

US orders blockade of Strait of Hormuz

From wire reports

The United States is preparing to impose a naval blockade in the Strait of Hormuz, President Donald Trump announced Sunday, sharply escalating the conflict with Iran after talks between the two sides failed to produce a deal.

“Effective immediately, the United States Navy, the Finest in the World, will begin the process of BLOCKADING any and all Ships trying to enter, or leave, the Strait of Hormuz,” Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

“I have also instructed our Navy to seek and interdict every vessel in International Waters that has paid a toll to Iran. No one who pays an illegal toll will have safe passage on the high seas,” he added. “Any Iranian who fires at us, or at peaceful vessels, will be BLOWN TO HELL!”

Earlier Sunday, Vice President JD Vance said negotiators would return to the U.S. from Pakistan without a deal after Iran failed to give a commitment it would not seek a nuclear weapon. Iranian media said the U.S. made “excessive” demands, although a spokesman

for Iran’s Foreign Ministry appeared to leave the door open for more discussions.

“We’ve made very clear what our red lines are, what things we’re willing to accommodate them on, and what things we’re not willing to accommodate them on,” Vance told reporters early Sunday in Islamabad. “And we’ve made that as clear as we possibly could, and they have chosen not to accept our terms.”

Trump, in a post Sunday, said the talks had lasted nearly 20 hours and blamed their failure on Iran’s refusal to make enough concessions on its nuclear program, writing: “IRAN IS UNWILLING TO GIVE UP ITS NUCLEAR AMBITIONS!”

Trump said in an interview Sunday on Fox News Channel that the U.S. has deployed “highly sophisticated underwater minesweepers” and is also sending “more traditional minesweepers.”

“I understand the U.K. and a couple of other countries are sending minesweepers,” he said, adding that “a lot” of U.S. ships would be brought up as part of an effort he described as

an “all or none” approach.

“We’re not going to let Iran make money selling oil to people they like and not people they don’t like or whatever it is,” Trump said.

It was not immediately clear how any U.S. blockade would be enforced, raising risks of further escalation.

At a brief press conference in Islamabad on Sunday, Vance said Iran had for now rejected “our final and best offer,” while insisting the discussions were substantive and that the U.S. was “quite flexible and accommodating.”

Iranian state media said the talks broke down over the U.S. negotiators’ “excessive demands,” including issues related to control of the Strait of Hormuz and the removal of nuclear materials from Iran.

U.S. negotiators “failed to gain the trust of the Iranian delegation during this round of talks,” said Iranian parliamentary speaker and lead negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf in a statement on X.

Pakistan, which hosted the meetings, said the talks were “constructive” and called on

both sides to maintain the ceasefire in the more than month-long war, saying it would continue to facilitate discussions between the U.S. and Iran in the coming days. Zev Elkin, an Israeli security Cabinet minister, said Sunday that the two-week ceasefire period hadn’t yet ended and “it’s possible that there will be attempts to generate more talks.”

Esmail Baghaei, the spokesman for Iran’s Foreign Ministry, said an understanding was reached on some issues but disagreement remained “on two or three key points.”

“It was natural that one should not have expected to reach an agreement in a single session from the outset,” Baghaei said on Iranian state television after the talks. “Diplomacy never ends” and Iran will “continue to pursue national interests under all circumstances,” he added.

Iran’s virtual closure of the Strait of Hormuz—a crucial waterway for about a fifth of global oil flows—and the continued fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon had been two key points of contention in the talks.

Navy destroyers transit strait ahead of mine-clearing

Bloomberg News

Two U.S. Navy destroyers transited the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday, laying the ground for the start of a mine-clearing operation, U.S. Central Command said.

The USS Frank E. Peterson and USS Michael Murphy transited the Strait of Hormuz and operated in the Arabian Gulf, CENTCOM said in a statement posted to X, adding that more U.S. forces, including underwater

drones, will join the clearance effort in the coming days.

“Today, we began the process of establishing a new passage and we will share this safe pathway with the maritime industry soon to encourage the free flow of commerce,” said CENTCOM commander Adm. Brad Cooper.

Since the start of the war on Feb. 28, Iran has asserted control over the strait through which roughly a fifth of the world’s oil and liquefied natural gas typical-

ly flows, effectively halting most commercial traffic. The country has sporadically attacked ships in and around the Persian Gulf and may have laid mines to deter shipowners and crews from attempting to traverse the narrow waterway.

Several U.S. Navy ships crossed Hormuz on Saturday in an operation that wasn’t coordinated with Iran, Axios reported earlier, citing a U.S. official it didn’t identify. The ships crossed

the strait from east to west to the Gulf before making their way back to the Arabian Sea, according to the report.

However, a regional intelligence official said two U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke-class destroyers that attempted to transit the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday were forced to turn back after encountering threats from Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which also launched a UAV in the direction of the vessels.

Pentagon plays down rift with Vatican

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon and the Vatican denied allegations of a rift following Pope Leo XIV's criticism of the Trump administration and a news report of a contentious meeting between a papal envoy and a top U.S. defense official.

In separate statements, the two sides professed an eagerness to get along, saying the meeting that occurred in January was frank but polite. The Defense Department issued a statement that said "we have nothing but the highest regard and welcome continued dialogue with the Holy See."

"The Apostolic Nunciature is grateful for the opportunities to meet and dialogue with government officials and others in Wash-

ington to discuss areas of mutual concern," the Vatican's diplomatic mission in Washington said in a statement.

