

Honea is Navy's new master chief

By JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

James Honea became the new master chief petty officer of the Navy during a recent ceremony in Maryland presided over by Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday.

Honea, installed Sept. 8 at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, takes over as the Navy's chief enlisted sailor and adviser to Gilday from Master Chief Petty Officer Russell Smith, who retired after his term ended under allegations of misconduct.

Honea "brings the exact kind of professional experience we need for this immense responsibility," Gilday said during the ceremony. "I've said it before: He's got saltwater running through his veins."

Now the 16th master chief petty officer of the Navy, Honea, with 35 years in the service, was formerly the senior enlisted leader for U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. He completed the Command Master Chief Course and the Senior Enlisted Joint Professional Military Education Keystone Course at National Defense University; he is married to Evelyn Honea, according to the Navy.

"When I was selected for MCPON, I thought heavily on what my tenure means and what I could bring to you all," Honea said, according to a Sept. 10 Navy news release. "I'm glad I chose to be challenged by this adventure and I'm proud of what it has brought me."

Honea began his naval career in 1987 as a boatswain's mate, serving at various sea assignments, including the USS Bonhomme Richard, an amphibious assault ship that was decommissioned and scrapped last year after a major onboard fire at Naval Base San Diego in July 2020.

He advanced through the ranks, and as a command master chief served on the USS Gridley, a destroyer homeported at Everett, Wash., and then the USS New Orleans, an amphibious dock ship homeported at Sasebo Naval Base, Japan. His resume also includes several shore-based commands as a command master chief.

His priorities as the Navy's top enlisted leader are laid out in a Navy document, MCPON 16 Priorities, issued Tuesday. They include "warfighting competency, professional and character development, and qual-

ity of life," the document states.

"We must ensure our principles, basic standards of technical competency development, and expertise align to the Chief of Naval Operations' navigation plan," Honea said in the release.

Honea is stepping into a position overshadowed by allegations of misconduct against his two predecessors.

Master Chief Petty Officer Steven Giordano, who spent almost two years in the job prior to Smith, retired in 2018 after a Naval Inspector General's report found he created a "toxic leadership environment" and belittled his subordinates, according to a Stars and Stripes report on June 22, 2018.

Smith, who took over four years ago, also came under IG scrutiny for unspecified allegations against him, according to reports in February from the Navy Times and USNI News, which cited unidentified Defense Department officials.

The Navy found nothing in the allegations that would prevent Smith from retiring honorably, Navy spokeswoman Lt. Alyson Hands told Military.com Sept. 12.

Ukraine's Zelenskyy courts allies to add momentum

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine—President Volodymyr Zelenskyy worked Thursday to add political momentum to Ukraine's recent military gains against Russia, while missile strikes that caused flooding near his hometown demonstrated Moscow's determination to reclaim the battlefield advantage.

A week after a Ukrainian counteroffensive caused Russian troops to retreat from a northeast region, Zelenskyy met with European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen during her third visit to Kyiv since Russia's Feb. 24 invasion. Von der Leyen publicly conveyed the wholehearted support of the 27-nation bloc and wore an outfit in Ukraine's national colors.

"It's absolutely vital and necessary to support Ukraine with the military equipment they need to defend themselves. And they have proven that they are able to do this, if they are well equipped," she said.

Yet highlighting the breadth of the nearly 7-

month-old war, air raid sirens blared several times in the Ukrainian capital during von der Leyen's meeting with Zelenskyy, showing the fear and damage Russian troops could still inflict.

Ukrainian officials said Russian missile strikes on a reservoir dam near Kryvyi Rih, Zelenskyy's birthplace and the largest city in central Ukraine, sent water raging through some streets. Over 100 homes flooded, and efforts were underway to prevent more spillage.

Russian military bloggers charged the attack was intended to flood areas downstream where Ukrainian forces made inroads as part of their counteroffensive.

The attack so close to his roots angered Zelenskyy, who said the strikes had no military value.

"In fact, hitting hundreds of thousands of ordinary civilians is another reason why Russia will lose," he said.

But the president, who said Ukrainian forc-

es had recaptured almost 400 Russian-occupied settlements in less than a week, remained in a buoyant mood and shrugged off a traffic collision the previous night that left him with no major injuries

On a day when political optics stood out, the Ukrainian leader's snug, warm meeting with the president of the European Commission contrasted with a formal encounter between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping at a regional security summit in Uzbekistan.

The European Parliament completed the drawn-out process of approving a 5 billion-euro preferential loan to Ukraine, the key part of a 9 billion-euro aid package to offset the cost of war.

Zelenskyy said more assistance cannot come quickly enough. He insisted that the West needed to impose more sanctions on the Kremlin and to provide more weapons for his frontline soldiers to use.

New bill OKs Coast Guard to step up in Arctic region

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Coast Guard will step up operations in the increasingly contested Arctic region, crack down on illegal fishing and forced labor, and improve oil spill response under legislation approved Wednesday by a Senate committee wary of competition from Russia and China.

Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation said the Coast Guard's mission is growing in importance as melting ice in the Arctic creates a new frontier for economic and navigational opportunities.

Russia and China are developing a robust military presence in the region, with Russia boasting the largest icebreaker fleet in the world and China planning to build the largest icebreaker.

To meet that emerging threat, lawmakers want to authorize \$841 million for a third Polar Security Cutter icebreaker ship for the Coast Guard and \$20 million to establish an Arctic Security Cutter program office, which will begin work on the next generation of me-

dium icebreakers.

"We are not just discussing the Arctic theoretically but making real investments," said Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, a colonel in the Marine Corps Reserve and a member of the committee.

Members of the service, or "Coasties," are also expected to see more options for child care, better access to affordable housing and expanded medical care and education opportunities as they fulfill a mission to safeguard ports and waterways and secure the maritime economy, according to the Coast Guard Authorization Act for fiscal years 2022 and 2023.

The bill would authorize \$14.94 billion for the service for fiscal 2023, which begins Oct. 1.

The Senate committee advanced the legislation on Wednesday.

"In my view, the Coast Guard often gets overlooked on many issues — funding, support, retirement... I'm glad to say that this bill makes good strides in a couple areas that will bring the Coast Guard up to what the other services in the military have," Sullivan said.

Student loan forgiveness still available for service members

Stars and Stripes

Service members and Defense Department civilians with student loans have until Oct. 31 to benefit from a temporary expansion of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, which makes it easier for more borrowers to have the debt forgiven.

The program erases the remaining balance on federal direct loans after 120 qualifying monthly payments, according to a DOD memo circulated this week. It's designed for people working full-time in public service, including the military and the federal government.

The U.S. Department of Education temporarily expanded the program's eligibility criteria in October 2021, but the application period for those extended benefits expires in a few weeks.

Borrowers may get credit for previous repayments on federal student loans, such as Perkins and National Defense Student Loans, as long as they consolidate those loans into a federal direct loan.

Also, payments that were less than the amount due or a few days late count if made on or prior to Oct. 21, 2021, among other changes.

To get the benefit, borrowers must submit a form and consolidate nondirect federal student loans by Oct. 31. Anyone who previously applied for the program and was denied because of the loan type should try again, according to the memo.

For more information on how to qualify and complete the waiver, go to <https://studentaid.gov/announcements-events/pslf-limited-waiver>.

Australian jury convicts bouncer in Marine attack

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

A nightclub bouncer who knocked a U.S. Marine to the ground during a street confrontation last year in Darwin, Australia, has been convicted of causing serious harm, according to a local court official.

The Marine's injuries led to a "significant amount of time" in a hospital and then in rehabilitation after having part of his skull removed, Australia's state broadcaster, the ABC, reported Sept. 2.

Hayden Robert Bruce Summers, 34, was found guilty of "unlawfully causing serious harm" on Sept. 2 by a jury in the Northern Territory Supreme Court, court spokesman Xavier La Canna told Stars and Stripes in an email Wednesday.

Closed-circuit TV footage of the altercation provided by the court shows Summers and the Marine, identified by ABC as Glen Thomason, outside Darwin's Monsoons nightclub early on April 11, 2021.

Darwin is home to a Marine rotational force that spends six months each year on training missions during the southern hemisphere winter. This year's rotation includes 2,200 Marines.

In the video, the Marine appears agitated as he talks to the security guard and swings an arm across the bouncer's face. Moments later, Summers strikes Thomason in the head, causing him to fall to ground.

The bouncer then rolls the unconscious Marine into a recovery position on his side.

Summers had pleaded not guilty, according to the broadcaster.

However, Crown prosecutor Ian Rowbottom told the jury that the bouncer's actions were unreasonable and that he failed to explore options such as moving back, asking for help or pushing the Marine away, ABC reported.

Summers told the court he was trying to de-escalate the situation and had told Thomason to "calm down." He told the court he feared the Marine was about to punch him because of his hand gestures and a "death stare," ABC reported.

However, the jury found the bouncer guilty of causing serious harm. The case returns to court for sentencing Oct. 4, La Canna said in his email.

Biden: Tentative deal set, averting rail strike

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden said Thursday that a tentative railway labor agreement has been reached, averting a strike that could have been devastating to the economy before the pivotal midterm elections.

Railroads and union representatives had been in negotiations for 20 hours at the Labor Department on Wednesday to hammer out a deal, as there was a risk of a strike starting on Friday that could have shut down rail lines across the country.

Biden made a key phone call to Labor Secretary Marty Walsh at 9 p.m. as the talks were ongoing after Italian dinner had been brought in, according to a White House official insisting on anonymity. The president told the negotiators to consider the harm

to families, farmers and businesses if a shutdown occurred.

What resulted from the back and forth was a tentative agreement that will go to union members for a vote after a post-ratification cooling off period of several weeks.

