

Kyiv residents take cover amid fighting

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Kyiv residents braced Saturday for another night sheltering underground, as Russian troops closed in on Ukraine's capital and skirmishes were reported on the outskirts. Ukraine's leader, meanwhile, vowed to continue fighting the Russian assault as he appealed for more outside help.

"The real fighting for Kyiv is ongoing," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a video message in which he accused Russia of hitting infrastructure and civilian targets.

"We will win," he said.

Central Kyiv appeared quiet on Saturday, though sporadic gunfire could be heard. And fighting on the city's outskirts suggested that small Russian units were trying to clear a path for the main forces. Britain and the U.S. said the bulk of Russian forces were 19 miles from the center of the city.

As Russian troops pressed their offensive with small groups of troops reported inside Kyiv, the city's mayor, Vitali Klitschko, extended an overnight curfew to run from 5 p.m. Saturday until 8 a.m. on Monday, saying any civilians out past curfew "will be considered members of the enemy's sabotage and reconnaissance groups."

Russia claims its assault on Ukraine is aimed only at military targets, but bridges, schools and residential neighborhoods have been hit since the invasion began Thursday with air and missile strikes and Russian troops entering Ukraine from the north, east and south.

Ukraine's health minister reported Saturday that 198 people, including three children, had been killed and more than 1,000 others had been wounded during Europe's largest land war since World War II. It was unclear whether those figures included both military and civilian casualties.

In Kyiv, a missile struck a high-rise apartment building in the southwestern outskirts near one of the city's two passenger airports, leaving a jagged hole of ravaged apartments over several floors. A rescue worker said six civilians were injured.

The conflict has driven thousands of Ukrainians from their homes in search of safety. U.N. officials said more than 120,000 Ukrainians had left the country for Poland,

Moldova and other neighboring nations.

Zelenskyy reiterated his openness to talks with Russia in a video message Saturday, saying he welcomed an offer from the leaders of Turkey and Azerbaijan to organize diplomatic efforts, which so far have faltered. A day earlier, Zelenskyy offered to negotiate a key Russian demand: to abandon its ambitions of joining NATO.

Russian President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine after he spent weeks denying that's what he intended, all the while building up a force of almost 200,000 troops along the countries' borders. He claims the West has failed to take seriously Russia's security concerns about NATO, the Western military alliance that Ukraine aspires to join. But he has also expressed scorn about Ukraine's right to exist as an independent state.

Putin has not disclosed his ultimate plans for Ukraine but Western officials believe he is determined to overthrow Ukraine's government and replace it with a regime of his own, redrawing the map of Europe and reviving Moscow's Cold War-era influence.

It was unclear in the fog of war how much territory Russian forces have seized. Britain's Ministry of Defense said, "the speed of the Russian advance has temporarily slowed likely as a result of acute logistical difficulties and strong Ukrainian resistance."

A senior U.S. defense official said Saturday that more than half of the Russian combat power that was massed along Ukraine's borders had entered Ukraine and that Russia has had to commit more fuel supply and other support units inside Ukraine than originally anticipated. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal U.S. assessments, did not provide further details.

Ukraine's Infrastructure Ministry said a Russian missile was shot down before dawn Saturday as it headed for the dam of the sprawling water reservoir that serves Kyiv, and Ukraine said a Russian military convoy was destroyed near the city early Saturday. Footage showed soldiers inspecting burned-out vehicles after Ukraine's 101st brigade reported destroying a column of two light vehicles, two trucks and a tank.

The claim could not be verified.

Highways into Kyiv from the east were dotted with checkpoints manned by uniformed Ukrainian troops and young men in civilian clothes carrying automatic rifles. Low-flying planes patrolled the skies, though it was unclear if they were Russian or Ukrainian.

In addition to Kyiv, the Russian assault appeared to focus on Ukraine's coastline, which stretches from near the Black Sea port of Odesa in the west to beyond the Azov Sea port of Mariupol in the east.

If the Russian troops succeed, Ukraine would be cut off from access to all of its sea ports, which are vital for its economy. In Mariupol, Ukrainian soldiers guarded bridges and blocked people from the shoreline amid concerns the Russian navy could launch an assault from the sea.

Fighting also raged in two territories in eastern Ukraine that are controlled by pro-Russian separatists. Authorities in the city of Donetsk said hot water supplies to the city of about 900,000 were suspended because of damage to the system by Ukrainian shelling.

The U.S. government urged Zelenskyy early Saturday to evacuate Kyiv but he turned down the offer, according to a senior American intelligence official with direct knowledge of the conversation. Zelenskyy issued a defiant video recorded on a downtown Kyiv street early Saturday, saying he remained in the city.

"We aren't going to lay down weapons. We will protect the country," the Ukrainian president said. "Our weapon is our truth, and our truth is that it's our land, our country, our children. And we will defend all of that."

Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians have been on the move, seeking safety in the west of the country or beyond. The U.N. estimates that up to 4 million could flee if the fighting escalates.

