

Trump gets royal welcome on UK visit

Associated Press

WINDSOR, England—President Donald Trump relished the glow of a British royal spectacle Wednesday, greeted at Windsor Castle on his state visit by King Charles III, military honor guards and mounted troops before paying a private tribute at Queen Elizabeth II's tomb.

Joined by first lady Melania Trump at St. George's Chapel on the castle grounds, the president placed a wreath in honor of Elizabeth, who died in 2022. Later, he sat with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, chief of staff Susie Wiles and other American officials for a musical performance from the chapel choir.

The pomp and pageantry are deliberate, meant to bolster ties with Trump at a time when his America First policies are putting pressure on trade and security arrangements around the globe. For the grandeur-loving

president, festivities involved 120 horses and 1,300 troops—including the largest guard of honor in living memory.

An opening day full of ceremony and good feelings will give way to the real work Thursday when Trump and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer meet, with the stakes high for the host country.

Trump's visit began with Prince William and his wife, Kate, meeting the presidential helicopter in the private Walled Garden on the vast Windsor estate, then walking the Trumps over to be greeted by Charles and Queen Camilla.

The guests traveled to the castle in a procession of horse-drawn carriages, past ranks of soldiers, sailors and aviators. The king and the Republican president chatted in the Irish State Coach during the short journey to the castle quad-

rangle, where Trump, accompanied by Charles, inspected an honor guard of soldiers in red tunics and bearskin hats.

They continued to chat and joke together as the day progressed, with the king putting his hand on Trump's back at one point. Trump stepped in front of the king during a review of troops, though Charles had gestured, inviting the president to do so and avoiding a violation of protocol. That was not the case in 2019, when Trump stepped in front of Queen Elizabeth during his first state visit.

The president and Charles also toured the Royal Collection Display in an ornate room where officials laid out five tables of artifacts on U.S.-British relations.

Among the items were 18th-century watercolors and documents on the United States seeking independence from King

George III.

There were materials from the first trans-Atlantic cable, including messages between Queen Victoria and President James Buchanan, as well as a 1930s hot dog picnic that a young Elizabeth wrote about, and a large glass vessel that President Dwight D. Eisenhower gave the queen during a 1957 state visit.

"Wow," Trump said as he looked at documents on U.S. independence.

"That's fascinating," Charles said.

The president, first lady, king and queen walked a red carpet to climb a riser under a tent on the East Lawn of the castle to watch the Beating Retreat, a military ceremony of music and parading.

No other U.S. president, or any other world leader, has ever had the honor of a second U.K. state visit.

Ex-admiral sentenced to six years in bribery case

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A retired four-star U.S. Navy admiral was sentenced on Tuesday to six years in prison for his conviction on corruption charges that he agreed to exchange a military contract for a lucrative postretirement job.

Retired Adm. Robert P. Burke — once the second-highest uniformed officer in the Navy — was commanding its forces in Europe and Africa when he engaged in a bribery plot with two business executives, according to federal prosecutors.

A jury convicted Burke of four counts, including conspiracy and accepting a bribe, after a trial in May. A separate trial for

Burke's two co-defendants — Next Jump co-CEOs Yongchul "Charlie" Kim and Meghan Messenger — ended with a hung jury and a mistrial last Thursday.

Burke, 63, declined to address the court before U.S. District Judge Trevor McFadden in Washington, D.C., sentenced him.

"This was blatantly unlawful, as you well knew," the judge told him. "But you did it anyway."

The judge told Burke that he betrayed the public's trust and his oath of office.

"This is a sad day and a sad chapter in the U.S. Navy," McFadden said.

Prosecutors sought a 10-year

prison sentence for Burke, saying he abused his powerful position to enrich himself at the Navy's expense.

"Burke's conduct was as blatant and egregious as it was damaging to the public's trust in its leaders and corrosive to the integrity of the procurement system," prosecutors wrote. "His offense demands accountability. His crime calls out for punishment."

Burke's attorneys say they will appeal his convictions. They cited his "lifetime of extraordinary public service" in asking the judge to spare Burke from a prison sentence.

"This is not a case of a career criminal," they wrote. "It is the case of a single, tragic, and

aberrant chapter at the very end of a life defined by honor, courage, and commitment."

Kim and Messenger agreed to pay Burke a \$500,000 salary with stock options projected to be worth millions of dollars, according to prosecutors. In exchange, they said, Burke ordered his staff to give a contract to Next Jump and promoted the company's product to other senior Navy commanders.

Burke's attorneys said a military commander with his experience could have landed a better-paying job in the private sector.

"He was not motivated by greed, but by a belief in the mission and product of the company," they wrote.

Chinese ships, aircraft seen near Okinawa

By KEISHI KOJA
AND RYAN M. BREEDEN
Stars and Stripes

Chinese warships and aircraft passed through a key waterway in Japan's southern islands as U.S. and Japanese forces staged their largest-ever joint exercise, Japan's military said.

The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force on Saturday spotted two Chinese guided-missile destroyers about 75 miles north-

east of Miyako Island, the Joint Staff said in a Tuesday news release. The ships passed through the Miyako Strait, a 155-mile-wide international waterway between Okinawa and Miyako, then continued into the Pacific.