“These rail workers will get better pay, improved working conditions, and peace of mind around their health care costs: all hard-earned,” Biden said. “The agreement is also a victory for railway companies who will be able to retain and recruit more workers for an industry that will continue to be part of the backbone of the American economy for decades to come.”

The threat of a shutdown had put Biden in a delicate spot politically. The Democratic president believes unions built the middle

class, but he also knew a rail worker strike could damage the economy ahead of the midterms, when majorities in both chambers of Congress, key governorships and scores of important state offices will be up for grabs.

That left him in an awkward position on Wednesday. He flew to Detroit, a stalwart of the labor movement, to espouse the virtues of unionization, while members of his administration went all-out to keep talks going in Washington between the railroads and unionized workers.

As the administration was trying to forge peace, United Auto Workers Local 598 member Ryan Buchalski introduced Biden at the Detroit auto show on Wednesday as “the most union- and labor-friendly president in American history” and someone

who was “kickin’ ass for the working class.” Buchalski harked back to the pivotal sit-down strikes by autoworkers in the 1930s.

In the speech that followed, Biden recognized that he wouldn’t be in the White House without the support of unions such as the UAW and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, saying autoworkers “brung me to the dance.” But without a deal among the 12 unions in talks back in Washington, Biden also knew that a stoppage might have begun as early as Friday that could halt shipments of food and fuel at a cost of \$2 billion a day.

By 5:05 a.m. Thursday, it was clear that the hard work across the government, unions and railway companies had paid off as Biden announced the deal.

R. Kelly convicted of child porn, enticing girls for sex

Associated Press

CHICAGO — A federal jury in Chicago convicted R. Kelly on Wednesday of producing child pornography and enticing girls for sex after a monthlong trial in his hometown, delivering another legal blow to the Grammy Award winning singer who was once one of the world’s biggest R&B stars.

Prosecutors won convictions on six of the 13 counts against him, with many of the convictions carrying long mandatory sentences. But the government lost the marquee count — that Kelly and his then-business manager successfully rigged his state child pornography trial in 2008.

Both of his co-defendants, including longtime business manager Derrel McDavid — who had told jurors that testimony from four Kelly accusers had led him to change his mind about Kelly’s believability — were acquitted of all charges.

Kelly, who shed tears of joy when jurors acquitted him in

2008, gave a thumbs-up sign to spectators after Wednesday’s verdict but otherwise showed little emotion. Before Kelly was returned to federal lockup, McDavid hugged Kelly, who rose from poverty on Chicago’s South Side to become a superstar.

Asked by reporters later outside court how Kelly felt after the verdict, his lead attorney, Jennifer Bonjean, said: “Mr. Kelly is used to bad news.”

“He’s still got many fights to fight,” she said. “But what he did say is that he had a sense of relief that this particular case was in the past now.”

The verdict comes months after a federal judge in New York sentenced Kelly to 30 years in prison in June for racketeering and sex trafficking. Based on that sentence, the 55-year-old won’t be eligible for release until he is around 80. And two sexual misconduct trials still await Kelly — one in Minnesota and one in state court in Chicago.

Officials probing if blast at Boston college staged

Associated Press

BOSTON — Federal officials are examining whether the employee who reported an explosion at Northeastern University may have lied to investigators and staged the incident, law enforcement officials said Wednesday.

Investigators identified inconsistencies in the employee’s statement and became skeptical because his injuries did not match wounds typically consistent with an explosion, said one official.

The officials could not discuss details of the investigation publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The Northeastern staff member said late Tuesday the hard plastic case exploded on the campus in Boston, causing minor injuries, according to authorities.

In an interview with The Boston Globe, the employee denied staging the explosion, calling the event “very traumatic.”

“I did not stage this ... no way, shape or form ... they need to

catch the guy that did this,” he told the newspaper. He didn’t immediately respond to an email Wednesday from The Associated Press.

The case contained a rambling note that railed against virtual reality and also referenced Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, a law enforcement official said. No explosive materials were found and they do not believe the package was sent through the U.S. Postal Service, the official said.

The official described the case as a “Pelican-style” case. Pelican is a company that makes hard cases designed to protect sensitive equipment.

A spokesperson for the FBI office in Boston declined to comment Wednesday, saying the investigation is “still very active and fluid.”

The campus opened normally for classes and other activities Wednesday. Counseling services were made available for students, faculty and staff.

Iranian citizens charged in hacking scheme

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department said Wednesday that three Iranian citizens have been charged in the United States with ransomware attacks that targeted power companies, local governments and small businesses and nonprofits, including a domestic violence shelter.

The charges accuse the hacking suspects of targeting hundreds of entities in the U.S. and around the world, encrypting and stealing data from victim networks, and threatening to release it publicly or leave it encrypted unless exorbitant ransom payments were made. In some cases, the victims made those payments, the department said.

The Biden administration has tried to go after hackers who have held U.S. targets es-

entially hostage, often sanctioned or sheltered by adversaries. The threat gained particular prominence in May 2021 when a Russia-based hacker group was accused of conducting a ransomware attack on Georgia-based Colonial Pipeline, which disrupted gas supplies along the East Coast.