Refugees arriving in the Hungarian border town of Zahony said men between 18 and 60 were not being allowed to leave Ukraine.

"My son was not allowed to come. My heart is so sore, I'm shaking," said Vilma Sugar, 68.

US considering \$6.4B to aid Ukraine

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration wants Congress to provide \$6.4 billion to pay for an initial U.S. response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, largely for military and humanitarian assistance in the region, three people familiar with the request said Friday.

The largest portions of money would be for the Defense and State departments and for the U.S. Agency for International Development, which distributes civilian foreign aid. Smaller amounts would be for the Treasury and Commerce departments, whose chief roles in the Ukraine crisis will be to apply sanctions against Russia, its financial in-

stitutions and state-owned businesses and its leaders, including President Vladimir Putin.

The request, which White House and other administration officials described to congressional aides in a conference call Friday, provides an early look at the costs American taxpayers could bear as a result of Russia's attack on its western neighbor. Those assaults were in their second full day Friday as Russian forces pounded Kyiv, Ukraine's capital.

The administration is seeking \$2.9 billion for State Department, USAID and other programs for security assistance to Ukraine,

Poland, the Baltic nations and other Eastern European allies, an administration official said. It would also cover food and other humanitarian assistance, energy and economic aid plus efforts to thwart Russian cyberattacks.

The administration official said there would also be \$3.5 billion for the Defense Department but provided no detail. The sums could change based on events in Ukraine and the needs of allied countries, the people describing the phone call said.

All three people spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss it publicly.

120K Ukrainians flee to neighboring nations

Associated Press

MEDYKA, Poland — Dragging suitcases and carrying children, tens of thousands of Ukrainians rushed to the borders Saturday as invading Russian troops pressed their advance into Ukraine, moving toward the country's capital of Kyiv.

Nearly 120,000 people have so far fled Ukraine into Poland and other neighboring countries in the wake of the Russian invasion, the U.N. refugee agency said Saturday. Some walked many miles through the night while others fled by train, car or bus, forming lines miles long at border crossings. They were greeted by waiting relatives and

friends or headed on their own to reception centers organized by neighboring governments.

"This may go up, it's changing every minute," said Shabia Mantoo, the spokeswoman of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. "It's very fluid and changing by the hour."

The agency expects up to 4 million Ukrainians could flee if the situation deteriorates further.

Those arriving were mostly women, children and the elderly after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy banned men of military age from 18 to 60 from leaving.

Some Ukrainian men were heading back into Ukraine from Poland to take up arms against the Russian forces.

Regular people were also opening up their homes to refugees and volunteering at welcome centers. In Poland, a Facebook page was formed where people were offered rides in private cars from the border and other help.

Volunteers even came from elsewhere in Europe to pick up refugees, among them a German couple from Hamburg who held up a sign at the Polish border town of Medyka saying they could take three people home with them.

Sailor to be court-martialled in assault ship blaze

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — A 20-year-old sailor will face a military trial on charges he deliberately set the fire that destroyed a \$1.2 billion warship on the San Diego waterfront in 2020, the Navy announced Friday.

Seaman Recruit Ryan Sawyer Mays, a former deck seaman on the amphibious assault ship Bonhomme Richard, is charged with aggravated arson and the willful hazarding of a vessel in connection with the four-day

fire that destroyed most of the ship. Vice Adm. Steve Koehler, the commander of the San Diego-based U.S. 3rd Fleet, issued the order to send the case to trial on Wednesday, according to court documents.

"After careful review of the preliminary hearing report, (Koehler) referred charges" against Mays, said Cmdr. Sean Robertson, a 3rd Fleet spokesperson. "Charges were brought in response to evidence found during the criminal investiga-

tion into the fire that started on the former USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) on July 12, 2020."

Mays was notified Friday, said Gary Barthel, Mays' San Diego-based civilian lawyer. Mays denies the charges against him, Barthel told the Union-Tribune in an interview.

"He maintains his innocence — always has," Barthel said when reached by phone Friday. "He's not happy to be going to court-martial but he's determined to prove his innocence."

The notification of trial came as a surprise to Mays, Barthel said, because a military judge recommended against proceeding to trial.

At a preliminary Article 32 hearing at Naval Base San Diego in December, Navy prosecutors made their case against Mays in front of a hearing officer, Capt. Angela Tang, a Navy judge.

According to Barthel, Tang's report recommended against going to trial over concerns about the evidence.

Swing votes key in High Court fight

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden and Senate Democrats say they are hoping for a bipartisan vote to confirm Ketanji Brown Jackson to the Supreme Court.

That won't be easy, but some Republicans have expressed an openness to voting for Biden's nominee, who currently sits on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit and would be the first Black woman on the Supreme Court. Republican Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina voted last year to confirm Jackson for her current position.

As senators review Jackson's record, some Republicans may drop hints about whether they are willing to vote for Jackson, who would replace liberal Justice Stephen Breyer. But senators in both parties often withhold their support until after they meet with the nominee and confirmation hearings are held.

