

Gaetz pick shows Trump's focus on loyalty

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Donald Trump has had few defenders in Congress as reliable as Matt Gaetz, who has thundered at one prosecutor after another for perceived bias against the president-elect and emphatically amplified the Republican's rallying cry that the criminal investigations into him are "witch hunts."

That kinship was rewarded Wednesday when Trump named Gaetz as his pick for attorney general, turning to a conservative loyalist in place of more established lawyers who'd been seen as contenders.

In announcing his selection of Gaetz as attorney general and John Ratcliffe a day earlier as CIA director, Trump underscored the premium he places on loyalty, citing both men's support for him during the Russia investigation as central to

their qualifications and signaling his expectation that leaders in his administration should function not only as a president's protector but also as an instrument of retribution.

The dynamic matters at a time when Trump, who will enter office in the wake of two federal indictments expected to soon evaporate and a Supreme Court opinion blessing a president's exclusive authority over the Justice Department, has threatened to pursue retaliation against perceived adversaries.

"Matt will root out the systemic corruption at DOJ, and return the department to its true mission of fighting Crime, and upholding our Democracy and Constitution. We must have Honesty, Integrity, and Transparency at DOJ," Trump wrote in a social media post about Gaetz, a Florida Republican.

The rhetoric from Trump re-

flects an about-face in approach from President Joe Biden, who has repeatedly taken a hands-off approach from the Justice Department even while facing a special counsel investigation into his handling of classified information and as his son, Hunter, was indicted on tax and gun charges.

Democrats immediately sounded the alarm, with Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, saying Gaetz "would be a disaster" in part because of Trump's threat to use the Justice Department "to seek revenge on his political enemies."

The president of Common Cause, a good government group, called the selection "shocking" and "a serious threat to the fair and equal enforcement of the law in our nation." Even several Senate Re-

publicans expressed concern about the Gaetz pick.

That Trump would openly value Gaetz's role in "defeating the Russia, Russia, Russia Hoax, and exposing alarming and systemic Government Corruption and Weaponization" is not altogether surprising. In his first term, Trump fired an FBI director who refused to pledge loyalty to him at a private White House dinner and an attorney general who recused himself from the Justice Department's investigation into potential ties between Russia and his 2016 presidential campaign.

"I think this selection indicates that President-elect Trump was looking for an attorney general whose views were closely aligned with him with respect to the appropriate role of the Department of Justice," said former federal prosecutor Robert Mintz.

Military suicides continued upward trend last year

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Suicides in the U.S. military increased in 2023, continuing a long-term trend that the Pentagon has struggled to abate, senior defense officials said. The increase is a bit of a setback after the deaths dipped slightly the previous year.

Officials said both the number of suicides and the rate per 100,000 active-duty service members went up, but that the rise was not statistically significant. The number also went up among reservists, while it decreased a bit for the National Guard.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has declared the issue a

priority, and top leaders in the Defense Department and across the services have worked to develop programs both to increase mental health assistance for troops and bolster education on gun safety, locks and storage. Many of the programs, however, have not been fully implemented, and the moves fall short of more drastic gun safety measures recommended by an independent commission.

The increase was fueled by spikes in the number of Army and Air Force deaths, while the Marine Corps and Navy saw a very small dip, the officials said. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss details not yet made public.

Overall, there were 523 reported suicides in 2023, compared with 493 in 2022. The number of active-duty troops who died by suicide increased to 363 from 331.

Officials have said that due to the decreasing size of the active-duty force in recent years, they believe the rate of suicides, rather than the number, is a more accurate measure. The suicide rate is calculated based on an active-duty force of about 1.28 million, about 330,000 reservists and nearly 430,000 in the Guard. The rate for active-duty service members and reservists went up, while the Guard was lower.

More broadly, however, the

trend since 2011 has been an increase in suicides among active-duty service members, while the Guard and Reserve have stayed largely stable. Officials said the statistics generally reflect suicide rates for society as a whole, when adjusted for age and gender, because a majority of those in the military are young and male.

The analysis in the annual report, which was expected to be released Thursday, also shows continuing trends for those who die by suicide and how they do it. Officials said the report shows that young, male enlisted troops still make up the vast majority of the suicides. And the bulk of them use a firearm.

DOD shows signs of strain amid Mideast crisis

The Washington Post

The open-ended crisis in the Middle East has begun to squeeze the Pentagon, fueling unease over the U.S. military's ability to balance imminent threats to American interests there with longer-term objectives as Russia and China test Washington elsewhere in the world.

Signs of strain were underscored in recent days by a decision to withdraw the sole aircraft carrier in the region, the USS Abraham Lincoln, whose imposing presence defense officials credit with helping to contain the ongoing violence between Israel, Iran and its network of well-armed proxies.

The Biden administration has kept at least one, and sometimes two, aircraft carriers in the Middle East for more than year, since the Hamas-led attack on Israel in October 2023 spawned a multifaceted conflict with no end in sight. When the Lincoln departs in coming days, the Defense Department instead will rely on a mix of other forces, including naval destroyers, B-52 bombers and land-based fighter jets, to sustain its expansive and potentially combustible deterrence mission that stretches from the eastern Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf and other volatile shipping routes around the Arabian Peninsula.

Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, a Pentagon spokesman, told reporters that the new deployments will provide a "significant amount of capability on par with what we've been doing in the Middle East" since the crisis there began.

The shake-up occurs as the Pentagon grapples, too, with shortages of key munitions it has used to fend off attacks by Yemen's Houthis, who have waged an aggressive, months-long campaign targeting commercial vessels in the Red Sea

and Gulf of Aden, and to help Ukraine resist Russia's nearly three-year incursion. Military officials have acknowledged also that they are struggling to distribute enough air-defense systems to protect assets and allies in Eastern Europe along with those in the Middle East, and analysts warn the strain could hinder Washington's ability to defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion.

The Lincoln, and the dozens of combat aircraft that operate from its flight deck, was scheduled to deploy to the Asia-Pacific region as part of a Pentagon strategy meant to show force in an area where key U.S. partners have had to contend with an expansionist China and a wildly unpredictable North Korea. In August, after tensions between Israel and Iran hit a peak with the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, the carrier was ordered from the Pacific to the Middle East and later had its deployment extended as senior officials evaluated the potential risks of making such a significant shift.

The quandary simmered for weeks, with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Air Force Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, weighing various options mindful of the mounting demands the Middle East conflict has imposed on U.S. personnel and equipment, and Washington's ability to address other pressing geostrategic objectives. Brown said in a recent interview that the Pentagon must "step back and take a look" at the totality of what's being asked of the military, "not just in the Middle East but really all around the world."

The chairman's force-posture recommendations go to Austin, who ultimately makes the weighty decisions that could create long-term complications

for the Pentagon. Those considerations require "very real trade-offs," said a senior defense official familiar with this thinking, who like some others spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military movements.

"I don't think there are any easy decisions," the official said.

Demands on the Navy

When the Gaza war began, the Pentagon moved quickly to reinforce its presence in the Middle East, shuffling around tens of thousands of troops, realigning defenses and deploying dozens of attack aircraft to complement Israel's Iron Dome air defenses and project a message of deterrence to Iran and its proxies. The ongoing crisis has affected the Navy like no other service.

In the days after Hamas attacked Israel, President Joe Biden announced that a deployment of the aircraft carrier USS Gerard Ford and its escort ships would be extended to help protect the Jewish state as another carrier, the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, was dispatched to the region. The Eisenhower strike group also carried out an extended assignment, from November 2023 until June. In that time, U.S. personnel launched hundreds of weapons at a total cost of more than \$1 billion, according to Navy data.

The Eisenhower was replaced in the Middle East by the carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt, and Austin ordered the Lincoln to join it after the assassination of Haniyeh prompted Iranian threats of retaliation. In late September, when Israel's killing of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Lebanon triggered additional declarations from Tehran, Austin extended the Lincoln.

Another aircraft carrier, the

USS Harry S. Truman, deployed from Virginia in September and in recent days was in the North Sea for a scheduled deployment to Europe, where Russia's actions in Ukraine and beyond have been met with alarm. Officials said the Truman could be diverted to the Middle East if necessary.

Another concern, officials say, is the Wasp Amphibious Ready Group, a three-ship flotilla that has been in the eastern Mediterranean since late June due to concerns that a U.S. evacuation from Lebanon may be necessary. Those ships and personnel have been deployed since April, and several defense officials familiar with the situation said there is no similar replacement ready to step in because of the Navy's long-standing struggle to maintain its modest fleet of such vessels.

James Foggo III, a retired Navy admiral, said the extended deployments have enhanced security in the Middle East but will result in second-order effects that include delayed maintenance, upended training schedules and shortfalls in munitions.

"Two more months — 60 more days — of wear and tear on the ship means more things need to be fixed," Foggo said. "It's very important to be able to fix the ship ... and to get it back in the rotation."

The Navy's top officer, Adm. Lisa Franchetti said in a recent event at the Atlantic Council that she is focused on addressing challenges that have caused delays when ships require extensive maintenance after deployments. Franchetti said she has set a "stretch goal" of having 80% of the Navy's ships and aircraft available to be surged in a crisis by 2027. That number, she told reporters recently, was 36% in 2022 and had come up to 67% as of June.

Republicans gain control of US House

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republicans have won enough seats to control the U.S. House, completing the party's sweep into power and securing their hold on U.S. government alongside President-elect Donald Trump.

A House Republican victory in Arizona, alongside a win in slow-counting California earlier Wednesday, gave the GOP the 218 House victories that make up the majority. Republicans earlier gained control of the Senate from Democrats.

With hard-fought yet thin majorities, Republican leaders are envisioning a mandate to upend the federal government

and swiftly implement Trump's vision for the country.

The incoming president has promised to carry out the country's largest-ever deportation operation, extend tax breaks, punish his political enemies, seize control of the federal government's most powerful tools and reshape the U.S. economy. The GOP election victories ensure that Congress will be on-board for that agenda, and Democrats will be almost powerless to check it.

When Trump was elected president in 2016, Republicans also swept Congress, but he still encountered Republican leaders resistant to his policy ideas,

as well as a Supreme Court with a liberal majority. Not this time.

When he returns to the White House, Trump will be working with a Republican Party that has been completely transformed by his "Make America Great Again" movement and a Supreme Court dominated by conservative justices, including three that he appointed.

