

## Troops' obesity costly for Pentagon

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

American troops are too fat, and it is costing the Pentagon more than \$1 billion of taxpayer funding each year, a study of obesity among active-duty service members published Wednesday found.

Obesity was the leading cause for disqualification among hopeful military recruit applicants, and the top driver of separations among active-duty troops in 2023, according to the new American Security Project study. The Washington-based think tank that studies modern national security issues found the Pentagon spent some \$1.25 billion last year treating military patients for dozens of diseases related to obesity, and another \$99 million in lost productivity among hospitalized overweight troops.

"America can no longer afford to ignore this [obesity] crisis," American Security Project researchers wrote. "The United States armed forces face an unprecedented challenge as obesity prevalence among service members continues to rise. As combat and incidental injuries become less prevalent year-over-year, rates of obesity-related conditions, including diabetes, osteoarthritis, hypertension and steatotic liver disease increasingly meet or exceed civilian trends."

Researchers suggested the Pentagon take a more proactive approach to preventing obesity, focusing on providing young, enlisted troops with health and nutrition education and access to quality foods. They also suggested the military replace long-held, appearance-based body composition standards with health-based standards driven by medical professionals and classify obesity as a disease in the military health system so troops can be treated medically for the condition.

"Unlike nearly all other diseases affecting service members today, obesity itself is not considered a disability nor disease by the service branches nor the Department of Veterans Affairs, making it difficult to proactively identify and treat," the report reads. "Without this written classification and its associated protections, service members face bias and discrimination for 'exceeding weight standards,' becoming ineligible for promotion, educational privileges, deployment or disability compensation."

Last year, the American Security Project found nearly seven in 10 active-duty troops were overweight or obese, according to their body mass index, including some 21% of active-duty troops qualified as obese, a rate that more than doubled in the past decade. Body mass index, or BMI, is a long-

used but controversial method of assessing a person's body classification by height and weight. A person between 25 and 30 on the BMI is considered clinically overweight and more than 30 is considered obese, according to the National Institutes of Health.

The researchers found the weight problem within the military was at least two-pronged because of rising obesity rates among the civilian population from which the military needs to recruit, and the loosening of military fitness standards to ensure the services have enough troops in their ranks amid recent enlistment struggles. The Pentagon, the researchers found, has lowered fitness standards to keep overweight troops in the ranks and increased the use of body composition waivers to bring overweight recruits into the military.

The military services have taken steps in recent years to counter obesity. The Army and Navy introduced fitness courses to engage potential recruits early and get them into shape to qualify for service. The Marines, meanwhile, began using more accurate biometric scanning machines last year to assess body fat.

But the American Security Project concluded those measures were not enough to mitigate the threat of increasing weight problems in the force.

## Teen charged in shooting interviewed in 2023

*Associated Press*

WINDER, Ga. — The teen charged with opening fire at a Georgia high school denied making prior threats when police interviewed him last year as they looked into online posts threatening a school shooting. Investigators ultimately did not have enough evidence for an arrest, according to a report obtained Thursday.

The 14-year-old suspect has been charged as an adult in the shooting Wednesday outside Atlanta that killed four people and wounded nine. He is accused of using an assault-style rifle to kill two students and two teachers in the hallway outside his algebra classroom.

The same teenager was interviewed in

May 2023 by a sheriff's investigator from nearby Jackson County who received a tip from the FBI that the boy, then 13, "had possibly threatened to shoot up a middle school tomorrow."

The tip came to the FBI from people in Australia and California who were concerned about comments made by a chat group user on the social media platform Discord, according to a Jackson County sheriff's report obtained by The Associated Press.

Classes were canceled Thursday at Apalachee High School, though some people came to pay respects by leaving flowers around the flagpole and kneeling in the grass with heads bowed. Among them was

Linda Carter, who lives nearby. Though she has no children attending the school, Carter said the rampage left her angry and hurting.

"I'm upset, I'm crying constantly," Carter said. "These kids shouldn't have lost their lives. These parents, these adults, these teachers should not have lost their lives yesterday."

When the suspect slipped out of class Wednesday, Lyela Sayarath figured her quiet classmate who recently transferred was skipping school again. But he returned later and wanted back into the room. Some students went to open the locked door but instead backed away.

The teen then turned the gun on people in a hallway, authorities said.

# Marine suspected of sex assault on Okinawa

By BRIAN McELHINEY  
AND HANA KUSUMOTO

*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa—A U.S. Marine is suspected of sexually assaulting and injuring a woman on Okinawa in June, according to Okinawa Prefectural Police, the third case of its type to surface on the island this year.

Police forwarded a case on Thursday against a 20-year-old man to the Naha District Public Prosecutors Office, a spokesman for the prosecutor's office said by phone that day.

The Marine is suspected of non-consensual sexual intercourse resulting in injury, a spokesman for the police investigative team said by phone Thursday. He declined to identify the Marine, saying doing so may affect the investigation.

He said the incident occurred on Okinawa, and that medical

personnel who treated the woman reported it to police.

He said the Marine and the woman were acquaintances but declined to say how they knew each other.

