

Calls for peace in Mideast increase

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Israeli troops fought with Hamas militants on the edges of Gaza City on Thursday, as the Palestinian death toll rose above 9,000. With no end in sight after nearly four weeks of war, U.S. and Arab leaders raised pressure on Israel to ease its siege and at least briefly halt its attacks in order to aid civilians.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was heading to the region for talks Friday in Israel and Jordan, after President Joe Biden suggested a humanitarian “pause” in the Gaza fighting to let in aid for Palestinians and let out foreign nationals.

On Wednesday, an apparent agreement among the U.S., Egypt, Israel and Qatar, which mediates with Hamas, allowed hundreds of Palestinians with foreign passports and dozens of wounded to leave Gaza for the first time. Dozens more left on Thursday.

Israel did not immediately respond to Biden’s remarks.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has previously ruled out a cease-fire, vowing to destroy Hamas rule in the Gaza Strip after its bloody Oct. 7 rampage in southern Israel in which the militants killed hundreds of men, women and children and took some 240 people captive.

Arab countries, including those allied with the U.S. and at peace with Israel, have expressed mounting unease with the war. Jordan recalled its ambassador from Israel and told Israel’s envoy to remain out of the country until there’s a halt to the war and the “humanitarian catastrophe” it is causing.

An airstrike Thursday smashed a residential building to rubble in the Bureij refugee camp several miles south of Gaza City. One boy, his face covered in blood, cried as workers dug him out of the dirt and wreckage. Others rushed wounded men and women, covered in dust, away on stretchers or wrapped in blankets. At a nearby hospital, doctors tried

to stanch the flow of blood from the head of a child laid out on the floor.

At least 15 people were killed, Gaza’s Civil Defense spokesperson said, and residents said dozens more were believed buried. The strike took place in the southern zone to which Israel has told residents of the north to flee.

Hours later, more than five minutes of heavy explosions raised clouds of smoke over Gaza City. Al-Jazeera television, which continues to broadcast from the city, said Israeli airstrikes were hitting an area of apartment towers in the Tel al-Hawa neighborhood.

The barrage hit around 100 yards from Al-Quds Hospital, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society said in a post on X. It said there were deaths and injuries but gave no more details.

There was no immediate comment by the Israel military on the strikes. Israel says it targets Hamas fighters and infrastructure and that the group endangers civilians by operating

among them and in tunnels under civilian areas.

The U.S. has pledged unwavering support for Israel in its campaign against Hamas.

But the Biden administration has pushed for Israel to let more aid into Gaza amid growing alarm in the region over the destruction and humanitarian crisis in the tiny Mediterranean enclave.

More than 3,700 Palestinian children have been killed in 25 days of fighting, and three weeks of bombings that often level large swaths of neighborhoods have driven more than half the territory’s 2.3 million people from their homes. Food, water and fuel are running low under Israel’s siege.

Israel and the U.S. also seem to have no clear plan for what would come next if Hamas rule in Gaza is brought down.

Earlier in the week, Blinken suggested that the Palestinian Authority govern Gaza. Hamas drove the authority’s forces out of Gaza in its 2007 takeover of the territory.

Franchetti confirmed as first woman to lead Navy

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Senate on Thursday voted to confirm the first woman to lead the Navy and serve on the Joint Chiefs of Staff as anger intensified over a Republican senator’s monthslong hold on military promotions.

Adm. Lisa Franchetti was approved as chief of naval operations in a 95-1 vote after serving in the position on an acting basis following the August retirement of Adm. Michael Gilday. She also performed the duties of her former role as vice chief as she awaited confirmation.

Sen. Roger Marshall, R-Kan., a former Army captain, was the only senator to oppose Franchetti’s promotion

Her appointment marked the second time since February that the Senate has individually confirmed senior military nominees affected by a nine-month hold on appointments and promotions by Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala.

Gen. David Allvin, nominated to lead the Air Force, and Lt. Gen. Christopher Mahoney, set to become the Marine Corps’ assistant commandant, were also expected to be confirmed Thursday.

The promotion of the officers took on

new urgency after Gen. Eric Smith, the Marine Corps commandant, reportedly suffered a cardiac arrest on Sunday.

Tuberville’s hold, an act of protest against the Pentagon’s abortion access policy, had left the service’s second-in-command position empty.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Smith’s hospitalization coupled with Israel’s war in Gaza has created a crisis. He had resisted holding individual votes on nominees, which are normally approved in large batches, but made an exception in September to fill three seats on the Joint Chiefs.

US military access in Finland may widen

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military could gain exclusive access to a range of bases in Finland, where weaponry and other gear could be stored as part of a new bilateral defense agreement.

The deal is nearly finalized and could go before Finland's parliament for approval as early as next week, multiple Finnish news outlets reported

in recent days.

For more than a year, Washington and Helsinki have been putting the finishing touches on the Defense Security Cooperation agreement, which specifies how and where American troops can maneuver in the new NATO member state.