A Chinese guided-missile frigate and a replenishment oiler followed the same route Sunday, according to the release.

The Miyako Strait is a vital passage in the Ryukyu Islands,

part of the so-called first island chain seen as a barrier to China's access to the Pacific.

Japan sent the destroyer JS Amagiri from Yokosuka and a P-3C patrol aircraft from Naha to track the Chinese ships.

Separately, a suspected Chinese drone was detected Monday between Yonaguni Island and Taiwan, while a Chinese Y-9 patrol aircraft was reported between Okinawa and Miyako.

Japan scrambled fighter jets in response, the Joint Staff said.

China may have been keeping tabs on Resolute Dragon, an annual U.S.-Japan exercise that began Sept. 11 and runs through Sept. 25 across Japan.

"I think that's the reason, but I can't say for sure," a Joint Staff spokesman said Wednesday. Some Japanese government officials may speak to the press only on condition of anonymity.

Trump: US targeted 3rd alleged drug ship sailing from Venezuela

The Washington Post

President Donald Trump disclosed Tuesday that the U.S. government had "knocked off" what he said was a total of three alleged drug smuggling boats, all apparently from Venezuela, a country whose leader his administration has villainized while dramatically escalating the use of deadly force in a bid to disrupt the Latin American narcotics trade.

The president, speaking to reporters outside the White House, offered no other details about the previously undisclosed incident.

The White House and the Pentagon declined to address questions about the third vessel, including when it was struck, where it was struck, and how many people were aboard.

Trump was responding to a question about what message the sudden spike in military activity was intended to send Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro when he informed reporters, "We knocked off actually three boats, not two, but you saw two."

It appears the president was referring to two recent social media posts of his. On Monday, he announced that U.S. forces had killed three alleged drug smugglers earlier in the day. He made a similar announcement Sept. 2, saying the U.S. military had killed 11 people in a boat also accused of transporting illegal narcotics to the United States.

In both posts, which appeared on Trump's Truth Social platform, the presi-

dent included overhead video of the boats erupting in flames.

The Trump administration has not identified what military assets were used in these operations and, to date, it has not publicized any evidence verifying who was on the boats — and what they were hauling — when U.S. forces blew them up.

In remarks following Monday's announcement, Trump suggested his administration was preparing to take military action against Latin American cartels that move illicit drugs over land as well. He did not identify specific groups, saying only, "We're going to be stopping them the same way we stopped the boats."

Speaking outside the White House on Tuesday, Trump accused Maduro, whom the administration has labeled an illegitimate head of state, of directing the movement of narcotics and criminals — "they're sending their prisoners," the president said — from Venezuela to the United States. Trump has shown a particular fascination with the criminal gang Tren de Aragua, alleging Maduro controls the group.

U.S. intelligence agencies, in an assessment from earlier this year, have said that Maduro's government "probably does not have a policy of cooperating with TDA and is not directing TDA movement to and operations in the United States."

Instead, the intelligence agencies assessed, Venezuela's government mostly considers the group an internal security threat but sometimes tolerates its activities within the country.

Ex-midshipman charged in Md. academy threat

Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — A former U.S. Naval Academy midshipman has been charged in federal court with making a threat across state lines related to a lockdown and shooting at the military college in Maryland last week, the U.S. attorney's office in Indiana said Tuesday.

Jackson Fleming, 23, was arrested Friday on suspicion of sending an online threat through a social media application concerning the academy, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Indiana said in a news release. Fleming, of Chesterton, Ind., was charged with one count of transmitting a threat in interstate communication, the release said.

Jonathan Bedi, Fleming's attorney, said "we intend to fight these charges in court vigorously."

"We are prepared to mount the strongest possible defense, and I am confident that when the complete facts emerge, Jack will be vindicated," he said.

Fleming attended the academy from June 30, 2021, to Jan. 5, 2024, the academy confirmed.

The threatening post triggered a lockdown at the academy Thursday. It prompted authorities to respond to what turned out to be a false report of a gunman. And during the investigation, a midshipman who had mistaken security personnel as a threat was shot in the shoulder in the confusion.

Prosecutors say Kirk shooting suspect confessed to partner

Associated Press

PROVO, Utah — As authorities worked feverishly to find the person who assassinated Charlie Kirk at Utah Valley University last week, the 22-year-old man now charged with the crime was texting with his romantic partner and acknowledging he was the shooter, court documents revealed.

Tyler Robinson fired a single fatal shot from the rooftop of a building overlooking the outdoor venue where Kirk was speaking to about 3,000 people on Sept. 10, investigators say. Afterward, prosecutors say he texted with the partner, who he lived with near St. George, Utah, about 240 miles southwest of the campus.

He said to look under his keyboard at their home. There was a note that said, "I had the opportunity to take out Charlie Kirk and I'm going to take it."

After expressing shock, his partner asked Robinson if he was the shooter. Robinson responded, "I am, I'm sorry."

Robinson was involved in a romantic relationship with his roommate, who investigators say is transgender.

