

Search on for sniper who killed Kirk

Associated Press

OREM, Utah — The sniper who assassinated Charlie Kirk is believed to have jumped off a roof and fled into a neighborhood after firing one shot and has not been identified, authorities said Thursday in disclosing they have recovered a high-powered, bolt-action rifle they believe was used in the attack and are reviewing video footage of the person they believe was responsible.

The shooter appeared to be of college age and blended in on the university campus where Kirk was killed Wednesday, said Beau Mason, the commissioner of the Utah Department of Public Safety. It remained unclear how far the shooter has traveled, though law enforcement officials say nearby woods where the rifle was found have been secured.

Kirk's casket was to be flown from Utah to Arizona aboard Air Force Two on Thursday.

Even as law enforcement officials revealed new details about an attack they called targeted, much remained unclear nearly 24 hours later, including the sniper's identity, motive and whereabouts. Two people detained Wednesday were released after neither was determined to be connected to the shooting, but by Thursday officials expressed confidence they had tracked the shooter's movements on campus in the run-up to it.

Later Thursday, the FBI released two photos of a person of interest in connection with the shooting as investigators appealed to the public for information. The photos show a person wearing a hat, sunglasses and a long-sleeve black shirt.

Law enforcement recovered a Mauser .30 caliber bolt-action rifle hidden in a towel in a wooded area near the university campus along what they suspect to be the shooter's path as they fled

the scene, according to information circulated among law enforcement and shared with The Associated Press. Besides the spent cartridge recovered in the chamber, three other rounds were loaded in the magazine. The weapon and ammunition are being forensically analyzed by law enforcement at a federal lab for clues that could help identify the shooter or the motive.

Kirk, a close ally of President Donald Trump, was killed in broad daylight while speaking about social issues at a Utah Valley University campus courtyard. The circumstances brought renewed attention to the escalating threat of political violence in the United States that in the last several years has cut across the ideological spectrum. The killing drew bipartisan condemnation, but a national reckoning over ways to prevent political grievances from manifesting as deadly violence

seemed elusive.

The attack was captured on grisly videos circulating on social media that show Kirk speaking into a handheld microphone when suddenly a shot rings out. Kirk can be seen reaching up with his right hand as blood gushes from the left side of his neck. Stunned spectators gasp and scream before people start running away.

Trump said he would award Kirk the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the U.S., while Vice President JD Vance and his wife, Usha, were set to visit with Kirk's family in Salt Lake City. Vance posted a remembrance on X chronicling their friendship, dating back to initial messages in 2017, through Vance's Senate run and ultimately praying after hearing of the shooting. Kirk played a pivotal role in setting up Trump's second Republican administration, Vance wrote.

House passes defense bill with pay raise for troops

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The House approved an annual defense policy bill on Wednesday that authorizes a 3.8% pay raise for troops, bolsters support for European partners and restricts gender-affirming medical treatment.

Many Democrats refused to vote for the legislation due to several Republican amendments that target transgender individuals and forbid the Defense Department from funding certain health care for them. The vote was 231-196.

"None of these amendments are remotely necessary," said Rep. Adam Smith of Washington, the top Democrat on the Armed Services Committee. "They are an effort to take advantage of a culture-war partisan issue to

drive a wedge into this bill. It doesn't belong here."

The provisions include a ban on Tricare, the military's health care program, from providing gender-related medical treatment and on the Exceptional Family Medical Program from approving gender transition procedures.

Rep. Nancy Mace, R-S.C., won approval for amendments that prohibit males at military service academies from participating in female athletics and that require individuals on military installations to access single-sex spaces that correspond with their sex.

The Senate is voting on its own version of the legislation, and both chambers will need to negotiate and vote on a final version before the bill can be sent to President Donald

Trump's desk.

Divisive social issue provisions are typically stripped from the final bill.

The legislation's primary focus is on reforming the Pentagon's slow and costly weapons acquisitions process — reducing decision timelines for requirements from three years to as few as three months.

It also builds on the quality-of-life improvements for military members initiated under last year's defense policy bill.

Service members would see a 3.8% pay raise under the bill, as requested by the Trump administration.

The family separation allowance, which helps offset expenses incurred when a service member is separated from their family for more than 30 days, would go up from \$250 to \$400 per month.

Lawmakers target Pentagon over UFO sightings

By LINDA F. HERSEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Descriptions of mysterious aircraft that withstood a missile strike and hovered over a U.S. Air Force base highlighted veterans' firsthand reports of UFO sightings at a dramatic hearing by a special House task force collecting evidence on "unidentified anomalous phenomena."

But one of the veterans speaking Tuesday before the House Oversight and Government Reform Task Force on the Declassification of Federal Secrets complained he faced retaliation by the Defense Department and intelligence officials that included blacklisting from em-

ployment at federal intelligence agencies.

Air Force veteran Dylan Borland, a former geospatial intelligence specialist at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia, claimed he faced reprisal after reporting a UAP event he witnessed.

Borland said a triangular aircraft hovered above him for several minutes after he stepped outside for a cigarette break while on overnight duty at Langley Air Force Base in 2012.

