

Death toll rises in Kentucky flooding

Associated Press

HINDMAN, Ky. — Kentucky's governor said it could take weeks to find all the victims of flash flooding that killed at least 25 people when torrential rains swamped towns across Appalachia.

Gov. Andy Beshear said Saturday that the numbers of victims would likely rise significantly as a result of record flash flooding over the past several days.

"This is an ongoing natural disaster," Beshear told Fox News. "We are still in search and rescue mode. Thankfully, the rain has stopped. But it's going to rain more starting Sunday afternoon."

Rescue crews continue the struggle to get into hard-hit areas, some of them among the poorest places in America. Crews have made more than 1,200 rescues from helicopters and boats, the governor said.

Beshear, who flew over parts of the flood-stricken region on Friday, described it as "just total devastation, the likes of which we have never seen."

"We are committed to a full rebuilding effort to get these folks back on their feet," Beshear said. "But for now, we're just praying that we don't lose anybody else."

The rain let up early Friday after parts of eastern Kentucky received between 8 and

10½ inches over 48 hours. But some waterways were not expected to crest until Saturday.

Patricia Colombo, 63, of Hazard, Ky., became stranded when her car stalled in floodwaters on a state highway. Colombo began to panic when water started rushing in. Though her phone was dead, she saw a helicopter overhead and waved it down. The helicopter crew radioed a ground team that plucked her to safety.

Colombo stayed the night at her fiancé's home in Jackson and they took turns sleeping, repeatedly checking the water with flashlights to see if it was rising. Though her car was a loss, Colombo said others had it worse in a region where poverty is endemic.

"Many of these people cannot recover out here. They have homes that are half underwater; they've lost everything," she said.

It's the latest in a string of catastrophic deluges that have pounded parts of the U.S. this summer, including St. Louis earlier this week and again on Friday. Scientists warn climate change is making weather disasters more common.

As rainfall hammered Appalachia this week, water tumbled down hillsides and into valleys and hollows where it swelled creeks and streams coursing through small towns.

The torrent engulfed homes and businesses and trashed vehicles. Mudslides marooned some people on steep slopes. Officials said Friday at least six children were among the victims, including four children from the same family in Knott County.

President Joe Biden declared a federal disaster to direct relief money to more than a dozen Kentucky counties.

The flooding extended into western Virginia and southern West Virginia.

Gov. Jim Justice declared a state of emergency for six counties in West Virginia where the flooding downed trees, power outages and blocked roads. Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin also made an emergency declaration, enabling officials to mobilize resources across the flooded southwest of the state.

About 18,000 utility customers in Kentucky remained without power early Saturday, poweroutage.us reported.

Extreme rain events have become more common as climate change bakes the planet and alters weather patterns, according to scientists. That's a growing challenge for officials during disasters, because models used to predict storm impacts are in part based on past events and can't keep up with increasingly devastating flash floods and heat waves.

101st Airborne takes on its new mission in Romania

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The 101st Airborne Division marked its official arrival in Europe during a ceremony Saturday at a strategic base in Romania, where soldiers were dispatched on a mission aimed at deterring potential aggression on NATO's southeastern flank.

The division's headquarters and its 2nd Brigade Combat Team unfurled colors at Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base, which will serve as an operational hub for the unit in the months

ahead. The positioning of an Army combat brigade in Romania is part of an enhanced military presence along NATO's eastern flank that has taken root in the aftermath of Russia's war on Ukraine.

"Being here, so close to that fight (in Ukraine), is exactly where the 101st Airborne Division is destined to be," said Maj. Gen. JP McGee, 101st commander, during the livestreamed ceremony.

Following the ceremony, U.S. and Romanian soldiers launched a combined demon-

stration to showcase their firepower, with attack helicopters, artillery, machine guns and tanks.

In a related move Saturday, the U.S. Army in Poland formally renamed a base hosting the first permanent U.S. troop presence along NATO's eastern flank in Poznan. Camp Kosciuszko, as it is now known, is home to the Army's V Corps, which is in charge of managing soldier maneuvers in Europe.

The increased number of troops in Romania in the form of a rotational brigade and the

establishment of a permanent garrison in Poland were announced by Joe Biden during NATO's June summit in Madrid.

In all, about 4,700 soldiers from the 101st Airborne will carry out missions in Europe during their deployment.

The "Screaming Eagles" arrival in Romania is perhaps the unit's most significant deployment to the Continent since World War II, when the division became part of military lore for its role on D-Day during the invasion of Normandy.

Semi-automatic weapons bill revived

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House passed legislation Friday to revive a ban on certain semi-automatic guns, the first vote of its kind in years and a direct response to the firearms often used in the crush of mass shootings ripping through communities nationwide.

Once banned in the U.S., the high-powered firearms are now widely blamed as the weapon of choice among young men responsible for many of the most devastating mass shootings. But Congress allowed the restrictions first put in place in 1994 on the manufacture and sales of the weapons to ex-

pire a decade later, unable to muster the political support to counter the powerful gun lobby and reinstate the weapons ban.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi pushed the vote toward passage in the Democratic-run House, saying the earlier ban “saved lives.”

