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STARS AND STRIPES

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WAR IN UKRAINE

Shifting perceptions

Russia's failures in Ukraine imbue Pentagon with newfound confidence

BY GREG JAFFE AND DAN LAMOTHE
The Washington Post

For more than a decade, the Pentagon, pinned down in Afghanistan, followed China's rise as a global power and Russia's ambitious military modernization program with growing alarm. The consensus in Beijing, Moscow and

among some in Washington was that an era of U.S. global dominance was rapidly coming to an end.

But one month into Russia's invasion of Ukraine, senior Pentagon officials are brimming with newfound confidence in American power, spurred by

SEE SHIFTING ON PAGE 8

A Ukrainian soldier stands on a destroyed Russian vehicle on Saturday in Kharkiv, Ukraine.

EFREM LUKATSKY/AP



RELATED

Ukrainian officials claim seven Russian generals have been killed in combat **Page 8**

White House clarifies angry Biden remark on Putin **Page 6**

General: Air Force faces uphill climb to hit recruiting targets

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The U.S. Air Force will struggle to hit its recruiting goal this year as it confronts the toughest hiring environment in nearly a generation, the two-star general in charge of its efforts to enlist new members told Stars and Stripes.



Thomas

And the long-term trends appear equally ominous, Maj. Gen. Ed Thomas said Thursday during a stop at a U.S. military base in Stuttgart.

Thomas, who is in Europe to meet with recruiters and other military officials at bases in Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, said the push is now on to make up lost ground.

"The theme right now for us, from Tokyo to Aviano, is presence, presence, presence," said Thomas, commander of the U.S. Air Force Recruiting Service. "No teleworking. We need to be in offices, schools, public spaces. Our message: We are hiring."

Thomas first raised the recruitment alarm in a January memo to his staff

that said "we have warning lights flashing." For example, the number of possible recruits classified on a "qualified and waiting" list was about half of what it has historically been, Thomas wrote.

Now, the Air Force, like the other services, is grappling with a math problem,

SEE UPHILL ON PAGE 3

BUSINESS/WEATHER

British Museum to remove Sackler family name

Associated Press

LONDON — The British Museum will remove the Sackler name from galleries, rooms and endowments following global outrage over the role the family played in the opioid crisis.

The museum is the latest cultural institution to cut ties with the Sacklers. The Sackler name has been removed in recent years from wings and galleries at institutions including the Louvre in Paris and the Serpentine Gallery in London. The British Museum said it had

mutually agreed on the move with trustees of the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Foundation, which has supported the museum for more than 30 years.

“The British Museum is grateful for the Foundation’s past support, and the Trustees appreciate their cooperation in coming to this agreement as we now move the museum into a new era and present our incredible collections in different ways for new audiences,” museum Chairman George Osborne said in a statement.

The Sackler name has become synonymous with Purdue Pharma, the company that developed OxyContin, a widely prescribed and widely abused painkiller. Purdue has faced a barrage of lawsuits alleging that it helped spark an addiction and overdose crisis linked to more than 500,000 deaths in the United States over the past two decades.

The museum said it is developing a new master plan, making this is a “timely opportunity” for the change.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		South Korea (Won)	
Euro costs (March 28)	\$1.07		1,226.24
Dollar buys (March 28)	0.8852	Switzerland (Franc)	0.9309
British pound (March 28)	\$1.29	Thailand (Baht)	33.59
Japanese yen (March 28)	118.00	Turkey (New Lira)	14.8354
South Korean won (March 28)	1,188.00		
Commercial rates		(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770		
Britain (Pound)	1.3184		
Canada (Dollar)	1.2473		
China (Yuan)	6.3663		
Denmark (Krone)	6.7714		
Egypt (Pound)	15.5009		
Euro	0.9102		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8287		
Hungary (Forint)	340.02		
Israel (Shekel)	3.2150		
Japan (Yen)	122.14		
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3042		
Norway (Krone)	8.6120		
Philippines (Peso)	52.18		
Poland (Zloty)	4.28		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7513		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3578		

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	3.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	1.00
Federal funds market rate	0.08
3-month bill	0.54
30-year bond	2.60

WEATHER OUTLOOK

MONDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



MONDAY IN EUROPE



TUESDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

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MILITARY

Airman completes 1,000-mile footrace

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The first active-duty service member to compete in the Iditarod Trail Invitational passed the finish line on Thursday, completing the grueling 1,000-mile-long Alaska footrace in 26 days.

Maj. Joshua Brown, 42, a surgical nurse with the 673rd Surgical Operations Squadron at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, set off on foot Feb. 27 from Knik Lake, about 50 miles north of Anchorage, the Air Force said in a news release March 18. Tethered behind him was a sled holding food, gear and other needed supplies.

Thursday afternoon Brown crossed the finish line in Nome on the state's western coast, according to the website trackleaders.com, which monitors movements through GPS devices carried by participants.

Brown is the first service member to compete in the race since it began 20 years ago, the Air Force said.

A native of Portland, Ore., now living in Eagle River, Alaska, Brown is married and a father of three.

"I can only imagine what's going through his mind right now," Jon Richner, a longtime friend who hiked the first 350 miles of the trail with Brown, told Stars and Stripes in a phone interview from his home near Seattle on Tuesday as Brown neared the finish.

Richner managed to talk with him twice since he left trail.

"He's been in a couple of places

where he's had cellphone coverage," Richner said. "He was pretty upbeat."

The main difficulty Brown faced was stomach problems that forced him to slow his pace for a couple days, Richner said. Brown hiked through temperatures that dropped to minus 30 degrees last weekend.

Founded in 2002, the Iditarod Trail Invitational, or ITI, was inspired by the famed Iditarod Sled Dog Race. There are no dogs in the ITI, however, with all participants competing on foot, skis or bikes.

Athletes must qualify for the race by completing the first 350 miles of the course during a previous year. The race accepts only 75 competitors for the full 1,000-mile course.

Race organizers tout it on their website as "the world's longest and toughest winter race" that draws only "the most intrepid and prepared adventurers."

The course includes seven checkpoints that offer minimal lodging, an opportunity for racers to warm up, rest up and stock up.

Participants must finish the race within 30 days, a timeline that requires hiking into the night, Richner said.

"You have to keep moving out there to finish the course," he said. "You only get a couple hours of sleep every day."

While nights are colder than days, hiking in the dark has one great advantage.

"The ground is more frozen so it's easier to pull stuff," he said.



PATRICK SULLIVAN/U.S. Air Force

Air Force Maj. Joshua Brown, dressed in black jacket and pants, walks amid fellow participants as the Iditarod Trail Invitational kicks off Feb. 27 at Knik Lake, Alaska.

"When the sun is out it can soften up the trail."

Richner, 56, said he met Brown in 2003 and since that time the pair have participated in evermore challenging races and obstacle courses.

"The human body is a fascinating thing," Richner said. "It's amazing what it will do for you if you put it to the challenge. You obviously have to know your limitations."

He and Brown completed the

350-mile ITI last year, and Richner said he had no plans to hike the course again.

"But when [Brown] said he'd signed up for the 1,000, I thought he might like to have some company," Richner said. "It gets kind of lonely, so I finagled my way in for the first part of the course as well."

Few competitors are left on the trail for that final 600 miles.

"You are alone," he said. "You are very much alone out there."

In Richner's experience, stay-

ing focused on short-term goals keeps a hiker mentally focused.

"This is where I'm going today," he said. "This is what I'm shooting for. One day at a time – that's my perspective. I suspect Josh is the same way: I want to get to the next point."

"My hat's off to anyone who steps up to do this," he said.

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Fort Hood soldiers sentenced for human smuggling operation

New York Daily News

A pair of Fort Hood soldiers were sentenced to time behind bars after they were linked to a human smuggling operation uncovered in Texas last year.

The soldiers, Isaiah Gore, 21, and Denerio Williams, 22, both of them active duty, pleaded guilty in December to conspiring to

transport undocumented aliens, according to a statement released by U.S. Attorney Jennifer B. Lowery on Friday. They were sentenced to 2½ years and 2 years in prison, respectively. Both soldiers also received three years of supervised release after their prison time is up.

An investigation into the scheme re-

vealed that Gore actively recruited people to pick up undocumented immigrants while Williams and other soldiers served as drivers, who then took the immigrants elsewhere in Texas in exchange for money.

In handing down the prison terms, Judge Marina Garcia Marmolejo noted that Gore and Williams, as soldiers in the Army, were

"not the average citizen," which warranted harsher sentencing. The judge additionally emphasized that the suspects wore their military uniforms, knowing that it would help them evade arrest.

One more soldier, Ivory Palmer, has also pleaded guilty and sentencing is pending in his case.

Uphill: Despite domestic drop-off, USAF still recruiting well in overseas military community

FROM PAGE 1

he said.

The Air Force recruitment goal is 27,452 new airmen by Sept. 30. Halfway into the fiscal year, 9,920 new recruits are in uniform and 5,314 have signed contracts, according to Air Force data.

"We will struggle to meet our recruiting goal for fiscal year 2022," Thomas said. "This is really the hardest recruiting environment since about 1999."

For starters, there is an overall labor shortage in the U.S., where unemployment rates are at historic lows and the military is in a battle for talent with the civilian sector, Thomas said.

Then there is the aggregate effect of recruiters largely being absent for two years from schools, county fairs and other public meeting places because of the coronavirus pandemic, he said.

Studies show that there is no replacement for face-to-face meetings with potential recruits, Thomas said.

Also, research indicates that fewer young Americans have an interest in military careers, and the number has dropped sharply during the pandemic, he said.

The lack of interest in military service is part of a broader cultural disconnect between the military and the civilian world that will pose long-term recruiting challenges, Thomas said.

Then factor in that roughly 75% of young Americans don't qualify to begin with because of a growing obesity problem and other health and medical issues, and the squeeze is on, he added.

"That is staggering," Thomas said. "That is a very troubling statistic, not just for us but for America."

Assuming public life is set to soon return to more of a post-pandemic normal, Thomas expects a numbers bump because recruiters will be back in force in the public square. Still, any boost could be short-lived.

"We are pedaling uphill into headwinds," he said. "We think this is longer-term because the math problem doesn't go away."

One bright spot is the overseas military

community, where Air Force recruiters are on target to meet all their goals, Thomas said.

"The European theater, it is family business when it comes to recruiting. The advantages we do have here is the kids have exposure to the military," he said. "So we are depending on the military family to come and serve."

But even that is a "double-edged sword," Thomas said, because it reinforces a civilian and military divide among the U.S. population and does little to solve the underlying problem of reaching Americans with no family military connection.

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MILITARY



EUGENE HOSHIKO/AP

A member of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force takes position during a joint military drill with U.S. Marines southwest of Tokyo.

Japan OKs bigger budget to host US, boost accord

By MARI YAMAGUCHI
Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan's parliament on Friday approved a new agreement with the United States, endorsing Japanese government spending exceeding \$8 billion for hosting U.S. troops as the two sides strengthen their military alliance in the face of a growing threat from China and North Korea in the region.

The \$8.6 billion host nation support budget covers the purchase of advanced arsenals used in their joint military exercises, as well as utilities and facilities used by the U.S. troops and their Japanese employees working on American bases in the country through

March 2027.

The upcoming five-year budget includes a new funding category of up to \$164 million for the purchase of advanced virtual combat training systems for joint exercises between the two forces.

The roughly \$1.6 billion for the first year is included in the fiscal 2022 national defense budget — a record \$44 billion — beginning in April.

Japan's government now describes the host-nation support budget as necessary for strengthening the alliance, rather than for "kindness" as it used to be considered.

Japan has been expanding its defense budget and capability for

about a decade and is now revising its key national security strategy in the face of threats from China, North Korea and now Russia.

Japan is especially concerned about Chinese military activity in waters in the East China Sea surrounding the Japanese-controlled Senkaku islands, which Beijing also claims and calls Diaoyu.

Japan has significantly expanded its joint drills with the United States as well as other partners including Australia, India, France, Britain and Germany that share concern about China's push for its territorial claims in the region, which has some of the world's busiest sea lanes.

Romania, US partner in Mideast naval group

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

Personnel from the Romanian navy will soon join U.S. sailors at Naval Support Activity Bahrain.

Romania is the ninth country to join a maritime coalition formed to prevent attacks on commercial shipping in the Middle East, a statement by U.S. Naval Forces Central Command said Saturday.

Romanian navy personnel will serve at the headquarters of the International Maritime Security Construct, which is based in Bahrain with U.S. 5th Fleet, the statement said.

"We are excited to welcome Ro-

mania to the team," Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces, said in the statement.

The International Maritime Security Construct, founded in 2019, includes Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as non-Middle Eastern countries such as Albania, Estonia, Lithuania, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The organization's operational arm, Coalition Task Force Sentinel, recently participated in U.S.-led training exercises in the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, Gulf of



LOUIS STAATS/U.S. Navy

The guided-missile destroyer USS Winston S. Churchill participates in joint training in the Bab el Mandeb Strait, on Nov. 20, 2020.

Oman, Red Sea and the northern Indian Ocean.

This unit was founded to "deter state-sponsored malign activity and reassure the merchant shipping industry in the Bab al-Mandeb and Strait of Hormuz," the statement said.

Several transport ships were attacked in the region in 2021, including the hijacking of an asphalt tanker in the Gulf of Oman in August.

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Japan PM, US envoy pray in Hiroshima

Associated Press

TOKYO — Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida escorted the U.S. ambassador to his hometown Hiroshima on Saturday to pay respects to atomic bombing victims and warned that the world is again facing threats of nuclear attacks stemming from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"As we face a possibility of Russia's use of nuclear weapons as a realistic concern, I felt strongly (as leader of) the world's only country to have suffered atomic attacks that we should never allow threats or use of nuclear weapons," Kishida told reporters after a tour of the peace park and the museum with Ambassador Rahm Emanuel.

"The tragedy should never be repeated," Kishida said.

Leaders from the Group of Seven countries on Thursday urged Russia not to use biological, chemical or nuclear weapons in its war on Ukraine. That prospect was raised when Russian President Vladimir Putin in February ordered his nation's nuclear forces put on high alert over tensions with the West.

The Aug. 6, 1945, atomic bombing by the United States killed about 140,000 people and nearly destroyed Hiroshima. Three days later, a second U.S. atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki killed 70,000 more, before Japan surrendered six days later.

Suicide study to focus on Alaska, S. Korea bases

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

An independent review ordered last week by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will seek out ideas to stem the increasing number of suicides among soldiers stationed in Alaska and South Korea, as well as some stateside installations.

The review committee is expected to begin work by May with a report due before the end of the year, Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said during a news conference Tuesday.

Committee members will "visit multiple installations here at home and overseas," he said.

The review, as ordered Tuesday in a memo by Austin that laid out its parameters, includes three installations in Alaska: the Army's Fort Wainwright and Eielson Air Force Base in Fairbanks, and

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage.

Camp Humphreys in South Korea, home to thousands of U.S. soldiers, is the sole overseas base that committee members will visit.

Also included in the review are Fort Campbell, Ky.; Camp Lejeune, N.C.; Nellis Air Force Base, Nev.; Naval Air Station North Island, Calif.; and the North Carolina National Guard.

A rising number of suicides has bedeviled the Army in Alaska since 2019, with a dramatic leap in 2021.

Seven soldiers died by suicide in the state in 2020, and last year that number jumped to 11 — a figure that does not include six soldier deaths still under investigation.

The commander of U.S. Army

Alaska told reporters during a conference call last month that he had mandated wellness checks with behavioral health counselors for 100% of soldiers in his command.

Kirby told reporters that 580 service members died by suicide in 2020, a tally that includes reserve and National Guard troops. Full data for 2021 likely will not be available until this fall, but Austin "is not interested in waiting for the '21 data," Kirby said.

"He's seen enough to know that we've got to do something different, that we've got to try to take additional and more creative action here."

Austin was in Fairbanks last summer, where, among other topics, he talked with troops and commanders "about the challenges there with respect to mental

health and suicide," Kirby said.

Austin also had discussions with mental health experts in Alaska, who "walked him through some of the complexities they've seen" in regard to suicide and its prevention, Kirby said.

Austin came away from the talks with a firmer understanding that addressing stigma among troops about seeking help with mental health problems is a key to reducing suicides, he said.

A significant number of suicides by service members involve the use of a firearm, Kirby said.

Austin wants to "work with commanders on storage of the firearms in the home or on base and make sure we've got that well in hand," he said.

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PACIFIC

'Cheap' missiles may help small nations deter China

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

Anti-ship missiles could help smaller nations deter China if it seeks to use Russia's war in Ukraine to create a blueprint for conquering Taiwan or grabbing more territory in the South China Sea, according to security experts.

Any future conflict involving Beijing will likely be waged at sea, said Patricio Abinales, a professor at the University of Hawaii's School of Pacific and Asian Studies.

"There is a lot of chatter about how China could use what is happening to Ukraine to map a strategy of conquering Taiwan and projecting further its power in the South China Sea," he told Stars and Stripes in an email Tuesday.

Outnumbered and outgunned Ukrainian forces are using weapons such as Javelin anti-tank missiles supplied by the United States and its allies to extract a heavy toll on Russian invaders.

"I think things like the use of missiles and weapons that can easily be moved around are being factored in by both [China and its potential adversaries]," Abinales said.

"It may even things up between small countries like the Philippines and Taiwan and big hegemons like China."

Missiles would be particularly useful for the Philippines, which has only a small navy consisting mainly of refurbished Vietnam-War-era coast guard cutters, he said.

"If Philippine marines could now carry Stingers or other similar handy anti-ship missiles, their odds at stalling any Chinese advance become better," he said.



TAYLOR CLEVELAND/Mississippi Army National Guard

A member of the Mississippi Army National Guard prepares to fire a Javelin anti-tank missile last year at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif.

'Cheap' and dispersed

Ukrainian troops' battlefield success, including rumors last week that they sank a Russian amphibious assault ship, is likely having a sobering effect on China, Lyle Goldstein, director of Asia Engagement at Defense Priorities and Visiting Professor at Brown University, told Stars and Stripes by phone Friday.

Nations bordering the South China Sea such as Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia have both shore- and sea-based anti-ship defenses, New Zealand-based security expert Paul Bucha-

nan said in an email Wednesday.

Taiwan, for example, has the U.S.-made Harpoon anti-ship missile system. The Philippines recently signed a contract with India for a shore-based anti-ship cruise missile system worth \$385 million, he said.

Anti-tank Javelins and anti-ship missiles are precision-guided weapons that are relatively inexpensive compared to their targets, said former Navy Capt. Jan van Tol, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments in Washington, D.C.

"Having large numbers of relatively cheap, well-dispersed pre-

cision-guided weapons can be a highly effective deterrent and, if necessary, warfighting asset in both land and sea domains," he said in an email Wednesday.

"This could be further extended to the air domain by having fairly large numbers of cheap short-range air defense weapons ... like Stingers dispersed around a battle area."

Philippines training

U.S. Marines and Philippine troops will practice calling in simulated missile strikes during the annual Balikatan exercise between March 29 and April 8. The

drills will involve 5,100 U.S. and 3,800 Philippines troops on the islands.

Members of the Marines' newly formed 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment will work with the Philippines' coastal defense regiment to call in the strikes from Marine Corps High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS, Marine Lt. Col. Dan Eagan said by phone March 15.

The units have complementary capabilities, said Eagan, the joint force operations officer for the U.S. side of Balikatan.

"They will be using similar sensor systems to provide eyes and ears to the joint force in that littoral terrain," he said.

