

Patriot missile system deploying to Slovakia

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The U.S. is deploying a Patriot missile system to Slovakia, along with troops to operate it, after Slovakia sent a long-range, anti-aircraft battery to Ukraine, chief Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Friday.

Ukrainian officials have been asking other countries to donate the S-300 anti-aircraft system, which is a Soviet Union-era equivalent to the U.S. Patriot missile system, to help beat back the Russian invasion that began Feb. 24.

Kirby did not say how many U.S. troops would accompany the Patriot missile system to Slovakia, but he said the deployment would help ensure “that their air defense can be preserved” as Russia continues its war on neighboring Ukraine.

“It’s part and parcel of the larger effort that we’ve been doing now for quite some time to bolster NATO’s eastern flank and improve our deterrence and defense capabilities there,” Kirby told reporters at the

Pentagon.

It remains unclear when the deployment will begin and how long it will last, but he said it will be “temporary.”

“We’re grateful for [Slovakia’s] willingness to help out Ukraine with this critical need particularly as the war in Ukraine now enters a new phase with a stronger focus by the Russians on the Donbas [region],” Kirby said.

For the past week, senior U.S. defense officials have said Russia is now focusing more on the eastern region of Donbas, home to separatist cities Donetsk and Luhansk. Russia recognized these cities as independent of Ukraine days before invading the country.

The shift in focus comes as all Russian fast-response ground units that once surrounded the Ukraine capital of Kyiv and a second northern city Chernihiv moved back to neighboring Belarus to resupply and refit their forces, a senior defense official said Thursday.

“There’s just nothing left of the [units that

left Ukraine] except the handful of troops and maybe a small number of vehicles, and they’re going to have to be reconstituted or resupplied,” the official said Friday. “We’ve seen others that are down 30% manpower, or even higher.”

However, Russia still has about 80% to 85% of the troops and combat equipment it initially deployed for the invasion six weeks ago, according to the senior U.S. defense official.

Now that combat power will be focused on the Donbas region, it could make Russian forces more lethal than when they had sent units to attack multiple cities in northern, southern and eastern Ukraine, the official said.

“That’s going to be concentrated now in a more confined smaller geographic area [in the Donbas,]” the official said. “Earlier on in this invasion they were working on three massively separate lines of access.”

Since the start of the war, Russia has launched more than 1,500 missiles at Ukraine, the official said.

More civilians flee after Ukraine train station strike

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Civilian evacuations moved forward in patches of battle-scarred eastern Ukraine on Saturday, a day after a missile strike killed at least 52 people and wounded more than 100 at a train station where thousands clamored to leave before an expected Russian onslaught.

In the wake of the attack in Kramatorsk, several European leaders made efforts to show solidarity with Ukraine, with the Austrian chancellor and British prime minister visiting Kyiv — the capital city that Russia failed to capture and where troops retreated days ago. U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, where Johnson’s office said they discussed Britain’s “long-term support.”

Ukrainian authorities have called on civilians to get out ahead of an imminent, stepped-up offensive by Russian forces in the east. With trains not running out of Kramatorsk on Saturday, panicked residents boarded buses or looked for other ways to leave, fearing the

kind of unrelenting assaults and occupations by Russian invaders that delivered food shortages, demolished buildings and death to other cities elsewhere in Ukraine.

“It was terrifying. The horror, the horror,” one resident told British broadcaster Sky, recalling Friday’s attack. “Heaven forbid, to live through this again. No, I don’t want to.”

Ukraine’s state railway company said in a statement that residents of Kramatorsk and other parts of the country’s contested Donbas region could flee through other train stations. Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said 10 evacuation corridors were planned for Saturday.

More than six weeks after Russia first invaded Ukraine, it has pulled its troops from the northern part of the country, around Kyiv, and refocused on the Donbas region in the east. Western military analysts said an arc of territory in eastern Ukraine was under Russian control, from Kharkiv — Ukraine’s second-largest city — in the north to Kherson in the south. But Ukrainian counterattacks are

threatening Russian control of Kherson, according to the Western assessments, and Ukrainian forces are repelling Russian assaults elsewhere in the Donbas region in the southeast.

Zelenskyy called the train station attack the latest example of war crimes by Russian forces and said it should motivate the West to do more to help his country defend itself.

Russia denied it was responsible and accused Ukraine’s military of firing on the station to turn the blame for civilian casualties on Moscow. A Russian Defense Ministry spokesman detailed the missile’s trajectory and Ukrainian troop positions to bolster the argument.

Western experts and Ukrainian authorities insisted that Russia launched the weapon. Remnants of the rocket had the words “For the children” in Russian painted on it. The phrasing seemed to suggest the missile was sent to avenge the loss or subjugation of children, although its exact meaning remained unclear.

'Thundersnow' hits Kaiserslautern area

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — U.S. service members and their families in the Kaiserslautern military community were digging out Saturday morning from an April storm that dumped as much as 6.5 inches of heavy, wet snow in some villages overnight, knocking out power, downing trees, snarling roads and temporarily suspending flight operations on Ramstein Air Base.

