

Black Vietnam vet awarded Medal of Honor

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Nearly 60 years after he was first recommended for the nation's highest award for bravery during the Vietnam War, retired Col. Paris Davis, one of the first Black officers to lead a Special Forces team in combat, received the Medal of Honor on Friday.

In presenting the medal, President Joe Biden described Davis as a "true hero," describing his efforts to haul injured soldiers to safety under heavy enemy fire. When one of his superiors told him to get to safety, Davis said, according to Biden: "Sir, I'm just not going to leave. I still have an American out there," and he went back into the firefight to carry out an injured medic."

The recognition for the 83-year-old Virginia resident comes after his recommendation for the medal was lost, re-submitted — and then lost again. It wasn't until 2016 — half a century after Davis risked his life to save some of his men by fighting off the North Vietna-

mese — that a volunteer group of advocates painstakingly recreated and resubmitted the paperwork.

Some of Davis' supporters believe racism was to blame, but Davis doesn't dwell on it. He said he doesn't know why it has taken decades for his heroism to be recognized.

"Right now I'm overwhelmed," he said the day before Biden placed the blue ribbon holding the Medal of Honor around Davis' neck.

"When you're fighting, you're not thinking about this moment," Davis said. "You're just trying to get through that moment."

That moment lasted nearly 19 hours and stretched over two days in mid-June 1965.

Davis, then a captain in the 5th Special Forces Group, engaged in nearly continuous combat during a pre-dawn raid on a North Vietnamese army camp in the village of Bong Son in Binh Dinh province.

He led the charge against the enemy, called for precision ar-

tillery fire, engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the North Vietnamese and thwarted the capture of three American soldiers — all while suffering multiple wounds from gunshots and grenade fragments. Davis used his pinkie finger to fire his rifle after his hand was shattered by an enemy grenade, according to reports.

Davis repeatedly sprinted into an open rice paddy to rescue each member of his team, according to the Army Times. His entire team survived. Davis refused to leave the battlefield until his men were safely removed.

Davis, a native of Cleveland, retired in 1985 at the rank of colonel and now lives in Alexandria, Va. Biden called him several weeks ago to deliver the news.

Davis' commanding officer recommended him for the military's top honor, but the paperwork disappeared. He eventually was awarded a Silver Star Medal, the military's third-highest combat medal, as an in-

terim honor, but members of Davis' team have argued that his skin color was a factor in the disappearance of his Medal of Honor recommendation.

"I believe that someone purposely lost the paperwork," Ron Deis, a junior member of Davis' team in Bong Son, said in a separate interview.

Deis, now 79, helped compile the recommendation that was submitted in 2016. He said he knew Davis had been recommended for the Medal of Honor shortly after the battle in 1965 and he spent years wondering why Davis hadn't received it. Nine years ago he learned that a second nomination had been submitted "and that also was so-mehow, quote, lost."

Army officials say there is no evidence of racism in Davis' case.

In early 2021, Christopher Miller, then the acting defense secretary, ordered an expedited review of Davis' case. He argued in an opinion column that awarding Davis the medal would address an injustice.

Storms roll eastward after slamming Texas, Louisiana

Associated Press

A storm system marched eastward Friday, threatening heavy snow in the Midwest and Northeast after spawning likely tornadoes in Texas and Louisiana that damaged homes, businesses, a university campus and left thousands without power.

The storms threatened the Tennessee and Ohio Valleys with tornadoes as they move toward New England, the Storm Prediction Center said. A swath of snow was expected in the Upper Midwest through New England

on Friday and Saturday, with sleet and freezing rain possible south of the heaviest snow.

No deaths or injuries have been reported from the storms that struck Texas and Louisiana on Thursday night after slamming California with as much as 7 feet of snow.

The National Weather Service in Fort Worth planned Friday to survey damage near Pickton, about 80 miles east of Dallas, where it said a confirmed tornado struck.

Winds of nearly 80 mph were

recorded near the Fort Worth suburb of Blue Mound. The roof of an apartment building in the suburb of Hurst was blown away, resident Michael Roberts told KDFW-TV.

"The whole building started shaking. ... The whole ceiling is gone," Roberts said. "It got really crazy."

Buildings at Louisiana State University-Shreveport were damaged, and trees were toppled, spokesperson Erin Smith said.

More than 80,000 Texas cus-

tomers and nearly 11,000 in Louisiana lacked electricity Friday morning, according to PowerOutage.us.

Heavy rain was reported in northern Arkansas and southern Missouri, causing flooding in both states.

Parts of southeastern Missouri were under a flash flood warning Friday morning after heavy rain swelled streams and flooded low-lying highways with runoff, according to the Missouri State Department of Transportation.

US to send ammo, folding armored bridges to Ukraine

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. is expected to announce a new package of military aid for Ukraine Friday, including — for the first time — eight armored vehicles that can launch bridges and allow troops to cross rivers or other gaps, U.S. officials said Thursday.

The officials said the total cost of the package will be about \$400 million and will also include large amounts of ammunition, such as rockets for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems. It comes just a week after the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and as Ukrainian forces are preparing for a spring offensive.

