

Biden honors fallen on Memorial Day

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. — President Joe Biden honored America's war dead at Arlington National Cemetery on Memorial Day by laying a wreath at the hallowed burial ground and extolling the sacrifices of the fallen for the pursuit of democracy.

The president was joined on Monday by first lady Jill Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and second gentleman Doug Emhoff in a somber ceremony at the Virginia cemetery's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which is dedicated to deceased service members whose remains have not been identified.

His face tight with emotion, Biden walked up to the wreath, cupping it in his hands in silent reflection and then making the sign of the cross. Later, he

called on Americans to commemorate their fallen heroes by remembering their fight for the nation's ideals.

"This nation was built on an idea," Biden said Monday at Arlington. "We were built on an idea, the idea of liberty and opportunity for all. We've never fully realized that aspiration of our founders, but every generation has opened the door a little wider."

He focused much of his speech on the importance of democracy, saying that it thrives when citizens can vote, when there is a free press and when there are equal rights for all.

"Generation after generation of American heroes are signed up to be part of the fight because they understand the truth that lives in every American heart: that liberation, oppor-

tunity, justice are far more likely to come to pass in a democracy than in an autocracy," Biden said.

The Bidens stopped by a row of gravestones after the ceremony, holding hands and speaking with a family whose relative died during World War II.

Other dignitaries at the Arlington event included Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

On Sunday, Biden addressed a crowd of Gold Star military families and other veterans in a ceremony at War Memorial Plaza in New Castle, Delaware. Earlier in the day, he and other family members attended a memorial Mass for his son Beau Biden, a veteran who died of brain cancer six years ago to the day.

US bombers fly over all 30 NATO nations on Memorial Day

BY CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — U.S. long-range strategic bombers were flying a Memorial Day mission over all 30 NATO countries in Europe and North America, officials said Monday.

The B-52H Stratofortress aircraft, deployed to Moron Air Base, Spain, were expected to fly with aircraft from more than 20 allies, U.S. Air Forces in Europe-Air Forces Africa said in a statement.

It's the second time a bomber task force deployed to Europe has conducted such a mission since the U.S. began deploying bombers to the region in 2018, USAFE said. The mission is called "Operation Allied Sky."

"Today's mission is an awesome demonstration of NATO air superiority," Gen.

Jeff Harrigian, NATO Allied Air Command and USAFE-AFAFRICA commander, said in Monday's statement.

The U.S. Air Force's eight-engine bombers, based out of Barksdale Air Force Base, La., arrived at Moron two weeks ago. Four B-52s from the 2nd Bomb Wing and over 200 personnel deployed on a short-notice tasker, Air Force Maj. Marisa King, 96th Bomber Task Force director of operations, said in a video statement last week.

On Monday, the long-range heavy bombers were expected to conduct aerial refueling and integration flights with the aircraft of several allies over Europe, from Turkey to Norway. KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft based at RAF Mildenhall, England, were expected to support the mission, which also included a

North American leg over the U.S. and Canada, supported by aircraft from those countries.

The last time U.S. bombers conducted an overflight of all 30 allies was in August, and that effort involved six B-52s out of Minot Air Force Base, N.D., escorted by some 80 fighter jets at various stages.

Since 2018, U.S. bombers deployed to Europe have taken part in more than 200 sorties with allies and partners, mainly as a deterrent response to Russia's military resurgence.

Early last week, the Barksdale-based bombers worked with Hungarian Gripens, Italian Eurofighters and F-16s from Greece, Romania and Bulgaria during simulated target training in the Black Sea region. The bombers later flew with RAF Eu-

rofighter Typhoons and Hellenic F-16s over the east Mediterranean Sea before conducting counter-maritime exercises with P-8A Poseidon aircraft from U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa's Patrol Squadron 40.

The bomber rotation comes as the alliance conducts a series of large-scale exercises across Europe involving thousands of troops. It also follows Russia's deployment last month of thousands of troops to the border area along Ukraine, which raised concern among NATO allies.

"Bomber missions demonstrate the credibility of our forces to address a global security environment that is more diverse and uncertain than at any other time in our history," Harrigian said in Monday's statement.

Vet educates on multilevel marketing companies

BY ERICA EARL
Stars and Stripes

The thought of running your own business from home can sound appealing, especially if your home changes to a new location around the world every few years.

Multilevel marketing companies, or MLMs, are becoming increasingly popular in military communities based on their pitch of “becoming your own boss,” said Scott Johnson, a Navy veteran who hosts a podcast aimed to educate service members and veterans about career opportunities and identifying scams.

MLMs promise a path to wealth but some who become involved with them find the promise illusory, even fraudulent. Others earn good money while making friends. Knowing what to look for and keeping a life balance are two factors in managing membership in an MLM.

Multilevel marketing companies create revenue by using non-salaried members to sell goods or services directly to consumers. Products range from clothing to jewelry to beauty items, but the premise is the same. Participants must pay a recruitment fee, and they must also pay for the inventory they will be selling.

“Eventually you go broke, or you can’t continue to sell to your same friend group,” Johnson, who worked for Amway for a decade after his time in service, told Stars and Stripes by phone May 12. Amway, founded in 1959, is an MLM that sells health, beauty and home care products.

