

Pentagon gives new details on Iran strike

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Air Force Gen. Dan Caine said during Sunday's press conference that it would be too early to comment on battle damage assessment about the U.S. attack on three nuclear facilities in Iran. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth added the assessment was ongoing.

After a preliminary report from the Defense Intelligence Agency, a part of the Defense Department, assessed the airstrikes set Iran's nuclear program back by months but did not eliminate it, the Pentagon's top leaders came out Thursday morning to emphasize how effective the military mission was and show the destruction it caused.

"Ultimately, we're here to clarify what these weapons are capable of, which anyone with...

two eyes, some ears and a brain can recognize that kind of firepower with that specificity at that location and others, is going to have a devastating effect," Hegseth told reporters during a news conference at the Pentagon.

He berated reporters for bias reporting that relied on leaked information and preliminary reports based on limited details.

Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the origins of the strike on Iran began with the Defense Threat Reduction Agency in 2009 when they began to study the nuclear facility at Fordo, one of three Iranian facilities attacked by the U.S. over the weekend. It was the work of two officers in that agency that led to the creation of a bomb that could penetrate and destroy the underground facility.

Caine provided greater de-

tails about the history behind the attack, the equipment and units used in the attack and displayed more information to show the bunker-buster bombs destroyed their targets.

He showed aerial images of Fordo's main exhaust shaft with two additional ventilation shafts on either side.

"The United States decided to strike these two ventilation shafts ... as the primary point of entry into the mission space," Caine said.

The attack targeted Iran's three main nuclear facilities at Fordo, Isfahan and Natanz in a mission dubbed Operation Midnight Hammer.

It began Friday and went into Saturday. More than a dozen bunker-buster bombs were used in the mission.

In the days preceding the attack, the Iranians attempted to cover the shafts at Fordo with

concrete to try and prevent the attack. While Caine did not provide specific details of the concrete cap, planners had to account for this.

Six bunker-buster bombs, each weighing about 30,000 pounds, were used at Fordo. Caine showed a video of a simulated bomb test used as preparation for the operation in Fordo.

"This is one weapon. So, if you take a view, this is five additional. You'll get a sense of what this looks like," Caine said. "Unlike a normal surface bomb, you won't see an impact crater because they're designed to deeply bury and then function."

Caine reassured all six bombs at Fordo went "exactly where they were intended to go." But the chairman again did not provide his own assessment of the strike and referred questions to U.S. intelligence agencies.

Admiral: Ukraine Black Sea ops shape Navy, NATO

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Ukraine's Black Sea operations against Russia are shaping U.S. Navy and NATO thinking on the future of drones, mines and missile tactics in global maritime warfare, one of the service's top leaders in Europe and Africa said.

The Navy is focusing on tools to deny opponents the ability to go on offense, Rear Adm. Michael Mattis, the commander of Task Force 66 and director of strategic effects for U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, said in a recent interview.

Mattis said insights from the service's Black Sea Battle Lab

apply to the Baltic and eastern Mediterranean seas. But they could just as easily relate to the Indo-Pacific, including the archipelago waterways near Japan, Taiwan and the northern Philippines — areas where China contests territory held by American partners and allies.

The Navy applied some of those lessons this month during the multinational U.S. 6th Fleet-led BALTOPS exercise, when it used surface drones to simulate attacks on 6th Fleet flagship USS Mount Whitney and the destroyer USS Paul Ignatius.

Service members also used underwater drones to identify sea mines, a concern in the Baltic due to potentially tens of

thousands of underwater explosives left behind after two world wars.

The diving drones also would be useful in tracking and addressing suspected Russian activities, such as anchor dragging incidents that have targeted communication cables and other undersea infrastructure, Mattis said.

It "should have a very good deterrent effect and ensure that Russia understands that NATO is preparing and prepared to defend and deter here in the Baltic," he said.

The Black Sea combat also is teaching the Navy about how an adversary like Ukraine, which had few ships and no blue-water

presence, could devastate a technologically superior foe — and how to counter such attacks.

Early on, Ukraine targeted Russian ports and moved on to attacking ships in the Black Sea, without much success in sinking them. They didn't have enough drones and lacked air, cyber and space support.

In early 2024, Ukraine had the drones and other needed capabilities, ultimately sinking three Russian ships from January to March of that year, according to the Navy.

Overall, Ukraine has disabled about 40% of the Russian Black Sea Fleet and denied its ships access to a sizable portion of the sea, Mattis said.

Advocates draw parallels between deaths

By CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — An advocacy group on Wednesday drew parallels between the recent death of a Navy sailor and that of Army Spc. Vanessa Guillen, whose killing in 2020 led to Defense Department policy reforms on sexual harassment and sexual assault.

“What happened to [Seaman Angelina Resendiz] was not just a tragedy, it was a preventable failure. We are here to demand justice for Angelina,” said Juan Proano, who leads the League of United Latin American Citizens.

Resendiz, a 21-year-old culinary specialist, enlisted in the Navy in August 2023. Resendiz reported to the USS James E. Williams, a Norfolk-based destroyer, in February 2024.

