

## US to expand access in Philippines

*The Washington Post*

The U.S. military is poised to secure expanded access to key bases in the Philippines on the heels of a significant revamp of U.S. force posture in Japan — developments that reflect the allies' concern with an increasingly fraught security environment in the region and a desire to deepen alliances with the United States, according to U.S. and Philippine officials.

While negotiations are still ongoing, an announcement is expected as soon as this week when Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin meets in Manila with his counterpart and then with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

The expansion involves access to Philippine military bases, likely including two on the northern island of Luzon — which, analysts said, could give U.S. forces a strategic position from which to mount operations in the event of a conflict in Taiwan or the South China Sea. They will also facilitate cooperation on a range of security concerns, including more rapid responses to natural disasters and climate-related events.

Extensive work has been done over the last few months in the Philippines to assess and evaluate various sites, and at least two of them have been pinned down, said a State Department official, who like other officials spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak about the deliberations.

A Philippine defense official said an

agreement for the additional sites had “more or less” been made but would be formalized when the two defense secretaries meet. Aides from the two offices were continuing to iron out key details in recent days, and at least two of the new sites are in Luzon, he said.

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan discussed the matter with his counterpart Eduardo Año last month as part of a White House effort to step up cooperation with Indo-Pacific allies, a U.S. official said.

The increased military cooperation with the U.S. “bodes well for our defense posture,” said the Philippine official. But, he emphasized, the Philippines push to bolster its security “is not aimed at any particular country.”

Marcos “realizes the dynamics of the region at the moment and that the Philippines really needs to step up,” said the official, adding that the president has been closely monitoring developments in the Taiwan Strait and in the West Philippine Sea. “We’ve already got incursions from multiple countries and the tensions are still expected to rise.”

While expanded base access is alone not the security linchpin for the region, “it’s a pretty big deal,” said Gregory Poling, director of the Southeast Asia program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. “This is significant not just in terms of what it means for a Taiwan or South China Sea contingency. This is a signal that the Philippines

are all in on modernizing the alliance, and that they understand that a modern alliance means they have responsibilities, too.”

The Philippines, once a U.S. territory, has been a treaty ally since 1951. It hosted a massive U.S. presence after World War II, including two of the largest American military facilities overseas — an arrangement that ended in 1991 when the Philippine Senate, asserting the country’s sovereignty was being violated, forced the Americans to relinquish all U.S. bases to the Philippines.

The mutual defense arrangement was further stressed under the administration of former president Rodrigo Duterte, arguably the most pro-Beijing and anti-American president ever of the Philippines. Duterte threatened to end the Visiting Forces Agreement, which gave legal protections to U.S. military in the Philippines.

But after Austin visited in the summer of 2021, and in the face of increasing Chinese aggression in Philippine waters, Duterte withdrew the threat.

The election of Marcos last year continued a warming trend — President Joe Biden was the first foreign leader to call to congratulate him. But the deepening of the alliance, officials have said, is rooted in a recognition that the region is becoming a more dangerous place. In November, for instance, the Chinese Coast Guard forcibly seized Chinese rocket debris being towed by the Philippine Navy near one of the Philippine-held islands.

## US hypersonic missile passes 4th test, exceeds Mach 5

**By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN**  
*Stars and Stripes*

The United States successfully tested another hypersonic missile, bringing the military a step closer to having an operational version of the weapon in its arsenal, developers said.

Hypersonic missiles travel at least five times the speed of sound and are being developed to strike targets from extremely long distances on short notice.

The U.S. has been under pressure to establish its hypersonic capabilities after Chinese and Russian announcements of suc-

cessful tests and growing concern that its program is lagging behind those of its adversaries.

Completed in January at an unspecified location, the test was part of a project known as the Hypersonic Air-breathing Weapons Concept, or HAWC, developed by the Air Force and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, a DARPA statement Monday said.

HAWC missiles use air-breathing engines to stay aloft, allowing them to fly at lower altitudes and maneuver over distances to destroy targets with kinetic energy

rather than explosive warheads.

The Lockheed Martin missile, with its Aerojet Rocketdyne scramjet engine, was launched from an Air Force B-52 bomber, the statement said, adding that it exceeded Mach 5, which is roughly 3,800 mph, and flew over 300 nautical miles at more than 60,000 feet in altitude.

It followed a similar test in March and an initial HAWC test in September 2021 that used a Raytheon Technologies missile with a Northrop Grumman scramjet engine.

Overall, it was the fourth successful flight of the HAWC program since 2021.

# Ukraine pushes for Western fighter jets

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine won support Tuesday from Baltic nations and Poland in its quest to obtain Western fighter jets, but there were no signs that larger nations like the U.S. and Britain have changed their stance of refusing to provide the warplanes to Kyiv after almost a year of battling Russia's invading forces.

"Ukraine needs fighter jets ... missiles, tanks. We need to act," Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu said in the Latvian capital of Riga at a news conference with his Baltic and Polish colleagues. Those countries, which lie on NATO's eastern flank, feel especially threatened by Russia and have been the leading advocates for providing military aid.

Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov held talks with his French counterpart, saying they did not discuss specific fighter jets but did talk about aviation "plat-

forms" to help Ukraine's ground-to-air defense.

"I don't know how quick it will be, this response from Western allies" to Kyiv's requests for fighter jets, Reznikov said. "I'm optimistic and I think it will be as soon as possible."

He also listed weapons Ukraine has sought in the past year, starting with Stingers, and said the first response was always, "Impossible." Eventually, though, he said, "it became possible."

French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu, speaking alongside Reznikov, said there are "no taboos" on sending fighter jets. He also confirmed that France is sending 12 more Caesar cannons in the coming weeks.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Monday that France doesn't exclude sending fighter jets to Ukraine, but he laid out multiple conditions before such a step is

taken, including not leading to an escalation of tensions or using the aircraft "to touch Russian soil," and not resulting in weakening "the capacities of the French army."

Reznikov's trip came a week after Western nations pledged to send Kyiv sophisticated modern tanks.

Several Western leaders have expressed concern that providing warplanes could escalate the nearly year-long conflict and draw them deeper into the war.

Such fighter jets would offer Ukraine a major boost, but countering Russia's massive air force would still be a major challenge.

The U.K. government, among Kyiv's staunchest diplomatic supporters and military suppliers, said that sending its fighter jets is "not practical."

Asked Monday if his administration was considering sending Ukraine F-16 fighter jets, President Joe Biden responded, "No."

## Feds drop lobbying probe of retired general

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department has dropped its probe of retired four-star Gen. John Allen for his role in an alleged illegal foreign lobbying campaign on behalf of the wealthy Persian Gulf nation of Qatar, his lawyer told The Associated Press.

Attorney David Schertler said in a statement Tuesday that the Justice Department had informed him that it was closing

its investigation of Allen and no charges would be filed.

The Justice Department declined to comment but a law enforcement official familiar with the inquiry who wasn't authorized to speak publicly confirmed the decision on condition of anonymity.

The AP first reported last June that the FBI had outlined a potential criminal case against Allen in a confidential search warrant application that ap-

peared to have been filed in error on a federal courts website. Days later, the former Marine general who oversaw U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan resigned as head of the influential Brookings Institution think tank.

Schertler said it was "deeply unfortunate" and "unfair" that the public release of the FBI's confidential document had damaged Allen's reputation and livelihood.

The 77-page document detailed Allen's behind-the-scenes efforts to help Qatar influence U.S. policy in June 2017 when a diplomatic crisis erupted between the gas-rich monarchy and its neighbors. That included traveling to Doha to advise top Qatari officials and then lobbying U.S. officials, the FBI said.

Allen denied any wrongdoing, saying his involvement with Qatar was meant to help benefit the United States.

## Navy's air wing of future to fly over Super Bowl

By FRANK ANDREWS  
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Navy plans to flaunt its "Carrier Air Wing of the Future" during a four-ship flyover of Super Bowl LVII in Glendale, Ariz.

The four tactical aircraft — two F/A-18F Super Hornets, an F-35C Lightning II and an EA-18G Growler — will roar over the stadium on game day, Feb. 12, just as country

music star Chris Stapleton sings, "...and the home of the brave," the last line of "The Star-Spangled Banner," according to a Navy news release Sunday.

The Super Bowl is a high-profile opportunity for the sea service to show off its most technologically advanced aircraft on one of the world's biggest stages. The NFL estimates that 200 million people watched last year's Super Bowl.

The Navy's air wing of the future provides advanced technology and enhanced flexibility to military combatant commanders, according to the Navy release. The Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group with Carrier Air Wing 2 embarked on a South China Sea deployment in September 2021, for example, with squadrons of F-35Cs and CMV-22B Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft assembled as a future air wing.

# More disciplined, fired in Nichols' death

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Two more Memphis police officers have been disciplined and three emergency responders fired in connection with the death of Tyre Nichols, officials said Monday, widening the circle of punishment for the shocking display of police brutality after video showed many more people failed to help the 29-year-old black man beyond the five officers accused of beating him to death.

Officer Preston Hemphill, who is white, was relieved of duty shortly after Nichols' Jan. 7 arrest, the police department announced. Later in the day it said another officer had also been relieved, but without naming the person or specifying

what role they played in the incident.

That brought the total number of Memphis officers who have been disciplined to seven, including the five Black officers who were fired and charged last week with second-degree murder and other offenses in Nichols' beating and Jan. 10 death.

Also Monday, Memphis Fire Department officials announced the dismissal of emergency medical technicians Robert Long and JaMicheal Sandridge and Lt. Michelle Whitaker. The EMTs had previously been suspended.

Fire Chief Gina Sweat said in a statement that the department received a call from police to respond to a report of a person who had been pepper-sprayed.

