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US unemployment falls to 8.4% in Aug.

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. unemployment rate fell sharply in August to 8.4% from 10.2% even as hiring slowed, with employers adding the fewest jobs since the pandemic began.

Employers added 1.4 million jobs, the Labor Department said, down from 1.7 million in July. The U.S. economy has recovered about half of the 22 million jobs lost to the pandemic.

Friday's report added to evidence that nearly six months after the coronavirus paralyzed the country, the economy is mounting only a fitful recovery. From small businesses to hotels, restaurants, airlines and entertainment venues, a wide spectrum of companies are struggling to sur-

vive the loss of customers with confirmed viral cases still high. After an epic collapse in the spring, when the economy shrank at a roughly 30% annual rate, growth has been rebounding as states have reopened at least parts of their economies. Yet the recovery remains far from complete.

Many economists think significant hiring may be hard to sustain because employers are operating under a cloud of uncertainty about the virus. Daily confirmed case counts have fallen from 70,000 in June to about 40,000. The decline has leveled off in the past week and the viral caseload remains higher than it was in May and June.

As a result activities like restaurant dining and air travel are still far below pre-pandemic levels. Most economists say a meaningful economic recovery will likely

be impossible until the coronavirus is brought under control, most likely from the widespread use of a vaccine.

Friday's jobs data was the second-to-last employment report — for most voters, the most visible barometer of the economy — before Election Day, Nov. 3. President Donald Trump faces the daunting task of seeking re-election in the worst economic downturn since the 1930s. Yet voters in surveys have generally given him higher marks on the economy than they have on other aspects of his presidency.

The jobs report coincides with growing signs that more companies are making permanent job cuts rather than temporary furloughs. It is typically harder for an unemployed worker to find a new job than to return to a previous employer.

Trump denies report that he called US war dead 'losers'

From wire reports

President Donald Trump strongly denied that he called Marines killed in World War I "losers" and "suckers," after published reports alleged he made disparaging remarks about service members who had been killed, wounded or captured in combat.

Trump has made support for the military a signature feature of his administration. On Thursday, he and top White House officials pushed back strongly against the report, which first appeared in *The Atlantic Magazine* and later in *The Associated Press*.

The reports said Trump decided in 2018 not to visit a French cemetery for Marines killed in the Battle of Belleau Wood because he thought the rain would mess up his hair and the men buried there were losers.

"If people really exist that would have said that, they're lowlives and they're liars," Trump told White House reporters. "And I would be willing to swear on anything that I never said that about our fallen heroes. There is nobody that respects them more."

White House chief of staff Mark Meadows said, "It's sad the depths that people will go to during a lead-up to a presidential campaign to try to smear somebody."

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden said Thursday, "If the revelations

in today's *Atlantic* article are true, then they are yet another marker of how deeply President Trump and I disagree about the role of the President of the United States."

The *Atlantic's* editor in chief Jeffrey Goldberg maintained he heard of the alleged comments from "four people with firsthand knowledge of the discussion that day," but he did not name them.

AP said a senior Defense Department official who claimed firsthand knowledge of events and a senior U.S. Marine Corps officer who was told about Trump's comments confirmed some of the remarks to the agency's reporter.

The defense officials said Trump made the comments as he begged off visiting the cemetery outside Paris during a meeting following his presidential daily briefing on the morning of Nov. 10, 2018.

Staffers from the National Security Council and the Secret Service told Trump that rainy weather made helicopter travel to the cemetery risky, but they could drive there. Trump responded by saying he didn't want to visit the cemetery because it was "filled with losers," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to discuss it publicly.

The White House blamed the canceled visit on poor weather at the time.

The Defense officials also confirmed

to the AP reporting in *The Atlantic* that Trump on Memorial Day 2017 had gone with his chief of staff, John Kelly, to visit the Arlington Cemetery gravesite of Kelly's son, Robert, who was killed in 2010 in Afghanistan, and said to Kelly: "I don't get it. What was in it for them?"

The senior Marine Corps officer and *The Atlantic*, citing sources who said they had firsthand knowledge, also reported that Trump said he didn't want to support the August 2018 funeral of Republican Sen. John McCain, a decorated Navy veteran who spent years as a Vietnam prisoner of war, because he was a "loser." The *Atlantic* also reported that Trump was angered that flags were flown at half-staff for McCain, saying: "What the f— are we doing that for? Guy was a f—ing loser."

In 2015, shortly after launching his presidential candidacy, Trump publicly blasted McCain, saying "He's not a war hero." He added, "I like people who weren't captured."

Trump only amplified his criticism of McCain as the Arizona lawmaker grew critical of his acerbic style of politics, culminating in a late-night "no" vote scuttling Trump's plans to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Trump has continued to attack McCain for that vote, even posthumously.

Portland shooting suspect killed at arrest

Associated Press

LACEY, Wash. — A man suspected of fatally shooting a supporter of a right-wing group in Portland, Ore., last week after a caravan of Donald Trump backers rode through downtown was killed Thursday as investigators moved in to arrest him, the U.S. Marshals Service said Friday.

The man, Michael Forest Reinoehl, 48, was killed as a federal task force attempted to apprehend him near Lacey, Wash., about 120 miles north of Portland. Reinoehl was the prime suspect in the killing of Aaron “Jay” Danielson, 39, who was shot in the chest Saturday night, a senior Justice Department official told The Associated Press.

