

Biden, Putin hold high-stakes call

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden and Russia's Vladimir Putin squared off Tuesday over the massive buildup of Russian troops near the Ukrainian border, the U.S. president eager to use his video call with Putin to serve notice that Moscow will face economy-jarring sanctions if it invades neighboring Ukraine.

Just hours before the call got underway, Ukrainian officials charged Russia was continuing to escalate the crisis by sending tanks and snipers to war-torn eastern Ukraine to “provoke return fire.” Ukraine’s Defense Ministry alleged that Russia is holding “training camps under the leadership of regular servicemen of the Russian Armed Forces.” The Kremlin hasn’t commented on the allegations.

Biden aimed to make clear that his administration stands ready to take actions against the Kremlin that would exact “a very real cost” on the Russian economy, according to White House officials. Putin, for his part, was expected to demand guarantees from Biden that the NATO military alliance will never expand to include Ukraine, which has long sought membership. That’s a non-starter for the Americans and their NATO allies.

“We’ve consulted significantly with our allies and believe we have a path forward that would impose significant and severe harm on the Russian economy,” White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Monday in previewing the meeting. “You can call that a threat. You can call that a fact. You can call that preparation. You can call it whatever you want to call it.”

The leader-to-leader conversation — Biden speaking from the Situation Room, Putin from his residence in Sochi — was expected to be one of the toughest of Biden’s presidency and comes at a perilous time. U.S. intelligence officials have determined that Russia has massed 70,000 troops near the Ukraine border and has made preparations for a possible invasion early next year.

The U.S. has not determined whether Putin has made a final decision to invade. Still, Biden intended to make clear to the Russian leader that there will be a “very real cost” should Russia proceed with military action, according to a senior administration official who briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity.

Biden was vice president in 2014 when Russian troops marched into the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea and annexed the territory from Ukraine. Aides say the Crimea

episode — one of the darker moments for former President Barack Obama on the international stage — looms large as Biden looks at the current smoldering crisis.

The eastward expansion of NATO has from the start been a bone of contention not just with Moscow but also in Washington. In 1996, when President Bill Clinton’s national security team debated the timing of membership invitations to former Soviet allies Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, Defense Secretary William Perry urged delay to keep Russian relations on track. Perry wrote in his memoir that when he lost the internal debate he considered resigning.

Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were formally invited in 1997 and joined in 1999. They were followed in 2004 by Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the former Soviet states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Since then, Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and North Macedonia have joined, bringing NATO’s total to 30 nations.

A key principle of the NATO alliance is that membership is open to any qualifying country. And no outsider has membership veto power.

While there’s little prospect that Ukraine would be invited into the alliance anytime soon, the U.S. and its allies won’t rule it out.

China fires back at US diplomatic boycott of Games

Associated Press

BEIJING — China accused the United States of violating the Olympic spirit on Tuesday after the Biden administration announced a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Games over human rights concerns.

Rights groups have pushed for a full-blown boycott of the Games, accusing China of rights abuses against ethnic minorities. The U.S. decision falls short of those calls, but still comes at an exceptionally turbulent time for relations between the powerhouse nations and was met with a barrage of criticism from China.

The U.S. is attempting to interfere with the Beijing Games “out of ideological prej-

udice and based on lies and rumors,” Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian told reporters.

The boycott “seriously violates the principle of political neutrality of sports established by the Olympic Charter and runs counter to the Olympic motto ‘more united,’” Zhao said.

As he did the previous day, Zhao vowed that China would respond with “resolute countermeasures,” but offered no details.

“The U.S. will pay a price for its practices. You may stay tuned for follow-ups,” Zhao said.

On Monday, White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters that the Biden administration will fully support U.S. athletes competing at the Games but won’t dis-

patch diplomats or officials to attend.

Psaki said the U.S. has a “fundamental commitment to promoting human rights” and that it “will not be contributing to the fanfare of the Games.”

The diplomatic boycott comes as the U.S. attempts to thread the needle between stabilizing difficult relations with Beijing and maintaining a tough stance on trade and political conflicts. The U.S. has accused China of human rights abuses against Muslim Uyghurs in northwest Xinjiang province, suppressing democratic movements in Hong Kong, committing military aggression against the self-ruled island of Taiwan and more.

Other major countries have yet to say if they will follow the American lead.

Russia deploys anti-ship missile system

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

Russia's military deployed a coastal defense missile system able to target carrier battle groups, navy convoys and landing craft near disputed islands north of Japan, according to the Russian Ministry of Defense.

"The crews of Bastion coastal missile system of the Pacific Fleet were deployed for the first time and took on duty on the island of Matua," the ministry announced Thursday on its website.

Matua is a volcanic island nearly 7 miles long in the Kurile chain, north of Japan's Hokkaido prefecture, but not one of four Russian-occupied islands in the group claimed by Japan.

"On this remote island in the central part of the Kuril Ridge, servicemen will be on a 24-hour watch to monitor the adjacent water ar-

ea and straits," the defense ministry said.

