

## DOD low on funds to replace Ukraine aid

By **DOUG G. WARE**  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon is running low on money to replace the weapons and equipment that have been shipped to Ukraine and defense officials are asking Congress to authorize more funds as soon as possible, the Defense Department's top budgetary official said.

Every time the United States sends emergency military aid to Ukraine, the equipment comes from Pentagon stocks and makes them unavailable for U.S. forces around the world. Of the roughly \$26 billion that Congress previously authorized to replace weapons and equipment for the embattled country, only \$1.6 billion remains, Pentagon Comptroller Michael McCord wrote in a letter to House and Senate lawmakers.

McCord also expressed concern that the stopgap funding approved by Congress on Saturday to avert a government shutdown does not include new funding for Ukraine aid.

"I write to express the Department of Defense's deep concern with the absence of [new] security assistance funding for

Ukraine," McCord said in the letter, which was sent to Republican and Democratic leaders in the House and Senate. "[We are] anxious to avoid a lapse in appropriations, but it is important that a [continuing resolution] protect our security interests and uphold our commitments and our values."

New aid for Ukraine was removed from the continuing resolution to ensure enough House Republicans voted for the spending measure. The resolution will keep funding the government until mid-November, giving Congress more than a month to pass the appropriate bills to fund the government through September 2024 and appropriate more aid to help Ukraine fight invading Russian forces.

"We have already been forced to slow down the replenishment of our own forces to hedge against an uncertain funding future," McCord wrote. "Failure to replenish our military services on a timely basis could harm our military's readiness."

The Pentagon reportedly has about \$5.4 billion left in presidential drawdown authority, which allows the military to

send weapons quickly from DOD shelves on an emergency basis. But McCord wrote the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative is already out of money. Because weapons sent through the assistance initiative don't come from Pentagon stocks, they don't need to be replaced.

"Without additional funding now, we would have to delay or curtail assistance to meet Ukraine's urgent requirements, including for air defense and ammunition that are critical and urgent now as Russia prepares to conduct a winter offensive and continues its bombardment of Ukrainian cities," he wrote. "For example, a lack of USAI funding now will delay contracting actions that could negatively impact the department's ability to purchase essential additional 155 mm artillery and critical munitions essential to the success of Ukraine's armed forces."

Though many congressional lawmakers agree with continuing aid to Ukraine, a growing number of Republicans, particularly those on the party's far right, are beginning to balk at approving more funds. Many

who have stressed the importance of keeping up aid, including President Joe Biden, have said in recent days that the assistance cannot stop now.

"We cannot under any circumstance allow America's support for Ukraine to be interrupted," Biden said Sunday. "The vast majority of both parties ... support helping Ukraine in the brutal aggression that is being thrust upon them by Russia. Stop playing games. Get this done."

McCord wrote in his letter that cutting off aid to Ukraine would put the Eastern European country in a dire situation — and possibly encourage other nations, such as China, to carry out further acts of aggression.

Beijing has repeatedly expressed a desire to "unify" with Taiwan — a move that could require military force.

"Delays to additional funding would also be perceived by Ukraine as a sign of wavering U.S. support and likely as a betrayal of our previous commitments," McCord wrote. "It is crucial that the U.S. continues to lead [the] global coalition, and we need the resources to underwrite our leadership role."

## Costliest weapons program now even more expensive

*Bloomberg News*

The world's most expensive weapons program — the United States' F-35 fighter jet — got even more costly, according to the Pentagon.

The program to develop and procure the plane will cost a total of \$438 billion, up \$26 billion from the last estimate a year ago, according to the F-35's new Selected Acquisition Report released Monday.

The 6.5% increase is actually relatively modest by the standards of the program, which was originally \$233 billion when Lockheed Martin Corp. won the contract in 2001.

"The cost data in question was driven after accounting for inflation" and readjustment of the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps production plans which extend from 2044 to 2049, the program office

said in a statement. The new estimate does not change the total number of planned aircraft, which includes 14 development jets and 2,456 production models for the U.S., it said.

The so-called per-jet "program acquisition unit cost" that includes development and production dollars when calculated in what budget analysts call inflation-adjusted "then

year" dollars has increased to \$179 million a jet from \$166 million in the last year, according to the SAR.

The \$26 billion increase is equivalent to what Congress has appropriated under the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative to support Kyiv's fight against Russia's invasion. It also roughly equals this year's budget request for NASA, the space agency.

# Nuclear sub wraps overhaul; tests missile

By SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

The U.S. Navy test-fired a ballistic missile from a nuclear-powered submarine off the coast of California last week as the vessel prepares to return to service, according to the Department of Defense.

Photographs of an unarmed, extended life Trident II D5, launched Sept. 27 by the USS Louisiana and blasting out of the water near San Diego, were released by the DOD the next day.

The test was part of a Demonstration and Shakedown Operation, a final evaluation of the Louisiana's crew and readiness following a 41-month engineered refueling

overhaul at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Wash., which concluded in March.

