

2 US carriers join drill near Middle East

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Two Navy aircraft carriers and about 11,000 U.S. personnel launched aircraft and practiced missile defense during a three-day exercise in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, a show of strength that coincides with high-level diplomacy aimed at preventing a wider war in the Middle East.

The Gerald R. Ford and Dwight D. Eisenhower carrier strike groups coordinated flights between the two decks and trained on several sea operations, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet said in a statement Friday.

The amphibious command ship USS Mount Whitney and the Italian navy frigates ITS Virginio Fasan and ITS Carlo Margottini joined the drills, the Navy said. Mount Whitney is the flagship of the Italy-based U.S. 6th Fleet.

Although two-carrier exercises with an included ally aren't unprecedented, few other na-

tions have the capabilities to execute such drills effectively.

The show of force won't go unnoticed by Iran, said Sebastian Bruns, a naval and maritime security expert with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based think tank. Iran backs both Hamas and proxy forces that are launching missile and drone attacks on U.S. bases in the region.

"The naval forces offer a wide set of tools, from reassuring allies to deterrence and coercion of antagonists," Bruns said.

The exercise also sends a message to Russia and China, Bruns said.

Since the Oct. 7 attacks by Hamas that tortured and killed 1,400 people in Israel, Moscow and Beijing have flooded state and social media with messages portraying the war as a U.S. failure, the State Department's Global Engagement Center said.

Eisenhower, along with the destroyers USS Gravelly and USS Mason, entered the Mediterra-

nean Oct. 28. The cruiser USS Philippine Sea followed soon after.

The group was already scheduled for a routine deployment, presumably to relieve Ford.

But in the days after Hamas attacked Israel, Ford and Eisenhower were ordered to the Eastern Mediterranean.

Ford's deployment was extended, and Eisenhower was redirected to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. The Navy did not say when Eisenhower would depart for the Middle East.

It also wasn't clear if Fasan would deploy with the group when it leaves the Mediterranean. Fasan participated in a training exercise with the Eisenhower group earlier this year in anticipation of a planned deployment.

The Pentagon acknowledged but did not answer questions Friday about the status of Fasan's deployment.

In recent days, open-source in-

telligence analysts have noted about 48 U.S. and allied ships, including those from Standing NATO Maritime Group 2, operating in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East.

The Ford group includes Carrier Air Wing 8, the destroyers USS Ramage, USS Bulkeley and USS Paul Ignatius, as well as the cruiser USS Normandy.

Carrier Air Wing 3 with its nine squadrons is deployed with Eisenhower, the statement said.

The naval activity came during U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other Middle East leaders.

On Saturday, Blinken met in Jordan with Arab foreign ministers to find ways to ease Gaza's humanitarian crisis, The Associated Press reported.

Israel has maintained that there can be no temporary ceasefire until all of the roughly 240 hostages held by Hamas are released.

US ship sails near outposts in South China Sea chain

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A U.S. Navy warship cruised past four occupied features of a contested island chain in the South China Sea on Friday to protest "excessive maritime claims."

The guided-missile destroyer USS Dewey "asserted navigation rights and freedoms" near the Spratly Islands, about 100 maritime features between Vietnam and the Philippines, the U.S. 7th Fleet said in a Friday news release.

The Navy routinely sends warships to the Spratlys and the Paracel Islands, another contested chain in the South China Sea, on freedom-of-navigation operations to protest "unlawful" restrictions such as require-

ments for permission or advance notice of "innocent passage" through territorial waters.

"Unlawful and sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea pose a serious threat to the freedom of the seas, including the freedoms of navigation and overflight, free trade and unimpeded commerce, and freedom of economic opportunity for South China Sea littoral nations," 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. Luka Bakic said in the release.

China, Vietnam and Taiwan claim the entire Spratly chain, while the Philippines and Malaysia claim portions of it. Approximately 45 islands in the Spratlys are occupied by small military outposts operated by the five claimants, according to the CIA World Fact-

book website.

The Dewey on Friday made an innocent passage within 12 nautical miles of four islands — Petley Reef, Sand Cay, Loaita Island and Itu Aba Island — as part of a "routine and peaceful exercise of rights and freedoms," Bakic told Stars and Stripes by email Friday.

All four islands are occupied by outposts, according to the CIA World Factbook. Petley Reef and Sand Cay are occupied by Vietnam; Loaita is occupied by the Philippines; and Itu Aba is occupied by Taiwan.

All interactions between the Dewey and foreign vessels or aircraft were "consistent with international norms and did not impact the operation," Bakic said without elaborating.

Navy drones launch missile for 1st time

Display of fired munitions signals lethal evolution of their unmanned boats

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

Navy drone boats participating in a recent Middle East exercise fired lethal munitions for the first time, as sailors from the 5th Fleet deployed the vessels in a way not seen before.

Footage of the Digital Talon exercise released Thursday by the Navy shows an unmanned speedboat launching missiles off the Arabian Peninsula on Oct. 23.

