

## Ukraine nuke plant using reserve power

*Associated Press*

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine — The head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog said Saturday that the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in Ukraine was disconnected from its last external power line but was still able to run electricity through a reserve line amid sustained shelling in the area.

International Atomic Energy Agency Director-General Rafael Grossi said in a statement that the agency's experts, who arrived at Zaporizhzhia on Thursday, were told by senior Ukrainian staff that the fourth and last operational line was down. The three others were lost earlier during the conflict.

But the IAEA experts learned that the reserve line linking the facility to a nearby thermal power plant was delivering the electricity the plant generates to the external grid, the statement said. The same reserve line can also provide backup power to the plant if needed, it added.

"We already have a better understanding of the functionality of the reserve power line in connecting the facility to the grid," Grossi said. "This is crucial information in assessing the overall situation there."

In addition, the plant's management in-

formed the IAEA that one reactor was disconnected Saturday afternoon because of grid restrictions. Another reactor is still operating and producing electricity both for cooling and other essential safety functions at the site and for households, factories and others through the grid, the statement said.

The Zaporizhzhia facility, which is Europe's largest nuclear plant, has been held by Russian forces since early March, but its Ukrainian staff are continuing to operate it.

The Russian-appointed city administration in Enerhodar, where the Zaporizhzhia plant is located, blamed an alleged Ukrainian shelling attack on Saturday morning for destroying a key power line.

"The provision of electricity to the territories controlled by Ukraine has been suspended due to technical difficulties," the municipal administration said in a post on its official Telegram channel. It wasn't clear whether electricity from the plant was still reaching Russian-held areas.

Vladimir Rogov, a member of the Kremlin-appointed regional administration said on Telegram that a shell had struck an area between two reactors. His claims couldn't be immediately verified.

Over the past several weeks, Ukraine and Russia have traded blame over shelling at and near the plant, while also accusing each other of attempts to derail the visit by IAEA experts, whose mission is meant to help secure the site. Grossi said their presence at the site is "a game changer."

Russia's Defense Ministry said that Ukrainian troops launched another attempt to seize the plant late Friday, despite the presence of the IAEA monitors, sending 42 boats with 250 special forces personnel and foreign "mercenaries" to attempt a landing on the bank of the nearby Kakhovka reservoir.

The ministry claimed that the Russian military killed 47 troops, including 10 "mercenaries" and wounded 23. The Russian claims couldn't be independently verified.

The plant has repeatedly suffered complete disconnection from Ukraine's power grid since last week, with the country's nuclear energy operator Enerhoatom blaming mortar shelling and fires near the site.

Local Ukrainian authorities accused Moscow of pounding two cities that overlook the plant across the Dnieper river with rockets, also an accusation they have made repeatedly over the past weeks.

## US plans to sell in defensive arms to Taiwan

*The Washington Post*

The Biden administration Friday formally notified Congress of its intent to sell Taiwan \$1.1 billion worth of defensive arms as Beijing continues its heightened military air and sea presence around the island in the wake of a high-profile visit to Taipei by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi last month.

The package, which includes 60 Harpoon anti-ship missiles, 100 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles and support for a surveillance radar system, is the fifth and largest arms sale to Taiwan advanced by the Biden administration. It is widely expected to clear Congress, which is considering legislation to surge the amount of security assistance provided to Taiwan over the next four years.

Such sales generally take several years to be delivered because of larger structural

challenges arising out of how foreign military sales are completed. Laura Rosenberger, White House senior director for Taiwan and China, said the administration has undertaken a "substantial effort" to accelerate the process. "We're acutely aware of the need to expedite delivery," she said.

The package, which was first reported by Politico, is part of the administration's broader strategy to deter Beijing's aggression, officials said. That strategy also calls for working with allies and partners through joint exercises in the region and building Taipei's economic resilience so it can withstand increased pressure from China, they said. The United States will soon launch trade talks with Taiwan.

"The biggest threats we see that Taiwan will face are going to come from the sea and from the air," Rosenberger said. "So it

is really critical that they are able to use the Harpoons in support of the coastal defense and the Sidewinders in support of their air defense."

Rosenberger stressed, however, that the administration sees the threat from China against Taiwan as long-term and so Washington's response needs to be both sustained and comprehensive. Last month, for instance, the U.S. conducted a joint air exercise with Japan near Okinawa, and last week it sent two U.S. warships through the Taiwan Strait — the first such transit since Pelosi's visit.

"We will not be reflexive or knee-jerk," White House Indo-Pacific Coordinator Kurt Campbell told reporters last month. "We will be patient and effective, will continue to fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows."

# PETA decries using sheep for Navy tests

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — A leading animal rights group is calling on Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to force the Navy to stop conducting painful and often lethal decompression sickness tests on sheep.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals will send a letter urging Austin to end the Navy's conduct and financial support of "horrific" decompression sickness and oxygen toxicity tests on animals, according to PETA's vice president of international laboratory methods, Shalin Gala.