Trump rallied House Republicans at a Capitol Hill hotel Wednesday morning, marking his first return to Washington since the election.

"I suspect I won't be running again unless you say, 'He's good, we got to figure something else,'" Trump said to the

room full of lawmakers who laughed in response.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, who with Trump's endorsement won the Republican Conference's nomination to stay on as speaker next year, has talked of taking a "blowtorch" to the federal government and its programs, eyeing ways to overhaul even popular programs championed by Democrats in recent years. The Louisiana Republican, an ardent conservative, has pulled the House Republican Conference closer to Trump during the campaign season as they prepare an "ambitious" 100-day agenda.

Trump picks Tulsi Gabbard for top intelligence post

The Washington Post

President-elect Donald Trump has selected Tulsi Gabbard, a former Democratic congresswoman from Hawaii turned staunch Trump ally, to be the next head of the U.S. intelligence community.

The selection of Gabbard, a U.S. Army Reserve officer who lacks deep experience in intelligence matters and whose antiwar views are seen as sympathetic to Moscow, is seen as an unconventional choice. As director of national intelligence, she would lead 18 spy agencies and oversee a

budget of \$76 billion.

Gabbard shares Trump's worldview as an outspoken critic of aid to Ukraine and U.S. military interventions overseas.

In announcing Gabbard's selection, Trump said she would bring "a fearless spirit" to the intelligence community and secure "peace through strength."

Gabbard, who left the Democratic Party in 2022 to declare as an independent, became a Republican in 2024. In that time, she cultivated a relationship with Trump, stumping

for him on the campaign trail and helping him prepare for his debate with Vice President Kamala Harris. She is now a co-chairperson on his transition team.

Trump suggested that her history as a Democrat could ease her path to confirmation. "As a former candidate for the Democrat presidential nomination, she has broad support in both parties," he asserted in a statement Wednesday. "She is now a proud Republican!"

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Mark Warner, D-Va., who will be in the mi-

nority next year, said he would have "a lot of questions" for Gabbard during her confirmation hearing. "These are extraordinarily serious jobs and it's why the Senate has an advise and consent process."

He added that he's "got real questions" on whether she is too sympathetic to Russia.

GOP members of the Senate Intelligence Committee voiced support for Gabbard. "We always give the president the benefit of the doubt," Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D., said. "She's been in Congress, she has a military background."

Congress pushes its quest for transparency on UFOs

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The House Oversight and Accountability Committee on Wednesday pushed its probe into UFOs and the secrecy surrounding them with a hearing aimed at forcing more transparency from the government, particularly the Pentagon.

"We know that there are objects or phenomena observed in our air space and also possibly in our oceans," said Rep. Robert Garcia of California, the top Democrat on the com-

mittee's national security panel. "The American people have legitimate questions and I believe it's critical that Congress should help address them."

The hearing was the latest effort by House lawmakers to shine a light on the work of the Defense Department's All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office, or AARO, which was created in 2022 to investigate sightings of UFOs and standardize data collection.

In March, the AARO released a report finding no evidence that the government

was hiding evidence of alien spacecraft or technology and said most cases of UFO sightings could be explained as optical illusions, airborne trash or drones.

But the office's inability to solve or identify some reports of UFOs, also called unidentified anomalous phenomena by the government, has fueled speculation of a coverup and fed the public's growing interest in aliens.

Testimony from former military personnel has also stirred questions.

NATO, EU press China on N. Korean troops

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — NATO and the European Union are ramping up efforts to persuade China to help get North Korea to stop sending troops and other support to Russia to back its war on Ukraine.

Up to 12,000 North Korean troops have been sent to Russia's Kursk border region to help beat back Ukrainian forces there, according to U.S., South Korean and Ukrainian intelligence assessments. NATO says Russia is sending missile technology to North Korea in return.

With Russia exploiting its military advantage in Ukraine, the United States wants its allies to exert political pressure on China to rein in North Korea. Since Pyongyang and Beijing established diplomatic ties in 1949, their relationship has been described as being "as close as lips and teeth."

One political lever is the

threat of any increased Western activity in China's backyard, the Asia-Pacific region. Just last week, the EU sealed security pacts with regional powers Japan and South Korea.

In an opinion piece for Politico last week, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte said that "China bears particular responsibility here, to use its influence in Pyongyang and Moscow to ensure they cease these actions. Beijing cannot pretend to promote peace while turning a blind eye to increasing aggression."

On a visit to Latvia on Thursday, Rutte warned that the exchanges of missile technology in particular pose "a direct threat, not only to Europe, but also to Japan, South Korea and the U.S. mainland." Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand now regularly attend NATO meetings.

On Wednesday, after talks

with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, he also said that "the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific really have to be seen as one theater, and not as two separate ones," and that "our security, therefore, now more and more is global, and we have to look at this as a global issue."

While North Korea and Russia have moved significantly closer, many observers say China is reluctant to form a three-way, anti-West alliance with them as it prefers a stable security environment to tackle economic challenges and maintain relationships with Europe and its Asian neighbors.

In a blog published on Thursday, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell detailed his recent trip to Japan and South Korea, where North Korea's troop deployment and other assistance to Russia was on the agenda.

"This marks an escalation of

the utmost seriousness, which was of course at the heart of our discussions with the Japanese and South Korean leaders," wrote Borrell, who also held talks with Blinken on Wednesday.

