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Cost creeping up for Navy's next carrier

Bloomberg

The Navy vowed that a runaway budget wouldn't be allowed again after the USS Gerald Ford, the first in a new class of aircraft carriers, cost a record \$13.3 billion. Now, the price for the second ship is creeping up.

The service's estimate for shipbuilder Huntington Ingalls Industries to design and construct the USS John F. Kennedy has increased to \$3.58 billion, up 7% from the \$3.35 billion contract awarded in 2015, according to the carrier program's Selected Acquisition Report for fiscal 2021.

That underscores previous warnings that the fully outfitted carrier may exceed an \$11.4 billion cost cap imposed by Congress. The contractor is falling short by a key measure of labor efficiency, the Navy said in the report obtained by Bloomberg News.

Its workforce performed 91 cents of work for every Navy dollar spent in the last year, down from the more acceptable level of 95 cents per dollar over the same timeframe, according

to the report.

Huntington Ingalls also is falling short of a Navy goal to reduce cumulative labor hours by at least 18% from the first ship. With the vessel 69% complete, the Kennedy is performing at a 16% improvement over the Ford at the same point, Capt. Danny Hernandez, a Navy spokesman, said in an email.

Hernandez said the cost report's figures stem in part from changes such as improvements in warfare capability and lessons learned from the Ford's recent post-delivery "shake-down" sea trials. There are additional costs "from congressional direction" requiring that the Kennedy be capable of deploying with F-35 jets by mid-2025, he said.

The cost increases are also "due to delays relating to electrical, sheet metal, painting and platform engineering work," the Navy said in the Selected Acquisition Report. The JFK is expected to be delivered in 2024.

But the report warned that "if the current cost performance continues, then the bud-

get will be exhausted prior to the completion" of the carrier. That could force the Defense Department to make the case to lawmakers for easing the cost cap.

Beci Brenton, a spokeswoman for Newport News, Va.-based Huntington Ingalls, said the carrier's construction is about 72% complete. The company "continues to see the benefits associated with significant build strategy changes and incorporation of lessons learned" from its predecessor.

"We track cost and schedule trends continuously and share that information with our customer," the Navy, Brenton said. The company reports earnings Thursday.

Shelby Oakley, an acquisition director for the Government Accountability Office, said in an email that "our past work has shown that during the last phases of construction, programs generally experience their highest levels of cost growth as they are finishing the detailed stages of construction."

Earlier, the cost of the Ford soared as it was plagued by

technical problems with its combat systems. Since 2008, its cost has increased \$2.8 billion amid congressional criticism.

The Navy needs to retain congressional and public support to boost funds for shipbuilding if it's to achieve its goal of a 355-ship fleet, up from 300 today.

The newly disclosed information indicates construction cost performance on the second carrier "has been eroding gently over time," said Ronald O'Rourke, naval analyst for the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service. He said "the Navy believes there is more than a 50% chance that the ship will experience cost growth" driving it above the \$11.4 billion congressional cap.

The cap is supposed to apply to the fully outfitted ship.

O'Rourke's assessment matches that of the Congressional Budget Office, which in October said the Navy informed it "that there is a greater than 60% chance that the ship's final cost will be more than the current estimate."

Troops' remains found along with sunken vehicle

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The bodies of service members who were aboard an assault amphibious vehicle last week when it sunk during a training exercise off the California coast have been found, the Marine Corps announced Tuesday.

The location of the vehicle was identified Monday by officials with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, I Marine Expeditionary Force and the Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group, according to a statement from IMEF.

The assault amphibious vehicle was carrying 15 Marines and one sailor from

15th MEU when it began to take on water Thursday evening. The crew had just finished training on San Clemente Island and were traveling back in the vehicle to their ship. Eight Marines were rescued from the sinking vehicle, though one died at the scene. Two more Marines were sent to a nearby hospital in critical condition. The 15th MEU is based at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Seven Marines and a sailor missing with the vehicle were presumed dead Sunday after a search and rescue effort that lasted days.

"The U.S. Navy's Undersea Rescue Command confirmed that human remains have

also been identified using their underwater remotely-operated video systems from the merchant vessel HOS Dominator, a ship specializing in undersea search and rescue," according to the statement Tuesday.

The Navy is working now to recover the remains of the service members and raise the vehicle. The statement did not say how many remains were found. The equipment needed to get to the vehicle off the seafloor will be at the location by the end of the week, according to the Marine Corps.

The vehicle, which weighs about 26 tons, had sunk to a depth of 385 feet almost a mile from San Clemente Island, according to the statement.

US military participates in Arctic exercise

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Hundreds of American sailors and Coast Guard members will learn to maneuver and operate in the Arctic as part of an annual Canadian maritime exercise as Russia and China continue to increase their activity in the region, according to military officials.

“The Arctic is the new frontier of our homeland defense. Our competitors are steadily expanding military presence in the region and left us with no choice, no option but to improve our homeland defense capability and capacity,” Vice Adm. Andrew Lewis, the commander of 2nd Fleet, said Tuesday during a news briefing about Operation Nanook 2020.

