

## Trump pleads not guilty to charges

*Associated Press*

MIAMI — Donald Trump became the first former president to face a judge on federal charges as he pleaded not guilty in a Miami courtroom Tuesday to dozens of felony counts accusing him of hoarding classified documents and refusing government demands to give them back.

The history-making court date, centered on charges that Trump mishandled government secrets that as commander in chief he was entrusted to protect, kickstarts a legal process that will unfold at the height of the 2024 presidential campaign and carry profound consequences not only for his political future but also for his own personal liberty.

Trump approached his arraignment with characteristic bravado, posting social media broadsides against the prosecution from inside his motorcade en route to the courthouse and insisting — as he has through years of legal woes — that he has done nothing wrong and was being persecuted for political purposes. But inside the courtroom, he sat silently, scowling and arms crossed, as a lawyer entered a not guilty plea on his behalf in a brief arraignment that ended without him having to surrender his passport or otherwise restrict his

travel.

The arraignment, though largely procedural in nature, was the latest in an unprecedented reckoning this year for Trump, who faces charges in New York arising from hush money payments during his 2016 presidential campaign as well as ongoing investigations in Washington and Atlanta into efforts to undo the results of the 2020 race.

Always in campaign mode, he swiftly pivoted from the solemn courtroom to a festive restaurant, stopping on his way out of Miami at Versailles, an iconic Cuban spot in the city's Little Havana neighborhood where supporters serenaded Trump, who turns 77 on Wednesday, with "Happy Birthday." The back-to-back events highlight the tension for Trump in the months ahead as he balances the pageantry of campaigning with courtroom stops accompanying his status as a twice-indicted criminal defendant.

Yet the gravity of the moment was unmistakable.

Until last week, no former president had ever been charged by the Justice Department, let alone accused of mishandling top-secret information. The indictment unsealed last week charged Trump with 37 felony counts — many under the Espionage

Act — that accuse him of illegally storing classified documents in his bedroom, bathroom, shower and other locations at Mar-a-Lago and trying to hide them from the Justice Department as investigators demanded them back. The charges carry a yearslong prison sentence in the event of a conviction.

Trump has relied on a familiar playbook of painting himself as a victim of political persecution. He attacked the Justice Department special counsel who filed the case as a "thug" and "deranged," pledged to remain in the race no matter what and addressed supporters Tuesday night at his Bedminster, N.J., golf club, where he delivered a roughly half-hour speech full of repeated falsehoods and incendiary rhetoric and threatened to go after President Joe Biden and his family if elected.

"The seal is broken by what they've done. They should never have done this," Trump said of the indictment.

But Attorney General Merrick Garland, an appointee of Biden, sought to insulate the department from political attacks by handing ownership of the case last November to a special counsel, Jack Smith, who on Friday declared, "We have one set of laws in this country, and they apply to everyone."

## Russia steps up aerial strikes amid counteroffensive

*Associated Press*

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian forces fired cruise missiles at the southern Ukrainian city of Odesa and shelled the eastern Donetsk region early Wednesday, killing at least six people and damaging dozens of homes, regional Ukrainian officials said.

Russian forces have recently stepped up aerial strikes in their nearly 16-month war, a Ukrainian military spokesman said. The country's armed forces, meanwhile, have reported limited gains in the early stages of a counteroffensive to take back the nearly one-fifth of Ukraine's territory that is under Russian control.

The grinding Ukrainian advance is pressing slowly ahead, Ukraine's Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar said Wednesday. Western analysts and military officials say the effort to dislodge entrenched, powerfully

armed and large numbers of Russian troops could take years.

Ukrainian troops have advanced 200-500 yards at various sections of the front line around the Donetsk city of Bakhmut and 300-350 yards in the southern Zaporizhzhia region, Maliar claimed.

Ukrainian forces have managed to make gains despite the Russian edge in artillery and air power, she said.

It was not possible to verify the claims.

Ukrainian forces can expect to make slow progress in what will be a "hugely difficult" fight as the counteroffensive gains traction, according to a Western official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence.

"Intense fighting is now ongoing in nearly all sectors of the front," the official said "This is much more than probing. These are full-

scale movements of armor and heavy equipment into the Russian security zone."

The official described the Ukrainian attacks as methodical and said that, broadly speaking, "Russian forces have put up a good defense."

In Odesa, three food warehouse employees were killed in a strike that also damaged homes, shops and cafes in the city's downtown, the regional administration said on Facebook. Another 13 people were injured.

Search teams were looking for possible survivors under the rubble of the warehouse, it said.

The attack on the port city, launched from the Black Sea, was the second in a week and involved four Kalibr cruise missiles, three of which were intercepted by air defenses, the administration said.

# General: Promotions block impairs security

By DOUG G. WARE

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Marine Gen. Eric Smith on Tuesday told senators that Sen. Tommy Tuberville's effort to hold up hundreds of military promotions could undermine national security.

