

Navy review: Shipbuilding delayed by challenges

The Virginian-Pilot

A Navy review is shining a light on major shipbuilding delays, but defense experts have pointed to larger systemic issues constraining the industrial base's production capacity.

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro ordered a 45-day shipbuilding review this year with the goal of identifying causes of shipbuilding challenges and recommending actions to keep new builds on schedule. A one-page fact sheet released in April showed several of the Navy's top shipbuilding programs are one to three years behind schedule.

A second investigation will explore how to fix the delays, Del Toro said. The secretary referenced needing a "whole-of-government effort" when ordering the study in January.

The review found that the lead ship of the Columbia-class submarines is delayed 12-16 months, blocks four and five of Virginia-class submarines are delayed 24-36 months and the third Ford-class aircraft carrier is delayed 18-26 months — all of which Newport News Shipbuilding plays a role in constructing. Additionally, the lead ship of the Constellation-class frigates, which are being built at Fincantieri Marinette Marine in Wisconsin, is delayed 36 months.

The fact sheet offered little insight into the cause of the delays, only summarizing bullet points of challenges. Lead ship issues included design maturity, first-of-class challenges, transition to production and design workforce. Class issues included acquisition and contract strategy, supply chain, skilled work-

force and government workforce. The full report is not available for public release due to sensitive information, said Lt. Cmdr. Javan Rasnake, spokesperson for the Navy's research, development and acquisition division.

Del Toro's January order placed blame on the "lingering effects of post-pandemic conditions" on shipbuilders and suppliers, specifically with the Columbia-class submarine and Constellation-class frigate programs.

"It is a partial explanation. It's not a sufficient one. And it doesn't address the situation in the year 2024," said Aaron Karp, an Old Dominion University lecturer specializing in international security, armed conflict and weapons proliferation.

Shipbuilding delays are caused by funding tensions among lawmakers or the inability or unwillingness of manufacturers to make the long-term investments that higher production rates require, Karp said.

"There is some long-term investment that needs to be done for this kind of work — big capital stuff," Karp said. "If you want to sustain higher rate production, it just has to be done."

This year, it took lawmakers multiple continuing resolutions spanning nearly six months to pass \$1.2 trillion in spending in a package of bills, including defense spending. The delay meant defense dollars were frozen at the prior year's levels.

President and CEO Chris Kastner of HII, the parent company of Newport News Shipbuilding, did not say if

funding tensions contributed to delays, but said advance procurement is critical to keeping shipbuilding on track. Advance procurement, he told reporters April 4 at the company's Arlington office, allows suppliers to plan for future orders and be on schedule with delivering products.

The Navy's 2025 budget request is looking to trim procurement of Virginia-class submarines and future Ford-class carriers in an effort to ease the workload on shipyards. But such changes disrupt the industrial supply chain by lowering demand, ultimately making the Navy "not a very good customer," said Bryan Clark, defense analyst with Washington, D.C.-based Hudson Institute.

"From the industry perspective, you can't really prepare. You can't buy. You can't hire workers. You can't build infrastructure," Clark said. "You can't establish your production lines in advance because you can't depend on the schedule over which the government's going to buy your products."

The Navy's budget plans to purchase one Virginia-class submarine, a break from a steady two-per-year demand signal from the service. Navy officials have maintained that the industrial base must build 2.33 attack boats per year in order for the United States to sell Virginia-class submarines to Australia as part of a trilateral agreement. The submarine industrial base is currently building 1.3 attack boats per year, despite the Navy buying two Virginia-class submarines per year since fiscal year 2011, according to the Congression-

al Research Service.

The inability to plan exacerbates workforce challenges, Clark said.

"We are in a pretty tight labor environment. Working in a lot of these industries is not as easy as an office job or retail job, and in a lot of cases, the industry jobs don't pay that much more than the retail or the office job," Clark said.

The review found that first-in-class challenges and design maturity have contributed to delayed production. That shows, Clark said, the Navy has aimed too high by making generational leaps with cutting-edge technology.

China has made headlines in recent months for outpacing U.S. military shipbuilding.

"This is because they have probably chosen to go with more proven technologies," Clark said.

The issue plagued the USS Gerald R. Ford, the Navy's newest and most technologically advanced aircraft carrier. The Ford was delivered to the Navy in 2017 after years of costly delays associated with the never-before-seen technology. The delays pushed the Ford's price tag up to \$13 billion — \$4 billion over budget.

While U.S. Navy ships are dramatically more sophisticated than Chinese ships, Clark said, the U.S. is paying the price — that price being shipbuilding delays.

"I think the lesson here is maybe make these improvements more incrementally and accept the fact that you may have to make other arrangements to mitigate the shortfalls that come from building a less sophisticated warship," Clark said.

Chinese general takes harsh line at naval gathering

Associated Press

QINGDAO, China — One of China's top military leaders took a harsh line on regional territorial disputes, telling an international naval gathering in northeastern China on Monday that the country would strike back with force if its interests came under threat.

The 19th biennial meeting of the Western Pacific Naval Symposium opened in the port city of Qingdao, where China's northern naval force is based, providing a vivid backdrop to China's massive military expansion over the past two decades that has seen it build or refurbish three aircraft carriers.

