

Russia widens offensive in Ukraine

Associated Press

LIVIV, Ukraine — Russia widened its offensive in Ukraine on Friday, striking airfields in the west and a major industrial city in the east, while the huge armored column that had been stalled for over a week outside Kyiv was on the move again, spreading out into forests and towns near the capital.

On the economic and political front, the U.S. and its allies moved to further isolate and sanction Russia by revoking its most favored trading status, while on the ground, the Kremlin's forces appeared to be trying to regroup and regain momentum after encountering heavier losses and stiffer resistance than anticipated.

"It's ugly already, but it's going to get worse," said Nick Reynolds, a land warfare analyst at Royal United Services Institute, a British think tank.

With the invasion in its 16th day, Russian President Vladimir Putin said there had been "certain positive developments" in Russia-Ukraine talks, but gave no details.

For his part, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Ukrainian forces had "reached a strategic turning point," though he did not elaborate.

"It's impossible to say how many days we will still need to free our land, but it is possible to say that we will do it," he said via video from Kyiv.

He also said authorities were working on establishing 12 humanitarian corridors and trying to ensure food, medicine and other basics get to people across the country.

Thousands of civilians and soldiers on both sides are believed to have been killed in the invasion.

So far, the Russians have made the biggest advances on cities in the east and south — including in Mariupol, the heavily bombarded seaport where civilians scrounged for food and fuel amid a harrowing 10-day-old siege — while struggling in the north and around Kyiv.

On Friday, they continued to launch airstrikes in urban areas such as Kyiv, Kharkiv and Mariupol, while also pounding targets away from the main battle zones.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said Russia used high-precision long-range weapons to put military airfields in Lutsk and Ivano-Frankivsk in the west "out of action."

The Lutsk strikes killed four Ukrainian

servicemen and wounded six, Lutsk Mayor Ihor Polishchuk said. In Ivano-Frankivsk, residents were ordered into shelters in an air raid alert.

In another potentially ominous development, new satellite photos appeared to show the massive Russian convoy outside the Ukrainian capital had split up and fanned out.

Howitzers were towed into position to open fire, and armored units were seen in towns near the Antonov Airport north of the city, according to Maxar Technologies, the company that produced the images.

The 40-mile line of tanks and other vehicles had massed outside Kyiv early last week.

But its advance had appeared to stall amid reports of food and fuel shortages, muddy roads and attacks by Ukrainian troops with anti-tank missiles.

The purpose of the latest move was unclear, though Russia is widely expected eventually to try to encircle the capital.

Reynolds, the defense analyst, said the move, in part, looked like an attempt by the troops to better protect themselves by dispersing. He said it may indicate the Russians are not ready to surround the city just yet.

Russian biological weapons 'disinformation' cited

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — The United States accused Russia of using a U.N. Security Council meeting Friday for "lying and spreading disinformation" as part of a potential false-flag operation by Moscow for the use of chemical or biological agents in Ukraine.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said Russia was playing out a scenario put forth in the council last month by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken — that President Vladimir Putin would "fabricate allegations about chemical or biological weapons to justify its own vio-

lent attacks against the Ukrainian people."

"The intent behind these lies seems clear, and is deeply troubling," she said. "We believe Russia could use chemical or biological agents for assassinations, as part of a staged or false-flag incident, or to support tactical military operations."

Russia had requested the council meeting to address its allegations of U.S. "biological activities" in Ukraine — a charge made without any evidence and denied by both Washington and Kyiv.

Britain's U.N. Ambassador Barbara Woodward, called the

allegations "utter nonsense" and said "Russia is sinking to new depths today, but the council must not get dragged down with it."

U.N. disarmament chief Izumi Nakamitsu told the council she was aware of media reports about allegations of biological weapons programs and said: "The United Nations is not aware of any biological weapons programs."

Thomas-Greenfield said Ukraine doesn't have a biological weapons program or biological weapons laboratories supported by the United States, as Russia claimed. Ukraine does own and

operate its own public health laboratory facilities which make it possible to detect and diagnose diseases like COVID-19 which the U.S. has assisted Ukraine in doing "safely and securely."

Thomas-Greenfield said that ever since Russia began building up forces near Ukraine's borders, Washington's strategy has been to counter Moscow's tactics and share what it knows with the world.

"We're not going to let Russia get away with lying to the world or staining the integrity of the Security Council by using it as a venue for legitimizing Putin's violence," she said.

Senate approves \$13.6B in aid for Ukraine, allies

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A \$13.6 billion emergency package of military and humanitarian aid for besieged Ukraine and its European allies easily won final congressional approval, hitching a ride on a government-wide spending bill that's five months late but loaded with political prizes for both parties.

With Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion killing thousands and forcing over 2 million others to flee, the Senate approved the \$1.5 trillion overall legislation by a 68-31 bipartisan margin late Thursday.

Democrats and Republicans have battled this election year over rising inflation, energy policy and lingering pandemic restrictions, but they've rallied behind sending aid to Ukraine, whose stubborn resilience against brutal force has been inspirational for many voters.

"We promised the Ukrainian people they would not go at it alone in their fight against Putin," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said just before the vote. "And once we pass this funding in a short while, we will keep that promise."