"It certainly compromises our ability to be most ready," Smith told members of Senate Armed Services Committee during a hearing on his nomination to become the next commandant of the Marine Corps. "Our readiness is national security."

The four-star general said the blocked promotions, which include more than 200 military officers, have an impact on readiness, decision making and the effectiveness of the units hindered by the delays.

"When a three-star general retires ... there will be a one-star general, a fairly new one, in charge of [a] 48,000-person Marine Expeditionary Force," Smith offered as an example of how the delay can affect readiness. "It will have an effect."

Tuberville, R-Ala., a member of the committee who was at the hearing, has blocked the Senate for months from making stan-

dard voice votes to approve military promotions over his objection to a Pentagon policy that provides travel money to troops for reproductive health care, including abortions. The nominees can be confirmed by the Senate one by one in a process that would consume months of the upper chamber's floor time.

"We live in a dangerous world," Tuberville told Smith. "And I would hope some of your colleagues in the Pentagon would catch on to that a little bit and get politics out of this. I mean, politics is detrimental to a lot of things. It's good for some things, some things it's not. For the military, it's not."

Smith, 58, was nominated by President Joe Biden last month to be the 39th commandant of the Marine Corps when Gen. David Berger retires next month. He's been assistant commandant since late 2021. As commandant, Smith would be the service's highest-ranking officer and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

To ascend to the post, Smith must be confirmed by the Senate. First, it must be approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee.

## Ruiz named 20th sergeant major of Marines Corps

By COREY DICKSTEIN

*Stars and Stripes*

The Marine Corps has selected a 30-year veteran who has served combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan and worked as a drill instructor and recruiter as the next senior enlisted Marine.

The Corps last week announced it had selected Sgt. Maj. Carlos A. Ruiz to become the 20th sergeant major of the Marine Corps. Ruiz will become the top enlisted Marine on Aug. 8 when he is scheduled to relieve Sgt. Maj. Troy Black, who is set to retire. Ruiz now serves as the senior enlisted leader for Marine Forces Reserve and Marine Forces South.

As the senior enlisted Marine, Ruiz will work alongside the Marine commandant and advise him on the issues that impact enlisted troops. Black has served as the sergeant major of the Marine Corps since July 2019, working alongside Gen. David Berger, the commandant who is slated to retire in the summer.

Black, in a statement, endorsed Ruiz's selection.

"He's a proven leader, a combat veteran and has experience in all elements of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force, especially in his current assignment at U.S. Marine Corps Forces Reserve," Black said. "As sergeant major of the Marine Corps, he will lead our Marines to the next level. He's a Marine who will continuously provide leadership, guidance, care and advocacy for all Marines and their families."

Ruiz enlisted in the Marines in 1993 in Phoenix, according to his official biography.

Ruiz's awards include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal with combat distinguishing device, Meritorious Service Medal with gold star, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with two gold stars, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with one gold star, and the Combat Action Ribbon with one gold star, according to his biography.

Ruiz will take over as Gen. Eric Smith is expected to take over as commandant from Berger as soon as next month.

## Chinese live-fire training near Taiwan follows US Navy drills

By ALEX WILSON

*Stars and Stripes*

China launched a series of military exercises, including live-fire training, in the East China Sea this week, just days after massive naval drills by a pair of U.S. Navy aircraft carriers and three allies in the Philippine Sea. Beijing marked off at least three areas along its eastern coast for training between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. Tuesday and designated one area for "ship-borne weapons and light weapons shooting training," according to navigational warnings issued by China's Maritime Safety Administration.

The training areas were between 150 miles and 278 miles from Taiwan, in the same region where China carried out three days of drills in mid-April in response to Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen's meeting with House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in California that month.

Tuesday's live-fire training took place just 11 miles from the Dachen Islands, a chain that was administered by Taiwan until the First Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1955.

Additional exercises are scheduled to take place throughout the week in the South China Sea and East China Sea.

# USDA seeks accurate claims on meat labels

Associated Press

The U.S. Department of Agriculture said Wednesday it hopes to weed out false or misleading animal-welfare claims on meat and poultry packaging with new guidance and testing.

The claims — such as “pasture-raised,” “humanely raised,” and “raised without antibiotics” — are increasingly popular with consumers and allow producers to charge a premium. Perdue “free range” chicken breasts with no antibiotics sell for \$5.78 per pound at Walmart, for example; store brand chicken breasts without those claims sell for \$2.79 per pound.

Both meat producers and animal welfare advocates say the USDA isn’t adequately substantiating the claims or ensuring they meet consumer expectations. The USDA lets producers define some terms, including “humane,” which can lead to widely varying conditions for animals. Other claims like “free range” are clearly defined by the USDA, but some producers are skirting requirements.

The USDA must approve all animal welfare claims on meat and poultry labels before products can be sold. But unlike “organic” claims, which are verified in person by government regulators, animal welfare claims are substantiated with paperwork submitted

to the USDA.

