

## Trump returns to power for second term

*From wire reports*

After taking an oath as the nation's 47th president Monday, President Donald Trump pledged in a speech to "put America first" and said that "the golden age of America begins right now."

Trump said the United States would "once again consider itself a growing nation" and one that "expands our territory." He critiqued the Biden administration and started laying out his priorities, including declaring a national emergency at the southern border.

Trump is promising a flurry of actions on Day 1 on immigration, energy production, crime and other issues.

Trump was sworn in Monday by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr., officially becoming the 47th president of the United States. JD Vance was sworn in as vice president.

Trump, who overcame impeachments, criminal indictments and a pair of assassination attempts to win another term in the White House, will act swiftly

after the ceremony. Dozens of executive orders have already been prepared for his signature to clamp down on border crossings, increase fossil fuel development and end diversity and inclusion programs across the federal government.

Declaring that government faces a "crisis of trust," Trump said in his inaugural address that under his administration "our sovereignty will be reclaimed. Our safety will be restored. The scales of justice will be rebalanced."

Trump claimed "a mandate to completely and totally reverse a horrible betrayal," promising to "give the people back their faith, their wealth, their democracy and indeed their freedom."

"From this moment on," he added, "America's decline is over."

The executive orders are the first step in what Trump is calling "the complete restoration of America and the revolution of common sense."

Other goals will prove more difficult, perhaps testing the pa-

tience of supporters who were promised quick success. Trump has talked about lowering prices after years of inflation, but his plans for tariffs on imports from foreign countries could have the opposite effect.

Frigid weather rewrote the pageantry of the day. Trump's swearing-in was moved indoors to the Capitol Rotunda — the first time that has happened in 40 years — and the inaugural parade was replaced by an event at a downtown arena. Throngs of Trump supporters who descended on the city to watch the inaugural ceremony outside the Capitol from the National Mall were left to find other places to view the festivities.

At the Capitol, Vance was sworn in first, taking the oath read by Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh on a Bible given to him by his great-grandmother. Trump followed moments after noon, using both a family Bible and the one used by President Abraham Lincoln at his 1861 inauguration as Chief Justice John Roberts administered his oath.

A cadre of billionaires and tech titans — including Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos, Tim Cook and Sundar Pichai — were given prominent positions in the Capitol Rotunda, mingling with Trump's incoming team before the ceremony began. Also there was Elon Musk, the world's richest man, who is expected to lead an effort to slash spending and federal employees.

Trump and his wife, Melania, were greeted at the North Portico of the executive mansion by outgoing President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden for the customary tea and coffee reception. It was a stark departure from four years ago, when Trump refused to acknowledge Biden's victory or attend his inauguration.

Trump also acknowledged that he was taking office on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which honors the slain civil rights hero. Trump said, "We will strive together to make his dream a reality," and he thanked Black and Latino voters for their support in November.

## Trump to sign executive orders on sexes, DEI, immigration

*From wire reports*

President Donald Trump intended to sign an executive order that recognizes two sexes — male and female — and one ending diversity, equity and inclusion efforts in the federal government — taking action on two cultural issues that galvanized his base.

Trump was also expected to issue a series of orders aimed at remaking America's immigration policies, ending asylum access, sending troops to the southern border and ending birthright citizenship, an incoming White House official said.

The sex and DEI orders were detailed by an incoming White House official on a call Monday ahead of Trump's swearing-in ceremony. The president has vowed to take action on a slew of orders on the first day of

his second term.

While the exact scope of the orders is still unclear, they are likely to invite legal challenges.

The gender order was cast by the official as intended to protect women from gender ideology. The effort defines two sexes and would require agencies to give force to the definitions and terms in the order when applying statutes and regulations.

The order seeks to mandate that agencies will use the term sex not gender and would have the secretaries of State, Homeland Security and other agencies ensure that official documents, including passports and visas, reflect sex accurately, according to the incoming official.

It would also seek to ensure that Ameri-

cans' rights to free speech and religious freedom are being protected, according to the official, and that taxpayer funds are not being used for transition health care.

The order would also protect spaces for women in facilities, including in prisons and rape shelters.

The second order would end DEI initiatives in the federal government, targeting diversity practices that have drawn the ire of conservatives, who have cast the measures as discriminatory against white Americans.

Concerning immigration, it's unclear how Trump would carry out some of his executive orders, including ending automatic citizenship for everyone born in the country, while others were expected to be immediately challenged in the courts.

# Biden pardons family members, Milley, Fauci

*The Washington Post*

Outgoing President Joe Biden issued preemptive pardons Monday to retired Army Gen. Mark Milley, Anthony Fauci, members and staff of the Jan. 6 congressional committee and police officers who testified before the panel, an extraordinary move just hours before President Donald Trump's inauguration.

He also pardoned several of his immediate family members.

In a lengthy statement, Biden said that he was issuing the pardons not because of any wrongdoing by those individuals but to protect them from potential political prosecution. Trump has repeatedly threatened to go after those who have crossed him politically or attempted to hold him accountable for his efforts to overturn the 2020 election results.

"These public servants have served our nation with honor and distinction and do not deserve to be the targets of unjustified and politically motivated prosecutions," Biden said. "I believe in the rule of law, and I am optimistic that the strength of our legal institutions will ultimately prevail over politics.