"This craft interfered with my telephone, did not have any sound and the material it was made of appeared fluid or dynamic," Borland told the task force. "It displayed zero kinetic disturbance, sound or wind dis-

placement."

The UAP then rapidly "ascended to commercial jet level" and left the area at a high rate of speed, he said.

Borland said he was interviewed by AARO in 2023 about the incident, but his claims were dismissed.

AARO — the Pentagon's All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office — was established to investigate UAP sightings by military personnel. He said the agency's assessments do not support the reported sightings by military personnel.

AARO has maintained it has no verifiable evidence from anecdotal reports of extraterrestrial activity or technology.

Borland said he faced discrediting because of his report, as well as workplace retaliation and "manipulation of his security clearance."

Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, R-Fla., who is chairwoman of the task force, accused the Defense Department and intelligence community of a "lack of transparency."

She said the task force has been denied access to video and files related to UAP incidents.

Luna suggested there is a cover-up by defense officials of evidence about UAP encounters. "The American people are not fragile and do not need to be shielded like children from reality," Luna said.

Marine Corps Ospreys to remain in Australia

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

U.S. Marine Corps MV-22B Osprey tiltrotors will stay in Australia when a rotational force returns home this fall, according to the country's defense department.

Marines have been deploying annually to the Northern Territory on six-month rotations since 2012. This year's Marine Rotational Force-Darwin includes 2,500 Marines.

Tiltrotors have been part of the rotations since 2017, when they arrived at Royal Australian Air Force Base Darwin. The green light to store and maintain the Ospreys was announced Thursday in an Australian news release.

"At the conclusion of this year's 14th MRF-D rotation, MV-22 aircraft will remain behind in Australia," the department said. "This will increase availability of the aircraft for

training, significantly reduce transportation costs and remove the import-related impost on Australian border agencies."

The Ospreys will be positioned at Toowoomba Wellcamp Airport, Capt. Johnny Fischer, a spokesman for the rotational force, said.

"Initially, Marines will handle maintenance and preparation, with contracted support assuming sustainment responsibilities later," he said. "Before

returning to flight, each Osprey will undergo comprehensive inspections, system checks and test procedures conducted by certified Marine Corps professionals."

Prepositioned American military equipment played a role in the Talisman Sabre drills, involving more than 40,000 troops from the United States, Australia and 17 other nations training across the southern continent from July 13 to Aug. 4.

Navy sailor charged in slaying of shipmate

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

A Navy sailor is charged with murder and sexual assault in connection with the death of a fellow service member whose badly decomposed body was found just a few miles from Naval Station Norfolk in Virginia.

Seaman Jeremiah Copeland, a culinary specialist assigned to

the destroyer USS James E. Williams, also is facing additional charges of sexual misconduct, making false statements, wrongfully broadcasting or distributing intimate photographic data and obstructing justice in the death of Angelina Resendiz, according to the Navy judge advocate general corps' website.

Resendiz, a culinary special-

ist also assigned to Williams, was first reported missing May 29.

But it wasn't until June 3 — five days after she was last seen or in contact with family and friends — that a statewide missing adult alert was issued.

That lag occurred because the Navy initially considered Resendiz absent without official

leave, a response that has drawn criticism from her family and congressional inquiries into the handling of her disappearance.

Twelve days after Resendiz was first reported missing, her body was found June 9 in a wooded area about 10 miles from Naval Station Norfolk and returned to her family later that month.

S. Korean workers held in raid depart US

Associated Press

ATLANTA — A plane carrying more than 300 workers from South Korea who were detained during an immigration raid at a battery factory in Georgia last week left Atlanta on Thursday, bound for South Korea.

The workers traveled by bus from a detention center in southeast Georgia to Atlanta earlier in the day for their flight, which is expected to land in South Korea Friday. South Korea's Foreign Ministry said the detainees released by U.S. authorities included 316 Koreans, 10 Chinese nationals, three Japanese nationals and one Indonesian.

More than 300 Koreans were among about 475 workers detained during last week's raid at the battery factory under construction on the campus of Hyundai's auto plant west of Savannah.

The workers had been held at an immigration detention center in Folkston.

South Korea's President Lee Jae Myung called Thursday for improvements to the United States' visa system, saying Korean companies will likely hesitate to make new investments in the U.S. until that happens.

Lee said during a news conference that Korean and U.S. officials had a back-and-forth dis-

cussion over whether the detainees would be leaving under "voluntary departure" or deportation.

While those discussions were ongoing, U.S. officials started to return the detainees' belongings. Then, however, "everything suddenly halted," Lee said, adding that they were told that was due to instructions from the White House.

"President [Donald] Trump had directed that the (detainees) should be allowed to return home freely and those who didn't want to go didn't have to," he said. "We were told that, because of that instruction, the process was paused and the ad-

ministrative procedures were changed accordingly."

A South Korean Foreign Ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the diplomatic process, said Trump had halted the process to hear from South Korea on whether the Koreans should be allowed to stay to continue their work and help train U.S. workers or should be sent back to South Korea.

