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Hurricane Ian lashes Fla. with high winds

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Hurricane Ian's most damaging winds began hitting Florida's southwest coast Wednesday, lashing the state with heavy rain and pushing a devastating storm surge after strengthening to the threshold of the most dangerous Category 5 status.

Fueled by warm waters in the Gulf of Mexico, Ian grew to a catastrophic Category 4 hurricane overnight with top winds of 155 mph, according to the National Hurricane Center. The storm trudged on a track that would have it making landfall north of the heavily populated Fort Myers area, which forecasters said could be inundated by a storm surge of up to 18 feet.

"This is going to be a nasty nasty day, two days," Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said, stressing that people in Ian's path along the coast should rush to the safest possible shelter and stay there.

Ian menaced Florida after bringing destruction Tuesday to western Cuba, where two people were reported dead and the storm brought down the country's electrical grid.

Ian's center was about 25 miles west of Fort Myers at 2 p.m. Wednesday, as it churned toward the coast at 9 mph. The storm was expected to spend a day or more crawling across the Florida peninsula, dumping flooding rains of 12 to 18 inches across a broad area, including Tampa, Orlando and Jacksonville.

Catastrophic storm surges could push 12 feet of water or more across more than 250 miles of coastline, from Bonita Beach to Englewood, the hurricane center warned.

"It's going to get a lot worse very quickly. So please hunker down," DeSantis said.

Off the coast on Sanibel Island near Fort Myers, swirling water covered residential streets and was halfway up mailbox posts by mid-morning. Seawater rushed out of Tampa Bay, leaving parts of the muddy bottom exposed, and waves crashed over the end of a wooden pier at Naples.

Ian's rapid strengthening caused Fort Myers handyman Tom Hawver to abandon his plan to weather the hurricane at home and head across the state to Fort Lauderdale.

"We were going to stay and then just decided when we got up, and they said 155 mph

winds," Hawver said. "We don't have a generator. I just don't see the advantage of sitting there in the dark, in a hot house, watching water come in your house."

More than 2.5 million people were under mandatory evacuation orders, but by law no one could be forced to flee. The governor said the state has 30,000 linemen, urban search and rescue teams, and 7,000 National Guard troops from Florida and elsewhere ready to help once the weather clears.

Florida residents rushed ahead of the impact to board up their homes, stash precious belongings on upper floors and join long lines of cars leaving the shore.

Some chose to stay and ride out the storm. Jared Lewis, a Tampa delivery driver, said his home has withstood hurricanes in the past, though not as powerful as Ian.

"It is kind of scary, makes you a bit anxious," Lewis said. "After the last year of not having any, now you go to a Category 4 or 5. We are more used to the 2s and 3s."

Forecasters predicted Ian would make landfall more than 100 miles south of Tampa and St. Petersburg.

Hawaii fines US Navy millions for dumping sewage

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The Hawaii Department of Health announced Tuesday that it would fine the U.S. Navy \$8.7 million for more than 700 incidents of discharging sewage from its wastewater treatment plant on Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

The notice of violation and order was issued "to address a myriad of deficiencies" at the Navy's treatment plant near Pearl Harbor since the beginning of 2020, the Health Department said in a news release Tuesday.

"The Navy's failure to properly operate and maintain this wastewater treatment plant led to the pollution of state waters," Kathleen Ho, deputy director of environment health at the Health Department, said in the release.

"We are taking action to protect our state's water resources and to hold the Navy accountable to make critical repairs and

prevent a potential catastrophic failure of the facility," she said.

The Navy has 20 days to request a hearing if it wishes to contest the order, according to the release.

The plant is operated by the Naval Facilities Engineering Command.

The treatment facility occupies about 12 acres and filters about 6.5 million gallons of household and industrial wastewater per day, according to a 2020 Navy fact sheet.

This is only the latest high-profile action taken by Health Department against the Navy.

In January, it ordered the service to empty and close the Red Hill fuel facility near the joint base after jet fuel contaminated groundwater.

The Navy contested the order to discontinue using the massive World War II-era collection of storage tanks, but in March Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin relented and ordered the facility permanently closed.

Regarding the wastewater plant, the Health Department "assessed an \$8,776,250.00 penalty based on 766 counts of discharging pollutants in exceedance of permit limits, 17 counts of unauthorized bypass, and 212 counts of operation and maintenance failures," the news release said.

Among the violations cited in the Health Department's order were the Navy's failures to operate and maintain a sand filter bypass valve, ultraviolet disinfection systems and effluent pumps. In some instances, untreated or insufficiently treated wastewater bypassed sand filters because of "poor operation and maintenance," the release said.

The order requires the Navy to take corrective actions, including assessing the condition of the plant and following up with needed repairs, obtaining a "root cause analysis for recent effluent pump failures" and implementing a revised maintenance plan, according to the release.

Harris vows US will continue to back Taiwan

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The United States plans to “deepen unofficial ties” with Taiwan, despite anticipating “continued aggressive behavior” from China across the Indo-Pacific, Vice President Kamala Harris said Wednesday at the home of the U.S. 7th Fleet.

