

Many shoppers experience sticker shock on new cars

Average selling price tops \$50,000 for first time, says Kelley Blue Book. Here's why. **In Money**

College football Week 10: 6 teams remain unbeaten

After weekend free of upsets, a look at who has best chance to reach playoff. **In Sports**

Allison Williams skips horror for romance

"Regretting You" star says she didn't see herself as a romantic lead but is happy to make something that is "not too scary." **In Life**

USA TODAY

THE NATION'S NEWS | \$3 | WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2025

FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

'Total' ruin is feared in Jamaica

Hurricane Melissa brings dangerous winds, rain

Dinah Voyles Pulver, Thao Nguyen and Jeanine Santucci

USA TODAY

Catastrophic Hurricane Melissa made landfall along the southwestern coast of Jamaica on Oct. 28 with dangerous wind speeds of 185 mph and life-threatening storm surge, preparing to leave a wake of destruction across the island before turning its ferocity on southeastern Cuba.

The storm, now the strongest tropical cyclone of 2025 globally, killed at least seven people before it even hit. Its landfall is one of the most powerful in Atlantic Basin recorded history, the National Hurricane Center said.

It's the third Category 5 hurricane of the Atlantic season – the highest category possible on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale.

At 10 a.m. Eastern, the National Hurricane Center issued a dire warning: "LAST CHANCE TO PROTECT

See MELISSA, Page 2A



Port Royal in Kingston, Jamaica, was already flooding Oct. 27 as Hurricane Melissa approached. RICARDO MAKYN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Town's Catholic statues mark another fight of religious liberty

BrieAnna J. Frank and Peter Blandino

USA TODAY NETWORK

A showdown over Catholic statues on a public building in a Massachusetts city represents yet another fight in a national conversation about the separation of church and state.

Quincy Mayor Thomas Koch commissioned statues of St. Michael and St. Florian, the patron saints of police and firefighters, to adorn its new police headquarters. But more than a dozen residents are suing Koch, alleging that the city is violating religious neutrality as outlined in the state constitution.

A judge granted a preliminary injunction in mid-October, barring the statues from being installed as litigation continues.

Koch told The Patriot Ledger, part of the USA TODAY Network, that the city

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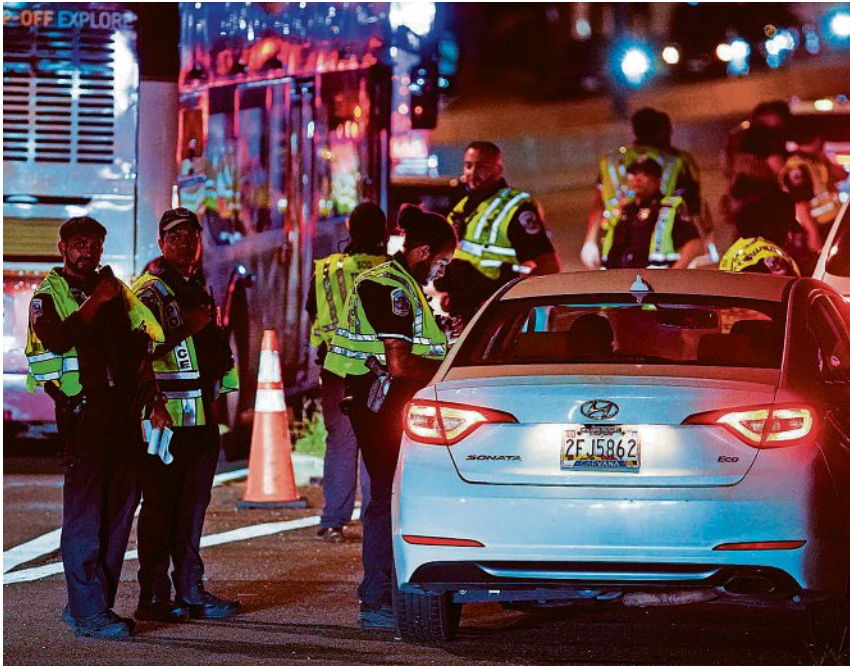
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Trump crackdown drawing backlash



Federal agents clash with protesters at the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement building on Oct. 12, in Portland, Oregon. MATHIEU LEWIS-ROLLAND/GETTY IMAGES

President says he's ridding crime, others see power grab



"A lot more people are either staying closer to home or not coming out at all."

Lupe Lopez
East San Jose, California

President Donald Trump deployed National Guard troops to Washington, DC, in August.

AL DRAGO/REUTERS

Christopher Cann, Michael Loria, Jack Armstrong, Suzette Hackney and Terry Collins

USA TODAY NETWORK

In Chicago, federal agents rappelled from Black Hawk helicopters onto an apartment building. In Portland, Oregon, masked officers clashed with protesters wearing inflatable animal costumes. In the nation's capital, police set up checkpoints and troops patrolled the streets.

Since early June, President Donald Trump has surged federal resources into a growing number of Democratic-led cities as part of a widening crackdown on illegal immigration and violent crime.

The deployments have sparked intense backlash, a dizzying number of legal battles and upended daily life in communities flooded with federal agents and National Guard troops.

The Trump administration says the added resources are needed to service the president's mass deportation campaign and clamp down on

See CRACKDOWN, Page 4A

A partner's death spurs change for bridge

2 spans show difference suicide barriers can make

Laura Trujillo

USA TODAY

He had left their Washington, DC, apartment to take out the trash, she thought.

Then he sent her a text message that scared her.

Chelsea Van Thof called the police, a friend, and then set out to find him on that warm Wednesday night in April

2022.

She stood on the nearby Duke Ellington Memorial Bridge, peering through an 8-foot-high light green wrought iron fence.

She felt her breathing slow. She saw police lights in the distance of a nearby bridge – that's when she knew.

Peter Tripp died by suicide after jumping from the William Howard Taft Bridge. He was 29.

Almost immediately Van Thof became obsessed by the fact that the two

See BRIDGES, Page 6A



Chelsea Van Thof has advocated for a barrier on Washington's Taft Bridge after boyfriend Peter Tripp's suicide in 2022. PROVIDED BY CHELSEA VAN THOF

Texas AG sues makers of drug Tylenol over alleged link to autism

N’dea Yancey-Bragg and Ken Alltucker
USA TODAY

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton announced he is suing the makers of Tylenol, claiming the companies failed to warn consumers about the risks of taking the drug while pregnant.

Paxton filed suit against pharmaceutical giant Johnson & Johnson and its spin-off company Kenvue, claiming the companies “willfully ignored and attempted to silence the science” connecting Tylenol to autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, violating the state’s consumer protection laws.

The suit also claims Johnson & Johnson broke the law by transferring liability to Kenvue, which spun off in 2023, to shield their assets against lawsuits.

“These corporations lied for decades, knowingly endangering millions to line their pockets,” Paxton said in a statement Oct. 28. “Additionally, seeing that the day of reckoning was coming, Johnson & Johnson attempted to escape responsibility by illegally offloading their liability onto a different company.”

The suit comes just over a month after President Donald Trump and his top health officials urged pregnant women to stop taking Tylenol as he promoted an unproven link between the painkiller and a rise in autism among children.

Experts say multiple factors, including genetics, contribute to autism. Several medical organizations have pushed back on the Tylenol autism claim.

“Unfortunately, governmental officials have been touting the few observational studies that do suggest a potential link between prenatal acetaminophen use and autism ... As health care professionals, it’s critical for us to emphasize to patients the limitations in these studies and to highlight that no causal relationship has been established,” American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists President Steven Fleischman wrote in a MedPage Today perspective published Oct. 25.

Acetaminophen, the generic form of Tylenol, “is the safest pain reliever option for pregnant women as needed throughout their entire pregnancy,” Kenvue said in a statement to USA TODAY. The company said it is “deeply concerned by the perpetuation of misinformation” about the drug’s safety.

“We will defend ourselves against these baseless claims and respond per the legal process,” the company’s statement said. “We stand firmly with the global medical community that acknowledges the safety of acetaminophen and believe we will continue to be successful in litigation as these claims lack legal merit and scientific support.”

Johnson & Johnson said in a statement that the company “divested its consumer health business years ago, and all rights and liabilities associated with the sale of its over-the-counter products, including Tylenol (acetaminophen), are owned by Kenvue.”

At a news conference Sept. 22 along-

side Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Trump linked Tylenol to an increased risk of autism and urged expecting mothers to “fight like hell not to take it.”

More than two dozen studies have linked a pregnant person’s frequent use of acetaminophen to autism and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder in their child, including a report published in August in BMC Environmental Health.

But several studies have found competing evidence. That includes a 2024 study in Sweden of about 2 million children, more than 180,000 of whom were exposed to acetaminophen during pregnancy, which found no associations between the pain medication and children’s risk of autism, ADHD or intellectual disability.

The Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists have endorsed the use of acetaminophen during pregnancy.

Fleischman said a Tylenol label change “highlighting the unfounded risk will only add to the growing fear and confusion” about the over-the-counter medication’s use during pregnancy. Fleischman wrote patients are “hearing the misleading warnings from the government” and fear they could be doing something wrong by taking Tylenol during pregnancy.

“That couldn’t be further from the truth,” Fleischman wrote. “In fact, by avoiding acetaminophen during pregnancy, they may unintentionally expose their fetus to the very harms they seek to prevent.”

FDA Commissioner Marty Makary said in a letter to doctors nationwide that “while an association between acetaminophen and autism has been described in many studies, a causal relationship has not been established and there are contrary studies in the scientific literature.” Still, the Food and Drug Administration announced it has initiated steps to change the label for acetaminophen “to reflect evidence suggesting that the use of acetaminophen by pregnant women may be associated with an increased risk” of autism and ADHD in children. A citizen petition has also been filed requesting a warning be added to the label, which Kenvue has urged the FDA to reject.

The Texas suit claims the companies “had the authority and the duty” to update their own labels but have taken no steps to do so. If they had, the suit claims, pregnant Texans would have reduced or eliminated acetaminophen consumption.

“Defying the recommendations of our Nation’s public-health officials, Defendants practically encourage women to disregard the warnings of the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Commissioner of Food and Drugs,” the lawsuit says.

Contributing: Adrianna Rodriguez, USA TODAY; Reuters

Melissa

Continued from Page 1A

YOUR LIFE.”

Melissa powered up over the warm waters in the Caribbean last week, its winds increasing by 65 mph in one 15-hour period. It is now tied “with the heavy hitters” in hurricane history for second strongest winds on record, Phil Klotzbach, a senior hurricane research scientist at Colorado State University, told USA TODAY.

“Total structural failure is likely,” the National Hurricane Center warned, especially at higher elevations and on the windward sides of hills and mountains, where winds “could be up to 30% stronger” – potentially well over 230 mph.

“Get to the sturdiest building that you can find,” urged Michael Brennan, the hurricane center’s director.

“Catastrophic” winds, flash flooding and storm surge were hitting the island, the center said. Downpours that could produce 15 to 30 inches of rain, with as much as 40 inches of rain possible in isolated locations, are expected to contribute to deadly landslides in the island’s mountainous terrain, the National Hurricane Center said. Torrential rains had already been soaking Jamaica for days.

Melissa also was forecast to bring up to a 13-foot storm surge, topped by large battering waves, on the south coast of Jamaica, and a surge almost as high where it’s forecast to strike the southeastern coast of Cuba, the hurricane center said.

Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness warned of damage to farmlands, homes and infrastructure.

“There is no infrastructure in the region that can withstand a Category 5,” Holness said.

“It’s a catastrophic situation expected in Jamaica,” World Meteorological Organization tropical cyclone specialist Anne-Claire Fontan said at a news briefing in Switzerland. “For Jamaica, it will be the storm of the century for sure.”

Turbulence forced one reconnaissance flight with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and another with the U.S. Air Force Reserve to turn back, according to the hurricane center and the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron.

Melissa registered on another index of strength as well: barometric pressure, a measure of the air pressure in Earth’s atmosphere. The lower the pressure, the more powerful the hurricane, Klotzbach, the hurricane researcher, said in a post on X.

According to the hurricane center, Melissa’s pressure plummeted to 892 millibars the morning of Oct. 28, putting it third on Klotzbach’s list of hurricanes with the lowest recorded pressures.

At least three people died in Jamaica as they were preparing for the storm, said Christopher Tufton, the country’s minister of health and wellness. The deaths happened while trees were being cut down.

Another 13 people were injured, according to Tufton, most of them after falling from ladders or roofs while

trying to prepare for the storm.

At least four deaths also had been reported in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, according to Reuters.

Authorities across the Caribbean ordered evacuations.

In Haiti, more than 3,650 people in the southern parts of the country had moved into temporary shelters as of Oct. 27, authorities said. Flights to and from the southern peninsula were suspended, and sailing was banned.

In Cuba, authorities said they had evacuated more than 500,000 people in coastal and mountainous areas vulnerable to heavy winds and flooding and canceled schools and transport across the eastern part of the island.

Still, for some, departure was not possible. Damian Anderson, a teacher from a town in Jamaica’s Blue Mountains, said Oct. 27 that impassable roads had already cut off his community.

“We can’t move,” said Anderson, 47. “We’re scared. We’ve never seen a multiday event like this before.”

For the United States, Melissa could briefly bring a swell and rough seas to the East Coast after it passes the Bahamas later in the week, but because of the angle and speed at which it’s moving off into the Atlantic, David Roth, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service’s Weather Prediction Center, said any coastal effects should be short-lived.

“We can’t move. We’re scared. We’ve never seen a multiday event like this before.”

Damian Anderson
Cut off by impassable roads in Jamaica’s Blue Mountains

A series of weather systems has contributed to heavy rain and dangerous surf across parts of the Southeast, especially in Florida, but the systems also are part of a weather pattern that is expected to help spare the mainland United States.

The only Atlantic system to make landfall in the mainland United States this year is Tropical Storm Chantal, which moved over the South Carolina coast and through North Carolina on July 6.

A forecast for several feet of rain is rare, but not unheard of, during fall storms in Jamaica.

In 2010, Hurricane Nicole dropped 37.42 inches of rain at Belleisle, Jamaica, over five days, the National Hurricane Center reported. More than 13 people died in that storm; damage to the country’s infrastructure was reported at roughly \$235 million.

Rainfall totals from slow-moving Hurricane Michelle over 10 days in November 2001 reached as high as 37.44 inches at Comfort Castle, Jamaica, according to the hurricane center.

Looking further back, Hurricane Flora dropped 60 inches of rain in 1963 in Silver Hill, Jamaica, according to a historical report by Roth, the NOAA meteorologist. And historical records show 135 inches of rain at Silver Hill over eight days from Nov. 4 to Nov. 11, 1909.

Contributing: Doyle Rice and Christopher Cann, USA TODAY; Reuters

Statues

Continued from Page 1A

would be appealing the ruling.

“We chose the statues of Michael and Florian to honor Quincy’s first responders, not to promote any religion,” Koch said. “These figures are recognized symbols of courage and sacrifice in police and fire communities across the world.”

The Becket Fund, an organization that says it defends “religious liberty as a universal right,” is representing the city in the case. The organization won a case representing Hobby Lobby in a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case, granting private employers the right to deny contraception coverage to employees because of their religious beliefs.

The Massachusetts litigation coincides with lawsuits over several states’ efforts to display the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms. All of it comes at a time when the Trump

administration is working to put its own stamp on what religious liberty means under the First Amendment.

President Donald Trump has vowed to bring religion back to the country, and members of his Religious Liberty Commission have said the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause doesn’t prevent the government from promoting religion and that it can and should do so.

The commission has been criticized by some who argue its purpose is promoting conservative Christian views and not striving for religious liberty for all faith groups.

Fights over religious symbols on public property aren’t new, though. The U.S. Supreme Court allowed a massive Latin cross, referred to as the Bladensburg Cross, to remain on government property in Maryland in a 7-2 ruling in 2019. It was erected as a World War I memorial nearly a century before, and the court said the symbol of the Christian cross “took on an added secular meaning” when used in such ways.



The city of Quincy, Massachusetts, wants to install these two saint statues on the front of the new public safety building. PROVIDED BY OFFICE OF QUINCY MAYOR TOM KOCH

“The cross is undoubtedly a Christian symbol, but that fact should not blind us to everything else that the Bladensburg Cross has come to represent,”

Justice Samuel Alito wrote in the majority opinion.

The court noted, however, that keeping existing religious symbols is “quite different from erecting or adopting new ones.”

Decades prior, the Supreme Court ruled in 1984 that a Rhode Island city had not violated the Establishment Clause by having a nativity scene as part of its Christmas display. The court said any perceived promotion of Christianity through the display was “indirect, remote and incidental” and that it was “no more an advancement or endorsement of religion” than the government recognizing the origins of Christmas or patronizing museums with religious paintings.

BrieAnna Frank reports for USA TODAY, and Peter Blandino reports for The Patriot Ledger.

USA TODAY’s coverage of First Amendment issues is funded through a collaboration between the Freedom Forum and Journalism Funding Partners. Funders do not provide editorial input.

**USA TODAY**

Volume 44, No. 33

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USA TODAY, ISSN 0734-7456, is published daily except for Saturday, Sunday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving (Observed), Christmas (Observed) and New Years Day (Observed), by Gannett Media Corp., 1575 Eye Street, NW, Suite 350, Washington, DC, 20005. Periodicals Postage at Washington, DC and additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send all UAA to CFS. (See DMM 507.1.5.2); NON-POSTAL ONE AND MILITARY FACILITIES: Please send address corrections to USA Today, Customer Service, 401 W Main St #600 Louisville KY 40202.

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Kirk suspect can wear street clothes in court

His lawyers see move as maintaining innocence

N'dea Yancey-Bragg
USA TODAY

A Utah judge has decided that the man accused of killing conservative activist Charlie Kirk can wear civilian clothes but must be restrained in court. Kirk, 31, an influential ally of President Donald Trump and cofounder of Turning Point USA, was gunned down Sept. 10 while speaking to students at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah. Tyler Robinson, 22, was charged with aggravated murder and other felonies in September after turning himself in to authorities. Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty. Robinson's attorneys asked the court to allow him to appear in civilian clothes

without restraints "to maintain the presumption of innocence" and protect his right to a fair trial. The defense noted there was precedent for granting such a request, citing a similar temporary motion granted in the trial of Bryan Kohberger, who was sentenced to life in prison in July for the murders of four University of Idaho students in 2022. Prosecutors opposed that request in a court filing that has not been made public because it contains information regarding security measures in the high-profile case, according to Christopher Ballard, a spokesperson for the Utah County Attorney's Office. A closed-door hearing was held Oct. 24. Judge Tony Graf ruled in a brief hearing Oct. 27 that Robinson "shall be dressed as one who is presumed innocent" during all pretrial hearings but denied his request to appear without restraints. Graf said that though Robinson

has no criminal history and no record of misconduct while in custody, the charges are "extraordinarily serious," and the emotional nature of the proceedings raises the risk of disruption. Graf ordered the sheriff's office to use the least restrictive restraints necessary and prohibited media from taking pictures or video of Robinson's restraints to avoid influencing potential jurors.

Ban on cameras in the courtroom still up in the air

Robinson's defense attorneys challenged claims from the Utah County Sheriff's Office in a joint filing with prosecutors that concerns about negative publicity arising from Robinson appearing in inmate apparel could be addressed by having the defendant appear remotely for noncritical hearings. Doing so would violate Robinson's rights and

make it harder for him to communicate with his defense team, attorneys said. The defense attorneys did, however, say they agreed with the sheriff's office assertion that the court should limit media coverage, specifically photo and video coverage, of the proceedings. There have already been thousands of instances of pretrial publicity "that have relentlessly focused on Mr. Robinson's demeanor and appearance during his jail-house court appearance and have polluted the waters of justice in this case," the attorneys wrote. Graf sided with a defense motion arguing the sheriff's office joint filing with the prosecution was procedurally improper but did not make a decision about whether to issue a blanket ban on photography and video recording in the courtroom or hold certain hearings remotely. *Contributing: Nick Penzenstadler*

Poll: Cuomo cuts Mamdani's lead in race for NYC mayor

Former NY governor now trails 44% to 34%

Terry Collins
USA TODAY

Former Gov. Andrew Cuomo has cut in half the double-digit lead of heavy favorite Democratic nominee Zohran Mamdani with a week to go in the New York City mayor's race, according to a new Suffolk University poll. Cuomo, an independent candidate who has trailed Mamdani by more than 20 points in a September poll, is now behind by 10, the latest Suffolk poll released on Oct. 27 revealed. Mamdani, a democratic socialist state assemblyman, is ahead of Cuomo, 44% to 34%, in the days leading up to the Nov. 4 election, the poll of 500 voters surveyed by phone between Oct. 23 and Oct. 26 showed. Republican nominee and independent Curtis Sliwa remains steady in third place at 11%. In September, Suffolk's poll had Mamdani leading Cuomo by 20 points, or 45% to 25%, followed by Republican nominee Curtis Sliwa with 9%, and incumbent Mayor Eric Adams at 8%. Adams has since dropped out of the mayoral race and is now endorsing Cuomo. As a result, a majority of Adams' votes have gone to Cuomo, said David Paleologos, who directs Suffolk's Political Research Center and led the new NYC mayor's poll, told USA TODAY. While Mamdani has a sizable lead, the new poll adds some suspense to the widely watched mayoral race for America's most populous city. While Cuomo does have some momentum, for him to beat Mamdani, he will need those voters supporting Sliwa to swing his way, Paleologos said. When Sliwa voters polled this month were asked for their second choice for mayor, they preferred Cuomo to Mamdani by an overwhelming 36% to 2%, Paleologos said. "Cuomo needs to appeal to Sliwa's voters. You have this big, powerful Democratic (candidate), and at the 11th hour, the only people who can save him are Sliwa voters who are Republican, so



Independent candidate and former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo speaks during a debate on Oct. 16.

ANGELINA KATSANIS/POOL PHOTO VIA REUTERS

there's some irony here," Paleologos said. "They favor Cuomo, and part of the reason is they are anti-Mamdani and more conservative. Maybe they are Trump voters, so they are going to support anybody who is the potential GOP nominee. "But Cuomo has to make that appeal," Paleologos said. "He's still an underdog, and everything has to fall right for him. He is beginning to stage a comeback, though." A Cuomo spokesperson on Oct. 27 said the poll shows "momentum is on our side." The Mamdani campaign did not immediately return USA TODAY's message seeking comment about the poll. Cuomo sees big gains among Hispanic and independent voters

Cuomo's most dramatic gains have come from Hispanic voters, where he now leads in the Suffolk poll by 1 point, after trailing Mamdani by 30 points in September, Paleologos said. Paleologos said he doesn't know specifically why Cuomo is doing well among Hispanics. The pollster said he's not sure whether Cuomo is doing a direct appeal to them, "if it's a cultural thing," or something they liked during the contentious debates. "But there clearly was a shift. Some Hispanic voters are also more conserva-

tive, as we learned during the 2024 presidential election," Paleologos said. "Maybe they are leaning toward the more moderate candidate with more government experience." Cuomo's camp believes momentum is on their side

The new Suffolk poll resembles what Cuomo's campaign has seen in the past month, Cuomo spokesman Rich Azzopardi said. "Today's Suffolk University poll shows exactly what we're seeing on the ground: This is a two-man race, momentum is on our side," Azzopardi said in an emailed statement to USA TODAY. "And the more New Yorkers learn about how dangerously inexperienced Zohran Mamdani is – and about his extremist agenda – the less they like what they see." Azzopardi said early voter turnout also is going in Cuomo's way. "And it's clear that Andrew Cuomo's message of competent leadership – along with his agenda to increase public safety, end the housing and affordability crisis, and strengthen our economy and education system – is resonating," Azzopardi said. "Andrew Cuomo will not stop fighting for every vote in every corner of this great city between now and Election Day. Together, we can and will win the fight to save the city."

Pollster said Mamdani is still within reach of winning

Even though Cuomo has sliced Mamdani's lead in half, according to the Oct. 27 Suffolk poll, Paleologos said Mamdani is still in a position to become New York City's next mayor. The good news for Mamdani there may not be enough undecided voters to swing Cuomo's way, despite his gains in the new poll. "Mamdani's support hasn't really dropped. What it shows me is he's just not growing as strong as Cuomo," Paleologos said. "The good news for Mamdani is he's very close to being at the number he needs to win."



Sean Combs speaks during the Hollywood Walk of Fame ceremony for DJ Khaled in 2022, in Los Angeles.

KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES

Combs' release from prison set for May 2028

Brendan Morrow
USA TODAY

The date of Sean "Diddy" Combs' release from prison was revealed Oct. 27 after a judge handed down the rapper's sentence earlier in the month. Combs is currently scheduled to get out of prison on May 8, 2028, according to the Federal Bureau of Prisons' online database. Combs is behind bars at the Metropolitan Detention Center in New York City's borough of Brooklyn. On Oct. 3, U.S. District Court Judge Arun Subramanian sentenced the rapper to 50 months, or roughly four years, in prison after he was found guilty on two counts of transportation to engage in prostitution. He was acquitted on the more serious charges, sex trafficking and racketeering, in his federal sex-crimes trial this summer. Prosecutors were seeking an 11-year sentence for Combs, while his legal team asked the judge for 14 months behind bars. During a trial that lasted approximately two months, prosecutors laid out their case that Combs operated a criminal enterprise and engaged in sex trafficking, among other offenses. The rapper pleaded not guilty and is appealing his conviction. His legal team filed a notice of appeal in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York on Oct. 20. Combs' lawyers previously tried and failed to get the judge to either overturn his conviction or grant him a new trial. In a letter to the judge before his sentencing, Combs apologized "for all of the hurt and pain that I have caused others by my conduct" and said he takes "full responsibility and accountability for my past wrongs." He went on to write, "I understand that the mere words 'I'm sorry' will never be good enough as these words alone cannot erase the pain from the past." Combs also apologized in court to his ex-girlfriend Casandra "Cassie" Ventura Fine, who delivered days of emotional testimony about the abuse he allegedly subjected her to. "My actions were disgusting, shameful and sick," Combs said. Last week, TMZ reported that President Donald Trump was considering commuting Combs' sentence. But in a statement to USA TODAY, a White House spokesperson said there was "zero truth" to the story, adding, "The president, not anonymous sources, is the final decider on pardons and commutations." Trump confirmed on Oct. 6 that Combs "asked me for a pardon." *Contributing: Edward Segarra, Patrick Ryan, KiMi Robinson, Aysa Bagchi and Taijuan Moorman, USA TODAY*

Cops: Scary break-in attempt in VA was family prank

Natalie Neysa Alund
USA TODAY

A masked trio being sought in a chilling attempted break-in at a Virginia home this month was family members pulling a prank, according to new information released by police in the case. After more than 100 hours of investigation, Alexandria Police Department Chief Tarrick McGuire said detectives identified the three suspects who terrorized a family dressed in "Halloween masks" as cousins of the residents. The reported prank took place on Oct. 14 in Alexandria, a city just south of Washington, DC. The incident in which the trio made threats against the family and caused property damage to their home was captured on a home's Ring surveillance camera, McGuire said during an Oct. 27 news conference. McGuire said investigators received numerous tips after the story garnered national attention, and later contacted one of the suspects, an adult female, who confessed to her role and that of other family members in the case.

Chief calls incident 'moral failure'

McGuire told reporters a woman admitted she and her two sons and a nephew staged the prank while two other adults and a child reportedly filmed the incident. Calling it a "moral failure," McGuire said the incident could have gone south fast had someone opened fire on the suspect. In addition to calling 911, McGuire said the homeowner called her brother, who arrived at the scene armed with a loaded firearm. Police responded to a 911 call at the home after the incident, McGuire said, adding there was no indication the residents knew about the prank. "Adults should be accountable for their children, and not exercise this type of behavior. Hopefully, this will be a learning experience for their family," the chief said. Suspects won't face charges, police say

The chief also said no criminal charges would be filed in the case.

Because the family did not want to pursue charges, police said, the suspects will not be identified. No one was injured in the incident.

Doorbell camera captured incident

Footage captured the frightening episode, which began when one of the masked individuals rang the front doorbell. Video shows the trio standing ominously in the front yard before taking turns ringing the bell, knocking on the door and jiggling its handle. "It's either you come out or we come in," one of the masked men says in the video as the trio continues to demand that the family open the door. Shayla Whiteside, who lives in the home, previously said the trio appeared to be strangers and she thought the scene was a prank. "They tried forcing the front door open, jiggled the handles, broke down my backyard fence, and tore through the back screen, screaming threats, saying that they will kill us," she said.

Feds: Man allegedly offered \$45,000 for killing AG Bondi

Fernando Cervantes Jr.
USA TODAY

A Minnesota man was arrested and is facing federal charges after allegedly offering \$45,000 for the killing of Attorney General Pam Bondi.

According to court documents obtained by USA TODAY, 29-year-old Tyler Avalos allegedly published the threat on TikTok, saying he wanted Bondi “dead or alive” but “preferably dead,” according to an affidavit written by FBI



Bondi

Special Agent Caleb Jurchisin.

The FBI said that the investigation into Avalos began Oct. 9 after receiving a tip from a Detroit-based TikTok user, who flagged the post to the FBI’s National Threat Operations Center.

The TikTok that Avalos is alleged to have posted included a picture of Bondi “with a sniper-scope red dot” on her

forehead, the affidavit said.

“Additionally, the suspect user posted a comment below the description that reads ‘cough cough/when you don’t serve us then what?’” Jurchisin said.

When reached by USA TODAY, Avalos’ attorney Daniel Gerdtts said, “Mr. Avalos is not guilty of any crime.”

Avalos was located after TikTok, Google and Comcast provided FBI agents with information showing that he signed up for the social media plat-

form using a Samsung Galaxy phone, investigators said.

According to the affidavit, Avalos has had prior convictions. In July 2022, he was convicted in a stalking case in Dakota County, Minnesota, as well as a domestic battery charge in Polk County, Florida, in August 2016. Apart from those two cases, the affidavit said Avalos has a 2019 misdemeanor battery case out of Dakota County, “which appears to have been reduced from a felony domestic assault by strangulation.”

Crackdown

Continued from Page 1A

violence in liberal cities. Critics, including state and local officials, say the deployments are an illegal show of force and a power grab.

Across the country, federal operations have taken different forms, shaped by levels of cooperation between federal and local officials, protests over heightened immigration enforcement and the scale of the operations themselves.

In several cities, immigration raids touched off a wave of demonstrations, prompting Trump to call up National Guard troops. In others, federal agents worked closely with local police to target crime more broadly, setting up roving patrols and checkpoints. One major commonality: The cities all experienced a surge in immigration enforcement.

Trump threatened to send “more than the National Guard” to “troubled” U.S. cities, a potential escalation from deploying troops where mayors and governors have opposed them in disputes that have reached the Supreme Court. Trump didn’t specify what the escalation would mean and which cities he is targeting. If courts block the National Guard deployments, Trump has repeatedly threatened to invoke the 1807 Insurrection Act, which would allow him to deploy active-duty troops to fight crime and battle protesters.

Reporters across the USA TODAY Network spoke with experts, residents, officials and local advocates to capture the impact of federal intervention in U.S. cities, including Los Angeles, Washington, DC, Memphis, Portland and Chicago – a short list that seems likely to grow as the president eyes deployments to other cities.

Many residents and local officials said the cities didn’t need intervention, especially a deployment of troops. Some living in crime-stricken areas said while they generally support the idea of more law enforcement, they want the operations to target violent crimes – not immigration violations.

Experts, meanwhile, said targeted police work is the most effective way to lower crime and worry that the federal government’s flood-the-zone tactics, both in immigration enforcement and general crimefighting, could erode public trust in police.

“Aggressive enforcement needs to be reserved for the most aggressive criminals,” said Thomas Abt, director of the Center for the Study and Practice of Violence Reduction. He added that broad, heavy-handed policing has “limited benefits and a lot of collateral consequences.”

White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson hailed the president’s efforts and said local leaders across the country should take inspiration and “clean up their city.”

“Making America Safe Again – especially crime-ridden cities – was a key campaign promise from the President that the American people elected him to fulfill,” Jackson said in a statement.

Chicago: Intensifying ICE raids and widespread protests

The nation’s third-largest city has become the latest flashpoint in the battle between local officials and the Trump administration over the president’s deportation campaign and federal deployments.

In September, Trump launched Operation Midway Blitz, an initiative he said was needed to catch “the worst of the worst” criminal immigrants. Research has shown that, on average, immigrants commit fewer crimes than native-born Americans. Further, immigration violations, such as living in the country without proper documentation, are civil, not criminal, under U.S. law.

Expanding Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids triggered protests in downtown Chicago and the city’s surrounding suburbs. As tensions boiled, clashes broke out and federal agents used pepper balls and tear gas, hitting journalists, a pastor and officers with the Chicago Police Department, according to reports and a lawsuit.

The president called for the arrests of

Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker and Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson for “failing to protect” ICE agents.

Residents and local advocates have accused ICE of employing reckless and brutal tactics during the blitz. Some incidents that have raised alarm: Immigration agents fatally shot a Mexican immigrant accused of resisting arrest; a Border Patrol agent shot and wounded a U.S. citizen on the city’s South Side; and, reportedly, a school had to hold recess indoors after federal authorities deployed a chemical agent nearby.

The most controversial raid came on Sept. 30, when federal agents descended from Black Hawk helicopters and ransacked a South Side apartment building in an aggressive search of apartments inhabited by Venezuelan migrants.

Two of 37 people arrested were “confirmed” gang members, according to the Department of Homeland Security. Dozens of U.S. citizens were pulled from their beds and temporarily zip-tied during the operation, which Pritzker wants investigated by state agencies.

