

Little progress in Iran talks amid clashes

Bloomberg News

The U.S. and Iran have made little progress in talks over an interim peace deal this week, with the sides seeing their worst clashes since an April ceasefire began and fighting continuing in Lebanon.

Skirmishes continued overnight between Hezbollah and Israel in southern Lebanon after the Iran-backed group rejected a U.S.-brokered proposal aimed at securing a broader truce. Even so, Hezbollah's attacks on northern Israel have eased, while Israel has held off striking Beirut after threatening to do so earlier this week.

Iran insists on a ceasefire in Lebanon before accepting a deal with the U.S. that's meant to extend their truce by two months and reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

President Donald Trump on Thursday said negotiations are in the "final" stages without

elaborating. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi earlier said there had been "no tangible progress" even though the two sides continued to exchange messages via mediators.

On Wednesday, Iran fired missiles and drones at Kuwait and Bahrain, killing one person and injuring dozens at Kuwait's main airport, after the U.S. struck an oil tanker headed to the Islamic Republic. That was the worst of several flare-ups since the current ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran took hold on April 8.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah militants said they refused to abide by the conditions of a ceasefire announced by the U.S. State Department only hours earlier.

At least eight people were killed in Israeli strikes, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry.

And Israel's military said Hezbollah launched several

rockets toward its soldiers, with no injuries reported.

Asked by reporters Thursday in the Oval Office about Hezbollah's rejection of the truce, Trump said "they didn't reject me" and claimed "they called us" to discuss a cessation of hostilities.

Brent crude edged up to near \$96 a barrel and gold slipped lower in response to the ongoing uncertainty over the status of U.S.-Iran talks.

Trump has repeatedly claimed a deal is close even as Iran refuses to give in to his demands on its nuclear program and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. Before the war, the waterway carried about a fifth of global oil supplies, but traffic has been sharply reduced since the U.S. and Israel struck Iran on Feb. 28. Industry officials have warned prices could spike again as inventories are drawn down.

On Thursday, Trump said in a social media post he's "right in the middle of my final negotiations to end the War with the Islamic Republic of Iran." He didn't elaborate on the talks, using the post to blast a vote by the Republican-led House of Representatives to halt the war.

While it won't end the U.S. military campaign against Iran, the move is a reflection of the increasing unpopularity of the conflict in the U.S. and worries from Trump's own party about the conflict's impact on the mid-term elections.

Trump's post came hours after Iran's semiofficial Tasnim news agency cited Araghchi as saying that there had been no real progress in peace talks recently.

Among the conditions Iran has set was an end to Israel's attacks in Lebanon, where its forces have launched a major drive to oust Hezbollah.

Senate OKs bill without curbs on Trump's \$1.8B fund

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — The Senate passed a nearly \$70 billion reconciliation bill for immigration enforcement early Friday morning after rejecting repeated attempts by members of both parties to prohibit or restrict a Justice Department "anti-weaponization" fund.

On a mostly party-line vote of 52-47, the Senate sent to the House a bill designed to fund immigration agencies for the rest of President Donald Trump's term without new restrictions on federal immigration agents sought by Democrats. Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski was the sole Republican

to join all Democrats in opposition.

The vote on final passage capped an 18-hour "vote-a-rama" on amendments focused mostly on a nearly \$1.8 billion fund announced last month designed to compensate alleged victims of political prosecutions. Critics denounced it as a "slush fund" to reward Trump loyalists who broke the law.

While administration officials later bowed to the backlash and said the fund would not move forward, lawmakers of both parties were concerned it still could. They sought to prohibit it through a provision in the reconciliation bill.

The most closely watched amendment, sponsored by Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., would restrict payouts from the fund only to law enforcement officers who died or suffered from the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol or their next of kin. And it would appropriate \$100 million to the fund for that effort, offset by a cut to Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Floor action slowed for hours overnight as Cassidy held talks with the Senate parliamentarian in hopes of securing guidance that would allow the amendment to be adopted with a simple-majority vote. But in the end, the amendment was

deemed to require 60 votes — a threshold that virtually guaranteed its defeat.

The vote was 52-47 in favor, falling eight votes shy of the 60 required. Six Republicans joined all Democrats in support of the measure.

An initial attempt by Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., to target the fund garnered a sliver of bipartisan support, but was defeated on a lopsided vote of 15-84. His amendment would have diverted the money to fraud enforcement efforts.

But Democrats said the measure would just create a slush fund by another name, under the guise of fraud enforcement.

Trump planning to nominate Blanche for attorney general

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump announced that he planned to soon make Todd Blanche, who leads the Justice Department on an acting basis, the “permanent attorney general,” a move that would install a fervent loyalist at the top of the nation’s law enforcement apparatus.

A video posted on Wednesday by White House adviser Dan Scavino showed Trump making the announcement during a Rose Garden event.

Blanche, a former personal lawyer to Trump, has served as acting attorney general since the president dismissed Pam Bondi in early April. Before that, Blanche had been Bondi’s chief deputy.

The White House has yet to formally nominate Blanche.

Speaking Thursday during a press conference in Ohio, Blanche said he was “honored and humbled” to receive the nod from Trump and vowed to

try and win over U.S. senators ahead of what could be a tough confirmation battle.

