

## Dozens dead from devastating Ian

*Associated Press*

PAWLEYS ISLAND, S.C. — Rescuers searched for survivors among the ruins of Florida's flooded homes from Hurricane Ian while authorities in South Carolina began assessing damage from its strike there as the remnants of one of the strongest and costliest hurricanes to ever hit the U.S. continued to push north.

The powerful storm terrorized millions of people for most of the week, battering western Cuba before raking across Florida from the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic Ocean, where it mustered enough strength for a final assault on South Carolina. Now weakened to a post-tropical cyclone, Ian was expected to move across central North Carolina on Saturday morning then move into Virginia and New York.

At least 30 people were confirmed dead, including 27 people in Florida mostly from drowning but others from the storm's tragic aftereffects. An elderly couple died after their oxygen machines shut off when they lost power, authorities said.

Meanwhile, distraught residents waded through knee-high water Friday, salvaging what possessions they could from their flooded homes and loading them onto rafts and canoes.

"I want to sit in the corner and cry. I don't know what else to do," Stevie Scuderi said

after shuffling through her mostly destroyed Fort Myers apartment, the mud in her kitchen clinging to her purple sandals.

In South Carolina, Ian's center came ashore near Georgetown, a small community along the Winyah Bay about 60 miles north of historic Charleston. The storm washed away parts of four piers along the coast, including two connected to the popular tourist town of Myrtle Beach.

The storm's winds were much weaker Friday than during Ian's landfall on Florida's Gulf Coast earlier in the week. Authorities and volunteers there were still assessing the damage as shocked residents tried to make sense of what they just lived through.

Anthony Rivera, 25, said he had to climb through the window of his first floor apartment during the storm to carry his grandmother and girlfriend to the second floor. As they hurried to escape the rising water, the storm surge had washed a boat right up next to his apartment.

"That's the scariest thing in the world because I can't stop no boat," he said. "I'm not Superman."

Pawleys Island, a beach community about 73 miles up South Carolina's coast from Charleston, was among the places hardest hit by Ian.

Eddie Wilder, who has been coming to Pawleys Island for more than six decades,

said Friday's storm was "insane to watch." He said waves as high as 25 feet washed away the pier, just two doors down from his home.

"We watched it hit the pier and saw the pier disappear," said Wilder, whose house sits about 30 feet above the ocean and stayed dry inside. "I've seen quite a few storms, and this one was wild. ... We had a front row seat."

The Pawleys pier was one of at least four along South Carolina's coast to be destroyed during Ian's winds and rain.

"We watched it crumble and watched it float by with an American flag still floating," Wilder said.

Bridges on Pawleys Island were strewn with palm fronds, pine needles and even a kayak retrieved from a nearby shoreline. An intercoastal waterway was littered with the remnants of several boat houses torn apart and knocked off their pilings in the storm.

Even though Ian has long passed over Florida, new problems continued to arise. A 14-mile stretch of Interstate 75 was closed late Friday in both directions in the Port Charlotte area because of the massive amount of water swelling the Myakka River.

Ross Giarratana, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Tampa, said the Myakka was cresting at a record 12.73 feet Saturday morning.

## Sailor acquitted of setting fire that destroyed ship

*Associated Press*

SAN DIEGO — A military judge on Friday acquitted a sailor of arson in a fire that destroyed the USS Bonhomme Richard, a blow to the Navy as it faces allegations of improper training and maintenance of the \$1.2 billion amphibious assault ship.

Ryan Sawyer Mays, 21, deeply exhaled when the verdict was read, put both hands on the defense table, broke into sobs and hugged supporters in the audience at Naval Base San Diego.

Outside the courtroom building, Mays read a brief statement to reporters and declined to answer questions. He did not address his plans.

"I can say that the past two years have been the hardest two years of my entire life as a young man," he said. "I've lost time with friends. I've lost friends. I've lost time with family, and my entire Navy career was ruined. I am looking forward to starting over."

Prosecutors presented no physical evidence during the nine-day trial that the sailor set the ship on fire, while the defense chipped away at the credibility of a key witness, Seaman Kenji Velasco, who changed his account over time.

Gary Barthel, a former Marine judge advocate who represented Mays at a preliminary hearing, said undercutting Velasco's credibility was key. Barthel has said the

judge in the preliminary hearing recommended against a court-martial, but Vice Adm. Steve Koehler, former commander of the San Diego-based U.S. 3rd Fleet, had the final say.

The ship's lower vehicle storage area "became a junkyard and I believe throughout this entire process the Navy was attempting to clean up their mess by accusing Seaman Mays of these allegations," Barthel told reporters.

Prosecutors did not comment after the verdict. The Navy said through a spokesman, Lt. Samuel R. Boyle, that it "is committed to upholding the principles of due process and a fair trial."

# Army misses recruiting goal by 25%

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The Army fell about 15,000 soldiers — or 25% — short of its recruitment goal this year, officials confirmed Friday, despite a frantic effort to make up the widely expected gap in a year when all the military services struggled in a tight jobs market to find young people willing and fit to enlist.

