

## IG: F-35s 'mission capable' only 55% of time

By MATTHEW ADAMS

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — F-35 fighter jets are available to fly only 55% of the time, and 73% of replacement parts must be sent back to suppliers because the Pentagon's maintenance depots are inadequate, according to a new report from government auditors.

"The military services must take over management of F-35 sustainment by October 2027 and have an opportunity to make adjustments — specifically to the contractor-managed elements," the Government Accountability Office wrote in its 96-page report released Thursday. "Reassessing its approach could help [the Defense Department] address its maintenance challenges and reduce costs."

The report comes days after an F-35B Lightning II crashed in South Carolina after a Marine Corps pilot encountered a problem while in flight and ejected. Questions have been raised about what prompted the pilot to eject and how the \$100 million warplane was able to keep flying pilotless for 60 miles before crashing.

The F-35 program is one of the Pentagon's most expensive, costing \$1.7 trillion in

its lifespan. Of that amount, \$1.3 trillion has been spent on the cost of operating and maintaining the fighter jets, according to the GAO report.

The 55% average availability rate as of March 2023 is below the goal of a mission-capable rate for different versions of the aircraft of 85% to 90%.

The report states the GAO spoke to military maintenance staff at three military bases who said they were not allowed to look up spare part numbers for the F-35 because the proprietary database was controlled by Lockheed Martin, the company that makes the jets.

"Not having ready access to part numbers hinders the repair of the aircraft because it delays the ordering and receipt of needed parts," the auditors wrote. "Since then, DOD has added new F-35s to its fleet, increasing the demand for repairs, while continuing to face delays establishing military service depot repair capacity. As a result, the number of parts waiting for repair increased to over 10,000 as of March 2023."

As of March, the Pentagon was sending 73% of F-35 components back to the original equipment manufacturer because of delays

in standing up a full depot repair capability at military service depots. Maintenance on components of fighter jets is behind, leaving more than 10,000 components waiting to be repaired. The F-35 is used by the Air Force, Marine Corps and the Navy. Previous maintenance concerns have led to a push for the Pentagon to take over management of F-35 maintenance, but that shift is not scheduled to occur until late 2027.

The GAO made seven recommendations to address maintenance delays, and the Pentagon concurred with all of them, according to the report.

"We will work with, and be part of, the Sustainment Implementation Working Group to drive improvements in sustainment across the F-35 enterprise. We are pursuing a more resilient sustainment structure," Air Force Lt. Gen. Mike Schmidt said in a statement, the Pentagon's F-35 program manager.

The GAO released a report in May that found F-35 engines are being overlooked and could lead to an extra \$38 billion in overhauls in the next few decades to help cool radar and other components of the fighter jet.

## Study: Almost 1.5M vets don't have enough to eat

By ROSE L. THAYER

*Stars and Stripes*

Roughly 70% of veterans older than 70 who do not have enough to eat are not using government food assistance programs, according to a research report released last week.

The statistic is one of several findings in a new Rand Corp. study that concluded the federal government needs to review how it screens veterans for food insecurity and revise how it evaluates disability payments to increase the number of veterans who apply for social services.

The study also found hunger can lead to other problems. Re-

searchers and advocates said Thursday that not having enough to eat can lead to physical and mental health conditions and increase a veteran's risk of suicide.

Rand researchers found 7.5% of America's roughly 18 million veterans — nearly 1.4 million — don't have enough food, but less than 5% are enrolled in the federal government's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, according to the report titled "Reducing Policy Barriers to SNAP Participation by Food-Insecure Veterans."

To close the gap, researchers recommended finding ways to

better screen veterans about their access to food and conduct more research to determine what might be stopping them from enrolling, such as a stigma from accepting help, awareness of the program or policies that count veteran disability benefits as income. The report did not examine why veterans aren't enrolled in more government programs. It only focused on the demographics of veterans who use SNAP, formerly known as food stamps.

"When we speak about food and food-insecure households, this refers to having difficulty at some point in time during the year providing enough food for

all household members because of a lack of resources," Tamara Dubowitz, a senior policy researcher at Rand, said Thursday during an online presentation on the study.

The gap between those in need and those enrolled in SNAP was widest among veterans who are older than 70 and those out of work because of a disability. Roughly 70% of food-insecure veterans older than 70 were not enrolled in SNAP, compared to 60% of nonveterans of the same age and disposition. Among food-insecure disabled veterans, 55% were not enrolled, compared with about 45% of nonveterans.

# Air Force revamps enlisted education

BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL  
*Stars and Stripes*

Enlisted airmen will be hitting the books harder and sooner for professional studies as a result of a wide-ranging overhaul of the Air Force's education program.

In a Sept. 18 letter to members of the service, outgoing Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Brown and Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force JoAnne Bass announced the introduction of the enlisted airmanship continuum plan.

While details are still limited, the plan indicates more classroom time and training earlier in airmen's careers. It calls for redesigned foundations courses that will serve as prerequisites for the in-house leadership academies.

The curriculum is still under development, but beginning as early as October, these courses will replace the existing professional enhancement seminars and will be conducted at the base level, allowing airmen to

avoid having to travel to school.