Democrats will also keep an eye on their own moderate flank, Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona. Neither has indicated, so far, that they would vote against Biden's choice, and they have voted for all his other nominees.

Senators to watch as the confirmation process begins:

■ **Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine** — The Maine senator, who voted against Justice Amy Coney Barrett, former President Donald Trump's nominee for Supreme Court in 2020, is perhaps Democrats' best chance for a Republican crossover vote.

On Friday, Collins said she would conduct a "thorough vetting" and meet with the nominee in the coming weeks.

■ **Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C.** — Graham pushed Biden to pick a South Carolinian — federal district court Judge J. Michelle Childs. While the White House said Childs was under consideration, the president eventually picked the more experienced Jackson instead.

Graham said earlier this month that if the nominee wasn't Childs, whom he considers more moderate than Jackson, his vote would be more "problematic."

■ **Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska** — Along with Collins, Murkowski is one of the most moderate Republican members of the Senate and has expressed concerns about whether the court could overturn the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision guaranteeing a right to an abortion. But she is up for reelection

this year in her conservative state, and she has signaled she may not be inclined to cross party lines.

■ **Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa** — Grassley, the top Republican on the Judiciary panel, is a longtime member of the committee and oversaw the confirmation of two of Trump's three picks as the then-chairman. He will almost certainly vote against Jackson's nomination, but his role will nonetheless be important as Republicans strategize over how much to criticize her and whether to throw up procedural hurdles to slow the nomination.

■ **Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz.** — Neither has given any indication they will oppose his Supreme Court pick. Manchin said on a West Virginia radio show last month that "It would be the character of the person" that matters, even if the nominee is more liberal than he is.

Sinema said in a statement that Jackson's nomination "represents a historic milestone for our country" and she will consider it based on whether she is "professionally qualified, believes in the role of an independent judiciary, and can be trusted to faithfully interpret and uphold the rule of law."

Top GOP on Senate Armed Services Committee retiring

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Sen. Jim Inhofe, the top Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, announced Friday that he will retire at the end of the current congressional session after decades in office.

The 87-year-old Oklahoma legislator will step down on Jan. 3, four years before the end of a six-year term he won in 2020. He was first elected to Congress as a member of the House of Representatives in 1987 and became a senator in 1994.

"Today's announcement is not the end of the road," Inhofe said in a statement. "I have work yet to do for Oklahomans over these next nine months, in-

cluding passing the National Defense Authorization Act and holding the Biden administration accountable."

Inhofe's retirement will leave a Republican leadership vacancy on the powerful Senate committee overseeing military affairs, where he has long held sway over Department of Defense policies. Inhofe succeeded the late Sen. John McCain as chairman of the committee in 2017 but lost the post when Democrats took control of the Senate in January 2021.

Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., is in line to succeed Inhofe as the ranking Republican on the committee and could become chair if the GOP retakes the Senate in the November midterm elections.

Treasury: COVID rental aid went to low-income tenants

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — More than 80% of the billions of dollars in federal rental assistance aimed at keeping families in their homes during the pandemic went to low-income tenants, the Treasury Department said.

It also concluded Thursday that the largest percentage of tenants receiving pandemic aid were Black followed by female-led households. In the fourth quarter of 2021, Treasury found that more than 40% of tenants getting help were Black and two-thirds of recipients were female-headed households. The data was consistent with what Treasury saw throughout the year.

According to the Eviction Lab at Princeton University, those

most likely to face eviction are low-income women, especially women of color. Domestic violence victims and families with children are also at high risk for eviction.

"It's really encouraging to see so much of the rental assistance reaching those most in need: women, Black renters, and low-income households in particular," Peter Hepburn, a research fellow at the Eviction Lab, said. "These are the groups that face highest risk of eviction and who were most severely affected by the economic impacts of the pandemic. They're the ones that this money was meant to help."

The agency's findings on beneficiaries showed their efforts to reach low-income communities the past year had paid off.

State of Union follows crises, setbacks

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The last time President Joe Biden addressed a joint session of Congress, he said the country was “ready for takeoff” after a period of plague and strife.

It’s been a more turbulent flight than expected. Biden is scheduled to deliver his first State of the Union speech on Tuesday night at a moment when he has struggled to deliver on many of his original promises and as he is being forced to confront new crises.

The gap between the two major speeches — the first one was last April — is the story of a presidency that has repeatedly needed to recalibrate its ambitions.

Although Biden reached a bi-

partisan deal on an infrastructure plan, many of his other proposals have been jettisoned or left languishing with no clear path to becoming reality. He followed through on his pledge to remove U.S. forces from Afghanistan, but the chaotic withdrawal left the Taliban in control and a looming humanitarian disaster. Meanwhile the coronavirus evolved into new, more contagious variants that increased the pandemic’s death toll despite the widespread availability of vaccines.

And most recently, Russian President Vladimir Putin has expanded his invasion of Ukraine, plunging Europe into war and hijacking Biden’s foreign policy agenda.