While the Army was the only service that didn't meet its target, all of the others had to dig deep into their pools of delayed entry applicants, which puts them behind as they begin the next recruiting year on Saturday.

The worsening problem stirs debate about whether America's fighting force should be restructured or reduced in size if the

services can't recruit enough, and could also put added pressure on the National Guard and Reserve to help meet mission requirements.

According to officials, the Marine Corps, which usually goes into each fiscal year with as much as 50% of its recruiting goal already locked in, has only a bit more than 30%. And the Air Force and the Navy will only have about 10% of their goals as they start the new fiscal year. The Air Force usually has about 25%. Officials spoke on condition of anonymity to provide details on the recruiting totals that have not yet been released.

"In the Army's most challenging recruiting year since the start of the all-volunteer force, we will only achieve 75% of our

fiscal year 22 recruiting goal," Army Secretary Christine Wormuth said in a statement to The Associated Press. "The Army will maintain its readiness and meet all our national security requirements. If recruiting challenges persist, we will draw on the Guard and Reserve to augment active-duty forces, and may need to trim our force structure."

Officials said the Army brought in about 45,000 soldiers during the fiscal year that ended Friday. The goal was 60,000.

The Air Force, meanwhile, was able to pull enough recruits from its delayed entry pool to exactly meet its goal to bring in 26,151 recruits this year.

"Using Air Force lexicon, I would say we're doing a dead

stick landing as we come into the end of fiscal '22, and we're going to need to turn around on the first of October and do an afterburner takeoff," Maj. Gen. Edward Thomas, head of the Air Force Recruiting Service, said at a conference last week. "We're going to be starting 2023 in a tougher position than we started 2022."

Early this year, military leaders were already bracing for a bad recruiting season. The Army, for example, announced several months ago that it would have to adjust the expected size of its total force this year from 476,000 to about 466,000. The large recruiting shortfall was offset a bit by the Army's ability to exceed its retention goal — keeping 104% of the targeted number of troops in the service.

## Austin visits Hawaii amid distrust over fuel leak

*Associated Press*

HONOLULU — U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin visited Hawaii this week amid lingering community frustration and distrust after jet fuel from a military storage facility last year spilled into Pearl Harbor's drinking water, poisoned thousands of military families and threatened the purity of Honolulu's water supply.

Austin traveled to the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility in the hills above Pearl Harbor on Friday and met the commander of the joint task force in charge of draining its tanks so it can be shut down.

He also met with several families affected by the fuel spill and Hawaii state officials, the military said in a news release. The meetings were closed to the media, and Austin didn't hold a news conference afterward.

Outside Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam, several dozen protesters held signs saying "Navy Lies" and "Shut Down Red Hill." People driving by — including many exiting the base — honked in support.

Samantha McCoy, whose husband is in the Air Force, said her family suffered mi-

graines, rashes, skin sores and gastrointestinal problems that only subsided when they moved out of military housing in August.

She called on Austin to make more medical care available to families.

"It took four months of daily migraines to even get a referral to a neurologist. And that's really unacceptable," she said at the protest.

A Navy investigation released in July showed a cascading series of errors, complacency and a lack of professionalism led to the fuel spill, which contaminated tap water used by 93,000 people on the Navy's water system.

Nearly 6,000 sought medical attention for nausea, headaches and rashes. Some continue to complain of health problems.

The military put families up in hotels for several months, but stopped paying once the health department cleared people to resume drinking their tap water.

Kristina Baehr, an attorney with Texas-based Just Well Law, sued the federal government in August on behalf of four families but said she will be adding more indi-

viduals from among the 700 clients she represents. McCoy is among her clients.

"They didn't warn them to stop drinking it, and 6,000 people went to the emergency room," she said. "Then, many of these people have only gotten sicker over time."

Baehr said her clients were not among those chosen to speak to Austin. If they had such an opportunity, she said they would tell him to have officials stop saying no one is medically affected by the spill and that there are no long-term effects.

They would also encourage him to provide appropriate medical care to families, safe housing because families claim the homes were not properly remediated and compassionate reassignment to other bases to all those who ask.

"A lot of people are still stuck in the houses that made them sick," she said. "So it's very simple, let people out of the houses that made them sick and fix the houses so that they're safe for the next people."

The military plans to drain fuel from the tanks by July 2024 to comply with a Hawaii Department of Health order to shut down the facility.

# Russia withdraws after Ukraine encircles Lyman

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — After being encircled by Ukrainian forces, Russia pulled troops out Saturday from an eastern Ukrainian city that it had been using as a front-line hub. It was the latest victory for the Ukrainian counteroffensive that has humiliated and angered the Kremlin.

Russia's withdrawal from Lyman complicates its internationally vilified declaration just a day earlier that it had annexed four regions of Ukraine — an area that includes Lyman. Taking the city paves the way for Ukrainian troops to potentially push further into land that Moscow now illegally claims as its own.

The fighting comes at a pivotal moment in Russian President Vladimir Putin's war. Facing Ukrainian gains on the battlefield — which he frames as a U.S.-orchestrated effort to destroy Russia — Putin this week heightened threats of nuclear force and used his most aggressive, anti-Western rhetoric to date.