Iran-based hackers have also been a focus over the last year, with the FBI thwarting a planned cyberattack on a children's hospital in Boston that was to have been carried out by hackers sponsored by the Iranian government.

"The cyber threat facing our nation is growing more dangerous and complex every day," FBI Director Christopher Wray said in a statement accompanying the indictment unsealed Wednesday. "Today's announcement makes clear the threat

is both local and global. It's one we can't ignore and it's one we can't fight on our own, either."

The hackers named in Wednesday's indictment are not believed to have been working on behalf of the Iranian government but instead for their own financial gain, and some of the victims were even in Iran, according to a senior Justice Department official who briefed reporters on the case on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the department.

But the official said the activity, even if not directed by the Iranian government, exists because the regime permits hackers to largely operate with impunity.

In a related action Wednesday, the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctioned 10 individu-

als and two entities affiliated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps who it says have been involved in malicious cyber activities, including ransomware. The Treasury Department identified the three defendants in the Justice Department case as employees of technology firms it says is affiliated with the Revolutionary Guard.

John Hultquist, vice president for threat intelligence at the cybersecurity firm Mandiant, said his team has been tracking the Iranian actors for some time and assessed they are contractors for the Revolutionary Guard who have been moonlighting as criminal hackers.

He said they are dangerous because "any access they gain could be served up for espionage or disruptive purposes."

Fewer Americans apply for jobless benefits last week

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits fell again last week to a four-month low even as the Federal Reserve continues its aggressive interest rate cuts to bring inflation under control.

Applications for jobless aid for the week ending Sept. 10 fell by 5,000 to 213,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. That's the fewest since late May.

First-time applications generally reflect layoffs.

The four-week average for claims, which offsets some of the weekly volatility, fell by 8,000 to 224,000.

The number of Americans collecting traditional unemployment benefits inched up by 2,000 for the week that ended Sept. 3, to 1.4 million.

Hiring in the U.S. in 2022 has been remarkably strong even in the midst of rising interest rates and weak economic growth. The Federal Reserve has aggressively raised interest rates in an effort to bring down inflation, which generally also slows

job growth.

Earlier this month, the Labor Department reported that employers added still-strong 315,000 jobs in August, though less than the average 487,000 a month over the past year.

The unemployment rate ticked up to 3.7%, its highest level since February, but for a healthy reason: Hundreds of thousands of people returned to the job market, and some didn't find work right away, so the government's count of unemployed people rose.

DeSantis flies 2 planes of immigrants to Martha's Vineyard

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on Wednesday flew two planes of immigrants to Martha's Vineyard, escalating a tactic by Republican governors to draw attention to what they consider to be the Biden administration's failed border policies.

Flights to the upscale island enclave in Massachusetts were part of an effort to "transport illegal immigrants to sanctuary destinations," said Taryn Fenske, DeSantis'

communications director.

While DeSantis' office didn't elaborate on their legal status, many migrants who cross the border illegally from Mexico are temporarily shielded from deportation after being freed by U.S. authorities to pursue asylum in immigration court.

Massachusetts' Gov. Charlie Baker, a Republican, said he was in touch with local officials and that short-term shelter was being provided. State Rep. Dylan Fernandes, who represents Martha's Vineyard, tweeted:

"Our island jumped into action putting together 50 beds, giving everyone a good meal, providing a play area for the children, making sure people have the healthcare and support they need. We are a community that comes together to support immigrants."

DeSantis appears to be taking his strategy to a new level by using planes and choosing Martha's Vineyard, whose harbor towns that are home to about 15,000 people are far less prepared than New York or Washington for large influxes of migrants.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Rabies alert issued after raccoon taken into bar

ND MADDOCK — A woman walked into a North Dakota bar carrying a raccoon, leading health officials to warn those who had contact with the animal about possible rabies exposure.

Bartender Cindy Smith said she was serving drinks at the Maddock Bar last week when a local resident brought in the animal during happy hour. There were about 10 people in the saloon at the time, she said.

Smith said she immediately asked the woman to leave but instead she took the raccoon around the bar to show another customer. The woman eventually departed with the animal after about five minutes.

"We finally got her out with it, and that's all that happened," Smith told The Bismarck Tribune. "It never left her arms one time, and there was absolutely no biting."

In an alert issued Tuesday, North Dakota's Health and Human Services Department is asking anyone who may have been bitten or had contact with the raccoon's saliva to seek medical care.

County votes to drop Lee, Jackson highway names

VA FAIRFAX — Fairfax County's Board of Supervisors has voted to change the name of two major highways recognizing Confederate generals.

The 9-1 vote Tuesday would change the name of Lee Highway in the county to Route 29 and Lee-Jackson Memorial Highway to Route 50. The route

numbers have already been linked to the highways for many years.

A county task force recommended the changes, even though a majority of people in an unscientific survey conducted by the task force supported keeping the names in place.

