

Allies want US weapons used in Ukraine

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As other nations see the impact of U.S. weapons in the Ukraine war, the Pentagon is getting more requests for them, including the high-tech, multiple-launch rocket system that Ukrainian forces have successfully used against Russian ammunition depots and other supplies, Defense officials said Friday.

Bill LaPlante, the department's undersecretary for acquisition, told reporters that the Pentagon has been working with the defense industry to increase production lines to meet both U.S. and international demands for certain weapons. And he said some countries have already begun asking about buying the High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS.

As a result, he said, the U.S. has to both replace the HIMARS systems it sent to Ukraine — at a projected cost so far of about \$33 million — but also predict the future demands in foreign sales.

According to the Pentagon, the department is already working to replace about \$7 billion in weapons and equipment that was taken off the shelves so it could be delivered

quickly to Ukraine. Of that, about \$1.2 billion has already been contracted, and roughly half of that was for Stinger missiles.

Congress provided a total of \$12.5 billion for such replacements so far this year, as well as another \$6 billion to buy weapons and equipment directly from industry to send to Ukraine. The contracted items could take several years to come in.

Some of the money will be spent to invest in the defense industrial base so that companies can either expand or speed up their production.

"We remain committed to getting things on contract as quickly as possible, ultimately to send a clear and persistent demand signal to our partners in industry," LaPlante said. As an example, he said, right now industry is producing about 14,400 rounds of ammunition for the Howitzer artillery gun every month, but the plan is to work up to 36,000 a month in about three years.

Even that amount, he noted, may not meet demands. So the U.S. Army has contacted other companies around the world to buy 250,000 rounds of that ammunition.

In some cases, LaPlante said, there are

easy solutions to increasing the production capacity and in others it requires more creativity. Restarting the production of Stinger missiles, he said, forced contractors to come up with alternative parts to replace obsolete ones.

Sasha Baker, the defense undersecretary for policy, said the new U.S. defense attache in Kyiv, Brig. Gen. Garrick Harmon, is trying to provide greater insight into what capabilities the Ukrainian forces are using most.

She said Harmon, who was appointed in July, gives the U.S. better oversight and the ability to get "real-time information about what the Ukrainians are seeing and experiencing and what they might need."

LaPlante said he will meet with acquisition and weapons officials from other NATO and allied nations later this month to talk about how to resolve supply chain issues and ramp up production of needed equipment. He said the group will also discuss how the various nations can increase the use of equipment that is interchangeable and operates more easily with other allies' systems.

Russia pulls back troops from Kharkiv region

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia's Defense Ministry announced Saturday that it's pulling back troops from two areas in Ukraine's eastern Kharkiv region where a Ukrainian counteroffensive has made significant advances in the past week.

The news came after days of apparent advances by Ukraine south of Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city, in what could become the biggest battlefield success for Ukrainian forces since they thwarted a Russian attempt to seize the capital of Kyiv at the start of the nearly seven-month war.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said Saturday that troops would be regrouped from the Balakliya and Izyum areas to Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region. Izyum was a major base for Russian forces in the Kharkiv region and earlier this week social media videos showed residents of Balakliya joyfully cheering as Ukrainian

troops moved in.

Konashenkov said the Russian move is being made "in order to achieve the stated goals of the special military operation to liberate Donbas," one of the eastern Ukraine regions that Russia has declared sovereign.

The claim of pullback to concentrate on Donetsk is similar to the justification Russia gave for pulling back its forces from the Kyiv region earlier this year when they failed to take the Ukrainian capital.

Ukrainian officials earlier Saturday claimed major gains in a counteroffensive against Russian forces in the Kharkiv region, saying Ukrainian troops had cut off vital supplies to Izyum.

Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesman Oleh Nikolenko also suggested the Ukrainian troops had retaken Kupiansk, a town along the main supply route to Izyum, long a focus on the Russian front line and the site of heavy artillery and other fighting. Niko-

lenko tweeted a photo showing soldiers in front of what he said was a government building in Kupiansk, 45 miles north of Izyum.

The Ukrainian Security Service of Ukraine hours later posted a message which it said showed its forces in Kupiansk, further suggesting it had been seized by Ukrainian troops. The Ukrainian military didn't immediately confirm entering the town, a railway hub that Russia seized in February.

Videos on social media appeared to show Ukrainian forces on the outskirts of Izyum at a roadside checkpoint. A large statue with the city's name could be seen in the footage. Ukrainian forces did not acknowledge holding the city.

The fighting in eastern Ukraine comes amid an ongoing offensive around Kherson in the south. Analysts suggest Russia may have taken soldiers from the east to reinforce around Kherson.

Pentagon: F-35s all using banned China-made alloy

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — Every one of the more than 825 F-35 fighter jets delivered so far contain a component made with a Chinese alloy that's prohibited by both U.S. law and Pentagon regulations, according to the program office that oversees the aircraft.