“We took a significant step forward and advanced our capability to the next level,” Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, the 5th Fleet commander, said in a statement Thursday.

The 5th Fleet has used drone boats extensively in the Middle East for surveillance over the past two years, but the use of lethal weaponry in the exercise moves the Navy “beyond just maritime domain awareness,”

“We took a significant step forward and advanced our capability to the next level.”

Vice Adm. Brad Cooper
U.S. Navy

Cooper said.

During Digital Talon, unmanned surveillance drones and crewed ships worked together to find and destroy orange target boats.

Then, a MARTAC T38 Devil Ray unmanned speedboat launched missiles at the targets, scoring direct hits each time, the statement said.

A sailor at an operations center in Bahrain was in charge of firing the missiles, and Special Operations Forces Central Command also took part in the exercise, the statement said.

Future exercises will expand

the number of combat-capable unmanned systems, Cooper said in the Navy statement.

In 2021, the Navy created a unit known as Task Force 59 to focus on developing drones and artificial intelligence for 5th Fleet operations.

Navy officials have said they aim to rely more on unmanned vessels aided by AI to patrol Middle East waterways, through which much of the world’s trade transits.

These unmanned boats have been used for ship surveillance in the Strait of Hormuz amid an increase in naval patrols over

the summer, after the United States accused Iran of harassing civilian shipping.

In September, unmanned underwater boats and aerial drones shadowed Iranian ships and small boats during these patrols, the Navy said.

Iran has gained prominence for its own unmanned technology, specifically the aerial drones it has been supplying to Russia for the war in Ukraine.

In the Middle East, Iran is smuggling weapons to militant groups around the region, according to the Navy, which has seized some of these shipments.

Iran seized Navy drone boats twice in 2022. In both instances, the drones were released as U.S. warships neared, the Navy said.

Analysts say the U.S. and Iran have been locked in a shadow war, with Washington’s allies clashing with militant groups backed and funded by Tehran.

Marine commandant doing better after heart attack

By DOUG G. WARE
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Gen. Eric Smith, the Marine Corps commandant, is making “excellent progress” several days after he had a heart attack near his home, the service said Friday.

Smith, who took over as the Marine Corps’ top general in September, experienced a sudden cardiac arrest on Sunday near his home at the Marine Barracks in southeastern Washington, the service said, and has spent the past few days at an undisclosed hospital.

Friday’s update on Smith’s health was the second status report from the Marines about the

commandant, but the first time that the Corps confirmed he had suffered a heart attack.

“Gen. Smith is making excellent progress,” the service said in a statement. “His baseline physical health has directly contributed to his rapid improvement and he is recovering as expected.”

At the time of his heart attack, Smith had been performing the duties of two jobs — commandant and assistant commandant — for weeks because the nominee for assistant commandant was among almost 400 military officers whose promotions were still being blocked by Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala.

US contractor killed in car crash with camel in Kuwait

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

An American contractor who was involved in a car crash with a camel on the road next to Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait has died, according to U.S. military officials.

The victim, who died Oct. 27 and whose name was not released, was an American citizen, an Army official said Wednesday. The official was not authorized to talk about contractors and spoke on condition of anonymity.

A report online by a Kuwaiti newspaper Oct. 27 said a U.S. soldier had died in a car collision with a camel. But no ser-

vice members were involved in the crash, a statement from Central Command said Thursday.

A spokesman for the Army’s Criminal Investigation Division said the agency was aware of the crash and that local law enforcement had taken charge of the investigation.

The Kuwaiti Interior Ministry and the Kuwait Fire Force did not immediately respond to requests for information.

The U.S. military employs about 21,000 contractors in the Middle East, according to the latest numbers provided in October by the Defense Department.

Biden's UAW ties crucial in 2024 election

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden called the head of the United Auto Workers union to congratulate him this past week on getting a new contract with General Motors and to wish him a happy 55th birthday — a sign of how the relationship had evolved since their first get-to-know-you meeting in the Oval Office on July 19.

UAW President Shawn Fain launched the strike against GM, Ford and Chrysler-owner Stellantis with a willingness to force political leaders to choose between backing unions or corporations. Biden had long straddled this line. He proclaimed in speeches that unions built the middle class, but he also heralded his credentials as a former senator from the “corporate capital of the world,” also known as Delaware.

The White House was deter-

mined to build trust with Fain and look past his occasional slights of Biden. That approach, which included Biden meeting with workers on the picket line in Michigan, helped to resolve the nearly 45-day set of strikes and produced significant pay raises for workers.

But even as Biden's sympathies publicly shifted toward union workers during the stand-off, there are few signs that the UAW fully warmed to the Democratic president. Biden has yet to receive the union's endorsement as he seeks reelection with the message that he has delivered for blue-collar workers.

The UAW declined to talk about its relationship with the White House. No final decision on the endorsement is expected to come until after contracts with the automakers are finalized, which probably will happen later this month.