The House passed the compromise bill easily Wednesday. President Joe Biden's signature was certain.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said approval "proves once more that members of both parties can come together to deliver results for the American people" — a phenomenon in short supply in recent years.

She also prodded lawmakers to revive money "urgently needed to prevent severe disruptions to our COVID response." In an embarrassment to Biden and Democratic leaders who'd made it a top priority, the House on Wednesday dropped the measure's \$15.6 billion for continuing efforts to battle the pandemic after rank-and-file lawmakers balked at cuts in aid states had been promised.

Around half the \$13.6 billion measure for the war was for arming and equipping Ukraine and the Pentagon's costs for sending U.S. troops to other Eastern European nations skittish about the warfare next door. Much of the rest included humanitarian and economic assistance, strengthening regional

allies' defenses and protecting their energy supplies and cybersecurity needs.

Republicans strongly backed that spending. But they criticized Biden for moving too timidly, such as in the unresolved dispute with Poland over how that nation could give MiG fighter jets to Ukraine that its pilots know how to fly.

"This administration's first instinct is to flinch, wait for international and public pressure to overwhelm them, and then take action only after the most opportune moment has passed us by," said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

White House aides told Congress last month that Biden wanted \$6.4 billion to counter Russia's invasion. He ended up formally requesting \$10 billion, an amount that it took an eager Congress just a few days to boost to its final figure of \$13.6 billion.

The \$1.5 trillion bill carrying that aid gave Democrats a near 7% increase for domestic initiatives, which constituted a bit less than half the package. That translated to beefed-up spending for schools, housing, child care, renewable energy, biomedical research, law enforcement grants to communities and feeding programs.

The measure also directs money to minority communities and historically black colleges, renews efforts aimed at preventing domestic violence against women and requires infrastructure operators to report serious hacking incidents to federal authorities.

Republicans lay claim to an almost 6% boost for defense, including money for 85 advanced F-35 fighter planes, 13 new Navy ships, upgrades for 90 Abrams tanks and improvements for schools on military bases. There would be another \$300 million for Ukraine and \$300 million for other Eastern European allies on top of the measure's emergency funding.

The GOP also prevailed in retaining decades-old restrictions against using federal money to pay for nearly all abortions. And they forced Biden to abandon goals for his 2022 budget — politically implausible from the start — that envisioned 16% domestic program increases and defense growth of less than 2%.

TSA extends its mask mandate

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Federal officials are extending the requirement for masks on planes and public transportation for one more month — through mid-April — while taking steps that could lead to lifting the rule.

The mask mandate was scheduled to expire March 18, but the Transportation Security Administration said Thursday that it will extend the requirement through April 18.

TSA said the extra month will give the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention time to develop new, more targeted policies that will consider the number of cases of COVID-19 nationally and in local communities, and the risk of new variants.

The TSA enforces the rule, which extends to planes, buses, trains and transit hubs.

As of Thursday, more than 98% of the U.S. population is living in areas with low or medium COVID-19 case levels, meaning that the CDC no longer recommends face masks in public indoor settings.

A decision to eventually scrap the mask requirement — one of the last vestiges of nationwide pandemic rules — has grown more likely in recent weeks as more states, even those led by Democratic governors, relaxed their own mandates for wearing masks indoors, and the CDC eased its recommendations.

That led critics to question why the CDC would allow maskless people to gather in movie theaters and sports arenas but not on planes.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Thursday that deciding on the right policy for travel was more complicated than setting recommendations for local communities.

"If you're moving from one zone to another and picking people up ... it's a little bit different, and that requires some consultation, which is what (CDC officials) are going to endeavor to do between now and April 18," Psaki said.

CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said last week that her agency must study the science around virus transmission "but also the epidemiology and the frequency that we may encounter a variant of concern or a variant of interest in our travel corridors."

Rattlesnake roundups use different formats

Associated Press

WOODSTOCK, Ga. — An annual rattlesnake roundup in south Georgia recently changed the format of this month's event to celebrate living snakes without skinning and butchering them, earning plaudits from animal rights activists.

But no such changes are occurring at a huge rattlesnake roundup this weekend in Texas, a festival that the activists say is barbaric. The two events are a marked contrast in how rattlesnakes are handled. They also show the huge divide in how they are seen by some, with the Georgia festival heralded by animal advocates and the Texas roundup shamed.

"A few rattlesnake roundups still persist," the Arizona-based Center for Biological Diversity said in a statement full of scorn for the Texas festival, which is "notorious for openly killing and skinning western diamondback rattlesnakes by the hundreds in front of crowds."

Plans for the "World's Largest Rattlesnake Roundup" this weekend in the Texas town of Sweetwater are full-scale ahead, with snakes set to be skinned and others "milked" of their venom. There's even a pageant for local young women, Miss Snake Charmer. The town of 11,000 is expected to swell to around 30,000

during the festival that runs Friday through Sunday, said Dennis Cumbie, one of the organizers.

"It's the biggest event in this town every year," Cumbie said. "It's very much part of our culture."

Sweetwater has held its rattlesnake roundup for more than six decades, "and what we have figured out over 64 years is that we're not damaging the population of the snakes whatsoever," Cumbie said. Rather, organizers liken snake hunting to how other hunters keep deer numbers in check.

