

## Promotions approved after hold ends

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The Senate in a single stroke Tuesday approved about 425 military promotions after Sen. Tommy Tuberville of Alabama ended a monthslong blockade of nominations over his opposition to a Pentagon abortion policy.

Tuberville had been under pressure from members of both sides of the political aisle to end his holds as senators complained about the toll it was taking on service members and their families, and on military readiness.

President Joe Biden called the Senate's action long overdue and said the military confirmations should never have been held up.

"In the end, this was all pointless. Senator Tuberville, and the Republicans who stood with him, needlessly hurt hundreds of servicemembers and military families and threatened our national security — all to push a partisan agenda. I hope no one

forgets what he did," Biden said in a statement released by the White House.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer teed up the military confirmations for a vote just a few hours after Tuberville emerged from a closed-door lunch with fellow GOP senators and told reporters he's "not going to hold the promotions of these people any longer." He said holds would continue, however, for about 11 of the highest-ranking military officers, those who would be promoted to what he described as the four-star level or above.

There were 451 military officers affected by the holds as of Nov. 27. It's a stance that had left key national security positions unfilled and military families with an uncertain path forward.

Tuberville was blocking the nominations in opposition to Pentagon rules that allow travel reimbursement when a service member has to go out of state to

get an abortion or other reproductive care.

The Biden administration instituted the new rules after the Supreme Court overturned the nationwide right to an abortion, and some states have limited or banned the procedure.

"Well, certainly we're encouraged by the news," Pentagon spokesman Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder said Tuesday.

"We continue to stay engaged with Senator Tuberville in the Senate directly, to urge that all holds on all our general flag officer nominations be lifted."

Critics said that Tuberville's tactics were a mistake because he was blocking the promotions of people who had nothing to do with the policy he opposed.

"Why are we punishing American heroes who have nothing to do with the dispute?" said Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska. "Remember, we are against the Biden abortion travel policy. But why are we punishing peo-

ple who have nothing to do with the dispute and if they get confirmed can't fix it? No one has had an answer for that question because there is no answer."

For months, many of the military officers directly impacted by Tuberville's holds declined to speak out, for fear any comments would be seen as political.

But as the pressures on their lives and the lives of the officers serving under them increased, they began to speak about how the uncertainty surrounding their next move was impacting not only them, but their children and spouses.

The issue came to a head when U.S. Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Eric Smith suffered a heart attack in October, just two days after he'd talked about the stress of the holds at a military conference.

Tuberville expressed no regrets, but admitted "we didn't get as much out of it as we wanted."

## Intense fighting in Gaza blocks aid to some civilians

*Associated Press*

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Intense fighting blocked relief workers from distributing food, water and medicine across most of the Gaza Strip, deepening the humanitarian crisis as Israeli forces battled Hamas militants Wednesday in a ground offensive that has brought some of the devastation and mass displacement seen in the north to the south.

As the focus of the offensive moves down the Gaza Strip and into the second-largest city of Khan Younis, it is further shrinking the area where Palestinians can seek safety and

pushing large numbers of people, many of whom have been forced to flee multiple times, toward the sealed-off border with Egypt.

On the Gaza side of the border, makeshift shelters and family homes are already overflowing and many people are sleeping in the streets. On the other side, Egypt has refused any mass influx of refugees, saying it believes Israel will not let them back into Gaza and that the two countries' decades-old peace treaty would be undermined.

The U.N. says some 1.87 million people — over 80% of the

population of 2.3 million — have already fled their homes. Many Palestinians fear they will not be allowed to return.

Much of the north, including large parts of Gaza City, has been destroyed, and Palestinians worry the rest of Gaza could suffer a similar fate as Israel tries to dismantle Hamas, which has deep roots in the territory it has ruled for 16 years.

Two months of Israeli bombardment and ground assaults have killed more than 16,200 people in Gaza — most of them women and children — and wounded more than 42,000, the territory's Health Ministry said

late Tuesday. It has said many are also trapped under rubble. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths.

Israel has vowed to fight on, saying it can no longer accept Hamas rule or the group's military presence in Gaza after the Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war. Hamas and other militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took captive some 240 men, women and children in that attack.

An estimated 138 hostages remain in Gaza after more than 100 were freed during a ceasefire last week.

# Navy to name 3 subs for Pearl Harbor ships

By GARY WARNER  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Navy is honoring the popular slogan “Remember Pearl Harbor” by naming three submarines and an aircraft carrier after ships and a sailor linked to the Japanese attack that brought the United States into World War II.

Three new Virginia-class, nuclear-powered submarines will be named USS Utah, USS Oklahoma and USS Arizona — the three battleships sunk and never salvaged from the Dec. 7, 1941, attack that killed 2,400 Americans.

The submarines will be joined in a decade by the USS Doris Miller, a new Ford-class aircraft carrier named for the sailor who served as a mess attendant on the battleship USS West Virginia and was awarded the Navy Cross for bravery during the attack. The medal is second only to the Medal of Honor.

Seven other battleships dam-

aged during the attack were salvaged, repaired and returned to service in World War II. All decommissioned after the war, their names have been assigned to new Navy ships and submarines.

