

Probe: Mental health care taxed on ship

The (Norfolk, Va.) Virginian-Pilot

The mental health system aboard the aircraft carrier USS George Washington is “overwhelmed” and sailors have a poor understanding of alternative resources, according to the Navy’s investigation into three sailor suicides.

In May, the Navy launched an investigation into the April deaths, interviewing senior medical officers and sailors aboard the carrier undergoing an overhaul at Newport News Shipbuilding. While the probe found the deaths were not connected, the report released Dec. 19 found the Washington’s psychologist and behavioral health technician — Psych Boss and Psych Tech — were “overwhelmed” and struggled to keep up with the demand for services.

From January 2021 to January 2022, the ship reported about 2,600 mental health patient encounters with the psych boss, the behavioral health technician and two substance abuse rehabilitation program counselors. It was unclear how many sailors sought mental health services, as a “patient encounter” could mean one sailor was seen multiple times.

Of the three Washington sailors who died

by suicide in April, only Natasha Huffman, 24, was a patient of the mental health team.

The psych boss and psych tech reported a “significant backlog” for initial appointments despite each seeing as many as 20 patients a day. According to the investigation, this means it could take up to six weeks for a sailor to get a non-emergent initial mental health appointment.

“(Senior medical officer) and Psych Boss had considered switching from individual-based therapy to group therapy in order to handle the high volume, but chose not to because group therapy ‘hadn’t worked well in the past,’” the report reads.

Leadership aboard the Washington added to the demand for mental health services.

The Navy has sponsorship and mentorship programs available to connect sailors with leadership who will guide them through their assimilation into a new command. But according to the investigation, multiple sailors reported a lack of mentorship aboard the carrier and said leadership did not want to talk about or were uncomfortable discussing mental health issues with junior sailors.

“Psych Tech stated that ‘leadership,’ and

specifically leading petty officers (LPOs), ‘don’t have time’ to deal with mental health issues of their subordinates and want to refer them to Psych Boss and Psych Tech to deal with,” the report reads.

While the medical team aboard the Washington was overwhelmed, the deployed resiliency counselor was “underutilized.”

The resiliency counselor, at an offsite location 3 miles from the carrier, only saw 46 patients from January 2021 to January 2022. Deployed resiliency counselors are civilian clinicians that offer confidential, non-medical counseling on a short-term basis while sailors are deployed or in port.

“Sailors interviewed were generally not aware that the deployed resiliency counselor is an available resource who does not readily share patient information, and any information shared with the DRC is not entered into the sailor’s military health record,” the report said.

Additionally, multiple sailors interviewed did not know who the deployed resiliency counselor was or where they were. But those who knew were “hesitant to take that much time off to go there (or don’t believe they can),” the report said.

Simple tweak may cut emissions in military vehicles

The Washington Post

The thrum of idling diesel engines is the background noise of U.S. military deployments around the world, as soldiers draw power from their vehicles for communications and other necessities, even when they are sitting still.

If Pentagon planners have their way, the military could soon become a lot quieter and more fuel-efficient: They are pushing to add anti-idling technology to their next-generation workhorse vehicle, the partial replacement for the Humvee.

The technology, which would turn the engine off when the vehicle is sitting still, would cut

its fuel consumption by 20% overall. Any switch could have a big climate impact: With its big fleet and worldwide presence, the Department of Defense accounts for more than half of the federal government’s carbon footprint. And saving on diesel also cuts the need to truck the fuel through hostile areas, an extra benefit for leaders scarred by years of attacks on fuel convoys in Afghanistan and Iraq.

“The warfighter purpose and the view of climate as a national security challenge are fully aligned in cases like this,” Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks said after a tour in the

Pentagon courtyard of an exhibition of climate-friendly technology, including prototypes of vehicles with anti-idling technology.

The vehicles were silent, but their radios were on and their air conditioning was whirring, a necessity for soldiers who are keeping watch in hot places.

“We have to operate in extremely high temperatures in the desert down to the Arctic,” Timothy Goddette, one of the U.S. Army’s top officials charged with acquisitions, told a House hearing in 2021. “And then as we wrap them into armor and integrate them into very tight systems, how do we

keep them cool, how do we ensure that those electronics also work in very high temperatures?”

The anti-idling system is not complicated. The vehicle gets extra lithium-ion batteries, just a little bigger than those used in regular cars. And it gets some extra equipment to automatically flip the engine back on whenever the spare power needs an extra boost. That means the vehicle briefly rumbles back to life every few minutes. In the meantime, soldiers can use their radios and other communication devices, along with air conditioning or heating, without idling the engine nonstop.

Ukraine school denies troops killed there

Associated Press

KRAMATORSK, Ukraine — Officials at a vocational school in an eastern Ukraine city dismissed claims by Russia that hundreds of Ukrainian troops were killed in a missile strike there, saying Monday that a rocket merely blew out windows and damaged classrooms.

Russia specifically named the vocational school in Kramatorsk as the target of an attack in the almost 11-month war. The Russian Defense Ministry said its missiles hit two temporary bases housing 1,300 Ukrainian troops in the city, killing 600 of them, late Saturday.