She was found dead June 9 about 10 miles from Naval Station Norfolk, Va., where the sailor went missing 12 days earlier. At about the time Resendiz’s body was found, a fellow sailor who could face charges in connection with her death was detained. A missing adult alert was issued five days after Resendiz was last seen because the Navy

initially considered her absent without official leave — a move her family said indicated a lack of urgency.

Proano said during a news conference in Washington that the case is strikingly similar to that of Guillen, a 20-year-old small arms repairer. Guillen was initially considered absent without official leave when she disappeared in 2020 from Fort Hood in Texas. After her body was found along a river near base, investigators determined she was killed by a fellow soldier after being sexually harassed months earlier.

Guillen’s story captured international media attention and led to the passage of military justice reforms and changes to how the military investigates and manages sexual harassment and sexual assault cases.

“These reforms were supposed to ensure that no family ever goes through what the Guillen’s went through, and yet, here we are. The spirit of the law must now be honored,” Proano said.

The league, which advocates for civil rights protections for Latin American citizens, said Resendiz’s case was mishandled, which Proano described as

“unacceptable.”

Resendiz’s disappearance prompted a state-wide missing adult alert on June 3 — five days after she was last seen or in contact with family and friends. The Naval Criminal Investigative Service shared on social media a missing person flyer for Resendiz on June 6. Naval Station Norfolk shared the NCIS flyer the next day, June 7 — more than a week after she disappeared from the base.

“Too often we hear we leave no one behind, yet the system left Angelina behind. Enough is enough. We are here to say no more stalling, no more secrecy. Angelina’s family deserves the truth,” Proano said.

The league issued formal letters in mid-June to Navy Secretary John Phelan and lawmakers calling for an investigation into how the Navy handled Resendiz’s disappearance and a public timeline of the service’s actions. The league is also calling for criminal accountability for any command personnel who failed to take appropriate action and a review of the naval base’s sexual assault and harassment procedures.

One in five active-duty ser-

vice members are Latino and women make up more than 17% of the military, according to the league.

“They — like Angelina and Army Spc. Vanessa Guillen before her — volunteered to defend this nation. We owe them nothing less than a safe and respectful environment in return,” Proano said.

Esmeralda Castle, Resendiz’s mother, said the Navy failed to notify the family of Resendiz’s disappearance through “proper channels.” The family learned Resendiz was missing from fellow sailors, Castle said. When Castle reached out to Resendiz’s chain of command, she said Navy leaders provided false and conflicting information about the sailor’s wellbeing.

After NCIS got involved, the family was not provided any information about Resendiz, Castle said. The family still does not know what happened to Resendiz between May 29, when she was last seen, and June 9, when her body was found.

The Norfolk Medical Examiner’s Office is conducting an autopsy. The cause and manner of death were still pending, the examiner’s office said Wednesday.

Revised Senate bill slashes border operations funds

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Senate Armed Services Committee on Wednesday released an updated plan for defense spending in a bill from Republicans to enact President Donald Trump’s agenda, slashing money for military operations on the U.S.-Mexico border while increasing funds for defense supply chains.

The latest iteration of the \$150 billion measure to modernize America’s military and strengthen national security is part of a sweeping tax cut and spending bill that Republicans hope to pass through both chambers of Congress and send to

Trump’s desk by July 4.

The Senate is expected to vote on the legislation in the coming days.

Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said the defense portion of the bill is a “crucial down payment” to enhance defense capabilities amid rising global threats from China, Russia, Iran and other adversaries.

The measure includes \$29 billion to boost Navy shipbuilding and the maritime industrial base, \$25 billion to support Trump’s Golden Dome missile defense initiative and \$9 billion to improve housing, health care, child care and education for

service members and their families.

The Senate’s legislation initially called for \$3.3 billion to fund the military’s mission at the southwest border, but that amount has been reduced to \$1 billion under updated bill language released Wednesday. House Republicans had approved \$5 billion for military border support.

Funding for munitions production is going up by \$2 billion, from \$23 billion to \$25 billion, in the updated Senate bill. It includes \$5 billion to shore up supply chains for critical minerals essential for the manufacturing of weapons and \$3 billion to support the defense industrial base.

Court: States can cut funds for Planned Parenthood

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A divided Supreme Court allowed states to cut off Medicaid money to Planned Parenthood in a ruling handed down Thursday amid a wider Republican-backed push to defund the country's biggest abortion provider.

The 6-3 opinion comes in a case that wasn't directly about abortion. It's instead about Medicaid funding for other health care services Planned Parenthood provides, like contraception, cancer screenings and pregnancy testing.

The ruling authored by Justice Neil Gorsuch and joined by the rest of the court's conservatives could have broader implications for Medicaid patients because it blocks them from suing to make sure they can visit the provider they choose.

Public health care money

generally can't be used to pay for abortions. Medicaid patients go to Planned Parenthood for other needs in part because it can be tough to find a doctor who takes the publicly funded insurance, the organization has said.

South Carolina's Republican governor says no taxpayer money should go to the organization. The budget bill backed by President Donald Trump in Congress would also cut Medicaid funding to Planned Parenthood. That could force the closure of about 200 centers, most of them in states where abortion is legal, the organization has said.

South Carolina, though, argued that patients shouldn't be able to file those lawsuits.

