

## Military suicides drop by 15% in last year

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

Suicides among active-duty troops dropped about 15% last year compared with the record high set in 2020, but defense officials warned the annual report also showed the military's suicide rate remained on an upward trend during the last decade.

The Pentagon report released Thursday showed an active-duty suicide rate of about 24 suicide deaths per 100,000 troops last year, down from about 29 per 100,000 in 2020. Defense officials said they were cautiously optimistic the slowing annual suicide rate was an indication efforts to address the issue were finally working.

"While we are cautiously encouraged by the drop in these numbers, one year is not enough time to assess real change," Beth Foster, the executive director of the Pentagon's Force Resiliency Office, said Thursday. "The year-to-year trend provides helpful preliminary insight, but there is still a gradual increasing trend for suicide in the military over a 10-year period, and we need to

see a sustained long-term reduction in suicide rates to know if we're really making progress."

The Defense Department's fourth annual "Suicide in the Military" report showed 519 service members died by suicide in 2021, down from 582 in 2020. While the active-duty rate dropped, rates for the Reserves and National Guard remained about the same last year as in 2020, according to the report.

Suicide rates dropped from 2020 to 2021 in all the military services except for the Army, which remained at the same rate — about 36 deaths per 100,000 soldiers, the report showed. Foster said the Air Force's dropped last year from almost 25 deaths per 100,000 airmen to about 15 suicides per 100,000 airmen. The Marine Corps' rate dropped from almost 35 suicides per 100,000 troops to about 24 deaths per 100,000 troops. The Navy's dropped 19 to about 17 suicides per 100,000 sailors.

While the Army's 2021 rate did not fall, the service reported an about 30% drop in suicides during the first six months of 2022, accord-

ing to preliminary data published last month.

The 2021 report comes as the military has spent years grappling with an increasing rate of suicide deaths among its troops amid outcry from members of Congress and others. The Defense Department has spent millions of dollars in recent years on multiple efforts to attempt to understand what causes service members to harm or kill themselves. The department has taken some steps to increase troops' access to mental health professionals, combat the long-standing stigma that seeking help was a sign of weakness and better train its troops on firearms safety, Foster said.

Among the efforts, the Pentagon was mandated by Congress to create an independent review committee to study the issue. The committee began work in May and is expected to produce a comprehensive report on military suicide by February.

In a statement Thursday, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin promised to pour as many resources as necessary into suicide prevention efforts.

## Ukrainians pile pressure on Russian-held Kherson

*Associated Press*

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian forces bombarded Russian positions in the occupied and illegally annexed southern Kherson region, targeting resupply routes across a major river while inching closer Friday to a full assault on one of the first urban areas Russia captured after invading the country.

Russian-installed officials were reported desperately trying to turn the city of Kherson, a prime objective for both sides because of its key industries and major river and sea port, into a fortress while attempting to evacuate tens of thousands of residents.

The Kremlin poured as many as 2,000 draftees into the Kherson region — one of four provinces Moscow illegally annexed and put under Russian martial law — to replenish losses and strengthen front-line units, according to the Ukrainian army's general staff.

The Dnieper River figures prominently in the regional battle because it serves crit-

ical functions — crossings for supplies, troops and civilians; drinking water for southern Ukraine and the annexed Crimean Peninsula; and power generation from a hydroelectric station. Much of the area, including the power station and a canal feeding water to Crimea, is under Russian control.

Kremlin-installed Kherson officials said Ukrainian shelling of a Dnieper River ferry crossing killed two journalists working for a local TV station they set up under occupation. At least two other people were reported killed and 13 wounded.

Natalia Humeniuk, a spokesperson for Ukraine's southern operational command, confirmed the Ukrainian military struck the Antonivskiy Bridge but only during an overnight curfew Russian-installed officials put in place to avoid civilian casualties.

"We do not attack civilians and settlements," Humeniuk told Ukrainian television.

Earlier Ukrainian strikes had made the

Antonivskiy Bridge inoperable, prompting Russian authorities to set up ferry crossings and pontoon bridges to relocate civilians and transport supplies to troops in Kherson, which sits on the Dnieper's western bank.

Russian-installed officials are trying to evacuate up to 60,000 people from Kherson for their safety and to allow the military to build fortifications. Ukraine's military reported Friday that bank employees, medical workers and teachers were relocating as the city's infrastructure wound down.

"The situation is really difficult," the deputy head of Kherson's Kremlin-installed regional administration, Kirill Stremousov, said in a video he posted on Telegram. "Today we are preparing the city of Kherson as a fortress for defense and are ready to defend to the last. Our task is to save people, build defenses and protect the city."

Kherson city, with a prewar population of about 284,000, was one of the first urban areas Russia captured when it invaded Ukraine, and it remains the largest city it holds.

# Jan. 6 panel issues subpoena to Trump

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The House committee investigating the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol issued a subpoena Friday to Donald Trump, exercising its subpoena power against the former president who lawmakers say “personally orchestrated” an effort to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

The nine-member panel issued a letter to Trump’s lawyers, demanding his testimony under oath by Nov. 14 and outlining a request for a series of corresponding documents, including personal communications between the former president and mem-

bers of Congress as well as extremist groups.