Snow started accumulating Friday evening and by 10 p.m., roads were slick with poor visibility due to blizzard-like conditions that included thunder and lightning, a

rare weather phenomenon known as "thundersnow."

The storm left a trail of fallen trees and limbs on and off base.

The storm cut off power to more than 33 communities in the area. Power was still out in some places as of Saturday afternoon, local police said.

Air Force civil engineers were still assessing damage on Ramstein Air Base on Saturday morning after being out all night clearing snow from roads and the flight line, said Kelly Sanders, a spokeswoman for the 86th Airlift Wing. Crews had identified at least eight downed trees, some of which blocked roads or damaged fencing, she said.

Flight line operations on Ramstein were suspended overnight due to the storm, she said. Two incoming aircraft were diverted for landing to Spangdahlem Air Base in southwestern Germany and Frankfurt.

Throughout the region, more than 50 accidents and more than 80 downed trees were recorded. Two people were slightly injured.

Base and school events were canceled, including an Easter egg hunt on Ramstein. The egg hunt has been rescheduled for April 16. The thrift store on Ramstein also closed Saturday.

Stars and Stripes reporter Alexander Riedel contributed to this story.

Fort Bliss hospital: Water supply unsafe to use

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

The hospital at Fort Bliss was on limited operations Thursday after plumbing problems allowed sediment into the facility's water supply, discoloring it and making it unsafe to use, according to officials at the west Texas base.

An environmental team at the base's William Beaumont Army Medical Center tested the water within the hospital facility and confirmed there are no pathogenic or biological concerns, according to officials. However, Col. Brett Venable, the hospital commander, declared the water not safe for

drinking and sterile procedures "out of an abundance of caution."

The hospital, which opened nine months ago, is continuing with limited operations and began diverting trauma cases to other hospitals within the El Paso region, according to Fort Bliss. Officials postponed scheduled elective surgeries and they are sterilizing all equipment in a separate off-site facility. Patients and staff are receiving bottled water.

Staff members on March 25 reported that one department at the hospital identified debris in its water, according to Fort Bliss. At the time, tests indicated the problem was

contained to that department.

But on April 6, hospital staff identified evidence of discoloration and sediment in water in other departments, the base said.

"After multiple tests of the external water supply feeding the hospital, the Fort Bliss Department of Public Works confirmed that water coming from the city of El Paso is not at issue. Hospital officials suspect the root cause of the discoloration and sediment lies within the hospital's internal plumbing," Fort Bliss said.

"We will continue to keep the community informed as the situation develops," Fort Bliss said.

State Department: Trump, Pence gift records missing

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The State Department says it is unable to compile a complete and accurate accounting of gifts presented to former President Donald Trump and other U.S. officials by foreign governments during Trump's final year in office, citing missing data from the White House.

In a report to be published in the Federal Register this week, the department says the Executive Office of the President did not submit information about gifts received by Trump and his family from foreign leaders in 2020. It also says the General Services Administration didn't submit information

about gifts given to former Vice President Mike Pence and White House staffers that year.

The State Department said it sought the missing information from National Archives and Records Administration and the General Services Administration, but was told that "potentially relevant records" are not available because of access restrictions related to retired records.

The State Department's Office of Protocol reported the situation in footnotes to a partial list of gifts received by U.S. officials in 2020. The office publishes such lists annually in part to guard against potential con-

flicts of interest. A preview of the 2020 report was posted on the Federal Register website on Friday.

The report notes that the lack of gift information could be related to internal oversights as the protocol office neglected to "submit the request for data to all reporting agencies prior to January 20, 2021," when the Trump administration ended and the Biden administration began. However, it also noted that there had been a "lack of adequate recordkeeping pertaining to diplomatic gifts" between Jan. 20, 2017, when Trump took office, and his departure from the White House four years later.

Whitmer plot: 2 freed, hung jury for 2

Associated Press

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — A jury acquitted two men of all charges in a plot to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer but couldn't reach verdicts against the two alleged leaders, a stunning defeat for the government after a weeklong trial that centered on a remarkable FBI sting operation just before the 2020 election.

Whitmer did not immediately comment on Friday's outcome, though her chief of staff was critical, saying Americans are "liv-

ing through the normalization of political violence."

The result was announced on the fifth day of deliberations, a few hours after the jury said it had been struggling to find unanimity on charges in the 10-count indictment. The judge told the panel to keep working, but jurors emerged again after lunch to say they still were deadlocked on some counts.

Daniel Harris, 24, and Brandon Caserta, 33, were found not guilty of conspiracy. In addition, Harris was acquitted of charges

related to explosives and a gun.

The jury could not reach verdicts for Adam Fox, 38, and Barry Croft Jr., 46, which means the government can put them on trial again for two conspiracy charges. Croft also faces a separate explosives charge.

