

Sexual assault reports up at academies

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Reported sexual assaults at U.S. military academies shot up during the 2021-22 school year, and one in five female students told an anonymous survey that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact, The Associated Press has learned.

A Pentagon report on reported assaults at the Army, Navy and Air Force academies shows an overall 18% jump in assaults reported by students compared with those of the previous year. The increase was driven largely by the Navy, which had nearly double the number of reported assaults in 2022, compared with 2021. It's unclear whether the phasing out of COVID-19-related restrictions contributed to the increase, including at the U.S. Naval Academy.

An anonymous student survey accompanying the report shows increases in all types of unwanted sexual contact — from touching to rape — at all

the schools. And it cites alcohol as a key factor.

The military services and the academies have struggled for years to combat sexual assault and harassment, with a myriad of prevention, education and treatment programs every year. But despite reams of research, recommendations and a shift to more independent prosecutions, the numbers continue to grow.

The increases have triggered outrage on Capitol Hill and a steady stream of legislation. But as yet, the changes have not appeared to make a dent in the problem, although officials argue that improved treatment programs have encouraged more victims to report the crimes.

According to U.S. officials, 155 students reported assaults during the 2022 school year, compared with 131 the previous year. Of those, students at the U.S. Naval Academy reported 61 — nearly double the school's

total for the previous year, when there were 33, which was by far the lowest of all the academies for that year.

Cadets at the Air Force Academy in Colorado reported 52, the same as in the previous year, and those at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in New York reported 42, a slight decrease from last year's 46.

Not all of the assaults included in the report happened while the students were enrolled in the academies. Because students at the academies are encouraged to report assaults, they sometimes will come forward to talk about events that happened in the years before they started school there. As a result, 16 students reported an assault in the 2021-22 school year that occurred prior to joining the military.

Another 35 cases involved civilians, active-duty service members and prep school students who allegedly were assaulted by someone who was a

student. All together, the total number of reported assaults with any connection to a student was 206 — about 28% higher than last year's total of 161.

U.S. officials provided details about the findings on the condition of anonymity because the report had not yet been released. The report was expected to be released later Friday.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a brief dip in cases at the academies during the shortened 2019-20 school year, when in-person classes were canceled and students were sent home to finish the semester online.

At the start of the 2020-21 school year, students faced a number of restrictions due to the ongoing pandemic. But those were reduced a bit over time, and bars and restaurants reopened. By the end of that year, the numbers began to increase again, and officials said it's hard to tell what, if any, impact COVID-19 had on the 2021 school year.

Kim supervises troops simulating attack on S. Korea

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised a live-fire artillery drill simulating an attack on a South Korean airfield and called for his troops to be ready to respond to the enemies' "frantic war preparation moves" — apparently referring to the recent series of military drills between the United States and South Korea.

The North Korean state media report Friday came a day after South Korea's military detected the North firing at least one short-range ballistic missile toward the sea from a site near

the western coastal city of Nam-po. The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff was assessing whether more missiles may have been launched simultaneously.

The United States has recently sent long-range B-1B and B-52 bombers for several rounds of joint aerial drills with South Korean warplanes. The allies are also preparing this month for their biggest combined field training exercise in years to counter the growing threat of Kim's growing nuclear arsenal. North Korea views regular U.S.-South Korean military exercises as invasion rehearsals.

Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency said Kim urged his troops to be prepared to "overwhelmingly respond to and contain" the military action of the North's enemies, which he said were proceeding with "all sorts of more frantic war preparation moves."

He said front-line units should sharpen their capabilities to carry out their two main "strategic missions, that is, first to deter war and second to take the initiative in war."

South Korea's Unification Ministry later Friday urged North Korea to stop raising tensions with "reckless nuclear

and missile programs and military provocations." Vice spokesperson Lee Hyo-jung told reporters that North Korea must focus instead on caring for people's livelihoods and take a path toward building peace on the Korean Peninsula.

The KCNA report did not specify what types of weapons were involved in the exercise or how many rockets were fired. Some of the North's newer short-range weapons includes large-sized multiple rocket launchers that experts say blur the boundaries between artillery and ballistic missile systems.

Biden unveils budget plan, challenges GOP

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — As political gridlock puts the government at risk of defaulting, President Joe Biden on Thursday made an opening bid with a budget plan that would cut deficits by \$2.9 trillion over the next decade — a proposal that Republicans already intend to reject.

It's part of a broader attempt by the president to call out House Republicans who are demanding severe cuts to spending in return for lifting the government's legal borrowing limit. But the GOP has no counteroffer so far, other than a flat "no" to a Biden blueprint with tax increases on the wealthy that could form the policy backbone of Biden's yet-to-be-de-

clared campaign for reelection in 2024.

