

Late deal prevents federal shutdown

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The threat of a federal government shutdown suddenly lifted late Saturday as President Joe Biden signed a temporary funding bill to keep agencies open with little time to spare after Congress rushed to approve the bipartisan deal.

The package drops aid to Ukraine, a White House priority opposed by a growing number of GOP lawmakers, but increases federal disaster assistance by \$16 billion, meeting Biden's full request. The bill funds government until Nov. 17.

After chaotic days of turmoil in the House, Speaker Kevin McCarthy abruptly abandoned demands for steep spending cuts from his right flank and instead relied on Democrats to pass the bill, at risk to his own job. The Senate followed with final passage closing a whirlwind day at the Capitol.

It's been a sudden head-spinning turn of events in Congress ahead of the midnight funding

deadline after grueling days in the House pushed the government to the brink of a disruptive federal shutdown.

The outcome ends, for now, the threat of a shutdown, but the reprieve may be short-lived. Congress will again need to fund the government in coming weeks, risking a crisis as views are hardening, particularly among the right-flank lawmakers whose demands were ultimately swept aside this time in favor of a more bipartisan approach.

"We're going to do our job," McCarthy, R-Calif., said before the House vote. "We're going to be adults in the room. And we're going to keep government open."

If no deal was in place before Sunday, federal workers would have faced furloughs, more than 2 million active-duty and reserve military troops would have had to work without pay and programs and services that Americans rely on from coast to coast would have begun to face

shutdown disruptions.

"It has been a day full of twists and turns, but the American people can breathe a sigh of relief: There will be no government shutdown," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

The package funds government at current 2023 levels until mid-November, and also extends other provisions, including for the Federal Aviation Administration. The package was approved by the House 335-91, with most Republicans and almost all Democrats supporting. Senate passage came by an 88-9 vote.

For the House package to be approved, McCarthy was forced to rely on Democrats because the speaker's hard-right flank has said it will oppose any short-term funding measure, denying him the votes needed from his slim majority.

The House's quick pivot comes after the collapse Friday of McCarthy's earlier plan to pass a Republican-only bill with

steep spending cuts up to 30% to most government agencies and strict border provisions that the White House and Democrats rejected as too extreme. A faction of 21 hard-right Republican holdouts opposed it.

The White House has brushed aside McCarthy's overtures to meet with Biden after the speaker walked away from the debt deal they brokered earlier this year that set budget levels.

Catering to his hard-right flank, McCarthy had made multiple concessions including returning to the spending limits the conservatives demanded back in January as part of the deal-making to help him become the House speaker.

But it was not enough as the conservatives insisted the House follow regular rules, and debate and approve each of the 12 separate spending bills needed to fund the government agencies, typically a monthslong process. In the Senate, all the no votes against the package came from Republicans.

Ukraine aid tenuous as it is axed from stopgap bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congressional supporters of Ukraine say they won't give up after a bill to keep the federal government open excluded President Joe Biden's request to provide more security assistance to the war-torn nation.

Still, many lawmakers acknowledge that winning approval for Ukraine assistance in Congress is growing more difficult as the war between Russia and Ukraine grinds on. Republican resistance to the aid has been gaining momentum in the

halls of Congress.

Voting in the House last week pointed to the potential trouble ahead. Nearly half of House Republicans voted to strip \$300 million from a defense spending bill to train Ukrainian soldiers and purchase weapons. The money later was approved separately, but opponents of Ukraine support celebrated their growing numbers.

Then, on Saturday, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., omitted additional Ukraine aid from a measure to keep the government running

until Nov. 17. In doing so, he closed the door on a Senate package that would have funneled \$6 billion to Ukraine, roughly a third of what has been requested by the White House. Both chambers overwhelmingly approved the stopgap measure, with members of both parties abandoning the increased aid for Ukraine to avoid a government shutdown.

The exclusion of Ukraine funding came little more than a week after lawmakers met in the Capitol with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelen-

skyy, who sought to assure lawmakers that his military was winning the war, but stressed that additional aid would be crucial for continuing the fight.

Yet, McCarthy, pressured by his right flank, has gone from saying "no blank checks" for Ukraine, with the focus being on accountability, to describing the Senate's approach as putting "Ukraine in front of America." He declined to say after the vote on government funding whether he would bring aid for Ukraine up for a House vote in the coming weeks.

Navy will start testing SEALs for steroids

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Navy will begin randomly testing its special operations forces for steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs beginning in November, taking a groundbreaking step that military leaders have long resisted.

Rear Adm. Keith Davids, commander of Naval Special Warfare Command, announced the new program Friday in a message to his force, calling it necessary to protect their health and military readiness. The Navy will be the first to begin random testing, but Army Special Operations Command said it will soon follow suit, although no

start date has been set.

The Army and Navy have the largest and most well-known special operations forces, including the Navy SEALs and Army's Delta Force, Green Berets and Ranger Regiment. They are often called on to do the military's most sensitive and dangerous missions. The physical and mental challenges of getting through their selection and training programs and the pressures of the risky missions can lead some to use performance-enhancing drugs, although officials have said the numbers are small.

