

## Russian missiles strike Odesa region

*Associated Press*

POKROVSK, Ukraine — Russian missile attacks on residential areas killed at least 21 people early Friday near the Ukrainian port of Odesa, authorities reported, a day after the withdrawal of Moscow's forces from an island in the Black Sea seemed to ease the threat to the city.

Video of the attack before daybreak showed the charred ruins of buildings in the small town of Serhiivka, about 31 miles from Odesa. The Ukrainian president's office said three Kh-22 missiles fired by warplanes struck an apartment building and a campsite.

Ukrainian authorities interpreted the attack as payback for Russian troops being forced from Snake Island a day earlier, though Moscow portrayed their departure as a "goodwill gesture" to help unblock ex-

ports of grain from the country.

Russian forces took control of the island in the opening days of the war in the apparent hope of using it as a staging ground for an assault on Odesa, Ukraine's biggest port and the headquarters of its navy.

"The occupiers cannot win on the battlefield, so they resort to vile killing of civilians," said Ivan Bakanov, head of Ukraine's security service, the SBU. "After the enemy was dislodged from Snake Island, he decided to respond with the cynical shelling of civilian targets."

Large numbers of civilians died in Russian airstrikes and shelling earlier in the war, including at a hospital, a theater used as a bomb shelter and a train station. Until this week, mass casualties involving residents appeared to become less frequent as Moscow concentrated on capturing eastern

Ukraine's Donbas region.

But Russian missiles struck the Kyiv region last weekend after weeks of relative calm around the capital, and an airstrike Monday on a shopping mall in the central city of Kremenchuk killed at least 19 people.

After Friday's attack, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov reiterated that Moscow is not targeting residential areas.

Ukrainian media reported said 21 people were killed, including children. It said 38 others, including six children and a pregnant woman, were hospitalized. Most of the victims were in the apartment building, Ukrainian emergency officials said.

In eastern Ukraine, Russian forces kept up their push to encircle the city of Lysychansk, the last stronghold of resistance in Luhansk, one of two provinces that make up the Donbas region.

## Air Guard troops doing space missions seek identity

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — About 1,000 Air National Guard troops who are assigned to space missions are mired in an identity crisis.

Torn between the Air Force, where they have historically been assigned, and the military's shiny new Space Force where they now work, their units have become orphans, according to commanders, as state and federal leaders wrangle over whether to create a Space National Guard.

For federal authorities, the issue is mainly about the money. A Space Guard, they say, will create unneeded bureaucracy and cost up to \$500 million a year. They argue it's too high a price to slap a new name on a patch for an airman doing the same job at the same desk as a year ago.

But state Guard leaders say what's at stake is more than just uniform patches. They say the split has caused budgeting gaps, training delays and recruiting problems, and if unresolved will lead to bigger divisions, eroding units' readiness in some of the nation's critical space warfighting and nuclear command and control jobs.

The state leaders don't buy the money ar-

gument. They say a Space Guard will be needed in only seven states and Guam, where the Air Guard members who support space missions already reside. The cost, they say, will only be about \$250,000, for new signs, tags and other administrative changes.

"When they removed all the space operators out of the Air Force, the Air Force no longer really does space," said Air Guard Lt. Col. Jeremiah Hitchner, commander of the 109th Space Electromagnetic Warfare Squadron in Guam.

Hitchner was referring to the decision to shift active-duty Air Force troops doing space missions into the new Space Force. "They left us in the Air Force. So we were — for lack of a better term — orphaned. We were left on our own to survive."

Across the country, there are 1,008 Air National Guard citizen-airmen performing space jobs in Alaska, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, New York, Ohio and Guam.

Unlike the Army, Navy and Air Force, the Space Force is not its own military department. Instead, it's administered by the Air Force secretary, is led by a four-star gener-

al and provides forces for U.S. Space Command, which oversees the military's space operations.

To limit costs and avoid establishing a vast space bureaucracy, only a few military career fields were created for the Space Force: mainly space operations, cyber and intelligence jobs. Active-duty airmen who were doing those missions became Space Force Guardians.

There are about 7,000 active-duty Guardians, and a similar number of civilians, with a budget of about \$18 billion for this fiscal year. Other duties — including legal, medical, public affairs and some administrative posts — continue to be carried out by Air Force staff.

The opposition to creating a small Space Guard appears to be centered at the White House and Office of Management and Budget. Last September, the budget office said it strongly opposed a Space National Guard, citing Congressional Budget Office estimates that it could cost about \$500 million a year.

While having a Space Guard was part of the initial Air Force plan, the funding limits have become the overriding issue.

# Ala. cites abortion ruling in trans case

Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Days after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states can prohibit abortion, Alabama has seized on the decision to argue that the state should also be able to ban gender-affirming medical treatments for transgender youths.

