

US Osprey crashes off coast of Japan

Associated Press

TOKYO—A U.S. Air Force Osprey based in Japan crashed during a training mission Wednesday off the country's southern coast, killing at least one of the eight crew members, the Japanese coast guard said.

The cause of the crash and the status of the seven others on board were not immediately known, Japanese coast guard spokesperson Kazuo Ogawa said.

U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command said in a statement that the CV-22B Osprey belonged to the 353rd Special Operations Wing assigned to Yokota Air Base. The crash occurred "while performing a routine training mission off the shore of Yakushima Island," the command said.

While the U.S. Marine Corps flies most of the Ospreys based in

Japan, the Air Force also has some deployed there.

Air Force Special Operations Command said search and rescue operations were underway. A U.S. official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the crash could not provide further information on the crew's condition pending notification of next of kin.

The Osprey is a hybrid aircraft that takes off and lands like a helicopter, but during flight can rotate its propellers forward and cruise much faster like an airplane.

Ogawa said the coast guard received an emergency call Wednesday afternoon from a fishing boat near the crash site off Yakushima, an island south of Kagoshima on the southern main island of Kyushu.

Coast guard aircraft and patrol boats found one person, identified only as male, who was later pronounced dead by a doctor at a nearby port, Ogawa said. They also found gray debris believed to be from the aircraft and an empty inflatable life raft in an area about half a mile off the eastern coast of Yakushima, he said.

The coast guard said it planned to continue searching through the night.

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said the Osprey disappeared from radar a few minutes before the coast guard received the emergency call. The aircraft requested an emergency landing at the Yakushima airport about five minutes before it was lost from radar, NHK public television and other news outlets reported.

NHK quoted a Yakushima resi-

dent as saying he saw the aircraft turned upside down, with fire coming from one of its engines, and then an explosion before it fell to the sea.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said he planned to seek a further explanation from the U.S. military, but he declined to say whether he would seek a temporary suspension of Osprey operations in Japan.

Ogawa said the aircraft had departed from the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Yamaguchi prefecture and crashed on its way to Kadena Air Base on Okinawa.

Japanese Vice Defense Minister Hiroyuki Miyazawa said it had attempted an emergency sea landing and quoted the U.S. military as saying its pilot "did everything possible until the last minute."

Mediators making push to extend the truce in Gaza

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip—International mediators on Wednesday worked to extend the truce in Gaza, encouraging Hamas militants to keep freeing hostages in exchange for the release of Palestinian prisoners and further relief from Israel's air and ground offensive. The cease-fire will otherwise end within a day.

Hamas freed two Russian-Israeli women, who exited Gaza Wednesday evening, Israel said. The release was expected to be followed by the swap of 10 more hostages in Gaza for 30 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

Israel has welcomed the release of dozens of hostages in recent days and says it will maintain the truce if Hamas keeps

freeing captives. Still, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu underscored on Wednesday that Israel will resume its campaign to eliminate Hamas, which has ruled Gaza for 16 years and orchestrated the deadly attack on Israel that triggered the war.

"After this phase of returning our abductees is exhausted, will Israel return to fighting? So my answer is an unequivocal yes," he said. "There is no way we are not going back to fighting until the end."

He spoke ahead of a visit to the region planned this week by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken to press for further extensions of the truce and hostage releases.

Weeks of heavy bombard-

ment and a ground invasion demolished vast swaths of Gaza and killed thousands of Palestinians. But it seems to have had little effect on Hamas' rule, evidenced by its ability to conduct complex negotiations, enforce the cease-fire among other armed groups, and orchestrate the release of hostages. Hamas leaders, including Yehya Sinwar, have likely relocated to the south.

Most of Gaza's 2.3 million people are now crammed into southern Gaza, with some three-quarters of them driven from their homes. The truce has led to a frenzied rush to obtain supplies to feed their families as aid enters in greater, but still insufficient, amounts. Hanging over everyone is the fear that fighting

will soon resume.

International pressure for a lasting cease-fire is mounting. An Israeli ground invasion of the south will likely bring an escalating cost in Palestinian lives and destruction that the United States, Israel's main ally, could be unwilling to bear.

The Biden administration has told Israel that if it launches an offensive in the south, it must operate with far greater precision.

"How far both sides will be prepared to go in trading hostages and prisoners for the pause is about to be tested, but the pressures and incentives for both to stick with it are at the moment stronger than the incentives to go back to war," Martin Indyk, a former U.S. ambassador to Israel, wrote on X.

Ukraine makes pitch for NATO membership

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Ukraine's armed forces have become the strongest in Europe and now function as a "de facto NATO army," the country's top diplomat said Wednesday in Brussels, where discussions about alliance membership for Ukraine were on the table.

Ukraine Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba also said the rest of Europe is now dependent to some degree on Ukraine for its own security.

"Defending Europe without Ukraine is a futile task; you cannot do it for one simple reason — we have the strongest, most battle-hardened army in Europe," Kuleba said.

