

Hovercraft to be mission ready by fall

By CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

The Navy's new hovercraft will be ready to deploy and conduct missions in September as the service races to replace its aging landing craft fleet, according to a recent federal watchdog report.

Known as the ship-to-shore connector, the upgraded version of the service's air-cushioned landing craft has struggled through four years of delays due to developmental testing and technical issues, most recently related to cracking propeller blades and premature gearbox wear, the Government Accountability Office said last week in its annual weapons system assessment.

However, further issues with those components are not expected and the hovercraft should complete its initial operating test and evaluation phase by the end of June, putting the craft on track to be mission ready by the fall,

the GAO said.

Manufactured by Rhode Island-based Textron Inc., the new hovercraft is larger, faster and more efficient than its predecessor, which has been used since the early 1980s to ferry Marines and their equipment from amphibious ships to shore during combat or disaster-relief efforts. The older air-cushioned landing craft are reaching the end of their service life, with 68 having already been extended by a decade from 20 years to 30 years.

Program officials previously said initial operational capability — or when the new craft can deploy, conduct missions and be maintained by a unit — would be achieved when six of them were delivered to the fleet.

Nine new craft have been delivered to the Navy since the replacement program launched in 2009, including four in 2023. While it was the first time in the program's history that four connector craft were delivered with-

in 12 months, the GAO report stated several of the vessels took five years to complete and had "major production-quality issues."

Two crafts delivered in 2023 had the lowest number of deficiencies the program has found in testing, though one had a "severe deficiency."

"Specifically, weld repairs on the bottom of the hull failed during testing, allowing water to enter the hull, and additional weld defects were found after the acceptance trials," the report read.

The program officials said the weld defects were corrected, and the Navy accepted the hovercraft in November 2023.

The Navy's plan is to replace all 72 vessels of its hovercraft fleet. Of those, 24 crafts are under contract, including the nine that have been delivered.

The GAO report has noted delays in the program reaching operational status since 2020. Some hulls had issues with leaks in the

propeller lubricating oil system, failure of the craft de-ice propulsor shroud, abrasions on the bow ramp cables, as well as propeller blade erosion and air leakage in the craft cushion vanes, which delayed testing and delivery.

Those issues were corrected and did not impact the delivery of later hulls.

The report raised concerns about a stable production line due to a lack of funding.

Originally, the program's timeline outlined five hovercrafts would be procured each fiscal year. While the contractor demonstrated it could provide four craft per year, the service is slowing its procurement for fiscal years 2025-28, accepting just two crafts per year, according to the Navy's fiscal 2024 budget estimate.

The decision to slow the procurement was attributed to the current level of planned funding for fiscal 2025 through 2028, according to the GAO.

General pleads guilty to lesser charges at court-martial

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

FORTSAMHOUSTON, Texas — Maj. Gen. Phillip Stewart pleaded guilty Monday morning to two of the lesser charges against him just before opening arguments were to begin in his court-martial for sexual assault of a subordinate officer.

The two-star Air Force general pleaded guilty to pursuing an unprofessional relationship with a subordinate officer and adultery during the motions hearing that began at 8:30 a.m. in a courtroom at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston in Texas.

However, Stewart did plead

not guilty to the remaining charges against him: two counts of sexual assault, dereliction of duty for flying a training aircraft within 12 hours of drinking alcoholic beverages and conduct unbecoming an officer.

The general is accused of sexual assault and flying an aircraft after drinking at Altus Air Force Base in Oklahoma in April 2023, according to the charge sheet.

The pursuit of an unprofessional relationship stretched between March and May 2023, according to authorities. This violated an Air Education and Training Command regulation in place since 2020.

Stewart acknowledged Monday that the sexual encounter occurred when he pleaded guilty to adultery. At the time of the encounter at Altus AFB, Stewart was married, but it was noted during the court hearing that he is now divorced.

For pleading guilty to the charges, Stewart faces punishment of forfeiture of pay, a reprimand or up to 18 months in prison.

Stewart requested a court-martial by jury panel for the remaining charges. The trial began Monday with military judge Col. Matthew Stoffel. The jury must consist of officers of equal or greater rank than Stewart.

A selection of eight jurors ended Saturday night with six men and two women chosen to serve during a trial that is expected to last through the week.

At the time of the charges, Stewart commanded the 19th Air Force — the unit responsible for pilot training within Air Education and Training Command at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Air Force Base.

Lt. Gen. Brian Robinson, commander of the training command, fired Stewart in May and decided last year to move forward with the court-martial despite a report from a hearing in October recommending against it.

China uses unusual weapons in territorial feuds

The Washington Post

When Chinese forces violently intercepted Philippine naval ships last week in a disputed area of the South China Sea, they didn't use handguns or rifles, let alone the more high-tech weaponry now widely seen in modern conflicts.

Instead, videos shared by the Philippine military showed the Chinese coast guard wielding pickaxes and knives as they made their bid to exert control over the area. Experts have said the use of these simple weapons was a tactical choice.

"The underlying logic is something like, 'Sticks and stones can break my bones, but are less likely to lead to war, probably,'" said Daniel Mattingly, a Yale University political science professor who studies the Chinese military.

