

Israel intensifies bombardment of Gaza

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Israel said Tuesday that its troops had entered Gaza's second-largest city as intensified bombardment sent streams of ambulances and cars racing to hospitals with wounded and dead Palestinians, including children, in a bloody new phase of the war.

The military said its forces were “in the heart” of Khan Younis, which has emerged as the first target in the expanded ground offensive into southern Gaza that Israel has said aims to destroy Hamas. Military officials said they were engaged in the “most intense day” of battles since the ground offensive began more than five weeks ago, with heavy fire-fights also taking place in northern Gaza.

The assault into the south is pushing a new wave of displaced Palestinians almost two months into the war, raising alarm from relief groups that

they can't keep up because insufficient aid supplies are entering Gaza. The United Nations said 1.87 million people — more than 80% of Gaza's population — have been driven from their homes. New evacuation orders by the Israeli military are squeezing people into ever-smaller areas of the tiny coastal strip's southern portion.

Bombardment has grown fiercer across the territory, including areas where Palestinians are told to seek safety. In the central Gaza town of Deir al-Balah, just north of Khan Younis, a strike Tuesday destroyed a house where dozens of displaced people were sheltering. At least 34 people were killed, including at least six children, according to an Associated Press reporter at the hospital who counted the bodies.

Footage from the scene of the strike showed women screaming from an upper floor of a house shattered to a con-

crete shell. In a field of wreckage below, men pulled the limp body of a child from under a concrete slab next to a burning car. At the nearby hospital, medics tried to resuscitate a young boy and girl, placed together bloodied and unmoving on a single stretcher.

Under U.S. pressure to prevent further mass casualties in the conflict with Hamas, Israel has said it is being more precise as it widens its offensive into southern Gaza. Weeks of bombardment and a ground offensive obliterated much of northern Gaza.

Israel has said it must dismantle Hamas' extensive military infrastructure and remove it from power to prevent a repeat of the Oct. 7 attack that ignited the war. In the surprise attack, Hamas and other Palestinian militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took captive some 240 men, women and children.

Israel's assault since Oct. 7

has killed more than 15,890 people in Gaza — 70% of them women and children — with more than 42,000 wounded, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths. It said hundreds have been killed or wounded since a weeklong cease-fire ended Friday, and many are still trapped under rubble.

Israel military Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi said his forces had begun the “third phase of the ground operations,” moving against Hamas in the south after seizing much of the north and “severely damaging Hamas.”

Israel has not given details on troops movements, and it was not clear how far they had moved into Khan Younis.

The past days have brought some of the heaviest bombardment of the entire war, the U.N.'s humanitarian affairs office OCHA said.

Admiral: US can support Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan

BY DOUG G. WARE

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military can aid Taiwan along with Ukraine and Israel if the Indo-Pacific island came under attack from China, the Pentagon's second highest-ranking officer said Monday.

“[They are] not necessarily the same things, so we are able to work our way through that,” Adm. Christopher Grady, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said during a discussion at the Atlantic Council, a Washington-based think tank that studies international affairs. “Is it challenging? Sure, but as [De-

fense] Secretary [Lloyd Austin] said, we have to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time.”

The United States has been providing billions of dollars in military aid to Ukraine since the Russian invasion in early 2022 and recently began sending increased aid to Israel after the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas militants. The U.S. has said many times that it would also provide needed support to Taiwan if it was attacked or invaded by China, which considers the island a breakaway Chinese territory.

Giving aid to two countries involved in conflicts has already

raised the question whether the support could put a strain on U.S. military capabilities and readiness. Some U.S. military leaders have said China could move on Taiwan as soon as 2027.

“According to some observers, Taiwan's civil defense preparedness is insufficient, and Taiwan's military struggles to recruit, retain and train personnel,” according to a report in September by the Congressional Research Service, a public policy research institute. “Some U.S. officials [have] publicly cited specific years in the mid-2020s as possible target

dates for a [Chinese] attack on Taiwan, sparking alarm and reinvigorating debates among experts and policymakers about how to allocate limited time and resources to shore up Taiwan's resilience.”

Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro said earlier in the year that it might be “challenging” to keep U.S. and Ukraine troops armed if the defense industry cannot maintain adequate production of equipment and weapons. He later clarified his remark and said he fully expected industry production to keep up. Grady said Monday that giving aid to three allies can be done.

Navy plane removed from bay; damage assessed

Associated Press

KANEOHE BAY, Hawaii — Landing gear from a U.S. Navy jet pulverized coral when it came to a stop in an environmentally sensitive Hawaii bay after overshooting a runway nearly two weeks ago, a state official said Monday.

Kim Fuller, an aquatic biologist with the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, said divers are working to quantify the extent of the damage now that the plane has been removed from the water.

Navy officials said Monday that a team worked through the weekend to use inflatable cyl-

inders, or roller bags, to lift and roll the plane off the reef where it crashed on Nov. 20 and move it to the nearby runway at Marine Corps Base Hawaii at Kaneohe Bay.