Striding around a stage at a union training center in Philadelphia, Biden seemed to be in full campaign mode as he spoke about his plan for the government's finances and how his values contrasted with Republican priorities.

"I just laid out the bulk of my budget," Biden said. "Republicans in Congress should do the same thing. Then we can sit down and see where we disagree."

Yet the president doubted that GOP lawmakers could make their numbers match their calls for a balanced budget and he suggested that any efforts to do so could come at the expense of middle-class

families.

"How are they going to make the math work?" Biden said. "What are they going to cut?"

Biden's package of tax and spending priorities is unlikely to pass the GOP-run House or the Senate, where Democrats hold a slim edge, as proposed.

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said the president's proposed deficit reduction was inadequate. "It just seems like it's going to create the biggest government in history. I don't think that's what we need at this time," he said.

In addition to deficit reduction, Biden's 10-year budget largely revolves around the idea of taxing the wealthy to help fund programs for the middle class, older adults and families.

It would raise \$4.7 trillion from higher taxes, with an additional \$800 billion in savings from changes to programs.

The tax increases include a reversal of the 2017 tax cuts made by President Donald Trump on people earning more than \$400,000 a year.

Biden has floated a new 25% minimum tax on households worth \$100 million or more.

Also, the tax that companies pay on stock buybacks would rise fourfold and those earning more than \$400,000 would pay an additional Medicare tax that would help to keep the program solvent beyond the year 2050. Medicare could negotiate on the prices of more prescription drugs, helping to save the government money.

Ukraine rebounds from Russian barrage, restores power

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine's capital had most of its power supply restored Friday, officials said, as the country again responded swiftly and defiantly to the latest Russian missile and drone barrage targeting critical infrastructure.

In what has become a familiar Russian tactic since early October, the Kremlin's forces struck Ukraine from afar Thursday while the ground battles in the country's east largely remained mired in a grinding stalemate.

The apparent aim of attacking power stations and other infrastructure is to weaken Ukraine's resolve and compel the Ukrainian government to negotiate peace on Moscow's terms.

Ukrainian authorities scrambled to counter the consequences of the latest bombardment, part of a recurring cycle of urban smash-and-repair that has brought little change in the

course of the war, which recently entered its second year.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, said in an assessment that "these missile strikes will not undermine Ukraine's will or improve Russia's positions on the front lines."

Ukrainian military analyst Oleh Zhdanov said the Russians are striking civilian infrastructure, because they can't efficiently target Ukrainian military assets.

"The Russians lack data about the location of Ukrainian troops and weapons, so they are targeting civilian infrastructure and using the same old methods of attacking civilians to sow fear and panic in the society," he said. "Ukraine has survived the winter and Russia's strikes on the energy system in the spring hardly make any sense."

Power and water were restored in Kyiv, said Serhii Popko, the head of the city's mili-

tary administration. Popko said that about 30% of consumers in the capital remained without heating and that repair work was ongoing.

Power supplies were fully restored in Ukraine's southern Odesa region, private provider DTEK said Friday afternoon.

Around 60% of households in the city of Kharkiv that were knocked off grid by Russia's missile strikes on Thursday were also back online, authorities said, though significant damage remained in the Zhytomyr and Kharkiv regions in Ukraine's northwest and northeast.

In another sign of normality quickly returning, Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin made an unannounced visit to Kyiv on Friday.

Marin accompanied President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and senior military officers at the funeral of one of Ukraine's best-known fighters and command-

ers who was killed in fighting near the devastated eastern city of Bakhmut.

The prime minister echoed other Western leaders who have accused Russia of war crimes in Ukraine and said Russian soldiers and leaders would be held accountable in a courtroom.

On the battlefield Friday, Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar said the fighting in Bakhmut had "escalated," with another push by Russian forces to break through Ukrainian defense lines that have largely held firm for the past six months.

Just west of Bakhmut, shelling and missile strikes hit the Ukrainian-held city of Kostiantynivka, damaging multiple homes.

Thursday's Russian onslaught, much of which took place before dawn, was the largest such attack in three weeks, deploying more than 80 Russian missiles and exploding drones.

Cartel says it handed over men in killings

Associated Press

CIUDAD VICTORIA, Mexico — A letter claiming to be from the Mexican drug cartel blamed for abducting four Americans and killing two of them condemned the violence and said the gang turned over to authorities its own members who were responsible.

In a letter obtained by The Associated Press through a Tamaulipas state law enforcement official, the Scorpions faction of the Gulf cartel apologized to the residents of Matamoros where the Americans were kidnapped, the Mexican woman who died in the cartel shootout, and the four Americans and their families.

