

## In-person voting for president begins

*Associated Press*

MINNEAPOLIS — In-person voting for this year's presidential election began Friday, a milestone that kicked off a six-week sprint to Election Day after a summer of political turmoil.

Voters lined up to cast their ballots in Minnesota, South Dakota and Virginia, the states with the first early in-person voting opportunities. About a dozen more states will follow by mid-October.

At a polling site in Minneapolis, Jason Miller arrived well before the polls opened at 8 a.m. and was first in line. He was among roughly 75 people who cast ballots in the first hour at the city's early voting center.

"Why not try to be first? That's kind of fun, right?" said the 37-year-old house painter.

He said he voted "against crazy," but didn't want to name his choice for president.

"I don't think I have to. I think that's pretty obvious. I think that's very, very clear," he said.

The beginning of in-person

balloting follows a tumultuous summer in American politics that included President Joe Biden dropping out of the race and being replaced by Vice President Kamala Harris as the Democratic nominee, and an assassination attempt against Republican nominee Donald Trump followed by another apparent attempt on his life just nine weeks later.

Across the country, local election directors are beefing up their security to keep their workers and polling places safe while also ensuring that ballots and voting procedures won't be tampered with. Officials and ordinary poll workers have been targets of harassment and even death threats since the 2020 presidential election.

Federal authorities are investigating the origin of suspicious packages that have been sent to or received by election officials in more than 15 states in recent days, including Virginia.

"If I could wave a magic wand in this room right now, I would wish for two things: Between

now and November 5th, I want to see high turnout and low drama," Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon said during a news conference Thursday that previewed his state's efforts around the election season. Simon also serves as president of the National Association of Secretaries of State.

Some voters suggested that the potential for trouble or chaos on Election Day was one reason not to wait.

Chris Burda, 74, said she is encouraging others to get their ballots in early "to avoid potential disruption on Election Day or in-person voting by a certain party who seems to be interested in poll watching to the point of intimidation." She cast her ballot for Harris at a Minneapolis voting center, saying the vice president was "standing up for democracy and the freedom to choose."

As the start of early voting approached, Trump's rhetoric turned more ominous with a pledge to prosecute anyone who "cheats" in the election in the

same way he falsely claimed they did in 2020, when he lied about widespread fraud and attacked officials who stood by their accurate vote tallies.

Trump has previously sought to sow doubts about mail voting and encouraged voters to cast ballots in person on Election Day. But this year, Trump and the Republican National Committee have begun to embrace early and mail voting as a way to lock in GOP votes before Election Day, just as Democrats have done for years.

Eugene Otteson, 71, a Vietnam War veteran and former mill worker, was casting his early ballot for the former president in Anoka, Minn. He said he believes Trump will keep the country from intervening in foreign conflicts and will manage the economy like a business executive.

"Not that I like him, but he's a business person, and I like someone who can run a business," Otteson said. "With Kamala, you still don't know what she stands for."

## Congress scrambles to ensure safety of candidates

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers are scrambling to ensure that the Secret Service has enough money and resources to keep the nation's presidential candidates safe amid repeated threats of violence. It's unclear, though, how much they can do with only weeks before the election, or if additional dollars would make an immediate difference.

Days after a gunman was arrested on former President Do-

nald Trump's golf course, the House on Friday overwhelmingly passed bipartisan legislation 405-0 to require the agency use the same standards when assigning agents to major presidential candidates as they do presidents and vice presidents. The agency has told Congress that it has already boosted Trump's security, but House lawmakers want it put into law.

The efforts come after an assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump at a

rally in July, and after Secret Service agents arrested a man with a rifle hiding on the golf course at Trump's Florida club over the weekend.

The suspect in Florida apparently also sought to assassinate the Republican presidential nominee.

"In America, elections are determined at the ballot box, not by an assassin's bullet," Rep. Mike Lawler, R-N.Y., a chief sponsor of the bill, said in floor debate ahead of the vote. "That

these incidents were allowed to occur is a stain on our country."

Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., chairman of the subcommittee that oversees the Secret Service, said new money could go toward technology like drones, partnerships with other agencies that could provide immediate assistance and overtime pay for agents. It would likely be added to a stopgap spending bill that Congress will consider next week to keep the government running.

# Harris looks for boost with Oprah interview

*Associated Press*

FARMINGTON HILLS, Mich. — Vice President Kamala Harris looked for a boost with persuadable and less-motivated voters as she participated in a livestream Thursday evening with former talk show host Oprah Winfrey to focus on her plans to cut costs for the middle class, restore a national right to abortion and address gun violence.

The event, billed as “Unite for America,” and hosted by Winfrey from suburban Michigan, one of this election’s key battlegrounds, sought to tap into the same energy as long-running Winfrey’s talk show, which drove bestseller lists and allowed celebrities to share their softer side and everyday people to share stories of struggle and inspiration.

It leaned on celebrities like Bryan Cranston, Jennifer Lopez and Meryl Streep, but also

the stories of ordinary voters to promote Harris’ message over the course of 90 minutes and to draw a contrast with former President Donald Trump, the Republican nominee. More than 300,000 people were watching the Harris campaign livestream on YouTube alone and the event was also being streamed on other major social media platforms.