Russia's Defense Ministry claimed to have inflicted damage on Ukrainian forces in battling to hold Lyman, but said outnumbered

Russian troops were withdrawn to more favorable positions. Kyiv's air force said it moved into Lyman, and the Ukrainian president's chief of staff posted photos of a Ukrainian flag being hoisted on the town's outskirts.

Lyman had been an important link in the Russian front line for both ground communications and logistics. Located 100 miles southeast of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, it is in the Donetsk region near the border with Luhansk region, both of which Russia annexed Friday after a local "referendum" was held at gunpoint.

Ukrainian forces have retaken vast swaths of territory in a counteroffensive that started in September. They have pushed Russian forces out of the Kharkiv area and moved east across the Oskil River.

Moscow's withdrawal from Lyman prompted immediate criticism from some Russian officials.

The leader of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, blamed the retreat, without evidence, on one general being "covered up for by higher-up leaders in the General Staff." He called for "more drastic measures."

## Gun owners, rights groups file new lawsuit over Conn. rifle ban

Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. — Citing a U.S. Supreme Court decision earlier this year, gun rights groups and firearms owners have launched another attempt to overturn Connecticut's ban on certain semi-automatic rifles that was enacted in response to the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting.

A new lawsuit was filed Thursday in federal court by three gun owners, the Connecticut Citizens Defense League and the Second Amendment Foundation. They are seeking to overturn the state prohibition on what they call "modern sporting arms" such as AR-15-style rifles like the one used to kill 20 first-graders and six educators at the Newtown school in 2012.

"We all deserve to live in safe communities, but denying ownership of the most commonly owned firearms in the country is not the way to achieve it," Holly Sullivan, presi-

dent of the Connecticut Citizens Defense League, said in a statement.

"The recent U.S. Supreme Court decision ... has opened the door to this challenge, and we believe Connecticut will be hard pressed to prove its statutes are constitutional," she said.

State officials vowed to defend the 2013 gun laws.

"Connecticut's gun laws save lives, and we are not going back," state Attorney General William Tong said in a statement. "We will not allow weapons of war back into our schools, our houses of worship, our grocery stores, and our communities. I will vigorously defend our laws against any and every one of these baseless challenges."

In June, the Supreme Court broadly expanded gun rights in a 6-3 ruling by the conservative majority that overturned a New York law restricting carrying guns in public.

## US vets captured in Ukraine war 'prayed for death'

Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Even after three months of captivity that included execution threats, physical torture, solitary confinement and food deprivation, it was the ride to freedom that nearly broke Alex Druke, a U.S. military veteran released last week with nine other prisoners who went to help Ukraine fight off Russian invaders.

His hands were bound. His head was covered by a plastic bag, and the packing tape holding it in place was secured so tightly it it caused welts on his forehead. Druke said he and fellow American prisoner Andy Huynh reached their limit in this state during the transit, which occurred in a series of vehicles from eastern Ukraine to an airport in Russia that was surrounded by armed guards.

"For all we went through and all the times we thought we might die, we accepted that we might die, we were ready to die when it came, that ride was the only time that each of us independently prayed for death just to get it over with," Druke told The Associated Press in an interview Friday.

"The mental and emotional torture of those last 24 hours in captivity, that was the worst," he said.

Druke, 40, is healing: The swelling is going down on his head and he's trying to regain some of the 30 pounds he figures he lost eating a poor diet. But awful memories remain, and he's unsure what comes next aside from trying to focus attention on fellow prisoners who remain in Russian hands.

"The war has not ended," he said, speaking at the home he shares with his mother and other relatives in Tuscaloosa.

Druke and Huynh, a 27-year-old fellow military veteran from Alabama, were among hundreds of Americans who went to Ukraine early on to help in the fight against Russia.

On June 9, they were captured during what Druke described as a reconnaissance mission associated with Ukraine's international legion, composed of foreign volunteers.

"Everyone else managed to make it back to the base safe," he said.

Russian soldiers took the two men to their camp, and then into Russia for "intensive interrogation." While declining to go into specifics, Druke said the treatment was brutal.



# US officials: Monkeypox not going away

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Some U.S. health officials are conceding that monkeypox is probably not going away anytime soon.

The disease's spread is slowing but the virus is so widespread that elimination is unlikely, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. That conclusion was in a recent CDC report, and echoed Friday by Marc Lipsitch, director of science in the agency's disease-forecasting center.

Lipsitch hesitated to say monkeypox is permanently here to stay, but he said it stands to be a continuing threat for the next few years.

"It's in many geographic locations within the country" as well as in other countries, Lipsitch told The Associated Press. "There's no clear path in our mind to complete elim-

ination domestically."

The virus has mainly spread among gay and bisexual men, though health officials continue to stress that anyone can be infected. It's important that people at risk take steps to prevent spread and that vaccination efforts continue, Lipsitch said.

The CDC report contained some good news: The U.S. outbreak seems to have peaked in early August. The average number of daily cases being reported — fewer than 150 — is about a third what it was reported in the middle of the summer, and officials expect the decline will continue for at least the next several weeks.

