

Sex assault reports across military up 13%

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Reports of sexual assaults across the U.S. military jumped by 13% last year, driven by significant increases in the Army and the Navy as bases began to move out of pandemic restrictions and public venues reopened. The Associated Press has learned.

Mirroring the increase in those reports is the disclosure that close to 36,000 service members said in a confidential survey that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact—a dramatic increase over the roughly 20,000 who said that in a similar 2018 survey, U.S. defense and military officials said.

The latest numbers are certain to anger lawmakers on Capitol Hill who have been critical of the Pentagon's efforts to get a handle on sexual crimes and misconduct.

According to officials, the overall increase is largely fueled by a nearly 26% jump in reports in-

volving Army soldiers. It's the largest increase for that service since 2013, when such reports went up by 51%.

The increase in Navy reports was about 9%, the Air Force was a bit more than 2% and the Marine Corps was less than 2%, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the reporting has not yet been made public.

The big increase is especially troublesome for the Army, which is struggling to meet its recruiting goals. Army leaders have acknowledged that it is important for parents and others who influence recruits to feel comfortable that their son or daughter is safe and will be taken care of in the service.

Army officials said the numbers are alarming, and that they certainly could have an impact on recruiting if parents believe their youth are at risk of assaults. They said Army leaders saw the growing numbers last year and began trying to implement new pro-

grams. Already, they said, some programs are working and the sexual harassment and assault numbers have been coming down this year.

COVID-19 and the pandemic restrictions make year-to-year comparisons complicated. Officials said they do not have enough data to determine if — or how much — the pandemic played a role in the higher reporting and survey numbers.

The Pentagon and the military services have long struggled to come up with programs to prevent sexual assaults and to encourage reporting. While the military has made inroads in making it easier and safer for service members to come forward, it has had far less success reducing the assaults, which have increased nearly every year since 2006.

Army leaders said they've seen some results with a training program that soldiers get when they report to their first duty station. It is rolled out right away, and has

soldiers acting out dangerous situations and emphasizes training on how to respond.

The double-digit overall increase comes after two years of relatively small increases in reports filed by or involving service members. In the budget year ending September 2020, reports of sexual assault and unwanted sexual contact edged up by 1%, as much of the world largely shut down due to the pandemic. The previous year, reports went up by about 3% — a substantial improvement over 2018, which also saw a 13% increase.

The widespread restrictions on travel and movement for the military continued during fall 2020 and the early part of 2021, and many businesses, restaurants and bars were shut down or had limited service. Things began to open up as more people were vaccinated in the summer and fall, but it's also not clear whether that greater freedom contributed to the increase in assault reports.

Work underway on Navy's 1st frigate in over 3 decades

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

Construction on the Navy's first frigate in more than three decades started this week, setting in motion a plan to provide the Navy with a class of versatile ships that pack a heavy punch.

Work on the \$1.3 billion USS Constellation began Wednesday, the Navy announced in a statement the same day.

The Navy wants to add a total of 20 frigates, which are planned for use in blue water and along the coasts, and which have more armor and firepower than the much-maligned littoral combat ships. The frigates, along with a force of 32 LCS, would give the

Navy about 52 small surface combatants, meeting its goal within the current 355-ship plan, according to an Aug. 26 congressional report.

The Navy needs more smaller, powerful ships that are cheap to operate and easy to keep deployed. Such ships are better at addressing day-to-day Russian and Chinese movements, analysts have said. The Navy may, however, jettison nine of its Freedom-class variant LCS. A House bill under consideration proposes to repurpose five of the ships.

Wisconsin-based shipbuilder Fincantieri Marinette Marine is slated to deliver the frigate in

2026, USNI News reported Wednesday. The Constellation is the first frigate built for the service since 1989.

The Navy plans to alternate buying one to two of the frigates annually over the next five years, according to the service's 2023 annual long-range shipbuilding report to Congress. That could change if the Navy exercises an option to bring on a second shipbuilding yard, the Aug. 26 congressional report stated.

The frigate's capabilities include air warfare, anti-submarine warfare, surface warfare and electromagnetic maneuver warfare. It has radar, combat, missile launch and communica-

tions systems that are already used in the fleet.

Having those proven systems should help accelerate the timeline to get the ships to the fleet, the Navy said.

"The frigate program has worked diligently to minimize risks," said Capt. Kevin Smith, Constellation-class frigate office program manager.

Fincantieri will build at least 10 of the ships.

The frigates are a significant part of the recently released Chief of Naval Operations Navigation Plan 2022, which envisions a future hybrid fleet of 350 manned ships and about 150 unmanned ships, the Navy said.

Navy vet builds, launches smartphone game

By JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

When Christian Fager ended his naval career, he knew what path he would embark on next.

He created a smartphone game based on his six years as a Navy petty officer aboard guided-missile destroyers. Navy Xperience aims to amuse and entertain by putting the player in control of a sailor.