President Joe Biden hailed the House vote, saying, “The majority of the American people agree with this common sense action.” He urged the Senate to “move quickly to get this bill to my desk.”

However, it is likely to stall in the 50-50 Senate. The House legislation is shunned by Republicans, who dismissed it as an election-year strategy by Democrats. Almost all

Republicans voted against the House bill, which passed 217-213.

The bill comes at a time of intensifying concerns about gun violence and shootings — the supermarket shooting in Buffalo, N.Y.; massacre of school children in Uvalde, Texas; and the July Fourth shootings of revelers in Highland Park, Ill.

Biden was instrumental in helping secure the first semi-automatic weapons ban as a senator in 1994. The Biden administration said that for 10 years, while the ban was in place, mass shootings declined. “When the ban expired in 2004, mass shootings tripled,” the statement said.

Illinois ticket wins \$1.337B lottery jackpot

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Someone in a Chicago suburb beat the odds and won a \$1.337 billion Mega Millions jackpot.

According to megamillions.com, there was one jackpot-winning ticket in the draw Friday night, and it was bought at a Speedway gas station and convenience store in Des Plaines.

The winning numbers were: 13-36-45-57-67, Mega Ball: 14.

“We are thrilled to have witnessed one of the biggest jackpot wins in Mega Millions his-

tory,” Ohio Lottery Director Pat McDonald, the current Lead Director for the Mega Millions Consortium, said in a statement on the lottery’s website. “We’re eager to find out who won and look forward to congratulating the winner soon!”

The jackpot was the nation’s third-largest lottery prize. It grew so large because no one had matched the game’s six selected numbers since April 15. That’s 29 consecutive draws without a jackpot winner.

The \$1.337 billion prize is for winners who

choose the annuity option, paid annually over 29 years. Most winners opt for the cash option, which for Friday night’s drawing was an estimated \$780.5 million. Earlier, Illinois Lottery officials had estimated the winning take at \$1.28 billion.

The odds of winning the jackpot are 1 in 302.5 million.

According to the Illinois Lottery, the store that sold the ticket is a pretty big winner, too; it will receive half a million dollars just for selling the ticket.

W.Va abortion bill delayed over disagreements

Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — West Virginia lawmakers passed up the chance Friday to become the first state to approve new legislation restricting access to abortions since the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling last month removing its protected status as a constitutional right.

The Republican-dominated Senate adopted its version of a bill along with amendments, one of which removes criminal penalties for physicians who perform illegal abortions. Late Friday night the House of Delegates, which passed its bill Wednesday, refused to concur with the Senate amendments, instead asking for a conference committee to iron out differences among the bills.

Both chambers then adjourned until they

are called back sometime next month.

Several GOP-led states had “trigger” abortion bans in place in advance of the court ruling, but West Virginia lawmakers are taking action because of legal uncertainty over whether a ban from the 1800s that was upended by the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision could be enforced now.

The Senate approved an amendment sponsored by a physician, Kanawha County Republican Tom Takubo, that removes criminal penalties of three to 10 years upon conviction for any medical provider who performs an abortion.

Takubo said the bill already would subject a physician to the difficult loss of their license for performing an illegal abortion. He also said West Virginia already has problems re-

taining medical professionals, and if the criminal penalties are retained it could have a chilling effect on the practice.

Another approved amendment offered by Greenbrier County Democrat Stephen Baldwin would allow a minor to report a rape to someone covered as a “mandated reporter,” such as a pastor or school counselor, who would be required to report the case to authorities. The House version requires law enforcement to be directly contacted.

The measure allows exemptions for victims of rape and incest up to 14 weeks of pregnancy. The bill also provides other exceptions for an ectopic pregnancy, a “nonmedically viable fetus” or a medical emergency that could kill or cause a substantial and irreversible injury.

Health, climate package may finally pass

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — It's been more than a year in the making and has seen plenty of ups and downs. Now, a Democratic economic package focused on climate and health care faces hurdles but seems headed toward party-line passage by Congress next month.

Approval would let President Joe Biden and his party claim a triumph on top priorities as November's elections approach. They have not forgotten that they came close to approving a far grander version of the bill last year, only to see Sen. Joe Manchin, D-

W.Va., one of their most conservative and contrarian members, torpedo it at the eleventh hour.

This time, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., has crafted a compromise package with Manchin, to the surprise of everyone, transforming the West Virginian from pariah to partner. The measure is more modest than earlier versions but still checks boxes on issues that make Democrats giddy.

The measure would raise \$739 billion in revenue over 10 years and spend \$433 billion. More than \$300 billion would

be left for trimming federal deficits.

Those are meaningful cuts in red ink. But they're tiny compared with the \$16 trillion in new debt the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates will accumulate over the next decade.

