

US announces Patriot missiles for Ukraine

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. will provide Ukraine additional Patriot missiles for its air defense systems as part of a massive \$6 billion additional aid package, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced Friday.

The missiles will be used to replenish previously supplied Patriot air defense systems and are part of a package that also includes more munitions for the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems and additional gear to integrate Western air defense launchers, missiles and radars into Ukraine's existing weaponry, much of which still dates back to the Soviet era.

Ukrainian President Volody-

myr Zelenskyy discussed the need for Patriots early Friday at the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, a coalition of about 50 countries gathering virtually in a Pentagon-led meeting.

The meeting fell on the second anniversary of the group, which Austin said has "moved heaven and earth" since April 2022 to source millions of rounds of ammunition, rocket systems, armored vehicles and even jets to help Ukraine rebuff Russia's invasion.

Zelenskyy said at least seven Patriot systems are needed to protect Ukrainian cities. "We urgently need Patriot systems and missiles for them," Zelenskyy said. "This is what can and should save lives right now."

At a Pentagon press conference following the meeting, Austin said the U.S. was continuing to work with allies to re-source additional Patriot systems but did not commit to sending more U.S. versions.

"It's not just Patriot that they need, they need other types of systems and interceptors as well," Austin said. "I would caution us all in terms of making Patriot the silver bullet."

U.S. officials said the aid package will be funded through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, which pays for longer-term contracts with the defense industry and means that it could take many months or years for the weapons to arrive. The officials spoke on the

condition of anonymity to discuss details not yet made public.

The new funding — the largest package of USAI aid sent to date — also includes High Mobility Artillery Rocket System as well as Switchblade and Puma drones, counter drone systems and artillery.

Friday's meeting follows the White House decision earlier this week to approve the delivery of \$1 billion in weapons and equipment to Ukraine.

Those weapons include a variety of ammunition, such as air defense munitions and large amounts of artillery rounds that are much in demand by Ukrainian forces, as well as armored vehicles and other weapons.

Some colleges negotiate with protesters, others call cops

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The students at Columbia University who inspired pro-Palestinian demonstrations across the country dug in at their encampment for the 10th day Friday as administrators and police at campuses from California to Massachusetts wrestled with how to address protests that have seen scuffles with police and hundreds of arrests.

Officials at Columbia and some other schools have been negotiating with student protesters who have rebuffed police and doubled down. Other schools have quickly turned to law enforcement to douse demonstrations before they can take hold.

As the death toll mounts in the war in Gaza and the humanitarian crisis worsens, protesters at universities across the country

are demanding schools cut financial ties to Israel and divest from companies they say are enabling the conflict. Some Jewish students say the protests have veered into antisemitism and made them afraid to set foot on campus, partly prompting the calls for police intervention.

After a tent encampment popped up Thursday at Indiana University Bloomington, police with shields and batons shoved into protesters and arrested 33. Hours later at the University of Connecticut, police tore down tents and arrested one person.

And at Ohio State University, police clashed with protesters just hours after they gathered Thursday evening. Those who refused to leave after warnings were arrested and charged with criminal trespass, said university spokesperson Benjamin Johnson, citing rules barring

overnight events.

The clock is ticking as May commencement ceremonies near, putting added pressure on schools to clear demonstrations. At Columbia, protesters defiantly erected a tent encampment where many are set to graduate in front of families in just a few weeks.

Columbia officials said that negotiations were showing progress as the school's self-imposed Friday deadline to reach an agreement on dismantling the encampment came and went.

On Friday morning, hundreds of counterprotesters gathered on the streets outside Columbia, many holding Israeli flags and chanting for the hostages being held by Hamas and other militants to be released.

California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt, has been

negotiating with students who have been barricaded inside a campus building since Monday, rebuffing an attempt by the police to clear them out. Faculty members met with protesters Thursday to try to negotiate a solution as the campus remains shut down at least through the weekend.

On the other end of the state, the University of Southern California canceled the school's May 10 graduation ceremony. The announcement was made a day after more than 90 protesters were arrested on campus. The university said it will still host dozens of commencement events, including all the traditional individual school commencement ceremonies.

At Emerson College in Boston, 108 people were arrested at an encampment by early Thursday.

Blinken, Xi meet amid continuing tension

Associated Press

BEIJING — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met Friday with Chinese President Xi Jinping and senior Chinese officials, stressing the importance of “responsibly managing” the differences between the United States and China as the two sides butted heads over a number of contentious bilateral, regional and global issues.

Talks between the two sides have increased in recent months, even as differences have grown. Blinken said he raised concerns with Xi about China’s support for Russia and its invasion of Ukraine, as well as other issues including Taiwan and the South China Sea, human rights and the production and export of synthetic opioid precursors.

Blinken sounded a positive note on recent progress made in bilateral cooperation, including in military communications, counternarcotics and artificial intelligence, on which the two sides agreed to start a dialogue on how to reduce risks

from the rapidly emerging technology.

“We are committed to maintaining and strengthening lines of communication to advance that agenda, and again deal responsibly with our differences so we avoid any miscommunications, any misperceptions, any miscalculations,” he said.