Kuleba's comments came during a gathering of the newly formed NATO-Ukraine Council, established earlier this year to give Kyiv a stronger voice with its partners in the trans-Atlantic alliance. One of the issues at the top of the group's agenda is fine-tuning the way ahead for Ukraine to become a NATO member. Allies have long pledged to do that, but without any timeline for making it a reality.

"We remain unwavering in

our commitment to Ukraine," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday. "We are determined that Ukraine will one day sit at this table as a full member of our alliance."

Stoltenberg said NATO has given Ukraine a series of recommendations on needed reforms that must be made before accession, which include ways to eliminate government corruption.

Besides Ukraine's prospective membership, allies discussed how to further support Kyiv in its war with Russia.

In Brussels, allies insisted they were with Ukraine for the long-haul and that military support to the country will continue to flow.

"Some are questioning whether the United States and other NATO allies should continue to stand with Ukraine as we enter the second winter of Putin's brutality," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said at the end of talks in Brussels. "But the answer here today at NATO is clear and it is unwavering. We must and we will continue to support Ukraine."

Sailor's death ruled suicide; 4th at Kitsap base this year

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

The death of a sailor found last week in his quarters at Naval Base Kitsap was ruled a suicide Monday by the local medical examiner's office, marking the fourth service member at the base to die by suicide this year. The Navy said Monday that the sailor was found dead Nov. 21 and served as a machinist's mate (auxiliary) first class assigned to the ballistic missile submarine USS Henry M. Jackson. But the service has yet to confirm the death was a suicide.

"Naval Criminal Investigative Services are currently investigating the incident," said Lt. Corey Jones, public affairs officer for Submarine Group 9 at Kitsap, which is southwest of Seattle.

The death was classified a suicide by the Kitsap County Medical Examiner, according to Jeffrey Wallis, a supervisor with the agency. Three deaths of Navy service members earlier this year at Kitsap have been classified as suicides. More than 15,600 active-duty personnel are assigned to the base, including an aircraft carrier strike group, ballistic missile submarines, a shipyard, a fuel depot and dozens of other installations spread across 12,000 acres.

The prior suicides at the base in 2023 include an aviation boat-swains mate airman in October assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz, a petty officer in April with Submarine Development Squadron 5, and a sailor in January with the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt.

The Henry M. Jackson and Nimitz are homeported at Kitsap. The Theodore Roosevelt was at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard at the base for an 18-month refurbishing, which was completed in March. The carrier then returned to its homeport at Naval Air Station North Island in San Diego.

An annual report on suicide in the military for 2022 by the Defense Department, which was released Oct. 26 of this year, showed suicide rates among all service members rose 3% between 2021 and 2022. The total included members of the Reserve and National Guard.

The Pentagon reported 492 service member suicides in 2022, including 331 by those on active duty.

The Marine Corps had a rate of 34.9 suicides per 100,000 active-duty service members. The Army rate was 28.9, the Navy was 20.6 and the Air Force was 19.7. The Space Force reported no suicides in 2022.

Officials pose bleaker estimate of Red Hill's pollution legacy

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — As much as 2 million gallons of fuel may have leaked and spilled into the ground under the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility since it was built during World War II, an amount far exceeding past estimates, Hawaii state and local officials said in a report released Tuesday.

The Red Hill Water Alliance

Initiative, a working group of state, county and city of Honolulu officials, formed in May with a focus on remediation of areas contaminated by the facility.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in March 2022 ordered the facility permanently closed in the wake of a large jet fuel spill in late 2021 that contaminated a well used by the Navy to supply water to military communities on and near Joint Base

Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

Roughly 20,000 gallons of fuel spilled during that incident and an earlier one in May.

But that amount is insignificant compared with the petroleum that made its way out of the tanks over the past 80 years, according to the report.

"The documented amount of fuel constituents in the ground is an estimated 180,000 gallons, spilled over 80 years in 70 inci-

dences," the report states.

"However, after listening to subject matter experts, it is the conclusion of the Red Hill WAI that a number significantly higher than 180,000 gallons must be assumed for the purposes of risk assessment and formulating remediation strategies, since this aquifer provides water to the majority of residents on Oahu, including Navy personnel."

Lawmakers move to vote on expelling Santos

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House lawmakers from both parties moved Tuesday to force a vote this week on the expulsion of Rep. George Santos, a Republican from New York who was the subject of a scathing ethics investigation released earlier this month and is facing nearly two dozen charges in federal court.

Santos responded to the competing expulsion resolutions by

taking to the House floor and asking colleagues to understand what kind of precedent it would set for him to be removed before federal charges against him are resolved. He made it clear he would not be resigning beforehand.

“This expulsion vote simply undermines and underscores the precedent that we’ve had in this chamber,” Santos said. “It starts and puts us in a new direc-

tion, a dangerous one.”

Santos has survived two prior expulsion votes. But a report released by the House Ethics Committee following an investigation has prompted new outrage. The report released Nov. 16 was unsparing in its criticism, concluding that Santos “sought to fraudulently exploit every aspect of his House candidacy for his own personal financial profit.”