Lipsitch attributed the good news to increasing vaccinations, cautious behavior by people at risk and infection-derived immuni-

ty in the highest risk populations.

Dr. Tom Inglesby, director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, agreed that it's unlikely that spread of monkeypox will stop in the U.S. anytime soon, but he said it's still possible in the long term.

If domestic transmission were stopped, infections may still continue if people catch the virus while traveling internationally, he said. But the declining cases makes it seem like "we've turned a real corner."

"The efforts underway are succeeding, and should be continued, if not intensified," he said. With case numbers going down, this is a good time for local health departments to take a new stab at doing intensive contact tracing to try to stop chains of transmission, he said.

# Ariz. judge declines to halt ban on abortion

Associated Press

PHOENIX — An Arizona judge on Friday declined to put her order that allowed enforcement of a pre-statehood law making it a crime to provide an abortion on hold, saying abortion right groups that asked her to block the order are not likely to prevail on appeal.

The ruling from Pima County Superior Court Judge Kellie Johnson means the state's abortion providers will not be able to restart procedures. Abortions were halted on Sept. 23 when

Johnson ruled that a 1973 injunction must be lifted so that the Civil War-era law could be enforced.

Republican Attorney General Mark Brnovich sought the order lifting the injunction. Attorneys with his office told the judge that, since the U.S. Supreme Court's June 24 decision said women do not have a constitutional right to obtain an abortion, there was no legal reason to block the old law.

Planned Parenthood and its Arizona affiliate had urged Johnson to keep the injunction issued shortly after *Roe v. Wade* was de-

clined in 1973. They argued that laws enacted by the state Legislature in the ensuing 50 years should take precedence. Planned Parenthood's lawyers on Monday asked Johnson to put her ruling on hold to allow an appeal.

Before the Sept. 23 ruling allowing enforcement of the old law, abortions were legal in Arizona until the fetus was viable, usually at about 24 weeks of pregnancy. But on Saturday, a law enacted by the state Legislature last spring banning abortion

at 15 weeks took effect.

Gov. Doug Ducey has said that law takes precedence; Brnovich and some Republican lawmakers insist the old law is in force.

"It is impermissible that Arizonans are waking up each morning to their elected officials making conflicting statements about which laws are in effect or claiming that they do not know, and yet the court has refused to provide any clarity or relief," said Brittany Fonteno, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Arizona.

# Tesla robot walks, waves but long way from Musk vision

Associated Press

DETROIT — An early prototype of Tesla Inc.'s proposed Optimus humanoid robot slowly and awkwardly walked onto a stage, turned and waved to a cheering crowd at the company's artificial intelligence event Friday.

But the basic tasks by the robot with exposed wires and electronics — as well as a later, next-generation version that had to be carried onstage by three men — was a long way from CEO Elon Musk's vision of a human-like robot that can change the world.

Musk told the crowd, many of whom might be hired by Tesla, that the robot can do much more than the audience saw Fri-

day. He said it is also delicate and "we just didn't want it to fall on its face."

Musk suggested that the problem with flashy robot demonstrations is that the robots are "missing a brain" and don't have the intelligence to navigate themselves, but he gave little evidence Friday that Optimus was any more intelligent than robots developed by other companies and researchers.

Musk said that Friday night was the first time the early robot walked onstage without a tether. Tesla's goal, he said, is to make an "extremely capable" robot in high volumes — possibly millions of them — at a cost that could be less than a car, that he guessed would be less than \$20,000.

Tesla showed a video of the robot, which uses AI that Tesla is testing in its "Full Self-Driving" vehicles, carrying boxes and placing a metal bar into what appeared to be a factory machine. But there was no live demonstration of the robot completing the tasks.

Employees told the crowd in Palo Alto, Calif., as well as those watching via livestream, that they have been working on Optimus for six to eight months. People can probably buy an Optimus "within three to five years," Musk said.

Employees said Optimus robots would have four fingers and a thumb with a tendon-like system so they could have the dexterity of humans.

**AMERICAN ROUNDUP**

**Animal blessing rule: No venomous critters**

**LA** NEW ORLEANS — Rule No. 1 for the upcoming animal blessing at a Catholic university in New Orleans: “Please leave venomous animals at home.”

Rule No. 2: Be prepared to clean up after your pet. “We will provide a pet station with complimentary water and waste bags,” said a news release.

The group blessing of the animals will be the first since 1999 at Loyola University New Orleans. The service will be Tuesday, feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals, ecology, merchants and Italy.

The Rev. Justin Daffron, Loyola’s interim president, and Parleaux, a black cockapoo he trained as the university’s therapy dog, will attend.

**Man charged in fatal crash at restaurant**

**NC** WILSON — A man has been charged with misdemeanor death by motor vehicle in a crash that killed two customers at a fast-food restaurant in August, police said.

Wilson police obtained warrants charging Jesse Lee Lawrence, 75, of Wilson with reckless driving and two counts of misdemeanor death by motor vehicle, police said.