The relationship between Fain and Biden could be crucial to the outcome of the 2024 election. More than 380,000 UAW members are scattered in states that include Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, places where narrow margins have decided the overall winner of the past two presidential contests.

Gene Sperling, the White House liaison for the strike talks, was in daily contact with executives at the UAW and the three automakers. Biden tasked the economic adviser who has served in three Democratic White Houses to develop a bond with the UAW but also preserve connections with the automakers that are helping to deliver on Biden's electric vehicle agenda.

Sperling told The Associated Press that he followed a set of principles in communicating with all sides: “We're not here to intervene. We're not here to me-

diate. But we want to be in touch. We want to be helpful.”

As the weeks stretched on, though, Biden and his team did less straddling and publicly stepped ever closer to the union.

At one point, Sperling stressed to the automakers the UAW's position that new contracts needed a built-in cost-of-living adjustment, so that wages could be adjusted for inflation. That adjustment became part of the tentative agreement, which for GM workers also includes a 30% pay bump through April 2028, when the contract would expire.

Biden staked out his position that the autoworkers had made sacrifices during the 2008 financial crisis to keep their employers afloat. Now that automakers were pulling in billions of dollars in profits, the president said, those same workers should share in the rewards.

DeSantis faces Trump challenges in home state

Associated Press

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — A booth at the Florida Republican Party's Freedom Summit made swift business of Donald Trump merchandise on Saturday, selling everything from socks to bathtub rubber ducks that paid tribute to the former president.

Vendor Peter Crotty also had Ron DeSantis T-shirts. But he reduced those items from their original \$25 down to \$5, an 80% discount on the Florida governor's name. The excess inventory needed to go, Crotty said.

It was just one sign of DeSantis' challenges in the 2024 Republican primary fight.

Barely two months from the first nominating ballots being cast, Trump is flaunting his advantages by trying to embarrass the governor in the two rivals' shared home state, where party activists on Saturday cheered any mention of the former president and booed at any criticisms of the GOP 2024 front-runner.

“We're going to win the Florida primary for the third

straight time, and we're going to win the state by a landslide next November,” Trump told a boisterous crowd Saturday evening, before calling to the stage several Florida lawmakers who switched their endorsements from DeSantis ahead of Saturday's Florida Freedom Summit.

Trump and his newest backers stood beneath graphics that read: “Florida is Trump Country.”

It was a show of strength for Trump in a state where DeSantis has controlled state politics

since garnering Trump's endorsement in 2018 on his way to winning the first of two gubernatorial elections.

Now, two months before the first balloting in the 2024 presidential nomination process, the two men have an increasingly personal and crude rivalry, and the second-term governor faces the reality that Trump has dominated national Republican politics since he launched his first White House bid in 2015, when DeSantis was a little-known Florida congressman.

Mother of slain daughter now running for Uvalde mayor

Associated Press

UVALDE, Texas — On a sticky Texas morning, Kimberly Mata-Rubio is lacing up her running shoes ahead of two races she is running in Uvalde in tribute to her daughter Lexi,

who was killed in the 2022 Robb Elementary School shooting.

First up is a charity run honoring Lexi's life. Then it's back to a tougher contest: Campaigning to become mayor of Uvalde, a town still divided after one of

America's deadliest mass shootings and a botched police response that is still under investigation.

On Tuesday, Uvalde voters will pick a new mayor for the first time since the May 2022 at-

tack that killed 19 students and two teachers. Mata-Rubio could become Uvalde's first female mayor.

She will run against two other candidates, a former Uvalde mayor and a local teacher.

Gaza loses communication again; Israel's military circles Gaza City

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Gaza came under its third total communications outage since the start of the war late Sunday, while Israel's military announced it had encircled Gaza City and divided the besieged coastal strip into two.

"Today there is north Gaza and south Gaza," Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari told reporters, calling it a "significant stage" in Israel's war against the Hamas militant group. Israeli media reported that troops are expected to enter Gaza City within 48 hours.

But the "new collapse in connectivity" across Gaza reported by internet access advocacy group NetBlocks.org and confirmed by Palestinian telecom company Paltel made it even more complicated to share details on the new stage of the military offensive.

"We have lost communication with the vast majority of the UNRWA team members," U.N. Palestinian refugee agen-

cy spokesperson Juliette Touma told The Associated Press. The first Gaza outage lasted 36 hours and the second one for a few hours, complicating efforts to share events on the ground.

Earlier Sunday, Israeli warplanes struck two central Gaza refugee camps, killing at least 53 people and wounding dozens, health officials said. Israel said it would press on with its offensive to crush the territory's Hamas rulers, despite U.S. appeals for even brief pauses to get aid to desperate civilians.

Gaza's Health Ministry said more than 9,700 Palestinians have been killed in the territory in nearly a month of war, a number likely to rise as Israeli troops advance into dense, urban neighborhoods.

Airstrikes hit the Maghazi refugee camp overnight, killing at least 40 people and wounding 34 others, the Health Ministry said. The camp is in the zone where Israel's military had urged Palestinian civilians to seek refuge as it focuses its of-

fensive on the north.