“He blatantly stole from his campaign. He deceived donors into providing what they thought were contributions to his campaign but were in fact payments for his personal benefit,” the report said.

Santos was critical of the committee’s investigation, saying it was “incomplete, irresponsible and littered with hyperbole and littered with biased opinions.”

Rosalynn Carter laid to rest in her hometown

Associated Press

PLAINS, Ga. — With her frail husband as a silent witness, Rosalynn Carter was celebrated by her family and closest friends Wednesday at her funeral in the same tiny town where she and Jimmy Carter were born, forever their home base as they climbed to the White House and traveled the world for humanitarian causes.

The former first lady, who died Nov. 19 at the age of 96, had her intimate funeral at Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains, where she and her husband spent decades welcoming guests and where a wooden cross Jimmy Carter fashioned in his woodshop is displayed. Earlier tributes were held in nearby Americus and in Atlanta.

The former president was in attendance in his wheelchair, with her one last time in his life.

Maranatha Pastor Tony Lowden opened the service with a tribute to “the life and legacy of the greatest first lady.”

Rosalynn Carter wasn’t “just the first lady of the White House,” he told the gathering. “She served every nation around the world.”

She will be buried in a plot she will one day share with her husband of 77 years. The former president, now 99, left

home hospice care to attend Tuesday’s memorial, where two other presidents and all the living first ladies joined the extended Carter family before Wednesday’s more intimate hometown funeral.

Vernita Sampson, a school bus driver and Plains native, drove a group of area high school students, all wearing Future Farmer of America jackets, to downtown Plains to pay tribute to the former first lady and soak up the history of the day.

“They were people you could relate to, not this high standard where they were up here and, you know, we’re all down there,” said Sampson, 58. “We never get used to death, no matter who we are or how long you have lived,” but she said she and the students came “to celebrate that she did live a long life, a very happy and productive life, that gives you joy.”

At the service, the mourning came with affectionate stories of life with Rosalynn Carter and some laughs.

“It occurs to me that dad got used to mom disagreeing with him because she was really good at it,” son Jack Carter said. “And she became a partner in the true sense of the word, where they had equal footing.”

Harvard faces investigation for antisemitism amid war

Boston Herald

The U.S. Department of Education has added Harvard University to its list of schools that are under investigation for possible civil rights violations as students have reported antisemitic incidents amid the Israel-Hamas war.

The Cambridge campus is now under the federal microscope for potential discrimination following antisemitism complaints since Hamas’ terrorist attacks on Oct. 7.

One notable incident on campus involved pro-Palestinian protesters surrounding a Jewish student, which led to reports being filed with the FBI and Harvard Police.

On Tuesday, Harvard was added to the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights list of the higher education and K-12 institutions under investigation for alleged shared ancestry violations of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Title VI prohibits race, color, or national origin discrimination, including harassment based on a person’s shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics.

“The Department’s Office of Civil Rights confirms a pending investigation of Harvard University,” a U.S. Department of Education spokesperson said in a statement to the Boston Herald

on Tuesday.

Other schools that are already on the list for a federal civil rights investigation include Wellesley College, Cornell University, Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania.

Following Hamas’ deadly terrorist attacks against Israel, dozens of Harvard student groups wrote an explosive letter that blamed Israel solely for the attacks. Then, student group members who signed on to the letter were doxxed.

Pro-Palestinian protesters on campus have held banners and chanted phrases that call for the end of Israel.

After the Jewish student was accosted by pro-Palestinian protesters, the Harvard Business School dean said the incident “left many of our students shaken.”

“The pro-Palestinian demonstration that crossed from Cambridge onto our campus last Wednesday, which included a troubling confrontation between one of our MBA students and a subset of the protesters, has left many of our students shaken,” Dean Srikant Datar wrote in October.

“Reports have been filed with HUPD and the FBI, the facts are being evaluated, and it will be some time before we learn the results of an investigation,” the dean added.

Life expectancy rises in US in last year

Associated Press

NEW YORK — U.S. life expectancy rose last year — by more than a year — but still isn't close to what it was before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2022 rise was mainly due to the waning pandemic, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention researchers said Wednesday. But even with the large increase, U.S. life expectancy is only back to 77 years, 6 months — about what it was two decades ago.

Life expectancy is an estimate of the average number of years a baby born in a given year might expect to live, assuming the death rates at that time hold constant. The snapshot statistic is considered one of the most important measures

of the health of the U.S. population. The 2022 calculations released Wednesday are provisional, and could change a little as the math is finalized.

For decades, U.S. life expectancy rose a little nearly every year. But about a decade ago, the trend flattened and even declined some years — a stall blamed largely on overdose deaths and suicides.

Then came the coronavirus, which has killed more than 1.1 million people in the U.S. since early 2020. The measure of American longevity plunged, dropping from 78 years, 10 months in 2019 to 77 years in 2020, and then to 76 years, 5 months in 2021.

“We basically have lost 20 years of gains,” said the CDC’s

Elizabeth Arias.