DHS officials say aggressive tactics are necessary to catch criminals, and accused protesters of attacking agents and “rioting.” Over 1,500 immigrants have been arrested in connection with the blitz, the agency said. USA TODAY has not been able to verify the number of detentions or the criminal background of those in custody.

Chicagoans said the federal intervention has made their neighborhoods virtually unrecognizable.

“We went from being this community that walks our kids to school or goes out to parks. Now the streets are empty,” said Corina Pedraza, a longtime South Sider.

Local alderwoman Julia Ramirez told USA TODAY that people “can’t live their lives the way they did before.”

“Agents have created a war zone in our community,” she said.

Portland, Oregon: Tensions flare during protest at ICE facility

“War ravaged,” “burning to the ground” and “hell” are words Trump has used to describe the liberal stronghold of Portland in recent weeks – characterizations vehemently disputed by local residents and officials.

The back-and-forth comes as the president seeks to deploy troops to the city over the objections of local and state officials. A federal judge in Oregon initially blocked the deployments, but an appeals court on Oct. 20 ruled in Trump’s favor, lifting one of the orders preventing the president from calling up 200 Oregon guardsmen to Portland.

Trump officials say soldiers are necessary to protect federal personnel and an ICE facility in South Portland, where demonstrators have protested on a nightly basis.

Outside the facility earlier this month, USA TODAY reporters saw demonstrators peacefully protesting. There were people in puffy animal costumes dancing and waving signs as motorists drove by, honking in support. Other forms of resistance have had a distinctly Portland vibe, such as an “emergency” naked bike ride in mid-October.

City residents said Trump’s characterization of Portland as a city “under siege” is false and misleading.

“It offends me so deeply that we have a president that is willing and able to spread such misinformation without hitting the streets and coming out here,” said Tiana Stewart, 37, a bartender. “But he knows that the people who are watching are going to buy into it. It’s ludicrous to me.”

Portland is not without its problems. Homeless camps are visible in parts of the city and drug use, especially the surge of fentanyl, is a serious concern that prompted officials to declare a 90-day state of emergency last year. But residents said they don’t think the president’s crackdown is meant to address those issues.

“Obviously, this is all a scam,” said Curtis Best, 70, a retired molecular biologist. “I really believe it’s a way to militarize police and make problems in these cities ... I think he just wants revenge on us. I think he just doesn’t like Democrat cities, Democrat states, or its people.”



Charles Wilson says while he has not seen a surge of federal agents in his Anacostia neighborhood of Washington, DC, “things feel a little calmer and a little safer.”
JOSH MEYER/USA TODAY

Memphis: A crime-stricken city flooded with feds. Is it helping?

Unlike other cities where Trump deployed National Guard troops, Memphis sits in a state led by a Republican governor who has welcomed the president’s wishes to mobilize military forces.

In September, Trump created a crime-fighting task force involving over a dozen federal agencies and the state’s National Guard – a move he said was requested by Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee.

A week after troops were seen patrolling downtown Memphis on Oct. 10, a group of Democratic officials filed a lawsuit against Lee, claiming the deployment violated the state constitution. A judge has since denied the plaintiffs’ request to pause the deployment.

“Agents have created a war zone in our community.”

Julia Ramirez
Chicago alderwoman

In 2024, Memphis had the highest rate of murder and other violent crimes of any large American city, according to a USA TODAY analysis of FBI data from 30 cities with more than 500,000 residents.

Memphis Mayor Paul Young, a Democrat, said he’s working to steer the task force to focus on violent offenders, rather than immigration enforcement.

“The busier we can keep them with (the Memphis Police Department), the less time they will have to focus on immigration,” he said at a town hall on Oct. 20.

Officials have given conflicting portrayals of the task force’s work so far.

The White House says the task force has yielded 1,300 arrests related to outstanding warrants, drugs and firearms. But a county mayor and local advocates say a large portion of the arrests were for immigration offenses, not violent crime.

Mauricio Calvo, president and CEO of advocacy organization Latino Memphis, said some people have shut themselves in their homes because of the heightened immigration enforcement and concerns over racial profiling.

“People don’t want to send the kids to school, people don’t want to work,” he said. “We’re in crisis mode.”

Washington, DC: Mixed feelings on Trump’s crime crackdown

Trump declared a “crime emergency” in the nation’s capital on Aug. 11, using its status as a federal district to take control of the city’s police department and send in thousands of federal agents and National Guard troops.

For weeks, federal agents and local police set up checkpoints across the city, spurring protests. Immigration raids expanded, instilling fear as officers arrested workers and delivery drivers. Several of the city’s small homeless campsites were broken down, leading some of the homeless to enter shelters temporarily.

Meanwhile, National Guard troops

patrolled monuments and Metro stations, some with assault rifles. They removed graffiti, picked up trash and shoveled mulch. An internal budget viewed by USA TODAY estimated the guard deployment could cost taxpayers more than \$200 million.

After 30 days, the federal takeover of the police department ended and Trump declared the operation a success, touting a drop in reported crimes and anecdotes of people “going out to dinner where they didn’t go out for years.”

The data, though, was murky. While local police data shows a short-term dip in some reported crimes after the crackdown began – especially incidents involving firearms – crime had already been trending downward in recent years. Experts who viewed the data said it’s too soon to know if the crackdown had any significant or long-term impact on violent crime.

Across the city, residents were conflicted about the federal operation.

For 20 years, Charles Wilson has lived in Anacostia, a neighborhood with one of the highest rates of murder and violent crime in Washington. He said while he has not seen a surge of federal agents in his neighborhood, he’s noticed fewer people loitering and he doesn’t hear as many “random gunshots.”

“There’s definitely been a shift, and things feel a little calmer and a little safer,” he told USA TODAY.

But Wilson also said the assertive immigration enforcement in Washington, some of which has gone viral online, “doesn’t sit well” with him or his neighbors.

“It seems un-American and mean-spirited,” he said.

Los Angeles: Raids, protests, state of emergency declared

Los Angeles has remained one of the central targets of Trump’s sweeping illegal immigration campaign and was the first American city where he deployed National Guard troops in his second term in office.

Following ICE raids at a Home Depot and a clothing manufacturer in June, thousands of people took to the streets to protest. While demonstrations were contained to a few downtown blocks, they erupted into violence, with clashes breaking out between protesters and police, and reports of looting and property damage.

Trump ordered 4,000 California National Guard troops and at least 500 Marines to protect federal personnel and property in the city. The move was challenged in court, and a California judge said the deployment was illegal but did not order the remaining soldiers to leave. Gov. Gavin Newsom said in September that the deployment had already cost taxpayers nearly \$120 million.

ICE agents kept up their high pace of arrests, and in October, the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors declared a state of emergency. Local officials said the federal agency “created a climate of fear, leading to widespread disruption in daily life and adverse impacts to our regional economy.”

Ongoing immigration raids and operations across Los Angeles County – which is home to over 3 million people born outside the United States – have led to a decline in workplace attendance and strained critical services such as schools, hospitals, and places of worship, according to the board of supervisors.

Lupe Lopez, 69, whose family owns nine Arteagas Food Center supermarkets, told USA TODAY she’s seen a big drop in foot traffic at her family’s shop in the Hispanic neighborhood of East San Jose. The reason: Young people are buying in bulk because their parents are afraid of being outside, where they might be picked up by ICE agents.

“A lot more people are either staying closer to home or not coming out at all,” she said.

Christopher Cann, Michael Loria, Suzette Hackney and Terry Collins report for USA TODAY. Jack Armstrong reports for the Memphis Commercial Appeal.

Contributing: Thao Nguyen and Bart Jansen, USA TODAY; Lucas Finton, Memphis Commercial Appeal



Miami Beach aims to raise \$40 million to extend the underwater corridor across 7 miles, the length of Miami Beach, and plant thousands of corals.

PROVIDED BY REEFLINE

Underwater traffic jam to become coral reef at Miami Beach

Concrete artwork carries environmental message

Julia Gomez
USA TODAY

Miami Beach, Florida, is known for its gorgeous beaches, Cuban food, and terrible traffic. Now, traffic is being used for a good cause in the city.

The city of Miami Beach residents and visitors are able to see 22 life-sized concrete cars being lowered into the ocean on Oct. 27 and Oct. 28, a process that started between Oct. 20 and Oct. 21. Once completed, they will form “Concrete Coral.” The artwork, created by Leandro Erlich, will replicate an underwater traffic jam 20 feet below the water’s surface.

“Healthy reefs are our natural infrastructure. ... This monumental, science-based project offers an innovative solution for protecting our marine ecosystems and cultural landscape.”

Miami Beach Mayor Steven Meiner

This is the beginning phase of Reefline, a “first-of-its-kind” underwater sculpture park and hybrid reef. It was founded by Ximena Caminos and developed by the nonprofit, BlueLab Preservation Society, in partnership with the City of Miami Beach, according to a news release emailed to USA TODAY.

“This monumental artwork and living reef, composed of 22 life-sized cars made from marine-grade concrete, will soon rest on the ocean floor as a haunting yet hopeful metaphor for our impact on the planet,” Caminos wrote in a post on Instagram.

Miami Beach aims to raise \$40 million for its 11-phase project to extend the underwater sculpture park across 7 miles – the length of Miami Beach – and to plant thousands of corals, according to a news release from the city.

Will people be able to visit the underwater sculpture park?

Yes, once the statues are in place, people will be able to swim to the sculptures, located 600 feet from the shore, to view the environmental art for free, according to Miami Beach’s website.

Those wanting to see it will not need scuba gear. Visitors can bring just a snorkel mask and fins to see the sculptures better.

However, while work is underway, vessels and swimmers will not be allowed in the area.

Will more sculptures be added?

Yes. The city plans to add more sculptures from other artists.

British artist Petroc Sesti’s sculpture, “Heart of Okeanos,” will mimic “the heart of a stranded blue whale,” according to Miami Beach’s website. And Carlos Betancourt, based in Miami, will create the “Miami Reef Star,” a large-scale trail of starfish.

Although work is underway, the city’s website did not state when the final 7-mile sculpture park will be completed.

Why was the project created?

The underwater artwork is “a critical long-term economic safeguard for Miami Beach,” Miami Beach Mayor Steven Meiner said in a statement.

The cars, which look like concrete cars, will be seeded with 2,200 corals cultivated by REEFLINE’s Miami Native Coral Lab in the next phase of the project.

“Healthy reefs are our natural infrastructure, shielding our treasured beachfront and vital tourism revenue by powerfully reducing storm surge and erosion,” Meiner said. “This monumental, science-based project offers an innovative solution for protecting our marine ecosystems and cultural landscape.”

Why is regrowing coral reefs so important?

Coral reefs are under stress for many reasons, including climate change.

“Coral reefs are one of the most sensitive ecosystems globally to the ravages of human activities,” Gabriel Grimsditch, United Nations Environment Programme marine ecosystems expert, said in a statement. “They are especially vulnerable to climate change and warming ocean temperatures, and mass coral bleaching and mortality events are predicted to increase in frequency and intensity as temperatures continue to rise.”

Coral bleaching occurs when stressed corals expel the algae that live in their tissues, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration says.

The bleaching doesn’t mean the coral is dead, and it can survive the event, but corals are under more stress when this happens, and they are more susceptible to dying.

In 2005, the United States lost half of the Caribbean’s coral reefs in just one year due to a bleaching event, and satellite data confirmed that the waters had been warmer than they were in the past 20 years.

Man in Nazi uniform faces charges for striking student

Natalie Neysa Alund
USA TODAY

A man accused of striking a University of Georgia student while wearing a Nazi uniform outside a bar now faces an assault charge, according to information from police and school officials.

Athens-Clarke County Sheriff’s Office records show local police arrested Kenneth Leland Morgan, 33, on Friday, Oct. 24. He was booked into the local jail just before 3 a.m. that day.

Lt. Katie Jenkins, a public information officer for the Athens-Clarke County Police Department, told USA TODAY Morgan faces charges of misdemeanor simple battery and felony aggravated assault.

Videos of the man wearing a Nazi uniform circulated widely on social media over the weekend.

UGA: Man in Nazi uniform was not a student

The University of Georgia said the suspect is not a student or affiliated with the school.

“We are horrified by the actions of an individual who, while in downtown Athens wearing a Nazi uniform, assaulted a female University of Georgia student,” the university said in its statement.

“His actions, which were caught on videotape, are appalling, and we are grateful to Athens-Clarke County police officers for swiftly apprehending and arresting him,” the statement continues. “We encourage any other students affected by this disturbing act to reach out to Student Care and Outreach for support.”

The incident took place outside Cutter’s Pub, according to The Red & Black, a student newspaper at the university.

When reached by USA TODAY, Cutter’s Pub confirmed that the incident “did not occur in Cutter’s Pub, but rather on the sidewalk in front of the bar.”



Media reports identify Grace Lang, 23, a University of Georgia student, as the victim of assault outside a bar.

JOSHUA L. JONES/USA TODAY NETWORK

The business did not provide additional information.

Friend confronted suspect

Grace Lang, identified in media reports as the 23-year-old student who was hit, was at the bar when one of her friends approached the man, she said in interviews with NBC News and The Red & Black.

“She was mainly just telling him he needed to leave and needed to go home,” Lang told NBC.

Video of the attack circulating online shows the suspect outside a bar, with a woman yelling at him to leave. The woman pushes the man, who then says, “Don’t touch me.”

She responds, “You can’t wear that ...” as a large crowd begins to gather, and at one point, the man appears to strike a woman in the head, the footage shows.

‘Heinous antisemitic behavior’

Counselors are available through the school for students who witnessed the incident, according to UGA Senior Director for Integrated Media Communications James Hataway.

The university’s statement went on to call the suspect’s actions “heinous antisemitic behavior.” University officials were in contact with the student who was hit, as well as other students who witnessed the attack.

Man wearing Nazi uniform remained jailed as of Oct. 27

As of late morning Oct. 27, online sheriff’s office records show Morgan remained jailed on \$1,500 bond.

An attorney of record was not listed online for Morgan.

JUST \$4.95

MILWAUKEE BUCKS 2025-26 SEASON PREVIEW

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Bridges

Continued from Page 1A

bridges half a mile apart were almost identical. Both arched and historic, they stretched 136 feet above Rock Creek Park connecting popular neighborhoods.

“I was standing on a bridge with a barrier,” she says. “And he had jumped from the one that didn’t have one.”

She knew that the barrier wouldn’t have stopped Tripp from being suicidal. Rather it would have interrupted the impulse long enough to take him out of the moment, providing time to be rescued or for people who love him to get him help.

Science says safety barriers help save lives. They cut through impulsiveness. And when suicidal people are stopped by a fence or net, research shows the vast majority don’t go on to find another spot or method.

She wanted a barrier on the Taft bridge.

No, she wanted Peter. And their future.

But a barrier would have to do.

Before the loss

They met in veterinary school near Boston more than a decade ago.

They were friends for a long time before they realized it was more. She fell in love with his kindness and quiet generosity.

He donated blood platelets every three weeks and became a bone marrow and stem cell donor. He never lost patience in teaching friends the rules to a new board game. He showed up, even late nights, to feed the lambs at the Tufts barn during vet school.

After graduating in 2019, they moved to a tiny seaside town at the southern edge of Oregon to work at an animal hospital where they cared for everything from tortoises to cattle.

They bonded over Risk and Catan, charcuterie boards and historical cooking shows. She did the dishes and he cooked – everything from eggs in the hole to kugel.

His steadiness felt a match to her uncertainty. He grounded her.

They wanted to move to the Northeast, maybe New Hampshire, where Tripp went to college. Maybe Massachusetts, where he grew up, the eldest of four boys.

They settled in Washington in 2020, when she was offered a fellowship at the State Department. Tripp began working as a veterinarian at an animal hospital.

They built a life, with rabbits and a tiny rescue poodle, Annie, and later Hugo Spots, a Dalmatian with so many health and behavioral issues they joked that only two veterinarians could adopt him.

Denial

No one knew if Tripp had been depressed before his suicide.

He hadn’t confided in anyone, but he was never one to ask for help. He was the one friends went to for advice, the one who reached out when someone was struggling.

Van Thof, 34, now wonders how the man who spent his life taking care of animals and everyone else couldn’t ask for help when he needed it most.

How cruel the brain could be that it turned on itself.

Everything about the body wants to live. In times of distress and blood loss, the body responds by slowing circulation to our fingers and our toes, preserving blood flow to our heart, and our brain. It works to save our most important organs. Even our unconscious self wants to live.

And yet with suicide, it is the opposite. We try to escape our healthy selves. Our brain lies. It tells us illogical things that we believe. It gets stuck in a moment. It doesn’t allow asking for help.

“People don’t choose to kill themselves,” explains Christine Yu Moutier, a physician and the medical director for The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. “The brain in those moments is not the healthy brain of that person at 99.9% of the other times of their life.”

In many ways, she says, the person succumbs to their distress.

Scientists only now are beginning to better understand suicide, which remains the second leading cause of death for those 10 to 34. It is seen as a complex health outcome, not a moral failing. We are living through a neuroscience renaissance in many ways, with brain scans, connections between the gut and the brain, ketamine treatments and transcranial magnetic stimulation to lessen depression.

We can’t prevent every suicide, but suicide can be prevented, Van Thof says.

“I know Peter was not in his right state of mind that night,” she says. “We just needed a little more time.”



Workers install suicide prevention measures on the William Howard Taft Bridge in Washington in September. Over 12 years, half of the 26 people who died in bridge-related suicides in Washington did so at the Taft Bridge. JACK GRUBER/USA TODAY

Anger

The day after Tripp died, Van Thof returned to their empty apartment, the spot where friends had gathered for game nights, where they learned to make dumplings together, the place they brought Hugo home as a puppy.

In those first days when grief didn’t allow her to do much, she began emailing groups she thought might help her get a barrier.

“Peter was the best person I’ve ever met,” she wrote. “I will spend the rest of my life trying to keep the world as good of a place as it would be if he was still in it.”

She didn’t know that others had tried to get barriers on the Taft bridge before and failed. Between 2010 and 2022, half of the 26 people who died by suicide on bridges in Washington did so from that one.

The DC Department of Transportation said it had no plans to add barriers. One neighborhood commissioner sent her to another. They sent her back to the first. Because the bridge crosses two wards, they needed to figure who had ownership. It was as frustrating as it was exhausting.

But the work gave her purpose, even if Van Thof still was avoiding the Taft bridge.

Their apartment was four blocks from the bridge, the main artery connecting her to many parts of the city. She would take an Uber around the bridge to meet friends in Georgetown, sometimes adding 20 minutes or more to the trip. She no longer walked Hugo over the Taft, missing one of the best views of the sycamore and river birch trees turning fiery shades of orange and red during the fall season.

It’s where she and Tripp would walk across to a favorite brunch spot, the path he walked some days to catch the metro.

She tries not to be angry with Tripp but admits sometimes she has been. “Feelings are hard and you didn’t want to deal with them. So you didn’t,” she writes in her journal.

Bargaining

Her job is based on science. Data and research guide her.

As Van Thof pushed for a barrier on the Taft bridge, she learned that there should have been one decades earlier.

Missy Read was a recent graduate from George Washington University when she jumped from the Duke Ellington bridge in 1979. Two years after her death, her parents pushed for barriers. Neighbors said a higher rail would be “real ugly.” Nearby business owners and preservationists said it would detract from the architectural integrity, ruin the bridge’s character and its views of red-tailed hawks and warblers.

Ben and Anne Read persisted. Barriers were installed in 1986. When barriers on the Ellington went up, it didn’t increase suicides on other Washington bridges. But the opposition halted construction at the nearby Taft Bridge.

For decades, people have argued that a barrier on a bridge or building will just encourage someone to find another spot. But most people do not then seek out another bridge or method, says Taylor Kleffel, director of Legislative & Policy Analysis for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

Suicide feelings can be impulsive and intense, but they pass. Barriers give needed time.

Van Thof learned that almost every

new bridge barrier came at a loss.

Trisha Merelo pushed for a barrier on the Natchez Trace Bridge in Tennessee after her 17-year-old son John died in 2016. A temporary barrier lines the bridge now.

Nine-foot-tall steel balusters went up at the Queechee Gorge Bridge in Vermont seven years after David and Regina Cooper lost their son Derek. He was 21.

After Kevin Hines survived jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge in 2000, he pushed for safety measures. In January 2024, the largest safety net, spanning the bridge’s 1.7 miles on each side was finished. The net has helped show other cities that barriers can save lives. Typically, about 30 people die by suicide at the Golden Gate bridge each year. The year the net went up, the number dropped to eight.

Van Thof has told Tripp’s story to her neighbors, coworkers and to her ride share drivers. She talked to reporters, nonprofit groups, politicians and foundation members.

“I learned that it wasn’t my job to know how to do it,” she says. “It was my job to make people care. It was my job to tell Peter’s story.”

Her neighborhood commissioner believed in Van Thof. They passed a resolution later in 2022 recommending barriers.

It was just the first step, but in it, Van Thof saw hope.

Deborah Steinberg, a volunteer with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, brought research and understanding of government agencies. Together, they found allies in a bicycling club and the DC Department of Transportation.

By spring of 2023, City Council approved \$850,000 for the department to review potential barrier designs.

Van Thof still would need to persuade a preservation league and gain approval from the Federal Highway Administration, the National Park Service and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

She made calls and emailed officials during lunch breaks and after work. She pinned all messages on the barriers to the top of her email.

In February 2024, the National Capital Planning Commission approved the initial barrier design. Then the Commission of Fine Arts.

She did suicide prevention walks, she spoke at conferences. She pushed on, telling Tripp’s story.

People would call her brave and strong, but she didn’t feel that way. There is no comfort after suicide.

In her days when all she can think about is Tripp, when she soothes herself by listening to the old recordings of him telling Alexa to “turn off the living room lights,” she turns to the meetings, the testimonials, the calls.

In spring of this year, the barriers were approved. The Department of Transportation began assessing all its bridges for the addition of barriers with construction set to begin in fall.

Maybe the bridge barriers were also saving her.

Acceptance

A few months after Tripp died, Van Thof took a walk with Hugo.

It started to smell like fall, which reminded her of Tripp’s soft flannels that she would soon wear. “Flannels mean you. I don’t know how I’m going to get through that,” she wrote in her journal.

Guilt often competed with grief. There is a time when you lose someone

to suicide when one question consumes you: Was I not enough?

Van Thof set a reminder on her phone that repeats each morning: “Your death had nothing to do with me.”

Suicide typically has many causes, but it doesn’t keep the maybes from creeping in, especially at night. She knows that veterinarians are twice as likely as others to die by suicide. She ends most conversations with new people like this: “Please be kind to your vets.”

Before Tripp died, he had been looking at notes from families of pets he had cared for.

“It’s something we are taught in vet school to do when we have doubts,” she says. “To remind us about the good we do.”

She doesn’t know what pain Tripp carried. She doesn’t know what else he didn’t share, only that she would never know.

“One day he was the Peter I knew,” Van Thof says. “And the next day, he was the Peter that decided jumping off a bridge was better than staying in the pain he was in.”

Van Thof looks the same as when Tripp died. Her brown hair is curly. She smiles easily. But she wonders if he would recognize her. She’s different now. She communicates more, telling people what she’s thinking, feeling.

Her grief lives with her, but now her thoughts are more organized in voice memos, notes in an app on her phone, in a Word doc. Maybe there is a book one day.

This month she will become an assistant state veterinarian in Vermont, a place where Hugo can run. Tripp is the one person, she says, who would be equally excited about their city dog discovering the forest. She misses Tripp in these times that feel like they are shared only with the person you love most. It’s those quiet, ordinary moments like when she sees a croque monsieur on a menu or when she tries to make Kugel.

Last month, her neighborhood commissioner, the one she first contacted about the barriers three years ago, texted her a photo on the Taft.

A tall chain link fence runs along the bridge. The temporary barrier is up, construction is starting.

Van Thof has allowed herself to think about this moment only a few times over the years. It always felt impossible, dreamlike, an end to the work that has sustained her, and a reminder that Tripp isn’t coming back.

She thought she would be sad, but she smiled, surprising herself.

“I allowed myself to feel happy,” she says. “It’s really happening.”

It’s time for flannels again. The leaves are starting to turn, the air feels like fall here.

This is the place where Tripp lived, where he existed in the world, where they walked together.

Next fall, the barriers will be finished, painted in Sherwin Williams Aquas-tone.

Van Thof plans to return to Washington. The barriers will allow her to walk this bridge again, to exist in a world without Tripp.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org.

Laura Trujillo is a national columnist focusing on health and wellness. She is the author of “Stepping Back from the Ledge: A Daughter’s Search for Truth and Renewal,” about her mother’s suicide at the Grand Canyon.

OPINION

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Trump’s beef with ranchers puts America last



Rex Huppke
USA TODAY

Great news for vegans: The cost of beef has skyrocketed, and President Donald Trump has made American cattle ranchers hoof-stomping mad with policies that appear decidedly America-last.

While U.S. consumers wrestle with record-high ground beef prices – \$6.63 per pound in August, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics – and steak restaurants boost prices, Trump has proposed helping his far-right, Trump-like pal, Argentine President Javier Milei, by quadrupling the amount of Argentine beef coming into America.

That would likely do little to help consumers, while hurting cattle ranchers already struggling with a reduced domestic herd size brought on by everything from drought to inflated feeding costs.

Trump’s Argentina beef plan ‘a kick in the nuts’ to ranchers

The National Cattlemen’s Beef Association CEO Colin Woodall called out Trump’s pro-Argentina plan in no uncertain terms:

“This plan only creates chaos at a critical time of the year for American cattle producers, while doing nothing to lower grocery store prices. ... Argentina also has a history of foot-and-mouth disease, which, if brought to the United States, could decimate our domestic livestock production.”

I generally place anything involving foot-and-mouth disease in the “bad” category.

Kyle Hemmert, a 61-year-old cattle rancher in western Kansas, put it succinctly when he recently told The New York Times:

“It’s really just a kick in the nuts.

Come on President Trump, this is ‘America First’ policy? No.”

Trump frustrates ranchers as well as soybean farmers

He’s right. Trump has already enraged U.S. soybean farmers by bailing out Argentina to the tune of \$20 billion, only to see Argentine farmers turn around and sell soybeans to China, normally one of the primary purchasers of American soybeans.

“The frustration is overwhelming,” American Soybean Association President Caleb Ragland said in a statement. “U.S. soybean prices are falling, harvest is underway, and farmers read headlines not about securing a trade agreement with China, but that the U.S. government is extending \$20 billion in economic support to Argentina while that country drops its soybean export taxes to sell 20 shiploads of Argentine soybeans to China in just two days.”

Great, now it’s bad news for vegans AND carnivores.

There are ways to help ranchers. Bailing out Argentina is not it.

Independent cattle ranchers have been squeezed in part because only four meat processing and packing companies handle more than 80% of the nation’s beef. Beyond those monopolies, ranchers face myriad other issues.

As Bloomberg reported recently: “Cattlemen above all want to see a return to mandatory Country of Origin labeling to promote high-quality American beef. They want more regional processing plants, help restocking herds after years of drought (the national cattle herd is at a 75-year low) and easier interstate sales.”

Trump insults cattle ranchers with snide social media post

But Trump, as always, thinks he has all the answers. And as cattle rancher



President Donald Trump welcomes Argentina’s president, Javier Milei, to the White House in Washington, DC, on Oct. 14. JONATHAN ERNST/REUTERS

fury grew, the president responded with a dismissive social media post:

“The Cattle Ranchers, who I love, don’t understand that the only reason they are doing so well, for the first time in decades, is because I put Tariffs on cattle coming into the United States, including a 50% Tariff on Brazil.

“If it weren’t for me, they would be doing just as they’ve done for the past 20 years – Terrible!

“It would be nice if they would understand that, but they also have to get their prices down, because the consumer is a very big factor in my thinking, also!”

Talk about a kick in the nuts.

An ‘absolute betrayal to the American cattle rancher’

Just because Trump eats a lot of hamburgers, he thinks he knows better than the hardworking ranchers who keep Americans fed.

As the U.S. Department of Agriculture noted on its website in May:

“Cattle production is the most important U.S. agricultural industry, consistently accounting for the largest share of total cash receipts for agricultural commodities. In 2024, U.S. cattle production represented about 22 percent of the

\$515 billion in total cash receipts for agricultural commodities.”

Wyoming’s Meriwether Farms wrote about the situation on X in a post that quickly went viral, calling Trump’s plan to buy beef from Argentina an “absolute betrayal to the American cattle rancher.”

The post read in part: “On top of all this – there is only chaos coming from the Department of Agriculture. There is no true guidance, mixed messaging, and a copious amount of photo ops.”

Sadly, American farmers – a huge pro-Trump voting bloc – are learning what people like me have been shouting for years: Donald Trump cares about no one but himself, and he will sell people out in a second.

Farmers and cattle ranchers, like many others, got conned

Trump sees himself in Argentina’s president. He wants to bolster other far-right leaders because it helps him and his authoritarian dreams. He doesn’t care a bit about what Americans are paying for beef or how his actions might impact the farmers who have loyally supported him. He cares about Trump.

If the president wants to buy foreign beef that will hurt U.S. cattle ranchers and do nothing to help U.S. consumers, he’ll do it. Your complaints, your anger, your expressions of betrayal don’t mean a thing.

Farming is brutally hard work, and I respect and appreciate the people who make it their livelihood. I want to see them prosper, just like I want affordable meat for myself and other shoppers.

I hope that the farmers and the consumers who stood behind Trump all these years and who are now suffering see they’ve been sold lies by a con man. An insipid, damaging Argentina-first policy is just another part of the bill coming due.

You can follow USA TODAY columnist Rex Huppke on Bluesky at @rexhuppke.bsky.social and on Facebook at facebook.com/RexIsAJerk

Don’t expect Supreme Court to do away with voting rights



Dace Potas
USA TODAY

On Oct. 15, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a case that has the potential to curtail portions of the Voting Rights Act.

If you just read the headlines, you’d think the Voting Rights Act was doomed to be razed by the court’s conservative majority, but the reality is less clear. The conservative justices seem skeptical of Louisiana’s new map, but how they will address it is entirely speculation.

While the “how” is murky, the Supreme Court should end race-based districting. It’s a relic of antiquated thinking about minority voters.

Justices will likely limit part of Voting Rights Act

Louisiana is roughly one-third Black. Redistricting efforts initially produced a map with just one majority Black district. Lower courts ordered the drawing of a new map with two majority Black districts. That new map was then appealed, reaching the Supreme Court.

The question at the heart of Louisiana v. Callais asks justices whether the Voting Rights Act, specifically Section 2, demands that the second majority Black district be drawn solely in the interest of creating a proportional number of majority Black districts to their share of the population, or if that new district violates the Constitution.

Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act is an enforcement mechanism under which those who believe that their 15th Amendment right to vote cannot be infringed upon “on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

On the other hand, the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment guarantees that states won’t “deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

Petitioners have argued that con-



Janai Nelson, head of NAACP Legal Defense Fund, addresses supporters at the Supreme Court (undergoing renovation) on Oct. 15, after she presented oral arguments for Louisiana Black voters. JEMAL COUNTESS/GETTY IMAGES FOR LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

sciously sorting voters into districts based on race violates the Constitution.

The state legislature needs guidance on how to proceed, whether to consider race in drawing district lines or not. Still, despite some news reports claiming that the Voting Rights Act is in danger, it’s unclear how the nation’s highest court will rule.

Part of the trouble with identifying how the court will land on the issues is that in oral arguments, the conservative justices took time to address differing concerns:

- Justice Brett Kavanaugh noted that while the Supreme Court has permitted some race-conscious remedies in the past, it has done so not in perpetuity but rather with an endpoint in mind.
- Chief Justice John Roberts asked about how this case relates to the precedent set by a similar 2023 case.
- Justice Neil Gorsuch expressed concerns about maps that “intentionally discriminate,” a signal of his skepticism toward the practice altogether.

Remember, a Supreme Court decision needs five votes to be a binding precedent, and to reach that threshold, the decision might not go as far as certain justices would on their own.

Supreme Court should end racial gerrymandering

Race-based districting has no place in modern society. Racial makeup is just one of many factors considered in districting, and we only treat it differently due to past injustices.

Other important factors are compactness, contiguity, adherence to county or city limits, community interests, incumbent protection and more.

In Louisiana’s desperate attempt to create a second majority Black district, lawmakers have neglected these other important factors. The result is a district to connect as many Black people as possible, completely ignoring their regional proximity, similarity of living situation or economic context.

Those who advocate for this sort of remedy engage in an odd form of racial stereotyping, in which race is a factor more important to someone’s vote choice than anything else.

Are the interests of Black Americans as a constituency better represented when they are crammed into an overwhelmingly favorable Democratic district, or when they are treated as one of many constituencies in more competitive races? Voters being grouped with those who share proximity and have similar living situations seems a lot more important to me than skin color.

The Supreme Court should make it clear that racial gerrymandering is illegal, even if it is in the name of racial justice. Districting should prioritize grouping communities with similar interests together, regardless of the racial makeup of its residents.

Dace Potas is an opinion columnist for USA TODAY and a graduate of DePaul University with a degree in political science.



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Rivian ranks last in reliability

But EV maker excels in consumer satisfaction

Liam Rappleye
Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY

Usually, unreliability and consumer satisfaction don't go hand-in-hand. But for one electric vehicle manufacturer, a dead-last ranking in a reliability survey is coupled with a first rank in consumer satisfaction.

According to Consumer Reports, Rivian placed last in its ranking of reliability, with the consumer-focused magazine citing electrical issues, frequent repairs and constant over-the-air updates as cause for the low ranking. For a start-up electric vehicle manufacturer (Rivian delivered its first vehicle in 2021), issues such as these are to be expected as the brand irons out the kinks in production and development.