“These speeches go through

many, many drafts,” said Michael Waldman, president of the Brennan Center for Justice and a former chief speechwriter for President Bill Clinton. “And I would bet they’re starting some new drafts right now.”

He added: “Two weeks ago the speechwriters probably thought they knew what was in the speech. Vladimir Putin had other ideas.”

Traditionally, State of the Union speeches focus on domestic issues. But Waldman said this one is a chance for Biden to outline the stakes of the crisis in Ukraine, especially as Americans remain wary of becoming involved in foreign conflicts and worry that economic ripple effects could drive up gas prices.

“This is a really important opportunity for the president to talk about Russia’s appalling attack and to put it in the context of why it matters,” Waldman said.

Biden is preparing his speech during one of the most consequential stretches of his presidency. In addition to the expanding invasion of Ukraine, on Friday he announced Ketanji Brown Jackson as his nominee for the Supreme Court seat being vacated by Justice Stephen Breyer, who is retiring.

Jackson, a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, would be the first Black woman to serve on the nation’s highest court if she is confirmed by the Senate.

J&J, 3 distributors finalize opioid settlement

Associated Press

CAMDEN, N.J. — Drugmaker Johnson & Johnson and three major distributors finalized nationwide settlements over their role in the opioid addiction crisis Friday, an announcement that clears the way for \$26 billion to flow to nearly every state and local government in the U.S.

Taken together, the settlements are the largest to date among the many opioid-related cases that have been playing out across the country. They’re expected to provide a significant boost to efforts aimed at reversing the crisis in places that have been devastated by it, including many parts of rural America.

Johnson & Johnson, AmerisourceBergen,

Cardinal Health and McKesson announced the settlement plan last year, but the deal was contingent on getting participation from a critical mass of state and local governments.

Friday was the deadline for the companies to announce whether they felt enough governments had committed to participate in the settlement and relinquish the right to sue. The four companies notified lawyers for the governments in the case that their thresholds were met, meaning money could start flowing to communities by April.

“We’re never going to have enough money to immediately cure this problem,” said Joe Rice, one of the lead lawyers who represented local governments in the litigation that

led to the settlement. “What we’re trying to do is give a lot of small communities a chance to try to change some of their problems.”

While none of the settlement money will go directly to victims of opioid addiction or their survivors, the vast majority of it is required to be used to deal with the epidemic. The need for the funding runs deep.

Kathleen Noonan, CEO of the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers, said a portion of the settlement money should be used to provide housing to people with addictions who are homeless.

“We have clients who have a hard time staying clean to make it in a shelter,” she said. “We would like to stabilize them so we can help them recover.”

Retired officer acquitted in shooting over cell phone spat

Associated Press

A Florida jury on Friday acquitted a retired police SWAT commander of murder for fatally shooting a fellow moviegoer during an argument over cellphone use.

Retired Tampa police Capt. Curtis Reeves, now 79, had been charged with second-degree murder for killing Chad Oulson during an altercation at a suburban movie theater on Jan. 13, 2014.

During closing arguments, defense attorney Richard Escobar said that Oulson, 43, made Reeves, then 71, reasonably believe his life was in danger by turning, yelling and reaching toward him. He said Reeves made the decision to shoot based on his nearly 30 years in law enforcement and hours of training on the justifiable use of deadly force. Reeves didn’t have to wait until he was hit before defending himself, Escobar said.

Reeves “had more knowledge, more experience, more study in that area than anyone in this courtroom,” Escobar said. “It’s a dangerous world.”

But prosecutor Scott Rosenwasser countered that Reeves killed Oulson because he threw popcorn in his face, angering him because it violated his self-image as an “alpha male.” He didn’t fear anything,” Rosenwasser said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man tries to rob store with lighter, de-icer

NC LENOIR — Police in North Carolina have arrested a man who they say attempted to rob a convenience store using a lighter and a can of spray de-icer.

Lenoir police said a man entered a store and handed the cashier a note demanding money, the Hickory Daily Record reported. The cashier refused and the man sprayed the de-icer and ignited it with the cigarette lighter, causing a small fire near the cash register that was quickly extinguished. No injuries were reported.

Logan Ryan Jones, 29, of Lenoir, was arrested at his home by Caldwell County sheriff's deputies, police said. Jones was charged with attempted robbery with a dangerous weapon and burning certain buildings.

Parents sue after man feeds baby at hospital

IA DES MOINES — The parents of a newborn child who was fed and changed by a stranger at a Des Moines hospital is suing the hospital and the man.

Police have said the man, Adam Wedig, entered the neonatal intensive care unit at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center on Dec. 27 and fed the child and changed a diaper before leaving. He got into the NICU through a secure door when a nurse was leaving, according to the criminal complaint.

Wedig was charged with misdemeanor trespassing. He has a history of legal trouble related to substance abuse, according to court records.

The suit accuses MercyOne of not having adequate security measures and not complying with existing measures.

