

## Russia bombs Kyiv during UN chief visit

*Associated Press*

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russia of trying to humiliate the United Nations by raining missiles on Kyiv during a visit to the city by the U.N. chief, a deadly attack that shattered weeks of relative calm in the capital.

Ukraine's forces, meanwhile, fought to hold off Russian attempts to advance in the south and east, Zelenskyy reported. And U.N.-backed efforts to arrange safe passage for residents trapped in the ruins of Mariupol continued. Numerous previous attempts to evacuate civilians have fallen through.

Russia pounded targets all over Ukraine on Thursday, hitting a residential high-rise and another building in Kyiv just as life seemed to be getting a little closer to normal. U.S.-funded broadcaster Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty said one of its journalists was killed.

In an apparent reference to the attack in Kyiv, Russia's military said it had destroyed "production buildings" at the Artem defense factory.

The bombardment came barely an hour after Zelenskyy held a news conference with U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres, who toured some of the destruction in and

around Kyiv and condemned attacks on civilians.

"This says a lot about Russia's true attitude toward global institutions, about attempts of the Russian leadership to humiliate the U.N. and everything the organization represents," Zelenskyy said late Thursday in his nightly video address to the nation. "Therefore, it requires a correspondingly powerful response."

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said the attack was Russian President Vladimir Putin's way of giving "his middle finger" to Guterres.

The strikes were the boldest Russian attack on the capital since Moscow's forces retreated weeks ago following their failure to take the city. Russia is now pushing into the Donbas, the country's eastern industrial region, which the Kremlin says is its main objective.

Volodymyr Fesenko, a Ukrainian political analyst and head of the Kyiv-based Penta Center think tank, said the Kyiv attack carried a message: "Russia is sending a clear signal about its intention to continue the war despite the international pressure."

Getting a full picture of the unfolding battle in the east has been difficult because airstrikes and artillery barrages have made it

extremely dangerous for reporters to move around.

Both Ukraine and the Moscow-backed rebels fighting in the east also have introduced tight restrictions on reporting from the combat zone.

But so far, Russia's troops and the separatist forces appear to have made only minor gains, and Britain's Defense Ministry said those have been achieved at significant cost to the Kremlin's forces.

One aim of Guterres' visit was to secure the evacuation of people from the gutted southern port of Mariupol, including a shattered steelworks where an estimated 2,000 Ukrainian defenders and 1,000 civilians were holed up in the last major stronghold of resistance in the city.

The Soviet-era steel plant has a vast underground network of bunkers able to withstand airstrikes. But the situation has grown more dire after the Russians dropped "bunker busters" and other bombs.

"Locals who manage to leave Mariupol say it is hell, but when they leave this fortress, they say it is worse," said Mariupol Mayor Vadym Boichenko. "They are begging to get saved," he said, adding: "There, it's not a matter of days, it's a matter of hours."

## Relatives say former US Marine killed in Ukraine fight

*Associated Press*

A 22-year-old former U.S. Marine was killed alongside Ukrainian forces in the war with Russia, his relatives told news outlets in what's the first known death of an American citizen fighting in Ukraine.

Willy Joseph Cancel was killed Monday while working for a military contracting company that sent him to Ukraine, his mother, Rebecca Cabrera, told CNN. Cancel had recently worked as a corrections officer in Tennessee and had previously served in the Marines from 2017-21, joining the service the same year he graduated from high school.

Cabrera said her son had signed up to work with the private military contractor shortly before fighting began in Ukraine on Feb. 24. She told CNN he agreed to go to Ukraine.

"He wanted to go over because he believed in what Ukraine was fighting for, and he wanted to be a part of it to contain it there so it didn't come here, and that maybe our American soldiers wouldn't have to be involved in it," she said.

Cabrera said her son's body has not been found.

"They haven't found his body," she said. "They are trying, the men that were with him, but it was either grab his body or get killed, but we would love for him to come back to us."

She said her son flew to Poland on March 12 and entered Ukraine shortly after. She said he was fighting alongside men from a number of countries.

Cancel had also served as a volunteer firefighter in New York and leaves behind a 7-month-old son, according to an online fun-

draising page set up by a man identifying himself as his father. His wife received the call informing her of his death on Tuesday, the page said. The father wrote that Cancel made the decision in early March to go to Ukraine because he wanted to defend innocent people.

Cancel graduated from Newburgh Free Academy in New York in 2017, the school district said.

While in the Marines, Cancel served as a rifleman and was stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

He was given a bad conduct discharge after he was convicted of violating a lawful general order, Marine Corps spokesperson Maj. Jim Stenger said.

He had no war zone deployments, Stenger said. No other details on the bad conduct conviction were provided.

# NATO plans troop drills to deter Russia hostility

*Associated Press*

LONDON — Tens of thousands of troops from NATO and other north Atlantic nations will take part in a series of military exercises across Europe in the coming weeks as western countries seek to deter Russian aggression.

