

Hurricane Milton pounds Florida

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Hurricane Milton barreled into the Atlantic Ocean on Thursday after plowing across Florida, where it knocked out power to more than 3 million customers and whipped up a barrage of tornadoes. The storm caused at least four deaths and compounded the misery wrought by Helene while sparing Tampa a direct hit.

The system tracked to the south in the final hours and made landfall late Wednesday as a Category 3 storm in Siesta Key, about 70 miles south of Tampa. Damage was widespread, and water levels may continue to rise for days, but Gov. Ron DeSantis said it was not “the worst-case scenario.”

The deadly storm surge feared for Tampa apparently did not materialize, though the

storm dumped up to 18 inches of rain in some parts of the area, the governor said. The worst storm surge appeared to be in Sarasota County, where it was 8 to 10 feet — lower than in the worst place during Helene.

“We will better understand the extent of the damage as the day progresses,” DeSantis said.

As dawn broke Thursday, officials repeated that the danger had not passed: Storm-surge warnings were posted for much of the east-central Florida coast and north into Georgia. Tropical storm warnings were in place along the coast into South Carolina. Officials in the hard-hit Florida counties of Hillsborough, Pinellas, Sarasota and Lee urged people to stay home, warning of downed power lines, trees in roads, blocked bridges and flooding.

“We’ll let you know when it’s

safe to come out,” Sheriff Chad Chronister of Hillsborough County, home to Tampa, said on Facebook.

The storm knocked out power across a large section of Florida, with more than 3.2 million homes and businesses without electricity, according to poweroutage.us, which tracks utility reports.

The fabric that serves as the roof of Tropicana Field — home of the Tampa Bay Rays baseball team in St. Petersburg — was ripped to shreds by fierce winds.

It was not immediately clear if there was damage inside. Before the storm hit, first responders were moved from a staging area there.

Multiple cranes were also toppled in the storm.

St. Petersburg residents could no longer get water from

their household taps because a water main break led the city to shut down service. Mayor Ken Welch had told residents to expect long power outages and the possible shutdown of the sewer system.

During a break in the storm, Tampa police rescued 15 people from a single-story home damaged by a fallen tree, authorities said.

Just inland from Tampa, the flooding in Plant City was “absolutely staggering,” according to City Manager Bill McDaniel. Emergency crews rescued 35 people overnight, said McDaniel, who estimated the city received 13.5 inches of rain.

“We have flooding in places and to levels that I’ve never seen, and I’ve lived in this community for my entire life,” he said in a video posted online Thursday morning.

Navy dives into social media to attract submariners

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Navy has launched a high-tech scavenger hunt on a popular social media platform meant to draw in its next generation of submariners.

The service’s interactive marketing campaign, which is available on the Reddit account page AmericasNavy, encourages users to decipher codes and search for clues to complete command directives. The campaign is the latest tactic to target submarine-specific jobs, a niche community of sailors that can prove difficult to recruit.

“The sailors who operate and maintain Navy submarines are among the most skilled and elite

in all the U.S. military and filling their ranks with exceptional new sailors is a priority for the Navy,” said Charlie Spirtos, a spokesman for the Navy’s Office of Information.

The Navy boasts a force of more than 380,000 active-duty enlisted and commissioned officers. But few recruits go on to become submariners, according to Navy Recruiting Command. There are fewer than 20,000 active-duty enlisted and commissioned officers who serve as submarine sailors, making up about 5% of the overall Navy force. To become a submariner, sailors — enlisted and commissioned officers — require about two years of nuclear-specific education that is sci-

ence and mathematics heavy.

“It takes a special kind of person to be a Navy submariner — only a small percentage of future sailors qualify to serve on a submarine. As such, finding the next generation of submariners means finding individuals who possess a unique blend of intelligence, curiosity and drive,” Spirtos said.

Submarines are some of the Navy’s most secretive vessels, packed with leading-edge technology and combat systems. The intricate machinery aboard a nuclear-powered submarine is complex, and navigating the warship through the dark ocean requires pinpoint accuracy and the careful coordination of multiple systems, Spirtos said.

The Reddit scavenger hunt seeks to tap into such skills — technical and analytical proficiency and an aptitude for mathematics and mechanics.

The Navy did not say how many potential submariners it aims to recruit with this campaign, instead stating the overall goal is to reach qualified individuals who might not be aware of what a Navy submarine career entails or understand the skill set required to join the Navy’s “Silent Service.”

The Navy established its Reddit account in 2018. The service has increasingly become more active on social media platforms such as Reddit, Instagram and Facebook to reach younger generations.

At ASEAN talks, China defiant on sea clashes

Associated Press

VIENTIANE, Laos — South-east Asian leaders stepped up pressure on China to respect international law following clashes in the disputed South China Sea, but Chinese Premier Li Qiang was defiant during annual summit talks on Thursday as he blamed “external forces” for interfering in regional affairs.

The 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations’ meeting with Li followed recent violent confrontations at sea between China and ASEAN members Philippines and Vietnam that heightened unease over China’s increasingly assertive actions in the contested waters.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said it was “regrettable that the overall situation in the South China Sea remains tense and unchanged” due to China’s actions, which he said violated international law.