“We each have those moments in our lives when it’s time to step up,” Harris said when Winfrey asked about her overnight transformation as she went from President Joe Biden’s running mate to being the Democratic nominee in her own right after he suddenly dropped out in July. “I felt a sense of responsibility, to be honest with you, and with that comes a sense of purpose.”

Winfrey told Harris it looked as if a “veil dropped” and she “stepped into your power.”

At one point Harris reminded viewers that she owns a gun — which surprised Winfrey — saying, “If somebody’s breaking into my house they’re gettin’ shot.” She added, “I probably shouldn’t have said that.”

Harris was given the chance to talk about her plans to reduce the cost of housing and lower taxes for the middle class, as she took questions from voters in Michigan and Virginia.

Oprah recognized Hadley Duvall in the audience, a 22-year-old woman who became an abortion rights advocate after she was raped by her stepfather as a child.

“You can’t wait until it’s too late to care about reproductive health care, because then it’s too late,” said Duvall, who is featured in a new Harris campaign ad. “Thank you for hearing us and seeing us when the Supreme Court won’t,” Duvall

added in praise of Harris.

Harris and Winfrey also welcomed the mother and sister of a young Georgia mother who died after waiting 20 hours for a hospital to treat her complications from an abortion pill. Amber Thurman’s death occurred just two weeks after Georgia’s strict abortion ban was enacted in 2022 following the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision to overturn nationwide abortion rights. Harris has blamed her death on Trump.

“Amber was not a statistic; she was loved by a family, a strong family and we would have done whatever to get my baby, our baby, the help that she needed,” said Thurman’s mother, Shanette Williams.

Harris praised their courage in speaking out and called out a “health care crisis” caused by the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. “They have no right to be in your womb,” Winfrey added.

## Trump: Jewish voters would ‘have a lot to do with a loss’

*Bloomberg News*

WASHINGTON — Republican nominee Donald Trump told an antisemitism summit that Jewish voters could be to blame if he ultimately lost the presidential election and complained that he had not “been treated right” after his support of Israel.

“In my opinion the Jewish people would have a lot to do with a loss,” Trump said at the event hosted by Republican donor Miriam Adelson. “It’s only because of the Democrat hold, or curse, on you.”

Trump went on to repeatedly suggest his backing for Israel should result in more political support among Jewish Americans, and at one point conflated Jewish Americans with the state of Israel itself.

“More than any people on Earth, Israel has to defeat her,” he said, adding that “there’s no way that I should be getting 40% of the vote — I’m the one who is protecting you.”

Trump spent Thursday attempting to enhance his outreach to Jewish voters before November’s election against Vice President Kamala Harris, his Democratic opponent, giving speeches at both the forum and a subsequent event hosted by the Israeli American Council. He said that Israel’s very existence could hinge on the election: “If I don’t win, I believe Israel will be eradicated,” he said.

But the former president’s remarks risked again stoking controversy over suggesting that Jewish Americans should be loyal to Israel’s interests.

After the speech, Amy Spitalnick, chief executive officer of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs issued a rebuke.

“Trump continues to label Jews who don’t support him as disloyal and crazy, to play into dangerous dual loyalty tropes and to blame Jews for a potential electoral loss,” she said. “At the same time, he continues to normalize antisemitic extremism.”

Trump repeated his claim that he was not treated fairly by Jewish voters at his subsequent event, and added that Jewish votes “may be necessary for us to win.”

Trump has repeatedly come under criticism for remarks asserting that Jews ought to be unquestioningly supportive of the Israeli government.

In an interview in March, Trump accused Jewish people who support Democrats of hating their religion and Israel. Trump has sought to seize on divisions among Democrats over Israel’s war against Hamas, designated a terrorist group by the U.S. and European Union.

In a July radio interview, Trump attacked Harris, saying she “doesn’t like Jewish people” and that she had appeared annoyed during a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. When the radio host criticized Harris’ husband, second gentleman Doug Emhoff, calling him a “crappy Jew,” Trump responded “yeah.”

Emhoff has been a vocal advocate against antisemitism, including leading the administration’s strategy on the issue.

# US awards \$3B for EV battery production

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration is awarding over \$3 billion to U.S. companies to boost domestic production of advanced batteries and other materials used for electric vehicles, part of a continuing push to reduce China's global dominance in battery production for EVs and other electronics.

The grants will fund a total of 25 projects in 14 states, including battleground states such as Michigan and North Carolina, as well as Ohio, Texas, South Carolina and Louisiana.

The grants announced Friday mark the second round of EV battery funding under the bipartisan infrastructure law approved in 2021. An earlier round allocated \$1.8 billion for 14 projects that are ongoing.

The totals are down from amounts officials announced in October 2022 and reflect a number of projects that were withdrawn or rejected by U.S. officials during sometimes lengthy negotiations.

The money is part of a larger effort by President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris to boost production and sales of EVs as a key element of their strategy to slow climate change and build up U.S. manufacturing. Companies receiving awards process lithium, graphite or other battery materials, or manufacture components used in EV batteries.