Officials spoke on condition of anonymity because the aid package has not yet been publicly announced.

The so-called Armored Vehicle Launched Bridge is a portable, 60-foot folding metal bridge that is carried on top of a tank body. Providing that system now could help Ukrainian troops as they launch the expected offensive, and make it easier for troops to cross rivers to get to Russian forces.

Including this latest package, the U.S. has now provided more than \$32 billion in military aid to Ukraine. The vehicle bridges and

ammunition in the package will be taken from Pentagon stocks through the presidential drawdown authority, so they will be able to be delivered quickly to the warfront.

The aid will also include an undisclosed amount of rounds for howitzers, other ammunition, demolition munitions and other equipment to clear obstacles, spare parts and equipment for vehicle maintenance and repair.

The announcement comes on the heels of a brief meeting Thursday between U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at a meeting of top diplomats from the Group of 20 nations in New Delhi. It was the highest-level in-person talk between the two countries since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But there was no indication of any movement toward easing the intense tensions between the two nations.

Blinken said he told Lavrov the U.S. would continue to support Ukraine for as long as it takes.

Lavrov, who did not mention speaking with Blinken when he held a news conference after the meeting, told reporters Moscow would continue to press its action in Ukraine.

Russia seeks explanation for Serbian rockets sent to Ukraine

Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia — Russia is seeking an official explanation from its ally Serbia about reports that the Balkan country has delivered thousands of rockets to Ukraine for its fight against Russia's invasion.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova expressed “deepest concern” about the reports, which first came from pro-government Russian media last month.

“We are following this story,” Zakharova said in a statement posted on the Russian Foreign Ministry website late Thursday. She added that the possible arming of Ukraine represented a “serious question” for Serbian-Russian relations.

The media reports said a Serbian state arms factory recently delivered some 3,500 missiles for the Grad multiple rocket launchers used by both the Ukrainian and Russian armed forces. The 122 mm rockets were allegedly transported to Ukraine via Turkey and Slovakia.

Serbian Defense Minister Milos Vucevic has denied the country exported the missiles to Ukraine but left open the possibility they could have gotten there via a third party.

“If private companies buy weapons in third states’ markets and then sell them to other companies in other countries, that is not a question for Serbia, that is international trade,” he said.

Serbia is Moscow's closest ally in Europe, with historic, religious and cultural ties that are bolstered by decades of pro-Russian propaganda campaigns in the Balkan country.

Russia backs Serbia's claim over its former province of Kosovo, which declared independence in 2008 with Western support. And Serbia has refused to impose sanctions on Moscow over the invasion.

Western officials fear Russia could use simmering tensions in Kosovo to try to destabilize the Balkans and avert some attention from the invasion of Ukraine.

Germany eyes Leopard 2 tanks

Associated Press

BERLIN — Germany wants to buy mothballed Leopard 2 battle tanks from Switzerland to replace tanks that Berlin and its Western allies are sending to Ukraine, the Swiss government said Friday.

The Swiss Defense Ministry said that Germany's defense and economy ministers wrote on Feb. 23 to Swiss Defense Minister Viola Amherd, setting out German manufacturer Rheinmetall's interest in buying Leopard 2 tanks that the Swiss army doesn't plan to put back into service.

They assured Amherd that the tanks, if bought, wouldn't be sent to Ukraine and would be used by Germany or its NATO and European partners to fill the gaps in their own stocks created by their donations of tanks to Kyiv and

to improve the availability of replacement parts.

That's an issue because Switzerland has a long tradition of neutrality. Germany so far has been unable to persuade the Swiss to provide supplies from their stockpile of ammunition for Gepard self-propelled anti-aircraft guns that Berlin provided to Ukraine.

The ministry, in an emailed response to a query after Swiss daily Blick reported on the request, didn't specify how many tanks Germany would like to buy. Switzerland has 230 of the German-made Leopard 2 tanks, 96 of which aren't in operation, according to German news agency dpa.

Amherd this week responded to the German government that any sale would require a decision by the Swiss parliament to declare the tanks officially removed from service.

Murdaugh guilty of murder of wife, son

Associated Press

WALTERBORO, S.C. — South Carolina attorney Alex Murdaugh was convicted of murder Thursday in the shooting deaths of his wife and son in a case that chronicled the unraveling of a powerful Southern family with tales of privilege, greed and addiction. On Friday, he was sentenced to life in prison.

The jury deliberated for less than three hours before finding Murdaugh guilty of two counts of murder at the end of a six-week trial. Judge Clifton Newman sentenced Murdaugh, 54, to life in prison without a chance of parole.

Murdaugh, who wore a dress shirt and jacket, appeared stoic with a slight grimace as the verdict was read. Once the hearing ended, Murdaugh was handcuffed and led out of the courtroom by two sheriff's deputies.

His 52-year-old wife, Maggie, was shot four or five times with a rifle and their 22-year-old son Paul was shot twice with a shot-

gun at the kennels near their rural Colleton County home on June 7, 2021.

