

Biden says he will ‘complete the job’

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden used his closely watched news conference Thursday to deliver a forceful defense of his foreign and domestic policies and batted away questions about his ability to serve another four years, declaring: “I’m not in this for my legacy. I’m in this to complete the job.”

Early on, he made one notable flub when he bobbled a reference to Vice President Kamala Harris. But for an hour, he largely held his own under intense questioning, eschewing any suggestion that he was in decline, no longer capable of leading the nation and too old to serve another term.

It was unclear whether the performance was enough to change the dynamic that has set in: A growing number of Democratic lawmakers, donors and celebrities are calling on him to step aside — not to mention the majority of voters expressing

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doubts that he is up to the job — and Biden is digging in, insisting he’s staying in the race and will win come November. And the longer the infighting continues, the less the Democrats are presenting a united front against Republican Donald Trump.

“If I slow down and I can’t get the job done, that’s a sign that I shouldn’t be doing it,” Biden said. “But there’s no indication of that yet — none.”

Yet even as he wrapped his news conference, the 81-year-old leader was confronting calls to step aside.

In a statement released shortly after he walked off-stage, Connecticut Rep. Jim Himes, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said Biden should end his candidacy, considering his “re-

markable legacy in American history.” Fifteen other House Democrats have called on him to make way for a new candidate.

Vintage Biden

Biden said he was willing to take another neurological assessment before the election, but only if his doctors recommended it.

His last exam was in January and the results of it were released in February.

In his first exchange with reporters, Biden was asked about losing support among many of his fellow Democrats and unionists, and was asked about Vice President Kamala Harris. Biden was at first defiant, saying the “UAW endorsed me, but go ahead,” meaning the United Auto Workers. But then he mixed up Harris and Trump, saying, “I wouldn’t have picked Vice President Trump to be vice president if she wasn’t qualified.”

Trump weighed in live on Biden’s news conference with a post on his social media network of a video clip of the president saying “Vice President Trump.”

Trump added sarcastically, “Great job, Joe!”

Most of the news conference was vintage Biden: He gave long answers on foreign policy and told well-worn anecdotes.

He used teleprompters for his opening remarks on NATO, which ran about eight minutes. Then the teleprompters lowered and he took a wide range of questions from 10 journalists about his mental acuity, foreign and domestic policy and — mostly — the future of his campaign.

“I believe I’m the best qualified to govern and I think I’m the best qualified to win,” Biden said, adding that he will stay in the race until his staff says there’s no way he can win.

“No one’s saying that,” he said. “No poll says that.”

US says end of its pier for Gaza aid is coming soon

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Battling rough seas around Gaza, the U.S. now is considering abandoning efforts to reinstall the pier that has been used to get badly needed humanitarian aid to starving Palestinians, two U.S. officials said Thursday.

The initial plan earlier this week had been to reinstall the pier for a few days to move the final pallets of aid onto the shore and then permanently remove it, but rough seas have prevented the reinstallation.

The White House and the De-

fense Department both said the pier will cease operations “soon” but would not specify timing. Other U.S. officials said the Pentagon and U.S. Central Command were actively discussing an early end to pier operations because weather and some maintenance problems make it far less desirable to reconnect it for just a short time.

President Joe Biden, who announced the building of the pier during his State of the Union speech in March, expressed disappointment that it didn’t do as well as hoped.

“I’ve been disappointed that some of the things that I put forward have not succeeded as well — like the port we attached from Cyprus,” Biden said during his news conference on Thursday. “I was hopeful that would be more successful.”

The U.S. officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, said there is no final decision yet and that if the weather calms for a bit, there is a slim chance they could reattach it for a short time.

Across Washington, officials were signaling the end of what

has been a mission fraught with weather and security problems, but which also has brought over 19.4 million pounds of aid to starving residents in Gaza as the nine-monthlong war between Israel and Hamas drags on.

Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, Pentagon press secretary, acknowledged in a statement that U.S. military personnel “were unable to re-anchor the pier to the shore” as planned this week, and that a date to reattach it has not been set. “The pier will soon cease operations,” he said, but provided no timeline.

US, Canada, Finland eye more icebreakers

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States, Canada and Finland will work together to build up their icebreaker fleets as they look to bolster their defenses in the Arctic, where Russia has been increasingly active, the White House announced Thursday.

The pact announced at the NATO summit calls for enhanced information sharing on polar icebreaker production, allowing for workers and experts from each country to train in shipyards across all three, and promoting to allies the purchase of polar icebreakers from American, Finnish or Canadian shipyards for their own needs.

Daleep Singh, the White House deputy national security

adviser for international economics, said it would reinforce to adversaries Russia and China that the U.S. and allies will “doggedly pursue collaboration on industrial policy to increase our competitive edge.”