The use of these drugs has been a somewhat limited but

persistent problem across the military, but leaders have balked at increased testing because it is highly specialized, costly and requires contracting with the few labs that do such work. The military services have done occasional tests when they perceive a problem with an individual service member, but they must get special permission from the Pentagon to do routine, random testing.

The Air Force and the Marine Corps special operations commands said they have not yet requested a similar policy change.

According to the Navy command, four units will be randomly selected each month, and

15% of each will be tested. That will amount to as many as 200 sailors monthly, and those testing positive face discipline or removal.

The Navy has provided \$225,000 to fund the testing contract through the end of this month, and it's expected to cost about \$4.5 million per year for the next two years.

Noting that the drugs are illegal, Davids has told his force that any number above zero is unacceptable, whether during training or downrange when sailors are deployed. He has urged sailors to talk to their teammates and commanders about the drugs and their risks.

Navy enlists dogs to help approach to mental health

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Once nearly as common in the Navy as sailors, dogs are poised to make a comeback as the service strives to broaden its approach to mental health.

Oliver, a golden retriever, and Morgan, a mixed breed, are among several dogs that now regularly staff USO centers overseas as part of the organization's canine therapy program, the Navy announced in July.

The two dogs made their debut earlier in the summer at Naval Air Station Sigonella on the Italian island of Sicily.

Six American Red Cross-certified therapy dogs joined the center at Naval Support Activity Naples in September as part of the same program, implementation of which will vary by base.

There are plans to expand to other locations, such as Naval Station Rota in Spain, USO officials said in September.

They join Sage, a yellow Labrador retriever who deployed on the USS Gerald R. Ford in April as part of a pilot program, according to the Navy. The carrier has been on patrol in the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations.

Sage is the only support dog deployed on a Navy ship, but more could be on the way pending evaluation of the program, the spokesperson said. Chaplains, psychologists and counselors are also on board to help sailors, the spokesperson added.

The Navy has been grappling with an increase in sailor suicides since 2006, according to data on its website.

In 2022, 70 active-duty sailors died by suicide, a rate of 20.1 per 100,000, preliminary data show, compared to a rate of 9.1 in 2006. As of August, suicide has claimed the lives of 41 active-duty sailors this year, according to the Navy.

US says Iranian naval forces aimed laser at Viper in Gulf

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Iran's military demonstrated unsafe and unprofessional behavior last week when it shined a laser at a U.S. helicopter flying in international airspace in the Persian Gulf, according to Navy officials.

No one was hurt in the Wednesday evening incident, and the AH-1Z Viper attack helicopter was not damaged, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. 5th Fleet said in a statement Thursday.

The helicopter, which is assigned to the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, was performing routine operations when Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps navy vessels directed a laser at it several times, the statement said.

In August, more than 3,000 sailors and Marines arrived in the Middle East, part of a stepped-up push to counter Iranian interference with commercial shipping in the region.

The Bataan Amphibious Ready Group and the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit sailed into the region after Iran attempted to seize two oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman in early July. In one of those cases, Iranian naval forces fired on one of the ships.

The attempted seizures were the latest in a string of Iranian actions to harass oil tankers, U.S. officials said.

Iran countered that its actions were law enforcement efforts in response to infractions committed by the ships.

In late April, a Marshall Islands-flagged oil tanker headed to Texas was seized.

In all, Iran has harassed, attacked or seized 20 commercial ships since 2021, the Navy has said.

The U.S. helicopter involved in Wednesday's incident is attached to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 162, deployed aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan, the Navy said.

DOD vows more measures to prevent suicide

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Including unit leaders in more suicide prevention training and increasing mental health services are just two of the more than 100 recommendations that the Pentagon said Thursday will be implemented in the next seven years to help address the suicide crisis in the military.

“Suicide prevention is a long-term effort. Change will not happen overnight, but we have no time to spare,” Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin wrote in a memo announcing the initiative.

The Defense Department in recent years has aimed to improve mental health care access for troops, amid increases in suicide rates and outcry from members of Congress and others.

There were almost 29 suicides per 100,000 troops in 2020 — up from 17.5 per 100,000 in 2010, according to Defense Department

data. That figure fell to 24.3 per 100,000 in 2021, but it still represented a serious uptick in suicides compared to most of the 2000s and 2010s.

In 2022, Austin approved the establishment of the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee, and the group made 127 recommendations of near- and long-term solutions to address problems in the ranks. Austin implemented 10 recommendations in March 2023. In Thursday’s announcement, 101 recommendations were added to be implemented by the end of fiscal 2030, subject to the availability of funds.

Some of the recommendations to be implemented include expanding telehealth services, increasing appointment availability by revising the mental health staff model, launching a comprehensive public education campaign on firearm safety, and updating content by how it is pre-

sented and the amount of suicide prevention training.

“You cannot solve this problem by isolating one risk factor. You have to take a holistic approach,” said Elizabeth Foster, executive director of the Pentagon’s Force Resiliency Office. “And to be truly effective, you have to look far upstream of the point of crisis. If we are doing this right, this is as much about well-being promotion as is it about suicide prevention.”