“We continue to be subjected to harassment and intimidation,” he told summit leaders. He called for

more urgency in ASEAN’s negotiations with China for a code of conduct to govern the South China Sea. The Philippines, a long-time U.S. ally, has been critical of other ASEAN countries for not doing more to get China to back away.

Li responded by saying the South China Sea is “a shared home” and that China has an obligation to protect its sovereignty, according to an ASEAN official who declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the discussion.

Li later said meddling by foreign forces is creating conflicts within the region.

“We must realize that our development is also facing some unstable and uncertain factors. In particular, external forces frequently interfere and even try to introduce bloc confrontation and geopolitical conflicts into Asia,” Li said during an ASEAN meeting with China, Japan and South Korea. He called for more dialogue between countries to ensure disputes are resolved amicably.

Li didn’t name the foreign forces, but China has previously warned the U.S. not to meddle in the region’s territorial disputes.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who arrived in Laos on Thursday for the meetings, is expected to raise the issue of China’s actions in the sea, officials said. The U.S. has no territorial claims in the South China Sea but has deployed Navy ships and fighter jets to patrol the waterway and promote freedom of navigation and overflight.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who takes over the rotating ASEAN chair next year, said the bloc has called for an early conclusion to the code of conduct to maintain peace and security in the strategic waterway. Talks have been ongoing for years.

ASEAN members Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei along with Taiwan have overlapping claims with China, which asserts sovereignty over virtually all of the South China

Sea. Chinese and Philippine vessels have clashed repeatedly this year, and Vietnam said last week that Chinese forces assaulted its fishermen in the disputed sea. China has also sent patrol vessels to areas that Indonesia and Malaysia claim as exclusive economic zones.

Aside from regional security issues, the focus at the summit was also on trade. China’s Li said creating an “ultra large-scale market” is key to economic prosperity amid rising global trade protectionism. ASEAN and China said they expect to conclude negotiations to upgrade their free trade pact next year. Since the two sides signed the pact covering a market of 2 billion people in 2010, ASEAN’s trade with China has leaped from \$235.5 billion to \$696.7 billion last year.

China is ASEAN’s No. 1 trading partner and its third-largest source of foreign investment — a key reason why the bloc has been reluctant to criticize Chinese actions in the South China Sea.

US helo makes ‘precautionary landing’ on beach near Tokyo

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

CHIGASAKI, Japan — A U.S. Navy helicopter resumed its flight four hours after making a “precautionary landing” Thursday on a beach about 30 miles southwest of Tokyo.

The MH-60R Seahawk, assigned to Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 51 at Naval Air Facility Atsugi, landed safely on the beach along Sagami Bay in Chigasaki city at 11:06 a.m., base spokesman Gregory Mitchell told Stars and Stripes. It departed at 3:01 p.m.

The helicopter, with three crew members on board, landed out of precaution, Mitchell said by phone Thursday. He did not

disclose what prompted the landing.

“The cause of the precautionary landing is currently under investigation, and we regret any disturbances the landing may have caused,” he said in a follow-up email to Stars and Stripes.

Scores of onlookers and dozens of police officers, firefighters and reporters clustered near the helicopter that afternoon.

The Seahawk landed without issue, and there were no injuries, damage to the aircraft, or any other issues, Mitchell said. The Navy will continue to work with local authorities to address and investigate the incident, he added.

USS Boxer, carrying aid, arrives in the Philippines

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The amphibious assault ship USS Boxer arrived in the Philippines with emergency supplies Tuesday as the island nation continues to recover from Super Typhoon Krathon.

The Boxer, carrying elements of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, planned to assist the U.S. Agency for International Development’s relief efforts in the region by sending personnel and equipment to deliver foreign disaster response supplies, according to a U.S. 7th Fleet news release Wednesday.

Krathon, referred to as Super Typhoon Julian in the Philip-

ppines, made landfall Sept. 30 in Cagayan province, about 230 miles north of Manila. The storm affected more than 310,000 people, with at least five dead as of Wednesday, according to the Philippines’ National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council.

“Our condolences go out to all those affected by this devastating typhoon,” U.S. Navy Capt. Tate Robinson, commander of Amphibious Squadron 5, said in the release.

The relief efforts coincide with the start of the annual Sama Sama exercise, which began with an opening ceremony at Subic Bay, just north of Manila.

GOP challenges legitimacy of overseas votes

The Washington Post

A group of Republican congressmen from Pennsylvania have filed a federal lawsuit seeking stricter scrutiny of votes cast by U.S. citizens living abroad, reflecting a new GOP strategy to challenge the eligibility of a group of voters that includes overseas military personnel.

The lawmakers claim in the suit, which was filed this week, that because local election officials in Pennsylvania are not required to verify the identity or eligibility of voters who register overseas, those ballots are vulnerable to fraud. They have asked a federal judge to require officials to set aside completed ballots and not count them until voter eligibility can be determined.