The approved garrisons for U.S. forces would include areas for the Army, Navy and Air Force, the YLE news service

reported Monday.

The Marines also trained in the country's south with Finnish troops in May.

The exact location of the proposed bases remains a secret, but some include areas that would be available only to U.S. forces, YLE said.

The defense pact will enable the United States to stock up on materials for troops carrying out missions in the country,

such as arms and vehicles.

The agreement doesn't limit the number of U.S. troops or exercises that could be conducted in the country, YLE reported.

As expected, the pact doesn't stipulate any permanent U.S. bases or troops stationed in Finland. U.S. forces already have stepped up troop rotations and training missions in the past year.

US, Canada team up for another Taiwan Strait trip

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — A U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer and a Canadian patrol frigate completed a trip through the Taiwan Strait on Thursday, the second transit there by the two nations' warships since Sept. 19.

The USS Rafael Peralta and the HMCS Ottawa on Wednesday began their journey north-east through the 110-mile-wide channel that separates mainland China from Taiwan and exited into the East China Sea on Thursday in a trip that was "unremarkable, unprovocative and consistent with international law," U.S. 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. Luka Bakic told Stars and Stripes by email Thursday.

The journey demonstrated the two countries' commitment to a "free and open Indo-Pacific," 7th Fleet said in a news release.

"Cooperation like this represents the centerpiece of our approach to a secure and prosperous region where aircraft and ships of all nations may fly, sail and operate anywhere international law allows," Bakic said in the release.

The Navy over the past two years has sent warships through

the contentious waterway on a near-monthly basis; Navy surveillance aircraft also occasionally fly over the strait.

Beijing has routinely criticized such actions as provocative. China considers Taiwan, self-governing since it split from China in 1949, a breakaway province that must be reunified with the mainland, by force if necessary.

Wednesday's joint transit was "publicly hyped," and the Chinese military organized to monitor the ships' entire trip, Eastern Theater Command spokesman Col. Shi Yi said in a Thursday post to the command's Weibo social media account.

All interactions between the U.S. and Canadian ships and foreign vessels or aircraft were "consistent with international norms and did not impact the operation," Bakic said.

The guided-missile destroyer USS Higgins and patrol frigate HMCS Vancouver made a nearly identical trip on Sept. 19.

That was the first joint operation between U.S. and Canadian warships since 2021, when the USS Dewey and HMCS Winnipeg steamed through the strait.

Marine Corps commandant stable, still in DC hospital

By DOUG G WARE
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Gen. Eric Smith, new Marine Corps commandant, remained in the hospital Wednesday but in stable condition after experiencing a medical emergency near his home three days ago, the service said.

Smith was near his home at the Marine Barracks in southeastern Washington on Sunday when the emergency occurred and was taken to a nearby hospital, officials said.

Earlier in the day, he attended the Marine Corps Marathon.

The New York Times reported earlier this week that Smith suffered a heart attack while jogging near his home, but the Marine Corps has declined to describe the nature of the medical emergency at the request of the commandant's family.

"He is currently listed in stable condition and is recovering in a leading hospital in our nation's capital," the Marine Corps said in a statement. "His family has requested privacy at this time, as Gen. Smith continues his recovery."

President Joe Biden nominated Smith in May to succeed Gen.

David Berger as the Marine Corps commandant, which is the top-ranking position in the service.

But Smith's appointment was delayed — along with those of hundreds of other top military officers — by Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., over a Pentagon policy that reimburses expenses to troops who want to travel to other states to get reproductive care, including abortions.

Smith was finally confirmed in September.

In recent weeks, Smith had been performing two jobs — commandant and assistant commandant — because the nominee to be the new assistant commandant, Lt. Gen. Christopher Mahoney, remains stalled by Tuberville. Democrats in the Senate are now working to confirm three of the top remaining nominations, including Mahoney.

The Marine Corps said further updates on Smith's condition will be "provided as appropriate."

For the time being, Lt. Gen. Karsten Heckl, the most senior officer at Marine Corps headquarters, is performing Smith's duties.

Trump Jr. denies working on documents

Associated Press

NEW YORK—Donald Trump Jr. testified Wednesday that he never worked on his father's financial statements, the documents now at the heart of the civil fraud trial that threatens former President Donald Trump's real estate empire.

The ex-president's eldest son is an executive vice president of the family's Trump Organization and has been a trustee of a trust set up to hold its assets when his father was in the White House.

At least one of the annual financial statements bore language saying the trustees "are responsible" for the document. But Donald Trump Jr. said he didn't recall ever working on any of the financial statements and had "no specific knowledge" of them.

The lawsuit centers on whether the former president and his business misled banks and in-

surers by inflating his net worth on the financial statements. He and other defendants, including sons Donald Jr. and Eric, deny wrongdoing.

Trump Jr. said he signed off on statements as a trustee, but had left the work to outside accountants and the company's then-finance chief, Allen Weisselberg.

"As a trustee, I have an obligation to listen those who are an expert — who have an expertise of these things," he said.