Equipment, personnel and materiel were delivered to Matua by amphibious ships from the Primorsk Flotilla, according to the ministry's statement.

"The personnel began to be on duty and to carry out planned combat training activities," it said.

The announcement didn't state how many anti-ship missile systems were deployed to Matua, but a video posted on the ministry's website shows multiple missile carriers disembarking from amphibious landing ships.

Russia deployed a different Bastion system, with a range of 310 miles to the Southern Kurils in 2016, according to a Thursday report in *The Guardian* newspaper.

The following year, Russian President Vladimir Putin said his country's military buildup in the Far East was a necessary response

to the United States' missile defense shield. The U.S. deployed a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, also known as THAAD, to South Korea in March 2017.

Russia has been talking for some years about developing military facilities on Matua, the site of an old Japanese airstrip, according to James Brown, an international affairs expert at Temple University's Japan campus.

"It now seems to be pushing forward with these plans," he said in an email Thursday.

The aim appears to be to strengthen Russia's position at the starting point of the Northern Sea Route, Brown said.

The Arctic shipping route, only open briefly each summer, has the potential to save time, fuel and money for shippers involved in the multibillion-dollar trade between Asia and Europe.

Permanent closure of Red Hill fuel tanks considered

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro is considering the permanent closure of the massive underground Red Hill fuel storage facility on Oahu in the wake of widespread petroleum contamination of nearby drinking water, he said Monday.

"We're looking at all options,

and all options are on the table, certainly," Del Toro told reporters during a news conference at U.S. Pacific Fleet headquarters on the joint base.

"We're looking at some very serious options here in the near future before I depart the island of Oahu," Del Toro said. He arrived over the weekend and is slated to give the keynote address Tuesday at the commemoration of the 80th anniversary

of the 1941 surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.

"I still need more time to meet with additional groups and look at additional facts before I make a determination of what steps I need to make in the near term in the next, let's say, 48 hours before I leave the island," he said.

The Navy suspended fuel-transfer operations from the underground tanks Nov. 27 as it began investigating complaints

from Navy housing communities of foul-smelling tap water. For the time being, the service is using fuel from above-ground tanks.

Tests last week confirmed that the Navy's Red Hill well, one of three that supply water to roughly 7,000 households on the Navy water system, was contaminated by petroleum. The well was shut down and isolated early last week.

Bidens honor Pearl Harbor's fallen at WWII Memorial

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden on Tuesday marked the 80th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor with a somber visit to the World War II Memorial in the nation's capital.

The Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor and other locations in Hawaii killed 2,403 service members and civilians and was a defining moment that led to U.S. entry into World War II.

Joe Biden touched a wreath and saluted. The wreath contained a wild sunflower, the

state flower of Kansas, in honor of former Sen. Bob Dole, a war veteran who was a driving force in getting the memorial built on the National Mall and who died Sunday at age 98.

The first lady laid a bouquet of flowers at the base of the memorial below the New Jersey pillar and softly touched a wall, where she and the president spent a moment. The bouquet was in honor of her father, Donald Jacobs, who served as a U.S. Navy signalman in the war, the White House said.

The Bidens then paused at the Pacific arch on the southern side of the memorial

plaza for one last moment of reflection before departing.

Joe Biden, in a White House proclamation issued last week to recognize National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, gave "thanks to the Greatest Generation, who guided our Nation through some of our darkest moments and laid the foundations of an international system that has transformed former adversaries into allies."

Biden made the Tuesday morning visit just hours before he was to hold a highly anticipated video conference call with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Study can't replicate experiments' results

Associated Press

Eight years ago, a team of researchers launched a project to carefully repeat early but influential lab experiments in cancer research.

They re-created 50 experiments, the type of preliminary research with mice and test tubes that sets the stage for new cancer drugs. The results reported Tuesday: About half the scientific claims didn't hold up.

"The truth is we fool ourselves. Most of what we claim is novel or significant is no such thing," said Dr. Vinay Prasad, a cancer doctor and researcher at the University of California, San

Francisco, who was not involved in the project.

It's a pillar of science that the strongest findings come from experiments that can be repeated with similar results.

In reality, there's little incentive for researchers to share methods and data so others can verify the work, said Marcia McNutt, president of the National Academy of Sciences. Researchers lose prestige if their results don't hold up to scrutiny, she said.

And there are built-in rewards for publishing discoveries.

But for cancer patients, it can

raise false hopes to read headlines of a mouse study that seems to promise a cure "just around the corner," Prasad said. "Progress in cancer is always slower than we hope."

The new study reflects on shortcomings early in the scientific process, not with established treatments. By the time cancer drugs reach the market, they've been tested rigorously in large numbers of people to make sure they are safe and they work.

For the project, the researchers tried to repeat experiments from cancer biology papers published from 2010 to 2012 in

major journals such as Cell, Science and Nature.

Overall, 54% of the original findings failed to measure up to statistical criteria set ahead of time by the Reproducibility Project, according to the team's study published online Tuesday by eLife. The nonprofit eLife receives funding from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, which also supports The Associated Press Health and Science Department.