Borrell hailed the conclusion during his trip of new security and defense partnerships with Japan and South Korea, "the first ones outside Europe."

"The EU was certainly not born as a military alliance but, in the current geopolitical context, it can and must also become a global security provider and partner," he wrote.

Blinken said this week that the Biden administration is determined in its final months to help ensure that Ukraine can keep fighting off the invasion next year by sending as much aid as possible to hold Russian forces at bay or strengthen its hand in any peace negotiations.

Israel says its airstrikes hit Islamic Jihad sites in Syria

Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria — Israel carried out at least two airstrikes on a western neighborhood of Damascus and one of the capital's suburbs on Thursday, killing at least 15 people and wounding another 16, Syria's state news agency said.

The news agency, SANA, said the airstrikes on the Mazzeh neighborhood in Damascus and the suburb of Qudsaya northwest of the capital struck two buildings. An Associated Press journalist at the scene in Mazzeh said that a five-story building was damaged by a missile that hit the basement.

The Israeli military said that it had hit infrastructure sites and command centers of the Islamic Jihad militant group in Syria, and had "inflicted significant damage to the terrorist organization's command center and to its oper-

atives."

The airstrikes in Damascus and the nearby suburb came shortly before Ali Larijani, an adviser to Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei, was scheduled to meet in the Syrian capital with representatives of Palestinian factions at the Iranian Embassy in Mazzeh.

The Israeli military said that Islamic Jihad had participated alongside Hamas, the Palestinian militant group in the Gaza Strip, in the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks on southern Israel that triggered the ongoing war in the Middle East.

An official with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Group said that the strike in Mazzeh targeted one of their offices, and that several members of the group were killed. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak to the media.

2 are charged with setting wildfires in US Northeast

Associated Press

BRICK, N.J. — New Jersey's governor declared a drought warning. Black Hawk helicopters scooped water from a lake to dump on a burning forest in New York state. A park in Manhattan caught fire. And authorities in two states revealed criminal charges Wednesday against people accused of setting some of the wildfires that have plagued the northeast U.S. in recent weeks.

The actions came as conditions in some northeast states are the driest they've been in nearly 120 years as numerous wildfires continue to burn in places that haven't seen significant rain since August. Meanwhile, dry conditions from coast to coast were contributing to the spread of wildfires, particularly in Southern California.

The drought declaration by New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy

asked people to take voluntary conservation steps. But it stopped short of mandatory water usage restrictions.

Firefighting crews continued efforts to contain a wildfire in a woodland on the New Jersey-New York border that has burned around 7.8 square miles in the two states. Around 30 miles away in New York City, a brush fire broke out in a park on the northern tip of Manhattan.

Late Wednesday, police in the Philadelphia suburb of Evesham Township said they had charged a juvenile with deliberately setting an Oct. 30 fire that burned less than a tenth of a square mile.

On New York's Long Island, a 20-year-old volunteer firefighter was charged with intentionally setting a brush fire Tuesday that wound up damaging a parked car, the Suffolk County Police Department said in a news release.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Driver goes around barricade, dies in crash

NC WAYNESVILLE — A driver has died after going around a barricade on a hurricane-damaged North Carolina highway that became a symbol of Helene's destruction, then driving off the roadway, officials said.

Photos of Interstate 40 with multiple lanes washed out by Helene near the Tennessee state line garnered widespread attention in the days after the September storm as the region was largely cut off by numerous road closures.

Emergency workers from Tennessee and North Carolina responded to a report of a crash involving a vehicle that went off the collapsed road and down an embankment on eastbound I-40 on Saturday night, according to a news release from the Juna-luska Community Volunteer Fire Department.

The driver, identified as Patricia Mahoney, 63, of Southern Pines, N.C., was extricated and taken to a hospital. She died later that night, according to Sgt. Brandon Miller of the North Carolina State Highway Patrol. She got on the highway, headed westbound in eastbound lanes and went off the road where the road ends. There's no indication of why she went around the barricade, Miller said.

Monument erected for victims of 1921 massacre

OK TULSA — A World War I veteran whose remains were identified earlier this year during a probe into the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre was among those honored in a memorial service Tuesday at Tul-

sa's Oaklawn Cemetery.

C.L. Daniel was the first victim of the massacre to be identified among remains discovered in a mass grave in the city. A gravestone bearing Daniel's name was erected at the cemetery, along with a monument to other victims.

On May 31 and June 1, 1921, a white mob looted and burned Greenwood, a thriving Black district of Tulsa. As many as 300 Black people were killed; more than 1,200 homes, businesses, schools and churches were destroyed; and thousands were forced into internment camps overseen by the National Guard.

Judge acts to slash \$38M verdict in abuse case

NH CONCORD — The judge who oversaw a landmark civil trial over abuse at New Hampshire's youth detention center has issued a preliminary order slashing the \$38 million verdict against the state to \$475,000. Rockingham County Superior Court Judge Andrew Schulman previously said reducing the amount awarded to plaintiff David Meehan by nearly 99% would be an "unconscionable miscarriage of justice," but "reluctantly" granted the state's request to the cap the award and said he would enter a final judgment to that effect Friday barring any late requests from attorneys.