The workers arrived at 8:41 p.m. as Nichols was handcuffed on the ground and slumped against a squad car, the statement said.

Long and Sandridge, based on the nature of the call and information they were told by police, "failed to conduct an adequate patient assessment of Mr. Nichols," the statement said. Whitaker and the driver remained in the engine.

An ambulance was called, and it arrived at 8:55 p.m., the statement said. An emergency unit cared for Nichols and left for a hospital with him at 9:08 p.m. — 27 minutes after Long, Sandridge and Whitaker arrived, officials said.

An investigation determined that all three violated "multi-

ple" policies and protocols, the statement said, adding that "their actions or inactions on the scene that night do not meet the expectations of the Memphis Fire Department."

Lawyers for the Nichols family questioned Monday why the department did not disclose Hemphill's discipline earlier and why he has not been fired or charged.

Memphis police spokeswoman Karen Rudolph said information on disciplinary action taken against Hemphill was not immediately released because Hemphill was not fired. The department generally gives out information about an officer's punishment only after a department investigation into misconduct ends, Rudolph said.

## Slower wage pace may calm fears of inflation

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Pay and benefits for America's workers grew at a healthy but slower pace in the final three months of 2022, a third straight slowdown, which could help reassure the Federal Reserve that wage gains won't fuel higher inflation.

Wages and benefits, such as health insurance, grew 1% in the October-December quarter compared with the previous three months. That marked a solid gain, though it was slower than the 1.2% increase in the July-September quarter.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell and economists consider the data released Tuesday, known as the employment cost index, to be the most comprehensive gauge of labor costs. Powell last year cited a sharp increase in the index as a key reason why the Fed accelerated its interest rate hikes.

On Wednesday, Powell and his Fed colleagues are set to raise their benchmark interest

rate by a quarter-point to a range of 4.5% to 4.75%, their eighth straight rate hike. But as inflation has cooled, the central bank has been boosting rates by smaller increments. Last year, the Fed raised its key rate by three-quarters of a point four times.

Powell has said he sees rapid wage gains, particularly in the labor-intensive service sector, as the biggest impediment to bringing inflation down to the Fed's 2% target. When restaurants, hotels, veterinary clinics and other services companies raise pay, they often pass along those higher costs by charging their customers higher prices.

Inflation is steadily cooling overall, having eased to 6.5% in December compared with a year ago. That is down from a 40-year high of 9.1% in June. Powell's concern, though, is that fast-growing wages will cause inflation to plateau at around 4% — still twice as high as the Fed's target.

## 2 monkeys are taken in latest suspicious event at Dallas Zoo

Associated Press

DALLAS — Two monkeys were taken from the Dallas Zoo on Monday, police said, the latest in a string of odd incidents at the attraction being investigated — including fences being cut and the suspicious death of an endangered vulture in the past few weeks.

No arrests have been made in any of the investigations, and police have not said whether the incidents are linked.

Dallas police said they believe someone cut an opening in an enclosure and took two emperor tamarin monkeys, small primates with long whiskers that look like a mustache.

"It was clear the habitat had been intentionally compromised," the zoo said in a statement that offered few other details.

The incident follows the Jan. 13 closure of the zoo and a day-long search when a clouded leopard named Nova went missing.

She was eventually found

near her habitat, but police said a tool had been used to cut an opening in its fencing. A similar gash also was found in an enclosure of langur monkeys, though none got out.

On Jan. 21, an endangered vulture named Pin was found dead, and the zoo said the death did not appear to be natural. Zoo President and CEO Gregg Hudson said the vulture had "a wound."

Ed Hansen, chief executive of the American Association of Zoo Keepers, said he could not recall a zoo facing similar incidents with such frequency.

"It appears that somebody really has an issue with the Dallas Zoo," Hansen said.

Hansen, who described the Dallas Zoo's reputation as "excellent" within the industry, said accredited zoos have double-perimeter fencing and that a zoo as large as Dallas' would have a security patrol.

The zoo said it has added additional cameras and increased overnight security patrols.

# Biden to end COVID-19 emergencies on May 11

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden informed Congress on Monday that he will end the twin national emergencies for addressing COVID-19 on May 11, as most of the world has returned closer to normalcy nearly three years after those national emergencies were first declared.

The move to end the national emergency and public health emergency declarations would formally restructure the federal coronavirus response to treat the virus as an endemic threat to public health that can be managed through agencies' normal authorities.

It comes as lawmakers have already ended elements of the emergencies that kept millions of Americans insured during the pandemic. Combined with the drawdown of most federal COVID-19 relief money, it would also shift the development of vaccines and treatments away from the direct management of the federal government.

Biden's announcement comes in a statement opposing resolutions being brought to the floor this week by House Republicans to bring the emergency to an immediate end. House Republicans are also gearing up to launch investigations on the federal government's response to COVID-19.

Then-President Donald Trump's Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar first declared a public health emergency on

Jan. 31, 2020, and Trump later declared the COVID-19 pandemic a national emergency that March. The emergencies have been repeatedly extended by Biden since he took office in January 2021, and are set to expire in the coming months. The White House said Biden plans to extend them both briefly to end on May 11.