The USDA doesn’t have the regulatory authority to check animal welfare claims on farms, said Sandra Eskin, the USDA’s deputy undersecretary for food safety.

“There are plenty of companies out there that are following the law and many that are not, and that’s just not fair,” Eskin said.

Eskin said the USDA plans to update its guidelines to require more documentation from companies making animal welfare claims. It will also strongly encourage companies to hire third-party verification groups, such as Human Farm Animal Care, a non-profit organization in Virginia that certifies animal welfare claims.

To substantiate “no antibiotics” claims, the USDA also plans to explore new testing that can find traces of antibiotics in animals once they arrive at processing plants.

Eskin said the agency may also update definitions of certain claims, a change some producers have been pressing for. Perdue Foods, a major poultry and pork producer, recently asked the USDA to clarify the difference between “free range” and “pasture raised.” The agency uses the terms interchangeably, Perdue said, even though “free range” chickens may roam in dirt or shrubs and not necessarily pasture.

# White House official broke Hatch Act rule

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Since taking on the role of White House press secretary, Karine Jean-Pierre has become known for frequently dodging questions by citing the Hatch Act. The law bars civil servants from politicking during their day jobs, and Jean-Pierre uses it to deflect reporters’ questions involving campaigns.

But apparently she wasn’t careful enough. The Office of Special Counsel, a government agency that enforces the Hatch Act, said in a recent letter that Jean-Pierre violated the law before last year’s midterm elections.

Her offense: Making frequent references to “MAGA Republicans” during briefings.

According to a letter from the Office of Special Counsel, Jean-Pierre “made those references to generate opposition to Republican candidates” and “accordingly, making the references constituted political activity.”

Jean-Pierre said the White House counsel’s office was reviewing the letter, adding that “we do everything we can” to comply with the law and take it “very seriously.”

She noted she was confused by the violation.

After all, she said, Trump’s White House used the phrase “MAGA” about 2,000 times to describe his administration’s policies.

# NATO defense chiefs plans to upgrade Ukraine ties

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

NATO defense chiefs will put the final touches this week on a new Russia strategy and a plan to elevate Ukraine’s status with the alliance, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday.

Stoltenberg’s comments came on the eve of a two-day meeting among allies in Brussels, where Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will hold a concurrent gathering of partners focused on supplying weaponry for Ukraine’s war effort against Russia.

The meetings in Brussels likely will be the last major gathering of top allied defense officials before a July summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, where President Joe Biden and world leaders will meet.

In Vilnius, allies “will send a strong mes-

sage of support and solidarity with Ukraine and make sure clear that Ukraine’s future is in NATO,” Stoltenberg told reporters.

Still, it remains unlikely that allies will take any concrete steps resulting in swift NATO entry for Ukraine, which requires unanimous support from the 31 members.

Numerous members, including Germany and France, long have been ambivalent about making Ukraine a NATO ally. If those objections to accession were overcome, the alliance’s requirements likely would mean that Ukraine would have to wait until the war with Russia is over.

Instead, allies are expected to agree on other steps forward, such as giving Ukraine a boost within NATO’s bureaucracy. Stoltenberg said allies are considering upgrading the NATO-Ukraine Commission to the

level of “council.”

“If allies agree to establish a NATO council, that actually means that we will then be 32 equals. It will be the 31 allies and Ukraine sitting around the same table and at equal terms,” he said.

Meanwhile, defense ministers will focus on further strengthening NATO’s eastern flank with new regional plans to defend allied territory with more troops able to deploy on shorter notice.

“The regional plans require a new NATO force structure,” Stoltenberg said. “This will provide well over 300,000 troops at high readiness, backed by substantial air and naval power.”

The NATO gathering comes while Ukraine is in the early stages of a long-planned counteroffensive.



# Fort Polk officially renamed Fort Johnson

By ROSE L. THAYER  
*Stars and Stripes*

With the striking of an anvil to symbolize the forging of the warrior spirit, the home of the Army's Joint Readiness Training Center in Louisiana was officially renamed Tuesday from Fort Polk to Fort Johnson.

"At the heart of the warrior spirit lies courage, unwavering bravery to face danger head on, to stand firm in the face of adversity and to protect the freedoms we hold dear," said Brig. Gen. David Gardner, the post's commander. "If Sgt. William Henry Johnson doesn't exemplify the warrior spirit in its purest form, then I don't know who does."

Born in North Carolina, Johnson moved to New York as a teenager and enlisted in the Army in June 1917. He was assigned to the 369th Infantry Regiment, an all-Black New

York National Guard unit known as the Harlem Hellfighters.

Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief of the National Guard Bureau, attended Tuesday's ceremony and said Johnson fought in World War I with the National Guard — the first war in which the organization was officially called the National Guard and was considered a professional military force. He thanked the commission tasked with renaming the Army's nine installations for choosing a member of the National Guard for recognition.

"Fort Johnson is named after a citizen and a soldier," Hokanson said. "It is a tribute to both his personal heroism with sacrifices made by so many to defend freedom."