But he stressed that “even as we seek to deepen cooperation, where our interests align, the United States is very clear-eyed about the challenges posed by (China) and about our competing visions for the future. America will always defend our core interests and values.”

Notably, he said he raised ongoing concerns about Beijing’s supply of materials, including machine tools and microelectronics, to Moscow that President Vladimir Putin is using to boost Russia’s defenses and its war on Ukraine.

“Russia would struggle to sustain its assault on Ukraine without China’s support,” Blinken told reporters after his meeting with Xi.

“Fueling Russia’s defense industrial base not only threatens Ukrainian security, it threatens European security,” he added. “As we’ve told China for some time, ensuring transatlantic security is a core U.S. interest. In our discussions today, I made clear that if China does not address this problem, we will.”

Blinken did not elaborate on how the U.S. would address the matter if China did not, but Washington has imposed large numbers of sanctions against Chinese firms for doing business with countries such as Russia, Iran and North Korea.

Blinken also discussed with Xi China’s maritime maneuvers in the disputed South China Sea, and reiterated “iron-clad” American support for the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia.

Xi stressed that China and the U.S. must seek common ground “rather than engage in vicious competition.”

“China is happy to see a confident, open, prosperous and thriving United States,” the

Chinese leader said. “We hope the U.S. can also look at China’s development in a positive light. This is a fundamental issue that must be addressed.”

Earlier, Blinken held lengthy talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Public Security Minister Wang Xiaohong.

He and Wang underscored the importance of keeping lines of communication open as they lamented persistent and deepening divisions that threaten global security.

Those divisions were highlighted earlier this week when U.S. President Joe Biden signed a massive foreign aid bill that contains several elements that the Chinese see as problematic.

“Overall, the China-U.S. relationship is beginning to stabilize,” Wang told Blinken at the start of about 5 ½ hours of talks. “But at the same time, the negative factors in the relationship are still increasing and building and the relationship is facing all kinds of disruptions.”

Egypt sends delegation to Israel cease-fire effort

Associated Press

CAIRO — Egypt sent a high-level delegation to Israel on Friday with the hope of brokering a cease-fire agreement with Hamas in Gaza, two officials said. At the same time, it warned that a possible Israeli offensive focused on Gaza’s city of Rafah — on the border with Egypt — could have catastrophic consequences for regional stability.

Egypt’s top intelligence official, Abbas Kamel, is leading the delegation and plans to discuss with Israel a “new vision” for a prolonged cease-fire in Gaza, an Egyptian official said, speaking on condition of ano-

nymity.

As the war drags on and casualties mount, there has been growing international pressure for Hamas and Israel to reach an agreement on a cease-fire.

Friday’s talks will focus at first on a limited exchange of hostages held by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners, and the return of a significant number of displaced Palestinians to their homes in northern Gaza “with minimum restrictions,” the Egyptian official said.

The hope is that negotiations will then continue, with the goal of a larger deal to end the war, he said. The official said media-

tors are working on a compromise that will answer most of both parties’ main demands.

Hamas has said it will not back down from its demands for a permanent cease-fire and full withdrawal of Israeli troops, both of which Israel has rejected. Israel says it will continue military operations until Hamas is defeated and that it will retain a security presence in Gaza afterwards.

Ahead of the talks, senior Hamas official Basem Naim said “there is nothing new from our side,” when asked about the negotiations.

Overnight, Lebanon’s mili-

tant Hezbollah group fired anti-tank missiles and artillery shells at an Israeli military convoy in a disputed border area, killing an Israeli civilian.

Hezbollah said its fighters ambushed the convoy shortly before midnight Thursday, destroying two vehicles. The Israeli military said the ambush wounded an Israeli civilian doing infrastructure work, and that he later died of his wounds.

Low-intensity fighting along the Israel-Lebanon border has repeatedly threatened to boil over as Israel has targeted senior Hezbollah militants in recent months.

Weinstein's rape conviction overturned

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York's highest court on Thursday threw out Harvey Weinstein's 2020 rape conviction with a ruling that shocked and disappointed women who celebrated historic gains during the #MeToo era and left those who testified in the case bracing for a retrial against the ex-movie mogul.

The court found the trial judge unfairly allowed testimony against Weinstein based on allegations that weren't part of the case.

Weinstein, 72, will remain

in prison because he was convicted in Los Angeles in 2022 of another rape. But the New York ruling reopens a painful chapter in America's reckoning with sexual misconduct by powerful figures — an era that began in 2017 with a flood of allegations against Weinstein.

#MeToo advocates noted that Thursday's ruling was based on legal technicalities and not an exoneration of Weinstein's behavior, saying the original trial irrevocably moved the cultural needle on attitudes about sexual assault.

The Manhattan district attorney's office said it intends to retry Weinstein, and at least one of his accusers said through her lawyer that she would testify again.

The state Court of Appeals overturned Weinstein's 23-year sentence in a 4-3 decision, saying "the trial court erroneously admitted testimony of uncharged, alleged prior sexual acts" and permitted questions about Weinstein's "bad behavior" if he had testified. It called this "highly prejudicial" and "an abuse of judicial discretion."

