

Cease-fire in Gaza set for Friday

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — A four-day cease-fire in Gaza between Israel and Hamas will begin Friday morning, Qatar said, a day later than originally announced, as negotiators worked out final details of the deal, which is to lead to the release of dozens of hostages held by militants and Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

The diplomatic breakthrough promised some relief for the 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza who have endured weeks of Israeli bombardment, as well as families in Israel fearful for the fate of their loved ones taken captive during Hamas' Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war. The deal appeared to hit a last-minute snag when Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, announced a one-day delay late Wednesday, without providing a reason. The cease-fire was originally set to begin Thursday morning.

On Thursday, Majed al-Ansari, a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry of Qatar, which played a key role in mediating with Hamas, announced the cease-fire will start at 7 a.m. local time Friday (5 a.m. GMT.)

Rising toll in Gaza

The Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Ga-

za, meanwhile, resumed its detailed count of Palestinian casualties from the war, saying over 13,300 have been killed. The new numbers were not fully broken down, but in past tallies, women and minors have consistently made up around two-thirds of the dead.

The figures do not include updated numbers from hospitals in the north, where services and communication largely broke down earlier this month. The ministry says some 6,000 people have been reported missing and are feared to be buried under rubble.

The ministry does not differentiate between civilians and militants in its death tolls. Israel says it has killed thousands of Hamas fighters, without presenting evidence for its count.

Some say truce won't end war

The truce agreement had raised hopes of eventually winding down the war, which has leveled vast swaths of Gaza, fueled a surge of violence in the occupied West Bank, and stirred fears of a wider conflagration across the Middle East.

Air raid sirens sounded across northern Israel on Thursday as Hezbollah said it

fired 48 Katyusha rockets from southern Lebanon. The barrage came after an Israeli strike killed five Hezbollah fighters.

The Israeli military said it was striking the sources of the launches. Israel and Hezbollah, which fought a monthlong war in 2006, have repeatedly traded fire across the border since the war in Gaza broke out.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to continue the war after the truce expires, with the goal of destroying Hamas' military capabilities, ending its 16-year rule in Gaza and returning all of the estimated 240 captives held in Gaza by Hamas and other groups.

"We will continue it until we achieve all our goals," Netanyahu said, adding that he had delivered the same message in a phone call to President Joe Biden. The United States has provided extensive military and diplomatic support to Israel since the start of the war.

The delay in implementing the cease-fire dismayed uprooted Palestinians in Gaza, who hope to use the few days of quiet to visit homes they fled — or at least the wreckage of them — and to reconnect with families after the massive dispersal caused by the Israeli assault.

Ukraine: Russia attacks suburb with cluster bombs

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — A Russian attack using cluster munitions killed three people Thursday in a suburb of Ukraine's southern city of Kherson, a Ukrainian official said, bringing the number of civilians to die in a day of war to at least six.

Five people were wounded in what Ukrainian Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said was heavy afternoon shelling of Kherson's Chornobayivka suburb. More than 60 residential and infrastructure buildings were damaged in the daylight attack, he said.

Cluster munitions — a type of bomb that opens in the air and releases smaller "bomblets" across a wide area — are used by both Russia and Ukraine, which has received them as military aid from the United States. Critics say the weapons litter the ground and harm and kill many more civilians than combatants.

Of military significance and lying on the war's long front line, the Kherson region has been a stage for heavy fighting. Ukrainian troops last week reported gaining multiple bridgeheads on the Russian-held east-

ern side of the Dnieper River.

Before the afternoon attack, Russian forces fired at other parts of the province with eight nighttime artillery barrages, killing a 42-year-old man in his apartment building and wounding another man, the Ukrainian presidential office said.

Russian shelling also killed two people in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, the office said.

It was not possible to independently verify the reports. Long-range Russian shelling that hits civilian areas has been a hallmark of Moscow's 21-month

war in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Russian state media reported that TV journalist Boris Maksudov died after being wounded in a drone attack while working in southern Ukraine's Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia region.

Maksudov, who worked for Russian state television channel Russia 24, was hit Wednesday while working on a story about Ukraine allegedly shelling civilians, according to Russia's Ministry of Defense. Zaporizhzhia is one of the four Ukrainian regions that Russia illegally annexed last year.

USAF base denies political bias claims

Associated Press

Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota is defending itself from claims of political bias after an unofficial message cautioning airmen to not attend a conservative political rally began circulating on social media.

At issue is the Dakota Patriot Rally, an event held Friday in Minot featuring a pro-Donald Trump group known as Turning Point Action. The group's founder is Charlie Kirk, a white conservative agitator who has built a following inflaming racial divides. For instance, "scumbag" is how he has described George Floyd, the Black man whose murder at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer set off a global reckoning over racial injustice.

A message that was re-posted to a public Facebook page and was purported to be from base leadership described the group as an "alt-right organization." It said that "participation with groups such as Turning Point Action could jeopardize their continued service in the U.S. military."