Last year proved to be particularly rough for those seeking work during the coronavirus pandemic. Unemployment for military spouses was at

24%, a higher rate than the general population, according to a 2020 Department of Defense report to Congress.

And, according to the Department of Labor, 6.5% of veterans were unemployed in 2020. This was a significant jump from 3.1% the previous year, reflecting the severity of the pandemic, the agency said.

Johnson said he understands the appeal of MLMs, especially for people who crave a social circle when their spouses deploy, or who are about to exit the military without a career plan.

He said he became involved with Amway in 1993 because he lacked a plan, and a trusted friend, a former flight surgeon, was with the company.

Johnson said he spent thousands of dollars on meetings, membership fees and inventory.

“To make up for the cost to stay at Amway, I was always having to sell, and the sales I did make became more about not disrupting the relationship. They were sympathy sales,” he said.

“But it’s more than just the money. That’s just dollars. There’s also time. I can recover money, but not my time or those friendships.”

In 2010, Johnson was part of a class-action lawsuit against Amway subsidiary Quixtar that alleged unfair and illegal business practices that misled distributors about earning potential and participation costs.

Amway settled out of court for \$56 million, and Johnson said he got 5% of what he spent on his involvement in the company.

The settlement did not include admission of guilt from Amway.

“The suit contains strong and dis-

agreeable allegations and language that we categorically reject,” said a 2010 letter from the company’s chairman, Steve Van Andel, and then-president Doug DeVos. “Nevertheless, the company and its (Independent Business Owner) leaders take responsibility for all past issues, and we take responsibility for fixing them.”

MLM companies deal in a range of goods and services, but the business model of recruiting more people to help sell a product remains the same.

The notion of becoming a “boss babe,” a term used in MLM social media circles, along with the products are the bait, Johnson said. Many MLM companies are marketed toward women because of the products they sell, or ride trend waves, such as weight loss and “wellness.”

Brooke Langston, a military spouse on Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, said she joined Thrive by Le-Vel, a brand of dietary supplement and weight loss products, last year to make money during the pandemic.

She was given a strict script to follow for her social media posts, as well as instructions to message friends or family members she knew might have body image insecurities, Langston told Stars and Stripes by Facebook Messenger on May 5.

She said she regrets spending the \$1,000 it cost to sign on with the company.

“I only made \$20 from my few months with the company, which I have yet to see a cent of due to the fact that their payment portal will not release funds until you make \$25,” Langston said. “Looking back, I’m extremely embarrassed that I allowed myself to become victim to the predatory business model that is an

MLM, and even more embarrassed that I tried to exploit people for my own tiny gain.”

Truthinadvertising.org, a non-profit organization that examines product claims, said in March that Thrive uses unsubstantiated health and disease-treatment claims to sell its products.

Representatives from Le-Vel, which has an A+ rating from the Better Business Bureau, did not respond to email queries from Stars and Stripes on Friday.

According to the Federal Trade Commission, an MLM should be avoided if it makes promises that seem too good to be true, focuses heavily on salespeople recruiting other sellers for the company, uses high-pressure sales tactics or if its distributors are required to purchase more inventory than they can reasonably sell to stay active in the company.

But not everyone has a bad experience with MLMs. Ashley Watkins, a Navy spouse at Great Lakes Naval Station, Ill., said she joined Pure Romance, an MLM selling sex toys and other adult products, after she lost her civilian job.

Watkins said she purposefully schedules days where she does not engage in selling Pure Romance to keep a balance in her personal life to avoid pushing her friends away or being labeled as a “hun,” internet slang for someone who relentlessly messages people to sell products.

“I think it is a way to meet people depending on where you are stationed,” Watkins said via Facebook Messenger on May 5. “Plus, you can work from your phone anytime of the day.”

Tenn. hat shop offer of Star of David patches denounced

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The owner of a Tennessee hat shop is dealing with pushback after posting a photo of herself to social media wearing a yellow patch resembling the Star of David with the words “not vaccinated.”

The photo posted by Gigi Gaskins, owner of HatWrksNashville, shows her smiling and wearing the badge that looks similar in shape

and color to those that the Nazis forced Jews to wear in Europe during the Holocaust. A caption with the photo advertised the patches for \$5 apiece.

“People are so outraged by my post? But are you outraged with the tyranny the world is experiencing?” Gaskins said on Instagram. “If you don’t understand what is happening, that is on you not me. I pay much more respect to history by

standing up with the fallen than offering silence and compliance.”

Gaskins later deleted the photo and issued an apology Saturday.

“In NO WAY did I intend to trivialize the Star of David or disrespect what happened to millions of people. That is not who I am & what I stand for,” Gaskins wrote. “My intent was not to exploit or make a profit. My hope was to share my genuine concern & fear, and to do

all that I can to make sure that nothing like that ever happens again. I sincerely apologize for any insensitivity.”

The photo was shared widely on social media with the hashtag “hateworks” and prompted hat maker Stetson to announce that it was pulling its products from the store. Hat maker Goorin Bros. of San Francisco said on Instagram that it was “horrified” by the patch.

GOP given week for infrastructure deal

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said Sunday that time is running short for a bipartisan deal on infrastructure, indicating that President Joe Biden will look to act without Republican support if there is no consensus when Congress returns from its Memorial Day break.