The component — a magnet used in an aircraft-powering device supplied by Honeywell International Inc. — has been used in the plane since 2003, the Pentagon's F-35 program office said. On Wednesday, the Pentagon suspended deliveries of new F-35s to make sure the program complies with regulations related to "specialty metals."

The F-35 program — which may result in over 3,300 jets — will now seek a national security waiver from the Pentagon's top acquisition official, William LaPlante, to resume deliveries of already assembled new aircraft containing the alloy, F-35 spokesman Russell Goemaere said.

Speaking to reporters on Friday, LaPlante said a waiver was likely if there were no security or safety issues.

"I'm hoping this can be resolved pretty soon," LaPlante said.

The program office doesn't anticipate

"replacing magnets in delivered aircraft," according to Goemaere. Replacing them could entail costly and time-consuming retrofits of the over 500 U.S. training and operational aircraft. The Pentagon and Lockheed Martin Corp., which builds the aircraft, have found a U.S. source for the alloy for future planes, the company said.

U.S. law and Pentagon acquisition regulations prohibit the use of specialty metals or alloys made China, Iran, North Korea or Russia. The Defense Contract Management Agency reported the violation to the F-35 program office on Aug. 19.

A decade ago, the Pentagon granted a waiver to Honeywell to use Chinese magnets in other F-35 components, saying the program, already beset by delays and cost overruns, would have been slowed even more.

The program office says the part has no technical flaw and it poses no security risk to the U.S.'s top stealth fighter or its 8 million lines of software code. Rather, it's a question of supply-chain security and why the banned alloy wasn't detected by Honeywell. The Pentagon's judgment that China poses the biggest threat to the U.S. globally only adds to the challenge.

Guard offers free child care during drill weekends

BY ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

The National Guard Bureau launched a \$3.6 million pilot program this month that provides free child care to eligible Guard soldiers in six states during drill weekends to help retain single parents in the service.

"It's a challenge," Maj. Gen. Eric Little, the Guard's director of manpower and personnel, said Friday during a call with reporters. "This has been a constant concern for the families over the last several years."

The bureau chose to test the program in six states — Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Virginia and Washington — that already have a state-wide licensing program to ensure that safety requirements are met. The nonprofit organization Childcare Aware of America, which already contracts with the Defense Department for community-based child care, will oversee the program and offer space in traditional and in-home day cares, Little said.

The idea for the pilot came from service-wide surveys that have continually shown that finding child care during drill weekends is a barrier for many parents who would like to remain in the National Guard, Little said. Parents using the new program have no out-of-pocket costs for the child care and all funding is coming from appropriated federal dollars, not state funding, he said.

About 35% of Army National Guard troops, or roughly 118,000 soldiers, have children and about 9% are single parents. They account for 36,000 children younger than age 12, according to the bureau.

To use the free child care, soldiers must be in good standing with their unit and affirm that no other adult within the household is available to provide care. Children going to care must be registered with the military as a dependent and be between 6 weeks and 12 years old.

"We expect that during September drills soldiers will largely get educated about the existence of the pilot, and the process by which they can apply from their commanders," said Nadine Moore, family readiness branch chief for the bureau.

US offers \$40,000 for info to find 'Fat Leonard' in Navy bribery case

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — The U.S. government posted a \$40,000 reward Friday for information leading to the arrest of the Malaysian defense contractor nicknamed "Fat Leonard," who disappeared weeks before he was set to be sentenced for one of the largest bribery scandals in the nation's military history.

Leonard Glenn Francis cut off his ankle monitoring bracelet around 7:35 a.m. on Sept. 4 at a San Diego home where he was being held, according to the U.S. Marshals Service. Neighbors reported seeing U-Haul trucks coming and going from the home days before he disappeared.

Francis had been allowed to remain in home confinement to receive medical care while he cooperated with the prosecution. With his help, prosecutors secured convictions of 33 of 34 defendants, including more than two dozen Navy officers.

Francis pleaded guilty in 2015 to offering prostitution services, luxury hotels, cigars, gourmet meals and more than \$500,000 in bribes to Navy officials and others to help his Singapore-based ship servicing company, Glenn Defense Marine Asia Ltd. or GDMA. Prosecutors said the company overcharged the Navy by at least \$35 million for servicing ships, many of which were routed to ports he controlled in the Pacific.

GOP retreats from some abortion bills

The Washington Post

An aggressive push by Republicans to pass hard-line antiabortion measures is faltering in some state legislatures and on Capitol Hill, the latest indication that many Americans are balking at extreme restrictions being imposed since the fall of *Roe v. Wade*.

In South Carolina, Republicans failed to pass a near-total abortion ban during an extended legislative session Thursday night, unable to agree on whether to include exceptions for rape and incest. In West Virginia, a recent special session over similar legislation ended in gridlock.

At the same time, efforts to advance a strict nationwide ban in Congress have quietly fizzled. After pushing for a national “heartbeat ban” on abortion in the spring — which would have outlawed the procedure as soon as cardiac activity is detected, around six weeks of pregnancy — Republican lawmakers and some antiabortion advocates have retreated from the idea. Some legislators are now pushing for a 15-week ban; others have abandoned any kind of national abortion legislation.

