

Ukraine expands draft in offensive prep

The Washington Post

KYIV, Ukraine — The men in uniform could show up almost anywhere, any time.

They knock on civilians' front doors and randomly stop them on street corners, handing out draft papers that can turn lives upside down.

Ukraine needs more soldiers — and fast. Kyiv is preparing for an imminent assault on Russian occupying forces, and while Ukraine does not disclose its casualty counts, commanders in the field have described large losses. In a trove of leaked classified files, the U.S. government recently estimated that between 124,000 and 131,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed or wounded since the start of the invasion — more than five times what Kyiv has publicly disclosed.

“We need to understand if the war lasts another year, we’re all going to be in the army,” said Sasha, 35, a casting director and amateur kickboxer who is taking a private military training course in the capital in case he is drafted. He spoke on the condition that only his first name be used, because of concerns over publicizing his mobilization status.

The much-hyped counteroffensive will rely on both new soldiers and more experienced troops newly trained on donated Western equipment, including Leopard 2 tanks. And the pace and aggression with which officials are now calling on civilian men to report to military offices — or sign up

on their own — are sowing panic among those who feel unprepared or unwilling to serve.

Previously, officials could only deliver draft papers to people’s homes, and some avoided the notices by staying at different addresses than where they are officially registered. But new rules have widened the scope of places where men can be stopped and questioned about their draft status. Martial law in place in Ukraine since February 2022 bars most men between ages 18 and 60 from leaving the country. Under mobilization rules, any man in that range can theoretically be called to fight. Exceptions are made, including for students; parents with three or more children under 18; caretakers of disabled dependents; and those deemed medically unfit, among others.

Almost a quarter-million Ukrainians will turn 18 this year — making them old enough to sign up to fight, or, if they’re male and still in the country, too old to leave.

The Ukrainian army has long relied on volunteers. But now many Ukrainian men — even those working as volunteers or doing other useful jobs as civilians — cannot escape the draft, or at least registering in military offices.

Oleksii Kruchukov, 46, a washing machine repairman waiting in line outside a recruitment office in Kyiv, said he was ordered to report there after police broke up a fight he got into on the street. He did not have

any valid military exemptions and said he expected that the incident will result in him soon being sent to training, and then the front.

Oleksandr Kostiuk, 52, a road repairman who helped set up barriers against Russian forces around Kyiv last year, recently received his notice via his human resources department at work. He is willing to go to the front if he has to — but fears for his safety. “Now we understand what’s going on, so I’m more nervous,” he said.

Thousands of other civilians are preempting such situations, instead signing up in droves for a force called the Offensive Guard — made up of eight new assault brigades.

Some are responding to the posters plastered across the country’s highways calling on civilians to join — and “turn your rage into a weapon.” The young men may have recently turned 18 and now qualify, or have cleared up family obligations that previously stopped them from joining. Others hope enlisting of their own accord will give them better training and prestige than if they were drafted.

Since early February, more than 5,000 people have applied to join what was formerly known as the Azov Battalion, a controversial former right-wing militia that was incorporated into Ukraine’s national guard. Last year, the battle-hardened group was hailed as heroic for withstanding a months-long siege of the southeastern city of Mariupol.

S. Korea repels North’s patrol boat after sea breach

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea’s military says it fired warning shots to repel a North Korean patrol vessel that temporarily crossed the countries’ disputed western sea boundary while chasing a Chinese fishing boat.

The North Korean patrol boat crossed the so-called Northern Limit Line at about 11 a.m. Saturday while pursuing the Chinese boat in waters near South Korea’s Baekryeong island but immediately retreated after a South Korean naval vessel fired warning shots, South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff

said Sunday.

While there were no exchanges of fire between the North and South Korean vessels, the South Korean high-speed vessel collided with the Chinese boat as it responded to the intrusion amid poor visibility, causing bruises and other minor injuries to some of the South Korean sailors.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff said the South Korean military is closely monitoring North Korean military activities while preparing for various possibilities of provocations.

South Korea’s navy has often fired warning shots to repel North Korean vessels

crossing the countries’ poorly marked sea border, but there also have been some deadly clashes over the years. South Korea blamed North Korea for an attack on a South Korean warship that killed 46 sailors in 2010, but the North has denied responsibility.

Saturday’s intrusion came amid heightened tensions in the region as the pace of both North Korea’s weapons demonstrations and the U.S.-South Korean joint military exercises aimed at countering the North Korean threat have intensified in a cycle of tit-for-tat.

Accused doc leaker had highest security clearance

BY DOUG G. WARE
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Jack Teixeira, the airman accused in the leak of classified military documents online, was part of a unit in Massachusetts that collects and analyzes sensitive intelligence gathered from all over the world, according to a criminal complaint unsealed on Friday.

Teixeira, 21, was arrested by FBI agents in southeastern Massachusetts on Thursday, about a week after the first tranche of secret documents were found by authorities on social media sites. The airman first class appeared in federal court in Boston on Friday to face the charges of unauthorized retention, removal and transmission of national defense information.