The package would save consumers and the government money by curbing prescription drug prices, and it would subsidize private health insurance for millions of people. It would bolster the IRS budget so the tax agency can collect more unpaid taxes.

The plan would foster clean

energy and offshore energy drilling, a balance demanded by Manchin, a champion of fossil fuels. It also would collect new taxes from the largest corporations and wealthy hedge fund owners.

It's a fraction of the \$3.5 trillion package that Biden proposed early in his presidency, which also envisioned sums for initiatives such as paid family leave and universal preschool. It's also smaller than the roughly \$2 trillion alternative the House passed last November after Manchin-demanded cuts then derailed the deal anyway, citing inflation fears.

House approves bill to help West with fires

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House on Friday approved wide-ranging legislation aimed at helping communities in the West cope with increasingly severe wildfires and drought — fueled by climate change — that have caused billions of dollars of damage to homes and businesses in recent years.

The measure combines 49 separate bills and would increase firefighter pay and benefits; boost resiliency and mitiga-

tion projects for communities affected by climate change; protect watersheds; and make it easier for wildfire victims to get federal assistance.

"Across America the impacts of climate change continue to worsen, and in this new normal, historic droughts and record-setting wildfires have become all too common," said Rep. Joe Neguse, D-Colo., the bill's chief co-sponsor. Colorado has suffered increasingly devastating wildfires in recent years, in-

cluding the Marshall fire last year that caused more than \$513 million in damage and destroyed nearly 1,100 homes and structures in Boulder County.

"What once were wildfire seasons are now wildfire years. For families across the country who have lost their homes due to these devastating wildfires and for the neighborhoods impacted by drought, we know that we need to apply a whole-of-government approach to support community recovery and bol-

ster environmental resiliency," Neguse said. "This is a bill that we believe meets the moment for the West."

The bill was approved, 218-199, as firefighters in California battled a blaze that forced evacuation of thousands of people near Yosemite National Park and crews in North Texas sought to contain another fire.

The bill now goes to the Senate, where Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., has sponsored a similar measure.

Calif. court OKs death penalty in '80s sex slave murders

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The California Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the conviction and death penalty for one of two men implicated in at least 11 notorious horrific torture-slayings in the mid-1980s in which the duo kept their victims hidden in a secret bunker in the Northern California woods.

Thirty-seven years later, authorities are still trying to identify the remains of some of their victims.

Charles Ng, now 61, was convicted in 1999 of killing six men, three women and two baby boys in 1984 and 1985. He was initially accused of 13 slayings — 12 in Calaveras County and one in San Francisco.

He and his criminal partner, Leonard Lake, committed a series of kidnappings in which they engaged in bondage and sadism ending in murder. They were initially suspected of killing up to 25 people.

Lake killed himself with a cyanide capsule after police arrested him for shoplifting in San Francisco in 1985 and were questioning him before any bodies were found.

The justices said in a detailed 181-page analysis of the case that Ng received a fair trial, including a change of venue from Calaveras County to Orange County because of pre-trial publicity.

The men incriminated themselves with videotapes of them tormenting bound, terri-

fied women they used as sex slaves before their murders.

Ng joined the Marine Corps after he came to the United States from Hong Kong. He earlier was imprisoned at Leavenworth, Kan., for weapons theft while serving in the Marine Corps.

He and his defense attorneys argued that he was under the influence of Lake, an older man and survivalist who they said engineered the serial slayings. Ng denied participating in many of the crimes.

Gov. Gavin Newsom has imposed a moratorium on the death penalty so long as he is governor, and Ng still has the possibility of other federal appeals.

Ships told to slow down more for whales

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine — Vessels off the East Coast must slow down more often to help save a vanishing species of whale from extinction, the federal government said Friday.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration made the announcement via new proposed rules designed to prevent ships colliding with North Atlantic right whales. Vessel strikes and entanglement in fishing gear are the two biggest threats to the giant animals, which number less than 340 and are falling in population.

Efforts to save the whales have long focused on fishing gear, especially that used by East Coast lobster fishermen. The pro-

posed vessel speed rules signal that the government wants the shipping industry to take more responsibility.

“Changes to the existing vessel speed regulation are essential to stabilize the ongoing right whale population decline and prevent the species’ extinction,” state the proposed rules, which are slated to be published in the federal register.

The new rules would expand seasonal slow zones off the East Coast that require mariners to slow down to 10 knots. They would also require more vessels to comply with the rules by expanding the size classes that must slow down. The rules also state that NOAA would create a framework to implement mandatory speed restrictions

when whales are known to be present outside the seasonal slow zones.

Federal authorities spent a few years reviewing the speed regulations used to protect the whales. The shipping rules have long focused on a patchwork of slow zones that require mariners to slow down for whales. Some of the zones are mandatory, while others are voluntary.

Environmental groups have made the case that many boats don’t comply with the speed restrictions and that the rules need to be tighter. Environmental organization Oceana released a report in 2021 that said noncompliance was as high as nearly 90% in voluntary zones and was also dangerously low in the mandatory ones.