“By the time that they return, which is June 7, just a week from tomorrow, we need a clear direction,” Buttigieg said. “The president keeps saying inaction is not an option. And time is not unlimited here.” He said the American people “expect us to do something.”

Biden plans to meet with lead Republican negotiator, Sen. Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, this coming week and says he remains open to hearing from other GOP senators who are working on different proposals. But Biden has been

eying the dwindling timeline for a deal, with an early June hearing scheduled on a House transportation bill that is widely seen as a building block for the big package he favors.

Democratic senators also plan on moving forward on a sweeping infrastructure package “with or without the support of Republican senators,” Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., wrote to Democrats on Friday. Biden had originally set a Memorial Day deadline for reaching a deal before he let that deadline slip back.

The two sides remain far apart. Republican senators last week outlined a \$928 billion infrastructure proposal as a counteroffer to Biden’s \$1.7 trillion proposal, and they said they would not go along with his plans to raise the corporate tax from 21% to 28% to pay for new spending.

Republicans want to shift unspent CO-

VID-19 relief dollars to help cover the costs, a nonstarter for many Democrats and a proposal that Biden is finding unworkable, a White House adviser told The Associated Press on Friday.

On Sunday, Capito said she remained hopeful the two sides can move closer to agreement.

“I think we can get to real compromise, absolutely, because we’re both still in the game,” she said. “I think the president told me himself that let’s get this done. We realize this is not easy. I think we bring every idea that’s on the table into the negotiations to see how we can achieve this and get it across the threshold.”

The GOP plan amounts to about \$250 billion in new spending, far from the president’s approach. Biden reduced his \$2.3 trillion bid to \$1.7 trillion in earlier negotiations.

Black women target governorships, Senate seats

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Jennifer McClellan remembers her parents recounting life as Black Virginians enduring segregation and the trauma and triumph of the civil rights movement.

It showed her that government can be “a powerful force for improving people’s lives” but also one “that oppresses some, ignores others.”

A generation later, despite her interest in public office, there was no obvious pathway for someone like her.

“There weren’t a lot of role models ... examples of Black women” in power, said McClellan in an interview. Now she’s a 48-year-old state senator running for governor herself. “We’re in a very different Virginia.”

McClellan’s candidacy alongside fellow primary candidate Jennifer Carroll Foy demonstrates the rising political power of Black women, long a foundation of Democratic victories, and more recently, as candidates and officeholders, from

Vice President Kamala Harris to mayors in Atlanta, Chicago and San Francisco.

McClellan and Carroll Foy, a 39-year-old former legislator, are trying to break another barrier by becoming the first Black woman to win a governor’s race in any state. They are decided underdogs to former Gov. Terry McAuliffe in Virginia’s June 8 primary. Yet they’re nonetheless part of a surge in candidacies by Black women not just for local and legislative posts but also statewide offices that are still new ground for Black women.

“We are normalizing Black women’s leadership (and) seeing Black women on every ballot so that it’s second nature for voters,” said Glynda Carr, co-founder of Higher Heights for America, which backs Black female candidates.

In addition to Virginia, two Black women are running for U.S. Senate from North Carolina in 2022: former state Supreme Court Chief Justice Cheri Beasley and former legislator Erica Smith. In Florida, U.S. Rep. Val Demings is running for

Republican Sen. Marco Rubio’s seat. In Georgia, voting rights activist and former legislative leader Stacey Abrams is expected to make a second run for governor in 2022.

In addition to no Black woman serving as governor, only two have been elected to the U.S. Senate, and the chamber has none now. The next goal, Carr said, is for Black women to match their voting power to their representation.

Congress began this year with a record 25 Black women out of 435 House members. Black women are mayors in seven of the 100 most populous U.S. cities, up from one less than a decade ago. The number of Black women in state legislatures has nearly doubled in two decades, to more than 4%.

“We can celebrate,” Carr said, “but still recognize the work that needs to be done.”

At the least, strong campaigns from Black women so early in the midterm cycle stand out compared to previous years.

In 2017, as Georgia’s Abrams was preparing for her first bid

for governor, white power brokers in the state party recruited one of her fellow state lawmakers, a white woman, to run against her.

“They should have been ashamed,” said Karen Finney, a prominent Black Democratic consultant and Abrams ally. “She proved them all wrong.”

Abrams trounced her hand-picked primary opponent and came within 55,000 votes out of 4 million cast of defeating Republican Brian Kemp. Soon after, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer courted her to run for Senate. She declined but recruited the Rev. Raphael Warnock. Warnock, a Black man, won his January runoff by 2 points, a wider margin than his white colleague, Democratic Sen. Jon Ossoff, managed in a parallel contest.

Heading into 2022, Georgia Democrats are uniformly ceding the top of the ticket to Abrams, who is publicly mum but expected to run.

“She proved you don’t have to follow conventional wisdom,” McClellan said.

N. Korea: South's missile decision due to US hostility

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea said Monday the U.S. allowing South Korea to build more powerful missiles was an example of the U.S.'s hostile policy against the North, warning that it could lead to an "acute and instable situation" on the Korean Peninsula.