In a stinging dissent, Judge Madeline Singas wrote that the Court of Appeals was continuing a "disturbing trend of overturning juries' guilty verdicts in cases involving sexual violence." She said the ruling came at "the expense and safety of women."

In another dissent, Judge Anthony Cannataro wrote that the decision was "endangering decades of progress in this incredibly complex and nuanced area of law" regarding sex crimes after centuries of "deeply patriarchal and misogynistic legal tradition."

Trump's lawyers seek to discredit witness testimony

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Donald Trump's defense team in his hush money case sought Friday to undermine the testimony of the prosecution's lead witness and his account that a tabloid's practice of helping to bury embarrassing stories about Trump was part of a scheme to aid the Republican's 2016 campaign.

David Pecker, the former publisher of the National Enquirer, returned to the witness stand for a fourth day as defense attorneys tried to poke holes in his testimony about his tabloid's efforts to protect his old friend from potentially damaging stories using a catch-and-kill

scheme.

Pecker's testimony is crucial for prosecutors, who allege the effort was a way to illegally influence the 2016 election. Under cross-examination, Trump's lawyers are trying to show that any dealings Trump had with Pecker were intended to protect Trump, his reputation and his family — not his campaign.

Pecker has testified that he hatched a plan with Trump and then-Trump attorney Michael Cohen in August 2015 for the National Enquirer to help Trump's presidential campaign.

But, under questioning by Trump lawyer Emil Bove, Pecker acknowledged there was no

mention at that meeting of the term "catch-and-kill," which describes the practice of tabloids purchasing the rights to a story so it never sees the light of day. Nor was there discussion at the meeting of any "financial dimension," such as the National Enquirer paying people on Trump's behalf for the rights to their stories, Pecker said.

Bove also confronted Pecker with statements he made to federal prosecutors in 2018 that the defense lawyer said were "inconsistent" with the former publisher's testimony earlier this week. Pecker previously testified that Trump thanked him during a White House visit

in 2017 for his help burying two stories.

But according to notes cited by Bove in court, Pecker had previously told federal authorities that Trump did not express any gratitude to him during the meeting.

Pecker stuck to the story that that he gave in court. "The FBI notes that someone is writing down here could be wrong," he said, adding: "I know what the truth is."

Pecker's cross-examination caps a consequential week in the criminal cases the former president faces as he vies to reclaim the White House in November.

Fed's preferred inflation gauge rose to 2.7% in March

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A measure of inflation closely tracked by the Federal Reserve remained uncomfortably high in March, likely reinforcing the Fed's reluctance to cut interest rates anytime soon and underscoring a burden for President Joe Biden's reelection bid.

Friday's report from the government showed that prices

rose 0.3% from February to March, the same as in the previous month. It was the third straight month that the index has run at a pace faster than is consistent with the Fed's 2% inflation target. Measured from a year earlier, prices were up 2.7% in March, up from a 2.5% annual rise in February.

After peaking at 7.1% in 2022, the Fed's favored infla-

tion index steadily cooled for most of 2023. Yet so far this year, the index has remained stuck above the central bank's target rate. More expensive gas and higher prices for restaurant meals, health care and auto repairs and insurance, among other items, have kept the overall pace of price increases elevated. With new-car prices up sharply in the past

few years, auto repair and replacement costs have risen especially fast.

Friday's inflation data showed that excluding volatile food and energy costs, "core" prices rose by an elevated 0.3% from February to March, unchanged from the previous month. Compared with a year earlier, core prices rose 2.8% for a second straight month.

17 states challenging abortion rules

Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Republican attorneys general from 17 states filed a lawsuit Thursday challenging new federal rules entitling workers to time off and other accommodations for abortions, calling the rules an illegal interpretation of a 2022 federal law.

The lawsuit led by Tennessee and Arkansas comes since finalized federal regulations were published April 15 to provide guidance for employers and workers on how to implement the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act. The language means workers can ask for time off to obtain an abortion and recover from the procedure.

The rules, which the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission adopted on a 3-2 vote along party lines, will go into effect June 18. The lawsuit filed in federal court in Arkansas argues the regulations go beyond the scope of the 2022 law that passed with bipartisan support.

"This is yet another attempt by the Biden administration to force through administrative fiat what it cannot get passed through Congress," Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin said in a statement. "Under this radical interpretation of the PWFA, business owners will face federal lawsuits if they don't accommodate employees' abortions, even if those abor-

tions are illegal under state law."

An EEOC spokesperson referred questions to the Justice Department, which did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

A Better Balance, one of the most vocal advocates for the PWFA, called the lawsuit a baseless attack on the law's protections.

"This lawsuit represents a bad faith effort to politicize what is a vital protection for the health and economic security of millions of families, and a continuation of the alarming attacks on women's health and reproductive choice," Dina Bakst, the group's co-president, said in a statement. "We are committed to

fighting to defend workers' rights under the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act."

The EEOC has said the new law does not obligate employers or employer-sponsored health plans to cover abortion-related costs, and that the type of accommodation that most likely will be sought under the PWFA, regarding an abortion is time off to attend a medical appointment or for recovery, which does not have to be paid.