Decompression sickness tests involving Navy scientists took place at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Be-

thesda, Md; the Naval Medical Center San Diego; and the Naval Medical Research Center in Silver Spring, Md., according to a 2021 report in the *Undersea and Hyperbaric Medical Journal*.

"Sheep were locked in high-pressure chambers and exposed to significant atmospheric pressure equivalent to what a diver would experience at 257 feet below sea level — and left in that state for 31 minutes," PETA said of the tests. "The animals were then forced to decompress, which caused them to endure severe [decompress illness.]"

As part of the process, the sheep endured "crippling joint pains, bloating treated by stomach puncture and cardiovascu-

lar collapse or spinal cord injury, causing distress or paralysis and frequently resulting in death," said the letter, which cited the 2021 report.

"In this experiment, the sheep were then injected with an experimental oxygen-carrying substance that failed to reduce mortality," Gala said. "Following all of these procedures, the sheep were then killed and dissected."

Gala said the tests, which have been abandoned by the British and French navies, are less accurate than others that do not involve animals. These use modern technology to study decompression sickness based on human tissue and data from divers.

## Russia begins military drills in Far East

*The Washington Post*

Russian forces on Thursday began the large-scale Vostok 2022 military exercises in Russia's Far East and other locations. The military exercises will last until Wednesday, and 13 other countries including China and India will take part.

The exercises will be the first large-scale drills of the Russian military since its invasion of Ukraine.

According to the Russian Defense Ministry, about 50,000 troops will join Vostok, which means East in Russian. Russia apparently intends to dispel concerns over shortages of personnel and equipment amid its inva-

sion of Ukraine and strengthen opposition to the West and Japan.

The military exercises will be conducted in the Sea of Japan and the Okhotsk Sea, as well as at seven onshore training fields.

The Russian military conducts large-scale exercises in autumn every year with the country's military districts taking turns to host them, and it is the first time since 2018 that the exercises have been held in the Eastern Military District, which holds jurisdiction over the Far East and other regions.

This year's exercises are expected to be joined by the largest-ever number of foreign countries, totaling 13 nations including ob-

servers. The participating countries include India, which also values its relationship with Japan and the United States, and Nicaragua, a Central American country governed by a left-wing government at odds with the United States.

Amid the ongoing invasion of Ukraine, the Kremlin seems to be trying to emphasize that it is not militarily isolated, and to check growing U.S. military activity in the Asia-Pacific region.

However, the number of troops taking part in the military exercises comes to only about one-sixth of the figure for the previous Far East military exercises four years ago.

## Russia's Nord Stream gas pipeline won't reopen

*Associated Press*

BRUSSELS — Russian energy giant Gazprom announced Friday that it won't reopen the Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline as expected, leaving Europe at risk of severe energy shortages in the winter and the rest of the world bracing for price increases.

Gazprom shut down the pipeline, which links Russia and Germany, on Wednesday for what was supposed to be three days of work. But on Friday, just hours after the Group of Seven industrialized nations announced they will impose a price cap on Russian oil, the company said that an oil

leak had been discovered at a compressor station and the pipeline would not reopen after all.

Germany last month called similar shutdowns a political move by the Kremlin to increase uncertainty as the European Union hits Russia with unprecedented sanctions in response to the war in Ukraine. Friday's news will deepen fears that Russia will continue to curb — or even cut — gas supply.

The move comes as Europe is scrambling to confront acute energy disruptions that threaten to leave the continent short of the fuel it needs when temperatures drop. The

shutdown extension is expected to send gas prices up sharply when markets open on Monday. If the pipeline stays offline permanently — and Europe has a particularly cold winter — the economic consequences for Europe and the world would be considerable.

"Gazprom's move is sadly no surprise," tweeted Charles Michel, president of the European Council. "Use of gas as a weapon will not change the resolve of the EU. We will accelerate our path towards energy independence. Our duty is to protect our citizens and support the freedom of #Ukraine."

# Thousands say farewell to Gorbachev; Putin absent

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Thousands of mourners lined up Saturday to pay tribute to former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who launched drastic reforms that helped end the Cold War and precipitated the breakup of the Soviet Union, in a farewell snubbed by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The Kremlin's refusal to declare a state funeral reflects its uneasiness about the legacy of Gorbachev, who has been venerated worldwide for bringing down the Iron Curtain but reviled by many at home for the Soviet collapse and the ensuing economic meltdown that plunged millions into poverty.

On Thursday, Putin privately laid flowers at Gorbachev's coffin at a Moscow hospital where he died. The Kremlin said the president's busy schedule would prevent him from attending the funeral.

Asked what specific business will keep Putin busy on Saturday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that the president will have a series of working meetings, an international phone call and needs to prepare for a business forum in Russia's Far East he's scheduled to attend next week.

The coffin of Gorbachev, who died Tuesday at the age of 91, was brought to Mos-

cow's Novodevichy cemetery, where he will be buried next to his wife Raisa, following a farewell ceremony at the Pillar Hall of the House of the Unions, an opulent 18th-century mansion near the Kremlin that has served as the venue for state funerals since Soviet times.