The case marks one of the first known instances in which a conservative state has tried to apply the abortion ruling to other realms, just as LGBTQ advocates and others were afraid would happen.

Critics have expressed fear that the legal reasoning behind the high court ruling could lead to a rollback of decisions involving such matters as gay marriage, birth control and parental rights.

The state is asking a federal appeals court to lift an injunction and let it enforce an Alabama law that would make it a felony to give puberty blockers or hormones to transgen-

der minors to help affirm their gender identity.

In its historic ruling last Friday, the U.S. Supreme Court said terminating a pregnancy is not a fundamental constitutional right because abortion is not mentioned in the Constitution and is not “deeply rooted in this nation’s history and tradition.”

In a brief filed Monday, the Alabama attorney general’s office argued similarly that gender transition treatments are not “deeply rooted in our history or traditions,” and thus the state has the authority to ban them. Alabama contends such treatments are dangerous and experimental, a view disputed by medical organizations.

Shannon Minter, legal director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, said this is the first case he is aware of in which a state cited the abortion ruling on another issue, but added, “It won’t be the last.”

Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito said in the majority opinion that the abortion ruling should not cast “doubt on precedents that do not concern abortion.” But Justice Clarence Thomas wrote that the same legal reasoning should be used to reconsider high court rulings protecting same-sex marriage, gay sex and contraceptives.

“It is no surprise that Alabama and other extremely conservative states are going to take up that invitation as forcefully as they can,” Minter said. “Justice Thomas’ concurrence was a declaration of war on groups already under attack, and we expect the hostility to be escalated.”

The Alabama case could become an early test of where judges stand on the scope of the abortion ruling. The appeals court granted the state’s request for an expedited schedule for submitting briefs, and a decision could come as early as this fall.

## Same-sex couples updating legal status after court rule

Associated Press

The Supreme Court’s abortion ruling last week didn’t directly affect the 2015 decision that paved the way for same-sex marriage. But, Sydney Duncan said, it was still a warning shot for families headed by same-sex parents who fear their rights could evaporate like those of people seeking to end a pregnancy.

“That has a lot of people scared and, I think, rightfully so,” said Duncan, who specializes in representing members of the LGBTQ community at the Magic City Legal Center in Birmingham.

Overtaking a nearly 50-year-old precedent, the Supreme Court ruled in a Mississippi case that abortion wasn’t protected by the Constitution, a decision likely to lead to bans in about half the states. Justice Samuel Alito said the ruling involved only the medical proce-

dures, writing: “Nothing in this opinion should be understood to cast doubt on precedents that do not concern abortion.”

But conservative Justice Clarence Thomas called on his colleagues to reconsider cases that allowed same-sex marriage, gay sex and contraception.

The court’s three most liberal members warn in their dissent that the ruling could be used to challenge other personal freedoms: “Either the mass of the majority’s opinion is hypocrisy, or additional constitutional rights are under threat. It is one or the other.”

That prospect alarms some LGBTQ couples, who worry about a return to a time when they lacked equal rights to married heterosexual couples under the law. Many, fearful that their marital status is in danger, are moving now to square away potential medical, parental and estate issues.

## Judge to temporarily block Fla. 15-week abortion ban

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — A Florida judge said Thursday that he will temporarily block a 15-week ban on abortions in his state, but his bench ruling won’t take effect before the ban becomes law Friday — an issue that could cause confusion for patients as well as abortion providers.

The case in Florida reflects battles being waged in courts across the country after the Supreme Court said abortion was no longer protected under the federal constitution. The high court left it up to states to decide whether abortion is legal within their borders — forcing attorneys on both sides of the debate to turn to their state constitutions.

In Florida, Judge John C. Cooper said Thursday that he will temporarily block the 15-week abortion ban from taking effect after reproductive

health providers argued the state constitution guarantees a right to the procedure. Cooper said Florida’s ban was “unconstitutional in that it violates the privacy provision of the Florida Constitution.”

Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis said the state would appeal.

Cooper’s decision, issued from the bench, will not be binding until he signs a written order — which appeared would not happen before Tuesday. That means the 15-week ban will take effect Friday, as scheduled, and the gap in timing raises questions about whether some patients will be affected. Florida’s current law allows abortion up to 24 weeks.

Laura Goodhue, executive director of the Florida Alliance of Planned Parenthood Affiliates, said clinics were still seeing patients and would operate under the law.

# Court: 'Remain in Mexico' can end

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court said Thursday the Biden administration can scrap a Trump-era immigration policy to make asylum-seekers wait in Mexico for hearings in U.S. immigration courts, a victory for a White House that still must address the growing number of people seeking refuge at America's southern border.

The ruling will have little immediate impact because the policy has been seldom applied under President Joe Biden, who reinstated it under a court order in December. It was his prede-

cessor, Donald Trump, who launched the "Remain in Mexico" policy and fully embraced it.