Lee said during his news conference that the U.S. gave the detainees a choice between staying and going home. Ultimately, one South Korean national who has relatives in the U.S. chose to stay, Lee said.

Senate Republicans hold off Dems on Epstein info release

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a close vote, Senate Republicans defeated an effort Wednesday by Democrats to insert language into Congress' annual defense authorization bill that would have forced the public release of case files on the sex trafficking investigation into the late Jeffrey Epstein.

The Senate voted 51-49 to dismiss the changes to the bill, with Republican Sens. Josh Hawley of Missouri and Rand Paul of Kentucky joining with all Democrats in opposition.

For months, Democrats have clamored for the release of what's become known as the Epstein files, looking for practically every opportunity to force Republicans to either join their push for disclosure or publicly oppose a cause that many in the Republican base support. President Donald Trump as he was running for president signaled that he was open to releasing a full accounting of the case, but is now trying to dismiss the push as a "Democrat hoax."

So far, Democrats have been successful in forcing Republican

leadership to grapple with the issue, yet it was unclear whether they would actually be able to crack Trump's hold on congressional Republicans to force legislation through Congress.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, a South Dakota Republican, said earlier this week that the Justice Department "has already released tons of files" on Epstein.

Still, many in the Republican base — as well as some victims of Epstein's abuse — have been unsatisfied with what the Justice Department has so far released.

The calls for disclosure of Epstein's case have at times consumed Congress, looming over politics even more than when Epstein killed himself in a Manhattan jail while awaiting trial in 2019 on charges that said he sexually abused and trafficked dozens of underage girls. The case was brought more than a decade after he secretly cut a deal with federal prosecutors in Florida to dispose of nearly identical allegations. Epstein was accused of paying underage girls hundreds of dollars in cash for massages and then molesting them.

Musk briefly loses crown as world's richest person

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The battle among billionaires for bragging rights as the world's richest person got heated Wednesday with the surprising surge of an old contender: Larry Ellison.

In a stunning few minutes after markets opened, stock in Ellison's Oracle Corp. rocketed more than a third, enough for him to temporarily wrest the title from its longtime holder Elon Musk and hand it to the software giant's co-founder. But the stock market is fickle, and Musk was back on top by the end of the day, at least according to Bloomberg, as Oracle gave up a bit of its earlier gains.

For those keeping score, the difference now is a billion, which isn't much given the size of the figures: Musk's \$384.2 billion versus \$383.2 billion for Ellison.

The dueling fortunes are so big each could fund the lifestyles of 5 million typical American families for a year, about the entire population of Florida, allowing them to all quit their jobs.

The brief switch in the ranking came after a blockbuster earnings report from Oracle powered

by multibillion-dollar orders from customers as the artificial-intelligence race heats up.

Musk became the world's richest person for the first time four years ago. A big reason is his stake in a hot, but now cooling, electric car maker Tesla. Stock in the company has been moving in the opposite direction of Oracle's, dropping 14% so far this year. Musk also controls several private companies, including rocket maker SpaceX, his artificial intelligence company xAI and the former Twitter, now called X.

Ellison, 81, owns about 40% of Oracle, which means its surging stock added \$100 billion to his net worth in little over a half-hour after the stock market opened.

The night before, after trading had closed, the company announced in an earnings report that it had struck more than \$300 billion worth of new deals, including contracts with OpenAI, Meta, Nvidia and Musk's xAI. It said that it now expects revenue from its cloud infrastructure business to jump 77% to \$18 billion this fiscal year, then rise to \$144 billion in four years after that.

Russian drones in Poland alarm NATO

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — Poland's prime minister pledged Thursday to push ahead with a "great modernization program" for his country's military and Finland's president warned of further unease over security in Europe, a day after Russian drones struck on Polish soil and alarmed NATO leaders about what the Kremlin's future territorial ambitions might be.

The incursion Wednesday, which came during unrelenting Russian strikes on neighboring Ukraine, deepened long-standing fears that the three-year war between Poland's neighbors could precipitate a wider conflict. U.S.-led efforts to steer Moscow and Kyiv toward a peace settlement have so far failed to get traction.

European officials described the incursion as a deliberate provocation, forcing the NATO alliance to confront a potential threat in its airspace for the first time and compelling it to take

stock of its military response.

NATO's supreme commander in Europe, U.S. Air Force Gen. Alexis Grynkeiwich, said Thursday that the alliance wasn't certain about the number of drones that entered Polish territory, nor whether they were fired intentionally.

"But we will learn lessons. We will learn of things that we need to enhance our posture, to handle these limited incursions," Grynkeiwich said in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Several European leaders said they believed the incursion amounted to an intentional expansion of Russia's assault against Ukraine.

The foreign ministers of Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania published a joint statement calling the incursion "a deliberate and coordinated strike constituting an unprecedented provocation and escalation of tension."

President of Finland Alexander Stubb, who met Thursday with President Volodymyr Zel-

enskyy in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, said now "the line between war and peace has been blurred" and that Wednesday's events were another milestone following Russia's illegal seizure of the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine in 2014.