"Today's awards move us closer to achieving the administration's goal of building an end-to-end supply chain for batteries

and critical minerals here in America, from mining to processing to manufacturing and recycling, which is vital to reduce China's dominance of this critical sector," White House economic adviser Lael Brainard said.

The Biden-Harris administration is "committed to making batteries in the United States that are going to be vital for powering our grid, our homes and businesses and America's iconic auto industry," Brainard told reporters Thursday during a White House call.

The awards announced Friday bring to nearly \$35 billion total U.S. investments to bolster domestic critical minerals and battery supply chains, Brainard said, citing projects from major

lithium mines in Nevada and North Carolina to battery factories in Michigan and Ohio to production of rare earth elements and magnets in California and Texas.

"We're using every tool at our disposal, from grants and loans to allocated tax credits," she said, adding that the administration's approach has leveraged more \$100 billion in private sector investment since Biden took office.

In recent years, China has cornered the market for processing and refining key minerals such as lithium, rare earth elements and gallium, and also has dominated battery production, leaving the U.S. and its allies and partners "vulnerable," Brainard said.

## Another Calif. teen girl is arrested for school threats

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — Police in Riverside arrested a 15-year-old girl Wednesday who they said made violent threats on social media against Ramona High School.

The allegations come in the wake of the Riverside Police Department's arrest Tuesday of a 13-year-old girl who is accused of making threats against Chema-wa Middle School in at least two social media posts. A third teenager — a 14-year-old boy from the Riverside County city of Eastvale — was arrested Monday

on suspicion of making undisclosed threats against students at a Jurupa Unified School District middle school.

Public Information Officer Ryan J. Railsback said the Riverside Police Department had investigated two dozen similar threats since the school year began in August. Similar incidents have occurred in recent weeks across the nation since a Sept. 4 shooting at a high school in Winder, Ga., that killed four people.

"This is going on across the entire country. We don't know what is causing it," he said. Specific

threats against individual students or a school can lead to an arrest.

Wednesday's incident stems from an Instagram group chat among female students in which one of the girls shared a photo of firearms and made statements suggesting violence against her classes. But she hadn't taken the photo herself — it had been recirculated from a social media post that originally threatened school violence in another state.

Police searched the girl's home and determined she did not have access to firearms. She

was arrested and booked into a Riverside County juvenile facility on suspicion of making criminal threats.

"These aren't pictures kids are taking with guns they have access to," Railsback said. "What we're finding is they're just screenshotting these photos from social media and using those."

Other students then take a screenshot of these re-created posts and text them to their friends, which "continues it and hypes it out," the officer said. "It literally spreads like wildfire."

## Powerful, deadly storm flips over RVs in Oklahoma

Associated Press

PAWNEE, Okla. — A strong storm moved through part of Oklahoma, flipping over several camping vehicles and downing trees and power lines, authorities said. One death was reported.

Early Friday, the city of Pawnee asked residents to move about the area carefully and

said there were several areas still without power: "Crews have worked through the night and are still out."

The city earlier said damage around the town from the Thursday night storm was significant, with several roads closed. The National Weather Service office in Tulsa received wind gust reports of up to 72

mph and hail the size of golf balls.

One person died in a RV that flipped, said Pawnee County Sheriff Darrin Varnell. He said others were damaged and people "essentially lost just about everything they own in a matter of seconds."

"Right now, we're not sure whether it was straight-line

wind damage or tornado," meteorologist Mark Plate in the Tulsa office said Friday morning. "We'll have to send out survey teams today to survey the damage."

Pawnee Public Schools were closed Friday due to storm damage. Homecoming activities Thursday night were canceled because of the weather.



# EU to loan Ukraine up to \$39B

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — The European Union pledged on Friday to lend Ukraine up to \$39 billion as part of a loan package organized by the Group of Seven major industrial nations, as it seeks to help the country rebuild its economy and its war-shattered power grid.

G7 leaders agreed in June to engineer a \$50 billion loan to help Ukraine in its fight for survival. Interest earned on profits from Russia's frozen central bank assets would be used as collateral, but progress in distributing the loans has been slow.

"We should make Russia pay for the destruction it caused," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told reporters at a news conference in Kyiv with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Von der Leyen said that the

EU has already provided Ukraine with more than \$132 billion in military and economic assistance since the war began in February 2022, "but Russia's relentless attacks mean further support is necessary".

"Crucially, this loan will flow straight into your national budget. This will improve Ukraine's macro-financial stability and it will provide you with significant and much-needed fiscal space. You will decide how best to use the funds, giving you maximum flexibility to meet your needs."

The loans would be underwritten by the windfall profits earned on almost \$300 billion in Russian assets, which have been frozen over its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The vast majority of that money is held in EU nations, notably Belgium.

Von der Leyen said the EU is "confident that we can deliver

this loan to Ukraine very quickly." The 27-nation bloc hopes that other G7 countries will follow its lead and start providing loans too.

Zelenskyy said his priorities are to rebuild Ukraine's energy network, erect more bomb shelters, improve schools and buy more weapons and ammunition.