The lawsuit is notable for targeting a group of voters long thought to favor Republicans

because of the prevalence of military personnel stationed overseas, but is now seen as more evenly divided or even leaning Democratic. The suit adds to a long list of Republican-backed litigation being fought around the country with just weeks to go before the Nov. 5 election, with much of it aimed at disqualifying mail-in votes or removing ineligible voters from rolls.

Critics pounced on the suit as more evidence that the GOP is laying the groundwork to contest the outcome of the presidential vote if Vice President Kamala Harris defeats former President Donald Trump.

They said the suit, if successful, could cause the disqualification of thousands of eligible ballots.

Pennsylvania has sent out 25,000 ballots to Americans abroad so far this year, accord-

ing to the office of Secretary of State Al Schmidt—a potentially decisive number in the event of a close election. In 2020, Joe Biden won both Arizona and Georgia by less than half that number. Pennsylvania is widely seen as among the most competitive states this year.

In the lawsuit, six of Pennsylvania's eight Republican congressmen argue that state law makes it possible for ineligible individuals to "register to vote without verification of identity or eligibility but receive a ballot by email and then vote a ballot without providing identification at any step in the process." As a result, they say, "the ultimate tally of the votes may not accurately reflect the legal results which could affect a close Congressional election."

The suit claims that Pennsylvania's rules around overseas voting violate state and federal

law, but critics say that is not true. Federal law defers to states to establish election rules, and it also specifically calls for the process of overseas voting to not be unduly burdensome.

"The policies and procedures around overseas voting have been known for years, if not decades," said David Becker, who leads the nonpartisan Center for Election Innovation & Research, which promotes trust in U.S. elections. "For members of Congress to file a lawsuit four weeks before the presidential election, about a law that is four decades old, is disturbing, and could put the right to vote at risk for many members of the military."

Pennsylvania law governing overseas voting, which has been in place for decades, requires Americans abroad to be previous residents of Pennsylvania and to attest to their eligibility.

Inflation reaches lowest point since surge began

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Inflation in the United States dropped last month to its lowest point since it first began surging more than three years ago, adding to a spate of encouraging economic news in the closing weeks of the presidential race.

Consumer prices rose just 2.4% in September from a year earlier, down from 2.5% in August and the smallest annual rise since February 2021. Measured from month to month, prices increased 0.2% from August to September, the Labor Department reported Thursday, the same as in the previous month.

But excluding volatile food and energy costs, "core" prices, a gauge of underlying inflation, remained elevated in September, driven higher by rising costs for medical care and car

insurance. Core prices in September were up 3.3% from a year earlier and 0.3% from August. Economists closely watch core prices, which typically provide a better hint of future inflation.

The improving inflation picture follows a mostly healthy jobs report released last week, which showed that hiring accelerated in September and that the unemployment rate dropped from 4.2% to 4.1%.

The government has also reported that the economy expanded at a solid 3% annual rate in the April-June quarter. Growth likely continued at roughly that pace in the just-completed July-September quarter.

Economists at Goldman Sachs project that core inflation will drop to 3% by December 2024.

Solar storm may strain grids even more after hurricanes

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — A severe solar storm is headed to Earth that could stress power grids even more as the U.S. deals with major back-to-back hurricanes, space weather forecasters said Wednesday.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued a severe geomagnetic storm watch for Thursday into Friday after an outburst from the sun was detected earlier this week. Such a storm could temporarily disrupt power and radio signals.

NOAA has notified operators of power plants and orbiting spacecraft to take precautions. It also alerted the Federal Emergency Management Agency about possible power disruptions, as the organization copes with the devastating aftermath of Hurricane Helene and now Hurricane Milton after

it barreled across Florida on Thursday.

Forecasters do not expect the latest solar storm to surpass the one that slammed Earth in May, the strongest in more than two decades. But they won't know for sure until it's just 1 million miles away, where spacecraft can measure it.

Florida is far enough south to avoid power disruptions from the solar surge unless it gets a lot bigger, said scientist Rob Steenburgh of NOAA's Space Weather Prediction Center.

"That adds a little bit more to the comfort level," Steenburgh said. "Why we're here is to let them know so that they can prepare."

Experts are more concerned about potential effects to the power grids in areas slammed by Hurricane Helene two weeks ago, said NOAA space weather forecaster Shawn Dahl.

Israel hits Gaza school-turned-shelter

Associated Press

DEIRAL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — An Israeli strike on a school sheltering the displaced in the Gaza Strip killed at least 27 people on Thursday, Palestinian medical officials said. The Israeli military said it targeted militants hiding among civilians, without providing evidence.

Israel has continued to strike at what it says are militant targets across the Palestinian enclave, even as attention has shifted to its war against Hezbollah in Lebanon and rising tensions with Iran. The military launched a large-scale air and ground operation against Hamas in northern Gaza earlier this week.

In a separate development,

the U.N. peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon said an Israeli tank fired on its headquarters in the town of Naqoura, hitting an observation tower and wounding two peacekeepers, who were hospitalized.

The Israeli military said it was looking into the incident.

UNIFIL said in a statement that its headquarters and nearby positions “have been repeatedly hit.” It said the army also fired on a nearby bunker where peacekeepers were sheltering, damaging vehicles and a communication system. It said an Israeli drone was seen flying to the bunker’s entrance.