The Kremlin said it had nothing to add to a Wednesday statement by Russia's Defense Ministry, which insisted that Russian forces had not targeted Poland and that it was open to discuss the incident with Polish officials.

The U.N. Security Council scheduled an emergency meeting on the drone incursion on Friday afternoon at Poland's request.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk addressed Polish troops at an air base in the central city of Lask on Thursday, praising the quick response from the troops and NATO allied forces from the Netherlands.

But the response also brought questions about the wisdom of

using advanced fighter jets to shoot down relatively cheap drones. Poland expects to receive its first F-35 fighter jets from the United States next year, Tusk said. It will be the first delivery of some of the 32 aircraft expected by 2030 as part of a support package finalized five years ago, he said.

Polish President Karol Nawrocki, visiting a base in Poznan-Krzesiny on Thursday, struck a defiant tone in a statement that said Poland "doesn't get scared by Russian drones."

The Polish Air Navigation Agency announced that Poland was introducing air traffic restrictions in the eastern part of the country. It said the step was taken at the request of the Polish army for national security reasons.

Poland said some of the drones that entered its airspace Wednesday came from Belarus, where Russian and local troops have begun gathering for war games scheduled to start Friday.

Philippines protests China's plan for nature reserve

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines protested on Thursday a plan by China to establish a nature reserve at one of the most hotly disputed shoals in the South China Sea and demanded that Beijing immediately withdraw it.

China's State Council on Wednesday announced the approval of a plan to create a nation-

al nature reserve at the Scarborough Shoal. The aim is to protect a coral reef, according to the National Forestry and Grassland Administration.

The Scarborough Shoal is one of many South China Sea islands, islets and reefs that are claimed by China and its neighbors, including the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

Its Philippine name is the Bajo de Masinloc.

The Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila said a diplomatic protest was underway "against this illegitimate and unlawful action by China as it clearly infringes upon the rights and interests of the Philippines in accordance with international law."

The Philippines has declared that any Chinese construction at

Scarborough, which Beijing, Manila and Taipei all claim, would be a red line.

China's State Council said in its notice Wednesday that the "establishment of the Huangyan Island National Nature Reserve is an important guarantee for maintaining the diversity, stability and sustainability of the natural ecosystem of Huangyan Island."

Qatar: Israel 'killed any hope' of hostage release with strike

Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar — Qatar's prime minister said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "killed any hope" of releasing hostages still held in the Gaza Strip after Israel attacked Hamas leaders in Do-

ha.

The comments from Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, ahead of appearing at the United Nations on Thursday, underscored the wider anger among Gulf Arab countries over Israel's strike

that killed at least six people.

"I was meeting one of the hostages' families the morning of the attack," Sheikh Mohammed told CNN in an interview aired late Wednesday. "They are counting on this (ceasefire) mediation. They

have no other hope for that."

His remarks came as thousands of Palestinians continued to flee Gaza City ahead of Israel's impending offensive there.

The numbers leaving the city have grown in recent days.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Head of megachurch indicted while in prison

NY NEW YORK — The longtime head of a Mexican megachurch who is serving more than 16 years in a California prison for sexually abusing young followers has been charged with racketeering conspiracy and sex trafficking for allegedly victimizing members of the church for decades, authorities said Wednesday.

A federal grand jury in New York returned the indictment alleging that Naason Joaquin Garcia, 56, and five others exploited the church for decades to enable the systemic sexual abuse of children and women for the sexual gratification of Garcia and his father, who died in 2014.

Garcia was taken into federal custody early Wednesday in Chino, Calif., where he is serving a more than 16-year sentence after pleading guilty in 2022 to two state counts.

Garcia is the head of La Luz del Mundo (The Light of the World), which claims to have 5 million followers worldwide. Believers consider him to be the “apostle” of Jesus Christ.

Police arrest boy with 23 guns over school threats

WA TACOMA — A 13-year-old boy described by police as obsessed with school shooters was arrested on multiple firearms possession charges and causing a threat after they say they found social media posts about intentions to kill and seized 23 guns and ammunition from his home.

The boy pleaded not guilty to a total of five charges, four of

them felonies, in juvenile court on Monday.

Firearms were mounted on walls and handguns were found unsecured throughout the home, sheriff's Deputy Carly Cappelto said in a news release Monday.

“Several pieces of evidence from the suspect's bedroom indicated he was obsessed with past school shooters and imitated similar behaviors with photos and inscriptions throughout his room,” she said. Loaded magazines with school shooter writings on them were removed.

The boy's parents said their son had no intention of harming anyone.

Zoox launches robotaxi service in Sin City

NV LAS VEGAS — Amazon's Zoox on Wednesday launched its robotaxi service in Las Vegas, offering free rides through parts of the entertainment mecca for anyone willing to gamble on the safety of a driverless vehicle.

The Las Vegas debut of Zoox's long-planned ride-hailing service reflects the Amazon-owned robotaxi maker's confidence in the safety of its boxy vehicles after two years of testing them in the city.