Some government officials in Japan are required to speak to the media only on condition of anonymity. In Japan, police forward cases of alleged criminal conduct to area prosecutors for a charging decision.

The Marine is not in Japanese custody, but is confined to military installations in Japan, according to a spokesman for the III Marine Expeditionary Force.

"The Marine Corps is aware of an allegation of criminal misconduct by an Okinawa-based Marine, and we are fully cooperating with all appropriate authorities during the ongoing investigation," said 1st Lt. Owen Hitchcock, spokesman for III Marine

Expeditionary Force, in an email Thursday to Stars and Stripes.

He declined to identify the Marine, his unit or duty station.

"The alleged behavior does not reflect the core values of the U.S. Marine Corps, nor does it represent the conduct of the overwhelming majority of Okinawa-based Marines. The Marine Corps goes to great lengths to instill these values in every Marine through regular education and training throughout their service and we take these allegations seriously," his email states.

This case follows indictments of two U.S. service members on separate charges of sexual assault and attempted sexual assault that came to light over the summer and roiled Okinawa.

Senior Airman Brennon R.E. Washington pleaded not guilty July 12 in Naha District Court to charges of kidnapping and sex-

ually assaulting a minor in December. Marine Lance Cpl. Jamel Clayton was charged in May with attempting to sexually assault a woman in Yomitan.

Those cases led to formal complaints from the prefecture to the U.S. Embassy, U.S. military and the Japanese government and calls for changes to the status of forces agreement governing the U.S. military population in Japan.

The prefectural government, led by Gov. Denny Tamaki, also complained that it was kept in the dark about the two indictments and other reports against service members who were not charged.

Japan's investigative authorities announced in July that they would begin sharing more information about criminal cases involving U.S. service members with local governments as much as possible. This case is the first under that agreement.

## Wildfire damages Navy base in Calif.; live fire suspected

*Los Angeles Times*

LOS ANGELES — About 75 miles northwest of San Diego, beyond the view of much of the mainland, the rugged and remote Navy outpost of San Clemente Island remains a mystery to most Californians.

For nine decades, San Clemente Island, the southernmost of the eight Channel Islands, has been owned by the Navy and is largely inaccessible to civilians. Throughout this time the volcanic isle's sprawling shoreline and rolling hills have served as a crucial military training ground where U.S. troops detonate grenades and fire heavy artillery. It's also the Navy's last live-firing range for ship-to-shore bombardments.

So, in late July, few noticed when a catastrophic wildfire swept over more than 13,000 acres of the island outpost. Be-

tween July 24 and July 30, the blaze scorched more than a third of the island, damaging more than nine miles of high-voltage power lines, including more than 160 utility lines and a transformer, according to Navy documents.

The fire also swept through parts of the island that have rare habitats for sensitive plant and animal species found nowhere else, such as the endangered San Clemente loggerhead shrike, a carnivorous songbird.

The conflagration left the southern end of the island charred, and numerous Navy buildings without power.

It is expected to take at least a year to restore electricity to those facilities. In the meantime, the Navy will rely on diesel-powered backup generators to maintain communications for its operations, as well as for Federal Aviation Administration air traffic

control functions and Coast Guard search-and-rescue missions.

Navy spokesman Kevin Dixon said the fire may have been caused by live-fire military exercises in the so-called shore bombardment area, although it remains unclear what type of training might have sparked the blaze. After two years of above-normal rainfall, Dixon said, there was much more grass to catch fire. No one was injured or evacuated.

"We did have training going on there where there was bombardment," Dixon said. "So I can't definitively say that it is, but, just looking at it logically, it may be related to this."

Just before the fire, several units of the California National Guard had been on the island for military training exercises that included the firing of howitzer shells and mortar rounds. The

military units posted photos and videos of the exercises on social media.

California National Guard spokesperson Lt. Col. Brandon Hill said guard members did not spark the fire.

"If a fire would have started because of those training rounds impacting it would have been immediately reported to range control," Hill said. "We completed all training on July 23rd and cleared the training areas with no issues."

NASA's Worldview tool, which publishes daily satellite imagery and wildfire data, detected a possible wildfire on San Clemente Island around 5:30 a.m. July 24.

In the past, the Navy has restricted the use of live ammunition during the wildfire season to curtail the risk of these disasters. No restrictions were apparently in place around the time of the July wildfire.

# Lawyers clash on Trump case's next steps

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Prosecutors and defense lawyers clashed in court Thursday over the next steps in the federal election interference prosecution of Donald Trump in the first hearing since the Supreme Court narrowed the case by ruling that former presidents are entitled to broad immunity from criminal charges.

The dueling proposals reflected the extent to which the justices' July opinion had upended the path of the case that charges Trump with plotting to overturn the results of the 2020 election in the run-up to the Capitol riot on Jan. 6,

2021.

Moving to salvage the case, special counsel Jack Smith's team filed a new indictment that stripped out certain allegations against Trump for which the Supreme Court said Trump enjoyed immunity from prosecution.

A member of that team, Thomas Windom, said Thursday that prosecutors were prepared to file within three weeks a legal brief explaining why the new indictment was sound. But defense lawyer John Lauro said the special counsel "proposes a device which turns the criminal rules on its head" by seeking to submit a filing before the de-

fense has had a chance to try to dismiss the indictment.