The troops are limited, however, by the munitions they are equipped with, he said.

"HIMARS isn't the best weapon to shoot at a moving ship," he said.

The new littoral regiment needs long-range capability, such as the Navy-Marine Corps Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System, called NMESSIS, which features a naval strike missile mounted on an unmanned vehicle, assistant commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Eric Smith said in a March 4 USNI News report.

During Balikatan, troops will go through the procedures they'd need to call in a strike from such as system, Eagan said.

"It is not exclusively U.S. forces who can provide firing data for these systems," he said. "Our partners can feed these targets to these more appropriate firing systems."

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Philippine coast guard: China maneuvers threatened ships over last year

By **JIM GOMEZ**
Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Chinese coast guard ships maneuvered dangerously close to Philippine coast guard ships at least four times near a disputed shoal over the past year, in moves that increased the risk of collision and violated international safety regulations, the Philippine government said Sunday.

It was not immediately clear if the Philippines has formally protested the aggressive actions by the Chinese ships, but Manila's coast guard said the incidents would not deter it from deploying patrol vessels at Scarborough Shoal and in other areas within the country's internationally recognized exclusive economic zone.

China seized Scarborough Shoal, a rich fishing area about 120 miles off the northwestern coast of the Philippines and 370 miles southeast of China, after a tense naval standoff in 2012. Chinese coast guards



PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD/AP

A Chinese Coast Guard ship sails near a Philippine Coast Guard vessel during its patrol at Bajo de Masinloc, 124 nautical miles west of Zambales province, northwestern Philippines, on March 2.

ships then surrounded the shoal and restricted Filipino fishermen's access.

The United States has accused China of bullying smaller South China Sea claimants like the Philippines and has deployed Navy ships and aircraft to promote freedom of navigation and overflight in the region. China, which claims the South

China Sea virtually in totality, has warned Washington to stay away and accused it of meddling in what it has said is a purely Asian dispute.

The incidents were reported to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila and an inter-agency body on the South China Sea "to address this issue through rules-based and peaceful approaches," Philippine

coast guard chief Adm. Artemio Abu said in a statement.

Earlier this month, a Chinese coast guard ship maneuvered just 63 feet from a Philippine patrol vessel and restricted its maneuvering space in the vicinity of Scarborough Shoal, the Philippine coast guard said, adding that the Chinese action was "a clear violation" of a 1972 international safety regulation that aims to prevent sea collisions.

In June last year, two Chinese coast guard ships on two successive days moved dangerously close to two Philippine coast guard ships, which were participating in a maritime exercise off Scarborough Shoal. A month before, a Chinese coast guard ship moved close to a Philippine Bureau of Fisheries vessel manned by coast guard personnel also near the shoal, according to the coast guard.

China's seizure of Scarborough Shoal prompted the Philippines to bring the disputes to international

arbitration. In 2016, a U.N.-backed tribunal invalidated most of China's claims and said it had violated the rights of Filipinos to fish at the shoal.

China dismissed the ruling as a sham and continues to defy it, but allowed Filipino fishermen to return to the shoal under Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, who nurtured closer ties with Beijing after taking office in 2016. Despite cozier relations, however, sporadic territorial spats have persisted.

Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei also lay claims to the busy waterway through which an estimated \$5 trillion in global trade passes each year.

"We are fully aware of dangerous situations at sea, but these will not stop our deployment of assets and personnel" to serve Filipino fishermen, Abu said. "As long as they feel safe seeing us during their fishing operations, we know that we are doing our job well."

EUROPE

Zelenskyy blasts West over aid delay

BY YURAS KARMANAU
Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused the West of cowardice as his country fights to stave off Russia's invading troops, making an exasperated plea for fighter jets and tanks to sustain a defense as the war ground into a battle of attrition.

Speaking after U.S. President Joe Biden said in a lacerating speech that Russian President Vladimir Putin could not stay in power — words the White House immediately sought to downplay — Zelenskyy lashed out Sunday at the West's "ping-pong about who and how should hand over jets" and other weapons while Russian missile attacks kill and trap civilians.

"I've talked to the defenders of Mariupol today. I'm in constant contact with them. Their determination, heroism and firmness are astonishing," Zelenskyy said in a video address, referring to the besieged southern city that has suffered some of the war's greatest deprivations and horrors. "If only those who have been thinking for 31 days on how to hand over dozens of jets and tanks had 1% of their courage."

Ukraine's ambassador to the United States, Oksana Markarova,

said on NBC's "Meet the Press" that her country had heard Biden "loud and clear."

"Now, it's all up to all of us to stop Putin while it's still local in Ukraine, because this war is not only about Ukraine," she said, but "an attack on democracy."

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, now in its 32nd day, has stalled in many areas. Its aim to quickly encircle the capital, Kyiv, and force its surrender has faltered against staunch Ukrainian resistance — bolstered by weapons from the U.S. and other Western allies.

Britain's Defense Ministry said Russia's troops are trying to encircle Ukrainian forces directly facing the two separatist-held areas in the country's east. That would cut the bulk of Ukraine's military off from the rest of the country.

Moscow has claimed its focus is on wresting from Ukraine the entire eastern Donbas region, which has been partially controlled by Russia-backed separatists since 2014. A high-ranking Russian military official said Friday that troops were being redirected to the east from other parts of the country.

The leader of one separatist-controlled area of Donbas said Sunday that he wants to hold a vote on joining Russia, words that may indicate a shift in Russia's po-



VADIM GHIRDA/AP

A Ukrainian serviceman stands in a heavily damaged building in Stoyanka, Ukraine, on Sunday.

sition. Leonid Pasechnik, the head of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic, said it plans to hold a referendum on becoming part of Russia "in the nearest time."

Russia has supported the separatist rebels in Luhansk and neighboring Donetsk since an insurgency erupted there shortly after Moscow annexed the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine in 2014. In talks with Ukraine, Moscow has demanded Kyiv acknowledge the independence of Donetsk and Luhansk.

Kyrylo Budanov, the head of Ukrainian military intelligence, accused Russia of seeking to split Ukraine in two, like North and South Korea.

"The occupiers will try to pull

the occupied territories into a single quasi-state structure and pit it against independent Ukraine," Budanov said in a statement released by the Defense Ministry. He predicted that guerrilla warfare by Ukrainians would derail such plans.

Ukraine has said that to defeat Russia, the West must provide fighter jets and not just missiles and other military equipment. A proposal to transfer Polish planes to Ukraine via the U.S. was scrapped amid NATO concerns about being drawn into direct fighting.

In his pointed remarks, Zelenskyy accused Western governments of being "afraid to prevent this tragedy. Afraid to simply make a decision."

"So who is in charge of the Euro-Atlantic community? Is it still Moscow, thanks to its scare tactics?" he asked. "Our partners must step up their aid to Ukraine."

His plea was echoed Sunday by a priest in the western city of Lviv, which was struck by rockets a day earlier. The aerial assault illustrated that Moscow, despite assertions that it intends to shift the war eastward, is willing to strike anywhere in Ukraine.

"When diplomacy doesn't work, we need military support," said the Rev. Yuri Vaskiv, who reported fewer parishioners in the pews of his Greek Catholic church, likely because of fear.

Referring to Putin, he said: "This evil is from him, and we must stop it."

Biden lashes at Putin, calls for Western resolve for freedom

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — President Joe Biden delivered a forceful and highly personal condemnation of Russia's Vladimir Putin on Saturday, summoning a call for liberal democracy and a durable resolve among Western nations in the face of a brutal autocrat.

As he capped a four-day trip to Europe, a blend of emotive scenes with refugees and standing among other world leaders in grand settings, Biden said of Putin: "For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power."

It was a dramatic escalation in rhetoric — Biden had earlier called Putin a "butcher" — that the White House found itself quickly walking back. Before Biden could even board Air Force One to begin the flight back to



EVAN VUCCI/AP

President Joe Biden condemned Russian President Vladimir Putin in a speech Saturday at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, Poland.

Washington, aides were clarifying that he wasn't calling for an immediate change in government in Moscow.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov quickly denounced Biden, saying "it's not up to the president of the U.S. and not up to

the Americans to decide who will remain in power in Russia."

While Biden's blunt language grabbed headlines, in other pieces of his roughly 30-minute speech before Warsaw's iconic Royal Castle he urged Western allies to brace for what will be a turbulent road ahead in a "new battle for freedom."

He also pointedly warned Putin against invading even "an inch" of territory of a NATO nation.

The address was a heavy bookend to a European visit in which Biden met with NATO and other Western leaders, visited the front lines of the growing refugee crisis and even held a young Ukrainian girl in his arms as he sought to spotlight some of the vast tentacles of the conflict that will likely define his presidency.

"We must remain unified today

and tomorrow and the day after, and for the years and decades to come. It will not be easy," Biden said as Russia continued to pound several Ukrainian cities. "There will be costs, but the price we have to pay, because the darkness that drives autocracy is ultimately no match for the flame of liberty that lights the souls of free people everywhere."

Biden also made the case that multilateral institutions like NATO are more important than ever if the West and its allies are going to successfully push back against autocrats like Putin.

During his campaign for president, Biden talked often about the battle for primacy between democracies and autocracies. In those moments, his words seemed like an abstraction. Now, they have an urgent resonance.

EUROPE

Russian troops using unsecured phones, radios

By ALEX HORTON
AND SHANE HARRIS
The Washington Post

Russian troops in Ukraine have relied, with surprising frequency, on unsecured communication devices such as smartphones and push-to-talk radios, leaving units vulnerable to targeting, and further underscoring the command-and-control deficiencies that have come to define Moscow's monthlong invasion, observers say.

"We're seeing them use a lot more unclassified communications because their classified communications capability, ... for one reason or another, is not as strong as it should be," a senior U.S. defense official, speaking on the condition of anonymity under terms set by the Pentagon, told reporters in a recent news briefing.

The Russian military possesses modern equipment capable of secure transmission, but troops on the battlefield have reached for simpler-to-use but less-secure lines because of uneven discipline across the ranks, an apparent lack of planning for conducting a sustained fight over long dis-

tances, and Russian attacks on Ukraine's communication infrastructure that it, too, has relied on, experts say.

A European intelligence official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss NATO's battlefield assessments, said that since the invasion began in late-February, there have been multiple instances of Russian commanders confiscating their subordinates' personal phones for fear they would unwittingly give away a unit's location.

Similarly, Ukrainian civilians have reported having their phones stolen by Russian troops who use them to speak with one another and with family back home, this official said.

Those calls, the official noted, have revealed troops' frustrations and declining morale as Ukraine's military has stymied Russia's advance around key cities, killing thousands of Russians in the process.

The Pentagon on Friday said that its latest intelligence showed Russian forces had lost full control of Kherson, a port city along the Black Sea, as Ukraine expands

its offensive operations in key part of the country and Russia appears to have shifted its emphasis to the separatist Donbas region in the east. Ukrainian forces also have pushed back Russian advances outside the northern city of Chernihiv with other offensives underway in the western suburbs of Kyiv, the capital, the senior U.S. defense official said.

There is evidence that the United States and other NATO countries have provided Ukrainian forces with electronic warfare equipment capable of interrupting Russian transmissions and allowing them to target Russian command posts, said Kostas Tigkos, a Russian military expert at the defense analysis firm Janes Group. By destroying Russia's communication nodes, the Ukrainians could pressure their adversaries to use less-secure equipment, he said, increasing the likelihood their conversations will be intercepted or their positions triangulated.

While the Russian military has overhauled its military technology in the last two decades, with some emphasis on mod-

ernizing its communication hardware, Tigkos said equipment is only part of the equation. "It's one thing," he said, "to develop a good radio that works well. It's another thing to deploy that radio, build a network, and conduct a complex military operation with thousands of moving parts, and have them work together like a symphony."

Russian commanders also have exhibited difficulty orchestrating communications over such a vast, dynamic battlefield, analysts say. Their forces are stretched across Ukraine, the largest country in Europe outside Russia, posing challenges for military planners who must coordinate mobile transmission sites and ensure radios are operating on frequencies that must be consistently changed.

There is anecdotal evidence that Russia's unsecured communications have led to battlefield losses. One Russian general was purportedly killed in an airstrike after his cellphone was detected by the Ukrainians, the New York Times reported earlier this month.

Odesa residents rush to defend city

Associated Press

ODESA, Ukraine — The Black Sea port of Odesa is mining its beaches and rushing to defend its cultural heritage from a feared Mariupol-style fate in the face of growing alarm that the strategic city might be next as Russia attempts to strip Ukraine of its coastline.

The multi-cultural jewel, dear to Ukrainian hearts and even Russian ones, would be a hugely strategic win for Russia. It is the country's largest port, crucial to grain and other exports, and headquarters for the Ukrainian navy.

Bombardment from the sea last weekend further raised worries that the city is in Russia's sights.

Residents say Russian President Vladimir Putin would be insane to take Odesa with the brutal approach that has left other Ukrainian cities in ruins.

Once a gilded powerhouse of the Russian empire, Odesa includes one of the finest opera houses in Europe and the famed Potemkin Steps between the city and the sea, featured in Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein's 1925 silent film masterpiece "Battleship Potemkin."

But after a month of grueling war, people say they can't predict anything anymore.

"The only thing we're really afraid of is that the other side has no principles whatsoever," said Valerii Novak, a local businessman. He never considered himself a Ukrainian patriot, but when Russia invaded, something "just clicked" in him. He has refused to

leave Odesa and joined thousands of people in basic training in how to use a gun.

Now he and other Odesa residents watch Russian warships move closer, in provocation. Western officials call the Russian ships a mix of surface combatants and the kinds used to put naval infantry ashore.

The seizure of Odesa and the strip of land farther west also would allow Moscow to build a land corridor to the separatist Trans-Dniester region of neighboring Moldova that hosts a Russian military base.

A senior U.S. defense official said this past week the U.S. didn't see indications that ships in the Black Sea were firing on Odesa as they had last weekend. He spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive subject.

"It's difficult to know what this indicates," Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said of last weekend's bombardment. "Is it the prelude to an assault on Odesa? Is it a diversionary tactic to sort of hold and fix Ukrainian troops in the south so that they can't come to the relief of their comrades in Mariupol or in Kyiv?"

The uncertainty adds to the anxiety in Odesa, where the initial panic has been followed by a wary calm.

Some residents are pitching in to strengthen the city's defenses. On an unmined beach, sea captain Sivak Vitaliy joined others in packing sandbags for barricades.

"We will win," he said, no matter how ghastly Russia's invasion



PETROS GIANNAKOURIS/AP

Anti-tank barricades are placed on a street Thursday as preparation for a possible Russian offensive, in Odesa, Ukraine. The Black Sea port is mining its beaches and rushing to defend itself from a Mariupol-style fate. Some Western officials believe the city could be next.

has become in cities like Mariupol or Kharkiv.

Ukrainian authorities assert that Russia appears to lack forces to quickly press an offensive on Odesa as its marine units are busy to the east with the siege of Mariupol, where they have suffered heavy losses.

Closer to Odesa, on the Black Sea coast, the Russian troops have taken Kherson and tried to bypass Mykolaiv, an important port halfway between Odesa and Russia-annexed Crimea, but fierce Ukrainian resistance has thwarted those attempts.

"Is our city the next one or not?" asked Hanna Shelest, an Odesa-based security analyst.

She said Russia needs Odesa to surrender, not to fight, to avoid the "blow to sentiment" that any destruction of the city's cultural heritage would give to nostalgic Russians. Odesa was one of the largest and most cosmopolitan cities in the Russian empire, with a significant Jewish population as well as Greek, Italian and others drawn by the vibrant port.

Now the city's Italian baroque opera house, rebuilt in the 1880s, is one of the most heavily defended buildings in Ukraine. Major monuments elsewhere in Odesa are covered in sandbags. The contents of the fine arts museum, including Orthodox religious icons, have been moved into under-

ground storage. Checkpoints are heavy throughout the historic city center.

Russian forces' plans to take Odesa have been ruined by the Ukrainian resistance in Mykolaiv, a crucial land supply route, Shelest said. Without holding Mykolaiv, a Russian landing operation in Odesa from the sea would be suicidal.

"If the situation continues like this, there's a chance for a big attack only if Putin becomes completely crazy," she said. "From all considerations, he should not do it."

Nevertheless, Shelest, like other Odesa residents, has gathered her documents in case she has to flee.

EUROPE

Russian generals killed at 'unusual' rate

The Washington Post

The war in Ukraine is proving extraordinarily lethal for Russian generals, the gray men bedecked in service medals, who are being aggressively targeted by Ukrainian forces and killed at a rate not seen since World War II.

Ukrainian officials say their forces have killed seven generals on the battlefield, felled by snipers, close combat and bombings.

If true, the deaths of so many generals, alongside more senior Russian army and naval commanders — in just four weeks of combat — exceeds the attrition rate seen in the worst months of fighting in the bloody nine-year war fought by Russia in Chechnya, as well as Russian and Soviet-era campaigns in Afghanistan, Georgia and Syria.

"It is highly unusual," said a senior Western official, briefing reporters on the topic, who confirmed the names, ranks and "killed in action" status of the seven.

In all, at least 15 senior Russian commanders have been killed in the field, said Markiyanyan Lubkivsky, a spokesperson for the Ukraine Ministry of Defense.

NATO officials estimated earlier this week that as many as 15,000 Russian troops have been killed in four weeks of war, a very high number. Russia has offered a far lower figure, reporting Friday



SALWAN GEORGES/The Washington Post

A Ukrainian sergeant walks through trenches on the front lines between Mykolaiv and Kherson in Ukraine on Tuesday.

that only 1,351 of its fighters had died.

The Russian government has not confirmed the deaths of its generals.

If the numbers of senior commanders killed proves accurate, the Russian generals have been either extremely unlucky or successfully targeted — or both.

Shooting generals is a legiti-

mate tactic of war — and it has been openly embraced by Ukrainian officials, who say their forces have been focused on slowing Russian advances by concentrating fire on Russian command-and-control units near the front lines.

Jeffrey Edmonds, former director for Russia on the National Security Council and now a senior

analyst at the CNA think tank in Washington, said Ukrainian forces appear to be targeting "anyone with gray hair standing near a bunch of antennas," a signal they may be senior officers.

Some experts suggest the Russian military has struggled to keep its communications secure and that Ukraine intelligence units have found their targets through

Russian carelessness, with Russian forces reduced to using unencrypted devices.

Pentagon and other Western officials say that Russian generals generally serve closer to the front lines than their NATO counterparts. By design, the Russian army is top heavy with senior officers, which makes them numerous, though not expendable.

Military analysts and Western intelligence officials say the Russian generals in Ukraine may be more exposed and serving closer to the front because their side is struggling — and that senior officers are deployed closer to the action to cut through the chaos.

Ukrainian officials and Western officials have named seven Russian generals killed in action: Magomed Tushayev, Andrei Sukhovetsky, Vitaly Gerasimov, Andrey Kolesnikov, Oleg Mityaev, Yakov Rezanstev and Andrei Mordvichev.

Russian officials and Russian media have confirmed the death of only one general.

Sukhovetsky, a deputy commander of Russia's 41st army, was killed by a sniper at the beginning of the war, Ukrainian officials said. At his burial in Novorossiysk, a port city on the Black Sea, a deputy mayor said Sukhovetsky "died heroically during a combat mission during a special operation in Ukraine."

Shifting: US touts its efforts to bolster Ukraine forces

FROM PAGE 1

the surprising effectiveness of U.S.-backed Ukrainian forces, Russia's heavy battlefield losses and the cautionary lessons they believe China is taking from the war.