The outcry was immediate, with Republican U.S. Sen. Kevin Cramer, of North Dakota, and Kirk among those denouncing the message.

The base responded Tuesday that the initial message was based "on incorrect data and sent outside of official base messaging platforms." It said that it subsequently corrected the message traffic to categorize the event as a local political fundraiser and stressed that there was no issue with military members participating as long as they complied with regulations.

"All Air Force Airmen have a Constitutional right to freedom of assembly," the post said.

But Cramer said in a news release Tuesday that a "greater apology is needed." He said he spoke with Gen. David Allvin, chief of staff of the U.S. Air Force, about what he described as a "biased and misguided official communication."

He said Allvin indicated that the base issued an internal correction within an hour. Why then, Cramer asked, did it take days for the base to issue a statement on its official website and Facebook page?

"It's disgusting to me that anybody in our Air Force today would consider a Turning Point USA event anything other than a pro-American, patriotic, and frankly, pro-military group," Cramer said.

Navy's top officer visits Reagan for Thanksgiving

BY ALEX WILSON

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Just days after returning from a monthslong deployment, the crew aboard the USS Ronald Reagan celebrated Thanksgiving alongside the Navy's highest-ranking officer and most senior enlisted sailor.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy James Honea boarded the carrier in its berth at Yokosuka on Thursday. They helped reenlist 10 sailors and then joined the crew for a Thanksgiving feast.

"Traditionally, our supply department goes all out for Thanksgiving, whether we're in port or on deployment," Senior Chief Matthew White told Stars and Stripes during the meal.

Between bites of turkey and prime rib — carved and served by Franchetti and Honea — the sailors rubbed shoulders with the distinguished visitors and discussed their personal and professional lives.

Meeting Franchetti, who was confirmed as the first female chief of naval operations on Nov. 2, was especially inspiring for Petty Officer 1st Class Brit-tany Robinson.

"I think it's awesome she's paving the way for women," the aviation ordnanceman told

Stars and Stripes during the feast. "If she can do it, we can do it, too."

Dozens of family members joined about 120 sailors in the carrier's aft enlisted mess hall, where food was served to anyone, on or off duty.

The carrier returned to Yokosuka on Sunday after concluding an annual Indo-Pacific patrol that began May 23.

Ahead of the meal, Franchetti voiced her appreciation to the family members who sacrifice and hold down the fort while their sailor is away.

"They are the glue that holds our Navy together; they're your family and your support team," she said during a brief speech ahead of the meal. "They sacrifice a lot for us, and they make a difference, so I want to say thank you for that."

Honea echoed those sentiments and acknowledged the family members who can't see their sailors on Thanksgiving.

"We get deployed all over the world, and sometimes we have to leave our extended families back home — our brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, moms and dads," he told the crowd. "Wherever you happen to be, you have to make new connections; we become one another's brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles."

Navy probes death of submariner at Wash. state base

BY GARY WARNER

Stars and Stripes

The Navy is investigating the death of a ballistic-missile submarine crewmember whose body was found Tuesday at his apartment on Navy Base Kitsap, just west of Seattle.

Navy Lt. Corey T. Jones, spokesman for Submarine Group 9, the component of the

Pacific Fleet's missiles submarines based in Puget Sound, confirmed the death in an email on Wednesday.

The sailor's name, rank and cause of death are being withheld pending notification of his next of kin, Jones said.

The Naval Criminal Investigative Service is making an official inquiry.

The Navy said the sailor was assigned to the "blue crew" of the USS Henry M. Jackson, an Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine. Each missile submarine maintains two full crews — named "blue" and "gold" for the Navy's official colors. The crews alternate deployments, allowing the submarine to maximize time on patrol while giv-

ing crewmembers long periods ashore for training and recreation.

The Navy is still investigating the Oct. 22 death of a crew member of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz as a possible suicide. The Kitsap County Medical Examiner's Office has independently determined the cause of death as suicide.

Black Friday deals to tempt consumers

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Retailers are kicking off the unofficial start of the holiday shopping season on Friday with a bevy of discounts and other enticements. But executives are growing concerned with a spending slowdown that could temper sales on the day after Thanksgiving as well as throughout the holidays.

Shoppers, powered by a solid job market and steady wage growth, had demonstrated a resilience that confounded economists and ran counter to sour sentiments expressed in opinion

polls. Such spending, while cautious, came despite higher prices in the grocery aisle and higher borrowing costs.

But consumers are now coming under more pressure from dwindling savings, increased credit card debt and still stubborn inflation. In fact, shoppers cut their buying in October, ending six straight months of gains. Shoppers have gotten some relief from easing inflation, but many goods and services like meat and rent are still far higher than they were just three years ago.

The latest quarterly results

from a string of retailers from Walmart to Best Buy have reported a weakening consumer. Walmart said it noticed shoppers cutting back in October and offered a muted annual sales outlook. Best Buy, the nation's largest retailer, said shoppers are trading down to cheaper TVs. And Target said shoppers are waiting longer to buy items. For example, instead of buying sweatshirts or denim back in August or September, they held out until the weather turned cold.