The Louisiana is one of 14 Ohio-class submarines that make up the most survivable leg of America's nuclear triad, which includes land and air-launched nuclear weapons, according to the DOD.

"Their stealth design makes finding an SSBN (a nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine) an almost impossible task, giving pause to potential adversaries," the DOD states on its website. "The Columbia-class SSBN program will begin to replace the Ohio-class SSBNs starting in the early 2030s."

The Trident II D5 is the lat-

est generation of the Navy's submarine-launched ballistic missiles and was first deployed in 1990, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The service plans to keep the missiles in service under a life extension program into the 2080s, according to the center.

Under the New START agreement, each missile may carry up to eight nuclear warheads, either 100-kiloton W76 warheads or the 475-kiloton W88. Each of the 12 Ohio-class subs always in service carries 20 Trident II missiles, according to the center.

Some motors that supported last week's unarmed flight

test were the oldest Trident II D5 motors flown to date, demonstrating their reliability and proven performance, Northrop Grumman said in a news release Monday.

"Northrop Grumman's strategic motors have provided propulsion success for 191 successful test launches since their deployment to the fleet," Wendy Williams, company vice president for propulsion systems, said in the release.

The life-extended Trident II D5 is a three-stage missile also carried by British Vanguard-class submarines and will be carried aboard U.S. Columbia-class and British Dreadnought-class subs in the future, the company said.

## DOD official charged with participating in dog fighting

*The Washington Post*

A senior member of the Department of Defense communications staff has been arrested and charged with participating in a dogfighting ring in the Washington, D.C., area for more than 20 years, federal authorities disclosed Monday. The ring regularly trained dogs for fights, ran thousands of dollars in bets on the outcomes and executed dogs that didn't die during matches, court records state.

Frederick Douglass Moorefield Jr., 62, of Arnold, Md., was a deputy chief information officer for command, control and communications for the Secretary of Defense's Chief Information Officer, court records and Moorefield's LinkedIn page show. He was arrested Thursday on a charge of promoting and furthering animal fighting venture, along with a longtime friend who allegedly admitted his participation in

dogfighting, Mario D. Flythe, 49, of Glen Burnie, Md.

Investigators found battery jumper cables, which were allegedly used to execute dogs at Moorefield's house, along with five pit bull-type dogs at his house and five pit bull-type dogs at Flythe's house, court records show. The FBI, the Department of Agriculture, and other local and federal agencies raided both houses on Sept. 6, according to a federal affidavit, finding weighted collars and heavy metal chains used to increase fighting dogs' strength.

Lt. Cmdr. Tim Gorman, a Pentagon spokesman, said in a statement the DoD was "aware of the criminal complaint" filed against Moorefield in federal district court in Baltimore.

"We can confirm that the individual is no longer in the workplace, but we cannot comment further on an individual personnel matter," Gorman said.

## Michigan school shooter's parents set to stand trial

*Associated Press*

DETROIT — The Michigan Supreme Court turned down an appeal Tuesday, clearing the way for the parents of a teenager who killed four fellow students in a shooting at Oxford High School to face trial on involuntary manslaughter charges.

James and Jennifer Crumbley are accused of making a gun available to Ethan Crumbley and ignoring his mental health needs.

The state appeals court in March said the couple could face trial, and the Supreme Court said it would let that decision stand.

The shooter killed Madisyn Baldwin, Tate Myre, Hana St. Juliana and Justin Shilling at Oxford High, about 40 miles north of Detroit, in November 2021. Six students and a teacher were also wounded.

Ethan Crumbley pleaded guilty to terrorism and murder. A judge last week said he is eligible for life in prison without parole.

Attorneys for the parents have insisted the school shooting was not foreseeable. They acknowledged that bad decisions were made, but not ones that should rise to charges of involuntary manslaughter.

The teen and his parents met with school staff on the day of the shooting after a teacher noticed violent drawings, but no one checked his backpack for a gun. He was allowed to stay.

The 17-year-old, who was 15 at the time of the shooting, will be sentenced Dec. 8. The judge will have an option of giving him a prison term that would make him eligible for parole in the decades ahead.

# McCarthy defiant as ouster vote looms

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — House Speaker Kevin McCarthy is confronting his hard-right critics head-on Tuesday as he faces a historic challenge to oust him from leadership, insisting he will not cut a deal with Democrats to remain in power and setting the stage for an extraordinary and unpredictable showdown on the House floor.

The Republican McCarthy's fate is deeply uncertain as he faces what's known as a "motion to vacate" from Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida, a strident critic allied with Donald Trump. It would take the support of only a handful of Republicans from his slim majority to remove McCarthy as speaker if Democrats vote in favor alongside the conservative rebels.

Behind closed doors early Tuesday, McCarthy told fellow Republicans: Let's get on with it.

"If I counted how many times someone wanted to knock me out, I would have been gone a long time ago," McCarthy said at the Capitol after a private morning meeting.