“We are not elected as kings or dictators. We’re elected to serve the will of people,” said West Virginia state Sen. Tom Takubo (R), who refused to support a near-total ban without rape and incest exceptions. “Even in the most rural and conservative parts of West Virginia, I still believe the majority

thinks there should be exemptions for rape and incest.”

Sixty-nine percent of Americans, including 56% of Republicans, said abortion should be legal when the pregnancy resulted from rape, according to a March Pew Research Poll.

The Supreme Court’s June decision to overturn the constitutional right to abortion immediately triggered strict abortion bans in states across the South and Midwest, cutting off abortion access for 1 in 3 women across the country. Even so, many antiabortion advocates saw an opportunity to go further. In state legislatures, activists teamed up with conservative lawmakers to lobby for extreme restrictions, including bans without exceptions for rape and incest, and legislation that would stop people from seeking abortion care across state lines.

But lawmakers have been forced to reckon with a growing public backlash. Last month, voters overwhelmingly rejected an antiabortion amendment in Kansas that would have removed abortion protections from the state constitution. And Democrats who support abortion rights have won recent special elections in moderate districts, outperforming expectations.

“They saw what happened in Kansas,” said Mary Ziegler, a University of California at Davis law professor who specializes in abortion. “You have people from certain parts of South Carolina who are gun shy

about this — and they have reason to be.”

In South Carolina this week, a ban from fertilization without exceptions for victims of rape or incest had support from 24 out of 30 GOP senators, including party leadership, but a small group of Republicans spent hours on Wednesday and Thursday trying to persuade their colleagues to soften the bill’s language. Eventually, the Republicans championing a near-total ban abandoned the most restrictive proposals because they could not gather enough votes to pass them.

“People are very divided,” state Sen. Penny Gustafson (R) said.

On Capitol Hill, Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) had been planning behind the scenes to introduce a “heartbeat” ban in the Senate after the Supreme Court decision, lending the gravitas of one of the GOP’s most prominent female stars to legislation that would have banned the procedure nationwide before many people know they’re pregnant.

Although that bill has been drafted, there is no timeline for Ernst or any other senator to introduce it, according to several antiabortion advocates close to the situation. Ernst did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Sen. Steve Daines (R-Mont.), founder and chair of the Senate Pro-Life Caucus, said he hasn’t had conversations with lawmakers about introducing a heartbeat-style bill in the chamber since the Supreme Court decision.

US, Trump team propose names for arbiter in probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department and Donald Trump’s legal team each proposed candidates Friday for the role of an independent arbiter in the investigation into top-secret documents found at the former president’s Florida home, but the two sides differed on the scope of duties the person would have.

Lawyers for Trump said they believe the so-called special master should review all documents seized by the FBI during its search last month of Mar-a-Lago, including records with classification markings, and filter out any that may be protected by claims of executive privilege.

The Justice Department, by contrast, said it does not believe the arbiter should be permitted to inspect classified records or resolve potential claims of executive privilege.

U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon had

given both sides until Friday to submit potential candidates for the role of a special master, as well as proposals for the scope of the person’s duties and the schedule for his or her work.

The Justice Department submitted the names of two retired judges — Barbara Jones, who served on the federal bench in Manhattan and has performed the same role in prior high-profile investigations, and Thomas Griffith, a former federal appeals court jurist in the District of Columbia.

The Trump team proposed one retired judge, Raymond Dearie — also the former top federal prosecutor in the Eastern District of New York — and a prominent Florida lawyer, Paul Huck, Jr.

The back-and-forth over the special master is playing out amid an FBI investigation into the retention of several hundred classified documents recovered from Mar-a-Lago within the past year. Though the legal

wrangling is unlikely to have major long-term effects on the investigation or knock it significantly off course, it will almost certainly delay the probe by potentially months and has already caused the intelligence community to temporarily pause a separate risk assessment.

The Justice Department proposed an Oct. 17 deadline for the special master to complete the review process, while the Trump team said the work could take as long as three months.

Though both sides met Cannon’s deadline to provide potential candidates, their filings made clear that they have core disagreements about the job of special master. That’s not surprising given that the Justice Department had strenuously objected to the Trump team’s desire for such an arbiter, and gave notice Thursday that it would appeal the judge’s decision to grant the ex-president’s request.

Strong winds hit Southern California

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Parts of Southern California were lashed by severe winds from a tropical storm Friday that brought high humidity, rain and possible flooding to the parched region but also the promise of cooler temperatures after a 10-day heat wave that nearly overwhelmed the state's electrical grid.

Firefighters had feared powerful winds that topped 100 mph could expand the massive Fairview Fire burning about 75 miles southeast of Los Angeles but instead crews made significant progress and

pegged Monday as a day when they should have full containment. More than 10,000 homes and other structures remained threatened and evacuation orders were still in place.