"I wasn't working on the document, but if they tell me that it's accurate, based on their accounting assessment of all of the materials," he said, "these people had an incredible intimate knowledge, and I relied on them."

The first family member to testify, he returned to the stand Thursday. Next up will be his brother and fellow Trump Organization Executive Vice Presi-

dent Eric Trump and, on Monday, their father—the family patriarch, company founder, former president and 2024 Republican front-runner.

Daughter Ivanka, a former Trump Organization executive and White House adviser, is scheduled to take the stand Nov. 8. But her lawyers on Wednesday appealed Judge Arthur Engoron's decision to require her testimony.

New York Attorney General Letitia James brought the lawsuit, alleging that Donald Trump, his company and top executives, including Eric and Donald Jr., conspired to exaggerate his wealth by billions of dollars on his financial statements. The documents were given to banks, insurers and others to secure loans and make deals.

The former president has called the case a "sham," a "scam," and "a continuation of

the single greatest witch hunt of all time."

James is a Democrat, as is Engoron, who ruled before the trial that Trump's financial statements were fraudulent. The judge ordered that a court-appointed receiver seize control of some Trump companies, potentially stripping the former president and his family of such marquee properties as Trump Tower, though an appeals court has halted enforcement for now.

During about 85 minutes on the witness stand Wednesday, Trump Jr. appeared to be laying groundwork to blame any irregularities in the financial statements on the Trump Organization's longtime outside accountant, Donald Bender.

Bender, for his part, testified last month that Trump's company wasn't always forthcoming with all the information required for the financial statements.

Santos survives effort to expel, still faces House ethics report

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Rep. George Santos easily survived a vote Wednesday to expel him from the House as most Republicans and 31 Democrats opted to withhold punishment while both his criminal trial and a House Ethics Committee investigation proceed.

The effort to kick Santos out of the House was led by his fellow New York Republicans, who are anxious to distance themselves from a colleague infamous for fabricating his life story and accused of stealing from donors, lying to Congress and receiving unemployment benefits he did not deserve.

But the resolution failed to gain the required two-thirds vote. Supporters could not even gain a simple majority, with the final vote being 179 for expulsion and 213 against.

To succeed, numerous Repu-

blican lawmakers would have had to break ranks with newly elected Speaker Mike Johnson, who has said Santos should get his day in court. Johnson, R-La., also recently told Fox News that if Congress is going to expel members because they are charged with a crime or accused of wrongdoing, "that's a problem."

Some Democrats also voiced concerns about getting ahead of the Ethics Committee, which issued a rare memo the day before, citing the depth of its investigation with some 40 witnesses contacted and the issuance of 37 subpoenas. It also said the next steps of the committee's investigation would be announced by Nov. 17.

Congress has rarely resorted to the most extreme punishment at its disposal. The House has expelled only five members in its history: three during the Civil War and two after convictions on public corruption charges.

House rejects effort to censure Tlaib over rhetoric about Israel

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House late Wednesday rejected an effort to censure Democrat Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, scrapping a Republican attempt to condemn the only Palestinian-American in Congress over her recent rhetoric around the ongoing Israel-Hamas war.

A measure to move forward with a censure resolution of Tlaib, a punishment one step below expulsion from the House, was dismissed with broad bipartisan support as both parties raised concerns about violating First Amendment rights.

A Democratic effort to in turn censure Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., who had sponsored the Tlaib resolution, was called off in response. The scheduled votes were among the House's first acts of business after a nearly monthlong

gridlock caused by the removal of Republican Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California as speaker.

The agenda of retribution reflects the growing divisiveness of the House, where severe forms of punishment that had long been viewed as an option of last resort, to be triggered only for the most egregious wrongdoing, are quickly becoming routine, often wielded in strikingly partisan ways.

Greene introduced a censure resolution last week against Tlaib, one of two Muslims in Congress. The resolution accuses Tlaib of "antisemitic activity" after she voiced concern over America's continued role in supplying arms to Israel as it engages in a bloody battle with Hamas following Hamas' deadly Oct. 7 surprise attack.

Tlaib called Greene's resolution "unhinged."

Big-city mayors want Biden meeting on migrant upsurge

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The mayors of Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles and New York are pressing to meet with President Joe Biden about getting federal help in managing the surge of migrants they say are arriving in their cities with little to no coordination, support or resources from his administration.

The Democratic leaders say in a letter obtained by The Associated Press on Wednesday that while they appreciate Biden's efforts so far, much more needs to be done to ease the burden on their cities.

Migrants are sleeping in police station foyers in Chicago. In New York, a cruise ship terminal was turned into a shelter. In Denver, the number of migrants arriving has increased tenfold and available space to shelter them has withered. With fewer available work authorizations, these migrants cannot find work that would allow them to get into proper housing.

Denver Mayor Mike Johnston, who is leading the coalition, said nearly every conversation he has had with arriving migrants is the same: Can he help them find a job, they ask.

"The crisis is we have folks here who desperately want to work. And we have employers here who desperately want to hire them. And we have a federal government that's standing in the way of employers who want to hire employees who want to work," Johnston said.