An AP reporter at a nearby hospital saw eight dead children, including a baby, brought in after the strike. A surviving child was led down the corridor, her clothes caked in dust, an expression of shock on her face.

Arafat Abu Mashaia, who lives in the camp, said the Israeli airstrike flattened several multi-story homes where people forced out of other parts of Gaza were sheltering.

"It was a true massacre," he said. "All here are peaceful people. I challenge anyone who says there were resistance (fighters) here."

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

Another airstrike hit a house near a school at the Bureji refugee camp in central Gaza, and staff at Al-Aqsa Hospital told the AP at least 13 people were killed. The camp is home to an estimated 46,000 people and was struck Thursday as well.

Russia says it test fired missile from nuclear sub

Associated Press

MOSCOW — The Russian military on Sunday reported a successful test launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile designed to carry nuclear warheads from a new nuclear submarine.

The report comes as tensions are soaring between Russia and the West over the fighting in Ukraine. Adding to those tensions, President Vladimir Putin signed a bill last week revoking Russia's ratification of a global nuclear test ban in a move that Moscow said was needed to establish parity with the United States.

The Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement that the Emperor Alexander III strategic missile cruiser fired the Bulava missile from an underwater position in Russia's northern White Sea, and successfully hit a target in the far-eastern region of Kamchatka.

It wasn't immediately clear from the statement when the test launch occurred.

The Emperor Alexander III is one of the new Borei-class nuclear submarines that carry 16 Bulava missiles each and are intended to serve as the core naval component of the nation's nuclear forces in the coming decades.

According to the Defense Ministry, launching a ballistic missile is the final test for the vessel, after which a decision will likely be made regarding its induction into the fleet.

The Russian navy currently has three Borei-class submarines in service, one more is finishing tests and three others are under construction, the Defense Ministry said.

Nepal quake leaves thousands homeless

Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal — Villagers in the mountains of northwest Nepal cremated the bodies of some who perished in an earthquake that shook the area Friday night. The strong tremor killed 157 people and left thousands homeless.

The 13 bodies were carried on Sunday to the banks of the Bheri River and placed on pyres made of stacked wood. Priests chanted Hindu prayers while family members cried as they covered the bodies of loved ones with flowers before setting them on fire in a cremation ceremony.

All 13 were from Chiuri village in Jajarkot district, which authorities said was the epicenter of the quake, and where at least 105 people were confirmed dead.

Another 52 were killed in the neighboring Rukum district, officials said. Some 184 people were injured.

Most of the houses in Jajarkot — usually made

by stacking rocks and logs — either collapsed or were severely damaged by the sudden earthquake, while the few concrete houses in towns were also damaged. The majority of those killed were crushed by debris.

Thousands spent Saturday night in the bitter cold.

People used whatever they could find to set up shelter for the night, using plastic sheets and old clothes to keep them warm. Most people have been unable to retrieve their belongings from under the rubble.

Nepal's government said it is trying to get aid to affected areas.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the earthquake had a preliminary magnitude of 5.6 and occurred at a depth of 11 miles. Nepal's National Earthquake Monitoring & Research Center confirmed the epicenter was in Jajarkot, which is about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

FTX founder convicted of cryptocurrency fraud

NY NEW YORK — FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried’s spectacular rise and fall in the cryptocurrency industry — a journey that included his testimony before Congress, a Super Bowl advertisement and dreams of a run for president — hit rock bottom when a jury convicted him of fraud for stealing at least \$10 billion from customers and investors.

After the monthlong trial, jurors rejected Bankman-Fried’s claim during testimony in Manhattan federal court that he never committed fraud or meant to cheat customers before FTX, once the world’s second-largest crypto exchange, collapsed into bankruptcy a year ago.

He was convicted of two counts of wire fraud, two counts of wire fraud conspiracy and three other conspiracy charges, which carry potential penalties adding up to 110 years in prison.

Ex-police officer pleads guilty in Nichols’ death

TN MEMPHIS — A former Memphis police officer pleaded guilty in the fatal beating of Tyre Nichols in exchange for prosecutors recommending a 15-year sentence, becoming the first of five officers charged in the case to admit guilt.

Desmond Mills Jr. entered his plea at the Memphis federal courthouse as part of a larger agreement under which he will also plead guilty to related charges in state court. It wasn’t immediately clear if any of the other officers would follow suit.

Attorneys for three of the officers declined to comment and William Massey, the lawyer for Emmitt Martin, said in a text message that they “will stay the course” with the former officer’s criminal defense.

Mills pleaded guilty to federal charges of excessive force and obstruction of justice and agreed to cooperate with prosecutors.

Pilot accused of threat is USAF Reserve officer

WY CHEYENNE — A pilot accused of threatening to shoot a commercial airline captain if they diverted their flight to give a passenger medical attention is an Air Force Reserve lieutenant colonel who was relieved of command for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine.