This is the second major analysis by the Reproducibility Project. In 2015, they found similar problems when they tried to repeat experiments in psychology.

Ex-Pence aide complying with Jan. 6 House panel

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The former chief of staff to Vice President Mike Pence is cooperating with the House panel investigating the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Marc Short was at the Capitol on Jan. 6 and accompanied Pence as he fled his post presiding over the Senate and hid from rioters who were calling for his hanging. Short is cooperating with the panel after receiving a subpoena, according to the person, who was granted anonymity to discuss the private interactions.

Former President Donald Trump was openly criticizing his vice president even as the insurrectionists broke into the building because Pence had said he would not try to unilaterally reject the electoral count as Congress certified President Joe Biden's victory. Pence didn't have the legal power to do so, but Trump pressured him anyway.

As Pence's top aide, Short was also present for several White House meetings ahead of the in-

surrection. At one point, Trump banned Short from the White House grounds because he objected to the pressure on Pence to reject the legitimate election results.

CNN first reported Short's cooperation and subpoena.

Some people close to Pence were furious about the way that Trump tried to scapegoat the former vice president on Jan. 6 and became even more incensed after Pence, his closest aides and his family were put in physical danger by the rioters.

Alyssa Farah, who served as Pence's press secretary before taking on other roles and left her job at the White House before Jan. 6, voluntarily met with Republicans on the House select committee and provided information.

In a series of tweets as the insurrection unfolded, Farah urged Trump to condemn the riots as they were happening and call on his supporters to stand down. "Condemn this now, @realDonaldTrump," she tweeted. "You are the only one they will listen to. For our country!"

Austin: Stopgap funding would limit China focus, hurt troops

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

A full-year stopgap spending measure to fund the federal government — including the military — for fiscal 2022 could irreparably harm Pentagon efforts to check a rising Chinese military and halt planned moves for troops, the top U.S. defense official warned Monday.

"I strongly urge Congress to seize this opportunity to sustain American competitiveness, advance American leadership and enable our forces by immediately reaching a bipartisan, bicameral agreement on full-year 2022 appropriations," Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin wrote in a statement issued Monday, more than two months since the beginning of the fiscal year. "It's not only the right thing to do, it's the best thing they can do for our nation's defense."

Austin's statement came just days after President Joe Biden on Friday signed into law the second stopgap spending measure — known as a continuing resolution — passed by Congress to fund the federal government in fiscal 2022, which

began Oct. 1. The latest continuing resolution passed in the absence of a fiscal 2022 budget allows federal institutions to continue operating through Feb. 18.

Neither chamber of Congress has yet passed a fiscal 2022 defense appropriations bill, and lawmakers have indicated they are not yet close to voting on the critical measures. The Senate's version of the bill would provide the Pentagon about \$725.8 billion, and the House version — in line with Biden's budget request — would provide \$705.9 billion. Congress also has yet to pass a 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, a separate bill that sets policy priorities and directs how the Pentagon spends the funds that it is provided in the annual appropriations bill.

In Austin's statement on Monday, he noted the Pentagon would be unable to begin new programs, including some aimed at keeping pace with Chinese advancements, under a continuing resolution. He said a CR would also continue funding some programs that the Pentagon has planned to eliminate this year.

Feds sue Texas over redistricting maps

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — The Justice Department sued Texas on Monday over its new redistricting maps, saying the plans discriminate against minority voters, particularly Latinos, who have fueled the state's population boom.

The lawsuit claims the Republican-controlled state violated part of the Voting Rights Act in drawing new district boundaries for its congressional delegation and state legislature. It's the Biden Justice Department's first legal action challenging a state's maps since states began redrawing their maps this year to ac-

count for population changes.

The lawsuit notes that most of Texas' population growth over the past decade came from Black, Latino and Asian people, but alleges that the new maps scatter these voters across districts, diluting their votes and denying them opportunities to choose their representatives. It also argues the maps pack Black and Latino communities into bizarre-shaped districts — a Dallas-area one is described as “seahorse” shaped — while preserving seats for white Republicans.

“This is not the first time that Texas has acted to minimize the

voting rights of its minority citizens,” Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta said during a news conference with Attorney General Merrick Garland. “Decade after decade, courts have found that Texas has enacted redistricting plans that deliberately dilute the voting strength of Latino and Black voters and that violate the Voting Rights Act.”

The litigation comes as Republicans and Democrats jockey for an edge in the once-a-decade redistricting process, which has already reached new levels of gerrymandering. The lawsuit also plays out during a changed

legal landscape for redistricting challenges. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2019 that it won't referee partisan gerrymandering disputes — maps drawn to benefit a political party.

A spokeswoman for Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, condemned the lawsuit.

“It's no surprise that Democrats in Washington are attacking our state's redistricting plans,” Renae Eze said. “We are confident that Texas' redistricting plans will be upheld by the courts, and our office continues working with the Office of the Attorney General to ensure Texans are represented fairly.”