No juror spoke publicly about the mixed result.

"Obviously we're disappointed with the outcome. ... We have two defendants that are awaiting trial and we'll get back to work on that," U.S. Attorney Andrew Birge said.

Will Smith banned from Oscars for 10 years

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The motion picture academy on Friday banned Will Smith from attending the Oscars or any other academy event for 10 years following his slap of Chris Rock at the Academy Awards.

The move comes after a meeting of the academy's Board of Governors to discuss a response to Smith's actions.

"The 94th Oscars were meant to be a celebration of the many individuals in our community who did incredible work this past year; however, those moments were overshadowed by the unacceptable and harmful behavior we saw Mr. Smith exhibit on stage," the academy said in a statement.

"I accept and respect the Academy's decision," Smith said in response. He preemptively resigned from the academy late

last month during the run-up to the meeting, calling his actions "shocking, painful, and inexcusable."

Smith will keep the Oscar he won after the slap, and he will remain eligible to be nominated for and to win more of them in the 10-year period, though he can't show up to accept them.

The academy also apologized for its handling of the situation and allowing Smith to stay and accept his best actor award for "King Richard."

"During our telecast, we did not adequately address the situation in the room. For this, we are sorry," the academy said. "This was an opportunity for us to set an example for our guests, viewers and our Academy family around the world, and we fell short — unprepared for the unprece-

dent."

In a statement in the days following the Oscars, the academy said Smith was asked to leave the ceremony but refused.

But it's not clear how the message was delivered to Smith or what form it took, and several media outlets reported that he was never formally told to leave the Dolby Theatre. The Los Angeles Times reported in a story Thursday that Oscars producer Will Packer told Smith: "Officially, we don't want you to leave. We want you to stay."

The academy in its Friday statement also expressed "deep gratitude to Mr. Rock for maintaining his composure under extraordinary circumstances."

With his resignation last week, Smith lost the ability to vote for nominees and winners.

Amazon seeks to overturn Staten Island union victory

Associated Press

Amazon is seeking to overturn the historic union victory at one of its New York City warehouses, arguing in a legal filing Friday that union organizers and the National Labor Relations Board acted in a way that tainted the results. It now wants to redo the election.

The e-commerce giant listed 25 objections in the filing obtained by The Associated Press, accusing organizers with the nascent Amazon Labor Union of intimidating workers to vote for the union, a claim an attorney representing the group has called "patently absurd."

"The employees have spoken," Eric Milner, the attorney, said in a statement Thursday after Amazon's initial planned objec-

tions were made public in another legal filing.

"Amazon is choosing to ignore that, and instead engage in stalling tactics to avoid the inevitable — coming to the bargaining table and negotiating for a contract" on behalf of the workers, he said.

Warehouse workers in Staten Island cast 2,654 votes — or about 55% — in favor of a union, giving the fledgling group enough support to pull off a victory last Friday.

In one objection, Amazon said organizers "intentionally created hostile confrontations in front of eligible voters," by interrupting the mandatory meetings the company held to persuade its employees to reject the union drive. In a filing released earlier this month, the company disclosed it

spent about \$4.2 million last year on labor consultants.

In another objection, Amazon targeted organizers' distribution of cannabis to workers, saying the labor board "cannot condone such a practice as a legitimate method of obtaining support for a labor organization." New York legalized the recreational use of marijuana last year for those over 21. Milner, the attorney representing the union, said Amazon is grasping at straws.

Distributing cannabis "is no different than distributing free t-shirts and it certainly did not act to interfere with the election," he said.

The company also accused organizers of improperly polling workers.

SC passes bill banning vaccine requirement

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — The South Carolina Senate has passed a bill that would ban businesses from refusing to serve people who haven't gotten the COVID-19 vaccine and prevent public employers from requiring the shots.

The Senate approved the bill 29-12 on Wednesday. Senators made changes to a House bill which that chamber passed in December, meaning the proposal returns to the House to see if it accepts those changes.

Senators initially put in a large unemployment tax penalty for private businesses that fired unvaccinated workers. But instead they compromised to allow fired workers to collect unemployment benefits, retroactive nine months.

Opponents of the Republican-backed bill questioned why a group that typically says government shouldn't tell businesses what to do is taking up this fight.

Supporters of the bill said they were trying to protect the choice of people who don't

want to take the COVID-19 vaccine.

The proposal bans state and local governments and public schools from requiring vaccines for their employers, contractors or students and also says first responders can't be fired for refusing a COVID-19 shot.

The House can either agree to the Senate's changes, sending the bill to Gov. Henry McMaster's desk, or insist on its version of the bill, meaning a small group of House members and senators will have to work on a compromise.

Alaska man gets 32 months in prison for threats to kill senators

Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — A rural Alaska man who threatened to assassinate both of Alaska's U.S. senators in a series of profane messages left at their congressional offices was sentenced Friday to 32 months in prison.