The strike in the central Gaza city of Deir al-Balah killed 27 people, including a child and

seven women, according to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, where the bodies were brought. It said several other people were wounded.

An Associated Press reporter saw ambulances streaming into the hospital and counted the bodies, many of which arrived in pieces.

“We appeal to the world. We are dying!” one man screamed.

The Israeli military said it carried out a precise strike targeting a militant command and control center inside the school. Israel has repeatedly attacked schools that were turned into shelters in Gaza, accusing militants of hiding out in them.

Witnesses who spoke on condition of anonymity for security

reasons said the strike occurred while school managers were meeting with representatives of an aid group in a room normally used by Hamas-run police who provide security. They said there were no police in the room at the time.

The Hamas-run government operated a civilian police force numbering in the tens of thousands. They largely vanished from the streets after the start of the war as Israel targeted them with airstrikes, but plainclothes Hamas security personnel still exert control over most areas.

Hamas has continued to launch attacks on Israeli forces and fire occasional rockets into Israel more than a year after its Oct. 7 attack ignited the war.

DOD puts Russian casualty toll in Ukraine at 600K

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

More than 600,000 Russian troops have been killed or injured since the Kremlin launched its 2022 full-scale invasion in Ukraine, with last month being the deadliest of all, Pentagon officials said this week.

Senior defense officials, speaking on background Wednesday to reporters, said the Russian combat losses far exceed the numbers of all the

Kremlin’s other post-World War II conflicts combined.

“The Ukrainians are mounting a strong defense, both on the ground and from an air defense perspective,” a senior official said in a Defense Department statement.

But despite the heavy enemy losses, Ukraine still faces a daunting challenge against a much larger force that Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to pour resources into.

“Despite Ukraine’s offensive into (the Russian region of) Kursk, Russia has also demonstrated time and time again a willingness to do whatever it takes to attempt to force the Ukrainians to capitulate, including purposely targeting Ukrainian civilians and critical infrastructure,” a senior defense official said.

The Pentagon estimate of more than 600,000 Russian casualties is a sharp increase from es-

timates early in the year that were in the 350,000 range. The updated number is in line with estimates by Ukraine’s military last month.

The Pentagon and Ukraine have not offered a tally for Ukrainian military casualties. The Wall Street Journal reported in September, however, that a confidential Ukrainian estimate from earlier in the year put the numbers at 80,000 dead and 400,000 wounded.

S. Korean author awarded Nobel Prize in literature

Associated Press

STOCKHOLM — The Nobel Prize in literature was awarded Thursday to South Korean author Han Kang for what the Nobel committee called “her intense poetic prose that confronts historical traumas and exposes the fragility of human life.”

Han becomes the first South Korean writer to win the Nobel literature prize.

Nobel committee chairman

Anders Olsson praised Han’s “physical empathy for the vulnerable, often female lives” of her characters.

He said her work “confronts historical traumas and in each of her works exposes the fragility of human life. She has a unique awareness of the connections between body and soul, the living and the dead, and in a poetic and experimental style, has become an innovator in contemporary prose.”

Han, 53, won the International Booker Prize in 2016 for “The Vegetarian,” an unsettling novel in which a woman’s decision to stop eating meat has devastating consequences.

At the time of winning that award, Han said writing novels “is a way of questioning for me.”

“I just try to complete my questions through the process of my writing and I try to stay in the questions, sometimes painful, sometimes — well — some-

times demanding,” she said.

With “The Vegetarian,” she said, “I wanted to question about being human and I wanted to describe a woman who desperately didn’t want to belong to the human race any longer and desperately wanted to reject being human, (humans) who commit such violence.”

Her novel “Human Acts” was an International Booker Prize finalist in 2018.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

University president's home defaced on Oct. 7

MI WEST BLOOMFIELD — A suburban Detroit house owned by the University of Michigan president and the sidewalk were spray-painted Monday with the words “intifada” and “coward” on the first anniversary of the Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel by Hamas.

West Bloomfield police didn't identify the owner, but the university acknowledged that the house belongs to Santa Ono. The house is separate from his official campus residence. “Intifada” is an Arabic term for the Palestinian uprising against Israel.

Ono and the university's governing board have been criticized by pro-Palestinian activists for not taking steps to eliminate any investment linked to Israel.

State tells inmate to choose execution method

SC COLUMBIA — South Carolina prison officials told death row inmate Richard Moore on Tuesday that he can choose between a firing squad, the electric chair and lethal injection for his Nov. 1 execution.

State law gives Moore until Oct. 18 to decide or by default he will be electrocuted. His execution would mark the second in South Carolina after a 13-year pause due to the state not being able to obtain a drug needed for lethal injection.

Moore, 59, is facing the death penalty for the September 1999 shooting of store clerk James Mahoney. Moore went into the Spartanburg County store un-

armed to rob it and the two ended up in a shootout after Moore was able to take one of Mahoney's guns. Moore was wounded, while Mahoney died from a bullet to the chest.

