

US, allies prep for long war in Ukraine

The Washington Post

The United States and its allies are making preparations for a prolonged conflict in Ukraine, officials said, as the Biden administration attempts to deny Russia victory by surging military aid to Kyiv while scrambling to ease the war's destabilizing effects on world hunger and the global economy.

President Joe Biden's announcement last week of an additional \$1 billion in security aid for Ukraine, the single largest tranche of U.S. assistance to date, offered the latest proof of Washington's determination to ensure Ukraine can survive a punishing battle for the eastern Donbas region. European nations including Germany and Slovakia unveiled their own shipments of advanced weapons, including helicopters and multiple-launch rocket systems.

"We're here to dig in our spurs," Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said after convening dozens of nations in Brussels to pledge greater support for Kyiv.

The decision to supply Ukraine with increasingly sophisticated arms such as anti-ship missiles and long-range mobile artillery—capable of destroying significant military assets or striking deep into Russia—reflects a growing willingness in Western capitals to risk unintended escalation with Russia.

The support appears to have emboldened the government of President Volodymyr Zelensky, who last week vowed to retake all of Russian-controlled Ukraine, even areas annexed by Moscow long before Russian President Vladimir Putin's Feb. 24 invasion.

But analysts say that despite the surge in outside aid, and strong morale among Ukrainian troops, Kyiv and its backers can hope for little more than a stalemate with Russia's far bigger, better armed military. Unlike in Moscow's failed attempt to seize the capital Kyiv, the Donbas battle has played to Russia's military strengths, allowing it to use standoff artillery strikes to pound Ukrainian positions and gradually expand its reach.

Ivo Daalder, a former U.S. ambassador to NATO who now heads the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, said the battlefield impasse leaves the United States with a stark choice: either continue to help Ukraine sustain a potentially bloody status quo, with the

devastating global consequences that entails; or halt support and permit Moscow to prevail.

"That would mean feeding Ukraine to the wolves," Daalder said, referring to a withdrawal of support. "And no one is prepared to do that."

A senior State Department official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe ongoing international deliberations, said Biden administration officials had discussed the possibility of a protracted conflict with global spillover effects even before February, as U.S. intelligence suggested Putin was preparing to invade.

The Biden administration hopes that the new weaponry, in addition to successive waves of sanctions and Russia's diplomatic isolation, will make a difference in an eventual negotiated conclusion to the war, potentially diminishing Putin's willingness to keep up the fight, the official said.

Even if that reality does not materialize immediately, officials have described the stakes of ensuring Russia cannot swallow up Ukraine—an outcome officials believe could embolden Putin to invade other neighbors or even strike out at NATO members—as so high that the administration is willing to countenance even a global recession and mounting hunger.

Already the war, compounding the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, has plunged the world economy, now expected to suffer years of low growth, into renewed crisis. It has also deepened a global food emergency as the fighting pushes up prices of basic goods and cripples Ukraine's grain exports—which typically feed hundreds of millions of people a year—pushing some 44 million people closer to starvation, according to the World Food Program.

"While it's certainly challenging—in terms of how to navigate these stormy waters, our guiding light is that the outcome of Russia being able to achieve its maximalist demands is really bad for the United States, really bad for our partners and allies, and really bad for the global community," the State Department official said.

On Friday, Ukrainian forces attempted to defend dwindling areas under their control in Sievierodonetsk, a strategic city in Lu-

hansk province that Pentagon officials expect to fall soon.

In a sign of how Western weaponry has the potential to pull the West deeper into the war, a U.S. defense official on Friday confirmed that a U.S.-made Harpoon anti-ship missile had struck a Russian tugboat in the Black Sea. For the first time as part of Biden's latest arms package, the United States said it will provide Ukraine mobile Harpoon launchers.

Ukrainian leaders' longtime ambition to integrate more further into Europe moved closer to reality on Friday, when the European Commission recommended that Ukraine be made an official candidate for European Union membership. Zelensky hailed what he called a "historic decision," even though membership might be years away.

"Ukrainians are ready to die for the European perspective," European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen said. "We want them to live with us the European dream."

Putin, lashing out at the West in a speech on Friday, said he had nothing against the idea of Ukraine joining the E.U. but also warned that "all the tasks of the special operation will be met," as the Kremlin calls the invasion, and said his country could employ nuclear weapons if its sovereignty was threatened.

Underscoring what Western nations say is a radically altered security outlook, NATO leaders are expected to unveil new deployments to Eastern Europe at a late June summit in Madrid.

Ahead of that meeting, Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has defended the need to stop Russia in stark claims, equating the suffering among civilians in Ukraine to what Nazi Germany inflicted on Europe. But he has also cautioned that while Moscow faces chronic issues in its Ukraine offensive, including leadership, morale and logistics, the numbers "clearly favor the Russians" in eastern Ukraine.

The prospect of a negotiated conclusion seems distant with Putin appearing underterred, likely pursuing what analysts describe as a strategy of seizing the entire Donbas region then offering a cease-fire that would freeze in place Russia's control of that and other areas.

Video shows 2 vets held captive in Ukraine

Associated Press

Russian state television showed video Friday of two U.S. military veterans who went missing last week while fighting in Ukraine, confirming that the men were taken captive and raising fears about their fate.

