

## Biden warns Putin against invasion

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden told Russia's Vladimir Putin that invading Ukraine would cause "widespread human suffering" and that the West was committed to diplomacy to end the crisis but "equally prepared for other scenarios," the White House said Saturday.

Biden also said the United States and its allies would respond "decisively and impose swift and severe costs" if the Kremlin attacked its neighbor, according to a White House description of the hourlong call.

"President Biden was clear with President Putin that while the United States remains prepared to engage in diplomacy, in full coordination with our Allies and partners, we are equally prepared for other scenarios," the White House statement said.

The two presidents spoke a day after Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, warned that U.S. intelligence shows that a Russian invasion could begin within days and before the Winter Olympics in Beijing end Feb. 20.

In a sign that American officials were getting ready for a worst-case scenario, the United States announced plans to evacuate its embassy in the Ukrainian capital, and Britain joined other European nations in urging its citizens to leave Ukraine.

The leaders' call produced "no fundamental change in the dynamic that has been unfolding now for several weeks," according to a senior administration official who briefed reporters following the call.

The official, who discussed the call on condition of anonymity, added that it remains unclear whether Putin has made a final decision to move forward with military action.

The Biden administration has been warning for weeks that Russia could invade Ukraine soon, but U.S. officials had previously said the Kremlin would likely wait until after the Olympic Games ended so as not to antagonize China.

Sullivan told reporters on Friday that U.S. intelligence shows that Russia could take military action during the Olympics.

Russia has massed well over 100,000 troops near the Ukraine border and has sent troops to exercises in neighboring Be-

larus, but denies that it intends to launch an offensive against Ukraine.

Before talking to Biden, Putin had a telephone call with French President Emmanuel Macron, who met with him in Moscow earlier in the week to try to resolve the biggest security crisis between Russia and the West since the Cold War. A Kremlin summary of the call suggested that little progress was made toward cooling down the tensions.

The timing of any possible Russian military action remained a key question.

The U.S. picked up intelligence that Russia is looking at Wednesday as a target date, according to a U.S. official familiar with the findings. The official would not say how definitive the intelligence was.

U.S. officials say Russia's buildup of firepower near Ukraine has reached the point where it could invade on short notice.

A Kremlin statement about the Putin-Macron call referred to "provocative speculations about an allegedly planned Russian 'invasion' of Ukraine." Russia has consistently denied that it plans military action against its neighbor.

Putin also complained in the call that the United States and NATO have not responded satisfactorily to Russian demands that Ukraine be prohibited from joining the military alliance and that NATO pull back forces from Eastern Europe.

Biden has said the U.S. military will not enter a war in Ukraine, but he has promised severe economic sanctions against Moscow, in concert with international allies.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he told his Russian counterpart Saturday that "further Russian aggression would be met with a resolute, massive and united trans-Atlantic response."

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy tried to project calm as he observed military exercises Saturday near Crimea, the peninsula that Russia seized from Ukraine in 2014.

"We are not afraid, we're without panic, all is under control," he said.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his Russian counterpart, Sergei Shoigu, also held telephone discussions on Saturday.

U.K. troops that have been training the

Ukrainian army also planned to leave the country. Germany, the Netherlands and Italy called on their citizens to leave as soon as possible.

A State Department travel advisory on Saturday said most American staff at the Kyiv embassy have been ordered to leave and other U.S. citizens should depart the country as well.

Further U.S.-Russia tensions arose on Saturday when the Defense Ministry summoned the U.S. embassy's military attache after it said the navy detected an American submarine in Russian waters near the Kuril Islands in the Pacific. The submarine declined orders to leave, but departed after the navy used unspecified "appropriate means," the ministry said.

Adding to the sense of crisis, the Pentagon ordered an additional 3,000 U.S. troops to Poland to reassure allies.

Sullivan said Americans in Ukraine should not expect the U.S. military to rescue them in the event that air and rail transportation is severed after a Russian invasion.

Several NATO allies, including Britain, Canada, Norway and Denmark, also asked their citizens to leave Ukraine, as did non-NATO ally New Zealand.

Sullivan said Russian military action could start with missile and air attacks, followed by a ground offensive.

"Russia has all the forces it needs to conduct a major military action," Sullivan said, adding that "Russia could choose, in very short order, to commence a major military action against Ukraine." He said the scale of such an invasion could range from a limited incursion to a strike on Kyiv, the capital.

Russia scoffed at the U.S. talk of urgency.

"The hysteria of the White House is more indicative than ever," said Maria Zakharova, a Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman. "The Anglo-Saxons need a war. At any cost. Provocations, misinformation and threats are a favorite method of solving their own problems."

Zakharova said her country had "optimized" staffing at its own embassy in Kyiv in response to concerns about possible military actions from the Ukrainian side.

# Eyeing midterms, Dems ease mandates

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — “People are tired,” Georgia Sen. Raphael Warnock says in the opening ad for his reelection campaign.

There’s not a face mask to be seen in the Democrat’s video montage of scenes across Georgia, as he goes on to say people that are “wondering when things will get back to normal, and at the same time not knowing what normal even means anymore.”

