Market Briefing - Tuesday, 18 August 2026

Prices as of the US cash close and Nasdaq last sale after 16:00 ET. SpaceX last ~$143.18. Session is closed. Not investment advice.

A rates-and-oil day, not an AI-demand day. Memory stocks reversed Monday's bounce. SpaceX (SPCX) bought back almost the entire dip and held the IPO reclaim into the close. Klarna imploded on guidance. The 30-year Treasury yield tagged a 19-year high.

One-line take

The market sold crowded duration - memory, high-beta chips, buy-now-pay-later - and kept a bid in names that already washed out (SpaceX) or look like cash-rich quality (Apple). Geopolitics kept oil bid. Oil kept the long end of the curve bid. The long end did the damage.

1. Market snapshot

US stocks fell for a second straight session. The Nasdaq led as semis and other richly valued growth names were marked down against a 30-year yield that touched about 5.33%, highest since 2007. Oil stayed elevated on a harder US-Iran line and a still-choked Strait of Hormuz.

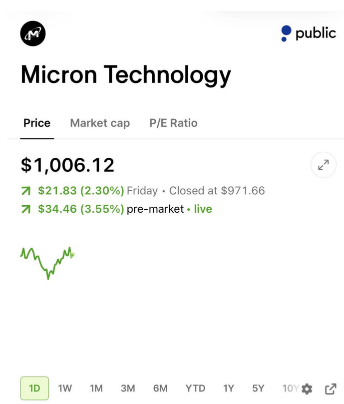
Index / asset	Level / last	Day
S&P; 500	about 7,706	about -0.5%
Nasdaq Composite	about 26,291	about -1.3%
Dow Jones	about 53,422	about -0.2%
SOX / SMH	semis complex	about -5% / -3.8%
10-year yield	about 4.70%-4.75%	still elevated
30-year yield	about 5.30%-5.33%	19-year high
Brent / WTI	about $91 / $84-$85	up
Bitcoin	about $64,300-$64,750	+1% to +2%

Name	Last	Day	Tape note
SpaceX (SPCX)	~$143.18	about -2.1% vs Mon $146.23	Low $139.41; bought back; held $135
Micron (MU)	about $938	about -7.3%	Monday $1,012 given back
SanDisk (SNDK)	about $1,621	about -9.3%	Reversed Mon +8.9%
SK Hynix (SKHY)	about $157	about -8.4%	Same memory dump
Western Digital (WDC)	about $501	about -6.6%	Storage sold with DRAM
Nvidia (NVDA)	about $220	about -2.2%	Weak, not memory-weak
AMD	about $480	about -5.1%	High-beta AI silicon
Intel (INTC)	about $96.31	about -6.9%	Among the worst mega-chips
Apple (AAPL)	about $311	about +1.7%	Quality / cash bid

Name	Last	Day	Tape note
Microsoft (MSFT)	about $482	about +0.3%	Held up vs growth
Alphabet (GOOGL)	about $344	about -0.1%	Flat
Meta (META)	about $551	about -3.1%	Duration / capex
Tesla (TSLA)	about $340	about +0.1%	Held the line
Home Depot (HD)	about $340	green	Beat; frozen housing; guidance held
Klarna (KLAR)	about $15.30	about -21.6%	Guidance crater; first profit ignored

Monday for context: S&P; 7,745 (-0.52%), Nasdaq 26,645 (-0.32%). Memory actually outperformed Monday (Micron +4.1% to $1,011.75, SanDisk +8.9% to $1,786.85, SpaceX +4.5% to $146.23). Tuesday was the unwind of that bounce - except SpaceX, which tagged $139.41 and was bought.

Semis complex into the rates shock. Illustrative tape, not official OHLC.



Micron lost the $1,000 reclaim. Monday's bounce did not stick.

2. What actually drove the tape

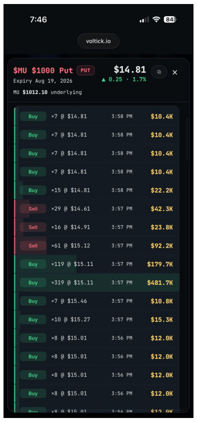
There was no overnight collapse in AI demand, high-bandwidth memory allocation, or hyperscaler capex. This was a macro shock to the discount rate on top of a geopolitical oil shock.

Rates. The 30-year tagged about 5.33%. Long-dated growth stocks got repriced. Memory was 2026's most crowded winner (SanDisk roughly +650% year to date into Monday, Micron +250%). Those names get sold first when the risk-free rate jumps.

Oil and Iran. Brent near $91. The White House said the US is not in talks with Iran, ruled out extending the expired 60-day ceasefire, floated making Hormuz a "US territory," and threatened to bomb Oman if it "gets in the way." UAE air defenses detected two Iranian ballistic missiles toward the UAE. A cargo vessel was struck in the strait. Only a handful of ships are transiting. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve is at 293.4 million barrels, lowest since 1982.

