

Jailed Iranian activist wins Peace Prize

Associated Press

Imprisoned Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday in recognition of her tireless campaigning for women's rights and democracy and against the death penalty.

Mohammadi, 51, has kept up her activism despite numerous arrests by Iranian authorities and spending years behind bars. She has remained a light for nationwide, women-led protests, sparked by the death last year of a 22-year-old woman in police custody. Those demonstrations grew into one of the most intense challenges ever to Iran's theocratic government.

"This prize is first and foremost a recognition of the very important work of a whole movement in Iran with its undisputed leader, Narges Mohammadi," said Berit Reiss-Andersen, the chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee. She began the announcement with the words "Woman, Life, Freedom"

in Farsi — the slogan of the demonstrations in Iran.

Reiss-Andersen said the committee hopes the prize "is an encouragement to continue the work in whichever form this movement finds to be fitting." She also urged Iran to release Mohammadi in time for the prize ceremony on Dec. 10.

For nearly all of Mohammadi's life, Iran has been governed by a Shiite theocracy headed by the country's supreme leader. While women hold jobs, academic positions and even government appointments, their lives can be tightly controlled. Laws require all women to at least wear a headscarf, or hijab, to cover their hair as a sign of piety. Iran and neighboring Afghanistan remain the only countries that mandate it.

In a statement released to The New York Times after the Nobel announcement, Mohammadi said she will "never stop striving for the realization of democracy, freedom and equality."

"Surely, the Nobel Peace Prize will make me more resilient, determined, hopeful and enthusiastic on this path, and it will accelerate my pace," she said.

Mohammadi, an engineer by training, has been imprisoned 13 times and convicted five times, according to Reiss-Andersen. In total, she has been sentenced to 31 years in prison. Her most recent incarceration began when she was detained in 2021 after attending a memorial for a person killed in nationwide protests sparked by an increase in gasoline prices.

She has been held at Tehran's notorious Evin Prison, whose inmates include those with Western ties and political prisoners.

Her husband Taghi Rahmani, who now lives in exile in Paris with their two children, 16-year-old twins, said that although he hadn't been able to reach her since the announcement, she "would be very glad to know she

has won an award and she will re-state her determination like always."

"She has a sentence she always repeats: 'Every single award will make me more intrepid, more resilient and more brave for realizing human rights, freedom, civil equality and democracy,'" he said.

Rahmani hasn't been able to see his wife for 11 years, and their children haven't seen their mother for seven, he said.

Their son, Ali Rahmani, said the prize was not just for his mother. "It's for the struggle"

"Iranian men and women have been fighting for over a year. This prize is for the entire population, for the whole struggle from the beginning, since the Islamic government came to power," Ali Rahmani said.

Narges Mohammadi is the 19th woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize and the second Iranian woman, after human rights activist Shirin Ebadi won the award in 2003.

Civilian deaths mount in Russian missile attacks

Associated Press

KHARKIV, Ukraine — A Russian missile attack killed a 10-year-old boy and his grandmother Friday in the northeastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, officials said. Elsewhere in the region, villagers prepared to bury their dead after a strike the previous day killed at least 52 civilians in one of the deadliest attacks in the war in months.

Associated Press reporters saw emergency crews pulling the boy's body from the rubble of a building after the morning attack. He was wearing pajamas with a Spider-Man design.

The strike also killed the boy's grandmother and wounded an 11-month-old child, Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said on Telegram. Regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said that in all, 30 people were wounded. Rescue operations were continuing.

Officials said preliminary information indicated that the Kremlin's forces used two Iskander missiles in the attack, the same as in the previous day's strike on the village of Hroza that killed 52 people.

In Hroza, workers at the local cemetery on Friday cut down trees and mowed grass to pre-

pare graves for those killed. They are to be buried not far from Ukrainian soldier Andrii Kozyr, whose wake they were attending when the strike happened.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov denied on Friday that Russia was responsible for the Hroza attack. He insisted, as Moscow has in the past, that the Russian military doesn't target civilian facilities.

Meantime, Russia scrambled a MiG-31 fighter jet to shadow a U.S. Navy P-8A Poseidon patrol plane approaching Russian airspace over the Norwegian Sea,

Russia's Ministry of Defense said.

When the Russian jet approached the U.S. plane, the American aircraft turned away from, and did not cross, the Russian border, the ministry said. It said the Russian fighter jet flew "in strict accordance" with international rules and did not "dangerously approach" the U.S. plane.

Such intercepts have become more frequent. Protocols in both Russia and the West envisage scrambling fighters if a plane from the other side flies close to the border.

Philippines protests after incident with Chinese ship

Associated Press

ABOARD BRP SINDANGAN — A Chinese coast guard ship came within 3 feet of colliding with a Philippine patrol ship it was trying to block in the South China Sea, in an alarming incident that intensified fears that territorial disputes in the waters could spark a larger crisis.

