



B-R's Wensley hits walk-off grand slam vs. Lincoln-Sudbury

SPORTS, 7A

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The Sunday Enterprise

SUNDAY, APRIL 16, 2023 | ENTERPRISENEWS.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

‘IT FELT UNREAL’



Joslin Fields and her fiancé, Anthony McLeod, pause between tasks at their new home in Randolph for a quick refreshment break on March 21. PHOTOS BY MARK JARRET CHAVOUS/THE ENTERPRISE

Randolph woman handed keys to ‘life-changing’ dream house

Alisha Saint-Ciel
The Enterprise
USA TODAY NETWORK

RANDOLPH – Joslin Fields walked into her empty, newly purchased house, took a deep breath and thought to herself, “I’m a homeowner.”

The 32-year-old mother of two finalized the sale of the home two days after Christmas, a dream come true, she said.

“It felt unreal. My kids were so excited, and I instantly saw a change in them. They were so happy to have their rooms, and they constantly told me, ‘Mommy, I love you,’” Fields said.

This significant purchase was made possible with a grant from The Welcome Home Fund started by local realtor Josh Muncey of the Muncey Group.

The Welcome Home Fund was created to address systemic inequities that often result in making homeownership financially out of reach for many families of color in the Boston area, Muncey said.

The fund is a new partnership between The Muncey Group and Compass Working Capital, a Boston-based non-profit that works to end asset poverty for low-income families and narrow the racial and gender wealth divides.

Muncey realized, with his own family, how purchasing a property after World War II created generational wealth and financial stability for many

“It felt unreal. My kids were so excited, and I instantly saw a change in them. They were so happy to have their rooms, and they constantly told me, ‘Mommy, I love you.’”

Joslin Fields

generations to come.

Muncey wanted to impact the community of color as they fell short in homeownership.

“These massive racial disparities have an impact on both homeownership and asset building. The Welcome Home Fund realizes that while economic and racial diversity is vital to the fabric of strong communities, neighborhoods in and around Boston are becoming increasingly unaffordable for the families who live and work in our communities,” Muncey said.

According to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the homeownership rate for white households is 75% compared to 45% for Black households and 48% for Hispanic households.

The fund provided \$20,000 to each family in the program to use for down

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Fields takes some measurements in her living room for additional furnishings that will come later.



McLeod helps get the house ready after coming home from work.



Brockton High's new head football coach, Jermaine Wiggins, speaks with players after being introduced at Marciano Stadium on Friday. JASON SNOW/THE ENTERPRISE

Brockton football welcomes its new head coach

Jason Snow
The Enterprise
USA TODAY NETWORK

BROCKTON – The podium on the Marciano Stadium turf was positioned outwards, facing a row of cameras and reporters.

After an introduction from principal Cynthia Burns, former New England Patriots tight end Jermaine Wiggins stepped to the microphone, took out a sheet of notes and made his opening remarks as the new head coach of the Brockton High football team Friday afternoon.

That was until midway through what was an 11-minute speech, when the 48-year-old East Boston native turned to his right and faced his new players, who all sat together on the distant bleachers.

"I don't like having my back to these young kids," Wiggins told reporters, set to deliver a message to the team. "I want them to see I'm no different than them. I walked the same path. Obviously, I didn't grow up in Brockton, but East Boston was no different. I came from basically nothing, in a sense. I grew up in a single-parent household. My mother worked multiple jobs. I grew up in an environment, where – it was a great environment. It bred pride. It taught me all the things I am today.

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Volume 42 | No. 28
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FROM PAGE ONE

Fields

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payments and other expenses to purchase their first homes.

Each family was an active member in the Compass Working Capital program, which primarily serves single mothers of color to reach their financial goals.

So far, four families are in their new homes, and two are in the process of searching for one.

The journey of homeownership for Fields was a marathon. After the death of her mother several years ago, it kick-started the idea of creating a safe space for her family and wanting to become a homeowner.

“It was a seven-year-long journey,” Fields said.

It took countless months of budgeting, credit repair and paying off student-loan debt but also enjoying life for Fields to reach her financial goals.

An obstacle she didn’t predict was the difficulty house hunting became. The housing marketing right now in Randolph is competitive, Fields said.

But with the help of her Realtor, who is also her brother, they found the perfect home.

Fields now has individual rooms for both children, a large backyard to roam, and a garden with a deck to host and entertain.

In the future, Fields plans to decorate each room with its own unique personality.

She looks forward to spending the first Christmas in their home and utilizing the fireplace.

“It was a life-changing opportunity,” Fields said.

Enterprise staff reporter Alisha Saint-Ciel can be reached by email at stciela@gannett.com. You can follow her on Twitter at @alishaspeakss and Instagram at Alishaatv. Support local journalism by purchasing a digital or print subscription to The Enterprise today.



Joslin Fields holds the keys to her new dream home on Tuesday in Randolph, a purchase made possible with a grant from The Welcome Home Fund. MARK JARRET CHAVOUS/THE ENTERPRISE

Wiggins

Continued from Page 1A

But also, there were challenges.”

Wiggins takes over for Peter Colombo, who retired at the end of last season after a 20-season tenure with the Boxers that featured a 132-72 overall record, five Super Bowl appearances and back-to-back championships in 2004 and 2005.

“It is an extremely proud moment for me,” said Wiggins.

Wiggins caught two passes in the Patriots’ Super Bowl XXXVI win over the St. Louis Rams in 2002 and finished his seven-year NFL career with totals of 2,141 receiving yards, 236 receptions and 14 touchdowns across stints with four different teams (Minnesota Vikings, Carolina Panthers, New England Patriots and Indianapolis Colts). He spent portions of three seasons in New England.