"We're committed to supporting local jurisdictions that are hosting migrants that have recently arrived into the country. We're going to continue to deliver support every way that we

can," said Emilie Simons, deputy White House press secretary.

Simons said the administration is already working to reduce to 30 days the time it takes to get arriving migrants through the system.

The White House said it has entered into a partnership with New York City on a work authorization clinic where up to 300 migrants per day can come in to submit work permit applications.

The reason for the ballooning number of migrants in these cities is complicated, but economic and climate-related hardships in their home countries are key drivers.

There are increasing numbers of families arriving and asking for asylum.

Some conservative-leaning states have sent migrants to so-called sanctuary cities such as New York or Chicago, where laws are more favorable to non-citizens.

But that alone does not explain why the cities are facing such increases.

In years past, when migrants arrived, they would be released and picked up by nonprofit groups before usually going to stay with a relative already in the U.S. But the nationalities of the people arriving have changed, and many no longer have any place to go.

Biden has asked \$1.4 billion from Congress to help state and local governments provide shelter and services for migrants, after earlier pleas from Democratic mayors and governors.

Johnston and the other mayors say in their letter that more is needed, and they are asking for \$5 billion.

Firefighters make progress battling Southern Calif. blaze

Associated Press

AGUANGA, Calif. — Firefighters on Wednesday made inroads in containing a Southern California wildfire, but officials said many homes and other buildings remain threatened by the blaze that at one point saw thousands of people under orders to evacuate.

The Highland Fire in rural Riverside County southeast of Los Angeles was only mildly active as Santa Ana winds that pushed it through brushy hills eased and fire crews had it 20% contained by Wednesday night, said Rob Roseen, a fire spokesperson.

"It was favorable conditions for firefighters" but humidity remained low and rugged terrain made the work challenging for the approximately 1,200 firefighters, Roseen said.

The size of the blaze remained unchanged at just under 4 square miles.

One firefighter was injured but was in stable condition, Roseen said.

Gusty, dry Santa Ana winds

were blowing Monday when the fire erupted near rural Aguanga in Riverside County about 53 miles north of San Diego. Evacuation orders were issued for 4,000 residents as flames spread rapidly. With progress being made against the blaze, many evacuation orders were reduced to warnings on Wednesday, and several thousand people were allowed to return home but about 2,500 homes and other buildings remained threatened, authorities said.

Although the forecast for the next few days was favorable, those allowed back home should remain vigilant, Roseen said.

Seven homes and other buildings had been destroyed and six others damaged, authorities said.

The Santa Ana winds, which have a long history of stoking the region's wildfires, blow out of the interior toward the Pacific Coast. The dry air saps moisture from vegetation, making it easier to burn. Forecasters predicted a return of moist ocean air by Friday.

Russia continues attacks on southern city of Kherson

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian shelling killed an 81-year-old woman in the yard of her home and a 60-year-old man in southern Ukraine's Kherson region Thursday, local authorities said. The deaths were the latest civilian casualties in Moscow's recent ramped-up bombardment of the front-line area.

Kherson is a strategic military region located on the Dnieper River near the mouth of the Black Sea. Unconfirmed reports say attacking Ukrainian troops have gained a foothold on the Russian-held side of the river during Kyiv's monthslong counteroffensive.

The two civilians died when Russian artillery targeted Kherson region villages, ac-

ording to Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin. Four others were injured in the strikes, which also damaged residential and public buildings, authorities said.

On Wednesday, one person died in Russian shelling that caused extensive damage in the Kherson region's capital city of the same name. Prokudin called it "an apocalyptic scene."

The Kherson region is a key gateway to the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014 and is now home to a lot of Moscow's war logistics operations and rear supply depots.

Ukrainian forces recaptured the city of Kherson last November after nearly nine months of Russian occupation following Moscow's full-scale invasion.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police use patrol vehicle to strike armed suspect

NV LAS VEGAS — Las Vegas police officers used a patrol vehicle Tuesday to strike and kill a man who the department says fatally stabbed a female at an apartment complex and then ran into the street and “began to walk toward occupied vehicles” while armed with a knife.

Police Capt. Joshua Martinez said officers had been called to investigate reports of a stabbing at an apartment complex in western Las Vegas when they encountered a man brandishing a knife in the street. Martinez said officers hit the man with their patrol vehicle “to get him down to the ground” and take him into custody. He died at the scene.

Police did not release the names or ages of the man or the stabbing victim, who died at a hospital. They also didn’t identify the officers.

Tarantula part of crash that injured motorcyclist

CA DEATH VALLEY — A tarantula crossing the road in Death Valley National Park caused a traffic crash that sent a Canadian motorcyclist to the hospital, the National Park Service said.

Swiss travelers, driving a rented camper van, braked suddenly to avoid hitting the tarantula as it crossed State Route 190 on Saturday, the park service said. The 24-year-old motorcyclist then struck the back of the camper van. The motorcyclist’s condition was not immediately available Monday.