He is appealing to the U.S. Supreme Court to stop the execution. Moore, who is Black, is the only man on South Carolina's death row to have been convicted by a jury that did not have any African Americans, his lawyers said.

Grazer wins contest over bear that killed her cub

AK ANCHORAGE — In a storyline better befitting a melodrama than a popularity vote, Grazer won her second Fat Bear Contest on Tuesday by defeating the male behemoth that killed her cub this summer.

Grazer beat Chunk by more than 40,000 votes cast by fans watching live cameras at explore.org of Alaska's Katmai National Park and Preserve.

Fans cast votes online for their favorite chunky competitor in tournament-style brackets that begin with 12 bears. They picked the bear they believe best exemplifies winter preparedness by the fat they have accumulated over the summer feeding on the sockeye salmon that return to Brooks River.

The bears often perch at the top of a falls in the river, grabbing leaping salmon out of the air as the fish attempt to hurdle the waterfall to spawn upstream.

This is where Grazer's cub died after it slipped over the waterfall and was killed by Chunk, perhaps the most dominant brown bear on the river.

State strikes 302 more people from voter rolls

OR PORTLAND — Oregon authorities said Monday they had removed another 302 people from the state's voter rolls after determining they didn't provide proof of citizenship when they were registered to vote, in the latest revelation of improper voter registrations stemming from clerical errors at the state DMV.

Monday's announcement, in addition to the 1,259 people whose voter registrations have already been inactivated because of the issue, brings the total number of mistaken registrations to 1,561. It came the same day the DMV released a report about the errors, which were first acknowledged by authorities last month.

The mistake occurred in part because Oregon passed a law in 2019 allowing some residents who aren't citizens to obtain driver's licenses. And the state's so-called “Motor Voter” law, which took effect in 2016, automatically registers most people to vote when they seek a new license or ID.

Prosecutor: Officer was justified in fatal shooting

NE OMAHA — A prosecutor has decided not to file charges against an Omaha police officer who fatally shot an armed Nebraska man eight times while he was fleeing.

Douglas County Attorney Don Kleine said Monday that Officer Noah Zendejas' “actions were justified in the shooting of Steven Phipps.”

Police showed video and still photos of what happened last

week during a briefing. After Phipps was pulled over for having expired plates on Sept. 28, he ran away and scaled a chain link fence. As he fell head-first from the fence, body camera video showed Phipps holding a gun in his right hand.

“The actions of Mr. Phipps in producing a firearm at a traffic stop, not complying with officers' commands, and Mr. Phipps' gun barrel being pointed towards the officers during the incident justified the officers' decision to use deadly force,” Kleine said in his two-paragraph statement.

Court dismisses lawsuit against Christian baker

CO DENVER — Colorado's Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed on procedural grounds a lawsuit against a Christian baker who refused to bake a cake for a transgender woman. Justices declined to weigh in on the free speech issues that brought the case national attention.

Baker Jack Phillips was sued by attorney Autumn Scardina in 2017 after his Denver-area bakery refused to make a pink cake with blue frosting to celebrate her gender transition.

Justices said in the 6-3 majority opinion that Scardina had not exhausted her options to seek redress through another court before filing her lawsuit.

The case was among several in Colorado pitting LGBTQ+ civil rights against First Amendment rights. In 2018, Phillips scored a partial victory before the U.S. Supreme Court after refusing to bake a cake for a gay couple's wedding.

— From wire reports

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Long-starved fans believe in Commanders

Associated Press

Jayden Daniels has one of the best-selling jerseys in the NFL. Forgive the rookie quarterback for not noticing just how many Washington Commanders fans are now wearing his name and No. 5 on their backs.

"I appreciate them," Daniels said, "but I haven't even really paid attention to that."

Daniels and his teammates are saying all the right things and trying to block out the hype they have created with the franchise's first 4-1 start since 2008. But there's no doubting the Commanders have engendered optimism that has not existed at least since the team has had this name and really for quite some time before that.

"When you're winning, it just creates a little bit more fire in you," third-year cornerback Benjamin St-Juste said Wednesday. "Winning, it just puts a little extra smile to your face when you come here because we got the potential to do

something great here."

Washington has not had a winning season since 2016. Daniels is the brightest hope at football's most important position since Robert Griffin III in 2012.

That's the year Stephen Boyd became a season-ticket holder. Forgive him if he is reticent to believe this time around is different.

"It's like we're going up the escalator, if you will, but I keep looking back because I know what was behind me and I'm afraid, 'Will I fall off? Can we keep going?'" said Boyd, who has not missed a home or away game for the past decade and is known for hosting fan rallies on the road. "I keep looking back even though I want to just continue to look up and beyond. But the past still haunts me."

Dan Quinn, in his first year as coach, has not been part of that past and, when asked about that mentality earlier this week, could hardly wrap his mind

around it.

"Boy, I don't think of it in that way at all," Quinn said Monday. "For those who are thinking the other way, I'd say it's 2024, and so just let's let it ride with these guys and have a blast."