The partner apparently never went to law enforcement with the information. Robinson remained on the run until the next night, when his parents recognized he was the person in a photo released by authorities and helped organize Robinson's peaceful surrender.

The partner was not named in the charging documents that contained the narrative of the shooting and were made public Tuesday when authorities charged Robinson with capital murder and other counts. Prosecutors intend to seek the death penalty.

Law enforcement officials say they are looking at whether others knew about or aided Robinson in the assassination. They have not said if the partner is among those being investigated but have publicly expressed appreciation for the partner shar-

ing information.

Utah County Attorney Jeff Gray said that DNA on the trigger of the rifle bolt-action rifle used to kill Kirk on the campus in Orem, south of Salt Lake City, matched Robinson. That rifle had been a gift from Robinson's grandfather, the prosecutor said.

Robinson appeared briefly Tuesday before a judge by video from jail.

Authorities have not revealed a clear motive in the shooting, but Gray said that Robinson wrote in a text about Kirk to his partner: "I had enough of his hatred. Some hate can't be negotiated out."

While court documents said Robinson wrote in one text that he planned the attack for more than a week, authorities have not said what they believe that entailed.

In addition to murder, Robinson was charged discharge of a firearm, obstructing justice and witness tampering.

Several DC deployment arrests dropped

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — More than 50 people have faced federal charges in Washington, D.C., since President Donald Trump's emergency law-and-order surge began last month. Already, prosecutors have dropped at least 11 of those cases, an unusually high collapse rate that judges say is wasting court resources.

The dismissals highlight the risks of Trump's emergency surge strategy: an unprecedented flood of arrests that has produced headline-grabbing numbers but faltered under judicial scrutiny, with some of the most serious cases—from assaults on federal agents to gun charges—unraveling before they ever reach trial.

On Tuesday, U.S. Magistrate Judge Matthew Sharbaugh dismissed two felony assault cases at the request of U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro's office. He delivered a blunt warning from the bench as he questioned whether prosecutors are making charging decisions before cases are properly investigated and vetted.

"That's not the way it's supposed to work, and it has real-world consequences," Sharbaugh said. "This is becoming a real concern for the court just given the sheer numbers."

Judges aren't the only ones pushing back. Grand juries have refused to return indictments at least eight times in six separate cases, an extraordinarily rare rebuke that underscores skepticism about the strength of the evidence in surge prosecutions.

Trump claims his emergency 30-day deployment of federal agents and National Guard members is making the streets safer for District of Columbia residents.

Dems stake out opposition to spending bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democratic leaders lashed out Tuesday at a short-term spending bill to avoid a partial government shutdown at the end of the month, warning Republicans they will not support a measure that doesn't address their concerns on the soaring cost of health insurance coverage for millions of Americans.

House Republicans unveiled the spending bill Tuesday. It would keep federal agencies funded through Nov. 21, buying lawmakers more time to work out their differences on spending levels and policy for the coming fiscal year that begins Oct. 1. Republicans said that

they were providing exactly what Democrats have insisted upon in past government shutdown battles—a clean funding bill free of partisan policy riders.

"It'll be a clean, short-term continuing resolution, end of story," House Speaker Mike Johnson told reporters. "And it's interesting to me that some of the same Democrats who decried government shutdowns under President Biden appear to have no heartache whatsoever at walking our nation off that cliff right now. I hope they don't."

The bill would generally fund agencies at current levels, with a few limited exceptions, in-

cluding an extra \$88 million to boost security for lawmakers and members of the Supreme Court and the executive branch. The proposed boost comes as lawmakers face an increasing number of personal threats, with their concerns heightened by last week's assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer and House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries have been asking their Republican counterparts for weeks for a meeting to negotiate on the bill, but they say that Republicans have refused.

The House is expected to vote on the measure by Friday.

Israel presses into Gaza City after strikes

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — The Palestinian death toll in the Israel-Hamas war surpassed 65,000 on Wednesday, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, as Israeli troops and tanks pushed deeper into Gaza City and residents fled the devastated area.

Israel's military said that air force and artillery units had struck the city over 150 times in the last few days, ahead of ground troops moving in. The strikes have toppled high-rise towers in areas densely populated by tent camps where thousands of Palestinians are sheltering. Israel claims the towers are being used by Hamas to surveil troops.

Overnight strikes killed at least 16 people, including women

and children, hospital officials reported. The death count in Gaza reached 65,062, with another 165,697 wounded, since Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack, said the Health Ministry, which is part of the Hamas-run government.

Israel's offensive has destroyed vast areas of Gaza, displaced around 90% of the population and caused a catastrophic humanitarian crisis, with experts announcing famine in Gaza City.

The ministry does not say how many of the dead were civilians or militants. Its figures are seen as a reliable estimate by the U.N. and many independent experts.

Meanwhile, Palestinians streamed out of the city — some by car, others on foot. Israel

opened another corridor south of Gaza City for two days beginning Wednesday to allow more people to evacuate.

More than half of the Palestinians killed in overnight Israeli strikes were in famine-stricken Gaza City, including a child and his mother who died in their apartment in the Shati refugee camp, according to officials from Shifa Hospital, which received the casualties.