The county estimates the cost of the name change at \$2.9 million, including \$1.5 million for affected property owners to deal with the cost of renaming.

The proposal now goes to the state's Commonwealth Transportation Board for consideration.

The Lee and Jackson names recognize Confederate Gens. Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson.

Mom who drove into girls fights with guard at hearing

NV LAS VEGAS — A mother who was sentenced Monday to probation and mental health treatment for intentionally striking two schoolgirls with her SUV near a Las Vegas-area high school pleaded guilty Tuesday to misdemeanor battery for scuffling with a jail guard while in custody.

Fatima Maria Mitchell, 36, remains jailed pending sentencing Sept. 19 for the August incident at the Clark County Detention Center. Her sentence is expected to be folded in with three years on probation and treatment at a residential behavioral health center in the crash case, said Connor Sapphire, her deputy public defender.

Mitchell pleaded guilty in June to felony reckless driving after initially being charged with attempted murder in the

March 28 crash near Basic High School in Henderson. Police said her Chevrolet Tahoe struck a tree, a concrete sign and the two girls, who were treated at a hospital for broken bones.

Police and prosecutors alleged that Mitchell deliberately drove toward the girls after they fought with her daughter; brawls that day resulted in citations for four other students and a separate arrest of a parent.

Officials: Boy, 11, charged with arson in store fire

MD HAMPSTEAD — An 11-year-old boy was charged with arson in a fire that destroyed a Maryland dollar store this month, state fire investigators announced Monday.

The fire broke out at a Dollar General in Hampstead on Sept. 3 and the boy was identified last week, the state fire marshal's office said. It took more than an hour to control the blaze and no injuries were reported.

The boy was charged with first-degree arson and released to his parent's custody, officials said. Charges will be referred to the Department of Juvenile Services. His name won't be released because of his age.

Bingo, Nerf among Toy Hall of Fame finalists

NY ROCHESTER — Voting opened Wednesday on which toys should go into the National Toy Hall of Fame this year. The class of 2022 finalists are: bingo, Breyer Horses, Catan, Lite-Brite, Nerf Toys, Masters of the Universe, piñata, Phase 10, Pound Puppies, Rack-O, Spirograph, and the top.

"These 12 toys span the history of play. The top is as old as civilization itself and bingo has been played in some form for hundreds of years," said Christopher Bensch, vice president for collections at The Strong museum in Rochester, where the hall of fame is housed.

The public is invited to vote online through Sept. 21. The three toys that receive the most public votes will make up a single "Player's Choice" ballot. That ballot will be counted alongside those turned in by a national selection committee. The inductees will be announced Nov. 10.

About 100 firearms stolen from 2 businesses

MI DEARBORN HEIGHTS — About 100 firearms have been stolen during weekend break-ins at two suburban Detroit businesses.

Vehicles were used early Sunday and again around midnight Monday to burst through the front of a pawn shop in Dearborn Heights. Nearly 50 guns were taken from that shop, police said.

Early Sunday, another 50 or so long guns and pistols were taken from a Westland gun shop after a stolen vehicle was used to smash through the entrance.

No arrests have been made in any of the break-ins.

Spencer Wong, owner of the Westland shop, told WXYZ-TV that a barricade had been erected in the rear of the business, but not out front.

"[W]e didn't think anyone would be willing to drive through the front," he said.

— From wire reports

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Federer decides to retire at age 41

Associated Press

Roger Federer is retiring from professional tennis at age 41 after a series of knee operations, closing a career in which he won 20 Grand Slam titles, finished five seasons ranked No. 1 and helped create a golden era of men's tennis with rivals Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic.

Federer posted what he called a "bittersweet decision" via social media on Thursday, less than a week after 23-time major champion Serena Williams played what is expected to be the last match of her career.

Combined, the exits by two of the greatest athletes in their sport's history represent a significant turning of the page.

"As many of you know, the past three years have presented me with challenges in the form of injuries and surgeries. I've worked hard to return to full competitive form," Federer wrote on Twitter. "But I also know my body's capacities and limits, and its message to me lately has been clear."

Federer has not competed since Wimbledon in July 2021, and so, in that sense, his news is not all that surprising.

But he had appeared at an event marking the 100-year anniversary of Centre Court at the All England Club this July and said he hoped to come back to play there "one more time."

He also had said he would return to tournament action in his home country at the Swiss Indoors in October.

In Thursday's announcement, Federer said his farewell event will be the Laver Cup in London next week. That is a team event run by his management company.

Federer is married and he and his wife, Mirka — a tennis player, too; they met as athletes at an Olympics — have two sets of twins.

He leaves with a total of 103 tour-level titles on his substantial résumé and 1,251 wins in singles matches, both second only to Jimmy Connors in the Open era, which began in 1968. Federer's records include being the oldest No. 1 in ATP rankings history — he returned to the top spot at 36 in 2018 — and most consecutive weeks there (his total weeks mark was eclipsed by Djokovic).

