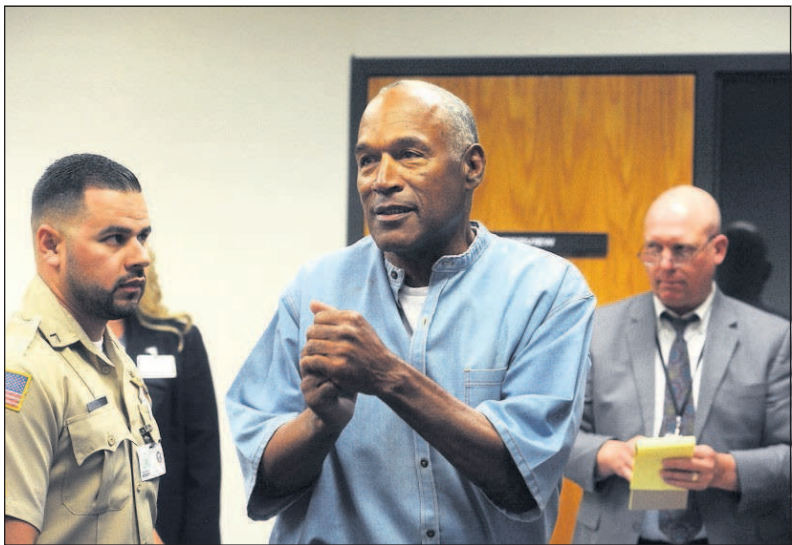


SPORTS

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O.J. Simpson triumphant as he gets parole



Jason Bean/The Reno Gazette-Journal
 Former NFL football star O.J. Simpson reacts after learning he was granted parole at Lovelock Correctional Center in Lovelock, Nev., on Thursday.

By **KEN RITTER**
 Associated Press

LOVELOCK, Nev. — Barring any last-minute snafus, O.J. Simpson will walk out of prison a free man in about three months, having persuaded a Nevada parole board the bungled hotel-room heist he pulled nearly 10 years ago was a huge error in judgment and one he will never repeat.

Although he still adamantly maintains he was trying to retrieve his personal property when he barged into a hotel room with five other men in September 2007, he acknowledged repeatedly Thursday that it was something he never should have done.

"I thought I was glad to get my stuff back, but it just wasn't worth it," he told the board. "It wasn't worth it, and I'm sorry."

After a nationally televised hearing that clearly revealed the public's fascination with Simpson continues, four parole commissioners voted unanimously to release him.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you," he said quietly as he buried his head on his chest with relief.

Then, as he was led down a hall and back to prison, the Hall of Fame athlete and 1995 murder defendant raised his hands over his head in a victory gesture and said: "Oh, God, oh!"

Some two hours earlier, Simpson, gray-haired but looking trimmer than he has in recent years, had walked stiffly into a small hearing room of the Lovelock Correctional Center in rural Nevada dressed in jeans, a light-blue prison-issue shirt and sneakers.

He chuckled as parole board chairwoman Connie Bisbee began the hear-

ing by mistakenly giving his age at 90 before quickly correcting herself.

"Feels like it though," Simpson, 70, said as laughter erupted.

Bisbee and three other parole board commissioners were gathered in another room about two hours away in Carson City. They questioned Simpson via video.

By turns remorseful, jovial and defensive, he heatedly insisted the items he and five others took during the armed robbery in a Las Vegas hotel room in September 2007 were "my stuff."

Asked what he planned to do if released, Simpson said he would move to Florida to be close to two of his four adult children.

"I could easily stay in Nevada, but I don't think you guys want me here," he joked.



AP Photo/Elaine Thompson
 Seattle Mariners' Ben Gamel, right, tumbles after being tagged out on a run-down as New York Yankees second baseman Starlin Castro looks toward first during the first inning of a baseball game Thursday in Seattle. Yankees beat the Mariners 4-1.

Severino, Gardner lead Yankees to win over M's

By **TIM BOOTH**
 Associated Press

SEATTLE — In the past week, Luis Severino has tossed a gem at Fenway Park against Chris Sale and outpitched Felix Hernandez in Seattle.

The 23-year-old All-Star is becoming the ace of the New York Yankees' staff this season.

"I enjoy it. I knew it was going to be tough every time I face a guy like Felix," Severino said. "I just tried to bring my A stuff, tried to make pitches, tried to get hitters out."

Severino pitched out of trouble to throw seven shutout innings, Brett Gardner hit a solo home run off Hernandez, and the Yankees added three unearned runs late for a 4-1 win over the Mariners on Thursday night.

Severino (6-4) was overpowering when he

UP NEXT: MARINERS

- New York Yankees (49-45) at Seattle Mariners (48-48)
- Tonight, 7:10 p.m. TV: RTNW

needed to be, striking out six and getting his fastball to flash triple-digits on the stadium scoreboard even in the seventh. He allowed eight hits, but was outstanding in the big moments. The right-hander escaped jams in the first, second and most notably the fourth inning when Seattle had runners at the corners with no outs and was unable to score.

"It shows you he understands what he needs to do," New York manager Joe Girardi said. "He has to get after it from the first hitter and that's exactly what he's doing because two runs could beat you when you're facing

guys like that."