Man accidentally sets self on fire aboard bus

NE YORK — Authorities in southeastern Nebraska say a man trying to smoke drugs in a bus bathroom accidentally set himself and the bus on fire.

The incident happened aboard a Burlington Trailways bus on Interstate 80 in York County, the York News-Times reported. Firefighters put out the fire in the bus bathroom with a fire extinguisher.

Investigators said the fire was started by a 33-year-old man from Brunswick, Ga., who suffered upper body burns in the fire and was taken to a York hospital for treatment. He was later arrested on suspicion of arson and possession of a controlled substance.

Authorities said they believe he went to the bathroom to smoke drugs when his clothes caught fire, which spread to other items in the room. The fire is estimated to have caused about \$1,500 in damage to the bus.

Man with explosives eyed houses of worship

ME PORTLAND — A teenager charged with having homemade explosive devices in his backpack discussed plans to travel to Chicago to attack a mosque and other houses of worship, federal prosecutors said.

Xavier Pelkey, 18, of Waterville, was in communication with two juveniles about his

plans to attack a mosque, and possibly a synagogue, prosecutors said. Federal agents discovered three improvised devices in Pelkey's backpack during a search of his apartment on Feb. 11, according to documents filed in U.S. District Court.

The devices were made of fireworks bundled together with staples, pins and thumb tacks to create shrapnel if detonated, an FBI agent wrote.

Pelkey is charged with possession of an unregistered destructive device, a felony that carries a sentence of up to 10 years in prison.

Police pursuit of stolen party bus ends in crash

CA PALMDALE — A party bus reported stolen in San Diego smashed into a car north of Los Angeles after a lengthy pursuit by the California Highway Patrol.

A woman got out of the bus soon after the crash and surrendered to officers. Paramedics placed the driver of the badly damaged car into an ambulance. The midday crash occurred in the Palmdale area.

San Diego station KUSI reported that the bus was stolen when its driver was making a pickup and got out of the vehicle to notify the clients.

Man gets 4 years for stealing checks in mail

ND BISMARCK — A former Dickinson man convicted of stealing mail and checks was sentenced to four years in prison.

Ryan Gregory Lee, 43, of Little Elm, Texas, pleaded guilty in November to four counts of

bank fraud, two counts of aggravated identity fraud and one count of possession of stolen mail. U.S. District Judge Daniel Hovland also ordered Lee to pay back nearly \$3,500.

Investigators said Lee stole the checks from mailboxes in Dickinson between October 2019 and May 2020 and altered payee information, dollar amounts and signatures. He then used personal identifying information from other people to both cash those checks and create fraudulent bank accounts, the complaint said.

Police: Tot who shot at cops held gun before

UT SALT LAKE CITY — The father of a 4-year-old boy who fired a gun at police told investigators the child had gotten ahold of the weapon before, according to police documents.

The child stuck the gun out of a car window as police arrested his father, who had brandished his gun at McDonald's workers over an incorrect order. An officer spotted the gun and instinctively swiped it away, sending the shot into the side of the building in Midvale, Utah, said Sgt. Melody Cutler with Unified Police of Greater Salt Lake.

Both the boy and a 3-year-old sibling were taken into the care of child-welfare workers and will be interviewed as part of the investigation. Their father is being held without bail on suspicion of felony child abuse and threat with a deadly weapon.

He acknowledged that "this was not the first time his son had gotten ahold of his gun," investigators wrote.

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Castroneves a full-time driver again

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Helio Castroneves climbed the fence three times in 12 starts on the downtown streets of St. Petersburg and it is one of his favorite events on the IndyCar schedule.

Unless, of course, he was at the popular IndyCar season-opening race as a spectator. Castroneves didn't care for that at all the last four seasons.

"It was absolutely horrible," the Brazilian said.

Phased out of IndyCar after the 2017 season to help launch Team Penske's sports car program, Castroneves didn't exactly exit the series on his own terms. When St. Pete officials asked him to be the grand marshal in 2018, his first year out of IndyCar, Castroneves told anyone who would listen that he'd be back in the series someday.

"Everyone said when I was the grand marshal, 'Man, you

should be (racing).' I was like, 'Yeah, thanks. That doesn't help,'" Castroneves said. "But now we're back."

Indeed he is back, and perhaps performing at the highest level of his long career.

Castroneves has raced his way back into a full-time IndyCar ride with Meyer Shank Racing, the team that hired him to run the Indianapolis 500 last season as it began its expansion to two cars. Castroneves went out and won the race — his record-tying fourth Indy 500 victory — and was hired to drive the No. 06 for the full 2022 season.

He's 46 now and a quarter century removed from his debut in American open-wheel racing but undoubtedly ready to contend for wins and maybe even the championship. He never won an IndyCar title driving for Roger Penske, and his only professional cham-

pionship was in 2020 when he won the IMSA sports car title in the final year of that program.