Rear Adm. Kevin Lenox, the commander of Carrier Strike Group 3 who is leading the \$1.5 million salvage effort, said absorbent material around the plane showed no indication of any fluid other than sea water, giving officials confidence that the plane hadn't released any hazardous materials such as fuel.

A Navy team had earlier removed nearly all of the estimated 2,000 gallons of fuel

from the aircraft.

None of the nine people on board the P-8A — the military's version of a Boeing 737 — were injured. The Navy is investigating the cause of the crash.

The Navy released underwater video last week showing the aircraft's wheels resting on parts of crushed coral and much of the rest of the plane floating above the reef.

During a dive Sunday, state divers snorkeled along the shoreline and looked at the plane's path into the water, Fuller said. In addition to pulverized coral at the primary impact area, there was some

coral damage caused by the anchors of containment booms, she said. Some coral had also been overturned or scraped, she said.

"However, I do feel that the impact area likely is much smaller than the size of the aircraft," she said, adding that it will take time to delineate and quantify the extent of the damage.

"I would say we've seen the majority of the worst damage," she said.

Kaneohe Bay is home to coral reefs and a lot of other marine life. The area hosts an ancient Hawaiian fishpond being restored by community groups.

Navy fires squad leader over loss of confidence

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The commander of Amphibious Squadron 5 in San Diego was relieved Friday, five months after taking command, the Navy said in a news release that day.

Capt. James Harney was ousted "due to a loss of confidence" in his ability to perform his duties by Rear Adm. Randall Peck, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 3, the release said.

No further details were provided as to reasons why Peck lost confidence in the 27-year Navy officer.

Harney will be administratively reassigned to Naval Surface Force Pacific, the news release said.

Capt. Tate Robinson will assume the duties of Amphibious Squadron 5's commander.

"Navy leaders are held to high standards of personal and professional conduct, both on and off duty," the release said. "They

are expected to uphold the highest standards of responsibility, reliability and leadership, and the Navy holds them accountable when they fall short of those standards."

Harney, a Kentucky native, received his commission in 1996 from the U.S. Naval Academy, where he earned a bachelor's degree in computer science, according to his official Navy biography.

Among his assignments at sea were chief of staff for Carrier Strike Group 11; commander of the guided-missile cruiser USS Port Royal; commander of Afloat Training Group (Mayport); and commander and executive officer aboard the guided-missile destroyer USS Russell.

In June, Harney took command of Amphibious Squadron 5, which was established in 1954 to prepare for and direct expeditionary warfare missions using amphibious ships and Marine Corps troops.

US to deploy anti-ship sub missiles to counter China

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Navy plans to begin arming submarines next year with ship-targeting versions of the widely used Tomahawk missile, part of Washington's push to ramp up military capabilities to challenge Chinese maritime forces, particularly around Taiwan.

The "Maritime Strike" version of the Tomahawk, the RTX Corp. missile traditionally used as a ground-attack weapon, will be fielded after Oct. 1, program manager Capt. Jon Hersey said in a statement. The latest models will be modified with a new guidance system enabling them "to engage a mobile target at sea," he said, adding the Navy took delivery of the initial version last year for tests before declaring it combat ready.

Fielding the new version of the Tomahawk — which made its battlefield debut in the early hours of the 1991 Persian Gulf

War in Iraq — would add to a growing U.S. arsenal of ship-attack missiles to complement submarine-launched torpedoes intended to counter China's numerically superior fleet.

While the Navy also plans to start fielding the weapons on surface vessels, those are more vulnerable to China's land- and sea-based anti-ship arsenal.

The schedule for the new maritime strike missile fits roughly within the Pentagon's plans to field thousands of drones in the Indo-Pacific region to counter China, known as the Replicator program, which the Pentagon aims to deploy on a large scale between February and August 2025.

The missiles will be deployed on Los Angeles and Virginia-class submarines, which can carry as many as 12 land-attack Tomahawks, although some modified versions of the Virginia-class will be able to carry as many as 40.

USAF IDs 8 airmen killed in Osprey crash

By **DOUG G. WARE**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Air Force on Tuesday identified the eight airmen who were killed in the crash of a CV-22B Osprey off the coast of Japan a week ago.

The airmen were aboard the tiltrotor aircraft on a training mission Nov. 29 when it crashed into the sea off Yakushima, an island in Kagoshima prefecture. The aircraft was assigned to the 353rd Special Operations Wing at Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo.

The Air Force identified those killed in the crash as Maj. Jeffrey T. Hoernemann, 32, of Minnesota; Maj. Eric V. Spendlove, 36, of Utah; Maj. Luke A. Unrath, 34, of California; Capt. Terrell K. Brayman, 32, of New York; Tech. Sgt. Zachary E. Lavoy, 33, of Florida; Staff Sgt. Jake M. Turnage, 25, of Georgia; Senior Airman Brian K. Johnson, 32, of Ohio; and Staff Sgt.

Jake Galliher, 24, of Massachusetts.

“After days of intensive, 24/7 search and rescue operations ... the U.S. military transitioned search and rescue operations to search and recovery operations,” Air Force Special Operations Command said. “The transition ... occurs when the determination is made that survivors are unlikely.”

