

## Navy has fired over 200 missiles in Red Sea

By ALISON BATH  
*Stars and Stripes*

NAPLES, Italy — The U.S. Navy has defended against nearly 400 attack drones and missiles in the Red Sea since Iranian-backed Houthi militants began their assault on commercial and military ships more than a year ago, a pace that has seen the service firing back at levels comparable to World War II battles.

Navy forces have fired more than 200 missiles against those attacks since the Houthis began their campaign in the strategic waterway in November 2023. Destroyers and cruisers have also fired more than 150 artillery rounds, said Vice Adm. Brendan McLane, commander of Naval Surface Forces.

Many of the munitions were fired in larger-scale battles, said McLane, speaking Tuesday

during a panel discussion at the Surface Navy Association conference in Arlington, Va.

“We’ve done the analysis with what we used to shoot in World War II, and we’re at about two rounds per incoming missile to shoot (Houthi strikes) down,” he said.

That matches the current rates of fire to those of the historic battles fought more than 80 years ago, he added.

In a recent attack, the destroyer USS Spruance was “in a fight where they shot down three anti-ship ballistic missiles, three anti-ship cruise missiles and seven one-way (aerial drones) that were coming toward” them, said McLane, who didn’t specify when Spruance was attacked.

On Nov. 11, Spruance and the destroyer USS Stockdale came under Houthi fire, fending off at

least eight drones and eight missiles while transiting the Bab el Mandeb, a strait that connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.

Over the past 15 months, the Navy has fired 120 SM-2, 80 SM-6, and 20 Evolved Sea Sparrow and SM-3 missiles, as well as 160 rounds from its 5-inch guns. Those weapons defeated 380 Houthi attack drones and ballistic and cruise missiles, McLane said.

Those missile expenditures have cost the Navy hundreds of millions of dollars. SM-2 missiles are priced at about \$2.1 million apiece while the SM-6 missiles cost about \$3.9 million each. SM-3 missiles range from \$9.6 million to \$27.9 million, according to Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance data.

McLane acknowledged the expense, saying that modest threats were increasingly being

addressed with lower-cost alternatives such as guns, electronic countermeasures and aircraft.

But commanders shouldn’t be considering the cost of a weapon when responding to a threat, McLane said speaking separately during a “status of the forces” address at the convention.

The Navy has sent 26 vessels into the Red Sea and nearby waters since November 2023, including the aircraft carriers USS Dwight D. Eisenhower and USS Harry S. Truman, to protect ships.

The Houthis have vowed to disrupt shipping until there is a ceasefire in Gaza.

It wasn’t clear Thursday whether they would end their attacks should a ceasefire negotiated between Israel and Hamas, the warring parties in Gaza, begin Sunday.

## Marine head: Moving troops over to Guam is ‘wrong way’

By BRIAN McELHINEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

The commandant of the Marine Corps warned this week that a plan to move thousands of troops from Okinawa to Guam would position forces too far away to deter Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific, according to media reports.

Gen. Eric Smith, at a Defense Writers Group meeting Wednesday in Washington, D.C., said the plan “puts us going the wrong way,” according to reports from news websites military.com and Task & Purpose.

“Guam puts us on the other side of the International Date Line, but it puts us a long way from the crisis theater, from the priority theater,” Smith said, according to the reports.

“Every time you give China a foot, they take a mile. They only understand one thing, which is a credible deterrent force. And that credible deterrent force has to be present to win, which — to me — means being [in] the first island

chain,” he said, according to military.com.

The chain includes the Kuril Islands north of Hokkaido; Japan itself; the Ryukyu Islands, which include Okinawa; Taiwan; and the Philippines.

A full transcript of Smith’s remarks was not available Thursday. U.S. Marine Corps Headquarters spokeswoman Capt. Brenda McCarthy, however, confirmed the accuracy of Smith’s comments in an email Thursday.

More than 4,000 Marines are expected to move from Okinawa under the Defense Policy Review Initiative, a 2012 agreement between the U.S. and Japan to reduce the military presence on Okinawa, which hosts nearly 30,000 of the 55,000 U.S. troops stationed in Japan.

About 100 logistics support troops from III Marine Expeditionary Force began moving from Okinawa to Guam last year, according to a Dec. 14 joint statement by the Marine Corps and Japan’s Ministry of Defense.

Camp Blaz on Guam is expected to house 1,300 members of III MEF and another 3,700 Marines as a rotational force. The base is still under construction.

Smith told reporters Wednesday that he is not sure the plan “is in the best strategic interest of America.”

“We’re committed to coming down to about 10,000 on Okinawa and getting ourselves to Guam,” he said, according to military.com. “But Guam is a challenge. I mean, Apra Harbor [at Naval Base Guam] still has to be refurbished; [it] has to be redone to allow for big decks to get in there.”

The service “supports the tenets outlined in the DPRI agreement and the plan for the movement of units from Japan to Guam or Hawaii starting in 2024,” McCarthy wrote in a separate email Wednesday.

“The Marine Corps will continue to explore options for the best location for the future force in the region.”

# Austin found at fault for diagnosis failures

By MATTHEW ADAMS  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is responsible for the Pentagon neglecting to tell Congress and the White House that the former Army general was incapacitated last year due to treatment for prostate cancer as his office is required to do, the agency's watchdog concluded in a report released Wednesday.