The ad reflects a shifting narrative on COVID-19 restrictions across the country: Democrats are now increasingly supportive of easing mandates as they struggle to address voter frustration with the lingering pandemic.

They’re hoping a shift in policy could serve to blunt incoming political attacks with the midterm elections — when control of Congress is at stake — now less than nine months away. But their appeals for a return to normalcy, both in symbols and practice, are putting new pressure on President Joe Biden.

More than a year after he was sworn into office pledging to bring about an end to the pandemic, the virus’ persistence has taken a toll on Biden’s approval in the midterm election year as COVID-19 restrictions and mask-wearing requirements move to the forefront of the nation’s culture wars.

After months of sparring with Republican governors for standing in the way of public health measures like face-coverings and social distancing, the sudden shift on the part of Democrats in recent days has caught White House officials off guard and left them seemingly out of sync with their own party.

While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continues to recommend indoor masking in more than 99% of the country, even Democratic states from New York to California began easing mandates for the public, and New Jersey announced plans to roll back its face-covering requirement in schools.

“Some people may call what’s happening now the ‘new normal,’” Biden said last month, acknowledging the frustrations. “I call it a job not yet finished.”

Yet Biden, even some members of his own party contend, isn’t moving swiftly enough to finish the job. Governors in both parties have appealed to the federal government for new, clearer guidelines as COVID-19 becomes endemic and less of a public health emergency.

Last week administration officials for the first time allowed that they have been working on new guidelines for the “next phase” of the pandemic response, but those are still weeks away.

“We understand where the emotions of the country are,” press secretary Jen Psaki said last week. “People are tired of masks.”

But she noted it wasn’t universal. “If you look at the polling though, there’s also a huge chunk of people who still want masks. Right? So, it’s not even that specific.”

She said Biden remains committed to his promise, stretching back to the campaign, to “listen to scientists, listen to data.”

White House officials, themselves eager to see the country get back to normal, looked forward to the Food and Drug Administration’s expected authorization of the Pfizer vaccine for the youngest kids.

With what would then be universal coverage for the shots, new therapeutics and increasingly available rapid-tests, the administration believed it would have the tools to sell the country on putting the pandemic in the past.

But the FDA on Friday slowed the approval of the Pfizer shot by weeks as the company awaits more data on the effectiveness of a third booster dose in the youngest kids.

Democratic Governors Association spokesman David Turner said the party’s shifting approach has been motivated by the evolving virus and not politics. But he said that while Democratic governors have tried to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, many of their Republican colleagues have made things worse by deliberately spreading misinformation about it and the coronavirus vaccine.

“I think Democratic governors are going to have a good story to tell about following science and facts and listening to public health experts to keep people safe from the pandemic,” Turner said about the November elections. “And there’s going to be a story to tell about Republicans actively working to prolong it.”

Biden on Thursday called the efforts by members of his own party to ease restrictions “probably premature,” though he acknowledged it was a tough call for leaders.

White House officials noted that the Democratic mask roll-backs coincided with sharply declining cases as a two-month nationwide surge in cases from the omicron variant was showing signs of ebbing.

## FDA delays COVID vaccines for kids under 5

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — COVID-19 vaccinations for children under 5 hit another monthslong delay Friday as U.S. regulators abruptly put the brakes on their efforts to speed review of the shots that Pfizer is testing for youngsters.

The Food and Drug Administration, worried about the omicron variant’s toll on kids, had taken the extraordinary step of urging Pfizer to apply for OK of the extra-low dose vaccine before it’s clear if tots will

need two shots or three. The agency’s plan could have allowed vaccinations to begin within weeks.

But Friday, the FDA reversed course and said it had become clear the agency needed to wait for data on how well a third shot works for the youngest age group. Pfizer said in a statement that it expected the data by early April.

FDA’s vaccine chief Dr. Peter Marks said he hoped parents would understand that the agency’s decision was part of its

careful scientific review of the evidence Pfizer has submitted so far.

That information “made us realize that we needed to see data from a third dose from the ongoing trial in order to make a determination,” Marks told reporters. “We take our responsibility for reviewing these vaccines very seriously because we’re parents as well.”

The nation’s 18 million children under 5 make up the only age group not yet eligible for vaccination.

# Judge rejects Texas mail-in ballot limits

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — A federal judge on Friday night handed Texas' elections overhaul a partial defeat days ahead of 2022's first primary over rules that criminalize encouraging voters to get a ballot by mail.

The ruling by U.S. District Judge Xavier Rodriguez in San Antonio is limited but orders Texas not to enforce that narrow part of the law against Harris County, which in 2020 sought to send more than 2 million voters mail-in ballot applications during the pandemic in the state's largest Democratic stronghold.

Texas was expected to appeal the decision,

which comes just days before early voting begins for the first-in-the-nation primary on March 1.

Texas has some of the nation's most restrictive rules surrounding vote-by-mail, generally making it only available to voters who are at least 65 years old or have an illness or disability. Under the new law signed by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott in September, an elections official who solicits mail-in ballot applications from voters could face felony charges punishable by six months in jail.