The four-day meeting has drawn representatives from partners and competitors including Australia, Cambodia, Chile, France, India and the U.S. and comes amid heightened tensions over China's assertive actions in the Taiwan Strait and the East and South

China seas, and as China's navy has grown into the world's largest by number of hulls.

Zhang Youxia, the vice chairman of the ruling Communist Party's Central Military Commission, which controls the armed forces, spoke of "common development" and said "decoupling, friction and confrontation will only divide the world into isolated islands guarding against each other with suspicion."

However, he then turned to China's territorial claims, which have not been recognized under international law and in some cases have been denied.

Beijing has ignored rulings not in its favor, particularly in the South China Sea, where it is in dispute with five other parties over islands, waterways and undersea resources.

Japan continues to defend its control over the uninhabited Senkaku island chain against incursions by the China.

North Korea fires missiles days after 'warhead' test

BY DAVID CHOI

Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — North Korea fired several short-range ballistic missiles toward the Sea of Japan on Monday afternoon, the South's military told reporters soon after the launch.

The weapons went up at 3:01 p.m. and flew roughly 190 miles before splashing down into what South Korea calls the East Sea, according to the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff.

They did not specify how many missiles were launched.

The Joint Chiefs described the launches as a "clear provocation that seriously threatens peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula." South Korea, Japan and the United States are analyzing the flight details, they said.

The launches came two days after the state-run Korean News Agency said the North had tested a "super-large warhead" atop a cruise missile, along with a new anti-aircraft missile, the previous day in the Yellow Sea.

Seoul detected several cruise missiles and anti-aircraft missiles being fired from the North at around 3:30 p.m. Friday, South Korea's Yonhap

News reported Saturday, citing unnamed sources.

North Korea fired an intermediate-range ballistic missile from the Pyongyang area on April 2.

That solid-fueled weapon flew roughly 370 miles before landing in the Sea of Japan. A hypersonic glide vehicle mounted on the missile was unsuccessful in its final gliding phase, the South's military said at the time.

Monday's launches happened the same day the head of U.S. Space Command, Gen. Stephen Whiting met with the chairman of the South's Joint Chiefs, Adm. Kim Myung-soo, in Seoul.

The military leaders discussed promoting joint space capabilities between their countries and North Korea's reconnaissance satellite launches, according to a news release from the South's Joint Chiefs.

North Korea may launch a new satellite as soon as mid-April, South Korean National Defense Minister Shin Won-sik said during a news conference April 8. The communist regime successfully launched a spy satellite in November after two failed attempts in May and August.

Poland leader: We're ready to host NATO members' nukes

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — Poland's president says the NATO member would be ready to host the nuclear weapons of the military alliance's other members in response to Russia's moving its nuclear weapons to neighboring Belarus.

President Andrzej Duda made the comments in an interview published Monday in the Fakt tabloid.

Russia is "recently relocating

its nuclear weapons to Belarus," Duda said, in a reference to Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko's announcement in December.

"If there were a decision by our allies to deploy nuclear weapons within the nuclear sharing also on our territory in order to strengthen the security of NATO's eastern flank, we are ready," Duda said.

He said Poland is aware of its obligations within the 32-member

alliance including the U.S.

Prime Minister Donald Tusk, who shares Duda's views on national security, later told journalists that he needs to discuss this suggestion with him urgently. Duda has previously spoken of Poland's openness to nuclear sharing within NATO.

Under NATO nuclear weapons sharing, the U.S. has provided nuclear arms for Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey to deploy and store.

In Moscow, a Kremlin spokesman said any deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons in Poland would be met with steps necessary for Russia's security.

"The military will, of course, analyze the situation if such plans are implemented, and in any case will do everything necessary, (will take) all the necessary retaliatory steps to guarantee our safety," Dmitry Peskov said during a daily news conference.

Prosecutor: Trump tried to 'corrupt' '16 vote

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Donald Trump tried to illegally influence the 2016 presidential election by preventing damaging stories about his personal life from becoming public, a prosecutor told jurors Monday at the start of the former president's historic hush money trial.

"This was a planned, long-running conspiracy to influence the 2016 election, to help Donald Trump get elected through illegal expenditures to silence people who had something bad to say about his behavior," prosecutor Matthew Colangelo said. "It was election fraud, pure and simple."

A defense lawyer countered by attacking the integrity of the one-time Trump confidant who's now the government's star witness.

"President Trump is innocent. President Trump did not commit any crimes. The Manhattan district attorney's office should not have brought this case," attorney Todd Blanche said.

The opening statements offered the 12-person jury — and the voting public — radically di-

vergent roadmaps for a case that will unfold against the backdrop of a closely contested White House race in which Trump is not only the presumptive Republican nominee but also a criminal defendant facing the prospect of a felony conviction and prison.

The case is the first criminal trial of a former American president and the first of four prosecutions of Trump to reach a jury. Befitting that history, prosecutors sought from the outset to elevate the gravity of the case, which they said was chiefly about election interference as reflected by the hush money payments to a porn actor who said she had a sexual encounter with Trump.

"The defendant, Donald Trump, orchestrated a criminal scheme to corrupt the 2016 presidential election. Then he covered up that criminal conspiracy by lying in his New York business records over and over and over again," Colangelo said.