Two recommendations not included in the recommendations were installing air conditioning units in all barracks, dorms and military housing locations and raising the minimum age to buy firearms and ammunition on Defense Department property to 25.

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment is looking into housing matters at large, Foster said, so the Force Resiliency Office did not want to get ahead of

that effort.

Regarding raising the age to purchase firearms and ammunition, Foster said it was determined after a thorough review “there were significant legal barriers” to implementing the recommendation at this time.

She said she could not discuss how much the initiative will cost.

According to a recent Pentagon report, suicides in the active-duty military increased in the first three months of 2023 compared to the same time period last year. The Defense Suicide Prevention Office revealed in its quarterly report that the overall number of active-duty suicides, 94, from January through March was up 25% compared to the number of troops, 75, who died by suicide in the first three months of 2022.

In May, the Pentagon enacted the Brandon Act to let troops seek mental health services confidentially and any time that they need it.

US Navy is part of 9-nation drill hosted by Philippines

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. and Philippine navies will join seven other nations Monday for a 12-day exercise near the island of Luzon amid Chinese maneuvering in the South China Sea.

Exercise Samasama — Tagalog for “together” — will include anti-submarine, anti-surface, anti-air and electronic warfare practice, according to a Wednesday statement from the Philippine armed forces.

The drills follow a series of confrontations by the Philippine and Chinese coast guards in the South China Sea, where they’re at odds over territorial claims.

Both nations have installed buoys in disputed waters. Filipino officials said Monday their forces had removed a floating barrier installed by China near the disputed Scarborough Shoal.

The drills could help the U.S. manage its Philippine ally’s anger over Chinese provocation, according to Patricio Abinales, a professor at the University of Hawaii’s School of Pacific and Asian Studies.

U.S. officials are likely “fearful” of what the Philippines could do next after removing the Chinese barrier at Scarborough, Abinales said by email Friday.

During the Samasama drills, the U.S. and Philippines navies will hold subject-matter exchanges and practice humanitarian assistance and disaster response with navies from Japan, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, the Philippine statement said. French and Australian sailors will join the subject-matter exchanges and New Zealand and Indonesian sailors will observe, the statement said.

Gun, abortion cases on tap in new Supreme Court term

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court is returning to a new term to take up some familiar topics — guns and abortion — and concerns about ethics swirling around the justices.

The year also will have a heavy focus on social media and how free speech protections apply online. A big unknown is whether the court will be asked to weigh in on any aspect of the criminal cases against former President Donald Trump and others or efforts in some states to keep the Republican off the 2024 presidential ballot because of his role in trying to overturn the results of the 2020 election that he lost to Joe Biden.

In the gun case, the federal appeals court in New Orleans struck down a federal law that aims to keep guns away from people facing domestic violence restraining

orders from having firearms. The three-judge panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said its decision was compelled by the Supreme Court’s 2022 ruling expanding gun rights and directing judges to evaluate restrictions based on history and tradition. Judges also have invalidated other long-standing gun control laws.

The justices will hear the Texas case, in November, in what is their first chance to elaborate on the meaning of that decision in the earlier case.

The abortion case likely to be heard by the justices also would be the court’s first word on the topic since it reversed *Roe v. Wade*’s right to abortion. The new case stems from a ruling, also by the 5th Circuit, to limit the availability of mifepristone, a medication used in the most common method of abortion in the U.S.

Gaetz will attempt to oust McCarthy as House speaker

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Rep. Matt Gaetz said Sunday he will try to remove House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, a fellow Republican, from his leadership position this week after McCarthy relied on Democratic support to pass legislation that avoided a government shutdown. “Bring it on,” McCarthy responded.

Gaetz, R-Fla., a longtime McCarthy nemesis, said in broadcast interviews that McCarthy was in “brazen, material breach” of agreements he made with House Republicans in January when he ran for speaker. As a result, Gaetz said he would be filing a “motion to vacate the chair,” as House rules permit.

McCarthy’s response: “So be it. Bring it on. Let’s get over with it and let’s start governing.”

No speaker has ever been removed from office through such a move. Procedural votes could be offered to halt the motion or it could trigger a House floor vote on whether McCarthy, R-Calif., should remain speaker.

“I think we need to rip off the Band-Aid,” Gaetz said. “I think we need to move on with new leadership that can be trustworthy.”

Republicans just ended a tumultuous week in which Congress flirted with a government closure and the majority party in the House could not even pass its own bill in an effort to avoid a shutdown. GOP lawmakers complained the House waited too long to take up annual spending bills, squandering an opportunity to force the Senate to negotiate on spending and policy priorities.

McCarthy has continually tried to placate the conservative wing and on Friday, he brought a short-term plan to fund the government while enacting steep spending cuts of nearly 30% for many agencies and strict border security provisions. But that was deemed insufficient by some Republicans, and 21 joined with every Democrat in voting against the package.

McCarthy pivoted on Saturday to a bill that would draw Democratic support. It keeps agencies funded at current levels into mid-November and provides \$16 billion in disaster relief for states and communities dealing with hurricanes and other natural disasters. Democrats jumped at the chance to keep the government open and both chambers passed the bill by overwhelming margins.