Speaking aboard the guided-missile destroyer USS Howard, the vice president, surrounded by sailors in dress whites, delivered remarks that largely focused on the region’s growing tensions. She touched on Russia’s attempted annexation of Ukraine and a North Korean ballistic missile launch on Sunday, but zeroed in on recent actions by Beijing.

“China has challenged the freedom of the seas; China has flexed its military and economic might to coerce and intimidate

its neighbors,” she said. “We have witnessed disturbing behavior in the East China Sea and in the South China Sea — and most recently, provocations across the Taiwan Strait.”

Tensions between the U.S. and China have remained high since U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Aug. 3 became the highest-ranking official to visit Taiwan in a quarter-century.

Beijing responded by launching a weeklong series of drills encircling the island. Near-daily incursions of Chinese aircraft and ships into Taiwanese waters and airspace have continued since.

Beijing considers Taiwan, which split from China in 1949, a breakaway province that must be reunified with the mainland. Chinese officials, in a white paper released in August, said they would not “renounce the use of force” to reclaim Taiwan and

that the option of using “all necessary measures” is reserved.

Harris, who arrived in Japan on Monday to attend a state funeral for slain former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, said aboard the Howard that the U.S. anticipates “continued aggressive behavior from Beijing, as it attempts to unilaterally undermine the status quo.”

“The United States believes that peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait is an essential feature of a free and open Indo Pacific,” she said.

Echoing similar sentiments made by President Joe Biden during a “60 Minutes” interview broadcast by CBS on Sept. 18, Harris vowed that the U.S. would continue to back Taiwan.

“We will continue to oppose any unilateral change to the status quo, and we will continue to support Taiwan’s self-defense consistent with our long-stand-

ing policy,” she said. “Taiwan is a vibrant democracy that contributes to the global good, from technology to help and beyond, and the United States will continue to deepen our unofficial ties.”

Later, during a dockside news conference, Harris clarified that “deepening ties” meant “doing the work of meeting with and reaffirming our commitment to an ally of Japan as an ally in this region,” and mentioned her scheduled visit to South Korea on Thursday.

“It’s about strengthening the trilateral relationship that we have,” she said.

Not long after Harris’ departure from Yokosuka, North Korea fired a pair of short-range ballistic missiles toward the East Sea, also known as the Sea of Japan, the South’s Joint Chiefs of Staff told reporters on Wednesday.

S. Korea says North launched 2 short-range ballistic missiles

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles toward the East Sea, also known as the Sea of Japan, the South’s Joint Chiefs of Staff told reporters through its messaging service Wednesday.

The launches happened just hours after Vice President Kamala Harris wrapped up a speech aboard a U.S. destroyer at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, during which she condemned the North’s most recent launch on Sunday, along with aggressive actions by Moscow and Beijing.

South Korea’s military said Wednesday’s missiles were fired at around 6:10 p.m. and 6:20 p.m. from Pyongyang’s Sunan area. Sunan hosts North Korea’s inter-

national airport in the capital city, where the communist regime has carried out several rounds of weapons tests this year. The missiles were estimated to have flown roughly 223 miles at a peak altitude of about 18 miles.

North Korea’s actions “further strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities” of the U.S. and South Korean militaries and will “only deepen isolation from the international community,” the Joint Chiefs said.

Japan’s Prime Minister’s office confirmed Wednesday’s test, saying it would “take all possible measures for precaution, including readiness for contingencies.”

On Thursday, Harris will travel to South Korea.

Wednesday’s launches mark North Korea’s 20th round of testing so far this year, a record.

US Army copes with soaring energy costs across Europe

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Army leaders are concerned that skyrocketing European utilities expenses will leave some U.S. soldiers living in Germany and Italy with cold comfort this fall and winter.

Officials from Army Emergency Relief, a charity that helps cash-strapped troops, have been touring U.S. bases in Europe and speaking with soldiers about ways to alleviate the economic stress, which in large part stems from actions taken following Russia’s February invasion of Ukraine.

On average, gas prices across Europe are more than 200% higher than they were this time last year, according to Reuters.

“Everywhere we’ve been, the

leadership has been very concerned about rising energy costs,” retired Lt. Gen. Ray Mason, the charity’s director, said Tuesday during a visit to Rhine Ordnance Barracks in Kaiserslautern, part of the largest American military community overseas.

The stop followed others in Germany and Italy by Mason and his team and preceded a visit to Belgium.

While DOD personnel do receive varying levels of housing and utility allowances, the stipends may not be enough for some to avoid out-of-pocket costs.

Army Emergency Relief is encouraging soldiers in Europe who are experiencing financial hardship to contact the nearest AER branch and have a counselor go over their finances.

Russia poised to annex occupied Ukraine

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia was poised Wednesday to formally annex parts of Ukraine where occupied areas held a Kremlin-orchestrated “referendum” — denounced by Kyiv and the West as illegal and rigged.

Armed troops had gone door-to-door with election officials to collect ballots in five days of voting. The results were widely ridiculed as implausible and characterized as a land grab by an increasingly cornered Russian leadership following embarrassing military losses in Ukraine.