It seems that Rivian's buyers are OK with the frequent fixes necessary to keep their cars on the road because the brand finished first overall in Consumer Reports' survey of customer satisfaction. Tesla has been similarly stratified between reliability and satisfaction, too. In the same reports, Tesla placed 17th out of 22 in the reliability ranking, but scored third in customer satisfaction.

Reliability rankings

In Consumer Reports' roundup of reliability, which was scored on a scale of 1-100, Rivian scored a 14. The methodology for the ranking included establishing a "problem rate" for all models in a brand's portfolio from model years 2000-2025.

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An electric pick-up truck is shown at the Rivian Automotive Inc facility in Costa Mesa, California, on Nov. 1, 2023. MIKE BLAKE/REUTERS

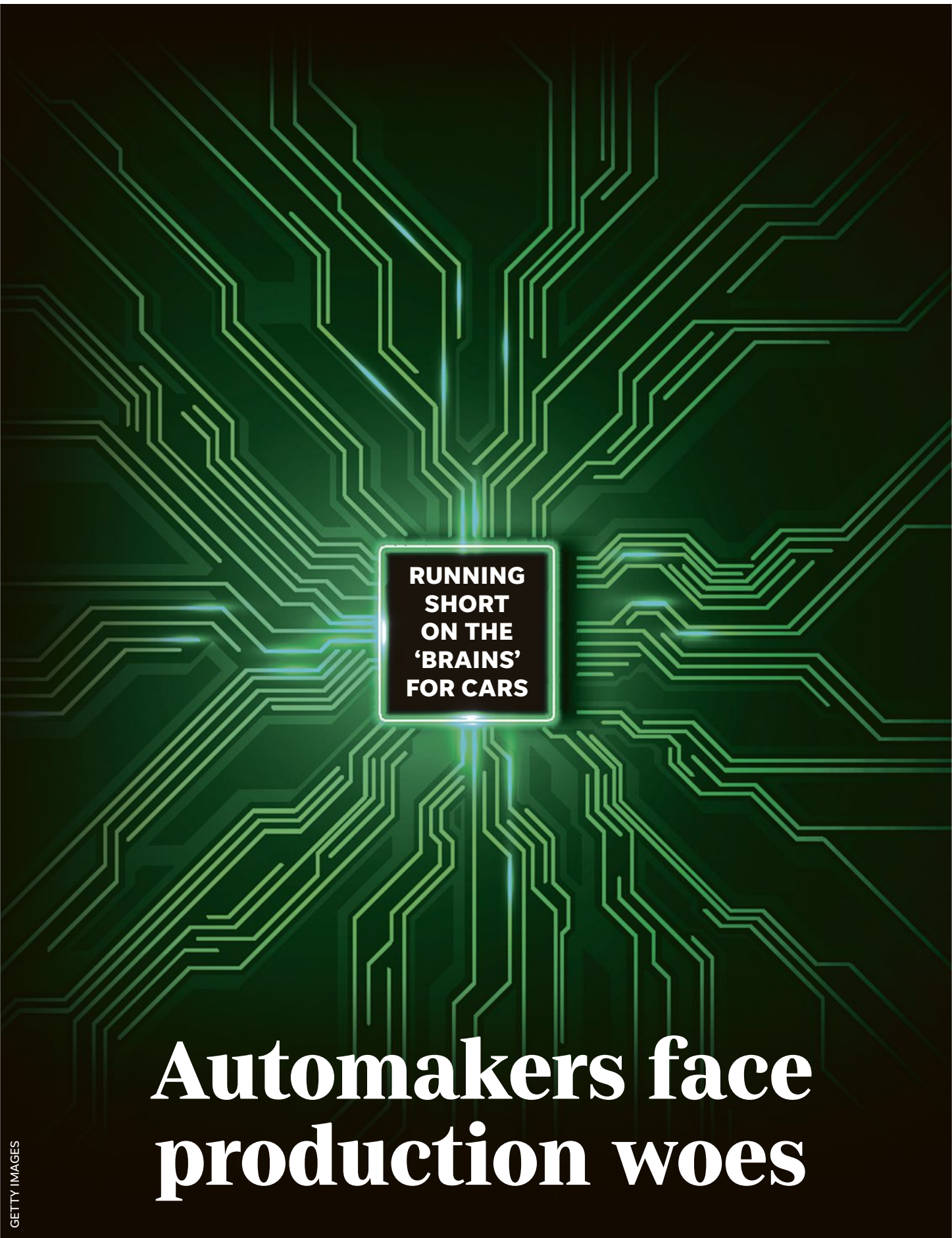
Average cost of a new car reaches a new historic high

Keenan Thompson
Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

The average selling price of a new car has now eclipsed \$50,000 for the first time in history, according to Kelley Blue Book.

The price of just about everything has climbed higher – and new vehicles are no exception. But when the average transaction price for a new vehicle hit \$50,080 in September, many car shoppers surely encountered sticker shock. The ATP (average transaction price) this year for new vehicles has risen 3.6% year-over-year, which is the biggest increase since spring 2023. There are several factors driving up new car prices, including tariffs, the end of the federal EV tax credit and the luxury vehicle segment remaining consistent in sales.

See **PRICE**, Page 2B



Disruptions on horizon due to looming chips crisis

Jamie L. LaReau Detroit Free Press | USA TODAY NETWORK

The Detroit automakers are staring at a looming semiconductor chip crisis that could put the brakes on much of their new car production.

A group representing major carmakers has warned that a dispute between China and the Dutch government has brought on a disruption in the delivery of semiconductor chips, which are used in a variety of car parts.

According to Reuters, automakers and their suppliers received notice from Nexperia last week that it could no longer guarantee delivery of its chips, said ACEA, the European Union's auto association.

The group warned that auto manufacturing could be significantly disrupted as a result. Reuters said people at some of the automakers told Reuters that U.S. car production could be affected as early as next month. The people requested to not be named due to the sensitivity of the issue.

The warning comes after the Dutch government said Sunday that, as of Sept. 30, it had taken control of Chinese-owned computer chipmaker Nexperia over concerns of a possible transfer of technology to Nexperia's Chinese parent company, Wingtech. Reuters said most of Nexperia's chips are made in Europe but they are then packaged in China. Neither side of the company's operations would be able to quickly find alternative partners. It is not clear how long customers' stockpiles can last.

Auto group urges a quick resolution

Reuters cited court documents as showing the Dutch government's move came after months of mounting U.S. pressure on Nexperia. The chipmaker was at risk of being impacted by a new U.S. rule that extends export control restrictions to

See **CHIPS**, Page 2B

Toyota develops a small truck to compete with Ford's Maverick

Charles Singh
USA TODAY

Toyota is developing a truck to go toe-to-toe with Ford's smallest pickup.

The Ford Maverick is a maverick in more ways than one, debuting as one of the few standard hybrid trucks on the market. Aside from being a standard hybrid, the Maverick also is one of the smallest trucks on the market, and the most affordable.

Toyota produces a competitive pickup truck in the midsize segment (Tacoma) and the full-size segment (Tundra). The Japanese brand is working on a small truck that will be a direct competitor to the Maverick, according to MotorTrend.



The 2025 Toyota Tacoma. PROVIDED BY TOYOTA

Can Toyota create a true Ford Maverick rival?

Toyota Motor Corp. is no newbie when it comes to producing popular pickup truck models. The Toyota Taco-

ma is known for its off-roading prowess and resale value.

Toyota's Tundra full-size pickup has gained attention for its powerful engine options and high-quality steel frame. On the other hand, the Japanese brand has yet to produce a truck smaller than the Tacoma for the American market.

Reasons why Toyota could produce a capable Ford Maverick competitor

- Tacoma nameplate success.
- Reputation for affordable and durable models.
- History of hybrid vehicle

See **PICKUP**, Page 2B

Rivian

Continued from Page 1B

The “problem rate” is calculated by surveying customers about each brand about issues they have had with their vehicles in the previous year. Using data from more than 300,000 vehicles from the 2000 to 2025 model years, they calculated what types of problems were appearing – and how often.

Rivian’s score of 14 out of 100 was significantly outclassed by Subaru, Lexus and Toyota. Subaru scored highest with a 68. Lexus, in second, scored 65. Toyota, a titan of reliability, scored 62.

Joining Rivian at the bottom is Cadillac, which scored a 27. Consumer Reports said that electric vehicles (of which Cadillac produces several) generally tend to score lower on reliability as engineers work out the issues with the new technology.

These brands were not included in the study because of a lack of data: Alfa Romeo, Chrysler, Dodge, Fiat, Infiniti, Jaguar, Land Rover, Lincoln, Lucid, Maserati, Mercedes-Benz, Mini, Mitsubishi, Polestar, Porsche and Ram.

Despite the low reliability ranking, Consumer Reports indicated that Rivian owners love their vehicles, whether or not they are in need of regular service.

The first-place finish in customer satisfaction was Rivian’s second in a row. The brand was the only one to score 5 out of 5 on Consumer Reports’ scale, beating out BMW, Tesla, Porsche and Lexus.

According to the survey, Rivian scored highly in comfort, driving performance, cabin feature usability and ownership cost.

What is Rivian?

Rivian is an American electric vehicle manufacturer headquartered in Irvine, California, with its main production facility in Normal, Illinois. Founded in 2009, the company built its brand around high-tech EVs focused on performance.

The company’s lineup currently includes the R1T pickup truck and R1S SUV, both built on Rivian’s electric “skateboard” platform. The R1T starts at \$70,990, and the standard R1S costs \$76,990. The vehicles boast long range, off-road capability and advanced driver-assistance features.

Previously, the automaker announced plans to launch a more affordable midsize SUV, the Rivian R2, and a compact model, the R3, in 2026 as it seeks to expand its customer base. Rivian estimates that the R2 will cost \$45,000, while the price of the smaller, rally-esque R3 has not yet been announced.

While long-standing automakers in the United States struggle to navigate changes to the EV marketplace, new-found EV-only brands like Rivian are simultaneously trying to keep the growth they made in previous years under an EV-friendly administration.

Price

Continued from Page 1B

But even with prices reaching an all-time high, cars keep selling.

EVs hit record sales this quarter

This year, the influx of shoppers trying to get new EVs before the federal tax credit ended played a big role in price trends. A record 437,487 EVs were sold in Q3 with an average sale price of \$58,124.

Tariffs have played a role in these price increases as well. Automakers tried to resist raising their prices to see how things played out. Since the tariffs officially took effect earlier this year, boards have been forced to pass along soaring manufacturing costs to the consumer. This has led to even the most affordable makes and models selling for prices that drive potential buyers to consider the used market.

Luxury cars are still being sold

For the higher end of the car market, vehicle sales don’t seem to be slowing down. Executive analyst for Cox Automotive Erin Keating said in a news release what to expect in the future:

“Today’s auto market is being driven by wealthier households who have access to capital, good loan rates, and are propping up the higher end of the market,” Keating said. “While there are many affordable options out there, many price-conscious buyers are choosing to stay on the sidelines or cruising in the used-vehicle market.”

Pickup

Continued from Page 1B

production.

- Experience producing small trucks internationally.

Toyota has the experience and design background to produce a competent Maverick rival in terms of affordability, size and capability. The reception of this truck when it eventually hits the streets is anyone’s guess.

The rise of small trucks in America

There are still plenty of big, powerful trucks on the market, but there’s no question that there has been a rise in small truck production in recent years. Hyundai’s compact pickup, the Santa Cruz, hit the streets in the summer of 2021. Ford’s smallest truck, the Maverick, went on sale in late 2021.

Since then, both truck models have gained attention at automotive shows and on the enthusiast scene due to their quirky exterior designs. Slate Auto, an automotive startup backed by Jeff Bezos, is also developing a small truck to meet the demand for pickups that slot below the midsize segment.

Ford sold 12,022 Maverick units as of July, according to a sales release. The tiny pickup is outselling other Ford models like the Mustang Mach-E, Bronco



The 2026 Hyundai Santa Cruz. PROVIDED BY HYUNDAI

Sport, Escape, Expedition, and Ranger pickup truck. Maverick sales increased by 8.9% year-over-year as of July.

Hyundai sold a whopping 18,845 Santa Cruz pickup trucks as of August 2025, said a recent sales report from the South Korean automaker. Santa Cruz sales are down 18% year-over-year, but the truck remains a popular model for the brand, outselling Hyundais like the Ioniq 6 sedan and Ioniq 9 SUV.

What to expect from a new small Toyota truck

Based on existing Toyota truck models, a new Toyota truck will likely boast some off-roading ability. Additionally, it should be built for longevity, like the

Tacoma and Tundra.

The 2025 Toyota Tacoma starts at \$31,590 and is the brand’s current smallest truck for the American market. Ford’s compact truck, the Maverick, starts at \$28,145. An entry-level Toyota truck should start around \$30K (MotorTrend’s estimate), closer to the Maverick’s starting price.

Toyota has begun the hybridization of several models in its portfolio, including models like the Sienna minivan, Sequoia SUV, and Camry midsize sedan. If the brand really wants to set a new truck model apart from the Tacoma, it can follow in the footsteps of Ford and make the new small truck a standard hybrid.

The new small Toyota truck is expected to debut in 2027.



Suzie Roskandich-McDermott looks over a Ford F-150 Lightning pickup truck while working on the customer acceptance line at the Rouge Electric Vehicle Center in Dearborn on May 15. RYAN GARZA/USA TODAY NETWORK

Chips

Continued from Page 1B

companies at least 50% owned by one or more entities on the U.S. entity list. Washington put Wingtech, which owns 100% of Nexperia, on the U.S. entity list in December.

The development has thrown the auto industry on high alert with General Motors and Stellantis saying they are closely monitoring the situation. Ford Motor declined to comment.

But the Alliance for Automotive Innovation, which represents GM, Toyota, Ford, Volkswagen, Hyundai and other major automakers, begged for a quick resolution citing the potential for significant economic disruption.

“We don’t know all the circumstances surrounding this incident. What we do know (from very recent experience) is this: Disruptions to the interconnected automotive supply chain will quickly ripple inside the U.S. and around the world,” John Bozzella, CEO of Alliance for Automotive Innovation, said in a statement to the Detroit Free Press. “If the shipment of automotive chips doesn’t resume – quickly – it’s going to disrupt auto production in the U.S. and many other countries and have a spillover effect in other industries. It’s that significant. We’re urging a quick resolution, so U.S. and global automaking remains on track.”

GM is working around the clock

As of now, GM’s production has not been impacted by the burgeoning chip shortage, but CEO Mary Barra told investors early Tuesday during GM’s third-quarter earnings call that GM is scrambling to ensure it can source chips elsewhere and mitigate any production disruptions.

“This is an industry issue. While this has the potential to impact production, we have teams working around the clock with our supply chain partners to minimize possible disruptions. The situation is very fluid,” Barra said.

She said GM’s team “jumped into action” to evaluate where there could be potential disruptions and what differ-

ent sources it could use for chips.

“The team is working around the clock to get that done,” Barra said. “We’re very hopeful this is going to get resolved. In the meantime, the team continues to work as we speak to make sure we continue to identify other sources, so we keep running.”

Stellantis spokesperson Kaileen Connelly told the Detroit Free Press in an email: “Stellantis is closely monitoring the situation and collaborating with Nexperia and other suppliers to assess potential impacts and develop mitigation measures.”

Ford spokesman Mike Levine told the Detroit Free Press, “We don’t comment on supplier issues.”

But this news comes just as Ford is facing its own pending problem of a shortage of aluminum because of a fire at its supplier, Novelis, in New York. Ford uses aluminum in the bodies of many of its vehicles, including its top seller, the F-Series pickup. As the Free Press has reported, sources said Ford has paused production of the all-electric Ford F-150 Lightning and two of its large SUVs due to the aluminum shortage.

Ford declined to comment on any adjustments to its vehicle production and said it will provide more details as to how the aluminum shortage will impact its fourth-quarter results on Oct. 23 when Ford reports its third-quarter earnings.

As to the chip situation, Levine directed the Free Press to MEMA, an association that represents vehicle suppliers.

Auto supplier group calls on Trump

MEMA spokeswoman Megan Gardner sent a statement that said the group is closely monitoring the “recent export restrictions impacting semiconductors and diodes, including the developments related to Nexperia. Suppliers across the motor vehicle industry are working to understand the potential effects on production and supply continuity.”

MEMA said chips and diodes are foundational to automotive components and systems. They are used in in-

tainment systems, door handles, steering and braking. The absence of a single diode or chip can disrupt the manufacture of vehicles.

MEMA’s statement said automotive suppliers source thousands of components globally and have made significant progress in diversifying their supply chains since the 2021 semiconductor shortage.

“However, risk still exists,” the statement said. “This issue reaches far beyond Tier 1 suppliers; it affects sub-tier suppliers throughout the global supply base that provide the building blocks for nearly every vehicle system.”

MEMA said it is coordinating with suppliers, automakers, consumer electronics partners, and other trade associations to assess the full scope of impact, indicating it will turn to President Donald Trump for assistance if needed.

“Together, we aim to ensure the administration understands the potential consequences for U.S. manufacturing and supply chain competitiveness and to support constructive solutions that protect both national and economic security,” MEMA’s statement read.

The last chip crisis

The tiny chips, about the size of a quarter, indeed can cause big problems.

Four years ago, a shortage of semiconductor chips nearly brought U.S. vehicle production to a halt.

Car dealers had barren parking lots, consumers faced limited options on new car purchases and many buyers had to wait months for their new ride to be built.

The chips are tiny transistors made from silicon, which is found in most of the minerals on the Earth’s surface. They allow computers, smart phones, appliances and other electrical devices to function. Most vehicles can’t run without them.

The 2021 chip shortage was the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased demand for the personal electronics such as cell phones and laptops that the chips are used in to the point where production could not keep pace with demand.

Contributing: Jackie Charniga and Liam Rappleye

GM plans eyes-free driving by 2028

Automaker to roll out unified software platform

Jackie Charniga
Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

General Motors said it is on the cusp of eyes-free driving and a unified software platform for its vehicles, two long-awaited initiatives the automaker poured billions of dollars into achieving while leaning heavily on Silicon Valley expertise.

The wide-scale advancement of artificial intelligence expedited several key projects involving software, an area where the automaker has repeatedly faltered, as well as plans to launch robots in manufacturing plants this year.

GM CEO Mary Barra and other senior leaders unveiled a series of AI-enabled initiatives at a news media event on Oct. 22 in midtown Manhattan that the company called “GM Forward.”

At the event, GM revealed that its first eyes-off capable vehicle is slated to hit dealerships in 2028, debuting on the Cadillac Escalade IQ electric SUV.

Alongside its most advanced driver assist system ever, the Escalade IQ will also be the first on GM’s entirely new software platform.

GM said the new software architecture will soon be standard on both EVs and gas-powered vehicles and streamlined, uniting every major system from propulsion and steering to infotainment and safety on a single, high-speed computing core.

The 2026 Escalade IQ starts at \$127,405.

Google integration, cobots

Though some of GM’s announcements won’t be seen in vehicles for a few years, consumers will be able to sample “conversational” AI as early as 2026 through a partnership with Google Gemini.

Customers will be able to ask questions audibly and get responses from Google while driving.

Former Apple engineering leader Dave Richardson, senior vice president of software and services engineering, told reporters that the partnership is a stopgap until GM is able to integrate its own proprietary AI system directly into its vehicles connected by OnStar.

That future tech, Richardson said, would allow the vehicle to describe new



GM CEO Mary Barra and other senior leaders unveiled a series of AI-enabled initiatives at a news media event in midtown Manhattan that the company called “GM Forward” on Oct. 22. JACKIE CHARNIGA/USA TODAY NETWORK

features directly to drivers, identify and explain maintenance issues, and even give restaurant recommendations and directions.

“It’s practical AI that makes your life better,” Richardson said.

GM also touted its state-of-the-art robotics it plans to deploy in the manufacturing process this year. Called cobots, or “collaborative robots,” they are designed to work along with human employees by undertaking a single-use job function – but GM hopes to expand these cobots to take on more complex work in the future.

GM builds and trains its non-humanoid cobots at its Autonomous Robotics Center (ARC) in Warren, Michigan, and at its sister lab in Mountain View, California, which employ more than 100 roboticists, AI engineers, and hardware specialists.

Eyes-off driving

GM said the technology and validation frameworks it absorbed from the self-driving startup Cruise allowed it to more quickly advance its existing advanced driver assist system, Super Cruise.

SuperCruise, which GM launched, is available on 23 GM vehicle models.



GM’s Autonomous Robotics Center (ARC) in Warren, Michigan, and a sister lab in Mountain View, California, are developing software and manipulation components for collaborative robots (cobots) planned to deploy in its U.S. assembly plants this year.

PROVIDED BY GM

“From an expansion, it will be faster than SuperCruise,” Barra said. “This is something you will see us roll out much, much faster.”

According to the company, GM has mapped 600,000 miles of North American roads where drivers can navigate hands-free. In these select spaces, Super Cruise customers have driven 700

million miles without a single reported crash attributed to the system.

Sterling Anderson, GM executive vice president, global product and chief product officer, said the advancement would be a “cornerstone” of the company’s business moving forward.

“The system is developed on AI that’s been trained and fine-tuned with real-world data,” Anderson said, adding that the increased automation in SuperCruise will start with highway driving. “From there, we’ll expand to urban environments, ultimately enabling your vehicle to handle errands while you focus on more important things.”

GM folded Cruise this year and consolidated remaining employees into engineering teams dedicated to increasing driver assist features in personal cars rather than commercial options like robotaxis.

Folding in the company allowed GM to leverage more than 5 million fully driverless miles of experience into its system.

Software-defined stumbles

News of GM’s next-generation software platform has been long-awaited. Software glitches forced the company to pause sales of its Chevrolet Blazer EV in December 2023 and its profitable gasoline-powered midsize pickups.

But GM previewed some of its software plans at a news media event in May, when Richardson said the new electrical architecture offers greater potential to not only improve customer satisfaction but break into new revenue streams.

The company’s current electrical architecture – called VIP or Global B – is considered a “software-defined” platform, but GM said the next generation will allow the company to improve vehicles faster through cloud-based, over-the-air updates, more in line with what customers expect in other areas of their lives.

The new system is a more streamlined computer with more robust computing power: 10 times more over-the-air software update capacity, 1,000 times more bandwidth, and up to 35 times more AI performance for autonomy and advanced features.

“This architecture will support massive software sharing across our entire portfolio ... and the payoff is massive,” Richardson said.

“For customers, it means vehicles are always up-to-date.”

Escalade vs. Escalade IQ: It’s about power

IQ’s battery gives it a leg up on its gas-running kin

Liam Rappleye
Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Cadillac Escalade has been an iconic symbol of luxury and comfort since it debuted in 1999.

It began as a badged-up GMC Yukon, powered by a 5.7-liter V-8 pushing 255 horsepower. Over 25 years later, the Escalade is still the hallmark luxury SUV, though things have changed. Since 2024, Cadillac has evolved the Escalade nameplate and now offers two versions of the vehicle: The classic, gas-powered Escalade and the Escalade IQ.

There is an obvious difference: The IQ is powered by a battery. However, there is more than a difference in powertrains that separates the luxury behemoths.

Design: Cadillac DNA in two forms

Visually, both the Escalade and Escalade IQ are bold, identifiable vehicles. The IQ, though, takes things further with larger dimensions and a slightly more futuristic look.

The electric Escalade IQ stretches more than a foot longer than the standard Escalade, with a wheelbase 2 inches longer than the longest version of the gas-powered Escalade, the ESV. The Escalade IQ, with a wheelbase measuring 136.2 inches, further eclipses the standard wheelbase version of the Escalade (with a 121-inch wheelbase) by 15 inches.

Both vehicles look like Cadillacs because, well, they are. But the internal combustion Escalade carries a slightly more traditional Escalade look, while the IQ features an illuminated grille, a sloping roofline and a paint-matched pillar at the rear of the third-row window that diverges from the standard Escalade, which has an all-glass finish at the back of the vehicle.

Inside, both models tout massive 55-



A Cadillac all-electric 2025 Escalade IQ luxury SUV is displayed during press day of the North American International Auto Show in Detroit in 2023.

REBECCA COOK/ REUTERS

inch display screens across the dashboard. A passenger-side screen that’s invisible to the driver adds a layer of privacy and luxury entertainment. In the IQ, there are up to 126 ambient lighting colors that give the EV driver options to customize their atmosphere.

Power and performance: Gas vs. electric

The 2025 Escalade offers traditional gasoline-powered powertrains, but Cadillac has significantly evolved the power capabilities for its three-row SUV since its 255-horsepower debut.

The ICE Escalade comes standard with a 6.2-liter V8 pushing out an impressive 420 horsepower. And if you want some ridiculous power to couple with the luxury, the 682-horsepower V-Series model with a supercharged V-8 is a great option.

But the most power available in an Escalade comes in electric form.

The Escalade IQ features dual electric motors, full-time all-wheel drive,

and 750 horsepower in its high-performance mode. Even in the standard setting, the IQ delivers 680 horsepower, just shy of the highest-performance ICE model’s best number.

Generally speaking, EVs are heavier than their internal combustion counterparts. The same is true for the Escalade and the Escalade IQ. The gas Escalade weighs 6,014 pounds. The IQ, on the other hand, weighs a whopping 9,134 pounds, one of the heaviest passenger vehicles on the market.

The battery-powered IQ accelerates from 0 to 60 mph in just 4.7 seconds, with an estimated 460-mile range on its 205 kWh lithium-ion battery. The highest-performance ICE Escalade does 0-60 in 4.4 seconds, slightly better than its heavier counterpart. The standard Escalade does 0-60 in about six seconds.

Technology and comfort: Electric luxury

Tech is where the newborn Escalade IQ one-ups its big brother.

The IQ offers four-wheel steering – an uncommon feature – with a turning radius that is 6.5 feet tighter than the standard Escalade. On top of nimbler steering for a larger vehicle, the Escalade IQ offers plush suspension through adaptive air suspension and magnetic ride control.

All trim levels of the Escalade IQ have power-opening, obstacle-sensing doors, making it a great choice for a chauffeur. Due to the electric powertrain, too, the IQ offers a 12.2 cubic foot front trunk with slide-out trays and organizers.

However, the 2025 gasoline Escalade isn’t left behind. It shares many of the IQ’s high-tech features, but not on all trim levels.

The classic Escalade’s two highest trim levels feature the same power doors, an executive second-row package with massage seats, tray tables, and headrest speakers. The Escalade comes standardly equipped with Super Cruise hands-free driving.

One notable distinction between the two vehicles is that the gas-powered Escalade features Apple CarPlay and Android Auto standard, while the features are absent in the Escalade IQ, which relies on GM’s native infotainment system.

Pricing: Exclusivity vs. relative accessibility

The Escalade IQ totes a hefty price tag. It starts at \$127,700, with the high trim levels like the Sport 2 reaching more than \$150,000 before options and a \$2,290 destination fee.

For that price, buyers get what Cadillac calls the most advanced full-size luxury electric SUV on the market today.

Prices for the 2025 gasoline Escalade are slightly lower, starting at \$88,100. The higher trim levels begin to mirror the price of the IQ, climbing to \$176,000 manufacturer’s suggested retail price. This makes the gas-powered Escalade the more accessible option, though still a very expensive vehicle.

50★States

News from across the USA

ALABAMA Montgomery: According to a new report from SmartAsset, the Heart of Dixie ranks in the top 10 nationwide among states where the salary needed to live comfortably is the lowest.

ALASKA Anchorage: A new report found that Alaska’s tourism season that ended in April 2025 saw a 1.1% increase from the previous season, with more than 3 million people visiting the state, Alaska Public Media reported.

ARIZONA Phoenix: Arizona State University’s prospective medical school received the green light to recruit its first class of students, bringing it closer to its official 2026 launch. That’s because the school received preliminary accreditation from the Liaison Committee on Medical Education.

ARKANSAS Jonesboro: The Arkansas State University Athletics Department said plans to build a 40,000-square-foot baseball Player Development Center at Tomlinson Stadium and Slayton Family Field are moving forward, with construction expected to begin soon, KARK reported.

CALIFORNIA Sacramento: A new statewide program will alert high school students that they’ve been admitted to California State University before they’ve even applied. But it could also be a boon to schools hungry for boosts in enrollment.

COLORADO Pueblo: An overnight camp that has taught local kids about hiking, camping, horseback riding, archery and more for more than 100 years is closing down due to declining usage and increasing costs.

CONNECTICUT Hartford: The Board of Regents for Connecticut State Colleges and Universities – which includes four regional universities, the community colleges and the online Charter Oak State College – voted to keep tuition fees flat for the second year in a row but to raise food service costs and certain programmatic fees, The CT Mirror reported.

DELAWARE Dover: Former state Rep. John Kowalko, an unapologetic voice for Delaware’s progressive movement and a longtime advocate for government transparency, died Oct. 25 at age 80.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Washington: Officials said vehicles were damaged and people were assaulted in three separate violent carjacking incidents that occurred near Logan Circle on the evening of Oct. 25, WUSA reported.

FLORIDA Daytona Beach: For most of the 13 years the City Island Recreation Center has been shuttered, city managers have repeatedly suggested that the World War II-era building be torn down. Now, for the first time, a majority of city commissioners have agreed it’s time for the beat-up structure to come down. At their next meeting on Nov. 5, city commissioners will vote on a proposal to tear down the 8,000-square-foot building.

GEORGIA Athens: Landmark Properties recently announced it had raised \$150,000 in its fourth annual Building Hope Through Homes Invitational Golf Tournament in Braselton. Landmark noted that \$140,000 will go to the Athens Area Habitat for Humanity to support the construction of new homes in the Micah’s Creek community. The other \$10,000 goes to the Atlanta Habitat for Humanity.

HAWAII Kula: A family is searching for their prized pet miniature goat that was stolen from their private ranch, Hawaii News Now reported.

IDAHO Boise: Idaho Democratic Party Chair Lauren Necochea said in a statement that former U.S. Rep. Richard Stallings has died at age 85, KTVB reported.

ILLINOIS Bloomington: Illinois’ Attorney General has filed a lawsuit against State Farm, arguing the Bloomington-headquartered company should be required to give the state information about homeowners insurance policies that it issues nationwide.

INDIANA Indianapolis: The Nickel Plate Trail will soon become the second major rail trail connecting Indianapolis and Hamilton County. But ongoing construction means that trail users won’t be able to travel its full length until late next year.

IOWA Woodbine: Over 1,000 mink were released from a farm near Woodbine in what Fur Commission USA called a terrorist act.

HIGHLIGHT: RHODE ISLAND



Trees toppled by coastal storms litter the beach at Crescent Park in East Providence. ALEX KUFFNER/USA TODAY NETWORK

East Providence: The beach at Crescent Park is littered with toppled trees. The bluff rising up over the strip of sand on the Providence River is slowly collapsing under the twin forces of rainwater runoff that’s weakening it from above and storm-driven waves that are undercutting it from below. When the tide’s in, there’s barely room to walk. East Providence has worked on erosion control projects, but nothing so far has been able to stop the hillside’s slide. Now, with the city working toward a plan to reopen the beach to swimming, officials are set to try out a hybrid solution using a rock wall topped with native vegetation.

KANSAS Salina: SculptureTour Salina has received the Community Collaboration Award from the Travel Industry Association of Kansas, according to an announcement.

KENTUCKY Frankfort: Kentucky has ranked among the worst places in the country for people with Medicare benefits. The Commonwealth Fund, a nonpartisan organization geared toward creating a more equitable health care system, released a report that ranked each state on how residents enrolled in Medicare experience the program and its benefits. Overall, Kentucky clocked in as the third worst state, with only Mississippi and Louisiana behind it.

LOUISIANA New Orleans: A new study has officially named the home of the New Orleans Saints the most haunted stadium in the entire NFL.

MAINE Springvale: Habitat for Humanity of York County is breaking ground on its 40th home, marking a major milestone in the organization’s ongoing mission to provide affordable housing. The new build is located in Springvale. It is the fourth and final home in the community – and part of Habitat’s Carter Build Project, a tribute to late former President Jimmy Carter and late former first lady Rosalynn Carter’s decades of service and advocacy.

MARYLAND Princess Anne: Philanthropist Mackenzie Scott has donated \$38 million to the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, the university announced. According to the university, this is the largest single gift the university has received.

MASSACHUSETTS Worcester: Nearly 200,000 patients at UMass Memorial Health could see big changes to their insurance coverage if a new contract between the health system and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts isn’t reached by the end of this year. Both sides are at an impasse in negotiations on a new three-year contract that will impact 185,000 patients.

MICHIGAN Paradise: The Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society will have two memorials in honor of the 50th anniversary since the Edmund Fitzgerald sank on Lake Superior. The commemorative ceremonies will happen on Nov. 10, with a public ceremony happening at 2 p.m. and a private memorial at 7 p.m. The public ceremony will be held outside, underneath the Whitefish Point lighthouse on the shores of Lake Superior in Paradise.

MINNESOTA St. Paul: Violent crime in Minnesota held steady in 2024, with a small increase in the Twin Cities area and a decrease in the rest of the state, according to a Minnesota Department of Public Safety report.

MISSISSIPPI Satartia: A meeting in Mississippi’s smallest town could lead to the largest economic development project in the history of the state. An ExxonMobil spokesperson as well as one of its local lobbyists met with residents of Satartia in Yazoo County to discuss the potential of the company building a power plant that would energize a data center for what could ultimately be as much as a \$30 billion project.