The episode comes at a moment of friction between the Trump administration and the new pope. In a January address, Pope Leo made a plea for a more peaceful world order and offered oblique criticism of the U.S. days after a U.S. operation to capture Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. "A diplomacy that promotes dialogue and seeks consensus among all parties is being replaced by a diplomacy based on force," he said.

He was even more pointed after President Donald Trump issued a social media threat against Iran that "a whole civilization will

die tonight." The pope called that threat "truly unacceptable."

Those tensions were given further fuel in recent days after the Free Press reported that U.S. officials had pressured the Catholic Church to take Washington's side in international affairs — and warned of dire consequences if it failed to do so. The report said that in a January meeting, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Elbridge Colby had delivered the warning to Cardinal Christophe Pierre, who served as the apostolic nuncio in Washington until his retirement in March.

Both sides confirmed the meeting between Pierre and Colby, who has said in public speeches that he's Catholic. But they rejected the idea that it was contentious.

The apostolic nunciature, which represents the Holy See in Washington, did not characterize the Jan. 22 meeting, saying only that the two sides "discussed current affairs."

But the Trump administration pushed back, calling the report "grossly false and distorted." It said the meeting was "substantive, respectful, and professional."

Trump's ambassador to the Holy See, Brian Burch, also denied a rift. "Cardinal Pierre has been a regular interlocutor since my nomination," he wrote. "When we disagree, we have done so with sincerity and respect. I believe the same could be said of his January meeting with Undersecretary Colby."

Judge: Pentagon's fixes to press access fall short

BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department is still in violation of a court order to lift restrictions that deny journalists Pentagon access, a federal judge said last week in a ruling that escalates a First Amendment fight with President Donald Trump's administration.

U.S. District Judge Paul Friedman in Washington said Thursday that the Pentagon had not followed his March ruling in the case, *The New York Times Company v. Department of Defense*.

The DOD disagreed with that finding and plans to appeal, agency spokesman Sean Parnell said Thursday.

The Times filed suit in December after more than 50 journalists refused to sign an agreement placing limits on how they

could gather and publish certain information. They were subsequently denied credentials.

Defense Department officials have said the policy was intended to protect sensitive information and ensure security at the Pentagon.

Friedman sided with the newspaper last month, saying the policy is unconstitutional. He ordered the DOD to reinstate the press credentials of the Times reporters.

In response, the Pentagon issued an interim policy. But the plaintiff argues that the revised policy imposes similar restrictions by moving the press corps out of the main Pentagon building and into an annex facility.

"The Department cannot simply reinstate an unlawful policy under the guise of taking 'new' action and expect the Court to look the other way," Friedman wrote in Thursday's order.

White House warns staff amid Iran war wagers

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The White House sent an internal staff-wide email that warned employees against using confidential information to place trades on financial markets and fast-growing event betting platforms.

The warning comes after a series of recent well-timed and profitable bets raised questions about potential insider trading around President Donald Trump's decision-making on military maneuvers in Iran and Venezuela.

The email was sent from the White House Management Office on March 24, according to a White House official who asked not to be identified discussing a confidential matter.

Trump, the previous day, had cited "productive conversations" with Tehran and announced a five-day pause on his threat to attack Iranian power plants in a so-

cial media post. Futures for oil and stocks worth billions of dollars changed hands just 15 minutes before Trump's post sent crude prices tumbling and equities soaring.

Contracts corresponding to at least 6 million barrels of Brent and West Texas Intermediate were sold in the two minutes from 6:49 a.m. in New York on March 23, according to exchange data compiled by Bloomberg. The average for the same time period over the previous five trading days was about 700 lots — or 700,000 barrels. Trump's Truth Social post was published at around 7:05 a.m. that day.

The email was first reported by *The Wall Street Journal*.

Profitable bets placed just before the U.S. capture of Venezuelan strongman Nicolas Maduro earlier this year also sparked questions about the use of confidential information.

Amid criminal inquiry, Swalwell urged to exit governor's race

Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The fallout over sexual misconduct allegations against Rep. Eric Swalwell, D-Calif., grew Saturday as his fellow gubernatorial candidates faced a new race and Democrats were forced into a rapid test of how they respond to accusations of sexual misconduct.

Within hours of the accusations against Swalwell being made public, the Northern California congressman's campaign began to unravel and a chorus of top Democrats urged him to drop out. Staff members resigned, his fundraising website went offline and allies moved quickly to distance themselves from a candidate who had been gaining momentum as a front-runner in the race to lead the Golden State.

The repercussions extended beyond Swalwell's campaign

for governor. The Manhattan district attorney's office opened an investigation into sexual assault allegations against Swalwell by a former staffer and issued a statement Saturday that urged "survivors and anyone with knowledge of these allegations to contact our Special Victims Division."

Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, R-Fla., posted a video on X saying that she plans to force a House vote this week to expel Swalwell.

Swalwell has denied the allegations, calling them "flat [out] false."

The speed and severity of the response underscores how quickly political support can erode — and reflects a broader shift in how such allegations are handled in the post-#MeToo era, which has been intensified by the scrutiny surrounding the late financier and convicted sex

offender Jeffrey Epstein.