Prosecutors didn't have the weapons used to kill the Murdaughs or other direct evidence like confessions or blood spatter. But they had a mountain of circumstantial evidence, led by a video locked on the son's cellphone for more than a year — video shot minutes before the killings that witnesses testified captured the voices of all three Murdaughs.

Defense attorney Jim Griffin told reporters the Murdaugh team was disappointed in the outcome but had no further comment until sentencing.

The state's legal team emerged from the courthouse to a celebratory atmosphere. South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson thanked the prosecution for the past six weeks of late nights spent at a local hotel.

"It was all worth it. Because we got to bring justice and be a voice for Maggie and Paul Mur-

daugh," Wilson said. "Today's verdict proved that no one — no matter who you are in society — is above the law," he added, a line met with applause from spectators.

Through more than 75 witnesses and nearly 800 pieces of evidence, jurors heard about betrayed friends and clients, Murdaugh's failed attempt to stage his own death in an insurance fraud scheme, a fatal boat crash in which his son was implicated, the housekeeper who died in a fall in the Murdaugh home, the grisly scene of the killings and Bubba, the chicken-snatching dog.

In the end, Murdaugh's fate appeared sealed by the cellphone video taken by his son Paul, whom he called "Little Detective" for his knack for finding bottles of painkillers in his father's belongings after the lawyer had sworn off the pills.

Testimony culminated in Murdaugh's appearance on the witness stand, when he admitted stealing millions from cli-

ents and lying to investigators about being at the dog kennels where the shootings took place but steadfastly maintained his innocence in the deaths of his wife and son.

"I did not kill Maggie, and I did not kill Paul. I would never hurt Maggie, and I would never hurt Paul — ever — under any circumstances," Murdaugh said.

Murdaugh had told police repeatedly after the killings that he was not at the kennels and was instead napping before he went to visit his ailing mother that night.

Murdaugh called 911 and said he discovered the bodies when he returned home.

But in his testimony, Murdaugh admitted joining Maggie and Paul at the kennels, where he said he took a chicken away from a rowdy yellow Labrador named Bubba — whose name Murdaugh can be heard saying on the video — before heading back to the house shortly ahead of the fatal shootings.

2 men arrested on charges of selling tech to Russia

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department on Thursday arrested two Kansas men on allegations that they illegally exported aviation-related technology to Russia and provided repair services for the equipment.

Cyril Gregory Buyanovsky and Douglas Robertson are charged with conspiracy, exporting controlled goods without a license, falsifying and failing to file electronic export information, and smuggling goods in violation of U.S. law.

The charges come as the U.S. has ramped up sanctions and financial penalties on Russia since its invasion of Ukraine began on Feb. 24, 2022. Along with thousands of sanctions on peo-

ple and firms, export controls on the Kremlin are meant to limit access to computer chips and other products needed to equip a modern military.

The Justice Department says Buyanovsky and Robertson owned and operated KanRus Trading Co., which allegedly supplied aircraft electronics to Russian companies and provided repair services for equipment used in Russian-manufactured aircraft.

The indictment says that since 2020, they conspired to evade U.S. export laws by concealing and misstating the true end users and destinations of their exports and by shipping equipment through third-party countries.

New crew from US, Russia, UAE arrives at space station

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — A new crew arrived at the International Space Station on Friday for a six-month mission after overcoming trouble with one of the capsule's docking hooks.

The SpaceX capsule and its four astronauts had to wait 65 feet from the orbiting lab, as flight controllers in California scrambled to come up with a software fix.

It's the same problem that cropped up shortly after Thursday's liftoff. Although all 12 hooks on the capsule appeared to be fine, the switch for one of them malfunctioned. SpaceX Mission Control urged patience, telling the U.S., Russian and Emerati astronauts they could stay in this holding pattern for

up to two hours.

Once new software commands were relayed, the astronauts received the go-ahead to proceed. In the end, the linkup occurred an hour late as the capsule and space station soared 260 miles above the coast of Somalia.

"After a brief scenic detour, welcome to the International Space Station," SpaceX Mission Control radioed. NASA officials agreed the delay added to the anticipation.

The new arrivals include United Arab Emirates' Sultan al-Neyadi, the first astronaut from the Arab world who will spend an extended time in space. Al-Neyadi is only the second person from the UAE to rocket into orbit.

Rep. Santos faces House ethics panel probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House Ethics Committee announced Thursday it is launching an investigation into embattled Republican Rep. George Santos, the New York congressman whose lies and embellishments about his resume and personal life have drawn deep scrutiny.

The investigation appears to be far reaching. It seeks to determine whether Santos “may have engaged in unlawful activity with respect to his 2022 congressional campaign” among other actions, the committee said in a statement.

The panel will also investigate whether Santos “failed to properly disclose required information on statements filed with the House, violated federal conflict of interest laws in connection with his role in a firm providing fiduciary services, and/or engaged in sexual misconduct towards an individual seeking employment in his congress-

sional office,” the statement said.

Santos had already removed himself from his committee assignments but otherwise has refused calls from Republicans in New York to step down from office. On Twitter, his office said that he is “fully cooperating” with the Ethics probe and would not comment further.