China, a sprawling country that shares land borders with 14 countries and has maritime borders with a further six, has volatile territorial disputes with several of its neighbors. But over recent years, its troops have often used simple weapons while battling over these borders, despite the considerable advances in technology used by the Chinese military in the period.

The tactic has been used notably on China's border with India, according to unverified videos of clashes that have been shared on social media.

In a 2022 clash with the Indian military over a portion of northeastern India that China claims, Chinese and Indian forces appeared to engage in hand-to-hand combat and use stones and makeshift clubs as weapons. In 2017, front-line Chinese and Indian troops did not carry weapons and instead fought by "jostling" — or bumping chests — amid Chi-

na's effort to seize land from tiny Bhutan, a close ally of India's.

China's use of nonconventional weaponry may be a strategic move to avoid sparking escalation and to stave off international attention, particularly from the United States. But experts warned that while it may have worked this time, it was risky.

"Maybe [China] could point to the idea that these were tools and not weapons in this instance [in the South China Sea]," said Harrison Prétat, deputy director and fellow with the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "But we're getting pretty close to the line."

In the most recent incident in the South China Sea, the Chinese coast guard boarded Philippine navy vessels to damage and confiscate equipment, according to Philippine officials, who said China aimed to stop Philippine ships from resupplying the Sierra Madre warship on the Second Thomas Shoal, a reef that has become a focal point of the maritime dispute.

A spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington disputed this and asserted the Philippines had illegally intruded into waters without China's permission and "violated international law."

"The Chinese side took necessary measures in accordance with [the] law to safeguard its sovereignty, which was lawful and justified, and done in a professional and restrained manner," Liu Pengyu wrote in an email to *The Washington Post*.

U.S. officials have repeatedly said that an armed attack on a Philippine government vessel in the South China Sea

would trigger the 1951 mutual treaty that commits the U.S. and the Philippines to defend each other in the Pacific.

"Not using guns makes it ambiguous whether the United States is obligated to step in and potentially aid the Philippines," Mattingly said. "If they did use guns, then there is a stronger case that the U.S. should."

The Philippines said Friday morning that it does not intend to invoke that treaty in response to last week's altercation, with Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin telling reporters that the government did not consider that confrontation with the Chinese coast guard to be an armed attack.

"We saw bolo, ax, nothing beyond that," Bersamin said, according to the Associated Press.

While the use of sharp objects alone could limit the risk of escalation, it can still prove dangerous and even lethal. In the South China Sea this week, a Philippine sailor lost a finger. In June 2020, 20 Indian soldiers — and at least four Chinese soldiers — died, according to official accounts from both nations.

China and India have disputed the 2,100-mile Himalayan border for decades. Crude battles date as far back as the 1970s, when the armies confronted each other via fist-fights and stone pelting. Under the terms of a 1996 bilateral agreement, border troops are barred from using firearms within two kilometers of the border, called the Line of Actual Control.

Recent Sino-Indian border disputes have centered on the Tawang sector, a sector that lies within the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, as well as around La-

dakh — at India's far northeastern tip — and the Galwan Valley. A clash in 2022 over the Tawang sector took the shape of a gun-free faceoff, leading to hand-to-hand combat and troop injuries. This clash marked the most serious incident between India and China since 2020.

On another Himalayan border, in 2017, Chinese and Indian troops squared off in Bhutan over an area that China claimed belonged to them but that India and Bhutan maintained to be Bhutanese. In that skirmish, too, there were no reports of gun use or weaponry. Instead, the fighting involved "jostling," in which soldiers from India and soldiers of China's People's Liberation army bumped chests, without punching or kicking, to push the other side backward but did not open fire.

Sushant Singh, a senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Research in India and a lecturer at Yale, said there was often gunfire on India's borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh. "The PLA's culture is very different from what a Western military culture would be, where use of weaponry is far more frequent," he said.

But September 2020 brought a deviation from this norm, when — amid public pressure following the deaths of Indian soldiers in a clash months before — shots were fired at the border for the first time in decades, with both sides accusing the other of firing warning shots.

"Once either side decides that the norm no longer exists, it doesn't exist on both sides," Singh said. "Think of them as very weak guardrails, which can be broken off and then restarted."

2 federal judges put limits on student debt forgiveness

Associated Press

TOPEKA, Kan. — Federal judges in Kansas and Missouri on Monday together blocked much of a Biden administration student loan repayment plan that provides a faster path to cancellation and lower monthly payments for millions of borrowers.

The judges' rulings prevent the U.S. Department of Education from helping many of the intended borrowers ease their loan repayment burdens going forward under a rule set to go into effect July 1. The decisions do not cancel assistance already provided to borrowers.

In Kansas, U.S. District Judge Daniel Crabtree ruled in a lawsuit filed by the state's attorney general, Kris Kobach, on behalf of his state and 10 others. In his ruling, Crabtree allowed parts of the program that allow students who borrowed \$12,000 or less to have the rest of their loans forgiven if they make 10 years' worth

of payments, instead of the standard 25.

