

## Navy fires USS John S. McCain skipper

BY GARY WARNER  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Navy on Friday fired the commander of a guided-missile destroyer that is part of an aircraft carrier strike group deployed in the Middle East to counter attacks on shipping lanes in the Persian Gulf by Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Cmdr. Cameron Yaste was relieved of his duties as commanding officer of the USS John S. McCain, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer now operating in the Gulf of Oman.

Rear Adm. Christopher Alexander, commander of the USS

Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group, took the action citing a “loss of confidence to command the guided-missile destroyer.”

“Loss of confidence” is a vague phrase often used throughout the U.S. military to describe the removal of a commanding officer from his or her post without providing a clear explanation. The causes for past removals of Navy commanders for “lack of confidence” have ranged from ineffective leadership, mistreatment of crew members, and poor behavior off duty, such as drinking with subordinates or a

“driving under the influence” arrest.

Alexander announced Capt. Allison Christy, deputy commodore of Destroyer Squadron 21, has temporarily assumed command of the destroyer.

“There is no impact on the ship’s mission or schedule due to the relief,” the Navy said in a statement.

Yaste assumed command of the John S. McCain in October 2023. The Navy said he will return to Naval Station Everett, Wash., to take up temporary administrative duties.

Yaste was photographed earlier this year firing an M-4 rifle,

which some service members pointed out had the optical site mounted backward.

The USS John S. McCain is unique in that it is named after three naval officers from the same family.

John S. McCain Sr. was an admiral and a Navy aircraft carrier commander in World War II. John S. McCain Jr. was an influential Navy admiral during the Vietnam War era.

John S. McCain III was a naval aviator who was a prisoner of war in North Vietnam and went on to become a U.S. senator from Arizona and a Republican presidential candidate.

## 7 US troops hurt in joint raid with Iraq to combat ISIS

*Associated Press*

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The United States military and Iraq launched a joint raid targeting suspected Islamic State militants in the country’s western desert that killed at least 15 people and left seven American troops hurt, officials said Saturday.

For years after dislodging the militants from their self-declared caliphate across Iraq and Syria, U.S. forces have fought ISIS, though the casualties from this raid were higher than in previous ones.

U.S. Central Command said the militants were armed with “numerous weapons, grenades, and explosive ‘suicide’ belts” during the raid Thursday, which Iraqi forces said happened in the Anbar Desert.

“This operation targeted ISIS leaders to disrupt and degrade ISIS’ ability to plan, organize, and conduct attacks against Iraqi civilians, as well as U.S. citizens, allies, and partners

throughout the region and beyond,” CENTCOM said. “Iraqi Security Forces continue to further exploit the locations raided.”

It added: “There is no indication of civilian casualties.”

An Iraqi military statement said “airstrikes targeted the hideouts, followed by an airborne operation.”

“Among the dead were key ISIS leaders,” Iraq’s military said, without identifying them. “All hideouts, weapons and logistical support were destroyed, explosive belts were safely detonated and important documents, identification papers and communication devices were seized.”

A U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss details of the operation yet to be made public, told The Associated Press that five American troops were wounded in the raid, while two others suffered injuries from falls during the operation. One who suffered

a fall was transported out of the region, while one of the wounded was evacuated for further treatment, the official said.

“All personnel are in stable condition,” the official said.

It wasn’t immediately clear why it took two days for the U.S. to acknowledge it took part in the raid. Iraq did not say the U.S. took part in the operation when initially announcing it, as politicians debate the future of having American troops in the country. There are approximately 2,500 U.S. troops in Iraq.

Since the U.S. toppled dictator Saddam Hussein with its 2003 invasion of Iraq, the country has struggled to balance relations between America and neighboring Iran. Since the Israel-Hamas war broke out, Iraqi militias allied to Iran have targeted U.S. forces there, leading to American airstrikes targeting them.

At its peak, ISIS ruled an area half the size of the U.K. It attempted to enforce its extreme

interpretation of Islam, which included attacks on religious minority groups and harsh punishment of Muslims deemed to be apostates.

A coalition of more than 80 countries led by the United States was formed to fight the group, which lost its hold on the territory it controlled in Iraq in 2017 and in Syria in 2019.

However, the militants have continued to operate in the Anbar Desert in Iraq and Syria, while claiming attacks carried out by others elsewhere in the world inspired by the group. That includes the two suspects in a foiled plot to attack Taylor Swift concerts in Vienna. Meanwhile, the ISIS branch in Afghanistan is known to carry out intensely bloody assaults.

Iraqi officials say that they can keep the ISIS threat under control with their own forces and have entered into talks with the U.S. aimed at winding down the mission of the U.S.-led military coalition in Iraq.

# China, Philippines trade blame after their ships collide

Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan — China and the Philippines accused each other of causing a collision between their two vessels Saturday in the latest flareup of tensions over disputed waters and maritime features in the South China Sea.

In a statement posted on social media, Chinese coast guard spokesperson Liu Dejun was quoted as saying that a Philippine ship maneuvered and “deliberately collided” with a Chinese coast guard ship “in an unprofessional and dangerous manner.”

Philippine officials in Manila said it was their coast guard ship, the BRP Teresa Magbanua, that was rammed thrice by the Chinese coast guard without any provocation, causing damage to the Philippine vessel.