"Let me put it this way," said one senior Pentagon official of America's standing in the world. "Who would you switch places with? Seriously, who would you switch places with?"

It's a stunning shift in tone for a department that in August ended a 20-year war in Afghanistan with a chaotic withdrawal as an ascendant Taliban returned to power. Even though the U.S. military has not played the primary role in the American response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, senior Pentagon officials are quick to tout the still-unfolding war as proof of America's economic, diplomatic and military strength.

The senior Pentagon official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal strategy, said that the last few weeks have shown that the United States can marshal its "primacy in the global financial system" and its network of allies "in ways that can absolutely pummel aggressors."

The success of U.S. and NATO-trained Ukrainian forces has also bolstered the Pentagon's confidence following the embarrassing collapse of U.S.-trained militaries in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last decade. The Ukrainian military's will to

fight and ability to inflict heavy losses on larger and more technologically advanced Russian force has taken many at the Pentagon by surprise.

"I think Ukraine has been able to tie the Russians in knots in large part because of what we've been able to do to help them since 2014," the senior defense official said, adding that the failures of Afghan forces "might" have caused U.S. officials to underestimate Ukrainian troops.

Such optimism isn't universally shared. Critics note that the Russian invasion is only one month old and that the Russians already are using their overwhelming firepower advantage to level Ukrainian cities in an attempt to secure a brutal and bloody victory. Even a partial triumph would allow Russian President Vladimir Putin to say that he had stood up to the world and the flood of arms from the West.

The United States also has relied heavily on European allies, who have often taken the lead in leveling crippling sanctions on the Russian economy at considerable costs to themselves. It's not yet clear whether the current unity will fracture if the war drags on for months.

"We need to demonstrate our [collective] power every day, and we can only demonstrate it if we keep everybody together," said Ivo Daalder, president of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and a former U.S. ambassador to NATO. "This is not some-

thing the U.S. has traditionally done well."

Some Republicans have charged that Putin's perception of the United States and its allies as militarily weak or unwilling to fight gave him the confidence to invade Ukraine. Rep. Michael McCaul of Texas, the top Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, this month compared Biden to Neville Chamberlain, the former British prime minister who sought to appease Hitler before World War II.

"Weakness invites aggression. It's a historic axiom. And it's true," McCaul said in a news conference on Capitol Hill.

Pentagon officials contend that there was little they could do to deter Putin, who expected a quick and easy victory in Ukraine, and argue that their broader strategy of "integrated deterrence" — which leverages economic, diplomatic and military power to dissuade potential aggressors — has so far worked to stop Putin from expanding the war into NATO territory. The Biden administration has made integrated deterrence the cornerstone of its soon-to-be-released National Defense Strategy, which was delayed as the threat of an invasion grew.

"I don't think there's any doubt that the model of integrated deterrence comes out smelling pretty good from this," the senior defense official said.

Others pointed to Putin's Ukraine invasion as proof of the concept's failure. Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Wis., said in an inter-



EFREM LUKATSKY/AP

A Ukrainian soldier holds a machine gun, as the Ukrainian flag waves on the front line position near Kharkiv, Ukraine, on Saturday.

view that he "completely and strongly" disagrees with anyone who cites Ukraine as an example of the success of integrated deterrence. "I cannot fathom how they can make that argument with a straight face," he said. "Their whole deterrence strategy rested on the idea that the threat of limited sanctions could deter Putin."

Gallagher added that the Ukraine conflict "could still escalate in ways that we don't foresee right now."

VIRUS OUTBREAK



RICH PEDRONCELLI/AP

A second-grade student is given an at-home COVID-19 test at H.W. Harkness Elementary School in Sacramento, Calif., on Feb. 11.

Calif. schools prepare to spot post-break COVID-19 cases

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — California's 7 million students and school employees are getting free at-home COVID-19 tests to help prevent outbreaks at their school when they return from spring break.

The state has shipped or delivered more than 14.3 million antigen tests, enough for two tests per person, to counties and school districts as part of a massive push to limit infections and avoid classroom closures after the break, Gov. Gavin Newsom's office announced Saturday.

The strategy is part of the state's "endemic" approach to the coronavirus, emphasizing prevention and

quick reaction to outbreaks over mandated masking and business shutdowns.

"California is focused on keeping schools open and students safe, and we're not letting our guard down," Newsom said in a statement. "We know that COVID-19 is still present in our communities, but the SMARTER Plan is how we keep people safe and continue moving the state forward," he said, referring to the state's acronym for a strategy that calls for shots, masks, awareness, readiness and testing.

The World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic on March 11, 2020, and has not said the coronavirus has reached the endemic stage, where

the virus still exists in a community but becomes manageable as immunity builds.

California's plan focuses on stockpiling masks and establishing the infrastructure to provide vaccinations and tests in the event of an outbreak.

California ended the mask mandate in schools on March 12, almost exactly two years after the state first shut down schools in many districts to prevent COVID-19 spread.

The new guidance made face coverings strongly recommended rather than a requirement at schools, regardless of vaccination status. Local jurisdictions are free to impose their own requirements.

Experts fear how US will see next big surge coming

By MIKE STOBBE
Associated Press

NEW YORK — As coronavirus infections rise in some parts of the world, experts are watching for a potential new COVID-19 surge in the United States — and wondering how long it will take to detect.

Despite disease monitoring improvements over the last two years, they have said, some recent developments don't bode well:

- As more people take rapid COVID-19 tests at home, fewer people are getting the gold-standard tests that the government relies on for case counts.

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will soon use fewer labs to look for new variants.

- Health officials are increasingly focusing on hospital admissions, which rise only after a surge has arrived.

- A wastewater surveillance program remains a patchwork that cannot yet be counted on for the data needed to understand coming surges.

- White House officials have said the government is running out of funds for vaccines, treatments and testing.

"We're not in a great situation," said Jennifer Nuzzo, a Brown University pandemic researcher.

Scientists have acknowledged that the wide availability of vaccines and treatments puts the nation in a better place than when the pandemic began, and that monitoring has come a long way.

For example, scientists have tout-

ed a 6-month-old program that tests international travelers flying into four U.S. airports. Genetic testing of a sample on Dec. 14 turned up a coronavirus variant — the descendant of omicron known as BA.2 — seven days earlier than any other reported detection in the U.S.

More good news: U.S. cases, hospitalizations and deaths have been falling for weeks.

But it's different elsewhere. The World Health Organization recently reported that the number of new coronavirus cases increased two weeks in a row globally, likely because COVID-19 prevention measures have been halted in numerous countries and because BA.2 spreads more easily.

Some public health experts aren't certain what that means for the U.S.

BA.2 accounts for a growing share of U.S. cases, the CDC said — more than one-third nationally and more than half in the Northeast. Small increases in overall case rates have been noted in New York, and in hospital admissions in New England.

Some of the northern U.S. states with the highest rates of BA.2, however, have some of the lowest case rates, noted Katriona Shea of Penn State University.

Dr. James Musser, an infectious disease specialist at Houston Methodist, called the national case data on BA.2 "murky." He added: "What we really need is as much real-time data as possible ... to inform decisions."

FDA to approve additional booster shot for US adults age 50 and older

Bloomberg News

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is poised to clear a fourth dose of the mRNA coronavirus vaccine for adults age 50 and older, looking to shore up protections for more vulnerable groups, a person familiar with the matter said.

The authorization could come as early as next week and, for most Americans, it would mean a second booster shot of either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines. Currently, only immunocompromised people are eligible in the United States for the additional dose.

Unlike with previous authorizations, the FDA is expected to stop short of a full recommendation, meaning the option would be open

for people who want the shot. The development was reported earlier by The New York Times.

The move comes as the Biden administration is warning of waning supplies in its fight against the virus and is calling on Congress to authorize new funding. The U.S. does not have enough vaccines to give everyone a fourth dose of mRNA vaccine, officials have said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would have to make a final ruling on any recommendation by the FDA.

Vaccinations in the U.S. are at their lowest point since the start of the immunization drive in December 2020, according to the Bloomberg Vaccine Tracker.

At least 559 million doses have

been administered in the U.S. since rollout began. Over 80% of people in the U.S. who are eligible have received at least one dose of vaccine, with almost 70% of those eligible are defined by the CDC as fully vaccinated. Trials are still underway for children under 5, who are not currently eligible for vaccination.

A recent report by the CDC found that protection against COVID-19 waned slightly in the months following a third dose of the vaccine. The booster shot resulted in a 91% decrease in hospitalizations for people who received the booster two months prior to getting sick, and 78% for those who received the booster four or five months prior to contracting the virus.



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

A sign advertising COVID-19 booster shots stands at the entrance to a Hy-Vee grocery store in Sioux Falls, S.D., on Oct. 7.

NATION

Black women feel sting of 'traumatizing' hearings

Associated Press

NEW YORK — “Senator,” she said, letting out an audible sigh.

In that singular moment, Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson spoke for countless Black women who have had to gather all the patience, strength and grace within to answer insinuating questions about their credentials, qualifications and character.

It was Day One of questioning at the Senate Judiciary Committee as the Harvard-educated Jackson, the first Black woman to be nominated for the nation's highest court, was making history.

The federal judge had to endure hours of public scrutiny from skeptics, namely the Republican senators who are erecting a wall of opposition to her landmark nomination, the first in the court's 233-year history, and may vote en bloc against her confirmation.

“It was really traumatizing to watch,” said Melanie L. Campbell, president and CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation and convener of the Black Women's Roundtable.

From questioning of Jackson's view of books on critical race theory that drew her exasperated sigh — “They don't come up in my work as a judge,” she said — to the loaded suggestion that the sentences she imposed on child pornography defendants were too lenient, the questions from the Republicans tapped into long-standing American grievances over race, class and public safety.

The insinuations that Jackson, a distinguished jurist and mother of two, is a secret radical liberal or poses a danger to the safety of children felt to some supporters as yet another example of highly qualified Black women having to endure indignities and distortions of their credentials, even as they shatter racial barriers in American society.

Campbell told The Associated Press that “the othering of her, in a sense, like she's against our children,” seemed like a tired political tactic.

“My spirit feels it was to bring this Black woman down because she's about to break the glass ceiling that, once broken, opens the door to more.”



ALEX BRANDON/AP

Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson answers a question by Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, as she testifies during her Senate Judiciary Committee confirmation hearing in Washington on Tuesday.

Ginni Thomas texts reveal fears, motive to overturn 2020 election

By DAN BALZ

The Washington Post

“Release the Kraken and save us from the left taking America down.”

What more does anyone need to know about the many text messages sent by Virginia “Ginni”

Thomas to then-White

House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows in the weeks after the 2020 election? A dozen words sum up everything.

That the spouse of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas was imploring the president's highest-ranking adviser to do all he could to overturn the 2020 election may seem beyond extraordinary. It

is, but it is more than that.

The messages once again show how former President Donald Trump's conspiracies, lies and obsessions infected the Republican Party (and in many quarters still do), from its rank-and-file base to some of its most establishment figures. The more that is known about the events between Election Day 2000 and the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, the clearer it is just how extensive the efforts to overturn the election were and how high up they went.

The Ginni Thomas text messages, first revealed by The Washington Post and CBS News, are among the many documents that Meadows turned over to the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 riot be-

fore he stopped cooperating with the committee. They show the fervor with which believers in Trump could embrace the wildest of conspiracy theories, as well as their apocalyptic vision of what they believed the inauguration of President Joe Biden could mean for the country.

The text messages have put Justice Thomas in an uncomfortable ethical position. Once again, partisan politics has splashed onto the high court. He was the lone dissenter in the court's ruling that Trump had to turn over documents to the House committee. His reasons for the dissent were never publicly explained. He is now under much greater pressure to recuse himself from any future decisions related to

these matters, and some Democrats are calling on him to resign.

The shock value of the Thomas-Meadows texts almost goes without saying. The underlying implications are more troublesome. Ginni Thomas was not someone in a Proud Boys cell or living on the fringes of the Republican Party. She has straddled hard-right activism and establishment politics for decades, operating for years in the most rarefied circles within the conservative movement.

If not true conservative royalty, the Thomases come awfully close to it. Justice Thomas' long record as one of the most conservative members of the Supreme Court is indisputable. His wife has collected accolades of her own as an activist on

the far right. They have said many times that their professional lives are kept separate, though their causes are certainly shared.

Now it's known just how much Ginni Thomas pushed senior officials in the government to embrace allegations that were unproven at the time and ultimately disproved, claims that embodied some of the most outlandish of the ideas that were circulating then.

It might be easy for senior Republican officials to dismiss Thomas' texts as the work of someone who represents only the most far-right fringe of the party. But that's an escape from the continuing influence and downright domination of Trump's leadership of the Republican Party.

Fortenberry, convicted in campaign donation case, resigns from House

By GRANT SCHULTE

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Republican U.S. Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, of Nebraska, on Saturday resigned from office after a California jury convicted him of lying to federal authorities about an illegal campaign donation from a foreign national.

In a letter to the House, Fortenberry said he was resigning from Congress, effective March 31.

“It has been my honor to serve with you in the United States House of Representatives,” he said in the letter. “Due to the dif-

ficulties of my current circumstances, I can no longer effectively serve.”

Fortenberry's announcement followed concerted pressure from political leaders in Nebraska and Washington for him to step down. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy on Friday urged Fortenberry to resign.

Nebraska Republican Gov. Pete Ricketts said Fortenberry should “do the right thing for his constituents” and leave the office he has held since 2005.

Fortenberry was indicted in

October after authorities said he lied to FBI agents in two separate interviews about his knowledge of an illegal \$30,000 contribution from his campaign from a foreign billionaire. Fortenberry was interviewed at his home in Lincoln, and then again with his lawyers present in Washington, D.C.

At trial, prosecutors presented recorded phone conversations in which Fortenberry was repeatedly warned that the contributions came from Gilbert Chagoury, a Nigerian billionaire of Lebanese descent. The donations were funneled through three

strawmen at a 2016 fundraiser in Los Angeles.

Fortenberry's withdrawal from the primary leaves state Sen. Mike Flood as the likely GOP nominee. The former speaker of the Nebraska Legislature, who has won endorsements from Ricketts and former Gov. Dave Heineman, has a strong advantage in the Republican-leaning 1st Congressional District. State Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks, a Democrat from Lincoln, is also running for the seat.

In a statement from his campaign, Flood thanked Fortenber-

ry for “his many years of honorable service” and wished him and his family the best.

“Working together, we will keep this seat in Republican hands,” Flood said, promising to “continue the fight for our families, our economy and our conservative values in Congress.”

Under Nebraska state law, the governor has to schedule a special election within 90 days once a congressional seat becomes vacant. Each political party gets to pick a nominee who will run to serve the remainder of the congressional member's term.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Fentanyl hidden in speaker delivered to home

RI PROVIDENCE — Authorities have arrested a Providence woman they said retrieved a package from her porch containing what she thought was more than 4.5 pounds of fentanyl hidden inside a speaker, federal prosecutors said.

Rosangeles Bueno, 40, faces several drug charges and is being held pending a hearing in U.S. District Court in Providence, according to the U.S. attorney's office in Providence.

The package that originated in California was deemed to be suspicious, authorities said. It was opened and found to contain a brick-like object inside a speaker.

The fentanyl was removed and replaced by another substance then delivered to Bueno's home. She was spotted by surveillance exiting the residence, checking the surrounding area, and retrieving the package, authorities said.

Casino to pay \$8M for serving chemicals

NV LAS VEGAS — A jury in Las Vegas has awarded \$8 million to a middle school special education teacher who sued after being permanently injured when he was served cleaning solvents instead of tap beer at a casino bar.

Lon Enwright, 38, used to also work as a wine steward at Las Vegas Strip restaurants but lost his sense of taste due to the December 2018 injury at a Barley's Casino & Brewing Co. in Henderson, his attorney, Andre Lagomarsino, said.

Enwright's negligence lawsuit said he was sickened and experienced convulsions after he asked for a sample of Honey Blonde ale on tap and was served caustic chemicals commonly used to clean beer taps and lines.

His lawyers said bar employees knew the beer lines were out of service for cleaning.

Drugs left at site leads to smuggling ring at jail

MS BILOXI — A drug smuggling ring that included inmates at a county jail in Mississippi has been busted, authorities said.

Ronnie Earhart, 41, of Bayside Park, Miss., and Hancock County jail inmate Mindi Saucier were arrested on charges of conspiracy and possession with intent to distribute illegal drugs, Sheriff Ricky Adam said in a news release, The Sun Herald reported. Another inmate, Valerie Black, also faces a conspiracy charge, he said.

Earlier this month, narcotics agents received information indicating that inmates were getting drugs while in the general public on work details, then distributing them throughout the jail. Agents staked out a work detail in Bay St.



RANDY HOEFT, THE YUMA (ARIZ.) SUN/AP

Spring cleaning

Workers with Brown's Amusements wash the "Carousel" on the carnival midway of the Yuma County Fair, on Friday morning, in Yuma, Ariz.

Louis and saw Earhart drive into the parking lot and drop off a package near a trash bin before leaving. Saucier, an inmate on the work detail, retrieved the package and was confronted by agents.

Authorities investigate woman with Nazi armband

CA LAGUNA WOODS — A woman wearing a Nazi armband in public threatened an elderly Jewish man who confronted her, according to police in Southern California who are seeking to have the woman charged with a hate crime.

Orange County Sheriff's Department spokesperson Jaimee Blashaw said deputies investigated the incident in Laguna Woods in which a man in his 80s said he confronted the woman wearing a red armband with a swastika.

Blashaw said the woman made antisemitic comments and threatened the man. She said two witnesses intervened and one took the armband from the woman.

Blashaw declined to name the woman involved as she has not been arrested yet.

Crews find man dead under 10 feet of corn

IA WILLIAMSBURG — Rescue crews called to a grain bin in eastern Iowa found a man dead, buried under 10 feet of corn, authorities said.

THE CENSUS

\$3M The approximate minimum worth of merchandise stolen from a Beverly Hills jewelry store. Passersby recorded video of the assault on the store, the latest in a long string of brazen smash-and-grab thefts and robberies of people wearing expensive watches or jewelry in the Los Angeles area. The robbers, wearing hoodies and masks, used sledgehammers to break the window of Luxury Jewels of Beverly Hills. Company President Peter Sedghi estimated he lost \$3 million to \$5 million worth of merchandise.

Emergency responders were called to the grain bin near Williamsburg, the Iowa County Sheriff's Office said in a news release.

Arriving crews worked for an hour before finding the man buried. He was declared dead at the scene. Officials did not immediately release the man's name.

Town seeks foreclosure on unpermitted gun range

VT PAWLET — The Vermont town of Pawlet is moving to foreclose on a property with an unpermitted firing range whose owner has not paid a fine of more than \$52,000 that is accruing interest daily.

In a filing in Vermont Superior Court in Rutland, the town asked for the judgment against Daniel Banyai, the owner of Slate Ridge Vermont, after the Vermont Supreme Court ruled that the fine imposed by a lower court last year was correct.

In a separate filing last month, the town renewed its request that the state Environmental Court hold Banyai in contempt for failing to abide by the March 2021

judgment that imposed the original fine of \$46,600 that is subject to 12% interest.

The town also requested that Banyai "be jailed if he fails to demonstrate compliance with the Court's injunction within 30 days, and that such imprisonment continue until Defendant demonstrates compliance," the motion said.

Man charged after his dogs mauled a woman

SC ABBEVILLE — A South Carolina dog owner has been charged in connection with a severe attack that led the victim to have her arms amputated.