Wiggins entered the NFL as an undrafted free agent in 1999 after a college career at the University of Georgia and a standout high school career at East Boston High. He is currently a sports talk radio co-host on WEEL, a job he reassured Friday that he will continue doing.

Brockton High is coming off its 125th anniversary season, in which it earned a 9-2 record and finished with a 37-34 defeat to Methuen in the first round of the Division 1 state tournament.

“Today, we welcome Coach Wiggins,” superintendent Mike Thomas said. “We’re thrilled to have him with us. Brockton has always been great – the City of Champions. Now we have a champion to coach the team.”

“What Jermaine Wiggins just shared with me and superintendent Mike Thomas is, he’s not just going to be a coach,” said mayor Robert F. Sullivan. “He’s going to surround himself with excellent people – we’ve had excellent people and we will continue to have excellent people coaching here at Brock-



Brockton High’s new head football coach, Jermaine Wiggins, introduced at Marciano Stadium on Friday. JASON SNOW/THE ENTERPRISE

ton – but it’s about making sure the boys and girls understand how important it is to have a (respectable) GPA. It’s making sure you’re hitting the books and giving back to the community.

“So, Jermaine,” added Sullivan, “I want to thank you for who you are, what you’re bringing to the table. We’re the City of Champions, you’re a Super Bowl champion. Welcome. God bless you. Good luck, Brockton Boxers.”

During his his opening remarks Friday, Wiggins credited his former NFL coaches Bill Belichick and Bill Parcells; his college coach, Jim Donnan; his high school basketball coach, Mike Rubin; and his high school football coach, John Loftus, for playing a part in him “going on a straightened arrow,” he said.

“Sports kept me off the wrong path. ... (Those coaches) taught me all the things I needed to be taught in how to be successful.”

“That is my goal here. That is what I want to do here. That is why I’m here,” said Wiggins. “To show everybody that looks like me, talks like me, walks like me and is from a place very similar to where I’m from that anything can be obtained. I think that’s the biggest thing.”

Brockton High announced the hire via press release Thursday afternoon, much to the surprise to a few players that a Super Bowl champion will lead the program forward.

“At first, I didn’t believe it,” said lineman Makhi Boston, who added he first saw the news on Instagram. “When I

found out, it was really cool to know we could have someone of a high level to come in and have a connection with us on a personal level and know where we stand as student-athletes. I think it’s going to be a good connection to pick up where we left off”

“I was definitely excited,” said wide receiver Cam Monteiro, who has fielded multiple offers from Division 1 colleges in recent months. “He has the football experience. It’s a plus for us.”

Growing up locally, Wiggins recalls memories of observing the program’s dynastic run under Armond Colombo, when Brockton and Everett were the state’s top two heavyweight programs: “That’s something I want to bring back. I want to do everything on my part,” said Wiggins. Armond Colombo, who stepped down in 2003 due to a heart ailment and was replaced by his son Peter, retired with 316 career wins, a state record that stood until 2014.

“Obviously you see what the Colombos have created here. It’s an honor to follow in those footsteps,” said Wiggins. “Like I tell my kids, to come from a great legacy is one thing, but now you have to create your own. That’s what I intend to do. My goal is to give every athlete that steps on this field skills and tools that I think are so important in life. I want to see them grow into young adults that are successful, that are contributing to their community, that are contributing to their family legacy.”

It’s the first time in 54 years that a Colombo will not be the Boxers’ head coach.

“It’s definitely going to take some getting used to,” Monteiro said. “Going into my senior year, I’ve been here three years. Same coaches, nothing changed. It’s going to be a new atmosphere, a new culture.”

Said Boston, “What (Wiggins) knows in his mind about football, about being a student-athlete, about everything we’re doing he’s already done it and achieved it at a higher level. We’re really excited about what he’ll bring to the team.”

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G7 diplomats to grapple with crises

Ukraine, China, NKorea to dominate discussions

Foster Klug
ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOKYO – Russian threats to nuke Ukraine. China’s belligerent military moves around rival Taiwan. North Korea’s unprecedented run of missile testing.

The top diplomats from some of the world’s most powerful democracies will have plenty to discuss when they gather in the hot spring resort town of Karuizawa on Sunday for the so-called Group of Seven foreign ministers’ meeting.

Some believe that with the weakening of the United Nations, amid Russian and Chinese intransigence on the Security Council, global forums like the G7 are even more important. But there’s also considerable doubt that diplomats from mostly Western democracies can find ways to influence, let alone stop, authoritarian nations that are more and more willing to use violence, or its threat, to pursue their interests.

Besides the global hot spots, foreign ministers from Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, Italy and the European Union are expected to discuss ways to improve human rights and democracy, and also issues important to poorer nations that may feel underrepresented by the focus on wealthy countries with stable governments.

The agenda will be dominated, however, by worries over Russia, China and North Korea, and an awareness of the interconnectedness of these and other foreign policy headaches.

This year’s G7 meetings are the most important in the gathering’s history, given the pressing need to end Russia’s war in Ukraine and to stop a potential invasion of Taiwan by China, according to Yuichi Hosoya, an international politics professor at Keio University



Besides the global hot spots, foreign ministers from Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, Italy and the European Union are expected to discuss ways to improve rights and democracy. MARTIN MEISSNER/AP FILE

in Japan.

With the stakes so high, here is a look at what diplomats will face in talks that end Tuesday:

The war in Ukraine

A broad concentration on nuclear issues was always going to be important at this year’s G7 talks, which culminate with the main leaders’ summit next month in Hiroshima, the target of the first nuclear bomb used in war.

The issue is more urgent amid fears that Russian President Vladimir Putin, as he becomes desperate over failures in Ukraine, might use a tactical nuclear weapon to win the war.

