

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 1 of 92

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [1- Vender Fair Ad](#)
- [1- Bates Township Equalization Meeting Notice](#)
- [1- Truss Pros Help Wanted](#)
- [2- State A Tournament Coverage](#)
- [13- Foggy morning](#)
- [14- Weather Pages](#)
- [18- Daily Devotional](#)
- [19- 2022 Community Events](#)
- [20- Subscription Form](#)
- [21- News from the Associated Press](#)



“YOUR BODY CANNOT HEAL WITHOUT PLAY.
YOUR MIND CANNOT HEAL WITHOUT LAUGHTER.
YOUR SOUL CANNOT HEAL WITHOUT JOY.”

-Catherine Rippenger Fenwick

Friday, March 18

State A Tournament in Rapid City: Groton takes on Sioux Falls Christian at noon (1 p.m. Central time).
Spring Break - No School

Saturday, March 19

State A Tournament in Rapid City
Mitchell Show Choir Competition

Sunday, March 20

5 p.m.: Welcome Home Celebration in the Arena

Vender Fair

A vendor fair has been organized in Groton for March 26, 2022, at the Groton Community Center, from 10 am. – 3 p.m. A variety of crafters and vendors will be available. Proceeds from an auction table will be donated to Make-a-Wish Foundation.

Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

Bates Township Equalization Meeting Notice:

The Bates Township Board of Equalization will meet at the Clerk's home on Tuesday, March 22nd, 2022 at 6:30 pm.

All persons disputing their assessments are requested to notify the clerk prior to the meeting.

Betty Geist

Bates Township Clerk

14523 409th Ave

Conde, SD 57434

Truss Pros Help Wanted

Truss Pros in Britton is looking to hire a CDL driver to deliver trusses in the tri-state area. Home every night. Competitive wage! Full benefit package!

To apply call 605-277-4937 or go to www.uslbm.com/careers and search for jobs in Britton, SD.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

© 2022 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 2 of 92

Flandreau pulls away from Groton Area in second half

Flandreau put two players in double figures as the Fliers pulled away with a 50-36 win in the first round of the State A Basketball Tournament. The tournament is being played at Summit Arena at The Monument in Rapid City. While this is the first time in 21 years that Groton Area is at the state tournament, this is the first state tournament for Coach Brian Dolan. But Dolan said, "It's all about the kids."

Flandreau took a 6-0 lead before Jayden Zak hit a three-pointer to get the Tigers on the scoreboard. Tate Larson and Kaden Kurtz had back-to-back baskets as Groton Area tied the game at six. The game was tied at eight before the Fliers took a 13-8 lead. It was 15-10, Flandreau, after the first quarter.

The Fliers kept the upper hand in the second quarter and upped its advantage to 10 at half time, 27-17.

In the first half, Groton Area made five of 14 two-pointers, two of five three-pointers, made five of eight free throws, had eight rebounds and eight turnovers. Flandreau made 13 of 23 two-pointers, missed two three-pointers, made one of two free throws, had 11 rebounds and five turnovers.

Flandreau opened up a 15-point lead with 1:14 left in the third quarter, but the Tigers sliced it down to nine at the break, 38-27.

Jacob Zak took advantage of three Flandreau turnovers in the second half and power in seven points off of those turnovers. Groton Area had the lead sliced down to eight, 40-32, but Flandreau would keep scoring on the other end and finished with a 50-36 win.

In the second half, Groton Area made nine of 20 two-pointers, one of eight three-pointers, did not attempt any free throws, had 10 rebounds and six turnovers. Flandreau made eight of 18 two-pointers, one of three three-pointers, six of eight free throws, had 13 rebounds and six turnovers.

Jacob Zak led the Tigers with 12 points while Jayden Zak had eight, Kaden Kurtz and Tate Larson each had six and Wyatt Hearnen had four points.


Tash Sunday led the Fliers with 23 points while Chase LeBrun had 12, Liam Street eight, Alex Anderson three and Paul Parsley and Luke Sheppard each had two points.

Coach Brian Dolan said after the game, "Obviously disappointed in how today ended up. Their size was just a little too much for us to overcome, but I thought our kids played their hearts out and we had tremendous effort. Flandreau did a nice job making it hard for us to get going on the offensive end, but we also missed a few really good opportunities at crucial times of the game. Flandreau has a good basketball team and we wish the best of luck tomorrow vs Dakota Valley, now it's time for us to get ready to play Sioux Falls Christian and give the same effort we have been giving all year again tomorrow."


Groton Area will play Sioux Falls Christian in the consolation round on Friday with the game starting at noon, Mountain Time. That will be followed by Winner taking on Lakota Tech. In the championship bracket, Dakota Valley takes on Flandreau and St. Thomas More takes on Sioux Valley.

Dakota Valley edged out Sioux Falls Christian in the first game, 62-56 in a game that had 10 lead changes and was tied five times. In the evening bracket, Sioux Valley defeated Winner, 58-54, and St. Thomas More defeated Lakota Tech, 63-53. In the evening bracket, Sioux Valley defeated Winner, 58-54, and St. Thomas More defeated Lakota Tech, 63-53.

- Paul Kosel



Allied Climate Professionals
Heating & Cooling
Installations & Services

 YORK
It's time to get comfortable.

Call Service Professional
Kevin Nehls at **605/626-6522**



BAHR
BRIAN BAHR

SPRAY FOAM

Your area spray foam expert.

If you are planning to build a new home, shop or addition, make sure you use spray foam for your insulating needs. Bahr Spray Foam is certified for both open and closed cell and spray foam and will cut the costs of your heating and cooling bills. And did you know that spray foam can raise concrete too?! Call/Text Brian at 605-380-2931 for information about spray foam.

Cell: 605-380-2931
bahrsprayfoam.net  Bahr Spray Foam



HARR
Motors



When you're in the market for a new or used vehicle, contact your FAVORITE Sales Person!

Bary Keith
Sales



(605)216-6952
www.harrmotors.com

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 3 of 92



Jayden Zak
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Fans dressed up for St. Patrick's Day.
(Photo by Paul Kosel)





Base Kamp Lodge
30 N. Main St.
Groton



Cassels House Inn & Events
501 N. 3rd St
Groton

basekamplodgesd.com

Call us for a reservation.
605-377-0192 or 605-377-0225



PIONEER
Pioneer Seed

Crop Protection Products
Starter Fertilizer
Farm/Home Chemical and Fertilizer



Joel Bierman
605/290-0786
Jordan Steen
605/377-4210

Downtown Groton



Becky Kotzer,
Owner
605-216-8894
www.bkcustomsd.com



 BK Custom T's & More

Custom Apparel Personalized Gifts Fundraising Opportunities

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 4 of 92



The Larson family.
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Wyatt Hearnen
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Cole Simon
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

BLOCKER CONSTRUCTION LLC Perry Blocker
New Construction
Remodeling
Hoop Barns
Shops

605/216-2677

DB BEST OF LUCK GROTON TIGERS!

GO WITH **TEAMWORK.**

DACOTA BANK

dacotahbank.com

New Sauced & Tossed **Parmesan Garlic** Chicken Strip Basket \$19.99 4-Piece

Also available Sauced & Tossed **Parmesan Garlic** Rotisserie-style Chicken Bites Basket \$7.99 Regular

This Special only available through the month of March

DQ Grill & Chill
US 12, Groton

Groton Daily Independent

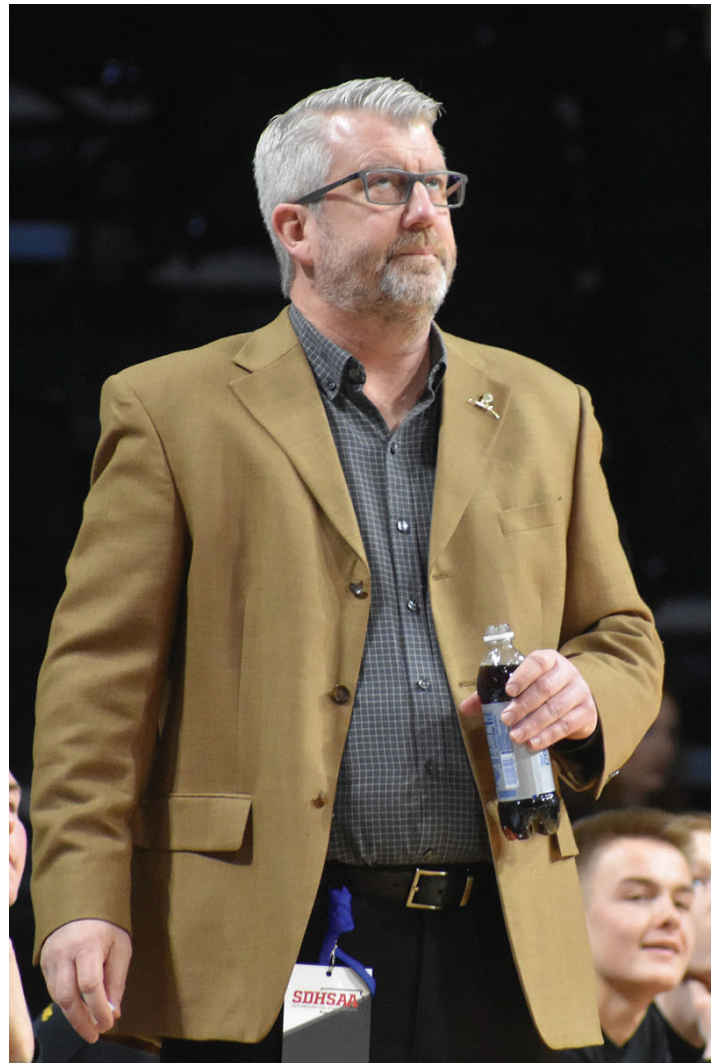
Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 5 of 92



Jacob Zak
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Lane Tietz steals the ball.
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Coach Brian Dolan and his Pepsi.
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

**Doug Abeln
Seed Company**
40344 134th St, Groton, SD
Call Doug at 605/380-0200
www.abelnseed.com

Latham HI-TECH SEEDS **BECK'S** **ROB-SEE-CO**

Fire Safety First

Request your
fire extinguisher
inspection today!
Call us before you
need us!
(605) 229-2270
413 N Congress St, Aberdeen
www.firesafetyfirstsd.com
firesafetyfirstllc@gmail.com

FSS **Fliehs
Sales &
Service**

Providing sales and service for
lawnmowers in NE South Dakota

- *New Lawnmower Sales
- *Used Lawnmower Sales
- *Replacement Parts
- *Service Work
- *Warranty Work
- *Pick-Up & Delivery

Family owned and operated since 1978
605/294-5228 ~ www.fliehssales.com

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 6 of 92



The Groton Area cheerleaders cheering on as the starters are introduced.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



AGRONOMY • ENERGY • FEED • GRAIN • CONSULTING

Britton, Hecla, Pierpont,
Doland, Groton, Forman,
Gwinner and Wilmot

www.fullcircleag.com
(800) 927-2131



★ Grant for ★
★ Groton City Mayor ★

Vote April 12th, 7am-7pm
at
The Groton Community Center

★ Count on Integrity ★

Paid for by Aaron Grant on his own behalf

Residential ~ Ag & Commercial
General Contractor
New Construction and Remodeling
Concrete Work

Greg Johnson
Construction, Inc.

Greg Johnson, Owner

Business: 605/492-3143

Cell: 605/216-3143

Bristol, SD

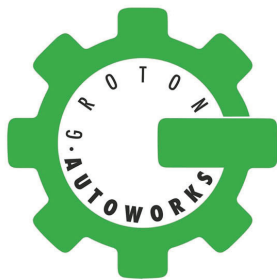
Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 7 of 92



The Tigers wait to get on the court.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Full service shop. We do most everything automotive here along with in-house and mobile window installation and repair.

 Groton Autoworks

(605) 290-0492

235 East Railroad Ave Unit 2, Groton

GROTON
Chamber Of Commerce

We are proud of the Groton Area Tigers!

PROUD TO BE LOCAL
BUY LOCAL · SUPPORT LOCAL



Check out upcoming events at . .
www.grotonchamber.com

 Groton Chamber

Groton Chiropractic Clinic



Carol McFarland-Kutter, D.C.
1205 N 1st St., Groton
605/397-8204

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 8 of 92



Wyatt Hearnen drew this foul and made two free throws to make it 21-15, Flandreau.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



The Tigers stole the inbound pass to start the second half and Jacob Zak had an easy layup to make it 27-19, Flandreau.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton Golf Cars
Sales & Service
Steve Dunker
605-397-7938



Club Car



Groton American Legion Post #39

A proud supporter of Groton Baseball and other events and activities in Groton!

Lounge: 397-2603
Downtown Groton

 Groton Legion

GROTON VET CLINIC

Groton Vet Clinic is a mixed animal veterinary practice

1503 N Broadway, Groton
605/397-8145

 Groton Veterinary Clinic

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 9 of 92



Kaden Kurtz
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Tate Larson
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

Hanlon Brothers
Gravel Hauling
Manure Hauling




New & Cleaning of
Stockdams with our
60' reach trackhoe




605/395-6531

your
VOTE
counts



Re-Elect
Scott Hanlon
for Groton City Mayor



I enjoy visiting with others and trying
to keep an open mind. By working
together, we have created a great town
to live in.

Paid for by Scott Hanlon on his own behalf.

HARRY'S
IMPLEMENT

Family Owned & Operated Since 1935

Ferney ~ 605/395-6421
www.harrysinc.com

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 10 of 92



The Cheerleaders putting in some extra practice as their advisors Jasmine Schinkel and Aubray Harry watch.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

Good luck
GROTON
TIGERS!

from your #PublicPower provider

JAMES VALLEY
TELECOMMUNICATIONS

INTERNET TV MOBILE TELEPHONE

JOHN SIEH
AGENCY

for our way of life

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT NOW!
605-229-1760

jsains.com
Aberdeen (800) 658-3653
Ipswich (800) 532-0457

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 11 of 92

Date: 3/17/2022
Time: 1:45 pm

Arena: Summit Arena
City, State: Rapid City, SD

VISITOR: Groton (20-3)

NO	PLAYER	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT		FTA		REBOUNDS			PF	TP	A	TO	BK	S	MIN
		P	FG	FGA	FG	FGA	FT	FTA	OFF	DEF	TOT								
3	Zak, Jayden	*	3	4	2	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	8	2	1	1	0	32:00
10	Tietz, Lane	*	0	4	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	3	3	0	0	31:04	
20	Kurtz, Kaden	*	3	7	0	3	0	0	0	2	2	2	6	0	4	0	0	29:38	
22	Zak, Jacob	*	5	9	1	2	1	2	1	3	4	3	12	3	4	0	3	26:18	
40	Larson, Tate	*	2	5	0	0	2	4	0	5	5	2	6	0	2	0	0	29:12	
4	Hearnen, Wyatt		1	5	0	2	2	2	0	2	2	1	4	0	0	0	1	10:29	
11	Simon, Cole		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1:19	
TEAM REBOUNDS										0	2	2	0						
Team Totals			14	34	3	13	5	8	1	17	18	11	36	9	14	1	4	160	

Total FG% - 1st: 5/14 0.357 2nd: 9/20 0.450 Game: 0.412 Deadball
3-PT FG% - 1st: 2/5 0.400 2nd: 1/8 0.125 Game: 0.231 Rebounds
Total FT% - 1st: 5/8 0.625 2nd: 0/0 0.000 Game: 0.625 (3,1)

HOME: Flandreau (19-3)

NO	PLAYER	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT		FTA		REBOUNDS			PF	TP	A	TO	BK	S	MIN
		P	FG	FGA	FG	FGA	FT	FTA	OFF	DEF	TOT								
10	LeBrun, Chase	F	4	12	0	3	4	5	0	2	2	4	12	1	2	2	1	26:35	
30	Lunday, Tash	F	10	18	1	2	2	3	3	7	10	3	23	2	4	0	3	31:28	
2	Parsley, Paul	G	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	1	2	1	0	0	1	27:44	
20	Streitz, Liam	G	4	6	0	0	0	0	2	2	4	1	8	1	0	0	1	31:17	
24	Anderson, Alex	G	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	2	2	1	3	1	5	0	2	25:35	
14	LeBrun, Maverick		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0:32	
22	Sheppard, Luke		1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	16:49	
TEAM REBOUNDS										0	0	0	0						
Team Totals			21	41	1	5	7	10	5	19	24	10	50	8	11	2	8	160	

Total FG% - 1st: 13/23 0.565 2nd: 8/18 0.444 Game: 0.512 Deadball
3-PT FG% - 1st: 0/2 0.000 2nd: 1/3 0.333 Game: 0.200 Rebounds
Total FT% - 1st: 1/2 0.500 2nd: 6/8 0.750 Game: 0.700 (0,0)

Technical Fouls: Gro (0)
: Flan (0)

OFFICIALS :
ATTENDANCE : 0

SCORE BY PERIODS	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	TOTAL
Groton	10	7	10	9	36
Flandreau	15	12	11	12	50

Last FG: Groton 4th- 2:18, Flandreau 4th- 0:34
Largest lead: Groton NONE, Flandreau by 15 3rd- 1:14
Score tied: 2 times, Lead changed: 0 times

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 12 of 92



The following wish the Tigers good luck at state and are sponsoring the coverage in the Groton Daily Independent and Groton Independent:

Allied Climate Professionals/
Kevin Nehls
Bahr Spray Foam
Bary Keith at Harr Motors
Base Kamp Lodge and Cassels
House Inn & Events
Bierman Farm Service
BK Custom T's and More
Blocker Construction
Dacotah Bank
Doug Abeln Seed Company
Fire Safety
Flihs Sales & Service
Full Circle Ag
GDI
Grant for Groton City Mayor

Greg Johnson Construction
Groton Autoworks
Groton Chamber of Commerce
Groton Chiropractic Clinic
Groton Dairy Queen
Groton Ford
Groton Golf Cars
Groton Legion Post #39
Groton Vet Clinic
Hanlon Brothers
Hanlon for Mayor
Harry Implement
Heartland Consumers Power District
J.Simon Photography
James Valley Telecommunications
John Sieh Agency
Jungle Lanes & Lounge
KR Body Shop, Andover
Krueger Brothers
Locke Electric
Lori's Pharmacy
Love To Travel / Becah Flihs

Marty Weismantel Agency
Matt's Tree Service
Mike-N-Jo's Body-N-Glass
Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.
MJ's Sinclair
ML Realty
Northeast Chiropractic Clinic
Northern Electric
Olive Grove
Poet
Professional Management
Services
Ryan Likness Agency
S&S Lumber
Schultz Construction
Spanier Trucking & Harvesting
Subway of Groton
Thunder Seed with John
Sheeting
TreeLine Tree Service/Sperry
Stump
Weber Landscaping

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 13 of 92

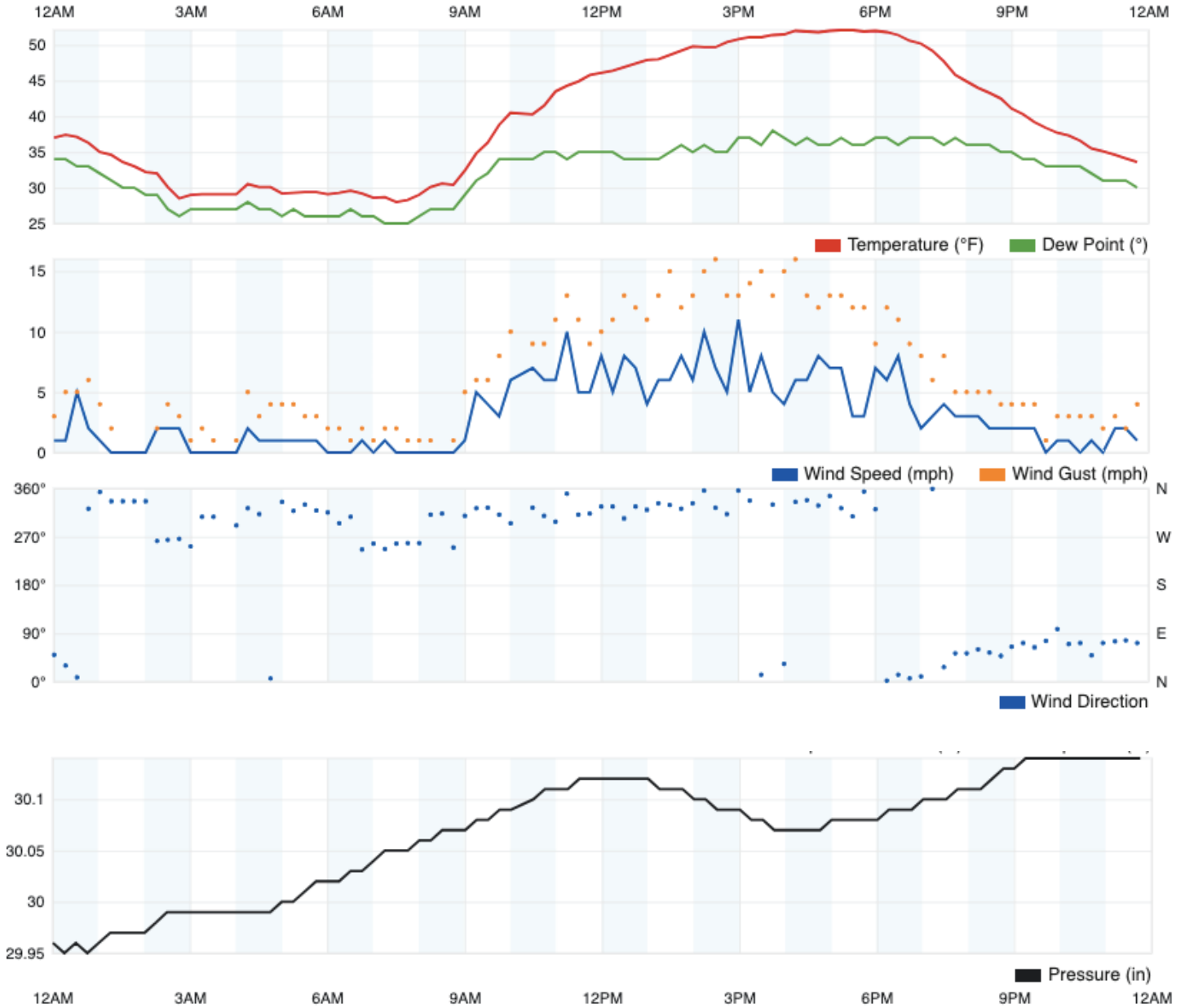


Fog set in this morning with the melting of the snow and the warm temperatures. (Photo by Tina Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 14 of 92

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 15 of 92

Today



Areas Freezing Fog and Patchy Fog then Sunny

High: 56 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 29 °F

Saturday



Sunny

High: 61 °F

Saturday Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 31 °F

Sunday



Mostly Sunny then Mostly Cloudy and Breezy

High: 65 °F

**Mild & Dry
This Weekend**



Today:
*Highs 40s east, near
60° west*

Saturday:
*Highs near 50°
East, 60s west*

Sunday:
*Highs 50s east,
Near 70° south*



Updated 2:45 AM CDT NWS Aberdeen SD

Mild and dry conditions are anticipated for the weekend. #sdwx #mnwx

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 16 of 92

Today in Weather History

March 18, 1982: Northern Lawrence and Southwest Butte Counties experienced strong winds during the afternoon of March 18, 1982. Winds gusting to 70mph in Spearfish and Belle Fourche areas overturned a trailer house near Belle Fourche. No injuries were reported.

March 18, 2013: An area of low pressure moving across the region brought widespread accumulating snowfall along with powerful northwest winds to northeast South Dakota. Snowfall amounts from 1 to 4 inches along with sustained winds of 25 to 35 mph with gusts up to near 60 mph caused widespread blizzard conditions. Travel was disrupted or halted. Some businesses and schools were also closed. Some snowfall amounts included; 1 inch at Sisseton; 2 inches south of Bristol and at Bowdle; 3 inches near Big Stone City; and 4 inches at Summit. The highest wind gust was 58 mph at Aberdeen and near Summit. The snowfall began between 5 and 7 pm on the 17th and ended between 5 and 9 pm on the 18th.

March 18, 2014: A low-pressure surface area moving off to the east brought some heavy snow into far eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. A narrow band of heavy snow set up across this area bringing from 6 to 11 inches of snow.

1925: The great "Tri-State Tornado" occurred, the deadliest tornado in U.S. history. The storm claimed 695 lives (including 234 at Murphysboro, IL, and 148 at West Frankfort, IL), and caused seventeen million dollars property damage. It cut a swath of destruction 219 miles long and as much as a mile wide from east-central Missouri to southern Indiana between 1 PM and 4 PM. The tornado leveled a school in West Frankfort, Illinois, and picked up sixteen students setting them down unharmed 150 yards away. Seven other tornadoes claimed an additional 97 lives that day.

1952: 151.73 inches of rain fell at Cilaos, La Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean over five days (13th-18th) to set the world rainfall record. This record was broken on February 24th-28th, 2007, when Commerce La Reunion Island picked up 196.06 inches.

1971 - High winds accompanied a low pressure system from the Rocky Mountains to the Great Lakes. Winds gusted to 100 mph at Hastings NE, and reached 115 mph at Hays KS. High winds caused two million dollars damage in Kansas. Fire burned 50,000 forest acres in eastern Oklahoma. (17th-19th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A storm in the central U.S. produced up to 10 inches of snow in western Nebraska, and up to six inches of rain in eastern sections of the state. The heavy rains pushed the Elkhorn River out of its banks, submerging the streets of Inman under three feet of water. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Light rain and snow prevailed east of the Mississippi River. Fair weather prevailed west of the Mississippi. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A storm in the western U.S. produced heavy rain in California, with heavy snow in the Sierra Nevada Range. Venado CA was drenched with 5.40 inches of rain in 24 hours. A dozen cities in the eastern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date, including Baltimore MD with a reading of 82 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Heavy rain caused extensive flooding of rivers and streams in Georgia, with total damage running well into the millions. Flooding also claimed six lives. Nearly seven inches of rain caused 2.5 million dollars damage around Columbus, and up to nine inches of rain was reported over the northern Kinchafoonee Basin in Georgia. (Storm Data)

1990: An intense hailstorm struck the Sydney region in Australia, producing strong winds and torrential rains in a swath from Camden to Narrabeen, causing extensive damage. Hailstones were measured up to 3 inches in diameter. The total insured cost was estimated at \$319 million, the third-largest loss event in Australian insurance history.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 17 of 92

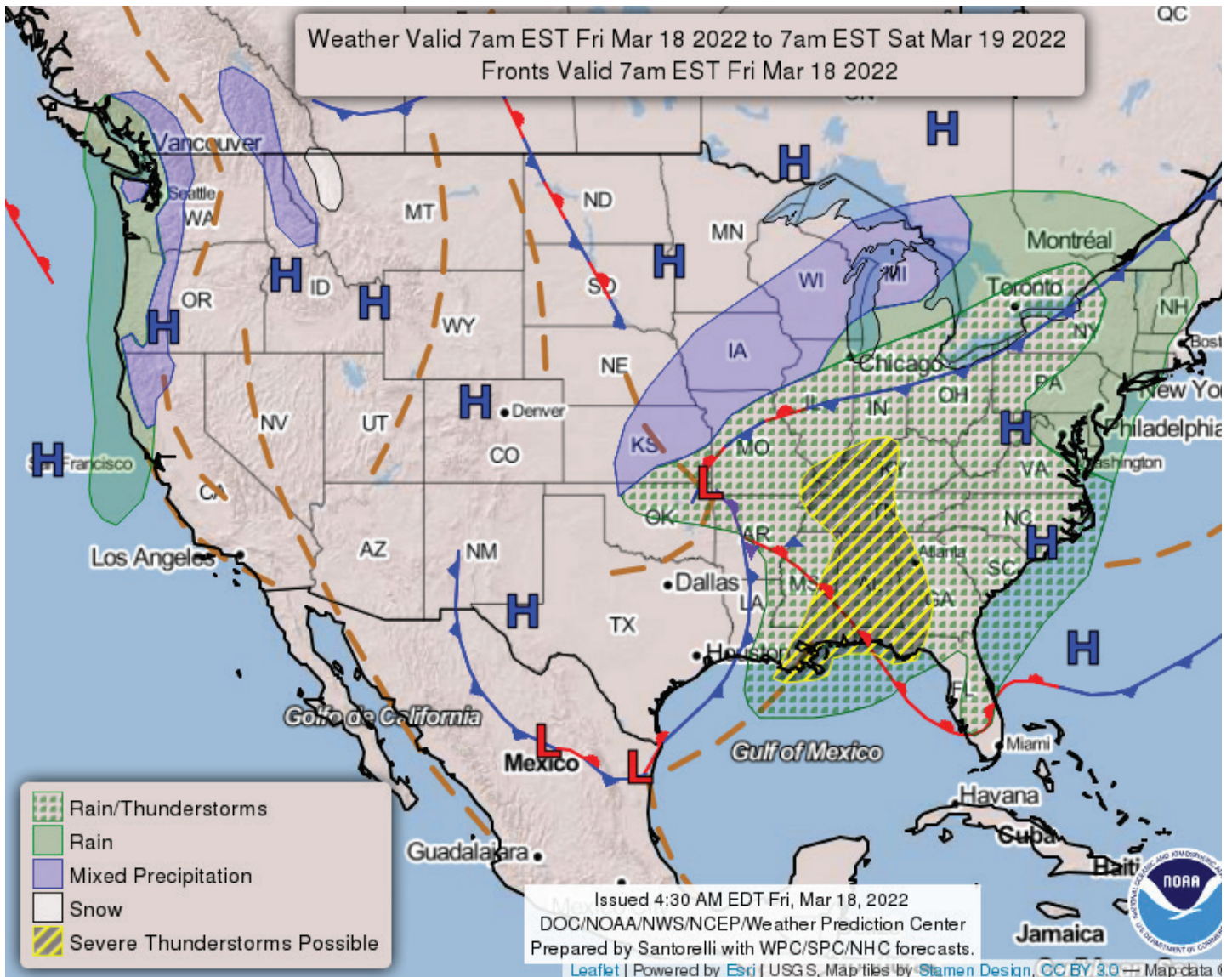
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 52 °F at 5:08
Low Temp: 28 °F at 7:27 AM
Wind: 16 mph at 2:20 PM
Precip: 0.00

Day length: 12 hours, 06 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 85 in 2012
Record Low: -15 in 1923
Average High: 43°F
Average Low: 21°F
Average Precip in Mar.: 0.46
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 1.63
Precip Year to Date: 0.97
Sunset Tonight: 7:43:39 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:35:11 AM



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 18 of 92



MIND-FULL OR MIND-LESS

"You know," said the old farmer, "the mind is much like a garden. You can either plant something good in it and watch it grow or watch it fill up with weeds."

If we are careful, we can have a mind filled with good thoughts and great ideas. We can plant "seeds" that come from well-cultivated "ancestors" and carefully bred crops or "seeds" of questionable origin and random sources. What goes into our mind can be carefully controlled and chosen or simply allowed to enter because there is no plan to nourish our hearts and souls. The source of the content is our choice and ours alone. The contents of our minds are not force-fed. Whatever is in our minds is there because we invited it in at one time in our lives.

The wisdom of our Psalmist is well worth heeding: "My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on Your promises." No random "seed-thoughts" were allowed to contaminate the garden of his mind. His mind had been filled "in advance" with God's promises. Now, when he was awake throughout the night, he meditated on the gifts God had "waiting" for him.

Years ago, following cancer surgery, I was told that I would have to get up every three hours for the rest of my life. I cannot explain the intensity of my anger at God for these "gifts." First cancer - now, sleepless nights. "OK God. What's going on here? Life is unfair, God!"

Soon, however, I realized that while I was waiting to fall back to sleep, I could pray or quote Bible verses or even meditate. Was my cancer a "gift" from God? Indeed! We, God and I, now have more time to share ideas.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for planting the "seeds" of Your Word in my mind that now provide food for my soul. You are so gracious and merciful. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on Your promises. Psalm 119:148

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 19 of 92

2022 Community Events

- 01/30/2022 84th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
01/30/2022 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am – 1pm, Groton Community Center, 109 N 3rd St, Groton,
04/07/2022 Groton CDE
04/09/2022 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
04/09/2022 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
04/23/2022 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/24/2022 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/07/2022 Lions Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
St John's Lutheran Church VBS 9-11am
05/30/2022 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
Transit Fundraiser at the Community Center 4-7pm (Thursday Mid-June)
06/17/2022 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm Start
06/18/2022 Groton Triathlon
Ladies Invitational at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration 10am Start
07/04/2022 Firecracker Couples Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start
(4th of July)
07/10/2022 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar 11am-1pm at the Groton Legion
Baseball Tourney
07/21/2022 Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
How can we... "Love Groton"? United Methodist Church 9:30am
Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20
Golf Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course 11a-1pm
08/05/2022 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
08/12/2022 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
United Methodist Church VBS 5-8pm
Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day 4-5pm GHS Parking Lot
09/10/2022 Lions Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3:30-5pm
09/11/2022 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm
Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
10/14/2022 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am (2nd Friday in October)
10/01/2022 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/31/2022 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
10/31/2022 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/12/2022 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
12/03/2022 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course
Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm
01/29/2023 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 20 of 92

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White \$41.54/year
- Colored \$74.55/year
- Colored \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly* \$21.30/year

* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent

www.397news.com

Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month \$15.98
- 3 Months \$21.30
- 6 Months \$26.63
- 9 Months \$31.95
- 12 Months \$42.60

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul



News from the Associated Press

Saint Peter's ousts Kentucky, busts brackets on NCAA Day 1

By The Associated Press undefined

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Tiny Saint Peter's took down basketball royalty on Thursday night, getting 27 points from Daryl Banks III in an 85-79 overtime victory over second-seeded Kentucky in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

The Peacocks became the 10th No. 15 seed to win a first-round game since the tournament expanded to 64 teams in 1985 and handed Kentucky its first opening-round loss under coach John Calipari.