Austin came under scrutiny last year for failing to disclose his cancer and complications that led to an extended hospital stay.

A report issued by the De-

fense Department's inspector general faults Austin for communication failures in which his hospitalization was kept secret for days, including from President Joe Biden.

"I wish [Secretary Austin] were a normal person, but he's the [defense secretary]. We have a big institutional responsibility. He can't just go totally dark on his staff. ... Please pass to him that we can't keep his hospitalization a secret forever. It's kind of big deal for him to be in the [surgical intensive care unit]. And I'm worried sick," then-chief of staff Kelly Magsamen wrote in texts to Austin's

junior military assistant.

Austin was first diagnosed with cancer in December 2023, with his hospital stay stretching into January. By February, the defense secretary took responsibility for secrecy about his illness.

"I want to be crystal clear; we did not handle this right. I did not handle this right," Austin told reporters at the Pentagon in February. "I should have told the president about my cancer diagnosis. I should have told my team and the American people, and I take full responsibility."

The inspector general's year-long investigation found Aus-

tin's strong desire for privacy likely influenced his staff in deciding not to prod further into his condition. To date, no one on Austin's staff has been singled out as responsible for the failure.

The IG report points to Austin for not informing Congress or the White House of his initial treatment in December 2023 for prostate cancer and not telling his staff or the White House of his worsening complications on Jan. 1, 2024, which led him to be taken by ambulance to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.

## Report: Military pay in line with private sector

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

U.S. service members earn more in money and benefits than most civilians in similar demographics, the Defense Department said this week following the release of a military pay review done every four years.

No major changes to the military's compensation system were called for in Wednesday's report, officially titled the Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation.

"Our retention is really high, so I'm thinking that the longer members serve, the more fully they understand the value of the total compensation package," a defense official told reporters Wednesday.

The assessment considered salaries and benefits such as housing and subsistence allowances.

Junior enlisted troops fared especially well when compared with Americans of similar career experience and education levels, ranking in the 93rd per-

centile. Most officers, meanwhile, were in the 75th percentile for financial compensation, the study found.

The study didn't account for a salary bump passed by Congress in December that will give junior enlisted troops a 14.5% pay raise and all other service members a 4.5% increase.

Although DOD compensation is competitive with the civilian labor market, there are some areas for improvement, another senior defense official told reporters Wednesday.

"This may ultimately require us to consider policy and programmatic changes to compensation as well as nonmonetary programs to ensure successful recruitment, retention and readiness of the force moving forward," the official said.

The report also recommended that DOD reconsider its current target of paying service members at the 70th percentile of comparable civilian jobs and boost the figure to the 75th percentile.

## 2 US B-1Bs fly with jets from Japan, South Korea

By JOSEPH DITZLER  
*Stars and Stripes*

Japanese and South Korean fighters escorted U.S. bombers on a display of air power Wednesday in the skies over the Sea of Japan, or East Sea, according to Air Force Global Strike Command.

Two Mitsubishi F-2s of the Japan Air Self-Defense Force and two F-15K Slam Eagles of the South Korean air force escorted a pair of Air Force B-1B Lancer bombers in a show of deterrence and interoperability, the command said in a news release.

The military uses the term interoperability to refer to the ability of one nation's armed forces to use the equipment and training methods of another country's military.

The escort flight was the first air power demonstration of the year by the three countries, according to the release. The flight "builds upon a history of strong trilateral cooperation, enabling an immediate coordinated response to regional security chal-

lenges.

"This increasingly steady and sophisticated trilateral interoperability of our aerial and maritime forces strengthens our collective deterrence and defense posture," the release states.

Escort flights of this nature sometimes follow missile tests or other demonstrations of military strength by North Korea.

In this case, the North on Tuesday tested several short-range ballistic missiles, according to the Japanese and South Korean militaries, which said they tracked the launches.

North Korea's communist regime also fired an intermediate-range ballistic missile on Jan. 6, its first test of the new year.

The state-run Korean Central News Agency described the missile as a hypersonic weapon, but the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff expressed skepticism of that claim in a statement that said the description was likely exaggerated.

# Biden: 'Oligarchy' threatens US democracy

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden used his farewell address to the nation Wednesday to deliver stark warnings about an “oligarchy” of the ultra-wealthy taking root in the country and a “tech-industrial complex” that is infringing on Americans’ rights and the future of democracy.

Speaking from the Oval Office as he prepares to hand over power Monday to President-elect Donald Trump, Biden seized what is likely to be his final opportunity to address the country before he departs the White House to spotlight the accumulation of power and wealth in the U.S. among just a small few.

“Today, an oligarchy is taking shape in America of extreme wealth, power and influence that literally threatens our entire democracy, our basic rights and freedoms, and a fair shot for ev-

eryone to get ahead,” Biden said, drawing attention to “a dangerous concentration of power in the hands of a few ultra-wealthy people and the dangerous consequences if their abuse of power is left unchecked.”

Invoking President Dwight Eisenhower’s warnings about the rise of a military-industrial complex when he left office in 1961, Biden added, “I’m equally concerned about the potential rise of a tech-industrial complex that could pose real dangers to our country as well.”