“I have a good relationship with the Senate on both sides. I don’t say no to phone calls,” Blanche said. “I’m looking forward to working with the senators and getting them the information they need through the confirmation process,” he said.

If Trump follows through on his plans, senators could grill Blanche over his role in the department’s release of files related to disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein, as well as Trump’s recent attempt to establish a \$1.8 billion fund to pay victims of alleged government “weaponization” and targeting of the president’s political foes.

Blanche, who has shown enthusiasm for carrying out Trump’s agenda and defended prosecutions of some of the president’s opponents, will face intense scrutiny from

Democrats and perhaps some Republicans over the turmoil at the department since Trump returned to office in January 2025.

Thousands of federal prosecutors and FBI agents have been fired or resigned.

Blanche told reporters in April that he hadn’t been pressured to carry out retribution against Trump’s political enemies.

At a congressional hearing on Tuesday, Blanche said the administration would not move forward with the fund, which had been a key pillar of the agreement Trump reached in May with the Internal Revenue Service and Treasury Department over leaks of his tax information during his first term.

Blanche, according to his LinkedIn profile, graduated from Brooklyn Law School and later supervised prosecutors at the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York.

Trump will headline DC rally for US anniversary

Bloomberg News

President Donald Trump said he would headline a rally in Washington on June 24 to mark the 250th anniversary of the United States, a week after several artists pulled out of planned shows on the National Mall.

“We don’t want singers with no talent, but big fees to put you to sleep, we’ve told them all to stay home,” Trump said in a social media post — a nod to the wave of cancellations by artists who said they wouldn’t be performing shortly after they were announced as featured acts.

“All we want is you, me, a few speakers, and the Greatest Music ever played, the same Music you have listened to for years!” he said.

At least five of the nine announced performers pulled out of the previously planned shows on the National Mall, saying the event was more political than they had been led to believe. Freedom 250, which is organizing the events, is a group described by Trump as a public-private nonprofit that also organized an overtly Christian prayer meeting on May 17 that included a video message from the president.

Cancellations for the Freedom 250 shows included country music icon Martina McBride, hip-hop artist Young MC, The Commodores, Morris Day and The Time and Bret Michaels.

Trump said the acts for his rally would include “God Bless the USA” singer Lee Greenwood and opera tenor Christopher Macchio, who have performed at other Trump rallies, as well as military bands.

President looks for intelligence director, says selection of Bill Pulte is temporary

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said that Bill Pulte will only serve as national intelligence director on an acting basis, adding that he is interviewing permanent candidates for the position.

“He’s not going to be permanent, because, you know, I don’t think he’d want to be permanent,” Trump told reporters Thursday of Pulte, a loyalist who currently serves as the nation’s housing finance chief.

Trump’s announcement that he was installing Pulte in the acting role earlier this week drew criticism from Democrats and some Republicans, who have stressed his lack of intelligence experience. Nominating him for the job would have set off a bruising confirmation battle in the Senate.

Still, Trump praised Pulte’s “energy” and said he’s a person of “high integrity” who will “be very good.”

“Again, it’s short term, but he

may be very effective for a short period,” the president said.

The previous director of national intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard, announced late last month that she would step down to help her husband confront health issues.

Trump is relying on several Cabinet officials who are performing multiple high-profile roles, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who also serves as Trump’s national security adviser.

House committee OKs defense policy bill

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — The House Armed Services Committee approved its fiscal 2027 National Defense Authorization Act late Thursday after a series of politically charged debates about the Iran war, Pentagon acquisition rules, defense spending and vestiges of the Confederacy in the military.

After contending with about 900 amendments over the course of 14 hours, the committee approved the sweeping measure in a resounding vote of 44-12.

The House is expected to take up the bill by the July recess.

The Senate Armed Services Committee plans to mark up its version next week.

The chairman's mark of the House bill endorsed about \$1.15 trillion for defense programs, mostly at the Pentagon. The funds must still be appropriated in separate legislation. President Donald Trump asked Congress to send \$350 billion more via a reconciliation bill, for a total request of \$1.5 trillion.

That amount of money would be the most ever spent on national defense in the U.S., and many Democrats assailed the proposed spending level as profligate, particularly in the context of cuts to nondefense programs and a ballooning national debt.

The last few hours of the markup were dominated by a handful of passionate debates.

The most contentious and lengthy debate of the day was over an amendment by Rep. Marilyn Strickland, D-Wash., that would restore the Army's 2023 decision to give nine of its bases new names not associated with the Confederacy, as recommended by a congressionally chartered naming commission the year before.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth undid the commission-driven changes in 2025.

The House included a similar Strickland provision in its fiscal

2026 NDAA, but that was not included in the final measure. The vote on Thursday was 29-27 in favor of Strickland's proposal.

Rep. Austin Scott, R-Ga., who served on the commission, said the Trump administration's names for the bases "will not stand the test of time."

Strickland, who is African American, fought back tears as she spoke of her father serving in a segregated Army. She said keeping the Confederate-linked names would disrespect Black men who have served.

"I ask you one more time: Who are we as a nation?" she said. "And more importantly, who are you?" she said, pointing at some of her GOP colleagues.

