

Putin says Russia avoided ‘civil war’

Bloomberg News

President Vladimir Putin said Russia averted “civil war” following the armed rebellion by Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin, in a public display of support for his military leadership that the mercenary chief had sought to overthrow.

“You in fact prevented a civil war,” Putin told 2,500 troops assembled at a televised Kremlin ceremony Tuesday. “In a difficult situation you acted clearly and coherently.”

Putin spoke after a meeting late Monday with security chiefs that included Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, his close ally who’s been the main target of Prigozhin’s attacks over the handling of the war in Ukraine.

The Federal Security Service announced Tuesday that it’s closed a criminal investigation into Prigozhin and Wagner fighters over Saturday’s armed mutiny that spiraled into the biggest threat to Putin’s 24-year-rule. The Defense Ministry in Moscow said preparations have begun to transfer heavy weaponry from Wagner to units of the Russian army.

Putin had pledged to respect a deal brokered by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko for Prigozhin to end the uprising in return for being allowed to go to Belarus and to close criminal proceedings against him

and his troops.

A private jet used by Prigozhin landed in Belarus at the military airbase Machulishchi from St. Petersburg early Tuesday, according to the monitoring group Belarusian Hاجun, which cited air traffic data. It wasn’t immediately clear if Prigozhin was on board the aircraft and he hasn’t been seen since ending the revolt late Saturday.

“It was very painful to see the events that happened in southern Russia,” Lukashenko said at a televised meeting Tuesday with military officers in the capital, Minsk. “The worst thing is that if there were turmoil, in the West they would instantly take advantage of this.”

Prigozhin has accused the Russian Defense Ministry of seeking to destroy Wagner with an order requiring his fighters sign up with the military by July 1. He said Monday that Lukashenko had offered to allow Wagner to continue operating in his country.

The rapid chain of events has left the United States, Europe and China puzzling over the political fallout from a rebellion that shattered Putin’s invincible image as Russia’s leader. The 24-hour crisis highlighted bitter divisions within Russia over the faltering war in Ukraine that’s the biggest conflict in Europe since World War II, as a Ukrainian

counteroffensive has continued to try to push Putin’s forces out of occupied territories.

The Kremlin and state media continued to tout support for Putin from world leaders. Putin and Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman spoke by phone, while Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said in an interview with Germany’s Bild that the Russian leader won’t be weakened by the mutiny.

Wagner’s heavily-armed troops first took control of Russia’s southern city of Rostov-on-Don, and then rapidly moved toward Moscow virtually unopposed, reaching 124 miles from the capital before turning back.

In an 11-minute audio message on Telegram Monday, Prigozhin said the lightning progress of his fighters toward Moscow, blockading military units along the way without significant resistance, highlighted “serious problems with security on the whole territory of the country.”

The mercenary chief also pointedly noted the expressions of public support he said his fighters enjoyed as they marched through Russia’s heartland.

Lukashenko said there were “no heroes” in the story of the mutiny and the effort to resolve the crisis. “We let the situation get out of hand,” he said.

US, Ukraine’s annual Black Sea drill moves to UK

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

An annual Black Sea exercise that frequently draws Russia’s ire resumed this week after a year hiatus, thousands of miles away from its hotly contested home waters.

Sea Breeze, traditionally led by Ukraine and the United States, kicked off Monday in Glasgow, Scotland, the Ukrainian navy said on its official Facebook page the same day.

The exercise includes 15 countries and is taking place in waters near the British Isles, according to the post, which did not specify a more precise location.

The number of U.S. ships or sailors participating in the current iteration of Sea Breeze, which last took place in the Black Sea in 2021, wasn’t announced.

Participants will focus on mine countermeasures, including the use of unmanned undersea vehicles, as a part of allied efforts to ensure safe navigation in the Black Sea, the Ukrainian navy said.

Ukrainian minehunter ships Cherkasy and Chernihiv are participating in the exercise, which was announced separately on the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet official Facebook page.

Tensions ahead of the 2021 exercise ran high as Russia threatened to fire on participants if they encroached on its territorial waters. Moscow ultimately claimed to have fired at and dropped bombs in front of a British ship transiting the Black Sea near Crimea in June of that year.

The British disputed the Kremlin claim,

saying no shots were fired and that their ship was transiting in Ukrainian waters according to international law.

Shortly after Russia launched its full-scale war on Ukraine in February 2022, the Black Sea was closed to foreign warships. Since then, only Black Sea-homeported warships from Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine can enter.

In February, the destroyer USS Nitze visited Turkey, bringing the ship closer to the Black Sea than any other U.S. warship since Russia invaded Ukraine.

On Monday, Ukrainian navy commander Vice Adm. Oleksiy Neizhpapa said he was thankful for the help of the U.S., the United Kingdom and others in ensuring the exercise went ahead despite the war.

Work begins on \$97M Osprey hangar in Japan

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The Air Force has broken ground on a \$97 million hangar and maintenance facility for special operations CV-22 Osprey aircraft at this air-lift hub in western Tokyo.

The project began Thursday on the east side of Yokota's runway, Charles Maib, a spokesman for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Japan Engineer District, said in an email Tuesday.