The body of Galliher, a military linguist, was recovered on the day of the crash, but U.S. and Japanese forces have been searching for the other seven for the past week. The Air Force said it has recovered the remains of three airmen and is in the process of recovering those of three more. The other two have not yet been found.

“We are resolved to locating our air crew and bringing them home to their families,” said Rear Adm. Jeromy Williams, commander

of Special Operations Command Pacific.

The service said Hoernemann, Spendlove and Unrath, the most senior members of the crew, were an instructor pilot, a flight surgeon and an Osprey pilot, respectively. Brayman was an Osprey pilot, Lavoy a medical operations flight chief, and Turnage and Johnson flight engineers.

The CV-22B Osprey is a hybrid aircraft that can take off and land vertically like a helicopter and maneuver like an airplane in flight. Manufactured by Boeing and Bell Textron, the Osprey has been in U.S. military service since 2007. Japan grounded its Osprey fleet the day after the crash, and Japanese Defense Minister Minoru Kihara said Tuesday that the U.S. Ospreys in the country also have not been flying.

“Regarding flight safety, we still have concerns,” Kihara told

reporters. “Therefore, I have been saying that there is a need to continue receiving thorough information.”

Several agencies are involved in the ongoing recovery operation, including the Japan Coast Guard, Japan Self-Defense Forces, U.S. Pacific Air Forces, the U.S. Pacific Fleet and 1st Special Forces Group, officials said.

Crews have located parts of the downed Osprey, including the fuselage, and authorities are trying to determine what caused it to crash. Multiple witnesses have said they saw fire coming from one of the engines.

“The honorable service of these eight airmen to this great nation will never be forgotten, as they are now among the giants who shape our history,” said Lt. Gen. Tony Bauernfeind, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command.

Army officer promotions racial disparity narrows

By **ROSE L. THAYER**
Stars and Stripes

The disparity between promotion rates of white and non-white Army officers has narrowed in the first two years under a policy to remove photos and data that identify an officer’s race and gender at promotion boards, according to new research from the Rand Corp.

Though there’s not enough data to say the policy is effective, it’s promising, and the Army should continue to monitor it, said Maria Lytell, lead author of the research organization’s new report “Striving for Diversity: Observations on Racial and Ethnic Talent in the Regular Army’s Senior Officer Corps.” The Army put the change into practice Aug. 1, 2020, to address discrimination, prejudice and bias, and criticism that its highest ranks lacked diversity. Rand found minority officers in the ranks of captain, major and

lieutenant colonel are more likely to remain in the Army than white officers, though they have lower promotion rates. The reason why remains unclear, the report concluded.

Across the Army’s junior officers, diversity has increased in the past 15 years, with the proportion who were racial and ethnic minorities increasing from 29% in fiscal 2005 to 33% in fiscal 2020, according to the report. Of that 33%, 11% were Black, 10% Hispanic, 9% Asian American and Pacific Islander and 3% from other racial or ethnic minorities.

The officer research brief is part of a larger report, “Retention of Racial-Ethnic Minorities in the Regular Army,” which recommends the Army provide more training and education to junior-level leaders on counseling and evaluating soldiers because their opinions factor heavily into promotion and discipline decisions.

Army removes colonel from key field support post in Germany

By **JOHN VANDIVER**
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The leader of a Germany-based brigade that maintains vast amounts of Army weaponry and supplies has been quietly fired from her position.

Col. Crystal Hills was removed as commander of the 405th Army Field Support Brigade by Maj. Gen. David Wilson, head of Army Sustainment Command, the service said in a statement late Monday.

Wilson fired Hills “due to loss of trust and confidence in her ability to command,” said Kimberly Conrad, a spokeswoman for Army Sustainment Command.

The command refused to say when Hills was fired or who, if anyone, has replaced her at the helm of a unit that plays a key role in ensuring U.S. soldiers are supplied across Europe and Africa. The unit’s mission also involves oversight of a network of pre-po-

sitioned weapons depots at locations across Europe. Those sites have played an important role for infantry units rotating in and out of Europe on missions to deter potential Russian aggression against NATO member territory.

The Kaiserslautern-based brigade’s website lists Hills’ former job as vacant. The Army also did not specify where Hills was reassigned.

Hills’ relief is the latest in a string of exits for leaders of brigades, units that serve as the operational backbone of the Army. Often, the Army doesn’t announce the removals and keeps the circumstances surrounding them under wraps. The Army acknowledged firing Hills after being asked by Stars and Stripes.

Hills assumed command of the 405th in June 2022. She also did a stint teaching cadets at the United States Military Academy as an associate professor in the department of English and philosophy.

Job openings fall to lowest number since March 2021

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. employers posted 8.7 million job openings in October, the fewest since March 2021, in a sign that hiring is cooling in the face of higher interest rates, yet remains at a still-healthy pace.

The Labor Department's report said Tuesday that openings were down significantly from 9.4 million in September.

Layoffs were up modestly in October. And the number of Americans who quit their jobs — which generally reflects confidence in their ability to find better pay or working conditions elsewhere — was down slightly.