Beijing has sought to tighten its relationship with Moscow as much of the West has tried to economically isolate Russia in the aftermath of its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

“Without this arrangement, we’d risk our adversaries developing an advantage in a specialized technology with vast geostrategic importance, which could also allow them to become the preferred supplier for countries that also have an interest in purchasing polar icebreakers,” Singh said. “We’re committed to

projecting power into the high latitudes alongside our allies and partners. And, that requires a continuous surface presence in the polar regions, both to combat Russian aggression and to limit China’s ability to gain influence.”

Singh noted that the U.S. has only two icebreakers, and both are nearing the end of their usable life. Finland has 12 icebreakers and Canada has nine, while Russia has 36, according to U.S. Coast Guard data.

President Joe Biden, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Finnish President Alexander Stubb discussed the pact on the sidelines of this week’s summit, which focused largely on the alliance’s efforts to counter Russia’s invasion of

Ukraine.

During a talk in February at RAND, Coast Guard Vice Admiral Peter Gautier said the agency has determined it needs eight to nine icebreakers — a mix of heavy polar security cutters and medium Arctic security cutters. Gautier said some test panels were being built in Mississippi and full construction of an icebreaker is slated to begin this year.

According to a Government Accountability Office report, the U.S. hasn’t built a heavy polar icebreaker in almost 50 years.

The 399-foot Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star was commissioned in 1976 and the 420-foot Coast Guard Cutter Healy was commissioned in 1999.

NATO, Indo-Pacific partners forge ties amid shared threats

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Four Indo-Pacific countries attending the NATO summit issued a joint statement Thursday to “strongly condemn the illicit military cooperation” between Russia and North Korea, showing how the military alliance and its Pacific partners are forging closer ties to counter what they see as shared security threats.

For the third year in a row, leaders or their deputies from Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia — which are not NATO members — attended the high-level meeting of the 75-year-old military alliance of European and North American countries. In Washington, they launched cooperative projects on Ukraine, disinformation, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence.

“We will address our shared security challenges, including Russia’s war against Ukraine,

China’s support for Russia’s war economy and the growing alignment of authoritarian powers,” NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said when meeting officials of the four Pacific partners. “We must work even more closely together to preserve peace and protect the rules-based international order.”

“Our security is not regional. It is global,” he said.

The White House said it welcomed the attendance of the four Indo-Pacific countries at the NATO meeting because the threats and challenges among the regions are interconnected.

In an interview with the South Korean news agency Yonhap, Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said Washington wants to “institutionalize” the grouping of the four countries as Washington refocuses its attention in the region.

US, South Korea sign joint nuclear deterrence rules

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — The U.S. and South Korea signed joint nuclear deterrence guidelines for the first time, a basic yet important step in their efforts to improve deterrence toward North Korea’s evolving nuclear threats.

Meeting Thursday on the sidelines of a NATO summit in Washington, President Joe Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol commended what they called “the tremendous progress” that their countries’ alliance have made a year after creating a joint Nuclear Consultative Group.

The two leaders authorized “the U.S.-ROK Guidelines for Nuclear Deterrence and Nuclear Operations on the Korean Peninsula” that was signed by their defense officials earlier Thursday, according to South Korea’s presidential office.

ROK stands for the Republic of Korea, South Korea’s official name.

Last year, the U.S. and South Korea launched the consultative body to strengthen communication on nuclear operations and discuss how to integrate U.S. nuclear weapons and South Korean conventional weapons in various contingencies. The U.S. has long promised to use all its capabilities, including nuclear weapons, to defend South Korea if it is attacked, but faced suspicions that it lacks plans on how it would exercise its extended deterrence for its Asian ally.

The consultative body was established as North Korea has sharply accelerated its missile testing activities and openly threatened to use nuclear weapons preemptively in potential conflicts. South Korea has no nuclear weapons.

Trump lawyers press judge to overturn hush money conviction

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Donald Trump's lawyers are imploring a New York judge to overturn his hush money conviction and dismiss the case, arguing his historic trial was "tainted" by evidence that shouldn't have been allowed because of the Supreme Court's recent presidential immunity ruling.

In a court filing made public Thursday, the former president's lawyers expanded on their view that Manhattan prosecutors had rashly and wrongly hurried to try Trump while the high court was still considering his immunity claims.

"Rather than wait for the Supreme Court's guidance, the prosecutors scoffed with hubris at President Trump's immunity motions and insisted on rushing to trial," Trump lawyers Todd Blanche and Emil Bove wrote. They urged Judge Juan M. Merchan "to address these injustices," saying he was "duty-bound to do so in light of the Supreme Court's decision."

Trump became the first ex-president convicted of a crime when a jury found him guilty in May of falsifying records to cover up a potential sex scandal.

Trump's lawyers urged Merchan to toss out not only the ju-

ry's verdict but the indictment, which would prevent prosecutors from retrying the case.

Merchan has said he'll rule on the defense's requests on Sept. 6 and will sentence Trump on Sept. 18, "if such is still necessary."

The Manhattan district attorney's office has until July 24 to respond to the defense filing and declined to comment Thursday.