‘Cheugy,’ ‘omicron’ among most mispronounced words

Associated Press

“Cheugy” is apparently a lot to chew on. Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter Billie Eilish and Philadelphia Eagles center Jason Kelce have something in common — broadcasters butcher their names.

And virtually everyone is having trouble with “omicron.”

All four made it onto this year's list of most mispronounced words as compiled by the U.S. Captioning Co., which captions and subtitles real-time events on TV and in courtrooms. The list released Tuesday identifies the words that proved most challenging for newsreaders and people on television to pronounce this year. The caption company said it surveyed its members to generate the list, which is now in its sixth year and was commissioned by Babel, a language-learning platform.

“As a language teacher, it's always interesting to see that some of these terms are usually new colloquialisms, or are rooted or borrowed from another language,” said Esteban Touma, a standup comedian and teacher for Babel Live. “As a non-native speaker, I must confess it's fun to

see English speakers stumbling a bit for a change.”

Here's how Touma breaks down the proper pronunciations for the most commonly misspoken words:

■ **Cheugy (CHOO-gee):** A trendy term popularized by Gen Z and used to mock an outdated and unfashionable aesthetic typically associated with millennials, such as “Live, Laugh, Love” signs.

■ **Dalgona (tal-goh-NAH):** A Korean treat made with melted sugar and baking soda, popularized in Netflix's “Squid Game.”

■ **Eilish (EYE-lish):** The singer Billie Eilish, whose album “Happier Than Ever” was released to critical acclaim.

■ **Kelce (KELs):** Jason Kelce revealed that his teammates and the media had been mispronouncing his name for years.

■ **Omicron (AH-muh-kraan / OH-mee-kraan):** A new variant of COVID-19, named in keeping with the World Health Organization's system of identifying variants with Greek letters.

■ **Yassify (YEAH-sih-fai):** A trend in which multiple beauty filters are applied to famous pictures or portraits for comic effect.

New York City mulling local voting rights for noncitizens

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York City, long a beacon for immigrants, is on the cusp of becoming one of the largest places in the country to give noncitizens the right to vote in local elections.

Legally documented, voting-age noncitizens comprise nearly one in nine of the city's 7 million voting-age inhabitants. Under a bill nearing approval, some 800,000 noncitizens would be allowed to cast ballots in elections to pick the mayor, City Council members and other municipal officeholders.

Noncitizens still wouldn't be able to vote for president or members of Congress in federal races, or in the state elections that pick the governor, judges and legislators.

Little stands in the way of the effort becoming law. The measure has broad support within the City Council, which is expected to ratify the proposal Thursday. Mayor Bill de Blasio has raised concerns about the wisdom and legality of the legislation, but said he won't veto it.

The law would give an electo-

ral voice to the many New Yorkers who love the city and have made it their permanent home, but can't easily become U.S. citizens or would rather remain citizens of their home nations for various reasons.

It would also cover “Dreamers” like Eva Santos, 32, who was brought to the United States by her parents at age 11 as an unauthorized immigrant, but wasn't able to vote like her friends or go to college when she turned 18.

“It was really hard for me to see how my other friends were able to make decisions for their future, and I couldn't,” said Santos, now a community organizer.

More than a dozen communities across the U.S. currently allow noncitizens to vote, including 11 towns in Maryland and two in Vermont.

San Francisco, through a ballot initiative ratified by voters in 2016, began allowing noncitizens to vote in school board elections — which was also true in New York City until it abolished its boards in 2002 and gave control of schools to the mayor.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Ice-skating canine wins award from kennel club

NV LAS VEGAS — An ice-skating dog familiar to Vegas Golden Knights fans is drawing acclaim from the American Kennel Club for his role as a companion animal for children with disabilities.

Hockey fans at T-Mobile Arena know “Benny” for his on-ice abilities with his custom skates and hockey stick.

The AKC Humane Fund named the 8-year-old Labrador retriever owned by Cheryl Del Sangro, of Las Vegas, one of five winners of the organization’s Award for Canine Excellence.

Benny won as “exemplary companion” for his roles skating with children who have autism and other developmental disabilities as part of the Spectrum On Ice program.

Benny also skateboards and shows off other tricks during visits to Opportunity Village, a Las Vegas not-for-profit that provides vocational training, employment and social recreation for people with intellectual and related disabilities.

Shoplifter deploys bear spray, Walmart cleared

CO GREELEY — A Walmart store in Colorado was evacuated after a shoplifter deployed bear spray against several employees, police said.

Officers responded to the Walmart in Greeley after receiving multiple reports about bear spray being deployed.

Workers had tried to detain a male shoplifter but he allegedly assaulted them, sprayed them with the bear spray and then

fled in a vehicle prior to the arrival of police.

Emergency crews treated at least five people for exposure to bear spray, which can painfully irritate a person’s eyes, skin and lungs.

Man found dead inside air duct of his house

MN DENT — A 40-year-old northwestern Minnesota man was found dead in the air duct of his house, authorities said.