The annual Canadian exercise started in 2007, though this year it will be shortened due to the coronavirus pandemic. The maritime component of the exercise, Tuugaalik, started Tuesday and ends Aug. 24. Ships participating are from the United States, Canada,

France and Denmark. The USS Thomas Hudner, a guided-missile destroyer, will participate as well as a detachment from Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 46 and the Coast Guard cutter Tahoma, according to a 2nd Fleet statement.

This is the fourth time that the 2nd Fleet has operated in the Arctic and the first time they have sent rigid inflatable boats from the Hudner to work in those temperatures, according to Lewis.

The Pentagon’s 2018 National Defense Strategy puts Russia and China at the center of the military’s renewed focus on great-power competition. Based at Naval Station Norfolk, Va., 2nd Fleet focuses on the Atlantic Ocean including up to the Arctic, which is becoming a greater strategic concern as more ice is melting, opening more routes to travel through the region. Russia has increased its presence in the region by establishing more military bases and operating a large icebreaker fleet.

China is also attempting to become more involved in the

region, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said last year during an Arctic Council meeting.

There is growing international interest in the region’s resources, fishing and global strategic positioning, according to Vice Adm. Steven Poulin, the commander of Coast Guard Atlantic Area.

“I think it’s important that we continue to showcase our mutual commitment to safety, security and environmental protection. As I said at the outset, our commitment is to safeguard the Arctic, and that includes those three elements: safety, security and environmental protection,” he said Tuesday.

The Arctic’s warm season is lasting longer each year, which is causing more traffic, according to Rear Adm. Brian Santarpia, the Canadian commander of Maritime Forces Atlantic and Joint Task Force Atlantic.

“As we see traffic increase, we know that we need to be ready to operate in the north ourselves to a much greater degree,” he said.

The ships will work together

on tactical scenarios, according to Santarpia, including gunnery, locating and tracking ships and basic security tasks.

Experiencing how to operate in the Arctic through training allows sailors to understand how different it is from other parts of the world, according to Lewis. That includes special clothing in case they fall into frigid waters or just the longer time it takes to navigate the waterways.

“The Arctic Region requires specialized training, gear, and a unique skill set that can only be honed and developed over time and repetition,” he said.

Having the navies and coast guards of several nations working together in this operation sends a message that their alliance and presence in the region is strong, according to the naval officers.

“The strength of that partnership and the ability to operate safely and in accordance with international norms is what we are intending to do. And that’s what the expectation is of all the parties that are [participating],” Lewis said.

Suicide prevention measure draws support in Congress

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A suicide prevention measure that would create a safe word for troops to seek mental health care was introduced in the Senate last week and added to the House’s version of the annual defense bill.

The legislation, called the Brandon Act, is named for 21-year-old sailor Brandon Caserta, who died in 2018 after throwing himself into the spinning tail rotor of a helicopter at Naval Station Norfolk, Va. A command investigation into his death determined that belligerent and brash leadership of his unit contributed to Caserta’s decision to end his life. He felt

alone, stuck and afraid of retaliation, said his parents, Patrick and Teri Caserta.

The goal of the Brandon Act is to create a pathway for service members to seek mental health evaluations in confidence, without disclosing to their command.

Rep. Seth Moulton, D-Mass., introduced the bill June 25, the second anniversary of Caserta’s death. The measure was added as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act, which the House passed June 21.

The Brandon Act was not part of the Senate’s version of the annual defense legislation, and it’s uncertain whether lawmakers will decide to keep the measure when members of

the House and Senate convene to negotiate a final bill. The NDAA sets the Defense Department’s annual budget and includes a slew of policies for the Pentagon.

Though it wasn’t added to the Senate’s NDAA, Sen. Martha McSally, R-Ariz., introduced the Brandon Act as a stand-alone bill last week.

“This legislation honors Brandon’s legacy of selfless service and kindness by creating a confidential reporting method for service members struggling with their mental health,” McSally said in a statement. “We must continue to break the stigma around mental health.”

Brandon Caserta was one of 325 active-duty service members who died by suicide in

2018, and one of 68 sailors, according to military data. Less than half, or 44.6%, of troops who died by suicide that year had a documented behavioral health diagnosis, according to a report the Pentagon released in April.

The Brandon Act creates a system based on the process available to victims of sexual assault, which would allow service members who experience mental health issues to receive care without notifying their command or opening an official investigation of any allegations they raise. The Casertas believe it would help reduce the perceived barriers of self-reporting for mental health evaluations and ease service members’ path to care.

New cases reported on Okinawa bases

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND AYA ICHIHASHI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Okinawa recorded 77 new cases of coronavirus, its second highest daily count, on Wednesday, as its wait list for quarantine space grew longer.

The U.S. military reported 11 new cases: seven at the Marines' Camp Courtney on the central coast, three at U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa at Camp Foster and one at the White Beach Naval Facility, according to posts on official Facebook pages.

At a press conference Wednesday, Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki asked nightclubs, bars and cabarets in the Misaki area of Ishigaki Island and the Hirara district of Miyako to close Friday through Aug. 20. Both areas are sites of cluster outbreaks.

He urged residents to stay home except for urgent or necessary trips and nonresi-

dents to avoid trips to the island prefecture for the time being.