It's a stunning moment for the embattled McCarthy that serves as the most severe challenge yet, a potential punishment sparked by his weekend decision to work with Democrats to keep the federal government open rather than risk a shutdown. So far, several hard-

right Republicans said they are ready to oppose McCarthy, many of them who fought in January during his prolonged battle to gain the gavel.

At the Capitol, both Republicans and Democrats met privately behind closed doors ahead of what would be a historic afternoon vote.

McCarthy insisted he had not reached across the aisle to the Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries for help with votes to stay in the job, nor had they demanded anything in return. Democrats "haven't asked for anything," McCarthy said on CNBC before the meeting. "I'm not going to provide anything."

During the hourlong meeting in the Capitol basement, McCarthy invoked Republican speaker Joseph Cannon who more than 100 years ago confronted his critics head on by calling their bluff and setting the vote himself on his ouster. Cannon survived that take-down attempt which, until now, was the first time the House had actually voted to consider removing its speaker.

McCarthy received three standing ovations during the private meeting — one when he came to the microphone to speak, again during his remarks and lastly when he was done, according a Republican at the meeting and granted anonymity to discuss it.

At one point, there was a show of hands in support of McCarthy and it was "overwhelming," said Rep. Ralph Norman, R-S.C., a member of the House Freedom Caucus.

Gaetz was in attendance, but did not address the room.

On the other side of the Capitol, Democrats lined up for a long discussion and unified around one common point: McCarthy cannot be trusted, several lawmakers in the room said. "I think it's safe to say there's not a lot of good will in that room for Kevin McCarthy," said Rep. Richard Neal, D-Mass. Still, the Democrats are holding their strategy close, leaving to Jeffries and his team to decide the move ahead as floor voting is set to begin.

Jeffries said afterward that Democrats are willing to work with Republicans but he urged those on the other side of the aisle to — "End the chaos, end the dysfunction, end the extremism."

But privately, Jeffries told the caucus that Democrats should vote to oust McCarthy as he has proven to be untrustworthy, according to a Democratic aide who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a private meeting.

Jeffries also told the Democrats to vote against any procedure motion to delay the effort to oust McCarthy on Tuesday, the aide said.

## Trump trial judge says evidence is not too old to be used in fraud case

*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — A New York judge on Tuesday took the air out of the win that former President Donald Trump claimed he scored in the first hours of his civil business fraud trial.

With Trump voluntarily in court for a second day, Judge Arthur Engoron set the record straight about a comment that the ex-president had claimed as an important victory.

The issue: Engoron had suggested on Monday that testimony about Trump's 2011 financial statement might be beyond the legal time limit applicable to New York Attorney General Letitia James' lawsuit. It alleges that Trump and his business chronically lied about his wealth on financial statements given to banks, insurers and others.

The relevant statute of limitations bars claims related to activities before a date in 2014, and Trump's legal team has argued that the time limit cuts off most of the case.

Engoron said Tuesday that "statutes of limitations bar claims, not evidence" and that at the trial's early stage, he's inclined to give both sides considerable leeway to connect older evidence to claims in the lawsuit.

"I want to emphasize: This trial is not an opportunity to relitigate what I have already decided," Engoron said. He ruled last week that all the claims were allowable under the statute of limitations.

A lawyer for James' office, Kevin Wallace, went on to suggest that he was using the 2011 document to show that Trump's financial statements were prepared in the same manner — giving him and his company final say over the valuations — for at least a decade.

Trump denies any wrongdoing. The Republican former president and current 2024 GOP front-runner claims that James, a Democrat, is wielding the justice system as a political cudgel to hobble his ongoing campaign.

## Hunter Biden pleads not guilty to 3 gun charges

*Associated Press*

WILMINGTON, Del. — Hunter Biden pleaded not guilty on Tuesday to three federal firearms charges that emerged after his earlier deal imploded, setting the case on a track toward a possible trial in 2024 while his father is campaigning for reelection.

President Joe Biden's son has been charged with lying about his drug use in October 2018 on a form to buy a gun that he kept for about 11 days.

His lawyer Abbe Lowell said in court he plans to file a motion to dismiss the charges, challenging their constitutionality.

Hunter Biden has acknowledged struggling with an addiction to crack cocaine during that period in 2018, but his lawyers have said he didn't break the law. Gun charges like these are rare, and an appeals court has found the ban on drug users having guns violates the Second Amendment.

# New court term: Mulling ‘and,’ denying appeals

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court opened its new term Monday with a case about prison terms for drug dealers and rejections of hundreds of appeals, including one from an attorney who pushed a plan to keep former President Donald Trump in power.

The court turned away attorney John Eastman’s effort to have a lower-court ruling thrown out that said Eastman and Trump had “more likely than not” committed a crime by trying to keep Congress from certifying President Joe Biden’s victory in the 2020 election.

Justice Clarence Thomas, who once employed Eastman as a law clerk, did not take part in the court’s consideration of Eastman’s appeal.

The only case argued Monday concerns the meaning of the word “and” in a federal law dealing with prison terms for low-level drug dealers. The length of thousands of sentences a year is at stake.

“I think this is a very hard case,” Justice Amy Coney Bar-

rett said during 90 minutes of arguments that did not suggest how the court might rule.