Another feisty debate on Thursday night preceded the committee's 29-27 vote to adopt an amendment by Rep. Ronny Jackson, R-Texas, to codify the Trump administration's preferred name for the Pentagon: the Department of War.

Jackson argued that the name "sends an unmistakable message to our adversaries" of U.S. strength and resolve.

Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., the panel's ranking member, offered a withering rebuttal.

"I wish our adversaries were that stupid," Smith said.

The committee adopted by voice vote an amendment from Rep. Maggie Goodlander, D-N.H., that would revive efforts to give the military the right to fix its own equipment, an issue that emerged as a flash point in last year's NDAA debate.

The underlying bill contains some "right to repair" language, but amendment supporters argued that did go far enough.

Rep. Pat Harrigan, R-N.C., who supported Goodlander's proposal, said the amendment would fix a "genuine readiness" concern.

"We have planes that cannot fly. We have ships that cannot sail. We have vehicles that cannot drive and tanks that cannot crawl. And in some of our ser-

vices that number is approaching 50% of the force," he said.

While lawmakers and defense officials maintain "right to repair" legislation could save billions of dollars and allow the military to more quickly fix its equipment, defense contractors have fiercely lobbied against the efforts and argued the legislation would require companies to relinquish their intellectual property.

In opposing the amendment, Rep. Mike D. Rogers, R-Ala., the committee's chairman, highlighted that several industry groups have urged the committee to reject the measure.

He argued the amendment "regrettably creates a much larger problem" than it solves because it would "force companies to choose between protecting their IP and working with the Department of Defense."

The committee knocked down a flurry of Democratic amendments, a host of which were ruled out of order, typically over jurisdictional issues.

The committee voted down, 26-30, another Strickland amendment responding to recent reports that Hegseth has removed women and Black service members from officer promotion lists.

Specifically, her amendment would have empowered only the president to remove officers from the lists generated by promotion selection boards and shorten the time to notify Congress of any removals from 30 days to five days. Right now, the secretary and deputy secretary of defense can remove names for promotions below the one-star general or admiral level.

Scott, in supporting Strickland's amendment, said he wrote a letter to Hegseth about the removals, and he expressed frustration that the secretary has not explained his decision.

"I'm not saying that his actions weren't justified; maybe they are," Scott said. "But if they are justified, then he should

give a public reason why they were removed from the list."

Also on the list of defeated Democratic proposals:

■ An amendment by Rep. Pat Ryan, D-N.Y., defeated 26-30, that would prohibit funding for military action in or against Iran absent congressional authorization or a war declaration.

■ An amendment by Rep. William Keating, D-Mass., defeated 27-29, that would require release of unclassified video of the second strike on the survivors of an attack on an alleged drug-running boat in the Caribbean on Sept. 2, 2025.

■ An amendment by Rep. Sara Jacobs, D-Calif., defeated 25-31, that would cap at \$250 million the amount that can be transferred in a fiscal year without reimbursement from the Pentagon to another department, such as the Department of Homeland Security.

■ An amendment by Jacobs, defeated 25-31, that would prohibit U.S. military force in or against Mexico without congressional approval.

■ An amendment by Ryan, defeated 25-31, that would prohibit funding for National Guard quick reaction crowd-control forces, the creation of which Trump ordered last August.

In the early portion of the marathon markup, the committee adopted relatively few amendments and rejected more than two dozen others.

For example, the committee defeated a Democratic amendment that would cut the nearly \$1.15 trillion authorized level of overall spending by \$150 billion, and another that would authorize \$1 billion less than the president sought to procure a new Trump class of battleships.

The panel also defeated a GOP amendment that would establish gender-neutral fitness standards in the military, which Democrats argued was a stealth attempt to disqualify women from serving in combat jobs.

US denies sanctions caused Cuba crisis as UN warns of shortages

Miami Herald

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations on Thursday rejected claims that U.S. policies are responsible for Cuba's worsening humanitarian crisis, telling U.N. member states that the U.S. government is offering a new \$100 million humanitarian aid package while accusing the Cuban government of causing the island's shortages through corruption and failed economic policies.

The sharp exchange came during a briefing on Cuba, hours after Stéphane Dujarric, spokesperson for U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres, told journalists on all of Cuba's "basic services, from clean water and sanitation to food production and the health sector, have been impacted by the lack of fuel and electricity."

Edem Wosornu, director of the Crisis Response Division at the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, chaired the briefing. Wosornu

recently traveled to Cuba, focusing on the impact of overlapping crises, including repeated hurricanes, economic constraints linked to sanctions and persistent energy shortages.

"What we're seeing here today is beyond the impact of one single event," Wosornu said.

Ernesto Soberón Guzmán, Cuba's permanent representative to the United Nations, blamed the crisis on U.S. policy, calling it a "policy of collective punishment" and saying recent U.S. executive orders have intensified the economic pressure on the island.

"The complex humanitarian situation Cuba faces today has a direct cause: the inhumane policy of collective punishment imposed by the United States against my country," Soberón Guzmán said.

But U.S. Ambassador Mike Waltz pushed back sharply, saying the United States "stands with the people of Cuba," but not with the Cuban government,

which he accused of failing, jailing and stealing from its people.