The exercises, backed by aircraft, tanks, artillery and armored assault vehicles, will take place in Finland, Poland, North Macedonia and along the Estonian-Latvian border. They will include troops from NATO and the Joint Expeditionary Force, which includes non-NATO members Finland and Sweden.

“The scale of the deployment, coupled with the professionalism, training and agility of the British Army, will deter aggression at a scale not seen in Europe this century,” Lt. Gen. Ralph Wooddisse, commander of the U.K.’s field army, said in a statement.

The deployments will begin this week in Finland, where troops from the U.S., Bri-

tain, Estonia and Latvia will participate in Exercise Arrow to improve their ability to work alongside Finnish forces.

Also this week, some 4,500 troops will take part in Exercise Swift Response, which will include parachute drops and helicopter-borne assaults in North Macedonia. The operation will include forces from U.S., Britain, Albania, France and Italy.

Next month, 18,000 NATO troops, including forces from Britain, France and Denmark, will take part in Exercise Hedgehog along the Estonia-Latvia border.

In late May, about 1,000 British soldiers will join troops from 11 other nations for Exercise Defender in Poland.

“The security of Europe has never been more important,” U.K. Defense Secretary Ben Wallace said. “These exercises will see our troops join forces with allies and partners across NATO and the Joint Expeditionary Force in a show of solidarity and strength in one of the largest shared deployments since the Cold War.”

## NATO intercept Russian jets over Black, Baltic seas

*Stars and Stripes*

NATO fighter jets positioned around the Baltic and Black seas scrambled multiple times over four days to track and intercept Russian aircraft flying near allied airspace, NATO said Friday.

Allied radars had tracked an unspecified number of unidentified aircraft since Tuesday, NATO officials said.

“Russian military aircraft often do not transmit a transponder code indicating their position and altitude, do not file a flight plan, or do not communicate with air traffic controllers, posing a potential risk to civilian airliners,” NATO’s air command said in a statement.

Quick reaction fighters from Poland, Denmark, France and Spain made the intercepts in the Baltic Sea region. Meanwhile, Romanian and British aircraft scrambled from Romania to track aircraft in the Black Sea region, NATO said.

The Russian aircraft never entered alliance airspace, NATO said, adding the intercepts were conducted in a safe and routine manner.

## Key players urge accountability for Ukraine atrocities

*Associated Press*

UNITED NATIONS — For the first time, key players seeking accountability for atrocities during the Ukraine war have come together at an informal meeting of the U.N. Security Council to spur investigations into abuses that many Western countries blame on Russia.

The session Wednesday included the International Criminal Court’s chief prosecutor, the chair of the U.N. Commission of Inquiry, Ukraine’s top prosecutor and human rights lawyer Amal Clooney.

Ukrainian Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova, who has opened over 8,000 investigations into alleged violations of the laws and customs of war, said that “Russia’s actions amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes” and the pattern “resembles the crime of genocide.”

Albanian Foreign Minister Olta Xhacka, who co-sponsored and chaired the meeting,

said that as a veto-holding member of the Security Council, Russia is supposed to be a guardian of international peace but has “embarked on a war of choice against a neighbor committing immeasurable crimes in the process.”

France’s deputy U.N. ambassador, Nathalie Broadhurst, the other co-sponsor, said the images of atrocities in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha and other areas after Russian forces withdrew “are unbearable” and may amount to war crimes.

Beth Van Schaack, the U.S. ambassador-at-large for global criminal justice, said the United States has concluded Russia committed war crimes, pointing to credible reports of individuals killed execution-style, bodies showing signs of torture and “horrific accounts of sexual violence against women and girls.” She said Russia’s political and military leadership and rank and file will be held accountable.

The legal chief at Russia’s U.N. Mission, Sergey Leonidchenko, dismissed their statements, saying: “What we heard today was another portion of unsubstantiated claims and even fakes seasoned with lies, hypocrisy and pompous rhetoric.”

Russia has denied responsibility for any atrocities and repeatedly blamed Ukrainian nationalists and “neo-Nazis.”

Leonidchenko said Ukrainians responsible for all these “heinous crimes will be brought to justice.” He said Russia is collecting witness statements and evidence across Ukraine, including in the besieged city of Mariupol. He said Russia plans to hold an informal council meeting May 6 to present what he claimed will be “facts not fakes.”

ICC prosecutor Karim Khan said, the ICC signed an agreement for the first time for a joint investigative team with Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania.

# Inflation gauge jumps most since 1982

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — An inflation gauge closely tracked by the Federal Reserve surged 6.6% in March compared with a year ago, the highest 12-month jump in four decades and further evidence that spiking prices are pressuring household budgets and the health of the economy.

Yet there were signs in Friday's report from the Commerce Department that inflation might be slowing from its galloping pace and perhaps nearing a peak, at least for now.

And despite soaring prices, consumer spending rose faster than inflation for a

third consecutive month, suggesting that rising prices haven't cooled the desire of Americans to shop. The pandemic's distortions to the economy are also fading as consumers shift their spending back to experiences like travel, concerts and dining out. That follows a two-year surge of pandemic spending on goods, things like exercise bikes, patio furniture and standing desks.