Meehan's allegations of horrific sexual and physical abuse at the Youth Development Center in Manchester in 1990s led to a broad criminal investigation resulting in multiple arrests. His civil lawsuit seeking to hold the state accountable was the first of more than 1,100 to go to trial. Although jurors sided with

him in May after a monthlong trial, confusion arose over how much money they could award in damages.

The verdict form asked jurors "How many incidents does the jury unanimously find the plaintiff has proven by a preponderance of the evidence?" Jurors were not informed that state law caps claims against the state at \$475,000 per "incident."

Some jurors later said they wrote "one" on the verdict form to reflect that they believed Meehan suffered a single case of post-traumatic stress disorder resulting from more than 100 episodes of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. The state has interpreted the verdict to mean that jurors found it liable for only one "incident" of abuse.

State's public universities see enrollment rise 6%

GA ATLANTA — All 26 of Georgia's public universities and colleges added students this fall in the strongest enrollment surge in years.

Enrollment rose 6% statewide from fall 2023. That increase of nearly 20,000 students set a new record of nearly 365,000, surpassing last year's previous high of 344,000.

During a Tuesday meeting in Atlanta, University System of Georgia officials told regents they believed the system had benefitted from the Georgia Match program that sends letters to high school seniors urging them to apply for admission.

The University System of Georgia again saw its growth outstrip students nationwide. The National Student Clearinghouse reported last month that student enrollment nationwide grew by 3%.

Man charged with shooting after being denied entry

MS LAUREL — A 34-year-old man has been charged in the shooting of five people during a weekend party in Mississippi after he was denied entry into the event.

The shooting happened at the Cameron Center in Laurel shortly after midnight Sunday, Laurel Police Chief Tommy Cox told WJTV-TV.

Daniel Gomez allegedly shot the people after he wasn't allowed into the facility, according to police. He has been charged with five counts of aggravated assault and one count of driving under the influence.

Cox said the five victims had non-life threatening injuries.

Governor unveils state employee pay plan update

AR LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders proposed on Tuesday a \$102 million overhaul of the pay plan for state employees, a change that her office said will raise compensation for more than 14,000 state workers.

The Republican governor detailed the planned overhaul, which she said will be part of the balanced budget proposal she's scheduled to make to lawmakers later this month. Sanders said the changes are aimed at bringing state employees up to comparable rates paid in the private sector and targeted at positions facing chronic shortages such as correctional officers, state troopers, nurses and social service workers.

The proposal also reduces the number of job titles from about 2,200 to just over 800.

— From wire reports

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Heisman hopeful Jeanty made impact at Naples

BY MATT WAGNER
Stars and Stripes

Offensive coordinator Cory Taunton noticed something odd in the backfield this season that he brought up to Naples head football coach Jim Davis.

Instead of being hunched over before the snap, the Wildcats running backs were standing straight up. Davis recognized that type of stance almost immediately, as he had seen it before.

Perhaps the most memorable time was six years ago, when Ashton Jeanty almost led Naples to a DODEA-Europe Division II title as a freshman in his lone season with the Wildcats.

Now a junior at Boise State, Jeanty is once again showcasing his talents on the football field — this time in the NCAA's top division. And even though many of the current Wildcats weren't even in Italy during his time, the Broncos junior's impact still is felt at Naples — which won its third straight championship this year after an unbeaten season.

"It's funny how much of an influence he has on my kids now," Davis said. "The kids talk about it. We have articles around. We have the (No. 2) uniform hanging in the

locker ... There's reminders of him. Not that they need it."

The 5-foot-9, 215-pound running back has gone from that explosive high school freshman to one of the front-runners to win the Heisman Trophy.

A year after Jeanty earned first-team All-Mountain West and Associated Press second-team All-American honors, he has exploded for 1,734 yards and 23 touchdowns over nine games. His clip of 7.7 yards per attempt is staggering, and midway through the regular season, he was on pace to break Barry Sanders' single-season records of 2,628 yards and 37 scores.

Jeanty still could do so, should the Broncos qualify for and make a deep run in the expanded 12-team playoff for the first time. Boise State is ranked No. 13 in the latest College Football Playoff rankings — the highest of the Group of Five schools, which get one automatic qualifier.

Jeanty's performances have led to talk of him forgoing his senior season and declaring himself for the NFL Draft, with many experts saying he could be the top running back taken.

For all the hoopla surrounding

Jeanty now, he doesn't forget his football roots in Naples.

Not able to play his seventh- and eighth-grade years when his father, Harry — then a chief petty officer in the Navy — was stationed in Italy, Jeanty learned valuable lessons about self-motivation that helped him get to where he is today.

"I really would say just hard work, dedication and discipline," Jeanty said during a recent teleconference. "I didn't get to play football for two years over there, but I still had to work out and still develop my football skills while I was over there. When I finally got my chance, I ran with it."

Davis wasn't surprised when Jeanty showed up for football practice his freshman year.

He had noticed Jeanty during PE in the fall of 2016 as he saw a smaller Jeanty leap so high it seemed like he might dunk the ball on the basketball court.

After keeping tabs for two years, Davis was ready to see if Jeanty could hack it with football. He had him take on upperclassman Robby Mitchell during the first day of hitting, and when Jeanty flattened the veteran line-backer, Davis had no doubts

about the star on his hands.