The Philippines on Friday strongly condemned the Chinese ship's maneuvers near Second Thomas Shoal, which the Asian neighbors both claim and has been the scene of frequent confrontations.

One other Philippine coast guard vessel was blocked and surrounded by Chinese coast guard and militia ships in the incident, which dragged on for

about eight hours on Wednesday. A major clash in the disputed waters could potentially involve the United States, which has vowed to defend the Philippines, its treaty ally, if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under armed attack.

Two smaller supply boats being escorted by the Philippine coast guard in the contested waters managed to breach the Chinese blockade and delivered food and other supplies to a Filipino marine outpost at the shoal.

"We condemn the behavior of the Chinese coast guard vessel. They have been violating international law, particularly the collision regulations," Philippine coast guard spokesperson

Commodore Jay Tarriela said at a briefing Friday.

A collision was averted when one of the two Philippine coast guard vessels, the BRP Sindangan, rapidly reversed its engine to avoid slamming into the Chinese coast guard ship that crossed its bow at a distance of only a meter, Tarriela said.

It's "the closest dangerous maneuver" by any Chinese coast guard ship against a Philippine patrol ship, he said.

The incident was witnessed by several journalists, including from The Associated Press, who were invited by the Philippine coast guard to join the voyage as part of a strategy aimed at exposing Chinese aggressive actions in the South China Sea.

Talks urged for Kosovo and Serbia

Associated Press

PRISTINA, Kosovo — The NATO-led peacekeeping force on Friday called on both Kosovo and Serbia to return to the negotiating table to resolve their issues to prevent violence like the recent shootout between masked Serb gunmen and Kosovo police that left four people dead and sent tensions soaring in the region.

Kosovo Force commander Maj. Gen. Angelo Michele Ristuccia called on both countries to "refrain from inflammatory and counterproductive rhetoric and help to create the necessary conditions for lasting security in Kosovo and across the region."

Ristuccia told a news conference that KFOR fully supported European Union-facilitated dialogue to normalize their ties.

In February, the EU put forward a 10-point plan to end months of political crises. Kosovar Prime Minister Albin Kurti and Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic gave their approval at the time, but with some reservations that haven't been resolved.

"If the parties do not come back to the table ... and do not find a common solution and do not negotiate for a political solution, I think this balance will become more fragile and volatile in the future," Ristuccia said.

On Sept. 24, around 30 Serb gunmen killed a Kosovar police officer and then set up barricades in northern Kosovo before launching an hours-long gunbattle with Kosovo police. Three gunmen were killed.

NATO beefed up its peacekeeping presence in Kosovo by about 200 British troops after the crisis. More are expected to be deployed from Romania and other allies if the situation requires, Ristuccia said.

Turkey strikes Kurdish militia targets

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkish warplanes have carried out airstrikes on sites believed to be used by a U.S.-backed Kurdish militia in northern Syria, after the U.S. military shot down an armed Turkish drone that came within 500 yards of American troops, officials said Friday.

A Turkish defense ministry statement said the Turkish jets targeted some 30 sites in the Tal Rifat, Jazeera and Derik regions, destroying caves, bunkers, shelters and warehouses.

Ankara said the locations were used by Kurdistan Workers' Party, PKK, a designated terrorist group behind a decades-long insurgency in Turkey — as well as its allies from a Kurdish militia in Syria, known as People's Defense Units, or

YPG.

The YPG is part of Syrian Kurdish-led forces — known as the Syrian Democratic Forces — backed by the United States. The Syrian Kurdish fighters have been close U.S. allies in the war against the militants from the Islamic State.

Turkey has been carrying out strikes on Kurdish targets in Iraq and Syria following a suicide bombing outside the Interior Ministry building in Ankara, the Turkish capital, early on Sunday.

The PKK claimed the attack in which one attacker blew himself up and another would-be bomber was killed in a shootout with police. Two police officers were wounded.

Kurdish authorities in northeastern Syria said the Turkish

bombing killed 15 people, including eight civilians. Several others were wounded.

The U.S.-backed and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces in northeastern Syria have denied any connection to the Ankara attack.

In Washington, the Pentagon said Thursday that a Turkish drone bombed targets near the U.S. troops in Syria, forcing them to go to bunkers for safety. Air Force Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder, the Pentagon press secretary, said the decision to shoot down the drone of a NATO ally "was made out of due diligence and the inherent right of self-defense to take appropriate action to protect U.S. forces." There was no indication that Turkey was intentionally targeting U.S. forces, he said.

Deportation flights for migrants resume

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — The Biden administration will resume deporting Venezuelan migrants, the largest single group encountered at the U.S.-Mexico border last month, back to their economically troubled country as their arrivals continue to grow.