The man was arrested, according to the Abbeville County Sheriff's Office. He was charged with three counts of owning a dangerous animal that attacked and injured a human, a rabies control violation and a count of dangerous animals not permitted beyond premises unless restrained.

Kyleen Waltman, 38, was attacked while walking to her home in Honea Path, her sister,

Shenna Green, told news outlets.

Waltman lost both arms and her colon and may have to have her esophagus removed, her family wrote in an online post requesting prayers and donations. She was in critical but stable condition.

The sheriff's office said Abbeville Animal Control immediately took possession of the dogs — two pit bulls and a mixed breed — on the day of the attack.

Hearst Castle to reopen after pandemic, damage

CA SAN SIMEON — California's famous Hearst Castle will reopen to the public in May after a two-year closure due to the pandemic and severe rain-storm damage that prompted a \$13.7 million renovation.

The steep, curvy access road to the palatial home that media mogul William Randolph Hearst built on ranch land overlooking the Pacific was damaged by atmospheric rivers — storms fueled by long and wide plumes of moisture pulled in from the Pacific — in 2021.

The San Luis Obispo County castle designed by architect Julia Morgan includes a 115-room main house, as well as guesthouses, pools and cultivated gardens, according to the California State Parks. Construction dates back to 1919.

NATION

19K forced to evacuate from Colo. wildfire

Associated Press

BOULDER, Colo. — Authorities issued an evacuation order for 19,400 people Saturday near a fast-moving Colorado wildfire in rolling hills south of the college town of Boulder, not far from the site of a destructive 2021 blaze that leveled more than 1,000 homes.

The wildfire was fueled by wind earlier in the day and had grown to 122 acres with no containment, Boulder Fire-Rescue spokesperson Marya Washburn said. The Boulder Office of Emergency Management said an overnight shelter was opened after evacuation orders covered 8,000 homes and 7,000 structures. No structures had been damaged.

Winds and temperatures have died down, Washburn said. Offi-

cialists expect to be dealing with the fire for several days due to heavy fuels, said Boulder Fire-Rescue Wildland Division Chief Brian Oliver.

The fire is in an area where a blaze destroyed 1,000 homes last year in unincorporated Boulder County and suburban Superior and Louisville. Superior town officials told residents in an email that there were no immediate concerns for the community.

The 2021 blaze burned Alicia Miller's home, where she could see smoke from Saturday's fire rising in the background. She posted a photo on Twitter and referenced climate change, which has made the U.S. West warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make weather more



HELEN H. RICHARDSON, THE DENVER POST/AP

A helicopter flies above the smoke from the NCAR fire as it burns in the foothills south of the National Center for Atmospheric Research, on Saturday, in Boulder, Colo.

extreme and wildfires more destructive, according to scientists.

Miller said her neighbors helped her escape along with her husband, Craig, their three adult sons and two dogs, Ginger and Chloe. She said the hardest losses from the blaze were things they didn't look at much, like baby

shoes, family pictures and letters from her grandmother.

"I feel exhausted by all of this, and I just feel like enough as far as these fires and disasters," she said. She pointed to a recent Texas wildfire that left a deputy dead and homes destroyed. "... So I'm standing there and it's just kind of a re-

peat."

Saturday's fire started around 2 p.m. and burned protected wildland near the National Center for Atmospheric Research, Boulder police said. Authorities have called it the NCAR fire and its cause is not yet known, said Washburn.

Ice shelf bigger than NYC breaks off eastern Antarctica

By JASON SAMENOW

The Washington Post

An ice shelf larger than New York City has broken off eastern Antarctica, the first major shelf to collapse there in more than four decades of satellite observations.

The Conger Ice Shelf, spanning about 460 square miles, shattered off the continent on March 15. Its disintegration has alarmed scientists, who have long considered ice in eastern Antarctica as relatively stable and far less vulnerable to global warming compared to ice in western Antarctica.

Ice shelves surrounding Antarctica protect ice sheets and glaciers on the continent. If the shelves give way, it creates a path for ice streams from surrounding glaciers to spill into the ocean and contribute to sea level rise. The ice shelves themselves do not directly lift the sea level because they're already floating on the ocean.

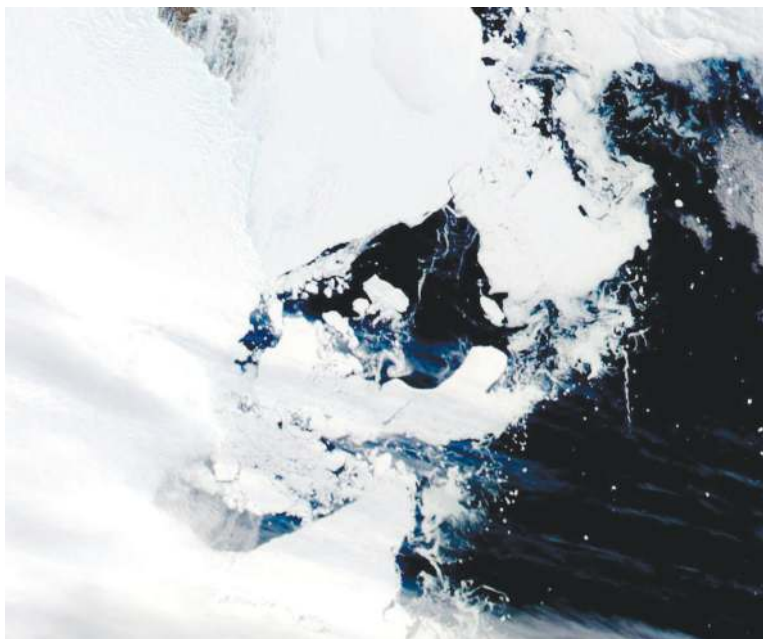
In just the last three weeks, sea ice levels surrounding the continent dropped to a record low and temperatures on the interior of eastern Antarctica shot up 70 degrees above normal, smashing records.

"We're seeing these things sooner than we expected," said Peter Neff, assistant research professor at the University of Minnesota and an expert in glaciology.

Ice loss from Antarctica has accelerated in recent years — much of which comes from western Antarctica — and ranks as a significant driver of global sea level rise. What happens in eastern Antarctica is particularly important because if all of its ice were to melt, it would raise sea levels by well over 100 feet.

The collapse of the Conger Ice Shelf occurred at the beginning of the record-breaking warm spell in eastern Antarctica. On March 18, temperatures rose 50 to 90 degrees above normal over parts of the East Antarctic Ice Sheet and rain, a rare occurrence on the continent, fell near the coast.

Temperatures near where the ice shelf broke off began rising above the melting point right around the time it separated from the continent. A weather station in Casey, Antarctica, about 300 kilometers from the Conger Ice Shelf had maximum temperatures above freezing from March 15-18.



NASA/AP

Scientists are concerned because an ice shelf the size of New York City collapsed this month in eastern Antarctica, an area that had long been thought to be stable.

Neff said the pulse of warmth, transported over the continent by an intense plume of moisture known as an atmospheric river, probably played a relatively small role in the ice shelf's collapse. But it may have contributed to its disintegration, he added.

The record low sea ice levels surrounding Antarctica probably played a bigger role in hastening the ice shelf's demise, Neff said. The ice extent fell below 2 million square kilometers on Feb. 25, the lowest in 43 years of observations, amid windy and unusually warm conditions.

Satellite imagery show its disintegration evolved over the course of many years, but that the recent collapse was rapid.

He described the ice shelf's demise as a wake-up call for scientists studying the region.

"We expect the ice shelves on the west to be doing this but not the eastern ones," he said in a phone interview. "That's what got folks' attention. We really need to be more comprehensively tracking all of these processes in east Antarctica. Small mistakes in eastern Antarctica can lead to big oversights."

Man killed, girl injured in shooting at Chicago mall

Associated Press

ROSEMONT, Ill. — A masked gunman opened fire in a suburban Chicago shopping mall, leaving one man dead and wounding at least one other person — a teenage girl who was found in a washroom after shoppers ran for cover, police said.

The gunman, in his mid-20s, opened fire just after 7 p.m. Friday near the food court at the Fashion Outlets of Chicago mall in Rosemont, a village just northwest of the city, Rosemont Police Sgt. Joe Balogh told the Chicago Tribune on Saturday. Police did not release a motive for the shooting but said it was a targeted attack.

The gunman then fled in a car with "other unknown subjects," he said.

More than two hours after the shooting, police stopped that vehicle on an expressway in Chicago, Balogh said. The car's owner was taken into custody and was being questioned as a person of interest, he said. A gun was seized.

The Cook County medical examiner's office identified the man who died as Joel Valdes, 20, of Skokie.

A 15-year-old girl who was shot in the right wrist was in stable condition, Balogh said.

WORLD

Blinken visits allies ahead of possible Iran deal

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Sunday tried to soothe the fears of Israel and its Gulf Arab allies ahead of the possible renewal of global powers' international nuclear deal with Iran.

Blinken made the comments shortly before joining his counterparts from Israel and four Arab countries at a special gathering where the Iranian nuclear deal was expected to top the agenda. Israel and many of

its neighbors are fiercely opposed to the deal, which they believe will embolden and enrich Iran.

"When it comes to the most important element, we see eye-to-eye," Blinken told a news conference with Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid in Jerusalem. "We are both committed, both determined that Iran will never acquire a nuclear weapon."

The Biden administration has been working to renew the 2015 nuclear deal, which

placed curbs on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for billions of dollars in sanctions relief. With support from Israel, the Trump administration withdrew from the deal in 2018, causing it to unravel.

Although Iran has since raced ahead with its nuclear program, Israel and Gulf Arab countries are deeply concerned about restoring the original deal. Israel fears it does not include enough safeguards to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

Both Israel and its Gulf allies also believe that relief from economic sanctions will allow Iran to step up its military activities across the region, including support for hostile militant groups.

Blinken said the U.S. believes that restoring the nuclear deal "is the best way to put Iran's program back in the box it was in." He added: "Our commitment to the core principle of Iran never acquiring a nuclear weapon is unwavering."

Japan's age of adulthood to drop, but they still can't legally smoke, drink

By HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Starting April 1, some teenagers in Japan may sign contracts and rent apartments on their own, but they still can't legally smoke, drink or gamble, according to a change in Japanese law.

Japan is lowering the age of majority, or adulthood, to 18, to stay in step with other countries, including the United States, France and Turkey, according to a Ministry of Justice pamphlet explaining the move.

The change in Japan's Civil Code lowers the age of adulthood from 20, with one exception: the age at which women may marry is raised to 18 from age 16. Men were already permitted to marry at 18.

The change means that 18- and 19-year-olds may sign

contracts, such as those for cellphones, credit cards and apartments, without their parents' consent. It also ends the legal responsibility of parents to keep custody of their children, care for and educate them, according to the ministry pamphlet.

In Japan, students graduate from high school at age 17 or 18, and many start working.

The age at which young Japanese may drink, smoke and wager at government-controlled activities such as horse racing, remains 20.

"The age limit will be maintained from the standpoint of health effects, delinquency prevention and protection of juveniles," the pamphlet states.

These limits also apply to U.S. service members and others in Japan under the status of forces agreement.

A total of 22 related laws that set age conditions will be revised to reflect the lowered age of adulthood, according to a Mainichi newspaper report from 2018.

Some parts of the juvenile law, which covers 19-year-olds and younger, will be changed. The names of those indicted for criminal cases may be reported in media for those who are 18 and 19, according to Ministry of Justice website.

Japan's courts will continue to treat defendants ages 18 and 19 as minors, in which their cases will be sent to family court, according to the ministry website. However, family courts may decide that those defendants should be tried as adults.

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The Daily Guide to Navigating the European Business Market




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MATTHIAS CLAMER/FX

From left, LaKeith Stanfield, Zazie Beetz, Donald Glover and Brian Tyree Henry traveled to Europe to film Seasons 3 and 4 of "Atlanta."

'Kind of a concept album'

Director Hiro Murai talks about changes in direction in Season 3 of TV's 'Atlanta'

BY MARK OLSEN
Los Angeles Times

The last time a new episode of "Atlanta" aired was in May 2018. And obviously, much has changed since then — if not "Atlanta" itself, whose third season, which premiered March 24 on FX and March 25 on Hulu, opens with a stand-alone horror story before shifting the action to Europe. (A fourth and final season has already been shot and is set to premiere later this year.)



Murai

Created by and starring Donald Glover, the show follows the exploits of his character, Earnest "Earn" Marks, a college dropout who returned home to Atlanta and has been struggling to find direction in his life. He latches onto managing the rap career of his cousin, who goes by Paper Boi (Brian Tyree Henry), while dealing with his on-again, off-again relationship with Van (Zazie Beetz), mother of their daughter, Lottie. Also in their orbit is Paper Boi's friend and right-hand man, Darius (LaKeith Stanfield).

In the time since the previous season, the cast's careers have all taken off in different directions, with Glover achieving greater fame as a musician working under the name Childish Gambino, while Beetz, Henry and Stanfield have all pursued successful film careers.

What remains intact is the series' eccentric, unpredictable allure. Among the key collaborators in crafting its incredibly bold and free storytelling is director Hiro Murai, who transitioned from a successful career directing music videos to working in television and was recently nominated for a DGA Award for his work on HBO Max's series "Station Eleven."

Murai recently got on the phone from his home in Los Angeles to talk — as much as he could — about what to expect from the upcoming seasons.

LA Times: What was it like returning to shoot Seasons 3 and 4 back-to-back?

Murai: We're reuniting in London during a pandemic, and none of us had seen humans for at least a year. So, in some ways, it was the most "Atlanta" reunion ever: It was the strangest circumstance for a reunion. But it was really kind of lovely and emotional ... it was nice to come back together and look back on the show and how it was working together back then and who we are now.

The main cast — Donald, Zazie, Brian and LaKeith — their careers have all taken off in such exciting ways since the show started.

In some ways, I was really nervous, 'cause I think what was great about the first two seasons, just the experience of making it anyway, was that it just felt very scrappy, and we felt like a very tight unit. I was half expecting to come back and half of us be divas or something, but as soon as we got in a room together, it just kind of all clicked in again. It just felt very familiar, like we grew up together in a family or something and we were coming back together for a reunion. And so my worries, they dissipated pretty quickly.

What can you tell me about that decision to take the show to Europe? Both story-wise and production-wise, that feels like a real break from a lot of what "Atlanta" has done before.

Everything we do on the show just comes out of what naturally happens in the writers room, with Donald and all the writers. And I think they had a lot of stories to tell and things to unpack from being away from home, being on the road. It's such a big part of being a musician. There's something specifically very fish-outta-water about touring Europe, 'cause obviously all the cultural things, but you are also bringing American Black music to a different land, so the story naturally bent that way. But obviously, the show, it's also a very weird thing to have a three-year absence. And then kind of take out the core element of the show, which is the city

of Atlanta, for the show. It was almost like a thought experiment: What does this feel like in this new setting with these different faces?

From what audiences know about this new season, it deals with how racism travels internationally, the way it's different from country to country and place to place. Is that your experience as a Japanese American?

I think that's always true: You're trying to bridge culture gaps, and a lot of it is how people treat race. I can only speak from my own experience, but I think a big takeaway for me was that maybe race is less central to conversations outside of the States. Maybe it's less ingrained in the story of each country. In talking about racism, it's highly unavoidable when you're talking about the history of America in a way that's maybe not the case as much in some of the countries we visited. So even that was just a strange thing to negotiate and realize as you were telling these inherently charged stories about race with different crews in different countries.

Can you give any hints as to where these seasons are going? What's the endgame, especially for Season 4? What should audiences expect?

I'll say every season is very distinct and very different. And I'm hoping that, at the end of the series, you'll be able to watch all the seasons as like a mega-arc to the show. Not in an intricate "Lost" plot kind of way. Season 3, I think it's a kind of a concept album — we're trying a lot of different things, and I think you'll see some wild swings. I think it's very experimental. Season 4, I think, is kind of a homecoming for us. Not just 'cause we're back in Atlanta, but we're kind of revisiting a lot of the things that worked for us in the first season, but at the same time you're kind of realizing that we're not the same people that made the first season. And so what I love about Season 4 is it has a kind of a cyclical, full-circle feeling. And it also feels like a proper ending because of that.

Foo Fighters drummer dies at 50

Associated Press

Taylor Hawkins, for 25 years the drummer for Foo Fighters and best friend of frontman Dave Grohl, has died during a South American tour with the rock band. He was 50.



Hawkins

There were few immediate details on how Hawkins died, although the band said in a statement Friday that his death was a "tragic and untimely loss."

Colombia's Prosecutor's Office released a statement Saturday saying toxicological tests on urine from Hawkins' body preliminarily found 10 psychoactive substances and medicines, including marijuana, opioids, tricyclic antidepressants and benzodiazepines. It did not provide a cause of death and investigations are continuing.

Foo Fighters had been scheduled to play at a festival in Bogota, Colombia, on Friday night. Hawkins' final concert was Sunday at another festival in San Isidro, Argentina.

"His musical spirit and infectious laughter will live on with all of us forever," said a message on the band's official Twitter account that was also emailed to reporters. "Our hearts go out to his wife, children and family."

The Bogota municipal government issued a statement Saturday that the city's emergency center had received a report of a patient with "chest pain" and sent an ambulance, though a private ambulance had already arrived at the hotel in northern Bogota.

Health workers tried to revive him, but were unable to do so. After Grohl, Hawkins was the most recognizable member of the group, appearing alongside the lead singer in interviews and playing prominent, usually comic, roles in the band's memorable videos and their recent horror-comedy film, "Studio 666."

Hawkins was Alanis Morissette's touring drummer when he joined Foo Fighters in 1997. He played on the band's biggest albums including "One by One" and "In Your Honor," and on hit singles like "Best of You."

In Grohl's 2021 book "The Storyteller," he called Hawkins his "brother from another mother, my best friend, a man for whom I would take a bullet."

"Upon first meeting, our bond was immediate, and we grew closer with every day, every song, every note that we ever played together," Grohl wrote. "We are absolutely meant to be, and I am grateful that we found each other in this lifetime."