But these are exceptional circumstances, and I cannot in good conscience do nothing."

In a more personal act, Biden also preemptively pardoned his siblings — James Biden, Frank Biden and Valerie Biden Owens — as well as their spouses, John Owens and Sara Biden.

"My family has been subjected to unrelenting attacks and threats, motivated solely by a desire to hurt me — the worst kind of partisan politics," Biden said. "Unfortunately, I have no reason to believe these attacks will end."

The unprecedented actions — a president has never pardoned people neither charged with nor suspected of wrongdoing — reflected the historic uncertainties of the moment, as a president takes office having regularly threatened the imprisonment of his political opponents.

It also gave a glimpse of the fear and anger underlying the stately ceremonies of Inauguration Day, as the White House made the announcement hours before Biden welcomed Trump there for a tea-and-coffee reception.

Biden, hours from the end of a decades-long political career in Washington, did not name Trump in his statement, but he repeatedly alluded to the incoming president's actions and his attacks on those now being pardoned.

"Rather than accept accountability, those who perpetrated the January 6th attack have taken every opportunity to undermine and intimidate those who participated in the Select Committee in an attempt to rewrite history, erase the stain of January 6th for partisan gain, and seek revenge, including by threatening criminal prosecutions," he said.

Milley, a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he was "deeply grateful" for Biden's decision.

"After forty-three years of faithful service in uniform to our Nation, protecting and defending the Constitution, I do not wish to spend whatever remaining time the Lord grants me fighting those who unjustly might seek retribution for perceived slights," Milley said in a statement. "I do not want to put my family, my friends, and those with whom I served

through the resulting distraction, expense, and anxiety."

Because such pardons are unprecedented, they have not been tested in court.

But the courts have often been deferential in allowing presidents to exercise authorities explicitly granted to them in the Constitution — such as the pardon power — as they see fit.

Recipients of the preemptive pardons include Fauci, former director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, who was a public face of the government response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fauci has faced years of investigation by congressional Republicans who allege that the longtime civil servant was not forthcoming about the possible origins of the pandemic.

Trump and other conservatives also blame Fauci and other public health officials for recommending measures that they say were overly harsh.

Fauci has dismissed the allegations that he participated in a coverup as "preposterous" and has said he was appropriately transparent about his agency's role.

## Stars not avoiding Trump's 2nd inauguration like before

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Carrie Underwood might not be Beyoncé or Garth Brooks in the celebrity superstar ecosystem. But the singer's participation in President Donald Trump's inauguration is nevertheless a sign of the changing tides, where mainstream entertainers, from Nelly to The Village People are more publicly and more enthusiastically associating with the new administration.

Eight years ago, Trump reportedly struggled to enlist

stars to be part of the swearing-in and the various glitzy balls that follow. The concurrent protest marches around the nation had more famous entertainers than the swearing-in, which stood in stark contrast to someone like Barack Obama, whose second inaugural ceremony had performances from Beyoncé, James Taylor and Kelly Clarkson and a series of starry onlookers.

There were always some celebrity Trump supporters, like Kid Rock, Hulk Hogan, Jon

Voight, Rosanne Barr, Mike Tyson, Sylvester Stallone and Dennis Rodman, to name a few. But Trump's victory this time around was decisive and while Hollywood may always skew largely liberal, the slate of names participating in his inauguration weekend events has improved.

Kid Rock, Billy Ray Cyrus, The Village People and Lee Greenwood all performed at a MAGA style rally Sunday. Those performing at inaugural balls include the rapper Nelly,

country music band Rascal Flatts, country singer Jason Aldean and singer-songwriter Gavin DeGraw.

"The people who are coming out and participating directly are still a small subset of the entire universe of what we call celebrity," said Robert Thompson, a professor of pop culture at Syracuse University. "But we're seeing a lot more celebrities who are coming out and supporting Trump. There may not be that distinct division that we saw before."

# No beards: 'We're Marines, we're different'

By MATTHEW ADAMS  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Gen. Eric Smith, the Marine Corps commandant, said Marines are different, even when it comes to beards.

Smith told reporters Wednesday that the service would not make any changes to its regulations that would allow Marines to grow beards.

"We're Marines, and we're different. We don't have beards," he said during a Defense Writers Group discussion. "The Marine Corps has a brand, and we're making our recruiting mission. We've always made our recruiting mission, and what we don't want to do is tinker with the ethos of the Marine Corps—you

joined us, we didn't join you. You knew that coming in. You signed up. We don't have beards, and you knew that coming in."

Some Marines can grow a beard through a waiver process for pseudofolliculitis barbae, which causes painful razor bumps and disproportionately affects Black men.

"That's a medical waiver, not a fashion waiver," Smith said. "It's not a 'Well, I decided I wanted to.'"

All military services have faced growing legal and internal pressure to relax grooming standards as debates on social media and in various other forums highlight the struggle to balance tradition and uniformity with individual rights. Military offi-

cials have argued facial hair could prevent a perfect seal of a gas mask.

"When I retire, I'm going to grow one," Smith added. "I won't have to deal with a ... mask."

In December 2022, a federal appeals court ruled three Sikh men should be allowed to go through Marine Corps recruit training with their turbans and beards intact. The panel ruled the Marine Corps had not proved that allowing the recruits to keep their beards and turbans for religious reasons would threaten cohesion and uniformity.