The lawsuit was filed by officials in Harris County who have described feeling hamstrung to help Houston voters navigate the

new law. The ruling also applies to the Austin area, where opponents joined the suit.

"Public officials should be able to recommend that option for folks who are eligible to vote by mail," Harris County Attorney Christian Menefee said. He criticized the new Texas law as "keeping these voters in the dark and discouraging them from voting by mail."

Republican Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton's office did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The new Texas law also bans 24-hour polling places, drive-thru voting and empowers partisan poll watchers.

## Gun sale surge brings in record funds for conservation program

Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. — Tax receipts from surging gun and ammunition sales in the U.S. boosted money for a federal conservation program to a record level in 2022, officials announced Friday.

Excise taxes on guns, ammunition and archery equipment brought in \$1.1 billion to fund federal grants to states for state wildlife conservation and hunter education, said officials from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

A related program for fish restoration brought in almost \$400 million, from taxes on fishing equipment and boat fuel, they said.

The restoration programs distribute tax money from hunting, shooting and fishing equipment to all 50 states and U.S. territo-

ries. The taxes resulted from a 1937 law that aimed to stop the rapid decline of many species of fish and other animals early last century because of overhunting and habitat destruction.

Money for the wildlife program rose by more than 60% over last year and shattered the previous high of \$808 million in 2015, according to figures provided by Fish and Wildlife spokesperson Laury Marshall.

The increased funding comes after at least 18.5 million firearms were sold last year, according to the National Shooting Sports Foundation. The sales volume is based on the number of law enforcement background checks for gun buyers and is a minimum estimate, said Mark Oliva, the firearm industry group's public affairs director.

## NASA telescope sees 1st starlight and takes selfie

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — NASA's new space telescope has captured its first starlight and even taken a selfie of its giant, gold mirror.

All 18 segments of the primary mirror on the James Webb Space Telescope seem to be working properly 1 1/2 months into the mission, officials said Friday.

The telescope's first target was a bright star 258 light-years away in the constellation Ursa Major.

"That was just a real wow moment," said Marshall Perrin of the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore.

Over the next few months, the hexagonal mirror segments — each the size of a coffee table — will be aligned and focused as one, allowing science observations to begin by the end of June.

The \$10 billion infrared observatory — considered the successor to the aging Hubble Space Telescope — will seek light from the first stars and galaxies that formed in the universe nearly 14 billion years ago. It will also examine the atmospheres of alien worlds for any possible signs of life.

Webb's 21-foot, gold-plated mirror is the largest ever launched into space. An infrared camera on the telescope snapped a picture of the mirror as one segment gazed upon the targeted star.

NASA released the selfie, along with a mosaic of starlight from each of the mirror segments. The 18 points of starlight resemble bright fireflies flitting against a black night sky.

## Plea hearing scheduled for Navy nuclear engineer in espionage case

Associated Press

MARTINSBURG, W.Va. — A plea hearing has been scheduled for a Navy nuclear engineer accused of trying to sell information about nuclear-powered warships to a foreign country.

Jonathan Toebbe and his wife, Diana Toebbe, of Annapolis, Md., were arrested last October in West Virginia, and had pleaded not guilty to espionage-related charges that carry life in prison.

Court records show that a plea hearing is

scheduled for Jonathan Toebbe for Monday afternoon in federal court in Martinsburg, W.Va.

Prosecutors have alleged that Jonathan Toebbe tried to pass secrets about sophisticated and expensive Virginia-class submarines to someone he thought was a representative of a foreign government but who was actually an undercover FBI agent. The government said Diana Toebbe served as a lookout for her husband at several "dead drop" locations at which sensitive information was left behind.

# US to open embassy in Solomon Islands

*Associated Press*

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — The U.S. says it will open an embassy in the Solomon Islands, laying out in unusually blunt terms a plan to increase its influence in the South Pacific nation before China becomes “strongly embedded.”

The reasoning was explained in a State Department notification to Congress that was obtained by The Associated Press.

The plan was confirmed by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken during a visit to Fiji Saturday on a Pacific tour that began in Australia.

Blinken left Fiji late in the evening bound for Hawaii, where he will host the foreign ministers from Japan and South Korea to discuss the threat posed by North Korea, amid rising concerns over its recent missile tests.

The State Department said Solomon Islanders cherished their history with Americans on the battlefields of World War II, but that the U.S. was in danger of losing its preferential ties as China “aggressively seeks to

engage” elite politicians and business people in the Solomon Islands.

The move comes after rioting rocked the nation of 700,000 in November. The riots grew from a peaceful protest and highlighted long-simmering regional rivalries, economic problems and concerns about the country’s increasing links with China, after it switched allegiance from the self-ruled island of Taiwan to Beijing three years ago. Rioters set fire to buildings and looted stores.

Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare survived a no-confidence vote the following month, telling lawmakers in a fiery 90-minute speech that he’d done nothing wrong and would not bow down to “the forces of evil” or to “Taiwan’s agents.”

The U.S. previously operated an embassy in the Solomons for five years before closing it in 1993. Since then, U.S. diplomats from neighboring Papua New Guinea have been accredited to the Solomons, which has a U.S. consular agency.