U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, speaking in Mexico City Thursday, cited the new measure as one of the “strict consequences” the Biden administration is pairing with the expansion of legal pathways for asylum seekers.

“Our two countries are being challenged by an unprecedented level of migration throughout our hemisphere,” Mayorkas said, referring to Mexico.

The repatriation flights are ex-

pected to begin shortly, said two U.S. officials, though they did not provide specific details on when the flights would begin taking off. The officials were not authorized to disclose details of the government’s plan and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

The resumption of deportation flights comes not long after the administration increased protected status for thousands of Venezuelans who had previously arrived to the U.S. They must have entered the country before July 31 of this year to be eligible for temporary protected status.

In making the recent expansion of protections official, President Joe Biden’s administration said just this week that it had determined that “extraordinary

and temporary conditions continue to prevent Venezuelan nationals from returning in safety.”

Mayorkas on Thursday addressed the contrast with the announcement just days later of more deportations, saying “we have made a determination it is safe to return Venezuelan nationals who arrived in the United States subsequent to July 31 and do not have a legal basis to remain here.”

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who led a U.S. delegation to Mexico, added that “we have an ironclad commitment to provide protection for those who qualify. That remains paramount in everything we’re doing.”

The Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service criticized

the move to resume deportations noting the apparent contradiction with the expansion of temporary protected status.

“Returning thousands of Venezuelans to the same unimaginably dangerous conditions they just fled is a profoundly problematic policy for the world’s humanitarian leader to adopt,” the organization’s CEO Krish O’Mara Vignarajah said in a statement.

Administration officials would not discuss details about how frequently deportation flights would be going to Venezuela or describe how Venezuela agreed to accept back their citizens except to say that, like other countries around the world, the U.S. has long encouraged Venezuela to accept back its nationals.

Biden says he had to use Trump-era funds for wall

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Thursday defended his administration’s decision to waive 26 federal laws in South Texas to allow for construction of roughly 20 miles of additional border wall, saying he had no choice but to use the Trump-era funding for the barrier to stop illegal migration from Mexico.

Asked if he thought such walls work, he said flatly, “No.”

The new construction was announced in June, but the funds were appropriated in 2019 before the Democratic president took office. Biden said he tried to get lawmakers to redirect the money but Congress refused, and the law requires the funding to be used as approved and the construction to be completed in 2023.

“The money was appropriated for the border wall,” Biden said. “I can’t stop that.”

Still, the waiving of federal laws for the construction —

something also done when Republican Donald Trump was president — raised questions, particularly because Biden condemned border wall spending when he was running for the White House. One of Biden’s first moves as president was to halt the use of emergency funds to build the wall along the Southern border and end the national emergency there.

The decision comes as the Biden administration is struggling to manage increasing numbers of migrants at the border and spreading out in the larger U.S. Democratic leaders in New York, Chicago and Washington are asking for federal help to handle the growing numbers of migrants in their cities.

Republicans, for their part, are hammering the president as ineffective on border policy, with some suggesting they would not fund any more efforts in Ukraine without a substantial increase to border security funding.

Ex-treasurer for Santos pleads guilty to conspiracy

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The ex-treasurer for U.S. Rep. George Santos pleaded guilty Thursday to a fraud conspiracy charge and implicated the indicted New York Republican in a scheme to embellish his campaign finance reports with a fake loan and fake donors.

Nancy Marks, who was a close aide to Santos during his two congressional bids, entered the plea at a federal courthouse on Long Island, where she was a longtime political operative and bookkeeper for multiple candidates.

Speaking to the judge, Marks briefly outlined a scam she said was intended to hoodwink Republican Party officials into throwing their support behind Santos, who at the time had lost an earlier race for Congress and was struggling to get financial support for a second run.

To impress party leaders, she said, Santos submitted bo-

gus campaign finance reports falsely saying he had loaned his campaign \$500,000 even though in reality he didn’t have that kind of money and the loan didn’t exist.

The fake loan made Santos look way richer than he really was, and also helped him hit fundraising thresholds needed to qualify for backing from a national GOP committee.

Reading from a prepared statement, Marks also said she had provided the Federal Elections Commission with a fake list of people who had supposedly given large donations to the campaign. Prosecutors said the list included the names of multiple members of Santos’ and Marks’ families.

“The donors, who are real people, didn’t give me permission to use their names,” Marks said in court.

Her plea agreement comes with a recommendation that she serve 3½ years to 4 years in prison.

US sees robust job gains in September

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The nation's employers added 336,000 jobs in September, an unexpectedly robust gain that suggests that many companies remain confident enough to keep hiring despite high interest rates and a hazy outlook for the economy.