Toxin leak from truck crash kills 5 in Illinois

Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — Five people were killed and five were seriously injured after a truck overturned in central Illinois, causing a toxic substance to leak from its cargo and forcing the evacuation of hundreds of area residents, authorities said Saturday.

A semitruck carrying caustic anhydrous ammonia toppled about 9:25 p.m. Friday night in Teutopolis, spilling more than half its 7,500-gallon load, according to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

Effingham County Coroner Kim Rhodes said the five dead included three from the same family: one adult and two children under 12. The other two were adult motorists from out of state, Rhodes said. Additionally, five people were airlifted to hospitals, their conditions unknown.

About 500 residents within a 1-mile radius of the crash site were evacuated after the accident. Late Saturday, Teutopolis Fire Protection District Assistant Chief Joe Holomy said testing found the area was safe for residents to return home.

Emergency crews worked overnight after the accident on Friday trying to control the plume from the leak and struggled to get near the crash site.

“We have a lot of brave firemen, EMT, hazmat specialists, police officers that are working on this scene as we speak,” Effingham County Sheriff Paul Kuhns said at a Saturday morning news conference.

Private and federal environmental contractors were summoned to recommend a cleanup procedure in Teutopolis, a town of 1,600 about 110 miles northeast of St. Louis.

Man indicted in Tupac Shakur slaying

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — A man who prosecutors say ordered the 1996 killing of rapper Tupac Shakur was arrested and charged with murder Friday in a long-awaited breakthrough in one of hip-hop’s most enduring mysteries.

Duane “Keffe D” Davis has long been known to investigators as one of four suspects identified early in the investigation. He isn’t the accused gunman but was described as the group’s ringleader by authorities Friday at a news conference and in court. In Nevada you can be charged with a crime, including murder, if you help someone commit the crime.

“Duane Davis was the shot caller for this group of individ-

uals that committed this crime,” said Las Vegas police homicide Lt. Jason Johansson, “and he orchestrated the plan that was carried out.”

Davis himself has admitted in interviews and in his 2019 tell-all memoir, “Compton Street Legend,” that he provided the gun used in the drive-by shooting.

Authorities said Friday that Davis’ own public comments revived the investigation.

Davis, now 60, was arrested early Friday while on a walk near his home on the outskirts of Las Vegas, hours before prosecutors announced in court that a Nevada grand jury had indicted the self-described “gangster” on one count of murder with a deadly weapon. He is due in court this week.

The grand jury also voted to add a sentencing enhancement to the murder charge for gang activity that could add up to 20 additional years if he’s convicted.

Hundreds of pages of transcripts released Friday provide a view into the first month of grand jury proceedings, which began in late July with testimony from former associates of Davis, friends of Shakur and a slate of retired police officers involved in the case early on.

Their testimony painted a picture for the jurors of a deep, escalating rift between Shakur’s music label Death Row Records and Bad Boy Records, which had ties to Davis and represented Shakur’s rap rival, Biggie Smalls.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Fast food workers' pay boosted to \$20 per hour

CA SACRAMENTO — A new law in California will raise the minimum wage for fast food workers to \$20 per hour next year, an acknowledgment from the state's Democratic leaders that most of the often overlooked workforce are the primary earners for their low-income households.

When it takes effect on April 1, fast food workers in California will have the highest guaranteed base salary in the industry. The state's minimum wage for all other workers — \$15.50 per hour — is already among the highest in the United States.

Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom signed the law Thursday amid a throng of cheering workers and labor leaders at an event in Los Angeles. Newsom dismissed the popular view that fast food jobs are meant for teenagers to have their first experience in the workforce.

Prankster's shooter acquitted of main charge

VA LEESBURG — A jury last week found a delivery driver not guilty in the shooting of a YouTube prankster who followed him around a mall food court earlier this year.

Alan Colie, 31, was acquitted of aggravated malicious wounding in the shooting of Tanner Cook, 21, who runs the "Classified Goons" YouTube channel.

The jury was split though on two lesser firearms counts, and decided to convict him on one and acquit him on the other.

The April 2 shooting at the food court in Dulles Town Center set off panic as shoppers fled what they feared to be a mass

shooting.

Colie pleaded not guilty and said he was acting in self defense.

Colie's defense attorney, Adam Pouilliard, said during Thursday's closing arguments that his client felt menaced by the 6-foot-5 Cook during the confrontation, which was designed to provoke a reaction and to draw viewers to Cook's YouTube channel.

Police probe fentanyl overdoses involving kids

OR PORTLAND — Nearly a dozen children, including a 1-year-old, have overdosed on fentanyl since June in Portland, its police bureau said, intensifying alarm in a city like so many others that has struggled to address the deadliest overdose crisis in U.S. history.

Police said 10 minors have overdosed since June and that fentanyl is suspected in all but one of the cases. Half of the incidents were fatal. A 1-year-old, 2-year-old, 5-year-old and two 15-year-olds are among the dead, the Portland Police Bureau said in a news release.