Von der Leyen arrived in Ukraine on Friday focused on helping the country to restore and reconnect its electricity grid and boost its heating capacity as winter approaches.

Around half of Ukraine's energy infrastructure has been destroyed during the war, and rolling electricity blackouts leave parts of the east in darkness for four hours at a time. Von der Leyen said it was the equivalent of all of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia losing electricity.

## Israel hits Beirut with deadly strike

Associated Press

BEIRUT — An Israeli strike on Beirut on Friday killed at least three people and wounded more than a dozen others, Lebanese health officials said, the first Israeli attack on the Lebanese capital in months that came after Hezbollah pounded northern Israel with rockets.

Israel announced the strike, but didn't immediately specify the target in Beirut's crowded southern suburbs, where Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group holds sway.

Lebanon's Health Ministry reported that at least three people were killed and 17 others wounded as local networks broadcast footage of wounded people being pulled from the ruins of a flattened building and ambulances rushing to the scene of the strike.

The strike in Dahiyeh, just kilometers from downtown Beirut, hit during rush hour, as people were leaving work and students headed home from school.

The escalation came as the region awaited the revenge promised by the militant group's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, for this week's mass bombing attack on pagers and walkie-talkies belonging to Hezbollah members.

Israel's rare strike on the Beirut suburbs came after Hezbollah pounded Israel with 140 rockets, which the Israeli military said came in three waves targeting sites along the ravaged border with Lebanon.

Following the attacks, the Israeli military said that it had struck areas across southern Lebanon targeting Hezbollah infrastructure but didn't provide details of damage.

Hezbollah said that its attacks had targeted several sites along the border with Katyusha rockets, including multiple air defense bases as well as the headquarters of an Israeli armored brigade they said they'd struck for the first time.

## Replica of the Oval Office opening in DC

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Washington is getting a new tourist stop that offers visitors the next best thing to being in the Oval Office: an identical replica of President Joe Biden's office, right down to his desk, the armchairs in front of the fireplace and the weathered family Bible resting on a side table.

And when Biden's successor takes office next year, the full-scale replica Oval Office at "The People's House: A White House Experience" will be redecorated to look exactly like the new president's office, said Stewart McLaurin, president of the White House Historical Association, which is opening the doors of its technology-driven education center to the public on Monday.

A separate space in the center called the "Immersive Theater" uses technology to transform into some of the more notable rooms in the White House every

five minutes.

"A terrific thing about this Oval Office, unlike the current Oval Office, is if you're visiting us you can come and you can sit in this chair and be the president of the United States," McLaurin said, talking about the desk chair as he led The Associated Press on a tour of the center before the opening.

Few people ever set foot in the Oval Office. It is not on the White House public tour route. But at "The People's House," not only will visitors get to see what one of the most famous offices in the world looks like, they can experience it, too.

"You can take a call from Mr. Putin or anybody you'd like to receive a call from, have your photo taken there," McLaurin said. "You can sit on the sofas or in the president's chair as you've visualized him sitting there and you see him on the news talking with a visitor or a head of state. You can do the

same thing right there in front of the fireplace."

The wallpaper, draperies, rug, furniture, paintings and other artwork are exact replicas of the furnishings as they are currently in the Oval Office. The plan is to change the decor with each future president.

"It is exactly like President Biden's, exactly," McLaurin said. "Even the family Bible with the weathered elements are duplicated."

Except for the "digital column" in the center of the room that shows visitors how the physical office has evolved throughout the presidency. It also turns into a mirror so visitors can see themselves standing in the Oval Office.

Technology is also used to transform the "Immersive Theater" into each of the five rooms on the White House State Floor: the East Room, the Red, Blue and Green Rooms and the State Dining Room.

# Ohtani keeps showing flair for the dramatic

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Shohei Ohtani keeps showing a flair for the dramatic during his historic first season with the Los Angeles Dodgers.

The Japanese superstar became the only player in major league history with 50 home runs and 50 stolen bases, doing so with a slew of firsts.

Ohtani had the first three-homer game of his career — all coming after the sixth inning — his first six-hit game and a franchise and career-record 10 RBIs in Miami on Thursday. No one in MLB history has done that before.

He finished the night with 51 homers and 51 steals.

“Going for a home run is not the ideal way for me to hit a home run, so I try to focus on quality at-bats,” Ohtani said through an interpreter.

He also stole two bases and nearly hit for the cycle, but was thrown out at third trying to

stretch his second double into a triple while showing off his rare combination of speed and power.

Ohtani resumes trying to top himself on Friday at Dodger Stadium against the Colorado Rockies. His previous bests were 46 homers and 26 stolen bases in 2021, when he won the first of his two American League Most Valuable Player awards while playing for the Los Angeles Angels.

Now he’s the favorite for NL MVP honors.

It seems there are no limits for Ohtani. He was the fastest player to reach the 40-40 mark with a ninth-inning grand slam against Tampa Bay in his 126th game on Aug. 23.

Now he has nine games left to see what else he can do in the regular season.