At the ceremony Saturday, mourners passed by Gorbachev's open casket flanked by honorary guards, laying flowers as solemn music played. Gorbachev's daughter, Irina, and his two granddaughters sat beside the coffin.

The grand, chandeliered hall lined by columns hosted balls for the nobility under the czars and served as a venue for high-level meetings and congresses along with state funerals during Soviet times. Upon entering the building, mourners saw honor guards flanking a large photo of Gorbachev standing with a broad smile, a reminder of the cheerful vigor he brought to the Soviet leadership after a series of dour, ailing predecessors.

Despite the choice of the prestigious site for the farewell ceremony, the Kremlin stopped short of calling it a state funeral, with Peskov saying the ceremony had "elements" of one, such as honorary guards, and the government's assistance with organizing it.

# Pilot in custody after flying and making threats

Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. — An airplane circled over north Mississippi on Saturday morning, causing panic on the ground as the pilot threatened to crash into a Walmart. Hours later, the plane landed safely in a field, and police took the pilot into custody.

Gov. Tate Reeves announced on Twitter shortly after 10:30 a.m. that the "situation has been resolved and that no one was injured." He thanked law enforcement agencies that helped in bringing the aircraft down.

The Federal Aviation Administration confirmed that the plane landed northwest of Ripley, Mississippi, with only the pilot aboard. Benton County Sheriff Dispatcher Connie Strickland also said the plane landed and the subject was taken into custody.

Ripley is about 85 miles southeast of Memphis, Tenn., and about 45 miles northwest of Tupelo, Miss., where the flight originated.

The plane started circling over Tupelo at about 5 a.m., the Tupelo Police Department said. Officers evacuated a Walmart and a convenience store in Tupelo because of the pilot threatened to intentionally crash into the Walmart.

The plane flew over Tupelo more than three hours before flying toward more rural areas. People walked outside and looked toward the skies, some of them taking photos or cellphone videos.

Authorities believe the aircraft — a Beechcraft King Air C90A — was stolen and are working to determine whether the pilot who threatened to crash the plane is an employee of a local airport, two people briefed on the matter told The Associated Press. Multiple federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security, were involved in the investigation and are working to discern a motive.

An online flight tracking service showed the plane meandering in the sky for several hours and following a looping path.

Leslie Criss, a magazine editor who lives in Tupelo, woke up early and was watching the situation on TV and social media. Several of her friends were outside watching the plane circle overhead.

"I've never seen anything like this in this town," Criss told The Associated Press. "It's a scary way to wake up on a Saturday morning."

# NASA's 2nd moon rocket launch attempt scrubbed due to fuel leak

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — NASA's new moon rocket sprang another dangerous fuel leak Saturday, forcing launch controllers to call off their second attempt to send a crew capsule into lunar orbit with test dummies.

The first attempt earlier in the week was also marred by escaping hydrogen, but those leaks were elsewhere on the 322-foot rocket, the most powerful ever built by NASA.

NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said repair work could bump the launch into October.

Mission managers planned to meet later in the day to decide on a course of action. After Tuesday, a two-week launch blackout period kicks in. Extensive leak inspections

and repairs, meanwhile, could require that the rocket be hauled off the pad and back into the hangar; that would push the flight into October, Nelson said.

"We'll go when it's ready. We don't go until then and especially now on a test flight, because we're going to stress this and test it ... and make sure it's right before we put four humans up on the top of it," Nelson said.

He added: "This is part of our space program: Be ready for the scrubs."

NASA wants to send the crew capsule atop the rocket around the moon, pushing it to the limit before astronauts get on the next flight. If the five-week demo with test dummies succeeds, astronauts could fly around the moon in 2024 and land on it in 2025. People last walked on the moon 50 years ago.

# 9 migrants found dead in Rio Grande

*Associated Press*

At least nine migrants were found dead in the Rio Grande after dozens of people attempted a hazardous crossing near Eagle Pass, Texas, officials said.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Mexican officials made the discovery Thursday while responding to a large group of people crossing the river following days of heavy rains that had resulted in particularly swift currents. U.S. officials recovered six bodies, while Mexican teams recovered three, according to a CBP statement.

The agency said U.S. crews rescued 37 others from the river and detained 16 more, while Mexican officials took 39 migrants into custody. Officials on both sides of the border continue searching for victims, the bor-

der agency said.

CBP did not say what country or countries the migrants were from and did not provide any additional information on rescue and search operations. Local agencies in Texas that were involved did not immediately respond to requests for additional information.

The Border Patrol's Del Rio sector, which includes Eagle Pass, is fast becoming the busiest corridor for illegal crossings. Agents stopped migrants nearly 50,000 times in the sector in July, with Rio Grande Valley a distant second at about 35,000.

The area draws migrants from dozens of countries, many of them in families with young children. About 6 of 10 stops in the Del Rio sector in July were migrants from

Venezuela, Cuba or Nicaragua.

The sector, which extends 245 miles along the Río Grande, has been especially dangerous because river currents can be deceptively fast and change quickly. Crossing the river can be challenging even for strong swimmers.