Jonathan J. Dunn’s military service came to light in a Utah U.S. Attorney’s Office filing in which a judge was asked to delay his arraignment for 45 to 60 days to allow time for the U.S. military to bring Dunn back from overseas.

Dunn was indicted Oct. 18 and charged with interfering with a flight crew over the alleged in-flight incident in August 2022. The Transportation Department’s inspector general had said Dunn threatened to shoot the captain during the disagreement over whether to divert because of the passenger’s medical issue.

Road shut after visitors allegedly try to hold bear

NC ASHEVILLE — A section of the scenic Blue Ridge Parkway in western

North Carolina has been closed temporarily after the National Park Service said it received multiple reports of visitors feeding and attempting to hold a young bear.

The 8-mile closure just northeast of Asheville stretches from milepost 367.6 near the Craggy Gardens Picnic Area to milepost 375.6 at Ox Creek Road. National Park Service officials blocked off the road and said it will remain closed until further notice.

The recent bear interactions allegedly took place at the Lane Pinnacle Overlook, a popular high-elevation viewpoint, at the height of leaf-peeping season.

The temporary closure is necessary to protect bears and park visitors alike, said Blue Ridge Parkway Superintendent Tracy Swartout.

Pair charged after taking teen for abortion

ID POCATELLO — An Idaho woman and her son have been charged with kidnapping after prosecutors said they took the son’s minor girlfriend out of state to get an abortion.

Court documents showed Idaho police began investigating the mother and son earlier this summer after a 15-year-old girl’s mother told authorities her daughter had been sexually assaulted and later taken to Oregon to have an abortion.

With some narrow technical exceptions, abortion is banned throughout pregnancy in Republican-controlled Idaho. The procedure is legal in left-leaning Oregon, prompting many patients to cross the state border for abortion services, a

trend anti-abortion opponents have struggled to stifle.

The girl told officials that she began having a consensual sexual relationship with her boyfriend when he was 17 and she was 15.

The relationship continued when he turned 18, right around when the girl said she became pregnant.

According to court documents, the girl said she was “happy” when she found out she was pregnant, but her boyfriend was not — warning that he would not pay for child support and that he would end their relationship.

State funded some trips for senator in sex case

ND BISMARCK — A former North Dakota legislator charged with traveling to Prague with the intent of paying for sex with a minor used state funds to pay for at least three trips to that city and to other destinations in Europe, according to a group that organized the travel.

Travel records from the North Dakota School Boards Association showed that former state senator Ray Holmberg, 79, used public funding for trips in 2011, 2018 and 2019 to Prague in the Czech Republic and to other cities, including Amsterdam and Berlin.

It’s unclear whether the alleged conduct happened during the publicly funded trips. But the indictment says Holmberg traveled to Prague “from on or about June 24, 2011, to on or about Nov. 1, 2016 ... for the purpose of engaging in any illicit sexual conduct.”

-From Associated Press



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College hoops coaches become CEOs

Associated Press

Virginia coach Tony Bennett has been around college basketball for most of his life.

His father, Dick Bennett, was a Division III coach during his formative years in the 1960s and '70s, and later coached at Green Bay, Wisconsin and Washington State. Tony played for his dad in college before a brief career in the NBA and overseas, and then got his own coaching start on his bench with the Badgers, the father-son duo ultimately taking them to the Final Four.

The game changed over Dick's four decades in coaching — the shot clock and 3-point line were introduced, TV brought the game to the masses — but nothing like the transfer portal has changed it since the younger Bennett took over for pops at Washington State in 2006.

The transfer portal along with name, image and likeness legislation have turned Bennett and his brethren into defacto CEOs, businessmen as much as coaches. Not only must they continue to recruit high school players, but they must also mine the transfer market while ceaselessly recruiting the players already on their roster, lest they slip away to a program offering

more playing time or, yes, more NIL money than they are able to scrounge up themselves.

"You can't stick your head in the sand and say, 'This is exactly how it was,'" Tony Bennett said. "You adjust. You make changes. But you still hold dear and hold true to what matters to you and your program, and you find the guys that will buy into it."

That is harder than ever, though. And the margins between success and failure are shrinking.

College football coaches bring in upwards of 25 new players each recruiting cycle, and that makes it easier to absorb the loss of a player who decides to transfer. Their basketball equivalents might land four or five each year, and they must not only be good but also loyal, or their coaches could find themselves with a barren roster in the time it takes to blow a whistle.

Those coaches capable of best managing that minefield are the most likely to find themselves playing for a championship.

"I will tell you that there's more to it," Duke coach Jon Scheyer said. "It's not just talking about brand. You think about

the new CBA (in the NBA) with the guys we're recruiting — they're at such a high level, you're not talking making a few million bucks. If they knock it out of the park, you're talking about hundreds of millions of dollars that are at stake. So our thing is, our track record with guys, the job we've done, but also the brand that Duke has.