When Federer won his first Grand Slam title at Wimbledon in 2003, the men's record for most was held by Pete Sampras, who had won his 14th at the U.S. Open the year before in what turned out to be the last match of the American's career.

Federer went on to blow way past that, ending up with 20 by winning eight championships at Wimbledon, six at the Australian Open, five at the U.S. Open and one at the French Open. His 2009 trophy at Roland

Garros allowed Federer to complete a career Grand Slam.

His serving, forehand, footwork and attacking style will all be remembered. Also unforgettable were his matches against younger rivals Nadal, 36, and Djokovic, 35, who both equalled, then surpassed, Federer's Slam total and are still winning titles at the sport's four biggest tournaments.

Nadal now leads the count with 22, one ahead of Djokovic.

"I was lucky enough to play so many epic matches that I will never forget," Federer said in Thursday's announcement.

Addressing his "competitors on the court" — although not by name — he wrote: "We pushed each other, and together we took tennis to new levels."

Federer's last match anywhere came on July 7, 2021, when he lost at Centre Court in the Wimbledon quarterfinals to Hubert Hurkacz 6-3, 7-6 (4), 6-0.

Soon after, Federer had surgery to repair damage to his meniscus and cartilage in his right knee — his third operation on that knee in a span of 1½ years.

"Tennis has treated me more generously than I ever would have dreamt," Federer said Thursday, "and now I must recognize when it is time to end my competitive career."

ADs urge reform, but not a breakaway from the NCAA

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The athletic directors who lead the schools that play Division I college football at the highest level want the sport to continue to be governed by the NCAA — if that governance can be streamlined.

LEAD1, an association of Football Bowl Subdivision ADs, convened 105 of its 131 members Wednesday for a meeting that focused mostly on how best to govern major college football.

There has been some momentum in the past year to seriously explore breaking FBS away from the NCAA and creating another structure to run the biggest revenue generator in college sports.

For now, though, the preference is for reform within the current structure.

"At the end of the day, it was very clear that the status quo is not acceptable," said LEAD1 President and CEO Tom McMillen, the former Maryland basketball star and

congressman. "And that there was a strong, very strong, preference for a model in the NCAA that is extremely streamlined and much less bureaucratic."

McMillen added: "And if that can't be accomplished, move it to the outside."

McMillen did not detail what a more efficient governing model for major college football would entail.

He said LEAD1 planned to gather ideas cultivated at Wednesday's meeting and share them with NCAA officials in a letter.

"We're a facilitator. We're not the decision-maker," McMillen said. "We recommend. That's really the extent of what we can do."

The NCAA is in the midst of what college sports leaders hope will be an overhaul of the way Division I is structured and governed.

The Division I Transformation Committee was formed last year and has been meeting regularly for months. It is led by South-

eastern Conference Commissioner Greg Sankey and Ohio athletic director Julie Cromer, who is also a member of LEAD1.

"Certainly the debate today has been helpful," Cromer said. "I think we'll use this feedback in our transformation committee work."

The Transformation Committee has already handed down proposals related to transfer rules and how NCAA enforcement operates as part of phase one of its work. A set of those proposals were approved last month.

Phase two is in progress, with membership requirements for schools, student-athlete benefits, access to championship events and revenue distribution at the core of the discussions.

"I think there exists some frustration with the lack of responsibility and the ability to be nimble and specific to our needs in football, within the current decision-making structure," Cromer said of the FBS ADs.

Yankees' Judge closes in on Maris' mark

Associated Press

To some, Aaron Judge's season has a special sheen because he appears to be Mr. Clean.

They would consider Judge the record-holder if he surpasses Roger Maris' 61 homers, absent the steroids stain sticking to the tainted trio of Barry Bonds, Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa.

"To me, the holder of the record for home runs in a season is Roger Maris," author George Will said. "There's no hint of suspicion that we're seeing better baseball than better chemistry in the case of Judge. He's clean. He's not doing something that forces other players to jeopardize their health."

Bonds' 73 and other Steroids Era peaks are viewed by critics as phantoms, totals as inflated as the biceps of those bulked-up hitters.

Judge entered Thursday with 57 homers through the New York Yankees' 143 games, leaving 19 games to go. Judge towers over everyone else, and not just because he is 6-foot-7-inches tall: Kyle Schwarber is second in homers with 37 for Philadelphia.

Judge has hit 23,448 feet of home runs this year — 4.44 miles — with an average distance of 411 feet, according to MLB Statcast.

"Judge is like Secretariat in the Belmont," broadcaster Bob Costas said, thinking back to the Triple Crown-winning 31-length victory in 1973. "He's percentages above everyone else. It's downplayed now

— he's hitting .300, so he's a classic great player. The great players have power and average. Well, he's doing that. And in the context of this season and in this era, that's really something. And he certainly should have in any reasonable person's mind put the most valuable argument for this year to bed."

With his black matte Chandler model maple bat, Judge is hitting .310 with 123 RBIs — 12 more than anyone else.

Until the 1990s, baseball's great debate was whether Maris' 1961 season should count as the record because he played more games.

