

Rockets vs. drones for Independence Day

‘Left-wing lunacy’ or basic sanity? Fireworks shows dividing Americans

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — John Morris was eager to mark the 250th anniversary of America with his annual fireworks show at Alamitos Bay.

Then, he discovered the California Coastal Commission would only approve a show using lighted drones, not real fireworks. He couldn't believe it.

“Of course it's going to be about fireworks,” Morris told the commission at a hearing last year. “So we're going to be the only ones in the country who can't do fireworks? Gotta be kidding me.”

Morris tried to appeal the decision this year, but the board upheld its call. So, after 14 years, he canceled the Big Bang on the Bay celebration.

The event, which has drawn 1,300 people to Alamitos Bay and more than 100,000 to nearby beaches for a 20-minute extravaganza, is the latest fireworks show to go dark, but it likely

won't be the last.

Big fireworks shows are on the decline in California amid a variety of factors including increased regulations, litigation by environmental groups and public concern about pollution and wildfires.

The transition is underway at plenty of Californians' favorite spots.

In the last few years, Fourth of July shows at the Rose Bowl, Grand Park in downtown, Hansen Dam in the San Gabriel Valley, Morro Bay on the Central Coast and at Lake Cunningham in San José have all moved from fireworks to drones.

Next year, the Port of San Diego's Big Bay Boom show could also become a drone show at the behest of the Coastal Commission.

“Every show is analyzed on a case-by-case basis, but there has been direction from the commission to see a transition to drones,” said Jeff Palm, an

analyst with the California Coastal Commission.

The commission, tasked with protecting waters, marine life, environment and access to the state's coast, has used its jurisdiction to steer groups toward drones, which are seen as being more environmentally friendly than fireworks.

Some organizers have adopted the change on their own, looking to entertain spectators with a new technology that offers a different kind of show.

Some argue the switch to drones makes perfect sense, allowing big entertainment value without the environmental and public safety trade-offs.

But to traditionalists like Morris, it's just not the same without the real explosions.

Like so many things in California, the fireworks debate has entered the culture wars this summer, with right-wing influencers slamming the anti-fireworks crowd, specifically tar-

geting the Coastal Commission's executive director, Kate Huckelbridge, for scorn.

Fireworks are a hot political issue in Southern California, in part due to the proliferation of illegal fireworks set off around the region on and around July 4. Those pyrotechnics have led to fires and serious casualties. To some, it makes regulated, organized fireworks shows all the more important as an alternative.

On May 1, the Coastal Commission sent Morris a letter presenting a couple of alternatives for his show: Go with drones, as they'd previously suggested, or launch fireworks from “an adjacent location along the Long Beach shoreline that is still visible from the event location.”

Morris dismissed the offer.

“I never responded to it; they're just covering their ass,” Morris said. “They just want to push their agenda of drone shows.”

China warns Japan, Philippines over sea talks

Bloomberg News

China issued a legal warning against Japan and the Philippines over their upcoming maritime border talks, escalating pressure on Washington's key regional allies as they attempt to counter Beijing's naval assertiveness.

The Chinese Ministry of Natural Resources said the planned discussions “constitute an internationally wrongful act” as it urged the two nations to start talks with Beijing, according to a legal opinion it released on

Thursday.

The talks are unlawful as they are initiated “without consultation with China,” read the document issued by the China Institute for Marine Affairs under the ministry.

The report also warned outside powers to avoid the “political risks” of assisting or recognizing the talks.

The document also said “Japan and the Philippines must not introduce the Taiwan authorities into the so-called ‘delimitation’ process in any form.”

“Otherwise, it will constitute a severe provocation against the One-China principle,” the legal opinion read.

The move signals Beijing's growing displeasure at Manila and Tokyo's decision to start maritime border talks involving waters east of Taiwan. China has subsequently sent Coast Guard vessels to patrol the area, as well as survey ships to map the seabed.

The legal opinion said China owns exclusive economic zone and continental shelf rights in

the region, as its territory covers Taiwan.

The government in Taipei rejects that view, insisting that Taiwan is de facto independent. Taiwan has also sought consultations with Tokyo and Manila on the sea talks.

The talks “in essence ignored the fact that Taiwan and its subordinate islands belong to China,” which infringe upon China's territorial sovereignty and violate the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the legal opinion read.

Venezuela rejects criticism of response

Government established military rule in area hit by deadly earthquakes

Miami Herald

Facing growing criticism over military restrictions in disaster zones, Venezuela's interim government on Thursday defended its decision to militarize the state of La Guaira as the death toll from last week's earthquakes climbed to 2,595.

The devastating twin earthquakes of 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude that struck north-central Venezuela on June 24, just seconds apart, have now left more than 12,400 injured, according to interim President Delcy Rodríguez, who pushed back sharply Thursday against mounting criticism of the government's handling of the disaster.

Rodríguez said authorities have recorded 862 aftershocks since the main quakes and confirmed that 189 buildings collapsed completely nationwide, the vast majority in La Guaira, the coastal state that suffered the worst destruction.