"Today's airmen learn faster, and these new courses will match that pace, as they are designed to be four to five days in length," said Col. Damian Schluskel, commander of the Barnes Center for Enlisted Education at Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base, Ala.

Similar to college courses that build on prerequisites, the incremental courses go from the 100 level starting at basic training to the 900 level, approximately paralleling airmen's rise through the enlisted pay grades, from E-1 to E-9.

Unlike their predecessors, which often relied on volunteer briefers, the courses will be taught by trained instructors following a curriculum designed in large part at Air University.

Many building blocks of the training remain the same, but the timeline will shift slightly, according to the Air Force statement outlining the changes.

# US, Vietnam coast guard ties boost after Biden visit

BY SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — The U.S. and Vietnamese coast guards will expand a working relationship on the high seas in the wake of President Joe Biden's visit to Hanoi this month, according to a top American diplomat.

Mira Rapp-Hooper, National Security Council director for the Indo-Pacific, made the pledge during an online press conference Sept. 13 alongside U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Marc Knapper.

"The United States and Vietnam have a longstanding security partnership that ranges [across] a number of areas," Rapp-Hooper told reporters following Biden's Sept. 10-11 visit.

"We have done a lot of important work together to build capacity in areas like coast guard capacity and in the maritime domain, and we are looking forward to continuing to grow our relationship in those areas," she said.

The U.S. has transferred three of its older Coast Guard cutters to Vietnam since 2017,

part of the tens of millions of dollars in security assistance and foreign military sales to the former adversary in recent years, according to a fact sheet on the U.S. Embassy to Vietnam website.

The nations' coast guards cooperate on maritime security in the region, said Kirah Wurst, spokeswoman for the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, by email Tuesday.

"We have provisioned patrol craft, maintenance facilities, and training to the Vietnam Coast Guard," Wurst said. "Our work with the Vietnam Coast Guard focuses on countering illicit smuggling and countering illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing."

The Biden administration has built an overlapping range of coalitions and partnerships throughout the Indo-Pacific, Rapp-Hooper said during the press conference.

"We see the U.S.-Vietnam partnership now taking its place, its rightful place, in the pantheon of these incredible partnerships," she said.

# Better vet suicide response urged amid hotline failures

BY COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Department of Veterans Affairs must improve mental health care access for veterans with suicide risks, senators told VA officials on Wednesday in the wake of an inspector general report that found problems with the agency's crisis hotline for suicide prevention.

"We've had so damn many hearings on mental health, and it doesn't seem like anything has changed," Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., told VA officials during a hearing of the Senate Vet-

erans' Affairs Committee. "There's no doubt in my mind that you want to do your best for veterans, and you're trying to do the best for your veterans."

"But this is really frustrating for me to say, but we've got to do better. We just have got to do better."

Wait times to see mental health specialists are too long, and too few veterans at risk for suicide are actively in the VA's health care system, multiple senators said. New authorities for expanded mental health care access via telehealth have

been implemented too slowly, Tester told Matthew Miller, the executive director for suicide prevention at the VA's Veterans Health Administration.

The committee would "probably give you anything you asked for when it comes to mental health," Tester, who is the chairman of the Senate panel, told Miller. "We just need to make sure that what you're asking for is something that can actually make a difference."

Suicides are multifaceted

and complex, Miller told the committee, thanking senators for granting the VA several new authorities via legislation in recent years that are helping the department improve.

The VA's most recent veteran suicide statistics show a slight decrease in suicides among veterans in 2020, but suicides among Americans with military service time far outpaced the rate among civilians. That year, 6,146 veteran deaths were ruled suicides. Data for 2021 is expected to be released in the coming months.

# Russian strikes destroy Ukrainian houses

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian airstrikes on Sunday killed two people and wounded three others in southern Ukraine's Kherson province, the region's governor reported Sunday as the war in Ukraine entered a 20th month.

According to Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin, Russian forces struck the city of Beryslav, destroying an unspecified number of private houses. A woman was killed and three people were wounded, including a police officer, he said.

Another airstrike also killed a 67-year-old man in the village of Lvove, Prokudin said with-

out specifying the type of weapons used in the attack.

The communities hit are both located in the Ukrainian-controlled part of the Kherson region, where the Dnieper River that bisects the province has marked a battle line since Russian troops withdrew across it in November 2022, a retreat that boosted the invaded country's morale.

The Russians regrouped on the river's eastern bank and regularly shell cities and villages across the river, including the city of Kherson, the regional capital that was occupied early on in the war but retaken by Ukrainian forces more than

10 months ago.

In Russia, a Ukrainian drone hit an administrative building in the city of Kursk and "insignificantly damaged" the roof, regional Gov. Roman Starovoit reported. He didn't report any casualties or say what the building housed.

Unconfirmed media reports both in Russia and Ukraine said it was the offices of the Kursk branch of Russia's main security agency, the Federal Security Service, also known as the FSB.

The Kursk region of Russia borders Ukraine and is also a frequent target of attacks. The drone strike Sunday took place

as residents commemorated the anniversary of the regional capital's founding.