Saint Peter's, the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference champion, kept it close throughout and Banks' two free throws with 1:45 left in overtime gave the Peacocks the lead for good. Doug Edert's layup with 24 seconds left in regulation sent the game to overtime. He also made the final two game-sealing free throws for the Peacocks and finished with 20 points.

Saint Peter's (20-11) moves on to face Murray State in Saturday's second round in the East Region.

Not bad for a private Jesuit school in Jersey City, New Jersey, that's made half as many NCAA Tournament appearances (four) as Kentucky has national titles (eight).

Oscar Tshiebwe had 30 points and 16 rebounds for Kentucky (26-8) but his pair of missed free throws early in overtime was costly, and the Wildcats lacked a reliable secondary scorer. TyTy Washington Jr. was held to five points on 2-of-10 shooting.

MURRAY STATE 92, SAN FRANCISCO 87, OT

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — KJ Williams scored six of his 18 points in overtime after Murray State blew an eight-point lead late in regulation, and the seventh-seeded Racers extended their winning streak to 21 games by beating San Francisco.

The Racers (31-2) tied South Dakota State, which lost to Providence earlier Thursday, for the longest winning streak in the nation this season.

The game featured 18 lead changes and 14 ties. Murray State ultimately took control with Williams' clutch baskets and Jordan Skipper-Brown's timely plays in the extra session.

Jamaree Bouyea scored 36 points for USF (24-10), which made its first NCAA appearance since 1998.

BAYLOR 85, NORFOLK STATE 49

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — Matthew Mayer scored a career-high 22 points and defending national champion Baylor beat Norfolk State.

Freshman standout Jeremy Sochan added 15 points and seven rebounds for the top-seeded Bears (27-6), who will play eighth-seeded North Carolina on Saturday.

Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference player of the year Joe Bryant had 15 points for 16th-seeded Norfolk State (24-7).

The Spartans were one of the biggest underdogs in first-round games this year, at 20 1/2 points, according to FanDuel Sportsbook. Despite some size up front, they couldn't keep up with the Bears and never came close to an upset.

Flo Thamba scored 14 points and Adam Flagler had 11 points for the Bears after some early foul trouble.

NORTH CAROLINA 95, MARQUETTE 63

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — Brady Manek scored 28 points, Caleb Love had 21 of his 23 before halftime and North Carolina routed Marquette.

Love made six 3-pointers, all in the first 19 minutes, to tie Carolina's single-game tournament record as the Tar Heels (25-9) built a 28-point lead.

Manek, who also had 11 rebounds, finished with five 3s as he and Love combined to go 11 of 24 from long range. Armando Bacot grabbed 10 rebounds on his way to the school season record (422).

RJ Davis had a career-high 12 assists for Carolina.

Olivier-Maxence Prosper scored 16 points for the No. 9 seed Golden Eagles (19-13), who lost their third

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 22 of 92

consecutive first-round game.

SAINT MARY'S 82, INDIANA 53

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Logan Johnson scored 20 points and fifth-seeded Saint Mary's took advantage of No. 12 seed Indiana's grueling recent schedule.

Tommy Kuhse added 19 points and six assists for the Gaels (26-7), who will play UCLA in the second round.

Trayce Jackson-Davis had 12 points for Indiana (21-14), which arrived in Portland on Wednesday morning after an all-nighter because of flight delays from Dayton following its First Four victory over Wyoming.

Thursday's game was Indiana's fifth in seven days. Saint Mary's came in fresh from a 10-day layoff.

Saint Mary's pulled away late in the first half and led by as many as 34 points — and the overtaxed Hoosiers couldn't catch up.

UCLA 57, AKRON 53

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Tyger Campbell rescued UCLA from a potential upset, scoring eight straight points late in the second half, and the fourth-seeded Bruins rallied past No. 13 seed Akron.

With the Bruins down 51-47 with 3 1/2 minutes left, Campbell took control. He hit a corner 3-pointer to pull UCLA within one, knocked down a 15-footer for the lead and added a 25-footer as the shot clock was expiring to put the Bruins ahead 55-51 with 1:17 left.

Campbell finished with 16 points and Jamie Jaquez Jr. added 15 for UCLA (26-7). Jules Bernard, who hit a 3 to start UCLA's run when it trailed 47-39, added 10 points.

Xavier Castaneda led Akron (24-10) with 18 points and Enrique Freeman added 14 before fouling out with 2:26 remaining on an illegal screen.

SOUTH REGION

MICHIGAN 75, COLORADO STATE 63

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Freshman Frankie Collins provided the spark Michigan needed in a turbulent year for the Wolverines and coach Juwan Howard, helping the 11th-seeded Wolverines rally from a 15-point deficit to beat sixth-seeded Colorado State.

Collins, pressed into the starting lineup because starting point guard DeVante' Jones was out with a concussion, had season highs of 14 points, six rebounds and 31 minutes.

Big man Hunter Dickinson led Michigan with 21 points on 8-of-10 shooting. Eli Brooks had 16 points and Caleb Houston added 13 for the Wolverines (18-14), who will face third-seeded Tennessee in the second round on Saturday.

Dischon Thomas scored 15 points on 5-of-7 3-point shooting for Colorado State (25-6), and Mountain West Conference player of the year David Roddy had 13 points and six rebounds.

The Rams led 28-13 early, but Collins helped Michigan chip away and the Wolverines took the lead for good midway through the second half.

TENNESSEE 88, LONGWOOD 56

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Santiago Vescovi scored 18 points and Tennessee pounded Longwood, showing why it felt it deserved better than a No. 3 seed.

The Volunteers (27-7) shot 60% from the field and had four players score in double figures. The runaway victory came just four days after the school won the Southeastern Conference Tournament for the first time in 43 years.

Josiah-Jordan James added 17 points, and John Fulkerson scored 15 on 7-for-8 shooting. Kennedy Chandler had 13 and Zakai Ziegler finished with 10.

Longwood (26-7), the Big South champ from Farmville, Virginia, was led by Justin Hill with 13 points in the school's first NCAA tourney appearance.

MIDWEST REGION

CREIGHTON 72, SAN DIEGO STATE 69, OT

FORT WORTH, TEXAS (AP) — Trey Alexander converted a go-ahead, three-point play late in overtime, and Creighton rallied past San Diego State.

The Bluejays hadn't led since the first five minutes of the game when Alexander, who also had the tying

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 23 of 92

bucket late in regulation, drove right and was fouled on the layup. The free throw put Creighton ahead 71-69 with 1:08 remaining.

Down by two, the Aztecs had the ball with 4.3 seconds left when Matt Bradley inbounded to Aguek Arop, then ran around him for the handoff. Bradley lost control of the ball before getting a shot off, and Creighton secured it with 0.8 seconds to go.

Alexander scored 18 points, and Ryan Kalkbrenner had 16 points and 10 rebounds before leaving with an apparent left leg injury in overtime.

The ninth-seeded Bluejays (23-11) will play top-seeded Kansas on Saturday.

Chad Baker-Mazara scored 15 of his 17 points in the first half for the Aztecs (23-9), who were in position for their first tournament win since 2015. Gus Bradley added 15.

KANSAS 83, TEXAS SOUTHERN 56

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — Remy Martin had 15 points and Christian Braun 14 as five players scored in double figures for top-seeded Kansas, and the Jayhawks opened their 50th NCAA Tournament by beating Texas Southern.

Southwestern Athletic Conference champion Texas Southern (19-13), which won a First Four game two nights earlier, had its only lead against the Big 12 champs after Bryson Etienne made its first shot of the game.

Once the Jayhawks (29-6) finally got on the board on a tying layup by Dajuan Harris after missing their first three shots, they got on a roll. They made their next six shots, and soon after that had a stretch of seven makes in a row.

John Walker III had 13 points for the Tigers.

RICHMOND 67, IOWA 63

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Jacob Gilyard scored 24 points, Tyler Burton added 18 points and 11 rebounds, and No. 12 seed Richmond leaned on its experience to defeat Big Ten tournament champ Iowa.

Nathan Cayo also had 15 points, including a couple of big baskets down the stretch, as the Atlantic 10 Tournament champ Spiders (24-12) improved their NCAA tourney record against fifth-seeded teams to 4-0. They will next face the region's No. 4 seed, Providence.

Keegan Murray scored 21 points and Patrick McCaffery added 18 for the Hawkeyes (26-10), who were unable to carry over the momentum of winning four times in four days at the Big Ten tournament last weekend.

The Hawkeyes' fourth-best offense nationally, which entered the NCAA Tournament averaging 83.8 points, was held to its third-lowest total of the year and worst production since a 48-46 loss at Rutgers on Jan. 19.

Gilyard sealed the victory by hitting all four of his free-throw attempts in the final 16 seconds.

PROVIDENCE 66, SOUTH DAKOTA STATE 57

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Al Durham had 13 points, eight rebounds and six assists and Jared Bynum made three big free throws with 29.9 seconds left as Providence snapped the longest winning streak in college basketball by beating South Dakota State.

It was a typical grind for the Big East regular-season champions. The Friars' turnaround season after going 13-13 in 2020-21 now includes 16 victories by single digits.

The Jackrabbits (30-6) came in on a 21-game winning streak.

The Friars (26-5) were up three in the final minute and Bynum let loose a 3-pointer with 3 seconds left on the shot clock. The shot missed, but Douglas Wilson was whistled for a foul. Bynum knocked down all three shots to give Providence a six-point lead. Bynum finished with 12 points and Noah Horchler had 13 for the Providence.

Baylor Scheierman led the Jackrabbits with 18 points and 10 rebounds and Wilson scored 13.

WEST REGION

NEW MEXICO STATE 70, UCONN 63

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Teddy Allen scored 37 points and New Mexico State won an NCAA Tournament game for the first time almost three decades, upsetting fifth-seeded Connecticut to become the second

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 24 of 92

No. 12 seed to advance out of the first round.

The Aggies (27-6) will Arkansas in the second round. In their 23rd NCAA appearance, the Aggies won for the first time since beating Syracuse in the first round in 1993.

Allen made a rainbow 3 off the dribble with 1:40 to put New Mexico State up 61-58.

He wasn't done. After R.J. Cole cut the lead to one for UConn (23-10), Allen went back to work. He completed a three-point play for a 66-60 lead with 27 seconds left.

Cole led the Huskies with 20 points.

ARKANSAS 75, VERMONT 71

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Stanley Umude scored 21 points, JD Notae scored all 17 of his in the second half, and No. 4 seed Arkansas hung on to beat 13th-seeded Vermont.

Jaylin Williams scored 13 points and had 10 rebounds for the Razorbacks (26-8), who a year ago reached the Elite Eight before losing to eventual champion Baylor.

Two-time America East player of the year Ryan Davis and Ben Shungu scored 20 points each for the Catamounts (28-6).

Notae sealed the win by sinking two free throws with 9 seconds remaining. Vermont's final possession ended with Finn Sullivan missing a 3-point attempt, allowing Arkansas to run out the clock.

GONZAGA 93, GEORGIA STATE 72

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Drew Timme scored 22 of his 32 points in the second half and top overall seed Gonzaga struggled to shake No. 16 seed Georgia State for 30 minutes before pulling away late.

The Zags (27-3) were sluggish early and couldn't make a basket for a long stretch of the first half. Even when Gonzaga's offense kicked into gear after halftime, the Panthers didn't fold.

The eventual overwhelming surge from the Bulldogs finally arrived with about 10 minutes to go. Gonzaga went on a 24-1 run, turning a four-point game into the blowout that was expected. The Zags will face the West Region's No. 9 seed, Memphis, in the second round on Saturday.

Timme was the catalyst, topping 30 points for the fifth time in his career while also grabbing 13 rebounds. Chet Holmgren, the Zags' 7-foot freshman, added 19 points, 17 rebounds and seven blocks.

Corey Allen led Georgia State (18-10) with 16 points, and Jalen Thomas and Kane Williams both added 12.

MEMPHIS 64, BOISE STATE 53

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — DeAndre Williams had 14 points, Jalen Duren made a crucial basket down the stretch and No. 9 seed Memphis held off a second-half rally by Boise State.

Duren finished with 10 points and 11 rebounds for the Tigers (22-10), who were 9-8 after 17 games but went on a late-season charge to reach the tournament for the first time since 2014. The Tigers have now won 13 of their past 15 games.

Abu Kigab had 20 points to lead the eighth-seeded Broncos (27-8), the Mountain West regular-season and tournament champs, who were making their first appearance in the tournament since 2015.

EXPLAINER: Driver in Texas crash was 13; is that legal?

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

From the logging roads of the Pacific Northwest to the farm country of the Great Plains and beyond, it's not uncommon for people in rural parts of the U.S. to learn to drive when they're young, sometimes even before they reach their teens.

But the news that a 13-year-old was behind the wheel of a pickup truck that blew a tire and struck a van on a dark, two-lane road in West Texas on Tuesday night, killing nine people — including six members of a New Mexico college's golf teams and their coach — put a renewed focus on the practice.

At a news conference in Odessa, Texas, on Thursday, National Transportation Safety Board Vice Chairman Bruce Landsberg said the dangers of underage driving put it on the agency's "most-wanted list."

Along with drunk and distracted driving, Landsberg said "youthful driving" and excessive speed on rural roads are among the problems that make highway driving the most dangerous form of transit in the United States.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 25 of 92

"Every two days we are killing the equivalent of a Boeing 737 crashing," he said, referring to highway fatalities from multiple causes. "It's long overdue that we start to do something about it."

LEGAL DRIVING AGE VARIES BY STATE

Cash Hogen, a 60-year-old who runs a kitchen and hardware store in Pierre, South Dakota, recalled learning to drive a Ford Bronco "as soon as my feet hit the pedals" – probably around age 10. He'd drive the two-track roads across his family's ranch in western South Dakota to repair barbed-wire fences or for other tasks.

But his father always stressed safety around vehicles and told stories of horrific tragedies to drive home the danger.

"Under no circumstances would I be out on a public road without my learner's permit," he said.

While it's legal for people of any age to drive on private property, such as farms or ranches, public roads where others are at risk is another matter, said William Van Tassel, the manager of driver training programs for AAA's national office.

Every U.S. state has some type of graduated driver's licensing program, by which teens as young as 14 can begin taking driver's education classes or begin driving with an instructor or guardian, he said. Eventually they gain more independence, being allowed to drive on their own or at night, until they have full privileges.

"Certainly in rural areas there's a general trend of lower minimum driving ages," Van Tassel said. "We see a lot of teen drivers have driving experience by the time they come to a formal driver's education course because they've been driving trucks or tractors or other vehicles on the farm. But when it comes to public roads, the laws are pretty clear: You can't be out there until you're legally eligible."

According to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data, there were 47 fatal crashes and 1,057 injury crashes in 2020 involving drivers 13 or younger.

In 2019, the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled was 1.9 times higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

PERMIAN BASIN SEES HEAVY TRAFFIC ON RURAL ROADS

The cause of Tuesday's crash in Andrews County, Texas, near the New Mexico border, wasn't clear, but federal authorities said Thursday that the 13-year-old was driving a Dodge pickup on a road with a 75 mph speed limit when its front left tire, a spare, blew out.

The truck veered across the center line into an oncoming transit van carrying the golf team from the University of the Southwest, in Hobbs, New Mexico. The boy and a man in the truck with him were killed, along with members of the golf teams and their coach.

While the area is rural, the surrounding oil fields of the Permian Basin that crosses from West Texas into New Mexico mean the traffic can be anything but, local residents said.

Gib Stevens, 57, of Hobbs, leads trucking operations for an oilfield servicing company. He said he himself started driving trucks at age 12 on dairy farms and quiet farm roads, but he said the road where the accident happened was clearly unsafe.

"For a 13-year-old to be driving that road, that was dumb," Stevens said. "These roads are all oil traffic."

'WORST CASE SCENARIO' IN TEXAS CRASH

In Texas, one must be 14 to begin classroom instruction for a learner's license and 15 to receive that provisional license to drive with an instructor or licensed adult in the vehicle. Department of Public Safety Sgt. Victor Taylor said it would be illegal for a 13-year-old to drive on public roads.

Van Tassel noted that the crash involved several risk factors besides the youth of the driver: It happened at night and on a road with a high speed limit when the spare blew.

Further, teenage boys are one of "the most dangerous segments" of the driving population across the country, said Cathy Chase, president of the Washington, D.C.-based Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety.

"This is a worst case scenario, on top of a worst case scenario, on top of a worst case scenario," Chase said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 26 of 92

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

SDHSAA State Tournament

First Round

Class AA

Harrisburg 78, Mitchell 77, 3OT

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 57, Sioux Falls Lincoln 34

Sioux Falls Roosevelt 57, Yankton 49

Sioux Falls Washington 66, Sioux Falls Jefferson 56

Class A

Dakota Valley 62, Sioux Falls Christian 56

Flandreau 50, Groton Area 36

Sioux Valley 58, Winner 54

St. Thomas More 63, Lakota Tech 53

Class B

DeSmet 60, Waubay/Summit 28

Lower Brule 51, Castlewood 48, OT

Potter County 63, Aberdeen Christian 48

White River 75, Freeman Academy/Marion 70

Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

EXPLAINER: Driver in Texas crash was 13; is that legal?

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

From the logging roads of the Pacific Northwest to the farm country of the Great Plains and beyond, it's not uncommon for people in rural parts of the U.S. to learn to drive when they're young, sometimes even before they reach their teens.

But the news that a 13-year-old was behind the wheel of a pickup truck that blew a tire and struck a van on a dark, two-lane road in West Texas on Tuesday night, killing nine people — including six members of a New Mexico college's golf teams and their coach — put a renewed focus on the practice.

At a news conference in Odessa, Texas, on Thursday, National Transportation Safety Board Vice Chairman Bruce Landsberg said the dangers of underage driving put it on the agency's "most-wanted list."

Along with drunk and distracted driving, Landsberg said "youthful driving" and excessive speed on rural roads are among the problems that make highway driving the most dangerous form of transit in the United States.

"Every two days we are killing the equivalent of a Boeing 737 crashing," he said, referring to highway fatalities from multiple causes. "It's long overdue that we start to do something about it."

LEGAL DRIVING AGE VARIES BY STATE

Cash Hogen, a 60-year-old who runs a kitchen and hardware store in Pierre, South Dakota, recalled learning to drive a Ford Bronco "as soon as my feet hit the pedals" — probably around age 10. He'd drive the two-track roads across his family's ranch in western South Dakota to repair barbed-wire fences or for other tasks.

But his father always stressed safety around vehicles and told stories of horrific tragedies to drive home the danger.

"Under no circumstances would I be out on a public road without my learner's permit," he said.

While it's legal for people of any age to drive on private property, such as farms or ranches, public roads where others are at risk is another matter, said William Van Tassel, the manager of driver training programs for AAA's national office.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 27 of 92

Every U.S. state has some type of graduated driver's licensing program, by which teens as young as 14 can begin taking driver's education classes or begin driving with an instructor or guardian, he said. Eventually they gain more independence, being allowed to drive on their own or at night, until they have full privileges.

"Certainly in rural areas there's a general trend of lower minimum driving ages," Van Tassel said. "We see a lot of teen drivers have driving experience by the time they come to a formal driver's education course because they've been driving trucks or tractors or other vehicles on the farm. But when it comes to public roads, the laws are pretty clear: You can't be out there until you're legally eligible."

According to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data, there were 47 fatal crashes and 1,057 injury crashes in 2020 involving drivers 13 or younger.

In 2019, the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled was 1.9 times higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

PERMIAN BASIN SEES HEAVY TRAFFIC ON RURAL ROADS

The cause of Tuesday's crash in Andrews County, Texas, near the New Mexico border, wasn't clear, but federal authorities said Thursday that the 13-year-old was driving a Dodge pickup on a road with a 75 mph speed limit when its front left tire, a spare, blew out.

The truck veered across the center line into an oncoming transit van carrying the golf team from the University of the Southwest, in Hobbs, New Mexico. The boy and a man in the truck with him were killed, along with members of the golf teams and their coach.

While the area is rural, the surrounding oil fields of the Permian Basin that crosses from West Texas into New Mexico mean the traffic can be anything but, local residents said.

Gib Stevens, 57, of Hobbs, leads trucking operations for an oilfield servicing company. He said he himself started driving trucks at age 12 on dairy farms and quiet farm roads, but he said the road where the accident happened was clearly unsafe.

"For a 13-year-old to be driving that road, that was dumb," Stevens said. "These roads are all oil traffic."

'WORST CASE SCENARIO' IN TEXAS CRASH

In Texas, one must be 14 to begin classroom instruction for a learner's license and 15 to receive that provisional license to drive with an instructor or licensed adult in the vehicle. Department of Public Safety Sgt. Victor Taylor said it would be illegal for a 13-year-old to drive on public roads.

Van Tassel noted that the crash involved several risk factors besides the youth of the driver: It happened at night and on a road with a high speed limit when the spare blew.

Further, teenage boys are one of "the most dangerous segments" of the driving population across the country, said Cathy Chase, president of the Washington, D.C.-based Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety.

"This is a worst case scenario, on top of a worst case scenario, on top of a worst case scenario," Chase said.

Baylor women welcome Hawaii as NCAA tourney opens

WACO, Texas (AP) — NaLyssa Smith, Queen Egbo and Caitlin Bickle got to Baylor together and were part of a national championship as freshmen in 2019. They all had a decision to make following an unexpected coaching change after last season.

Smith, Egbo and Bickle all opted to stay when WNBA coach Nicki Collen took over after three-time national champion coach Kim Mulkey left for LSU in her home state. The senior trio now finally gets to play in another women's NCAA Tournament at home.

"I just felt like I had already gave this program so much. I didn't want to just leave it all behind," said Smith, who this week named an AP All-American for the second season in a row.

Baylor (27-6) won its 12th consecutive Big 12 regular-season title and will host NCAA games for the 10th time. It is only the second time for Smith, Egbo and Bickle at home. COVID-19 forced the cancellation of the 2020 tourney, and the entire field played last year in a San Antonio-based bubble.

The Bears, the No. 2 seed in the Wichita Regional, play 15th-seeded Hawaii (20-9) on Friday in the first

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 28 of 92

tournament game for the Rainbow Wahine since 2016. That follows SEC team Ole Miss (23-8), the WNIT runner-up last season, taking on 10th-seeded South Dakota (27-5) from the Summit League.

"We're lucky to be at home. We're lucky to have a fairly normal routine," Collen said. "Other than that, I can promise you had we had control of our schedule today, we would not be practicing when our men are playing."

Instead, Baylor's assigned on-court practice session happened while the men were playing less than 100 miles from the Waco campus, and beat Norfolk State 85-49 in their first-round game.

The Baylor women lost to Texas in the Big 12 Tournament championship game last Sunday, when Smith left the game for a bit with a leg injury.

"Quite frankly, we're just happy NaLyssa is healthy, that we're going to get full-strength NaLyssa and not have lingering effects of that collision," Collen said. "I don't think anyone feels good about how we played in that game. But I think the reality is, I don't think it took anybody's confidence away from how we've played down the stretch."

CONSISTENT COYOTES

South Dakota is in its fourth consecutive NCAA Tournament under coach Dawn Plitzuweit, and fifth for the Summit League champions in their 10 eligible seasons.

The Coyotes (27-5) are led by conference player of the year Chloe Lamb (16.0 points a game) and Summit defensive player of the year Hannah Sjerven (14.8 points, 7.8 rebounds a game).

One of the biggest challenges in their NCAA opener will be facing 6-foot-5 center Shakira Austin, the Ole Miss senior and former Maryland transfer who averages 15.4 points, 8.9 rebounds and 2.0 blocks per game. She is an AP All-American honorable mention for the second time.

"She's someone who can find ways to score over the top of you, to get around you, to kind of hang and score. She's such a great offensive rebounder, a great shot blocker," Plitzuweit said. "Certainly, we're going to have to be very aware and we're going to have to find ways to commit more than one player to try to slow her down to the best of our ability, without putting us in a position where we're giving too much else up."

USED TO BE A REGULAR

Ole Miss is playing in its first women's NCAA Tournaments in 15 years.

The Rebels (23-8) used to be a regular in the field, playing in the first 11 women's NCAA tournaments from 1982-92, and 14 of the first 15, when Van Chancellor was their coach. This is now only their fourth in 26 seasons.

Ole Miss was also the No. 7 seed in its last tourney in 2007, and made it to the NCAA Elite Eight in its last 20-win season until now. The WNIT last year was their fifth since then.

"The NIT was perfect for us. We were able to get five games in with such a young team. The majority of my team last year was freshmen," fourth-year coach Yolett McPhee-McCuin. "The majority of my team last year also had never had postseason experience. That experience is something we have used to continue on the momentum this whole season."

LIKE HOME IN HAWAII

While more than 3,700 miles from home, the Rainbow Wahine should have a familiar feeling at the Ferrell Center on the Baylor campus in Waco, Texas.

Hawaii's home arena, the Stan Sheriff Center built in 1994, was modeled after the Ferrell Center. Other than the team logos on the floors and the golden paint on Baylor's roof, the two arenas are near identical replicas.

Providence snaps South Dakota State's streak at 21 in NCAA

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Sports Writer

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Providence coach Ed Cooley knows it takes some good fortune to make a long run in the NCAA Tournament.

So if anyone wants to call his gritty Friars lucky, that's fine by him.

Al Durham had 13 points, eight rebounds and six assists and Jared Bynum made three big free throws

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 29 of 92

with 29.9 seconds left as Providence snapped the longest winning streak in the country by beating South Dakota State 66-57 Thursday in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

The fourth-seeded Friars (26-5) advanced to face Richmond in the Midwest Region on Saturday.

"If luck is the narrative that continues to keep us connected and winning, we'll take it," said Cooley, who is in his 11th season at Providence.

It was a typical grind for the Big East regular-season champions. The Friars' turnaround season after going 13-13 in 2020-21 now includes 16 victories by single-digit margins.

"We want to be in a close game," said Cooley. "If we're in a close game, I believe in our players, and I believe what we do as a staff."

The 13th-seeded Jackrabbits (30-6) came in on a 21-game winning streak and were a popular pick to spring the tournament's first upset. So popular that it really wouldn't have been much of an upset. The Friars were only a two-point favorite, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

"You know, we hear the noise that everybody says, but we can't let that rattle us," Durham said. "We knew what we were capable of."

All those close games have led to some calling Providence the luckiest team in America. The Friars like to think of themselves as a tough and poised team that makes winning plays late — as they did Thursday.

The Friars were up three in the final minute when Bynum let loose a 3-pointer with 3 seconds left on the shot clock. The shot missed, but Doug Wilson was whistled for a foul. Bynum released the ball before contact, but Wilson appeared to hit the shooter's arm and bump him before he landed.

"I thought he kicked his leg there, and I sort of ran into him, but I don't make the calls," Wilson said.

SDSU coach Eric Henderson put his head in his hands in frustration and then argued the call after watching it on the big screen.

"It was a tough call," Henderson said. "Just like one game is not going to define our season, one call is not going to determine the outcome of the game. I would have liked it to be different, but ..."

Bynum knocked down all three shots to give Providence a six-point lead. Bynum finished with 12 points and Noah Horchler had 13 for the Providence.

Baylor Scheierman led the Jackrabbits with 18 points and 10 rebounds and Wilson scored 13.

Thursday marked 92 days since the Jackrabbits' previous loss, but the second-highest scoring team in the country (86.7) struggled to do what it does best: Make 3s.

South Dakota State came into the game shooting nearly 45% from long range, best in Division I in 28 years. The Jackrabbits were 7 for 23 on 3s.

The Friars made 8 of 22 3-pointers, including Horchler's jumper from the wing with 15:58 left in the second half that put Providence up 43-29. The largest lead of the game to that point had the Friars dancing on the bench and Henderson calling timeout to try to regroup.

The Jackrabbits responded with an 8-0 run and Providence was in yet another tight one the rest of the way.

The Jackrabbits were running early, with Wilson slamming home a couple of alley-oop passes and converting a behind-the-back-bounce pass from Scheierman into a layup.

The teams went almost nine minutes from the start of the game without a stoppage in play and South Dakota State led 17-15. As things slowed, Providence gained control.

BIG PICTURE

South Dakota State: The Jackrabbits were making their sixth NCA Tournament appearance in just 13 years as a Division I school, but they are still looking for win No. 1.

Providence: The Friars got 15 productive minutes off the bench from 245-pound Ed Crosswell, who had nine rebounds and four steals.

UP NEXT

Providence advanced to the second round of the tournament for the first time since 2016.

Biden names 2 South Dakota USDA program directors

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — President Joe Biden on Thursday appointed two state directors for United States Department of Agriculture programs in South Dakota, naming Steve Dick to head the Farm Service Agency and Nikki Gronli as director of rural development.

Dick formerly directed Ag United, an organization that advocates for farmers and ranchers, while Gronli was the vice-chair of the South Dakota Democratic Party and worked as a marketing specialist with SDN Communications, a broadband internet service provider.

Dick said he would not start in his new role until next month, adding he was “excited about the appointment. He will oversee the Farm Service Agency offices in the state. He worked on former Sen. Tom Daschle’s staff for ten years.

Gronli said she will be leaving her position with the Democratic Party and said she would focus her work on economic development in rural communities.

“I look forward to working with rural and tribal communities on water access, the elimination of food deserts, and business development,” she said in a statement released by the South Dakota Democratic Party. “This department is key to keeping our rural areas strong, vibrant, and growing.”

A presidential appointment for the U.S. Attorney in South Dakota has not yet been named.

Appeals court revives Biden climate damage cost estimate

By KEVIN MCGILL, MATTHEW BROWN and MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A federal appeals court has revived a Biden administration effort to account for potential damage from greenhouse gas emissions when creating rules for polluting industries.

A Louisiana-based federal judge had blocked the so-called “social cost of carbon” policy last month, saying it would bring costly regulatory burdens and drive up energy prices. But a panel of three 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals judges in New Orleans unanimously stayed the lower court in a ruling dated Wednesday, meaning the administration can continue using the policy while the case goes on.

The panel said any regulatory burdens the policy might bring are speculative at this point and that Louisiana and other states challenging the policy therefore had no standing to sue.

The social cost of carbon attempts to put a dollar value on damage caused by every additional ton of greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere. That cost estimate would be used to shape future rules for oil and gas drilling, automobiles, and other industries, and a higher estimate could justify more stringent rules.

President Joe Biden on his first day in office issued an order that restored the cost estimate to about \$51 per ton of carbon dioxide emissions after the Trump administration had reduced the figure to about \$7 or less per ton. Former President Donald Trump’s estimate included only damage felt in the U.S. versus the global damage captured in higher estimates that were previously used under the Obama administration.

Republicans and business groups have questioned the accuracy of the complex economic models used to derive the cost estimate. They argue that an emphasis on future climate damage would hobble the economy, particularly the energy industry.

The carbon cost estimate had not yet been used very much under Biden, but is being considered in a pending environmental review of oil and gas lease sales in western states. Those sales and other energy-related actions were delayed by the administration in response to the Feb. 11 ruling that struck down its social cost of carbon policy.

But the appeals court said U.S. District Judge James David Cain, a Trump appointee in Louisiana’s Western district, had gone “outside the authority of the federal courts” in ordering the Biden administration “to comply with prior administrations’ policies on regulatory analysis absent a specific agency action to review...”

Republican attorneys general led by Louisiana’s Jeff Landry had challenged the policy. The other states whose officials sued are Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, South Dakota, Texas, West Virginia and Wyoming.

The panel that ruled Wednesday included judges Leslie Southwick, appointed by President George W.

Bush, and James Graves and Gregg Costa, both appointed by President Barack Obama.

A spokeswoman with the U.S. Department of the Interior said the administration was reviewing the decision.

Landry's office said the decision would be appealed to the full 17-member 5th Circuit.

"We strongly disagree with the 5th Circuit's opinion that we lack standing in Biden's latest attempt to inject the federal government into the everyday lives of Americans," the statement said.

The White House has been preparing to update its climate damage price tag and it's expected to increase, perhaps dramatically.

Economist Steve Rose said the circuit court ruling does not resolve questions about the reliability of the complex models used to determine damages.

"The uncertainty is of course a significant issue, because this kind of modelling is going to model the globe for multiple centuries," said Rose, a senior economist at the Electric Power Research Institute, a non-profit organization whose membership includes many utilities.