Ruth's 60 in 1927 stood as the standard for 34 years. Maris' mark lasted 37 until Mark McGwire hit 70 in 1998, part of an apparently juiced jolt that saw Sammy Sosa hit 66. McGwire followed with 65 the next year as Sosa hit 63. Power peaked in 2001, when Barry Bonds hit a previously unfathomable 73 and Sosa 64.

"Personally, I think that those records are tainted, and therefore I'm rooting very much for Judge," former baseball Commissioner Fay Vincent said. "I think he's absolutely clean. I don't think there's any performance-enhancing drug involvement or taint with Judge. And so I think one of the reasons his performance is so illuminating and so compelling is that it's totally clean."

Since drug testing with penalties started in 2004, the highest total has been Giancarlo Stanton's 59 for Miami in 2017.

"Fans, writers, Hall of Fame voters, all those groups that matter are going to make their own judgments about how his accomplishments should be weighed against other players who may have been disclosed as using performance-enhancing drugs," current Commissioner Rob Manfred said. "They're going to place appropriate weight on those performances. I have found Judge's performance to be as compelling and captivating as any as I've ever seen."

Maris' legitimacy was debated because the American League schedule increased to 162 games in 1961 following expansion. With Maris at 35 homers, then-Commissioner Ford Frick decided on July 17 that if anyone topped Ruth in more than 154 games "there would have to be some distinctive mark in the record books to show that Babe Ruth's record was set under a 154-game schedule."

That "distinctive mark" became known as an "asterisk" and it remained until Sept. 4, 1991, when a committee on statistical accuracy chaired by Vincent voted unanimously to recognize Maris as the record-holder.

At 30, Judge has an impeccable reputation in an era during which each player is tested for performance-enhancing drugs during spring training and is subject to random tests during the season and offseason.

McGwire admitted in 2010 he used steroids while breaking Maris' record. Bonds and Sosa maintain they never knowingly used banned substances.

Miami's blitz still a bad memory for Jackson, Ravens

Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — When Lamar Jackson and the Baltimore Ravens faced Miami in November, it was as discombobulated as they looked all season.

The culprit was the Dolphins' blitz-heavy defensive scheme — and that game is again on Baltimore's mind as the Ravens prepare to host Miami this weekend.

The Dolphins have a new coach, so they may not defend Jackson exactly the same way, but there's no denying the effectiveness of their approach last season. Miami won 22-10, becoming the first team in 52 games to hold Baltimore under 14 points. It ended up being the Ravens' lowest point total of the season.

"They just caught us off guard, really," Jackson said. "We haven't really went over defenses doing all-up Zero against us, like just

all-up, flat-out Zero. I feel we have an answer for it this year. We watch film, watched a lot of film on those guys, because we don't want it to happen again."

It wasn't just that Miami blitzed a lot — on 30 of Jackson's 50 dropbacks, according to Pro Football Focus. The aggressiveness of the Dolphins' Cover Zero scheme seemed to rattle the Ravens, who weren't able to make Miami pay with big plays.

Short completions did little to deter the Dolphins from sending extra pass rushers. Jackson, normally such a threat to run because of his elusiveness, was sacked four times and ran for only 39 yards on nine carries. At some point, even he can't escape if he's under too much pressure from too many people at once.

Watching Jackson and the Ravens adjust to the blitz could have been a fascinating subplot

to the second half of last season, but he didn't have many chances. Because of injury and illness, he only played two full games out of Baltimore's final eight.

The Ravens did have time during the offseason to work on countering Cover Zero.

"We'd have been negligent if we hadn't worked on it," coach John Harbaugh said. "It's something we need to get a lot better at, and we studied it the whole offseason. We'll have a plan for it. Hope it works, because these guys are probably the best in the league at doing it."

Jackson was sharp in Baltimore's opener last weekend, throwing three touchdown passes in a 24-9 win over the New York Jets. Those TD strikes were 25 and 17 yards to Devin Duvernay, and 55 yards to Rashod Bateman.

Rodríguez helps Mariners get past Padres

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Julio Rodríguez hit the fourth leadoff home run of his rookie season, Eugenio Suárez and Carlos Santana both went deep, and the Seattle Mariners beat the San Diego Padres 6-1 on Wednesday.

Rodríguez hit the first pitch thrown by Padres starter Mike Clevinger (5-7) for his 26th home run. Rodríguez later nabbed his 25th stolen base, making him the third rookie in league history to have at least 25 steals and 25 homers in their first season. But unlike Chris Young in 2007 and Mike Trout in 2012, Rodríguez reached the 25/25 plateau in his debut season. Both Young and Trout reached the majors late in the previous season, but were still considered rookies.

Seattle kept pace with Toronto and gained a game on Tampa Bay in the crowded race for the top AL wild card. The Padres hold the third and final NL wild-card slot.

Cardinals 4, Brewers 1: Adam Wainwright and Yadier Molina made history with the first pitch of the game, then the record-setting battery helped host St. Louis extend its NL Central lead by beating Milwaukee.

