

Police look for missing after Ida flooding

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Police went door to door in search of more possible victims and drew up lists of the missing as the death toll rose to 49 on Friday in the catastrophic flooding set off across the Northeast by the remnants of Hurricane Ida.

The disaster underscored with heart-breaking clarity how vulnerable the U.S. is to the extreme weather that climate change is bringing.

More than three days after the hurricane blew ashore in Louisiana, the storm's rainy remains hit the Northeast with surprising fury on Wednesday and Thursday, submerging cars, swamping subway stations and basement apartments and drowning scores of people in five states.

It overwhelmed urban drainage systems never meant to handle so much rain in such a short time — 3 inches in just an hour in New York.

Commuter train service north of New York City remained suspended or severely curtailed. In the Hudson Valley, train tracks were covered in several feet of mud. New York's subways were running with delays or not at all.

In Philadelphia, part of the crosstown Vine Street Expressway remained under water as people in neighborhoods along the

swollen Schuylkill River started cleaning up and assessing the damage.

President Joe Biden approved emergency declarations for New York and New Jersey.

The death toll was highest in New Jersey, where at least 25 people perished. Most drowned after their vehicles were caught in flash floods.

At least six people were still missing in New Jersey, Gov. Phil Murphy said.

Floodwaters and a falling tree also took lives in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and New York. In New York City, 11 people died when they were unable to escape rising water in their low-lying apartments.

After the storm, fires broke out in several New Jersey homes and businesses that were largely inaccessible to firefighters because of the floodwaters. Authorities said they suspect gas leaks triggered by the flooding fed the blazes.

The search for possible victims was not over.

"I don't have an exact answer regarding how many people are actually missing, but we are going to continue to work hard throughout the day, throughout the evening to make sure we identify everyone's location," Rodney Harrison, New York City police chief of department, said Thursday.

In Wilmington, Del., crews rescued more than 200 people after the Brandywine River

reached record levels, swamping roads, bridges and homes. No major injuries or deaths were reported.

Elsewhere, work continued on hauling away ruined cars, clearing mud and other debris from streets and restoring transit service.

In Philadelphia, crews worked seven large pumps to drain the flooded expressway, with officials giving no estimate on when the heavily trafficked interstate would fully reopen. An inch-thick layer of muck was left behind in the portions that were drying out.

Leaders in some states pledged to examine whether anything could be done to prevent a catastrophe like this from happening again.

New Jersey and New York have both spent billions of dollars improving flood defenses after Superstorm Sandy hit in 2012, but much of that work was focused primarily on protecting communities from seawater, not rain.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said Thursday the region needs to turn its attention to storm systems unprepared to handle a future of more frequent flash flooding because of climate change.

"One thing I want to make clear: We're not treating this as if it's not going to happen again for 500 years," she said.

Afghan women demand equal rights as Taliban rule

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A small group of Afghan women protested near the presidential palace in Kabul on Friday, demanding equal rights from the Taliban as Afghanistan's new rulers work on forming a government and seeking international recognition.

The Taliban captured most of the country in a matter of days last month and celebrated the departure of the last U.S. forces after 20 years of war. Now they face the urgent challenge of governing a war-ravaged country that is heavily reliant on international aid.

The Taliban have promised an inclusive government and a more moderate form of Islamic rule than when they last ruled the

country from 1996 to 2001. But many Afghans, especially women, are deeply skeptical and fear a rollback of rights gained over the last two decades.

The protest in Kabul was the second women's protest in as many days, with the other held in the western city of Herat. Around 20 women with microphones gathered under the watchful eyes of Taliban gunmen, who allowed the demonstration to proceed.

The women demanded access to education, the right to return to work and a role in governing the country. "Freedom is our motto. It makes us proud," read one of their signs.

A Taliban fighter ventured into the crowd at one point, but witnesses said he was angry

at the bystanders who had stopped to watch the demonstration and not the protesters themselves.

The Taliban have said women will be able to continue their education and work outside the home, rights denied to women when the militants were last in power. But the Taliban have also vowed to impose Sharia, or Islamic law, without providing specifics.

Interpretations of Islamic law vary widely across the Muslim world, with more moderate strains predominating. The Taliban's earlier rule was shaped by Afghanistan's unique tribal traditions, under which women are not to be seen in public. Those customs endure, especially in the countryside, even during 20 years of Western-backed governments.

Calmer winds aid firefighters in California

Associated Press

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, Calif. — Fire crews took advantage of decreasing winds to battle a California wildfire near popular Lake Tahoe and were even able to allow some people back to their homes but dry weather and a weekend warming trend meant the battle was far from over.

The Caldor Fire remained only a few miles from South Lake Tahoe, which was emptied of 22,000 residents days ago, along with casinos and shops across the state line in Nevada.

The wind-driven fire that began Aug. 14 had raged through densely forested, craggy areas and still threatened more than 30,000 homes, businesses and other buildings ranging from cabins to ski resorts.