The term is shaping up as an important one for social media as the court continues to grapple with applying older laws and rulings to the digital age.

Several cases also confront the court with the continuing push by conservatives to constrict federal regulatory agencies. On Tuesday, the court was to hear a challenge that could disrupt the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

The court is also dealing with the fallout from major rulings a year ago that overturned *Roe v. Wade* and expanded gun rights. A gun case will be argued in November. Limits on mifepristone, a drug used in the most common method of abortion, could be before the court by spring.

Among the bigger unknowns is whether any disputes will reach the court involving the prosecution of Trump or efforts to keep the Republican off the 2024 ballot because of the Constitution’s insurrection clause.

Apart from cases, the justices are discussing a first-ever code of conduct, though disagreements remain, Justice Elena Kagan said recently.

The push to codify ethical standards for the justices stems from a series of stories questioning some of their practices. Many of those stories focused on Thomas and his failure to disclose travel and other financial ties with wealthy conservative donors, including Harlan Crow and the Koch brothers. But Justices Samuel Alito and Sonia Sotomayor have also been under scrutiny.

On Monday, Thomas did not explain his decision to stay out of Eastman’s case, which involved emails that Eastman tried to keep from the House committee that investigated the 2021 attack on the Capitol.

Some of those emails are between Eastman and another lawyer, Kenneth Chesebro, in which they mention Thomas as their best hope to get the Supreme Court to intervene in the election outcome in a case from Georgia.

## Poll says colleges friendlier to liberals

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Americans view college campuses as far friendlier to liberals than to conservatives when it comes to free speech, with adults across the political spectrum seeing less tolerance for those on the right, according to a new poll.

Overall, 47% of adults say liberals have “a lot” of freedom to express their views on college campuses, while just 20% said the same of conservatives, according to polling from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and the University of Chicago Forum for Free Inquiry and Expression.

Republicans perceive a stronger bias on campuses against conservatives, but Democrats see a difference too — about 4 in 10 Democrats say liberals can speak their minds freely on campuses, while about 3 in 10 Democrats say conservatives can do so.

“If you’re a Republican or lean Republican, you’re unabashedly wrong, they shut you down,” said Rhonda Baker, 60, of Goldsboro, N.C., who voted for former President Donald Trump and has a son in college. “If they hold a rally, it’s: ‘The MAGA’s coming through.’ It’s: ‘The KKK is coming through.’”

Debates over First Amendment rights have occasionally flared on college campuses in recent years, with conflicts arising over guest speakers who express polarizing views, often from the political right.

Stanford University became a flashpoint this year when students shouted down a conservative judge who was invited to speak.

## CDC set to back antibiotic pill for STDs

Associated Press

NEW YORK — U.S. health officials plan to endorse a common antibiotic as a morning-after pill that gay and bisexual men can use to try to avoid some increasingly common sexually transmitted diseases.

The proposed CDC guideline was released Monday, and officials will move to finalize it after a 45-day public comment period. With STD rates rising to record levels, “more tools are desperately needed,” said Dr. Jonathan Mermin of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The proposal comes after studies found some people who took the antibiotic doxycycline within three days of unprotected sex were far less likely

to get chlamydia, syphilis or gonorrhea compared with people who did not take the pills after sex.

The guideline is specific to the group most studied — gay and bisexual men and transgender women who had an STD in the previous 12 months and were at high risk to get infected again.

There’s less evidence that the approach works for other people, including heterosexual men and women. That could change as more research is done, said Mermin, who oversees the CDC’s STD efforts.

Doxycycline, a cheap antibiotic that has been available for more than 40 years, is a treatment for health problems including acne, chlamydia and Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### State enacts sweeping gun control legislation

**CT** HARTFORD — Connecticut's most wide-ranging gun control measure since the 2013 law enacted after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting took effect Sunday, with proponents vowing to pursue more gun legislation despite legal challenges happening across the country.

The new law, signed by Democratic Gov. Ned Lamont in June, bans the open carrying of firearms and prohibits the sale of more than three handguns within 30 days to any one person, with some exceptions for instructors and others.

Immediately after it was passed, the law was challenged in court by gun rights supporters. Connecticut's landmark 2013 gun law, passed in response to the 2012 elementary school shooting in Newtown that claimed 26 lives, is also being contested in court.

### Phoenix experiences driest monsoon season

**AZ** PHOENIX — After a summer of extreme heat, Arizona's most populous city is in the record books again. This time, Phoenix is notching a record for dry heat.

The National Weather Service said the monsoon season this year in the arid Southwest dropped only 0.15 inches of rainfall from June 15 to Sept. 30. That's the driest since the agency began keeping records in 1895. The previous mark was 0.35 inches in 1924.

The monsoon season normally runs for about three months each year starting in June, when rising

temperatures heat the land and shifting winds carry moisture from the eastern Pacific and Gulf of California to the Southwest via summer thunderstorms.