"It's clear that consumers have been remarkably resilient," Tar-

get's CEO Brian Cornell told analysts last week. "Yet in our research, things like uncertainty, caution and managing a budget are top of mind."

Even luxury retailers are noting their shoppers are feeling pinched.

"We're taking a measured approach. There's been some softening," said Marc Metrick, CEO of Saks Fifth Avenue's standalone online business, Saks. "I don't think (the holiday season) is going to be some horrible business nor is it going to be some kind of explosive holiday season."

Anti-Islam populist Wilders wins big in Dutch elections

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — The party of anti-Islam populist Geert Wilders won a huge general election victory in the Netherlands, according to a nearly complete vote count early Thursday, that showed a stunning lurch to the far right for a nation once famed as a beacon of tolerance.

The result will send shock waves through Europe, where far-right ideology is on the rise, and puts Wilders in line to lead talks to form the next governing coalition and possibly become the first far-right prime minis-

ter of the Netherlands.

"It is going to happen that the PVV is in the next Cabinet," Wilders said, using the Dutch abbreviation for his Party for Freedom.

With nearly all votes counted, Wilders' party was forecast to win 37 seats in the 150-seat lower house of parliament, two more than predicted by an exit poll when voting finished Wednesday night and more than double the 17 the party secured in the last election.

Wilders got a standing ovation when he met his lawmakers at the parliament building

Thursday morning.

"Can you imagine it? 37 seats!" he said to cheers.

Other political parties were holding separate meetings to discuss the election's outcome before what is likely to be an arduous process of forming a new governing coalition begins Friday.

Wilders' election program included calls for a referendum on the Netherlands leaving the European Union, a total halt to accepting asylum-seekers and migrant pushbacks at Dutch borders.

It also advocates the "de-Islam-

mization" of the Netherlands. He says he wants no mosques or Islamic schools in the country, although he has been milder about Islam during this election campaign than in the past.

In a statement on its website, the Dutch branch of Amnesty International said: "Yesterday human rights lost. A racist party won the Dutch elections."

Although known for his harsh rhetoric, Wilders began courting other right-wing and centrist parties by saying in a victory speech that whatever policies he pushes will be "within the law and constitution."

Axl Rose accused in '89 rape of model in NYC lawsuit

New York Daily News

NEW YORK — Guns N' Roses frontman Axl Rose was accused of brutally raping a Penthouse model and dragging her on the floor "like a caveman" in a New York City hotel room more than 30 years ago in a lawsuit brought Wednesday on the eve of the Adult Survivors Act expiring.

In searing detail, Sheila Kennedy's Manhattan Supreme Court lawsuit describes Rose violently attacking her in a luxury

Central Park West hotel suite in February 1989 after meeting her at a nightclub earlier that night.

"Kennedy had just witnessed Rose violently have sex with another woman. He dragged Kennedy to his bedroom like a caveman and acted with uncontrolled fury. Rose had physically stopped her from leaving. Kennedy was trapped," the complaint charges.

"Rose then sexually assaulted Kennedy ... (He) made no at-

tempt to ask for or check that Kennedy was consenting. He treated her like property used solely for his sexual pleasure. He did not use a condom."

Rose denied the allegations through his attorney Alan Gutman. "Simply put, this incident never happened. Notably, these fictional claims were filed the day before the New York State filing deadline (for the Adult Survivors Act) expires," Gutman said in a statement.

"Mr. Rose has no recollection

of ever meeting or speaking to the Plaintiff, and has never heard about these fictional allegations prior to today. Mr. Rose is confident this case will be resolved in his favor."

Kennedy, 61, of Palm Springs, Calif., has spoken publicly about the alleged incident in recent years, including in her 2016 memoir, "No One's Pet." Her suit lists four causes of action — assault, battery, intentional infliction of emotional distress, and gender-motivated violence.

Shipped animals likely became reptile food

Los Angeles Times

In a nightmare scenario that has animal welfare advocates demanding answers, hundreds of small animals that were transferred from California to Arizona to find new homes likely ended up as reptile food.

“We are heartbroken for every one of these animals and every individual who shares our concern for them,” the Humane Societies of San Diego and of Southern Arizona, sister organizations, said in a joint statement earlier this month.

It was not clear how the animals ended up in the hands of a private company that sells live and frozen animals as feed, but a humane society executive has been fired and another one has resigned over the incident, which is under investigation by both organization and local authorities.

In August, the San Diego Humane Society transferred 323 small animals — including guinea pigs, rats, hamsters and rabbits — to the Humane Society of Southern Arizona. SDHS was over capacity for months, the organization said, and contacted the HSSA to help find the animals homes.