It's North Korea's first response to the May 21 summit between the leaders of the United States and South Korea, during which the U.S. ended decades-long restrictions that capped South Korea's missile development and allowed its ally to develop weapons with unlimited ranges.

The accusation of U.S. policy being hostile to North Korea matters because it said it won't return to talks and would enlarge its nuclear arsenal as long as U.S. hostility persists. But the latest statement was still attributed to an individual commentator, not a government body, suggesting North Korea may still want to leave room for potential diplomacy with the Biden administration.

"The termination step is a stark reminder of the U.S. hostile policy toward (North Korea) and its shameful double-dealing," Kim Myong Chol, an international affairs critic, said, according to the official Korean Central News Agency. "It is engrossed in confrontation despite its lip-service to dialogue."

"The U.S. is mistaken, however. It is a serious blunder for it to pressurize (North Korea) by creating asymmetric imbalance in and around the Korean Peninsula as this may lead to the acute and instable situation on the Korean Peninsula now technically at war," he said.

The United States had previously barred South Korea from developing a missile with a range of longer than 500 miles out of concerns about a regional arms race. The range is enough for a South Korean weapon to strike all of North Korea but is short of hitting potential key targets in other neighbors like China and Japan.

Some South Korean observers hailed the end of the restrictions as restoring military sovereignty, but others suspected the U.S. intent was to boost its ally's military capability amid a rivalry with China.

The commentator Kim accused Washington of trying to spark an arms race, thwart North Korean development and deploy intermediate-range missiles targeting countries near North Korea.

The South Korean government said it "prudently watches" North Korea's reaction, but Unification Ministry spokeswoman Lee Jong-joo wouldn't comment otherwise, since the remarks were attributed to an individual, not an official statement from the North Korean government.

Netanyahu may lose PM title as rivals join forces

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — A former ally of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday said he would seek to form a coalition government with the Israeli leader's opponents, taking a major step toward ending the rule of the longtime premier.

The dramatic announcement by Naftali Bennett, leader of the small hardline Yamina party, set the stage for a series of steps that could push Netanyahu and his dominant Likud party into the opposition in the coming week.

While Bennett and his new partners, headed by opposition leader Yair Lapid, still face some obstacles, the sides appeared to be serious about reaching a deal and ending the deadlock that has plunged the country into four elections in the past two years.

"It's my intention to do my utmost in order to form a national unity government along with my friend Yair Lapid, so that, God willing, together we can save the country from a tailspin and return Israel to its course," Bennett said.

The pair have until Wednesday to complete a deal in which each is expected to serve two years as prime minister in a rotation deal, with Bennett holding the job first.

Bennett said another election would yield the same results and said it was time to end the cycle.

China easing birth limits to cope with aging society

Associated Press

BEIJING — China's ruling Communist Party said Monday it will ease birth limits to allow all couples to have three children instead of two in hopes of slowing the rapid aging of its population, which is adding to strains on the economy and society.

The ruling party has enforced birth limits since 1980 to restrain population growth but worries the number of working-age people is falling too fast while the share over age 65 is rising. That threatens to disrupt ambitions to transform China into a prosperous consumer society and global tech leader.

A ruling party meeting led by President Xi Jinping decided to introduce "measures to actively deal with the aging population," the official Xinhua News Agency said. It said leaders agreed "implementing the pol-

icy of one couple can have three children and supporting measures are conducive to improving China's population structure."

Leaders also agreed China needs to raise its retirement age to keep more people in the workforce and improve pension and health services for the elderly, Xinhua said.

Restrictions that limited most couples to one child were eased in 2015 to allow two, but the total number of births fell further, suggesting rule changes on their own have little impact on the trend.

Couples say they are put off by high costs of raising a child, disruption to their jobs and the need to look after elderly parents.

Comments on social media complained the change does nothing to help young parents with medical bills, low incomes and grueling work schedules known popularly

as "996," or 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. six days a week.

"Every stage of the problem hasn't been solved," said a post on the popular Sina Weibo blog service signed Tchaikovsky. "Who will raise the baby? Do you have time? I go out early and get back late. Kids don't know what their parents look like."

Another, signed Hyeongmok, joked bitterly: "Don't worry about aging. Our generation won't live long."

China, along with Thailand and some other Asian economies, faces what economists call the challenge of whether they can get rich before they get old.

The 12 million births reported last year was down nearly one-fifth from 2019. About 40% were second children, down from 50% in 2017, according to Ning Jizhe, a statistics official.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Small town can't find \$200K in fines and fees

SC GREENWOOD — A small South Carolina town has lost track of nearly \$200,000 worth of tickets, fines and fees, and officials aren't sure if the money was never received or just never logged into the court system.

Ware Shoals Councilwoman Valerie Jackson said at a recent Town Council meeting that the problem in the town stretches back to 2004, The Index-Journal of Greenwood reported. The town's court system wasn't recording scheduled payments for the past 16 years, she said.

So far, the town has found both tickets and fines paid and not recorded as well as people who failed to make scheduled payments, Ware Shoals Police Chief Bryan Louis said. The town's judge is sending letters to people who have unpaid fines and fees, Louis said.

Alligator wanders into river, taken back home

PA WRIGHTSVILLE — An alligator that wandered away from his owner's Pennsylvania home slipped into the Susquehanna River, but was found the following day.