Gardner took advantage of the one costly mistake by Hernandez (5-4), driving a 2-1 pitch into the right-field seats with one out in the sixth. Other than that, Hernandez was as good as he's been in 2017, striking out as a season-high nine and pitching at least seven innings for the second time.

Aaron Judge added a broken-bat RBI single in the eighth. It was just his fourth hit in 29 at-bats since the All-Star break. The Yankees added a pair of runs in the ninth with two outs on second baseman Robinson Cano's throwing error, allowing Didi Gregorius and Todd Frazier to score.

Three of New York's four runs were unearned.

It was a vintage performance by Hernandez, all the way down to the lack of run support — a staple of his career with the Mariners.

British Open begins with All-American orientation

By **DOUG FERGUSON**
 Associated Press

SOUTHPORT, England — The wind off the Irish Sea pushed away the rain clouds and bathed Royal Birkdale in sunshine, Stars and Stripes.

The British Open began Thursday with an All-American flavor.

Jordan Spieth, chomping away on gum as he watched one putt after another pour into the center of the cup, worked some bunker magic late in the round to keep his card filled only with birdies and pars for a 5-under 65. He was tied for the lead with U.S. Open champion Brooks Koepka and Matt Kuchar.

Koepka, with no competition and barely any practice since capturing his first major a month ago, ran off three straight birdies and holed a tough shot from a pot bunker for eagle on the par-5 17th hole.

Kuchar, who first endeared himself to these British fans as a 19-year-old amateur in 1998 at Royal Birkdale, tied the course record with a 29 on the front nine, only to fall into a routine of pars the rest of the way. He still shot 65, his best score ever in a major.

They were a stroke ahead of Paul Casey and Charl Schwartzel on a day that started nasty and ended with 39 players breaking par. The biggest question after a long day on the links was what was in store for Friday, when high wind and occasional showers were in the forecast.

"I thought today's round was extremely important, as they all are," Spieth said, atop the leaderboard at a major for the first time since last year's Masters. "But given the forecast coming in, I thought you really needed to be in the red today. You can certainly make up ground in a round tomorrow, and we'll see it happen. But being able to kind of play with shots, or play a little more conservative because you don't try to do too much on a day like tomorrow, that's nice and very helpful."

Ledecky prepares for another big week at world swim crown

By **PAUL NEWBERRY**
 Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary — Katie Ledecky shrugs off the notion that she's doing anything special over the next week.

For the 20-year-old American star, the improbable has become the expected.

"It's really just putting in the work, putting in the training," Ledecky said today, sounding so nonchalant that she might as well have been describing a leisurely afternoon swim in one of those thermal baths along the Danube.

Of course, there's nothing restful about her plans for the world championships in Budapest, where the swimming competition begins on Sunday.

Ledecky will race every day for seven straight days, a total of 6,300 meters if all goes according to plan. That's nearly 4 miles in total, encompassing freestyle races that range from 200 meters (essentially a sprint) to 1,500 (the grueling metric mile).

To add a little perspective, Michael Phelps put in 3,300 meters — roughly half the distance of Ledecky's program — on his way to a record eight gold medals at the Beijing Olympics. No one is aware of a pool swimmer



AP Photo/Nick Wass
 Olympic gold-medal swimmer Katie Ledecky talks to the media before a baseball game between the Baltimore Orioles and the Washington Nationals, in Washington in August. Ledecky shrugs off the notion that she's doing anything special. Ledecky will race every day for seven straight days at the world championships in Budapest.

ever covering so much distance within the confines of a single major meet.

For anyone else, it would seem like a breeze, a mere 3,300 meters for the week since the 1,500 wasn't part of the women's program.

That will change at the 2020 Games in Tokyo, so this will be the first test of what her program will probably look like at the next Olympics.

At the Rio Olympics last summer, Ledecky captured four gold medals and a silver. That must have seemed like a breeze, a mere 3,300 meters for the week since the 1,500 wasn't part of the women's program.

That will change at the 2020 Games in Tokyo, so this will be the first test of what her program will probably look like at the next Olympics.

"I feel like I'm really prepared,"

Ledecky said. "I was confident two years with what that schedule would be like and how I could handle it and manage it so I would have good energy throughout the week."

Life has changed quite a bit since her triumphant performance in Brazil.

A native of the Washington, D.C., suburbs, she moved away from home for the first time to attend Stanford, an experience that has given her a whole new balance and perspective. The change of scenery forced her to change coaches, as well. She left Bruce Gemmill and is now working with her college coach, Greg Meehan, who is serving as the head U.S. women's coach in Budapest.

Meehan knew he was inheriting a special talent.

He tweaked a few things in her training regimen, and worked to make her stroke a bit longer and more efficient, but Ledecky certainly didn't need a major overhaul.

"She knows how to handle that racing load," Meehan said. "Nothing prepares you for that other than experience and hard work. She did a great job with Bruce Gemmill. Bruce prepared her in that regard. We've just taken the ball and continued to run with it. She's in a great spot."



AP Photo/Alastair Grant
 Jordan Spieth of the United States plays a shot on the 18th hole during the first round of the British Open Golf Championship, at Royal Birkdale, Southport, England Thursday.