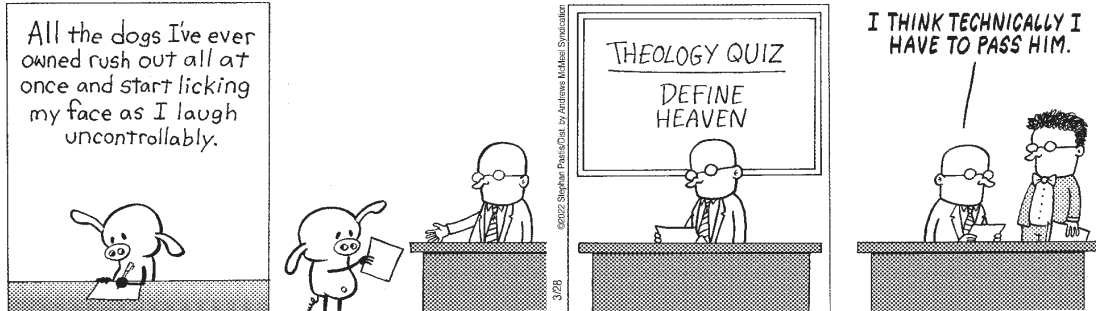
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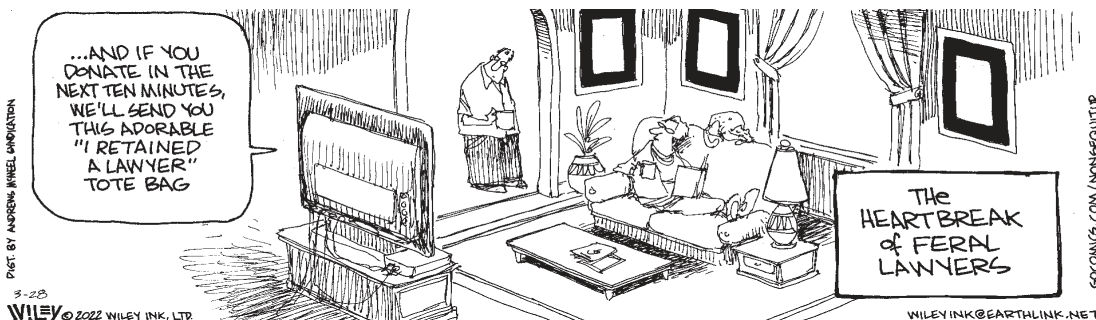
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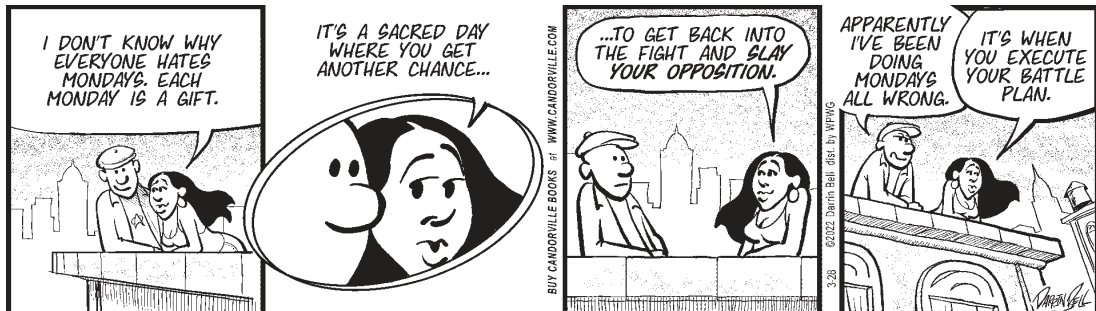
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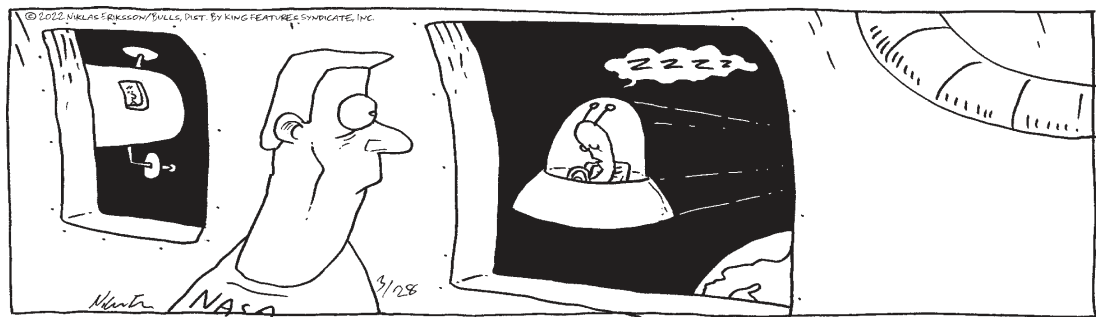
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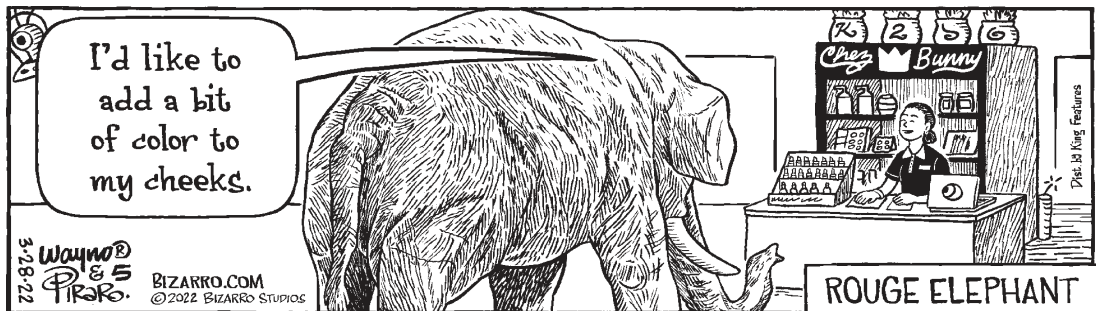
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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ACROSS

- 1 Scurry
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- 8 Folder features
- 12 "Take your pick"
- 14 Langston Hughes poem
- 15 Easy treatment
- 16 Moving fleet
- 17 Paper Mate rival
- 18 Caribbean religion
- 20 Actress Zellweger
- 23 Biblical king
- 24 "Sad to say ..."
- 25 Commuter's trip
- 28 Corral
- 29 Salad green
- 30 ACLU issues
- 32 Trip to an airport, say
- 34 Sushi fish
- 35 Bowling spot
- 36 Started
- 37 Hudson River feeder
- 40 Flight stat
- 41 Whole range
- 42 Wedding day trip
- 47 Apple variety
- 48 Cyberspace wink, e.g.
- 49 Crystal gazer

- 50 Talk and talk
- 51 Wrestling style

- 23 Soft leather
- 25 Model Christie
- 26 Pharmaceutical
- 27 Sicilian peak
- 29 Gullet
- 31 — Salvador
- 33 Sports jacket
- 34 Block-dropping game
- 36 Inky stain
- 37 Red planet
- 38 Oklahoma tribe
- 39 Abode
- 40 Out of control
- 43 — Little Teapot
- 44 Post-op area
- 45 Monk's title
- 46 Rock's Brian

DOWN

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- 6 Turf
- 7 Deep fissure
- 8 Villa d'Este city
- 9 Slightly
- 10 U2 lead singer
- 11 Mediocre
- 13 Buffalo's lake
- 19 Partially mine
- 20 Knock
- 21 Power co. supply
- 22 "Peter Pan" pooch

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Saturday's Cryptoquip: PARODIC SONG FULL OF GOOD-NATURED TEASING ABOUT THE AMERICAN FLAG: "THE STAR-SPANGLED BANTER."

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals P

STARS AND STRIPES

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John Rodriguez, Europe chief of staff
Lt. Col. Michael Kerschbaum, Pacific commander
Michael Ryan, Pacific chief of staff

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GOP attacks miss the real liberal weakness on crime

BY JASON WILLICK

The Washington Post

The modern Supreme Court confirmation process has become a forum for senatorial grandstanding on wedge issues, and Republicans made crime and punishment their focus in opposing Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson. There's a political logic to this tactic, but it overlooks a crucial policy distinction: Judges have only a minor role in crime control today.

That might sound counterintuitive, but it's true. Violent crime in the United States is a pressing problem; there was a 30% increase in the murder rate in 2020. But judges enter the criminal process late, handing down sentences only after defendants have been arrested, prosecuted and (in almost all cases where charges are filed) taken a guilty plea.

The progressive damage to the criminal justice system is manifest earlier in the process, with diminished policing and the rise of highly ideological prosecutors who refuse to bring certain charges. A crime policy centered on deterrence would focus not on extending sentences but on ensuring that a larger share of people who commit serious crimes are caught in the first place.

State and federal governments responded to elevated rates of crime in the second half of the 20th century by significantly stiffening prison sentences. The average federal prisoner's time served increased to more than three years from less than 1½ years between 1988 and 2012, while the number of life sentences (state and federal) more than tripled. Crime declined sharply over this period. But it is spiking again, and policymakers now have less room to turn up the sentencing dial.

It is doubtful that turning that dial further would have a significant deterrent effect on crime. A comprehensive 2013 review of the literature by Carnegie Mellon criminologist

Daniel Nagin found that "there is little evidence that increasing already long prison sentences has a material deterrence effect." By contrast, he found, the effect of "putting more police officers on the street" has a "substantial deterrent effect on serious crime."

A 2021 analysis by economists Evan K. Rose, of the University of Chicago, and Yohan Shem-Tov, of UCLA, found that while serving time behind bars reduces the likelihood that someone will reoffend in North Carolina, there are diminishing returns to longer sentences. They concluded that "shortening sentences overall but sending a larger fraction of offenders to prison can generate meaningful reductions in recidivism."

I won't belabor the social science, but it stands to reason that, for all but the most sophisticated potential offenders, sentencing guidelines (which most people may be only vaguely aware of) are a weaker incentive to be law-abiding than the more certain prospect of swift arrest, prosecution and imprisonment. This view was publicized in the mid-2010s, including by Obama administration economists Peter Orszag and Jason Furman. Now it seems to have gone out of fashion as the progressive attitude toward law enforcement sours.

Which brings us back to the Republican focus on allegedly lenient judges. "President Biden is deliberately working to make the whole federal judiciary softer on crime," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said on March 17. The president is certainly appointing more former defense lawyers such as Jackson to the bench, and judges who were public defenders are less likely to hand down the harshest sentences.

But judges don't determine whether a defendant is apprehended or prosecuted — the factors that have the greatest deterrent effect. That's primarily up to police, who are increas-

ingly demoralized and retiring in large numbers. Deterrence is also eroded if offenders believe that, even if they are arrested, "progressive prosecutors" such as Philadelphia's Larry Krasner won't bring charges. The judicial role prior to the sentencing phase has attenuated further in recent decades as fewer and fewer defendants go to trial.

George Mason University economist Alex Tabarrok, in reviewing some of the evidence on crime deterrence in 2016, wrote: "We need to change what it means to be 'tough on crime.' Instead of longer sentences let's make 'tough on crime' mean increasing the probability of capture for those who commit crimes."

Six years on, we appear headed in the opposite direction. Just 50% of murders were solved in 2020 — the lowest rate in at least 40 years. Efforts to beef up police forces, at least in progressive jurisdictions, is likely to face political resistance.

Longer sentences for convicted criminals, meanwhile, remain difficult to oppose on the merits (except perhaps for drug crimes). That was evident during the Jackson hearings, when Republicans attacked her sentences in certain child-pornography cases as too lenient. Democrats shied away from defending the sentences themselves, instead simply explaining that they were within the mainstream.

The Jackson hearings showed that the GOP perceives a political advantage on crime. The key to actually bringing rates down, however, is not a more punitive judiciary, but more effective prosecutors and police. Republicans' political messaging would pack more policy punch if they focused their attention there.

Jason Willick writes a regular Washington Post column on legal issues, political ideas and foreign affairs. He previously wrote for The Wall Street Journal and The American Interest.

This is no longer the Senate. It's more like day care.

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

Washington Post Writers Group

The usual circus we've come to expect from Supreme Court confirmation hearings devolved last week into something less grown-up and more, shall we say, tykey. (Usage: "Is the little tyke up to his tricks again?")

Watching the performances of Republican Sens. Ted Cruz, of Texas, and Lindsey Graham, of South Carolina, I was swept back to my childhood memories of the "Merry Moppets" play school and the Big Babies, as we referred to our toddler colleagues who couldn't control themselves.

To say that Cruz and Graham have become caricatures of themselves would be to minimize their accomplishments at self-parody.

Cruz, who once distinguished himself in the Senate by reading Dr. Seuss' "Green Eggs and Ham" aloud during a 21-hour-19-minute sort-of-filibuster, questioned Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson's opinion about several children's books that he thoughtfully brought to the hearing. Remember now, the committee is supposed to determine whether a nominee to the high court is qualified to serve, usually based on experience and judicial temperament, though there are no constitutional requirements. Personally, I'd like to add a spot-check of reading materials on the night tables of nominees and Judiciary Committee members.

We know what would be found on Cruz's

bedside: "Antiracist Baby" by Ibram X. Kendi, "The End of Policing" by Alex Vitale (currently No. 1 on Amazon, thanks to Cruz), and "Critical Race Theory: An Introduction" by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, to name a few of the tomes keeping Cruz awake at night. These books, among others, present a critical conundrum for Jackson's confirmation, according to Cruz's graphically illustrated interrogation. This is because they're available (and sometimes recommended) at Georgetown Day School, a private school in D.C., where Jackson serves on the board of trustees.

So?

So, Cruz thinks that because certain books are accessible to students at an elite, private school, this judge — coincidentally the first African American woman up for a seat at the big bench — can't be trusted to rule on cases that come before the court? At least we might trust that Jackson, unlike Cruz, would read the facts of the case in their proper context. Cruz apparently hasn't read the books he finds so repugnant because the excerpts he quoted were demonstrably taken out of context.

Graham, who long ago mastered the art of getting attention by saying outrageous things and — once upon a time — hilariously true things, is no one's audience. Whatever happened to the old Lindsey Graham on his way to flip-flopping infamy no longer matters. Today, he's the tantrum-throwing tyke who refuses to take off his Batman cape and stomps out of the room when things don't go his way.

Yes, he did. On the second day of the hearings after grilling Jackson on her faith — "On a scale of 1 to 10, how faithful would you say you are in terms of religion?" — and a fiery exchange with committee Chairman Dick Durbin, D-Ill., about Guantánamo Bay detainees — Graham raised his voice, grabbed his Coca-Cola bottle and stormed out of the chamber.

In another line of questioning, he referred to the brutal 2018 confirmation hearings of Brett Kavanaugh and asked Jackson how she would respond if a letter concerning her past were produced on the last day of her hearing.

"How would you feel if we did that to you?" he asked.

When Durbin reminded Graham that Jackson wasn't involved in the Kavanaugh proceedings, he said, "I'm asking her what she feels about what y'all did!"

You know by now who did not resort to theatrics — that would be Jackson. But I suspect she'd have relished calmly collecting her notes and sauntering toward the exit to escape the tyranny of such childishness.

Instead, she remained calm and dignified throughout. If only her poise and temperament could be bottled in a vial (along with Cruz's tears). For now, we might have to settle for anger management therapy for Graham and remedial reading courses for Cruz, who, in another fantastic foray, asked Jackson whether it would be OK with her if he decided that, instead of being Hispanic, he could be Asian. Sure, Ted. Whatever you say.

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SCOREBOARD

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

NCAA men's tournament

EAST REGIONAL
At Wells Fargo Center
Regional Championship
Sunday, March 27
North Carolina vs. St. Peter's

SOUTH REGIONAL
At AT&T Center
San Antonio
Regional Championship
Saturday, March 26
Villanova 50, Houston 44

MIDWEST REGIONAL
At United Center
Chicago
Regional Championship
Sunday, March 27
Kansas vs. Miami

WEST REGIONAL
At Chase Center
San Francisco
Regional Championship
Saturday, March 26
Duke 78, Arkansas 69

FINAL FOUR
At Caesars Superdome
New Orleans
National Semifinals
Saturday, April 2
Duke vs. North Carolina-St. Peter's winner

Villanova vs. Kansas-Miami winner
National Championship
Monday, April 4
Semifinal winners

NCAA women's tournament

GREENSBORO REGIONAL
At Greensboro Coliseum
Greensboro, N.C.

Regional Semifinals
Regional Championship
Sunday, March 27
South Carolina vs. Creighton

WICHITA REGIONAL
At Intrust Bank Arena
Wichita, Kan.
Regional Semifinals
Saturday, March 26
Louisville 76, Tennessee 64
Michigan 52, South Dakota 49

Regional Championship
Monday, March 28
Louisville vs. Michigan

SPOKANE REGIONAL
At Spokane Veterans Memorial Arena
Spokane, Wash.
Regional Championship
Sunday, March 27
Stanford vs. Texas

BRIDGEPORT REGIONAL
At Total Mortgage Arena
Bridgeport, Conn.
Regional Semifinals
Saturday, March 26
NC State 66, Notre Dame 63
UConn 75, Indiana 58

Regional Championship
Monday, March 28
NC State vs. UConn

FINAL FOUR
At Target Center
Minneapolis
National Semifinals
Friday, April 1
South Carolina-Creighton winner vs. Louisville-Michigan winner
NC State-UConn winner vs. Stanford-Texas winner

National Championship
Sunday, April 3
Semifinal winners

COLLEGE HOCKEY

NCAA tournament

NORTHEAST REGIONAL
At Times Union Center
Albany, N.Y.
Championship
Saturday, March 26
Michigan St. 1, Notre Dame 0

EAST REGIONAL
At DCU Center
Worcester, Mass.
Championship
Sunday, March 27
W. Michigan vs. Minnesota

MIDWEST REGIONAL
At PPL Center
Allentown, Pa.
First Round

Michigan vs. Quinnipiac
WEST REGIONAL
At Budweiser Events Center
Loveland, Colo.
Championship
Saturday, March 26
Denver 2, Minn. Duluth 1

FROZEN FOUR
At TD Garden
Boston
National Semifinals
Thursday, April 7
Michigan vs. Quinnipiac winner vs. Denver
Michigan St. vs. W. Michigan-Minnesota winner

DEALS

Saturday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

CLEVELAND GUARDIANS — Agreed to terms with RHP Bryan Shaw on a one-year contract. Placed RHP Cody Morris on the 60-Day IL.

DETROIT TIGERS — Optioned LHP Miguel Del Pozo and INF's Kody Clemens and Zack Short to Toledo (Triple-A East). Reassigned RHP Drew Carlton, INF Josh Lester and OF Jacob Robson to the minor league camp.

MINNESOTA TWINS — Optioned INF Royce Lewis to St. Paul (Triple-A East). Reassigned INFs Austin Martin, Aaron Sabato and Spencer Steer to the minor league camp.

NEW YORK YANKEES — Claimed OF Jeison Rosario off waivers from Boston and optioned him to Somerset (Double-A Northeast).

OAKLAND ATHLETICS — Agreed to terms with INF Jed Lowrie on a one-year contract.

SEATTLE MARINERS — Reassigned RHP Devin Sweet, LHP Roenis Elias and C Jake Anchia to the minor league camp.

National League

CINCINNATI REDS — Agreed to terms with OF Tommy Pham and RHP Hunter Strickland on one-year contracts. Optioned OF Allan Cerda, RHPs James Marinar and Jared Solomon to Chattanooga (Double-A South).

COLORADO ROCKIES — Optioned RHP Noah Davis and INFs Ezequiel Tovar and Elehuris Montero to the minor league camp. Reassigned RHPs Zach Lee and Nate Grier to the minor league camp.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Optioned RHP Roansy Contreras and INF Rodolfo Castro to Indianapolis (Triple-A East). Reassigned RHPs Yerry De Los Santos, Emmanuel Mejia, Hunter Stratton and LHP Blake Weiman to minor league camp.

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Agreed to terms on a minor league contract with RHP Blake Parker and invited him to join the major

league spring training camp.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

GREEN BAY PACKERS — Signed CB Keisean Nixon.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Signed RB Ronald Jones to a one-year contract.

NEW YORK JETS — Signed K Greg Zuerlein.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Signed LB Kyzir White to a one-year contract.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

ANAHEIM DUCKS — Activated C Ryan Getzlaf from injured reserve.

BOSTON BRUINS — Reassigned G Callum Booth from Providence (AHL) to Maine (ECHL). Activated C Patrice Bergeron from injured reserve.

DETROIT RED WINGS — Recalled G Calvin Pickard from Grand Rapids (AHL). Reassigned G Kaden Fulcher from Toledo (ECHL) to Grand Rapids (AHL).

MONTREAL CANADIENS — Signed D Jordan Harris to a two-year entry-level contract.

NASHVILLE PREDATORS — Recalled D Jeremy Davies from Milwaukee (AHL). Recalled D Jake McLaughlin from Florida (ECHL).