“We recognize that a subpoena to a former President is a significant and historic action,” Chairman Bennie Thompson and Vice Chair Liz Cheney wrote in the letter to Trump. “We do not take this action lightly.”

It is unclear how Trump and his legal team will respond to the subpoena. He could comply or negotiate with the committee, announce he will defy the subpoena or ignore it altogether. He could also go to court and try to stop it.

The committee writes in its letter that it

has assembled “overwhelming evidence” that Trump “personally orchestrated” an effort to overturn his own defeat in the 2020 election, including by spreading false allegations of widespread voter fraud, “attempting to corrupt” the Justice Department and by pressuring state officials, members of Congress and his own vice president to try to change the results.

But lawmakers say key details about what Trump was doing and saying during the siege remain unknown. According to the committee, the only person who can fill the gaps is Trump himself.

# Mar-a-Lago papers held Iran, China secrets

*The Washington Post*

Some of the classified documents recovered by the FBI from Donald Trump’s Mar-a-Lago home and private club included highly sensitive intelligence regarding Iran and China, according to people familiar with the matter. If shared with others, the people said, such information could expose intelligence-gathering methods that the United States wants to keep hidden from the world.

At least one of the documents seized by the FBI describes Iran’s missile program, according to these people, who spoke on the

condition of anonymity to describe an ongoing investigation. Other documents described highly sensitive intelligence work aimed at China, they said.

Unauthorized disclosures of specific information in the documents would pose multiple risks, experts say. People aiding U.S. intelligence efforts could be endangered, and collection methods could be compromised. In addition, other countries or U.S. adversaries could retaliate against the United States for actions it has taken in secret. The secret documents about Iran and China are considered among the most

sensitive the FBI has recovered to date in its investigation of Trump and his aides for possible mishandling of classified information, obstruction and destruction of government records, the people said.

The former president has denied wrongdoing in having the documents at Mar-a-Lago, claiming in a recent television interview that he declassified any documents in his possession and that a president can declassify information “even by thinking about it.”

A Trump spokesman did not immediately respond to requests for comment Friday morning.

# Iranians in Crimea assisting with drone strikes

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The White House said Thursday that Iranian troops are “directly engaged on the ground” in Crimea supporting Russian drone attacks on Ukraine’s power stations and other key infrastructure, claiming it has troubling evidence of Tehran’s deepening role assisting Russia as it exacts suffering on Ukrainian civilians just as the cold weather sets in.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters that Iran has sent a “relatively small number” of personnel to Crimea, a part of Ukraine unilaterally annexed by Russia in contravention of international law in 2014, to assist Russian troops in launching Iranian-made

drones against Ukraine. Members of a branch of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps were dispatched to assist Russian forces in using the drones, according to the British government.

The revelation of the U.S. intelligence finding comes as the Biden administration seeks to mount international pressure on Tehran to pull back from helping Russia as it bombards soft Ukrainian civilian targets with the help of Iranian-made drones.

The Russians in recent days have increasingly turned to the Iranian-supplied drones, as well as Kalibr and Iskander cruise missiles, to carry out a barrage of attacks against Ukrainian infrastructure and non-military targets. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said this week that Rus-

sian forces have destroyed 30% of Ukraine’s power stations since Oct. 10.

“The information we have is that the Iranians have put trainers and tech support in Crimea, but it’s the Russians who are doing the piloting,” Kirby said.

U.S. officials believe that Iran may have deployed military personnel to assist the Russians in part because of the Russians’ lack of familiarity with the Iranian-made drones.

“The systems themselves were suffering failures and not performing to the standards that apparently the customers expected,” Kirby said. “So the Iranians decided to move in some trainers and some technical support to help the Russians use them with better lethality.”

# Parents regretful in online school fallout

Associated Press

BOSTON — Vivian Kargbo thought her daughter's Boston school district was doing the right thing when officials kept classrooms closed for most students for more than a year.

Kargbo, a caregiver for hospice patients, didn't want to risk them getting COVID-19. And extending pandemic school closures through the spring of 2021 is what many in her community said was best to keep kids and adults safe.

But her daughter became depressed and stopped doing school work or paying attention to online classes. The former honor-roll student failed nearly all of her eighth grade courses.

"She's behind," said Kargbo, whose daughter is now in tenth grade. "It didn't work at all. Knowing what I know now, I would say they should have put them in school."

Preliminary test scores around the coun-

try confirm what Kargbo witnessed: The longer many students studied remotely, the less they learned. Some educators and parents are questioning decisions in cities from Boston to Chicago to Los Angeles to remain online long after clear evidence emerged that schools weren't COVID-19 super-spreaders — and months after life-saving adult vaccines became widely available.

There are fears for the futures of students who don't catch up. They run the risk of never learning to read, long a precursor for dropping out of school. They might never master simple algebra, putting science and tech fields out of reach. The pandemic decline in college attendance could continue to accelerate, crippling the U.S. economy.