It was the second confrontation in days near Sabina Shoal in the internationally recognized exclusive economic zone of the Philippines.

The Philippine ship, the Magbanua, has been anchored in Sabina since mid-April after Ma-

nila suspected that China may construct a structure to seize the uninhabited atoll.

China harbored the same suspicions and recently filed a diplomatic protest against the Philippines due to the ship’s prolonged presence at the shoal.

Commodore Jay Tarriela of the Philippine coast guard said in a news briefing in Manila that the Magbanua had dropped its anchor again and would not withdraw from Sabina Shoal “despite the harassment, bullying activities and escalatory action of the Chinese coast guard.”

Video released by the Philippine coast guard appeared to show the Magbanua being rammed by a Chinese coast guard ship.

The United States condemned “the multiple dangerous violations of international law by the PRC (People’s Republic of China), including today’s intentional ramming of the BRP Teresa Magbanua while it was conducting lawful operations within the Philippines’ Exclusive Economic Zone.”

# Japan seeks record high for its defense in budget

By HANA KUSUMOTO  
*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — Japan’s Ministry of Defense asked for a record-high 8.5 trillion yen — about \$58.7 billion — on Friday for fiscal 2025, the third year of a planned military buildup.

The ministry also unveiled details of its budget request, which, if approved, will be the 13th consecutive year of increased military spending and will exceed this fiscal year’s \$54.5 billion budget. Japan’s fiscal year begins April 1.

To achieve its buildup goals by fiscal 2027, the government “will steadily increase the expenditure budget request, while accumulating projects that should be started during FY 2025,” the budget document states.

Japan in 2022 embarked on a plan to increase its defense capabilities in five years, aiming to strengthen its deterrence capabilities in a regional security environment made uncertain by an assertive China.

Since then, Japan has drastically increased its defense budget, pledging to spend about \$297 billion through 2027.

The fiscal 2025 budget request includes about \$6.7 billion to continue strengthening Japan’s stand-off defense capability. Past purchases in this category included U.S.-made ex-

tended range stand-off missiles and Tomahawk cruise missiles.

“We will drastically strengthen our stand-off defense capabilities to deal with ships and landing forces advancing to our island region from outside the threat zone of anti-aircraft missiles,” budget request stated.

Among the items in that category is about \$2.2 billion to build a satellite constellation for target detection and tracking capabilities. The system is budgeted this year for the first time; the ministry hopes to start operating it by March 2027.

The ministry has budgeted another \$712 million for unmanned defense capabilities, which it calls a “revolutionary game changer” that can provide asymmetric advantages in the air, on the water and under the sea.

The ministry requested about \$20.7 million to acquire small, offensive unmanned aerial vehicles for security in the southwestern islands, a strategically important area for Japan.

It also requested about \$58 million for equipment designed to defend against drones and improve base security. That request follows a May incident in which drone footage of a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force flattop, the JS Izumo, at Yokosuka Naval Base appeared on a Chinese social media site.

# Japan protests Chinese survey ship entering its territory

Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan lodged a formal protest via China’s embassy against what it called an incursion by a Chinese survey ship into its territorial waters Saturday, the Japanese foreign ministry said.

The ministry expressed “strong concern” after the ship was spotted near Kagoshima

Prefecture, southwestern Japan, early in the morning.

The Chinese ship, confirmed in territorial waters at 6 a.m. local time, left shortly before 8 a.m., according to Japan’s Defense Ministry, adding it was monitored by a Japanese military vessel and plane.

Recently, China’s increasingly assertive activity around Ja-

panese waters and airspace has caused unease among Japanese defense officials, also concerned about the growing military cooperation between the Chinese and Russian air forces.

This follows Tokyo’s protest after a Chinese military aircraft briefly entered Japan’s southwestern airspace on Monday. It was the first time the Japanese

Self Defense Force detected a Chinese military aircraft in Japan’s airspace.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said his country had “no intention” to violate any country’s airspace.

Bilateral business ties between the two, as well as exchanges among scholars and business people, remain strong.

# Trump, special counsel duel over future in Jan. 6 case

*The Washington Post*

The special counsel's office and Donald Trump outlined dueling visions Friday for how the former president's 2020 election obstruction case should proceed in D.C. federal court, with Trump's attorneys proposing a schedule that would extend pretrial arguments into next year and neither side pushing for resolution before the November election.

In a joint filing Friday night, both sides previewed legal wrangling that is likely to drag out the case deep into 2025 or beyond. The filing came after U.S. District Judge Tanya S. Chutkan requested a proposed plan for how to resolve legal issues in the case after the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 along ideological lines that presidents are absolutely immune from prosecution when carrying out their core constitutional powers.

The ruling prompted special counsel Jack Smith last week to seek a superseding indictment in the case, removing elements of the original indictment that

might run afoul of the Supreme Court's guidance.

It will be up to Chutkan to determine what acts laid out in the indictment can still be prosecuted. Although the Supreme Court determined presidents had broad immunity, it said they could still be prosecuted for private conduct or for official acts under certain exceptions. Whatever Chutkan decides could face higher-level court review.