In a news release last month, CBP said it had discovered bodies of more than 200 dead migrants in the sector from October through July.

Surveys by the U.N. International Organization for Migration and others point to rising fatalities as the number of crossing attempts have soared. In the last three decades, thousands have died attempting to enter the United States from Mexico, often from dehydration or drowning.

## Thousands flee, several hurt as California fire burns

*Associated Press*

WEED, Calif. — Thousands of people remained under evacuation orders Saturday after a wind-whipped wildfire raged through rural Northern California, injuring people and torching an unknown number of homes.

The fire that began Friday afternoon on or near a wood-products plant quickly blew into a neighborhood on the northern edge of Weed but then carried the flames away from the city of about 2,600.

Evacuees described heavy smoke and chunks of ash raining down.

Annie Peterson said she was sitting on the porch of her home near Roseburg Forest Products, which manufactures wood veneers,

when “all of a sudden we heard a big boom and all that smoke was just rolling over toward us.”

Very quickly her home and about a dozen others were on fire. She said members of her church helped evacuate her and her son, who is immobile. She said the scene of smoke and flames looked like “the world was coming to an end.”

Suzi Brady, a Cal Fire spokeswoman, said several people were injured.

Allison Hendrickson, spokeswoman for Dignity Health North State hospitals, said two people were brought to Mercy Medical Center Mount Shasta. One was in stable condition and the other was transferred to UC Davis

Medical Center, which has a burn unit.

Rebecca Taylor, communications director for Roseburg Forest Products based in Springfield, Ore., said it is unclear if the fire started near or on company property. A large empty building at the edge of company property burned she said. All employees were evacuated, and none have reported injuries, she said.

The blaze, dubbed the Mill Fire, was pushed by 35-mph winds, and quickly engulfed 4 square miles of ground.

The flames raced through tinder-dry grass, brush and timber. About 7,500 people in Weed and several nearby communities were under evacuation orders.

## Assassination attempt against VP roils Argentina

*Associated Press*

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina — As Argentina's powerful Vice President Cristina Fernández stepped from her car outside her apartment building and began shaking hands with a throng of well-wishers, a man pushed forward with a gun, pointed it just inches from her face and pulled the trigger with a distinct click.

The loaded weapon evidently jammed.

Fernández's security detail seized the gunman and took him away, and the 69-year-old former president of Argentina was unhurt. But the apparent assassination attempt against the deeply divisive figure

Thursday night shook Argentina — a country with a history of political violence — and worsened tensions in the sharply divided nation.

The gunman was identified as Fernando André Sabag Montiel, a 35-year-old street vendor and Brazilian citizen who has lived in Argentina since 1998 and had no criminal record, authorities said. He was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder.

Sabag Montiel wielded a .38-caliber semiautomatic handgun that was “capable of firing” and was “operating normally,” according to a judicial official who was not authorized to discuss the case publicly and

spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Authorities shed no light on a possible motive and were investigating whether he acted alone or was part of a larger plot.

The country's political leaders quickly condemned the attempted shooting as an assault on democracy and the rule of law, with President Alberto Fernández holding a late-night national broadcast to tell Argentines just how close the vice president came to being killed.

The president, who is not related to his vice president, said the gun was loaded with five bullets but “didn't fire even though the trigger was pulled.”

**AMERICAN ROUNDUP**

**Box of reptiles mailed to the wrong address**

**NY** PORT CHESTER — Several live lizards were wrongly delivered to a residence in a village north of New York City.

“Needless to say the addressee was quite startled when they opened the box,” Port Chester police wrote on Facebook.

Police posted a picture of three dark-colored lizards held in a large white container. It was not immediately clear whether there were more reptiles not pictured.

Police said they held the animals until a local animal sanctuary could pick them up for safe-keeping.

**Park readies for annual ‘Super Bowl of Marbles’**

**TN** HILHAM — Tennessee will play host to the 39th annual National Rolley Hole Marbles Championship on Sept. 17.

Rolley hole is a game that involves shooting marbles into small holes in the ground while keeping other teams from making the holes. Players say it involves skill and strategy, and the annual event at Standing Stone State Park is considered the “Super Bowl of Marbles.”

The championship matches will be played on the park’s 40-by-20-foot dirt marbles yard, the only marbles yard in the country located within a state park, according to a news release from the parks. The tournament will include a festival with bluegrass music, food, marble-making demonstrations, a marbles roller coaster and kids’ marbles games.

“There is no other event like this in the world,” Standing Stone Park Ranger Shawn Hughes said.

**Woman arrested in alleged border kidnap**

**MT** PLENTYWOOD — A Colorado woman faces numerous felony charges after she was caught allegedly trying to cross the U.S.-Canada border illegally with a person she had kidnapped and assaulted, federal authorities said.

The 48-year-old suspect from Aguilar, Colo., was arrested along a remote area of the border in northeastern Montana, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Border patrol agents intercepted the suspect’s vehicle northeast of Plentywood and discovered that a passenger inside was a female from Canada who allegedly had been kidnapped and assaulted.