Teixeira joined the Air National Guard in 2019 and is a Cyber Transport Systems jour-

neyman stationed at Otis Air National Guard Base on Cape Cod. As CTS journeyman, it was Teixeira's job to maintain communications equipment at the base.

One question possibly in the minds of the American public is how was a 21-year-old airman first class in the Massachusetts Air National Guard able to access highly classified information about the war in Ukraine and U.S. activities in other countries?

The criminal court unsealed on Friday says Teixeira had the highest possible security clearance as part of his position. But having that clearance doesn't automatically entitle a service member to see any and all classified materials.

"It's not just, 'I want to have access to it because I have a clearance,'" Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon's top spokesperson, told report-

ers Thursday. "It's all based on need to know. Do you have a need to know that information? And that typically will grant you access if you have the appropriate clearances."

Ryder said the leak of documents has led the Pentagon to review its procedures involving the release of classified intelligence to see if changes are needed for access, distribution lists or other areas that could pose a potential risk.

It may not be surprising, however, that Teixeira's unit — the 102nd Intelligence Wing — would have access to highly classified material.

One of its main functions, according to the unit's website, is to "exploit and analyze information sent from unmanned aerial vehicles circling the globe" and deal in "worldwide precision intelligence." One of the unit's six "distinct capability" goals is "information superiority."

Leak suspect yearned to join military, regretted it

Associated Press

DIGHTON, Mass. — The Massachusetts Air National Guardsman accused of leaking highly classified documents had set his sights on joining the military from an early age. But more recently he had expressed disillusionment about having enlisted.

Jack Teixeira, 21, was charged Friday in U.S. District Court in Boston with unauthorized removal and retention of classified and national defense information.

Teixeira grew up in Dighton, a rural community south of Boston that is dotted with single-family homes interspersed with small farms.

Two of his classmates told The Boston Globe that Teixeira revered the military and showed an early interest in joining. He was especially focused on the history of war and weapons. Though classmate John Powell remembered Teixeira being bullied in middle school, he told the newspaper that the young man was an optimist and "sweetheart," with an especially close relationship with his stepdad, an Air Force veteran.

Teixeira enlisted in the Air National Guard in September 2019.

It was during the pandemic that Teixeira developed a close relationship with other members of a chat room on the social media platform Discord, where members of the group have said the leaks showed up.

Teixeira liked to chat about guns, was an observant Christian and would often pray with group members, a Discord user said.

Marines activate second F-35C squadron

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps activated its second F-35C Lightning II fighter jet squadron during a ceremony Friday at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif.

The unit is the reactivated version of Marine Attack Squadron 311, which had cased its colors in October 2020 at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., the Marine Corps said in a news release last Monday. That squadron's aviators had flown AV-8 Harrier jets since 1988.

Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 311 will become the Marine Corps' second operational squadron to fly the "C" version of the F-35 fighter jet, the release said.

It joins Miramar-based Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314, which began flying its first F-35Cs in 2020.

On its website, manufacturer Lockheed Martin describes the F-35C as "the first and world's only long-range stealth strike fighter designed and built explicitly for Navy carrier operations." The C model is

equipped with landing gear and folding wingtips for carrier operations.

The second F-35C squadron is part of the aviation plan released last year by the Marine Corps, 2nd Lt. Andrew Baez, a spokesman for 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, said in a phone interview Wednesday.

"The plan prioritizes readiness, reinforces the importance of flying from the sea, and refocuses on manpower, support to logistics and modern capabilities," the Marine Corps said in a May news release.

Harris rallies as high court eyes abortion pills

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Vice President Kamala Harris on Saturday urged Americans to take action during “a critical point in our nation’s history” as thousands of protesters demonstrated across the country against new limits to abortion rights making their way through the courts.

Saturday’s nationwide rallies were sparked by the U.S. Supreme Court’s actions the day before, when the high court intervened to delay rule changes that would have limited the way the abortion drug mifepristone could be used and dispensed.

The limits were paused while the court reviews the case more thoroughly.

Harris made a surprise stop in Los Angeles at one of the rallies, where she called the latest upheaval over abortion rights a further incursion by conservatives into myriad “fundamental rights” many Americans thought they had.

“And so this is a moment that history will show required each of us — based on our collective love of our country — to stand up, and fight for, and protect our ideals. That’s what this moment is,” she said Saturday, speaking to

several hundred demonstrators from the steps of City Hall. “When you attack the rights of women in America, you are attacking America.”

Some of the protesters voiced their anger at the steps of the nation’s high court, which took Friday’s action at the request of the federal Justice Department. The agency asked the high court to lift restrictions on mifepristone imposed by an appellate court in Texas earlier in the week. The decision by the appellate court reduced the window of time when the drug could be used and prevented the drug from being

dispensed by mail.

