

Gaza hospitals in crisis as Israeli troops near

Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip — Medics in Gaza warned Sunday that thousands could die as hospitals packed with wounded people ran desperately low on fuel and basic supplies. Palestinians in the besieged coastal enclave struggled to find food, water and safety ahead of an expected Israeli ground offensive in the war sparked by Hamas' deadly attack.

Israeli forces, supported by a growing deployment of U.S. warships in the region, positioned themselves along Gaza's border and drilled for what Israel said would be a broad campaign to dismantle the militant group. A week of blistering airstrikes have demolished entire neighborhoods but failed to stem militant rocket fire into Israel.

The Gaza Health Ministry said 2,670 Palestinians have been killed and 9,600 wounded since the fighting erupted, more than in

the 2014 Gaza war, which lasted over six weeks. That makes this the deadliest of the five Gaza wars for both sides.

More than 1,400 Israelis have been killed, the vast majority of them civilians, in Hamas' Oct. 7 assault. An estimated 150 others, including children, were captured by Hamas and taken into Gaza. It's also the deadliest war for Israel since the 1973 conflict with Egypt and Syria.

The U.S. State Department said Secretary of State Antony Blinken would return to Israel on Monday after completing a frantic six-country tour through Arab nations aimed at preventing the fighting from igniting a broader regional conflict.

Fighting along Israel's border with Lebanon, which flared since the start of the latest Gaza war, intensified Sunday with Hezbollah militants firing rockets and an anti-tank missile, and Israel responding with airstrikes and

shelling. The Israeli military also reported shooting at one of its border posts. The fighting killed at least one person on the Israeli side and wounded several on both sides of the border.

A spokeswoman for Hezbollah, Rana Sahili, said the increased fighting represents a "warning" and does not mean Hezbollah has decided to enter the war.

Hospitals in Gaza are expected to run out of generator fuel within two days, endangering the lives of thousands of patients, according to the U.N. Gaza's sole power plant shut down for lack of fuel after Israel completely sealed off the 25-mile long territory following the Hamas attack.

In Nasser Hospital, in the southern town of Khan Younis, intensive care rooms are packed with wounded patients, most of them children under the age of 3. Hundreds of people with severe blast injuries have come to the hospital, where fuel is expected to

run out by Monday, said Dr. Mohammed Qandeel, a consultant at the critical care complex.

There are 35 patients in the ICU who require ventilators and another 60 on dialysis. If fuel runs out, "it means the whole health system will be shut down," he said, as children moaned in pain in the background. "All these patients are in danger of death if the electricity is cut off."

Israel has ordered more than 1 million Palestinians — almost half the territory's population — to move south. The military says it is trying to clear away civilians ahead of a major campaign against Hamas in the north, where it says the militants have extensive networks of tunnels, bunkers and rocket launchers.

Hamas urged people to stay in their homes, and the Israeli military released photos it said showed a Hamas roadblock preventing traffic from moving south.

Hamas 'takes evil to another level,' Austin says in Israel

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza pits the country against an enemy worse than Islamic State and peace in the Middle East hinges on international isolation of the Palestinian terrorist group, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Friday in Tel Aviv.

"This is no time for neutrality, or for false equivalence, or for excuses for the inexcusable," Austin said alongside top Israeli officials.

During an exchange with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Austin referred to his time as head of U.S. Central Command, when American forces were waging a campaign against

ISIS. Hamas "takes evil to another level," Austin said.

Israeli officials now have deemed Hamas the "ISIS of Gaza."

The Pentagon chief's comments come as Israel prepares to launch a ground offensive into Gaza.

"Those who want to survive, please go south," Israel's defense secretary, Yoav Gallant, said during a news briefing with Austin, adding that the country's forces are preparing to demolish all Hamas targets in Gaza.

The looming operation has raised concerns about what impact the offensive will have on noncombatants in densely populated Gaza.

Hamas' track record of blending together with civilians also complicates any attack.

Numerous Muslim countries in the region along with some humanitarian groups have said that Israel isn't doing enough to ensure the welfare of civilians in Gaza. The situation also has sparked divisions around the world, with pro-Palestinian protests taking place in scores of cities.

Austin, however, said the blame for the current situation lies squarely with Hamas.

"The United States will make sure that Israel has what it needs to defend itself. And Israel has a right to protect its people," he said.

Austin said he was confident

that Israel would do its best to avoid civilian casualties, in contrast to "terrorists like Hamas (who) deliberately target civilians."

Still, Austin said he was prepared to share lessons learned during the U.S. battle against ISIS several years ago and how it established humanitarian corridors as a way to minimize civilian casualties.

That campaign also was marked by barbaric attacks by ISIS, which took women as hostages and sex slaves and broadcast the beheadings of Westerners in gruesome public displays.

During Hamas' blitz into Israel that began Oct. 7, similar tactics were used.

Workload, beds behind rest issues in Navy

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

The Navy still hasn't addressed two of the biggest contributors to shipboard fatigue more than six years after two deadly collisions in which exhaustion played a role, according to an analysis by the Government Accountability Office.