In a sign of how inflammatory the debate has become, there's sharp disagreement among educators, school leaders and parents even about how to label the problems created by online school. "Learning loss" has become a lightning rod. Some fear the term

might brand struggling students or cast blame on teachers, and they say it overlooks the need to save lives during a pandemic.

Regardless of what it's called, the casualties of Zoom school are real.

The scale of the problem and the challenges in addressing it were apparent in Associated Press interviews with nearly 50 school leaders, teachers, parents and health officials, who struggled to agree on a way forward.

Some public health officials and educators warned against second-guessing the school closures for a virus that killed over a million people in the U.S. More than 200,000 children lost at least one parent.

"It is very easy with hindsight to say, 'Oh, learning loss, we should have opened.' People forget how many people died," said Austin Beutner, former superintendent in Los Angeles, where students were online from mid-March 2020 until the start of hybrid instruction in April 2021.

## Daycare workers charged, accused of scaring children with a mask

Associated Press

HAMILTON, Miss. — Four people linked to viral video footage of Mississippi day care employees using a scary mask to frighten young children are facing charges of felony child abuse, and a fifth person faces two misdemeanor counts, authorities say.

The daycare's owner, Sheila Sanders, is not facing charges. She has said that at least four of the employees were fired after the video came to light.

The videos — one filmed in September and another this month — were posted on social media. They show a day care worker at Lil' Blessings Child Care & Learning Center in Hamilton, an unincorporated community in northeast Mississippi, wearing a Halloween mask similar to the one in the "Scream" movies and yelling at children who didn't "clean up" or "act good."

Children can be seen bawling, cowering in fear and at times running from the masked employee. Another employee gives directions, singling out which children have acted good or bad. The employee in the mask is shown screaming inches away from children's faces, the video showed.

Monroe County Sheriff Kevin Crook said in a news release that four of the women each face three counts of felony child abuse.

A fifth woman, he says, faces charges of failure to report abuse by a mandatory reporter and simple assault against a minor — both misdemeanors.

"They can't use corporal punishment, so we think they were using the mask to try to scare the kids into doing what they were supposed to be doing," Crook said.

Crook said his office, the county prosecuting attorney and the district attorney met earlier this week with the children's parents about the case. On Wednesday, at least one set of parents signed felony child abuse complaints, he said, adding a judge issued warrants Thursday for the women.

Crook said all five live in the area. Sierra McCandless, 21; Oci-Anna Kilburn, 28; Jennifer Newman, 25, and Shyenne Shelton, 28, are accused of three counts of felony child abuse, the sheriff's statement said.

Another woman, Traci Hutson, 44, faces charges of failure to report abuse by a mandatory reporter and simple assault against a minor — both misdemeanors, he added.

Crook told the Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal that the felony charges will ultimately be presented to the grand jury to determine if there's enough evidence for formal indictments, which could lead to court trials.

## SF plans to spend \$1.7M on restroom

Los Angeles Times

A single-toilet public restroom planned for San Francisco's Noe Valley Town Square is expected to take two years to build, but it's already causing a stink.

The reason: its \$1.7 million price tag.

The estimated cost has garnered plenty of headlines for the restroom as well as some backlash from state officials who wanted a better explanation than what the city was giving.

The San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department admits the price tag for the single restroom is attention-grabbing, but officials promise the reason behind the estimate is "more nuanced and less sensational."

The project is still in the early phase of its timeline and there are no designs for the proposed restroom at the town square, located in central San Francisco. The square hosts a Farmer's Market and other popular events on weekends.

The proposed single toilet restroom would be in a 150-foot-square enclosure and is expected to be completed by 2025, according to the city.

"We estimate high — not because we want to spend more money, but because we want to ensure we can deliver projects to communities even if we are hit with unexpected costs," officials said.

# Effort to halt student loan forgiveness plan dismissed

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — A federal judge on Thursday dismissed an effort by six Republican-led states to block the Biden administration's plan to forgive student loan debt for tens of millions of Americans.

U.S. District Judge Henry Autrey in St. Louis wrote that because the six states — Nebraska, Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas and South Carolina — failed to establish they had standing, “the Court lacks jurisdiction to hear this case.”

Suzanne Gage, spokeswoman for Nebraska Attorney General Doug Peterson, said the states will appeal. She said in a statement that the states “continue to believe that they do in fact have standing to raise their important legal challenges.”

President Joe Biden announced in August that his administration would cancel up to \$20,000 in education debt for huge numbers of borrowers. The announcement immediately became a major political issue ahead of the November midterm elections.

The states' lawsuit is among a few that

have been filed. Earlier Thursday, Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett rejected an appeal from a Wisconsin taxpayers group seeking to stop the debt cancellation program.

In the lawsuit brought by the states, lawyers for the administration said the Department of Education has “broad authority to manage the federal student financial aid programs.” A court filing stated that the 2003 Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act, or HEROES Act, allows the secretary of education to waive or modify terms of federal student loans in times of war or national emergency.

“COVID-19 is such an emergency,” the filing stated.