The drop in job openings last month was particularly steep in healthcare and social assistance, where they fell by 236,000; finance, which includes banking, insurance and real estate and which has been hit particularly hard by higher interest rates, down 217,000; and hotels, restaurants and bars, down 124,000.

Still, despite the sharp drop in October, job openings remain at historically high levels.

They have now exceeded 8 million for 32 straight months — a threshold they had never reached before 2021.

U.S. hiring is slowing from the breakneck pace of the past two years. Still, employers have added a solid 239,000 jobs a month this year. And the un-

employment rate has come in below 4% for 21 straight months, the longest such streak since the 1960s.

The job market has shown surprising resilience even as the Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark interest rate 11 times since March 2022 to fight the worst bout of inflation in four decades. The resulting higher borrowing costs have helped ease inflationary pressures.

Consumer prices were up 3.2% in October from a year earlier, down from a peak of 9.1% in June 2022.

The Labor Department will issue the November jobs report on Friday. It is expected to show that employers added nearly 173,000 jobs last month.

That would be up from 150,000 in October, in part because of the end of strikes by autoworkers and Hollywood writers and actors. The unemployment rate is expected to have remained at 3.9%, according to a survey of forecasters by the data firm FactSet.

Though unemployment remains low, 1.93 million Americans were collecting unemployment benefits in the week that ended Nov. 18, the most in two years. That suggests that those who do lose their jobs need unemployment assistance longer because it is getting harder to find new employment.

Police look for cause in Va. house explosion

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. — Hours before a massive explosion destroyed a duplex and shook a Virginia suburb of Washington, D.C., a suspect inside his home fired a flare gun 30 to 40 times into the neighborhood, drawing a large police response, officials said Tuesday.

All officers escaped serious injury but it was unclear what happened to the suspect who was inside when it was leveled by the explosion Monday night, Arlington County, Va., police spokesperson Ashley Savage said.

Officers went to the home at about 4:45 p.m. after receiving reports of shots fired. The preliminary investigation showed that a suspect discharged the flare gun from inside his home, but no property damage or injuries were reported, police said in a statement.

While police investigated, they obtained a search warrant for the home and tried to make contact with the suspect by telephone and loudspeakers, but he remained inside without responding, police said.

As officers tried to execute the warrant, police said the suspect discharged several rounds from what is believed to be a firearm inside the home and, subsequently, around 8:30 p.m. there was an explosion, shooting flames and debris into the air. An investigation into the circumstances of the explosion was ongoing, police said.

Savage said police don't have any evidence that others were in the duplex but can't rule out the possibility.

The fire was under control around 10:30 p.m., but Arlington County Fire Department crews continued to battle small spot fires, police said early Tuesday.

Biden to spend bulk of week raising money for campaign with celebrities

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden is making a big push to raise money for his reelection effort before the end of the year, appearing at seven events through next Monday — with more to come.

Biden was traveling to Massachusetts on Tuesday to schmooze with donors at a trio of Boston fundraisers to benefit his campaign and the broader Democratic Party, including an event in the city's theater district featuring a concert by singer-songwriter and guitarist James Taylor.

Later this week, the Demo-

crat will touch down on the West Coast on Friday for his first Los Angeles fundraisers since the end of the strikes by actors and screenwriters, featuring film director Steven Spielberg and "Scandal" showrunner Shonda Rhimes, among other celebrities.

Biden will also attend a fundraiser Wednesday near the White House and another one on Monday in Philadelphia.

"This next election is going to be different," the president said last week at a money event in Denver, where he sought to draw contrasts with former President Donald Trump, ex-

pected to be Biden's Republican opponent. "Not because I'm running, because of the nature of what's at stake."

The burst of fundraising comes as the holiday season sets in and as candidates make their final pushes to raise needed cash before the quarter ends on Dec. 31. Biden is also headlining fundraisers in Washington, D.C., and in Maryland later in December.

November was the campaign's strongest grassroots fundraising month since Biden formally announced last April that he was seeking a second term.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

1 dies in Bronx blaze blamed on e-bike battery

NY NEW YORK — One person was killed and six others were injured when a fire blamed on an electric bicycle battery tore through a New York City apartment, officials said Monday.

The fire started at around 7 p.m. Sunday in a 10th-floor apartment in a public housing complex in the Bronx, a Fire Department spokesperson said.

One person was taken to a hospital with critical injuries and later died, the spokesperson said. Two others suffered serious, life-threatening injuries and four others suffered minor injuries, he said.

Fire marshals determined that the fire was caused by an e-bike's lithium ion battery, department officials said.

Academy Sports paying \$2.5M over killings

SC COLUMBIA — A sporting goods chain is paying the families of three people shot to death by a South Carolina serial killer \$2.5 million after one of its stores sold guns to a straw buyer who gave them to the killer, a felon who couldn't legally buy them.

At times, Todd Kohlhepp stood near the buyer, picking out guns at Academy Sports Outdoors to be purchased for him, the families said in a lawsuit that led to the settlement.