Inadequate crewing on ships keeps sailors working longer hours, limiting their available sleep time. And when personnel do get some sleep, they must contend with uncomfortable mattresses, a GAO report released Wednesday said.

"Without fully addressing the root causes of fatigue — such as high workload caused by under-crewing and mattress problems — the Navy may better manage fatigue but not eradicate it," the report authors said.

Workload and mattresses not conducive to restful sleep were the two leading causes of fatigue cited in a 2022 Navy survey, the GAO noted.

Overwork was highlighted in a Navy report to Congress in March that showed shipboard sailors on average had just 6.26 hours a day available for sleep, according to the

GAO.

Those sailors ended up getting an average of 5.25 hours of sleep, well below the minimum 7.5 hours required by policy, the government watchdog agency said.

While the Navy is working to fully crew its ships within the next 15 years, the service hasn't committed to putting that intention into policy, the GAO noted.

"Even if the Navy achieves this goal, there would remain a 15-year period where the surface fleet will experience operational risk and sailors will experience health risk from ongoing crew shortfalls," it said.

In regards to the mattresses, officials had permission to replace them every three years.

But no Navy department was willing to fund mattress improvements across the fleet or review the problem further, so the issue remains unresolved, the report said.

It follows a GAO review in 2021 of the fatigue management policy the Navy implemented after collisions in 2017 between commercial vessels and the destroyers USS Fitzgerald and USS John McCain that killed seven and 10 sailors, respectively.

In that report, the GAO found that the Navy wasn't consistently implementing the policy and routinely assigned an inadequate number of crew members for safe operation of ships.

The Navy agreed to the eight recommendations the GAO gave in 2021. In Wednesday's follow-up report, the service received credit for fully implementing four of those recommendations, most of which focused on revising or establishing policies or guidelines.

The GAO also said the service had made progress on three other recommendations, including using data to identify, monitor and evaluate why sailors aren't getting enough sleep.

But the applicability of the data was limited by the Navy's reliance on voluntary surveys of sailors at sea twice over a three-year deployment cycle.

The service also established two programs related to wearable devices that collect biometric data and could help reduce fatigue, but a lack of dedicated funding prevented expansion of those programs, the GAO said.

Charges dropped against colonel at Fort Cavazos

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — A former Fort Cavazos brigade commander accused of inappropriately touching and kissing the spouse of a fellow officer had the criminal charges against him dismissed with the Army citing "newly discovered evidence."

Col. Jon Meredith, 47, faced a court-martial on two counts of conduct unbecoming of an officer for his actions on July 23, 2022, while he was commander of the 1st Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Cavalry Division. A previous charge of abusive sexual contact was dismissed last month.

Instead, his punishment will move into administrative action, said Lt. Col. Tania Dono-

van, spokeswoman for Fort Cavazos and III Corps, which is headquartered at the Texas base.

Lt. Gen. Sean Bernabe, commander of III Corps and Fort Cavazos, made the decision based on the new evidence and in consultation with the Office of Special Trial Counsel, Donovan said.

"It was based on an assessment of multiple factors which guide every commander in deciding the appropriate means of addressing allegations of misconduct. Among these factors are the impact and appropriateness of alternative disposition options, including nonjudicial punishment or administrative action," Donovan said in a statement.

Sherry Bunn, Meredith's at-

torney, said the decision to dismiss was based on evidence obtained during the law enforcement investigation into Meredith's wife, Col. Ann Meredith, who was fired in March from her command of the 89th Military Police Brigade at Fort Cavazos.

Ann Meredith was fired because she sent a text message that was considered interfering with the investigation into her husband, according to a post to her personal Facebook page. She was disciplined through administrative action, according to Fort Cavazos.

The evidence shows Jon Meredith's "accuser and her husband, a lieutenant colonel, concluded to create a false sexual-assault allegation against Meredith because the accuser's hus-

band was upset about the rater comments on his officer evaluation report," Bunn said. The evidence was discovered in the couple's cell phone messages from October 2022, she said.

Bunn said she only recently gained access to the evidence from Ann Meredith's file, but she said the Army has had it for the past year.

Donovan said the evidence was first disclosed to Army prosecutors on Sept. 28. Because the investigations were separate, prosecutors were not aware that evidence from Ann Meredith's file contained information relevant to Jon Meredith's court-martial, she said.

"We hope the Army will investigate the matter underlying the false allegations," Bunn said.

Emptying of Red Hill fuel tanks to begin

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — Hawaii state and federal officials gathered on a Pearl Harbor pier Friday to speak to reporters about what some described as a milestone: defueling the Red Hill Bulk Storage Facility starting Monday.

The speaker who best captured the public's sentiment on the facility's drainage and eventual closure, however, was the deputy director of environmental health for the Hawaii Department of Health.

"Nearly two years ago, an unprecedented environmental disaster occurred in Hawaii," said Kathleen Ho, referring to a fuel leak in late 2021 that contaminated a Navy water distribution system used by tens of thousands of residents.

"The people of Hawaii came together to call for the defueling and closure of Red Hill," she said. "Now defueling is about to begin. For many people in our community, this milestone is more of a source of relief than a cause for celebration."