"Ask any woman staffer over the age of 45 what her experience was like, and this was a fairly prevalent sort of situation," said Elizabeth Ashford, a Democratic strategist. "It was allowed. I really think it shows a lot of growth on the part of political professionalism, that these things are taken seriously."

As of Saturday afternoon, Swalwell ignored calls to drop out of the race and resign from Congress, even as outrage and criticism swelled. A Bay Area fundraiser was canceled and major institutional backers abandoned the campaign. The California Labor Federation withdrew its endorsement, SEIU California rescinded its backing and urged Swalwell to exit the race, and the California Police Chiefs Association suspended its support.

Morrison's late trade disclosures criticized

The Minnesota Star Tribune

Democratic U.S. Rep. Kelly Morrison violated a law that requires members of Congress to disclose stock trades and other financial trades within 45 days of making them.

The violation was reported by the news outlet NOTUS, which found that Morrison, of Minnesota, was months and in some cases over a year late in reporting several stock trades worth millions.

The trades were mostly made to Minnesota-based windows and doors company Andersen Corp. that were worth between \$1.4 million and \$2.9 million, according to Morrison's financial disclosures.

A spokesperson from Morrison's office said the congresswoman's stock portfolio is overseen by an investment manager and that she had "no prior knowledge of these transactions before they occurred."

"These transactions were discovered during a yearly audit for her financial disclosure, and the reporting processes have been updated to ensure all future transactions will be reported on time," the spokesperson for Morrison said in a statement.

The federal Stock Act requires members of Congress to disclose stock trades that exceed \$1,000 within 45 days.

NOTUS reports that federal lawmakers are responsible for compliance with the Stock Act and that the law does not distinguish between the lawmaker making a trade themselves or an adviser making it on their behalf.

Lawmakers who violate the law are required to pay a \$200 fine, which Morrison's office told NOTUS she would pay.

Melania Trump denies ties to Epstein

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — First lady Melania Trump made a rare public appearance at the White House on Thursday to tell reporters that she did not know about Jeffrey Epstein's crimes and that the convicted sex offender did not introduce her to her husband, President Donald Trump.

"The lies linking me to the disgraceful Jeffrey Epstein need to end today," the first lady said. She added that she was "not Epstein's victim" and emphasized: "Epstein did not introduce me to Donald Trump."

The first lady spoke for less than six minutes and walked out of the room without taking questions from reporters, including one that shouted "Why now?" as she exited the room.

Melania Trump instead decided to read a statement that distanced her from any connection to Epstein and his convicted accomplice, Ghislaine Maxwell. She said she had never been on Epstein's plane or visited his private island and noted that her name has never appeared in court documents, depositions, victim statements or FBI interviews related to the Epstein files.

Melania Trump told reporters she met her husband "by chance" at a party in New York City in 1998.

Melania Trump has previously pushed back against claims that Epstein was involved in introducing her and Donald Trump.

Author Michael Wolff said last year that Epstein played a

role in introducing the couple in a Daily Beast article that was later retracted.

Melania Trump later sent a letter to Wolff demanding that he retract his statements, apologize and offer her a financial settlement.

Wolff filed a lawsuit in response, alleging that Melania Trump's letter was designed to "create a climate of fear" and "shut down legitimate inquiry into the Epstein matter with the Trumps." The case is ongoing.

Epstein himself had suggested in a 2016 email that he was with Donald Trump and Melania Knauss, as she was then known, when they met.

Epstein was a known fabulist and there is no indication of where the alleged meeting would have taken place.

Artemis II astronauts return to Earth

Orlando Sentinel

Records were set. History was made. All that was left was to get the four Artemis II astronauts home safe. That happened Friday night as they splashed down safe in the Pacific Ocean.

NASA's Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Christina Koch along with Canadian Space Agency astronaut Jeremy Hansen made the final run of a nearly 700,000-mile trip that began April 1 when they launched from Kennedy Space Center on the first crewed mission of the Artemis program.

They hit the water at 8:07 p.m. Eastern time off the coast of San Diego after a 13-minute reentry

that slowed the vehicle from nearly 24,000 mph down to a gentle, parachute-assisted, 19-mph landing in calm seas.

The capsule bobbing nearby with the crew still inside awaiting the arrival of support personnel from the Navy and NASA. By 9:30 p.m. EDT, all four crew had been helped onto an inflatable area called "the front porch" awaiting helicopter transport back to the recovery ship.

"It's a huge moment for everybody. I mean, we are back in the business of sending astronauts to the moon, bringing them back safely," Isaacman said. "This is not a once-in-a-lifetime, which you hear some-

times around here is like, 'This was a once in a lifetime.' No, it's not. This is just the beginning."

The quartet had made their final course correction burn earlier Friday afternoon and began the final steps to come back to Earth at 7:33 p.m., when the service module separated from the crew module, which the crew had named Integrity.

"We have a great view of the moon out window two. Looks a little smaller today," Wiseman said soon after.

"Guess we'll have to go back," replied Artemis II crew's chief training officer Jacki Mahaffey, who was the crew's main point of contact during the landing.

The next big event was entry

interface, hitting the first traces of Earth's atmosphere at 7:53 p.m. at 400,000 feet altitude about 1,900 miles short of the landing site traveling at 23,742 mph.

The spacecraft shortly after went out of contact for six minutes, a blackout period as plasma built around the spacecraft.

The capsule had no issues with drogue parachute deployment at 22,000 feet at 8:03 p.m. with its three main parachutes one minute later with splash-down officially coming at 8:07 p.m. EDT.

