

Taliban say strict punishments to return

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — One of the founders of the Taliban and the chief enforcer of its harsh interpretation of Islamic law when they last ruled Afghanistan said the hard-line movement will once again carry out executions and amputations of hands, though perhaps not in public.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Mullah Nouruddin Turabi dismissed outrage over the Taliban's executions in the past, which sometimes took place in front of crowds at a stadium, and he warned the world against interfering with Afghanistan's new rulers.

"Everyone criticized us for the punishments in the stadium, but we have never said anything about their laws and their punishments," Turabi told The Associated Press, speaking in Kabul. "No one will tell us what our laws should be. We will follow Islam and we will make our laws on the Quran."

Since the Taliban overran Kabul on Aug. 15 and seized control of the country, Afghans and the world have been watching to

see whether they will re-create their harsh rule of the late 1990s. Turabi's comments pointed to how the group's leaders remain entrenched in a deeply conservative, hard-line worldview, even if they are embracing technological changes, like video and mobile phones.

Turabi, now in his early 60s, was justice minister and head of the so-called Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice — effectively, the religious police — during the Taliban's previous rule.

At that time, the world denounced the Taliban's punishments, which took place in Kabul's sports stadium or on the grounds of the sprawling Eid Gah mosque, often attended by hundreds of Afghan men.

Executions of convicted murderers were usually by a single shot to the head, carried out by the victim's family, who had the option of accepting "blood money" and allowing the culprit to live. For convicted thieves, the punishment was amputation of a hand. For those convicted of highway robbery, a hand and a foot were amputated.

Trials and convictions were rarely public

and the judiciary was weighted in favor of Islamic clerics, whose knowledge of the law was limited to religious injunctions.

Turabi said that this time, judges — including women — would adjudicate cases, but the foundation of Afghanistan's laws will be the Quran. He said the same punishments would be revived.

"Cutting off of hands is very necessary for security," he said, saying it had a deterrent effect. He said the Cabinet was studying whether to do punishments in public and will "develop a policy."

In recent days in Kabul, Taliban fighters have revived a punishment they commonly used in the past — public shaming of men accused of small-time theft.

On at least two occasions in the last week, Kabul men have been packed into the back of a pickup truck, their hands tied, and were paraded around to humiliate them. In one case, their faces were painted to identify them as thieves. In the other, stale bread was hung from their necks or stuffed in their mouth. It wasn't immediately clear what their crimes were.

CDC head says people with risky jobs on booster list

Associated Press

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention endorsed booster shots for millions of older or otherwise vulnerable Americans, opening a major new phase in the U.S. vaccination drive against COVID-19.

CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky signed off on a series of recommendations from a panel of advisers late Thursday.

The advisers said boosters should be offered to people 65 and older, nursing home residents and those ages 50 to 64 who have risky underlying health problems. The extra dose would be given once they are at least six months past their last Pfizer shot.

However, Walensky decided to make one recommendation that the panel had rejected.

The panel on Thursday voted against saying that people can get a booster if they are ages 18 to 64 years and are health-care workers or have another job that puts them at increased risk of being exposed to the vi-

rus.

But Walensky disagreed and put that recommendation back in, noting that such a move aligns with an FDA booster authorization decision earlier this week. The category she included covers people who live in institutional settings that increase their risk of exposure, such as prisons or homeless shelters, as well as health care workers.

The panel had offered the option of a booster for those ages 18 to 49 who have chronic health problems and want one. But the advisers refused to go further and open boosters to otherwise healthy front-line health care workers who aren't at risk of severe illness but want to avoid even a mild infection.

The panel voted 9 to 6 to reject that proposal. But Walensky decided to disregard the advisory committee's counsel on that issue. In a decision several hours after the panel adjourned, Walensky issued a statement saying she had restored the recom-

mendation.

"As CDC Director, it is my job to recognize where our actions can have the greatest impact," Walensky said in a statement late Thursday night. "At CDC, we are tasked with analyzing complex, often imperfect data to make concrete recommendations that optimize health. In a pandemic, even with uncertainty, we must take actions that we anticipate will do the greatest good."

Experts say getting the unvaccinated their first shots remains the top priority, and the panel wrestled with whether the booster debate was distracting from that goal.

All three of the COVID-19 vaccines used in the U.S. are still highly protective against severe illness, hospitalization and death, even with the spread of the extra-contagious delta variant.

But only about 182 million Americans are fully vaccinated, or just 55% of the population.

GOP: Charges against refugees raise concerns

Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — Wisconsin Republicans on Thursday reiterated their concerns about the vetting of Afghan refugees being housed at an Army post in the state, after two Afghan men were charged with crimes there.

The criticism from U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson and others in Wisconsin comes as Republicans nationally, including aides to former President Donald Trump, are becoming increasingly hostile toward the refugees and are trying to turn the collapse of Afghanistan into another opportunity to push a hardline immigration agenda. Trump, in a statement in August, wondered, “How many terrorists are among them?”