Some Pearl Harbor veterans did not want to see replacements in the fleet named for unretrievable USS Arizona, USS Oklahoma and USS Utah. Nikki Stratton of Morrison, Colo., grew up listening to her grandfather, Donald Stratton, one of just 355 sailors who survived after a Japanese bomb pierced the deck of the USS Arizona and exploded in the forward ammunition magazine. The 1,177 who died on the USS Arizona accounted for nearly half of all Americans killed in the attack.

For much of his life, her grandfather didn't want the name USS Arizona ever used again, she said.

“She's not just a sunken ship,” Nikki Stratton said in a recent interview. “She's a war grave, a war

memorial and an education of what happens when the world goes awry.”

But in the years before Donald Stratton's death in 2020 at age 97, he supported efforts to bring the names of the Arizona, Oklahoma and Utah back to the fleet. When the Navy announced in 2016 that it would name the first of a bigger, more powerful Block V version of the Virginia-class submarines USS Arizona, Donald Stratton was pleased.

“He understood that if the name died, so would the history and stories that are passed along,” Nikki Stratton said.

She was selected as the official sponsor of the new USS Arizona.

In 2032, the USS Doris Miller is scheduled to join the fleet. It will be the fourth Ford-class supercarrier to be built, displacing more than 100,000 tons carrying 75 F-35C Lightning II fighter-attack aircraft.

Its namesake is the son of Texas sharecroppers who enlisted in the Navy in 1939. As a Black man, Miller's roles in the officially segregated Navy at that time were limited to support positions.

During the attack, Miller aided wounded officers and sailors, then grabbed a .50 caliber machine gun and fired at the enemy dive bombers and torpedo planes.

Miller returned to combat in March 1943 as a senior steward on the escort carrier USS Liscome Bay. The night before Thanksgiving 1943, the Liscome Bay was off the Gilbert Islands when hit by a single Japanese torpedo. Miller and two-thirds of the crew of 900 were killed.

The USS Doris Miller is expected to be christened in 2029 and commissioned into the fleet — joining the USS Arizona, USS Utah and USS Oklahoma — in 2032.

## Army lawyer fired for once doubting victims' claims

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The lawyer selected to be the Army's first top prosecutor of sexual assaults under an overhaul of the military justice system has been fired because of an email he sent 10 years ago appearing to belittle victims' assault allegations.

Brig. Gen. Warren Wells was removed from the job on Friday by Army Secretary Christine Wormuth, just hours after she was given the email.

Wells was the Army's new lead special trial counsel for cases involving sexual assault and other top crimes — a job created as part of Congress' push to revamp a military justice system it believed could be overly deferential to service members accused of sexual misconduct. The office was ex-

pected to begin work around the end of the year.

In the email, sent to a number of his staff members in June 2013, Wells complained about what he said were false allegations by some alleged victims.

Wells, who was then a lieutenant colonel and the Army's defense counsel for the Great Plains region in Kansas, told his staff that “you and your teams are now the ONLY line of defense against false allegations and sobriety regret.” He told them they now were the only defenders of troops no one will defend, “even when all signs indicate innocence.”

“Congress and our political masters are dancing by the fire of misleading statistics and one-sided, repetitive misinformation by those with an agenda,” he said.

## DOD: US training of African troops not linked to coups

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

Pentagon officials speaking to a House panel Tuesday downplayed the idea that American training was responsible for a series of coups in Africa, where several elected governments have been overthrown by the military.

Celeste Wallander, assistant defense secretary for international security affairs, said she did not see a causal relationship between such training and coups in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso over the past three years.

During the past 12 years, the U.S. has trained some 21,000 African troops in various military education programs, Wallander said.

“And of those, 20 were involved in coups, which is .01%,” she told

the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Political upheaval in places such as Niger, where a July coup ousted President Mohamed Bazoum, put a spotlight on American military involvement in the Sahel region. Rep. John James, a Michigan Republican and U.S. Military Academy graduate, said during the Tuesday hearing that it was concerning to see “a revolving door of coup leaders and despots that are trained by American forces.”

Wallander responded that the U.S. training emphasizes civilian control of the military. A takeaway from the recent coups, however, is that the military must “refocus and recommit” to reinforcing that lesson with partner forces, she said.

# Ally says Trump will ‘come after’ media if elected again

*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — A Donald Trump ally who worked in his Justice Department said Tuesday that if the former president is elected again, his administration will retaliate against people in the media “criminally or civilly.”

Kash Patel, who was also chief of staff in the Defense Department and held a role on the National Security Council, made the comment on Steve Bannon’s podcast. He said that, in a second Trump administration, “We will go out and find the conspirators not just in government, but in the media,” over the 2020 election, which Trump lost to Democrat Joe Biden.

Trump and his allies have repeatedly claimed the election was stolen, despite the fact that numerous federal and local officials, a long list of courts, top former campaign staffers and even his own attorney general have all said there is no evidence of the fraud he alleges.

Trump has also promised “retribution” as a central part of his campaign message as he seeks a second term in the White House.