Hurricane Kay made landfall near Mexico's Bahia Asuncion in Baja California Sur state Thursday, but it quickly weakened into a tropical storm by the time it reached Southern California. Still winds were ferocious in places — speeds reached 109 mph on San Diego County's Cuyamaca Peak, the National Weather Service said.

The tropical conditions added a swelter

to the heat wave that saw temperatures soar past 100 degrees Fahrenheit in many parts of California this week. Even places like San Diego, renowned for its temperate climate, baked in the heat.

By late morning Friday a steady rain pelted downtown San Diego as Charles Jenkins swept the accumulating puddles away from the tarps of his makeshift home.

"The heat was killer, so for now this feels good," Jenkins said. "I just hope the water doesn't get too high. But I will rough it. I've got pallets I can put underneath to keep out the rain."

Charles III officially proclaimed Britain's king

Associated Press

LONDON — Two days after his mother's death elevated him to the throne, King Charles III was officially proclaimed Britain's monarch Saturday in a pomp-filled ceremony steeped in ancient tradition and political symbolism — and, for the first time, broadcast live.

Charles, who spent seven decades as heir apparent, automatically became king when his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, died on Thursday. But the accession ceremony was a key constitutional and ceremonial step in introducing the new monarch to the country, a relic of a time before mass communications.

Scores of senior British politicians past and present, including new Prime Minister Liz Truss and five of her predecessors,

gathered in the ornate state apartments at St. James's Palace for the meeting of the Accession Council.

They met without Charles, officially confirming his title, King Charles III. The king then joined them, vowing to follow his mother's "inspiring example" as he took on the duties of monarch.

"I am deeply aware of this great inheritance and of the duties and heavy responsibilities of sovereignty which have now passed to me," he said.

Speaking of his personal grief, he said: "I know how deeply you and the entire nation, and I think I may say the whole world, sympathize with me in this irreparable loss we have all suffered."

The new king formally approved a series of orders — including one declaring the day

of his mother's funeral a public holiday. The date of the state funeral has not been announced, but it is expected to be around Sept. 19.

This is the first time the accession ceremony has been held since 1952, when Queen Elizabeth II took the throne.

Charles was accompanied at the ceremony by his wife Camilla, the Queen Consort, and his eldest son Prince William. William is now heir to the throne and is now known by the title that Charles long held, Prince of Wales.

The ceremony ended with a royal official publicly proclaiming King Charles III the monarch from a balcony at the palace. In centuries past, this would have been the first official confirmation the public had of their new sovereign.

Memphis shooting suspect granted public defender

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — A Tennessee man accused of killing four people and wounding three others in a livestreamed shooting rampage that paralyzed Memphis and led to a city-wide manhunt was granted a public defender during Friday morning court appearance and will remain jailed on a first-degree murder charge.

Ezekiel Kelly, 19, told a judge he could not afford a lawyer for accusations in Wednesday's attack that caused panic and fear across the city.

Additional charges are expected. Dis-

trict Attorney Steve Mulroy said outside court that bond is not warranted due to the violent nature of the alleged crimes.

The hourslong rampage had police warning residents to shelter in place, locking down a baseball stadium and university campuses and suspending public bus services as frightened residents wondered where the man might strike next. Kelly was arrested late Wednesday after crashing a stolen car while fleeing police.

The violence unfolded just a few months after Kelly was released early from a three-year prison sentence for a pair of shootings in 2020.

The bloodshed played out as the city was still reeling from the brutal killing of jogger Eliza Fletcher who was abducted during her early morning run less than a week earlier.

"This has been a horrific week for the city of Memphis," Police Director Cereilyn "CJ" Davis said.

Authorities offered no explanation Thursday of a possible motive. Nor did they say how Kelly managed to obtain the gun or guns used in the attacks.

The Shelby County public defender's office did not return a call seeking comment on Kelly's case.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Adorkable among new entries in dictionary

MA SPRINGFIELD — Shrinkflation, adorkable, subvariant and pumpkin spice are now officially in the dictionary.

ICYMI, those are among 370 words and phrases that Merriam-Webster added to its dictionary this month, the publisher announced. Oh yeah, ICYMI, short for “in case you missed it,” was also added.

Worldwide inflation has made shrinkflation a household word. It is defined by the Springfield, Mass., publisher as “the practice of reducing a product’s amount or volume per unit while continuing to offer it at the same price.” Think, going to the grocery store and finding that orange juice is no longer available in 64 fluid ounce cartons, just 59 ounce.

Pumpkin spice — that polarizing blend of cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, cloves and allspice that’s used to flavor, well, just about everything every fall these days — has been around for years but is finally in the dictionary.

Many of the words are slang or used informally on social media. Adorkable, a mashup of dorky and adorable, means “socially awkward or quirky in a way that is endearing.” Yeet is either “used to express surprise, approval, or excited enthusiasm” or as a verb to mean “to throw especially with force and without regard for the thing being thrown,” according to Merriam-Webster’s definition.