But Max Sarinsky, a professor at the New York University School of Law, said accounting for future damages from emissions is key to the administration attempt to weigh climate impacts of actions such as the pending oil and gas lease sale.

"These numbers are important," Sarinsky said. "They provide a useful tool for the government to develop cost effective policies that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

The ruling was welcomed by environmental groups.

Earthjustice senior attorney Hana Vizcarra said the ruling "puts the government back on track to address and assess climate change."

"This commonsense decision simply allows the government to continue its usual consideration of the costs of climate damage, but we need a lot more than that from the Biden administration," Kassie Siegel, director of the Center for Biological Diversity's Climate Law Institute, said in an emailed statement.

South Dakota woman gets parole in 1981 dead infant sentence

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A 60-year-old South Dakota woman was granted parole Thursday after serving two months in prison for the 1981 death of her infant son — a loss she kept secret for decades.

The South Dakota Board of Pardons and Paroles was closely divided as it weighed the parole request from Theresa Bentaas, who entered an Alford plea to a first-degree manslaughter charge in October. The plea means she maintained her innocence but admitted that evidence could persuade a judge or jury of her guilt.

South Dakota Circuit Judge Bradley Zell sentenced Bentaas in December to 10 years in prison, but suspended nine years of her sentence and said she should serve only two months. She had been held in jail for 73 days before trial and was supposed to be released to community supervision in July.

The eight-member board was initially deadlocked Thursday on motions to grant and deny her parole. But on a second vote, it granted Bentaas' request for release.

The board said Bentaas' will be able to leave prison once the conditions of her parole are finalized, which could take several weeks.

Several board members pushed to keep her behind bars until July.

"We have a citizen of our state who never had a chance to have a life," said board member Peter Lieberman of Bentaas' son, adding that her punishment amounted to a slap on the hand.

Zell said during sentencing that it was unclear whether the infant died from complications during birth or abandonment during a South Dakota winter. The baby's body was found in a ditch in 1981, and an autopsy found that the boy likely died from exposure and failure to assist in maintaining an airway during his birth.

The case remained unsolved until 2019, when DNA testing led investigators to Bentaas.

"He was not moving. He was not breathing. He was not alive," Bentaas said Thursday when asked by the parole board whether her son was alive when she left his body outside.

Judge dismisses wrongful death lawsuit over road washout

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A federal judge has dismissed a wrongful death lawsuit against the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Standing Rock Sioux Tribe stemming from a road washout nearly three years ago that killed two people and injured two others.

Heavy rain in July 2019 washed away a section of roadway on the Standing Rock reservation. In the dark hours of the early morning, Trudy Peterson and Jim VanderWal, both of Mobridge, South Dakota, unknowingly drove their vehicles into a deep culvert where the road washed away and were killed.

Steven Willard and Evan Thompson, both of Fort Yates, were injured and flown to Bismarck hospitals for treatment of injuries their attorney said are permanent.

The victims' families sought \$10 million in damages for wrongful death and personal injury.

Their attorney, Tim Purdon, said in their lawsuit that the BIA had adopted road maintenance standards from the transportation departments of North Dakota and South Dakota and argued that the washout could have been avoided if the BIA had adhered to those standards, the Bismarck Tribune reported.

In a ruling this week, Judge Daniel Hovland said the tribe and BIA had no mandatory rules, regulations, policies or procedures to follow in deciding whether to replace the culvert above the road that eventually washed away.

The BIA and tribe had the discretion to determine when, where, and how to perform road maintenance, and is therefore shielded from liability Hovland said.

Live updates: Germany mulls imposing Russian oil embargo

By The Associated Press undefined

BERLIN — German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock has indicated that her country should consider imposing an oil embargo on Russia in the wake of its invasion of Ukraine.

In a security policy speech Friday, she said it was important to take a stance and not remain silent due to economic or energy dependency.

“Even if it’s difficult, including on questions now with regard to oil or other embargoes,” said Baerbock.

Germany receives about a third of its oil from Russia and half of its coal and natural gas.

Baerbock also warned against China’s growing influence over energy infrastructure in Africa and Asia, saying Germany will soon propose a new strategy on dealing with Beijing.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR:

- Rescuers search for survivors at Mariupol theater hit by Russian airstrike; casualties unclear
- World leaders called anew for an investigation of Russia’s repeat attacks on civilian targets
- Russian media reported that the detention of WNBA star Brittney Griner was extended until May 19
- An American man was among many killed in a Russian attack on the northern Ukrainian city of Chernihiv
- Go to <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine> for more coverage

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS TODAY:

BERLIN — A spokesman for Olaf Scholz says the German chancellor spoke Friday by phone with Russian President Vladimir Putin and urged him to agree to an immediate cease-fire in Ukraine.

During the hour-long call, Scholz also called for an improvement to the humanitarian situation and progress in efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict.

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre wants an extra allocation of 3.5 billion kroner (\$400 million) for 2022 to strengthen NATO member Norway’s Armed Forces and civil preparedness.

Gahr Støre told Norway’s parliament that the money will be used to “strengthen our ability to prevent,

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 33 of 92

deter and deal with digital attacks.”

“These are necessary measures because we are facing a more unpredictable and aggressive Russian regime,” Gahr Støre said, adding that Russian President Vladimir Putin “has raised the alert of his nuclear weapons forces. It contributes to more uncertainty in an already tense situation.”

He said Norway “is NATO’s eyes in the north.”

In a speech to the Scandinavian country’s parliament about Ukraine, Gahr Støre said Norway was gearing up “to handle an extraordinary situation with up to 100,000 refugees.”

“We do not know how long the war will last, or how many will come here. But in any case, it will put us to a historical test,” he said.

LVIV, Ukraine — Lviv Mayor Andriy Sadovyi said Friday on Telegram that several missiles hit a facility used to repair military aircraft and damaged a bus repair facility, though no casualties were immediately reported.

The plant had suspended work ahead of the attack, the mayor said.

The missiles that hit Lviv were launched from the Black Sea, but two of the six that were launched were shot down, Ukrainian air force’s western command said on Facebook.

NEW DELHI — An Indian official says the state-run Indian Oil Corp. bought 3 million barrels of crude oil from Russia earlier this week to secure its energy needs, resisting Western pressure to avoid such purchases.

The official said India will be looking to purchase more oil from Russia despite calls not to from the U.S. and other countries due to the invasion of Ukraine. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak with a reporter, said India has no such sanctions.

Imports make up nearly 85% of India’s oil needs. Its demand is projected to jump 8.2% this year to 5.15 million barrels per day as the economy recovers from the devastation caused by the pandemic.

Associated Press writer Ashok Sharma in New Delhi contributed to this report.

LVIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he was thankful to U.S. President Joe Biden for the additional military aid but said he would not say specifically what the new package included because he didn’t want to tip off Russia.

“This is our defense,” he said in his nighttime video address to the nation. “When the enemy doesn’t know what to expect from us. As they didn’t know what awaited them after Feb. 24,” the day Russia invaded. “They didn’t know what we had for defense or how we prepared to meet the blow.”

Zelenskyy said Russia expected to find Ukraine much as it did in 2014, when it seized Crimea without a fight and backed separatists as they took control of the eastern Donbas region. But Ukraine is now a different country, with much stronger defenses, he said.

He said it also was not the time to reveal Ukraine’s tactics in the ongoing negotiations with Russia. “Working more in silence than on television, radio or on Facebook,” Zelenskyy said. “I consider it the right way.”

UNITED NATIONS — Russia’s U.N. ambassador says he is not asking for a vote Friday on its resolution on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, which has been sharply criticized by Western countries for making no mention of Russia’s responsibility for the war against its smaller neighbor.

Vassily Nebenzia told the U.N. Security Council Thursday that Russia decided at this stage not to seek a vote because of pressure from the United States and Albania on U.N. members to oppose it, but he stressed that Moscow is not withdrawing the resolution.

Nebenzia said Russia plans to go ahead with a council meeting Friday to discuss again its allegations of U.S. “biological laboratories” in Ukraine, claiming new documents. His initial charge was made without any evidence and repeatedly denied by U.S. and Ukrainian officials.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield responded to Nebenzia’s announcement by saying “their

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 34 of 92

farcical humanitarian resolution ... was doomed to fail.”

“We know if Russia really cared about humanitarian crises, the one that it created, it could simply stop its attacks on the people of Ukraine,” she said. “But instead, they want to call for another Security Council meeting to use this council as a venue for its disinformation and for promoting its propaganda.”

At last Friday’s council meeting on Russia’s initial allegations of U.S. “biological activities,” Thomas-Greenfield accused Russia of using the Security Council for “lying and spreading disinformation” as part of a potential false-flag operation by Moscow for the use of chemical or biological agents in Ukraine.

UNITED NATIONS — The U.N. health chief decried the devastating consequences of war on the Ukrainian people who are facing severe disruption to services and medication and stressed that “the life-saving medicine we need right now is peace.”

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told the U.N. Security Council Thursday that WHO has verified 43 attacks on hospitals and health facilities with 12 people killed and 34 injured.

In a virtual briefing, Tedros said “the disruption to services and supplies is posing an extreme risk to people with cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, HIV and TB, which are among the leading causes of mortality in Ukraine.”

The WHO chief said displacement and overcrowding caused by people fleeing fighting are likely to increase the risks of diseases such as COVID-19, measles, pneumonia and polio.

In addition, more than 35,000 mental health patients in Ukrainian psychiatric hospitals and long-term care facilities face severe shortages of medicine, food, health and blankets, he said.

So far, WHO has sent about 100 metric tons (110 tons) of medical supplies — enough for 4,500 trauma patients and 450,000 primary health care patients for a month — to Ukraine along with other equipment. Tedros said the agency is preparing a further 108 metric tons (119 tons) for delivery.

Tedros urged donors to support the immense and escalating humanitarian needs in Ukraine and fully fund the U.N.’s \$1.1 billion humanitarian appeal.

Russian strikes hit Ukrainian capital and outskirts of Lviv

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces pressed their assault on Ukrainian cities Friday, with new missile strikes and shelling on the capital Kyiv and the outskirts of the western city of Lviv, as world leaders pushed for an investigation of the Kremlin’s repeated attacks on civilian targets, including schools, hospitals and residential areas.

The early morning barrage of missiles on the outskirts of Lviv were the closest strike yet to the center of the city, which has become a crossroads for people fleeing from other parts of Ukraine and for others entering to deliver aid or fight.

Black smoke billowed for hours after the explosions, which hit a facility for repairing military aircraft near the city’s international airport, only six kilometers (four miles) from the center. One person was wounded, the regional governor, Maksym Kozytskyy, said.

Multiple blasts hit in quick succession around 6 a.m., shaking nearby buildings, witnesses said. The missiles were launched from the Black Sea, but the Ukrainian air force’s western command said it had shot down two of six missile in the volley. A bus repair facility was also damaged, Lviv’s mayor Andriy Sadovyi said.

Lviv lies not far from the Polish border and well behind the front lines, but it and the surrounding area have not been spared Russia’s attacks. In the worst, nearly three dozen people were killed last weekend in a strike on a training facility near the city. Lviv’s population has swelled by some 200,000 as people from elsewhere in Ukraine have sought shelter there.

Early morning barrages also hit a residential building in the Podil neighborhood of Kyiv, killing at least one person, according to emergency services, who said 98 people were evacuated from the building. Kyiv mayor Vitali Klitschko said 19 were wounded in the shelling.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 35 of 92

Two others were killed when strikes hit residential and administrative buildings in the eastern city of Kramatorsk, according to the regional governor, Pavlo Kyrylenko.

In city after city around Ukraine, hospitals, schools and buildings where people sought safety have been attacked. Rescue workers searched for survivors in the ruins of a theater that served as a shelter when it was blown apart by a Russian airstrike in the besieged southern city of Mariupol Wednesday.

In Kharkiv, a massive fire raged through a local market after shelling Thursday. One firefighter was killed and another injured when new shelling hit as emergency workers fought the blaze, emergency services said.

The World Health Organization said it has verified 43 attacks on hospitals and health facilities, with 12 people killed and 34 injured.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Thursday that American officials were evaluating potential war crimes and that if the intentional targeting of civilians by Russia is confirmed, there will be "massive consequences."

The United Nations political chief, Undersecretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo, also called for an investigation into civilian casualties, reminding the U.N. Security Council that international humanitarian law bans direct attacks on civilians.

She said many of the daily attacks battering Ukrainian cities "are reportedly indiscriminate" and involve the use of "explosive weapons with a wide impact area." DiCarlo said the devastation in Mariupol and Kharkiv "raises grave fears about the fate of millions of residents of Kyiv and other cities facing intensifying attacks."

About 35,000 civilians left Mariupol over the previous two days, Kirilenko said Friday.

Hundreds of civilians were said to have taken shelter in a grand, columned theater in the city's center when it was hit Wednesday by a Russian airstrike. On Friday, their fate was still uncertain, with conflicting reports on whether anyone had emerged from the rubble. Communications are disrupted across the city and movement is difficult because of shelling and fighting.

"We hope and we think that some people who stayed in the shelter under the theater could survive," Petro Andrushchenko, an official with the mayor's office, told The Associated Press Thursday. He said the building had a relatively modern basement bomb shelter designed to withstand airstrikes. Other officials said earlier that some people had gotten out.

Video and photos provided by the Ukrainian military showed the at least three-story building had been reduced to a roofless shell, with some exterior walls collapsed. Satellite imagery on Monday from Maxar Technologies showed huge white letters on the pavement outside the theater spelling out "CHILDREN" in Russian — "DETI" — to alert warplanes to the vulnerable people hiding inside.

Russia's military denied bombing the theater or anyplace else in Mariupol on Wednesday.

In Chernihiv, at least 53 people were brought to morgues over 24 hours, killed amid heavy Russian air attacks and ground fire, the local governor, Viacheslav Chaus, told Ukrainian TV Thursday.

Ukraine's emergency services said a mother, father and three of their children, including 3-year-old twins, were killed when a Chernihiv hostel was shelled. Civilians were hiding in basements and shelters across the embattled city of 280,000.

"The city has never known such nightmarish, colossal losses and destruction," Chaus said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said early Friday he was thankful to President Joe Biden for additional military aid, but he would not get into specifics about the new package, saying he did not want Russia to know what to expect. He said when the invasion began on Feb. 24, Russia expected to find Ukraine much as it did in 2014, when Russia seized Crimea without a fight and backed separatists as they took control of the eastern Donbas region.

Instead, he said, Ukraine had much stronger defenses than expected, and Russia "didn't know what we had for defense or how we prepared to meet the blow."

In a joint statement, the foreign ministers of the Group of Seven leading economies accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of conducting an "unprovoked and shameful war," and called on Russia to comply with the International Court of Justice's order to stop its attack and withdraw its forces.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 36 of 92

Both Ukraine and Russia this week reported some progress in negotiations. Zelenskyy said he would not reveal Ukraine's negotiating tactics.

"Working more in silence than on television, radio or on Facebook," Zelenskyy said. "I consider it the right way."

Putin spoke by phone Friday with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who urged the Russian president to agree to an immediate cease-fire and called for an improvement to the humanitarian situation, a spokesman for Scholz said.

In a statement about the call, the Kremlin said Putin told the German chancellor that Ukraine had "unrealistic proposals" and was dragging out negotiations. The Kremlin also said it was evacuating civilians, and accused Ukraine of committing war crimes by shelling cities in the east.

While details of Thursday's talks were unknown, an official in Zelenskyy's office told the AP that on Wednesday, the main subject discussed was whether Russian troops would remain in separatist regions in eastern Ukraine after the war and where the borders would be.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive talks, said Ukraine was insisting on the inclusion of one or more Western nuclear powers in the negotiations and on legally binding security guarantees for Ukraine.

In exchange, the official said, Ukraine was ready to discuss a neutral military status.

Russia has demanded that NATO pledge never to admit Ukraine to the alliance or station forces there.

The fighting has led more than 3 million people to flee Ukraine, the U.N. estimates. The death toll remains unknown, though Ukraine has said thousands of civilians have died.

UK regulator revokes license of Russia-backed broadcaster RT

LONDON (AP) — Britain's communications regulator on Friday revoked the license of the state-funded Russian broadcaster RT amid concern that its coverage of the war in Ukraine was biased.

The decision comes as the regulator, Ofcom, conducts 29 investigations into the impartiality of RT's coverage of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The volume and nature of the issues raised by these inquiries are of "great concern," the regulator said, particularly because RT had been fined 200,000 pounds for previous violations of impartiality standards.

RT's funding from the Russian state, as well as the fact that Russia invaded its smaller neighbor, were also part of the decision, Ofcom said.

As a result, Ofcom ruled that RT's parent company, ANO TV Novosti, isn't "fit and proper to hold a U.K. broadcast license." The move is largely symbolic, as the broadcaster is already off the air due to sanctions imposed by the European Union.

"We also note new laws in Russia which effectively criminalise any independent journalism that departs from the Russian state's own news narrative, in particular in relation to the invasion of Ukraine," the regulator said in a statement. "We consider that given these constraints it appears impossible for RT to comply with the due impartiality rules of our Broadcasting Code in the circumstances."

RT said in a statement that the regulator had robbed the U.K. public of access to information and ignored its "clean record" of four consecutive years.

RT deputy editor-in-chief Anna Belkina said that with its decision Ofcom "has shown the U.K. public, and the regulatory community internationally, that despite a well-constructed facade of independence, it is nothing more than a tool of government, bending to its media-suppressing will."

Government minister James Heappey said Ofcom's decision was "very welcome." But he stressed that "it was the regulator that took the choice rather than government."

Pro-Trump Ohio candidates realize endorsement may never come

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

MANSFIELD, Ohio (AP) — Ohio's crowded Republican Senate race has been all about one man: Donald

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 37 of 92

Trump.

But with less than two months until the state's May 3 primary to succeed retiring Sen. Rob Portman, some of the leading candidates have accepted that, despite their best efforts, the former president's coveted endorsement may never come.

"I've made my pitch to the president. I continue to make my pitch to the president. But we also have to make our pitch to voters because I think there's a chance he stays out of it," said J.D. Vance, one of the candidates eagerly courting Trump.

Perhaps no race in the nation better represents the transformation of the Republican Party over the last six years than the one in Ohio. The state that voted twice for former President Barack Obama and elected a long succession of moderate Republicans, from former Gov. John Kasich to the establishment-minded Portman, has swung decisively right. And the leading candidates in the race have been working to out-Trump one another as they try to woo both him and his voters.

Vance notes at his town hall events that he speaks with Trump regularly. Former state Treasurer Josh Mandel is running with the slogan "pro-GOD, pro-GUN, pro-TRUMP." And former Ohio GOP chair Jane Timken's website opens with an ad titled "Incredible Leader" that features footage of Trump praising her at his rallies and by tweet. At his last event in the state, her campaign hired a plane to pull a banner that read "Ohio is Trump Country" and distributed a flyer that called her "The Only True Pro-Trump, America First Candidate" in the race.

The candidates' past criticisms of Trump have also dominated the millions of dollars in negative advertising that has flooded the state's airwaves.

But Trump has remained on the sidelines, unable to settle on a pick, even as some current and former aides — a long list of whom are working for competing candidates — have tried to nudge him their way. Unless a clear front-runner emerges, allies say Trump may choose to sit out the race entirely, may endorse more than one candidate or may wait to weigh in until the last minute, when many voters will have already made up their minds. Adding to the uncertainty: the possibility the election may be delayed after the Ohio Supreme Court this week again rejected proposed legislative maps.

"Ohio is a critical race. President Trump is watching it closely and will decide at the right time," said Trump spokesperson Taylor Budowich.

That's left the candidates trying other tactics.

"You know, in this campaign, everybody's saying they're all the Trumpiest candidates," Mike Gibbons, one of the race's front-runners, said at a campaign event last week. "I don't have to prove my Trump credentials. And it's not about Trump. It's about America First and the ideas and the things that he accomplished."

Nonetheless, the wealthy investment banker who is running as "a pro-Trump businessman" ticked through his Trump bona fides, telling his audience at the Stark County GOP headquarters that he'd served as Trump's state finance co-chair in 2016, launched a Trump-aligned super PAC and even served as a pro-Trump commentator on Norwegian TV.

Gibbons, who told The Associated Press last week that he had never courted Trump's endorsement, met with the former president Tuesday, according to two people familiar with the sit-down who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a private meeting.

"You know I never have," Gibbons told the AP. "I mean, (Trump) knows who I am. That's it. He doesn't know a lot about me. But I think he knows I never criticized him or was an anti-Trumper."

He also said he understood Trump's reluctance: "He doesn't want to be embarrassed and pick the wrong person."

Mandel, the far-right candidate who has been using Trump's playbook of attention-by-controversy, had no qualms about acknowledging his efforts.

"I completely respect the president's decision-making process on the endorsement. I'm doing everything I can to earn his support. And I'm confident I'm going to earn it," he told the AP, noting that he was the first statewide official in Ohio to support Trump in 2016. "There's no candidate in this race that embodies the Trump America First spirit and agenda like I do."

Timken spokesperson Mandi Merritt, meanwhile, said Timken "of course would be honored" to receive

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 38 of 92

Trump's backing.

"But every day, Jane is focused on earning the endorsement and support of the voters of Ohio," she said.

The final major GOP candidate in the race, state Sen. Matt Dolan, whose family owns the Cleveland Guardians, has not aligned himself with Trump, seeking an alternate lane.

For now, the race remains fluid. A recent Fox News poll found that about a quarter of Republican primary voters in the state say they are undecided. And even majorities of Gibbons, Mandel and Vance supporters said they may well change their minds.

And voters here said in interviews that a Trump endorsement might not matter.

Dorine Garbash, 57, a lifelong Republican who lives in Uniontown, said she's turned off by candidates who constantly talk up their ties to Trump, whom she voted for twice.

"I don't like people riding on other people's coattails. And I really feel that there's a lot of them out there riding on his coattails," she said.

Star Clark, 75, an Elyria resident who plans to vote for Mandel, said she she doesn't care about Trump's endorsement — as long as the person seeking her vote supports the former president.

"If they go against Donald Trump, it's to their detriment," she said. "They need to stick with him if they want to go on and to be something. I love Donald Trump."

While the former president's endorsement is coveted by candidates across the country, it remains unclear how valuable it will be in this year's races.

Trump crowed last week after the first 2022 midterm election contests that "All 33 Trump-Endorsed candidates won last night in Texas, or are substantially leading." But many of the candidates he endorsed there were running uncontested or had limited opposition. And Attorney General Ken Paxton, a strong Trump ally, was forced into a runoff against Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush.

Meanwhile in Alabama, Trump's Senate candidate, Rep. Mo Brooks, has been struggling so badly that Trump told the Washington Examiner this week that he may pull his endorsement. His surprise pick in North Carolina's Senate race, Rep. Ted Budd, is locked in a competitive primary. And in Georgia's governor race, former Sen. David Perdue, whom Trump lobbied to run, has been badly outraised by Republican Gov. Brian Kemp.

In addition to Ohio, Trump has yet to endorse in several other high-profile Senate races where his support has been courted. After being burned when his original pick for Pennsylvania's open Senate seat dropped out amid allegations of abuse by his ex-wife, Trump has yet to weigh in again in that race or in primaries in Missouri and Arizona.

Rep. Tim Ryan, the leading Democrat in the Ohio Senate contest, sees an opportunity as the Republicans in the race jockey to be the Trumpiest of the bunch.

"I think a lot of Republicans are afraid of what the Republican primary's turned into," he told the AP. "It's one of those 'I didn't leave them, they left me' kind of things."

Biden looks to assess where China's Xi stands on Russia war

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden and China's Xi Jinping are set to speak on Friday as the White House warns Beijing that providing military or economic assistance for Russia's invasion of Ukraine will trigger severe consequences from Washington and beyond.

Planning for the call has been in the works since Biden and Xi held a virtual summit in November, but differences between Washington and Beijing over Russian President Vladimir Putin's prosecution of his three-week-old war against Ukraine are expected to be at the center of the call.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden would question Xi about Beijing's "rhetorical support" of Putin and an "absence of denunciation" of Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine.

"This is an opportunity to assess where President Xi stands," Psaki said.

China on Friday again sought to highlight its calls for negotiations and donations of humanitarian aid, while accusing the U.S. of provoking Russia and fueling the conflict by shipping arms to Ukraine.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 39 of 92

"China has called for every effort to avoid civilian casualties all the time," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian told reporters at a daily briefing. "Which do the civilians in Ukraine need more; food and sleeping bags or machine guns and artillery? It's easy to answer."

The U.S.-China relationship, long fraught, has only become more strained since the start of Biden's presidency. Biden has repeatedly criticized China for military provocations against Taiwan, human rights abuses against ethnic minorities and efforts to squelch pro-democracy advocates in Hong Kong.

But the relationship may have reached a new low with the Russian invasion.

In the days after Putin deployed Russian forces in Ukraine, Xi's government tried to distance itself from Russia's offensive but avoided criticizing Moscow. At other moments, Beijing's actions have been provocative and have included amplifying unverified Russian claims that Ukraine ran chemical and biological weapons labs with U.S. support.

Earlier this week, the U.S. informed Asian and European allies that American intelligence had determined that China had signaled to Russia that it would be willing to provide both military support for the campaign in Ukraine and financial backing to help stave off the impact of severe sanctions imposed by the West.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Thursday reiterated that the Biden administration remains concerned that China is considering providing military equipment to Russia. He said Biden would make clear to Xi "that China will bear responsibility for any actions it takes to support Russia's aggression, and we will not hesitate to impose costs."

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan and senior Chinese foreign policy adviser Yang Jiechi met in Rome earlier this week for an intense, seven-hour talk about the Russian invasion and other issues.

Ahead of the Rome talks, Sullivan said the U.S. wouldn't abide China or any other country helping Russia work around economy-jarring sanctions inflicted by the U.S. and other allies since the Feb. 24 invasion.

Sullivan also said the administration determined China knew that Putin "was planning something" before the invasion of Ukraine, but the Chinese government "may not have understood the full extent" of what Putin had in mind.

Xi and Putin met in early February, weeks before the invasion, with the Russian leader traveling to Beijing for the start of the Winter Olympics. During Putin's visit, the two leaders issued a 5,000-word statement declaring limitless "friendship."

Beijing's leadership would like to be supportive of Russia but also recognizes how badly the Russian military action is going as an overmatched Ukrainian military has put up stiff resistance, according to a Western official familiar with current intelligence assessments.

The official, who was not authorized to comment and spoke on the condition of anonymity, said Beijing is weighing the the potential "reputational blowback" of being associated with the Russian camp. The Chinese response to Russia's request for help "is in the process of being formulated," the official added.

Though seen as siding with Russia, China has also reached out to Ukraine, with its ambassador to the country on Monday quoted as saying, "China is a friendly country for the Ukrainian people. As an ambassador, I can responsibly say that China will forever be a good force for Ukraine, both economically and politically."

"We have seen how great the unity of the Ukrainian people is, and that means its strength," Fan Xianrong was quoted by Ukraine's state news service Ukrinform as telling regional authorities in the western city of Lviv, to where the Chinese Embassy has relocated.

Despite tensions in U.S.-China relations, Biden and Xi have sought to keep the leader-to-leader dialogue open and have become familiar with each other through their political rise.

Biden and Xi first got to know each other on travels across the U.S. and China when both were vice presidents, interactions that both leaders say left a lasting impression. Friday's phone call will be the fourth exchange between the two leaders since Biden became president.

NTSB: 13-year-old drove pickup in Texas crash that killed 9

By CEDAR ATTANSIO, JILL BLEED and ANITA SNOW Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 40 of 92

HOBBS, N.M. (AP) — The investigation into this week's fiery head-on crash in West Texas now focuses on the revelation that a 13-year-old was driving the pickup truck that struck a van, killing nine people, including six members of a college golf team and their coach.

The young teen, who is still unidentified, and a man traveling in the truck also died.

National Transportation Safety Board Vice Chairman Bruce Landsberg on Thursday revealed the truck was driven by the child. He said the truck's left front tire, which was a spare tire, blew out before impact.

The pickup truck crossed into the opposite lane on the darkened, two-lane highway before colliding head-on with the van. Both vehicles burst into flames.

Although it was unclear how fast the two vehicles were traveling, "this was clearly a high-speed collision," Landsberg said.

Landsberg said investigators hoped to retrieve enough information from the vehicle's recorders, if they survived, to understand what happened. He said many in the van were not wearing seatbelts and at least one was ejected from the vehicle.

It's not unusual for young teens to drive in that region and other more rural parts of the United States.

But "that was dumb" for a 13-year-old to be driving on a busy two-lane roadway used by oil traffic, said Gib Stevens, who leads area trucking operations for an oilfield servicing company.

One must be 14 in Texas to start taking classroom courses for a learner's license and 15 to receive that provisional license to drive with an instructor or licensed adult in the vehicle.

Department of Public Safety Sgt. Victor Taylor said a 13-year-old driving would be breaking the law.

The University of the Southwest students, including one from Portugal and one from Mexico, and the coach were returning from a golf tournament when the vehicles collided Tuesday night. Two Canadian students were hospitalized in critical condition.

The NTSB sent an investigative team to the crash site in Texas' Andrews County, about 30 miles (50 kilometers) east of the New Mexico state line.

University of the Southwest spokeswoman Maria Duarte declined to comment on the NTSB's announcement about the young driver, citing the ongoing investigation. The private Christian college is located in Hobbs, New Mexico, near the Texas state line.

The golf teams were traveling in a 2017 Ford Transit van that was towing a box trailer when it collided with the 2007 Dodge 2500 pickup, according to NTSB spokesperson Eric Weiss.

The speed limit at the crash site is 75 mph (120 kph), he said.

The Texas Department of Public Safety identified the deceased as: Golf coach Tyler James, 26, of Hobbs, New Mexico; and players Mauricio Sanchez, 19, of Mexico; Travis Garcia, 19, of Pleasanton, Texas; Jackson Zinn, 22, of Westminster, Colorado; Karisa Raines, 21, of Fort Stockton, Texas; Laci Stone, 18, of Nocona, Texas; and Tiago Sousa, 18, of Portugal.

Also killed were Henrich Siemens, 38, of Seminole County, Texas, and the 13-year-old boy who were truck.

Critically injured aboard the van were Canadian students Dayton Price, 19, of Mississauga, Ontario, and Hayden Underhill, 20, of Amherstview, Ontario. Both were taken by helicopter to the University Medical Center in Lubbock, about 110 miles (180 kilometers) to the northeast.

"They are both stable and recovering, and every day making more and more progress," University of the Southwest Provost Ryan Tipton said Thursday.

"One of the students is eating chicken soup," said Tipton, calling their recovery "a game of inches."

Tipton said University President Quint Thurman visited the students' parents at the hospital, illustrating the close community at the college with only about 350 on-campus students.

"Hockey was a big part of life for a while, but his true passion is golf," said Underhill's brother Drew Underhill.

The Mexican Federation of Golf posted an online note of condolence to the loved ones of Mauricio Sanchez.

Sousa was from Portugal's southern coast, where he graduated from high school last summer before heading to college in the U.S., said Renata Afonso, head of the Escola Secundária de Loulé.

A memorial was set up Wednesday at the golf course near campus where the team practices, with flow-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 41 of 92

ers, golf balls and a handmade sign.

About 150 people turned out Thursday evening to remember Jackson Zinn at Texas Roadhouse, a restaurant where he worked and met his girlfriend of five months.

"We met here exactly at this table," said Maddy Russell, 20, of Hobbs. "He was my heart."

The mourners released around 100 blue and orange balloons into the cold whipping wind of eastern New Mexico, which soon disappeared into the horizon.

The university said on Twitter that counseling and religious services was available on campus.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott expressed sympathy.

The teams had been taking part in a golf tournament at Midland College, about 315 miles (505 kilometers) west of Dallas.

Putin likens opponents to 'gnats,' signaling new repression

NEW YORK (AP) — Facing stiff resistance in Ukraine and crippling economic sanctions at home, Russian President Vladimir Putin is using language that recalls the rhetoric from Josef Stalin's show trials of the 1930s.

Putin's ominous speech on Wednesday likened opponents to "gnats" who try to weaken the country at the behest of the West — crude remarks that set the stage for sweeping repressions against those who dare to speak out against the war in Ukraine.

His rant appeared to reflect his frustration about the slow pace of the Russian offensive, which bogged down on the outskirts of Kyiv and around other cities in northeastern Ukraine. Russian forces made comparatively bigger gains in the south, but they haven't been able to capture the strategic port of Mariupol on the Sea of Azov, and their advance along the Black Sea coast also has stalled.

Meanwhile, Russia has been battered by devastating Western sanctions that cut the government's access to an estimated half of the country's hard currency reserves and dealt crippling blows to many sectors of the economy.

With his hopes for a blitz in Ukraine shattered and economic costs mounting swiftly, Putin unleashed a venomous diatribe at those who oppose his course.

"The Russian people will always be able to distinguish true patriots from scum and traitors and will simply spit them out like a gnat that accidentally flew into their mouths — spit them out on the pavement," Putin said during Wednesday's call with top officials. "I am convinced that such a natural and necessary self-purification of society will only strengthen our country, our solidarity, cohesion and readiness to respond to any challenges."