A Japanese Shinto priest took part in a ritual at the site with Ruel Binonwangan, Honshu area engineer for the Japan Engineer District, according to a photograph Maib sent by email.

The 73,300-square-foot, three-bay hangar and maintenance unit is slated to open in early 2026, Maib said in comments emailed by Yokota's public affairs office.

"This \$97 million facility will go a long way in protecting the investment America has made in the CV-22 aircraft already present at Yokota Air Base," he said. "It gives

them a home to call their own."

The Ospreys, helicopter-airplane hybrids flown by the 21st Special Operations Squadron, have operated from temporary facilities on Yokota since October 2018.

The new hangar will be part of a campus to support the Ospreys. The project, underway since 2019, includes 587,000 square feet — equivalent to about 10 football fields — of paved areas.

The hangar will accommodate the 753rd Special Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Maib said. It will host activities such as CV-22 engine and propeller maintenance, tool crib storage and aircraft inspection.

The facility enables the 353rd Special Operations Wing to consolidate all training and operations at Yokota in a new state-of-the-art facility and co-locate the CV-22 aircraft with squadron personnel, Maib said.

"This project is yet another building block in support of the U.S./Japan Alliance, enhancing the security of the region and the efficiency of the Wing," he said.

After Titan submersible implosion, Coast Guard looks to improve safety

Associated Press

As an international group of agencies investigates why the Titan submersible imploded while carrying five people to the Titanic wreckage, U.S. maritime officials say they'll issue a report aimed at improving the safety of submersibles worldwide.

Investigators from the U.S., Canada, France and the United Kingdom are working closely together on the probe of the June 18 accident, which happened in an "unforgiving and difficult-to-access region" of the North Atlantic, said U.S. Coast Guard Rear Adm. John Mauger, of the Coast Guard First District.

Salvage operations from the sea floor are ongoing, and the accident site has been mapped, Coast Guard chief investigator Capt. Jason Neubauer said Sunday. He did not give a timeline for the investigation. Neubauer said the final report will be issued to the Interna-

tional Maritime Organization.

"My primary goal is to prevent a similar occurrence by making the necessary recommendations to advance the safety of the maritime domain worldwide," Neubauer said.

Evidence is being collected in the port of St. John's, Newfoundland, in coordination with Canadian authorities.

All five people on board the Titan were killed. Debris from the vessel was located about 12,500 feet underwater and roughly 1,600 feet from the Titanic on the ocean floor, the Coast Guard said last week.

One of the experts whom the Coast Guard has been consulting said Monday he doesn't believe there is any more evidence to find.

"It is my professional opinion that all the debris is located in a very small area and that all debris has been found," said Carl Hartsfield, a retired Navy captain.

Embattled 5th SFAB chief fired after investigation

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The embattled commander of the Army's 5th Security Forces Assistance Brigade was fired last week after a service investigation into toxic leadership claims, according to an Army statement Monday.

Col. Jonathan Chung was relieved by Maj. Gen. Donn Hill, who leads the Army Security Force Assistance Command, over a "loss of confidence ... based on the results of an Army Regulation 15-6 investigation," according to a statement from the command, which is based at Fort Liberty, formerly Fort Bragg, N.C. Chung's firing comes after he was suspended from command of the 5th SFAB in April amid the command investigation into accusations that he and others harbored a "counterproductive leadership culture."

Col. Tony Braxton, who took temporary command of the unit when Chung was suspended, will remain in charge of the 5th SFAB, according to the Army statement.

Chung's suspension came after complaints by soldiers he commanded — now and in the past — that he regularly disparaged subordinates and rebuked soldiers over minor infractions. The command investigation into Chung's leadership found the colonel "exhibited counterproductive leadership" qualities, according to an Army official who reviewed the 15-6, a non-criminal, command-initiated administrative probe to gather information about allegations against a soldier. The Army declined to make the investigation public on Monday.

Chung has declined wrongdoing. Jeremy Snyder, a civilian attorney for Chung, said Monday that the former commander simply pushed his troops hard to ensure they were prepared for their missions.

Chung is a "dedicated and caring leader who held people accountable to high standards to ensure individual and unit readiness to accomplish the Army mission," said Snyder of the firm Military Law.

Chung was disappointed in the Army's decision to remove him from command, Snyder said. The attorney also said Chung faced no further punishment or reprimand from the Army beyond his removal as 5th SFAB commander.

Poland's American-made tanks arriving

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The first batch of Abrams tanks ordered by Poland was scheduled to arrive Tuesday at a Baltic Sea port, part of a multibillion-dollar program that also includes a new maintenance center to manage the influx of American-made armor.

A port near Szczecin was slated to take delivery of 14 tanks, and additional tanks for the formation of a battalion will arrive within months, Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak said in a statement Monday.

The shipment serves as a milestone for the Polish army, which has been investing heavily in modernization over the past several years.

Those efforts have intensified since Rus-

sia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine last year.

In all, Poland will incorporate 366 Abrams tanks into its arsenal in the coming years.