PITTSBURGH PENGUINS — Recalled RW Kasper Bjorkqvist from Wilkes-Barre/Scranton (AHL).

SAN JOSE SHARKS — Recalled C Lane Pederson from San Jose (AHL) loan.

TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS — Signed F Nick Abruzzese to a two-year entry-level contract.

SOCCER
MLS

COLUMBUS CREW — Assigned G Brady Scott on loan to Columbus Crew 2 for the 2022 MLS NEXT Pro season pending league and federation approval.

COLLEGE

GEORGIA — Named Katie Abrahamson-Henderson women's basketball head coach.

SYRACUSE — Named Felisha Legette-Jack women's basketball head coach.

AP SPORTSLIGHT

March 28

1950 — CCNY beats Bradley 71-68 in the NCAA basketball final to become the only team to win the NIT and NCAA titles in the same year. CCNY beat Bradley 69-61 in the NIT on March 18.

1982 — Louisiana Tech beats Cheyney State 76-62 in the NCAA's first women's basketball championship. The tournament replaces the AIAW championship

which had been held since 1972.

1992 — Christian Laettner hits a 15-foot turnaround jumper at the buzzer to give defending champion Duke a 104-103 overtime victory over Kentucky and a fifth consecutive trip to the Final Four.

2012 — The NFL's new rule for postseason overtime is expanded to cover the regular season on a 30-2 vote by the NFL owners. All games that go into overtime cannot end on a field goal on the first possession.

2015 — Breanna Stewart has 31 points, 12 rebounds and seven assists to help UConn rout Texas 105-54, earning coach Geno Auriemma his 100th NCAA Tournament win.

2015 — Kentucky escapes with a 68-66 win against Notre Dame to go to 38-0 and advance to the Final Four. Wisconsin tops Arizona 85-78 to reach consecutive Final Fours for the first time.

TENNIS

Miami Open

Saturday
At Hard Rock Stadium
Miami Gardens
Purse: \$8,584,055
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Men's Singles
Round of 64

Alex de Minaur (25), Australia, def. Jordan Thompson, Australia, 6-2, 6-3.
Roberto Bautista Agut (15), Spain, def. Kamil Majchrzak, Poland, 6-3, 6-3.
Tommy Paul, United States, def. Karen Khachanov (23), Russia, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (3).
Daniil Medvedev (1), Russia, def. Andy Murray, Britain, 6-4, 6-2.
Hubert Hurkacz (8), Poland, def. Arthur Rinderknech, France, 7-6 (5), 6-2.
Pedro Martinez, Spain, def. Cristian Garin (27), Chile, 7-6 (2), 6-2.
Yoshihito Nishioka, Japan, def. Daniel Evans (24), Britain, 3-6, 6-4, 6-3.
Miomir Kecmanovic, Serbia, def. Felix Auger-Aliassime (7), Canada, 6-4, 6-2.
Aslan Karatsev (29), Russia, def. Ugo Humbert, France, 7-5, 6-2.
Taylor Fritz (11), United States, def. Mikhail Kukushkin, Kazakhstan, 6-3, 5-7, 6-3.
Sebastian Korda, United States, def. Albert Ramos-Vinolas (32), Spain, 4-6, 7-6 (6), 6-3.
Jenson Brooksby, United States, def. Nikoloz Basilashvili (18), Georgia, 6-3, 6-1.
Lloyd Harris, South Africa, def. Denis Shapovalov (12), Canada, 6-3, 6-4.
Marin Cilic (21), Croatia, def. Alexei Popyrin, Australia, 6-0, 6-3.
Stefanos Tsitsipas (3), Greece, def. Jeffrey John Wolf, United States, 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-1.
Carlos Alcaraz (14), Spain, def. Marton Fucsovics, Hungary, 6-3, 6-2.

Women's Singles
Round of 32

Daria Saville, Australia, def. Katerina Siniakova, Czech Republic, 6-0, 1-0, ret.
Belinda Bencic (22), Switzerland, def. Heather Watson, Britain, 6-4, 6-1.
Lucia Bronzetti, Italy, def. Anna Kalinskaya, Russia, walkover.
Naomi Osaka, Japan, def. Karolina Muchova, Czech Republic, walkover.
Danielle Collins (9), United States, def. Vera Zvonareva, Russia, 6-1, 6-4.
Aliaksandra Sasnovich, Belarus, def. Irina-Camelia Begu, Romania, 7-5, 6-7 (4), 6-4.
Alison Riske, United States, def. Ann Li, United States, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3.
Ous Jabeur (8), Tunisia, def. Kaia Kanepi, Estonia, 6-3, 6-0.

Men's Doubles
Round of 32

Marcel Granollers, Spain, and Horacio Zeballos (3), Argentina, def. Raven Klaasen, South Africa, and Ben McLachlan, Japan, 6-2, 6-2.
Simone Bolelli and Fabio Fognini, Italy, def. Filip Polasek, Slovakia, and John Peers (4), Australia, 6-2, 6-4.
Edouard Roger-Vasselin, France, and Austin Krajicek, United States, def. Nicolas Mahut and Fabrice Martin (8), France, 6-3, 6-4.
Marcelo Melo, Brazil, and Ivan Dodig, Croatia, def. Sander Gille and Joran Vliegen, Belgium, 6-4, 6-1.
Rajeev Ram, United States, and Joe Salisbury (2), Britain, def. Michael Venus, New Zealand, and Lloyd Glasspool, Britain, 7-5, 6-4.
Pedro Martinez, Spain, and Lorenzo Sonego, Italy, def. Gonzalo Escobar, Ecuador, and Ariel Behar, Uruguay, 6-3, 6-4.

Women's Doubles
Round of 32

Alize Cornet, France, and Jill Teichmann, Switzerland, def. Andreja Klepac, Slovenia, and Darija Jurak Schreiber (5), Croatia, 6-0, 6-4.
Veronika Kudermetova, Russia, and Elise Mertens (1), Belgium, def. Jasmine Paolini, Italy, and Tamara Zidansek, Slovenia, 6-2, 6-1.
Xu Yifan, China, and Alexa Guarachi, Chile, def. Raluca-Ioana Olaru, Romania, and Nadiia Kichenok, Ukraine, 3-6, 7-6 (4), 11-9.
Paula Badosa, Spain, and Aryna Sabalenka, Belarus, def. Beatriz Haddad Maia, Brazil, and Anna Danilina, Kazakhstan, 6-3, 6-4.
Zhaoxuan Yang, China, and Ekaterina Alexandrova, Russia, def. Sam Stosur, Australia, and Zhang Shuai (3), China, 6-4, 6-4.
Gabriela Dabrowski, Canada, and Giuliana Olmos (6), Mexico, def. Sabrina Santamaria, United States, and Lidziya Marozva, Belarus, 6-1, 6-3.
Asia Muhammad, United States, and Ena Shibahara, Japan, def. Lucie Hradecka and Marie Bouzkova (8), Czech Republic, 4-6, 6-3, 12-10.
Belinda Bencic, Switzerland, and Ana Konjuh, Croatia, def. Anhelina Kalinina, Ukraine, and Elena Rybakina, Kazakhstan, 6-2, 6-7 (4), 10-7.
Vera Zvonareva, Russia, and Laura Siegemund, Germany, def. Natela Dzalamidze, Russia, and Ulrikke Eikeri, Norway, 6-1, 6-2.

AUTO RACING

Pit Boss 250

NASCAR-Xfinity Series
Saturday
At Circuits of the Americas
Austin, Texas.
Lap length: 3.41 miles
(Start position in parentheses)

- (4) AJ Allmendinger, Chevrolet, 46 laps, 53 points.
- (8) Austin Hill, Chevrolet, 46, 35.
- (3) Cole Custer, Ford, 46, 0.
- (12) Noah Gragson, Chevrolet, 46, 35.
- (10) Sam Mayer, Chevrolet, 46, 42.
- (21) Myatt Snider, Chevrolet, 46, 31.
- (13) Brett Moffitt, Chevrolet, 46, 30.
- (16) Jade Buford, Chevrolet, 46, 42.
- (17) Miguel Paludo, Chevrolet, 46, 28.
- (6) Sheldon Creed, Chevrolet, 46, 27.
- (35) Ryan Sieg, Ford, 46, 26.
- (11) Parker Kligerman, Toyota, 46, 0.
- (18) Anthony Alfredo, Chevrolet, 46, 24.
- (7) Preston Pardus, Chevrolet, 46, 28.
- (1) Ty Gibbs, Toyota, 46, 23.
- (24) Sage Karam, Chevrolet, 46, 26.
- (2) Ross Chastain, Chevrolet, 46, 0.
- (38) Brandon Jones, Toyota, 46, 19.
- (23) Parker Chase, Toyota, 46, 21.
- (28) Brandon Brown, Chevrolet, 46, 17.
- (33) Stefan Parsons, Chevrolet, 46, 16.
- (30) Patrick Gallagher, Ford, 46, 15.
- (20) Jeb Burton, Chevrolet, 46, 14.
- (26) Jeremy Clements, Chevrolet, 46, 15.
- (19) Daniel Hemric, Chevrolet, 46, 20.
- (22) Riley Herbst, Ford, 46, 17.
- (25) Josh Berry, Chevrolet, 46, 17.
- (15) Bubba Wallace, Toyota, 46, 0.
- (36) JJ Yeley, Ford, 46, 8.
- (34) Ryan Vargas, Chevrolet, 46, 7.
- (14) Landon Cassill, Chevrolet, 46, 6.
- (32) Scott Heckert, Chevrolet, 46, 6.
- (9) Justin Allgaier, Chevrolet, 46, 18.
- (31) Joe Graf Jr., Ford, 46, 3.
- (27) Josh Berry, Chevrolet, 46, 2.
- (5) Alex Labbe, Chevrolet, reargear, 41, 10.
- (37) Will Rodgers, Toyota, 34, 1.
- (29) Bayley Currey, Chevrolet, engine, 13, 1.

Race Statistics

Average Speed of Race Winner: 70.635 mph.
Time of Race: 2 hours, 13 minutes, 14 seconds.
Margin of Victory: 2.039 seconds.
Caution Flags: 4 for 8 laps.
Lead Changes: 8 among 5 drivers.
Lap Leaders: T.Gibbs 0; R.Chastain 1-3; A.Allmendinger 4-16; T.Gibbs 17; R.Chastain 18-27; S.Mayer 28-30; J.Allgaier 31; R.Chastain 32; A.Allmendinger 33-46
Leaders Summary (Driver, Times Led, Laps Led): A.Allmendinger, 2 times for 27 laps; R.Chastain, 3 times for 14 laps; S.Mayer, 1 time for 3 laps; T.Gibbs, 1 time for 1 lap; J.Allgaier, 1 time for 1 lap.
Wins: T.Gibbs, 2; N.Gragson, 1; A.Hill, 1.
Top 16 in Points: 1. N.Gragson, 223; 2. T.Gibbs, 204; 3. A.Allmendinger, 204; 4. J.Allgaier, 172; 5. J.Berry, 164; 6. B.Jones, 153; 7. D.Hemric, 146; 8. A.Hill, 137; 9. R.Herbst, 128; 10. R.Sieg, 125; 11. L.Cassill, 122; 12. S.Creed, 122; 13. S.Mayer, 120; 14. B.Brown, 118; 15. J.Burton, 112; 16. T.Bayne, 109.

PRO SOCCER

MLS

	Eastern Conference					
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Philadelphia	3	0	1	10	7	2
Columbus	2	0	2	8	10	5
Chicago	2	0	2	8	5	1
New York	2	1	1	7	8	4
Orlando City	2	1	1	7	4	2
Atlanta	2	1	1	7	8	8
D.C. United	2	2	0	6	5	4
Charlotte FC	2	3	0	6	6	7
Cincinnati	2	3	0	6	5	10
NYCFC	1	2	1	4	4	4
New England	1	2	1	4	6	8
Toronto FC	1	2	1	4	5	8
CF Montréal	0	3	1	1	5	11
Inter Miami CF	0	3	1	1	2	10

	Western Conference					
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
LAFC	3	0	1	10	9	2
Real Salt Lake	3	1	1	10	6	4
Minnesota	2	0	2	8	4	2
Austin FC	2	1	1	7	11	3
FC Dallas	2	1	1	7	7	3
Colorado	2	1	1	7	6	4
LA Galaxy	2	2	0	6	4	4
Sporting KC	2	3	0	6	4	8
Houston	1	1	2	5	3	3
Portland	1	1	2	5	5	7
Seattle	1	2	1	4	4	5
Nashville	1	2	1	4	3	5
San Jose	0	3	1	1	4	9
Vancouver	0	3	1	1	2	9

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Saturday's games

Charlotte FC 2, Cincinnati 0
Sporting Kansas City 1, Real Salt Lake 0

Sunday's game

Orlando City at Portland

GOLF

Dell Match Play

World Golf Championships
Saturday
At Austin Country Club
Austin, Texas
Purse: \$12 million
Yardage: 7,108; Par: 71
At Austin Country Club
Austin, Texas
(Seedings in parentheses)
Fourth round

Scottie Scheffler (5), United States, def. Billy Horschel (12), United States, 1 up.
Seamus Power (42), Ireland, def. Tyrrell Hatton (13), England, 4 and 3.
Dustin Johnson (8), United States, def. Richard Bland (54), England, 3 and 2.
Brooks Koepka (16), United States, def. Jon Rahm (1), Spain, 19 holes.
Kevin Kisner (29), United States, def. Adam Scott (32), Australia, 1 up.
Will Zalatoris (24), United States, def. Kevin Na (25), United States, 22 holes.
Corey Conners (36), Canada, def. Takumi Kanaya (56), Japan, 5 and 3.
Abraham Ancer (15), Mexico, def. Collin Morikawa (2), United States, 7 and 6.

Quarterfinals

Scottie Scheffler (5), United States, def. Seamus Power (42), Ireland, 3 and 2.
Dustin Johnson (8), United States, def. Brooks Koepka (16), United States, 2 up.
Kevin Kisner (29), United States, def. Will Zalatoris (24), United States, 4 and 3.
Corey Conners (36), Canada, def. Abraham Ancer (15), Mexico, 2 up.

Corales Puntacana Championship

PGA Tour
Saturday
At Corales Golf Club
Punta Cana, Dominican Republic
Purse: \$3.7 million
Yardage: 7,670; Par: 72

Third Round

Ben Martin	66-66-70-202	-14
Chad Ramey	70-65-69-204	-12
Jhonattan Vegas	70-70-65-205	-11
Thomas Detry	69-69-68-206	-10
Nate Lashley	69-68-69-206	-10
David Lipsky	73-65-68-206	-10
Cameron Percy	71-68-67-206	-10
Martin Trainer	69-70-67-206	-10
Rasmus Hojgaard	73-67-67-207	-9
Justin Lower	74-65-68-207	-9
Alex Smalley	69-65-73-207	-9
Brian Stuard	70-68-69-207	-9
Wyndham Clark	70-68-70-208	-8
Ben Kohles	72-67-69-208	-8
Andrew Novak	70-69-69-208	-8
Vaughn Taylor	68-71-69-208	-8
Vince Whaley	70-68-70-208	-8
Ryan Armour	69-71-69-209	-7
Scott Brown	71-71-67-209	-7
Wesley Bryan	70-72-67-209	-7
Rafael Campos	72-68-69-209	-7
Graeme McDowell	68-68-73-209	-7
Adam Schenck	67-68-74-209	-7
Nick Taylor	72-68-69-209	-7
Hayden Buckley	68-74-68-210	-6
Jonathan Byrd	70-72-68-210	-6
Jason Dufner	70-73-67-210	-6
Rick Lamb	72-70-68-210	-6
Sahith Theegala	71-68-71-210	-6
Greg Chalmers	73-69-69-211	-5
Tyler Duncan	71-71-69-211	-5
Brandon Hagy	70-70-71-211	-5
Kramer Hickok	73-68-70-211	-5
Bo Hoag	74-69-68-211	-5
David Lingmerth	69-70-72-211	-5
Bryson Nimmer	70-72-69-211	-5
Matthias Schwab	73-69-69-211	-5
Greyson Sigg	69-69-73-211	-5
Kevin Chappell	73-67-72-212	-4
Michael Gligic	72-70-70-212	-4
Bill Haas	72-67-73-212	-4
Hank Lebioda	71-71-70-212	-4
Sean O'Hair	71-71-70-212	-4

JTBC Classic

LPGA Tour
Saturday
At Aviara Golf Club
Carlsbad, Calif.
Purse: \$1.5 million
Yardage: 6,609; Par: 72

Third Round

N. Koerster Madsen	66-67-69-202	-14
Na Rin An	69-67-69-205	-11
P. Anannarukarn	68-69-69-206	-10
Jun Young Ko	65-71-70-206	-10
Maude-Aimee Leblanc	68-68-70-206	-10
Hye Jin Choi	67-68-72-207	-9
Nasa Hataoka	70-69-68-207	-9
Charley Hull	69-70-68-207	-9
Janie Jackson	70-68-69-207	-9
Lilia Vu	71-71-65-207	-9
Brittany Altomare	71-68-69-208	-8
In Gee Chun	69-72-67-208	-8
Stephanie Meadow	69-72-67-208	-8
Atthaya Thitikul	69-70-69-208	-8
M. Jutanugarn	69-72-68-209	-7
In-Kyung Kim	69-73-67-209	-7
Lydia Ko	68-67-74-209	-7
Pernilla Lindberg	73-68-68-209	-7
Inbee Park	71-68-70-209	-7
Lauren Coughlin	71-70-69-210	-6
Muni He	70-71-69-210	-6
Minjee Lee	69-71-70-210	-6
Jeongeun Lee6	70-74-66-210	-6
Leona Maguire	69-70-71-210	-6
Ryann O'Toole	6	

NHL/AUTO RACING

Scoreboard

NHL ROUNDUP

Bruins win Bergeron's 1,200th game

Eastern Conference							
Atlantic Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Florida	64	44	14	6	94	262	186
Boston	65	41	19	5	87	200	174
Tampa Bay	64	40	18	6	86	211	181
Toronto	64	40	19	5	85	234	195
Detroit	65	26	31	8	60	187	242
Buffalo	65	23	33	9	55	174	227
Ottawa	65	23	36	6	52	170	213
Montreal	65	18	37	10	46	167	244

Metropolitan Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Carolina	65	43	15	7	93	216	156
Pittsburgh	66	39	17	10	88	214	177
N.Y. Rangers	65	41	19	5	87	198	168
Washington	67	37	20	10	84	224	191
Columbus	66	32	29	5	69	216	246
N.Y. Islanders	63	28	26	9	65	173	174
Philadelphia	65	21	33	11	53	167	228
New Jersey	65	23	37	5	51	200	237

Western Conference							
Central Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Colorado	65	46	14	5	97	251	181
Minnesota	63	39	20	4	82	234	200
St. Louis	64	35	20	9	79	226	187
Nashville	65	37	24	4	78	212	190
Dallas	64	36	25	3	75	189	192
Winnipeg	66	31	25	10	72	207	206
Chicago	66	24	32	10	58	179	229
Arizona	64	20	40	4	44	166	232

Pacific Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Calgary	65	40	17	8	88	231	160
Los Angeles	67	36	22	9	81	195	188
Edmonton	66	36	25	5	77	227	215
Vegas	68	36	28	4	76	216	206
Vancouver	67	32	26	9	73	192	191
San Jose	65	29	28	8	66	173	204
Anaheim	67	27	29	11	65	189	218
Seattle	65	20	39	6	46	170	232

Friday's games							
N.Y. Rangers 5, Pittsburgh 1	Washington 4, Buffalo 3, SO	Winnipeg 4, Columbus 3, OT	Calgary 4, Arizona 2	Colorado 6, Philadelphia 3			
Saturday's games							
Boston 6, N.Y. Islanders 3	Tampa Bay 2, Detroit 1, OT	Vegas 5, Chicago 4, OT	Montreal 4, Toronto 2	Washington 4, New Jersey 3	Vancouver 4, Dallas 1	Florida 4, Ottawa 3, SO	Carolina 7, St. Louis 2
Minnesota 3, Columbus 2, OT	Calgary 9, Edmonton 5	San Jose 4, Anaheim 1	Los Angeles 4, Seattle 2				
Sunday's games							
Tampa Bay at N.Y. Islanders	Buffalo at N.Y. Rangers	Detroit at Pittsburgh	Colorado at Minnesota	Philadelphia at Nashville	Arizona at Winnipeg	Florida at Toronto	Montreal at New Jersey
Monday's games							
Carolina at Washington	Vancouver at St. Louis	Buffalo at Chicago	Arizona at Edmonton	Seattle at Los Angeles			

Associated Press
 BOSTON — David Pastrnak and Brad Marchand each had a goal and an assist during a four-goal second period for the surging Bruins, carrying them to a 6-3 victory over the New York Islanders on Saturday.