The Congressional Budget Office has said the program will cost about \$400 billion over the next three decades. James Campbell, an attorney for the Nebraska attorney general's office, told Autrey at an Oct. 12 hearing that the administration is acting outside its authorities in a way that will cost states millions of dollars.

# Johnson eyes return as UK prime minister

Associated Press

LONDON — Several British lawmakers, including former Prime Minister Boris Johnson, were trying to scoop up support on Friday ahead of a short, intense contest to replace Liz Truss as the nation's leader.

Truss quit on Thursday after a turbulent 45-day term, conceding that she could not deliver on her tax-cutting economic plans.

The Conservative Party is holding a speeded-up race to replace her, which will see a new leader — who will also become prime minister — chosen within a week.

Former Treasury chief Rishi Sunak and House of Commons leader Penny Mordaunt are among the bookmakers' favorites — along with Johnson, who was forced to resign by the party just over three months ago after becoming mired in scandals over his ethics and finances. His return would be a remarkable resurrection for a politician who is popular and polarizing in equal measure.

Johnson, who remained a lawmaker after stepping down as prime minister, has not said whether he will run, but his allies in Parliament are working to gather support.

Nominations for a new leader will close on Monday afternoon, and candidates need the signatures of 100 of the 357 Conservative lawmakers, meaning a maximum field of three. Lawmakers will vote to knock out one of those, and will hold an indicative vote on the final two. The party's 172,000 members will then get to decide between the two finalists in an online vote. The new leader is due to be selected by Oct. 28.

Sunak, who came second to Truss in a summertime leadership contest, is favored by some as a safe pair of hands who can steady the struggling economy. Mordaunt, who came third, is popular with the party grassroots.

But the wild card in the contest is Johnson, who is adored by some in the party as a proven vote-winner with a rare common touch, and reviled by others for the chaos and scandal that marred his three years in office.

Johnson ally Nadine Dorries said the party should pick him because “he is a known winner” who led the Conservatives to a big election victory in 2019.

But some other Conservative legislators said they would leave the party if Johnson — who faces an ongoing probe — returned as leader.

# Jury says Kevin Spacey didn't molest actor Anthony Rapp in '86

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A jury sided with Kevin Spacey on Thursday in one of the lawsuits that derailed the film star's career, finding he did not sexually abuse Anthony Rapp, then 14, while both were relatively unknown actors in Broadway plays in 1986.

The verdict in the civil trial came with lightning speed. Jurors at a federal court in New York deliberated for a little more than an hour before deciding that Rapp hadn't proven his allegations.

When the verdict was read, Spacey dropped his head, then hugged his lawyers. He didn't speak to reporters as he left the courthouse.

“We're very grateful to the jury for seeing through these false allegations,” said his attorney, Jennifer Keller.

“What's next is Mr. Spacey is going to be proven that he's innocent of anything he's been accused of. That there was no truth to any of the allegations,” she added, a reference to other sexual misconduct claims

against the actor, including criminal charges in England.

During the trial, Rapp testified that Spacey had invited him to his apartment for a party, then approached him in a bedroom after the other guests left. He said the actor, then 26, picked him up and laid partially on top of him on a bed before he wriggled away and fled as an inebriated Spacey asked if he was sure he wanted to leave.

In his sometimes-tearful testimony, Spacey told the jury it never happened, and he would never have been attracted to someone who was 14.

The lawsuit sought \$40 million in damages.

Rapp and his lawyers also left the courthouse without speaking to reporters. In his closing statements to the jury Thursday, Rapp's lawyer, Richard Steigman, accused Spacey of lying on the witness stand.

“He lacks credibility,” Steigman said. “Sometimes the simple truth is the best. The simple truth is that this happened.”

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Hoarder charged after 300 animals rescued

**NY** MILLER PLACE — Authorities rescued nearly 300 rabbits, birds and other animals from a filthy home in New York and charged a self-help book author with cruel confinement of animals, prosecutors announced.

“Operation Open Cage” started Oct. 1 when investigators were contacted by animal control officers who reported a hoarding situation in the hamlet of Miller Place on Long Island, the Suffolk County district attorney’s office said.

Officers wearing hazardous material suits found a total of 118 rabbits, 150 birds, 15 cats, seven tortoises, three snakes and several mice living among filth, many surrounded by their own feces and urine and covered with cockroaches, the district attorney said.

The owner of the home, Karin Keyes, 51, was charged with multiple counts of cruel confinement of animals. She’s a social worker and the author of a self-published book titled “Journey Into Awareness: Reclaiming Your Life.”

### Another wolf is killed, \$11.5K reward offered

**OR** DURKEE — A colared wolf in the Lookout Mountain pack was shot and killed earlier this month in northeast Oregon and police are seeking the public’s help to find the person or people responsible.

On Oct. 3, state Fish and Wildlife troopers received information from the agency that a colared female wolf known as

OR88 might be dead about 9 miles from Durkee, Oregon State Police said Wednesday.

Fish and Wildlife personnel responded to the area and found the wolf’s body on Bureau of Land Management property. Troopers believe the wolf was shot on Oct. 2.