"An abrupt end to the emergency declarations would create wide-ranging chaos and uncertainty throughout the health care system — for states, for hospitals and doctors' offices, and, most importantly, for tens of millions of Americans," the Office of Management and Budget wrote in a Statement of Administration Policy.

More than 1.1 million people in the U.S. have died from COVID-19 since 2020, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including about 3,700 last week.

The costs of COVID-19 vaccines are also expected to skyrocket once the government stops buying them, with Pfizer saying it will charge as much as \$130 per dose. Only 15% of Americans have received the recommended, updated booster that has been offered since last fall.

People with private insurance could have some out-of-pocket costs for vaccines, especially if they go to an out-of-network provider, Levitt said. Free at-home COVID tests will also come to an end.

# Santos says he won't serve on 2 committees

*New York Daily News*

Rep. George Santos told fellow Republican lawmakers he will agree to not sit on any committees amid controversies over his serial lies about his background, education and finances.

Santos made the pledge, which is unlikely to quiet rising demands for his resignation, at a closed door meeting of the Republican caucus.

The embattled freshman Long Island lawmaker had been assigned to sit on the relatively low-profile science and small business committees.

"He has asked to reserve his seats on both committees until he is properly cleared for both personal and campaign finance investigations," said Naysa Woomer, a spokeswoman for Santos.

Santos has been facing immense pressure to resign but insists he will not step down over his outrageous campaign of falsehoods.

A new poll says 78% of voters in his NY-03 district want him to resign compared with just 13% who say he should stay in office to serve out his two-year term. Even 71% of Republicans want him to see him gone for good. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy has so far stood by Santos, mostly because he holds a razor-thin majority and does not want to risk the likely loss of the seat to a Democrat if Santos resigns and forces a special election.

# Winter weather cancels, delays flights in Texas

*Associated Press*

DALLAS — Winter weather brought ice to Texas and nearby states Tuesday, causing the cancellation of more than 980 flights and delays to nearly 800 more.

Numerous auto collisions were reported in Austin, Texas, with at least one fatality according to the Austin Fire Department.

More than 500 flights to or from Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport and nearly 125 to or from Dallas Love Field were canceled or delayed Tuesday, according to the tracking service FlightAware.

Dallas-based Southwest Airlines has canceled more than 300 flights and delayed nearly 100 more, FlightAware reported.

The storm began Monday as part of an ex-

pected "several rounds" of wintry precipitation through Wednesday across Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Tennessee, according to National Weather Service meteorologist Marc Chenard.

"Generally light to moderate freezing rain resulting in some pretty significant ice amounts," Chenard said.

"We're expecting ice accumulations potentially a quarter inch or higher as far south as Austin, Texas, up to Dallas over to Little Rock, Ark., towards Memphis, Tenn., and even getting close to Nashville, Tenn.," according to Chenard.

The flight disruptions follow Southwest's meltdown in December that began with a winter storm but continued after most other

airlines had recovered. Southwest canceled about 16,700 flights over the last 10 days of the year, and the U.S. Transportation Department is investigating.

The weather service has issued a winter storm warning for a large swath of Texas and parts of southeastern Oklahoma and an ice storm warning across the midsection of Arkansas into western Tennessee.

A winter weather advisory is in place in much of the remainder of Arkansas and Tennessee and into much of Kentucky, West Virginia and southern parts of Indiana and Ohio.

Schools and colleges in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas planned to close or go to virtual learning Tuesday.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## State set to vote on repealing fast-food law

**CA** SACRAMENTO — A voter initiative that would overturn a California law aimed at raising wages and improving working conditions for more than a half-million fast food workers has qualified for next year's ballot, authorities said.

The referendum raised more than 623,000 valid voter signatures to be placed on the Nov. 5, 2024, election ballot, Secretary of State Shirley N. Weber announced.

The first-in-the-nation law, passed last year, establishes a 10-member council empowered to set minimum wages as well as standards for hours and working conditions for California's fast food workers. It would affect some 550,000 workers statewide.

Opponents, who raised more than \$10 million last year to fund the referendum campaign, have argued that the law would burden owners of chain restaurant franchises and drive up the cost of food.

## Police discover body in man's car after towing it

**MO** KANSAS CITY — Family members and a forensic expert are questioning why Kansas City police didn't find a man's body in the cargo area of his own SUV until after they towed it to a Missouri police station.

Adam "A.J." Blackstock Jr.'s death is being investigated as a homicide, according to The Kansas City Star.

The newspaper reported that police defended how they initially handled the situation because they didn't have a search warrant

when they had the vehicle towed and Blackstock had yet to be officially reported missing.

One forensic expert told the newspaper that police should have looked inside the vehicle before they moved it.

Family members said they want answers about what happened to Blackstock, 24, who left behind an 18-month-old son.