Draining the 104 million gal-

lons of fuel in the World War II-era underground tanks will take about three months. Fuel will drain via gravity through roughly 3 miles of pipes that end at a fueling pier on the joint base.

There, the fuel will be loaded onto tanker ships and relocated to San Diego, Subic Bay in the Philippines, the Port of Singapore and a pair of fuel depots in Hawaii.

Vice Adm. John Wade, who heads Joint Task Force-Red Hill, the Defense Department entity tasked with emptying the tanks, told reporters that "99.9%" of the fuel will drain via that initial gravity system.

"When that phase completes, then we must get after what's called residual fuel," he said. Residual fuel can't be drained using gravity because it has accumulated in low points and bends in pipes.

"Once that is complete, which we estimate will be in the early spring, then, at some point, the joint task force will transition to our critical partners, the Navy, and the Navy has the responsibility for closing the facility," he said.

Hornets arrive in Japan as complement to F-35Bs

BY JONATHAN SNYDER
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — The first contingent of Marine "legacy" fighters from California rolled to a stop at this base south of Hiroshima late last month with a dozen aircraft sporting newly upgraded radar.

The Red Devils of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232 from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar will operate their F/A-18C and F/A-18D Hornets from MCAS Iwakuni as part of a six-month unit deployment, squadron commander Lt. Col. Michael McMahon told Stars and Stripes.

"We're the first F/A-18C squadron to get this new, active electronically scanned array radar, [it's] very similar to what the Super Hornets have," he said. "This radar has definitely increased our capabilities in all aspects of what we do."

Raytheon's APG-79(V)4 provides Hornet aircrews with improved situational awareness, better ability to track targets nearly instantaneously and improved capacity for tracking many targets, according to MilitaryAerospace.com in September 2022.

The improved radar is built

with open system architecture and commercial-off-the-shelf parts that deliver an increased air-to-air and air-to-surface targeting and tracking capabilities, according to Raytheon's site.

"It's definitely an edge over the rest of the F/A-18, the legacy charlies and delta fleet that's out there," McMahon said.

The radar upgrade is a "big deal" that will help keep the Hornets relevant toward the end of the decade as the Marine Corps looks at downsizing its aging aircraft, he said.

"Every single day, almost every sortie we went on, we were integrated with the F-35s," he said, referring to the fifth-generation stealth fighter flown by the Marines, Navy and Air Force. "[The F/A-18] is a multi-role fighter; we do air-to-air, air-to-ground and anti-maritime."

Pairing the Hornet with the F-35 complements each aircraft's capabilities, McMahon said.

"The anti-maritime weapons and the number of strike weapons [and] the number of air weapons we can carry, in comparison to the F-35B, we can carry a little bit more," he said. "We're commonly called a 'weapons truck' for those folks."

Air monitors to give Pearl Harbor 'early-warning' of spill

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The Navy has installed 40 air-monitoring stations on and near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam as an "early-warning" system in the event of a spill as it empties the Red Hill fuel storage facility starting Monday.

The stations will remain in place for six months, after which the Navy will reevaluate their need, Capt. Mark Sohaney, commander of Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, wrote in a let-

ter Tuesday to military housing residents to clarify the purpose of the stations.

Joint Task Force-Red Hill, a Defense Department entity, is handling the three-month process of emptying 104 million gallons of fuel from the World War II-era tanks.

Leakage from the tanks in 2021 contaminated one of three wells used by the Navy for distributing water to military housing communities on and adjacent to the joint base.

Late that year, residents com-

plained about tap water smelling of petroleum, leading to thousands being temporarily relocated to area hotels as the Navy cleaned up the distribution system.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in March 2022 ordered the facility to be emptied and permanently closed.

The idea of millions of gallons once again flowing through Red Hill pipes to awaiting tankers at the joint base has left some residents of military communities uneasy given what they believe

was an inadequate response by the Navy in the initial wake of water contamination.

The installation of the stations is an application of "lessons learned from Red Hill," according to a Navy fact sheet sent to residents.

"While air quality monitoring is not a regulator-mandated prerequisite for defueling, these stations can provide an early-warning indicator that improves response time in the unlikely event of an incident," the fact sheet states.

House speaker saga produces frustration, farce

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — No one knows what's going to happen next on Capitol Hill — perhaps House Republicans least of all.

As the House entered its 11th day without a speaker Friday afternoon, Republicans, who hold a narrow majority in the lower chamber, did not appear close to being able to elect a replacement for the ousted Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif.

Jim Jordan, the representative from Ohio who's former President Donald Trump's pick for speaker, became the party's new nominee after a secret-ballot election late Friday afternoon. Jordan, a conservative firebrand, won 124 to 81

over Georgia's Rep. Austin Scott, who entered the race Friday morning but then vowed to back the Ohioan in a floor vote.

Still, Jordan's path to the speakership was far from clear. At least six Republicans have publicly vowed not to vote for him, all but ensuring his defeat on the House floor unless he can change their minds.

After the first secret ballot, Republicans voted privately on whether they would back Jordan in a vote of the full House; just 152 members reportedly said they would, and 55 said they would not. One member voted present.

At least a dozen Republicans apparently missed the closed-door meeting entirely. And by 5 p.m. Friday, lawmakers' fierce loyalty to their week-ends had won out over their desire to elect a speaker as soon as possible.