A decline in COVID-19 deaths drove 2022’s improvement.

In 2021, COVID was the nation’s third leading cause of death (after heart disease and cancer). Last year, it fell to the fourth leading cause. With more than a month left in the current year, preliminary data suggests COVID-19 could end up being the ninth or 10th leading cause of death in 2023.

But the U.S. is battling other issues, including drug overdose deaths and suicides.

The number of U.S. suicides reached an all-time high last year, and the national suicide rate was the highest seen since 1941, according to a second CDC report released Wednesday.

Drug overdose deaths in the

U.S. went up slightly last year after two big leaps at the beginning of the pandemic. And through the first six months of this year, the estimated overdose death toll continued to inch up.

U.S. life expectancy also continues to be lower than that of dozens of other countries. It also didn’t rebound as quickly as it did in other places, including France, Italy, Spain and Sweden.

Steven Woolf, a mortality researcher at Virginia Commonwealth University, said he expects the U.S. to eventually get back to the pre-pandemic life expectancy.

But “what I’m trying to say is: That is not a great place to be,” he added.

Commercial jet makes 1st fossil fuel-free flight

Associated Press

LONDON — The first commercial airliner to cross the Atlantic on a purely high-fat, low-emissions fuel flew Tuesday from London to New York in a step toward achieving what supporters called “jet zero.”

The Virgin Atlantic Boeing 787 flight was powered without using fossil fuels, relying on so-called sustainable aviation fuel made up largely of tallow and other waste fats.

“The world will always assume something can’t be done, until you do it,” said Virgin founder Richard Branson, who was aboard the flight with others including corporate and government officials, engineers and journalists.

The U.K. Transport Department, which provided \$1.27 million to plan and operate the flight, called the test a “huge step towards jet zero” to make air travel more environmentally friendly, though large hurdles remain in making the fuel

widely available.

While governments have long talked about decarbonizing air travel, the transition has been moving at the pace of a dirigible.

Sustainable aviation fuel, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions by about 70%, is the best near-term way for the international aviation industry to achieve its net zero target by 2050, the U.S. Energy Department said, though it called the goal aspirational.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office said that while domestic production of the fuel had jumped from about 2 million gallons in 2016 to 15.8 million gallons in 2022, it accounted for less than 0.1% of the jet fuel used by major U.S. airlines.

The White House, meanwhile, set a goal two years ago to produce 3 billion gallons of sustainable aviation fuel per year by 2030 and 100% of domestic commercial jet fuel by 2050.

Michigan to join effort to regulate AI political ads

Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. — Michigan is joining an effort to curb deceptive uses of artificial intelligence and manipulated media through state-level policies as Congress and the Federal Elections Commission continue to debate more sweeping regulations ahead of the 2024 elections.

Campaigns on the state and federal level will be required to clearly say which political advertisements airing in Michigan were created using artificial intelligence under legislation expected to be signed in the coming days by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat. It also would prohibit use of AI-generated deepfakes within 90 days of an election without a separate disclosure identifying the media as manipulated.

Deepfakes are fake media that misrepresent someone as doing or saying something they didn’t. They’re created using generative artificial intelli-

gence, a type of AI that can create convincing images, videos or audio clips in seconds.

There are increasing concerns that generative AI will be used in the 2024 presidential race to mislead voters, impersonate candidates and undermine elections on a scale and at a speed not yet seen.

Candidates and committees in the race already are experimenting with the rapidly advancing technology, which can create convincing fake images, video and audio clips in seconds and in recent years has become cheaper, faster and easier for the public to use.

The Republican National Committee in April released an entirely AI-generated ad meant to show the future of the United States if President Joe Biden is reelected. Disclosing in small print that it was made with AI, it featured fake but realistic photos showing boarded-up storefronts and huge increases in immigration creating panic.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Foul play not suspected after body found in vent

MI CLINTON TOWNSHIP — Authorities investigating a bad odor discovered a body in the ventilation system at a performing arts center in suburban Detroit.

“There is no reason to suspect foul play,” said William Leavens, police chief at Macomb Community College.

The body was found Sunday at Macomb Center for the Performing Arts in Clinton Township, Leavens said Monday.

The body was identified as a 36-year-old man who was reported missing on Nov. 1, police said.

Charge dismissed in ‘ballot selfie’ case

WI PORT WASHINGTON — A local official who posted a photo of his marked ballot on Facebook during the April 2022 election had felony charges against him dropped.

Paul Buzzell, 52, of Mequon had faced maximum penalties of 3½ years behind bars and \$10,000 in fines. Buzzell, a member of the Mequon-Thiensville School Board, would have also been barred from holding elected office if convicted.

Ozaukee County Judge Paul Malloy dismissed the charges against Buzzell in a hearing Monday, saying a state law prohibiting voters from showing their marked ballots to anyone else is in violation of the constitutional right to freedom of speech, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported.

Ozaukee County District Attorney Adam Gerol, who

brought the charges against Buzzell, promised to continue pursuing the case.