The other states joining the lawsuit are Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah and West Virginia.

USDA tells producers to reduce salmonella in some chicken products

Associated Press

Poultry producers will be required to bring salmonella bacteria in certain chicken products to very low levels to help prevent food poisoning under a final rule issued Friday by U.S. agriculture officials.

When the regulation takes effect in 2025, salmonella will be considered an adulterant — a contaminant that can cause foodborne illness — when it is detected above certain levels in frozen breaded and stuffed raw chicken products. That would include things like frozen chicken cordon bleu and chicken Kiev dishes that appear to be fully cooked but are only heat-treated to set the batter or coating.

It's the first time the U.S. Department of Agriculture has declared salmonella as an adulterant in raw poultry in the same way that certain *E. coli* bacteria are regarded as contaminants

that must be kept out of raw ground beef sold in grocery stores, said Sandra Eskin, the USDA's undersecretary for food safety.

The new rule also means that if a product exceeds the allowed level of salmonella, it can't be sold and is subject to recall, Eskin said.

Salmonella poisoning accounts for more than 1.3 million infections and about 420 deaths each year in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Food is the source of most of those illnesses.

The breaded and stuffed raw chicken products have been associated with at least 14 salmonella outbreaks and at least 200 illnesses since 1998, CDC statistics show. A 2021 outbreak tied to the products caused at least three dozen illnesses in 11 states and sent 12 people to the hospital.

Venice is testing a 5-euro entry fee for day-trippers

Associated Press

VENICE, Italy — Under the gaze of the world's media, the fragile lagoon city of Venice launched a pilot program Thursday to charge day-trippers a 5-euro (\$5.35) entry fee that authorities hope will discourage visitors from arriving on peak days and make the city more livable for its dwindling residents.

Visitors arriving at Venice's main train station were greeted with large signs listing the 29 dates through July of the plan's test phase that also designated separate entrances for tourists, and residents, students and workers.

"We need to find a new balance between the tourists and residents," said Simone Venturini, the city's top tourism official. "We need to safeguard the spaces of the residents, of course, and we need to discourage the arrival of day-trippers on some particular days."

Not all residents, however,

are persuaded of the efficacy of the new system in dissuading mass tourism, insisting that only a resurgence in the population will restore balance to a city where narrow alleyways and water buses are often clogged with tourists.

Hundreds of Venetians protested against the program, marching festively though the city's main bus terminal behind banners reading "No to Tickets, Yes to Services and Housing." Protesters scuffled briefly with police with riot gear who blocked them from entering the city, before changing course and entering over another bridge escorted by plainclothes police officers. The demonstration wrapped up peacefully in a piazza.

Tourists arriving at the main station encountered almost as many journalists as stewards on hand to politely guide anyone unaware of the new requirements through the process of downloading the QR code to pay the fee.

Six QBs picked in top 12 of NFL draft

Associated Press

DETROIT — Caleb Williams swiftly walked on stage, looked out and screamed “Woooo! Yeah!”

Long-suffering Bears fans felt his joy.

Williams is heading to the Windy City, aiming to become the franchise quarterback Chicago has sought for decades.

“My goal is to get into as far as February as I can,” Williams said, referring to playing in a Super Bowl for a team that hasn’t hoisted the Lombardi Trophy in nearly 40 years.

The 2022 Heisman Trophy winner kicked off a historic NFL draft Thursday night that had five other teams selecting quarterbacks among the top 12 picks, setting a record with five in the top 10 and tying a record for the most in the first round.

Nearly the entire first half of the draft was offensive players.

A defensive player wasn’t selected until UCLA edge rusher Laiatu Latu went at No. 15 to Indianapolis. That’s the latest a first defensive player has gone.

The Bears opened with the easy choice, taking Williams at No. 1 after deciding weeks ago to bank on the 2022 Heisman Trophy winner from USC.

“Care, love and support and want to win,” Williams said about what he’s bringing to Chicago.

The Washington Commanders followed up by taking 2023 Heisman Trophy winner Jayden Daniels from LSU and the New England Patriots took North Carolina’s Drake Maye at No. 3, making it the fourth draft with quarterbacks going with the first three picks.

At No. 8, the Atlanta Falcons made a stunning decision to choose Washington QB Michael Penix Jr. despite signing Kirk Cousins to a massive contract in free agency. The Minnesota Vikings traded up one spot and took J.J. McCarthy, who led Michigan to a national championship, to make it five QBs in the top 10 for the first time.

The Denver Broncos chose Oregon’s Bo Nix with the 12th pick, tying the 1983 draft with six QBs in the first round. Three of those became Hall of Famers — John Elway, Dan Marino and Jim Kelly.

The Arizona Cardinals snapped the early QB trend, choosing Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. with the fourth pick. The Los Angeles Chargers opened the Jim Harbaugh era by taking Notre Dame offensive tackle Joe Alt instead of giving Justin Herbert a No. 1 wide receiver to replace Keenan Allen and Mike Williams.

The New York Giants then snatched up LSU receiver Malik Nabers at No. 6. The Tennessee Titans took Alabama offensive tackle J.C. Latham with the seventh pick and the Bears selected Washington wideout Rome Odunze at No. 9.