Jay Allen Johnson was also fined \$5,000, ordered to serve three years of supervised release after his prison sentence, and is barred by a protective order from contacting U.S. Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan, their family and staff members for three years.

"Nothing excuses this conduct, threatening our elected officials, an act that attacks our very system of governance," U.S. Attorney John E. Kuhn Jr. of the District of Alaska said in a statement. "The erosion of civility in our political discourse will never justify threats or acts of violence. Johnson's actions must be punished, and the Department of Justice will always work to ensure our elected officials can serve without fear of harm."

Johnson, who said he was too old and ill to carry out his threats, partially blamed his behavior on a mixture of pain medications and alcohol along with the isolation during the pandemic prevalent during the five-month span of 2021 when he left 17 threatening voicemails.

Johnson, 65, of Delta Junction, pleaded guilty in January to two counts of threatening to kill a U.S. official in January. Sentencing was carried out at U.S. District Court in Fairbanks.

The government sought a sentence of 37 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release along with the protective order.

Johnson sought a 30-month term or super-

vised release.

"The defendant's conduct is simply unacceptable in a democracy" U.S. Assistant Attorney Ryan Tansey wrote in the government's sentencing memo filed before the sentencing hearing. "As political violence and domestic extremism grow, violent intimidation of public officials must result in serious criminal consequences."

In one message left at Murkowski's office, Johnson asked, ".50 caliber shell ... you ever see what that does to a human head? Yeah, well...."

In another message to Murkowski, he said: "I will find out all your properties, and I will burn everything you hope to have, and I will burn everything you hope to own."

Johnson also blamed her for the undocumented workers who have come into the country.

"Your life is worth \$5,000, that's all it's worth," he said in a message to Murkowski's office. "And as you let in these terrorists, and assassins, guess what, I'm going to use them. ... I'm going to use them to come and assassinate your f—— a—."

In a message left for Sullivan, Johnson said he was tired of politicians destroying the country. He claimed he would get out his .50 caliber and start a GoFundMe page for the shells. "And I'm coming with a vengeance, motherf——," he said.

"Sadly, political violence of all stripes has become a clear and present danger to public safety and the functioning of our democracy," the government memo states. "The defendant's conduct showed his rejection of that democracy and his willingness to resort to repeated violent threats when duly elected representatives take actions with which he disagrees."

Palestinian man killed in battle with Israeli forces

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israeli troops on Saturday raided the West Bank hometown of a Palestinian who carried out a deadly shooting in Tel Aviv, sparking a gunbattle that left at least one Palestinian militant dead, according to Palestinian officials.

The Israeli military said its troops were carrying out what it said was a counterterrorism operation in the city of Jenin and the adjacent Jenin refugee camp. That's the area in the northern West Bank where the gunman in Thursday's attack had lived. It said the troops came under fire and returned fire at the assailants. There were no Israeli casualties and the forces seized an automatic rifle used by one of the militants, the military said.

It gave no more details, but the Israeli news site Ynet said troops surrounded the attacker's home to arrest some of his relatives.

The Palestinian news agency Wafa shared a video on Twitter in which gunshots could be heard. The Palestinian Health Ministry said at least one Palestinian was killed and 10 wounded. The Islamic Jihad militant group identified the dead man as one of its fighters.

Jenin is considered a stronghold of Palestinian militants. Israeli forces often come under fire when operating in the area. Even the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the occupied West Bank and coordinates with Israel on security matters, appears to have little control.

In Thursday's shooting, a Palestinian gunman opened fire in central Tel Aviv, killing three people. The attacker, identified as Raad Hazem, 28, of Jenin, was later killed by Israeli forces.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Bank robbery suspect recognized at strip club

SC GREENWOOD — A suspect in a bank robbery was captured after he was recognized a short time later at a strip club in South Carolina's Upstate region, authorities said.

The 50-year-old man is suspected of robbing a Wells Fargo bank branch in Greenwood, The Index-Journal reported.

The man slipped a bank teller a note stating his intention to rob the bank, Greenwood police Officer Jonathan Link said. He was given an undisclosed amount of money.

He then decided to visit a strip club in Greenville, where someone recognized him, Greenwood Police Chief T.J. Chaudoin said.

Man bought Coachella tickets with firm's funds

CA LOS ANGELES — A Southern California man was sentenced to two years in federal prison for embezzling more than \$350,000 from his employer to pay for Coachella tickets, a hot tub and other extravagant personal expenses.

As manager of the tech firm Networks 2000, Matthew P. Hernandez controlled finances and was able to transfer company money to his personal accounts, the U.S. Attorney's Office said.

He issued direct deposits from the company's checking account to pay off personal credit card debt and used corporate credit cards to buy luxury items including a home gym, a \$3,500 hot tub and a watch priced more than \$1,000, the Los

Angeles Times reported.

The scheme involved hundreds of transactions over seven years, prosecutors said.