Castroneves opened 2021 with a win in the Rolex 24 at Daytona, followed it with his victory at Indy in May and closed the year with a full-time ride. Shank used him in the Rolex lineup last month and guess what? Castroneves won a second consecutive watch.

He now has four Indy 500 rings and a pair of Rolexes — achievements that former boss Roger Penske finds "just wonderful."

"I kid him a bunch and tell him, 'You know, three of those races, you won with us. Don't forget your old buddy,'" said Penske, who is now also the owner of IndyCar. "He's just so exciting, and so much energy, and the fans love him. It's terrific to have him back in the series and the passion he

brings to his new team — now Meyer Shank is another really solid team for IndyCar."

The Indy 500 victory by Castroneves legitimized Shank's organization, and when Penske tried to shift Simon Pagenaud from IndyCar to sports cars at the end of last season, Pagenaud instead signed with Meyer Shank. Now he's reunited with former Penske teammate Castroneves and the paddock knows the potential Meyer Shank has each race weekend.

"There's a huge buzz around the race team right now, which is great to be part of," Pagenaud said. "But it's kind of scary in a way because I think it is happening quick. We have the ingredients, we just need to put everything together."

Pagenaud was fourth fastest in the opening practice of the IndyCar season on Friday and Castroneves was 11th.

Hurricanes pepper Berube, blank Blue Jackets

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Jordan Staal got Carolina on the board with a determined second-period sequence, then the Hurricanes broke it open with two quick third-period goals to beat the Columbus Blue Jackets 4-0 on Friday night.

The Metropolitan Division-leading Hurricanes finished with a season-high 50 shots, leaving netminder Frederik Andersen with a relatively quiet night in earning his third shutout this season on 19 saves.

Teuvo Teravainen scored late in the second for a 2-0 lead, then Nino Niederreiter and Vincent Trocheck scored 36 seconds apart in the opening minutes of the third.

Both teams entered on winning streaks, with Columbus at a season-high four wins and

Carolina with three straight. And the Blue Jackets had surged to win seven of eight, a stretch that included five road wins — the last coming a day earlier at Atlantic Division-leading Florida.

But the Hurricanes controlled the puck from the start and surrendered few scoring chances, whether at even-strength or with their NHL-best penalty kill. They just needed time to finally beat J-F Berube after firing a steady stream of shots on net.

Kings 4, Ducks 1: Jonathan Quick became the fourth American-born goalie to reach 350 victories in the NHL, Adrian Kempe scored twice and visiting Los Angeles beat Anaheim for its fourth straight victory.

Quick stopped 24 shots and improved to 25-13-9 against

the Kings. Ryan Miller tops U.S.-born goalies with 391 victories. John Vanbiesbrouck had 374 and Tom Barrasso 369. Quick is the 24th goalie overall to reach 350 victories,

Avalanche 6, Jets 3: Gabriel Landeskog scored three times, Nathan MacKinnon added two more and host Colorado overcame a three-goal deficit to beat Winnipeg.

Landeskog also had a hat trick in a 7-1 home victory over the Jets on Jan. 6. Andre Burakovsky also scored for Colorado, and Pavel Francouz made 26 saves.

Coyotes 3, Golden Knights 1: Nick Schmaltz scored twice in the third period, Scott Wedgewood stopped 43 shots and host Arizona beat Vegas.

Shayne Gostisbehere also scored for the Coyotes. They had lost seven of the previous

nine against Vegas.

Blackhawks 8, Devils 5: Kirby Dach snapped a tie in the third period and Patrick Kane had three goals and an assist, helping host Chicago beat New Jersey.

Brandon Hagel also scored three times for Chicago, which had dropped three in a row and seven of nine overall. Ryan Carpenter also scored, and Kevin Lankinen made 31 saves in his return from a right hand injury.

Blues 5, Sabres 3: Jordan Kyrrou had two goals and an assist, and Colton Parayko scored the winner in host St. Louis' victory over Buffalo.

Jake Walman and Brayden Schenn also scored, and Ville Husso had 35 saves for St. Louis to improve to 10-1-1 since the start of 2022 — and 9-1-0 at home.

Poland refuses to play Russia in qualifier

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — Poland is refusing to play its World Cup qualifier against Russia next month in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Polish soccer federation president said Saturday.

Cezary Kulesza made the announcement on Twitter and indicated Poland was in talks with other federations to present a unified position to FIFA, which is responsible for the March 24 game in Moscow.

"No more words, time to act!" Kulesza wrote, saying the move was prompted by the "escalation of the aggres-

sion."

Poland striker Robert Lewandowski, the nation's all-time leading scorer and winner of FIFA's best-player award for the past two years, immediately responded to say it's the "right decision!"

"I can't imagine playing a match with the Russian National Team in a situation when armed aggression in Ukraine continues," the Bayern Munich star said on Twitter. "Russian footballers and fans are not responsible for this, but we can't pretend that nothing is happening."

FIFA has yet to take a clear position on Russia hosting or even playing against Poland.

European soccer body UEFA said Friday that in its competitions all Russian and Ukrainian teams must now move their home games to play in other countries.