Waltz said the U.S. has provided \$9 million in humanitarian assistance since Hurricane Melissa struck in October 2025 and is now offering an additional \$100 million package that includes food, hygiene products and water treatment supplies. The aid, he said, would be distributed directly to the Cuban people through the Catholic Church and other reliable institutions, not through the Cuban government.

Waltz also denied that there is an "oil blockade," saying Washington has permitted fuel deliveries from Russia and fuel shipments from the United States to private entities not affiliated with the Cuban government.

"It's not because of the embargo, or because of an 'oil blockade,' which is untrue and fake," Waltz said. "Cuba is suffering because the regime chose failed communist economics."

Xi to visit N. Korea next week

Bloomberg News

Chinese President Xi Jinping will travel to North Korea next week, marking his first overseas trip of the year after hosting U.S. President Donald Trump and Russia's President Vladimir Putin in Beijing.

Xi will travel to Pyongyang for the first time since 2019 from June 8-9 at the invitation of Kim Jong Un, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Friday. That visit comes as Kim steps up diplomatic activity and showcases his expanding nuclear arsenal.

Coming after his high-profile summits last month with Trump and Putin, the trip will allow Xi to cast China as one of the few powers able to engage with all sides in an increasingly fractured world. A meeting with Kim will remind Washington and Moscow of the influence Beijing holds over the North Korean regime, though that leverage has limits.

Despite years of Chinese pressure, North Korea has accelerated its nuclear program in recent years and deepened military ties with Moscow since its invasion of Ukraine.

When Xi last visited North Korea, the Chinese president told Kim the world wanted him to make progress in nuclear talks with the U.S. Trump and Kim met three times during the U.S. president's first term, but that engagement failed to convince Kim to scale back his nuclear program.

China's latest white paper on nonproliferation skipped stating "denuclearization" as a goal for the Korean Peninsula, in a shift from previous statements. While the White House said Trump and Xi last month confirmed their shared desire to "denuclearize North Korea," the Chinese readout didn't include such details.

Actor James Handy fatally stabbed in LA by girlfriend's son, officials say

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — Los Angeles police are investigating the fatal stabbing of actor James Handy, who officials said was killed by his girlfriend's son Wednesday at a home in Tarzana.

The suspect was apprehended after he made a bizarre 911 call.

On Thursday, authorities identified the 81-year-old stabbing victim as the actor, who appeared in the films "Logan," "Jumanji," "Top Gun: Maverick" and "Arachnophobia."

Representatives for the actor confirmed the news to the Los

Angeles Times.

On Wednesday morning around 9:30 a.m., West Valley area patrol officers responded to an emergency call in a residential neighborhood of Tarzana. The 911 caller stated, "I am the son of man. I just killed the man of sin."

When police arrived, they found Handy in the front yard of the Erwin Street home, unconscious and suffering from a stab wound to his chest.

According to law enforcement, Handy was taken to a local hospital by paramedics, where he was pronounced dead.

A news release said that Mi-

chael Gledhill, the man suspected of stabbing Handy, flagged down officers who were responding to the incident and told them he was the one they were looking for.

Gledhill, 44, lives at the Erwin Street home with his mother, who police said was in a relationship with Handy.

Detectives said they believed this was an isolated incident and there appeared to be no danger to the public at this time.

Gledhill was arrested and transported to Van Nuys Jail, where he was booked on suspicion of murder. His bail was set at \$2 million.

Fleetwood part of 4-way tie for Memorial lead

Associated Press

DUBLIN, Ohio — Scottie Scheffler never thought two straight victories in the Memorial would be of any value when he began his bid for three in a row. It sure felt that way Thursday in a tough start that left him exasperated by the wind and six shots behind a four-way share of the lead.

Wyndham Clark, coming off a win in the Byron Nelson, U.S. Open champion J.J. Spaun, Tommy Fleetwood and Ryan Gerard were each at 5-under 67, among only 22 players who broke par at Muirfield Village.

Scheffler was poised to be among them until a bad wedge led to a careless bogey on the 14th, and what he thought was a great shot on the 16th bounced into the water for double bogey.

Six of the seven players who broke 70 started before 10 a.m. and missed out on the swirling wind on a hot, clear day.

Fleetwood's 67 was his lowest round in his fifth time playing the Memorial, and this wasn't the way he would have drawn it up. Fleetwood hit only seven greens in regulation and still played bogey-free.

Kupcho grabs early lead in US Women's Open

LOS ANGELES — Jennifer Kupcho made seven birdies on an unforgiving Riviera for a 5-under 66 and a one-shot lead over Sei Young Kim in the opening round of the 81st U.S. Women's Open on Thursday. Mexico's Gaby Lopez and Japan's Hinako Shibuno joined South Korea's Hyunjo Yoo and Ina Yoon in a group at 3 under.

Polish qualifier Chwalinska advances to French Open final

Associated Press

PARIS — Sipping tea every night is working wonders for Maja Chwalinska.

The Polish player became only the second qualifier to reach a Grand Slam singles final in the Open Era when she beat Diana Shnaider of Russia 7-6 (4), 6-4 on Thursday.

Chwalinska, 24, can match Emma Raducanu's title run at the 2021 U.S. Open when she plays Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva in Saturday's final at Roland Garros.