"We may be dealing with an illegitimate indictment from the get-go," Lauro said. He added: "We want an orderly process that does justice to the Supreme Court opinion."

Defense lawyers said they intend to file multiple motions to dismiss the case, including one that piggybacks off a Florida judge's ruling that said Smith's appointment was unconstitutional.

Neither side envisions a trial happening before the November election, especially given the amount of work ahead. Chutkan is tasked with deter-

mining which of the acts alleged in the indictment can remain part of the case in light of the Supreme Court opinion.

The justices in July ruled that former presidents enjoy absolute immunity for the exercise of their core constitutional duties and are presumptively immune from prosecution for all other official acts.

Smith's team responded to the ruling with a revised indictment last week that removed references to Trump's efforts to use the law enforcement powers of the Justice Department to remain in power, an area of conduct for which the Supreme Court said Trump is immune.

## White House takes aim at disinformation from Russia

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration seized Kremlin-run websites and charged two Russian state media employees in its most sweeping effort yet to push back against what it says are Russian attempts to spread disinformation ahead of the November presidential election.

The measures, which in addition to indictments also included sanctions and visa restrictions, represented a U.S. government effort just weeks before the November election to disrupt a persistent threat from Russia that American officials have long warned has the potential to sow discord and create confusion among voters.

Washington has said that Moscow, which intelligence officials have said has a preference for Republican Donald Trump, remains the primary threat to elections even as the FBI continues to investigate a hack by Iran this year that targeted the presidential campaigns of both political parties.

"The Justice Department's message is clear: We will have

no tolerance for attempts by authoritarian regimes to exploit our democratic systems of government," Attorney General Merrick Garland said.

One criminal case disclosed by the Justice Department accuses two employees of RT, a Russian state media company, of covertly funding a Tennessee-based content creation company with nearly \$10 million to publish English-language videos on social media platforms including TikTok and YouTube with messages in favor of the Russia government's interests and agenda, including about the war in Ukraine.

The nearly 2,000 videos posted by the company have gotten more than 16 million views on YouTube alone, prosecutors said.

The two defendants, Kostiantyn Kalashnikov and Elena Afanasyeva, are charged with conspiracy to commit money laundering and violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act. They are at large. It was not immediately clear if they had lawyers.

## GOP seeks Blinken testimony on US exit from Afghanistan

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republicans have issued a subpoena demanding testimony from Secretary of State Antony Blinken as they wrap up a sprawling yearslong investigation into the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021.

Rep. Michael McCaul, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, sent a subpoena letter late Tuesday ordering Blinken to appear before the committee by Sept. 19 or face a contempt of Congress charge.

"You served as the final decision maker for the department on the withdrawal and evacuation," McCaul wrote.

He added that three years later, Blinken is "in a position to inform the Committee's consideration of potential legislation aimed at helping prevent the catastrophic mistakes of the withdrawal, including potential reforms to the Department's legislative authorization."

Matthew Miller, a State Department spokesman, said Blinken is unable to testify on

the dates proposed by the committee as he will be traveling for diplomatic work the majority of September. He claimed the committee denied "reasonable alternatives" to the subpoena date.

"The Secretary has testified before the Congress on Afghanistan more than 14 times — more than any other Cabinet-level official," Miller said, adding that four of those times were directly before the Foreign Affairs committee at the request of McCaul. "It is disappointing that instead of continuing to engage with the Department in good faith, the Committee instead has issued yet another unnecessary subpoena."

The subpoena for Blinken's testimony is the latest in a series of moves by McCaul and other House Republicans over the last 18 months to hold the Biden administration accountable for what they have called a "stunning failure of leadership" after Taliban forces seized the Afghan capital of Kabul, far more rapidly than U.S. intelligence had foreseen as American forces pulled out.



# Netanyahu demands open-ended control of Gaza border with Egypt

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Wednesday that Israel must keep open-ended control of Gaza's border with Egypt, digging in on his stance on an issue that has threatened to derail cease-fire efforts.

Netanyahu's comments came as the United States is developing a new proposal for a cease-fire and hostage release, hoping to break a long deadlock and bring an end to the nearly 11-month-old war.

The question of Israeli control of the Philadelphia corridor — a narrow strip of land along Gaza's border with Egypt, seized by troops in May — has become a central obstacle in the talks. Hamas has demanded an eventual full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in the multiphase truce deal.

Egypt, a mediator in the talks along with the U.S. and Qatar, has

also demanded a concrete timeline for Israeli troops to leave the Philadelphia corridor. And on Wednesday, the United Arab Emirates, which established formal ties with Israel in the 2020 Abraham Accords, also criticized the Israeli stance.

Speaking to foreign journalists, Netanyahu repeated his stance that Israel must maintain its hold on the border to prevent Hamas from rearming by smuggling weapons into Gaza. He said it was a vital part of the goal ensuring Hamas cannot repeat Oct. 7.

"Gaza must be demilitarized, and this can only happen if the Philadelphia corridor remains under firm control," he said, claiming Israeli troops had discovered dozens of tunnels under the border.