China is seen as one of the few nations that might influence Russia’s moves in Ukraine, and the foreign policy alignment between the world’s two largest autocracies will be a major focus in Karuizawa.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping, who

appears increasingly emboldened to pursue his authoritarian impulses, recently traveled to Moscow and committed to deepen bilateral relations.

Japan might use the G7 to announce a boost to its already substantial support of Ukraine, said Jeffrey Hall, a lecturer at Kanda University of International Studies.

China’s rise

China’s increasingly bold attempts to intimidate self-governing Taiwan were on full display when Beijing recently sent planes and ships to conduct a simulated encirclement of the island, which China claims as its territory. China’s broad military expansion, including a rapid jump in its nuclear warheads, a tougher line on its claim to the South China Sea and recent statements from Xi painting a scenario of impending confrontation have galvanized fears among G7 nations.

Beijing and Pyongyang are especially worried about Japanese military expansion, which they see as an attempt to “weaken both capitals’ efforts to rewrite the regional security architecture in their favor,” Nagy said.

Under Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, Tokyo has made a major break from its self-defense-only post-World War II principles, looking to acquire preemptive strike capabilities and cruise missiles to counter growing threats from North Korea, China and Russia.

While the G7 examines ways to manage China’s rise, Beijing is bolstering relations with countries from Pakistan to Argentina eager for trade and investment. This will massively expand China’s global footprint and challenge North American and European attempts to link investment to good governance and respect for human rights.

North Korean threats

This year’s G7 talks are crucial in revitalizing diplomacy aimed at pressuring a hostile North Korea to return to disarmament negotiations, especially with a dysfunctional U.N. Security Council that’s divided between permanent members, according to Park Won Gon, a professor at Seoul’s Ewha Womans University.

Since last year, North Korea has test-fired around 100 missiles, including intercontinental ballistic missiles that showed the potential of reaching the U.S. mainland and a variety of other shorter-range weapons that threaten South Korea and Japan.

Leader Kim Jong Un may be looking to use the global distraction of Russia’s war on Ukraine to expand a nuclear arsenal he sees as the strongest guarantee of his family’s dynastic rule.

Beijing and Moscow last year blocked a U.S.-led drive to tighten Security Council sanctions on North Korea over its major missile tests.

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NW-34944512

Abortion pill order spares safe havens

High court ruling pauses limits on medication

Geoff Mulvihill
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Before the U.S. Supreme Court stepped in Friday, access to an abortion pill was in line to become more cumbersome in California, New York and some other states that have positioned themselves as safe havens for those seeking to end their pregnancies.

The order keeps in place federal rules for use of mifepristone, one of the two drugs usually used in combination in medication abortions. The legal saga isn't over: The Supreme Court suggested it will decide the issue by Wednesday.

The high court's position at least pauses a ruling issued last Wednesday by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans that would have allowed mifepristone sales to continue, but under rules adopted by the Food and Drug Administration in 2000, before a series of changes that relaxed access.

The 5th Circuit ruling, which overturned another recent federal court order halting mifepristone sales nationwide, was set to take effect Saturday. It would have required the drug to be taken in the presence of a physician, ruling out mailing it to patients.

"That's not good for all of these states that are trying to help other people," Jolynn Dellinger, a senior lecturing fellow at Duke Law School who has been following the mifepristone litigation, said before the Supreme Court ruled.

None of the rulings affect the other abortion pill, misoprostol, which can be used alone to end pregnancies but is more effective when taken in combination with mifepristone.

For the 13 states with bans on abortion at all stages of pregnancy and the one with a ban on abortion after cardiac activity can be detected, reverting to the old rules would have had little to no effect on abortion policy.

At least 10 other states had restrictions that already placed limits on medication abortion, according to an analysis by the Kaiser Family Foundation. For



Doris Marlin, left, of Silver Spring, Md., and fellow activists demonstrate in front of the U.S. Supreme Court on Friday in Washington. The court said Friday it was temporarily keeping in place federal rules for use of an abortion drug, while it takes time to more fully consider the issues raised in a court challenge. J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

instance, in Georgia, it's legal only in the first six weeks of pregnancy; in Kansas, an ultrasound at an office visit is required before it's dispensed; and in North Carolina, it can't be prescribed via telehealth.

On the other side, 17 states controlled by Democrats apparently would not have been affected by the change either; in a separate but closely related case recently, a judge sided with them in their request that mifepristone access not be changed there.

That would have left just eight states where returning to the pre-2016 rules could have had a major impact: Democrat-controlled California, Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York – all states that have protected abortion access and welcomed out-of-staters seeking abortions – Republican-controlled Alaska and Montana and politically di-



Misoprostol can be used alone to end pregnancies but is more effective when taken in combination with mifepristone. ALLEN G. BREED/AP FILE

vided New Hampshire and Virginia.

California, Massachusetts and New York have stockpiled abortion pills in case of restrictions, and Maryland's governor announced Friday that his state was doing the same. New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy has said he's considering doing so.

Maryland Gov. Wes Moore, a Democrat, said his administration has partnered with the University of Maryland Medical System to ensure access to mifepristone.

"As a member of the Reproductive Freedom Alliance, Maryland will not stand for this assault on women's health care," Moore said. "This purchase is another example of our Administration's commitment to ensure Maryland remains a safe haven for abortion access and quality reproductive health care."

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2024 hopefuls talk guns on NRA stage

Trump proposes new tax credit to arm teachers if he’s reelected

Will Weissert and Tom Davies
ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS – Top Republican hopefuls for the 2024 presidential race vowed Friday at the National Rifle Association’s annual convention to defend the Second Amendment at all costs, suggesting that new firearms restrictions in the wake of mass shootings around the country would only hurt law-abiding gun owners.