The mission officially lasted nine days, 1 hour, 32 minutes and 15 seconds and traveled 694,481 statute miles.

Ukraine hit Russian oil station before ceasefire

Bloomberg News

Ukraine struck a fuel pumping station in Russia's Krasnodar region hours before the start of 32-hour ceasefire for Orthodox Easter and a prisoner-of-war swap.

Kyiv's forces hit the Krymskaya facility, Ukraine's General Staff said on Telegram. Earlier, authorities of the southern Russian region reported on Telegram that a drone attack had caused a fire at a fuel depot, but didn't specifically mention the pumping station. The fire was extinguished by the morning, according to regional authorities.

The facility serves as a main pipeline toward the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk, a key point for Russian oil exports, as well as a link to crude oil from the Afipsky and Ilsky refineries.

Ukraine in recent weeks has intensified attacks on Russia's oil-export infrastructure in the Black Sea and Baltic Sea, aiming to curb Russia's oil export

revenue. Transneft's Sheskhari oil terminal in Novorossiysk halted loadings for a time last week after an attack by Ukrainian drones. The port resumed oil loading several days after the attack.

The latest strike happened ahead of a 32-hour ceasefire declared by Russian President Vladimir Putin for Orthodox Easter and also adopted by Ukraine. The halt in hostilities started as planned Saturday at 4 p.m. Moscow time and will last through Sunday. There have been no reports of any serious violations so far.

Also ahead of the ceasefire, Russia and Ukraine exchanged prisoners of war in a swap mediated by the United Arab Emirates.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed the exchange of 175 POWs from each side — the third so far this year — in a social media post.

Most of the POWs returned from Russia had been in captivity since 2022, Zelenskyy said.

Armored vehicle runs over gunman accused of murdering detective

Los Angeles Times

A Tulare County sheriff's deputy was fatally shot Thursday while assisting officers serving an eviction notice in Porterville, Calif.

The incident turned into an hours-long standoff with the suspected gunman that ended when he was run over and killed by a police armored vehicle.

The bizarre ending to the tragic sequence of events occurred around 6 p.m. just as Tulare County Sheriff Mike Boudreaux was providing an update at a news conference.

After stepping away for a few minutes, Boudreaux returned to say the situation had been resolved.

"The suspect is now dead," he said. "He was not shot. One of our (armored vehicles) ran over him and killed him.

"This story is not about him; this story is about our officer. ...

We have a ... baby who will never know his or her father," the sheriff said. The detective is survived by his wife, who is 4 months pregnant.

When asked by a reporter if the officers had intentionally run over the suspect, Boudreaux said they had.

"We intentionally ran him over," he said. "Don't shoot at cops. You shoot at cops, we're going to run you over."

Boudreaux said the suspect had been shooting at officers as he moved among three homes. He said officers in the armored vehicle were searching an area where they believed that he was hiding when they ran him over.

Boudreaux identified the suspect as David Morales, 59.

The incident began around 10:20 a.m. after the suspect fired on two officers who were there to serve an eviction notice.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

'Ketamine queen' gets lengthy prison sentence

CA LOS ANGELES — A woman known as the "Ketamine queen" who provided the drugs that killed actor Matthew Perry was sentenced Wednesday to 15 years in federal prison.

Jasveen Sangha, who prosecutors said operated a high-volume drug trafficking business out of her North Hollywood home, pleaded guilty in September to one count of maintaining a drug-involved premises, three counts of distribution of ketamine and one count of distribution of ketamine resulting in death or serious bodily injury.

Sangha, 42, was one of five people charged with conspiracy to distribute ketamine to Perry, who died from acute effects of the drug.

During the sentencing hearing, U.S. District Judge Sherilyn Peace Garnett said that of the charged defendants tied to Perry's death, Sangha was "probably one of the most culpable."

Authorities say Sangha sold about 50 vials of ketamine to Perry for \$11,000 — including the batch that led to his October 2023 death.

Pro-Palestine protester admits torching cop cars

NY NEW YORK — A pro-Palestine, anti-ICE protester admitted Wednesday he torched 11 parked NYPD vehicles last year as they sat unoccupied in a parking lot near a Brooklyn police stationhouse.

Jakhi Lodgson-McCray, 22, of Brooklyn, pleaded guilty to a federal arson charge Wednesday, admitting to an offense that

carries a mandatory minimum of five years behind bars.

"On June 12, 2025, I knowingly and intentionally set fire to NYPD vehicles in a parking lot in Brooklyn, New York, and I knew that the vehicles could be damaged," he told Brooklyn Federal Court Magistrate Judge Seth Eichenholtz, as about 20 of his supporters sat in the courtroom, watching.

Lodgson-McCray set the police vehicles ablaze early on June 12, just hours after a "Speak Out" protest at the stationhouse calling out the NYPD for its treatment of Puerto Rican Day Parade after-parade celebrants.

Ban on child sex dolls, AI child porn supported

KY FRANKFORT — Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman announced last week he filed a brief in support of upholding a state law that bans the possession of child sex dolls and child porn generated by artificial intelligence.

Kenneth Moore, 50, of Sturgis, filed a motion to dismiss his charges in February after he was arrested in July 2025 and charged with possession of three child sex dolls and dozens of AI-generated child sex abuse videos of images. Moore claimed the Kentucky law outlawing possession of such material, passed unanimously by the Kentucky General Assembly and signed into law in 2024, violated his constitutional rights.