But there was optimism and progress as winds eased on the fire's western flank while

in the northeast, despite gusty ridgetop winds, firefighters with bulldozers and shovels were steadily hacking out fire lines or burning away vegetation to box in the flames before they reached Tahoe.

"In the valleys we're doing plenty of work," fire information officer Marco Rodriguez said. "The crews are working and they're doing controlled fires... to try to make those containment lines a little bit stronger."

Residents who were forced to flee South Lake Tahoe earlier this week remained evacuated along with people across the state line in Douglas County, Nev.

The resort can easily accommodate 100,000 people on a busy weekend but on Thursday, just before the Labor Day weekend, it was eerily empty.

Yet after days of flames threatening to engulf the resort at any moment, any respite was

welcome.

"I feel like we are truly the luckiest community in the entire world right now. I'm so incredibly happy," said Mayor Tamara Wallace, who evacuated to Truckee, Calif.

"It's finally a chance to take a breath," said Clive Savacool, chief of South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue. "It's a breath full of smoke. Nonetheless, I think we're all breathing a little bit easier and we feel like we're making some progress."

Farther west, evacuation orders were lifted or downgraded to warnings in several areas of El Dorado County.

Friday's forecast called for lighter winds but also extremely dry daytime weather, with a warming trend through the weekend as high pressure builds over the West, fire officials said.

US hospitals hit with nurse staffing crisis amid virus

Associated Press

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a nurse staffing crisis that is forcing many U.S. hospitals to pay top dollar to get the help they need to handle the crush of patients this summer.

The problem, health leaders say, is twofold: Nurses are quitting or retiring, exhausted or demoralized by the crisis. And many are leaving for lucrative temporary jobs with traveling-nurse agencies that can pay \$5,000 or more a week.

It's gotten to the point where doctors are saying, "Maybe I should quit being a doctor and go be a nurse," said Dr. Phillip Coule, chief medical officer at Georgia's Augusta University

Medical Center, which has on occasion seen 20 to 30 resignations in a week from nurses taking traveling jobs.

"And then we have to pay premium rates to get staff from another state to come to our state," Coule said.

The average pay for a traveling nurse has soared from roughly \$1,000 to \$2,000 per week before the pandemic to \$3,000 to \$5,000 now, said Sophia Morris, a vice president at San Diego-based health care staffing firm Aya Healthcare. She said Aya has 48,000 openings for traveling nurses to fill.

The explosion in pay has made it hard on hospitals without deep enough pockets.

Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly lamented recently that the state's hospitals risk being outbid for

nurses by other states that pay a "fortune." She said Wednesday that several hospitals, including one in Topeka, had open beds but no nurses to staff them.

In Kansas City, Mo., Truman Medical Centers has lost about 10 nurses to travel jobs in recent days and is looking for travelers to replace them, said CEO Charlie Shields.

In Texas, more than 6,000 travel nurses have flooded the state to help with the surge through a state-supported program. But on the same day that 19 of them went to work at a hospital in the northern part of the state, 20 other nurses at the same place gave notice that they would be leaving for a traveling contract, said Carrie Kroll, a vice president at the Texas Hospital Association.

Hiring slows to 235,000 jobs after two strong months

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — America's employers added just 235,000 jobs in August, a surprisingly weak gain after two months of robust hiring at a time when the delta variant's spread has discouraged some people from flying, shopping and eating out.

The unemployment rate dropped to 5.2% from 5.4% in July.

The August job gains the government reported Friday fell far short of the roughly 940,000 that employers had added in each of

the previous two months, when widespread vaccinations allowed the economy to fully reopen from pandemic restrictions. Still, the number of job openings remains at record levels, and hiring is expected to stay solid in the coming months.

With COVID cases having spiked in July and August, Americans have been buying fewer plane tickets and reducing hotel stays. Restaurant dining, after having fully recovered in late June, has declined to about 10% below pre-pandemic levels.

Some live shows, including the remaining concerts on country star Garth Brooks' tour, have been canceled. Businesses are delaying their returns to offices, threatening the survival of some downtown restaurants, coffee shops and dry cleaners.

Supply shortages have also fed an inflation surge, with consumer prices having jumped in July by the most in three decades, according to the Fed's preferred measure. Rising inflation pressures have contributed, in turn, to a sharp drop in consumer confidence.

Manchin seeks pause on \$3.5T Biden bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Centrist Sen. Joe Manchin said Thursday that Congress should take a “strategic pause” on more spending, warning that he does not support President Joe Biden’s plans for a sweeping \$3.5 trillion effort to rebuild and reshape the economy.

The West Virginia Democrat’s pointed opposition was stronger than his past statements and taps into a grab-bag of arguments over inflation, national security and other concerns to deny Biden and his party a crucial vote on the emerging pack-

age. The timing of his comments comes as lawmakers are laboring behind the scenes to draft the legislation ahead of this month’s deadlines.

“Instead of rushing to spend trillions on new government programs and additional stimulus funding, Congress should hit a strategic pause on the budget-reconciliation legislation,” Manchin wrote in an op-ed published in the Wall Street Journal.