He said Israel would only consider withdrawing from the corridor when presented with an alternative force to police it.

"Bring me anyone who will actually show us ... that they can actually prevent the recurrence" of smuggling, he said. "I don't see that happening right now. And until that happens, we're there."

Families of remaining hostages have stepped up their demands that he agree to a deal after Hamas killed six hostages last week as Israeli troops appeared to be moving to rescue them. In angry public statements, hostage families have accused Netanyahu of blocking a deal and potentially sacrificing their loved ones' lives for the sake of holding the border strip. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis have taken to the streets in recent days, calling for a deal and saying time is running out.

Netanyahu pushed back against the pressure, saying his stance was necessary to "ensure Hamas doesn't pose a threat to Israel."

# New foreign minister is appointed in Ukraine

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine's parliament approved the appointment of a new foreign minister Thursday, two lawmakers said, as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy sought to breathe fresh life into his administration with the war against Russia poised for what could be a pivotal phase.

Andrii Sybiha, a former ambassador to Turkey, is the country's new chief diplomat. He replaced Dmytro Kuleba, who became one of Ukraine's most recognizable faces on the international stage as he petitioned and pleaded with Western countries to support Ukraine's war effort.

Sybiha, 49, has been working as Kuleba's deputy since April.

Zelenskyy wants to replace almost a dozen top officials in his biggest government shake-up since Russia's full-scale invasion in early 2022. Other possible new faces included the heads of strategic industries, farming and justice. Parliament's approval is required for the changes. Ukrainian lawmakers Yaroslav Zhelezniak and Oleksii Honcharenko confirmed the vote to The Associated Press.

Zelenskyy said Wednesday of the reshuffle that Ukraine needs "new energy."

The war, more than 900 days long, is on the cusp of what could be a key period.

A likely hard winter lies ahead, testing the country's resolve. Ukraine's power grid is under severe strain after Russian missiles and drones knocked out around 70% of the country's generation capacity. That could mean going without heat and water.

On the battlefield, Ukraine is waiting to see whether the military's gamble with its surprise thrust into Russia's Kursk border region a month ago pays dividends.

# Armed man is killed in shootout with police near Israeli Consulate in Munich

Associated Press

MUNICH — Police exchanged fire with a gunman near the Israeli Consulate in Munich on Thursday, fatally wounding him. Authorities said they believe he was planning to attack the consulate on the anniversary of the attack on the 1972 Munich Olympics.

No one else was hurt in the shootout shortly after 9 a.m. in an area near the consulate and a museum on the city's Nazi-era history. Officers had been alerted to a person carrying a gun in the Karolinenplatz area, near downtown Munich, and returned fire when he shot at them. The suspect, who was carrying an old long gun with a bayonet attached to it, died at

the scene.

Police said the gunman was an 18-year-old from Austria, but investigators were still looking into his motive. They didn't give further details on the suspect, who left a car nearby, except to say that he lived in Austria.

"We have to assume that an attack on the Israeli Consulate possibly was planned early today," Bavaria's top security official, state Interior Minister Joachim Herrmann, told reporters at the scene. "It's obvious that, if someone parks here within sight of the Israeli Consulate ... then starts shooting, it most probably isn't a coincidence."

Prosecutors and police said in a statement later Thursday they currently believe the plan was

for "a terrorist attack, also with respect to the consulate of the state of Israel," and that they are still investigating the man's motive.

Thursday was the 52nd anniversary of the attack by Palestinian militants on the Israeli delegation at the 1972 Munich Olympics, which ended with the death of 11 Israeli team members, a West German police officer and five of the assailants.

Police said there was no evidence of any more suspects connected to the shooting.

The Austria Press Agency reported that the assailant, an Austrian citizen with Bosnian roots, had come to the attention of authorities there last year but wasn't considered high-risk.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Woman indicted in attack on Muslim kids at pool

**TX** DALLAS — A Texas woman accused of attempting to drown two Muslim children in an apartment complex pool was recently indicted by a Tarrant County grand jury.

Elizabeth Wolf, 42, is charged with attempted capital murder of a person under 10 years old and intentionally causing bodily injury to a child younger than 15, court documents show. The indictment, filed Aug. 15, includes a hate crime enhancement.

Wolf, of Grand Prairie, allegedly made “racial statements” before grabbing a 6-year-old boy and trying to drown his 3-year-old sister on May 19 at the family’s apartment complex pool, Euless police previously said.

She was initially arrested on a public intoxication charge and released on a \$40,000 bond, but the charges were later elevated to attempted capital murder and injury to a child, which led to her rearrest in July.

## Driver charged in partially automated SUV crash

**PA** PHILADELPHIA — A woman was intoxicated and using a partially automated driving system when she caused a March highway crash in Philadelphia that killed two people, authorities said as they announced homicide charges against the driver.

State and federal investigators say the woman’s Ford Mustang Mach-E SUV struck the stationary vehicle of a man who had stopped on the left shoulder of I-95 to assist a driver whose

car had broken down ahead of him. The March collision, which occurred around 3 a.m., killed both men.

