

## Experts: US Navy needs smaller ships

By ALISON BATH  
*Stars and Stripes*

As the U.S. pursues a maritime strategy that prioritizes a blue-water navy, Russia appears to be betting on smaller, missile-laden vessels to help it slowly gain territory and influence, according to military analysts.

Smaller Russian warships like corvettes and frigates aren't built for fights with the U.S. Navy.

Instead, they provide coastal defense in the Black and Baltic seas, and allow Russia to harass cargo ships and credibly threaten its neighbors, said Bryan Clark, director of the Hudson Institute's Center for Defense Concepts and Technology.

And while Ukraine has had success in crippling or sinking some of Russia's vessels, the Kremlin's strategy in coastal and regional waters presents difficulties in the long run for the U.S. mission to deter Russia from attacking American allies and partners.

Destroyers, cruisers and aircraft carriers allow the U.S. to project power. But the Na-

vy lacks small and powerful ships that are cheap to operate and easy to keep deployed. Such ships are better at addressing day-to-day Russian aggressions, Clark and other analysts said.

"The problem is the big-war capabilities the U.S. Navy has are not really well-suited to compete in that way," Clark said. "They kind of have to come in as large deployments of carrier strike groups that have to defend themselves, and that tends to be seen as provocative by countries in the region."

The Navy tried to fill this gap with the littoral combat ship, which once was scheduled to compose about one-sixth of its fleet. But the program was beset by cost overruns from the start, followed by failures to deliver the capabilities it promised.

The Navy is proposing to ditch all nine of its Freedom-class littoral combat ships next year, according to the service's 2023 budget, though there is a House bill under consideration that would repurpose five of the ships.

The service instead wants frigates, which

could take on some similar duties while carrying more armor and firepower than the LCS variants.

But the acquisition program for the new Constellation class, based on a ship already in use by the French and Italians, was slowed because of congressional concerns about the design, according to a March USNI News report.

The frigate USS Constellation is expected to begin construction this year and isn't expected to be operational for at least a few more years. On Thursday, the Navy announced it agreed to procure the third frigate of the class.

The U.S. Navy is far ahead of Russia when it comes to large ships and capabilities. But it has 30 small surface combatant vessels, which include the littoral combat ships, according to a Congressional Research Service report in May.

Meanwhile, Russia has 86 corvettes and 11 frigates, though it's unclear how many are in service, according to Globalfirepower.com, which tracks international military strength.

## Family: Man denied clinic referral on Japan base

By SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A spouse who took his own life last year at this airlift hub in western Tokyo was denied a referral to the base mental health clinic despite a history of prior suicide attempts, according to his family.

An airman with base security on Feb. 16, 2021, discovered the body of Trevor Balint, 34, originally of Hubbard, Ohio, in a storage unit in the housing tower where he and his wife, Britni Balint, a Defense Department civilian programmer and analyst, lived on Yokota Air Base. Trevor Balint had been missing for two weeks.

Balint attempted suicide four times between 2010 and 2018, according to the death investigation by the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, which cited his medical and mental health records. His mother-in-law, Denise Simion Mott, of Brookfield, Ohio, disputed the report and said there was no 2018 attempt.

But those same records show that on April 7, 2020, Balint was considered an "intermediate risk," with passive thoughts of suicide, Mott told Stars and Stripes by Facebook Messenger on June 8.

A month later, on May 6, 2020, he sought mental health care at the 374th Medical Group but

was turned away because the COVID-19 pandemic had restricted access to health care on base, Mott said.

"There should have been more Medical help available to Trevor especially because he outright asked for help," she wrote. "We all LOVED Trevor unconditionally and would never want anyone else to go thru such terrible tragedy."

A base spokesman said the 374th Medical Group at Yokota imposed safety measures during the COVID-19 pandemic to protect patients and staff, but never denied mental health services to anyone in need.

"During this time, the Mental Health Clinic worked hard to

deliver appropriate services for all of our patients depending on their needs," 1st Lt. Danny Rangel wrote by email on Friday to Stars and Stripes. "Services for individuals experiencing acute psychiatric distress, thoughts of suicide, or other safety concerns were never impacted or delayed."

The OSI report did not indicate whether Balint sought help immediately prior to his death, nor did it mention the April 2020 risk assessment that Mott described.

"(A)ccess to mental health services for acute safety concerns has never been limited by any beneficiary category," Rangel said Thursday by email.

# Study looks for blast exposure, CTE link

By WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

Service members with a history of blast exposure or head trauma are not at elevated risk of suffering from a disabling brain condition common among football players and boxers, according to a study published in the June 9 issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

Researchers examined 225 autopsied brains from service members and veterans for evidence of chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE, a degenerative condition caused by repeated blows to the head that re-

searchers have yet to fully understand.

Lesions associated with CTE were found in only 10 brains examined, with seven of those coming from service members who had no history of blast exposure or traumatic brain injury, the study said.

“All of those 10 cases had been exposed to contact sports, which is a known risk factor for CTE,” Dr. Daniel Perl, a coauthor of the study, told *Stars and Stripes* in a phone interview Thursday.