The single-vehicle crash occurred Aug. 14 at a Hardee’s restaurant in Wilson. A Lincoln Aviator struck brothers Christopher Ruffin, 58, and Clay Ruffin, 62, both from Wilson, according to a police news release. Christopher Ruffin was pronounced dead at the scene,

while his brother died at ECU Health Medical Center in Greenville.

Lawrence was treated at Wilson Medical Center and released.

**Man found guilty of dumping body parts**

**AZ** PRESCOTT — A former Seattle resident accused of dumping body parts around central Arizona has been convicted of more than two dozen felonies.

A Yavapai County jury found Walter Harold Mitchell III guilty of 29 felony counts of concealing or abandoning a dead body, according to a statement from the Yavapai County Attorney’s Office.

Authorities linked Mitchell to human remains found on the outskirts of Prescott in late December 2020, through tags and medical gauze that accompanied them.

Mitchell had moved to Arizona earlier in 2020 from Washington state, where he owned a business that managed cadavers for research. His business permanently closed in April 2020 and he took the donor parts with him when he moved, prosecutors said.

The remains that included arms, legs and heads have been linked to nine people, Deputy Yavapai County Attorney Casi Harris said previously.

**Train derailment sends 13 rail cars off tracks**

**MI** WARREN — A freight train derailment sent more than a dozen rail cars off the tracks near Detroit, snarling traffic while

emergency responders assessed the damage, officials said.

Warren Fire Commissioner Wilburt McAdams said 13 of the CN freight train’s 151 cars derailed in Warren. No injuries were reported following the derailment on the city’s southeast side.

McAdams said three of the 13 derailed cars were tanker cars hauling liquid chlorine and unrefined alcohol, but those tanker cars had remained upright.

He said a tanker car carrying alcohol was leaking a little but did not pose a danger to the public.

McAdams said a section of tracks near the derailment area is bowed. He said it remains unclear whether those tracks caused the derailment or if one or more of the rail cars’ wheels had malfunctioned and damaged the tracks, causing the derailment.

**Principal hid ‘death notebook’ for year**

**AL** TRUSSVILLE — A high school principal failed to tell police about a student’s “death notebook” that was found last year and disclosed in September, only after the student threatened to shoot a classmate, the mayor said.

While prosecutors declined to file any charges, Trussville Mayor Buddy Choat said a “total lack of communication” had led to a situation that rattled some parents. “There is no reason for this not to have been reported other than a mistake in judgment,” he said.

Police began an investigation in September after a student at Hewitt-Trussville High School

threatened to shoot someone with a bow and arrow, officials said. During the probe, police learned the same student had compiled a “death notebook” that was based on a television show and contained the names of about three dozen students to harm.

Rather than reporting the list to police or school superiors when it was found last October, the principal placed the notebook in a drawer and kept it, Choat said, providing it to police after the alleged threat.

**14 guards at women’s prison indicted in attack**

**NJ** TRENTON — A grand jury has indicted 14 corrections officers on charges stemming from what authorities said was a brutal attack in 2021 on inmates at the state’s only prison for women.

The grand jury handed up the indictments after a more than yearlong investigation into January’s events at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women, in the community of Clinton, Acting Attorney General Matt Platkin’s office said.

Attorneys for the guards charged have said previously they planned to fight the allegations in court. The charges include conspiracy, official misconduct, tampering with public records and aggravated assault, Platkin said.

The indictments are the latest development in a state criminal probe that resulted in significant fallout, including the departure of the state’s corrections commissioner and Gov. Phil Murphy’s declaration that he will close the prison.

— From Associated Press



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# Mariners end 21-year playoff drought

*Associated Press*

SEATTLE — More than an hour after Cal Raleigh ended the longest playoff drought in baseball, he was back on the field with his teammates, circling the perimeter of the field to acknowledge the tens of thousands of fans who still stuck around.

The celebration was more akin to winning something big in October, rather than a victory on the last day of September. But after 21 years, the Seattle Mariners could be excused for going a little over the top upon their return to the playoffs.

“It’s better than maybe what you could dream it to be,” Seattle manager Scott Servais said.

Raleigh hit a game-winning home run with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning and the Mariners clinched a wild-card berth in the American League with a 2-1 victory over the Oakland Athletics on Friday night.

Raleigh, pinch-hitting for

Luis Torrens, hit a 3-2 pitch from Domingo Acevedo (3-4) just inside the right-field foul pole for a solo homer that sent the Mariners to the postseason for the first time since 2001.

“I remember the moment when I knew it was fair and looking at the team and everybody’s jumping. It was just crazy,” Raleigh said.

Seattle’s celebration on the field lasted more than 10 minutes as fans and players lifted themselves from the burden of two decades without seeing playoffs from their baseball team.

That was just the start.

Nearly an hour later, and with the stands still mostly full, Servais and his team were back on the field after a wild clubhouse celebration. He grabbed the microphone and reminded the crowd — colorfully — that when he arrived along with President of Baseball Operations Jerry Dipoto seven years ago, the mission was to “end the ... drought.”

“We did it. These players behind me are special. They care. They care about winning the right way. They care about representing the city of Seattle,” Servais told the crowd.