Alex Druke and Andy Huynh, both from Alabama, were believed to be the first Americans captured by Russian forces since the war began on Feb. 24.

Druke, speaking into the camera from what appeared to be an office, sent a message to his mother, concluding with a quick wink.

“Mom, I just want to let you know that I’m alive and I hope to be back home as soon as I can be. So, love Diesel for me. Love you.” Diesel is his dog, a mastiff.

His aunt, Dianna Shaw, said the video included both a key word and a gesture that Druke and his mother had set up during one of his two tours in Iraq so she would know that it was indeed him and that he was OK.

Druke, who served in the U.S. Army, and Huynh, who served in the U.S. Marines, went missing after their group came under heavy fire in the northeastern Kharkiv region on June 9.

Citing Druke, the RT television report said the Americans became separated from the others and once it was safe they set off

through the woods, ending up in a village where they were approached by a Russian patrol and surrendered.

RT, which broadcasts in English, said they were being held by Russian-backed separatist forces in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine.

Three other foreigners fighting for Ukraine, two Britons and a Moroccan man, were sentenced to death by a court run by separatists in Donetsk, which is in the Donbas.

The U.S. has insisted that anyone captured should be considered a prisoner of war and protected by guarantees of humane treatment and fair trials.

But the Russian military has said it considers foreigners fighting with Ukraine to be mercenaries and claims they are not protected as combatants under the Geneva Conventions.

A reporter for the Russian state television network VGTRK recorded short clips of the two men speaking Russian and saying, “I am against war.”

The Washington Post reported that Druke and Huynh are both quoted as disparaging Ukrainian forces in the RT article: Druke warned other U.S. veterans to “think really long and hard about why you’re doing it and what can happen” if they travel to join Ukrainian forces, while Huynh said he grew disenchanted with cor-

ruption in the Ukrainian military.

Shaw, Druke’s aunt, told the Washington Post that no one should take what Druke says seriously in the RT interviews and that “everyone knows it’s propaganda.”

“It says that they found the Ukrainian army disorganized and incompetent, and that they hated Ukraine,” said Druke’s mother, Lois “Bunny” Druke. “And that’s not true at all.”

Huynh’s family also has seen videos that appear to show him and Druke, Huynh’s fiancée, Joy Black, told the Post.

“I won’t comment directly on the video, but we continue to pray for the safe return of both Andy and Alex and we’re so thankful for all the help and support that we’ve been receiving in the effort to bring them home,” Black said.

Ukrainian forces have continued to communicate with Druke family members about their missing loved one, Shaw said.

“They have been scouring social media trying to find any clues, as well as scouring the land and sending out drones,” she said. “And as they’re finding things, they’re sending them to us, and we’re sending them on to the State Department. Sometimes, the State Department has them already. A lot of things are moving really fast.”

There has been no official confirmation from the U.S. or Russian government that the Americans were being held.

Trump lashes out at Jan. 6 riot committee hearings

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Making his first public appearance since the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection began its hearings laying bare his desperate attempts to subvert democracy and remain in power, former President Donald Trump on Friday lashed out at the committee as he continued to tease his plans for a third presidential run.

Speaking to religious conservatives at a sprawling resort near the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville, Trump blasted the committee’s efforts as a “theatrical production of partisan political fiction” and insisted he had done nothing wrong.

“What you’re seeing is a complete and total lie. It’s a complete and total fraud,” he told the Faith and Freedom Coalition’s

“Road to Majority” conference. He dismissed the harrowing video footage and searing testimony presented by the committee — including first-hand accounts from senior aides and family members — as having been selectively edited. And he downplayed the insurrection as “a simple protest that got out hand.”

Trump’s appearance at an event long known as a testing ground for presidential hopefuls comes as he has been actively weighing when he might formally launch another White House campaign. The debate, according to people familiar with the discussions, centers on whether to make a formal announcement later this summer or fall or, in accordance with tradition, wait until after the November midterm elections.

While allies insist he has yet to make a final decision about his plans, Trump for months has been broadcasting his intentions, and continued to tease them Friday.

“One of the most urgent tasks facing the next Republican president — I wonder who that will be,” Trump said at one point, prompting a standing ovation and chants of “USA!”

“Would anybody like me to run for president?” he asked the crowd, unleashing more cheers.

Ralph Reed, chair of the Faith and Freedom Coalition, said that, for now, “We don’t know whether or not he will run, although certainly given his speech, I think he wanted to let everybody know that that is his plan.”

Mont. governor blasted for his trip amid flood

Associated Press

RED LODGE, Mont. — As punishing floods tore through Yellowstone National Park and neighboring Montana communities, the state's governor was nowhere to be seen.

In the immediate aftermath, the state issued a disaster declaration attributed to the Republican governor, but for some reason it carried the lieutenant governor's signature.

It wasn't until Wednesday — more than 48 hours after the flood hit the state — that Gov. Greg Gianforte's office acknowledged he was out of the country, though it wouldn't say exactly where he was, citing unspecified security concerns.