In Smith's revised indictment, prosecutors kept the same four counts of plotting to subvert the results of the election that Trump was charged with in August 2023. But the special counsel dropped some allegations that the high court said intruded on core executive-branch powers and sharpened others that the justices said might be prosecutable as the actions of a candidate for president, rather than an officeholder.

Prosecutors with Smith's office did not outline a specific timetable on which they thought the case should proceed. But

they said Chutkan should tackle "first and foremost" whether Trump might be immune from allegations in the new indictment and whether evidence that prosecutors plan to use at trial may be off-limits to the government.

Prosecutors said they are ready to submit an opening brief "promptly" that would detail why Trump's private conduct as a candidate is prosecutable, and make a case for why even some of his official conduct as president should not be shielded.

Smith's office said Chutkan should resolve immunity questions all at once before or at the same time as Trump's other challenges.

That is because the outcome of her decisions about what allegations and evidence the government may use could affect her rulings on Trump's other claims, and because rendering immunity decisions one at a time could give the defense repeated opportunities to appeal, paralyzing the case, prosecutors argued.

## Border arrests expected to rise in Aug.

*Associated Press*

SAN DIEGO — Arrests for illegal border crossings from Mexico during August are expected to rise slightly from July, officials said, possibly ending a streak of five straight monthly declines but the numbers are hovering near four-year lows.

Authorities made about 54,000 arrests through Thursday, which, at the current rate, brought the August total to about 58,000 when the month ended Saturday, according to two U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss information that has not been publicly released.

The tally suggests that arrests could be bottoming out after being halved from a record 250,000 in December, a decline that U.S. officials largely attributed to Mexican authorities increasing enforcement within their borders. Arrests were more than halved again after Democratic President Joe Biden invoked authority to temporarily suspend asylum processing in June. Arrests plunged to 56,408 in July, a nearly four-year low that changed little in August.

Asked about the latest numbers, the Homeland Security Department released a statement by Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas calling on Congress to support failed legislation that would have suspended asylum processing when crossings reached certain thresholds, reshaped how asylum claims are decided to relieve bottlenecked immigration courts and added Border Patrol agents, among other things.

Republicans, including presidential nominee Donald Trump, opposed the bill, calling it insufficient.

## Calif. lawmakers pass landmark bills to atone for racism, hold off on fund

*Associated Press/Report for America*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California lawmakers last week passed some of the nation's most ambitious legislation aimed at atoning for a legacy of racist policies that drove disparities for Black people, from housing to education to health.

None of the bills would provide widespread direct payments to African Americans. The state Legislature instead approved proposals allowing for the return of land or compensation to families whose property was unjustly seized by the government, and issuing a formal apology for laws and practices that have harmed Black people.

But lawmakers left out two bills that would have created a fund and an agency to carry out the

measures, considered key components of the efforts to take action. California Legislative Black Caucus Chair Assemblymember Lori Wilson said Saturday that the Black Caucus pulled the bills, adding the proposals need more work.

Sen. Steven Bradford, who authored the measures, said the bills didn't move forward out of fear Gov. Gavin Newsom would veto them.

"We're at the finish line, and we, as the Black Caucus, owe it to the descendants of chattel slavery, to Black Californians and Black Americans, to move this legislation forward," Bradford said, urging his colleague to reconsider.

The Democratic governor hasn't weighed in on most of the bills.



# Israel recovers bodies of 6 hostages in Gaza

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israel on Sunday said it had recovered the bodies of six hostages in Gaza, including a young Israeli American man who became one of the most well-known captives held by Hamas as his parents met with world leaders and pressed for his release.

The military said all six had been killed shortly before the arrival of Israeli forces. Their recovery sparked mass protests against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whom many Israelis blame for failing to bring them back alive in a deal with Hamas to end the 10-month-old

war. Negotiations over such a deal have dragged on for months.

Netanyahu said Israel would hold Hamas accountable for killing the hostages in “cold blood,” and blamed the militant group for the stalled negotiations, saying “whoever murders hostages doesn’t want a deal.”

Grieving and angry Israelis surged into the streets Sunday night, chanting “Now! Now!” as they demanded that Netanyahu reach a cease-fire with Hamas to bring the remaining captives home.

Tens of thousands of Israelis protested in one of the largest

demonstrations since the war began nearly 11 months ago. Thousands of people, some of them weeping, gathered outside Netanyahu’s office in Jerusalem. In Tel Aviv, hostages’ relatives marched with coffins to symbolize the toll.

Militants seized Hersh Goldberg-Polin, 23, and four of the other hostages at a music festival in southern Israel during Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack, which triggered the war.

The native of Berkeley, Calif., lost part of his left arm to a grenade in the attack. In April, a Hamas-issued video showed him alive but with his left hand mis-

sing, sparking new protests in Israel urging the government to do more to secure the hostages’ release.

The army identified the other dead hostages as Ori Danino, 25; Eden Yerushalmi, 24; Almog Sarusi, 27; and Alexander Lobanov, 33; who were also taken from the music festival. The sixth, Carmel Gat, 40, was abducted from the nearby farming community of Be’eri.

It said the bodies were recovered from a tunnel in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, around half a mile from where another hostage, Qaid Farhan Alkadi, 52, was rescued alive last week.