The Gaza Health Ministry, meanwhile, said that multiple Israeli strikes hit the Rantisi Hospital for children in Gaza City on Tuesday night. It posted pictures on Facebook showing the damaged roof, water tanks and rubble in a hospital hallway.

The ministry said the strikes

forced half of some 80 patients to flee the facility. About 40 patients, including four children in intensive care and eight premature babies, remained in the hospital with 30 medical workers, the ministry said.

The Israeli military said it was looking into the strikes, but in the past it has accused Hamas of building military infrastructure inside civilian areas.

A coalition of leading aid groups Wednesday urged the international community to take stronger measures to stop Israel's offensive on Gaza City. It came a day after a commission of U.N. experts found Israel was committing genocide in the Palestinian enclave. Israel denies the allegation.

Chief says she was fired from CDC for refusing ultimatum

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Susan Monarez testified before senators on Wednesday that Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. fired her after she refused to endorse forthcoming vaccine recommendations without reviewing scientific evidence to support the guidance.

Monarez was ousted 29 days into the job, over disagreement with her boss on vaccine policies.

Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy, who chairs the powerful health committee Monarez appeared before, expressed skepticism over the explanations Kennedy has given over her firing. He praised President Donald Trump for his commitment to promoting health among Americans but made it clear he was befuddled by Monarez's removal. He noted that senators had just approved Monarez's confirmation with Kennedy praising her "unimpeachable scientific credentials."

"Like, what happened?" Cassidy said. "Did we fail? Was there

something we should have done differently?"

Monarez said in her testimony that Kennedy gave her an ultimatum: "Preapprove" new vaccine recommendations from an advisory CDC panel that Kennedy has stocked with some medical experts who doubt vaccine safety or be fired. That panel is expected to vote on new vaccine recommendations later this week. He also demanded Monarez fire high-ranking, career CDC officials without cause, she said.

"He said if I was unwilling to do both, I should resign. I responded that I could not preapprove recommendations without reviewing the evidence, and I had no basis for firing," Monarez told senators. "He said he had already spoken with the White House several times."

Kennedy has denied Monarez's accusations that he ordered "rubber-stamped" vaccine recommendations. He did, however, acknowledge during a testy Senate hearing earlier this month that he ordered Monarez to fire several top officials at the CDC.

Zelenskyy calls for an air defense system for Europe

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian forces bombarded the southern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia with rockets overnight, wounding 20 people, including four children, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday as he urged European leaders to make the Continent safe by building an ambitious air defense umbrella.

With the war grinding on since Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbor more than 3½ years ago, there has been no let-up in Russian strikes on civilian areas of Ukraine and its army's push on the roughly 620-mile front line.

A settlement to end the war appears to be no closer despite months of U.S.-led peace efforts. President Donald Trump's ultimatums and deadlines for Russian President Vladimir Putin to engage with proposals to stop the fighting have passed without obvious consequences.

Just over the past two weeks,

Zelenskyy said on Telegram, Russia has launched more than 3,500 drones, more than 2,500 powerful glide bombs and almost 200 missiles at targets inside Ukraine.

Russian glide bombs, usually dropped by jets at high altitude and far behind the front line, and drone swarms are a major challenge for Ukrainian defenses. Glide bombs aren't very accurate, but they leave big craters, and Ukraine has no effective countermeasure against them.

Russian drones also recently landed on Polish soil, prompting NATO to beef up the alliance's European air defenses as tensions with Moscow mounted.

"Now is the time to implement the joint protection of our European skies with a multi-layered air defense system. All the technologies for this are available," Zelenskyy said on Telegram. "We need investments and desire, we need strong actions and decisions from all our partners."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

County confirms 1st case of West Nile virus

WI LA CROSSE — A La Crosse County resident has been hospitalized with a confirmed case of West Nile virus, according to the La Crosse County Health Department.

The mosquito-borne disease has been previously detected in other parts of Wisconsin this year, resulting in several human and animal infections.

West Nile virus is spread to people through the bite of an infected mosquito, which they get from feeding on infected birds. It is not spread from person to person.

Eighty percent of people infected with the virus do not get sick, and those who do typically experience mild symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle ache, rash and fatigue.

Another orca seen carrying dead calf

WA EASTSOUND — Once again, an endangered orca in Washington state has been seen carrying her dead newborn calf in an apparent effort to revive it.

Researchers with the Center for Whale Research, SeaDoc Society and San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance said they received reports on Friday that the whale — identified as J36 — was pushing the dead calf in Rosario Strait, part of the Salish Sea in the San Juan Islands. They were able to confirm that the female calf, which still had its umbilical cord attached, was deceased.

Early this year, another Southern Resident orca — known as Tahlequah, or J35 — was observed carrying the body

of a deceased newborn. Tahlequah made headlines in 2018 for carrying a dead calf for more than 1,000 miles over 17 days.

Researchers said it wasn't clear if J36's calf had been born alive. J36 was not carrying the calf when researchers observed her on Saturday, said SeaDoc society spokesperson Justin Cox.