Gianforte finally returned on Thursday night from what his office said was a vacation with his wife in Italy. But he found himself facing a torrent of criticism for not hurrying home sooner and for not telling the public his whereabouts during the emergency.

"In a moment of unprecedented disaster and economic uncertainty, Gianforte purposefully kept Montanans in the dark about where he was and who was actually in charge," said Sheila Hogan, executive director of the Montana Democratic Party.

While Gianforte was away, Montana's lieutenant governor served as acting governor. And in Gianforte's defense, his office said he was briefed regularly about the flooding, which caused widespread damage to small communities in the southern part of the state and had threatened to cut off fresh water to Billings, the state's largest city.

But Gianforte's critics seized on his mysterious disappearance and started the mocking social media hashtag #WhereIsGreg. Montanans and others traded wisecracks about Gianforte and the Appalachian Trail — a reference to former South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford, who disappeared in 2009 and had his staff tell reporters he was hiking the Appalachian Trail while he was actually having a tryst with his lover in Argentina.

Gianforte finally toured the flood zone Friday but didn't address his absence. He instead encouraged visitors to still come to the Yellowstone region.

"Here's a very simple message for people that have planned trips to Yellowstone Park: We're open. You've got to come. There's so much to do in Montana," he said. "The vitality of our communities depend on it, and your families need what we have in Montana."

NM counties certify vote after standoff

Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — A standoff over the security of voting machines between a Republican-leaning county in New Mexico and Democratic state officials that threatened to erupt into a wider political crisis was defused Friday after local commissioners voted to certify their election results.

The move by the Otero County commission reversed an earlier decision against certifying results of the June 7 primary because of unspecified concerns with Dominion voting systems, a target of widespread conspiracy theories since the 2020 presidential election.

The two commissioners who voted in favor said they had been threatened with prosecution by the state attorney general and had no choice under the law — but criticized their position as being little more than rubber stamps.

Commissioner Couy Griffin was the lone dissenting vote, but acknowledged that he had no basis for questioning the results of the election. He dialed in to the meeting because he was in Washington, D.C., where hours before he had been sentenced for entering restricted U.S. Capitol grounds during the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection.

"My vote to remain a 'no' isn't based on any evidence. It's not based on any facts," Griffin said, nevertheless requesting a hand recount of ballots. "It's only based on my gut feeling and my own intuition."

The Otero elections clerk earlier said the primary had gone off without a hitch and that the results had been confirmed afterward: "It was a great election," said Robyn Holmes, a Republican.

Democratic Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver, who had appealed to the state Supreme Court to intervene, expressed relief at the Otero County decision and called it a "shame that the commission pushed our state to the brink of a crisis by their actions."

The showdown provided a stark example of the chaos that election experts across the U.S. have warned about as those who promote the lie that former President Donald Trump was cheated out of reelection seek to populate election offices across the country and the usually low-profile boards that certify the results.

Iowa Supreme Court: Abortion not fundamental right in state

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — The Iowa Supreme Court on Friday cleared the way for lawmakers to severely limit or ban abortion in the state, reversing a decision by the court just four years ago that guaranteed the right to abortion under the Iowa Constitution.

The court, now composed almost entirely of Republican appointees, concluded that a less conservative court wrongly decided abortion is among the fundamental privacy rights guaranteed by the Iowa Constitution and federal law.

Friday's ruling comes amid expectations that the U.S. Supreme Court will overturn the landmark Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion nationwide. If that hap-

pens, Iowa lawmakers could ban abortion without completing the lengthy process of amending the state constitution.

The Iowa decision stemmed from a lawsuit filed by abortion providers who challenged a 2020 law that required a 24-hour waiting period before a woman can get an abortion. A judge who struck down the law cited the state high court's 2018 ruling. The judge also concluded that the law violated rules prohibiting passage of bills with more than one subject.

The state Supreme Court action means those seeking an abortion in Iowa must abide by the 24-hour waiting period which means returning to the clinic for a second time, an obstacle that opponents said could place abortion out of reach for some.

Calif. bill would reduce plastic by 25%

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — An ambitious California proposal aims to reduce plastic production for single-use products like shampoo bottles and food wrappers by 25% starting next decade, part of an effort to rein in pollution from the ubiquitous material.

A bill introduced late Thursday aims to bring environmental and business groups together to avoid a similar ballot measure slated to go before voters in November. But at least two of the ballot measure's three proponents aren't yet on board.

Democratic Sen. Ben Allen, the bill's author, said that if passed the proposal would make California a leader in reducing plastic waste by focusing on eliminating plastic at the source, not just recycling it once produced.

"The truth is we just need less crap out there — less plastic out there in general," Allen said Friday.

Plastics have long been a target of environmental groups. Most plastic is not recycled and millions of tons are polluting the world's oceans, hurting wildlife and showing up in drinking water. Various efforts are

underway to rein in such pollution, with states attempting to reduce the use of plastic grocery bags, straws and other products. This month the federal government said it will phase out the sale of single-use plastics like water bottles at national parks.

Under the bill, the 25% reduction in plastic from single-use products would start in 2032. It would apply to producers of products like laundry detergent, toothpaste and food wrappings, as well as companies like Amazon that package products for mailing. They would have to replace the plastic with other materials, reduce their packaging or market the products as reusable and make it easy for consumers to do so. It wouldn't apply to water or other beverage bottles, which are regulated by different recycling laws.