It indeed had been a long wait — the last time the Mariners advanced to the postseason, the team was led by rookie Ichiro Suzuki and Edgar Martinez and managed by Lou Piniella.

As has been the case for most of this season with the Mariners, their 86th win and the one that sent them back to the playoffs happened in the most stressful way possible. Seattle was unable to solve Oakland starter Ken Waldichuk and an assembly line of relievers for eight innings, held only to Ty France’s RBI double that scored Dylan Moore two batters into the game.

Acevedo struck out Mitch Haniger and Carlos Santana to open the ninth, but Raleigh came through with his 26th home run of the season, the

most ever by a Seattle catcher.

“It’s not really a pressure moment,” Raleigh said. “We’re having fun. We’re playing baseball. That’s the way I look at it. And I think that’s the mentality you got to have.”

Aside from clinching a spot in the postseason, Seattle stayed 1½ games behind Toronto for the top wild-card spot and one half-game ahead of Tampa Bay as the three continue to jockey for seeding.

But the place in the standings didn’t matter on this night. It was all about punching the final AL ticket and ending two decades without the guarantee of playoff baseball.

Seattle’s berth ended the longest active playoff drought in any of the four major professional sports, a dubious honor that now falls to the Sacramento Kings, who have not made the NBA playoffs since the 2005-06 season. The Mariners are still the only current team never to have played in the World Series.

## Braves touch up deGrom, tie Mets for NL East lead

*Associated Press*

ATLANTA — Austin Riley doesn’t want to put too much emphasis on winning the first game of a crucial three-game series with the New York Mets.

That being said, he sure is glad the Atlanta Braves took the opener.

“To get the first one is huge and just try to build as much momentum off it as possible,” Riley said. “To come out fighting and top to bottom did a great job. Arms did great. Just a solid win.”

Riley and Matt Olson hit back-to-back homers off Jacob deGrom in the second inning and Dansby Swanson later connected off the Mets ace as the Braves beat New York 5-2 Friday night to move into a tie for the NL East lead.

The defending World Series champion Braves soaked in the raucous atmosphere at sold-out Truist Park as they seek to keep the Mets from winning one game in the three-game series and earn the tiebreaker between the two teams.

Atlanta, going for its fifth straight NL East title, has won eight of the 17 games in the season series.

Both teams are 98-59 with five games to go in the regular season.

Riley and Olson became the first players to hit back-to-back homers off deGrom (5-4) since Freddie Freeman and Josh Donaldson did it for the Braves on June 18, 2019. That game was also the last time deGrom allowed two homers in the same inning.

At that point, deGrom had given up 13 earned runs and five homers in 17 innings over his last four starts. He entered 0-2 with a 6.60 ERA in his previous three starts. The righty also is dealing with a blister on the middle finger of his pitching hand, but he refused to use that as an excuse.

“I had a little bit in the last start and then it popped and skin underneath right now kind of peeled off, so I started getting pretty aggravated,” deGrom said. “We were debating whether or not to keep going with it, so we decided it was enough. We don’t want it to become a bigger issue than it is.”

Swanson homered off deGrom after he had retired seven in a row to make it 3-1. Swanson’s 23rd long ball went

441 feet into the left-field seats, touching off a frenzy from the crowd. Eddie Rosario’s sacrifice fly and Orlando Arcia’s RBI double off Tylor Megill in the seventh padded the lead to 5-1.

Max Fried (14-7) allowed consecutive singles to begin the second before Francisco Álvarez grounded into a double play in his first major league at-bat. The Mets led 1-0 on Luis Guilmorme’s single as Rosario had the ball bounce off his glove in left field in an attempt to make a running catch.

Braves reliever Collin McHugh faced the minimum in the sixth, Raisel Iglesias faced four batters in the seventh and A.J. Minter gave up Tomás Nido’s third homer to make it 5-2 in the eighth.



# Tampa Bay locks down wild-card berth

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The Tampa Bay Rays and Houston Astros both had reasons to like how things turned out Friday night.

Drew Rasmussen and the Rays were the only ones celebrating, however.

Rasmussen pitched seven effective innings and the Rays clinched a playoff spot for the fourth straight season, posing on the field for a team picture after beating Houston 7-3. Despite the loss, the Astros wound up with home-field advantage throughout the AL playoffs.

The Rays (86-71) began the day in the third and final AL wild-card slot, trailing Toronto and Seattle.

Houston (102-55) was assured home-field advantage throughout the AL playoffs when the New York Yankees lost earlier in the day. Only the Los Angeles Dodgers have a better record than the Astros.

**Orioles 2, Yankees 1:** Aaron Judge didn't come close to hitting his 62nd home run, going 1-for-2 with a pair of walks as visiting Baltimore beat New York.

Baltimore (81-76) assured it will stop a streak of four consecutive losing seasons. The Orioles were eliminated from the playoffs later Friday night when Seattle beat Oakland.

**Dodgers 10, Rockies 1:** Clayton Kershaw went six scoreless innings in his next-to-last start before the playoffs and host Los Angeles had an eight-run fourth inning to rout Colorado.

Los Angeles wrapped up the best record

in baseball earlier Friday when the Houston Astros lost to the Tampa Bay Rays, giving the Dodgers a home game for a potential Game 7 of the World Series.