Ethics committee members David Joyce, R-Ohio, and Susan Wild, D-Pa., will lead the probe, with two other lawmakers from each party. The panel had voted unanimously to establish a subcommittee to investigate the allegations.

“The Committee notes that the mere fact of establishing an Investigative Subcommittee does not itself indicate that any violation has occurred,” Thursday’s statement said.

The committee could take an array of actions, from a letter of reprimand to recommending censure and a fine.

It can also recommend expulsion, the

sternest form of punishment the House can impose, an action it has used only five times in more than two centuries and never when it comes to conduct that took place before a member was sworn into office. At least two-thirds of the House must vote for expulsion for it to occur.

Any recommendation would be part of a committee report that states the evidence supporting its findings and an explanation of the reasons for the recommended sanctions.

A Long Island prosecutor has already been investigating whether Santos defrauded supporters. The Federal Election Commission has repeatedly flagged problems with Santos’ campaign finance reports.

Santos admitted that he lied about key parts of his background, including his job experience and college education, after The New York Times raised questions in December about the life story that he presented during his campaign.

Ohio residents confront railroad over health fears

Associated Press

Residents who say they’re still suffering from illnesses nearly a month after a train carrying toxic chemicals derailed in Ohio confronted the railroad’s operator Thursday at a town forum, demanding to know whether they’d be relocated from homes they’re afraid to live in.

“It’s not safe here,” said one man, staring straight at representatives of Norfolk Southern. “I’m begging you, by the grace of God, please get our people out of here.”

While the railroad announced it was ready to begin moving more contaminated soil from underneath the tracks, buying homes and moving people out of East Pal-

estine hasn’t been discussed, said Darrell Wilson, the railroad’s assistant vice president of government relations.

“Why?” someone shouted.

Few seemed to come away satisfied with answers they heard about air and water testing from state and federal officials — even after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said it was ordering Norfolk Southern to begin testing for dioxins, toxic chemical compounds that can stay in the environment for long periods of time.

Many people remain scared about whether the area will be safe for their children years from now, saying they fear that dioxins not yet detected will cause long-

term damage. Testing so far by the EPA for “indicator chemicals” has suggested there’s a low chance that dioxins were released from the derailment, the agency said.

Some residents booed, laughed and yelled, “Don’t lie to us,” when Debra Shore, a regional administrator with the EPA, reiterated that tests have continually shown that the village’s air is safe.

Investigators looking into the fire that erupted after the derailment said it melted a key part of the tank cars filled with toxic chemicals, leading federal officials to warn railcar owners earlier Thursday to check their fleets for similar flaws.

Biden willing to sign effort to block new DC crime laws

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden said Thursday he is willing to sign a Republican-sponsored resolution blocking new District of Columbia laws that would overhaul how the nation’s capital prosecutes and punishes crime.

In doing so, the president would be allowing Congress to nullify the city’s laws for the first time in more than three decades. Biden’s willingness to do so, despite earlier opposition from his White House, is linked to growing

concern over rising crime both in the nation’s capital and across the U.S. and comes amid relentless criticism from Republicans.

“One thing the president believes in is making sure that the streets in America and communities across the country are safe,” said White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre. “That includes D.C.”

The district lacks the same rights that states have to make and amend laws. While Congress has allowed the city’s residents some powers of “home rule,” it has retained veto

powers over district government actions. District residents also do not have voting members of Congress.

City officials have spent nearly two decades trying to redo Washington’s criminal laws, including redefining crimes, changing criminal justice policies and reworking how sentences should be handed down after convictions. The overhaul was approved late last year by the D.C. Council. It overrode a veto by Mayor Muriel Bowser, who had concerns over some of the changes.

Nobel laureate sentenced to 10 years in prison in Belarus

Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia — A Belarusian court on Friday sentenced Ales Bialiatski, Belarus' top human rights advocate and one of the winners of the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize, to 10 years in prison.

Bialiatski and three other top figures of the Viasna human rights center he founded were convicted of financing actions violating public order and smuggling, Viasna reported Friday.

Valiantsin Stefanovich was given a nine-year sentence; Uladzimir Labkovicz seven years; and Dzmitry Salauyou was sentenced to eight years in prison in absentia.

Bialiatski and two of his associates were arrested and jailed after massive protests over a 2020 election that gave authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko a new term in office. Salauyou managed to leave Belarus before he was arrested.

Lukashenko, who has ruled the ex-Soviet country with an iron fist since 1994, unleashed a brutal crackdown on the protesters, the largest in the country's history. More than 35,000 people were arrested, and thousands were beaten by police.

During the trial, which took place behind closed doors, the 60-year-old Bialiatski and his colleagues were held in a caged

enclosure in the courtroom. They have spent 21 months behind bars since the arrest.

In the photos from the courtroom released Friday by Belarus' state news agency Belta, Bialiatski, clad in black clothes, looked wan, but calm.

Viasna said after the verdict that all four activists have maintained their innocence.