Ford’s Blue Cruise system allows drivers to take their hands off the steering wheel while it handles steering, braking and acceleration on highways. The company says the system isn’t fully autonomous.

Investigators in Philadelphia believe that driver Dimple Patel, 23, was driving about 71 mph, using both Blue Cruise and Adaptive Cruise Control, when the crash occurred.

## ‘Whistleblower’ says he leaked plans, then fired

**FL** TALLAHASSEE — A former state employee who said he leaked information about the plans to build golf courses and hotels in Florida’s state parks has apparently been fired.

But James Gaddis, who described himself as an “ethical whistleblower,” said he doesn’t regret making the public aware of the proposals, according to the Palm Beach Post.

Gaddis, who worked as a cartographer for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, said he was directed to draw up conceptual maps for the proposals to build golf courses, pickleball courts, 350-room hotels and more at nine state parks from Miami to the Panhandle.

After leaking the information, Gaddis was put on administrative leave on Aug. 30. The next day, he got a letter of dismissal in the mail saying he violated department policies.

A spokesperson for DEP did not respond to a request for comment.

## Lawyer: Ex-official treated for addiction amid charge

**MS** JACKSON — A former tax assessor and collector in north Mississippi checked into a residential treatment center for a gambling addiction after he called the state auditor’s office and confessed to misusing more than \$300,000 in public money, his attorney said Tuesday.

Shannon Wilburn, 49, resigned in April from the elected office he had held in Benton County since 2016, and he began the 12-week addiction treatment in late July, his attorney Tony Farese told The Associated Press.

Mississippi Auditor Shad White announced Tuesday that Wilburn has been charged with one count of embezzlement. The announcement came days after Wilburn was indicted. Farese said Wilburn turned himself in to the sheriff’s office last Friday, then posted bond and returned to the treatment program.

## Afghan refugee pleads no contest to 2 murders

**NM** ALBUQUERQUE — An Afghan refugee convicted of first-degree murder in one of three fatal shootings in 2022 that shook Albuquerque’s Muslim community pleaded no contest Tuesday to two homicide charges stemming from the other killings.

Prosecutors said Muhammad Syed, 53, entered the pleas to two counts of second-degree murder for the deaths of Muhammad Afzaal Hussain, 27, and Naeem Hussain.

A jury had convicted Syed in March in the shooting death of

Aftab Hussein, 41, in July 2022.

The three ambush-style killings happened over the course of several days. Investigators shifted away from possible hate crimes to what prosecutors called the “willful and very deliberate” actions of another member of the Muslim community.

Syed, who settled in the U.S. with his family several years earlier, denied involvement in the killings after being stopped more than 100 miles from Albuquerque.

Bernalillo County prosecutors said Syed faces a life prison sentence in Aftab Hussein’s killings and will serve 30 years behind bars for the no-contest pleas. A sentencing date hasn’t been set.

## Officer dies after crash into tree during chase

**MO** OSAGE BEACH — A Missouri police officer and mother of six children died after losing control of her patrol vehicle and crashing into a tree while chasing someone who fled a traffic stop.

Osage Beach police officer Phylicia Carson, 33, spun off the road and hit a tree Saturday while chasing someone a different officer had tried to pull over for speeding. The Camden County Sheriff’s Office identified that person as Christopher Aaron Bishop Wehmeyer, 23, who faces felony charges for resisting arrest and creating a substantial risk of death, according to jail records.

Carson joined the police department last year, Osage Beach Police Chief Todd Davis said at a news conference.

— From wire reports

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# Cubs throw combined no-hitter against Pirates

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Shota Imanaga wasn't disappointed when he was removed after seven hitless innings and 95 pitches.

"He actually didn't know he had a no-hitter going at all," Chicago Cubs manager Counsell said.

Nate Pearson and Porter Hodge each followed with a perfect inning to finish a 12-0 victory over the Pittsburgh Pirates on Wednesday night, the Cubs' first no-hitter at Wrigley Field since 1972.

"That's 100% about taking care of Shota and making sure we're doing the right thing for him," Counsell said. "It's not fun to do, but when you're prioritizing the player's health and you don't know what's going to happen moving forward, we want him to stay healthy."

Imanaga (12-3) struck out seven and walked two, throwing 66 pitches for strikes.

A 31-year-old left-hander in his first season with the Cubs after pitching in Japan for eight seasons, Imanaga has not gotten an out in the eighth inning this

season and has thrown a high of 103 pitches.

He needed 25 pitches to get through the second inning. He complimented catcher Miguel Amaya, who posed for photos with the three pitchers after the final out.

"Miggy studies the hitters, and there were a few occasions today where there was a specific pitch I wanted to throw, Miggy had a different sign, and I just trusted him and it worked out," Imanaga said through an interpreter. "I can't thank him enough."

"The way he works, the presence, the confidence that he shows up there, every pitch is with intention," Amaya said. "He's a grinder."

Chicago's previous no-hitter was by Zach Davies, Ryan Tepera, Andrew Chafin and Craig Kimbrel at Dodger Stadium on June 24, 2021. The Cubs had not pitched a no-hitter at Wrigley Field since Milt Pappas against San Diego on Sept. 2, 1972 — Pappas was one pitch from a perfect game when Bruce Froemming called ball four on a

full-count pitch to Larry Stahl. Garry Jestadt then popped out.