Federal agents from the FBI and the U.S. Marshals Service had located him on Thursday after a warrant was issued for his arrest, and Reinoehl pulled a gun during the encounter, the official said.

The official wasn’t authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke to the AP on

condition of anonymity.

A U.S. Marshals Service statement later said the fugitive task force “attempted to peacefully arrest him.”

“Initial reports indicate the suspect produced a firearm, threatening the lives of law enforcement officers. Task force members responded to the threat and struck the suspect who was pronounced dead at the scene,” the statement said.

Thurston County Sheriff’s Lt. Ray Brady said four task force members fired their weapons, including two Pierce County Sheriff’s deputies, an officer from the Lakewood Police Department and an officer from the Washington State Department of Corrections.

Reinoehl had described himself in a social media post as “100% ANTIFA.” A regular presence at anti-racism demonstrations in Portland, he suggested the tactics of counter-protesters amounted to “warfare,” and had been shot at one protest and cited for having a gun at another.

On July 26, Reinoehl was shot near his

elbow after he got involved in a scuffle between an armed white man and a group of young people of color. The man who was carrying that gun, Aaron Scott Collins, told The Oregonian/OregonLive that he and a friend had just left a bar when they saw the group harassing an older Black man. His friend began filming them with a phone, and the group confronted them, calling them Nazis, he said.

Reinoehl later that day spoke to an AP videographer. His arm was wrapped in a bloody bandage; he said he was on his way to meet protest medics so they could change it.

He said he didn’t know what had started the altercation between Collins and the group, but that several people had decided to intervene when they saw Collins fighting with minors.

“As soon as the adults jumped in, he pulled out a gun,” Reinoehl said. “I jumped in there and pulled the gun away from people’s heads, avoided being shot in the stomach and I got shot in the arm.”

DC police release footage of Black man fatally shot

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Police in the nation’s capital on Thursday released body camera footage from the officer who fatally shot a Black teenager a day earlier, leading to protests outside Mayor Muriel Bowser’s home and a police station.

Deon Kay, 18, was shot in the chest Wednesday afternoon in the midst of a foot pursuit with police officers.

Early Thursday morning, the local Black Lives Matter affiliate tweeted that the “Terror Gang has once again taken the life of a young man,” and demanded the immediate release of the footage.

The video shows a brief and chaotic scene. As a police car pulls into the parking lot of a southeast Washington apartment complex, the officer jumps out and begins chasing someone. The officer turns around, sees Kay running a few feet behind him and fires a

single shot into Kay’s chest.

Police identified that officer as Alexander Alvarez, who joined the department in 2018. He has been placed on administrative leave.

The police video later freezes the frame and circles what appears to be a pistol in Kay’s hand. But it’s unclear whether Kay, who had officers in front and back of him, was intending to use the weapon or throw it away.

Immediately after the shooting, as other officers tend to Kay, the officer who fired the shot begins frantically looking for Kay’s gun in the surrounding grass. The handgun was found about 98 feet away, a distance that Metropolitan Police Department chief Peter Newsam said “does seem like a long way to throw a weapon.”

“Everyone can go and look at the video for themselves,” Newsam said.

NY mayor suspends officers involved in suffocation death

Associated Press

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — Seven police officers involved in the suffocation death of Daniel Prude in Rochester, N.Y., were suspended Thursday by the city’s mayor, who said she was misled for months about the circumstances of the fatal encounter.

Prude, 41, who was Black, died when he was taken off life support March 30. That was seven days after officers who encountered him running naked through the street put a hood over his head to stop him from spitting, then held him down for about two minutes until he stopped breathing.

Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren announced the suspensions at a news conference amid outrage that city officials had previously kept quiet about Prude’s death.

While denying a cover-up, Warren acknowledged that Prude “was failed by the police department, our mental health

care system, our society, and he was failed by me.”

Hours after the announcement, a crowd of protesters unswayed by the suspensions demonstrated late into the night outside Rochester’s police headquarters.

Journalists were among those hit by pellets during the confrontation, which came on the second day of peaceful demonstrations over Prude’s death.

The mayor said she only became aware that Prude’s death involved the use of force on Aug. 4.

Initially, she said, Police Chief La’Ron Singletary portrayed it as a drug overdose, which is “entirely different” than what Warren said she witnessed in body camera video.

The mayor said she told the chief she was “deeply, personally and professionally disappointed” in his failure to accurately inform her what happened to Prude.

Biden: America confronting its 'original sin'

Associated Press

KENOSHA, Wis. — Joe Biden told residents of Kenosha, Wis., that recent turmoil following the police shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black man, could help Americans confront centuries of systemic racism, drawing a sharp contrast with President Donald Trump amid a reckoning that has galvanized the nation.

"We're finally now getting to the point where we're going to be addressing the original sin of this country, 400 years old slavery and all the vestiges of it," Biden said at Grace Lutheran Church, where he met with community leaders after a private session with Blake and his family.

The visit marked the former vice president's first trip to the battleground state of Wisconsin as the Democratic presidential nominee and was a vivid illustration of the contrast he offers to Trump.

While Biden spent more than an hour with the Blake family, Trump didn't men-

tion Blake during his own trip to Kenosha on Tuesday. Where Biden traced problems in the criminal justice system back to slavery, Trump refused to acknowledge systemic racism and offered his unvarnished support to law enforcement, blaming the recent violence on "domestic terror."