The trial, which could last up to two months, will require Trump to spend his days in a courtroom rather than on the campaign trail,

a reality he complained about Monday.

"I'm the leading candidate ... and this is what they're trying to take me off the trail for. Checks being paid to a lawyer," he said after leaving court.

Trump has nonetheless sought to turn his criminal defendant status into an asset for his campaign, fundraising off his legal jeopardy and repeatedly railing against a justice system that he has for years claimed is weaponized against him.

Trump faces 34 felony counts of falsifying business records — a charge punishable by up to four years in prison — though it's not clear if the judge would seek to put him behind bars. A conviction would not preclude Trump from becoming president again, but because it is a state case, he would not be able to pardon himself if found guilty. He has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing.

The opening statements served as an introduction to the colorful cast of characters that feature prominently in that tawdry saga, including Stormy Daniels, the

porn actor who says she received the hush money; Michael Cohen, the lawyer who prosecutors say paid her; and David Pecker, the tabloid publisher who agreed to function as the campaign's "eyes and ears" and who served as the prosecution's first witness on Monday.

In his opening statement, Colangelo outlined a comprehensive effort by Trump his allies to prevent three stories — two from women alleging prior sexual encounters — from surfacing during the 2016 campaign.

Blanche, the defense lawyer, sought to preemptively undermine the credibility of Cohen, who pleaded guilty to federal charges related to his role in the hush money scheme, as someone with an "obsession" with Trump who cannot be trusted. He said Trump had done nothing illegal when his company recorded the checks to Cohen as legal expenses and that it was not against the law for a candidate to try to influence an election.

Trump has denied having a sexual encounter with Daniels.

Biden marks Earth Day by announcing solar grants

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden is marking Earth Day by announcing \$7 billion in federal grants for residential solar projects serving 900,000-plus households in low- and middle-income communities. He also plans to expand his New Deal-style American Climate Corps green jobs training program.

The grants are being awarded by the Environmental Protection Agency, which unveiled the 60 recipients on Monday. The projects are expected to eventually reduce emissions by the equivalent of 30 million metric tons of carbon dioxide and save households \$350 million annually, according to senior administration officials.

Biden's latest environmental announcements come as he is working to energize young voters for his reelection campaign.

The awards came from the Solar for All program, part of the \$27 billion "green bank" created as part of a sweeping climate law passed in 2022. The bank is intended to reduce climate and air pollution and send money to neighborhoods most in need, especially disadvantaged and low-income communities disproportionately impacted by climate change.

The taxpayer-funded green bank has faced Republican opposition and concerns over accountability for how the money gets used.

US campuses adjust amid pro-Palestinian protests

Associated Press

Columbia University in New York canceled in-person classes on Monday and new demonstrations broke out on other college campuses as tensions continue to grow over Israel's war in Gaza.

Police arrested several dozen protesters at Yale University on Monday morning after officials at the New Haven, Conn., school said they defied warnings over the weekend to leave.

And following arrests last week at Columbia, pro-Palestinian demonstrators set up encampments on other campuses, including at the University of Michigan, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of North Carolina.

The developments came hours before the Monday evening start of the Jewish holiday of Passover.

Last week, police arrested more than 100 pro-Palestinian demonstrators at Columbia who had set up an encampment on campus. On Sunday, a rabbi at Columbia sent a WhatsApp message to more than 200 Jewish students, urging them to leave campus if they did not feel safe.

Columbia President Minouche Shafik said that she understands that many are experiencing deep moral distress.

"But we cannot have one group dictate terms and attempt to disrupt important milestones like graduation to advance their point of view," Shafik wrote.

Chad asks US to stop activity at base

Bloomberg News

Chad called on the U.S. to withdraw its troops from an army base in the central African country that's one of the West's few remaining outposts to fight a roiling jihadi insurgency in the region.

The move comes a month after Niger — another key Western ally in the region — suspended its security agreement with the U.S., amid a series of coups that have seen military-ruled governments in the Sahel forge closer ties with Russia while cutting those with the

West.

Chad has alerted the U.S. “to stop their activity at the base,” according to a letter to the U.S. defense attaché seen by Bloomberg. The letter, signed by the air force chief of staff Idriss Amine Ahmed, was verified by a foreign ministry spokesman.

CNN reported that Chad had asked U.S. troops to leave the country, citing a separate letter sent to the U.S. defense attaché.

“Chad hasn’t asked U.S. forces to leave,” a U.S. state department spokesman said. “The U.S. and Chad have agreed that

the period following the upcoming Chadian presidential election is an appropriate time to review our security cooperation.”

Chad’s Interim President Mahamat Deby, who seized power three years ago following the death of his father, is widely expected to extend his family’s three-decade-long rule in the May 6 polls.

In January, Deby became the latest military ruler in the Sahel to hold a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin and stress the need for “sovereignty.”

“Chad’s a free and independent country,” Deby told French broadcaster France24 this week. “We’re not a slave looking to change his master. We intend to work with all nations that respect us.”

The military rulers of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, who all seized power over the past three years, have also cut security ties with former allies in the West amid an upsurge in anti-Western sentiment in the region — particularly against ex-colonial power France — that Russia has exploited.