"I wanted to share some of my experiences, stories and challenges as a way to connect sailors who have gone through similar things," Fager, 36, of Cedar, Minn., told Stars and Stripes by email Tuesday.

Navy Xperience can be found on Apple's iPad and iPhone platforms for \$4.99.

Fager has been hatching game ideas since age 8, he said, and at 17, he programmed an online Yu-

Gi-Oh game based on a Japanese anime series using Microsoft Visual Basic software.

He said his job in the Navy was pushing the buttons that launched missiles, but in his free time Fager maintained his interest in creating video games, even collaborating with other sailors on ideas.

He also helped create about 15 Navy electronic applications. Though not active anymore, they included training materials, guides, quizzes and exam preparation. One app calculated the sailor's basic allowance for housing, or BAH. The apps were available on both Apple iPhone and Android platforms.

Today, Fager is pursuing a bachelor's in computer applications development at Metro State University.

In April, he began work on Na-

vy Xperience, which was initially inspired by the hardships he experienced at sea. Fager borrowed from his memories of serving aboard the USS Fitzgerald and USS Carney. Sailors often find themselves performing mundane janitorial tasks aboard ship, and he incorporated that as a theme for Navy Xperience.

"Many of the game mechanics are exaggerated from events or emotions experienced while serving," he said.

In the game, the player engages in "tactical cleaning," joining with other sailors to tackle various challenges aboard a naval vessel.

The characters also get "cranking," a Navy term for food-service tasks in the ship's galley or make inspections and take part in a line crossing ceremony, an old naval tradition at-

tached to crossing the equator.

Some events are close to real life and others are exaggerated, Fager said. He also implemented a few games within the game that players encounter as they advance.

He said he had ideas about this game for years, but finally settled on the current form. Working mostly solo on the product, with a little help on music composition from his mother and using computer code from some of his past projects, he completed it Aug. 24.

He wants to improve the game with added challenges and is hoping it hits home with active-duty sailors.

"I am preparing an update as we speak, adding in a few small features and fixes I noticed," he said. "For future updates, I plan to wait for more feedback from players, to see what they think."

4 families sue Navy over tainted water in Hawaii

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — Four families claiming a host of maladies arising from exposure to petroleum-tainted Navy tap water in Hawaii filed suit in federal court Wednesday, the first of possibly hundreds of plaintiffs ultimately seeking compensation.

The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court of Hawaii, alleges the U.S. Navy "made negligent errors" when it spilled jet fuel at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility in May and November 2021.

The suit does not specify the amount of compensation sought, but it states the plaintiffs' injuries include past and future pain and suffering, mental anguish, medical care, loss of income and physical impairment.

Just Well Law, the Austin, Tex-

as-based firm bringing the suit, said in a news release Wednesday that it represents "hundreds more" clients who have filed pre-litigation forms with the Navy and will be added to the lawsuit.

The jet fuel contaminated one of three wells used by the Navy for its water distribution system supplying military communities on and near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

Roughly 3,200 families were temporarily relocated to hotels on Waikiki Beach for months beginning in December as the Navy worked at isolating the contamination and flushing the system. The lawsuit, however, asserts that the Navy's "actual efforts to remediate the water situation only compounded the harm."

The Navy said in a statement Wednesday that it does not comment on ongoing litigation.

Taiwan to buy 4 US-made naval surveillance drones

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

Taiwan has agreed to purchase four surveillance drones from the United States for \$555 million, with the first to be delivered in 2025, Taiwanese media reported Wednesday.

Following "intensive discussions," Taiwan's Ministry of Defense signed a seven-year contract with the U.S. to acquire four MQ-9B SeaGuardians, Taiwanese legislator Wang Ting-yu announced via Facebook on Wednesday. The SeaGuardian is a naval variant of General Atomics' MQ-9A Reaper with a specialized focus on maritime surveillance and increased endurance over the Reaper, while sacrificing maximum speed, altitude and payload capacity.

The purchase will help "Taiwan's drone combat power leap

forward," Wang said. The contract began Aug. 24 and is set to conclude December 2029.

The half-billion-dollar package also includes ground control station equipment and support systems, Taiwan News reported Wednesday.

The announcement comes a day after Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen pledged that her government would continue to invest in military equipment such as warships, aircraft and drones to shore up Taiwan's defenses.

The island's defense budget next year is set at \$84.9 billion, a record high and a 14% increase over this year, according to a Tuesday statement from Taiwan's official Military News Agency.

The island would not back down in the face of Chinese intimidation, Tsai said.

UN inspectors arrive at nuclear plant

Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine — A U.N. inspection team arrived at Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant Thursday on a mission to safeguard it against catastrophe, reaching the site amid fighting between Russian and Ukrainian forces that prompted the shutdown of one reactor and underscored the urgency of the task.

The visit from the 14-member expert delegation from the International Atomic Energy Agency came after months of negotiations to get inside Europe's biggest nuclear plant. Arriving in a convoy of SUVs and vans, the inspectors were led by IAEA director Rafael Grossi.