The robotaxis initially were only available to employees in Las Vegas before gradually expanding to friends and family members. Now, anyone with the Zoox app will be able to request a ride to five designated locations, including Resorts World, the Luxor hotel and the New York-New York hotel. The longest distance the Zoox robotaxis will travel is about three miles while carrying up to four pas-

sengers.

All rides will be provided for free for at least the first few months. Once it begins charging for rides in Las Vegas, Zoox says its prices will be comparable to Uber and Lyft.

Clash over college class content leads to removals

TX COLLEGE STATION — A professor at Texas A&M University was fired and others were removed from their positions after a video surfaced in which a student confronted the instructor over her teaching of issues related to gender identity in a class on children's literature.

The firing of Melissa McCoul, a senior lecturer in the English department with over a decade of teaching experience, came after political pressure from Republican lawmakers, including Gov. Greg Abbott, who had called for her termination.

The incident prompted Glenn Hagar, the chancellor of the Texas A&M University System, to order an audit of courses at all 12 schools in the system.

In an email, McCoul referred all questions to her attorney, Amanda Reichek. Reichek said in a statement that McCoul has appealed her termination and “is exploring further legal action.”

Texas A&M University President Mark A. Welsh III said in a statement Tuesday he directed the campus provost to fire McCoul after learning the instructor had continued teaching content in a children's literature course “that did not align with any reasonable expectation of standard curriculum for the course.”

In her statement, Reichek

pushed back on Welsh's claims that McCoul's teaching did not match the course description.

Welsh also ordered the removal of the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the head of the English Department from their administrative positions.

The controversy began on Monday after Republican state Rep. Brian Harrison posted a video, audio recordings and other materials on a thread on the social media site X. Harrison called for the professor and Welsh to be fired for “DEI and LGBTQ indoctrination.”

Democrat defeats vet in US House special election

VA FAIRFAX — Democrat James Walkinshaw, a politician with experience working on Capitol Hill, has won a special election to be the next U.S. House representative of the Virginia district home to the state's most populous county.

Walkinshaw's victory in Virginia's 11th Congressional District helps Democrats winnow Republicans' narrow majority in the House.

Walkinshaw, who has served on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors since 2020, defeated Republican Stewart Whitson, an Army veteran and former FBI agent.

Tuesday's special election was set to fill the seat of Rep. Gerry Connolly, who died of esophageal cancer in May.

Walkinshaw previously served as Connolly's chief of staff for more than a decade and had received the representative's endorsement before his passing.

— From wire reports

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Lyles-Bednarek rematch set for track worlds

Associated Press

TOKYO — With a message-sending staredown, then the two-handed shove that followed, then the trash talk that came after that, Noah Lyles and Kenny Bednarek set the stage for what could be the best legit sprint rivalry track has seen in decades.

Their next showdown: track and field world championships in Tokyo.

Whether it was merely a dose of WWE-like bluster or there's really something gnawing at two of the world's best sprinters, the mix-up after Lyles' 200-meter win at last month's U.S. championships delivered a ready-made storyline for a sport that struggles to capture the world's imagination the way it did in the Usain Bolt era and before.

Worlds start Saturday when track unfolds its big tent in Tokyo for the first time since the COVID-tinged 2021 Olympics.

The highlight could very well be the Sept. 19 showdown ex-

pected in the 200-meter final between Lyles, the three-time defending world champion at that distance, and Bednarek, who has beaten a less-than-100% Lyles in the race at the last two Olympics.

Since that shove, Bednarek has said he and Lyles have discussed things behind closed doors and "everything is sorted."

But this quote from Bednarek, the 26-year-old, two-time Olympic silver medalist, just minutes after the race, has been reheated and rehashed aplenty since their tiff on Aug. 4:

"Unsportsmanlike (expletive) and I don't deal with that," he said. "It's a respect factor. He's fresh. Last time we lined it up, I beat him, that's all I can say. Next time we line up, I'm going to win. That's all that matters."

Underdog Richardson

As always, all eyes in the

women's 100 will be on Sha'Carri Richardson, though she is a longshot to repeat as world champion.

The favorite is Richardson's training partner, Melissa Jefferson-Wooden, who is undefeated at 100 meters this year, has the season-best time of 10.65 seconds and recently beat Richardson by .32 at a race in Brussels.

Olympic champion Julien Alfred is also a contender.

Richardson made headlines at nationals when news emerged of her arrest on a domestic violence charge for an argument that escalated at the Seattle airport with her boyfriend, Christian Coleman.

Coleman did not pursue the case and Richardson expressed her remorse on social media. Meanwhile, in a year plagued by injury, she failed to qualify for the 200 meters, where she won a bronze medal at worlds in 2023.

Keeping the Faith

Virtually every time Faith Kipyegon steps on the track, she's aiming to set a record, or make history, or both.

In June, the Kenyan fell six seconds short in her much-hyped Nike-backed attempt to become the first woman to break the 4-minute barrier in the mile.

But less than two weeks later, she came back and broke her own record (for the second time) in the 1,500 meters — the metric mile — finishing in 3 minutes, 48.68 seconds at the Prefontaine Classic.