A growing number of children are dying of fentanyl overdoses across the country amid an opioid crisis that last year claimed nearly 80,000 lives, according to federal data. In the past month, a 2-year-old with a significant amount of fentanyl in her system died at her home near Seattle, a 1-year-old died of a suspected fentanyl overdose at a day care in New York City and a 15-month-old in California died after being exposed to the substance in her home.

Portland police have increased patrols to shut down an

open-air fentanyl market at an abandoned building downtown, and Democratic Gov. Tina Kotek just last week announced plans to address fentanyl flowing into the state.

Invasive catfish predator found in another river

GA SOCIAL CIRCLE — Flathead catfish are invading another river, state officials warn, a predator that would threaten native fish including the prized redbreast sunfish.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources said that systematic sampling in August found more than a dozen flathead catfish in a stretch of the Ogeechee River just upstream from Interstate 95.

Wildlife officials are urging anglers to catch as many flathead as they can and report them to the state Wildlife Resources Division, but not to release them back into the Ogeechee.

The flathead catfish is native to many rivers that drain to the Gulf of Mexico, including the Coosa River drainage in northwest Georgia. But the fish has become established in multiple Georgia rivers that drain to the Atlantic Ocean, including the Satilla, Altamaha and Savannah rivers.

Support alligator denied admittance to stadium

PA PHILADELPHIA — A Phillies fan and his emotional support animal, an alligator named WallyGator, were denied entrance to watch Philadelphia host Pittsburgh.

Social media posts showed the gator on a leash with a harness with his name on it outside the stadium Wednesday.

WallyGator is a working emotional support alligator owned by Joie Henney, of Jonestown. The reptile has a big presence on Instagram and TikTok.

Henney told The Philadelphia Inquirer last year that WallyGator helps him battle depression and that "he likes to give hugs." Henney said that the gator had never bitten anyone.

Hyundai, Kia recall 3.4M vehicles due to fire risk

MI DETROIT — Hyundai and Kia are recalling nearly 3.4 million vehicles in the U.S. and telling owners to park them outside due to the risk of engine compartment fires.

The recalls cover multiple car and SUV models from the 2010 through 2019 model years including Hyundai's Santa Fe SUV and Kia's Sorrento SUV.

Documents posted by the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration say the anti-lock brake control module can leak fluid and cause an electrical short, which can touch off a fire while the vehicles are parked or being driven.

The automakers are advising owners to park outdoors and away from structures until repairs are done.

Dealers will replace the anti-lock brake fuse at no cost to owners. Kia says in documents that it will send notification letters to owners starting Nov. 14. For Hyundai the date is Nov. 21.

Hyundai reported 21 fires in the affected vehicles in the U.S., and another 22 "thermal incidents" including smoke, burning and melting of parts, the documents say. Kia reported 10 fires and melting incidents.

— From wire reports



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Will Georgia's close win impact voters?

Associated Press

Time to talk about who should be No. 1.

Georgia has held the top spot in 15 straight AP Top 25s, dating to the middle of last season when the Bulldogs won a second straight national title.

Georgia (5-0) extended its school-record winning streak to 22 games at Auburn on Saturday, but yet again the Bulldogs didn't look much like the clear best team in the country.

For the second time in two Southeastern Conference games, Georgia trailed at half-time. This time against an Auburn team that simply does not have a functional passing game. Credit coach Hugh Freeze for working the quarterback run to keep the Bulldogs off balance, but again it took coach Kirby Smart's team a while to find its offense.

"I just think there's a lot more parity in college football. I don't think there's a great separation between anybody," Smart said. "The pro scouts that come to our place — I always trust their opinion — and

they're like, 'Well, we've been to this place, that place, that place. And everybody's pretty similar. There's not this great margin.'"

The solution, not surprisingly, turned out to be getting the ball in the hands of the one of the best players in the country.

If a tight end can make a run at a Heisman Trophy, it is Brock Bowers. The third-year star finished with eight catches for 157 yards and the winning touchdown.

Georgia has been an overwhelming No. 1 since the preseason and the Bulldogs received 55 first-place votes last week. The other eight were sprinkled between five other teams.

The door is open for another team to jump up and take the top spot, but there is no obvious team to replace Georgia.

No. 2 Michigan hammered Nebraska, and has yet to be tested but the best opponent the Wolverines have faced is Rutgers (4-1).

No. 3 Texas? Maybe. The Longhorns beat Alabama and

other than a sluggish start against Wyoming the next week, have been rolling ever since. Kansas hung around on the scoreboard for a little while, but it really wasn't close Saturday in Austin. Texas outgained the Jayhawks 661-260 and set up a battle of unbeaten next week against No. 14 Oklahoma in the final Big 12 edition of the Red River Rivalry.

The Longhorns and Sooners will meet with both undefeated for the first time since 2011.

No. 4 Ohio State won't jump to No. 1 during an off week.

No. 5 Florida State was also off Saturday and that impressive victory against LSU to start the season doesn't look quite as good after the Tigers' allowed 711 yards in a loss to No. 20 Mississippi.

LSU, which started the season ranked fifth, has two losses before the calendar flipped to October.

No. 6 Penn State slogged around against Northwestern. Drew Allar and the Nittany Lions need to find some explosive plays before going to Ohio State

in three weeks.