The Otter Tail County Sheriff’s Office said it received a call from a family member who went to check on the man at his residence in rural Dent. The family said they hadn’t heard from him in several days, KVRR-TV reported.

The sheriff’s office said the death appears accidental but it remains under investigation. No further information has been released.

Homeowner burns house trying to get rid of snake

MD POOLESVILLE — A Maryland home was accidentally burned to the ground by an owner trying to get rid of a snake infestation, officials said.

The homeowner in Poolesville, a town about 25 miles outside of Washington, D.C., was attempting to use smoke to purge the snakes from the house, according to Montgomery County Fire Department officials.

In the process, the homeowner caught the house on fire, causing about \$1 million in damage, The Washington Post reported.

Pete Piringer, a spokesman for the county fire department, said on Twitter that 75 firefighters were called to put out the blaze that started in the basement.

Piringer said the fire, caused by placing coals too close to combustible material, was accidental and that no people were hurt. But he said the well-being of the snakes is “undetermined.”

Meth found at school; nutrition head arrested

GA GROVETOWN — A school nutrition manager is facing drug charges after authorities said they found methamphetamine at her school and in her car.

The employee was arrested and is no longer employed at Cedar Ridge Elementary School, The Augusta Chronicle reported.

The Grovetown Department of Public Safety said officers found the methamphetamine in an employee restroom in the kitchen.

Authorities said that sheriff’s deputies also discovered methamphetamine in the center console of her car.

Man sentenced for smuggling ammunition

AZ TUCSON — A 26-year-old Phoenix man has been sentenced to over three years in prison for attempting to take thousands of rounds of ammunition from the United States to Mexico.

According to a complaint filed by a Homeland Security Investigations agent, Mauricio Robles was the owner of a vehi-

cle stopped by the Arizona Department of Public Safety on Interstate 10 near Eloy for unlawful window tint.

Robles was a passenger in his car, which was being driven by another man when it was stopped, the complaint said.

The complaint said the car’s back end appeared to be low and a search disclosed that the trunk was full of nearly 6,000 rounds of four kinds of ammunition.

The complaint said Robles acknowledged knowing there was ammunition in the vehicle and said he had agreed to be paid for having his car used to transport the ammunition to Rio Rico so another person could smuggle it into Mexico.

Snowplow driver deficit spells slow road clearing

MT HELENA — Montana’s Department of Transportation warned residents that it could take longer to clear snow from highways this winter because the state has been unable to hire enough snowplow drivers.

The department is advertising for 89 temporary, part-time jobs for snowplow drivers and road maintenance workers.

“MDT is facing significant staffing shortages in a number of areas across the state and will work proactively to clear Montana’s highways by shifting crews to the affected areas, when possible,” the department’s maintenance administrator Jon Swartz said in a statement.

The state has about half of the snowplow operators it needs for full staffing, Swartz said.

— From wire reports



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Four Heisman Trophy finalists named

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Alabama quarterback Bryce Young, Michigan defensive end Aidan Hutchinson, Pittsburgh quarterback Kenny Pickett and Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud were announced Monday as finalists for the Heisman Trophy.

The Heisman will be presented Saturday in New York, returning to its usual routine and date — second Saturday in December — after it was forced to delay and go virtual last year due to the pandemic.

There are some changes this year. The site of the presentation is moving from a theater in Midtown Manhattan, near Times Square, to a smaller venue on the West Side near Lincoln Center.

The process by which Heisman finalists are determined has also been modified. The Heisman Trust announced that starting this season, there will be four finalists — no more, no fewer — invited to the award presentation ceremony.

In the past, the Heisman has invited at least three and as many as six players to the presentation. The number was determined by distribution of vote, with the cutoff decided by

the gap between vote-getters.

After a 2021 season in which a Heisman front-runner took a while to emerge and the race seemed wide-open into November, Young closed strong to become the favorite.

The sophomore led a 97-yard, game-tying touchdown drive against rival Auburn two weeks ago, helping the Crimson Tide rally to win the Iron Bowl in overtime.

Then Young broke the Southeastern Conference championship game record with 421 yards passing in a victory against Georgia's vaunted defense on Saturday. For the season, Young has thrown for 4,322 yards, 43 touchdowns and just four interceptions while guiding the top-ranked Crimson Tide to the College Football Playoff.

As good as Young has been in his first season as Alabama's starting quarterback, following Heisman finalists Mac Jones and Tua Tagovailoa, an argument could be made he is not even the clear best player on his own team.

Will Anderson Jr. appeared to be the Tide's top Heisman contender until Young went off against Georgia. The sophomore outside linebacker leads

the nation in tackles for loss with 31.5 and sacks with 15.5, but he didn't get an invitation to New York.

Nether did Michigan State running back Kenneth Walker III, who is second in the nation in rushing at 136 yards per game with 19 touchdowns. The Wake Forest transfer jumped to the top of the Heisman watch lists after scoring five touchdowns in the 11th-ranked Spartans' victory against Michigan on Oct. 30.

Young could become Alabama's fourth Heisman winner, second consecutive, but first quarterback.