Fed overlay. Swaps still about 63% September hold, 37% hike. Sticky oil plus a 5.3% 30-year makes "the Fed has our back" a weaker story.

Positioning. Monday a trader bought about 20,100 November 630-strike SMH puts for about $129 million, a synthetic short against semis. Jim Cramer on Monday said it was "not too late" to buy SanDisk, Micron, Seagate and Western Digital and that Micron "can double again." Retail treated that as a fade by lunch.



The SMH put print sat under the memory unwind.

3. The split: memory vs SpaceX

SpaceX opened $140.74, tagged $139.41, and was bought back. Nasdaq last sale after the bell was about $143.18, roughly -2% versus Monday's $146.23 close, but the IPO line at $135 held and the dip was not left on the floor. Micron, SanDisk, and SK Hynix never found that bid.

Different points in the sentiment cycle. SpaceX already had the "priced for perfection, then disappointment" event: first public earnings, capex more than 2x revenue, lockup scare, washout to about $105. Shorts peaked near 34% of the float and collapsed toward 11% when the 6 August unlock failed to crash the stock. Memory never completed that washout. It bounced too early.

Crowding. SanDisk had already ripped about 35% in five sessions into Friday, then +8.9% Monday. Micron reclaimed $1,000 Monday and lost it immediately. SpaceX's bounce from $105 had a mechanical bid (short covering plus lockup supply absorbed). Memory's bounce did not.

Ownership handoff. As SpaceX reclaimed the $135 IPO area, retail was a net seller for the first time since listing. Institutions (Harvard, Nvidia, Norway, Alphabet, BlackRock, Fidelity) have been showing up in the float. Memory is still owned by momentum.

Fundamentals did not flip overnight. High-bandwidth memory is still described as sold out. DRAM is still called tight into 2027-28. Elon Musk's line - limiting factor is memory, demand +200% vs supply +20% - has not been falsified by a data print. Tuesday was rates plus positioning.

Do not confuse the stock dip with cheaper chips. If memory stocks are falling only because of yields, chip prices can stay high and keep squeezing SpaceX AI capex ($15.8B of $18.4B Q2 capex was AI). If the stocks are correctly sniffing a peak in contract prices, cheaper memory later is a cost tailwind for SpaceX. Today's tape does not settle that. It only tells you who had buyers.

4. Earnings and company news

Home Depot - beat, frozen housing, stock bid. Q2 revenue $47.86B vs $47.24B expected. Earnings $4.79, adjusted $4.92 vs $4.73. Comps +1.7% globally, +1.3% US. Transactions -1%. Average ticket $92.50 vs $90.01. The CFO talked about smaller projects in a frozen housing market. Big-ticket still down. Full-year guidance unchanged (sales +2.5% to +4.5%), helped by $730 million in tariff refunds. Express delivery launching nationwide. CEO still on medical leave. Stock green.

Klarna - first profit, about -22%. Q2 profit $9 million vs a $53 million year-ago loss. Revenue $1.04B, +27%, a beat. Then guidance: Q3 revenue midpoint about $960M vs about $1.11B expected; Q3 adjusted operating income midpoint about $10M vs about $85M; full-year revenue cut to $4.1-$4.2B. About $600M FX headwind, softer Germany. CFO and CMO stepping down early 2027. First quarterly profit does not matter if next quarter's operating income is guided to $10 million versus $85 million.

Other. Nvidia won a competitive Ohio AI data-center bid. The $105B credit-support figure is still in the tape. Rothschild reportedly lifted Apple to Buy, $400 target. SpaceX had no new fundamental print - it just had to hold the IPO reclaim ahead of the 20 August unlock (about 319 million shares). It did, so far.

5. Other noteworthy items

The Strategic Petroleum Reserve is at a 44-year low. The buffer is thinner if Hormuz stays closed.

Trump posted Hormuz as "US territory." CENTCOM did not confirm mines are gone. Eurasia Group pushed a peace-deal timeline toward year-end. Oil is under $100 because flows were rerouted. That can change on one tanker hit. Two Iranian ballistic missiles were detected toward the UAE.

Long Treasury ETFs (TLT / VGLT) were pressured toward record-low territory even with inflows. The bond market is not finished.

Bitcoin +1-2% above $64k while Nasdaq was red. That is not a risk-on confirmation. Modest ETF inflow Monday (+$137M).

Schwab's July STAX: clients net-bought SpaceX (most-bought name) and Micron on the July dip. That cohort is now underwater on memory and closer to flat-to-up on SpaceX.