More than a week after the disaster, search-and-rescue operations remain active, though hopes of finding additional survivors are rapidly fading.

"We have not closed the search-and-rescue phase," Rodríguez said. "As long as there is even one point where there may be someone alive, we will continue."

The rising death toll comes as criticism of the government's response continues to intensify.

Survivors, local volunteers and some foreign rescuers have described the first 72 hours after the earthquakes as chaotic and poorly coordinated, citing delayed access to devastated areas, shortages of heavy equipment and excessive military control in disaster zones.

Rodríguez rejected those accusations, insisting authorities mobilized immediately.

She said 4,000 civil and military personnel were deployed

within hours of the earthquakes, rising to 14,000 the following day and more than 19,000 currently stationed in La Guaira.

According to Rodríguez, the decision to militarize La Guaira was intended to prevent chaos and preserve access for specialized rescue teams.

She accused some media organizations of politicizing the disaster.

"It is miserable and heartless to generate chaos among a population already suffering anguish and pain," she said.

Her remarks come amid mounting allegations that military restrictions slowed aid deliveries and prevented civilians — and in some cases rescue crews — from getting to critical areas during the early phase of the emergency.

Multiple foreign rescue teams have publicly complained of bureaucratic delays and access restrictions, while

residents in several affected communities told journalists they felt abandoned during the most critical hours.

Rodríguez denied those claims, saying some remote areas were difficult to reach because roads were blocked by landslides and debris, forcing authorities to rely on motorcycles, drones and satellite imagery.

She also emphasized the scale of international cooperation, saying 147 countries and 31 international organizations have offered assistance.

Rodríguez singled out the United States for praise, thanking President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio for rapidly supporting rescue efforts.

The acknowledgment reflects an unusual level of cooperation between Washington and Caracas despite years of intense political confrontation.

200 square miles burn as 5 wildfires hit Colo.

The Denver Post

Hundreds of firefighters battling five wildfires across Colorado may see extreme fire behavior in the coming days, with state leaders bracing for a weather forecast of near-zero humidity, triple-digit temperatures and strong winds.

Four of the five major wildfires in Colorado are burning with zero containment and threatening thousands of homes and buildings in Pueblo, Custer, Montezuma, Ouray and Lake counties.

Together, the Aspen Acres, Gold Mountain, Snyder, Ferris

and Willow fires have charred roughly 128,000 acres — 200 square miles — as of Thursday afternoon.

Colorado's largest wildfire, the Aspen Acres fire in Pueblo County, grew to 50,187 acres as of Thursday afternoon, up from 47,953 acres from Wednesday night.

The burn area is roughly 78 square miles. The fire has destroyed an estimated 200 buildings.

The Aspen Acres fire was declared the No. 1 priority in the nation on Wednesday, fire officials said.

Judge: Philly can't force ICE agents to unmask

The Philadelphia Inquirer

PHILADELPHIA — Philadelphia can't prevent U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and other federal officers from concealing their identities, a federal judge ruled Thursday.

U.S. District Judge Chad F. Kenney issued an order preventing the city from barring federal law enforcement officers from wearing masks, intentionally covering their badges or using unmarked vehicles.

The U.S. Constitution's Supremacy Clause prevents states — or a city in this case — from imposing requirements on how

federal agencies carry out their duties, the judge appointed by President Donald Trump said.

When City Council passed the bill in April as part of the ICE Out legislative package, the lawmakers "attempted to sidestep the Constitution's clear mandate and disregarded this fundamental principle of law that has informed American jurisprudence for over 200 years," Kenney's opinion said.

While the ordinance's requirements apply to all law enforcement, its inclusion in an "ICE Out" package suggested the city planned to be selective in its enforcement, Kenney said.

Trump insists 'there's nothing wrong' with his big crypto gains

Bloomberg News

President Donald Trump suggested on Thursday that he was not aware of the extent of his digital asset holdings but said there was nothing illegal about his involvement, following disclosures about his family companies' crypto windfall.

Trump reported earlier this week earning at least \$1.4 billion in 2025 from crypto and meme-coin-related firms. The president, who turned over the running of his business operations to his two eldest sons, was asked by CNBC whether he was aware of the crypto ventures.

"I could know about it," Trump said in an interview at the White House. "I didn't."

In the financial disclosures, Trump reported making about \$594 million from World Liberty Financial, which he and his sons co-founded, roughly \$636 million in income tied to his meme-coin business and nearly \$197 million from an equity sale

related to Stablecoin Holdco.

"There's nothing illegal. There's nothing wrong with it. I could know," Trump said about his dealings with the family business.

A onetime crypto skeptic, Trump became a champion of the industry during the 2024 election and once back in office has advocated policies and legislation seen as beneficial to crypto investors.

The financial disclosures heightened concerns among critics that Trump, who did not divest his assets for his White House tenure, may be profiting from his role as head of state. Opponents have regularly accused him of mixing official duties with his financial interests.

The president said in the CNBC interview that his goal was to ensure that the U.S. became dominant in crypto.