Hiring last month jumped from a 227,000 increase in August, which was revised sharply higher. July's gain was also healthier than had been initially estimated. The economy has

now added an average of 266,000 jobs a month in the past three months. The sustained strength of the labor market makes it likelier that the Federal Reserve will raise its key rate again before year's end as it continues its drive to tame inflation.

Friday's report from the Labor Department showed that the unemployment rate was unchanged at 3.8%, not far above a half-century low.

The job market has defied an array of threats this year, nota-

bly high inflation and the rapid series of Fed interest rate hikes that were intended to conquer it. Though the Fed's hikes have made loans much costlier, steady job growth has helped fuel consumer spending and kept the economy growing, defying longstanding predictions of a forthcoming recession.

Across the economy last month, most large industries added jobs, from health care, which gained 66,000, to manufacturing, which added 17,000,

to retailers, which added nearly 20,000. Professional services, a category that includes engineers and architects, gained 21,000. Government at all levels added 73,000 jobs, reflecting the healthy budgets of most state and local governments.

Yet wage growth slowed, with average hourly pay rising just 0.2% from August to September. Compared with those of a year earlier, wages are up 4.2%, the mildest 12-month increase in more than two years.

Trump endorsing Jim Jordan to succeed McCarthy

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former President Donald Trump is officially backing Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio, the pugnacious House Judiciary Committee chairman and longtime Trump defender, to succeed Kevin McCarthy as House speaker.

"Congressman Jim Jordan has been a STAR long before making his very successful journey to Washington, D.C., representing Ohio's 4th Congressional District," Trump wrote on his Truth Social site shortly after midnight Friday. "He will be a GREAT Speaker

of the House, & has my Complete & Total Endorsement!"

The announcement came hours after Texas Rep. Troy Nehls said Thursday night that Trump had decided to back Jordan's bid and after Trump said he would be open to serving as interim leader himself if Republicans couldn't settle on a successor following McCarthy's stunning ouster.

Trump, the current GOP presidential front-runner, has used the leadership vacuum on the Hill to further demonstrate his control over the Republican Party. House Republicans are

deeply fractured and some have been asking him to lead them — a seemingly fanciful suggestion that he also promoted after inflaming the divisions that forced out McCarthy as speaker.

Trump had been telling people in recent days that he preferred Jordan for the post, according to two Republicans familiar with his thinking and granted anonymity to discuss it. But it was unclear whether he intended to announce it before Nehls' tweet.

"Just had a great conversation with President Trump

about the Speaker's race. He is endorsing Jim Jordan, and I believe Congress should listen to the leader of our party," Nehls wrote late Thursday on X, formerly known as Twitter.

In an interview later with The Associated Press, Nehls, who had been encouraging Trump to run for the post himself, said the ex-president instead wanted Jordan.

"After him thinking about it and this and that ... he said he really is in favor of getting behind Jim Jordan," Nehls said. "He believes Jim Jordan is right for the job."

Trump lawyers seek dismissal of DC election case

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Lawyers for Donald Trump asked a judge Thursday to dismiss the Washington federal election subversion case against him, arguing the Republican is immune from prosecution for actions they say were taken in his official role as president.

The motion amounts to the most pointed attack yet by defense lawyers on the federal case charging Trump with plotting to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election he lost to Democrat Joe Biden. It tees up a fight over the scope

of presidential power, forcing courts to wrestle with whether the actions Trump took in his failed bid to remain in office fell within his duties as commander-in-chief or whether they strayed far outside his White House responsibilities and are subject to prosecution.

"Breaking 234 years of precedent, the incumbent administration has charged President Trump for acts that lie not just within the 'outer perimeter,' but at the heart of his official responsibilities as President," the defense motion states. "In doing so, the prosecution does not, and

cannot, argue that President Trump's efforts to ensure election integrity, and to advocate for the same, were outside the scope of his duties."

The presidential immunity argument had been foreshadowed for weeks by defense lawyers as one of multiple challenges they intended to bring against the indictment.

Special counsel Jack Smith's team is expected to vigorously contest the motion. It is not clear when U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan might rule, but potentially protracted arguments over the motion — including an

expected appeal if she denies the request — could delay the case as courts step into what defense lawyers described an unsettled question.

The Supreme Court has held that presidents are immune from civil liability for actions related to their official duties. But Trump's lawyers noted in their motion that no court has addressed the question of whether that immunity shields a president from criminal prosecution, hinting that the defense will likely fight the issue all the way to the nation's highest court.

Funerals held for scores killed in Syrian drone attack

Associated Press

HOMS, Syria — Family members of some of the victims of a deadly drone attack on a crowded military graduation ceremony that killed scores gathered outside a military hospital in the central city of Homs on Friday to collect the bodies of their loved ones, who died in one of Syria's deadliest single attacks in years.