The switch to services helps restrain inflation because prices are rising more slowly for services than for goods.

Excluding the especially volatile food and energy categories, so-called core prices rose 5.2% in March from a year earlier. That

was slightly below the 5.3% year-over-year increase in February, and it was the first time that 12-month figure has declined since February 2021, before the inflation spike began. And on a month-to-month basis, core prices rose 0.3% from February to March, the same as from January to February. Previously, it had risen by a half-point for four straight months.

Overall inflation jumped 0.9% in March from February, the biggest one month gain since 2005. Gas prices soared 18% just in March. But they have since fallen a bit this month, another sign inflation may start to slowly decline.

# Chauvin appeals Floyd murder conviction

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin is appealing his conviction for murder in the killing of George Floyd, arguing that jurors were intimidated by the protests that followed and prejudiced by heavy pretrial publicity.

Chauvin asked the Minnesota Court of Appeals in a court filing Monday to reverse his conviction, reverse and remand for a new trial in a new venue, or order a resentencing.

Last June, Hennepin County Judge Peter Cahill sentenced

Chauvin to 22½ years in prison after jurors found him guilty of second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

Floyd died on May 25, 2020, after Chauvin pinned the Black man to the ground with his knee on his neck for 9 minutes, 29 seconds. Floyd had been accused of passing a counterfeit \$20 bill at a convenience store. Three other fired officers face state trial this summer after being convicted in federal court earlier this year of violating Floyd's civil rights.

Chauvin's attorney, William

Mohrman, laid out a number of challenges to his conviction, including that the trial should not have been held in Hennepin County, where Floyd was killed.

"The overwhelming media coverage exposed the jurors — literally every day — to news demonizing Chauvin and glorifying Floyd which was more than sufficient to presume prejudice," the brief said.

In the months that followed Floyd's killing, protesters took to the streets in Minneapolis and around the country to protest police brutality and racism. Some

of that unrest was violent.

Mohrman said several potential jurors expressed concerns during jury selection that if Chauvin was acquitted they would fear for their personal safety and worried about more violence.

The filing also cited the fatal shooting of Daunte Wright by a police officer in nearby Brooklyn Center that sparked more protests during Chauvin's trial. It says jurors should have been sequestered after selection to avoid being prejudiced by reports of that slaying.

# States sue Postal Service over gas vehicle plans

Associated Press

California and 15 states that want the U.S. Postal Service to electrify its mail delivery vehicles are suing to halt purchases of thousands of gas-powered trucks as the agency modernizes its delivery fleet.

Three separate lawsuits, filed Thursday by the states and environmental groups in New York and California, ask judges to order a more thorough environmental review before the Postal Service moves forward with the next-generation delivery vehicle program.

Plaintiffs contend that purchases of fossil fuel-powered delivery vehicles will cause environmental harm for decades to come. The lawsuits could further delay the Postal Service's efforts to replace the ubiquitous

delivery trucks that went into service between 1987 and 1994.

"Louis DeJoy's gas-guzzling fleet guarantees decades of pollution with every postcard and package," said Scott Hochberg, an attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity, referring to the postmaster general.

Attorneys general from 16 states — 14 of which have Democratic governors — sued in San Francisco. A separate lawsuit by the Center for Biological Diversity, Earthjustice, CleanAirNow KC and Sierra Club was filed in the same venue. Another was filed by the Natural Resources Defense Council and United Auto Workers in New York.

All three of them target the environmental review underpinning the Postal Service's

planned purchase of up to 165,000 next-generation delivery vehicles over the next decade.

California Attorney General Rob Bonta said it's key to stop the process before it's too late.

"Once this purchase goes through, we'll be stuck with more than 100,000 new gas-guzzling vehicles on neighborhood streets, serving homes across our state and across the country, for the next 30 years. There won't be a reset button," he said.

The Postal Service defended the process it followed under DeJoy, a wealthy former logistics executive and Republican donor who was appointed by a board of governors controlled by then-President Donald Trump.

# FDA set to ban menthol cigars, cigarettes

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. government on Thursday released its long-awaited plan to ban menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars, citing the toll on Black smokers and young people.

“The proposed rules would help prevent children from becoming the next generation of smokers and help adult smokers quit,” said Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, in a statement.

He added that the ban would also be an “important step to advance health equity” by reducing disparities in tobacco-related

diseases.

The Food and Drug Administration said eliminating menthol cigarettes could prevent between 300,000 and 650,000 smoking deaths over 40 years.

Menthol accounts for more than a third of cigarettes sold in the U.S., and the mint flavor is favored by Black smokers and young people. Menthol’s cooling effect has been shown to mask the throat harshness of smoking, making it easier to start and harder to quit.

The FDA said it will also seek to ban menthol and dozens of other flavors like

grape and strawberry from cigars, which are increasingly popular with young people, especially Black teens.

The agency’s proposals on both cigarettes and cigars are only initial drafts and are unlikely to be finalized before next year. Companies would then have one additional year to phase out their products. Tobacco industry lawsuits could delay the prohibition for several more years, according to experts. For now, FDA leaders said they will take comments for two months and then proceed “as expeditiously as possible.”