Wisconsin’s Fort McCoy is housing about 12,700 Afghan refugees. When they first arrived in late August, Republicans repeatedly raised concerns about vetting and identification. Democratic Gov. Tony Evers called their concerns “dog whistle crap.”

The charges against the two men announced Wednesday by the U.S. attorney in Wisconsin are unrelated to terrorism. One of them, a 20-year-old man, was charged in federal court with three counts of engaging in sexual acts with a minor. The other, a 32-year-old man, was charged with assaulting his wife.

Johnson called the charges “the latest consequence of the Biden administration’s incompetence.”

“This is precisely why I have asked, and continue to ask, the administration about their vetting process and repeatedly raised the issue regarding Ft. McCoy,” Johnson tweeted Thursday.

U.S. Rep. Scott Fitzgerald lodged similar complaints.

“Gov. Evers thinks concerns about the refugees are ‘dog whistle crap,’” Fitzgerald tweeted. “These are precisely the concerns many have about the vetting process. Evers should get his head out of the sand & pay attention.”

The evacuees from Afghanistan began arriving at Fort McCoy in western Wisconsin four weeks ago and a large number of them will soon be leaving for resettlement, Wisconsin Public Radio reported.

House passes defense bill, probe of Afghan failures

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The House on Thursday approved its version of the annual defense authorization bill, giving a hefty bipartisan endorsement to open an independent investigation of U.S. failures in Afghanistan, require women to register for the draft, and overhaul how the military prosecutes sex assault.

The 316-to-113 vote in favor of the \$768 billion measure — \$740 billion of which authorizes spending for the Pentagon, military operations and personnel and \$28 billion of which goes to the Energy Department — represents a rare moment of unity in a Congress otherwise riven with partisan rancor over questions of budgeting. It also reflects Republicans’ and Democrats’ shared frustration with decisions that led to U.S. troops’ chaotic exit from Afghanistan last month.

The legislation — which has yet to be negotiated with the Senate — contains several demands for an accounting of the people and weapons left behind. It directs the Pentagon to detail how it will continue to extract American citizens, green-card holders and Afghans with special immigrant visa status who were not able to leave during the 17-day evacuation from Hamid Karzai Interna-

tional Airport in Kabul.

It also orders defense and intelligence leaders to make clear how they plan to safeguard against terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan, now that the United States does not have a footprint on the ground and is relying solely on “over the horizon” capabilities — capacities that proved to be faulty last month, when U.S. troops killed an aid worker and his family in an errant drone strike.

The Senate bill already aligns with the House’s in some key areas, including the provision requiring women to register for the Selective Service, the system that is drawn upon in the event of a draft. Considered controversial just five years ago, the idea has gained bipartisan support as combat roles previously closed to women have opened.

The House bill’s provisions on reforming the military justice system for cases of sexual assault may also prove influential over the Senate’s bill, which included competing proposals to address the issue. In the House legislation, cases pertaining to sex crimes would be taken out of the chain of command and handled by an independent military prosecutor authorized to bring charges.

Milley seeks Russia military talks

Associated Press

ABOARD A U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT — The U.S. should explore ways to expand its military contacts with the Russians, potentially to include allowing observers from each country to watch the other’s combat exercises, in a broad effort to increase transparency and reduce the risk of conflict, the top U.S. military officer said Thursday.

Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met in Finland for six hours Wednesday with his Russian counterpart, Gen. Valery Gerasimov, chief of the Russian General Staff. Speaking to two reporters traveling with him back to the U.S., Milley said that military contacts between the two great powers are currently largely limited to senior leaders such as the defense

secretary, the chairman and the supreme allied commander for Europe.

But he said the U.S. might look into allowing the military service chiefs to form stronger relationships with their Russian counterparts — which is currently not allowed. That way, for example, naval leaders could reach out to avoid conflict when there are tensions at sea.

“We need to put in place policies and procedures to make sure that we increase certainty, to reduce uncertainty, increase trust to reduce distrust, increase stability to reduce instability in order to avoid miscalculation and reduce the possibility of great power war,” Milley said. “That’s a fundamental thing that we should try to do, and I am going to try to do it.”

Only 225 migrants remain in Texas town

Associated Press

DEL RIO, Texas — Only 225 migrants remained in a Texas border camp where almost 15,000 mostly Haitian migrants had gathered just days ago hoping to seek asylum, the top elected official in Val Verde County said Friday.

County Judge Lewis Owens wrote in a text message that he's been told all of the migrants will be removed by the end of the day — a dramatic change from Saturday, when the number peaked as migrants driven by confusion over the Biden administration's policies and misinformation on social media

converged at the border crossing between Del Rio, Texas, and Ciudad Acuña, Mexico.

Many face expulsion because they are not covered by protections recently extended by the Biden administration to the more than 100,000 Haitian migrants already in the U.S. — many of whom left their homeland after its devastating 2010 earthquake — citing security concerns and social unrest in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country.