All animals arrived safely in Tucson on Aug. 7, the SDHS said in a statement in August. The San Diego group said it was informed the animals were transported to an anonymous, local private rescue with which the southern Arizona organization said it had “a long-standing history of successful partnership.”

But questions from employees and animal welfare advocates about the animals’ fate mounted, sparking investigations into the incident by both organizations and local authorities.

A joint statement from the two organizations issued Nov. 9 said the HSSA transferred more than 300 animals to Colten Jones, owner of the Fertile Turtle, a reptile farm business that sells both live and frozen animals for reptile feed.

Local Tucson television station KVOA reported it obtained a text message from Jones to a source who did not want to be publicly identified.

“Do you have the ability to freeze off a bunch of guinea pigs and or rabbits?” Jones asked in the text message, sent on Aug. 8, a day after the animals arrived in Tucson, according to KVOA. “I don’t have the manpower or labor to be able to do it in time for the show and it’s too much time for me.”

KVOA also reported that the “show” was referring to a reptile show in Pomona a few days later.

In their joint statement, the San Diego and Arizona humane organizations said the message “clearly indicates Mr. Jones’ intention to use these animals as feed instead of finding them adoptive homes.”

“We have a responsibility to seek definitive answers about the fate of these animals,” the organizations said. “We’ve consistently stated our commitment to pursuing legal action when warranted.”

The organizations said 62 animals were returned to the HSSA.

The Tucson Police Department is investigating the incident. According to the joint statement, the San Diego humane group said it is collaborating with its legal advisers “to advance both civil and criminal proceedings.” The Arizona humane organization said it is “considering legal action as well.”

Md. hate crime panel member suspended over Israel posts

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Maryland’s attorney general suspended a member of the state’s new commission aimed at addressing hate crimes this week after she posted on social media criticizing Israel’s actions in Gaza.

Attorney General Anthony Brown said in a news release Tuesday that his office recently learned about the personal social media posts of Zainab Chaudry, director of the Maryland chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

The Maryland Commission on Hate Crimes Response and Prevention is required to include a representative of CAIR along with other advocacy organizations. It was created by state lawmakers during the 2023 legislative session and began meeting last month. Brown has the authority to appoint its members as chair of the commission.

Brown said Chaudry’s mem-

bership has been temporarily suspended after she posted numerous times since Hamas invaded Israel on Oct. 7. He called on other commission members to “exercise great care in their communications and conduct.”

“Personal postings that could be reasonably perceived as hate speech may disrupt the ability of the Commission to accomplish its important work,” he said.

Chaudry joins a growing list of Americans facing professional repercussions for public comments about the war.

Chaudry’s Facebook posts since Israel declared war in Gaza in response to the Hamas attack have included images of Palestinian victims and claims that Israel is committing war crimes by indiscriminately attacking civilians. Along with calling for a cease-fire and the immediate return of all hostages, she wrote: “This isn’t a war. This is genocide.”

Work party at Calif. Taco Bell turned into out-of-control bash

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — A company Christmas potluck for employees of a Taco Bell in the LA community of San Pedro turned into a boozy bash, with one worker having sex with his wife in front of spectators and another vomiting into a guacamole bowl, according to a lawsuit by one of the employees.

The worker, Alana Bechiom, filed the lawsuit last week in Los Angeles Superior Court. She’s seeking unspecified damages.

When Bechiom reported the incident to human resources, the lawsuit claims, three co-workers who took part in the party were fired, but Bechiom said she was physically threatened and her car window was smashed, and she claims Taco Bell and the franchise owner did nothing to protect her against the threats.

The franchise owner, Alvarado Restaurant Group, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The alcohol-fueled party took place on Dec. 18, 2022, at the Taco Bell in San Pedro, according to court records.

When Bechiom walked in, the lawsuit claims, she noticed the windows in the restaurant were covered with wrapping paper, and the cameras in the Taco Bell lobby were also covered.

She had been socializing in the parking lot for a while but, when Bechiom walked back in, according to court records, she found one of her male co-workers was “having sex with his wife in front of everyone at the party.”

The co-worker’s wife, the lawsuit states, was bent over and kissing two other co-workers, including a supervisor, simultaneously.

Bechiom complained to her supervisor about what she saw, but the supervisor then threatened to fight her, according to the suit.

After she reported the incident, three of the employees were fired, the lawsuit claims.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Pilot killed as small plane crashes at strip mall

TX PLANO — A small plane crashed and burned Tuesday on the doorstep of a strip mall in Texas, killing the pilot and causing a nearby car to catch fire, but nobody on the ground was injured, authorities said.

The single-engine Mooney M20, with just the pilot aboard, went down at about 6 p.m. north of Air Park-Dallas Airport, the Federal Aviation Administration said.

Photos from the scene showed the wreckage in a parking space next to a nail salon and diner just outside of the shopping center in the Dallas suburb of Plano.

The crash caused a parked car to catch fire, but nobody was inside the vehicle, authorities said. Police confirmed the pilot died at the scene.