**White Sox 3, Padres 1:** Eloy Jiménez homered and visiting Chicago jumped on ace Yu Darvish to slow San Diego's march toward a playoff spot.

Darvish (16-8) was pushed back a day to give him extra rest with an eye toward pitching in the NL wild-card round, but the Padres lost their third straight game. With Milwaukee's win over Miami, their magic number remained at three for clinching a wild-card berth.

**Cardinals 2, Pirates 1:** Albert Pujols hit his 701st home run, Jack Flaherty allowed one run in six innings and host St. Louis beat Pittsburgh.

Pujols mashed a slider from Johan Oveido 398 feet to left field in the fourth inning, his 22nd homer of the season. Pujols hadn't homered in a week since hitting Nos. 699 and 700 at Dodger Stadium last Friday.

**Guardians 6, Royals 3:** José Ramírez hit a three-run homer and Emmanuel Clase closed for his major league-leading 40th save as host Cleveland beat Kansas City.

Cleveland has won 10 of 11 and is a major league-best 21-4 since Sept. 5.

**Phillies 5, Nationals 1:** Rhys Hoskins hit his 30th home run, Bailey Falter pitched six scoreless innings and visiting Philadelphia beat Washington to stay a half-game ahead of Milwaukee for the final NL wild-card spot.

The game was supposed to be the opener of a day-night doubleheader, but the second game was rained out and rescheduled as part of a doubleheader Saturday.

**Brewers 1, Marlins 0:** Corbin Burnes outpitched Sandy Alcantara, striking out seven in eight innings to lead host Milwaukee past Miami.

The Brewers remained a half-game behind the Phillies for the final NL wild card.

**Blue Jays 9, Red Sox 0:** Vladimir Guerrero Jr., George Springer and Raimel Tapia homered, Alek Manoah pitched six innings and playoff-bound Toronto beat Boston.

**Twins 7, Tigers 0:** Jake Ryan allowed five hits in six innings and visiting Minnesota handed Detroit its 22nd shutout loss of the season.

**Angels 4, Rangers 1:** Reid Detmers pitched six innings of four-hit ball in the final start of his rookie season, and Jo Adell and Luis Rengifo hit early solo homers as host Los Angeles won its fifth straight.

**Giants 10, Diamondbacks 4:** Evan Longoria homered twice and drove in five runs and host San Francisco beat Arizona for its 10th win in 11 games.

The Giants kept their slim wild-card hopes going with five games remaining, though a loss or a win by Philadelphia will eliminate them.

**Cubs 6, Reds 1:** Adrian Sampson threw seven efficient innings, Nico Hoerner drove in three runs and host Chicago won its fifth straight game.

## UCLA stays unbeaten, surprises No. 15 Washington

Associated Press

PASADENA, Calif. — Dorian Thompson-Robinson had read and heard the comments about UCLA's unbeaten start not meaning much due to the quality of opponents it played.

On Friday night, Thompson-Robinson and the Bruins made sure to make a statement with their first victory over a top-15 team since 2014.

Thompson-Robinson passed for 315 yards and three touchdowns in UCLA's 40-32 victory over No. 15 Washington in a matchup of unbeaten Pac-12 teams at the Rose Bowl.

"People were saying all week that we're the worst 4-0 team out there and writing us off. I think my boys came here with a chip on

their shoulder," said Thompson-Robinson, who had the sixth 300-yard passing game of his career. "I think I told y'all on Monday, see if Washington can run with us, not the other way around."

The fifth-year senior also ran 2 yards for a score in the third quarter, when he sidestepped defenders Bralen Trice and Jayvion Green, causing them to fall on one another in a heap near the goal line in making it 33-10.

Thompson-Robinson supplied the highlight plays, but plenty of other Bruins contributed to give them their first 5-0 start since 2013.

Zach Charbonnet rushed for 124 yards and a score, Jake Bobo had six receptions for 142 yards and a pair of TDs while the

Bruins recorded their first safety in four years and forced a pair of turnovers.

"Our defense did a great job in the first half. For them to stake us that lead when we needed every inch of it," coach Chip Kelly said. "Dorian was clutch. We have total confidence in everything that he does."

The Bruins have also won eight straight dating to last season — their longest unbeaten streak since 2005. They have scored at least 40 points in six of those victories.

Washington's Michael Penix Jr. came into the game leading the nation in passing yards but struggled in the first half as UCLA (2-0 Pac-12) scored on four straight drives and jumped out to a 26-10 halftime lead.

"We dug ourselves too big of a hole in the first half," coach Kalen DeBoer said.

# US women win gold at basketball World Cup

Associated Press

SYDNEY — The names on the U.S. team have changed, but the Americans' dominance has not.

A'ja Wilson scored 19 points, Kelsey Plum added 17 and the United States beat China 83-61 on Saturday to win its fourth consecutive gold medal at the women's basketball World Cup.

"It feels great," said Wilson, who was selected as the tournament's MVP. "We came here on a mission, we got it. We got gold. Now we're going home with some hardware. It feels great to us. Australia was great to us. I didn't see any kangaroos, but it's OK because we are leaving with a gold."