The United States and Mexico appeared eager to end the increasingly politicized humanitarian situation at the border

that prompted the resignation of the U.S. special envoy to Haiti and condemnation from civil rights leader Rev. Al Sharpton and UNICEF after images spread widely this week of border agents maneuvering their horses to forcibly block and move migrants.

President Joe Biden on Friday said it was “horrible” to see the way agents used horses block people from crossing the Rio Grande and he promised that “people will pay.”

The incident prompted widespread outrage and is under investigation. The agents have been assigned to administrative

duties and the Department of Homeland Security said it has suspended the use of horses in Del Rio.

Homeland Security has said that nearly 2,000 Haitians had been rapidly expelled on flights since Sunday under pandemic powers that deny people the chance to seek asylum. About 3,900 were being processed for a possible return to Haiti or placement in U.S. immigration court proceedings. Others have been released in the U.S. with notices to appear in court or to report to immigration authorities. Thousands have returned to Mexico.

Jan. 6 committee subpoenas Trump advisers, associates

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A House committee investigating the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol has issued its first subpoenas, demanding records and testimony from four of former President Donald Trump's close advisers and associates who were in contact with him before and during the attack.

In a significant escalation for the panel, Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., announced the subpoenas of former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, former White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications Dan Scavino, former Defense Department official Kashyap Patel and former Trump adviser Steve Bannon.

The four men are among Trump's most loyal aides.

Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., wrote to the four that the committee is investigating “the facts, circumstances, and causes” of the attack and asked them to produce documents and appear at depositions in mid-October.

The panel, formed over the

summer, is now launching the interview phase of its investigation after sorting through thousands of pages of documents it had requested in August from federal agencies and social media companies.

The committee has also requested a trove of records from the White House.

The goal is to provide a complete accounting of what went wrong when the Trump loyalists brutally beat police, broke through windows and doors and interrupted the certification of President Joe Biden's November election victory — and to prevent anything like it from ever happening again.

Thompson says in letters to each of the witnesses that investigators believe they have relevant information about the lead-up to the insurrection.

In the case of Bannon, for instance, Democrats cite his Jan. 5 prediction that “(a)ll hell is going to break loose tomorrow” and his communications with Trump one week before the riot in which he urged the president to focus his attention on Jan. 6.

Dems see tax ‘framework’ to pay for \$3.5T package

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The White House and congressional Democrats have agreed to a framework of options to pay for their huge, emerging social and environment bill, top Democrats said Thursday. Now they face the daunting task of narrowing the menu to tax possibilities they can pass to fund President Joe Biden's \$3.5 trillion plan.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California announced the progress as Biden administration officials and Democratic congressional leaders negotiated behind the scenes. The package aims to rewrite tax and spending priorities to expand programs for Americans of all ages, while upping efforts to tackle income inequality and fight climate change.

Staring down a self-imposed Monday deadline, lawmakers said they would work nonstop to find agreement on specifics. Democrats' views on those vary widely, though they largely agree with Biden's idea of rais-

ing taxes on corporations and the wealthy to fund the package.

Biden has been putting his shoulder into the negotiations, inviting more than 20 of his party's moderate and progressive lawmakers to the White House for lengthy meetings this week.

But the party has been divided over many of the details.

Moderate Democrats, most prominently Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, are demanding that the massive dollar total be reduced. The revenue options to pay for it — that mostly means taxes — being considered can be dialed up or down, the leaders say. The ultimate price tag may certainly slip from the much-publicized \$3.5 trillion.

Republicans are solidly opposed to the package, calling it a “reckless tax and spending spree.”

So Democrats will have to push it through Congress on their own, which is only possible if they limit their defections to a slim few in the House and none in the Senate.

Woman suspected of starting Calif. blaze

Associated Press

REDDING, Calif. — A woman has been arrested on suspicion of starting a Northern California wildfire that spread rapidly, burning homes and prompting evacuation orders Thursday in a rural community, authorities said.

Workers at a nearby quarry reported seeing a woman acting strangely and trespassing in the area in Shasta County where the Fawn Fire was sparked Wednesday afternoon, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said in a statement.

Later Wednesday, Alexandra Souverneva walked out of the brush near the fire line and approached firefighters and told them she was

dehydrated and needed medical help, Cal Fire said.

Souverneva, 30, was taken out of the area for evaluation and treatment. During an interview with Cal Fire and law enforcement, officers came to believe Souverneva, of Palo Alto, was responsible for setting the fire, officials said. She was arrested and booked into the Shasta County Jail. It wasn't immediately known if she has an attorney.

KRCR-TV aired video Thursday of multiple houses burning near the unincorporated Mountain Gate area north of the city of Redding. Officials said 25 structures were destroyed, but didn't specify how many were homes.

The number of people affected by evacua-

tion orders was not immediately known. People living in other areas were warned to be prepared to leave. About 2,000 structures were threatened.