The Oregon Wildlife Coalition and conservation partners are offering a \$11,500 reward for information leading to an arrest and/or citation, police said.

### Carbon monoxide leak sends 8 to hospital

**MO** KANSAS CITY — Six students and two adults were taken to a hospital for evaluation after a carbon monoxide leak was detected at a Kansas City elementary school, officials said.

The eight people taken to hospitals from Longfellow Elementary School suffered nausea and dizziness but none suffered life-threatening issues, Assistant Fire Chief Jimmy Walker said.

Emergency responders went to the school after several students reporting feeling ill. Firefighters found “extremely high” levels of the lethal gas inside the building, Walker said. The level reached 2,000 parts per million, which was the maximum for monitors used by firefighters at the scene.

### After gun cases, mall tries metal detectors

**MN** BLOOMINGTON — The Mall of America near Minneapolis is testing metal detectors at one entrance following two incidents of gunfire and an armed robbery within the last year.

Mall spokeswoman Laura Utecht said Tuesday the trial is taking place over the next month at the mall’s north doors, although that could change as testing continues.

### ‘Swift-footed lizard’ named state dinosaur

**MA** BOSTON — A “swift-footed lizard” that lived millions of years ago in what is now Massachusetts has been named the state’s official dinosaur under legislation signed into law by Gov. Charlie Baker.

Podokesaurus holyokensis received more than 60% of the roughly 35,000 votes cast in a social media campaign, beating out another dinosaur that was also discovered in the state.

“If I think about my own childhood ... the thing that got me interested in science in the first place was dinosaurs,” the Republican governor said at the signing ceremony at the Museum of Science in Boston, with some of the state’s leading paleontologists. “And the main reason they got me interested is because of their majesty, and their ferocity and their almost alien-being status. As a kid, they just created wonder.”

Lewis came up with the idea of a state dinosaur while trying to find engaging projects for the Cub Scout den he led at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 1 killed in crash with dozens of vehicles

**OR** BROWNSVILLE — Dozens of vehicles, including semitrailers, were involved in a deadly crash in

heavy fog Wednesday on Interstate 5 in Oregon.

One person was killed in the crash that happened in the southbound lanes of the interstate north of Eugene, Oregon State Police told KOIN-TV. About 60 vehicles, including up to 20 semitrailers, were involved in the crashes that spanned more than a mile and led to the closure of that part of the interstate.

The Department of Environmental Quality responded to address leaking fluids from six of the semitrailers, police said. School buses from Eugene were reportedly sent to take several dozen stranded motorists to a nearby truck stop.

Authorities believe the fog led to the crash, police said.

### Fentanyl pills disguised in candy boxes seized

**CA** LOS ANGELES — Authorities seized thousands of suspected fentanyl pills hidden in candy boxes at Los Angeles International Airport.

Someone tried to go through screening with some snacks and bags of candy at about 7:30 a.m., the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department said.

“However, it was discovered that inside the ‘Sweetarts’, ‘Skittles’, and ‘Whoppers’ candy boxes were fentanyl pills,” the statement said.

About 12,000 pills were seized by sheriff’s detectives and U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents assigned to a drug task force at the airport, authorities said.

The suspected trafficker fled but has been identified.

— From Associated Press

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# Astros take 2-0 ALCS lead over Yanks

*Associated Press*

HOUSTON — Alex Bregman, Framber Valdez and the Houston Astros are off to a perfect start this postseason.

Taking the formula that won them 106 games in the regular season — strong pitching and hitting home runs — the Astros kept rolling against the New York Yankees.

Bregman connected for an early three-run homer, Valdez threw seven strong innings and the Astros edged the Yankees 3-2 Thursday night to take a 2-0 lead in the AL Championship Series.

The Astros improved to 5-0 this postseason after a home sweep to begin this best-of-seven matchup.

“We got a few guys hot. We would like to get everybody hot before it’s over with,” Astros manager Dusty Baker said.

Yankees slugger Aaron Judge just missed a two-run homer in the eighth when his drive was caught just in front of the short wall by right fielder Kyle Tucker. The ball would’ve landed in the short right-field porch at Yankee Stadium, Statcast showed — with the roof open at Minute Maid Park, the wind might’ve knocked down Judge’s bid.

“I think the roof open kind of killed us,” Yankees manager Aaron Boone said, later adding, “I didn’t think like he smoked it like no-doubter, but it felt like his homers to right.”

A night after Justin Verlander struck out 11 in a 4-2 win in Game 1, Valdez turned in another solid pitching performance and

Bregman’s third-inning homer was all the offense Houston needed.

“They got a really tough pitching staff over there,” Bregman said. “They’re really good. So just trying to scratch and claw and battle and try and fight.”

Valdez allowed four hits, walked none and struck out nine. The only runs New York scored were unearned, coming in the fourth after Valdez committed two errors on the same play.

He quickly moved past the gaffe and shut down the powerful Yankees lineup the rest of the way. Valdez allowed just one baserunner after that inning on a single to Harrison Bader with two outs in the fifth and retired the last seven hitters he faced, capped by striking out the side in the seventh.

