

Trump urges unity in wake of shooting

Associated Press

BUTLER, Pa.—Former President Donald Trump called for unity and resilience Sunday after an attempt on his life injected fresh uncertainty into an already tumultuous presidential campaign, while President Joe Biden implored Americans to “cool it down” in the final stretch and “resolve our differences at the ballot box.”

The opponents’ statements followed an attack that shook the firmament of the American political system, causing at least a temporary detente in a heated presidential campaign expected to resume again in earnest amid the pageantry of the upcoming Republican National Convention.

A full day after the shooting, the gunman’s motive remained a mystery, with investigators saying they believe he acted alone before he was fatally shot by Secret Service agents.

Biden ordered an independent

security review of the attack, which killed a bystander, critically wounded two others and prompted questions about how a gunman was able to open fire from a rooftop near a Pennsylvania campaign rally. The FBI was investigating the shooting as a potential act of domestic terrorism.

Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, said the upper part of his right ear was pierced by a bullet.

He arrived in Milwaukee on Sunday evening for the convention, set to begin Monday. He told the Washington Examiner that he had rewritten his speech for the event to focus more on national unity than on the policies of Biden.

In a post Sunday on his social media site, Trump said: “In this moment, it is more important than ever that we stand United, and show our True Character as Americans, remaining Strong and Determined, and not allow-

ing Evil to Win.”

In a prime-time national address from the Oval Office, Biden said political passions can run high but “we must never descend into violence.” The president said his party and the Republicans can compete forcefully over different policy visions—but must do it in a civil fashion.

“All of us now face a time of testing as the election approaches,” Biden said. “There is no place in America for this kind of violence — for any violence. Ever. Period. No exception. We can’t allow this violence to be normalized.”

The rallygoer who was killed was Corey Comperatore, a former fire chief from the area, according to Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, who said Comperatore “died a hero.”

“His wife shared with me that he dove on his family to protect them,” Shapiro said. The two wounded bystanders were listed

in stable condition.

The FBI identified the gunman as Thomas Matthew Crooks, 20, of Bethel Park, Pa., about 50 miles from the scene of the shooting.

Biden urged Americans to stay patient. “Please, don’t make assumptions about his motives or his affiliations,” he said.

Most serious assassination attempt since 1981

The attack was the most serious attempt to kill a president or presidential candidate since President Ronald Reagan was shot in 1981. It drew new attention to concerns about political violence in a deeply polarized U.S. less than four months before the election.

Biden on Sunday ordered a security review of operations for the Republican National Convention, which is proceeding as planned. The Secret Service said it was “confident” in the security plan, and no additional changes were planned.

Anger and anxiety could shift script at GOP convention

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Donald Trump’s campaign chiefs designed the convention opening this week to feature a softer and more optimistic message, focusing on themes that would help a divisive leader expand his appeal among moderate voters and people of color.

Then came a shooting that rattled the foundation of American politics.

Suddenly, the Democrats’ turmoil after the debate, the GOP’s potential governing agenda and even Trump’s criminal convictions became secondary to fears about political violence and the country’s sta-

bility. The presumptive Republican nominee and his allies will face the nation during their four-day convention in Milwaukee unquestionably united and ready to “fight,” as the bloodied Trump cried out Saturday while Secret Service agents at his Pennsylvania rally rushed him to safety.

Anger and anxiety are coursing through the party, even as many top Republicans call for calm and a lowering of tensions.

Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, known for his sunny and optimistic vision of Republican politics, suggested online the attempted assassination had been “aided and abetted by the rad-

ical Left and corporate media incessantly calling Trump a threat to democracy, fascists, or worse.”

Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson, another likely convention speaker, offered a more somber tone during a Sunday appearance on NBC.

“We’ve got to turn the temperature down in this country,” Johnson said. “We need leaders of all parties, on both sides, to call that out and make sure that happens so that we can go forward and maintain our free society that we all are blessed to have.”

On Monday, word circulated that Trump had made his deci-

sion on his vice presidential pick.

Trump’s pick was expected to appear at the Republican National convention later in the day as the running mate is formally nominated.

Florida Sen. Marco Rubio has been informed that he is not Trump’s vice presidential pick, according to a person familiar with their conversation. North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum also has been told he will not be chosen as Trump’s running mate, AP sources said.

Trump was believed to have narrowed his list to three candidates: Rubio, Burgum and Ohio Sen. JD Vance.

F-35Cs and Ospreys headed to Iwakuni

By JONATHAN SNYDER
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — The Navy said Monday it is replacing squadrons of F/A-18 Super Hornet fighters and C-2A Greyhound transports with next-generation stealth fighters and tiltrotors at this base south of Hiroshima.

The F-35C Lightning IIs of Strike Fighter Squadron 147 will replace the F/A-18s of Strike Fighter Squadron 115, according to a news release from U.S. Naval Forces. Likewise, CMV-22B Ospreys with Fleet Logistics Multi-Mission Squadron 30 will swap out with the Greyhounds of

Fleet Logistics Squadron 30.