The fire scorched more than 8.5 square miles of heavy timber on steep, rugged terrain amid hot, dry and gusty conditions. It was just 5% contained.

Statewide, more than 9,000 firefighters remained assigned to 10 large, active wildfires, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

California fires have burned 3,671 square miles this year, destroying more than 3,200 homes, commercial properties and other structures.

Jury in R. Kelly trial urged to make R&B star 'pay'

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A prosecutor in closing arguments at the sex-trafficking trial of R. Kelly urged jurors on Thursday to make the R&B superstar "pay" for his alleged crimes, while a defense lawyer told them they've been misled by opportunistic accusers about consensual relationships.

"It is now time to hold the defendant responsible for the pain he inflicted on each of his victims," Assistant U.S. Attorney Elizabeth Geddes said in concluding her closing in federal court in Brooklyn that spanned two days. "It is now time for the defendant, Robert Kelly, to pay for his crimes. Convict him."

Defense attorney Deveraux Cannick countered by telling the jury that testimony by several accusers was full of lies, and that "the government let them lie."

He added: "Where's the fairness to Robert? Where's the integrity of the system?"

The exchange came with trial nearing jury deliberations after testimony from dozens of witnesses since the beginning of the proceedings on Aug. 18. Jurors could get the case as soon as Friday afternoon.

The 54-year-old Kelly, perhaps best known for the 1996 smash hit "I Believe I Can Fly," has pleaded not guilty to racketeering charges accusing him of abusing women, girls and boys for more than two decades. He's also charged with multiple violations of the Mann Act, which makes it illegal to transport anyone across state lines "for any immoral purpose."

Geddes gave an exhaustive recitation of evidence the government says proves how Kelly, with the help of some loyal members of his entourage, used tactics from "the

predator playbook" to sexually exploit his victims.

The tactics included isolating them in hotel rooms or his recording studio, subjecting them to degrading rules like making them call him "Daddy" and shooting video recordings of them having sex with him and others as a means to control them, prosecutors said.

Geddes described one of several graphic homemade videos in evidence — seen by the jury during testimony, but not by the public. She said it showed Kelly grabbing one of his victims by the hair and forcing her to give another man oral sex. The woman submitted "because her will had been broken," the prosecutor said.

The defense argued that it would make no sense for a celebrity like Kelly to set up a criminal enterprise to entrap victims.

1 killed, 14 hurt by gunman in Tennessee grocery store

Associated Press

COLLIERVILLE, Tenn. — A gunman who killed a woman and wounded 14 other people in a Tennessee grocery store did not appear to target anyone specifically as he rampaged through the building on a sunny Thursday afternoon, police said. The entire shooting was over within minutes as first responders swarmed the scene.

On Friday, some of the wounded were still in critical condition and fighting for their lives, Collierville Police Chief Dale Lane said at a morning news conference.

Still, the outcome could have been worse,

he said. The shooter died of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound within a couple of minutes of police arriving, and they arrived almost immediately at the Kroger in the wealthy suburb outside of Memphis.

The gunman acted alone and was a third-party vendor to the store who was on site on a daily basis, Lane said. He was later identified by Major David Townsend as UK Thang. Police searched his home Thursday and removed electronic devices, Lane said.

"We all want to know the why," Lane said of the shooter's motive. "But today, less than 24 hours, we're not ready to tell you that."

The victims included 10 employees and five customers.

Lane identified the woman who was killed as Olivia King. Friends told The Commercial Appeal she was a widowed mother of three.

On Facebook, one of King's sons, Wes King, posted that he had spoken to the trauma surgeon and learned his mother was shot in the chest.

"They tried to save her at the hospital to no avail," he wrote. "I apologize for the graphic details, but this type of crime needs to stop being glossed over and sanitized."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Men in crash carjack good Samaritans

FL TAMPA — Two men who were involved in a crash on Interstate 75 are accused of carjacking the good Samaritans who stopped to help them, the Florida Highway Patrol said.

The crash happened when the driver lost control of the vehicle and hit a barrier wall on I-75 before stopping in the center southbound lane, troopers said in a report sent Tuesday night.

Another vehicle traveling south stopped to help. Troopers said the two men, armed with a shotgun, got inside the vehicle and forced the victims to take them to Tampa.

Once they arrived at the destination, the men got out of the vehicle and let the driver and passenger leave, the report said. The victims went to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office to file a report.

State polls public on license plate options

TN NASHVILLE — Tennessee officials are asking the public to pick their favorite of four redesign options for new license plates that will be available starting in January.

Gov. Bill Lee's office says voting runs through Sept. 27 at tn.gov/ratetheplates.

The new design will replace the current plate that launched in 2006, with modifications in 2011, 2016 and 2017. State law includes a redesign every eight years if lawmakers approve funding for it.

Tennessee law also requires

the words "Tennessee," "Volunteer State" and "TNvacation.com" to be on the plate, and lets Tennesseans pick an "In God We Trust" option.