"It's a mindset," Kipyegon said. "If you have it set in your mind that, I want to achieve this goal and do this, then it's all about the mind. And also the preparation and the vision."

Kipyegon is eligible to defend her title in both the 1,500 and 5,000 meters in Tokyo. She has not raced at a distance longer than 3,000 meters this year.

Toyota turns heads with speed in NASCAR playoffs

Associated Press

When Toyota entered NASCAR's premier series in 2007, the manufacturer was concerned more about making races than winning 200 of them.

In its first year, Toyota drivers suffered through nearly 100 failed qualifying attempts — but the lack of speed didn't dissuade Joe Gibbs Racing from signing with the automaker for the 2008 season despite its drivers' concerns.

"Certainly, I was worried when we switched over," JGR driver Denny Hamlin said Sunday after winning at World Wide Technology Raceway to make Toyota the fourth manufacturer to reach the 200-victory mark in Cup. "Obviously, it was a big leap of faith by everyone at Joe Gibbs Racing. The drivers were kind of like an innocent bystander. We were going to live and die by those decisions that JGR made. It turned out to be the best partnership that they could imagine."

Two races into the 2025 NASCAR Cup Series playoffs, Toyota's blazing pace in trying to end a six-year championship drought has

emerged as a prevailing storyline.

After Toyota swept the top four and took six of the top seven spots in the playoff opener at Darlington Raceway, Hamlin and teammate Chase Briscoe claimed the top two spots at the 1.25-mile oval outside St. Louis commonly known as Gateway.

Toyota's Camrys have led 515 of 607 laps in the playoffs, and their all-around performance has left defending series champion Joey Logano marveling at the gap with Ford and Chevrolet.

"They're ridiculously fast," Logano said when asked about Toyota after his No. 22 Ford took fifth at Gateway. "They've got a lot of grip, and they've got a lot of horsepower. We've got a lot of work to do to catch up. We've got to be absolutely perfect in every category to contend, and we need them to make mistakes, which they do. We have the potential to do it, it's just going to be really challenging."

Logano has won two of the past three titles for Team Penske by winning the season finale at Phoenix, a track that is similar in size and shape to Gateway.

After failing to lead a lap at Phoenix in his

past two Championship 4 appearances in 2020-21, Hamlin is hopeful of being a factor again after leading a race-high 75 of 240 laps at Gateway.

"You just never know in this sport. It ebbs and it flows," Hamlin said.

Toyota Racing Development president Tyler Gibbs is also cautiously optimistic about the consistency across the manufacturer's nine-car lineup. Though Joe Gibbs Racing is Toyota's winningest organization with 166 victories (56 apiece by Hamlin and Kyle Busch, who won the most recent title for JGR and Toyota in 2019), 23XI Racing won the Brickyard 400 with Bubba Wallace (who has five top-10 finishes in seven races) and Legacy Motor Club has three top fives in the past three races.

"The tracks have suited us well and our drivers well," Gibbs said. "I think execution is going to be what wins races in the playoffs and is going to win the championship at Phoenix. The cars are so close, and that execution can take all that away. We're just going to keep our heads down and keep preparing the way we have."

Healthy Stafford in top form for Rams

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Even after missing nearly a month of training camp and sitting out the pre-season, Matthew Stafford had zero trouble getting up to his old tricks in the Los Angeles Rams' season opener.

Stafford also pulled out a couple of new tricks that showed he's still growing in his 17th NFL season.

The 37-year-old quarterback pulled off his latest no-look pass during the Rams' 14-9 victory over Houston, hitting Puka Nacua for a 25-yard gain after misdirecting the Texans' defense to clear space for his receiver down the seam.

With instincts honed over a long career, Stafford said he made the decision "in the moment" to try the audacious throw.

"I never know if anybody will notice any of the little stuff, but that's part of it," Stafford said Wednesday. "(Running back) Kyren (Williams) was excited on that one. He came up to me

afterwards and said, 'How do you do that?' Which is cool. But no, it's fun. Obviously, caught the snap, wasn't thinking it, and then just in the moment, (made) a play."

The pass not only led to a key first down, but demonstrated Stafford is still sharp and competitive after spending much of the past two months working through an aggravated disk in his back. The lingering injury had many observers questioning whether the Rams could contend for a playoff berth without a healthy Stafford, even while the quarterback said he was healthy and ready to play.

Stafford's facility with no-look passes is part of his lore, particularly after he famously hit Cooper Kupp in the fourth quarter of the Rams' Super Bowl 56 victory with a pass that inspires YouTube breakdowns with hyperbolic titles like: "Best Throw Ever?"

But earlier in that same fourth quarter, Stafford broke new ground when he hit Da-

vante Adams for a 24-yard completion in which Stafford perfectly feathered a ball to the back shoulder of his new teammate, who alertly broke stride to haul it in.

It was a throw and catch that looked just like a vintage hoo-kup between Adams and Aaron Rodgers when the two were teammates with the Packers — and even Stafford knew it.

