



GIANTS  
CUT QB

THE TEAM LET GO OF FOURTH-STRING QUARTERBACK TOMMY DEVITO, A FAN FAVORITE, AHEAD OF TUESDAY'S 4 P.M. DEADLINE FOR ROSTER CUTS, ACCORDING TO MULTIPLE REPORTS. **E1**

YOUTH SPORTS

On-field incident was already ugly.  
Then came the online firestorm.



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Fallout between soccer teams  
underscores how social media  
is magnifying contentious  
incidents in youth sports.

Patrick Lanni For The Star-Ledger

The video tells an undeniable story. Amid a highly contested youth girls soccer match, a player grabs her opponent by the back of the neck, yanking her back and forth before throwing her to the grass face-first. The girl's spontaneous fit of anger is clearly a foul and draws a swift yellow card from the referee. It could have ended there. But the moment of flagrant play was captured on video, by a parent of one of the South Jer-

sey teams that played the May match. The 10-second clip was posted to social media and has since amassed more than 2 million views on Facebook. But unlike previous viral New Jersey sports incidents, which have unfolded with ugly brawls in wrestling gyms and the assault of an umpire on a baseball diamond, this one came with a twist. Woodstown Borough, the team with the player who committed the hard foul, was welcomed back to the South Jersey Girls Soccer League for the upcoming 2025 fall season. Monroe Township, the team on the receiving end of the penalty, was not. The ugly foul and the ensuing fallout have now thrust two communities and a volunteer-driven soccer organization into the center of a raging debate over conduct at games, parental involvement in on-field disputes, and social media's role in magnifying

youth sports incidents and fanning them into viral clips. Lauren Astore, the parent of the Monroe girl who was thrown to the turf, claims her persistent complaints about the incident — and pursuit of accountability from league officials — led to her daughter's team being banned from the league this fall. "Taking this from them is really hard," Astore told NJ Advance Media. "It's hard for the parents. It's hard for the girls. I get emotional because they're still caught up about it." The foul and subsequent firestorm marked the latest viral sports moment to make its way across the nation, turning an unsportsmanlike play into an unlikely backdrop for debate in youth sports: Can seconds of video, sometimes without context, ruin a young athlete's future? And what role are parents playing in elevating **SEE SOUTH JERSEY, A2**

STATEWIDE

Jersey gas prices fall as local summer beckons

Larry Higgs For The Star-Ledger

With the summer season's last hurrah this weekend, drivers can expect the lowest gas prices in five years. But prices will go even lower for locals next month. "For New Jersey, it will be the cheapest Labor Day since COVID, 21 cents (a gallon) lower than last year, but up 4 cents from a month ago," said Patrick De Haan, GasBuddy's head of petroleum analysis. And the decline won't stop on Sept. 2. Barring a hurricane or geopolitical tensions, Garden State gas prices will continue to slide during what's been dubbed "local summer" — when Jersey Shore residents reclaim the beaches from tourists. AAA reports the average price for a gallon of regular dropped to \$3.05 on Tuesday, while the national average rose to \$3.18. You can put those savings toward a

second slice of boardwalk pizza. GasBuddy.com, the crowd-sourced tracker of discount prices, showed the top 10 cheapest reported gas prices ranging from \$2.71 to \$2.73, which included a name-brand BP station. One major reason for the slide — which De Haan predicted ahead of Memorial Day — is the decision by the Organization of Oil Exporting Countries, better known as OPEC, to increase production in March. Those countries have steadily ramped up monthly production of crude oil, the raw product gasoline is refined from, the analyst said. "OPEC cut production in 2023... It could be a shift in strategy," De Haan said. "The intended consequences of 2023 never materialized. The more oil they produce, the more marketshare they retain." In May, both De Haan and Tom Kloza, an independent oil analyst, said drivers

would pay the highest prices at the beginning of the summer season in May and see declines as Labor Day approached. "The number you pay in the first 30 days of summer will be higher than the last 30 days of summer," Kloza said in May. De Haan described what drivers experienced this summer as a "pinch instead of a punch" at the pump. Naturally, a Gulf Coast or Atlantic hurricane that disrupts refineries or gas supplies is the wild card that could affect prices, he said. Jersey drivers saw two non-marketplace gas price increases this year. In January, the state gas tax increased by 2.6 cents per gallon. In April, the annual switch to summer blend reformulated gas increased prices. The state switches back to non-reformulated winter blend gas in late September, which will deliver a further price drop, De Haan said.

BERGEN COUNTY

Dispute over mall's  
alleged defiance  
of 'Blue Laws'  
heads to court

In Bergen County, most retail stores must remain closed on Sundays. The owners of American Dream say policy doesn't apply to mega-mall.

Anthony G. Attrino For The Star-Ledger

Paramus officials filed a lawsuit Monday against the owners of American Dream in East Rutherford, alleging the mall's 120 retail stores are open on Sunday in violation of Bergen County's "Blue Laws." "These businesses with the encouragement and support of the mall's ownership and the acquiescence of the other defendants here, have violated the law hundreds if not thousands of times since January," states the suit, filed in Superior Court of Bergen County. In addition to suing Ameream, the Delaware LLC that owns the mall, the borough of Paramus is also suing the county, the borough of East Rutherford, and the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority (NJSEA), which owns and leases property to the mall. A spokesperson for American Dream called the lawsuit "a meritless political stunt driven by private competitors' interests." "It is well established that Bergen County's Blue Laws do not apply to property owned by the state — American Dream is on state property where retail sales have occurred on Sundays for decades. We look forward to our day in court," the spokesperson said in an email. A spokesperson for the NJSEA declined to comment, citing pending litigation. East Rutherford officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In Bergen County, most retail stores — especially large shopping centers and malls — must remain closed on Sundays. **SEE BERGEN COUNTY, A6**

LIFE



It's a love story  
(and she said yes)

Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce took to Instagram Tuesday to announce their engagement, the fairytale culmination of a courtship that for two years has thrilled and fascinated millions. **F1**

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