But Crabtree said that the Department of Education won't be allowed to implement parts of the program meant to help students who had larger loans and could have their monthly payments lowered and their required payment period reduced from 25 years to 20 years.

In Missouri, U.S. District Judge John Ross' order applies to different parts of the program than Crabtree's. His order says that the U.S. Department of Education cannot forgive loan balances going forward. He said the department still could lower monthly payments.

Ross issued a ruling in a lawsuit filed by Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey on behalf of his state and six others.

Together, the two rulings, each by a judge appointed by former President Barack Obama, a Democrat, appeared to greatly limit the scope of the Biden ad-

ministration's efforts to help borrowers after the U.S. Supreme Court last year rejected the Democratic president's first attempt at a forgiveness plan. Both judges said Education Secretary Miguel Cardona exceeded the authority granted by Congress in laws dealing with students loans.

Bailey and Kobach each hailed the decision from their state's judge as a major legal victory against the Biden administration and argue, as many Republicans do, that forgiving some students' loans shifts the cost of repaying them to taxpayers.

The White House said it strongly disagrees with the judges' rulings and would continue to defend the program, and use every available tool to give relief to students and borrowers.

Both orders are preliminary, meaning the injunctions imposed by the judges would remain in effect through a trial of the separate lawsuits.

US official: Gun violence is a public health crisis

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. surgeon general on Tuesday declared gun violence a public health crisis, driven by the fast-growing number of injuries and deaths involving firearms in the country.

The advisory issued by Dr. Vivek Murthy, the nation's top doctor, came as the U.S. grappled with another summer weekend marked by mass shootings that left dozens of people dead or wounded.

"People want to be able to walk through their neighborhoods and be safe," Murthy told The Associated Press in a phone interview.

"America should be a place where all of us can go to school, go to work, go to the supermarket, go to our house of worship, without having to worry that that's going to put our life at risk."

To drive down gun deaths, Murthy calls on the U.S. to ban automatic rifles, introduce universal background checks for purchasing guns, regulate the industry, pass laws that would restrict their use in public spaces and penalize people who fail to safely store their weapons.

None of those suggestions can be implemented nationwide without legislation passed by Congress, which typically recoils at gun control measures. Some state legislatures, however, have enacted or may consider some of the surgeon general's proposals.

Separately on Tuesday, the White House reported that more than 500 people, including some linked to transnational cartels and organized crime rings, have been charged with gun trafficking and other crimes under the landmark gun safety legislation President Joe Biden signed two years ago.

Lawsuit challenges new Louisiana law that puts Ten Commandments in schools

Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — Civil liberties groups filed a lawsuit Monday to block Louisiana's new law that requires the Ten Commandments to be displayed in every public school classroom, a measure they contend is unconstitutional.

Plaintiffs in the suit include parents of Louisiana public school children with various religious backgrounds, who are represented by attorneys with the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the Freedom From Religion Foundation and the New

York City law firm Simpson, Thacher & Bartlett.

"This display sends a message to my children and other students that people of some religious denominations are superior to others," said the Rev. Jeff Simms, a Presbyterian pastor who is a plaintiff in the suit and father of three children in Louisiana public schools.

Under the legislation signed into law by Republican Gov. Jeff Landry last week, all public K-12 classrooms and state-funded universities will be required to display a poster-sized version of the Ten Commandments in "large, easily readable font" next

year.

Opponents argue that the law is a violation of separation of church and state and that the display will isolate students, especially those who are not Christian. Proponents say the measure is not solely religious, but that it has historical significance.

The lawsuit filed Monday seeks a court declaration that the new law violates First Amendment clauses forbidding government establishment of religion and guaranteeing religious liberty. It also seeks an order prohibiting the posting of the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms.

Julian Assange expected to plead guilty

The Washington Post

Julian Assange, the founder of the anti-secrecy site WikiLeaks, has reached a tentative deal to plead guilty to one count of violating the Espionage Act for his role in obtaining and publishing classified military and diplomatic documents from 2009 to 2011, according to court filings.

The plea deal likely ends a long-running legal saga and a transatlantic tug-of-war that pitted national security against press freedom.

He is expected to be sentenced on Wednesday in the Northern Mariana Islands, according to a letter filed by the

Justice Department in the remote U.S. jurisdiction Monday evening. He will then return to his home country of Australia, the letter says, indicating he will be sentenced to the 62 months he has already spent behind bars in a London jail.

A criminal information filed alongside the letter says Assange “knowingly and unlawfully conspired” with Chelsea Manning to “receive and obtain documents ... connected with the national defense” and “communicate” that information to “persons not entitled to receive” it. Manning, then a young Army intelligence analyst in Iraq, was convicted of violating the Es-

pionage Act and other laws at a court-martial in 2013.

Assange, whose snow-white hair became recognizable worldwide, was a polarizing figure. Supporters saw him as a courageous journalist whistleblower of government misdeeds, but his detractors saw a pompous self-promoter interested primarily in fame and oblivious to the harm his leaks might cause.

In negotiating the plea deal, the U.S. government had already agreed that if Assange were convicted at trial in the United States, he could serve his sentence in his home country of Australia — one of several con-

cessions made by the Justice Department in its five-year effort to extradite the WikiLeaks founder.