"He got up, and he's like, 'Coach, he's the real deal,'" Davis said of Mitchell's reaction. "It wasn't that he was embarrassed that (Jeanty) put him down on his butt. I think he was happy that he was on his team."

The 2018 campaign turned into a wild ride that saw the Wildcats go 5-1 during the regular season and earn a berth in the Division II championship game. There, they lost to Aviano, 42-19.

Naples did hand the Saints their only loss of the season, 41-36, in Week 6. In that game, Jeanty amassed 339 rushing yards and four touchdowns on just 17 carries.

Yet Jeanty didn't recall a particular game when thinking back to his time at Naples. Instead, he talked of the importance of team bonding.

"That connection with your teammates off the field, it just makes you that much better as a team," Jeanty said. "I just remember long bus rides around Europe, sometimes 18 hours all the way to Germany. A lot of laughs, a lot of giggles, a lot of fun on the bus rides, but it just made us that more connected as a team."

Bills QB Allen dismisses comparisons with Chiefs' Mahomes

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — There are several reasons Josh Allen spent much of Wednesday referring to the AFC East-leading Bills' much-hyped showdown against Patrick Mahomes and the undefeated Chiefs on Sunday as merely one regular-season game among 17.

Outside the practice facility, a long line of CBS transport trucks were pulling into the Bills parking lot to set up headquarters for their national TV broadcast. Inside, Allen indirectly shed light on his just-another-game thought process when asked to reflect on how his and Mahomes' numbers are remarkably similar over their previous seven meetings, including the playoffs.

"Well, I know we haven't beaten them in the playoffs," Allen said. "So that's the only thing that kind of matters."

And there's the rub.

Though Allen has directed Buffalo to win three straight regular-season meetings since losing the first one in 2020, the Bills are 0-3 in the playoffs over the past four years.

With the season not on the line Sunday for two teams in the driver's seat to clinch playoff berths, Allen's focus is less on the buzz and more on maintaining the complementary "everybody eats" approach that has Buffalo (8-2) enjoying its best record through 10 games since 1993.

"I know the media perception and the fan perception is of what this game means. But for us, it's just Week 11," Allen said. "Just continuing to trust the process, not changing anything because there's no need to. ... It's gotten us to 8-2 thus far."

Allen is enjoying his most efficient season, even though his production is down considerably as compared to his numbers through 10 games in each of the past four seasons.

His 2,281 yards and 17 touchdowns passing are both Allen's fewest since his second year in 2019. Also significantly down are Allen's four interceptions after having as many as 11 through 10 outings last season.

This might also be Allen's most complete season in how he's adapted to the offense's deficiencies such as injuries — rookie wide-out Keon Coleman will miss a second straight game, while recent trade acquisition Amari Cooper has missed two games and is questionable to play Sunday. And this is an offense that opened the season with a receiver group that featured just one player, Khalil Shakir, who had previously caught a pass from Allen, following the offseason departures of Stefon Diggs and Gabe Davis.

And yet, Allen has the Bills enjoying a five-win run, with their magic number to clinch a fifth straight AFC East title down to three.

Cavs top 76ers, are 6th to start 13-0

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Donovan Mitchell scored 11 of his 23 points in the final three minutes of the game and the Cleveland Cavaliers became the sixth team in NBA history to start a season 13-0 with a 114-106 win over the Philadelphia 76ers on Wednesday night.

Mitchell also grabbed 13 rebounds and added nine assists as Cleveland became the first team since the 2015-16 Golden State Warriors to win 13 straight to begin a season. That Warriors team holds the record for most wins to begin a campaign at 24 straight.

Darius Garland scored 25 points while Evan Mobley had 14 points with seven rebounds.

Jared McCain had a career-high 34 for the 76ers, who played without Paul George and Joel Embiid on the second night of a back-to-back as part of left knee injury maintenance. Kelly Oubre Jr. had 20 points while Caleb Martin added 18 for Philadelphia.

Celtics 139, Nets 114: Jayson Tatum had 36 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds, Jaylen Brown added 24 points and 12 rebounds and visiting Boston beat Brooklyn.

Payton Pritchard had 23 points, eight assists and six rebounds for the Celtics, who quickly and emphatically bounced back with their highest points total of the season after a surprising 117-116 home loss to Atlanta on Tuesday night.

Boston fell into a 13-point hole in the first quarter of this one before the NBA champions snapped themselves back into top form and turned the game into a rout with a 74-point second half.

Magic 94, Pacers 90: Franz Wagner scored 29 points, Jalen Suggs hit two free throws with 9.8 seconds left and host Orlando beat Indiana to remain unbeaten at home.

Orlando is 6-0 at home this

season and has won 13 in a row overall at home.

Pascal Siakam led the Pacers with 29 points. Bennedict Mathurin added 23 points — scoring 12 straight Indiana points late in the fourth quarter — and 12 rebounds. Tyrese Haliburton had with nine points and 12 assists.

Goga Bitadze added 12 points and 12 rebounds for the Magic. Anthony Black came off the bench for six points, six assists, four steals and a block.

Bulls 124, Knicks 123: Zach LaVine scored 31 points and Colby White had 22, including the winning free throws with three seconds left, as visiting Chicago outlasted New York.