Woman shocked with Taser suing police

CO DENVER — A woman who was shocked in the back with a Taser while lying on the ground in Pueblo last year is suing the police officer who stunned her and the city’s police chief, accusing the police department of failing to report excessive force by the officer to state regulators.

The federal lawsuit filed Sunday by Cristy Gonzales, who was suspected of stealing a vehicle, says the police department found Cpl. Bennie Villanueva used excessive force against Gonzales and another person several weeks later. However, it says the agency withheld the information from a state board which oversees who is qualified to serve in law enforcement. If it had been reported, Villanueva would have lost his certification to work as a police officer for at least a year, the lawsuit said.

Gonzales was suspected of stealing a truck in February 2022, and didn’t stop for Villanueva, according to a police investigation. Eventually the vehicle ran out of gas, according to the lawsuit.

Customer sues Chopt over finger in salad

NY MOUNT KISCO — A customer has filed a lawsuit against the fast casual chain Chopt over a salad that she says contained a piece of the manager’s finger.

The lawsuit filed Monday by Allison Cozzi of Greenwich,

Connecticut, alleges that she bought a salad at a Chopt location in Mount Kisco, N.Y., on April 7, and realized while eating it that “she was chewing on a portion of a human finger that had been mixed in to, and made a part of, the salad.”

According to the suit, a manager at the restaurant accidentally severed a piece of her left pointer finger while chopping arugula.

The manager went to the hospital but the contaminated arugula was served to customers including Cozzi, the lawsuit says.

Women falls to death down hidden well shaft

SC SALEM — An 83-year-old woman who died when she fell through rotting floorboards in a century-old house and down a well shaft the owner didn’t know was there, authorities said.

It took rescuers nearly four hours Sunday to get the woman’s body out of the 50-foot deep hole, Oconee County Coroner Karl Addis said in a statement.

The woman was helping her daughter pack up and move from the house in Salem, which according to property records was built in 1920, Addis said.

As she walked across the kitchen floor, part of it collapsed. The woman’s daughter searched for her in the crawl-space under the house and couldn’t find her.

WWE legend sentenced to 17 years in prison

FL DAYTONA BEACH — Former pro wrestler Tammy “Sunny” Sytch has been sentenced to more than 17

years in prison for drunkenly colliding with another car, killing a 75-year-old man, while her blood alcohol level was four times the legal limit, authorities in Florida said.

Sytch, who was inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame in 2011, pleaded no contest in August to driving under the influence manslaughter and other charges. She also had an unsealed bottle of vodka in her vehicle and cannabis in her system at the time of her arrest in Volusia County in March 2022, authorities said.

She had faced up to more than 25 years in prison during her sentencing hearing on Monday.

ERs divert patients due to Ransomware attack

TN NASHVILLE — A ransomware attack has prompted a health care chain that operates 30 hospitals in six states to divert patients from at least some of its emergency rooms to other hospitals, while putting certain elective procedures on pause, the company announced.

Ardent Health Services said the attack occurred Nov. 23 and the company took its network offline, suspending user access to its IT applications, including the software used to document patient care.

The company said it cannot yet confirm the extent of any patient health or financial information that has been compromised. Ardent owns and operates 30 hospitals and more than 200 care sites with upwards of 1,400 aligned providers in Oklahoma, Texas, New Jersey, New Mexico, Idaho and Kansas.

— From Associated Press

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Loaded field of CFP contenders creates drama

Associated Press

The four-team College Football Playoff is going out with the most crowded field of contenders and the most consequential championship weekend in the 10-year history of the system.

Eight teams have at least a glimmer of hope to make the field. Yes, that means you, too, Ohio State.

The penultimate CFP rankings were released Tuesday. Georgia remained No. 1. Michigan moved up a spot to second after beating Ohio State. Unbeaten Washington was third, followed by unbeaten Florida State.

Oregon remained fifth, Ohio State slipped to No. 6, Texas was seventh and Alabama eighth.

The field for the playoff will be announced Sunday.

Determining which teams are CFP contenders heading into championship weekend is a bit subjective. More often than not, a Power Five team with only one loss going into the conference title games — regardless of whether that team is playing — has to be considered alive.

No team with two losses has ever made the CFP, but at least a couple of times a team with two losses had to be considered in contention when it played for a conference title. Auburn in 2017 is the most obvious example.

That season was one of the few where championship weekend had multiple games matching CFP contenders. More

commonly, championship weekend hasn't been about teams playing their way into the field as much as watching for whether teams might play their way out.

This year, every conference championship has at least one CFP contender. The Pac-12 and the SEC each have two. Two-time defending champion Georgia might be able to lose to Alabama and make the field, as it did on the way to the national title in 2021, but that is far from a guarantee.

There are multiple scenarios that could play out this weekend and leave the 13-member CFP selection committee facing almost impossible choices Saturday night.

Here are the paths to the final four for the contenders:

Unbeaten teams

With perfect records, it is simple: win and you're in...usually.

That's certainly the case for Georgia, Michigan and Washington. Being unbeaten provides some hope of backing in after a loss, especially for the Bulldogs, winners of 29 straight games.