The United States promised Assange he would not face any charges that could trigger the death penalty, that he would not be automatically put in solitary confinement, and that he would receive mental health treatment. But Assange’s attorneys repeatedly argued that those promises were insufficient to prevent him from self-harm were he to be in U.S. custody.

Assange’s health deteriorated during his long stay in London’s Belmarsh Prison, family members and his lawyer said.

Team combs fire-ravaged NM village for missing

Associated Press

As residents return to a fire-ravaged village in the mountains of southern New Mexico, the mayor on Monday warned them that some parts of Ruidoso remain off limits as special search and rescue teams comb the charred rubble along the hardest-hit streets.

They’re looking for the remains of people who are still unaccounted for after the South Fork and Salt fires ripped through the area just days ago, killing at least two people, forcing thousands to flee and destroying more than 1,500 structures.

Mayor Lynn Crawford put the number of missing at 29. Village officials said in a Sunday night update that the search teams have identified potential additional fatalities, but any confirmation will have to be made by investigators.

“The search and rescue teams are in there and they’re with canines and so they’re still going property to property to property,” Crawford said during his Monday morning radio

address.

With cell service going down during the evacuations last week, it made communication nearly impossible. While service slowly is being restored, some residents said Monday they are still having a difficult time connecting.

The 29 people on the list have not been in touch with friends or family since last Monday. The list was larger just a day ago, but village officials have been using social media and working with the American Red Cross to mark evacuees as “safe” as soon as they are heard from.

Authorities have blocked traffic into so-called exclusion zones to ensure these areas remain undisturbed until they are officially cleared. The FBI also is investigating, offering up to \$10,000 for information leading to the arrests and convictions of those responsible for the human-caused fires.

Several dozen members of the New Mexico Army and Air National Guard were stationed in Ruidoso to help.

More rain likely in Midwest as flooding breaches levee

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Floodwaters breached levees in western Iowa on Tuesday, creating dangerous conditions that prompted evacuations as the deluged Midwest faced another round of severe storms forecast for later in the day.

The sheriff’s office in Monona County, south of Sioux City near the Nebraska border, said the Little Sioux River breached levees in several areas. Evacuation orders were issued and roads closed in two small towns, emergency management officials said. No injuries were immediately reported.

“Please stay out of the area for your safety,” the sheriff’s office said in a social media post.

Patrick Prorok, emergency management coordinator in Monona County, described waking people in Rodney, a town of about 45 people, to recommend evacuation about 4 a.m. Later Tuesday morning, the water hadn’t yet washed into the community.

“People up the hill are saying it is coming our way,” Prorok

said.

Iowa state transportation officials said they planned to close sections of I-29 and I-680 north of Council Bluffs Tuesday because of rising floodwaters.

The flooding has damaged roads and bridges, closed or destroyed businesses, required hospitals and nursing homes to evacuate, and left cities without power or safe drinking water, the governors of Iowa and South Dakota said. Officials reported hundreds of water rescues.

Severe storms were forecast for Tuesday afternoon and evening with large hail, damaging winds and even a brief tornado or two in parts of western Iowa and eastern Nebraska, according to the National Weather Service. Showers and storms were also possible in parts of South Dakota and Minnesota, the agency said.

The weather service also predicted more than two dozen points of major flooding in southern Minnesota, eastern South Dakota and northern Iowa, and over three dozen points of moderate flooding.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Bears killed in effort to boost caribou herd

AK ANCHORAGE — State wildlife officials have now killed a total of 180 brown bears on Southwest Alaska caribou calving grounds in just over a year as part of a contested strategy to restore the renowned Mulchatna herd.

Shooting from a helicopter between May 10 and June 5, Alaska Department of Fish and Game employees killed 81 brown bears and 15 wolves they spotted across 530 square miles of tundra, officials said this month.

In 2023, the first year of the program, state employees killed 94 brown bears including some cubs, five black bears and five wolves.

State wildlife officials say killing bears feeding on newborn calves is a last-ditch attempt to shore up a herd that has declined from a peak of 200,000 animals in 1997 to just over 13,000 today.

Storage is getting tight amid pot crackdown

NY NEW YORK — City deputy sheriffs have seized so much cannabis from unlicensed pot shops amid a crackdown that the agency's offices have become a weed wonderland, with pot stowed in every nook and cranny they can find, The New York Daily News has learned.

When the sheriff's office was tasked with raiding illegal weed shops, the cannabis they removed was initially stored in six 20-foot shipping containers with poor ventilation inside an indoor parking garage at the

agency's Long Island City offices on Starr Ave. But deputies quickly realized that they were collecting more marijuana products than they had space for, union members said.

So much weed had been collected that deputy sheriffs responsible for vouchering the evidence from the weed raids were being inundated by the smell — and some even getting sick, union officials said.

Man dies after being struck by roller coaster

OH MASON — A man who was struck by a steel roller coaster at an Ohio theme park last week after he entered a restricted area to retrieve his lost keys has died from his injuries.

Arntanaro Nelson, 38, of Wilmington, entered a fenced area at Kings Island, according to a statement issued by the park. He was found on the ground with a "critical injury" and died days later at a hospital.