Critics of the Texas and appellate court decisions, including pharmaceutical companies, viewed the courts’ actions as a dangerous intrusion into the authority of the FDA, which regulates how medications are sold and used in the United States.

Restrictions on the delivery and use of mifepristone, part of a two-drug regimen to end a pregnancy, would be a further blow to abortion rights advocates. The other drug, misoprostol, can be used on its own, but doing so is less effective than using both drugs in combination.

Alabama birthday party shooting kills at least 4

Associated Press

DADEVILLE, Ala. — Four people have been killed and multiple people injured during a shooting at a birthday party Saturday night in Dadeville, the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency said.

The shooting happened around 10:30 p.m., Sgt. Jeremy Burkett of the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency said. There was no initial confirmation about what led to the shooting. It was not immediately known if a suspect was in custody.

“There were four lives tragically lost in this incident and there’s been a multitude of injuries,” Burkett said during a news conference Sunday morning.

The shootings rocked the small city of 3,200. Dadeville Chief Jonathan L. Floyd paused to regain his composure before speaking at the news conference.

“What we’ve dealt with is something that no community should have to endure. I just ask for your patience. It’s going to be a long process, but I do earnestly solicit your prayers,” Floyd said.

Pastor Ben Hayes, who serves as the chaplain for the Dadeville Police Department and for the lo-

cal high school football team, said most of the victims are teenagers because the shooting occurred at a birthday party for a 16-year-old. He said the shooting has rocked the small town where serious crime is rare.

“One of the young men that was killed was one of our star athletes and just a great guy. So I knew many of these students. Dadeville is a small town and this is going to affect everybody in this area,” Hayes said.

The Tallapoosa County school system said counseling will be available for students at schools Monday, the school superintendent, Raymond C. Porter, said.

WRBL-TV reported that the shooting happened at a dance studio. The station showed images of crime scene tape around the Mahogany Masterpiece Dance Studio and neighboring buildings and a heavy police presence.

“This morning, I grieve with the people of Dadeville and my fellow Alabamians. Violent crime has NO place in our state, and we are staying closely updated by law enforcement as details emerge,” Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey said in a statement posted on social media.

Boston marks 10 years after deadly marathon bombing

Associated Press

BOSTON — With a bagpiper playing “The Bells of Dunblane” and a few runners looking on, families of those killed in the Boston Marathon bombing marked the 10th anniversary of the tragedy early Saturday by slowly walking together to the memorial sites near the finish line and laying wreaths.

Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, who was making her first run for City Council when the bombing happened, joined the somber procession along with Gov. Maura Healey. At each memorial site — marked with three stone pillars — they stood with the families in silence.

Thousands, including many marathon runners in their blue and yellow windbreakers and several former Boston Red Sox players, came out to a second ceremony Saturday afternoon near the finish line. Church bells were rung and the Boston City Singers and Boston Pops performed “Amazing Grace” and “America the Beautiful.”

The 127th Boston Marathon takes place Monday.

“The day never leaves me,” said Jennifer Black, 71, a realtor

from Loveland, Ohio, who was watching the morning procession and recounted how her race in 2013 was cut short due to the bombing and talked about those who died in the attack. She is back in Boston to run this year.

“So much loss, so much pain all because of hate,” she continued, tears streaming down her face. “We have to stand up for people. We have to look out for each other, and we have to pray for these families every day.”

Three people were killed and more than 260 were injured when two pressure-cooker bombs went off at the marathon finish line. Among the dead were Lu Lingzi, a 23-year-old Boston University graduate student from China; Krystle Campbell, a 29-year-old restaurant manager from Medford, Mass.; and 8-year-old Martin Richard, who had gone to watch the marathon with his family.

On Saturday, the focus was mostly on remembering victims and survivors of the bombing but also, as Wu said, “really making sure this was a moment to focus on where the city and our communities, our families are headed in the future.”

Ukraine marks Easter with freed POWs

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — More than 100 Ukrainian prisoners of war have been released as part of a major Easter exchange with Russia, a top official said Sunday, as Orthodox Ukrainians marked the holiday for a second time since Moscow unleashed its brutal full-scale war last February.

While celebrations were subdued due to security risks, with a curfew barring the faithful from customary all-night services, Ukrainian authorities and ordinary people shared messages of hope, linking the story of Jesus' resurrection to their longing for peace and a Ukrainian victory.

Dozens of families had special reasons to rejoice, as presidential adviser Andriy Yermak announced that 130 soldiers, sailors, border guards and others captured by Moscow were on their way back home following a "big Easter prisoner exchange."

Yermak said in a Telegram post Sunday that those released included troops who

fought near Bakhmut, the eastern mining city which has for months been the focus of Russia's grinding offensive.

"The lives of our people are the highest value for us," Yermak said, adding that Kyiv's goal was to bring back all remaining POWs.

There was no immediate information on how many Russian prisoners were released, but the press service of the founder of the Wagner Group, the Kremlin-affiliated paramilitary force whose fighters are prominent in eastern Ukraine, also released a video Sunday showing Ukrainian prisoners of war being readied for an exchange.