No. 7 Washington played its first close game of the season, but remained perfect against Arizona.

Past time

The Colorado-centric portion of the college football season has now concluded.

For the second straight week, Deion Sanders' team could not handle one of the Pac-12's big boys, though the Buffaloes acquitted themselves far better against No. 8 Southern California.

Caleb Williams and the Trojans practically picked up where Oregon left off last week, going up 34-7 in the second quarter. Notably, though, She-deur Sanders and the Buffs turned a blowout into a one-score game in the fourth quarter.

"It was a pleasure for me to play against them and their head coach. I mean that was fun for me, it really was," Deion Sanders told reporters. "Probably didn't look like it but that was fun."

Larrier, Michel lead Air Force to romp over San Diego St.

Associated Press

AIR FORCE ACADEMY, Colo. — Zac Larrier threw two long touchdown passes, Emmanuel Michel added a pair of touchdown runs and Air Force cruised to a 49-10 victory over San Diego State on Saturday night.

Neither team scored until Jalen Mayden directed a 17-play, 80-yard drive, capped off with his 21-yard touchdown pass to Joshua Nicholson to give San Diego State (2-4, 0-2 Mountain West Conference) a 7-0 lead.

Air Force (5-0, 3-0) answered with three straight touchdown drives. Cade Harris pulled the Falcons even at 7-7 with a 7-yard scoring run and Michel followed with touchdown runs of 2 and 3

yards for a 21-7 advantage.

Jack Browning kicked a conference- and school-record 61-yard field goal on the final play of the half for the Aztecs' final points.

Air Force put the game out of reach by the 7:09 mark of the third quarter. Larrier teamed up with Harris for a 54-yard touchdown and, on the Falcons' next possession, fired a 53-yard scoring strike to Jared Roznos. Trey Taylor followed with a 30-yard pick-6 on the next play from scrimmage and the Falcons led 42-10. Jensen Jones' 4-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter was the final score.

Larrier finished with 189 yards on 6-for-7 passing for Air

Force. He also carried eight times for 103 yards.

South Florida 44, Navy 30: Byrum Brown threw for three touchdowns, including an 88-yarder to Sean Atkins, and Tramel Logan added a 70-yard fumble return for a touchdown to carry the visiting Bulls over the Midshipmen.

South Florida trailed 14-0 barely six minutes into the game, before answering with three straight touchdowns, two of them passes from Brown to Atkins.

Blake Horvath threw a 2-yard touchdown pass to Anton Hall Jr. with just under two minutes left in the first half to pull the Midshipmen within one, 21-20, but the two-point conversion at-

tempt was returned by the Bulls' Jaylen Shuler to send them into intermission with a 23-20 lead.

Logan's scoop-and-score on the first play of the fourth put South Florida up 37-23 and Michel Dukes added an 11-yard touchdown run with 7:45 left. Horvath fired a 68-yard touchdown pass to Eli Heidenreich with 7:28 left to complete the scoring.

Brown was an efficient 26-for-34 passing for 338 yards to lead South Florida (3-2, 2-0 American Athletic Conference). Atkins finished with four catches for 116 yards.

Alex Tecza carried 13 times for 82 yards to lead a Navy (1-3, 0-2) ground game that put up 240 yards.

Europeans win Ryder Cup at home again

Associated Press

GUIDONIA MONTECELIO, Italy — Europe won back the the Ryder Cup on Sunday, just like it always does before its raucous crowd, with Rory McIlroy leading the way and Tommy Fleetwood delivering the decisive point to extend its dominance over the Americans on home soil.

The outcome was never seriously in doubt at Marco Simone. Europe started the final day with a five-point lead. McIlroy, Jon Rahm, Viktor Hovland and Tyrrell Hatton put the Europeans on the verge of the Cup, forcing the Americans to win the remaining five matches on the course.

Just like everything else this week, there was little chance of that.

McIlroy was still fired up over what he perceived to be bad behavior by Patrick Cantlay's caddie on the 18th green the previous evening. He won his match to cap a 4-1 week and was Europe's top scorer for the first time in the Ryder Cup.

And then Fleetwood hit a signature shot on the signature hole, a drive to 25 feet on the reachable 16th. Rickie Fowler hit into the water and eventually

conceded a short birdie to Fleetwood that assured Europe the 14½ points it needed to claim the 17-inch gold trophy.

The celebration was on, just like it always is on European soil, with one exception. The first Ryder Cup in Italy brought its share of chaos as fans raced toward the edge of the 18th green to watch the final match that only decided a result for the record book:

Europe 16½, United States 11½.

The Americans were coming off a record 19-9 win over Europe two years ago at Whistling Straits, confident this would be the time they ended 30 years of losing away from home.

Make it 34. They won't get another chance until Adare Manor in Ireland in 2027.

"We were so disappointed after Whistling Straits. We all were," said McIlroy, who was in tears at the last Ryder Cup. "We wanted to come to Rome and redeem ourselves. I just knew I needed to put in a better performance for my team this week."

"I think the European team played some phenomenal golf. I think it really is quite that simple," U.S. captain Zach Johnson said, his voice choking to the

point it was hard for him to complete a sentence. "Team USA will be better for it. We'll figure it out."