State to set COVID-19 vaccine guidelines

WI MADISON — Wisconsin will issue its own guidelines on making the COVID-19 vaccine available to people, regardless of new limitations issued by the federal Health and Human Services department under Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Gov. Tony Evers announced the directive Monday, which also ordered the state Department of Health Services to monitor and review vaccine requirements and the state's chief medical officer to issue a standing order requiring the vaccines be available at local pharmacies.

The state's insurance commissioner and the pharmacy examining board should continue to "remove barriers" to vaccine access and ensure they remain broadly available, the order states.

'Ghost ship' that sank in Lake Michigan found

WI MADISON — After decades of scouring the bottom of Lake Michigan, searchers have finally found the wreckage of a "ghost ship" that sank during a ferocious storm almost 140 years ago off the Wisconsin coastline.

The Wisconsin Historical Society and the Wisconsin Under-

water Archaeology Association announced Monday that a team led by researcher Brendon Baillod found the wreck of the F.J. King. Baillod said in an email to The Associated Press that the wreckage was discovered on June 28.

According to the announcement, Baillod's team found the ship off Bailey's Harbor, a town of about 280 people on Wisconsin's Door Peninsula, an outcropping of land jutting into Lake Michigan that gives the state its distinctive mitten-thumb shape.

The F.J. King was a 144-foot, three-masted cargo schooner built in 1867 in Toledo, Ohio, to transport grain and iron ore. According to the historical society and archaeology association's announcement, the ship ran into a gale off the Door Peninsula on Sept. 15, 1886, while moving iron ore from Escanaba, Mich., to Chicago.

New England's shrimp industry is struggling

ME PORTLAND — There's an effort underway to bring New England shrimp back to seafood customers — but fishermen have found few of the crustaceans, and the fishing industry that harvests them may face an even longer shutdown.

Fishermen have been under a moratorium on catching shrimp for more than a decade because of low population levels that scientists have attributed to climate change and warming oceans. The harvesters were allowed to catch a small number of shrimp this past winter as part of an industry-funded sampling and data collection effort.

The fishermen didn't catch

much though, and recent changes allow regulators to extend the moratorium for five years at a time instead of just one, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission officials said Monday.

Regulators will meet in December to determine whether to extend the moratorium, said Chelsea Tuohy, a fishery management plan coordinator with the commission.

1.7M gallons of sewage reported spilled in river

FL BRADENTON — Bradenton's wastewater plant recently spilled an estimated 1.7 million gallons of sewage into the Manatee River during an overflow at the plant, a report filed by the city says.

It's the largest spill reported this year at the wastewater plant. It comes as the city is in the midst of millions of dollars in upgrades to its aged and troubled sewer system.

While major sewage spills have been less frequent this year, the plant still regularly exceeds state limits for nutrients in its treated wastewater, a known contributor to water quality problems such as harmful algal blooms like red tide.

The city's report says that on Sept. 8, a plant operator noticed several sewage treatment systems overflowing, causing wastewater to run off the grounds into a nearby roadway and storm drain. To stop the overflow, operators opened the plant's bypass and allowed partially-treated sewage to discharge into the Manatee River for over five hours. Plant operators closed the bypass the next morning, the report said.

— From wire reports

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Horton has Cubs on cusp of playoff return

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Cade Horton arrived in Chicago thinking about October.

It's almost here for the talented right-hander. And his surging team, too.

The 24-year-old pushed the Cubs to the brink of a postseason berth with five mostly efficient innings in a 4-1 win over ace Paul Skenes and the Pittsburgh Pirates on Tuesday night, the latest gem in a string of them that has seen Horton quickly deliver on the promise Chicago saw when it selected him seventh overall in the 2022 amateur draft.

Horton joined the organization during a period of transition, as the core that helped the big league club become a playoff fixture (and in 2016, World Series champions) in the late 2010s moved on.

A little more than three years later, Horton has emerged as one of the key pieces of a savvy (and relatively quick) retooling that has returned the Cubs to prominence. While he's only been in the majors since May, the rookie certainly seems ready for the unique pressure that comes with getting handed the ball in October.

"I love pitching in high-stakes moments," Horton said after limiting the reeling Pirates to one run and three hits in five innings. "I feel like that's something I've loved doing my whole career. It's a lot of fun to go out there and compete when you're in the thick of it."

And Chicago is in the thick of it thanks in no small part to Horton, who has put together one of the most impressive second halves of a season in recent memory. The pitcher who weathered four eventful innings in his major league debut against the New York Mets in May has been dominant since the All-Star break.

Horton's 11-4 record includes an 8-1 mark since July 20, a span in which he's allowed all of six runs. The last pitcher to do that? Hall of Famer Bob Gibson during his iconic 1968 season.

"It's been a brilliant second half," Cubs manager Craig Counsell said. "There's nothing you can't like about it. He's been as good as anybody in the game."

Counsell had a feeling during spring training that Horton could be a factor for Chicago in 2025.

"You understand that he's a talented, talented pitcher that, if we laid a good foundation for him, we suspected that he was going to make an impact on this team," Counsell said when Horton was called up in May.

The opening couple of months were uneven as Horton found his footing. His ERA stood at 4.80 after he allowed 13 runs (10 earned) over back-to-back starts against Houston and Seattle in late June.