Associated Press reporters visiting the scene in sunny weather Monday saw a four-story concrete building with most of its windows blown out. Inside, locals were cleaning up debris, sweeping up broken glass and hurling broken furniture out into a missile crater below.

A separate, six-story school building was largely undamaged. There were neither signs of a Ukrainian military presence nor any casualties.

Yana Pristupa, the school's deputy director, scoffed at Moscow's claims of hitting a troop concentration.

"Nobody saw a single spot of blood anywhere," she told the AP. "Everyone saw yesterday that no one carried out any bodies. It's just people cleaning up."

She said that before the war began last

February, the school had more than 300 students. Most of them studied mechanical engineering, with most lessons moving online when Russia invaded.

The students "are now in shock," she said, adding, "What a great facility it was."

Ukrainian officials on Sunday quickly denied the Russian claims it had lost a large number of soldiers in the attack.

Despite the absence of any evidence that hundreds of Ukrainian troops died in the strike, Moscow wouldn't budge. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said reports from the scene didn't shake senior officials' faith in defense authorities.

"The Defense Ministry is the main, legitimate and comprehensive source of information about the course of the special military operation," Peskov said Monday in a conference call with reporters, using the Kremlin's term for the war.

During the war, both sides have regularly claimed killing hundreds of each other's soldiers in attacks. The claims can seldom be independently verified because of the fighting.

Moscow's allegations may have backfired domestically, however, as some Russian military bloggers criticized the Kremlin's claims about the Kramatorsk strike.

The Institute for the Study of War think tank said the bloggers "responded negatively to the Russian (Ministry of Defense's) claim, pointing out that the Russian MoD frequently presents fraudulent claims and crit-

icizing Russian military leadership for fabricating a story ... instead of holding Russian leadership responsible for the losses accountable."

A Russian Defense Ministry spokesman said the strikes on Kramatorsk were retaliation for Ukraine's attack in Makiivka on New Year's Eve, in which at least 89 Russian soldiers gathered at a temporary barracks died, according to Moscow. Ukrainian authorities said the death toll in that attack ran into the hundreds.

It was one of the deadliest attacks on the Kremlin's forces since the war began more than 10 months ago and an embarrassing loss. Such revenge strikes have occurred before. When Ukraine in early October struck a bridge linking the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula with Russia, damaging an important supply artery for the Kremlin's faltering war effort in southern Ukraine and hitting a key symbol of Russian power in the region, the Kremlin sent a first massive barrage against Ukraine's energy facilities. It was billed as retaliation for the bridge attack and heralded a period of relentless bombardments against Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

Ukraine's presidential office reported Monday that at least three civilians were killed and 12 others wounded in the country over the previous 24 hours as nine Ukrainian regions in the southeast of the country were shelled.

NATO chief says it's time for Sweden to join alliance

Associated Press

STOCKHOLM — It's time for Sweden to join NATO because it has done what's necessary to secure Turkey's approval for membership, the military alliance's secretary-general said Monday.

"I have said that time has come to bring to an end the ratification process for Sweden," Jens Stoltenberg told Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet in an interview.

In May, Sweden and neighboring Finland dropped their long-standing policies of military non-alignment and officially applied to join NATO following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The move

requires the unanimous approval of the alliance members. Turkey has held up the process while pressing the two Nordic countries to crack down on groups it considers to be terrorist organizations and to extradite people suspected of terror-related crimes.

Last month, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Sweden was not even "halfway" through fulfilling the commitments it made to secure Ankara's support. His remarks came after a Swedish court ruled against extraditing a journalist wanted by Turkey for alleged links to a 2016

failed coup.

"I am confident that Sweden will become a member of NATO. I do not want to give a precise date for when that happens," Stoltenberg said. "So far, it has been a rare, unusual and fast membership process. Normally, it takes several years."

Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson has said that Sweden has lived up to its commitments and that the decision now "lies with Turkey."

"We have a very good process together with Finland and Turkey and are doing exactly what we said, which Turkey is now

confirming," Kristersson said on Sunday, the first day of the three-day People and Defense conference in Salen, a ski resort in central Sweden. The event was attended by Stoltenberg and Swedish foreign policy and security experts.

"Legislation banning participation in terrorist organizations is being implemented, and Turkey is known to name individuals it wants extradited. It is also known that Sweden has legislation that is clear and means that it is up to the courts. We also do not extradite Swedish citizens to any country."

California braces for more wind, rain

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — Another in a series of powerful winter storms is bearing down on Northern California on Monday, prompting concerns over flooding and hazardous winds that triggered President Joe Biden to declare an emergency in the state.

A series of atmospheric rivers that pummeled coastal communities last week and left more than 400,000 without power in California on Sunday will be followed by two major episodes of heavy rain and mountain snow in the next several days.

Rivers are expected to reach flood level, debris flows could be possible in burn areas and powerful winds could wreak havoc from the “energetic and moisture-laden parade of cyclones that are aiming directly for California,” according to the National Weather Service.

Late Sunday, Biden approved an emergency declaration for California which authorizes the Federal Emergency Management Agency to coordinate disaster relief

efforts and provide emergency resources, the White House said in a statement.

“We expect to see the worst of it still in front of us,” Gov. Gavin Newsom said Sunday. “We’re anticipating very intense weather coming in [Monday] and Tuesday morning.”