In Georgia, organizers say the more humane format they launched for the first time last weekend was a success. Exact attendance figures are unknown because many people such as children are admitted free, but "I've heard anywhere from 7,000 to 15,000," said longtime volunteer Jeffrey Cox, who has been helping to organize the Whigham Rattlesnake Roundup for the past four decades.

"Everybody was nervous about it and didn't know how it would go," Cox said. Then came perfect weather for the one-day Georgia show, "and there were no complaints whatsoever," he said. "We probably had more actual snakes there this year, even though it was a different format than what we've had."

Suspect arrested after body in concrete-filled tub found in Hawaii

Associated Press

HONOLULU — Two men captured in Southern California and suspected of a Hawaii killing were living in the victim's house in an exclusive, gated community until neighbors complained about a stench, leading to the discovery of the homeowner's body encased in concrete in a bathtub, police said.

U.S. Marshals and Los Angeles police found Juan Tejedor Baron, 23, hiding in a crawl space under a bench at the back of a Greyhound bus Wednesday in Anaheim, Calif., police said. The bus was headed for Mexico.

A 34-year-old man was also arrested but later released.

On Monday, patrol officers were sent to

the home in the exclusive east Honolulu neighborhood called Hawaii Loa Ridge to check on the 73-year-old owner, who was reported missing, according to Honolulu police.

Detectives spoke with Baron, who said he lived in the home and was in a relationship with the owner, police said. He allowed police to search the home, but the owner couldn't be found. Detectives noticed a bathtub filled with a "concrete-type substance," Honolulu police said.

The next day, police returned to the home and saw that the concrete-filled tub was covered with coffee grounds, Hawaii News Now reported. As police chipped away at the concrete, they found a decomposing body.

Trans serial killer charged after head of woman found

New York Daily News

NEW YORK — An 83-year-old serial killer was charged with second-degree murder after a woman's severed head was found in the transgender suspect's apartment, prosecutors said Thursday.

When cops went to Harvey Marcelin's apartment to execute a search warrant and question her about a headless, limbless torso found dumped on a Brooklyn street, they found what they believe is the head of Susan Leyden, who was reported missing March 2, prosecutors said.

Marcelin served two stints in prison for killing two girlfriends in Manhattan and now identifies as a transgender woman, authorities said.

Marcelin was arrested for concealment of a human corpse on March 4 and ordered held without bail. She was indicted Thursday on second-degree murder and other charges.

A source said the head found in Marcelin's apartment was in a plastic bag.

"Last week my office charged Harvey Marcelin with allegedly concealing the severed head of a woman in her home and discarding the victim's torso in a bag on the street," said Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez.

"Today, the grand jury indicted Harvey Marcelin for murder, and my office is committed to vigorously seeking justice," Gonzalez said. "The facts of this horrific case are gruesome and unsettling, and my heart is with the victim's family and friends,"

Leyden's torso was found in a multicolored bag with a flower decal stuffed in a shopping cart at Atlantic and Pennsylvania Aves., in East New York last Thursday. The multicolored bag was wrapped inside a black garbage bag, cops said.

A human leg found nearby four days later has now been determined to be Leyden's.

Police were led to Marcelin after she was identified as the person caught on video disposing of the torso.

Zeroing in on Marcelin's address, cops recovered video surveillance of Leyden going into Marcelin's building on Feb. 27 — rolling behind her the same multicolored bag that would later hold her dismembered torso.

A few days later, on March 2, Marcelin was spotted rolling the same bag out of the apartment building and throwing it in the trash near the corner of Pennsylvania and Atlantic Aves., just a short distance from her home.

Census report finds some undercounted

Associated Press

Black, Hispanic and American Indian residents were missed at higher rates than they were a decade ago during the 2020 census, according to a report released Thursday that evaluated how well the once-a-decade head count tallied every U.S. resident.

Even though the 2020 census missed an unexpectedly small percentage of the total U.S. population given the unprecedented challenges it faced, the increase in undercounts among some minority groups prompted an outcry from civil rights leaders who blamed political interference by the Trump administration, which tried unsuccessfully to add a citizenship question to the census form and cut field operations short.

"These numbers are devastating. Once again, we see an overcount of white Amer-

icans and an undercount of Black and Hispanic Americans," National Urban League CEO Marc Morial said on a call with reporters. "I want to express in the strongest possible terms our outrage."

The results of the U.S. Census Bureau's Post-Enumeration Survey showed that most racial and ethnic minorities were overlooked at statistically significant higher rates than they were a decade ago, with the Asian population being an exception. The survey measures whether certain populations were undercounted or overrepresented in the census. Overcounts take place, for example, if someone owns a vacation home and is counted there as well as at a permanent home address.

The Black population in the 2020 census had a net undercount of 3.3%, while it was almost 5% for Hispanics and 5.6% for Amer-

ican Indians and Native Alaskans living on reservations. Those identifying as some other race had a net undercount of 4.3%. The non-Hispanic white population had a net overcount of 1.6%, and Asians had a net overcount of 2.6%, according to the results.