Tide receiver DeVonta Smith won the Heisman last year. Smith broke a streak of four straight quarterbacks to win the Heisman.

Since 2000, 17 quarterbacks have won the trophy. Among the non-quarterback winners are Alabama running backs Mark Ingram (2009) and Derrick Henry (2015).

Hutchinson would be the first defensive player to win the Heisman since Michigan's Charles Woodson in 1997. Woodson was also Michigan's last Heisman winner.

The last Wolverines player to be a Heisman finalist also

played defense, though not exclusively. Defensive back Jabrill Peppers played some offense and returned kicks when he finished fifth in 2016.

Hutchinson is one of the nation's best pass rushers with 14 sacks. The senior led No. 2 Michigan to its first playoff appearance as Big Ten champion and helped end an eight-game losing streak to rival Ohio State.

Pickett returned to Pitt for a fifth season in 2021, taking advantage of the NCAA's eligibility give-back for playing through the pandemic in 2020, and had a record-breaking year. Pickett passed for 4,319 yards with 42 touchdowns to eclipse school marks and led the 13th-ranked Panthers to their first Atlantic Coast Conference title.

The last Pitt player to be a Heisman finalist was receiver Larry Fitzgerald in 2003.

Stroud completed 71% of his passes for 3,862 yards, 38 touchdowns and five interceptions as the seventh-ranked Buckeyes finished 10-2 in his first season as a starter.

He is the third straight Ohio State starting quarterback to be a Heisman finalist, joining Justin Fields (2019) and Dwayne Haskins (2018).

Hurricanes fire Diaz, then hire Oregon's Cristobal

Associated Press

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — Mario Cristobal is going home again.

Cristobal is leaving Oregon and returning to Miami, accepting an offer to become head football coach at his alma mater, where he won two national championships as a player. He let the Ducks know of the decision Monday, his team meeting in Oregon nearly simultaneous with Miami announcing the firing of coach Manny Diaz after three seasons.

"My family and I are excited

to return home to the University of Miami," Cristobal said.

Cristobal and the Hurricanes were finalizing terms on a 10-year, \$80 million deal, by far the richest the school has ever given a coach. Diaz was making around \$4 million annually. The university has said it plans to give athletics an influx of cash, in part because the school's hospital system has seen profits skyrocket during the pandemic.

Diaz was hired by Miami in 2018 on the same day that Mark Richt stepped down; this time, the football vacancy was even

shorter, since the Hurricanes weren't firing Diaz without a commitment from Cristobal to come aboard.

"I am disappointed in the university's decision and the manner in which this played out over the last few weeks," Diaz said. "The uncertainty impacted our team, our staff and their families — these are real people that gave everything to this program. For that, for them, I hurt."

The Cristobal hire is one of two major signings Miami has pursued in recent days. A person with knowledge of the school's

plans told The Associated Press that the Hurricanes expect to complete the hiring of Dan Radakovich as athletic director this week. Radakovich has been AD at Clemson but started his career in sports administration 40 years ago at Miami, where he got one of his degrees.

Cristobal was 35-13 at Oregon, with two Pac-12 titles and a Rose Bowl victory on his resume. He and Ducks athletic director Rob Mullens were in constant contact throughout the weekend, and Cristobal gave him the final decision early Monday.

Pats make a run for it, hold off Bills

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — Linebacker Matt Judon praised the Patriots offense while taking a playful swipe at rookie quarterback Mac Jones.

“Hats off to the offense. Really everybody, probably besides Mac,” Judon said breaking into a smile. “He didn’t really do nothing besides hand the ball off.”

No offense taken. With 40 mph wind gusts placing an emphasis on running the ball, Jones was more than content in being relegated to handoff duty in New England’s 14-10 win over the Buffalo Bills on Monday night.

Jones completed just two of three pass attempts for 19 yards in essentially standing back and watching the Patriots backfield literally run away with their seventh consecutive win and shore up New England’s familiar place atop the AFC.

“Just a crazy game to be a part of,” Jones said.

“We knew it was going to be windy. You can’t control it. There is no on and off switch,” he added. “You just have to go out there and do your job, and for us to run the ball like we did was incredible.”

Damien Harris scored on a 64-yard run in an outing the Patriots out-gained Buffalo 222 to 99 in yards rushing. Nick Folk hit both field goal attempts from 34 and 41 yards with the wind at his back, and the New England defense limited the Bills to a season-low 230 yards of offense.

Defensive back Miles Bryant sealed the victory by batting down Josh Allen’s pass at the goal line with Buffalo facing fourth-and-14 at the Patriots’ 18 with 1:55 remaining. It came a series after the Bills’ Tyler Bass missed a 34-yard attempt wide right into the wind in a game

where Buffalo managed 10 points on four drives inside New England’s 20.

“What a memorable game that will be for me in my career,” Patriots center David Andrews said. “One, it’s a win. Two, I don’t know if I’ve ever played in a game where we’ve thrown the ball three times. And I’ve been playing football since I was 6 years old, so that’s 23 years.”