The Dodgers clinched a postseason berth for the 12th consecutive season with their 20-4 rout of the Marlins. It’s nothing

new for them, but it is for Ohtani. He has played 865 games without making a postseason appearance, more than any other active player.

Ohtani made it clear in signing a \$700 million, 10-year deal with the Dodgers last December that competing for a championship is what drives him.

“The No. 1 goal is to get to the postseason and win the World Series,” he said last month.

During his six seasons with the Los Angeles Angels, they never made the playoffs or had a winning record.

The NL West-leading Dodgers are looking to lock up their 11th division title in 12 seasons.

Ohtani’s amazing feats are occurring during a season in which his closest friend betrayed him and he isn’t pitching while he rehabilitates from elbow surgery last offseason.

He skipped the Home Run Derby during All-Star weekend in July to avoid further injury,

although as designated hitter he slugged a three-run homer in the National League’s loss.

Not pitching has kept Ohtani’s arms and legs fresher and quicker, while allowing him to focus and improve on other parts of his game. He’s honed his craft of running and stealing bases, learning how to get good jumps off opposing pitchers by studying video of their tendencies.

Dodgers fans could be witnessing a once in a generation side of Ohtani’s game. Once he resumes pitching every five days next year, his legs may not allow him to steal as many bases.

The Ohtani effect is visible off the field, too.

Fans created mob scenes in and around Dodger Stadium during his two bobblehead giveaways. The final Ohtani promotion is Saturday when T-shirts featuring his likeness will be given to the first 40,000 fans.

## Guardians pushing unexpected season into playoffs

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Soaked to the skin from being sprayed with Champagne and beer, manager Stephen Vogt stood in the middle of the clubhouse and triumphantly lifted a fake jeweled championship belt over his head like a conquering boxer.

Cleveland will fight for a real one in October.

Led by their 39-year-old rookie manager, who has pushed all the right buttons for months, and a superb bullpen, the Guardians clinched one of the AL’s six playoff spots on Thurs-

day with a 3-2 win over the Minnesota Twins — Cleveland’s major league-leading 42nd comeback.

A most unexpected season will include a postseason.

One of baseball’s youngest teams can end decades of playoff heartbreak for a franchise enduring baseball’s longest active World Series title drought.

“This is really special,” said Vogt, a former All-Star catcher who had zero managing experience when the Guardians hired him in November. “The goal is to get in and then from here we

keep pushing. You get in, you have a chance.”

The Guardians are the second AL team to qualify for the 2024 postseason, following only the New York Yankees, who clinched a spot on Wednesday and will return to the playoffs after a one-year absence — an eternity for their spoiled fans.

New York was slated to contend. Cleveland, not so much.

But in their first season under Vogt, who was on his farm in Washington shoveling cow manure when the team’s front office called to offer him the job, the Guardians have been one of

baseball’s best stories and biggest surprises.

They weren’t expected to do much coming off a 76-win season, which ended with beloved manager Terry Francona’s retirement. The feeling heading into this year was the road back to title contention could be long.

But the Guardians have been atop the AL Central since mid-April, and in a season in which there doesn’t appear to be any clear-cut powerhouse favorite, they’ll enter the playoffs with a shot to win their first title since 1948 — when they were known as the Indians.

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# Gilbert reaches 200 Ks as Mariners win

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Logan Gilbert allowed two runs pitching into the sixth inning and reached the 200-strikeout mark for the season, J.P. Crawford had a key two-out RBI single as part of Seattle's three-run first inning, and the Mariners beat the New York Yankees.

Seattle salvaged the final game of the series and stayed on the fringes of the playoff race, pulling two games behind Minnesota and Detroit for the final wild-card spot in the American League ahead of a six-game road trip to Texas and Houston.

A day after clinching a post-season berth, the Yankees had their lead in the AL East trimmed to four games after Baltimore's victory. They also received a major scare from star outfielder Juan Soto in the seventh inning.

Soto slid into the short wall in foul territory down the right-field line while making a highlight-reel catch. After a lengthy visit from manager Aaron Boone, athletic trainers and seemingly every one of his teammates, Soto remained in the game and was shaking out his left leg.

The play was initially ruled a foul ball, but was overturned to a catch on replay.

**Orioles 5, Giants 3:** Anthony Santander hit a game-winning home run — his 42nd of the season — and host Baltimore edged closer to the postseason with a victory over San Francisco.

Santander's two-run shot off Ryan Walker (9-4) in the bottom of the ninth came after Casey Schmitt's game-tying single off Seranthony Dominguez in the top half.

It landed just a few feet over the ground crew shed in right-center to end an afternoon that began with Baltimore having lost three in a row and eight of 10 to start five games behind New York in the AL East and 2½ up on Kansas City for the top wild card place.

**Braves 15, Reds 3:** Matt Olson hit two of Atlanta's six home runs, Chris Sale coasted to his major league-leading 18th win and the visiting Braves beat Cincinnati.

The Braves pulled 1½ games behind the Mets for the final NL wild-card spot.

Sale pitched five innings, allowing two runs and five hits with two walks and six strikeouts. Along with his career-best win total, Sale (18-3) also leads the majors in ERA (2.38) and strikeouts (225).