Beyond plastic, producers of all single-use products, even those made of paper or glass, would need to ensure that 65% are recycled by 2032. It's estimated that less than 10% of plastic in the United States is recycled now.

Makers of single-use products would have to join "producer responsibility organizations" that would implement the rules

with state oversight. The organizations would have to collect \$500 million annually for a state plastic pollution mitigation fund. Producers that don't follow the rules could be fined \$50,000 a day.

The legislation was the product of long negotiations between Allen's office, environmental and business groups. Allen said he doesn't expect the plastics industry to support the bill. But he hopes they won't lobby against it because it may be more acceptable than the ballot measure and would mean they don't have to spend money trying to defeat it.

"While California businesses both large and small face a maze of environmental regulations as a result of this bill, we believe that this proposal ensures long term policy certainty around recycling and packaging," Jennifer Barrera, president of the California Chamber of Commerce, said in a statement.

Still, there was no immediate commitment from backers of the ballot measure to withdraw it. Ballot measures can be removed until June 30, meaning the bill would need to win quick passage.

SpaceX fires employees critical of CEO Musk

Associated Press

HAWTHORNE, Calif.— SpaceX, the rocket ship company run by Tesla CEO Elon Musk, has fired several employees involved in an open letter that blasted the colorful billionaire for his behavior, according to media reports.

The reports published Friday cited an email from Gwynne Shotwell, SpaceX's president, saying the company had terminated employees who put together and circulated the letter. The letter writers denounced Musk for actions that they said are a "frequent source of distraction and embarrassment for us, particularly in recent weeks."

The New York Times was the first outlet to report the purge, based on information from three employees familiar with

the situation. The employees were not named.

It's unclear how many SpaceX workers lost their jobs, but Shotwell left no doubt that the company believed they had crossed an unacceptable line.

"The letter, solicitations and general process made employees feel uncomfortable, intimidated and bullied, and/or angry because the letter pressured them to sign onto something that did not reflect their views," Shotwell wrote in her email, according to the Times. "We have too much critical work to accomplish and no need for this kind of overreaching activism."

The firings occurred Thursday — the same day Musk addressed Twitter employees for the first time about his \$44 billion deal.

Bitcoin drops below \$20K for first time since 2020

Associated Press

LONDON — The price of bitcoin fell below \$20,000 for the first time since late 2020 on Saturday, in a fresh sign that the selloff in cryptocurrencies is deepening.

Bitcoin, the most popular cryptocurrency, fell below the psychologically important threshold, dropping as much as 9% to less than \$19,000, according to CoinDesk.

The last time bitcoin was at this level was November 2020, when it was on its way up to its all-time high of nearly \$69,000.

Bitcoin has now lost more than 70% of its value since reaching that peak.

Ethereum, another widely followed cryptocurrency that's been sliding in recent weeks, took a similar tumble on Sat-

urday.

It's the latest sign of turmoil in the cryptocurrency industry amid wider turbulence in financial markets. Investors are selling off riskier assets because central banks are raising interest rates to combat quickening inflation.

A spate of crypto meltdowns have erased tens of billions of dollars of investors' assets and sparked urgent calls to regulate the free-wheeling industry.

Cryptocurrency lending platform Celsius Network said this month it was pausing all withdrawals and transfers, with no sign of when it would give its 1.7 million customers access to their funds.

Stablecoin Terra imploded last month, erasing tens of billions of dollars in a matter of hours.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Bus driver: Didn't know snacks had THC

CN BRIDGEPORT — A bus driver has been charged with 38 counts of reckless endangerment after blacking out behind the steering wheel while snacking on gummi-ies he said he didn't know were infused with THC.

Jinhuan Chen appeared in Bridgeport Superior Court after being arrested at his home in Boston.

Chen was driving 38 passengers from the Mohegan Sun Casino when he stopped the bus on the side of Interstate 95 in Stratford. Police said they found Chen slumped unconscious in the driver's seat, next to an open package of Smokies Edibles Cannabis Infused Fruit Chews.

Toxicology tests showed Chen had a high level of THC, the active ingredient in cannabis, in his bloodstream, prosecutors said.

Chen told Judge Ndidi Moses he had no idea he had been snacking on anything but regular candy.

Contractor held over camera in restroom

LA THIBODAUX — A contractor was arrested on video voyeurism charges accusing him of putting a camera in a bathroom vent at a home where he repaired damage from Hurricane Ida.

Chase Cheramie, 37, of Galliano, at first denied knowing anything about the camera, but its memory card held images of him installing it, according to a news release from the Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office.

"Detectives are encouraging

anyone who had Cheramie perform work in their residence to search for similar devices or anything suspicious," the statement said.

Deputies found images of three other people, two of whom appeared to be juveniles, on the memory card. Cheramie was arrested on three counts of video voyeurism.

Man gets 9 years for stealing nude images

FL TAMPA — A California man accused of breaking into thousands of Apple iCloud accounts and stealing private photos and videos of nude young women has been sentenced to nine years in federal prison.