# Dry Southwest braces for more high winds

Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Thousands of firefighters continued to slow the advance of destructive wildfires in the Southwestern U.S., but officials warned they were bracing for the return Friday of the same dangerous conditions that quickly spread the wind-fueled blazes a week ago.

At least 166 homes have been destroyed in one rural county in northeast New Mexico since the biggest fire currently burning in the U.S. started racing through small towns east and northeast of Santa Fe on April 22, the local sheriff said.

Winds gusting up to 50 mph were forecast Friday in the drought-stricken region. One expert said it’s a recipe for disaster on the wildlands where some timber has a fuel moisture drier than kiln-dried wood.

“It’s a very, very dangerous fire day to-

morrow,” fire behavior specialist Stewart Turner said at a briefing Thursday night on the edge of the Santa Fe National Forest in Las Vegas, N.M.

“Like we saw last Friday, epic fire behavior,” Turner said. “It’s a day that as a firefighter, we’ll write about, we’ll read studies about. It’s going to be a big fire day.”

A swath of the country stretching from New Mexico and Colorado to Kansas and the Texas panhandle is expected to be hit the hardest by the return of the bad firefighting weather that has generated unusually hot and fast-moving fires for this time of year, forecasters warned.

Red flag warnings for extreme fire danger were in place Friday for nearly all of New Mexico and parts of Colorado, Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas.

The expected high winds will likely

ground firefighting aircraft in some areas, officials said.

More than 3,000 firefighters were battling fires in Arizona and New Mexico on Friday — about half of those in northeast New Mexico, where more than 187 square miles of mostly timber and brush has been charred.

They focused Thursday on preventing it from moving into the rural New Mexico community of Ledoux. That meant bolstering fire lines and sending in crews tasked with protecting structures.

“Great progress again today,” incident commander Carl Schwobe said Thursday night. But “tomorrow has the potential to be a very destructive day.”

“It will be chaotic if anything close to what happened (last) Friday occurs,” added operations chief Jayson Coil.

# Okla. House approves Texas-style abortion ban

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Oklahoma House gave final approval Thursday to a Texas-style abortion ban that prohibits the procedure after about six weeks of pregnancy, before many women know they are pregnant.

The bill approved by the GOP-led House without discussion or debate now heads to Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt, who is expected to sign it within days. The assault on abortion rights is one of several culture-war issues conservatives in GOP-led states have embraced, like restricting LGBTQ rights, that drive the party’s base in an election year.

A coalition of Oklahoma abortion providers and abortion rights advocates immediately filed separate legal challenges in state court to both the Texas-style ban and a separate bill Stitt signed earlier this month to make abortion a felony. Legal experts say it’s likely both measures could be temporarily halted before they take effect.

House members also voted Thursday to adopt new language prohibiting transgender students from using school restrooms that match their gender identity and requiring parental notification ahead of any classroom instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity.

The abortion bill, dubbed the Oklahoma

Heartbeat Act, prohibits the procedure once cardiac activity can be detected in an embryo, which experts say is roughly six weeks into a pregnancy. A similar bill approved in Texas last year led to a dramatic reduction in the number of abortions performed in that state, with many women going to Oklahoma and other surrounding states for the procedure.

Like the Texas law, the Oklahoma bill would allow private citizens to sue abortion providers or anyone who helps a woman obtain an abortion for up to \$10,000. After the U.S. Supreme Court allowed that mechanism to remain in place, other Republican-led states sought to copy Texas’ ban.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

**Man used twin's ID to get veterans benefits**

**FL** JACKSONVILLE — A Florida man was sentenced Tuesday to two years in federal prison for using his twin brother's stolen identity to obtain tens of thousands of dollars in military veterans benefits.

Wayne Bowen, 64, was sentenced in Jacksonville federal court, according to court records.

He pleaded guilty in January to aggravated identity theft.

He must also pay \$63,773 in restitution.

According to a plea agreement, Bowen used the name, Social Security card and military discharge papers of his estranged twin brother in 2014 to apply for federally subsidized housing benefits intended for indigent military veterans. The program was administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Bowen admitted to federal agents that he had been using his brother's identity for years, prosecutors said.

**Settlement reached in fatal Lamborghini crash**

**CA** LOS ANGELES — The family of a woman killed when a 17-year-old driver crashed his father's Lamborghini into her car in Los Angeles has reached an \$18.85 million settlement in the case, attorneys announced Wednesday.

Monique Munoz, 32, was on

her way home from work at a hospital on Feb. 17, 2021, when the Lamborghini SUV driven by Brendan Khuri ran a red light.

Prosecutors said Khuri had been racing another vehicle and swerving in and out lanes at more more than 100 mph just prior to colliding with Munoz's car.

Munoz died at the scene of the collision near the Westwood area of Los Angeles.

Khuri pleaded guilty to one count of vehicular manslaughter with gross negligence and was sentenced last September to seven to nine months in a juvenile camp and four months of probation.