Academy Sports asked that the amount of the settlement be kept confidential because it could encourage other lawsuits, but a judge ruled it didn't make much of a difference because the case had attracted so much publicity already, and that the

public had a right to know how it turned out. The estates of the victims will split the settlement.

Kohlhepp pleaded guilty in 2017 to killing seven people — three on his property in Spartanburg County and four others about 12 years earlier at a motorcycle shop. In between the killings, he ran a real estate business. He is serving life without parole.

Before the shootings, Kohlhepp had been barred from having guns because he was a convicted felon. He moved to South Carolina in 2001 shortly after spending 14 years in prison on a kidnapping conviction in Arizona. Authorities there said the then-15-year-old boy forced a 14-year-old neighbor back to his home at gunpoint, tied her up and raped her.

Judge dismisses state's lawsuit against TikTok

IN INDIANAPOLIS — An Indiana county judge on Wednesday dismissed a lawsuit filed by the state accusing TikTok of deceiving its users about the level of inappropriate content for children on its platform and the security of its consumers' personal information.

A pair of lawsuits filed in December 2022 accused the app of misleading its viewers — particularly children. They alleged the app contains "salacious and inappropriate content" despite the company claiming it is safe for children 13 years and under. In the second complaint, the state argued that the app deceives consumers into believing their sensitive and personal information is secure. The lawsuits have since been consolidated.

Judge Jennifer L. DeGroot

of the Allen County Superior Court in Fort Wayne made the ruling. The dismissal is an apparent national first with similar lawsuits pending in Arkansas and Utah.

Firms to pay \$110M to settle chemicals claims

DE DOVER — The DuPont Co. and two spin-off firms will pay \$110 million to the state of Ohio to settle a lawsuit over environmental threats from toxic chemicals used at a former DuPont facility in neighboring West Virginia, the companies said Wednesday.

The settlement involving DuPont, the Chemours Co. and Corteva Inc. resolves Ohio's claims relating to releases of manmade, fluorinated compounds known as PFAS. It also resolves claims relating to the manufacture and sale of PFAS-containing products and claims related to firefighting foam containing PFAS.

The compounds, which are associated with an increased risk of certain cancers and other health problems, are often referred to as "forever chemicals" because of their longevity in the environment.

Publishers sue over new school book-banning law

IA DES MOINES — The nation's largest publisher and several bestselling authors, including novelists John Green and Jodi Picoult, are part of a lawsuit filed Thursday challenging Iowa's new law that bans public school libraries and classrooms from having practically any book that depicts sexual activity.

The lawsuit is the second in the past week to challenge the

law, which bans books with sexual content all the way through 12th grade. An exception is allowed for religious texts.

Penguin Random House and four authors joined several teachers, a student and the Iowa State Education Association — the state's teachers union representing 50,000 current and former public school educators — in filing the federal lawsuit.

The law went into effect this fall after the Republican-led Legislature passed it earlier this year and Gov. Kim Reynolds signed it in May. In addition to the book ban, the law forbids educators from raising gender identity and sexual orientation issues with students through grade six, and school administrators are required to notify parents if students ask to change their pronouns or names.

Lawmaker gets probation on conviction, won't quit

MS JACKSON — A longtime Mississippi lawmaker was sentenced Monday to two years of probation and has already paid nearly \$85,000 in restitution, months after he pleaded guilty to a federal charge of willfully making a false statement on a tax return.

Democratic state Rep. Earle Banks, of Jackson, was sentenced Monday by U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves. Banks' conviction does not prevent him from continuing to serve and he intends to remain in office, according to his attorney Rob McDuff.

Banks, 69, is a funeral director and attorney. He has been in the Mississippi House of Representatives since 1993.

— From wire reports



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Heisman finalists: 3 QBs, WR Harrison

Associated Press

LSU's Jayden Daniels, Oregon's Bo Nix and Washington's Michael Penix Jr., transfer quarterbacks who have all played at least five college seasons, and Ohio State receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. were announced as the Heisman Trophy finalists on Monday night.

The Heisman has been given to the nation's most outstanding college football player since 1935. This year's winner will be announced Saturday in New York. The top four vote-getters determined by more than 870 voters, which include members of the media and former Heisman winners, are selected as finalists.

With Nix and Penix, the Pac-12 has two Heisman finalists for the first time since 2010 when Stanford's Andrew Luck was the runner-up to Auburn's Cam Newton, and Oregon running back LaMichael James finished third in the balloting.

The Pac-12 is in its final season with its current membership before 10 schools depart, including Oregon and Washington to the Big Ten.

A look at each finalist:

Daniels

Daniels had one of the most prolific seasons in Southeastern Conference history for the 13th-ranked Tigers (9-3), his second at LSU and fifth overall after starting his career at Arizona State. He passed for 3,812 yards and 40 touchdowns and ran for 1,134 yards and 10 TDs.

Daniels is trying to become the third LSU player to win the Heisman, the first since Joe Burrow in 2019 — another transfer quarterback in his second season in Baton Rouge, La.

Daniels is also trying to become the rare Heisman winner in the BCS/CFP era to win the award with a team that wasn't in contention for a championship late in the season. The last player

to win the Heisman on a team with a 9-3 record was Louisville quarterback Lamar Jackson in 2016.