Of the 715 coronavirus cases reported in Okinawa since the pandemic started, 572 have been announced since July 8. The list of infected individuals with no symptoms or mild symptoms waiting for a hospital bed or hotel room designated for quarantine is now 253, according to the prefecture.

The 11 new cases among the Navy and Marines brings to 295 the total military cases there since the pandemic began.

The Marines did not specify whether the individuals are service members, civilian employees, contractors or family members. The individuals at Courtney quarantined themselves after developing symptoms; their close contacts are also quarantined, according to a Facebook post by Marine Corps Installations Pacific.

Two of the individuals at U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa had no recent contacts with patients and one with only a "few individu-

als," the Facebook post said. During those contacts, the individual was wearing full protective gear as a member of a virus testing team.

"Close contacts of these individuals have also been directed to quarantine," the post said. "None of these individuals worked in the main hospital facility."

The naval hospital is at Camp Foster, headquarters of Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler, which encompasses all Marine bases on Okinawa, and Marine Corps Installations Pacific.

At White Beach Naval Facility, the one individual there tested positive at the end of the mandatory 14-day quarantine period for new arrivals, according to a post Tuesday on the Commander Fleet Activities Okinawa Facebook page.

"The individual has not had any contact with the local community since arriving on Okinawa and is currently in isolation on base," the post said.

Army reservist is 4th military virus death

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — An Army reservist from Virginia is the fourth service member to die from the coronavirus, the Army announced Tuesday.

Spc. Curtis Fort, 61, of Roanoke died July 30 from complications related to the coronavirus, Lt. Col. Simon Flake, a spokesman for the Army Reserve, said in a statement.

Fort was a radio and com-

munications security repairer assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-319th Cadet Summer Training Battalion in Salem, Va., according to Flake. He was awarded the Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal and the Army Service Ribbon.

Fort was also a pastor, a husband and a father of five children, according to a GoFundMe

page for his funeral.

The death is the first reported since another Army reservist died in May. The other two military deaths were a National Guard member from Pennsylvania and a sailor who was aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt during the aircraft carrier's coronavirus outbreak.

Army Capt. Douglas Linn Hickok, 57, of the New Jersey National Guard was the first service member to die of the

virus. He was preparing to activate in response to the pandemic at the time of his death on March 28.

Charles Robert Thacker Jr., 41, a chief petty officer from the Roosevelt, died April 13 after being found unresponsive while in quarantine on Guam.

Army Sgt. Simon Zamudio, a 34-year-old reservist from Illinois, died May 22, becoming the third service member to die of the coronavirus.

Progress slows as urgency grows on relief legislation

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Frustrated Senate Republicans reupped their complaints that Democratic negotiators are taking too hard a line in talks on a sweeping coronavirus relief bill. But an afternoon negotiating session brought at least modest concessions from both sides, even as an agreement appears far off.

Top Democrats emerged from a 90-minute meeting

Tuesday with Trump administration officials to declare more progress. The Trump team agreed with that assessment and highlighted its offer to extend a moratorium on evictions from federally subsidized housing through the end of the year.

"We really went down, issue by issue by issue slogging through this. They made some concessions which we appreciated. We made some conces-

sions that they appreciated," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. "We're still far away on a lot of the important issues, but we're continuing to go back."

Another glimmer of hope emerged as a key Senate Republican hinted that the party may yield to Democrats on an increase in the food stamp benefit as part of the huge rescue measure, which promises to far exceed a \$1 trillion target set

by the GOP.

Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Pat Roberts, R-Kan., said Tuesday that "you can make an argument that we need some kind of an increase" in food stamps and that he's raised the topic with Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. He added that an agreement on the issue could lead to further overall progress on the legislation, which remains stalled despite days of Capitol negotiations.

At least 7 killed as Isaias batters East Coast in US

Associated Press

WINDSOR, N.C. — At least seven people were killed as Tropical Storm Isaias battered the U.S. East Coast with rain and fierce winds after making landfall as a hurricane in North Carolina. Millions of people were without power on Wednesday after felled trees downed power lines.

The sound of generators and chainsaws punctuated the sunrise in New Jersey, where more than 1 million homes and businesses were without electricity. NJ Transit train service remained suspended while crews cleared about 150 trees and repaired signals and overhead wires.

Regional rail service was also suspended in Philadelphia after Isaias raised the Schuylkill River and sent an unsecured construction barge into a bridge. Inspectors were checking for damage. Interstate 676, which crosses the bridge, was also closed in both directions.

Patrick Foye, chairman of New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority, said more than 2,000 trees fell across the system's train and bus network.

"This storm caused severe damage," Foye said Wednesday. "Not since Superstorm Sandy has our system experienced this type of wind."

Two people died when Isaias

spun off a tornado that struck a North Carolina mobile home park. Another person died in Pennsylvania when their vehicle was overtaken by water and swept downstream. Three others were killed by falling trees toppled by the storm in Maryland, Connecticut and New York City, and a seventh person died in Delaware when a tree branch fell on them, authorities said.

Isaias sustained top winds of up to 65 mph more than 18 hours after coming ashore, but it was down to 45 mph max winds as of late Tuesday, according to the National Hurricane Center.