“I, for one, won’t support a \$3.5 trillion bill, or anywhere near that level of additional spending, without greater clarity about why Congress chooses to ignore the

serious effects inflation and debt have on existing government programs.”

Democrats have no votes to spare as they labor to helm Biden’s big “build back better” agenda to passage in the narrowly divided Congress, where they have the majority in the 50-50 Senate because of the tie-breaking vote of Vice President Kamala Harris.

Manchin has long been a holdout against the topline amount, \$3.5 trillion, even though he voted last month to approve a budget resolution that set the figure.

GOP-led states see Texas abortion law as model

Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — Republican states that have passed increasingly tough abortion restrictions only to see them blocked by the federal courts have a new template in an unusually written Texas law that represents the most far-reaching curb on abortions in nearly half a century.

On Thursday, Republican lawmakers in at least half a dozen states said they planned to introduce bills using the Texas law as a model, hoping it provides a pathway to enacting the kind of abortion crackdown they have sought for years.

In Mississippi, Republican state Sen. Chris McDaniel said he would “absolutely” consider filing legislation to match the Texas law after a sharply divided U.S. Supreme Court let it stand.

“I think most conservative states in the South will look at this inaction by the court and will see that as perhaps a chance to move on that issue,” he said.

The Texas law, which took effect Wednesday, prohibits abortions once med-

ical professionals can detect cardiac activity, usually around six weeks and before many women know they’re pregnant. While a dozen states have tried to enact bans early in pregnancy, those laws have been blocked by courts.

Texas may have found an end-run around the federal courts by enacting an unusual enforcement scheme that authorizes private citizens to file lawsuits in state court against abortion providers and anyone involved in aiding an abortion, including someone who drives a woman to a clinic. The law includes a minimum award of \$10,000 for a successful lawsuit, but does not have government officials criminally enforce the law.

In addition to Mississippi, GOP lawmakers and abortion opponents in at least five other Republican-controlled states — Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, North Dakota and South Dakota — said they were considering pushing bills similar to the Texas law and its citizen-enforcement provision.

“Even though you may have pro-life leg-

islators, you do not always have pro-life bureaucrats who are willing to do enforcement inspections,” said Indiana state Sen. Liz Brown, a Republican who has been the sponsor of several anti-abortion bills adopted in recent years.

Democrats also anticipated the Supreme Court’s new conservative majority overturning Roe, although they fear a ruling striking it down would leave old state laws outlawing abortions in effect.

“Reproductive freedom in our state is built on case law,” said New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, a Democrat, as he pushed for state lawmakers to enact a bill that would enshrine access to abortions.

“All of that case law is in turn built on the Supreme Court’s decision on Roe v. Wade. If the foundation of that series of case laws is impacted, impaired, taken away, the entire reality in our state falls like a house of cards, which is why we need to, as soon as possible, put this protection into statute.”

NHTSA: Traffic deaths rise again as drivers take risks

Associated Press

U.S. traffic deaths in the first quarter of 2021 rose by 10.5% over last year, even as driving has declined, the government’s road safety agency reported Thursday.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimated that 8,730 people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes from January through March, compared with the 7,900 fatalities from the same period in 2020.

The increase in traffic fatalities is a con-

tinuation of a trend that started in 2020. In June, the NHTSA reported that traffic deaths rose 7% last year to 38,680, the most since 2007. That increase came even as the number of miles traveled by vehicles fell 13% from 2019 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The NHTSA said drivers continue to exhibit risky behavior on the roads, including speeding, not wearing seat belts and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Preliminary data from the Federal Highway Administration shows that vehicle miles traveled fell 2.1% — roughly 14.9 billion miles — in the first three months of 2021. The agency estimates that there were 1.26 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled in the first quarter this year, compared to a rate of 1.12 deaths for the same period in 2020.

Neither the data from 2020 nor 2021 is final.

New Zealand police kill 'terrorist' who stabbed 6

Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — New Zealand authorities were so worried about an extremist inspired by the Islamic State they were following him around-the-clock and were able to shoot and kill him within 60 seconds of him unleashing a frenzied knife attack that wounded six people Friday at an Auckland supermarket.

Three of the shoppers were taken to Auckland hospitals in critical condition, police said. Another was in serious condition, while two more were in moderate condition.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the incident was a terror attack. She said the man was a Sri Lankan national who was inspired by ISIS and was well known to the nation's security agencies.

Ardern said she had been personally briefed on the man in the past but there had been no legal reason for him to be detained.

"Had he done something that would have allowed us to put him into prison, he would have been in prison," Ardern said.

The attack unfolded at about 2:40 p.m. at a Countdown supermarket in New Zealand's largest city.

Police Commissioner Andrew Coster said a police surveillance team and a spe-

cialist tactics group had followed the man from his home in the suburb of Glen Eden to the supermarket in New Lynn.

But while they had grave ongoing concerns about the man, they had no particular reason to think he was planning an attack on Friday, Coster said. The man appeared to be going into the store to do his grocery shopping.