There was no immediate comment from the Ukrainian authorities, who usually don't acknowledge responsibility for attacks on Russian territory.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was traveling home from North America, where he addressed the U.N. General Assembly and paid his first wartime visit to Canada. In a social media statement Saturday, Zelenskyy said he stopped in Poland on his way back to Ukraine to give state awards to two Polish volunteers.

## Austin in Africa during tense time for US allies

By DOUG G. WARE

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is in Africa this week to shore up U.S. defense relationships with allies during a time of heightened bloodshed across the continent and growing influence in the region from China and Russia.

"Secretary Austin will travel to Africa ... to underscore the United States' commitment to building and reinforcing security partnerships with African nations and to promote African-led initiatives and regional solutions to security issues," said Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon's top spokesman.

Austin left for the trip on Saturday — he arrived in Djibouti on Sunday — and will return Thursday, the Defense Department said. He will visit two countries in eastern Africa — Kenya and Djibouti — as well as Angola. The visit will take Austin and other military officials near one trouble spot — Sudan — where there's an ongoing power struggle between two military factions that sacked the

civilian government two years ago. The bloody conflict forced the Pentagon to quickly remove American personnel at the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum and other civilians from the country.

Last week, members of each faction — the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces — gave competing addresses at the 78th United Nations General Assembly in New York — blaming each other for the conflict, which is now in its sixth month.

There, Austin will meet with senior Djiboutian officials to "discuss ongoing military cooperations" and examine regional security challenges, the Pentagon said. In Kenya, he will engage with defense officials in Nairobi on shared problems and counter-terrorism efforts, officials said. And in Angola, the U.S. defense secretary will explore avenues for what the Pentagon called greater "military-to-military cooperation."

Austin also will take time to meet with U.S. military personnel during the stops in Kenya and Djibouti, officials said.

## Limits on US military medical appointments in Europe likely

By JENNIFER H. SVAN

*Stars and Stripes*

Patients at U.S. military bases in Europe may find appointments scarce starting next week as providers switch to the Pentagon's new electronic medical recordkeeping system.

Military Healthcare System Genesis is expected to be launched Saturday at Defense Department medical clinics in Europe, Turkey and Bahrain.

All clinics in Europe will have fewer routine appointments during the next 60 to 90 days, Kirk Frady, spokesman for Medical Readiness Command, Europe, said Thursday.

The reduction will vary between clinics but availability will gradually increase as medical providers and staff become more familiar with the new system, he said.

Some locations could see the number of appointments drop by half initially, while patients should expect longer waits to see a provider and may have to be referred off base more than usual, military medical officials said this week.

Emergency and acute cases, meanwhile, still have priority.

"We sincerely appreciate everyone's patience and cooperation as our DOD clinics undergo this monumental change," Frady said.

Bases in the Indo-Pacific region are slated to switch to Genesis next month. Officials there have also forecast delays.

MHS Genesis was first rolled out in the Pacific Northwest in 2017. The \$4.3 billion commercial software system will provide a single, common digital medical record for service members, veterans and military family members once it's fully operational.

DOD medical providers will use the program to manage delivery of everything from en route care and dentistry to vision and pharmacy services.

Once registered, patients will be able to access their medical records "at the tips of their fingers," from basic training all the way through retirement, said Air Force Col. Dwayne Baca, commander of the 86th Medical Group at Ramstein Air Base in Germany.



# US to tighten ties with 2 Pacific nations

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden is set to establish diplomatic relations Monday with two South Pacific nations, the Cook Islands and Niue, as his administration aims to show to Pacific Island leaders that it is committed to increasing American presence in the region.

The announcement comes as Biden prepares to welcome leaders to Washington for a two-day U.S.-Pacific Island Forum Summit expected to focus heavily on the impact of climate change.

Biden has put a premium on improving ties in the Pacific amid rising U.S. concern about China's growing military and economic influence. Plans for the diplomatic move were confirmed by two senior administration officials who briefed re-

porters on the condition of anonymity before the formal announcement.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Biden would use the summit to strengthen "ties with the Pacific Islands and discuss how we address complex global challenges, like tackling the existential threat of climate change, advancing economic growth, and promoting sustainable development."

At last year's summit, the White House unveiled its Pacific strategy, an outline of its plan to assist the region's leaders on pressing issues like climate change, maritime security and protecting the region from overfishing. The administration pledged the U.S. would add \$810 million in new aid for Pacific Island nations over the next dec-

ade, including \$130 million on efforts to stymie the impacts of climate change.

The forum includes Australia, the Cook Islands, Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Biden will welcome the leaders to the White House on Monday morning for talks and a working lunch. They also will meet on Monday with Biden's special envoy on climate, John Kerry, for talks focused on climate change. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and U.N. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield will host the leaders at the State Department for a dinner.

Kerry and Samantha Power, administrator of the U.S. Agency

for International Development, will host the leaders on Tuesday for climate talks with members of the philanthropic community. The leaders also plan to meet with members of Congress. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen will host a roundtable with the leaders and members of the business community.