**Disease outbreak kills dozens of wild horses**

**CO** CANON CITY — An outbreak of an undetermined and highly contagious disease has killed dozens of wild horses at a federal holding facility in southern Colorado.

Bureau of Land Management officials say 67 horses have died since the outbreak began late last week at the agency's holding pen in Canon City, about 150 miles southwest of Denver.

"We are working with local, state and federal officials to determine what is impacting horses in the facility and how we can respond as effectively as possible," said Stephen Leonard, the manager of the BLM Colorado Wild Horse and Burro Program.

The facility, which is under voluntary quarantine, current-

ly holds 2,550 horses.

BLM officials say the horses that have been most affected by the disease were gathered from the West Douglas area last fall.

**Mail intended for 12 communities lost in fire**

**AK** HOMER — A trailer containing mail intended for a dozen communities on the Kenai Peninsula caught fire and was destroyed.

The driver of the truck hauling the trailer was not injured in the Tuesday incident, the Homer News reported.

The cause of the fire is under investigation, the U.S. Postal Service said in a statement.

The contract truck left a processing center in Anchorage and caught fire near Mile 38 of the Seward Highway, or just north of the intersection of the Seward and Sterling highways, near Tern Lake.

No other information has been released.

**City votes to keep cars off popular park road**

**CA** SAN FRANCISCO — Supervisors voted Tuesday to ban motorists from a popular road in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, making permanent a closure that started in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic when people needed space to exercise and distance socially.

After a 12-hour meeting, the Board of Supervisors voted 7-4 for Mayor London Breed's proposal.

The majority sided with sup-

porters who said a car-free promenade was in keeping with the city's commitment to safer roads and cleaner climate.

Other roads in the park — which sees more than 24 million visitors a year — will stay open to drivers.

Critics argued that permanently closing the 1.5-mile portion of John F. Kennedy Drive would cut off park access to people who are disabled, elderly or live farther away while benefiting select bicyclists and runners.

Some people asked for a compromise to keep the road car-free on weekends only, saying drivers needed access during the week.

**1st winning ticket for big lottery sold in state**

**MN** ROSEVILLE — Lottery officials say the first people to buy a winning Mega Millions ticket in Minnesota quietly redeemed their prize on Tuesday, opting to take the cash option and to remain anonymous.

They will collect \$66.9 million before taxes.

The \$110 million ticket for the April 12 drawing was sold at a Holiday gas station in Ramsey.

Lottery officials could not say if the winners were from Minnesota, but were told the couple has been playing the lottery since their first date more than 30 years ago.

A new state law allows winners of prizes of \$10,000 or more to keep their names a secret.

— From Associated Press

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# Jags focus on defense with No. 1 pick

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — In an NFL draft focused early on stoppers, it was the goers — wide receivers — who stole the spotlight Thursday night.

Not simply prospects, either.

Yes, the first five selections came on the defensive side of the ball, including edge rushers Travon Walker of national champion Georgia to Jacksonville and Aidan Hutchinson of Michigan to Detroit at Nos. 1 and 2. It was the first time in 31 years that no player on offense went in the opening five picks.

So, naturally, the next five choices were on offense. And those kept coming: right through No. 12.

And the theme throughout the first 20 picks was to get guys who could catch the ball — including Philadelphia acquiring standout A.J. Brown from the Titans, and Arizona getting veteran Marquise Brown from the Ravens.

“The more playmakers we can have, the better,” Cardinals coach Kliff Kingsbury said.

In all, six of the opening 18 selections were wideouts, start-

ing with Southern California's Drake London at No. 8 to Atlanta. He'll team with tight end Kyle Pitts, the Falcons' first-rounder in 2021, on a rebuilding attack.

“I mean it's just two big dudes out there on the perimeter,” London said. “... Obviously, I've got to earn my stripes to get out there on the field with him.”

No quarterbacks went until 20th, when Pitt's Kenny Pickett found out he can simply switch to another side of the practice facility as he joins the Steelers and perhaps become Ben Roethlisberger's successor.

But this is a draft rich with linemen and defensive backs as well as wideouts.

The 6-foot-5, 275-pound Walker, who has some raw elements to his game but an extremely high ceiling for his skills, joins former Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence as the second straight top overall selection by the Jaguars.

“I'm definitely prepared for it, being the No. 1 pick,” Walker said. “I have to say there's a lot of expectations behind that, but

it's just the game of football to me.”

Walker was a one-year starter whose production (13 tackles for loss and 9 1/2 sacks) doesn't jump out because he was part of a deep rotation at Georgia. His talent level certainly impressed the Jaguars, the NFL's worst team the past two years.

“He's an athletic freak,” Georgia defensive coordinator Will Muschamp told The Associated Press. “I swear to God he could line up at middle linebacker and go be fine. I would take him at No. 1 and not even blink.”

The Jaguars didn't blink.

Commissioner Roger Goodell began the proceedings by estimating more than 100,000 fans were on hand at the theater built specifically for the draft. Walker was not in Las Vegas.