The embassy announcement fits with a

new Biden administration strategy for the Indo-Pacific that was announced Friday and emphasizes building partnerships with allies in the region as a way to counter China’s growing influence and ambitions.

In its notification to Congress, the State Department said China had been “utilizing a familiar pattern of extravagant promises, prospective costly infrastructure loans, and potentially dangerous debt levels,” when engaging with political and business leaders from the Solomon Islands.

“The United States has a strategic interest in enhancing our political, economic, and commercial relationship with Solomon Islands, the largest Pacific Island nation without a U.S. Embassy,” the State Department wrote.

The State Department said it didn’t expect to build a new embassy immediately but would at first lease space at an initial setup cost of \$12.4 million. The embassy would be located in the capital, Honiara, and would start small, with two U.S. employees and about five local staff.

## Afghans protest order to give \$3.5B to 9/11 victims

*Associated Press*

KABUL, Afghanistan — Demonstrators in Afghanistan’s capital Saturday condemned President Joe Biden’s order freeing up \$3.5 billion in Afghan assets held in the U.S. for families of America’s 9/11 victims — saying the money belongs to Afghans.

Protesters who gathered outside Kabul’s grand Eid Gah mosque asked America for financial compensation for the tens of thousands of Afghans killed during the last 20 years of war in Afghanistan.

Biden’s order, signed Friday, allocates another \$3.5 billion in Afghan assets for humanitarian aid to a trust fund to be managed by the U.N. to provide aid to Afghans. The country’s economy is teetering on the brink of collapse after international money stopped coming into Afghanistan with the arrival in mid-August of the Taliban.

Afghanistan’s Central Bank called on Biden to reverse his order and release the funds to it, saying in a statement Saturday that they belonged to the people of Afghanistan and not a government, party or group.

Torek Farhadi, a financial adviser to Afghanistan’s former U.S.-backed government, questioned the U.N. managing Afghan Central Bank reserves. He said those funds are not meant for humanitarian aid but “to back up the country’s currency, help in monetary policy and manage the country’s balance of payment.” He also questioned the legality of Biden’s order.

“These reserves belong to the people of Afghanistan, not the Taliban ... Biden’s decision is one-sided and does not match with international law,” said Farhadi. “No other country on Earth makes such confiscation decisions about another country’s reserves.”

## 9 officers hurt in ‘ambush’ shooting at Phoenix home

*Associated Press*

PHOENIX — A man who shot his ex-girlfriend at a Phoenix home early Friday ambushed the first officer on the scene, seriously injuring him, then opened fire on other police as they tried to rescue a baby that was left outside the door.

The woman later died. In all, five officers were shot, including four who were wounded while trying to take the baby to safety. Four more officers were injured by shrapnel or ricocheting bullets, police said.

Of the five shot, four remain hospitalized. All of the officers were expected to survive, and the baby girl was unharmed.

“A baby is safe today because of our Phoenix police officers,” Mayor Kate Gallego said at a news conference near the scene.

The most seriously injured officer was the first to arrive at the home, around 2:15 a.m., follow-

ing a report of a woman shot. He was invited inside, Phoenix police Sgt. Andy Williams said.

“As he approached the doorway, the suspect ambushed him with a gun and shot him several times,” he said. “That officer was able to get back and get away to safety.”

Video from the scene shows another man coming outside holding a baby and a satchel. The man put the satchel on the ground and then laid down the infant, wrapped in a blanket, between the satchel and the front door. He raised his hands to surrender while backing away from the house.

After that man was detained, other officers approached the doorway to get the baby girl, and the suspect fired more shots.

Police identified the gunman as Morris Richard Jones III, 36, and said they were still trying to learn about the circumstances preceding the incident.

**AMERICAN ROUNDUP**

**Statue of racist governor in closet**

**MS** JACKSON — Mystery solved: The top administrator in the Mississippi House says he made the decision to take a statue of a racist former Gov. Theodore Bilbo off public display and put it into storage.

People started noticing in recent weeks that a bronze statue of the late governor had disappeared. It was on display for decades — first in the center of the Capitol, and since the 1980s in a House committee room.

House clerk Andrew Ketchings said a work crew moved the Bilbo statue in October, at a cost of about \$4,000 to \$5,000, paid by public money. It is now covered by a fire-resistant blanket, in a large closet behind one of the Capitol elevators.

Bilbo was a Democrat known for racist rhetoric. He was governor from 1916 until 1920 and again for the 1928-1932 term. He was in the U.S. Senate from 1935 until he died in 1947.

**Groups sue over resort lights that harm birds**

**HI** HONOLULU — Bright lights at a luxury Hawaii resort are killing endangered seabirds, according to a lawsuit filed by conservation groups that say hotel officials need to do more to protect the species.

Artificial lights at Maui's Grand Wailea disorient Hawaiian petrels as they navigate between breeding colonies and the ocean, the Conservation Council for Hawaii and the Center for Biological Diversity said.