The three-day gathering with thousands of the organization’s most active members at Indianapolis’ convention center came mere days after mass shootings at a school in Nashville, Tennessee, and a bank in Louisville, Kentucky. Last year’s NRA convention followed the massacre at a school in Uvalde, Texas.

That illustrated the stark reality that such shootings have become enough of the fabric of American life that the NRA can no longer schedule around them. Nor does it really want to: The convention also fell on the second anniversary of the mass shooting at a FedEx facility in Indianapolis that killed nine people.

None of that stopped top Republicans from flocking to the event, underscoring the political power of the NRA.

“Gun-hating politicians should never go to bed unafraid of what this association, and all of our millions of members, can do to their political careers,” said NRA CEO Wayne LaPierre, suggesting that his group could play a dominant role in the 2024 election after turmoil in recent years over a failed bankruptcy effort, a class action lawsuit and a fraud investigation.

Instead of fewer guns, former Vice President Mike Pence called for federal funding for armed school officers and more institutions for those with mental illness, though mental illness is not the main driver of mass shootings. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said he had resisted implementing any gun restrictions in his state despite that stance being un-



“I will be your loyal friend and fearless champion once again as the 47th president of the United States,” former President Donald Trump said during his speech Friday evening at the NRA convention in Indianapolis. He pledged to create a new tax credit to reimburse teachers “for the full cost of a concealed-carry firearm,” as well as gun training “from highly-qualified experts.”
LUKE JOHNSON/INDIANAPOLIS STAR

popular.

Former President Donald Trump crowned himself as “the most pro-gun, pro-Second Amendment president” in the nation’s history. “I will be your loyal friend and fearless champion once again as the 47th president of the United States,” he told the crowd, pledging to create a new tax credit to reimburse teachers “for the full cost of a concealed-carry firearm,” as well as gun training “from highly-qualified experts.”

Some of the Republican politicians speaking at the event said they were saddened by the recent shootings, but most spent more time criticizing Democrats, slamming COVID-19 restrictions and vaccines, and discussing security along the U.S.-Mexico border. That was fine with many attendees, who don’t think gun restrictions are the answer to mass shootings.

“No one wants to see the violence you see in schools and stuff today,” said Randy Conner, a pistol and rifle instructor for the NRA from Waynesburg, Pennsylvania. “But I don’t think taking the guns away from ordinary citizens is going to

change any of that at all.”

Trump’s appearance was his first public event since being arrested and arraigned in New York on felony charges stemming from a hush money payment to adult film actor Stormy Daniels during his 2016 campaign. His Secret Service protection meant attendees couldn’t carry guns at the convention.

The former president made a few references to the numerous investigations he’s facing. Instead of the government going after hardened criminals, he complained, “The only one they want to prosecute is Donald Trump.”

Friday’s appearance was the first time he and Pence have addressed the same campaign event on the same day since their estrangement following the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. Pence is considering his own 2024 bid.

A former Indiana governor, Pence drew scattered boos as he started speaking, despite it being his home turf. The former vice president had skipped a number of conservative gatherings in recent years after he was booed and heckled during their previous meetings.

Pence noted the two recent mass shootings and said his heart and prayers were with the families of the victims, who included three 9-year-old students. But he said, “We don’t need gun control. We need crime control.”

Former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson, a Trump critic who announced his 2024 campaign after news of the former president’s indictment broke, drew at least one yelled obscenity from the Trump-friendly crowd after he suggested President Joe Biden was “praying” for a rematch with Trump in 2024 and declared, “We don’t need a rerun of 2020.”

Others offering video messages were former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, who began her 2024 campaign in February, and South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, who announced a presidential exploratory committee last week. DeSantis, seen as a top rival to Trump even though he’s yet to jump into the race, also spoke briefly in virtual remarks.

“I’ve resisted calls to take up gun control, even when such a stand is superficially unpopular,” DeSantis said, a reference to calls for stricter Florida laws in the wake of the 2018 Parkland school shooting that killed 17 people.

Trump, meanwhile, has a contradictory history on guns.

The NRA was a key backer of his 2016 campaign, spending some \$30 million to support a candidate who sometimes mentioned carrying his own gun and vowed to eliminate gun-free zones in schools and on military bases. Trump also pledged to establish a national right to carry.

But, as the country reeled from a series of mass shootings, Trump’s administration banned bump stocks, which were used in a 2017 attack on a Las Vegas country music concert that killed 60 people and injured hundreds more. After the Parkland school shooting the following year, Trump urged congressional Republicans to expand background checks and proposed seizing guns from people with mental illnesses.

He also suggested raising the minimum age to buy assault rifles from 18 to 21, and suggested he was open to a conversation about reviving assault weapons bans. After meeting with the NRA, however, Trump abandoned his push.

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HIGH SCHOOL BOYS LACROSSE

With wave of changes, B-R off to winning start

Jason Snow
The Enterprise
USA TODAY NETWORK

BRIDGEWATER – A collection of 10 players turned their jerseys in to Matt Connolly after last year's tournament loss to Needham, never to come back and wear the Trojans' red and white again.

Like Christian Thornton, who now-a-days suits up for the men's lacrosse team at UMass-Lowell. And Ryan Breheny, who now does the same at Con-

necticut College, just to name a couple.

So for Connolly, the longtime head coach of the Bridgewater-Raynham boys lacrosse team, this year's group has plenty of new. New faces, sure, but also familiar names in new spots.