The worldwide coronavirus pandemic has pushed terms once heard almost exclusively

in medical circles onto everyone’s tongue, including subvariant, booster dose and emergency use authorization, which are all new dictionary entries.

School candidates laugh at child leave race

VA FAIRFAX — Two candidates for the Fairfax County School Board have dropped out of the race after they were captured on video laughing at a student with autism who sang the national anthem at a meeting.

The Washington Post reported that Stephanie Lundquist-Arora and Harry Jackson both left the race after their reaction to the student drew strong disapproval from parents online.

Jackson told ABC 7News that he was no longer a candidate. Lundquist-Arora wrote in a post on the Independent Women’s Network website that she was withdrawing because her laughter at the student had drawn too much harassment, which threatened her ability to perform “my most important job — being a mother.”

Lundquist-Arora and Jackson told the Post in statements that they were sorry for laughing at the student, a Washington, D.C.-area singer and songwriter.

Bear that attacked woman, her dog killed

OR MEDFORD — A bear that attacked a woman in southern Oregon has been killed, police said.

Police in Medford, Ore., said officers responded to a bear sighting in a yard in an area near the prior night’s attack.

Officers set up a perimeter and called Oregon State Police and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for help. The bear started to flee, however, and officers shot and killed the bruin, police said.

The state agencies collected the bear and confirmed it was the bear from the prior night’s attack, according to police.

The bear had rushed a woman in her yard, causing injuries to her arm and leg. The woman’s dog was also attacked, but the woman and dog chased away the bear, police said.

12-year-old charged after making threat

ME BANGOR — Police in Maine charged a middle schooler with terrorizing after they found a threat of violence on the wall of a school in Bangor.

Under state law, a person can be charged with terrorizing if they make a threat of violence to someone else.

The message appeared on the wall of Bangor Regional Program, a school in the district, the Bangor Daily News reported. Police charged a 12-year-old as a result of the vandalism.

Man who reported dead woman in car charged

NC WAKE FOREST — A man has been charged with murder after police said he turned up at a North Carolina police department to report a dead woman in his car.

Wake Forest police officers responded to a report of a shooting at a gas station, but couldn’t find a victim, police said in a statement. More than an hour

later, police in neighboring Youngsville reported that a man arrived at the police department there to report a dead woman in his car in the parking lot.

Wake Forest officers responded and confirmed that the incident was related to the gas station shooting report. Police said Terrance Hartsfield, 33, has been charged with murder and possession of a firearm by a felon.

Police identified the woman who was killed as Jacqueline Beckwith, 54. Police said Beckwith was in a relationship with Hartsfield.

Police arrest man with 56 pounds of fentanyl

NV ELY — Nevada state police arrested a Washington state man and seized 56 pounds of suspected fentanyl with an estimated street value of \$3.6 million from a vehicle a trooper stopped near the Utah line.

Jorge A. Rivas-Vizcarra, 50, of Royal City was being held on multiple drug charges in the White Pine County Jail in Ely where his bail was set at \$750,000.

He was arrested after a traffic stop on U.S Highway 93 about 20 miles north of Ely.

Rivas-Vizcarra was booked on suspicion of possession of a controlled substance — fentanyl, possession of a controlled substance for sale, transporting a controlled substance and transporting a controlled substance that cannot be introduced into commerce, White Pine County Sheriff Scott Henriad said in an email.

— From Associated Press

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MLB adds pitch count, other big changes

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Major League Baseball is introducing some of its most radical rules next season, adopting a pitch clock and limiting defensive shifts after concluding modern analytics created a slower, less entertaining sport.

The decisions were made Friday by the sport's 11-man competition committee over the unanimous opposition of the panel's four players. Commissioner Rob Manfred pushed for the innovations along with a management team that included former Boston and Chicago Cubs executive Theo Epstein, now an MLB consultant.

"The influx of data in our industry," Epstein said, "has not improved the game from an aesthetic standpoint or from an entertainment standpoint. So in my role now, it's my responsibility to try to look at the big picture, think about what's great for fans."

Players supported the third major initiative: larger bases that are expected to lessen

injuries and lead to more stolen bases because of a decreased distance of 4½ inches.

Manfred called the rules an attempt to "bring back the best form of baseball."

"Number one, fans want games with better pace," he said during a news conference. "Two, fans want more action, more balls in play. And three, fans want to see more of the athleticism of our great players."

Union head Tony Clark was noticeably absent, as he was at the announcement of an agreement in March that ended a 99-day lockout.

"Players live the game — day in and day out. On-field rules and regulations impact their preparation, performance, and ultimately, the integrity of the game itself," the union said in a statement. "Major League Baseball was unwilling to meaningfully address the areas of concern that players raised."

The pitch clock will be set at 15 seconds with no runners on base and 20 seconds

with runners — up from the 14/19 tested at Triple-A this season and 14/18 at lower minor league levels.

There will be a limit of two of what MLB calls disengagements — pickoff attempts or steps off the rubber — per plate appearance, and a balk would be called for a third or more unless there is an out. The disengagement limit, which some players predict will benefit baserunners, would be reset if a runner advances.