On May 14, 1918, Johnson was deployed to France where his unit was attached to a French unit in the Argonne Forest. At

about 2 a.m., Johnson was standing guard when German forces attacked. With his fellow guard incapacitated, he sounded the alarm and attacked the enemy alone.

He threw his entire supply of grenades, then fired his rifle until his bullets ran out.

"He charged the enemy swinging his rifle as a club and when he observed two Germans about to carry his wounded comrade away for interrogation, Johnson abandoned his rifle and instead drew his bolo knife, fighting off the raiders in close quarters and pushing them back from the position," Gardner said.

Johnson became one of the first American privates to receive the Croix du Guerre, France's highest military honor. However, in the U.S., Black veterans did not receive equal recognition.

Though Johnson was paraded through New York City as a hero after the war, his disability pension was denied and he died of his war wounds in 1929.

After his death, Johnson was awarded the Purple Heart in 1996, the Distinguished Service Cross in 2002, and the Medal of Honor in 2015. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

The Army did not establish Camp Polk in central Louisiana until January 1941. The post, which has always been used to train troops, closed for four years between World War II and the Korean War. In 1993, the Army moved the Joint Readiness Training Center from Fort Chaffee, Ark., to the installation.

Fort Johnson is the seventh of nine Army installations to change its name in recent months to shed homage to a Confederate general.

## Drug deal likely led to Denver shooting after Nuggets' win

*Associated Press*

DENVER — A shooting in downtown Denver amid fans celebrating the Nuggets' first NBA championship win was likely sparked by a drug deal gone wrong, police said Tuesday. The violence left 10 people wounded, including one of two people arrested in connection with the shooting.

All of the injured — nine men and one woman — are expected to survive, including five or six people that police believe were bystanders not involved in the drug deal, Chief Ron Thomas said at a news conference. He said 20 rounds were fired at the scene, roughly a mile from Ball Arena where the Nuggets defeated the Miami Heat on Monday night.

A total of five handguns were found by investigators but testing still needs to be done to determine whether they were used at

the shooting, the police chief said. A "significant quantity" of suspected fentanyl pills were also found at the scene, Commander Matt Clark said, along with cash.

Of the 10 people taken to the hospital, four underwent emergency surgery at the same time at Denver Health Medical Center. Five were still there on Tuesday afternoon, all in fair condition, said Dr. Eric Campion, a trauma surgeon.

The Nuggets' win drew thousands of people downtown and the shooting happened as the celebration was winding down after midnight, authorities said. Still, hundreds of police officers were massed in the area when the gunfire broke out.

Authorities were still investigating how many people were involved in the shooting. Two men are being held on suspicion of being felons who are barred from having a firearm, said Clark.

## Transgender activist banned for going topless at White House

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Transgender advocate Rose Montoya is no longer welcome at White House events after posting on social media a video of herself and two others going topless for a time at Saturday's Pride Month celebration on the South Lawn.

"The behavior was simply unacceptable," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Tuesday. "It was unfair to the hundreds of attendees who were there to celebrate their families."

Speaking at the White House press briefing, Jean-Pierre said, "Individuals in the video certainly will not be invited to future events." The White House spokeswoman said the bare-chested display "was not a normal thing that has happened under this administration."

President Joe Biden hosted the event to show the administration's support of the LGBTQ+ community. There is a push by some Republicans at the state level to restrict drag shows and limit the options for youth who are seeking to transition their genders.

Biden said Saturday that he had a message for the entire community, but especially for transgender children: "You are loved. You are heard. You're understood. And you belong."

Parts of his speech appeared in the video posted on social media by Montoya.

Montoya defended her post on Instagram and Twitter, saying that she had "zero intention of trying to be vulgar or be profane in anyway," adding that she covered her nipples with her hands in the video "just to play it safe."

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Root canal upends Biden schedule for the day

**DC** WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden got a root canal Monday and it left a cavity in his daily schedule, forcing him to bow out of a public event with college athletes and postpone his meeting with NATO's secretary general by a day.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre minimized the significance of the procedure at the Monday afternoon news briefing. She called it "routine" and said Biden is feeling "just fine." She declined to say what caused Biden's dental pain and led to the root canal.

Biden's personal physician, Kevin O'Connor, said in a memo released by the White House that Biden reported the pain in his lower right premolar on Sunday. The president had an initial root canal that day, and he "tolerated the procedure well" with no complications, O'Connor said.

On Monday morning, Biden had "further discomfort" in his mouth, which O'Connor said was expected. An endodontal specialty team from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center completed Biden's root canal at the White House.

### PacifiCorp ordered to pay billions after wildfires

**OR** PORTLAND — A jury in Oregon on Monday found the electric utility PacifiCorp responsible for causing devastating fires during Labor Day weekend in 2020, ordering the company to pay tens of millions of dollars to 17 homeowners who sued and

finding it liable for broader damages that could push the total award into the billions.