The suspect was turned over the Sheridan County Sheriff’s Office and later transferred to the Cascade County Detention Center.

**Delivery driver’s actions save pups from fire**

**FL** LAKE CITY — Three puppies in northeast Florida were saved after a delivery driver noticed a fire in their home while their owner was away, fire officials said.

The driver for Amazon was delivering a package when she noticed smoke coming from the home and called 911. Firefighters rescued the pups from the home and revived them from smoke inhalation, according to Columbia County Fire Rescue. Firefighters contained the fire

to the room where it was started.

“Thank you to the Amazon driver who noticed the smoke and called 911,” Columbia County Fire Rescue said in a Facebook post. “Since the homeowner was not at home at the time, she saved the home and the puppies’ lives!”

The county is located about 60 miles west of Jacksonville, Fla.

**Sale of Buffett portrait can’t match lunch bid**

**NE** OMAHA — The auction of a high-tech portrait of Warren Buffett didn’t come close to matching the \$19 million someone paid earlier this year for a private lunch with the billionaire, but it still raised \$75,100 for one of his favorite charities.

The eBay auction wrapped up on Buffett’s 92nd birthday. The portrait created by Motiva Art features a grid of letters over the picture that light up to spell out 11 of the Berkshire Hathaway CEO’s best-known quotes.

The lunch auction that Buffett has done for years to benefit the Glide Foundation, which helps the homeless in San Francisco, always attracts big bids because it offers exclusive access to the investor. This year’s auction generated a remarkable amount of money because Buffett said it was going to be the final one.

**Man charged with 132 counts of sexual assault**

**AR** ARKADELPHIA — Prosecutors have charged a southwest Arkansas man with 132 counts, accusing him of sexually assaulting 31 children over 25 years.

Court records show Barry Walker, 58, of Glenwood, is charged with rape, engaging a child in sexually explicit conduct, computer exploitation of a child, producing or directing a sexual performance by a child and distributing or possessing material depicting child sex.

Prosecuting Attorney Dan Turner said that all of the victims were girls younger than 14.

Walker has pleaded not guilty to many of the charges and awaits arraignment on the remaining counts, according to Turner.

The crimes occurred from 1997 until earlier this year, according to court documents.

**Scuba diver finds phone lost by paddleboarder**

**MA** ROCKPORT — When Laura Hernandez fell into the water and lost her iPhone while paddleboarding off Massachusetts earlier this month, she figured it was probably gone for good.

But the next day the New York woman returned to the Rockport beach and approached the instructor of a novice scuba diving class and told him her situation.

Instructor Larry Bettencourt told her the odds of finding it, even with its distinctive pink case, were not good, but he told the class to keep an eye out for it. The Boston Globe reported.

Amazingly, Vanessa Kahn, 26, of Peabody, making her first open-water ocean dive, spotted the phone in water about 25 feet deep.

Hernandez gave Kahn a \$300 reward.

– From Associated Press



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# Serena says goodbye after US Open loss

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Leave it to Serena Williams to not want to go quietly, to not want this match, this trip to the U.S. Open, this transcendent career of hers, to really, truly end.

Right down to what were, barring a change of heart, the final minutes of her quarter-century of excellence on the tennis court, and an unbending unwillingness to be told what wasn't possible, Williams tried to mount one last classic comeback, earn one last vintage victory, with fans on their feet in a full Arthur Ashe Stadium, cellphone cameras at the ready.

The 23-time Grand Slam champion staved off five match points to prolong the three-hours-plus proceedings, but could not do more, and was eliminated from the U.S. Open in the third round by Ajla Tomljanovic 7-5, 6-7 (4), 6-1 on Fri-

day night in what is expected to be her final contest.

"I've been down before. ... I don't really give up," Williams said. "In my career, I've never given up. In matches, I don't give up. Definitely wasn't giving up tonight."

She turns 41 this month and recently told the world that she is ready to start "evolving" away from her playing days — she expressed distaste for the word "retirement" — and while she remained purposely vague about whether this appearance at Flushing Meadows definitely would represent her last hurrah, everyone assumed it will be.

"It's been the most incredible ride and journey I've ever been on in my life," Williams said, tears streaming down her cheeks shortly after one final shot landed in the net. "I'm so grateful to every single person

that's ever said, 'Go, Serena!' in their life."

Asked during an on-court interview whether she might reconsider walking away, Williams replied: "I don't think so, but you never know."

A little later, pressed on the same topic at her post-match news conference, Williams joked, "I always did love Australia," the country that hosts the next Grand Slam tournament in January.

With two victories in singles this week, including over the No. 2 player in the world, Anett Kontaveit, on Wednesday, Williams took her fans on a thrill-a-minute throwback trip at the hard-court tournament that was the site of a half-dozen of her championships.

The first came in 1999 in New York, when Williams was a teen. Now she's married and a mother; her daughter, Olympia,

turned 5 on Thursday.