The upgrades in Navy fighter and transport aircraft based in Japan follow a similar move announced July 4 by the Air Force to permanently base 36 F-15EX Eagles at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, and 48 F-35A Lightning II fighters at Misawa Air Base in the north. Those aircraft replace older model F-15s at Kadena and F-16s at Misawa.

The two Navy squadrons will join Carrier Air Wing 5, which is based at MCAS Iwakuni. The Navy did not lay out a timeline for the aircraft's arrival in Japan.

The air wing is attached to Carrier Strike Group 5, which

will embark aboard the carrier USS George Washington when it arrives at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, to replace the USS Ronald Reagan. The Ronald Reagan is returning to Bremerton, Wash., after nine years at Yokosuka.

The Greyhounds shuttle personnel and cargo from ship to shore but were scheduled for replacement by the Osprey, which has increased range, faster cargo loading and unloading, aerial refueling capability and other improvements, according to the Navy.

The crash in November of an Air Force Osprey in southern Japan, killing all eight aboard, de-

layed that move and stretched the 15 remaining Navy Greyhound's service several more months, USNI News reported in February.

The 400 Ospreys in the Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force, although cleared to fly in March, are not permitted to fly their full range of missions until mid-2025, Vice Adm. Carl Chebi, who leads U.S. Naval Air Systems Command, told House lawmakers last month.

Strike Fighter Squadron 115 and its F/A-18s arrived at MCAS Iwakuni in November 2017 when the carrier air wing relocated from Naval Air Facility Atsugi, south of Tokyo.

Pentagon official touts alliance with Philippines

By JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. alliance with the Philippines has risen to among America's "most vital defense partnerships in the world," thanks to a heightened challenge from China in the South China Sea, a Pentagon official said Thursday.

Ely Ratner, assistant secretary of defense for Indo-Pacific security affairs, said events involving the Philippines since 2021 have been "truly transformative and decisive," driven largely by an assertive and often aggressive China.

"We have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Manila in the midst of a changing security environment," Ratner said in Washington, D.C., at the Center for Strategic and International Studies' South China Sea Conference. A copy of his remarks was posted on the Defense Department website.

Ratner underlined U.S. support for the Philippines as it fac-

es coercion by China's coast guard over possession of Second Thomas Shoal, a shallow reef inside the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

"I believe that historians will record this period in the alliance as truly transformative and decisive, as emblematic of broader strategic changes across the Indo-Pacific," and the result of decisions by U.S. President Joe Biden, Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.

On the Second Thomas Shoal, Chinese coast guard vessels regularly harass Philippine vessels attempting to resupply the BRP Sierra Madre, a grounded, rusting hulk serving as a military outpost. The Chinese have used water cannons and small boats to attack Philippine resupply efforts on the water there.

"We've continued to stand with our ally as Manila defends its lawful rights in the South China Sea," Ratner said.

Chinese, Russian navies kick off joint exercise

Associated Press

BEIJING — China and Russia's naval forces kicked off a joint exercise at a military port in southern China on Sunday, official news agency Xinhua reported, days after NATO allies called Beijing a "decisive enabler" of the war in Ukraine.

The Chinese defense ministry said in a brief statement forces from both sides recently patrolled the western and northern Pacific Ocean and that the operation had nothing to do with international and regional situations and didn't target any third party.

The exercise, which began in Guangdong province on Sunday and is expected to last until mid-July, aimed to demonstrate the capabilities of the navies in addressing security threats and preserving peace and stability globally and regionally, state broadcaster CCTV reported Saturday, adding it would include anti-missile exercises, sea strikes and air defense.

Xinhua News Agency reported the Chinese and Russian naval forces carried out on-map military simulation and tactical coordination exercises after the opening ceremony in the city of Zhanjiang.

The joint drills came on the heels of China's latest tensions with NATO allies last week.

The sternly worded final communiqué, approved by the 32 NATO members at their summit in Washington, made clear that China is becoming a focus of the military alliance, calling Beijing a "decisive enabler" of Russia's war against Ukraine. The European and North American members and their partners in the Indo-Pacific increasingly see shared security concerns coming from Russia and its Asian supporters, especially China.

In response, China accused NATO of seeking security at the expense of others and told the alliance not to bring the same "chaos" to Asia.

Judge dismisses Trump classified documents case

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The federal judge presiding over the classified documents case against former President Donald Trump in Florida dismissed the prosecution on Monday, siding with defense lawyers who said the special counsel who filed the charges was illegally appointed by the Justice Department.

The decision by U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon, which can be appealed and may be overruled by a higher court, brings at least for now a stunning and abrupt conclusion to a criminal case that at the time it was filed was widely regarded as the most perilous of all the legal threats the Republican former president confronted.

Though the case had long been stalled, and the prospect of a trial before the November election already was an unrealistic scenario, the judge's order is a mammoth legal victory for Trump as he recovers from a weekend assassination attempt and prepares to accept the Re-

publican nomination in Milwaukee this week.

In one of four criminal cases against Trump, he had faced dozens of felony counts accusing him of illegally hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Fla., and obstructing FBI efforts to get them back.

He had pleaded not guilty and denied wrongdoing.