## Russia says it downed over 150 Ukraine drones

Associated Press

Russian air defenses intercepted and destroyed 158 Ukrainian drones overnight, including two over Moscow and nine over the surrounding region, the Defense Ministry said Sunday.

Forty-six of the drones were over the Kursk region, where Ukraine has sent its forces in recent weeks in the largest incursion on Russian soil since World War II. A further 34 were shot over the Bryansk region, 28 over the Voronezh region, and 14 over the Belgorod region — all of which border Ukraine.

Drones were also shot down deeper into Russia, including one each in the Tver region, northwest of Moscow, and the Ivanovo region, northeast of the Russian capital. Russia’s Defense Ministry said drones were intercepted over 15 regions, while one other governor said a drone was shot down over his region, too.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyannin said falling debris from one of the two drones shot down over the city caused a

fire at an oil refinery.

Ukrainian drone strikes have brought the fight far from the front line into the heart of Russia. Since the beginning of the year, Ukraine has stepped up aerial assaults on Russian soil, targeting refineries and oil terminals to slow down the Kremlin’s assault.

Meanwhile, Russia’s Defense Ministry said Sunday that it had taken control of the towns of Pivnichne and Vyimka, in Ukraine’s Donetsk region. The Associated Press could not independently verify the claim.

Russian forces have been driving deeper into the partly occupied eastern region, the total capture of which is one of the Kremlin’s primary ambitions. Russia’s army is closing in on Pokrovsk, a critical logistics hub for the Ukrainian defense in the area.

At least three people were killed and nine wounded Sunday in Russian shelling in the town of Kurakhove, some 20 miles south of Pokrovsk, Donetsk regional Gov. Vadym Filashkin said.

## On first day without X, many Brazilians feel disconnected

Associated Press

SAO PAULO — The blocking of social media platform X in Brazil divided users and politicians over the legitimacy of the ban, and many Brazilians on Saturday had difficulty and doubts over navigating other social media in its absence.

The shutdown of Elon Musk’s platform started early Saturday, making it largely inaccessible on both the web and through mobile apps after the billionaire refused to name a legal representative to the country, missing a deadline imposed by Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes. The blockade marks an escalation in a monthslong feud between Musk and de Moraes over free speech, far-right accounts and misinformation. Brazil is one of the biggest markets for X, with tens of millions of users.

“I’ve got the feeling that I have no idea what’s happening in the world right now. Bizarre,” entertainment writer and heavy X user Chico Barney wrote on Threads. Threads is a text-based app developed by Instagram that Barney was using as an alternative. “This Threads algorithm is like an all-you-can-eat restau-

rant where the waiter keeps serving things I would never order.”

Bluesky, a social media platform that was launched last year as an alternative to X and other more established sites, reported a large influx of Brazilians in the past couple of days. The company said Friday it has seen about 200,000 new users from Brazil sign up during that time, and the number “continues to grow by the minute.” Brazilian users are also setting records for activities such as follows and likes, Bluesky said.

Previous users of other platforms welcomed Brazilians to their ranks. “Hello literally everyone in Brazil,” a user wrote on Threads. “We’re a lot nicer than Twitter here,” said another.

Platform migration isn’t new for Brazilians. They were huge adopters of Orkut and, when Orkut went kaput, they very gladly moved to other platforms.

X is not as popular in Brazil as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or TikTok. It remains an important platform on which Brazilians engage in political debates, however, and is highly influential among politicians, journalists and other opinion makers.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Contract awarded to rebuild collapsed bridge

**MD** BALTIMORE — Maryland transportation leaders on Thursday approved a contract for rebuilding the Francis Scott Key Bridge several months after the 1.6-mile steel span collapsed under the impact of a massive container ship that lost power and crashed into one of its supporting columns.

They cited a 2028 completion date and estimated the project would cost \$1.7 billion and would include significantly more pier protection to better defend against future wayward ships.

At a monthly meeting Thursday morning, the Maryland Transportation Authority board awarded a \$73 million contract for the first phase of the project to Kiewit Infrastructure.

### Boar's Head plant linked to outbreak cited before

**VA** JARRATT — A Boar's Head deli meat plant in Virginia tied to a deadly food poisoning outbreak repeatedly violated federal regulations, including instances of mold, insects, liquid dripping from ceilings, and meat and fat residue on walls, floors and equipment, newly released records show.

Government inspectors logged 69 instances of "noncompliance" with federal rules in the past year, including several in recent weeks, according to documents released through federal Freedom of Information Act requests.

Inspections at the plant have been suspended and it will re-

main closed "until the establishment is able to demonstrate it can produce safe product," U.S. Agriculture Department officials said in a statement Thursday. Boar's Head officials halted production at the Jarratt, Va., plant in late July.

The plant has been linked to the deaths of at least nine people and hospitalizations of about 50 others in 18 states.

Between Aug. 1, 2023, and Aug. 2, 2024, inspectors found "heavy discolored meat buildup" and "meat overspray on walls and large pieces of meat on the floor." They also documented flies "going in and out" of pickle vats and "black patches of mold" on a ceiling. One inspector detailed blood puddled on the floor and "a rancid smell in the cooler." Plant staff were repeatedly notified that they had failed to meet requirements, the documents showed.

### Plane lands on highway, then is hit by vehicle

**NC** GREENSBORO — A small plane that had made an emergency landing on a highway near an airport was hit by a vehicle, injuring one of the aircraft's occupants, authorities said.