"There's a true dollar amount behind that," Scheyer continued, "but it's still going to be a bigger decision than just money. It's still a bigger decision than even just basketball. That's ultimately why we want our guys to choose Duke. But the CEO role is fair. I spend way more time doing other things besides basketball, because you have to. It's just, you have to."

After the Huskies won their fifth national title last season, they watched a trio of stars head to the NBA and four more transfer elsewhere. That left Danny Hurley to reinforce his roster with Rutgers transfer Cam Spencer and a five-man freshman class that just might be the envy of the other 351 coaches in Division I basketball this season.

Kansas, which won the title two years ago, leaned more on transfers to complement a

three-man freshman class and produce a roster that earned it a spot as preseason No. 1 in the AP Top 25. The headliner is Michigan transfer Hunter Dickinson, arguably the most coveted player in the portal in years, who had overtures from Kentucky, Villanova and just about everyone else.

Lest anyone think NIL wasn't a factor in picking the Jayhawks, Dickinson acknowledged as much when he addressed angry Michigan fans on his "Roundball" podcast in May: "The people hating on me would leave their job right now for a \$10,000 (pay) increase," he said. "I got, at Michigan, less than six figures. I got less than six figures at Michigan for the year."

It's not clear what Dickinson will make at Kansas. Apparently, more than six figures.

It is also not entirely clear how much Jayhawks coach Bill Self had to do with lining up Dickinson's NIL package. What would have once landed a coach in NCAA trouble now is simply another responsibility, and one that doesn't sit well with many who still remember when their job was about X's and O's rather than dollar signs and bottom lines.

Mahomes, Chiefs hang on to beat Dolphins in Germany

Associated Press

FRANKFURT, Germany — Patrick Mahomes threw two touchdown passes, safety Bryan Cook scored on a 59-yard fumble return, and the Kansas City Chiefs held on to beat the Miami Dolphins 21-14 on Sunday at Deutsche Bank Park.

The Chiefs (7-2) did just enough to slow the NFL's top-ranked offense in the first-ever regular-season game in Frankfurt, but nearly blew a big lead.

Miami's comeback fell short when quarterback Tua Tago-

vailoa couldn't handle a snap on fourth-and-10 from the Kansas City 31 with 1:03 to play.

Mahomes connected on first-half scoring passes to Rashee Rice and Jerick McKinnon as Miami (6-3) kept getting stuck in third-and-long situations. The Dolphins also fell to 0-3 on the season against teams with winning records.

Mahomes finished 20-for-30 for a season-low 185 yards in his European debut, but the Chiefs' offense struggled in the second half. Tight end Travis Kelce

had just three catches for 14 yards.

Three Chiefs players combined to put Kansas City up 21-0 just before halftime on one of the top defensive plays of the season so far.

And it came at the expense of former teammate Tyreek Hill.

With the Dolphins driving late in the first half, cornerback Trent McDuffie stuffed Hill on a short pass in the flat and stripped the ball from the All-Pro receiver. Mike Edwards scooped it up and after Hill

tried to tackle him, Edwards lateraled to Cook, who returned it for the score.

Hill finished with a team-high eight catches for 62 yards.

Taylor Swift was a no-show, as was Miami's offense early on. The only thing more surprising than Miami's first-half struggles on offense was referee Clay Martin making a "false start" call in German in the first quarter.

Miami hadn't been shut out in the first half of a game since Week 2 of the 2021 season.

Top teams survive more than separate

Associated Press

A separation weekend in the Big 12 and Southeastern Conference turned into a survive-and-advance Saturday around college football.

It's November. Just win. Don't fret over the how.

No. 1 Georgia got all it could handle from No. 14 Missouri and No. 8 Alabama won a score-fest with No. 13 LSU to put the SEC superpowers on a collision course for another championship game meeting.

If you counted out Jalen Milroe and the Crimson Tide after a shaky September, shame on you.

Elsewhere, No. 3 Ohio State was trailing at the half to Rutgers for the first time ever before pulling away in the fourth quarter; No. 4 Florida State didn't shake Pitt until late in the third quarter; No. 5 Washington leaned on its running game to win a shootout with No. 24 USC; and No. 7 Texas needed overtime to beat No. 25 Kansas State after blowing a 20-point lead.

The Longhorns' fellow South-

eastern Conference-bound Big 12 rival was unable to complete the mission.

In the final Bedlam game in the Big 12 — and for the foreseeable future — Oklahoma State gave No. 10 Oklahoma an unfriendly parting gift.

Ollie Gordon II and the resurgent Cowboys handed the Sooners a second straight loss, crippling their now erstwhile rivals' Big 12 championship and College Football Playoff hopes.

It's been a remarkable in-season turnaround for Cowboys coach Mike Gundy, whose team started 2-2 and has now won five straight.

Gundy's been one of the nation's best coaches for more than a decade at his alma mater, but Bedlam victories have been rare. He is only 4-15 against Oklahoma, but this one might count extra.

"There's only one Oklahoma and it ends with State. And it ends with State," said Gordon, who has gone over 100 yards rushing in six straight games.