"Clearly, I'm still capable. ... (But) I'm ready to be a mom, explore a different version of Serena," she said. "Technically, in the world, I'm still super young, so I want to have a little bit of a life while I'm still walking."

With 23,859 of her closest friends cheering raucously again Friday, Williams faltered against Tomljanovic, a 29-year-old Australian who is ranked 46th.

Williams gave away leads in each set, including the last, in which she was up 1-0 before dropping the final six games.

Tomljanovic is unabashedly a fan of Williams, having grown up watching her play on TV.

"I'm feeling really sorry, just because I love Serena just as much as you guys do. And what she's done for me, for the sport of tennis, is incredible," said Tomljanovic.

## Murray eliminated by Berrettini in third round

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Andy Murray's latest Week 1 exit at a Grand Slam tournament did not discourage him. The three-time major champion still thinks he can go toe-to-toe with the best in men's tennis — even after two hip operations, even as the years without a trip past the third round at any of the sport's biggest events stretch on.

After bowing out at that stage of the U.S. Open with a 6-4, 6-4, 6-7 (1), 6-3 loss across more than 3½ hours against 2021 Wimbledon finalist Matteo Berrettini on Friday, Murray chose to look on the bright side.

"I've got a metal hip. It's not easy playing with that. It's really difficult. I'm surprised I'm still able to compete with guys that are right up at the top of the game," the 35-year-old Murray said, resting his head on his left hand. "Matches like this, I'm really proud that I have worked myself into a position where I'm able to do that. I'm really disappointed that I didn't get over the line today. But I get reminded, like, 'This is the first time you've made the third round here since 2016.' It's been six years. It's been a difficult six years for me."

Berrettini, a big hitter who reached the

2019 semifinals at Flushing Meadows, dominated in just about every statistical way at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Coco Gauff, an 18-year-old American who reached the final at the French Open in June, made it to the fourth round at the U.S. Open for the first time with a 6-2, 6-3 victory over Madison Keys, the 2017 runner-up in New York and seeded 20th this year.

When six-time champion Serena Williams lost to Ajla Tomljanovic and 2019 winner Bianca Andreescu was eliminated by No. 17 Caroline Garcia, it was guaranteed there will be a first-time U.S. Open women's champion.

Gauff now meets Zhang Shuai, who eliminated Rebecca Marino 6-2, 6-4.

Defending men's champion Daniil Medvedev beat Wu Yibing of China 6-4, 6-2, 6-2 in Ashe to close the night and is set to meet Wimbledon runner-up Nick Kyrgios, the No. 23 seed who swept past American J.J. Wolf 6-4, 6-2, 6-3.

Medvedev had 12 aces to only one for Wu, who was the first Chinese man to reach the third round of the U.S. Open.

In other action during the day session, Wimbledon finalist Ons Jabeur came back

to defeat No. 31 Shelby Rogers 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 and avoid the sort of early exit by a high-seeded woman that has filled the first week of play at the year's last major. No. 2 Anett Kontaveit (who lost to Williams), No. 3 Maria Sakkari and No. 4 Paula Badosa are all already gone, as are 2021 champion Emma Raducanu and 2021 runner-up Leylah Fernandez; No. 1 Iga Swiatek and No. 5 Jabeur have offered a bit of the expected.

Jabeur reached the fourth round in New York for the first time after going 0-3 in the third round since 2019.

She next plays No. 18 Veronika Kudermetova, who needed just 47 minutes to overwhelm Dalma Galfi 6-2, 6-0.

In the men's bracket, French Open runner-up Casper Ruud edged 29th-seeded Tommy Paul in five sets, while No. 27 Karen Khachanov moved on when his opponent, Jack Draper, stopped playing in the third set because of an injured hamstring. The 13th-seeded Berrettini advanced to face Alejandro Davidovich Fokina on Sunday by hitting more aces than the unseeded Murray, 18-5, delivering far more total winners, 55-24, and accumulating 15 break points, converting five, while facing only four.

# CFP expanding to 12 teams by 2026

*Associated Press*

After 14½ months of haggling over details and questioning motivations, a plan to expand the College Football Playoff to 12 teams was finally approved Friday, setting the stage for a multibillion-dollar tournament as soon as the 2024 season.

What still needs to be determined is just how quickly the current four-team model can be converted and implemented, but it will happen no later than 2026. When it does, major college football's championship bracket will triple in size.

"This was a very historic day for college football," said Mississippi State President Mark Keenum, chairman of the CFP's Board of Managers that pressed ahead after a process that started in June 2021 with an ambitious plan was derailed for months by provincialism and mistrust.

In a unanimous vote that was necessary to pursue early expansion, the 11 university leaders who make up the board approved the original 12-team pro-

posal. It calls for the six highest-ranked conference champions and six at-large picks — as determined by a selection committee — to make the playoff.

The top four seeds would be conference champions and receive byes into the second round. First-round games would be played on campuses and the rest at bowl sites.

A 12-team, 11-game postseason system to crown a champion could be worth as much as \$2 billion in media rights to the conferences that play major college football, starting in 2026.