Chicago ended a streak of 4,147 regular and postseason games at Wrigley Field without a no-hitter, the second-longest for a team in a single ballpark behind Pittsburgh, according to Opta. The Pirates never had a no-hitter in 4,773 games at Forbes Field from 1909-70.

Cubs players celebrated when shortstop Dansby Swanson threw to first baseman Michael Busch for the final out on Oneil Cruz's grounder, but were more muted than during celebrations after individual no-hitters.

Swanson insisted on staying in the game despite the blowout.

"He goes about his work the same every day, whether he's had a good outing or a bad outing," Swanson said on Imanaga. "He's always wanting to get better. He's always doing the routine that he needs to do to be able to go back out again in five days and be able to pitch well. He's always prepared. He has his own way of doing things and takes full pride and responsibility

to do that."

This was the fourth no-hitter this season after complete-game efforts by Houston's Ronel Blanco against Toronto on April 1, San Francisco's Blake Snell at Cincinnati on April 2 and San Diego's Dylan Cease at Washington on July 25.

Nico Hoerner, Pete Crow-Armstrong and Swanson each had three of Chicago's 17 hits, with Swanson and Crow-Armstrong both finishing a triple shy of the cycle.

Domingo Germán (0-1), who pitched a perfect game last year for the New York Yankees against Oakland, allowed seven runs — six earned — and nine hits in three innings.

Seiya Suzuki hit an RBI single in the first, and Chicago opened a 4-0 lead in the second when Crow-Armstrong had a run-scoring double and Happ hit a two-run single.

Swanson's two-run homer and Crow-Armstrong's solo shot boosted the lead to 7-0 in the third. Cody Bellinger hit a two-run homer in the sixth against Kyle Nicolas.

## Yankees looking ahead instead of focusing on slump

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Aaron Judge hasn't homered in nine straight games for the first time this season, and the New York Yankees are under .500 over the equivalent of half a season.

Never mind that Judge leads the major leagues with 51 home runs or the Yankees are just a half-game behind Baltimore for the AL East lead and the AL's best record.

"Nobody's going to feel sorry for us," manager Aaron Boone said. "I'm sure a lot of people out there are rooting against us. We've got to have that us-against-the-world, go take this thing, go take this position, go take this playoff opportunity. It's all there for us. We've got to do it."

In a 10-6 loss at the Texas Rangers on Wednesday night that gave the Yankees their third consecutive series loss, New York was within inches of cutting a ninth-inning deficit from eight runs to one.

Wyatt Langford made a leaping, game-ending catch at the top of wall in left field on a 104 mph liner from Giancarlo Stanton with two runners on after Trent Grisham's two-out grand slam. This was a night after the Texas rookie's game-ending slam in a 7-4 Rangers victory.

Judge and Juan Soto had left the game in the eighth inning because of the 10-2 deficit, so Judge was already assured of his ninth consecutive game without going deep — he had a pair of eight-game stretches earlier this season.

"Just don't think about it, try not to hear those kinds of things," said Judge, who was 6 of 34 with two doubles over the three series losses. "I think I heard it early in the year, too, but there's nothing I can do about that. I'm not trying to hit homers."

The Yankees are currently without a specific closer after two-time All-Star Clay Holmes gave up Langford's drive with New York on the cusp of a series victory in the middle game

against the Rangers — Holmes' big league-high 11th blown save.

Boone says there are several options, including Holmes, for the next save opportunity in what he called a short-term situation. Those answers won't come until Friday at the earliest, at the Chicago Cubs.

New York's 40-41 record goes back to June 1, when it started that day 40-19. Even back then, though, the Yankees were only two games ahead of the Orioles.

AL Central-leading Cleveland (80-60) is also in the mix for the AL's best record, tied with New York and a half-game behind Baltimore (81-60).

"We are right there with every opportunity to reach our hopes and dreams. And that's because of the season we've had as a whole," Boone said. "We've put ourselves in position to go grab this thing. But if we want to go grab it, we've got to play our best ball and put our best foot forward with 22 to go."



# 'Canes want to tune out 'rat poison'

*Associated Press*

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — Miami coach Mario Cristobal worked at Alabama under Nick Saban, so he's fully aware of what his former boss considers to be one of the biggest threats to a good football team.

Saban called it "rat poison" — his term for praise from the outside world, the type that is so highly heaped it can distract a team from doing its job.

Cristobal knows it's coming.

Miami (1-0) moved up seven spots to No. 12 in the AP Top 25 on Tuesday, voters obviously having been impressed by the Hurricanes' 41-17 road romp over Florida in the opener for both teams last weekend. That win, combined with Florida State's 0-2 start that sent the Seminoles from No. 10 to unranked, left the Hurricanes as the only Top 25 team in the Sunshine State after one full week.

"Miami has gotten off to a good start this season," said Cristobal, who spent four seasons — 2013 through 2016 — on Saban's staff at Alabama. "We're 1-0."