Heavy rain was already falling over the San Francisco Bay Area early Monday. The region is expected to see between 3 and 5 inches of rain and gusts reaching up to 45 mph from the weather system. The Sierra Nevada will likely see heavy rain exceeding 6 feet across higher elevations through Tuesday night.

“The cumulative effect of successive heavy rainfall events will lead to additional instances of flooding. This includes rapid water rises, mudslides, and the potential for major river flooding. Susceptible terrain and areas near recent burn scars will be most at risk for debris flows and rapid runoff,” according to a forecast from the National Weather Service in the Bay Area.

Evacuation warnings or orders were is-

sued in parts of Santa Clara, Alameda, Sacramento, Sonoma, Monterey and Santa Cruz counties, with forecasts suggesting that swollen rivers could flood businesses and homes.

The weather service on Monday issued flash flood warnings for the Dolan fire burn scar in Monterey County, along with portions of Santa Cruz, Watsonville and Scotts Valley.

The agency also issued flood warnings for the Carmel River at Robles Del Rio in Monterey County and the Russian River in Guerneville.

San Jose officials were gearing up for what could be the worst flooding to hit the San Francisco Bay Area’s most populous city since the surprise flooding in 2017 of Coyote Creek, which forced more than 14,000 residents out of their homes.

Flooding along some rivers could happen even after the rain stops on Tuesday because of continuing runoff, said Brayden Murdoch, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in the Bay Area.

New guidelines say medication, surgery early for obesity in kids

Associated Press

Children struggling with obesity should be evaluated and treated early and aggressively, including with medications for kids as young as 12 and surgery for those as young as 13, according to new guidelines released Monday.

The longstanding practice of “watchful waiting,” or delaying treatment to see whether children and teens outgrow or overcome obesity on their own only worsens the problem that affects more than 14.4 million young people in the U.S. Left untreated, obesity can lead to lifelong health problems, including high blood pressure, diabetes and depression.

“Waiting doesn’t work,” said Dr. Ihuoma Eneli, co-author of the first guidance on childhood obesity in 15 years from the American Academy of Pediatrics. “What we see is a continuation of weight gain and the like-

likelihood that they’ll have (obesity) in adulthood.”

For the first time, the group’s guidance sets ages at which kids and teens should be offered medical treatments such as drugs and surgery — in addition to intensive diet, exercise and other behavior and lifestyle interventions, said Eneli, director of the Center for Healthy Weight and Nutrition at Nationwide Children’s Hospital. In general, doctors should offer adolescents 12 and older who have obesity access to appropriate drugs and teens 13 and older with severe obesity referrals for weight-loss surgery, though situations may vary.

The guidelines aim to reset the inaccurate view of obesity as “a personal problem, maybe a failure of the person’s diligence,” said Dr. Sandra Hassink, medical director for the AAP Institute for Healthy Childhood weight.

Feds reviewing Musk tweet about disabling Tesla driver monitoring

Associated Press

DETROIT — A tweet from Elon Musk indicating that Tesla might allow some owners who are testing a “Full Self-Driving” system to disable an alert that reminds them to keep their hands on the steering wheel has drawn attention from U.S. safety regulators.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says it asked Tesla for more information about the tweet.

Last week, the agency said the issue is now part of a broader investigation into at least 14 Teslas that have crashed into emergency vehicles while using the Autopilot driver assist system.

Since 2021, Tesla has been beta-testing “Full Self-Driving” using owners who haven’t been trained on the system but are actively monitored by the company. Earlier this year, Tesla said 160,000, roughly 15% of

Teslas now on U.S. roads, were participating. A wider distribution of the software was to be rolled out late in 2022.

Despite the name, Tesla still says on its website that the cars can’t drive themselves. Teslas using “Full Self-Driving” can navigate roads themselves in many cases, but experts say the system can make mistakes. “We’re not saying it’s quite ready to have no one behind the wheel,” CEO Musk said in October.

On New Year’s Eve, one of Musk’s most ardent fans posted on Twitter that drivers with more than 10,000 miles of “Full Self-Driving” testing should have the option to turn off the “steering wheel nag,” an alert that tells drivers to keep hands on the wheel.

Musk replied: “Agreed, update coming in Jan.”

It’s not clear from the tweets exactly what Tesla will do.

Nurses go on strike at 2 NYC hospitals

Associated Press

NEW YORK—Striking nurses chanted and waved signs outside two large New York City hospitals Monday after a weekend of negotiations over pay and staffing levels did not produce a deal for a new contract.

The walkout involves as many as 3,500 nurses at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx and about 3,600 at Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan. Patients are likely to see disruptions in care such as emergency room visits and childbirth.

The New York State Nurses Association, which represents the workers, said it was being forced into the drastic step because of chronic understaffing that leaves them caring for too many patients.

Strikers sang the chorus from Twisted Sister's 1984 hit "We're Not Gonna Take It" on Monday

morning outside Mount Sinai on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

"We were heroes only two years ago," said Warren Urquhart, a nurse in transplant and oncology units, referring to the height of the COVID-19 crisis. "We was on the front lines of the city when everything came to a stop. And now we need to come to a stop so they can understand how much we mean to this hospital and to the patients."