The Supreme Court's July 1 immunity decision gave broad protections to presidents and insulated them from prosecution for official acts. It also restricted prosecutors from citing any official acts as evidence in trying to prove a president's unofficial actions violated the law.

The Supreme Court did not define what constitutes an official act, leaving that to lower courts.

Hours after the opinion's release, Trump's lawyers wrote a letter asking Merchan to set aside the verdict and to delay Trump's sentencing, which had been scheduled for Thursday.

Trump's trial began April 15. The Supreme Court heard arguments in the immunity case 10 days later.

Trump was convicted on 34 felony counts of falsifying busi-

ness records arising from what prosecutors said was an attempt to cover up a \$130,000 hush money payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels just before the 2016 presidential election.

Daniels claims she had a sexual encounter with Trump in 2006. Trump denies it, saying at his June 27 debate with President Joe Biden, "I didn't have sex with a porn star."

He has vowed to appeal the conviction but would not be able to do so until he is sentenced.

Prosecutors said the Daniels payment was part of a broader scheme to buy the silence of people who might have gone public during the campaign with embarrassing stories alleging Trump had extramarital sex.

Trump denied any wrongdoing and said all the stories were false.

Trump's former lawyer Michael Cohen paid Daniels and was later reimbursed by Trump. Prosecutors said Cohen — with Trump's knowledge — disguised the reimbursements by submitting monthly invoices for retainer payments as Trump's personal lawyer. Trump's company logged the payments to Cohen as legal expenses.

Melania Trump will attend GOP convention

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Former first lady Melania Trump will attend the Republican National Convention next week in Milwaukee, according to two people familiar with her plans.

Melania Trump has largely refrained from public appearances, noticeably missing key moments such as former President Donald Trump's Super Tuesday victory party and his 78th birthday party last month. She also did not accompany the presumptive Republican presidential nominee on any of the days of his monthlong hush money trial in New York.

Her presence at the convention where her husband will be officially nominated as the Republican candidate will be a boost for the party as it tries to present a united front compared to the crisis the Democratic party faces as some are calling for President Joe Biden to withdraw his reelection bid following his debate performance.

Melania Trump's plans have not been formally announced, and it is not yet clear whether she will deliver a speech or have any role in the proceedings.

Hungary's nationalist leader visits Trump in Florida

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Hungary's nationalist prime minister, Viktor Orbán, traveled to Florida on Thursday and met with former President Donald Trump following a NATO summit in Washington, a move likely to aggravate frustrations among Western allies over similar secretive trips he made to Russia and China in recent days.

Orbán met with Trump at the former president's beachside compound Mar-a-Lago and shared a photo of the two on social media with the caption: "We discussed ways to make peace. The good news of the day: he's going to solve it!"

On his own social media site, Trump posted: "Thank you Viktor. There must be PEACE, and quickly."

The Hungarian leader has

openly endorsed Trump's candidacy in this year's presidential election, and expressed hopes that the Republican will be able to bring an end to Russia's war in Ukraine.

The European Union's longest-serving leader has become an icon to some conservative populists for championing what he calls "illiberal democracy," which includes restrictions on immigration and

LGBTQ+ rights.

He has also cracked down on the press and judiciary in Hungary and been accused by the EU of violating rule-of-law and democracy standards.

The Mar-a-Lago meeting — Orbán's second since March — came as the latest stop on what he calls a "peace mission" aimed at finding a path toward ending Russia's war in Ukraine.

Key takeaways from Biden's news conference

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Joe Biden faced a test Thursday that he had avoided so far this year — a solo news conference with questions from the White House press corps.

The news conference was meant to reassure a disheartened group of Democratic lawmakers, allies and persuadable voters in this year's election that Biden still has the strength and stamina to be president. Biden has tried to defend his feeble and tongue-tied performance in the June 27 debate against Republican Donald Trump as an outlier rather than evidence that at 81 he lacks the vigor and commanding presence that the public expects from the commander in chief.

He made at least two notable flubs, referring at an event beforehand to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as "President Putin" and then calling Kamala Harris "Vice President Trump" when asked about her by a reporter. But he also gave detailed responses about his work to preserve NATO and his plans for a second term. And he insisted he's not leaving the race even as a growing number of Democratic lawmakers ask him to step aside.

Here are some highlights from the press conference:

■ He bungled key names — and remained defiant.

Perhaps Biden's biggest slipup in the press conference came early on when he referred to Vice President Kamala Harris as "Vice President Trump," in saying he picked her because he believed she could beat Trump.

Even before the news conference, Biden had bungled an important name at the NATO summit and instantly lowered expectations for his performance.

"Ladies and gentlemen, President Putin," Biden said as he was introducing Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelen-

skyy, who is most definitely not Russian President Vladimir Putin. The gaffe immediately prompted gasps, as Biden caught himself and said to Zelenskyy: "President Putin? You're going to beat President Putin."

But he was defiant when a reporter brought up his reference to "Vice President Trump" and noted the presumptive Republican nominee's campaign was already promoting the slipup. "Listen to him," he said, before walking off the stage.