MISSOURI Bradleyville: Three southern Missouri school districts have been labeled “financially stressed,” a designation typically triggered by having too little money on hand or operating critical funds in the red. Bradleyville in Taney County made the list along with East Carter County in Ellsinore, and Zalma in Bollinger County.

MONTANA Missoula: Corgis dashed to the finish line in the inaugural corgi races at Ogren Park hosted by Missoula PaddleHeads and the Missoula Valley Corgis on Oct. 25, KPAX reported.

NEBRASKA Lincoln: Madonna Rehabilitation unveiled its updated research institute, KOLN reported.

NEVADA Carson City: Roughly four out of five Nevada children are locked out of after-school programs because the programs are too expensive or just not offered in their communities, according to new analysis from national nonprofit Afterschool Alliance, Nevada Current reported.

NEW HAMPSHIRE Dover: This winter will mark the start of the demolition of the historic Gen. Sullivan Bridge, following approval of an approximately \$28.5 million contract.

NEW JERSEY East Rutherford: The New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority approved nearly \$800,000 in spending for structural work on and near the parking garage at the American Dream mall as the complex continues to prepare for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

NEW MEXICO Albuquerque: City officials held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the opening of the first section of the long-awaited Rail Trail in the Sawmill District, KOB reported.

NEW YORK Valhalla: Westchester Medical Center will receive up to \$100 million in state funding to support its takeover of Bon Secours Charity Health and Health Alliance of the Hudson Valley, officials said.

NORTH CAROLINA Fayetteville: The Methodist University Cape Fear Valley Health School of Medicine received preliminary accreditation from the Liaison Committee on Medical Education. This means it can start recruiting its first class for the summer of 2026.

NORTH DAKOTA Mandan: The North Dakota Department of Commerce has awarded a \$500,000 Destination Development Grant to the Morton Mandan Public Library for the Tourism Makerspace Hub, which is expected to open in 2027, KFYY reported.

OHIO Marysville: Honda Auto Plant in Marysville is scaling back operations due to supply chain issues plaguing the auto industry.

OKLAHOMA Oklahoma City: U.S. Rep. Tom Cole says efforts by some Texas politicians to move aviation training out of Oklahoma and to Texas would happen “over our dead bodies, politically.” Cole said he and other federal legislators from Oklahoma have quashed similar efforts in the past, including efforts to build a new training academy outside of the state.

OREGON Salem: The Department of Public Safety Standards and Training Board revoked the public safety certifications of four police officers, five corrections officers and one dispatcher, and took no action against one police officer, two corrections officers and two fire professionals following allegations of moral fitness violations both on and off the job.

PENNSYLVANIA Philadelphia: Philadelphia, America’s sixth-largest city, is one of the nation’s unsafest, according to a new study. WalletHub ranked Philadelphia as the ninth-unsafest city in a ranking of the nation’s 182 largest cities.

SOUTH CAROLINA Columbia: Families who are looking for a festive place to spend the holiday this year may want to book their flights to a certain South Carolina city, according to Google Flights. The Google-based app “determined trending travel destinations for Thanksgiving based on the biggest percentage increases in searches for trips departing November 23-30 from U.S. airports,” said Southern Living. South Carolina’s capital, Columbia, is getting the national spotlight this time.

SOUTH DAKOTA Aberdeen: A South Dakota couple wants an Iowa carbon pipeline company to pay them for surveying their land against their will, South Dakota Searchlight reported. Jared and Tara Bossly, of rural Aberdeen, filed a trespassing lawsuit in Brown County against Summit Carbon Solutions and a handful of affiliated companies they say acted as agents of the company, according to the news outlet.

TENNESSEE Nashville: Tennessee public school teachers and staff may see new state funding to implement wearable, silent panic buttons to communicate swiftly and clearly during emergencies. State Rep. Ron Gant and state Senate Majority Leader Jack Johnson announced they will seek to expand a pilot program that furnished six schools with such devices in 2024 to fund implementation in every public school in the state.

TEXAS Borger: Phillips 66 and Kinder Morgan plan to build and operate a new 20-inch, 1,300-mile pipeline connecting Texas and Arizona, a move that is likely to shift the balance of the local gasoline supply. The Western Gateway Pipeline would transport gasoline and other refined petroleum products from Borger to Phoenix. The new pipeline is expected to complete construction by 2029.

UTAH Lindon: The First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announced that the public open house for the Lindon Utah Temple will be from March 12 through April 11, and the dedication will be on May 3, KUTV reported.

VERMONT Killington: Killington Resort is investing \$22 million into infrastructure upgrades for the 2025-26 season, the resort said.

VIRGINIA Petersburg: Virginia State University extended the contract of its president, Dr. Makola Abdullah, for another seven years. Abdullah has been president of the university since 2016.

WASHINGTON Olympia: Washington quietly ended funding this summer for a program that provided millions of dollars in rebates to farmers who paid unfair fuel surcharges under Washington’s landmark climate law, Washington State Standard reported. Lawmakers are hoping instead that legislation enacted in May will make it easier for farm fuel users and haulers of agricultural goods to receive the fuel exemption promised under the state’s cap-and-trade system, according to the news outlet.

WEST VIRGINIA Bridgeport: The Preston County Commission agreed to give \$16,000 to KAMP Ambulance to address payroll concerns, WDTV reported.

WISCONSIN Oshkosh: Oshkosh will become home to Wisconsin’s largest mural by month’s end, when visual artist Mauricio Ramirez is set to finish a 1,000-foot-long mural by the riverfront along the back wall of the Cummins plant.

WYOMING Niobrara County: Two fossilized “mummies” unearthed by scientists in the badlands of Wyoming of the duckbilled dinosaur Edmontosaurus reveal the external anatomy in exquisite detail, including the surprising presence of hooves on the feet – a first for any dinosaur. *From USA TODAY Network and wire reports*



Right, from top to bottom: Ohio State's Isaiah West, Georgia Tech's Haynes King and Navy's Brandon Chatman



Left, from top to bottom: Indiana's Elijah Sarratt, Texas A&M's Jamarion Morrow and BYU's Tiger Bachmeier



Unblemished – but for how long?

Six college unbeatens look to avoid a potentially costly loss in November

Eddie Timanus USA TODAY

A college football weekend relatively free of upsets yielded little in the way of material ripe for overreaction. So rather than look at individual moments or outcomes, we'll take a look at the sport's most exclusive club.

Entering Week 9, there were only six remaining undefeated members of the Football Bowl Subdivision. Upon the conclusion of the weekend, well, there are still six. Since putting together a perfect record is extremely difficult, just speculating about the possibility of running the table might be considered an overreaction. ... But can it be done?

As fate and mathematics would have it, on the eve of the season's final month there could conceivably be five teams left with unblemished slates when College Football Playoff time arrives, one from each of the top five conferences. Obviously, the

See UNBLEMISHED, Page 2C

PHOTOS BY CHRIS PIETSCH, THE REGISTER-GUARD AND SCOTT CLAUSE, BRETT DAVIS, JEFF HANISCH, TOMMY GILLIGAN AND REESE STRICKLAND/IMAGN IMAGES



Bob Nightengale
Columnist
USA TODAY

Shohei Ohtani redefines best WS game ever

LOS ANGELES – It's getting a little absurd, isn't it?

This shouldn't be humanly possible.

It's like watching Barry Bonds in his prime, Reggie Jackson in October and Albert Pujols in a St. Louis Cardinals uniform.

Shohei Ohtani is taking this World Series into his own hands, putting on a show that may never be forgotten.

Ohtani had the greatest World Series performance in Los Angeles Dodgers' history Monday Oct. 27, hitting two home runs and two doubles, driving in three runs, scoring another three, reaching base a record nine times, with four intentional walks, and then watching first baseman Freddie Freeman hit a walk-off homer in the 18th inning of the Dodgers' 6-5 victory over the Toronto Blue Jays in Game 3 of the World Series.

It was an instant classic, tied for longest game in World Series history at 18 innings.

Ohtani's surreal performance has the Dodgers halfway to their second consecutive World Series championship.

They lead the Blue Jays 2 games to 1, hoping to win the next two games at Dodger Stadium, where they will attempt to clinch their first championship at Dodger Stadium since 1963.

The painful defeat taught the Blue Jays two lessons:

- 1. Do Not Pitch to Shohei Ohtani: And if you do, don't throw meatballs down the middle of the plate like Blue Jays reliever Seranthony Dominguez did in the seventh inning.
- 2. Do Not Taunt Shohei Ohtani: If you do, well, you are going to pay the price.

It was the taunt that was heard 'round the world on the night of Friday Oct. 24.

"We don't need you! We don't need you!"

Ohtani's wife thought it was hysterical. Blue Jays veteran pitcher Chris Bassitt was worried. Ohtani simply shrugged it off.

Maybe, next time, the Blue Jays fans will listen to Bassitt who warned their fans: "Don't poke the bear."

The Blue Jays fans, remember, were the ones laughing at Ohtani's expense in Game 1 when they were routing the Dodgers 11-4, chanting to Ohtani in his last plate appearance:

"We don't need you! We don't need you!"

While Dodgers manager Dave Roberts claimed that Ohtani didn't understand the chant, his superstar acknowledged that he indeed heard it.

See NIGHTENGALE, Page 2C



Dodgers designated hitter Shohei Ohtani celebrates after hitting a home run during the seventh inning in Game 3. KIYOSHI MIO/IMAGN IMAGES

Nightengale

Continued from Page 1C

“I thought it was great,” Ohtani said. “My wife loves that chant, so she teased me a little about it.”

Ohtani laughed, saying he hopes his wife doesn’t start saying the same chant at home.

Still, if the Blue Jays faithful though they were getting under Ohtani, guess again?

“I’m focused during my at-bats,” Ohtani said, “so it doesn’t really bother me or anything like that.”

Apparently not.

Ohtani, who was hitting .224 this postseason in the Dodgers’ first 12 games (11-for-49), tormented the Blue Jays early and often and was the only reason the Blue Jays didn’t win the game in regulation.

He hit a ground-rule double in his first at-bat.

He homered in the third inning.

He hit a run-scoring double off the center-field fence in the fifth inning.

He tied the game in the seventh inning with a homer.

He was intentionally walked in the eighth inning.

He was intentionally walked in the 11th inning.

He was intentionally walked in the 13th.

He was intentionally walked in the 15th.

He was walked on four pitches in the 17th.

He became the first player in World Series history to reach base nine times and joined Frank Isbell of the 1906 Chicago White Sox as the only players in history to produce four extra-base hits in a World Series game.

Ohtani also became the first player in modern-day baseball history to produce 12 total bases in consecutive home games, with his three-homer performance in the Dodgers’ pennant-clincher against the Milwaukee Brewers.

“I do feel better at the plate recently, so in that sense it’s been good overall,” Ohtani said Sunday. “I do everything in my power to make sure that I’m prepared as much as possible and being at the plate with the right mentality. But you have to give some credit to the other side as well.”

Well, on this night, he flipped the script, and the Blue Jays had no choice but to give him credit, intentionally walking him four times.

It set the stage for the fourth walk-off homer in Dodgers’ World Series history, and a night no Dodger fan will ever forget.

Follow Bob Nightengale on X: @Bnightengale



Freddie Freeman celebrates with Dodgers teammates after hitting a leadoff, walk-off home run in the 18th inning.

JAYNE KAMIN-ONCEA/IMAGN IMAGES

Record-breaking numbers in Game 3 of World Series

Steve Gardner

USA TODAY

The Los Angeles Dodgers’ marathon Game 3 victory over the Toronto Blue Jays in 18 innings was an instant classic for so many different reasons – from Shohei Ohtani’s latest incredible individual performance to Freddie Freeman’s walk-off homer.

But to fully appreciate what we witnessed (or more likely couldn’t stay awake long enough to see), we need to take a deep dive into the numbers.

Although it fell just short of the longest game in MLB playoff history – second only to the Dodgers’ 7-hour,

20-minute victory over the Boston Red Sox in Game 3 of the 2018 World Series – the 2025 extended remix against the Blue Jays was certainly amazing in its own right.

Here’s a look at some of the eye-popping stats from the Dodgers’ 6-5 win on Monday Oct. 27:

- **18:** Innings, tying a record for the longest World Series game
- **6:39:** Time of game, the second longest in World Series history
- **3:** Career walk-off postseason hits by Freddie Freeman, tying him with David Ortiz and Carlos Correa for the most in baseball history
- 44:** Players used by both teams in the

game, including a record 19 pitchers

130: Combined at-bats by both teams, smashing the record of 118 set by the Dodgers and Red Sox in 2018

19: Runners left on base by the Blue Jays, the most by a single team in World Series history, breaking the record of 15 held by six different teams

9: Times Shohei Ohtani reached base in Game 3 (two home runs, two doubles and five walks), an all-time postseason record

4: Intentional walks to Shohei Ohtani, also a postseason record (six players – including David Ortiz, Albert Pujols, Josh Hamilton and Barry Bonds – previously had three)

Unblemished

Continued from Page 1C

postseason will start reducing that list even further, so we’ll limit our exercise to which members of the unbeaten club have the best chance to reach the Playoff still unscathed.



Ohio State/Indiana

Obviously the Buckeyes and Hoosiers can’t both be unbeaten after the Big Ten title game since under this scenario they’ll have played each other in Indianapolis. That said, both of them have a good chance of getting there with 12-0 marks, but for one small matter.

We’ll start with the Hoosiers, who only have one more home game in November, a probable romp over offense-challenged Wisconsin. None of Indiana’s three remaining road dates, however, loom as being particularly daunting. Maryland has improved but can’t seem to close in the fourth quarter, Penn State will have an interim coach and a backup quarterback and Purdue is just trying to make it to basketball season.

Ohio State also faces Penn State and Purdue, and the Buckeyes’ other remaining dates are at home against UCLA – which just received a reality check from Indiana – and Rutgers, which had a similarly humbling result against Oregon.

Then there’s the Thanksgiving week finale. We don’t even have to say it, do we, Ohio State fans? In truth, if the Buckeyes can shed their own collective mental baggage they’ll beat a largely one-dimensional Michigan team with little fanfare, and in the process check that last box on Ryan Day’s coaching résumé. But a rivalry can be a strange beast. So with all that stated up front, we’d say the Big Ten champ has the best chance to reach Selection Sunday unscathed.



Ohio State safety Malik Hartford (9) and Sonny Styles react during the road win vs. Wisconsin on Oct. 18. SAMANTHA MADAR/THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH – USA TODAY NETWORK



Texas A&M

The Aggies have a road date at Missouri and a season finale at renewed rival Texas (see above on rivalry games), but for the most part they’ve done the heavy lifting already with the first two months of the season successfully negotiated. A&M’s biggest remaining obstacle then will likely come in the SEC title game. It could be another recent upstart like Ole Miss or Vanderbilt awaiting the Aggies in Atlanta. But it’s more likely to be Alabama or Georgia, programs accustomed to the bright lights and the big stage.

Even with a loss there, the Aggies would still have plenty on their resume to warrant Playoff inclusion, and perhaps still a bye to the quarterfinals. But an SEC title with a 13-0 ledger would present a compelling argument for the top overall seed – unless the Big Ten

champ is also perfect. But that’s an overreaction debate for another day.



Georgia Tech

Having already survived a couple of games decided on the final play, the Yellow Jackets can’t exactly guarantee victory just by stepping on to the field. We’ll allow that their remaining ACC contests are winnable, however, though their final league test against Pitt in a few weeks is looking trickier.

After that, of course, is the annual showdown with Georgia. The Bulldogs have gotten the better of it for a number of years, but Tech has closed the gap of late and by rights probably should have won last year’s meeting. Up next then would be the conference final against – Miami? Virginia? Louisville? Someone else? Suffice it to say that is very much

up in the air at this point.

Could the Jackets make the Playoff without winning the ACC? It’s unlikely without a win against Georgia to bolster their at-large case. But again, that’s a hypothetical argument that will be taken up on another day, possibly by the committee members themselves.



BYU

We’d say that of the Power Four conference leaders, BYU’s path to perfection is the most treacherous. Then again, the Cougars passed one of their remaining road tests this weekend at Iowa State, overcoming an early two-score deficit in the process.

But two Big 12 road trips remain against ranked opponents. The next one in two weeks might be the toughest at Texas Tech, then a couple of weeks after that is an even longer flight to Cincinnati. The good news is the Cougars have the coming week off to prepare for the difficult stretch drive. They might not have to win all of their November games to play for the conference title, but they’ll probably need to at least split those two road dates.



Navy

Let’s state this up front. What the Midshipmen have accomplished thus far to get to 7-0 is tremendous, and quarterback Blake Horvath absolutely belongs in the Heisman discussion. But with that said, Navy is the longest of long shots on this list to run the table, simply by virtue of having the toughest November schedule.

Navy’s finishing stretch in the American is tough enough, starting with next week’s trip to 7-1 North Texas. A home date with 6-2 South Florida and a season-ending visit to 7-1 Memphis are also on the docket. And, oh yeah, there’s also the trip to Notre Dame in two weeks. But though perfection is a tall order, Navy could win the league, and yes, even make the Playoff. This whole exercise is about daring to dream, right?

NFL POWER RANKINGS

No change at top for first time in four Oct. weeks

Nate Davis
USA TODAY

NFL power rankings entering Week 9 of the 2025 season (previous rank in parentheses):

1. Kansas City Chiefs (1): Rekindled TE Travis Kelce is a microcosm for a re-kindled dynasty, one that’s won five of six heading into the teeth of its schedule – starting Sunday Nov. 2 at Buffalo.

2. Green Bay Packers (4): Christian Watson returned, with significant effect, Sunday night Oct. 26, and fellow WR Jayden Reed shouldn’t be too far behind for an offense seemingly loaded with 1A weapons – even if a No. 1 receiver has yet to emerge. An already accelerating team could be poised to hit another gear.

3. Los Angeles Rams (2): They made a very nice pick-up Monday, acquiring CB Roger McCreary to fortify a defense lacking for little but depth – a forward-thinking move that basically seems to have January in mind.

4. Indianapolis Colts (3): How well is it going for the team with the league’s best record (7-1)? QB Daniel Jones was sacked on third down Sunday ... for the first time this season. Also, MVP candidate Jonathan Taylor is on pace for more than 2,200 yards and 30 touchdowns from scrimmage.

5. Detroit Lions (5): They haven’t lost at home this season. They haven’t lost at home to the Vikings since the 2020 season.

6. Seattle Seahawks (6): Coming out of their week off, they hit the road – exactly where coach Mike Macdonald and crew play their best football – for four of their next six games.

7. Denver Broncos (7): Awesome as this pass rush has been, now up to a league-leading 36 sacks, how many of the coverage variety will it lose with injured CB Pat Surtain II set to miss a few games?

8. Philadelphia Eagles (8): Their bye comes at a terrible time after the offense put up 59 points and nearly 800 yards over the past two weeks. Their bye also comes at an ideal time given RB Saquon Barkley left their win hobbled by a groin injury.

9. New England Patriots (12): Seven of their final nine opponents currently have losing records. Not only do the Pats appear to be back, they could be right back to having the No. 1 playoff seed that became so customary during the TB12 years.

10. Buffalo Bills (9): RB James Cook’s 216-yard rushing performance Sunday was the most by a Buffalo player since O.J. Simpson had 273 in a game 49 years ago.

11. Tampa Bay Buccaneers (10): An injury-riddled offense has really hit the skids the past two weeks, both in terms of output and mistakes made. The bye arrives right on time even as the Bucs begin pulling away in the NFC South.

12. Pittsburgh Steelers (11): Are the wheels coming off here? The league’s worst (by far) pass defense will next be charged with slowing down the high-powered Indy offense. And Sunday night provided further evidence this offense isn’t built to overcome even moderate deficits.

13. Los Angeles Chargers (20): Amazing what the return of LT Joe Alt and some sweet uniforms will do for a struggling offense.

14. Jacksonville Jaguars (14): Coming off an ugly “home” game in London and their bye, they’ll only play in Duval County once between now and Dec. 7.

15. Houston Texans (22): The passing offense finally came to life Sunday – naturally, the absence of WR1 Nico Collins (concussion) was the missing piece.

16. San Francisco 49ers (15): Well ... the defense picked off its first pass in 14 games, snapping a league-record drought in that department. Otherwise, it was torn asunder by C.J. Stroud and company.

17. Chicago Bears (13): Their league-high 16 takeaways have greatly contributed to the fact the Bears’ average starting field position is their own 33-yard line, best in the league. Coulda used one of those turnovers in Baltimore.

18. Carolina Panthers (16): When you lose three starting offensive linemen in one game, it probably doesn’t matter much who’s taking the snaps.

19. Dallas Cowboys (17): Remember when Jerry Jones cited an emphasis on stopping the run as a reason to move on from DE Micah Parsons and reconfigure this defense? Seems to be going great,



The Chiefs are getting players back, and quarterback Patrick Mahomes has led Kansas City to three wins in a row. JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES

Dallas surrendering nearly 168 rushing yards per game over the past five weeks.

20. Baltimore Ravens (25): Now 15-3 all-time following a bye week, coach John Harbaugh faces a big game Thursday night – will QB Lamar Jackson actually play in his native South Florida? – before another mini-bye.

21. Washington Commanders (19): Monday night’s loss dropped them to 13th place in the NFC – if only two games behind the Niners, who currently hold the conference’s final wild-card spot. The return of QB Jayden Daniels will obviously help, but this offense also has a lot of other issues to address.

22. Minnesota Vikings (21): They lost QBs Sam Darnold and Daniel Jones in the offseason ... and have already lost more games in 2025 (four) than they did in 2024 (three). Coincidence?

23. Cincinnati Bengals (23): Sunday was a reminder that this team is basically a more expensive version of last year’s. So why bother rushing QB1 Joe Burrow back this season?

24. New York Giants (24): Not only is the loss of injured RB Cam Skattebo bad for the offense and bad for business, it’s also very likely going to be bad for the development of rookie QB Jaxson Dart as his arsenal continues to dwindle.

25. Arizona Cardinals (26): A team that’s lost five in a row has somehow been outscored by one point over the course of the entire season. Still, unclear if the expected return of QB Kyler Murray is truly a net gain for a team seeking to get back to net positive in the points department.

26. Cleveland Browns (27): Sacks became an official individual statistic in 1982. Before Sunday, no player had ever had a five-sack performance – in a double-digit loss. DE Myles Garrett just continues to distinguish himself ... in the darkness.

27. Miami Dolphins (31): That’s 30 touchdowns in 36 career games for RB De’Von Achane – and there should be a lot more coming as he is on course for his first season with at least 300 touches.

28. Atlanta Falcons (18): Is there a more vexing team? Getting rocked by a Miami squad fresh off getting rocked by Cleveland suggests these birds are headed for a dirty finish.

29. New Orleans Saints (29): They’re not a rare team, but Sunday was one of the rare times when they didn’t show up. It’s time to look at rookie QB Tyler Shough and others before the course for 2026 is charted.

30. New York Jets (32): Apparently, all they needed was for RB Breece Hall to throw a game-winning TD pass – just the fourth non-QB to do so in the final two minutes of regulation or overtime in a game during the Super Bowl era.

31. Las Vegas Raiders (28): Geno Smith, Jamal Adams and now Tyler Lockett? Pete Carroll seems determined to reconstitute an older version of the average-at-best Seahawks teams that concluded his tenure in Seattle.

32. Tennessee Titans (30): Johnny Hekker, one of the best specialists who’s ever lived, booted his 1,000th punt Sunday. He might reach 2,000 by season’s end.



Chiefs wide receiver Rashee Rice celebrates with quarterback Patrick Mahomes after scoring a TD during the fourth quarter. DENNY MEDLEY/IMAGN IMAGES

Mahomes and Rice among winners in Monday night victory

Tyler Dragon
USA TODAY

The Kansas City Chiefs are starting to resemble the team that’s been to five Super Bowls over the past six seasons.

Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs won their third straight game, routing the Washington Commanders 28-7 on Monday night Oct. 27. The Chiefs scored 21 unanswered points in the second half against a Jayden Daniels-less Commanders team.

Mahomes finished the win with 299 passing yards, three touchdowns and two interceptions.

He continued to produce on the ground, adding 30 rushing yards on four attempts.

The Chiefs improve to 5-3 and keep pace with the Los Angeles Chargers and Denver Broncos in a competitive AFC West. Washington drops to 3-5 and is now 1-2 without Daniels this season.

USA TODAY Sports examines the winners and losers from Monday’s interconference matchup:

WINNERS FROM CHIEFS VS. COMMANDERS

Patrick Mahomes joins exclusive club

Mahomes joined Hall of Famer Peyton Manning as the only players in NFL history with at least 40,000 passing yards in their first nine seasons, including playoffs.

Mahomes threw an interception on each of Kansas City’s first two drives, but the second INT wasn’t his fault.

The Chiefs star QB responded after the early turnovers with a touchdown drive on the team’s third possession.

Mahomes led Kansas City to three straight touchdown drives in the second half to break the game open. He went 25 of 34 passing for 299 yards, with three touchdowns and two interceptions. Finishing with a 104.9 passer rating.

Mahomes’ ability to buy extra time and extend plays with his legs was a theme throughout the win.

Rashee Rice is undoubtedly Kansas City’s No. 1 wide receiver

Three touchdowns in two weeks for Rashee Rice.

Rice found the end zone again in just his second game back from a six-game suspension. He had a team-high nine catches for 93 yards and a touchdown.

The wideout has 16 receptions, 135 receiving yards and three touchdowns in two weeks since making his 2025 debut.

TE Travis Kelce ties Chiefs’ TD record

Travis Kelce caught a 10-yard touchdown pass from Mahomes in the third quarter. It was the tight end’s 83rd touchdown of his career, which tied Priest Holmes for the franchise record.

Kareem Hunt

Kareem Hunt is a constant threat in the red zone. The Chiefs running back

had a receiving touchdown and a rushing touchdown in the win.

Chiefs offensive line

Kansas City’s O-line had a nice night without one of the best guards in the league in Trey Smith (back) and rookie left tackle Josh Simmons (personal).

Mahomes had ample time to throw and was rarely pressured. The Chiefs came into Week 8 with the ninth-best pass block win rate in the NFL, per ESPN.

Zach Ertz enters the 800 club

The Commanders veteran tight end joined Tony Gonzalez, Jason Witten, Travis Kelce, Antonio Gates and Shannon Sharpe as the only tight ends in NFL history with 800 career receptions.

Zach Ertz had four catches in the loss.

LOSERS FROM CHIEFS VS. COMMANDERS

Dreadful second half for Washington after 7-7 first half

The Commanders had only two first downs in the third quarter. The fourth quarter wasn’t any better, as they moved the chains only twice in the final period. Washington was held scoreless in the second half after the game was tied 7-7 at halftime.

The offense gained only 67 yards after halftime.

The Commanders defense did give up 21 points after halftime, but it was hard to fault the defense because their offensive teammates provided no help.

Commanders’ fourth-down efficiency

The Commanders went 0-2 on fourth downs. One of Washington’s failed attempts came on a virtual measurement.

Deebo Samuel

Deebo Samuel had a bad drop on Washington’s first series. He took his eyes off the ball on a short pass and the ball ricocheted off the front of his helmet and into the hands of Chiefs DE Mike Danna.

The turnover squandered what was a promising opening drive for the Commanders that would’ve given them early momentum.

However, Mahomes threw an interception on the Chiefs’ ensuing possession.

Samuel wasn’t effective. He had three catches for 11 yards and one rush for 1 yard in the loss.

Washington drops third straight

The Commanders (3-5) have lost three consecutive games. They host the Seattle Seahawks in Week 9.

AFC West

After a 0-2 start, the Chiefs have won five of their last six games.

Kansas City has the same record as the (5-3) Los Angeles Chargers and they are one game behind the (6-2) Denver Broncos in the loss column.

The Chiefs have a 10th straight AFC West title well within their grasp.

Make Saban, Meyer say no not a joke



Blake Toppmeyer
Columnist
USA TODAY NETWORK

Every coaching search starts in nearly the same fashion from the average fan’s perspective.

You think of your dream candidate. Let’s just say Urban Meyer. Because, well, Meyer or someone very much like him is often the average fan’s dream candidate.

Mr. Average Fan demands that the folks doing the hiring pull together some stupid money and “make Urban say no!” before moving on to other candidates.

Fast-forward to the end of the search. The school hires some stiff who’s not named Urban Meyer, and not named Nick Saban, and the average fan knocks back a triple shot of copium and convinces himself this new coach isn’t so bad and that a national championship is just a few short years away.

Except, the stiff is actually a stiff. He’s fired within a few short years. The process repeats.

That’s how it usually unfolds, anyway.

But, now here’s LSU needing a coach, and I’m not rolling my eyes or laughing when I hear, “Make Urban (or Saban) say no!” I’m certainly not dismissing the idea of Lane Kiffin researching Baton Rouge’s top hot yoga studios.

If there’s one athletic director in America who’s proved he’s comfortable spending stupid money and forcing someone to say yes, it’s Scott Woodward at LSU.

LSU, Scott Woodward don’t hire cheap

Woodward’s responsible for the \$75 million guaranteed offer that took Jimbo Fisher from Florida State to Texas A&M. He’s responsible for the \$100 million offer (most of it guaranteed) that transported Brian Kelly from Notre Dame to LSU.

To be clear, those hires amount to money poorly spent. Stupid money became just stupid. Neither Fisher nor Kelly delivered the expected return on investment.

Woodward’s other hires using his swing-for-the-fences approach include LSU women’s basketball coach Kim Mulkey and baseball coach Jay Johnson. They’ve supplied national championships.

“Feel like there’s no limitation,” Woodward said of his hiring approach, while appearing last summer on the “Navigating Sports Business” podcast. “Go after the best you could get.”



Former Alabama football coach Nick Saban introduces President Donald Trump before a commencement address to University of Alabama graduates at Coleman Coliseum. GARY COSBY JR./THE TUSCALOOSA NEWS

I could make the very obvious rebuttal that, in the case of Fisher and Kelly, Woodward didn’t hire the best coach he could get. Perhaps, he just hired the most expensive one he could get.

One thing Woodward’s never done, from Washington to Texas A&M to LSU? Gone cheap.

With this school and this AD, pipe dream candidates can become reality.

LSU exactly the type of school to make Urban Meyer and Nick Saban say no

Gambling oddsmakers earmark Tulane’s Jon Sumrall as the favorite to land the job. I’d point out that when this job opened in 2021, Kelly wasn’t even included on the odds chart.

Woodward’s best football hires came at Washington. He sacked Tyrone Willingham and hired Steve Sarkisian.

When Sarkisian left, Woodward made what remains his best hire. He nabbed Chris Petersen, whose starting pay dwarfed most of his mates in the Pac-12.

“If people (say), ‘Oh, you overpaid for something,’ well, how do you know that? I thought it through. Maybe I didn’t (overpay),” Woodward told me, in 2022, of his philosophy. “Or, I underpaid for something. (People) know the cost of it, but do they know the value of it?”

“It’s always worked for me that the best predictors are usually past performances,” he added.

Years after Woodward left Texas A&M for LSU, the Aggies fired Fisher and replaced him with Mike Elko, a cheaper choice. Elko is positioning to lift the Aggies to heights Fisher never reached. He’s proving what a great bang for the buck looks like.

Woodward’s misfires on Kelly and Fisher don’t mean, though, that he’ll

reverse course and cheap out. Kiffin would be worthy of a lucrative offer.

Get past Kiffin, and I like Louisville’s Jeff Brohm, who’s currently making less than \$6 million. Tulane’s Sumrall is building an SEC résumé. So, too, is Georgia Tech’s Brent Key.

But, I’m wondering whether this search makes it that far.

Because, if LSU calls Saban (make sure to call Miss Terry, too) and Meyer, proceeds to Kiffin, then moves to Oregon’s Dan Lanning and Notre Dame’s Marcus Freeman, and it makes each say no, how far down the list would it make it before someone says yes?

Woodward’s just the type of guy who’d try to find out.

Blake Toppmeyer is the USA TODAY Network’s senior national college football columnist. Email him at BToppmeyer@gannett.com and follow him on X @btoppmeyer.

Collier to WNBA players: Can’t back down

Heather Burns
USA TODAY

With the clock ticking on the WNBA collective bargaining agreement (CBA), Minnesota Lynx free agent Napheesa Collier explained what the players are fighting for in a profile in Glamour magazine.

Facilities and charter flights are among the talking points in the new CBA. But revenue sharing is where the rubber hits the road for the WNBA and its players as the deal expires on Friday, Oct. 31. Very few, if any, on either side believe a new CBA will be reached by the deadline. An extension can be agreed upon before a lockout is put into place.

“You know, everything is so great in Minnesota. We share everything with the men’s team (the NBA’s Minnesota Timberwolves). So whatever they have, we have,” Collier says. “After learning that (other teams) don’t even have practice facilities, they don’t even have changing rooms, they don’t have all these things. It just feels really unjust.”

Collier, the WNBP vice president and co-founder of 3-on-3 league Unrivaled, would like to see an equal playing field. She referred to the New York Liberty being fined \$500,000 in 2022 for violating the CBA using charter flights for travel during the 2021 season. The WNBA started a charter flight program in 2024 but it has not been codified in the CBA.

“I feel like that is not a hard thing for me to fight for because I’m a player in this league too. I want to lift this up for everyone,” Collier said. “I don’t mind that New York takes planes. I’m glad for you guys. But it shouldn’t be unfair (to the point) where (some) people are living in squalor.”

The sides went back and forth after NBA Commissioner Adam Silver appeared on the “Today” show on Oct. 21



Napheesa Collier is the vice president of the WNBP. CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES

and took issue with a question about revenue sharing. Craig Melvin asked if WNBA players should get a larger piece of the revenue pie. “They get 9% of total revenue compared to roughly 50% of the revenue of NBA players. Should they be getting a larger share of revenue in the WNBA?”