In addition, five of those 10 brains had single lesions that were “barely diagnostic,” said

Perl, a professor of pathology at the Uniformed Services University.

“Being exposed to blasts is not a risk factor for developing CTE,” Perl said. “The major symptomatology that individuals who have been exposed to blasts are struggling with is not related to them having CTE.”

The brains examined had been donated by next-of-kin to the Defense Department’s Uniformed Services University Brain Tissue Repository in Bethesda, Md., from 2013 through 2021, the study said.

CTE arises from repeated

blunt force trauma to the head and has been found mostly among athletes with long-time participation in contact sports such as American football, boxing, rugby and hockey.

Among the symptoms associated with CTE are memory loss, impaired thinking, impulsive or aggressive behavior, depression, suicidal thoughts and disruption of motor skills.

Many of those same symptoms are found among service members with a history of combat deployment, particularly those exposed to blasts, Perl said.

## USS Fort Worth to live on thanks to funding bill

*Fort Worth Star-Telegram*

The USS Fort Worth has been saved again.

U.S. Rep Kay Granger, R-Texas, has crafted a deal that’s part of a government funding bill that secures the city’s namesake and four other littoral combat ships from being scrapped by the U.S. Navy while permitting the decommissioning of four others.

The provision is in the defense funding bill for fiscal year 2023, which the House Appropriations Committee will consider Wednesday.

The committee released a draft bill last week that did not specify the names of the ships, but the *Star-Telegram* obtained the list from congressional sources. The five protected ships that will continue in service are the USS Fort Worth, the USS Wichita, the USS Billings, the USS Indianapolis and the USS St. Louis. The Fort Worth, commissioned in 2012, is the oldest of the ships.

“I am glad to see continued bipartisan support for preventing several littoral combat ships, in-

cluding the USS Fort Worth, from being decommissioned,” Granger said in a statement to the *Star-Telegram*. “These new ships have many useful years of service life left in them. As China continues to grow its Navy, we cannot afford to decrease our capabilities in the name of short-sighted cost savings. I look forward to working with my colleagues to keep these ships in service for many years to come.”

The compromise is a victory for Granger, the powerful ranking member of the committee who is also the ship’s sponsor, by preserving five of the ships and calling for studies to repurpose them and to possibly sell the four decommissioned ones.

But it also gives the Navy a victory, too, in its determination to rid itself of the littoral combat ships.

The four ships that will be permitted to be mothballed — USS Milwaukee, USS Detroit, USS Little Rock and USS Sioux City — were put in service from 2015 to 2018.

## Navy SEAL use of Washington parks over; state won’t appeal

*The Seattle Times*

The Washington Attorney General’s office has declined to appeal a judge’s ruling that bans Navy SEAL or other military training in Washington state parks.

This appears to mark the demise of a high-profile, controversial permitting process that would have expanded to possibly 17 or more parks under a motion approved by the State Parks and Recreation Commission in January 2021.

“This should be the end of the road to the Navy’s using the state parks,” said Zachary Griefen, an attorney representing Whidbey Environmental Action Network, which filed a lawsuit in state Superior Court challenging the commission’s action.

The state had 30 days to file an appeal to the ruling, which was issued May 13. Judge James Dixon found the commission lacked the statutory authority to permit the training and also failed to adequately consider the impacts of such training in violation of a state environmental law.

Brionna Aho, a spokesperson for the state Attorney General, deferred to the Parks and Recreation Commission to comment on the decision not to file an appeal. A commission representative could not be reached for comment Friday afternoon.

Navy SEALs, elite special-operations forces, began training at state parks in the early 1980s. But they have not been able to use them since 2020, when permits to use five parks expired.

A new review process got underway after the January 2021 commission vote but had yet to result in any new permits being issued, according to an April statement from Becki Ellison, executive assistant to the state Parks and Recreation Commission.

The SEAL training involves submersible vessels that navigate through offshore waters and unarmed SEAL team trainees in groups of six to eight who then make their way to shore, typically under cover of darkness. Once on land, they conceal themselves for 24 to 48 hours to conduct surveillance, then depart by water.

# Justices seem ready to hear elections case

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court seems poised to take on a new elections case being pressed by Republicans that could increase the power of state lawmakers over races for Congress and the presidency, as well as redistricting, and cut state courts out of the equation.

The issue has arisen repeatedly in cases from North Carolina and Pennsylvania, where Democratic majorities on the states' highest courts have invoked voting protections in their state constitutions to frustrate the plans of Republican-dominated legislatures.

Already, four conservative Supreme Court justices have noted their interest in deciding whether state courts, finding violations of their state constitutions, can order changes to federal elections and the once-a-decade redrawing of congressional districts. The Supreme Court has never in-

voled what is known as the independent state legislature doctrine, although three justices advanced it in the *Bush v. Gore* case that settled the 2000 presidential election.

"The issue is almost certain to keep arising until the Court definitively resolves it," Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote in March.

It only takes four of the nine justices to agree to hear a case. A majority of five is needed for an eventual decision.

Many election law experts are alarmed by the prospect that the justices might seek to reduce state courts' powers over elections.