One House Democrat, Rep. Jim Himes of Connecticut, issued a statement minutes later calling on the president to withdraw.

■ He insisted, 'I've got to finish this job.'

It's a delicate dance between the president and vice president, with many Democrats openly pining for Harris to replace Biden on the ticket. Biden didn't acknowledge that tension, but only brought Harris up in response to pointed questions about whether he believed she had the capability to replace him.

"I wouldn't have picked her unless I thought she was qualified to be president," Biden said, citing Harris' resume from prosecutor to the U.S. Senate.

But in response to a later question he acknowledged he'd moved on from his 2020 campaign promise to be a "bridge" to a new generation of Democrats. "What changed was the gravity of the situation I inherited," he said, without a word about his vice president.

Repeatedly, he said, "I've got to finish this job."

The press conference ended with Biden being asked directly whether he'd step down for Harris if he saw polling showing she had a better chance of beating Trump. "No, unless they come back and said there's no way you can win," Biden responded. Then he added, in a stage whisper, "No poll's saying that."

■ He argued he's delivered results over rhetoric.

Biden tried to make the case that what he's doing matters more than how he talks about it.

He praised the just finished NATO summit as elevating America's standing. "Have you ever seen a more successful conference?" Biden said to a group of reporters who often only got to see the conference during prepared remarks.

He drilled down on how inflation has eased from its 2022 peak as he reeled off stats such as the creation of 800,000 manufacturing jobs under his watch, saying that world leaders would want to trade their own economies for what United States has. He also said he would cap how much rent could grow for tenants of landlords who are part of a tax-credit program for low-income housing.

It's the same pitch Biden has made in stump speeches without necessarily doing much to move his own popularity. His team believes it will sink in if repeated constantly.

■ He brought up his work on NATO.

Biden kicked off the press conference by talking at length about NATO and its value to the United States — one of his strongest political issues against Trump, who has been openly skeptical of the alliance and once suggested he'd encourage Russia to attack NATO members whom he considered delinquent.

Biden tied himself to an American tradition stretching "from Truman to Reagan to me" of defending NATO. "Every American must ask herself or himself, is the world safer with NATO?" he asked.

Overall, Biden spoke forcefully and fluently about foreign policy, one of his favorite subjects. But the news conference's focus wasn't really foreign policy, it was reassuring Democrats and the world that Biden is still able to be president and

beat Trump.

That shows how even Biden's strengths are being overshadowed by questions about his capabilities.

■ He answered questions in detail — unlike at the debate.

There were few fireworks in Biden's answers — with the highly anticipated event at times coming across as more of a think tank lecture than an effort to grab voters' attention. He went into granular detail on geopolitics and rattled off numbers — asking at one moment, though, to not be held to the precise figure.

While it didn't erase the stumbles and blank stares from the debate, it showed that he could engage with reporters' questions on a range of issues without losing focus.

There was still regular coughing and throat clearing. And at times he lowered his voice to a hoarse whisper that evoked the rasp of his voice on debate night.

Overall, his presentation was a reminder that people are focused on him now with an almost clinical eye toward possible slipups and mistakes, the kind of pressure that is unlikely to go away for as long as Biden insists he'll stay in the race.

■ When possible, he went back to the stump speech.

Every politician has a stock set of lines. And whenever Biden could, he went back to his favorite talking points. It was a way to answer the question without necessarily needing to say anything spontaneous or new.

He explained his decision to run for a second term with a variation on his "finish the job" catchphrase. He went into his standard spiel about computer chips.

With no time limit on his answers like he faced at the debate, Biden went on for several minutes at a time telling stories about his interactions with foreign leaders and making the case for his reelection.

Data of nearly all AT&T users downloaded

Associated Press

The data of nearly all customers of the telecommunications giant AT&T was downloaded to a third-party platform in a 2022 security breach, the company said Friday, as cyberattacks against businesses, schools and health systems continue to spread globally.

The breach hit customers of AT&T's cellular customers, customers of mobile virtual network operators using AT&T's wireless network, as well as its landline customers who interacted with those cellular numbers.

AT&T said that it currently doesn't believe that the data is publicly available.

"The data does not contain the content of calls or texts, personal information such as Social Security numbers, dates of birth, or other personally identifiable information," AT&T said Friday.

The compromised data also doesn't include some information typically seen in usage details, such as the time stamp of calls or texts, the company said, or customer names.

AT&T, however, said that there are often ways using pub-

licly available online tools to find the name associated with a specific telephone number.

An internal investigation determined that compromised data includes files containing AT&T records of calls and texts between May 1, 2022 and Oct. 31, 2022.

AT&T has more than 100 million customers in the U.S. and almost 2.5 million business accounts.

The company said Friday that it has launched an investigation and engaged with cybersecurity experts to understand the nature and scope of the criminal

breach.

Compromised data also includes records from Jan. 2, 2023, for a very small number of customers. The records identify the telephone numbers an AT&T or MVNO cellular number interacted with during these periods. For a subset of records, one or more cell site identification number(s) associated with the interactions are also included.