The state pointed to lower courts that have been swayed by similar arguments and allowed states such as Texas to block Medicaid funding from Planned

Parenthood.

The high court majority agreed. "Deciding whether to permit private enforcement poses delicate policy questions involving competing costs and benefits — decisions for elected representatives, not judges," Gorsuch wrote.

In a dissent joined by her liberal colleagues, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson said the ruling is "likely to result in tangible harm to real people."

Public health groups like the American Cancer Society said in court papers that lawsuits are the only real way that Medicaid patients have been able to enforce their right to choose their own doctor. Losing that right would reduce access to health care for people on the program, which is estimated to include one-quarter of everyone in the country.

New HHS panel calls for adjusted flu shot

Associated Press

ATLANTA — The Trump administration's new vaccine advisers on Thursday endorsed this fall's flu vaccinations for just about every American but threw in a twist: Only use certain shots free of an ingredient antivaccine groups have falsely tied to autism.

What is normally a routine step in preparing for the upcoming flu season drew intense scrutiny after U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. abruptly fired the influential 17-member Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices and handpicked replacements that include several vaccine skeptics.

That seven-member panel bucked another norm Thursday: It deliberated the safety of a preservative used in less than 5% of U.S. flu vaccinations based on a presentation from an antivaccine group's former leader — without allowing the usual public presentation of scientific data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The preservative, thimerosal, has long been used in certain vaccines that come in multi-dose vials, to prevent contamination as each dose is withdrawn. But it has been controversial because it contains a small amount of a particular form of mercury. Study after study has found no evidence that it causes autism or other harm.

The panel voted 5-1, with one abstention, that people ages 6 months and older get a flu vaccination this fall only using single-dose formulas that are thimerosal-free.

"There is still no demonstrable evidence of harm," one adviser, Dr. Joseph Hibbeln, a psychiatrist formerly with the National Institutes of Health, said in acknowledging the panel wasn't following its usual practice of acting on evidence.

Bill's key Medicaid provision breaks procedure

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate parliamentarian has advised that a Medicaid provider tax overhaul central to President Donald Trump's tax cut and spending bill does not adhere to the chamber's procedural rules, delivering a crucial blow as Republicans rush to finish the package this week.

Guidance from the parliamentarian is rarely ignored and Republican leaders are now forced to consider difficult options. Republicans were counting on big cuts to Medicaid and other programs to offset trillions of dollars in Trump tax breaks, their top priority.

Republicans scrambled to respond, with some calling for challenging, or firing, the non-partisan parliamentarian, who

has been on the job since 2012. Democrats said the decisions would devastate GOP plans. Sen. Ron Wyden, the top Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, said the GOP proposal would have been as much as a \$250 billion cut to the health care program.

The outcome is a setback as Senate Republicans hoped to get votes underway by week's end to meet Trump's Fourth of July deadline for passage. Trump planned to host an event Thursday at the White House with Americans the administration says would benefit from the bill as he hopes to energize Congress.

GOP leaders were already struggling to rally support for Medicaid changes that some senators said went too far and would have left millions without

coverage. Several GOP senators warn it would harm rural hospitals that depend on the funds. Hospital organizations have been warning it could wipe out their balance sheets and lead to hospital closures. Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., who's among those fighting the change, said he had spoken to Trump late Wednesday and that Trump told him to revert back to an earlier proposal from the House.

Critics decry the system as a type of "laundering," but almost every state except Alaska uses it to help provide the health care coverage.

The House-passed bill would freeze the provider taxes at current levels, while the Senate proposal goes deeper by reducing the tax that some states are able to impose.

Ukraine halts Russian advance in Sumy area

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian forces have halted Russia's recent advance into the northern Sumy region and have stabilized the front line near the border with Russia, Ukraine's top military commander said Thursday.

Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, commander in chief of Ukraine's armed forces, said that Ukrainian successes in Sumy have prevented Russia from deploying about 50,000 Russian troops, including elite airborne and marine brigades, to other areas of the front line.

His claim couldn't be independently verified, and Russian officials made no immediate comment.

Russian forces have been slowly grinding forward at

some points on the roughly 620-mile front line, though their incremental gains have been costly in terms of troop casualties and armor.

The outnumbered Ukrainian army has relied heavily on drones to keep the Russians back.

Months of U.S.-led international efforts to stop the more than three years of fighting have failed.

Sumy, the city which is the capital of the Ukrainian region of the same name, had a prewar population of around 250,000. It lies about 12 miles from the front line. Russia's push into the Sumy region earlier this year compelled Ukraine to strengthen its defenses there.

A special defense group has been formed to improve secur-

ity in Sumy and surrounding communities, Syrskyi said.

It's focusing on improving fortifications and accelerating construction of defensive barriers.

In March, Ukrainian forces withdrew from much of Russia's neighboring Kursk region, parts of which they had controlled after a surprise cross-border attack in August.

That retreat enabled Russia to launch a counteroffensive that advanced between 1-7 miles into Ukrainian territory, according to different estimates.

Ukrainian officials say fierce fighting is also taking place in the eastern Donetsk region.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Thursday that its forces have captured two villages, No-

voserhiivka and Shevchenko, in Donetsk.