A catcher is required to be in the catcher's box with nine seconds left on the clock and a hitter in the batter's box and focused on the pitcher with eight seconds remaining. Penalties for violations will be a ball called against a pitcher and a strike called against a batter.

A batter can ask an umpire for time once per plate appearance, and after that it would be granted only at the umpire's discretion if the request is made while in the batter's box.

Braves top Mariners, move into 1st place in NL East

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Dansby Swanson hit one of Atlanta's four home runs and the World Series champion Braves grabbed sole possession of first place for the first time all season with a 6-4 victory over the Seattle Mariners on Friday night.

Robbie Grossman, Travis d'Arnaud and rookie Michael Harris II also went deep for streaking Atlanta, which won its eighth straight and finally jumped a half-game ahead of the Mets in the NL East after chasing them for five months. New York lost 6-3 at Miami earlier in the night.

Atlanta was seven games back on Aug. 8 and 10½ behind on June 1. The only previous day this season the Mets did not hold at least a share of the division lead was April 11.

Marlins 6, Mets 3: Pete Alonso hit his 33rd home run but New York could not erase an early deficit and lost at Miami.

The Mets squandered a pair of good scoring chances by grounding into double plays and

fell out of first place in the NL East, dropping a half-game behind Atlanta.

Rays 4, Yankees 2: Aaron Hicks was benched midgame after failing to catch consecutive drives to left that landed for run-scoring doubles in the fourth inning, and visiting Tampa Bay closed within 3½ games in the AL East.

Randy Arozarena hit an RBI double in the first off Frankie Montas (5-12) to put the Rays ahead to stay.

Padres 5, Dodgers 4 (10): Jake Cronenworth singled home the winning run in the 10th inning and host San Diego kept Los Angeles' magic number at six for clinching the NL West.

The Padres won for just the third time in 13 games against the Dodgers this year and only the fourth time in their last 23 meetings. San Diego jumped into the second NL wild-card spot ahead of Philadelphia.

Blue Jays 4, Rangers 3: Bo Bichette homered for the fifth time in the last four games, Dan-

ny Jansen hit a tiebreaking RBI single in the ninth inning and playoff-contending Toronto won at Texas.

Orioles 3, Red Sox 2: Gunnar Henderson hit a bases-loaded single in the sixth inning to cap a big rally for host Baltimore.

Astros 4, Angels 3: Jeremy Peña hit a solo homer and Chas McCormick had a two-run shot in the seventh inning to lead Houston to a win over visiting Los Angeles.

Guardians 7, Twins 6: Oscar Gonzalez hit two home runs and drove in five runs, and Austin Hedges added a solo homer as Cleveland held on to win at Minnesota.

White Sox 5, Athletics 3: Elvis Andrus hit a go-ahead two-run double against his former club with two outs in the ninth as A.J. Puk blew a three-run lead, and Chicago rallied at Oakland for its eighth win in 10 games.

Phillies 5, Nationals 3: Rhys Hoskins and J.T. Realmuto hit solo homers and Noah Syndergaard pitched well enough into the seventh inning to keep host

Philadelphia in playoff position with a win over Washington.

Cubs 4, Giants 2: Drew Smyly allowed one hit in seven scoreless innings and Yan Gomes and Nico Hoerner homered to lead host Chicago.

Rockies 13, Diamondbacks 10: Elías Díaz hit a game-ending, three-run homer to give him seven RBIs, C.J. Cron had a 504-foot home run that was the second-longest since tracking began and host Colorado recovered after wasting a seven-run lead.

Pirates 8, Cardinals 2: Oneil Cruz finished a home run short of the cycle, and host Pittsburgh kept St. Louis from stretching its lead atop the NL Central.

Reds 8, Brewers 2: T.J. Friedl homered to lead off a five-run first inning, left-hander Nick Lodolo pitched eight strong innings and Cincinnati won at Milwaukee.

Tigers 10, Royals 2: Eric Haase hit two solo homers, Jeimer Candelario had a three-run shot and Detroit won at Kansas City.

Alcaraz stops Tiafoe's run at US Open

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Carlos Alcaraz and Frances Tiafoe engaged in a high-level, high-energy spectacle of a back-and-forth semifinal at the U.S. Open — no point over when it seemed to be, no ball out of reach, no angle too audacious.

One sequence was so stuffed with “What?! How?!” moments by both men that Arthur Ashe Stadium spectators were on their feet before it was over and remained there, clapping, while watching a replay on the video screens.

Ultimately, enough of the winners went Alcaraz's way, and too many of the mistakes came from Tiafoe's racket. And so it was Alcaraz who surged into his first Grand Slam final — and, in the process, gave himself a chance to become No. 1 at age 19 — by ending Tiafoe's run at Flushing Meadows with a 6-7 (6), 6-3, 6-1, 6-7 (5), 6-3 victory on Friday night.