Like Zach Sinclair, for example, a midfielder who stepped in as full-time goalie a season ago after an early-season injury to projected starter Nathan Carfagna unexpectedly shuffled the depth chart. Now one of the team's 11

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Bridgewater-Raynham's James Murray is checked by Dighton-Rehoboth's Jack Swan during Monday's game. SPECIAL TO THE TAUNTON DAILY GAZETTE/MIKE BORDEN

HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL



Bridgewater-Raynham's Casey Wensley smiles while sliding into third base during a game against Plymouth South.

JASON SNOW/THE ENTERPRISE

Wensley's walk-off grand slam lifts B-R in thriller

Jason Snow
The Enterprise
USA TODAY NETWORK

Casey Wensley insists he has the same approach every time he steps to the plate.

Even in pressure situations down two strikes in the midst of an 0-for-3 day.

So when the Bridgewater-Raynham baseball team trailed 6-3 with one out in the home half of the seventh inning Wednesday night against Lincoln-Sudbury, Wensley stuck to it and found the fastball he was hunting for.

The senior mashed it over the right-field fence for a walk-off grand slam to deliver the host Trojans a 7-6 triumph that extended the team's season-opening win streak to five games. Before jumping into a pile of excited teammates, he rounded the bases and pointed to the sky.

Wensley lost his stepfather, Bob, 52, to brain cancer in January. His stepbrother Brendan Goonan is on the team, his older brother Zach, a former player at Curry College, was helping out on the Trojans' bench and Wensley had a host of family in attendance from the stands.

"(My stepfather) loved baseball," said

Wensley. "He used to come to the field with me, teach me how to field a ground ball and help me with my swing. Every game, he'd come home and tell me how good I did and he could see the improvement from how hard I was working."

"This whole season is going out to him," Wensley said. "I know he was watching that. ... Just so happy I could do it for him. Wish he was here for it."

This marks Wensley's second year on the varsity team. He was named a captain and is now the Trojans' starting third baseman after not seeing much of the field as a junior.

"The things (Wensley and Goonan) had to get through just to get themselves to the field every day, and to be put in a spot like that and succeed, it was super special for everybody," head coach Mike Connolly said.

The host B-R trailed 6-2 entering the seventh and, to spark the rally, Luke Barry began with a lead-off walk and Evan Samsel then shot an RBI double into the gap to make it a 6-3 deficit. The two ensuing batters, Jack Ritchie and Bobby Quill, drew back-to-back walks to load the bases.

And Wensley proceeded to clear them.

"I wanted to get it elevated, maybe

shoot a gap or something, and it just happened to go over the fence," Wensley said. "I pointed to the sky. I know (my stepfather) was looking down on me, smiling."

"I'm glad I could come out and get it done for the team," he added. "Big team win for us."

The win marked B-R's fifth straight, as the team stacked wins over Barnstable (11-1 win), Plymouth South (15-4), Framingham (10-0), Brockton (15-3) and Lincoln-Sudbury (7-6) in the 5-0 start.

"Starting off 4-0 was pretty special, of course, especially when you don't know what the year will bring," Connolly said. "Then bringing in a powerhouse program like Lincoln-Sudbury and being able to pull off a win, I think it gets us on the radar with the rest of the state."

"We're really high up right now," Wensley said of the team's morale. "That game was our first real test. It was the first game we actually played seven innings, and it proves we're a top contender in the state and can compete at a high level with any top team. We're gunning for that state title this year."

HIGH SCHOOL ROUNDUP

Morrison powers Marshfield softball to victory

Eric McHugh
The Patriot Ledger
USA TODAY NETWORK

Senior Jessica Morrison hit a two-run home run in the top of the seventh inning Friday to snap a 5-5 tie and lead the Marshfield High softball team to a 7-5 win over Patriot League rival Whitman-Hanson.

Morrison was 3-for-4 and drove in three runs for the Rams (4-1, 3-1 Patriot League).

Junior Rowan Dillion had two hits and an RBI and was a defensive stand-out in right field for Marshfield.

For W-H, Taryn Leonard was 3-for-4, and Lauryn Meade and Kaylee Butterfield each went 2-for-4. Meade pitched the full game, allowing 7 hits, a walk and 6 strikeouts.

In other high school action on Friday:

SOFTBALL

Norwell 13, Cohasset 1: The Clippers won a South Shore League road game.

Malden Catholic 10, Fontbonne Academy 2: The Ducks lost on the road.

Hingham 6, Plymouth North 4: The Harborwomen won a Patriot League game at home.

Thayer Academy 17, Newton Country Day 3: The Tigers (2-1) won on the road.

BASEBALL

Braintree 13, Brookline 3: Senior Dan Surette was 4-for-5 with a home run and 5 RBI, and senior Tim Carney added 3 hits and 4 RBI for the host Wamps (2-2). Junior Aidan Manning threw 4 shutout innings in relief for the win.

Brockton 5, Weymouth 4: Dom Hopkins hit a walk-off single for the Boxers (4-1). Jackson O'Brien got the complete-game victory, striking out 7. For Weymouth (3-2), Andrew Ferguson had a pair of hits, Dylan Umano drove in 2 runs, and Jack Browning threw 3 shutout relief innings.

Whitman-Hanson 12, Marshfield 0: Jacob Getchell got the road win for the Panthers, striking out 10 over 5 innings. Cam Beltramini had 2 hits and 2 RBI. W-H had 11 hits in all, from 9 different players.

Plymouth South 9, Scituate 4: Sophomore Colin Ducie earned the

See ROUNDUP, Page 8A

B-R

Continued from Page 7A

seniors, Sinclair is back patrolling the field in his normal position for one last go-around before he heads to Clark University in the fall.

"I've been lucky enough to play with this kid since second grade," senior mid-fielder James Murray said as he turned to Sinclair. "And (I've played with) a lot of these guys since I was very young. I just want to take this road as long as I can before college."