Defense lawyers filed multiple challenges to the case, including a legally technical one that asserted that special counsel Jack Smith had been illegally appointed under the Constitution's Appointments Clause because he was appointed by Attorney General Merrick Garland, rather than being confirmed by Congress, and that his office was improperly funded by the Justice Department.

"The Special Counsel's position effectively usurps that important legislative authority, transferring it to a Head of Department, and in the process threatening the structural liber-

ty inherent in the separation of powers," Cannon wrote in a 93-page order granting a defense request to dismiss the case.

"If the political branches wish to grant the Attorney General power to appoint Special Counsel Smith to investigate and prosecute this action with the full powers of a United States Attorney, there is a valid means by which to do so," she added.

That mechanism is through congressional approval, she said.

The order is the latest example of Cannon, a Trump appointee, handling the case in ways that have benefited the ex-president.

She generated intense scrutiny during the FBI's investigation when she appointed an independent arbiter to inspect the classified documents recovered during the August 2022 search of Mar-a-Lago, a decision that was overturned months later by a unanimous federal appeals panel.

Texas gov. demands answers on outages

Associated Press

DALLAS — With around 270,000 homes and businesses still without power in the Houston area almost a week after Hurricane Beryl hit Texas, Gov. Greg Abbott on Sunday said he's demanding an investigation into the response of the utility that serves the area as well as answers about its preparations for upcoming storms.

"Power companies along the Gulf Coast must be prepared to deal with hurricanes, to state the obvious," Abbott said at his first news conference about Beryl since returning to the state from an economic development trip to Asia.

While CenterPoint Energy has restored power to about 2 million customers since the storm hit on July 8, the slow pace of recovery has put the utility, which provides electricity to the nation's fourth-largest city, under mounting scrutiny over whether it was sufficiently prepared for the storm that left people without air conditioning in the searing summer heat.

Abbott said he was sending a letter to the Public Utility Commission of Texas requiring it to investigate why restoration has taken so long and what must be done to fix it. In the Houston area, Beryl toppled transmission lines, uprooted trees and snapped branches that crashed into power lines.

With months of hurricane season left, Abbott said he's giving CenterPoint until the end of the month to specify what it'll be doing to reduce or eliminate power outages in the event of another storm. He said that will include the company providing detailed plans to remove vegetation that still threatens power lines.

Menendez jury asks if unanimity required to acquit 'on a single count'

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A jury deliberating over 18 charges at the bribery trial of Sen. Bob Menendez in New York City asked the judge Monday if unanimity is required to acquit "on a single count."

The jurors sent the note after resuming discussions Monday in Manhattan federal court, following their first three hours of deliberations on Friday.

The corruption trial for the New Jersey Democrat is in its 10th week.

Their written note asked:

"Does a not guilty verdict on a single count require unanimity?"

After consulting with lawyers in the case, Judge Sidney H. Stein responded: "Jury, your vote — whether guilty or not guilty — must be unanimous as to each count and to each defendant."

Menendez is charged in 16 of 18 counts in an indictment first returned last fall.

Menendez, 70, has denied charges that he engaged in a bribery scheme from 2018 to 2023 to benefit three New Jer-

sey businessmen, including by serving as a foreign agent for the government of Egypt.

He and two businessmen who allegedly paid him bribes of gold and cash have pleaded not guilty.

Prosecutors put a heavy emphasis in their closing arguments on nearly \$150,000 of gold bars and over \$480,000 in cash seized from the Menendez home during a 2022 FBI raid. They say the valuables were bribe proceeds, along with a Mercedes-Benz convertible found in the couple's garage.

Hamas: Gaza cease-fire talks haven't paused

Associated Press

MUWASI, Gaza Strip — Hamas said Sunday that Gaza cease-fire talks were ongoing and the group's military commander was in good health, a day after the Israeli military targeted Mohammed Deif with a massive airstrike that local health officials said killed at least 90 people, including children.

Deif's condition was still unclear after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Saturday "there still isn't absolute certainty" he was killed. Army chief Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi said Israel attacked a compound where Deif "was hiding" but added: "It's still too early to summarize the results of the attack, which Hamas is trying to hide."

Hamas representatives gave no evidence to back up their assertion about the health of a chief architect of the Oct. 7 attack that sparked the war. His killing

would mark the highest profile assassination of any Hamas leader by Israel since the war began.

Deif has long topped Israel's most-wanted list and has been in hiding for years.

The Israeli military said Rafa Salama, a Hamas commander it described as one of Deif's closest associates, was killed in Saturday's strike. Salama commanded Hamas' Khan Younis brigade. Netanyahu said all of Hamas' leaders are "marked for death" and asserted that killing them would move Hamas closer to accepting a cease-fire deal.

Hamas rejected the idea that mediated cease-fire discussions had been suspended. Spokesperson Jihad Taha said "there is no doubt that the horrific massacres will impact any efforts in the negotiations" but added that "efforts and endeavors of the mediators remain ongoing."

Hamas political officials also

insisted that communication channels remained functional between the leadership inside and outside Gaza after the strike in the territory's south. Witnesses said it occurred in an area that Israel had designated as safe for hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians. Israel's military would not confirm that.

On Sunday, some survivors were angry that the attack targeting Deif occurred without warning in an area they were told was safe.