Israeli military intel chief resigns over Oct. 7 failures

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — The head of Israeli military intelligence said Monday he would resign because of Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack, becoming the first senior figure to step down over his role in the stunning failure to anticipate or quickly respond to the deadliest assault in Israel’s history.

Maj. Gen. Aharon Haliva’s decision could set the stage for more resignations among Israel’s top security brass over Hamas’ attack, when militants blasted through Israel’s border defenses, rampaged through Is-

raeli communities unchallenged for hours and killed 1,200 people, most civilians, while taking roughly 250 hostages into Gaza. That attack set off the war against Hamas in Gaza, now in its seventh month.

“The intelligence directorate under my command did not live up to the task we were entrusted with. I carry that black day with me ever since, day after day, night after night. I will carry the horrible pain of the war with me forever,” Haliva wrote in his resignation letter, which was provided by the military.

Haliva said he would remain in his position until a replacement is found. He said he had intended to resign immediately after Oct. 7, but stayed on through the initial part of the war and was resigning as the army’s internal investigations gather pace.

His announcement came at the start of Passover, a major Jewish holiday, and as military operations in Gaza have slowed in recent weeks ahead of a possible offensive on the southern city of Rafah.

The timing of any resignations by security and military officials

has been complicated by the ongoing war in Gaza and battles with the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah along Israel’s northern border. Tensions with Iran are also at a high following attacks between the two enemies.

Some military experts have said resignations at a time when Israel is engaged on multiple fronts is irresponsible and could be interpreted as a sign of weakness.

Shortly after the attack, Haliva and others had publicly said that they shouldered blame for not preventing the Oct. 7 assault.

Leader offended by Biden’s comment about cannibals

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Papua New Guinea’s Prime Minister James Marape accused Joe Biden of disparaging the South Pacific island nation by implying that an uncle of the U.S. president had been eaten by “cannibals” there during World War II.

Biden’s comments offended a key strategic ally as China moves to increase its influence in the region.

The president spoke at a Pennsylvania war memorial last week about his Army Air Corps aviator

uncle 2nd Lt. Ambrose J. Finnegan Jr., whom he said was shot down over Papua New Guinea, the scene of heavy fighting.

“They never found the body because there used to be — there were a lot of cannibals for real in that part of New Guinea,” Biden said, referring to the country’s main island.

Marape said in a statement on Sunday that Biden “appeared to imply his uncle was eaten by cannibals.”

“President Biden’s remarks may have been a slip of the

tongue; however, my country does not deserve to be labeled as such,” Marape said in a statement provided by his office Monday.

“World War II was not the doing of my people; however, they were needlessly dragged into a conflict that was not their doing,” Marape added.

The rift comes as Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese began a visit on Monday to Papua New Guinea, Australia’s nearest neighbor. Albanese and Marape will commemorate

strong defense ties between the two countries by walking part of a pivotal battle ground known as the Kokoda Track later this week.

“I’m very confident that PNG has no stronger partner than Australia and our defense and security ties have never been stronger,” Albanese told reporters before departing Australia.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Friday Biden was speaking to the bravery of his uncle and the many U.S. service members that put their lives on the line.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Lawmakers try to slow island's e-bike riders

M I LANSING — Mackinac Island doesn't have cars. But it might soon have stricter speed limits.

The Michigan Senate voted overwhelmingly to set speed restrictions on the roadway that encircles the island, one of the state's top tourist destinations, to try to combat the rise of electric bikes that can go as fast as 28 mph.

Cars and trucks are generally and famously not allowed on Mackinac Island. Yet, the eight-mile roadway around the island, M-185, is considered a state highway, meaning lawmakers can institute the speed limit. Under Michigan law, the speed limit on state highways where a limit is not posted is 55 mph.

In the island's business district, under the proposal, the limit would be 10 mph.

Lodge from 'The Shining' will reopen after fire

OR GOVERNMENT CAMP — Oregon's historic Timberline Lodge, which featured in Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film "The Shining," will reopen to guests after a fire that prompted evacuations but caused only minimal damage.

The lodge said in a Facebook post that it will support guests while repairs are being done, as well as work to ensure water quality. Historic preservation efforts are also underway.

"There are challenges ahead but we are through the worst of it," the hotel said. "First responder and Timberline staff efforts have been nothing short of remarkable during a very difficult

time. This successful recovery is because of their dedication."

Embers from the lodge's large stone fireplace apparently ignited the roof, the lodge said. Guests and staff were evacuated as firefighters doused the flames, and no injuries were reported.

Kubrick used the exterior of the lodge as a stand-in for the Overlook Hotel in "The Shining," a psychological horror movie based on the 1977 Stephen King novel of the same name.

Rabbi jailed for wife's contract killing has died

NJ TRENTON — The New Jersey rabbi serving a decadeslong sentence in a 1994 murder-for-hire plot targeting his wife has died.

Fred Neulander, 82, was pronounced dead at a hospital in Trenton after he was found unresponsive in his cell in the New Jersey State Prison infirmary, news outlets reported, citing the state department of corrections.

A cause of death wasn't immediately released. Neulander was listed on the New Jersey corrections inmate locator as "deceased."