Florida State, however, is a bit of a different story. The Seminoles are perfect and in playoff position heading into their Atlantic Coast Conference title game against Louisville, but an injury to star quarterback Jordan Travis creates some uncertainty.

"You want to be pushing and playing your best ball in November so you can go into December and have these opportuni-

ties," Florida State coach Mike Norvell said.

Leaving an unbeaten Power Five conference champion out of the playoff would be unprecedented — and some would say unfair. But the committee is instructed to judge the team as it is entering the postseason.

Oregon, Texas, Alabama

Life is more complicated for these three 11-1 teams playing for their conference titles.

The Ducks seem to have the clearest path. The committee has had them ahead of Texas for weeks, so it would stand to reason if they beat Washington and win the Pac-12, then they are good to go.

Texas fans don't want to hear that and have been frustrated with the Longhorns' placement behind Oregon. It's a fair complaint, but unlikely to change now with Texas playing Oklahoma State (9-3) in the Big 12 title game and Oregon getting a chance to avenge its loss to Washington.

Texas might also have a case in a comparison against the current version of Florida State. And if Alabama can pull the upset in the SEC, that could help the 'Horns, who beat the Tide in Tuscaloosa in September.

Ohio State

At this point, Florida State, Oregon, Texas and Alabama will all likely have to lose in order for the Buckeyes to have a chance of getting into the final four.

2-game skid, strange schedule impacting Seahawks

Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — While most of the rest of the league played Sunday, the Seattle Seahawks were treating it like a Wednesday while starting to get ready for another Thursday game.

Confusing? The Seahawks were trying to figure it out themselves.

"We're right in the midst of it. It's just turning your brain around because you feel like you're on a different planet here," Seattle coach Pete Carroll said Sunday. "So, yeah, there's a challenge to that. But that's why we tried to get right

back into the routine so it feels the same regardless. It's kind of like a bit of a time warp and we just go at it."

On top of losing two straight, the Seahawks are facing the most difficult section of their schedule and a calendar they've never experienced. The Seahawks (6-5) were thumped 31-13 by San Francisco on Thanksgiving night at home and will turn around and play on a second straight Thursday when they play at Dallas.

So instead of getting an extended weekend off to rest and watch the remaining games around the league, Carroll and

his players were back to work on Sunday.

"It's weird watching the games on right now and we're going to practice," Seattle wide receiver DK Metcalf said. "It just feels weird practicing a Wednesday on a Sunday, but I'm ready to get back to work."

It's the first time for Seattle playing consecutive Thursday games, while it's become a regular occurrence for the Cowboys. Dallas has played on Thursday after hosting the Thanksgiving game seven times since 2014. The Cowboys also had a Thursday game post-Thanksgiving scheduled for 2020 that had to

get rescheduled because of other games being moved because of COVID-19 issues.

Veteran Seattle linebacker Bobby Wagner said the holiday also threw in another wrinkle to the recovery in the couple of days following the 49ers loss.

"You have this week where the holiday, you're working on the weekends, some places are closed if you want to use them. People's schedules are different on the weekend," Wagner said. "So I just think it's part of being a professional and figuring out how to maximize your time, and it's our job to make sure we're ready when we play."

Bucks beat Heat, finish atop Group B

Associated Press

MIAMI — Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 33 points, Damian Lillard added 32 and the Milwaukee Bucks rallied in the fourth quarter to beat the Miami Heat 131-124 on Tuesday night and clinch a home quarterfinal game in the NBA In-Season Tournament.

Khris Middleton scored 17, Malik Beasley had 16 and Brook Lopez added 12 for the Bucks, who won East Group B with a 4-0 record.

They'll host wild-card New York on Dec. 5, with East Group C winner Boston going to Group A winner Indiana for the other quarterfinal before the Final Four in Las Vegas.

Bam Adebayo scored 31 points for the Heat, who got 21 from Kyle Lowry and 20 from Josh Richardson.

Celtics 124, Bulls 97: Jaylen Brown scored 30 points, Jayson Tatum had 21 and host Boston routed Chicago to advance to the quarterfinals of the NBA In-Season Tournament.

The Celtics won a three-team

tiebreaker with Orlando and Brooklyn via point differential to take Group C and earn the No. 3 seed in the Eastern Conference. They will visit the No. 2 Indiana Pacers next week.

The Celtics made a season-high 21 3-pointers, getting four each from Al Horford and Jrue Holiday.

Horford finished with 16 points and nine rebounds. Holiday, who returned after missing two games with a sprained right ankle, had 14 points, nine assists and seven rebounds.

Knicks 115, Hornets 91: Julius Randle had 25 points and 20 rebounds, RJ Barrett scored 16 points and host New York advanced to the quarterfinals of the NBA In-Season Tournament with a victory over Charlotte.

The Knicks missed their chance to win Group B when the Milwaukee Bucks beat the Miami Heat to finish unbeaten in pool play. But the Knicks took the wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference by tiebreaker because of their point differen-

tial in the preliminary round.