“It was so electric. I mean, the tennis definitely matched the hype of the match. Unbelievable shot-making, gets, extending points, crazy shots ... at crazy times,” Tiafoe said. “Yeah, I was getting riled up.”

Alcaraz appeared to seize control by grabbing nine of 10 games in one stretch and could have ended the evening when he held a match point in the fourth set. But Tiafoe, who

is ranked 26th, saved it and soon was yelling, with some colorful language mixed in for emphasis, “I'm putting my heart on the line!” Soon after that, Tiafoe was forcing a fifth set by improving to a U.S. Open-record 8-0 in tiebreakers.

Still, Alcaraz showed no signs of fatigue despite playing a third five-setter in a row — including a 5-hour, 15-minute quarterfinal win that ended at 2:50 a.m. on Thursday, the latest finish in tournament history — and was better when he needed to be, taking four of the last five games.

“I feel great right now,” Alcaraz said nearly two hours after beating Tiafoe, then added: “I mean, a little bit tired.”

Now No. 3 Alcaraz will face No. 7 Casper Ruud for the championship Sunday with so much on the line: The winner will become a major champion for the first time and lead the rankings next week.

“It's amazing to be able to fight for big things,” Alcaraz said.

Alcaraz and Tiafoe were both making their major semifinal debuts and offered an exceptionally entertaining performance for a little more than a set, and a little more than an hour, at the start, then again for the latter portion of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth.

Tiafoe, a 24-year-old from Maryland who

eliminated 22-time Grand Slam champ Rafael Nadal in the fourth round, played to a sellout crowd of more than 23,000 that included former first lady Michelle Obama, often asking for — and receiving — more noise. No surprise, given he was the first American man in the semifinals at Flushing Meadows in 16 years.

Alcaraz, who's from Spain, is popular around the world, widely recognized as a future star of the sport, and he is now the youngest U.S. Open men's finalist from any country since Pete Sampras won the trophy at 19 in 1990.

During the day's first semifinal, which featured a 55-shot point to end the first set, folks called out the winner's last name — “Ruuduuud!” — and it sounded as if they were booing, rather than saluting. Ruud won that lengthy rally and built an early lead en route to beating Karen Khachanov 7-6 (5), 6-2, 5-7, 6-2.

“Towards the end,” Ruud, a 23-year-old from Norway, said about the longest point of this U.S. Open, “the pulse was getting very high and the legs were almost shaking.”

Either Ruud, the runner-up to Nadal at the French Open in June, will make a six-place jump that represents the biggest move ever to No. 1 or Alcaraz will become the youngest man to get to the ATP's top spot since the computerized rankings began in 1973.

Elliott looks forward in NASCAR's playoff push

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — Chase Elliott wasn't around to see the fireworks at the end of last weekend's NASCAR Cup Series race at Darlington.

Or, for that matter, the fire coming from Kevin Harvick's car.

Elliott's playoff opener was over early after the regular-season champion lost control of his No. 9 Chevrolet and brushed the wall in Turns 1 and 2. Chase Briscoe, closing fast and with nowhere to go, collided with Elliott and caused too much damage for him to overcome.

His crew from Hendrick Motorsports tried to repair the broken lower control arm and toe link but ran out of time.

The result was a 36th-place

finish — dead last — and a big blow in the playoff race. Elliott dropped from the top seed to ninth heading into Sunday's race at Kansas Speedway, the second of three stops before the field is whittled from 16 to 12.

“It's not to say that I don't care,” Elliott said this week, “but I recognize when you have something happen, there's nothing you can do after the fact. As much as I'd like to go back and change things and have a retry, that's not how it works. Really, your only choice in that situation, having a bad day, is get prepared for the next week.”

Elliott turned his attention to Kansas before Harvick's car went up in flames at Darlington, leading to more dialogue over

the safety of the Next Gen car, and Erik Jones gave the No. 43 its long-awaited 200th victory.

That last point was welcome news.

Jones isn't in the playoffs, which means nobody earned an automatic berth to the next round with a win. So should it come down to the standings for Elliott to advance, the 2020 champion would have a little extra wiggle room.

“I didn't really have a thought how it would shake out,” said Elliott, who is 14 points ahead of Austin Cindric, the first driver below the cut line. “My thought process was just, ‘Dang, hate that we had our day go like that,’ and I think, you know, in the those moments with the points and everybody being as close as

everybody is, you're going to be in the situation where there's a lot of guys really close to you, and that's what it's going to be like over the course of three weeks.”

Unless he gets a win. That would cure most ills.

Elliott has done it before at Kansas, winning the 2018 race to advance to the round of eight, and he was second at the intermediate track last fall. Elliott's been in the top five in five of his last starts at Kansas, and one of those other two — the race this past spring — he led 10 laps before a flat tire.

“Honestly, I don't really care about the other guys, and I'm not going to get excited about other guys' misfortune,” said Elliott.

Prescott, Brady duel in another opener

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Tom Brady retired and then returned to Tampa Bay in the off-season before skipping a big chunk of training camp for personal reasons.