Hao Kuo Chi, 41, of La Puente, Calif., was sentenced in federal court in Tampa, Fla., according to court records. He pleaded guilty last October to three counts of computer fraud and one count of conspiracy to commit computer fraud.

According to court documents, for years Chi operated a now-defunct website called Anon-IB, where users commonly posted images characterized as "revenge porn." Chi hacked into the Apple iCloud accounts of victims across the U.S. to steal private images and videos, officials said. They added he then shared and traded these images with others on Anon-IB.

Chi's email accounts contained the iCloud credentials of approximately 4,700 victims, according to officials.

Fed court: School can't make girls wear skirts

VA RICHMOND — A North Carolina charter school violated female stu-

dents' constitutional rights by requiring them to wear skirts, a federal appeals court ruled.

A majority of the full U.S. 4th Circuit Court of Appeals found that the dress code at Charter Day School in Leland violated female students' equal protection rights, siding with parents who had argued that their daughters were put at a disadvantage by the requirement.

Public schools have long been banned from enacting such mandates, but the court's majority concluded that public charter schools, since they receive public funds, are also "state actors" and are therefore subject to the Constitution's equal protection clause.

The court also ordered further hearings should be held by a lower federal court on claims that the policy violated the federal Title IX anti-discrimination law.

The students who challenged the policy were in grades kindergarten through eighth. They argued that they were receiving unequal treatment to male students, noting that the dress code limited their ability to participate in recess and made them uncomfortable in some situations such as emergency drills in which they had to crawl on the floor.

School band raffles guns during fundraiser

MS GULFPORT — A booster group for a high school on Mississippi's Gulf Coast is raising money for a band trip with what a school safety group calls a "highly inappropriate" raffle of guns and ammunition.

The fundraiser — called "30 guns in 30 days" — is holding

daily drawings for shotguns, handguns, rifles, ammunition, a bow and even a flamethrower. The \$100 tickets have sold out and will help send the West Harrison High School band to Orlando, Fla., according to the fundraiser's Facebook page.

The fundraiser comes after several recent mass shootings across the U.S., including the Uvalde, Texas, elementary school shooting that left 19 children and two adults dead.

Man pleads not guilty for Satanic Temple fire

MA SALEM — A Massachusetts man charged with setting fire to The Satanic Temple's headquarters in Salem was ordered held without bail.

Daniel Damien Lucey, 42, of Chelsea, pleaded not guilty to arson, destruction of a place of worship and civil rights violation charges during his arraignment in Salem District Court.

Prosecutors said a doorbell security camera captured Lucey pouring lighter fluid on the porch of The Satanic Temple headquarters, lighting a fire and walking away.

Lucey, who was wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the word "God," also left a backpack containing a copy of the U.S. Constitution and a Bible.

Prosecutors said Lucey made statements to police acknowledging his actions constituted a hate crime. He also said The Satanic Temple members were "devil worshippers" and that he would not "lose any sleep" over anyone in the building getting hurt, prosecutors said.

But the fire was quickly extinguished and no one was hurt.

— From Associated Press

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Plenty in position to fight for US Open title

Associated Press

BROOKLINE, Mass. — In at least one important way, the halfway point of the 2022 U.S. Open doesn't feel all that different from the day before it started.

Certainly, there are stars and household names lined up, all in good position to capture another major championship. But right beside them, there are plenty of journeymen and dreamers and potential one-hit wonders. Maybe, just maybe, it could be their week, instead.

Saturday's tee sheet for Round 3 said a lot. Three of the day's final five twosomes included a major-title winner paired up with a player who had to go through qualifying to get to America's open championship.

For every Collin Morikawa, Jon Rahm and Rory McIlroy among the top 12 spots of an

eclectic halfway leaderboard, there's a Joel Dahmen or Nick Hardy or Hayden Buckley.

For every Scottie Scheffler, there's a Patrick Rodgers.

"Me and my wife, we watch a lot of horse racing," said Matthew NeSmith, a qualifier whose 69 put him in a group of five players at 3 under, and gives him a tee time with Scheffler, the reigning Masters champion. "We're not going to enter any races that we don't think we can win."

Only two shots separate Morikawa and Dahmen, who lead the way at 5-under 165, from the rest of the top 12.

Four of this diverse dozen — Morikawa, Rahm, McIlroy and Scheffler — have major titles. Six more — Dahmen, Buckley, Beau Hossler, NeSmith, Rodgers and Hardy — made it to this week by earning spots via 36 holes of qualifying in a process

that starts with nearly 9,000 entrants, whittles to 870, then ends with 65 joining the other 91 who had earned exemptions straight into the field.

"It will be a big weekend," said Dahmen, who seriously considered skipping the qualifying process in exchange for a few weeks off. "We don't tee off until 3:45 (Saturday). I typically have to be home at 5 for dinner. So, this will be different for sure."

The golf course they face over the weekend will be unlike most any other they've seen, not only because of the craggy, hilly layout at The Country Club, filled with blind shots and a knee-high heather, the likes of which is not common either in weekly play on tour or in other majors. But also because the weekend forecast calls for highs in the 60s with a 10-15 mph wind blowing from the

north.