“The spider walked away un-

scathed,” the park service wrote in a statement.

While tarantulas spend most of their lives in underground burrows, 8- to 10-year-old males go aboveground in the fall to search for a mate, the park service said.

Lawmakers seek medal for late civil rights leader

MS JACKSON — Mississippi’s congressional delegation is urging President Joe Biden to award the Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously to civil rights leader Medgar Wiley Evers.

Sens. Roger Wicker and Cindy Hyde-Smith, and Reps. Bennie Thompson, Trent Kelly, Michael Guest and Mike Ezell on Tuesday sent a letter to Biden encouraging him to bestow the honor on Evers. He was assassinated outside his home in Jackson, Miss., on June 12, 1963, as a result of his work to promote racial equality, voting rights and social justice.

“Mr. Evers dedicated his life to the defense of civil rights in Mississippi and the United States,” the legislators wrote. “His sacrifice inspires Americans to this day, and he furthered the cause of freedom for all humankind.”

AG: Ruling closes door on Flint water prosecutions

MI LANSING — The Michigan attorney general’s office said Tuesday that the state prosecution of former Gov. Rick Snyder and other officials for their roles in the Flint water scandal has ended.

A decision Tuesday by the state Supreme Court to decline to hear appeals of a lower court’s dismissal of misdemea-

nor charges against Snyder “effectively closes the door on the criminal prosecutions of the government officials,” prosecutors said in a release.

The Michigan Supreme Court in September rejected a last-chance effort by prosecutors to revive criminal charges.

Snyder was charged with willful neglect of duty. The indictment against him also was dismissed, though the Supreme Court did not address an appeal by prosecutors in September only because that case was on a different timetable.

Managers appointed by Snyder turned the Flint River into a source for Flint water in 2014, but the water wasn’t treated to reduce its corrosive impact on old pipes. As a result, lead contaminated the system for 18 months. Some experts have attributed a fatal Legionnaires’ disease outbreak in 2014-15 to the water switch.

Flint was reconnected to a regional water system in 2015 and has been compliant with lead standards for seven years, regulators said.

Pilot indicted for alleged threat made to captain

UT SALT LAKE CITY — A pilot has been indicted for allegedly threatening to shoot the plane’s captain if the captain diverted the flight because of a passenger who needed medical attention.

A grand jury in Utah issued the indictment against Jonathan J. Dunn on Oct. 18 over an incident that happened in August 2022, charging him with interference with a flight crew, according to federal court records.

The Transportation Department’s inspector general’s of-

fice said in an email sent Tuesday that Dunn was the first officer, or co-pilot, on the flight and was authorized to carry a gun under a program run by the Transportation Security Administration.

“After a disagreement about a potential flight diversion due to a passenger medical event, Dunn told the Captain they would be shot multiple times if the Captain diverted the flight,” the inspector general’s office said.

The inspector general described Dunn as a California pilot. It did not identify the airline on which the incident occurred, saying only that it was a commercial airline flight. The office did not give the flight’s intended route, or whether it was diverted.

Auto parts maker plans to build \$176M plant

GA DUBLIN — Another South Korean auto parts company is set to build a plant in Georgia, investing more than \$176 million and hiring more than 460 employees.

Hwashin Co. said Tuesday that it would build a plant in the middle of the state in Dublin, planning to start production in 2025. The company will make metal pieces for auto chassis for both the new Hyundai Motor Group plant being built in Ellabell, near Savannah, as well as for sister company Kia in West Point.

It’s the latest company to announce a plant to supply Hyundai’s \$7.6 billion plant to assemble electric vehicles and batteries in Ellabell. The Hyundai plant was announced last year.

— From wire reports

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Rangers win World Series for first time

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Corey Seager took a mighty swing and barely connected, sending a squibber through an open area on the left side of the infield for his team's first hit in the seventh inning.

The Texas Rangers shortstop and World Series MVP provided plenty of power throughout a stellar October run. But it was a little good fortune that finally sparked the offense Wednesday night and sent the Rangers to their first title.

Considering the heartache this club endured 12 years ago in one of the all-time Fall Classic gut punches, Texas was certainly due.

Nathan Eovaldi pitched six gritty innings, Mitch Garver broke a scoreless tie with an RBI single in the seventh and the Rangers won the first World Series championship in their 63-season franchise history by beating the Arizona Diamondbacks 5-0 in Game 5.

"It's just awesome. This is the

vision, right?" Seager said. "It's a really special moment."

Marcus Semien homered in a four-run ninth and the Rangers, held hitless for six innings by Zac Gallen, finished a record 11-0 on the road this postseason after capping the Fall Classic with three straight wins in the desert.

"Everything I've ever worked for is for this moment," Semien said. "Gallen was unbelievable tonight. But we came through. Once Corey got the first hit, everybody kind of woke up. Pitching was unbelievable."

In his first season with Texas, manager Bruce Bochy won his fourth World Series title 13 years to the day after his first, which came in 2010 when the Giants beat the Rangers. He also won rings with San Francisco in 2012 and 2014.