Hernandez, 46, pleaded guilty to wire fraud. The sentencing also ordered him to pay restitution of more than \$356,600 to the San Diego-based company, the Times said.

Wild horse becomes pet after tourists took it

NC HARKERS ISLAND — A newborn wild horse will be raised as a domesticated animal after well-meaning tourists took it with them as they left a North Carolina barrier island, officials at a national park said.

The foal followed a group of visitors on Shackleford Banks for two hours on March 26 with no other horses around, according to a news release from the Cape Lookout National Seashore.

When the visitors moved their boat to leave the island, the young horse tried to follow them. The park said the group was worried that the newborn would drown, so they lifted it into their boat and left.

The tourists were cited for removing the horse, and the park said it's working with them to assist with future educational opportunities and community service projects that will benefit the banks and its horses.

Armed men kidnap US nun in Burkina Faso

LA NEW ORLEANS — Ten gunmen kidnapped an 83-year-old American nun from her bed in the West African nation of Burkina

Faso and destroyed almost everything in the house where she lived, but left four other women unhurt, a Louisiana official for the order said.

Sister Suellen Tennyson was taken "from her room in her pajamas — no shoes, no glasses, no phone, no medicine," Sister Ann Lacour, U.S. congregational leader for the Marianites of Holy Cross in Covington, La., told The Associated Press.

Tennyson had been a missionary in Burkina Faso since 2014, Lacour said.

2 guards charged in jail smuggling schemes

NY NEW YORK — Two corrections officers were accused of accepting bribes and smuggling contraband including cell phones into New York City's Rikers Island jail complex, according to unsealed criminal complaints.

The guards were arrested along with four other people in connection with two separate schemes, said Breon Peace, U.S. attorney for the eastern district of New York, in a release.

In one scheme, Katrina Patterson, 31, a corrections officer since June 2016, was accused of accepting more than \$34,000 from two women in order to bring drugs and cell phones inside the complex's facilities for an inmate in custody there. Both of the women and the inmate were also charged.

11 indicted for marriage fraud, immigration fraud

MA BOSTON — Eleven people were indicted for allegedly arranging sham marriages and submitting

fraudulent green card applications to circumvent immigration laws, Massachusetts U.S. Attorney Rachael Rollins announced.

Rollins said the defendants, who live in California, were indicted on conspiracy to commit marriage fraud and immigration document fraud in connection with operating a large-scale marriage fraud "agency" in Los Angeles.

Rollins said the charges stem from hundreds of sham marriages that were arranged between foreign national "clients" and U.S. citizens from 2016 until last month.

The agency allegedly prepared and submitted false petitions, applications and other documents to substantiate the sham marriages and secure adjustment of clients' immigration statuses for a fee of \$20,000 to \$30,000, Rollins added.

Suspected transporter of migrants crashes

AZ SIERRA VISTA — Sierra Vista police said a Tucson man suspected of transporting migrants who'd entered the country illegally was arrested after speeding through a school zone, hitting a bicyclist and crashing his vehicle in a residential area.

Ezekiel Frias, 28 was arrested on suspicion of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and multiple other charges, a police statement said.

Police said a U.S. Customs and Border Protection helicopter observed people hurriedly getting out of Frias' vehicle along Highway 92 south of Sierra Vista before driving north.

-From Associated Press

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Three Black golfers marks faint progress

Associated Press

The only color Harold Varner III was focused on at his first Masters was red.

And maybe, if he let his mind wander just a bit, there was a thought of green.

As in a green jacket.

Hardly looking like a rookie in the increasingly fierce conditions at windy Augusta National, the 31-year-old North Carolinian posted his second straight below-par round on Friday — a pair of red numbers that pushed him into contention heading into the weekend.

But let's talk about another color.

Varner is Black, and he's apparently part of something unprecedented at a course that cherishes its history and traditions as much as any other, even though many of them are relics of a much uglier era.

It's believed to be the first time that three Black golfers — in this case, Varner, Tiger Woods and Cameron Champ — have been part of a Masters field.

"That's cool," Varner said. "I would hope to see more, but it's

going to be up to that person. It's not going to be the color of their skin that's going to get them here. You're going to get here on merit, and I think that's awesome."

Coming on the heels of America's racial reckoning in the summer of 2020 and the death a few months ago of Augusta pioneer Lee Elder, the significance of this moment should not be ignored.

But it shouldn't be made into something bigger than it is.

A quarter-century removed from Woods' historic first Masters victory, there are still far too few Black players in golf's pipeline. A sport that long discriminated against people of color still has an awful long ways to go to get more of them on the course.

Think of it this way: Three Black golfers represent a mere 3.3% of the 91 players who qualified for the first major of the year. Woods remains the only Black golfer to win a major championship.

Varner knows that a lack of access is one of the big problems facing potential Black golf-

fers.

This is an expensive sport to play. The best courses are rarely located in Black communities. Varner hopes that his Masters debut will help to break down some of those barriers.