"A ruling endorsing a strong or muscular reading of the independent state legislature theory would potentially give state legislatures even more power to curtail voting rights and provide a pathway for litigation to subvert the election outcomes expressing the will of the people," law professor Richard Hasen wrote in an email.

But if the justices are going to get involved, Hasen said, "it does make sense for the Court to do it outside the context of an election with national implications."

The court could say as early as Tuesday, or perhaps the following week, whether it will hear an appeal filed by North Carolina Republicans.

The appeal challenges a state court ruling that threw out the congressional districts drawn by the General Assembly that made GOP candidates likely victors in 10 of the state's 14 congressional districts.

The North Carolina Supreme Court held that the boundaries violated state constitution provisions protecting free elections and freedoms of speech and association by handicapping voters who support Democrats.

The new map that eventually emerged and is being used this year gives Democrats a good chance to win six seats, and possibly a seventh in a new toss-up district.

## Jan. 6 committee setting its sights on Pence, Thomas

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Members of the House committee investigating the Capitol riot said Sunday they may subpoena former Vice President Mike Pence and are waiting to hear from Virginia "Ginni" Thomas, the wife of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, about her role in the illegal plot to overturn the 2020 election.

Lawmakers indicated they will release more evidence about Donald Trump's alleged

effort to defraud supporters by fundraising off false claims of a stolen presidential election. They also pledged to provide pertinent material to the Justice Department by the end of the month for its criminal investigation. The department complained in a letter last week that the committee was complicating its investigation by not sharing transcripts from its 1,000 interviews.

"We're not taking anything off the table in terms of witness-

es who have not yet testified," said Rep. Adam Schiff, who described a Pence subpoena as "certainly a possibility."

"We would still, I think, like to have several high-profile people come before our committee," said Schiff, D-Calif.

For example, the committee has been able to document most of Trump's end of his call to Pence on the morning of the insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021, when the then-president made his final plea for Pence to stop the

certification of Joe Biden's victory when Pence presided over the Electoral College count in Congress. Members have not yet documented directly what Pence said in response.

The committee chairman, Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., recently said the committee was still "engaging" with Pence's lawyers, while also suggesting it may not be necessary for him to appear because of testimony from many of Pence's closest aides.

## Yellowstone aims for quick reopening after record flooding

Associated Press

GARDINER, Mont. — Most of Yellowstone National Park should re-open within the next two weeks — much faster than originally expected after record floods pounded the Yellowstone region and knocked out major roads, federal officials said Sunday.

Yellowstone Superintendent Cam Sholly said the world-renowned park will be able to accommodate fewer visitors for the time being, and it will take more time to restore road connections with some southern Montana communities.

Park officials said Sunday they'll use \$50 million in federal highway money to speed up road and bridge repairs.

There's still no timetable for repairs to routes between the park and areas of Montana where the recovery is expected to stretch for months.

Yellowstone will partially reopen at 8 a.m. Wednesday, more than a week after more than 10,000 visitors were forced out of the park when the Yellowstone and other rivers went over their banks after being swelled by melting snow and several inches

of rainfall.

Only portions of the park that can be accessed along its "southern loop" of roads will be opened initially and access to the park's scenic backcountry will be for day hikers only.

Within two weeks officials plan to also open the northern loop, after previously declaring that it would likely stay closed through the summer season.

The northern loop would give visitors access to popular attractions including Tower Fall and Mammoth Hot Springs.

# What to watch in primaries across US

Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — The two Republican candidates in Alabama's U.S. Senate primary runoff on Tuesday can each boast that at one point they had Donald Trump's endorsement in the race.

Trump first backed U.S. Rep. Mo Brooks in the spring of 2021. That endorsement stood for nearly a year until Trump rescinded it as the conservative firebrand languished in the polls. The former president took his time in issuing a second endorsement, supporting Katie Britt in the race only after she emerged as the top vote-getter in the state's May 24 primary. Runoffs in Georgia will resolve close contests in several congressional races and a secretary of state nomination, while primaries in Virginia will set up competitive congressional contests for the fall.

What to watch in Tuesday's primaries:

## Alabama

The Senate runoff will decide the GOP nominee for the seat being vacated by 88-year-old Republican Sen. Richard Shelby, who announced his retirement in February 2021 after serving six terms.

Britt, Shelby's former chief of staff and a former leader of a state business group, won the most votes in last month's primary, capturing nearly 45% of the ballots compared to Brooks' 29%. Britt had needed to earn more than 50% of the vote to win outright and avoid a runoff.

Another top candidate, Mike Durant, best known as the helicopter pilot who was held captive in Somalia during the 1993 battle chronicled in the book and film "Black Hawk Down," finished in third place and failed

to advance to the runoff.

The winner of the GOP race will face Democrat Will Boyd in November.

## Georgia

A Democratic contest for secretary of state headlines the Tuesday runoffs in Georgia, while Republicans will settle three congressional nominations.

State Rep. Bee Nguyen, backed by Democratic gubernatorial nominee Stacey Abrams, is trying to defeat former state Rep. Dee Dawkins-Haigler in the secretary of state's race. The winner will face Republican Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger in the fall.