The single-engine plane experienced a mechanical failure and put out a distress call around 8 p.m. Wednesday to Piedmont Triad International Airport, Greensboro police said.

The plane landed on westbound Interstate 840 at the junction with Interstate 73, and after it stopped, a passenger vehicle hit it, police said. One of the two people on the plane was taken to a hospital with a minor

injury, police said.

Greensboro police will investigate the crash. The National Transportation Safety Board will investigate the cause of the airplane malfunction.

### Water woes shutter Grand Canyon hotels

**AZ** GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK — A series of breaks in the Grand Canyon's only water pipeline prompted park officials to take unprecedented action with what they call "Stage 4" water restrictions, forcing the sudden shutdown of overnight hotel stays during one of the busiest times of the year.

Since July 8, the park has faced challenges with its water supply and has been implementing various levels of water restrictions. Now, officials said, no water is currently being pumped to the canyon's south or north rims.

The 12.5 mile-long Transcanyon Waterline, built in the 1960s, supplies potable water for facilities on the South Rim and inner canyon. Park officials say it has exceeded its expected lifespan.

### Wolf pack that attacked livestock to be relocated

**CO** DENVER — Wildlife agencies are trying to capture and relocate the first pack of wolves that formed under Colorado's ambitious wolf reintroduction program after the animals repeatedly attacked livestock, marking an early stumble in the voter-driven initiative.

The move comes only a week after state officials touted three

pups born to the Copper Creek pack, which formed after 10 of the predators were released in December over bitter opposition from livestock groups. The pack has at least two adults.

The bid to capture them goes against Colorado's wolf management plan that was adopted last year. It included guidance that relocation "has little technical merit" because it could create problems elsewhere if the animals continue attacking livestock. The plan calls for using non-lethal approaches, such as patrolling ranches with range riders and scaring away problem wolves, or killing them if necessary to stop ongoing attacks on livestock.

Officials did not say where the pack would be relocated, nor whether they would be released into the wild or kept in captivity.

### Mass killing of barred owls may start in spring

**WA** SEATTLE — As soon as next spring, barred owls will be shot in the woods in a plan finalized last week. As many as 450,000 barred owls could be killed in three states over the next 30 years in an effort to save the spotted owl.

The cull is necessary to prevent extinction of the spotted owl, which is being pushed out of its native range by the barred owl, a native of the East Coast, said Kessina Lee, state supervisor for the Oregon office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The goal is not to eliminate barred owls, but to ensure both species survive, Lee said.

— From wire reports

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# Clemson at big risk after feeble loss to Georgia

Associated Press

Week 1 overreactions often turn into freezing cold takes by mid-October. See 2023 Colorado, for example.

That said, there has been enough evidence of Clemson's demise over the last three seasons to comfortably say the days of coach Dabo Swinney's program as a national championship contender are over and not have to worry about looking silly later this year.

In fact, what made No. 1 Georgia's 34-3 demolition of the 14th-ranked Tigers on Saturday in Atlanta notable was just how unsurprising it was.

"When you get beat like that, that's on the head coach," Swinney told reporters. "Complete ownership of an absolute crap second half. Sometimes you get your butt kicked, and we did today."

The Bulldogs aren't the defending champions — No. 9 Michigan has that title — but at 43-2 with two national titles since the start of the 2021 season, they are the standard in college football.

This run of dominance for Kirby Smart's squad began against Clemson in the '21 opener. That night in Charlotte, N.C., the Bulldogs beat the Tigers 10-3 without an offensive touchdown.

Since then, Georgia has been a rocket ship and Clemson is basically the same team: duds on defense, dysfunctional on offense, with a coach who simply refuses to use all avenues available to improve his team.

Swinney's lack of transfer portal activity is well documented.

"People say whatever they are going to say," Swinney said. "Doesn't matter what I say. We do what's best for Clemson. When you lose like this, they've got every right to say whatever they want and write whatever you want."

Thing is, this really goes well beyond the portal. Cade

Klubnik is now the second consecutive five-star quarterback recruit to not pan out at Clemson, following DJ Uiagalelei.

Maybe the receivers have a chance to be better this season. There was a lot of talk in the preseason about five-star freshman T.J. Moore. He had one catch against the Bulldogs.

Over the last three years, Clemson has had just three offensive players drafted, none higher than the fourth round. Who's changing that anytime soon?

The good news is it will only get easier for the Tigers because Georgia is if not in a class by itself, one that can meet in a broom closet.

This Clemson team still feels like one that could contend for an Atlantic Coast Conference title, with defensive lineman Peter Woods and linebacker Barrett Carter making life miserable against most opponents. Heck, the Tigers' D held up fine for a half against Georgia.

Try not to turn this into an indictment of the ACC, but it's not good news for the angst-ridden conference that its most recent national title winner is simply no longer part of those conversations.

Now, Virginia Tech losing to Vanderbilt might be an indictment on the ACC.

Fortunately, No. 19 Miami looked very much like the real deal, swamping Florida behind Cam Ward. On the Is-The-U-Back? meter, the Hurricanes' 41-17 victory was a solid 7½.