The video, published on the Telegram messaging service, features Wagner founder Yevgeny Prigozhin instructing a soldier to prepare the Ukrainian captives to leave Russian-controlled territory "by lunchtime" on Sunday.

The POWs are then shown boarding trucks and walking along a road.

In his Easter address released on Sunday morning, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the holiday as marking "the victory of good, the victory of truth, the victory of life," and he stressed what he said was Ukrainian unity in the face of Russian aggression.

"Belief in victory unites all of us always, and especially today. At Easter, which from time immemorial has been a family holiday for Ukrainians, a day of warmth, hope and great unity. We are one big family — Ukrainians. We have one big home — Ukraine. We have one big goal — victory for all," Zelenskyy said.

Ukraine's top soldier, Gen. Valery Zaluzhnyy, likewise drew parallels between the Christian message of resurrection and renewal and Ukraine's hopes for victory.

"Easter is a holiday of great hope. Hope that will bring us peace. I believe that together, united, we will overcome the enemy," he wrote in a Facebook post.

Dozens killed as rivals battle for control of Sudan

Associated Press

KHARTOUM, Sudan — The Sudanese military and a powerful paramilitary group battled for control of the chaos-stricken nation for a second day Sunday, signaling they were unwilling to end hostilities despite mounting diplomatic pressure to cease fire.

At least five civilians were killed and 78 wounded Sunday, bringing the two-day toll to 61 dead and more than 670 wounded, said the Sudan Doctors' Syndicate.

The group said it believes there were dozens of additional deaths among the rival forces.

The clashes are part of a power struggle

between Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, the commander of the armed forces, and Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, the head of the Rapid Support Forces group.

The two generals are former allies who jointly orchestrated an October 2021 military coup that derailed Sudan's short-lived transition to democracy.

Diplomats to discuss Ukraine war, China aggression

Associated Press

KARUIZAWA, Japan — Top diplomats from Europe and North America were arriving Sunday in this hot spring resort town to discuss the world's most intractable crises, including ways to end Russia's war in Ukraine, confront China's aggression toward Taiwan and lure North Korea back to nuclear disarmament talks.

They planned to dive right in, with a private working dinner Sunday spotlighting China and North Korea.

But even before the Group of Seven foreign ministers' talks

began, outside events threatened to overshadow the diplomacy, including questions about U.S. intelligence leaks that cast doubt over crucial alliances, and security worries after someone threw an explosive device at the Japanese leader during a campaign event.

Japan is eager to use a smoothly run G-7, which includes a host of gatherings on climate, finance and other issues ahead of a leaders' summit next month in Hiroshima, to pursue a stronger unified front against what Tokyo and other democracies see as Russian,

Chinese and North Korean aggression.

Amid widespread skepticism that the United Nations, which is often paralyzed by the oversized power on the Security Council of Russia and China, can do anything about these issues, many will be watching to see what, if anything, G-7 ministers from Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, Italy and the European Union might do.

Security is tight in Karuizawa, but Japan has been forced to address safety concerns after a

young man threw an explosive device toward Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on the eve of the diplomats' arrivals.

Kishida was uninjured Saturday and continued campaigning, but the attack is an unwanted development for Tokyo amid a lingering security debate over the assassination nine months ago of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

"Starting with the summit, we have to make every effort to ensure security and safety ... (as) dignitaries from all over the world gather," Kishida told reporters Sunday.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Dog arrives home after Alaskan sea-ice odyssey

AK ANCHORAGE — A 1-year-old Australian shepherd took an epic trek across 150 miles of frozen Bering Sea ice that included being bitten by a seal or polar bear before he was safely returned to his home in Alaska.

Mandy Iworriggan, Nanuq's owner who lives in Gambell, Alaska, and her family were visiting Savoonga, another St. Lawrence Island community in the Bering Strait, when Nanuq disappeared with their other family dog, Starlight, the Anchorage Daily News reported.

Starlight turned up a few weeks later, but Nanuq, which means polar bear in Siberian Yupik, was nowhere to be found.

About a month after Nanuq disappeared, people in Wales, 150 miles northeast of Savoonga on Alaska's western coast, began posting pictures online of what they described as a lost dog.

"I have no idea why he ended up in Wales. Maybe the ice shifted while he was hunting," Iworriggan said.

Museum offers \$25K reward for meteorites

ME PORTLAND — In a remote stretch of forest near Maine's border with Canada, space rocks crashed and may be scattered across the ground — just waiting to be picked up.

And a museum says it'll pay out a \$25,000 reward to the first person to find a really big one.

The unusually bright fireball could be seen in broad daylight

around noon April 8, said Darryl Pitt, chair of the meteorite division at the Maine Mineral and Gem Museum in Bethel.

NASA said the meteorite fall was observed on radar — a first for Maine — and witnesses heard sonic booms. According to Pitt, the fact that radar detected the fiery descent assures the meteorites can be found on the ground.