Moscow-installed administrations in the four regions of southern and eastern Ukraine claimed Tuesday night that residents had voted to join Russia.

“Forcing people in these territories to fill out some papers at the barrel of a gun is yet another Russian crime in the course of its aggression against Ukraine,” Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry said, adding that the balloting was “a propaganda show” and “null and worthless.”

Pro-Russia officials in Ukraine’s Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia regions said Wednesday that they would ask Russian President Vladimir Putin to incorporate their provinces into Russia. Separatist

leaders Leonid Pasechnik in Luhansk and Denis Pushilin in Donetsk said they were leaving for Moscow to settle the annexation formalities.

According to Russia-installed election officials, 93% of the ballots cast in the Zaporizhzhia region supported annexation, as did 87% in the Kherson region, 98% in the Luhansk region and 99% in Donetsk.

Western countries, however, dismissed the balloting as a meaningless pretense staged by Moscow in an attempt to legitimize its invasion of Ukraine launched on Feb. 24. European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell called the vote “illegal” and described the results as “falsified.”

Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry statement also asked the EU, NATO and the Group of Seven major industrial nations to “immediately and significantly” step up pressure on Russia with new sanctions and by significantly increasing their military aid to Kyiv.

The Kremlin remained unmoved amid the hail of criticism. Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that at the very least, Russia intended to drive Ukrainian forces out of the Donetsk region, where Moscow’s troops and separatist forces currently control about 60% of the territory.

Russia is calling up 300,000 reservists to fight in the war and warned it could resort to nuclear weapons after this month’s counteroffensive by Ukraine dealt Moscow’s forces heavy battlefield setbacks. The partial mobilization is deeply unpopular in some areas, however, triggering protests, scattered violence and Russians fleeing the country.

More than 194,000 Russian nationals have fled to neighboring Georgia, Kazakhstan and Finland — most often by car, bicycle or on foot. Early on, they snapped up airline tickets, which spiked in price on the few airlines still flying out of Russia. But the rest had to gas up their cars and join the long lines snaking on roads toward the borders.

The mobilization prompted the U.S. Embassy in Moscow to warn Americans in Russia to leave immediately because “Russia may refuse to acknowledge dual nationals’ U.S. citizenship, deny their access to U.S. consular assistance, prevent their departure from Russia and conscript dual nationals for military service.” Earlier embassy security alerts also advised Americans to leave, saying they could be harassed and have difficulty obtaining consular assistance.

EU vows to respond if pipeline damage found to be sabotage

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — The European Union suspects that damage to two underwater natural gas pipelines was sabotage and is warning of retaliation for any attack on Europe’s energy networks, a senior official said Wednesday, as energy companies began ramping up security.

The episode underscored the vulnerability of Europe’s energy infrastructure and further heightened tensions in the continent that has been rocked by the seven-month war in Ukraine. Poland and some experts said Russia was likely to blame, and could benefit from further market instability.

Seismologists reported that explosions rattled the Baltic Sea before unusual leaks were discovered Tuesday on two underwater natural gas pipelines running from Russia to Germany. The incidents came as the EU

has struggled to keep a lid on soaring gas and electricity prices.

“All available information indicates those leaks are the result of a deliberate act,” EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said in a statement on behalf of the bloc’s 27 members. “Any deliberate disruption of European energy infrastructure is utterly unacceptable and will be met with a robust and united response.”

Some European leaders and experts pointed to possible sabotage given the energy standoff with Russia. The three leaks were reported on the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines, which were filled with natural gas but were not delivering the fuel to Europe. The pipelines allow gas to be piped to Germany without transiting through Ukraine or Poland.

The extent of the damage,

along with the political ramifications, raises serious doubts about the future of the Nord Stream project. Germany was heavily criticized for the project by the United States and many of its European partners, which said it only increased Europe’s reliance on Russian gas imports.

While it remains unknown who might be responsible for the damage, given its undersea location, Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau said Tuesday that the leaks could be part of Russia’s hybrid war on NATO.

“The explosions took place very close to Danish territorial waters, but not inside them, because that would have meant NATO territory,” Rau said during a discussion at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

“This could mean that someone is trying to intimidate the countries of the Baltic Sea. With

the exception of Russia, all these countries are NATO members or are aspiring to membership,” he said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said allegations that Russia could be behind the incidents were “predictable and stupid.”

Anders Puck Nielsen, a researcher with the Center for Maritime Operations at the Royal Danish Defence College, said it would be hard to establish who is responsible, and just as tough to prevent similar incidents in the future.

“We have pipelines, we have communication cables like the internet. We have just power lines running on the seabed. All of this is vulnerable and our societies are very dependent on it. And it’s very, very difficult to monitor what’s going on and to prevent a case of sabotage,” he said.

Pipeline push over, easing spending bill path

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin has, for now, abandoned his push to speed up the permitting process for energy projects, easing the Senate's path toward passing a stopgap spending bill that would keep the federal government running when the fiscal year ends at midnight Friday.