The alligator, named Oscar, is believed to have escaped the pen at the Wrightsville home Thursday, the York Daily Record reported. The home is about 100 feet from the river's west bank, and the 3-foot-long animal was spotted Friday morning in the Susquehanna.

Owner Tyler Hake, a biologist who works with reptiles and has had Oscar since he was about 16, was in western Pennsylvania

conducting a survey. On Friday, he and a borough crew walked the riverbank and spotted Oscar in the river, pretty much in front of Hake's home, and were able to recapture him.

Woman arrested at US border with animal parts

VT HIGHGATE SPRINGS — A Montreal woman has been arrested on charges of trying to cross the U.S. border into Canada with "numerous undeclared wildlife items," including a three-toed sloth, 18 crocodile skulls and heads and seven crocodile feet, according to documents filed in federal court in Vermont.

Sloths and crocodiles are protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the Bennington Banner reported Friday.

Vanessa Rondeau, the owner of The Old Cavern Boutique in Montreal, also was alleged to be in possession of two horseshoe crabs, 30 sea stars, 23 raccoon feet, eight African antelope horns, one human skull "with mounted butterflies," four puffer fish and six shark jaws Wednesday when she attempted to cross the border at Highgate Springs, Vt., according to the criminal complaint.

Woman charged with harassing home seekers

MN MINNEAPOLIS — A White Bear Lake woman has been charged with two counts of stalking after she allegedly harassed real estate agents and prospective buyers who came to look at a property next door that was recently put

up for sale.

The Star Tribune reported that Lori E. Christensen, 57, took photos of and videotaped clients, put up "No Trespassing" signs facing the home for sale and loudly made disparaging comments about the house and the people who lived there.

Court documents say Christensen told investigators that she has a First Amendment right to freedom of speech, videotapes conversations to protect herself and always remains on her own property.

Christensen, who has previous convictions for domestic assault and violating a harassment restraining order, made her first court appearance remotely Friday. She posted a \$20,000 bond and is due back in court June 24.

City sets new rules on downtown music volume

MS OXFORD — The city of Oxford has adopted new rules limiting how loud music can be played at downtown venues.

The Oxford Board of Aldermen recently approved a sound ordinance amendment related to live and recorded music, The Oxford Eagle reported.

Before, organizers or business owners had to obtain a city permit for amplified sound at parades or other events. Under the new rules, a permit is not required as long as the sound falls within approved limits.

Police: Woman stole police cruiser, totaled it

NJ TRENTON — Police said that a woman stole a police car in New Jersey's capital city and led law en-

forcement on a chase through a nearby township before she crashed and was arrested.

Trenton police said the police cruiser was parked on a street in downtown Trenton when it was taken shortly after 5:30 p.m. Saturday. Police alleged that the woman drove the vehicle north on Route 29 into Hopewell Township with law enforcement in pursuit before crashing into a utility pole at Washington Crossing Road and Bear Tavern Road.

Police said Cherrelle Cooper, 30, of Morris Plains, was taken into custody and was then taken to a hospital for treatment of injuries said not to be life-threatening.

Strange bobcat tree den found in fire burn zone

CA THOUSAND OAKS — Biologists studying Southern California bobcats found a mother and three kittens this spring in an unusual den in a cavity up in a tree in an area intensely burned by a huge 2018 wildfire west of Los Angeles, the National Park Service said.

Bobcat "denning" in a tree is unusual, according to biologist Joanne Moriarty.

Their dens are usually found in hollow areas of thick chaparral or coastal sage or in woodrat nests made of piles of sticks and leaves.

Scientists believe the bobcat used the cavity because little vegetation has grown since the Woolsey Fire ravaged the Santa Monica Mountains and Simi Hills, the park service said Thursday.

— From wire reports

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Castroneves wins record-tying 4th Indy 500

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indianapolis 500 was meant to mark the return of some sort of normalcy, at least for marquee sporting events that Americans find so meaningful.

For Helio Castroneves, Indy provided a professional rebirth that pushed him into an elite club that last welcomed a new member 30 years ago. He became just the fourth four-time winner of the Indy 500 on Sunday in front of 135,000 fans at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, easily the largest and loudest sporting event since the start of the pandemic.

The race was postponed to August a year ago and held without spectators for the only time in its 105-year history. Given permission to open 40% of the grandstands this year, the exuberant crowd came in droves and went wild for Castroneves' historic win for the old guys.

Biding his time until the moment was right, the veteran passed 24-year-old Alex Palou with two laps remaining and the

frenzied crowd roared its approval. When the Brazilian took the checkered flag, he rushed to the fence for his traditional "Spiderman" climb that belied his 46 years.

Castroneves had been trying since 2009 to join A.J. Foyt, Al Unser Sr. and Rick Mears, his former mentor at Team Penske, as the only four-time winners of "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing." Mears was the last driver to join the club in 1991.

Castroneves became the fourth-oldest winner in Indianapolis 500 history, behind Al Unser (47, 1987), Bobby Unser (47, 1981) and Emerson Fittipaldi (46, 1993).

After climbing down the fence, Castroneves ran nearly a mile down the frontstretch for a victory lap on foot. He pumped his arms in the air and waved to the ecstatic crowd, his explosion of emotional energy stopped every few feet by a flood of rivals who rushed onto the track to congratulate him.