The Hamilton County coroner's office has listed Nelson's death as a "suspected accident," but it remains under investigation. His death was announced Monday.

Nelson dropped his keys while riding the Banshee, an inverted roller coaster where the train dangles from the track, and then went into the restricted area and was struck by the coaster, according to Mason police.

State may soon return stolen land to tribe

IL SPRINGFIELD — Some 175 years after the U.S. government stole land

from the chief of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation while he was away visiting relatives, Illinois may soon return it to the tribe.

Nothing ever changed the 1829 treaty that Chief Shab-eh-nay signed with the U.S. government to preserve for him a reservation in northern Illinois: not subsequent accords nor the 1830 Indian Removal Act, which forced all indigenous people to move west of the Mississippi.

But around 1848, the U.S. sold the land to white settlers while Shab-eh-nay and other members of his tribe were visiting family in Kansas.

To right the wrong, Illinois would transfer a 1,500-acre state park west of Chicago, which was named after Shab-eh-nay, to the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation. The state would continue providing maintenance while the tribe says it wants to keep the park as it is.

Lifeguard dies in shark attack while surfing

HI HONOLULU — A professional lifeguard died after he was attacked by a shark while surfing off the island of Oahu in Hawaii on Sunday afternoon, authorities said.

City and County of Honolulu Ocean Safety lifeguard Tamayo Perry, 49, died in the attack near Goat Island, Shayne Enright of the Honolulu Emergency Services Department said in a statement.

Honolulu Ocean Safety and the city's fire, police and emergency medical services departments responded to Malaekahana Beach on Oahu's North Shore just before 1 p.m. after a caller

reported seeing a man who appeared to have suffered shark bites, Enright said.

Lifeguards brought Perry to shore by jet ski and paramedics assisted with the death pronouncement, Enright said.

More than \$13M awarded to hurt athlete

WA SEATTLE — A jury awarded \$13.1 million to an ultramarathon athlete who was severely injured when she fell on a Seattle sidewalk in 2021.

The award by a King County jury found that the city of Seattle and the owners of an apartment building are responsible for the amount, the Seattle Times reported.

Lesley Mettler Auld, 53, said in a news release issued by her attorneys on Friday that she will never run again and struggles to walk after the fall on a sidewalk in Seattle's Queen Anne neighborhood.

Cargo ship leaves after bridge collapse

MD BALTIMORE — The cargo ship Dali headed out of Baltimore for Virginia on Monday, nearly three months after it lost power and crashed into one of the Francis Scott Key bridge's supporting columns and caused the bridge to collapse.

The 984-foot Dali started moving shortly before 8:30 a.m. with four tugboats.

The Dali was sailing under its own power with a full crew of 22 and six salvage experts, the U.S. Coast Guard said in a news release.

— From Associated Press

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Panthers wrap up their 1st Stanley Cup

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Aleksander Barkov put his hands at either end of the Stanley Cup and began skating away to start the celebration that the Florida Panthers have wanted forever.

And as he began to hoist hockey's chalice for the first time, he had one thought.

"It's heavy," he said.

A 37-pound trophy wasn't too much for him. A three-game slide wasn't too much for the Panthers. There was no stumble with the Cup, no collapse with the Cup on the line. The Panthers are champions for the first time, after taking about the hardest path possible to the title.

Sam Reinhart and Carter Verhaeghe scored goals, Sergei Bobrovsky made 23 saves and the Panthers beat the Edmonton Oilers 2-1 on Monday night in Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final. It was the third title-round appearance in Florida's 30-year

history; it was swept in 1996 by Colorado and routed 4-1 by Vegas last season. And that loss last year was what this team needed.

"You have to go through it first," forward Matthew Tkachuk said, "to know what it takes to get it done."

This time, they were on the right side of history — after avoiding what would have been a historic collapse. The Panthers won the first three games of the series, then lost the next three and needed a win on Monday to avoid joining the 1942 Detroit Red Wings as the only teams to lose the Final after taking a 3-0 lead in the title round.

"It's not what I thought it would be," Panthers coach Paul Maurice said. "It's so much better."

It wasn't easy. Not even close. But it's done.

Barkov handed the Cup to Bobrovsky and the celebration was on. It took until the very end

for the Panthers to deny Connor McDavid his first title, and Edmonton what would have been its first Cup since 1990.

"You want to become a true champion and you want to win," said Bobrovsky, a champion for the first time at 35. "But at the end of the day, you don't do it for the Cups. You do it for the love of the game."

McDavid won the Conn Smythe as MVP of the Stanley Cup playoffs. He didn't come out for the trophy. It's not the one he wanted, anyway. The Cup is what they play for, and it was Florida that hoisted it.

"No player in the world wants to win the Stanley Cup more than him," Oilers teammate Leon Draisaitl said of McDavid, who had one of the greatest individual postseasons in NHL history with 42 points. "He does everything right, every single day."

But the Panthers did a little more right on Monday. And

that's the difference.