The Portland utility is one of several owned by billionaire Warren Buffett's Omaha, Neb.-based investment conglomerate Berkshire Hathaway. The property owners, suing on behalf of a class of thousands of others, alleged that PacifiCorp negligently failed to shut off power to its 600,000 customers during a windstorm, despite warnings from officials, and that its power lines were responsible for multiple blazes.

There has been no official cause determined for the Labor Day fires, which killed nine people, burned more than 1,875 square miles in Oregon, and destroyed upward of 5,000 homes and structures.

PacifiCorp immediately said it would appeal.

### Law looks to penalize libraries that ban books

**IL** CHICAGO — Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker on Monday signed into law a bill that he says will make Illinois the first state in the nation to outlaw book bans.

Illinois public libraries that restrict or ban materials because of "partisan or doctrinal" disapproval will be ineligible for state funding as of Jan. 1, 2024, when the new law goes into effect. The new law comes into play as states across the U.S. push to remove certain books in schools and libraries, especially those about LGBTQ+ themes and by people of color.

To be eligible for state funds, Illinois public libraries must adopt the American Library Association's Library Bill of

Rights, which holds that "materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation," or subscribe to a similar pledge.

### Lawmaker pleads guilty to drunken driving

**IN** SEYMOUR — An Indiana state legislator pleaded guilty Monday to drunken driving charges less than two weeks after police say he crashed his pickup truck through an interstate highway guardrail and drove away.

Republican Rep. Jim Lucas, of Seymour, signed an agreement with the prosecutor in southern Indiana's Jackson County in which he pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charges of driving while intoxicated and leaving the scene of an accident at the interchange of Interstate 65 and Indiana 11 early May 31, court records show.

The agreement calls for no additional jail time for Lucas as long as he completes at least 180 days of supervised probation, including completion of any alcohol or drug abuse treatment as determined by the county probation department.

Lucas said in a written statement to The Associated Press that he took "full responsibility" and apologized for his actions.

### Tanker driver lost control on ramp under I-95

**PA** PHILADELPHIA — The driver of a tractor-trailer hauling gasoline lost control on an off-ramp and flipped the tanker truck on its side in a wreck that set it afire and destroyed a section of the

East Coast's main north-south highway, Pennsylvania's top transportation official said Monday.

In the first official accounting of a wreck that threw hundreds of thousands of morning commuters into chaos and disrupted untold numbers of businesses, state Transportation Secretary Mike Carroll said the driver was northbound "trying to navigate the curve, lost control of the vehicle, landed on its side and ruptured the tank."

The driver was feared dead, and a relative of a New Jersey truck driver who has not been heard from since Sunday told The Philadelphia Inquirer that investigators had contacted the family in an effort to identify human remains recovered from the wreckage.

### Thousands of dead fish wash up on beach

**TX** QUINTANA — Tens of thousands of dead fish washed up on the Texas Gulf Coast over the weekend, covering the shoreline with rotting carcasses and leading local officials to warn visitors to keep away.

Waves from the Gulf of Mexico pushed in dead fish "by the thousands" Friday in Brazoria County, which is over 40 miles south of Houston, Quintana Beach County Park officials said. Low levels of dissolved oxygen in the water made it difficult for the fish to breathe, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department officials said.

The phenomenon — known as a "fish kill" — is common as temperatures rise in the summer, the state department said.

— From wire reports

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# Knights whip Panthers, win Stanley Cup

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Golden Knights games have always been as flashy as any show on the Las Vegas Strip, the sword-fighting mascot taking the ice before what seems like a legion of players marching out through the mirrored entrance into the roar of the crowd.

If this team was ever going to win the Stanley Cup, it was going to do it with Vegas flash.

The Knights delivered just that from dazzling passes to Mark Stone's hat trick to all-out goal celebrations, capturing the young organization's first title with a 9-3 romp over the beaten up and exhausted Florida Panthers on Tuesday night.

Coach Bruce Cassidy, in a nod to the Knights' brief history, started five of the original Vegas players known as the Misfits and put the sixth on the second shift. Cassidy sounded confident the day before the game that his team would play well, and it certainly did, blowing open a one-goal game in the second period to lead 6-1. The nine goals tied the record for the most in a Cup Final.

"Vegas, you certainly know how to throw a party," NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman

told the crowd. "What's going on inside this arena and outside is incredible and a testament to what a great hockey market this is."

Vegas closed out the series in five games to win the Cup before a delirious franchise-record crowd of 19,058 at T-Mobile Arena that drowned out the pregame introductions of forward Jonathan Marchessault and goalie Adin Hill and cheered all the way through the final buzzer.

Marchessault, who ended the postseason with a 10-game points streak, received the Conn Smythe Trophy for playoff MVP.

"I couldn't be more proud of our team, our organization," Marchessault said. "Everybody stepped up at different times and that's why we're winners."