The 68-year-old Bochy helped exorcise some painful memories for Texas fans, who watched as their team came agonizingly close to the 2011

crown, needing just one strike on two occasions before losing to the St. Louis Cardinals.

"I was sitting in a recliner there in Nashville, just enjoying myself," said Bochy, who came out of retirement to take over in Texas.

"I was along for the ride, trust me. I was very fortunate and blessed to be able to get back into baseball in this type of a situation."

One night after the Rangers built a 10-run lead by the third inning in Game 4, they finished off baseball's third all-wild card World Series by outlasting Arizona in an intense pitchers' duel.

Gallen carried a no-hitter into the seventh before giving up an opposite-field single to Seager, whose weak grounder found a hole. Rangers rookie Evan Carter — all of 21 years old — followed with a double. Garver then delivered the first run, pumping his fist as a hard grounder up the middle scored

Seager.

Garver was 1-for-17 at the plate in the Series before his huge hit.

With the Rangers clinging to that 1-0 lead, Josh Jung and Nathaniel Lowe singled off Paul Sewald to start the ninth. Jung scored on Jonah Heim's single, and Lowe came all the way around from first base when center fielder Alek Thomas let the ball get past him for an error.

Two outs later, Semien's two-run homer made it 5-0. It was the 13th time Texas scored at least three runs in an inning this postseason.

Meanwhile on the mound, Eovaldi wriggled out of trouble all night before Aroldis Chapman and Josh Sborz closed the door, as the Rangers became the first team to win a World Series game despite having no hits or runs through six innings.

"I kind of joked around: I don't know how many rabbits I have in my hat," said Eovaldi.

Brilliant, combustible coaching giant Knight, 83, dies

Associated Press

Bob Knight, the brilliant and combustible coach who won three NCAA titles at Indiana and for years was the scowling face of college basketball, has died. He was 83.

Knight's family made the announcement on social media on Wednesday night. He was hospitalized with an illness in April and had been in poor health for several years.

"It is with heavy hearts that we share that Coach Bob Knight passed away at his home in Bloomington surrounded by his family," the statement said. "We are grateful for all the thoughts and prayers, and appreciate the continued respect for our privacy as Coach requested a private family gathering, which is being honored."

Knight was among the win-

ningest and most controversial coaches in the sport, finishing his career with 902 victories in 42 seasons at Army, Indiana and Texas Tech while mentoring some of America's best coaches. He also coached the U.S. Olympic team to a gold medal in 1984.

The Hall of Famer cared little what others thought of him, choosing Frank Sinatra's "My Way" to celebrate his 880th win in 2007, then the record for a Division I men's coach.

He was nicknamed "The General" and his trademark temper also cost him his job at Indiana in 2000. He once hit a police officer in Puerto Rico, threw a chair across the court and was accused of wrapping his hands around a player's neck.

Critics fumed relentlessly about his conduct, but his defenders were legion. There was this

side of Knight as well: He took pride in his players' high graduation rates, and during a rule-breaking era he never was accused of a major NCAA violation.

At Indiana, he insisted his base salary not exceed that of other professors. At Texas Tech, he sometimes gave back his salary because he didn't think he earned it.

Knight expected players to exceed expectations on the court and in the classroom. He abided by NCAA rules even when he disagreed with them, never backed down from a dust-up and promised to take his old-school principles to the grave.

While he was beloved by many of his players, his disposition and theatrics sometimes overshadowed his formidable record, tactical genius, innova-

tion and dedication to the game, leaving behind a singular résumé.

"He changed basketball in this state, the way you compete, the way you win," Steve Alford, the leader of Knight's last national championship team in 1987, once said. "It started in Indiana, but he really changed college basketball."

Long esteemed for his strategy and often questioned for his methods, Knight reveled in constructing his best teams with overachievers. As a hard-to-please motivator, he clung to iron principles, and at 6-foot-5 was an intimidating presence for anyone who dared cross him.

When Knight retired in 2008, he left with four national championships (one as a player at Ohio State) and as the Division I men's record-holder in wins.

College basketball transfer portal still valuable

Associated Press

Eric Musselman returned Arkansas to elite status quickly, taking the Razorbacks to the Sweet 16 and beyond three straight years.

The former NBA coach's success in Fayetteville followed a similar pattern to what Musselman was able to accomplish in four seasons at Nevada. At the core of his accomplishments: transfers.

"The transfer portal — keeping players and also players leaving programs and coming in — is the equivalent of free agency," Musselman said. "Incoming freshman are the equivalent of a draft pick. You have to be flexible, got to be nimble, got to be willing to change and have an open mind."

The advent of the transfer portal five years ago has reshaped college athletics, none more than college basketball. Since 2021, underclassmen have been able

to transfer once without having to sit out a year before playing, sending a tsunami of players into the portal every offseason.