"I know he's really good at that kind of stuff just from playing against him and watching him torment my team back in the day," said Stafford, who quarterbacked the Packers' NFC North rivals in Detroit for 12 years. "So yeah, I know he's got that. I've played a long time. He's played a long time. I understand that's an opportunity."

Stafford said he and Adams haven't had much time to work on those intricate, high-level connections in practices due to Stafford's back injury, but they're building chemistry every day.

Coach Sean McVay dialed up

the play, but he said Stafford figured out how to make it work in tight coverage from star defensive back Derek Stingley.

"Look at when he lets that go, and that's against one of the premier corners in this league," McVay said, noting Stafford released the ball before Adams had even looked back at his quarterback.

Stafford went 21-for-29 for 245 yards with one touchdown and no interceptions against Houston's elite defense. He was sacked three times — twice on the same drive in the fourth quarter that started with his back-shoulder throw to Adams — and hit six times, but he emerged from his first game action since January in good shape.

The Rams are on the road for the next two weeks with big tests for Stafford. Los Angeles visits Tennessee and pass rusher Jeffery Simmons on Sunday, followed by a trip to face the defending champion Eagles, who beat the Rams twice last season.

Irish plan to let QB Carr loose against Texas A&M

Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — No. 6 Notre Dame played it safe with a new starting quarterback on the road in its season-opening loss at then-No. 10 Miami.

It may have cost coach Marcus Freeman more than a victory. He also acknowledged losing some sleep. So with the Fighting Irish back on their own turf following a bye week, Freeman is ready to make a change — giving CJ Carr a longer leash against No. 16 Texas A&M on Saturday.

"I think we were very intentional about trying to protect the first-time starter early in the game, right?" Freeman said. "I was vocal about giving him easy reads, easy throws. Let's not just tell him to bomb the ball down the field every play, because he'll do that if we allow him to.

CJ will throw the ball down the field every single play."

Carr certainly has the arm strength to succeed, and the stat line from his first start — 19-for-30 with 221 yards, two touchdown passes, one TD run and one interception — was solid, not spectacular. But he did rally the Irish (0-1) from a 21-7 third-quarter deficit, played well enough to become the first Notre Dame quarterback to throw a TD pass and run for a score in his first career start since Brandon Wimbush in 2017, and after another week of practice appears to have earned more trust from Freeman. So this week, Notre Dame seems ready to turn Carr loose.

"He showed he's ready, he's capable," Freeman said. "As you saw as the game went on, we

were able to take some more shots. I still am a firm believer shots are a response to being able to have positive run plays, right? We have to be able to run the football. But we feel like, listen, CJ can execute the entire game plan, the entire playbook. He's a special player."

If Freeman could pinpoint one sequence in which Carr proved himself, it might be his 65-yard completion to Eli Rairdon that set up Notre Dame at the Miami 10-yard line in the fourth quarter. Carr rushed for 3 yards on the next play, then raced 7 yards to the end zone to tie the score at 24 with 3:21 to play.

Receiver Jaden Greathouse praised Carr's leadership as well, noting the key to Notre Dame's aerial attack is timing

and chemistry.

"You get a lot of different things during the game, some things you do expect, some things you don't expect," Greathouse said. "And so, you know, every game is an adjustment, and you just kind of have to take it how it comes. CJ can handle that quickly. He just has kind of a knack for feeling out where we're going to be and where we kind of want the ball, where we're kind of expecting the ball. That helps us a lot with our run after the catch and things like that."

The key, he believes, is running crisper routes and getting better ball placement than they had at Miami, facets that will improve in time.

Running the ball better would help, too.

Burger's 2 HRs lead Rangers to sweep Brewers

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Jake Burger homered twice and the playoff-chasing Texas Rangers beat Milwaukee 6-3 on Wednesday to complete a three-game sweep of the Brewers, who still have the best record in the majors.

Milwaukee, on the verge of being the first team to clinch a playoff spot, hadn't been swept since losing its first three games this season at the New York Yankees.

The Brewers quickly led 2-0 after Brice Turang and Jackson Chourio opened the game with back-to-back homers. They didn't score again until Rhys Hoskins' pinch-hit RBI single in the sixth that chased Merrill Kelly (12-7), the trade deadline acquisition from Arizona who scattered 10 hits and struck out six.

Freddy Peralta (16-6) missed a chance to be the first MLB pitcher to 17 wins. The All-Star right-hander struck out nine, but allowed five runs on a season-high 113 pitches in five innings.

Burger homered leading off the second to end Peralta's streak of 30 consecutive scoreless innings, two short of Teddy Higuera's franchise record set in 1987. Burger's 16th homer of the season was a two-run shot in the fifth for a 5-2 lead.

Astros 3, Blue Jays 2: Yainer Diaz drilled a tiebreaking home run in the ninth inning, Carlos Correa hit his 200th career homer and visiting Houston beat Toronto.

After the Astros' bullpen gave up a 2-0 lead in the bottom of the eighth, Diaz restored the lead with a one-out homer off Blue Jays closer Jeff Hoffman.

Hoffman (9-7) leads all MLB relievers with 15 home runs allowed this season.