Shark sightings more common at New York beaches

Associated Press

BABYLON, N.Y. — As bathers cooled themselves in the Atlantic surf on New York’s Fire Island last Wednesday, Reily Winston held up a smooth dogfish shark his friend had just caught fishing off a pier in an inlet behind the beach. He briefly cradled the bloodied shark in his hands before releasing it back into the ocean.

Shark sightings have become more common along Long Island’s shores this summer — and not just the mostly harmless, abundant dogfish.

Since June, there have been at least five verified encounters where sharks bit swimmers and surfers. Though there were no fatalities, sightings prompted officials to temporarily close some beaches to swimming, from New York City’s Rockaway Beach to Long Island’s Smith Point County Park, where a surfer beat a shark on its snout after it bit his calf.

George Gorman, regional director for the state park system on Long Island, referred to the recent shark interactions as “extraordinarily unusual.”

Sharks aren’t new to New York’s waters. Sand tiger, sandbar and dusky sharks are some of the more common species found near shore. But in the last century or so, New York state had documented only 13 shark attacks.

Experts say sharks aren’t setting out to dine on people, but instead are chasing bunker fish near beaches. Recent shark bites are likely mistakes, according to Gorman.

“We think it has to do with the menhaden fish, with the bunker fish being close to shore and the sharks just making a mistake,” he said.

Swimmers may also be interacting with sharks while they are feeding.

“When there’s a food source close to shore, they’ll come close to shore to feed on

that,” said Frank Quevedo, executive director of The South Fork Natural History Museum. “If people are in the water, they may interfere with or get in the way of shark feeding.”

Factors contributing to the spike in shark sightings are the improvement in water quality and thriving bunker fish populations due to conservation efforts. Quevedo noted that in 2019, New York passed legislation to protect Atlantic menhaden, the main food source for many species like dolphins, whales, tuna, seals, striped bass and sharks.

“This is all a positive sign that the marine ecosystem is healthy,” said Chris Scott, supervising marine biologist for the Department of Environmental Conservation, during a news conference Monday. “And it’s important because sharks are a keystone species that regulate the species diversity, abundance, distribution, the marine habitat.”

US ruling out summer booster shots for coronavirus

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. regulators said Friday they are no longer considering authorizing a second COVID-19 booster shot for all adults under 50 this summer, focusing instead on revamped vaccines for the fall that will target the newest viral subvariants.

Pfizer and Moderna expect to have updated versions of their shots available as early as September, the Food and Drug Administration said in a statement. That would set the stage for a fall booster campaign to strengthen

protection against the latest versions of omicron.

The announcement means the U.S. won’t pursue a summer round of boosters using the current vaccines for adults under 50, as some Biden administration officials and outside experts previously suggested. They had argued that another round of shots now could help head off rising cases and hospitalizations caused by the highly transmissible omicron strains.

Currently, all Americans age 5 and over are

eligible for a booster shot five months after their initial primary series. Fourth doses of the Pfizer or Moderna shots — a second booster — are recommended for Americans 50 and older and for younger people with serious health issues that make them more vulnerable to COVID-19.

The FDA urged eligible adults who haven’t been boosted to get their extra shot now. “You can still benefit from existing booster options and leave time to receive an updated booster in the fall,” the agency said in a statement.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

State police dog shot, killed by suspect

MA FITCHBURG — A decorated Massachusetts State Police dog called “as loyal a partner as any Trooper ever had” by the agency’s commander was shot and killed by a man who had barricaded himself inside a home.

Frankie, a nearly 11-year-old Belgian Malinois with a tan coat and black snout, was shot by a 38-year-old suspect, according to a statement from State Police Col. Christopher Mason.

He was the first Massachusetts State Police dog to die in the line of duty, Mason said.

“Frankie had every trait we seek in a good law enforcement officer, canine or human: intelligence, immense courage, and dedication to protecting the public,” Mason said. “He was as loyal a partner as any Trooper ever had.”

Frankie and his handler Sgt. David Stucenski won the state law enforcement Medal of Valor in 2017 for apprehending a suspect who opened fire on them, and also won three awards from the U.S. Police Canine Association in 2014, according to the statement.

Swimmer injured by monk seal with pup

HI HONOLULU — A swimmer at a beach in Waikiki was injured after encountering an endangered Hawaiian monk seal with a young pup.

Hawaii Marine Animal Response, a nonprofit conservation organization that helps monitor protected species, said their workers witnessed a

swimmer come into contact with the mother monk seal known as Rocky.

The Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources said in a statement that the victim is a 60-year-old elementary school teacher from California. The woman received lacerations to her face, arm and back, the agency said.

The Hawaii Marine Animal Response said in a statement that the seal gave birth to a pup about two weeks ago on Kaimana Beach in Waikiki, the same area where the swimmer was injured.