In the 2010 census, by comparison, the Black population had a net undercount of more than 2%, while it was 1.5% for the Hispanic population. There was almost a 4.9% undercount for American Indian and Alaskan Natives living on reservations, and it was 1.6% for people identifying as some other race and 0.08% for Asians. The non-Hispanic white population had a net overcount of 0.8%.

The 2020 census missed 0.24% of the entire U.S. population, a rate that wasn't statistically significant, while it missed 0.01% in the 2010 census.

Smollett sentenced to 150 days in jail in fake attack

Associated Press

CHICAGO — A judge sentenced Jussie Smollett to 150 days in jail, branding the Black and gay actor a narcissistic charlatan for staging a hate crime against himself to grab the limelight while the nation struggled with wrenching issues of racial injustice. Smollett responded by defiantly maintaining his innocence and suggesting he could be killed in jail.

The sentence and Smollett's post-hearing outburst capped an hourslong hearing Thursday and more than three years of legal drama following Smollett's claim that he had been the target of a racist and homophobic attack.

Smollett didn't make a statement when offered the opportunity before the judge announced the sentence, saying he was listening to his attorneys' advice. But after Cook County Judge James Linn issued his decision,

Smollett removed the face mask he wore throughout the hearing to proclaim himself innocent.

"If I did this, then it means that I stuck my fist in the fears of Black Americans in this country for over 400 years and the fears of the LGBT community," Smollett said, standing up at the defense table as his lawyers and sheriff's deputies surrounded him. "Your Honor, I respect you and I respect the jury but I did not do this. And I am not suicidal. And if anything happens to me when I go in there, I did not do it to myself. And you must all know that."

As deputies led him from the courtroom, Smollett shouted out again.

"I am innocent," he yelled, raising his fist. "I could have said I am guilty a long time ago."

The judge sentenced Smollett to 30 months

of felony probation, with 150 days served in Cook County Jail, and ordered that he pay \$120,106 in restitution to the city of Chicago and a \$25,000 fine.

Special prosecutor Dan Webb asked Linn to include "an appropriate amount of prison time" when sentencing the actor for his conviction on five counts of disorderly conduct.

"His conduct denigrated hate crimes," Webb said after the hearing. "His conduct will discourage others who are victims of hate crimes from coming forward and reporting those crimes to law enforcement."

Smollett's attorneys wanted the judge to limit the sentence to community service, arguing that he had already been punished by the criminal justice system and damage to his career.

IRS plans to hire 10,000 workers to relieve backlog

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The IRS said Thursday it plans to hire 10,000 new workers to help reduce a massive backlog that the government says will make this tax season the most challenging in history.

The agency released a plan to work down the tens of millions of filings that includes speeding up the traditionally slow hiring process, relying more on automated processes and bringing on more contract workers to help with mailroom

and paper processing.

Getting it done will be the big challenge, tax experts say.

The agency faces a backlog of around 20 million pieces of correspondence, which is more than 15 times as large as in a normal filing season, according to the agency. And the IRS workforce is the same size it was in 1970, though the U.S. population has grown exponentially and the U.S. tax code has become increasingly complicated.

Additionally, the need to administer pandemic-related programs has imposed an entirely new workload on the agency.

White House officials have said the agency is not equipped to serve taxpayers even in non-pandemic years. A senior administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity Thursday to preview the new IRS plan, said processing returns will continue to be a massive challenge so long as the agency operates on 1960s infrastructure.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Mummified body found in wall of building

CA OAKLAND — A construction worker found a mummified body in the wall of the Oakland convention center on Wednesday, authorities said.

The body was found during renovations at the Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center, the Alameda County Sheriff's Office said. The partially decomposed corpse probably had been there for several years and had mummified, authorities said.

The decomposition made it impossible to immediately determine the age or gender of the body, the Sheriff's Office said.

The city-owned convention center near Lake Merritt has been closed since 2005. But in 2015 the City Council reached an agreement with a developer to lease the building and turn it into a commercial and performing arts space.

Woman arrested in case involving missing baby

MD HAGERSTOWN — A 2-month-old baby missing from a Maryland home was located in Washington, D.C., and a woman was arrested in connection with the case, police said Wednesday.

News outlets report the baby boy was found about 10:30 a.m. with help from the FBI, Maryland State Police and the Metropolitan Police Department, according to Lt. Rebecca Fetchu of the Hagerstown Police Department. A woman told officers that she left her baby at her Hagerstown apartment with a male acquaintance and that when she returned, the ac-

quaintance was still there but the baby was gone.

A woman who was found with the baby was arrested on an outstanding warrant in relation to the case, Fetchu said.

Hunters kill fewer white-tailed deer

WV SOUTH CHARLESTON — The number of white-tailed deer killed in West Virginia during the recent hunting seasons fell slightly compared to a year ago, wildlife officials said.

Hunters killed 105,278 deer last year, a 1.5% drop from the 106,861 deer killed in 2020, the Division of Natural Resources said in a news release.

The most deer were killed in Preston, Jackson, Randolph and Upshur counties.

The DNR said hunters killed more than 42,000 bucks during the traditional buck firearm season, 31,000 were killed by bows and crossbows, nearly 28,000 antlerless deer were killed during all firearm seasons, and nearly 3,600 deer were killed by muzzleloaders.