Under Trump, the program enrolled about 70,000 people after it was launched in 2019. Biden suspended the policy, formally known as Migrant Protection Protocols on his first day in office in January 2021. But lower courts ordered it reinstated in response to a lawsuit from Republican-led Texas and Missouri.

The heart of the legal fight in the immigration case was about whether U.S. immigration authorities, with far less detention

capacity than needed, had to send people to Mexico or whether those authorities had the discretion under federal law to release asylum-seekers into the United States while they awaited their hearings.

After Biden's suspension of the program, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas ended it in June 2021. In October, the department produced additional justifications for the policy's demise, but that was to no avail in the courts.

Chief Justice John Roberts wrote that an appeals court "erred in holding that the" fed-

eral Immigration and Nationality Act "required the Government to continue implementing MPP." Joining the majority opinion was fellow conservative Brett Kavanaugh, a Trump appointee as well as liberal justices Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan.

Kavanaugh also wrote separately and noted that in general, when there is insufficient detention capacity, both releasing asylum-seekers into the United States and sending them back to Mexico "are legally permissible options under the immigration statutes."

## Court leaves few paths for Biden on climate

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — More than 500 days into his presidency, Joe Biden's hope for saving the Earth from the most devastating effects of climate change may not quite be dead.

But it's not far from it.

A Supreme Court ruling Thursday not only limited the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to regulate climate pollution by power plants, but also suggests the court is poised to block other efforts by Biden and federal agencies to limit the climate-wrecking fumes emitted by oil, gas and coal.

It's a blow to Biden's commitment to slash emissions in the few years scientists say are left to stave off worse and deadlier levels of global warming. And it's a sign, to Democrats at home and allies abroad, of the dwindling options remaining for Biden to re-

verse the legacy of President Donald Trump, who mocked the science of climate change. Trump's three Supreme Court appointees provided half of the affirmative votes in Thursday's 6-3 ruling.

After the ruling, a veteran Democratic lawmaker acknowledged he saw little hope of Congress producing any meaningful climate legislation, either. "There's no easy fix from Congress from this mess," Rhode Island Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse said. The foreign allies whom Biden once spoke of leading to a global clean-power transformation are wondering if the United States can even lead itself.

The climate decision in some ways "may have broader impacts at least on the European populace that this is a country that, A: can't get things done and B: is going in a really bizarre direction domestically," said Max Bergmann, director of the Europe pro-

gram at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Biden's EPA still has meaningful moves left to make, but must move quickly, Eric Schaeffer, a former director of civil enforcement at the agency, said in a statement. Among them: speed up setting of new carbon limits for carbon pollution from power plants, make long overdue updates to standards on toxic discharges from the plants and move faster to crack down on leaks of climate-damaging methane in natural gas as the Biden administration has already promised.

Biden has pledged to cut the nation's greenhouse gas emissions in half by the end of the decade and to have an emissions-free power sector by 2035.

"Our fight against climate change must carry forward, and it will," Biden said in a statement after the ruling that offered no guarantees of success.

## Improving weather helps with Sierra Nevada fire

Associate Press

BRIDGEPORT, Calif. — Improving weather helped firefighters stop the spread of a Sierra Nevada wildfire that forced evacuation of several hundred people from their homes and injured 13 firefighters and a civilian, authorities said Thursday.

The Rices Fire remained at 904 acres while containment increased to 20%, the

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said.

Firefighters were aided by cooler weather and an increase in humidity, Cal Fire said.

Injuries from the fire were heat-related problems, such as dehydration, fire officials said.

The wildfire began with a building fire Tuesday in Nevada County near the Yuba

River. It burned that structure and three nearby outbuildings, fire officials said.

Some evacuation orders were lifted Thursday as firefighters made progress but Cal Fire said 250 homes and other structures in small nearby communities remained under threat.

The fire burned down to the Yuba River but did not cross over into neighboring Yuba County.

# Official: Migrants who died cleared checkpoint

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — The tractor-trailer at the center of a human-smuggling attempt that left 53 people dead had passed through an inland U.S. Border Patrol checkpoint with migrants inside the sweltering rig earlier in its journey, a U.S. official said Thursday.

The truck went through the checkpoint on Interstate 35 located 26 miles northeast of the border city of Laredo, Texas.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation, said there were 73 people in the truck when it was discovered Monday in San Antonio, including the 53 who died. It was unclear if agents stopped the driver for questioning at the inland checkpoint or if the truck went through unimpeded.

The disclosure brings new attention to an old policy question of whether the roughly 110 inland highway checkpoints along the Mexican and Canadian borders are sufficiently effective at spotting people in cars and trucks who enter the United States illegally. They are generally located up to 100 miles from the border.

Texas state police also announced they would operate their own inland checkpoints

for tractor-trailers on the orders of Gov. Greg Abbott, who considers the Biden administration's efforts insufficient. It was unclear how many trucks they would be stopping.