"You look at it the way it's grown over the years, you have believers, you don't have believ-

ers, you know, whatever it is, but it's a big deal, and anything we do, I want to be number one in, and we're number one in crypto," Trump said.

The president seemed to express sympathy for his children because of the impact his position in office had on running the business and the implication that they would have insider information for their dealings.

"It's pretty tough in that sense. I tell my kids: stay away from as much as you can stay away from. But they also have a life," Trump said.

The financial disclosure, which was released Tuesday by the U.S. Office of Government Ethics, listed more than 680 pages of transactions, including purchases and sales of equities, including Amazon.com Inc. and Apple Inc. Nvidia Corp., Microsoft Corp., Netflix Inc. and Exxon Mobil Corp. were among the most frequently traded stocks in his portfolio.

Questions concerning McConnell's health grow

Lexington Herald-Leader

The Democrat vying to replace Mitch McConnell in the U.S. Senate says Kentuckians deserve to know "if our senator is alert, conscious, or capable of serving" more than two weeks after the 84-year-old was hospitalized for an unspecified reason.

Charles Booker, the Democrat facing off against Republican nominee Andy Barr, released a lengthy statement Thursday afternoon calling for transparency about McConnell's health.

Booker said that while he was sensitive to the personal nature of medical emergencies, "our entire commonwealth and country are vested" in McConnell's condition.

"It's time we know what's happening. When we don't know if our senator is alert, conscious, or capable of serving, that's not a partisan question. It's a Kentucky one," Booker said. "What is clear is that we have known for some time that Mitch McConnell has lacked the capacity to represent us in the Senate. That fact, along with the developing news now, is deeply concerning."

"Continuing to ignore this is not leadership. It's elder abuse. And it's time for him to relinquish the business of Kentucky back to the people."

McConnell was hospitalized June 14, but his team did not give details about his condition at the time, only saying he was receiving "excellent care."

Dispatch audio obtained by national media outlets this week revealed first responders performed CPR on someone experiencing "cardiac arrest" at a known address for McConnell the same day his hospitalization was announced, NBC news said.

US Mint releases new nickels, dimes, quarters and half-dollars for 250th

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Check your change: You might have one of the U.S. Mint's special-edition coins celebrating the nation's 250th birthday.

For one year only, circulating nickels, dimes, quarters and half-dollars will feature new historical designs. Part of the U.S. Mint's Semiquincentennial program, many of the coins entered circulation at the beginning of the year.

"The program is the most significant redesign of the nation's circulating coins in the past century," said Jill Westeyn, acting chief of public affairs at the U.S. Mint. "These coins commemo-

rate 250 years of American Liberty by reflecting our country's founding principles and honoring our nation's history."

The quarter is a star of the program, boasting five different designs that highlight pivotal moments in American history.

The Mayflower Compact, signed in 1620 as one of the New World's earliest documents establishing self-government, inspired one of the quarter's designs, which features the ship.

Motifs from the Declaration of Independence, the Revolutionary War and the U.S. Constitution appear on three of the other quarters. Images include Philadelphia landmarks like the

Liberty Bell and Independence Hall.

The fifth quarter honors President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Meant to highlight the Civil War-era speech's commitment to equality, the quarter depicts Lincoln on one side and clasped hands on the other.

The quarters are scheduled for circulation in separate intervals throughout the year. So far, the Mayflower Compact quarter, the Revolutionary War quarter and the Declaration of Independence quarter have been released. The remaining two designs will enter circulation later in the year.

California state workers return to offices

The Sacramento Bee

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — After six years of teleworking, California's state employees have become fluent in software such as Google Docs and Microsoft Teams to work with their colleagues and get their jobs done.

But on Wednesday, the first day of Gov. Gavin Newsom's return-to-office order, state workers were still working from their laptops — just from government offices.

"You see people two, three seats away on a (Microsoft) Teams call with one another," said Jordan Adams, an Employment Development Department employee. "This idea that we're in the same space, and they're going to have meetings together, it's a fairy tale at this point."

One of the central reasons Newsom cited for bringing em-

ployees back to offices was to promote collaboration among colleagues. But state workers said Wednesday that they have been working together effectively from home for the past six years.

The roll-out of Newsom's return-to-office mandate happened in the middle of a short workweek for many state employees who are taking Friday off to celebrate the Fourth of July. The full brunt of the transition back to in-person work likely won't be felt until next week when employees are actually required to be in offices for most of the week.

Over 2,500 state employees were also not in offices Wednesday, but were instead gathered on the Capitol grounds to rally support for SEIU Local 1000's active contract negotiations and to protest the return-to-office

order.

Some state workers reported they encountered more traffic than usual driving downtown, but a review of Sacramento-area highways using Caltrans cameras indicated that roads were not significantly more congested on the first day of the return-to-office order compared to other mornings.

Some business owners in downtown Sacramento reported higher than usual levels of foot traffic, which was at least part of Newsom's motivation from calling workers back to offices, but other restaurant employees said Wednesday was pretty normal compared to other days.

Several other EDD employees who spoke with The Sacramento Bee said they are performing their jobs in the same ways they would at home,

but instead doing it from a downtown office.