“Yes,” Silver said. “I think ‘share’ isn’t the right way to look at it because there’s so much more revenue in the NBA. You should look at it in absolute numbers in terms of what they’re making. They are going to get a big increase in this cycle of collective bargaining. And they deserve it.”

The WNBP clipped Silver saying “I think ‘share’ isn’t the right way to look at it” to its Instagram story with the

caption, “Don’t want to share?” and tagged the commissioner.

“You know they know it’s bad when the best they say they can do is more of the same: a fixed salary system and a separate revenue-sharing plan that only includes a piece of a piece of the pie, and pays themselves (the league) back first,” WNBP executive director Terri Jackson said in a statement sent to The Athletic on Oct. 22.

“We’ve come to the table prepared to do business. They’ve responded with bad math and are hoping everyone doesn’t understand what ‘uncapped’ actually means. Adam Silver said it himself on behalf of the WNBA. ‘Share isn’t the word.’ It’s not in their vocabulary.”

The WNBA came back with its own

statement to ESPN, saying: “It is incorrect and surprising that the Players Association is claiming that the WNBA has not offered an uncapped revenue sharing model that is directly tied to the league’s performance. The comprehensive proposals we have made to the players include a revenue-sharing component that would result in the players’ compensation increasing as league revenue increases – without any cap on the upside.

“It is frustrating and counterproductive for the union to be making misrepresentations about our proposals while also accusing the league of engaging in delay. That is simply not true.

“While we have delivered comprehensive proposals that seek an agreement that will benefit all, the Players Association has yet to offer a viable economic proposal and has repeatedly refused to engage in any meaningful way on many of our proposal terms. We stand ready to continue negotiating in good faith and hope they will do the same so that we can finalize a mutually beneficial new CBA as quickly as possible.”

The WNBA has undergone unprecedented growth since the last CBA was signed in 2020. Investment, franchise valuations, attendance, ratings and merchandise sales have all increased. The league’s \$2.2 billion media deal also kicks in next season.

For her part, Collier told Glamour the players are steadfast in getting what they believe they deserve.

“If we give in, we’re not only doing a disservice to us, we’re doing a disservice to where we have gotten in women’s sports,” she said. “We really have no choice but to stand strong again, not just for the present, but for the future of our league too. We are standing really firm on what we want and we’re not going to give in before we get it.”

Wemby and scandal set the chatter

The winners and losers from Week 1:

More important, the Spurs are 4-0.

Before the season, NBA general managers voted Erik Spoelstra as the best head coach in the NBA. Three games in, he's showing one of the reasons why. Spoelstra has completely overhauled Miami's offense, unleashing the post-Jimmy Butler Heat as a transition team. One season after ranking 27th in pace, generating just 97.08 possessions per 48 minutes, Miami leads the NBA (109.67). The Heat are barely setting screens, allowing players to race out in transition, exploiting favorable



The Spurs are undefeated in large part because of the play of forward/center Victor Wembanyama, who is averaging 31 points, 4.8 blocked shots and 13.8 rebounds per game. STEPHEN LEW/IMAGN IMAGES



76ers rookie guard VJ Edgecombe, driving against Magic center Wendell Carter Jr., is averaging 25 points, 6.0 assists and 5.7 rebounds. BILL STREICHER/IMAGN IMAGES

The Rockets-Thunder season opener, as mentioned, was a classic. Wemba-nyama is doing things we've never seen on a basketball court. Yet most of the coverage last week focused on the explosive gambling scandals that have implicated current Trail Blazers coach

Lakers already scrambling because of injuries

It seemed like Luka Dončić – who averaged 46 points, 11.5 rebounds and 8.5 assists though Los Angeles' first two games – would be able to shoulder the load while LeBron James (sciatica) recovered. But now Dončić will miss at least a week with finger and leg injuries.

But Gabe Vincent suffered a sprained ankle, so Austin Reaves will need to light up box scores for Los Angeles to remain competitive. That's only magnified because Jaxson Hayes (knee) and Maxi Kleber (oblique) are banged up in the frontcourt.

The Rockets might have a point guard problem

It likely won't be an issue in the regular season. In the playoffs, however ...

The revamped Magic – and their splash addition – sputter out of the gate

Bane, a career 40.9% shooter from 3, is converting shots from beyond the arc at just a 27.2% rate.

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Blue Jays say don't count them out yet



Gabe Lacques
Columnist
USA TODAY

LOS ANGELES – As they trudged off the Dodger Stadium grass in the wee minutes of Oct. 28, the Toronto Blue Jays experienced feelings only a precious few ballplayers across a century of this game have confronted: losing an 18-inning World Series game.

Hey, when it's first team to four that wins a world championship, every loss is costly. And the bill for this one will be ex-orbitant in Games 4 and 5.

Freddie Freeman's home run leading off the bottom of the 18th inning didn't just elevate the Dodgers to a 6-5 victory and a 2-1 World Series advantage Monday Oct. 27. It also exacerbated the many problems Toronto will face both getting back in this Series and, against the odds, reclaiming the upper hand.

Not that the Blue Jays are focusing on that. Manager John Schneider is the master of cheerfully refusing to consider what just happened might impact what will happen.

"The Dodgers didn't win the World Series today. They won a game," says Schneider in his postgame dissection, long after the clock struck midnight on the West Coast.

"These guys are going to be ready to go tomorrow. I love the way we played. I love the way we fought."

Schneider is rightfully proud of his dudes but it's probably not a bad idea to peek under the hood and ponder the Jays' reality.

They have a Shohei Ohtani problem: The game's greatest player didn't just reach base a record nine times in as many plate appearances, drop two home runs and two doubles on Toronto and still go to bed dreaming of dominating them on the mound.

He also illustrated the problems of pitching around him. Sure, it took 18 in-



The Blue Jays' Vladimir Guerrero Jr. reacts after being forced out at second base in the 18th inning of Game 3 of the World Series. PATRICK SMITH/GETTY IMAGES

nings, but turn over that Dodger lineup enough, and eventually a former MVP will come around to beat you if you insist Ohtani doesn't.

"Again, man, the guy's a great player," says Schneider. "There's certain times where I feel like you feel better about someone else beating you. If that someone else is Mookie Betts or Freddie Freeman, it still stings.

"It's not the easiest thing in the world to just walk him and face Mookie and Freddie."

Says Toronto third baseman Ernie Clement: "He's the best player to ever play this game. Reaching base nine times – I think I was 1-for-8, so wish I could take a couple of those from him. It's amazing. "You can't let him beat you. We intentionally walked him, pretty much, four times, at least. It's a no-brainer."

They have a pitching problem: Game 4 starter Shane Bieber had averaged just 4 ⅓ innings in his three playoff starts this season, all against lineups not nearly as potent as the Dodgers'.

Now, consider the state of the relief corps – all of whom pitched in Game 3 –

that will align behind him.

Long man Eric Lauer pitched a gallant 4 ⅔ innings, keeping Toronto alive between innings 12 through 16, requiring 68 pitches. Closer Jeff Hoffman pitched two innings, burning 33 throws.

Five other relievers threw between 19 and 29 pitches, and while you can say the Dodgers also had to cover 18 innings, will also have pitchers down because of it, they also have something Toronto does not:

Shohei Ohtani, starting Game 4.

No wonder the Blue Jays will, even more than usual, place "unavailable" on its banned list of words this week.

"Honestly, I think almost everybody's going to be ready to go tomorrow," says Lauer, who might be whisked away by pitcher's protective services, if such an entity exists, should he throw a pitch in Game 4.

"It's the World Series: Nobody wants to miss an inning, no one wants to be down. Do whatever you can to get yourself ready tomorrow and ready to go."

And they have a health problem: DH and leadoff man George Springer, whose

body was already compromised in multiple fashions, left the game after wrenching his left side on a swing in the seventh inning. He underwent an MRI.

Second baseman Bo Bichette has made significant contributions in this World Series since returning from a 48-day absence due to a knee ligament strain. Yet he is also far from 100% and is replaced either by a pinch-runner or on defense late in games.

Springer's exit and Bichette's limitations burned the Blue Jays in Game 3, with massive holes in the lineup creating the impression they might never score again.

And for the last 11 innings of Game 3, they didn't.

"We owe them some runs tomorrow, for sure. We'll get on that," says Clement.

Postseason pitching is already a different, uncaged animal, and the World Series is its most extreme example, since there truly are no tomorrows. Toronto was prepared, mentally, to adjust to whatever role might come before its pitchers.

As the 17th and 18th innings unfolded, there were crazy sights to behold in the Dodgers' and Blue Jays' bullpens: Yoshinobu Yamamoto, the Dodgers' Game 2 winner who threw a complete game two days before, getting ready to come in if necessary.

And Shane Bieber, Toronto's Game 4 starter, likely getting tapped to pitch the 19th inning, if it got that far.

It didn't. And now, Toronto's pitching problem is not mental adjustments to playoff ball but rather a physical one, pondering limitations and efficacy as it aims to win three of the next four games.

"This is playoff baseball. You saw who was getting ready in their bullpen. And who was getting ready in ours," says Blue Jays Game 2 starter Kevin Gausman. "That just shows you this time of year is a little different. And playing that long of a game is a little different. Throw all your normalities out the window when it comes to this time of year."

Oh, Game 3 was plenty abnormal. Stay tuned for the fallout.

Dodgers' 18-inning victory is one for the ages



Bob Nightengale
Columnist
USA TODAY

LOS ANGELES – Hall of Famer Sandy Koufax may be 89 years old – hasn't thrown a single pitch in 60 years – but was so excited Monday night Oct. 27 that he rushed into the Los Angeles Dodgers clubhouse, almost ready to put on a uniform himself.

This is the 121st World Series played, and no one has ever seen a game quite like it, featuring 44 players, 19 pitchers, a batter reaching base nine times, five outs recorded on the bases, a player becoming the first to hit two walk-off homers in the World Series, a reliever who wasn't even on the playoff roster until four days ago becoming the winning pitcher, in a game that lasted 18 innings, tied for the longest in World Series history.

It was that kind of zany and historic night at Dodger Stadium, where the Dodgers outlasted the Toronto Blue Jays 6-5 – an instant World Series classic lasting 6 hours, 39 minutes, with Freddie Freeman hitting a walk-off homer to lead off the 18th and give the Dodgers a 2-games-to-1 series lead.

"It's one of the greatest World Series games of all time," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. "I'm spent emotionally. We got a ball game later tonight (Tuesday at 8 ET), which is crazy."

Oh yeah, and the guy taking the mound is the guy who just reached base nine times, Shohei Ohtani, who hit two homers and two doubles and was walked five times – four times intentionally.

"I hope we don't lose sight," Freeman said, "our starting pitcher got on base nine times tonight. Just incredible."

Yet despite the historic performance, Ohtani was almost an afterthought as the game went on, being intentionally walked in the ninth, 11th, 13th and 15th innings, and walked on four pitches in the 17th inning.

While Ohtani was being walked, reliever Justin Wroblewski, after pitching in the sixth inning, kept running in and out of the Dodgers clubhouse for 11 innings with his other teammates who were out of the game, furiously changing sweat-shirts, shoes, pants and anything for good luck.

"I went sweatshirt, then I went no sweatshirt, and then I went three differ-



The Dodgers celebrate defeating the Blue Jays in the 18th inning of Game 3 of the World Series at Dodger Stadium. KIRBY LEE/IMAGN IMAGES

ent pairs of shoes," Wroblewski said. "The third pair of shoes finally worked."

Infielder Miguel Rojas was getting his arm loose, and was ready in case the Dodgers wanted to turn to a position player after already using 10 pitchers, with Roberts saying on TV during the game that he was nearly ready to do just that.

"I was trying to get myself ready," Rojas said. "I was going to throw everything I have, even that eeplus pitch."

Dodgers starter Yoshinobu Yamamoto, who threw a complete game just two days earlier, actually was warming up in the bullpen as the game ended, ready to come in for emergency relief.

There was Ohtani, who said he was tired and just wanted to go to bed, knowing he was scheduled to take the mound in a few hours.

It was a night where Freeman was the hero, becoming the first to hit multiple walk-off homers in World Series history.

But another man who will be forever remembered in Dodger folklore is Will Klein. He is a 25-year-old journeyman who has pitched for five teams, was added to the World Series roster at the last minute, and who pitched four scoreless innings to perhaps save their season.

When Freeman's fly ball sailed over the center-field fence, he thrust his right arm high into the air, and then both hands as he circled the bases and crossed home plate.

Nearly the entire team encircled

Klein to congratulate him as the winning pitcher.

What was said exactly?

"Probably nothing that was in English," Dodgers third baseman Max Muncy said. "It was just a bunch of gibberish. I was too tired, too excited, but we all made sure to give him a hug and tell him how important that was."

While it may have been a blur to Muncy and his teammates, pardon Klein if he remembers every detail the rest of his life.

"That was so cool," Klein said. "I never dreamed that anything like this would happen. So just having all those guys like kind of celebrating me for a second there was just insane. I don't think I could have dreamt a dream that good.

"Yeah, that was crazy."

So was the entire game.

There were 10 runs scored in the first seven innings, and not another until Freeman's 18th-inning homer.

There were five runners thrown out on the bases, four ending innings.

There were 44 players used, including 19 pitchers, with not a single reliever left in either bullpen.

"I think we'll be talking about this game for a long time," Muncy said. "We always talk about a regular playoff game is like playing three extra-inning games. And we basically just played a double-header back-to-back today."

And, of course, there was Klein.

"He will be remembered as a hero," Rojas said.

Said Freeman: "Will Klein, MVP of the game."

Considering Klein was a last-minute replacement on the World Series roster because of a family emergency with left-handed reliever Alex Vesia, when did Klein realize he might be summoned into the game in the 15th inning?

"When I looked around in the bullpen and my name was the only one still there," he said, laughing. "I was just going to go until I couldn't, and that's kind of what happened and, thankfully, Freddie saved us from Yamamoto having to do the same thing ...

"I don't think I could have ever imagined that this would happen."

The Dodgers were riding so high after the game they insisted they weren't physically exhausted, only mentally wiped out, and Roberts entered the clubhouse to tell them how proud he was of each and every one of them.

Heroes were everywhere he looked.

There were nine relievers who gave up just one run in 13 ⅓ innings.

There was Will Smith who caught all 18 innings.

There was Yamamoto who came to the bench and volunteered to pitch in relief.

And, there was three-time Cy Young winner Clayton Kershaw, who entered the game with the bases loaded in the 12th inning, the first time he had pitched in an extra-inning game in his career.

Kershaw promptly induced a weak ground ball by Nathan Lukes, ending the inning, and sending 52,654 fans into hysterics, wondering if that was perhaps Kershaw's final World Series game.

"It was a big out for us," Kershaw said. "I thought it was going to be a bigger out, but we played like nine more innings."

And while Yamamoto never came into the game, the fact that he told Roberts and the coaching staff he was ready to pitch, and warmed up furiously in the bullpen, it only exemplified the Dodgers' unselfishness.

"That's a testament to our team that he's willing to go do that," Freeman said. "It took every single guy tonight, and for him to want to do that, I think that just shows you who we are as a group. We'll do anything to win the game."

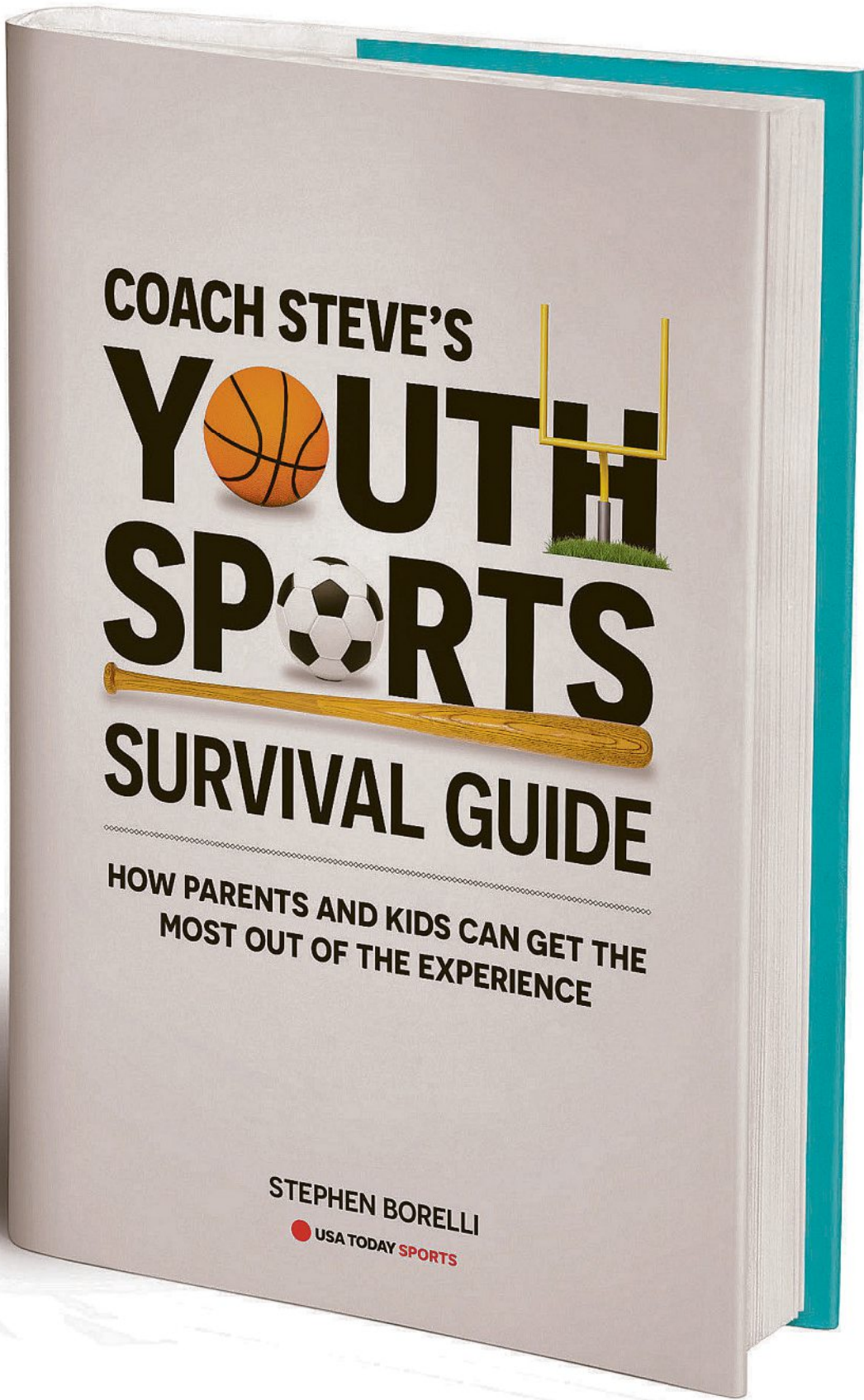
Said Kershaw: "That's just unbelievable. He throws a complete game two days ago, has cross-country travel, gets in at 4 in the morning, had one day rest basically, and is ready to go out and pitch. Sometimes, that's what you need to win a World Series. We've got a lot of guys in here willing to sacrifice."

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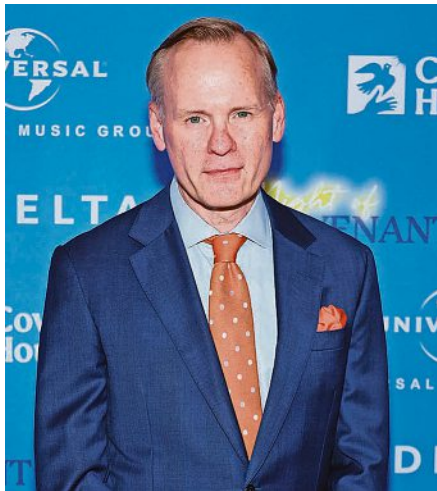
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LIFELINE



THEO WARGO/GETTY IMAGES

MAKING WAVES
JOHN DICKERSON

John Dickerson is saying goodbye to CBS after 16 years. The co-anchor of the “CBS Evening News” is set to leave the network at the end of 2025. “I am extremely grateful for all that CBS gave me,” he shared Oct. 27 on Instagram, thanking his colleagues “who’ve made me a better journalist and a better human.” Dickerson, 57, and Maurice DuBois took over as “CBS Evening News” co-anchors in January following the departure of Norah O’Donnell. News of his exit comes weeks after Bari Weiss, founder of The Free Press, became editor-in-chief of CBS News.

IT’S YOUR BIRTHDAY
WHO’S CELEBRATING TODAY



Animator-filmmaker **Ralph Bakshi** turns 87. Actor **Richard Dreyfuss**, 78. Actor **Kate Jackson**, 77. Voice actor-comedian **Dan Castellaneta**, 68. Actor **Rufus Sewell**, 58. Actor

Joely Fisher, 58. Actor **Winona Ryder**, 54. Actor **Tracee Ellis Ross**, 53. Actor **Gabrielle Union**, 53. TV producer-writer **Michael Schur**, 50. Actor **Ben Foster**, 45. Actor **Cleopatra Coleman**, 38. Actor **India Eisley**, 32. – USA TODAY Network

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More: www.sanctuaryworld.co

Aries (March 21-April 19). Have the future all set up in your mind? Big visions meet surprising detours.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). Innovating your finances? Brainstorm new strategies to make your money work for you.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). Sudden changes can test your patience in partnerships. Do you decide on your own? Or do you listen to others?

Cancer (June 22-July 22). Chaos might show up in work or health. Do these disruptions have you thinking differently about your routines?

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Your mind is ready to play! Mercury entering Sagittarius today stimulates your creative faculties. What do you want to express?

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Imagining a more expansive home life? Speak one clear boundary about your personal space to set the precedent.

Libra (Sept.23-Oct. 23). A casual conversation may incite a sudden revelation today. Your mind ventures into uncharted territory.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Money talks may be uncomfortable today. Hidden fears around value or dependence coming up? Let it all shake out.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Your words are electric today! However, others may find you unsettling. Speak your truth without bulldozing connection.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Work can feel chaotic now! Mercury moving into Sagittarius amplifies the mental unrest.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Word from a friend may surprise you today! Presented with an unexpected invite? Spontaneity can lead to fun.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). Ambition may be on your mind, but a disruption at home could distract your focus. Learn through the chaos.

MOVIES



Allison Williams
NATHANIAL GARY/
USA TODAY

Williams gets serious about rom-dramas

Clare Mulroy USA TODAY

NEW YORK – Allison Williams has starred in such horror movies as “Get Out” and “M3GAN,” soared across the stage in “Peter Pan Live!” and made us laugh (and cringe) in “Girls.” But she didn’t think anyone would want to see her in a romantic drama. • “Regretting You” director Josh Boone helped changed her mind.

“I just didn’t think of myself as a romantic lead,” Williams tells USA TODAY in a sit-down interview. “I don’t know if I want to see myself get the guy or whatever. I don’t know if I would root for myself on screen. But I was like, if (Boone) thinks I can do this, then maybe there’s something about my vibe that I can’t detect that is actually going to work in this medium.”

Based on Colleen Hoover’s book, “Regretting You,” now in theaters, stars Williams, Dave Franco, McKenna Grace and Mason Thames.

Williams, also a producer on the film, plays Morgan Grant, a young mom who finds out her husband and her sister were having an affair after they both die in a car accident. Her complicated grief deepens a rift

with her teenage daughter Clara (Grace), whose college dreams and new beau (Thames) Morgan does not approve of. Complicating matters further is her late sister’s partner, Jonah (Franco), who has had feelings for Morgan since their school days.

A movie that’s ‘not too scary’ for Allison Williams’ friends

Williams says acting in “Regretting You” is partially an act of service for her friends – it’s the project of hers that they’re most excited to see.

“I know friends who live across the country who are doing viewing

See WILLIAMS, Page 2D



Morgan (Allison Williams) and Jonah (Dave Franco) face family secrets after an accident in “Regretting You.” PROVIDED BY PARAMOUNT PICTURES

MUSIC

Carlile’s ‘Myself’ reflects on aging

Melissa Ruggieri
USA TODAY

Almost exactly a year ago, Brandi Carlile took a bow with Joni Mitchell at the final “Joni Jam” concert at the Hollywood Bowl and the next morning hopped a flight to New York.

Full of feelings after closing a chapter in which she became Mitchell’s muse and champion, Carlile retreated upstate to meet with The National’s Aaron Dessner, himself a guardian of the introspective as a producer and songwriter.

Alone in a barn on Dessner’s property, Carlile wrote a poem that became “Returning to Myself.” Her words became lyrics and eventually, the title track to her eighth studio album out now.

Four years since her stunning Grammy-winning “In These Silent Days,” Carlile, 44, has released 10 potent songs focusing on the reflection that comes with aging (“A War With Time”); love for her family including wife Catherine Shepherd and young daughters Evangeline Ruth and Elijah (“A Long Goodbye”); and the visceral rocker that reminds of the power of the First Amendment (“Church & State”).



Teaming with pop-rock maestro Andrew Watt – a kindred spirit since working with him this year on “Who Believes in Angels?,” her project with Elton John – and Dessner, as well as Bon Iver’s Justin Vernon, and lifetime collaborators Tim and Phil Hanseroth, Carlile extracted various vibes for her new songs.

She’ll take her new tunes on the road beginning Feb. 10 in Philadelphia for a North American arena tour with The Head & The Heart (tickets are on sale Oct. 31) and debut a couple of the tracks during her fourth career appearance on her favorite show, “Saturday Night Live,” on Nov. 1.

Carlile also will perform at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony Nov. 8 in Los Angeles, which airs live on Disney+.

Chatting from her home in Washington state while receiving a vitamin IV following a long flight back from the East Coast, Carlile is typically contemplative, candid and wryly funny as she talks about midlife crisis, Mitchell’s funny response to Carlile’s new song about her and why Elton John threatened to spank her.

Question: I was going to ask how these past years spending so much time with Joni and Elton informed you as a songwriter and musician, but that you have a song called “Joni” on your new album answers some of that.

Answer: Oh, I got so much unintended wisdom from both of them. Joni doesn’t dole out advice. You absorb through osmosis, the telling of the stories. Elton blew apart any semblance of any musical boundaries. I had rules and templates and Elton just taught me how to be – and Joni, too – decisive and to stand behind my first instincts. Neither of them is going to sit around dithering. Know what you want and do it.

A lyric in “Joni” refers to her as a “wild woman.” Do you call her a wild woman when you’re together? And the line that “she’s a game of solitaire” really stands out.

Joni is a wild woman in the sense that she’s utterly and totally untamed.

See CARLILE, Page 2D

MOVIES

Absent Diamond present at ‘Song’ premiere

Bryan Alexander
USA TODAY

LOS ANGELES – Singer/songwriter legend Neil Diamond was not physically able to attend the world gala premiere of “Song Sung Blue” that closed the AFI Fest 2025 on Oct. 26.

But Diamond, 84, did the next best thing to show love for the musical drama filled with his classic songs: The “Sweet Caroline” singer FaceTime’d stars Hugh Jackman, Kate Hudson and writer/director Craig Brewer on the premiere red carpet from his home in Colorado.

Hudson told USA TODAY the video call from Diamond was “very emotional. We all wish that he could be here.”

“It was so sweet,” she said. “He said that he wishes he could be there, but he can’t. And that he loves the movie. He even said that he wishes his mother and dad could have been here tonight.”

Introducing “Song Sung Blue” at the TCL Chinese Theatre, Jackman referenced the FaceTime call with Diamond.

“I told (Diamond) that I might be mentioning that we spoke, and asked if he had a message for everyone,” Jackman said. “He said, ‘Yeah, tell everyone, ‘I love them and keep on singing.’”

There was plenty of singing at the world premiere, which saw Diamond’s wife of more than a decade, Katie McNeil Diamond, represent the couple.

Jackman stepped out with new partner Sutton Foster, the Broadway powerhouse and his costar in the 2022 Broadway revival of “The Music Man.” The couple have been getting red-carpet official with recent outings, five months after the finalization of Jackman’s divorce from Deborra-Lee Furness in May.

Hudson attended the premiere with her partner, Danny Fujikawa, and her brother Oliver Hudson.



“Song Sung Blue” stars Hugh Jackman and Kate Hudson paid tribute to Neil Diamond at the Oct. 26 AFI Fest premiere. LISA O’CONNOR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Neil Diamond, at the Carousel Ball on Oct. 11, had to miss his Hollywood premiere. TOM COOPER/GETTY IMAGES

What is ‘Song Sung Blue’ about?

“Song Sung Blue” is based on the true story of Milwaukee couple Mike Sardina (Jackman) and his wife, Claire (Hudson). The real-life couple formed a tribute band, Lightning & Thunder, dedicated to Neil Diamond’s music in 1987. The two formerly hard-luck performers, each divorced with children, blended their families and achieved enough professional success to open for Pearl Jam and Eddie Vedder in Milwaukee.

The movie is based on the 2008 documentary “Song Sung Blue,” directed by Greg Kohs.

The world premiere audience enthusiastically received the musical. The first star duet between Jackman and Hudson – a perfect, tender Milwaukee living-room version of Diamond’s love song, “Play Me” – prompted spontaneous audience applause in the theater.

Hudson shows powerhouse vocals alongside the tested Broadway performer Jackman. Producer John Fox said

Jackman advocated casting Hudson for the role.

“Hugh Jackman is a huge, huge Neil Diamond fan who actually had seen the original documentary,” Fox said. “And he loved that documentary so much, he just said, ‘I’m in!’ and it was his idea to cast Kate. And she is lights out.”

Producer John Davis said Diamond, who was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease in 2018 and retired from touring, granted full access to his song catalog for the movie.

The movie includes “Sweet Caroline,” which has been reborn as a stadium anthem in Europe and with the Boston Red Sox, as well as hits such as “Song Sung Blue,” “Forever in Blue Jeans” and “Cracklin’ Rosie.”

“Neil saw the movie about four weeks ago in a private screening with his family and loved it,” Fox said. “This movie is a love letter to Neil Diamond.

“He’s still in Colorado tonight, but he’s with us in spirit.”

“Song Sung Blue” opens nationwide Dec. 25.

Carlile

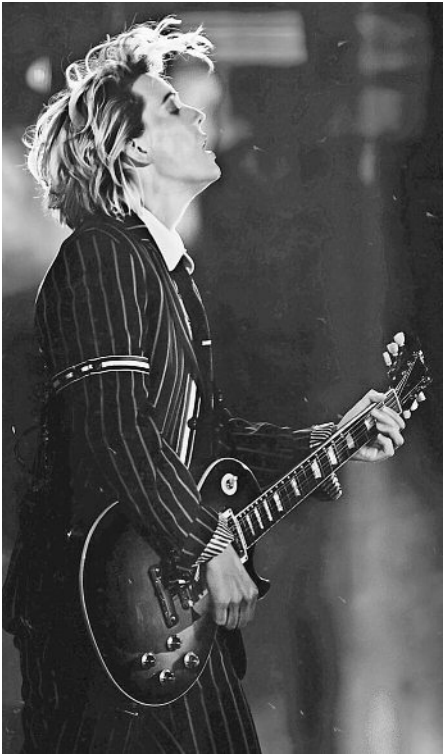
Continued from Page 1D

She can’t be known or predicted or convinced. She is a completely unlocked woman. And she plays solitaire! One of my favorite things to do is sit in her kitchen while she plays and tells me stories. I sit there like a little schoolgirl.

What did she say when she heard the song?

She was so cool. Everybody always worries because Joni is a formidable character and the sheer amount of respect people feel for her might make them intimidated of someone who is really just fun. So she called me an asshole and it made me feel seen. (Laughs)

I knew the song “You Without Me” sounded familiar and it’s because it’s also on your album with Elton. Why did you decide to put it on this album as well?



Brandi Carlile’s eighth studio album, “Returning to Myself” is out now. She will embark on a North American arena tour with The Head & The Heart in 2026. PROVIDED BY PHIL MCDONALD

“Speak truth to power, but be human. It’s easier said than done.”

Brandi Carlile

came and I do think it’s darkest before the dawn. So instead of a guitar solo I thought of commentary. I just decided to read it. I didn’t even know if I would keep it in there, but it’s the essence of the song.

And live, you’ve been shouting that part.

I have a tendency to shout in the mic and I have no idea why (laughs). I thought maybe I would rerecord it shouting, but it sounded hysterical. The way it’s on there, not every part of it is easily understood and that might lead people to go on the internet and find (the text). Its inclusion should offend no one. And whoever is offended by it, that’s part of the problem.

In “Human” you sing, “shake your fist at the city, let it rip at the seams.” Is that your way of expressing the anger and exhaustion that so many people feel in the country right now?

Yeah, like how to strike that very fine line of learning how to be happy for a short time on Earth, but not being apathetic about activism. Shake your fist, but be human. Let the bitterness die, but when you look in the eyes of a stranger, you must feel human. Do both things. Speak truth to power, but be human. It’s easier said than done.

Williams

Continued from Page 1

parties, going with their girlfriends, taking their book groups,” Williams says. “I’m glad to make something that’s not too scary for a good chunk of the people in my life to watch.”

Filming “M3GAN 2.0” in New Zealand and “Regretting You” in Atlanta just a few weeks apart took a bit of the pressure off to craft the perfect romantic lead because she didn’t have time to “obsess” over channeling romance legends such as Julia Roberts, Rachel McAdams or Meg Ryan, Williams says.