"He entered the store, as he had done before. He obtained a knife from within the store," Coster said. "Surveillance teams were as close as they possibly could be to monitor his activity."

Witnesses said the man shouted "Allahu akbar" — meaning God is great — and started stabbing random shoppers, sending people running and screaming.

Coster said that when the commotion started, two police from the special tactics group rushed over. He said the man charged at the officers with the knife and so they shot and killed him.

Coster said there would be questions about whether police could have reacted even quicker. He said that the man was very aware of the constant surveillance and they needed to be some distance from him for it to be effective.

British national pleads guilty in ISIS beheadings

Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — A British national admitted Thursday evening in a federal courtroom near the nation's capital that he played a leadership role in an Islamic State scheme to torture, hold for ransom and eventually behead American hostages.

Alexanda Amon Kotey, 37, pleaded guilty to all eight counts against him at a plea hearing in U.S. District Court in Alexandria. The charges include hostage-taking resulting in death and providing material support to ISIS from 2012 through 2015.

He admitted guilt in connection with the deaths of four American hostages — journalist James Foley, journalist Steven Sotloff and aid workers Peter Kassig and Kayla Mueller — as well as European and Japanese nationals who also were held captive.

Kotey is one of four ISIS members who were dubbed "the Beatles" by their captives because of their British accents. He and another man, El Shafee Elsheikh, were brought to the U.S. last year to face charges after the U.S. assured Britain that neither man would face the death penalty.

Elsheikh is still scheduled to go on trial in January. A third Beatle, Mohammed Emwazi, also known as "Jihadi John," was killed in a 2015 drone strike. A fourth member is serving a prison sentence in Turkey.

The plea deal sets a mandatory minimum sentence of life without parole. After 15 years, though, he would be eligible to be transferred to the United Kingdom to face any possible charges there.

In the plea deal, he admits that life is an appropriate sentence in the United Kingdom as well. If he were to receive a sentence of less than life there, the deal requires that he serve the rest of his life sentence, either in the United Kingdom if that country will do so, or be transferred back to the U.S. to serve the life term.

The deal also requires him to cooperate with authorities and answer questions about his time in the Islamic State. He would not, though, be required to testify at Elsheikh's trial.

The deal also requires him to meet with victims' families if they request it.

Family members of all four victims attended Thursday's hearing and stood outside the courthouse afterward with prosecutors. They will have an opportunity to speak at Kotey's formal sentencing on March 4.

With no tourist handouts, hungry Bali monkeys steal from villages

Associated Press

SANGEH, Indonesia — Deprived of their preferred food source — the bananas, peanuts and other goodies brought in by tourists now kept away by the coronavirus — hungry monkeys on the resort island of Bali have taken to raiding villagers' homes in their search for something tasty.

Villagers in Sangeh say the gray long-tailed macaques have been venturing out from a sanctuary about 500 yards away to hang out on their roofs and await the right time to swoop down and snatch a snack.

Worried that the sporadic sorties will escalate into an all-out monkey assault on the village, residents have been taking fruit, peanuts and other food to the Sangeh Monkey Forest to try to placate the primates.

"We are afraid that the hungry monkeys

will turn wild and vicious," villager Saskara Gustu Alit said.

About 600 of the macaques live in the forest sanctuary, swinging from the tall nutmeg trees and leaping about the famous Pura Bukit Sari temple, and are considered sacred.

The Sangeh Monkey Forest typically had about 6,000 visitors a month, but as the pandemic spread last year and international travel dropped off dramatically, that number dropped to about 500. Since July, when Indonesia banned all foreign travelers to the island and shut the sanctuary to local residents as well, there has been nobody.

Not only has that meant nobody bringing in extra food for the monkeys, the sanctuary has also lost out on its admission fees and is running low on money to buy food for them, said operations manager Made Mohon.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Drone operators warned ahead of air show

ME BRUNSWICK — The Great State of Maine Air Show this weekend will feature aerial acrobats, all manner of vintage and modern planes, and the Navy's flight demonstration team. But drones are not welcome.

The Brunswick Police Department said drones and other aircraft are not allowed within 5 miles of the Brunswick Executive Airport effective Thursday and through the show's completion on Sunday.

"The FBI has been working directly with Brunswick PD in planning the security/safety for the Air Show and stated that they will prosecute those that choose to not follow the no-fly restriction," said Police Chief Scott Stewart.

The flight ban around the air show also applies to conventional aircraft.

Raided pet store called 'shop of horrors'

KY BURNSIDE — Police and members of the Humane Society have removed 150 neglected animals from a pet shop in southern Kentucky.

Local authorities in Pulaski County, including the Burnside Police Department, served a search warrant on the pet shop, Tim's Reptiles and Exotics, on Wednesday morning.

A media release from the Humane Society of Kentucky said dozens of "snakes, lizards, turtles, rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils and fish were found living in filthy, poor conditions."

Todd Blevins, Kentucky director for the Humane Society, called the store a "shop of horrors."