Currently, airmen are not required to shave only if they have a religious exemption or a med-

ical waiver for conditions such as pseudofolliculitis barbae.

In the latest National Defense Authorization Act, Congress wants the Air Force to examine the pros and cons of allowing airmen to grow beards, with a prospective April 1 deadline for service leaders to deliver findings to lawmakers.

The House Armed Services Committee in May approved an amendment requiring the Navy to brief committee members on a 2023 study by the Naval Health Research Center on the effect of beards on gas mask seals, with the briefing due by March 1.

The Navy and the Coast Guard were the last branches to ban beards, doing so in 1985 and 1986, respectively.

## Navy Secretary Del Toro names 19 ships to end his term

By CAITLYN BURCHETT  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro in recent days has named more than a dozen future ships, including aircraft carriers and submarines, to culminate his time leading the sea service.

A total of 19 Navy ships have been named by Del Toro in the past two weeks.

The latest slew of ships to be named included the future USS McClung, the first ship in the new McClung-class of medium landing ships. The Navy's Medium Landing Ship program, previously called the Light Amphibious Warship program, seeks to purchase and build 18 to 35 new amphibious ships to support Marine Corps operations. The ships are meant to transport troops and equipment from ship to shore. The first-in-class ship honors Maj. Megan McClung, a Marine Corps public affairs officer who was killed in action while serving in Iraq. This will be the first Navy vessel to bear her name.

Also announced were the future USNS Joshua L. Goldberg

and USNS Thomas D. Parham Jr. — two future John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oilers.

Del Toro also announced the names of three Flight III Arleigh Burke-class, guided-missile destroyers and one Constellation-class, guided-missile frigate. Those warships are future destroyers USS Ray Mabus, USS Kyle Carpenter, and USS Robert R. Ingram and future frigate USS Everett Alvarez Jr.

The three destroyers honor former Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, and Medal of Honor recipients Lance Cpl. Kyle Carpenter and Navy Corpsman Robert Ingram.

The destroyers join two others named earlier in the month — the future USS Robert Kerrey and USS Intrepid.

Future frigate USS Everett Alvarez Jr. pays tribute to the first American aviator shot down over Vietnam and the longest-held prisoner of war in North Vietnam, according to the Navy History and Heritage Command. The constellation-class, guided-missile frigate represents the Navy's next-generation small surface combat vessel.

Del Toro announced that the names of the Navy's next two Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carriers will honor former presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. The future USS William J. Clinton and USS George W. Bush will be the fifth and sixth Ford-class carriers.

Ford-class ships are the Navy's newest aircraft carriers, packed with never-before-seen technology meant to carry the service into the 21st century.

The names of four future submarines were announced in a video message to the Navy's submarine community.

The next Columbia-class submarine will be the USS Groton, named for the Connecticut town considered to be the submarine capital of the world because it is where Navy submarines are built. The Columbia-class submarine is a new class of nuclear subs designed to replace the Navy's Ohio-class submarines.

Additionally, three Virginia-class submarines were named the future USS Potomac, USS Norfolk and USS Brooklyn.

Del Toro also named a future

San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock USS Travis Manion, along with two T-AGOS — the first two ships in the newly named Explorer class of ocean surveillance ships — the future USNS Don Walsh and the future USNS Victor Vescovo.

The amphibious ship honors a Marine who was ambushed while searching a suspected insurgent house in Iraq's Anbar province. As he led a counterattack, Manion was fatally wounded by a sniper while aiding his fellow Marines. For his actions, he received the Silver Star and the Bronze Star with valor.

Del Toro also named a future Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ship USNS Portsmouth during a ship naming ceremony at the Naval Medical Center in Portsmouth, Va. Bethesda-class expeditionary medical ships are designed to optimize hospital-level medical care in support of maritime operations.

President Donald Trump, who entered office Monday, has tapped businessman and mega donor John Phelan as his pick for the next Navy secretary.



# Houthis say they'll now limit attacks

*Associated Press*

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Yemen's Houthi rebels have signaled they now will limit their attacks in the Red Sea corridor to only Israeli-affiliated ships, just as a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip entered its second day Monday.

The Houthis' announcement, made in an email sent to ship-owners and others on Sunday, likely won't be enough to encourage global firms to reenter the route that's crucial for cargo and energy shipments moving between

Asia and Europe.

Their attacks have halved traffic through the region, cutting deeply into revenues for Egypt, which runs the Suez Canal linking the Red Sea to the Mediterranean.

"The ceasefire is considered fragile," said Jakob P. Larsen, the head of maritime security for BIMCO, the largest international association representing ship-owners.

"It is assessed that even minor deviations from the ceasefire agreements could lead to hostil-

ities, which would subsequently prompt the Houthis to again direct threats against a broader range of international shipping."

The Houthis separately planned a military statement on Monday, likely about the decision.

The Houthis made the announcement through their Humanitarian Operations Coordination Center, saying it was "stopping sanctions" on the other vessels it has previously targeted since November 2023.

For Israeli ships, those "sanc-

tions ... will be stopped upon the full implementation of all phases" of the ceasefire, it added.

However, the center left open resuming attacks against both the United States and the United Kingdom, which have launched airstrikes targeting the rebels over their seaborne assaults.