"I can't say if tomorrow God made me president, I can't guarantee you everything gets solved in four years," Biden said. But "it would be a whole lot better, we'd get a whole lot further down the road" if Trump isn't re-elected.

Blake remains hospitalized after being shot in the back seven times by a white Kenosha police officer while authorities were trying to arrest him on Aug. 23.

Outside Grace Lutheran, Blake's uncle, Justin Blake, compared Trump's and Biden's respective visits as he marched and chanted with a crowd. "Trump didn't ask about my nephew. Trump didn't mention my nephew's name while he was here,"

Justin Blake said.

Justin Blake called Biden "more of a unifier" and credited the Democrat for bringing up criminal justice changes before being asked. But Justin Blake said "we're holding everybody's feet to the fire. Nobody gets a free pass."

Biden heard similar sentiments inside the church, where residents offered searing accounts of their struggles.

Porsche Bennett, an organizer for Black Lives Activists Kenosha, told Biden she's "tired" at just 31 years old and worried for her three young, Black children. "For so many decades we've been shown we don't matter," she said, adding that she's heard promises from plenty of politicians, but not "action."

Biden answered that, because he's white, "I can't understand what it's like to walk out the door or send my son out the door or my daughter and worry about, just because they're Black, they might not come back."

Trump pushes 'law and order' message in Pa.

Associated Press

LATROBE, Pa. — President Donald Trump on Thursday honed the "law and order" message he intends to wield for the next two months against his Democratic rival, Joe Biden, stepping up attacks that his campaign believes are resonating with battleground state voters.

"Biden's plan is to appease the domestic terrorists and my plan is to arrest them and prosecute them," Trump declared at a rally in Pennsylvania — a state that flipped in his favor in 2016, helping to pave his

road to victory.

The rally comes as Trump's campaign is claiming new signs of momentum, including in the longtime Democratic stronghold that Trump won by less than 45,000 votes in 2016. Trump campaign officials have been feeling encouraged in the last few weeks as Trump has responded to mass demonstrations against racial injustice by taking a hard line against protesters and painting Biden as weak.

The rally came the same day that Biden paid a visit to Kenosha, Wis., amid turmoil following the police shooting of Jacob

Blake, a Black man, seven times. Trump mocked Biden for visiting two days after he had, claiming: "There was nobody there. He was a little late. I was going to say, 'Hey listen, we ended that problem.'"

Trump's campaign believes its efforts to paint Biden as weak on crime will help Trump win back suburban voters, and especially women, who supported him in 2016 but have since soured on him.

That includes in Pennsylvania, where they argue the president is in a better position than he was in 2016, citing Democrats' shrinking voter registration advantage.

NATO urges response to poisoning of Russian dissident

BY JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The poisoning of Russian dissident Alexei Navalny demands an international response, NATO's top official said Friday after alliance officials were provided with proof that a military-grade chemical agent was used to try to assassinate the 44-year-old Muscovite.

"Time and again, we have seen opposition leaders and critics of the Russian regime attacked, and their lives threatened," Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.

"Some have even been killed. ... It is a serious breach of international law, which demands an international response," he

said after an emergency meeting in Brussels about the poisoning.

Navalny, a prominent opponent of Russian President Vladimir Putin and a longtime anti-corruption activist who has exposed numerous cases of graft among Russia's elite, became sick on a flight to Moscow on Aug. 20. Doctors at the hospital in Russia where he was initially held said they found no evidence of poisoning. But after he was flown by air ambulance to Berlin, where he is in a medically induced coma, German authorities said the same kind of nerve agent that was used to try to kill former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury, England, in 2018, had been found in Navalny's system.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Thursday said the Russian government has not seen any evidence that Navalny was poisoned.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said on Twitter that the poisoning of Navalny was the latest example of Russian aggression after the 2008 war with Georgia, the 2014 seizure of the Crimean Peninsula and the invasion of eastern Ukraine, the shooting down of a Malaysian Airlines flight, and the poisoning of the Skripals.

"How many wake-up calls do we need to finally realize that we are dealing with a hostile regime?" Morawiecki tweeted Thursday.

Seattle landlords sue over eviction ban

Associated Press

SEATTLE — A small group of Seattle landlords is suing Mayor Jenny Durkan and Gov. Jay Inslee over the constitutionality of city and state eviction moratoriums amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The suit, filed Thursday in the U.S. District Court in Seattle, comes two days after the federal Centers for Disease Control initiated a nationwide eviction moratorium through the end of 2020, The Seattle Times reported. In Seattle, the moratorium has been extended to December to protect people who can't pay rent.

Ethan Blevins, who is representing the landlords, said the problem with the moratorium is it expects landlords to shoulder the burden of the pandemic rather than putting the burden on the public as a whole.

Tara Lee, an Inslee spokesperson, said the governor welcomes the court's review of the state's eviction moratorium, which she called "a difficult but necessary measure to prevent widespread homelessness during this unprecedented pandemic."

She noted that the moratorium does not erase the debt of past due rent.

Edmund Witter, managing attorney for the Housing Justice Project at the King County Bar Association, doesn't expect the lawsuit to go very far. Similar challenges based on constitutionality have been struck down by federal courts such as the Southern District of New York in June, he said.