Scrutiny is sure to follow. His six captain's picks combined to win four matches all week. Only three Americans played a tournament in the five weeks since the PGA Tour season ended.

But this was more about Team Europe.

"This team felt on a bit of a mission," Justin Rose said. "This win was clinical and a wonderful performance from day one. Relentless."

Europe went into the singles session knowing no team had ever come back from a five-point deficit on Sunday. The Americans made them sweat, but only briefly.

Rahm won the 18th hole to earn a half-point against Scottie Scheffler. Hatton completed an unbeaten week by beating British Open champion Brian Harman. Hovland put the first blue point on the board in a win over Collin Morikawa.

All Europe needed was one more halve, and Fleetwood assured that with a 2-up lead with two holes to play against Fowler.

Cantlay gave his team momentum even in the face of

fierce heckling for not wearing a hat and a Sky Sports report he called "outright lies" that he was not wearing a hat to protest not being paid to play. For two days, thousands of fans waved their caps at Cantlay, who never flinched.

He birdied his last three holes Saturday evening in fourballs, and then McIlroy was furious with caddie Joe LaCava for continuing to celebrate as McIlroy still had a putt.

McIlroy said he used it as fuel. "I didn't let it take away from what's been a fantastic week," he said. "I think what transpired on that last green gave us a fire in the belly to get the job done."

But it was clear that hard feelings lingered when he was asked on TV if a meeting with LaCava allowed them to put it behind them. "I haven't met Joe," McIlroy said flatly. He repeated the answer after another question.

The only mood that mattered was pure joy, with Europeans leaping into the water to celebrate a win they badly needed.

The Americans still lead the overall series in the Ryder Cup dating to 1927. But since Europe joined the party in 1979 — the modern era — Europe now has a 12-9-1 advantage.

Lawrence, Ridley, defense lead Jaguars past Falcons

Associated Press

LONDON — Calvin Ridley caught a touchdown pass against his old team and Darius Williams returned an interception for a 61-yard score and the Jacksonville Jaguars beat the Atlanta Falcons 23-7 on Sunday at Wembley Stadium.

The Jags (2-2) halted a two-game skid with a series of big plays as the team celebrated playing for the 10th time in London and held on as the Falcons tried to rally in the second half.

Trevor Lawrence side-stepped a blitzing Richie Grant and lofted a deep ball to a wide-

open Ridley for a 30-yard touchdown pass in the first quarter.

Williams stepped in front of wide receiver Drake London, intercepted Desmond Ridder's pass and outran the second-year QB into the end zone to make the score 17-0 in the second quarter. It was the first pick-6 in London since 2016.

The Falcons (2-2) have dropped two in a row and Ridder, making his eighth NFL start, showed some inexperience with interceptions on back-to-back throws in the first half.

After the pick-6, Andre Cisco intercepted Ridder's next pass

— intended for Kyle Pitts on a crossing route — and returned it to the Atlanta 20. Cisco fumbled but teammate Foyesade Oluokun recovered it at the 16.

Jaguars coach Doug Pederson opted against a chip-shot field goal for a 20-point lead and Lawrence was sacked on fourth-and-1 from the 7 by David Onyemata.

Lawrence finished 23-for-30 for 207 yards and the TD pass. Christian Kirk led the Jags with eight receptions for 84 yards. Ridley, drafted 26th overall in 2018 by the Falcons, had two receptions for 38 yards.

Atlanta came out energized in the second half and Ridder finished a 75-yard drive with a 15-yard touchdown pass to London to cut Jacksonville's lead to 17-7.

London only got one foot down at the back of the end zone on a fourth-and-3 from the 6 with just over six minutes remaining and the score 20-7.

Bijan Robinson rushed for 105 yards on 14 carries for the Falcons.

Brandon McManus kicked three field goals for the Jags.

Ridder finished 19-for-31 for 192 yards, the TD pass and two interceptions.

Rangers get 1st playoff spot since '16

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Bruce Bochy had a bottle of bubbly in his hand as he watched the celebration of a turnaround that very few expected in his first season in charge in Texas.

“This is what I came back for and there’s nothing like it,” Bochy said. “It’s been some kind of ride so far and we’ve got a lot of work to do, but to be in this moment right now, these are memories you never forget and for these guys I couldn’t be happier.”

The Rangers are back in the postseason for the first time since 2016, beating the Seattle Mariners 6-1 on Saturday to clinch a playoff spot in the American League.

Texas (90-71) can claim the AL West title and the No. 2 seed in the AL playoffs with a win over the Mariners in the regular-season finale or a loss by Houston (89-72) at Arizona on Sunday.

After a traditional clinching celebration in the middle of the clubhouse, the Rangers crowded into a dining room to watch the final outs of Houston’s 1-0 win over the Diamondbacks. That win pushed the division race to the final day and muted a little of the party.

But just a little.

“To come from where we did last year to make the playoffs is extremely exciting. That’s why we’re celebrating tonight,” Texas shortstop Corey Seager said.

The win by the Astros also eliminated the Mariners from the postseason race, falling short a year after ending a 21-year playoff drought.