Biden used his 15-minute address to offer a model for a peaceful transfer of power and — without mentioning Trump by name — raise concerns about his successor. It marked a striking admonition by Biden, who is departing the national stage after more than 50 years in public life, as he has struggled to define his legacy

and to steel the country against the return of Trump to the Oval Office. This time, the president, who has repeatedly called Trump a threat to the nation’s system of governance, went even further, warning Americans to be on guard for their freedoms and their institutions during a turbulent era of rapid technological and economic change.

Biden sounded the alarm about oligarchy as some of the world’s richest individuals and titans of its technology industry have flocked to Trump’s side in recent months, particularly after his November victory. Billionaire Elon Musk spent more than \$100 million helping Trump get elected, and executives like Meta’s Mark Zuckerberg and Amazon’s Jeff Bezos have donated to Trump’s inaugural committee and made pilgrimages to Trump’s private club in Florida for audiences with

the president-elect as they seek to ingratiate themselves with his administration and shape its policies.

Biden’s speech in the Oval Office is the latest in a series of remarks on domestic policy and foreign relations he has delivered that are intended to cement his legacy and reshape Americans’ grim views on his term. Earlier in the day, he heralded a long-awaited ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, which could end more than a year of bloodshed in the Middle East.

“It’ll take time to feel the full impact of what we’ve done together but the seeds are planted and they’ll grow and they’ll bloom for decades to come,” Biden said. It was a tacit acknowledgment that many Americans say they have yet to feel the impact of his trillions of dollars spent on domestic initiatives.

## Laws to age-check porn sites get their day in high court

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Wednesday seemed open to a Texas law aimed at blocking kids from seeing online pornography, though the justices could still send it back to a lower court for more consideration of how the age verification measure affects adults’ free-speech rights.

Texas is among more than a dozen states with such laws aimed at blocking young children and teenagers from viewing pornography. The states argue the laws are necessary as online porn, including hardcore obscene material, has become almost instantaneous to access on smartphones online.

Chief Justice John Roberts, a member of the court’s conservative majority, raised similar concerns. “Technological access to pornography has exploded, right?” he said.

The Free Speech Coalition, an adult-entertainment industry trade group, says the Texas law wrongly affects adults by requiring them to submit personal identifying information online, making it vulnerable to hacking or tracking.

The Coalition agrees that children shouldn’t be seeing pornography, but it argues the new law is so broadly written it could also apply to sexual education content or simulated sex scenes in movies.

The law focuses on porn sites rather than the search engines often used to find porn, the group says in court documents. Content filtering is a better alternative to online age checks, it says.

Justice Amy Coney Barrett appeared skeptical.

“Content filtering for all those different devices, I can say from personal experience, is difficult to keep up with,” said Barrett, who has seven children.

## Social Security payments to dead people recovered

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. government clawed back more than \$31 million in Social Security payments that improperly went to dead people, a recovery that one official said Wednesday was “just the tip of the iceberg.”

The money was reclaimed as part of a five-month pilot program after Congress gave the Department of Treasury temporary access to the Social Security Administration’s “Full Death Master File” for three years as part of the omnibus appropriations bill in 2021. The SSA maintains the most complete federal database of individuals who have died, and the file contains more than 142 million records, which go back to 1899, according to the Treasury.

The Treasury projects that it will recover more than \$215 million during its three-year access period, which runs from December 2023 through 2026.

“These results are just the tip of the iceberg,” the Treasury’s Fiscal Assistant Secretary David Lebryk said. He urged Congress to give the Treasury full access to the master file, saying it would “significantly reduce fraud, improve program integrity, and better safeguard taxpayer dollars.”

The effort has shown areas where the government is preventing fraud, waste and abuse — which is also one of Donald Trump’s campaign promises.

The president-elect has tapped two business titans — Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy — to lead the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, a new nongovernmental task force assigned to find ways to fire federal workers, cut programs and slash federal regulations, all part of what Trump calls his “Save America” agenda for his second term.



# Netanyahu: 'Crisis' is holding up truce

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday that a last-minute dispute with Hamas was holding up Israeli approval of a long-awaited ceasefire that would pause the fighting in the Gaza Strip and release dozens of hostages. Israeli airstrikes, meanwhile, killed at least 72 people in the war-ravaged territory.

The statement from Netanyahu's office signaled complications with the deal shortly after U.S. President Joe Biden and key mediator Qatar announced it was complete. That created a

dual reality: War-weary Palestinians in Gaza, the relatives of hostages held there and world leaders all welcomed an agreement, expected to begin Sunday, even as Netanyahu said it was not yet finalized.

"Hamas is backing out of the understandings and creating a last-minute crisis that prevents a settlement," Netanyahu's office said.

It was not yet clear if Netanyahu's statements merely reflected jockeying to keep his fractious coalition together or whether the deal was at risk.

The Israeli Cabinet was expected to vote on the deal Thurs-

day, but Netanyahu's office said that officials won't meet until Hamas backs down, accusing the militant group of reneging on parts of the agreement in an attempt to gain further concessions, without saying which parts.