Later in the day, Grossi reported that the group had collected important information at the plant and would continue its assessment.

"My team is staying on, and more importantly ... we are establishing a continued presence by the IAEA here," he said in a video on Twitter, the plant visible behind him.

As the experts made their way through the war zone toward the complex, Russia and Ukraine accused each other of

shelling the area and trying to derail the visit. The heavy shelling delayed the team's progress toward the plant.

Energoatom, Ukraine's state nuclear power company, said Russian mortar shelling had led to the shutdown of one of its reactors by its emergency protection system and had damaged a backup power supply line used for in-house needs. One of the plant's reactors that wasn't operating was switched to diesel generators, Energoatom said.

"There has been increased military activity, including this morning until very recently,"

Grossi said during the journey, adding that after being briefed by the Ukrainian military, he decided to keep moving despite the risks. "Weighing the pros and cons and having come so far, we are not stopping."

The Zaporizhzhia plant has been occupied by Russian forces but run by Ukrainian engineers since the early days of the 6-month-old war. Ukraine has alleged Russia is using the plant as a shield, storing weapons there and launching attacks from around it; Moscow has accused Ukraine of recklessly firing on the area.

White House to encourage COVID boosters, flu shots

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration hopes to make getting a COVID-19 booster as routine as going in for the yearly flu shot.

That's at the heart of its campaign to sell the newly authorized shot to an American public that has widely rejected COVID-19 boosters since they first became available last fall.

Shots of the updated boosters, specifically designed by Pfizer and Moderna to respond to the omicron strain, could start within days. The U.S. government has purchased 170 million doses and is emphasizing that everyone will have free access to the booster.

White House COVID-19 coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha said this latest round of shots will offer protection during the busy cold and flu season, with the hope of transitioning people to get the vaccine yearly. Typically, at least half of U.S. adults get a flu shot.

"We expect them to provide more durable protection over time," Jha said in an interview Wednesday with The Associated Press. "The goal very much is to

get to a point where people get their COVID shot on a regular basis, the way they do their flu shot."

Community health workers in North Carolina, home to the country's lowest COVID-19 booster rate, like the strategy, especially because of confusion among some people about vaccine schedules.

"I believe in keeping things simple," said Marty Stamey, an outreach coordinator for the Mountain Area Health Education Center in western North Carolina. "I've heard a lot of people say, 'I think I'll just wait and try to do it like the flu shots.'"

The White House plan also relies in part on local health departments, providers and community groups to reach out and encourage people to get the updated booster. Pharmacies, health providers and state or local health departments are preparing to send text messages to millions of people that will encourage them to get a booster this fall, White House officials said.

Jha said he recommends most Americans get the booster by the end of October.

Reading, math scores fell sharply during pandemic

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Math and reading scores for America's 9-year-olds fell dramatically during the first two years of the pandemic, according to a new federal study — offering an early glimpse of the sheer magnitude of the learning setbacks dealt to the nation's children.

Reading scores saw their largest decrease in 30 years, while math scores had their first decrease in the history of the testing regimen behind the study, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, a branch of the U.S. Education Department.

Much of the nation's standardized testing didn't happen during the early days of the pandemic, so the findings released Thursday gave an early look at the impact of pandemic learning disruptions. Broader data is expected to be released later this year as part of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, also known as the Nation's Report Card.

"These are some of the largest declines we have observed in a single assessment cycle in

50 years of the NAEP program," said Daniel McGrath, the acting associate commissioner of NCES. "Students in 2022 are performing at a level last seen two decades ago."

The study reflects two years of upheaval in American education as schools shut down for months at a time amid COVID-19 outbreaks. Many students spent a year or more learning from home, and virus outbreaks among staff and students continued the disruption even after kids returned to the classroom.

In math, the average score for 9-year-old students fell 7 percentage points between 2020 and 2022, according to the study. The average reading score fell 5 points.

The pandemic's upheaval especially hurt students of color. Math scores dropped by 5 percentage points for white students, compared with 13 points for Black students and 8 points for Hispanic students. The divide between Black and white students widened by 8 percentage points during the pandemic.

Peltola defeats Palin for US House seat

Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska — Democrat Mary Peltola won the special election for Alaska's only U.S. House seat on Wednesday, besting a field that included Republican Sarah Palin, who was seeking a political comeback in the state where she was once governor.

Peltola, who is Yup'ik and turned 49 on Wednesday, will become the first Alaska Native to serve in the House and the first woman to hold the seat. She will serve the remaining months of Republican U.S. Rep. Don Young's term. Young held the seat for 49 years before his death in March.

"I don't think there will be another birthday like today," Peltola said.

"Really I'm just so grateful to Alaskans and all the Alaskans who put their faith in me to fill out the remainder of Congressman

Young's term," she said in an interview. "My desire is to follow in Congressman Young's legacy of representing all Alaskans, and I'm just looking forward to getting to work."