Paper: Court clerk gave herself \$30K raise

SC KINGSTREE — An elected court clerk in a small county gave herself a \$30,000 raise last year using federal money set aside to improve collecting child support, a newspaper reported.

The county attorney isn't sure what Williamsburg County Clerk of Court Sharon Staggers did was appropriate and the State Law Enforcement Division is looking into her office, The Post and Courier reported.

Staggers' salary is now more than \$92,000, according to documents the paper obtained.

Road project aims to increase safety

KY COVINGTON — A project intended to help drivers in Covington travel north on the interstate is set to begin this month, officials said.

Construction of a Texas Turnaround that will help move traffic north on Interstate 71/75 will begin on March 16 if weather permits, a statement from the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet said. The turnaround, which started in Texas, helps traffic move more efficiently through busy highway interchange areas, the statement said.

Currently, drivers coming onto the interstate from Fourth Street in Covington must cross multiple lanes of traffic on a bridge to go north, engineer Bob Yeager said in the statement.

Police seize cash, 82 gambling machines

MI LANSING — Police raids have led to more than \$91,500 in cash and 82 gambling machines being removed from two illegal storefront casinos in Lansing.

The raids followed an investigation by Michigan's Gaming Control Board, the state Attorney General's office and Lansing police, the Lansing State Journal reported Wednesday.

Most of the machines, including 28 slot machines and a virtual blackjack table, were removed Feb. 28 from a storefront in a shopping center. Thirteen full-size slot machines and seven other games were removed

March 4 at the other storefront.

Police find abandoned animals locked in cages

NC BLACK MOUNTAIN — A group of abandoned animals was found locked in cages on the side of a road, according to police.

The Black Mountain Police Department said the animals were left late Tuesday or early Wednesday. Police posted photos of two cages sitting on the side of the road, each with multiple animals crammed inside.

One photo shows three dogs sharing one crate and what appears to be a rabbit in a cage with other dogs.

Police didn't provide information on the conditions of the animals or whether they would be available for adoption.

Historic stonework found at golf course

IN MISHAWAKA — Crews doing maintenance work on an Indiana golf course unearthed stonework from the Works Progress Administration, the Depression-era program that provided jobs across the U.S.

Mishawaka Mayor Dave Wood said an island, stone bridge, cobblestone paths and a fork of a creek were found at Eberhart-Petro Golf Course by workers with the St. Joseph County Drainage Board, the South Bend Tribune reported.

It's the second time that WPA stonework was uncovered at the golf course. A year ago, stone walls were discovered when an underground pipe began to fail and crews dug it up.

— From Associated Press

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit www.stripes.com.

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

MLB owners, union reach agreement

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Major League Baseball's players and owners ended their most bitter money fight in a quarter-century Thursday when the players' association accepted management's offer to salvage a 162-game season that will start April 7.

The work stoppage ended at 7 p.m. sharp, closing an acrimonious 99-day lockout that delayed spring training and threatened to cancel regular-season games for the first time since 1995.

Training camps in Florida and Arizona were to open Friday, with players mandated to report by Sunday. Opening day was pushed back just over a week from its March 31 date, but all that might be forgotten when the Yankees' Aaron Judge digs in against the rival Red Sox, or Shohei Ohtani eschews the new universal designated hitter and plays both ways for the Angels.

"I do want to start by apologizing to our fans," Commissioner Rob Manfred said, his voice quavering at times, later adding: "I hope that the players will see the effort we made to address their concerns in this agreement as an olive branch in terms of building a better relationship."

The deal brings major changes that include expansion of the DH to the National League, increasing the postseason from 10 teams to 12, advertisements on uniforms, a balanced schedule that reduces intradivision play starting in 2023 and measures aimed to incentivize competition and decrease rebuilding, such as an amateur draft lottery. Most of the labor fight, of course, centered on the game's core economics.

The players' executive board approved the five-year contract at about 3 p.m. in a 26-12 vote. Owners ratified the deal 30-0 just three hours later, and just like that, baseball's ninth work stoppage ended.

Not that all is resolved. Union head Tony Clark did not appear alongside Manfred and scheduled a separate news conference for Friday, a visible sign of the sport's factions.

"Our union endured the second-longest work stoppage in its history to achieve significant progress in key areas that will improve not just current players' rights and benefits, but those of generations to come," Clark said in a statement.

Manfred pledged "maybe to more regularly get to the bottom of player concerns so that they don't build up."

"I spoke to Tony after their ratification vote. I told him that I thought we had a great opportunity for the game in front of us," Manfred said. "One of the things that I'm supposed to do is promote a good relationship with our players. I've tried to do that. I think that I have not been successful in that. I think that it begins with small steps."

The 184 games canceled by Manfred were instead postponed, and the regular season was extended by three days to Oct. 5. Approximately three games per team will be made up as part of doubleheaders.

With pitchers Max Scherzer and Andrew Miller taking prominent roles as union spokesmen, players let three management deadlines pass — Manfred called them "the art of collective bargaining" — before accepting an agreement before the fourth.

While the union's executive subcommittee voted 8-0 against the deal — all earned \$3.5 million or more last year — player representatives were in favor by 26-4.