A U.S. official with knowledge of the negotiations said Hamas made a last-minute revision that relates to the distance Israeli forces would withdraw from at least one largely populated area in Gaza that the official would not identify. The issue is expected to be resolved quickly and enable the ceasefire to begin as planned this weekend, accord-

ing to the official, who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

In a briefing Thursday, David Mencer, an Israeli government spokesman, said the Israeli delegation of negotiators remained in Qatar, "continuing its efforts to reach a solution."

Izzat al-Rishq, a senior Hamas official, said the militant group "is committed to the ceasefire agreement, which was announced by the mediators."

The deal announced Wednesday would see scores of hostages held in Gaza released and a pause in fighting.

## South Korean court rejects petition to release Yoon

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — Lawyers for impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol failed in their court effort to secure his release on Thursday, a day after he was detained at his residence for questioning over rebellion allegations linked to his martial law declaration last month.

Yoon was sent to a detention center near the country's capital, Seoul, after undergoing more than 10 hours of questioning on Wednesday at the headquarters of the Corruption Investigation

Office for High-Ranking Officials, during which he exercised his right to remain silent. Yoon refused further questioning by the anti-corruption officials on Thursday as his lawyers maintained that the investigation was illegal.

Lawyers had asked the Seoul Central District Court to consider his release, questioning the validity of the detention warrant for Yoon issued by the Seoul Western District Court.

But the Central District Court denied their petition late Thursday.

Yoon had avoided several requests to appear for questioning before the anti-corruption agency and police carried out a major law enforcement operation involving hundreds of personnel to detain him at his residential compound in Seoul.

Investigators are expected to move to place him under arrest in the coming days.

The anti-corruption agency, which is leading a joint investigation with the police and the military over whether Yoon's martial law declaration amounted to attempted rebellion, has 48 hours

either to request a court order for his formal arrest or to release him.

On Thursday, his lawyers formally declared that Wednesday's raid at the presidential residence, which led to the detention of a head of state, was illegal, in complaints filed with prosecutors.

Yoon didn't attend a hearing at the Central District Court on Thursday, which was part of the review over his detention warrant, because of security concerns, according to Seok Donghyeon, one of the president's lawyers.

## Bezos' New Glenn rocket reaches orbit on test flight

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Blue Origin launched its massive new rocket on its first test flight Thursday, sending up a prototype satellite to orbit thousands of miles above Earth.

Named after the first American to orbit Earth, the New Glenn rocket blasted off from Florida, soaring from the same pad used to launch NASA's Mariner and Pioneer space-

craft a half-century ago.

Years in the making with heavy funding by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, the 320-foot rocket carried an experimental platform designed to host satellites or release them into their proper orbits.

All seven main engines fired at liftoff as the rocket blazed through the predawn sky to the delight of spectators lining nearby beaches. Bezos took part in the action from Mission

Control and Blue Origin employees erupted in cheers once the craft successfully reached orbit 13 minutes later, a feat that drew praise from SpaceX's Elon Musk.

The first-stage booster missed its landing on a barge in the Atlantic, but the company stressed that the more important goal was achieved. Bezos said before the flight it was "a little crazy" to even try to land the booster on the first try.

"We did it!" Blue Origin's CEO Dave Limp said via X about reaching orbit. "On to spring and trying again on the landing."

For this test, the satellite was meant to remain inside the second stage while circling Earth. Plans called for the second stage to be placed in a safe condition to stay in a high, out-of-the-way orbit in accordance with NASA's practices for minimizing space junk.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

**Judge: Police can wind down federal oversight**

**LA** NEW ORLEANS — The New Orleans Police Department can begin winding down its long-standing federal oversight, a judge ruled Tuesday in response to a request from the city and the Justice Department to start wrapping up the monitoring program.

U.S. District Judge Susie Morgan said the police department has transformed itself into a more transparent and accountable agency, even though more work remains to be done over the next two years.

In 2013, the City of New Orleans agreed to what it called “the nation’s most expansive” federal oversight plan after a U.S. Justice Department investigation found evidence of racial bias, misconduct and a culture of impunity.

In the years since oversight started, the department has created a framework of audits and data analysis, and increased transparency by revising and publishing online training materials and policies, police officials said.

**Traffic into Manhattan drops in 1st week of toll**

**NY** NEW YORK — A new toll on drivers entering the core of Manhattan brought modest but measurable traffic reductions to New York City’s heavily-gridlocked streets in its first week of operation, according to preliminary data released Monday by the state’s transit authority.

Known as “congestion pricing,” the first-in-the-nation program launched Jan. 5, collecting \$9 from most passenger cars en-

tering the city below Central Park during peak hours and higher fees on trucks and other vehicles. In the days since, total traffic in the tolling zone has dropped by 7.5% — or roughly 43,000 cars per day — compared to the equivalent period last year, Metropolitan Transportation Authority officials said.

First proposed decades ago, the program is intended to raise billions of dollars in revenue for the cash-strapped MTA while easing congestion on the city’s streets. It follows similar initiatives in London, Singapore and Stockholm, which also saw immediate reductions in traffic after their tolls went live.

**New governor axes DEI, OKs vaccine exemptions**

**WV** CHARLESTON — Republican Gov. Patrick Morrisey issued a slew of aggressive executive orders on his first full day as West Virginia’s chief executive Tuesday, including one enabling families to receive religious exemptions from required school vaccinations — a massive departure for a state with one of the strictest vaccine policies in the nation.