Peltola's victory, in Alaska's first state-wide ranked choice voting election, is a boon for Democrats, particularly coming off better-than-expected performances in special elections around the country this year following the Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. She will be the first Democrat to hold the seat since the late U.S. Rep. Nick Begich, who was seeking reelection in 1972 when his plane disappeared. Begich was later declared dead and Young in 1973 was elected to the seat.

Peltola ran as a coalition builder while her two Republican opponents — Palin and Begich's grandson, also named Nick Begich — at

times went after each other. Palin also railed against the ranked voting system, which was instituted by Alaska voters.

All three — Peltola, Palin and Begich — are candidates in the November general election, seeking a two-year term that would start in January.

The results came 15 days after the Aug. 16 election, in line with the deadline for state elections officials to receive absentee ballots mailed from outside the U.S.

Ranked choice tabulations took place Wednesday after no candidate won more than 50% of the first choice votes, with state elections officials livestreaming the event. Peltola was in the lead heading into the tabulations, followed by Palin and then Begich.

State elections officials plan to certify the election by Friday.

Calif. heat wave sparks fears of fires, power outages

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — California was in a state of emergency Thursday as a brutal heat wave brought the threat of power outages and wildfires.

Temperatures will continue to reach triple digits in many areas of the state through Labor Day, forecasters said, prompting concerns that people will turn up the air conditioning and strain the state's electrical grid.

Gov. Gavin Newsom on Wednesday declared an emergency to increase energy production and relaxed rules aimed at curbing air pollution and global warming gases. He emphasized the role climate change was

playing in the heat wave.

"All of us have been trying to outrun Mother Nature, but it's pretty clear Mother Nature has outrun us," Newsom said. "The reality is we're living in an era of extremes: extreme heat, extreme drought — and with the flooding we're experiencing around the globe."

Newsom's declaration followed a "Flex Alert" call for conservation on Wednesday afternoon and again for Thursday afternoon by the California Independent System Operator, which oversees the state's electrical grid.

In August 2020, a record heat wave caused a surge in power use for air condi-

tioning that overtaxed the grid. That caused two consecutive nights of rolling blackouts, affecting hundreds of thousands of residential and business customers.

Rolling blackouts "are a possibility but not an inevitability" during the current heat wave, said Elliot Mainzer, president and CEO of California Independent System Operator.

Cooling centers were being opened across the state and officials encouraged people to seek comfort at public libraries and stores — even if just for a few hours to prevent overheating.

The National Weather Service warned of an increased risk of wildfires.

Mich. election board rejects abortion rights initiative

Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. — A Michigan elections board on Wednesday rejected an abortion rights initiative after its two Republican board members voted against putting the proposed constitutional amendment on the November ballot.

The two Democrats on the Board of State Canvassers voted in favor, but getting the measure on the ballot required at least three votes of the four-member board. The Reproductive Freedom for All campaign, which gathered signatures to get the measure on the ballot, is expected to appeal to the Democratic-leaning Michigan Supreme Court in the

coming days and expressed confidence it would prevail.

The board's administrative and clerical work on elections was once carried out in obscurity, but it drew national attention in 2020 when Donald Trump pressured Republican members not to certify Joe Biden's electoral win in the state. Its partisan split was evident on another issue Wednesday, when it deadlocked 2-2 on a measure to expand voting, with Democrats for it and Republicans against.

Abortion rights have become a powerful motivator for voters since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned. In conservative Kansas, voters overwhelmingly defeated a ballot measure

that would have allowed the Republican-controlled Legislature to tighten restrictions or ban the procedure outright, and the issue has swayed votes in special elections for Congress, including in a battleground district in upstate New York. Nationally, Democrats have seen an increase in fundraising since the Supreme Court decision.

The proposed constitutional amendment aims to negate a 91-year-old state law that would ban abortion in all instances except to save the life of the mother. The meeting drew hundreds of people, who packed the hearing room and overflow rooms for a chance to comment.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Ex-school chief charged with kidnapping 2 kids

WV HUNTINGTON — A former Ohio schools superintendent has been charged in West Virginia with luring two children into his vehicle with money, police said.

William J. Morrison III, 59, of Huntington, was charged with two felony counts of kidnapping after his arrest last week, Huntington police said.

Morrison is accused of approaching a 9-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl in his vehicle on Aug. 17 and offering them \$20 each to babysit his 4-year-old child.

After a short drive, he stopped the vehicle and told the boy to get out to inspect one of the tires, the statement said. Once the boy went outside, the vehicle drove off with the girl still in it. When the girl started to cry, Morrison allegedly increased the offer to \$100, according to the criminal complaint.

Police said the girl was able to open a passenger door a few blocks later and leave. Neither child was injured.

Town asks where they put their time capsule

IA SHELTON — The small northwest Iowa city of Sheldon planned to make the opening of a time capsule one of the centerpiece events of its 150th anniversary this weekend, but it ran into a slight problem.

No one is sure where the time capsule is buried.