It wasn't immediately clear whether the plane was taking off or trying to land.

Governor streamlines flood victims' housing aid

VT MONTPELIER — Vermont Gov. Phil Scott took steps on Tuesday to streamline the building of temporary emergency housing for victims of the catastrophic summer flooding.

With winter approaching, Scott signed an addendum to his emergency declaration that temporarily suspends all state and local regulations that could prevent or slow the Federal Emergency Management Agency's plans to build the housing on city-owned property in Montpelier.

The city, however, said Tues-

day that it's unknown when the 20 trailers will go up on city property.

The July storm dumped two months' worth of rain in two days in Vermont, flooding Montpelier, the state capital, as well as other communities in central and southern Vermont.

Man convicted of killing girlfriend with a sword

CA REDWOOD CITY — A Northern California man was found guilty of first-degree murder for beheading his girlfriend with a samurai sword on a city street last year.

A San Mateo County jury returned the verdict against Jose Rafael Solano Landaeta, 34, on Monday and found an "aggravating factor" that he used a sword in the killing.

On Tuesday, jurors found that there were four other aggravating factors.

Karina Castro, the 27-year-old mother of Landaeta's then-1-year-old daughter, was killed outside her apartment in San Carlos on Sept. 8, 2022.

Witnesses testified that they saw the two arguing in the street before Landaeta got a sword from his car and attacked Castro as she ran.

Handgun licensing law struck down by US court

MD BALTIMORE — A federal appeals court on Tuesday struck down Maryland's handgun licensing law, finding that its requirements, which include submitting fingerprints for a background check and taking a four-hour firearms safety course, are unconstitutionally restrictive.

In a 2-1 ruling, judges on the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Ap-

peals in Richmond, Va., said they considered the case in light of a U.S. Supreme Court decision last year that "effected a sea change in Second Amendment law."

The underlying lawsuit was filed in 2016 as a challenge to a Maryland law requiring people to obtain a special license before purchasing a handgun. The law, which was passed in 2013 in the aftermath of the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., laid out a series of necessary steps for would-be gun purchasers: completing four hours of safety training that includes firing one live round, submitting fingerprints and passing a background check, being 21 and residing in Maryland.

The 4th Circuit opinion by Judge Julius Richardson directly references the Supreme Court decision last year that found Americans have a right to carry firearms in public for self-defense.

Process restarts for proposal stalled by typo

OH COLUMBUS — Backers of a proposal to change Ohio's troubled political mapmaking system will finally be able to start gathering signatures, after clearing a second round of state approvals Monday.

Citizens Not Politicians now has until July 3 to collect roughly 414,000 signatures required to put its constitutional amendment before voters in November 2024. Supporters are expected to fan out across the state beginning this week.

Their proposal would replace the current Ohio Redistricting Commission, made up of three

statewide officeholders and four state lawmakers, with an independent body selected directly by citizens.

The effort began with two early rounds of objections to their petition language by Republican Attorney General Dave Yost before wording was initially certified. The Ohio Ballot Board then unanimously cleared the measure in October, only for organizers to discover they had made a single-digit typo in a date. The mistake sent the process back to the drawing board.

Physicians, clinic: Block too-vague abortion law

ND BISMARCK — Physicians and the former, sole abortion provider in North Dakota on Tuesday asked a judge to block enforcement of part of a revised law that bans most abortions, saying a provision that allows the procedure to protect a woman's health is too vague.

North Dakota outlaws all abortions, except in cases where women could face death or a "serious health risk." People who perform abortions could be charged with a felony under the law, but patients would not.

Tuesday's request for a preliminary injunction asks the state district court judge to bar the state from enforcing the law against physicians who use their "good-faith medical judgment" to perform an abortion to treat pregnancy complications that could "pose a risk of infection, hemorrhage, high blood pressure, or which otherwise makes continuing a pregnancy unsafe."

— From wire reports

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Ohio State-Michigan: Stakes high again

Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — J.J. McCarthy says beating Ohio State means everything.

Ask any Buckeye, and he would say the same about Michigan.

A spot in the Big Ten championship game and a path to the College Football Playoff will be at stake when the second-ranked Buckeyes play the third-ranked Wolverines on Saturday at the Big House.

It will also mark the end of an era for one of the greatest rivalries in sports.

With the Big Ten expanding to 18 schools and eliminating divisions next season, there's a chance the Wolverines and Buckeyes will play two times in future years because it will be possible for them to match up in the conference title game after facing off in the regular season.

Michigan has turned things around in the series, which dates to 1897, with two straight wins after losing a school-record eight consecutive games to Ohio State.

"Being able to get on top of that rivalry this last two years has been huge," McCarthy said in an interview with The Associated Press. "And, we don't plan on being on the other side of that at all anymore."

Jim Harbaugh will not be on the sideline with his team for the third straight Saturday, serving the final game of a Big Ten suspension for being in charge of a program that the conference says broke its sportsmanship policy with a sign-stealing scheme.