"I was drawn by the positive energy of everyone. For a long time these people want to see a

four-time winner," he said. "I say that because they tell me. Every time we sign the autographs, they are like, 'I've never seen a four-time winner. I want to see it.' That's what probably made me thank all of them because they made this place special."

Almost every member of Team Penske rushed out to meet Castroneves, including former teammate Will Power, who saw the final scoring pylon and had no idea his longtime friend won.

"I was looking up and down 'Who is the 06?'" Power told Castroneves in a victory hug. "You're a legend."

Castroneves spent more than two decades driving for Team Penske and won three Indy 500s with the team. But he was eventually phased over to the sports car program, where he won the IMSA championship last season before Roger Penske shuttered the team and made the business decision to cut Castroneves loose.

Penske, now the owner of the speedway, embraced Castro-

neves in Victory Lane. Foyt welcomed the new member to the four-time winners club.

"He deserved it, he worked hard to get it and he finally got it," said Foyt, who was celebrating the 60th anniversary of his first Indy 500 victory. "It wasn't given to him and when someone works as hard as he did, I'm glad it happened for him."

After Castroneves, still the last driver to win consecutive Indianapolis 500s in 2001 and 2002, was cut loose by Penske, he insisted he was not done racing yet.

Michael Shank agreed.

Shank hired Castroneves for the Indy 500 to complement the one-car Meyer Shank Racing team.

Maybe Castroneves would have a shot to win, but he'd also boost a team that needed some veteran leadership at one of the most challenging tracks in the world.

Castroneves was also part of the winning Rolex 24 Daytona sports car team in January, taking the prestigious sports car event for the first time.

Larson gives Hendrick record-breaking victory

Associated Press

CONCORD, N.C. — The first thing Rick Hendrick thought about as Kyle Larson crossed the finish line to win the Coca-Cola 600 was April 29, 1984.

That's when Hendrick won for the first time as a NASCAR Cup Series owner when Geoff Bodine took the Sovran Bank 500 at Martinsville Speedway.

Little did Hendrick know that 37 years later he would become the winningest owner in NASCAR Cup Series history. Larson's dominating win at Charlotte Motor Speedway gave Hendrick Motorsports a record-setting 269th win, passing Petty Enterprises.

"Unbelievable," Hendrick said. "I can't get in my brain around it right now."

"With nearly 40 years of excellence, Hendrick Motorsports has set the gold standard for race team success," said NASCAR Chairman and CEO Jim France. "Rick Hendrick has already cemented his legacy as a NAS-

CAR Hall of Famer, and now adds another incredible accomplishment to an exemplary NASCAR career."

Hendrick said he's glad to have the record behind him, while quickly praising Richard Petty for his role in NASCAR.

"Richard Petty is the king of NASCAR and he has done so much for this sport," Hendrick said.

Hendrick called it "pretty neat" that Larson broke the record driving the No. 5 car — the same number on Bodine's car several decades ago.

"It feels great to be the guy to help Mr. H break that record," Larson said.

Hendrick said he didn't care which of his four Cup drivers won Sunday — as long as one of them did.

And it seemed all four of them had that chance.

It was an impressive night for Hendrick Motorsports with all four drivers finishing in

the top five — Chase Elliott was second, William Byron fourth and Alex Bowman fifth.

Kyle Busch was third for Joe Gibbs Racing.

It also was the sixth win in 16 races this season for Hendrick Motorsports — and this one wasn't even close.

Larson, who joined Hendrick this season, ended six years of struggles at Charlotte, leading 328 of 400 laps and winning four stages.

Larson's previous best finish at Charlotte was fifth in 2016 and he had only one top-10 finish at the Coca-Cola 600. Larson dominated most of the race, becoming the first driver since Busch in 2018 to sweep every stage. It gave Larson a series-high 10 stage wins this year.

"He is an awesome talent as you see by some of the moves he makes," Hendrick said. "And he wants to win and is super dedicated. He is all business."

Gausman, Giants top Kershaw, Dodgers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Kevin Gausman pitched six shutout innings and Mauricio Dubón hit one of two homers off Clayton Kershaw, helping the San Francisco Giants beat the Los Angeles Dodgers 5-4 on Sunday.

Gausman (6-0) allowed two hits, struck out seven and walked none before he was removed because of left hip tightness. He also helped himself with an RBI single in the fifth inning.

Jake McGee worked the ninth for his 12th save in 14 opportunities.

Austin Slater also connected against Kershaw (7-4), sending the Giants to their third win in the four-game set after Los Angeles posted a three-game sweep last weekend. San Francisco has the second-best record in the majors at 33-20 and is a half-game behind San Diego in the NL West.

Albert Pujols and Max Muncy each hit a two-run homer for Los Angeles.

Brewers 3, Nationals 0: Brandon Woodruff (4-2) out-pitched Max Scherzer (4-4) and Avisail García homered again, leading visiting Milwaukee to its fourth straight win.

The Brewers collected four of the game's seven hits. Washington totaled three runs in getting swept in the three-game series.

Rays 6, Phillies 2: At St. Petersburg, Fla., Mike Zunino and Brett Phillips homered as AL East-leading Tampa Bay won for the 15th time in 16 games.