Thursday's strike on the Homs Military Academy killed 89 people, including 31 women and five children, and wounded as many as 277, according to the health ministry. The death toll could rise as some of the wounded are in critical condition. Syria announced a three-day state of mourning starting Friday.

The attack is likely to lead to a wave of violence in the country's opposition-held northwest, where front lines have been relatively calm since Russia and Turkey, who support rival sides in the country's conflict, reached a cease-fire in March 2020, ending a three-month Russian-backed government offensive against insurgents.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for Thursday's attack as Syria endures its 13th year of conflict that has killed half a million people. In the aftermath, Syrian government forces intensified their shelling and airstrikes on rebel-held regions and insurgents fired back toward areas held by President Bashar As-

sad's forces.

The attack was an indication that the war is far from over and a sign of weakness within the Syrian military, which failed to prevent it despite the fact that the army has regained control of most of Syria in recent years with the backing of Russia and Iran.

The last such large-scale killing against government forces came in 2014, when the Islamic State group killed more than 160 Syrian government troops at a military base in the northern province of Raqqa. In a video released at the time, dozens of terrified young conscripts were made to run while stripped down to their underwear before being killed.

Marine mammals losing food, study says

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine — Whales, dolphins and seals in U.S. waters face major threats from warming waters, rising sea levels and decreasing sea ice associated with climate change, according to a first-of-its-kind assessment.

Researchers with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration examined more than 100 stocks of American marine mammal species and found more than 70% of them are vulnerable to threats, such as loss of habitat and food, due to the consequences of warming waters. The impacts also include loss of dissolved oxygen and changes to ocean chemistry.

The scientists found large whales such as humpbacks and North Atlantic right whales were among the most vulnerable to climate change, and that other toothed whales and dolphins were also at high risk.

The study, published last month in the journal PLOS ONE, is evidence that the way the U.S. manages whales and dolphins needs to adapt in the era of climate change, advocates for marine mammals said.

The news is bleak, but the assessment also is the first to look solely at marine mammal stocks managed by the U.S. and the results can help inform federal ocean managers about how to safeguard the vulnerable animals, said Matthew Lettrich, a biologist and lead author of the study.

3 bears sneak into factory in Japan

Associated Press

TOKYO — Three bears that snuck into a tatami mat factory in northern Japan and were holed up inside for nearly a day have been captured and killed, according to town officials and media reports.

A patrolling official spotted the bears, believed to be a parent and two cubs, as they walked into the factory on Wednesday morning in Misato, a town in Akita prefecture, where there's been a growing number of reported bear attacks in or near residential areas.

An owner of the factory said he saw the bears walking out-

side but never thought they would come inside.

Town officials and police officers rushed to the site, wearing helmets and carrying shields, and kept watch. Local hunters used fire crackers to try to scare the intruders out, without success. They later set up a pair of cages at the entrance of the factory and waited overnight.

On Thursday morning, the bears were trapped in cages, two cubs in one and the adult in another.

Misato issued an urgent message later Thursday to residents that all three bears had been captured. Media reports said

the bears were later killed for fear that they would return to the town and pose a threat if released.

Akita's governor, Norihisa Satake, who had sounded the alarm over the increase of marauding bears in the prefecture, told reporters on Thursday that he planned to seek the central government's support to combat the bears, including revising wildlife protection law to allow the use of hunting guns in residential areas.

Akita has logged a record 30 cases of bear attacks on people in 2023 alone, increasingly in residential areas.

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Calm Carter is producing for Rangers

Associated Press

Evan Carter has such a calmness about him at barely 21 years old, and less than a month after his Rangers debut, that Texas manager Bruce Bochy wonders if the kid even realizes he's in the big leagues.

Plus, the speedy outfielder just keeps getting on base.

"Just love the way he's handling himself through all this," Bochy said.

Carter certainly hasn't been overwhelmed since jumping into the playoff chase. Called up as an injury fill-in, he hit .306 with five homers in 23 games down the stretch for the Rangers, then reached base in seven of his eight plate appearances during the AL Wild Card Series, when they swept Tampa Bay to advance in the postseason for the first time since 2011.

"I wouldn't say it was easy," Carter said with a wide smile, even though that is exactly how he has made it look. "There's a lot of work and preparation and stuff ... older people on the team with a lot of experience, picking their brains, and the coaching staff."

Texas plays Game 1 of its AL Division Series on Saturday at 101-win Baltimore.

The only player to reach base more in any two-game postseason span at age 21 or younger was Freddie Lindstrom eight times for the New York Giants in the 1924 World Series. Carter matched Dylan Carlson's seven for St. Louis in the NL Wild Card Series in 2020.

Batting ninth in a Rangers order with five All-Stars, Carter reached the first six times he went to the plate in Tampa Bay, becoming only the second player to do that in his first postseason. Jorge Soler got on his first nine plate appearances for the Chicago Cubs in the 2015 NL Division Series.