The freedom of movement opened doors previously unavailable to college coaches, and they have pounced on the chance for the immediate roster upgrades. A freshman, even a five-star recruit, needs time to adjust to the college game. Transfers already understand the demands and level they need to play at on the college level so they can hit the hardwood running.

Tristan Newton and Joey Calcaterra were key contributors on last year's national championship team after transferring to UConn, which faced a rebuild again earlier this year. Three of national runner-up San Diego State's top six scorers were transfers.

Transfers Kevin McCullar Jr. and Joseph Yesufu helped Kan-

sas win the 2022 national title. Baylor's 2021 title team was dotted with transfers.

Kansas is this year's preseason No. 1 after adding former Michigan big man Hunter Dickinson. No. 7 Houston added former Baylor guard LJ Cryer. Former Creighton guard Ryan Nembhard is now playing for No. 11 Gonzaga and No. 12 Arizona added former North Carolina guard Caleb Love.

"Obviously, any transfer has more experience than an incoming freshman," Musselman said. "That can change the maturity level, the ability to pick up schemes both offensively, defensively."

Navigating the portal has gotten trickier.

In recent years, the NCAA has been lenient in granting waivers for players who transferred more than once, with some players switching schools three, even four times. That changes

this season after the Division I Council voted to enforce stricter guidelines for second-time transfers, which has prompted some criticism and led to more homework.

"When you talk about two-time transfers, I think, for me, you would have to have all the information," Syracuse coach Adrian Autry said. "And I think you have to have your roster in place to see if it's worth going down that journey, because it is a possibility that it might not happen."

Under the new guidelines, an athlete unable to "adequately document a personal need for medical or safety reasons to depart the previous school are not eligible to compete immediately." That means players who want to switch schools due to a coaching change or lack of playing time will likely have their waiver denied and have to sit out a season if they do transfer.

Longtime rivals Larson, Bell facing off for NASCAR title

Associated Press

AVONDALE, Ariz. — The rivalry hardly reaches the heights of Petty versus Pearson or Earnhardt against Gordon as one of NASCAR's great competitions. But there is no doubt that dozens of dirt track battles between Kyle Larson and Christopher Bell have created an interesting dynamic ahead of Sunday's championship.

Larson beat Bell at Las Vegas Motor Speedway to claim the first of four spots in Sunday's title-deciding season finale, then Bell won the next week at Homestead-Miami Speedway to take the second slot.

Their rivalry is the most intense of the championship contenders — William Byron dates Ryan Blaney's youngest sister and referred to Blaney as his "brother-in-law" last week — and Bell and Larson will finally race each other for the biggest

trophy to date.

"I don't know how fans view it, (but) I really enjoy getting to race a guy in the Cup Series that when we were starting out racing with each other, neither of us were in the Cup Series," Larson said.

Larson has 23 wins over nine full Cup Series seasons and won the 2021 Cup title driving for Hendrick Motorsports. Bell has six wins in four Cup seasons driving for Joe Gibbs Racing. He won the Truck Series championship in 2017.

For most of their careers, the annual Chili Bowl Nationals in Bell's home state of Oklahoma was the only race that mattered. Bell won it three consecutive times in small open-wheel midget cars from 2017 to 2019 as Larson came up short time and time again.

Larson finally broke through with back-to-back wins in 2020

and 2021.

The two were once dirt midget teammates at Keith Kunz Motorsports, where Bell seemed to consistently beat Larson in equal equipment, and the relationship hasn't always been warm.

"He kicked my ass for a few years straight, like every race," Larson said. "I don't know if I ever beat him. He made me work really hard to get better as a driver, especially on the dirt track stuff."

The two had a NASCAR incident on the road course at Watkins Glen two years ago that created a brief but public feud: Larson said Bell ignored an apology text; Bell said Larson "cried to the media" about the snub before Bell had a chance to respond.

They went quite some time without speaking before eventually resolving the dispute and

moving on with their careers. Larson at Phoenix Raceway on Sunday is racing for a second Cup title in three years, while Bell is back in the championship for the second consecutive year but seeking his first title.

The respect level is certainly there and was evident after Larson held off Bell over the closing laps to win Las Vegas for the championship berth. He flashed a thumbs-up to runner-up Bell after the finish.

"That was just me kind of showing respect and saying thanks in a way for having us race it out," Larson said. "He's always been a really fair, clean racer. We've had numbers and numbers of battles in stock cars, but mostly in dirt track. I'm typically the one that is the aggressor or the aggressive one in our battles. Probably push the limit of being dirty sometimes."

Georgia, Alabama aim to boost CFP stock

Associated Press

Another November begins with the familiar sight of Southeastern Conference teams in lofty places in the initial College Football Playoff rankings.

And much like a year ago, two-time defending national champion and top-ranked Georgia is looking up from second after Tuesday night's release. (The Bulldogs began third last year.) Ninth-ranked Alabama (No. 8 CFP) and No. 11 Mississippi (No. 10 CFP) follow, with No. 13 LSU (No. 14 CFP) and No. 14 Missouri (No. 12 CFP) on the radar.