Also Thursday, Homero Zamorano Jr., 45, the alleged driver of the tractor-trailer, made his initial appearance in San Antonio federal court. During a hearing that lasted about five minutes, Zamorano, wearing a white T-shirt and gray sweatpants, said very little, giving yes and no answers to questions from U.S. Magistrate Judge Elizabeth Chestney about his rights and the charges against him.

The judge appointed a federal public defender for Zamorano as well as a second attorney since the smuggling charge he faces carries a possible death sentence. She scheduled a hearing next week to determine if he is eligible for bail.

It remained unclear just how long the migrants were in the trailer on the sweltering day and whether having their cell phones confiscated by the smugglers before being placed inside contributed to the extremely high death toll. Emergency calls from trapped migrants have not emerged in this case as they have in earlier incidents.

# California sets toughest plastic reduction rules

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Companies selling shampoo, food and other products wrapped in plastic have a decade to cut down on their use of the polluting material if they want their wares on California store shelves.

Major legislation passed and signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom on Thursday aims to significantly reduce single-use plastic packaging in the state and drastically boost recycling rates for what remains. It sets the nation's most stringent requirements for the use of plastic packaging, with lawmakers saying they hope it sets a precedent for other states to follow.

"We're ruining the planet and we've got to change it," Sen. Bob Hertzberg, a Democrat, said before voting on the bill.

Under the bill, plastic producers would have to reduce plastics in single-use products 10% by 2027, increasing to 25% by 2032. That reduction in plastic packaging can be met through a combination of reducing package sizing, switching to a different material or making the product easily reusable or refillable. Also by 2032, plastic would have to be recycled at a rate of 65%, a massive jump from today's rates. It wouldn't apply to plastic beverage bottles, which have their own recycling rules.

Efforts to limit plastic packaging have failed in the Legislature for years, but the threat of a similar ballot measure going before voters in November prompted business groups to come to the negotiating table. The measure's three main backers withdrew it from the ballot after the bill passed, though they expressed concern the plastics industry will try to weaken the requirements.

Plastic makers would form their own industry group tasked with developing a plan to meet the requirements, which would need approval from the state's recycling department. They'll be required to collect \$500 million annually from producers for a fund aimed at cleaning up plastic pollution. Maine, Oregon and Colorado have similar producer responsibility systems.

Sen. Ben Allen, a Santa Monica Democrat who led negotiations on the bill, said it represented an example of two groups that are often at odds — environmentalists and industry — coming together to make positive change.

# European task force battling extremists withdraws from Mali

Associated Press

PARIS — A European military task force that helped Mali's government fight Islamic extremists has formally withdrawn from the West African country amid tensions with its ruling military junta.

The French military, which spearheaded the Takuba task force, announced Friday that it officially ended its work Thursday. The move was tied to France's decision earlier this year to withdraw troops from Mali after nine years helping Malian forces fight violent extremists who had threatened to seize power.

The Takuba force was composed of several hundred special forces troops from 10 countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, and Sweden. It

aimed at training and protecting Malian combat forces.

Despite the withdrawal, the French military called the force a "strategic and tactical success" and an example of "what Europeans are able to achieve together in complex security environments," saying that lessons learned from Takuba could be used in future joint operations.

In announcing its pullout, France accused Mali's authorities of neglecting the fight against Islamic extremists. France is maintaining a military presence in neighboring West African nations facing threats from extremist violence.

The departure of the European force comes after the U.N. Security Council voted Wednesday to maintain the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Mali.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

**Stolen 2020 Olympic gold medal found**

**CA** ANAHEIM — A stolen Olympic gold medal belonging to a member of the 2020 U.S. Women's Volleyball Team has been found in Southern California, authorities said Wednesday.

Jordyn Poulter reported the medal stolen May 25 after the Olympian discovered her car broken into at a parking garage in Anaheim, police said.

Detectives later arrested a 31-year-old suspect in the theft, but weren't immediately able to locate the missing medal.

On Monday, the owners of an Anaheim barbershop reported finding the gold medal inside a plastic bag discarded outside their business, police said in a statement. They handed it over to police, who plan on returning it to Poulter.

**Bison gores man who sought to protect family**

**WY** YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK — A bull bison gored a Colorado man in Yellowstone National Park this week, park officials said.

The 34-year-old man from Colorado Springs was walking with his family near Giant Geyser in the Old Faithful area when a bull bison charged the group, park officials said.

A video of the encounter posted on social media appeared to show the man was behind the bison when it charged other members of his party. The man ran up and appeared to be trying to keep himself between the bison

and his family when the bison pursued a child who tried to run away. The man grabbed the child and was thrown by the bison while still holding the child.

They both got up and ran away. The man's arm was injured, park officials said.

**Resort renaming over sensitivity concerns**

**VT** SOUTH POMFRET — A small ski area in Vermont has announced that it's retiring its name, Suicide Six, this summer amid growing concerns about the insensitive nature of the historical name.