"Time and economic leverage. No agreement comes together before those two things play out," Manfred said. "I think we made an agreement when it was possible to make an agreement."

Baseball's lockout is finally over, so what now?

Associated Press

Major League Baseball and its players have settled on terms for a new collective bargaining agreement, ending the sport's ninth work stoppage after 99 days and clearing the way for a full — but modified — 162-game regular season.

Opening day has been pushed back a week to April 7. Before Max Scherzer makes his New York Mets debut or Cleveland plays for the first time with its new Guardians moniker, clubs need to get players ready for a six-month season.

Plus, there are still 138 major league free agents looking for homes, including All-Star shortstop Carlos Correa.

Here's what to know with baseball's labor lockout over:

Spring training: MLB says players must report to camps by Sunday, but some will be there for optional workouts as soon as

Friday — exactly four weeks before the regular season begins.

Unlike a normal spring training, there won't be a split set of arrivals for pitchers and catchers versus other position players. Expect the entire roster to report at once, or at least as quickly as players can arrive.

Player preparedness: Very high, for the most part. Players have been gathering at fields and facilities across the country to stay sharp when camps didn't open as planned in mid-February. Aaron Judge and several Yankees teammates have been preparing at the University of South Florida, Vanderbilt coach Tim Corbin has invited alumni and their pals to use the school's facilities in Nashville, Tenn., and the union opened a facility in Mesa, Ariz., for players.

Facilities and coaches: This is actually an easier one. Since the lockout only applied to play-

ers on major league contracts, minor league players have already reported to camps.

Many coaches, trainers and other members of major league staffs have been working with those minor leaguers while they anxiously awaited the end of the lockout.

Filling ballparks: Commissioner Rob Manfred had previously canceled spring exhibitions until March 18, but some games could be added to the schedule for next week.

Even if most major league players aren't ready for game action as soon as camps formally open, teams could fill rosters with minor league players in the early stages of the exhibition schedule.

And make no doubt, ballparks in Florida and Arizona — and the businesses nearby — would be happy to have some games restored.

Free agency blitz: Correa, Freddie Freeman and Kris Bryant headline the list of free agents still searching for a team after rosters were frozen by MLB during the lockout.

Teams spent a record \$1.4 billion on free agents in the hours before the lockout began — remember Corey Seager and Marcus Semien going to the Texas Rangers? Or Javier Báez to the Detroit Tigers?

Some names to watch: Clayton Kershaw may be choosing between a reunion with the Los Angeles Dodgers or a chance to stay close to his Dallas home with the Rangers, while Japanese outfielder Seiya Suzuki was posted back in November but had his 30-day signing window interrupted by the lockout. Suzuki will have 20 days to strike an agreement when the freeze lifts.

Rain once again delays Players Championship

Associated Press

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla. — The Players Championship was again halted Friday after four hours as puddles began to form on putting surfaces and the TPC Sawgrass couldn't hold any more rain.

A Monday finish was looking inevitable, which would be the eighth since The Players Championship began in 1974, all of them in March.

Only 96 players from the 144-man field had finished the first round when play was stopped.

"We may be in a situation where, if we don't get back out there today, we're assured of a Monday finish," said Gary Young, the chief referee of The Players.

The TPC Sawgrass received about 2½ inches of rain in a 24-hour period, and the Stadium Course held up remarkably well to get in four hours of play.

Chargers to acquire DE Mack

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles Chargers are taking a first step toward upgrading their defense by adding another premier pass rusher to pair with Joey Bosa.

The Chargers agreed to acquire defensive end Khalil Mack from the Chicago Bears in exchange for two draft picks, two people familiar with the negotiations confirmed Thursday to The Associated Press.

The Chargers are expected to send a second-round pick this year and a 2023 sixth-round selection to the Bears for the three-time All-Pro defender.

Other news

■ Russia stepped up its legal fight against isolation in sports because of the war in Ukraine when its national Olympic body made an urgent appeal Friday to overturn a ban on its athletes competing at a European youth winter sports festival. The Court of Arbitration for Sport said it was setting a timetable for the case ahead of the Winter European Youth Olympic Festival being held in Finland from March 20-25.

■ At Åre, Sweden, Slovakian skier Petra Vlhová dominated the penultimate women's World Cup giant slalom of the season Friday, narrowing the gap on leader Mikaela Shiffrin in the overall standings. Shiffrin was sixth after the opening run but improved to third, 1.70 seconds behind Vlhová. The American had her lead over Vlhová reduced to 77 points in the overall standings with five races left this season.

Bear, Hurricanes edge Avs

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Ethan Bear scored with 5:40 left and Sebastian Aho added an empty-netter to help the Carolina Hurricanes beat the Colorado Avalanche 2-0 on Thursday night.

Bear collected a loose puck along the boards near the Avalanche bench and fired a long shot that slipped through Darcy Kuemper. It was the breakthrough moment in a matchup of the league's top two teams in terms of points percentage, one that came after the Hurricanes and Avalanche had come up empty on a combined 68 shots to that point.

The Hurricanes added the clinching score after the Avalanche pulled Kuemper with about three minutes left, with Aho stealing Gabriel Landeskog's pass near center ice and skating in for the score with 1:32 left.