Capturing Shevchenko marked an important stage in Russia's ongoing offensive that is trying to break into Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region, which borders Donetsk and is a major industrial center, according to the Defense Ministry.

Meanwhile, the two sides continued to launch long-range strikes.

Russia's Defense Ministry said that 50 Ukrainian drones were downed over nine regions overnight, including three over the Moscow region.

Ukraine's air force said that Russia deployed 41 Shahed and decoy drones across the country overnight, wounding five people. It said that 24 drones were either intercepted or jammed.

Democrats fret about fallout after Mamdani win in NYC

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The stunning success of Zohran Mamdani, a 33-year-old self-described democratic socialist, in the race for New York City mayor has exposed anew the fiery divisions plaguing the Democratic Party as it struggles to repair its brand nearly half a year into Donald Trump's second presidency.

A fresh round of infighting erupted among Democratic officials, donors and political operatives on Wednesday, a day after Mamdani's leading opponent, former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, conceded the Democratic primary.

Mamdani appears on a glide path to the nomination for mayor in the nation's largest city, though ranked choice vote counting will determine the final outcome next week.

Many progressives cheered the emergence of the young and charismatic Mamdani, whose

candidacy caught on with viral campaign videos and a focus on the cost of living.

But the party's more pragmatic wing cast the outcome as a serious setback in their quest to broaden Democrats' appeal and move past the more controversial policies that alienated would-be voters in recent elections.

Indeed, Wednesday's debate was about much more than who would lead America's largest city for the next four years.

Giddy Republicans viewed Mamdani's success as a political gift that would help shape elections across New Jersey and Virginia this fall and into next year's midterms.

And while such predictions are premature, national conservative media focused on the New York election with fresh zeal, suggesting that Mamdani's emerging profile as a prominent Democratic leader will surely grow.

Prosecutor: Combs abused through power, violence

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Two days of closing arguments in Sean "Diddy" Combs' sex trafficking trial began on Thursday with a prosecutor telling the jury the hip-hop mogul used "power, violence and fear" to rule a criminal enterprise that facilitated kidnapping, arson and brutal sex crimes that she said were at the heart of the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Christy Slavik provided the jury with a road map for a closing argument expected to last hours.

She described Combs as someone "who doesn't take no for an answer," while he committed crimes of sex trafficking and racketeering conspiracy.

Combs "counted on silence and shame" to enable and prolong his abuse, Slavik said. He used a "small army" of employees — an inner circle that included personal assistants and bodyguards — to harm women and cover it up, she said.

The theory of racketeering law is that "when someone commits crime as part of a group, they're more powerful and dangerous," Slavik said.

Prosecutors say Combs coerced and abused women for years as he used his "power and prestige" as a music star to enlist a network of associates and employees to help him while he silenced victims through blackmail and violence, including kidnapping, arson and physical beatings. They say he induced female victims into drugged-up, elaborately produced sexual performances with male sex workers in events dubbed "Freak Offs."

Before Slavik began her closing, Judge Arun Subramanian told the jury they would hear a closing argument from a defense lawyer on Friday and a rebuttal by a prosecutor before he instructs them on the law and allows them to begin deliberating as early as late afternoon.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Ex-lawmaker seeks return in another state

NH CONCORD — Scott Brown, a Republican who once represented Massachusetts in the U.S. Senate, announced his second bid Wednesday for the New Hampshire Senate seat being vacated by Democrat Jeanne Shaheen next year.

Brown, 65, was born at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and moved to Massachusetts as a toddler. After several terms in the state Legislature, he won a special election in 2010 for the U.S. Senate seat that had been held for decades by Edward Kennedy.

He lost to Democrat Elizabeth Warren in 2012. He then moved to New Hampshire, where he unsuccessfully challenged Shaheen for the Senate in 2014. Shaheen announced in March she would not seek reelection in 2026.

New Hampshire has an all-Democrat congressional delegation, with four-term Rep. Chris Pappas, 44, announcing his candidacy for the Senate seat in April.

Karen Read foreman asks reopening of probe

MA BOSTON — The jury foreman in the Karen Read retrial is calling on the FBI to rip open the case and start from scratch.

"There are so many holes that need to be filled," Juror #1 told the Boston Herald on Tuesday afternoon. "Now that the FBI knows Karen Read is not a suspect, something happened and multiple jurors feel that way."

Juror #1, who first spoke to

the Herald exclusively last Friday, is now urging the FBI to "get justice for John O'Keefe."

It has already been announced that federal investigators did look into the web of Canton and Boston police connections to the case and did not charge anyone.

FBI Boston officials "declined comment" on the juror's appeal for a new probe.

Law lets strike workers get unemployment pay

OR SALEM — Democratic Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek on Tuesday signed into law a bill that provides unemployment benefits to striking workers, following neighboring Washington state in adopting measures spurred by recent walkouts by Boeing factory workers, hospital nurses and teachers in the Pacific Northwest.

Oregon's measure makes it the first state to provide pay for picketing public employees — who aren't allowed to strike in most states, let alone receive benefits for it. It makes striking workers eligible to collect unemployment benefits after two weeks, with benefits capped at 10 weeks.