A potential precedent for action is from 1992. Both FIFA and UEFA removed Yugoslavia from their competitions following sanctions imposed by the United Nations at the outbreak of war there.

Previously, Poland had only said it did not want to play the qualifying playoff semifinal in Moscow.

The winner is due to host Sweden or the Czech Republic on March 29 for a place in the World Cup that will be played

in Qatar from Nov. 21-Dec. 18.

The head of Sweden's federation, Karl-Erik Nilsson, is also first vice president at UEFA, which has stripped Russia of hosting the Champions League final in St. Petersburg in May. UEFA decided Friday to move that game to Paris.

Russian troops pressed toward Ukraine's capital Saturday, after a night of explosions and street fighting that sent Kyiv residents seeking shelter underground.

It was not immediately clear how far Russian troops had advanced. Ukrainian officials reported some success in fending off assaults, but fighting persisted near the capital.

Manfred joins in as lockout talks gain momentum

Associated Press

JUPITER, Fla. — Baseball players and owners took a first step toward salvaging opening day, nearing agreement Friday on an amateur draft lottery during lockout negotiations that included a surprise one-on-one meeting between Commissioner Rob Manfred and union head Tony Clark.

While an agreement on the draft was not complete, the talks gained momentum for the first time as Major League Baseball's end of Monday deadline approached for a deal that would preserve opening day on March 31 and a 162-game schedule.

Talks continued Saturday, the 87th day of baseball's first work stoppage since 1995. The sides remain far apart on the big-money issues of the competitive balance tax thresholds and rates, salary arbitration eligibility, the size of a bonus pool for pre-arbitration-eligible players and the minimum salary.

In another sign of the disruption caused by baseball's ninth work stoppage, MLB canceled three more days of spring training games through March 7. Ex-

hibition games were to have begun Saturday.

But for the first time all week, both sides expressed a feeling they had moved in a positive direction.

Manfred had a meeting with Clark in June 2020 during pandemic restart talks that produced disagreement over what transpired and sparked a still-pending grievance over the length of the season.

Manfred had not attended bargaining since the first session of these talks in April. He has a home in the area and had been in the background at the ballpark during the first four days this week, speaking with management officials.

The players' association had not known he was in the area, and Manfred surprised the union Friday when he asked for a one-on-one meeting with Clark.

Manfred then made the short walk from the offices near home plate where management officials had grouped, crossed the small driveway behind the right-field foul pole and entered the building containing the Cardinals spring training clubhouse,

where players had gathered. He walked back about 20 minutes later.

The day included three negotiating sessions, a high for any day this week.

In an effort to address the union's claim that teams are giving up on winning in an effort to gain a top pick in the amateur draft, MLB had proposed the top selections be determined by a lottery, such as the NBA began in 1985 and the NHL a decade later.

MLB has offered to have the first four picks determined by a lottery in which the teams with the three lowest winning percentages would have the best chances of getting the top pick. The union asked for the first seven selections to be sorted by lottery.

The sides exchanged proposals Friday on the number of lottery picks, adjustments and penalties, moving closer to agreement on a format. For the first time in months of negotiations, there was immediate back and forth: MLB made a proposal, the union caucused and countered, and management was to respond Saturday.

Discussions also covered other areas and were described as spirited and at times emotional.

Management's delegation included Yankees managing general partner Hal Steinbrenner, Colorado CEO Dick Monfort, Deputy Commissioner Dan Halet and Executive Vice President Morgan Sword.

Clark led players who included Max Scherzer, Andrew Miller and Zack Britton from the union's eight-man executive subcommittee.

Players have not accepted Monday as a deadline and have suggested any missed games could be made up as part of doubleheaders, a method MLB said it will not agree to.

Once Monday passes, the length of the schedule would become yet another issue in the dispute along with possible lost pay and service time.

The union has told MLB if games are missed and salaries are lost, clubs should not expect players to agree to management's proposals to expand the postseason and to allow advertisements on uniforms and helmets.

Harden makes 76ers debut in blowout win over T-wolves

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — James Harden had just hit a stepback three-pointer while being fouled, a move seen countless times from the 10-time All-Star and 2018 MVP. Joel Embiid, his new teammate, raised both hands and met up with Harden at midcourt for a hug.

Philadelphia liked seeing Harden's three-and-ones finally help the 76ers, and they enjoyed the first exposure of general manager Daryl Morey's experiment to put the two stars together.

Harden had 27 points, 12 assists and eight rebounds in his 76ers debut, Joel Embiid added 34 points and 10 rebounds and Philadelphia routed the Minnesota Timberwolves 133-102 on Friday night.

"We're unselfish, we just want to win," Harden said. "We've got guys, from top to bottom, that it feels that way on the court. Great things are going to happen more times than not. My job is to come in and add to each individual on this team."

The wait proved worth it after Harden missed his first two games with the 76ers following the trade from Brooklyn with a hamstring injury. The results were promising, particularly where Embiid and Harden thrive — at the free-throw line.