The romance genre guarantees one thing – a happily ever after. “Regretting You” touches on serious subject matter including grief and affairs, but it’s different from other movies Williams has been in, which deal with such serious topics as racism or artificial intelligence or sexual assault. But it has helped her to reframe the way she thinks about escapist romance movies – they deal with universal, monumental issues, too.

“Honestly, it does feel weird doing press for a movie where I’m not talking about a big issue, but then I’m like, I’m talking about the biggest issues – the issues that make those other issues important, which is love and autonomy and loss,” Williams says. “The reason we fear AI is because we love humanity and we fear the loss of ourselves and human life. And the reason we hate sexual assault, which is what ‘The Perfection’ dealt with, and grooming, is because we love people. We want to take care of them. We don’t want things that are bad to happen to them. These are the big issues that make those other things worth talking about.”

Williams enters the Colleen Hoover universe

With “Regretting You,” Williams enters a canon of Hoover adaptations. “Regretting You” has skated by, so far, without much of the controversy of “It Ends With Us.”

Williams is a Hoover fan, with “Verity” being her favorite. She started reading the book of “Regretting You” after she read the script. Then began the “intimidating” process of bringing a beloved book character to life.

“It always feels weirdly intimate to create the definitive version of what so many people have imagined for themselves very privately. That feels intrusive,” Williams says.

Boone’s work faithfully adapting “The Fault in Our Stars” by John Green soothed her worries. Hoover, too, was supportive of Williams’ Morgan.

“I also knew that Colleen loved the script, liked all the casting, was super

involved in the cut of the movie, is very happy with the product of the movie,” Williams says. “Since she’s the ultimate authority on her original work, that feels good. That’s a nice vote of confidence.”

Motherhood helped on-screen relationship with McKenna Grace

Williams, who has an almost 4-year-old son with actor Alexander Dreymon, tapped into her maternal instincts to build a mother-daughter relationship with costar Grace, who plays her 17-year-old rebellious daughter. She was worried about their chemistry. Bouncing between “M3GAN” and “Regretting You,” Williams didn’t get the time she thought she needed with Grace.

“‘Thought I needed it’ is the operative phrase, because actually we just connected really quickly,” Williams says. “There are things about us that are just kind of similar and fundamental, and I also just find her to be totally mind-blowingly talented.”

Yet much of Clara and Morgan’s on-screen relationship is contentious. Clara sneaks out, gets drunk and high and sees her boyfriend without her mom’s permission. Morgan, on the other hand, is dealing with the loss of her sister and husband and keeping their betrayal a secret from Clara. There’s plenty of door slamming, “go to your room” yelling and even scenes where Morgan smashes a car. It’s not her personal brand of anger, but Williams says that bit did feel surprisingly “cathartic,” saying, “there’s a reason there are rage rooms.”

Does all the teenage angst make Williams worry to one day parent one of her own?

“Being a mom has helped me in some ways learn that I can and will worry about things that are coming that will end up being irrelevant because it’s not the version of it that I’m experiencing and I will miss the opportunity to worry about the version of it that I am experiencing,” Williams says.

Williams has this Taylor Swift song on the brain

Williams, a self-proclaimed Swiftie, has been thinking about Taylor Swift’s “The Life of a Showgirl” album. In one song, “Ruin the Friendship,” Swift sings about wishing she had kissed a friend she had a crush on before it was too late. It’s an apt soundtrack for Jonah and Morgan in “Regretting You,” who wrestle with letting themselves rekindle an old flame not examined.

She hopes the movie, like Swift’s song, is a cautionary tale for lovers.

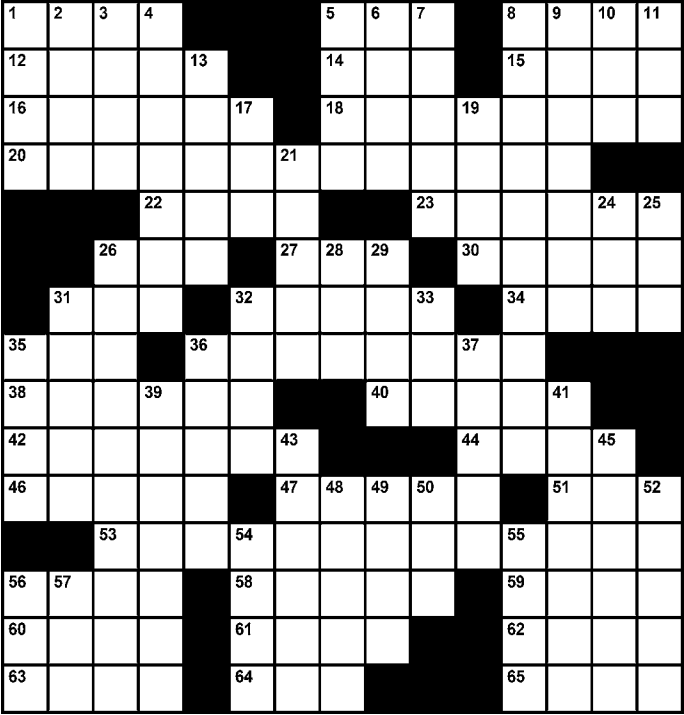
“Go for the thing that feels authentic and be as gentle about it with the people as possible – a choice that some characters in this movie didn’t make,” Williams says. “The whole movie is sort of encouraging that kind of brave living, brave thinking, just being brave.”

USA TODAY CROSSWORD

EDITED Amanda Raffkin
BY Chandi Deitmer

LIGHT IT UP

- ACROSS
- 1 Bit of lip
5 Contribute
8 Moderately fast gait
12 Teach one-on-one
14 “Would I ___ to you?”
15 Feature of a bagel
16 Roma’s country
18 Medication label phrase written as “PRN” on a prescription
20 Stuffed dish also called sigarim
22 Biological unit
23 Poetry in ___ (public arts program)
26 Lemon, in a way
27 Fitting rhyme of “chop”
30 Transition
31 Music genre that’s also the name of an *NSYNC song
32 Mimicked a crow
34 Like some memorization
35 International delivery company
36 Keanu Reeves-led action film series
38 Like deodorant with a ball inside
40 Leave unceremoniously
42 Without help
44 Bob Marley portrayer Kingsley Ben-
46 “Gracias,” in French
47 “Super Dry” beer
51 Word after “hot” or “soup”
53 Encounter a worthy opponent
56 Final track of “Cowboy Carter”
58 Time sheet units
59 Norse trickster
60 Horizontal camera movements
61 Spanish for “she”
62 Observed
63 “That’s accurate”
- Answers: Call 1-900-988-8300, 99 cents a minute; or, with a credit card, 1-800-320-4280.



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10/29

- 64 Football field units (Abbr.)
65 Evens’ counterparts
- DOWN
- 1 Do a self-soothing behavior
2 Transport around Delhi, for short
3 Symbol on Burkina Faso’s flag
4 Red drink container at a rager
5 Actor Rickman
6 No ___ (error message on a DVD player)
7 Canadian tux material
8 Fan of high school drama?
9 “good 4 u” singer
10 Olivia
11 Spanish cheer
12 “The Good Place” actor Danson
13 Prepped potatoes for gnocchi
17 Knee part, for short
- 19 Divas’ are notoriously big
21 God in the Shahadah
24 No longer cool
25 Pre-maiden name word
26 Affordable thing to order off of
28 Take responsibility for
29 Church seating
31 “E.T. ___ home”
32 Ice cream shop choice
33 Leave unceremoniously
35 Taiko, for example
36 “Killing Eve” actor Comer
37 Insurance filing
39 Permit owner’s goal, often
41 Moved oh-so-sneakily
43 Like discount bakery bread, usually
- 45 Went hard
48 Kia SUVs
49 Vibe
50 Base-clearing hits (Abbr.)
52 Waters down
54 Singular or plural pronoun
55 “Likewise ...”
56 Fitting
57 Spoil

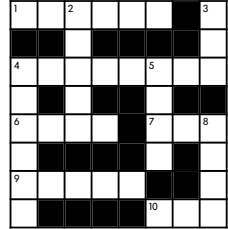
Tuesday’s Answer



10/28

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TXTPERT



- Across
1. 392483
4. 26927359
6. 7673
7. 963
9. 24273
10. 429
- Down
2. 26937
3. 749
4. 227825
5. 3696
8. 3689

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Today’s theme
Feelings



Use the phone keypad to decode the clues.
For example:
2 could be A, B or C... and 5678 could be LOST



Yesterday’s solution

Numbers

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SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 (no repeats).



10/29

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★☆☆☆

SUDOKU FUSION
ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

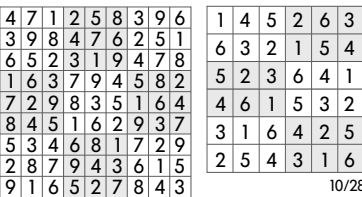
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Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x2 box contains the numbers 1 through 6 (no repeats).



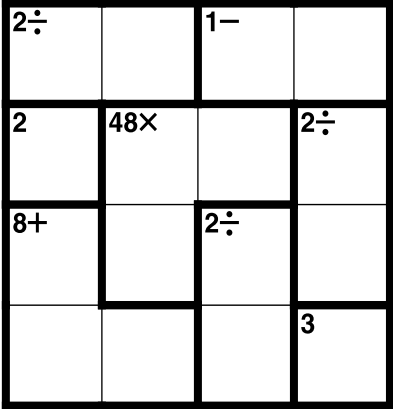
DIFFICULTY RATING ★★☆☆☆

Tuesday’s Answers



10/28

KENKEN

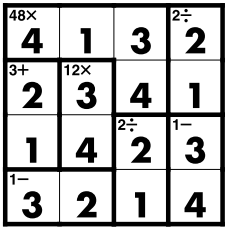


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1. Each row and column must contain the numbers 1 through 4 without repeating.
2. The numbers within the heavily outlined boxes, called cages, must combine using the given operation (in any order) to produce the target numbers in the top-left corners.
3. Freebies: fill in single-box cages with the number in the top-left corner.

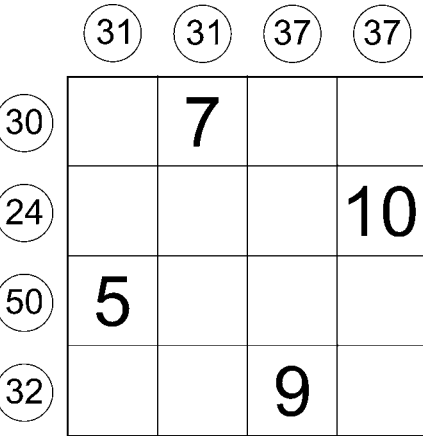
YESTERDAY’S SOLUTION



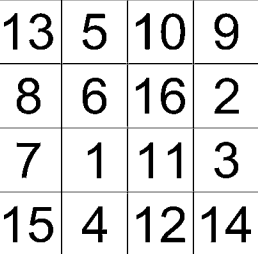
KUBOK 16

By Davide Coppo

Difficulty: EXPERT



Solution to Tuesday’s puzzle



Enter the missing numbers from 1 to 16 without repetitions so that the sum of the four numbers in each row and column is the same as the corresponding circled number.

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10/29/25

Words

WORD ROUNDUP

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

- Find and Circle:
Seven words ending with GH (four-letter min.)
Orange ____
Three eating utensils
____ Roberts (actors and siblings)
Capital of Alaska

Tuesday’s answer: STORMY CHILLY WINDY SNOWY RAINY HAZY / LEOPARD CHEETAH PANTHER TIGER LION LYNX / ALASKA HAWAII / SELLECK / TONY

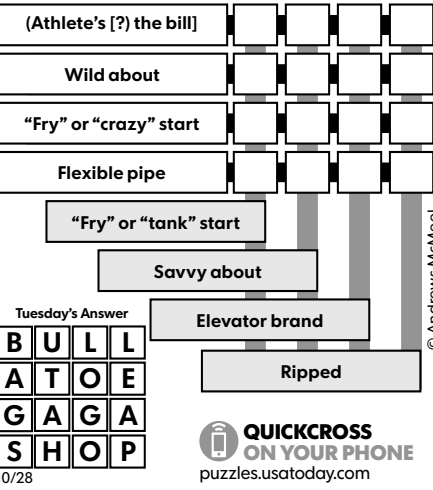


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QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes

10/29



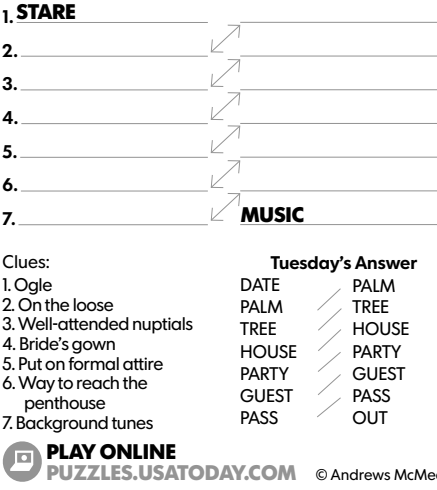
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UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt

10/29



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Author Gilbert K. Chesterton thinks about history.

Rearrange the words to complete the quote.
HISTORY MAKE NOTHING PEOPLE SEE SORT YOU

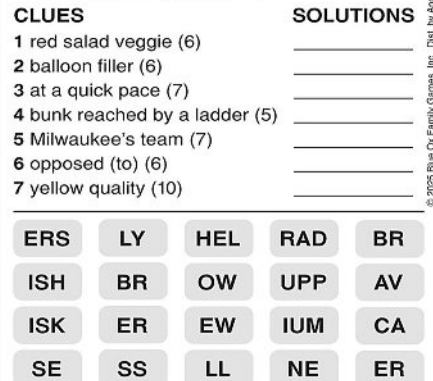
____ WHO ____ HISTORY KNOW ____ ABOUT HISTORY.
____ CAN ____ THAT IN THE ____ OF ____ THEY MAKE.

10/29

Tuesday’s Answer: “Behind every working woman is an enormous pile of unwashed laundry.” - Barbara Dale

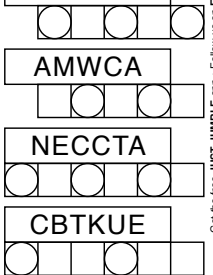
7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.



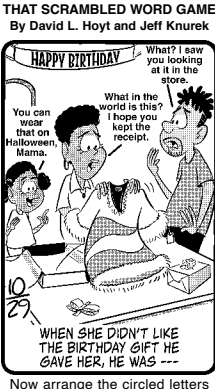
JUMBLE

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



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Yesterday’s Jumbles: IRONY EVENT (Answers tomorrow)
Answer: The Tower of Pisa’s building inspectors were — TOO “LEAN-IENT”



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BONUS CROSSWORD

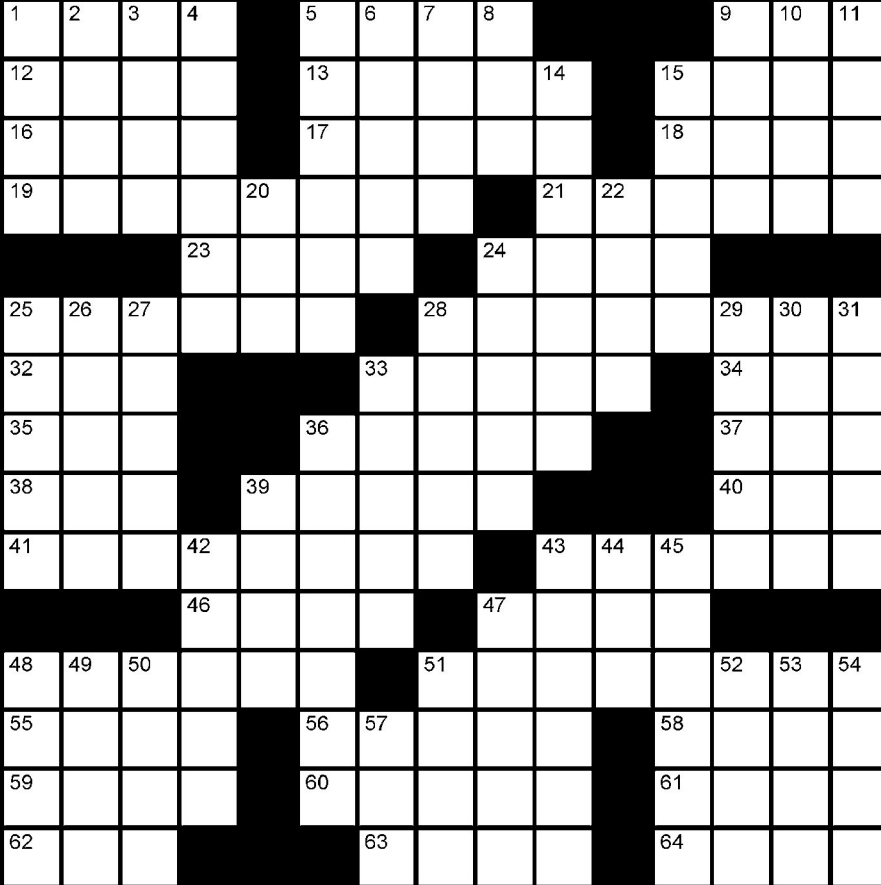
- ACROSS
- 1 Sharp projection
5 Valley
9 Quid — quo
12 Genus of maple trees
13 Greek epic
15 Leisurely
16 Spiced tea beverage
17 Boutique
18 “— & Faith”
19 Tenders of sheep
21 Exchanged
23 Equipment
24 Refrigerate
25 Power to attract
28 Uncertain
32 Deceive
33 Playing cards
34 “— — rule ...”
35 Asphalt substance
36 Cries loudly
37 Taxi
38 Singer — DiFranco
39 Cause to ring
40 Id complement
41 Potato bug (Hyph.)
43 Expert
46 “— of Eden”
47 Imprison
48 Cruel ruler
51 Sports drink brand
- 55 White frost
56 Oust
58 Malevolent
59 Ireland
60 “Divine Comedy” poet
61 Christmas
62 Hankering
63 Hideout
64 Tips
- DOWN
- 1 Great German composer
2 Yearn
3 Raise
4 “— Over Troubled Water”
5 Depressing
6 Modify
7 Zoo denizen
8 Corn spike
9 Walk slowly with effort
10 Lariat
11 Had outstanding bills
14 Roundabout ways
15 “Thou — not ...”
20 Ocean
22 Steals from
24 “If looks — kill”
25 Communion table
26 Liberace’s instrument
27 Hazard

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED



10-29-25 © 2025 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS

- 28 Soft and fluffy
29 Aspect
30 Application
31 — of love
33 Culpability
36 Pushed up
39 Reach across
42 Hanker
43 Make a difference
44 In the past
45 Calm
47 Spiny plants
48 “The bigger — are ...”
- 49 Antiquity
50 Precipitation
51 Actress — Gershon
52 English river
53 Perished
54 Annexes
57 Actor — Kilmer



MUSIC NEWS & VIEWS

Rodrigo shows ‘Guts’ in her surprise show

Anika Reed
USA TODAY

NEW YORK – Olivia Rodrigo is bidding farewell to her “Guts” era.

The singer-songwriter played her “final” concert following her 102-show, arena-filling Guts World Tour with an intimate “secret” concert in New York City, hosted Thursday night by American Express at the Park Avenue Armory.

“This is definitely going to be the last ‘Guts’ show, so it’s kind of awesome to bookend this chapter,” Rodrigo, 22, said before diving into her first chart-topping hit, “Drivers License.” “Can’t wait to get back on the road one of these days. I don’t think I’ve ever played a show without playing this song.”

The Grammy-winning “Good 4 U” singer, dressed in a sequined chartreuse babydoll Miu Miu mini dress, knee-high socks and Miu Miu ballet flats, played a hit-packed show accompanied by an all-female band. She playfully danced around the stage, belting out songs from “Sour” and “Guts,” including “Vampire,” “Bad Idea Right?” and “Deja Vu.”

The Oct. 23 show also saw such celebs as “Emily in Paris” star Ashley Park, “Vampire Diaries” star Nina Dobrev and Good American cofounder Emma Grede in the audience rocking out to Rodrigo.

“This is like the most intimate show we’ve done in a really long time,” Rodrigo said.

Fans at the exclusive show, which was open to American Express Platinum and Business Platinum cardholders and VIP guests, were treated to chicken sandwich sliders and hamachi crudo bites before the show on the purple-hued stage, plus an open bar and to-go pizza at the end of the night.

Rodrigo praises ‘The Summer I Turned Pretty’ for ‘Lacy’ feature

Rodrigo also shared a shoutout to the teen drama series, “The Summer I Turned Pretty.” The Prime Video show featured her “Guts” track, “Lacy,” in Season 3, Episode 2.

She prefaced the performance by recalling “writing (‘Lacy’) and feeling so proud of it, just like the songwriting perspective, the lyrical perspective. I thought it really captured this feeling that I was feeling so acutely, like jealousy and comparison and inferiority.”



“This is like the most intimate show we’ve done in a really long time,” Olivia Rodrigo said at her surprise concert. PHOTOS BY DIMITRIOS KAMBOURIS/GETTY IMAGES



Rodrigo spilled her “Guts” for the last time on Oct. 24.

Olivia Rodrigo setlist at American Express concert

- “Bad Idea Right?”
- “Ballad of a Homeschooled Girl”
- “Vampire”
- “Lacy”
- “Pretty Isn’t Pretty”
- “Drivers License”
- “Traitor”
- “So American”
- “All-American Bitch”
- “Favorite Crime”
- “Deja Vu”
- “Good 4 U”
- “Get Him Back”

“down-tempo” ballad and remembered thinking, “I don’t know if anyone wants to hear it.”

“But lately it was in the show ‘The Summer I Turned Pretty,’ and then ever since it was in that show, people have been like chanting at me at concerts to sing the song if I wasn’t going to sing it,” she said. “So I’m really grateful for that show and I’m really grateful to you guys for listening to the song and streaming it, because it’s always been one of my favorites.”

BOOKS

Knightley’s daughters were brutally honest reviewers

Patrick Ryan
USA TODAY

Keira Knightley is adding “author” to her résumé.

The “Atonement” star has just published her first children’s book, “I Love You Just the Same,” which is out now in her native United Kingdom and will be released stateside next summer by Gallery Kids/Simon & Schuster.

The picture book is both written and illustrated by Knightley, 40, who tells a whimsical story about a young girl who wishes her new baby sister would be carried away by birds. But when it actually happens, the guilt-ridden girl embarks on a journey to retrieve her little sibling.

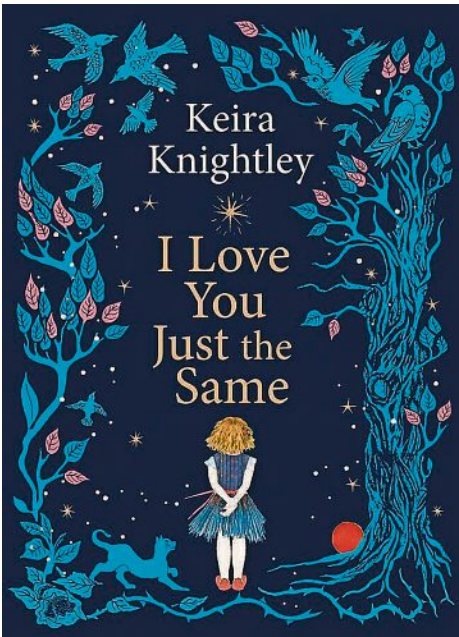
The project was inadvertently born roughly five years ago, thanks to Knightley’s two daughters with husband James Righton: Edie, 10, and Delilah, 6.

“It was a complete accident,” Knightley tells USA TODAY, in a recent interview for her Netflix thriller “The Woman in Cabin 10” (now streaming). “My eldest kid didn’t sleep very much, and we tried many different nighttime routines to try and get her to sleep. Eventually, I came on this idea that if I drew her a picture every night, then when she’d gone to bed, I’d leave it in her room.”

When Edie would “wake up, she knew that I’d been thinking about her,” Knightley continues. “So every night before bed, she’d tell me what picture she wanted me to draw.”

The pictures got more and more creative over time, as Edie asked her mom to draw babies, cats and birds.

“Then one day, when her sister was about 6 months old – she’d been crying a lot because she was teething – she said, ‘Can the bird take the baby away?’ ” Knightley says with a laugh. A story began to take shape, “and I thought, ‘Maybe I can push this a bit further and make it more universal about sibling rivalry and separation anxiety.’ So that’s what I ended up doing and I loved every bit of it. It was such a joyous thing to do.”



Coincidentally, “I Love You Just the Same” was greenlit by the publisher the day Knightley started production on Season 1 of her Netflix spy series “Black Doves.” The actress memorizes lines by recording dialogue and listening back.

“That’s literally what I was doing the whole time making ‘Black Doves,’” Knightley says. “I would listen to my lines while I was drawing the illustrations for the book. It was kind of a weird juxtaposition: drawing a lovely pigeon at the same time as I’m learning lines where I’m about to kill somebody. (Laughs.) It was quite nice to have those two things going on at once.”

The two-time Oscar nominee jokes it took her “too long” to make the book, in that Edie has now grown out of it.

“I started it when she was 5, because we were doing it in a way where it was just between us and it wasn’t this whole thing,” Knightley says. “She’s so bored by it now. She’s like, ‘Has that book come out yet?’ And I’m like, what is the matter with you?!”

Delilah, meanwhile, has given her a thumbs up.

“She was a baby when we started and she’s 6 now,” Knightley says. “She’s like, ‘Well done, Mummy! I like your book!’ And I’m like, ‘Thank you!’ That’s what I need.”

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- Roster and schedule, analysis, season storylines
- Relive last season's run; who stands in the way in '26?

CHET HOLMGREN

SHAI GILGEUS-ALEXANDER

JALEN WILLIAMS

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NATION&WORLD **EXTRA**

‘ROARING LION’

Hurricane Melissa hits Jamaica, turns to Cuba



Residents self-evacuate under pouring rain from Playa Siboney to safe locations ahead of the arrival of Hurricane Melissa, in Santiago de Cuba, Cuba, on Oct. 28. Hurricane Melissa was set to strike nearby eastern end of Cuba late Oct. 28 after pummeling Jamaica. YAMIL LAGE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Zahra Burton
REUTERS

KINGSTON, Jamaica – Hurricane Melissa churned north-east toward Cuba's second-largest city on Oct. 28 as a powerful Category 4 storm, hours after making landfall in nearby Jamaica as the strongest-ever storm to hit the Caribbean island nation.

Melissa struck land near Jamaica's southwestern town of New Hope, packing maximum sustained winds of 185 mph, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said in an advisory, well above the minimum strength of a Category 5 storm, the most powerful level on the Saffir-Simpson scale.

In southwestern Jamaica, the parish of St. Elizabeth was left "underwater," an official said, and over half a million residents were without power.

"The reports that we have had so far would include damage to hospitals, significant damage to residential property, housing and commercial property as well, and damage to our road infrastructure," Jamaica's Prime Minister Andrew Holness said on CNN after the storm had passed.

Holness said the government had not received any confirmed storm-related fatalities, but given the strength of the hurricane and the extent of the damage, "we are expecting that there would be some loss of life."

It is now forecast to curve toward Santiago de Cuba, Cuba's second-largest city.

"We should already be feeling its main influence this afternoon and evening," Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel said in a message published in state



Ferocious winds and torrential rain tore into Jamaica Oct. 28 as Hurricane Melissa made landfall, the worst storm ever to strike the island nation and one of the most powerful hurricanes on record. RICARDO MAKYN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

newspaper Granma, in which he called on citizens to heed evacuation orders.

"There will be a lot of work to do. We know that this cyclone will cause significant damage."

Cuban authorities said they evacuated about 500,000 people. In the Bahamas, next in Melissa's crosshairs, the government ordered further evacuations for people living in southern parts of the archipelago.

Nearby Haiti and the Dominican Republic have faced days of torrential downpours leading to at least four deaths, authorities there said.

Local media reported at least three

deaths in Jamaica during storm preparations, and a disaster coordinator suffered a stroke while carrying out her duties in the onset of the storm and was rushed to hospital.

Late Oct. 28, many areas remained cut off.

Jamaica's 'storm of the century'

No stranger to hurricanes, Jamaica had never before taken a direct hit from a Category 4 or 5 storm.

The Jamaican government called

See HURRICANE, Page 4NN

States sue to stop food benefits suspension

It would be 1st time a shutdown affects aid

Nate Raymond
REUTERS

BOSTON – A coalition of states sued the Trump administration on Oct. 28, seeking to avert what would be a historic lapse in food aid for millions of Americans that is set to begin Nov. 1 amid an ongoing government shutdown.

The lawsuit represents a critical challenge

to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's decision not to use \$6 billion in contingency funds to pay for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as food stamps, which costs about \$8 billion monthly.

At stake is whether more than 41 million low-income Americans will receive their November benefits, which would mark the first time payments have lapsed due to a government shutdown in the program's 60-year history.

"The federal government has the money to continue funding SNAP benefits – they're choosing to harm millions of families across the country already struggling to make ends meet," Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell said in a social media post about the lawsuit filed in Boston federal court by attorneys general and governors from 25 states and the District of Columbia.

The case was assigned to U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani, who was appointed by Democratic former President Barack Obama. She set a hearing for Oct. 30 on whether to issue a temporary restraining order forcing the USDA to use available contingency funds for November SNAP benefits.

The USDA's shutdown plan had included the potential use of contingency funds for SNAP, but on Oct. 26 the department updated its website to say no benefits would be issued on Nov. 1 as scheduled, stating "the well has run

See FOOD, Page 4NN



California Gov. Gavin Newsom and Attorney General Rob Bonta announce that California is suing the White House to restore SNAP funding before the cutoff during a news conference in Sacramento. FRED GREAVES/REUTERS

Israel strikes Gaza after accusing Hamas of violating ceasefire



People descend into a tunnel looking for bodies in an area north of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on Oct. 28. Israel's military accused Hamas of staging its search for the remains of a Gaza hostage body. BASHAR TALEB/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Maayan Lubell and Nidal al-Mughrabi
REUTERS

JERUSALEM – Israeli planes launched strikes in Gaza on Oct. 28 after Israel accused the militant group Hamas of violating a ceasefire in the Palestinian territory, the latest test of a fragile deal brokered earlier this month by President Donald Trump.

Local health authorities said the strikes killed at least 26 people, including five in a house hit in the Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, four in a building in Gaza City's Sabra neighborhood, and five in a car in Khan Yunis. The attacks by Israeli planes continued into early Oct. 29 across the Gaza Strip, according to witnesses.

The Israeli military did not immedi-

ately comment on the strikes, which followed a statement by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office saying he had ordered immediate "powerful attacks."

The statement did not give a specific reason for the attacks but an Israeli military official said Hamas had violated the ceasefire by carrying out an attack against Israeli forces in an area of the enclave that is under Israeli control.

"This is yet another blatant violation of the ceasefire," the official said.

The U.S.-backed ceasefire agreement went into effect on Oct. 10, halting two years of war that was triggered by deadly Hamas-led attacks on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, and that has devastated the

See GAZA, Page 4NN



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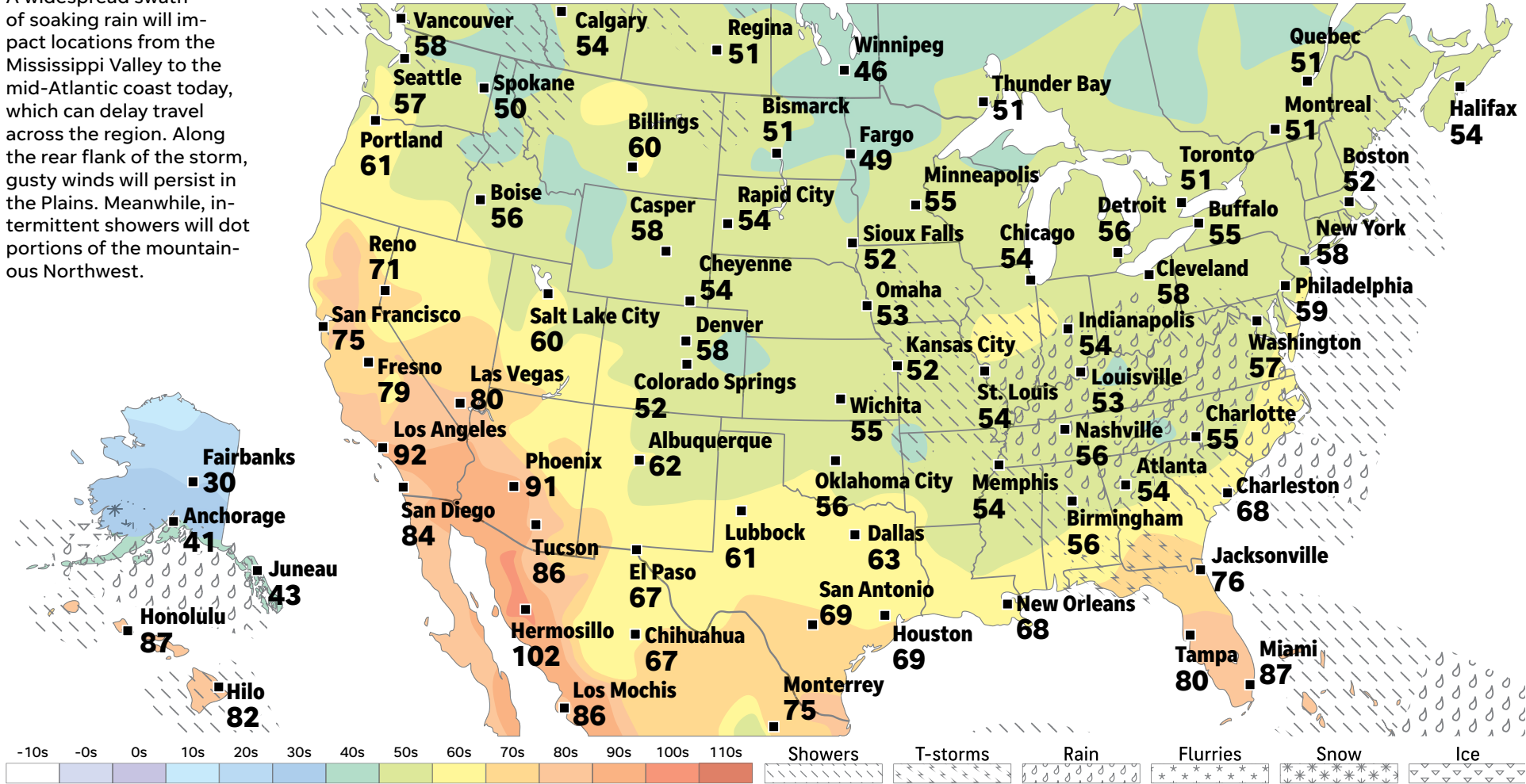


NATIONAL SUMMARY

A widespread swath of soaking rain will impact locations from the Mississippi Valley to the mid-Atlantic coast today, which can delay travel across the region. Along the rear flank of the storm, gusty winds will persist in the Plains. Meanwhile, intermittent showers will dot portions of the mountainous Northwest.