The pet shop owner was charged with 19 counts of animal cruelty, according to the Humane Society.

Bad batteries, illness: School year starts rocky

MI BALDWIN — The school year is off to a slow start in a western Michigan district due to power outages, faulty batteries and students with flu-like symptoms.

The Baldwin district, 70 miles north of Grand Rapids in Lake County, called off classes for Wednesday and Thursday and told students to return Sept. 7. Schools were already closed Friday ahead of the holiday weekend.

"The state requires that we have 75% of attendance across the entire district," interim Superintendent J. Mark Parsons told 9and10news.com. "We were not making that threshold."

Most flu-like symptoms were in the elementary school. Parsons canceled classes on two days last week, too.

Online learning is not an immediate option. The batteries used in internet hot spots were recalled.

Gray wolf spotted for 1st time in decades

CA BAKERSFIELD — A gray wolf was spotted in Kern County earlier this year, the farthest south the species has traveled since being reintroduced in California after going extinct, wildlife officials

said.

The collared gray wolf was captured on a trail camera drinking from a water trough on private property back on May 15, but officials received the footage last week, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife said in a statement Saturday.

It is possible the wolf could be OR-93, a young male wolf that entered California from Oregon in January. The animal was spotted in San Luis Obispo County on April 5, when his collar stopped transmitting, they said.

OR-93 dispersed from the White River pack in northern Oregon, officials said.

School locked down after parent's mask fit

FL SARASOTA — A Florida elementary school was placed in a temporary, limited lockdown after a parent threatened to leave his job and confront an assistant principal for telling his children they couldn't come to school without being masked.

Christopher Kivlin was met by police officers Tuesday outside Ashton Elementary School in Sarasota.

No charges were filed but he was ordered not to come back to the school without calling first and getting permission.

An incident report said Kivlin showed up to campus saying the school was violating the law by not allowing his children to attend school.

The Sarasota County school district is among a dozen of the Florida's 67 districts, representing about half of the state's 2.8 million public school students,

that have defied Gov. Rob DeSantis' executive order barring schools from requiring masks over parent objections.

A judge last week blocked the order, saying the governor did not have the authority.

Kivlin told television station WFLA that he had no intention of hurting anyone but just wanted to talk to a school official.

He apologized for scaring anyone and said "it was just emotions built up."

"I found out after the fact that the school had to go into lockdown, I was like, 'That's horrible,'" Kivlin said. "I feel like I might have scared other parents."

Department gets mental health program funds

WV CHARLESTON — The West Virginia Department of Education's program to increase mental health awareness among youth and train school staff to respond has received a \$1.8 million grant from the federal government.

The award was announced Tuesday by U.S. Sens. Joe Manchin and Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia.

Project AWARE, or Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education, also works to train school teachers and employees to detect and respond to mental health issues and connect young people affected by behavioral health issues with needed services, Manchin and Capito said in a news release.

The award comes from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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Florida QB finally gets time to shine

Associated Press

Emory Jones first landed on Dan Mullen's recruiting radar seven years ago.

Jones was a high school freshman in La-Grange, Ga., and Mullen was scouring the country for another spread quarterback at Mississippi State. Ideally, Mullen wanted to find the next Alex Smith, Tim Tebow, Cam Newton or Dak Prescott.

Mullen could see Jones' raw talent: a big, accurate arm and game-breaking mobility. Everything else, Mullen figured, could be taught. They bonded quickly, and when Mullen took over in Gainesville three years later, he asked Jones to join him.

Jones obliged and became Mullen's first hand-picked quarterback to sign with the Gators.

Now, after waiting three years behind Feleipe Franks and then Kyle Trask, Jones finally gets his chance when No. 13 Florida opens the season against Florida Atlantic on Saturday night.

"It has been hard, but it's all been for a reason," Jones said. "That's what I've realized over the past years. I have been playing a little bit, so that keeps me going. I've just been watching the guys in front of me do their best and watching how they move and how they operate and it's definitely just helping me."

While Trask set school and Southeastern Conference records and became a Heisman Trophy finalist in 2020, Jones served as a change-of-pace option.

Jones completed 18 of 32 passes for 221

yards last year, with two touchdowns and an interception. He also ran for 217 yards and two scores. He was at his best against Oklahoma in the Cotton Bowl, where he threw for 86 yards and ran for 60 more and a score.

But this, no doubt, will be different.

"I think he understands it," Mullen said Monday. "You look at his playing time and experience throughout the years. Everybody says this will be his first time playing the first play of the game, but to say he hasn't played in a lot of big moments in a lot of different games, big difference."

Mullen made it clear that the offense won't be watered down or scaled back with Jones at the helm. Jones helped create the game plan and will have the freedom to audible or scramble on any play. The sky-high expectation is Jones will be able to improvise like no other quarterback in Florida lore, too.

"We'll just throw the whole thing at him and let him go," Mullen said.

Mullen has raised some eyebrows with some of his claims regarding Jones, especially the one about Jones being able to make throws that Trask could only dream about.