This was one of the most dominant teams in the Americans' storied history in the World Cup that has now won 11 gold medals. They now have won four straight gold medals for the first

time ever. This was also the biggest win in a gold-medal game, surpassing the 20-point win that the Americans had done twice.

"Everybody wants to beat us. Everybody wants what we have, and that's gold medals and victories," Breanna Stewart said.

What started with Sue Bird and Diana Taurasi has now been passed down to Wilson and Stewart. With Alyssa Thomas the oldest player at 30, the domination could continue for years to come.

"It's been an incredible journey just to continue to lay that foundation down like so many of the greats in front of us have," Wilson said. "Now it's our turn to step up and be in that situation."

As they've done all tournament, the Americans did it on both ends of the court, playing stellar defense as well as using a

high-powered offense.

The U.S. (8-0) finished the World Cup averaging 98.8 points — just short of the mark held by the 1994 team that averaged 99.1. They won by an average of 40.8 points, topping the mark held by the 2010 team.

The game was a sellout with nearly 16,000 fans — the biggest crowd to attend a women's World Cup game since the inaugural tournament in 1953 in Chile.

Led by Li Yueru and Wu Tongtong, China hung around. The Chinese team trailed 33-28 late in the second quarter before the U.S. went on a 10-2 run highlighted by fast-break layups by Stewart and Wilson to extend the advantage to double digits.

Jin Weina hit a three-pointer just before the halftime buzzer to get China back to within 10.

The U.S. was just too good to

let the upset happen, outscoring China 25-14 in the third. The Americans did have one scary moment when Thomas went down after a collision with Li in the lane. She was helped off the court, but returned a few minutes later.

"It was a tough game as we expected," Thomas said. "By no means is this game easy. We stuck to it and pulled out a win."

China won its first medal since the 1994 World Cup when the team also took the silver, and is a rising power in women's basketball. After the game, the team posed for a photo with its flag and men's great Yao Ming, who is the president of the Chinese Basketball Association.

Li finished with 19 points and Wu added 13 before leaving the game in the fourth quarter after her knee gave out driving to the basket. She had to be carried off the court.

## Drivers fuming over concussions suffered in new car

Associated Press

NASCAR drivers are angry and concerned about their safety in the new Next Gen cars as the playoffs roar into one of the most chaotic and dangerous tracks on the circuit.

Alex Bowman will miss Sunday's race at Talladega Superspeedway with a concussion diagnosed four days after he crashed. Bowman hit the wall early at Texas Motor Speedway but finished Sunday's race despite radioing his Hendrick Motorsports crew: "I can't drive the rest of the day."

"I don't understand how (the car) is still rolling. That's the hardest I've crashed anything in my entire life," Bowman added.

Now he is on the sidelines alongside Kurt Busch, who will miss his 11th consecutive race because of his own concussion. He crashed in July during a qualifying run when he spun and backed his car into the wall. Busch said his vision and balance are not at 100%, but he hopes to race again this season.

Complaints about the Next Gen — introduced this season as a cost-saver and a way to bring some parity to the grid — have reached a critical level following four difficult playoff races and three injured drivers.

Cody Shane Ware will race Sunday despite a fractured foot suffered in a hard crash.

Drivers amplified their complaints as soon as they learned of Bowman's concussion. They have been concerned since an exaggerated tale emerged of an ominous NASCAR crash test of the Next Gen at Talladega in 2021. The rumor was that the crash-test dummy had suffered forces in the collision that would have killed a human.

"Completely unacceptable that those in charge have let things get to this point," Kevin Harvick wrote on Twitter. He said he recalled Denny Hamlin insisting "that the car was too stiff. Data didn't agree. TIME TO LISTEN TO THE DRIVERS CRASHING THEM!"

Hamlin, who was heard moaning on his radio after a hard crash last month, also directed his anger at NASCAR.

"Pretty disappointing that our sanctioning body refuses to acknowledge or accept any responsibility for drivers getting hurt," Hamlin wrote. "It's the same THEY said. WE knew better. It's wrong these drivers continue to get taken advantage of by the system."

The Next Gen was an industry-wide col-

laboration to develop a spec car that would both lower costs and equalize the competition. But part of the cost-cutting came in designing a durable car that can withstand crashes without being destroyed, a step to reduce the fleet sizes needed to compete for a full season.

So the Next Gen is very stiff and the parts and pieces that used to fly off a car during a crash are holding tight, resulting in drivers absorbing more energy from collisions.

NASCAR has been attempting to address issues with the Next Gen as they arise. There has been a rash of problems with the car through the first four playoff races — in the Bristol elimination race, 12 of the 16 playoff drivers had some sort of issue — ranging from unexplained fires to tire and parts failures, and now the unyielding nature of the car actually affecting drivers.

After fires during the playoff opener at Darlington, senior vice president of competition Scott Miller said it was "unacceptable" and NASCAR quickly mandated design changes. The series is also considering monitoring pressure levels to determine if drivers are blowing tires because their teams are too aggressive with the settings.