"I would expect over the weekend for it to get a little faster and a little fiercer," McIlroy said. "You have to be pretty precise already, but maybe just that little bit more precise with everything."

Even under good conditions that greeted most of the players Friday, there was trouble out there.

McIlroy needed three shots to hack out of the knee-high fescue near the third green. Once out, he needed to sink a long putt to save double-bogey — a make that grew more important by the hour, as he rallied to work his way back up the leaderboard and finish at 4 under.

"You don't want to try to be making 30-footers for 6s, but I got it in in the least amount of strokes possible on that hole after what happened," McIlroy said.

OU, Notre Dame win College World Series openers

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Jackson Nicklaus hit a grand slam, Jake Bennett pitched six strong innings and Oklahoma jumped on No. 5 national seed Texas A&M early in a 13-8 victory in the College World Series opener Friday.

The Sooners scored seven runs with two outs in the second inning to lead 8-0 and then turned back the Aggies' comeback bids in the highest-scoring CWS game since 2008.

"We talked about being a team of Davids and attacking the giant," Nicklaus said. "That's been our team motto lately. We just want to attack the game and play with no fear. We had a game plan. We wanted to execute early. We did."

The Sooners (43-22), who advanced to Omaha as a No. 2 regional seed, will play Sunday against Notre Dame, a 7-3 winner over Texas on Friday night. Texas A&M (42-19) will face Texas in an elimination game.

Oklahoma won a week after the school's softball team earned its second straight Women's College World Series championship. The Aggies have lost nine straight

CWS games over five appearances since they beat Kansas in 1993.

Aggies starter Nathan Dettmer (5-3) lasted just 1½ innings and left with his team down 5-0. He hasn't made it past the fifth inning since April and has allowed 30 earned runs in his last 24⅓ innings (10.95 ERA).

Joseph Menefee took over for Dettmer, and Jimmy Crooks drove his second offering into the right-field bullpen for his eighth homer and an 8-0 lead.

Six Texas A&M pitchers combined to walk 10, hit three batters and strike out 12.

Oklahoma loaded the bases in the fourth on a bunt single, throwing error and walk before Nicklaus's grand slam made it 12-3.

Bennett (10-3), who allowed five hits and four earned runs, retired nine of the last 10 batters he faced.

Notre Dame 7, Texas 3: At Omaha, Neb. John Michael Bertrand and two relievers held the Longhorns' potent offense in check and the Fighting Irish scored in all kinds of ways in its first College World Series game in 20 years.

Notre Dame (41-15) carried over its momentum from eliminating No. 1 national seed Tennessee in the super regionals with

a strong all-around performance against the program making its record 38th appearance in Omaha.

Notre Dame will play Oklahoma on Sunday. The Longhorns (47-21) will face rival Texas A&M in an elimination game.

Bertrand (10-3), roughed up in his start against Tennessee last week, limited the Longhorns to three runs on six hits in 5⅓ innings. Alex Rao and Jack Findlay gave up no hits in 3⅓ innings, with Findlay earning his fourth save.

The Irish scored six runs on nine hits against Texas starter Pete Hansen (11-3). They picked up single runs on Jared Miller's home run in the first inning, an RBI groundout in the third and a safety squeeze in the fourth, and they scored three more in the fifth on Tristan Stevens' balk and a couple singles.

The Longhorns arrived in Omaha with a program-record 128 homers, most among the CWS teams and fourth nationally, and had hit three or more in each of its previous four games.

They mustered only six singles against the Irish and were the only team in the first two CWS games to not hit a homer.

Warriors cap title run, NBA turns page

Associated Press

A parade awaits in San Francisco to celebrate the champion Golden State Warriors. The NBA Draft is a few days away, with presumed top-three picks Jabari Smith, Chet Holmgren and Paolo Banchero set to take their first steps toward realizing their enormous potential. Free agency starts in less than two weeks.

The 2021-22 NBA season is over.

The 2022-23 NBA season seems like it's already here.

The Warriors are back on the NBA mountaintop. Their win over the Boston Celtics in this season's Finals capped the league's 75th anniversary celebration and ushered in an off-season that will, as always, start with tons of attention on player movement — or, in some cases, players not moving.

Two-time reigning MVP Nikola Jokic is eligible to receive a \$260 million supermax ex-

tension from the Denver Nuggets; it's basically a sure thing that it'll be offered and accepted. Phoenix's Devin Booker and Minnesota's Karl-Anthony Towns are in line for \$210 million extensions, neither of which will be surprises, either.

Then there's the class of younger players in line to secure their first post-rookie-contract payday: Memphis' Ja Morant, Miami's Tyler Herro, New York's R.J. Barrett and Cleveland's Darius Garland are just some of the names in that group. So, too, is New Orleans' Zion Williamson, which will be an interesting case since he has been healthy enough to play in only 85 games over his first three pro seasons and is constantly questioned about his conditioning.

Zach LaVine, who is expected to remain with the Chicago Bulls, headlines the class of unrestricted free agents. Kyrie Irving, James Harden, Russell Westbrook and Bradley Beal

all have player options for next season, all of them worth between \$34 million and \$43 million.