In his final address to the court, he urged the authorities to "stop the civil war in Belarus." Bialiatski said it became obvious to him from the case files that "the investigators were fulfilling the task they were given: to deprive Viasna human rights advocates of freedom at any cost, destroy Viasna and stop our work."

Exiled Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya denounced the court verdict on Friday as "appalling." "We must do everything to fight against this shameful injustice (and) free them," Tsikhanouskaya wrote in a tweet.

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee, a non-governmental organization working to ensure that human rights are respected in practice, said that it was "shocked by the cynicism behind the sentences that were just issued to our Belarusian friends in Minsk."

Colombia eyes shipping hippos to India, Mexico

Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia — Colombia is proposing transferring at least 70 hippopotamuses that live near Pablo Escobar's former ranch — descendants of four imported from Africa illegally by the late drug lord in the 1980s — to India and Mexico as part of a plan to control their population.

The hippos, which are territorial and weigh up to 3 tons, have spread far beyond the Hacienda Napoles ranch, located 124 miles from Bogota along the Magdalena River. Environmental authorities estimate there are about 130 hippos in the area in Antioquia province and their population could reach 400 in eight years.

Escobar's Hacienda Napoles — and the hippos — have become a sort of local tourist attraction in the years since the kingpin was killed by police in 1993. When his ranch was abandoned, the hippos survived and reproduced in local rivers and favorable climatic conditions.

Scientists warn the hippos do not have a natural predator in Colombia and are a potential problem for biodiversity since their feces change the composition of the rivers and could impact the habitat of manatees and capybaras. Last year, Colombia's government declared them a toxic invasive species.

Gunmen threaten Messi, shoot up family-owned shop

Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina — Gunmen threatened Argentine soccer superstar Lionel Messi in a written message left Thursday when they opened fire at a supermarket owned by his in-laws in Argentina, police said.

Nobody was injured in the early morning attack, and it was unclear why assailants would target Messi or the Unico supermarket in the country's third-largest city of Rosario, owned by the family of his wife, Antonella Rocuzzo.

The city's mayor, Pablo Javkin, went to the supermarket and lashed out at federal author-

ities over what he called their failure to curb a surge in drug-related violence in Rosario, located about 190 miles northwest of the capital of Buenos Aires.

Police said two men on a motorcycle fired at least a dozen shots into an Unico branch in the early hours, leaving a message on cardboard that read, "Messi, we're waiting for you. Javkin is also a drug trafficker, so he won't take care of you."

Messi has not commented. Considered by many to be the greatest soccer player of all time, Messi is revered in Argentina, especially

since he led the national team to the country's first World Cup victory in 36 years in Qatar in December.

Messi currently plays for Paris Saint-Germain and spends much of his time overseas, though he often visits Rosario where he has a home in the suburb of Funes. The French team posted a photo on social media of Messi training on Thursday morning.

In Rosario, prosecutor Federico Rébola said authorities were reviewing security camera footage and that the investigation was "preliminary."

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At NFL combine, college experience counts

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Linebacker Ochaun Mathis went all-in by betting an extra year of college football could help him make an NFL roster.

He knew entering the league at age 24 was a risky proposition, given most players' careers end at about 25. He knew scouts and team decision-makers would likely knock him down a few pegs on draft boards because he was older. He also thought he needed more time to develop.

Now, with an additional year of development, the former Nebraska star has landed in Indianapolis at the league's annual scouting combine with an opportunity to chase his dream job.

"Yes, they want a younger guy and that has a real impact on me coming into the draft," Mathis said before the start of Thursday's first on-field workouts. "I didn't want to get too old, you know, ruin the process of it. So just testing the waters, getting out there and taking that leap of faith is one of the biggest things I have to do."

Evaluating older draft pro-

spects adds a surprisingly new twist to a sport that usually values youth and potential over finished products. Not so long ago, many teams wouldn't even consider selecting a 24-year-old rookie because the average career lasts fewer than four seasons.

Now, though, things appear to be changing — perhaps long term.

Thanks to the NCAA's increasing tolerance to grant additional redshirt years for medical reasons, the extra year of eligibility for the 2020 COVID-19 season and NIL deals potentially keeping late-round prospects in school, the number of older players at this year's combine has expanded.

The list includes two 25-year-old quarterbacks — Hendon Hooker of Tennessee and Stetson Bennett IV of Georgia — and Aidan O'Connell of Purdue, who will turn 25 before the end of next season.

How do they compare to two of the sport's biggest stars?

Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts won't turn 25 until August and by the time Patrick Mahomes was 25, he'd

already played in two Super Bowls, won one and earned the first of two league MVP Awards.

NFL teams clearly have seen how rules designed to protect quarterbacks also created longer careers with some Hall of Fame-caliber guys still succeeding long after age 35. And the evolving science of health and fitness has helped many remain young at heart — and on the field.

"I think athletes are taking better care of themselves," said Jeff Foster, president of the National Invitation Camp that oversees the combine. "When you see Tom Brady and other players succeeding at their age, I think they (teams) see that, so I think we will see older guys here."

The trend doesn't start or stop at the game's most important position, though.