The shoreline where the seals live is roped off, and beachgoers are warned of the risks of getting too close to the nursing mother.

Highway sign drops ‘R’ from Albuquerque

NM ALBUQUERQUE — It made drivers on Route 66 and Interstate 40 in New Mexico do double takes.

A newly upgraded state Department of Transportation sign that pointed drivers toward Albuquerque misspelled the city’s name, losing the “R.”

People called and emailed the department to point out the mistake on the sign visible to drivers on the parallel highways, said Kimberly Gallegos, a department spokesperson. A corrected sign has gone up, she said.

Robber yelled ‘Dillinger lives!’ at bank

CA LOS ANGELES — A Southern California bank robber who gleefully yelled “John Dillinger lives!”

during a holdup was sentenced to nearly 20 years in federal prison, prosecutors said.

Todd Cannady, 61, of Palm Springs, was sentenced for a 2021 holdup but he acknowledged robbing a total of 10 banks in Southern California from 2018 to 2021, according to a statement from the U.S. attorney’s office.

In total, he stole nearly \$758,000, authorities said.

The holdups began only four months after Cannady was released from state prison, prosecutors said.

He spent more than two decades behind bars for a 1992 armed bank robbery and a 1982 conviction for robbing people at gunpoint in Los Angeles stores, authorities said.

Cannady “seemingly took great joy in his crimes,” yelling “John Dillinger Lives” during a 2019 holdup, according to the memorandum.

Man charged after aiming car toward teens

MS RIPLEY — A Mississippi man is facing criminal charges after posting a video of himself on social media in which he can be seen using racial slurs and driving a car toward a group of teens on bikes.

Mark Hall, 49, has been charged with nine counts of misdemeanor simple assault, an official with the Tippah County Detention Center confirmed.

WAPT-TV said Hall is accused of driving his car toward the youths riding their bicycles down a street in the community of Ripley. No injuries were reported.

In the video circulating on social media, Hall could be heard using racial slurs as he accelerated at the teens in his car.

Austin Hill, one of the teens, told WREG-TV that two of his friends had to run into a ditch to avoid the oncoming car and that it clipped the back of one bike, damaging it.

Ex-officer sentenced for planting gun on suspect

MD BALTIMORE — A former Baltimore police detective was sentenced to 30 months in prison, three months after he was found guilty of multiple federal crimes, including providing a gun that he knew would be planted on a suspect.

Robert Hankard, 46, who was found guilty of corruption and conspiracy charges in April, was also given three years of supervised release, according to a news release from the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Baltimore.

The prosecution of Hankard was part of the fallout from the rogue Gun Trace Task Force, which was supposed to take illegal guns off the streets, but instead members robbed drug dealers, planted drugs and guns on innocent people and assaulted seemingly random civilians.

Federal prosecutors alleged that Hankard provided a BB gun that was planted on a suspect in 2014 and later lied to a federal grand jury about it.

They also accused him of being involved in a situation in which drugs were planted on a man’s truck in 2015, falsifying an application for a search warrant in the case and preparing a false incident report.

— From Associated Press

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Source: NBA investigating Harden deal

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The Philadelphia 76ers are being investigated by the NBA for possible tampering in off-season free-agency moves involving James Harden, P.J. Tucker and Danuel House, a person familiar with the situation told The Associated Press on Friday night.

The person, speaking on condition of anonymity because the investigation is ongoing, said the team is cooperating with the investigation.

Harden signed a deal worth slightly more than \$68 million, paying him about \$33 million

this season with a \$35 million player option for the 2023-24 season. Harden, though, will make about \$14.5 million less this coming season than he could have earned under his previous deal. Harden had a \$47.4 million option for this coming season that he declined last month, saying he wanted to give the 76ers flexibility to improve their roster and compete for a championship.

ESPN reported Friday there are questions involving Harden and the team having “a handshake agreement in place on a future contract.”

“Taking less money this year to sign as many players as we needed to help us contend and be the last team standing was very, very important to me,” Harden said in an interview this month with The Associated Press. “I wanted to show the organization, the Sixers fans and everybody else who supports what we’re trying to accomplish, what I’m trying to accomplish individually, that this is what I’m about.”

Tucker signed a \$30 million, three-year contract and House signed for \$8.4 million over two years. Philadelphia was

able to sign Tucker to the full mid-level exception and sign House to the biannual exception because Harden declined his option.

If Harden had opted in before his June 30 deadline, the 76ers would have had a much more difficult time in finding financial pathways toward luring free agents.

The NBA approved stiffer penalties for tampering in 2019 and stripped a draft pick from both the Chicago Bulls for early contact with Lonzo Ball and the Miami Heat for doing the same with Kyle Lowry in the summer of 2021.

New Pac-12 coaches Riley, Lanning, DeBoer in spotlight

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES— Coaching changes in the Pac-12 are a given, but it is rare when it happens to three of the most recognizable programs in the conference.