The winning design of the primarily white and blue options will be announced in the fall.

Ex-official gets prison for \$2 million theft

IL KANKAKEE — A man who stole \$2 million from Kankakee and a regional wastewater agency was sentenced to nine months in federal prison and two years of home confinement.

Richard Simms, 74, acknowledged diverting money through a fraudulent software invoicing scheme.

"He stands before the court deeply remorseful for his actions and for the great pain he caused," defense lawyer Alan Brunell said.

Simms served as director of the Kankakee River Metropolitan Agency and superintendent of Kankakee's Environmental Services Utility.

Woman admits taking late father's benefits

IN HAMMOND — A northwest Indiana woman has admitted that she cashed her late father's government disability checks and pocketed the money for 10 years after his death.

Gary resident Elizabeth Harris, who's also known as Elizabeth Harris-Liuhoulo, pleaded guilty Tuesday to mail fraud in U.S. District Court in Hammond. Prosecutors said she defrauded Social Security out of more than \$192,000.

The government said that after Harris' father died in September 2010, she had a duty to inform Social Security of his death but she never did. After her father died, Harris, 39, repeatedly submitted forms to Social Security claiming he was still alive, prosecutors said.

Harris stole the money while acting as representative payee for her father after he became incapable of managing his own federal disability and retirement benefits.

Residents fail to heed plea to conserve water

CA SACRAMENTO — Californians failed to significantly cut back their water consumption in July, state officials announced, foreshadowing some difficult decisions for Gov. Gavin Newsom's administration as an historic drought lingers into the fall.

Newsom had asked people in July to voluntarily cut back their water consumption by 15% to help address a severe drought that has left some of the state's reservoirs at dangerously low levels.

But in the three weeks after Newsom's announcement, residents reduced their water consumption just 1.8%, according to data released Tuesday and reported by the Sacramento Bee.

App helps officers take on community concerns

NY NEW YORK — A new smartphone app being rolled out this week allows officers in New York City's community policing program to log neighborhood concerns like graffiti, loud music and public

intoxication and keep track of whether they've been addressed.

The internal app, the NYPD's latest push toward digitizing communications within the department, improves on the more scattershot ways officers have been keeping tabs on community problems from shift to shift — namely, calling, texting or emailing one another.

Information is now available around the clock to more officers and supervisors, meaning problems are less likely to fall through the cracks and off-duty officers won't be getting woken up at home if they forget to pass along details about a particular matter.

After outcry, school renews coaching offer

IL LISLE — A Catholic school in suburban Chicago reversed course Tuesday, offering a job to a girls lacrosse coach that had been rescinded when school officials learned the woman is in a same-sex marriage.

Word of the rescinded job offer sparked outcry at Benet Academy in suburban Lisle, which is about 25 miles from Chicago. Dozens of alumni, parents and students met outside the school to support Amanda Kammes. Thousands signed a petition.

Benet Academy officials acknowledged in a Tuesday statement that they'd withdrawn the head coach offer after learning Kammes was in a same-sex marriage. But the board determined her "background and experience made her the right candidate for the position."

— From Associated Press

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Panthers stay perfect, beat Texans

Associated Press

Thanks to another efficient performance from quarterback Sam Darnold and continued dominant play by their top-ranked defense, the Carolina Panthers are 3-0 for the first time since 2015, when they reached the Super Bowl.

That combination was certainly too much for the Texans in Carolina's 24-9 victory on Thursday night in Houston. But a hamstring injury to star running back Christian McCaffrey could cause serious adversity for Darnold and the Panthers' offense going forward.

"Losing Christian is tough, but I thought we did a great job of bouncing back," Darnold said. "We were able to put the first half behind us and do a good job in the second half."

Darnold threw for 304 yards and ran for two touchdowns as the Panthers eased past the Texans despite losing McCaffrey early in the second quarter.

"In the second half we trusted Sam," coach Matt Rhule said. "We were throwing more verticals and pushing the ball down the field."

Carolina's top-ranked defense put the squeeze on Houston rookie Davis Mills in

his first career start, sacking him four times and holding him to 168 yards passing.

The Panthers have allowed 573 yards and totaled 14 sacks in three games.

Darnold topped 300 yards passing for the second consecutive game as he continues to revitalize his career with the Panthers after being cast aside by the New York Jets.

McCaffrey came in leading the league in scrimmage yards, the same thing he did in the 2019 season. But he missed all but three games in 2020 with various injuries as the Panthers sputtered to 5-11 in Rhule's first year.

Rhule said McCaffrey had a strained hamstring.

"I don't know the severity level of it yet, to be quite honest with you," Rhule said. "But the minute it happened I said: 'Hey, he's out for the game.' That's all I knew."

Darnold rushed for Carolina's first score in the first quarter and put the game away when he bulled in from 1 yard out to make it 24-9 with about four minutes left, losing his helmet in the process.