The fleet will be a mix of the M1A1 and the more state-of-the-art M1A2 version.

Polish officials also announced Monday that a center for maintaining and servicing tanks will be created in Poznan, which is home to the U.S. Army's first permanent base in the country.

"In the longer term, the potential of the center will also be available to U.S. troops stationed in Poland and other European countries," a statement by the Polish Armaments Group said.

The Poznan facility further cements the city's status as a hub for the U.S. Army,

which on Monday marked a first when leadership of the service's new garrison switched hands during a change of command ceremony at Camp Kosciuszko.

Col. Christopher Church took command of the garrison, which oversees day-to-day support operations for the Army across Poland.

The camp in Poznan is also home to the Army's V Corps forward headquarters.

Church replaced Col. Jorge Fonseca, who over the past several years led the Army's on-the-ground effort to set up its first permanent garrison in Poland, which activated in March.

There are about 500 military personnel operating at the Poznan base and 10,000 American military members in Poland.

Prigozhin denies coup attempt, says Wagner Group will still survive

Bloomberg News

Yevgeny Prigozhin broke his silence Monday for the first time since leading an armed rebellion, saying he wasn't trying to oust Vladimir Putin's government but would keep his Wagner mercenary company going despite official efforts to shut it down.

The march on Moscow by Wagner troops to within 124 miles of the capital on Saturday was a protest aimed at bringing to account those responsible for "enormous mistakes" in Russia's war in Ukraine as well as to prevent the "destruction" of his mercenary group by officials, Prigozhin said Monday in an 11-minute audio message on his press service's Telegram channel.

"We did not have the goal of overthrowing the existing regime and the legitimately elected government," he said, stopping short of openly pledging his loyalty to the Russian president.

There was no immediate response from the Kremlin, which has sought in public to put the

dramatic upheaval behind it. State television showed footage Monday of Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu — the main target of Prigozhin's attacks on the handling of the war — meeting commanders.

The conflicting signals only added to the mystery surrounding the weekend's events, which were the biggest public challenge to Putin's authority in his more than two decades in office.

The Russian president early Saturday denounced the revolt as "treason" in a TV address to the nation and threatened "harsh" punishment that never transpired.

Instead, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko brokered a deal for Prigozhin to end the revolt in return for Putin allowing him to travel to Belarus and dropping criminal mutiny charges.

He accused the Defense Ministry of seeking to destroy Wagner with an order requiring his fighters sign up with the military by July 1.

Trump talks about document in recording

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — An audio recording from a meeting in which former President Donald Trump discusses a "highly confidential" document with an interviewer appears to undermine his later claim that he didn't have such documents, only magazine and newspaper clippings.

The recording, from a July 2021 interview Trump gave at his Bedminster, N.J., resort for people working on the memoir of his former chief of staff Mark Meadows, is a critical piece of evidence in special counsel Jack Smith's indictment of Trump over the mishandling of classified information.

The special counsel's indictment alleges that those in attendance at the meeting with Trump — including a writer, a publisher and two of Trump's staff members — were shown classified information about a Pentagon plan of attack on an unspecified foreign country.

"These are the papers," Trump says in a moment that seems to indicate he's holding a secret Pentagon document with

plans to attack Iran. "This was done by the military, given to me."

Trump's reference to something he says is "highly confidential" and his apparent showing of documents to other people at the 2021 meeting could undercut his claim in a recent Fox News Channel interview that he didn't have any documents with him.

"There was no document. That was a massive amount of papers, and everything else talking about Iran and other things," Trump said on Fox. "And it may have been held up or may not, but that was not a document. I didn't have a document, per se. There was nothing to declassify. These were newspaper stories, magazine stories and articles."

Trump pleaded not guilty earlier this month to 37 counts related to the alleged mishandling of classified documents kept at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Fla., as part of a 38-count indictment that also charged his aide and former valet Walt Nauta.

Woman charged in Black neighbor's death

Associated Press

A white woman accused of firing through her door and fatally shooting a Black mother in front of her 9-year-old son in central Florida was charged Monday with manslaughter and assault.

Susan Lorincz was arrested earlier this month following the fatal shooting of Ajike Owens in Ocala, Fla. She was formally charged with one count of manslaughter with a firearm and one count of assault.

State Attorney William Gladson said his office contemplated filing a second-degree murder charge but that prosecutors concluded there was insufficient evidence that Lorincz had "hatred, spite, ill will or evil in-

tent" toward Owens.

"As deplorable as the defendant's actions were in this case, there is insufficient evidence to prove this specific and required element of second-degree murder," Gladson said in a statement. "I am aware of the desire of the family, and some community members, that the defendant be charged with second-degree murder. My obligation as State Attorney is to follow the law in each case that I prosecute."

If convicted, Lorincz faces up to 30 years in prison. Amanda Sizemore, Lorincz's attorney from the public defender's office, said she had no comment at this time.

Anthony Thomas, an attorney for Owens'

family, said the decision against filing a second-degree murder charge was disappointing.

"We firmly believe that justice demands nothing less," Thomas said in a statement. "The failure of the prosecutor to charge Susan with what truly reflected her wanton, reckless behavior undermines our ability to even get real accountability."