Jordan recommended that members go home, and come back to try again this week. Floor votes could happen as soon as Monday evening.

The mood in the halls of Congress alternated between frustration and farce as GOP lawmakers stumbled out of the conference room, grumbling about the fractures that have made it impossible for their party to accomplish anything.

"There are people in there that are honorably trying to get to the right place, and then there are people in there, as you know, that like to go on the TV and are not necessarily negotiating for anything other than TV time," Scott told reporters. "Makes us look like a bunch of idiots."

McCarthy was optimistic about Jordan's chances, arguing that he can make it to the required 217 votes. With two vacancies in the House, there are currently 221 Republican members.

"He'll get there," he told reporters after the closed-door meeting. "I don't see a problem with him not getting there."

In flip, GOP's Landry wins Louisiana governor's race

Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — Attorney General Jeff Landry, a Republican backed by former President Donald Trump, has won the Louisiana governor's race, holding off a crowded field of candidates.

The win is a major victory for the GOP as they reclaim the governor's mansion for the first time in eight years. Landry will replace current Gov. John Bel Edwards, who was unable to seek reelection due to consecutive term limits. Edwards is the only Democratic governor in the Deep South.

"Today's election says that our state is united," Landry said during his victory speech Saturday night. "It's a wake-up call and it's a message that everyone should hear loud and clear, that we the people in this state are going to expect more out of our government from here on out."

By garnering more than half of the votes, Landry avoided an expected runoff under the state's "jungle primary" sys-

tem. The last time there wasn't a gubernatorial runoff in Louisiana was in 2011 and 2007, when Bobby Jindal, a Republican, won the state's top position.

The governor-elect, who celebrated with supporters during a watch party in Broussard, La., described the election as "historic."

Landry, 52, has raised the profile of attorney general since being elected in 2015. He has used his office to champion conservative policy positions.

More recently, Landry has been in the spotlight over his involvement and staunch support of Louisiana laws that have drawn much debate. Those include banning gender-affirming medical care for transgender youths, the state's near-total abortion ban that doesn't have exceptions for cases of rape and incest, and a law restricting youths' access to "sexually explicit material" in libraries, which opponents have feared will target LGBTQ+ books.

'Ring of fire' brings cheers as it moves across Americas

Associated Press

CANCÚN, México — First came the darkening skies, then the crescent-shaped shadows on the ground, and finally an eruption of cheers by crowds that gathered Saturday along the narrow path of a rare "ring of fire" eclipse of the sun.

It was a spectacular show for millions of people across the Americas as the moon moved into place and blocked out all but a brilliant circle of the sun's outer edge.

Hundreds of people filed into the planetarium in the Caribbean resort city of Cancún to watch the eclipse. Some peered through box projectors, while others looked through telescopes and special glasses.

Excited children whistled, as some adults raised their arms toward the sky as if to welcome the eclipse.

Vendors selling plants outside observed the dance between the moon and the sun in a more natural way — with the help of trees as the shifting sunlight filtered through the leaves, casting unique shadows

on the sidewalk.

"There was silence and like a mist, as if it was dusk, but only a few minutes later the birds were singing again," said Carmen Jardines, 56, one of the vendors.

In the United States, some eclipse watchers traveled to remote corners of the country to try to get the best view possible while those in Albuquerque got a double treat as the eclipse coincided with an international balloon fiesta that typically draws tens of thousands of spectators and hundreds of hot air balloon pilots from around the world.

There were hoots, hollers and yelps from the balloon launch field as the moon began to cover the sun. Some pilots used their propane burners to shoot flames upward in unison as the spectacle unfolded.

"It's very exciting to be here and have the convergence of our love of flying with something very natural like an eclipse," said Allan Hahn, a balloon pilot from Aurora, Colo.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Officer fatally shoots man with knife holding hostage

TN NASHVILLE — Police in Nashville fatally shot a man accused of taking a housemate hostage at knifepoint after authorities said the suspect came toward them with the weapon.

An altercation led to a man holding another person hostage in a home, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation said in a statement. Metro Nashville Police entered the house and tried to talk to the suspect through a door, then rushed into the room when they heard screaming, the statement said.

Joshua Kersey, 30, came toward officers with a large knife, the bureau said, and one officer shot and killed him. No officers were injured.

Kersey's sister had called for help after her brother took the keys to her vehicle while intoxicated, drove off and then returned and got into a heated argument with family members, police said.

Police: Man smuggled rare birdwing butterflies

NY NEW YORK — Birdwing butterflies are among the rarest and largest to grace the planet, their 10-inch wingspans flapping through the rainforests of Southeast Asia and Australia. Their sheer size can make them hard to miss.

But the U.S. Attorney's Office in Brooklyn said Charles Limmer made tens of thousands of dollars over the past year by illegally trafficking scores of flying insects, including endangered birdwings — whose numbers have fallen because of di-

minishing habitat and illegal poaching.