Arizona

PHOENIX — Most counties in Arizona, including the state's most populous one, were cleared Thursday to transition their schools to some form of in-person learning after recent coronavirus data showed improvements.

The state Department of Health Services announced that eight of Arizona's 15 counties now meet the benchmarks required to do a hybrid of remote and in-person instruction

if they choose to. They include Maricopa and Pima counties. Meanwhile, Greenlee and La Paz counties, which are more rural, got the green light to switch to full-time, in-person classes.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Kathy Hoffman, however, urged caution as school districts consider whether to make the switch.

"As we saw at the end of spring and throughout the summer, COVID-19 can spread very quickly when we fail to adhere to essential mitigation strategies like wearing masks and practicing social distancing," Hoffman said in a statement.

Colorado

GOLDEN — Jefferson County health authorities filed a lawsuit Thursday seeking to compel Bandimere Speedway to comply with coronavirus-related public health orders after several thousand people attended a rally at the track to protest those same orders.

Jefferson County Public Health's district court suit seeks an injunction requiring the Morrison race track to comply with an earlier court order that it get county approval for large events. Conditions include limiting individual crowd sizes to 175 people and other social distancing and mask-wearing measures.

County authorities contend a "Stop the COVID Chaos" rally on Tuesday violated those conditions.

Michigan

LANSING — Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced Thursday that gyms can reopen after 5½ months of closure and additional organized sports can resume if masks are worn — lifting some coronavirus restrictions that lasted longer in Michigan than in many states.

The order, which takes effect next Wednesday, allows for the reopening of fitness centers and indoor pools in a swath of the state that is home to 93% of Michigan's population.

The governor, a Democrat

whose state has seen nearly 6,800 deaths related to COVID-19, allowed athletic competitions to resume in regions where they have been restricted.

Missouri

O'FALLON — More than 7,000 college-age people in Missouri have tested positive for the coronavirus since classes resumed in mid-August, fueling spikes in confirmed cases in the state's college towns, Gov. Mike Parson said Thursday.

Recent single-day positive test rates in some college towns have been as high as 45% for people in the 18-24 age group, Parson said. That's more than eight times the national positivity rate of 5.5% for people of all ages, according to the seven-day average from The COVID Tracking Project operated by The Atlantic.

Parson said none of the college-age students have become seriously ill, but he warned that they can spread the disease to more vulnerable people such as the elderly.

Nevada

RENO — Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak said Thursday he is pursuing the possibility of easing COVID-19 restrictions on religious gatherings as a rural church pushes forward with its legal effort to strike down the current 50-person cap as unconstitutional.

Lawyers for Calvary Chapel Dayton Valley filed new briefs in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco on Wednesday after the U.S. Supreme Court narrowly refused its bid in July for an emergency order suspending the hard cap.

Sisolak, who is Catholic, said Thursday he has asked his advisers to review whether the state can ease that restriction, among others, and allow churches to expand how many people can attend.

The Democratic governor did not have a timeline for when he would announce a decision or any specific benchmarks necessary to make a change.

New Mexico

SANTA FE — New Mexico is easing its self-quarantine requirements for interstate travelers in advance of the Labor Day holiday and allowing hotels to accept more guests if they undergo certification for coronavirus precautions.

Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced she will waive quarantine restrictions on travelers as they arrive from low-risk states by land or air starting Friday. Hotel occupancy limits are being raised from 50% to 75% when a certification for safe practices is completed.

And individuals who can show documentation of a valid negative COVID-19 test taken within the 72 hours before or after entry into the state are exempt from the 14-day quarantine requirement.

The state's self-quarantine requirement still will apply to people returning or arriving from "high-risk" states based on coronavirus positivity rates and per-capita infections.

Utah

SALT LAKE CITY — Utah will aim to be prepared to distribute a coronavirus vaccine once it becomes available, Gov. Gary Herbert said at a weekly briefing Thursday — a week after the federal government told states to be ready for distribution by Nov. 1.

Herbert did not clarify whether Utah will expedite the licensing and permitting processes as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had requested. The ramped-up distribution timeline has raised concerns among public health experts that the vaccine's approval may be driven by political considerations ahead of a presidential election, rather than science.

"We want to get it done as quick as we can," Herbert told reporters Thursday. "Whether that's fortuitous for the elections in November for the current administration, I guess that's anybody's opinion."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Sheriff: Inmate tried to plot deputy's murder

GA LAGRANGE — A Georgia inmate attempted to solicit the murder of a deputy from behind bars, authorities said.

Jonathan Taylor Lawrence, 28, was rearrested Wednesday and charged with felony criminal attempted murder, news outlets reported. Lawrence was being held at the Troup County jail on a charge of threatening a witness in official proceedings.

Troup County Sheriff's Sgt. Stewart Smith said investigators learned that Lawrence was looking for someone willing to kill a county deputy. An investigation was launched on Aug. 20.

During the investigation, Lawrence gave an undercover officer a plan with "substantial steps" on how to kill the deputy. A motive for the solicitation wasn't immediately released.

Forestry division has seedlings available

TN DELANO — Tree and shrub seedlings are now available for purchase through the Tennessee Department of Agriculture's division of forestry, the department announced Wednesday.

The East Tennessee Nursery in Delano is accepting orders until April 30 for seedlings that can help landowners reforest timberland, control erosion and enhance the environment for wildlife, according to the department.