Neulander — founding rabbi of the Congregation M'kor Shalom synagogue in Cherry Hill, which merged two years ago with nearby Temple Emanuel — was sentenced to 30 years to life in January 2003 after he was convicted by a jury of having hired two men to kill his wife.

Carol Neulander, 52, a mother of three, was beaten to death in her Cherry Hill home in November 1994. Prosecutors alleged that the hit men received \$30,000 and were told to make it look like a robbery that turned violent.

15 hurt in tram accident at Universal Studios

CA LOS ANGELES — A tram accident at Universal Studios Hollywood in Los Angeles injured 15 people, authorities and the company said.

The California Highway Patrol said that while the tram was negotiating a turn, its last car collided with a metal guardrail, "causing it to tilt and eject multiple passengers."

The victims taken to area hospitals had minor injuries, the fire department said.

Universal Studios Hollywood said in a statement there were "multiple minor injuries" from an accident involving a tram at the theme park. Modified tours resumed the following day.

The tram circuit, called the World-Famous Studio Tour, offers a glimpse behind the scenes of Universal movies including "Jaws" and Jordan Peele's "Nope."

The theme park will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the tour starting Friday.

University shuts down pro-Palestinian group

PA PHILADELPHIA — The University of Pennsylvania effectively has banned from campus Penn Against the Occupation, a pro-Palestinian group, by revoking its status as a registered student organization.

The university's action was first reported by the student newspaper, the Daily Pennsylvanian. Penn Against the Occupation asserted in a statement posted on Instagram that the university also had tried to limit its social media activity.

"This group has failed to com-

ply with policies that govern student organizations at Penn, despite repeated efforts to engage with the group and to provide opportunities to resolve noncompliance," a Penn spokesperson said in a statement to the DP. The statement did not elaborate.

A spokesperson for Penn Against the Occupation was quoted as contending that the group was booted because it would not disclose the names of its student organizers, which could put them in danger.

Nuns who battled bishop now under new authority

TX DALLAS — A group of cloistered nuns who fought a monthslong public battle with a Fort Worth bishop will report to a new authority.

An association of Carmelite nuns will direct daily operations of the secluded Arlington monastery, where members sued Bishop Michael Olson after he accused the reverend mother of violating her vow of chastity, according to a decree from the Vatican.

"In light of this decision, I consider my task and responsibility as Pontifical Commissary of the Arlington Carmel to have ended," Olson said in a statement posted to the Fort Worth diocese's website.

The decision appears to end, for now, a bitter conflict between the two sides that played out in dueling public statements and in civil court. It unfolded in April 2023 when Olson launched an investigation into whether the Reverend Mother Teresa Agnes Gerlach violated her vow of chastity with a priest.

— From wire reports

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Tatum triple-double helps Celtics top Heat

Associated Press

BOSTON — The Celtics spent the days leading up to their playoff matchup with Miami talking about wanting to match the physicality of a team that would be looking for an edge without star Jimmy Butler.

Boston did that and then some.

Jayson Tatum notched his first career playoff triple-double with 23 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists to lead Boston past the Miami Heat 114-94 on Sunday to open their first-round playoff series.

Derrick White added 20 points and four assists for Boston, which finished with six players in double-figures. The Celtics' lead grew as high as 34 points in the fourth quarter. Miami used a late run to get as close as 14, but Boston closed it out.

The Heat spoiled the Celtics' NBA Finals dreams last season, jumping out to a 3-0 lead in the

conference finals and then blowing them out in Boston in Game 7.

But the Celtics fed off the energy of the TD Garden crowd Sunday, tying a franchise playoff record with 22 3-pointers and outscoring Miami 31-14 in the third quarter.

Including the regular season, Boston is 38-4 at home and has won its past four meetings with the Heat.

Bam Adebayo scored 24 points for Miami, which played for the second straight game without star Butler following his right knee injury during the play-in round.

Clippers 109, Mavericks 97: James Harden scored 28 points, Ivica Zubac had a double-double and host Los Angeles defeated Luka Doncic and Dallas to win its playoff series opener.

Harden hit 6 of 11 3-pointers and had eight assists. Zubac's 20 points were a playoff career high to go with 15 rebounds.

Paul George added 22 points. The Clippers outdid the Mavs at their own 3-point game, making 18 of 36 from long range to 10 of 33 for Dallas.

Doncic led the Mavs with 33 points and 13 rebounds. Kyrie Irving had 31 points and seven rebounds, but the Mavs got little from their supporting cast.

Bucks 109, Pacers 94: Damian Lillard scored all 35 of his points before halftime and host Milwaukee withstood the absence of Giannis Antetokounmpo to defeat Indiana in their Eastern Conference playoff opener.

The Bucks needed Lillard to step up without Antetokounmpo, whose return date is uncertain as he deals with a strained left calf that also caused him to miss Milwaukee's final three regular-season games.

Pascal Siakam had 36 points and 13 rebounds for the Pacers, who hadn't scored fewer than 99 points in the regular season while averaging a league-high

123.3 points per game. The Pacers shot 8 of 39 from 3-point range.

Thunder 94, Pelicans 92: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 28 points, including the go-ahead basket in the final minute, and top-seeded Oklahoma City edged visiting New Orleans in Game 1 of their first-round Western Conference playoff series.