Nothing will change Chwalinska's routine for the biggest match of her life.

"I'm going to drink my tea," she said.

Chwalinska and Raducanu, according to stats provider Opta, stand alone among men and women in having reached a major singles final from the qualifying rounds since the Open Era began in 1968.

"I feel like I am in a bubble; I don't know what's going on," Chwalinska said. "After the tournament it will be time to process it: breathe in, breathe out."

Besides the tea, she might watch some tennis "because I'm a tennis freak."

She said her favorite player growing up was Swiss great Roger Federer, then Spanish clay-court ace Rafael Nadal. Now it's 24-time major winner Novak Djokovic.

"I'm just very grateful that I was growing up during this era," she said. "Sometimes I come back to these old matches and I watch them play, and it feels like poetry."

Chwalinska sealed victory on her first match point with a powerful forehand winner down the line, then fell back with both hands on her face. She then sat on her chair and panted heavily, her face buried into a towel.

"I honestly don't know what was going on in my head," she said. "I was just in such a shock."

Chwalinska's run saw her advance through three qualifying rounds to enter the main draw and play in just her third Grand Slam. Her best result at a major before this was the second round at Wimbledon in 2022. Polish countrywoman Iga Swiatek has won the French Open four times.

Andreeva, 19, reached her first Grand Slam fi-

nal by beating Marta Kostyuk 6-1, 6-3 earlier Thursday on Court Philippe-Chatrier.

Andreeva had reached the semifinals here two years ago, but this is Chwalinska's first semifinal anywhere at WTA tour-level.

Remarkable run

Chwalinska has dropped only one set in her nine matches, including qualifying, and has bulldozed four top-50 players in the main draw.

Her ranking will rocket from No. 114 to No. 14 if she wins the tournament, according to the WTA.

Her bank balance will also get a significant boost. Chwalinska's total prize money heading into Roland Garros was \$864,030 and by reaching the final she gets 1.4 million euros about (\$1.6 million); and 2.8 million euros (\$3.25 million) if she wins on Saturday.

A neat drop shot and lob gave her set point in the tiebreaker, and she clinched the first set when Shnaider's backhand went wide.

Shnaider had a medical timeout after the seventh game of the second set. She flexed her left leg as she lay on her back, and dropped her serve in the ninth game, giving Chwalinska a chance to serve for the match.

"All the kudos to Maja. She played amazing," Shnaider said. "She moves incredible on the court, she covers a lot. Even if you think that you won the point, she's there."

Fully focused

Andreeva could see even the smallest details on the ball.

"I was seeing the little hairs on the ball when I was tossing or playing (shots)," Andreeva said. "I was really, really focused today."

Andreeva, who is seeded No. 8, also converted her first match point when serving for the victory.

She clearly feels comfortable at the French Open, which she describes as a "cozy" tournament because she sees familiar faces every year, and enjoys her time in Paris.

"I really like to walk around the city, to go into those little restaurants on the street," she said. "I also speak a little bit of French, so I try to sometimes talk to people in French."

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Hurricanes rally, even series in OT

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — The Carolina Hurricanes looked a step behind, down two goals and chasing a tested team filled with Stanley Cup winners from three years ago. And the pressure had been building for weeks on Seth Jarvis and the power play.

“Somebody had to step up and make a play,” coach Rod Brind’Amour said simply.

A shocking third-period comeback changed everything, both in getting the Hurricanes back in the Stanley Cup Final and setting the stage for Jarvis and that power-play unit to get a needed breakthrough moment.

Jarvis blasted a one-timer past Carter Hart on a power play at 3:56 of overtime to lift the Hurricanes past the Vegas Golden Knights, 4-3 on Thursday night. That ended a night that saw Carolina trail 2-0 entering the third period after looking outmatched through the second, rally with three unanswered goals, then regroup after giving up a tying goal late to force the OT.

Just as importantly, the Hurricanes went from staring at an 0-2 series deficit after losing twice at home to heading West for Game 3 on Saturday in a tied series after an abrupt turn of fortune.

The time was coming, the Hurricanes kept insisting, when their top-line guys and the power play would make big plays.

Turns out, they were right.

“This is exciting; this is what playoff hockey is all about,” said Jarvis, who admitted the winning score was a “huge” weight off his shoulders. “It’s tight games and momentum swings, and you never really know what’s going to happen next.”

Unexpected comeback

Indeed, Vegas’ roster filled with Cup winners from 2023 looked every bit in control of this one. Yet the Hurricanes pulled off a comeback that will

Tortorella’s failed challenge changed Game 2 momentum

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — A failed coach’s challenge by John Tortorella was a momentum-changing moment in Game 2 of the Stanley Cup Final on Thursday night.

His Vegas Golden Knights appeared to score with five minutes left in regulation, but referee Jean Hebert waved it off immediately, citing goaltender interference. Hebert announced that he and the other on-ice officials thought Ivan Barbashev pushed Carolina Hurricanes goaltender Frederik Andersen to knock the puck into the net.

Tortorella after some deliberation decided to challenge the play, and it did not take long for officials and the on-site NHL situation room to stick with the call on the ice of no goal. The Hurricanes scored on the ensuing power play 25 seconds later and went on to win 4-3 in overtime to tie the series.