Trump’s campaign distanced itself from Patel’s comments, saying that proclamations “like this have nothing to do with” them.

The campaign did not respond to questions about whether Trump is considering the plans Patel described.

In a Fox News Channel interview later Tuesday, Trump declined twice to say he would not abuse power to seek retribution in a second White House term.

“You mean like they’re using right now?” Trump responded to one question, alleging that the Biden administration was abusing power.

Patel is a fellow at the Center for Renewing America, a conservative think tank that is part of a network of conservative groups that is preparing for a possible second White House

term for Trump or any conservative who aligns with their views.

In his interview with Bannon, Patel said: “We’re going to come after the people in the media who lied about American citizens who helped Joe Biden rig presidential elections. We’re going to come after you, whether it’s criminally or civilly. We’ll figure that out. But yeah, we’re putting you all on notice.”

In a post on his Truth Social network in September, Trump repeated both phrases and vowed to investigate NBC News and MSNBC for “Country Threatening Treason” and try to curb their access to the airwaves.

“I say up front, openly, and proudly, that when I WIN the Presidency of the United States, they and others of the LameStream Media will be thoroughly scrutinized for their knowingly dishonest and corrupt coverage of people, things, and events,” Trump said in the post.

# VP Harris breaks the record for tiebreakers

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Vice President Kamala Harris broke a nearly 200-year-old record for casting the most tiebreaking votes in the Senate when she voted Tuesday to advance the confirmation of a new federal judge in Washington, D.C.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, called Harris’ 32nd tiebreaking vote a “great milestone.”

Harris returned to Capitol Hill later in the day to cast her 33rd vote as well, securing the judge’s confirmation. The previous recordholder was John C. Calhoun, who cast 31 tiebreaking votes during his eight years as vice president, from 1825 to 1832. Harris, a Democrat, tied Calhoun’s record in July.

Schumer presented Harris with a golden gavel after Tuesday’s vote. Harris, who beamed as she made history from the Senate dais, said afterward she was “truly honored.”

Casting tiebreaker votes is among the only constitutional duties for vice presidents, and Harris has been repeatedly called on to break deadlocks because the Senate is closely divided between Democrats and Republicans.

The pace of Harris’ votes dropped off this year, when Democrats expanded their slim majority in the Senate by a single seat. But she still managed to surpass Calhoun’s record in less than half the time that he took to set it.

Harris has helped advance the American Rescue Plan, which was a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief measure, and the Inflation Reduction Act, which limited the costs of prescription drugs and created financial incentives for clean energy.

# Atmospheric river soaks Northwest

*Associated Press*

PORTLAND, Ore. — An atmospheric river has brought heavy rain, flooding and unseasonably warm temperatures to the Pacific Northwest, closing rail links, schools and roads as it shattered daily rainfall and temperature records in Washington state.

Amtrak said Tuesday that no passenger trains will be running between Seattle and Portland, Oregon, until Thursday because of a landslide. The National Weather Service issued flood warnings in parts of western Washington, including in areas north and east of Seattle and across a large swath of the

Olympic Peninsula.

The wet conditions also brought warm temperatures to the region. At 64 Fahrenheit in Walla Walla in southwestern Washington, it was as warm as parts of Florida and Mexico, according to the NWS. Seattle reported 59 degrees F at 1 a.m. Tuesday morning, breaking its previous daily record high, the weather service said.

Atmospheric rivers, sometimes known as a “Pineapple Express” because the long and narrow bands of water vapor convey warm subtropical moisture across the Pacific from near Hawaii, delivered enormous amounts of rain and snow

to California last winter.

On the Olympic Peninsula, the small town of Forks — whose claim to fame is being the rainiest town in the contiguous U.S. — saw its rainfall record for Dec. 4 more than double after it received about 3.8 inches of rain, the NWS said. By early Tuesday morning, it had recorded 4.7 inches of rain over 24 hours — more rainfall than Las Vegas has received in all of 2023, according to the agency.

About 100 miles farther south, the daily rainfall record for Dec. 4 was broken in Hoquiam, which received about 2.6 inches of rain on Monday, the NWS said.

# Man in custody after 6 killed in Texas attacks

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — A Texas man was charged Wednesday with capital murder after a daylong wave of violence across two major cities that left six people dead and two police officers recovering from gunshots.

A cyclist in Austin was also shot and wounded in a trail of attacks that began Tuesday morning and ended with the suspect crashing his car that evening during a police pursuit,

Austin interim Police Chief Robin Henderson said. In all, four who died were found in two homes in Austin and two others were found in a home more than 80 miles away in the San Antonio area.

Henderson said it was unclear what relationship, if any, the man had to the victims.

Authorities identified the suspect as Shane James, 34. Online jail records in Travis County show he was being held on charges of capital murder

and misdemeanors from other counties.

“We strongly believe one suspect is responsible for all of the incidents,” Henderson said during a news conference early Wednesday.

She said authorities did not determine the Austin attacks were connected until the final one at a home, which happened more than eight hours after a school police officer was shot and wounded in a high school parking lot on the other side of

the city.