The White House said most members of the 18-member forum were dispatching their top elected official or foreign minister to the summit. But the administration was "very disappointed" that Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare, who was in New York last week for the U.N. General Assembly, opted not to stick around for the White House summit, according to an administration official. The Solomon Islands last year signed a security pact with China.

## NASA's 1st asteroid samples on Earth after 7-year journey

*Associated Press*

A space capsule carrying NASA's first asteroid samples has landed in the Utah desert. The Osiris-Rex spacecraft released the capsule Sunday, following a seven-year journey to asteroid Bennu and back. The capsule peeled away 63,000 miles from Earth, four hours ahead of the planned landing. Scientists expect to get at least a cup of rubble from Bennu. Japan collected about a teaspoon in a pair of asteroid missions. The pristine samples are believed to be leftover building blocks from the dawn of our solar system. Osiris-Rex, the mothership, is already targeting another asteroid.

NASA's first asteroid samples fetched from deep space parachuted into the Utah desert Sunday to cap a seven-year journey.

In a flyby of Earth, the Osiris-Rex spacecraft released the sample capsule from 63,000 miles out. The small capsule landed four hours later on a re-

mote expanse of military land, as the mothership set off after another asteroid.

"We have touchdown!" Mission Recovery Operations announced, immediately repeating the news since the landing occurred three minutes early. Officials later said the orange striped parachute opened four times higher than anticipated — around 20,000 feet — correctly basing it on the deceleration rate.

Forty minutes later, the recovery team confirmed the capsule was intact and had not been breached.

Scientists estimate the capsule holds at least a cup of rubble from the carbon-rich asteroid known as Bennu, but won't know for sure until the container is opened. Some spilled and floated away when the spacecraft scooped up too much and rocks jammed the container's lid during collection three years ago.

## Weakening Ophelia still a flood risk for eastern US

*Associated Press*

After being downgraded from a tropical storm, Ophelia on Sunday still posed a risk of coastal flooding and heavy rains from Washington, D.C., to New York City, with coastal flood warnings remaining in effect for parts of the Mid-Atlantic region, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said.

As of 5 a.m. Sunday, the hurricane center said Ophelia was located about 85 miles south of Washington, D.C., with maximum sustained winds of 25 mph and higher gusts. The storm is expected to continue moving north-northeast before turning east on Sunday night, then continue weakening over the next two days.

Even though Ophelia has been downgraded, the center warned Sunday that swells generated by the storm will affect much of the U.S. East Coast through the weekend, likely causing life-threatening surf and rip cur-

rents. Ophelia is also expected to produce 1 to 3 inches of additional rainfall through Sunday night in portions of the Mid-Atlantic to southern New England. Isolated river flooding is also possible in areas of heavier rainfall, the center said.

Some New Jersey shore communities, including Sea Isle City, already experienced flooding Saturday. Thousands remained without power Sunday in New Jersey. NJ.com reported more than 6,000 customers without power Sunday morning in the state, down from a high of 13,000, with more than half of the remaining outages among Jersey Central Power and Light customers in Monmouth County.

The storm came ashore near Emerald Isle, N.C., on Saturday morning with near-hurricane-strength winds of 70 mph, but winds weakened as the system traveled north, the center said.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### 1.5M in Seattle are asked to conserve water

**WA** SEATTLE — Seattle Public Utilities is asking about 1.5 million customers in the Seattle area to use less water as drought conditions continue throughout most of the state.

Residents were asked to stop watering their lawns, to reduce shower time, to only run full laundry machines and dishwashers, and to fix leaking pipes and running toilets, according to a post on the utility's website.

An unusually dry summer along with a forecast of ongoing dry conditions, including a potential delay in sustained autumn rains, have prompted concerns about having sufficient water for people and fish, the utility said.

Customers are asked to use less water until there is enough rain to refill the mountain reservoirs to necessary levels.

### Bus carrying school band crashes, killing 2 adults

**NY** MIDDLETOWN — A charter bus carrying high school students to a band camp veered off a New York highway and tumbled down an embankment Thursday, killing two adults and seriously injuring several others, officials said.

The bus was one of six in a caravan taking the marching band, color guard and dancers from Farmingdale High School on Long Island on a beloved annual trip to a camp in Greeley, in northeastern Pennsylvania.

It was only about 30 minutes from its destination when the wreck happened a little after 1

p.m. on Interstate 84 in the town of Wawayanda, about 45 miles northwest of New York City.

A tire failure may have been to blame for the bus going off the road, Gov. Kathy Hochul said.

The high school's band director, Gina Pellettiere, 43, of Massapequa, and retired teacher Beatrice Ferrari, 77, of Farmingdale, died in the crash.

Five of the 44 passengers were hospitalized in critical condition, state police said.

### Toddler lost in woods found asleep with dogs

**MI** FAITHORN — A 2-year-old girl who walked away from her home in Michigan's Upper Peninsula alongside two family dogs was found in the woods hours later sleeping on the smaller dog like a furry pillow, state police said.

"She laid down and used one of the dogs as a pillow, and the other dog laid right next to her and kept her safe," Lt. Mark Giannunzio said Thursday.