“I saw a loose puck in front of Freddie,” Tortorella said. “Our player stabbed it, didn’t move the goalie and it goes through him into the other side. I’d challenge it 10 out of 10 times.”

It was purely a video review of goalie interference and had nothing to do with whether the whistle was blown before the puck crossed the goal line.

“The ruling on the play was goaltender interference,” executive vice president and director of officiating Stephen Walkom told a pool reporter. “He waved it (off) immediately. He believed that it was under the goalie, and the Vegas player went after the puck and interfered with the goalie and his ability to freeze the puck and waved it off immediately.”

The punishment for a failed coach’s challenge is a two-minute minor penalty. Vegas was 4 for 4 on the penalty kill against Carolina’s power play to that point in the series.

Staal made sure the Golden Knights didn’t kill this one, tipping defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere’s point shot in for just the Hurricanes’ eighth power play goal of the playoffs. Seth Jarvis made it nine when he scored in overtime, though it may have never gotten to that point had Tortorella not challenged.

“You’d like to make them pay every time,” center Sebastian Aho said. “It’s a big swing because the other option is going down a goal. But other than that, every time you get a power play, you’re trying to score. So, it’s not that different, but obviously it was a big swing.”

earn a spot in franchise lore alongside moments like the “Molson Miracle” at Montreal in 2002 — when they rallied from a 3-0 hole entering the third before winning in 4-3 OT in Round 2 — or the 2009 first-round shocker at New Jersey when the Hurricanes scored twice in the final 80 seconds for another 4-3 win in Game 7.

It started with a tough effort by Logan Stankoven to beat Rasmus Andersson for a puck along the boards before coming behind the net to throw one off the skate of Jeremy Lauzon in the crease to slip by Hart for a life-infusing score at 10:20.

Mark Jankowski followed, when linemate William Carrier kept the entry alive while tussling

with Lauzon and fed him for a score. This one stuck, coming after Jankowski had an overtime winner waved off in Game 2 of the first-round series against Ottawa and a second goal later waved off against Philadelphia for a goaltender-interference review on Carrier.

Jarvis, power play come through in clutch

Carolina’s power play entered the night just 7 of 58 (12.1%) in the playoffs after ranking fourth in the regular season at 24.9%. But, that unit struck twice to change everything on Thursday night, first with captain Jordan Staal redirecting Shayne Gostisbehere’s shot to beat Carter Hart from the top of the crease for a 3-2 lead with the man advantage.

Then, after Vegas got a tying goal off Mark Stone’s skate with 1:21 left in regulation — coming when Hurricanes defenseman Jacob Slavin knocking a loose rebound past Frederik Andersen into the net while clearing the crease — Carolina came up with a rousing response in OT.

The fact that it was Jarvis who got it only magnified the scope of the moment. The winning blast marked only the fourth goal of the playoffs for Jarvis, a top-line forward who led the team with 32 regular-season goals and played for Canada’s silver-medal team at the Milan Cortina Olympics.

Brind’Amour had said multiple times in recent weeks that the Sebastian Aho-centered line featuring Jarvis and Andrei Svechnikov had largely played other top lines to even. The Hurricanes had rolled to a 12-1 record through the Eastern Conference playoffs while the Stankoven-centered second line or the third line featuring open-ice speedster Nikolaj Ehlers carried the scoring.

But Brind’Amour cautioned Wednesday: “We need them to get going.”

Finals put NYC fans in Knicks frenzy

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jalen Brunson was wowed upon hearing the price on the secondary market for the cheapest ticket in New York for Game 3 of the NBA Finals between the Knicks and Spurs.

What left the Knicks star nearly stumped was determining what he would deem worthy of spending \$7,500 to go see.

“That’s a good question,” Brunson said Thursday. He paused for a few seconds before delivering his answer: “A live Michael Jackson performance.”

Thriller, indeed.

From Bay Ridge to the Bronx and beyond, the Big Apple has gone nuts for the Knicks.

The team is not only in the NBA Finals for the first time in 27 years, New York is riding a 12-0 roll after rallying from a 14-point second-half deficit in a 105-95 win at San Antonio in Game 1 on Wednesday night. Game 2 is Friday night in San Antonio before the series shifts to New York on Monday.

It seems as if the entire city is on board. There were the thousands who filled Madison Square Garden to watch the game on the big screen, only to be matched by the thousands more celebrating outside in the shadow of the Empire State Building lit up in the Knicks’ blue and orange.

The MTA — the city’s transit authority — got into the spirit by painting several subway stops around the arena in Knicks colors. And Mayor Zohran Mamdani even signed an executive order temporarily lifting children’s bedtime hours.

“Knicks in Four!” chants erupted shortly after midnight, as fans climbed light posts and even on an ambulance outside of MSG.

Similar scenes were captured at a free watch party in Central Park, and across the five boroughs.

At a bar in Brooklyn, fans spilled out onto the outside sidewalk to watch the game on the TV inside. At a pizzeria a few doors down, fans gathered around a flat screen TV someone erected in the trunk of a car.

All of this for a chance to be a part of what could be history 53 years in the making, since Willis Reed and company last brought an NBA title to what was and evidently remains a basketball-mad metropolis. The buzz in the city has overwhelmed much talk of the World Cup, which opens in a week.