Meanwhile, that smell coming from Gainesville, Fla., is resignation. A make-or-break season for coach Billy Napier started with no signs the Gators are any better than they have been.

"It's embarrassing, to be quite honest with you," Napier said.

Only seven more ranked opponents to go for Florida.

Resignation is probably the

feeling for Clemson fans now, too. The Tigers salvaged last season by winning their final five games, renewing hope that maybe Swinney's program would rediscover its mojo.

It was nowhere to be found in Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

"They didn't hand out a national championship trophy tonight. We didn't lose the ACC tonight," Swinney said.

Nope, and with a new 12-team College Football Playoff, Clemson can still dream big.

The problem is the biggest dreams now appear to be pipe dreams.

## Debuts

Riley Leonard's first game as quarterback for No. 7 Notre Dame was a gritty performance behind an inexperienced offensive line against No. 20 Texas A&M at a raucous Kyle Field. The Fighting Irish beat an SEC team on the road for the first time in 20 years, winning 23-13.

Penn State fans could not have been much happier with new offensive coordinator Andy Kotelnicki after the eighth-ranked Nittany Lions romped at West Virginia, 34-12. Kotelnicki was hired away from Kansas to bring explosiveness to a unit that slogged through a 10-win season last year. He delivered in Game 1. Drew Allar averaged 12.7 yards per attempt. Harrison Wallace averaged 23.3 yards on five catches. Nick Singleton averaged 8.8 yards on 13 carries. Mission accomplished for Game 1.

No. 25 Iowa also unveiled a new offense, with former Western Michigan coach Tim Lester taking over for the beleaguered Brian Ferentz, son of Hawkeyes head coach Kirk Ferentz. It took while for Iowa — sans the suspended Kirk Ferentz — to get it cranked up in a 40-0 victory over Illinois State. The Hawkeyes finished with 490 total yards, their most

since putting up 644 against Middle Tennessee on Sept. 28, 2019.

No. 2 Ohio State has assembled maybe the most talented depth chart in college football, and there is a very real chance its best player is a freshman. Receiving prodigy Jeremiah Smith caught two touchdown passes during a choppy first half against Akron before the Buckeyes rolled in the second half en route to a 52-6 victory.

This could be the year of the freshman receiver phenom: Alabama's Ryan Williams (two catches, 139 yards and two TDs); Texas' Ryan Wingo (four for 70); Auburn's Cam Coleman (two for 62, TD) and Perry Thompson (two for 82, TD); and Iowa's Reece Vander Zee (five for 66, two TDs) all shined Saturday.

Nebraska's highly touted freshman quarterback, Dylan Raiola, was rock solid in his first career game, throwing for 238 yards and two scores as the Cornhuskers rolled past UTEP 40-7, setting up a tasty Week 2 game against Colorado.

New Mexico State transfer Diego Pavia ran for 104 yards, threw for 190 and scored what proved to be the winning touchdown as Vanderbilt upset Virginia Tech 34-27 in overtime. A huge win for Commodores coach Clark Lea, who imported both Pavia and former New Mexico State head coach Jerry Kill from Las Cruces, hoping to show enough progress in Season 4 to earn a Season 5 at his alma mater.

The first Alabama football game without Nick Saban as coach since 2006 could not have gone better. Kalen DeBoer's fifth-ranked Crimson Tide won 63-0 over Western Kentucky and quarterback Jalen Milroe put up this crazy stat line: 7 for 9 passing for 200 yards and three touchdowns and 79 yards rushing and two TDs on 10 carries.



# No. 1 Sinner halts run of US Open upsets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jannik Sinner never gave his third-round opponent at the U.S. Open on Saturday, Chris O'Connell, even a moment to contemplate pulling off the sort of monumental upset that eliminated Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz.

"It shows that this sport is unpredictable. Whenever you drop a little bit of your level — if it's mental, if it's tennis-wise or physical — at the end, it has a huge impact on the result," Sinner said. "Both opponents who they lost against, they played some incredible tennis. And it happens."

Not to the No. 1-ranked Sinner, who is suddenly the favorite to win the men's championship at Flushing Meadows. He won the first five games and 21 of the first 29 points to make quite clear how things would go at Arthur Ashe Stadium and wrapped up a 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 victory over O'Connell in under two hours.

"I felt like he was on from the get-go," O'Connell said. "I felt a little bit clueless, to be honest. ... Every single shot, I just felt like I had to do something with it, because he was just on me. He was suffocating me."

Stepping on court less than 15 hours after Djokovic's loss to Alexei Popyrin, and two days

after Alcaraz's loss to Botic van de Zandschulp, Sinner was as dominant as can be in every facet of the sport. With 23-time major champion Serena Williams watching from an Ashe suite, Sinner struck 15 aces. He never faced a break point. He won five of O'Connell's 12 service games. He finished with more than twice as many winners, 46, as unforced errors, 22.

"The best tennis player I've ever played, for sure," the 30-year-old O'Connell said.

The only past men's champion at the U.S. Open still in the bracket is 2021 winner Daniil Medvedev.

"For sure didn't expect to have this in the fourth round when Novak and Carlos are here," Medvedev said after beating No. 31 Flavio Cobolli 6-3, 6-4, 6-3. "So it's a fun feeling from one side, but from the other side it's a new tournament. I need to play my best to try to win it again."