“We’re trying to find instructions on exactly where it’s at before we just start digging,” said Sheldon Chamber of Commerce

Director Ashley Nordahl. “We think we know where it is, but to dig up concrete in the park when we have such a big event going on, we’re just postponing that to a little bit later in the year.”

The time capsule was buried 50 years ago during Sheldon’s centennial celebration and over time its specific location became fuzzy. Event organizers had planned to open the time capsule during a town birthday celebration Friday featuring birthday cake and coffee. They then planned to place new items inside the capsule and rebury it.

The other events will go on, with the time capsule unveiling delayed until workers can find it.

Man allegedly made bomb threats at airport

NV LAS VEGAS — A man is facing three felony charges of communicating a bomb threat after allegedly driving his truck into a secure area of the Las Vegas airport last week and producing a fake bomb.

Sergio Magana, 36, also faces charges of possessing a hoax bomb and destroying property. Two similar misdemeanors were added Monday, including the unlawful manufacture, purchase, possession, sale, advertisement or transportation of a hoax bomb and destroying property.

A police report obtained by the Las Vegas Review-Journal said Magana drove nearly a mile on airport property and was arrested at the scene Aug. 25.

“The car stopped on (the officer’s) driver’s side, and the sub-

ject shouted, ‘I’m trying to get your attention; I’ve been looking for you,’” police said, the Review-Journal reported. “(The motorist) then states, ‘I got a bomb right here,’ as the subject held up an unknown aerosol can wrapped with duct tape.”

The man allegedly told Las Vegas police that he drove into the secure area of the airport to tell police about “the cartel people,” who he said come into the convenience store where he works, the newspaper reported. A police dog detected no explosives in the vehicle.

Column collapses, killing student in hammock

OR PORTLAND — Authorities said a brick column collapsed at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Ore., killing one student who was in a hammock hanging from the column.

Portland Fire & Rescue said two other people were injured Monday night. KGW reported that fire and rescue crews responded to the scene at about 8:15 p.m. Six people were in three hammocks hanging from the column, authorities said.

A 19-year-old man was pronounced dead at the scene. Two 18-year-old women were hospitalized.

Monday was the first day of class at the campus of the private liberal arts college.

Man threw explosive devices at troopers

VT BRIGHTON — A 64-year-old Vermont man is facing domestic terrorism and a host of other charges after allegedly throwing explo-

sive devices at state troopers, Vermont State Police said Tuesday.

State police didn’t give any details about the devices allegedly used or how powerful they were. No one was hurt.

The man was taken into custody, given a medical evaluation and ordered held without bail.

Police were notified by neighbors that the man had ignited an incendiary device at their home near a propane tank and a parked vehicle. The homeowners were able to extinguish the device.

The man fled to his residence with troopers following, and barricaded himself, police said. He came out several times brandishing a firearm, and ultimately threw explosive devices at responding troopers, police said.

Truck crashes, spills tomatoes on highway

CA VACAVILLE — A truck hauling tomatoes crashed Monday into the center divider of a Northern California highway, spilling its load across several lanes of traffic, causing an hourslong closure, authorities said.

The truck was one of three vehicles that collided on the westbound lanes of Highway 80 just after 5 a.m. near Vacaville, California Highway Patrol Officer Jason Tyhurst said.

The truck crashed against the center divider, spilling the tomatoes onto eastbound lanes where another four vehicles then skidded and crashed, he said.

Tyhurst said three people were taken to a hospital, including one with major injuries.

— From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit www.stripes.com.

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Tide's Young, Anderson focused on title

Associated Press

Will Anderson Jr. glowers at the camera like it was an opposing quarterback on third-and-5. Standing next to him, Alabama's Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback, Bryce Young, sports a beatific smile befitting football's glamour position.

The two most decorated players in college football — a fierce pass rusher and a poised-beyond-his-years passer — took different approaches to the No. 1 Crimson Tide's team photo.

They're on the same page when it comes to one pursuit: A national title.

Having arguably the best offensive and defensive player both back for their third (and final?) season in Tuscaloosa is an embarrassment of riches, even for coach Nick Saban and Alabama.

"To have two players that make such a significant impact on our team as those two guys, I don't recall ever having a circumstance like that," Saban said.

Alabama is banking on Anderson and Young to lead the team back to a national championship after a tantalizingly close call

last season. Both are high on the lists of pre-season Heisman Trophy candidates and potential No. 1 NFL Draft picks.

Despite all that, and lucrative celebrity endorsement deals, Saban and their teammates say Anderson and Young just aren't the types to get complacent.

"That's why me and Bryce work so well together, because we are kind of wired the same," Anderson said. "We both want to be great and want to improve every day, and we're always looking for some way to get better."

Last season would be hard to top statistically for the two.

Young set Alabama single-season passing marks with 4,872 yards and 47 touchdowns in his first season as starter. He was intercepted just seven times on his way to becoming the Tide's second straight Heisman winner.

But instead of heading to Hawaii with his family, Young worked out twice a day with his trainer and threw most days during the semester break before returning to Tuscaloosa for the summer.

"He was ultimately, utterly committed to

the season," Young's father, Craig, said.