Such is the case with Southern California, Oregon, and Washington, which have new coaches on the sideline this season. The schools have won five of the last six conference titles.

“It’s interesting and unique. That’s what makes it fun,” Washington offensive lineman Jaxson Kirkland said during the conference’s media day on Friday. “Now we have a whole bunch of different teams and schemes coming around. It will be cool to see everyone getting after each other.”

USC made waves last December when it convinced Lincoln Riley to leave Oklahoma. After Mario Cristobal left Oregon for Miami, the Ducks tabbed Dan Lanning, the defensive coordinator at Georgia.

The most significant upheaval has been at Washington, where Kalen DeBoer is the Huskies’ third coach in four seasons. DeBoer was at Fresno State.

The coaching changes

haven’t changed preseason expectations. The media picked Utah to defend its conference title, with Oregon second, USC third and Washington sixth.

Riley faces the most pressure to produce immediately after leading the Sooners to a 55-10 record in five seasons and two appearances in the College Football Playoff. Pressure is routine for Riley, who was 33 when he succeeded Bob Stoops at Oklahoma.

USC was picked by the media to win the Pac-12 South last year, but went 4-8 and fired Clay Helton two games into the season.

“If there’s no pressure, then you probably don’t have the same opportunities others do. You’ve got to see the opportunity. If you do it well, anything is possible,” Riley said. “This is one of those programs and one of those cities. If you do it well, the sky’s the limit.”

“You don’t come to USC or Los Angeles to do things small.”

With a huge assist from the transfer portal, Riley was able to rebuild the Trojans for a conference title run this season. Quarterback Caleb Williams al-

so came from Oklahoma, while running back Travis Dye transferred from Oregon and Biletni-koff Award-winning wide receiver Jordan Addison from Pittsburgh.

This is the first head coaching job for Lanning, who was on Georgia’s staff the last four seasons. He admitted that it has been a bit of a whirlwind getting up to speed.

“Certainly, a lot of pieces go into being a head coach. You wear a lot of hats,” he said. “It’s fun piecing together the talent. It’s also about bringing in coaches that are about relationships and development.”

The Ducks, who were 10-4 last season, open against defending national champion Georgia in Atlanta on Sept. 3. They return most of their front seven on defense, including linebacker Noah Sewell, while adding former Auburn quarterback Bo Nix.

“Certainly excited about going back and seeing some familiar faces going there, getting to compete against a mentor and a friend in Kirby Smart,” Lanning said. “I know our players are certainly excited to be on a na-

tional stage early and get to play an elite opponent in Georgia. That being said, we’re really focused on right now.”

Washington is DeBoer’s third head coaching job. He was at Sioux Falls for five seasons (2005-09) and won four NAIA national titles before coaching at Fresno State the last two seasons.

DeBoer is well aware of Washington’s upheaval since its last Pac-12 title in 2018 and is trying to make sure the transition to his staff tries to be as seamless as possible. The Huskies were 4-8 last season, but return some talent, along with potential competition at quarterback between Dylan Morris, Sam Huard, and Indiana transfer Michael Penix Jr.

“You got some guys that have had multiple position coaches. If there’s anything that’s been hard, it’s just really understanding that these guys have been through a lot,” DeBoer said. “Simplifying it down, just trying to focus on winning that day is what we are trying to do, worry about the things we can control and make a name for the 2022 team.”

Cards' Conner ready to carry rushing load

Associated Press

GLENDAL, Ariz. — Arizona's James Conner and a reporter were bantering back and forth after a training camp practice about how many touches he should have each game for the Cardinals to have a successful season.

Possibly 10? 15? 20?

"No number," Conner said. "That would be foolish."

The reporter countered one more time: "As many as possible?"

"My man," the running back said laughing.

The 27-year-old Conner enters his sixth NFL season as the unquestioned leader on Arizona's running back depth chart. The bruising 6-foot-1, 233-pounder is coming off a Pro Bowl season where he ran for 752 yards, caught 37 passes for 375 yards and scored a career-high 18 touchdowns.

But like the rest of the Cardinals, he wore down as the season progressed. Arizona started the season with a 10-2 record before losing four of its last five regular-season games.

Conner's absence was part of the reason for the downfall. He was inactive for two of the last three regular-season games and was clearly not 100% healthy in the team's ugly 34-11 loss to the Los Angeles

Rams in the NFC Wild Card round.

With that in mind, coach Kliff Kingsbury won't push him particularly hard during the preseason. That's easier said than done, considering Conner practices just as hard as he plays.

"You almost have to save him from himself a little bit," Kingsbury said. "He's that valuable. You saw when he's on the field, the plays he made in the passing game. Obviously a tough runner. But we want to be smart with him — it's a long season."

To keep Conner healthy, the Cardinals would like to find another running back who can split time in the backfield. Last season, that partner was Chase Edmonds, who ran for nearly 600 yards and a pair of touchdowns. Edmonds was a smaller, shifter back than Conner, and the two provided a good one-two punch.