The Sooners' big turnaround season after coach Brent Venables' first resulted in a rare losing record in Norman has taken a hit. Beating Texas last month vaulted the Sooners into the top 10, but it looks as if there is still plenty of building to be done as they head to the SEC next year.

For about 40 minutes against Kansas State, Texas looked like it was on its way to making it Statement Saturday.

The Longhorns jumped out to a 27-7 lead in the second half before it all unraveled and K-State forced overtime with a last-second field goal.

Down three and with a first-and-goal, the Wildcats went nowhere and were left with a fourth-and-goal from the 4. Instead of kicking for the tie, Kansas State went for it and the Texas pass rush blew up the play.

Kansas State coach Chris Klieman made a call sure to be debated in the bottom of the first and only OT period. Klieman said he had no regrets at all.

"I'm upset that we lost, but

watching what our guys were able to do in the second half was pretty special," he said.

What became most apparent Saturday in Austin is the Longhorns could really use their starting quarterback back.

Maalik Murphy started again for the injured Quinn Ewers (shoulder) and was all kinds of shaky (19-for-37 for 248 yards), missing some easy throws and throwing two interceptions that fueled the Kansas State comeback.

Texas has not won the Big 12 since 2009. It was the favorite to do so heading into its last year in the conference, and still should be considered that. But losing to Oklahoma means the Longhorns don't have much room for error down the stretch.

The five-way tie atop the Big 12 at the start of the day was down to two by the end: Texas and Oklahoma State have a one-game lead over Oklahoma, Kansas State, Iowa State and Kansas, which beat the Cyclones in Ames.

Army forces 6 TOs, hands No. 17 Air Force first loss

Associated Press

DENVER — Army wrecked No. 17 Air Force's perfect season — and then some.

Nothing like beating a rival to salvage — or jump-start — a season that hasn't gone according to plan for the Black Knights.

Quarterback Bryson Daily ran for 170 yards and two touchdowns, Army's swarming defense forced six turnovers and the Black Knights knocked Air Force from the list of undefeated teams with a 23-3 win on Saturday.

Daily and the Black Knights entered as an 18½-point underdog, according to FanDuel Sportsbook. But they quickly set the tone with a dominant opening half in which they led 23-3. A stunned and staggered Falcons

team never got on track in front of 52,401 fans at Empower Field at Mile High in Denver.

"We kind of were overlooked for sure," Army linebacker Leo Lowin said. "We haven't had a great season. We saw this as a huge opportunity to turn that around, turn that in our favor."

The mistake-prone Falcons (8-1) had four fumbles, threw two interceptions, missed a 32-yard field goal and turned the ball over twice on downs as their best start since 1985 came to a halt. They entered the day as one of eight undefeated major college football teams.

"We had high expectations to come out here and win this game and we didn't. So we're very disappointed," said Air Force tailback John Lee Eldridge III,

whose team was held without a touchdown for the first time since Nov. 4, 2017, against Army. "We just didn't go out there and execute on the small things like we usually do."

Army (3-6) snapped a five-game skid and moved into the driver's seat to hoist the Commander in Chief's Trophy. The Black Knights need to beat Navy on Dec. 9 to claim the prize in the annual round-robin competition between the service academies. Air Force can retain the trophy if Army loses to the Midshipmen.

The CIC Trophy outright winner earns a trip to the White House and, of course, bragging rights.

Daily set the tone early with a 62-yard TD run less than two

minutes into the game. He's been banged up but carried the ball 36 times.

"He's just a tough kid," Army coach Jeff Monken said. "You could hit him with a sledgehammer 36 times and he'll get back up and he'll go again. ... That's just who he is."

Lowin led a menacing defensive performance with 12 tackles, a sack, two forced fumbles and a fumble recovery. The Black Knights were constantly pressuring Air Force quarterback Zac Larrier.

The senior Larrier turned the ball over four times, including twice being picked off by cornerback Bo Nicolas-Paul. Larrier lost for the first time as a starter after tying the program mark for a QB by going 8-0.

76ers beat Suns for 4th straight win

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The 76ers needed a lift from a big man out of Kansas each time the undermanned Suns made a run at the lead.

Joel Embiid?

Sure, the NBA MVP did his part with another double-double and even got to watch the fourth quarter from the bench.

But the former Jayhawk with the big buckets in this one — 17 points at the half — was Kelly Oubre Jr. The early surprise of the season, Oubre has done more than fit in with the Sixers; he found a way to stand out with his third 20-point game already.

Embiid had 26 points and 11 rebounds, Oubre scored 25 points and the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Phoenix Suns 112-100 on Saturday for their fourth straight win.

With Bradley Beal (back

spasms) and Devin Booker (sprained left ankle) sitting out, the Suns faltered in the fourth and lost their third straight game. Kevin Durant kept the Suns within striking range until late with 31 points. He made 12 of 14 free throws.

Tyrese Maxey overcame a slow start and had 22 points and 10 assists. Tobias Harris added 18 points and 10 rebounds for the Sixers.