**Blue Jays 4, Rangers 0:** Kevin Gausman pitched five no-hit innings before exiting with lower back tightness, Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hit two solo homers after that and visiting Toronto beat Texas to avoid a series sweep.

Texas managed only two singles against Gausman and four relievers.

Gausman (13-11) struck out six and the only runner he allowed was on a walk in the fifth. The 33-year-old right-hander threw 38 of his 58 pitches for strikes before Dillon Tate struck out two of the three batters he faced in a perfect sixth.

Génesis Cabrera then took over in the seventh, and Josh Smith lined the first pitch sharply into right-center for a hit, though he was thrown out trying to stretch it for a double.

Guerrero has 30 homers after going deep in the seventh and ninth innings. His first multi-homer game this season was the 10th in his career.

**Rays 2, Red Sox 0:** Zack Littell allowed one hit over seven innings and host Tampa Bay beat Boston.

Littell (8-9), who made his team-leading 28th start in his first full season as starter, struck out seven and did not issue a walk. After Edwin Uceta pitched a perfect eighth, Garrett Cleavinger worked a 1-2-3 ninth to get his sixth save in seven chances.

Nick Sogard's two-out single

in the third was Boston's only hit of the game.

Boston starts a three-game series at Fenway Park against Minnesota on Friday, trailing the Twins and Detroit by four games for the final AL wild card.

**Pirates 3, Cardinals 2:** Yasmani Grandal homered, Nick Gonzales drove in the winning run with a single in the eighth inning, and visiting Pittsburgh beat St. Louis to snap a three-game losing streak.

Pirates starter Luis Ortiz allowed two runs on five hits and had seven strikeouts in six innings. Carmen Mlodzinski (4-5) and Dennis Santana each tossed a scoreless inning, and Aroldis Chapman pitched the ninth to earn his 10th save in 15 chances.

Cardinals starter Erick Fedde allowed one run on four hits and struck out three.

Gonzales singled up the middle off Ryan Fernandez who entered the game after JoJo Romero (7-3) walked pinch hitter Connor Joe with two outs in the top of the eighth.

**Mets 10, Phillies 6:** Mark Vientos, Pete Alonso, Brandon Nimmo and Francisco Alvarez homered off Taijuan Walker, and host New York scored 10 runs in three straight games for the first time in their 63-year history with the victory.

Philadelphia, which leads the NL East by six games over second-place New York, failed in its second attempt to clinch after losing Wednesday at Milwaukee. The Phillies would clinch a playoff berth with one win over the Mets during the four-game series and would clinch their first division title since 2011 with two victories over the Mets this week.

New York won its fourth straight game and for the 16th time in its past 20, maintaining a two-game lead over Atlanta for the NL's final wild-card position.

**Diamondbacks 5, Brewers 1:** Brandon Pfaadt tied an Ari-

zona franchise record by striking out seven straight batters to highlight his dominating performance as the visiting Diamondbacks boosted their playoff hopes by beating Milwaukee.

Arizona is tied for second place in the NL wild-card standings with the New York Mets.

Milwaukee was playing one night after clinching its third NL Central title in four years.

Pfaadt (10-9) collected a career-high 12 strikeouts while allowing just one run and two hits in seven innings.

**Cubs 7, Nationals 6:** Seiya Suzuki homered, Cody Bellinger drove in three runs and host Chicago topped Washington to stave off elimination from the postseason.

Joey Gallo hit a three-run home run for Washington, which has lost four straight.

The Cubs trailed 6-5 after Gallo's shot in the sixth off reliever Drew Smyly, but took the lead for good with a two-run seventh. Bellinger singled in the tying run and Isaac Paredes came up next to tag reliever Robert Garcia (3-6) with an RBI groundout.

Dansby Swanson added three hits and scored four times for Chicago.

**Astros 3, Angels 1:** Jon Singleton's tiebreaking two-run double with two outs in the eighth inning lifted host Houston over Los Angeles.

The game was tied 1-1 when Ryan Miller (0-1) walked Yorlan Alvarez and Kyle Tucker to start the eighth. A fielder's-choice grounder by Yainer Diaz sent Alvarez to third.

Jeremy Peña grounded out on a ball that rolled just in front of the batter's box before the Angels intentionally walked Victor Caratini to load the bases.

Singleton then smacked his two-strike double, a line drive to center field to score Alvarez and Diaz.

Houston's magic number to clinch the AL West dropped to five.



# Rodgers sparkles as Jets defeat Patriots

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Aaron Rodgers was in total control in a superb homecoming performance that kept the cheers and chants going from the giddy New York Jets fans.

And this time, Rodgers was able to walk off the field — healthy and a winner.

The star quarterback threw two touchdown passes while being showered with “Aa-ron! Rod-gers!” chants throughout, New York’s defense was dominant and the Jets rolled to a 24-3 victory over the New England Patriots in their home opener Thursday night.

“It was a really special night,” Rodgers said. “All those chants are really meaningful.”

Rodgers started his first game at MetLife Stadium since leaving the field just over a year ago with a torn Achilles tendon in New York’s opener. The 40-year-old quarterback showed no signs of the injury — or playing in his third game in 11 days — while scrambling several times and making off-balance throws all night, slicing through New England’s defense with surgical precision.