Valdez, who often talks about his maturation, said he would have been undone by his fourth-inning miscues a few years ago.

“Back in 2019 I probably would have been done with the game,” he said in Spanish through a translator. “I probably would have lost all focus there at that moment. But those are all things that we work on and just continue working hard to be able to focus better and get better in the game.”

Featuring a mix of pitches, Valdez got 25 swings and misses. He also helped end the Yankees’ record run of 23 straight postseason games with a home run.

Bryan Abreu pitched a scoreless eighth. Ryan Pressly walked one in a scoreless ninth, striking out three for his second save of the series.

There was a slight delay before Pressly threw his first pitch after a fan got on the field and appeared to try to hug Astros second baseman Jose Altuve and take a selfie with him. Security and police officers quickly descended on the man and pulled him away from Altuve before wrestling him to the ground, handcuffing him and escorting him off the field.

The series shifts to New York for Game 3 Saturday where the Yankees will try to dig themselves out of a hole to avoid being eliminated by Houston in the ALCS for the third time in six years.

Houston is 7-2 overall against the Yankees this year.

Yankees starter Luis Severino plunked Martín Maldonado on the left forearm to start Houston’s third before the slumping Altuve struck out. Jeremy Peña singled to center before Yordan Alvarez grounded in to a forceout at second.

Bregman then knocked a fastball beyond the wall in left field for his second home run this postseason to make it 3-0. It was his 14th career home run in the playoffs to move him past Justin Turner for most homers by a third baseman in MLB history.

It was a bit windy at Minute Maid Park in a rare game where the retractable roof was open, and it was unclear how much the conditions impacted flyballs. Judge, who set an AL record with 62 home runs during the regular season, gave the Houston fans a scare with his drive that Tucker grabbed before knocking into the wall.

# Clippers hold off Lakers in Leonard’s return

*Associated Press*

LOS ANGELES — Kawhi Leonard had 14 points and seven rebounds in his first game in 16 months, and the Los Angeles Clippers opened a season of sky-high expectations with a 103-97 victory over the Lakers on Thursday night.

Paul George scored 15 points and John Wall added 15 in his debut for the Clippers, who held on down the stretch to beat their more pedigreed Los Angeles rivals for the eighth consecutive time.

Leonard came off the bench for the first time since 2013 and played 21 minutes in his first game since he tore a ligament in his right knee in a playoff game in June 2021. The two-time NBA Finals MVP decided to ease back in a temporary reserve role after

missing all of last season while recovering from surgery.

“My goal was to try to be great in my minutes,” Leonard said. “Have fun, obviously stay healthy and win the basketball game. We did that tonight. Just the first game, though. We’ve got a lot to go.”

The Clippers’ high hopes for their first championship rest largely on Leonard’s ability to return to elite form. Leonard and George are healthy now alongside five-time All-Star Wall, who provided an immediate spark in his first NBA game in 18 months after sitting out last season in Houston.

Anthony Davis scored 25 points, while LeBron James had 20 points and 10 rebounds in the 20th home opener of his career.

**Bucks 90, 76ers 88:** Wesley Matthews hit the go-ahead three-pointer with 23.8 seconds left, and Giannis Antetokounmpo had 21 points and 13 rebounds to lead visiting Milwaukee past Philadelphia.

Brook Lopez scored 17 points as the Bucks, who went 0-5 in the preseason, won their season opener after Matthews surprised the Sixers on the long three. James Harden, who scored 31 and rallied the Sixers in the fourth, missed a jumper that could have won the game.

The 76ers lost their opener Tuesday night in Boston and had another weak defensive effort that had the Philly crowd booing them off the court in the third quarter.

Joel Embiid had 15 points and 12 rebounds for the Sixers.

# Two pick-6s help Cardinals down Saints

Associated Press

GLENDALE, Ariz. — The Arizona Cardinals were trailing late in the first half when cameras caught coach Kliff Kingsbury and Kyler Murray in a heated verbal exchange while star receiver DeAndre Hopkins played the role of peacemaker.

Murray's message to his irate coach: "Calm down, we're good. We're going to make it right."

Murray — and the Cardinals defense — made sure his prediction was true.

Marco Wilson and Isaiah Simmons scored touchdowns on two pick-6s late in the first half and used that stunning change in momentum to lift the Cardinals over the New Orleans Saints 42-34 on Thursday night.

The Cardinals (3-4) snapped an eight-game home losing streak that was the franchise's longest since 1958.

The game was tied at 14 when Saints quarterback Andy Dalton threw the game-changing interceptions on consecutive

drives that were barely a minute apart. The first one wasn't necessarily his fault, but the second one was.

The first came when Saints receiver Marquez Callaway bobbled a potential catch. Wilson was there to pluck it out of the air and then sprinted 38 yards to the end zone, diving over the goal line for a 20-14 lead.

The second happened when Dalton tried to throw over the middle. Simmons corralled the interception with one hand and then ran 56 yards down the right sideline for the score and a 28-14 lead. The Cardinals crowd — which hadn't seen a win since Oct. 24 of last season against the Texans — roared its approval.