A procedural vote Tuesday advancing the funding bill succeeded easily, 72-23, after Democrats announced the West Virginia senator's proposal would be stripped from the final legislation. It was clear that, with Manchin's plan included, Democrats were falling short of the 60 votes needed to proceed, as most Republicans objected to it.

While lawmakers are again waiting to the final moments of the fiscal year to pass legislation keeping the government running, they are confident they will do so. Neither party is interested in a shutdown heading into the critical midterm elections Nov. 8 that will determine which party is in charge of the House and Senate.

In addition to government funding, the spending measure provides about \$12.3 billion in assistance related to Ukraine, including training, equipment, weapons and direct financial support for the Ukraine government. The assistance would be on top of some \$53 billion Congress has already approved through two previous bills.

The measure excludes the White House call for spending \$22 billion to respond to COVID-19, and \$3.9 billion to fight against an outbreak of the monkeypox virus.

Republican lawmakers were overwhelmingly opposed to the health funding. At least 10 Republican senators would have to support the measure to overcome procedural hurdles and advance in that chamber.

The most contentious piece of the legislation was Manchin's plan to streamline the permitting process for energy projects and make it easier for a pipeline project in his home state and Virginia to proceed.

Manchin in a statement confirmed he had asked Senate Ma-

jority Leader Chuck Schumer to remove the permitting language, and said he was holding to his belief that "we should never come to the brink of a government shutdown over politics."

Both chambers of Congress must approve legislation by Friday to prevent a partial government shutdown. It represents the last bit of unfinished business for lawmakers before the midterm elections in November.

Manchin, who chairs the Senate Energy Committee, had secured a commitment from President Joe Biden and Democratic leaders to have a vote on the permitting package in return for his support of a landmark law to curb climate change.

Biden keeps US target for refugee admissions at 125K

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — President Joe Biden on Tuesday kept the nation's cap on refugee admissions at 125,000 for the 2023 budget year, despite pressure from advocates to raise it even higher to meet the need after falling far short of that target this year.

Refugees advocates have been pushing the Biden administration to do more to restore the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. The more than four-decade-old program suffered deep cuts under the Trump administration, which slashed admissions to a record low of 15,000.

After taking office, Biden quadrupled the number of refugee admissions permitted for the remaining months of the 2021 budget year. He then set the target at 125,000 for the 2022 budget year, which ends Sept. 30. But so far, fewer than 20,000 refugees have been admitted. That number excludes the roughly 180,000 Ukrainians

and Afghans who came to the United States via a legal process called humanitarian parole that got them into the country more quickly than the traditional refugee program, but only allows for stays of up to two years.

Refugees are provided a path to permanent residency. Their admissions are determined by the president each year, and federal funding for resettlement agencies is based on the number of people they resettle in a given year.

The 125,000 target "is justified by humanitarian concerns or is otherwise in the national interest," Biden stated in his presidential determination. Historically, the average has been 95,000 under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

Biden earmarked 5,000 more slots for people from Europe and Central Asia for the 2023 budget year, making room to accommodate those fleeing the war in Ukraine.

Biden on ending hunger in US: 'I know we can do this'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden said Wednesday that his administration's goal of ending hunger in the United States by the end of the decade was ambitious but doable, if only the nation would work together toward achieving it.

"I know we can do this," Biden told an auditorium full of public health officials, private companies and Americans who have experienced hunger. They were gathered for the first White House conference on hunger, nutrition and health since 1969.

It was the president at his most optimistic, sketching out a future where no child in the U.S. would go hungry, and diet-related diseases would diminish because of better, healthier food alternatives and access to vast outdoor spaces.

"That's why we're here today, to harness our greatest resource: Our fellow Americans," Biden said. "Everyone, everyone has an important

role to play."

The 1969 conference, hosted by President Richard Nixon, was a pivotal moment that influenced the U.S. food policy agenda for 50 years.

It led to a major expansion of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly known as food stamps, and gave rise to the Women, Infants and Children program, which serves half the babies born in the U.S. by providing their mothers with parenting advice, breastfeeding support and food assistance.

And yet 10% of U.S. households in 2021 suffered food insecurity, meaning they were uncertain they could get enough food to feed themselves or their families because they lacked money or resources for food, according to the Food and Drug Administration.

Scientific advances have helped Americans better understand how the foods they eat contribute to disease.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man retried for sex crime gets longer jail sentence

OR SALEM — An Oregon man retried on a sexual assault charge was found guilty and sentenced to 25 years in prison.

In 2017, John Rideout was found guilty of first-degree rape and first-degree sodomy by a Marion County jury and a judge sentenced him to over 16 years in prison.

Rideout, 65, was given a new trial because the sodomy verdict had been non-unanimous, the Statesman Journal reported. In 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that such convictions were unconstitutional.

Rideout was tried and acquitted in 1978 for allegedly raping his wife at their Salem apartment in front of their young child. The Oregon Legislature had previously passed a law eliminating marital privilege as a rape defense.

A jury last week deliberated less than an hour before unanimously finding Rideout guilty of sodomy in the 2017 case.