Boston captain Patrice Bergeron played in his 1,200th game. He became the 120th player in NHL history to reach that milestone. He returned to the lineup Saturday after missing the previous four games with an elbow infection.

"I told him we need you around for 1,300, by the way, and beyond," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said of the 36-year-old Bergeron, who can become a free agent at the end of the season.

"Credit to him to play for one organization that long," Cassidy said. "Obviously, that tells you a little bit about both sides. He loves it here and we love having him."

Erik Haula and Jake DeBrusk each had a second-period goal after Craig Smith and Taylor Hall scored in the first for Boston, which earned its 14th win in 17 games (14-2-1).

"I guess I've been around for a while. It's been a long road that went fast," Bergeron said. "It's kind of crazy to think ... You appreciate the moment and be thankful for everything you go through."

Brock Nelson scored his 30th of the season, and Anders Lee and Zach Parise each had a power-play score for the Islanders, who had won four of their previous five.

Lightning 2, Red Wings 1 (OT): Brayden Point scored on a power play at 2:28 of overtime and visiting Tampa Bay beat Detroit to snap a three-game losing streak.

Point scored on a rebound of Steven Stamkos' shot. Stamkos tied it on a power play with 4:38 left in regulation. Anthony Cirelli assisted on both goals.

Brian Elliott made 26 saves in his first start since March 12 and



MICHAEL DWYER/AP

The Bruins' Craig Smith (12) scores on the Islanders' Semyon Varlamov during the first period on Saturday in Boston.

fifth since Dec. 31.

Flames 9, Oilers 5: Matthew Tkachuk had two goals and two assists, Johnny Gaudreau set a career high with five assists and host Calgary beat Edmonton.

Leon Draisaitl had a hat trick to lead the Oilers (36-25-5). Derick Brassard and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins also scored for Edmonton.

Elias Lindholm and Mikael Backlund each scored twice for the Flames.

Golden Knights 5, Blackhawks 4 (OT): Evgenii Dadonov scored for host Vegas at 2:05 of overtime after the team overcame a three-goal deficit in the third period against Chicago.

Dadonov scored for the second time in two games since returning to the Golden Knights' roster after the NHL negated a trade that sent him to Anaheim because of his no-trade clause.

Down 3-0 after two period, Vegas got third-period goals from Chandler Stephenson, William Karlsson, Jack Eichel and Alex Pietrangelo. Logan Thompson stopped 30 shots for Vegas, allowing goals by Dominik Kubalik, Jo-

nathan Toews, Dylan Strome and Alex DeBrincat.

Canadiens 4, Maple Leafs 2: Paul Byron broke a tie with 2:28 left, Jake Allen made 49 saves and host Montreal beat Toronto.

David Savard scored in consecutive games, Cole Caufield added a goal and Christian Dvorak had an empty-netter.

Auston Matthews and William Nylander scored for the Leafs.

Capitals 4, Devils 3: Nicklas Backstrom scored the go-ahead goal and added an assist on the night host Washington celebrated his 1,000th career point and beat New Jersey.

Alex Ovechkin scored his team-leading 42nd goal on a third-period power play. Connor McMichael and Tom Wilson also scored for the Capitals. Vitek Vanecek stopped 29 shots.

Panthers 4, Senators 3 (SO): Aleksander Barkov had the tying goal late in the third period and scored the shootout winner, helping visiting Florida overcome a three-goal deficit and beat Ottawa.

Anthony Duclair and Patric Hornqvist also scored for the Pan-

thers, who extended their hold on the Eastern Conference lead. Recently acquired Claude Giroux had two assists and Sergei Bobrovsky made 19 saves.

Hurricanes 7, Blues 2: Andrei Svechnikov scored twice on his 22nd birthday and Seth Jarvis also had two goals as visiting Carolina beat St. Louis.

Antti Raanta won a battle of Finnish goalies with 30 saves. Ville Husso stopped 21 of 26 shots, and the Hurricanes scored two empty-net goals when Husso was pulled with 5:30 to play.

Wild 3, Blue Jackets 2 (OT): Jared Spurgeon scored 1:24 into overtime and host Minnesota beat Columbus, providing Marc-Andre Fleury a victory in his debut with the Wild.

Fleury stopped 23 shots for Minnesota, which won its fifth straight game.

Jake Bean and Jakub Voracek scored for the Blue Jackets.

Canucks 4, Stars 1: Elias Pettersson had two goals and a pair of milestones as visiting Vancouver rallied past Dallas.

Pettersson's second goal was his 20th of the season and the 200th career point for the fourth-year player from Sweden.

Pettersson's second score started a three-goal barrage in the third period.

Sharks 4, Ducks 1: Timo Meier had a hat trick, Marc-Edouard Vlasic added a goal, and host San Jose defeated Anaheim.

James Reimer had 27 saves for San Jose, which sent the Ducks to their ninth straight loss.

Kings 4, Kraken 2: Jordan Spence scored his first NHL goal and captain Anze Kopitar had a goal and an assist as host Los Angeles beat Seattle.

Gabriel Vilardi scored his first goal in five months and Sean Durzi ended a 29-game goal drought for the Kings in their second win over the expansion Kraken this season.

Allmendinger grabs first Xfinity win of season

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — AJ Allmendinger and Kaulig Racing scored their first victory of the season Saturday in the Xfinity Series race at Circuit of the Americas.

Allmendinger was scheduled to start 20th on Sunday in the Cup race, also in a Chevrolet for Kaulig. It was Allmendinger's first win through six races this season, and first for Kaulig, which dominated the Xfinity Series last year and this year has added two Cup cars to its program.

Austin Hill finished second for

Richard Childress Racing to give Chevrolet a 1-2 sweep. Kaulig and RCR have a technical alliance.

Cole Custer finished third in a Ford for Stewart-Haas Racing and was followed by seven more Chevrolet drivers as General Motors dominated the Saturday race on the permanent road course.

Allmendinger was exhausted and seemingly out of breath after taking the checkered flag. It was his seventh road course win — he already held the Xfinity Series record with six victories — and he'll try to pad his Cup resume Sunday.

He led 27 of the 46 laps.

Allmendinger has two career road course wins in the Cup Series, including last year at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. With three career starts at COTA ahead of Sunday's race, he'll be one of the most experienced drivers on the track added to the schedule only last season.

"I was hard on myself (Friday), I was not happy," Allmendinger said about qualifying fourth. "This Chevy was really good and it was hard to drive. I had to drive it a certain way."

Smith wins Truck Series race in double overtime

AUSTIN, Texas — Zane Smith inherited the Truck Series win at Circuit of the Americas on Saturday when a three-wide move for the lead went awry and Smith sailed past his rivals for the victory in double overtime.

Kyle Busch led a race-high 31 of the 46 laps around the permanent road course and was desperately trying to stretch his fuel to the finish when the race went haywire. Alex Bowman moved from third

alongside Stewart Friesen, who tried to defend the pass by diving inside of Busch.

All three trucks were side-by-side as the drivers dove into a turn. Unable to maneuver through, the trucks slid off course and Smith shot past the leaders to take over the top spot.

Smith was able to drive away from the challengers as Busch and Bowman tried to regain position. He scored his fifth career victory and second through four races this season. Smith also won the season-opening race at Daytona.

NBA

ROUNDUP

Morant-less Grizzlies down Bucks

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — De’Anthony Melton had 24 points, Desmond Bane added 20 and the Memphis Grizzlies continued to win in the absence of scoring leader Ja Morant, beating the Milwaukee Bucks 127-102 on Saturday night.

Dillon Brooks scored 19 points and Jaren Jackson Jr. had 16 and two blocks to help Memphis win its fourth straight and eighth in the last nine games. Melton was 8 of 11 from the field, going 6 of 9 from three-point range.

“I’m just trying to go out there and hoop,” Melton said. “Have fun with it. Play with confidence and do what the team needs me to do.”

Raptors 131, Pacers 91: Pascal Siakam scored 23 points and host Toronto routed depleted Indiana in a game delayed 70 minutes in the first half because of a speaker fire that forced the evacuation of fans.

Scottie Barnes added 19 points in the Raptors’ biggest margin of victory this season. Oshae Brissett led Indiana with 21 points.

Bulls 98, Cavaliers 94: Zach LaVine scored 26 points, DeMar DeRozan added 20 and Chicago won at Cleveland to stay alone in the No. 5 spot in the Eastern Conference.

The Bulls held the Cavs to just 35 points in the first half and won on the road for the first time since March 9, snapping a five-game slide. Chicago, which is 4-8 in March, came in with a one-game lead over Cleveland for the fifth playoff spot.

Nuggets 113, Thunder 107: Nikola Jokic scored 35 points and missed a triple-double by two assists and host Denver outlasted Oklahoma City.

Spurs 107, Pelicans 103: Dejounte Murray had 15 points, 13 assists and 11 rebounds, Keldon Johnson punctuated his 21-point night with a break-away dunk in the final seconds and San Antonio won at New Orleans to bolster its postseason hopes.

Kings 114, Magic 110 (OT): Donte DiVincenzo and Harrison Barnes hit three-pointers in the final minute of overtime and Sacramento won Orlando.

Rockets 115, Trail Blazers 98: Alperen Sengun scored 27 points and Houston won at Portland to sweep a two-game set there.



BRANDON DILL/AP

Memphis Grizzlies forward Kyle Anderson shoots over Milwaukee Bucks guard Wesley Matthews in the Grizzlies’ 127-102 win on Saturday in Memphis.



JIM RASSOL/AP

Miami Heat center Bam Adebayo (13) and Brooklyn Nets guard Kyrie Irving (11) jostle for rebounding position during Brooklyn’s 110-95 win on Saturday in Miami.

Nets add to Heat’s woes to tighten race in East

Brooklyn’s Durant has 23 points, Curry has 17, Miami drops 4th straight

BY TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

MIAMI — Goran Dragic looked up at the overhead screen and watched the video that paid tribute to his seven seasons with the Miami Heat, then waved to acknowledge the loud cheers from his former home crowd.

It was the start of a great night for the Brooklyn Nets.

And it was about the only thing Heat fans could cheer about.

Kevin Durant scored 23 points, Seth Curry added 17 and the Nets overwhelmed Miami 110-95 on Saturday night, sending the Heat to their season-worst fourth consecutive loss.

“I thought there was a lot of force and purpose offensively,” Brooklyn coach Steve Nash said. “We didn’t take things for granted.”

Andre Drummond had 13 points and 11 rebounds for the Nets, who got 11 points from Kyrie Irving — who will play his first home game of the season for the team on Sunday — and 10 from Nic Claxton.

“I think all phases of our game worked tonight,” Durant said.

Bam Adebayo scored 14 points for the Heat, which trailed by as many as 37 — its biggest deficit of the season. Miami was without coach Erik Spoelstra, who missed the game because of a family matter, and assistant Chris Quinn took his place.

Tyler Herro and Max Strus each had 13 and Kyle Lowry had 12 for the Heat. Caleb Martin had 10 and Jimmy Butler was held to just seven points on 2 of 9 shooting.

And the Eastern Conference race only got tighter, now with the top four teams all separated by only a half-game.

Philadelphia (46-27, .630) moved into first in the East, percentage points ahead of Miami (47-28, .627). Boston and Milwaukee — which lost

Saturday night in Memphis — are both 46-28 (.622); the Celtics hold the head-to-head tie-breaker at this point over the Bucks.

“We’re not concerned in the sense of, like, panicking,” Lowry said. “But, yeah, we have to fix some stuff.”

Brooklyn (39-35) remained in the No. 8 spot, now a full game ahead of No. 9 Charlotte. The Nets and Hornets meet on Sunday night.

“We’re in that mindset where every game counts,” Drummond said.

Dragic said he learned about the tribute earlier Saturday. He’s kept friendships with plenty of Heat players and employees since getting moved in the trade that brought Lowry to Miami last summer.

“It means a lot,” Dragic said. “I spent seven years, 6½ years here. It’s always nice to get the reception that I did. ... We had a blast, but right now, my focus is in Brooklyn.”

The Heat bench stood in unison for the tribute.

“One of the best point guards to put on the jersey,” Quinn said. “Anytime we get to see him, we love seeing him. Obviously, we don’t love seeing him on the other team, but it’s always good to be around someone of that caliber.”

The Nets outscored Miami 40-21 in the second quarter to take a 21-point lead into the half. It just kept getting worse for the Heat; Drummond intercepted a pass, dribbled downcourt, threw up a “peace” sign at Miami defenders on his way to the rim and dunked for an 82-55 lead midway through the third.

“I don’t know what made me do it,” Drummond said.

The Heat led Brooklyn 90-73 with 11 minutes to go on Friday, then got outscored 38-13 the rest of the way. Curry made a three-pointer with 4:02 left in the third for a 94-57 lead — meaning, going back to Friday, over a span of 43 minutes the Heat were outscored 132-70.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	46	27	.630	—
Boston	46	28	.622	½
Toronto	42	32	.568	4½
Brooklyn	39	35	.527	7½
New York	32	42	.432	14½

Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
y-Miami	47	28	.627	—
Charlotte	38	36	.514	8½
Atlanta	37	37	.500	9½
Washington	31	42	.425	15
Orlando	20	55	.267	27

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	46	28	.622	—
Chicago	43	31	.581	3
Cleveland	41	33	.554	5
Indiana	25	50	.333	21½
Detroit	20	54	.270	26

Western Conference

Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Memphis	52	23	.693	—
Dallas	45	29	.608	6½
New Orleans	31	43	.419	20½
San Antonio	30	44	.405	21½
Houston	20	55	.267	32

Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Utah	45	29	.608	—
Denver	44	31	.587	1½
Minnesota	43	32	.573	2½
Portland	27	47	.365	18
Oklahoma City	21	53	.284	24

Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
z-Phoenix	60	14	.811	—
Golden State	48	26	.649	12
L.A. Clippers	36	39	.480	24½
L.A. Lakers	31	42	.425	28½
Sacramento	27	48	.360	33½

z-clinched conference
y-clinched division
x-clinched playoff spot

Friday’s games

Charlotte 107, Utah 101
Washington 100, Detroit 97
Atlanta 121, Golden State 110
Minnesota 116, Dallas 95
New York 111, Miami 103
Houston 125, Portland 106
Philadelphia 122, L.A. Clippers 97

Saturday’s games

San Antonio 107, New Orleans 103
Sacramento 114, Orlando 110, OT
Brooklyn 110, Miami 95
Memphis 127, Milwaukee 102
Toronto 131, Indiana 91
Chicago 98, Oklahoma City 94
Denver 113, Oklahoma City 107
Houston 115, Portland 98

Sunday’s games

New York at Detroit
Golden State at Washington
Minnesota at Boston
Philadelphia at Phoenix
L.A. Lakers at New Orleans
Charlotte at Brooklyn
Utah at Dallas

Monday’s games

Atlanta at Indiana
Denver at Charlotte
Orlando at Cleveland
Boston at Toronto
Chicago at New York
Sacramento at Miami
Golden State at Memphis
San Antonio at Houston
Oklahoma City at Portland

Tuesday’s games

Chicago at Washington
Milwaukee at Philadelphia
Detroit at Brooklyn
L.A. Lakers at Dallas
Utah at L.A. Clippers

Scoring leaders

Through Saturday

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
James, LAL	54	613	241	1618	30.0
Embiid, PHI	60	564	579	1787	29.8
Anttknmpo, MIL	61	620	506	1813	29.7
Young, ATL	68	635	439	1915	28.2
Doncic, DAL	57	556	303	1587	27.8
Morant, MEM	56	573	311	1543	27.6
DeRozan, CHI	69	698	460	1900	27.5
Tatum, BOS	70	652	371	1889	27.0
Booker, PHO	63	602	288	1659	26.3
Jokic, DEN	68	677	340	1789	26.3
Mitchell, UTA	61	569	236	1595	26.1

MLB



CURTIS COMPTON, ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION/AP

Braves pitcher Bryce Elder, left, tosses the ball first baseman Matt Olson for an out after fielding a grounder during a preseason game on March 18.

Olson central to keep Braves in contention

BY CHARLES ODUM
Associated Press

VENICE, Fla. — Atlanta's trade for Matt Olson was designed to ensure the defending World Series champion Braves will be contenders in 2022.

Signing Olson to an eight-year deal only one day later was the foundation of a plan by general manager Alex Anthopoulos to keep Atlanta competitive through the decade.

As soon as it became clear the Braves and Freddie Freeman wouldn't reach a deal, Anthopoulos shifted to a new long-term strategy.

"That was the thought," Anthopoulos told The Associated Press on Thursday, adding he believed it was crucial the new contract for Olson be finalized before the introductory news conference for the first baseman.

The Braves traded four prospects to Oakland for Olson on March 14. One day later, the team announced the \$168 million, eight-year deal that keeps the first baseman in Atlanta at least through 2029. It is the largest contract in Braves history.

Anthopoulos said his first offer to Olson, who turns 28 this Tuesday, was for seven years and \$140 million. The GM said he believed it was important to keep the annual payout at \$20 million "so we could build the roster around him."

Anthopoulos said he also believed it was crucial that Braves players knew this was a long-term response to the void left by the 32-year-old Freeman.

"We worked all day, all night and we were motivated to have it done by the press conference," Anthopoulos said. "If that meant we were going to give a little bit more to get it done, we thought it was important for the clubhouse, for the organization."

For the clubhouse?

"I just think knowing that he's here," Anthopoulos said. "Just everyone knowing that he's here to stay. I think it allows him to settle in a little bit more."

Olson knows he will be measured by the standard set by Freeman, the 2020 NL MVP and face of the franchise who signed a \$162 million, six-year deal with the Los Angeles Dodgers. Olson says he will not let those expectations cast a shadow over his play.

"I think it's a thing right from the start that you really can't look into a lot," Olson said. "I

have nothing but respect for him. He's a hell of a player but I just came into the situation. I didn't have any say in what happened before. I'm going to go out there and do what I can to help this team win. I want to come here and try to mesh with the guys and go out and play some good baseball."

From his 6-foot-5, 225-pound frame to his left-handed swing to his modest but friendly demeanor, Olson seems to be cut from the Freeman mold.

"We know his track record," reliever Will Smith said. "We know the back of his baseball card is pretty great. Anybody that's got a Gold Glove, as a pitcher I'm a fan of. I'm excited to have him back there."