Offensive coordinator Sherone Moore will fill in for Harbaugh, who also missed the first three games because of a school suspension for breaking NCAA rules, to match wits against Ohio State coach Ryan Day.

For the second straight year, both the Buckeyes (11-0, 8-0 Big Ten, No. 2 CFP) and Wolverines (11-0, 8-0, No. 3 CFP) will have perfect records when they meet.

Injury report

Day said it almost took a "fist fight" to keep four-year line-

backer Tommy Eichenberg out for a second straight game last week because of an arm injury.

Day had to convince Eichenberg, perhaps the top player on one of college football's best defenses, that it was important to have him healthy this week rather than risk injury on senior day at Ohio Stadium.

"Tommy will bring every single ounce of his person to this game, and he will fight to defend our honor," defensive coordinator Jim Knowles said.

Ohio State's banged-up safety, Josh Proctor, is expected to play, but the status of defensive lineman Mike Hall is less clear after he missed last week's game.

McCarthy said playing in the previous game was "a little bit rough" after getting injured in the victory at then-No. 9 Penn State, but insisted Monday that he feels fantastic.

Michigan's Roman Wilson, who has 10 receiving touchdowns, was knocked out of last week's game at Maryland with a first-quarter hit. Myles Hinton

started at left tackle against the Terrapins and had a knee injury, filling in for LaDarius Henderson, who missed the game with an injury. Linebacker Michael Barrett, the second-leading tackler on a top-ranked defense, left Maryland with his left shoulder wrapped.

Best of backs

The team with the most rushing yards in The Game has won every matchup since 2001, according to Sportradar, and both schools have a star running back behind an offensive line with future NFL players.

Michigan's Blake Corum, who played only briefly in last year's game because of a knee injury, has an FBS-high 20 rushing touchdowns to tie a school record.

Ohio State's TreVeyon Henderson has ignited the running game that is opened up by star receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. After missing three games with an injury, Henderson has run for an average of 124.8 yards with five touchdowns over the last four games.

Backups quarterbacks set to battle in the Swamp

Associated Press

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — No one could have imagined Tate Rodemaker and Max Brown would headline the latest matchup between in-state rivals Florida State and Florida.

But the backup quarterbacks will step into the brightest of spotlights when the fifth-ranked Seminoles (11-0) face the reeling Gators (5-6) in the Swamp on Saturday night. Is either one truly ready to handle the stage, the moment, the pressure?

"You try to make it to where the mindset is always the same because you never know," FSU coach Mike Norvell said. "But it's probably different for them."

Wildly different.

Rodemaker, a fourth-year junior, will make his second career start in place of the injured Jordan Travis. The Heisman Trophy contender suffered a season-ending injury to his left leg against North Alabama last week, leaving Rodemaker to try to fill

some of the biggest cleats in program history.

Rodemaker's only previous start came against lower-division Jacksonville State in 2020 and he's never played in a road venue quite like Florida Field after dark.

"He's played in pressure-packed situations where he's known he's been the guy," Norvell said. "Now, is it a step up when you're in college? Yes. But he's had to do that before, too. This will not be his first start that he's taken. ... He's been preparing for this."

"I'm not worried about any of the other factors other than just go play his game. I'm very confident what that'll look like."

The Gators say the same about Brown, who stepped in for injured starter Graham Mertz last week at Missouri. Mertz broke his left collarbone in the third quarter, and Brown helped the Gators take the lead in the waning minutes before suffering another defensive collapse.

Brown, a redshirt freshman, now will make his first start against a team that's won 17 consecutive games and has yet to allow 30 points this season.

"He's gained a lot of confidence," Florida receiver Ricky Pearsall said. "I think that's first and foremost the thing that I noticed the most. He's super excited for any opportunity he gets, which I think is super healthy."

The quarterbacks and their teams have plenty at stake, too.

Florida State dropped to fifth in the latest College Football Playoff standings following Travis' injury and likely needs to win out to have a shot at making the four-team playoff.

The Gators, who have lost four in a row, need a victory in the regular-season finale to become bowl eligible. It's also "senior night" for coach Billy Napier's team and a chance for Florida to essentially ruin its archrival's season.

Apple Cup focused on Washington's run

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Looking back at the on-field celebration of a blowout victory two years ago, the planting of the crimson flag on the purple “W” at midfield, was the day the current run of success for No. 4 Washington started.

Even if it came at the hands of watching a rival party on the Huskies' own field.

“Without that, who knows where we would be right now,” Washington tight end Jack Westover said. “I think it was one of the best things that ever happened to this program. I really do think that. It's kind of weird saying it that way, but I think without that, I don't think we'd be where we are right now.”

Where the Huskies are is on the brink of a magical season as they host rival Washington State on Saturday in the Apple Cup in a meeting that's overflowing with story lines.