## Firefighters find man on fire in store bathroom

**KS** TOPEKA — Kansas firefighters found a man on fire inside a restroom at a Walmart store.

Topeka city spokeswoman Gretchen Spiker told the Topeka Capital-Journal that firefighters found the man when they went to a Walmart Neighborhood Market.

"Upon arrival, firefighters located an adult male on fire in a bathroom," she said. "TFD personnel immediately worked to get the fire out, and rendered aid to the involved individual."

The man was taken to a Topeka hospital with serious injuries. He wasn't immediately identified.

Spiker said investigators are working to determine how the fire started.

## State OKs bill banning gender-affirming care

**UT** SALT LAKE CITY — Utah's Republican governor signed a bill that bans youth from receiving gender-affirming health care.

Gov. Spencer Cox, who had not taken a public position on the transgender care measure, signed it a day after the Legislature sent it to his desk. Utah's measure prohibits transgender

surgery for youth and disallows hormone treatments for minors who have not yet been diagnosed with gender dysphoria.

Cox explained in a statement that his decision was based on his belief that it was prudent to pause "these permanent and life-altering treatments for new patients until more and better research can help determine the long-term consequences."

In a letter to Cox, the ACLU of Utah said it was deeply concerned about "the damaging and potentially catastrophic effects this law will have on people's lives and medical care and the grave violations of people's constitutional rights it will cause."

## State advances gun bill for K-12 school staff

**WV** CHARLESTON — A bill that would allow teachers, administrators and support personnel to carry guns in K-12 public schools is advancing in the West Virginia House of Delegates.

The proposal passed the House Education Committee on Jan. 25, just one day after the state Senate overwhelmingly passed a bill that would permit the carrying of firearms on college and university campuses. It will now go before the House Judiciary Committee.

Del. Doug Smith, the bill's lead sponsor, said similar legislation has been enacted in dozens of other states and that it's up to each school system to decide whether or not to implement the program. According to West Virginia's proposed legislation, if local school boards do decide to pursue a concealed carry program, a public hearing must be held so community members can

weigh in.

The bill would allow districts in West Virginia to designate one or more teachers, school personnel and administrators as "school protection officers" — a voluntary position for which they would receive no additional compensation to their salaries.

Elementary and secondary education teachers would not be able to openly carry a gun in school — the firearms must be concealed and the educator in possession of the weapon must hold a valid concealed carry permit.

## Governor has bill to ease path for name changes

**IL** SPRINGFIELD — A bill sent to Gov. J.B. Pritzker would lift restrictions on Illinois residents who can't change their names because of past crimes.

Supporters said the legislation would also help people who are transgender or have been victims of human trafficking.

"We were really focused on the folks who, it's a need, it's like a life-or-death need, because of fears of abusive partners or their trafficker finding them again," Khadine Bennett of the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois told the Chicago Tribune.

Under current law, there's a lifetime ban on name changes for people who have been convicted of identity theft or who are on state registries for certain crimes. Others convicted of crimes can face a 10-year waiting period.

A judge would make the final decision on a name change with input from a local prosecutor under a bill that has cleared the General Assembly.

— From wire reports

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# NFL wasn't at its best in title games

*Associated Press*

The NFL didn't put on its Sunday best for the conference championships.

Before the San Francisco 49ers ran out of luck and quarterbacks, they were burned by a fourth-down catch by Philadelphia Eagles receiver Devonta Smith that wasn't even a catch.

Although Kyle Shanahan could have thrown a challenge flag, the league's replay assist rule allows the replay official to make a quick reversal without a challenge, something that didn't happen before the Eagles hurried to snap the ball.

The next play was Miles Sanders' TD run that opened the scoring.

After Christian McCaffrey tied it up by pinballing his way into the end zone from 23 yards out, the Niners were done in by their quarterback issues and succumbed 31-7 when they were left without a passer who could throw the ball more than 5 to 10 yards for most of the second half.

Philadelphia's pass rush was

relentless, and San Francisco lost third-stringer Brock Purdy to a right elbow injury and fourth-string journeyman Josh Johnson to a concussion.

"You dress two quarterbacks and neither one of them can throw and neither one of them is really available," tight end George Kittle said. "It kind of limits what you can do as an offense, kind of limits our playbook to like 15 plays. You can only do so much."

Dressing two quarterbacks is the problem.

The NFL used to allow an "emergency" third quarterback to dress for the game but it stopped doing that in 2011.

A third QB now counts toward the 46-man limit, so teams quit doing it. And it burned the 49ers and the NFL on Sunday.

When Johnson went out with a concussion on the first drive of the second half, the Niners were left with the choice of putting Purdy back in even though he could hardly throw the ball or play the rest of the game in the wildcat with McCaffrey run-

ning the show.

They chose Purdy, and the Niners had no shot against a Philadelphia defense that stacked the box with no concern about defending the pass.