Gushing groundwater swamps neighborhood

CA CLAREMONT — Water has been gushing out of the ground in a Southern California neighborhood for days, forcing residents to use pumps, hoses and sandbags to divert flows away from their properties.

The flooding began April 9 in the city of Claremont's Stone Canyon development, impacting more than two dozen homes, KABC-TV reported.

"We started gathering pumps. We started digging holes to create sumps for the water to go down into," resident Ken Larson said.

Claremont lies at the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains, which received a huge amount of rain and snow this winter.

Hit-and-run suspect dies of medical condition

NV SPARKS — Police investigating the bizarre death of a hit-and-run suspect driving a stolen pickup said he probably died from a medical condition after he struck a bicyclist — who jumped into the fleeing truck's bed — before he crashed again and ran off as the bicyclist gave chase.

Police said an investigation

indicates Mergan was beginning to flee the scene of the first accident in a stolen truck when "the victim bicyclist jumped into the bed of the pickup ... to prevent his escape."

"When Mergan crashed a second time, he fled on foot and the bicyclist followed on foot. After running a couple hundred yards, Mergan was exhausted and stopped," police said.

"The bicyclist caught up and verbally attempted to convince Mergan to stay put for authorities. Mergan threw an item at the bicyclist and began to flee on foot again," the new statement said.

"Mergan only went a very short distance before collapsing and was unresponsive when police and medics arrived. ... There was no police intervention or force used in this incident," police said.

Not guilty plea in attack on anti-abortion office

WI MADISON — The man accused of firebombing a Wisconsin anti-abortion group's office has pleaded not guilty.

Investigators believe Hridindu Roychowdhury, of Madison, threw two Molotov cocktails into the Madison office of Wisconsin Family Action last May. He entered a not guilty plea to one count of attempting to cause damage by means of fire or an explosive and waived his right to appear in court for an arraignment once he is returned to Wisconsin.

One of the firebombs thrown into the anti-abortion group's office failed to ignite; the other set a bookcase on fire. No one was in the office at the time. The

message "If abortions aren't safe then you aren't either" was found spray-painted on the building.

Blast injures 1 person, kills 18,000 cattle

TX DIMMITT — An explosion at a dairy farm in the Texas Panhandle that critically injured one person and killed an estimated 18,000 head of cattle is the deadliest barn fire recorded since the Animal Welfare Institute began tracking the fires.

Castro County Sheriff Salvador Rivera has said the April 10 fire and explosion at Southfork Dairy Farm near Dimmitt was likely caused by overheated equipment and would be investigated by state fire marshals.

"This would be the most deadly fire involving cattle in the past decade, since we started tracking that in 2013," institute spokesperson Marjorie Fishman said Thursday.

Drones used to deliver contraband to prison

KS KANSAS CITY — Six people are accused in a federal indictment of conspiring to use a drone to fly contraband such as cellphones and marijuana into the U.S. Penitentiary in Leavenworth.

Two prisoners, Dale Gaver III and Melvin Edwards, allegedly arranged with four people outside the prison to deliver items requested by other inmates into the prison yard between, The Wichita Eagle reported. The items included cellphones, the synthetic drug K-2, marijuana and tobacco products.

-From wire reports

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Fox lifts Kings in return to playoffs

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — De'Aaron Fox finished off a dazzling playoff debut that was years in the making, and had one more task to do.

With the home crowd counting down following an exhilarating return to the postseason, Fox pressed the button and lit the ceremonial beam, letting out 17 seasons of frustration for Sacramento.

"Sacramento showed out tonight," Fox said. "But doing this for the fans, just knowing the way that they support this team through thick and thin — really thin. It's just a testament to the way they are."

Fox was the biggest reason for that, scoring 38 points to tie for the second-highest playoff debut in NBA history, leading the Kings to a 126-123 victory over the defending champion Golden State Warriors on Sat-

urday night.

Fox scored 29 points in the second half after taking time to adjust to the playoff physicality and hit the three-pointer that gave Sacramento the lead for good late in the fourth quarter.

Fox took until his sixth season to reach the postseason stage but announced himself as a star, as only Luka Doncic scored more points in a playoff debut with 42 for Dallas three years ago.

"You need guys like that on your side because they know everything we're throwing at them," coach Mike Brown said. "There's no secrets. You have to have guys on your team that can go make plays, and Foxy went and made plays tonight."

The first playoff meeting between the Northern California neighbors lived up to the hype and delighted the raucous crowd that had been waiting for

a playoff game since 2006.

The inexperienced Kings closed the game strong against a Warriors team that won four titles in the previous eight seasons.

After Stephen Curry hit a corner three-pointer to give Golden State a 114-112 lead with about four minutes left, the Kings responded with seven in a row starting with a three-pointer from Fox.

The Warriors didn't go away and cut the deficit to one on a layup by Curry in the final minute. But Andrew Wiggins missed a corner three for the lead in the closing seconds of his first game in more than two months.