In congressional runoffs, Vernon Jones, a Trump-backed candidate and former Democrat, is competing against trucking company owner Mike Collins for the Republican nomination for the 10th Congressional District seat east of Atlanta. Collins was endorsed by Republican Gov. Brian Kemp, who also won his primary over a Trump-backed challenger.

## Virginia

In Virginia, voters will be picking Republican nominees to take on Democratic U.S. House incumbents in two of the most highly competitive districts in the country.

In the coastal 2nd District, which includes the state's most populous city, Virginia Beach, four military veterans are competing for the GOP nomination. With a big fundraising lead and the backing of the Congressional Leadership Fund, a super PAC dedicated to electing House Republicans, state Sen. Jen Kiggans is widely seen as the front-runner.

# Inflation taking bite out of infrastructure projects

Associated Press

The price of a foot of water pipe in Tucson, Ariz.: up 19%. The cost of a ton of asphalt in a small Massachusetts town: up 37%. The estimate to build a new airport terminal in Des Moines, Iowa: 69% higher, with a several year delay.

Inflation is taking a toll on infrastructure projects across the U.S., driving up costs so much that state and local officials are postponing projects, scaling back others and reprioritizing their needs.

The price hikes already are diminishing the value of a \$1 trillion infrastructure plan President Joe Biden signed into law just seven months ago.

That law had included, among other things, a roughly 25% increase in regular highway program funding for states.

"Those dollars are essentially evaporating," said Jim Tymon, executive director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Offi-

cial.

"The cost of those projects is going up by 20%, by 30%, and just wiping out that increase from the federal government that they were so excited about earlier in the year."

In Casper, Wyo., the low bid to rebuild a major intersection and construct a new bridge over the North Platte River came in at \$35 million this spring — 55% over a state engineer's estimate. The bid was rejected and the project delayed as state officials re-evaluate their options.

"If this inflation keeps the way it is, we will have to roll projects from one year into the next, into the next, into the next," said Mark Gillett, chief engineer of the Wyoming Department of Transportation.

Gillett had hoped the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act would finance a boom in highway and bridge construction.

"But it's just not going to go as far as we had hoped," he said.

# China says it successfully intercepted a missile in flight

Associated Press

BEIJING — China says it has successfully intercepted a missile in flight, in a test of an anti-ballistic missile system that could improve its defenses as it presses its territorial claims.

A brief statement from the Defense Ministry late Sunday gave no details, but said the test was purely defensive in nature and was not aimed at any foreign nations.

Missiles are a major component of China's defense and are the backbone of its space program, which has launched astronauts and components to the nation's orbiting space station.

The missile interception test comes as China has been esca-

lating threats against the self-governing island of Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own territory to be annexed by military force if necessary.

A conflict over Taiwan would likely bring in the U.S., which is the island's main source of weaponry and is legally bound to regard threats to it as a matter of "grave concern."

China is also engaged in territorial disputes with the Philippines, Vietnam and other governments over the South China Sea.

China is seen as backing Russia in its invasion of Ukraine, although it is not known to have provided material support.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## High school helps stage graduation for sick dad

**AL** SEALE— An Alabama man suffering from late-stage cancer got to see his son graduate from high school with help from school officials and his family.

Mike Bowden had stage four liver and bile duct cancer that would have made it impossible for him to attend his son's graduation from Russell County High School in Seale, Ala., near the Georgia border, the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer reported Friday.

So his wife, Jessie, asked high school assistant principal Christopher Baker whether she could borrow a cap and gown to conduct a ceremony at home. She also asked Baker whether he would be willing to attend and hand a fake diploma to her and Mike Bowden's son, also named Michael Bowden.

School administrators agreed, and they and the family surprised the elder Bowden with a graduation ceremony on April 25.

Principal Tonya Keene gave Michael Bowden Jr. his real diploma. Mike Bowden Sr. died at home on May 9, two weeks before the official graduation. He was 64.

## Mountain lion in NPS study killed by vehicle

**CA** CALABASAS — A mountain lion that was part of a National Park Service study was fatally struck by a vehicle in Southern California's Santa Monica Mountains along the same road where her mother was similarly killed.

The adult female cougar, dubbed P-54, died Friday on

Las Virgenes Road, south of Mulholland Highway, the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area said.

P-54 was outfitted with a radio tracking collar by biologists who are studying how the big cats live in habitat fragmented by urban sprawl, barriers that limit genetic diversity and with hazards ranging from poisons to roads and freeways.

The park service said P-54 was the 29th mountain lion killed by vehicles since 2002 in the study area, which includes the Santa Monica range, Simi Hills, Santa Susana Mountains, Verdugo Mountains and Griffith Park in Los Angeles.

## Coast Guard: 2 dead, 10 saved in boat crash

**FL** MIAMI — Two people were killed and 10 others had to be rescued when their boats collided at night near Key Biscayne in South Florida, the U.S. Coast Guard and local authorities said.

The Coast Guard said a person involved in the collision notified the agency of the crash around 10:30 p.m. Friday night.