Anderson led the nation with 17.5 sacks and 34.5 tackles for loss. He won the Bronco Nagurski Trophy as the nation's top defensive player. Anderson finished fifth in the Heisman balloting, just missing out on finalist status and an invitation to New York with his teammate.

Afterward, sister Shanice encouraged him to use that near-miss as motivation.

"For him, I feel like as he gets more successful, it's just fueling him to set new goals, reach new heights," Shanice Anderson said.

The omission bothered him enough that the Heisman is now on the annual goal sheet Anderson keeps on the back of his phone. It's a new addition to a list that he's been compiling with Tide staffer Sal Sunseri before each season.

It's hard to separate the intense, 6-foot-4, 243-pound passer harasser and the 6-foot, 194-pounder who is the one QB he can't lay hands on from each other, or from Alabama's fortunes this season. They arrived as prized recruits, and emerged as superstars, together.

Serena ousts No. 2 seed Kontaveit, moves into third round

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Serena Williams can call it "evolving" or "retiring" or whatever she wants. And she can be coy about whether this U.S. Open will actually mark the end of her playing days. Those 23 Grand Slam titles earned that right.

If she keeps playing like this, who knows how long this farewell will last?

No matter what happens once her trip to Flushing Meadows is over, here is what is important to know after Wednesday night: The 40-year-old Williams is still around, she's still capable of terrific tennis, she's still winning — and, like the adoring spectators whose roars filled Arthur Ashe Stadium again — she's ready for more.

Williams eliminated No. 2 seed Anett Kontaveit 7-6 (4), 2-6, 6-2 in the U.S. Open's second round to ensure that she will play at least one more singles match at what she's hinted will be the last tournament of her illustrious career.

"There's still a little left in me," Williams said with a smile during her on-court interview, then acknowledged during her post-match news conference: "These moments are clearly fleeting."

After beating 80th-ranked Danka Kovinic

in straight sets Monday, then collecting her 23rd victory in her past 25 matches against someone ranked Nos. 1 or 2 against Kontaveit on Wednesday, the six-time champion at Flushing Meadows will play Friday for a spot in the fourth round.

Her opponent will be Ajla Tomljanovic, a 29-year-old Australian who is ranked 46th.

Hours before Williams beat Kontaveit, third-seeded Maria Sakkari was ousted 3-6, 7-5, 7-5 by Wang Xiyu of China in the second round.

Then, minutes after Williams' victory, No. 14 Leylah Fernandez was knocked off 6-3, 7-6 (3) by Liudmila Samsonova, a year after the Canadian lost to Emma Raducanu in the final.

Fernandez only recently returned to action after missing much of the summer with a stress fracture in her right foot. She would have played Williams if both reached the fourth round but knew that would be difficult, estimating her game was only about 30%.

"It's hard to get to the highest level, but it's so easy to get back down and that's what happening right now," Fernandez said.

It's not just happening to her.

Raducanu and two-time winner Naomi

Osaka were eliminated Tuesday night in the first round. That left Bianca Andreescu, who beat Williams in the 2019 final, as the most recent U.S. Open women's champion still in the field.

Andreescu moved into the third round by defeating No. 15 seed Beatriz Haddad Maia 6-2, 6-4 in a match that began after 11:30 p.m. on Wednesday night and finished after 1 a.m. on Thursday.

Andreescu, a 22-year-old Canadian, used to be ranked as high as fourth but is now 48th, so is unseeded in New York. She will meet No. 17 Caroline Garcia next.

Defending men's champion Daniil Medvedev followed Williams in Arthur Ashe Stadium and produced a 6-2, 7-5, 6-3 win over Arthur Rinderknech of France. That sends the top-ranked Medvedev into a third-round matchup against Wu Yibing, the first Chinese man to win a U.S. Open match in the professional era, which began in 1968.

No. 12 Coco Gauff and 20th-seeded Madison Keys avoided the trouble, setting up a third-round matchup between the Americans. Gauff beat Elena Gabriela Ruse 6-2, 7-6 (4), while 2017 U.S. Open runner-up Keys outlasted Camili Giorgi 6-4, 5-7, 7-6 (6).

Monken wants focus on Army players

Associated Press

Jeff Monken enters his ninth season at the helm at Army poised to notch another accomplishment in his run of success at West Point.

The Black Knights went 9-4 last season, finishing with a bowl victory over Missouri of the Southeastern Conference. That was win No. 58 on Monken's résumé, tying him with Charles Daly for second all-time at West Point, behind Earl Blaik's seemingly untouchable total of 121 in 18 seasons.

Monken would rather talk about his players.

"I think they are just confident about who we are as a team," he said. "They're really tough."

Army features a roster that returns standout linebacker Andre Carter II, who posted 15½ sacks, second nationally in 2021, and a quarterback in Tyhier Tyler with plenty of experience. Last season the Black Knights had four quarterbacks

with game experience, sort of a must with Army's version of the triple option, where the quarterback gets hit on nearly every play. Christian Anderson and Jabari Laws graduated, but also in the mix this season with experience are Cade Ballard and Jemel Jones.