Only three other states — New York, New Jersey and most recently Washington state — give striking workers unemployment benefits. Washington's bill, which passed in April, pays striking private sector workers for up to six weeks, starting after at least two weeks on the line.

The final passage for Oregon's bill proved tumultuous. It first passed the state Senate in March and then passed the state

House earlier this month. But a majority of senators did not concur with amendments added by the House, which sent the measure to a conference committee. It ultimately received final approval following a compromise on the 10-week benefits cap.

FBI arrests man, says tried to get guns to ISIS

CA SACRAMENTO — The FBI on Tuesday arrested a Northern California man accused of attempting to provide material support to Islamic State, federal prosecutors said.

Ammaad Akhtar, 33, of Stockton, was charged in federal court in Sacramento after allegedly pledging allegiance to the terrorist organization and attempting to send it money, weapons and tactical gear, according to Acting U.S. Attorney Michele Beckwith.

Prosecutors said Akhtar made several payments he believed were destined for ISIS militants and handed over binoculars, clothing and two loaded firearms to an undercover FBI operative posing as a group member.

In conversations recorded by the FBI, Akhtar reportedly expressed a desire to "die in the cause of Allah fighting the kuffar (infidels)" and requested instructions for building a homemade explosive device "to make a boom" at a crowded event, the complaint said.

Driverless cars proposal meets union resistance

MA BOSTON — Citing "serious safety, workforce, and ethical con-

cerns," a group of union members urged lawmakers to pump the brakes on plans to open the Bay State's roads to driverless cars.

Proposed legislation before the Joint Committee on Transportation that would establish rules for autonomous vehicles in Massachusetts was met with an earful from members of a half dozen local unions, who warned they could lose their livelihoods if cars are allowed to start driving themselves.

Representatives from the 32BJ SEIU, IAMAW District 15, the App Drivers Union, Teamsters Local 25, UFCW Local 1445 and the Greater Boston Labor Council rallied at the State House ahead of the hearing and joined lawmakers to express their concerns over the bills.

Measles cases continue to spread among kids

KS TOPEKA — The number of measles cases continues to rise in Kansas, reaching 80 confirmed cases, according the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's 2025 Kansas Measles Case Data dashboard.

The majority of cases, 77, are associated with the outbreak concentrated in the southwestern part of Kansas, with six new cases related to the outbreak reported this month, according to the data updated Monday.

There have been three hospitalizations and no deaths connected to the outbreak.

The data shows that among those affected by the southwest Kansas outbreak, only five involved patients who had been vaccinated appropriately.

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No surprise: Flagg, Harper are top picks

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Cooper Flagg is the new Maine man in Dallas.

The Mavericks took the Duke forward with the No. 1 pick in the NBA draft Wednesday night, hoping they have found their next franchise superstar less than five months after trading one away.

Mavericks fans were furious when Dallas traded Luka Dončić to the Los Angeles Lakers on Feb. 1, some immediately threatening to end their support of the team.

But the ones who stuck around may quickly love Flagg, the college player of the year who averaged 19.2 points and 7.5 rebounds while leading Duke to the Final Four. The Mavericks quickly announced that Flagg would wear No. 32 in Dallas, where fellow Duke products Kyrie Irving and Dereck Lively II are on the roster.

"I'm really excited. I think I keep saying I'm excited to be a sponge, to get down there and just learn, be surrounded by Hall of Fame-caliber guys and just to be able to learn from them," Flagg said. "It's going to be an incredible experience."

His selection — considered likely ever since Flagg showed off his considerable game last summer after being invited to the U.S. Olympic team's training camp — was a daylong celebration in his home state for the 18-year-old forward from Newport, Maine.

"It means a lot to me to have the support of the whole state. I

know how many people showed up today and supported me at some of the draft parties back home," Flagg said. "It feels amazing knowing I can inspire younger kids. I was in their shoes really not that long ago, so just to know I can give those kids those feelings and have the whole state behind me, it means a lot."

He joined Elton Brand, Irving, Zion Williamson and Paolo Banchero as Duke players drafted No. 1 since 1999, and he returned the draft to its longtime start with a one-and-done college player.

That's the way the draft began every year from 2010 until Banchero's selection in 2022, but the last two No. 1 picks, Victor Wembanyama and Zaccharie Risacher, are both from France.

Rutgers freshman Dylan Harper was taken by the Spurs with the No. 2 pick and will try to follow Wembanyama and Stephon Castle and give San Antonio a third straight NBA Rookie of the Year.

"It's definitely a goal of mine to make it three in a row," said Harper, the son of former NBA guard Ron Harper. "I think the coaching staff and the players are going to make it easy for me to go out there and showcase my talent, so definitely."

The 76ers then took Baylor's VJ Edgecombe, getting the first sustained burst of loud cheers of the draft from what seemed to be a number of Philadelphia fans who made the trip to Barclays Center in Brooklyn. The first

two picks had long been expected, but the No. 3 spot was the first one where there was intrigue.

Kon Knueppel made it two Duke players in the first four picks when the Charlotte Hornets took him at No. 4. When big man Khaman Maluach went at No. 10 — a pick made by the Houston Rockets but headed to Phoenix as part of the trade for Kevin Durant that can't become official until next month — it gave the Blue Devils three top-10 picks and 50 in the first round since 1989, moving past Kentucky (48) for most by any school.