"For the first time all season, we could play with the lead and lean on it," Kingsbury said. "It definitely helped."

From there, the Cardinals had control. The Saints pulled within 28-17 early in the third, but Murray found Greg Dortch

for a 5-yard touchdown to push Arizona ahead 35-17.

Murray completed 20 of 29 passes for 204 yards and a touchdown.

New Orleans (2-5) has lost five of its last six games. Dalton threw for 361 yards, four touchdowns and three interceptions.

It was another frustrating loss for the Saints.

"The three takeaways were killers in the game," Saints coach Dennis Allen. "We've got to fix some of these issues. That's my responsibility."

## Happy hop

The Cardinals welcomed back Hopkins, a three-time All-Pro who was suspended for the first six games of the season after violating the NFL's policy on performance-enhancing drugs.

Hopkins finished with 10 catches for 102 yards. He couldn't be with the team for much of the suspension, but said he worked hard to stay in shape.

"I don't know where he's been

or what he's been doing, but it worked," Kingsbury said.

## Bad company

Dalton was just the fourth quarterback since 2010 to throw two pick-6s in the first half. The others are Josh Rosen, Tony Romo and Colin Kaepernick.

## Nice play, rook

Dalton — starting his fourth straight game for the injured Jameis Winston — had a beautiful long throw on the first drive, connecting with rookie Rashid Shaheed for a 53-yard touchdown.

Shaheed was an undrafted free agent who made a big impact for a second straight week with his early touchdown.

He was brought up from the practice squad before last week's game against the Bengals and showed blazing speed when he took a handoff on a jet sweep 44 yards for a touchdown on his first offensive play with the ball in the NFL.

# 49ers get McCaffrey from Panthers for draft picks

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — The San Francisco 49ers have acquired star running back Christian McCaffrey from the Carolina Panthers for a haul of draft picks.

The Panthers on Thursday night announced the deal that sends McCaffrey back to the Bay Area where he starred in college at Stanford. They said it will be finalized when McCaffrey passes a physical.

The Panthers will receive picks in the second, third and fourth rounds of the 2023 draft, as well as a fifth-rounder in 2024, according to a person familiar with the terms. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the terms were not announced.

Carolina had been seeking a first-round pick, but San Francisco had already dealt its 2023 first-round pick in a deal to draft quarterback Trey Lance last year.

"I'm forever grateful for all of people who helped make these last 5½ years so special for me," McCaffrey tweeted Friday morning. "Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Carolina, I will always love you."

McCaffrey joins a talented group of playmakers in San Francisco with versatile receiver Deebo Samuel, star tight end George Kittle and receiver Brandon Aiyuk.

But the Niners (3-3) were not as strong at running back with starter Elijah Mitchell out with a knee injury. McCaffrey provides coach Kyle Shanahan with one of the best as both a runner and receiver, adding another element to San Francisco's offense.

McCaffrey has a \$990,000 salary this year after Carolina reworked his contract, making him an easy fit under the salary cap. He is owed about \$36 million over the next three years, but none of that is guaranteed.

McCaffrey becomes the second skill position player to be traded this week by the Panthers (1-5) since coach Matt Rhule was fired on Oct. 10. Carolina sent wide receiver Robbie Anderson to the Arizona Cardinals on Monday for two future late-round draft picks.

The trade leaves the already depleted Panthers offense extremely thin at running back with D'Onta Foreman and Chuba Hubbard expected to compete for the starting job and

Raheem Blackshear potentially in the mix for more work.

The 26-year-old McCaffrey is considered one of the most versatile running backs in the league when healthy because of his ability as a runner, receiver and blocker.

He missed 23 games over the previous two seasons due to injuries, but has played in all six games this season and is fourth in the NFL in yards from scrimmage (607) despite playing for the league's 32nd-ranked offense. He and Cleveland Browns running back Nick Chubb are the only players in the league to have five games this year with at least 100 yards from scrimmage.

McCaffrey has 7,272 yards from scrimmage — 3,980 rushing and 3,292 receiving — and has scored 50 touchdowns since coming into the league as the eighth overall draft pick in 2017.

McCaffrey's best season came in 2019 when he had 1,387 yards rushing and 1,005 yards receiving, making him only the third player in NFL history to eclipse 1,000 yards in both categories.

# Jarry, Penguins have easy time with Kings

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Tristan Jarry stopped 39 shots, Jeff Petry and Jan Rutta scored their first goals of the season and the Pittsburgh Penguins drilled the Los Angeles Kings 6-1 on Thursday night.

Petry and Rutta, brought in by the Penguins during the offseason to give their blue line a little more heft, scored on long shots from the point. Rickard Rakell and Jake Guentzel found the net from in close as the Penguins made Mike Sullivan the first coach to reach 300 victories with the club.

Jeff Carter also scored against his old team and Ryan Poehling added his first career goal in the third period as Pittsburgh improved to 3-0-1.