"The feelings that the word 'suicide' evokes can have a significant impact on many in our community," the resort statement said.

The resort's website said the name originally came after the man who built one of the runs on Hill No. 6 joked that skiing the steep trail would be suicide.

A new name will be announced in the coming weeks for the ski area in South Pomfret, which opened in 1936 and is home of the Fisk Trophy Race, a rite of passage for competitive skiers, the resort's website said.

**Fire damages cottage next to lighthouse**

**ME** GOULDSBORO — A house on the property of the Prospect Harbor Lighthouse caught fire Monday, officials said.

Multiple fire departments responded and smoke poured from windows of the century-old lightkeeper's cottage in the town of Gouldsboro, east of Winter Harbor.

The blaze was quickly extinguished. There was no immediate word about damage.

The lighthouse dates to 1849 but the existing lighthouse, made of wood, went into service in 1891. The keeper's cottage, built around the same time, is in a separate structure.

**2 workers killed in sewer trench collapse**

**TX** JARRELL — The bodies of two men who died in the collapse of a sewer line trench in Jarrell on Tuesday were recovered Wednesday officials said.

Their identities are not yet being released because some of their relatives live out of the country. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Williamson County sheriff's office are investigating the cause of the accident.

The recovery of the bodies took 16 hours due to the depth of the trench and the soil, said Mark McAdams, chief officer with Emergency Services District #5, also known as the Jarrell Fire Department.

**Amberjack count: Tags worth \$250 to anglers**

**LA** NEW ORLEANS — Scientists are trying to get a better estimate of greater amberjack populations in the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, and this means the chance at a \$250 catch for anglers.

Although the popular sport and table fish are not overfished in the South Atlantic, they are in the Gulf of Mexico, according to the National Oceanic and Atmo-

spheric Administration's fisheries division.

Greater amberjack are big silver fish named for the long amber line along each side from nose to first dorsal fin. They can grow up to 6 feet long and 200 pounds, though up to 40 pounds is most common, according to NOAA Fisheries.

As part of the Greater Amberjack Count, scientists led by Dr. Sean Powers of the University of South Alabama plan to tag 750 greater amberjack with yellow-and-red plastic tags.

Anglers who catch one can clip off the tag or tags, call the phone number on one side of the tag to report the catch, size, location and other details, and mail the tag or tags to the address on the other side to get the reward. The tag number — AJ followed by five digits — is on both sides.

**Authorities seize 7 tons of fireworks in LA**

**CA** AZUSA — A cache of illegal fireworks seized in a Los Angeles suburb was four times larger than initially reported, authorities said.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office said Tuesday that 7 tons of fireworks were seized from a home in Azusa and a storage unit.

Initial reports estimated 3,500 pounds.

Twenty-seven homes were evacuated for hours Monday as authorities removed the explosives. Investigators also seized more than \$10,000 in cash and an illegal gun, and detained one person.

— From Associated Press

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# USC, UCLA leaving Pac-12 to join Big Ten

Associated Press

In a surprising and seismic shift in college athletics, the Big Ten voted Thursday to add Southern California and UCLA as conference members beginning in 2024.

The expansion to 16 teams will happen after the Pac-12's current media rights contracts with Fox and ESPN expire and make the Big Ten the first conference to stretch from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The announcement, which caught the Pac-12 off-guard, came almost a year after Oklahoma and Texas formally accepted invitations to join the Southeastern Conference in July 2025.

Big Ten Commissioner Kevin Warren said USC and UCLA, both members of the Pac-12 and its previous iterations for nearly a century, submitted applications for membership and the league's Council of Presidents

and Chancellors voted unanimously to add the Los Angeles schools.

"Ultimately, the Big Ten is the best home for USC and Trojan athletics as we move into the new world of collegiate sports," USC athletic director Mike Bohn said. "We are excited that our values align with the league's member institutions. We also will benefit from the stability and strength of the conference; the athletic caliber of Big Ten institutions; the increased visibility, exposure, and resources the conference will bring our student-athletes and programs; and the ability to expand engagement with our passionate alumni nationwide."

The Big Ten is building on previous expansion into the nation's largest media markets, and the move allows the conference to keep pace with the SEC as one of the most powerful entities in college sports.

The Big Ten will gain blue-blood programs in football (USC) and basketball (UCLA) and big-name brands that will enhance the value of the conference's new media rights package currently being negotiated.

Losing flagship schools like USC and UCLA is a major blow to the Pac-12, which has had a long and amicable relationship with the Big Ten best exemplified by its Rose Bowl partnership.

"While we are extremely surprised and disappointed by the news coming out of UCLA and USC today, we have a long and storied history in athletics, academics, and leadership in supporting student-athletes that we're confident will continue to thrive and grow into the future," the Pac-12 said in a statement.