Two bodies were recovered in the ensuing rescue operation, one by the Coast Guard Station Miami Beach and another by Miami-Dade Fire Rescue, officials said. The Coast Guard said in a statement that one of its air crews in an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter played a key role in the emergency response.

A rescue swimmer was also sent to assist two critically injured people, one of whom was transferred to Jackson Memorial Medical Center for care. Nine other survivors were sent to another hospital for treat-

ment, authorities said. Their names were not released.

## 2 ex-frat members charged for hazing

**MO** COLUMBIA — Two former members of a University of Missouri fraternity have been indicted for a hazing incident that left another student blind and unable to walk or communicate after drinking a liter of vodka.

A Boone County grand jury on Friday indicted former Phi Gamma Delta fraternity members Ryan Delanty and Thomas Shultz, both of St. Louis County, in the hazing of Daniel Santulli, 19, of Eden Prairie, Minn., the Columbia Missourian reported.

Both were charged with felony hazing and misdemeanors of supplying liquor to a minor or intoxicated person. Shultz also faces a felony for tampering with physical evidence in a felony prosecution.

Santulli was pledging the fraternity in October when he was found unresponsive due to alcohol poisoning. Authorities said his blood alcohol content was 0.486, six times the legal limit.

## Buffett's last charity lunch draws \$19M bid

**NE** OMAHA — An anonymous bidder has shelled out a record \$19 million for a private lunch with billionaire Warren Buffett at a steakhouse in New York City.

The meal with the Berkshire Hathaway CEO was offered on an eBay auction to benefit the San-Francisco-based charity GLIDE, which helps homeless people and those in poverty. The winner can bring up to sev-

en guests.

Buffett has raised \$53 million for GLIDE since the auction began in 2000. The charity earned the philanthropist billionaire's support when his first wife, Susie, introduced him to it after she started volunteering there. She died in 2004.

This year's event will be the first private lunch offered with the 91-year-old billionaire since the previous record-setting bid of \$4.5 million by cryptocurrency entrepreneur Justin Sun in 2019. The past two auctions were called off due to COVID-19 concerns, and Buffett has said this will be the last.

## Gun fired in mall, but no injuries reported

**VA** McLEAN — A gun was fired when a fight broke out at a northern Virginia mall on Saturday, but no injuries were reported and there was no active shooter situation, police said.

Officers were called to Tysons Corner Center on Saturday afternoon for a report of shots fired at the prominent mall near the nation's capital, Fairfax County police tweeted. A fight broke out and one man displayed a gun and fired, police said.

Police said there were no reports of any injuries and no confirmed reports of additional shots fired.

Officers immediately began clearing the mall to make sure no suspects were still present and were also helping those who had sheltered in place. The authorities asked people who were sheltering to stay in place until officers came to them.

— From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit [www.stripes.com](http://www.stripes.com).

Reporting  
World, National  
and Military News

# 'Squeezy fade' earns Fitzpatrick US Open title

Associated Press

BROOKLINE, Mass. — A playoff was looming Sunday in the U.S. Open, just like it always does at The Country Club, when Matt Fitzpatrick sized up his shot from a bunker left of the 18th fairway.

He had a one-shot lead over Will Zalatoris and Masters champion Scottie Scheffler. He had a big patch of rough-filled turf in front of him, along with a gaping bunker protecting the green and a flag 156 yards away. Nothing less than a U.S. Open title was on the line.

On a back nine filled with clutch moments, Fitzpatrick delivered the biggest of them all.

"One of the best shots I ever hit," he said.

Fitzpatrick hit 9-iron that started around the steep lip — a "Squeezy fade," he called it — carried the front bunker and settled 18 feet away, setting up a par for a 2-under 68 that made the Englishman a major champion for his first profes-

sional win in America.

He won the U.S. Amateur at Brookline in 2013, making him only the second man to win a U.S. Amateur and U.S. Open on the same course. Jack Nicklaus, the name on the gold winner's medal draped around his neck, turned the trick at Pebble Beach. Juli Inkster won the U.S. Women's Amateur and U.S. Women's Open at Prairie Dunes.

"The feeling's out of this world," Fitzpatrick said. "It is so cliché, but it's stuff you dream of as a kid. Yeah, to achieve it, I can retire a happy man tomorrow."

Zalatoris, with remarkable resiliency during a tense battle at Brookline, had a 15-foot birdie to force a playoff. He dropped to his knees when the putt slid by the left edge of the cup. He shot 69 and was runner-up for the third time in the past seven majors.

Zalatoris and Scheffler, who earlier had a longer birdie putt to catch up to Fitzpatrick, did

all they could. Fitzpatrick was convinced his time was coming, and he grabbed it.

"Matt's shot on 18 is going to be shown probably for the rest of U.S. Open history," Zalatoris said. "I walked by it, and I thought that going for it was going to be ballsy. But the fact that he pulled it off and even had a birdie look was just incredible."

"So hat's off to him. He played great all week obviously and gave a solid round today."

The celebration felt familiar. Fitzpatrick shared tearful hugs with his parents and his younger brother, Alex, who caddied for him in the Amateur. He stayed with the same family.

The payoff was \$3.15 million and a title — major champion — that money can't buy.