The seabirds can mistake the lights for the moon and stars they instinctively use as a guide to fly out to sea, circling them until they fall to the ground from exhaustion or hit human-made structures, the lawsuit said.

From 2008 to 2021 at least 15 Hawaiian petrels were attracted to the Grand Wailea's lights, and at least one was found dead, the lawsuit said.

**10-year term for trying to have ex-wife killed**

**LA** MONROE — A Louisiana man has received the maximum 10-year sentence for trying to hire a hit man to kill his ex-wife while he was jailed on charges of sexually assaulting her two young daughters.

U.S. District Judge Terry A. Doughty sentenced Steven Marcus Kelley, 48, of West Monroe, on a charge of using the mail to commission a murder for hire in December 2019, U.S. Attorney Brandon B. Brown said in a news release.

In an October news release prosecutors said another inmate had recommended the person whom Kelley offered \$10,000 to shoot his ex-wife.

In a letter to the proposed hit man, Kelly wrote that the attack "HAS to look like a robbery" and he included a map, drawn in blue and black ink, of the area where she worked.

**Teacher suspended after gun found in class**

**NC** TROY — A North Carolina high school teacher has been suspended without pay after a search of his classroom turned up a loaded

gun, knives and ammunition, officials said.

Jason Hensley, 47, was suspended by Montgomery County Schools pending further disciplinary action, officials said.

A search of Hensley's desk at Montgomery Central High School turned up a loaded .380-caliber handgun, the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office said in a news release.

Hensley, who is a health-science teacher at the high school, is a part-time police officer with the town of Mount Gilead.

The sheriff's office said while he may have been in violation of school system policy, there was nothing illegal about having the gun in the classroom. State law allows a law enforcement officer to have a firearm on educational property.

**County renames justice complex after Trump**

**NV** YERINGTON — A rural Nevada county has renamed its justice complex after former President Donald J. Trump.

About 50 people attended the formal dedication of the Donald J. Trump Justice Complex in Yerington, Lyon County Manager Jeff Page said. The complex, which opened in 2013, houses the sheriff's office, jail, Third Judicial District Court and Walker River Justice Court.

The commissioners approved the new name for the justice complex on a 3-2 vote in August.

**Workers at 2 parks to get free tuition**

**TN** PIGEON FORGE — Dollywood and Kentucky Kingdom are offering a

new program that will pay for tuition, books and other fees for workers who want to further their education, officials said.

The initiative launches on Feb. 24 for all seasonal, part-time and full-time employees, said a statement from Herschend Enterprises, which operates both amusement parks.

It will offer more than 100 diploma, degree and certificate programs from 30 learning partners in Guild's Learning Marketplace, the statement said. The company will also offer partial funding for 150 other programs.

**Winner getting trip to neighboring state**

**MA** BOSTON — A Massachusetts contestant on "The Price Is Right" was hoping to win a getaway to some tropical locale during a recent appearance on the game show.

Catherine Graham had already won a fire pit and a love seat when she was picked to go on stage and play "Side By Side" with host Drew Carey.

Then she found out she'd be playing for a trip to New Hampshire, just across the border from Massachusetts.

She won by correctly guessing the value of the prize was \$7,696 instead of \$9,676.

Graham confessed she was hoping for somewhere a bit more exotic than the "Live Free or Die" state, which she said she's already visited "a million times."

"I just wish it was Tahiti or some place, or Bora Bora. A cruise around the world maybe," Graham told WBZ-TV, laughing.

— From Associated Press



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# Jacobellis, Baumgartner strike gold

*Associated Press*

ZHANGJIAKOU, China — The running joke was American snowboardcross racer Nick Baumgartner always referring to them as a pair of 40-somethings.

“I’m 36,” Lindsey Jacobellis playfully corrected time after time in interview after interview.

For these two, and all their vast experience, age proved to be one thing — golden.

Jacobellis won her second title of the Beijing Olympics, teaming with Baumgartner to capture the new event of mixed team snowboardcross on Saturday.

At 40 years, 57 days, Baumgartner, the concrete worker/contractor from Michigan, becomes the oldest snowboarder to win an Olympic medal. At 36 years, 177 days, Jacobellis, the author of a new children’s book, is the second-oldest.

“You’re never too late to take what you want from life,” Baumgartner said. “You let yourself down if you quit too early, doesn’t matter how old

you are. Our success at our age is a perfect example of that.”

Jacobellis took gold in the women’s event; it came 16 years after a late showboat move as she was cruising in for an apparent win cost her the title at the Turin Games.

“It’s the internal fire in believing in yourself, whether you’re trying to go get a gold medal or just improving your day-to-day life,” said Jacobellis, whose new book titled “Sochi: A True Story” is currently sold out. “You continue to try to grow and better yourself.”

After a slow start at the Beijing Olympics, the U.S. had five gold medals and 11 overall by Saturday afternoon. Jacobellis accounted for two, while snowboarder Chloe Kim has another. The Americans have also won two new Olympic events contested at the Genting Snow Park — mixed team aerials and now mixed team snowboardcross.

Although the unique snowboarding discipline made its Olympic debut in China, the event has been featured for

nearly a decade at numerous World Cup stops.