The coarse language carried ominous parallels for those familiar with Soviet history. During show trials of Stalin's Great Terror, authorities disparaged the declared "enemies of the people" as "reptiles" or "mad dogs."

His voice strained by anger, Putin charged that Russians who oppose the war in Ukraine were a "fifth column" obsequiously serving Western interests and ready to "sell their own mother."

"I don't condemn those who have villas in Miami or the French Riviera, those who can't live without foie gras, oysters or so-called gender freedoms," Putin said. "It's not a problem. The problem is that many of those people are mentally there (in the West) and not here with our people, with Russia. They don't remember or just don't understand that they are just ... expendables used for the purpose of inflicting the maximum damage on our people."

As he spoke, the Russian State Investigative Committee announced the opening of criminal probes against several people accused of spreading "false information" about the military action in Ukraine.

The first person singled out by the country's top investigative agency was Veronika Belotserkovskaya, a popular blogger and socialite who has written books about French and Italian cuisine and divides her time between Russia and southern France. She appeared to be a target conveniently fitting Putin's scathing description of cosmopolitan Russians who love fancy food and are seemingly at odds with the broad masses.

The investigative committee said it would move to issue an international arrest warrant for Belotserkovsk-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 42 of 92

kaya, alleging her Instagram posts “discredited” state authorities and the military.

Belotserkovskaya responded by writing: “I have been officially declared to be a decent person!”

She is being investigated under new legislation fast-tracked on March 4 by the Kremlin-controlled parliament, a week after Putin launched the invasion. It envisions prison terms of up to 15 years for posting “fake” information about the military that differs from the official narrative.

Putin and his lieutenants describe the war in Ukraine as a “special military operation” intended to uproot alleged “neo-Nazi nationalists” and remove a potential military threat against Russia— goals that most of the world has rejected as bogus.

Russian officials have attributed the offensive’s slow pace to their desire to spare civilians, even as the military pummeled Mariupol, Kyiv, Kharkiv and other Ukrainian cities with indiscriminate barrages and airstrikes, killing untold numbers of civilians.

With the action in Ukraine in stark contrast with official declarations, the authorities acted quickly to control the message, shutting access to foreign media websites, along with Facebook and Instagram and moving to outlaw their parent company Meta as an “extremist” organization.

The tight lids on information have helped the Kremlin rally support of broad layers of the population who rely on state-controlled television as their main source of news. State TV programs carried an increasingly aggressive message against those who oppose the war.

Asked about incidents in which the apartment doors of war critics were spray-painted with the letter “Z” — a sign used to mark Russian military vehicles in Ukraine that has been heavily promoted by the state — Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov described it as an “emotional” move by Putin’s supporters.

The campaign in support of the war saw Russian cities flooded with “Z” posters and vehicles emblazoned with it. School children were shown standing in groups in the shape of the letter or wearing clothes marked with a “Z.”

Despite the draconian new laws, tight controls on information and increasingly aggressive propaganda, however, thousands of Russians showed up at antiwar protests across the country to face immediate arrest.

In a powerful symbol of defiance, an employee of state television interrupted a live news program, holding a handmade sign protesting the war. Marina Ovsyannikova was fined the equivalent of \$270, but still faces a criminal probe that could land her in prison.

One loud voice of dissent was that of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, Putin’s fiercest political foe who is serving 2 1/2 years in prison and now faces a trial that could hand him a 13-year sentence.

In a speech at his trial Tuesday, Navalny warned that the war will lead to the breakup of Russia, saying that “everyone’s duty now is to oppose the war.”

Saint Peter’s ousts Kentucky, busts brackets on NCAA Day 1

By The Associated Press undefined

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Tiny Saint Peter’s took down basketball royalty on Thursday night, getting 27 points from Daryl Banks III in an 85-79 overtime victory over second-seeded Kentucky in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

The Peacocks became the 10th No. 15 seed to win a first-round game since the tournament expanded to 64 teams in 1985 and handed Kentucky its first opening-round loss under coach John Calipari.

Saint Peter’s, the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference champion, kept it close throughout and Banks’ two free throws with 1:45 left in overtime gave the Peacocks the lead for good. Doug Edert’s layup with 24 seconds left in regulation sent the game to overtime. He also made the final two game-sealing free throws for the Peacocks and finished with 20 points.

Saint Peter’s (20-11) moves on to face Murray State in Saturday’s second round in the East Region.

Not bad for a private Jesuit school in Jersey City, New Jersey, that’s made half as many NCAA Tournament appearances (four) as Kentucky has national titles (eight).

Oscar Tshiebwe had 30 points and 16 rebounds for Kentucky (26-8) but his pair of missed free throws early in overtime was costly, and the Wildcats lacked a reliable secondary scorer. TyTy Washington Jr. was

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 43 of 92

held to five points on 2-of-10 shooting.

MURRAY STATE 92, SAN FRANCISCO 87, OT

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — KJ Williams scored six of his 18 points in overtime after Murray State blew an eight-point lead late in regulation, and the seventh-seeded Racers extended their winning streak to 21 games by beating San Francisco.

The Racers (31-2) tied South Dakota State, which lost to Providence earlier Thursday, for the longest winning streak in the nation this season.

The game featured 18 lead changes and 14 ties. Murray State ultimately took control with Williams' clutch baskets and Jordan Skipper-Brown's timely plays in the extra session.

Jamaree Bouyea scored 36 points for USF (24-10), which made its first NCAA appearance since 1998.

BAYLOR 85, NORFOLK STATE 49

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — Matthew Mayer scored a career-high 22 points and defending national champion Baylor beat Norfolk State.

Freshman standout Jeremy Sochan added 15 points and seven rebounds for the top-seeded Bears (27-6), who will play eighth-seeded North Carolina on Saturday.

Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference player of the year Joe Bryant had 15 points for 16th-seeded Norfolk State (24-7).

The Spartans were one of the biggest underdogs in first-round games this year, at 20 1/2 points, according to FanDuel Sportsbook. Despite some size up front, they couldn't keep up with the Bears and never came close to an upset.

Flo Thamba scored 14 points and Adam Flagler had 11 points for the Bears after some early foul trouble.

NORTH CAROLINA 95, MARQUETTE 63

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — Brady Manek scored 28 points, Caleb Love had 21 of his 23 before halftime and North Carolina routed Marquette.

Love made six 3-pointers, all in the first 19 minutes, to tie Carolina's single-game tournament record as the Tar Heels (25-9) built a 28-point lead.

Manek, who also had 11 rebounds, finished with five 3s as he and Love combined to go 11 of 24 from long range. Armando Bacot grabbed 10 rebounds on his way to the school season record (422).

RJ Davis had a career-high 12 assists for Carolina.

Olivier-Maxence Prosper scored 16 points for the No. 9 seed Golden Eagles (19-13), who lost their third consecutive first-round game.

SAINT MARY'S 82, INDIANA 53

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Logan Johnson scored 20 points and fifth-seeded Saint Mary's took advantage of No. 12 seed Indiana's grueling recent schedule.

Tommy Kuhse added 19 points and six assists for the Gaels (26-7), who will play UCLA in the second round.

Trayce Jackson-Davis had 12 points for Indiana (21-14), which arrived in Portland on Wednesday morning after an all-nighter because of flight delays from Dayton following its First Four victory over Wyoming.

Thursday's game was Indiana's fifth in seven days. Saint Mary's came in fresh from a 10-day layoff.

Saint Mary's pulled away late in the first half and led by as many as 34 points — and the overtaxed Hoosiers couldn't catch up.

UCLA 57, AKRON 53

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Tyger Campbell rescued UCLA from a potential upset, scoring eight straight points late in the second half, and the fourth-seeded Bruins rallied past No. 13 seed Akron.

With the Bruins down 51-47 with 3 1/2 minutes left, Campbell took control. He hit a corner 3-pointer to pull UCLA within one, knocked down a 15-footer for the lead and added a 25-footer as the shot clock was expiring to put the Bruins ahead 55-51 with 1:17 left.

Campbell finished with 16 points and Jamie Jaquez Jr. added 15 for UCLA (26-7). Jules Bernard, who hit a 3 to start UCLA's run when it trailed 47-39, added 10 points.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 44 of 92

Xavier Castaneda led Akron (24-10) with 18 points and Enrique Freeman added 14 before fouling out with 2:26 remaining on an illegal screen.

SOUTH REGION

MICHIGAN 75, COLORADO STATE 63

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Freshman Frankie Collins provided the spark Michigan needed in a turbulent year for the Wolverines and coach Juwan Howard, helping the 11th-seeded Wolverines rally from a 15-point deficit to beat sixth-seeded Colorado State.

Collins, pressed into the starting lineup because starting point guard DeVante' Jones was out with a concussion, had season highs of 14 points, six rebounds and 31 minutes.

Big man Hunter Dickinson led Michigan with 21 points on 8-of-10 shooting. Eli Brooks had 16 points and Caleb Houston added 13 for the Wolverines (18-14), who will face third-seeded Tennessee in the second round on Saturday.

Dischon Thomas scored 15 points on 5-of-7 3-point shooting for Colorado State (25-6), and Mountain West Conference player of the year David Roddy had 13 points and six rebounds.

The Rams led 28-13 early, but Collins helped Michigan chip away and the Wolverines took the lead for good midway through the second half.

TENNESSEE 88, LONGWOOD 56

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Santiago Vescovi scored 18 points and Tennessee pounded Longwood, showing why it felt it deserved better than a No. 3 seed.

The Volunteers (27-7) shot 60% from the field and had four players score in double figures. The runaway victory came just four days after the school won the Southeastern Conference Tournament for the first time in 43 years.

Josiah-Jordan James added 17 points, and John Fulkerson scored 15 on 7-for-8 shooting. Kennedy Chandler had 13 and Zakai Ziegler finished with 10.

Longwood (26-7), the Big South champ from Farmville, Virginia, was led by Justin Hill with 13 points in the school's first NCAA tourney appearance.

MIDWEST REGION

CREIGHTON 72, SAN DIEGO STATE 69, OT

FORT WORTH, TEXAS (AP) — Trey Alexander converted a go-ahead, three-point play late in overtime, and Creighton rallied past San Diego State.

The Bluejays hadn't led since the first five minutes of the game when Alexander, who also had the tying bucket late in regulation, drove right and was fouled on the layup. The free throw put Creighton ahead 71-69 with 1:08 remaining.

Down by two, the Aztecs had the ball with 4.3 seconds left when Matt Bradley inbounded to Aguek Arop, then ran around him for the handoff. Bradley lost control of the ball before getting a shot off, and Creighton secured it with 0.8 seconds to go.

Alexander scored 18 points, and Ryan Kalkbrenner had 16 points and 10 rebounds before leaving with an apparent left leg injury in overtime.

The ninth-seeded Bluejays (23-11) will play top-seeded Kansas on Saturday.

Chad Baker-Mazara scored 15 of his 17 points in the first half for the Aztecs (23-9), who were in position for their first tournament win since 2015. Gus Bradley added 15.

KANSAS 83, TEXAS SOUTHERN 56

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — Remy Martin had 15 points and Christian Braun 14 as five players scored in double figures for top-seeded Kansas, and the Jayhawks opened their 50th NCAA Tournament by beating Texas Southern.

Southwestern Athletic Conference champion Texas Southern (19-13), which won a First Four game two nights earlier, had its only lead against the Big 12 champs after Bryson Etienne made its first shot of the game.

Once the Jayhawks (29-6) finally got on the board on a tying layup by Dajuan Harris after missing their first three shots, they got on a roll. They made their next six shots, and soon after that had a stretch of

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 45 of 92

seven makes in a row.

John Walker III had 13 points for the Tigers.

RICHMOND 67, IOWA 63

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Jacob Gilyard scored 24 points, Tyler Burton added 18 points and 11 rebounds, and No. 12 seed Richmond leaned on its experience to defeat Big Ten tournament champ Iowa.

Nathan Cayo also had 15 points, including a couple of big baskets down the stretch, as the Atlantic 10 Tournament champ Spiders (24-12) improved their NCAA tourney record against fifth-seeded teams to 4-0. They will next face the region's No. 4 seed, Providence.

Keegan Murray scored 21 points and Patrick McCaffery added 18 for the Hawkeyes (26-10), who were unable to carry over the momentum of winning four times in four days at the Big Ten tournament last weekend.

The Hawkeyes' fourth-best offense nationally, which entered the NCAA Tournament averaging 83.8 points, was held to its third-lowest total of the year and worst production since a 48-46 loss at Rutgers on Jan. 19.

Gilyard sealed the victory by hitting all four of his free-throw attempts in the final 16 seconds.

PROVIDENCE 66, SOUTH DAKOTA STATE 57

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Al Durham had 13 points, eight rebounds and six assists and Jared Bynum made three big free throws with 29.9 seconds left as Providence snapped the longest winning streak in college basketball by beating South Dakota State.

It was a typical grind for the Big East regular-season champions. The Friars' turnaround season after going 13-13 in 2020-21 now includes 16 victories by single digits.

The Jackrabbits (30-6) came in on a 21-game winning streak.

The Friars (26-5) were up three in the final minute and Bynum let loose a 3-pointer with 3 seconds left on the shot clock. The shot missed, but Douglas Wilson was whistled for a foul. Bynum knocked down all three shots to give Providence a six-point lead. Bynum finished with 12 points and Noah Horchler had 13 for the Providence.

Baylor Scheierman led the Jackrabbits with 18 points and 10 rebounds and Wilson scored 13.

WEST REGION

NEW MEXICO STATE 70, UCONN 63

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Teddy Allen scored 37 points and New Mexico State won an NCAA Tournament game for the first time almost three decades, upsetting fifth-seeded Connecticut to become the second No. 12 seed to advance out of the first round.

The Aggies (27-6) will Arkansas in the second round. In their 23rd NCAA appearance, the Aggies won for the first time since beating Syracuse in the first round in 1993.

Allen made a rainbow 3 off the dribble with 1:40 to put New Mexico State up 61-58.

He wasn't done. After R.J. Cole cut the lead to one for UConn (23-10), Allen went back to work. He completed a three-point play for a 66-60 lead with 27 seconds left.

Cole led the Huskies with 20 points.

ARKANSAS 75, VERMONT 71

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Stanley Umude scored 21 points, JD Notae scored all 17 of his in the second half, and No. 4 seed Arkansas hung on to beat 13th-seeded Vermont.

Jaylin Williams scored 13 points and had 10 rebounds for the Razorbacks (26-8), who a year ago reached the Elite Eight before losing to eventual champion Baylor.

Two-time America East player of the year Ryan Davis and Ben Shungu scored 20 points each for the Catamounts (28-6).

Notae sealed the win by sinking two free throws with 9 seconds remaining. Vermont's final possession ended with Finn Sullivan missing a 3-point attempt, allowing Arkansas to run out the clock.

GONZAGA 93, GEORGIA STATE 72

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Drew Timme scored 22 of his 32 points in the second half and top overall seed Gonzaga struggled to shake No. 16 seed Georgia State for 30 minutes before pulling away late.

The Zags (27-3) were sluggish early and couldn't make a basket for a long stretch of the first half. Even

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 46 of 92

when Gonzaga's offense kicked into gear after halftime, the Panthers didn't fold.

The eventual overwhelming surge from the Bulldogs finally arrived with about 10 minutes to go. Gonzaga went on a 24-1 run, turning a four-point game into the blowout that was expected. The Zags will face the West Region's No. 9 seed, Memphis, in the second round on Saturday.

Timme was the catalyst, topping 30 points for the fifth time in his career while also grabbing 13 rebounds. Chet Holmgren, the Zags' 7-foot freshman, added 19 points, 17 rebounds and seven blocks.

Corey Allen led Georgia State (18-10) with 16 points, and Jalen Thomas and Kane Williams both added 12. MEMPHIS 64, BOISE STATE 53

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — DeAndre Williams had 14 points, Jalen Duren made a crucial basket down the stretch and No. 9 seed Memphis held off a second-half rally by Boise State.

Duren finished with 10 points and 11 rebounds for the Tigers (22-10), who were 9-8 after 17 games but went on a late-season charge to reach the tournament for the first time since 2014. The Tigers have now won 13 of their past 15 games.

Abu Kigab had 20 points to lead the eighth-seeded Broncos (27-8), the Mountain West regular-season and tournament champs, who were making their first appearance in the tournament since 2015.

Saint Peter's shocks No. 2 seed Kentucky 85-79 in OT

By GARY B. GRAVES AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Saint Peter's acted like it had been there before.

After the 15th-seeded Peacocks bounced storied Kentucky from the NCAA Tournament on Thursday night, they calmly exchanged handshakes with the Wildcats before heading over to the opposite sideline to celebrate with a small contingent of true believers.

The tiny Jesuit school from Jersey City, New Jersey, got 27 points from Daryl Banks III as it took down basketball royalty, beating second-seeded Kentucky 85-79 in overtime and sending countless brackets into the digital wastebasket.

"It was an amazing feeling," Banks said. "You grow up watching March Madness, the tournament, so to let that sink in — knowing the game was over — it felt really good."

The Peacocks became the 10th No. 15 seed to win a first-round game since the tournament expanded to 64 teams in 1985 and handed Kentucky its first opening-round loss under coach John Calipari.

"At the end of the day, every team that made it to the NCAA Tournament deserves to be here. Every team that made it to the NCAA Tournament believes they can advance. It's about this night," Saint Peter's coach Shaheen Holloway said.

Saint Peter's, the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference champion, kept it close throughout and Banks' two free throws with 1:45 left in overtime gave the Peacocks the lead for good. Doug Edert's layup with 24 seconds left in regulation sent the game to overtime. He also made the final two game-sealing free throws for the Peacocks and finished with 20 points.

Saint Peter's (20-11) moves on to face either Murray State or San Francisco in Saturday's second round in the East Region.

Not bad for a school with an enrollment of about 3,500 that's made half as many NCAA Tournament appearances (four) as Kentucky has national titles (eight). Kentucky had nearly 31,800 students enrolled on its 900-acre campus as of last fall and has the second highest-paid coach in college hoops in Calipari (more than \$8 million per year).

"It's huge," Banks said. "We're putting Jersey City on the map. We come from Jersey, a small school, probably a lot of people don't even know who we are."

Oscar Tshiebwe had 30 points and 16 rebounds for Kentucky (26-8) but his pair of missed free throws early in overtime was costly, and the Wildcats lacked a reliable secondary scorer. TyTy Washington Jr. was held to five points on 2-of-10 shooting.

The game featured 16 ties and 13 lead changes. Kentucky went ahead 68-62 on Sahvir Wheeler's driving layup with 4:12 remaining. Saint Peter's followed with seven unanswered points, capped by Edert's

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 47 of 92

go-ahead 3-pointer with 1:25 remaining. Kellan Grady put Kentucky back ahead before Edert forced OT. The Wildcats had their eyes set on a ninth title behind Tshiebwe, the 6-foot-9 forward who is a candidate for national player of the year honors. And Kentucky was playing in front of a predominantly blue-clad crowd at Gainbridge Fieldhouse, a 2 1/2 hour drive from Lexington.

"It is sad because I've been wanting this moment for a long time," Tshiebwe said.

Banks set the tone throughout, making all four 3s for 16 first-half points. He finished 9 of 19 from the field and 5 of 8 from deep, with a loud reaction following most every big shot. Teammates followed suit.

Edert made 5 of 7 shots including both of his 3-point tries. Saint Peter's finished 9 of 17 overall from 3 and shot 29 of 57 overall (50.9%). The Peacocks also stayed close on the boards (35 to Kentucky's 36) and made 18 of 21 from the line.

"It feels amazing, truly it feels amazing," Edert said. "They had a great crowd, a lot of people. I don't know if you saw it, but we had our own little section over there, too."

Kentucky was 26 of 61 (43%) overall and 23 of 35 from the line. The Wildcats were tentative at times with the ball, hesitation that ended with forced shots. And it led to a second consecutive loss to close the season.

"My whole thing this week, because I knew they had never played in this stuff, was to get them free and loose and we never got to that point," Calipari said. "Even during timeouts, I was trying to do that. ... As a coach it's your job to figure out how to finish the game and we didn't do that."

TURNING POINT

After Banks' go-ahead free throws, Kentucky had two empty possessions. Wheeler's turnover led to a layup by Drane. Then KC Ndefo blocked Keion Brooks Jr.'s layup attempt, and Banks made two more free throws.

Washington sank a 3 to get Kentucky within 81-79 before Lee and Edert sealed it at the line.

BITTERSWEET MEMORIES

Before taking over at Saint Peter's, Holloway spent eight years as an assistant at his alma mater, Seton Hall. He played four years for the Pirates and experienced the highs and lows of the NCAA Tournament as a senior in 2000.

Holloway scored 27 points and made the go-ahead basket with 1.9 seconds left in a first-round win over Oregon, but he was injured and played only eight minutes in a second-round win over Temple. He did not play when Seton Hall was eliminated in the Sweet 16 by Oklahoma State.

BIG PICTURE

Saint Peter's: The Peacocks didn't flinch against their more talented foe, keeping up with and sometimes dictating the pace. Banks' perimeter shooting was huge in the first half before he came up late in the game and in OT.

Kentucky: The Wildcats had to work for nearly every basket but succeeded at getting to the line. But they struggled moving the ball and missed several key shots that could have won the game. Instead, they're going home early a year after missing the tournament altogether.

UP NEXT

Saint Peter's hopes to repeat Oral Roberts' run to the Sweet 16 as a No. 15 seed last year.

The AP Interview: Health chief warns of COVID funds shortage

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With the nation yearning for a new normal after its long struggle with the coronavirus, U.S. Health Secretary Xavier Becerra warned Thursday that vaccines, tests and treatments will be "stuck on the ground" unless Congress provides the additional funds the White House has demanded.

"We have reached a pivot point," Becerra said in an interview with The Associated Press. "How well we pivot is on us."

Omicron variant BA.2, which is causing a virus rebound in Europe and Asia, is gaining ground in the U.S., although overall cases here are still in decline. And Becerra said a funding impasse with Capitol Hill could

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 48 of 92

hamper the Biden administration's promising new strategy called "Test to Treat."

Under that plan, people could go to their local drugstore for a COVID test, and if they were positive, receive medication they could then take at home. A "one-stop shop," he called it.

But "if you don't have the dollars to let it fly, you're stuck," Becerra said. "You're stuck on the ground."

In a wide-ranging interview, Becerra also expressed concerns about cases rising among children as schools lift mask requirements.

Schools have become a flashpoint in the COVID response, with some parents objecting to mask requirements as an infringement on personal liberty and others reluctant to put their children near any potential risks. With the pendulum now swinging in the direction of unmasking, Becerra said he hoped the cautious will not be singled out.

"I would hope that there's no stigmatization of a child," he said. "If a parent says, 'I want my child to wear a mask,' good for them."

He also said his Department of Health and Human Services is trying to prepare so millions of people do not lose health insurance if their eligibility for Medicaid lapses when the government ends the official COVID public health emergency. During the pandemic, Congress has been providing more money for state Medicaid programs. But in exchange, states have been precluded from culling the rolls.

A more comfortable new normal is within reach, Becerra said, but it depends on two things. One is the virus, which has proven hard to control. The other is Americans' sense of personal responsibility. With less than half the eligible population now boosted, even as medical experts weigh a new, 4th round of shots, more appeals to personal responsibility may get tuned out.

Asked about the likelihood of a return to more relaxed and normal living, Becerra said, "If everyone does their part, then yes."

But he quickly added, "If not, get ready. This thing is hard to tame. COVID has taken us on a wild ride."

The White House and Congress are in a stand-off over President Joe Biden's request for \$22.5 billion to continue the government's COVID response this year. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi tried for a \$15.6 billion package, but varying objections from Democrats as well as Republicans have kept a deal from going through. The White House says money for some efforts, including the purchase of more booster doses and for monoclonal antibody treatments will run out by the end of this month. Also at risk: free COVID care for uninsured people.

As for the "Test to Treat" program, Becerra said it would help people get medication soon after they are infected, heading off potential hospitalization.

"Test to Treat is indispensable," he said. "You go a long way in avoiding the spread of COVID."

But right now the option is not widely available. Pharmacy "locations don't grow on trees, the way money doesn't grow on trees, and it costs money," Becerra said.

Throughout the pandemic, the government has had problems trying to clearly communicate with the public about COVID risks and countermeasures. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an HHS agency, has faced particular criticism as giving complicated, shifting guidance.

But Becerra said people who spread misinformation about the coronavirus must bear the brunt of the blame for Americans' confusion.

"The scientists have communicated pretty clearly with the American people what to do," he said. "Unfortunately, somebody else decides to slant or skew the message, or completely distort in ways that are untrue."

Becerra likened the pandemic to a five-alarm fire that is being contained but is still dangerous.

"You need to have a sense that things have stabilized" before attempting to move on from COVID, he warned.

"We have to get to a point where we believe the health status of the country and of our people is sufficiently stabilized," he said. "I think we're getting closer and closer to that point where we see no need to have those five alarms."

California prepares for 3rd dry year after few winter storms

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Drought-stricken California is facing another year of parched conditions and pleas for conservation as the winter comes to a close with little of the hoped-for rain and snow.

A wet December that dumped snow in the mountains fueled optimism as 2022 began, but the state may end this month with the distinction of the driest January through March in at least a century. State water officials are preparing to tell major urban and agricultural water agencies Friday that they will get even less water from state supplies than the small amount they were promised to start the year, and major reservoirs remain well below their normal levels.

Meanwhile, Californians water use went up in January despite calls for conservation. Gov. Gavin Newsom has stopped short of mandatory water-use cutbacks, but his Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot said recently that local or regional governments might issue their own orders.

"The wiser we are with the use of water now means the more sustainable we are if the drought persists," he said last week at a Sacramento news conference urging people to save water. He added, "water is a precious resource, particularly in the American West, and we have to move away from clearly wasteful practices."

California is in its second acute drought in less than a decade, and scientists say the U.S. West is broadly experiencing the worst megadrought in 1,200 years, made more intense by climate change. People adapted their water use last drought, in part by ripping up sprinkler-hungry lawns and replacing it with drought-resistant landscapes, and many of those water-saving habits stuck.

But the dry conditions that began in 2020 are demanding more conservation, as reservoirs such as Lake Oroville and Shasta Lake remain below historical levels and less water from melting snow is expected to trickle down the mountains this spring. Current predictions estimate the state will see about 57% of the historical median runoff this April through July, said Alan Haynes, hydrologist in charge for the California Nevada River Forecast Center of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"If we hadn't had what we had in December, we'd probably be in much more serious trouble," he said.

A persistent lack of water can have a range of negative consequences, including farmers following fields and endangered salmon and other fish dying.

The State Water Project supplies water through a complex system of canals, dams and other infrastructure to agencies that serve 27 million people and 750,000 acres (303,514 hectares) of farmland. The state's contractors have a certain amount of water they can request from the state, and the state makes determinations through the winter on how much they will get based on supply.

In December, before the major snowfall, state officials told contractor that they wouldn't get anything beyond what was needed for immediate health and safety, such as drinking and bathing. The state upped that to 15% in January. Department of Water Resources Director Karla Nemeth said Tuesday that percentage will go down again, but she didn't say by how much.

"What is our plan here to sustain through what may be a very long drought? Nobody knows, and I don't think we're getting the miracle March that we hoped for," said Jennifer Pierre, general manager for the State Water Contractors, which represents the agencies that rely on state supplies.

She said the state needs to be planning for more droughts in the future by spending money to line canals to protect against water loss, improving groundwater basins and providing even more financial incentives for people to make their properties more drought friendly. The state's plans to expand water storage got a boost Thursday when the federal government indicated it will loan \$2.2 billion to help build a new reservoir.

But critics of California's water policy say the larger problem is that the state promises more water each year than it has to give. That's led to a continued diminishment of supply in federally and state run reservoirs, said Doug Obegi, an attorney focused on water for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

"We basically have a system that is all but bankrupt because we promised so much more water than can actually be delivered," he said.

Obegi also took issue with the state's plan to forego certain water quality requirements in the Delta, the

part of the state's watershed where the freshwater rivers and salty ocean water mingle. The water quality standards are designed, in part, to ensure the water doesn't get so salty it can't be used for farming, drinking and protecting the environment.

"My hope is that this drought is a wakeup call that we really are not prepared and we don't have a plan for drought," he said.

EXPLAINER: Driver in Texas crash was 13; is that legal?

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

From the logging roads of the Pacific Northwest to the farm country of the Great Plains and beyond, it's not uncommon for people in rural parts of the U.S. to learn to drive when they're young, sometimes even before they reach their teens.

But the news that a 13-year-old was behind the wheel of a pickup truck that blew a tire and struck a van on a dark, two-lane road in West Texas on Tuesday night, killing nine people — including six members of a New Mexico college's golf teams and their coach — put a renewed focus on the practice.

At a news conference in Odessa, Texas, on Thursday, National Transportation Safety Board Vice Chairman Bruce Landsberg said the dangers of underage driving put it on the agency's "most-wanted list."

Along with drunk and distracted driving, Landsberg said "youthful driving" and excessive speed on rural roads are among the problems that make highway driving the most dangerous form of transit in the United States.

"Every two days we are killing the equivalent of a Boeing 737 crashing," he said, referring to highway fatalities from multiple causes. "It's long overdue that we start to do something about it."

LEGAL DRIVING AGE VARIES BY STATE

Cash Hogen, a 60-year-old who runs a kitchen and hardware store in Pierre, South Dakota, recalled learning to drive a Ford Bronco "as soon as my feet hit the pedals" — probably around age 10. He'd drive the two-track roads across his family's ranch in western South Dakota to repair barbed-wire fences or for other tasks.

But his father always stressed safety around vehicles and told stories of horrific tragedies to drive home the danger.

"Under no circumstances would I be out on a public road without my learner's permit," he said.

While it's legal for people of any age to drive on private property, such as farms or ranches, public roads where others are at risk is another matter, said William Van Tassel, the manager of driver training programs for AAA's national office.

Every U.S. state has some type of graduated driver's licensing program, by which teens as young as 14 can begin taking driver's education classes or begin driving with an instructor or guardian, he said. Eventually they gain more independence, being allowed to drive on their own or at night, until they have full privileges.

"Certainly in rural areas there's a general trend of lower minimum driving ages," Van Tassel said. "We see a lot of teen drivers have driving experience by the time they come to a formal driver's education course because they've been driving trucks or tractors or other vehicles on the farm. But when it comes to public roads, the laws are pretty clear: You can't be out there until you're legally eligible."

According to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data, there were 47 fatal crashes and 1,057 injury crashes in 2020 involving drivers 13 or younger.

In 2019, the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled was 1.9 times higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

PERMIAN BASIN SEES HEAVY TRAFFIC ON RURAL ROADS

The cause of Tuesday's crash in Andrews County, Texas, near the New Mexico border, wasn't clear, but federal authorities said Thursday that the 13-year-old was driving a Dodge pickup on a road with a 75 mph speed limit when its front left tire, a spare, blew out.

The truck veered across the center line into an oncoming transit van carrying the golf team from the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 51 of 92

University of the Southwest, in Hobbs, New Mexico. The boy and a man in the truck with him were killed, along with members of the golf teams and their coach.

While the area is rural, the surrounding oil fields of the Permian Basin that crosses from West Texas into New Mexico mean the traffic can be anything but, local residents said.

Gib Stevens, 57, of Hobbs, leads trucking operations for an oilfield servicing company. He said he himself started driving trucks at age 12 on dairy farms and quiet farm roads, but he said the road where the accident happened was clearly unsafe.

"For a 13-year-old to be driving that road, that was dumb," Stevens said. "These roads are all oil traffic."

'WORST CASE SCENARIO' IN TEXAS CRASH

In Texas, one must be 14 to begin classroom instruction for a learner's license and 15 to receive that provisional license to drive with an instructor or licensed adult in the vehicle. Department of Public Safety Sgt. Victor Taylor said it would be illegal for a 13-year-old to drive on public roads.

Van Tassel noted that the crash involved several risk factors besides the youth of the driver: It happened at night and on a road with a high speed limit when the spare blew.

Further, teenage boys are one of "the most dangerous segments" of the driving population across the country, said Cathy Chase, president of the Washington, D.C.-based Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety.

"This is a worst case scenario, on top of a worst case scenario, on top of a worst case scenario," Chase said.

China weighs exit from 'zero COVID' and the risks involved

By DAKE KANG and HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Even as authorities lock down cities in China's worst outbreak in two years, they are looking for an exit from what has been a successful but onerous COVID-19 prevention strategy.

A study, interviews with Chinese public health staff and recent public messaging by government-affiliated experts indicate that China is exploring ways of slowly easing its zero-tolerance approach — with the emphasis on slowly.

The latest sign came Monday in an essay published by Zhang Wenhong, an infectious disease specialist who is part of Shanghai's COVID-19 response team and known as China's "Dr. Fauci" — after U.S. government expert Anthony Fauci — for his public health messaging during the pandemic.