The next five weeks will determine if the unbeaten Bulldogs (8-0, 4-0) follow last year's path and enter on top of the final four-team playoff before the format expands to 12 next season. New Year's Six and other bowl berths will be settled soon after, adding more importance for teams to close the regular season playing their best football with numerous committees watching.

Winning generally takes care of everything, but achieving the obvious bottom line certainly won't be easy for Georgia, 'Bama and Ole Miss, which must

navigate challenging paths of conference foes to stay on the playoff radar. And staying focused on what's immediately in front of them.

"I'm worried about constant improvement," Georgia coach Kirby Smart said Wednesday on the SEC's weekly teleconference, adding that his team doesn't feel slighted by its initial ranking despite winning its last 25 games while pursuing a third straight national title.

Smart added that his focus is "getting players back healthy, trying to get the guys that aren't playing back to playing and (then) the guys that are playing, (playing) better. And you do that one week at a time."

The Bulldogs face perhaps the most difficult gauntlet with three ranked opponents in Mizou on Saturday in Athens, Ole Miss and at No. 19 Tennessee (No. 17 CFP) before closing the regular season against in-state rival Georgia Tech in nonconference play.

Lopsided victory margins may impress the AP Top 25 and CFP voters, but narrow wins can also pay off.

One year ago, Georgia rallied

from a 10-point deficit to beat Missouri 26-22 in early October. The win may have given the Bulldogs the confidence they needed to gut out a 16-6 win at Kentucky and eventually earn a tough 42-41 CFP semifinal Peach Bowl win over Ohio State. They jumped to No. 1 in the second ranking and stayed there.

"I think ultimately that game last year was such an essential role to what that team became," center Sedrick Van Pran said Monday. "So, I think ultimately we had the opportunity to kind of create our identity through that game. I think we could have, but I'm grateful that we had that game to help build us."

Alabama hosts LSU on Saturday night with the Western Division lead at stake before visiting Kentucky ahead of a non-league breather against UT-Chattanooga. It closes at rival Auburn on Nov. 25 and hopes a trip to Atlanta for the SEC championship game will follow.

Though the Crimson Tide (7-1, 5-0) will need teams above them to snatch one of those coveted playoff spots, having to prove themselves during the

stretch run isn't uncommon. They come off a bye Saturday night after six consecutive wins, including a 34-20 comeback victory over Tennessee after trailing 20-7 at halftime.

Alabama's offense has come together around quarterback Jalen Milroe, and coach Nick Saban is trying to maintain his team's focus in this upward trajectory.

"I think it's more stay focused on the process of what you have to do and not become outcome-oriented and create a bunch of anxiety for yourself," he added. "Just play the next play. Play that moment. Don't look at the scoreboard, don't be affected by external factors."

Ole Miss (7-1, 4-1) is also a game behind Alabama in the West and carries a four-game winning streak into Saturday's meeting with Texas A&M (5-3, 3-2). Georgia is next with rival Mississippi State sandwiched around a non-league matchup with UL-Monroe. Not surprisingly, Rebels coach Lane Kiffin isn't paying attention to rankings and says they won't matter as long as his team keeps on winning.

Rookie Hall prepares for first start with Cousins out

Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. — Thrust into a regular-season game for the first time, Minnesota rookie quarterback Jaren Hall walked to the huddle deep in Vikings' territory at Lambeau Field on Sunday, trying to keep his team together after Kirk Cousins went down with an injury.

Hall's command of the huddle, in just the eighth week of his first season out of Brigham Young, made an impression. The Vikings think he is ready to start this weekend in Atlanta.

"When he came in, he was spitting out the play calls with no hesitation, with no verbiage that

was missing," tight end T.J. Hockenson said. "It was good. He took control of the huddle and that's what you need out of a rookie quarterback. They've got to have the confidence to come into the huddle and just really take control of it."

Cousins is done for the season after he had surgery Wednesday for a torn Achilles tendon. A trade for Joshua Dobbs, who started all eight games this season for Arizona, added to the quarterback room on Tuesday, but it's Hall who will start on Sunday.

"You always try to be prepared as if you're going to play,"

Hall said. "Now, it's just understanding your role's a little bit bigger, so you've got to take a little more urgency to it, spend more time with the coaches and be great at answering questions and make sure I'm getting the information that I need."

Minnesota took Hall, already 25 years old, in the fifth round of this year's draft as the 12th quarterback selected. At 6-foot, 207 pounds, he was considered a bit undersized. But Hall is athletic and considered to be an accurate passer.

And he's impressed everyone in the organization with his demeanor.

"How he came off, how he was on the sideline, getting some great feedback from the guys in the huddle with him, all that information led me to believe Jaren is ready for this moment," Vikings coach Kevin O'Connell said.

"We have a lot of confidence in him. We have a long way to go before Sunday, so we have to use every moment we can to get him up to speed and confident, so he can go out there and play fast."

In his short time against the Packers, Hall was 3-for-4 passing for 23 yards. In three preseason games, he was 26-for-48 for 264 yards.