It’s a competition that features a male and female rider from the same country being paired up and placed into a multi-team bracket. When the male racer crosses the line, the time advantage he holds over the next competitor is applied to his female teammate. The female rider then begins the run and the top two teams advance round by round until the final.

Baumgartner gave Jacobellis a slender lead after his run in the final. Jacobellis, of course, closed it out. They held off the Italian team of Omar Visintin and Michela Moioli by 0.2 seconds. The Canadian duo of Eliot Grondin and Meryeta O’Dine finished third after O’Dine was able to scramble back up and get to the line first following an early-in-the-race wipeout with another Italian team. The bronze-medal winning team finished 23.20 seconds behind the time of Jacobellis and Baumgartner.

“I didn’t know if she was OK,

or anything,” said the 20-year-old Grondin, the silver medalist in the men’s event. “So I was just waiting and hoping she was fine and that she kept going. Then I saw her name on the split times and I said, ‘Come on.’”

“Then she jumped to the finish line and I was like, ‘Ahh, we did it.’ It’s crazy.”

Shortly after Jacobellis’ finish, Baumgartner went over for a gold-medal worthy embrace. Later, the American tandem grabbed hands and stepped on the podium when their names were announced.

“I always tell people that I learned a lot about myself and about my riding once I did a team event,” Baumgartner said. “Because the vibe up at the top ... when it’s a team race, we’re all smiling and we’re having fun and we’re enjoying each other’s company. We’re feeding off of each other. It brings the level of riding to a different level. You saw that today. It’s because we’re just a little less stressed and we’re having fun.”

## Young US squad downs Canada in men’s hockey

*Associated Press*

BEIJING — It’s no secret the young United States men’s hockey team is fast and skilled.

Turns out the kids can hit, too.

Answering all the questions raised about their youth and inexperience, the U.S. went toe to toe with Canada in a bruising matchup between the longtime rivals. Using not just speed and skill but also a healthy dose of physicality against bigger, stronger opponents, the Americans emerged with a hard-earned 4-2 victory Saturday and are unbeaten in two games at the Olympics.

“We didn’t back down from their physical play,” said captain Andy Miele, who led the U.S. with a goal and an assist. “I love

the way our team responded. I’m so proud of this group. We took a beating. They kept on going forward, we kept on coming back at them and got the outcome that we deserved.”

Thanks to Miele’s response goal 70 seconds after Canada scored and 35 saves by Strauss Mann, the U.S. is in the driver’s seat to earn a spot in the quarterfinals. Beating Germany on Sunday night would put the Americans first in the group and could make them the top seed in the knockout round.

With eight players under age 21, the U.S. was one of the hardest teams to figure out in a tournament without NHL talent. The boom or bust potential of the

youngest team in the tournament was on full display against Canada.

With Claude Julien back behind the bench two weeks after breaking his ribs in a sledding accident, the Canadians figured they’d use their size and physicality to wear down the smaller Americans over the course of 60 minutes. Instead, the U.S. — with 12 college players on the ice — went hit for hit with Canada and used a combination of offensive skill and bad opposing goaltending to take control of the game.

“The kids can play, I think it’s safe to say,” said Kenny Agostino, who scored the fourth U.S. goal. “It’s clear we’ve got a lot of speed and a lot of talent, but I

think this was a man’s game tonight: Canada-U.S.A., there’s no real explanation needed. I think all of them stepped up and played like men out there.”

There were some hiccups, like Mann allowing a soft goal to Mat Robinson from the boards 40 feet away 1:24 in. Miele’s goal kept the U.S. from playing from behind for too long.

Brian O’Neill, the lone returnee from the 2018 Olympics, called falling behind early “good adversity” after routing China 8-0 in the opener. Facing and beating Canada was a test that the U.S. passed by leaning on strengths like playing fast and also adapting to changes in the pace of the game.

# Rams have fearsome defensive fivesome

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Many Los Angeles Rams fans first came under the team's spell because of the Fearsome Foursome perhaps the greatest defensive line in NFL history.

Merlin Olsen, Rosey Grier, Deacon Jones and Lamar Lundy battered quarterbacks and crushed running backs for the better part of the 1960s, living up to their catchy nickname with feats that regularly exceeded the accomplishments of their more modestly talented Rams teams.

Six years into the Rams' second stint in Los Angeles, their front is once again the strength of their defense and one of the best groups in the league.

They're not usually a foursome, however: The Rams typically play three down linemen with two edge rushers, like many teams in the modern game. Perennial All-Pro Aaron Donald and the ferocious four around him have been outstanding all season, and they

could make the difference in the Super Bowl.

Call them the Fearsome Fivesome, even if that's also not precisely correct. With one more win, they'll be accurately called champions.

"We have a lot of good players everywhere on our defensive front, and you can't help but just rely on those guys and know they're going to do their thing every week," nose tackle Greg Gaines said. "Everyone knows they're going to take care of business."