The six-count indictment against Limmer, 75, accuses him of working with overseas collaborators to smuggle some 1,000 lepidoptera, including some of the rarest and most endangered moths and butterflies in the world. An Etsy page connected to a seller going by the name "Limmer" had four ads for birdwings still advertised, including featuring a collection of five specimens with an asking price of \$133.

Casino industry spurs \$329B in economic labor

NJ ATLANTIC CITY — The casino gambling industry in the U.S. generates nearly \$329 billion a year in economic activity, according to a new study by the industry's national trade association.

The American Gaming Association released a study showing the industry's economic impact in 2022 was up 26% from 2017, before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Commercial and tribal casinos support 1.8 million jobs, including 700,000 jobs at casinos themselves or related businesses, about the same as in 2017.

The industry paid \$52.7 billion last year in taxes to federal, state and local governments, up 29% since 2017, the report said.

Chief justice urges exit of judge for texting at trial

OK OKLAHOMA CITY — The chief justice of the Oklahoma Supreme Court is recommending the removal of a lower court judge who was caught on camera scrolling through social media and texting during a murder

trial.

An investigation by the Oklahoma Supreme Court Council on Judicial Complaints found District Judge Traci Soderstrom exchanged more than 500 texts with her courtroom bailiff during the trial.

Texts included in a court filing showed the judge mocked prosecutors, laughed at the bailiff's comment about a prosecutor's genitals, praised the defense attorney and called the key prosecution witness a liar, according to the petition filed by Chief Justice John Kane IV.

Soderstrom was suspended with pay pending the outcome of a hearing by the Court on the Judiciary, which will determine whether to remove her from the bench.

Police search for killer of retired dean shot on trail

VT CASTLETON — More than 150 tips have come in since Vermont State Police released a sketch of a person of interest in the killing of a retired college dean who was shot dead this month on a recreation trail in the small college town, authorities said Thursday.

The composite sketch was made public Wednesday afternoon and is based on witnesses' accounts of a man they saw on the trail before they came across the body of Honoree Fleming, 77, police said. Fleming died of a gunshot wound to the head while walking along the trail on the afternoon of Oct. 5, about 1 mile south of the Vermont State University Castleton Campus.

The person of interest is described as a 5-foot-10 white male in his 20s with short, red

hair. He was wearing a dark gray T-shirt and carrying a black backpack and is considered armed and dangerous, police said.

Witnesses reported that the man was acting odd, and more than one person observed him, Capt. Scott Dunlap, commander of the Vermont State Police major crime unit, said.

Man executed in deadly carjacking of woman, 80

TX HUNTSVILLE — A Texas man who unsuccessfully challenged the safety of the state's lethal injection drugs and raised questions about evidence used to persuade a jury to sentence him to death for killing an elderly woman decades ago was executed last week.

Jedidiah Murphy, 48, was pronounced dead after an injection at the state penitentiary in Huntsville for the October 2000 fatal shooting of 80-year-old Bertie Lee Cunningham of the Dallas suburb of Garland. Cunningham was killed during a carjacking.

The execution took place hours after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned an order that had delayed the death sentence from being carried out.

Murphy's attorneys had questioned evidence of two robberies and a kidnapping used by prosecutors to persuade jurors during the penalty phase of his trial that Murphy would be a future danger — a legal finding needed to secure a death sentence in Texas.

Murphy admitted he killed Cunningham but had long denied he committed the robberies or kidnapping.

— From wire reports



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Penix pushes Washington past Oregon

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Before Rome Odunze left the room, he wanted to share a message about his Washington teammate that was sitting behind the microphones.

“You’re looking at the Heisman Trophy winner right there,” Odunze shouted in the direction of his quarterback Michael Penix Jr.

While voting is still months away, Penix’s Heisman moment may have come Saturday on the biggest stage for a pair of long-time Pacific Northwest rivals.

Penix hit Odunze on an 18-yard touchdown pass with 1:38 remaining after another debatable fourth-down decision by Oregon, and Camden Lewis missed a 43-yard field-goal attempt on the final play as No. 7 Washington held off No. 8 Oregon 36-33 in another wild chapter to their heated rivalry.

The 115th matchup between the rivals was the first that featured both teams ranked in the

top 10, along with a couple of quarterbacks in Penix and Bo Nix who should contend for the honor of the best player in college.

And it lived up to the hype as perhaps the biggest ever between the foes. There were offensive fireworks, wild momentum swings, big plays from the two QBs and decisions that will be questioned by one fan base.

It was a perfect recipe to an afternoon that ended with Washington fans swarming the field and Prince’s “Purple Rain” blasting through the stadium speakers.

“That was an amazing football game. If there’s one that I’ve been a part of that was bigger and better, I can’t think of it right now,” Washington coach Kalen DeBoer said.

The final regular-season meeting before both programs move to the Big Ten next year could be the opening act to decide the last season of the Pac-12 as we know it.

A rematch in the conference title game in Las Vegas is possible. Part I was 60 minutes of intensity, excitement and intrigue.

Penix needed just two plays to go 53 yards in 33 seconds after Oregon was stopped on fourth-and-3 at the Washington 47 with 2:11 remaining. Penix threw a 35-yard strike to Ja’Lynn Polk between two defenders, then hit Odunze on a back-shoulder throw at the goal line to give Washington (6-0, 3-0 Pac-12) the lead.