"From the moment he came up, he's very poised and confident. He's got a very simple approach, and he likes to stick to that," All-Star pitcher Nathan Eovaldi said after he won Game 2 against the Rays.

Even before Carter's first at-bat, he had an impact for Texas in Game 1. He sprinted 59 feet for a diving catch in left field to end the first inning with a runner on base.

The Rangers called up Carter for his big-league debut on Sept. 8, after he had played only eight Triple-A games and 10 days after his 21st birthday. They had

just put All-Star slugger and then-AL RBI leader Adolis Garcia on the injured list.

General manager Chris Young said then that the Rangers were optimistic Carter could help now and in the future.

Well, Carter singled in his first big league at-bat and became the first player in the expansion era (since 1961) with a hit, walk, stolen base and outfield assist in his MLB debut. His on-base streak of 16 games was the longest to open a career in franchise history.

In the Wild Card Series, Carter hit a first-pitch homer, doubled twice and had three walks on full counts — making it somewhat fitting that he wears jersey No. 32. He got hit by an 81-mph sweeper on the ninth pitch of his final at-bat after fouling off four two-strike pitches.

"We joke around and say he's our little savior," said fellow rookie Josh Jung, the AL's starting third baseman in this year's All-Star Game who had three extra-base hits Wednesday.

"The impact he's had has been incredible," Jung said. "He's had a quality at-bat I feel like every at-bat. He knows the

strike zone really well, and his at-bat alone is pushing the pitcher's pitch count up."

Even with a first-pitch double in Game 1, and his two-run homer in Game 2 on which Jung scored, Carter saw 40 pitches in his eight plate appearances.

These days, it's not unusual for rookies to make an instant impact in their first October — two of the past three AL Championship Series MVPs were rookies (Tampa Bay's Randy Arozarena and Houston's Jeremy Peña), and Peña also won World Series MVP. But both of those players were 25 for their memorable playoff debuts.

Jurickson Profar was 19 in the AL's single wild-card game in 2012, making Carter the second-youngest player to appear in a playoff game for Texas. The only other Rangers rookie with a postseason homer was Mitch Moreland in Game 3 of the 2010 World Series, which they lost in five games to the Bochy-managed San Francisco Giants.

Texas took Carter in the second round (50th overall pick) of the 2020 draft after his prep senior season in Elizabethton, Tenn., was canceled after three games because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Eppler resigns as Mets GM and is under investigation

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Billy Eppler resigned as New York Mets general manager Thursday, and a person familiar with the probe said he is under investigation by Major League Baseball.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The person did not disclose the nature of the probe, but the New York Post was first to report Thursday that Eppler is being investigated by MLB for improper use of the injured list.

His surprising resignation

came three days after David Stearns was hired above Eppler as the Mets' first president of baseball operations. Eppler spent the past two seasons running baseball operations for New York in his role as GM.

The Mets said they could not comment because it's an ongoing investigation.

Eppler's decision to step down continues an overhaul that followed a fourth-place NL East finish for a team with playoff expectations and World Series aspirations. Mets owner Steve Cohen fired manager

Buck Showalter on Sunday, saying Stearns deserved to bring in his own manager.

"I wanted David to have a clean slate and that meant me stepping down," Eppler said in a statement from the team.

Cohen had long talked about hiring a president of baseball operations above Eppler and had said baseball operations leadership had become too large a job for one person. Eppler attended the Monday news conference at Citi Field to introduce Stearns, who discussed working in tandem with Eppler.

"Billy and I have had I think a really nice relationship going back years as competitors. Talking to each other, whether it's about transactions or just about industry events," said Stearns, the former Milwaukee Brewers boss who also held front-office positions in Houston and Cleveland. "I have a lot of respect for the experience he has in this game, the experience he has in New York, and I'm looking forward to working with him."

But just a few days later, Eppler is out.

Fields, Moore lead Bears to first win

Associated Press

LANDOVER, Md. — Music blared from the Chicago Bears locker room after a victory for the first time in almost a year, and players danced and jumped around with joy.

All thanks to Justin Fields and DJ Moore being perfectly in tune.

Fields and Moore connected eight times for 230 yards and three touchdowns to give the embattled Bears their first win of the season, beating the Washington Commanders 40-20 Thursday night, hours after word emerged of the death of franchise great Dick Butkus.

“We just needed a win, get the mojo going in our favor,” Moore said. “It felt amazing to get the first win under our belts.”

Relief was palpable at the end of a 14-game skid dating to last season — since Oct. 24, 2022, the last time they won a game. All the off-field drama the organi-

zation has been mired in for weeks melted away in the moments of celebration.