Phoenix's average rainfall during a monsoon season is 2.43 inches. Arizona gets less than 13 inches of average annual rainfall as America's second-driest state behind Nevada, which meteorologists have said averages less than 10 inches of rain per year compared to the national average of about 30 inches.

### Airbnb guest binds, robs homeowner at gunpoint

**GA** BUFORD — Police said a man who used Airbnb to rent a room in Georgia ended up robbing the home's owner at gunpoint.

A homeowner in the metro Atlanta suburb of Buford called Gwinnett County police saying an armed man who had rented his basement through the room-sharing app had fled after stealing his wallet.

According to a police report, the renter checked in late Tuesday and within an hour sent a text message to the owner upstairs saying the toilet was leaking. The homeowner told officers he was checking the toilet when he turned to see the renter pointing a gun at him.

He said the renter bound his hands and feet with zip ties and fled with his wallet, which contained cash and credit cards, according to police.

### Muscogee Nation judge rules for freedmen

**OK** OKLAHOMA CITY — A judge for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in Ok-

lahoma ruled in favor of citizenship for two descendants of Black slaves once owned by tribal members, potentially paving the way for hundreds of other descendants known as freedmen.

District Judge Denette Mouser, based in the tribe's headquarters in Okmulgee, ruled last week in favor of two Black Muscogee Nation freedmen, Rhonda Grayson and Jeff Kennedy, who had sued the tribe's citizenship board for denying their applications.

Mouser reversed the board's decision and ordered it to reconsider the applications in accordance with the tribe's Treaty of 1866, which provides that descendants of those listed on the Creek Freedmen Roll are eligible for tribal citizenship.

Freedman citizenship has been a difficult issue for tribes as the United States has reckoned with its history of racism. The Cherokee Nation has granted full citizenship to its freedmen, while other tribes, like the Muscogee Nation, have argued that sovereignty allows tribes to make their own decisions about who qualifies for citizenship.

### Woman who fled Maui wildfire on foot dies

**HI** HONOLULU — A woman who escaped Hawaii's Lahaina wildfire by running through a flaming field has died after spending more than seven weeks in a hospital burn unit.

Laurie Allen died Friday at Straub Medical Center in Honolulu, according to a GoFundMe page set up for her and her husband, Perry Allen.

"Laurie slipped away peacefully. Her heart was tired, and she was ready," her sister-in-

law, Penny Allen Hood, wrote on the website.

Allen's husband, two brothers, a sister and other relatives were at her side.

Allen was among at least 98 people killed by the fire Aug. 8 that devastated historic Lahaina on the west coast of Maui. The fire was the deadliest in the U.S. in more than a century and destroyed 2,200 buildings, most of them homes.

### Attempt to pass tanker may have led to crash

**IL** SPRINGFIELD — The tanker truck crash in central Illinois that killed five people may have started when another vehicle tried to pass the chemical-laden truck, a federal transportation official said Sunday.

The tanker truck was carrying caustic anhydrous ammonia when it jackknifed Friday night and hit a utility trailer parked just off the highway according to Tom Chapman, a member of the National Transportation Safety Board. The tank carrying anhydrous ammonia hit the trailer hitch of the other vehicle, which punched a six-inch hole in the chemical container, Chapman said during news conference Sunday.

Chapman said the tanker truck's driver pulled to the right and ran off the road as it traveled west on U.S. 40 in Teutopolis.

The crash spilled roughly half the truck's 7,500 gallon load. The rest was drained and moved to a "secure location" for the NTSB's investigation, authorities said late Saturday, as area evacuees were allowed to return to their homes.

— From wire reports

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and Military News

# Top NFL teams are who we expected

Associated Press

The NFL's top preseason contenders played like it in the first quarter of the season.

Defending champion Kansas City (3-1), Philadelphia (4-0), San Francisco (4-0), Dallas (3-1) and Buffalo (3-1) are 17-3 combined. The Chiefs, Eagles, 49ers, Cowboys and Bills are, in Dennis Green's words, who we thought they were.

Of the six teams with the best Super Bowl odds entering the season, only the Bengals (1-3) haven't lived up to expectations. Cincinnati is struggling because Joe Burrow is playing hurt. A calf injury has severely limited the NFL's highest-paid player.

If Burrow can get healthy and get the Bengals going, they can't be counted out because they've won road playoff games against Kansas City and Buffalo in the past two years.

Most of the front-runners are winning despite not playing their best football.

The Chiefs barely escaped with a 23-20 victory over the New York Jets on Sunday night.

Their only loss came against the Lions (3-1) in the season opener—a game played without Travis Kelce and Chris Jones.

Patrick Mahomes posted the fourth-lowest passer rating

(63.6) of his career against New York's tough defense, but the two-time Super Bowl MVP made critical plays with his legs on a final drive to ice the win.

"It's not always going to be a pretty four quarters, especially against a good defense, but it's about, when the opportunity arises, going down and finishing," Mahomes said.