Isaias toggled between hurricane and tropical storm strength as it churned toward the East Coast. Fueled by warm ocean waters, the storm got a late burst of strength as a rejuvenated hurricane with top sustained winds of 85 mph before coming ashore late Monday near Ocean Isle Beach, N.C. Its tropical storm status was sustained, but weakened, as it headed north into Canada on Tuesday night.

Before making landfall late Monday, Isaias killed two people in the Caribbean and battered the Bahamas before brushing past Florida.

Tornadoes were confirmed by the National Weather Service in Virginia, Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey.

Beirut port officials facing house arrest following explosion

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Investigators began searching the wreckage of Beirut's port Wednesday for clues to the cause of the massive explosion that ripped across the Lebanese capital, and the government ordered port officials put under house arrest amid speculation that negligence was to blame.

The investigation is focusing on how 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate, a highly explosive chemical used in fertilizers, came to be stored at the facility for six years, and why nothing was done about it.

International aid flights arrived as Lebanon's leaders struggled to deal with the aftermath of Tuesday's blast, crippled by an economic crisis and facing a public where many already blame chronic mismanagement and corruption among the ruling elite for the disaster.

The explosion at the port killed at least 135 people and wounded about 5,000. Hospitals were overwhelmed — one that was damaged in the blast had to evacuate all its patients to a field for treatment. Buildings were damaged for miles

around the city, and Beirut's governor said Wednesday that hundreds of thousands might not be able to return to their homes for two or three months.

Fueling speculation that negligence was to blame for the accident, an official letter surfaced online showing that the head of the customs department had warned repeatedly over the years that a huge stockpile of ammonium nitrate stored in a hangar in the port was a danger and asked for a way to remove it.

Ammonium nitrate is a component of fertilizer that is potentially explosive. The 2,750-ton cargo had been stored at the port since it was confiscated from a ship in 2013, and on Tuesday it is believed to have detonated after a fire broke out nearby. The resulting explosion — hitting with the force of a 3.5-magnitude earthquake — was the biggest ever seen in Beirut, a city blasted by a 1975-90 civil war, bombarded in conflicts with Israel and hit by periodic terror attacks.

The 2017 letter from the custom's chief to a judge could not be immediately confirmed.

Protest leader Bush ousts 20-year Rep. Clay in Mo.

Associated Press

Cori Bush, a onetime homeless woman who led protests following a white police officer's fatal shooting of a Black 18-year-old in Ferguson, ousted longtime Rep. William Lacy Clay on Tuesday in Missouri's Democratic primary, ending a political dynasty that has spanned more than a half-century.

Bush's victory came in a rematch of 2018, when she failed

to capitalize on a national Democratic wave that favored political newcomers such as Bush's friend, New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

But this time around, Bush's supporters said protests over the death of George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis and outrage over racial injustice finally pushed her over the top.

An emotional Bush, 44, speaking to supporters while wearing a mask, said few peo-

ple expected her to win.

"They counted us out," she said. "They called me — I'm just the protester, I'm just the activist with no name, no title and no real money. That's all they said that I was. But St. Louis showed up today."

Bush's primary win essentially guarantees her a seat in Congress representing the heavily Democratic St. Louis area. Missouri's 1st Congressional District has been represented by Clay or his father

for a half-century. Bill Clay served 32 years before retiring in 2000. William Lacy Clay, 64, was elected that year.

Both Clay and Bush are Black, and Black residents slightly outnumber whites in the district that includes St. Louis and north St. Louis County.

After Michael Brown's death in 2014 in Ferguson, Bush became a leader of some of the many protests that followed the fatal police shooting of the Black, unarmed 18-year-old.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Crews rescue ostrich that fell into ravine

IL O'FALLON — An ostrich that escaped from a southwestern Illinois farm was rescued after the 300-pound bird fell into a ravine and was injured, fire officials said.

A veterinarian tranquilized the ostrich before four members of a fire rescue crew entered the ravine near O'Fallon and strapped the bird to a board before it was moved using a pulley system.

O'Fallon Fire Chief Brad White said the ostrich had fallen about 15 feet into the ravine and suffered a long neck laceration that caused it to lose "a good amount" of blood.

After its rescue, the ostrich was treated by the veterinarian and returned to its owners at a nearby farm, White told the Belleville News-Democrat.

Police: Woman pepper sprays eatery workers

MO AFFTON — Police said a 27-year-old St. Louis woman pepper sprayed employees at a pizza place after she was asked to leave because she wasn't wearing a mask.

St. Louis County police responded to a call at Incredible Pizza Co., the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

Police said customers were asked to leave because they weren't wearing masks, then a woman used pepper spray on employees.

The woman was issued a summons for assault.

Event to give women free firearms training

MI TAYLOR — Free gun lessons are being offered in the Detroit area to 1,500 women interested in learning about firearms and

personal protection.

Gun advocacy group Legally Armed in Detroit has scheduled its annual firearms training event on Aug. 15-16.

Sessions include a firearms safety briefing, use of a firearm, ammunition and gun range time.

No previous firearms training or experience is required.

Firearms trainer Rick Ector said 50 women received training during the first free event nine years ago. More than 800 women took part last year.