Olson already has shown the powerful, left-handed swing and strong defense that made him an All-Star with the A's in 2021, when he hit .271 with 39 homers and 111 RBIs. He won Gold Gloves in 2018 and 2019.

Olson likely won't match Freeman's .295 career batting average, but his power bat fits nicely in Atlanta's lineup. Olson hit second on Friday against the Boston Red Sox, ahead of Austin Riley and Marcell Ozuna.

"It's going to be a lineup where we can kind of get the matchups we want," said manager Brian Snitker. "... It's a pretty deep lineup."

Anthopoulos saw a lot to like in Olson.

"His performance obviously has been very strong," Anthopoulos said. "Everything we heard about the person and the makeup was off the charts. So an easy guy to invest in. The acquisition cost and the prospects were very expensive and the extension was expensive, but he's a special player and those are the guys you do it for."

For Olson, signing with the Braves was a homecoming. He is from Parkview High School in Lilburn, Ga., an Atlanta suburb. That adds to his anticipation for the Braves' home opener on April 7 against Cincinnati.

"I've been saying the stars aligned perfectly," Olson said. "There's so many factors that were positives here, No. 1 being a good team that won the World Series. That's something I want to do more than anything, so the roster that was here and being able to be at home around family and friends," he said.

"It was something I wanted to be a part of, to be a part of this winning culture and get a taste of it myself."

Umps asked to stick to substance checks

League wants increased random inspections of pitchers

BY RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

Major League Baseball is asking umpires to make more random checks of pitchers for sticky substances after watching its crackdown become less effective late last season.

MLB instituted regular checks last June 21 for grip aids. Seattle's Héctor Santiago was ejected on June 27 and Arizona's Caleb Smith was tossed on Aug. 18, and both received 10-game suspensions.

"After an initial dip in spin rates as a result of the periodic checks, unfortunately the data showed that spin rates started to rise toward the end of the season as players grew accustomed to the circumstances of routine umpire checks," MLB Senior Vice President of On-Field Operations Mike Hill wrote in a memorandum Friday to team owners, executives and managers, and all major and minor league players.

"As a result, umpires have been instructed to be more vigilant and unpredictable in the timing and scope of their checks during the 2022 season," he said.

The memorandum, first reported by Sports Illustrated, was obtained by The Associated Press.

Last season, umpires checked all starting pitchers multiple times and all relievers either at the end of his first inning or when removed, whichever occurred first. Caps, gloves and fingertips were checked.

"We are working with the umpires in an effort to make inspections less invasive," Hill wrote. "Rather than focusing on uniforms and belts, umpires have been given additional guidance to help them determine



NAM Y. HUH/AP

Home Plate umpire Phil Cuzzi, right, checks Seattle Mariners relief pitcher Hector Santiago's hat during a game against the White Sox in Chicago, on June 27, 2021. Santiago was ejected from the game and received a 10-game suspension. Major League Baseball is making checks for banned foreign substances on pitchers more random after watching its crackdown become less effective late last season. Last season, umpires checked all starting pitcher multiple times and all relievers at specific times.

whether a pitcher's hand or fingers contain a foreign substance in violation of the rules."

"An umpire checking a pitcher for foreign substances will use his thumb to check for stickiness on the pitcher's thumb, index finger, middle finger, and palm," Hill wrote.

While the timing of checks will be more random, it appears the frequency will not change.

"Starting pitchers should continue to expect more than one mandatory check per game," Hill wrote. "Each relief pitcher will be subject to at least one check when he enters the game, at the conclusion of the inning in which he entered the game, or when he is removed from the game. In general, inspections will be conducted between innings or after pitching changes to avoid a delay of the game and to allow the umpire to perform a thorough check of the pitcher."

Fastball spin rates declined from an average of 2,323 revolutions per minute in May to 2,258 in June, according to Statcast data. Plans for the crackdown first emerged June 3 following an owners' meeting.

While the average was 2,239 in July, it rose to 2,263 in September.

The major league batting average for the season dropped to .244, its lowest since the year of the pitcher in 1968.

"We now have extensive data, including testing by third-party researchers, which shows how the use of foreign substances on baseballs has a material impact on performance," Hill wrote. "Specifically, foreign substances significantly increase the spin rate and movement of the baseball, providing pitchers with an unfair advantage over hitters that our playing rules were expressly designed to prohibit. We also learned about a dangerous side to foreign substances — that foreign substance use appears to be contributing to an overall decline in control because it enables a style of pitching in which pitchers sacrifice control in favor of spin and velocity."

Velocity was virtually unchanged, increasing from 93.6 mph before June 3 to 93.7 mph after.

Teams must submit documentation in advance of each series for a pitcher to use a substance for a medical reason, such as to treat blisters, cuts or broken nails, although treatment is allowed for in-game medical issues.

"Catchers and position players may be subject to inspections based on the circumstances," Hill wrote.

In addition, "an opposing manager may request that the umpire inspect the pitcher or a position player only if the manager (or a member of his team) observes behavior on the field consistent with the use of a foreign substance."

Those checks would take place between at-bats, not during.

"A manager will be subject to discipline if he makes the request in bad faith (e.g., a request intended to disrupt the pitcher in a critical game situation, a routine request that is not based on observable evidence, etc.)," Hill wrote.

NCAA TOURNAMENT

WOMEN'S ROUNDUP

Bueckers, Williams lead UConn to Elite 8

Associated Press

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. — Over the past 25 years, UConn has been known for putting together lengthy scoring runs that turn tight games into blowouts.

Paige Bueckers and the Huskies put together a classic one to begin the second half against Indiana on Saturday and move into the program's 16th consecutive regional final.

Bueckers' three-pointer to open the third quarter began the 16-0 onslaught and the Huskies ran away from Indiana 75-58 in the Bridgeport Regional.

"We started pushing the ball in transition more; we got a few easy buckets there," Bueckers said. "I thought we played with a lot better pace and just a lot better energy." Bueckers and Christyn Williams each scored 15 points and Azzi Fudd had 13 to lead UConn, which faces top-seeded North Carolina State on Monday night in an attempt to earn a 14th straight trip to the Final Four.

But it was in the lane where the Huskies dominated. Olivia Nelson-Ododa had a double-double with 10 points and 14 rebounds and Connecticut (28-5) outscored the Hoosiers 46-32 in the paint. UConn also outrebounded Indiana 39-27, including 15-2 on the offensive end.

"Throughout the season rebounding has been a point of emphasis, especially from the coaches," Nelson-Ododa said. "Just going out there today, staying in an aggressive mentality and just keep attacking, keep crashing the boards was really huge for us."

Ali Patberg, in her seventh year of college basketball thanks to transfer and COVID-19 rules, had 16 points for the third-seeded Hoosiers, who finish their season at 24-9. Grace Berger had 13 points and Mackenzie Holmes added 12 for Indiana.

"I'm not a good loser," Patberg said. "So this is not how I envisioned going out. But I'm just thankful that Coach (Teri) Moren believed in me five years ago and gave me an opportunity to wear Hoosier on my chest. I just hope that the time I had at IU people just remember how hard I played and I was a good teammate and worked as hard as I could."



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Indiana guard Ali Patberg (14) drives against Connecticut guard Azzi Fudd (35) during the Huskies' 75-58 Sweet 16 win on Saturday in Bridgeport, Conn.

Wichita Regional

Louisville 76, Tennessee 64: Hailey Van Lith had 23 points and six assists, Emily Engstler had 20 points and 10 rebounds, and the No. 1-seeded Cardinals held off the Volunteers in Wichita, Kan., to reach the Elite Eight for the fourth consecutive time.

Kianna Smith also had 12 points for Louisville (28-4), which blew most of an early 15-point lead before pulling away late in the fourth quarter to set up a date with No. 3 seed Michigan for a spot in the Final Four.

The Cardinals have become one of the nation's dominant women's programs under coach Jeff Walz — much like Tennessee was for so many years under Pat Summitt — but are still chasing their first national championship.

Rae Burrell led the fourth-seeded Volunteers (25-9) with 22 points, but she didn't get a whole lot of help from her team, which had 18 turnovers. Jordan Walker contributed 10 points but had five of the turnovers.

Michigan 52, South Dakota 49: Naz Hillmon had 17 points and 10 rebounds and Laila Phelia scored the go-ahead layup in the final minute for the No. 3 Wolverines, who beat the No. 10-seeded Coyotes in Wichita, Kan., to reach the Elite Eight for the first time.

Phelia scored 14 points and Leigha Brown added 10 for Michigan (25-6).

"We have players that came in here with this vision and this belief that they could do something incredibly special," Wolverines coach Kim Barnes Arico said. "They wanted to be a part of that Block M and that excellence, and here we are sitting at the table going to the Elite Eight. It's just a dream like you could never imagine, but it's people that came together and created something incredibly special. It's awesome."

South Dakota (29-6) was trying to become just the fifth double-digit seed to reach the Elite Eight, but fell short. Hannah Sjerven had 17 points and eight rebounds before fouling out, while Chloe Lamb, the Summit League Player of the Year who averaged 16 points per game, was held to just six points.



JEFF ROBERSON/AP

Michigan's Naz Hillmon, left, and Emily Kiser celebrate a 52-49 Sweet 16 victory over South Dakota Sunday in Wichita, Kan.



PHOTOS BY FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Above: North Carolina State guard Raina Perez, left, strips the ball from Notre Dame guard Dara Mabrey for a steal late in Wolfpack's 66-63 win Saturday in Bridgeport, Conn., in a regional semifinal. Below: North Carolina State coach Wes Moore has his team in its first NCAA regional title game in 24 years.

Art of the steal: Perez lifts Wolfpack over Irish

BY DOUG FEINBERG

Associated Press

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. — Raina Perez decided to come back for one more season and hopefully lift N.C. State to new heights. The senior guard did just that, helping the Wolfpack advance to their first regional final in 24 years.

The senior guard stole the ball at midcourt and made a go-ahead layup with 14 seconds left to send the top-seeded Wolfpack to a 66-63 comeback win over No. 5 Notre Dame on Saturday.

It's the Wolfpack's first trip to the Elite Eight since 1998, when they reached the Final Four.

N.C. State had lost in the Sweet 16 the previous three tournaments and looked as if it was going to make it four straight until the late rally led by Perez and Kai Crutchfield, who also came back for the extra COVID year granted by the NCAA.

"For this group it would have been hard for me to face the fact they they all came back and we still didn't get over the hump," coach Wes Moore said. "That makes me feel really good and I'm so excited for our program to do this, kind of break through. It took a while four years of the Sweet 16 to get through that wall."

It wasn't the first time that Perez came up huge for the Wolfpack on a big stage. She hit the game-winning jumper to lift them to the ACC tournament championship last season.

Trailing 59-51 early in the fourth quarter, N.C. State rallied, scoring 15 of the final 19 points capped by Perez's layup. The Irish had one last chance, but Maddy Westbeld missed a three-pointer from the wing and Perez hit both free throws for the final margin.

"We practice this and knew I could do it," Perez said of the free throws. "I'm just so happy I knocked them down."

The Wolfpack had gotten within 63-62



when Elissa Cunane made the first of two free throws with 36 seconds left. After a Notre Dame timeout, the Irish got the ball inbounds in the backcourt and Dara Mabrey was stripped near midcourt by Perez, who took it in for the layup and the lead. It was their first lead since the 7:43 mark of the second quarter.

N.C. State (32-3) advanced to the regional final Monday night, where it will face second-seeded UConn.

Cunane scored 16 points and Crutchfield added 14 for the Wolfpack, who avenged an earlier loss to the Irish on Feb. 1. That was N.C. State's most recent loss of the season and only defeat in conference play.

"It's a hump we had to get over and the girls are determined and I'm determined and we made it happen," said Crutchfield of reaching the regional final.

Olivia Miles scored 21 points and Westbeld added 13 for Notre Dame (24-9).

"No one thought that we'd do this coming from a team that did not make the tournament last year and fought through a lot of adversity with COVID and injuries and players," Miles said. "It's just incredible to see what we've done, and I'm sure we're going to remember this feeling like we remembered the feeling last year and come back and go even farther."

NCAA TOURNAMENT

Again: Coach K heads to 13th career Final Four

FROM PAGE 24

coach for one more weekend after beating Arkansas 78-69 on Saturday night in the West Region final.

"To see the joy, I can't explain it, because, you know, I'm a grandfather, I've lived through my daughters, I'm living through my grandchildren but now I'm living through these guys," Krzyzewski said on the court before cutting down the net. "Holy mackerel!"

A.J. Griffin scored 18 points, West Region MVP Paolo Banchemo added 16 and second-seeded Duke (32-6) frustrated fourth-seeded Arkansas (28-9) on the offensive end to get back to the Final Four for the first time since Krzyzewski won his fifth championship in 2015.

Coach K will try to follow the path of the only coach to win more NCAA men's titles as John Wooden won his 10th championship in his final season at UCLA in 1975. Krzyzewski broke the tie he had with Wooden for most Final Four appearances with the Blue Devils' commanding win over the Razorbacks.

"It's an honor. Coach Wooden, if he kept coaching, would probably have 24," Krzyzewski said. "But it's a heck of a thing. We've won a lot in the tournament, and we've won a lot of games, but Final Fours are big, obviously, then national championships. That's what you put banners up for."

Duke's upcoming matchup in New Orleans next Saturday will be historic either way — either its first NCAA Tournament meeting with archrival North Carolina or an unfathomable tangle in the national semifinals with 15th-seeded Saint Peter's.

"It's going to be an honor for us to go against whoever is the regional champion of that region," Krzyzewski said. "There's no greater day in college basketball

than when those four regional champions, four champions, get in one arena and play. It's the greatest day for college basketball, and we're honored to be a part of it."

The Blue Devils were in control for most of the second half, using an 10-0 run after Arkansas had cut the deficit to five points early in the half to open up a big cushion. The spurt came following a timeout when Krzyzewski once again switched his team to an uncharacteristic zone after having success doing that in the Sweet 16 against Texas Tech.

"I think going zone helped," said defensive anchor Mark Williams, who had 12 points, 12 rebounds and three blocks. "I think it gave them a different look, slowed them up a little bit."

Jaylin Williams ended that run with an emphatic dunk over Banchemo for a three-point play but it wasn't nearly enough for the Razorbacks, who didn't cut the deficit into single digits until the final minute of the game.

Williams led Arkansas with 19 points and 10 rebounds and JD Notae had 14 points before fouling out. The Razorbacks shot 41.9% for the game but felt proud after turning their season around following an 0-3 start in the Southeastern Conference.

"We all wanted to get further in this, but the fight this team has showed all year has been incredible," Williams said. "For the way that we started off conference, nobody would have expected us to get this far. So I just think that this team just kept fighting the whole year, the whole year, but, of course, we didn't get where we wanted."

Duke closed the first half on an 8-0 run to take a 45-33 lead at the break with Banchemo hitting a three-pointer to start the spurt. Trevor Keels hit another three just before the buzzer.



Arkansas guard Stanley Umude, right, drives to the basket against Duke forward Wendell Moore Jr. during the second half of Saturday's Elite 8 round NCAA men's tournament game in San Francisco,

MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP



DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP

Villanova guard Collin Gillespie, right, celebrates after his team's Elite Eight round win over Houston in the NCAA tournament on Saturday in San Antonio. The Wildcats won 50-44 to advance to the Final Four.

Villanova to 7th Final Four with victory over Houston

Wildcats top gritty Cougars in South Regional final

BY STEPHEN HAWKINS
Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Villanova coach Jay Wright has won national championships with well-balanced and fundamentally sound teams, yet even he knew staying in contention for another title was going to take a rugged and exhaustive effort.

Ugly at times, the final result was beautiful for the Wildcats, who are going to their third Final Four in the past six NCAA Tournaments.

Jermaine Samuels had 16 points and 10 rebounds as Villanova grinded out a 50-44 win over a gritty and athletic Houston team in the South Region final Saturday.

"You just knew watching this team defensively, like you weren't going to come out and just outscore them," Wright said. "We really weren't talking as much at the end about how we were going to score. We were talking about how we were going to stop them."

Caleb Daniels added 14 points for the Wildcats (30-7), and fifth-year senior Collin Gillespie's only made field goal was a clutch shot late, even though Villanova led throughout to clinch the first spot in this year's Final Four in New Orleans.

"It was like playing against our own selves. They were just as physical as we were," Daniels said. "It was a literal street fight, every possession trying to get a rebound."

The Wildcats shot 28.8% from

"It was like playing against our own selves. They were just as physical as we were. It was a literal street fight, every possession trying to get a rebound."

Caleb Daniels
Villanova guard



ERIC GAY/AP

Villanova guard Caleb Daniels blocks a shot by Houston guard Jamal Sheard on Saturday.

the field (15 of 52). The Cougars were only slightly better at 29.8% (17 of 57), missing their last five shots and 10 of 11 overall after cutting an 11-point second-half deficit to two. They made only one of their of 20 attempted three-pointers in their lowest-scoring NCAA tourney game ever.

"We had it turned, we kept getting stops. We were getting stop, stop stop, we just weren't scoring on the other end," Houston coach Kelvin Sampson said. "I remember telling them in the huddle, I think it was a four-point game there ... and we kept getting stops that somebody's going to make a big shot. But we didn't. Credit Villanova."

The Wildcats, seeking their fourth championship overall, will play either Kansas, the only No. 1 seed remaining, or 10th-seeded Miami in a national semifinal next Saturday. They have won two championships in Wright's 22 seasons, in 2016 and 2018.

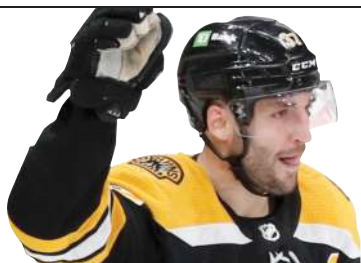
Taze Moore had 15 points and 10 rebounds for the Cougars (32-6), who were denied making consec-

utive Final Four appearances for the first time since 1982-84 during the Phil Slama Jama era. The starting five was completely changed from last season, including Moore and two other senior newcomers.

After Villanova missed three shots on the same possession — and was still without any second-chance points in the game — Moore got the long rebound on the break. After initially slowing things down, Moore scored on a drive against Gillespie, getting Houston within 42-40 with 5:25 left.

As a senior, Samuels goes into the Final Four after being named MVP of the South Region. He is averaging 17.5 points a game in this NCAA tourney — so far.

SPORTS



1,200 and counting
Bruins captain Bergeron reaches career games-played milestone » **NHL, Page 19**

NCAA TOURNAMENT



Blue Devils do it again

Duke extends Coach K's farewell tour to Final Four with win over Arkansas

By **JOSH DUBOW**
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Mike Krzyzewski slowly climbed up the ladder, bowed to the adoring Duke fans and then pointed to his players to give them the credit before cutting the final string of the net.

Coach K's farewell tour will end at his record-setting 13th Final Four.

The Blue Devils delivered their most complete performance of this NCAA Tournament run to extend the career of their Hall of Fame

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SOUTH REGIONAL FINAL

Villanova grinds out victory over gritty Houston **Page 23**

Top: Duke head coach Mike Krzyzewski celebrates while cutting down the net after Duke defeated Arkansas 78-69 in the Elite 8 round of the NCAA men's tournament on Saturday in San Francisco. **Right:** Duke forward AJ Griffin (21) celebrates in front of teammates on the bench after hitting a three-pointer against Arkansas.



PHOTOS BY MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

Nets beat Heat, tighten playoff race in East » Page 20