One of the first phone calls came from Nicklaus, the four-time U.S. Open champion. Turns out Fitzpatrick won the member-member at The Bear's Club — the course Nick-

laus built in south Florida — and what the Golden Bear said that day was not forgotten.

"He gave me a bit of abuse at the start of the year. He said, 'Finally. Congratulations for winning in the States,'" Fitzpatrick said. And then slightly lifting the trophy, Fitzpatrick sent a fun message to Nicklaus: "Jack, I won a second time."

It took a good break, a signature shot and some guts at the end.

Fitzpatrick and Zalatoris were tied going to the 15th when the Englishman hit his tee shot so far right that it went into the gallery and found a decent lie on grass that was dead and trampled. Zalatoris missed by only a few yards and was buried in deep grass.

"I feel like all year we've just had moments where I've just not caught a break, just not had a lie, just not had a bounce. This time I get there, and the ball's sitting perfectly," Fitzpatrick said. "It was one of the best shots I hit all day."

## Bird starts farewell tour with emotional win in New York

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Nearly an hour after playing her final regular season game in New York, Sue Bird was still soaking in the moment.

The WNBA's all-time assist leader was on the court signing autographs and taking photos with the 100 or so family and friends who had come to Barclays Center to see her play in her hometown one last time.

Bird had announced Thursday in Connecticut that this would be her final season playing in the WNBA. The first stop on her retirement tour was fittingly New York. She'll have one more game in Connecticut, where she starred in college, next month. While she still has a bunch of road finales left this season, none will come close to the emotion of playing in New York.

Bird said she has shed a lot of tears, both good and bad, in the past few days. But Sunday was a day to celebrate in New York.

"It was just really about soaking it all in and enjoying the moment," the five-time

Olympic gold medalist said. "I really couldn't have written this any better."

The Liberty treated Bird like she was one of their own right from the start of the day. The team wore shirts that said: "Thank You Sue, Love New York," and the organization played a pregame video tribute that featured clips of Bird throughout her career, as well as tributes from Billie Jean King, CC Sabathia and Bird's fiancée Megan Rapinoe. The team gifted her a jersey and jacket that featured every New York sports team on it.

The pregame festivities would normally be given to one of their own and not an opposing player who never played in New York. But it would have been hard not to honor the beloved native New Yorker, who said after the game she planned to split time between Seattle and New York after she's done playing this year. She plans on getting season tickets to the Liberty.

While Bird will have played her entire 21-year career in Seattle, she's a New Yorker at

heart, born and raised on Long Island — about 30 miles from Sunday's game.

"When anyone thinks about the WNBA, they think about Sue Bird and what's she's meant to the sport," New York guard Sabrina Ionescu said. "She's transcended it. What she's meant to absolutely everyone outside of the sport is something that you really cannot put into words. So [it was] really cool to see how many people were here tonight in support of her — her career — and what she's done."

Ionescu is definitely a big part of the present and future of the WNBA, and she did all she could to get New York the win, but the Liberty fell short in no small part because of Bird, who finished with 11 points.

With the game still somewhat in doubt in the final minute, Bird put it away sinking a 3-pointer that sealed the 81-72 victory for the Storm. She held her follow-through much to the admiration of the crowd, who gave her a standing ovation as she exited the game.

# Sooners move within win of CWS finals

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Cade Horton struck out a career-high 11 in six innings, Tanner Tredaway continued his torrid post-season with three hits and Oklahoma took control of its bracket in the College World Series with a 6-2 victory over Notre Dame on Sunday night.

The Sooners (44-22) need one more win to advance to the best-of-three finals starting Saturday. They'll play Wednesday against the winner of a Tuesday elimination game between Notre Dame (41-16) and Texas A&M. The Aggies beat Texas 10-2 on Sunday.

With three freshmen, five sophomores and a senior in the everyday lineup and picked to finish sixth in the Big 12, Oklahoma wasn't expected to be in this position. The Sooners got hot in the second half of the regular season, won the conference tournament and went on the road to win its regional and super regional.

"Winning the national championship has always been the

goal, and we've had that from the very beginning," freshman third baseman Wallace Clark said. "It's not a new idea. Even when we would lose a mid-week game, we would talk about it. The idea behind it was we're going to win the whole damn thing."

Horton, who had Tommy John surgery 16 months ago and didn't pitch until March 29, went at least six innings for a third straight start. The redshirt freshman held the Irish scoreless on three singles the first five innings.

Horton (5-2) gave up David LaManna's two-run homer to left in the sixth and didn't come out for the seventh. He threw a season-high 100 pitches.

"When you have mid 90s, you have a good slider, you have a curveball, and he flashed a changeup periodically ... That was a lot. Clearly we didn't recognize it," Irish coach Link Jarrett said.

Tredaway continued to be a catalyst for the Sooners. He's now batting .513 (20 of 39) in the

NCAA Tournament after going 3 for 4 and extending his hitting streak to 16 games. He drove in two runs and scored twice.