"It's not a dream anymore. It's not a dream. It's reality," said Tkachuk, who got traded to Florida two summers ago with this as his goal. "I can't believe it. I can't believe it. ... I can't believe how good these two years have been. So thankful for this group of guys. It's the best place, best guys. It's something really special here with what we have."

Mattias Janmark had the goal for Edmonton and Stuart Skinner stopped 19 shots. The Oilers also couldn't snap Canada's title drought; it's been 1993 and counting since a team based in Canada won the Cup.

Montreal was the last to do so, 30 seasons ago. Since then, there have been seven attempts by teams from Canadian-based cities — Vancouver in 1994 and 2011, Calgary in 2004, the Oilers in 2006, Ottawa in 2007 and the Canadiens in 2021 — to win titles.

McDavid named playoff MVP despite Oilers' loss

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Connor McDavid won the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP on Monday night despite Edmonton's Stanley Cup Final loss to Florida, a nod to one of the greatest postseason performances in NHL history.

McDavid, who was held without a point the final two games of the Final, still led all playoff scorers with 42 points, five shy of the record of 47 set by Wayne Gretzky in 1985. He did not return from the locker room to accept the trophy from Commissioner Gary Bettman, leaving it sitting on its stand while the Panthers celebrated nearby.

"It's an honor with the names on that trophy, but yeah," McDavid said.

McDavid was first on 16 of 17 ballots. Panthers captain Aleksander Barkov was second.

"I don't think he cares," longtime running mate Leon Draisaitl said. "I mean, it speaks to how amazing of a hockey player he is. There's no player in the world that wants to win a Stanley Cup more than him. He does everything right, every single day, just to win it one day. It's really hard with him being sad and being disappointed at the end."

After not scoring (but still leading the team with three assists) through the first three games against Florida, McDavid changed the course of the series by doing something no other player in history has done, including Gretzky. He had four points in consecutive games in the Final to keep the Oilers from being eliminated.

"You think about the year that Connor had: 100 assists, leading our team, the performance he

had in this playoffs, especially in this final round when we're down three games to zero and then he comes out with eight points in two games," coach Kris Knoblauch said. "Yeah, he's our leader. He's our best player."

McDavid is just the second skater after the Flyers' Reggie Leach in 1976 to win the Conn Smythe on a team that lost in the Final. Goaltenders Jean-Sebastien Giguere of Anaheim in 2003, Ron Hextall of Philadelphia in 1987, Glenn Hall of St. Louis in 1968 and Roger Crozier with Detroit in 1966 were also playoff MVPs after backstopping teams that fell just short of hoisting the Cup.

Asked how he was feeling nearly a half-hour after the loss, McDavid could only muster the words, "It sucks."

McDavid, the reigning and

three time Hart Trophy winner long considered the best hockey player in the world, put on a show in his first trip to the Final. His goal and three assists in an 8-1 rout in Game 4 avoided a sweep, and his four points including an empty netter in Game 5 three nights later dragged the series back to Alberta.

Those who know McDavid believe it's the year-round work he has put in throughout his career allowed him to thrive when the spotlight was at its brightest.

"He's unique in his dedication to his craft," said Hall of Famer Ken Hitchcock, who coached McDavid in 2018-19. "He's very unique. He's learned to be relentless, and he enjoys it and he's very, very serious about his craft, and that becomes contagious when you're on the team with him."

Tennessee tops Texas A&M for 1st title

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Tony Vitello jumped into the stands to share a group hug with the legion of Tennessee fans who invaded Omaha. His players ran a lap around the warning track high-fiving them. Kavares Tears squatted in right field taking in the moment with a towel over his eyes.

Tennessee at long last won its first national championship in baseball.

Christian Moore hit a leadoff homer, Dylan Dreiling went deep for the third time in three games and Tennessee survived anxious moments late to take the title with a 6-5 victory over Texas A&M on Monday night in Game 3 of the College World Series finals.

The Volunteers bounced back from a Game 1 loss to win two straight and become the first No. 1 national seed in the NCAA Tournament to win the title since Miami in 1999.

"Kids are tough these days. They will do what you ask them to do," said Vitello, the Vols' sev-

enth-year coach. "I know our fans got us through that tough inning. That was a group effort on the mound. If you're in the SEC, you're going to be a superstar player, but you need to be a good teammate, and that's what these guys were."

Tennessee (60-13) held an Aggies team averaging 8.5 runs per game for the season to six runs over the last 20 innings of the finals, with Zander Sechrist and Nate Snead doing the heavy lifting on Monday before Texas A&M came back to score four runs and get the tying run at the plate in the ninth.

Aaron Combs struck out Hayden Schott and Ted Burton to end the game and set off a Tennessee celebration behind the pitcher's mound.

Tennessee had made runs at the title before. The Vols reached the CWS in 2021 and went 0-2. The next year they were the No. 1 national seed and lost at home in a three-game super regional. They were back in Omaha last year and won a game. And they slugged their

way back again this year, making it to the finals for the first time since the 1951 team lost to Oklahoma in the championship game.

Minutes after the final pitch, the 45-year-old Vitello shared an embrace with his father, Greg, a longtime state champion high school baseball and soccer coach in St. Louis.