Marlins 7, Pirates 3: Jazz Chisholm hit his 19th home run, Josh Bell delivered a late two-run double and visiting Miami clinched the fourth playoff berth in franchise history by beating Pittsburgh.

A.J. Puk (7-5) and seven other relievers kept the Pirates in check, rendering any score-

board-watching pointless.

Closer Tanner Scott wrapped up his 12th save by striking out the side in the ninth, setting off a celebration on the field and behind the Miami dugout, where a small clutch of fans chanted “Lets Go Marlins” in the ninth.

Jon Berti had three hits for the Marlins and started the go-ahead rally with a leadoff walk in the sixth off Quinn Priester (3-3), beginning a sequence that symbolized Miami’s “whatever it takes” approach.

Astros 1, Diamondbacks 0: Justin Verlander threw five innings, José Abreu hit a run-scoring double and visiting Houston beat Arizona as both teams clinched spots in the upcoming playoffs.

Arizona’s seeding could still change depending on Sunday’s results, which also could determine whether the Marlins have to fly back to New York on Monday to finish a suspended game with the Mets.

Verlander (13-8) helped the Astros to World Series wins in 2017 and 2022 but signed as a free agent with the New York Mets during the offseason. After a disappointing few months, the Mets traded the three-time Cy Young Award winner back to the Astros at the trade deadline.

Mets 4-11, Phillies 3-4: Francisco Álvarez drove in a career-high six runs with his first big league grand slam and a two-run homer, powering host New York to a doubleheader sweep of playoff-bound Philadelphia.

Mets right-hander Tylor Megill unveiled his attempt at throwing Kodai Senga’s Ghost Fork in the opener, when he threw a career-high $7\frac{1}{3}$ innings in a 4-3 victory.

Álvarez, who sat out the opener, hit a two-run homer off the signage along the second deck in left field to cap a three-run second against Michael Plassmeyer (0-1).

Taijuan Walker (15-6), in line to start a potential Game 3 of an NL Wild Card series Thursday, went seven innings in the opener and finished the season with a career-high 172 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings and 31 starts. He had a 7.05 first-inning ERA but a 3.81 in the subsequent innings.

Rays 7, Blue Jays 5 (10): Toronto clinched a playoff spot when the Mariners lost to the Rangers despite its loss to Taylor Walls and visiting Tampa Bay.

Walls lifted the Rays to a 6-4 lead with a two-run single off Jordan Hicks (3-9) with two out in the 10th. Junior Caminero then drove in Raimel Tapia with an infield single.

Rays right-hander Chris Devenski (6-4) pitched two innings for the win, working around Bo Bichette’s RBI double in the 10th.

Braves 5, Nationals 3: Marcell Ozuna hit a go-ahead, three-run homer in the fifth inning, Spencer Strider shook off a shaky first inning to get his 20th win and major league-leading Atlanta beat visiting Washington.

Strider, the MLB leader in strikeouts and victories, had a rough start with a 36-pitch, three-run first inning. He settled down to finish with seven strikeouts on 94 pitches — 57 strikes — in five innings.

Orioles 5, Red Sox 2: Ryan Mountcastle hit a tiebreaking double in the seventh inning and scored on an infield hit to lead AL East champion Baltimore over last-place Boston for its 101st win.

The host Orioles (101-60), who will host an AL Division Series starting Oct. 7, are finishing their winningest season since going 102-57 in 1979.

Giants 2, Dodgers 1: Clayton Kershaw lost for the first time since May, allowing the go-ahead run when Max Muncy misplayed a potential inning-ending double-play grounder in

a loss to host San Francisco that left Los Angeles one win shy of 100 going into its season finale.

Cubs 10, Brewers 6: Yan Gomes hit a grand slam, but visiting Chicago was eliminated from postseason contention during its victory over Milwaukee.

Chicago’s game was going into the eighth inning when Miami secured an NL wild card and knocked the Cubs out of the playoff race.

Cardinals 15, Reds 6: Cincinnati’s playoff bid ended in game No. 161 when it was eliminated during the seventh inning of a loss to host St. Louis when the Marlins beat the Pirates to clinch a wild-card berth.

The Reds would have been eliminated with their loss regardless, ending their attempt to become just the third team to make the postseason following a 100-loss season.

Tigers 8, Guardians 0: Miguel Cabrera followed a pre-game retirement celebration by scoring the first run and driving in another, helping host Detroit beat Cleveland to clinch second place in the AL Central.

Twins 14, Rockies 6: Trevor Larnach hit his first career grand slam, one of visiting Minnesota’s four home runs, and the playoff-bound Twins beat Colorado.

Yankees 5, Royals 2: Frankie Montas earned the win out of the bullpen in his season debut for visiting New York, which clinched its 31st straight winning season with one game to spare.

Padres 6, White Sox 1: Ha-Seong Kim had four hits to lead visiting San Diego over Chicago, which lost 100 games for the first time since 2018.

Athletics 7, Angels 3: Shea Langeliers hit a tiebreaking three-run homer in his team’s five-run eighth inning, leading visiting Oakland over Los Angeles.