The Eagles needed overtime to beat the Commanders 34-31 behind Jalen Hurts' best game of the season. They're undefeated even though they haven't hit their stride. Philly's passing attack took four weeks to click. The defense has been spotty. The Eagles face the Rams and Jets the next two weeks, so they have an opportunity to work out the kinks before the schedule gets tougher.

"When you can win different ways—you're going to be put in all these scenarios through a long season, right? And so, it just builds confidence that, OK, we've been here before, we know how to win this way," Eagles coach Nick Sirianni said.

Hurts played his first turnover-free game of the season, throwing for 319 yards and two TDs to lead Philadelphia back from a 10-point deficit.

"I think it is reassuring for us,"

Hurts said. "When you feel those moments, they build so much character for you. ... No one is satisfied. No one is ever satisfied. I'm never satisfied, but winning is the only thing that matters and we'll enjoy those wins because we earned them and we know what winning can do if you take it in the right way, so we just want to keep that hunger, keep the eagerness to get better, just keep growing."

The Bills have won three in a row following a season-opening loss to the Jets on the night Aaron Rodgers' season ended. Their 48-20 win over Miami (3-1) was most impressive. Josh Allen and Co. sent a clear message that the AFC East still goes through Buffalo. The Dolphins came in unbeaten off a 70-point outburst.

"Every week is a different week," Allen said. "It doesn't matter what you did last week or what you're going to do next week."

Allen, who had a perfect 158.3 passer rating after throwing for 320 yards and four touchdowns, wants to see the Bills improve.

"I still think we have more," Allen said. "We're gonna have to learn a lot from this tape and find ways to get better, but we left a lot out there and we're all fo-

cused on correcting those things."

The Cowboys, coming off a stunning loss to Arizona, earned their third dominant win of the season, 38-3, over the Patriots. It was the worst loss in Bill Belichick's career. Dallas has outscored its opponents 108-13 in three wins, but the offense still hasn't hit its stride.

"Pretty efficient but still not to our standard, honestly," QB Dak Prescott said. "To have as many opportunities as we had in the red zone and (just) have some field goals. ... A lot of good comes from it and a lot of great comes from it when you win a game 38-3. So, it's a lot easier to get better with a win like this and a score like that."

The 49ers pulled away from the Cardinals in the fourth quarter of a 35-16 win. Brock Purdy improved to 11-0 in games he starts and finishes without injury. Christian McCaffrey has been outstanding on an offense filled with playmakers and the defense has been stingy.

Next week, the Cowboys visit the 49ers.

The Dolphins, Ravens and Buccaneers also are 3-1 and the Seahawks matched that record with a 24-3 win over the Giants on Monday night.

## Seahawks' defense shuts down Giants' offense

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — With all the points the Seattle Seahawks were scoring this season, it was easy to overlook their defense. They were excellent against the run but the pass defense was horrible.

A new Legion of Boom appeared on Monday night and wreaked havoc on Daniel Jones and the New York Giants.

Rookie cornerback Devon Witherspoon scored on a 97-yard interception return late in the third quarter and the Seahawks tied a team record with 11 sacks in a 24-3 victory over the struggling and offensively inept Giants.

"We're just getting going," Seattle coach

Pete Carroll said. "We're just putting it together. A night like this for our defense to play that explosively ... I can't remember seeking double digit sacks."

Geno Smith threw a 6-yard touchdown pass to DK Metcalf late in the first quarter after a strip-sack by defensive end Mario Edwards Jr. set up a short drive and Kenneth Walker III scored on a 1-yard run just before halftime as the Seahawks (3-1) won their third straight.

A fourth-quarter interception by Quandre Diggs set up a field goal by Jason Myers as Seattle improved to 6-0 at MetLife Stadium, including the franchise's only Super Bowl win, a 43-8 decision over Denver in 2014.

Besides the sacks, Seattle held New York, which played without star running back Saquon Barkley (ankle) for the second straight game, to 248 yards in total offense, 6-for-16 on third down and forced three turnovers.

Bobby Wagner, Jordyn Brooks, Witherspoon and Uchenna Nwosu each had two sacks.

"I think we needed it. Easy game defensively," said Wagner, who also had 17 tackles. "We've been getting better. We've done a good job stopping the run but the thing was applying pressure. The last game we had a lot of pressures but not as many sacks. I think this game we turned those pressures into sacks."

# Prolific rookie hitters made their mark

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Royce Lewis has played in 70 games for the Minnesota Twins. He has five grand slams.

The AL Central champion Twins haven't had a rookie so ready for major league stardom since Joe Mauer nearly two decades ago. Despite a decided lack of live games over the last three seasons due to injuries and the pandemic, Lewis entered the lineup after finishing his ACL rehab and immediately hit like he'd been there for years.

"An impact on our team that we can't really measure, except to say we're a significantly better team when he's out there," manager Rocco Baldelli said.

Lewis is just one of dozens of first-year position players crushing it at the plate for contending teams, many of them with a postseason place clinched. By at least one key measure, this is the best class of rookie hitters the major leagues have ever seen.

Call this the year of the instant hit.