Several programs exist to help landowners obtain free seedlings. Trees for Tennessee aims to increase pine regeneration on recently harvested or fallow fields. Play. Plant. Preserve. works to ensure that the hardwood used for making drumsticks and mallets in Tennessee is sustainable. The Duck

and Elk River Watershed Buffer Initiative works to enhance riparian zone and wetland buffers for wildlife.

That's the spirit: Distillers push diversity

KY LEXINGTON — The Kentucky Distillers' Association says it will fund scholarships at the University of Kentucky in a push to increase diversity in the distilled spirits industry.

The scholars program fund will support full tuition each year for up to four students in UK's distillation, wine and brewing studies program, the association said Wednesday.

President Eric Gregory said there are "too few diverse voices in our industry," adding that the scholars program is a "vital part of our commitment to building a workforce that's more reflective of our country's population and culture."

Woman set on fire, man struck by vehicle

WI WAUKESHA — Police have arrested a man for setting a woman on fire in Waukesha as she walked her dog and for hitting an elderly man with his vehicle and setting another fire at his property.

Neighbors said the woman was doused with a flammable liquid and set on fire about 8:30 a.m. Wednesday. Witness Erin Duffy told the Journal Sentinel the woman was badly burned on her arms and stomach.

Police arrived on the scene within minutes. There's no word on the woman's condition.

In the other incident, sheriff's officials said the suspect struck an 83-year-old man with his vehicle and set two vehicles on fire at the victim's home in the Village of Waukesha. Neighbors said the victim was taken from the scene on a stretcher and

was conscious and talking. His current condition is not known.

The incidents caused schools in Waukesha to lock down.

Teen dies after leaning out of SUV's sunroof

MO ST. LOUIS — A teenager has died, days after suffering a head injury after hanging out of an SUV's sunroof in St. Louis.

Seventeen-year-old William Jordan was injured Saturday night. Police say he died Wednesday at a hospital.

Police said that as an 18-year-old woman drove the SUV inside a downtown parking garage, the teenager and two others had their heads hanging out of the sunroof.

Authorities aren't sure if the victims struck a beam or fell, but police said the driver sped from the scene, leaving them behind.

Man faces charges after elk is poached

MI WOLVERINE — A man has been arrested in connection with the poaching of a cow elk in a northern Michigan state forest.

Jakob Gagnon, 21, was arraigned Aug. 28 in Cheboygan County District Court on misdemeanor taking an elk without a license and possessing stolen property charges, according to the state's Natural Resources department.

Gagnon also is charged with felony cocaine possession.

An investigation was started in 2018 following an anonymous tip to a poaching hotline that an elk had been shot in the Pigeon River Country State Forest, about 75 miles northwest of Traverse City.

Evidence later was seized from a home.

Gagnon is accused of shooting and later processing the

elk. He fled the state after the home was searched. He recently turned himself in to authorities, according to the DNR.

21-year-old author gets 7-figure book deal

NY NEW YORK — A 21-year-old author has agreed to a seven-figure deal for a pair of young adult novels.

Feiwei and Friends, an imprint of Macmillan Children's Publishing Group, announced Thursday that it would publish Faridah Abike-Iyimide's highly anticipated debut, the thriller "Ace of Spades," in June 2021. The author also plans a second novel, currently untitled.

Feiwei and Friends is calling "Ace of Spades" a combination of "Gossip Girl" and "Get Out," the story of two Black students at an overwhelmingly white private school and how they get caught up in a "disturbing and deadly game."

Area sees summer of mountain lion kittens

CA THOUSAND OAKS — A mountain lion baby boom has occurred this summer in the Santa Monica Mountains and Simi Hills west of Los Angeles.

Thirteen kittens were born to five mountain lion mothers between May and August, according to the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

It's the first time so many mountain lion dens have been found within such a short period of time during the 18 years in which the region's cougar population has been studied by the National Park Service.

The most dens found previously in one year was four, spread across 10 months in 2015.

From wire reports

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Padres rookie making name for himself

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — It didn't take Jake Cronenworth long to start making an impression in the big leagues.

The San Diego Padres rookie doubled in his first big league at-bat, hit his first homer in his sixth game and put on such a fielding clinic at first base during the second full week of the season that A.J. Pollock of the Los Angeles Dodgers said he was "just trying not to hit it to that Cronenworth guy" when he delivered a go-ahead hit against San Diego.

On Aug. 26, Cronenworth's grand slam against Houston made "Slam Diego" the first team in big league history to hit five in six games. Earlier that week, they became the first team to hit a grand slam in four straight games.

Life in the majors came at Cronenworth fast and he responded so well that he was named NL Rookie of the Month. He's gone from being an intriguing two-way prospect who came over with Tommy Pham in an offseason trade with Tampa Bay to being the leading contender for NL Rookie of the Year.

"It's pretty tough to let it all sink in right now, with everything going as fast as it is, going game to game, trying to get to playoffs," the 26-year-old Cronenworth, said. "We've got a great group of guys here. It's been an awesome time so far."

Led by exciting young shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr. — a leading contender for NL MVP — and a resurgent Manny Machado, the Padres have become perhaps baseball's most

entertaining team. Cronenworth has been along for the ride almost from the start. He was pressed into duty at first base early in the season when Eric Hosmer missed several games with a stomach ailment and looked comfortable there even though he hadn't played the position consistently since his college days at Michigan. He has since taken over at second base, forcing Jurickson Profar, another offseason acquisition, to the outfield.