The company was cooperating with law enforcement on the incident and that it understands that at least one person has been apprehended so far.

Alec Baldwin's trial over 'Rust' set shooting on hold

Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. — Alec Baldwin's involuntary manslaughter trial was put on hold Friday while the judge considers a defense motion to dismiss the case over disputed ammunition.

Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer sent the jury home for the day after a hearing on the issue that was supposed to precede resumption of the trial raised more questions and called for further testimony.

The defense filed its motion over what it says is ammunition evidence the prosecution hid from them that may be related to the shooting death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins on the set of the film "Rust" in 2021.

The issue came up Thursday during defense questioning of sheriff's crime scene technician Marissa Poppell.

Baldwin lawyer Alex Spiro

suggested with his questions that Poppell and other authorities had been overly cozy with the film's firearms supplier Seth Kenney and had insufficiently investigated whether he was responsible for the fatal ammunition reaching the set.

Special prosecutor Kari Morrissey established in her questioning that the source of the ammunition was Troy Teske, a friend of the father of the film's armorer, Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, who has already been convicted of involuntary manslaughter for her role in Hutchins' death.

She was sentenced to 18 months in prison and is appealing her conviction.

Morrissey said the bullets were not the same size or chemical composition as the live rounds found on the "Rust" set, including the one that killed Hutchins.

Mother of baby found crawling by road charged

Associated Press

LAKE CHARLES, La. — Three days after a 4-year-old boy's body was pulled from a southwest Louisiana lake, and two days after the child's 1-year-old brother was rescued while crawling beside an interstate highway, Louisiana authorities announced a murder charge against the children's mother.

Aaliyah Jack, 25 was arrested earlier this week in Mississippi on a Louisiana charge of failure to report a missing child. On Thursday, the Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's Office added charges including cruelty to a juvenile and second-degree murder. She remained in custody in Mississippi after her arrest in the city of Meridian.

It was unclear when she would be extradited. A Louisiana judge set bond at \$9.1 million, according to the sheriff's

news release.

"Although we have upgraded charges on Jack, our detectives still have a lot of work to do," Calcasieu Sheriff Gary "Stitch" Guillory said in a news release. "The investigation will continue while we wait for the autopsy results of the victim."

Authorities have not stated a suspected cause of death for the 4-year-old.

Guillory said at a Tuesday news conference that the baby was covered with insect bites but otherwise appeared in good condition. Guillory called the boy a "miracle baby," having been spotted crawling in a ditch beside Interstate 10 after two days alone in sometimes stormy weather.

Authorities had recovered the dead child's body Monday after getting a report of a body in a lake behind a Louisiana welcome center.

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Court: Some NCAA athletes may qualify as employees

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — College athletes whose efforts primarily benefit their schools may qualify as employees deserving of pay under federal wage-and-hour laws, a U.S. appeals court ruled Thursday in a setback to the NCAA.

The court, in the latest challenge to the NCAA's long-held notion of "amateurism" in college sports, said that a test should be developed to differentiate between students who play college sports for fun and those whose effort "crosses the legal line into work."

"With professional athletes as the clearest indicators, playing sports can certainly constitute compensable work," U.S. Circuit Judge L. Felipe Restrepo wrote. "Ultimately, the touchstone remains whether the cumulative circumstances of the relationship between the athlete and college or NCAA reveal an economic reality that is that of an employee-employer."

A colleague, in a concurring opinion, questioned the difficulty of such a process, noting that nearly 200,000 students com-

pete on nearly 6,700 Division I teams. The NCAA had hoped to have the case dismissed, but it will instead go back to the trial judge for fact finding.

The ruling follows a 2021 Supreme Court decision that led the NCAA to amend its rules to allow athletes to profit from their name, image and likeness. In May, the NCAA announced a nearly \$2.8 billion revenue-sharing plan that could steer millions of dollars directly to athletes by next year.

The Division I athletes and former athletes behind the suit in Philadelphia are seeking more modest hourly wages similar to those earned by their peers in work-study programs. They argue that colleges are violating fair labor practices by failing to pay them for the time they dedicate to their sports, which they say can average 30 or more hours per week.

Lawyer Paul McDonald, representing the plaintiffs, has suggested that athletes might make \$2,000 per month or \$10,000 per year for participating in NCAA sports. He said that many students need the money for every-

day expenses.

"This notion that college athletes cannot be both students and employees is just not accurate when you have student employees on campuses," McDonald said Thursday. "It's just beyond belief, the idea that the athletes would not meet the same criteria as employees."

A district judge had refused to throw out the case, prompting the Indianapolis-based NCAA to ask the appeals court to stop it from going to trial.

The NCAA, in a statement, said it has been expanding core benefits for athletes, from health care to career preparation, and wants to help schools steer more direct financial benefits to their athletes.

However, it noted what it called student concerns that the employment model could "harm their experiences and needlessly cost countless student-athletes opportunities in women's sports, Olympic sports, and sports at the HBCU and Division II and Division III levels." The statement was issued by NCAA spokesperson Meghan Durham Wright.