Murray is aiming at a collegiate lacrosse career of his own at Massachusetts Maritime this fall, but the team captain has rallied the Trojans to a 3-1 start to the season in his final high school campaign.

The senior class' final (and only) campaign of opportunity, that is.

"Even though we have a lot of seniors, a lot of them are lesser experienced because we were relying on last year's senior class so much, and the senior class before that. This is the group that were freshmen when COVID happened, so they never got a freshman season," Connolly said. "No excuses, though. We were just saying, though, if we're going to be less experienced, how do we address it? So we tried to scrimmage a lot (in the preseason) and I thought we had some good wins to start the season."

"It's been tough, leading a whole different vibe of guys this year, versus last year," Murray said. "But it's good to see the challenge, stare at it and tackle it."

The Trojans began the season with three consecutive wins – against Bishop Feehan (11-10 win), Mansfield (8-6 win) and Dighton-Rehoboth (14-5) – until Marshfield came on campus and spoiled the run Wednesday with a convincing 14-5 win.

B-R is coming off an 11-5 season in which it clinched the No. 25 seed in the



Bridgewater-Raynham's Brendan Roshier is checked by Dighton-Rehoboth's Noah Bastis during Monday's game. SPECIAL TO THE TAUNTON DAILY GAZETTE/MIKE BORDEN

Division 1 state tournament but suffered an 11-5 setback to No. 8 Needham in the opening round. The team has qualified for the postseason every year since 2012 (except for 2020, as there was no tournament due to COVID-19).

"That's always the goal. It's a benchmark to measure ourselves against," said Connolly. "With a tough schedule, if you look at the power rankings, we more than doubled strength of schedule from last year to this year. You don't want to bite off more than you can chew, but the

kids seem like the right kind of kids to take on challenges and aren't afraid."

One of those names is new starting goalie, sophomore Shaun LaCivita, who last summer took over the position for the first time in June last summer.

"The future's really bright for him. There's so much potential," Connolly said. "He's super coachable. He takes everything in. He's always asking questions and he wants to keep improving. ... We say let's get better every single day and he's a guy who definitely embodies

that."

A few other names to know are sophomore Jayson Kelleher, junior Ryan McInnis, junior Dawson DuBose and senior Patrick Concannon – each scored in Monday's defeat against Marshfield – as well as junior Sean Nasiff, sophomore Caleb Tripp and senior Jack Gentile on the defensive side. Gentile is committed to play at the Wentworth Institute of Technology next year.

Sinclair (2 goals) and Concannon led the way in the team's most recent win against Dighton-Rehoboth on Monday, a 14-5 final, in which a collection of eight different players scored for the Trojans.

Experience may not be the team's calling card (yet, according Connolly due to an expected battle-tested mettle due to the ramped-up non league schedule come late in the season), but cohesion is.

B-R had five different players find the back of the net in its 8-6 win over Mansfield this past Saturday, and six in the opener against Feehan, a 11-10 final in which Kelleher buried the game-deciding goal with 1:23 left in a 5-goal outburst to headline the beginning of his sophomore season.

"It's a total team effort," said Sinclair, who is now recovered from knee surgery he underwent in the fall. "We have multiple guys, like five or six guys, scoring goals each game. Not just one or two."

The annual Coach's Challenge Cup next week – "which will live up to the name," Connolly joked – is still ahead on the schedule, as are matchups against Canton (April 26), King Philip (May 4), a home-and-home against Attleboro (May 10, May 17), Sandwich (May 22), Newton South (May 25) and Seekonk (May 26) in the season finale.

Said Connolly, "I hope we can win enough games and do well enough to get in (the tournament) and then, if we're lucky enough to be there, I think we'll be battle-tested by that point."

Roundup

Continued from Page 7A

win for the Panthers (2-3), working 6 innings and allowing 3 earned runs with 7 strikeouts. He also was 2-for-4 with an RBI. Other hitting stars for South were Alex Carroll (2-for-5, 2 RBI) and Brad Leonard (2-for-3, double, RBI).

Duxbury 15, Silver Lake 5: Nick Ayres homered and Matt Horgan drove in 5 runs to lead the Dragons (4-1) to a Patriot League home win.

East Bridgewater 3, Bristol-Plymouth 2: Dave McNaught earned the win for the host Vikings (3-2), allowing an earned run over 5 innings with 8 strikeouts. He also drove in a run and scored.

Pembroke 5, Hanover 3: The Titans beat the Hawks on the road in Patriot League action.

Plymouth North 8, Hingham 1: The Blue Eagles won at home.

Milford 9, Canton 3: The Bulldogs lost at home.

BOYS LACROSSE

Rockland 15, Archbishop Williams 12: The Bulldogs won a non-league road game. Zac McClay (5 assists) and Sean Velozo each scored 4 goals for Archies.

Duxbury 20, North Quincy 1: Thirteen different players scored for the Dragons (4-0), led by Colin Hulett (4 goals, assist), Zachary Falls (3 goals) and Gavin Nagle (goal, 3 assists). NQ goalie Jacoby Quinn made 22 saves, and Thomas Manton scored the lone Raiders goal.

Sharon 17, Cardinal Spellman 5: Matt O'Donnell had a hat trick for the Cardinals in the non-league home loss.

Canton 10, Hanover 6: The Bulldogs beat the Hawks at home in non-league action.

GIRLS LACROSSE

Archbishop Williams 14, Rockland 0: Aliya Greenwood and Bridget Donovan combined for the shutout, and eight different players scored for the Bishops in the non-league road win.

Braintree 14, Canton 13: Emily McCabe had 6 goals and 4 assists for the Bulldogs in the non-league road loss. Ella Yeaton, Nora Giannacopoulos and Shannon McGrann each had a pair of goals.