6. What's buzzing on X

Trending tape mixed Bitcoin, Baidu, Klarna, DRAM, Meta. Five camps mattered.

Camp 1 - Memory is a meme unwind. "Yesterday they needed DRAM. Today nobody needs DRAM anymore." The sarcasm is the tell: they do not believe demand died. They believe the stock is a crowded toy. Cramer's "not too late / Micron can double again" is the fade signal.

> *"Yesterday they needed DRAM. Today nobody needs DRAM anymore."*
>
> X, memory tape

Camp 2 - SpaceX has a bid. "Scary to be short… too many institutions behind the name." Elon's 3 August "I think so" on buying near $108 is the victory lap. Bears who called $75-$85 after the 6 August unlock are the cautionary tale.

Camp 3 - Double-top / Thursday unlock trap. TraderTV Neal: double top at 150, look short unless 150 breaks. Others: range $142-$148, then dump toward $120. Remaining bear case: about 319 million shares around 20 August.

Camp 4 - If Elon is right, own Micron not SpaceX. One large account likes SpaceX the company, but at about $1.5T on a ~$30B run-rate the stock only works if Musk's $100B / $1T path lands. If the AI/memory boom is real, Micron and Nvidia capture it with actual margins. That relative-value argument got run over today.

Camp 5 - It's just the 30-year. Yields up, memory off highs. Iran headlines dominated the SPY room. Running joke: Nasdaq / SanDisk down equals Apple up.

Klarna was top trending. Split between "wait two days" and buy-now-pay-later mockery. Correct take: weaker forward guidance, not a Q2 collapse. Still a -22% stock.

7. Independent view

Not a recommendation.

1. Believe the rates tape, not "AI is over." A 19-year high in the 30-year with Brent at $91 will knock extended growth over. It does not rewrite high-bandwidth memory as sold out. Nobody stopped needing memory overnight. What changed is the hurdle rate - the return investors demand to hold a long-dated story.

2. The memory bounce was a trap; the SpaceX bounce had structure. Monday was a relief rip. Cramer blessing it was late. SpaceX off $105 had shorts covering, a lockup that did not avalanche, and an institutional bid. That is why SpaceX tagged $139 and came back, and Micron tagged $932 and sat there. Reclaiming the IPO is a technical win, not a re-rating. Still about 35% below $226.

3. Thursday's SpaceX unlock is the actual test. If it holds $135-$140, the "stronger hands" story gets another data point. If it loses $135 on volume, today's relative strength was just a squeeze coda.

4. I would not blindly buy memory here, and I would not panic-sell the cycle. Micron still looks like a second-leg-down candidate toward $840-$900 if the 30-year stays bid. That is a trading statement. The fundamental case is intact, which is why a later, calmer entry is more interesting than catching a knife under "double again." SanDisk after +35% in five days is not a dip. It is a failed breakout.

5. Apple green / chips red tells you what kind of risk-off this is. Not a 2022 indiscriminate tech wreck. Cash-flow quality (Apple, Home Depot, even Microsoft) is being bid. High-beta silicon and buy-now-pay-later are not. Meta -3% fits the same long-dated capex bucket.

6. Geopolitics can invalidate the "just a dip" view. Ruling out talks, teasing Hormuz as US territory, threatening Oman - not priced like a campaign riff. The reserve is depleted, tanker traffic is a trickle, missiles toward the UAE. A second-wave shock that puts Brent through $100 would push the 30-year higher still and turn this into a broader equity drawdown. That is the overnight risk.

7. Klarna is a sideshow with a useful lesson. First quarterly profit does not matter if Q3 operating income is guided to $10 million vs $85 million expected. Elevated expectations are the risk factor of this tape.

Bottom line

Tuesday was de-risking driven by the long bond and Hormuz, expressed most violently in 2026's crowded winners (memory, high-beta chips, Klarna). SpaceX recovering the dip is the exception: the market will still buy names that already took their medicine. Treat memory as a positioning unwind until Micron defends a real level or yields come in. Treat SpaceX strength as real but contingent on Thursday's unlock and on oil not exploding. The 30-year is the boss until proven otherwise.

8. What to watch next

Rest of week. Iran / Hormuz headlines. Oil and the 30-year decide if this is a one-day flush or a multi-day growth wreck.

Thursday, 20 August. SpaceX next lockup (about 319 million shares). Hold $135-$140 = constructive. Lose $135 on volume = the squeeze is over.

Micron $900 then $840. A bounce that dies at $1,000 again is still a lower high.

Nvidia earnings 26 August. The next real demand print.

September FOMC. About 63/37 hold vs hike. A hike scare is worse for this tape than a hold.

Method: live X plus wires plus Nasdaq last sale. Night voice follows the Market Briefing shape (readable for a normal investor). Not financial advice.