The Bulls led by as many as 22 in the third quarter, but the Knicks rallied and went ahead 123-121 on Jalen Brunson's bucket with four seconds remaining.

Brunson's potential winner rimmed out at the buzzer.

Karl-Anthony Towns scored a season-high 46 points for New York. Brunson finished with 24 points and Mikal Bridges had 20.

Thunder 106, Pelicans 88: Jalen Williams scored 31 points, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander added 29 and host Oklahoma City beat short-handed New Orleans.

The victory was the second straight for the Thunder without Chet Holmgren. Oklahoma City was coming off a 134-128 win over the Los Angeles Clippers on Monday.

Lou Dort scored 11 points and Aaron Wiggins added 10 for the Thunder, who broke a 59-all tie with a 16-0 run in the third quarter for a 75-59 advantage.

Brandon Ingram scored 18 points, and Trey Murphy added 14 for the Pelicans.

Rockets 111, Clippers 103: Jalen Green had 21 points and Amen Thompson and Tari Eason added 18 each to lead host Houston to a victory over Los Angeles in the opener of a two-game set.

The Rockets trailed by 11 early but had taken a five-point lead by halftime. They used a huge run at the end of the third quarter and the beginning of the fourth to push the lead to 19.

The Clippers used a 9-2 run to cut the lead to four with about 90 seconds remaining, but Alperen Sengun had a dunk followed by a monster block on the other end to secure Houston's third straight victory.

James Harden had 19 points for Los Angeles, which lost a second straight after winning four in a row.

Spurs 139, Wizards 130: Victor Wembanyama had a career-high 50 points and host San Antonio rolled to a victory over Washington.

Wembanyama was 8 for 16 on 3-pointers, also setting a career high, as the Spurs won their second straight.

Jordan Poole had 42 points for the Wizards, who lost their sixth straight.

At 20 years 314 days, Wembanyama is the fourth-youngest player to score 50 points, trailing only Brandon Jennings (20/52), LeBron James (20/80) and Devin Booker (20/145).

Wembanyama's previous high was 49 points in a 130-126 overtime victory over New York.

Bucks 127, Pistons 120 (OT): Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 59 points to pace host Milwaukee to an overtime victory over Detroit.

It was a league-high for points this season.

Antetokounmpo hit 21 of 34 shots and 16 of 17 free throws and added 14 rebounds as the Bucks rallied from an 18-point second-half deficit.

Cade Cunningham led the Pistons with 35 points and Malik Beasley had 26 against his former team.

Detroit's Ron Holland II was fouled by Antetokounmpo with one second left in regulation and the score tied at 111, but

Holland missed both free throws.

Kings 127, Suns 101: De'Aaron Fox had 29 points and 10 assists, Kevin Huerter scored a season-high 22 points and host Sacramento beat Phoenix.

Domantas Sabonis added 11 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists to help the Kings to their second victory in four days against the Suns, who were without Kevin Durant for the third straight game because of a strained calf.

Josh Okogie had a season-high 25 points and eight rebounds for Phoenix, which was also without Bradley Beal (calf) and Grayson Allen (hamstring). Devin Booker had 18 points.

Trail Blazers 106, Timberwolves 98: Shaedon Sharpe scored 33 points, Donovan Clingan narrowly missed a triple-double with 17 points, 13 rebounds and eight blocks, and host Portland beat Minnesota for the second straight night.

Anthony Edwards scored 24 points as the Timberwolves squandered an early lead and dropped their third straight game.

The teams entered the fourth quarter tied before the Trail Blazers took control behind the defense of Clingan, who had four blocks in the period as Minnesota missed 10 of its first 11 shots to start the final frame.

Lakers 128, Grizzlies 123: LeBron James had 35 points, 14 assists and 12 rebounds for his third straight triple-double and host Los Angeles rallied to beat Memphis.

Anthony Davis scored 11 of his 21 points in the fourth quarter. He picked up his fifth foul with 3:51 remaining in the third quarter, then came back in with 6:48 left and hit a couple of pivotal baskets, including a 3-pointer with 4:51 remaining to put the Lakers up for good at 111-108.

James was 13-for-22 from the field, hitting 4 of 7 3-pointers.

Karaban helps UConn rout Le Moyne

Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. — Alex Karaban scored 11 of his 17 points in the first half and No. 3 UConn routed Le Moyne 90-49 on Wednesday night.

Liam McNeeley added 15 points for two-time defending national champion UConn (3-0). Solo Ball scored all 12 of his points in the second half. Tarris Reed Jr. added 12 points and 10 rebounds, and Hassan Diarra had 10 points and six assists.

Dwayne Koroma led Le Moyne (1-3) with 13 points and five rebounds. Fred Bagatskis had 11 points.

No. 5 Auburn 79, Kent State 56: Johni Broome had 18 points and 12 rebounds and Chaney Johnson also scored 18 points to lead the host Tigers past the Golden Flashes.

Chad Baker-Mazara and Denver Jones had 12 points apiece for Auburn. Broome made 8 of 12 shots and Johnson 8 of 11.

VonCameron Davis led Kent

State (2-1) with 19 points despite playing just 18 minutes after getting into early foul trouble. Jalen Sullinger added 16 points and made 3 of 5 3-pointers.