The Pac-12's next move is unknown, but adding schools to replace USC and UCLA is a possibility.

"We look forward to partnering with current and potential members to pioneer the future of college athletics together," the Pac-12 said.

The Big Ten has expanded twice in recent years, with Nebraska joining in 2011 and Maryland and Rutgers in 2014.

"From increased exposure and a broader national platform for our student-athletes, to enhanced resources for our teams, this move will help preserve the legacy of UCLA Athletics for generations to come," UCLA athletic director Martin Jarmond said.

"We have deeply valued our membership in the Pac-12, and we have great respect for the conference and our fellow member institutions, but each school faces its own unique challenges and circumstances. We believe this is the right move for UCLA at the right time."

## Britain's Watson makes it to Wimbledon's 4th round

Associated Press

WIMBLEDON, England — Heather Watson has been through a lot at Wimbledon, and now she's made it through the third round for the first time.

The 121st-ranked Watson, making her 12th appearance at the All England Club, advanced to the fourth round on Friday by beating Kaja Juvan 7-6 (6), 6-2.

"I know I'm not speechless because I'm blabbing on, but I don't know what to say," the 30-year-old Watson said on No. 1 Court. "Playing here at home in front of all you guys, the atmosphere is everything. So, please can all of you come back for my fourth round?"

The pressure on British players at their home Grand Slam can be immense. Watson and every other British player know that well.

Before Andy Murray won the men's title, the talk among the

locals would endlessly focus on Fred Perry and Virginia Wade, the last British singles champions at the All England Club.

Murray ended some of that in 2013, becoming the first British man to win the Wimbledon title since Perry in 1936. Wade, in 1977, remains the last female British champion of the grass-court Grand Slam tournament.

"I actually wasn't that nervous," said Watson, who had lost in the first round six times since making her Wimbledon debut in 2010.

In the next round, Watson will face Jule Niemeier of Germany. She beat Lesia Tsurenko 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

Third-seeded Ons Jabeur also reached the fourth round, defeating Diane Parry 6-2, 6-3, while 2017 French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko beat Irina-Camelia Begu 3-6, 6-1, 6-1.

Jabeur, who is known as the

"Minister of Happiness" back home in Tunisia, will next face Elise Mertens. The 24th-seeded Mertens beat 2018 Wimbledon champion Angelique Kerber 6-4, 7-5.

Fifth-seeded Maria Sakkari, however, was eliminated. The Greek player, who reached the semifinals at both the French Open and the U.S. Open last year, lost to Tatjana Maria of Germany 6-3, 7-5.

In the men's draw, three Americans advanced — one to the third round and two to the fourth.

Qualifier Jack Sock finished off a 6-4, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (1) victory over another American, Maxime Cressy, in a match that was suspended Thursday after the second set. That made him the eighth American man to reach the third round, the most at any Grand Slam tournament since 1996.

Frances Tiafoe and Tommy Paul were also among those eight, and they already earned themselves a spot in the fourth round.

The 23rd-seeded Tiafoe, who is making his fifth appearance at the All England Club, beat Alexander Bublik 3-6, 7-6 (1), 7-6 (3), 6-4. Paul, seeded 30th, defeated Jiri Vesely 6-3, 6-2, 6-2.

Another one of those Americans, John Isner, set a men's tour ace record.

The 20th-seeded Isner hit ace No. 13,729 to break the ATP tour record held by Ivo Karlovic of Croatia. He set the record during the third game of his third-round match against Jannik Sinner on No. 2 Court.

Six-time Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic also reached the fourth round. The top-seeded Serb beat Miomir Kecmanovic 6-0, 6-3, 6-4.

# Money flows as NBA free agency begins

Associated Press

The NBA generated more basketball-related income than ever this past season, the total number coming up just short of \$9 billion.

Business is good. The first night of free agency underscored how good.

Nikola Jokic agreed to the biggest contract in NBA history, Bradley Beal agreed to a deal worth a quarter-billion dollars, and the money just kept flowing. Shortly after midnight Friday in the Eastern time zone, three more players — Karl-Anthony Towns, Devin Booker and Ja Morant — also agreed to huge-money extensions.

Towns and Booker agreed to four-year deals that will commence in 2024 and are worth at least \$224 million, their agent, Jessica Holtz of CAA, said. Morant will sign his first rookie extension, one that'll be worth at least \$193 million and could reach the \$230 million range, according to Tandem Sports, which represents him.

Those five players — Jokic, Beal, Towns, Booker and Morant — had more than \$1.1 billion in money committed to

them in their new deals, highlighting the moves made Thursday when the NBA's annual free-agent negotiating window opened.

All those moves were overshadowed by a piece of non-free-agent news that came earlier Thursday when Kevin Durant, according to a person with direct knowledge of the situation, told the Brooklyn Nets that he wanted a trade. That undoubtedly had some sort of an impact on the decisions some teams were making, or were considering, with the surprise development that one of the world's elite players is looking for a new place to play.