“Honestly, I just feel grateful to be here and experience the New York Knicks, doing what we haven’t done in a long time,” Owen Odigie said, celebrating the Game 1 win inside Madison Square Garden. “It’s special. It’s beautiful.”

Knicks forward Karl-Anthony Towns could feel the Big Apple energy 1,800 miles away in San Antonio following Game 1.

“You feel the energy in the city, the grit, the grind, the hard work you’ve got to put in to make it in the city,” said Towns, who hails from New Jersey. “I think we reflect all our fans ... when we step on that court with a Knicks jersey.”

Knicks fans even made their presence felt in San Antonio, beyond the familiar celebrities of Spike Lee, Tracy Morgan, Timothée Chalamet, Ben Stiller and more. The crowd in San Antonio was estimated to be 20% Knicks fans, some of whom made their voices heard in yelling, “Let’s go, Knicks,” during the national anthem.

In reality, given the soaring prices at home, it was reasonably cheaper for Knicks fans to make the trip to San Antonio, even when taking into account flight and lodging costs. Tickets for Game 1 started at around \$750 on the secondary market.

Spurs guard Julian Champagnie — a native New Yorker — wasn’t surprised to see the Knicks contingent.

“I kind of expected that,” Champagnie said. “I’m from New York. I know how New York fans travel and stuff like that, so I kind of expected that.”

‘Spurs Nuns’ have created divine bond with team

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Victor Wembanyama stepped off the court for a moment before Game 1 of the NBA Finals, accepted greetings from a handful of well-wishers in San Antonio Spurs jerseys, then bowed his head to join them in a quick prayer.

They’re the Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco.

On game nights, they’re called the Spurs Nuns.

New York has Ben Stiller, Tina Fey, Tracy Morgan among its superfans; San Antonio has a group of nuns who wear Spurs jerseys over their habits. It’s a relationship that goes back at least 20 years or so, and to the sisters, it makes perfect sense.

“We’re serving the poor and the young,” said Sr. Bernadette Mota, the director of the department of mission advancement for the Salesian Sisters.

“And in order to reach the young where they’re at, you have to love what they love and then they’ll love who you love. So, we

have that affinity with the Spurs because it gives us an avenue to do our mission with the young people that we serve.”

This tale started in a most unique way.

As the story goes, a couple decades ago, some of the retired sisters — who happened to be native Texans and big Spurs fans — would watch the games on television or listen on the radio, some even doing so while hospitalized. They would cheer for all the players, and for coach Gregg Popovich. But Popovich would sometimes seem a bit angry on the sidelines, prompting some of the sisters to reach out with letters.

“They would write to Coach Popovich and let him know when they thought he was he doing great and let him know when he lost his temper — but they were really supporting him,” Mota said. “He’s the one that actually responded back to them, thanking them for their support for him and for the Spurs. It was really just a very organic conversation that started all of this.”

Yes, it’s true: The nuns would scold Pop

for bad behavior.

“They would, in a nice way, in a very nice way,” Mota said. “They’d be like, ‘Coach, you lost your temper there, come on, we’re praying for you, you can do better.’”

Popovich and the Spurs have kept a relationship with the sisters since. Popovich’s late wife Erin, who died in 2018, also had close ties to the sisters and their work. It has been a mutually beneficial relationship; the Spurs love having the sisters at games, and the story of what the nuns do when they’re not watching basketball has led to many people offering to help their mission.

“We’ve had a number of individual people reach out and they’ve been donating anywhere from \$10 to \$100 and we’ve had a few ones who have larger capacity reach out, too,” Mota said.

“All of this is divine providence, God’s gift, because we’re actually very much in need. Our mission, we rely on the generosity of people who are our partners and collaborators in our mission.”

Marte HR lifts D-backs over Dodgers

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Ketel Marte hit a solo homer in the ninth inning as the Arizona Diamondbacks rallied after a hard collision injured two players to beat the Los Angeles Dodgers 3-2 on Thursday night.

The Dodgers scored two runs off Ryne Nelson in the fifth inning following a collision at first base that injured Diamondbacks first baseman Ildemaro Vargas and the Dodgers' Max Muncy.

Arizona tied it in the eighth inning on Corbin Carroll's leadoff homer and Geraldo Perdomo's run-scoring single.

Paul Sewald (2-4) then worked around Will Smith's two-out double in the ninth to set up Marte's walk-off.

Marte did it on the first pitch he saw from Tanner Scott (1-3), tossing his bat nearly all the way to Arizona's dugout following a towering shot to left that sent his teammates charging out of the dugout.

Nelson didn't allow a hit until Kyle Tucker's leadoff single in the fifth inning, but the collision at first base and two misplayed balls in the outfield after that led to two runs.

Yankees 2, Guardians 1: Ryan McMahon hit a go-ahead single in the seventh inning, Carlos Rodón combined with three relievers on a two-hitter and New York beat visiting Cleveland to salvage the finale of a three-game series that star Aaron Judge missed.

The Yankees announced after the game that Judge will be sidelined indefinitely with a stress fracture of the first rib on his right side. He will need to rest and have limited activity, and he will be re-evaluated in four to six weeks.