Harrison

Harrison has 67 catches for 1,211 yards and 15 touchdowns, and his trip to New York gives No. 7 Ohio State (11-1) Heisman finalists in five of the past six seasons.

Harrison's overall numbers lag behind some of the other star receivers around the country, but he was the most consistent threat for a Buckeyes offense that was breaking in a new starting quarterback.

He would be the fifth receiver to win the Heisman in the award's 87-year history, but the second in the past four years. Alabama's DeVonta Smith in 2020 was the first receiver to win in nearly three decades.

Nix

While Daniels went from the Pac-12 to the SEC and found star-

dom, Nix went the opposite way.

After three years at Auburn, the former five-star recruit transferred to Oregon in 2022 and became one of the best players in the country, leading the eighth-ranked Ducks (11-2) to the Pac-12 title game.

Nix has completed 77.2% of his passes, which is slightly behind the major college football record, and has thrown for 4,145 yards and 40 TDs.

Penix

Penix is in his sixth college season after four injury-filled years at Indiana. He transferred to Washington in 2022 to play for coach Kalen DeBoer, his former offensive coordinator at Indiana, and has guided the second-ranked Huskies to 23 victories, a Pac-12 title and their second College Football Playoff appearance this year.

This season, Penix has passed for 4,218 yards and 33 touchdowns.

Browning steals spotlight, Bengals shock Jags in OT

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Jake Browning insisted his first career start was the real surprise. Everyone else would disagree.

Browning threw for 354 yards and a touchdown in his second start — much better than the four-sack, two-turnover performance a week earlier — and the Cincinnati Bengals stunned the Jacksonville Jaguars 34-31 in overtime Monday night.

"He just lit the world on fire," coach Zac Taylor said.

Browning also ran for a score as the Bengals (6-6) won a road game on "Monday Night Football" for the first time since 1990. Evan McPherson's 48-yard field goal in overtime was the difference and ended a three-game losing streak on the season and a nine-game road skid on MNF.

"After you put up 10 points in your first start, you're excited to get another crack at it," Browning said.

This one was shocking and potentially costly for the Jaguars (8-4), who lost quarterback Trevor Lawrence to a sprained right ankle late in the fourth quarter.

It ended an otherwise stellar night for Lawrence, who completed 22 of 29 passes for 259 yards and two touchdowns. He also ran for a score.

Browning was equally stout in place of star Joe Burrow, who watched and coached from the sideline while wearing a cast and a sling.

Browning completed 32 of 37 passes and directed the overtime drive that set up McPherson's field goal. McPherson, who played collegiately at near-by Florida, banged a 57-yarder

off the crossbar in the same direction early in the game.

Jacksonville backup C.J. Beathard completed 9 of 10 passes for 63 yards in relief of Lawrence. Beathard put the Jaguars in position for Brandon McManus' 40-yard field goal with 26 seconds remaining in regulation.

"It should have been a game-winning field goal," said Jaguars coach Doug Pederson, pointing to the 48-yarder McManus missed early in the fourth.

Ja'Marr Chase caught 11 passes for 149 yards and a touchdown, a 76-yarder in the third quarter that got the Bengals going.

"He's so hard to bring down," Taylor said. "Anytime you get the ball in his hands, it's stressful for the defense."

Joe Mixon ran for 68 yards

and two scores, and rookie Chase Brown added 61 yards on the ground for the league's worst rushing attack. Mixon also had six receptions for 49 yards.

The Bengals made it harder that it should have been when Taylor called a trick play that turned into a debacle in third.

Browning lateraled to receiver Tyler Boyd, who inexplicably threw directly to pass rusher Josh Allen. Allen caught the ball for his second career interception. The Jaguars scored four plays later when Lawrence jumped and stretched the ball across the goal line.

"That could have broken our back there," Taylor said. "But our team rallied around it."

The Bengals did the same all week for Browning, whose first start ended in a 16-10 home loss to Pittsburgh.

Couturier scores in OT, lifts Flyers over Pens

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Sean Couturier scored 3:55 into overtime to lead the Philadelphia Flyers to a 2-1 victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins on Monday night.

Tyson Foerster scored in regulation for Philadelphia.

Sidney Crosby became Pittsburgh's all-time leading scorer against the Flyers when he tallied late in the first period.

The Penguins have lost five of seven and seven of 10.

Philadelphia won the first leg of a home-and-home set with the Penguins 4-3 on Saturday night in Pittsburgh when Couturier netted the only tally in the shootout.

"These are huge games, big rivalry," Couturier said. "Two big wins for our team."

It only went to overtime this time, as Couturier finished a 2-on-1 with Travis Konecny, beating Alex Nedeljkovic with a one-timer that went just past his left pad and inside the post.

"Nice setup," Couturier said. "Everything just worked out perfectly. Huge win."

The winning goal was one of several good chances the Flyers had in the contest.

"When you give teams those

kinds of looks, it's hard to win," Penguins coach Mike Sullivan said. "Easy offense."

The Penguins also had some scoring opportunities in the extra session, but couldn't find the net.