"I really like to keep things simple," Tredaway said. "I get in patterns like this where I can go on a long stretch and do pretty well. I try not to get out of my zone. I think the two-strike approach has been really good for me the last couple weeks. I'm trying to hit good pitches and do my thing and be on time."

**Texas A&M 10, Texas 2:** Trevor Werner hit a tiebreaking single in a four-run second inning, and the No. 5 national seed Aggies broke a nine-game College World Series losing streak by ending the Longhorns' season.

Texas A&M (43-19) spotted Texas (47-22) a two-run lead before taking control of the first CWS game between programs that had met 373 times since 1904.

Their first win in five Omaha appearances since 1993 moved Texas A&M to another elimination game Tuesday against

Notre Dame. Oklahoma beat Notre Dame 6-2 on Sunday night.

Aggies starter Micah Dallas (7-3) acknowledged there was added satisfaction to knocking out the Longhorns.

"There is a little extra oomph behind everything, especially when it's Texas, because you just look at the fan bases, there's a lot of like genuine hate between each other," Dallas said. "We kind of feed off of it. We respect them. They're a great ballclub. But there's a little more, I don't know, competition."

Leading 8-2, the Aggies faced a stressful situation in the sixth inning when Jacob Palisch walked Mitchell Daly to load the bases with two outs and Ivan Melendez coming to bat. Palisch struck out the national home run leader and .393 hitter, catching him looking at a fastball at the knees on the inner half of the plate.

"That was a massive part of the game," Aggies coach Jim Schlossnagle said.

# Speedy Avalanche zoom to 2-0 series lead over Bolts

Associated Press

DENVER — Marinate on this for a quick moment: Colorado has 11 goals in the Stanley Cup Final so far, and not one from star forward Nathan MacKinnon.

The always-pushing-the-pace Avalanche are clicking on all cylinders, even with MacKinnon's scoring held in check and Nazem Kadri sidelined by a thumb injury.

This is a bunch that comes at you from all directions — no matter the name on the back of the jersey. They're a constant blur of burgundy-and-blue that gets fast break after fast break, scoring chance after scoring chance.

Along with it, they have a 2-0 lead over Tampa Bay in the best-of-seven series, with Game 3 in Tampa on Monday night.

"Certainly the fastest team that we played," Tampa Bay forward Steven Stamkos said. "We've got to find a way to slow them down."

How, precisely? "Putting pucks in areas where you can neutralize their speed and not

turning the puck over — not giving them freebies," Stamkos said. "It's no secret they're a very fast team."

Colorado has scored at least seven goals four times in this playoff run, the latest a 7-0 rout in Game 2. They're one of only seven NHL teams who have recorded that many seven-or-more goal games in one postseason.

On top of that, the Avalanche became the first NHL team to tally 11 or more goals through two games of the final since they themselves accomplished the feat in 1996.

Coach Jared Bednar chalks the offensive fireworks up to one big reason — rest. While the Lightning had to grind through a tough six-game series with the New York Rangers, the Avalanche got an extended breather after a sweep of Edmonton.

"We've been trying all year to balance the work/rest ratio," Bednar explained. "It's important. ... Our team just seems to be really focused, dialed in and they're hungry and they want to win."

A different player rises to the occasion each game, too. Like Andre Burakovsky scoring the OT winner in Game 1, or Valeri Nichushkin and Cale Makar each recording two goals in Game 2. They've found a way to score early and often on Tampa Bay's Andrei Vasilevskiy, who's one of the best goaltenders on the planet.

Speed really can make a difference.

"We think that's how we have to beat them," Avalanche defenseman Josh Manson said of pushing the tempo. "For us, we can't think that we're under their skin. We can't think anything like that. We've just got to keep going and just have that mentality that doesn't stop."

Colorado's performing all the gritty tasks as well. Take Darren Helm, for example: He leads the playoffs with 84 hits, including 22 in the finals. He also had a goal in Game 2, his second of the postseason.

"A beast," Makar said of the veteran center. "He's so driven."

# Jays rally, end Yanks' winning streak

Associated Press

TORONTO — Lourdes Gurriel Jr. launched his fifth career grand slam, Teoscar Hernández hit a go-ahead, three-run homer and the Toronto Blue Jays rallied to stop the Yankees' nine-game winning streak, beating New York 10-9 Sunday.

Josh Donaldson, Anthony Rizzo, Gleyber Torres, Kyle Higashioka and Marwin Gonzalez each hit home runs for the Yankees, who led 8-3 in the sixth inning. New York lost for just the second time in 18 games.

"This was going to be an easy win, that's what I thought," Yankees right-hander Luis Severino said. "You know, it's not over until it's over. They made a great comeback."

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hit his 17th home run and George Springer also connected for the Blue Jays.

Toronto got all of its runs on homers and became the first Yankees opponent to score in double digits this season. New York leads the majors with a 49-17 record.

**Pirates 4, Giants 3:** Jack Suwinski hit his third homer of the game in the ninth inning, giving host Pittsburgh a walk-off victory over San Francisco to avoid a three-game sweep.

The rookie drove a slider from Tyler Rogers (0-3) to right for his second game-ending home run of the season after connecting for one June 4 against the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Suwinski is the first Pirates rookie to hit three homers in a game since Andrew McCutchen on Aug. 1, 2009.