“It felt great,” Rodgers said. “I was feeling real good out

there. I felt good in pregame. I told you guys after Week 1 that it’s going to be a process and I’ll continue to extend plays once I feel more comfortable. This was kind of a first step in playing like I know I’m capable of playing.

“I felt like I was, you know, myself.”

Rodgers finished 27 of 35 for 281 yards with TD tosses to Garrett Wilson and Allen Lazard as the Jets (2-1) ended an eight-game home losing streak against the Patriots (1-2).

“He may not be what he used to be, but he still has plenty in those legs,” a smiling Jets coach Robert Saleh said of Rodgers. “His arm is still 30 and his mind is still operating at a high level.”

New York, which stopped a 15-game skid against New England last season in Bill Belichick’s final game as the Patriots’ coach, sacked Jacoby Brissett five times. Drake Maye, the No. 3 overall pick in April, made his NFL debut when he replaced Brissett — who was 12 of 18 for 98 yards — with 4:24 to play.

Maye finished 4 for 8 for 22 yards and was sacked twice, but Patriots coach Jerod Mayo wasn’t sure he would be making a quarterback change any time soon.

“I don’t know,” the first-year coach said. “We talk every single week that you’re competing for a job. We’ll get together as a coaching staff and see where it goes.”

Breece Hall ran for a score for the Jets, who also snapped a six-game skid in Thursday night games.

And there was never much of a doubt in this one between the AFC East rivals.

“A lot of good things to build on from this game,” said Rodgers, who jogged onto the field to a thunderous ovation.

Soon after, he sent the crowd into a frenzy again.

After the Jets’ first drive stalled, Rodgers marched them down the field — with a little help by a mental mistake from the Patriots.

A first-down pass from Rodgers to Hall was stopped for no gain, but Jahlan Tavai lifted the Jets running back and slammed him to the turf with a move more suitable for the wrestling ring. The 15-yard penalty put the ball at New England’s 31.

Four plays later, Rodgers threw a quick out to Lazard on his left. The receiver made a move and Alex Austin reached out to try to stop him, but instead

got only a handful of Lazard’s undershirt that stretched several yards like a rubber band before Lazard broke away and zipped into the end zone for a 13-yard touchdown.

Lazard immediately ran over to his quarterback and handed the ball to Rodgers, who had thrown his first touchdown pass at home for the Jets.

Rodgers and the Jets kept things going on their next possession, capping a 13-play, 91-yard drive with a 1-yard run by Hall that was reversed by video review after it was originally ruled he was short of the goal line.

Joey Slye’s 44-yard field goal cut the Patriots’ deficit to 14-3 with 3:56 left in the first half.

New York made it 21-3 with 6:18 remaining in the third quarter when Rodgers zipped a pass to his right and found Wilson, who toe-tapped in the front corner of the end zone for a 2-yard touchdown.

It marked the third straight game the Jets had at least three touchdowns on offense.

After Chuck Clark forced and recovered a fumble by Rhamondre Stevenson, the Jets increased their lead on a 28-yard field goal by Greg Zuerlein.

## Arch Manning set to get his first start for No. 1 Texas

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — No. 1 Texas will start Arch Manning at quarterback Saturday against Louisiana-Monroe while regular starter Quinn Ewers continues to recover from a strained muscle in his abdomen, coach Steve Sarkisian said Thursday.

It will be the first career start for Manning, a second-year freshman. He relieved Ewers in the second quarter last week against UTSA, and passed for four touchdowns and ran for another in a 56-7 Texas victory.

Manning is the son of Cooper Manning, the grandson of for-

mer NFL quarterback Archie Manning, and the nephew of Super Bowl-winning QBs Peyton and Eli Manning. He was one of the highest-rated recruits in the country coming out of high school after the 2022 season.

“Arch is more than capable” of being the Texas starter, Sarkisian said. “I don’t think he has to focus on leading right now. I think he needs to focus on knowing what he’s supposed to do and do it at a high level.”

The Longhorns are No. 1 for the first time since 2008, and Saturday’s matchup with the Warhawks is Texas’ last game

before the program starts its first SEC schedule against Mississippi State on Sept. 28.

“We feel like Quinn has made great strides ... (but) I’m looking forward to his future as a player and also the future of this season for us, the longevity, and getting him one more week healthier for the long term, is good for us as we’re getting ready for SEC play,” Sarkisian said.

Ewers missed several games over the past two seasons with shoulder and sternum injuries. Sarkisian insisted he will return as the starter when he is ready.

“He’s in really good spirits,”

Sarkisian said of Ewers. “All the goals that we had for him coming into this season are still there for him. I think we have a national championship-caliber team, and he’s the quarterback of that team. We still have that in front of us to go do that.

“With some of the games we have coming up down the road, this guy’s going to be in New York for the Heisman, whether he wins it or not. He has the ability to be a top five NFL draft pick. ... Saturday, him not playing in this game, is not going to impact those three things and the goals we set for him.”