"In the event of any aggression ... the sanctions will be reinstated against the aggressor state," the center said. "You will be promptly informed of such measures should they be implemented."

## Ceasefire brings joy, fear for Israelis, Palestinians

*Associated Press*

RAMALLAH, West Bank — After 15 months of collective grief and anxiety, three Israeli hostages left Hamas captivity and returned to Israel, and dozens of Palestinian prisoners walked free from Israeli jail, leaving both Israelis and Palestinians torn between celebration and trepidation as the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took hold Sunday.

The skies above Gaza and Israel were silent for the first time in over a year, and Palestinians

began returning to what was left of the homes they fled across the war-ravaged enclave, started to check on relatives left behind and, in many cases, to bury their dead. After months of tight Israeli restrictions, more than 600 trucks carrying humanitarian aid rolled into the devastated territory.

The ceasefire that went into effect Sunday morning stirred modest hopes for ending the Israel-Hamas war.

But in Israel, the joy of seeing freed hostages Emily Damari, Romi Gonen, and Doron Stein-

brecher reunited with their families was tempered by major questions over the fate of the nearly 100 others abducted in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack, still in captivity in Gaza.

Damari, Gonen and Steinbrecher were the first among 33 Israeli hostages who are meant to be released in the coming six weeks in a deal that includes a pause in fighting, the release of nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and increased fuel and aid deliveries for Gaza.

What happens after the deal's

first phase of 42 days is uncertain. The agreement's subsequent stages call for more releases of hostages and prisoners and a permanent end to the war.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was pressured by the outgoing Biden administration and incoming Trump administration to secure a deal before the president-elect's inauguration Monday in Washington, has said he received assurances from Trump that Israel could continue fighting Hamas if necessary.

## Officials: Accidents behind undersea cable damage

*The Washington Post*

LONDON — Ruptures of undersea cables that have rattled European security officials in recent months were likely the result of maritime accidents rather than Russian sabotage, according to several U.S. and European intelligence officials.

The determination reflects an emerging consensus among U.S. and European security services, according to senior officials from three countries involved in ongoing investigations of a string of incidents in which critical seabed energy

and communications lines have been severed.

The cases raised suspicion that Russia was targeting undersea infrastructure as part of a broader campaign of hybrid attacks across Europe, and prompted stepped-up security measures including an announcement last week that NATO would launch new patrol and surveillance operations in the Baltic Sea.

But so far, officials said, investigations involving the United States and a half-dozen European security services have

turned up no indication that commercial ships suspected of dragging anchors across seabed systems did so intentionally or at the direction of Moscow.

Instead, U.S. and European officials said that the evidence gathered to date — including intercepted communications and other classified intelligence — points to accidents caused by inexperienced crews serving aboard poorly maintained vessels.

U.S. officials cited "clear explanations" that have come to

light in each case indicating a likelihood that the damage was accidental, and a lack of evidence suggesting Russian culpability. Officials with two European intelligence services said that they concurred with U.S. assessments.

Despite initial suspicions that Russia was involved, one European official said there is "counter evidence" suggesting otherwise. The U.S. and European officials declined to elaborate and spoke on the condition of anonymity, citing the sensitivity of ongoing investigations.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

**Battery plant fire raises air quality concerns**

**CA** SAN FRANCISCO — A fire at the world's largest battery storage plant in Northern California smoldered after sending plumes of toxic smoke into the atmosphere, leading to the evacuation of up to 1,500 people. The blaze also shook up the young battery storage industry.

The fire at the Vistra Energy lithium battery plant in Moss Landing generated huge flames and significant amounts of smoke but had diminished significantly, Fire Chief Joel Mendoza of the North County Fire Protection District of Monterey County said. Vistra is based in Texas.

"There's very little, if any, of a plume emitting from that building," Mendoza said. Crews are not engaging with the fire and are waiting for it to burn out, he said. Letting lithium-ion battery fires burn out is not unusual because they burn very hot and are hard to put out.

**Jury says CNN defamed Navy vet in Afghan story**

**FL** PANAMA CITY — After a Florida jury found that CNN defamed a U.S. Navy veteran who helped rescue endangered Afghans, the network reached a settlement to avoid a punishing order that it pay punitive damages.

The jury in Panama City, Fla., ruled in favor of Zachary Young. Young blamed CNN for destroying his business through a 2021 story on Jake Tapper's broadcast about a "black market" of extracting desperate Afghans following the Taliban takeover.

The jury awarded Young \$5 million in compensatory damages. A second phase of the trial, to award punitive damages, was underway before Circuit Court Judge William S. Henry interrupted proceedings to announce a settlement. Terms were not disclosed.

Young's business helped smuggle people out of Afghanistan, but he said he worked exclusively with deep-pocketed outside sponsors like Bloomberg and Audible. CNN showed his face in a story that primarily raised questions about contractors who were charging Afghans themselves fees as much as \$10,000 to get out.

He testified that the term "black market" implied he was involved in something illegal.

**Man rescues dog floating along freezing river**

**VT** BERLIN — Spotting a dog struggling to stay afloat in a icy Vermont River, Chris MacRitchie never hesitated.

He jumped into the frigid waters and waded over to the dog, gently pulling it ashore where his wife, Erica, draped it with a sweatshirt. The dramatic rescue of the dog in Berlin, Vt., was caught on video by his son.