Man gets jail for selling bogus aircraft parts

CA LOS ANGELES — A Southern California man who previously went to prison for selling bogus aircraft parts was sentenced to nearly four years in federal prison for doing it again, prosecutors said.

Aman Khan, 73, of Riverside, was given a 46-month term by a judge in Los Angeles who also ordered him to pay more than \$1.5 million in restitution, the U.S. attorney's office said in a statement.

Prosecutors said Khan made

various counterfeit aircraft parts at his Riverside-based company, including wheel assemblies and turbine gas nozzles that had been ordered for NATO jets.

In 1996, he was sentenced to 4½ years in prison for crimes that included selling phony aircraft parts.

In 2005, he was sentenced to more than 15½ years in federal prison for fraudulently selling aircraft parts and agreeing to sell parts for military jet fighters to China.

Man dies after getting pinned under pickup

DE WILMINGTON — A man was killed when he was pinned beneath a truck, police in Delaware said.

Officers were called to Beehler Court in the Wilmington area for a report of a person hit by a vehicle, New Castle County Police said in a news release.

Officers found a 46-year-old man pinned beneath a Ford F-350 pickup truck, police said. Officers and paramedics tried to resuscitate the man, but their efforts were unsuccessful and police said he was pronounced dead on the scene.

The initial investigation revealed that the man got out of the truck while it was still in gear and he was hit by the truck, then pinned beneath it, police said.

Police: Man on moped groped at least 7 women

NY NEW YORK — A man riding around Brooklyn on a moped pulled up to at least seven women and grabbed their genitals and buttocks in recent weeks, police

said.

The forcible touching incidents happened in various neighborhoods, including Park Slope, Williamsburg and Clinton Hill between Aug. 28 and Sept. 10.

Police released security camera video showing the at-large suspect looking over his shoulder while riding a moped down a sidewalk after the most recent reported incident, in which a 21-year-old woman was groped in Midwood.

The man is suspected of touching three women within an hour on Aug 30 and one each on Aug. 28, Sept. 8, 9 and 10.

12 kids ill after possible pool party chlorine leak

MS FLOWOOD — Twelve children were taken to the hospital after a possible chlorine leak at a YMCA pool in Mississippi, officials said.

The children were at a birthday pool party in Flowood when they were sickened, the Clarion Ledger reported.

The pool is cleaned with automatic chlorine pumps and was closed for an independent inspection, YMCA officials said.

"The chlorine levels were good based on our records," interim area YMCA CEO Jeff Colens said. "We are unsure of what could have gone wrong specifically."

Women survive mountain lion attack on trail run

UT SALT LAKE CITY — Two women survived a mountain lion attack in Utah that occurred when they were running in a canyon east of Salt

Lake City.

They came upon the mountain lion when they came around a corner on a trail run in Millcreek Canyon, said Faith Jolley, a spokesperson for the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources.

The mountain lion leapt at the woman closest to the animal, leaving two puncture wounds on her leg, she said.

They were able to get away and down the mountain after the uninjured woman threw a rock at the mountain lion. The woman's injuries aren't considered life-threatening, Jolley said.

Wildlife officials later found the mountain lion they believe was the one in the attack and euthanized the animal.

State spends \$45M to establish 3 new parks

PA HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania is spending \$45 million to add new state parks at a nature preserve in Tunkhannock, on Big Elk Creek in the Philadelphia suburbs and along the Susquehanna River near Wrightsville, officials announced.

The additions to the state's 121-park system will be an existing nearly 700-acre nature preserve on the Vosburg Neck in Wyoming County, a 1,700-acre tract in Chester County and some 1,100 acres in York County.

The expansion was funded in the state budget that passed in July.

They are the first new state parks in Pennsylvania since 2005, not counting Washington Crossing in Bucks County, which was transferred from the state Historical and Museum Commission.

—From wire reports

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NFL scoring is down as top QBs struggle

Associated Press

With some of the most accomplished quarterbacks in the NFL struggling to produce points, it was no surprise the league had one of its lowest scoring weeks.

The 20.3 points per game by teams was the lowest for a Week 3 since 2009 and the fourth-lowest for any week in the past five seasons.

Teams led by Patrick Mahomes, Tom Brady and Aaron Rodgers—the winners of four of the last five MVP awards—played a major role with their teams combining for 43 points Sunday. That's the fewest points scored in the 57 weeks all three of those standout QBs have started. The previous low was 55 in Week 15 of the 2018 season.

Brady and the banged-up Tampa Bay Buccaneers have had the biggest problems offensively early this season, failing to score more than 20 points in any of their three games. Tampa Bay is scoring 17 points per game, down from 30.1 last season.

That's just the fifth time that's ever happened in three straight games for a team quarterbacked

by Brady and second in the past 11 seasons. It happened once in 2019 in New England.

The Bucs and the New York Giants are the only teams without a first-half touchdown as absences on the offensive line and receiver have taken a toll.

The beneficiaries of that poor production by Tampa Bay were Aaron Rodgers and the Green Bay Packers, who pulled out the 14-12 road win despite failing to score following the first two drives.

It marked just the fourth time in Rodgers' career that he ended up on the winning side in a game when Green Bay failed to score more than 14 points. The Packers are averaging 16 points per game, down from 26.5 last season.