Jazz Chisholm Jr. hit a tying sacrifice fly in the fourth and started the seventh-inning rally with a one-out walk from Codi Heuer (0-1). Chisholm stole second and advanced to third on a wild pitch during consecutive pitches, then scored on McMahon's single as the Yankees went on to win for the seventh time in 10 games.

Phillies 6, Padres 4: Adolis García hit his first home run in nearly a month, Zack Wheeler allowed two hits in seven innings and host Philadelphia passed San Diego in the NL wild-card standings with a win that completed a season sweep.

García, who signed with Philadelphia in the offseason to provide right-handed power to the lineup, went deep for the first time since May 6. His fifth homer this season came off San Diego starter Lucas Giolito

(2-1) in the fifth inning to give the Phillies a 2-0 lead.

Wheeler (5-1) took a no-hitter into the sixth before it was broken up on a bloop single by Bryce Johnson. Wheeler allowed two runs on a homer by Manny Machado while striking out eight.

The Phillies completed their second sweep of the Padres in a week, winning all six games this season. They are 24-10 under interim manager Don Mattingly and have gone from 10 games under .500 to a wild-card position in 37 days.

Orioles 8, Red Sox 2: Coby Mayo hit a bases-clearing double in a six-run first inning to help Baltimore win at Boston.

Taylor Ward had three hits including a leadoff double and an RBI single in that first inning, which tied the Orioles' most runs in a single frame this season.

Adley Rutschman extended his on-base streak to 15 games on an RBI single, one game shy of his longest career streak.

Leody Taveras drove in another run in the first, and all but one run came with two outs. Carlos Narváez got the Red Sox out of the inning with a successful ABS challenge, his eighth strikeout gained via ABS.

Willson Contreras drove in the only runs for the Red Sox with a sixth-inning RBI single and a ninth-inning 403-foot homer.

Giants 12, Brewers 9: Casey Schmitt homered on the game's first pitch and Eric Haase hit San Francisco's fifth grand slam in a 17-game span as they opened a nine-run lead in a road win for a four-game split.

Jung Hoo Lee had four of the Giants' 20 hits, and Chapman and Bryce Eldridge three each. San Francisco scored six times in the seventh inning, opening a 12-3 lead.

The Giants' five slams in 17 games is the shortest span in team history; they hit five over 23 games from April 14 to May 10, 1970.

Jackson Chourio homered twice for Milwaukee and David Hamilton once.

Blue Jays 7, Braves 2: Chad Dallas allowed one run in 3⅓ innings in his major-league debut and combined with five other Toronto pitchers on a four-hitter as it beat Chris Sale and host Atlanta to end a four-game losing streak.

Myles Straw drove in three runs on two hits in Toronto's 16-hit attack.

Sale (8-4) allowed three runs on a season-high 10 hits in 5⅓ innings. Straw singled in two runs and Charles McAdoo added a run-scoring single in Toronto's three-run third inning. Vladimir Guerrero Jr., who doubled and scored in the third, and Ernie Clement

each had three hits.

Tyler Heineman doubled in two runs off Reynaldo López in Toronto's four-run ninth.

Toronto left-hander Mason Fluharty made his 33rd appearance of the season and recorded the first four outs as the opener in only his third career start. Dallas (1-0), who was recalled from Triple-A Buffalo, allowed two hits and one run with two walks and two strikeouts.

Pirates 5, Astros 1: Ryan O'Hearn homered and drove in three runs to lead Pittsburgh to a win at Houston.

O'Hearn hit an RBI single in the first inning and his two-run homer in the sixth made it 4-0.

Pittsburgh's Jared Jones (1-0) allowed four hits and walked two in five scoreless innings. Carmen Mlodzinski gave up four hits and a run the rest of the way to get his first save. It was his first work since being put on the restricted list for a day after general manager Ben Cherington told reporters he wasn't ready to pitch Sunday following a move to the bullpen.

Isaac Paredes hit a solo homer in the sixth inning for the Astros to become the fourth Mexican-born player in the MLB history to reach 100 for his career. But it wasn't nearly enough to keep Houston from its third loss in four games.

Cubs 7, Athletics 6: Pete Crow-Armstrong's bloop RBI single capped a four-run ninth inning and host Chicago beat the Athletics to avoid a three-game series sweep.

Crow-Armstrong also hit a solo homer, his ninth of the season, in the sixth inning for Chicago, which had lost three straight and 14 of 17.

Joel Kuhnel (1-2) gave up five Chicago hits in the ninth inning and was tagged for all four runs. Luis Medina replaced him with two outs and surrendered the tying single to Dansby Swanson before Crow-Armstrong's knocked in Seiya Suzuki.

Royals 8, Twins 6: Pinch-hitter Josh Rojas had a go-ahead, two-run single in the ninth inning in his Kansas City debut and the Royals outlasted host Minnesota.

Rojas was recalled from Triple-A Omaha earlier in the day and didn't enter the game until he pinch hit for Nick Loftin with the bases loaded and one out against Justin Lawrence. Rojas slapped a single up the middle to put the Royals ahead.

Kody Clemens homered twice off Royals starter Seth Lugo, and Byron Buxton and Victor Caratini also hit solo shots.