Thairo Estrada homered off Pittsburgh closer David Bednar leading off the top of the ninth, tying the game at 3. Bednar (3-1) was working his second inning of relief and struck out two of the final three batters to end the ninth.

**Nationals 9, Phillies 3:** Juan Soto hit a three-run homer and host Washington avoided a five-game sweep.

The Nationals ended an eight-game skid and snapped Philadelphia's seven-game road winning streak.

Nats starter Jackson Tetreault (1-1) earned his first major league victory in his second appearance. The 26-year-old right-hander gave up three unearned runs in seven innings, with two walks, six hits and two strikeouts.

**Orioles 2, Rays 1:** Anthony Santander homered and pointed to his dad sitting in front of the press box as host Baltimore beat Tampa Bay.

Orioles starter Jordan Lyles was

scratched Sunday morning because of a stomach virus. As a result, manager Brandon Hyde was forced into a bullpen game.

Austin Voth, claimed by the Orioles off waivers from the Washington Nationals on June 7, made his first start of the season and 23rd of his five-year career.

**Tigers 7, Rangers 3:** Robbie Grossman homered and drove in four runs as host Detroit earned a split of the four-game series.

The Tigers and their league-worst offense scored five or more runs in consecutive games for the first time this season. Detroit had lost six straight before winning 14-7 Saturday.

**Marlins 6, Mets 2:** Jerar Encarnación had a spectacular major league debut with a go-ahead, seventh-inning grand slam for his first hit and also threw out a runner at third base from right field, lifting visiting Miami over the New York Mets.

Encarnación became the first player since at least 1901 with a grand slam and an outfield assist in his debut. He also stole a base in the ninth inning.

**Brewers 6, Reds 3:** Victor Caratini and Hunter Renfroe each hit two-run homers as visiting Milwaukee got its fourth straight win.

Brewers starter Adrian Houser (4-7) had a solid outing, allowing four hits and three runs through six innings while striking out five. Devin Williams pitched the ninth for his fifth save.

**Braves 6, Cubs 0:** Ian Anderson pitched three-hit ball into the seventh inning, Matt Olson hit three doubles and visiting Atlanta beat Chicago.

Travis d'Arnaud and Michael Harris II homered for the defending World Series champion Braves, who avoided their first three-game losing streak of the season.

Anderson (6-3) struck out six and walked two in a season-high 6⅓ innings and improved to 3-0 with a 4.37 ERA in four June starts.

**Red Sox 6, Cardinals 4:** Nick Pivetta pitched seven dominant innings with 10 strikeouts, Christian Vázquez hit a three-run homer and host Boston won its fifth straight series.

Trevor Story added a solo shot and Jackie Bradley Jr. had a go-ahead single for the Red Sox, who rebounded after getting blown out 11-2 on Saturday night for their 13th victory in 17 games.

Pivetta is 7-1 with a 1.77 ERA in his last nine starts.

**Rockies 8, Padres 3:** San Diego star

third baseman Manny Machado sprained his left ankle while taking a tumble running out a grounder and host Colorado completed a three-game sweep.

Machado, in the midst of a stellar season, was injured in the first inning and exited the game. The Padres said X-rays were negative.

Randal Grichuk homered to cap a five-run fifth inning and the Rockies beat San Diego for the 10th straight time at Coors Field.

**Athletics 4, Royals 0:** Jared Koenig pitched into the sixth inning for his first career win and combined with three relievers on a three-hitter, helping host Oakland end an eight-game home losing streak.

Seth Brown had three hits, including his first home run at the Oakland Coliseum in nearly a year. Sean Murphy also connected to help the A's avoid a three-game sweep.

**Diamondbacks 7, Twins 1:** Buddy Kennedy hit a grand slam for his first big-league homer, Christian Walker added two solo shots and host Arizona beat Minnesota.

Merrill Kelly (6-4) threw seven effective innings as the D-backs built their lead. The right-hander gave up one run on five hits, striking out five and walking none.

**Angels 4, Mariners 0:** Mike Trout homered for the fifth time in the five-game series and host Los Angeles beat Seattle.

Trout tied the record for any player in a single series against the Mariners, along with George Bell in 1987 and Boston's Trevor Story earlier this season. Trout's two-run drive in the fourth inning was his 52nd career homer against Seattle, matching Rafael Palmeiro for the most by any player off the Mariners.

**Guardians 5, Dodgers 3:** Andrés Giménez drove in the go-ahead run with the bases loaded in the ninth inning, Oscar Gonzalez hit his first major league homer and scored the winning run, and visiting Cleveland rallied to beat Los Angeles.

The surging Guardians took two of three from the Dodgers and have won 15 of their last 19.

**Astros 4, White Sox 3:** Rookie J.J. Matijejevic homered for his first major league hit and Mauricio Dubón added a two-run shot to power host Houston.

The victory broke a tie between Astros manager Dusty Baker and White Sox manager Tony La Russa, giving the 73-year-old Baker a 106-105 edge against the 77-year-old La Russa in regular-season matchups dating to 1996.