Nurse practitioner Juliet Escalon said, "We were so-called heroes — and now, this is how you treat the heroes?"

Union officials say nurses are pushing the issue of staffing levels for patients' sake, as well as their own. Escalon said she sometimes finds herself caring for twice as many people as ideal standards call for and skipping bathroom breaks to attend to patients.

"What we're really fighting here for is patient safety," she said. "How can I pay attention to your needs when I'm being called somewhere else with the rest of the patients?"

Mount Sinai's chief nursing officer, Fran Cartwright, has said that she empathizes with overtaxed nurses and that the hospital needs time to rebuild its ranks after the coronavirus pandemic spurred upheaval and departures in nursing and many other professions.

In the meantime, both hospitals planned to assign managers and others not represented by the union to cover the shifts of striking workers.

Montefiore officials said in a statement Monday, "We remain committed to seamless and compassionate care, recognizing that the union leadership's decision will spark fear and uncertainty

across our community."

Mount Sinai officials said, "We're prepared to minimize disruption, and we encourage Mount Sinai nurses to continue providing the world-class care they're known for, in spite of NYSNA's strike."

Montefiore and Mount Sinai had been getting ready for a walkout by transferring patients, diverting ambulances to other institutions, postponing nonemergency medical procedures and arranging for temporary staffing.

Gov. Kathy Hochul urged the union and the hospitals Sunday to take their dispute to binding arbitration.

Montefiore's administration had said it was willing to let an arbitrator settle the contract "as a means to reaching an equitable outcome."

The union did not immediately accept the proposal.

Harry's mention of 25 kills in Afghanistan draws criticism

Associated Press

In a book full of startling revelations, Prince Harry's assertion that he killed 25 people in Afghanistan is one of the most striking — and has drawn criticism from both enemies and allies.

In his memoir, "Spare," Harry says he killed more than two dozen Taliban militants while serving as an Apache helicopter copilot gunner in Afghanistan in 2012-13. He writes that he feels neither satisfaction nor shame about his actions, and in the heat of battle regarded enemy combatants as pieces being removed from a chessboard, "Baddies eliminated before they could kill Goodies."

Harry has talked before about his combat experience.

But his decision to put a number on those he killed, and the comparison to chess pieces, drew outrage from the Taliban, and concern from British veterans.

"Mr. Harry! The ones you killed were not chess pieces, they

were humans; they had families who were waiting for their return," prominent Taliban member Anas Haqqani wrote Jan. 6 on Twitter.

The Taliban, who adhere to a strict interpretation of Islam, returned to power when Western troops withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021. Afghan Foreign Ministry spokesperson Abdul Qahar Balkhi said Harry's comments "are a microcosm of the trauma experienced by Afghans at the hands of occupation forces who murdered innocents without any accountability."

In Britain, some veterans and military leaders said publishing a head count violated an unspoken military code. Col. Tim Collins, who led a British battalion during the Iraq War, told Forces News that the statement was "not how you behave in the Army; it's not how we think."

Harry's memoir is due to be published on Tuesday.

Brazil seeks to punish pro-Bolsonaro rioters

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO — Brazilian authorities were vowing to protect democracy and preparing to mete out punishment Monday after thousands of ex-President Jair Bolsonaro's supporters stormed Congress, the Supreme Court and presidential palace, then trashed the nation's highest seats of power.

The protesters were seeking military intervention to either restore the far-right Bolsonaro to power or oust the newly inaugurated leftist Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, unleashing chaos and destruction that bore striking similarities to the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

Rioters donning the green and yellow of the national flag on Sunday broke windows, toppled furniture, hurled computers and printers to the ground. They punctured a massive Emiliano Di Cavalcanti painting in five

places, overturned the U-shaped table at which Supreme Court justices convene, ripped a door off one justice's office and vandalized an iconic statue outside the court. The monumental buildings' interiors were left in states of ruin.

In a news conference late Sunday, Brazil's minister of institutional relations said the buildings would be inspected for evidence including fingerprints and images to hold people to account, and that the rioters apparently intended to spark similar such actions nationwide. Justice Minister Flávio Dino said the acts amounted to terrorism and coup-mongering and that police have begun tracking those who paid for the buses that transported protesters to the capital.

So far, more than 1,200 people have been detained, the justice ministry's press office said Monday.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Biden signs water bills set to benefit 3 tribes

AZ FLAGSTAFF — A Native American tribe that has one of the largest and most secure rights to Colorado River water now has approval to lease some of it in Arizona, a state that's been hardest hit by cuts to its water supply and is on a perpetual search for more.

President Joe Biden signed legislation Thursday giving leasing authority to the Colorado River Indian Tribes, whose reservation tracks its namesake on the Arizona-California border. Biden also approved a water rights settlement for the Hualapai Tribe and authorized additional funding to complete water projects for the White Mountain Apache Tribe.

The Colorado River Indian Tribes passed a resolution in 2020 to seek the federal legislation to help bolster the tribe's economy and improve housing, health care and education on the reservation. The tribe has the right to divert more than 662,000 acre-feet of Colorado River water in Arizona but hasn't taken full advantage because it lacks the infrastructure. An acre-foot is enough to serve roughly two to three households annually.