MacRitchie's son, Ace, first spotted the dog as they were going through the drive-thru of a nearby Dunkin' Donuts.

When they reached the river embankment, the father of two felt he had no choice but to save the pooch.

After retrieving the dog, MacRitchie called the dog's owner, Morgan Cerasoli, whose number was listed on the dog tag.

Cerasoli said she had been looking for her dog, a 7-year-old

mutt who had originally been rescued from the side of the road in South Carolina.

**Case on LGBTQ+ books in schools goes to high court**

**DC** WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court agreed to hear an appeal from parents in suburban Washington who want to pull their children from elementary school classes that use books featuring LGBTQ+ characters.

The justices will review an appeals court decision that went against parents in Montgomery County, Md.

The parents claim that the policy violates their constitutional religious rights by not allowing them to opt out of lessons that include the storybooks.

The stories include a family's attendance at a pride parade, a girl's anxiety about giving a valentine to another girl and a transgender boy's decision to share his gender identity with his family.

The parents argue that public schools can't force kids to participate in instruction that violates their faith. They point to opt-out provisions in sex education and note that the district originally allowed parents to pull their children when the storybooks were being taught, before abruptly reversing course.

**Breastfeeding women exempt from jury duty**

**AL** BIRMINGHAM — Breastfeeding women in Alabama will be excused from jury duty, the state's highest court ordered unanimously, in response to public outcry from a mother who said that she was threatened with child protective services for bringing her

nursing infant into court.

The Alabama Supreme Court issued an administrative order that requires Alabama judges to have written procedures excusing breastfeeding mothers from jury duty. Previously, state code did not specifically make exemptions for nursing mothers.

"A nursing mother of an infant child clearly qualifies for the excuse from jury service" under the existing court codes, the order read. All nine justices concurred with the order.

**College game flagged for unusual gambling activity**

**MI** YPSILANTI — Eastern Michigan played two men's college basketball games this season that were flagged for unusual betting, a university spokesperson confirmed.

The Eagles' game at Central Michigan and against Wright State on Dec. 21 had suspicious gambling activity that prompted betting firm Integrity Compliance 360 to alert its clients, ESPN first reported.

Eastern Michigan University spokesman Greg Steiner said the school became aware of the matter.

"At this time, we do not know anything further about what may have precipitated the suspicious activity," Steiner said. "We are working with the Mid-American Conference and will provide further details as we learn additional information."

The betting firm alerted clients that a bettor attempted to place their largest wager to date on Central Michigan to cover the spread in the first half of a Mid-American Conference game against the Eagles.

— From wire reports

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# Allen outduels Jackson as Bills top Ravens

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — Josh Allen heard the “MVP! MVP!” chants directed at him from the stands, but the Bills quarterback deflected the credit following Buffalo’s hard-fought victory in the divisional playoff round.

This season’s Bills were thought to be thin on both sides of the ball. And it wasn’t one player or one unit that led to Buffalo beating Lamar Jackson and the Baltimore Ravens 27-25 on Sunday night, ending its string of three straight losses at this stage of the postseason and moving on to play the two-time defending champion Kansas City Chiefs in the AFC title game next Sunday.

It was everyone.

“What a complete win,” Allen said. “All year, this team has heard we’ve got no talent, we’re too small, we can’t stop the run, we’re not good enough to com-

pete. We’ve just put our head down and worked hard. I’m so proud of our defense. I’m so proud of our offense and special teams.”

Allen rushed for touchdowns of 1 and 4 yards, but he threw for only 127 yards and rushed for 20. The Bills finished with a modest 273 yards of offense that included rookie Ray Davis scoring on a 1-yard run.

How about that often maligned defense, which gave up 271 yards rushing in a 35-10 loss to the Ravens in Week 4?

On Sunday, Buffalo allowed 176 yards rushing and 416 overall to Baltimore, but compensated by forcing three turnovers.

“We were motivated all week, man,” said linebacker Terrel Bernard, who forced and recovered Mark Andrews’ fumble to set up Tyler Bass’ 21-yard field goal with 3:29 left. “We put a lot of work into it. And to see the re-

sults start to pay off right now, I can’t say enough about this team.”

The Bills made fewer mistakes than the Ravens on a snow-slicked field and hung on when the usually sure-handed and wide-open Andrews dropped a 2-point conversion pass from Jackson, allowing the ball to bounce off his chest with 1:33 left. Jackson connected with a sliding Isaiah Likely for a 24-yard touchdown to give Baltimore a chance to tie it.

The Ravens tried an onside kick and cornerback Rasul Douglas fielded the ball on two hops.

Buffalo closed its season 10-0 at home, including a 30-21 win over the previously unbeaten Chiefs in Week 11. Now the Bills head to Kansas City, where they’ve been eliminated twice in the past four years — more recently in an unforgettable finish three years ago, when Buffalo

blew a three-point lead in the final 13 seconds of regulation and lost 42-36 in overtime.

“We know what they are. They’re the perennial of what you want to be in the NFL,” Allen said. “You’ve got to beat them to get past them. So, you know, we’re going to enjoy this one tonight.”

Baltimore had one of the NFL’s most productive offenses in the regular season but fell a win short of reaching the conference title game, which they lost to the Chiefs a year ago. Scrutiny of Jackson’s playoff performances will only increase as he fell to 3-5 in the postseason.