# Clark, Reese change the WNBA landscape

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Year 1 of the Clark & Reese Show has been unlike anything the WNBA has ever seen.

Sure, this season's final chapter is still unscripted with the playoffs set to start Sunday. But the rookie seasons and attention Caitlin Clark and Angel Reese have had makes the league's outlook extremely bright beyond this postseason.

Sold-out arenas became the norm. Soaring television ratings helped expand the fan base. Clark, Reese, the presumptive league MVP A'ja Wilson and others continually chased record-breaking statistics. And routine conversations and social media posts spurred sometimes heated debates about everything from basketball to culture.

"Watching the basketball that's been played this season and the talent that's been on the floor across the league, it's been phenomenal," Chicago Sky veteran Lindsay Allen said. "The two rookies, Caitlin and Angel — Angel has been huge for us and has been setting records. The basketball has been at a very, very high level and the interest has been, too."

It's impossible to ignore how much the sport has evolved since Clark, Reese and arguably the best rookie class ever arrived in April. The timing for the league was perfect, too.

Clark and Reese brought the swagger, confidence and passion they exuded in a rivalry that captivated college basketball fans. That momentum continued into the pros and has elevated the profile of everyone around the league.

And as much as everyone attempted to manage the lofty expectations, Clark and Reese, in particular, exceeded them.

The Indiana Fever guard's résumé includes rookie records for scoring (761), 3-pointers (120) and All-Star Game assists (10). She broke the league's single-game (19) and single-season records for assists (329) while becoming the first rookie to ever post a triple-double. Now, she believes a title run is possible in the playoffs.

"Once we get there, I think it'll feel a little more real and, obviously, we're not just happy to be there," said Clark, who helped Indiana end the second-longest playoff drought in league history at seven years. "We really believe we can compete with every single team that's going to be in the playoffs. Obviously, the only team we didn't beat this year was the (Las Vegas) Aces and the only way we would see them, I think, would be in the Finals."

Reese was equally efficient, perhaps more proficient, in her impressive season.

The Chicago rookie forward established new league marks

for single-season rebounds (446), offensive rebounds (172) and overall rebounding average (13.1). Though Reese didn't hold the single-season rebound record long, because Wilson broke it while Reese was sidelined with a season-ending injury.

Reese did become the first rookie with an All-Star Game double-double, and she became the first WNBA player to record back-to-back games of 20 or more rebounds while her 24 double-doubles broke the league's rookie record.

The only real disappointment has been the wrist injury that ended Reese's season after 34 games, an absence that could keep the Sky out of the playoffs and possibly throw a wrench into Reese's Rookie of the Year hopes.

The Clark-Reese dynamic continues to fuel debates among fans — similar to the barber-shop discussions about Larry Bird-Magic Johnson in 1980 when they each played leading roles as rookies.

Their polarizing personas put Clark & Reese squarely in the middle of discussions about everything from hard fouls to technical fouls, even cultural issues — including sexuality and race.

But there's no doubt that their presence — and their rivalry — opened the door to more endorsements and more fan engagement, including children who

increasingly showed up in the players' jerseys long before tip-off.

From the corn maze featuring Clark in northwestern Indiana to Reese's presence on a large electronic billboard in Chicago to promote blue jeans or the tears of joy streaming down the cheeks of Wilson and her teammates when she broke the league's single-season scoring record at Indiana, everyone seems to have a favorite moment.

"I've been in this league long enough to play alongside some amazing players, Hall of Fame players, and this one is no different," Aces forward Alysha Clark said, wiping her eyes while sitting next to Wilson. "When you have players of this caliber playing now, appreciate that because one day she's not going to be here. She's going to retire and go on to live her life and people are going to marvel at what she's done and I'm like, 'Marvel at it now.'"

Fans of Clark and Reese share similar sentiments about the two 22-year-olds who seem destined to be the face of the league for years to come and cornerstone pieces on the 2028 U.S. Olympic Team.

But it's not just a bright future for the rookies, it's also a bright future in a league that has seen ticket demand and visibility soar while playing in front of packed arenas.

## NBA expands scope of some coach's challenge reviews

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The NBA has expanded the permissible scope of coach's challenge reviews on some out-of-bounds plays, saying Tuesday that if a foul should have been called on the play it now can be assessed shortly after the fact.

The league's Board of Governors approved the move on the second day of its two-day meet-

ing in New York, after it was unanimously recommended by the league's competition committee last week. The change will take effect this season.

The review change could have come into play at least once in last season's playoffs, when Dallas' Kyrie Irving fouled Minnesota's Jaden McDaniels and the ball went out of bounds. No foul was

called on the play, and even though the review clearly showed Irving hitting McDaniels' arm, the ball was awarded to Dallas because it went out off of McDaniels.

When such out-of-bounds plays have reviews triggered by coaches challenging now, on-court officials and the NBA Replay Center "will be able to review the video to determine

whether a foul proximate to the violation should have been called," the league said, providing that certain criteria are met.

Those criteria: whether the players involved in the uncalled foul are the same or different players than the ones involved in the out-of-bounds violation under review, and how much time has elapsed between the uncalled foul and the violation.