"I heard the first hit, and my son came screaming, 'Daddy, Daddy,' and took cover with me," said Mahmoud Abu Yaseen, who clutched his children but then woke up in the hospital to find his son had died. The family had already been displaced five times since the war began. "Where do we go?" he asked.

A United Nations official described utter chaos at Nasser hos-

pital where victims were taken, many treated on bloodstained floors with few supplies available.

"I witnessed some of the most horrific scenes I have seen in my nine months in Gaza," Scott Anderson said in a statement. "I saw toddlers who are double amputees, children paralyzed and unable to receive treatment and others separated from their parents." He said restrictions on humanitarian aid to Gaza hamper efforts to provide needed medical and other care.

On Sunday, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant praised the pilots who carried out the strike and said Hamas is being eroded every day, with no ability to arm itself, organize or "care for the wounded."

At least 300 people were wounded in the strike, one of the deadliest in the nine-month war sparked by Hamas' Oct. 7 assault on southern Israel.

Japan defense officials punished for misconduct

Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan's defense ministry announced disciplinary action on Friday against more than 200 senior officials and service members over mishandling of classified materials and other misconduct, an embarrassment that could undermine Tokyo's efforts to work more closely with United States and other partners in the face of China's growing threat.

The Ministry and its Self-Defense Forces have been under scrutiny over allegations that members of the navy violated the sensitive information protection law, as well as other misconduct such as falsely claiming allowances for special assignments, or wrongfully claiming free meals at base cafeterias. Ministerial staff were also accused of abuses of power.

Defense Minister Minoru

Kihara apologized, saying the problems are "significantly damaging to the public trust" for the ministry and Japan's defense forces. "I'm keenly aware of my responsibility."

He blamed a lack of discipline across the organization.

Kihara said the ministry's investigation found that classified information was mishandled on 38 destroyers and submarines, but said no sensitive information leaked outside of the military or caused any harm. People without appropriate clearances were routinely assigned to duties that involved sensitive information.

"Ensuring intelligence protection is extremely important for our cooperation with the ally and other like-minded countries, and we should never let this kind of problem happen again," Kihara said.

2 suspected Houthi attacks strike ships in the Red Sea

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Two suspected attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels targeted ships in the Red Sea on Monday, as a new U.S. aircraft carrier approached the region to provide security for the key international trade route that has been under assault since the Israel-Hamas war erupted nine months ago.

The captain of the first targeted ship reported being attacked by three small vessels off the coast of Al Hudaydah, Yemen, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said, adding that two of the vessels were crewed and another uncrewed. The "reported unmanned small craft collided with the vessel twice and the 2 manned small craft fired at the vessel," the UKMTO reported. "The vessel conducted self-protection measures, after 15 minutes the small

craft aborted the attack."

The captain later reported two separate waves of missile attacks, approximately 45 minutes apart, that exploded near the vessel.

Later on Monday, in a separate incident also off the coast of Al Hudaydah, a vessel reported being attacked by a suspected uncrewed Houthi aerial vehicle, which "impacted on the port side causing some damage and light smoke," the UKMTO reported.

Both ships and all crew are reported safe, the UKMTO said in a warning to mariners. Names and flags of the ships were not immediately known. The Houthis did not immediately comment on either incident.

The aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt is approaching the Middle East to replace the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, which spent months in the Red Sea to counter the Houthis.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Plea deal for man in assaults of girlfriend

MN ST. PAUL — A man who was accused of holding his girlfriend captive in her dorm room at a Minnesota college for three days while raping, beating and waterboarding her has reached a plea deal that calls for a sentence of up to 7½ years.

Keanu Avery Labatte, 20, of Granite Falls, pleaded guilty Friday to an amended charge of second-degree criminal sexual conduct. He admitted to choking and sexually assaulting the woman in her room at St. Catherine University in September. In return, prosecutors agreed to dismiss four other charges, the St. Paul Pioneer Press reported.

His attorney, Thomas Beito, said Labatte admitted to choking her during the assault. “He did not admit to the other kind of salacious details that were involved here, such as waterboarding, or holding her hostage or kidnapping,” Beito said. “We deny that any of that happened.”

Disturbance investigated after 6 inmates injured

SD SPRINGFIELD — South Dakota corrections officials said they are investigating a pair of incidents at the state prison in Springfield that left six inmates injured.

Department of Corrections spokesman Michael Winder said in a statement that fighting began Tuesday night at the Mike Durfee State Prison, followed by another incident the next morning. The six inmates suffered non-life-threatening injuries, he said.

Winder also said some prison

staff suffered minor injuries while restoring order, but there were no assaults on personnel or damage to property. He said any evidence of criminal activity would be forwarded to the Division of Criminal Investigation.

Fire commissioner will resign after sub found

NY NEW YORK — The first female commissioner of the Fire Department of New York said she plans to step down because it’s time to “pass the torch” after two years in the job.

Laura Kavanagh didn’t say when she plans to resign. But she said in a statement that she plans to spend the next several months helping with the transition in leadership.

“While the decision I have made over the last month has been a hard one, I’m confident that it is time for me to pass the torch to the next leader of the finest Fire Department in the world,” she wrote.