Fan charged in theft from Brewers clubhouse

WI MILWAUKEE — A man who had passed out in the bushes outside the Milwaukee Brewers' stadium after a game and, upon awakening, entered the team's clubhouse and stole electronics, a credit card, team memorabilia and other valuable items, according to a

criminal complaint.

The 25-year-old man was charged Dec. 14 with felony burglary, online court records show.

The complaint says the man attended a Sept. 8 doubleheader against the San Francisco Giants at Milwaukee's American Family Field, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported. He said he drank at least 10 beers, passed out, woke up and got back inside the stadium by pulling on a door until it opened.

He found his way to the clubhouse and started taking items from the locker room, the complaint said.

Authorities seize horses after neglect allegations

SD RAPID CITY — An animal neglect investigation has led authorities to seize more than a dozen horses from a South Dakota home.

The Rapid City Journal reported that the Pennington County Sheriff's Office seized 14 horses and two donkeys from the home just north of Rapid City on Thursday morning.

The animals were in a state of extreme neglect, the newspaper reported. The South Dakota Animal Industry Board is also investigating.

A neighbor said last week that she's been calling the sheriff's office about the animals since June 2021.

Man faces felonies in driver's license scheme

PA HARRISBURG — A former Pennsylvania Department of Transportation employee accused by authorities of charging immigrants up to \$350 to help pass the knowl-

edge test and ultimately obtain driver's licenses said Wednesday that he was seeking to help them.

Angelo Carrion, 66, charged immigrants to furnish them with correct answers to get learner's permits and ultimately secure their licenses, according to an affidavit. He also submitted incomplete applications or applications that were not verified for immigration or citizenship status, the charging documents state.

Carrion was charged with 17 felony counts of bribery in official matters, one felony count each of theft by deception and criminal use of a communication facility, and 17 felony counts plus 35 misdemeanor counts of tampering with public records or information, Pennsylvania State Police announced Wednesday.

Suit: Police stuffed snow in mouth during arrest

OH AKRON — An Ohio man who had snow stuffed into his mouth by a police officer during an arrest in Akron has filed an excessive force lawsuit against the city and several officers, claiming his civil rights were violated.

Charles Hicks II, 28, seeks unspecified compensatory and punitive damages in the suit filed in federal court. It also alleges malicious prosecution and claims the city failed to properly train officers or conduct a thorough investigation into the Feb. 7, 2021, arrest.

Police had gone to an Akron home after Hicks reportedly threatened his girlfriend. Police body-camera footage showed Hicks struggling with officers as

they took him to the ground and tried to handcuff him and one officer — John Turnure, who is among those named in the suit — putting snow in Hicks' face three times as he laid on the ground. Hicks then told officers he could not breathe before they stood him up.

Hicks, who is Black, eventually pleaded no contest to a resisting arrest charge in Akron Municipal Court and city prosecutors dismissed a domestic violence charge and two other unrelated minor charges.

Cleanup begins as fire sends butter into sewer

WI MADISON — The state Department of Natural Resources is helping local government workers clean up after a fire flooded a dairy plant with butter.

The fire broke out in a butter storage room at the Associated Milk Producers Inc. facility in Portage around 9 p.m. last Monday, the Wisconsin State Journal reported. The butter heated up and flowed through the building, impeding access. Firefighters needed several hours to extinguish the blaze.

Most of the butter that escaped the plant flowed into the sewers and traveled to a wastewater treatment plant, DNR officials said Thursday. Plant personnel have been clearing butter out of their equipment since the fire but the facility is still operating effectively, agency officials said.

About 20 gallons of butter flowed into the storm sewers and into a nearby canal, DNR officials said. Booms were deployed to contain the butter and it's been removed, they said.

— From wire reports

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Things fall Seahawks' way in final week

Associated Press

The NFL's Week 18 saved its best drama for the final game of the weekend.

The Detroit Lions — eliminated from playoff contention earlier Sunday when the Seahawks beat the Rams — pushed past their disappointment and played the role of a spoiler, rallying to beat Green Bay 20-16 on Sunday night. The win denied quarterback Aaron Rodgers and the Packers a spot in the postseason.

Instead of Green Bay, it's the Seahawks who will be the No. 7 seed in the NFC. They'll travel to face division rival San Francisco in next weekend's wild-card round.

The rest of next weekend's schedule is also set: In the AFC, it'll be the Miami Dolphins at the Buffalo Bills, the Baltimore Ravens at the Cincinnati Bengals and the Los Angeles Chargers at the Jacksonville Jaguars. In the NFC, the Minnesota Vikings will host the New York Giants and the Tom Brady-led Tampa Bay Bucs host the Dallas Cowboys.

The Lions' upset win capped a weekend that saw the Dolphins make it back to the playoffs for the first time since 2016. The surprising Jaguars also return to the postseason for just the second time since 2007.

Seven of the 14 teams that qualified for the playoffs didn't make the field last season, including the Seahawks, Ravens, Jaguars, Chargers, Dolphins, Vikings and Giants.

Among those headed home: The New England Patriots and six-time Super Bowl-winning coach Bill Belichick, eliminated af-

ter a loss to the Bills.

The Lions didn't have much to play for against the Packers other than pride, but that was enough. They were knocked out of playoff contention when Seattle's Jason Myers kicked a 32-yard field goal to beat the Los Angeles Rams 19-16 in overtime.