“The feeling that we all had after the game is a feeling that you just never want it to end,” Fields said. “Just proud of the way all the guys game out and played.”

Fields had four touchdown passes to match his career high set last week, this time coming in a winning effort as Chicago (1-4) jumped out to a 24-point halftime lead and, unlike Sunday, held on.

“He’s a heck of a good, young football player,” Commanders coach Ron Rivera said.

Fields threw for 282 yards and ran for 57 yards, including a rush for a first down late in the third quarter after tipping the ball to himself following a high snap. Moore had 137 yards receiving in the first half alone, becoming the first Bears player to surpass 125 before halftime

since at least 2000 and eventually reaching a career high.

“This morning I was nervous — out of this world nervous,” Moore said. “I guess that was my body telling me that we were about to go off.”

It was such an impressive showing that it got the attention of LeBron James, who posted on social media: “J Fields and DJ Moore going crazy right now!!! SHEESH!!”

The Bears also got a defensive performance that felt like a fitting way to honor Butkus, the fearsome Hall of Fame linebacker who died at age 80 earlier Thursday. They forced two turnovers and sacked Sam Howell five times in bouncing back from blowing a 21-point lead and losing to Denver.

“We harped all week on finishing,” said Greg Stroman, a former Washington cornerback who picked off Howell. “We do great things as a team. We

played well for three strong quarters last week, so just were building off that and that was the message: Build off that and finish.”

Washington (2-3) lost a third consecutive game, this time struggling with missed tackles and blown coverage on defense, while again failing to force a turnover. Couple that with Howell’s interception, and there was a reason the Commanders were booed off the field at halftime by fans who again packed FedEx Field for another sellout.

Their second-half comeback bid fell short, stunted by Logan Thomas fumbling, a later drive stalling in the red zone and Joey Slye missing a 46-yard field goal attempt with five minutes left. Washington got as close as 10 points, but couldn’t end its losing streak and keep Chicago’s going.

“It starts at the top,” Rivera said. “That’s on me.”

Dick Butkus, fearsome Bears linebacker, dies at 80

Associated Press

CHICAGO — A photo of Dick Butkus sneering behind his facemask filled the cover of Sports Illustrated’s 1970 NFL preview, topped by the headline, “The Most Feared Man in the Game.” Opponents who wound up on the business end of his bone-rattling hits could testify that wasn’t an exaggeration.

Butkus, a middle linebacker for the Chicago Bears whose speed and ferocity set the standards for the position in the modern era, died Thursday, the team announced. He was 80.

According to a statement released by the team, Butkus’ family confirmed that he died in his sleep at his home in Malibu, Calif.

Butkus was a first-team All-Pro five times and made the Pro Bowl in eight of his nine seasons before a knee injury forced him

to retire at 31. He was the quintessential Monster of the Midway and was elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1979, his first year of eligibility. He is still considered one of the greatest defensive players in league history.

“Dick Butkus was a fierce and passionate competitor who helped define the linebacker position as one of the NFL’s all-time greats. Dick’s intuition, toughness and athleticism made him the model linebacker whose name will forever be linked to the position and the Chicago Bears,” NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said in a statement.

“We also remember Dick as a long-time advocate for former players, and players at all levels of the game.”

A moment of silence honoring Butkus was held before the

Bears played at the Washington Commanders on Thursday night.

Trading on his image as the toughest guy in the room, Butkus enjoyed a long second career as a sports broadcaster, an actor in movies and TV series, and a sought-after pitchman for products ranging from anti-freeze to beer. Whether the script called for comedy or drama, Butkus usually resorted to playing himself, often with his gruff exterior masking a softer side.

“I wouldn’t ever go out to hurt anybody deliberately,” Butkus replied tongue-in-cheek when asked about his on-field reputation. “Unless it was, you know, important ... like a league game or something.”

Butkus was the rare pro athlete who played his entire career close to home. He was a

star linebacker, fullback and kicker at Chicago Vocational High who went on to play at the University of Illinois. Born on Dec. 9, 1942 as the youngest of eight children, he grew up on the city’s South Side as a fan of the Chicago Cardinals, the Bears’ crosstown rivals.

But after being drafted in the first round in 1965 by both the Bears and Denver Broncos (at the time, a member of the now-defunct American Football League), Butkus chose to remain in Chicago and play for NFL founder and coach George Halas. The Bears also added future Hall of Fame running back Gale Sayers to the roster that year with another first-round pick.

“He was Chicago’s son,” Bears chairman George McCaskey, Halas’ grandson, said in a statement.

Joel Embiid picks USA over France for Paris Olympics

Associated Press

Joel Embiid will wear red, white and blue in Paris next summer — not rouge, blanc and bleu.

The NBA's reigning MVP and scoring champion has told USA Basketball that, after more than a year of deliberating, he has picked the Americans over France as his team for the Paris Olympics.