The No. 5 seed will next face Nuno Borges, who was a point away from elimination at 6-3 in a fourth-set tiebreaker, then rallied to beat Jakub Mensik 6-7 (5), 6-1, 3-6, 7-6 (6), 6-0.

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek, who counts the 2022 title at Flushing Meadows among her five Grand Slam trophies, beat No. 25 seed Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-4, 6-2 to reach the fourth

round of the U.S. Open for the fourth straight year.

Earlier Saturday, Jasmine Paolini joined Coco Gauff as the only women to reach at least the fourth round at every major in 2024, getting that far at the U.S. Open for the first time with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over No. 30 seed Yulia Putintseva.

The fifth-seeded Paolini was the runner-up at the French Open in June and Wimbledon in July and next meets 2023 French Open finalist Karolina Muchova. Also advancing were No. 6 Jessica Pegula, No. 16 Liudmila Samsonova, No. 18 Diana Shnaider and 2018 Australian Open champion Caroline Wozniacki.

Since losing the first set he played in New York, against Mackie McDonald — which was also the first set Sinner had played since news emerged of a doping case that involved two positive tests in March for trace amounts of a banned anabolic steroid — the 23-year-old from Italy has performed impeccably, dropping a total of 18 games across nine sets.

Trying to collect his second Grand Slam title of the year after gaining the first of his career at the Australian Open in January, Sinner will face No. 14 Tommy Paul of the United States in the fourth round Monday. Paul defeated Canadian

qualifier Gabriel Diallo 6-7 (5), 6-3, 6-1, 7-6 (3).

"He's a great mover. He has improved a lot in the last period of time. It's going to be a tough challenge," Sinner said about facing Paul, a 2023 Australian Open semifinalist. "He plays some great tennis, especially here in America."

Perhaps there was some wariness on Sinner's part heading into Saturday, given recent events. This is, after all, only the third time in the Open era (the others were in 1973 and 2000) that two of the top three seeded men were gone before the fourth round.

So Sinner woke up as the man considered most likely to win the U.S. Open, a status that belonged to No. 3 Alcaraz — the champion at the French Open and Wimbledon this season — before the tournament began. No. 2 Djokovic — the defending champ and owner of a men's-record 24 major trophies — moved atop the odds when Alcaraz was sent home Thursday night, only to relinquish that after his own early exit Friday night.

There is something quite difficult about trying to follow up one career-best win with another, and van de Zandschulp didn't really show up Saturday, eliminated by No. 25 Jack Draper 6-3, 6-4, 6-2.

## 49ers rookie WR Pearsall stable after being shot

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A juvenile suspect is in custody after allegedly shooting San Francisco 49ers wide receiver Ricky Pearsall in the chest Saturday afternoon during an attempted robbery in central San Francisco, officials said.

Pearsall, 23, was in stable condition at San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center, San Francisco Police Chief Bill Scott said during a news briefing Saturday.

Pearsall was walking alone shortly after 3:30 p.m. when a suspect attempted to rob him with a gun on Geary Boulevard in the

Union Square area.

"A struggle between Mr. Pearsall and the suspect ensued and gunfire from the suspect's gun struck both Mr. Pearsall and the subject," said Scott, who noted more than one shot was fired.

Officers in the area responded immediately and provided emergency medical aid and arrested the suspect.

Police identified the suspect as a 17-year-old male resident of Tracy, Calif., about 63 miles east of San Francisco, who was also transported to San Francisco General.

A gun allegedly belonging to the suspect

was recovered and investigators believe he acted alone, Scott said.

Scott said there was no indication Pearsall was targeted because he is a 49ers player.

The 49ers issued a statement earlier saying Pearsall was hit by a bullet in the chest and gave his condition as serious but stable.

"We ask that you please respect his privacy at this time," the team said, adding, "Our thoughts and prayers are with Ricky and the entire Pearsall family."

"He's good," 49ers teammate Deebo Samuel posted on X. "Thank god!!!!"

# Cardinals get first win in Bronx since 1964

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Brendan Donovan hit a three-run homer, Kyle Gibson pitched seven strong innings and the St. Louis Cardinals beat the New York Yankees 6-5 on Saturday for their first regular-season win at Yankee Stadium.

It was the first victory for St. Louis in the Bronx since Tim Lincecum hit a three-run homer in the 10th inning in Game 5 of the 1964 World Series and Bob Gibson pitched a complete game in a 5-2 win. The Cardinals improved to 1-7 at Yankee Stadium in the regular season.

St. Louis went ahead to stay with four runs in the third against rookie Will Warren (0-3). Nolan Arenado hit a tying RBI single before Donovan connected for his 11th homer. It was his first three-run drive since July 23, 2023.

"Any day you hit a home run, I consider that a good day and to have a couple of people on base and to give us a little bit of breathing room, I think is good," Donovan said after matching a career high in homers. "Someone said that's the first time we've won here in 60 years, which is pretty special for this organization. First time here, it's a pretty cool place."

Iván Herrera hit an RBI double in the sixth and scored on a throwing error by Yankees catcher Austin Wells following a wild pitch by Mark Leiter Jr. Herrera reached three times and hit a single in the third when Paul Goldschmidt was thrown out at the plate.