"It's ridiculous that we have to jump through all of these hoops in order to fulfill this RTO mandate," said Brian Leon Guerrero, an EDD information technology specialist. He said that his division is only required to be in office three days a week for now because of spacing issues.

Due to space limitations at the Labor Agency Building on 9th and O streets, EDD has exempted some employees from coming into state offices four days a week. Other departments have either modified workers' telework schedules or delayed the start date of the return-to-office order due to office space limitations.

The Newsom administration has said that information about office space is confidential.

Empire State Building daredevil pair arraigned, tell court they did it for love

New York Daily News

NEW YORK — They say they did it all for love — but prosecutors say they recklessly put themselves and others in extreme danger.

Angelina Nikolau, 33, and Ivan "Vanya" Kuznetsov, 32, were arraigned Thursday morning for scaling the spire on top of the Empire State Building for a marriage proposal a day earlier.

Appearing in Manhattan Criminal Court in the all-black getups they wore to climb the 1,454-foot skyscraper on Wednesday, they were charged with burglary, reckless endangerment, criminal mischief, criminal tampering and related non-bail-eligible charges.

Manhattan Assistant District Attorney Anthony Giliberti said the couple regularly engage in extreme risk-taking behavior like breaking and entering into

restricted areas of commercial buildings, hanging from rooftops and free climbing skyscrapers.

Scenes of the couple atop the gleaming Midtown skyscraper in record-degree heat that ricocheted around the world showed Kuznetsov getting down on one knee and proposing to his beaming girlfriend.

The prosecutor said Kuznetsov told cops after his arrest that he had wanted to "do something special" for the engagement.

That motive spurred the couple to trespass in a nonpublic area atop the Empire State overnight and scale the broadcast antenna above Fifth Avenue to hang their banner reading, "When the power of love beats the love of power, the world knows peace."

"These activities continually create a risk to their own lives, as well as the lives of New York-

ers and first responders," Giliberti said.

After being notified the couple were up on the antenna around 11:15 a.m. Wednesday, police discovered a lock had been broken on a security door on the building's 104th floor, which is closed off to the public and leads to the tip-top of the building, according to the criminal complaint. The floor can't be reached without accessing the 102nd floor with a key card.

The antenna had to be powered down so NYPD cops could safely approach the couple due to the spire's dangerous high-frequency radio signals, the complaint details.

Judge Janice Chen granted the couple supervised release.

Nikolau wasn't wearing her new ring at Thursday's arraignment and later told reporters that cops still had it at the precinct stationhouse.

Passengers ill with norovirus

Los Angeles Times

More than 100 passengers were sickened in a recent norovirus outbreak on the Ruby Princess cruise ship that departed from California last month and arrived back at port Thursday.

The guests reported mild gastrointestinal illness during a 20-day voyage that departed from San Francisco on June 12, a spokesperson for Princess Cruises wrote in an email. The ship returned to San Francisco on Thursday and was undergoing cleaning and disinfection before departing for its next voyage in the afternoon, according to the spokesperson.

Those who became ill during the cruise included 102 of 3,032 passengers and 23 of 1,144 crew members, and they predominantly reported vomiting and diarrhea, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Ovechkin returns for 22nd season

Associated Press

The dust began settling Thursday around the NHL more than 24 hours into free agency, with a handful of high-profile players still on the market and the league's career goal-scoring leader back for a 22nd season.

Three-time Stanley Cup champion Patrick Kane and two-time winner Vladimir Tarasenko were among the top unrestricted free agents available by late afternoon. Jason Robertson headlines the restricted free agents without a contract as the Dallas Stars work to get him signed.

The Washington Capitals needed little to bring Alex Ovechkin back, re-signing him to a bonus-laden deal with a \$1 million salary that will make him \$9 million at age 41 as long as he plays in 10 games. The Caps made sure to keep enough salary cap space open to fit Ovechkin during an offseason in which they added Jordan Kyrou, Alex Tuch, Boone Jenner and Vincent Desharnais.

"I'm back!" Ovechkin said in a statement released by the Capitals.

After scoring 32 goals at age 40, Ovechkin is 35 clear of now second-place Wayne Gretzky, whose mark of 894 he passed on April 6, 2025, completing the so-called "GR8 Chase" that captivated hockey.

"I'm truly happy for him," said John Carl-

son, a teammate for 16-plus seasons, who signed a two-year, \$17 million deal with Tampa Bay. "I felt that he really wanted to come back, and I'm glad that he came to that decision. I think it's great for everyone. I think it's great for hockey."

A day after landing prized free agent goalie Sergei Bobrovsky, the Toronto Maple Leafs continued their offseason transformation by signing former Capitals forward Brandon Duhaime to a three-year contract.

Free agency as it stands

Kane is still available after spending the past three years with Detroit. Kane is 37 now and a decade removed from winning the Hart Trophy as MVP when he led the league in scoring. Also unsigned are wingers Tarasenko and Anthony Mantha, who is coming off a career year, and forward Claude Giroux, who is still chasing a championship at 38.