The No. 1 overall seed in the AFC was claimed by Kansas City with its 31-13 win over Las Vegas on Saturday. The NFC's top spot was taken by Philadelphia, which beat the New York Giants 22-16 on Sunday.

The AFC bracket could still be affected by the cancellation of the Bills-Bengals game after Hamlin's injury. The Bengals avoided a coin flip for home field after beating the Ravens 27-16, but there still could be a neutral field AFC championship game if the Bills line up against the Chiefs.

Here's a look at the postseason:

Wild-card schedule

Saturday

Seattle at San Francisco
L.A. Chargers at Jacksonville

Sunday

Miami at Buffalo
New York Giants at Minnesota
Baltimore at Cincinnati

Monday

Dallas at Tampa Bay

Playoff format

This is the third straight year of the current NFL playoff format, which includes the top seven teams from both the AFC and the NFC.

The four division winners in both confe-

rences automatically get the top four seeds, regardless of record, and then the top three teams with the best record that didn't win their division are the wild-card selections. That's why it's fairly common for a wild-card selection to have a better record — but worse playoff seeding — than a team that finished as a division winner.

The No. 1-seeded team in each conference gets a bye into the second round — that's the Chiefs and Eagles — while No. 2 hosts No. 7, No. 3 hosts No. 6 and No. 4 hosts No. 5 during wild-card weekend.

The NFL has a re-seeding policy after each playoff round. That means that no matter how the bracket started, the lowest-seeded team will always travel to the higher-seeded team.

Bills-Bengals cancellation

It's been an eventful week for players and fans, who watched in horror Monday night as Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin collapsed on the field and had to be given CPR before leaving the field in an ambulance. A few days later, those same players and fans have watched with joy as Hamlin recovers.

That made it much easier to focus on Week 18 and now the playoffs.

The Bills-Bengals game had major playoff implications in the AFC, so the cancellation of the game due to Hamlin's injury could force some changes depending on playoff results.

The AFC championship game will be played on a neutral site if the Chiefs and Bills reach that point.

Texans win, hand Bears top draft pick; Smith fired

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Thanks to an old friend, the Chicago Bears are on the clock for the NFL Draft.

Chicago will pick No. 1 for the first time since 1947 after it lost 29-13 to the Minnesota Vikings in its season finale on Sunday. It was the 10th straight loss for the Bears (3-14), extending a franchise record, and the 14 losses overall also marked the most in team history.

Even with all that misery, the Bears were headed for the No. 2 selection before Lovie Smith

coached Houston to a wild 32-31 victory at Indianapolis. Davis Mills passed for three touchdowns as the Texans (3-13-1) rallied for their second win in three games.

After Mills threw a 28-yard touchdown pass to Jordan Akins with 50 seconds left, Smith dialed up the same combination on a two-point conversion play to give Houston a rare and improbable 32-31 victory at Indianapolis, costing the Texans the No. 1 pick in April's draft.

Not surprisingly, Smith cared

more about the celebration than the consequences.

He was fired by the Texans on Sunday night.

"We wanted to leave the season with a good taste in our mouth and to do it that way where you have to scratch and claw, we've lost a few games right at the end, overtime and all of that," Smith said right after the win. "So it was good to see those guys kind of finish this one."

Smith was asked about the win ruining Houston's chance to get the top pick in the draft.

"So, you're saying, hey, guys, playing this last game, all that you've been working for all your life, you play to win, forget that, lose the game on purpose," Smith said. "I think that would be a hard one to get by. They wouldn't expect me to say that. I didn't. Each week our game plan to be to win the game. It's kind of simple as that. That's what we followed through on today."

The 64-year-old Smith coached the Bears from 2004-12, going 81-63 and making the playoffs three times.

Durant hurts knee before Nets edge Heat

Associated Press

MIAMI — Brooklyn got another win. Now the Nets have to hope for good news on Kevin Durant.

Royce O'Neale's putback with 3.2 seconds left put Brooklyn ahead to stay, and the Nets beat the Miami Heat 102-101 on Sunday night in a game where Durant left in the third quarter with a right knee injury.

"Right knee, he'll get evaluated tomorrow and then hopefully I'll have some more info," Nets coach Jacque Vaughn said. "Most likely it will include imaging, just to make sure we're good."

Durant was awaiting his teammates after the big finish, giving them all fist bumps as they walked into the locker room. Vaughn said he did not ask Durant how he was feeling, though Kyrie Irving said his

friend was in good spirits.

Durant left with 36.6 seconds left in the third quarter, not long after he appeared to get hurt on a drive by Miami's Jimmy Butler. Durant grabbed at his right knee after Butler, who had just driven to the basket, landed with his back to Durant and fell into him.

"Those plays are scary, because when someone's not looking what's going on, anything can happen in those moments," Irving said. "So I'm grateful for all that time he's put in the weight room putting his body in a great position, and his body was able to save him from something worse."

Grizzlies 123, Jazz 118: Desmond Bane had 24 points and nine assists, Tyus Jones added 21 points and host Memphis, playing without leading scorer Ja Morant, defeated Utah.