Silver Lake 8, Bridgewater-Raynham 5: Cloe Geraigery had a hat trick and Maggie Keller made 18 saves for the Lakers in the non-league road win.

Hull 10, Cardinal Spellman 9: Freshman Erin Walsh scored the winning goal for the host Pirates (6-0).

Quincy 17, Boston Latin Academy 6: Senior Delia Nichol recorded her 100th career point in the road win.

Dedham 8, Stoughton 3: The Black Knights lost at home.



Dragon Mike Hocking slides under a late tag by SL infielder Connor Finn. Duxbury hosted Silver Lake High in baseball on Friday. GREG DERR/THE PATRIOT LEDGER

BOYS TENNIS

Hingham 5, Plymouth North 0: Travis Rugg, Ethan Warhaftig and Liam Arnold all won in straight sets for visiting Hingham. Will Baker and Ben LaRhethe won in straight sets at first doubles, and John Murray and Sergio Munoz won 8-2 in an 8-game pro set at second doubles.

Whitman-Hanson 3, Marshfield 2: Brady Wright (7-6, 6-4) and Mateo Santalucia (6-2, 6-3) secured wins at first and second singles, respectively, for the Panthers (2-3), who also prevailed at first doubles with Tristan Baker and Ryan Hathaway (6-2, 6-3).

Canton 3, Milford 2: Drew Garrett and Jonathan Sithivong clinched the victory for the visiting Bulldogs, 6-4, 7-6 (8-6) at first doubles. Max Kupferman and Bharat Rhamanathan swept their singles matches.

Duxbury 5, Silver Lake 0: Brandon Marconi and Bennet Stout won at second doubles for the host Dragons (4-0).

GIRLS TENNIS

Hingham 5, Plymouth North 0: Katelyn Erickson, Sanya Khadivi and Sam Ruddick won in singles, and host Hingham (4-0) swept the doubles with

the teams of Maggie O'Keeffe/Sammy Price and Susie Anderson/Kate Radulski.

Marshfield 4, Whitman-Hanson 1: The Rams won a Patriot League road match. W-H's lone point came from second doubles as Ciara Flynn and Mary Lynam won, 6-1, 6-4.

Duxbury 5, Silver Lake 0: Caroline Sutcliffe, Annabel Keating and Jordan Fiorentino won in singles for the visiting Dragons.

Pembroke 4, Hanover 1: The Titans won a Patriot League match at home.

BOYS RUGBY

Hanover 26, Weymouth 24: The Hawks won on the road in a rematch of last year's Div. 2 state final.

Braintree 24, Marshfield 22: The Wamps edged the Rams.

Lincoln-Sudbury 27, Milton 20: The Wildcats lost at home.

GIRLS RUGBY

Weymouth 19, Brookline 15: The Wildcats won on the road.

BOYS VOLLEYBALL

Braintree 3, Quincy 0: The Wamps beat the Presidents (4-3) at home, 25-21, 27-25, 25-23.

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In Ireland, Biden feels the love

Approval, appreciation more elusive in US

Darlene Superville, Colleen Long and Chris Megerian
ASSOCIATED PRESS

BALLINA, Ireland – Admirers packed the streets for President Joe Biden on his last day in Ireland, some traveling for hours just to catch a glimpse. Pictures of his smiling face were plastered on drums and shop windows.

No wonder Biden keeps joking about sticking around.

Back home, Biden’s approval rating is near the lowest point of his presidency. And even some fellow Democrats have suggested he shouldn’t run for reelection. On trips within the U.S. to discuss his economic and social policies, Biden often gets a smattering of admirers waving as he drives by, and friendly crowds applaud his speeches. But the reception doesn’t compare with the overwhelming adoration he’s getting here in the old sod.

After stops in Northern Ireland, County Louth and Dublin, the president flew west to County Mayo on Friday, where his great-great-grandfather Patrick Blewitt lived until he left for the United States in 1850. The locals have been abuzz for weeks with preparations, giving buildings a new coat of paint and hanging American flags from shopfronts.

“This is just a fantastic occasion for us all, for an American president to be here in Ballina,” said Howard Tracy, 52, waiting with his 13-year-old son Adam.

It’s a dynamic that most of Biden’s predecessors also have faced: The world abroad tends to love American presidents. Back home, not always. Not so much.

“With the greatest of respect, Mr. President, I must say, you sure can draw a crowd,” Ceann Comhairle Seán Ó Fearghail, speaker of the lower chamber of Ireland’s parliament, said as he introduced Biden’s joint address to lawmakers on Thursday.

A U.S. president’s overseas trips often offer a backdrop and substance that are difficult to replicate on home turf. Biden’s Ireland trip has been heady with nostalgia, fellowship, religion and poetry – the grand sweeping hills and cozy towns fitting for just such a mood.

Biden, a Catholic who speaks often of his faith, stopped at Knock Shrine, a pilgrimage site where it’s said the saints Mary, Joseph and John the Evangelist appeared along a stone wall in the 1800s.

Knock parish priest the Rev. Richard Gibbons told the BBC that Biden met with the priest who performed the last rites on Biden’s late son Beau, who died in 2015 at age 46. The Rev. Frank O’Grady now works at the Irish shrine.

Gibbons said that the president “laughed, he cried,



President Joe Biden walks with Irish President Michael Higgins and his wife Sabina, to plant a tree at the presidential residence Thursday in Dublin. Friday was Biden’s last day in Ireland. BRIAN LAWLESS/PA VIA AP

it just kind of hit the man, you could just (see) how deeply it all felt and meant to him.” Biden then stopped at a hospice center where there’s a plaque dedicated to Beau.