And then there's LeBron James, about to enter his 20th season — likely the one where he'll catch Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and become the NBA's all-time scoring leader — and soon to be eligible for a two-year extension with the Los Angeles Lakers that'll be worth nearly \$100 million for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 seasons.

"When we get to that point, we'll see," James said when the Lakers' season ended.

The favorites

According to FanDuel Sportsbook, Golden State is the favorite to win the 2023 title — just ahead of Boston.

Brooklyn is the third choice in odds posted immediately after Game 6 of this year's Finals ended, followed by Milwaukee and the Los Angeles Clippers — who get Kawhi Leonard

back next season. Phoenix, Miami, Philadelphia, Memphis and Dallas round out the top 10 in the odds posted by FanDuel.

When last season ended Brooklyn was the runaway favorite to win the 2022 NBA title. The Nets didn't win a playoff game, getting swept by the Celtics in the first round.

The second choice by sportsbooks after last season was the Los Angeles Lakers. They didn't even make the playoffs and struggled by almost all possible measures.

Summer League

All 30 teams will be in Las Vegas from July 7-17 for the NBA Summer League, which — before the pandemic slowed momentum — was routinely drawing big crowds, and the belief is it'll get back to that again this summer.

There are two other smaller events, hosted by the Warriors and the Utah Jazz, before the Vegas league.

Elevation not an excuse for Lightning in Stanley Cup Final

Associated Press

DENVER — Visitors to Ball Arena are reminded of the altitude challenge facing them as soon as they walk through the doors with a sign welcoming them to the "Mile High City, elevation 5,280 feet."

That reminder becomes reality during the first few shifts of a hockey game, especially one as crucial as the start of the Stanley Cup Final. The Tampa Bay Lightning looked like they were feeling it early in Game 1, though they came back to tie it before losing in overtime. They said they don't consider the elevation a reason they shouldn't be able to tie the series on Saturday night.

"It would be easy for everyone to use that as an excuse, but we came out here early, got a good practice in and we were ready to go," veteran defenseman Victor Hedman said Friday. "Now we had a few days more, but it's not going to change the way we approach the game."

Center Anthony Cirelli, whose job is to shadow speedy Avalanche star Nathan

MacKinnon, brushed it off entirely as a factor.

"Guys are going out there and we're giving our all," Cirelli said. "We just go out there and play, and I don't think it affects the way we play or going out there and just executing our game plan."

Cogliano back?

The Avalanche could be getting one of their injured forwards back after veteran Andrew Cogliano was a full participant in practice and skated on the fourth line. Cogliano missed the series opener after injuring a finger blocking a shot with his right hand in the Western Conference finals-clinching victory against Edmonton on June 6.

"Cogliano is kind of progressing," coach Jared Bednar said. "He felt good enough to join the group today. We'll see where he's at tomorrow."

Center Nazem Kadri is further away from returning. Kadri, who has been out since injuring his right thumb during the

Oilers series, skated with a stick in his hands for a second consecutive day but again did not take any shots.

"For the last couple of days, he's been getting better," Bednar said. "But I don't have an update on him besides that."

Son not much like father

To get to his first Stanley Cup Final, Josh Manson had to go through his father, an assistant coach with Edmonton. The Avalanche swept Dave Manson and the Oilers in the West finals, and the two were able to enjoy a moment in the handshake line.

"Just father-son stuff," Josh said. "We didn't break down the game or anything. He was excited for me."

Manson made an impact in Colorado's Game 1 victory with a few crushing hits, and his style of play draws some similarities to his dad, who was also a big defenseman. Dave Manson is also one of the most penalized players in NHL history.

Cubs end Braves' 14-game win streak

Associated Press

CHICAGO — The Chicago Cubs stopped the Atlanta Braves' 14-game winning streak and ended their own 10-game skid with a 1-0 victory Friday behind rookie Christopher Morel's eighth-inning sacrifice fly.

A pair of double-digit streaks had not ended in the same game since Philadelphia beat Houston on Sept. 15, 1999, ending the Phillies' skid at 11 and the Astros' winning streak at 12.

Chris Martin (1-0) pitched a perfect eighth for his first win for the Cubs. A.J. Minter (2-1) was the loser.

Yankees 12, Blue Jays 3: Anthony Rizzo capped his team's eight-run fifth inning with a grand slam off the facing of the third deck in right, extending New York's winning streak to eight games with a win at Toronto.

Giancarlo Stanton, DJ LeMahieu, and Joey Gallo also homered for the Yankees, who lead the major leagues with 105 home runs and are off to the best start since 1998 at 48-16.

Jordan Montgomery (3-1) allowed two runs and three hits in six innings to improve to 3-0 in his last five outings.

Ross Stripling (3-2) led 1-0 in the fourth, extending his shutout streak to 16 2/3 innings. He gave up two runs and five hits in 3 2/3 innings.

Alejandro Kirk hit his sixth home run in the sixth as the Blue Jays lost to the Yankees for the seventh time in 10 games this year.

Mariners 8, Angels 1: Robbie Ray lost a no-hitter with two outs in the seventh inning on a grounder that bounced off his glove in host Seattle's victory over Los Angeles.