“He kind of gave me the head nod to do what I needed to do. He threw it up, gave me a shot, believed in me,” Odunze said.

It was Penix’s fourth touchdown pass of the game and his second time connecting with Odunze, who had eight catches for 128 yards. Penix finished 22-for-37 for 302 yards. He threw 26-yard touchdowns to Polk and Giles Jackson during a wild first half where the teams combined for five

straight touchdown drives.

Nix did his part and at times was the better quarterback. He sparked Oregon’s rally from an 11-point deficit early in the second half and took a 33-29 lead on Jordan James’ 10-yard TD run with 12:58 remaining.

Nix had one last chance to get the Ducks (5-1, 2-1) into field-goal range and reached the Washington 25 with 17 seconds left. Nix missed with his next two passes and on the final play Lewis pushed the kick to the right, setting off a wild celebration of purple-clad fans pouring onto the field.

Oregon seemed in position midway through the fourth quarter to pull off a narrow victory in the same way the Huskies did last year in Eugene. Washington was stopped on three run plays inside the Oregon 2, with Tybo Rogers stuffed on fourth-and-goal from the Ducks’ 1 with 6:33 left, met by Taki Taimani and others short of the goal line.

Notre Dame hounds Williams, hands USC first loss

Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — With its season in danger of spiraling, Notre Dame harassed the Heisman Trophy winner and knocked its fiercest rival from the ranks of the unbeaten.

Xavier Watts intercepted Caleb Williams twice and returned a fumble for a touchdown as No. 21 Notre Dame handed No. 10 Southern California its first loss in a 48-20 victory on Saturday night.

Having lost twice in the last three games, the Fighting Irish (6-2) bounced back against their longtime rivals from the West Coast in a big way. Watts had two of Notre Dame’s three first-half picks against Williams and then a 15-yard scoop-and-score with 3:27 left to add an exclamation point.

“Obviously, we were coming off a loss to Louisville,” Watts said. “I was kind of angry from that. This was a big rivalry game. I just wanted to come out and dominate.”

Benjamin Morrison had Notre Dame’s other interception of the half, leading to Audric Estime’s 1-yard plunge that put Notre Dame ahead 24-3. A week after wiping out a 17-point deficit to beat Arizona in overtime, the Trojans (6-1) had no such comeback in them.

Williams had only been intercepted once, but he was sacked four times by the Fighting Irish and finished with 199 yards passing and a TD. His hopes of becoming just the second two-time Heisman winner along with Ohio State’s Archie Griffin took a hit.

“I made mistakes that I usually don’t make,” Williams said. “Nights like that happen. You have to get through it, you got to keep fighting, you have to be a leader.”

Averaging 51.8 points per game, USC ended up with five turnovers and was limited to 92 yards rushing. The Fighting Irish racked up 11 tackles for loss.

“I couldn’t speak more highly of the performance of our defense,” Notre Dame coach Marcus Freeman said. “I don’t know if there’s a perfect answer to stopping Caleb Williams. He is one of the best college football players that I’ve ever seen. All I kept telling our guys was, we have a plan, and on this play, you have to attack. You cannot play passive. You

cannot play a three-man rush and let him go out there and be the Heisman Trophy winner he is.”

Williams pulled USC within 31-20 with a 7-yard TD pass to Brenden Rice with 9:04 left in the fourth quarter.

Seconds later, the Notre Dame lead bounced back to 18 points when Jadarian Price returned the ensuing kickoff 99 yards for a score.

“Disappointed, certainly not defeated, not demoralized,” USC coach Lincoln Riley said. “We’ve obviously got a lot in front of us. This game means a lot. We know it means a lot to our fan base, it means a lot to college football.”

USC lost for the fifth consecutive time at Notre Dame Stadium.

Tucker kicks 6 FGs in Ravens' victory

Associated Press

LONDON — Lamar Jackson threw a touchdown pass and Justin Tucker kicked six field goals to lead the Baltimore Ravens to a 24-16 win over the Tennessee Titans on Sunday at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium.

Jackson mostly shined in his international debut, but Tucker stole the spotlight by going 6-for-6 with the longest just 41 yards. Jackson was 21-for-30 for 223 yards and he led the team with 62 yards on the ground.

The Ravens (4-2) got plenty of chunk plays on offense and a 70-yard punt return by Devin Duvernay but several of their drives stalled deep in Tennessee territory.

Rookie receiver Zay Flowers scored his first NFL touchdown on a 10-yard pass after Jackson scrambled to his left and found the first-round draft pick open to make it 15-3.

The Titans (2-4) looked sluggish early against an opponent that arrived in London several

days before them.

Tennessee quarterback Ryan Tannehill limped off after the third quarter, replaced by Malik Willis. Tannehill, who was moving gingerly after a hit from Justin Madubuike in the third quarter, finished 8-for-16 for 76 yards.

Baltimore closed the first half with Tucker's 29-yard field goal after Titans returner Kyle Phillips fumbled a catch and Baltimore recovered with a second remaining.

Tennessee woke up in the second half, though.