Gibson (8-6) allowed one run and five hits. After struggling through his worst outing this season Monday against San Diego, he got his first win since July 7 at Washington.

"Today was just about trying to clear my mind a little bit, not look at ERA, not look at last couple of outings and try to be focused on what I'm trying to do today," Gibson said.

**Cubs 5, Nationals 3:** Nico

Hoerner had two hits and scored two runs, and visiting Chicago beat Washington for its fifth straight win.

Javier Assad pitched six innings of three-run ball as the Cubs won for the eighth time in nine games overall. Chicago (70-66), trying to make up ground in the race for the last NL wild card, also improved to 18-8 in August.

José Tena went 3 for 3 for Washington, and Andrés Chaparro connected for his second career homer.

**Rays 11, Padres 4:** Touted rookie Junior Caminero hit a three-run homer, José Caballero had four RBIs and host Tampa Bay beat San Diego.

Caminero went deep against Randy Vásquez in a four-run second inning to help Tampa Bay take a 5-2 lead. Baseball's top-ranked prospect has three homers and seven RBIs in 17 games.

Jake Cronenworth hit a two-run homer in the first and finished with three hits for the Padres, who hold the second NL wild card.

**Tigers 2, Red Sox 1:** Tarik Skubal allowed one run in eight innings and struck out eight to become the fourth Detroit left-hander with 200 strikeouts in a season as the Tigers celebrated the franchise's 1984 World Series championship with a win over visiting Boston.

Jack Morris threw the ceremonial first pitch to Lance Parrish, and Skubal (16-4) gave a performance that would have fit onto Morris' resume. He allowed Tyler O'Neill's first-inning homer, but Boston only managed three singles the rest of the way.

Tyler Holton pitched the ninth for his sixth save as the Tigers moved 1½ games of Boston for fourth in the American League wild-card race.

**Pirates 3, Guardians 0:** Rowdy Tellez hit a two-run single in the eighth inning, and visiting Pittsburgh beat AL Central

leading Cleveland.

Luis Ortiz (6-4) pitched six innings of one-hit ball in his first win since July 20. The right-hander struck out five and walked three, helping Pittsburgh stop a four-game slide.

The Guardians, who own the best home record in the AL at 42-25, had their division lead over Kansas City sliced to two games. Cleveland was shut out for the 14th time this season, matching the most in the majors.

**Rangers 3, Athletics 2:** Leody Taveras hit a game-ending single with one out in the ninth inning as host Texas beat Oakland.

The bases were loaded when Taveras grounded a single through the middle and past a drawn-in infield, sending pinch-runner Ezequiel Duran home with the winning run.

Athletics reliever Tyler Ferguson (2-2), who struck out the side after coming on in the eighth, hit Nathaniel Lowe with a pitch to start the ninth. Carson Kelly reached on a bloop single and Travis Jankowski drew a four-pitch walk with one out. Duran replaced Lowe at second base after Kelly's single.

**Astros 5, Royals 2:** Yusei Kikuchi struck out 12 in seven innings to lead host Houston to a win over Kansas City.

Kikuchi (7-9) improved to 3-0 with a 2.57 ERA since he was acquired by the Astros a day before the trade deadline. He gave up five hits, only allowing the Royals a run on a fielder's choice grounder that followed two singles in the seventh. He threw 101 pitches, including 75 for strikes.

**Blue Jays 15, Twins 0:** Visiting Toronto hit three two-run homers, including two in a seven-run first inning, and José Berrios tossed six shutout innings as the Blue Jays routed Minnesota.

Daulton Varsho and Spencer Horwitz each hit two-run home runs in the first inning off

Twins starter Zebby Matthews (1-2), giving the Blue Jays a 4-0 lead just four batters into the game.

**Phillies 3, Braves 0:** Zack Wheeler pitched seven shutout innings to earn his 100th career victory, Edmundo Sosa homered, doubled and drove in two runs and host Philadelphia beat Atlanta.

Trea Turner also went deep for NL East-leading Philadelphia, which increased its lead over the Braves in the division to six games.

**Mets 5, White Sox 3:** Pete Alonso and Jesse Winker hit back-to-back home runs in the first inning and visiting New York handed Chicago its 106th loss to tie a franchise record.

The Mets (72-64) won their third straight and moved within two games of Atlanta for the final NL wild card. New York has won eight of 12 to climb eight games over .500 for the first time this season.

**Brewers 5, Reds 4:** Jackson Chourio hit a tiebreaking solo homer in the ninth inning, and visiting Milwaukee beat Cincinnati for its fifth consecutive win.

The 20-year-old Chourio had three hits and scored twice as the Brewers reduced their magic number for clinching the NL Central title to 16.

**Marlins 4, Giants 3:** Griffin Conine hit his first career home run and visiting Miami beat San Francisco.

Conine, the son of longtime Marlins stalwart Jeff Conine, made his major league debut Monday and got his first hit Tuesday. His first homer was a two-run shot off the right-field foul pole in the second inning.

**Angels 5, Mariners 4:** Mickey Moniak hit two home runs in the final three innings, including a game-ending solo shot in the ninth, to rally host Los Angeles past Seattle.

Joe Adell also homered twice for the Angels, who won for just the second time in 10 games.