"It was so emotional getting to see my teammates, my fellow freshmen getting drafted," Maluach said. "I was so happy for them because they deserve everything they have. They worked hard for it, for that moment, too."

Ace Bailey, Harper's teammate with the Scarlet Knights who could have been in the mix to go third but declined to work out for the 76ers, ended up going at No. 5 to Utah to end a draft process in which he was criticized for how his camp handled it.

"I'm glad it's over," Bailey said. "I'm ready to play some basketball now."

Then it was Tre Johnson of Texas to the Washington Wizards at No. 6 and Oklahoma's Jeremiah Fears to New Orleans at No. 7, before the host Nets took BYU's Egor Demin at No. 8, Brooklyn's first of potentially five selections in the first round.

Toronto took South Carolina's Collin Murray-Boyles at No. 9. The Nets would later add French guard Nolan Traore at No. 19, North Carolina's Drake Powell at No. 22 (once a three-way trade with Boston and Atlanta is complete), Ben Saraf of Israel at No. 26 and Michigan center Danny Wolf at No. 27.

The NBA champion Oklahoma City Thunder took Georgetown center Thomas Sorber at No. 15, their first of two picks in the first round. The Thunder also had the No. 24 pick but traded the rights to Nique Clifford to Sacramento for a future first-round pick.

The first night of the two-night draft, a format the NBA went to last season, had some mid-round trades involving some of college basketball's top players. New Orleans acquired the rights to Maryland forward Derik Queen, the No. 13 pick, from Atlanta for the rights to the No. 23 pick, Asa Newell of Georgia, and a future first-round pick.

Walter Clayton Jr., the Most Outstanding Player of the Final Four after leading Florida to the national championship, was drafted by Washington at No. 18 but his rights were dealt to Utah for the rights to Illinois' Will Riley, who went 21st.

The draft was to resume at Barclays Center on Thursday night.

All of the players invited to the green room were taken in Round 1, with UConn's Liam McNeeley the last at No. 19, with Phoenix sending his rights to Charlotte.

Suns trade 2 first-rounders for Hornets' 7-footer Williams

Associated Press

PHOENIX — The Phoenix Suns have acquired center Mark Williams in a trade that sends two first-round picks to the Charlotte Hornets, a person familiar with the move told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

The person spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity because the trade hasn't officially been announced.

The Hornets received this year's No. 29 pick — which they used to select UConn guard Liam McNeeley — and a 2029 first-round selection. ESPN

first reported the deal.

Williams was one of two 7-footers the Suns added during the first round of the NBA Draft. The Suns are also expected to get Duke center Khaman Maluach, who was selected by the Rockets with the No. 10 overall pick but is part of a trade that

will send 15-time All-Star Kevin Durant to Houston.

Williams averaged 15.3 points and 10.2 rebounds per game for the Hornets last year, providing plenty of production when healthy. He was the No. 15 overall pick out of Duke in the 2022 draft.

Misiorowski outduels Skenes in Brewers' win

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — The Brewers' Jacob Misiorowski made an extra effort to avoid getting caught up in all the hype surrounding the rookie flamethrower's highly anticipated matchup with the Pirates' Paul Skenes.

"It was just one of those things that you wanted to try and calm yourself down as much as possible and stay off the internet because I feel like everything I swiped was me and Skenes, me and Skenes, me and Skenes," Misiorowski said after Milwaukee's 4-2 victory over Pittsburgh on Wednesday. "I had to mute it, turn it off."

The way he's pitching, Misiorowski better get accustomed to the extra attention.

After throwing five shutout innings to outperform the 2024 NL Rookie of the Year, Misiorowski has a 3-0 record and 1.13 ERA. The three hits he has allowed

thus far is the fewest by any major league pitcher through his first three career starts with a minimum of 16 innings pitched since at least 1901, according to Sportradar.

Plenty of history was made Wednesday.

Misiorowski averaged 99.5 mph and Skenes averaged 98.5 mph on their fastballs. That represented the highest combined fastball velocity by two starting pitchers in the same game since at least 2009, Sportradar said.

Misiorowski reached at least 100 mph on 19 of 74 pitches — reaching a career-best peak of 102.4 — and Skenes got to 100 mph once out of 78 pitches. Since at least 2009, this marked the most combined 100-mph pitches by opposing starters for any game in which both reached that threshold at least once.

"I've watched plenty of his games," Misiorowski said of

Skenes. "It's awesome to face a guy like that and really compare yourself to some of the best."

The hoopla surrounding this matchup of 23-year-olds didn't seem to bother Misiorowski, who struck out eight while allowing two hits and two walks. That was apparent well before the game.

"We were sitting over here laughing, joking," said Brewers catcher Eric Haase, whose locker is just around the corner from Misiorowski's. "Didn't seem it was affecting him at all."

The matchup drew a season-best sellout crowd of 42,774 for a weekday afternoon game. Most fans wanted to see what Misiorowski did next after allowing a total of one hit in his first two outings.