"I felt like I was the dad and he was the kid because he wouldn't stop crying," Vitello said. "I had to rub some dirt on him."

The Vols are the eighth Southeastern Conference school to win a national title in baseball. Those eight have combined for 16 titles. The SEC has won five in a row, all by different schools, and 10 of the past 15.

Texas A&M threatened to cut into a 3-1 deficit in the sixth and seventh innings, but Snead got the Vols out of trouble both times.

Dreiling, the CWS Most Outstanding Player, connected for his 23rd homer of the season and Hunter Ensley evaded Jackson Appel's tag at the plate as he

scored on Tears' double to make it 6-1 going to the eighth. Since the CWS best-of-three finals began in 2003, Dreiling is the only player to homer in three games.

"I kind of blacked out again in the moment," Dreiling said. "I know first pitch I overswung on a heater way up. I told myself just see the ball deep and put a good swing on something. He gave me a changeup over the middle. I tried to stay back and put a good swing on it."

The Vols' two homers Monday moved them into a tie with the 1998 LSU team for most in an NCAA Tournament (37) and gave them 184 for the season, four behind the 1997 LSU team's NCAA record of 188.

Texas A&M created some anxiety for the Vols in the eighth, scoring twice and threatening to get more with two runners on base with one out. Kirby Connell got two strikeouts, pumped his left fist twice coming off the mound, gave a primal scream and skipped over the third-base line on his way back to the dug-out.

Mu falls in final, won't get to defend Olympics 800 title

Associated Press

EUGENE, Ore. — Athing Mu got tangled up in the middle of the track and started falling. One hand hit the ground, then the other. As she rolled onto her back, her bright pink shoes started pointing toward the sky.

With that, one of America's most promising runners saw her hopes of back-to-back Olympic titles in the 800 meters go down the drain, while sports fans got a refresher on just how unforgiving these U.S. track trials really are.

The 22-year-old from New Jersey became the first big-name casualty of the trials Monday, victimized by a bunched-up pack in the backstretch of the first lap, to say nothing of the long-standing rule in the U.S.

that only the top three finishers at trials make the Olympics, regardless of their résumé.

"I've coached it, I've preached it, I've watched it," Mu's coach, Bobby Kersee, said. "And here's another indication that regardless of how good we are, we can leave some better athletes home than other countries have. It's part of our American way."

Mu filed an appeal and USA Track and Field officials sorted through the replays deep into the night, but eventually denied the protest.

Kersee said Mu got spiked, had track burns and hurt her ankle.

"She's going to be licking her wounds for a couple of days," Kersee said.

Mu got back to her feet and finished, but was more than 22 seconds behind the winner, Nia Akins, who ran 1 minute, 57.36 seconds. Mu was choking back tears as she headed quickly off the track and through the tunnel after the race. She did not do interviews.

She was racing on the outside in a tightly bunched pack and looked to be veering to her left toward the eventual third-place finisher, Juliette Whitaker, when she tripped and went tumbling, leaving three runners behind her flailing as they jumped over and around her.

Mu is hardly the first athlete to have this happen. One of the more memorable and heart-breaking moments on this track came eight years ago in the

same event, when Alysia Montano, looking to return to the Olympics, got tripped up in the homestretch and stayed down on the track crying.

"I have a little mama bear feeling," said Montano, who is at the track this week doing in-house interviews over the PA system. "But the race is brutal sometimes. It's two laps, a tight race and everyone's feeling scrappy to try to figure out what position they want to get into."

The Olympic trials marked Mu's first meet of the year after dealing with injuries all season. She looked to be in good form in her first two rounds, and Kersee said her season was coming together.

But in the 800 final, she barely made it half a lap.

Hoskins' grand slam sparks Brewers to win

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Rhys Hoskins put Milwaukee ahead for good with a grand slam during a five-run rally in the sixth inning and the Brewers beat Texas 6-3 on Monday to snap the Rangers' four-game winning streak.

"It was a big situation in the game," said Hoskins, who homered for the first time since June 3. "I've learned pretty quickly that the game is always going to throw the next moment right at you. You've just got to stay ready, regardless of how it's gone. I learned from a coach you've got to want that fifth at-bat, even if you're 0 for 4."

Adolis García homered for the Rangers.

Milwaukee pounded the Rangers' bullpen after Texas' Michael Lorenzen held the Brewers scoreless for the first four innings. Milwaukee's Jackson Chourio raced home on Lorenzen's two-out wild pitch in the fifth to end a streak of 26 straight shutout innings by Rangers pitchers.

Milwaukee trailed 3-1 when William Contreras hit a leadoff double in the sixth to knock Lorenzen out of the game. The Rangers brought in Jacob Latz, who hadn't allowed a run in his eight relief appearances this month.

After Latz walked Christian Yelich and Willy Adames to load the bases, Hoskins sent a first-pitch fastball into the left-field seats to give the Brewers their first lead of the game.

Hoskins' third career grand slam was his 11th homer of the season.

"Just trying to get something up, regardless of first pitch or not," Hoskins said. "Just really trying to be ready to hit. There have been times I think in the last month where I've been a little passive. The situation called for something up, and I was just happy to not miss it."