According to FanGraphs data, the advanced metric Wins Above Replacement total for all rookie hitters in 2023 (75.5) is the best since 1900, entering the final weekend of the regular season slightly ahead of the 2015

group (75.1) headlined by Kris Bryant, Francisco Lindor, Carlos Correa and others.

Corbin Carroll (Diamondbacks), Yainer Diaz (Astros), Gunnar Henderson (Orioles) and James Outman (Dodgers) are some of the most prominent and productive first-year standouts guaranteed of more games in the postseason this month.

The 2023 rookies, who had a running start on the new rules regarding the pitch clock and pickoff limits in the minor leagues, have also blown away every other rookie class in modern major league history with their total — through Thursday — of 825 stolen bases. The next closest class (1977) had 691. Esteury Ruiz (Oakland Athletics) and Carroll each topped 50 steals.

Carroll, even by comparison to so many other dazzling debuts, is the clear front-runner for the National League Rookie of the Year award.

"He's an unbelievable talent, and he brings a certain edge to the game because of his precision and because of his athleticism, but he combines it all and goes out there and makes plays and does things and times it right," Diamondbacks manager Torey Lovullo said. "He's just gotten even better with the tim-

ing of everything that he does, and that's hard to do for a 22-year-old player. He can carry us."

Major league pitching in this rocket-armed era is as hard to hit as it's been in decades. So why are these rookies raking like they are these days? The 2022 class has the third-best WAR (54.9) of all time, according to FanGraphs, followed by 2019 (49.5).

"A lot of what we do at the major league level, process-wise, is more similar at the Triple-A level than ever before," Baldelli said. "We try to make it resemble what they are going to see when they get here. I think a lot of those small things add up to really help players in a big way."

That includes immersion in everything from pitcher scouting reports to advanced statistical data to video swing analysis.

"Hitting coaches in the minors are really good, and they communicate with the big-league hitting coaches as well," Diaz said through an Astros interpreter. "So it goes all the way down."

Lewis, who was recently sidelined by a hamstring strain, has a .921 on-base-plus-slugging percentage. That's the best in baseball this season for rookies with more than the 130 at-bats.

The first overall pick in the 2017 draft likely would've been ready to join the Twins sometime in 2020 had there been a full schedule. The following winter, he tore his ACL during a workout. After more than a year of rehab, Lewis played 12 games for the Twins in 2022 before another ligament tear in the same knee.

Growing up in the Los Angeles area, he routinely faced strong pitching in high school, a trend that is not going to end anytime soon with the prevalence of one-sport specializing that puts teenage prospects in year-round training mode.

Another factor in accelerated development is major league teams inviting more prospects to spring training, exposing them earlier to elite pitching in exhibition games. Front offices also appear more willing to promote their rising stars faster through the farm system.

"When you perform, I think you should just go," Lewis said. "I think that's finally how they're going about it, and it's fun to watch all the young guys come up. At the same time, if I was a veteran, I would probably be saying, 'Hey, I think you should take your time.' But as a young guy now, it's fun to watch."

## Average game time drops 24 minutes with pitch clock

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The average time of a nine-inning major league game dropped to 2 hours, 40 minutes in the first year of the pitch clock, a 24-minute decrease in a season of change that resulted in a spike in batting average and the most stolen bases in nearly 40 years.

Left-handed hitters benefited from the limits on shifts, runners took advantage of the slightly decreased distance between bases and average fastball velocity set another record.

The average game time dropped to its 1985 level after passing 3 hours for the first time in 2016. It reached a record 3:10 in 2021 before the introduction of the PitchCom electronic pitch-calling device helped bring it down to 3:04 last year. Over the objections of the players' association, MLB instituted a pitch clock set at 15 seconds with the bases empty and 20 seconds with runners on base.

"It took some getting used to, but once you get used to it the game's a lot faster," Minnesota

shortstop Carlos Correa said. "There's not wasted time. The pace was great, so I think it's here to stay."

There were nine 3½-hour games, down from a record 390 in 2021.

"I think it's gone smoothly," Los Angeles Dodgers catcher Will Smith said. "It's nice for you to get home a bit earlier. You don't have the 4-hour games anymore."

Miami had the fastest average at just under 2:35, while Baltimore and San Diego topped the

majors at 2:44.

MLB's clock will remain the same for the postseason, which averaged 3:23 for nine-inning games last year.

"There are bigger moments, bigger times where we do need to step back and think about something we just did or think about something that we're going to be doing pitch-wise or swing-wise," said Zack Wheeler, who started Philadelphia's playoff opener against Miami on Tuesday. "I'm not a big fan of the pitch clock, but it is what it is."

# NBA stars already have Olympics in mind

*Associated Press*

Kevin Durant just got done with his summer vacation. He's planning to go to France for work next summer, and plenty of other big NBA names hope to join him.

Stephen Curry is among them.

Durant — along with many other top players, including Curry, the all-time three-point king — said Monday at media days being held around the league that he plans to play for his country at next summer's Paris Olympics, when the Americans will try for a fifth consecutive gold medal. If he plays and the United States wins, Durant would be the first men's player with four basketball golds.