Seven-time All-Pro Donald's pursuit of the quarterback is augmented by two of the NFL's most dangerous edge rushers: three-time All-Pro Von Miller and productive sack artist Leonard Floyd. When Donald is stopping the run, he is helped by A'Shawn Robinson and Gaines, two effective and ever-improving linemen with ebullient personalities and energy to spare.

In the Super Bowl, the Rams also expect the return of Se-

bastian Joseph-Day, likely their top run defender and another big personality.

Add it up, and it's a fearsome amount of talent.

First-year Rams defensive coordinator Raheem Morris stops short of calling this group the best defensive line he's ever been around. After all, he was a defensive assistant for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 2002 with All-Pro Warren Sapp and Simeon Rice.

"You never really want to compare," Morris said. "But Aaron Donald is going down as a legend in this game. Von Miller is going down as a legend. Flo is working himself up into being legendary-like. Who knows what he can become? And then with what Greg has been able to do throughout the year, and with A'Shawn Robinson, and then if we get (Joseph-Day) back, I think it's an awesome group."

The Rams' awesomeness up front is a potential nightmare

for the Bengals, whose clearest weakness is their offensive line. Blocking Donald, Miller and Floyd requires skill, athleticism, precision and consistency — and Cincinnati has lacked most of that from its offensive line during the post-season.

Donald had 12½ sacks this season while winning far more pass-rush matchups with interior linemen than anybody in the league, according to NFL Next Gen Stats. Containing him requires at least two blockers on pretty much every down.

Miller and Floyd also require serious attention, which means Gaines and Robinson could end up the most important players on the line if the Bengals wisely decide to use their few resources on their subpar interior line to double-team Donald. Gaines has been a surprisingly effective pass rusher with 4½ regular-season sacks and 13 quarterback hits, third most on the defense.

# Robertson scores in OT to push Stars past Jets

Associated Press

DALLAS — Jason Robertson scored at 3:10 of overtime to give the Dallas Stars a 4-3 win over the Winnipeg Jets on Friday night.

Jacob Peterson, Tyler Seguin and Jamie Benn also scored for the Stars, who have won their first two games following the All-Star break, both at home, and have won seven of their last nine games dating to Jan. 20.

Benn also had an assist, and Jake Oettinger made 31 saves to run his home record this season to 12-3-0.

Robertson scored seconds after coming onto the ice, taking a pass in the slot from John Klingberg and following his own initial shot with a backhand just beyond the beyond the reach of a sprawling Connor

Hellebuyck.

"I was able to shoot it and get the rebound and put it in," Robertson said. "It all happened pretty fast."

Robertson has 20 goals after scoring 17 last season, which tied for second among rookies. He has points in 15 of his last 16 home games and in eight of his last nine games overall.

Pierre-Luc Dubois, Jensen Harkins and Mark Scheifele scored for the Jets, who have lost eight of their last 10 (2-5-3). Scheifele also had an assist, and Hellebuyck stopped 31 shots.

**Oilers 3, Islanders 1:** Cody Ceci and Zach Hyman each scored a goal, Mike Smith stopped 37 shots and host Edmonton won in Jay Woodcroft's NHL coaching debut.

Jesse Puljujarvi also scored

for the Oilers and Connor McDavid had two assists. Mike Smith stopped 37 shots, including 18 in the first period, to improve to 3-4-1 on the season.

Edmonton snapped a two-game skid and improved to 6-2-1 in its last nine.

Anthony Beauvillier had a goal for the Islanders, who have lost four of six. Ilya Sorokin finished with 33 saves.

**Lightning 4, Coyotes 3:** Steve Stamkos scored twice in the third period, and Brayden Point and Corey Perry added goals to lead visiting Tampa Bay past Arizona.

Brian Elliott made 15 saves in his second start since Dec. 31 as Tampa Bay rebounded from a 3-2 loss to Colorado on Thursday. The Lightning have not lost consecutive games this season

and are 5-0-1 in the second game of back-to-backs.

Clayton Keller had a goal and an assist, and Alex Galchenyuk and Nick Schmaltz also scored for the Coyotes. Karel Vejmelka made 28 saves.

**Kraken 4, Ducks 3:** Jordan Eberle scored with 1:42 remaining to lift visiting Seattle over Anaheim.

Ryan Donato had two goals and Vince Dunn scored for the Kraken, who have won consecutive road games for the second time. Chris Dreidger made 24 saves.

Isac Lundestrom scored twice and Rickard Rakell had a power-play goal, but the Ducks lost in their return from the All-Star break to end a 4-0-2 run. John Gibson made 23 saves, and Jamie Drysdale had two assists.

# Embiid carries 76ers over Thunder

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Joel Embiid had 25 points, 19 rebounds and five blocked shots, and the Philadelphia 76ers won as they wait on James Harden, 100-87 over the Oklahoma City Thunder on Friday night.

The 76ers gave a tease of Harden's impending arrival with a flipbook-style video of his career that ended with a shot of The Beard superimposed in a No. 1 jersey. Sixers fans gave the clip a roaring standing ovation.

Harden was acquired from the Brooklyn Nets at Thursday's trade deadline for 2016 No. 1 pick and three-time All-Star Ben Simmons. Harden has a hamstring injury and is expected to travel to the area this weekend and get evaluated by the team's medical staff.