Later that night, the NHL's Edmonton Oilers activated their emergency backup goaltender — affectionately known as the EBUG — Matt Berlin, a player from the University of Alberta Golden Bears. They put him in net with 2:26 to play.

If the NHL can have the EBUG on standby, then there's no reason the NFL shouldn't have its EQBIII.

Another thing the league might have to look into again is its officiating.

The AFC championship went down to the wire and Patrick Mahomes finally beat Joe Burrow when Kansas City prevailed 23-20 over Cincinnati in a game that featured enough infuriating flags and blatantly missed calls — plus some bad clock keeping — to reignite the debate about the league needing to replace moonlighting lawyers

with full-time officials.

Among the flags that drew fans' ire was a costly intentional grounding call on Burrow in the fourth quarter after his throw to running back Samaje Perine was short. Earlier, a nearly identical throw to the ground from Burrow didn't draw a flag.

Former NFL VP of officials and Fox rules analyst Dean Blandino said the intentional grounding call on Burrow never should have been called because Chris Jones hit him just as he released his pass.

"Was Joe Burrow's passing motion affected by the contact by Chris Jones?" asked Blandino in a tweet from The 33rd Team. "And that's the key: if the quarterback starts his throwing motion, and then he's contacted by a defender, which impacts that motion, then you are not to call intentional grounding."

"And I thought that the contact may have impacted Burrow's ability to get the ball out toward Perine enough to not calling grounding in that situation."

## Rashada case highlights issues in NIL and recruiting

*Associated Press*

Broken promises and unrealistic expectations have been part of college football recruiting for as long as coaches have been pitching their programs in living rooms across America.

Opportunities for playing time and a path to the NFL are being peddled, as always, but now potentially lucrative endorsement deals handled by booster-run collectives are also in the mix.

There is even more potential for prospects to feel short-changed after signing a national letter of intent.

When college football's traditional winter signing period opened Wednesday, among the unsigned blue-chippers will be

Jaden Rashada. The four-star quarterback from California signed with Florida in December, but asked for and was granted his release after an endorsement agreement with a collective that was potentially worth more than \$13 million fell through.

The ill-fated deal between Rashada and the Gator Collective — one that helped persuade him to back off a previous verbal commitment to Miami and a name, image and likeness offer from a collective that works with Hurricanes athletes — should be a cautionary tale for recruiting in the NIL era.

"NIL and the presence of collectives and promises to prospects create a facet of the

recruiting experience that is 100% outside of the school's control, and what's being magnified with the Rashada situation is the promises of independent third parties are impacting where kids decide to go to school," said Blake Lawrence, the CEO of Opendorse, a company that works with schools and collectives on NIL compliance and other services.

While the NCAA still has rules in place that make it impermissible to use NIL as a recruiting inducement, the association does not have detailed, uniform regulations in place.

The rise of collectives, which operate outside a school and its athletic department but ideally in its best interest, prompted the

NCAA to clarify that collectives — like individual boosters — can't be involved in the recruiting process.

But the lines have been blurred as coaches try to present potential NIL opportunities to recruits without making guarantees.

Mit Winter, a sports attorney based in Kansas City, said the fallout from the Rashada's decommitment should make schools closely examine the collectives they support.

"I think the moral of the story is collectives, you need to focus on your deals with current athletes and helping them with their NIL opportunities," Winter said. "And you leave the recruiting to the coaches."

# Nets win with Lakers' James, Davis out

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Kyrie Irving had 26 points, seven rebounds and six assists to lead the Brooklyn Nets to a 121-104 victory Monday night over the Los Angeles Lakers, who played without LeBron James and Anthony Davis.

Irving had scored 30 or more in a career-best six straight games, but didn't have to carry as heavy a load with some good play from Brooklyn's backup guards.

"It's nothing but joy in my eyes when I see them get rewarded for the hard work they've put in," Irving said. "It makes my job a lot easier."

Patty Mills and Cam Thomas added 21 points apiece for the Nets, who won their second straight and are 4-6 since Kevin Durant sprained a ligament in his right knee. They won just five times in 21 games last season when he sprained the other knee.

"I think from a big-picture standpoint we've just worked

out how to navigate the ship, I guess," Mills said, "and it definitely does feel a lot different than last year in that sense."

Lakers coach Darvin Ham said James was experiencing "really significant soreness" in his left foot and would be evaluated Tuesday to see if he could play at the New York Knicks that night.

James, who is 117 points shy of passing Kareem Abdul-Jabbar for the NBA's career scoring record, sat at the end of the Lakers bench.

It was a planned day off for Davis so that he didn't play both ends of a back-to-back after returning last week from a 20-game absence due to a right foot injury,

Thomas Bryant had 18 points and nine rebounds for the Lakers, while Russell Westbrook finished with 17 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds. The 2017 NBA MVP moved past Gary Payton into 10th place on the career assists list.

**Suns 114, Raptors 106:** Mi-

kal Bridges scored 29 points, Deandre Ayton added 22 points and 13 rebounds, and host Phoenix pulled away late to beat Toronto.