Officials seek public's help in antelope deaths

WY GILLETTE — Game wardens want to find out who killed seven antelope in northeastern Wyoming.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department game wardens Levi Wood and Jacob Miller found the six adult and one fawn antelope shot July 22. The animals were near a road between the North Antelope Rochelle and Black Thunder coal mines in southern Campbell County.

They suspect the animals were killed a couple days earlier, the Gillette News Record reported.

"To solve poaching cases like these, we really rely on the help of the public and someone's willingness to come forward with information," Wood said.

Man arrested for shining laser pointer at aircraft

MD TOWSON — Police in Maryland said they arrested a man who shined a laser pointer at one of their helicopters.

The alleged incident happened last month in Essex as officers were flying the helicopter during an unrelated investigation, Baltimore County police said in a news release.

Police said Brandon Dune-

vant, 31, stood on a road and shined a laser pointer through the cockpit. He has been charged with pointing a laser pointer at an aircraft, the release said.

Dunevant could face up to three years in jail for the charge.

Lights likely misled newly hatched turtles

SC EDISTO BEACH — Dozens of newly hatched sea turtles were recently found dead by a gas station at Edisto Beach, likely because white lights by the beach led the turtles toward land instead of the ocean, according to a conservationist with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.

Sea turtles can mistake the light for the horizon and head toward the road instead of the ocean after hatching, Marine Turtle Conservation Coordinator Michelle Pate told WCSC-TV.

Pate recommended homeowners and beachgoers to leave lights off on the beach at night.

Officials are tracking 5,200 nests along the state's coast.

Passenger refuses to don mask, delays flight

VA RICHMOND — American Airlines said a flight out of Virginia was delayed after a passenger refused to comply with its policy requiring a face mask.

The Richmond Times-Dispatch reported that the incident occurred at Richmond International Airport.

The airline said the plane returned to the gate. And the passenger ultimately exited the plane. The flight then departed for North Carolina's Charlotte Douglas International Airport without further issues.

American has required pas-

sengers to wear face coverings since May 11. Passengers who don't comply are denied boarding.

4 bears hit by vehicles in Yosemite park

CA YOSEMITENATIONAL PARK — Officials are urging drivers to slow down after four bears were struck by vehicles and two were killed in Yosemite National Park in recent weeks, according to a newspaper report.

The surviving bears were believed to be seriously injured after being hit by vehicles going faster than the 25 mph speed limit, the Fresno Bee reported.

The National Park Service estimates over 400 bears have been hit by cars in Yosemite dating back to 1995, the newspaper said. Wildlife protection zones were established for motorists to slow down and help protect animals.

Variety of fish in city's waters increases

IL CHICAGO — The variety of fish swimming in Chicago's rivers have increased in recent decades, which authorities attribute to a decline in pollution, according to a sampling study released by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District.

The report claims there are nearly 60 different types of fish swimming in the Chicago and Calumet rivers. There were fewer than 10 types of fish in the waterways in the 1980s, according to the Chicago Tribune. Carp is the most frequently found species in the rivers. Among other species netted by district biologists were bluegill, catfish, largemouth bass and yellow perch. Those fish are less tolerant of pollution than carp.

From wire reports

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Reporting
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Spieth's slam quest is really quiet

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The spotlight on Jordan Spieth should be bright enough to cut through the marine layer blanketing Harding Park this week at the PGA Championship.

Win this major and he joins the most exclusive club in golf with the final leg of the career Grand Slam. Only five other players — Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player, Ben Hogan and Gene Sarazen — have won all four majors since the Masters began in 1934.

This is his fourth chance, and each year becomes more difficult. The longest anyone went from winning the third leg to completing the Grand Slam was three years by Player and Nicklaus.

And hardly anyone is talking about it.

It's not because Brooks Koepka is trying to become the first player to win the PGA Championship three successive times in stroke play, or because Tiger Woods is going for his record-tying fifth PGA. It's not even because golf has returned amid a coronavirus pandemic that has kept spectators away from a major championship for the first time.

Spieth has become an afterthought because he hasn't won since he captured the British Open three years ago.

Who would have guessed that? Certainly not the 27-year-old Texan.

"If you told me that, I'd probably say that guy is kind of a jerk and I'd walk the other way," Spieth said with a smile. "But here we are. And I hope to end that as soon as possible." So much has changed since his last visit to the TPC Harding Park. That was in 2015 for the Cadillac Match Play.

Spieth was the newly minted "Golden Child" in golf as the Masters champion. He won the U.S. Open the following month, missed a British Open playoff by one shot at St. Andrews and was runner-up in the PGA Championship.

No one ever made such a spirited bid for the calendar Grand Slam.

Now, the world ranking tells the story. Spieth was No. 2 after winning at Royal Birkdale and getting his first shot at the career Grand Slam in the 2017 PGA Championship (he tied for 28th). He was No. 8 in the world going to Bellerive for the PGA Championship the following year (he tied for 12th).

He was No. 39 going to Bethpage Black last year. He played in the final group with Brooks Koepka on Saturday, albeit eight shots behind, and fell back quickly. He tied for third.

Now he has plunged all the way to No. 62, out of the top 50 for the first time since he was a 20-year-old rookie.