"He's got a cannon for an arm," Mullen said.

Teammates have delivered equally glowing praise.

"I don't like to call Emory a dual threat because most people like see Emory break and see him run," running back Dameon

Pierce said. "I call Emory a mobile pocket passer because this guy, he can launch that ball.

"That's probably the most underrated aspect of his game. He can launch the ball! He wants to throw the ball first. He only runs when there's absolutely nothing there or pressure comes and he's got to get out the pocket. I feel like Emory brings a lot to the table this year."

His best attribute might be patience. After all, Jones never complained or caused a scene during his time on the bench — three years in which the NCAA transfer portal exploded in popularity.

He could have moved on and gotten on the field sooner. He could have already started somewhere else. Instead, he stuck it out. Now, the payoff could be significant.

Even though the Gators lost two first-round draft picks, dynamic tight end Kyle Pitts and elusive receiver Kadarius Toney, they seem to have enough talent to be a title contender in the Eastern Division.

A lot of that will depend on Jones' development. And his time comes with a twist: Jones waited so long and now might have to share the spotlight with redshirt freshman Anthony Richardson, who's bigger, faster and quite possibly a better NFL prospect.

"Coach Mullen definitely uses his offense around the quarterback," Jones said. "Whatever type, style quarterback you are, he's going to make it happen. For me, just a different skill set. I feel I can do anything on the field."

No. 4 Ohio State outlasts Minnesota in Stroud's debut

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — C.J. Stroud's mind was not right as he sparred with first-game jitters, feeling "kind of all over the place" in his debut as Ohio State's starting quarterback.

Playing for the Buckeyes comes with plenty of pressure. It also brings plenty of help.

Stroud passed for 294 yards and four touchdowns, and the fourth-ranked Buckeyes kept coach Ryan Day unbeaten in Big Ten play with a 45-31 victory over Minnesota on a rainy Thursday night.

Ohio State trailed at halftime

(14-10) for the first time in a regular-season game under Day, but time in the locker room was all Stroud needed to settle in. He passed for 246 yards in the second half.

"Everybody was encouraging me, telling me I can do it. My teammates all have belief in me," said Stroud, who went 13-for-22 with one interception.

Said Day, who is 24-2 overall and 16-0 in conference games starting his third full year on the job: "We weren't going to play it close to the vest. That's not how we do it here."

The Buckeyes flashed their five-star speed with two 70-plus-yard scores in the opener, one early on a run off right end by Miyan Williams and one late on a third-down screen to true freshman Trevon Henderson.

Chris Olave had touchdown catches of 38 and 61 yards, and Garrett Wilson scored on a 56-yard reception that gave Ohio State the lead for good at 24-21 midway through the third quarter. Less than three minutes later, Haskell Garrett grabbed a fumble from a strip-sack that Zach Harrison deliv-

ered on Tanner Morgan and ran it in for a 32-yard touchdown.

More painful for the Gophers than their fade down the stretch was the loss of star running back Mo Ibrahim, who hurt his lower left leg late in the third quarter and left the field in a walking boot.

The second team preseason Associated Press All-American had 30 carries for 163 yards and two scores, both giving the Gophers the lead and the first one after Terrell Smith intercepted an off-target pass by Stroud that hit Olave's hand.

No. 24 Utah pulls away to beat Weber St.

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Charlie Brewer threw for 233 yards and two touchdowns in his Utah debut to help the No. 24 Utes beat Weber State 40-17 on Thursday night.

Dalton Kincaid caught four passes for 75 yards and two touchdowns in the opener for both teams. Tavion Thomas ran for 107 yards and two touchdowns on 12 carries in his Utah debut.

Brewer beat out Cameron Rising for the starting quarterback job in camp and did not disappoint. He was crisp on many throws and gave Utah a legitimate passing attack it lacked at times last season.

"I thought he was very poised in the pocket," Utah coach Kyle Whittingham said. "He did a nice job keeping his eyes downfield. He was accurate ... Did a good job of running the offense."

Bronson Barron threw for 213 yards and a touchdown for Weber State, but the Wildcats had just 57 yards rushing.

"We did not do a good enough job of getting yards on the first down which put us in too many third-and-longs," Weber State coach Jay Hill said.

No. 22 Coastal Carolina 52, The Citadel 14: At Conway, S.C., Grayson McCall threw for 262 yards and a touchdown and the Chanticleers scored on their first seven possessions against the Bulldogs.

Coastal Carolina was among the biggest surprises last season, going 11-1 and winning the Sun Belt Conference's East Division after being picked last in the preseason.

McCall, last year's Sun Belt offensive player of the year, completed 16 of 19 passes before coming out early in the third quarter.

Heiligh had six catches for 133 yards, and Shermari Jones also had two touchdowns and ran for 100 yards.

No. 25 Arizona State 41, Southern Utah 14: Darien Butler had two interceptions and the Sun Devils used their punishing running game to overcome some sloppy moments in their season opener.