Since then, he's given up nine runs — total — fueled by an arsenal that includes a rising four-seam fastball that leaves his teammates' heads shaking.

"I know I'm at first base watching it, but I'm glad I don't have to be in the box against it," first baseman Michael Busch said. "It's a really legit pitch and just the command, the ability to just go out there every day and just throw strikes, pound the zone. It's fun to watch."

It's just not particularly fun to face. Pittsburgh had a little success early, scratching across a run in the first on an RBI triple by Oneil Cruz. Horton needed 27 pitches to get the first three outs. But he needed

just 52 to get the next 12 before being removed by Counsell, who admitted his budding ace probably had more to give.

The Cubs, however, are monitoring Horton's workload a bit. He has yet to throw more than 92 pitches in a start, though he's hardly complaining. Not even after tossing five no-hit innings against Atlanta earlier this month.

Chicago is sprinting toward the postseason with a club that could be a tough out. Horton suddenly finds himself a big part of it. And while the calendar says the NL wild-card round — where the Cubs are likely headed considering NL Central-leading Milwaukee's sizable lead — doesn't start until Sept. 30, Horton plans to use whatever regular-season starts he might have left as a dress rehearsal.

"I just feel like I want to prepare myself for the playoffs and kind of treat (every start) like it's a playoff game," he said. "That way, when we do get into the playoffs, it's not like an eye-opening moment. And that's when you have to just go back to scaling the moment down and just play the game like it's supposed to be played."

Baty leads Mets' power surge in win over Padres

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Brett Baty hit a two-run homer that capped a five-run first inning for the New York Mets, who beat the San Diego Padres 8-3 on Tuesday night to win consecutive games for the first time in two weeks.

Francisco Lindor, Pete Alonso and Cedric Mullins also went deep as the Mets improved to 4-9 this month. They won their second straight following an eight-game losing streak — their longest since 2018.

New York remained 1½ games ahead of Arizona in a four-team race for the final National League wild card.

Brandon Nimmo had an RBI single in the first and Jeff McNeil delivered a two-run double off an ineffective Michael King in the opener of a three-game series between

NL playoff contenders.

Jackson Merrill, Jake Cronenworth and Freddy Fermin homered for the Padres, who occupy the second wild-card spot, four games ahead of the Mets. San Diego stayed two games behind the first-place Los Angeles Dodgers in the NL West.

Struggling lefty Sean Manaea (2-3), serving in a piggyback role behind Clay Holmes, allowed one run in five innings of relief for the win. Holmes, completing his first full season as a starter, permitted three hits — including the homers by Merrill and Cronenworth — in four innings.

King (4-3), making his third start since May 18 following right shoulder and left knee injuries, set career highs by giving up eight runs and 10 hits over three innings.

The four homers he allowed tied a career worst set April 12, 2024.

Baty's 416-foot shot was his second homer in his last 23 games.

Alonso's solo shot in the second inning gave him 35 on the year, as he and Juan Soto (40 homers) are now the first New York teammates to reach 35 home runs in the same season since Carlos Beltrán (41) and Carlos Delgado (36) in 2006.

The Mets' power surge of five runs in the first inning came after scoring five or fewer in each of their previous 11 games.

New York turned to LHP David Peterson (9-5, 3.77 ERA) on Wednesday night to try for its third straight win, while the Padres sent RHP Nick Pivetta (13-5, 2.73) to get them back in the win column.

Raleigh, Canzone HRs power Mariners

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Cal Raleigh hit a pair of homers to match the Seattle season record set by Ken Griffey Jr., Dominic Canzone belted a career-best three homers of his own and the AL West-leading Mariners routed the fading Kansas City Royals 12-5 on Tuesday night for their 10th consecutive win.

Raleigh's first homer, a 419-foot shot off Michael Wacha while batting left-handed, gave him 55 on the season, breaking the record for a switch-hitter set by Yankees great Mickey Mantle in 1961. Raleigh's second shot, a 425-footer off Daniel Lynch IV as he batted right-handed, tied the club mark Griffey set during the 1997 season and matched the following year.

It was the 10th multihomer game this season for Raleigh and the 20th of his career. The All-Star catcher also doubled in the first inning and finished 3-for-5 with three RBIs, giving him 118 on the year.

"It just doesn't even seem real," said designated hitter Canzone, who on almost any other night would have been the star. "I mean, he just does it every single day, and he's doing it behind the plate as well."

Canzone homered in the second inning, the fifth and the ninth on a hot, humid, late-summer night in which balls were sailing out of spacious Kauffman Stadium. The designated hitter also had a pair of singles to finish 5-for-5 with four RBIs.

Cubs 4, Pirates 1: Michael Busch greeted Paul Skenes with the fourth leadoff home run of his career and visiting Chicago moved to the brink of its first playoff berth in five years with a victory over Pittsburgh.

The Cubs winnowed their magic number to one by chasing Skenes (10-10) during a rare rocky outing for the NL Cy Young Award favorite. Busch led off with his 29th homer of the season.