Antti Raanta had 36 saves for his second shutout this season for the Hurricanes. They have won eight of 10.

Kuemper made 35 saves for NHL-leading Colorado.

Sabres 3, Golden Knights 1: Craig Anderson stopped 30 shots to win his 300th career game as host Buffalo beat Vegas, with former Sabres captain Jack Eichel mostly booted in his first visit to his former home.

Charging up Sabres fans even further was Buffalo's opening goal being scored by Peyton Krebs and Alex Tuch sealing the win by scoring into an empty net with 36 seconds remaining. Both players were acquired in the trade that sent Eichel to Vegas on Nov. 4.

Panthers 7, Flyers 4: Sam Reinhart had his sixth career hat trick, Carter Verhaeghe scored twice and Florida beat visiting Philadelphia for its fifth consecutive victory.

Jonathan Huberdeau and Aaron Ekblad each had four assists for Florida.

Coyotes 5, Maple Leafs 4 (OT): Defenseman Jakob Chychrun scored his second goal of the game at 2:17 of overtime to lift Arizona over host Toronto.

Arizona recovered for its fourth consecutive victory after blowing a 4-1 lead in the third period. Alex Galchenyuk had a goal and an assist, Travis Boyd and Christian Fischer also scored, and Scott Wedgewood made 34 saves.

Toronto star Auston Matthews scored his NHL-leading 44th goal.

Flames 4, Lightning 1: Johnny Gaudreau had his sixth career hat trick to extend his points streak to seven games and help Cal-

gary beat visiting Tampa Bay.

The Flames are 15-2-1 in their past 18 games and 13-1-1 in their past 15 home games.

The Lightning have lost consecutive games in regulation for the first time this season.

Bruins 4, Blackhawks 3: David Pastrnak snapped a tie with 17.2 seconds left and host Boston beat Chicago for its eighth victory in 10 games.

Brandon Hagel scored twice for Chicago, and Alex DeBrincat extended his streak to five straight games with a goal, giving him 34 for the season.

Islanders 6, Blue Jackets 0: Anders Lee had his first career hat trick and Ilya Sorokin stopped 25 shots for his sixth shutout of the season in New York's victory over visiting Columbus.

Joonas Korpisalo made 27 saves in his first start since Jan. 31st for the Blue Jackets.

Wild 6, Red Wings 5 (SO): Mats Zuccarello and Kevin Fiala scored in a shootout, lifting Minnesota over host Detroit.

Matt Boldy scored twice in regulation, and Zuccarello, Kirill Kaprizov and Joel Eriksson Ek also had goals to help Minnesota sweep the season series. Cam Talbot made 29 saves and stopped Jakub Vrana and Dylan Larkin in the shootout.

Blues 6, Rangers 2: Robert Thomas scored twice and host St. Louis beat New York to snap a four-game losing streak.

Rangers goaltender Igor Shesterkin gave up four goals on 17 shots before replaced by Alexander Georgiev.

Jets 2, Devils 1: Kyle Connor scored his team-leading 35th goal late in the second period to snap a tie and lead visiting Winnipeg past New Jersey.

Eric Comrie made 33 saves while beating the team for which he made one start last season. Defenseman Brenden Dillion also scored for the Jets.

Senators 4, Kraken 3 (OT): Josh Norris scored twice in his 100th career game, including a power-play goal 2:34 into overtime, as Ottawa beat visiting Seattle.

It was the first meeting between the Senators and the expansion Kraken.

Predators 4, Ducks 1: Matt Duchene had two goals and an assist, Juuse Saros made 27 saves and host Nashville beat Anaheim for its third consecutive victory.

Sharks 4, Kings 3 (OT): Tomas Hertl scored 1:13 into overtime and Zach Sawchenko made 33 saves to get his first career win for visiting San Jose.

Durant leads Nets in rout of 76ers

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The 76ers fans came to boo Ben Simmons. They left booing their own team.

Kevin Durant scored 18 of his 25 points in Brooklyn's dominating first half in the Nets' 129-100 blowout victory over the 76ers on Thursday night in Simmons' much-hyped return to Philadelphia.

Seth Curry added 24 points, and Kyrie Irving had 22 for the Nets. They entered in eighth place in the East, but looked like a legitimate conference contender while badly outplaying the third-place 76ers.

Joel Embiid had 27 points and 12 rebounds for the 76ers, and James Harden finished with just 11 points.

It was the first loss for Philadelphia in six games with Harden in the lineup.

The game was dubbed as "Boo Ben" night, but the raucous fans instead turned

their displeasure on the home team when the 76ers went to the locker room trailing 72-51 and again when Brooklyn built a stunning 32-point lead in the third quarter.

"I think all of us look at Ben as our brother," Durant said. "We knew this was a hostile environment. It's hard to chant at Ben Simmons when you're losing by that much."

Simmons, wearing a designer hockey jersey and flashy jewelry, watched from the bench, likely taking delight in the vitriol deflected away from him. The three-time All-Star is continuing to recover from a back injury that has sidelined him since being swapped for Harden in a blockbuster deal at the trade deadline.