Ted Abela, a season-ticket holder since 2001, thinks "football is fun again" and "being a Washington fan is fun again." He has noticed more fellow fans at games in Commanders gear in recent weeks than the interim name or the team's longstanding name that was dropped four summers ago, and the line at the stadium store showed it after a 34-13 beatdown of the Cleveland Browns.

He's willing to believe this season because he thinks this brand of winning is sustainable and enjoyable and no one is counting on an undefeated record down the stretch to make a long-shot run at the playoffs.

"Now, they're actually winning games ahead of schedule, and it almost feels like we're

playing with house money," said Abela, who's known among the fanbase as "Tailgate Ted" for his pregame gatherings. "The way Jayden's winning, the way this team is winning, people are back."

Quinn said he had the best seat in the house for that last weekend, a 360-degree view of fans being back on board after years of losing. Players who have been around for some of it are enjoying being on the right side of games for a change.

"It's been a lot of fun," seventh-year defensive tackle Daron Payne said. "Just being with the guys and being able to enjoy the locker room after the games, it's been fun."

Daniels, who has vaulted into favorite status as offensive rookie of the year, is having plenty of fun. Five games into his pro career, the 2023 Heisman Trophy winner and No. 2 draft pick said, "I love playing football, and it makes it even better when you're winning football games."

Sanders tells his players success was expectation

Associated Press

BOULDER, Colo. — Some coaches might downplay a 4-1 start. Not Deion Sanders.

Colorado's coach took time this week to remind his players of just how well they're playing and not to be surprised by it.

Some coaches also might mute the outside noise. Again, not Sanders. He hears everything, which was a bit negative early in the season but is now much more favorable. He's taking it all in stride — or trying to, anyway.

"As quick as they jump on, they can jump off. As quick as they support, they try to dismantle. As quick as they love, they could hate," Sanders said Tuesday as his team returned from a bye week and prepares to host No. 18 Kansas State (4-1, 1-1 Big 12) this weekend. "I

really don't get into that. I definitely know who said what for my purposes."

He's taking note of this: Colorado (4-1, 2-0) is on a three-game winning streak that has it contending for a Big 12 title. His message to the team is don't let the success be a surprise.

"How can you be surprised that you're winning in life?" Sanders said. "How can you be surprised with the expectation you have for yourself? The only way you can be surprised is if you didn't expect it."

Sanders certainly expected it. He just wishes he could have a mulligan for a 28-10 loss at Nebraska on Sept. 7.

"Some of us are still upset about the Nebraska game," Sanders said. "Because we felt like we weren't where we are

then, where we are right now. ... When we practice like we do, prepare like we do, we expect the results."

The Buffaloes have a big test this weekend against the Wildcats and their explosive offense led by quarterback Avery Johnson. Colorado's defense will be at full strength, with safety Shilo Sanders returning from a forearm injury (he's wearing a rubber cast).

Since Shilo, the coach's older son, went out against Nebraska, the team has knocked off Colorado State, Baylor and Central Florida.

Deion Sanders' advice to his squad: Just keep grinding.

"I don't want them to be lackadaisical thinking this is easy, because a win don't care who attains it," Sanders said. "It has no mind, no memory, no what-

soever. It does not care. So it might as well be us if it has no care and no feelings."

Sanders got a ringing endorsement Tuesday from athletic director Rick George, who likes what he sees from attendance (two straight years of selling out season tickets), games appearing on major networks and the product on the field.

"We hope that 'Coach Prime' finishes his career here," George said. "He can do significant things for us long-term with longevity. He and I are on the same page about where we want this program to go."

For the record, Sanders has no animosity toward Kansas State running back Dylan Edwards, who left Boulder after last season. Sanders roots for Edwards — just not Saturday.

Lindor's grand slam propels Mets into NLCS

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Francisco Lindor hit a grand slam in the sixth inning, his latest clutch swing in a storybook season full of them, and the New York Mets reached the National League Championship Series with a 4-1 victory over the Philadelphia Phillies on Wednesday.

Edwin Díaz struck out Kyle Schwarber with two runners aboard to end it as New York finished off the rival Phillies in Game 4 of their best-of-five Division Series, winning 3-1 to wrap up a postseason series at home for the first time in 24 years.

"I want to win it all. And ours will be a team that will forever be remembered," Lindor said, speaking in the interview room with one of his young daughters on his lap drinking from a Gatorade bottle.

"This will be a team that comes every 10 years and eats for free everywhere they go. And I want to do that. I want to do that. But the job is not done."

With tears in his eyes, outfielder Brandon Nimmo embraced Lindor as the Mets poured onto the field in excitement following the final out.

Then, in a raucous locker

room, they enjoyed the team's first champagne-soaked clinching celebration in Citi Field's 16-season history. The last time the Mets won a playoff series in their own ballpark was the 2000 NLCS at Shea Stadium.

"This is the kind of stuff that I was dreaming about," Nimmo said in a clubhouse interview shown on the giant videoboard in center. "This has been a long time coming. We wanted it so bad for our fan base."

After a third bubbly clinching bash in 10 days and then some rest, New York opens the best-of-seven NLCS on Sunday at the San Diego Padres or Los Angeles Dodgers. Those teams are tied 2-1 heading into the decisive Game 5 of their NLDS on Friday in Los Angeles.