The New York Jets, who dropped to No. 11, chose offensive tackle Olu Fashanu, giving Aaron Rodgers more protection. The Las Vegas Raiders got Georgia tight end Brock Bowers at No. 13. The New Orleans Saints took Oregon State offensive tackle Taliese Fuaga with the 14th pick before the Colts grabbed Latu.

Previously, the latest a first

defensive player was selected was No. 8. The Seattle Seahawks took Texas defensive tackle Byron Murphy next and the Vikings made another trade to move up and take Alabama edge Dallas Turner at No. 17.

The Cincinnati Bengals chose Georgia offensive tackle Amarius Mims and the Los Angeles Rams got Florida State edge Jared Verse at No. 19, the team’s first selection in the first round since taking Jared Goff at No. 1 in 2016.

Wearing a navy suit with silver accents and flashing a big smile, Williams gave Roger Goodell a bear hug, careful not to squeeze too hard because the NFL commissioner had back surgery three weeks ago.

Rap icon Eminem walked on stage in a Lions sweatshirt and cap shortly after Goodell to start the festivities. The Motor City native riled up the fans before turning it over to Lions stars Goff, Aidan Hutchinson, Amon-Ra St. Brown and Hall of Famers Barry Sanders and Calvin Johnson.

St. Brown led them in chanting “Jar-ed Goff!” and Johnson kept it short: “Whaddup doe?”

An estimated crowd of 275,000, many wearing their Honolulu blue Lions jerseys, filled the streets surrounding the draft theater and turned the NFL’s biggest offseason event into a giant party.

They roared when the Lions moved up five spots in a trade with Dallas and took Alabama cornerback Terrion Arnold with the 24th pick.

The 22-year-old Williams is the third quarterback Chicago has selected in the first round in

the past eight years, joining Mitch Trubisky and Justin Fields. They passed up on Bryce Young and C.J. Stroud last year and traded the No. 1 pick to Carolina in a blockbuster deal only to get the top choice this year after the Panthers went 2-15.

Williams shouted “Da Bears!” to finish his first news conference as a pro.

The Pittsburgh Steelers selected versatile Washington offensive lineman Troy Fautanu at No. 20. Penn State edge Chop Robinson went next to the Miami Dolphins and the Philadelphia Eagles went with Toledo cornerback Quinyon Mitchell.

Wide receiver Brian Thomas Jr. was chosen by the Jacksonville Jaguars at No. 23. After the Lions took Arnold, the Green Bay Packers selected Arizona offensive tackle Jordan Morgan and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers drafted Duke offensive lineman Graham Barton.

Missouri edge Darius Robinson went to Arizona. The two-time defending Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs made a deal with AFC rival Buffalo to move up and take Texas wideout Xavier Worthy at No. 28.

The Cowboys chose Oklahoma offensive tackle Tyler Guyton and the Baltimore Ravens got Clemson defensive back Nate Wiggins.

The defending NFC champion San Francisco 49ers added another playmaker, taking Florida wideout Ricky Pearsall and the Carolina Panthers made a trade to get South Carolina wideout Xavier Legette with the last pick of the first round at No. 32.

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Magic beat Cavaliers 121-83 to trim series deficit to 2-1

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Paolo Banchero had 31 points and 14 rebounds, Jalen Suggs added 24 points and the Orlando Magic handed Cleveland the worst playoff loss in franchise history, winning 121-83 on Thursday night to cut the Cavaliers' lead to 2-1 in their Eastern Conference first-round series.

Franz Wagner finished with 16 points and eight assists for the Magic, who led by 43 points in the fourth quarter on the way to the third-largest margin of victory in a playoff game. They earned their first playoff victory since 2019 and the first on their home floor since April 26, 2011.

They can even the series with a victory at home Sunday.

Jarrett Allen had 15 points and eight rebounds for the Cavaliers, who shot 39% from the field and 23.5% from 3-point range. Caris LeVert added 15

points and Donovan Mitchell had 13 points and seven assists.

76ers 125, Knicks 114: Joel Embiid scored 50 points, making five of seven 3-point attempts and scoring 18 in a potential series-shifting third quarter to lead host Philadelphia to a win over New York in Game 3 of their Eastern Conference first-round series.

Embiid boldly stated "we're going to win this series" after the 76ers dropped Game 2.

With one of the finest postseason efforts of his career, Embiid became the third player to ever score 50 against the Knicks in the postseason and kept the hope of a Philadelphia series comeback very much alive.

The Knicks lead the series 2-1. Game 4 is Sunday in Philadelphia.

Embiid was 13 of 19 from the floor overall and made 19 of 21 free throws.

Nuggets 112, Lakers 105:

Aaron Gordon had 29 points and 15 rebounds, Nikola Jokic added 24 points, 15 rebounds and nine assists, and visiting Denver moved to the brink of the second round with a victory over the Los Angeles Lakers in Game 3 of their first-round series.

Jamal Murray scored 22 points as the defending NBA champion Nuggets won their 11th consecutive meeting with LeBron James and the Lakers in dominating style.