Playing in the same outfield as Tatis, Machado and Hosmer has been "unbelievable," Cronenworth said.

"I'm just along for ride with those guys. They're the stars of the show. I'm just a little kid from St. Clair, Michigan."

He's hitting .346 with four homers and 17 RBIs, and has reached base 19 straight games.

His on-base percentage is .405 and he's slugging .606.

General manager A.J. Preller, who pulled off a dizzying six trades from Saturday through the trade deadline on Monday, said Cronenworth was anything but a throw-in in the Pham trade.

Preller said the Padres had Cronenworth targeted going back to last year, when pro scouts Dom Viola and Keith Boeck, plus analyst Dave Cameron, "felt he was a guy that could be something as an everyday player for us down the road. It's nice to get multiple looks and options. They weighed in and had him targeted, and it was something we were able to line up on."

"It's nice having guys who can play multiple positions, especially shortstop, like Jake can do," Preller said.

MLB roundup

Alonso, Mets earn split of season series with Yankees

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Pete Alonso hit a two-run homer leading off the 10th inning Thursday night, lifting the New York Mets to a come-from-behind, 9-7 win over the Yankees in the final Subway Series game of the season between the teams.

The Mets came back from deficits of 4-0 and 7-4 at Citi Field to earn a split of the six-game season series, all of which was played over the last six days.

J.D. Davis forced extra innings by homering off Yankees closer Aroldis Chapman one pitch after pinch-runner Billy Hamilton was thrown out trying to steal third base. Alonso then hit the second pitch he saw from Albert Abreu (0-1) well into the left-field seats for his first walk-off homer.

Alonso raised his arms and looked towards the dugout as the Mets spilled out to celebrate a win on the afternoon they honored franchise icon

Tom Seaver, whose death was announced Wednesday.

Pirates 6, Cubs 2: First-time father Bryan Reynolds hit a three-run homer in his return from paternity leave to lead host Pittsburgh past Chicago.

Reynolds, who along with wife Blair welcomed son Reese on Monday, sent a drive off Alec Mills (3-3) into the seats in right field in the third inning to help Pittsburgh snap a four-game losing streak. Reynolds also doubled leading off the second and celebrated by pre-tending to rock a baby to sleep.

Blue Jays 6, Red Sox 2 (10): Teoscar Hernandez hit a go-ahead, three-run homer in the 10th inning after breaking up Boston's no-hit bid with a leadoff single in the seventh, and visiting Toronto rallied to win the game.

Toronto opened the five-game series at Fenway Park with its seventh win in 10 games. Boston has lost four straight and seven of 10.

Dodgers 5, Diamondbacks 1: Clayton Kershaw reached two career strikeout milestones and held Arizona hitless into the sixth inning, leading host Los Angeles to its fifth straight victory.

While racking up eight strikeouts over six scoreless innings, Kershaw (5-1) became the 39th pitcher in major league history with 2,500 strikeouts when he fanned Nick Ahmed in the second. The left-hander then caught and passed Christy Mathewson (2,502) for 38th place on baseball's career list by getting Carson Kelly and Tim Lincecum in the third.

Astros 8, Rangers 4: Aledmys Diaz hit a three-run homer and Michael Brantley added three RBIs, leading Zack Greinke and Houston over visiting Texas.

Greinke (3-0) struck out a season-high nine in six innings, allowing three runs and six hits. The 36-year-old Greinke leads the majors in career

starts among active pitchers with 455, one more than teammate Justin Verlander.

Angels 2, Padres 0: Andrew Heaney allowed only three hits over seven innings and host Los Angeles beat San Diego, spoiling Mike Clevinger's debut with his new team.

With most of the attention focused on Clevinger, who was acquired in a multiplayer deal with Cleveland before Monday's trade deadline, it was Heaney (3-2) who ended up pitching a gem. The right-hander struck out six and walked two while throwing a career-high 117 pitches.

White Sox 11, Royals 6: Luis Robert's 458-foot home run capped a second five-run inning of the night for visiting Chicago against Kansas City.

Edwin Encarnacion and Tim Anderson also homered for Chicago. The White Sox pulled within a half-game of Cleveland for the lead in the American League Central.

Roundup

Raptors win, avoid falling into 3-0 hole

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — The Toronto Raptors were a half-second away from falling into the abyss that no NBA team has ever escaped. Down by two points, down by two games, the reigning champions needed a miracle.

OG Anunoby delivered.

Anunoby caught a cross-court pass that Kyle Lowry threaded over everybody else on the floor and hit a three-pointer as time expired, giving the Raptors a 104-103 win over the Boston Celtics in Game 3 of their Eastern Conference semi-final series Thursday night.

The Celtics still lead the series 2-1. But it's not 3-0 — and that means the Raptors still have realistic hope. The Raptors mobbed Anunoby after the shot, reveling in the moment.

"Someone hit me in the nose," Anunoby said. "It's cool."

The Celtics took a two-point lead when Kemba Walker found Daniel Theis for a dunk with a half-second left.

No team in NBA history has rallied from a 3-0 series deficit. The Raptors won't have to try it now; Lowry elected to audible and throw the long pass — threading it over Boston's 7-foot-5 Tacko Fall, who was put in specifically to disrupt the inbounds play — to Anunoby.