Troopers used drones and police dogs in the search while local police and citizens from both Michigan and adjacent Wisconsin helped look for the girl in the remote wooded area. Around midnight, a citizen on an ATV found the girl about 3 miles from her home, state police said.

Giannunzio said the girl was checked by medical staff and appeared to be in good health.

### Judge: Professor let go over Islamic art can sue

**MN** ST. PAUL — A former Hamline University adjunct art professor can proceed with her lawsuit against the private school but only on the basis of religious dis-

crimination, a federal judge has ruled.

Erika López Prater sued Hamline University earlier this year after she was dismissed following a complaint from a Muslim student that she showed ancient images of the Prophet Muhammad in a global art course last year.

U.S. District Judge Katherine Menendez dismissed several other claims in López Prater's lawsuit, including those claiming reprisal, defamation, intentional infliction of emotional distress and retaliation, the Star Tribune of Minneapolis reported. López Prater's attorney has argued that the school would have treated her differently if she were Muslim.

The controversy began in October when López Prater showed a 14th-century painting depicting Muhammad to her students as part of a lesson on Islamic art. She had warned them beforehand in the class syllabus, giving them an opportunity to opt out.

### Murdaugh pleads guilty to financial crimes

**SC** CHARLESTON — Convicted murderer Alex Murdaugh did something Thursday he hasn't done in the two years since his life of privilege and power started to unravel — plead guilty to a crime.

Murdaugh admitted in federal court to 22 counts of financial fraud and money laundering.

Murdaugh, 55, is serving life without parole in a South Carolina prison for shooting his wife, Maggie, and younger son Paul.

He has denied any role in the killings since their deaths in June 2021 and insisted he was innocent in testimony earlier

this year before he was convicted of two counts of murder.

The federal guilty plea likely locks in years if not decades in prison for the disbarred lawyer, even if his murder conviction and sentence in state court are overturned on appeal.

### Poker player admits lying to GoFundMe donors

**NV** LAS VEGAS — The fundraising platform GoFundMe said it has refunded money to donors after a poker player admitted to lying about a terminal cancer diagnosis and accepted thousands of dollars in donations so he could play in a World Series of Poker tournament in Las Vegas.

GoFundMe said it has also banned Rob Mercer from the platform and removed the poker player's fundraising campaign from its website.

Mercer told the Las Vegas Review-Journal he made up a stage 4 colon cancer diagnosis for his GoFundMe page in June.

### Wienermobile back after short-lived name change

**WI** MADISON — Some names are the wurst.

Just four months after announcing that the hot dog-shaped Wienermobile was changing its name to the Frankmobile, the distinctive wiener on wheels is reverting to the original. The name change announced by The Kraft Heinz Co. in May was meant to pay homage to the brand's 100% beef franks and their new recipe.

Oscar Mayer operates several of the vehicles. The first Wienermobile was created in 1936, and it has gone through several iterations since then.

— From wire reports

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# Several Top 25 teams make statements

Associated Press

The bill came due for Coach Prime and Colorado in Oregon.

Florida State stared down Death Valley.

Alabama embraced winning ugly.

And Ohio State coach Ryan Day had enough of critics questioning the Buckeyes' toughness.

A Statement Saturday in September that featured six games matching ranked teams was the first chance to make some sense of the season.

Here's what we learned.

Day is no fan of Lou Holtz. The former Notre Dame coach called out the Buckeyes for a lack of toughness earlier this week while picking the Fighting Irish to win a top-10 showdown with No. 6 Ohio State.

"I'd like to know where Lou Holtz is right now," Day said during a postgame interview with NBC. "What he said about our team, I cannot believe. This is a tough team right here. We're proud to be from Ohio. It's always been Ohio against the world, and it'll continue to be Ohio against the world. But I'll tell you what: I love those kids. We've got a tough team."

Buckeyes-Fighting Irish was

a worthy main event on a loaded schedule.

The Irish have lost so many of these types of high-profile games over the last two-plus decades. No. 9 Notre Dame came in 4-19 in top-10 games since 1994.

But this time it was the Irish who seemed to have the advantage at quarterback: Sam Hartman in his sixth year vs. Kyle McCord, making his fourth start.

McCord came through in the end, leading a game-winning drive in the closing seconds. To make the loss even more crushing for the Irish, Chip Trayanum's 1-yard go-ahead plunge with a second left came against a Notre Dame defense with only 10 men on the field.

Irish coach Marcus Freeman said he noticed the problem with the lineup, but he didn't have a timeout and didn't want to rush a player on the field, take a penalty and risk giving Ohio State another play.

"It's on us. We got to be better," Freeman said.

So does Colorado.

Deion Sanders' Buffaloes have been a fun and fascinating story, maybe the biggest in all of sports during a 3-0 start. Team Transfer Portal has had televi-

sion networks chasing it all over and been must-see TV.

"The Cinderella story's over, men. They're fighting for clicks, we're fighting for wins. There's a difference," Ducks coach Dan Lanning said in a fiery pregame speech in front of ESPN's cameras.

The 10th-ranked Ducks then backed it up with a 35-0 first half. It was every bit as lopsided as the 42-6 final score.