The Philadelphia 76ers' star let USA Basketball managing director Grant Hill know his mind was made up and then made the decision public on Thursday. And one of the reasons Embiid cited in what had him pick the U.S.: His son is American.

"I've been here for such a long time," Embiid said in Fort Collins, Colo., where the 76ers are having training camp — and where Embiid met with Hill this week. "For the past few years,

every decision I've made has been based on just family. My family, my son, and having the chance to represent a country like the U.S., with my son being born here ... I love my home country, but I really wanted to play in the Olympics."

France had given Embiid an Oct. 10 deadline for deciding on his Olympic plans. Embiid said he appreciated the interest the French showed in him.

"I was trying to take my time as much as possible," Embiid said. "It was kind of made hard by the deadline. But I'm happy with it."

USA Basketball does not plan to name its team until the spring of 2024, but if healthy, Embiid would seem certain to have one of the 12 spots on the squad that will be coached by Golden State's Steve Kerr with assistants Erik Spoelstra of Miami, Tyronn Lue of the Los Angeles

Clippers and Mark Few of Gonzaga.

"It's exciting for USA Basketball that Joel Embiid wants to represent the United States," Hill said. "Joel and I have had several conversations about his goals and I'm looking forward to continuing that dialogue knowing that one of those goals is to represent USA Basketball next summer in Paris. As I've said before, I'm looking forward to the process of building the 2024 USA Basketball Men's National Team roster over the next several months."

No player has been officially named to the team at this point.

"The stronger the team, the better," San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich, who coached the Americans at the 2019 World Cup and then to gold at the Tokyo Games, said Thursday when told of Embiid's decision.

Hadley's 64 leads way in Mississippi

Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. — Chesson Hadley played bogey-free Thursday in the Sanderson Farms Championship and posted an 8-under 64 for a one-shot lead in his latest bid to secure his PGA Tour card.

This is the third straight year Hadley has been on the bubble to finish among the top 125 in the FedEx Cup. At least now he has time on his side, and faith in swing that he tweaked at the start of the year.

He had two stretches of three straight birdies on a day of ever-shifting weather at the Country Club of Jackson to move past Henrik Norlander, who had a 65 in the morning, and Brandon Wu, who made an 18-foot birdie putt on his final hole in the afternoon for a 65.

Ludvig Aberg, the 23-year-old Swede who made his Ryder Cup debut last week at Marco Simone, had a 67 that left him a little frustrated. He missed three birdie putts from 7 feet or closer on the back nine.

Aberg was the No. 1 in the PGA Tour University ranking, and thus is assured his PGA Tour card for 2024. Hadley isn't so fortunate.

The FedEx Cup Fall is for players to secure their positions inside the top 125 at the end of the year. Hadley is at No. 122, with little room for error. He said he wasn't in panic mode like he has been in previous year, mainly because he has more than a month left in the year.

"I've been feeling good. I feel dangerous. I'm feeling dangerous right now," Hadley said. "I feel like some of the hard work and some of the shot-shape change that I've done has paid off, and my game feels good. Just need to keep it going. The gas is on the right."

Hadley had to tie for eighth in the final regular-season event to secure his card last year.

Former Northwestern football coach Fitzgerald is suing school for \$130M

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Former Northwestern University football coach Pat Fitzgerald is suing the school for \$130 million, saying his alma mater wrongfully fired him in the wake of a hazing and abuse scandal that has engulfed the athletic department.

The announcement by Chicago-based attorney Dan K. Webb on Thursday comes nearly three months after Fitzgerald was suspended and then fired after 17 years as head coach of the Wildcats.

Webb said that Fitzgerald would also be seeking additional money for "infliction of emotional distress," future lost income and punitive damages. The \$130

million includes \$68 million remaining in owed salary plus \$62 million in future lost income, Webb added.

The suit was filed in Cook County Circuit Court against the university and its President Michael Schill, he said. A hearing is scheduled for Dec. 7.

"If there was ever — if there was ever — an athletic coach at Northwestern University that should not have been terminated, it's Coach Fitzgerald," Webb said. "The fact that he was terminated based on no rational reasons or facts whatsoever, the fact that they've gone out and destroyed his reputation as one of the best football coaches in America based on no legitimate reason

or evidence is disgraceful, is despicable conduct on behalf of Northwestern."

The 48-year-old Fitzgerald was fired July 10, three days after the school announced a two-week suspension without pay following an investigation by attorney Maggie Hickey of law firm ArentFox Schiff. That probe did not find "sufficient" evidence that the coaching staff knew about ongoing hazing, but concluded there were "significant opportunities" to find out about it.

Webb called that "a ridiculous allegation," adding that "no coach in America" did as much to prevent hazing and to make sure he would have a way to find out if it did happen.