Arizona State was a bit rusty to start a season of high expectations, committing numerous miscues on special teams and 13 penalties for 135 yards.

The Sun Devils still proved to be too much for the FCS Thunderbirds (0-2), forcing four turnovers and running for six touchdowns to win their 22nd straight home opener.

Djokovic stays on track for calendar-year Slam

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Novak Djokovic missed an overhead along the way to getting broken for the only time Thursday night and stared at a man in the Arthur Ashe Stadium stands who made noise during the point.

After breaking right back in the next game of his second-round victory at the U.S. Open, Djokovic glared in that direction again, as if to say, "How you like me now?" Miffed as the distractions persisted, he later spoke to the chair umpire about what's considered a no-no in tennis.

That, then, is pretty much what provided some intrigue and interest in this one, because the ultimate outcome — a 6-2, 6-3, 6-2 victory for Djokovic over Tallon Griekspoor — seemed fairly obvious after all of about 15 minutes. Or maybe even before the No. 1-ranked Djokovic and his 121st-ranked opponent stepped on court on a cool, breezy evening.

"That guy, for some reason, was calling, raising the sound and kind of screaming just before I would hit my smash, which was a big point. Before that, he would do it a few times. After that, again," Djokovic said. "That wasn't nice. That's all. I don't mind the noise. Don't get me wrong. I think it's important for the entertainment, for the crowds, the music. I get it. But if someone does it over and over again ... he knows why he's doing it. The guy that I pointed out, he knew exactly what he was doing, and that's all."

If that bothered Djokovic, his shot-making and serving boosted his mood as he took another step toward completing the first calendar-year Grand Slam in men's tennis since 1969 and claiming a 21st major championship to eclipse the mark he shares with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

"All in all very good, very good. I'm very pleased with the level of my tennis," Djokovic said. "All is going in the right direction."

He considered this a better performance than in his win Tuesday, when he dropped a set and was taken aback by hearing what he thought were boos but actually were last-name chants of "Ruuuuune!" for his 18-year-old foe, Holger Vitus Nodskov Rune.

Here's what matters the most: Djokovic is 2-0 at Flushing Meadows this week and 23-0 in Grand Slam tournaments this year, with five more wins standing between him and

history.

"I am motivated as ever to do well," said Djokovic, a 34-year-old from Serbia who will face 2014 U.S. Open finalist Kei Nishikori next. "I am trying to be the best I can be every single day and let's see what happens."

About the only problems No. 1 Ash Barty and other top women encountered earlier Thursday came in the delays trying to get to Flushing Meadows in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida's remnants blowing through the Northeast a night earlier.

Barty, a two-time major champion including at Wimbledon in July, three-time Grand Slam champ Angelique Kerber, Tokyo Olympic gold medalist Belinda Bencic, double Wimbledon title winner Petra Kvitová and other seeded women including No. 14 Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, No. 17 Maria Sakkari, No. 23 Jessica Pegula and No. 28 Anett Kontaveit all won in two sets during the afternoon to reach the third round.

At night, 2019 U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu improved her tournament record to 9-0 by defeating Lauren Davis 6-4, 6-4.

Among the men's winners were Summer Games gold medalist and 2020 U.S. Open runner-up Alexander Zverev, 2021 Wimbledon finalist Matteo Berrettini, No. 17 Gael Monfils and No. 22 seed Reilly Opelka of the U.S. But No. 10 Hubert Hurkacz, a Wimbledon semifinalist, lost to Andreas Seppi of Italy, and No. 31 Alexander Bublik was beaten by American wild-card recipient Jack Sock 7-6 (3), 6-7 (2), 6-4, 4-6, 6-3.

Another U.S. man who got a wild card, 20-year-old Jenson Brooksby, won an all-Californian matchup against Taylor Fritz 6-7 (7), 7-6 (10), 7-5, 6-2.

With nary a cloud around, play in second-round matches on the outer courts was pushed back from 11 a.m. to noon to allow the U.S. Tennis Association time to clean up downed tree branches and other scattered debris and make sure everything was ready for competition on Day 4 of the year's last Grand Slam tournament.

Once all was ready to go, it was just a matter of players' transportation navigating traffic delays caused by road closures and vehicles that were abandoned overnight; a trip from Manhattan to Queens that normally might take 30-45 minutes took 1½ hours or longer for some.

Estrada helps Giants avoid 4-game sweep

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Thairo Estrada hit a three-run homer during San Francisco's four-run eighth inning, and the Giants beat the Brewers 5-1 on Thursday to avoid a four-game sweep.

A day after falling out of first place for the first time since May 30, the Giants (85-49) moved into a tie atop the NL West with the idle Los Angeles Dodgers. Austin Slater also connected, and Logan Webb pitched seven sparkling innings.

San Francisco had dropped four in a row.

Milwaukee (82-53) wasted a terrific performance by Eric Lauer, who tossed seven innings of three-hit ball. The NL Central leaders had won four in a row.