"The pass was nothing," Lowry said. "OG made the shot. All the credit goes to the shot, man. That's a tough shot. Give OG that credit. The pass was just to get it to a guy like OG. It's OG's moment, man. That's a great moment for that kid."

Lowry played virtually the whole way, finishing with 31 points, eight assists and six rebounds. Fred VanVleet scored 25 points, Pascal Siakam had 16 and Anunoby 12.

Walker scored 29 points for Boston, which lost for the first time in seven playoff games.

Jaylen Brown had 19 points and 12 rebounds and Jayson Tatum finished with 15 points, nine rebounds and six assists for the Celtics.

Marc Gasol made a layup with 5:57 left for a four-point lead; the Celtics responded with the next eight points, going up 99-95 on a dunk by Brown with 3:02 remaining.

Lowry got a pair of layups, both drawing Toronto within two. The Raptors had the ball with a chance to tie or take the lead in the final half-minute, VanVleet getting an acrobatic layup to drop with 21.5 seconds left and knotting it at 101.

Theis' score put Toronto on the brink. Anunoby rescued the champs.

"Much credit to those guys," Walker said. "That was a hell of a shot."

Clippers 120, Nuggets 97: Kawhi Leonard scored 29 points and Los Angeles rolled past Denver in Game 1 of the Western Conference semifinals.

Paul George scored 19 points and Marcus Morris added 18. The Clippers shot 57% from the field.

Nikola Jokic scored 15 points for the Nuggets, who were coming off a seven-game series with Utah that just ended Tuesday. Jamal Murray, who averaged 31.6 points in the first round and scored at least 50 points twice in that series, finished with just 12 points on 5-for-15 shooting. Denver shot just 42%.

The Clippers took charge in the second quarter, outscoring the Nuggets 38-20 to take a 69-51 lead at halftime. Los Angeles held Denver to 25% shooting into the second quarter.

The Clippers continued to dominate in the third quarter, holding the Nuggets to 16 points in the period and taking a 91-67 lead into the fourth. Los Angeles' biggest lead in the quarter was 29 points.

Grizzlies' Morant runaway choice for Rookie of the Year

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — The first three baskets of Memphis' season set the tone for Ja Morant's rookie year. All were layups, all by him, the level of difficulty increasing each time.

He made them look easy that night. He made plenty look easy all season.

Morant was announced Wednesday as the runaway winner of the Rookie of the Year award for 2019-20, the first Grizzlies player to win the award since Pau Gasol in 2001-02. Morant averaged 17.8 points and 7.3 assists this season, picking up three Western Conference rookie of the month awards along the way.

Morant received 99 of the 100 first-place votes. He said he wanted to thank the voter who didn't have him atop their ballot "for motivating me even more."

"It's a blessing, definitely an honor," Morant said in the televised announcement of the award on TNT, with the trophy already at his side. "I put a lot of work in day in and day out. This journey has been rough, but in the end it's all paying off."

Miami's Kendrick Nunn was second and New Orleans' Zion Williamson was third. Nunn, who was undrafted, averaged 15.3 points in 67 regular-season games — all starts — for the Heat. Williamson averaged 22.5 points and 6.3 rebounds, but the No. 1 pick in the 2019 draft missed much of his rookie season while dealing with injury.

Williamson got the other first-place vote. Morant's Grizzlies teammate, Brandon Clarke, was fourth in the voting.

Morant was second among all rookies in scoring, first in assists by a wide margin and led all first-year players in both starts (67, tying him with Nunn) and minutes played (2,074).

The balloting took place

in July, before the season restarted at Walt Disney World. Games that occurred through March 11, the day the league shut down because of the coronavirus pandemic, were the ones taken into account by a voting panel of sports writers and broadcasters.

Morant said he's already looking for ways to get better. He said his father, Tee, already has ordered some more tires for their infamous workouts.

"I always feel like there's room for improvement," Morant said. "I'm looking to improve in every category."

Morant's rise has been meteoric; four years ago, he committed to mid-major Murray State as a guard who was unranked by the top national high school recruiting services. He averaged 12.7 points as a freshman, then entered the NBA Draft after averaging 24.5 points and a nation-leading 10.0 assists per game while earning first-team All-American status as a sophomore. "How I got here was crazy," Morant said on his draft night.

It doesn't look crazy that he's here now.

"The sky's the limit for you," Memphis coach Taylor Jenkins told Morant.

Morant's first 30-point game came in the third game of the season for Memphis, which got a one-point win that night over Brooklyn on a buzzer-beating three-pointer by now-Miami forward Jae Crowder — with that score set up by a pass from Morant.

That was the first of 28 games where Morant scored at least 20 points. He reached double-digits in assists 16 times, had a pair of triple-doubles and led the Grizzlies into the West's play-in series to determine the final playoff spot. Memphis lost the first and only game of that series to Portland, meaning the Grizzlies were just two wins shy of the postseason.

Williams on to showdown with Stephens

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Yes, Serena Williams won in straight sets again. And yes, she moved into an all-American showdown at the U.S. Open against Sloane Stephens. Still, this victory did not quite go according to plan.

Her serve only so-so at times, her footwork a bit off, Williams got by and got through Thursday night against an opponent ranked just 117th, beating Margarita Gasparyan 6-2, 6-4 and letting out a cry of “Yes!” at the end that reverberated in a nearly empty Arthur Ashe Stadium.

It sounded more like relief than excitement.