New England (9-4) improved to 6-0 on the road this season and now has a two-win edge over the Bills (7-5) in the AFC East standings.

Buffalo continued its inconsistencies by losing four of its past seven, and has not won consecutive games since capping a 4-0 run spanning Sept. 19 to Oct. 10.

Though the two teams meet once more in Foxborough, Mass., on Dec. 26, the Bills’ path to repeat as division champions,

never mind earn a third straight postseason berth, is suddenly muddied. The AFC’s wild card race now features four teams with seven wins. They also dropped to 5-5 against AFC opponents and 3-1 against division opponents.

Buffalo continues resembling the shell of a team which swept the season series against New England last year for the first time since 1999, en route to its first 13-win season in 29 years.

“No excuse for it,” middle linebacker Tremaine Edmunds said. “They came in and they beat us. We’ve just got to get better. We’ve got to finish off the season strong.”

That’s easier said than done for a team which continues to have difficulty running the ball and stopping the run. Take away Allen’s six carries for 39 yards, and the Bills trio of running backs finished with 60 yards on 19 carries.

Canucks blank Kings to kick off Boudreau’s stint

Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Bruce Boudreau got his first win as coach of the Canucks on Monday as Vancouver blanked the Los Angeles Kings 4-0.

The victory came less than 24 hours after the Canucks cleaned house.

Vancouver’s Thatcher Demko had 30 saves to collect his first shutout of the season. Brock Boeser and J.T. Miller each had a power-play goal and an assist for the Canucks, while Conor Garland and Juho Lamikko also scored.

Cal Petersen had 27 saves for the Kings.

Capitals 4, Ducks 3 (SO): John Carlson tied the game late in the second period and then scored host Washington’s third and final shootout goal in its win over Anaheim.

Tom Wilson scored his 100th career goal and Carl Hagelin added his first of the season for the Caps, who improved to 2-0-1 during a four-game homestand. Alex Ovechkin added his 20th and 21st assists for Washington, then joined Daniel Sprong in scoring during the shootout.

Ilya Samsonov made 31 saves, including the only one required by either goaltender in overtime.

Stars 4, Coyotes 1: Jacob Peterson made good on a second chance at the go-ahead goal against Arizona, and host Dallas tied a franchise record with its seventh consecutive win.

As the Minnesota North Stars and Dallas Stars, the franchise has had five seven-game winning streaks in 54 seasons. The Stars’ streak is currently the longest in the NHL.

Jamie Benn scored twice late

in the third period for Dallas and Roope Hintz also had a goal. Braden Holtby had 18 saves.

Senators 3, Devils 2 (SO): Josh Norris scored the decisive goal in a shootout to lift Ottawa to a win at New Jersey, extending its winning streak to three games.

The Senators’ Tim Stutzle and the Devils’ Tomas Tatar also scored in the shootout.

New Jersey lost its fourth straight in a makeup game for the Nov. 16 one that was postponed because of the Senators’ COVID-19 outbreak. Damon Severson and Nathan Bastian scored for the Devils, and Mackenzie Blackwood made 21 saves.

Avalanche 7, Flyers 5: Erik Johnson had a goal and an assist, and Colorado won at Philadelphia.

It was the Flyers’ ninth

straight loss, coming just hours after they fired coach Alain Vigneault.

Mike Yeo took over as interim coach, but Philadelphia didn’t fare any better following the shakeup.

Penguins 6, Kraken 1: Sidney Crosby and Danton Heinen scored 25 seconds apart early in the first period, Jake Guentzel extended his point streak to 13 games with two goals and an assist, and Pittsburgh rolled at Seattle.

Jeff Carter scored 1:47 into the game (and again in the second period), and then Crosby followed with his fourth goal at 4:42 in the first period by finishing a shot from the blue line from Guentzel. Heinen scored on a wrist shot about 30 seconds later.

Penguins goalie Casey DeSmith made 28 saves.

Embiid's 43 paces 76ers past Hornets

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Joel Embiid had a season-high 43 points, 15 rebounds and seven assists, and the Philadelphia 76ers held off the short-handed Charlotte Hornets 127-124 in overtime on Monday night.

Tobias Harris returned from a one-game absence due to illness and had 21 points and 11 rebounds as the 76ers shot 52.9% from the field and earned back-to-back wins for the first time since Nov. 4-6.

Kelly Oubre Jr. had 35 points with six three-pointers for the Hornets, but missed a three at the end of overtime that would have tied the game and sent it to a second extra period.

Charlotte played without five players, including starters LaMelo Ball, Terry Rozier and Mason Plumlee because of NBA health and safety protocols.

Embiid had six of Philadelphia's eight points in overtime.

The Hornets, who played only eight players, were 2 of 9 from the field in overtime.

Thunder 114, Pistons 103: Shea Gilgeous-Alexander had 30 points and 13 assists, Luquenz Dort scored 28 points and Oklahoma City won at Detroit in a battle of teams that entered with eight-game losing streaks.