The Ravens fell to 5-8 in the divisional round, including 1-4 in their last five.

Jackson finished 18-for-25 for 254 yards and two touchdowns, including a 16-yarder to Rashod Bateman to cap Baltimore’s first possession.

## Barkley runs for 2 long TDs, Eagles advance over Rams

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Saquon Barkley blew through a hole and ran untouched in the wintry mix, the Eagles’ 2,000-yard rusher smacking his helmet with his hand on his final snowy steps of a 78-yard touchdown run.

The Rams had braced for gusty winds and a heightened chance of snow on a trip to Philadelphia.

They were blown over by Barkley.

Barkley waved his arms in celebration as he scampered along the back of the end zone before he slid into the snow in the late-game playoff celebration.

Barkley dashed through the snow for touchdown runs of 78 and 62 yards and finished with 205 yards rushing, Jalen Hurts had a 44-yard scoring run and the Eagles held on against turnover-happy Los Angeles 28-22 on Sunday to reach the NFC championship game for the second time in three years.

“This is the reason why I came here,” Barkley said. “This was the best opportunity to play in a game like this.”

Barkley, who left the Giants in free agency to sign a three-year deal for \$26 million

guaranteed, ran for a 62-yard score in the first half and stretched the lead in the fourth on the 78-yard score that gave him four touchdowns of 60-plus yards in two games this season against the Rams.

Barkley gave Hurts a little heads up before the snap that a special play was about to develop.

“It was fun, It was a play that I asked for,” Barkley said. “It’s a beautiful thing when stuff like that happens.”

These Philly Snow Birds had cause for celebration — they will host the NFC championship game Sunday against Washington after the Commanders stunned No. 1 seed Detroit on Saturday.

Los Angeles kept the upset threat alive — caused in large part by two missed extra points by Eagles kicker Jake Elliott.

Matthew Stafford, who threw for 324 yards with sore ribs, kept the Rams in it with a 4-yard TD pass to Colby Parkinson that made it 28-22. Los Angeles got the ball back with two minutes left and Stafford completed consecutive passes of 11 and 37 yards to move the ball into Philadelphia territory.

But Stafford was sacked by Jalen Carter on third down and threw an incomplete pass

on fourth down to end the threat.

That came after the Rams suffered from a flurry of fumbles in the fourth quarter, one by running back Kyren Williams that led to a field goal for the Eagles and a strip-sack of Stafford that led to another kick by Elliott to give Philadelphia a 22-15 lead.

The Eagles are set to host the NFC championship game for the fifth time since Lincoln Financial Field opened in 2003.

Philadelphia defenders frolicked in the winter mess and made snow angels in the end zone to celebrate the turnovers. Stadium workers used snow blowers to clear yard lines and hash marks, while Eagles players scooped and kicked away snow to clear a circle for Elliott’s field goal attempts.

Hurts threw for just 128 yards, his mobility hampered in the second half after he was fitted for a knee brace. He didn’t miss any snaps, but was easily mauled on a safety. He was sacked seven times.

Hurts suffered a concussion that cost him in two games in a loss at Washington in December. It was Philadelphia’s only loss after returning from the bye with a 2-2 record.

Hurts said he expected to play against the Commanders.



# Jokic, Nuggets pull away from Magic

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Nikola Jokic had 20 points, 14 rebounds, 10 assists and three blocks without playing the fourth quarter and the Denver Nuggets rolled to a 113-100 win over the Orlando Magic on Sunday night.

Christian Braun added 20 points and 11 rebounds for the Nuggets, who won their six straight road game. Jamal Murray scored 19 points and Michael Porter Jr. had 15 points and six rebounds.

Wendell Carter Jr. led the Magic with 16 points and 13 rebounds. Anthony Black came off the bench with 14 points and five assists.

**Heat 128, Spurs 107:** Rookie Kel'el Ware scored 25 points to match his season high, Duncan Robinson added 21 on 5-of-7 3-shooting and host Miami beat San Antonio.

Jimmy Butler had eight points and seven assists in his second game since returning from a seven-game suspension for "conduct detrimental to the team."

Terry Rozier had 20 points, Tyler Herro scored 16 of his 18 points in the second half and Ni-

kol Jovic added 14 to help the Heat snap a three-game losing streak. Miami closed the first half with an 11-0 run to take a five-point lead at 46-41, then opened the second with a 25-8 run.

Devin Vassell scored 23 points and Victor Wembanyama added 21 for the Spurs. They have lost three straight.

**Thunder 127, Nets 101:** Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 27 points and 10 assists in three quarters, and host Oklahoma City beat Brooklyn.

Gilgeous-Alexander, the NBA's leading scorer, sat out Friday's loss at Dallas with a sprained right wrist. He looked fine against the Nets, making 8 of 14 field goals and all 10 of his free throw attempts. He also had four steals.

**Bucks 123, 76ers 109:** Giannis Antetokounmpo had 34 points and 15 rebounds to help host Milwaukee beat short-handed Philadelphia.

Damian Lillard added 25 points for the Bucks, who completed a 4-0 homestand. Khris Middleton had 13 points and eight assists in 25 minutes off the bench. Brook Lopez added 12

points, and Taurean Prince had 11.