"I don't know ... if I feel like one of those guys is absolutely, hands-down, the guy that needs to play the first play and every play," Monken said. "We feel good about both of those guys (Tyler and Ballard). Both of those guys are going to play in the game and that's fine with us. There's a group of quarterbacks there that we've got a lot of confidence in. That gives us some peace of mind."

Scouting Carter

Army had some new visitors during preseason camp. Scouts from NFL teams made the trip to West Point to get a closer look at the talent, especially the 6-foot-7, 260-pound Carter. The native of Missouri City, Texas,

was a third-team All-America selection last season.

Carter also forced four fumbles, blocked a kick and snared one interception.

"He exceeded my expectations last year," defensive coordinator Nate Woody said. "I knew he could get to the quarterback, but we talked a little bit and said, 'Andre, we've got to get turnovers, we've got to get takeaways from you.' Heck, he got four of them. He got pass breakups that led to interceptions. He got an interception himself (against Air Force) and returned the ball down the field. Just awesome."

Carter is on the watch lists for several national awards, and he's ready to keep wreaking havoc on opposing offenses.

"I don't pay attention," he said. "I try to stay focused on our team and getting better."

Mr. Outside 2

Last season, Tyrell Robinson totaled 1,202 all-purpose yards — 609 rushing, 340 receiving,

112 kick return and 141 punt return. That made Robinson and 1946 Heisman Trophy winner Glenn Davis, aka "Mr. Outside," the only Army players to record more than 600 rushing and 300 receiving yards in a season.

Run baby run

Army has a battering ram in the backfield with 260-pound JaKobi Buchanan and speed with Tyler and the elusive Robinson. The trio combined for 1,599 yards and 22 TDs rushing in 2021.

"He (Buchanan) is a tough runner, just a really strong, big, tough guy with the football," Monken said. "He's got good feet, I mean sneaky good in the hole where he doesn't get tripped up. He's able to kind of see things and step around, step over. He's always a guy we can count on to get us a positive yard when we need it. When you don't have negative yardage plays, you're a good player at that position."

Navy hopes rivalry victory charts new course

Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Navy coach Ken Niumatalolo has won his share of games against Army, and last year's victory may have been a particularly crucial one for his program.

The Midshipmen were finishing up their second losing season in a row when they won the most important game on their schedule. Now Navy hopes that triumph over Army can be a turning point for a team that seemed to need one.

"You kind of fight through the fire last year, but once you come through it, I feel really, really good about it," Niumatalolo said. "And I think it was evidenced by the last game."

Navy has endured back-to-

back sub-.500 seasons for the first time since going 11-45 from 1998-2002. The situation hasn't become that dire, but 3-7 followed by 4-8 the past two years was uncharacteristic of Niumatalolo's program.

The start of last season was particularly concerning — a 49-7 loss to Marshall followed by a 23-3 home loss to Air Force. That put longtime offensive coordinator Ivin Jasper's job in limbo, but he stayed on as quarterbacks coach.

Navy improved after that, with competitive losses to Houston and SMU sandwiched around a win over Central Florida. The Midshipmen also lost by just seven to playoff-bound Cincinnati.

The difficult schedule seemed to pay dividends at the end when Navy won its final two games — including its 16th victory in the past 20 years against Army.

Although that was a massive victory within the Navy program, the Midshipmen still have a lot to prove in terms of their ability to handle the rest of their schedule. They were picked 10th in the American Athletic Conference in this year's preseason media poll.

Changing landscape

Navy isn't the type of program that comes to mind when issues surrounding name, image and likeness or the transfer portal are discussed. Still, Niumatalolo says it's important to

keep an eye on that.

"Some of it may not affect us, but eventually it does affect us," he said. "We don't go to the portal like everybody else, but people still leave our school."

Realignment also has the potential to affect Navy in various ways.

Returning QB

Tai Lavatai was the starting quarterback for most of last season. It was his first year of varsity action, and the experience he gained should only help him in 2022.

"I feel a million times more confident. I feel like I could tell you exactly what every single person does on any possible play against any defense," Lavatai said. "It's a big relief."

Presidents again consider CFP expansion

Associated Press

The university presidents who oversee the College Football Playoff are scheduled to meet Friday to discuss expanding the four-team format, reopening the possibility that a new model for crowning a champion could be implemented as soon as the 2024 season.

Two people familiar with the situation told The Associated Press on Wednesday that CFP's Board of Managers, led by Mississippi State President Mark Keenum, is set to con-

vene by video conference.

There is no guarantee the presidents will take any official action or vote to approve an expansion model, but another person familiar with the situation told the AP they would like to accelerate a process that had ground to a halt six months ago.

All the people spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity because the board's plans were not being made public.

The CFP management committee, comprised of 10 FBS

conference commissioners and Notre Dame's athletic director, is scheduled to meet next week in Dallas.