The first day of free agency featured more than 55 players changing places across the league with more than \$360 million worth of contracts. And that's not even counting Bowen Byram becoming the highest-paid defenseman at an average salary of \$12.5 million beginning in 2027 under his new deal with Chicago after he was ac-

quired in a trade with Buffalo.

Wild day of signings and a trade

The Minnesota Wild were busy in re-signing their own free agents and acquiring forward Blake Coleman and defenseman Olli Maatta in a trade with Calgary. The Flames acquired defenseman Jake Middleton and three draft picks, including a second-round pick in 2029. Calgary also agreed to retain 50% of the \$4.9 million Coleman is owed in the final year of his contract.

Coleman, 34, has 10 seasons of NHL experience and posted his fourth 20-goal season last year, finishing with 20 and 35 points. Maatta is a 13-year NHL player noted for his defensive play. The 30-year-old Middleton leaves Minnesota after four-plus seasons.

Montreal extends Dobes

Building the future of the Canadiens took another step forward with an extension for Jakub Dobes, the self-described "goofy goalie" who was one of the stars of their run to the Eastern Conference Final. Dobes got a three-year extension from 2027-30 worth just over \$16 million, with the final four digits of his annual average salary (\$5,357,575) matching his No. 75 jersey number.

Clark voted to start 3rd straight WNBA All-Star Game

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Caitlin Clark was voted to start her third straight All-Star Game and will be joined by Indiana Fever teammates Kelsey Mitchell and Aliyah Boston, the WNBA announced Thursday.

It's the second time in four years that three players from the same team were chosen to start the game, with Las Vegas doing it in 2023. Clark wasn't able to play in last year's game that the Fever hosted because she was injured right before the All-Star break.

Clark and Mitchell will be joined this year in the backcourt by Dallas' Paige Bueckers

and Minnesota rookie Olivia Miles. It's the fourth consecutive year that a rookie was chosen as an All-Star starter. Bueckers played last season.

A'ja Wilson, Breanna Stewart, Jessica Shepard, Natasha Howard and Gabby Williams were selected for the frontcourt for the game that will be played in Chicago on July 25. It will be Wilson's and Stewart's eighth All-Star appearance while Shepard will be making her first.

Williams played in her first All-Star Game last season. Howard will play in her third.

Starters were chosen by a mixture of fan,

player and media votes. The fan vote counted for 50% while media and player votes were 25% each. Each player's score was calculated by averaging their weighted rank from all three areas.

The league's head coaches will select the 12 reserves for the team, results that will be announced Tuesday. The 15 head coaches will vote for three guards, five frontcourt players and four players at either position regardless of conference. Coaches can't vote for their own players.

Bueckers, Clark and Boston were the top three vote-getters among fans. All three received more than 1 million votes.

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit www.stripes.com.

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Ramos, Ronaldo score as Portugal rallies past Croatia

Associated Press

TORONTO — At 41, Cristiano Ronaldo will get another match in a Portugal uniform, thanks to a penalty he scored, a stoppage time header by Goncalo Ramos, and a VAR ruling the Croatia team still doesn't understand.

Ramos headed in the winner as Portugal beat Croatia 2-1 in a wild finish that also included a Croatian goal disallowed for offside just before the final whistle in a World Cup round of 32 match on Thursday night.

The game featured a matchup of 40-somethings — Ronaldo, in his sixth World Cup, and Croatia's Luka Modric, making his fifth bid for a tournament title.

Ronaldo tied things up in the 68th minute on a penalty kick that gave the megastar his first knockout stage goal at the World Cup before being subbed out in the 81st minute.

"I never felt any of that (fear)," he said. "Yes, nervous. But as always, you have to be very positive for things to go well."

Still, it was Ramos who gave Portugal the victory and a berth in the round of 16.

"I love that type of moment, I love that type of games," he said. "I want to play every game like that."

Portugal moves on to face Spain on Monday.

"First half we dominated the game. In second half after the goal we get a little bit panic, but this is football," Ronaldo said. "After the penalty, I think it was a little bit better for us. We created a few chances and I think at the end of the day we deserved to win the match."

In a postgame interview with Fox, Ronaldo proudly turned around to show that he was wearing a Diogo Jota jersey and his No. 21, one year after his teammate died in a car crash. "We knew this before the game. It was a so special moment. We speak today to our group, the coincidence of life. It's unbelievable."

Things got weird after Ramos scored. With Portugal and its fans still enthralled with his goal, Croatia thought it had tied things up 2-2 in the very last moments. But after a 2½-minute delay, Mario Pasalic was called offside as VAR ruled no goal. Croatia fans threw bottles on the field and whistled in protest.

Croatia midfielder Petar Susic said, "the referee said he didn't see (anyone) touch the ball, he said that he had a sensor in that ball," that caused the offside ruling. "For me, it's a regular goal."

Portugal coach Roberto Martinez said it was, indeed, the chip in the ball that triggered the decision.

"I need to tell them (Croatia fans) the message is very clear: The balls now have a chip, and it's very clear that's why the VAR intervened," he said. "It's not a subjective opinion."