There were plenty of red flags for Colorado coming into the game at Autzen Stadium: A one-dimensional offense; a porous defense; needing a miraculous comeback and overtime to beat Colorado State last week.

Oregon exposed all the 19th-ranked Buffs' flaws.

Sanders called it "a good, old-fashioned butt kicking."

But don't think it's going make him any less brash.

"You better get me right now. This is the worst we going to be," Sanders said.

Sanders still deserves a ton of credit for his hyper-speed roster flip and already tripling CU's win total from last year — but now we see the ceiling and it's more like six or seven wins than Pac-12 contender.

Fox is already down for another

trip to Boulder, Colo., for Big Noon Kickoff next week when Caleb Williams and No. 5 Southern California come to town. USC's inconsistent defense gives CU a puncher's chance, but we have probably seen the best of the Buffs this season.

Florida State, meanwhile, appears ready to soar. Only two days into the fall, and the Seminoles have on their résumé a resounding victory against LSU and their first win against Clemson since Jameis Winston was QB1.

Credit Clemson for a tremendous effort, three weeks after the Tigers got buried for losing their opener at Duke.

That said, you can already put coach Dabo Swinney's team down for a third straight season that ends outside the College Football Playoff.

Speaking of ailing dynasties: Alabama's still got problems, but the Crimson Tide muscled up to put Lane Kiffin and Mississippi in their place.

The Crimson Tide went back to Jalen Milroe at quarterback. The offense still looks limited but Milroe went 17-for-21 for 225 with a pretty, long touchdown pass and a really bad red zone interception.

## Syracuse turns it on after Army dominates first half

Associated Press

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Garrett Shrader threw for one touchdown and ran for another, Syracuse overcame a first-half dominated by Army and scored 26 unanswered points to defeat the Black Knights 29-16 Saturday and remain unbeaten.

Army totally dominated the first-half statistics, but not on the scoreboard, where it led just 10-3. The Black Knights held the ball for 23:24, had 149 yards to the Orange's 77, ran 41 plays to Syracuse's 17. Army gained 129 yards on the

ground, while the Orange could muster just 18.

Syracuse (4-0) came alive in the second half, scoring on five straight possessions. LeQuint Allen scored on a 13-yard touchdown run to tie the game at 10 midway through the third and a 13-yard pass from Shrader to Umari Hatcher on the Orange's next possession gave Syracuse a 16-10 lead over the Black Knights (2-2). The Orange defense held Army to just five first downs, minus-4 yards rushing, sacked Bryson Daily three times and intercepted him twice after intermission.

"I wouldn't necessarily say things didn't go our way in the first half," Syracuse coach Dino Babers said. "I would've liked it for it to be a tie game or for us to be slightly ahead, but we were down by the score that if we came out (on the first drive) we could get it even."

"The big conversation was that we needed to score on that drive in the third quarter and when we did that we switched the pressure back to them," Babers added. "If we do not score it might have put some doubt in their mind, but because we did, it put them back

in the right frame of mind."

Shrader was 21-for-26 for 245 yards through the air and 49 more rushing. Allen had 127 total yards with 104 coming on the ground. Damien Alford led Syracuse receivers with nine receptions for 135 yards. Brady Denaburg chipped in with three field goals.

"Alford is a captain and has a C on his chest," Babers said. "It was a breakout game for him. I was excited about his performance today."

Daily was 9-for-21 for 145 yards and rushed for a team-leading 47.



# Rams ready to rely on Williams as lead RB

*Associated Press*

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. — The Los Angeles Rams are putting the ball in Kyren Williams' hands, literally and figuratively.

Williams, the second-year running back from Notre Dame, will be the focus of the Rams' rushing offense moving forward following the decision to move on from Cam Akers, which culminated in a trade to the Minnesota Vikings on Thursday.

"I feel blessed," Williams said. "I feel as if I did put in the work to get to where I'm as now in this position of being starting running back for the Los Angeles Rams, so I feel like I did what I had to do to earn the trust of this organization."

Williams has run for 104 yards and three touchdowns on 29 carries through two games for the Rams (1-1). He also has six receptions for 50 yards and a touchdown headed into a game at the Cincinnati Bengals (0-2) on Monday.

Rams coach Sean McVay

said the all-around nature of Williams' skill set is what earned the 23-year-old a larger role.

"I think he's got the ability to play on all downs," McVay said. "It was really about you just continue to evaluate every single day, and you couldn't deny some of the improvements in the things he was doing that were in alignment with saying, 'We got to figure out ways to be able to get him involved.'"

Williams was on track to play as a rookie in passing situations before breaking his foot in the summer.

While he couldn't be an active participant in his first training camp, Williams found other ways to stay involved.

"I remember being in Irvine during camp I had the walkie-talkie and the microphone, listening to all the play calls while I was doing my rehab over on the side of the field," Williams said.

McVay said it was that kind of dedication which set the stage for Williams' strong start

to this season.

"He's passionate about the game and you look at a guy that had a couple different setbacks as a rookie, didn't let it phase him and just controlled the things that he could control," McVay said.

McVay recognizes, however, there are going to be growing pains for Williams.