Running backs Travis Dye of Southern California and Eric Gray of Oklahoma turn 24 before the end of next season. So does tight end Dalton Kincaid of Utah, a potential first-round pick. And former Minnesota star runner Mohamed

Ibrahim and receivers Jake Bobo of UCLA and Charlie Jones of Purdue will all turn 25.

The results have prompted some teams to rethink their draft strategy by taking longer looks at more mature, experienced players who can make immediate impacts.

Last year, the Cincinnati Bengals took then soon-to-be 24-year-old, four-time national champion Cordell Volson, an offensive lineman out of North Dakota State in the fourth round. He made 16 starts last season.

Others are taking note.

"It's something you've got to look at extensively, look deeper into what a player's numerical age is — how much football did you play?" Washington Commanders general manager Martin Mayhew said. "If he's a running back, did he get 600 or 700 carries — you know, those are the things that concern you more than what his numerical age is."

The truth is that some of this year's invitees wouldn't have made it without playing an extra year or two.

Carter, top NFL prospect, posts bond in fatal crash

Associated Press

Georgia defensive tackle Jalen Carter returned to the NFL scouting combine on Thursday after turning himself in to Athens police Wednesday night and posting a combined bond of \$4,000 on charges of reckless driving and racing in relation to a fatal crash that killed a teammate and team staffer.

Carter, originally projected as one of the top players in next month's NFL draft, could lose millions of dollars if he drops from the top of the first round because of his alleged connection to the Jan. 15 crash that killed teammate Devin Willock and a recruiting staffer,

24-year-old Chandler LeCroy.

Police allege in an arrest warrant that Carter was racing his 2021 Jeep Trackhawk against the 2021 Ford Expedition driven by LeCroy at the time of the crash. Willock was a passenger in the SUV LeCroy was driving.

Carter turned himself in at 11:33 p.m. and was released at 11:49 p.m., according to Athens-Clarke County jail records. He posted bond of \$2,500 on the racing charge and \$1,500 on the reckless driving charge.

Carter issued a statement on Twitter after the warrant was made public Wednesday, saying he expects to be "fully exonerated."

LeBron to have tendon injury checked in 3 weeks

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — The Lakers say LeBron James has a tendon injury in his right foot and will be reevaluated in approximately three weeks, the first official statement from the team since James became injured Sunday in Dallas.

The Lakers play 10 times in the three weeks, eight of them at home. With 19 games remaining in the regular season, the Lakers are in 11th place in the Western Conference and need to move up to 10th place to qualify for the NBA's play-in tournament or sixth place

for an automatic playoff bid. They are currently one game behind the 10th-place New Orleans Pelicans and 2.5 games behind the sixth-place Clippers.

James suffered the non-contact injury against the Mavericks, saying that he heard "a pop." He remained in the game and the Lakers were able to win. Without James, the Lakers split back-to-back games in Memphis and Oklahoma City to end their trip 2-1.

In 47 games this season, James is averaging 29.5 points, 8.4 rebounds and 6.9 assists.

Doncic, Irving lead Mavs past 76ers

Associated Press

DALLAS — Luka Doncic scored 42 points, Kyrie Irving added 40 and the new All-Star pairing sparkled throughout the Dallas Mavericks' 133-126 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers on Thursday night.

Doncic won a matchup of the NBA's top two scorers as Joel Embiid finished with 35 points for the 76ers, who were playing a night after a win in Miami without their All-Star center.

Irving and Doncic (12 assists) became the first Dallas teammates to score at least 40 in the same game.

They each had a 20-point first half while combining for 45, then combined to score 10 points in the first 102 seconds of the third quarter to start a 20-4 run for a 91-71 Dallas lead.

Tyrese Maxey scored 29 points for Philadelphia, and James Harden, who made his

first 11 shots, finished with 19 points and 10 assists.

Warriors 115, Clippers 91: Jordan Poole scored 34 points, Klay Thompson had 19 points and a career-high 11 rebounds, and Golden State used another big second-half surge to rally past Los Angeles for its fourth straight victory.

Kawhi Leonard scored 21 points and hit from deep to beat the buzzer that ended the second quarter, putting the cold-shooting Clippers ahead 56-45 at halftime.

Then the Warriors charged back with a 42-point third quarter while holding the Clippers to 16 points to lead 87-72 heading into the final 12 minutes.

Mason Plumlee had a season-best 20 rebounds and his 14 in the initial two quarters were the most of his career in any half. Eric Gordon made his first start in six games since joining the

Clippers in a trade from Houston and scored 16 points in the team's fourth straight defeat and sixth in eight.

Wizards 119, Raptors 108: Kyle Kuzma scored the game's first 10 points and finished with 30, Kristaps Porzingis added 25 points, and Washington beat Toronto in the opener of a two-game set between Eastern Conference playoff contenders.

Daniel Gafford scored 18 points and Delon Wright had a season-high 11 assists for the Wizards (30-32), who moved within percentage points of the ninth-place Raptors (31-33) in the East standings.

O.G. Anunoby scored 26 points and Jakob Poeltl had 23 points and 13 rebounds for the Raptors, who had won five of their previous six games. Pascal Siakam had 13 points and 11 rebounds for Toronto. Scottie Barnes and Fred VanVleet had

14 points apiece.