In San Antonio, Bexar County Sheriff Javier Salazar said the bodies of two people were found inside a residence after deputies saw water coming out of the home, as though something was leaking inside. He said the deaths appeared to have occurred before the shootings in Austin.

“This occurred, and then the suspect drove to Austin and did what he did there,” Salazar told reporters.

## Nurse goes into cardiac arrest while in training

Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. — Andy Hoang eagerly began her first nursing job this year in New Hampshire, with a desire to specialize in cardiac care.

She was excited about attending a November practice session on how to respond to someone in cardiac arrest. But as things were getting under way at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, Hoang, 23, started to feel dizzy and nauseated. She felt she needed to sit down.

“That’s the last thing I remember,” she told The Associated Press in an interview. “I woke up to a room full of doctors and nurses.”

It turned out that she, herself, had gone into cardiac arrest and needed help immediately. Her colleagues sprung into action —

instead of practicing chest compressions on a mannequin in a simulated environment, they went to work on her.

“One checked her carotid, one her femoral (arteries), and she did not have a pulse,” instructor Lisa Davenport said.

The nurses started CPR and a “code blue,” or medical emergency, team was called.

“What was really stressful about the situation was that we never had a real code blue in the center,” Davenport said. “We train for them all the time.”

Hoang was waking up by the time an emergency team arrived. Davenport estimated 15 minutes passed from the time Hoang slumped over to when they got her on a stretcher and sent her to the emergency department. But it felt longer.

## Police: Man fired shots, then likely died in house explosion

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. — The owner of a Virginia house that exploded as police tried to execute a search warrant is believed to have died in the blast, officials said Tuesday, as details emerged about numerous grievances he expressed against neighbors and others on social media and in lawsuits.

James Yoo, 56, was identified by Arlington County Police Chief Andy Penn at a news conference as the person whose actions brought police to the Arlington home after he fired a “flare-type gun” from inside the house into the neighborhood more than 30 times.

Penn said police responded to the house about 4:45 p.m. Monday after receiving reports of shots fired. When attempts to communicate with Yoo were

largely unsuccessful, police obtained a search warrant.

As officers breached the door to enter the home, the suspect fired gunshots from within the house, Penn said. Soon after that, just before 8:30 p.m., the house exploded, shooting flames and debris into the air in a blast that was felt for miles.

Investigators have not yet identified human remains found inside the home, but “all factors point to that it’s this individual (Yoo),” Penn said.

Yoo publicly aired grievances against multiple people in his life. On LinkedIn, he posted paranoid rants about his neighbors and a former co-worker. He also filed federal lawsuits that were dismissed as frivolous against his ex-wife, younger sister, a moving company and the New York Supreme Court.

## McCarthy resigns 2 months after being ousted as speaker

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Two months after his historic ouster as House speaker, Republican Rep. Kevin McCarthy announced Wednesday that he is resigning from his congressional seat in California.

His announcement capped a

stunning end for the one-time deli owner from Bakersfield, who ascended through state and national politics to become second in line to the presidency before a contingent of hard-right conservatives engineered his removal in October. McCarthy is the only speaker in history to

be voted out of the job.

“No matter the odds, or personal cost, we did the right thing,” McCarthy wrote in an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal*, announcing his decision.

“It is in this spirit that I have decided to depart the House at the end of this year to serve

America in new ways,” he wrote.

His toppling from the chamber’s top post was fueled by grievances from his party’s hard-right flank, including over his decision to work with Democrats to keep the federal government open rather than risk a shutdown.

**AMERICAN ROUNDUP**

**Menorah cancellation draws governor rebuke**

**VA** WILLIAMSBURG — Virginia political leaders, including Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin, on Monday condemned the reported cancellation of a menorah lighting at a community event in Williamsburg over apparent concerns related to the Israel-Hamas war.

The criticism from Youngkin and members of the General Assembly from both parties came after the Virginia Gazette reported over the weekend that the ceremony, which had been scheduled for a monthly art festival happening Dec. 10, had been canceled.

Youngkin — who has been outspoken in his support of Israel since Hamas' Oct. 7 rampage — said on X, formerly Twitter: "Singling out the Jewish community by canceling this Hanukkah celebration is absurd and antisemitic. The event organizers should immediately reconsider their actions and move forward with the menorah lighting."

**Man who posed as agent gets nearly 3 years**

**DC** WASHINGTON — A man accused of pretending to be a federal agent and offering gifts and free apartments to Secret Service officers has been sentenced to nearly three years in prison.

Arian Taherzadeh, 41, was sentenced to 33 months in prison Friday. He and a second man, Haider Ali, were indicted in April 2022, accused of tricking actual Secret Service offi-

cers, offering expensive apartments and gifts to curry favor with law enforcement agents, including one agent assigned to protect the first lady, prosecutors said.

Ali, 36, was sentenced in August to over five years.

Prosecutors alleged Taherzadeh falsely claimed, at various times, to be an agent with the Department of Homeland Security, a former U.S. Air Marshal, and a former U.S. Army Ranger. He used his supposed law-enforcement work to trick owners of three apartment complexes into letting him use multiple apartments and parking spaces for fake operations, the Justice Department said in a statement.