Jaren Jackson Jr. finished

with 19 points, nine rebounds and five blocks as Morant was a late scratch with right thigh soreness. That led to Jones running the first unit for Memphis. Jones also had six assists as Memphis won its sixth straight.

Cavaliers 112, Suns 98: Darius Garland and Donovan Mitchell both scored 22 points and visiting Cleveland pulled away late to beat banged-up Phoenix.

The Cavaliers won for the fourth time in five games. It's the second time this week the Cavs have topped the Suns after beating them 90-88 on Wednesday.

Hawks 112, Clippers 108: Trae Young scored 30 points and visiting Atlanta sent reeling Los Angeles to its season-worst sixth straight loss.

Thunder 120, Mavericks 109: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 33 points, and host Okla-

homa City beat Dallas.

76ers 123, Pistons 111: James Harden had 20 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists to lead visiting Philadelphia to a comfortable victory over Detroit.

Pacers 116, Hornets 111: Myles Turner scored 29 points, Buddy Hield had 21 and host Indiana capped the first half of its regular-season schedule with a comeback victory over Charlotte.

Raptors 117, Trail Blazers 105: Pascal Siakam scored 27 points, Scottie Barnes had 22 and host Toronto snapped a three-game losing streak by beating Portland.

Timberwolves 104, Rockets 96: D'Angelo Russell scored 22 points and Anthony Edwards added 21 as visiting Minnesota overcame a big early deficit to beat Houston for its fourth straight win.

Edey, No. 1 Purdue rally in second half to beat Penn State

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Zach Edey scored 30 points, grabbed 13 rebounds and helped a furious 12-0 run to start the second half as No. 1 Purdue rallied to defeat Penn State 76-63 before a sold-out crowd at the Palstra on Sunday night.

Fletcher Loyer scored 17 points while Braden Smith added 15 to help the Boiler-makers improve to 15-1 overall.

"We had some good looks at the basket and good looks from the perimeter," Purdue head coach Matt Painter said. "Fletcher got some really good looks in the second half after not getting good ones in the first."

Despite Jalen Pickett's 26 points, Penn State (11-5, 2-3 Big Ten) fell to 0-13 lifetime when facing the top-ranked team in the nation.

"We have to be better," Penn State coach Micah Shrewsberry said.

Edey, a 7-foot-4 junior center, was a nightmare from the start for the Nittany Lions. He scored Purdue's first six points of the game, drew double teams most of the night and was able to move the ball from the low block.

Pickett scored 18 of his points in the first half, ending the session with an up and un-

der shovel past Edey's outstretched arms, giving the Nittany Lions a 37-31 advantage at the halftime buzzer.

"They were hitting really tough shots, and they were knocking them down in the first half," Edey said. "They hit those scoop shots, so we just kept playing how we wanted to play and things would get better."

Purdue took the game over in the second half, shooting 66.7% from the floor (18-for-27). Edey scored 18 of his points in the second half while Loyer had 14 in the second half.

"We just kept sticking to what we wanted to do," Edey said. "We have really good shooters, and they were going down for them. But we started to knock shots down, that opened up some things in the post and we took advantage of it after that."

No. 2 Houston 72, Cincinnati 59: Jarace Walker scored a game-high 21 points, J'Wan Roberts added 14 points and 11 rebounds and visiting Houston extended its winning streak to seven.

Cincinnati guard Landers Nolley II knocked down his first four shots — all from three-point range — to keep the Bearcats (11-6, 2-2 American Athletic Conference) within striking distance but didn't

score again the rest of the way.

Marcus Sasser finished with 16 points for the Cougars (16-1, 4-0).

Mika Adams-Woods led the Bearcats with 19. Viktor Lakhin added 16.

Northwestern 84, No. 15 Indiana 83: Boo Buie scored 26 points and Northwestern earned its second road victory against a ranked opponent this season.

The Wildcats (12-3, 3-1 Big Ten), who knocked off then-No. 20 Michigan State 70-63 on Dec. 4, have won seven of eight games. The Hoosiers (10-5, 1-3) have lost four of six.

Buie made 10 of 18 shots. Chase Audige had 19 points and eight assists for the Wildcats. Robbie Beran and Ty Berry each added 13 points.

Maryland 80, No. 24 Ohio State 73: Jahmir Young scored 30 points, and host Maryland opened the second half with an 18-2 run en route to beating Ohio State.

The Terrapins (11-5, 2-3 Big Ten) rebounded from double-digit losses to Michigan and Rutgers, picking off a ranked opponent with a solid defensive effort. Ohio State (10-5, 2-2) missed its first seven field-goal attempts of the second half in the game's decisive stretch.

Capitals get stars back, blank Jackets

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Nicklas Backstrom and Tom Wilson made their season debuts and the Washington Capitals beat the Columbus Blue Jackets 1-0 on Sunday night.

It marked the first time Backstrom and Wilson took the ice at Capital One Arena since the first round of the 2022 Stanley Cup playoffs in May. Both underwent major procedures in the offseason — Backstrom had hip resurfacing surgery and Wilson had ACL surgery.

“You know, after an injury, it’s a little bit different. You’re expecting your body to show up but you never really know. I tried to put in all the work I could, and it held up, we got through it,” Wilson said. “It felt better as the game went on. The guys battled for Nicky and I to get it done, and Kuempers played really well, and it’s nice to get the first one out of the way. But it was a really cool experience.”