Her appointment by Mayor Eric Adams in 2022 was seen at the time as progress for the department, which was seeking to diversify its leadership.

States ask high court to review trans athletes rule

WV CHARLESTON — West Virginia and Idaho are asking the U.S. Supreme Court to review rulings that blocked the enforcement of state laws prohibiting transgender athletes from competing in sports.

“If the Supreme Court takes this up, it will determine the fate of women’s sports across the entire country for many years to come,” West Virginia Attorney

General Patrick Morrissey said at a briefing with reporters at the state Capitol in Charleston.

It’s unclear when the high court would decide whether to take up the cases, which were filed separately and involve transgender athletes who hoped to compete on female-designated teams at the K-12 and college level.

Lawmakers approve sale of canned alcoholic drinks

PA HARRISBURG — Pennsylvanians would be able to buy canned alcoholic drinks, called ready-to-drink cocktails, from a wider variety of retailers under new legislation.

The state Senate approved the bill, 32-17, and sent it to Gov. Josh Shapiro.

Under the bill, the approximately 12,000 restaurants, bars, beer distributors, grocery stores and convenience stores that are already licensed to sell alcohol can get a special permit to sell the canned drinks. Currently only the state-owned wine and liquor stores are allowed to sell the canned drinks.

Abortion backers sue to remove certain language

AZ PHOENIX — Backers of a November abortion rights ballot initiative have sued a GOP-led legislative committee that seeks to include proposed language for the voter pamphlet referring to a fetus as an “unborn human being.”

Arizona for Abortion Access filed a lawsuit in Maricopa County Superior Court asking that a judge refuse to allow the language favored by a Republican-dominated legislative group for the initiative sum-

mary. The summary will appear on a pamphlet voters can use to decide how to cast their ballots.

The Arizona abortion rights group said the pamphlet summary should simply use the word “fetus,” and argues that “unborn human being” is a politically charged phrase aimed at provoking opposition to the measure.

Hacking charge cut for model accused in killing

FL MIAMI — South Florida prosecutors dropped the computer hacking charge against an OnlyFans model accused of fatally stabbing her boyfriend in a Miami condo in 2022.

The charge against Courtney Clenney, 29, was dropped after a circuit judge ruled last month that the Miami-Dade State Attorney’s Office violated attorney-client privilege in January when investigators confiscated text messages and emails between Clenney, her parents and her attorneys, according to court records. Clenney’s parents had also been charged with hacking, and their charges were also dropped.

Clenney still faces a second-degree murder charge. Jail records showed she’s been held without bond since August 2022.

Defense attorney Jude Faccidomo, who represents the Clennys in the hacking case, said the Miami-Dade State Attorney’s Office should recuse itself from the murder case because prosecutors obtained communications about defense strategy, which they weren’t legally allowed to see.

— From wire reports

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Argentina wins Copa title; Messi injured

Associated Press

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. — Lionel Messi pumped his arms. The trophy bounced up and down in his grasp. Tears of frustration from an hour or so earlier had turned to laughs and hugs for the two-time Copa America champion and World Cup winner.

Messi was forced to watch much of the second half and extra time because of a leg injury. Still, Argentina won its second straight Copa America championship, beating Colombia 1-0 Sunday night on Lautaro Martínez's 112th-minute goal.

"Leo is the greatest player in history," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said through an interpreter. "He never wants to leave the pitch. He has a swollen ankle and wants to keep playing. I prefer those players. He wants to play not because he is egotistical or selfish. He wants to keep playing because he doesn't want to leave his teammates. ... He was born to be on the pitch."

Messi appeared to sustain a non-contact injury while run-

ning and falling in the 64th minute. The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner covered his face with his hands as he sat on the bench and sobbed.

Martínez later ran to that bench to hug his 37-year-old captain after the goal that propelled Argentina to its record 16th Copa title.

Appearing to be limping after the final whistle sounded well past midnight, Messi beckoned for his senior teammates to lift the trophy with him: 36-year-old Nicolás Ottamendi and Ángel Di María, who is retiring from the national team. As white confetti cascaded, the trio hugged.

"The truth is, it's hard to describe," Di María said. "It was written like that. I told the guys last night at dinner that I dreamt it. That's why I said it was my last Copa America. I dreamt we made it to the final and we won it so I could go out this way."

"I'll be always grateful to this generation who gave me everything, helped me win what I always wanted and today, I am leaving like this," Di María said.

"It could not be better."

In a match that started 1 hour, 22 minutes late because of crowd trouble at Hard Rock Stadium, Argentina won its third straight major title following the 2021 Copa America and 2022 World Cup and matched Spain, which won the 2008 and 2012 European Championships around the 2010 World Cup.

Argentina also stopped Colombia's 28-game unbeaten streak dating to a 1-0 loss to Albiceleste in a February 2022 World Cup qualifier, also on a Martínez goal.

Martínez entered in the 97th minute Sunday and scored from Giovani Lo Celso's perfect pass after Leandro Paredes stripped the ball from a Colombian with a sliding tackle near the center stripe. Paredes exchanged passes with Martínez, then threaded the ball to Lo Celso, who one-timed a through ball as Martínez sprinted past defender Carlos Cuesta.