**Online news personality won't qualify for primary**

**AR** LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas election officials on Monday said online news personality Cenk Uygur, who was born in Turkey, can't appear on the state's Democratic presidential primary ballot next year.

The determination comes weeks after Uygur proclaimed that he had become the first naturalized citizen on a presidential ballot after filing paperwork with the state and the Arkansas Democratic Party. Uygur's parents immigrated to the U.S. from Turkey when he was 8.

"My office has received your candidate filing paperwork," Arkansas Secretary of State John Thurston said in a letter to Uygur. "However, based on your own proclamation, you are not qualified to hold the elected office for which you filed. Therefore, I cannot, in good faith,

certify your name to the ballot."

The Constitution sets simple requirements for president: A candidate must be at least 35 years old and "a natural born citizen."

**YouTuber who staged crash gets 6 months**

**CA** LOS ANGELES — An influencer who staged a California plane crash to make a YouTube video of himself parachuting to safety was sentenced Monday to six months in federal prison for obstructing the investigation by destroying the wreckage, the U.S. Justice Department.

Trevor Daniel Jacob, 30, an experienced pilot and skydiver, pleaded guilty in June to one count of destruction and concealment with the intent to obstruct a federal investigation.

The video titled "I Crashed My Airplane" appeared in December 2021 and purported to show Jacob's small plane have engine failure over the mountainous Los Padres National Forest in Santa Barbara County. Already wearing a parachute, he jumped out with a selfie stick camera in hand.

After landing, he hiked to the crash site and recovered video from the onboard cameras, the government said.

**Motorist stopped with over 1K rounds of ammo**

**RI** EAST PROVIDENCE — A Florida motorist accused of firing shots at an East Providence home before leading officers on a wild pursuit in Rhode Island last week appeared in court Monday.

More than 1,000 rounds of

ammunition were recovered from the black Nissan Armada, and several guns were also found in a backpack discarded along the chase route, according to police.

Law enforcement officials brought more than 100 counts against Joshua Pavao, 43, with a last known address in Kissimmee, Fla. No pleas were entered in court Monday. Bail was at \$100,000 with surety, and Pavao was ordered to turn over all of his firearms and his passport.

During the chase, the suspect crashed into several other vehicles, officials said.

**Santos now offering videos for \$400**

**NY** ALBANY — George Santos already has a new gig.

The former congressman, fresh off his historic expulsion last week, has created a Cameo account where the public can pay for a personalized video message.

Screenshots of his account — with the bio "Former congressional 'Icon!'" — started to spread online Monday morning. By the afternoon, users, including several lawmakers, were posting clips of Santos offering advice, blowing kisses and making cracks about Botox. The price for a personalized video from Santos started at \$75 and by Wednesday morning went as high as \$400. He is also selling text messages for \$10.

Santos did not immediately return a voicemail seeking comment on Monday, but added a link to the Cameo account on his personal account on X, formerly Twitter.

— From wire reports



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# Dodgers acknowledge Ohtani meeting

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Dave Roberts started to dodge the question about Shohei Ohtani, rocking back and forth in his seat and staying silent for three seconds before his big admission:

“Yeah, we met with him,” the Los Angeles Dodgers manager said Tuesday at the winter meetings, making Roberts’ club the first to publicly admit a sit-down with the unique two-way player likely to break baseball’s salary record.

The Dodgers manager said the front office is working tirelessly with lots of scenarios and ways free agency could go.

“Clearly Shohei’s our top priority,” Roberts said. “So I still think that we’ve got a lot of people working on other things ultimately to be the best ballclub we can be.”

Roberts said Ohtani has a “very good poker face,” keeping the manager from drawing any clues from a meeting that lasted

two-to-three hours.

“We want to respect Shohei’s wishes as far as being private,” Roberts said, “but obviously people talk. I don’t think I need to share what we talked about.”

Officials on other teams danced meticulously around the question as if choreographed by Bob Fosse. Toronto general manager Ross Atkins, who sparked speculation of a possible meeting by holding his Monday media availability on Zoom rather than at the winter meetings hotel, had this to say: “Some meetings that occur, that don’t occur, I’m not going to get into the specifics of.”

New Chicago Cubs manager Craig Counsell batted away Ohtani queries as if in a cross-examination. After saying he had not met with Ohtani, Counsell was asked whether anyone in the Cubs front office had. Counsell replied: “I have not.”

Dodgers general manager Brandon Gomes said later Tues-

day he was “surprised” his manager shared news of the meeting with Ohtani. Details on Ohtani’s free agency have been sparse amid reports his side has demanded negotiations remain private.

Gomes, who said the Dodgers brought a large party to these meetings, refused to share any details because they’re not supposed to talk about current free agents.

“Dave made a comment, and, you know, we just, for us personally, don’t feel comfortable going into it any further,” Gomes said.

Japanese pitcher Yoshinobu Yamamoto, another prized free agent, could be sought by the New York Yankees and Mets, who set payroll records this year in their third season under owner Steve Cohen. The Mets’ projected final 2023 payroll is about \$346 million and their luxury tax roughly \$102 million.