More troublesome than not winning is that Spieth has rarely contended. He has not finished within three shots of the lead since his remarkable rally in the final round of the Masters two years ago left him two shots behind Patrick Reed.

Is there hope? He has no doubt. Is there a chance at Harding Park? He has experience.

"Majors aren't necessarily totally about form," Spieth said. "They're about experience and being able to grind it out, picking apart golf courses. So I feel like I probably have more confidence going into a major no matter where my game is at than any other golf tournament."

Exactly what went wrong is a topic of

debate and discussion. He was ill all of December before going into the 2018 season. His alignment got off. His putting, the hallmark of his game, went sideways. And he's been trying to put back the pieces ever since. The last two years he hasn't made it to the Tour Championship.

His only real success of late has been a more positive attitude. Spieth used the word "grace" at Colonial, his way of saying he will learn to shrug off mistakes and keep going.

"I almost feel at times like the game is testing me a little bit right now," he said.

Last week, he spoke of a shot that hit a tree. Whereas it used to bounce in the fairway, this one went off a cart path and out-of-bounds. The same thing happened at Hilton Head.

"I feel like you can look at it a couple ways," Spieth said. "You can get really upset and complain about it — which I've done and that's not helpful — or you can look at it like, 'Hey, this is part of the game testing you, and the better you handle these situations, the faster you progress forward.'"

Spieth says he is in no hurry. At 27, he has plenty of golf ahead of him in his career. As brilliant as his 2015 season was, he'd like to think his best years are ahead of him.

But there's only one PGA Championship this year. One shot at the career Grand Slam.

"It's something that I really want," Spieth said. "It's probably the No. 1 goal in the game of golf for me right now is to try and capture that. I'd love to be able to hold all four trophies."

The way the last three years have gone, any trophy would do.

Woods likes his approach for the PGA

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The course is one Tiger Woods knows well and where he has winning memories. The PGA Championship is a major he has won four times, more than anyone except Jack Nicklaus and Walter Hagen.

Woods learned last year that brings no guarantee of playing well.

Coming off the deep emotions of a Masters victory that capped his remarkable comeback, Woods lasted only two days at Bethpage Black and missed the cut.

He said Tuesday he's in a much better place at the TPC Harding Park.

Never mind that Woods has played only one tournament — a tie for 40th at the Memorial — in the last six months because of the COVID-19 pandemic and his own limited schedule. The biggest difference was showing up on Sunday in the sunshine to play 18 holes at Harding Park, followed by nine holes Monday as fog crept through the cypress trees and the temperature plunged into the 50s.

A year ago, he played 18 holes a week before the PGA Championship and only nine holes in the three days leading to the opening round. This year, his approach appears more serious.

"After I won the Masters, it was a bit of a whirlwind," Woods said. "We got a chance to go to the White House and meet with our president. I celebrated winning the Masters for quite some time. Came to Bethpage and played awful, and felt like Brooks (Koepka) beat me by like 30 shots in two days."

Actually, Koepka outshot him by 17.

"My game is better than it was going into that PGA," Woods said, "and hopefully, I can put it together this week."

They were encouraging words, not quite to the level he shared about a few past majors.

MLB roundup

Retooled Marlins blank Orioles in return

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — After enduring one final delay in their effort to return from an eight-day, coronavirus-induced hiatus, the Miami Marlins found enough power and pitching within their vastly overhauled roster to beat the Baltimore Orioles 4-0 Tuesday night.

Francisco Cervelli and Jesus Aguilar homered for the Marlins, who had their season halted after 18 players tested positive for COVID-19 following the opening series in Philadelphia.

Pablo Lopez (1-0) threw five innings of two-hit ball and the bullpen allowed just one hit in Miami's first shutout victory since Sept. 8 against Kansas City.

Late Tuesday afternoon, the Marlins were still awaiting the result of further COVID-19 tests, a process that stalled their arrival at Camden Yards and pushed back the scheduled 7:35 p.m. start by 41 minutes.

Orioles starter John Means (0-1) allowed one run and two hits in 4²/₃ innings. He retired 13 in a row before Cervelli drove a 3-1 pitch into the left-field seats to end the left-hander's night.

After the final out, Miami lined up and did "air" high-fives in which the players didn't make contact with their hands.

Nationals 5, Mets 3: Star slugger Juan Soto danced on the dugout roof to celebrate solo shots by Howie Kendrick and Josh Harrison, and host Washington returned from a coronavirus-caused four-day break to beat injury-depleted New York in a rain-interrupted game.

Kendrick — who missed the Nationals' last two games with a bad back, so he hadn't played in a week — went 4-for-4. Harrison drove in two runs and stole a base, and Patrick Corbin (1-0) allowed three runs in 5²/₃ innings while striking out eight.

When Kendrick drove a change-up from Steven Matz (0-2) over the wall in the first, Soto — who was sitting in the

stands, wearing a red mask — hopped atop the home dugout and boogied as the speakers blared Montell Jordan's 1995 hit, "This Is How We Do It."

Daniel Hudson pitched the ninth for his second save in two chances.