**Golden Knights 5, Jets 2:** Jack Eichel scored twice, Adin Hill made 26 saves and host Vegas beat Winnipeg.

Eichel had his third multi-goal game in 39 contests since joining Vegas last season. It was the 32nd time in his career he's scored two or more goals.

**Sharks 3, Rangers 2 (OT):** Erik Karlsson scored 49 seconds into overtime and visiting San Jose beat New York for its first victory of the season.

Logan Couture and Radim Simek also scored for the Sharks, who got former Rangers coach David Quinn his first win after beginning the season a franchise-worst 0-5-0. James Reimer stopped 21 shots.

**Sabres 6, Flames 3:** Alex Tuch had his first career hat trick and visiting Buffalo handed Calgary its first loss of the season.

Rasmus Dahlin scored for the fourth straight game for Buffalo to set an NHL record for defensemen to open a season.

**Oilers 6, Hurricanes 4:** Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and Connor McDavid each had a goal and three assists and host Edmonton beat Carolina to snap a two-game skid.

Zach Hyman, Ryan McLeod, Evander Kane and Leon Draisaitl also scored for the Oilers (2-2-0). Jack Campbell made 36 saves.

**Devils 4, Islanders 1:** Ondrej Palat scored twice to help visiting New Jersey beat New York.

Nico Hischier had a goal and two assists, Jack Hughes also scored and Mackenzie Blackwood made 16 saves. The Devils won their second straight after opening with two losses.

**Wild 4, Canucks 3 (OT):** Kirill Kaprizov scored in overtime and host Minnesota beat Vancouver for its first victory of the season.

Kaprizov had his fourth goal of the season and added two assists as Minnesota wrapped up its season-opening four-game homestand with its first points of the season. Mats Zuccarello added two goals and Sam Steel scored his second of the season. Marc-Andre Fleury finished with 23 saves.

**Blue Jackets 5, Predators 3:** Nick Blankenburg scored the go-ahead goal with 1:23

left and host Columbus had a four-goal third period to beat Nashville.

Columbus rallied from two goals down for the second consecutive game and has won two straight.

**Maple Leafs 3, Stars 2 (OT):** Nick Robertson scored his second goal of the night in his season debut at 3:46 of overtime to lift host Toronto past Dallas.

The winger took a pass from Auston Matthews on a 3-on-1 rush and fired a shot past Scott Wedgewood.

**Canadiens 6, Coyotes 2:** Top draft pick Juraj Slafkovsky scored his first NHL goal and host Montreal had a three-goal first period in its victory over Arizona.

Josh Anderson, Cole Caufield and Brendan Gallagher gave Montreal the early cushion. Nick Suzuki scored on a penalty shot, Sean Monahan added an empty-netter and Jake Allen made 25 saves.

**Bruins 2, Ducks 1 (SO):** Taylor Hall scored in the fourth round of the shootout to lift host Boston over Anaheim.

Hall also scored in regulation for Boston (4-1), and Linus Ullmark made 30 saves and stopped all four shots in the shootout.

**Senators 5, Capitals 2:** Drake Batherson scored twice in the second period and host Ottawa overcame an early two-goal deficit to beat Washington.

Shane Pinto broke a tie in third and Tyler Motte and Alex DeBrincat added empty-net goals. Anton Forsberg stopped 22 shots.

## Committee still working toward having 12-team CFP

Associated Press

DALLAS — The third in-person meeting of conference commissioners who manage the College Football Playoff since an August directive from their bosses to expand the postseason format ended without a resolution, but not without optimism.

“There’s a will to try and that will is still there,” Southeastern Conference Commissioner Greg Sankey said Thursday.

The CFP management committee, comprised of 10 major college football conference commissioners and Notre Dame’s athletic director, met for six hours at an airport hotel to work on a plan to triple the number of playoff teams from

four to 12 for the 2024 season.

“We’re not finished,” CFP Executive Director Bill Hancock said. “It is true that time is not on our side, but we haven’t given ourselves a deadline. It’s more important to get the work done right.”

Hancock said the management committee plans to meet again soon, likely by video conference, but did not have an exact day.

The task is tricky because the postseason schedule is already set for the 2024 and ’25 seasons based on the current four-team format. The College Football Playoff’s 12-year deal with ESPN expires following the 2025 season.

“We put a calendar on the wall. We want to make sure we’re aware of holidays, NFL game days. Commencements,” Hancock said, ticking off some of the items the CFP needs to consider.

The job now is to add four first-round games to be played in mid-December on the campuses of the higher-seeded teams and figure out the best days to play them.

From there the quarterfinals would be played on and around New Year’s Day, with the semifinals about a week after that and the championship at least another week later.

Hancock said Atlanta and Miami, the host cities for the

2024 and ’25 championship games in a four-team format, have indicated they would be able to accommodate the games on a later date.

This time last year the management committee was in the midst of seven months of haggling over whether to expand and how, frustrations growing with every meeting. This year there are no dissenters in the group. Just logistics to sort out.

“It’s been a fascinating process because every time you turn over one stone you start tripping other issues,” Steinbrecher said. “And it’s more challenging than I would maybe have imagined. But we’re getting there.”