Another order called for the termination of all Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, or DEI, initiatives from state-run institutions, something Morrisey said he believes will protect West Virginians from racial and gender discrimination — especially “inappropriate” preferential treatment for certain groups over others.

West Virginia Democratic Party Chair Mike Pushkin was not impressed with the executive orders, calling them a “troubling example” of executive over-

reach that “could harm us for generations.”

**Bill would limit colleges’ admission practices**

**FL** TALLAHASSEE — A Florida state lawmaker has filed a bill that would ban some public colleges and universities from admitting immigrants who are in the country without legal permission. The proposal comes the day after Gov. Ron DeSantis called for a special legislative session to help implement President-elect Donald Trump’s immigration policies.

The proposal was filed Tuesday by Republican state Sen. Randy Fine, who is currently running for a seat in Congress to replace Rep. Mike Waltz, Trump’s pick for national security adviser.

Fine’s bill would ban public schools of higher education with an acceptance rate of less than 85% from admitting students in the country without legal authorization.

The state is home to an estimated 1.2 million immigrants living in the United States without permission, according to the Pew Research Center.

**Anti-gun violence office created after shooting**

**WI** MADISON — Wisconsin’s Democratic governor created an office Tuesday dedicated to preventing gun violence, a month after a school shooting near the state Capitol.

Gov. Tony Evers also called on the Republican-controlled Legislature to pass a series of gun control and public safety measures, saying reducing violence

should be a “shared priority that transcends politics.”

Republican majorities in the Legislature shrunk after the November election, leading Evers and Democrats to say they hoped for more bipartisanship and consideration of ideas that have been summarily rejected in the past. But following the Dec. 16 shooting at the Abundant Life Christian School in Madison that left a student, teacher and the 15-year-old shooter dead, Republicans have not voiced support for any gun control measures backed by Democrats.

Wisconsin polls have repeatedly shown high public support for a variety of gun control measures.

**Town OKs removing 2 dams to improve river**

**ME** YARMOUTH — The Yarmouth town council voted unanimously this month to remove two town-owned dams on the Royal River and consider fish passage improvements at a stretch of rapids in between them, a historic vote more than two decades in the making.

The decision follows a federal proposal released last spring and is the most authoritative step to removing the Bridge Street Dam and East Elm Street Dam since 2009, when the town began studying how their removal could improve the Royal River’s health and fisheries.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined in April that removing the dams has the greatest potential to improve river habitat and restore fish access toward the headwaters of the Royal.

— From wire reports

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# 'Mr. Baseball' Bob Uecker dies at 90

*Associated Press*

MILWAUKEE — Bob Uecker, the voice of his hometown Milwaukee Brewers who after a short playing career earned the moniker "Mr. Baseball" and honors from the Hall of Fame, has died. He was 90.

The team announced Uecker died Thursday morning, calling it "one of the most difficult days in Milwaukee Brewers history." In a statement released by the club, Uecker's family said he had battled small cell lung cancer since early 2023.

"Even in the face of this challenge, his enthusiasm for life was always present, never allowing his spirit to falter," the family said.

Uecker was best known as a colorful comedian and broadcaster who earned his nickname during one of his numerous appearances on Johnny Carson's late night show.

Born and raised in Milwaukee, Uecker signed his first professional contract with the Milwaukee Braves in 1956 and

reached the majors in 1962. He lasted six seasons in the big leagues as a backup catcher, finishing with a .200 average and 14 homers.

"Career highlights? I had two," he often joked. "I got an intentional walk from Sandy Koufax and I got out of a run-down against the Mets."

Uecker also befriended former Brewers owner and MLB commissioner Bud Selig, who initially hired him as a scout. Selig liked to joke about how Uecker's initial scouting report was stained with mashed potatoes and gravy.

Selig eventually brought Uecker to the broadcast booth. Uecker became the voice of the Brewers in 1971, in the second year after the team moved from Seattle.

Uecker remained with the club from that point on and became one of its most indelible figures.

"There's no single person in this franchise's history who has been as iconic and as important

as Bob Uecker," said Jeff Levering, a member of the Brewers' broadcast team since 2015.

Even as his celebrity status grew nationwide, Uecker savored the opportunity to continue calling games to fans in his hometown.

"To be able to do a game each and every day throughout the summer and talk to people every day at 6:30 for a night game, you become part of people's families," Uecker once said. "I know that because I get mail from people that tell me that. That's part of the reward for being here, just to be recognized by the way you talk, the way you describe a game, whatever."

Uecker was honored by the Hall of Fame with the Ford C. Frick award in 2003 and spent nearly 20 minutes keeping the Cooperstown, N.Y., crowd of about 18,000 in stitches.

"Ueck" got his big break off the field after opening for Don Rickles at Al Hirt's nightclub in Atlanta in 1969. That perfor-

mance caught Hirt's attention, and the musician set him up to appear on "The Tonight Show" with Johnny Carson. He became one of Carson's favorite guests, making more than 100 appearances.

Carson was the one who dubbed Uecker "Mr. Baseball." And the name stuck.