He'd like to keep the narrative that simple. He knows that's not going to happen, at least not from the outside world.

And to be fair, there's a ton to like from the Miami perspective. Quarterback Cam Ward, who dazzled with 385 yards — the most by anyone in the country against a Power 4 opponent so far this season — and three touchdown passes in the opener, vaulted deeper into the way-too-early Heisman Trophy conversation. The Hurricanes' biggest rivals in the state, Florida State and Florida, are now a combined 0-3. There were recruits at Florida Field making "The U" with their hands as the

Hurricanes were walking into the locker room once the 24-point victory was in the books.

"We're nowhere near what we're capable of," Miami receiver Xavier Restrepo said Tuesday. "We did have a decent day on Saturday and it just shows you a little bit of how dangerous we are as an offense. But we're nowhere near where we need to be. ... We have a long way to go."

That's exactly what Cristobal wants the Hurricanes to be saying, thinking and believing.

It's just one game, but the Hurricanes haven't been ranked this highly in the AP poll since reaching No. 9 on Dec. 6, 2020. The trick is staying there: Miami hasn't finished a season ranked 12th or better nationally since 2004.

And on that front, like Restrepo said, there's a long way to go. "They have an extremely ath-

letic, big-time offensive line. Very, very good on the defensive line. Obviously very, very good at some of their skill positions," said Florida A&M coach James Colzie, whose Rattlers (2-0) will visit the Hurricanes on Saturday in Miami's home opener. "So, we have our work cut out for us."

Saban's approach and preaching about the perils of rat poison worked wonders for him at Alabama. Miami teams haven't always listened to such talk; Cristobal thinks this year's group understands what he means when he talks about blocking out such noise.

"You go right at it. You don't sugarcoat it," Cristobal said. "The best part about this team is you can look them right in the eye and give it to them, like right between the teeth, man. No holding back and they appreciate that."

## Lions host Stafford, Rams in rematch of NFC playoffs

*Associated Press*

DETROIT — The Detroit Lions know they have to put the 2023 season behind them and focus on 2024.

That won't be easy.

Detroit opens the season on Sunday night against the Los Angeles Rams in a rematch of their wild-card game in January — won by the Lions for the franchise's first playoff victory in 40 years.

It's another night game on national TV and another encounter with the symbol of the pre-Dan Campbell Lions — Matthew Stafford. Boomed on every play, Stafford dominated his former team, passing for 367 yards and two touchdowns, but Detroit escaped with a 24-23 win.

The Lions went on to beat Tampa Bay before blowing a big lead against San Francisco in the NFC championship

game.

Eight months later, it is the Rams again.

"It doesn't get any better than this — it really doesn't," Campbell said Monday. "The hardest thing is that we've still got seven days to go, but I'm excited, the staff is excited and so are the players, and I know our fans are ready to roll."

Last time, a lot of fans talked about their respect for Stafford — the best quarterback in franchise history — and insisted they were only booing him because of the magnitude of the situation.

The idea was the Rams would come to Detroit for a regular-season game and he would get the kind of response former Tigers pitcher Justin Verlander gets when he comes back to Comerica Park.

That's probably not going to happen on Sunday night in

Week 1; he's still the player they have to stop.

Rams coach Sean McVay "altered a little bit of how they traditionally played last year — they have a little bit more of a downhill approach," said Campbell, who is beginning his fourth season as Lions coach. "That got some hits off Stafford and let him do what he does best, which is a winning recipe. We absolutely need to be beefed up and ready to go up front."

The good news for the Lions is the Rams don't have a Hall of Famer in the middle of their defense anymore. Aaron Donald's retirement at 32 ends a lot of sleepless nights for offensive coordinators.

"You always needed to account for him, you needed to know where he was at all times," Campbell said. "You were shifting and motioning just for him, and you are damn

near doing it every play, plus you are trying to chip on one side so the tackle could help the guard so the guard could help the center with Donald.

"It's nice not to have to worry about him."

The Lions have never played in the Super Bowl, — their last appearance in an NFL title game was in 1957 — but Campbell is up front about Sunday being the next step in achieving that goal.

"Talking about it doesn't matter now," he said. "The first step is winning the division, and once you do that, it is about seeding. You want to be the three seed or the two or even the one seed? You have to start winning the head-to-head games, and this is an NFC opponent who could win the West."

"That's a long way down the road, but this is when you start setting it up."

# Pegula upsets No. 1 Swiatek at US Open

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The questions wouldn't stop for Jessica Pegula: Why was she 0-6 in Grand Slam quarterfinals heading into her U.S. Open matchup against No. 1 Iga Swiatek? What could Pegula do to change that?

They came up during her on-court interview after winning in the previous round. And again at the news conference that followed. And again during a brief TV interview right before striding onto the court at Arthur Ashe Stadium on Wednesday night.

If that all weighed on Pegula, the 30-year-old American hid it well, pulling off a big upset by easily beating Swiatek 6-2, 6-4 at Flushing Meadows and earning a debut trip to the semifinals at a major.