Zhang wrote in the Chinese business news outlet Caixin that the public needs to know the virus is becoming less deadly if people are vaccinated and their health isn't already compromised. "Dispelling the terror toward it is a step we must take," the essay said.

"We should carve a very clear path and not spend all our time debating whether we should continue zero COVID or coexist (with the virus)," Zhang wrote.

Change does not appear imminent, with more than 15,000 new cases this month in multiple outbreaks across the country, as well as an even larger one that has shaken Hong Kong. For now, the government is sticking with the tried-and-true policy of lockdowns, repeated mass testing of millions of people and a two-week or more quarantine for overseas arrivals.

When it does come, any change will all but certainly be gradual and cautious. Opening up carries risks, because the country's success in protecting people from COVID-19 means many don't have antibodies to fight the virus from previous infection. Moreover, China is using only domestically developed vaccines that are less effective than Pfizer's and other widely used ones.

"Given the still relatively low infection rate, the lack of the natural immunity and also the ineffectiveness of the vaccines in preventing infections, ... this is guaranteed to invite another wave of attack," said Yanzhong Huang, a public health expert at the Council on Foreign Relations in the U.S.

Chinese officials are paying close attention, though, as other countries relax mask mandates and other restrictions, and investigating just when and how to make the tricky transition.

On Thursday, Chinese President Xi Jinping acknowledged the toll of the stringent measures, saying China should seek "maximum effect" with "minimum cost" in controlling the virus, the official Xinhua news

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 52 of 92

agency reported.

A first step could be allowing more international flights — which have been sharply curbed since the pandemic — and reducing the quarantine for arriving passengers to one week from as many as 21 days in cities such as Beijing.

A weekly bulletin of news and research from China's Center for Disease Control published a paper last week outlining potential ways to ease the zero-COVID policy.

The paper suggests reducing the mandatory quarantine for incoming travelers to seven days, saying it would still screen out most cases as the virus can be detected more quickly now, and that China's health system is robust enough to handle any that slip through the cracks.

The authors make clear that eliminating all measures such as quarantines for all arrivals is not on the table. Their models show that a total easing of restrictions could lead to over 10 million cases in southeastern Guangdong province alone, though that's based on the delta variant, and not the more transmissible omicron that has become predominant.

A government researcher, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly, said that the evidence points to a "suppression strategy" as the next transition point. That means a seven-day quarantine, for example, rather than an unrestricted opening up.

Public health experts caution that the discussion of easing "zero COVID" has been sporadic and preliminary, and that no timeline has been set.

"It's a concept paper, not really a detailed plan," said Ben Cowling, an epidemiologist at the University of Hong Kong. He added he had yet to hear of any coordinated government movement toward easing restrictions, "just single experts from time to time raising the idea."

Huang at the Council on Foreign Relations said he had heard of discussions about "pivoting away" from zero COVID several months ago, but that the recent wave in Hong Kong has led policymakers to wait until "the dust settles."

More than 4,000 people have died in Hong Kong this year in an outbreak that has overflowed hospitals and morgues and shuttered many stores and restaurants.

In mainland China, authorities have shut down travel out of and within the hardest-hit province, Jilin in the northeast. More than 1,800 cases were reported in Jilin on Friday, out of 2,400 nationwide. Restrictions were partially eased, however, in Shenzhen, a major tech and finance hub bordering Hong Kong that had been locked down since Sunday.

Since omicron spreads quickly, "we need to take earlier, faster, stricter and more concrete measures," Chinese disease control official Lei Zhenglong told state television on Monday.

Many Chinese express support for zero COVID and pride that the government has managed to control a virus that has killed millions elsewhere, particularly in the West. China's official death toll stands at 4,636, the vast majority during the initial outbreak in early 2020.

But after two years of sporadic lockdowns, there are signs that some are tiring of the disruptions they bring.

"It's affected me," said Li Jing, a tea seller in Beijing. "If I work from home, I won't make as much money as if I go to my workplace."

Chinese officials worry about relatively low vaccination rates among the elderly, though they have not released recent figures. The elderly have accounted for the vast majority of the deaths in Hong Kong, and many of them were not fully vaccinated.

Studies of Chinese vaccines suggest they offer significantly less protection against infection from omicron, even after three doses, than a booster shot from a Western vaccine using mRNA technology. A Chinese mRNA vaccine is still in trials.

One major reason China is "not confident" enough to lift zero COVID is because of the lower efficacy of its vaccines, a Chinese public health official said, declining to be named to speak candidly on a sensitive topic. The official added that authorities are monitoring what happens in Hong Kong for any lessons for the mainland.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 53 of 92

Public health experts say nations can live with the virus, as long as the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions are protected.

"It's not the same virus as two years ago in Wuhan and elsewhere," said Jin Dong-yan, a virologist at the University of Hong Kong. "That's the main message that we need to pass on."

Rescuers search theater rubble as Russian attacks continue

By ANDREA ROSA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Rescue workers searched for survivors Thursday in the ruins of a theater blown apart by a Russian airstrike in the besieged city of Mariupol, while scores of Ukrainians across the country were killed in ferocious urban attacks on a school, a hostel and other sites.

Hundreds of civilians had been taking shelter in the grand, columned theater in central Mariupol after their homes were destroyed in three weeks of fighting in the southern port city of 430,000.

More than a day after the airstrike, there were no reports of deaths. With communications disrupted across the city and movement difficult because of shelling and other fighting, there were conflicting reports on whether anyone had emerged from the rubble.

"We hope and we think that some people who stayed in the shelter under the theater could survive," Petro Andrushchenko, an official with the mayor's office, told The Associated Press. He said the building had a relatively modern basement bomb shelter designed to withstand airstrikes. Video and photos provided by the Ukrainian military showed that the at least three-story building had been reduced to a roofless shell, with some exterior walls collapsed.

Other officials had said earlier that some people had gotten out. Ukraine's ombudswoman, Ludmyla Denisova, said on the Telegram messaging app that the shelter had held up.

Satellite imagery on Monday from Maxar Technologies showed huge white letters on the pavement in front of and behind the theater spelling out "CHILDREN" in Russian — "DETI" — to alert warplanes to those inside.

Across the city, snow flurries fell around the skeletons of burned, windowless and shrapnel-scarred apartment buildings as smoke rose above the skyline.

"We are trying to survive somehow," said one Mariupol resident, who gave only her first name, Elena. "My child is hungry. I don't know what to give him to eat."

She had been trying to call her mother, who was in a town 50 miles (80 kilometers) away. "I can't tell her I am alive, you understand. There is no connection, just nothing," she said.

Cars, some with the "Z" symbol of the Russian invasion force in their windows, drove past stacks of ammunition boxes and artillery shells in a neighborhood controlled by Russian-backed separatists.

Russia's military denied bombing the theater or anyplace else in Mariupol on Wednesday.

The strike against the theater was part of a furious bombardment of civilian sites in multiple cities over the past few days.

In the northern city of Chernihiv, at least 53 people had been brought to morgues over the past 24 hours, killed amid heavy Russian air attacks and ground fire, the local governor, Viacheslav Chaus, told Ukrainian TV on Thursday.

Ukraine's emergency services said a mother, father and three of their children, including 3-year-old twins, were killed when a Chernihiv hostel was shelled. Civilians were hiding in basements and shelters across the embattled city of 280,000.

"The city has never known such nightmarish, colossal losses and destruction," Chaus said.

Ukrainian officials said 10 people were killed Wednesday while waiting in a bread line in Chernihiv. An American man was among them, his sister said on Facebook.

At least 21 people were killed when Russian artillery destroyed a school and a community center before dawn in Merefa, near the northeast city of Kharkiv, according to Mayor Veniamin Sitov. The region has seen heavy bombardment in a bid by stalled Russian forces to advance.

In eastern Ukraine, a municipal pool complex where pregnant women and women with children were

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 54 of 92

taking shelter was also hit Wednesday, according to Pavlo Kyrylenko, head of the Donetsk regional administration. There was no word on casualties in that strike.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for more help for his country in a video address to German lawmakers, saying thousands of people have been killed, including 108 children. He also referred to the dire situation in Mariupol, saying: "Everything is a target for them."

The address began with a delay because of a technical problem caused by an attack close to where Zelenskyy was speaking, Bundestag deputy speaker Katrin Goering-Eckardt said.

Zelenskyy's office said Russian airstrikes hit the Kalynivka and Brovary suburbs of the capital, Kyiv. Emergency authorities in Kyiv said a fire broke out in a 16-story apartment building hit by remnants of a downed Russian rocket, and one person was killed.

Zelenskyy said he was thankful to U.S. President Joe Biden for additional military aid, but he would not get into specifics about the new package, saying he did not want Russia to know what to expect. He said when the invasion began on Feb. 24, Russia expected to find Ukraine much as it did in 2014, when Russia seized Crimea without a fight and backed separatists as they took control of the eastern Donbas region.

Instead, he said, Ukraine had much stronger defenses than expected, and Russia "didn't know what we had for defense or how we prepared to meet the blow."

At a Thursday meeting of the U.N. Security Council, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the WHO has verified 43 attacks on hospitals and health facilities, with 12 people killed and 34 injured. Tedros said disruption to hospital services now poses an extreme risk to people with serious illnesses and "the lifesaving medicine we need right now is peace."

In a joint statement, the foreign ministers of the Group of Seven leading economies accused Putin of conducting an "unprovoked and shameful war," and called on Russia to comply with the International Court of Justice's order to stop its attack and withdraw its forces.

Russian law enforcement, meanwhile, announced the first known criminal cases under a new law that allows for 15-year prison terms for posting what is deemed to be "false information" about the war. Among those charged was Veronika Belotserkovskaya, a Russian-language cookbook author and blogger living abroad.

One day after Biden called Russian President Vladimir Putin a "war criminal," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said American officials were evaluating and documenting potential war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine. Blinken said the intentional targeting of civilians would amount to a war crime and that there will be "massive consequences" for any such crimes that are confirmed.

Both Ukraine and Russia this week reported some progress in negotiations. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Thursday that some negotiators were breaking into working groups, "but there should be contacts today."

Zelenskyy said he would not reveal Ukraine's negotiating tactics.

"Working more in silence than on television, radio or on Facebook," Zelenskyy said. "I consider it the right way."

While details of Thursday's talks were unknown, an official in Zelenskyy's office told the AP that on Wednesday, the main subject discussed was whether Russian troops would remain in separatist regions in eastern Ukraine after the war and where the borders would be.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive talks, said Ukraine was insisting on the inclusion of one or more Western nuclear powers in the negotiations and on legally binding security guarantees for Ukraine.

In exchange, the official said, Ukraine was ready to discuss a neutral military status.

Russia has demanded that NATO pledge never to admit Ukraine to the alliance or station forces there.

The fighting has led more than 3 million people to flee Ukraine, the U.N. estimates. The death toll remains unknown, though Ukraine has said thousands of civilians have died.

Peru court orders ex-President Fujimori freed from prison

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 55 of 92

By FRANKLIN BRICEÑO Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Peru's Constitutional Court on Thursday approved the release from prison of former President Alberto Fujimori, who is serving a 25-year sentence for murder and corruption charges.

The decision restored a humanitarian pardon granted to Fujimori on Christmas Eve in 2017 by then President Pablo Kuczynski, a court official told The Associated Press. The official couldn't be quoted by name because the person was not authorized to speak on the matter.

The country's Supreme Court overturned the medical pardon in 2018 and ordered the former strongman returned to jail to serve out his sentence for human rights abuses, which was supposed to run until Feb. 10, 2032.

Kuczynski had said he pardoned Fujimori because he suffered a heart condition made worse by prison conditions, though the move was widely seen as an attempt to stave off impeachment by courting favor with Fujimori's allies in Congress. Kuczynski resigned three months after the pardon.

People gathered outside the prison hoping to see the 83-year-old Fujimori exit, though authorities gave no indication his release was imminent. Fujimori's lawyer, Cesar Nakazaki, said the former leader was not expected to leave prison until Monday or Tuesday after some legal procedures are completed.

Elsewhere in the capital, people rallied to protest against the court's ruling.

President Pedro Castillo tweeted Thursday that "the international justice bodies to which Peru is attached must safeguard the effective exercise of justice for the people."

Prime Minister Aníbal Torres said the ruling "harms" the country but will be followed. Torres told a local radio station that the court was being "a champion of impunity for major criminals."

The Constitutional Court typically livestreams its decisions but did not do so in this case. It also did not give an explanation for its ruling.

Fujimori, who governed from 1990 to 2000, remains a polarizing figure in the Andean country. Some Peruvians laud him for defeating the Maoist Shining Path guerrilla movement, while others loathe him for human rights violations carried out under his government.

A former mathematics professor, Fujimori was a political outsider when he emerged from obscurity to win Peru's 1990 presidential election over writer Mario Vargas Llosa.

Peru was being ravaged by runaway inflation and guerrilla violence when he took office. He quickly rebuilt the economy with mass privatizations of state industries. Defeating the fanatical Shining Path rebels took longer but his fight won him broad-based support.

But his presidency collapsed just as dramatically as his rise to power.

After briefly shutting down Congress and putting himself into a third term, Fujimori fled the country in disgrace in 2000 after leaked videotapes showed his spy chief, Vladimiro Montesinos, bribing lawmakers. Fujimori went to Japan, his parents' homeland, and sent in his resignation by fax.

Five years later, he stunned supporters and enemies alike when he flew to neighboring Chile, where he was arrested and extradited to Peru. Fujimori's goal was to run for Peru's presidency again in 2006, but instead he was put on trial.

His daughter, Keiko Fujimori, was a presidential candidate last year and vowed to release him if she got elected. But Castillo defeated her in a runoff election.

All former Peruvian presidents who governed since 1985 have been ensnared in corruption allegations, some imprisoned or arrested in their mansions. One died by suicide before police could take him into custody. The South American country cycled through three presidents in November 2020.

Fujimori also faced charges stemming from his role in a 1990s government program in which many Indigenous women in poor communities said they were forcibly sterilized and for the murder of six farmers by a military death squad during his administration.

Hope, hard reality mix in Japanese town wrecked by disaster

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

FUTABA, Japan (AP) — Yasushi Hosozawa returned on the first day possible after a small section of his

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 56 of 92

hometown, Futaba, reopened in January — 11 years after the nuclear meltdown at the nearby Fukushima Daiichi plant.

It has not been easy.

Futaba, which hosts part of the plant, saw the evacuation of all 7,000 residents because of radiation after the March 11, 2011, quake and subsequent tsunami that left more than 18,000 people dead or missing along Japan's northeastern coast.

Only seven have permanently returned to live in the town.

"Futaba is my home ... I've wanted to come back since the disaster happened. It was always in my mind," Hosozawa, 77, said during an interview with The Associated Press at his house, which is built above a shed filled with handcrafted fishing equipment.

An abandoned ramen shop sits next door, and so many houses and buildings around him have been demolished, the neighborhood looks barren.

A retired plumber, Hosozawa had to relocate three times over the past decade. Returning to Futaba was his dream, and he patiently waited while other towns reopened earlier.

To his disappointment, the water supply was not reconnected the day he returned. He had to fill plastic containers with water from a friend's house in a nearby town.

The town has no clinics, convenience stores or other commercial services for daily necessities. He has to leave Futaba to get groceries or to see his doctor for his diabetes medicine.

On a typical day, he makes a breakfast of rice, miso soup and natto. In the late morning, he drives about 10 minutes to Namie, a town just north of Futaba, to buy a packed lunch and to shop.

He takes a walk in the afternoon, but "I don't see a soul except for patrolling police." He drops by the train station once in a while to chat with town officials. After some evening sake at home, he goes to bed early while listening to old-fashioned Japanese "enka" songs.

He looks forward to the spring fishing season and likes to grow vegetables in his garden.

But Hosozawa wonders if this is the best way to spend his final years. "I won't live much longer, and if I have three to four more years, I'd rather not be in a Futaba like this," he says. "Coming back might have been a mistake."

"Who would want to return to a town without a school or a doctor? I don't think young people with children will want to come," he said.

When massive amounts of radiation spewed from the plant, more than 160,000 residents evacuated from across Fukushima, including 33,000 who are still unable to return home.

Of the 12 nearby towns that are fully or partially designated as no-go zones, Futaba is the last one to allow some people to return to live. There are still no-go zones in seven towns where intensive decontamination is conducted only in areas set to reopen by 2023.

Many Futaba residents were forced to give up their land for the building of a storage area for radioactive waste, and Fukushima Daiichi's uncertain outlook during its decades-long cleanup makes town planning difficult.

Futaba Project, which helps revitalize the town through tourism, new businesses and migration from outside Fukushima, sees potential for educational tourism.

"Places with scars of the disaster remain in Futaba ... and visitors can see its reality and think about the future," said Hidehiko Yamasaki, staffer at the nonprofit Futaba Project.

Hideyuki Ban, co-director of the Citizens' Nuclear Information Center, says that those returning to the area should have health checks. He says the inhabitable radiation level is the same as for nuclear workers, and could cause increased cancer risks within five years.

In June, Futaba is set to officially reopen the 560-hectare (1,400-acre) area near the train station — about 10% of the town — and an area that was once a commercial district where more than half the town's residents once lived. Daytime visits have been allowed since 2020 ahead of the Tokyo Olympics, when train and bus services resumed and a prefecture-run disaster museum opened.

Futaba has invited 24 companies, many of which are involved in town and plant cleanup work, to start

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 57 of 92

new businesses as part of an effort to revitalize local industry. A temporary town hall is set to open in August, and an 86-unit public housing complex is also being built. The town's goal is to have 2,000 residents within five years.

The latest surveys show that only 11.3% of the 5,625 people still registered as Futaba residents want to return home to live there, with more than 60% saying they will not. But 66% say they want to stay connected with the town.

Town officials set to return and live in Futaba ahead of the August town hall reopening will have to figure out how to improve the environment so people want to return, Mayor Shiro Izawa said. "We can do it if we don't give up."

Atsuko Yamamoto, 50, runs a Penguin fast-food store at a food court in the Futaba business community center, but she commutes from another Fukushima town.

"I've always thought I have to do something for (Futaba's recovery), so I raised my hand" when she saw the offer of a space in the food court, which opened two years ago, the former resident says. "When I evacuated, I never imagined I could return to Futaba like this."

Despite her deep attachment to her hometown, living here isn't possible, she says. The only way to make her business work is to get her food supplies in Iwaki, a business hub for coastal Fukushima where she now lives, and then to commute about 60 kilometers (40 miles) to Futaba.

Her mother used to sell donuts and hamburgers from a stand near the train station, and it was a popular hangout for local students and a landmark remembered by Futaba people before the disaster.

"As Futaba rapidly transforms into an unfamiliar place, I hope this store helps former residents feel at home," Yamamoto says. Familiar buildings and houses are increasingly being torn down, and daytime visitors are predominantly new faces.

"In our view, the buildings that remind us of our hometown are disappearing, like my friends' old houses, and it's extremely sad," she said, holding back her tears. She says she cannot help driving by where demolished houses, including her own, once were, as if to feel the pain and remember the past.

"It's hard to explain," Yamamoto says. "So I hope people will come back to visit and actually see this place."

Takumi Yamada, a worker at Futaba's only hotel, which opened last May, is from nearby Namie town.

Yamada, 23, spent most of his teenage years outside of Namie after fleeing from his elementary school — while still wearing his indoor classroom shoes — to Saitama, near Tokyo, with his parents and two siblings.

After studying elsewhere in Fukushima and Tokyo, Yamada decided to return home to reconnect and learn about an area he hardly remembered.

Yamada said he was thrilled when he was working on the hotel's reception desk and overheard former residents talking about the whereabouts of mutual friends.

"I think it's great if this hotel becomes a meeting place for former residents," Yamada said. "If there are people wondering whether to return, I think it's best to see the situation for themselves."

AP source: Raiders acquiring Davante Adams from Packers

By JOSH DUBOW AP Pro Football Writer

The Las Vegas Raiders are making a blockbuster move to keep up in the AFC West, acquiring All-Pro receiver Davante Adams from the Green Bay Packers.

A person familiar with the move said Thursday the Raiders are sending the No. 22 overall pick in the April draft and additional compensation to the Packers to reunite Adams with his college quarterback, Derek Carr. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the deal hadn't been announced.

NFL Network reported that Adams has agreed to a new five-year deal with the Raiders that will pay him \$141.25 million in the richest deal ever for a wide receiver.

This was an aggressive move by the Raiders new regime led by coach Josh McDaniels and general manager Dave Ziegler and the latest in an AFC West arms race as teams try to catch Patrick Mahomes and the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 58 of 92

Chiefs. Denver traded for quarterback Russell Wilson and the Chargers acquired edge rusher Khalil Mack. Now the Raiders are trying to keep pace and build on a 10-win season that sent them to the playoffs for the second time in the past 19 seasons.

Las Vegas potentially has one of the league's most dynamic offense with Carr having his best set of playmakers with Adams teaming with Pro Bowl slot receiver Hunter Renfrow, star tight end Darren Waller and running back Josh Jacobs.

Carr has a strong history with Adams, playing two seasons together in college at Fresno State. In their final year together in 2013, Adams had 131 catches for 1,719 yards and 24 TDs.

Adams reportedly bought a house in Las Vegas recently and Carr tweeted after reports of the deal became public, "Welcome home."

Now the next big move for the Raiders will likely be extending Carr's contract. He is playing on the final year of a five-year, \$125 million deal and is in line for a lucrative extension now that the Raiders appear to be going all-in.

Adams has been one of the most productive receivers in the NFL in recent years. His 432 catches, 5,310 yards receiving and 47 TD receptions lead the NFL over the past four seasons.

He had 123 catches for 1,553 yards and 11 TDs last season when he made his second straight All-Pro team.

This trade comes less than two weeks after the Packers placed the franchise tag on Adams and two days after the Packers announced that two-time reigning MVP quarterback Aaron Rodgers had signed a contract extension.

The franchise tag meant Adams would have been due to receive just over \$20 million for the 2022 season if he and the Packers didn't work out an extension before July 15. Adams, who has said he wants to be the game's highest-paid receiver, was asked late in the season about the prospect of getting the franchise tag.

"I'm not sure how to answer that safely right now," Adams said then. "So, we'll just cross that bridge when we get to it. I'll just say that. I like to be professional on here."

The 29-year-old Adams is the only player in NFL history to have at least 110 catches, 1,350 yards receiving and 11 touchdown receptions in three separate seasons.

Adams has joined Marvin Harrison and Larry Fitzgerald as the only players to have 600 catches, 8,000 yards receiving and 70 touchdown receptions over their first eight seasons.

His departure leaves a major hole in Green Bay's offense. The Packers have their MVP quarterback but must figure out who's going to catch Rodgers' passes.

The Packers return veteran Randall Cobb but aren't certain to bring back any of their other proven wideouts.

Allen Lazard is an unrestricted free agent who received a second-round tender this week. Marquez Valdes-Scantling, the team's top deep threat, is an unrestricted free agent. Tight end Robert Tonyan also is an unrestricted free agent.

NOTES: The report of the trade came after a busy day for the Raiders as they finalized free agent deals with edge rusher Chandler Jones, DT Bilal Nichols, CB Anthony Averett, RB Brandon Bolden, FB Jakob Johnson, WR Mack Hollins, CB Darius Phillips and OL Alex Bars. ... Las Vegas also previously acquired CB Rock Ya-Sin in a trade from Indianapolis for DE Yannick Ngakoue.

Moderna seeks FDA authorization for 4th dose of COVID shot

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Drugmaker Moderna asked the Food and Drug Administration on Thursday to authorize a fourth shot of its COVID-19 vaccine as a booster dose for all adults.

The request is broader than rival pharmaceutical company Pfizer's request earlier this week for the regulator to approve a booster shot for all seniors.

In a press release, the company said its request for approval for all adults was made "to provide flexibility" to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and medical providers to determine the "appropriate

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 59 of 92

use" of a second booster dose of the mRNA vaccine, "including for those at higher risk of COVID-19 due to age or comorbidities."

U.S. officials have been laying the groundwork to deliver additional booster doses to shore up the vaccines' protection against serious disease and death from COVID-19. The White House has been sounding the alarm that it needs Congress to "urgently" approve more funding for the federal government to secure more doses of the COVID-19 vaccines, either for additional booster shots or variant-specific immunizations.

U.S. health officials currently recommend a primary series of two doses of the Moderna vaccine and a booster dose months later.

Moderna said its request for an additional dose was based on "recently published data generated in the United States and Israel following the emergence of Omicron."

On Tuesday, Pfizer and its partner BioNTech asked U.S. regulators to authorize an additional booster dose of their COVID-19 vaccine for seniors, saying data from Israel suggests older adults would benefit.

Biden's St. Patrick's Day scrambled by Irish PM's COVID case

By ZEKE MILLER and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Call him a disappointed extrovert. President Joe Biden had to settle for meeting virtually Thursday with Irish Prime Minister Micheál Martin after the visiting leader's positive test for COVID-19 scrambled plans to mark St. Patrick's Day at the White House.

"I'm really deeply sorry for the inconvenience that we have to meet virtually this year," Biden said to Martin, who dialed in by video link while isolating at Blair House across the street from the White House. The traditional crystal bowl of shamrocks gifted to the U.S. president was displayed next to the television monitor set up next to Biden's chair in the Oval Office.

"I'm doing good, and I think that reminds of the vaccines and that the vaccines prevent severe illness," Martin told Biden.

Biden and Martin joined to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has jolted the world and brought the U.S. and its European allies to unite in condemnation and in placing stiff sanctions on Russia.

"We have to be united," Biden said. "We certainly are. But Putin's brutality and what his troops are doing in Ukraine is just inhumane."

Martin said he saluted Biden's leadership in marshaling democracies against what he called an "unjustifiable and immoral war." "It's firm, it's determined, it's measured, it's strong," Martin said.

Biden also reaffirmed U.S. support for the Good Friday accords, which were signed in 1998 and helped end sectarian violence that had raged for three decades over the issue of Northern Ireland unifying with Ireland or remaining part of the United Kingdom.

The virtual meeting kicked off the first in a daylong set of festivities that were reimagined after the Irish leader's diagnosis.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden was "disappointed" by the virus-induced change, saying the president "was looking forward to having the meeting today."

"He is an extrovert, extrovert, extrovert," she said, noting Biden much prefers in-person meetings to Zoom. She said Biden was glad he could continue with the other scheduled events of the day and expressed hope that next year's celebration would go off without a hitch.

"There will be more in the future," she said.

Martin also sat out the annual "Friends of Ireland Luncheon" at the Capitol hosted by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and attended by Biden. Biden went ahead with a White House reception Thursday evening, but Martin did not participate.

Martin learned he had tested positive Wednesday evening while attending an event with Biden and Pelosi, but the White House said the president was not considered a close contact of Martin — also referred to as Ireland's taoiseach.

Pelosi said she sat with Martin at the dinner. She said he was wearing a mask but took it off as they sat together to eat. It was during the appetizer when he was called aside. He later left the table, right before

she was to present him with an award.

All three leaders are vaccinated and boosted.

As for her own health, Pelosi said she is tested almost every day, and will continue following the guidelines from the Capitol's Office of the Attending Physician on COVID-19. She said she did not count the minutes she sat with the Irish leader.

Biden, meanwhile, said he was glad to briefly see Martin "for seven and a half minutes" at the event.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines "close contact" with an infected person as spending 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. The CDC says people with "close contact" does not need to quarantine if they are up to date on their vaccines, but they should wear a well-fitting mask around other people for 10 days after their contact.

"We're very, very sad that on St. Patrick's Day the Taoiseach has this diagnosis," Pelosi said.

The lunch proceeded with many members present. Introducing Biden at the lunch, Pelosi joked that while she is Italian herself, "I do have Irish grandchildren." She led the bipartisan crowd in toast to Biden's health after the president's remarks.

Pelosi used the experience to push additional federal COVID-19 aid after a funding package sought by Biden fell apart last week. She noted that former President Barack Obama had recently tested positive for the virus as well and questioned how people with fewer resources would fare.

"We want to move on, but we don't want to move on and leave people behind," she said. "We need the money."

This year marks the Irish-American Biden's second St. Patrick's Day in office, but his first with substantial in-person events after last year's celebrations were suspended by the pandemic.

EXPLAINER: Driver in Texas crash was 13; is that legal?

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

From the logging roads of the Pacific Northwest to the farm country of the Great Plains and beyond, it's not uncommon for people in rural parts of the U.S. to learn to drive when they're young, sometimes even before they reach their teens.

But the news that a 13-year-old was behind the wheel of a pickup truck that blew a tire and struck a van on a dark, two-lane road in West Texas on Tuesday night, killing nine people — including six members of a New Mexico college's golf teams and their coach — put a renewed focus on the practice.

At a news conference in Odessa, Texas, on Thursday, National Transportation Safety Board Vice Chairman Bruce Landsberg said the dangers of underage driving put it on the agency's "most-wanted list."

Along with drunk and distracted driving, Landsberg said "youthful driving" and excessive speed on rural roads are among the problems that make highway driving the most dangerous form of transit in the United States.

"Every two days we are killing the equivalent of a Boeing 737 crashing," he said, referring to highway fatalities from multiple causes. "It's long overdue that we start to do something about it."

LEGAL DRIVING AGE VARIES BY STATE

Cash Hogen, a 60-year-old who runs a kitchen and hardware store in Pierre, South Dakota, recalled learning to drive a Ford Bronco "as soon as my feet hit the pedals" — probably around age 10. He'd drive the two-track roads across his family's ranch in western South Dakota to repair barbed-wire fences or for other tasks.

But his father always stressed safety around vehicles and told stories of horrific tragedies to drive home the danger.

"Under no circumstances would I be out on a public road without my learner's permit," he said.

While it's legal for people of any age to drive on private property, such as farms or ranches, public roads where others are at risk is another matter, said William Van Tassel, the manager of driver training programs for AAA's national office.

Every U.S. state has some type of graduated driver's licensing program, by which teens as young as

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 61 of 92

14 can begin taking driver's education classes or begin driving with an instructor or guardian, he said. Eventually they gain more independence, being allowed to drive on their own or at night, until they have full privileges.

"Certainly in rural areas there's a general trend of lower minimum driving ages," Van Tassel said. "We see a lot of teen drivers have driving experience by the time they come to a formal driver's education course because they've been driving trucks or tractors or other vehicles on the farm. But when it comes to public roads, the laws are pretty clear: You can't be out there until you're legally eligible."

According to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data, there were 47 fatal crashes and 1,057 injury crashes in 2020 involving drivers 13 or younger.

In 2019, the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled was 1.9 times higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

PERMIAN BASIN SEES HEAVY TRAFFIC ON RURAL ROADS

The cause of Tuesday's crash in Andrews County, Texas, near the New Mexico border, wasn't clear, but federal authorities said Thursday that the 13-year-old was driving a Dodge pickup on a road with a 75 mph speed limit when its front left tire, a spare, blew out.

The truck veered across the center line into an oncoming transit van carrying the golf team from the University of the Southwest, in Hobbs, New Mexico. The boy and a man in the truck with him were killed, along with members of the golf teams and their coach.

While the area is rural, the surrounding oil fields of the Permian Basin that crosses from West Texas into New Mexico mean the traffic can be anything but, local residents said.

Gib Stevens, 57, of Hobbs, leads trucking operations for an oilfield servicing company. He said he himself started driving trucks at age 12 on dairy farms and quiet farm roads, but he said the road where the accident happened was clearly unsafe.

"For a 13-year-old to be driving that road, that was dumb," Stevens said. "These roads are all oil traffic."

'WORST CASE SCENARIO' IN TEXAS CRASH

In Texas, one must be 14 to begin classroom instruction for a learner's license and 15 to receive that provisional license to drive with an instructor or licensed adult in the vehicle. Department of Public Safety Sgt. Victor Taylor said it would be illegal for a 13-year-old to drive on public roads.

Van Tassel noted that the crash involved several risk factors besides the youth of the driver: It happened at night and on a road with a high speed limit when the spare blew.

Further, teenage boys are one of "the most dangerous segments" of the driving population across the country, said Cathy Chase, president of the Washington, D.C.-based Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety.

"This is a worst case scenario, on top of a worst case scenario, on top of a worst case scenario," Chase said.

Tara VanDerveer uses NCAA platform to pledge help to Ukraine

By JANIE McCAULEY AP Sports Writer

STANFORD, Calif. (AP) — At home over breakfast Thursday morning with sister Heidi, Tara VanDerveer formulated a plan to somehow help the suffering Ukrainian people who still mean so much to her years after she took the U.S. national team to play there.

The Hall of Fame Stanford coach pledged \$10 for every 3-pointer made in the women's NCAA Tournament toward humanitarian efforts in Ukraine, and she challenged anyone else who could give to do so — even just a dime per 3 if possible.

Georgia Tech coach Nell Fortner, whose team is playing its first-round NCAA game against Kansas at Stanford on Friday, immediately joined VanDerveer's fundraising efforts. She was an assistant coach on that U.S. team.

"I want to put a challenge out to other coaches, to our fans, to everyone in here, my sister's already accepted the challenge, I'd like to donate to the Ukraine humanitarian fund — and I'm not sure which fund it will be yet — \$10 for every 3-point made in the NCAA women's tournament," VanDerveer said as

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 62 of 92

defending champion and top-seeded Stanford prepared to take on Montana State in the first round.