The Nets have been working with Durant to find a trade partner, and he has multiple teams on his preferred list, according to the person who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity Thursday because neither the player nor Brooklyn revealed any details publicly.

Durant is a 12-time All-Star, four-time scoring champion, three-time Olympic gold medalist and two-time NBA champion — those rings coming with

Golden State, the team he was with before joining Brooklyn. He has four years and nearly \$200 million remaining on his contract, which means that it may take a haul of players, draft picks or possibly both for a team to acquire him.

Jokic agreed to a supermax extension to remain with the Denver Nuggets, the two-time reigning MVP guaranteeing himself at least \$264 million over five seasons starting with the 2023-24 campaign. The final number may go up slightly depending on what the league's salary cap is going into the '23-24 season and if it exceeds current projections.

Beal will make \$251 million over the next five seasons after re-signing with Washington, one day after turning down \$37 million for this coming season from the team with whom he's spent the entirety of his 10-year career.

Towns and Booker got their deals not long afterward, as did Morant. More big-money extensions are coming at some point, particularly rookie extensions — Miami's Tyler Herro and New Orleans' Zion William-

son among the names on that list.

Jokic and Beal have signed lucrative contracts before. For some, the ones they get this summer will be their first.

Jalen Brunson, as had been widely speculated given his deep ties to the Knicks — his father played there, for starters — agreed to sign with New York, on a deal that ESPN reported would be worth \$104 million over four years. He had earned about \$6 million, total, in his four seasons with the Dallas Mavericks and saw his value soar by averaging 21.6 points in 18 playoff games this past season.

Anfernee Simons, who had a breakout season for the injury-plagued Portland Trail Blazers last year — taking advantage of his opportunity, and then some — agreed to a four-year, \$100 million contract to remain with that club. And Lu Dort, undrafted three years ago and someone who made about \$4 million combined in his three seasons with Oklahoma City, will stay with the Thunder for the next five years on a deal worth nearly \$88 million.

## LIV Golf tees off in Oregon amid criticism over funding

Associated Press

NORTH PLAINS, Ore. — The Saudi Arabia-backed LIV Golf tour's second event teed off Thursday, angering a group of families who lost loved ones on Sept. 11 and want the Saudi government held to account for the terrorist attacks.

About 10 family members and survivors spoke at a small park honoring veterans in tiny North Plains, home to Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club.

"This event is nothing more than a group of very talented athletes who appear to have turned their backs on the crime of murder," said survivor Tim Frolich, who was injured in the collapse of the World Trade Center towers.

The LIV Golf series, funded by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, was making its first stop on American soil this week after a

debut this month outside of London.

Carlos Ortiz took the lead Thursday with a 5-under 67. Dustin Johnson, the 2020 Masters winner, was a shot back. Pat Perez, Brenden Grace and Hideto Tadihara were two shots off the lead.

"You need to get off to a good start and obviously stay with it because there's no real letting up," Perez said about the 54-hole format. "Every shot, I think, means a little bit more."

The upstart series, fronted by CEO Greg Norman, aims to challenge the PGA Tour and has lured players with big signing bonuses and rich prize purses. But critics call the tour an attempt at "sportswashing" to detract from Saudi Arabia's human rights abuses, including the murder of U.S.-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.

Locally, opponents point to the 2016 hit-

and-run death of 15-year-old Fallon Smart. The Saudi national accused in the case cut off a monitoring device shortly before his trial and vanished. U.S. officials believe he was spirited home by the Saudi government.

And then there's the Sept. 11 families, who have reached out to some of the individual golfers involved in the tour but have not been granted an audience. The group produced an ad that has run on local television.

"These golfers that are getting in bed with the Saudis, they should know what they're doing. Shame on them. And to the golfers that say it's just a game of golf: Shame on them," said Brett Eagleson, the head of the group 9/11 Justice, who lost his father at the World Trade Center. "I invite them to live with the pain in our eyes, hear our stories and walk in our shoes, hear what we have to say about the kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

# Giménez homers in 9th to lift Guardians

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Andrés Giménez watched his home run clear the center-field fence, kissed his bat and then flipped it while turning toward Minnesota's stunned dugout.

For the second day in a row, the Cleveland Guardians won a game they probably should have lost and handed the Twins another crushing defeat.

Giménez blasted a two-run homer in the ninth inning as the Guardians walked off against the Twins again, beating their AL Central rivals 5-3 on Thursday to take the five-game series and move within one game of first place.

When he crossed the plate, Giménez was splashed with water and bubble gum rained down on his head as the Guardians, who had only one hit through seven innings, celebrated their 17th last at-bat win — the most in the majors.

On Wednesday, Josh Naylor's two-run homer in the 10th inning sent the Guardians past the Twins, whose bullpen has imploded against Cleveland several times this season.