Mills threw for a touchdown and avoided big mistakes after he threw an interception in the second half of Sunday's loss at Cleveland. But the Texans (1-2) couldn't run the

ball, finishing with 42 yards on the ground.

"We just weren't very good on offense tonight ... because we weren't able to run the ball," Texans coach David Culley said.

Mills' favorite target was Brandin Cooks, who had nine receptions for 112 yards.

"I thought he was great," Cooks said of the rookie. "He handled himself well."

Darnold's 5-yard run put the Panthers ahead early and McCaffrey was injured on Carolina's next drive. Rookie Chuba Hubbard was stopped for no gain on fourth-and-1 from the Houston 5 to end that possession.

Hubbard, a fourth-round pick from Oklahoma State, finished with 11 carries for 52 yards and three receptions for 27 yards.

Anthony Miller grabbed a 1-yard touchdown pass about 30 seconds before halftime, but Joey Slye missed the extra point. Miller made his debut with the Texans after he missed the first two games with a shoulder injury.

Tommy Tremble dashed untouched into the end zone from 7 yards out to put Carolina ahead 14-6 in the third quarter. The teams traded field goals before Darnold's short rush on third-and-goal capped a 12-play drive that put it away.

Europe: Team without a country, but many Ryder Cup wins

Associated Press

SHEBOYGAN, Wis. — A few things have changed since the last time Europe and the United States gathered for the Ryder Cup.

For one, Europe.

In the post-Brexit world, seven of Europe's 12 players aren't technically from countries in the European Union anymore. But for decades now, this band of brothers has figured out how to set aside politics, paper over their differences, break down barriers and, more often than not, come together to win one for the home team.

Every two years — three in this case — natives of Britain and Spain and Ireland, sometimes France or Germany and, for the first time this year, Austria, leave their houses — often in Florida, sometimes in Arizona — pull their blue European Union scarves out of their draw-

ers and act like they've been best friends for years. In a lot of ways, they are. They've won the Ryder Cup four of the last five times.

Meanwhile, 12 U.S. golfers come together, put on the red, white and blue, rally around the stars and stripes, incite chants of "USA USA" and try to win one for America. It's worked a grand total of three times since 1995.

It's one of the great conundrums of the Ryder Cup, where Europe began its title defense Friday at Whistling Straits. One team plays for its country and doesn't fare so well.

The other?

"We play for each other," explained Rory McIlroy, a product of Northern Ireland and one of the seven players, the rest from England, who are no longer officially members of the EU. "I think that's the best thing you can do."

The Ryder Cup was a dying

enterprise in the late-70s, no longer competitive between the best America had to offer against top golfers from Britain and Ireland, which had about one-fourth of the population from which to draw and nobody close to the caliber of Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson, Hale Irwin or Raymond Floyd.

Several people, including Nicklaus, floated the idea of expanding the opposition to include all of Europe. Seve Ballesteros of Spain latched on and never let go. That started in 1979. And so, a new team was born out of the old continent.

"Pretty straightforward. Seve," European captain Padraig Harrington said when asked who, or what, the Europeans actually have rallied around for all these years. "He pushed for this to become continental, and it was a way for Seve to legitimize the European Tour."

The European Tour certainly had, and still has, an underdog feel to it, and Ballesteros was on the front lines of a charge to prove that the Euros could stand toe to toe with Americans, whose tour had more money, more exposure and more talent.

Point made. Since the change in 1979, Europe has brought the cup back to the continent 12 of 20 times.

And yet, they come to the Ryder Cup every other year, grasp firmly onto the underdog role that Ballesteros cultivated so well, produce a few cheeky social media videos and act as though they've been playing together for years.

"I honestly have no idea," Ireland's Shane Lowry said when asked why the bond between all these players remains so strong. "But when you enter that team room, there's almost like — something just hits you."

Hogs trying to end Aggies' dominance

Associated Press

The Southwest Classic between longtime rivals Arkansas and Texas A&M has been one-sided, with the Aggies having won nine straight. Before the season, the teams' SEC opener looked like just another game Saturday.

Turns out, it's a Top 25 matchup in CBS' prime afternoon time slot at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

The national stage provides an opportunity for the 16th-ranked Razorbacks to show they're the real deal after being picked second to last in the SEC West and that their impressive win over Texas two weeks ago was no fluke.

For No. 7 Texas A&M, it's a chance to calm fans made nervous by a harder-than-it-should-have-been tussle with Colorado two weeks ago and having Zach Calzada take over at quarterback for the injured Haynes King.

The Aggies are 5½-point favorites, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

Best game

No. 18 Wisconsin vs. No. 12 Notre Dame at Soldier Field in Chicago: The teams were sup-

posed to meet at Lambeau Field in Green Bay last year, but the game was canceled because of the pandemic.

This will be the teams' first meeting since 1964, and the first when both are ranked.