“I don’t know if anybody can

compete with Steve Cohen,” Yankees general manager Brian Cashman said. “He’s obviously a titan of industry. He’s had a lot of success and built an empire which has allowed him to do things like the Mets. ... We can just concentrate on what we’re going to concentrate on. Obviously, it’s a player of interest and we’ll compete for him and see where that takes us, and it will be enough or won’t be enough.”

Cashman went to Japan to watch Yamamoto and saw him pitch his second career no-hitter on Sept. 9 for the Orix Buffaloes against the Lotte Marines.

“A lot of teams went over there with their executives and I certainly wasn’t going to make the mistake of not being one of the executives that went over there, too,” Cashman said. “Certainly a negotiation is an important part of it, but I also think those type of personal touches are also important.”

# Steelers’ Trubisky thinks he can still be a starter

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Mitch Trubisky has insisted he’s too worried about the New England Patriots to think about how the next few weeks might affect the arc of his career.

Still, the No. 2 overall draft pick in 2017 may be running out of opportunities to prove he can be an NFL starting quarterback. His next chance will begin on Thursday night when the Pittsburgh Steelers (7-5) host the reeling Patriots (2-10).

Kenny Pickett, who leapfrogged Trubisky on the depth chart 14 months ago, is out indefinitely after undergoing right ankle surgery on Monday.

Enter Trubisky, who at 29 believes he can still deliver on the talent that made the Chicago Bears trade up to take him ahead of players such as Patrick Ma-

homes and Christian McCaffrey.

Not that Trubisky wants to talk about it.

Asked if he feels as if the next month is an audition of sorts — be it in Pittsburgh (where Pickett remains a work in progress), or elsewhere — Trubisky simply shrugged and said repeatedly he’s simply “excited” for the chance to be on the field to prove he’s not quite ready to be a career backup.

“I’m still growing,” he said. “I’m still learning and trying to get better every day. I’ve got some experience under my belt, but I’ve made some good plays and for me it’s going to be (about) consistency.”

It always is with Trubisky, who can tantalize with his athleticism one minute and throw an ill-advised pass into triple coverage the next.

It’s been that way basically from the moment Trubisky entered the league. He endured four turbulent years in Chicago then spent a season hitting the reset button behind Josh Allen in Buffalo in 2021 before signing with the Steelers in the spring of 2022.

Pittsburgh offered a chance at a fresh start. It hasn’t exactly worked out that way. The Steelers drafted Pickett weeks after, and even though Trubisky emerged from training camp as the starter, the leash was short. A month into the season, Trubisky was benched.

He took the demotion gracefully, and a player who knows what it’s like to enter the league with outsized expectations has tried to help Pickett deal with them while not being overcome by them.

The results have been mixed, with Pickett’s best attribute being

that he simply doesn’t make the kind of mistakes that cost the Steelers games.

He also, however, has struggled to be a difference-maker, too often settling for the safe (and sometimes ineffective) throw when the moment requires more.

That won’t be a problem with Trubisky, who has never met a needle he didn’t like to thread, regardless of the results. He’s become a frequent sub during Pickett’s injury-marked tenure and has already filled in three times this season after Pickett left for various reasons.

Trubisky’s numbers when getting thrust into the middle of games this season have been merely OK. He’s completed 29 of 49 passes for 273 yards with two touchdowns and two picks and has yet to orchestrate a comeback win.

# LeBron, Lakers secure last semifinal spot

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — LeBron James scored 15 of his 31 points in the fourth quarter, and the Los Angeles Lakers secured the last semifinal spot in the inaugural NBA In-Season Tournament with a 106-103 victory over the Phoenix Suns on Tuesday night.

Anthony Davis had 27 points and 15 rebounds and Austin Reaves scored 20 points for the top-seeded Lakers, who will face New Orleans on Thursday in Las Vegas.

“You’ve got some of the most

alpha male competitors in the world, and if you give us an opportunity to play for something meaningful or an incentive, then you get what you’re getting,” said James, who also racked up 11 assists, eight rebounds and five steals. “The In-Season Tournament is what it is, and we have an opportunity to play on a big stage, be on national television, represent our families, our communities, where we come from.”

James put on a masterful shooting performance down the

stretch while also racking up 11 assists, eight rebounds and five steals. The 21-year veteran scored 15 of the Lakers’ first 19 points in the final period and got the assists on his teammates’ other two baskets while Los Angeles pulled ahead.

Kevin Durant scored 31 points, but he badly missed a 3-point attempt at the buzzer for the Suns. Phoenix had won eight of 10 before losing to Los Angeles for the third time already this season.

**Bucks 146, Knicks 122:**

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 35 points and 10 assists, Damian Lillard added 28 points and host Milwaukee beat New York to reach the semifinals of the In-Season Tournament.

The Bucks posted a season high in scoring, shooting 60.5% (23-for-38) from 3-point range and 60.4% overall, to set up a matchup with Indiana in Las Vegas on Thursday.

Milwaukee is 5-0 in tournament play and extended its home winning streak to nine games.