Rockies 5, Giants 2: German Marquez (2-1) struck out nine in efficiently throwing into the eighth inning and benefited from an overturned home-run call for rolling Colorado. The host Rockies moved to 8-2 for the second time in franchise history, joining a 2011 team that finished 73-89.

Trailing 3-0 in the fifth, San Francisco thought it tied it on a three-run homer by Steven Duggar that hit off the top of the wall. A crew chief review overturned the call and awarded Duggar a two-run double. Marquez struck out Mike Yastrzemski and got Alex Dickerson to fly out to keep it a 3-2 game.

Nolan Arenado went deep for a second straight night, and Yency Almonte got five outs, including two double plays, pick up his first career save.

Giants starter and Denver native Kevin Gausman (0-1) threw 5¹/₃ innings and allowed four runs in his first appearance at Coors Field. He struck out seven.

Athletics 5, Rangers 1: Stephen Piscotty hit host Oakland's second walkoff grand slam of the year and gave the club its fourth straight win.

The late-game theatrics helped the A's win on a night when prized pitching prospect Jesus Luzardo pitched five scoreless innings in his first career start for Oakland and Texas starter Lance Lynn allowed his first run of the season.

Dodgers 5, Padres 2: AJ Pollock hit a pinch-hit, go-ahead double in the seventh inning and added a solo homer, and Dustin May struck out a career-high eight in a win at San Diego.

Mookie Betts entered the

game in right field in the eighth inning after missing Monday night's 5-4 loss in the series opener due to a finger injury.

Angels 5, Mariners 3: Mike Trout homered in his first plate appearance as a father, Albert Pujols moved one step closer to Willie Mays on the career home runs list and top prospect Jo Adell got a hit in his big league debut in a win at Seattle.

Trout missed four games while on paternity leave for the birth of his son, Beckham Aaron Trout. He returned with a solo shot to left-center in the first inning. Pujols hit a two-run homer later in the first for a 3-0 lead, giving him 659 for his career, one behind Mays on the career list. Adell legged out an infield single in his first at-bat. David Fletcher also homered.

Twins 7, Pirates 3: Jose Berrios (1-1) pitched six strong innings, Nelson Cruz had three hits and host Minnesota beat Pittsburgh in a game briefly delayed when an unauthorized drone flew over Target Field.

The Twins won their fifth in a row and improved to 9-2 for the second time in the team's 60-year history. The other was 2001.

Rays 5, Red Sox 1: Austin Meadows got two hits after missing the first 10 games of the season with the coronavirus and host Tampa Bay stopped its losing streak at five.

Boston lost its fourth in a row, including a three-game sweep at Yankees Stadium over the weekend, and fell to 3-8 overall.

Braves 10, Blue Jays 1: Max Fried boosted Atlanta's depleted rotation by allowing only one run in six innings, and Austin Riley hit a three-run homer.

The visiting Blue Jays played their first game since Thursday. Their weekend series against Philadelphia was postponed in this virus-interrupted season.

White Sox 3, Brewers 2: Jose Abreu hit a tiebreaking single in the seventh inning, Lucas Giolito (1-1) struck out

nine and allowed two runs in six innings and visiting Chicago won its sixth straight game for the first time since April 2017.

White Sox rookie second baseman Nick Madrigal left the game with an injured left shoulder in the third inning after he was thrown out trying to get from first to third on a single up the middle. Designated hitter Edwin Encarnacion departed in the sixth inning with left shoulder soreness. Both are expected to undergo examinations Wednesday.

Cubs 5, Royals 4: Jason Heyward, Jason Kipnis and Willson Contreras homered and host Chicago overcame another shaky outing by closer Craig Kimbrel to beat Kansas City for its fifth straight win.

Kimbrel took over to begin the ninth inning with a 5-2 lead but struggled again and allowed two runs and two hits while getting only one out. He's yielded six runs in 1²/₃ innings in three appearances.

Indians 4, Reds 2: Shane Bieber (3-0) overcame two solo home runs to pitch into the eighth inning, Franmil Reyes hit a tiebreaking, two-run homer and Cleveland snapped a four-game skid with a win at Cincinnati.

Reyes capped the Indians' comeback from a 2-0 deficit with his first homer of the season after hitting 37 with San Diego and Cleveland last year. His shot in the eighth inning to deep right-center field against Nate Jones (0-1).

Astros 8, Diamondbacks 2: Jose Altuve and Carlos Correa hit solo homers, George Springer added a two-run double and Houston roughed up Madison Bumgarner (0-2) for eight runs in 4¹/₃ innings in Arizona.

The Astros put the game away in the fifth inning with five runs, including two on Springer's bases-loaded double.

NBA roundup

Booker's buzzer-beater carries Suns

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Devin Booker made a turnaround jumper over Paul George as time expired, capping a 35-point performance and giving the Phoenix Suns a 117-115 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers on Tuesday.

The Suns improved to 3-0 in the bubble as they chase a play-off spot.

Kawhi Leonard had tied the game with two free throws with 31.3 seconds to go. Ricky Rubio missed a shot after that and Ivica Zubac got the rebound, but he threw a bad pass that Mikal Bridges stole to give the Suns another chance.