Kings 124, Warriors 123: Malik Monk hit a fadeaway with 7 seconds left and host Sacramento rallied late to beat Golden State and advance to the quarterfinals of the In-Season Tournament.

The Kings won their group with a 4-0 record and will host New Orleans next week in the quarterfinals.

Fox led the way with 29 points, with Monk and Kevin Huerter adding 21 apiece.

Mavericks 121, Rockets 115: Luka Doncic had 41 points, nine rebounds and nine assists, and host Dallas prevented Houston from advancing to the quarterfinals of the NBA In-Season Tournament.

Kyrie Irving added 22 of his 27 points in the second half for the Mavericks, who had already been eliminated. Their victory allowed the New Orleans Pelicans to win Group B in the Western Conference with a 3-1 record.

Cavaliers 128, Hawks 105: Donovan Mitchell scored 40

points, Evan Mobley added 17 points and a career-high 19 rebounds, and host Cleveland completed pool play in the NBA In-Season Tournament with a win over Atlanta.

The Cavs finished 3-1 and in second place in East Group A, but ultimately fell short of advancing by point differential.

Timberwolves 106, Thunder 103: Rudy Gobert had 17 points, 16 rebounds and four blocks, reserve Troy Brown Jr. scored 17 points and host Minnesota withstood an injury to Anthony Edwards to beat Oklahoma City in the NBA In-Season Tournament.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 32 points on 13-for-22 shooting for the Thunder.

Nets 115, Raptors 103: Spencer Dinwiddie scored 23 points to lead host Brooklyn over Toronto to win its third straight, but was knocked out of the NBA In-Season Tournament.

Bridges was one of five players to finish in double-figure scoring for Brooklyn (9-8).

Sheppard, No. 12 Kentucky beat No. 8 Miami in rout

Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Reed Sheppard scored 21 points, including 13 during a second half in which Kentucky shot 67%, and Antonio Reeves added 18 to propel the 12th-ranked Wildcats to a 95-73 blowout of No. 8 Miami on Tuesday night in the ACC/SEC Challenge.

Sheppard came off the bench, drained a 3 for his first basket and finished 5-for-9 from long range and 8-for-13 overall. The freshman also had five rebounds, four assists and three steals in 30 minutes, filling a void after starting point guard D.J. Wagner left late in the first half with an ankle injury.

"I just go out and try and do what I need to do, whatever I can to help my team win and

make the right play," Sheppard said. "With these dudes around me, it's really, really easy doing that. We were hitting shots left and right and everyone was moving the ball, passing and having fun."

Reeves was 7-for-12 from the field. Tre Mitchell had 14 points and seven assists, Rob Dillingham scored 14 points for Kentucky (6-1).

Norchad Omier scored 20 points and Wooga Poplar had 19 for the Hurricanes (5-1).

The Wildcats made their final three shots to lead 42-37 at halftime before sinking their first six of the second half and 10 of 11 overall for a 67-43 advantage with 14:15 remaining.

No. 1 Purdue 99, Texas Southern 67: Braden Smith

had 19 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds while leading the host Boilermakers past the Tigers.

Zach Edey added 15 points and six rebounds as Purdue (7-0) extended the nation's longest regular-season winning streak against nonconference opponents to 31 games.

No. 3 Marquette 93, Southern 56: Tyler Kolek scored all 16 of his points in the first half and the host Golden Eagles backed up their highest ranking in nearly half a century by trouncing the Jaguars.

No. 5 Kansas 71, Eastern Illinois 63: Hunter Dickinson had 25 points and 13 rebounds, Kevin McCullar Jr. overcame a tough shooting night to score 18, and the host Jayhawks had to fight all the way to the end to

beat the Panthers.

No. 9 Baylor 108, Nicholls 70: Langston Love made five 3-pointers and scored a career-high 23 points as the host Bears never trailed.

No. 11 Gonzaga 81, Cal State Bakersfield 65: Ryan Nembhard scored a season-high 22 points and Anton Watson added 11 points and 13 rebounds for the host Bulldogs.

Georgia Tech 67, No. 21 Mississippi State 59: Miles Kelly had 22 points and 12 rebounds, and the host Yellow Jackets handed the Bulldogs their first loss.

Clemson 85, No. 23 Alabama 77: PJ Hall had 21 points, eight rebounds and four blocks to lead the visiting Tigers past the Crimson Tide.

Gregor's shootout goal lifts Maple Leafs

Associated Press

TORONTO — Maple Leafs coach Sheldon Keefe was already in his office.

Toronto goaltender Joseph Woll had entered the locker room to begin peeling off his equipment.

Fourth-line winger Noah Gregor, meanwhile, was in the tunnel at Scotiabank Arena after leaving the ice with his teammates.

Everyone had to turn around.

Gregor scored the shootout clincher Tuesday after Florida appeared to win the game with an Evan Rodrigues effort on the previous attempt — one that was eventually overturned by video review — as the Leafs picked up a wild 2-1 victory over the Panthers.