But Edmonds is gone now after signing with the Miami Dolphins. Arizona's new options are former Kansas City back Darrel Williams and young holdovers like Eno Benjamin.

"I've said it a bunch, but that's when I thought we were playing our best football, when he and Chase were splitting the workload and staying fresh," Kingsbury said. "We were able to maximize what

each guy does best. Hopefully we'll find a similar rhythm this year."

The 5-foot-11, 219-pound Williams is the most logical successor to Edmonds. He ran for 558 yards and caught 47 passes for 452 yards last year in Kansas City.

But there's little doubt Conner is the top option. He'll be asked to get the hardest yards when the Cardinals are trying to punch the ball into the end zone.

The hope is Conner can stay healthy for all 17 regular-season games even though he's at a position known for being extremely tough on the body.

"Nutrition, sleep, just working smarter," Conner said. "I feel great. I don't even want to talk about getting old. I feel like I've got a lot of years left in this league."

Notes: Kingsbury said he hopes newly acquired receiver Marquise Brown will be able to practice "next week at some point. I don't know when, but that's our hope." Brown, who was a 1,000-yard receiver last season for the Ravens, was put on the active/non-football injury list earlier this week because of a hamstring injury. ... Kingsbury said there was some "tenderness" in QB Kyler Murray's wrist but the quarterback "threw really well today."

NASCAR, IndyCar intersect at extravaganza in Indy

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Now is the time to tune into American motorsports, on display all weekend at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, where NASCAR and IndyCar intersect with both series embroiled in turmoil.

Two-time IndyCar champion Josef Newgarden was cleared to compete on the road course on Indy's hallowed grounds after successfully completing Friday morning practice and passing a third medical evaluation. The driver from Nashville collapsed and hit his head on Sunday at Iowa Speedway about 90 minutes after he'd crashed while leading the race.

He said he assumes he suffered a concussion when he hit his head in the motorhome lot but spent the first part of the week so-

mewhat isolated in an attempt to heal so he could race Saturday. Newgarden is chasing a third title.

"I really was very motivated to be here this weekend; I knew if we weren't in this race, it was going to be very difficult to stay in this championship fight," Newgarden said. "That was the end for me. I know that we have to be in the race, so whatever I have to do to be fit and prepared is No. 1 on my plate."

Kurt Busch, meanwhile, will miss his second consecutive NASCAR race because of concussion-like symptoms following a crash last weekend at Pocono. Chase Elliott heads into Sunday's race as NASCAR's most recent winner, but he inherited the victory in an unprecedented disqualification to Joe Gibbs Racing

teammates Denny Hamlin and Kyle Busch.

Hamlin and Busch crossed the finish line 1-2, but their Toyotas failed postrace inspection and earned the first Cup Series disqualification since April 17, 1960. Emanuel Zervakis was stripped of his victory at Wilson Speedway in North Carolina because of an oversized fuel tank.

NASCAR is still five races away from its postseason, a 10-week knockout round to crown its champion. IndyCar, meanwhile, has five races remaining in its season and an incredibly tight six-driver title race. Reigning champion Alex Palou is sixth in the standings, 44 points behind Indianapolis 500 winner Marcus Ericsson, but he's being sued by Chip Ganassi Racing over his desire to move to McLaren Racing

next season.

Palou said ahead of Saturday's race that he still believes he can win a second consecutive title this year, and that he will be in the McLaren family in 2023. Team owner Chip Ganassi seemed exasperated.

"Good for him," Ganassi told The Associated Press on Friday. "I'm not making any statements. I have no quotes to give."

Newgarden also took the silent approach until after he'd qualified fifth for Saturday's race. His hard crash while leading the race — and the IndyCar standings until a broken suspension stopped his attempt at sweeping the Iowa doubleheader — dropped him into a tie for third in the standings and forced Team Penske to put Santino Ferrucci on standby in case Newgarden couldn't drive.

Judge homers twice in Yankees victory

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Aaron Judge became the first big leaguer with 40 homers this season, smashed a grand slam for No. 41 and robbed a home run in right field as the New York Yankees rallied to beat the Kansas City Royals 11-5 Friday night.

Isiah Kiner-Falefa lined a tie-breaking single in the eighth inning as New York completed its major league-leading 29th comeback victory.

Judge was lavished with “MVP!” chants throughout the night, none louder than after his slam in the eighth cemented yet another Yankees rally. He also had a single and finished with six RBIs.

Judge and Anthony Rizzo homered early on a rainy night in the Bronx, but Kansas City came back against Gerrit Cole, with Whit Merrifield’s two-run single in the fifth ending a scoreless drought of 31½ innings for the Royals.

Salvador Perez followed Merrifield with a go-ahead, three-run homer in his return from the injured list.

New York erased its deficit by batting around during a messy eighth inning that followed a 23-minute rain delay.