Martínez ran onto the ball, took a touch that sent him into the penalty area and struck a

right-foot shot through the upraised arms of sliding goalkeeper Camilo Vargas for his 29th international goal, his tournament-high fifth.

Colombia coach Néstor Lorenzo said many Colombia players finished with severe cramping. Temperatures were in the upper 80s with humidity around 73%.

"It is not easy to play a final. It's not easy for anyone," Lorenzo said through an interpreter. "They played six matches in 21 days and started feeling the results. They all left feeling cramps, some of them in both legs."

The start was delayed from 8 p.m. EDT to 9:22 p.m. because of crowd control issues outside the stadium, including troves of fans breaching security gates at a venue to be used for the 2026 World Cup.

Video showed fans climbing fences and railings to get inside the championship match, with officials unable to keep track of who had purchased tickets and who didn't.

Spain wins Euro, hands England another painful loss

Associated Press

BERLIN — Spain is the king of European soccer for a record fourth time. For England, it's another agonizing near-miss in the team's decades-long tale of underachievement.

Completing a tournament the team dominated from start to finish, Spain beat England 2-1 in the European Championship final Sunday with Mikel Oyarzabal the unlikely match-winner in the 86th minute.

Oyarzabal, a backup striker who came on as a substitute for captain Alvaro Morata, slid in to poke home a left-wing cross by Marc Cucurella, just when the game at Berlin's Olympiastadion seemed destined for extra time.

England is still without a ma-

major title in the men's game since winning the 1966 World Cup, and its players watched on forlornly as Morata raised aloft the silver trophy to backdrop of confetti and fireworks.

Add 2024 to the titles won by Spain in 1964, 2008 and 2012.

"Here we are, champions of Europe," said Nico Williams, whose opening goal for Spain in the 47th minute was canceled out by England substitute Cole Palmer in the 73rd. "We are thrilled and hope this can keep going and we can go for the (2026) World Cup."

Lamine Yamal, the prodigy who turned 17 on Saturday and is the youngest player to have appeared at a European Championship, set up Williams' goal with an inside run before pass-

ing across the face of the area. The two wingers have become the poster boys of an exciting, multicultural team that reflects Spain's changing demographics.

Yamal's mother is from Equatorial Guinea and his father is from Morocco, while the 22-year-old Williams has Ghanaian parents who made the long journey to Europe looking for a better life.

"I believe there is a historical change, we are really grateful," said Williams, the player of the match with his darting runs and his second goal of Euro 2024.

"My parents have suffered a lot to get here. They are the ones who have suffered the most and they have instilled this sort of respect and loyalty

in me," he said. "I'm really happy because we are making history."

Unlike his brother Inaki, who is a Ghana international, Nico chose to play for Spain and will now be regarded as a national hero.

Spain is back as a major player in senior soccer after winning both the Women's World Cup — also against England — and the men's UEFA Nations League in 2023.

"I said before the tournament, nobody can hang with us," Williams said.

Spain won all seven games at this European Championship — an unprecedented feat — and broke the record for goals scored in a single tournament, with 15.

Orioles walk off Yankees to avoid sweep

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Cedric Mullins hit a two-run double in the ninth inning to give Baltimore a 6-5 victory over the New York Yankees on Sunday, and the Orioles remained in first place after taking advantage of two defensive misplays at the end.

Anthony Volpe's error kept Baltimore's two-out rally going. Then Mullins hit a liner that appeared routine, but left fielder Alex Verdugo started in at first and couldn't recover well enough to prevent the ball from going over his head.

"I think he just misjudged it," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "Broke hard in, not wanting to get beat in front of him, and obviously it carried enough."

Ben Rice hit a three-run homer in the top of the ninth off Craig Kimbrel (6-2) to put the Yankees up 5-3, but New York's closer couldn't hold a lead either. Clay Holmes (1-4) allowed the Orioles to load the bases with two out. Then Ryan Mountcastle's grounder should have ended it, but Volpe's error made it 5-4 and kept the bases loaded.

Mullins, who came on as a pinch-runner the previous inning, delivered the big hit that snapped Baltimore's five-game losing streak and enabled the Orioles to take a one-game lead over the Yankees in the AL East into the All-Star break.

"You can't lead off an inning with two walks and make kind of a missed pitch," Kimbrel said. "The boys battled, and we were able to put something special together there at the end. That was fun to watch."

Rays 2, Guardians 0: Ryan Pepiot allowed two hits in six scoreless innings, Jose Siri and Brandon Lowe homered, and host Tampa Bay beat struggling AL Central-leading Cleveland.

Despite losing 11 of 18, the Guardians (58-37) have the AL's best record at the All-Star break for the first time since 1999. Cleveland was outscored 6-4 in

dropping two of three to the Rays.

Red Sox 5, Royals 4: Rafael Devers hit a two-run homer that broke a seat deep in right field at Fenway Park, Dominic Smith also had a two-run shot and host Boston beat Kansas City to take the series.

First-time All-Star Jarren Duran had four hits for the Red Sox, who improved to a majors' best 15-1 on Sundays. Boston enters the All-Star break surprisingly 4½ games out of first in the AL East after finishing in the basement three of the last four years.