In the digital e-edition, you can click anywhere on the US map to get up-to-date forecasts, radar, MinuteCast® and more.

Shown are areas of precipitation and high temperatures for Wednesday.



TUESDAY EXTREMES

NATIONAL (for the 48 contiguous states)
High: 100 at Zapata, TX
Low: 3 at West Yellowstone, MT
Precip: 2.97" at Mount Ida, AR

INTERNATIONAL (excludes Antarctica)
High: 111 at Fitzroy Crossing, Australia
Low: -33 at Baimka, Russia
Precip: 6.50" at Ongole, India

TODAY IN HISTORY

On Oct. 29, 1991, a storm dumped up to a foot of snow in Utah. Another storm dropped nearly 5 inches of rain on Little Rock, Ark. A third storm sank boats along the Massachusetts coast.

WEATHER TRIVIA™

Q: A voice part and also the prefix used for midlevel clouds?

NATIONAL CITIES WEDNESDAY

	High/low/W	Air Quality		High/low/W	Air Quality		High/low/W	Air Quality		High/low/W	Air Quality
Aberdeen, SD	51/31/pc	30	● Evansville, IN	53/44/r	16	● Levittown, PA	58/51/c	47	Rochester, NY	54/39/c	26
Abilene, TX	63/35/s	50	Fall River, MA	54/47/sh	43	Lincoln, IL	60/39/r	27	Rockford, IL	57/38/pc	40
● Accomac, VA	60/55/r	16	Farmington, NM	63/30/s	47	● Louisville, KY	53/47/r	41	Ruidoso, NM	58/38/pc	60
Adrian, MI	55/42/pc	30	● Fayetteville, NC	60/56/r	22	Lubbock, TX	61/33/pc	38	Salem, OR	60/39/pc	31
● Akron, OH	55/44/c	27	Fond du Lac, WI	54/38/pc	37	Manitowoc, WI	52/38/pc	29	Salina, KS	54/32/s	36
Alamogordo, NM	66/36/s	46	Fort Myers, FL	83/68/s	49	● Mansfield, OH	56/43/c	30	Salinas, CA	84/52/s	51
● Alexandria, VA	57/52/r	51	● Fort Smith, AR	55/44/s	23	● Marshall, NC	51/43/r	15	● Salisbury, MD	61/56/r	16
● Alliance, OH	56/43/c	26	Framingham, MA	51/44/c	40	Marshallfield, WI	55/33/c	42	San Angelo, TX	64/31/s	43
Amarillo, TX	56/32/s	42	Freeport, IL	56/36/pc	41	● Massillon, OH	56/45/c	29	Sarasota, FL	80/69/pc	42
Ames, IA	56/36/r	32	● Fremont, OH	55/47/c	29	● McLean, VA	56/50/r	48	● Savannah, GA	67/49/pc	27
● Anderson, SC	54/47/r	19	Fort Collins, CO	56/34/s	51	Melbourne, FL	80/60/s	38	Sheboygan, WI	53/40/pc	28
Appleton, WI	54/38/pc	36	● Gadsden, AL	56/45/r	17	● Memphis, TN	54/46/sh	33	● Shelby, NC	50/45/r	28
● Asheville, NC	48/44/r	14	● Gainesville, FL	77/48/s	31	● Middletown, NY	53/42/c	33	Sherman, TX	57/42/s	24
● Ashland, OH	55/43/c	28	Galesburg, IL	59/36/r	41	Milford, MA	50/44/c	45	Shreveport, LA	62/48/s	34
● Athens, GA	54/46/r	19	● Gastonia, NC	52/45/r	29	Milwaukee, WI	53/42/pc	37	Silver City, NM	63/37/s	34
● Augusta, GA	62/44/sh	20	Glen Rose, TX	63/38/s	28	Monroe, MI	55/43/pc	30	Sioux Falls, SD	52/32/pc	27
Austin, TX	68/43/s	44	Gonzales, LA	64/50/s	26	● Monroe, LA	60/48/s	21	● Somerset, PA	46/41/r	22
Bartlesville, OK	53/37/s	32	Great Falls, MT	59/30/pc	86	Montgomery, AL	61/49/sh	22	● Somerville, NJ	59/50/c	44
Battle Creek, MI	55/39/pc	31	Green Bay, WI	55/35/pc	29	● Muncie, IN	57/43/r	21	South Bend, IN	57/38/pc	26
● Bedford, IN	49/42/r	19	● Greenville, SC	52/44/r	21	● Murfreesboro, TN	55/45/r	16	● Spartanburg, SC	50/44/r	25
● Binghamton, NY	51/38/c	28	● Hackensack, NJ	57/49/c	52	● Naples, FL	82/70/s	44	Springfield, IL	57/39/r	27
● Bluffton, SC	66/51/pc	22	● Hagerstown, MD	54/47/r	21	● Nashville, TN	56/47/r	16	Springfield, MO	50/38/r	20
Bremerton, WA	57/42/pc	35	Hattiesburg, MS	63/52/s	18	● Neptune, NJ	58/54/r	46	St. Augustine, FL	75/53/s	25
Brockton, MA	53/47/sh	45	● Henderson, KY	54/43/r	18	New Bedford, MA	55/47/sh	31	● St. Cloud, MN	52/38/pc	31
Brownwood, TX	66/33/s	45	● Hendersonville, NC	47/43/r	18	● New Bern, NC	66/62/r	15	St. George, UT	76/47/r	52
Burlington, IA	58/38/r	38	Herkimer, NY	54/36/c	30	● New Philadelphia, OH	57/44/c	29	● Staunton, VA	50/46/r	23
● Burlington, NC	54/51/r	21	Hillsdale, MI	54/38/pc	28	● Newark, OH	56/45/c	32	Stevens Point, WI	56/33/c	43
Burlington, VT	52/38/c	29	Holland, MI	56/39/pc	27	● Newton, NJ	54/43/c	33	Stockton, CA	80/49/s	53
● Cambridge, OH	57/45/c	26	● Hornell, NY	56/37/pc	33	● New York, NY	58/53/c	54	● Stroudsburg, PA	54/42/c	40
Camdenton, MO	52/39/r	21	Houma, LA	64/48/s	22	Norwich, CT	53/43/c	31	Stuart, FL	82/68/s	47
Canandaigua, NY	54/38/c	31	Howell, MI	55/38/pc	29	Ocala, FL	77/47/s	30	Sturgis, MI	56/38/pc	24
● Canton, OH	55/44/c	24	Hutchinson, KS	53/30/s	42	Oklahoma City, OK	56/36/s	38	● Tallahassee, FL	73/46/t	23
Carlsbad, NM	62/37/pc	51	Hyannis, MA	55/49/sh	21	Opelousas, LA	63/47/s	26	Thibodaux, LA	65/47/s	23
● Chambersburg, PA	54/44/c	23	Indianapolis, IN	54/44/r	26	Oshkosh, WI	53/39/pc	35	Topeka, KS	52/37/c	23
● Cherry Hill, NJ	59/52/c	48	Iowa City, IA	57/37/r	43	Palm Beach, FL	84/71/s	43	● Tuscaloosa, AL	58/48/sh	15
● Cincinnati, OH	51/46/r	18	Ithaca, NY	54/37/c	28	Palm Springs, CA	95/67/s	81	Utica, NY	53/35/c	21
● Clarksville, TN	56/46/r	16	Jackson, MS	58/50/sh	19	Panama City, FL	72/56/t	26	Ventura, CA	79/56/s	69
Coldwater, MI	55/38/pc	27	● Jackson, TN	55/45/r	12	Pekin, IL	60/39/r	32	Victorville, CA	85/43/s	71
● Columbus, OH	56/46/r	32	● Jacksonville, FL	76/50/pc	35	Pensacola, FL	68/53/pc	25	● Vineland, NJ	58/51/r	33
● Corning, NY	55/37/c	39	● Jacksonville, NC	66/61/r	15	Peoria, IL	58/39/r	33	Visalia, CA	78/50/s	82
Corpus Christi, TX	77/46/pc	37	● Kent, OH	56/43/c	27	● Petersburg, VA	59/55/r	32	● Washington, DC	57/54/r	44
Daytona Beach, FL	78/54/s	32	Kewanee, IL	59/35/pc	47	Phoenix, AZ	91/64/s	80	Watertown, SD	49/31/s	24
Deming, NM	68/36/s	34	● Keyser, WV	49/44/r	20	Port Huron, MI	55/40/pc	25	Wausau, WI	54/33/c	40
DeRidder, LA	63/46/s	32	● Kinston, NC	64/59/r	16	Portsmouth, NH	54/42/pc	20	● Waynesboro, PA	54/45/r	24
Des Moines, IA	55/38/r	37	● Knoxville, TN	56/45/r	16	● Poughkeepsie, NY	55/42/c	28	● White Plains, NY	56/46/c	38
Detroit, MI	56/43/pc	30	Lafayette, IN	60/40/r	25	Providence, RI	53/47/sh	39	Wichita Falls, TX	62/36/s	32
Devils Lake, ND	46/36/pc	25	Lafayette, LA	65/49/s	29	Pueblo, CO	56/25/s	58	● Wilmington, DE	59/51/r	43
Dover, NH	52/39/pc	39	Lakeland, FL	81/59/s	50	Quincy, MA	53/48/sh	51	● Wilmington, NC	66/62/r	16
El Paso, TX	67/45/s	61	Lansing, MI	54/39/pc	31	Redding, CA	83/49/pc	52	Wisconsin Rapids, WI	56/34/pc	44
● Elmira, NY	55/37/c	35	Las Cruces, NM	64/38/s	37	Reno, NV	71/38/s	90	● Wooster, OH	56/45/c	24
● Erie, PA	56/45/pc	20	● Lebanon, PA	58/47/c	40	● Ravenna, OH	56/42/c	28	Worcester, MA	48/43/c	38
Eugene, OR	60/38/pc	33	Leesburg, FL	77/57/s	38	● Richmond, IN	52/45/r	30	York, PA	57/48/c	44

Air Quality Index: 0-50, Good; 51-100, Moderate; 101-150, Unhealthy for sensitive groups; 151-200, Unhealthy; 201-300, Very unhealthy; 301-500, Hazardous

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

	Wednesday High/low/W	Thursday High/low/W		Wednesday High/low/W	Thursday High/low/W		Wednesday High/low/W	Thursday High/low/W		Wednesday High/low/W	Thursday High/low/W
Acapulco	89/75/pc	89/75/pc	Cape Town	73/56/s	86/60/pc	La Paz	61/37/r	64/36/sh	San Jose	79/66/r	80/68/t
Addis Ababa	75/50/pc	75/51/c	● Caracas	93/78/sh	92/77/t	Lagos	87/77/r	87/77/r	● San Salvador	84/65/t	85/62/pc
Algiers	82/65/c	80/58/t	● Casablanca	78/62/sh	76/55/pc	Lima	70/62/c	71/62/pc	Santiago	79/50/pc	86/50/s
Amman	79/56/s	82/60/pc	● Colombo	89/78/r	90/79/s	Lisbon	71/58/sh	68/63/c	● Sao Paulo	79/59/sh	64/58/sh
● Amsterdam	56/48/r	56/47/pc	● Copenhagen	54/49/r	52/44/sh	London	55/42/sh	57/52/pc	Sarajevo	66/46/s	64/46/c
Ankara	60/33/s	65/32/s	Damascus	83/49/s	80/50/pc	● Madrid	62/49/r	66/49/s	Shanghai	72/62/s	75/62/c
Asuncion	70/55/c	79/58/pc	Dublin	52/39/pc	56/52/r	● Manila	91/78/t	89/79/t	Singapore	92/80/c	95/79/pc
Athens	73/53/s	71/58/c	● Geneva	57/51/c	60/44/pc	Mexico City	71/46/s	72/47/s	● Stockholm	43/36/c	47/40/sh
Auckland	65/52/pc	65/53/c	Guatemala City	80/59/t	76/57/pc	Milan	59/53/c	64/53/r	● Sydney	65/57/r	70/62/sh
Baghdad	92/74/s	93/68/s	Hanoi	84/74/pc	78/71/sh	● Mombasa	83/74/r	84/74/r	Taipei	77/71/pc	85/72/pc
Bangkok	89/78/sh	88/78/t	Harare	89/61/pc	89/61/s	Montevideo	61/46/sh	63/47/pc	● Tegucigalpa	83/66/t	78/62/c
Beijing	61/43/pc	61/39/pc	Havana	86/69/sh	81/65/pc	Montreal	51/36/s	49/43/r	Tehran	80/56/pc	79/54/pc
Beirut	80/69/s	81/69/s	● Helsinki	48/41/c	48/45/r	Moscow	45/40/r	45/40/c	Tokyo	62/54/c	67/57/c
Belgrade	68/47/s	71/52/pc	Hong Kong	79/74/pc	81/74/pc	Nairobi	71/62/t	70/62/t	Toronto	51/42/pc	48/40/r
Berlin	57/49/c	54/39/r	● Jakarta	91/75/t	90/76/t	New Delhi	83/70/pc	81/72/pc	Tunis	81/66/pc	77/62/c
Bogota	68/48/c	66/49/r	Jerusalem	74/57/s	77/64/pc	Panama City	86/75/r	87/75/r	Vancouver	58/41/pc	53/41/c
● Brussels	57/45/c	55/47/c	● Johannesburg	69/55/t	71/54/t	● Paris	59/45/sh	57/48/pc	Vienna	61/43/pc	61/44/c
Bucharest	66/42/s	67/46/c	Kabul	70/52/s	69/53/s	Port-au-Prince	86/73/r	93/74/sh	Warsaw	54/43/c	58/44/c
Budapest	64/47/s	67/40/pc	Khartoum	103/79/pc	103/78/pc	● Rio de Janeiro	83/69/r	73/67/r	● Yerevan	64/39/sh	54/36/s
Buenos Aires	62/56/pc	65/58/c	Kyiv	52/40/sh	57/47/pc	Riyadh	90/66/pc	90/68/pc	Zagreb	63/51/pc	62/52/c
Cairo	84/68/pc	85/67/pc	Kingston	90/79/sh	90/78/sh	Rome	71/62/pc	69/61/r	Zurich	57/48/c	58/41/pc

● Denotes possible travel delays Wednesday

Weather(W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice.

Hundreds of air traffic controllers take 2nd jobs

Doyinsola Oladipo
and David Shepardson
REUTERS

Hundreds of U.S. air traffic controllers have taken second jobs after missing their first full paychecks due to the government shutdown, intensifying strain on an already stretched aviation safety system, a union official said.

Air traffic controllers and trainees are taking side hustles like waiting tables, delivering food for DoorDash, driving for Uber, grocery shopping for Instacart and signing up as weekend tutors to make ends meet as the shutdown enters its 28th day.

“We’re talking to our coworkers about how to get zero-interest loans,” Mike Christine, National Air Traffic Controllers Association’s eastern regional vice president, told Reuters. Controllers are swapping notes about which companies are deferring payments and who is donating food to workers, he added. They missed their first full paycheck on Oct. 28. Roughly 13,000 air traffic controllers and 50,000 Transportation Security Administration officers must work without pay after a budget impasse between President Donald Trump and congressional Democrats triggered the shutdown.

Controllers, who only received a partial paycheck two weeks ago, have increasingly called in sick in recent weeks. That has led to thousands of flight delays per day and hundreds of cancellations that have frustrated the public and intensified scrutiny of the shutdown’s impact, raising pressure on lawmakers to resolve the situation.

The number of controllers working second jobs is set to rise as they look for ways to pay their bills, NATCA President Nick Daniels told reporters on Oct. 28 at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. “By the hundreds, they’re right now doing second jobs. Tomorrow, it will be in the thousands,” Daniels later told Reuters in New York at LaGuardia Airport as controllers handed out leaflets to passing travelers, urging them to contact their local officials to end the shutdown.

He said the lack of pay was a dangerous distraction. For younger controllers who have just moved across the country to start their first job, are in training



Dave Romano, a member of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association, holds leaflets to be handed out, encouraging people to contact their representatives in the U.S. Congress to demand an end to the ongoing federal government shutdown, at LaGuardia Airport in New York City.

SHANNON STAPLETON/REUTERS

or have not yet built up their savings, the financial strain is more pronounced.

“They are the most vulnerable that is out there. They’re the ones that are absolutely feeling the greatest amount of this impact,” Daniels said.

Rising delays

Staffing shortages during the government shutdown have repeatedly disrupted the aviation industry, with nearly 7,000 flights delayed on Oct. 27 and 8,800 on Oct. 26. As of 5 p.m. ET on Oct. 28, about 3,000 flights were delayed, according to FlightAware, a flight-tracking website. U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said on Oct. 28 that air traffic controller absences were the primary cause.

He said 44% of delays on Oct. 26 and 24% on Oct. 27 were caused by air traffic controller absences, compared to 5% on average before the shutdown. Even before the shutdown, the Federal Aviation Administration was about 3,500 air traffic controllers short of targeted staffing levels, with many already working mandatory overtime and six-day weeks.

Duffy was speaking at a press con-

ference at LaGuardia Airport, flanked by air traffic controllers and the president of their union, the latest in a series of airport appearances aimed at prodding Democrats to give up opposition to the Republican-proposed government funding bills.

He said it remained safe to fly, and the FAA would slow flights if controllers were not at work at certain towers.

The department had not been able to find funding to pay controllers, Duffy said, urging Democrats to vote to open the government.

Democrats say Republicans refuse to negotiate and are responsible for the continued shutdown. Southwest Airlines had 34% of its flights delayed on Oct. 27, while American Airlines had 29%, according to FlightAware. United Airlines had 19% of its flights delayed and Delta Air Lines had 22%. In 2019, during a 35-day government shutdown, the number of absences by air traffic controllers and TSA officers rose as workers missed paychecks, extending wait times at some airport checkpoints.

Authorities were forced to slow air traffic in New York and Washington, and the flight disruptions were credited with prompting the government to end the shutdown.

FINANCIAL MARKETS

Nvidia shares up amid record closings

Caroline Valetkevitch
REUTERS

NEW YORK – All three major U.S. stock indexes posted record closing highs again on Oct. 28 as Nvidia shares gained following news it will build artificial intelligence supercomputers for the U.S. energy department, and as investors were optimistic about corporate earnings ahead of key results from megacaps this week. Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang said the company will build seven supercomputers for the U.S. Department of Energy, and said the company has \$500 billion in bookings for its AI chips.

Nvidia’s stock closed up 5%, adding over \$230 billion in market value and putting the company on the verge of becoming the first worth \$5 trillion. Also boosting the market, Microsoft’s shares gained 2% after the company reached a deal that allows OpenAI to restructure into a public benefit corporation while giving Microsoft a stake of 27% in the ChatGPT maker. Quarterly results are expected this week from Apple, Microsoft, Alphabet, Amazon, and Meta Platforms. Investors are anxious for details from the companies on AI spending.

Shares of Apple ended up just 0.1%, with the company earlier crossing \$4 trillion in market value for the first time. “Momentum and earnings are pushing the market higher,” said Peter Cardillo, chief market economist at Spartan Capital Securities in New York.

“Earnings have been good,” he said. “Of course, we’re waiting for the big tech stocks.”

Investors were also digesting trade-related news. The Wall Street Journal said U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping will discuss a trade framework to reduce U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods in exchange for Beijing’s commitment to curb exports of fentanyl precursor chemicals.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 161.78 points, or 0.34%, to 47,706.37, the S&P 500 gained 15.73 points, or 0.23%, to 6,890.89, and the Nasdaq Composite gained 190.04 points, or 0.8%, to 23,827.49. Trump lavished praise on Japan’s first female leader, Sanae Takaichi, in Tokyo on Tuesday. They signed a deal to bolster supplies of critical minerals and rare earths, as their nations seek to reduce China’s dominance of some areas of key electronic components.

With results in from 180 of the S&P 500 companies, third-quarter earnings are estimated to have increased 10.5% from the year-ago period, up from earlier estimates for the quarter, according to LSEG data.

On Oct. 29, the Federal Reserve is widely expected to announce a 25-basis-point interest rate cut. Investors will be keen to get any details on the rate outlook, especially given that the U.S. government has been shut down for nearly a month, delaying crucial economic data and forcing traders to rely on private releases and corporate announcements.

A preliminary estimate of an ADP National Employment Report showed the U.S. economy added an average of 14,250 jobs in the four weeks ending Oct. 11. Even though the ADP data seemed to be positive, it was tempered by layoff announcements by big companies such as Amazon and others, analysts said. Shares of United Parcel Service jumped 8% after the company posted quarterly results in a sign its overhaul is making headway. UPS has been shuttering hundreds of facilities, slashing thousands of jobs and offering buyouts to its union drivers as part of its largest-ever overhaul, which aims to reduce costs by \$3.5 billion in 2025.

After the closing bell, shares of Visa edged higher after the company reported a rise in quarterly adjusted profit amid strong transaction volumes.

Visa’s stock ended the regular session down 0.3%. Declining issues outnumbered advancers by a 1.35-to-1 ratio on the NYSE.

There were 613 new highs and 102 new lows on the NYSE. On the Nasdaq, 1,868 stocks rose and 2,862 fell as declining issues outnumbered advancers by a 1.53-to-1 ratio.

Volume on U.S. exchanges was 20.5 billion shares, compared with the 20.96 billion average for the full session over the last 20 trading days.

Judge extends block on mass layoffs during shutdown

Daniel Wiessner
REUTERS

A federal judge on Oct. 28 extended a block that prevents President Donald Trump’s administration from laying off thousands of federal employees amid a nearly monthlong partial government shutdown.

During a hearing in San Francisco, U.S. District Judge Susan Illston barred nearly 40 federal agencies from implementing layoffs, pending the outcome of a legal challenge by unions representing federal workers. The decision extends an earlier temporary ruling.

The American Federation of Government Employees, which represents 800,000 federal workers and is a plaintiff in the case, this week called on Republicans and Democrats to put aside their differences and pass a spending bill so that government employees can return to work.

About 4,100 employees at eight agencies had been notified that they were being laid off before Illston’s Oct. 16 ruling, the Trump administration said in court filings. White House Budget Director Russell Vought has said that more than 10,000 federal workers could lose their jobs because of the shutdown.

Illston’s decision will likely be immediately appealed, and could be paused by a San Francisco-based appeals court or the U.S. Supreme Court pending further litigation.

The shutdown, which entered its 28th day on Oct. 28, is the second longest in U.S. history after a partial lapse in funding that lasted 35 days beginning in late 2018, during Trump’s first term.

Trump has blamed Democrats for the shutdown and the planned layoffs, though no other administration has carried out mass layoffs during lapses in funding.

Trump’s Republicans hold majorities in both chambers of Congress but



President Donald Trump has blamed Democrats for the planned layoffs, though no other administration has carried out mass layoffs during lapses in funding.

JONATHAN ERNST//REUTERS FILE

need at least seven Democratic votes to pass a funding bill in the Senate, where Democrats are holding out for an extension of health insurance subsidies. Democrats have said they will not cave to Trump’s pressure tactics.

The unions that filed the suit said implementing layoffs is not an essential service that can be performed during a shutdown, and that the current funding lapse does not justify mass job cuts because many federal workers have been furloughed without pay.

During the Oct. 28 hearing, U.S. Department of Justice lawyer Michael Velchik argued that federal agencies have broad powers to implement layoffs when they run out of funding to pay employees, and that Trump was following through on a campaign promise to reduce the size of the federal bureaucracy.

Danielle Leonard, a lawyer for the unions, countered that a funding lapse does not relieve federal agencies of their legal obligations under federal law

or allow them to fire the workers who fulfill them. If it did, Trump could “fire the entire federal government” during a shutdown if he chose, she said.

Illston made clear throughout the hearing that she agreed with the unions.

“I believe I will find (the layoffs) are arbitrary and capricious, as shown by the haphazard way in which they were rolled out, and intended for the purpose of political retribution as Budget Director (Russell) Vought and the president himself have publicly announced,” said Illston, an appointee of Democratic former President Bill Clinton.

Trump has, for example, said that job cuts would target “Democrat agencies.”

Skye Perryman, president and CEO of Democracy Forward, a left-leaning legal group that represents the unions, said in a statement that the judge’s ruling was a major blow to what it referred to as efforts by Trump to decimate the federal workforce.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Trump says he’s ready to send ‘more than the National Guard’

President Donald Trump has told U.S. troops he was prepared to send “more than the National Guard” into cities if needed, in the latest demonstration of his willingness to escalate a confrontation with Democratic-led local governments which oppose the deployments.

Trump delivered his remarks on Oct. 28 Tuesday aboard the George Washington aircraft carrier, which was docked at the Yokosuka naval base near Tokyo. His speech, which occasionally touched on partisan issues, was interrupted by applause and cheers from the troops several times.

“We have cities that are troubled ... and we’re sending in our National Guard. And if we need more than the National Guard, we’ll send more than the National Guard because we’re going to have safe cities,” Trump said.

Trump since June has deployed National Guard troops to various jurisdictions in an extraordinary expansion of the use of the military for domestic purposes. Trump has sent them to Los Angeles, Memphis and Washington, D.C., and is waging court battles to try to dispatch them to Portland and Chicago.

In Los Angeles, Trump also took the rare step of deploying active duty Marines, although their job was to protect federal agents and federal property and they have since been withdrawn.

Trump has left open the possibility that he might use the centuriesold Insurrection Act to deploy active duty troops for policing purposes and sidestep any court rulings blocking the dispatch of Guard troops into cities.

Under federal law, National Guard and other military troops are generally prohibited from conducting civilian law enforcement. But the Insurrection Act allows for an exception, giving troops the power to directly police and arrest people.

Since his second term as president began in January, Trump has shown little hesitation in seeking to wield governmental authority against his political opponents, as he pushes to expand the powers of the presidency in ways that have tested the limits of the law.

N.Korea test-fired cruise missiles ahead of Trump visit to S.Korea

SEOUL – North Korea test-fired sea-to-surface cruise missiles to the west of the Korean peninsula on Oct. 28, state media KCNA said on Oct. 29, just as President Donald Trump and other leaders are set to gather in South Korea for regional meetings.

Trump is due to arrive in the South Korean city of Gyeongju to join other heads of state and business leaders attending the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum for various summits and meetings. He is also expected to hold talks with the Chinese President Xi Jinping later this week.

The cruise missiles were fired vertically and flew about 7,800 seconds along a preset route to hit the target, KCNA said.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was not in attendance, according to KCNA.

Referring to the firing, Pak Jong Chon, vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission of North Korea, said “important successes are being made” in practically developing North Korea’s “nuclear forces” according to the plan set by the country’s ruling party, KCNA reported.

UK targets food delivery, car washes in illegal worker crackdown

LONDON – Britain said on Oct. 28 it made 63% more arrests for illegal working this year than last, driven by targeted operations in the food delivery, beauty salons and car washes industries aimed at deterring illegal migration.

Britain’s Labour government has seen its popularity slide since it came into office last year – partly due to public concerns over immigration – and, under pressure from the populist Reform UK party, has pledged to reduce the number of migrants who arrive illegally.

“Illegal working creates an incentive for people attempting to arrive in this country illegally,” interior minister Shabana Mahmood said in a statement. “No more.”

Immigration Enforcement arrested more than 8,000 illegal migrants in the 12 months to September 2025, a statement from Mahmood’s interior ministry said, up 63% on the previous 12 months. Of those arrested, over 1,050 foreign nationals have been removed from the country.

Reuters

Food

Continued from Page 1NN

dry.”

The lawsuit argues the suspension of benefits is arbitrary and being carried out in violation of the law and regulations governing the program, which requires that “assistance under this program shall be furnished to all eligible households.”

The lawsuit, led by the attorneys general of Massachusetts, California, Arizona and Minnesota, says the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 makes clear

Hurricane

Continued from Page 1NN

for foreign aid as it prepared for the fallout of the strongest-ever storm to directly strike its shores.

Meteorologists at AccuWeather said Melissa was the third most intense hurricane observed in the Caribbean after Wilma in 2005 and Gilbert in 1988 – the last major storm to make landfall in Jamaica.

“It’s a catastrophic situation,” the World Meteorological Organization’s tropical cyclone specialist Anne-Claire Fontan told a press briefing, warning of storm surges up to four meters high. “For Jamaica, it will be the storm of the century for sure.”

Colin Bogle, an adviser to aid group Mercy Corps in Portmore, near Jamaica’s capital of Kingston, said he had heard a loud explosion in the morning, and then everything went dark. Sheltering with his grandmother, he heard relentless noise and saw trees violently tossed in the wind.

“People are scared. Memories of Hurricane Gilbert run deep, and there is frustration that Jamaica continues to face the worst consequences of a climate crisis we did not cause,” he said.

Scientists warn that storms are intensifying faster as a result of climate change warming ocean waters. Many Caribbean leaders have called on wealthy, heavy-polluting nations to provide reparations in the form of aid or debt relief.

Melissa’s size and strength ballooned as it moved over unusually tepid Caribbean waters, but forecasters warned that its slow movement could prove particularly destructive.

Food aid will be critical, Bogle said,

that the contingency funds should be used when necessary to carry out program operations.

“Millions of Americans are about to go hungry because the federal government has chosen to withhold food assistance it is legally obligated to provide,” New York Attorney General Letitia James said in a statement. A spokesperson for the Department of Agriculture in a statement said Senate Democrats are approaching an inflection point where they either “hold out for the far-left wing of the party or reopen the government so mothers, babies, and the most vulnerable among us can receive timely WIC and SNAP allotments.”

SNAP benefits are available to Americans whose income is less than 130% of the federal poverty line, or \$1,632 a month for a one-person household, or \$2,215 for a two-person household in many areas.

SNAP benefits are paid out monthly, although the exact date payments are distributed varies among states, which are responsible for the day-to-day administration of the benefits.

The shutdown also threatens benefits for nearly 7 million participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, known as WIC.

Residents hold pieces of the roof before Hurricane Melissa hits the city of Santiago de Cuba, Cuba, on Oct. 28. YAMIL LAGE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

as well as tools, vehicle parts and seeds for farmers. Like last year’s devastating Hurricane Beryl, Melissa crossed over some of Jamaica’s most productive agricultural zones.

Earlier on Oct. 28, Holness said the government had an emergency budget of \$33 million and insurance and credit provisions for damage a little greater than Beryl.

Melissa made landfall in southwestern Jamaica, near the parish border between Westmoreland and St. Elizabeth, which was one of the areas worst-hit by Hurricane Beryl last year.

Authorities reported severe damages to public infrastructure including hospitals, and said that as of 4 p.m., over half a million residents were without power.

St. Elizabeth was “underwater,” local government minister Desmond McKenzie told a press briefing. Its only

public hospital lost power and reported severe damage to one of its buildings, and several families were marooned in their homes.

Rescue teams were struggling to reach stranded families, McKenzie added, but had managed to reach one group marooned with four babies.

In Portland Cottage, some 94 miles away from where Melissa made landfall, 64-year-old retiree Collin Henry McDonald told Reuters as the storm advanced that his community was seeing strong rain and winds, but his concrete roof was holding steady.

“It’s like a roaring lion. It’s mad. Really mad,” he said.

Around 15,000 Jamaicans were in temporary shelters by late Oct. 28, McKenzie said. The government had issued mandatory evacuation orders for 28,000 people, but many were reluctant to leave their homes.

ately respond to a question on whether Israel notified the United States before carrying out the Gaza strikes.

In Gaza City, an Israeli strike that killed four people hit a residential building near Shifa hospital, the largest operational hospital in northern Gaza. The hospital itself was also hit, according to Gaza officials, witnesses and Hamas media. Two people were wounded in an attack on a tent in Zawayda in the central Gaza Strip, according to local health authorities.

The search for hostage bodies stepped up over the past few days after the arrival of heavy machinery from Egypt. Bulldozers were working in Khan Younis on Oct. 28, in the southern Gaza Strip, and further north in Nuseirat, as Hamas fighters deployed around them.

Some of the bodies are believed to be in Hamas’ network of tunnels running below Gaza.

Witnesses in Khan Younis said the Egyptian teams, working with armed Hamas fighters, were digging deep near the Qatari-funded Hamad Housing City in the western side of Khan Younis, reaching tunnel shafts.



Residents hold pieces of the roof before Hurricane Melissa hits the city of Santiago de Cuba, Cuba, on Oct. 28. YAMIL LAGE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Gaza

Continued from Page 1NN

narrow coastal strip.