Klopp seen as top pick, Curtin says

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jim Curtin thinks the search for Gregg Berhalter's successor as U.S. coach doesn't need to be complicated.

"If Jürgen Klopp is available to do it and wants to do it, you don't need an interview process for that. That's the guy," the Philadelphia Union coach said Thursday. "But the reality is, I don't know how serious that is."

Klopp retired from Liverpool this spring after nine seasons that included Premier League, FA Cup and Champions League titles and appears to be the fan favorite to replace Berhalter, who was fired Wednesday following the Americans' first-round exit at the Copa America.

Thierry Henry, Patrick Vieira and Marcelo Bielsa are also among those being speculated about as candidates to lead the Americans into the 2026 World Cup, along with Curtin, Steve Cherundolo, Jesse Marsch, Hugo Pérez, Pellegrino Matarazzo, David Wagner, Massimiliano Allegri and Mauricio Pochettino.

"I think you need a bold, brash personality, someone that walks into that room and tells everyone that they're on a clean slate, and they've got to figure out who they want to be going into that World Cup," said Apple TV lead analyst Taylor Twellman, a former national team forward.

"Right now this group of players has heard far too long that they're the golden generation of player, yet they haven't really had that significant win," Twellman added, "so I would if I'm running the organization say, hang on a minute, I'm going to take the attention away from players. I'm going to put someone in front of the camera, someone that takes all the eyeballs, all the attention off of them and puts all the pressure on themselves."

Bill Belichick joining 'Inside the NFL'

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Bill Belichick has added a second media job for the upcoming season.

The CW Network announced Thursday that Belichick will be one of the analysts on "Inside the NFL." Belichick, who coached the New England Patriots to six Super Bowl titles during his 24 years at the helm, will also appear on the Maningcast during "Monday Night Football."

Belichick joins Ryan Clark,

Chad Johnson and Chris Long. Johnson and Long each played one season for Belichick in New England.

"I'm thrilled to join my new team at NFL Films and to work on such a historic television franchise," Belichick said in a statement. "I've always appreciated 'Inside the NFL's' depth of analysis, and I hope to bring the same detailed insight to The CW by talking real football with real pros — Ryan, Chris and Chad — this coming season."

"Inside the NFL," which is in

its 48th season, is produced by NFL Films.

While Belichick was infamous for his short answers and refusing to engage with reporters while he was a coach, the times he has been revealing and forthcoming have often been on shows or pieces produced by NFL Films.

Belichick was nominated for a Sports Emmy for Outstanding Studio Analyst for his work on the 2019 NFL Films series "NFL 100 All-Time Team," which aired on NFL Network.

Phillies sweep Dodgers with 5-1 win

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Brandon Marsh hit a home run and an RBI triple, Trea Turner launched his sixth longball in nine games and the Philadelphia Phillies completed a three-game sweep of the Los Angeles Dodgers with a 5-1 victory Thursday night.

Aaron Nola (11-4) struck out nine in six innings and Kyle Schwarber also went deep for the Phillies, who swept the Dodgers for the first time since 2011 — and the first time in Philadelphia since 2008. Los Angeles has lost four straight overall.

In a matchup between the top two teams in the National League, the Phillies led in every inning of the series except for the first one on Tuesday, which ended with both teams scoreless. They outscored the Dodgers 19-5 in the three games.

Marsh clubbed a 3-1 fastball from Landon Knack into the right-field seats leading off the second inning. Marsh then ripped a triple off Knack down the right-field line in the sixth, scoring Nick Castellanos to put the Phillies ahead 3-1.

Turner hit a solo shot in the first inning off Dodgers opener Anthony Banda (1-2) and added an infield single in the fourth. In the 21 games since he returned to Philadelphia's lineup following a 38-game stint on the injured list with a left hamstring strain, Turner is batting .356 with 11 multi-hit games.

Johan Rojas had an RBI single for Philadelphia.

Nola allowed one run and four hits. His 11 wins rank second in the NL behind Atlanta lefty Chris Sale (12).

Tigers 10, Guardians 1: Riley Greene drove in three runs on three hits and Jack Flaherty pitched six sparkling innings, helping Detroit beat AL Central-leading Cleveland to win their four-game series.

Cleveland's Bo Naylor ho-

mered in the third and Carson Kelly countered with his seventh of the season in the bottom of the inning, restoring Detroit's three-run lead before the game turned into a rout.

Greene's two-run double in the fourth put the Tigers ahead 6-1, and Gio Urshela's three-run double gave them a 10-run lead in the sixth inning.

Detroit is 6-1 in its past seven for its best stretch since winning six of its first seven games this season, but is still four games below .500 and trails the Guardians by 13 games in the division. The fourth-place Tigers will face Cleveland six more times this month, giving them an opportunity to make up some ground in the standings.