Nico Hoerner added three hits and Carson Kelly, Dansby Swanson and Mosié Ballesteros had two apiece for the Cubs in support of starter Cade Horton (11-4), who bolstered his NL Rookie of the Year credentials by limiting the Pirates to one run over five innings. The 24-year-old right-hander is 8-1 with a 0.92 ERA since the All-Star break.

Athletics 2, Red Sox 1: Brett Harris had a go-ahead single in a two-run sixth inning and the visiting Athletics rallied to beat Boston for their first five-game winning streak in over a year.

Tyler Soderstrom had two hits and an RBI double for the A's.

The Red Sox dropped into the third AL wild card, a half-game behind the Houston Astros and two games behind the New York Yankees.

Guardians 7, Tigers 5 (10): Steven Kwan, Angel Martinez, José Ramírez and Kyle Manzardo combined to give visiting Cleveland four extra-base hits in an extra inning for the first time in 64 years, and the Guardians beat Detroit for their 10th win in 11 games.

Tigers pinch-hitter Kerry Carpenter tied the score 3-3 with a two-out homer in the ninth.

Cleveland has a five-game winning streak for the fifth time this season, and improved to 11-6 in extra innings — the most extra-inning wins in the big leagues. The Guardians are 2½ games behind the Red Sox for the last AL wild card.

Diamondbacks 6, Giants 5: Jordan Lawlar's infield single with the bases loaded scored Corbin Carroll with the winning run in the ninth inning, and host Arizona erased an early four-run deficit to keep pace in the playoff race by beating San Francisco.

Both teams are chasing the Mets for the final NL wild card. The Diamondbacks remained 1½ games back with their fourth straight win.

The Giants fell three games behind New York.

Cardinals 3, Reds 0: Michael McGreevy pitched seven sharp innings, Thomas Saggese hit a two-run homer and host St. Louis beat Cincinnati.

It was another costly defeat for the Reds, who have lost four of five and dropped three games behind the Mets for the last NL wild card.

The Cardinals remained 4½ games back of New York with 10 to play.

Braves 6-5, Nationals 3-0: Chris Sale struck out nine while allowing three hits in eight innings, and Matt Olson hit a bases-loaded triple in the 10th to lead visiting Atlanta over Washington for a day-night double-header sweep.

The Braves took the opener as Olson homered for the fourth straight game and have won three in a row following a four-game slide.

The Nationals (62-90) reached 90 losses for the fifth straight year, a first for the franchise.

Brewers 9, Angels 2: All-Star Freddy Peralta allowed two hits, struck out 10 and won his NL-leading 17th game, Christian Yelich hit his 29th homer and drove in three runs and host Milwaukee beat Los Angeles.

Sal Frelick hit a sacrifice fly, Caleb Durbin, Andrew Vaughn and Jackson Chourio each drove in a run and William Contreras singled home two more for the Brewers.

Yankees 10, Twins 9: David Bednar just held on to get the final three outs, and visiting New York held on to beat Minnesota after nearly wasting a nine-run lead.

Anthony Volpe had two hits and an RBI in his return to the starting lineup after getting a cortisone shot in his left shoulder, and Trent Grisham hit a three-run homer in the second as every Yankees starter had a hit and they built a 10-1 lead by

the second.

Blue Jays 6, Rays 5: Joey Loperfido homered and George Springer had three hits and two RBIs as visiting Toronto beat Tampa Bay for its sixth straight win.

The Blue Jays (89-62), seeking their first AL East title since 2015, maintained a five-game lead over the second-place Yankees with 11 to play.

Astros 6, Rangers 5: Jeremy Peña went 3-for-3 and scored twice, Jose Altuve drove in two runs and host Houston held on for a victory over Texas.

Jesús Sánchez had a two-run single for the Astros, who nearly squandered a 6-0 lead. But they remained a half-game behind the red-hot Mariners for first place in the AL West and moved a half-game ahead of the Red Sox for the second of three AL wild cards.

Phillies 9, Dodgers 6: After Shohei Ohtani pitched five hitless innings for host Los Angeles, Philadelphia's Rafael Marchan hit a tiebreaking, three-run homer off Blake Treinen with two outs in the ninth inning for a win.

Brandon Marsh had a two-run homer and Max Kepler added a solo shot in a six-run sixth for the Phillies. The Dodgers then tied it in the eighth on Ohtani's 50th homer and Alex Call's sacrifice fly.

Marlins 6, Rockies 5: Eury Pérez pitched five scoreless innings, Dane Myers and Jakob Marsee each drove in two runs and visiting Miami beat Colorado for its fifth win in its last six games.

The Rockies, who were 1-for-7 with runners in scoring position, scored five runs in the last two innings but still lost their 110th game of the season.

Orioles 8, White Sox 7: Dylan Beavers tripled, homered and drove in three runs, Gunnar Henderson and Coby Mayo had three hits apiece and visiting Baltimore beat Chicago.

Nader gets surprise win in men's 1,500

Associated Press

TOKYO — This year's out-of-nowhere winner of the men's 1,500 meters hails from Portugal. It's Isaac Nader, who ran five wide down the stretch Wednesday night to pull what can only be described as a stunner at world championships, even against a field that lost three of its top contenders long before the finish line.