One of those moments came in the 30-23 loss to the San Francisco 49ers on Sept. 17 when Williams couldn't catch a pass that hit him in the hands and it was intercepted. Los Angeles was in position to at least kick a field goal and take the lead in the third quarter, and the turnover allowed San Francisco to go ahead on the ensuing drive.

Williams said it was difficult but he found a way to shake off that mistake, demonstrating some of the growth mindset McVay appreciates about him.

"He's just continuing to love the opportunity to go compete and to continue to take steps in the right direction," McVay

said. "I know he's a guy that is going to never be satisfied, and that's a great thing."

The elevation of Williams also marked the end of Akers' up-and-down four seasons in Los Angeles. A second-round pick in 2020, Akers flashed significant potential as a rookie before recovering from a torn Achilles tendon in time to be part of the postseason run that ended with the Super Bowl win over the Bengals.

The injury and quick return, however, seemed to sap Akers of some of his athleticism. He also clashed with coaches last season, resulting in time away from the team before closing out 2022 with three straight 100-yard games.

McVay said trading Akers was in the best interest of the Rams.

"Sometimes you have to be able to make tough decisions and I'm very grateful for the things that Cam did over the course of his career," McVay said. "He's a very good player, did a lot of really good things."

# Verstappen easily wins F1 Japanese Grand Prix

*Associated Press*

SUZUKA, Japan — Max Verstappen survived a dramatic first lap then coasted to victory at the Japanese Grand Prix on Sunday to move a step closer to securing his third consecutive Formula One championship.

The Red Bull driver, who missed out on the podium a week ago in Singapore, started from pole and held on for his 13th win of the season.

With Verstappen's victory, Red Bull secured the constructors' title, their sixth overall and second in a row. They did it with six races remaining.

"What an unbelievable season we are having," Verstappen said. "You can all be very proud here at the track and back at the factory. You guys built a rocket

ship of a car. Well done."

McLaren driver Lando Norris was second, 19.4 seconds back of Verstappen, while his teammate, Australian rookie Oscar Piastri, was third for his first F1 podium.

Verstappen, who also secured a point for the fastest lap, increased his lead over Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez to 177 points. He could wrap up his third consecutive title at the Oct. 6-8 Qatar Grand Prix.

The race got off to a thrilling start with Verstappen, Piastri and Norris going wheel-to-wheel, but the Red Bull driver held his lead through the first two turns.

Verstappen commented on the excitement at the start.

"Luckily nothing happened,"

Verstappen said. "It all got quite close but that's racing, that's how it goes at the start. And then of course you had a good battle into Turn 1 and Turn 2, I was lucky there (was) a bit more grip in Turn 2."

It was a disastrous day for Perez, who was given a penalty for hitting Haas driver Kevin Magnussen and retired from the race after serving the penalty.

The Mexican driver won in Saudi Arabia in March and Azerbaijan in April, but has struggled since.

Verstappen saw his record 10-race winning streak come to end at Marina Bay in Singapore and came to Japan determined to get back on top of the podium. Prior to Sunday's race, he led every session at the fast Suzuka

circuit, where he wrapped up last year's championship in a rain-shortened race.

The safety car came out on the first lap when Alfa Romeo driver Valtteri Bottas made contact with another car resulting in debris on the track. Verstappen was able to quickly retake the lead after his first pit stop and was never seriously challenged.

Ferrari driver Charles Leclerc was fourth followed by Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton.

A battle between the McLaren drivers was ultimately won by Norris. The Briton got ahead of Piastri at the start, dropping behind after the rookie pitted under a virtual safety car then producing enough pace to swap positions.

# Marlins win to stay in wild-card hunt

Associated Press

MIAMI — Jake Burger hit a three-run homer, the Marlins scored the tie-breaking run in the eighth inning and Miami beat Milwaukee 5-4 on Saturday to stay within a game of the Cubs for the third NL wild card and prevent the Brewers from clinching the NL Central.

Pinch runner Garrett Hampson scored the winning run on a wild pitch by reliever Joel Payamps (6-5).

Burger drew a leadoff walk before Bryan De La Cruz's single to right advanced Hampson to third. Payamps' slider got past catcher William Contreras and Hampson sprinted home.

"Obviously a very good ball club over there, so anything we can do to get a win from them and hopefully ride momentum going into (Sunday)," Burger said.

Miami's Luis Arraez went 1-for-5 and his major league-leading batting average dropped to .353. Carlos Santana hit the 300th homer of his career and Christian Yelich had career hit 1,500 for Milwaukee.

Marlins manager Skip Schumaker said Arraez didn't play the top of the ninth after he slipped on the dugout steps heading to his position. Arraez sprained his left ankle on Tuesday when he stepped on a baseball during infield drills and missed the last two games of Miami's series against the New York Mets.

**Orioles 2, Guardians 1:** John Means carried a no-hit bid into the seventh inning and Anthony Santander drove in a pair of runs, sending AL East-leading Baltimore over host Cleveland.

Means, a 30-year-old left-hander, was making his third start in 17 months following Tommy John surgery. Cleveland's only hit — and lone hard-hit ball — occurred when Andrés Giménez pulled a change-up to right for a homer.