Presidential visits come with the pageantry of Air Force One landings, long motorcades and “the beast,” Biden’s limo, which other world leaders, like Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, delight in riding.

“He can feel the love in a way that’s hard to do at home,” presidential historian Douglas Brinkley said. “There’s something about an American president being in your country that makes a nation’s press and public go gaga.”

“With the exception of the pope, the American president is usually the most coveted global figure,” Brinkley said.

During Biden’s visit to Warsaw, Poland, in February, thousands of people gathered at the foot of the Royal Castle to hear the president deliver a speech on the eve of the one-year anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

With the castle lit in the colors of the Ukrainian flag behind him, Biden vowed that “Democracies of the world will stand guard over freedom today, tomorrow and forever” to a rapt audience. As Biden exited the stage, he paused one more time to take in the scene, and a man in the audience bellowed out: “You’re our hero!”

When Biden spoke to the Canadian parliament in March, the chamber broke into applause 34 times. In a country in which English and French are spoken, Biden produced a thunderous round of clapping by simply opening his speech with “Bonjour, Canada.”

Even in Ireland, though, the acclaim was not universal. The small left-wing party People Before Profit vowed to boycott Biden’s speech to parliament because of opposition to U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and elsewhere.

People Before Profit lawmaker Paul Murphy said the president’s trip was being “treated as a visit by an interesting Irish-American celebrity, as opposed to a visit of the most powerful person in the world who needs to be asked hard questions about the kinds of policies that he is pursuing.”

But Biden’s critics overseas tend to be far less personal with their jibes than what he gets in the U.S.

Biden is far from the only U.S. president to find appreciation abroad that seems more elusive at home.

Then-President Bill Clinton found refuge overseas from the investigations pressing in on him at home. In his last year in office, President George W. Bush was about as well liked at home as Richard Nixon right before he resigned in scandal, according to the Pew Research Center, but he remained popular in Africa, where he boosted foreign aid and battled the AIDS epidemic.

President Barack Obama, saw his fortunes diverge in his first term. The grinding fallout from the Great Recession dragged down his approval ratings in the U.S., but views elsewhere in the world remained untarnished.

President Donald Trump was largely unpopular overseas, especially among traditional American allies, though he found kinship among more authoritarian leaders, such as Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro and North Korea’s Kim Jong-un.

The Irish response to Biden has been overwhelmingly positive for Cousin Joe, as many have called him. In Dundalk and Ballina, Knock and Dublin, it was one celebration after another.

Biden took selfies. He smiled at children. And he took a whirlwind tour of ancestral sites, pausing at Carlingford Castle, which could well have been the last Irish landmark that Owen Finnegan, his maternal great-great-grandfather, saw before sailing for New York in 1849. As he gazed at the sea, thousands cheered to him from the streets below, mixing with the sound of bagpipes that wafted from the green hills.

“I don’t know why the hell my ancestors left here,” he said. “It’s beautiful.”

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Experts: Hurricane season ‘slightly below-average’

Doyle Rice
USA TODAY

The likely development of El Nino should bring a “slightly below-average” Atlantic hurricane season, top forecasters announced Thursday at a hurricane conference in Texas. But the forecast also notes a high level of uncertainty.

Meteorologists from Colorado State University predict a total of 13 tropical storms will form, of which six will become hurricanes. A tropical storm becomes a hurricane when its sustained winds reach 74 mph.

A typical year averages about 14 tropical storms, with seven spinning into hurricanes, based on weather records that date from 1991 to 2020.

This forecast covers storms that form in the Atlantic basin, which includes the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico.

Strong westerly winds spurred on by El Nino – a natural climate pattern marked by warmer-than-average Pacific Ocean water – tend to prevent nascent Atlantic storms from developing.

In its most recent forecast, the Climate Prediction Center said chances are “elevated” that El Nino will appear by the fall.

Phil Klotzbach, Colorado State meteorologist and lead author of the report, said that of the six predicted hurricanes, two should be major hurricanes – category 3, 4 or 5 – with sustained winds of 111 mph or greater.

Given the conflicting signals between a potentially robust El Nino and an unusually warm tropical and subtropical Atlantic, the Colorado State team stresses that there is more uncertainty than normal with this outlook.

“Our analog seasons exhibited a wide range of outcomes, from below-normal seasons to hyperactive seasons,” said Klotzbach, a research scientist at CSU’s Department of Atmospheric Science. “This highlights the large uncertainty that exists with this outlook.”

Colorado State University meteorologist Michael Bell, a co-author of the forecast, cautioned coastal residents to



In 2022, Hurricane Ian made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane in southwest Florida. Meteorologists from Colorado State University predict a total of 13 tropical storms will form this year, of which six will become hurricanes.

SCOTT CLAUSE/USA TODAY NETWORK FILE

take precautions whatever the forecast. “It takes only one storm near you to make this an active season for you,” Bell said.

The report also includes the probability of major hurricanes making landfall in the U.S.:

- 44% for the entire U.S. coastline (average from 1880 to 2020 is 43%)
- 22% for the East Coast, including the Florida peninsula (average from 1880 to 2020 is 21%)
- 28% for the Gulf Coast from the Florida Panhandle westward to Brownsville, Texas (average from 1880 to 2020 is 27%)

Meteorologists at AccuWeather, in a forecast released last week, predicted that 11 to 15 named tropical storms would develop in the Atlantic basin in 2023, of which four to eight would be hurricanes. Federal scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will release their forecast in May.

According to the National Hurricane Center, the first named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season will be Arlene, followed by Bret, Cindy, Don, Emily, Franklin, Gert and Harold.

The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 to Nov. 30, though storms sometimes form outside those dates.

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