Heidi VanDerveer, the coach at UC San Diego, wasn't sure she could commit \$10 for every 3-pointer but said, "I'm going to do whatever I can." She and her sister were still discussing which organizations to support, perhaps choosing several.

"The fun thing about Tara, everyone talks about basketball and everything else, but she referred to her bubble. We're all in a basketball bubble but the rest of the world keeps going," Heidi said. "The great thing about her is that she definitely has the bigger picture in mind and understands that from traveling the world just how fortunate we are. And when you can help somebody, you do. It's great. It's awesome."

Tara VanDerveer's 1996 Olympic champion U.S. national team played in the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv leading up to the Atlanta Games, and faced the Ukrainian national team about 10 times.

"I would call them our cousins because we saw them in so many tournaments and played against them," VanDerveer recalled. "So maybe I have an affinity for the country, and watching what's happening has been really, really very hard. When our team was leaving Ukraine, women at 3:30 in the morning were begging outside of our bus. And our team emptied their suitcases, emptied their wallets, just were very generous."

Said Fortner: "That was a phenomenal trip over there, and it was an eye-opening trip in a lot of ways."

VanDerveer has asked associate director of communications Wilder Treadway to track her total each day.

"I hope people can make a lot of 3s and that I can be very generous," VanDerveer said, "and I hope other people will get on board with this challenge and I'd like people to match the challenge."

Georgia Tech guard Sarah Bates plans to contribute to the effort with her play.

"My job is to be a shooter and to make as many 3s as possible, so I'm planning on doing that anyway," she said. "But if it's to help the efforts in Ukraine as well, that's just another motivation to make more 3s. I think that's awesome what she's doing and I hope other people are on board and willing to shoot more 3s so we can get more money out there."

No. 1 Gonzaga comes alive late to race past Georgia St 93-72

By TIM BOOTH AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Gonzaga coach Mark Few has seen plenty of No. 16 seeds in the first round of the NCAA Tournament. When he watched video of Georgia State, the longtime Bulldogs' coach didn't see a team that fit that profile.

Few turned to be correct. Gonzaga spent 30 minutes struggling to create any separation against the 16th-seeded Panthers before pulling away late for a 93-72 win on Thursday.

"Once we started really breaking them down, I kept telling people that's not a 16 seed," Few said after Gonzaga won its 13th straight first-round game in the NCAAs. "I think they showed it tonight. Georgia State gave us quite a fight."

The Bulldogs eventually had too much size and skill for the Panthers. Drew Timme scored 22 of his 32 points in the second half, making up for a sluggish start by the Zags and a long stretch of the first half when the tournament's No. 1 overall seed couldn't make a basket.

Even when Gonzaga's offense kicked into gear after halftime, the Panthers didn't fold.

The eventual overwhelming surge from the Bulldogs finally arrived with about 10 minutes to go. Gonzaga went on a 24-1 run, turning a four-point game into the blowout that was expected. The Zags will face the West Region's No. 9 seed, Memphis, in the second round on Saturday.

Timme was the catalyst, topping 30 points for the fifth time in his career while also grabbing 13 rebounds. Chet Holmgren, the Zags' 7-foot freshman, added 19 points, 17 rebounds and seven blocks.

"My guys had my back and the coaches believed in me. I just had confidence from them," said Timme, who was 3 of 7 shooting and 4 of 9 at the foul line in the first half. "It's really reassuring. It really can help give you a boost when you get a little down on yourself."

Corey Allen led Georgia State (18-11) with 16 points, and Jalen Thomas and Kane Williams both added 12. The Panthers trailed by two at halftime despite shooting 29% and were down 62-58 with 10 1/2 minutes left. From there, they watched Gonzaga put together the kind of spurt that's made it the favorite to win

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 63 of 92

its first national title.

Georgia State, the Sun Belt Conference champion, came in with a 10-game winning streak and one loss since Jan. 27.

"I hate for these guys that the score really isn't indicative of how the game was really played," Georgia State coach Rob Lanier said. "I'm really proud of these guys, not just for the effort tonight, just for their overall contributions to our program."

Gonzaga led 64-58 when Holmgren scored on a putback and Nolan Hickman blocked a shot and scored in transition. Six points from Timme quickly pushed the lead to 16.

By the time Georgia State scored again with five minutes left, the Panthers trailed by 22 and the dream of the second 16-over-1 upset in tournament history had fizzled.

"We just needed to come back and be who we are in the second half, and I think they did a great job with that," Few said.

Even when Timme scored 10 points in the first six minutes of the second half, the Panthers hung around thanks to the shooting of Justin Roberts, Williams and Allen.

Eventually, the Panthers started missing and Gonzaga's stars kept scoring. Foul trouble also caught up with Georgia State as Kaleb Scott committed his fifth foul with 10:26 left, one of three interior players to foul out for the Panthers.

"We gave them a lot of easy buckets in the paint and a lot of fouls," Williams said. "Those fouls kind of bit us. We just couldn't overcome after that."

BIG PICTURE

Georgia State: Making their fifth NCAA Tournament appearance, the Panthers simply didn't have the interior bodies to match the Bulldogs. It didn't help when forward Eliel Nsoseme went down clutching his left knee in the latter portion of the first half. Nsoseme was down on the court for several minutes slapping the floor and yelling in discomfort before eventually walking to the locker room. Lanier said he didn't know how serious the injury but was told there was no chance Nsoseme could have returned.

Gonzaga: Foul shooting will be something to watch for the Bulldogs. Gonzaga was 9 of 19 in the first half and 16 of 30 for the game. The Zags had been solid for most of the season, shooting 73% as a team.

UP NEXT

Gonzaga will face a dangerous Memphis team that bounced back from a rough start to the season.

Richmond ousts 5th-seeded Iowa with 67-63 1st-round win

By JOHN WAWROW AP Sports Writer

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Jacob Gilyard had an inkling a week ago — well before Richmond had even qualified for the NCAA Tournament — that the Spiders were capable of a first-round upset.

"Probably last Thursday," the fifth-year guard said, referring to the day Richmond began a four-win run to the Atlantic 10 Tournament title. "We're a fairly confident group and I think last weekend showed that."

Spiders coach Chris Mooney had a feeling long before then, he said in the wake of the 12th-seeded Spiders' 67-63 first-round win over Big Ten champion Iowa on Thursday.

Mooney reflected on how Richmond's chances to qualify for the 2020 tournament with a 24-7 record were canceled because of the pandemic. Richmond went 14-9 last season, and Mooney credited the commitment six of his seniors showed when they chose to return for their extra year of COVID-19 eligibility.

"I told them it wasn't going to be all perfect, like their careers haven't been perfect. And I said, 'The reason you came back was to handle adversity,'" Mooney said. "And these guys have done that in a great way all season."

Gilyard scored 24 points, Tyler Burton added 18 points and 11 rebounds, and the Spiders improved their NCAA tourney record against fifth-seeded teams to 4-0. The Spiders (24-12) will face the Midwest Region's No. 4 seed, Providence, which defeated South Dakota State.

Keegan Murray scored 21 points and Patrick McCaffery added 18 for the Hawkeyes (26-10), who were unable to carry over the momentum of winning four times in four days at the Big Ten tournament last

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 64 of 92

weekend. Iowa set conference tournament records with 123 field goals and 351 points, finishing with a 75-66 win over Purdue on Sunday.

The Hawkeyes' fourth-best offense nationally (83.8 points per game) was held to its third-lowest total of the year and worst production since a 48-46 loss at Rutgers on Jan. 19.

"This game is probably the worst game we played all year, and I don't think it's close so it's definitely not a good feeling in our stomachs right now," Connor McCaffery said.

Sixth-year Iowa guard Jordon Bohannon was unable to contain his emotions after playing his NCAA-record 179th and final game.

"Just thanks for giving me a chance. It's been some of the best years of my life," Bohannon said, his voice cracking on several occasions. "I faced a lot of adversity coming back, you know, a couple of hip surgeries, dealt with a lot of injuries. And I can honestly say this last year, I put my heart and soul into this team, and hopefully I left this jersey in a better place than where I found it."

The Spiders are making their 10th tournament appearance and first since 2011, when they reached the Sweet 16 as — you guessed it — the No. 12 seed before losing to Kansas.

Led by sixth-year senior Grant Golden, Richmond's 20-player roster is made up of five fifth-year graduate seniors — Gilyard is one of them — and three fourth-year seniors. That experience showed down the stretch, when Gilyard sealed the win by hitting all four of his free-throw attempts in the final 16 seconds.

The teams traded the lead seven times. Golden laid in an inbounds pass from Gilyard to put Richmond ahead 40-39 with 14:33 remaining, and the Spiders led the rest of the way. It was Golden's first basket after missing his first nine attempts.

NO CALL?

Iowa took issue with the lack of a call when Richmond's Matt Grace appeared to foul Kris Murray on a 3-point attempt with about a minute remaining and the Spiders up 60-57. Grace was credited with a block on the play, but replays showed he hit Murray's elbow. Nathan Cayo then completed a three-point play at the other end.

CHILLY FIRST HALF

Iowa went 1 of 13 from 3-point range in a cold-shooting first half in which the teams combined to go 3 of 22; the Hawks finished 6 of 29 from beyond the arc. The first half featured six lead changes with neither team leading by more than four.

BIG PICTURE

Iowa has had some rough experiences in the NCAA Tournament. The Hawkeyes, the fourth team to win four games in four days at the Big Ten tourney, were the No. 2 seed last year and had national player of the year Luka Garza but were eliminated by Oregon in the second round.

Richmond improved its tournament record to 9-9, with all the wins coming when the Spiders were seeded 12th or lower. In 1991, Richmond became the tournament's first 15-seed to defeat a No. 2 seed with a 73-69 win over Syracuse.

UP NEXT

Richmond faces Providence on Saturday.

Convict: Lorenzen Wright's ex-wife recruited him for killing

By ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — A former Navy sailor and convicted killer testified Thursday that Lorenzen Wright's ex-wife asked him and another man to kill the former NBA player nearly 12 years ago in Atlanta.

Jimmie Martin testified in the trial of Billy Ray Turner, who has pleaded not guilty to charges of first-degree murder, attempted murder and conspiracy in the death of Wright.

Wright's slaying is one of the most highly publicized murder cases in Memphis history. A Memphis native and a 6-foot, 11-inch center who played for five teams over 13 seasons, Wright also played college basketball at the University of Memphis and was well-liked for his charity work in his hometown.

Wright's decomposing body was found riddled with bullet wounds in a swampy field in east Memphis on

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 65 of 92

July 28, 2010 — nine days after he placed a gunshot-ridden 911 call and several days after the 34-year-old father of six was reporting missing.

Prosecutors allege Turner and Martin were recruited by Lorenzen Wright's ex-wife, Sherra Wright, to kill the retired NBA player in Atlanta, then Memphis. At the time, Martin was facing charges of killing his girlfriend. Martin was convicted and is currently serving prison time in that case. He has received immunity from prosecution in the Wright case.

Turner and Sherra Wright were indicted in 2017. She entered a surprise guilty plea to facilitation of murder in July 2019 and was sentenced to 30 years in prison. Sherra Wright had helped pay for a lawyer for Martin — her cousin — to represent him in his girlfriend's slaying, Martin said.

Martin said he served in the Navy for eight years and enjoyed producing rap music while living in Batesville, Mississippi. Martin said he met with Sherra Wright and Turner in May 2010 at her home in the Memphis suburb of Collierville, where "a ploy to kill Lorenzen Wright" was first discussed.

Martin said he thought Sherra Wright was "going through some things," and he told her "this is not the business you want to be in." But they still participated in a brainstorming session to discuss ways to "perform the act," Martin said.

"What act are we talking about?" prosecutor Paul Hagerman asked Martin.

"The murder of Lorenzen," Martin said.

At a later date, Sherra Wright asked Martin to go to Atlanta to kill her ex-husband at his condominium there, with the understanding he would get paid for it. She gave him a car with three guns, money and marijuana in the trunk, he testified.

Martin told Sherra Wright that he went to Atlanta but couldn't find Lorenzen Wright. But, in reality, Martin never even traveled there, he said.

"She got upset," Martin told the prosecutor. Martin then added: "She knew I was lying,"

Sherra Wright later told Martin to return to Atlanta, this time with Turner, according to Martin. Sherra Wright had told him that she recently had visited the condo and had left a window open, Martin testified.

Armed with handguns, Turner and Martin went to the Atlanta condo, entered through the open window at night, and found someone sleeping on the couch in the living room — but it was not Lorenzen Wright.

Turner and Martin returned home without killing Lorenzen Wright. Martin said he was relieved that he didn't have to shoot anyone that night.

"On the ride home, the only conversation I believe we had was about how this is getting too ridiculous ... this plot that Sherra had hatched," Martin said.

Martin testified that he and Sherra Wright spoke in code in text and Facebook messages about their plans, such as using the term "party" in relation to the killing, Martin said.

In his opening statement, defense attorney John Keith Perry questioned Martin's credibility, saying the information he gave investigators about Wright's killing was a farce and full of lies. He will cross-examine Martin on Friday.

A motive for the slaying was not immediately clear, though Hagerman said in his opening statement that the killers were driven by jealousy and greed. Hagerman also mentioned \$2 million, though it was not immediately clear what that meant.

Sherra Wright did receive \$1 million from her ex-husband's life insurance policy, and settled a court dispute in 2014 over how she spent the insurance money meant to benefit their six children, The Commercial Appeal has reported.

Hot spring forecast: Drought deepens in West, flooding ebbs

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

There's no relief in sight for the West's record-shattering megadrought, which will likely only deepen this spring, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said in its seasonal outlook Thursday. But central and eastern states should be mostly spared from significant flooding.

Spring is likely to be hotter than normal in most states and drier as well for much of the West, NOAA meteorologists said. They said the high heat and drought will fuel each other as the lack of rain makes it

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 66 of 92

hotter, intensifying dry conditions.

NOAA predicts all of the Lower 48 states to be warmer than normal in April, May and June except Washington, Oregon, Montana, North Dakota and much of Idaho. Only an area around the Great Lakes down to Kentucky is forecast to be wetter than normal. Worsening allergies are expected in the areas that will be hot and wet.

"Drought has increased, especially in the West as it has warmed," said Deke Arndt, NOAA's climate science and services chief. "The reason the West is warming is climate change, especially over the multiple decade timeframe."

Already, 60% of the nation is in some form of drought, the largest drought coverage since 2013, said Jon Gottschalck, operational prediction chief at NOAA's Climate Prediction Center. He said the conditions are likely to get worse in many of those areas and could set the stage for more heat waves.

La Nina, a natural periodic cooling of the central Pacific that affects climate worldwide, is a huge factor in the spring outlook, Gottschalck said.

In California, especially the Central Valley, three-year rain and snow levels will soon reach the lowest on record since 1922, said Brett Whitin, a hydrologist at NOAA's California Nevada River Forecast Center. California has 1.5 million acre feet less water available than it did this time last year, and he said the only hope is for heavy December snow to make up for some of the shortfall.

"It does make for some very difficult (crop) producer decisions as what to continue to grow and what to keep alive," said Brad Rippey, a U.S. Department of Agriculture meteorologist, in a press briefing.

The more than 20-year megadrought gripping the West is the worst in 1,200 years and is stoked by human-caused climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas, studies have found. Worsening drought also sets the stage for more dangerous wildfires in summer, said Brad Pugh, a drought meteorologist with the NOAA's Climate Prediction Center.

In the central part of the country, spring often brings flooding worries. But this year, the flooding risk is minor for much of the Mississippi River valley and Tennessee Valley.

Major flooding and significant damage might affect about 500,000 people, which is far fewer than in most years. Above average precipitation and other factors increased flood risk near the Red River that divides North Dakota and Minnesota, NOAA said.

Jussie Smollett is out of jail, but faces uncertain future

By SARA BURNETT and DON BABWIN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) —

Jussie Smollett walked out of a Chicago jail after serving six days and walked into months, if not years, of uncertainty — from what's next for his career as an actor and performer to whether he'll eventually be back behind bars.

The former star of the TV show "Empire" was sentenced last week to 150 days in jail plus probation and a fine after a jury found him guilty of lying to police about being the victim of a racist, anti-gay attack in downtown Chicago in 2019. His release late Wednesday came hours after an appellate court ordered he could go free during the appeal process, which wouldn't be completed before Smollett had served his full sentence.

Smollett, who is Black and gay, has maintained his innocence. He didn't speak to reporters as he was escorted out of the Cook County Jail surrounded by security, and his attorneys wouldn't say where the 39-year-old may be heading or what he plans to do next.

Under the conditions of the sentence imposed by Cook County Judge James Linn, Smollett must now serve the 30-month probation, though he may leave the state and travel without restrictions. That means he could travel to places like Los Angeles and New York to try to resurrect his career.

But that will be difficult to do, publicists say, and the latest developments may not have done him any favors.

"I think he's actually doing more harm than good" by fighting the conviction and sentence, said publicist

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 67 of 92

Eric Rose. People can be very forgiving of celebrities who admit wrongdoing and apologize, he said, but instead Smollett is keeping his name and face in the headlines, reminding people of the circumstances of his conviction.

"That's what we call 'death by 1,000 cuts,'" Rose said. "From a reputation perspective, that is horrible."

During his trial, Smollett testified that "I've lost my livelihood" because of the charges against him, including losing his role on "Empire." He has since worked behind the scenes, writing, directing and producing a film, "B-Boy Blues," that recently won the "fan favorite narrative feature" award in the American Black Film Festival.

While work in front of the camera may be difficult to find, Smollett could get opportunities working behind the scenes, particularly because he has a sister and other family members with successful careers in the industry, said another publicist, Danny Deraney.

"Anything is possible," he said.

Smollett, who was convicted on five low-level felony counts of disorderly conduct and acquitted on a sixth count, also remains in legal limbo, with the prospect of being ordered back to jail to serve the rest of his sentence a very real possibility.

Smollett told Chicago police in January 2019 that he had been attacked by two men as he walked near his home around 2 a.m. He said the attackers also yelled that he was in "MAGA country," an apparent reference to President Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" campaign slogan that some Trump critics call racist and discriminatory.

The claims quickly garnered national attention, with Trump weighing in, and Chicago police said they worked around the clock investigating before determining that the attack was a hoax, staged by Smollett to get publicity. At trial, prosecutors presented a check they said Smollett had written to two brothers who worked on the "Empire" set with him as payment to fake the assault.

Smollett was charged with disorderly conduct, but Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx later dropped the case. A special prosecutor was then appointed, and Smollett was charged again.

Outside the jail on Wednesday night, Smollett's defense attorneys said having to face charges a second time went against his constitutional rights. They also said Smollett was the target of a racist justice system and people playing politics.

The appeal process will almost certainly take months, if not years, with multiple deadlines, extensions of deadlines, new deadlines and more extensions.

For example, now that Smollett's attorneys have filed their notice that they intend to appeal, they must send to the court the documents, transcripts and other paperwork the case has generated.

"They have 49 days..." said Stephen Komie, a Chicago attorney with extensive experience filing appeals, adding that postponing that deadline for two or three 49-day chunks of time is routine.

Komie explained that once that's done, Smollett's attorneys have 35 days to file their brief, but they can get that deadline extended up to four times. Then when it is the prosecutors' turn to respond, the court will give them as many as four 35-day extensions too.

"If the case goes quickly, they could have oral arguments this time next year," he said. "But if the case goes at the normal pace you will be calling me in the summer of 2023 to tell me about the oral arguments."

They might then have to wait a couple months or more for a decision, and, depending on how that goes, there could be appeals to the state Supreme Court and possibly the U.S. Supreme Court.

Smollett also still owes \$120,000 in restitution and a \$25,000 fine, though the Chicago Tribune reports that the money isn't due for 30 months. And in the meantime, he is still being sued by the city of Chicago for the \$130,000 the city says it paid out in police overtime to investigate Smollett's report that he was attacked.

Memphis holds off Boise State rally for 64-53 1st-round win

By ANNE M. PETERSON AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Lessons from a tough start to the season helped Memphis weather a second-half challenge by Boise State on Thursday.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 68 of 92

DeAndre Williams had 14 points, Jalen Duren made a crucial basket down the stretch and the ninth-seeded Tigers survived their first-round game against the Broncos with a 64-53 victory in the NCAA Tournament.

The Tigers (22-10), whose poor start to the season had coach Penny Hardaway dropping expletives in a press conference, are into the second round in the West Region and will play top-seeded Gonzaga on Saturday. The Bulldogs downed No. 16 seed Georgia State, 93-72.

"I just felt like (Hardaway) did a great job of preparing us for that moment. Just throughout my past and my history, I've always been in games where I could be up 20 or down 20, and the game is never over," Duren said. "Coach Penny put us in the right spots, that always help us get through every time."

Duren finished with 10 points and 11 rebounds for the Tigers, who were 9-8 after 17 games but went on a late-season charge to reach the tournament for the first time since 2014. The Tigers have now won 13 of their past 15 games.

Abu Kigab had 20 points to lead the eighth-seeded Broncos (27-8), the Mountain West regular-season and tournament champs, who were making their first appearance in the tournament since 2015.

Boise State trailed by 19 at the half but, taking advantage of a cold snap by the Tigers, narrowed the gap to 42-35 with 9:45 left. The Tigers had scored just four second-half points before Williams' dunk with 9:18 left got them going again.

Kigab hit a 3-pointer and a short jumper to get Boise State within 49-43 with 5:55 remaining, but Williams answered again with a 3-pointer for the Tigers. And when the Broncos closed to 56-51 with 1:26 left on Naje Smith's layup, and the teams traded foul shots, Duren's layup pushed the margin to 60-53 to give Memphis some breathing room.

Alex Lomax, hobbled in the first half by an ankle injury, added some clinching free throws for the Tigers.

It was a disappointing finish to a dream season for longtime coach Leon Rice, whose Boise State teams had been dumped from the NCAA Tournament in First Four games their past two trips. The Broncos beat San Diego State to win the Mountain West tourney title and their 27 wins set the school record for a single season.

"That's a team that's putting it together," Rice said of the Tigers. "I know they had a rough stretch and I know they started out in top 10 in the nation, and you see why. But they worked through some stuff throughout the year and they've turned it on right now and they've got it going."

Memphis had the nation's top recruiting classes, led by Duren and fellow five-star talent Emoni Bates, but Hardaway struggled to find a solid lineup until January — Bates had not played since Jan. 27 because of a back injury.

The Tigers have hit their stride down the stretch, though, reaching the title game of the American Athletic Conference tourney before losing to Houston. And they kept that momentum going into Thursday's first-round game, going on an 8-0 run early to take a 27-17 lead when Bates hit a 3-pointer with 4:26 left in the half.

Lomax hit a 3 a few minutes later that gave Memphis a 38-19 lead at the break, but he came down hard and appeared to injure his left ankle. He was limping as he headed for the Tigers' bench but returned to start the second half.

BATES IS BACK

Bates, who reclassified as a freshman, traveled to Portland with the team but it wasn't certain he would play until the moment he stepped on the court. He warmed up before tipoff and was in uniform for the game, finally checking in with 5:57 left in the first half. His 3-pointer was his only points of the game.

Bates finished with three points in about 3 1/2 minutes. Hardaway said he decided not to play him more down the stretch as the game got tense.

"He did fantastic today, stayed positive, watched the game, learned a lot today," Hardaway said. "Getting on the floor, getting his juices flowing again, he's a tough competitor."

BIG PICTURE

Memphis, which beat Boise State in last year's NIT, had a big advantage on the boards (39-30) to overcome 15 turnovers and pull away down the stretch. But it will take a better performance on the offense end if the Tigers want to beat their likely second-round opponent Gonzaga, the national runner-up a year ago.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 69 of 92

Boise State, which ranked 17th in the nation for defensive efficiency, had not trailed by more than seven points at halftime before Thursday. The Broncos nearly overcame the deficit but it proved to be simply too much.

UP NEXT

Memphis faces Gonzaga on Saturday for a spot in the Sweet 16.

Collins provides spark, Michigan beats Colorado State 75-63

By MICHAEL MAROT AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Freshman Frankie Collins made a starting debut that Michigan fans won't soon forget.

With starting point guard DeVante' Jones stuck on campus in the concussion protocol and the Wolverines struggling with turnovers, Collins scored 14 points, grabbed six rebounds and helped 11th-seeded Michigan overcome a shaky start to beat sixth-seeded Colorado State 75-63 in the first round of the NCAA Tournament on Thursday.

"I've always been impressed with his skill set and I think his style fits our style of play," coach Juwan Howard said.

Michigan (18-14), after a turbulent journey to the field of 68, now faces third-seeded Tennessee in the second round of the South Region. The Volunteers turned away 14th-seeded Longwood 88-56.

Looking shaky without Jones, Michigan committed nine turnovers in the first 12 1/2 minutes and trailed 28-13. Out of options, Howard called on Collins, who averaged less than 10 minutes per game, to turn things around. He went 6 of 7 from the field, produced season bests in points and rebounds and had just one turnover in 31 minutes.

"They just told me to be Frankie and I felt great going into the game," Collins said. "It's just basketball. I've been practicing and playing basketball my whole life, so it's just going out there doing the things I've been working on my whole life."

Big man Hunter Dickinson led Michigan with 21 points on 8-of-10 shooting.

After reaching last year's regional semifinals, the Wolverines squeaked into this year's tournament thanks largely to their stout schedule. Howard was suspended for the final five regular-season games for hitting a Wisconsin assistant in the face during a postgame handshake line, and Michigan hasn't won two straight games in more than a month.

Dischon Thomas scored 15 points on 5-of-7 3-point shooting for Colorado State (25-6), and Mountain West Conference player of the year David Roddy had 13 points and six rebounds.

But the Rams could not take advantage of the highest seed in school history, the momentum from nine wins in their previous 11 games or the big, early lead.

"Disappointed, obviously," Rams coach Niko Medved said. "I thought the game was in the balance. We had our chances. Michigan was the better team today, clearly in the second half."

Collins had the biggest impact.

He scored seven straight to cut the 15-point deficit to eight and helped Michigan close within 36-29 at the half.

Collins continued the charge early in the second half, capping a 6-0 spurt with a steal and dunk to make it 38-35. And when Caleb Houston made back-to-back 3s midway through the half, Michigan led 53-49.

The Wolverines never trailed again, closing it out at the free-throw line.

BIG PICTURE

Michigan: A year ago, the Wolverines won the Big Ten regular-season crown and came within one win of reaching the Final Four. Most of those players opted to return to chase Michigan's second national title. After teetering early, the Wolverines gave themselves a chance — especially if Jones returns this weekend.

Colorado State: The Rams had all five starters return from last season's third-place NIT squad. They're not likely to be as fortunate next fall. While this was likely Medved's best coaching job, it wasn't the way the Rams anticipated heading home.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 70 of 92

STAT PACK

Michigan: Eli Brooks had 16 points, seven rebounds and six assists. .. Houston scored 13 points. ... The Wolverines had a 36-25 rebounding advantage and outscored Colorado State 34-16 in the paint.

Colorado State: James Moore had 10 points. ... Isaiah Stevens had eight points and four assists before fouling out. ... The Rams were 12 of 35 on 3s but went 4 of 15 in the second half when they shot 29% from the field. ... Colorado State finished the season with two straight losses.

HE SAID IT

"If I remember, coach (Steve) Fisher started five freshmen," Howard said when asked about starting three freshmen, referring to his time with the Wolverines' famed Fab Five.

UP NEXT

Michigan: Seeks a fifth straight Sweet 16 appearance.

Colorado State: Will use this offseason to regroup and reload.

US vet jailed in Iran sues for \$1 billion, alleges torture

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A U.S. Navy veteran who was jailed in Iran for nearly two years sued the Iranian government on Thursday for \$1 billion, alleging that he was kidnapped, held hostage and tortured.

The federal lawsuit describes in unsparing detail the "prolonged and continuous" abuse that Michael White says he suffered behind bars, including being beaten and punched, whipped on his feet, deprived of food and drink, and pressured to falsely confess that he was a spy for the U.S. government.

"Mr. White endured this trauma for nearly two years, never knowing if or when he would be released and reunited with his family, repeatedly promised that his conditions would improve soon, only to be crushed psychologically when they did not," the lawsuit states.

The allegations in the complaint mirror the claims made by White in a 156-page manuscript that he wrote behind bars and that was later obtained by The Associated Press.

The 31-page complaint traces White's travel to Iran, saying he was lured there in the summer of 2018 by a woman he considered his girlfriend so that he could be kidnapped by Iranian government agents and put in prison. He was charged with insulting Iran's Supreme Leader and cooperating with the U.S. government against Iran — charges the lawsuit says were fabricated — and sentenced without a trial to 10 years in prison.

The suit also alleges that White's imprisonment was an effort by Iran to extract concessions from the Trump administration and to "manufacture additional leverage for diplomacy" in the aftermath of Iran's withdrawal in 2018 from a landmark nuclear deal with the U.S. Diplomats are currently trying to salvage a deal that would bring Iran back into compliance with limits on its nuclear program.

The lawsuit was filed in federal court in Washington, D.C. Besides White, other plaintiffs include his mother and two brothers.

It was not immediately clear if Iran planned to formally respond to the complaint, or if it had a lawyer who might enter an appearance in the case. If Iran does not respond to the allegations, a judge could enter a default judgment on White's behalf, enabling White to collect damages from a fund set up for victims of acts of state-sponsored terrorism.

The State Department arranged for his release in June 2020, flying him back to the U.S. as part of a deal that spared additional prison time for an American-Iranian doctor convicted in the U.S. of sanctions violations. White later made a videotaped appearance at that summer's Republican National Convention in a segment with former President Donald Trump and other hostages and detainees freed during the Trump administration.

Washington Gov. Inslee signs rollback of police reform bill

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Washington Gov. Jay Inslee signed a bill Thursday rolling back part of the state's sweep-

ing police reform legislation from last year after law enforcement and key Democratic lawmakers agreed the original bill went too far.

The measure, House Bill 2037, makes clear police can use force to stop people from fleeing temporary investigative detentions, known as Terry stops. Officers said restrictions passed by lawmakers in 2021 had left them unable to do so, meaning potential suspects could simply leave.

Under the bill, police still must use reasonable care, including appropriate de-escalation techniques, and they may not use force during Terry stops when the people being detained are compliant. Inslee said it "upholds the principle of police accountability, de-escalation and the protection of individual liberties."

Following 2020's widespread protests for police accountability in the wake of George Floyd's murder, Washington lawmakers passed an array of reforms covering everything from the background checks of officers undergo before they're hired to the circumstances under which they can be decertified.

Among them was House Bill 1310, which said officers could use force only when they had probable cause to make an arrest or to prevent imminent injury, and that they were required to use appropriate de-escalation tactics if possible.

Police said the measure hindered their response to crime: Often when officers show up at a scene, they need to detain people to figure out if they were involved in a crime. But under House Bill 1310, they couldn't use force to detain them unless they already had probable cause to arrest them, they said.

Police accountability activists said that was by design. Too often, they argued, officers use force against the wrong people, especially minorities. The Washington Coalition for Police Accountability urged Inslee to veto the measure allowing police to use force to prevent people from fleeing, saying House Bill 1310 was "deliberately written to address discriminatory policing and reduce violence."

"Police don't need additional authority to use force," said Leslie Cushman, of the coalition.

Rep. Jesse Johnson, the Federal Way Democrat who sponsored House Bill 1310, said restricting the ability of police to detain fleeing suspects was unintentional. The measure signed by Inslee Thursday allows police to do their jobs while also requiring them to use no more force than necessary.

The bill also addresses another shortcoming identified by police: They noted that while House Bill 1310 restricted when they can use force, it left undefined what "force" is. The measure defines it as any act reasonably likely to cause physical pain, or any act exerted upon a person to compel or gain control of them. It doesn't include pat-downs or handcuffing a compliant suspect.

Earlier this month Inslee signed two other bills fixing parts of last year's police reform package. One made clear officers may use force to help detain or transport people in behavioral health crisis, while the other corrected an oversight that seemed to inadvertently prohibit police departments from possessing certain less-lethal weapons.

American among civilians killed in Russian attack in Ukraine

WASHINGTON (AP) — An American man was killed in a Russian attack on the northern Ukrainian city of Chernihiv, where he was seeking medical treatment for his partner. The death of Jim Hill was reported Thursday by his sister.

"My brother Jimmy Hill was killed yesterday in Chernihiv, Ukraine. He was waiting in a bread line with several other people when they were gunned down" by Russian military forces, his sister, Cheryl Hill Gordon, wrote on Facebook. "His body was found in the street by the local police."

Ukrainian officials reported that 10 people were killed Wednesday in Chernihiv while standing in the bread line.

Chernihiv police and the U.S. State Department confirmed the death of an American but did not identify him. Hill was at least the second U.S. citizen to be killed in the conflict, after the killing of journalist and filmmaker Brent Renaud last week.

In poignant posts on Facebook in the weeks before his death, Hill described "indiscriminate bombing" in a city under siege and joked about wanting to appear "feeble-minded" if captured by the Russians.