Baltimore maintained a 1½-

game lead over second-place Tampa Bay in the division and for the best record in the AL.

**Rays 7, Blue Jays 6:** Josh Lowe hit a three-run homer and a walk-off single that capped a two-run ninth inning, lifting host Tampa Bay over Toronto after the Rays wasted a five-run lead.

Rays starter Zack Littel took a shutout in the sixth but was pulled after the Blue Jays put two runners on with two outs due to Curtis Mead's throwing error at third and a wild pitch on a strikeout.

Shawn Armstrong entered and gave up four straight hits. Chris Devenski (5-4), Tampa Bay's sixth pitcher, was credited with the win.

**Rangers 2, Mariners 0:** Jordan Montgomery pitched seven scoreless innings, switch-hitting All-Star catcher Jonah Heim drove in a run and AL West-leading Texas blanked visiting Seattle.

Montgomery (10-11) struck out six and walked two while scattering five hits. He is 4-2 in his 10 starts for the Rangers.

Texas maintained its slim lead in the AL West, pushing the Mariners to 2 games out of first place going into Sunday.

**Phillies 7, Mets 5:** Bryce Harper sparked host Philadelphia's comeback from a two-run deficit by reaching 20 homers for the ninth time, leading the Phillies to their fourth straight win.

Harper had three RBIs for the defending NL champions (86-69), who are closing in on an NL wild-card berth. Alec Bohm also homered for Philadelphia, which opened a four-game lead over Arizona for the top wild card.

Philadelphia would clinch a playoff berth Sunday with a win and a loss by either the Chicago Cubs or Miami Marlins. The Phillies have not reached the playoffs in consecutive seasons since winning five straight NL

East titles from 2007-11.

**Royals 3, Astros 2:** Jordan Lyles gave up just two hits in five innings, Bobby Witt Jr. drove in his 93rd run of the season and visiting Kansas City won for the ninth time in its last 10 games.

Houston has lost four of its last five games and fell to 39-41 at home this year. Still, the Astros maintained their half-game lead for the final AL wild-card spot over Seattle with seven games remaining.

**Cubs 6, Rockies 3:** Cody Bellinger hit a tiebreaking sacrifice fly in the seventh inning, and host Chicago topped Colorado to improve its position in the wild-card standings.

Led by a solid performance from its bullpen, Chicago earned its second straight win after a stretch of seven losses in eight games. It moved within a half-game of Arizona for the second NL wild card and ensured it would hold onto sole possession of the third spot for at least another day.

Colorado wasted a solid performance by Chris Flexen, who pitched five innings of two-run ball.

**Cardinals 5, Padres 2 (11):** The Padres matched the expansion 1969 Montreal Expos as the only teams to go 0-12 in extra innings as visiting St. Louis ended San Diego's season-high eight-game winning streak.

Richie Palacios and Andrew Knizner hit sacrifice flies in the 11th inning around Luken Baker's run-scoring single off Scott Barlow (3-5).

San Diego dropped five games behind the Chicago Cubs for the NL's last wild card.

**Pirates 13, Reds 12:** Visiting Pittsburgh overcame a nine-run deficit for the first time in its 133-season history as Luis Rivas tied a career-high with five RBIs, dealing a staggering blow to Cincinnati's playoff hopes.

Cincinnati, which dropped 2½ games back for the NL's last

wild card berth, opened a 9-0 lead with three runs in the first, five in the second and one in the third, then allowed 13 unanswered runs.

**Angels 1, Twins 0:** Jo Adell homered, Kenny Rosenberg outpitched Sonny Gray and visiting Los Angeles beat Minnesota, a day after the Twins clinched the AL Central title.

Rosenberg (2-2), a 28-year-old left-hander making his fourth big league start and ninth appearance, allowed five hits and two walks in five innings with five strikeouts. Carlos Estévez, the Angels' fourth reliever, hit Kyle Farmer with a pitch starting the ninth, then got three straight outs for his 31st save in 35 chances.

**White Sox 1, Red Sox 0:** Luis Robert Jr. hit a 311-foot home run just beyond the Pesky Pole to break a scoreless, ninth-inning tie, and Dylan Cease struck out 11 in seven shutout innings to lead visiting Chicago over Boston.

Playing in a steady rain, with the wind blowing in at 10 mph, Cease and Boston starter Nick Pivetta matched scoreless innings before both departed after seven.

**Athletics 4, Tigers 1:** Joe Boyle had five strikeouts in six innings for his first career win, Esteury Ruiz hit a two-run home run, and host Oakland beat Detroit.

Boyle (1-0) was mostly crisp in his second start in the majors. The rookie allowed five hits, pitched around traffic in each of the first six innings and gave up an unearned run in the third, the only runner Boyle allowed past second base.

**Dodgers 7, Giants 0:** Clayton Kershaw pitched two-hit ball over five innings, Mookie Betts hit a two-run double that set a record of 105 RBIs for a leadoff hitter, and host Los Angeles earned its 95th win of the season and 15th shutout, tied for second in the major leagues.