Phillies 11, Mets 3: Max Kepler homered and drove in five runs, Bryce Harper also went deep and host Philadelphia moved closer to repeating as NL

East champions by routing New York.

Cristopher Sánchez (13-5) allowed one run and four hits in six innings as the Phillies opened a 10-game lead over the second-place Mets with 16 to play. Philadelphia, which lowered its magic number to seven for clinching the division title, went for a four-game sweep Thursday night.

Juan Soto homered and had three hits for skidding New York, which lost its fifth straight. It remained two games ahead of San Francisco for the final National League wild card.

Tigers 11, Yankees 1: Gleyber Torres hit a go-ahead, two-run single in the fifth inning and had three RBIs against his former team, leading visiting Detroit over New York for its first season-series win against the Yankees since 2011.

New York has lost consecutive games by 10 or more runs for the third time. The others came in September 1908 and August 1988.

The Tigers have outscored the Yankees 23-3 over the past two nights and won four of five against New York this year with one meeting left. Detroit moved past Toronto for the best record in the American League and opened a 9½-game AL Central lead.

Diamondbacks 5, Giants 3: Eduardo Rodriguez allowed one hit over 6½ innings and visiting Arizona beat San Francisco to avoid a series sweep.

The victory kept the Diamondbacks in the hunt for a postseason berth. Arizona entered Thursday 3½ games behind the New York Mets for the final NL wild card.

Athletics 5, Red Sox 4: Nick Kurtz joined Jose Canseco and Mark McGwire as the only Athletics rookies to hit 30 home runs and Lawrence Butler hit a ninth-inning walk-off single in a win over Boston and Aroldis Chapman, whose seven-week hitless streak ended.

Shea Langeliers led off the ninth with a double off Chapman (4-3), who hadn't surrendered a hit since July 23, a span of 50 batters and a franchise-record 17 appearances, the third-longest streak in MLB history since 1901.

Angels 4, Twins 3: Zach Neto hit a two-run homer, Mike Trout drove in two runs and host Los Angeles beat Minnesota.

James Outman also homered, doubled and made a pair of leaping catches for the Twins. But they fell to 64-82 and were assured their first losing record since 2022.

Royals 4, Guardians 3: Nick Loftin singled in the tying run and scored on Maikel Garcia's double in the seventh inning, sending visiting Kansas City over Cleveland.

The Royals snapped a three-game losing streak and moved within 3½ games of Seattle, which holds the third and final AL wild-card position. The Guardians are three games behind the Mariners.

Orioles 2, Pirates 1 (10): Paul Skenes struck out eight in five two-hit innings to surpass 200 strikeouts before leaving after a season-low 64 pitches in Pittsburgh's 10-inning loss to host Baltimore.

Rookie Dylan Beavers hit a winning single — his first walk-off hit — off Kyle Nicolas (1-1) to give the Orioles their seventh victory in eight games. Jackson Holliday pulled Baltimore even in the eighth with a single off Isaac Mattson.

Marlins 8, Nationals 3: Eric Wagaman hit a tiebreaking RBI single in the sixth inning, Xavier Edwards had a three-run homer among his three hits and Otto Lopez drove in two runs as host Miami overcame an early three-run deficit and beat Washington.

Robert Hassell III had an RBI single in the third inning and Daylen Lile and Luis Garcia Jr. knocked in runs in the sixth as the Nationals built a 3-0 lead.

Cubs 3, Braves 2: Carson Kelly homered for the first of three runs against reigning NL Triple Crown winner Chris Sale and visiting Chicago outlasted Atlanta to win the series.

Nico Hoerner went 3 for 4 and scored the final run for the Cubs. They have won six of 10 to hold onto the first NL wild-card spot.

White Sox 6, Rays 5: Mike Tauchman and Lenyn Sosa hit two-run doubles, Michael A. Taylor had an RBI double during a five-run second inning and host Chicago beat Tampa Bay.

Taylor started the second-inning scoring with an RBI double and Tauchman followed with a two-run double. After Kyle Teel walked, Sosa hit another two-run double.

Reds 2, Padres 1: Elly De La Cruz and pinch-hitter Miguel Andujar delivered RBI singles in the eighth inning as visiting Cincinnati beat San Diego to take two of three games in a series between NL playoff contenders.

Andrew Abbott (9-6) threw eight sparkling innings to help the Reds pull even with San Francisco in the wild-card standings, two games behind the New York Mets for the NL's final postseason berth.

Dodgers 9, Rockies 0: Blake Snell struck out a season-high 11 in six innings, Mookie Betts hit a grand slam in the eighth and host Los Angeles defeated Colorado for its fourth straight win.

Helped by their third series sweep of the Rockies this season, the Dodgers increased their NL West lead to three games over the Padres.

Mariners 4, Cardinals 2 (13): Leo Rivas led off the bottom of the 13th inning with a two-run homer and host Seattle outlasted St. Louis for its fifth consecutive victory.

The Mariners completed a three-game sweep and remained one game behind Houston atop the AL West. Seattle leads Texas by 1½ games for the final AL wild card.