It's the last Apple Cup with both members of the same conference, but the rivalry will continue because the schools

reached agreement on a five-year deal to keep playing. It also comes with the sidebar of the schools embroiled in litigation off the field.

But with the subplot of the future taken care of, the focus is squarely on Washington's chance at history trying to finish off an unbeaten regular season. Washington (11-0, 8-0 Pac-12) moved up to No. 4 in the College Football Playoff rankings this week and seems assured of a semifinal spot with a win over the Cougars and again next week in the Pac-12 championship game. The Huskies have won 18 straight games, including last week's 22-20 win at Oregon State, and since losing to Washington State two years ago the Huskies are 22-2.

“Now we got to reclaim our own field, it feels like,” Washington edge rusher Zion Tupuola-Fetui said. “There's so much that we have to motivate ourselves.”

Washington State (5-6, 2-6) would love nothing more than to blow up the hopes of its rival and pick up a second straight win at

Husky Stadium. The Cougars have the motivation of needing a win to reach bowl eligibility and last week rediscovered a little of the magic from their 4-0 start in a 56-14 rout of Colorado that snapped a six-game losing streak.

The Cougars have gone to a bowl in seven straight full seasons, but the only way that streak continues comes by pulling the upset. The last time the Cougars beat a top-five team on the road was 1988, when they knocked off No. 1 UCLA.

“I never understood the impact and the significance of this game until I actually became a Cougar,” Washington State wide receiver Lincoln Victor said. “My first year here obviously going to Seattle and winning and storming the field you can see the hope in people's eyes and really see the impact of what a game can truly do.”

Seeking perfection

While there is still the matter of what transpires next week in Las Vegas for Washington with the conference championship

game, finishing off a perfect regular season would be a rare accomplishment.

Washington has a chance to be the first Pac-12 team to go undefeated in conference play since Oregon in 2010 when it was still the Pac-10. No conference team has finished the regular season unblemished overall since USC in 2004.

“Job is not done. We still got work to do,” Washington coach Kalen DeBoer said.

Heisman finish

Washington QB Michael Penix Jr. is no longer the Heisman Trophy favorite, but he has a chance these final two weeks to make a final statement. Penix is coming off his worst game of the year statistically against Oregon State, throwing for only 162 yards, although conditions played a role.

Last season, Penix threw for 484 yards and had five total touchdowns against the Cougars and he'll still have the stage of the Pac-12 championship game to make a final push in his Heisman campaign.

Beavers want to douse Ducks' championship hopes

Associated Press

In the long and storied history of the rivalry game between Oregon and Oregon State, it's safe to say that there's never been a meeting so bittersweet.

The two teams have met 127 times in the fourth-most contested rivalry in the nation. But Friday's game at Autzen Stadium could be the last for the foreseeable future.

Sixth-ranked Oregon is departing for the Big Ten next season, and No. 15 Oregon State will stay as one of two remaining teams in the Pac-12 with Washington State.

While Washington and Washington State have agreed to continue the Apple Cup, no such deal has been struck between

the Ducks and the Beavers.

The finale of the state's long-standing rivalry simmers in the background as Oregon (10-1, 7-1, No. 6 CFP) needs a win to secure a berth in the Pac-12 championship game against No. 4 Washington.

The Huskies sealed their spot in the last conference championship (as the league currently stands) last weekend with a 22-20 victory over the Beavers. The winner of the title game on Dec. 1 could secure a spot in the playoffs for a shot at the national championship.

Oregon State (8-3, 5-3) could throw things into chaos with a victory over the Ducks.

Should the Beavers prevail, Oregon is certainly out of the

race for a national title, and a window would open for No. 16 Arizona to play in the conference championship — if the Wildcats (8-3, 6-2) can take care of Arizona State in the Territorial Cup in Tempe on Saturday.

“Our players understand exactly what's at stake here for this game,” Oregon coach Dan Lanning said. “They want to go out there and have their best performance and leave it up to them and not to something else.”

Out of the running for the conference title, Oregon State is jockeying for bowl position.

The Pac-12 has agreements with six bowls.

Normally the Rose Bowl is the

destination for the winner of the conference, but this year it is a College Football Playoff site.

“We try to stick to a process and approach. There's still plenty to play for,” Oregon State coach Jonathan Smith said. “These guys will be excited to play.”

Bo-Nanza

Oregon quarterback Bo Nix is among the favorites for the Heisman Trophy, along with LSU's Jayden Daniels and Washington's Michael Penix Jr.

Last week, he threw for six touchdowns in the Ducks' 49-13 victory over Arizona State — bringing his total to 35 passing TDs with just two interceptions. He's also run for five scores.

Bills' midseason additions paying off

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — The Buffalo Bills' defense is banged up. What else is new?

A few things, actually.

The significant contributions made by cornerback Rasul Douglas and defensive tackle Linval Joseph a mere three weeks following their arrival haven't gone unnoticed.