The game has an intriguing backdrop with Notre Dame quarterback Jack Coan playing against his old teammates. Coan left the Badgers last year after Graham Mertz was named the starter. Mertz is yet to live up to the lofty expectations that came with him being ranked as the best pocket passer coming out of high school in 2019.

Heisman watch

**Kenneth Walker III, RB
Michigan State**

The Wake Forest transfer has gone from anonymity to national rushing leader over three games and is a big reason the No. 25 Spartans unexpectedly have become a factor in the Big Ten East.

Walker creates excitement with his shiftiness — he forced 20 missed tackles against Miami last week, according to Pro Football Focus — and he's averaging 8.7 yards per carry.

He goes against Nebraska at home this week.

Numbers to know

2 — Consecutive wins by Texas Tech at Texas' Darrell K. Royal-Memorial Stadium. The Red Raiders head there in search of their first 4-0 start since 2013.

17-1 — Boise State's record against Utah State since 1998. The Aggies are 3-0 for the first time since 1978 and are hosting a Boise team that's lost two of its first three for the first time since 2005.

100 — The number of times SMU and TCU will have met after Saturday's game in Fort Worth. TCU leads the series 51-41-7.

114 — Clemson's national ranking in total offense. The Tigers finished 10th in 2020.

1,051 — Michigan's nation-leading rushing yards total, the Wolverines' highest through three games since at least 1997.

Under the radar

No. 14 Iowa State at Baylor

The Cyclones got all they could handle from Baylor at home last year, and they're looking to build on last week's easy win at UNLV. Baylor is 3-0 against extremely light competition.

No. 24 UCLA at Stanford

The Bruins, coming off a loss to Fresno State, are playing the Stanford team whose win at Southern California got Clay Helton fired two weeks ago. The Cardinal beat UCLA in a 48-47 two-overtime thriller last year.

Indiana at Western Kentucky

The Hoosiers have lost two games to ranked teams after coming into the season with high expectations. With a loss here, the season really goes south.

Hot seat

Second-year Florida State coach Mike Norvell is 3-9 with a loss to Jacksonville State and a 21-point loss to Wake Forest on his tab. The Seminoles enter their home game against Louisville with the possibility of starting 0-4 for the first time since 1974.

Athletic department finances might buy Norvell time. The school will be paying more than \$3 million to the previous coach, Willie Taggart, each of the next two years. There could be hesitancy to cut bait on a coach who is only in his second year of a \$26.5 million, six-year contract.

NHL camps open with several big stars missing

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. — Sidney Crosby's injured left wrist and Evgeni Malkin's right knee are keeping them off the ice in Pittsburgh. Jack Eichel and Buffalo cannot agree on a course of action for his back problems. Evander Kane and San Jose agreed it's best he stay away.

Training camps got under way around the NHL on Thursday with several big-name stars nowhere to be found. From Washington's Nicklas Backstrom being considered week to week while rehabbing a hip injury to the Van-

couver Canucks not knowing how long they'll be without unsigned Quinn Hughes and Elias Pettersson, the absences overshadowed the attendance in many places on the first day of on-ice workouts.

With more than two weeks until the regular season, there's also no reason to rush.

"I think you see with the compressed schedule that we've had over the last couple seasons that there's injuries that need to be maintained," Capitals general manager Brian MacLellan said. "Especially if you're an older player, (it's important) that you

take the time to get it healed properly and don't insert the player into the lineup too early."

The archrival Penguins will have at least a couple of weeks to see how they play without Malkin and Crosby. Malkin is expected to return in late November at the earliest and Crosby will miss at least the first two weeks of meaningful games.

"They are two generational talents, arguably the best players of their generation, and so those guys aren't easy to replace," coach Mike Sullivan said. "Having said that, I think whenever

players go down from an injury standpoint, it's going to provide opportunity for others and others need to step up."

Someone else will — eventually — step up as the Sabres' captain after Eichel was stripped of the title amid his stalemate with the team over how to treat a herniated disk that has sidelined him for six months. Under the NHL's new collective bargaining agreement reached last year, teams now have the final say on how players can treat injuries, so the Sabres could eventually opt to suspend Eichel.

White Sox wrap up AL Central title

Associated Press

CHICAGO — The Chicago White Sox clinched their first AL Central title since 2008 with a 7-2 win over the Cleveland Indians in a doubleheader opener Thursday behind two home runs by Tim Anderson.

Chicago, in its first season under 76-year-old Hall of Famer manager Tony La Russa, is going to the postseason in consecutive years for the first time.

Anderson hit his fifth leadoff home run of the season and added a three-run drive in the second for his sixth career multi-homer game. Luis Robert and Eloy Jiménez hit consecutive homers in the second for a 7-0 lead off Aaron Civale (11-5).

Aaron Bummer (4-5) retired all three batters in the fifth.

Cleveland won the second game 5-3 when Oscar Mercado hit a two-run homer in the seventh off José Ruiz (1-3), making a winner of Emmanuel Clase (4-5).