Under a photo of himself he wrote on March 8: "me unshaven for 10 days. I am actually trying to look

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 72 of 92

as old and feeble-minded (not hard) as possible in case they catch me. I am working on my Rainman accent 'Oh Boy'..."

Hill, a native of Eveleth, Minnesota, who was living in Driggs, Idaho, identified himself as a lecturer at universities in Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, and Warsaw, Poland. He said he was in Chernihiv with his partner for her to receive medical treatment.

"We are staying on 3rd floor in Hospital. Most patients in basement bomb shelter. But cold down there and no internet," he wrote on Feb. 26, two days after the invasion began.

Four days later, he said: "Nobody in Chernihiv is safe. Indiscriminate bombing. ... Ukrainian forces hold city but are surrounded. It's a siege here. Nobody in. Nobody out."

At least 53 people had been brought to morgues over the past 24 hours, killed during heavy Russian air attacks and ground fire in Chernihiv, the local governor, Viacheslav Chaus, told Ukrainian TV on Thursday.

House votes to further restrict Russian trade after invasion

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House voted overwhelmingly Thursday to suspend normal trade relations with Russia and Belarus, preparing for President Joe Biden to enact higher tariffs on more products and further weaken the Russian economy in response to its military assault on Ukraine.

The U.S. has already taken steps to shut off the importation of Russian oil, liquefied natural gas, seafood, alcohol and diamonds. The vote on Thursday sets the stage for making it more expensive to import certain steel, aluminum and plywood items, among other goods.

The House vote was 424-8. The Senate is expected to take up the measure soon for final passage.

The broad trade action, which would revoke "most favored nation" status for Russia, is being taken in coordination with the European Union and Group of Seven countries. The House vote came one day after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pleaded with Congress and U.S. allies to do more to deter Russia.

"I'm asking to make sure that the Russians do not receive a single penny that they use to destroy people in Ukraine," Zelenskyy said in a video address to Congress.

In a joint statement introducing the trade bill, Reps. Richard Neal, D-Mass., and Kevin Brady, R-Texas, said Zelenskyy's remarks "only strengthened our resolve to further isolate and weaken" Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"We must do all we can to hold Putin accountable for senselessly attacking the Ukrainian people and undermining global stability," the two lawmakers said. "The suspension of normal trade relations is an essential part of our effort to restore peace, save lives and defend democracy."

World Trade Organization rules generally require each member to provide its lowest tariff rates to all WTO members. Russia joined the WTO in 2012 and Congress overwhelmingly approved legislation that year providing the president with the authority to extend normal trade relations status with Russia. But countries can enact exceptions to protect security interests.

Still, the revocation would carry mostly symbolic weight. The earlier sanctions on imports of Russian oil, gas and coal already cut off about 60% of U.S. imports from the country, but certain sectors of the economy could feel an effect.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said, "To date, both parties, Democrat and Republican, remain united in sending Putin a clear message: His inhumane violence against the Ukrainian people will come at a crippling price."

Tariffs make imports less competitive by increasing their costs to U.S. companies. Timothy Brightbill, a partner at Wiley Rein LLP who focuses on international trade law, said the effects on American consumers should be modest in most sectors as companies can generally turn to other suppliers. He said it's important for U.S. supply chains not to run through Russia any more and that consumers understand that.

"Most American consumers would be happy to pay a bit more to ensure that their products and raw materials don't support Russia and the Russian government," Brightbill said.

He also said that revoking Russia's trade status sends a strong signal to China that the United States

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 73 of 92

would not tolerate hostile actions against Taiwan.

Eight Republicans voted against the House measure, but speakers from both parties forcefully advocated for its passage during the debate. Democratic Reps. Lloyd Doggett, D-Texas, and Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., introduced an earlier version.

"What Putin is doing in Ukraine, bombing civilians, targeting children, ... is outside the circle of civilized human behavior," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. "He is committing war crimes and he must be held accountable."

Rep. Victoria Spartz, R-Ind., who was born in Ukraine, said the bill sends a message to Putin and his allies that "the West is serious."

"They cannot just go kill a bunch of people, destroy cities, kill women and children and then go back and have business as usual," Spartz said.

St. Patrick's Day parades turn pandemic blues Irish green

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — St. Patrick's Day celebrations across the country are back after a two-year hiatus, including the nation's largest in New York City, in a sign of growing hope that the worst of the coronavirus pandemic may be over.

The holiday served as a key marker in the outbreak's progression, with parades celebrating Irish heritage among the first big public events to be called off in 2020. An ominous acceleration in infections quickly cascaded into broad shutdowns.

The full-fledged return of New York's parade on Thursday coincided with the city's wider reopening. Major mask and vaccination rules were recently lifted.

The city's famed Fifth Avenue was awash with green, as hordes of revelers took to sidewalks amid damp skies to take part in the tradition for the first time in two years.

Kathy Brucia, 65, who is Irish and was clad in green, including a shamrock on her cheek, has been attending the parade for more than three decades — except the past two years.

"The pandemic," she said as the first marching band passed by Thursday morning. "I don't think it's over. But I think a lot of people feel like, wow, we could finally go to a parade and not worry. But I think everybody has to worry."

The day held great importance for a city still reeling from the outbreak.

"Psychologically, it means a lot," said Sean Lane, the chair of the parade's organizing group. "New York really needs this."

Mike Carty, the Ireland-born owner of Rosie O'Grady's, a restaurant and pub in the Theater District, agreed.

"This is the best thing that happened to us in two years," he said. "We need the business, and this really kicked it off."

The South's largest St. Patrick's Day celebration made a big comeback in Savannah, Georgia, where Irish immigrants and their descendants have held parades since 1824. After nearly two centuries, the holiday has become Savannah's most profitable tourist draw, a street party for hundreds of thousands still thirsty after Mardi Gras.

Tori Purvis, 46, arrived before dawn to claim a spot near the start of the parade along with her 3-year-old son, Tristan, still wearing his pajamas decorated with leprechaun hats and rainbows. Purvis said she's been celebrating St. Patrick's Day in Savannah since childhood, and the only years she recalls not showing up were 2020 and 2021 when the pandemic forced the parade to be canceled.

"I'm not against masks or anything, but it's nice to see people outside without masks and enjoying their time," Purvis said. "It's like a little bit of normalcy is coming back."

Over the weekend, Chicago dyed its river green, after doing so without much fanfare last year and skipping the tradition altogether during the initial virus onslaught.

Boston, home to one of the country's largest Irish enclaves, resumes its annual parade Sunday after a

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 74 of 92

two-year absence.

Some communities in Florida, one of the first states to reopen its economy, were also bringing their parades back. The state chose St. Patrick's Day two years ago to shutter restaurants, bars and nightclubs — a dramatic move by the Republican and which underscored the fear and uncertainty of the time.

New York's parade — the largest and oldest of them all, first held in 1762 — runs 35 blocks along Fifth Avenue, past St. Patrick's Cathedral and along Central Park.

It's being held as the city emerges from a discouraging bout with the highly contagious omicron variant, which killed more than 4,000 people in New York City in January and February.

New infections and hospitalizations have declined since the surge, prompting city officials to green-light the procession.

On Thursday, Mayor Eric Adams began his pub crawl early, raising a pint of Guinness while visiting one of his city's Irish establishments.

He likened the pandemic to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

"COVID is not terrorism, but it brought terror," the mayor told radio station WAXQ-FM. "And now we're at the 9/12 moment when we march down in the St. Patrick's Day parade. We're getting up and we're saying New York is stronger, better and we're ready to get back to our city being open."

To keep the tradition going, organizers in 2020 and 2021 quietly held small parades on St. Patrick's Day, right around sunrise, when the streets were empty.

Thousands of people showed up for this year's parade, even as many New Yorkers remain skittish about massive, potentially virus-spreading public events.

The holiday commemorates the death of the patron saint of Ireland more than 15 centuries ago but has evolved into a money-making observance of Irish culture for restaurants and pubs.

But there was solemnity, too. Thursday's procession paused to remember the fallen — including those who perished during the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, first responders killed in the line of duty and the thousands of pandemic casualties.

The Bishop Edmund Whalen, speaking outside St. Patrick's Cathedral, expressed kinship with the people of Ukraine.

"We Irish know all too well the injustice of domination and oppression from those who sought to impose their rule over us," he said. "And so we pray for the people of Ukraine who suffer this day from the injustice of war."

FBI eyeing 6 suspects after bomb threats at Black colleges

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

As the nation's historically Black colleges remain on edge after receiving dozens of bomb threats in recent weeks, federal law enforcement officials said they have identified six suspects who they believe are responsible for most of the racially motivated crimes.

More than a third of America's 101 historically Black colleges and universities have been targeted by calls or emails threatening to set off bombs on their campuses since early January, with the vast majority arriving during the celebration of Black History Month in February. The threats are being investigated as hate crimes.

At a congressional hearing Thursday, federal law enforcement agencies said they are working aggressively to make arrests in the 59 cases, calling the case their "highest priority." All six suspects are juveniles, according to the FBI.

Ryan Young, executive assistant director of the FBI intelligence branch, said investigators have identified "one person and a small group," although some of the threats may have been copycat crimes.

"Our intention is to bring these individuals to justice," Young told the House Oversight Committee.

The Biden administration this week announced a series of actions in response to the threats. The Education Department on Wednesday issued guidance to help colleges navigate threats and get help from federal agencies. Vice President Kamala Harris, the nation's first Black vice president and an alumna of

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 75 of 92

Howard University, a historically Black institution in Washington, also notified colleges they are eligible for grants meant to help schools recover from violence.

No explosives have been found in connection with the threats, but students say the prospect of violence has loomed over their lives. The threats have prompted lockdowns and evacuations, sometimes late at night, leaving students anxious and uneasy.

Emmanuel Ukot, president of the student government at Xavier University of Louisiana, said tensions have been high in the wake of two threats at the school of more than 3,000 students. Some students have been afraid to return to classes, he said, and some have sought mental health services.

"The triple impact of COVID-19, the ongoing racial reckoning in the country and the bomb threats on HBCU campuses is having a real and lasting impact on our students," he told lawmakers.

Howard University has received at least four threats since Jan. 4. After the second one, officials gave students a day off for their mental health.

"The added stress and in some cases paranoia that students, faculty and staff have subsequently experienced cannot be overstated," said Kylie Burke, president of Howard's student government.

The threats began in early January but picked up on Feb. 1, the first day of Black History Month, when 18 colleges were threatened on the same day. Some have come as recently as Monday, when Morehouse College in Atlanta locked down its campus in response to a bomb threat.

The vast majority of the threats have been made by phone, with a small number coming in emails or other online messages, said Young, of the FBI. Investigators have had trouble tracing some threats that were made using encryption technology, he added.

Young declined to provide further details on the six juveniles, but he said they "know they are under the scope of an investigation."

The investigation is spread across 31 FBI field offices along with other units including its cyber crimes division.

The threats evoke a history of bombings and other acts of violence against Black Americans.

Lawmakers on the Oversight Committee recalled the 1963 bombing of an Alabama church that killed four young Black girls. Others noted a 1999 bombing at Florida A&M University, a historically Black school. Two pipe bombs exploded in that case, although no one was injured.

"These reprehensible threats against Black institutions echo the tactics employed by the Ku Klux Klan and others decades ago as they tried to instill terror in the Black community," said Democratic Rep. Carolyn Maloney, chair of the committee.

Lawmakers from both parties urged authorities to hasten the investigation and expressed frustration that no arrests have been made, prolonging the turmoil for students and faculty.

"This committee is looking for guarantees from the FBI that there's going to be arrests made," Republican Rep. Clay Higgins of Louisiana said. "There should be no systemic fear at our colleges and universities in America."

FBI and Homeland Security officials said they are continuing to investigate, and they have been providing training to help HBCUs respond to threats.

Michelle Asha Cooper, an acting assistant education secretary, told lawmakers that HBCUs will need help recovering from the threats, which have diverted emergency resources and placed an increased burden on campus mental health systems.

"Campus leaders do not have all the resources at their disposal to respond appropriately to the ongoing threats, and are not fully aware of the resources available from the federal government," she said.

The House last week passed a resolution condemning the threats and affirming support for the schools. But Democrats said Congress must do more, with some calling for legislation that would increase HBCU funding for security, infrastructure and other costs.

Students testifying at the hearing echoed the call for further support. Burke said that while Howard benefits from being located in the nation's capital, with access to its security resources, many HBCUs don't have that kind of privilege.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 76 of 92

"When you support historically Black colleges and universities, what you're really supporting is the next generation of Black lawyers, filmmakers, engineers, artists, doctors and even politicians," she said.

US grew wealthier, better educated in 2nd half of 2010s

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

The U.S. grew wealthier, better educated, less impoverished and less transient during the second half of the last decade, according to data released Thursday by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Median household income for the nation, which had been almost \$59,000 from 2011 to 2015, rose to almost \$65,000 during the 2016 to 2020 period, which was the final stretch of the longest expansion in the history of U.S. business cycles, according to American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

With the exception of Colorado, the states with the biggest gains in household income were primarily on the coasts. The Rocky Mountain state joined the District of Columbia, California, Massachusetts and Washington with household jumps ranging from \$9,000 to \$14,000. The smallest gain was in Louisiana, at almost \$1,800, and household income declined by almost \$1,500 in Alaska.

The data released Thursday capture the second half of a decade-long expansion in the U.S. economy that followed the Great Recession. The expansion ended in spring 2020 as the coronavirus started spreading throughout the U.S., forcing businesses to close and workers to be laid off. The data captured only a small part of the initial impact from the pandemic, according to the Census Bureau.

The nation's poverty rate dropped significantly in the last half of the decade, going from 15.5% in the 2011 to 2015 period, in the aftermath of the Great Recession, to 12.8% in the 2016 to 2020 period. With the exception of Alaska, where its change wasn't statistically significant, poverty decreased in 49 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Along with the increase in household income and decline in poverty, home sizes got bigger. The number of owner-occupied homes with at least four bedrooms jumped from 29.7% to 31.3%

People were slightly less mobile in the last half of the 2010s, with 86.2% staying in the same home in the 2016 to 2020 period, compared to 85.1% in the 2011 to 2015 span. Young adults, who tend to move more than any age group, also slowed down their mobility, with 76.4% of people between ages 25 and 34 staying put compared to 75% between 2011 and 2015. Demographers say overall mobility in the U.S. has declined in recent years because housing construction hasn't kept pace with population growth, and the increase in the debt people carry makes moving more difficult.

The U.S. became better educated in the second half of the 2010s, with almost a third of the population over age 25 having a bachelor's degree or higher between 2016 and 2020, compared to 29.8% between 2011 and 2015.

Income inequality was slightly higher at the end of the decade, and it was at its highest level in the 2010s than in more than five decades that records have been kept. It declined in the District of Columbia and Texas, and it rose most significantly in Wyoming.

The American Community Survey provides the most comprehensive data on American life by asking 3.5 million households each year questions about commuting times, internet access, family life, income, education levels, disabilities, military service and employment. Disruptions caused by the pandemic produced fewer responses in 2020. Because of the low response rate, the 1-year version of the survey capturing year-to-year changes didn't measure up to Census Bureau standards and it only was released in an experimental format.

For the 5-year version of the American Community Survey released Thursday, the Census Bureau revised its methodology to reduce the impact from the lack of responses.

US Olympian Alysa Liu, father targeted in Chinese spy case

By SALLY HO Associated Press

U.S. Olympic figure skater Alysa Liu and her father Arthur Liu — a former political refugee — were among

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 77 of 92

those targeted in a spying operation that the Justice Department alleges was ordered by the Chinese government, the elder Liu says.

Arthur Liu told The Associated Press he had been contacted by the FBI last October, and warned about the scheme just as his 16-year-old daughter was preparing for the Winter Olympics that took place in Beijing in February. The father said he did not tell his daughter about the issue so as not to scare her or distract her from the competition.

"We believed Alysa had a very good chance of making the Olympic team and truly were very scared," Arthur Liu said late Wednesday.

The Justice Department earlier in the day announced charges against five men accused of acting on behalf of the Chinese government in a series of brazen and wide-ranging schemes to stalk and harass Chinese dissidents in the United States.

Arthur Liu said he and his daughter were included in the criminal complaint as "Dissident 3" and "family member," respectively.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said he was "not aware of the specifics" surrounding the allegations, and said China is "firmly opposed to the U.S. slandering by making an issue of this out of thin air."

"China always asks Chinese citizens to abide by the laws and regulations of host countries, and we would never ask our citizens to engage in activities that violate local laws," Zhao told reporters at a daily briefing Thursday. "The so-called transnational harassment schemes are just trumped up."

Liu said he took a stand against China's bullying by allowing his daughter to compete at the recent Olympic Winter Games, where she placed 7th in the women's event.

"This is her moment. This is her once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to compete at the Olympic Games. I'm not going to let them stop her from going and I'll do whatever I can to make sure she's safe and I'm willing to make sacrifices so she can enjoy the moment," Arthur Liu said. "I'm not going to let them win — to stop me — to silence me from expressing my opinions anywhere."

The father said he agreed to let his daughter compete with assurances from the State Department and U.S. Olympic Committee that she would be closely protected while competing in China, with at least two people escorting her at all times.

"They are probably just trying to intimidate us, to ... in a way threaten us not to say anything, to cause trouble to them and say anything political or related to human rights violations in China," Arthur Liu said. "I had concerns about her safety. The U.S. government did a good job protecting her."

He said a man called him last November, months before the Olympics, claiming to be an official with the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee, and asked for his and his daughters' passport numbers. Arthur Liu refused to provide them and said he would call his contact at Team USA the next day.

"I didn't feel good about it. I felt something fishy was going on," Arthur Liu said. "From my dealings with the U.S. Figure Skating association, they would never call me on the phone to get copies of our passports. I really cut it short once I realized what he was asking for."

A spokesman for U.S. Figure Skating deferred comment to Team USA.

The U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee in a statement to AP said: "The security of the U.S. delegation is our number one priority, and we work closely with our partners, including government agencies, to ensure athlete safety at the Games."

Arthur Liu said he does not remember being approached in person by Matthew Ziburis, who was arrested Tuesday on charges that include conspiring to commit interstate harassment and criminal use of a means of identification. Ziburis was released on a \$500,000 bond.

Prosecutors allege that Ziburis was hired to perform surveillance on the family and pose as a member of an international sports committee to ask Arthur Liu for a copy of his and Alysa Liu's passports by claiming it was a travel "preparedness check" related to COVID-19. The complaint said when Arthur Liu refused, Ziburis threatened to delay or deny them international travel.

The elder Liu said he left China in his 20s as a political refugee because he had protested the Commu-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 78 of 92

nist government following the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. Arthur Liu eventually settled in the San Francisco Bay Area, put himself through law school and nurtured one of America's most promising athletes.

His daughter visited their ancestral homeland for the first time while at the Olympics. Arthur Liu said his daughter has generally been warmly embraced by Chinese fans and media, who consider her to be one of their own.

But through the spying investigation, he learned that China was aware of an Instagram message about human rights violations against the ethnic minority Uyghurs that his daughter once posted. During the Games, Alysia Liu also told her father that she was approached by a stranger late one night at a cafeteria after the free skate event, and that the man followed her and asked her to come to his apartment.

"I've kind of accepted my life to be like this because of what I chose to do in 1989, to speak up against the government. And I know the Chinese government will extend their long hands into any corner in the world," Arthur Liu said. "I'm going to continue to enjoy life and live life as I want to live. I'm not going to let this push me down and I'm not going to let them succeed."

US adult smoking rate fell during first year of pandemic

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The first year of the COVID-19 pandemic saw more Americans drinking heavily or using illicit drugs — but apparently not smoking.

U.S. cigarette smoking dropped to a new all-time low in 2020, with 1 in 8 adults saying they were current smokers, according to survey data released Thursday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Adult e-cigarette use also dropped, the CDC reported.

CDC officials credited public health campaigns and policies for the decline, but outside experts said tobacco company price hikes and pandemic lifestyle changes likely played roles.

"People who were mainly social smokers just didn't have that going on any more," said Megan Roberts, an Ohio State University researcher focused on tobacco product use among young adults and adolescents.

What's more, parents who suddenly were home with their kids full-time may have cut back. And some people may have quit following reports that smokers were more likely to develop severe illness after a coronavirus infection, Roberts added.

The CDC report, based on a survey of more than 31,000 U.S. adults, found that 19% of Americans used at least one tobacco product in 2020, down from about 21% in 2019.

Use of cigars, smokeless tobacco and pipes was flat. Current use of electronic cigarettes dropped to 3.7%, down from 4.5% the year before.

Cigarettes were the most commonly used tobacco product, with 12.5% of adults using them, down from 14%.

Health officials have long considered cigarette smoking — a risk factor for lung cancer, heart disease and stroke — to be the leading cause of preventable death in the United States.

In 1965, 42% of U.S. adults were smokers.

The rate has been gradually dropping for decades for a number of reasons, including taxes and smoking bans in workplaces and restaurants. But a big part of the recent decline has to be recent price hikes, some experts said.

For example, British American Tobacco — the company that makes brands including Camel, Lucky Strike and Newport — increased prices four times in 2020, by a total of about 50 cents a pack.

Interestingly, the number of cigarettes sold in the U.S. actually went up in 2020 — the first such increase in two decades, the Federal Trade Commission reported last year.

It's possible that fewer people smoked, but those who did were consuming more cigarettes.

"That's a viable hypothesis — that you had people with more smoking opportunities because they weren't going to work," said University of Ottawa's David Swenor, a global tobacco policy expert at the University of Ottawa.

It's also possible that the CDC survey underestimated how many people are smoking, either because

some respondents weren't honest or because the survey missed too many smokers, he said.

Other surveys have suggested that for many people, alcohol consumption and illicit drug use increased in the first year of the pandemic.

EXPLAINER: Could Ukrainian 'neutrality' help end Russia war?

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — In talks between Russia and Ukraine toward a possible cease-fire after three weeks of intense fighting, negotiators are exploring prospects of possible "neutrality" for Ukraine, a former Soviet republic that has been moving closer to NATO in hopes of membership — infuriating Moscow.

The discussions this week have brought a glimmer of hope of a possible way out of the bloody crisis in Ukraine — and followed an acknowledgment from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the most explicit terms yet that Ukraine is unlikely to realize its goal of joining the Atlantic alliance.

An official in Zelenskyy's office said the talks have centered on whether Russian troops would remain in separatist regions in eastern Ukraine after the war and where borders would be. Ukraine also wants at least one Western nuclear power involved in the talks, and a legally binding document on security guarantees.

In exchange, Ukraine was ready to discuss a neutral military status, the official told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Vladimir Medinsky, the chief Russian negotiator, first mentioned publicly on Wednesday that the issue of a "neutral" status for Ukraine was on the table, sparking a guessing-game about what that might mean.

But even should a deal be struck, there's no assurance it would hold: Russia, many critics say, has gravely violated international law and its own commitments by invading Ukraine in the first place. In the view of Russian President Vladimir Putin, the West has breached what he considered its obligation not to expand NATO into Eastern Europe.

WHAT IS NEUTRALITY TODAY?

It's about not picking sides, keeping out of binding alliances, and trying to stay out of conflict — but even supposedly "neutral" nations have their limits. European countries often mentioned when the concept of neutrality comes up are Switzerland — which like Austria has codified neutrality into its constitution — as well as Sweden, Finland, Ireland and, once upon a time, Belgium, which is today the home of NATO.

Switzerland has generally resonated as the leading emblem of neutrality. The Swiss have shunned alliances, refused to join the European Union, acted as an intermediary between opposing countries, and only joined the United Nations 20 years ago — even though it has hosted the U.N.'s European headquarters for decades.

But the Swiss lined up with European Union sanctions against Russia after the invasion of Ukraine. Other countries too have strayed from neutrality in the strictest sense: Swedish forces are taking part in NATO's winter-weather exercises in neighboring Norway; Finland has long resisted joining NATO, but Moscow's actions in Ukraine have been changing the dynamic.

Some countries — particularly those close to Russia in Central and Eastern Europe — have gravitated close to NATO and become members, and eschewed neutrality out of concern it would convey weakness and vulnerability, and that Moscow could seize on that.

WHAT ALTERNATIVES ARE ON THE TABLE FOR UKRAINE AND RUSSIA?

Historian Leos Muller held up Austria — which has kept its distance from NATO — as a conceivable model for Ukraine.

After World War II, Austria — which before the war had been united with Nazi Germany — was occupied by forces from four Allied powers: Britain, France, the United States and the Soviet Union. In 1955, those four powers decided to pull out their occupying forces and let Austria be independent, but only after Moscow insisted that Austria's parliament first write into its constitution a guarantee of neutrality.

"I think that's the solution that they are thinking about at the moment, because it worked for Austria," said Muller, a history professor at Stockholm University and author of the book, "Neutrality in World History."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 80 of 92

Still, Muller doubted whether a diplomatic exit ramp can be found just yet, after so much blood has spilled on both sides in the conflict.

WOULD 'NEUTRALITY' OFFER AN EXIT ROUTE TO THE CRISIS?

Enshrining the "neutrality" of Ukraine into any deal could help diminish the military threat that Russia perceives from it — especially as a possible NATO member. Ukraine insists it has no hostile intent toward Russia, but has been sidling up to the alliance to ensure its security.

For years, Russian authorities, from Putin on down, have bristled about NATO's gradual creep eastward after the Cold War, when the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact alliance disappeared. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are the former Soviet republics now in NATO.

A brief war in 2008 between Russia and Georgia, which led to the de facto excision of two Georgian territories from its national map, put Georgia's own ambitions to join NATO into a deep freeze.

As Ukraine gravitated closer to the West, in 2014, Russia annexed the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea and pro-Russian separatists seized control of parts of eastern Ukraine in 2014 — boosting Kyiv's desire to join NATO, even if it was admittedly a long way off. After a continued cozying-up between NATO and Ukraine, including with weapons and advisers, Russia reached a boiling point last year.

HOW DID OTHER COUNTRIES COME TO ACCEPT NEUTRALITY?

The European countries that are most associated with neutrality got to that in different ways. Sometimes it was made easier by geography — such as in the case of Sweden and other Nordic states that were above the fray of wars south of the Baltic Sea. Sometimes, it was imposed.

Muller noted Finland. During the Cold War, Finland — which had sided with Nazi Germany during World War II and has a 1,340-kilometer (830-mile) border with Russia — was strong-armed by the Soviet Union into not opposing its foreign policy rules.

"They always had to take in consideration what Soviet reactions would be," Muller said.

Switzerland, at the end of the wars of conquest by French emperor Napoleon in the early 19th century, had its neutrality guaranteed by the great powers of the day in Europe at the Vienna Congress in 1815 — who recalled many armies were "tromping across" Swiss territory during those wars that followed the French Revolution, Muller said.

Over subsequent generations, Swiss neutrality became ingrained and has now become "part of the national identity," he added. **JUST HOW FAR BACK DOES THE IDEA OF NEUTRALITY GO?**

While the concept traces its origins back millennia, such as when some Greek city-states sought to avoid getting entangled in the Peloponnesian War in the 5th century BC, neutrality in the modern sense in Europe dates to the 18th century, after the Treaty of Westphalia — which ended the Thirty Years War and exemplified the emergence of international law, said Muller.

Some countries began choosing neutrality out of self-interest, but also as a moral choice, he said.

When it's not clear how to choose "who is the good guy, and who is the bad guy," said Muller, "then, it's morally OK to be in between."

FBI: Accused wanted 'tyrant' Gov. Whitmer tied up on table

By ED WHITE Associated Press

A key figure in an alleged plot to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer told an undercover FBI agent that he wanted to restrain the "tyrant" on a table then pose for a photo "like we just made the biggest drug bust," according to a secret recording played for jurors Thursday.

The trial of four men resumed in federal court in Grand Rapids, Michigan, after a three-day delay due to someone in the courtroom testing positive for COVID-19.

Agent Mark Schweers told the jury that he was posing as someone with like-minded views from Michigan's Upper Peninsula when he met Adam Fox in the basement of a vacuum shop in suburban Grand Rapids, a hideaway accessed by a trap door.

Fox didn't know that Schweers was wearing a recording device as he talked excitedly about attacking the Michigan Capitol, teaming up with a militia called the Wolverine Watchmen, and restoring a "consti-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 81 of 92

tutional republic.”

“We want her flex-cuffed on a table while we all pose and get our pictures taken like we just made the biggest drug bust in ... history,” Fox said of Whitmer, laughing and using profanities.

“You give us that, we’ll be happy,” Fox said. “Then you lock her ... up, even if we gotta go with her.”

Fox, Barry Croft Jr., Daniel Harris and Brandon Caserta are charged with conspiracy. Prosecutors say they turned their anger toward government in 2020 into a plot to kidnap Whitmer at her vacation home because of restrictions she imposed during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earlier Thursday, FBI agent Christopher Long testified about how investigators got interested in Croft, a trucker from Bear, Delaware.

Long said Croft wrote on social media in 2019 that he wanted to force police officers out of their homes with fire, then “have a people’s trial and hang them from the nearest tree.”

Defense attorney Joshua Blanchard has told jurors that the FBI pursued Croft because they simply didn’t like him or his associates who had antigovernment opinions. His questioning of Long at times followed that theme.

But the agent offered a different explanation.

“When you have an individual who has a violent-threat style of communications with individuals and you add in he had access to weapons ... those do not fall under First Amendment protected speech,” Long said.

Jurors listening to social media videos and secretly recorded conversations last week heard Fox and Croft talk about taking action against government. Defense lawyers claim informants and undercover agents improperly influenced the men.

Blanchard noted that the FBI had encouraged an informant to keep Croft and various antigovernment allies together after a tense summer 2020 meeting in Peebles, Ohio.

But if the group was possibly breaking up on its own, Blanchard asked, wouldn’t that actually prevent violence?

“The concern was that they were going to have a lone wolf attack, and we weren’t going to have access to specific individuals,” Long replied. “The entire group was violent. Mr. Croft was violent, as well.”

Whitmer, a Democrat who is seeking reelection, rarely talks publicly about the case. She has blamed former President Donald Trump for fomenting anger over coronavirus restrictions and refusing to condemn right-wing extremists like those charged in the case. She has said Trump was complicit in the Jan. 6 Capitol riot.

Find AP’s full coverage of the Whitmer kidnap plot trial at: <https://apnews.com/hub/whitmer-kidnap-plot-trial>

Germany to let virus restrictions expire even as cases surge

BERLIN (AP) — The German government on Thursday defended its decision to let many pandemic restrictions expire at the weekend, even as the country hit a new record high for newly confirmed cases.

Germany’s disease control agency reported 294,931 new cases in the past 24 hours. The Robert Koch Institute said there have been a further 278 COVID-related deaths, taking the overall toll since the start of the pandemic to 126,420.

“We are now entering a new phase of the pandemic in which we, like almost all of our neighboring countries, can do without most of the protective measures,” Chancellor Olaf Scholz said after a meeting with Germany’s 16 state governors.

The decision to end many pandemic restrictions on Sunday, including the requirements to wear masks in public settings and limit spectators in stadiums, was criticized by the states, who can still introduce their own restrictions in virus hotspots going forward.

Germany’s powerful industry lobby group BDI had also warned against a “generous” lifting of measures, saying it would be irresponsible in light of the current surge in infections.

Experts say mobility data show people are increasingly meeting others, facilitating the spread of the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 82 of 92

virus. The surge is also fueled by the highly transmissible omicron subvariant known as BA.2 that now makes up more than half of all cases in Germany. Past easing of rules and reports about similar action in other countries have also conveyed a mistaken impression that the pandemic is over.

Meanwhile, German lawmakers debated proposals for a general COVID-19 vaccine mandate for all adults, which Scholz has backed. Opponents of the measure have suggested mandatory vaccination only for people over 50, while others reject the idea altogether.

A final decision on making vaccinations compulsory isn't expected for several weeks.

Rock Hall of Fame to Dolly: Voters will decide if you're in

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

Dolly Parton is still on the list of this year's nominations for the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame despite the country icon asking to be removed because she hasn't "earned that right."

The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Foundation said in a statement Thursday that, in effect, it is up to the voters to decide if Parton is elected.

"Dolly's recommendation, along with the other 16 nominees for the class of 2022 was sent out earlier this month to our 1,200 general ballot voters, the majority of whom are artists themselves, for consideration for induction at our ceremony."

On Monday, Parton went on social media to "respectfully bow out" of the process, saying she did not want to take votes away from the remaining nominees. Parton had no immediate comment on the Hall's decision.

Parton was named on the Rock Hall shortlist last month, alongside fellow first-time nominees Eminem, Lionel Richie, Duran Duran and A Tribe Called Quest.

Other artists and groups being considered for induction are Rage Against the Machine, Pat Benatar, Dionne Warwick, Carly Simon, Judas Priest, Beck, Kate Bush, DEVO, Eurythmics, Fela Kuti, MC5 and the New York Dolls.

Parton is most associated with country music and is in the Country Hall of Fame, but she has performed songs with a rock feel. Artists who have made both the Rock Hall and Country Hall of Fame include Brenda Lee, Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley, Chet Atkins, Hank Williams and the Everly Brothers.