Owens was killed June 2 in Ocala, about 83 miles north of Orlando.

After the shooting, Lorincz told investigators she had problems for two years with being disrespected by children in the neighborhood — including Owens' children, who are ages 12, 9, 7 and 3.

Next advance in cancer treatment could be a vaccine

Associated Press

SEATTLE — The next big advance in cancer treatment could be a vaccine.

After decades of limited success, scientists say research has reached a turning point, with many predicting more vaccines will be out in five years.

These aren't traditional vaccines that prevent disease, but shots to shrink tumors and stop cancer from coming back. Targets for these experimental treatments include breast and lung cancer, with gains reported this year for deadly skin cancer melanoma and pancreatic cancer.

"We're getting something to work. Now we need to get it to work better," said Dr. James Gulley, who helps lead a center at the National Cancer Institute that develops im-

mune therapies, including cancer treatment vaccines.

More than ever, scientists understand how cancer hides from the body's immune system. Cancer vaccines, like other immunotherapies, boost the immune system to find and kill cancer cells. And some new ones use mRNA, which was developed for cancer but first used for COVID-19 vaccines.

For a vaccine to work, it needs to teach the immune system's T cells to recognize cancer as dangerous, said Dr. Nora Disis of UW Medicine's Cancer Vaccine Institute in Seattle.

Once trained, T cells can travel anywhere in the body to hunt down danger.

"If you saw an activated T cell, it almost

has feet," she said. "You can see it crawling through the blood vessel to get out into the tissues."

Patient volunteers are crucial to the research.

Kathleen Jade, 50, learned she had breast cancer in late February, just weeks before she and her husband were to depart Seattle for an around-the-world adventure. Instead of sailing their 46-foot boat, Shadowfax, through the Great Lakes toward the St. Lawrence Seaway, she was sitting on a hospital bed awaiting her third dose of an experimental vaccine. She's getting the vaccine to see if it will shrink her tumor before surgery.

"Even if that chance is a little bit, I felt like it's worth it," said Jade, who is also getting standard treatment.

UN says civilian toll high since Taliban's takeover

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — The United Nations said Tuesday it has documented a significant level of civilians killed and wounded in attacks in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover — despite a stark reduction in casualties compared with previous years of war and insurgency.

According to a new report by the U.N. mission in Afghanistan, or UNAMA, since the takeover in mid-August 2021 and until the end of May, there were 3,774 civilian casualties, including 1,095 people killed in violence in the country.

That compares with 8,820 civilian casualties — including 3,035 killed — in just

2020, according to an earlier U.N. report.

The Taliban seized the country in August 2021 while U.S. and NATO troops were in the final weeks of their withdrawal from Afghanistan after two decades of war.

According to the U.N. report, three-quarters of the attacks since the Taliban seized power were with improvised explosive devices in "populated areas, including places of worship, schools and markets," the report said. Among those killed were 92 women and 287 children.

A press statement from the U.N. that followed Tuesday's report said the figures indicate a significant increase in civilian

harm resulting from IED attacks on places of worship — mostly belonging to the minority Shiite Muslims — compared with the three-year period prior to the Taliban takeover.

The statement also said that at least 95 people were killed in attacks on schools, educational facilities and other places that targeted the predominantly Shiite Hazara community.

The statement said that the majority of the IED attacks were carried out by the region's affiliate of Islamic State — known as the Islamic State in Khorasan Province — a Sunni militant group and a main Taliban rival.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman charged for killing Uber driver

TX EL PASO — A Kentucky woman has been accused of fatally shooting her West Texas Uber driver after mistakenly believing she was being kidnapped and taken to Mexico, according to police.

Phoebe Copas remained jailed in El Paso, Texas, after being charged with murder in the death of Daniel Piedra Garcia, 52.

The shooting took place as Piedra was driving Copas, 48, to a location in far southeast El Paso. Copas, who is from Tompkinsville, Ky., was in El Paso visiting her boyfriend, according to authorities.

During the ride, Copas saw traffic signs that read “Juarez, Mexico,” according to an arrest affidavit. El Paso is located on the U.S.-Mexico border across from Juarez.

Believing she was being kidnapped and taken to Mexico, Copas is accused of grabbing a handgun from her purse and shooting Piedra in the head, according to the affidavit. The vehicle crashed into barriers before coming to a stop on a freeway.

Millions affected by pension fund hack

CA SACRAMENTO — The country’s largest public pension fund said the personal information of about 769,000 retired California employees and other beneficiaries — including Social Security numbers — was among data stolen by Russian cybercriminals in the breach of a popular file-transfer application.

It blamed the breach on a third-party vendor that verifies

deaths. The same vendor, PBI Research Services/Berwyn Group, also lost the personal data of at least 2.5 million Genworth Financial policyholders, including Social Security numbers, to the same criminal gang, according to the Fortune 500 insurer.

The California Public Employees Retirement system said they were offering affected members two years of free credit monitoring. Genworth said in a statement posted online it would offer credit monitoring and ID theft protection.