Tyrese Maxey led the 76ers with 37 points and seven assists. Kelly Oubre Jr. scored 19 points, Ricky Council IV had 13 and Eric Gordon 10.

Philadelphia has lost six straight and nine of 11. The 76ers (15-26) were once again missing several key players — Joel Embiid, Paul George, Kyle Lowry and Guerschon Yabusele among them — due to injuries.

**Clippers 116, Lakers 102:** Norman Powell scored 22 points, James Harden added 21 points and 12 assists and the Clippers won in the Lakers' first visit to the new Intuit Dome.

Kawhi Leonard had 19 points and Ivica Zubac had 21 points and 19 rebounds for the Clippers in the first meeting of the season between the former hallway rivals at Crypto.com Arena.

LeBron James had 25 points and 11 assists for the Lakers and Rui Hachimura added 19 points.

Anthony Davis had 16 points and 10 rebounds in his return after missing a game with plantar fasciitis. The Lakers two-game winning streak ended.

**Trail Blazers 113, Bulls 102:**

Scout Henderson had 25 points and host Portland snapped a five-game losing streak with a victory over Chicago.

Zach LaVine had 27 points for the Bulls. They have lost five straight.

Portland stretched its lead to 97-82 on Shaedon Sharpe's 3-pointer with 7:36 left. Patrick Williams' dunk got the Bulls within single digits at 110-102 with 1:26 left. Deni Avdija answered with a layup for Portland to end the threat.

**Kings 123, Wizards 100:** Domantas Sabonis had 29 points and 18 rebounds, and host Sacramento beat Washington.

DeMar DeRozan added 24 points, Malik Monk had 23 and Keon Ellis scored 18 on 6-for-8 shooting on 3-pointers to help the Kings win for the ninth time in 10 games.

Jonas Valanciunas had 23 points and 12 rebounds to lead the Wizards, who have lost 10 straight.

After allowing Washington to score the first six points, Sacramento never trailed again and built a double-digit lead in the second quarter. The Kings led by 24 points in the second half.

# Laine scores in OT as Canadiens outlast Rangers

Associated Press

MONTREAL — Patrik Laine scored 3:20 into overtime and the Montreal Canadiens beat the New York Rangers 5-4 on Sunday night.

Brendan Gallagher and Christian Dvorak had a goal and an assist, and Nick Suzuki and Juraj Slafkovsky also scored for the Canadiens, who trailed 4-3 heading into the third period. Jakub Dobes had 23 saves, including two highlight-reel stops before Laine ended the game, to improve to 5-0 for his career.

Alexis Lafrenière, Will Cuyille, Mika Zibanejad and Chris Kreider scored, and

Adam Fox had two assists for the Rangers, who snapped a two-game win streak. Jonathan Quick, who was in search of his 400th career NHL win, made 33 saves.

New York's Matt Rempe and Montreal's Arber Xhekaj dropped gloves and exchanged punches early in the second period.

Slafkovsky accepted a feed from linemate Cole Caufield before crashing into the goal, knotting the game at 4-4 with 7:08 left in regulation. It was Slafkovsky's second goal in his last three games after having gone 10 straight games without a

goal.

**Senators 2, Devils 1:** Artem Zub and Zack Ostapchuk each scored a goal and Anton Forsberg stopped 25 shots to lead visiting Ottawa to a win over New Jersey.

Zub snapped a 1-1 tie in the third period with his second goal of the season.

Ostapchuk scored his first career NHL goal that provided the Senators with a brief 1-0 lead in the second period. Michael Amadio and Matthew Highmore, Ostapchuk's linemates on the fourth line, had the assists.

Tomas Tatar scored for the Devils, who have lost four in a

row and are 2-6-3 in their past 11 games. Tatar tied it at 1-1 just 1:18 after Ostapchuk's goal from Curtis Lazar and Luke Hughes.

**Stars 4, Red Wings 1:** Jason Robertson had one of three first-period goals plus a third-period assist and Jake Oettinger made 33 saves as host Dallas beat Detroit.

Wyatt Johnston and rookies Matej Blumel and Mavrik Bourque also scored for the Stars, who are 10-3-1 in their last 14 games.

Simon Edvinsson pulled the Red Wings within 3-1 with 7:59 to play, but Johnston answered 2:08 later on Robertson's assist.

# 'Lucky' breaks help Sinner survive Rune

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — First came the medical timeouts, one each for Jannik Sinner and Holger Rune with the temperature above 90 degrees Fahrenheit at the Australian Open.

Then came the bizarre sight of a 20-minute delay because the net at Rod Laver Arena detached from the court after being hit by a big Sinner serve.

In the end, the breaks in action were "lucky," Sinner said, because they gave him a chance to catch his breath, put his struggles aside and emerge with the victory — as he keeps doing, no matter the site or the circumstances. The defending champion moved into the quarterfinals at Melbourne Park on Monday by eliminating the 13th-seeded Rune 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-2.

"I don't want to talk so much (about) how I felt today. I was not feeling really well. I think we saw that today. I was struggling physically," Sinner said, declining to say exactly what was wrong. "Playing against a tough opponent, but also playing against myself a little bit."