The Foundation on Thursday said there was plenty of room in the Hall for artists who aren't pure rockers. "From its inception, rock 'n' roll has had deep roots in rhythm & blues and country music. It is not defined by any one genre, rather a sound that moves youth culture," the statement reads.

"We are in awe of Dolly's brilliant talent and pioneering spirit and are proud to have nominated her for induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame."

Some GOP states seek new police units for election probes

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Republicans responding to the myth of widespread voter fraud are turning to a new tactic to appease voters who believe the claims: election police.

The efforts to establish law enforcement units dedicated to investigating election crimes come as Republican lawmakers and governors move to satisfy the millions of voters in their party who believe former President Donald Trump's false claims that widespread voter fraud cost him reelection in 2020.

In Florida, Republican lawmakers passed an election police bill pushed by Gov. Ron DeSantis, a potential 2024 GOP presidential candidate, who justified its need by citing unspecified cases of fraud. Similar legislation in Georgia would allow the state Bureau of Investigation to examine election fraud claims without invitations from other officials.

Republicans say the special police powers are needed to restore confidence in elections and uncover instances of fraud. Democrats and voting rights groups say the new layer of law enforcement would be redundant, given that local and state authorities already identify and prosecute potential fraud cases, and

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 83 of 92

could be leveraged for partisan purposes.

Increased involvement from law enforcement can be a deterrent to voters wanting to cast a ballot and even local election officials offering help, said Daniel Griffith, the policy director at Secure Democracy USA, a nonpartisan voting access group.

"Everyone just gets a little more concerned about, am I going to get investigated, am I going to be arrested just because I'm trying to vote or trying to help someone vote?" he said.

Voter fraud is rare, typically occurs in isolated instances and is generally detected. An Associated Press investigation of the 2020 presidential election found fewer than 475 potential cases of voter fraud out of 25.5 million ballots cast in the six states where Trump and his allies disputed his loss to President Joe Biden.

Nevertheless, Trump's false claims have proliferated in the GOP. They sparked a wave of legislation last year that placed new requirements for voters to cast ballots early or through the mail in Republican-controlled states, as well as a host of other rules critics labeled as restrictive.

Republicans have introduced a smaller set of state voting bills this year that they have often explained as necessary to prevent fraud, though not all have succeeded. In Arizona, another battleground state lost by Trump, legislation that would have established an agency in the governor's office to investigate election fraud with subpoena power failed to advance.

The Florida proposal passed earlier this month creates a 15-person office of Election Crimes and Security under the Department of State, which is run by an appointee of the governor. The unit would be tasked with receiving election-related fraud complaints and conducting preliminary investigations.

DeSantis would then be required to appoint a group of special officers within the Florida Department of Law Enforcement who would pursue the complaints. The 10 officers would have policing powers and would exist under the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. Under current state law, Florida's governor can appoint officers to investigate violations of election law but is not required to do so.

The governor has previously praised the state's 2020 election as smooth and has resisted calls to conduct a review of the results similar to a partisan effort that was carried out in Arizona but which ultimately found no evidence of wrongdoing.

"I really think we have a lot of procedures in place where these things can be addressed, and I worry that we're putting in place a police force which has no guardrails," said state Sen. Lori Berman, a Democrat. "We don't know who can initiate the investigation, there's nothing to prevent it from being used for targeting certain groups, and I really worry about us having this kind of squad that's totally out there without any supervision."

As the Florida bill moved through the GOP-controlled legislature, Republicans repeatedly highlighted a small number of election crimes in the state as justification for the proposal.

They noted four cases of people caught voting twice and reports of mostly elderly Hispanic voters in South Florida having their party registration wrongfully changed from Democrat to Republican by GOP canvassers. Some Republicans also suggested there were dozens of additional undisclosed fraud cases in the state, which Trump won, but provided no evidence.

"Are we afraid of our elections being too secure?" Republican state Sen. Travis Hutson, the bill's sponsor, said in advocating for the legislation.

Critics have said the measure is a way for DeSantis to appease those who believe the 2020 election was fraudulent and to bolster his ascent in the Republican Party.

"This is very much a response to pressure to pursue even more outlandish ideas, like relitigating the 2020 election," said Brad Ashwell, Florida state director of the advocacy group All Voting is Local.

Florida Secretary of State Laurel M. Lee, a Republican, has said the office would review all claims as a way to ensure the state's elections were secure. Mallory E. Morgan, press secretary in the Florida Department of State, said DeSantis would not direct which allegations should or shouldn't be investigated.

"The governor simply wants to ensure that Floridians will have a clear, straightforward way to report suspected voter fraud, and that a dedicated team of law enforcement personnel can address it in accordance with the law," she said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 84 of 92

DeSantis is expected to sign the bill in the coming weeks.

In Georgia, Republicans also have been calling for policing units dedicated to investigating election crimes.

Election problems are currently handled by investigators with police powers in the office of Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, a Republican who drew GOP scorn for rejecting Trump's request to "find" enough votes so he could overturn Biden's victory in the state in 2020.

Republicans in the state House recently approved a proposal to allow the Georgia Bureau of Investigation to dedicate agents to election crimes, among a host of other provisions related to voting. Lawmakers have included \$579,000 in next year's budget for four Georgia Bureau of Investigation positions. The agents would have policing powers and report to the bureau's director.

Raffensperger has endorsed the idea, as has Republican Gov. Brian Kemp, saying it would provide greater confidence in elections. The AP's investigation in the six battleground states found just 64 instances of potential fraud in Georgia from the 2020 presidential election, representing 0.54% of Biden's margin of victory in the state. Nearly half those cases were determined to be the result of an administrative error or some other mistake.

The bill now moves to the Republican-controlled Senate.

Democrats said they worry that having a law enforcement agency involved in elections could intimidate Black voters, given the history of police being used to suppress voting during the segregation era.

"We see that folks in the majority party are doing exactly what they've done before, using any means necessary to hold on to power," Rep Derek Mallow, a Democrat, said this week. "And we all know why we're seeing another bill attacking our election system and our election workers in the state of Georgia. It has nothing to do with election integrity or security. This bill is about the majority party legislating on a lie, the big lie."

Russian businesses in US face backlash from war in Ukraine

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO and HALELUYA HADERO AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — They're pouring out vodka, boycotting Russian restaurants and even leaving threatening voicemail messages at Russian businesses.

Angered by the deadly violence and the humanitarian crisis resulting from Russia's war on Ukraine, some Americans are taking it out on Russian businesses and brands in the U.S. — or anything that sounds Russian.

Business owners and experts say it's the most intense anti-Russian sentiment they've seen. They also call the behavior irrational and misplaced, especially when so many owners are denouncing Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion and supporting Ukraine, not to mention the fact that some are not even Russian.

Olga Sagan, the owner of Russian bakery Piroshky Piroshky in Seattle, which has offered handcrafted Russian pastries since 1992, described a recent call from someone threatening a terrorist attack on her store.

But Sagan immigrated from Russia in 1999 and is an American citizen. Of her 60 staff members, she is the only one from Russia; three others are from Ukraine.

"People make fun of Russians — we drink vodka," Sagan said. "But never, ever anything like this. It makes me feel very sad. I understand people's emotions and how strong they are about the situation, and I truly appreciate it because I have strong emotions. But most Russian people are against (the war)."

To clarify their position and placate customers, many business owners have posted Ukrainian signs on their doors or have turned to social media to pledge their support for Ukraine and condemn Russia's actions. Some restaurants are scrubbing any Russian references off their menu.

Even Ukrainians have been caught up in the backlash.

Alan Aguichev, 26, opened a restaurant in Manhattan two years ago with his mother, Svetlana "Sveta" Savchitz, who was born in Kharkiv, Ukraine. They named their restaurant Sveta and advertised it as an Eastern European and Russian eatery — a description that was intended to help people easily understand the food but now draws unwanted attention.

Aguichev, who was born in the U.S., said he has received emails from people using expletives about

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 85 of 92

Russia, and telling the business owners to "go back home." The owners have since removed references to Russia from the restaurant's menu.

"Her two blood sisters are hiding under a bunker," Aguichev said of his mother's family. "And then she gets these nasty phone calls saying, 'you're not Ukrainian, you're Russian.' That's terrible."

Aguichev notes that many others have been supportive of him and his mother but it shouldn't matter even if either of them were Russian because many of his Russian friends also don't want this war.

"It's just one man who wants to do this, and that's President Putin," he said. "It's not only affecting Ukrainian lives — it's affecting Russian lives as well."

Moscow on the Hudson, a specialty store that sells Russian, Ukrainian and other international products about nine miles north of Sveta, has also received calls from people cursing out Russia and requesting that the store owners ask Putin to stop the war.

"I was like 'good luck with that,'" said Gleb Gavrillov, who is Russian, Polish and Greek and runs the store with his mother. "I just hung up."

Gavrillov said he used to sell Putin magnets, and even nesting dolls that feature the Russian president as well as former U.S. President Donald Trump, because some Americans liked the products. But he stashed them away when the war started, thinking they might have more value in the future. He also doesn't want to be seen as aligned with Putin.

"I'm not really with him," Gavrillov said. "I just sell the stuff, and it sells good."

Sarah E. Mendelson, the head of Carnegie Mellon's Heinz College in Washington and a longtime expert on Russia, said she can't recall such intense anti-Russian backlash translating into people protesting restaurants or products, even after Russia's bombing campaigns in Syria and its invasion of Crimea in 2014.

Mendelson noted that the constant barrage of real-time images of Ukrainians fleeing their war-torn country has created a groundswell of emotions but the boycotts themselves are hurting emigrants who fled Russia as well as Ukrainians.

"It's an emotional response — it's not actually a rational response," she said. "People ought to take the time to figure out what's going on."

Consumer anger has been misdirected in the past. After the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, many Middle Eastern businesses suffered when customers aimed their hostility at them. In the years since, social media has made it easier for people to protest and organize boycotts via hashtags but the lack of context also makes it easier to get things wrong.

Robert Passikoff, founder and president of Brand Keys, a New York-based brand loyalty research consultancy, noted that a recent poll of 1,200 U.S. shoppers found 84% on a bipartisan basis indicated they would boycott Russian brands as a sign of solidarity with Ukraine. Still, only 8% of them could correctly name any Russian consumer brands without being assisted.

"It's a nice sentiment, but problematic," Passikoff said. "The reality is there aren't many well-known Russian brands readily evident in American stores."

One product that became an easy — but misguided — target of consumer angst was Stolichnaya, a vodka brand incorrectly linked with Russia. Stoli, the brand's better-known nickname and now official name, is actually made in Latvia and the parent company is based in Luxembourg. Its owner, Russian-born tycoon Yuri Shefler, left Russia in 2002 and hasn't been back since.

Damian McKinney, CEO of the Stoli Group, was horrified to see people posting videos on social media of bartenders pouring the drink down the drain and stores dropping it from shelves. To counteract, McKinney said the company let its distributors and retailers know that it was against Russia's invasion and that it supported Ukraine, as well as pointing out its true roots.

McKinney said that sales globally took a hit for seven days, but business has rebounded to higher than normal levels. It's also marketing the vodka bottles with pro-Ukrainian messages.

Whether a Russian brand or not, McKinney said companies must choose a side.

"We have been tested. As soon as that invasion occurred, you got to stand up and to be counted," he said. "I have Russians on the team. You have to decide which side you're on."

But some just want to stay neutral — at least publicly.

Tigran Elchyan, chef and owner of Kalinka Russian Cuisine, a restaurant in Glendale, California, said he has received threatening calls a couple of times a week since the war in Ukraine started. Business is down about 20%.

Elchyan is Armenian-born, and his restaurant highlights food not only from Russia but from his native country as well as former Soviet Union countries like Georgia and Kazakhstan. Most of his staff are from the Russian region. But Elchyan said he wants to stay out of politics.

"Russians and Ukrainians are sitting next together and eating the food," he said. "It's all about the food. It's not political. We are here for peace everywhere."

Big US gene database has volunteers from all walks of life

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

Scientists are getting their first peek at the genes of nearly 100,000 Americans in what's considered a uniquely diverse genomic database -- part of a quest to reduce health disparities and end cookie-cutter care.

The National Institutes of Health released the data on Thursday to help researchers start unraveling how people's genes, environments and lifestyles interact to drive their health. And half the study's participants are from racial and ethnic groups historically left out of medical research.

That diversity "will add a kind of knowledge that just isn't out there," said Dr. Josh Denny, who heads the NIH's massive "All of Us" study that eventually aims to have such data from 1 million Americans.

Until now, more than 90% of people in the world's large genome studies have been of European descent, a lack of diversity that hinders scientific progress, he said.

Researchers have been awaiting the genetic information to study some of the most perplexing health disparities.

For example, African Americans have a four-fold higher risk of kidney failure than their white counterparts, "everything else being equal," said Dr. Akinlolu Ojo of the University of Kansas Medical Center.

"We will for the first time be able to tease out what are the underlying genetic factors" behind that difference, he said.

"This is not just a snapshot in time," Ojo added, saying he hopes finally to track how genes and other factors work together to explain why some people survive for years with damaged kidneys while others rapidly worsen.

Today's health care is pretty one-size-fits-all. Most treatments are based on what worked best for the average person in short studies of a few hundred or thousand patients.

"All of Us" is part of a push toward precision medicine, a way to customize care based on the complex combinations of factors that determine health, including your genes, habits and where you live as well as age, gender and socioeconomics.

The study is recruiting volunteers from all walks of life -- both the sick and the healthy -- to share DNA samples, medical records, fitness tracking and answer health questions. Researchers also will cull environmental information about participants' communities.

While the pandemic delayed enrollment, the NIH said more than 474,000 have agreed to participate so far and more than 325,000 have provided blood or saliva samples for researchers to start analyzing.

The database that opened on Thursday contains nearly 100,000 whole genome sequences of the first volunteers -- meaning information on all their genes rather than the more common practice of studying a subset.

As with other genomic programs, the NIH team protects study participants' privacy by removing all identifying information from the data. U.S. scientists seeking to use the database for their research must meet strict requirements.

Participants can request to learn the results of their own genetic testing. Last year, the NIH program began releasing ancestral information to participants who asked. Plans are underway to also notify participants who bear certain well-known genetic variants that cause inherited diseases or trigger medication problems.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 87 of 92

Oscar Predictions: Will 'Power of the Dog' reign supreme?

By LINDSEY BAHR and JAKE COYLE AP Film Writers

Ahead of the 94th Academy Awards, Associated Press Film Writers Lindsey Bahr and Jake Coyle share their predictions for a ceremony with much still up in the air.

BEST PICTURE

The Nominees: "Belfast"; "CODA"; "Don't Look Up"; "Drive My Car"; "Dune"; "King Richard"; "Licorice Pizza"; "Nightmare Alley"; "The Power of the Dog"; "West Side Story."

BAHR: At this point it really feels like the award will go to "The Power of the Dog." It is paradoxically both a safe choice and a game changer in that it would be a first best picture win for Netflix after years of trying. Jane Campion's last major shot at picture (and director) was with "The Piano," but in 1994 that basically stood no chance against "Schindler's List." This time, it's her film that has the leg up on the Spielberg. And yet there is a distant possibility that "CODA" could "Little Miss Sunshine"/"Green Book" its way in there as the feel-good alternative (which was what "Belfast" was supposed to be).

COYLE: I'm calling the "CODA" upset. The smart money is on Campion's film. But the win for "CODA" at the Screen Actors Guild — where "The Power of the Dog" failed to get nominated for best ensemble — suggests strong passion for the film, and maybe a crowd-pleasing advantage on the academy's preferential ballot. Either film, though, will symbolize the ascent of streaming in Hollywood. It would hand a streaming service — Netflix or Apple — Hollywood's most prestigious honor for the first time. Maybe that's a big deal, maybe it's belated confirmation of what everyone has known for some time.

BEST ACTRESS

The Nominees: Jessica Chastain, "The Eyes of Tammy Faye"; Olivia Colman, "The Lost Daughter"; Penélope Cruz, "Parallel Mothers"; Nicole Kidman, "Being the Ricardos"; Kristen Stewart, "Spencer."

COYLE: This has been the cruelest of categories, laying waste to most expectations and some very sensational performances. Lady Gaga, Caitríona Balfe, Jennifer Hudson and my favorite performance of the year — Renate Reinsve ("The Worst Person in the World") — are just some of the masses among the snubbed. Yet, surprisingly, a very Oscar bait-y performance from a movie released early in the season — Jessica Chastain as the televangelist Tammy Faye — has moved to favorite status after winning the SAG Awards. That may partly be because Chastain, a three-time nominee but never a winner, is one of Hollywood's best actors and the time has come to honor her, for a film she steered into existence. I think she'll win, but Olivia Colman — typically brilliant in "The Lost Daughter" — could sneak in for her second Academy Award.

BAHR: Chastain should have already won several Oscars at this point, and not even necessarily for the ones she got nominations for ("The Help" and "Zero Dark Thirty"). However improbable for a movie that has some big issues, including the way it turns a blind eye to Tammy Faye's complicities in the scam, the tide has shifted in her favor and she'll probably get her win. Still, I still think there's a small possibility that it will go to Kristen Stewart, who has been on a rollercoaster path after starting the season at the top.

BEST ACTOR

The Nominees: Javier Bardem, "Being the Ricardos"; Benedict Cumberbatch, "The Power of the Dog"; Andrew Garfield, "tick, tick ... Boom!"; Denzel Washington, "The Tragedy of Macbeth"; Will Smith, "King Richard."

BAHR: It's always a bit of a snooze when categories are locked for months, but it would be a major surprise if Will Smith didn't get his first Oscar win for "King Richard." After a period of giving some possibly TMI interviews, Smith stepped back from the spotlight, let the race play out and still emerged triumphant. Not only did he give a terrific performance in the film, but his SAG speech, in which he was funny, humble and gracious to his co-star Aunjanue Ellis and subjects Venus and Serena Williams, was also a helpful reminder of the power of his star charisma. This is such a safe, respectable batch, though. It may have been fun to add some Simon Rex (for "Red Rocket") chaos to the mix.

COYLE: Smith will over-share his way to the Oscar, a deserved win for one of the movies' most insanely

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 88 of 92

charming stars. Smith might have already won best actor (for "Ali") if not for Denzel's titanic performance that year in "Training Day." This time, it's Smith's turn. If I could add someone here, it'd be Adam Driver in "Annette." If he can't have best actor, then he should surely take the award for most devastating and fiercely committed singing performance opposite a puppet baby. Wait, I'm being told that isn't an Oscar category.

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

The Nominees: Jessie Buckley, "The Lost Daughter"; Ariana DeBose, "West Side Story"; Judi Dench, "Belfast"; Kirsten Dunst, "The Power of the Dog"; Aunjanue Ellis, "King Richard."

COYLE: Thanks to her show-stopping, breakthrough performance in "West Side Story" DeBose has had this category locked down all season, and it's hard not to be moved by the historical symmetry. Sixty years ago, Rita Moreno won for the same role, Anita, in 1961's "West Side Story," making her the first Latina to win an Oscar. We'll have to see if DeBose is as brief as Moreno was accepting her award. (Her total speech: "I can't believe it! Good Lord! I leave you with that.") Still, it was a crime to neglect Kathryn Hunter's multiplying witches in "Macbeth." What's foul isn't always fair.

BAHR: I was prepared for Kirsten Dunst to finally get her moment up on that podium but Kiki's shrimp will have to wait. At least she broke the seal and got a nomination. And DeBose should definitely be ready with a killer speech. Do you think she'll take Moreno as her date? Maybe she'll don the black and gold dress Moreno wore in 1962 and famously repeated in 2018.

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

The Nominees: Ciarán Hinds, "Belfast"; Troy Kotsur, "CODA"; Jesse Plemons, "The Power of the Dog"; J.K. Simmons, "Being the Ricardos"; Kodi Smit-McPhee, "The Power of the Dog."

BAHR: Among mostly first-time nominees (save for J.K. Simmons, who previously won for "Whiplash"), "CODA's" Troy Kotsur went from breakthrough to frontrunner over the past couple months, winning at SAG, BAFTAs and Critics Choice and he's likely to continue that streak come Oscar Sunday. The support for Kotsur and "CODA" has only become more enthusiastic recently and it would be a history-making win. The 53-year-old is the first deaf man to have ever been nominated for an acting prize. I'd also liked to have seen Colman Domingo get some more widespread praise for "Zola," or Mike Faist for "West Side Story."

COYLE: It's a very likeable group of performers but Kotsur has this one in the bag. I think it will be one of the night's best moments, not just because of the historic nature of Kotsur's win, but because it's just reward for an actor who has long toiled and thrived on Los Angeles stages. Hinds was, though, fabulous in "Belfast" and the un-nominated Richard Jenkins in "The Humans" was also about as good as it gets.

BEST DIRECTOR

The Nominees: Kenneth Branagh, "Belfast"; Ryûsuke Hamaguchi, "Drive My Car"; Paul Thomas Anderson, "Licorice Pizza"; Jane Campion, "The Power of the Dog"; Steven Spielberg, "West Side Story."

COYLE: Campion has long been the frontrunner. For the trailblazing filmmaker, who nearly three decades ago became only the second woman nominated in this category, it's a coronation long in coming. Campion, the first woman ever to be twice nominated for best director, will win, and her cinematographer, Ari Wegner, will become the first woman to win that award — a triumph that should have happened long ago for women behind the camera.

BAHR: Yes, but will she thank Sam Elliott?

DOCUMENTARY

The Nominees: "Ascension"; "Attica"; "Flee"; "Summer of Soul (Or, When The Revolution Could Not Be Televised)"; "Writing With Fire."

BAHR: Though Questlove is much-beloved by the Academy and his documentary "Summer of Soul," which won at the BAFTAs, would be more than deserving, "Flee" likely has the advantage here since it was also nominated in the animated feature category. Also, while "Attica" director Stanley Nelson won the Directors Guild award, that group is narrower than the Academy's voting body.

COYLE: To quote the Roots, Questlove's Oscar has "got to be, got to be reality." Don't get me wrong, "Flee" is a singularly exquisite film, and this could indeed be close. But "Summer of Soul" might be the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 89 of 92

most universally adored film of the year. Both its uncovering of a lost Black history and its celebration of live performance were so profoundly suited to 2021. I can't see it not winning.

INTERNATIONAL FEATURE

The Nominees: "Drive My Car," Japan; "Flee," Denmark; "The Hand of God," Italy; "Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom," Bhutan; "The Worst Person in the World," Norway.

COYLE: Ryûsuke Hamaguchi's "Drive My Car" is a not-crazy best-picture underdog, which makes it a heavyweight in this category. There's stiff competition here — particularly from Joachim Trier's supremely lovely "The Worst Person in the World." But Hamaguchi's three-hour masterwork — a profound movie about art and dialogue as a means of human connection — should win.

BAHR: "Drive My Car" definitely has the advantage. The picture and director nominations probably helped convince a few more voting members to give it a chance, too. It's hard not to wonder just how far it could have gone had it had the awards campaign budgets of some of its best picture brethren.

ANIMATED FEATURE

The Nominees: "Encanto"; "Flee"; "Luca"; "The Mitchells vs. the Machines"; "Raya and the Last Dragon."

BAHR: "Encanto" is certainly the juggernaut in this category, with the triple threat of Disney, Lin-Manuel Miranda and a massive hit song that we won't talk about here (no, no, no). And under normal circumstances it'd be the easy frontrunner, but Disney has not had a good few weeks not to mention the fact that the studio has three nominations in the category which could split votes. Plus, there is massive industry goodwill for "The Mitchells vs the Machines" and it won the Annie award, which is why I think there may be a (good) upset in store.

COYLE: I think "The Mitchells vs the Machines" pulls it off. "Encanto" may be the favorite, but it's a funny kind of juggernaut. The Disney release didn't make a huge impression in theaters but once it hit streaming, its songs turned it into a sensation. Some voters may feel "Encanto" is great for the music, while "The Mitchells vs the Machines" is the better movie overall. I think so, anyway. So come on, academy. Do it for Monchi the pug.

March Madness tips off: Tourney gets rolling with 16 games

By The Associated Press undefined

A look at what's happening in the NCAA Tournament on Thursday:

GAME OF THE DAY

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE VS. PROVIDENCE

The tourney gets rolling with 16 first-round games and one of the most intriguing pits the 13th-seeded Jackrabbits against the fourth-seeded Friars in a Midwest Region tilt in Buffalo, New York.

Providence is favored by just two points, according to FanDuel Sportsbook, and facing an opponent no one would want to take on right now.

South Dakota State ran through the Summit League regular season unbeaten, owns the nation's longest win streak at 21 games and is in the tournament for the sixth time in 11 years. The Jackrabbits are shooting 45% on 3-pointers to lead the nation, and it's not just one sharpshooter. It's five.

Providence is not playing its best right now. The Friars are coming off a 27-point Big East Tournament loss to Creighton and struggled to beat lesser teams three times since mid-February.

OH, BROTHER

Brothers Arthur Kaluma and Adam Seiko got a Selection Sunday surprise when Creighton and San Diego State were matched for a Midwest Region first-round game in Fort Worth, Texas.

Kaluma, a freshman forward and the highest-rated recruit in Greg McDermott's 12 years at Creighton, has been a starter all season and averages 9.9 points and 5.1 rebounds per game.

Seiko, a senior guard, has mostly come off the bench and averaged 5.3 points and 2.0 rebounds in 23 minutes per game.

The two played together last summer on the Ugandan National Team.

"The family group chat is going crazy right now," Kaluma told the Omaha World-Herald.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 90 of 92

DEVANTE'S DISAPPOINTMENT

Michigan will be without starting point guard DeVante' Jones when it plays Colorado State in a South Region game in Indianapolis. Wolverines freshman Frankie Collins will draw his first start.

Jones entered concussion protocol after getting hit in the nose by an inadvertent elbow in practice this week. Jones, playing his final season after transferring from Coastal Carolina, is the Wolverines' third-leading scorer. Michigan coach Juwan Howard didn't rule out Jones coming back later in the tournament if the Wolverines advance.

LET'S DO IT AGAIN

Winning back-to-back national titles is harder than ever, according to Baylor coach Scott Drew.

Only two schools have done it — 2006-07 Florida and 1991-92 Duke — since John Wooden's UCLA teams won seven in a row from 1967-73.

Baylor is trying to become the third as it opens the tournament as the No. 1 seed in the East against Norfolk State in Fort Worth.

"In this day, if you win it all, probably you have a lot of pros that leave," Drew said. "And then with the transfer portal, people leave. And it's hard to have enough talent or chemistry or experience to repeat."

Drew has had to replace four starters from the team that beat Gonzaga in the national final.

"There's normally more pressure and expectations when you're the reigning champ," Drew said. "But at the same time with us, it's such a new team and we've lost so much, I think there's plenty of excitement. And we haven't approached it with pressure, but more opportunity."

PERSISTENCE PAYS

Chris Jans finally got his guy when Teddy Allen's long and winding road reached New Mexico State this season. The Aggies, seeded 12th in the West, face Connecticut in Buffalo.

Allen had made stops at West Virginia, Wichita State, Western Nebraska Community College and Nebraska before arriving in Las Cruces.

Allen averages 19 points per game and is the Western Athletic Conference player of the year. This will be his second experience in the NCAA Tournament, but it's been a while. He played in two games for West Virginia in 2018.

"This is my third time recruiting him," Jans said. "Took me a while, but we finally got it done."

Fewer Americans file for jobless claims last week

By MATT OTT AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fewer Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week as layoffs continue to fall amid a strong job market rebound.

Jobless claims fell by 15,000 to 214,000 for the week ending March 12, down from the previous week's 229,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. First-time applications for jobless aid generally track the pace of layoffs.

The four-week average for claims, which compensates for weekly volatility, fell to 223,000 from the previous week's 231,750.

In total, 1,419,000 Americans — a 50-year low — were collecting jobless aid the week that ended March 5, down 71,000 from the week before that.

Earlier this month, the government reported that employers added a robust 678,000 jobs in February, the largest monthly total since July. The unemployment rate dropped to 3.8%, from 4% in January, extending a sharp decline in joblessness to its lowest level since before the pandemic erupted two years ago.

U.S. businesses posted a near-record level of open jobs in January — 11.3 million — a trend has helped pad workers' pay and added to inflationary pressures.

The Federal Reserve launched a high-risk effort Wednesday to tame the worst inflation since the early 1980s, raising its benchmark short-term interest rate and signaling up to six additional rate hikes this year.

The Fed's quarter-point hike in its key rate, which it had pinned near zero since the pandemic recession

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 91 of 92

struck two years ago, marks the start of its effort to curb the high inflation that followed the recovery from the recession. The rate hikes will eventually mean higher loan rates for many consumers and businesses.

The central bank's policymakers expect inflation to remain elevated, ending 2022 at 4.3%, according to quarterly projections they released Wednesday.

Last week, the government reported that consumer inflation jumped 7.9% over the past year, the sharpest spike since 1982.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, March 18, the 77th day of 2022. There are 288 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 18, 1940, Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini met at the Brenner Pass, where the Italian dictator agreed to join Germany's war against France and Britain.

On this date:

In 1766, Britain repealed the Stamp Act of 1765.

In 1922, Mohandas K. Gandhi was sentenced in India to six years' imprisonment for civil disobedience. (He was released after serving two years.)

In 1925, the Tri-State Tornado struck southeastern Missouri, southern Illinois and southwestern Indiana, resulting in some 700 deaths.

In 1937, in America's worst school disaster, nearly 300 people, most of them children, were killed in a natural gas explosion at the New London Consolidated School in Rusk County, Texas.

In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order authorizing the War Relocation Authority, which was put in charge of interning Japanese-Americans, with Milton S. Eisenhower (the younger brother of Dwight D. Eisenhower) as its director.

In 1963, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Gideon v. Wainwright*, ruled unanimously that state courts were required to provide legal counsel to criminal defendants who could not afford to hire an attorney on their own.

In 1965, the first spacewalk took place as Soviet cosmonaut Alexei Leonov went outside his Voskhod 2 capsule, secured by a tether.

In 1974, most of the Arab oil-producing nations ended their 5-month-old embargo against the United States that had been sparked by American support for Israel in the Yom Kippur War.

In 2002, Brittanie Cecil died two days short of her 14th birthday after being hit in the head by a puck at a game between the host Columbus Blue Jackets and Calgary Flames; it was apparently the first such fan fatality in NHL history.

In 2016, police in Brussels captured Europe's most wanted fugitive, Salah Abdeslam, who was the prime suspect in the deadly 2015 Paris attacks.

In 2018, Vladimir Putin rolled to a crushing reelection victory for six more years as Russia's president.

In 2020, the U.S. and Canada agreed to temporarily close their shared border to nonessential travel.

Ten years ago: Mitt Romney scored an overwhelming win in Puerto Rico's Republican presidential primary, trouncing chief rival Rick Santorum.

Five years ago: Chuck Berry, rock 'n' roll's founding guitar hero and storyteller who defined the music's joy and rebellion in such classics as "Johnny B. Goode," "Sweet Little Sixteen" and "Roll Over Beethoven," died at his home west of St. Louis at age 90.

One year ago: The European Union's drug regulatory agency said that the AstraZeneca vaccine was not linked to an overall increase in the risk of blood clots and that the benefits of use outweighed the risks, paving the way for European countries to resume administering the shots. The Senate confirmed veteran diplomat William Burns as director of the CIA and California Attorney General Xavier Becerra as President Joe Biden's health secretary. The NBA said it was easing some of its health and safety protocols for indi-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 18, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 254 ~ 92 of 92

viduals who were fully vaccinated.

Today's Birthdays: Composer John Kander is 95. Actor Brad Dourif is 72. Jazz musician Bill Frisell is 71. Singer Irene Cara is 63. Alt-country musician Karen Grotberg (The Jayhawks) is 63. Movie writer-director Luc Besson is 63. Actor Geoffrey Owens is 61. Actor Thomas Ian Griffith is 60. Singer-songwriter James McMurtry is 60. TV personality Mike Rowe is 60. Singer-actor Vanessa L. Williams is 59. Olympic gold medal speedskater Bonnie Blair is 58. Actor David Cubitt is 57. Rock musician Jerry Cantrell (Alice in Chains) is 56. Rock singer-musician Miki Berenyi (ber-EN'-ee) is 55. Actor Michael Bergin is 53. Rapper-actor-talk show host Queen Latifah is 52. Former White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus (ryns PREE'-bus) is 50. Actor-comedian Dane Cook is 50. Country singer Philip Sweet (Little Big Town) is 48. Rock musician Stuart Zender is 48. Singers Evan and Jaron Lowenstein are 48. Actor-singer-dancer Sutton Foster is 47. Rock singer Adam Levine (Maroon 5) is 43. Rock musician Daren Taylor (Airborne Toxic Event) is 42. Olympic gold medal figure skater Alexei Yagudin is 42. Actor Adam Pally is 40. Actor Cornelius Smith Jr. is 40. Actor Duane Henry (TV: "NCIS") is 37. Actor Lily Collins is 33. Actor-dancer Julia Goldani Telles is 27. Actor Ciara Bravo is 25. Actor Blake Garrett Rosenthal is 18.