But Uecker's comedy was just a part of his abilities. His warm storytelling and delivery made Uecker a natural to become one of the first color commentators on network TV broadcasts in the 1970s with ABC.

From there, Uecker reached most households as one of the Miller Lite All-Stars in popular commercials for the beer brand based out of Milwaukee.

"You talk about all the things Bob has done, he never wanted to leave Milwaukee," Selig said. "Above all, he made himself into a great play-by-play announcer. That's what he did. He's everything to this franchise and loves every minute of it."

## Swiatek moves into third-round match vs. Raducanu

*Associated Press*

MELBOURNE, Australia — Iga Swiatek rushed through the first set in 26 minutes and completed her 6-0, 6-2 second-round win over Rebecca Sramkova in an hour at the Australian Open.

The five-time Grand Slam champion makes a habit of advancing quickly through the early rounds at the majors. She's won almost 12% of her sets in Grand Slams by 6-0, which puts her in exclusive company.

So when No. 49-ranked Sramkova ended a seven-game losing run by holding serve Thursday, she raised her arm to acknowledge the applause from the Rod Laver Arena crowd. It was one of the few chances she had to celebrate.

"It was good to play in such an efficient way and just finish it quick," Swiatek said. "Also, you know, just feel the court and how it is in RLA."

Second-seeded Swiatek next faces 2021 U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu, who recovered from an early break in the second set to hold off Amanda Anisimova 6-3, 7-5.

Taylor Fritz hasn't wasted any time advancing to the third round, dropping just eight games across two rounds and spending just over three hours on court.

The 2024 U.S. Open runner-up and No. 4 seed beat Cristian Garin 6-2, 6-1, 6-0 to move into a third-round match against 38-year-old Gael Monfils, who last week became the oldest player

to win an ATP Tour title.

Also advancing on the men's side were local hope Alex de Minaur, seeded 8th, No. 16 Lorenzo Musetti, No. 19 Karen Khachanov and No. 21 Ben Shelton.

Raducanu has struggled with injuries since her breakthrough major in 2021, when she became the first qualifier to win a Grand Slam singles title.

She didn't play a warmup tournament ahead of this year's Australian Open because of a muscle strain and needed time during her match against Anisimova to get treatment on her back from a trainer.

After advancing beyond the second round for the first time at Melbourne Park, the No. 61-ranked Raducanu was confident she'd recover in time for

her next challenge against Swiatek.

"It'll be a very good match for me, another opportunity to test my game," she said. "Going into it, I have nothing to lose. I'm just going to swing."

Swiatek is moving on from the doping infringement which led to her one-month ban last year. And she's not showing any signs of it being a distraction.

She did everything at pace in the second round, including quick claps of her racket to acknowledge the crowd after her win. Swiatek didn't face a break point against Sramkova and converted five of the six she had. She finished off points with winners off both sides, and also hit some clean volleys on her ventures to the net.



# Ohio State has purposely paced its offense

Associated Press

Ohio State has been purposely pacing itself on offense all season, huddling more and trying to limit the number of snaps in each game of what the Buckeyes hoped and anticipated would be a long run.

"I know it sounds crazy, the huddle, it's almost like going back in time," coach Ryan Day said. "But it's sort of a new thing, really, because of the no-huddle offenses that have been around, and certainly we have been a part of that. ... We don't always do that, but it has allowed us an opportunity to be more cohesive on offense."

While Ohio State (13-2) has certainly slowed down, it's getting ready for its school-record 16th game. That will be for the national championship against Notre Dame (14-1) on

Monday night in Atlanta.

None of the other teams in the expanded 12-team playoff average fewer plays than the Buckeyes' 61.8 per game that rank 120th out of 134 Division I teams. That includes 57 in each of their last two playoff games, wins over undefeated Big Ten champion Oregon in the Rose Bowl and SEC runner-up Texas in the Cotton Bowl.

Ohio State's lowest average in at least 25 seasons is only slightly down from its 63.9 plays a game in 2023. But it's still more than 10 plays a game below the 72.1 average over a 10-season span that began with its last national championship in 2014, when the College Football Playoff debuted as a four-team playoff.

"That's kind of by design,"

said first-year Buckeyes offensive coordinator Chip Kelly, who between coaching Oregon and UCLA spent four seasons as an NFL head coach when those were 16-game regular seasons. "We didn't have games we were running 100 snaps a game. ... We had a long-term plan."

Oregon averaged more than 81 plays a game in 2012, Kelly's final season there. Even Ohio State averaged more than 80 plays a game in 2018, which was Urban Meyer's final season before Day took over as head coach.

Indiana, a first-round loser with two fewer games, is the only one of the 12 playoff teams with fewer total snaps than the Buckeyes' 927 this season.

TreVeyon Henderson has

967 yards rushing with 10 touchdowns for Ohio State, and Quinshon Judkins has 960 yards and 12 TDs — neither has run more than 17 times in a game, with Henderson's season high being 11. Graduate transfer quarterback Will Howard has thrown for 3,779 yards and 33 touchdowns, and he has three receivers with at least 50 catches.