New Orleans' CJ McCollum missed an off-balance 3-pointer in the closing seconds and the Thunder held on to win their first home playoff game since 2019.

Jalen Williams scored 19 points and Chet Holmgren added 15 points, 11 rebounds and five blocks for the Thunder, who will host Game 2 on Wednesday night.

Trey Murphy III scored 21 points and McCollum added 20 for the Pelicans. Zion Williamson, New Orleans' leading scorer in the regular season, sat out with a strained left hamstring.

Panthers score twice in third period, top Lightning

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Carter Verhaeghe tapped in a pinpoint pass from Aleksander Barkov for the lead 58 seconds into the third period, Matthew Tkachuk added a goal and an assist and the Florida Panthers beat the Tampa Bay Lightning 3-2 in Game 1 of their series opener Sunday.

Barkov had two assists, Sam Reinhart also scored and Sergei Bobrovsky had 17 saves for the Panthers, who won a Game 1 on home ice for the first time since 1997.

Brandon Hagel and Steven Stamkos got the goals for Tampa Bay, which now trails Florida in a series for the first time. Andrei Vasilevski made 25 stops for the Lightning, who pulled him for an extra attacker with 3:08 remaining. Tkachuk got an empty-netter 63 seconds later, and Florida soon began celebrating a 1-0 series lead.

Stamkos scored with 9.3 seconds left for the Lightning.

Verhaeghe's goal came on the power play, one that carried over from late in the second period. Barkov held the puck at the

right point, then sent a diagonal pass through the slot to a hard-charging Verhaeghe — who was behind everyone else and simply touched the puck into an open net.

It's the third time the Sunshine State rivals have met in the playoffs — both of the first two having gone Tampa Bay's way, and basically in one-sided fashion. The Lightning won 4-2 on their way to their second straight Stanley Cup in 2021, then swept Florida 4-0 in 2022 and outscored the Panthers 13-3 in that series.

Rangers 4, Capitals 1: Jimmy Vesey had a goal and an assist, Artemi Panarin also scored, and host New York beat Washington in Game 1 of their first-round playoff series.

Matt Rempe and Chris Kreider also scored, Barclay Goodrow had two assists and Igor Shesterkin finished with 20 saves to help the Presidents' Trophy-winning Rangers get the postseason off to strong start.

Martin Fehervary scored and Charlie Lindgren stopped 27 shots for the Capitals,

who had won three straight and four of their last five games to earn the second wild card in the Eastern Conference.

Jets 7, Avalanche 6: Captain Adam Lowry and Kyle Connor each scored twice to propel host Winnipeg to a victory over Colorado in Game 1 of their first-round playoff series.

It was the first time the two teams have met in the playoffs.

A sold-out crowd of 15,225 white-clad fans had plenty to cheer about at the "white-out" parties inside and outside Canada Life Centre.

Canucks 4, Predators 2: Dakota Joshua scored twice and had an assist and host Vancouver stormed back for a win over Nashville in Game 1 of their first-round playoff series.

Trailing 2-1, the Canucks rallied with a pair of goals 12 seconds apart — by Pius Suter and Joshua — midway through the third.

Jason Zucker and Ryan O'Reilly scored for Nashville, and Juuse Saros made 17 saves.

Surging Phillies sweep struggling White Sox

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Trea Turner stole home, Kyle Schwarber hit a solo shot and Aaron Nola struck out seven in eight innings to help the Philadelphia Phillies complete a three-game sweep of the Chicago White Sox with an 8-2 win on Sunday.

Bryce Harper added a sacrifice fly and an RBI single on his best friend the Phillie Phanatic's birthday to complete an 8-2 homestand for the Phillies. After splitting a four-game series with Pittsburgh, the Phillies fattened their record with series sweeps of Colorado and the White Sox.

"We played really well the entire time," Phillies manager Rob Thomson said. "We got great pitching, starting pitching. Really good at-bats. Played exceptional defense today. I just thought we were really good."

After Spencer Turnbull carried a no-hit bid into the seventh inning and Zack Wheeler took one into the eighth in consecutive starts to open the series, there was no real no-no bid in this one. Nola (3-1) allowed a one-out single to the second batter of the game and Eloy Jiménez followed with a two-run homer for the quick lead.

That was it for the White Sox. Chicago extended its franchise-worst start to 3-18 and has lost nine of its last 10 games.

"We've got to play perfect baseball," White Sox manager Pedro Grifol said. "We've got to win with pitching and defense until the hitting gets going. If we're not doing that, we're going to struggle."

Rockies 2-2, Mariners 1-10: Ezequiel Tovar and Ryan McMahon each hit an RBI single in the bottom of the 10th inning to lift host Colorado over Seattle in the first game of a doubleheader.

A bases-loaded triple by J.P. Crawford keyed a six-run second inning that propelled the Mariners past the Rockies for a doubleheader split.

Cal Raleigh added a two-run

homer in the sixth inning of the nightcap and finished the game with three RBIs. Seby Zavala had three hits and scored twice for Seattle, which has won five of six.

Julio Rodríguez went 4-for-9 on the day for the Mariners to give him five straight multi-hit games.

Nationals 6, Astros 0: Left-hander Mitchell Parker threw seven shutout innings, and Luis García Jr. had three singles and two RBIs as host Washington beat Houston.