Flaherty (6-5) allowed two hits, struck out four and walked two in his return from a back injury. Facing a team with an AL-high five All-Stars, including four in the lineup, the 28-year-old right-hander lowered his ERA to 3.13.

Reds 8, Rockies 1: Tyler Stephenson homered twice and drove in five runs, helping Hunter Greene and Cincinnati beat Colorado.

Greene (6-4) struck out a season-high 10 in six innings. The All-Star right-hander allowed one run and two hits.

Jonathan India and Spencer Steer each had three hits and scored two runs as the Reds improved to 3-4 on their 10-game homestand leading up to the break. They won three of four against the Rockies to finish their season series with a 6-1 record.

Stephenson hit a three-run shot off Austin Gomber (2-6) in the third inning. He capped Cincinnati's four-run seventh with a two-run drive against Anthony Molina.

It was Stephenson's first career multihomer game. He has 10 homers this season.

Gomber was charged with

four runs and seven hits in five innings.

Mets 7, Nationals 0: Brandon Nimmo hit a bases-clearing double to spark a five-run fifth inning, David Peterson threw six scoreless innings and New York moved into playoff position with a victory over Washington, completing a three-game sweep.

J.D. Martinez and Pete Alonso added RBI singles as the Mets moved two games over .500 for the first time since April 24. Mark Vientos and Harrison Bader had RBI singles in the eighth and New York (47-45) moved one percentage point (.511) ahead of San Diego into the NL's third wild-card spot.

New York also completed its seventh sweep this season and is 23-12 since being swept by the Dodgers in a doubleheader on May 29 that necessitated a players-only meeting.

Peterson (4-0) allowed four hits and worked out of trouble at times while combining with four relievers on New York's first shutout of the season. Peterson struck out five and walked three.

The Mets were held hitless until Martinez doubled in the fourth. Consecutive walks to Jeff McNeill and Francisco Lindor in the fifth loaded the bases for Nimmo, who was denied a double by rookie left fielder James Wood in the first.

Pirates 1, Brewers 0: Paul Skenes struck out 11 in seven no-hit innings in another dominant performance for Pittsburgh.

Skenes threw 99 pitches in his 11th major league start, 65 for strikes. The All-Star right-hander walked one while lowering his ERA to 1.90.

Colin Holderman replaced Skenes (6-0) and surrendered a leadoff single to Jake Bauers for Milwaukee's first hit. The Brewers loaded the bases with two down in the eighth, but Holderman escaped the jam

when he struck out William Contreras swinging.

Aroldis Chapman handled the ninth for his fourth save, finishing a two-hitter for Pittsburgh.

Milwaukee wasted a terrific performance by Aaron Civale (2-7), who pitched six-hit ball into the seventh inning. The NL Central leaders lost for the fifth time in seven games.

The Pirates scored their only run in the seventh. Ke'Bryan Hayes reached on a leadoff single, but he was erased when Jack Suwinski bounced into a fielder's choice.

Blue Jays 5, Giants 3: Danny Jansen and Spencer Horwitz homered, Kevin Gausman pitched seven strong innings against his former team and Toronto beat San Francisco.

Gausman (7-8) allowed two runs and six hits with three strikeouts and no walks in his first outing at Oracle Park since pitching for the Giants in 2020-21.

Vladimir Guerrero Jr., Justin Turner and Leo Jiménez also drove in runs for Toronto, which took two of three from San Francisco and won for the fourth time in five games.

Toronto's Kevin Kiermaier had two hits and made a diving catch in center field to rob Matt Chapman of a hit in the fourth inning.

Heliot Ramos and Mike Yastrzemski homered for the Giants, who have lost four of five.

Cubs 8, Orioles 0: Justin Steele pitched seven innings of three-hit ball, Selya Suzuki had three extra-base hits and three RBIs, and Chicago blanked Baltimore for a three-game sweep.

Dansby Swanson homered for the Cubs, who outscored the AL East leaders 21-2 in becoming the first team to sweep the Orioles in Baltimore since Tampa Bay in August 2021.

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Chicago completed the sweep with a pair of shutouts, marking the first time the Orioles were blanked in successive games since June 23-24, 2021, during a season in which Baltimore finished 52-110.

Steele (2-3) celebrated his 29th birthday with a dominant performance. He retired his first 11 batters, didn't allow a runner past second base and struck out four without issuing a walk.

The only hits against the lefty were doubles by Ryan Mountcastle, Jorge Mateo and Anthony Santander.

Red Sox 7, Athletics 0: All-Star pitcher Tanner Houck limited Oakland to two hits in six innings and Connor Wong, Wilyer Abreu and Masataka Yoshida homered to help Boston win.

The Red Sox have won eight of their last 10 to improve to 51-41. They have won five of the six against Oakland this season.

Houck (8-6) took a no-hitter into the fifth and struck out six in his first victory since June 13. He threw 64 of 103 pitches for strikes and lowered his ERA from 2.68 to 2.54.

Yoshida went 3 for 4 and drove in four runs, Abreu also was 3 for 4, and Wong and David Hamilton each had two hits.