"That last one felt amazing," Wiggins said of the last shot. "Only up from here. ... I'm here to compete and I believe in myself."

Malik Monk made two free

throws to make it 126-123 with 2.9 seconds left. Curry missed a runner from three at the buzzer, giving the Kings their first playoff win since April 30, 2006, against San Antonio.

"That first game is kind of a feeling out process," Curry said. "We responded. That's what we are capable of doing. It was a high energy game from start to finish."

Monk finished with 32 points off the bench and Domantas Sabonis had 12 points and 16 rebounds.

Curry led the Warriors with 30 points, Klay Thompson added 21 and Wiggins and Poole scored 18 apiece.

It was a festive environment in success-starved Sacramento where fans gathered outside the arena hours before the start of the Kings' first playoff game following an NBA record 16-year drought.

Brunson, Randle push Knicks past Cavs in opener

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Julius Randle joked about being out of shape and Josh Hart walked into the postgame news conference wearing a T-shirt with a photo of teammate Jalen Brunson on the front.

The Knicks could finally relax.

Finally at full strength, and following a worrisome few weeks, New York's season looks much brighter.

Brunson shook off foul trouble and scored 21 of his 27 points in the second half, Randle returned from an ankle injury to add 19 — and a critical final rebound — and the Knicks welcomed Cleveland back to the NBA playoffs by holding off the Cavaliers 101-97 on Saturday night in Game 1.

Brunson was limited to nine minutes in the first half, but hit several big shots down the

stretch as the Knicks turned back Cleveland's late rally led by All-Star Donovan Mitchell, who finished with 38 points.

With the Knicks clinging to a 99-97 lead, Brunson missed a pullup with nine seconds left and Randle bailed out New York with his 10th rebound — and the team's 17th offensive board — that led to Quentin Grimes making two free throws to seal the win.

"You can't say enough about the monster rebound Julius made at the end," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said. "That rebound was huge. Huge."

Randle hadn't played since March 29 because of a sprained left ankle, and said he was thankful he had enough energy for one last jump.

"You see me breathing out there today?" said Randle, who played 34 minutes. "I was tired as hell. But it was just about win-

ning at that point."

Randle was reminded that the Knicks had a similar play in Game 1 against Atlanta in 2021, but didn't come up with the ball.

"Funny how things turn, right?" he said.

Game 2 is Tuesday at Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse.

Mitchell scored 14 points in the fourth, but it wasn't enough for the young Cavs, who disappointed a raucous, towel-waving Cleveland crowd that hadn't seen a playoff game since the 2018 NBA Finals.

Celtics 112, Hawks 99: Jaylen Brown had 29 points and 12 rebounds, and host Boston capitalized on a woeful shooting performance by Atlanta in Game 1 of the Eastern Conference first-round matchup.

Jayson Tatum scored 25 points, 21 of which were in the first half. Derrick White finished with 25 points and 11 re-

bounds for Boston, which will host Game 2 on Tuesday.

The Celtics led by as many as 32 points, pouncing on an Atlanta team that missed its first 10 three-point attempts.

Dejounte Murray led the Hawks with 24 points, eight rebounds and six assists. Trae Young added 16 points.

76ers 121, Nets 101: James Harden hit seven three-pointers and had 23 points and 13 assists, NBA MVP finalist Joel Embiid scored 26 points and Philadelphia pushed back Mikal Bridges and Brooklyn in Game 1.

Tobias Harris added 21 points and the 76ers hit a postseason team-record 21 threes in the opener of this Eastern Conference playoff series. The Sixers are trying to win their first NBA championship since 1983 and advance past the second round for the first time since 2001.

NYC places three teams in NHL playoffs

Associated Press

Keith Yandle walked into coffee shops when he played hockey in New York and would hear people talking about the next Rangers game against the Islanders or the New Jersey Devils.

"When you play those teams, even during the regular season, it adds a little bit more," Yandle said. "Those are fun rivalries."

Take those rivalries and add the prospect of elimination. The results could mean a spring sports scene in the Big Apple area that hasn't happened in almost three decades.

All three New York-area teams are in the NHL playoffs this year — just the fourth time that has happened and the first since 2007. Add in the NBA's Knicks and Brooklyn Nets and it's the first time the city's five indoor major professional teams all qualified for the post-season since 1994, when the Rangers lifted the Stanley Cup.

The Devils and Rangers are facing off in the first round, their first playoff matchup since the 2012 Eastern Conference finals.

"It's going to be a great battle," Devils forward Erik Haula said.

And given the teams' young talent and potential, it's easy to

envision a championship parade coming to New York or North Jersey in the not-too-distant future.

"It's awesome for the sport," said Brian Boyle, who played for the Rangers and Devils before retiring and joining NHL Network. "The passion, that's what drives it. That's what makes sports great, and they have that right there. And when they're all doing fairly well — there's no doormats now — it's exciting."