Derrick Henry's 15-yard touchdown run made it 18-13 in the third quarter after Sean Murphy-Bunting intercepted Jackson's pass in Baltimore territory.

A drive earlier, Henry took a direct snap and rumbled 63 yards — his longest run of the season — before the Titans settled for a field goal. Henry finished with 97 yards on 12 carries.

Tennessee's momentum slowed when Geno Stone intercepted a deep ball that Tannehill left short intended for Chig Okonkwo late in the third.

Baltimore couldn't punch it in, though, with Jackson stopped at the 2 on third down. Tucker made his fifth for a 21-13 lead, and added a sixth to complete an 11-play, 71-yard drive in the fourth quarter.

Nick Folk's third field goal of the game made it a one-score game, but his onside kick was recovered by the Ravens.

Titans wide receiver Chris Moore was being evaluated in the concussion protocol after a hit to the head by Ravens safety Kyle Hamilton, who was penalized and thrown out of the game.

Unfinished business

The Ravens scored on five of their six first-half possessions, but four of those were field goals. To start the second half, Baltimore had a pair of three-and-outs and the interception

that set up the first rushing touchdown allowed by the Ravens this season.

Folk tale

Folk made three field goals under 40 yards, tying the NFL record of 70 for most consecutive kicks from that distance held by Tucker. Folk's streak started six years ago. Tucker established the record in that range from 2016 to 2020. Folk's 38-yarder late in the game made the score 24-16.

Moment of silence

A moment of silence before kickoff was interrupted by a couple of "free Palestine" shouts. The stadium announcer said: "This past week, we witnessed a horrific terror attack in Israel. We mourn the lives lost in the massacre, and we pray for innocent civilians in the Middle East who continue to be in harm's way. The NFL, the Titans and the Ravens ask that you join us in a moment of silence."

Eldridge's long TD caps Air Force rally over Wyoming

Associated Press

AIR FORCE ACADEMY, Colo. — John Lee Eldridge III raced 58 yards for the go-ahead score with 2:17 remaining and Air Force rallied from a half-time deficit to defeat Wyoming 34-27 in a battle for first place in the Mountain West Conference on Saturday night.

The long touchdown came after John Hoyland missed a 52-yard field goal for Wyoming. Eldridge scored on the third play following the miss and Air Force (6-0, 4-0) stopped Wyoming (5-2, 2-1) on downs on the ensuing possession.

The win kept the Falcons alone in first place as they rallied from deficits of 14-0 in the first quarter and 21-17 at halftime.

The Falcons took the second-

half kickoff and drove 75 yards in 17 plays, taking 10:13 off the clock. Quarterback Zac Larrier's 1-yard touchdown run gave Air Force a 24-21 lead and the Falcons added a Matthew Dapore 43-yard field goal early in the fourth quarter.

Andrew Peasley threw his third touchdown pass of the game for Wyoming and the score was tied at 27 after the extra-point attempt was blocked.

Larrier led Air Force with 109 yards rushing and was 6-for-9 passing for 58 yards. Emmanuel Michel added 97 of the Falcons' 356 yards on the ground.

Peasley was 15-for-25 passing for 212 yards. He also had a 1-yard run for the game's first score.

In taking a 21-17 halftime lead, Wyoming gained 267

yards and was 9-for-10 on third down. The Cowboys finished with 321 total yards and were 0-for-5 on third down in the second half.

Air Force travels to Navy next Saturday.

Navy 14, Charlotte 0: Eli Heidenreich and Alex Tecza scored on plays of 60-plus yards in the second half and the Midshipmen shut out the host 49ers.

It was the second shutout this season for Navy (3-3, 2-2 American Athletic Conference).

Each team was held to 265 yards, but the Midshipmen broke through on Heidenreich's 69-yard touchdown catch from Braxton Woodson in the third quarter and Tecza's 62-yard burst up the middle in the fourth.

Woodson, a freshman who

took over for injured Tai Lavatai (rib), completed 5 of 14 passes for 85 yards. Tecza finished with 75 of Navy's 173 yards on the ground.

Troy 19, Army 0: Kimani Vidal ran for 116 yards, Jabre Barter had four catches for 138 yards and Scott Taylor Renfroe kicked four field goals and the visiting Trojans shut out the Black Knights.

Troy's defense recovered three fumbles, had six sacks and held Army to 2-for-13 on third down.

Vidal, the nation's leading rusher, now has 951 yards.

The Trojans (5-2) had a four-play, 63-yard drive just before halftime, capped by Gunnar Watson's 52-yard connection with Chris Lewis to make it 16-0 at the break.

Astros-Rangers ALCS is bigger in Texas

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Houston dominated Texas during the regular season, winning nine of 13 matchups.

Now the Rangers get another chance at the Astros when they meet for the first time in the playoffs in a Texas-sized showdown with a trip to the World Series on the line starting Sunday night in Houston.

The Astros completed the regular-season matchup against the Rangers with a three-game sweep at the beginning of September. Houston hit 16 homers to sweep that series by a combined score of 39-10.

But despite the lopsided results this season, both teams say they'll start with a clean slate for the American League Championship Series.

"Regular season doesn't mean anything anymore,"

Houston Game 1 starter Justin Verlander said. "And I think it's a different game. Playoffs is a different brand of baseball."