After allowing two runs in five innings last Monday in his major league debut, a 6-4 win over the Dodgers, Parker (2-0) was even more effective in his second major league start, allowing three hits, striking out eight and walking none, throwing 57 of his 73 pitches for strikes.

Guardians 6, Athletics 2: Josh Naylor delivered a clutch, three-run double in the seventh inning as host Cleveland continued its best start in 25 years with a win over Oakland to complete a three-game sweep.

The surprising Guardians have won four straight, seven of eight and improved the AL's best record to 16-6. This is the club's best start since Cleveland had the same mark through 22 games in 1999.

Yankees 5, Rays 4: Luis Gil struck out a career-high nine in 5½ innings for his first major league win in three years, and host New York took advantage of Adam Civale's control problems in a four-run fifth to beat Tampa Bay.

Civale walked three straight batters with two outs in the fifth, then gave up Alex Verdugo's two-run single and RBI singles by Jose Trevino and Oswaldo Cabrera — all in a three-pitch span — as the Yankees spurted ahead 5-1. New York had been 3-for-17 with runners in scoring position heading into the inning.

Red Sox 6, Pirates 1: Wilner Abreu had three hits and drove in two runs and visiting Boston

beat Pittsburgh to complete a three-game sweep.

Abreu's RBI single off Martín Pérez (1-1) in the third gave the Red Sox the lead for good. He added another RBI single in the sixth as Boston continued its strong play away from Fenway Park.

Reds 3, Angels 0: The Reds' bullpen picked up after starting pitcher Frankie Montas left the game in the first inning and host Cincinnati shut out Los Angeles to sweep the series.

Montas was hit by a line drive by Taylor Ward and left the game with a bruised right forearm after 16 pitches. Brent Suter allowed four hits in 3⅓ innings. Emilio Pagan (2-1) earned the win after allowing one hit in two innings.

Orioles 5, Royals 0: Colton Cowser and Jordan Westburg hit back-to-back homers for visiting Baltimore off Kansas City starter Seth Lugo, who had not allowed a home run since September, and the Orioles went on to beat the Royals.

Cole Irvin (1-1) scattered four hits and two walks in 6⅓ innings for Baltimore. He stranded a runner on third in the first inning and another at second base in the fifth while earning his first win since beating Kansas City on June 10, 2023.

Marlins 6, Cubs 3: Jesús Sánchez hit a massive solo homer and an RBI single, helping visiting Miami beat Chicago.

Sánchez, Luis Arraez, Jazz Chisholm Jr. and Nick Fortes each had two hits as Miami salvaged a split of the four-game series. The last-place Marlins are 6-8 since they opened the season with nine consecutive losses.

Brewers 2, Cardinals 0: Owen Miller broke a scoreless tie with a two-run single and Colin Rea tossed five shutout innings to lead visiting Milwaukee to a win over St. Louis.

Milwaukee has won four in a row and swept a three-game series in St. Louis for the first time since Sept. 24-26, 2018.

Tigers 6, Twins 1: Casey Mize pitched six scoreless innings for his first major league win since 2021 and Buddy Kennedy homered as visiting Detroit beat Minnesota.

Spencer Torkelson had two hits, scored twice and drove in two runs. Riley Greene scored three times for the Tigers, who improved to 8-3 on the road.

Dodgers 10, Mets 0: Shohei Ohtani broke Hideki Matsui's major league record for homers by a Japanese-born player with a huge two-run shot in the third inning, and host Los Angeles snapped its three-game skid with a victory over New York.

Ohtani crushed a 423-foot line drive off Adrian Houser (0-2) deep into the right-field bleachers for the two-time AL MVP's fifth homer of the year and the 176th of his six-plus seasons in the majors with the Angels and Dodgers. That eclipsed the record set by Matsui, the former Yankees slugger who played 10 seasons in North America.

Diamondbacks 5, Giants 3: Right-hander Slade Cecconi held San Francisco to two runs in six innings in his 2024 debut, and Gabriel Moreno hit a two-run, go-ahead single in the sixth inning to lead visiting Arizona to a victory.

Cecconi (1-0) started in place of an injured Merrill Kelly to help the Diamondbacks earn a split of the four-game series. He was recalled from Triple-A Reno to make his fifth career start to replace Kelly, who was scratched with a shoulder injury.

Padres 6, Blue Jays 3: Joe Musgrove pitched seven innings for the first time since July 4 and Xander Bogaerts homered for host San Diego, which beat Toronto to avoid a three-game sweep.

Rangers 6, Braves 4: Andrew Knizner hit a three-run homer, Adolis García added a two-run shot and visiting Texas avoided a three-game sweep with a victory over Atlanta.

Jordan pumped watching Reddick win

Associated Press

TALLADEGA, Ala. — So much for Michael Jordan being a jinx at the race track.

The Basketball Hall of Famer celebrated as if he was still on the court after Tyler Reddick stole a NASCAR Cup victory at Talladega Superspeedway, speeding across the line after front-runner Michael McDowell — swerving back and forth in a desperate bid to hold the lead — crashed with the finish line in sight.

It was another wild Talladega finish — and marked the first time that Jordan, co-owner of 23XI Racing along with Denny Hamlin, has been at the track to witness a victory for one of his drivers.