Athletics 18, Phillies 3: Visiting Oakland hit eight home runs estimated at a combined 3,340 feet in a rout of first-place Philadelphia. Lawrence Butler hit three homers and Brent Rooker and Seth Brown had two each.

Trea Turner homered for the Phillies. Despite losing the series, Philadelphia ended the first half with the most wins in baseball and in first place ahead of the Braves by 8½ games in the NL East. The Phillies were trying to extend their club record of 62 victories before the All-Star Game and match the 1973 and '74 Dodgers for the most NL wins before the break.

Rangers 4, Astros 2: Josh Smith homered twice with four RBIs to lead visiting Texas to a win over Houston.

Smith had a two-run shot in the first and added another one with two outs in the eighth to push the lead to 4-1. It's the first multi-homer game of the 26-year-old's career.

Rockies 8, Mets 5: Michael Toglia became the first Colorado switch-hitter to homer three times in a game, leading the visiting Rockies to a victory over New York.

Ezequiel Tovar homered twice and red-hot Brennan Doyle homered again as Colorado hit a season-high six home runs to finish the three-game series with 10.

Cubs 8, Cardinals 3: Pete Crow-Armstrong and Chris-

topher Morel each homered twice to lead visiting Chicago to a victory over St. Louis.

Tomas Nido and Ian Happ also homered for the Cubs, who split the four-game set against their NL Central rivals.

Marlins 3, Reds 2: Xavier Edwards' RBI single in the eighth inning gave visiting Miami a victory over Cincinnati.

Edwards' two-out hit drove in Jake Burger for the Marlins, who salvaged the series finale.

Tigers 4, Dodgers 3: Yohan Ramirez had two consecutive errors in the ninth inning, paving the way for host Detroit to beat Los Angeles for its second straight comeback win over the NL West leaders.

Wenceel Pérez had a sacrifice bunt to advance runners in the final at-bat and Ramirez made a wide throw to third, allowing Justyn-Henry Malloy to score the second run of the inning for the victory. The right-hander failed to field Ryan Vilade's sacrifice bunt in the previous at-bat, advancing Malloy to second.

Pirates 9, White Sox 4: Joey Bart and Bryan Reynolds homered, Ke'Bryan Hayes had three hits and visiting Pittsburgh won its fourth straight game, beating Chicago.

Nick Gonzales tripled and drove in two runs for the Pirates, who have won six of seven and reached .500 for the first time since April 27.

Brewers 9, Nationals 3: Willy Adames had a homer and four RBIs, Garrett Mitchell homered for the first time in more than a year and host Milwaukee avoided a series sweep with a victory over Washington.

Colin Rea (9-3) allowed two runs on five hits in 5½ innings after coming on for opener Rob Zastryzny. Rea struck out seven and walked one.

Giants 3, Twins 2: Mike Yastrzemski tripled and scored in the bottom of the ninth when the relay throw skipped past Minnesota third baseman Diego Castillo, giving host San Fran-

cisco a win.

San Francisco's walk-off victory came on a day when reigning NL Cy Young Award winner Blake Snell had his best showing of the season. Snell retired the first 18 batters he faced in order before Twins center fielder Manuel Margot laced a 2-2 fastball into left field to break up the bid for perfection. He finished with eight strikeouts and didn't walk anyone for the first time this year.

Braves 6, Padres 3: Travis d'Arnaud had two home runs and four RBIs, Chris Sale pitched five solid innings for his major league-leading 13th win and visiting Atlanta beat San Diego.

Atlanta has won six of its last nine games and took two of three from San Diego, which ended the first half by losing six of its last seven. The Braves finished the first half 53-42 and in second place in the NL East, 8½ games behind the Philadelphia Phillies.

Blue Jays 8, Diamondbacks 7: Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hit a go-ahead solo homer, Kevin Kiermaier added a grand slam and visiting Toronto recovered from blowing a seven-run lead to beat Arizona.

Guerrero's homer in the seventh came off reliever Kevin Ginkel (6-2), who had his scoreless streak of 10⅓ innings snapped. The Blue Jays avoided a sweep after dropping the first two games of the series.

Angels 3, Mariners 2: Jo Adell hit a three-run homer in the eighth inning and Carson Fulmer threw four hitless innings to lead host Los Angeles to a win over Seattle.

Fulmer opened the game for the Angels and breezed through the lineup, retiring 14 in a row until the fifth inning when the Mariners reached base on a fielding error by rookie second baseman Keston Hiura. Fulmer then hit Victor Robles to load the bases and manager Ron Washington went to the bullpen.

Guardians draft Bazzana with No. 1 overall pick

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Travis Bazzana feels like he represents an entire country, not just a college.

Cleveland selected the Australian second baseman Sunday night with the No. 1 pick in Major League Baseball's amateur draft, and three players from Wake Forest were picked in the top 10.

A former cricket, rugby and soccer player who came to the United States to play baseball for Oregon State, the 21-year-old hit .407 with 28 homers and 66 RBIs this season. He became the first Australian and first second baseman taken No. 1.