The criminal gang behind the hack, known as C10p, is extorting victims, threatening to dump their data online if they don’t pay up.

Lawmakers OK bill to overhaul liquor law

WI MADISON — The laws governing Wisconsin’s multibillion-dollar liquor industry would be streamlined and updated under a sweeping measure passed by the state Assembly that’s supported by groups from the smallest craft brewers to the largest national brewers, bar owners and alcohol distributors.

The massive overhaul to the laws affecting the production, distribution and sale of alcohol passed with broad bipartisan support. The measure now heads to the Senate for final approval. Democratic Gov. Tony Evers, who was involved with discussions of the measure, is expected to sign it into law.

The proposal would create a new division within the state Department of Revenue, which would be in charge of overseeing and enforcing the state’s alcohol laws. The absence of such a unit now has led to inconsistent en-

forcement of the law — and questions over how they affect new businesses that weren’t envisioned when the laws were enacted, supporters of the bill said.

Those who worked on the measure with Republican legislative leaders said now is the time to update laws in a state that saw the birth of beer-giant Miller in Milwaukee and in recent years has seen an explosion of craft brewers, like New Glarus Brewing Co. which makes Spotted Cow and other beers available for sale only in Wisconsin.

Charter school can’t make girls wear skirts

DC WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court left in place an appellate ruling barring a North Carolina public charter school from requiring girls to wear skirts to school.

The justices declined without comment to hear an appeal from the Charter Day School in the eastern North Carolina town of Leland. A federal appeals court had ruled that the school’s dress code violated students’ constitutional rights.

School founder Baker Mitchell had said the dress code was intended to promote “chivalry” by the male students and respect for the female students, according to court documents.

The dress code has already been changed to allow girls to wear pants, in line with the lower court ruling.

Deputy fatally shoots driver, dragged by car

TN MEMPHIS — A Tennessee sheriff’s deputy trying to stop a man from driving away was dragged by the vehicle and fatally shot the driver, officials said.

A Shelby County sheriff’s deputy approached a parked car as part of an “enforcement action” and tried to stop Jarveon Hudspeth, 21, from leaving the scene, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation said in a statement. It didn’t release the deputy’s name.

For reasons still being investigated, the situation escalated and Hudspeth drove off and dragged the deputy about 100 yards, the statement said. At some point while being dragged, the deputy fired his service weapon at least once and hit the driver, who stopped about a half-mile later, the bureau said.

Hudspeth died on the way to the hospital, and the deputy was hospitalized with serious injuries, officials said.

Governor blasts neo-Nazi rallies near synagogues

GA MACON — Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp condemned two neo-Nazi demonstrations that took place outside synagogues in Macon and near Atlanta.

“There is absolutely no place for this hate and antisemitism in our state. I share in the outrage over this shameful act and stand with Georgians everywhere in condemning it,” the Republican tweeted.

A group of about a dozen neo-Nazi extremists — waving swastika flags and displaying antisemitic propaganda — gathered in front of an East Cobb synagogue, about 20 miles from Atlanta during services, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported.

Similarly, a group of 15 protesters yelling antisemitic messages gathered outside Temple Beth Israel in downtown Macon.

— From wire reports

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Bedard set as likely No. 1 pick in NHL Draft

Associated Press

The tales of how much time Connor Bedard devoted to developing his precise and productive puck-shooting skills while growing up in the secluded neighborhood of Lynn Valley, tucked amid Vancouver's North Shore mountains, have become the stuff of lore.

Marred floors, broken windows, the thud of shots keeping neighbors up at night and Bedard turning down a family vacation to Disneyland are among them. They all paved the way for the 17-year-old to be the presumptive No. 1 pick when the Chicago Blackhawks open the two-day NHL Draft in Nashville, Tenn., on Wednesday.

And that doesn't include the time Bedard's mother, Melanie, was pulled over by police because of a license plate chipped by various errant attempts.

"I don't think I was missing that bad," Bedard said with a laugh while attending the NHL combine earlier this month.

"Maybe hit a post, ricocheted and hit the car or something," he added. "My mom probably had some valuable things broken by

me. But, you know, I hope she doesn't mind too much."

Why would she? Those lengthy practice sessions, which eventually shifted to the family's backyard to reduce the din and potential damage, have resulted in Bedard being labeled a generational talent.

He is drawing comparisons to hockey's other Connor — the McDavid one, who went first overall to Edmonton in the 2015 draft.

"It's just the next generation," NHL Central Scouting chief Dan Marr said.

"These young players' hockey sense is so quick to adapt and read plays and the skill levels, it's getting better and better, and it's getting faster," Marr added. "Connor McDavid started that trend, and Connor Bedard is going to lead it into the next trend."

And forget windows. At just under 5-foot-10 and 185 pounds, Bedard is better known for breaking records and the loftiest of expectations over the past three seasons with the Western Hockey League's Regina Pats and on the international stage.

He was the WHL's first player — and seventh in Canadian Hockey League history — to be granted exceptional status, allowing Bedard to play in the major junior ranks at 15. In 2021-22, he became the youngest WHL player to score 50 goals, finishing with 51 in 62 games. Last season, his 143 points (71 goals, 72 assists in 57 games) were the most in the league since 1995-96.