# Spencer leads No. 5 UConn over No. 9 North Carolina

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Cam Spencer had 23 points, seven rebounds and six assists as fifth-ranked UConn pulled away down the stretch for an 87-76 victory over No. 9 North Carolina in the Jimmy V Classic on Tuesday night.

Playing their third game at Madison Square Garden this season, the Huskies (8-1) rebounded from a four-point loss at then-No. 5 Kansas last Friday. The defending NCAA champions won a game in this event for the first time in five tries.

“We just got absolutely everything out of what we wanted when we put this on the schedule,” Huskies coach Dan Hurley said. “The atmosphere is awesome. The opponent is probably one of the best teams in the country, and it was such a great test coming off the disappointment of the Kansas loss on the road. Just to put that kind of impressive performance — it speaks to the group we have this year.”

Spencer shot 8-for-14 overall and scored 16 points in the first half, when the Huskies took the lead for good. He finished with his second-highest point total this season after shooting 2-for-12 at Kansas when he tweaked his foot in the first half.

“I definitely came in with a lot of motivation and anger to just help the team in any way that I could,” Spencer said. “I thought we just raised our intensity level from that Kansas game with a lot of little things. So I’m just really proud of the team, and everybody showed up today.”

RJ Davis led the Tar Heels (7-2) with 26 points and Harrison Ingram added 20. Armando Bacot finished with 13 points and 13

rebounds but North Carolina couldn’t keep pace with the Huskies, shooting 39% in the final 20 minutes and 44% overall.

“We had good looks,” coach Hubert Davis said. “We just didn’t make them.”

**No. 20 Illinois 98, No. 11 Florida Atlantic 89:** Marcus Domask and Terrence Shannon Jr. each scored 33 points, a career high for both, as the Fighting Illini shot 63% and surged ahead in the second half to beat the Owls in the Jimmy V Classic.

Playing in this event for the second consecutive year, Illinois (7-1) won its fifth straight game thanks to Domask and Shannon, who combined for 49 points after halftime and were a combined 25-for-35 from the field.

**Grand Canyon 79, No. 25 San Diego State 73:** Ray Harrison scored 23 points, Gabe McGlothian had 15 points and 13 rebounds, and the host Antelopes beat the Aztecs for their first win over a ranked opponent.

Grand Canyon (7-1) got hot and didn’t stop until late, using a 17-4 run to take a 13-point lead with 4½ minutes left. The Antelopes kept San Diego State at bay from there despite not hitting a field goal over the final 4:27 to win their first game in 10 tries against ranked opponents.

**No. 2 Kansas 88, Kansas City 69:** Kevin McCullar Jr. had a career-high 25 points, KJ Adams scored 16 of his 18 points in the second half and the host Jayhawks struggled to hold off the scrappy Kangaroos.

Hunter Dickinson added 14 and 11 rebounds for Kansas (8-1), which appeared to be caught looking ahead — or behind — in between its win over No. 5 UConn last week

and its game against rival Missouri on Saturday.

**No. 6 Baylor 78, Seton Hall 60:** RayJ Dennis had 17 points and seven assists, true freshman Ja’Kobe Walter made four 3-pointers and scored 15 points, and the host Bears beat the Pirates in the Big East-Big 12 Battle.

Dennis and Walter hit consecutive 3s for Baylor (9-0) after Seton Hall got within three points after halftime.

**No. 7 Gonzaga 111, Arkansas-Pine Bluff 71:** Braden Huff scored 19 points, Graham Ike added 17 points in 17 minutes and the host Bulldogs cruised past the Golden Lions.

Gonzaga (7-1) won its fifth straight since losing to Purdue at the Maui Invitational. Anton Watson finished with 15 points and Nolan Hickman added 13 as the Bulldogs shot 57% and outscored Arkansas-Pine Bluff 60-8 in the paint.

**No. 14 BYU 96, Evansville 55:** Jaxon Robinson scored 19 points and the unbeaten Cougars routed the visiting Purple Aces.

**No. 17 Tennessee 87, George Mason 66:** Jonas Aidoo scored a career-high 17 points and the host Volunteers beat the Patriots to stop a three-game skid.

**No. 19 Oklahoma 72, Providence 51:** Javian McCollum scored 19 points, Milos Uzan had 17 points and 12 rebounds, and the host Sooners limited the Friars to 20 second-half points.

**No. 23 Wisconsin 70, Michigan State 57:** AJ Storr matched a season high with 22 points and Steven Crawl scored a season-high 18 points, leading the visiting Badgers past the Spartans.

# Sharks rally from 3 down, top Islanders

Associated Press

NEW YORK — William Eklund scored in the closing seconds of overtime, Tomas Hertl had a hat trick and the San Jose Sharks erased a three-goal, third-period deficit to defeat the New York Islanders 5-4 on Tuesday night.

Kevin Labanc also scored and Kaapo Kahkonen made 33 saves for the Sharks.

Julien Gauthier, Brock Nelson, Mike Reilly and Ryan Pullock scored for the Islanders, who began a six-game homestand with a loss. Simon Holmstrom and Bo Horvat each added two assists and Ilya Sorokin finished with 27 saves.

Mikael Granlund set up Eklund for a one-time shot with 5 seconds to play in the three-on-three overtime period.