Spurs 110, Pacers 99: Jeremy Sochan had 22 points and 13 rebounds for his first career double-double and San Antonio defeated Indiana with Spurs coach Gregg Popovich out because of an illness.

Devin Vassell scored 18 points for the Spurs in his return after missing 25 games following arthroscopic surgery on his left knee. He shot 8 for 15 in his first game since Jan. 2.

Popovich and lead assistant Brett Brown were out with non-COVID-19 illnesses. Popovich is expected to return for Saturday's home game against Houston. Spurs assistant Mitch Johnson collected his first victory.

San Antonio has won two straight after dropping a franchise-record 16 in a row.

Buddy Hield had 27 points to lead the Pacers and Chris Duarte had 18.

Shed, Sasser shine as Houston routs Wichita State

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Jamal Shed scored a career-high 25 points, Marcus Sasser added 24 and No. 1 Houston defeated Wichita State 83-66 on Thursday night.

Shed shot 10 of 17 from the field. The junior was 4 of 8 on 3-pointers.

Sasser tied the school career record for most 3-pointers set by Robert McKiver with 261. He also scored at least 20 points for the sixth straight game, and chants of "Sasser" filled the Fertitta Center after it was over.

Jarace Walker had 11 points and nine rebounds for Houston (28-2, 16-1 American Athletic Conference). The Cougars shot 47%, including 9 of 25 on 3s, in winning their 10th straight game.

Houston forced 20 turnovers, which it converted into 17 points.

Craig Porter Jr. had 17 points and seven rebounds, Jaron

Pierre Jr. added 16 points and Kenny Pohto had 12 for Wichita State (15-14, 8-9).

No. 4 UCLA 79, Arizona State 61: Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored 26 points as UCLA pulled away in the second half to defeat Arizona State.

Tyger Campbell added 16 points and Jaylen Clark 15 for the regular-season Pac-12 champion Bruins (26-4, 17-2), who have won nine straight as they continue their bid for a top seed in the upcoming NCAA Tournament.

DJ Horne had 13 points and Warren Washington added 12 for the Sun Devils (20-10, 11-8).

Jaquez scored 15 of UCLA's first 19 points. He started 6 of 8 from the field while the rest of the team was 1 for 11.

The Bruins led 38-34 less than a minute into the second half before they broke things open with a 12-3 run that included five

points by Campbell and four from Clark.

No. 5 Purdue 63, Wisconsin 61: Zach Edey had 17 points and 19 rebounds as Purdue outlasted Wisconsin, damaging the Badgers' NCAA Tournament hopes.

Purdue (25-5, 14-5) already had clinched the Big Ten regular-season title outright before the end of this game by virtue of Illinois' 91-87 double-overtime victory over Michigan. The Illinois-Michigan game concluded late in the first half of the Purdue-Wisconsin matchup.

But there was still plenty at stake in this game as Purdue sought to make its case for a No. 1 seed and Wisconsin (16-13, 8-11) attempted to boost its postseason credentials. Neither team led by more than three points for the final 12 minutes.

No. 8 Arizona 87, USC 81: Azoulas Tubelis scored 25 points and grabbed 10 rebounds and

No. 8 Arizona ended USC's 14-game home win streak.

It was the Wildcats' first game since they were upset by rival Arizona State on an improbable half-court shot at the buzzer, 89-88. Arizona has not lost back-to-back games in the two seasons Tommy Lloyd has been its coach.

Arizona's inside game with Tubelis and Oumar Ballo gave the Trojans trouble all night and the pair finished with 35 points and 15 rebounds, plus each had three assists, a steal and a blocked shot.

The Wildcats (25-5, 14-5 Pac-12) extended their lead to as many as 15 points midway through the second half, but Ellis poured in 16 points over the final nine minutes as the Trojans cut the lead to five points in the final minute.

Boogie Ellis scored 35 points to lead the Trojans (21-9, 13-6).

Senators spoil Kane's Rangers debut

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Claude Giroux broke a tie early in the third period, former Ranger Derick Brassard scored twice and the Ottawa Senators beat New York 5-3 on Thursday night to spoil Patrick Kane's Rangers debut.

Kane made his debut following his acquisition from Chicago, where he won the Stanley Cup three times. He had four shots on goal.

The Rangers led 3-2 entering the third after Vladimir Tarasenko scored a highlight-reel goal late in the second, but Ottawa scored twice in a two-minute span, then held on for its fourth straight victory.

Brassard — playing his 1,000th game — tied it at 1:35 with his 11th of the season off an assist from Giroux, who beat netminder Jaroslav Halak for his 26th goal at 3:26 to put Ottawa ahead to stay.

Shane Pinto and Tim Stutzle (empty net) also scored for Ottawa, and Cam Talbot made 29 saves. Chris Kreider and Jacob Trouba also scored for New York.

Bruins 7, Sabres 1: David Pastrnak had a goal and two assists just a few hours after signing a new contract and surging Boston beat Buffalo to become the fastest team in NHL history to reach 100 points.