The Rays have won four consecutive games, including a two-game sweep of Philadelphia, since Kansas City stopped their 11-game win streak on Tuesday.

White Sox 3, Orioles 1: Lucas Giolito (5-4) struck out 12, and host Chicago handed Baltimore its 13th straight loss.

Baltimore matched its worst skid since 2009. It has been swept in four consecutive series and dropped 20 of 22 overall.

Tigers 6, Yankees 2: Rookie Tarik Skubal (2-7) pitched six shutout innings, and Detroit completed its first home series sweep of New York in 21 years.

Detroit had not swept a three-game home series from the Yankees since May 12-14, 2000, its first season at Comerica Park.

Astros 7, Padres 4: Zack Greinke (5-2) pitched eight effective innings and Kyle Tucker homered, lifting host Houston over San Diego.

Greinke permitted one run and six hits. The right-hander improved to 14-3 in his career against the Padres.

Reds 5, Cubs 1: Tyler Mahle (4-2) worked five shutout innings, Eugenio Suárez homered

and visiting Cincinnati stopped Chicago's six-game winning streak.

Tyler Naquin drove in two runs for Cincinnati, and Nick Castellanos had two hits. Jonathan India also had two hits and drove in a run.

Blue Jays 4-5, Indians 1-6: Host Cleveland rallied for a doubleheader split, taking advantage of another wild outing for Tyler Chatwood (0-2).

Chatwood forced in the tying run with his fourth straight walk in the seventh, and José Ramírez followed with a game-ending sacrifice fly.

Teoscar Hernández and Rowdy Tellez homered against Aaron Civale (7-2) in the opener, leading Toronto to the victory. Ross Stripling (1-3) pitched five innings of one-run ball for the win, and Jordan Romano got three outs for his third save.

Angels 4, Athletics 2: Jared Walsh's 12th homer sparked a four-run second inning for visiting Los Angeles, and four relievers combined for six scoreless innings.

David Fletcher doubled twice and drove in two runs for the Angels, who won their second straight for a split of the four-game series.

Diamondbacks 9, Cardinals 2: Ketel Marte homered and drove in three runs, and host

Arizona stopped a 13-game losing streak.

Arizona is just 19-35. It had been on the National League's longest losing streak since the Diamondbacks' 14-game skid in 2004.

Mariners 4, Rangers 2: Yu-sei Kikuchi (3-3) took a no-hit bid into the sixth inning, Kyle Seager homered and host Seattle sent Texas to its 12th straight road loss.

The Rangers matched a team record for most consecutive road losses set in 2003.

Seattle has won a season-best four in a row. Texas has lost six straight overall.

Royals 6, Twins 3: Whit Merrifield had two hits and scored two runs, leading visiting Kansas City past Minnesota.

Andrew Benintendi and Hunter Dozier each drove in two runs for Kansas City, which had dropped three of four. Dozier hit a solo drive in the ninth inning for his sixth homer.

Rockies 4, Pirates 3: Charlie Blackmon got three extra-base hits and keyed a two-run rally in the ninth inning that sent visiting Colorado past Pittsburgh.

Blackmon hit two doubles and a triple as the Rockies ended a five-game losing streak. They were shut out in both games of a doubleheader against Pittsburgh on Saturday.

Federer wins return to Paris, Grand Slam action

Associated Press

PARIS — They feted Roger Federer with as loud as applause gets from a crowd capped at 1,000 people in Court Philippe Chatrier — when he walked out with a wave, when he hit one of his 48 winners, even when he attempted a back-to-the-net 'tweener and hit the ball out.

This match bathed in sunshine Monday meant Federer finally was back at the French Open and back in Grand Slam action and he gave the excited fans what they wanted perhaps as much as he did: a victory.

Federer's first match at any major tournament in 16 months ended with a 6-2, 6-4, 6-3

victory over qualifier Denis Istomin at the French Open. It was a case of many happy returns — and serves, forehands, backhands, volleys and drop shots, too.

Showing no signs of rust, really, or trouble with the right knee that needed two operations last year, Federer produced more than twice as many winners as unforced errors — 48 to 20 — and never faced a break point while improving to 8-0 against Istomin over their careers.

Federer, whose 40th birthday is Aug. 8, hadn't appeared on the Grand Slam stage since Jan. 30, 2020, when he lost to Novak Djokovic in the semifinals of the Australian

Open.

He acknowledged recently he has zero chance of claiming the trophy this time around in Paris; instead, he is hoping to tune up his game to be ready to challenge for a championship at Wimbledon, where play begins in about a month.

After rhythmic clapping from the stands accompanied Federer's trot to the baseline for the match's opening point Monday, he got off to the perfect start against Istomin, who is ranked 204th and now is the owner of a seven-match Grand Slam losing streak but did upset Djokovic at the 2017 Australian Open.

Nets wallop Celtics, Irving dodges bottle

Associated Press

BOSTON— Kyrie Irving had 39 points and 11 rebounds to quiet the first post-pandemic full house at the TD Garden, Kevin Durant scored 42 points and Brooklyn beat Boston to take a 3-1 series lead.