**Senators 6, Rangers 2:** Brady Tkachuk and Vladimir Tarasenko each scored twice to lead host Ottawa to an impressive win over league-leading New York.

Anton Forsberg made 33 saves for the Sens, while Claude Giroux and Drake Batherson also scored for Ottawa.

Artemi Panarin and K'Andre Miller scored for the Rangers, while Igor Shesterkin stopped

30 shots.

**Devils 6, Canucks 5:** Jesper Bratt scored his second goal of the night with 34 seconds left in the third period as visiting New Jersey defeated Vancouver.

Jack Hughes had a goal and two assists, while his younger brother Luke Hughes scored on a power play for the Devils.

Vancouver's Quinn Hughes had two third-period assists as the Canucks rallied from three goals down to tie the game.

Erik Haula and Michael McLeod also scored for the Devils.

J.T. Miller had a power-play goal and an assist for the Canucks. Brock Boeser, Nils Hoglander, Sam Lafferty and Dakota Joshua also scored for Vancouver.

**Avalanche 3, Ducks 2:** Nathan MacKinnon had a goal and two assists as short-handed Colorado held off a late rally by visiting Anaheim.

Kurtis MacDermid scored early in the first and Logan O'Connor made it 3-0 in the third before the Ducks staged their comeback bid.

Sam Carrick scored a short-handed goal and Leo Carlsson added a power-play goal with 5:49 remaining in the third. The

Ducks pulled goaltender John Gibson for an extra skater with under a minute remaining, but couldn't tie it up.

**Kings 4, Blue Jackets 3 (OT):** Drew Doughty scored 33 seconds into overtime and visiting Los Angeles rallied from a three-goal deficit in the third period, beating Columbus for their NHL record-tying 10th straight road win.

Pheonix Copley stopped 26 for the Kings, who have won seven of their last eight games and matched the road win record of the 2006-07 Buffalo Sabres.

Phillip Danault scored twice, Arthur Kaliyev added a goal and Vladislav Gavrikov contributed a pair of assists in his first game back in Columbus after being traded to Los Angeles in March.

**Red Wings 5, Sabres 3:** Dylan Larkin scored twice as visiting Detroit raced to an early lead and held on to defeat Buffalo.

The Red Wings jumped out to a 4-0 lead, but had to hold off a late Sabres rally. Buffalo scored three unanswered goals but was unable to complete the comeback.

Robby Fabbri, Moritz Seider

and Michael Rasmussen also scored for the Red Wings, who won their third straight game and for the sixth time in seven games. Alex Lyon made 29 saves.

Rasmus Dahlin, Casey Mittelstadt and Jeff Skinner scored for Buffalo.

**Predators 4, Blackhawks 3 (SO):** Ryan O'Reilly scored in regulation and the shootout, and visiting Nashville handed Chicago its fourth consecutive loss.

Gustav Nyquist and Filip Forsberg also converted their chances as Nashville went 3-for-3 in the tiebreaker against Chicago goaltender Arvid Soderblom. Connor Bedard scored in the shootout for Chicago, but Tyler Johnson was stopped by Juuse Saros.

Nick Foligno had two goals and an assist for Chicago, which has lost five of six overall.

**Wild 5, Flames 2:** Matt Boldy scored twice and had an assist, leading visiting Minnesota over Calgary.

Kirill Kaprizov had a goal and an assist, and Marcus Foligno and Joel Eriksson Ek also scored for the Wild, who improved to 4-0-0 since Jon Hynes replaced Dean Evason as head coach Nov. 27.

## Shaw, US women too much for China in year-ending match

Associated Press

FRISCO, Texas — Jaedyn Shaw scored the go-ahead goal in the 79th minute to give the United States a 2-1 comeback victory over China on Tuesday night in the Americans' final match of the year.

It was the second of two soccer exhibition matches against China. The United States won the first 3-0 in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., on Saturday.

Shaw's second international goal came in front of her hometown crowd in Frisco. The 19-year-old, who grew up just

blocks from Toyota Stadium, was making her first start for the national team.

"I love being here in this stadium, and I have so many memories here," said Shaw, who had some 50 family members and friends at the game. "I'm just so happy to be able to play here at this level and play on this team."

Shen Mengyu scored in first-half stoppage time to give China the lead. Shen tapped in Siqian Wang's well-placed header off a free kick.

The goal snapped a seven-game shutout streak for the

Americans.

Sam Coffey scored her first international goal in the 62nd minute from the top of the box to even the score. She celebrated by raising her hands over her head and was mobbed by her teammates.

"It was just one of the best moments of my life," she said. "I've worked my whole life for moments like these and to share them with this team is just a dream come true. What matters most though is that we came away with the win."

The matches closed a difficult

year for the United States after the four-time champions were eliminated from the Women's World Cup this summer in the round of 16 after a scoreless draw with Sweden.

The United States was playing under interim coach Twila Kilgore, who will lead the team while newly named head coach Emma Hayes finishes out the season with Chelsea.

Hayes wasn't expected to take over the U.S. team until May, but she was involved in selecting the roster for the final two games.