His torrid start could focus attention on Misiorowski at the level Skenes has received since arriving in the big leagues as a No. 1 overall draft pick who led

LSU to a 2023 College World Series title.

Skenes has outperformed those considerable expectations. He was voted NL Rookie of the Year and finished third in Cy Young Award voting last season.

What advice would Skenes give Misiorowski about how to handle the scrutiny that could accompany an emergence to stardom?

"You've got to protect yourself, for lack of a better term, obviously with the media, but I assume if he goes and walks around Milwaukee now there's going to be more people that recognize him and all that," said Skenes, who met Misiorowski for the first time Monday. "If he does what he's supposed to do and everybody thinks he can do, that's not going away any time soon. Get used to it and find ways to find peace and that kind of thing."

Islanders weigh draft choices as Hagens could come home

Associated Press

Mathieu Darche's phone keeps ringing as he prepares for his first NHL draft as general manager of the New York Islanders, and he's sure of only one thing: They are not trading the No. 1 pick.

Beyond that, it's wide open. While Darche is not saying, the growing consensus is that New York is expected to select defenseman Matthew Schaefer on Friday night.

With Long Island native James Hagens also in the mix as a likely top-10 pick, there has been plenty of speculation about them making a splash to trade back into the first half of the first round to get both.

"I'm looking at everything," Darche said on a video call with reporters Tuesday. "If I feel the opportunity warrants that trade, I'll try it. ... Whether it's moving up in the draft with another pick, whether it's acquiring another pick, whether it's trading another pick to get a player, I'm looking at all options to improve our team."

Hagens grew up in Hauppauge going to Nassau Coliseum as a kid. He still has the towel from his first playoff game, and his buddies who are Islanders fans were pumped to see them win the draft lottery to get the first pick.

It has started to look increasingly unlikely

that Hagens is the top prospect in this draft, but that has not stopped folks in the New York area from rooting for Darche to keep the local boy. Hagens has had people approach him on the golf course and recently saw a bumper sticker reading, "Bring Hagens Home," at which point he tried to drive by without making eye contact.

"It was cool," Hagens a bit blushingly acknowledged. "Moments like that, it puts a smile on your face."

Hagens, a 5-foot-11 center who was a point-a-game player during his freshman season at Boston College, spoke with Darche but also sounds at peace with the possibility he ends up somewhere else.

"I have no idea what's going to happen on draft day, so it's just being ready," Hagens said during the top prospects' visit to the Stanley Cup Final in South Florida earlier this month. "I know that whatever team does takes the chance on me, I'm a loyal guy so I'd want to stick with them for however long they want me. I just want to be at a spot that wants me the most."

That still could be the Islanders, though probably not the rival Rangers after they transferred the 12th pick to Pittsburgh on Tuesday to complete an earlier trade and keep their first-rounder next year.

Schaefer and a couple of centers, Canadian

Michael Misa and Swede Anton Frondell, are expected to be the top three off the board. San Jose, which took Macklin Celebrini first a year ago, and Chicago, which got Connor Bedard at No. 1 in 2023, have the second and third picks after the Islanders.

"We're going to keep debating it till the end, keep calling around and getting as much info," said Darche, who spent seven seasons in Tampa Bay's front office before getting his first job running an NHL team. "There's a few guys we like, and do I have an idea at this point because it's in four days? Probably. But we're going to keep doing our due diligence all the way through Friday."

Asked specifically about Schaefer, Darche raved about the maturity of the soon-to-be-18-year-old, who has dealt with the grief of the deaths of his mom and his junior hockey host family mother in Erie and turned it into a way of helping others.

"He's an impressive young man," Darche said. "He's a hell of a player. He's a great person. But having said that, there's a lot of other kids at the draft that we met that are very impressive. That's why I say, regardless of who we pick on Friday, we'll get a special player that's going to help the New York Islanders fairly quickly."

Fried gets 10th win as Yankees rout Reds

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Max Fried became this season's first 10-game winner, Jasson Domínguez and Trent Grisham had four hits apiece and the New York Yankees defeated the Cincinnati Reds 7-1 on Wednesday night to avoid being swept in the three-game interleague series.

Jazz Chisholm Jr. homered for New York (46-34), which remained one game in front of Tampa Bay in the AL East.

Elly De La Cruz had two hits for Cincinnati.

Fried (10-2) went seven innings and allowed an unearned run, four hits and seven strikeouts. The left-hander is the third Yankees pitcher since 1962 to be the first in the majors to reach double-digit victories, joining CC Sabathia in 2011 and Tommy John in 1979.

Domínguez and Grisham each had two doubles. The four hits were a career high for Domínguez, while it was the third time Grisham has had at least four hits in his seven-year career.

Rangers 7, Orioles 0: Baltimore's Colton Cowser singled to lead off the eighth inning Wednesday night, breaking up right-hander Jacob deGrom's no-hit bid as visiting Texas went on to win.

The 37-year-old deGrom (8-2) had a perfect game going through six innings before walking designated hitter Sam Haggerty and left fielder Alejandro Osuna in the seventh and allowing Cowser's hard hit grounder to right field at the start of the eighth inning.

DeGrom struck out seven. The two-time Cy Young Award winner threw 59 strikes and 89 pitches overall before being lifted after allowing his first hit.