"Let's keep this thing rolling!" Mets slugger Pete Alonso told reveling fans still in the stands when he popped out of the clubhouse party for an on-field interview with large goggles protecting his eyes. "So proud of this group. We've overcome so much."

New York is chasing its third World Series title and first since 1986.

"I want to slay the negative

Met fan perceptions, and we're on our way to doing that," owner Steve Cohen said.

For the NL East champion Phillies, who won 95 games and finished six ahead of the wild-card Mets during the regular season, it was a bitter exit early in the playoffs and a disappointing step backward after they advanced to the 2022 World Series and then lost Games 6 and 7 of the 2023 NLCS at home to Arizona.

After falling short in October again, Bryce Harper and the Phillies are still looking for the franchise's third championship.

"We have a really great group. We got beat in a short series," manager Rob Thomson said.

Dodgers 8, Padres 0: Mookie Betts homered for the second straight night, Shohei Ohtani hit an RBI single and visiting Los Angeles beat Dylan Cease and San Diego to force a deciding Game 5 in their tense NL Division Series.

Will Smith and Gavin Lux each hit a two-run homer for the Dodgers, who snapped a two-game losing streak and now return home for the next matchup between the NL West rivals on Friday night.

"We have a bunch of grinders,

a bunch of fighters," Betts said after Los Angeles posted the largest shutout win in franchise postseason history. "We knew it wasn't going to be easy."

The winner will have home-field advantage in the National League Championship Series against the New York Mets, who eliminated the Philadelphia Phillies in their NLDS.

"I'm proud. ... Your desire's got to be more than your opponent's," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. "To see our guys go through what they've been through, and respond the way they have, it makes me excited about Game 5."

The Dodgers got a superb effort by opener Ryan Brasier and seven fellow relievers in a bullpen game, holding the Padres to seven hits and extending their scoreless streak to 15 innings. Evan Phillips, who got the win, retired Jurickson Profar, Manny Machado and Jackson Merrill on five pitches in the sixth.

"Overall the guys were efficient, understanding that they're going to have to do up/downs, go a little bit longer potentially," Roberts said. "So the efficiency of the strike zone was huge and it gives us options for Game 5."

Stanton powers Yankees over Royals with 8th-inning homer

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Giancarlo Stanton hit a go-ahead homer in the eighth inning amid a battle of bullpens, and the New York Yankees beat the Kansas City Royals 3-2 on Wednesday night in Game 3 of their AL Division Series at Kauffman Stadium.

Stanton finished with three hits, drove in two runs and stole a base for the first time in four years for the Yankees, who turned to six-time All-Star pitcher Gerrit Cole on Thursday night with a chance to reach the American League Championship Series.

"We need to wrap it up tomorrow. No wiggle room," Stanton said. "We've got to get it done."

In a game dominated by pitching, the Royals used four relievers before starter-turned-bullpen ace Kris Bubic took over for the eighth. He struck out Austin Wells before Stanton hit a 3-1 pitch nearly 420 feet to left

field to give New York the lead.

"He's done it throughout his career with us," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "I thought that at-bat off Bubic was just phenomenal. I think he went up there looking to do damage, looking to do just that."

Tigers 3, Guardians 0: Riley Greene and Spencer Torkelson each drove in a run, and six pitchers combined to lift host Detroit to a win over Cleveland and a 2-1 lead in their AL Division Series.

The Tigers, baseball's hottest team the past two months, had their first chance to advance to the American League Championship Series since 2013 on Thursday night in Game 4 at Comerica Park.

"We're human," Torkelson said. "We know how close we are."

The Guardians have gone 20 straight innings without scoring since opening the series

with a five-run first and a two-run sixth in their 7-0 win. Steven Kwan had three of their six hits in Game 3.

"Short sample size, obviously in the playoffs it's a lot more magnified," David Fry said after going 0-for-3 with two strikeouts, contributing to the team's eight runners left on base. "I think guys have hit balls hard. Balls aren't really falling."

After AL Cy Young Award favorite Tarik Skubal helped Detroit shut out Cleveland in Game 2, manager A.J. Hinch put a stream of pitchers on the mound and kept the Guardians quiet at the plate.

Tigers reliever Will Vest entered with two on and two outs in the seventh, and Fry lined to a leaping Matt Vierling at third.

"He likes to pull the ball a lot, so I was ready for anything that came my way," Vierling said. "I didn't have time to think. I just had to react."

Nadal will retire after Davis Cup final

Associated Press

MADRID — Tennis great Rafael Nadal announced his impending retirement from the sport on Thursday at age 38 after winning 22 Grand Slam singles titles during an unprecedented era he shared with his rivals in the so-called Big Three, Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic.

Nadal said he will retire after next month's Davis Cup finals that will be played in Malaga, Spain.

"Really, everything I have experienced has been a dream come true," Nadal said in an announcement on social media. "I leave with the absolute peace of mind of having given my best, of having made an effort in every way."

The Spaniard indicated his decision was related to persistent injury problems.