Prosecutors for Coleman's office submitted briefs in opposition of the motion, filed in Union Circuit Court, and in support of the law. Coleman called Moore's arguments "absurd"

and said the brief was in pursuit of "restor(ing) common sense and up(holding) the legislation created to keep Kentucky's children safe."

Settlement near in Baltimore bridge collapse

MD BALTIMORE — Maryland officials said Thursday they have reached a settlement in principle with the owner and operator of the cargo ship involved in the 2024 collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge, resolving a portion of the state's claims but stopping short of a final, binding agreement.

Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown announced the agreement with Grace Ocean Private Limited and Synergy Marine Pte Ltd., which respectively own and operate the M/V Dali. The settlement addresses claims brought by the state and several of its agencies over the March 26, 2024, collision with the Key Bridge.

In his statement, Brown said the agreement covers claims filed on behalf of agencies including the Maryland Transportation Authority, Maryland Port Administration and Maryland Department of the Environment, but does not resolve potential claims against the shipbuilder, Hyundai.

A settlement in principle means the parties have agreed to the major terms of a deal, but are still working to finalize and formally execute a written agreement before it becomes legally binding.

The collapse of the Key Bridge killed six construction workers, halted shipping at the Port of Baltimore and triggered widespread economic disrup-

tion across the region.

The state's lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in September 2024, alleged negligence and mismanagement in the operation of a vessel it said should not have been in service.

Cop sentenced for hurling cooler at fleeing suspect

NY NEW YORK — Sgt. Erik Duran, the NYPD "Cooler Cop" who killed a fleeing drug-deal suspect in the Bronx by hurling a heavy, ice-filled cooler at him, got a three-to-nine-year prison sentence Thursday, drawing cheers from criminal justice reform advocates and vitriol from the former cop's followers.

Duran, 38, wept as he stood before Judge Guy Mitchell in Bronx Supreme Court, telling the judge he "did everything he could" to save Eric Duprey after he crashed his motorcycle almost three years ago.

"I took this job to save lives," Duran told the judge. "I felt terrible once I saw Eric Duprey crashed. I ran up to him immediately. I regret that this day happened."

He spoke directly to Duprey's grieving mother, Gretchen Soto, in Spanish.

"Ma'am, I'm really sorry of the loss of your child," he said. "I never wanted this to happen. I pray for you and your family."

Duran was convicted of second-degree manslaughter in February following a Bronx Criminal Court non-jury trial. He was fired by the NYPD upon his conviction.

The manslaughter conviction meant he faced a maximum sentence of five to 15 years in prison.

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Low scores, except for McIlroy, close gap

Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — The Masters looked as if it might be a runaway entering the weekend.

Moving day changed all of that.

When the sun set on one of the wildest Saturdays in Masters history that featured dramatic movement on the leaderboard, Rory McIlroy's six-shot lead had evaporated, leaving the defending champion tied with Cameron Young at 11-under 205 and a dozen players within six shots of the lead, including two-time champion Scottie Scheffler.

Only two players were within six shots of the lead at the start of the third round.

What is left is a dream final round scenario for the Masters and TV partner CBS Sports — a championship that any number of high-profile players can win, setting up a potentially dramatic finish.

While McIlroy was spraying his driver, others were bearing down on flagsticks. Birdies at every turn, and eagles there for the taking.

Shane Lowry even had a hole-in-one in the difficult par-3 sixth hole, vaulting into contention and becoming first player in Masters

history with two career aces at Augusta National.

The field's average score on Saturday was 70.63 — a Masters record for the third round — besting the previous lows of 70.769 in 2019 and 70.979 in 1986.

This was moving day on steroids as 10 players shot 68 or better.

The way things went Saturday, Jason Day said it might be better not to be atop the leaderboard.

"I feel like the guys that are leading right now have all the pressure," said Day, who is at 8 under. "I'm just kind of, I'm the chaser. Usually the chasers don't really have a lot of the pressure. Guys at the top of the leaderboard always are trying to defend the lead, whereas I'm pushing forward trying to cut into the lead."

Scheffler seemed to get the landslide started.

Starting the round 12 shots back, he rolled in an eagle putt on the par-5 second hole and went on to shoot 31 on the front nine. He briefly threatened the championship record of 63 before finishing with a 65 after leaving some shots on the course over the back nine.

By the time he walked up to 18th green to a rousing applause, the the field behind him was posting some low scores, too.

Young matched Scheffler's 65.

Sam Burns, who is one shot behind the leaders, shot 68. Lowry also shot 68 and is two shots back. Day (68) and Justin Rose (69) had clawed to within three of the lead and Scheffler was tied for seventh, four back and well within striking distance.

"I was aware that (McIlroy) wasn't kind of stretching (the lead) out, so kind of made it feel like, yeah, all to play for," Rose said.

Rose is well aware that anything can happen on Sunday at the Masters.

Last year, he trailed McIlroy by seven shots entering the final round, only to catch him before losing in a playoff.

"I think I had to have a big mental reset going into the final round last year," Rose said. "You know, this year it's like — it feels like a little bit of a free run at it."

Burns, who played in the final pairing with McIlroy, said he simply tried to focus on his own game.

That will be his plan again Sun-

day.

"I can't control anything anyone else does," Burns said.