Kansas City's offense was clicking to start the season with 44 points in the opener but has scored just 44 the last two weeks, including a 20-17 loss at Indianapolis in Week 3 that marked just the fifth time the Chiefs scored 17 points or fewer with Mahomes at quarterback.

Overall, the 21 point per game average for the NFL is the lowest

through Week 3 since it was 20.2 points per game in 2010.

Rarities

The Buffalo Bills somehow managed to lose a game to Miami despite outgaining the Dolphins by 285 yards.

In the Super Bowl era, teams that outgain the opposition by at least 285 yards had a 266-11-1 (.959) record in those games before Tua Tagovailoa and Miami's 21-19 win.

The last team to overcome that and win was also the Dolphins, in Tagovailoa's first career start on Nov. 1, 2020, when Miami was outgained by 326 yards in a 28-17 win over the Rams.

The San Francisco-Denver game was also an outlier, with the Broncos' win becoming just the second 11-10 game in NFL history. The Steelers beat the Chargers by that score on Nov. 16, 2008.

It was also the second game in NFL history when the winning team had exactly one touchdown, one field goal and one safety. The other time it happened came Oct. 12, 2008, when

Minnesota beat Detroit 12-10.

In an odd coincidence, the safety in that game came when Dan Orlovsky stepped over the end line in the end zone just like Jimmy Garoppolo did Sunday night.

Parity

For the fifth time since the merger, only two teams remain winless after Week 3 with Las Vegas (0-3) and Houston (0-2-1) doing it.

That previously happened in 1988, '89, '90 and 2012, but this is just the first time since 1959 that only one team started a season 0-3, with the Lions doing it that year.

The Raiders managed to lose all three games despite their opponents failing to win any of their other games, joining the 2012 Saints and 1989 Cowboys as the only teams to do that since the merger.

There are also only two teams at 3-0, with Philadelphia and Miami pulling that off. This is the third time since the merger that only three teams either won or lost each of their first three games.

CFP expansion for 2024 isn't as easy as it sounds

Associated Press

ROSEMONT, Ill. — The conference commissioners who manage the College Football Playoff met for almost seven hours Tuesday to work on expanding the postseason system from four to 12 teams as soon as the 2024 season.

There is still much work to be done.

"We will not wrap up this week," CFP Executive Director Bill Hancock said.

The CFP management committee, comprised of 10 conference commissioners and Notre Dame's athletic director, was scheduled to convene again at the Big Ten offices for a few hours Wednesday morning. They are set to meet again in Dallas on Oct. 20.

"That'll be important," Hancock said.

Expansion talks were revived by the university presidents and chancellors who oversee the College Football Playoff last month.

By adopting a 12-team plan that had been on the table since the spring of 2021, the presidents pushed the commissioners to try to implement a new format before the end of the CFP's current contract with ESPN. That deal ends after the 2025 season.

Expanding from four to 12 in 2024 and '25 will require rescheduling semifinals and championship games that already have dates and sites set, plus adding four new first-round games in mid-December to be played on campus sites.

Squeezing it all into about a month and working around the NFL for television will be challenging.

Hancock said the idea of moving up the start of the college football season to the week before Labor Day to create more room at the end for the playoff has been discussed, but more for beyond the 2025 season.

"I think most people view that as a future item. As a long-term item and not an immediacy item," Hancock said. "Remember, there's so many details."

Hancock said CFP officials have spoken to bowl partners and hosts cities that are set to hold semifinals and championship games after the 2024 and '25 seasons, but they have not been presented definitive new dates.

Atlanta has already been chosen as the host city for the championship game to be played following the 2024 season on Jan. 6, 2025. The game would have to be pushed back about two weeks if the playoff grows from four teams to 12.

"(Atlanta organizers) have some work to do because of other businesses in the community," Hancock said. "Other meeting-type business, hotel business and Convention Center business there. They've been great to work with."

Yankees top Jays to clinch AL East

Associated Press

TORONTO — Aaron Judge and the New York Yankees held a lively clubhouse party to cheer another AL East title. A celebration for home run history? That's still on deck.

Judge walked four times and stayed at 60 homers, one shy of Roger Maris' American League record, as the Yankees clinched the division by beating the Toronto Blue Jays 5-2 Tuesday night.

"I'll take four walks for a win every day," said Judge, who scored twice.

New York won its first division championship since 2019 and 20th overall, tied for second-most with the Dodgers behind Atlanta's 21. The Yankees (95-59) secured a first-round bye and home-field advantage in the Division Series.

"We knew this was coming, but it's only step one," Judge said.

New York marked the clinching with loud, splashy fun in the visiting clubhouse at Rogers Centre, with beer and sparkling wine

flowing freely.

"This is a big moment," Judge said as beer dripped off his backwards cap.

Manager Aaron Boone, who carried a glass of Prosecco to his postgame news conference, certainly agreed.

"We can say we're the best team in the best division this year, and it wasn't easy," Boone said. "We took everyone's punches."