Michael Porter Jr. added 20 points for Denver, which took control in the third quarter and cruised through the final minutes to its fifth straight road win over Los Angeles, starting with its sweep of last season's Western Conference finals.

Game 4 is Saturday night in Los Angeles. No NBA team has ever rallied from an 0-3 playoff deficit.

Hurricanes hold on for win against Islanders

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Defensemen Brent Burns and Dmitry Orlov got Carolina off to a fast start and the Hurricanes held on to beat the New York Islanders 3-2 on Thursday night for a 3-0 lead in the first-round series.

Sebastian Aho also scored for the Hurricanes and Andrei Svechnikov had two assists. Frederik Andersen stopped 29 shots. Carolina won for the eighth time in nine games at UBS Arena, which opened for the 2021-22 season.

Brock Nelson and Pierre Engvall scored for the Islanders.

They are a loss away from being eliminated by Carolina in the first round for the second straight year.

Ilya Sorokin, getting the start after Semyon Varlamov went in the first two games, was pulled in the second period after giving up three goals on 14 shots.

Varlamov came on and stopped all eight shots he faced.

Game 4 is Saturday in New York.

Panthers 5, Lightning 3: Sergei Bobrovsky made 26 saves, Matthew Tkachuk scored twice and visiting Florida beat Tampa Bay to take a 3-0 lead in the first-round playoff series.

Brandon Montour, Sam Reinhart and Steven Lorentz also scored for the Panthers, who will seek a sweep Saturday night in Tampa.

Tkachuk had a first-period goal and added an empty-netter with 32 seconds left.

Steven Stamkos, Tyler Motte and Nicholas Paul scored for Tampa Bay, with Paul cutting it to 4-3 with 5:10 left.

Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 26 shots.

Bush plans to continue fight against the NCAA after return of his Heisman

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Reggie Bush is overjoyed to have his Heisman Trophy once again.

Now he wants his reputation back as well.

The former Southern California tailback says the return of his Heisman is the biggest step yet in what he sees as his fight against the NCAA to restore his good name and his records from his incredible college football career. Bush pointedly said he "never cheated" during his three seasons at USC.

"There was never a doubt in my mind that it would come," Bush said. "Because I know the truth is on my side."

Bush and his family celebrat-

ed the restoration of his Heisman honors Thursday during a news conference atop the venerable Coliseum, where Bush played for the Trojans before his 11-year NFL career. Bush and his three children held up the trophy while his wife, mother and supporters cheered.

Bush praised the Heisman Trust for his reinstatement, but the former tailback and his attorneys made it clear their fight against the NCAA has not ended. Bush indicated he doesn't plan to drop his defamation lawsuit filed last year against the NCAA over the governing body's 2021 characterization of the circumstances that led to Bush's troubles.

"It was more of being labeled a cheater," Bush said. "The trophy ... being taken away from me (was painful), but being labeled a cheater was far worse, because I've never cheated, and there's no proof of that, that I've cheated."

Bush won the Heisman in 2005, but forfeited it in 2010 after USC was hit with massive sanctions partly related to Bush's dealings with two aspiring sports marketers. The Heisman Trust restored the honor and returned the trophy to Bush in Jacksonville, Fla., on Wednesday, citing fundamental changes in the structure of college athletics over the past 14 years.

Twins sweep White Sox with 6-3 win

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The Chicago White Sox dropped to 3-22, wasting a two-run lead and stretching their losing streak to a season-high seven with a 6-3 defeat to Minnesota on Thursday as Edouard Julien hit two of the Twins' five solo home runs.

Chicago matched Cincinnati in 2022, Detroit in 2003 and Washington in 1894 as teams that opened 3-22. Baltimore began 2-23 in 1988.

Julien and José Miranda homered in a three-run sixth inning off Michael Soroka, Julian homered again off John Brebbia in the seventh and Carlos Santana and Jose Miranda went deep against Steven Wilson in the eighth.

Chicago, off to the worst start in franchise history, has been outscored 141-56 and allowed 38 home runs.

Minnesota swept the four-game series, its longest winning streak since five straight from last Aug. 3-7, 2023. Julien has seven home runs this season.

Andrew Vaughn and Korey Lee each had two hits for the White Sox, who wasted a 2-0 lead.

Julian and Jeffers homered on consecutive pitches in sixth, and Trevor Larnach, Max Kepler and Willi Castro hit consecutive singles against Tanner Banks (0-2) for a 3-2 lead.

Brewers 7, Pirates 5: Gary Sánchez hit a pinch-hit, two-run home run in the eighth inning to lift visiting Milwaukee to a win over Pittsburgh and a series split.

Sánchez drove an 0-2 sinker from Aroldis Chapman (0-2) 371 feet to right with two outs, putting the Brewers ahead 6-5. Two of his three home runs came this series, including on Tuesday when he produced Milwaukee's lone run in a 2-1 loss.

The Brewers have won six of eight after taking the final two of the four-game series. The Pirates have lost eight of 10 after

an 11-5 start.

Oliver Dunn tacked on a seventh run with a single to right off Roansy Contreras in the ninth before Trevor Megill retired the side in order in the bottom half for his first save in the majors.