Much like Major League Baseball's Subway Series between the Yankees and Mets, the mix of contending hockey teams in New York makes for interesting tension in the stands and in local establishments showing the games on TV.

"You're cheering against your neighbors, your cousins, your family," said Islanders forward Kyle Palmieri, who also played for the Devils after growing up in New Jersey. "Everyone kind of has their own alliances."

Because of that, visiting fans bleed into the crowd more easily than in other markets. But Zach Parise, now with the Islanders after captaining the Devils to the Final in 2012, said it doesn't feel like a neutral-site

game — certainly not in the playoffs.

"Both fanbases are so into it that they drown out the other half really quick," Parise said.

Yandle, who broke the NHL's consecutive games played record last season before retiring to join TNT, pointed out the New York-area teams all making the playoffs is good for the sport's bottom line, too, from revenue to ratings.

Former goalie Kevin Weekes, who played for all three and now works for ESPN, said: "You can't put a price on" playoff hockey at Madison Square Garden.

You can, and it's over \$350 on the secondary market just to get into the place known as "The World's Most Famous Arena."

It may be a little cheaper at Prudential Center in Newark or the sparkling new UBS Arena at Belmont Park on Long Island, which will host a postseason game for the first time in its second year of existence after the Islanders clinched their spot Wednesday night. They'll open against the Carolina Hurricanes.

No matter where the games are, at least for the first round, the eyes of the hockey community will be drawn to New York or

New Jersey just about every night. That's not something three-time Devils Stanley Cup-winning defenseman Ken Daneyko expected to experience again in his lifetime.

"When they do, all three in, it's great for our market, for New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Long Island — you name it," said Daneyko, who's now an NHL Network analyst. "Hockey's at the forefront and that's what we love, what we want."

Beyond adding more banners to hang from the rafters, it also could be a boon for youth hockey in the area. Much like Palmieri, James and Trevor van Riemsdyk and others from New York and New Jersey wanted to be like Mark Messier and Brian Leetch, the next generation of kids playing could say the same about Adam Fox, Jack Hughes and the other stars playing for the Rangers, Devils and Islanders.

"It has come a long way," Palmieri said. "You look at the rinks that are being built and the youth hockey teams that are popping up, the opportunities for guys to make it to higher levels is really awesome. Any time you generate buzz about hockey in that market, it's doing well for youth hockey and everyone."

Hooker hurdles questions about style, age, health

Associated Press

Hendon Hooker is fluid on the football field and mobile in NFL meeting rooms, where he's been hurdling concerns about his age, health and playing style.

The 25-year-old former Tennessee quarterback who tore the ACL in his left knee less than five months ago has spent his predraft visits with teams explaining the complexity of the Volunteers' seemingly simplistic spread offense. It's one that has raised concerns about how his game will translate to the pros, where he'll have to read

the entire field and not lock in on his primary target.

"I can make any throw," Hooker said. "The way we run our offense, the wide splits, those are all grown-men throws. I'm not throwing any 5-yard outs. Those are all big-boy balls."

Hooker pounces at questions about how he'll do in a pro style offense.

"I can't help that defenders can't guard my receivers. My job is to get them the ball," Hooker said. "A lot of these questions about one-sided

reads, we have pure progressions and routes. It's not my fault that my first read is getting open."

And don't be fooled, Hooker added, there's a lot going on underneath that cool demeanor of his that makes it seem like he's just leisurely playing catch.

Hooker figures to be the fifth quarterback selected in the NFL Draft later this month, behind sure-fire first-rounders Bryce Young, C.J. Stroud, Will Levis and Anthony Richardson.

"I really like Hendon Hooker," NFL Network draft analyst

Daniel Jeremiah said, citing his accuracy, acumen and adjustability.

Hooker's age — he'll turn 26 by the end of his rookie season — and health — he tore the ACL in his left knee in a game against South Carolina on Nov. 19 — have many predicting that he'll slide into the second round. But Jeremiah has him going to the Vikings at No. 23 in his latest mock draft.

The 2022 SEC Offensive Player of the Year spent three years at Virginia Tech and the last two at Tennessee.

McCutchen's late heroics lift Pirates

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Andrew McCutchen hit a tie-breaking, two-run homer in the 10th inning and the Pittsburgh Pirates beat the St. Louis Cardinals 6-3 on Saturday.

McCutchen hit a 3-2 pitch from Jordan Hicks (0-1) over the left field wall for his third home run of the season in leading off the inning. McCutchen worked a 3-0 count and thought he had walked on a slider that home plate umpire Will Little called a strike.

"I still had the mindset of he's still trying to pitch around me," McCutchen said. "He got the next pitch and then I fouled off a changeup, and then in my mind I said if he throws me another slider, I'm going to be ready to hit it. That's what he did, and it's pretty much history from there."

David Bednar (2-0) pitched a scoreless ninth inning, and Dauri Moreta worked around a leadoff walk in the 10th to earn his first save of the season and

guarantee the Pirates at least a split of the four-game series.