Dak Prescott didn't miss a day anywhere along the way while getting in what he says is the best shape of his life.

Oh, how the gap is still so great for Dallas' star quarterback as he gets ready to face the seven-time Super Bowl winner in the opener for the second consecutive year, this time at home Sunday night.

Prescott is the face of a storied franchise with five championships, but stuck in a 27-year Super Bowl hiatus.

"You definitely have to embrace it," Prescott said. "A guy whose résumé speaks for itself, who shows up at his age and is still better than most who do this. The greatest to do this, hon-

estly, to play this position."

Prescott embraced it last season in Tampa, throwing for 403 yards and three touchdowns in a 31-29 loss when Brady, who had four TD tosses, led the Buccaneers to Ryan Succop's short field goal in the final seconds.

That showing by Prescott came after he missed almost the entire preseason because of a strained shoulder. At the time, he felt he was still in comeback mode from the ankle injury that ended his 2020 season.

No such setbacks for the 29-year-old this year, except for the surgically repaired ankle getting sore in practice Thursday, an issue the QB blamed on a change in cleats. He was changing back, and said he was fine for the opener.

"I still feel the best that I've felt in a very, very long time," said Prescott, whose team lost a wild-card game at home to San Francisco last season. "Not

even comparable to where I was last year going into this game."

Brady opened defense of his seventh title against the Cowboys last season. He retired earlier this year after a divisional-round loss to the champion Los Angeles Rams despite throwing for a career- and league-high 5,316 yards at age 44.

After an 11-day absence during camp for personal reasons, Brady is set to become the first 45-year-old starting quarterback in NFL history.

"I'm going out there with a lot of good players," Brady said. "That's the best part for me as a competitor. It's going with a group of teammates you really believe in. It's not one player they're dealing with. They're dealing with all of us."

New graduate

Brady's unretirement was not the only major story of the off-season involving the Bucs, who

promoted Todd Bowles from defensive coordinator to coach when Bruce Arians retired and moved into the front office.

The former New York Jets coach also enters the season as a proud college graduate after completing work for a Bachelor of Science degree in youth and community development from Mount St. Mary's University in Maryland.

Bowles began pursuit of the degree the summer before Tampa Bay's title season of 2020. The 58-year-old finished online courses last week — more than three decades after leaving Temple, where he was a four-year starter under Arians.

"For me, it was a personal thing as far as a promise I made to my mother before she passed that I would go back and get it," he said. "Sometimes life gets in the way and things come up and you finally put your foot down and you try and do it."

Steelers, Trubisky begin post-Roethlisberger era

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Kenny Pickett — the former Pitt star, Heisman Trophy finalist and first-round draft pick — might be the quarterback of the future for the Pittsburgh Steelers. But for right now, Mitch Trubisky is their man under center.

Trubisky will be the starter when the Steelers open the post-Big Ben era on Sunday against the AFC champion Cincinnati Bengals.

Trubisky, who signed a two-year, \$14 million contract with Pittsburgh in March, got the nod after battling Pickett and three-year backup Mason Rudolph throughout training camp. It will be a fresh start for the 28-year-old after failing to live up to expectations with the Chicago Bears and then going through last season backing up Josh Allen in Buffalo.

"I had a really good camp. I came in here with a lot of experience, showed I could lead a team, showed I've been playing really well and throwing the football really well," said Trubisky, the No. 2 overall pick in 2017. "Now we go out there and execute on the field."

His Steelers teammates apparently believe in him, too, installing him as one of five team captains earlier this week.

"We're just really comfortable with what Mitch has shown us," Pittsburgh coach Mike Tomlin said.

The Steelers are going to have to worry a little bit about their defense against quarterback Joe Burrow and the Bengals, who have won the last three games in the series — including a sweep last season as Pittsburgh quarterback Ben Roethlisberger played out his final

year.

Burrow, who had to recover from an appendectomy at the start of camp after taking Cincinnati on an improbable run to the Super Bowl last season, will operate in front of an improved offensive line with four new starters. In the backfield, Burrow will be joined by running back Joe Mixon, who has been a steady, productive presence the past few years despite the lackluster line play.

Bengals coach Zac Taylor is deferential when describing the trust and respect his third-year quarterback has earned.

"It helps you sleep better at night when you have Joe Burrow playing quarterback for you, I can promise you that," he said.

First look at new O-line

Cincinnati acted quickly in the offseason to shore up an of-

fensive line that allowed 51 sacks last year, plus another 19 in the postseason.

It spent big money signing free agents and new starters — center Ted Karras, right guard Alex Cappa and right tackle La'el Collins. Fourth-round draft pick Cordell Volson won the starting spot at left guard. The remaining starter from last year is left tackle Jonah Williams.

New day

Trubisky is the first quarterback other than Roethlisberger to start a season opener for the Steelers since Charlie Batch filled in to start the 2010 season while Roethlisberger served a four-game suspension for violating the league's personal conduct policy.

Roethlisberger retired at the end of last season, which was his 18th in the NFL.