Hutchinson, a sack-master whose consistency and relentlessness helped the Wolverines to their first College Football Playoff, is staying home as a pro. The 6-foot-6, 265-pounder whose father Chris was a star player at Michigan in the 1990s,

was the Heisman Trophy runner-up last season.

“I always wanted to be at Detroit. I'm grateful to be a Lion,” he said.

Cornerbacks Derek Stingley Jr. and Ahmad “Sauce” Gardner went next, to the Texans and Jets, respectively.

LSU's Stingley is the grandson of former Patriots receiver Darryl Stingley, who was paralyzed in a 1978 preseason game. Gardner, of Cincinnati, was a major reason the Bearcats broke through into the College Football Playoff last season. He wore a brash bejeweled necklace proclaiming his nickname, and even an accessorized chain with a bejeweled sauce bottle.

“I know I'm going to be a great teammate and I'm going to be a sponge, somebody that's able to take information from everyone and not feeling like I'm too good for anyone,” Gardner said. “Just being a hard worker.”

The defensive run concluded with Oregon edge rusher Kayvon Thibodeaux to the New York Giants.

# Suns finish off Pelicans, advance to second round

Associated Press

Chris Paul is still looking for his perfect ending.

A perfect entry to Round 2 will have to suffice for now.

Paul and the Phoenix Suns — the team with the best record in the NBA this season — have moved on to the Western Conference semifinals, where a matchup with fourth-seeded Dallas awaits. It'll start in Phoenix on Monday night.

And Paul is coming off the perfect game: 14-for-14 from the field, 4-for-4 from the foul line, 33 points in the 115-109 Game 6 first-round series clincher for Phoenix at New Orleans on Thursday night. It was the most field goals without a miss in NBA playoff history and matched the fourth-most in any NBA game. The three better showings all belong to Wilt Chamberlain — who had

games of 15, 16 and 18 makes without a single miss.

“Nobody's seen this, 14-for-14,” Suns guard Devin Booker said. “This is the first time for all of us.”

Paul and the Suns got to the NBA Finals — his first time there — last season, winning the first two games against the Milwaukee Bucks before dropping the next four and watching Giannis Antetokounmpo and his teammates celebrate a title.

All Phoenix did this season for an encore was win 64 games, earn home-court for the entirety of the NBA playoffs and now moves into Round 2. The Suns ousted eighth-seeded New Orleans in six games to advance, saw Paul make history and got Booker back from a hamstring strain for the clincher.

“All playoff series are hard,” Suns coach Monty Williams said when the series ended,

lauding New Orleans' effort throughout. “Even if you sweep a team, that last game is going to be a battle. So yeah, this certainly helped us. This is not an eighth seed. No way.”

This becomes the second consecutive year that Phoenix needed six games, and a taste of adversity, to get through Round 1. Last year was against LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers, who took a 2-1 series lead before the Suns won the final three games. This time, it was against a Pelicans team that needed two play-in victories to make the playoffs, finished the year 10 games under .500 but split the first four games and had more than a few moments they'll savor from the matchup.

“This was a big-time battle,” Williams said. “You would expect a series like this later on in the playoffs.”

# 76ers crush Raptors to put end to series

Associated Press

A few hours before Game 6 of his team's first-round series in Toronto got started on Thursday night, Philadelphia coach Doc Rivers was busy watching film.

It wasn't tape of the Raptors. He was watching the Miami Heat.

The next challenge is now known for the 76ers, and Rivers wasted no time before beginning the process of getting ready. For the fourth time in the last five years, the 76ers are headed to the Eastern Conference semifinals, where the top-seeded Heat await.

Game 1 is Monday in Miami.

"It's going to be a short turnaround," Rivers said.

Yes, but a happy one. Joel Embiid — playing through a thumb injury that he'll have until the offseason — scored 33 points, Tyrese Maxey added 25, James Harden chipped in with 22 and the 76ers rolled past the Raptors 132-97 on Thursday night to clinch the first-round series in six games.

The Heat have been off since finishing a five-game ouster of Atlanta on Tuesday.

"We're going to go play grown men, and we're looking forward to the challenge," Rivers said.

Philadelphia's players got Friday off; coaches didn't, but there was no practice. The 76ers will hit the practice court Saturday and Sunday, then fly to Miami for Game 1. But the way Embiid sees it, the preparation for Miami — a team that switches on everything and thoroughly thwarted Atlanta in Round 1 with swarming defense — didn't start when Rivers began watching film Thursday afternoon. Embiid figures it started in Game 1 against Toronto.

"Toronto actually prepared us extremely well for them, because they've got basically the

same schemes," Embiid said.

Philadelphia and Miami split four regular-season games, each going 1-1 at home. Total score of the four games: Heat 404, 76ers 400.

There are ties that bind; Heat point guard Kyle Lowry is from Philadelphia, and leading scorer Jimmy Butler is a former member of the 76ers and close with Embiid from his time there.

"It's going to be tough," Embiid said.