"We keep fighting until the end," Giménez said.

Six of Cleveland's last at-bat wins have come against the Twins. The teams don't play

again until September, when they meet seven times.

Twins manager Rocco Baldelli called Wednesday's loss "excruciating" when he met with reporters Thursday morning. He was searching for a similar word several hours later.

"Probably the most difficult series I've ever been a part of," he said. "I've never seen five games against one team in four days that felt like that."

**Astros 2, Yankees 1:** Alex Bregman hit a two-run double early and host Houston held on to beat New York.

Thursday's game completes a stretch for the Astros of nine straight games against New York teams. Houston went 3-2 against the major league-leading Yankees and swept four games with the Mets, who had baseball's second best record before being overtaken by the Astros.

Houston starter Luis García (6-5) allowed three hits and one run with six strikeouts in 5½ innings for his third straight win.

**Pirates 8, Brewers 7:** Backup catcher Michael Perez had three home runs, rookies Oneil Cruz and Jack Suwinski hit back-to-back shots and host Pittsburgh beat Milwaukee.

It was the first multihomer game of Perez's five-year ca-

reer. He hit a two-run blast in the fourth inning off Brent Suter (1-2) to break a 3-3 tie, added another two-run homer in the sixth to make it 6-4 then had a solo shot in the eighth to increase the lead to 8-4.

**Dodgers 3, Padres 1:** Justin Turner homered twice, including a go-ahead two-run shot in the seventh inning, and host Los Angeles beat San Diego in the opener of a four-game series between the NL West's top teams.

The Dodgers have won 12 of 13 against San Diego dating to Aug. 24, outscoring the Padres 72-29 in that span.

**Blue Jays 4, Rays 1:** Teoscar Hernández and Santiago Espinal each hit two-run home runs, Yuseki Kikuchi struck out a season-high eight in six innings to snap a seven-start winless streak and host Toronto beat Tampa Bay.

Hernández hit his eighth homer in the second, and Espinal went deep in the seventh, his sixth. Both homers came off Rays left-hander Ryan Yarbrough (0-4).

**Phillies 14, Braves 4:** Kyle Schwarber finished off the month with another June homer, Darick Hall went deep twice and host Philadelphia avoided a three-game sweep with a rout of Atlanta.

Rhys Hoskins and Nick Castellanos also homered for the Phillies, who reached a season high in runs despite missing star Bryce Harper for the fourth straight game.

Adam Duvall and Michael Harris II went deep for the defending champion Braves, who ended June with a 21-6 mark to equal the most victories in a calendar month since the club moved from Milwaukee to Atlanta in 1966.

**Cubs 15, Reds 7:** Patrick Wisdom hit a grand slam and a solo homer en route to a career-high six RBIs, rookie Christopher Morel had a career-high five hits and host Chicago beat Cincinnati.

The Cubs collected 23 hits off five pitchers, tying their season high from a 21-0 rout of the Pirates on April 23. Seven of those hits came in the eighth against outfielder Max Schrock, who allowed a two-run homer to P.J. Higgins and a solo shot to Morel.

**Mariners 8, Athletics 6:** Julio Rodríguez homered for the second day in a row, Cal Raleigh had a two-run triple in the fifth inning and host Seattle beat Oakland.

Seattle has won 17 of 19 games against Oakland and earned its third straight victory overall to improve to 37-41.

# Timing of ruling on Browns' Watson uncertain

Associated Press

Deshaun Watson's disciplinary hearing concluded Thursday with the NFL adamant about an indefinite suspension of at least one year and the quarterback's legal team arguing there's no basis for that punishment, two people with knowledge of the case told The Associated Press.

Both sides presented their arguments over three days before former U.S. District Judge Sue Robinson in Delaware, according to both people who spoke on

condition of anonymity because the hearing isn't public.

Watson was accused of sexual misconduct by 24 women and settled 20 of the civil lawsuits.

Robinson, who was jointly appointed by the league and the NFL Players' Association, will determine whether Watson violated the NFL's personal conduct policy and whether to impose discipline.

Post-hearing briefs are due the week of July 11 so it's uncertain when Robinson will make a ruling. The Cleveland Browns

are hoping to know Watson's availability before training camp starts July 27.

If either the union or league appeals Robinson's decision, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell or his designee "will issue a written decision that will constitute full, final and complete disposition of the dispute," per terms of Article 46 in the collective bargaining agreement.

A person familiar with the case told the AP the league believes it presented evidence to warrant keeping Watson off the

field this season. The person said the league's investigation determined Watson committed multiple violations of the personal conduct policy and he would be required to undergo counseling before returning.

A person familiar with Watson's defense told the AP they expect a suspension. Asked what would be acceptable, the person said: "our goal is to get him back on the field this year."

Watson has denied any wrongdoing and vowed to clear his name.