Stone's hat trick — with the third into an empty net with 5:54 left — was the first in a Stanley Cup Final since Colorado's Peter Forsberg in 1996, also against the Panthers.

The Knights got the rest of their scoring from Nic Hague, Alec Martinez, Reilly Smith, Michael Amadio, Ivan Barbashev and Nicolas Roy. Martinez's goal in the second period

came nine years to the day after he scored the double-overtime goal in Game 5 to give the Los Angeles Kings' the Cup.

Hill came through with another strong performance with 31 saves that has quickly made him a Knights fan favorite, even earning "MVP! MVP!" chants in the third period. Jack Eichel, the eight-year pro playing in his first postseason, had three assists.

"This is what everyone dreams of," Eichel said. "You come to an organization like this and the expectation is to win this thing. It's a special place to play."

As captain, Stone was the first to lift the cup before handing it over to the six Misfits to each get their turn skating with the trophy before handing it down the line to the rest of the team.

"Unbelievable," Stone said. "The look in my teammates' eyes when I got it, one of the craziest feelings I've ever had. I can't even describe the feelings in my stomach right now. It's everything you can imagine."

Aaron Ekblad, Sam Reinhart and Sam Bennett scored for Florida, and Sergei Bobrovsky

was overwhelmed in another tough performance against Vegas — allowing eight goals on 30 shots — after carrying Florida to the Final. Missing from the lineup was star forward Matthew Tkachuk after playing injured in Game 4.

"It was a privilege for me to play with them and fight with them," Bobrovsky said. "It's definitely tough to lose that way and end the season that way. But we have done a fantastic job and I want to stick to that."

The Knights have set the standard of what an expansion franchise should look like, making the Cup Final in their first season and the playoffs in every year but one. Six players remain from the initial 2017-18 team that lost in five games to the Washington Capitals in the Final.

Those players watched the Capitals skate with the Stanley Cup that night, and then they got the chance to do the same Tuesday to fulfill owner Bill Foley's quest to win the title in the sixth year.

"We waited a long time for that moment to come back," Marchessault said. "We wanted to make sure we cash in this time."

## Marchessault makes off with playoff MVP trophy

Associated Press

Jonathan Marchessault won the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP after leading the Golden Knights to the Stanley Cup, a fitting honor for one of the franchise's original players who has been a key contributor since the first puck dropped in Las Vegas.

Marchessault led the Golden Knights with 13 goals and ranked second with 25 points during their playoff run, this one ending on a winning note unlike five years ago when they lost in the Final. He is one of six original Knights players left from the start of the expansion franchise in 2017 and has since developed a reputation for scoring big goals at timely moments.

"What I've always said about Jonathan

Marchessault: He seizes big moments," general manager Kelly McCrimmon said before Game 5. "He has always had a knack for that."

Marchessault scored important goals during just about every Vegas playoff run, from the second-round series clincher in 2018 through this Final against the Florida Panthers. Not bad for a player who was undrafted, traded two games into his NHL career and later left unprotected by Florida in the expansion draft.

He's the first undrafted player to win the Conn Smythe since Wayne Gretzky.

"He went on a heck of a run," Vegas leading scorer Jack Eichel said. "So deserving of the Conn Smythe. I'm so happy for him. He's been here since the beginning."

Reflecting upon his journey as an undersized player who has been perpetually overlooked, the 5-foot-9, 183-pound Quebec native said he would not be satisfied until he won a championship.

"When you win it all, that's one of those things that your name will always be a winner," Marchessault said. "And it doesn't matter if you win one or six or seven. If you win one time, you win it."

Marchessault can now call himself a winner, more than a decade after he went unselected in the NHL Draft and six years since the Panthers let Vegas take him for nothing fresh off a 30-goal season. They actually traded a draft pick and Reilly Smith — also still with the Golden Knights — to Vegas to select Marchessault.



# No simple solutions to major golf division

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Professional golf rarely has been this divided, bordering on hostile, and there is no simple solution. It was always going to be a hot topic at the U.S. Open.

So maybe the USGA should be thankful. No one is talking about rolling back the golf ball.

"It obviously pales in comparison, when before it was maybe the biggest new issue we were talking about," Patrick Cantlay said Tuesday.

It seems small now, especially with the consternation and confusion that has gripped players over the last week about the PGA Tour and European tour becoming partners with the Saudi national wealth fund behind LIV Golf, the great disruptor in the sport.

No one knows what to expect from the agreement to pool commercial businesses and rights. No one is entirely sure who will be in charge. What happens to the LIV Golf league next year? Is this the last we hear of the Cleeks and Majesticks?

The shock is still fresh among

so many players, particularly how blindsided they were by PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan not telling any of the players — Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy included — about the deal until right before it was announced.

This figures to be a primary topic of conversation the rest of the year.

And that's why the USGA and R&A should put their proposal for a shorter golf ball on ice.

The proposal for a "model local rule" that could lead to rolling back the distance a golf ball travels for elite players is in feedback mode. Manufacturers and others can weigh in until Aug. 14. If the governing bodies adopt the proposal, it would take effect starting in 2026.