“The only thing that gets me flustered is really me, like, because I always feel like I’m not winning every point. I mean, like, that doesn’t make sense,” said Williams, who has won six of her 23 Grand Slam singles titles at Flushing Meadows and was the runner-up the past two years.

“I just think with the pressure and everything that I felt like I just needed to be perfect. I always feel like I’m not perfect unless I’m perfect,” she said. “That’s not a fun way to live your career and live your life.”

Williams, whose older sister, Venus, was one of the few people in the stands, said

whatever blips came Thursday “could help me know what not to do next time.”

That’ll be Saturday against Stephens, the 2017 U.S. Open champion.

It is their seventh matchup; Williams leads 5-1, including victories in the past four meetings, but they last played at the 2015 French Open. Stephens’ lone head-to-head victory came all the way back at the 2013 Australian Open.

This caliber of contest certainly doesn’t feel as if it belongs in merely the third round at a Slam, but that’s the luck of the draw this time.

All spectators were banned from Flushing Meadows this year because of the coronavirus pandemic.

“I know if there were fans it would be so lit, and I’m kind of sad that we’re not playing in front of fans, because it would be so fun,” said the 26th-seeded Stephens, who advanced by defeating Olga Govortsova 6-2, 6-2. “The atmosphere won’t be as big, but obviously a big opportunity to play against the greatest player in the world. So, yeah, unfortunate but still fortunate.”

Light rain fell during the warmup, so Ashe could be turned into an indoor facility. It remained closed for the match that followed — Andy Murray against Felix Auger-Aliassime — and a serious downpour loudly pelted the roof.

Louis Armstrong Stadium was covered during the second set of 2019 men’s runner-up Daniil Medvedev’s 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 win over 116th-ranked Christopher O’Connell, and stayed that way for two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka’s 6-1, 6-3 victory over No. 5 seed Aryna Sabalenka.

Matches on all the outside courts were suspended in the evening because of the shower.

Earlier winners included No. 2 Dominic Thiem, No. 11 Karen Khachanov, 2014 champion Marin Cilic and unseeded Americans Frances Tiafoe and J.J. Wolf.

No. 14 Grigor Dimitrov and No. 25 Milos Raonic were eliminated.

No. 9 seed Johanna Konta lost 2-6, 7-6 (5), 6-4 to Sorana Cirstea, and No. 10 Garbine Muguruza — who owns two major titles — was beaten 7-5, 6-3 by Tsvetana Pironkova, who took a three-year break from professional tennis to have a son and is in her first tournament since Wimbledon in 2017.

Other women moving on included No. 2 Sofia Kenin, who won the Australian Open in February; No. 7 Madison Keys, No. 15 Maria Sakkari, No. 18 Donna Vekic and No. 22 Amanda Anisimova, a 19-year-old American who beat 16-year-old American Kristina Scott.

NHL playoffs roundup

Flyers, Canucks force decisive games

Associated Press

TORONTO — The Philadelphia Flyers credit Oskar Lindblom’s fight against bone cancer for inspiring them all year. Having him back in a game for the first time in nearly nine months provided a big emotional lift in a key playoff game.

Ivan Provorov scored at 15:03 of the second overtime and the Flyers beat the New York Islanders 5-4 on Thursday night to force a deciding Game 7.

“All season he’s been (an inspiration), not just tonight,” goalie Carter Hart said of Lindblom. “Him coming in the lineup and playing definitely gives our team a huge boost of energy. ... It’s pretty amazing what he’s gone through and how much he’s overcome and

persevered.”

Flyers captain Claude Giroux agreed.

“The kid has so much courage,” he said. “He played unbelievable, too.”

Kevin Hayes, James van Riemsdyk, Michael Raffl and Scott Laughton also scored for Philadelphia, and Hart made a career-high 49 saves. The Flyers won a third overtime game in a postseason series for the first time.

“Carter kept us in this game,” Giroux said. “He made some huge saves for us and I was pretty glad to see Provy’s shot go in there.”

Mathew Barzal and Derick Brassard each had a goal and an assist, and Anders Lee and Matt Martin also scored for New York, which trailed 2-0

midway through the first period before taking leads of 3-2 and 4-3. Semyon Varlamov stopped 26 shots.

“It’s an unfortunate play there at the end, but it happens,” Barzal said. “Now it’s a winner-take-all Game 7.”

Canucks 4, Golden Knights 0: At Edmonton, Alberta, Thatcher Demko stopped 48 shots, Quinn Hughes set an NHL record with a goal and an assist, and Vancouver staved off elimination for the second straight game and forced a Game 7 against Vegas.

“Thatcher’s been our MVP both nights,” Hughes said. “He’s standing on his head back there, making some amazing saves to keep us in games.”

J.T. Miller had a goal and an assist, Jake Virtanen also

scored and Bo Horvat added an empty-net goal with 4½ minutes left. Hughes has 16 points this postseason, one more than the record for rookie defenseman Colorado’s Cale Makar set Wednesday night.

Demko did the rest in his second playoff start, becoming the third rookie goalie in NHL history to force a Game 7 with a shutout.

“There’s no quit. We showed that all year,” Miller said. “Obviously (Demko) is playing unreal right now and we’re coming on at the right time.”

Demko has stopped 90 of 91 shots in two starts, leaving the Golden Knights frustrated in their attempt to reach the Western Conference finals for the second time in three years.