"So our plans are to begin the 12-team format for sure beginning in the 2026 football season," Keenum said. "However, we have asked our (conference) commissioners on the management committee to explore the possibility of us beginning the 12-team playoff format before the 2026 seasons, in either 2024 or 2025."

If the new format can be implemented before the current 12-year contract with ESPN expires, the conferences could

make an additional \$450 million over the final two years. The current deal pays about \$470 million per year.

CFP Executive Director Bill Hancock said ESPN under its contract would get the first bid on any new playoff inventory added in 2024 and '25.

Beyond 2025, there is no TV contract for a playoff. The plan is to take the new format to the open market and possibly involve multiple TV partners instead of just ESPN.

The conference commissioners and Notre Dame athletic director who comprise the CFP management committee are scheduled to meet Thursday in Dallas. Among the logistical hurdles that they need to clear are dates of games, host sites, available television windows and the impact on the regular-season schedule.

The committee also needs to determine how all that new revenue will be shared and then have that approved by the presidents.

Hancock announced in Feb-

ruary that expanding for the 2024 and '25 seasons was off the table and attention would be turned to what the playoff would look like for 2026 and beyond. Last month, the CFP locked in sites and dates for the championship games to be played after the 2024 and 2025 seasons. In a 12-team playoff, those dates would have to be pushed back.

But the presidents ultimately decide what happens with the playoff, and they took matters into their own hands to move expansion forward.

"It was time for us to make a decision," Keenum said.

Even after the February announcement, there were signs early expansion was not dead. A June meeting of the commissioners in Utah renewed optimism differences could be settled.

"It actually wouldn't surprise me once we agree on the format, if it happens before the end of the current term," Pac-12 Commissioner George Kliavkoff said in July.

## No. 15 Spartans sputter despite easy opening win

*Associated Press*

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Payton Thorne played well in spurts, allowing No. 15 Michigan State to earn a lopsided win over Western Michigan despite struggling for long stretches of the opener on both sides of the ball.

Thorne capped three straight drives with touchdown passes in the first half and threw for a fourth score in the final quarter to help the Spartans pull away and beat the Broncos 35-13 on Friday night.

"We got a lot of work to do," Michigan State coach Mel Tucker said. "But I like what I saw in the locker room after the game. We're a hungry football team and we know we need to

get better."

After taking a 21-3 lead early in the second quarter, the Spartans allowed an average Mid-American Conference team to pull within eight points late in the third after outscoring them 10-0 in the quarter.

"We didn't play very well in the third quarter," Thorne said. "I don't know the official stats. It was pretty bad."

Michigan State was fortunate Thorne's uneven performance included four touchdowns, matching Connor Cook's school record of throwing four touchdowns in four games. Thorne finished 12-for-24 for 233 yards with an interception.

Wisconsin transfer Jalen Berger ran for a career-high 120

yards and a touchdown that gave the Spartans a 28-13 lead with 6:28 remaining. Thorne's fourth touchdown, a 43-yard pass to Tre Mosley, on the next drive ended any doubt about the outcome.

After a slow start, Thorne threw a short pass to freshman Germie Bernard, whose speed turned the play into a 44-yard touchdown late in the first quarter. Illinois transfer Daniel Barker used only his right hand to catch a 13-yard pass for a score and Keon Coleman ran under a 41-yard pass to put Michigan State ahead 21-3 early in the second quarter.

Western Michigan pulled within 11 points midway through the third quarter, when

it converted a fourth-and-1 at its 42 and Sean Tyler ran for a 4-yard touchdown a snap after picking up 45 yards on the ground.

The Broncos made it 21-13 late in the third when Palmer Domschke made a 42-yard kick, but they couldn't make enough plays on both sides of the ball in the fourth quarter and fell to 1-30 against ranked teams.

"I told the team I thought they fought hard," Western Michigan coach Tim Lester said. "We didn't get the job done. Our No. 1 thing coming into the game was to take care of the ball and I don't think we did a good enough job of that. We've got to be better to beat a good team like that."

# Rays rout Yankees, tighten AL East race

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Jeffrey Springs pitched neatly into the sixth inning, Christian Bethancourt hit a two-run homer in the seventh, and the Tampa Bay Rays moved within five games of the AL East-leading New York Yankees with a 9-0 victory on Friday night.

It was the first of six games between the teams in a 10-day span as New York's once-commanding 15½-game advantage continues to evaporate.

"Just embarrassing when you get beat like that," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "We've got a much better standard in that room, now we've got to start living up to it."

New York star Aaron Judge agreed.

"We're going to see what this team is made of," Judge said. "We've got to bring it, that's it. Nobody on the outside is going to help us, nobody is feeling sorry for us."

Springs (7-4) gave up four hits and three walks, along with seven strikeouts in 5½ innings. JT Chargois, Colin Poche, Jason Adam and Calvin Faucher completed the five-hitter.

"Anytime we can come out like we did tonight and start a series like that, it's good," Springs said. "It's definitely a big momentum rolling into tomorrow."