Internationally, his 36 points (17 goals, 19 assists) in 16 world junior championship games rank fourth on the tournament list behind Peter Forsberg (42 points in 14 games), Robert Reichel (40 in 21) and Pavel Bure (39 in 21).

"Incredible," is how Swedish prospect Leo Carlsson referred to Bedard.

"Exceptional," was the word friend and fellow Canadian prospect Zach Benson used. "I wouldn't say there's a way to slow him down."

Bedard is the complete offensive package with deft moves — which he put on display with his overtime goal in Canada's 4-3 win over Slovakia in the world junior quarterfinals in January

— passing ability and an exceptional shot. Adding another tale to the Bedard lore, at 13, he strengthened his shot by continuing to practice solely using his left hand after breaking his right wrist.

His shot has been honed into one fluid, quick-release snapping motion. Bedard uses a stick that's larger than most for a player of his size, which adds extra torque and gives him an ability to maneuver the puck away from defenders.

Chicoutimi defenseman Matteo Mann learned firsthand how difficult it is to defend Bedard when the two practiced together at the CHL prospects game in January.

At 6-6, Mann thought he had the angle and reach, only to have Bedard drag the puck around and snap off a shot.

"I don't think people understand how far across he really brings the puck, because if you watch on TV, it's easy to point out defensemen's errors in terms of the way they're positioning their stick," Mann said. "I'd even go to say it's deceptive."

McDavid 1 vote shy of unanimous pick for 3rd MVP award

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Connor McDavid won his third Hart Trophy as NHL MVP on Monday night, falling one vote short of unanimous selection after the highest-scoring season by a player in more than a quarter-century.

McDavid also won the Ted Lindsay Award as the NHL's most outstanding player as voted by his peers. The Edmonton Oilers' captain led the league with 64 goals, 89 assists and 153 points. That's the most points since Mario Lemieux in 1995-96.

McDavid previously won the Hart in 2017 and 2021 and the Lindsay in 2017, 2018 and 2021. Universally recognized as the best hockey player in the world, McDavid is still searching for his first Stanley Cup title after Edmonton lost in the second round of the playoffs to eventual champion Vegas.

"Certainly it's not lost on me what these

trophies mean in the grand scheme of our game," McDavid said. "To do it a number of times, it means a lot to me. Obviously, it's not the motivating factor, but it's special still."

One voter out of 196 picked Boston's David Pastrnak as MVP. The Bruins had a big night at the league's awards ceremony after setting the record for the most wins and points in a regular season, records made possible in part by rule changes.

This year was a rare instance in which most of the major award winners were obvious since before the end of the regular season.

San Jose's Erik Karlsson also became a three-time award winner, receiving the Norris Trophy as top defenseman — his first such honor since 2015. Karlsson at age 32 was the first defenseman to surpass 100 points in a season since Brian Leetch in 1992.

The Bruins had three award winners: captain Patrice Bergeron, goaltender Linus Ullmark and coach Jim Montgomery.

The Vezina Trophy as top goalie and Jack Adams Award as coach of the year were each a first for Ullmark and Montgomery. Ullmark led the league with a 1.89 goals-against average and .938 save percentage and was tied for the most wins with 40 — getting them in just 48 starts.

Montgomery coached Boston to 65 wins in his first season with the team, and he thanked those who supported him through a low point in his career.

Bergeron won the Selke Trophy as the best defensive forward for a sixth time, building on the NHL record he broke last year. At age 37, he led the league in faceoff wins and percentage and was only on the ice for 27 goals against at even strength in 78 games.

LSU cruises to 1st CWS title since 2009

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — LSU went from its low point of the season to the ultimate high in a span of 24 hours.

A day after it gave up the most runs ever in a College World Series game, LSU cranked up its offense and won its first national title since 2009 with an 18-4 victory over Florida on Monday night in the third and deciding game of the finals.

LSU (54-17) staved off elimination three times in bracket play and bounced back from the humiliating 24-4 loss in Game 2 to claim its seventh championship, second to Southern California's 12.

"We got punched in the mouth yesterday," Tigers star Dylan Crews said. "That's the beauty of baseball. You wake up in the morning and do it all over again. We woke up today and you could see on everybody's faces that we were ready to go. Nobody in the country was going to beat us today."

The Tigers wiped out an early 2-0 deficit with a six-run second inning against Jac Caglianone (7-4). The runs kept coming until they finished with the most in a title game since USC's 21-14 win

over Arizona State in 1998. The 14-run margin was the largest ever in a final. Their 24 hits were most in a CWS game.

"It wasn't our day, all the way around," Gators catcher BT Riopelle said.

Thatcher Hurd (8-3) gave up Wyatt Langford's two-run homer in the first and then allowed no hits or runs while retiring 18 of the next 21 batters. Riley Cooper took over in the seventh and gave up Ty Evans' CWS-record fifth homer, and Gavin Guidry finished the combined five-hitter.

Cade Beloso said Jay Johnson's message to the team in the morning meeting was simple.