Booker dribbled left before being cut off by Leonard. He turned the other direction and shot as George was closing, then crashed to the court as his teammates surrounded him to celebrate the victory.

After setting a franchise record by making 25 three-pointers in a win over New Orleans on Saturday, the Clippers man-

aged just eight in the loss. Leonard led the Clippers with 27 points and George added 23.

Nets 119, Bucks 116: Timothe Luwawu-Cabarrot hit back-to-back three-pointers to put Brooklyn ahead to stay, and the Nets beat Milwaukee to keep the Bucks from clinching the top seed in the Eastern Conference.

Luwawu-Cabarrot finished with a career-high 26 points. Garrett Temple scored 19, Tyler Johnson and Justin Anderson each had 11 and Rodions Kurucs and Chris Chiozza had 10 apiece.

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 16 points playing only the first half for Milwaukee, which has lost two of three seeding games. Kyle Korver scored 13 points, and Ersan Ilyasova had 12 points and 10 rebounds. Frank Mason III added 11 points.

Heat 111, Celtics 106: Bam Adebayo had 21 points and 12 rebounds, and Miami never trailed in beating Boston to re-

main alone in the fourth spot in the Eastern Conference.

The Celtics had their lead for the No. 3 seed cut to 1½ games over the Heat. Miami has a game lead on Indiana and improved to 2-1 so far in the seeding games, despite Jimmy Butler sitting out with a sore right ankle after playing Monday in a loss to Toronto.

Duncan Robinson also had 21 points for Miami. Goran Dragic added 20 off the bench, Kelly Olynyk scored 15 and Tyler Herro 11.

Trail Blazers 110, Rockets 102: Damian Lillard scored 21 points and Carmelo Anthony hit a big three-pointer late to help Portland beat Houston.

The Blazers led by one before Lillard made one of two free throws. Anthony's 3 then extended the lead to 107-102 when less than a minute to go.

Lillard added two free throws and Anthony, who had 15 points and 11 rebounds, made one in the final minute to secure the victory for Portland, which is

fighting for a playoff spot.

Mavericks 114, Kings 110 (OT): Luka Doncic punctuated a triple-double by making the tiebreaking shot with 1:57 left in overtime and leading Dallas past Sacramento.

Doncic was sensational, finishing with 34 points, a career-high 20 rebounds and 12 assists. At 21 years, 158 days, he became the youngest player to finish a game with 30 or more points, 20 or more rebounds and 10 or more assists, shattering Oscar Robertson's previous mark of 23 years, 12 days.

Pacers 120, Magic 109: T.J. Warren scored 32 points, tying Jermaine O'Neal's franchise record for most in a three-game span, to send Indiana past Orlando for its third consecutive victory.

Warren has topped the 30-point mark in each game at Walt Disney World, starting with his 53-point outburst in the opener. He has 119 points (39.7 per game) in the restart.

NHL roundup

Aho scores twice, Hurricanes sweep Rangers

Associated Press

TORONTO — Petr Mrazek got the Carolina Hurricanes off to a strong start in net for the NHL's return to play, only to see James Reimer turn in an even better performance when it was his turn.

And that has the Hurricanes moving on in the expanded Stanley Cup playoffs with confidence in their goaltending after some question as to who might give them their best chance to win.

For this week, at least, the answer seems to be: either one.

Sebastian Aho scored twice in the third period while Reimer was strong in net to help Carolina beat the New York Rangers 4-1 on Tuesday night and sweep the Stanley Cup qualifier series.

Warren Foegele scored the go-ahead goal early in the third period for the Hurricanes, redirecting a shot from the point by

Brady Skjei to beat rookie Igor Shesterkin at 5:07 in the third. Then Aho followed with a highlight-reel goal about 5½ minutes later, taking the puck from Rangers defenseman Jacob Trouba along the boards and skating in on Tony DeAngelo to backhand the puck past Shesterkin as he went to his knees.

Canucks 4, Wild 3: J.T. Miller had a goal and an assist and Vancouver beat Minnesota in Edmonton to even their qualifying series at a win each.

Tanner Pearson, Brock Boeser and Bo Horvat also scored for the Canucks, and Jacob Markstrom made 32 saves.

Maple Leafs 3, Blue Jackets 0: Auston Matthews and John Tavares scored and Toronto beat Columbus to even their best-of-five qualifying series at one game.

Maple Leafs defenseman Jake Muzzin was taken off the ice on a stretcher with

1:52 left in the game after his head made violent contact with the Blue Jackets' Oliver Bjorkstrand behind the Columbus net. Muzzin was attended to by a trainer before more medical personnel arrived.

Predators 4, Coyotes 2: Ryan Johansen had a goal and an assist, Juse Saros stopped 24 shots and Nashville beat Arizona in Edmonton to even their Stanley Cup qualifier series.

Islanders 4, Panthers 2: Jordan Eberle scored twice, including the go-ahead goal, and New York rallied to a win over Florida and take a 2-0 lead in their best-of-five NHL preliminary round playoff series in Toronto.

Flames 6, Jets 2: Sean Monahan had a goal and two assists while Cam Talbot finished with 33 saves to help Calgary beat Winnipeg in Game 3 of their Stanley Cup qualifier series in Edmonton.