"I think a lot of times in the Black community, it's more about the economic issues," he said. "It's just hard to play golf. You can't just walk up and play golf for a reasonable price. I'm very adamant about helping those people. If they're Black, I'm going to help them. If they're white, I'm going to help them."

It's understandable that Varner wants to be known as more than a Black golfer. He wants people to respect him for the quality of his shots rather than the color of his skin.

"I've never been asked about being a Black golfer until I got on the PGA Tour," he said.

Of course, it was more than economics that kept Black golfers off the best courses for the bulk of the sport's history.

The PGA of America had a repulsive "Caucasian-only"

rule until 1961. It wasn't until 1975 that Elder became the first Black player to qualify for the Masters. Augusta National didn't allow its first Black member until 1990 — and only then to slide through the controversy over Shoal Creek Country Club hosting the PGA Championship while refusing to allow Black golfers as members.

Augusta National's sexist side also was rekindled this week, when Chairman Fred Ridley was asked about the 10th anniversary of the club allowing women as members.

Yep, that no-brainer of a decision was a mere decade ago.

"Our culture is better," Ridley said, sounding almost apologetic that it took so long. "We are a better club, a better organization, and we're proud to have women among our membership."

"When anything happens or any idea that you had turns out well and you're pleased about it, you might always say, 'Well, why didn't we do that sooner?' That's a fair thought. I wish we would have."

Scheffler builds 5-shot lead after two rounds of Masters

Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Scottie Scheffler strolled off Augusta National with both hands in his pockets as if he had just finished a casual round at home in the late afternoon.

The Masters was anything but that Friday.

The wind roaring through the Georgia pines gave Tiger Woods and so many others all they could handle, a relentless fight from tee to green. And then Scheffler made it feel even tougher.

His 5-under 67 matched the low score of the day and gave him a five-shot lead, tying a Masters record after 36 holes. The last four players who led by

five shots going into the weekend went on to win. The lone exception was Harry "Light-horse" Cooper in 1936.

That brought little more than a shrug from the No. 1 player in the world.

"I think I'm still playing against the golf course out there," Scheffler said. "And there's a bunch of other guys in the field. So I can't be paying too much attention to them either way."

Scheffler is beating them all, along with an increasingly difficult Augusta National.

"You live on a knife's edge every hole, honestly," said Adam Scott, who played in Scheffler's group. "And I was playing with

a guy who made it look easy. But that's how he's playing at the moment."

In his debut as the new No. 1 player in the world, Scheffler looked the part. He was bogey-free over the final 15 holes, played smart from the fairways and trusted every shot he faced even as the wind was as strong as it was fickle.

Scheffler, the 25-year-old Texas Longhorn, has won three of his last five starts on the PGA Tour and doesn't appear to be overwhelmed by the stage of Augusta National.

"I put myself in position, where I'm in position to win this golf tournament. I couldn't ask for anything more after 36

holes," Scheffler said. "My game feels like it's in a good spot. I've just got to keep doing what I'm doing and not overthink things."

He was at 8-under 136, five shots clear of defending champion Hideki Matsuyama (69), former champion Charl Schwartzel (69), former British Open champion Shane Lowry (68) and 18-hole leader Sungjae Im (74).

Woods was nine shots behind, a tough task even on two good legs.

Despite four bogeys after five holes, Woods patched together a 74 and made it to the weekend in his first 72-hole event since the November 2020 Masters.

Manaea dominant as Padres top D-backs

Associated Press

PHOENIX — New Padres manager Bob Melvin had one of the best seats in the house to watch new San Diego starter Sean Manaea throw seven brilliant innings of no-hit baseball on Friday night.

Just like old times.

Manaea was dominant on the mound in his first outing with his new team, Jurickson Profar hit a two-run homer and San Diego beat the Arizona Diamondbacks 3-0 for its first win of the season.

“First look in a Padres uniform was pretty darn good,” Melvin said of Manaea’s night.

Melvin and Manaea are transplants from the Oakland Athletics. Melvin was hired in the offseason after 11 seasons with the Athletics and Manaea was added in a trade earlier this week.

Said Manaea: “Everything was working.”

The left-hander handed his no-hitter off to the Padres bullpen a night after Yu Darvish did

the same. Tim Hill gave up a leadoff single to David Peralta in the eighth, the second day in a row the left-handed reliever blew a no-hit bid.

The Padres are the only team in the modern era to have a starting pitcher give up no hits through at least six innings in back-to-back games, according to STATS.

Manaea (1-0) was pulled after throwing 88 pitches, including 66 strikes. Melvin’s decision wasn’t much of a surprise since pitchers all around the game are on strict limits because of the lockout-shortened spring training.

Blue Jays 10, Rangers 8: Lourdes Gurriel Jr. doubled in the go-ahead run in the seventh inning and host Toronto erased a seven-run deficit and completed the biggest opening day comeback in seven decades to beat Texas.