Afterward, as Irving walked off the court, he was nearly hit by a bottle thrown from the stands. Irving and Nets guard Tyler Johnson turned to the stands and pointed; police surrounded a man in a Kevin Garnett jersey before leading him out in handcuffs. A spokesman for the TD Garden said Boston Police arrested one person “for throwing an object” and that the fan was “subject to a lifetime ban from TD Garden.”

“Fans have got to grow up at some point,” Durant said. “I know that being in the house for a year and a half with the pandemic has got a lot of people on edge, has got a lot of people stressed out. But when you come to these games you’ve got to realize: These men are human. We’re not animals. We’re not in the circus.”

James Harden added 23

points and a career post-season-high 18 assists for Brooklyn. Game 5 is in New York on Tuesday night, when the Nets will try to advance to the Eastern Conference semifinals for the first time since 2014.

Jayson Tatum scored 40 points for the Celtics, following up his 50-point effort in a Game 3 victory. But with Jaylen Brown and Kemba Walker out with injuries, Tatum couldn’t save the season on his own.

Clippers 106, Mavericks 81: Kawhi Leonard had 29 points and 10 rebounds, Paul George scored 20 points and visiting Los Angeles manhandled Dallas in Game 4 to tie the series.

Reggie Jackson added 15 points, and the Clippers are headed home for Game 5 much more sure of themselves than when they left LA in a two-game hole.

Luka Doncic started slowly after being listed as questionable because of a cervical strain.

Playing with medical strips on his left shoulder, and wearing a large pad in that area

when he wasn’t playing, Doncic scored 19 points after averaging 38 in the first three games. He was 9-for-24 with series lows in rebounds and assists with six apiece.

Suns 100, Lakers 92: Chris Paul had 18 points and nine assists, Devin Booker and Jae Crowder added 17 points apiece and visiting Phoenix beat Los Angeles in Game 4 to even the first-round series.

Deandre Ayton had 14 points and 17 rebounds, and the second-seeded Suns took advantage of Anthony Davis’ absence from the second half with a groin injury to reclaim home-court advantage after two straight losses.

LeBron James had 25 points and 12 rebounds for the Lakers. Before a last-minute surge, Los Angeles struggled in the absence of starters Davis and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope, who injured his knee in Game 3.

Game 5 is Tuesday night in Phoenix.

Davis scored six points on 2-for-9 shooting in the first half, then didn’t return after halftime. The superstar big

man scored 34 points in each of the Lakers’ two victories in the series, but he hyperextended his leg in Game 3 and appeared to aggravate his accumulated injury woes in the second quarter of Game 4, falling awkwardly and grabbing his leg after a layup attempt defended by Crowder.

Hawks 113, Knicks 96: Trae Young scored 27 points, John Collins added 22 despite a smack to the lip and host Atlanta frustrated Julius Randle and New York once again, pulling away in the second half for a 3-1 series lead.

Randle was serenaded again by chants of “Overrated!” every time he put one up. The roars were deafening after a sequence in the third when Randle missed on a drive and had a put-back rim out before the Knicks knocked the ball out of bounds.

Randle’s frustration boiled over less than a minute later when he slammed Collins to the court on another drive. Nothing was called initially, but Randle was assessed an offensive foul after a video review.

Lightning, Avalanche win second-round series openers

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Andrei Vasilevskiy turned away almost everything, while Barclay Goodrow came through with an opportunistic go-ahead goal midway through the third period.

And just like that, the Tampa Bay Lightning responded to another road environment with the confidence forged amid last year’s Stanley Cup championship run.

Goodrow beat Alex Nedeljkovic at 12:39 of the third period and Vasilevskiy had 37 saves, helping the Lightning beat the Carolina Hurricanes 2-1 on Sunday night to open their second-round playoff series.

Brayden Point also scored for the Lightning, who weathered a high-energy start from Carolina and continued the Hurricanes’ postseason frustrations on the power play.

Vasilevskiy was the key in both. He had 15 saves in that first period with the Hurricanes buzzing out of the gate backed by a rowdy home crowd of more than 16,000. Carolina also went 1-for-5 on the power play.

“He can just track the puck so well,” defenseman Ryan McDonagh said. “Never gives up on a puck and just stays to his strengths out there ... We know he’s a big backbone back there.”

Avalanche 7, Golden Knights 1: Nathan MacKinnon and Gabriel Landeskog each scored twice and well-rested Colorado used its speed to make quick work of visiting Vegas in a skirmish-filled Game 1 of their second-round playoff series.

What began as the Avalanche putting on a passing clinic — racing out to a 5-0 lead — spiraled into one fight after another. There were a total of 79 penalty minutes between

the teams, including four 10-minute misconduct calls and a match penalty on Vegas’ Ryan Reaves, who was later given an attempt-to-injure penalty.

“I don’t think you can call that physicality to be honest with you,” Landeskog said. “Reaves is on a mission to hurt somebody in the third and that’s what he goes out and does. I’m sure the league will take a look at it, intent to injure.”

Young defenseman Cale Makar added a goal and three assists, and Brandon Saad and Mikko Rantanen also scored for the Avalanche, who had an extra burst after nearly a week off following a four-game sweep of St. Louis in round one.

“Everyone took it serious, the break. Wasn’t a vacation,” MacKinnon said. “Everyone was ready to go and we had a great start.”