Judge lined out in his first at-bat and then drew four straight walks in his seventh straight game without a home run. He has walked 11 times in 30 plate appearances since hitting homer No. 60 against Pittsburgh last week. All five of Judge's plate appearances went to full counts — he saw 33 pitches, 14 strikes. His longest drought without a home run this year was nine games in mid-August.

"It's just awesome to see the discipline and the consistency of the at bats while he's going through this with all the attention around it," Boone said. "I keep saying he'll get there,

he'll get it, but to see him rack up quality at-bat after quality at-bat is impressive."

The Yankees have eight games left in the regular season for Judge to tie or break the AL mark set by Maris in 1961. With the division now secure, however, Boone said he wasn't sure Judge would play Wednesday.

"We'll see," Boone said.

Judge hasn't missed a game since Aug. 3 at Seattle, the day before a Yankees off day. New York is off Thursday.

Judge's batting average stayed at .314 as he went 0-for-1. He leads in all three AL Triple Crown categories.

Toronto (87-68) maintained its place atop the AL wild-card standings, but lost ground to Tampa Bay. The Jays lead the Rays by 1½ games — Tampa Bay holds the tiebreaker.

Gleyber Torres had three hits and drove in three runs.

Jameson Taillon (14-5) pitched 7⅓ sharp innings, allowing two runs and five hits. He's 4-0 in five career starts in Toronto.

Cardinals defeat Brewers, clinch NL Central title

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — The St. Louis Cardinals finally separated themselves from the Milwaukee Brewers in early August after chasing them for much of the season.

They haven't looked back since, turning what had been a nip-and-tuck NL Central race into something of a runaway.

MVP contender Paul Goldschmidt went 2-for-4 with a pair of RBIs as the Cardinals clinched the division title Tuesday night by beating the Brewers 6-2 behind six strong innings from Miles Mikolas.

"With the guys that we have and the veteran leadership, we knew that as soon as we smelled some blood right there and we took that lead, we knew we could run away with it," Mikolas said.

Andrew Knizner hit a two-run homer to break out of an 0-for-22 slump as St. Louis sealed its first division crown since 2019 and fourth straight playoff berth by defeating the team that won last year's NL Central

championship. This marks the third straight year the Cardinals have wrapped up a postseason spot with a victory over Milwaukee.

St. Louis (90-65) guaranteed itself at least a tie with the second-place Brewers (82-72), and now owns the tiebreaker because the victory Tuesday gave the Cardinals an insurmountable 10-8 lead in the season series.

St. Louis held a rather low-key celebration on Milwaukee's home field after the final out, reacting not much differently than if it had just won an ordinary game at midseason. The party didn't start until the Cardinals got into the locker room and started popping champagne.

"This is just one step, guys," Albert Pujols told his teammates at the start of the celebration. "Just remember this moment. This is what we want to do deep in October and hopefully win the championship and bring it to the city of St. Louis."

The Brewers remain 1½ games behind Philadelphia for

the final NL wild card. The Phillies won the season series with Milwaukee and would get the playoff bid if the teams end up tied.

The Cards trailed Milwaukee in the NL Central standings for much of the season and were four games back on the morning of July 31. St. Louis is 37-17 and the Brewers 25-28 since.

"We just didn't really play well enough all season to deserve winning the division," Milwaukee outfielder Christian Yelich said. "You get what you deserve in sports a lot and we just, for whatever reason, weren't able to put it all together. Not saying we don't still have a shot. We still have a shot at a wild card."

Tuesday's clincher didn't feature much suspense as the Cardinals scored the first six runs to delight the large contingent of St. Louis fans at American Family Field.

Mikolas (12-13) struck out nine and allowed only four hits and one walk. The Brewers' lone

run off him came in the sixth when Rowdy Tellez hit his 34th homer.

Milwaukee trailed 2-0 when starter Adrian Houser (6-10) left due to a strained right groin with one out in the fourth. Brewers manager Craig Counsell said Houser likely will go on the injured list.

The Cardinals grabbed sole possession of first place on Aug. 6 and have been there ever since as part of an exciting season that's included Pujols hitting his 700th career homer, Goldschmidt and Nolan Arenado making MVP arguments and Adam Wainwright and Yadier Molina becoming the most prolific battery in MLB history.

"Extremely magical when you really think about it," manager Oliver Marmol said. "What's more important about all of it is you've got MVP candidates on our corners, you've got Yadi and Waino chasing 325 (starts together), you've got 700 from Albert, and they never made it about themselves."

Acuña hits 2 HRs, Braves tie for first

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Ronald Acuña Jr. hit a pair of solo home runs and the Atlanta Braves beat the Washington Nationals 8-2 on Tuesday night for their fourth straight win, moving them into a first-place tie in the NL East with the New York Mets.

Orlando Arcia also homered and Michael Harris II had a two-run triple for the Braves, who caught the Mets when New York lost 6-4 at home to Miami. Both teams have seven games remaining, including a head-to-head three-game series beginning Friday in Atlanta, though the path of Hurricane Ian could force a postponement or relocation.

With the win, the defending World Series champion Braves (97-58) are guaranteed the No. 2 playoff seed in the National League if they finish ahead of the Mets.