Nader took advantage of a leisurely pace and beat 2022 champion Jake Wightman, who also wasn't expected to contend, by .02 seconds. The winning time: 3 minutes, 34.10 seconds.

"There were 14 men in the final, and I thought it was possible to win," Nader said. "I told myself before the race that I was either going to finish 14, or I was going to finish first."

Reynold Cheruiyot finished third while one of the favorites, Niels Laros, faded at the end and wound up fifth. Another top contender, 2023 world champ Josh Kerr, pulled up lame in the third

lap and then finished the race nearly 30 seconds off the pace.

The 26-year-old Nader came in ranked eighth in the world and had never placed in a major championship. He was a 50-1 longshot.

"It's the same story every year in the 15," Wightman said. "Whoever goes in the favorite always seems to have a bit too much of a target. I don't think one person would have expected Nader to win that."

Laros, the 20-year-old from The Netherlands, was considered the odds-on favorite. His chances only got better when the reigning Olympic champ, Cole Hocker, got disqualified for jostling in the semifinals and the 2021 Olympic gold medalist, Jakob Ingebrigtsen, came to Tokyo out of form and didn't make it out of the opening heats.

Then, Kerr started limping at about the 800-meter mark — leaving Wightman and 2019 champion Timothy Cheruiyot as the only two racers left with

winning experience at the highest level.

Laros traded the lead with Cheruiyot over the first three laps but finished only one spot ahead of his placement at the Paris Games last year, where he was a bit player in a drama involving Kerr, Ingebrigtsen and Hocker.

"It's not the first time I'm surprised in this championship about something that happened in the 15," Laros said.

Nader's biggest win up to now was in the Dream Mile in Oslo in June — a race that didn't feature any of the top names in four-lap races.

That probably explained his look of pure shock when Nader looked up at the scoreboard and saw he was finishing first, barely ahead of Wightman, who stumbled to the ground at the finish but came up short.

Drama in pole vault before 1-2 finish for US

American pole vaulter Katie

Moon had one last try to clear her season best and, with that, capture her third straight world title. She nailed it, clearing 16 feet, $\frac{3}{4}$ inches to snatch away the title from another American, Sandi Morris.

Moon's chest brushed the bar on her way over and it wobbled back and forth, but didn't fall.

"It definitely wasn't an immediate moment of elation, because I wasn't sure," Moon said. "But I'd seen it settle enough that I knew it wasn't coming down. I obviously would've loved to have cleared it without touching it, but I'll take it."

Moon has now collected four of the last five major titles — the only miss coming at the Paris Olympics where she took silver.

Morris, the only American woman to clear five meters outdoors, said this was a bit of a heartbreaker, but not a tragedy.

It's was her fifth major silver medal — four at worlds and one at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Steelers bench rookie Johnson after kick return gaffe

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Kaleb Johnson's mental lapse in Pittsburgh's loss to Seattle has temporarily cost the rookie his job returning kicks.

Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said Tuesday that Johnson is off the kick-return team in the short term after the third-round draft pick opted not to chase after a live ball that bounced over his head early in the fourth quarter against the Seahawks.

Seattle's George Holani chased it down and fell on it just before it rolled over the end line for a gift touchdown that propelled the Seahawks to a 31-17 victory and erased Pittsburgh's early season momentum just as quickly as it appeared.

"I'm certainly going to give

him an opportunity to work his way back from that error," Tomlin said. "I believe in his talent. He's a sharp young man. He is a hard worker. So you leave the light on for him. You give him an opportunity to move on from it, but he has to do that."

Johnson returned kicks briefly early in his career at Iowa before becoming the Hawkeyes' starting running back. The Steelers selected him 83rd overall in the draft, enamored with his size (6-foot-1, 225 pounds) and ability to create what Tomlin described as NFL-quality runs against defenses stacked to stop him.

While Johnson has yet to crack the running back rotation led by Jaylen Warren and Kenny Gainwell, Pittsburgh hoped his vision would help him be

effective on special teams. The early returns have been OK, if not spectacular. Johnson was averaging 23.9 yards per return before his gaffe, believed to be the first kickoff recovery in the end zone for a score in 45 years.

Tomlin declined to specify who would take over Johnson's spot. He was benched immediately in the game, with Jaylen Warren lining up deep next to Gainwell on the ensuing kickoff after the Seahawks' recovery. It seems unlikely that Warren — who returned kicks earlier in his career — is a long-term solution given his increased workload as the Steelers' starting running back.

Pittsburgh (1-1) will try to regroup on the road next week at New England (1-1) with a defense that has been hit hard by

injuries. Rookie defensive lineman Derrick Harmon is expected to miss his third straight game with a sprained knee. Safety DeShon Elliott is likely to miss a second consecutive contest with his own knee issue and outside linebacker Alex Highsmith is out with an ankle injury.

There's a chance cornerback Joey Porter Jr. (hamstring) could return after sitting out against Seattle. Darius Slay (shoulder) and linebacker Patrick Queen (oblique) are expected to play.

The spate of injuries to a veteran group is one of the reasons a defense that began the year with lofty expectations has struggled. The Steelers are 29th in yards allowed and points allowed, and have just three sacks through two games.