Chris Paul hit a crucial three-pointer to push the Suns ahead 106-102 with 1:30 left. Ayton added a tip-in with 51.4 seconds remaining to extend the advantage to 108-102.

**Mavericks 111, Pistons 105:** Luka Doncic had 53 points in his return to the lineup and Spencer Dinwiddie scored 10 of his 12 in the fourth quarter as host Dallas rallied past Detroit.

Doncic had 24 points in the first quarter and 18 in the third. Second in the NBA going in with an average of 33 points per game, he returned after spraining his left ankle early in last Thursday's game at Phoenix and then missing Saturday's game at Utah.

**Trail Blazers 129, Hawks 125:** Damian Lillard scored 42 points, Anfernee Simons hit a tiebreaking three with 34 seconds left and host Portland held

off Atlanta.

Lillard added six assists in his fifth 40-point game this month. Jerami Grant had 22 points and Simons finished with 21, including his clutch three that gave the Trail Blazers a 124-121 lead.

**Kings 118, Timberwolves 111 (OT):** De'Aaron Fox had 32 points and Trey Lyles scored eight of his 11 in overtime as visiting Sacramento outlasted Minnesota.

**Warriors 128, Thunder 120:** Stephen Curry had 38 points, 12 assists and eight rebounds, and visiting Golden State defeated Oklahoma City for its third straight win.

**Magic 119, 76ers 109:** Paolo Banchero had 29 points and 10 rebounds as visiting Orlando stormed back from a 21-point first-quarter deficit to beat Philadelphia.

**Wizards 127, Spurs 106:** Deni Avdija scored a career-high 25 points, Bradley Beal added 21 and visiting Washington ended a 22-game losing streak in games in San Antonio.

# Gardner, No. 6 Virginia hold on to top Syracuse

Associated Press

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Jayden Gardner scored 17 points and made a jumper near the foul line in the final minute as No. 6 Virginia withstood a second-half surge by Syracuse to win its seventh straight game 67-62 on Monday night.

Gardner, a fifth-year senior, drew a charge for the fifth foul on Syracuse big man Jesse Edwards with one minute left, then converted the shot with 37 seconds remaining to put the Cavaliers (17-3, 9-2 Atlantic Coast Conference) up by four.

"You got to have a shooter's mentality," Gardner said. "I missed a good look on the baseline so I made up for it on defense and finished the game off. I was hoping (for the charge). If he called a block that would've been demoralizing."

Kihei Clark and Armaan Franklin each scored 12 points for Virginia, which completed a sweep of Syracuse and moved within one game of ACC-leading Clemson.

Judah Mintz scored 20 points and Ed-

wards had 14 for Syracuse (13-10, 6-6), which has lost four of five.

Virginia twice led by eight points early in the first half, the biggest advantage for either team. The Cavaliers went ahead 46-39 early in the second half before Syracuse went on a 12-0 run that included a three-point play by Mintz, a three-pointer and three free throws by Chris Bell, and a three-point play by Edwards.

"In the first half we got off to a good start defensively and made a lot of shots, then Syracuse really took it to us. They just got the ball in the paint at will, scored over the top. We looked a bit lifeless," Virginia coach Tony Bennett said. "We weren't flying around and scrapping the way you have to on the road or in any ACC game. In the second half we got more aggressive, flew around, played even a little harder offensively with cuts and offensive rebounds, and then it was just a game of ebbs and flows. We just had to stay the course."

**No. 10 Texas 76, No. 11 Baylor 71:**

SirJabari Rice scored 21 points and Timmy Allen added 19 to end the Bears' six-game winning streak and keep the host Longhorns in a share of first place in the Big 12.

Baylor had closed within 72-71 on Keyonte George's three-point play before Texas answered with Marcus Carr's fallaway jumper with 27 seconds left.

Rice, a 29% three-point shooter in Big 12 play, was 4-for-5 shooting from long range. Allen was 7-for-10 from the floor for the Longhorns (18-4, 7-2).

**Texas Tech 80, No. 13 Iowa State 77 (OT):** The host Red Raiders erased a 23-point deficit after halftime for their first Big 12 win of the season, with De'Vion Harmon scoring all 16 of his points after the break against the Cyclones.

Kevin Obanor had 24 points and 13 rebounds for the Red Raiders (12-10, 1-8 Big 12), who won their second consecutive game, including a victory over LSU in the SEC/Big 12 Challenge.

# Islanders acquire Horvat from Canucks

Associated Press

It's no secret the New York Islanders need more scoring if they hope to return to the playoffs.

Bo knows a thing or two about that.

The Islanders on Monday acquired center Bo Horvat from the Vancouver Canucks in the first blockbuster of NHL trade deadline season.

The Islanders sent forward Anthony Beauvillier, top prospect Aatu Raty and a top-12 protected first-round pick in the 2023 draft to the Canucks for someone the general manager Lou Lamoriello called "a complete player."