Croatia opened the scoring in the 53rd minute when Ivan Perisic scored off a cross from Josip Sanisic.

Ronaldo, booed loudly by Croatia fans every time he touched the ball, got his chance from the spot after Nikola Vlasic was called for a holding foul inside the box. Portugal's megastar hitched his step and converted down the middle as the goalkeeper went to his right.

Dominant Spain into round of 16

Associated Press

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — Although Spain arrived at this year's World Cup as a championship favorite and then went unbeaten through group play, those first three matches weren't overly impressive.

When the knockout rounds arrived Thursday, this star-studded team turned on its full talent and served notice that Spain can be just as good as everybody thought — and it's probably getting better.

Mikel Oyarzabal scored two goals and Spain beat Austria 3-0 for its first World Cup victory in a knockout match since winning the title in 2010.

Pedro Porro added a goal in the second half as La Roja put on its most impressive performance of the tournament while demonstrating offensive creativity and defensive rigor throughout its vaunted lineup.

"The great teams step up when it's needed," Spain coach Luis De La Fuente said. "We played a great match. We came close to perfection, but we must keep improving."

While Oyarzabal, fullback Marc Cucurella and winger Lamine Yamal all had sensational moments in attack, Spain also has yet to allow a goal at this year's World Cup. Austria failed to get a shot on target, so Unai Simón didn't have to make a save while keeping his fourth consecutive clean sheet and setting a World Cup record with 519 consecutive shutout minutes dating back to the last tournament in Qatar.

La Roja will next face Portugal, a 2-1 winner over Croatia, in Dallas on Monday in the round of 16.

Yama, 18, had four of Spain's 10 shots on goal while getting wild cheers from the pro-Spanish sellout crowd at SoFi Stadium.

Switzerland moves on with shutout

Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Switzerland finally broke through with a win in a World Cup knockout match.

Breel Embolo and Dan Ndoye both scored and the Swiss advanced to the round of 16 with a 2-0 victory over Algeria on Thursday night.

Switzerland will play the winner of Friday's match between Colombia and Ghana in Kansas City, Mo.

The round-of-16 game is set for next Tuesday in Vancouver.

Switzerland had not won a knockout-round match since 1938 in France, but in 1954 the team won a playoff game to reach the quarterfinals.

Although the Swiss reached the round of 16 at

the past three World Cups, there was a smaller field of 32 teams in each of those tournaments, and they could get no further.

"Today we write one page of history, but we want more, and we work for more," Ndoye said. "I think we show that we are a strong team, and now we need to show it in the next game, and we hope again to the next game."

Celebrating the victory, the Swiss players sat on the field as they were serenaded by their fans. As the song reached a crescendo, the players jumped up and danced.

Algeria was eliminated after returning to the World Cup for the first time since 2014, when it advanced to the knockout round but fell to eventual champion Germany.

Burns tops Misiorowski, Brewers

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Sal Stewart and Jose Trevino homered off Jacob Misiorowski, and Chase Burns pitched six strong innings as the Cincinnati Reds beat the Milwaukee Brewers 7-2 on Thursday afternoon.

TJ Friedl also went deep for Cincinnati as the Reds beat the Brewers for the first time in seven attempts this season. Garrett Mitchell homered for Milwaukee.

The game featured two of baseball's best and hardest-throwing pitchers in Burns and Misiorowski. Burns (10-1) earned the win by giving up two runs and four hits. Burns is the only Reds pitcher since at least 1900 to open a season by allowing two runs or fewer in 15 of his first 17 starts.

Misiorowski (9-4) struck out 10 and walked none in five innings while reaching a peak velocity of 103.8 mph, but the five runs he allowed matched a career high. Only one of the runs was earned.

The most recent time Misiorowski allowed five runs came on Aug. 15 of last season, when he lasted only 1½ innings in a 10-8 victory at Cincinnati.

Misiorowski had gone 8-1 with an 0.54 ERA over his past 10 starts.

Stewart put Cincinnati ahead for good in the first inning by hitting his 17th homer, a 402-foot solo shot on a 102.3-mph fastball. According to MLB.com, it was the eighth-fastest pitch to result in a homer since the pitch tracking era began in 2008.

Cincinnati extended its lead to 5-0 by

scoring four unearned runs in the fourth inning.

JJ Bleday led off with a bunt and reached safely when first baseman Jake Bauers dropped the bare-handed throw from third baseman David Hamilton. Bleday scored on Noelvi Marte's one-out single.

The Reds had two on with two outs when Trevino stepped to the plate. Trevino fell behind 0-2 before working the count full and hitting his first homer since June 8, 2025.

Trevino went 3 for 4 to improve his batting average from .192 to .232.

Cincinnati's Sam Moll, Tejay Antone and Brock Burke didn't allow a baserunner in three innings of relief.

Misiorowski unlikely to pitch in All-Star Game

Misiorowski says he wants to play in the All-Star Game but understands why that's unlikely to happen.