Vice President JD Vance, part of a parade of Trump administration officials who visited Israel last week, said that despite the latest flare-up, “the ceasefire is holding.”

“That doesn’t mean that there aren’t going to be little skirmishes here and there,” he told reporters on Capitol Hill. “We know that Hamas or somebody else within Gaza attacked an (Israeli) soldier. We expect the Israelis are going to respond, but I think the president’s peace is going to hold despite that.”

Earlier on Oct. 28, Israeli media reported an exchange of fire between Israeli forces and Hamas fighters in the southern Gaza city of Rafah. The Israeli military did not respond to a request for comment.

Hamas denied responsibility for an attack on Israeli forces in Rafah. The group also said in a statement that it remained committed to the ceasefire deal in Gaza.

The Oct. 28 strikes on Gaza City followed what Israel called a “targeted strike” on Oct. 26 on a person in central Gaza who it said was planning to attack Israeli troops.

Netanyahu said earlier on Oct. 28 that Hamas had violated the ceasefire by turning over some wrong remains in a process of returning the bodies of hostages to Israel.

Netanyahu said the remains handed over on Oct. 27 to Ofir Tzarfati, an Israeli killed Oct. 7, 2023, attack. Tzarfati’s remains had already been partially retrieved by Israeli troops during the war.

Hamas initially said in response to this that it would hand over to Israel on Oct. 28 the body of a missing hostage found in a tunnel in Gaza. However, Hamas’ armed wing, Al-Qassam Brigades, said later it would postpone the planned handover, citing what it said were Israel’s violations of the ceasefire.

Late on Oct. 28, Al-Qassam issued a statement saying it had recovered the bodies of two Israeli hostages, Amiram



A Palestinian man reacts next to the body of a man, who according to medics was killed in an Israeli strike, at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, Oct. 28. STRINGER/REUTERS

Cooper and Sahar Baruch, during search operations in Gaza.

Hamas said Netanyahu was looking for excuses to back away from Israel’s obligations.

Under the ceasefire terms, Hamas released all living hostages in return for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and wartime detainees, while Israel pulled back its troops and halted its offensive.

Search for hostage bodies

Hamas has also agreed to hand over the remains of all dead hostages yet to be recovered, but has said it will take time to locate and retrieve the bodies amid Gaza’s ruins. Israel says the militant group can access the remains of most of the hostages.

The issue has become one of the main sticking points in the ceasefire, which Trump says he is watching closely. He has touted the truce and hostage-prisoner exchange deal as one of the top foreign policy achievements of his second term, and he and his top aides have sought to keep the ceasefire intact.

The White House did not immedi-

SPORTS

EXTRA

WORLD SERIES BLUE JAYS 6, DODGERS 2 (SERIES TIED 2-2)



The Toronto Blue Jays' Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hits a two-run home run in the third inning of Game 4 of the World Series against the Dodgers on Oct. 28 in Los Angeles. RONALD MARTINEZ/GETTY IMAGES

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Will 1st CFP rankings expose preseason polls' bias?

Matt Hayes
USA TODAY NETWORK

We're a week from the first College Football Playoff poll, and the unmasking of the absurdity of preseason polls. And more important, their potential affect on the CFP.

It is here where the CFP selection committee, charged this offseason with putting more emphasis on good wins and good losses — not just wins — will get its first test.

Ohio State is on top of the US LBM Coaches Poll and the Associated Press poll, the two polls used for ranking teams until the first CFP poll.

And it has nothing to do with good wins.

The three teams with legitimate arguments for the No. 1 ranking — Ohio State, Indiana, Texas A&M — all have one win against a currently ranked team, and have handled the remainder of their schedules with relative east.

But all three wins against ranked teams are not equal.

Indiana went on the road and physically dominated Oregon, and Texas A&M went to South Bend and won in the closing seconds.

Ohio State, meanwhile, won a yawner of a home game against a Texas team that struggles to move the ball offensively against any Power conference school not named Mississippi State.

See CFP, Page 3NS



Indiana's Devan Boykin (12) and Louis Moore (7) celebrate after an interception against UCLA on Oct. 25. ROBERT GODDIN/IMAGN IMAGES

RAPID RECOVERY

Jays shake off marathon loss to pull even in Series

Doug Padilla
FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

LOS ANGELES – It was not so much the heartbreak that the resilient Toronto Blue Jays overcame on Tuesday, it was the actual pain.

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hit a two-run home run, Shane Bieber pitched into

the sixth inning and the Toronto Blue Jays got even in the World Series with a 6-2 victory over the Los Angeles Dodgers in Game 4.

Andres Gimenez, Bo Bichette and Addison Barger each had RBI singles in a four-run seventh inning as the Blue Jays moved past the agony of an 18-inning loss in Game 3 to guarantee a Game 6 at Toronto on Friday.

The Blue Jays powered through the physical demands after a 6-hour, 39-minute game one night earlier.

“What didn’t hurt?” said 29-year-old Toronto third baseman Ernie Clement, who had two hits and scored a run. “I barely got out of bed. ... But yeah, nobody felt sorry for themselves today. We got to play a World Series game.”

Shohei Ohtani pitched six-plus innings for the Dodgers in his first career World Series start and was charged with four runs on six hits and one walk with six strikeouts.

See GAME 4, Page 4NS

NFL WEEK 8 WINNERS AND LOSERS

Parity still reigns as trade deadline nears

Michael Middlehurst-Schwartz
USA TODAY

Week 8 in the NFL was short on drama but long on consequences.

Blowouts became a running theme of the week, with nine matchups decided by two touchdowns or more. But parity is still running strong throughout the league, with little clarity on just who will emerge as buyers or sellers ahead of next Tuesday's trade deadline.

And with just one week of games remaining until the regular season reaches its halfway point, several teams are still looking to build momentum for a late-season playoff push.

With all that in mind, here are the biggest winners and losers from Week 8 in the NFL:

Winners

Houston Texans offense: Maybe they need to switch to the H-Town threads for good.

Decked out in their distinctly cool alternate uniforms, the Texans looked markedly different in a 26-15 win over the San Francisco 49ers.

Employing a heavy dose of jumbo packages, the Texans were able to solve their protection problems and keep C.J. Stroud out of duress.

The result: A season-high 318 passing yards and an offense that kept possession of the ball for 24:31 in the first half, the highest mark of any team since 2009, according to Next Gen Stats.

See WEEK 8, Page 2NS



Texans quarterback C.J. Stroud reacts during the second half against the San Francisco 49ers on Oct. 26 in Houston. SEAN THOMAS/IMAGN IMAGES

NFL

NOTEBOOK

QB Daniels expected to return to practice

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Washington star quarterback Jayden Daniels, who missed the loss on Monday night to the Kansas City Chiefs because of a hamstring injury, is expected to practice in some capacity on Wednesday, Commanders coach Dan Quinn said on Tuesday.

“He had a good rehab session on Sunday,” Quinn said. “The team’s back out at practice (on Wednesday) and we plan on him being a part of that.”

Quinn said he had not met with the medical team prior to Tuesday’s press conference. He said he would have more details on Wednesday on Daniels, wide receiver Terry McLaurin, who aggravated his quad injury, and offensive tackle Laremy Tunsil, who exited the 28-7 road loss with a hamstring injury.

Daniels, 24, sustained the right hamstring strain in the third quarter of a 44-22 road loss to the Dallas Cowboys on Oct. 19. He also sat out two games earlier this season with a knee sprain sustained in Week 2 versus the Green Bay Packers.

The 2024 NFL Rookie of the Year, Daniels has thrown for 1,031 yards, eight touchdowns and one interception this season with 211 rushing yards and one rushing score.

Marcus Mariota relieved Daniels in the Cowboys game and has started in his place for three games, playing the entire way against the Las Vegas Raiders, Atlanta Falcons and Chiefs.

Mariota, who turns 32 on Thursday, has completed 56 of 88 passes (63.6%) for 639 yards, four touchdowns and four interceptions.

Steelers coach Tomlin sticking with embattled DC Austin

Head coach Mike Tomlin understands criticism directed at Steelers defensive coordinator Teryl Austin in the midst of a two-game losing streak during which the Bengals and Packers combined for 68 points and six touchdown passes.

The Steelers (4-3) are holding onto first place in the AFC North entering November but far off on Tomlin’s own pre-season expectations for a defense capable of “historic things.”

“I’ve known Teryl a long time,” Tomlin said on Tuesday. “He’s very capable.



Washington Commanders quarterback Jayden Daniels looks to pass against the Dallas Cowboys on Oct. 19 in Arlington, Texas. KEVIN JAIRAJ/IMAGN IMAGES

He’s very thorough. I’ve largely been pleased with his work, but certainly he and I are not pleased with where we are right now from a defensive unit perspective, and so we’re just going to keep working.”

Tomlin said replacing Austin as the down-to-down defensive playcaller is “not on the table as we sit here today,” but the NFL’s top-ranked offense is on the schedule Sunday. Indianapolis (7-1) would be the No. 1 seed in the AFC if the playoffs began this week and averages 33.8 points and 385.3 yards per game, both tops in the league.

Reports: Patriots trade S Dugger to Steelers, DE White to 49ers

The New England Patriots moved on from a pair of former defensive starters by trading safety Kyle Dugger to the Pittsburgh Steelers and defensive end Keion White to the San Francisco 49ers, according to multiple media reports.

Both swaps are framed the same: The Patriots are sending a seventh-round draft pick along with their former player while collecting a sixth-round choice in return.

Dugger and White had been starters under previous Pats head coaches Bill Belichick and Jerod Mayo, but their roles diminished for first-year coach

Mike Vrabel this season. White, 26, was a healthy scratch for the Patriots’ 32-13 victory against the visiting Cleveland Browns on Sunday.

Dugger joins a Steelers defense that just lost veteran safety DeShon Elliott to a hyperextended knee in Sunday night’s loss to the Green Bay Packers. Head coach Mike Tomlin said on Tuesday that Elliott is week-to-week, according to ESPN.

White’s new club, the 49ers, has amassed just nine sacks in eight games – only the Jacksonville Jaguars (eight in seven) have fewer. San Francisco has been trying to compete without five-time Pro Bowl edge rusher Nick Bosa, who sustained a season-ending torn right ACL in Week 3.

Report: Chiefs RB Pacheco (MCL sprain) week-to-week

Kansas City Chiefs running back Isiah Pacheco is considered week-to-week with an MCL sprain, NFL Network reported.

Pacheco sustained the injury during the fourth quarter of Kansas City’s 28-7 victory over the Washington Commanders on Monday.

He received a hard hit to his right knee on his final carry and limped off the field.

Pacheco, 26, has rushed for 329 yards with one touchdown in eight games this season. He also has 11 catches for 43 yards and a score.

Pacheco was limited to seven games last season after he fractured the fibula in his right leg in a Week 2 meeting with the Cincinnati Bengals.

With Pacheco sidelined this time, Kareem Hunt, Elijah Mitchell and Brashard Smith likely will see their respective workloads receive a bit of an uptick.

Saints make switch to start rookie QB Shough

The 1-7 Saints are handing the keys of the offense to rookie quarterback Tyler Shough.

New Orleans coach Kellen Moore informed Spencer Rattler and Shough of the change.

Shough replaced Rattler late in the third quarter of last weekend’s 23-3 home loss to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Shough will make his first start, with Rattler as his backup, when the Saints visit the Los Angeles Rams (5-2) on Sunday.

A second-round pick in April out of Louisville, Shough was selected 40th overall and competing for the starting job in training camp. Rattler was a fifth-rounder in 2024 out of South Carolina.

Shough, 26, completed 17 of 30 passes for 128 yards with an interception against the Buccaneers.

Rattler, 25, completed 68% of his passes for 1,586 yards, eight touchdowns and five picks in eight starts this season.

Patriots CB Jones signs contract extension

New England Patriots cornerback Marcus Jones signed a contract extension.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed, however NFL Network reported it was a three-year, \$36 million extension.

Jones, 27, has recorded 36 tackles, two interceptions and a sack in eight games (five starts) while playing on the final year of his rookie contract. He also returned a punt 87 yards for a touchdown in the Patriots’ 42-13 victory over the Carolina Panthers in Week 4.

Week 8

Continued from Page 1

Tua Tagovailoa: Added to the injury report Sunday with an illness, the Miami Dolphins quarterback said he woke up with his left eye swollen shut. He then fired off a season-high four touchdown passes to help Miami break a three-game losing streak with a 34-10 win over the Atlanta Falcons.

The sixth-year signal-caller said after the game he would be keeping the visor he donned, but that’s hardly the only thing he and the offense should be clinging onto. A heavier commitment to the run game helped the Dolphins keep the Falcons off balance, and nine different receivers got in on the action by recording at least one catch.

Aaron Glenn: Not many coaches have navigated a more difficult introduction to their first top job than Glenn, who seemed at a loss to account for his team’s repeated miscues through nearly the first two months of the season.

Yet with things seemingly continuing to build against him – owner Woody Johnson’s pointed criticism of Justin Fields this week only drove more drama, as did the team’s decision not to reveal its starter prior to the weekend – the leader of Gang Green finally scored a breakthrough with a 39-38 win against the Cincinnati Bengals.

Tucker Kraft: On an otherwise muted National Tight Ends Day, the Green Bay Packers’ third-year standout seized the spotlight in prime time.

Operating as the focal point of the Packers’ aerial attack, Kraft hauled in seven catches for 143 yards – tops among all players on Sunday – and two touchdowns. The former third-round pick from South Dakota State has blossomed from intriguing talent to a true go-to target.

James Cook III: Is it possible for a 216-yard, two-touchdown outing to feel like a light day? That’s how Cook’s performance came across, as the Buffalo Bills running back needed just 19 carries – none of them coming in the fourth



Browns edge rusher and NFL sacks co-leader Myles Garrett looks on during a loss to the Patriots on Oct. 26. MADDIE MEYER/GETTY IMAGES

quarter – to set a career high in his team’s 40-9 romp against the Carolina Panthers.

Tyler Huntley: Nothing is guaranteed in the life of a veteran fill-in quarterback, as Andy Dalton and Kirk Cousins can attest after trying days.

But when the Baltimore Ravens’ already tumultuous season threatened to career off a cliff as Lamar Jackson missed yet another game amid controversy, Huntley stepped in to secure a 30-16 win over the Chicago Bears that could prove critical to the team’s hopes of a midseason revival.

Losers

Atlanta Falcons: Can’t expect to break a seven-year playoff drought – tied for the second-longest active streak – with monthly faceplants like this. Between September’s 30-0 flop against the Panthers and Sunday’s drubbing by the Dolphins, Atlanta now owns two of the most bewildering performances of the early season.

Kirk Cousins once again proved not

up to the task of handling the offensive reins, failing to get much of anything going until garbage time. And for the second straight contest, Bijan Robinson and the ground game looked largely toothless.

Cincinnati Bengals: Heading into Sunday, the Bengals looked on the precipice of doing the unthinkable: creeping back into the playoff race thanks to an in-season trade for a 40-year-old quarterback. Simply handling the winless Jets would have put Cincinnati back at .500 with a favorable setup down the stretch.

Yet despite racking up 181 rushing yards and not turning the ball over, the Bengals couldn’t figure out a way to slow New York, particularly in a fourth quarter that saw them surrender 23 points.

New York Giants: Cam Skattebo’s gruesome ankle injury took a visible toll on the rookie running back’s teammates, and the New York Giants had legitimate reason to be upset with some key calls in a 38-20 loss to the Philadelphia Eagles.

Still, there’s no question that most of

Big Blue’s misery is a product of the team’s own doing. It came as no surprise that Saquon Barkley enjoyed a get-right game with a season-high 150 yards against his former team and a vulnerable run defense.

Dallas Cowboys’ defense: Leave it to Sean Payton to pull no punches in summing up his offense’s mentality when facing the league’s last-ranked defense.

“We wanted to keep them last,” said the Denver Broncos coach. That he and his charges did, as Bo Nix and Co. rolled to a 44-24 win that featured little resistance.

Nix threw four touchdown passes – with a fifth easily within reach, had it not been for a penalty and subsequent drop by Courtland Sutton – while taking zero sacks and just one hit.

Myles Garrett’s brilliance: The last image of Garrett’s day should have been him wrapping up Drake Maye on any one of the edge rusher’s five sacks. Instead, it might be the former NFL Defensive Player of the Year sitting alone at the end of the Cleveland Browns’ bench toward the culmination of a 32-13 loss to the New England Patriots.

Quite literally, Garrett has set himself apart from his peers since he entered the league, and he reinforced that Sunday by passing Hall of Famer Reggie White for the most sacks (112 ½) by any player before turning 30.

But the Browns’ continued inability to build in any form off Garrett’s record-setting performance creates an uncomfortable dissonance. Garrett slammed his helmet after being pulled by the Browns, and it’s understandable that he would feel frustration while bumping against the ceiling of just how much he can do for this franchise.

Dillon Gabriel: There’s no quarterback controversy in Cleveland, where coach Kevin Stefanski affirmed after Sunday’s rout that Gabriel would remain the starter coming out of the forthcoming bye.

But it’s getting harder to figure out the third-round rookie passer’s value when he’s coughing up interceptions, with two bad ones coming against the Patriots.

NBA

ROUNDUP

Maxey rallies Sixers to an OT victory

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Tyrese Maxey scored 23 of his 39 points in the fourth quarter and over-time as the visiting Philadelphia 76ers remained unbeaten after storming back from a 19-point third-quarter deficit to beat the Washington Wizards 139-134 on Tuesday.

Joel Embiid scored 25 points in 23 minutes for Philadelphia while Quentin Grimes scored 23, Kelly Oubre Jr. added 17 points and 11 rebounds and VJ Edgecombe scored 14. Maxey produced nine of the Sixers' 13 points in overtime.

Alex Sarr paced Washington with 31 points and 11 rebounds while Kyshawn George scored 20 points. Marvin Bagley III and CJ McCollum added 14 points apiece, Corey Kispert and Khris Middleton each scored 13 while Tre Johnson and Bub Carrington had 10 apiece.

Washington led 126-116 with 2:41 remaining in regulation before the Sixers capped a 17-4 run with 10 straight points to tie the game at 126-126 on Grimes' 3-pointer with 39 seconds left.

Washington's chance to win the game in regulation fell short when Middleton missed a jumper at the buzzer.

Thunder 107, Kings 101

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 31 to lead Oklahoma City to a home victory over Sacramento.

The Thunder remained undefeated, winning their fifth consecutive game to start the season.

Oklahoma City did it, on the second night of a back-to-back, without Chet Holmgren. Holmgren, who played a big role in Monday's win in Dallas, sat out the game with back soreness.

The Thunder cut the deficit to one early in the fourth on five consecutive points from Ajay Mitchell.

But the Kings quickly answered with a turnaround jumper from Malik Monk, then stretched the lead back to seven midway through the quarter.

Then Oklahoma City ripped off a 14-2 run to take control.

Gilgeous-Alexander had seven points and an assist during the final six minutes, to finish 14 of 26 from the floor with nine rebounds.

Aaron Wiggins and Mitchell finished with 18 points each in the win.

While Oklahoma City was without Holmgren, it did have Alex Caruso back for the first time since the opener.

Bucks 121, Knicks 111

Giannis Antetokounmpo continued his hot start by scoring 23 of his game-high 37 points in the second half, sparking Milwaukee's comeback from a double-digit deficit to a win over vis-



Philadelphia 76ers guard Tyrese Maxey (0) drives to the basket against Wizards guard CJ McCollum on Oct. 28 in Washington. GEOFF BURKE/IMAGN IMAGES

iting New York.

Antetokounmpo's layup with 5:31 left snapped a 103-103 tie, putting the Bucks ahead for good and kickstarting a game-ending 18-8 run as Milwaukee won for the third time in four contests.

Antetokounmpo added eight rebounds and seven assists – including six rebounds and six assists in the second half. He is averaging 36.3 points, 14 rebounds and seven assists per game this season.

Ryan Rollins scored a career-high 25 points while Gary Trent Jr. added 11 points for the Bucks, who trailed by 14 points in the second quarter and were down 71-59 at the half.

Jalen Brunson put up 36 points for the Knicks, who have lost two straight after opening the season 2-0. Brunson played the final 6:13 with an apparent right leg injury sustained as he tried lunging back for the ball after Rollins swatted it away from him.

Warriors 98, Clippers 79

Jimmy Butler III put up a game-high 21 points without shooting a free throw and Golden State, holding James Harden scoreless in the second half, blitzed Los Angeles in San Francisco.

On a night when the Clippers were called for just five fouls, the Warriors overcame a 3-for-4 night at the free throw line by burying 17 of 45 (37.8%) from beyond the arc.

With Harden scoring all 20 of his points, the Clippers overcame an early 15-point deficit to take a 49-46 halftime lead.

But Los Angeles, which had beaten the Warriors seven straight times, added just 30 points over the final 24 minutes as Golden State, harassing the vis-

itors into 16 turnovers, gradually pulled away.

The Clippers shot just 36.6% overall and 18.2% (6 of 33) on 3-point attempts en route to their lowest point total since scoring 79 against the Cleveland Cavaliers in October 2021. The Warriors finished at 45.3% from the field.

Butler, who had gotten to the foul line 42 times in Golden State's first four games, hit nine of his 12 shots overall and three of his four 3-point attempts.

Heat 144, Hornets 117

Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored a season-high 28 points off the bench to lead Miami to a win over visiting Charlotte.

Bam Adebayo added 26 points and Andrew Wiggins scored 21 for the Heat, who shot a clinical 54.2% from the field, 44.4% from 3-point range and 90.9% from the free-throw line.

Pelle Larsson scored a career-best 17 points after being promoted to the starting five following Norman Powell's late withdrawal due to a groin strain suffered at morning practice.

LaMelo Ball scored 15 of his 20 points in the first quarter. He finished with nine assists and eight rebounds, but was wayward, shooting 6-of-18 from the floor.

Kon Knueppel hit 5 of 11 threes and put up 19 points, while Collin Sexton had 18 points and Miles Bridges chipped in 17.

Ball missed his last eight 3-point attempts after getting off to a fast start, knocking down his first four from downtown in the first quarter.

But the Heat took the momentum and a 37-34 lead into the first break thanks to their 18-0 advantage in bench production.

BOX SCORES

Oklahoma City 107, Sacramento 101
SACRAMENTO (101)
DeRozan 7-14 5-6 19, LaVine 6-13 7-7 23, Sabonis 5-15 0-0 10, Schroder 4-9 0-0 8, Westbrook 6-16 0-0 16, Ellis 4-10 2-2 12, Monk 3-7 3-4 9, Eubanks 0-0 0-0 0, Carter 1-1 2-2 4. Totals 36-85 19-21 101.

OKLAHOMA CITY (107)
Dort 4-9 4-4 13, Wiggins 7-15 0-0 18, Hartenstein 2-3 0-1 4, Gilgeous-Alexander 14-26 2-2 31, Wallace 3-9 0-0 8, Caruso 2-5 2-2 8, Mitchell 7-15 1-1 18, Williams 1-6 0-0 3, Barnhizer 1-3 0-0 2, Carlson 1-1 0-0 2, Youngblood 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 42-92 9-10 107.
SAC 29 33 21 18 – 101
OKC 24 34 22 27 – 107
3-Point Goals: Sacramento 10-29 (LaVine 4-6, Westbrook 4-8, Ellis 2-5, DeRozan 0-2, Sabonis 0-2, Schroder 0-3, Monk 0-3), Oklahoma City 14-44 (Wiggins 4-10, Mitchell 3-7, Caruso 2-5, Wallace 2-5, Gilgeous-Alexander 1-5, Dort 1-6, Williams 1-6). Fouled Out: None. Rebounds: Sacramento 46 (Sabonis 18), Oklahoma City 44 (Hartenstein 14). Assists: Sacramento 21 (Monk, Westbrook 4), Oklahoma City 26 (Wiggins 6). Total Fouls: Sacramento 16, Oklahoma City 19. A: 18,203 (18,203)

Miami 144, Charlotte 117
CHARLOTTE (117)
Bridges 6-16 3-4 17, Knueppel 7-15 0-0 19, Kalkbrenner 5-5 0-0 10, Ball 6-18 4-5 20, Sexton 7-11 2-2 18, Mann 3-15 0-0 8, James 2-2 2-2 8, Diabate 3-4 2-2 8, Salaun 0-3 3-4 3, McNeeley 1-1 3-4 6. Totals 40-90 19-23 117.

MIAMI (144)
Adebayo 10-16 3-4 26, Wiggins 8-15 2-2 21, Ware 4-13 4-5 14, Larsson 6-10 2-2 17, Mitchell 4-10 0-0 8, Jaquez Jr. 9-14 8-8 28, Jovic 4-7 0-0 10, Fontecchio 3-5 1-1 10, Smith 2-3 0-0 5, Young 0-0 0-0 0, Johnson 1-2 0-0 2, Gardner 1-1 0-0 3. Totals 52-96 20-22 144.
CHA 34 26 28 29 – 117
MIA 37 39 29 39 – 144
3-Point Goals: Charlotte 18-46 (Knueppel 5-11, Ball 4-12, Sexton 2-2, James 2-2, Bridges 2-8, Mann 2-8, McNeeley 1-1, Salaun 0-2), Miami 20-45 (Fontecchio 3-4, Adebayo 3-5, Wiggins 3-6, Larsson 3-6, Jaquez Jr. 2-4, Jovic 2-4, Ware 2-8, Gardner 1-1, Smith 1-2, Mitchell 0-5). Fouled Out: None. Rebounds: Charlotte 41 (Ball 8), Miami 37 (Ware 9). Assists: Charlotte 26 (Ball 9), Miami 34 (Mitchell 9). Total Fouls: Charlotte 18, Miami 16. A: 19,600 (19,600)

Philadelphia 139, Washington 134 (OT)
PHILADELPHIA (139)
Edwards 1-3 0-0 3, Oubre Jr. 5-13 4-5 17, Embiid 9-17 4-6 25, Edgecombe 4-12 2-2 14, Maxey 11-25 14-16 39, Grimes 7-17 6-6 23, Watford 1-3 0-0 2, Bona 1-3 0-0 2, Drummond 3-4 0-0 6, Walker 3-3 2-2 8, Gordon 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 45-100 32-37 139.

WASHINGTON (134)
George 8-17 0-2 20, Middleton 4-11 4-4 13, Sarr 13-23 2-2 31, Carrington 3-6 2-2 10, McCollum 4-14 4-4 14, Johnson 4-11 0-0 10, Kispert 5-11 1-3 13, Bagley III 6-7 2-4 14, Whitmore 4-7 0-0 9. Totals 51-107 15-21 134.
PHI 32 36 26 32 13 – 139
WAS 40 32 38 16 8 – 134
3-Point Goals: Philadelphia 17-42 (Edgecombe 4-8, Oubre Jr. 3-5, Embiid 3-6, Maxey 3-9, Grimes 3-10, Edwards 1-3, Watford 0-1), Washington 17-43 (George 4-7, Sarr 3-7, Carrington 2-3, McCollum 2-6, Johnson 2-7, Kispert 2-8, Whitmore 1-2, Middleton 1-3). Fouled Out: None. Rebounds: Philadelphia 55 (Oubre Jr. 11), Washington 50 (Sarr 11). Assists: Philadelphia 26 (Maxey 10), Washington 33 (George, McCollum 7). Total Fouls: Philadelphia 21, Washington 30. A: 15,529 (20,308)

Milwaukee 121, New York 111
NEW YORK (111)
Anunoby 3-11 2-3 9, Bridges 8-16 5-5 24, Towns 2-12 4-4 8, Brunson 14-25 7-9 36, Shamet 5-11 2-2 16, Hart 1-5 0-0 3, Clarkson 4-7 0-0 10, Hukporti 0-0 0-0 0, Kolek 2-5 0-0 5, Diawara 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 39-92 20-23 111.

MILWAUKEE (121)
Antetokounmpo 16-22 5-7 37, Trent Jr. 4-9 1-1 11, Turner 1-6 2-2 5, Green 3-5 0-0 9, Rollins 8-11 5-5 25, Anthony 2-6 0-0 4, Prince 3-4 0-0 8, Kuzma 0-2 5-6 5, Portis 4-10 0-0 9, Coffey 2-3 3-3 8. Totals 43-78 21-24 121.
NYK 26 45 20 20 – 111
MIL 27 32 35 27 – 121
3-Point Goals: New York 13-40 (Shamet 4-9, Bridges 3-7, Clarkson 2-3, Kolek 1-3, Hart 1-4, Brunson 1-5, Anunoby 1-6, Towns 0-3), Milwaukee 14-33 (Rollins 4-4, Green 3-5, Prince 2-3, Trent Jr. 2-5, Coffey 1-2, Portis 1-4, Turner 1-5, Antetokounmpo 0-1, Kuzma 0-1, Anthony 0-3). Fouled Out: None. Rebounds: New York 44 (Towns 12), Milwaukee 38 (Antetokounmpo, Turner 8). Assists: New York 23 (Bridges 6), Milwaukee 27 (Anthony 9). Total Fouls: New York 21, Milwaukee 21. A: 16,309 (17,500)

Golden State 98, L.A. Clippers 79
L.A. CLIPPERS (79)
Zubac 7-12 0-0 14, Dunn 2-6 0-0 5, Collins 2-6 1-2 5, Batum 1-4 0-0 3, Lopez 1-6 1-2 3, Paul 0-2 0-0 0, Brown 1-10 0-2, Christie 1-2 1-2 4, Niederhauser 0-0 0-0 0, Telfort 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 30-82 13-16 79.

GOLDEN STATE (98)
Post 4-9 0-0 12, Podziemski 5-10 0-0 12, Moody 3-9 0-0 9, Horford 1-5 0-0 2, Hield 1-2 0-0 2, Richard 2-3 0-0 5, Santos 0-2 0-0 0, Payton II 0-0 0-0 0, Jackson-Davis 0-0 0-0 0, Spencer 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 39-85 3-4 98.
LAC 25 24 14 16 – 79
GSW 33 13 32 20 – 98
3-Point Goals: L.A. Clippers 6-33 (Dunn 1-2, Christie 1-2, Leonard 1-4, Batum 1-4, Harden 1-5, Jones Jr. 1-6, Paul 0-1, Collins 0-2, Bogdanovic 0-3, Lopez 0-4), Golden State 17-45 (Post 4-7, Butler 3-4, Moody 3-7, Podziemski 2-6, Curry 2-8, Kuminga 1-2, Richard 1-2, Green 1-3, Hield 0-1, Santos 0-2, Horford 0-3). Fouled Out: None. Rebounds: L.A. Clippers 47 (Zubac 13), Golden State 42 (Post 8). Assists: L.A. Clippers 10 (Niederhauser, Paul 2), Golden State 24 (Curry 8). Total Fouls: L.A. Clippers 5, Golden State 15. A: 0 (18,064)

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

CFP

Continued from Page 1

Ohio State and Indiana have one common opponent: Illinois. The Hoosiers won by 53 in Bloomington, Ind., and the Buckeyes won by 18 on the road.

Then there's Texas A&M, a hot team with the big win of the moment (at LSU). But a bye week before the first CFP poll allows Ohio State (vs. Penn State) and Indiana (at Maryland) to make statements, and influence the selection committee.

Or the committee will punt and select the No. 1 team in the coaches and media polls — which they've done a majority of the time with their initial poll since the first CFP in 2014.

A look at this week's CFP projections.

1. Indiana: Three of the final four games are away from Bloomington, so if someone is going to upset the Hoosiers, this is the month. Next: at Maryland.

2. Ohio State: This team hasn't been threatened all season by any semblance of an offense. And won't until the Big Ten championship game. Next: Penn State.

3. Texas A&M: If we're being intellectually honest, the schedule isn't what it first appeared to be (avoiding Georgia and Alabama). Aggies will cruise to 12-0. Next: Bye week.

4. Alabama: A year after a whole lot of ugly on the road in the SEC, the ugly is still there. But now it comes with wins.



Ohio State quarterback Julian Sayin throws a pass against Wisconsin on Oct. 18 in Madison, Wisconsin. MARK HOFFMAN/MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Next: Bye week.

5. Georgia: Dawgs are measured against championship Georgia teams of recent past. That's a losing proposition in every way imaginable. Next: Florida (Jacksonville, Fla.)

6. Ole Miss: Huge statement win at Oklahoma. Rebels should win out and finish 11-1, and still may not play in SEC championship game. Next: South Caro-

lina.

7. Oregon: Considered a lock for the CFP, Ducks still have plenty of heavy lifting remaining. Next: Bye week.

8. Miami: The biggest question in Coral Gables: Can the Canes stay motivated over the final month of the season against overmatched ACC? Next: at SMU.

9. Vanderbilt: It's all new territory

Projected CFP bracket

First-round byes

● Indiana, Ohio State, Texas A&M, Alabama.

First-round games

- (12) South Florida at (5) Georgia
- (11) Texas Tech at Ole Miss (6)
- (10) Georgia Tech at Oregon (7)
- (9) Vanderbilt at Miami (8)

for this program. Every week is the next step into the unknown, yet the Commodores keep stacking wins. Next: at Texas.

10. Georgia Tech: QB Haynes King is getting stronger as November arrives, and there's a dangerous trap game against a team (and coach) desperate for a win staring back. Next: at NC State.

11. Texas Tech: Biggest two-game stretch of the season for Red Raiders. Will stout defense have an answer for surging K-State QB Avery Johnson (12 TDs in past four games)? Next: at Kansas State.

12. South Florida: Blew a two-touchdown lead at Memphis. Will get one more shot to win there (and likely earn a CFP spot) in the AAC championship game. Next: Bye week.

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