That's two years down the road. But there remains much discussion, which was starting to get heated. And right now, golf has enough strife on its plate.

This can wait. Golf won't suffer by putting on hold the debate about whether distance is hurting the game. So many opponents of the proposed rollback

will say golf has never been stronger. That's not the point. Golf has never been in such disarray. There's no need to add another layer of argument.

This golf ball debate was starting to get testy, right up until Monahan and Yasir Al-Rumayyan, who controls the Saudi wealth fund, sat next to each other in a television interview for an announcement that even a week later has created far more shock than awe, not to mention lingering anger.

The players meeting at the Canadian Open was described as heated and intense as Monahan tried to explain to players why the tour became partners with former adversaries, and why he kept them in the dark. Among the topics was whether Monahan should be replaced, which was greeted by applause from a dozen or so players.

"Tensions were high in those meetings," said Cantlay, one of five players on the PGA Tour board. "But like I said, it takes a bit of a backseat given all the other stuff going on."

Still to be determined is

whether the PGA Tour goes along with the model local rule, which would create undeniable bifurcation of the rules, a first in the nearly 300 years since the sport had its first set of rules.

Based on the meeting at the Memorial, players are largely unified against change.

"I think the USGA should not put it on the shelf, but put it in a safe and lock it up so far away they can't even think about it anymore," Billy Horschel said. "I don't think rolling back is the right way to go. I think it's the easy way out."

Jon Rahm was more measured, almost resigned to whatever happens.

"They keep trying to protect from distance by adding distance to a golf course in a way where only long hitters are going to have a better chance to win," Rahm said. "I don't know how else to really explain it. If they want to roll it back, then so be it."

"I think they're only going to... affect the shorter hitters a little bit more. I don't think the top players in the world will change."

## Rangers bring in Laviolette as coach to replace Gallant

Associated Press

The New York Rangers have hired Peter Laviolette as their next coach, bringing in a seasoned veteran with Stanley Cup-winning experience to replace Gerard Gallant.

The team announced the selection of Laviolette on Tuesday, putting the U.S.-born leader in NHL coaching victories in charge at a time of great expectations, with the Original Six franchise firmly in win-now mode.

"With Peter's extensive experience as a head coach in the National Hockey League, as well as the success his teams have had at several levels throughout his career, we are excited about what the future holds with him leading our team," general manager Chris Drury said in a statement.

Laviolette replaces Gallant, who mutually parted ways with the Rangers after their first-round playoff exit. Gallant spent two seasons behind the bench in New York, leading the team to the Eastern Conference fi-

nals last year.

Since Drury, a former captain, has taken over as general manager, the directive from owner James Dolan down has been to win the organization's first championship since 1994.

Laviolette certainly has experience to fit the bill of doing that: He coached Carolina to the Stanley Cup in 2006 and has taken two other teams to the Final: Philadelphia in 2010 and Nashville in 2017.

"Peter's impressive résumé, which includes winning a Stanley Cup and advancing to the Final with three different teams, has made him one of the most respected coaches in the league," Dolan said. "As we move forward in our goal to consistently contend for the Stanley Cup, I am confident that Peter is the right head coach to lead our team."

Most recently, Laviolette spent the past three seasons coaching the Washington Capitals. They made the playoffs and lost in

the first round each of the first two seasons before missing this year amid a bevy of injuries, and Laviolette and the team decided to go their separate ways.

The Rangers identified Laviolette early in their lengthy coaching search, which was designed to take time for Drury and the organization to make a decision. Laviolette interviewed multiple times for the job, with his experience making him the choice over former Nashville and New Jersey coach John Hynes, among others.

Decisions on Laviolette's coaching staff will be made in the coming days. Gord Murphy, an assistant under Gallant the past two years, will not return.

Murphy's departure could open a spot for Kevin McCarthy, Laviolette's longtime right-hand man who has served as an assistant with him for almost two decades through the stops with the Hurricanes, Flyers, Predators and Capitals.

# Yankees rally vs. Scherzer, outlast Mets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Clay Holmes got out of a sticky situation, Drew Smith did not and the New York Yankees won a wild Subway Series opener at Citi Field.

Holmes escaped a bases-loaded jam in the eighth inning and the Yankees stormed back from four runs down against Max Scherzer to beat the skidding Mets 7-6 on Tuesday night.

"One of those fun ones," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "Obviously the buzz around Mets-Yankees, and you can feel that in the building. To have a lot of really cool, big moments in that game and to have everyone have a hand in it, those are fun."

Giancarlo Stanton and DJ LeMahieu homered off Scherzer, and pinch-hitter Josh Donaldson drove in the tiebreaking run with a sacrifice fly in the sixth after Brandon Nimmo misplayed a ball in center field.

Before the seventh, Smith became the second Mets pitcher ejected by umpires this season for using an illegal foreign substance.