"The hope is to win tomorrow and then the hope is to have a good series against New York this weekend," Acuña said through a translator. "The division is on the line."

Marlins 6, Mets 4: Carlos Carrasco had another short start, lasting just three innings

as host New York fell into a first-place tie in the NL East with a loss to Miami.

Carrasco allowed six hits and walked one with two strikeouts while throwing four or fewer innings for the fourth time in his past six starts.

Pete Alonso's three-run homer in the fourth cut it to 4-3. But the Marlins answered in the fifth, when Jacob Stallings hit a two-run single off Trevor Williams.

Padres 4, Dodgers 3 (10): Jorge Alfaro drew a bases-loaded walk from Craig Kimbrel with two outs in the 10th inning and host San Diego beat NL West champion Los Angeles to reduce its magic number for clinching a wild-card berth to four.

Rays 6, Guardians 5 (11): Harold Ramirez's two-run double with two outs in the 11th inning gave visiting Tampa Bay a win over Cleveland, helping it tighten the AL wild-card race and ending the visitors' seven-game winning streak.

Cubs 2, Phillies 1: Marcus Stroman pitched seven innings of four-hit ball, and Yan Gomes hit a tiebreaking double in the seventh inning, lifting host Chicago over Philadelphia.

The Phillies' magic number to clinch a National League playoff berth is stalled at eight after their third straight loss.

Rangers 5, Mariners 0: Top prospect Josh Jung hit two home runs and finished with five RBIs, and host Seattle continued slumping in its quest for a postseason berth in a loss to Texas.

Despite the defeat, the Mariners inched closer to ending the longest playoff drought in baseball thanks to Boston's win over Baltimore. Seattle's magic number to clinch an American League wild card is five.

Red Sox 13, Orioles 9: Visiting Baltimore wasted four homers, including two more by Anthony Santander, in a loss to Triston Casas and Boston, hurting the its chances of earning an AL wild card.

Adley Rutschman and Ramón Urías also went deep, but Baltimore (80-74) lost for the third time in four games. The Orioles are 3½ games behind Seattle for the third AL wild card.

Astros 10, Diamondbacks 2: Jose Altuve hit two of his team's five home runs to lead host Houston over Arizona in a game in which Yordan Alvarez left

with an ankle injury.

Alvarez, who is tied for second in the American League with 37 homers, exited in the fifth inning with left ankle discomfort after rolling his ankle running out of the box on a single in the first.

Angels 4, Athletics 3: Jo Adell drove in Matt Duffy with a tiebreaking RBI single in the eighth inning, and Los Angeles opened its final homestand of the season with a victory over Oakland.

Pirates 4, Reds 1: Miguel Andújar hit a tiebreaking three-run double in the seventh inning, leading host Pittsburgh past Cincinnati.

Giants 5, Rockies 2: Logan Webb struck out seven in five innings to win for the fourth time in five starts, and host San Francisco continued its dominance of Colorado.

Twins 4, White Sox 0: Matt Wallner hit a two-run homer, Bailey Ober had a career-high 10 strikeouts and host Minnesota beat Chicago.

Tigers 4, Royals 3 (10): Harold Castro singled in the winning run with two outs in the 10th inning after tying it with a two-run single in the eighth for host Detroit.

Final US tuneup ends in scoreless draw with Saudi Arabia

Associated Press

The United States will limp into the World Cup, and not just because of all the Americans' injuries.

The U.S. played a 0-0 draw against Saudi Arabia on Tuesday night at Murcia, Spain, that was somewhere between unimpressive and alarming.

After managing no shots on goal in Friday's 2-0 loss to No. 24 Japan, the U.S. got just two against the 53rd-ranked Saudis in the Americans' final tuneup match. Among its last seven games against World Cup-bound nations, the U.S. has one win, three losses and three draws, getting shut out six times.

"We're playing tentative," said U.S. coach

Gregg Berhalter, who said he plans to announce his 26-man World Cup roster on Nov. 9. "It's nervy times. People are worried about being on the roster or not, and it's a difficult moment."

The two results will do little to quiet criticism of Berhalter, who left Jordan Pefok, John Brooks and Tim Ream off this roster.

Forwards Ricardo Pepi, Jesús Ferreira and Josh Sargent combined for five touches in the opponents' penalty area during the two matches, according to Opta.

"We had a better performance than last game," Pepi said. "We all have to go back to our clubs, take care of our own business, and we'll all be ready."

Oft-injured Gio Reyna came off in the

30th minute because of muscle tightness. Christian Pulisic was among four changes, returning to the depleted U.S. lineup after missing Friday with an unspecified injury.

Pepi had a team-low 13 touches and no shots before Ferreira replaced him in the 59th minute.

"It was tough for Ricardo. He didn't get much service. He didn't get many chances," Berhalter said. "So it's really hard to evaluate players when they're not getting opportunities."

After missing the 2018 tournament, the U.S. has rebuilt with what is among the world's youngest rosters in 56 matches under Berhalter. The Americans open against No. 19 Wales on Nov. 21.