Tigers 7, Giants 6 (11): Miguel Cabrera's walk-off single in the 11th inning capped Detroit's rally from a five-run deficit to beat San Francisco.

Blue Jays 5, Rays 2: Yusei Kikuchi struck out a season-high nine in six innings, Danny Jansen had two hits and an RBI and host Toronto again beat Tampa Bay.

Braves 9, Royals 3: Sean Murphy homered among his three hits and drove in four runs, Ozzie Albies added four RBIs and visiting Atlanta beat Kansas City.

Padres 10, Brewers 3: Jake Cronenworth had his first career multi-homer game with two two-run shots and drove in a career-high six runs as host San Diego beat NL Central-leading Milwaukee to snap a three-game losing streak.

Yankees 6, Twins 1: Domingo Germán retired his first 16 batters and host New York beat Minnesota.

Astros 8, Rangers 2: Yordan Alvarez doubled with three RBIs to back up a strong start by rookie Hunter Brown and help host Houston come back against Texas.

Dodgers 2, Cubs 1: David Peralta hit a two-run single and Los Angeles rallied for their first walk-off win of the season.

Mets 3, Athletics 2: Mark Canha homered leading off the seventh inning and Brandon Nimmo followed with an RBI double with two outs that scored pinch-runner Tim Lincecum as visiting New York rallied to beat Oakland.

Guardians 6, Nationals 4: José Ramírez drove his first homer of the season into the second deck for a two-run, go-ahead shot in the fifth inning, and visiting Cleveland erased a deficit for the second consecutive game.

Marlins 3, Diamondbacks 2: Luis Arraez hit a tiebreaking pinch-hit single in the seventh inning and host Miami rallied

to win their fourth straight.

White Sox 7, Orioles 6 (10): Yasmani Grandal tied the game in the 10th inning with a bloop RBI double, and Óscar Colás followed it with an RBI single to lift host Chicago over Baltimore.

Red Sox 9, Angels 7: Yu Chang snapped an 0-for-28 drought with a two-run homer and delivered a go-ahead, two-run single after Los Angeles' Matt Thaiss was called for his second catcher's interference in the eighth inning, lifting host Boston to a comeback win over the Angels.

Reds 13, Phillies 0: Wil Myers went 4 for 5 with two home runs, and host Cincinnati rode a stout pitching performance by Graham Ashcraft to shut out Philadelphia.

Mariners 9, Rockies 2: Eugenio Suárez started host Seattle's big fourth inning with a solo home run, Julio Rodríguez capped it with a three-run triple and the Mariners won their third straight.

Beck in line to take over Georgia's starting QB duties

Associated Press

ATHENS, Ga. — Carson Beck closed Georgia's spring practice as the leader, but not yet the winner, of the quarterback competition.

Beck is at the front of the line to replace Stetson Bennett, who led Georgia to back-to-back national championships for the first time in school history. Beck opened Saturday's G-Day scrimmage with the first-team offense, closing the Bulldogs' spring practice schedule as the favorite — but not yet the starter.

"I'd say I'm content with the way I attacked and performed through the spring and approached the competition side of it," Beck said.

Brock Vandagriff also had

snaps with the No. 1 offense Saturday and throughout the spring. Gunner Stockton is the third contender.

Coach Kirby Smart said he'd have to review tape from the scrimmage before evaluating the performances. Smart said Beck, a junior, earned the first opportunity with the starters on Saturday because "he's had the most practice reps."

Beck was Bennett's backup the last two seasons. He showed good accuracy, completing 15 of 22 passes for 231 yards and one touchdown, in the scrimmage. Vandagriff passed for two touchdowns and had a 23-yard run.

"I think I put together a pretty good spring," Vandagriff said. "It's a good, healthy competi-

tion between us two. You want to see the other guy do well."

Beck acknowledged it hasn't been easy to spend most of his time on the sideline the last three years, including a redshirt season, waiting for this opportunity. Georgia's runaway wins during its undefeated 2022 season provided opportunities for Beck (6-foot-4, 215 pounds) to play behind Bennett in seven games and complete 26 of 35 passes for 310 yards and four touchdowns.

"Obviously it's really difficult and I think it's difficult for anybody when you come out of high school," Beck said last week. "Really everybody who has come here has had to sit. We're all four-star and five-star guys here and we've had a ton of

them, but there have been a lot of guys who have had to sit and I'm sure every one of them would agree with me that it's very difficult."

Vandagriff (6-3, 205) was a hometown recruit from Prince Avenue Christian School in Athens. He said he considers himself to be a drop-back quarterback, even though he was rated among the top dual-threat players in his high school class.

Bennett recently showed off his arm strength by firing a fastball when he threw out the ceremonial first pitch at the Atlanta Braves' home opener. He was a former walk-on at Georgia who had an unusual wait, having to transfer before returning to play on the scout team and finally capitalizing on his chance.