"In terms of the way that we designed this year, part of it was the fact that we felt like by cutting down the number of snaps it would certainly help with the length of our season and the health of our team," Day said. "But also getting in a huddle and having Will Howard look 10 guys in the eye and break a huddle together, kind of grew as a team as the season went on."

# Jones leads No. 2 Iowa State past No. 9 Kansas

Associated Press

AMES, Iowa — Curtis Jones scored 25 points in his second start of the season to lead No. 2 Iowa State to a 74-57 win over No. 9 Kansas on Wednesday night, the Cyclones' 12th straight victory.

Iowa State (15-1, 5-0 Big 12) entered with its highest ranking in program history but without one of its key starters in forward Milan Momcilovic, who's out indefinitely with a left hand injury.

Jones, who scored a season-high 26 points off the bench against Texas Tech on Saturday, looked just as comfortable starting in Momcilovic's place. He made his first six shots and finished 5 of 6 on 3-pointers.

Dishon Jackson tied his season high with 17 points in his first appearance off the bench this season. Joshua Jefferson posted his sixth double-double with 10 points and 12 rebounds.

**No. 6 Tennessee 74, No. 23 Georgia 56:** Reserve Jordan

Gainey scored 19 points and the host Volunteers overcame a sluggish start to beat the Bulldogs.

Tennessee (16-1, 3-1 Southeastern Conference) broke the game open with a 26-4 run to start the second half. Zakai Zeigler had 16 points and seven assists. Jahmai Mashack scored 12 and Cade Phillips 10.

Asa Newell scored 13 points and Silas Demary 12 for Georgia (14-3, 2-2).

The Bulldogs, who led by a point at halftime, missed their first five shots of the second half and were slowed by a couple turnovers, allowing the Vols to build a 51-30 lead.

**No. 10 Houston 70, West Virginia 54:** J'Wan Roberts scored a season-high 22 points, L.J. Cryer added 18 and the host Cougars beat the Mountaineers for their ninth straight win.

Roberts had 17 points in the first half on 8-of-10 shooting. Emanuel Sharp, who finished with 14 points, added 12 as

Houston took a 40-27 lead into halftime.

Amani Hansberry scored 16 points and Javon Small added 13 points and eight assists for West Virginia (12-4, 3-2). The Mountaineers shot 44% and were 9 of 22 on 3-pointers.

**No. 12 Michigan State 90, Penn State 85:** Frankie Fidler had a season-high 18 points and Jaden Akins scored 16, leading the host Spartans to a victory over the Nittany Lions.

Michigan State (15-2, 6-0 Big Ten) has won 10 straight for the first time since the 2018-19 season, the most recent of their eight teams to reach the Final Four under Hall of Fame coach Tom Izzo.

Penn State (12-6, 2-5) has lost four in a row, including three straight to AP Top 25 teams.

**No. 17 Purdue 69, Washington 58:** Trey Kaufman-Renn scored 19 points to help the visiting Boilermakers dig themselves out of a hole and ultimately come away with a victo-

ry over the Huskies.

Purdue (14-4, 6-1 Big Ten) trailed by 10 late in the first half and was down by eight at the break, but opened the second period with an 11-2 surge to storm back in front.

Kaufman-Renn, who entered averaging 17.5 points per game, had a lot to do with the turnaround, scoring 13 points in the final 20 minutes.

The Boilermakers outscored Washington (10-8, 1-6) by 19 in the second half, and dominated it 40-22 in the paint.

**UNLV 65, No. 22 Utah State 62:** Dedan Thomas Jr. made a layup and a 12-foot fadeaway jumper to cap a closing seven-point run the host Rebels, who defeated the Aggies.

Utah State's Mason Falslev missed a 3-pointer in the final seconds, snapping the Aggies' six-game winning streak.

Jalen Hill led UNLV (10-7, 4-2 Mountain West) with 15 points, Julian Rishwain finished with 13 and Jailen Bedford had 10.

# Brunson, Hart lead Knicks over 76ers in OT

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Jalen Brunson scored 16 of his 38 points in the fourth quarter and overtime, and Josh Hart had the 11th triple-double of his career as the New York Knicks beat the Philadelphia 76ers 125-119 on Wednesday night.

Hart had 10 points, 17 rebounds and 12 assists, Mikal Bridges scored 23 points and OG Anunoby added 17 as the Knicks won a rematch of last year's first-round playoff series.

Tyrese Maxey led the 76ers with 33 points. Paul George had 26, and Kelly Oubre Jr. added 16 points and 10 rebounds.

Both teams played without their All-Star centers. Joel Embiid (left foot sprain) was ruled out for the sixth straight game. Karl-Anthony Towns missed the game with a right thumb sprain.

After missing a chance to win the game at the buzzer, New York scored the first eight points of overtime. Anunoby swooped in for a dunk, then Brunson added the next six on a 3-pointer and three free throws.

**Raptors 110, Celtics 97:** RJ Barrett had 22 points and 10 rebounds, and host Toronto snapped a 10-game losing streak against Boston with a victory over the Celtics.

Jakob Poeltl added 16 points and 11 rebounds as the Raptors won consecutive games for the third time. Scottie Barnes scored 18 points.

Toronto, which beat Golden State on Monday, has yet to win three straight this season.