"We definitely felt like Ben was on our heart," Irving said. "If you come at Ben, you come at us."

While Simmons hasn't taken the floor yet, Harden had been a boon for the 76ers unlike

his time in Brooklyn, where the so-called Big 3 of Harden, Durant and Irving managed to play just 16 games together following Harden's trade to Brooklyn last January that was billed as a potentially championship move. Harden exchanged fist bumps with Nets staff members just before tip before a shockingly poor performance from the 10-time All-Star and former MVP.

Harden missed 14 of 17 field-goal attempts.

Warriors 113, Nuggets 102: Stephen Curry scored 24 of his 34 points in the second half, and Golden State closed the game with a 13-0 run to beat host Denver.

Jordan Poole had 21 points, and Jonathan Kuminga and Klay Thompson added 18 each for the Warriors, who beat the Nuggets for the first time this season.

Denver's Nikola Jokic had 23 points, 12 rebounds and nine assists, just missing his 19th triple double of the season.

No. 2 Wildcats edge Cardinal in quarters

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Christian Koloko scored 24 points, Bennedict Mathurin added 20 and No. 2 Arizona held off Stanford 84-80 on Thursday in the Pac-12 Tournament quarterfinals.

The top-seeded Wildcats (29-3) had a hard time shaking the Cardinal in a win late in the regular season and faced a similar issue to open the conference tournament.

"It was good to get tested today," Arizona coach Tommy Lloyd said. "Obviously, Stanford gave us everything we wanted and then some. I love this time of year. I love coaching in these games. They mean a lot. You've got to win or go home."

Koloko put Arizona up 82-77 on a two-handed dunk, but Harrison Ingram (16 points) cut the lead to two on a corner three with 13 seconds left. Ninth-seeded Stanford (16-16) quickly fouled Pelle Larsson and he made two free throws with 8.5 seconds left to send the Wildcats into the next round.

Spencer Jones scored 28 points for Stanford, which went 11 for 20 behind the arc.

Oklahoma 72, No. 3 Baylor 67: Umoja Gibson scored 14 points, including a crucial three-point play with less than a minute to go, and the Sooners (18-14) rallied past the Bears (26-6) in the Big 12 Tournament quarterfinals.

No. 6 Kansas 87, West Virginia 63: Ochai Agbaji led the Jayhawks (26-6) to a win in the Big 12 quarterfinals with 18 points, and Mountaineers (16-17) coach Bob Huggins

picked up two technical fouls and was ejected 10 minutes into the game.

No. 7 Duke 88, Syracuse 79: The Blue Devils (27-5) began coach Mike Krzyzewski's final Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament with a tougher-than-expected victory over the Orange (16-17), who played without suspended ACC scoring leader Buddy Boeheim.

Boeheim was suspended for the game by the conference for a "flagrant act" after he punched a Florida State player in the stomach during the Orange's second-round victory Wednesday.

No. 8 Villanova 66, St. John's 65: Brandon Slater made the go-ahead free throws with 2.8 seconds left and the Wildcats (24-7) barely squeezed into the Big East Tournament semifinals, overcoming a 17-point deficit in the second half to beat the Red Storm (17-15).

No. 11 Providence 65, Butler 61: Al Durham drained a go-ahead three-pointer with 41 seconds left for his first basket of the game, and the Friars (25-4) barely got past the pesky Bulldogs (14-19) in the Big East Tournament quarterfinals.

No. 13 UCLA 75, Washington State 65: Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored 23 points, Jules Bernard added 19 and the Bruins (24-6) beat the Cougars (19-14) in the Pac-12 Tournament quarterfinals.

No. 14 Texas Tech 72, Iowa State 41: Terrence Shannon Jr. scored 18 points and the Red Raiders (24-8) routed the sloppy,

mistake-prone Cyclones (20-12) in the Big 12 Tournament quarterfinals.

TCU 65, No. 22 Texas 60: Damion Baugh led the Horned Frogs (20-11) on a frantic second-half comeback and Eddie Lampkin provided the go-ahead bucket with 39 seconds left to get past the Longhorns (21-11) in the quarterfinals of the Big 12 Tournament.

No. 20 UConn 62, Seton Hall 52: R.J. Cole and Tyrese Martin each scored 17 points to lead the Huskies (23-8) into the Big East Tournament semifinals with a win over the Pirates (21-10).

No. 21 USC 65, Washington 61: Boogie Ellis scored 17 points and the Trojans (26-6) overcame a rash of turnovers to hold off the Huskies (16-15) in the Pac-12 Tournament quarterfinals.

No. 23 Colorado State 53, Utah State 51: Chandler Jacobs banked in the winning basket with 1.8 seconds left and the Rams (25-4) held off the Aggies (18-15) in the Mountain West Conference quarterfinals.

No. 24 Iowa 112, Northwestern 76: Keegan Murray scored 26 points and Jordan Bohannon had 17, leading the Hawkeyes (23-9) to the runaway victory over the Wildcats (15-16) in the Big Ten Tournament quarterfinals.

No. 25 North Carolina 63, Virginia 43: Brady Manek outscored the Cavaliers (19-14) in the first half on the way to 21 points and the Tar Heels (24-8) cruised into the ACC Tournament semifinals.