



## Trevor Lawrence continues resurgence in win vs. Broncos

SPORTS, 1B

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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2025 | OCALA.COM

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HEAVY RARE EARTH ELEMENTS

## ‘FORMIDABLE CHALLENGE’



MP Materials’ rare earth open-pit mine in Mountain Pass, California, is seen in 2020. MP is a high-profile example of the impact of continued dependency by the West on China for heavy rare earth processing. STEVE MARCUS/REUTERS FILE

### Rivalry with China constricts supply chain of critical resource

Eric Onstad  
REUTERS

LONDON – The West’s push to build a home-grown magnets supply chain to reduce its reliance on China – led by massive U.S. backing for Nevada-based MP Materials – is running into a critical problem: the scarcity of so-called heavy rare earth elements.

The United States and allies have been scrambling to create an alternative supply chain to make super-strong rare earth magnets, which are vital components in everything from defense technology and electric vehicles, to electronics and wind turbines.

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Rare earths dug up and processed in Western Australia are pictured after being shipped to the Lynas plant in Gebeng, Malaysia, in 2014. Lynas is one of the biggest Western firms in the rare earths sector. SONALI PAUL/REUTERS FILE



A supervisor displays crushed ore before it is sent to the mill at the MP Materials rare earth mine in Mountain Pass, California. The company aims to integrate the supply chain from mining rare earths to magnet production. STEVE MARCUS/REUTERS FILE

MP Materials, which owns the only U.S. rare earths mine, aims to eventually lift magnet output to 10,000 metric tons a year. It plans to launch a heavy rare earth separation facility next year that will eventually be able to produce 200 tons a year of dysprosium and terbium.

## Local man faces third sexual assault allegation

Austin L. Miller  
Ocala Star-Banner  
USA TODAY NETWORK

A man already in jail and accused of two sexual assaults now has been accused of a third, according to a Marion County Sheriff’s Office press release issued Dec. 19.

The sheriff’s office says Dionne Le Trel Southall was arrested on this latest charge of sexual battery on Dec. 18 by Detective Hunter Kephart.

Southall, 30, was taken into custody on Nov. 5 in the first two cases. He appeared in front of County Judge Lori Cotton via Zoom from the Marion County Jail on Dec. 19 for a first appearance hearing on the latest charge.

Assistant State Attorney Will Harris told the judge Southall has multiple convictions that include burglary and grand theft of a motor vehicle. Harris asked the judge not to release Southall pending trial.

The judge agreed. She told Southall that, based on the facts of the case, it’s in the interest of public safety to deny him bail. His next court date, which will be his arraignment where prosecutors announce what charges will be filed, is Jan. 20.

The Public Defender’s Office will continue to represent Southall.

Court records show prosecutors already have filed one sexual battery charge against Southall, with a court date slated for Jan. 8 in front of Circuit Judge Peter Brigham.

### About the latest case

The news release notes Detective Kephart received information about this latest case on Dec. 5. The victim said she came forward when she saw a sheriff’s office press release about the first two cases.

The woman says Southall contacted her on Facebook in January 2021 and they agreed to have sex. She said Southall took her to a vacant residence that was under construction.

The woman said she changed her mind and wanted to leave. She said she managed to escape, but Southall caught her, strangled her, dragged her to a wooded area and then sexually assaulted her.

After hearing her story, detectives went to the jail to interview Southall. He denied knowing the victim,

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### MARION COUNTY FIRE RESCUE INVESTIGATION

## Several workers out due to November incident

Austin L. Miller  
Ocala Star-Banner  
USA TODAY NETWORK

An internal investigation launched after four Marion County Fire Rescue employees were arrested and fired amid

hazing allegations has resulted in six more agency employees losing their jobs, according to a Dec. 19 news release from county government.

Among those no longer with the agency are “all leadership personnel who were on duty” at the time of the in-

cident, the press item notes.

It also notes that two people “were cleared to return to work.”

The press release does not mention the names of those fired or those cleared.

“Marion County Fire Rescue main-

tains zero tolerance for conduct that falls short of the professionalism and integrity our citizens expect. We remain committed to accountability, transparency, and restoring the confidence of

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Volume 83 | No. 62  
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