"I can only control myself, and so that's kind of what the mentality we took today. Just focus on our process and go out there and compete."

On Sunday, Young will go off in the final pairing with McIlroy.

He has some history on his side.

In the previous two years, the winner of the Players Championship has gone on to win the Masters.

One thing is for certain: McIlroy's rounds of 67 and 65 to start the Masters now seem like ancient history and a testament to how quickly things can change at Augusta National.

That's why Young planned to put his 65 behind him quickly as possible.

"Yeah, I'll probably give myself some time to think about it right now for the next 30 minutes or so," Young said.

"After that, it's kind of a battle of managing how you want to react to those things. To me, it's just a matter of going right back to how am I going to run my day tomorrow."

Ulberg wins belt with 1st-round KO against Prochazka

Associated Press

MIAMI — Hobbling on one leg, Carlos Ulberg refused to let an injured knee ruin the opportunity he earned at UFC 327 on Saturday night.

With President Donald Trump sitting cageside, Ulberg delivered a perfect left hook to Jiri Prochazka's chin and won the undisputed light heavyweight belt with a knockout at the 3:45 mark of the first round.

"I blew out my knee, but I never counted myself out," Ulberg said. "I knew all I needed was that one shot and I ended up getting it. So I knew that Jiri was hesitant to come forward. And as soon as I landed my left hand he's going

"It's about getting those moments."

Ulberg (15-1-0) appeared to tweak something early in the first round when he planted his foot and his right knee buckled awkwardly. Prochazka (32-6-1) immediately went to work on Ulberg's left leg, repeatedly landing leg kicks with hopes of taking both legs away, rather than attacking aggressively to end it.

"I felt sorry (for) him, and this is one of the biggest lessons in my life," Prochazka said. "That fight was won, I had it, it was in my hands. I saw his injury, and ... I will be back. Life is about that, learn and be better."

The matchup was made after

former champion Alex Pereira vacated the belt to move up and challenge for the interim heavyweight crown at UFC Freedom 250 at the White House on June 14, on what will be Trump's 80th birthday.

In the co-main event, Paulo Costa (16-4-0) used a right roundhouse to the head to drop Azamat Murzakanov (16-1-0) and end the bout at the 1:23 mark of the third round. Costa stepped onto the apron of the Octagon after his victory to shake Trump's hand, and the president praised him. Costa acknowledged Trump during his post-fight interview with Rogan.

Josh Hoke (9-0-0) and Curtis Blaydes (19-6-0) battered each

other in the slugfest of the night, with Trump excitedly watching the heavyweights as fans chanted "This is awesome!" as the fighters bloodied each other's faces. Hoke won by unanimous decision (29-28, 29-28, 29-28).

White took to social media after Hoke's win to reveal that a matchup between Hoke and Derrick Lewis had been added to UFC Freedom 250. According to White's video, Trump asked why Lewis wasn't on the White House card. White said he called Lewis and offered him a fight, and when Rogan jokingly asked during the broadcast if there was room for Hoke on the card, the match came together.

Devils end Red Wings playoff hopes

Associated Press

DETROIT — Jesper Bratt's scored his second goal with 3:34 left in the third period, helping the New Jersey Devils eliminate the Detroit Red Wings from the NHL playoff picture with a 5-3 win on Saturday.

Detroit extended the league's longest active postseason drought, dating to the 2016 season when the franchise earned a berth for the 25th consecutive season in what was a remarkable run that included four Stanley Cup championships.

The Red Wings were in a playoff position for 148 days of the season, according to Sportradar, to raise expectations higher than they've been since the hockey-crazed state experienced the playoffs a long time ago.

They went ahead against New Jersey in the first, second and third periods — and lost every lead.

On an odd-man rush, Bratt scored the go-ahead goal from the left circle off a perfect pass from Jack Hughes in the right circle with John Gibson flailing around in an attempt to stop the puck. Dawson Mercer added an empty-net goal with a minute left.

Gibson had 27 saves for the Red Wings and Jake Allen stopped 25 shots for the Devils.

Lightning 2, Bruins 1: Emil Lilleberg scored on a rebound with 95 seconds left to help visiting Tampa Bay beat Boston, snapping a three-game losing streak and depriving the Bruins of a chance to clinch a playoff berth.

Boston clinched hours later when Detroit lost in regulation to New Jersey and the Red Wings were eliminated from contention.

Morgan Geekie scored and Jeremy Swayman made 22 saves for Boston, which has lost five in a row

Senators 3, Islanders 0: Ridley Greig scored a short-handed

goal, Linus Ullmark stopped all 23 shots he faced and visiting Ottawa moved to the verge of clinching a playoff spot by shutting out New York.

Ottawa got into the playoffs a few hours later when Detroit lost at home in regulation to New Jersey and the Red Wings were eliminated.

Senators captain Brady Tkachuk took a puck up high late in the second period, returned for one shift in the third and then did not return.

Capitals 6, Penguins 3: Ilya Protas scored his first NHL goal and added two assists as visiting Washington beat Pittsburgh on Saturday.

The 100th career matchup between Sidney Crosby and Alex Ovechkin didn't materialize. The Penguins opted to sit Crosby and several other regulars after clinching a playoff berth for the first time since the 2021-22 season and home ice advantage for the first round.