“Denny keeps saying I was bad luck when I come to the track, and today we proved him wrong,” a beaming Jordan said in Victory Lane. “I’m very happy to be here to see it. Everybody tells me when we win we can have a good celebration, but this is the first time I’ve been here.”

McDowell, the pole-sitter, dominated the closing laps and

was in position to give Ford its much-needed first victory of the year. But his desperate efforts to block Keselowski, another Ford driver, wound up costing them both.

McDowell spun out, Keselowski had to check up and Reddick sped by to claim his sixth career Cup victory by 0.208 seconds.

A pile of cars behind them were also taken out. Corey LaJoie’s No. 7 machine slid across the finish line on its side, pinned against the wall in front of the massive grandstands.

Reddick climbed out of his No. 45 car and scurried up the fence like Spider-Man.

“Was that crazy, guys?” he screamed to the fans. “That was chaos. That’s Talladega for you.”

For Jordan, it sparked memories of his former life, the one where he won six NBA championships and hit countless buzzer-beaters.

Yet make no mistake: Jordan’s passion these days is stock car racing.

“To me, this is like an NBA playoff game,” the 61-year-old said. “For us to win a big race

like this, it means so much to me. I’m all in. I love it. It replaces a lot of the competitiveness that I had in basketball. But this is even worse, because I have no control. If I was playing basketball, I’d have total control. But I have no control, so I live vicariously through the drivers, crew chiefs and everybody.”

Keselowski settled for the runner-up spot, failing again to pick up his first win since he triumphed three years ago at this 2.66-mile trioval in east Alabama.

“We went to make a move and Michael covered it,” Keselowski said. “We went the other way and had nowhere to go when Michael came back down. It’s just the way this stuff goes.”

McDowell was apologetic to Keselowski and everyone who crashed behind him.

“He pushed me out. I drove back to him and was able to get in front of him that very first time. But when I came back down, I barely wasn’t clear,” McDowell said. “It’s Talladega. You’re going for it, trying to get a win. We just came up short and took a lot of guys out with

me.”

Reddick’s victory redeemed a botched strategy that knocked out a bunch of Toyota contenders, including Hamlin, who co-owns 23XI while driving for Joe Gibbs Racing.

All three Toyota teams pitted in tandem with 37 laps to go, going with a strategy that would’ve allowed them to push the pace on the rest of the fuel-saving field.

Unfortunately, they couldn’t keep their cars straight.

Just four laps later, with the Toyota train running at a blistering, single-file pace and chasing down the lead pack, John Hunter Nemechek appeared to get into the bumper of Bubba Wallace, who is Reddick’s teammate at 23XI. Wallace then clipped Erik Jones, which sent him smashing hard into the outside wall.

Nemechek then slid down the track and took out Hamlin, as well.

“We had a plan,” Wallace said. “We just didn’t execute it as well as we should have. I hate it. It doesn’t make us look good at all.”

Dixon stretches fuel, pulls closer to Foyt on wins list

Associated Press

LONG BEACH, Calif. — Scott Dixon used mind-boggling fuel-saving strategy Sunday to win the Grand Prix of Long Beach and move closer to A.J. Foyt on IndyCar’s all-time win list with his 57th career victory.

Foyt is IndyCar’s winningest driver with 67 victories — a mark the 43-year-old Dixon isn’t sure he can hit.

“Still sounds like a lot,” he said. “Some years there you could knock out five, six or seven (wins). If it’s a good year, you can possibly get four or five. That’s strong. We’ll just keep our head down, man. It’s one of those things that I always say hopefully when you leave the sport,

you’re happy with the stats.

“Of course, these are big stats. This is a big deal. We’re still a long way away from that.”

Colton Herta and reigning IndyCar champion Alex Palou were baffled by Dixon’s ability to stretch his fuel for nearly 50 of the 85 laps.

“Once he took (the lead), I was like, ‘He’s going to make it work,’” said Dixon teammate Palou. “Probably he’s cheating and he has an extra fuel cell that I don’t know about. Yeah, that’s it. I’m joking.”

Runner-up Herta said Dixon needed both a fast car and his fuel-saving skills to pull it off.

“You need to be good at fuel saving, but you also need a good

car to do that,” Herta said. “There’s a few guys in the series that are probably capable of doing it, but they need a lot of things to go right, a lot of things for their car to be able to handle saving fuel.

“Obviously seems like Dixon is the only one that goes for these things sometimes, and they always work out.”

Dixon, with a sly smile, downplayed how easy he made it look.

“I think it was definitely a bit sketchy in the fact that the pressure is coming hard and strong,” he said. “We have a light that comes on that gives you a couple of laps heads up that you’re actually going to run out of fuel. I didn’t see it with two laps to go.

They came on the radio saying, ‘Go flat out, overtake, whatever you need.’

“That was definitely nice to hear at that point because the stress level was pretty high. To get after it for the last two laps without a concern was big.”

Dixon was being chased over the final 20 laps by Team Penske driver Josef Newgarden, who seemed to have the speed to run Dixon down for the victory. But the race changed when Herta ran into the back of Newgarden as they all slowed through the hairpin with lapped traffic ahead.

It knocked Newgarden out of the way as both Herta and Palou passed him.