The Brewers are currently planning to have Misiorowski start Tuesday at St. Louis and again on July 12 at Pittsburgh, which is the last day before the All-Star break. Pitchers with starting assignments on that Sunday before the break are ineligible to pitch in the All-Star Game two nights later, even if they're selected for the team.

"I get it," Misiorowski said Thursday. "I get we're not looking for right now. We're looking for September, October. It sucks — obviously I want to throw in a game like that

— but so be it."

Getting some extra rest during the All-Star break could help Misiorowski, who already has thrown 104 innings with his first full major league season just past the midway point. Misiorowski threw a combined 141½ innings throughout last year, including his work in the minors, the majors and the postseason.

The 24-year-old flamethrower said it helps that he already got some All-Star Game experience last year, when he pitched one scoreless inning.

"It makes it a little easier," Misiorowski said. "It makes it a little cooler. You get to be one of the guys, the veterans you were there with last year who kind of got to be in the background and watch it, so it's fun."

Misiorowski's All-Star Game selection last year drew criticism from some players because it came after he had made just five starts in the majors. There's no question the hard-throwing right-hander merits a spot on the roster this year, even if he's unavailable to pitch in the actual game.

Misiorowski (9-4) leads the majors in ERA (1.47) and strikeouts (156). His 105.5-mph fastball June 26 against the Chicago Cubs matched the third-fastest pitch since tracking began in 2008.

Over his past 11 starts, Misiorowski has gone 8-2 with an 0.63 ERA. During those 11 starts, Misiorowski has struck out 105 while walking 14 and opponents have hit just .128 against him.

Novak Djokovic earns 105th match win at Wimbledon

Associated Press

LONDON — Novak Djokovic saw Arthur Rinderknech falling toward the Centre Court net after a volley and said to himself, "please stay down."

The Frenchman did — and 39-year-old Djokovic dove to hit a backhand volley winner on match point for a 7-5, 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (4) record-equaling victory in the third round at Wimbledon on Friday.

Djokovic's 105th match win at the All England Club ties Roger Federer on the men's list for most singles match victories.

Martina Navratilova won 120 singles matches on Wimble-

don's courts.

By next weekend, Djokovic would love to equal Federer's men's record of eight singles titles, but this one will have to suffice for Friday.

"Today, I was quite stressed out, more tension than usual," Djokovic said in his on-court interview. "I knew it was going to be a very challenging match for me."

The 24-time Grand Slam champion overcame a blip — dropping the third set in 18 minutes — and held his nerve in the fourth-set tiebreaker by hitting back-to-back aces before Rinderknech's forehand went wide

to set up match point.

"I saw him slip and kind of fall down. And I was just like, 'please stay down' for that last shot," Djokovic, who had repeatedly punched his left thigh after losing the third set, said of the final play.

Joining Federer on 105 singles match wins is "a huge honor and privilege," Djokovic added. "I propose a matchup for me and Roger for 106."

Djokovic will face Russian qualifier Roman Safiullin in the fourth round.

Also Thursday, defending champion and top men's seed Jannik Sinner beat Jenson

Brooksby 6-4, 6-3, 6-4 on No. 1 Court to advance to the fourth round.

Safiullin beats Fonseca

Russian qualifier Roman Safiullin wiped away tears after beating Brazilian rising star João Fonseca 6-3, 6-3, 6-3 to reach the fourth round.

Safiullin, ranked No. 132, dealt with a knee injury last year but this week has eliminated two seeded opponents at the All England Club.

He surprised 12th-seeded Andrey Rublev in the first round. Fonseca was seeded No. 24.

Rays beat Royals for 8th straight win

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Cedric Mullins hit a two-run homer, Ian Seymour dominated the Royals for the second time in a week, and the Tampa Bay Rays beat Kansas City 5-2 on Thursday night to extend their winning streak to eight games.

Taylor Walls, Richie Palacios and Hunter Feduccia also drove in runs for the red-hot Rays, though Junior Caminero had his home run streak end at six games. The slug-ging third baseman went 0 for 5.

Seymour (5-1) allowed a leadoff homer to Carter Jensen but just two more hits over six crisp innings, striking out eight and walking one. Cam Booser and Garrett Cleavinger got the game to Bryan Baker, who handled the ninth for his 22nd save.

Stephen Kolek (4-3) struggled for the Royals in his first start since his wife gave birth to their daughter, Faye, last week. He cruised through the first but allowed three runs on four hits and a walk in the second, and he did not return for the third.

Kolek matched a career high by allowing nine runs in just 1½ innings in his most recent start June 21 against St. Louis.

Pirates 6, Phillies 1: Esmerlyn Valdez tripled, singled and knocked in two runs, Endy Rodriguez and Nick Gonzales homered and Pittsburgh won at Philadelphia.

The Pirates split their four-game series in Philadelphia, closing with a win against a Phillies team that had won 11 of its previous 15 games at Citizens Bank Park.

Jake Mangum had three hits and a run scored, while Brandon Lowe had a pair of hits, scored a run and reached safely three times for Pittsburgh. The Pirates had 14 hits and limited the Phillies to four.