"I will play in the Olympics next year," Durant adamantly said at Phoenix's media day.

Curry essentially said the same, because if he wants to play, it's certain that USA Basketball will find him a spot.

"Definitely want to be there," Curry said at Golden State's media day. "Definitely want to be on the team."

Others expressed the same sentiment: Bam Adebayo has said he's committed to the team, while DeMar DeRozan, Devin

Booker, Bradley Beal, Jaylen Brown, Donovan Mitchell, Khris Middleton, Julius Randle, Zach LaVine, Aaron Gordon, Fred VanVleet and Brook Lopez are among those who indicated they would play if asked. Kyrie Irving said the same at Dallas' media day last week, and Draymond Green previously indicated that he wants another Olympic opportunity.

This much is clear: There are 12 roster spots and a lot more than 12 interested players. It's a wonderful problem for USA Basketball to have.

"From the players that we have here off the top of my head that could fill that roster up, I don't think it would be too much of a physical toll," said Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James, the NBA's all-time scoring leader confirming that he's interested in another shot at gold. "I wouldn't have to do much. Rebound a little bit, pass a little bit, defend, block some shots, you know? But we'll see. We'll see what happens."

Also planning to play in the Olympics: Joel Embiid. The uniform he'd wear is still a mystery.

Embiid isn't a man without a country, but rather a man who just hasn't chosen a country yet. He would be eligible to play for

France or the U.S. because he has dual citizenship — and his birth country, Cameroon, still has a shot at qualifying for the Paris Games as well.

"My goal is to play in the Olympics," Embiid said. "I love all three options. Cameroon, I'm born there, I'm from there and I always want to represent my country. But the goal is also to play in the Olympics. If we had a chance, or if we would qualify for the Olympics, that will be an easy decision. But that's still up in the air. And I really do want to play in the Olympics."

When will Embiid decide? "Probably going to make that decision in the next few days," he said.

Others who revealed they have interest in playing included Zion Williamson, Paul George, Kawhi Leonard and Kyle Kuzma. Among those who haven't ruled it out: Jimmy Butler and Anthony Davis.

"Playing for USA Basketball, I think there's no greater honor," Brown said. "Playing for your country, coming from my community, coming from where I come from, where the majority of our demographic comes from — having an opportunity to represent that, your community, your outer com-

munity, the ones that support you is part of it as well. So being able to participate would be great."

The U.S. finished fourth at this summer's World Cup, yet did enough to reclaim the No. 1 spot in the FIBA world rankings and earn a berth in the Paris Olympics.

"I am proud of the World Cup Team and all they did to qualify USA Basketball for Paris 2024," said USA Basketball managing director Grant Hill, who along with men's national team director Sean Ford and coach Steve Kerr of Golden State will pick the team in the coming months. "We are thrilled there is interest and excitement going into next summer, and are looking forward to going through the process of naming the 2024 Olympic Team."

They will have tough decisions to make. Let the lobbying begin.

"It's something I've always dreamed of experiencing since I was a little kid," Milwaukee center Brook Lopez said. "I'm absolutely for it. I asked Steve Kerr while I was subbing into a game last year, I didn't ask, I told him I was free this coming summer of '24. Hopefully this will help remind him."

## Antetokounmpo praises Bucks for Lillard trade

*Associated Press*

MILWAUKEE — Giannis Antetokounmpo praised the Milwaukee Bucks for showing a commitment to winning another championship by acquiring Damian Lillard, but added that it still doesn't make financial sense for him to sign a contract extension right now.

Antetokounmpo is eligible to sign a three-year extension totaling about \$170 million, but he can make significantly more by waiting until next summer to do so. Antetokounmpo's contract runs through the 2024-25 season, though he also has a player option for 2025-26.

"I said that it did not make sense to sign the contract right now because money's not important — a lot of money is important. So I'm

going to sign it next year," Antetokounmpo said with a laugh. "But, no, at the end of the day, again, it doesn't make sense. It does not make sense for me to sign it right now. I've got to always look at what's best for me and my family, for my situation."

"But at the end of the day, I want to be a Milwaukee Buck for the rest of my career, as long as we are winning. It's as simple as that."

Antetokounmpo had told The New York Times this summer that he wanted to make sure the Bucks were committed to winning another championship before deciding whether to sign his extension.

The Bucks have since added Lillard as part of a three-team trade in which they gave up two-time All-Star Jrue Holiday, guard Gray-

son Allen and plenty of draft capital. In Lillard and Antetokounmpo, the Bucks now have two of the 75 players selected on the NBA's 75th anniversary team.

"Definitely I feel like the team has shown they're committed to winning a championship," Antetokounmpo said. "So I'm happy."

So is Lillard, who had requested a trade from the Portland Trail Blazers because of his interest in competing for a title.

"I don't think it's a secret how much I want to win," Lillard said. "That's how we got here today. They want to win equally as bad as I do. I couldn't be more excited. I couldn't be more thankful for this opportunity, to be part of this organization, to play alongside the best player in the league."