Wainwright and Molina started together for the 325th time, the most ever by a pitcher-catcher duo in the majors. They eclipsed the regular-season mark of 324 held by the Detroit Tigers pair of Mickey Lolich and Bill Freehan from 1963-1975.

Blue Jays 5, Rays 1: Vladimir Guerrero Jr.

hit his 100th home run at age 23, and host Toronto beat Tampa Bay to ensure winning a rare five-game series against a wild-card rival.

Yankees 5, Red Sox 3: Aaron Judge didn't homer and Gleyber Torres only sorta did to send AL East-leading New York past host Boston, completing a two-game sweep.

A day after homering twice to reach 57 for the season — four short of Roger Maris' AL record — Judge went 1-for-4 with a walk. He singled in the fifth after Aaron Hicks reached on an error, putting runners on first and second. Torres lined a single to right, and Alex Verdugo's throw to the plate was too late to get Hicks. Catcher Connor Wong thought he had Torres making too big of a turn and fired the ball to first but it sailed into the outfield. Judge scored, and Torres beat Verdugo's second throw home for the three-run, Little League homer that gave New York a 3-0 lead.

Guardians 5, Angels 3: José Ramírez hit a tiebreaking two-run homer in the eighth inning, and host Cleveland beat Los Angeles for its sixth consecutive victory.

Cubs 6, Mets 3: David Peterson got only one out and slumping New York fell behind early as visiting Chicago completed a three-game sweep.

Giants 4, Braves 1: Austin Wynns drove in three runs, Carlos Rodón struck out eight in five dominant innings before leaving with a blister and host San Francisco slowed Atlanta

to win the series.

Rockies 3, White Sox 0: Colorado's Kyle Freeland outpitched Dylan Cease and put a dent in host Chicago's push for a playoff spot.

Twins 4, Royals 0: Sonny Gray cruised through seven sharp innings and host Minnesota, despite losing AL batting leader Luis Arraez to an early injury, blanked Kansas City.

Astros 2, Tigers 1: Cristian Javier allowed two hits in six shutout innings, and visiting Houston beat Detroit for a seven-game season sweep.

Pirates 10, Reds 4: Rodolfo Castro hit a three-run homer and an RBI single, and visiting Pittsburgh finished a four-game sweep of Cincinnati.

Phillies 6, Marlins 1: J.T. Realmuto homered twice against his former team, Bryce Harper also went deep and visiting Philadelphia downed Miami.

Orioles 6, Nationals 2: Gunnar Henderson drove in four runs, Jorge Mateo homered and visiting Baltimore beat Washington to complete a two-game sweep.

Athletics 8, Rangers 7: Stephen Vogt's routine grounder with two outs in the ninth inning glanced off shortstop Corey Seager's glove, scoring the go-ahead run as visiting Oakland rallied past Texas.

Diamondbacks 5, Dodgers 3 (10): Late-inning defensive replacement Sergio Alcántara hit a three-run homer with two outs in the 10th to lift host Arizona over Los Angeles.

Minor leaguers form union in stunningly quick fashion

Associated Press

NEW YORK — More than 5,500 minor league baseball players formed a union on Wednesday, completing a lightning-fast organization campaign that launched just 17 days earlier in an effort to boost annual salaries as low as \$10,400.

Martin Scheinman, the sport's independent arbitrator, notified Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association that a majority of the 5,567 players in the minor league bargaining unit had signed union authorization cards since the drive started Aug. 28. He did not provide the sides a specific number.

"This historic achievement required the right group of

players at the right moment to succeed," union head Tony Clark said in a statement. "Minor leaguers have courageously seized that moment, and we look forward to improving their terms and conditions of employment through the process of good faith collective bargaining."

MLB had agreed Saturday that it would voluntarily accept a union if there was majority support and would not force players to petition the National Labor Relations Board to hold a representation election.

"Major League Baseball has a long history of bargaining in good faith with unions, including those representing minor and major league umpires, and

major league players," the league said in a statement. "Based on the authorization cards gathered, MLB has voluntarily and promptly recognized the MLBPA as the representatives of minor league players. We are hopeful that a timely and fair collective bargaining agreement will be reached."

Minor leaguers form a separate bargaining unit within the MLBPA, which negotiated its first collective bargaining agreement for big leaguers in 1968 but had until now been uninterested in representing players with minor league deals. Approximately 1,200 major leaguers are covered by the big league agreement, and their

average salary has risen from \$19,000 in 1967 to more than \$4 million this year.

Minor leaguers are expected to choose player representatives who will lead them in bargaining during the offseason. Bruce Meyer, who headed negotiations last winter for a major league agreement, will lead the minor league negotiations, and Deputy Commissioner Dan Halem will be the point man for management. Meyer was promoted to deputy executive director in July.

MLB raised weekly minimum salaries for minor leaguers in 2021 to \$400 at rookie and short-season levels, \$500 at Class A, \$600 at Double-A and \$700 at Triple-A.