With two on and two down in the sixth, Boston manager Alex Cora visited the mound. He had Brennan Bernardino warming up the bullpen, but Cora elected to stay with Houck after he

threw a wild pitch to put the runners in second and third. Houck got Lawrence Butler on a grounder to shortstop Cedanne Rafaela for the final out.

Rays 5, Yankees 4: Randy Arozarena hit a first-inning home run in a 5-3 victory for Tampa Bay as they took two of three from the Yankees and extended New York's streak of series losses to eight.

Brandon Lowe's RBI single put Tampa Bay ahead to stay in a three-run fifth against Nestor Cortes (4-8), and the Yankees lost for the 18th time in 25 games.

Austin Wells and Juan Soto homered for the Yankees, who have lost four straight series. The Yankees started 17-3-2 in their first 22 series but are 0-7-1 since winning three of four at Kansas City from June 10-13.

New York begins a three-game series at AL East-leading Baltimore on Friday night. The Yankees trail the Orioles by two games.

Soto went 2 for 3 with two walks and has reached bases at least three times in a majors-best 30 games but was in discomfort after a seventh-inning swing. His right hand has bothered him swinging since he got hurt June 28 at Toronto.

Shane Baz gave up three runs and six hits over 4⅓ innings in his second start since Tommy John surgery on Sept. 28, 2002.

Astros 6, Marlins 3: Jake Meyers hit an RBI double and surging Houston beat Miami, completing a three-game sweep

with their ninth straight victory at home.

Houston has won nine of 12 overall to improve to 49-44.

After coming off the injured list, Jake Bloss allowed four hits and two runs over four innings for the Astros in his second major league start. Tayler Scott (6-2) got the last two outs in the sixth for the win and Josh Hader struck out two in a scoreless ninth for his 17th save.

Bryan De La Cruz and Jazz Chisholm Jr. each hit a solo homer for the National League-worst Marlins, who were swept for the eighth time this season.

Miami rookie Roddery Muñoz (1-4) permitted five hits and six runs — four earned — in 6⅓ innings. He also had two wild pitches and a balk.

Mariners 11, Angels 0: Cal Raleigh homered from each side of the plate for the second time in three days, and J.P. Crawford had a two-run homer while getting three hits and three RBIs in Seattle's thrashing of Los Angeles.

Jorge Polanco had a two-run single in a four-run first inning as the Mariners wrecked the major league debut of Jack Kochanowicz (0-1) and kept piling on. Seattle opened a four-game series in Anaheim with its third straight victory.

Raleigh connected for a solo shot in the third inning from the left side of the plate and a three-run drive in the sixth from the right side. His 19 homers are an ongoing record for a Seattle

catcher before the All-Star break.

Luis Castillo (8-9) pitched six innings of four-hit ball with five strikeouts to win consecutive starts for the first time since April.

Mickey Moniak had two hits for the Angels, who have lost nine of 11. Los Angeles was shut out for the fourth time in its past nine games.

Diamondbacks 1, Braves 0: Brandon Pfaadt outpitched Max Fried in six strong innings and Jake McCarthy made a leaping grab at the wall in the ninth inning as Arizona beat Atlanta.

Pfaadt (4-6) was sharp for the fourth straight start, scattering three hits while striking out four to win after three consecutive no-decisions.

Fried (7-5) allowed a run on five hits in six innings with seven strikeouts and three walks. The lone run off the right-hander came in the fifth inning by Eugenio Suarez, a 437-foot shot after he hit a 452-foot homer in Arizona's 7-5 win the night before.

It was the first time Arizona won 1-0 at home on a solo homer since Sept. 19, 2011, when Justin Upton did it against Pittsburgh.

Paul Sewald worked around a two-out single in the ninth for his 13th save — second straight since a streak of three blown saves. He got a big lift from McCarthy, who snagged Matt Olson's one-out drive to the wall in left.

IOC, Saudi Arabia sign 12-year deal for Esports Olympics

Associated Press

GENEVA — Saudi Arabia and the IOC are teaming up for their first commercial deal together with the oil-rich kingdom set to host the Esports Olympics that launch next year.

The gaming partnership will be for 12 years “with Olympic Esports Games held regularly,” the International Olympic Com-

mittee said in a statement Friday. The value was not stated.

The announcement was made during the two-month Esports World Cup staged in Riyadh.

The first formal hosting or sponsorship deal between the IOC and Saudi Arabia is the latest addition to the kingdom's sprawling portfolio of sports events, including confirmation

due in December to stage the 2034 World Cup in men's soccer for FIFA.

Sports and entertainment events are a key part of the Vision 2030 program driven by Prince Mohammed bin Salman that aims to move the Saudi economy away from dependence on oil and to modernize its society.

Saudi sports minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Faisal said the country “has become a global hub for professional esports.”

“This is a natural next step for our young athletes, our country and the global esports community,” said Prince Abdulaziz, who also heads the Saudi national Olympic committee.