Tampa Bay has limited the Yankees to 42 runs (32 earned) in 14 games.

When asked why the Rays have been successful, a smiling manager Kevin Cash said "I don't know, and I wouldn't tell you if I did."

"But look, we got good pitching, no

doubt," he added. "Our pitchers do a really good job of executing."

New York has been shut out six times over its last 25 games. Bethancourt, on his birthday, made it 3-0 on his homer off Domingo Germán (2-3), who allowed three runs — two earned — and six hits over 6⅔ innings.

**Reds 3, Rockies 2:** Jonathan India drove in Spencer Steer from third base with a game-ending chopper against Colorado's five-man infield to lead host Cincinnati to the win.

**White Sox 4, Twins 3:** Jose Abreu drove in the winning run for host Chicago with a fielder's choice grounder in the ninth inning after Minnesota closer Jorge López hit Andrew Vaughn to ignite a heated confrontation.

**Cardinals 8, Cubs 0:** Jordan Montgomery pitched shutout ball into the seventh inning to remain unbeaten with host St. Louis, and Lars Nootbaar and Tommy Edman homered.

**Blue Jays 4, Pirates 0:** Alek Manoah pitched shutout ball into the eighth inning and Bo Bichette homered to lead Toronto to a win at Pittsburgh.

**Tigers 5, Royals 4:** Ryan Kreidler scored twice in his major league debut, including the go-ahead run on pinch-hitter Harold Castro's seventh-inning single, and host Detroit edged Kansas City.

**Diamondbacks 2, Brewers 1:** Emmanuel Rivera had three hits, Jake McCarthy added the go-ahead RBI single and host Arizona won for the seventh time in eight games.

**Astros 4, Angels 2:** Lance McCullers Jr. continued to impress in his return from a forearm flexor strain, pitching into the sixth inning as Houston won at Los Angeles.

**Orioles 5, Athletics 2:** Gunnar Henderson doubled twice in his home debut, Jorge Mateo had a two-run single in a three-run eighth inning, and host Baltimore beat Oakland.

**Mets 7, Nationals 3:** Pete Alonso hit a tiebreaking homer leading off the sixth inning to lead host New York.

**Mariners 6, Guardians 1:** Cal Raleigh homered twice, Luis Castillo pitched six solid innings and Seattle won at Cleveland for its fifth straight.

**Padres 7, Dodgers 1:** Yu Darvish combined with two relievers on a four-hitter, Manny Machado and Brandon Drury hit two-run homers in the third inning, and San Diego won at Los Angeles.

**Braves 8, Marlins 1:** Travis d'Arnaud and Vaughn Grissom homered off Sandy Alcantara in a four-run fourth inning, Michael Harris II homered in the sixth and host Atlanta won its third straight.

**Red Sox 9, Rangers 1:** Connor Wong hit his first major league homer, Kiké Hernández doubled twice and host Boston overcame an early injury to starting pitcher Nick Pivetta to hand Texas its season-worst sixth straight loss.

**Giants 13, Phillies 1:** Joc Pederson homered and drove in five runs, Alex Cobb struck out seven in seven scoreless innings and host San Francisco routed Philadelphia.

## Hungry Wolff: Ace helps him take LIV lead after first round

Associated Press

BOLTON, Mass. — Matthew Wolff became a footnote in LIV Golf history with the first hole-in-one, an ace that carried him to a 7-under 63 and a one-shot lead over a pair of newcomers Friday in the LIV Golf Invitational-Boston.

One of those newcomers was British Open champion Cameron Smith, among six players who recently joined the Saudi-funded league. Smith broke a wedge with a shot from behind a tree that allowed him to save par, and he finished with a 45-foot eagle putt for a 64.

Joaquin Niemann of Chile, who also signed with Greg Norman's league after he finished his PGA Tour season at the Tour Championship, and Talor Gooch also were at 64.

"I'm having a blast out there — my first day at the office," Niemann said.

Smith and Niemann highlighted the batch of newcomers that included Anirban Lahiri (66), Harold Varner III (67), Marc Leishman (70) and Cameron Tringale (71).

"This is a new kind of chapter in my life. I think this is the future of golf," Smith said earlier

in the week. "I love how it is out here. It's a little bit more laid back on the range, the music playing. I love that stuff."

He also cited a smaller schedule that will allow him to get home to Australia more often in leaving the PGA Tour after a three-win year that elevated him to No. 2 in the world.

Smith was solid at the start and finish with a few errant drives in the middle. One was on the 16th hole when he pulled his driver into the trees. The ball was next to the trunk, and Smith was allowed relief because his feet from playing it left-handed

— his only sensible play — were on the cart path.

After the drop, he tried to hood a gap wedge (right-handed) and the club smacked against the tree near the bottom of the shaft. The ball rolled just through the green and he saved par.

"You know you're going to lose a club but it's probably worth one or two shots," he said.

The only surprise was his group. Smith started on No. 1 with Dustin Johnson and Shergo Al Kurdi, the English-born Jordanian who earlier this year signed with Golf Saudi.