"It was, 'One game for the national championship. Are you in?' Everybody was, 'Yeah, let's go.' You can't let baseball get to you," Beloso said. "The game is brutal sometimes. You have to show up and play the next day."

There was speculation after Sunday's blowout loss about the Tigers bringing back ace Paul Skenes for a third start in Omaha. He threw a combined 243 pitches over 15½ innings in two spectacular appearances, and he would have been working on three days' rest.

It turned out Skenes was able

to watch from the dugout in the comfort of his sneakers while LSU poured on the runs and Hatcher kept dealing. Skenes headed to the bullpen to do some stretching and throwing in the seventh inning. He went back to the dugout after the eighth and stayed there until he and teammates rushed the mound when Guidry struck out Colby Halter to end it.

Skenes was named the Most Outstanding Player of the CWS.

The Tigers had been pointing toward a title run since their first team meeting last August. Coach Jay Johnson brought back the Southeastern Conference player of the year in Crews and the rest of the core of the 2022 lineup.

Three key transfers took LSU to a higher level. Skenes was the first college pitcher in 12 years with 200 strikeouts and could be the No. 1 pick in the amateur draft. Tommy White hit 24 homers and drove in a nation-leading 105 runs. Hurd was solid as a starter and reliever and matched his longest outing of the year in the title game.

"Right people, right place, right time," Johnson said. "This is the way it was supposed to go."

LSU joined Mississippi, Mississippi State and Vanderbilt in a line of four straight national champions from the SEC.

"Oh my gosh, this is what I dreamed of since I was a freshman, holding this trophy," Crews said. "We're champions, baby, bringing it back to LSU. It's been a long journey for us. We dealt with a lot of stuff. Just to finally say we're national champions ... I cannot wait to put another flag over the field. It's going to be awesome."

Florida (54-17) won the SEC regular-season title, was the No. 2 national seed and set school records for wins and home runs — the Gators hit 17 of the 35 homers by all teams in the CWS. But Florida was unable to carry over the momentum from their record-setting production Sunday.

"I thought our team was in a really good place," Florida coach Kevin O'Sullivan said. "I thought BP was good. They were loose. Put two on the board the bottom half of the first. I thought the dugout was electric. And then all of a sudden we had four walks and I think two hit-by-pitches ... and then we had to go to the 'pen earlier than we wanted to."

Blackhawks get Hall from Bruins to pair with Bedard

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Taylor Hall knows a lot about being the No. 1 pick in the NHL Draft.

That should come in handy for Connor Bedard and the Chicago Blackhawks.

Hall was traded from Boston to Chicago on Monday, clearing some valuable cap space for the Bruins and giving the Blackhawks a veteran winger to pair with Bedard after they take the young center at the top of the draft Wednesday night as expected.

The Blackhawks sent pending restricted free agents Ian Mitchell and Alec Regula to

Boston for Hall and the expiring contract of Nick Foligno.

"We are thrilled to be adding players of Nick's and Taylor's caliber to our organization," Blackhawks general manager Kyle Davidson said in a release. "The two bring a wealth of experience and leadership that will strengthen not only our forward group, but aid in the development of our entire roster."

The 31-year-old Hall had 16 goals and 20 assists in 61 games last season. He also had five goals and three assists in seven playoff games. The Bruins set NHL records for most wins and points in a regular season, but

they were upset by Florida in the first round of the playoffs.

Hall was selected by Edmonton with the No. 1 overall pick in the 2010 draft. He has 264 goals and 429 assists in 13 seasons with Edmonton, New Jersey, Boston, Arizona and Buffalo.

Hall was with the Oilers when they took Ryan Nugent-Hopkins (2011), Nail Yakupov (2012) and Connor McDavid (2015) with the No. 1 pick. He was playing for the Devils when they took Nico Hischier (2017) and Jack Hughes (2019) at No. 1.

Chicago is expected to take Bedard with this year's No. 1

pick. He could be joined on the team's top line by Hall, giving him some valuable experience to lean on.

Foligno, 35, had 10 goals and 16 assists in 60 games last season. Given its financial situation, Chicago could try to convince him to skip free agency with a short-term contract for above-market value.

Shedding salary could allow Boston to re-sign winger Tyler Bertuzzi, who was a great fit after he was acquired at the trade deadline from Detroit. Bertuzzi had 16 points in 21 regular-season games and then 10 points in seven games in the first round.

Brewers send Mets 8 games under .500

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Buck Showalter's solution for his struggling New York Mets seems simple enough.

"Win," the manager said. "It's not complicated."

So far, not much has worked out. The Mets fell a season-worst eight games under .500 after Joey Wiemer hit a go-ahead, two-run homer to straightaway center field in the sixth inning that lifted the Milwaukee Brewers to a 2-1 victory on Monday night.

New York, which won 101 games and shared the NL East title last year in Showalter's first season, is 35-43 despite entering the season with a major league-record \$355 million

payroll. The Mets have lost seven of nine and are 6-15 since completing a three-game sweep of Philadelphia on June 1 — their most recent series win.

"It's always about now and the heck with what happened last year or or last week or tonight," Showalter said. "You've got to get it fixed."