Darin Ruf put the Giants ahead to stay with a two-out RBI double off Devin Williams (7-2) in the eighth. Estrada fol-

lowed with a drive to left for his fourth homer.

Red Sox 4, Rays 0: Eduardo Rodriguez (11-7) pitched four-hit ball into the seventh inning, and visiting Boston earned a split in its four-game series against AL East-leading Tampa Bay.

Bobby Dalbec drove in two runs for Boston, which has a two-game lead over Oakland in the race for the second AL wild card.

Braves 6, Rockies 5: Adam Duvall hit a two-run homer in his team's three-run fifth inning, and visiting Atlanta overcame a grand slam by Charlie Blackmon to beat Colorado.

Jorge Soler also homered and Austin Riley had a two-run double for Atlanta, which stayed two games ahead of Philadelphia in the NL East.

Phillies 7, Nationals 6: Andrew McCutchen drove in four runs and visiting Philadelphia erased a six-run deficit on its

way to a three-game series sweep of Washington.

The Phillies overcame a disappointing start from Aaron Nola and rallied against the Nationals' bullpen for their sixth consecutive win. Philadelphia pulled within two games of idle Cincinnati in the race for the second NL wild card.

Mets 4, Marlins 3: Dominic Smith broke a seventh-inning tie with a pinch-hit RBI single, sending host New York past Miami.

Marlins leadoff batter Miguel Rojas and Mets counterpart Jonathan Villar each homered on the first pitch they saw, the first time that's happened in a major league game since at least 1985, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

Athletics 8, Tigers 6: Jed Lowrie hit a three-run homer in the first inning for the first of visiting Oakland's eight two-out runs against Detroit's Matt Manning.

Mark Canha followed Lowrie's shot with another homer for 4-0 lead. It was the 14th homer of the season for both Lowrie and Canha.

Indians 4, Royals 2: Triston McKenzie (4-5) pitched six effective innings in his return from the injured list, leading visiting Cleveland past Kansas City.

Cleveland has won 11 straight games against the Royals, the longest winning streak over Kansas City in club history.

Cubs 6, Pirates 5 (11): Sergio Alcántara scampered home when second baseman Wilmer Difo mishandled a popup in the 11th inning, and host Chicago beat Pittsburgh for its third straight win.

Rafael Ortega and Ian Happ homered for Chicago, and Alcántara logged the first three-hit game of his career. Codi Heuer (6-2) got three outs for the win.

US, El Salvador battle to scoreless soccer draw

Associated Press

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador — American players and the entire U.S. soccer community waited 1,424 days for this moment. Neither a triumph nor another tumble, the night showed problems mixed among promise.

"First reaction is disappointed," defender Tim Ream said after a 0-0 draw at El Salvador on Thursday night in the opener of pandemic-delayed World Cup qualifying.

At the type of Central American stadium that repeatedly has stymied the Americans, fireworks started during El Salvador's national anthem and lasted into the fifth minute. That energized an already boisterous crowd of about 29,000 that started filling Monumental Estadio Cuscatlán, Central America's largest stadium, about 8½ hours before kickoff.

American starters averaged 23 years, 282 days, the fourth-youngest in a qualifier in the modern era. Twelve Americans, including nine starters, made their qualifying debuts.

Right back DeAndre Yedlin, who started in the infamous 2-1 loss at Trinidad and To-

bago in October 2017 that ended a streak of seven straight World Cup appearances, and Ream, a central defender who was on the bench in Couva that night, were the only holdovers.

In his first qualifier as American coach, Gregg Berhalter didn't have star attacker Christian Pulisic (regaining fitness after testing positive for COVID-19) and goalkeeper Zack Steffen (back spasms).

Goalkeeper Matt Turner, who debuted in January, made a key stop when he was tested, diving to stop Eriq Zavaleta's header from Marvin Monterroza's corner kick in the 57th.

"I thought the fight was good," Berhalter said. "The intention to win the game was good, but we've got to get better. We got to be more connected as a team and be able to finish our chances in a better way. ... It was too much individual play, not enough switching field, not enough making them shift from side to side."

Midfielder Tyler Adams, at 22 years, 200 days, became the youngest to captain the Americans in a qualifier in the modern era,

beating Landon Donovan at 22 years, 219 days, against El Salvador in 2004.

"I'm not too dissatisfied, to be honest," Adams said. "We knew coming into this week it was going to be a learning process."

Asked for examples, he cited the experience of midfielder Gio Reyna.

"Gio going to take a corner, when he's playing in Dortmund, he's not getting hit with water bottles," Adams said.

Ream had tried to warn his teammates what was ahead.

"A lot of these guys are used to playing on immaculate fields and pitches in Europe and it wasn't going to be that," he said. "Really, it's just trying to make sure guys stay calm because we have a lot of different personalities, a lot of types, guys that can get frustrated and guys that can get anxious if things aren't going the way they want them to. And my role and where I see myself is just trying to keep guys focused, keep guys calm and keep guys in the moment."

Still, the U.S. remained winless in six straight road qualifiers dating to 2016 (two losses, four draws).