"We just didn't get it done," Sullivan said.

Blues 2, Golden Knights 1 (OT): Pavel Buchnevich scored 38 seconds into overtime and visiting St. Louis beat Las Vegas.

Alexey Toropchenko scored in regulation for the Blues and Jordan Binnington made 33 saves.

Jack Eichel scored for the Golden Knights while Logan Thompson made 25 saves.

In the extra period, Buchnevich was alone at the right corner when he took a pass from Robert Thomas and slammed the puck past Thompson.

Jets 2, Hurricanes 1: Nikolaj Ehlers and Kyle Connor each had a goal and added an assist to lead host Winnipeg to its second straight win after a three-game skid.

Mark Scheifele had two assists and Laurent Brossoit stopped 42 shots for Winnipeg.

Martin Necas scored for Carolina, and Antti Raanta made 20

saves. The Hurricanes had earned points in four straight games.

The Jets announced before the game that they had signed forward Nino Niederreiter to a three-year contract extension.

Lightning 4, Stars 0: Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 25 shots for his first shutout of the season, NHL points leader Nikita Kucherov had a goal and an assist, and host Tampa Bay snapped a four-game skid.

Anthony Cirelli had two goals and Luke Glendening also scored for the Lightning, who were coming off an 8-1 loss at Dallas on Saturday in which Vasilevskiy allowed six goals on 25 shots before being pulled after two periods.

Tampa Bay defenseman Victor Hedman became the third Lightning player and 383rd NHL player to play in his 1,000th game. The team wore Hedman 1000 jerseys during the pregame warmup.

Coyotes 6, Capitals 0: Nick Schmaltz scored two goals, Connor Ingram stopped 26 shots and host Arizona became the first team in NHL history to beat the previous five franchises to win the Stanley Cup in consecutive games.

Since an ugly loss to St. Louis on Nov. 22, the Coyotes reeled off wins over reigning Stanley Cup champion Vegas, Tampa Bay, Colorado and a rematch with the Blues.

Logan Cooley, Michael Carcone and Schmaltz scored in the first period to chase former Coyotes goalie Darcy Kuemper. Schmaltz then scored against Charlie Lindgren and Jason Zucker capped Arizona's first-period flurry with a little over a minute left.

Nick Bjugstad had a short-handed goal in the second period and Clayton Keller had three assists to cap the Coyotes' first five-game winning streak since 2018-19.

Canadiens 4, Kraken 2: Sean Monahan scored twice and Josh Anderson broke a 27-game goal drought dating to last season with an empty-netter that sealed host Montreal's win over Seattle.

With Montreal up 3-2, and Seattle pressing, Anderson floated the puck from his own zone and into the Kraken's net with 32 seconds left.

Tanner Pearson also had a goal for Montreal, which won its first game at home since Nov. 11.

MLB free-agent market stalled as Ohtani mulls big money

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Baseball is waiting for Shohei.

Big-name free agents appear in no hurry to strike deals at the winter meetings, bidding time until Shohei Ohtani potentially breaks the record for richest contract set 4½ years ago by Mike Trout.

And Japanese free agent Yoshinobu Yamamoto could be holding up the starting pitching market.

"It's probably a little slower from a conversation standpoint at a winter meetings than it normally would," New York Mets president of baseball operations David Stearns said Monday. "A possibility is that, yeah, the top of the free-agent market hasn't moved yet, and often it takes the top

of the free-agent market moving for the rest of the dominoes to fall."

Ohtani, the two-way unicorn who has won two of the last three AL MVP awards for the Los Angeles Angels, is expected to get a deal topping \$500 million — even though he won't pitch again until 2025 following elbow surgery.

Trout's contract was for \$426.5 million over 12 years.

There was no sign at the winter meetings of Nez Balelo, Ohtani's representative at the Creative Artists Agency, a contrast to the many other agents working the vast lobbies and suites of the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center for talks involving their clients.

Behind Ohtani in the hitters free-agent

pecking order are Cody Bellinger and Matt Chapman, both represented by the sport's biggest agent, Scott Boras. Among starting pitchers, the market includes Blake Snell and Jordan Montgomery, also represented by Boras.

Farhan Zaidi, the San Francisco Giants' president of baseball operations, would like a faster pace to offseason negotiations.

"Been talking to some people today about how there's some conversation about having a deadline for multi-year deals in the last CBA," he said. "Your business people who want to sell tickets and capitalize on fan excitement have less time to do that when those deals happen in January than November or December."

Pacers eliminate Celtics in quarterfinals

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — All that Tyrese Haliburton wanted before the season was to get his first taste of playoff basketball.

Monday night's NBA In-Season Tournament quarterfinal seemed like the perfect dry run.

So the 23-year-old All-Star guard registered the first triple-double of his career, completed a tiebreaking four-point play with 1:33 left and heard the large, raucous crowd chanting "M-V-P! M-V-P!" near the end of Indiana's 122-112 victory, which ousted league-leading Boston from the tourney.