Astros 11, Mariners 1: Justin Verlander pitched one-run ball into the eighth inning and won his MLB-leading 14th game, Aledmys Díaz hit two homers and Yordan Alvarez slugged his 30th home run of the season as host Houston routed Seattle.

Dodgers 5, Rockies 4: Will Smith and Trayce Thompson hit two-run homers, Julio Urías pitched seven strong innings and Los Angeles won at Colorado.

Mets 6, Marlins 4: Starling Marte homered, tripled and drove in three runs and Brandon Nimmo broke an eighth-inning tie with a two-run shot as visiting New York overcame two early deficits to run its winning streak to four games.

Orioles 6, Reds 2: Cedric Mullins hit a tiebreaking, two-run single in a four-run ninth inning, and Baltimore won at Cincinnati to move two games over .500 for the first time since April 2021.

Braves 5, Diamondbacks 2:

Austin Riley had a homer and three RBIs, Kyle Wright earned his NL-leading 13th victory and host Atlanta topped Arizona.

Cardinals 6, Nationals 2: Nolan Gorman and Lars Nootbaar hit back-to-back homers in the sixth inning as visiting St. Louis had consecutive wins for the first time since July 15-16.

Padres 10, Twins 1: Jorge Alfaro launched a three-run homer, Luke Voit and All-Star Manny Machado each hit a two-run shot and host San Diego had its first five-homer game in more than a year in a win over AL Central-leading Minnesota.

Phillies 4, Pirates 2 (10): Rhys Hoskins drilled a go-ahead two-run homer in the top of the 10th to lift Philadelphia to a win at Pittsburgh.

Cubs 4, Giants 2: Patrick Wisdom homered again, Marcus Stroman pitched six scoreless innings for his first win in more than two months and Chicago won at struggling San Francisco, which lost for the eighth time in nine games.

Guardians 4, Rays 1: José Ramírez hit a tiebreaking two-run homer in the fifth, Shane

Bieber struck out eight in seven innings and Cleveland won at Tampa Bay.

Tigers 4, Blue Jays 2: Willi Castro homered for the second time in two games, Victor Reyes had three hits, and Detroit won at Toronto.

Brewers 4, Red Sox 1: Christian Yelich drove in the go-ahead run with a single in the seventh inning, Brandon Woodruff struck out nine and Milwaukee won in its return to Boston for the first time in eight years.

Athletics 7, White Sox 3: Seth Brown hit two solo homers, Stephen Piscotty hit a three-run shot, and James Kaprielian pitched six strong innings as Oakland won at Chicago for its season-high fourth straight victory.

Rangers 7, Angels 2: Martin Perez worked seven strong innings, Adolis Garcia, Ezequiel Duran and Jonah Heim had RBI doubles and Texas broke open a close contest in the ninth inning and won consecutive games for the second time this month in a victory at Los Angeles.

Reds trade Castillo to Mariners for four prospects

Associated Press

SEATTLE — After more than two decades without a playoff appearance, the Seattle Mariners made a clear statement Friday night they intend to see their postseason drought come to an end this year.

The Mariners acquired perhaps the top starting pitcher on the trade market, getting All-Star Luis Castillo from the payroll-paring Cincinnati Reds for four minor league prospects.

Seattle has not been to the playoffs since 2001, the longest postseason drought in the four major North American professional sports.

“He’s one of the best pitchers in the game. He’s really estab-

lished himself as a dominant starter,” Mariners manager Scott Servais said in Houston. “We’ve got a chance to do something really big here this year. You have to step out and take a chance once in a while if you ultimately want to get the reward, take a little risk. Dominant starting pitcher, and I’m anxious to meet him.”

At 54-47, Seattle is in the second of three AL wild-card spots, a half-game in front of Tampa Bay (53-47) and two games ahead of Cleveland (51-48).

The Mariners won their final 14 games before the All-Star break, one short of the longest winning streak in team history and the best run by any club

heading into the break since 1933. But they are 3-5 since, following an 11-1 loss at Houston on Friday night.

Getting back into the AL West race may be out of the question with Houston holding a 12-game lead. But landing Castillo solidifies Seattle’s rotation and makes the Mariners dangerous if they can get into the playoffs.

Seattle general manager Jerry Dipoto said there were conversations with the Reds about Castillo dating back to last fall, prior to the lockout, and the Mariners’ performance over the last six weeks led to the teams reengaging.

“Right now we just think he is in the prime of his career, per-

forming at the top of his game, and our goal is to keep him there and in any possible way help him improve where it’s possible,” Dipoto said.

Cincinnati obtained infielders Noelvi Marte and Edwin Arroyo, and right-handers Levi Stoudt and Andrew Moore. Marte was Seattle’s top-rated prospect, Arroyo was third and Stoudt fifth.

“We felt this was the best return we could get for Luis,” Reds general manager Nick Krall said.

A 29-year-old right-hander, Castillo was 4-4 with a 2.86 ERA for the last-place Reds (38-61), striking out 90 and walking 28 in 85 innings. His fastball averages 97 mph.