Jakub Lauko scored twice, Dmitry Orlov added a goal and two assists and Jeremy Swayman stopped 26 shots as the

Bruins overcame the loss of Brad Marchand to a lower-body injury to win their ninth straight.

Boston improved to 48-8-5 in its 61st game, besting the Montreal team from 1976-77 that reached 100 points in 62 games when there were regulation ties and no extra points for overtime or shootout victories. The Bruins have seven points for overtime and shootout victories in their 101 points.

Pavel Zacha, Patrice Bergeron and Connor Clifton added goals for Boston. Casey Mittelstadt scored for Buffalo.

Penguins 5, Lightning 4, OT: Jason Zucker scored his second goal of the game 2:13 into overtime and Pittsburgh completed a three-game season sweep of Tampa Bay.

Defenseman Jeff Petry scored twice in 25 seconds, Drew O'Connor also scored and Tristan Jarry made 27 saves for the Penguins.

Ross Colton, Brayden Point, Steven Stamkos and Victor Hedman scored, and Andrei Vasilevskiy made 27 saves for the Lightning.

Kraken 5, Red Wings 4, OT: Oliver Bjorkstrand scored on a power play at 3:33 of overtime to lift Seattle past Detroit.

Bjorkstrand also scored in regulation. Jared McCann also had two goals for the Kraken, scoring twice in the opening 12 minutes and giving him a career-high 29 goals. Jaden Schwartz added a goal for Seattle.

Martin Jones gave up three goals on 12 shots and was benched late in the second period and replaced by Philipp Grubauer, who finished regulation with 16 saves.

Jake Walman, Adam Erne, Ben Chiarot and Jonatan Berggren scored for Detroit.

Stars 5, Blackhawks 2: Roope Hintz extended his scoring streak to four games with his third career hat trick and Dallas beat Chicago in the Blackhawks' first home game since the Patrick Kane trade.

Jamie Benn snapped a tie in the third period and Matt Murray made 19 saves in his NHL debut, helping Dallas to its third win in four games. Esa Lindell also scored for the Stars.

Maple Leafs 2, Flames 1: Calle Jarnkrok broke a tie at 2:20 of the third period and Joseph Woll made 25 saves in Toronto's victory over Calgary.

After Jacob Markstrom stopped Morgan Rielly on a breakaway, Jarnkrok was able to score off the rebound as the net came off its moorings.

Mitch Marner tied it for Toronto at 7:36 of the second period, beating Markstrom from the high slot.

Blake Coleman scored on a short-handed breakaway for Calgary at 2:32 of the first period. Markstrom stopped 32 shots.

Kings 3, Canadiens 2: Gabe Vilardi and Anze Kopitar scored in the third period and Los Angeles beat Montreal.

Alex Iafallo also scored and Pheonix Copley made 19 saves to help the Kings win their fourth straight home game.

Josh Anderson had a power-play goal for Montreal. Denis Gurianov also scored and Jake Allen made 30 saves.

Wild 2, Canucks 1: Kirill Kaprizov scored his 38th and 39th goals of the season and Minnesota beat Vancouver for its third straight victory.

Marc-Andre Fleury made 21 saves for Minnesota.

Brock Boeser scored for Vancouver. Thatcher Demko stopped 34 shots.

Blues 6, Sharks 3: Pavel Buchnevich had four assists, Jordan Kyrou had a goal and an assist and St. Louis beat San Jose.

Logan Brown, Colton Parayko, Brayden Schenn, Kasper Kapanen and Tyler Pitlick also scored for the Blues. Thomas Greiss made 22 saves.

Alexander Barabonov had a goal and assist for San Jose. Logan Couture and Steven Lorentz also scored.

Predators 2, Panthers 1: Kevin Lankinen made 30 saves and Nashville beat Florida.

Matt Duchene and John Leonard each scored for Nashville, which also beat Florida 7-3 at home on Feb. 18. The Predators have won four of their past five games.

Brandon Montour scored for Florida. Sergei Bobrovsky made 20 saves.

Jon Rahm seizes Arnold Palmer lead with opening 65

Orlando Sentinel

ORLANDO, Fla. — Round 1 at Bay Hill Club & Lodge offered something for everybody.

The world No. 1, a globe-trotting journeyman, a rising American star, a feel-good story and the defending champion were among those atop a tight, eclectic leaderboard Thursday at the

Arnold Palmer Invitational. Other big-name players are lurking, too, setting the stage for a riveting second round Friday when conditions were forecast to turn treacherous.

Golfers capitalized on favorable first-round scoring conditions, no one more than Jon Rahm. A fast start and faster

finish sandwiched a sluggish two-hour stretch adding up to a 7-under 65 for the game's top-ranked player a year after he failed to break 70 during his API debut.

"We're playing with some really small margins today and took advantage of those," he said. "You just come out here,

you pick your battles and hope you can birdie the ones that you pick."

In hot pursuit and two shots back are three players, including Kurt Kitayama. The 30-year-old Californian has won on the European, Asian and Sunshine tours but seeks his first on the PGA Tour.