Jared Koenig (1-0) picked up the win, getting through the seventh unscathed after allowing two hits and a walk.

Guardians 6, Red Sox 4: José Ramírez belted his sixth career grand slam and had three hits, Will Brennan had a solo homer and host Cleveland beat Boston.

Cleveland has the best record in the American League at 18-7 and matched the second-best mark in franchise history through 25 games. The Guardians won their season series against Boston 5-2 — all in an 11-day span.

Rafael Devers had three hits and Rob Refsnyder tripled in a run for the Red Sox. Jarren Duran had an RBI single in the sixth for Boston, which went 4-2 on a six-game trip through Pittsburgh and Cleveland.

Ramírez's slam off Chase Anderson (0-1) came one pitch after he appeared to strike out to end the second, but Red Sox catcher Reese McGuire couldn't hold onto the foul tip. Brennan also homered in the inning as Cleveland went ahead 5-0.

After Boston scored two runs in the third and twice in the sixth to cut it to 5-4, Ramírez added an insurance run in the seventh by singling, stealing second, advancing on an error by McGuire and scoring on a passed ball.

Phillies 5, Reds 0: Bryce Harper homered in his return to the lineup following the birth of his third child, and visiting Philadelphia beat Cincinnati for their second shutout win in splitting a four-game series.

Zack Wheeler (2-3) allowed one hit in six innings, a third-inning single by Santiago Espinal. He struck out eight and walked

four, extending his scoreless streak to 13⅓ innings.

Philadelphia has won eight of 10 and leads the major leagues with five shutouts, one more than the Phillies' total in all of last season.

Harper returned from paternity leave for the birth of a daughter and hit a two-run homer that capped a four-run third inning against Nick Martinez (0-1). Harper has four home runs in four games against the Reds this season, hitting three on April 2.

Bryson Stott hit an RBI triple and scored on Kyle Schwarber's sacrifice fly, then added an RBI single in the sixth. Trea Turner had three hits, raising his average to .336.

Orion Kerkering and Jeff Hoffman finished the three-hitter.

Mariners 4, Rangers 3: Ty France and Luis Urías hit two-run homers, Luis Castillo pitched six solid innings and visiting Seattle beat Texas, taking two of three in the series and leaving with first place in the AL West.

Julio Rodríguez, leading off after shortstop J.P. Crawford went on the injured list with a right oblique strain, opened with a single and scored on France's first homer of the season.

Andrew Heaney (0-3) retired the next 10 batters after France went deep until Dylan Moore, at shortstop in place of Crawford, led off the fifth with a double. Urías then homered to break a 2-2 tie.

Castillo (2-4) struck out six and walked two while allowing two runs and four hits. Andrés Muñoz, the third Seattle reliever, worked a perfect ninth for his third save in four chances.

Heaney also went six innings, with seven strikeouts and no walks. But the left-hander gave up the four runs on the two long balls.

Cubs 3, Astros 1: Pete Crow-

Armstrong hit a tiebreaking two-run homer for his first major league hit, and host Chicago swept Houston with a victory.

Nico Hoerner had three hits and Mike Tauchman went 1 for 1 with three walks as Chicago won for the fourth time in five games. Hayden Wesneski (2-0) pitched 2⅓ perfect innings for the win in relief of Javier Assad.

Houston has lost a season-high five straight and eight of nine overall. At 7-19, it is off to its worst 26-game start since it was 6-20 in 1969.

First-year manager Joe Espada was ejected by plate umpire Jansen Visconti in the top of ninth.

Rockies, 10, Padres 9: Elias Díaz capped Colorado's six-run eighth inning with a tiebreaking RBI double, and the Rockies beat visiting San Diego.

Elehuris Montero and Hunter Goodman homered for Colorado, which earned a split of the four-game series. Brenton Doyle and Brendan Rodgers each had three of the Rockies' 14 hits.

Rodgers started Colorado's big rally with a one-out double. Sean Bouchard then walked before Goodman greeted Wandy Peralta (1-1) with a 448-foot drive to left-center for his first homer of the season.

The 24-year-old Goodman was recalled from Triple-A Albuquerque on Wednesday.

Jacob Stallings singled, Ezequiel Tovar walked and Brenton Doyle singled to produce another run for Colorado. After Tovar scored on a passed ball, Díaz lifted the Rockies to a 10-9 lead when he doubled into the left-field corner against Stephen Kolek.

Tyler Kinley (1-0) got three outs for the win. Justin Lawrence pitched a 1-2-3 ninth for his second save.

Ha-Seong Kim and Jurickson Profar homered for Padres,

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Bevy of talent on defense still available

Associated Press

The unprecedented run on quarterbacks, wide receivers and pass protectors in the NFL draft's opening round pushed plenty of studly defenders down the board and allowed some of the top teams to select players who normally wouldn't fall to them.

It also shoved plenty of first-round-worthy defenders into the second round Friday, led by Cooper DeJean, the Iowa cornerback who broke his lower leg in November but has been cleared to return to football activities.

DeJean is one of the best ball-hawks in this class and also one of the best punt returners available, having averaged 13.1 yards per return over the past two seasons.