"There have been so many freaking times, and I just kept losing," said Pegula, who has won 14 of her past 15 matches, all on hard courts. "I know everyone keeps asking me about

it, but I was like, 'I don't know what else to do. I just need to get there again and, like, win the match.' So thank God I was able to do it. And finally — finally! — I can say, 'Semifinalist.'"

She will face unseeded Karolina Muchova of the Czech Republic on Thursday for a berth in the final.

Muchova, the runner-up to Swiatek at the 2023 French Open, made it to the final four in New York for the second consecutive year with a 6-1, 6-4 victory over No. 22 seed Beatriz Haddad Maia earlier Wednesday. Shortly after losing to Coco Gauff in last year's semifinals, Muchova had surgery on her right wrist, then was off the tour for about 10 months until returning this June.

That was the latest in a series of injuries for Muchova, who called it "one of the worst ones that I had."

"Doesn't seem to matter how many matches she's really gotten in, she seems to have good results no matter what. It's cool

to kind of see her back, because I think she's really great for the game and the way she plays is really fun," said the No. 6-seeded Pegula, who defeated Muchova at the Cincinnati Open last month. "She's good, so talented, so skilled as a tennis player. Like, so complete. Doesn't have a ton of weaknesses."

The other women's match Thursday night also featured an American making her major semifinal debut — No. 13 Emma Navarro against No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka, who won the past two Australian Open titles. Sabalenka lost to Gauff in the 2023 final in New York, while Navarro ended Gauff's title defense in the fourth round.

There are two Americans in the men's semifinals, too, and they'll face each other: No. 12 Taylor Fritz takes on No. 20 Frances Tiafoe on Friday.

This is the first time since the 2003 U.S. Open that multiple Americans reached both the women's and the men's semis.

The other men's semifinal will be No. 1 Jannik Sinner against No. 25 Jack Draper. Sinner defeated 2021 champion Daniil Medvedev 6-2, 1-6, 6-1, 6-4 on Wednesday night to reach the final four at Flushing Meadows for the first time. Draper eliminated Alex de Minaur in straight sets.

The lopsided nature of Pegula's win was surprising, but she did not think this day would never arrive.

"I knew I could do it," she said. "I just had to go out and execute my game and not get frustrated."

Swiatek served poorly in the first set and her forehand was a real problem, with 22 of her 41 unforced errors coming on that side. Pegula made only 22 unforced errors in all and used terrific defense to keep forcing Swiatek to hit an extra shot.

"It's never easy to play against Jess. She has a tricky ball because it's pretty low and pretty flat," Swiatek said. "I just made too many mistakes."

## NASCAR playoff surprises unlikely as power programs prevail

Associated Press

DARLINGTON, S.C. — NASCAR's regular season finished with a pair of surprises in winless drivers Harrison Burton and Chase Briscoe pulling off unexpected victories at Daytona and Darlington.

Don't look for more stunners when the playoffs start next week and NASCAR's power programs, Hendrick Motorsports, Joe Gibbs Racing and Team Penske, dominate the grid with 11 of the 16 drivers who will chase the championship next Sunday in Atlanta.

Throw in Burton and owner Wood Brothers' connection with Penske, and 75% of the field has blue-blood connections to research, equipment and advanced technology that give their racers most everything they need to succeed.

"I mean, the way I look at it is we got nothing to lose, right?" Briscoe said after his dramatic, late, three-wide pass to win the Southern 500. "If you can win at Darlington, you can win anywhere on the schedule."

Briscoe gave soon-to-be-shuttered Stew-

art-Haas Racing, once a power program with championships from Tony Stewart in 2011 and Kevin Harvick in 2014, a final chance to add to that legacy when he passed Kyle Larson and Ross Chastain for the lead, then outran Kyle Busch at the end.

History says it won't be easy for Briscoe and others non-power players to celebrate in Phoenix when the championship will be awarded in two months.

Drivers from Hendrick Motorsports, JGR and Team Penske have won the past 10 titles.

Hendrick's lineup features past champions Larson and Chase Elliott along with William Byron and Alex Bowman.

"You work hard all year long to get stage wins, to get race wins to position yourself in the playoffs," said Larson, the 2021 Cup Series champion who will open as the top seed in Atlanta. "Just keep on doing what we're doing. Our cars have been fast. Keep it up and hopefully, we can advance on through."

All four Gibbs drivers reached the playoffs, with Joe Gibbs' grandson, Ty

Gibbs, earning his first playoff berth and 2017 series champ Martin Truex Jr. holding on to the 16th and final spot despite an early wreck that knocked him out of the Southern 500 when his playoff fate was very much in doubt.

Christopher Bell and Denny Hamlin each won three times this year.

Penske enters with the past two reigning champions in Joey Logano in 2022 and Ryan Blaney last year. Austin Cindric won his way into the field in June at World Wide Technology Raceway outside of St. Louis.

Blaney is ready to run it back, even though his Southern 500 was cut short when he was taken out early in the wreck with Truex, who took all the blame for the miscue.

The rest of the field includes 23XI Racing's Tyler Reddick, who won the regular-season championship by a point over Larson; Brad Keselowski of Roush Fenway Keselowski Racing, who won the series title in 2012; and Daniel Suarez, who runs for Trackhouse Racing.