"It's pretty remarkable to be honest," safety Micah Hyde said, referring to Douglas, who had two interceptions and recovered a fumble in a 32-6 win over the Jets on Sunday. "Mid-season, coming in and learning the playbook and being able to go out there and not just know what he's doing, but to play fast is pretty impressive."

And then there's the 35-year-old Joseph, who has combined to play 79 snaps to stabilize the middle of Buffalo's defensive front.

"It's huge. It's huge," Hyde said. "For them to come in and step in and give us a little boost, a little energy is cool."

It's a boost the Bills (6-5) certainly needed after adding the veterans over a two-day span to reinforce a defense missing three starters.

Rasul, a seventh-year player, was acquired from Green Bay

on Oct. 31 to shore up a secondary that lost Tre'Davious White (torn Achilles tendon) in Week 4.

Joseph, now in his 14th NFL season, signed a day later to bulk up a line missing DaQuan Jones, who tore his pectoral muscle in Week 5. Buffalo lost linebacker Matt Milano to a season-ending right leg injury in the same game.

Rasul and Joseph were rushed into action.

Buffalo still ranks 10th in the NFL in yards allowed, down from sixth through four games. And the defense has dropped just two spots since to rank fourth in points allowed. The Bills will face the NFL-leading Philadelphia Eagles (9-1) on Sunday.

"The leadership they add to our room in addition to them on the field as players, I would say overall ... everybody has upped their game, and that's what we need moving forward," coach Sean McDermott said of a defense that could be further depleted this weekend.

Cornerbacks Taron Johnson and Dane Jackson are both in the concussion protocol, while backup safety Taylor Rapp is nursing a neck injury.

Douglas' two interceptions

against the Jets were Buffalo's first in seven games. He showed similar ball-hawking abilities during his two-plus seasons with the Packers.

Douglas credited the Bills' defensive system for being familiar, and a recent pep talk he got from receiver Stefon Diggs for smoothing his transition.

"Diggs just grabbed me before the game, and he was like, 'Bro, we brought you here to be you. Don't be out there thinking,'" he recalled.

Though he won a Super Bowl with the Eagles as a rookie in 2017, Douglas had difficulty finding his niche in the NFL. He lasted three seasons in Philadelphia before bouncing between several teams in 2020.

It wasn't until his arrival in Green Bay in 2021 when Douglas blossomed under then-Packers defensive backs coach Jerry Gray.

"I had a coach who actually knew the game and taught me to play the game how I played the game without restrictions," Douglas said. "He just gave me the freedom to just play football."

The Bills are providing him the same advice.

Joseph arrived with an accomplished résumé and a track

record of being ready despite being out of football since closing last season with Philadelphia in its Super Bowl loss to Kansas City. The 35-year-old didn't sign with the Eagles until mid-November last year and wound up starting all 11 games, including three in the playoffs.

The time he spent working out in the offseason not only paid off, but surprised Joseph, who said he didn't feel any soreness after registering two tackles over 30 snaps in his debut on Nov. 5.

"Body was fine, yeah. I was shocked just like you," Joseph said. "I took advantage of my opportunity and tried to show them that I'm here, I'm ready, and I'm gonna give you all I've got."

Coincidentally, the two are traveling to Philadelphia to face a team they both played for.

"It's been a while, but it's a great environment, and now they're one of the best teams in the league," said Douglas, who keeps tabs with some of his former teammates.

Joseph turned down other offers to sign with Buffalo in hopes of going one step further than he did last year.

"The main focus is to get back to the Super Bowl and get this team one," Joseph said.

Paul ejection adds to long-running feud with referee

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Chris Paul's return to Phoenix ended in the second quarter on Wednesday night after the 12-time All-Star was ejected by his old nemesis: referee Scott Foster.

The Golden State Warriors guard and Foster have a long, acrimonious history, with the point guard complaining about Foster's officiating for nearly a decade. Now Paul says that a years-old issue that involves his son is at least part of the reason for the friction.

"It's personal," Paul said. "We had a situation some years ago and it's personal. The league knows, everybody knows. There's been a meeting and all that. It's just a situation with my son. I'm OK with a ref saying whatever — just don't use a tech to get your point across."

"I've got to do a better job of making sure I'm staying on the floor for my teammates, but that's that."

Paul declined to provide additional details of the situation

with his son, though he said it happened when he was with the Los Angeles Clippers, who he played for from 2011-17.

The 38-year-old Paul — playing in Phoenix for the first time since being traded from the Suns during the offseason — was ejected with 23.2 seconds left in the second quarter after a long discussion with Foster, which led to his first technical foul.

Foster walked away but Paul kept yelling and the referee quickly turned and gave the

point guard another technical, which caused the ejection. The Warriors were already without forward Draymond Green, who was recently suspended five games by the NBA after grabbing Rudy Gobert around the neck.

"I didn't think Chris deserved to be ejected," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "The first tech? Absolutely. But I thought the second one was unnecessary. Everybody gets frustrated out there, but that's up to the official."