Phillies starting pitcher Alan Rangel, promoted recently from Triple-A Lehigh Valley, held his own against the Pirates but didn't last long.

Rangel threw 90 pitches in four innings, allowing no runs on only three hits, but with four walks and four strikeouts. He left with a 1-0 lead, courtesy of Bryce Harper's two-out, RBI double to left field in the third.

That left runners on second and third, but Pirates starter Jared Jones escaped further damage by getting Brandon Marsh on a fly to right. Jones also lasted four innings, allowing two hits with six strikeouts.

Rockies 14, Marlins 4: Jake McCarthy drove in four runs, Mickey Moniak had two RBIs and finished a triple shy of a cycle, and Colorado beat visiting Miami to earn a split in the four-game series.

McCarthy and Moniak both homered, with Moniak going deep for the third consecutive game.

It was the second consecutive game and the third time this season that Moniak missed out on a cycle by one hit. In the previous two instances, he failed to get a single.

McCarthy and Moniak both drove in runs during a seven-run sixth inning that stretched Colorado's lead from one run to eight. In that burst, the Rockies had seven consecutive batters get on base.

Troy Johnston, Willi Castro and Cole Car-rigg added two RBIs apiece for Colorado.

Guardians 6, White Sox 5: Brayan Rocchio hit a two-run homer in the bottom of the ninth inning that gave Cleveland a victory over visiting Chicago in the opener of a four-game series between the top two teams in the AL Central.

Cleveland rallied from a three-run deficit and trails Chicago by less than a full percentage point atop the division standings.

Pinch-hitter David Fry launched a solo homer in the seventh that trimmed the Guardians' deficit to 5-4.

White Sox reliever Grant Taylor (4-2) walked Rhys Hoskins leading off the ninth. Kahlil Watson flied out to center before Rocchio pulled a 99 mph fastball down the right-field line for his sixth home run this season.

Tim Herrin (1-3) pitched a perfect inning for the win.

Cardinals 11, Braves 5: Jordan Walker homered and drove in four runs, Nathan Church hit a tying two-run homer in a seven-run seventh inning and St. Louis won at Atlanta.

The Braves led 5-3 before the Cardinals rallied in the seventh. After Church's homer off Tyler Kinley (4-3), JJ Wetherholt's run-scoring single off Dylan Lee gave St. Louis the lead. Walker added a run-scoring single in the big inning.

Alec Burleson homered in the ninth and Masyn Winn had three hits and a walk for St. Louis.

Right-hander Gordon Graceffo (6-1) pitched a scoreless sixth as St. Louis won two of three in the series. The Cardinals gave manager Oliver Marmol a win on his 40th birthday.

Rangers 10, Tigers 4: Nathan Eovaldi weathered a three-run Detroit uprising after taking a no-hitter into the fifth inning and Elias Díaz, Josh Smith and Evan Carter hit solo home runs to help host Texas get the victory.

The Rangers matched a season high with 17 hits en route to their seventh victory in eight games. The Tigers arrived at Globe Life Field after sweeping three games at Yankee Stadium.

Eovaldi (9-7) allowed only one walk through four innings and matched a season high with nine strikeouts in winning his fourth consecutive start, pitching five-plus innings. Detroit's Colt Keith led off the fifth by homering on an 0-2 cut fastball above the strike zone. Hao-Yu Lee added a two-run homer that barely cleared the wall in left, just beyond Alejandro Osuna's reach.

Eovaldi allowed five hits in the fifth inning and was pulled leading 5-3 after Riley Greene led off the sixth with a double. Peyton Gray, Texas' third pitcher in the sixth, struck out Lee with the bases loaded to end the inning.

Mariners 1, Angels 0: Bryce Miller took a no-hitter into the seventh inning and Seattle edged visiting Los Angeles to finish a three-game sweep.

Cal Raleigh coaxed a bases-loaded walk from rookie starter Walbert Ureña with two outs in the sixth to force home the only run. Seattle stayed tied with the Texas Rangers for first place in the AL West at 45-43.

Andrés Muñoz pitched a shaky ninth for his 16th save. Muñoz gave up a leadoff walk and two singles but retired Wade Meckler on a grounder with two runners aboard to end it.

Dodgers 12, Padres 7: Dalton Rushing tied career highs with four hits and four RBIs as host Los Angeles rallied from an early six-run deficit for a victory over skidding San Diego.

Kyle Tucker added four hits to equal a career best and reached base five times. Andy Pages tied it with a two-run double in the fourth inning, and the Dodgers scored 12 straight runs to win for the eighth time in 10 games.

Roki Sasaki gave up six runs over three innings, including three homers, but the Los Angeles bullpen allowed just one run the rest of the way. Will Klein (3-2) worked two scoreless innings to earn the win.

It was the Dodgers' biggest comeback victory since they trailed by six runs against the St. Louis Cardinals in 2022.

Manny Machado, Jackson Merrill and Jake Cronenworth homered in the first two innings for the Padres, who matched a season high with their sixth consecutive loss. Three of those defeats have come against the Dodgers.