Yankees 6, Red Sox 5 (11): Josh Donaldson capped his Yankees debut with an RBI single in the 11th inning, lifting

New York over visiting Boston for its first walk-off victory on opening day since Yogi Berra scored in 1957.

Mets 7, Nationals 3: A benches-clearing interruption after Mets star Francisco Lindor was hit by a pitch overshadowed Max Scherzer’s return to Nationals Park even as the three-time Cy Young Award winner pitched New York past Washington.

Astros 13, Angels 6: Jeremy Peña hit his first major league home run while his parents were being interviewed on the broadcast, Kyle Tucker went deep twice and Houston pounded host Los Angeles.

Tigers 5, White Sox 4: Javier Báez wound up with a winning RBI single on a game-ending replay reversal in his debut with host Detroit.

Rays 2, Orioles 1: Wander Franco had three hits, Francisco Mejía snapped an eighth-inning tie with a pinch-hit sacrifice fly and Tampa Bay beat visiting Baltimore.

Phillies 9, Athletics 5: Kyle Schwarber homered in his first at-bat with host Philadelphia, reigning NL MVP Bryce Harper knocked in a run and Aaron Nola struck out seven.

Dodgers 5, Rockies 3: Freddie Freeman reached base three times and scored a run in his Los Angeles debut, helping Walker Buehler (1-0) and the Dodgers beat host Colorado.

Braves 7, Reds 6: Charlie Morton allowed only two hits while pitching into the sixth inning while returning from a broken leg, Travis d’Arnaud drove in three runs and Atlanta held off visiting Cincinnati.

Giants 6, Marlins (10): Austin Slater doubled with two outs in the 10th inning for his first career walkoff RBI, sending host San Francisco past Miami.

Mariners 2, Twins 1: Reigning AL Cy Young Award winner Robbie Ray tossed seven impressive innings in his Seattle debut, Mitch Haniger homered and the Mariners opened with a victory over host Minnesota.

Doncic has 39 points, 16th technical foul in Mavs win

Associated Press

DALLAS — Luka Doncic had 39 points, 11 rebounds and his 16th technical foul of the season for the Dallas Mavericks, who will open the playoffs at home for the first time since 2011 after their 128-78 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers on Friday night.

The Mavericks will play their regular-season finale Sunday without Doncic, unless the technical foul is rescinded by the NBA office. If upheld, his 16th of the season means an automatic one-game suspension.

“I got a technical asking how is that not a foul ... that’s it,” said Doncic, who was undercut and knocked down by Portland’s Elijah Hughes when taking a shot from beyond midcourt at

the end of the first quarter. “If you ask me, I think 100 percent it should be rescinded, because it wasn’t a tech. No warning, no nothing. I was just asking.”

Crew chief Tony Brothers, who issued the tech, told a pool reporter after the game Doncic wouldn’t stop complaining.

Dwight Powell added 18 points, Dorian Finney-Smith 15 and Spencer Dinwiddie 14 for the Mavericks (51-30), who are guaranteed a top-four seed in the Western Conference. None of the Mavs’ top four scorers played after the third quarter.

Dallas will open a first-round playoff series at home for the first time since its 2011 NBA championship season. That was when Jason Kidd, now the head coach, was the point guard.

They have lost first-round series their last six playoff appearances since.

Suns 111, Jazz 105: Devin Booker scored 33 points and NBA-leading Phoenix overcame a 17-point deficit in the fourth quarter to beat host Utah.

Nets 118, Cavaliers 107: Kevin Durant scored 36 points, leading two fourth-quarter surges that carried host Brooklyn into a tie for seventh place with Cleveland in the Eastern Conference.

Hornets 133, Bulls 117: LaMelo Ball scored 24 points as visiting Charlotte ran away from Chicago.

Bucks 131, Pistons 101: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 30 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists to help Milwaukee rout

host Detroit.

Heat 113, Hawks 109: Bam Adebayo made the go-ahead dunk with 27 seconds remaining and scored 27 points in Miami’s comeback victory over visiting Atlanta.

Lakers 120, Thunder 101: Stanley Johnson scored a season-high 21 points as host Los Angeles beat Oklahoma City to snap an eight-game losing streak.

Raptors 117, Rockets 115: Pascal Siakam had 29 points and 10 rebounds, Gary Trent Jr. made the winning layup with 4.8 seconds left and host Toronto beat Houston.

Knicks 114, Wizards 92: Obi Toppin scored a career-high 35 points as New York beat host Washington.

Blues beat Wild in OT, tie battle for home ice

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Robert Thomas scored at 1:27 of overtime to give the St. Louis Blues a 4-3 victory over the Minnesota Wild on Friday night.

Thomas took a pass from Vladimir Tarasenko and scored on a slap shot from the left faceoff circle.

The Blues overcame a 3-1 deficit to pull even with Minnesota in the Central Division in the battle for home ice in the first round of the playoffs.