Latz (2-2) gave up three runs, two hits and two walks without getting anyone out.

"He has been so good for us," Rangers manager Bruce Bochy said. "It's going to happen occasionally. Looking back, it's the walks that hurt him."

Phillies 8, Tigers 1: Bryce Harper homered, doubled twice, drove in five runs and helped turn a triple play as visiting Philadelphia beat Detroit.

Alec Bohm had four hits, including a homer, and was also involved in the triple play for the big league-best Phillies (52-26).

Detroit's best chance at a rally came in the third, when singles by McKinstry and Carson Kelly put runners on the corners with no one out. But Matt Vierling hit a broken-bat liner back to Nola, who tossed to Harper at first for a double play. Catcher Garrett Stubbs, noticing McKinstry had never stopped running from third, signaled to Harper to throw to third, where Bohm stepped on the bag to finish the 1-3-5 triple play.

It was the first 1-3-5 triple play in the majors since the Tigers turned one against the Red Sox on July 11, 1929, Major League Baseball said, citing the Society for American Baseball Research.

Reds 11, Pirates 5: Ellie De La Cruz hit a long homer and had three RBIs, Spencer Steer drove in three runs and host Cincinnati routed Pittsburgh.

Two-run doubles by Steer and Stuart Fairchild paced a five-run fourth inning for the Reds, who had scored just three total in dropping two of three to the Pirates last week in Pittsburgh.

Reds outfielder Levi Jordan, making his major league debut at age 28, collected his first RBI on a sacrifice fly in the fourth inning. He had his first hit in the sixth, a double off the wall in right field, and eventually scored.

Guardians 3, Orioles 2: José Ramírez hit a tiebreaking homer in the sixth inning, and vis-

iting Cleveland won its sixth straight game, beating Baltimore, which lost four in a row for the first time this year.

Tanner Bibee (6-2) allowed one earned run in six innings for the Guardians, who were able to protect their slim lead without using highly worked closer Emmanuel Clase. Tim Herrin and Hunter Gaddis worked the seventh and eighth, and Scott Barlow struck out the side in the ninth for his second save.

Since taking two of three in a big series at Yankee Stadium, Baltimore has dropped four in a row for the first time this year. Rookie Cade Povich (0-2) steadied himself after a 31-pitch first inning, but with the score tied at 2 in the sixth, Ramírez hit a 431-foot homer to center field.

Rays 4, Mariners 3: Yandy Díaz had a two-run single in a three-run eighth inning and host Tampa Bay rallied to beat Seattle.

Ben Rortvedt's two-out RBI double in the eighth off Austin Voth (2-2) cut Tampa Bay's deficit to 3-2. Closer Andrés Muñoz loaded the bases with a walk to José Caballero, and Díaz followed with a tough-hop single to right.

Red Sox 7, Blue Jays 6: Jarren Duran drove in Cedanne Rafaela with a ninth-inning single to help host Boston cap a furious rally and beat Toronto.

Rafael Devers and David Hamilton both added a two-run home runs for the Red Sox, who have won 10 of their last 12 and are a season-high seven games over .500 at 43-36.

Cardinals 4, Braves 3: Brendan Donovan had three hits with an RBI and Lance Lynn pitched into the seventh inning, lifting host St. Louis over Atlanta for its fourth straight win and ninth in 12 games.

St. Louis is 25-13 after a 15-24 start, moving three games over .500 for the first time since the end of the 2022 season.

Dodgers 3, White Sox 0:

James Paxton combined with four relievers on a five-hitter, and visiting Los Angeles beat Chicago.

Los Angeles was shut down by Garrett Crochet, but got to Chicago's shaky bullpen for three runs. The NL West leaders won for the sixth time in eight games.

Royals 4, Marlins 1: Cole Ragans (5-5) struck out 11 and gave up one run in six innings for his first win in a month, and host Kansas City beat Miami for just its fourth win in 15 games.

Vinnie Pasquantino, Salvador Perez and Hunter Renfroe hit solo homers off Roddery Muñoz (1-3), who has allowed six home runs in his last 10 innings.

Angels 5, Athletics 1: Taylor Ward hit a two-run homer, Griffin Canning pitched seven strong innings and host Los Angeles beat Oakland.

Ward gave the Angels a 2-0 lead with his drive to right field in the first inning and he had a ninth-inning leaping catch at the wall for the second consecutive game. He did the same at Dodger Stadium on Saturday.

Padres 7, Nationals 6 (10): Jurickson Profar's two-run, bases-loaded single with two outs in the 10th inning lifted host San Diego to a wild victory over Washington.

The Nationals had taken a 6-3 lead in the top of the 10th when Keibert Ruiz doubled in a run and Nick Senzel followed with a two-run homer to left.

Giants 5, Cubs 4: Wilmer Flores drew a bases loaded walk in the ninth, capping a wild comeback as host San Francisco snapped a five-game skid with a victory over Chicago.

Flores was the eighth Giants player to bat in the ninth. His walk scored Patrick Bailey, who singled with one on and one out in a 4-3 game to score Chapman, and Austin Slater's sacrifice fly two batters later tied the game.