Padres 1, Nationals 0: Nick Pivetta shut down Washington through seven brilliant innings, including matching his season high with 10 strikeouts, and host San Diego beat the Nationals to

take two of three in the series.

Pivetta (8-2) allowed just three baserunners, all on singles, and none reached scoring position. He picked off Daylen Lile after he hit a leadoff single in the third.

Luis Arraez, batting leadoff for just the second time this season, had three singles and drove in the game's only run.

Athletics 3, Tigers 0: Jacob Lopez pitched seven innings and Nick Kurtz hit a three-run homer to help the visiting Athletics beat Detroit.

Lopez (2-4) gave up three hits and a walk, striking out six to improve to 2-0 with a 0.82 ERA in his last four starts.

Michael Kelly pitched the eighth, aided by running catches by Tyler Soderstrom in left and Denzel Clarke in center. Mason Miller threw a perfect ninth for his 15th save.

Rays 3, Royals 0: Drew Rasmussen tossed five innings of two-hit ball, visiting Tampa Bay scored three times in the second on an array of singles and bunts, and the Rays held on the rest of the way to beat Kansas City.

Rasmussen (7-5) struck out five and walked two before turning it over to the Tampa Bay bullpen on a hot, humid night. Three relievers combined to allow one hit and one walk before Pete Fairbanks handled the ninth for his 14th save.

The Rays (45-35) have won five straight on the road, nine of their last 12 overall and are a season-best 10 games over .500.

Guardians 5, Blue Jays 4 (10): José Ramírez hit a walk-off single in the 10th inning and host Cleveland beat Toronto in the second start of the season for the Blue Jays' Max Scherzer.

Ramírez, who singled off Scherzer to give the Guardians a 1-0 lead in the first, hit a line drive to left field off Mason Fluharty (3-2) with the bases loaded.

Scherzer allowed three runs on six hits and three walks in five innings, throwing 83 pitch-

es and striking out four in his first start since March 29 when he hurt his right thumb and landed on the injured list.

White Sox 7, Diamondbacks 3: Lenyn Sosa went deep twice for his first career multi-homer game and finished with a career-high four RBIs to lead host Chicago past Arizona.

Andrew Benintendi added a solo shot and rookie catcher Kyle Teel had three hits with an RBI and two runs scored to help the last-place White Sox avoid a sweep. Mike Tauchman and Sosa finished with three hits as Chicago won for just the third time in 14 games.

Angels 5, Red Sox 2: Yusei Kikuchi struck out a season-high 12 in seven innings, Jo Adell and Travis d'Arnaud hit solo homers and RBI singles, and host Los Angeles beat Boston to complete a three-game sweep.

After giving up two unearned runs in the first, Kikuchi limited the Red Sox to one hit with no walks over the next six innings. He struck out the side in the second and fifth innings and retired Boston in order in the fourth, sixth and seventh innings.

Mets 7, Braves 3: Juan Soto homered twice and host New York finally got some production from the bottom of the lineup, beating Atlanta for its first victory over its NL East rivals in six meetings this season.

No. 8 batter Ronny Mauricio also went deep and finished with three hits as the Mets won for only the second time in 12 games. Center fielder Jeff McNeil robbed Marcell Ozuna of a two-run homer in the first inning.

Cubs 8, Cardinals 0: Ian Happ hit a leadoff home run and drove in three, Matthew Boyd gave up three hits in six scoreless innings and visiting Chicago beat St. Louis.

Reese McGuire and Kyle Tucker also homered for the Cubs, who snapped a three-game losing streak.

Twins 2, Mariners 0: Joe Ryan won for the seventh time in eight decisions, Kody Clemens hit his ninth homer and Willi Castro drove in the go-ahead run as host Minnesota beat Seattle to stop a five-game losing streak.

Ryan (8-3) allowed three hits in six innings, struck out eight and walked none to help the Twins end a six-game home skid, their longest at Target Field since an eight-game slide from April 27 to May 20, 2016. Ryan has allowed one run or none in nine of 15 starts.

Astros 2, Phillies 0: Victor Caratini homered, Isaac Paredes drove in a run and host Houston shut out Philadelphia for a second straight game.

Astros starter Colton Gordon (3-1) allowed four singles and struck out four in five innings. Josh Hader struck out one in the ninth for his 21st save.

Dodgers 8, Rockies 1: Max Muncy had a grand slam and drove in six runs, Yoshinobu Yamamoto allowed one hit over five scoreless innings before exiting after a rain delay and visiting Los Angeles beat Colorado.

Muncy's blast in the seventh was his eighth career grand slam. Michael Conforto homered for a second straight game, and Shohei Ohtani reached base four times, including a single, two walks (one intentional) and a catcher's interference call.

Marlins 8, Giants 5 (10): Otto Lopez hit the go-ahead RBI single in a four-run 10th inning and visiting Miami knocked off San Francisco to win consecutive series for the first time this season.

Lopez's hit off Camilo Doval (3-2) with one out gave the Marlins a 5-4 lead. Heriberto Hernández followed with a two-run double to left-center and advanced to third on the throw to the plate. Connor Norby's sacrifice fly capped the inning for Miami, which has won three straight.