Francisco Lindor hit a sacrifice fly in the fourth for the Mets, who trail NL East-leading Atlanta by 16 games and are 8½ games back of the third wild card. New York is eight games under .500 for the first time since ending the 2021 season at 77-85.

"I don't think anybody saw this coming, man," said Mets

starter Justin Verlander, who threw five scoreless but laborious innings and has a 4.11 ERA in 10 starts since signing an \$86.7 million, two-year deal. "Disappointing. It's disappointing for everybody in this room, I know. It's disappointing for the fans. Just got to keep trying."

Colin Rea (4-4) retired his first eight batters for the Brewers and allowed one run in 6½ innings. Hoby Milner (four outs), Elvis Peguero (one) and Devon Williams (three) completed a three-hitter.

Williams got his 14th save in 15 chances as Milwaukee retired the final 11 Mets in order on just 34 pitches.

"Three hits — kind of tough,"

Showalter said. "We pitched pretty well, all things considered. You'd like to take advantage of that, but we didn't."

Milwaukee stranded eight runners against Verlander, who gave up five hits and struck out five while throwing 100 pitches.

Wiemer's 422-foot drive off Drew Smith (3-3) hit off the black fence surrounding the Mets' celebratory home run apple and rolled about 50 feet away from centerfielder Brandon Nimmo.

"Feels good — put a good swing on a good pitch," said Wiemer, who has 11 homers, tied with Cincinnati's Spencer Steer for third-most among NL rookies.

Westburg solid in debut as Orioles hammer Reds

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Jordan Westburg's first big league plate appearance came during a bit of a downpour.

The Baltimore rookie was able to stay focused.

"Pretty crazy, honestly," Westburg said. "Felt like something out of like a movie, or something that you dream, honestly. Huge raindrops falling. Just trying to focus on picking up the baseball."

Westburg drew a walk in that trip to the plate, the start of a productive night offensively, and he also made a slick defensive play to help the Orioles to a rain-soaked 10-3 victory over the Cincinnati Reds on Monday night. Westburg, one of the game's top infield prospects, was called up earlier in the day and started at second base in his debut.

He had a hit, a walk, a run and an RBI, and in the fifth, he nearly started a double play by flipping the ball with his glove to shortstop Jorge Mateo on a grounder up the middle.

"I'm sure he's done it quite a

few times. He nailed it right there," Orioles outfielder Austin Hays said. "Shows he's comfortable and confident in himself."

The game started 15 minutes late because of the weather, and there was another delay of 1 hour, 44 minutes in the third inning. Baltimore led 2-1 when play was halted, then quickly started adding runs after it resumed.

Bruce Zimmermann (1-0) pitched three innings after the delay in relief of Cole Irvin.

Spencer Steer homered for the Reds, who have dropped three in a row following a 12-game winning streak.

Angels 2, White Sox 1: Mike Trout scored on a game-ending wild pitch, Shohei Ohtani hit his 26th home run, and host Los Angeles beat Chicago.

Trout slid home head-first on the bad throw by Aaron Bummer, helping the Angels get a critical seven-game homestand off to a successful start.

Carlos Estéves (2-1) pitched a scoreless ninth inning to get the win.

Luis Robert Jr. homered for

the third straight game for the White Sox. Reynaldo López (2-5) took the loss after walking Trout to start the ninth. Bummer then came in to face Ohtani, who drew his own walk. The two Angels superstars successfully executed a double steal, leading to Trout's heroics.

Braves 4, Twins 1: Marcell Ozuna hit a go-ahead homer in the seventh and Spencer Strider (9-2) allowed three hits in seven innings while striking out 10 to win his fifth consecutive decision for host Atlanta.

Ronald Acuña Jr. added a two-run homer in a three-run seventh. In the matchup of first-place teams in the NL East and AL Central, the Braves won for the 11th time in 12 games.

Minnesota played its first game at Truist Park, which opened in 2017.

Before Ozuna's homer, the only run allowed by Sonny Gray (4-2) when Travis d'Arnaud drove in a run while grounding into a forceout.

Mariners 8, Nationals 4: J.P. Crawford and Eugenio Suárez both homered, and Luis Castillo

overcame a shaky beginning to pitch seven strong innings and win his first start since May 27 as Seattle opened its final homestand before hosting the All-Star Game next month.

The Mariners needed their offense to come through as Castillo wasn't at his best early on.

Suárez homered leading off the fourth inning against Washington starter Trevor Williams, and Julio Rodríguez's two-out RBI single pulled Seattle even at 3-3. Seattle's three-run fifth inning against Washington's Cory Abbott (0-1) proved to be the difference.

Tigers 7, Rangers 2: Andy Ibañez and Jake Rogers homered as visiting Detroit overcame the early departures of their first two pitchers to beat AL West-leading Texas.

Tigers starter Matthew Boyd and reliever Will Vest were already hurt and out of the game before Ibañez hit a tiebreaking three-run homer in the third inning for a 4-1 lead. Rogers added a two-run shot with two outs in the sixth to chase Texas starter Andrew Heaney (5-5).