Ray lost his bid when Max Stassi hit a high chopper toward the mound that went right over the pitcher's head. The reigning AL Cy Young Award winner didn't jump, and the ball skipped off the top of his glove, giving

Stassi time to beat out an infield single.

Ray finished the seventh and came back out for the eighth, when Juan Lagares led off with a triple and scored on Andrew Velazquez's double. Ray (6-6) was pulled after that, charged with a run three hits and a walk with 10 strikeouts.

Guardians 2, Dodgers 1 (10): Richie Palacios hit a tiebreaking sacrifice fly in the 10th inning after Anthony Gose escaped a jam in the ninth, and Cleveland won at Los Angeles for its season-best fifth straight victory.

Andrés Giménez had two hits, José Ramirez hit safely in his ninth straight game and Owen Miller scored the go-ahead run in the 10th as the automatic runner, helping the Guardians win despite having just one hit after the fourth inning.

Cody Bellinger homered and Trea Turner had three hits for the Dodgers to extend his hitting streak to 10 games.

Phillies 5-8, Nationals 3-7 (10): J.T. Realmuto hit a go-ahead two-run single in the 10th inning with the aid of an obstruction call and Philadelphia completed a doubleheader sweep at Washington for its 14th victory in 16 games.

Bryce Harper had three hits against his old team, helping the Phillies win the opener.

Matt Vierling's first multi-homer game helped Philadelphia in the second game as the Nationals' losing streak stretched to seven.

Orioles 1, Rays 0: Dean Kremer pitched six scoreless innings and rookie Adley Rutschman singled home the game's only run in the seventh as host Baltimore sent Tampa Bay to its fourth straight loss.

Kremer allowed five hits and matched the six scoreless frames thrown by the Rays' Shane Bieber. Then Ryan Mountcastle hit a one-out double off Calvin Faucher (0-1), and Rutschman followed with a sin-

gle to center.

Brewers 5, Reds 4: Keston Hiura hit a tiebreaking home run off Ross Detwiler in the seventh inning and Milwaukee won at Cincinnati in a battle of long balls.

Hunter Renfroe's three-run homer in the fourth and Willy Adames' solo shot in the fifth built a 4-0 lead against Hunter Greene on a night every run scored on a homer.

Giants 2, Pirates 0: Carlos Rodón scattered two hits over eight innings and San Francisco won at Pittsburgh.

Rodón (6-4) won his second straight start after striking out eight with two walks as the Giants sent the Pirates to their 10th loss in 11 games. Camilo Doval worked a perfect ninth for his 10th save.

Rangers 7, Tigers 0: Jonah Heim doubled, homered and drove in three runs and visiting Texas sent Detroit to its sixth straight loss.

Jon Gray (2-3) pitched seven scoreless innings to end a five-start winless streak. He struck out six and did not walk a batter.

Red Sox 6, Cardinals 5: Michael Wacha pitched neatly into the sixth inning against his former team and host Boston shut down St. Louis' rally in the ninth.

The NL Central-leading Cardinals trailed 6-1 going into the ninth and reliever Austin Davis retired the first two batters. St. Louis loaded the bases and reliever Tanner Houck gave up an RBI double to Tommy Edman that made it 6-3 and a two-run double to Brendan Donovan.

Mets 10, Marlins 4: Francisco Lindor homered after being surprised by his mom's first visit to see him at Citi Field, Pete Alonso slugged a grand slam in the sixth inning and host New York beat Miami.

Lindor's wife, Katia, surprised her husband by flying in his mother, Maria Serrano, for her first visit to the city since Lindor was acquired from Cle-

veland in January 2021.

Astros 13, Whites Sox 3: Michael Brantley's grand slam was one of three homers in a 10-run sixth inning that propelled host Houston past Chicago.

Yordan Alvarez and Kyle Tucker also homered in the sixth on a night when the Astros hit five homers and tied a season high for runs. Alex Bregman (two-run homer) and Yuli Gurriel (solo homer) added blasts, and Tucker had an RBI double, extending his hitting streak to a career-long 15 games, the longest active run in the majors.

Rockies 10, Padres 4: C.J. Cron homered twice among his three hits and drove in five runs, Randal Grichuk also went deep and Colorado snapped a seven-game home losing streak.

Charlie Blackmon added three hits for the Rockies, including a run-scoring triple and RBI single.

Diamondbacks 7, Twins 2: Jordan Luplow homered twice to back Madison Bumgarner and host Arizona beat Minnesota.

Bumgarner (3-6) labored through his first three innings, giving up eight hits but limiting the Twins to two runs. The veteran left-hander then permitted just one hit in the next three innings before being relieved, finishing with three strikeouts and a walk in 103 pitches over six innings.

Royals 5, Athletics 1: Daniel Lynch had a career-high 10 strikeouts in five innings to win for the first time in nearly two months, and Kansas City prevailed at Oakland in a matchup of teams with the worst records in the major leagues.

Salvador Perez doubled and homered for the Royals. Whit Merrifield added three hits, while Andrew Benintendi and Michael A. Taylor each had two to send the A's to their 21st loss in 24 home games. Lynch (3-6) allowed four hits and struck out the side in the third and fifth.