Kings 1, Oilers 0: Anton Forsberg made 27 saves in his third shutout of the season, and Los Angeles greatly bolstered its playoff chances with a home victory over Edmonton.

Artemi Panarin scored on a first-period breakaway in the regular-season home finale for the Kings (34-26-19), who won their fourth straight game and moved three points clear of their nearest competitor for the final wild-card spot in the Western Conference.

Stars 2, Rangers 0: Jason Robertson scored a power-play goal midway through the third period and added an empty-netter in the final minute while Jake Oettinger made 22 saves for his fourth shutout of the season as host Dallas beat New York and clinched second place in the Central Division.

The Stars will face the Minnesota Wild in the first round of the NHL playoffs. They secured the position late in the third period when the Wild lost in reg-

ulation to the Nashville Predators.

Predators 2, Wild 1: Steven Stamkos scored a goal and added an assist to lead Nashville to a victory over Minnesota, locking the Wild into the third seed in the Western Conference for the playoffs.

Matthew Wood also scored and Justus Annunen made 21 saves for the Predators, 4-1-1 in their last six.

The Predators are now three points behind the Los Angeles Kings for the Western Conference's second wild card.

Hurricanes 4, Mammoth 1: Jordan Staal scored and reached 20 goals in a season for the first time in a decade, and Carolina killed four of five penalties in a road win over Utah for its sixth win in seven games.

Andrei Svechnikov, Sean Walker and Sebastian Aho also scored for Metropolitan Division champion Carolina.

The Hurricanes are within one point of securing the top seed in the Eastern Conference. Any loss by Buffalo or any point earned by Carolina will clinch it.

Blues 5, Blackhawks 3: Jordan Kyrro, Cam Fowler and Alexey Toropchenko scored in the second period, helping visiting St. Louis beat Chicago.

St. Louis (34-33-12) evened its season series with Chicago at two wins apiece. But the Blues were eliminated from playoff contention with the Los Angeles Kings' 1-0 victory over the Edmonton Oilers.

Kraken 4, Flames 1: Nikke Kokko stopped 26 shots in his first NHL start and Matty Beniers scored his 20th goal of the season as host Seattle beat Calgary.

The Kraken won their second straight after learning before the game they had been eliminated from playoff contention when the Los Angeles Kings beat the Edmonton Oilers 1-0.

Panthers 6, Maple Leafs 2:

Eetu Luostarinen and Mackie Samoskevich had a goal and two assists each as visiting Florida cruised past Toronto.

Tomas Nosek, with two goals, Cole Reinhardt and A.J. Greer, into the empty net to go along with an assist, provided the rest of the offense for Florida.

Blue Jackets 5, Canadiens 2: Charlie Coyle scored twice as desperate Columbus rolled to a road victory over Montreal.

The Blue Jackets sit outside the playoff picture, two points behind the Philadelphia Flyers for third place in the Metropolitan Division.

Flyers 7, Jets 1: Sean Couturier had two goals and an assist and Noah Cates added a short-handed goal and two assists to lead Philadelphia to a road win over Winnipeg.

Philadelphia earned a valuable two points to maintain its grip on third place in the Metropolitan Division and remain in the hunt for a playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

Golden Knights 3, Avalanche 2 (OT): Jack Eichel scored 1:19 into overtime, and visiting Vegas beat Colorado to secure a playoff berth.

Vegas (91 points) took over the Pacific Division lead from Edmonton with its fifth win in six games since coach John Tortorella was hired to replace Bruce Cassidy. The Oilers, who lost 1-0 at Los Angeles earlier, have 90 points and Anaheim is third with 89 points.

Canucks 4, Sharks 3 (SO): Linus Karlsson scored in the sixth round of the shootout and Vancouver put San Jose on the brink of playoff elimination with a road win.

After finishing last in the league the past two seasons, the Sharks have jumped 30 points in the standings. But they trail Los Angeles by five points with three games remaining in the race for the final wild-card spot in the Western Conference.

Crawford, Mariners rally to defeat Astros

Associated Press

SEATTLE — J.P. Crawford singled home the winning run after Bryan Abreu walked the bases loaded with one out in the ninth inning, and the Seattle Mariners rallied past the skidding Houston Astros 8-7 on Saturday night.

Cal Raleigh homered and had three RBIs for Seattle, which trailed 7-2 before scoring five times in the fifth. Crawford hit a two-run single, Raleigh followed with a sacrifice fly and Julio Rodríguez tied it with a two-run homer.

The 426-foot shot to center field was Rodríguez's first home run this season.

Yordan Alvarez homered and had three of Houston's 17 hits, but the Astros lost their sixth straight game. Taylor Trammell delivered an early three-run double, and Cam Smith had a career-high four hits — including a two-run single that capped a 13-pitch at-bat.

Pirates 4, Cubs 3 (11): Yohan Ramírez escaped bases-loaded jams in the 10th and 11th innings, and visiting Pittsburgh took advantage of a throwing error by Caleb Thielbar to score the go-ahead run in a win over Chicago that clinched the three-game series.

Alex Bregman's RBI single with two outs in the ninth inning on an 0-2 pitch off Dennis Santana tied the score 3-3 but the NL Central-leading Pirates (9-5) rebounded and won for the eighth time in 10 games, improving to 2-0 this season in series against division rivals.

Pittsburgh went ahead in the 11th when Brandon Lowe hit a two-out grounder to Thielbar (1-2), who bounced his throw to the infield side of first, and the ball bounced off Matt Shaw's mitt for an error that allowed Mitt Gonzales to score from second.