That series in September was during the worst slump of the season for the Rangers, who were without third baseman Josh Jung and who lost Adolis García during the series.

Texas first baseman Nathaniel Lowe also noted that 21-year-old outfielder Evan Carter wasn't even in the majors the last time the Rangers met the Astros.

"I think we were missing two or three bats, two or three starting bats. Evan was still in high school," Lowe joked. "We had a couple pieces that weren't fully, fully firing on all pistons."

Houston's success in the head-to-head matchup allowed the Astros to win the AL West

while the Rangers had to play in the Wild Card Series after both teams finished with 90-72 records.

Now both teams are back to full strength and prepared to fight for the Lone Star state crown.

This isn't the first time Houston manager Dusty Baker has experienced a high stakes, in-state postseason matchup.

As manager of the San Francisco Giants in 2002, he lost the World Series to the Anaheim Angels.

"In California we were in the World Series, two teams, us and the Angels, battling for bragging rights in California," he said. "But everything is bigger in Texas. I've learned that since I've been here."

Outfielder Robbie Grossman is in his first season with the Rangers but is well-acquainted

with the rivalry, after going to high school in suburban Houston and spending his first three big league seasons with the Astros.

"It's huge for baseball, but it's even bigger for the state of Texas," he said. "Just being a Texan, I know how much both these teams mean to the state."

Rangers starters Max Scherzer and Jon Gray were included on the roster for the series.

Scherzer, a three-time Cy Young Award winner, has been out since Sept. 12 because of a muscle strain in his shoulder.

Scherzer, who was traded from the Mets this summer, said he was "ready to go" after throwing a bullpen session and doing fielding drills Friday.

Gray returns after last playing for the Rangers on Sept. 25. He had been dealing with tightness in his right wrist.

Matthews' hat trick lifts Maple Leafs over Minnesota

Associated Press

TORONTO — Auston Matthews registered his second hat trick in two games to open the season, and the Toronto Maple Leafs beat the Minnesota Wild 7-4 on Saturday night.

William Nylander had two goals and an assist for Toronto, and Ilya Samsonov made 28 saves. Calle Jarnkrok had a goal and an assist, and Tyler Bertuzzi also scored. Mitch Marner and Morgan Rielly each had two assists.

Matthews is the fifth player in NHL history to open a season with back-to-back hat tricks, joining Alex Ovechkin (2017-18), Cy Denny (1917-18), Joe Malone (1917-18) and Reg Noble (1917-18).

"I want to play at the highest level that I can every night," Matthews said. "I'm not really thinking in the past or thinking about years in the past. It's all about today."

"Just trying to go out and put

in my best effort and do what I can to help the team."

Toronto coach Sheldon Keefe said it has been fun watching Matthews go to work.

"You don't expect back-to-back hat tricks, of course, but I've gotten somewhat comfortable and used to Auston having big nights, making a big impact," Keefe said. "To do so back-to-back nights to start a season, it's terrific."

Matt Boldy, Ryan Hartman, Marco Rossi and Brandon Duhaime scored for Minnesota. Filip Gustavsson stopped 26 shots.

Canadiens 3, Blackhawks 2: Cole Caufield scored the first of his team's three unanswered second-period goals, and Montreal beat Connor Bedard and Chicago in its home opener.

Golden Knights 4, Ducks 1: Jack Eichel had a goal and an assist, Adin Hill made 22 saves and defending Stanley Cup champion Vegas beat visiting

Anaheim to remain unbeaten.

Avalanche 2, Sharks 1 (SO): Cale Makar scored a late game-tying goal, and visiting Colorado beat San Jose in a shootout to spoil a 51-save performance by goaltender Mackenzie Blackwood.

Jets 6, Panthers 4: Kyle Connor had two goals and an assist, and host Winnipeg earned its first win of the season.

Blue Jackets 5, Rangers 3: Boone Jenner had a natural hat trick and host Columbus gave Pascal Vincent his first coaching victory.

Red Wings 6, Lightning 4: Alex DeBrincat had two goals and an assist in his home debut with host Detroit, leading his team to the victory.

Blues 2, Kraken 1 (SO): Robert Thomas scored and Jordan Binnington stopped all three shots in the shootout, lifting St. Louis to the victory in its home opener.

Islanders 3, Sabres 2: Casey Cizikas snapped a tie in the third period, and host New York opened its season with a win over Buffalo.

Canucks 4, Oilers 3: Nils Hoglander had a goal and an assist as visiting Vancouver continued its early season dominance of Edmonton.

Hurricanes 6, Kings 5 (SO): Jordan Martinook scored in the ninth round of the shootout, and visiting Carolina blew a three-goal lead before hanging on for a victory over Los Angeles.

Penguins 5, Flames 2: Evgeni Malkin had a goal and an assist during host Pittsburgh's five-goal third period.

Bruins 3, Predators 2: James van Riemsdyk broke a tie with his second goal of the game early in the third period, sending host Boston to the win.

Senators 5, Flyers 2: Brady Tkachuk and Jakob Chychrun each scored twice, leading host Ottawa to the victory.