Brayden Schenn, Pavel Buchnevich and Justin Faulk also scored for St. Louis, and Ville Husso made 35 saves.

Faulk snapped in a wrist shot from the left faceoff circle at 4:16 of third to pull the Blues within one.

Schenn tied it at with 9:32 left. He skated down the left side, cut to the middle beat goalie Cam Talbot high with a backhander.

Kirill Kaprizov scored his 41st goal for Minnesota to move within a goal of tying the Wild season record held by Marian Gaborik (2007-08) and Eric Staal (2017-18). Kevin Fiala and Jacob Middleton also scored for Minnesota.

The Blues are on a 6-0-1 run.

Avalanche 5, Jets 4 (OT): Cale Makar

scored a power-play goal 2:42 into overtime to lift Colorado over host Winnipeg.

Andre Burakovsky and Nathan MacKinnon each had a goal and an assist, and Nicolas Aube-Kubel, Erik Johnson and Nathan MacKinnon also scored for the Avalanche, who have won five straight. Makar added an assist. Pavel Francouz stopped 39 shots for Colorado, which is 9-1-1 in its last 11 games.

Panthers 4, Sabres 3: Sam Bennett scored with 37.3 seconds left to lift host Florida.

Sam Reinhart and Claude Giroux each had a goal and an assist, and Patric Hornqvist also scored for the Panthers. Sergei Bobrovsky made 19 saves.

Jeff Skinner, Mark Pysyk and Victor Olofsson scored for Buffalo, and Dustin Tokarski stopped 39 shots.

Islanders 2, Hurricanes 1: Kyle Palmieri scored with 14.1 seconds remaining in a wild final minute to lift New York over host Carolina.

Ilya Sorokin needed only 19 saves to pick up the victory, although he was less than a minute away from matching a franchise record for shutouts in a season. But Vincent Trocheck's goal with 56.8 seconds to play tied it for Carolina.

Coyle's tally in overtime lifts Boston

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Charlie Coyle scored 3:37 into overtime to give the Boston Bruins a 2-1 victory over the Tampa Bay Lightning on Friday night.

Coyle picked up a loose puck to the right of Tampa Bay goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy, came out in front and scored on a quick wrist shot.

"Jake (DeBrusk) made a nice play to pop the puck loose," Coyle said after scoring his 16th of the season. "It bounced right to me. Good on Jake to get it,"

DeBrusk scored the other goal for Boston, which got 28 saves from Linus Ullmark.

"This was a goaltending battle," said Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy, whose team improved to 8-3-0 in its past 11 games. "Tonight we were one goal better."

Pierre-Édouard Bellemare had the only goal for Tampa Bay, which fell one point behind Boston in the race for third place in the

Atlantic Division.

Playing behind a contending team is something new for Ullmark, who signed a five-year contract with the Bruins last summer after spending pieces of six seasons playing for the Buffalo Sabres, who have not made the playoffs since 2011.

"It's just fun to play these sorts of games," he said. "We still have 11 (regular-season) games to go, and we have to focus on them and not get ahead of ourselves."

The only two goals in regulation came early in the second period, when DeBrusk and Bellemare scored less than three minutes apart.

DeBrusk gave Boston a 1-0 lead when he scored his 22nd of the season 47 seconds into the middle period. Brad Marchand slipped a pass to a wide-open DeBrusk in front of the net, and he slid a backhander through Vasilevskiy's five-hole for his seventh goal in seven games.

Steelers QB Haskins hit by truck, killed

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Dwayne Haskins was killed Saturday when he was hit by a dump truck while he was walking on a South Florida highway.

Florida Highway Patrol spokeswoman Lt. Indiana Miranda confirmed the accident on westbound Interstate 595. Haskins was pronounced dead at the scene.

Miranda didn't say why Haskins, 24, was on the highway at the time. The accident caused the highway to be shut down for several hours.

Haskins' death sparked an outpouring of grief from multiple corners of the NFL, particularly with his former teammates with the Pittsburgh Steelers and Washington Commanders.

"I am devastated and at a loss for words with the unfortunate passing of Dwayne Haskins," Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said. "He quickly became part of our Steelers family upon his arrival in Pittsburgh and was one of our hardest workers, both on the field and in our community. Dwayne was a great teammate, but even more so a tremendous friend to so many. I am truly heartbroken."

"Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Kalabrya, and his entire family during this difficult time."

Haskins was selected by Washington in the first round of the 2019 draft out of Ohio State. He started seven games as a rookie, going 2-5. He was 1-5 in six starts the next season for the team, then was released.

Washington coach Ron Rivera said he was "absolutely heartbroken" to learn of Haskins' death.

"Dwayne was a talented young man who had a long life ahead of him," Rivera said in a release. "This is a very sad time and I am honestly at a loss for words. I know I speak for the rest of our team in saying he will be sorely missed. Our entire team is sending our heartfelt condolences and thoughts and prayers to the Haskins family at this time."