"They said both of my hands were too sticky," Smith said. "Really surprised, because I haven't done anything different all year. Sweat and rosin. I don't

know what else to say. Nothing changed. It's just, I think the process is so arbitrary."

**Athletics 2, Rays 1:** Pinch-hitter Carlos Pérez broke a tie with an RBI groundout in the eighth inning and host Oakland beat major league-best Tampa Bay before a season-best crowd of 27,759.

Athletics fans swarmed the stadium in what they called a "reverse boycott" to protest the team's planned move to Las Vegas. Fans shouted their anger at owner John Fisher, and the team responded with its season-best seventh straight victory.

Hogan Harris (2-0) pitched seven stellar innings, allowing one run on four hits with two strikeouts. Trevor May earned his third save in five chances as Oakland's bullpen recorded a save for the sixth consecutive game.

**Phillies 15, Diamondbacks 3:** Zack Wheeler threw six strong innings, Kyle Schwarber led off the game with a 450-foot homer and visiting Philadelphia beat Arizona.

The D-backs had their six-game winning streak snapped. Philadelphia has won eight of 10.

The Phillies had 20 hits and every starter had at least one, led by Bryson Stott's 3-for-5

night that included a homer and two RBIs.

**Twins 7, Brewers 5:** Carlos Correa hit a two-run homer for host Minnesota to cap a four-run ninth inning off Milwaukee closer Devin Williams.

Correa crushed a 1-1 changeup from Williams (3-1) into the left-field seats. Williams didn't record an out as he blew his first save in 11 attempts. Josh Winder (1-0) pitched two scoreless innings for the Twins.

**Angels 7, Rangers 3:** Hunter Renfroe hit a two-run homer during a three-run sixth inning and visiting Los Angeles beat AL West-leading Texas.

The Angels have won three straight and eight of nine. Shohei Ohtani reached base all five times with a single, double and three walks.

**Giants 11, Cardinals 3:** Mike Yastrzemski and Patrick Bailey homered, Michael Conforto had four hits and three RBIs, and visiting San Francisco beat St. Louis.

Keaton Winn earned the save with four innings of relief in his major league debut.

**Orioles 11, Blue Jays 6:** Rookie Gunnar Henderson hit his first career grand slam to power host Baltimore past Toronto.

**Rockies 7, Red Sox 6 (10):** Randal Grichuk had a two-run

double in a three-run 10th inning and visiting Colorado held on to beat Boston.

**Cubs 11, Pirates 3:** Ian Happ hit a three-run, first-inning drive for his first home run since May 5, Christopher Morel added a three-run homer in the eighth and host Chicago beat Pittsburgh.

**Padres 6, Guardians 3:** Gary Sánchez hit a three-run home run, his sixth homer since joining host San Diego on May 30, as the Padres beat Cleveland.

**Dodgers 5, White Sox 1:** Tony Gonsolin pitched six shutout innings, Will Smith and David Peralta hit two-run homers in the first inning and host Los Angeles beat Chicago.

**Mariners 9, Marlins 3:** George Kirby struck out a career-high 10 and Mike Ford homered twice as host Seattle beat Miami.

**Astros 6, Nationals 1:** Rookie Hunter Brown (6-3) allowed four hits in seven scoreless innings as host Houston beat Washington.

**Reds 5, Royals 4:** Kevin Newman had an RBI double during visiting Cincinnati's five-run second inning, and Brandon Williamson allowed four runs, three earned, in five innings to earn his first big league win.

## Beckham suits up for 1st time in 16 months with Ravens

Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — Odell Beckham Jr. is finally back.

For the first time in 16 months, Beckham participated in a live practice Tuesday as the Baltimore Ravens opened mandatory minicamp.

And even for a player who earned Pro Bowl acclaim his first three seasons and helped the Los Angeles Rams win the Super Bowl two seasons ago, it felt like a big step of a long journey.

"I think I've been trying to not think about it so much, because there's been so many disappointments," Beckham said prior to Tuesday's practice. "And I've been

in a good mental headspace, to where I've tried to downplay this. But I definitely think that I'll be excited to put a jersey on and go out and do the thing that you've done your whole life and that you love to do."

Beckham did not play last season following ACL surgery that came after suffering a knee injury during the second quarter of that Super Bowl victory in February 2022.

The Ravens are counting on the 30-year-old's extended recovery having a successful conclusion. In April, they signed Beckham to a one-year contract worth \$15 million guaranteed and \$3 million in potential bonuses.

Beckham was not involved in optional team activities that began last month and ran through last week, but said he is planning to join quarterback Lamar Jackson and others for additional workouts in Florida following minicamp.

"It's a process," Beckham said of his recovery. "It's hard when you get to the pinnacle of success in this sport and you feel like it was taken away from you. It wasn't something that was easy to live with. It was very hard to go through that. And then have surgery and your son born four days after, so many mixed emotions that I've had to deal with over the years. But it kind of all gets put to rest."