"An opportunity to make an impact on a lot of baseball players and a lot of people back home in Australia, and hopefully change the narrative for baseball there," Bazzana said.

Bazzana hit .360 over three seasons at Oregon State with 45

homers, 165 RBIs, 180 walks and 66 steals.

Cleveland president of baseball operations Chris Antonetti said the team made its decision Sunday.

"He recognizes pitches exceedingly well," Antonetti said. "He knows the strike zone, makes good swing decisions, when he does choose to swing makes elite-level contact. And I think what's really grown in Travis' game over the past year or so is the ability to add impact and drive the ball."

Bazzana watched the draft from Oregon State in the rooms where he had been recruited, joined by his parents, brothers and aunts along with coaches and mentors.

"There's people that have flown all the way from Australia, which is not cheap, nor is it an easy flight," he said.

He was inspired by Ryan Rowland-Smith and Trent Oeltjen, Australians who had

reached MLB.

"They really helped me believe and see this path and get an opportunity at Oregon State, and kind of helped me set no limits on myself," he said.

Baseball's No. 1 selection this year has a slot value of \$10,570,600 under the bonus pools system that began in 2012. Cleveland had the top pick for the first time since the draft began in 1965.

Wake Forest right-hander Chase Burns went second to Cincinnati, while Demon Deacons first baseman Nick Kurtz was the fourth pick for Oakland and third baseman/outfielder Seaver King 10th for Washington. They became the eighth trio of teammates selected in the first round, the first among the top 10 since Rice right-handers Philip Humber, Jeff Niemann and Wade Townsend in 2004.

Burns, 21, was 10-1 with a 2.70 ERA and 191 strikeouts

and 30 walks over 100 innings in 16 starts. The Reds took Demon Deacons right-hander Rhett Lowder with the seventh overall selection last year.

Kurtz hit .306 with 22 homers, 57 RBIs and 78 walks, and King batted .308 with 16 homers and 64 RBIs.

Colorado used the third pick on Georgia third baseman Charlie Condon, who started college as a walk-on. Projected first by some, the 6-foot-6 Condon led the NCAA this year with a .433 average and 37 homers. The 21-year-old homered in eight straight games from April 26 to May 9, one shy of the NCAA record, and won the Golden Spikes Award as the top amateur baseball player.

Arkansas left-hander Hagen Smith, who had Tommy John surgery as a 16-year-old in 2019, was picked fifth by the Chicago White Sox. He went 9-2 with a 2.04 ERA in 16 starts, striking out 161 in 84 innings.

NASCAR's Blaney keeps surging with win at Pocono

Associated Press

LOND POND, Pa. — Ryan Blaney still feels like the "silly, quiet kid" he was at 23 when he blazed past Kevin Harvick and Kyle Busch over the final 10 laps in 2017 at Pocono Raceway to win a NASCAR Cup race for the first time.

At times, not much in life has changed for Blaney.

"I still drink a lot of beer," Blaney said, before waiting a beat, "probably more."

Blaney chuckled at the thought, but the reality is, at the track he's long outgrown the mold of a rising NASCAR star. At 30, he's a certified one as a NASCAR champion and serves as a bit of an elder statesman, promoting the sport this week coast-to-coast from the ESPYS to the "Today" show.

"I've just been fortunate to be on a cool journey," Blaney said.

His celebrity profile may have mushroomed, but the only journey that really matters in NASCAR is the one to victory lane. Blaney led the final 44 laps and won Sunday at Pocono, the site of his first career NASCAR Cup Series win and his sec-

ond victory in the last five races this season.

"I feel like the last two months, we've been spectacular," Blaney said.

So has Team Penske. On any track. In any series.

Blaney made it a weekend sweep for Team Penske — Scott McLaughlin and Will Power won IndyCar races at Iowa Speedway for the 87-year-old Roger Penske.

"Penske sweep!" Blaney belted out.

The 2023 NASCAR champion, Blaney won the inaugural Cup race last month at Iowa Speedway and added two more top 10 finishes headed into Pocono. The Team Penske driver's summer success in the No. 12 Ford has stamped him a legitimate threat to win a second straight championship.

"I definitely think we're in a better spot at this time than where we were last year," Blaney said. "I feel like our speed's better. Our execution's great."

Blaney was dialed in on the 2.5-mile track and was never seriously challenged

over the final 10 laps by runner-up Denny Hamlin and Alex Bowman. Hamlin holds the Pocono record with seven career wins; Bowman won last week's Chicago Street Race.

Bowman and Hamlin were fast. Just not fast enough to catch Blaney in front of another packed house at Pocono.

Hamlin, last year's winner, was in hot pursuit over the final six laps, but the three-time Daytona 500 champion could never nip at Blaney's Ford.

"Never lose a race, just always run out of time, right? That's just part of it," Hamlin said.

No win, of course, in NASCAR is ever guaranteed, and there were some flashbacks to the cruel finish when Blaney ran out of fuel in early June while coming to the white flag at World Wide Technology Raceway.

"I was definitely more nervous today," crew chief Jonathan Hassler said. "You lose one on the last lap, and you certainly get an appreciation for, it's not over till you take the checkered."