



What Petrino said about Texas A&M reunion

SPORTS, 1B

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A ‘day of profound joy’ in Israel



Released hostage Evyatar David reacts upon arriving at the Rabin Medical Center-Beilinson Hospital in Petah Tikva, Israel, on Oct. 13.
STOYAN NENOV/REUTERS

Families, residents cheer as hostages released

Kathryn Palmer, Zac Anderson, Michael Collins and Bart Jansen
USA TODAY

Israel celebrated the release of the remaining hostages taken by Hamas militants in the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks as the first phase in the U.S.-brokered ceasefire plan was met with joy around the world on Oct. 13.

Twenty Israeli hostages in Gaza were transferred to the International Committee of the Red Cross and returned home, according to the Israeli military. Almost 2,000 Palestinian prisoners were released by Israel as part of the ceasefire deal.

Cheers, cries and Hebrew songs rang out in Tel Aviv’s Hostage Square, where thousands of Israelis had gathered to celebrate the homecoming.

President Donald Trump traveled to the Middle East to greet the hostages as part of a whirlwind visit to Israel and Egypt while back home the U.S. government entered its 13th day in a shutdown.

“This is the historic dawn of a new Middle East,” Trump said in his remarks to the Knesset, Israel’s legislature, declaring it at the start of a 65-minute speech a “day of profound joy.”

The release of Israeli hostages held in Gaza began at 1 a.m. ET on Oct. 13. Hamas also announced that on Oct. 13, it would release the bodies of four of the 28 dead Israeli hostages held in Gaza.

Some of the deceased hostages were killed on Oct. 7, 2023, attack; others are believed to have died while in captivity.

Following Hamas’ release of all 20

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Jesse Cole, owner of the Savannah Bananas and Party Animals greets fans in the upper deck at Memorial Stadium in Clemson, S.C. on April 26. KEN RUINARD/USA TODAY NETWORK VIA IMAGN IMAGES

Banana Ball League adds new teams, plans to return to AR

George “Clay” Mitchell
Fort Smith Southwest Times Record
USA TODAY NETWORK

Banana Ball returns to Arkansas. Jesse Cole, the owner and founder of the Banana Ball Championship League, announced on Thursday that the league will play at 75 stadiums in 45 states, including Dickey-Stephens Park on March 14 and 15, to christen the league’s inaugural season in 2026.

The games will feature the Fighter-fighters taking on the newly minted Loco Beach Coconuts, one of two new teams also announced.

Shane Victorino, who played for the 2008 Philadelphia Phillies and 2013 Boston Red Sox World Series teams, will helm the Coconuts as the primetime coach.

The Banana Ball League came to Ar-

kansas in August and played to a sold-out crowd at Baum-Walker Stadium in Fayetteville.

How to get tickets

Banana Ball is popular, and due to the massive demand for tickets, they are not sold publicly.

Tickets start at \$35, and fans who want to attend must sign up for the Banana Ball Ticket Lottery by Oct. 31 for a chance to purchase seats.

Other outlets sell secondhand tickets, but the team’s ownership expresses caution when using them.

What is Banana Ball

Banana Ball is an exhibition-style, fast-paced version of baseball developed by the Savannah Bananas that

blends sport with entertainment.

Unlike traditional baseball, Banana Ball operates under a distinctly different set of rules designed to keep the action moving and boost fan engagement.

Some of its hallmark rules include:

- A two-hour time limit for the game
- No bunting, no mound visits, and no stepping out of the batter’s box
- If a fan catches a foul ball in the air, the batter is automatically out
- Walks become sprints rather than passive advances
- Batters can “steal first” base under certain circumstances
- Each inning is worth one “point” (with runs in the final inning counting individually)

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SCOTUS to revisit Black voting rights

Maureen Groppe
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – When Congress passed landmark civil rights legislation in 1965 to stop racial discrimination in voting, only six members of the U.S. House were Black.

Today, there are 10 times as many Black lawmakers, a share of the House on par with the total share of Black Americans in the country.

Some of that change is attributed to the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Section Two of the act tries to prevent legislatures from diluting the votes of racial minorities by either packing them into one district or spreading them out among too many districts to have an impact.

But that part of the law could be in jeopardy in a case, *Louisiana v. Callais*, that the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear Oct. 15.

The justices will debate whether states can create legislative districts that comply with the Voting Rights Act without violating the bans on racial discrimination in the 14th and 15th amendments – changes to the Constitution passed after the Civil War to protect the rights of formerly enslaved people.

“This is a law that is designed to enforce the very amendments that the state of Louisiana and these (private) plaintiffs are claiming it violates,” said Marina Jenkins, executive director of the National Democratic Redistricting Committee.

Depending on what the high court decides, the case could be a continuation of the conservative court’s “color-blind” approach to the Constitution that often views consideration of race as discriminatory.

A ruling along those lines could reduce the number of racial minorities in office at all levels of government. And it could give the GOP an electoral boost, including in efforts to keep control of the closely divided House.

“The stakes are incredibly high,” said Sophia Lin Lakin, director of the American Civil Liberties Union’s voting

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