Tigers 6, Marlins 1: Riley Greene had a three-run homer and four RBIs, Drew Anderson ended the game by retiring Ja-

kob Marsee in a 14-pitch at-bat for his first major league save and host Detroit beat Miami to get A.J. Hinch his 400th win as Tigers manager.

Rookie Kevin McGonigle scored twice for Detroit, which has won two straight following a five-game losing streak. Spencer Torkelson reached base three times, including an eighth-inning RBI single.

Phillies 4, Diamondbacks 3: Kyle Schwarber hit a go-ahead, three-run homer in the third inning and Bryce Harper went deep two pitches later, boosting host Philadelphia over Arizona to stop a three-game losing streak.

Taijuan Walker (1-2) allowed two runs and four hits in five innings. Brad Keller gave up a two-out RBI single to Jose Fernandez in the eighth, then struck out Nolan Arenado to strand a runner on third.

Twins 7, Blue Jays 4: Trevor Larnach hit a three-run home run, Brooks Lee added a solo shot and visiting Minnesota used a seven-run third inning to beat Toronto for its fifth win in six games.

Blue Jays designated hitter George Springer left in the sixth inning because of a fractured big toe on his left foot. Springer fouled a ball off his foot in the third inning but completed his at bat, grounding out to third base.

Royals 2, White Sox 0: Michael Wacha (2-0) struck out seven while pitching four-hit ball through eight innings, Maikel Garcia homered and host Kansas City beat Chicago as its scoreless streak reached 20 innings.

Garcia opened the game with a leadoff homer and the Royals added another run in the eighth inning when Garcia doubled and scored on a sacrifice fly by Vinny Pasquantino.

Reds 7, Angels 3: Nathaniel Lowe hit a three-run double in a four-run first inning, and host Cincinnati stopped a three-game losing streak with a victory over Los Angeles.

New Angels manager Kurt Suzuki was ejected for the first time in the eighth inning when Logan O'Hoppe was called out for interference for not staying in the runner's box while heading to first base on a strike three pitch that bounced to the backstop. Suzuki had left the dugout in the sixth to argue Reds catcher Tyler Stephenson did not properly execute a ABS challenge.

Athletics 11, Mets 6: Tyler Soderstrom hit his first two homers this season and drove in five runs Saturday as the visiting Athletics roughed up Kodai Senga in a victory over struggling New York.

Carlos Cortes launched a three-run shot for the A's, who have won four straight games — two apiece against the Yankees and Mets in New York.

Rays 5, Yankees 4 (10): Taylor Walls and Jonathan Aranda had run-scoring infield grounders in the 10th inning, and host Tampa Bay rallied late twice to beat New York and extend the Yankees' losing streak to four.

Former Ray José Caballero had an RBI single in the 10th against Cole Sulser (1-0) for a 4-3 lead, but Chandler Simpson reached on a bunt single off David Bednar (0-2) leading off the bottom half, moving automatic runner Cedric Mullins to third, and Walls bunted to Bednar, whose throw home was too late to catch Mullins on what was ruled a single.

Guardians 6, Braves 0: Rookie left-hander Parker Messick (2-0) pitched four-hit ball into the seventh inning and José Ramírez hit his second home run of the season as visiting Cleveland beat Atlanta.

Chase DeLauter had an RBI double and Daniel Schneemann added a two-run single off the bench.

Nationals 3, Brewers 1: Foster Griffin didn't allow a hit through five innings and hot-hitting James Wood drove in a pair of runs as visiting Washington held on for the win, handing Milwaukee its fourth consecutive loss.

Griffin (2-0) held the Brewers hitless until a lead-off single by Joey Ortiz, the Brewers' No. 9 hitter, in the sixth. Milwaukee eventually loaded the bases in the inning but came up empty when pinch-hitter Jake Bauers grounded out against Brad Lord, who relieved Griffin.

Red Sox 7, Cardinals 1: Willson Contreras drove in three runs against his former team, Ranger Suárez (1-1) pitched six scoreless innings and visiting Boston set a season high for runs with a win over St. Louis.

The Red Sox, who broke open the game with a five-run ninth inning, have won three of four after a 2-8 start.

Orioles 6, Giants 2: Jeremiah Jackson finished a triple short of the cycle, Gunnar Henderson homered and host Baltimore beat San Francisco.

Colton Cowser had two hits and Coby Mayo drove in two runs for the Orioles, who have won four of five.

Padres 9, Rockies 5: Ramón Laureano hit a go-ahead, three-run homer in the fourth inning and Manny Machado had a two-run shot for host San Diego, which rallied from an early 4-0 deficit to beat Colorado for its fourth straight win.

Former Rockies starter Germán Márquez (2-1) faced his old team for the first time after spending 10 seasons in Colorado. Márquez allowed four runs and four hits in five innings. He struck out five and walked two to get the win.

Dodgers 6, Rangers 3: Shohei Ohtani hit a leadoff homer and Teoscar Hernández followed with a three-run shot in the first inning of host Los Angeles' seventh victory in eight games, beating Texas.

Emmet Sheehan (2-0) pitched six innings of four-hit ball with six strikeouts for the defending World Series champion Dodgers, whose 11-3 start is the best in the majors. Will Smith reached base four times and scored two runs.