Auburn's Jahki Howard and Ja'Heim Hudson missed their second game in a row after reportedly getting into an altercation on the flight to Houston, forcing the plane to be grounded shortly after takeoff.

No. 8 Houston 91, Louisiana 45: Terrance Arceneaux had 14 points off the bench, Milos Uzan scored 13 points and the host Cougars routed the Ragin' Cajuns.

Mercy Miller had 12 points off the bench, and J'Wan Roberts and Emanuel Sharp each added 11 points for Houston (2-1), which rebounded after losing to Auburn 74-69 on Saturday night.

Christian Wright had eight points, and Chancellor White, Kentrell Garnett and Kyndall Davis each scored seven points for Louisiana (1-2). The Ragin'

Cajuns shot 32.6%.

No. 11 Tennessee 92, Montana 57: Igor Milicic Jr. had 18 points, 10 rebounds and five assists, and the host Volunteers beat the Grizzlies.

Chaz Lanier, Felix Okpara and Cameron Carr each scored 13 points for Tennessee (3-0). Zakai Zeigler had 11 points, seven assists and six rebounds.

Money Williams led Montana (2-2) with 30 points.

No. 14 Creighton 78, Houston Christian 49: Ryan Kalkbrenner scored 16 points, Steven Ashworth added 13 and the host Bluejays blew out the Huskies as coach Greg McDermott became the school's all-time coaching wins leader.

McDermott has won 328 games at Creighton since taking over for Dana Altman in 2010. Altman, now at Oregon, won 327 games from 1994-2010.

D'Aundre Samuels led the Huskies with eight points.

No. 18 Arkansas 65, Troy 49:

Adou Thiero and Zvonimir Ivisic scored 19 points apiece, and the host Razorbacks used a big second-half run to beat the Trojans.

Arkansas (2-1) struggled until putting together a 19-6 run midway through the second half, with Ivisic, Thiero, Boogie Fland and Johnell Davis accounting for all of Arkansas' scoring in the stretch.

Jackson Fields led Troy (2-1) with 13 points.

No. 22 St. John's 66, Wagner 45: Deivon Smith drained a 3-pointer midway through the second half to start an 18-0 spurt that propelled the host Red Storm past the Seahawks.

RJ Luis Jr. had 13 points, Aaron Scott scored 11 and the 6-foot Smith grabbed a team-high eight rebounds as St. John's (3-0) pulled away down the stretch following a sloppy performance over the first 30 minutes.

Javier Ezquerra scored 10 points to pace Wagner (1-2).

Maple Leafs rally late to beat Capitals in overtime

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Mitch Marner tied it in the final minute of the third period, John Tavares scored the overtime winner and the Toronto Maple Leafs rallied from a two-goal deficit to beat the Washington Capitals 4-3 on Wednesday night.

William Nylander sparked the comeback with his goal with 4:09 left and set up Marner's 6-on-4 power play goal with 47.8 seconds left in regulation with goaltender Joseph Woll pulled for an extra attacker and Washington's Nic Dowd in the penalty box. Nylander's heroics came 24 hours after his turnover on the first shift put the Leafs on track to a dud of a shutout loss at home against Ottawa.

The Capitals led 3-1 on goals

by Taylor Raddysh, Dylan Strome and Aliaksei Protas before a turnover by Tom Wilson ended with Nylander beating Logan Thompson. Dowd's penalty became one mistake too many, and Washington lost for just the fifth time in 15 games this season.

Red Wings 3, Penguins 2 (OT): Simon Edvinsson scored 1:30 into overtime, and visiting Detroit beat Pittsburgh.

Patrick Kane had a goal and an assist for Detroit. Jonatan Berggren also scored, and Cam Talbot stopped 32 shots in his 250th career win.

Anthony Beauvillier and Bryan Rust scored for Pittsburgh. Beauvillier also scored during Monday night's 7-1 loss to Dallas.

Utah 4, Hurricanes 1: Nick Bjugstad scored his second

goal of the game to cap Utah's three-goal flurry in a 2½-minute span of the third period in a victory over visiting Carolina.

Jack McBain and Mikhail Sergachev also scored for Utah, which won at home after losing three of four on the road. Michael Kesselring had two assists and Karel Vejmelka had a career-high 49 saves to get his first win in five games.

Martin Necas scored for Carolina, which lost for just the second time in 11 games and ended a streak of nine straight games with at least four goals.

Golden Knights 3, Ducks 2: Nicolas Roy, Tomas Hertl and Pavel Dorofeyev all scored, and visiting Vegas held on late to beat Anaheim.

Shea Theodore had two assists and Adin Hill made 22 saves for Vegas. Jack Eichel

got his 20th assist of the season, second-most in the NHL.

Brock McGinn and Frank Vatrano scored for Anaheim. Lukas Dostal made 36 saves and Brett Leason had two assists for Anaheim.

Avalanche 4, Kings 2: Mikko Rantanen scored twice in the third period to complete his ninth career hat trick, and host Colorado beat Los Angeles.

Rantanen's goal at 10:01, his second of the night, gave Colorado the lead in the third and he added an empty-net goal with 1:59 remaining for his second hat trick of the season. Artturi Lehkonen also scored and Alexandar Georgiev made 13 saves for the Avalanche.

Adrian Kempe had two goals, including one 32 seconds into the game, for the Kings.