The Pistons led by 16 in the third quarter and 12 early in the fourth, but they were outscored 25-8 in the final five minutes of their ninth straight loss.

Cade Cunningham had 28 points and 11 rebounds for Detroit, while Jeremi Grant added 20 points.

Suns 108, Spurs 104: Chris Paul had 21 points and 10 assists, Jae Crowder added a season-high 19 points and host Phoenix beat San Antonio to reach the 20-win mark.

The Suns were playing their first game since having their franchise-record 18-game

winning streak snapped against Golden State on Friday. They didn't appear fazed by the setback and won for the 19th time in 20 games dating to Oct. 27.

The Spurs had their four-game winning streak snapped. All five San Antonio starters scored in double figures, led by Dejounte Murray's 17 points. Bryn Forbes added 15 points off the bench.

Warriors 126, Magic 95: Stephen Curry had 31 points and eight assists, Andrew Wiggins made a career-high eight three-pointers on the way to 28 points, and host Golden State beat Orlando.

Wiggins scored 17 of his points in the third quarter, knocking down three straight threes over a span of 1:14. He finished 9-for-17 from the floor to help the Warriors bounce back from having their 11-game home winning streak snapped in a loss Saturday to San Antonio. Jordan Poole added 12 points, seven assists and seven rebounds.

Gary Harris scored 17 points to lead the Magic, who lost for the ninth time in 10 games. Wendell Carter Jr. added 14 points and 12 rebounds.

Clippers 102, Trail Blazers 90: Paul George scored 21 points and visiting Los Angeles gave short-handed Portland its third straight loss.

Marcus Morris Sr. added 17 points and Luke Kennard, making his first start for the Clippers this season, finished with 15. Los Angeles had lost four of its previous five games. Jusuf Nurkic had a season-high 31 points for Portland, and Norman Powell finished with a season-best 29.

Grizzlies 105, Heat 90: Dillon Brooks and Desmond Bane scored 21 points each, and surging Memphis won at Miami.

The win was the Grizzlies' fifth straight

without leading scorer Ja Morant, who hurt his left knee against Atlanta on Nov. 26. They have not trailed during their streak. All five Grizzlies starters finished in double figures. Steven Adams had 17 points and 16 rebounds, while Tyus Jones and Jaren Jackson scored 14 points each.

Bulls 109, Nuggets 97: Zach LaVine scored 32 points as Chicago beat visiting Denver and moved into a tie with Brooklyn atop the Eastern Conference.

The Bulls took a big hit a few hours before tipoff when leading scorer DeMar DeRozan entered the NBA's health and safety protocols.

Bucks 112, Cavaliers 104: Giannis Antetokounmpo came back from a two-game absence and scored 27 points on his 27th birthday to help Milwaukee defeat visiting Cleveland.

The two-time MVP also had 12 rebounds in his return from a sore right calf as the Bucks won for the 10th time in 11 games.

Hawks 121, Timberwolves 110: Trae Young had 29 points and 11 assists, Timothe Luwawu-Cabarrot scored 23 points and short-handed Atlanta won at Minnesota.

Danilo Gallinari scored 20 points off the bench for the Hawks, who were without injured wings Cam Reddish, Bogdan Bogdanovich, Solomon Hill and De'Andre Hunter.

Pacers 116, Wizards 110: Domantas Sabonis finished with 30 points, 10 rebounds and six assists to help host Indiana snap a four-game losing streak with a win over Washington.

Caris LeVert had 19 points and Malcolm Brogdon added 17 points and eight assists for the Pacers, who had lost five straight in the series, including last season's play-in round game.

Texas Southern shocks No. 20 Florida for 1st victory

Associated Press

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — Johnny Jones got a wet welcome in the visiting locker room at the O'Connell Center. It was a celebration decades in the making.

Previously winless Texas Southern stunned No. 20 Florida 69-54 on Monday night behind PJ Henry's 16 points and Joirdon Karl Nicholas' perfect shooting performance.

Texas Southern (1-7) became

the first Southwestern Athletic Conference team to beat a ranked Southeastern Conference program in The Associated Press poll era dating to 1936, according to ESPN Stats & Info. Ranked SEC teams had been 51-0 against SWAC opponents.

"We were thoroughly outplayed, outcoached, out-everything," Florida coach Mike White said.

Jones got all the accolades. The former LSU coach who took Texas

Southern to the NCAA Tournament last season was doused as he stepped into the locker room to celebrate with his team. His shirt and pants were still soaking wet during postgame interviews.

"Water bottles, everything we could throw at him," Nicholas said.

No. 14 Houston 77, Alcorn State 45: Tramon Mark scored 18 points off the bench, Marcus Sasser had 17 points and a career-high six steals and the host Cougars en-

joyed an easy win.

Kyler Edwards finished with 12 points and seven rebounds and Josh Carlton had 12 points for Houston (8-1), which has won four in a row. The Cougars shot 47% overall. Houston forced the Braves (1-7) into 20 turnovers, which the Cougars turned into 30 points. During its winning streak, Houston is averaging over 30 points a game off turnovers.