"The reality is that it has been some difficult years, these last two especially. I don't think I have been able to play without limitations. It is obviously a difficult decision, one that has taken me some time to make. But in this life, everything has a beginning and an end," Nadal said.

Nadal's unrelenting, physical style of play — every point pursued as though it were his last, sprinting and sliding into place for that high-bouncing bullwhip of a lefty forehand — made him one of the greats of the game

and the unquestioned King of Clay, the slow, red surface on which he claimed his record 14 French Open championships.

That's more than anyone, man or woman, won at any one of the sport's four major tournaments, a dominance celebrated by a statue of Nadal that stands near the main entrance to the grounds of Roland Garros and in the shadow of its main stadium, Court Philippe Chatrier.

"14 thanks for the millions of memories," was the X post by Roland Garros.

Nadal also won four trophies at the U.S. Open and two apiece at Wimbledon and the Australian Open, giving him a career Grand Slam. His last pair arrived in 2022, at Melbourne in January and at Paris in June, pushing him ahead of Federer for the men's record of 20 Grand Slam titles. Federer announced his retirement when he was 41 at the end of the 2022 season, shortly before bidding adieu by teaming with Nadal in a doubles match at the Laver Cup.

Both have since been surpassed by Djokovic, who is up to 24.

"I want to thank the entire tennis industry, all the people involved in this sport, my long-time colleagues, especially my great rivals," Nadal said over images of him playing against Federer and Djokovic. "I have spent many hours with them and I have

lived many moments that I will remember for the rest of my life."

So much of Nadal's success was seen, fairly or not, through the prism of his encounters with Federer and Djokovic. The tennis world, and plenty outside of it, were consumed with the debate over which was most deserving of the "GOAT" — "Greatest Of All-Time" — moniker.

The world, tennis or otherwise, was fascinated by their matchups, their differing styles and personalities. Who among those who witnessed it could possibly forget Nadal vs. Federer in the 2008 Wimbledon final? Or Nadal vs. Djokovic in the 2022 French Open quarterfinals? Or Nadal vs. Djokovic in the 2012 Australian Open final? And so on.

Nadal added Thursday that he was excited to finish his career at the Davis Cup.

"I am very excited that my last tournament will be the final of the Davis Cup and representing my country," he said. "I think I've come full circle since one of my first great joys as a professional tennis player was the Davis Cup final in Seville in 2004."

Nadal has not played since the Paris Olympics, where he lost to old rival Djokovic in the second round of the singles tournament and reached the quarterfinals of the men's doubles with Carlos Alcaraz.

Montembeault helps Canadiens outlast Maple Leafs

Associated Press

MONTREAL — Sam Montembeault made 48 saves, Cole Caufield scored on a first-period power play and the Montreal Canadiens beat the Toronto Maple Leafs 1-0 on Wednesday night in the season opener for both teams.

Caufield scored at 7:48 of the opening period, finishing off a tic-tac-toe play with Juraj Slafkovsky and Kirby Dach. The Canadiens were 1 for 5 on the power play after going 0 for 30 in the preseason.

Anthony Stolarz made 26 saves for Toronto after expected starter Joseph Woll was held out of the lineup. Coach Craig Berube said Woll had "lower-body tightness."

Rangers 6, Penguins 0: Igor

Shesterkin stopped 29 shots and visiting New York opened the season with a victory over Pittsburgh.

Chris Kreider scored twice for the reigning Metropolitan Division champions. Sam Carrick, Alexis Lafreniere, Filip Chytil and Vincent Trocheck also scored for New York, which dominated Pittsburgh while beating the Penguins for the fifth time in their last six meetings.

Chytil's goal was his first in over 18 months after he missed most of last season due to a concussion. The center's flick to the far post against Tristan Jarry just before the game's midway point boosted New York's lead to 4-0.

Penguins star Sidney Crosby

was held scoreless in his 20th season opener. Evgeni Malkin was held without a point.

Jets 6, Oilers 0: Connor Helleybuyck made 30 saves for his 38th career shutout and visiting Winnipeg routed Edmonton in the opener for both teams.

Mason Appleton had a goal and two assists, Adam Lowry and Mark Scheifele each had a goal and an assist and Rasmus Kupari, Dylan Samberg and Kyle Connor also scored.

Edmonton outshot Winnipeg 30-20.

Oilers starter Stuart Skinner allowed five goals on 13 shots before being pulled midway through the second period. Calvin Pickard gave up a goal on seven shots.

Golden Knights 8, Avalanche

4: Ivan Barbashev, Mark Stone and Victor Olofsson each scored two goals and host Vegas beat Colorado in the season opener.

Barbashev also had two assists, linemate Jack Eichel had four and defenseman Shea Theodore added three.

Mikko Rantanen had three goals for the Avalanche.

Flames 6, Canucks 5 (OT): Connor Zary scored 1:33 into overtime and visiting Calgary opened its season with a comeback win over Vancouver.

Anthony Mantha had a goal and an assist to lead Calgary. Rasmus Andersson, Martin Pospisil, MacKenzie Weegar and Jonathan Huberdeau also scored for the Flames, who trailed 3-0 midway through the first period.