Embiid had 11 points and 10 rebounds in the first quarter.

Tyrese Maxey scored 24 points and Tobias Harris 17 for the Sixers.

Derrick Favors led the Thunder with 16 points and Lu Dort had 15.

The Sixers, who also sent Seth Curry and Andre Drummond to the Nets, never really pulled away in the second half from the 17-win Thunder.

**Cavaliers 120, Pacers 113:** Caris LeVert scored 22 points in his return to Indiana, and Cleveland's defense strung together a strong fourth quarter to rally for a win.

The Cavs have won five straight overall and snapped a three-game losing streak that dated to December 2018 at Indianapolis.

**Bulls 134, Timberwolves 122:** DeMar DeRozan scored 35 points, Nikola Vucevic added 26 and Chicago used a big fourth quarter to beat host Min-

nesota.

Tied with Milwaukee and Cleveland for second place in the Eastern Conference coming in, the Bulls went on a 15-2 run early in the fourth and outscored the Timberwolves 42-31 in the period.

**Celtics 108, Nuggets 102:** Jayson Tatum had 24 points, Marcus Smart added 22, five steals and two crucial free throws, and Boston held on against visiting Denver for its seventh straight win.

Boston spoiled another big night for Nikola Jokic, who had his 71st career triple-double with 23 points, 16 rebounds and 11 assists. Aaron Gordon finished with 17 points.

**Hornets 141, Pistons 119:** LaMelo Ball had 31 points and 12 assists, Terry Rozier added a triple-double and Charlotte ended a six-game skid against host Detroit.

Detroit has lost seven in a row and 11 of 12.

**Jazz 114, Magic 99:** Donovan Mitchell scored 24 points and grabbed seven rebounds to lead Utah over visiting Orlando.

Hassan Whiteside added 15 points and a season-high 18 rebounds for the Jazz, who won their fifth straight home game for the first time this season.

**Spurs 136, Hawks 121:** Dejounte Murray tied his career highs with 32 points and 15 assists to go with 10 rebounds for his 11th triple-double this season, Keldon Johnson scored 26 points and San Antonio cruised past host Atlanta.

Bogdan Bogdanovic had 23 points and Trae Young, the league's third-leading scorer, finished with 16 for Atlanta. The Hawks had won eight of nine at State Farm Arena but began the game 10th in the Eastern Conference.

# No. 25 Xavier holds off UConn, ends 2-game skid

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Jack Nunge had 22 points and nine rebounds, and No. 25 Xavier snapped a two-game losing streak with a 74-68 victory over No. 24 Connecticut on Friday night.

Zach Freemantle scored all 12 of his points in the second half, and Nate Johnson also had 12 points for Xavier (17-7, 7-6 Big East).

"UConn's as talented as any team we've played all year," Musketeers head coach Travis Steele said. "If we do what we're supposed to do, we can compete with anyone. This is great for our confidence moving forward."

R.J. Cole scored 22 points to lead UConn (16-7, 7-5 Big East). Tyrese Martin added 18 points for the Huskies.

"We lost the game with our defense on Nunge (and) not

guarding (Paul) Scruggs off the dribble to start the second half," UConn head coach Dan Hurley said.

The game, originally scheduled for Dec. 28, was postponed due to COVID-19 issues in the UConn program.

The teams met for just the fourth time, and second time at Cintas Center, with UConn winning there, 80-72, on Feb 13, 2021.

Both teams have been plagued recently by slow offensive starts, especially Xavier, which trailed at halftime in seven of its previous eight games.

But the Musketeers raced to a rare halftime lead on Friday, helped by Johnson's buzzer-beating three-pointer which put them ahead 34-31. Johnson had 10 points in the first half.

Cole and Sanogo each picked up two early fouls and played a combined 18 minutes in the first

half.

"I thought they were brutal calls in the first half," Hurley said. "That's not why we had the deficit at the half. But yeah, what a joke."

Scruggs and Zach Freemantle, who were scoreless in the first half, combined for 15 points to help the Musketeers extend their lead to 54-46 with 9:50 left. Scruggs finished with nine points.

"Paul (Scruggs) was getting to the rim," Steele said. "We were getting UConn in rotation, which would open up the lane for drives. Our guys did a nice job of taking what the defense gave us."

UConn kept the score close by converting 10 Xavier turnovers into 14 points.

The Musketeers led by as many as 10 points in the second half before the Huskies got within three points with 30 sec-

onds remaining. But, Xavier held on.

"I felt like this was a huge momentum game for us, and we needed it," said Xavier guard Colby Jones, who had six assists.

The Musketeers played without their second-leading three-point shooter, Adam Kunkel, who was sidelined by illness not related to COVID-19, according to Steele.

## Hurley hot

The Huskies' head coach wasn't pleased with a few calls in the first half that led to early foul trouble for his team. Late in the second half, Hurley and Huskies guard Andre Jackson received technical fouls less than a minute apart.

"I see a lot of coaches in the ear of the officials, and I didn't think there was anything there that warranted a technical," Hurley said.