Other defenders who will almost certainly hear their names called Friday night when teams have had a chance to gather their thoughts and dive into the second round include Texas A&M inside linebacker Edgerin Cooper and Alabama cornerback Kool-Aid McKinstry.

Cooper led the Aggies in tackles (84), tackles for loss (17) and sacks (8). McKinstry, besides having among the coolest names in the draft, is seen as a plug-and-play performer.

McKinstry is like DeJean in two ways in that he's an elite punt returner and he's coming off an injury.

McKinstry couldn't participate in drills at the NFL scouting combine because of a broken bone in his right foot. But he ran at his pro day on March 20 and then underwent surgery to repair the fracture. He's expected to be ready to go by training camp.

Another name to keep an ear out for is Illinois defensive tackle Jer'Zhan Newton, one of the best interior pass rushers in this year's draft. He pressured the quarterback more than 100 times over the past two seasons combined and also had 13 sacks and 22½ tackles for loss in 2022 and '23. He didn't work out at the combine or his pro day after undergoing foot surgery after the season.

The first defensive player off

the board Thursday night was UCLA edge rusher Liatu Latu, who is coming off a senior season in which he had 13 sacks and 21½ tackles for loss.

The Indianapolis Colts chose him with the 15th pick after a record half-dozen quarterbacks, four offensive linemen, three wide receivers and a tight end were taken.

The latest the first defender had come off the board in previous drafts was eighth in 2021, when the Carolina Panthers selected cornerback Jaycee Horn.

In all, the first round featured the six quarterbacks selected along with seven wide receivers, nine offensive linemen and a tight end. On defense, there were five edge rushers, three cornerbacks and one lineman drafted.

That's 23 players on offense, nine on defense.

"The one thing we did feel, and I think everyone around the league felt, was it's a receiver-heavy draft (and) there were some talented quarterbacks," Denver Broncos coach Sean Payton said. "You just do the

math, then you thought, all right, who's going to be the first defensive player drafted?"

"But I don't think there was a big surprise around the league the first 10, 12 (were on offense). ... So, I think when you have that receiver class with the quarterback class that it is a little bit historic. It doesn't happen that often. And then you have the tackles. So, I think that league-wide we felt there was going to be more offensive players taken in the first half of the draft."

The second half, too.

Of course, some of the top talent available in Round 2 also is on offense. That includes wide receivers Ladd McConkey of Georgia and Adonai Mitchell of Texas.

McConkey might have slipped into Day 2 because of his injury-riddled 2023 season in which he dealt with ankle, knee and back ailments while catching 30 passes for the Bulldogs, two for touchdowns.

On the clock first Friday are the Buffalo Bills, who traded out of the first round in deals with the Chiefs and Panthers.

MLB

who had won three of four. Xander Bogaerts had two hits and drove in a run.

Dodgers 2, Nationals 1: Yoshinobu Yamamoto pitched six shutout innings, and visiting Los Angeles completed a three-game sweep of Washington.

Teoscar Hernández homered for the Dodgers, who matched a season high with fourth straight wins.

Joey Meneses had three hits for Washington, which was swept for the first time this season. The Nationals scored four runs in the series and went 4 for 20 with runners in scoring position.

Yamamoto (2-1) didn't allow a runner past second and allowed four hits and a walk while striking out seven. He had multiple

runners on only in the sixth, when he gave up a pair of two-out singles before Keibert Ruiz's inning-ending groundout.

Royals 2, Blue Jays 1 (5 innings): Salvador Perez hit a two-run homer in the first inning, Cole Ragans held Toronto in check long enough for the rain to arrive, and host Kansas City beat Toronto in a game called after five innings and a long weather delay.

Ragans (1-2) allowed the lone Toronto run on three hits and three walks while striking out four.

José Berrios (4-1) had his streak of 22½ scoreless innings snapped when Perez, following Vinnie Pasquantino's two-out walk, deposited the first pitch

he saw into the left-field bullpen to give Kansas City the lead in the first inning.

When the fifth ended, and an early drizzle had turned to steady rain, umpire chief Chris Guccione called for the tarp to cover the infield. Blue Jays manager John Schneider came out to argue, wanting another opportunity to tie or take the lead, and apparently he convinced Guccione to have the grounds crew roll the tarp back and attempt to get the field in shape.

After about 10 minutes, Guccione again summoned the tarp. The field was covered for about 2 hours, and when the rain stopped, the grounds crew spent another hour-plus working on it. At that point, the game

was called after a delay of 3 hours, 38 minutes.

Athletics 3, Yankees 1: Mason Miller retired Aaron Judge with a runner on for his first four-out save, and visiting Oakland beat New York for a four-game split.

Nick Allen and Tyler Nevin homered in the third inning off Nestor Cortes (1-2), and Alex Wood (1-2) escaped bases-loaded trouble in the first and fourth innings.

New York was 1 for 7 with runners in scoring position, stranded 11 runners and outhit Oakland 11-6.

Miller, a 25-year-old right-hander, relieved T.J. McFarland with a runner on first in the eighth and struck out Jose Trevino on a 101.3 mph fastball.