"He brings a two-way game, used in all situations, and without question is on the verge of having a career year but has over the past several years been a 30-35 goal scorer," Lamoriello said. "And I think that's going to certainly add a need for us."

Horvat, 27, is a pending free agent and was one of the top rentals available ahead of the March 3 deadline. He said

there hasn't yet been any talks about a contract extension, which Lamoriello expressed confidence about agreeing to at some point.

"It's all happened so fast," Horvat said. "We'll see if we can get something done, but I'll leave that to [agent Pat Morris] and everybody to handle that."

The former Canucks captain, who was chosen to represent them at the NHL All-Star Weekend, could give the Islanders the scoring boost they've needed. Horvat has already tied his career high with 31 goals this season and also has 23 assists in 49 games.

"[I have been] going to the right areas and putting myself in positions to score those goals or make those plays," Horvat said.

Horvat has 420 points in 621 regular-season NHL games and is also on pace to shatter his career-best season in scoring.

New York ranks 25th out of 32 teams in scoring at 2.85 goals a game, is second worst on the power play and currently sits

two points out of a playoff position in the Eastern Conference.

"You make this type of a transaction because you can improve your team today and tomorrow," said Lamoriello, who added that the Canucks retained 25% of Horvat's salary to even out the salary cap ramifications with Beauvillier.

"And in my opinion he makes us a better team and gives us a better opportunity to [do] what we want to do."

Horvat has 12 more goals this season than the next-closest Islanders teammates: fellow All-Star Brock Nelson and captain Anders Lee, who each have 19 at the break. When his season resumes next week, Horvat will not have to wait long to face the team that drafted him ninth in 2013 with the pick acquired from New Jersey for goaltender Cory Schneider — a trade Lamoriello made when he was GM of the Devils. The Islanders host the Canucks on Feb. 9.

"That is going to be an interesting game to say the least," Horvat said. "It's a game that I

already circled on my calendar and I can't wait to play."

Dealing Horvat is the latest shakeup for Vancouver, which recently fired coach Bruce Boudreau and hired Rick Tocchet as his replacement. General manager Patrik Allvin said Horvat "has been a great leader and ambassador" for the team. "As difficult as it is to trade away our captain, we are excited to add a high-quality 25-year-old winger in Anthony Beauvillier, a young center in Aatu Raty, and a protected first-round draft pick," Allvin said in a statement. "These pieces will be a big part of our development and growth moving forward."

Horvat's camp and the Canucks were unable to agree last summer on a long-term contract. He said he expected to play his entire career with the organization.

"Things didn't work out that way," Horvat said. "It led me to this. I'm grateful for that, and I'm grateful the New York Islanders believe in me."

# Jets rally with four goals in third to beat Blues

Associated Press

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — Josh Morrissey and Mark Scheifele each scored twice in the third period as the Winnipeg Jets rallied for a 4-2 win against the St. Louis Blues on Monday night.

Saku Maenalanen and Kyle Connor each had two assists for the Jets, who snapped a three-game skid. Connor Hellebuyck stopped 24 shots.

"Josh played fantastic tonight," Scheifele said. "He always does, and he got rewarded. A few big goals by him, and he led us tonight, sure."

Jake Neighbours had a goal and assist and Nikita Alexandrov also scored for the Blues, who have lost five straight. Jordan Binnington had 34

saves and picked up an assist on Neighbours' goal.

After the Blues came up empty on the game's first power play, the Jets were handed a four-minute man advantage when Alexandrov was dinged with a double minor for high-sticking Jets forward Kyle Connor in the face. The lengthy power play was a bust, with the Jets only getting one shot on Binnington. The goalie then foiled shots by Pierre-Luc Dubois and Maenalanen.

"He was obviously a big part of why we were in that game the whole game," Blues defenseman Colton Parayko said of Binnington. "He made some big saves early on, big saves throughout the game."

The Jets had two more pow-

er plays in the first half of the second period, but a total of six shots couldn't get by Binnington.

The Blues got on the board with 5:24 left in the second on their next power play. Binnington sent the puck to Nick Leddy, who made a stretch pass to Neighbours that he used for a backhand shot to beat Hellebuyck for his fourth goal.

"Our kill was really good and we got a power-play goal there. It was a nice play," Blues coach Craig Berube said. "Kind of hanging in there with a pretty depleted lineup, you know. You've got to manage things and we just didn't manage it good enough."

Alexandrov made it 2-0 at

2:02 of the third period before the Jets began their comeback. Morrissey scored 40 seconds later to get Winnipeg on the scoreboard with an exuberant celebration.

## Remembering a star

Before puck drop, the Jets showed a video tribute and held a moment of silence for former star Bobby Hull, who died Monday at the age of 84.

The Hockey Hall of Famer played for the NHL's Chicago Blackhawks before signing a then-record \$1-million deal to join the Winnipeg Jets of the upstart World Hockey Association in 1972. The scoring legend spent eight seasons with the Jets, the last when the club merged with the NHL.