"It means the world to me to represent Indiana and this organization," Haliburton said after acknowledging he struggled to breathe during the first half. "I don't even know if it was as much about what was at stake, as what they did to us the last time. I think that (51-point loss) left a bad taste in our mouths."

This was one felt far sweeter, even if he needed a halftime assist from an inhaler.

Haliburton scored 16 of his 26 points in the second half and finished with 13 assists and 10 rebounds. Myles Turner added 17 points and 10 rebounds, and

seven Pacers reached double figures as Indiana remained unbeaten in the tourney. The Pacers were 4-0 in group play.

Indiana is the first team to reach the inaugural tourney's semifinal round Thursday in Las Vegas and will face the winner of Tuesday's game between New York and Milwaukee.

Boston, meanwhile, heads home despite getting another strong performance from its dynamic duo.

Jayson Tatum had 32 points and 12 rebounds, and Jaylen Brown finished with 30 points and nine rebounds for the Celtics. But it wasn't enough to extend a three-game winning streak, with All-Star Kristaps Porzingis missing his fourth straight game because of a strained left calf.

Still, the Celtics fought back from an 11-point third-quarter deficit and managed to force seven fourth-quarter ties — before Haliburton's 27-footer drew a foul on Brown and ignited Indiana's decisive 9-0 run.

"He played well. The whole team played well," Boston coach Joe Mazzulla said, referring to Haliburton and the Pacers. "(Brown) did the best he

could (defensively)."

For the young Pacers, many of whom including Haliburton have never been to the playoffs, this was a different experience. From the towel-waving crowd's chants of "Defense!" to the heavy media presence, single-elimination fate and festive atmosphere, this felt like a postseason game.

"I haven't heard it like this here in like three or four years, probably since (Victor) Oladipo was here," Turner said. "The energy was just incredible. I think this city really started rallying around this team."

There was a difference between the lines, too.

In this season's first matchup on Nov. 1, Boston blew out Indiana 155-104 — posting the second-highest points total in franchise history.

This time, Indiana turned the game in the third quarter, charging back from a 55-48 halftime deficit to tie the score at 71 before pulling out to an 85-74 lead.

Boston finally tied the score at 94 on Brown's 3-pointer with 6:07 left. But after the teams traded baskets for 4½ minutes, Haliburton made the crowd roar again with his big basket.

Pelicans 127, Kings 117:

Brandon Ingram scored 30 points and visiting New Orleans beat Sacramento in the quarterfinals of the NBA's In-Season Tournament.

Ingram helped the Pelicans erase an early deficit and New Orleans never trailed in the second half as it advanced to play the winner of Tuesday night's game between the Suns and the Lakers in the semifinals Thursday in Las Vegas.

Herb Jones added 23 points and Jonas Valanciunas had 18 to give the Pelicans their third win over the Kings in the past two weeks.

De'Aaron Fox scored 30 points and Domantas Sabonis added 26 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists for Sacramento. The Kings lost for the first time in the tournament after sweeping all four games in group play.

New Orleans built its cushion to 15 in the third quarter behind big shots from Ingram before Sacramento started to chip away.

The Kings got within six midway through the fourth before the Pelicans scored nine straight points to put the game away.

Edey, Purdue dominate Iowa in first game after loss

Associated Press

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Zach Edey was dominant, but Iowa coach Fran McCaffery said the rest of Purdue's team deserves credit too.

Edey scored 25 points and had 12 rebounds as No. 4 Purdue bounced back from its first loss of the season and blew past Iowa 87-68 on Monday night.

"He's difficult, but I think you have to give credit to the rest of the guys that are out there for them," McCaffery said. "They really executed tonight in terms of screening and cutting and ball movement, which makes it

really hard if you're trying to focus on him. Obviously, they're not a one-man show at all. They have shooters, they have drivers, they have size. They stretch your defense in ways that makes it very difficult."

Edey hit 9 of 10 shots and 7 of 9 free throws while sitting out much of the second half. Lance Jones added 17 points for Purdue (8-1, 1-1 Big Ten), playing its first game since a 92-88 overtime loss to Northwestern on Friday.

Mason Gillis and Fletcher Loyer each scored 12 and Trey Kaufman-Renn scored 10.

Ben Krikke led the Hawkeyes (5-3, 0-1) with 16 points and Tony Perkins added 12.

The Boilermakers, who never trailed, kept building on their 21-point halftime lead for most of the second half before going to their reserves. Purdue's largest lead was 35 points at 72-37.

Purdue, which held a 41-35 rebounding edge, shot 52% while holding Iowa to 38% shooting.

Gillis sank a 3-pointer with 6 seconds left in first half to give Purdue a 45-24 halftime lead. The Hawkeyes shot 32% in the first half, making only 1 of 9 3-

point shots. The Boilermakers shot 48% before intermission, making 6 of 17 3-pointers.

"I just thought we were aggressive against their press," Purdue coach Matt Painter said. "When we got the ball out of our hands and had space, our guys really advanced it with the pass and dribbles. Our guys did a good job of being receivers and flashing."

Jones and Braden Smith, who had eight assists, both did a strong job with diagonal passes, Painter said.

"Braden played great and he only made one shot," he said.