“Never seen that before,” Gregor said. “Crazy.”

Rodrigues looked to have closed it out in the shootout's fifth round, but was judged to have touched the puck twice on his deke to the forehand on Woll.

Gregor scored in the sixth round before Florida's Nick Cousins hit the post, handing the win to Toronto.

Oilers 5, Golden Knights 4 (SO): Connor McDavid had a goal and two assists and added the shootout winner as host Edmonton got a measure of revenge for last year's second-round playoff loss to Vegas.

Sam Gagner, Mattias Janmark and Evander Kane also scored for the Oilers, who have won three in a row.

Canucks 3, Ducks 1: Brock Boeser scored twice to help host Vancouver beat Anaheim.

Elias Pettersson snapped a third-period tie as Vancouver improved to 3-4 in its last seven games. Thatcher Demko stopped 30 shots.

Stars 2, Jets 0: Netminder Jake Oettinger stopped 27 shots to record his first shutout of the season, leading visiting Dallas over Winnipeg.

Forwards Tyler Seguin and Joe Pavelski scored for Dallas.

Wild 3, Blues 1: Joel Eriks-

son Ek and Frederick Gaudreau scored in the first period and host Minnesota ended a seven-game slide by beating St. Louis.

Matt Boldy added an insurance goal late and Filip Gustavsson made 23 saves for his first win in eight starts for Minnesota, playing its first game under coach John Hynes.

Hurricanes 4, Flyers 1: Michael Bunting had a goal and an assist, and visiting Carolina won for the fourth time in five games.

Seth Jarvis and Brendan Lemieux also scored for the Hurricanes. Sebastian Aho had two assists and Pyotr Kochetkov made 27 saves.

Devils 5, Islanders 4: Curtis Lazar scored the winning goal with 23 seconds left and Akira Schmid made eight saves in relief as host New Jersey rallied past New York.

New York led 4-2 entering the third before Jack Hughes and Nico Hischier scored to tie it. Michael McLeod and Daw-

son Mercer also scored for the Devils.

Blackhawks 4, Kraken 3: Tyler Johnson and MacKenzie Entwistle scored in the second period, and host Chicago topped Seattle after dropping six of seven.

Jason Dickinson and Boris Katchouk also scored for Chicago, and Petr Mrazek made 33 saves. Joey Anderson added two assists.

Predators 3, Penguins 2 (OT): Filip Forsberg scored 14 seconds into overtime to give host Nashville its sixth straight victory.

Michael McCarron scored twice and Juuse Saros made 29 saves for Nashville.

Coyotes 3, Lightning 1: Michael Carcone scored twice, Connor Ingram stopped 31 shots in his second straight strong performance and host Arizona beat Tampa Bay.

Ingram had his second assist this season and Travis Boyd scored his first goal of the season.

Blackhawks cut Perry loose for unacceptable conduct

Associated Press

CHICAGO — The Chicago Blackhawks are cutting ties with Corey Perry. The franchise is still answering questions about the culture of the organization.

The Blackhawks said Perry engaged in unacceptable conduct, and they are moving toward terminating his contract in the latest twist involving the veteran winger who was sent home last week without explanation.

The team said Tuesday in a statement that an internal investigation showed Perry acted in violation of his NHL Standard Player Contract and club policies “intended to promote professional and safe work environments.” Chicago put Perry on unconditional waivers and

said his deal will be terminated as long as he cleared Wednesday.

The team has not given any indication as to what Perry did to warrant these actions.

“As this is an individual personnel matter, I will not be able to disclose any details related to the initial reporting or the findings,” general manager Kyle Davidson said Tuesday.

“However, I do want to be very clear on this point. This does not involve any players or their families, and anything that suggests otherwise, or anyone that suggests otherwise, is wildly inaccurate and frankly it's disgusting.”

Pat Morris, Perry's agent, did not respond to messages seeking comment. Over the weekend, he said in a statement that

Perry had stepped away to attend to personal matters.

The Blackhawks have revamped many of their policies and reporting procedures since an October 2021 report detailed how the organization badly mishandled a player's allegations that he was sexually assaulted by an assistant coach during the team's 2010 Stanley Cup run.

In the wake of the scandal, the franchise's top leaders have talked repeatedly about the culture within the organization. While Davidson repeatedly declined to offer any specifics on what happened with Perry, he touched on its connection to the franchise's ongoing work.

“I think more than anything, it reinforced the resolve we have to change the culture and make sure we're doing the right

things and upholding our values and making sure that we continue to build a culture of accountability,” he said.

Asked if new reporting processes for misconduct made a difference in this case, Davidson responded: “I believe so.”

Perry hasn't played since he skated for almost 15 minutes during a 3-2 loss to Buffalo on Nov. 19. He was scratched for Chicago's past three games before Tuesday night's 4-3 victory over Seattle. Davidson said the team learned about an issue involving Perry while it was in Columbus a week ago. The GM met with the players on Tuesday to inform them of the decision to cut ties with Perry.

Davidson also said he has been in contact with the NHL and NHL players' association.