Embiid, who had 21 free throws in a double-overtime loss to Minnesota in November, was 11-for-13 from the line. Harden was 8-for-9 as the 76ers went 30-for-36 overall.

"That's what I expected," said Embiid as the two shared a postgame press conference table. "I've never been wide open like this in my life. Seriously, the passing, I wasn't even expecting it and it was just coming."

Karl-Anthony Towns led Minnesota with 25 points, and D'Angelo Russell had 21.

Clippers 105, Lakers 102:

At Los Angeles, Terance Mann had 19 points and 10 rebounds, Amir Coffey added 12 of his 14 in the fourth quarter and the Clippers returned from the All-Star break to beat the Lakers.

Luke Kennard scored 18 points for the Clippers. They earned their sixth consecutive victory over the Lakers in the latest meeting between Los Angeles' two underachieving, injury-plagued NBA franchises as they begin the next push to salvage their seasons.

Carmelo Anthony missed a long go-ahead jumper with four seconds to play and LeBron James missed a tying three-point attempt at the buzzer for the Lakers. They fell five games under .500 with their fourth loss in five games.

Heat 115, Knicks 100: Tyler Herro scored 25 points, Jimmy Butler had 23 and Miami overcame RJ Barrett's career-high 46 points to beat host New York.

Kyle Lowry added 19 points in the Heat's first game after the All-Star break after they were tied with Chicago for the best record in the Eastern Conference going into it.

Spurs 157, Wizards 153 (20T): Dejounte Murray had 31 points, 14 assists and 13 rebounds and visiting San Antonio outlasted Washington in double overtime in the highest-scoring game in the NBA this season.

Kyle Kuzma matched his season high with 36 points for the Wizards. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 24 points, and Raul Neto had season highs of 22 points and nine assists. The Wizards fell to 3-3 since losing star Bradley Beal to season-ending left wrist surgery.

Pelicans 117, Suns 102: CJ McCollum continued his scorching start with New Orleans, scoring 32 points to help the visiting Pelicans beat NBA-

leading Phoenix.

McCollum is averaging about 30 points over six games since joining the Pelicans in a trade from his longtime home in Portland. The 6-foot-3 guard made 11 of 18 shots from the field. Brandon Ingram added 28 points.

It was a rare loss for the Suns, who are still adjusting to life without injured All-Star point guard Chris Paul. They had won eight straight and 19 of 20.

Jazz 114, Mavericks 109: Donovan Mitchell hit a career-high seven three-pointers and scored 33 points to help host Utah beat Dallas.

Luka Doncic had 23 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds for Dallas. Dwight Powell had a season-high 22 points.

Thunder 129, Pacers 125 (OT): Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 36 points and made the decisive three-point play with 20.4 seconds left in overtime to lift visiting Oklahoma City past Indiana.

Tre Mann added 22 points to help Oklahoma City snap a two-game losing streak and a five-game skid in the series.

Buddy Hield led Indiana with 29 points. The Pacers lost for the eighth time in nine games.

Hornets 125, Raptors 93: Terry Rozier and Kelly Oubre Jr. each scored 23 points and host Charlotte emerged from the All-Star break looking reenergized against Toronto Raptors on Friday night.

Scottie Barnes had a career-high 28 points for the Raptors.

Magic 119, Rockets 111: Chuma Okeke scored a career-high 26 points and Orlando beat visiting Houston in a matchup of the worst teams in each conference.

Wendell Carter Jr. added 24 points and 12 rebounds to help the NBA-worst Magic end a four-game losing streak.

No. 25 Iowa knocks off Nebraska

Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Tony Perkins' right shoulder has been bothering him all season, not enough to keep him out of games, but enough to be annoying when driving into contact or bumping into a screen.

The Iowa sophomore was pleasantly surprised when, for the first time in a long time, he felt no pain during pregame warmups Friday. After he made his first two shots, he knew it would be his night.

Perkins scored a career-high 20 points to lead the No. 25 Hawkeyes past Nebraska 88-78, giving his team a boost while Big Ten scoring leader Keegan Murray struggled to get going.

"Before the game started, I told our trainer I'm feeling it, my shoulder's not hurting today," Perkins said. "I came out shooting, and it felt good. It's been on and off. Today my adrenaline was going, so I wouldn't have been feeling it even if it were to hurt."

Perkins, who had 15 points in the second half, had his first double-digit scoring game since Dec. 6 against Illinois (16 points).

"He always had that in him," teammate Kris Murray said. "He's a competitor, and he's always looking to score the ball. We know he can score the ball and he did that at great times tonight. When he's aggressive, I feel our team is so much better, too."

Keegan Murray had 15 points and 11 rebounds for his seventh double-double of the season. However, he couldn't find his shot early and finished 6 of 13 from the field while seeing his streak of games with at least 20 points end at seven.

His brother Kris, who had 12 points, did most of his scoring in the second half as the Hawkeyes began taking control.