Following nearly eight months of rehabilitation, both were cleared to make their long-awaited returns and were integrated quickly into the top six. Backstrom slotted in as the

first-line center between Alex Ovechkin and Conor Sheary while Wilson played on the second-line right wing with Dylan Strome and Evgeny Kuznetsov.

Darcy Kuemper continued his strong play between the pipes as he made 37 saves and held off the swarming Blue Jackets for his fourth shutout of the season.

Despite the Capitals getting two of their stars back, the ice wasn’t tilted in their favor, as Columbus dominated in shots on goal and limited Washington’s chances at 5-on-5 and on the man advantage. But Erik Gustafsson’s goal just 2:43 minutes into the game secured the win for the Capitals.

Jets 7, Canucks 4: Kyle Connor had a hat trick and host Winnipeg extended its winning streak to a season-best five games with a win over Vancouver.

Nikolaj Ehlers had a goal and two assists, and Axel Jonsson-Fjallby had a goal and assist.

Bo Horvat scored his 29th of the season and J.T. Miller had a goal and two assists for the Canucks, who have one win in their last five games.

Blues 3, Wild 0: Brandon Saad extended his goal streak to a career-best four straight games, Brayden Schenn scored twice and Thomas Greiss made 36 saves for his first shutout of the season to lead visiting St. Louis.

Saad also set up Schenn’s insurance goal for the Blues in the third period, just after a power play expired for the Wild. Schenn added an empty netter in the closing seconds.

Blackhawks 4, Flames 3 (OT): Maxi Domi scored at 1:04 of overtime and had an assist as host Chicago got its second straight win.

Lukas Reichel batted in his his first NHL goal and had two assists, and Philipp Kurashev and Colin Blackwell also scored for the last-place Blackhawks, who are 3-13-0 in their last 16 games. Alex Stalock made 44 saves in his third straight start.

Stars 5, Panthers 1: Jason Robertson scored two goals and Jake Oettinger made 27 saves to lead host Dallas past Florida.

Defensemen Nils Lundkvist, Esa Lindell and Miro Heiskanen also scored for the Stars.

Penguins 4, Coyotes 1: Jake

Guentzel scored two goals, Casey DeSmith stopped 23 shots and visiting Pittsburgh ended a six-game losing streak.

The Penguins fell into an early hole on Barrett Hayton’s first-period goal, but Guentzel scored twice in a little over three minutes in the second. Jason Zucker also scored in Pittsburgh’s first win since Dec. 20.

Maple Leafs 6, Flyers 2: John Tavares had a goal and two assists, Mitchell Marner added three assists and visiting Toronto beat Philadelphia.

Auston Matthews, Calle Jarnkrok, Conor Timmins, Zach Aston-Reese and Timothy Liljgren also scored for the Maple Leafs, who swept their three-game season series with the Flyers.

Bruins 7, Ducks 1: David Pastrnak had three goals and an assist, Hampus Lindholm scored a goal in his Anaheim homecoming and Boston completed a perfect three-game road trip.

Boston has won four straight overall after trouncing California’s three NHL teams by a combined 16-5 over the past four days.

Rahm wins stunner following Morikawa wipeout

Associated Press

KAPALUA, Hawaii — Jon Rahm left Maui with a trophy he wasn’t expecting, all because of a collapse from Collin Morikawa no one saw coming.

Rahm started the final round of the Sentry Tournament of Champions seven shots behind. He bogeyed his first hole. He was six shots back at the turn to Morikawa, who had yet to make a bogey the entire week at Kapalua.

“Bit of a crazy day, I’m not going to lie,” Rahm said.

A wild hour featured a seven-shot swing in four holes when Rahm ran off three straight bir-

dies and an eagle and Morikawa, playing two groups behind him, made three straight bogeys on holes the rest of the field collectively played in 44-under par.

It ended with Rahm making one last birdie for a 10-under 63 and a two-shot win over Morikawa (72), who went from a sure victory to a footnote in PGA Tour history as the ninth player to lose a six-shot lead going into the final round.

“It’s going to hurt, but I’ve got to get over it because we’re still in the very early parts of the season,” Morikawa said.

So began the bold new year on the PGA Tour of elevated tour-

naments that average \$20 million in prize money in a bid to bring the best together more often and reward them amid the challenge of Saudi-funded LIV Golf.

Rahm is riding a big wave, winning for the third time in his last five starts worldwide.

“In my mind, I feel like since August I’ve been the best player in the world,” he said.

For Morikawa, it was an epic wipeout even by Maui’s standards.

He still was three shots ahead when he bladed a 25-yard bunker shot over the 14th green and made bogey. On the par-5 15th,

his 5-wood leaked just enough right to go down the slope and leave his a daunting chip, up the hill with the strong grain of grass into him. He muffed the chip and took bogey. And then on the 16th, his wedge wasn’t long enough and rolled off the false front of the green some 70 feet from the pin for a third straight bogey.

“He still shot 63,” Morikawa said. “He definitely made the birdies when he needed to. But I also made bogeys. When you’re getting bogeys at that time of the tournament, they’re costly. I definitely felt the weight of that.”