The Sixers will go as far as Embiid and Maxey, who turned 23 on Saturday, will take them and neither one could get going in the first half. They combined for just a 7-for-23 effort from the floor.

Embiid was also whistled for a flagrant foul when he socked Jusuf Nurkic in the face with an elbow. Maxey bounced one into double coverage that led to a Suns bucket.

The 76ers were instead steered by another solid outing from Harris and Oubre.

Nuggets 123, Bulls 101: Nikola Jokic had 28 points, 16 rebounds and nine assists, Michael Porter Jr. scored a season-best 27 and host Denver overcame the loss of point guard Jamal Murray to defeat Chicago.

Aaron Gordon had 15 points and 12 rebounds for defending NBA champion Denver, which has won all four of its home games.

Celtics 124, Nets 112: Jayson Tatum had 32 points and 11 rebounds to lead unbeaten Boston over host Brooklyn.

Tatum was one of five players to finish in double-figure scoring for the Celtics, who improved to 5-0 this season.

Magic 120, Lakers 101: Franz Wagner scored 26 points,

and Paolo Banchero added 25 points, 10 assists and seven rebounds as host Orlando routed Los Angeles.

Hornets 125, Pacers 124: Mark Williams scored 27 points, Gordon Hayward had 23 and visiting Charlotte snapped a three-game losing streak by beating Indiana.

Timberwolves 123, Jazz 95: Karl-Anthony Towns scored 15 of his season-high 25 points in a dominant third-quarter stretch, and host Minnesota pulled away to beat Utah.

Rockets 107, Kings 89: Dillon Brooks scored 12 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter to lead host Houston past Sacramento.

Hawks 123, Pelicans 105: Trae Young had 22 points and 12 assists, and visiting Atlanta defeated New Orleans to extend its winning streak to four games.

Sharks suffer NHL record-tying 11th loss in a row

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Reilly Smith and Jake Guentzel each had two goals and two assists, Evgeni Malkin also scored twice and the Pittsburgh Penguins beat San Jose 10-2 on Saturday night, handing the Sharks their NHL record-tying 11th straight loss to start the season and second straight while allowing 10 goals.

Smith set the tone with two first-period goals as the Penguins — who had lost five of their last six — got back on track against the team with the league's worst record. Guentzel's goal early in the second that pushed Pittsburgh's lead to 3-0 was the 200th of his career.

Bryan Rust had a goal and three assists, and Vinnie Hinostroza, Kris Letang and Matt Nieto also scored for Pittsburgh. Tristan Jarry had 24 saves.

Penguins captain Sidney Crosby played in his 1,200th ca-

reer game, becoming the first player in franchise history and 10th active player to reach the mark. Crosby assisted on Letang's goal in the second period.

Red Wings 5, Bruins 4: David Perron had the go-ahead goal and two assists and host Detroit scored three times in the third period to hand Boston its first regulation loss of the season.

Kings 5, Flyers 0: Cam Talbot made 24 saves in his first shutout of the season and 29th overall, and visiting Los Angeles beat Philadelphia to extend its points streak to six games.

Capitals 2, Blue Jackets 1: Charlie Lindgren made 35 saves, Tom Wilson scored an early goal for his third of the season and host Washington held off Columbus for its fourth victory in five games.

Golden Knights 7, Avalanche 0: Mark Stone became the first

Vegas player to score two short-handed goals in a game as part of a four-point effort and Adin Hill made 41 saves in a victory over visiting Colorado.

Predators 5, Oilers 2: Ryan O'Reilly had three goals and an assist and visiting Nashville beat Edmonton to end a two-game losing streak.

Wild 5, Rangers 4 (SO): Mats Zuccarello and Matt Boldy scored in the shootout and host Minnesota beat New York after coming back from a three-goal deficit.

Sabres 6, Maple Leafs 4: Alex Tuch scored twice and visiting Buffalo overcame Auston Matthews' third hat trick of the season to beat Toronto.

Hurricanes 4, Islanders 3 (OT): Sebastian Aho scored 1:14 into overtime and visiting Carolina rallied from three goals down to beat New York.

Blues 6, Canadiens 3: Brayden Schenn and Jordan Kyrrou

each had a goal and two assists, and host St. Louis beat Montreal.

Blackhawks 5, Panthers 2: Connor Bedard scored in the second period and Philipp Kurashev had a goal and two assists, helping host Chicago beat Florida.

Flames 6, Kraken 3: Yegor Sharangovich and Mikael Backlund scored early in the third period to lift visiting Calgary past Seattle.

Jets 5, Coyotes 3: Nino Niederreiter scored three goals and Brenden Dillon got his first two of the season, leading visiting Winnipeg past Arizona.

Lightning 6, Senators 4: Brayden Point had three goals and an assist to help visiting Tampa Bay beat Ottawa.

Canucks 2, Stars 0: Thatcher Demko made 27 saves in his second shutout of the season in host Vancouver's victory over Dallas.