The 76ers bucked a trend in finding a way to get past the Raptors. The last time Philadelphia had dropped back-to-back games in a playoff series and still prevailed was the 2001 East finals against Milwaukee, when it lost Games 2 and 3 to fall behind 2-1 before eventually winning in seven games.

The 76ers were 0-11 in that scenario since, and lost Games 4 and 5 of this series against the Raptors to see a 3-0 lead trimmed to 3-2. But they left no doubt Thursday night, using a 17-0 run in the third quarter to take total control.

It silenced doubters, at least. Rivers famously has lost three series in which past teams of his held 3-1 leads, and seeing 3-0 become 3-2 certainly rekindled some of those memories. Rivers said the only way to avoid the conversation would be to win Game 6, and his team listened.

"We live and we learn from it and we push on," Philadelphia's Tobias Harris said. "And now we've got to get ready for Round 2."

The 76ers' win means the first round in the East went according to plan. Each of the top four seeds advanced — No. 1 Miami and No. 4 Philadelphia meet in one semifinal, while No. 2 Boston and No. 3 Milwaukee meet in the other. The Celtics-Bucks series starts Sunday.

# Mavs break through, oust Jazz in 6 games

Associated Press

Luka Doncic and his teammates remind Jason Kidd a little of the last Dallas Mavericks team to advance in the playoffs.

The coach now was the point guard then when the Mavericks had split the first four games of the 2011 playoffs against the Portland Trail Blazers. He recalls people thinking Dallas might not even get out of that series.

Instead, the Mavericks won the next two games and never looked back. They swept the two-time defending NBA champion Lakers in the next round and ended up winning the title themselves by beating Miami in the NBA Finals.

This year, Dallas again started 2-2, then won two straight to get by the Utah Jazz with a 98-96 victory on Thursday night. The current Mavericks don't have the experience and may not have the talent of his title team, but Kidd said they are a special group.

"They truly believe, small or big — we're not very big — but they find a way to win and they have fun doing it," Kidd said. "And hopefully this gives us confidence going against the best team in the NBA right now."

That would be the Phoenix Suns, the No. 1 seed after finishing 64-18 for the NBA's best record. They also wrapped up their series with a Game 6 victory on Thursday in New Orleans and will host the Mavericks in Game 1 of the Western Conference semifinals on Monday.

"I think we're going to have to play our best basketball," Doncic said. "They were in the Finals last year, No. 1 team this year, so it's going to be really tough. The crowd really gets them going, so I think we're going to have to play our best basketball to beat them."

Doncic always plays well in

the postseason, but it hadn't resulted in a series victory yet. The Mavericks lost to the Los Angeles Clippers in each of the last two years, even though he averaged more than 31 points in both.

The Mavs had to open this series without their All-Star, who missed the first three games with a calf strain sustained on the final day of the regular season. Once he returned, he averaged 29 points and 10.7 rebounds.

Unlike those previous series, when it appeared sometimes Doncic had to do it all alone, he shared the scoring load against the Jazz. Jalen Brunson followed his best NBA season — and set himself up to cash in nicely in the offseason — by averaging 27.8 points.

That came after he didn't play in the 2020 series and played poorly in the final four games last year as the Mavs blew a 2-0 lead.

"Pretty much I'm over the past two years," Brunson said. "This year is different for me and looking forward to continuing it and trying to help my team win."

With Doncic, Brunson and midseason acquisition Spencer Dinwiddie, the Mavs' strength is their three-guard lineup. Still, Dallas rarely looks explosive offensively.

Instead, it's a defense that allowed 104.7 points, just behind Boston for best in the NBA, that carried the Mavericks to a 52-30 record and the No. 4 seed in the West. Now they'll see what they can do against the Suns.

"We're not going to be a fancy group," Kidd said. "We don't have a lot of big names — Luka's the one that gets the majority of the attention — but JB, Dorian (Finney-Smith) and Reggie (Bullock) and those guys really, truly believe in team, and that's what helped us win this series."

# Tucker's pinch-hit HR lifts Astros

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Kyle Tucker hit a tiebreaking pinch-hit homer in the eighth inning and the Houston Astros beat the Texas Rangers 3-2 in a series finale that began as an impressive duel between starting pitchers.

Tucker's two-run blast came off Matt Bush (0-1), the first reliever for Texas after left-hander Martin Perez took a perfect game into the seventh inning before giving up his only run.

Two-time AL Cy Young Award winner Justin Verlander (2-1) struck out eight and allowed one run over seven innings in only his fourth start since Tommy John surgery. The right-hander threw 64 of 91 pitches for strikes and didn't have a walk while lowering his season ERA to 1.73.

Blake Taylor pitched a perfect eighth for the Astros. Rafael Montero then worked the ninth with usual closer Ryan Pressly still on the injured list and got

his first save despite Corey Seager's one-out homer to straightaway center.

Perez retired the first 18 batters he faced before Chas McCormick lined a double into the right-center gap on a full-count pitch leading off the seventh. The lefty got out two more batters out before Yordan Alvarez lined an opposite-field single to left to drive in McCormick.