Peyton Pritchard scored 20 points, Kristaps Porzingis had 18 and Jayson Tatum added 16 for Boston. The Celtics shot 16 for 46 from 3-point range.

**Hawks 110, Bulls 94:** Keaton Wallace had a career-high 27 points and short-handed Atlanta beat host Chicago.

Wallace nearly doubled his previous high of 14. He made four 3-pointers and had six as-

sists.

Daeqwon Plowden scored 19 points in his NBA debut after being called up from the G League's College Park Skyhawks.

Dyson Daniels scored 18 points, and Onyeka Okongwu added 14 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists to help the Hawks win for the third time in four games even though Trae Young sat out due to a bruised right rib.

**Bucks 122, Magic 93:** Damian Lillard scored 30 points and Giannis Antetokounmpo had 26 points and 11 rebounds as host Milwaukee capitalized on a fast start for the second straight night and trounced Orlando.

The Bucks (22-17) passed the Magic (23-19) to take over fourth place in the Eastern Conference. Milwaukee is 3-0 against Orlando, with the finale of the season series scheduled for March 8 at Milwaukee.

The Bucks led 34-16 at the end of the first quarter and rolled to their most lopsided victory of the season. Milwaukee was playing one night after racing to a 130-115 victory over Sacramento that snapped the Kings' seven-game win streak.

Paolo Banchero scored 22 points for the Magic.

**Rockets 128, Nuggets 108:** Jalen Green scored 34 points, Alperen Sengun had 20 points, nine rebounds and eight assists and visiting Houston beat short-handed Denver.

Green, who hit six 3-pointers, continued his recent scoring surge. He is averaging 32 points in the Rockets' last six games, including a career-best 42 points against Memphis on Monday.

Fred VanVleet added 16 points, eight assists and three steals for Houston, which beat Denver for the fifth time in six meetings.

Jamal Murray and Christian Braun each scored 22 point for the Nuggets, which had 18 turnovers in the loss, including five

apiece from its starting backcourt of Murray and Russell Westbrook.

**Pelicans 119, Mavericks 116:** Dejounte Murray scored 30 points, Trey Murphy III blocked Spencer Dinwiddie's layup for the lead with 4 seconds left and host New Orleans outlasted injury-depleted Dallas.

Murphy had 24 points and 10 rebounds, capped by game-sealing free throws with 2 seconds remaining, and Javonte Green added 13 points to help the Pelicans (10-32) take their third victory in four games after winning just five of their first 34 contests.

Daniel Gafford scored a career-high 27 points on 12-of-13 shooting and also grabbed 12 rebounds for the Mavericks, who played without top two scorers Luka Doncic (left calf) and Kyrie Irving (back), as well as usual starting center Dereck Lively (right ankle).

**Grizzlies 129, Spurs 115:** Ja Morant had 21 points and 12 assists to lead visiting Memphis to a win over San Antonio.

Desmond Bane scored 21 points, Santi Aldama added 20 and Jaren Jackson Jr. 19 for the Grizzlies, who had lost four of their last six games entering Wednesday.

Spurs rookie Stephon Castle had a season-high 26 points and Victor Wembanyama finished 13 points, 12 rebounds and eight blocks.

**Hornets 117, Jazz 112:** Mark Williams scored a career high 31 points and had 13 rebounds to help visiting Charlotte beat Utah.

LaMelo Ball added 27 points, nine assists and three blocks to help the Hornets snap a seven-game road losing streak. Miles Bridges had 25 points and 10 rebounds, and Brandon Miller finished with 20 points.

Keyonte George led the Jazz with 26 points and six assists. Brice Sensabaugh added 19 points.

**Warriors 116, Timberwolves 115:** Stephen Curry made seven 3-pointers and scored 31 points to help visiting Golden State stave off a furious comeback by Minnesota for a victory.

Andrew Wiggins added 24 points for a depleted Warriors team seeking a spark on the last stop on a four-game trip after falling below .500 for the first time this season in a loss Monday at Toronto.

Anthony Edwards and Donte DiVincenzo each scored 28 points for the Timberwolves, who trailed by 24 points late in the first quarter and fought back for a 108-all tie with 1:07 left.

**Lakers 117, Heat 108:** Rui Hachimura scored 23 points and Anthony Davis had 22 points and 11 rebounds as host Los Angeles snapped a three-game skid with a victory over Miami.

LeBron James finished with 22 points and nine assists and Austin Reaves added 14 points and 14 rebounds as the Lakers won for the first time since having two games postponed due to the deadly wildfires in Southern California.

Tyler Herro shot 7 for 12 from 3-point distance and scored 34 points for the Heat, who lost both games of a Los Angeles swing after falling to the Clippers on Monday. Haywood Highsmith and Nikola Jovic each scored 12 points.

**Clippers 126, Nets 67:** Kawhi Leonard scored 23 points, James Harden added 21 and host Los Angeles had the largest margin of victory in franchise history, routing Brooklyn.

The Clippers broke the team margin mark of 50 against Oklahoma City on April 10, 2022. It was also the worst loss in Nets' history, eclipsing a 52-point defeat to Houston on Oct. 18, 1978.

LA's largest lead was 64 points midway through the fourth quarter, despite coach Tyronn Lue emptying his bench late in the third quarter.