Phillies 12, Pirates 6: J.T.

Realmutto homered and drove in four, Ronald Torreyes hit a go-ahead, three-run home run in the sixth inning and host Philadelphia erased a six-run deficit to pull within two games of NL East-leading Atlanta.

Dodgers 7, Rockies 5: Max Muncy homered off Lucas Gilbreath (2-2) to start the 10th, and visiting Los Angeles closed within one game of NL West leader San Francisco.

Twins 7, Blue Jays 2: Nick Gordon drove in four runs and Michael Pineda (8-8) won his third straight start as host Minnesota bumped Toronto back in the AL wild-card race.

The loss was especially costly for Toronto, which fell a full game behind New York for the second spot and three games behind wild-card leader Boston.

Padres 7, Giants 6: Jurickson Profar raced home on Victor Caratini's infield single off Dominic Leone (3-5) with one out in the 10th, denying visiting San Francisco its 100th win.

San Diego stopped a five-game losing streak, and remained six games behind St. Louis for the second NL wild card.

Cardinals 8, Brewers 5: Paul Goldschmidt homered twice, and St. Louis overcame a 5-0 deficit to extend its longest winning streak since 1982 to 12 games.

The Cardinals moved five games ahead of Cincinnati and Philadelphia, who played later Thursday, for the second NL wild card.

Mariners 6, Athletics 4: Chris Bassitt pitched three scoreless innings less than a month after surgery to repair three facial fractures, but visiting Seattle rallied against Oakland's bullpen for a four-game sweep.

Seattle matched its season high with its fifth straight win and moved within two games of the idle Yankees for the second AL wild-card spot. Oakland fell four games back of New York.

Nationals 3, Reds 2: National League batting leader Juan Soto homered in consecutive innings, and visiting Washington pushed Cincinnati further from playoff contention.

Angels 3, Astros 2: Shohei Ohtani scored the go-ahead run in the sixth inning and host Los Angeles snapped a six-game losing streak.

Diamondbacks 6, Braves 4: Carson Kelly hit a tying three-run homer off Jacob Webb (5-4) in a five-run seventh, and Daulton Varsho followed with a go-ahead double for host Arizona against NL East-leading Atlanta.

Seeking its fourth straight division title, Atlanta saw its lead cut to two games over Philadelphia.

Orioles 3, Rangers 0: Ryan Mountcastle and Austin Hays homered, rookie Zac Lowther (1-2) pitched five sparkling innings to earn his first major league victory and host Baltimore beat Texas.

IndyCar returns to Long Beach after 2020 absence

Associated Press

One of the crown jewels of both motorsports and the North American street festival scene opened Thursday for the first time in 17 months after the pandemic snapped a 45-year run for the Grand Prix of Long Beach.

The annual event was one of the longest continuously run street events in auto racing dating to its 1975 opening as a temporary street course through the picturesque Long Beach downtown. The prestige grew during an eight-year run hosting Formula One, and the globe-trotting series found it to be a favorable stop because of pleasant weather, proximity to Los Angeles and the demands of the worn-and-torn 1.968-mile stretch of city roads that run

clockwise through 11 turns.

Masks are required even outdoors, and entrants must show proof of vaccination or a negative test for COVID-19 taken no earlier than 72 hours before Friday's opening day.

The 2019 race drew 187,000 spectators over three days, a 1% increase from the year before when the Grand Prix boasted its highest attendance total since 2000. Those who meander down to the water this weekend can feast at food trucks with an up-close seat to IndyCar's changing of the guard.

Alex Palou will win his first IndyCar championship on Sunday barring a total collapse in which a finish of 11th or better clinches the title. The 24-year-old is in just his second season in IndyCar, but a move this year to

Chip Ganassi Racing has pushed a previously unknown driver to within one race of becoming the first Spanish champion of America's open-wheel series.

Palou will be up against Pato O'Ward, the 22-year-old star for Arrow McLaren SP trying to become IndyCar's first Mexican champion. O'Ward has had a strong season with the first two victories of his career and a bravado that has drawn parallels to Juan Pablo Montoya.

No matter who wins between them — two-time champion Josef Newgarden, an American, is mathematically eligible but a longshot — IndyCar will have its first champion from a Spanish-speaking country since Montoya in 1999. The winner will also be the first champion

under 25 since Scott Dixon, who has collected six crowns since that 2003 first title at 23.

O'Ward has said the championship is Palou's to lose, but didn't concede after falling 35 points behind the leader last weekend at Laguna Seca. O'Ward raced at Long Beach in 2019 (12th-place finish) but Palou saw the circuit for the first time in his life on Thursday.

"I'm going for the win in Long Beach, whatever it takes," O'Ward said. "We still have a shot. I know things can go south real quick in racing. All I can do is just send it, take the fight to the guys."

Palou has taken a laid-back approach in part because he's teammates with Dixon and seven-time NASCAR champion Jimmie Johnson.