The management committee is responsible for hashing out a format for the CFP, but the presidents have the final say on what happens with the playoff.

Back in February, CFP Executive Director Bill Hancock announced expansion talks among the commissioners had failed to produce the needed unanimous consensus in time for the format to change before

the end of the current contract with ESPN. That deal runs through 2025.

The CFP recently announced the sites of the championship games for the final two seasons of the current 12-year deal.

Hancock said back in February that expansion talks would resume later in the year with a focus on what the playoff would be starting in 2026.

Since then, the commissioners who opposed the proposed 12-team format have seemingly softened their stances.

Nimmo's leaping catch saves deGrom, Mets' win

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Brandon Nimmo made an amazing grab, Timmy Trumpet blew his horn and Edwin Díaz shut the door.

Starting with another stingy performance by Jacob deGrom, the New York Mets hit every note Wednesday night in a scintillating show at pulsing Citi Field.

Nimmo saved the Mets with a breathtaking catch atop the center-field fence, and Díaz entered to Trumpet's live tune before closing out the Los Angeles Dodgers for a 2-1 victory.

"It was awesome," deGrom said. "That was a great atmosphere out there. The fans were in it the whole time."

Starling Marte hit a two-run homer off All-Star lefty Tyler Anderson (13-3) as the Mets evened a three-game showdown between the top two teams in the National League.

Mookie Betts connected off deGrom (4-1) for his 32nd home run, but it wasn't enough for the Dodgers in a tight pitching duel with a playoff feel that took only 2 hours, 19 minutes.

"That was fun," New York manager Buck Showalter said.

Making his sixth start of the season after returning from injury, deGrom hit 102 mph on the radar gun and struck out

nine in seven innings. He allowed three hits and walked one.

"Maybe the best to ever pitch," Betts said. "So he's a tough task."

The two-time Cy Young Award winner was nursing a 2-1 lead when ex-Met Justin Turner sent a drive to deep center in the seventh.

Knowing it might tie the game, deGrom turned around and went into a worried crouch on the mound. Nimmo, however, raced back and plucked the ball right off the top of the wall to rob Turner of a home run with a sensational leaping grab.

"Jumped up, the ball hit my glove and I knew it didn't bounce out once it got in there. And then all the emotions spilled out," Nimmo said. "I'm still really ecstatic about it. It was one of the best plays I've ever made."

A fired-up Nimmo landed on his feet, pumped his fist hard and screamed in excitement as deGrom held both arms high and then tipped his cap.

Angels 3, Yankees 2: Shohei Ohtani became the first player in major league history to hit 30 home runs and record 10 pitching wins in the same season as host Los Angeles rallied to beat New York.

Red Sox 6, Twins 5: Xander Bogaerts hit a grand slam and drove in five runs and J.D. Martinez also homered to back Michael Wacha's strong start for visiting Boston.

Cardinals 5, Reds 3 (13): Albert Pujols hit a go-ahead sacrifice fly in the 13th inning, Lars Nootbaar added a two-run homer and visiting St. Louis twice used five-man infields to stop Cincinnati.

Braves 3, Rockies 2: Kyle Wright pitched seven scoreless innings to earn his major league-leading 17th victory, Austin Riley and Ronald Acuña Jr. homered, and host Atlanta ended a three-game skid.

Astros 5, Rangers 3: Jose Altuve drove in two runs and scored two more for AL-best Houston against host Texas.

Padres 5, Giants 4: Joe Musgrove had a season-high 11 strikeouts, Manny Machado drove in three runs and visiting San Diego completed a three-game sweep.

Rays 2, Marlins 1 (10): Manuel Margot singled in the go-ahead run in the top of the 10th inning and prevented a run by tracking down a fly ball to deep center in the bottom half to lead visiting Tampa Bay over Miami.

Mariners 5, Tigers 3: Abra-

ham Toro hit a go-ahead, two-run homer in the seventh inning and visiting Seattle got its fifth win in six games.

Cubs 7, Blue Jays 5: Frammil Reyes homered, Nico Hoerner drove in two runs and visiting Chicago avoided a three-game sweep.

White Sox 4, Royals 2: Lance Lynn pitched four-hit ball through seven innings, Elvis Andrus hit a tiebreaking home run in the fifth and host Chicago snapped a five-game losing streak.

Orioles 4, Guardians 0: Gunnar Henderson homered in his major league debut, and visiting Baltimore beat Cleveland.

Brewers 6, Pirates 1: Keston Hiura and Luis Urias each hit an RBI single during his team's four-run seventh inning, and host Milwaukee beat Pittsburgh.

Nationals 6, Athletics 1: Aníbal Sánchez earned his first victory in nearly two years, Luke Voit hit a two-run home run and host Washington beat Oakland.

Phillies 18, Diamondbacks 2: Bailey Falter threw a career-high 6⅓ innings before leaving with an injury, Bryce Harper and Rhys Hoskins both had three hits and visiting Philadelphia pummeled Arizona.