The No. 1-ranked Sinner occasionally tried to cool off by pressing a cold towel to his face or

pouring water down the back of his neck. He was far better down the stretch, after both a 10-minute-plus delay in the third set when he went to the locker room for medical attention and after a 20-minute holdup in the fourth when the screw connecting the net to the blue playing surface came undone.

"It was a bit helpful. I at least felt slightly better when I went back on court," Sinner said about seeing a doctor. "I felt like the face looked a little bit better, the color was a little bit back."

Sinner has won 18 consecutive tour-level matches, dating back to late 2024. Last season, he went 73-6 with eight titles, the first man with that many tournament championships in a single year since Andy Murray in 2016.

That haul included Sinner's first two Grand Slam trophies, at the Australian Open in January and the U.S. Open in September, the latter shortly after he was exonerated for testing positive for an anabolic steroid twice in March. His case is still unresolved, though, with a hearing scheduled for April in the World Anti-Doping Agency's appeal of the ruling.

In the women's fourth round,

2017 U.S. Open runner-up Madison Keys eliminated 2022 Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina 6-3, 1-6, 6-3, and now plays Elina Svitolina, a 6-4, 6-1 winner over Veronika Kudermetova. Five-time major champion Iga Swiatek had — no surprise here — an easy time beating "lucky loser" Eva Lys 6-1, 6-0 in just 59 minutes.

Swiatek, who will face No. 8 Emma Navarro next, compiled a 28-7 edge in winners and has ceded a grand total of 11 games through four matches in the tournament. Contrast that to Navarro's path: Her 6-4, 5-7, 7-5 win against No. 9 Daria Kasatkina was the American's fourth three-setter in four matches in Melbourne, and she has dropped more than 60 games while spending more than 10 hours on court.

Sinner will play No. 8 Alex de Minaur of Australia, who defeated unseeded Alex Michelsen of the United States 6-0, 7-6 (5), 6-3 at night to reach the quarterfinals at his home Grand Slam tournament for the first time. A second Italian joined Sinner in the quarterfinals when 55th-ranked Lorenzo Sonego got that far at a major tournament for the

first time by ending the run of American qualifier Learner Tien 6-2, 6-3, 3-6, 6-1.

Sonego will go up against No. 21 Ben Shelton, who advanced when 38-year-old Gael Monfils of France quit because of an injury early in the fourth set. The 22-year-old American was leading 7-6 (3), 6-7 (3), 7-6 (2), 1-0 after nearly three hours when Monfils, who is married to Svitolina, called a halt to the match.

The men's quarterfinals Tuesday will be Novak Djokovic vs. Carlos Alcaraz, and Alexander Zverev vs. Tommy Paul.

Sinner said he showed up late at Melbourne Park and didn't hit before his match because he wasn't feeling great. The first obvious signs of trouble came at 3-all in the second set.

After lunging for a shot behind the baseline and stumbling slightly, Sinner clutched at his upper left leg and looked as though he might be bothered by some sort of discomfort, although it wasn't entirely clear what was going on.

After Rune held there, Sinner walked slowly to the sideline for the ensuing changeover and was breathing heavily during the time between games.

## No. 12 Michigan St. tops Illinois for 11th straight win

Associated Press

EASTLANSING, Mich. — Tre Holloman had 17 points, including two free throws in the closing seconds, Coen Carr and Frankie Fidler scored 11 each and No. 12 Michigan State held on to beat No. 19 Illinois 80-78 on Sunday.

The Spartans (16-2, 7-0 Big Ten) extended their winning streak to 11 games, their longest run since the 2018-19 season.

The Fighting Illini (13-5, 6-2) took a 10-point lead in the first half and were trailing by one with possession when Kylan Boswell turned over the ball with 5.9 seconds left.

Holloman made two free

throws on the ensuing possession.

Michigan State coach Tom Izzo told his players to foul Boswell instead of giving up a 3-pointer. Boswell made the first free throw and after missing the second intentionally, he got to the ball and shot it from the baseline over the backboard, and the officials waved it off.

Illinois star Kasparas Jakucionis was held to season lows in points (three) and minutes (nine) because of foul trouble.

Fellow freshman Will Riley came off the bench to pick up the scoring slack in the first half, scoring 16 points in eight min-

utes and finishing with 19.

**No. 18 Memphis 77, Charlotte 68:** PJ Haggerty scored 18 points, Tyrese Hunter added 15 points and the visiting Tigers used a strong first half to set the tone in a win over the 49ers.

Dain Dainja added 14 points and nine rebounds for Memphis (14-4, 4-1 American Athletic Conference), which bounced back from a loss to unranked Temple 88-81 on Thursday.

Haggerty finished 7-for-14 from the field.

**No. 20 Michigan 80, Northwestern 76 (OT):** Valdislav Goldin scored 31 points, Nimari Burnett added 13 and the host

Wolverines rallied to win in overtime.

Michigan made 9 of 10 free throws in the final 1:20 to finish off the Wildcats (11-7, 2-5).

**TCU 74, No. 25 Baylor 71:** Brendan Wenzel made a 3-pointer from the left corner with six seconds left and the Horned Frogs, after overcoming a double-digit deficit in the second half, ended the Bears' 10-game home winning streak.

Ernest Udeh Jr. had a career-high 16 points and 15 rebounds for TCU (10-7, 3-3 Big 12), and his fourth blocked shot was on Jayden Nunn's attempted 3-pointer to end the game.