**Braves 5, Cubs 1:** Ronald Acuña Jr. went 1-for-5 with two stolen bases in his return to the Braves lineup and Kyle Wright turned in another stellar performance, giving host Atlanta its first series win of the season with a victory over Chicago.

**Yankees 10, Orioles 5:** Aaron Judge hit a long three-run homer moments after visiting Baltimore committed its fifth error of the game, and surging New York beat the sloppy Orioles.

**Blue Jays 1, Red Sox 0:** Alek Manoah struck out seven and

pitched three-hit ball over seven innings, and host Toronto beat Boston.

**Rays 2, Mariners 1:** Brett Phillips bounced a tiebreaking single off pitcher Chris Flexen's leg in the seventh inning and Tampa Bay beat visiting Seattle.

**Phillies 7, Rockies 1:** Zack Wheeler tossed one-hit ball over six shutout innings and Alec Bohm homered to help host Philadelphia complete a four-game sweep of Colorado.

**Twins 7, Tigers 1:** Carlos Correa broke out of a slump with three hits and three RBIs and Minnesota completed a three-game sweep of visiting Detroit.

**Cardinals 8, Diamondbacks 3:** Dakota Hudson pitched six shutout innings, Paul Goldschmidt drove in three runs and host St. Louis beat Arizona.

**Angels 4, Guardians 1:** At Anaheim, Calif., Taylor Ward drove in two runs, Brandon Marsh had three hits and an

RBI, and Los Angeles completed a four-game sweep of Cleveland, which has lost seven straight.

**Padres 7, Reds 5:** Ha-Seong Kim hit a tiebreaking, three-run double in the sixth inning and visiting San Diego beat Cincinnati to complete a season sweep in the series.

**Royals 5, White Sox 2 (10):** Rookie Kyle Isbel hit a two-run single in Kansas City's three-run 10th, and the Royals beat host Chicago.

**Brewers 3, Pirates 2:** Andrew McCutchen hit a go-ahead two-run single in the top of the ninth inning to rally visiting Milwaukee past Pittsburgh to complete a three-game sweep.

**Marlins 3, Nationals 2:** Trevor Rogers provided his longest outing of the season by allowing one run in six innings, and Miami stretched its winning streak to five games and completed a sweep of host Washington.

# Panthers beat Senators to secure league's top mark

Associated Press

OTTAWA, Ontario — Carter Verhaeghe scored twice and Spencer Knight stopped 27 shots for his second career shutout as the Florida Panthers beat the Ottawa Senators 4-0 on Thursday night.

With the victory and Nashville's 5-4 shootout win over Western Conference-leading Colorado (56-18-7), the Panthers (58-17-6) clinched their first Presidents' Trophy for the best record in the regular season and home ice advantage throughout the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Sam Reinhart and Sam Bennett also scored for Florida, which halted Ottawa's four-game winning streak.

Filip Gustavsson made 26 saves for Ottawa.

**Predators 5, Avalanche 4**

**(SO):** Matt Duchene scored the lone goal of the shootout and David Rittich stopped all three attempts as visiting Nashville rallied from a two-goal deficit to beat Colorado.

Duchene also scored in regulation, along with Ryan Johansen, Roman Josi and Mattias Ekholm to help the Predators move into the first wild-card spot with a game remaining.

Rittich stopped 42 shots as he stepped in for injured goaltender Juuse Saros.

**Hurricanes 6, Devils 3:** Jesperi Kotkaniemi had a goal and two assists and host Carolina closed out a record-setting season with a victory over New Jersey.

The Metropolitan Division champion Hurricanes added to their franchise records for wins (54) and points (116) in a season.

**Bruins 5, Sabres 0:** Patrice Bergeron recorded his eighth career hat trick and his 400th NHL goal, and David Pastrnak ended his team's 0-for-39 power-play slump with his 40th goal of the season to lead host Boston past Buffalo.

**Wild 3, Flames 2 (OT):** Kirill Kaprizov scored a power play goal 44 seconds into overtime to give host Minnesota a win over Calgary.

With the victory, the Wild take over sole possession of second place in the Central Division. Minnesota leads St. Louis by two points with each team having one game remaining on Friday. If the Wild pick up any points in their game against Colorado or if the Blues lose at home to Vegas, Minnesota will have home-ice advantage in its first-round playoff series

against St. Louis.

**Blue Jackets 5, Lightning 2:** Oliver Bjorkstrand led host Columbus with a goal and an assist in a win that kept Tampa Bay from clinching the No. 3 seed in the Atlantic Division.

**Oilers 5, Sharks 4 (OT):** Zach Hyman scored his career-high 27th goal of the season 1:37 into overtime and host Edmonton rallied to beat San Jose.

**Islanders 5, Capitals 1:** Brock Nelson and Anders Lee scored first-period goals, Mathew Barzal had three assists and Semyon Varlamov made 26 saves as host New York routed playoff-bound Washington.

**Canucks 3, Kings 2 (OT):** Brock Boeser scored his second goal of the game with 29.7 seconds left in overtime, giving host Vancouver a win over Los Angeles.