“We have decided to turn over those who were directly involved and responsible in the

events, who at all times acted under their own decision-making and lack of discipline,” the letter reads, adding that those individuals had gone against the cartel’s rules, which include “respecting the life and well-being of the innocent.”

Drug cartels have been known to issue communiqués to intimidate rivals and authorities, but also at times like these as public relations work to try to smooth over situations that could affect their business. And last Friday’s violence in Matamoros was bad for cartel business.

The Americans’ killings brought National Guard troops and an Army special forces outfit running patrols that “heat up the plaza” in

narco terminology, Mexican security analyst David Saucedo said.

“It is very difficult right now for them to continue working in terms of street-level drug sales and transferring drugs to the United States; they are the first ones interested in closing this chapter as soon as possible,” Saucedo said.

A photograph of five bound men face-down on the pavement accompanied the letter, which was shared with The Associated Press by the official on condition that they remain anonymous because they were not authorized to share the document.

State officials did not immediately publicly confirm having new suspects in custody.

Feds: Proud Boys used foot soldiers in sedition plot

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Federal prosecutors are employing an unusual strategy to prove leaders of the far-right Proud Boys extremist group orchestrated a violent plot to keep President Joe Biden out of the White House, even though some of the defendants didn’t carry out the violence themselves.

As they wrap up their seditious conspiracy case, prosecutors are arguing that Proud Boys chief Enrique Tarrio and other leaders of the group handpicked and mobilized a loyal group of foot soldiers — or “tools” — to supply the force necessary to carry out their plot to stop the transfer of power from Donald Trump to President Joe Biden after the 2020 election.

These “tools” helped Proud Boys leaders overwhelm police, breach barricades, force the evacuation of the House and Senate

chambers and disrupt the certification of Biden’s victory, prosecutors allege.

Defense attorneys have dismissed the “tools” theory as a novel, flawed concept with no legal foundation. They argue that the Justice Department is trying to unfairly hold their clients responsible for the violent actions of others in the crowd of Trump supporters. Tarrio, for example, wasn’t even in Washington on Jan. 6.

The seditious conspiracy trial, which started nearly two months ago, is one of the most serious cases to emerge from the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol and comes as some conservatives continue to try to downplay the riot and push false narratives about what happened that day. Tarrio, who led the neofacist group as it became a force in mainstream Republican circles, is among the highest-profile defendants to stand trial

yet and could face up to 20 years in prison if convicted of seditious conspiracy.

Seditious conspiracy — a rarely used charge from the Civil War-era — can be difficult to prove, especially when the plot was unsuccessful. And the group leaders on trial aren’t accused of engaging in violence themselves. Tarrio was arrested on separate charges two days before the riot.

Tarrio is on trial with Ethan Nordean of Auburn, Wash., who was a Proud Boys chapter president; Joseph Biggs of Ormond Beach, Fla., a self-described Proud Boys organizer; Zachary Rehl, who president of the Proud Boys chapter in Philadelphia; and Dominic Pezzola, a Proud Boy member from Rochester, N.Y.

Their trial could stretch into April. Prosecutors are expected to rest their case as soon as next week.

Lawyer: Trump invited to testify before NY grand jury

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Former President Donald Trump has been invited to testify before a New York grand jury that has been investigating hush money payments made on his behalf during his 2016 presidential campaign, according to one of his lawyers.

Trump attorney Joseph Tacopina confirmed Thursday that the Manhattan district attorney’s office has invited the former president to testify next week as prosecutors near a decision on whether to proceed with what could be the first criminal case ever brought against a former U.S. presi-

dent.

“To me, it’s much ado about nothing,” Tacopina told the Associated Press, adding he didn’t think prosecutors had committed “one way or another” on a decision on whether to charge Trump. He said there was no legal basis for a case.

“It’s just another example of them weaponizing the justice system against him. And it’s sort of unfair,” he said.

The office of Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, a Democrat, declined to comment. Such an invitation to testify before a grand jury often indicates a decision on in-

dictments is near.

The invitation to testify was first reported by The New York Times.

Any indictment would come as Trump is ramping up a run to regain the White House in 2024 while simultaneously battling legal problems on multiple fronts.

Trump, in a lengthy statement posted on his social media network, blasted the investigation as a “political Witch-Hunt trying to take down the leading candidate, by far, in the Republican Party” and what he called a “corrupt, depraved, and weaponized justice system.”

US adds a robust 311K jobs despite hikes

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — America's employers added a substantial 311,000 jobs in February, fewer than January's huge gain but enough to keep pressure on the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates aggressively to fight inflation.

The unemployment rate rose to 3.6% from a 53-year low of 3.4%, as more Americans began searching for work and not all of them found jobs.

Friday's report from the government made clear that the nation's job market remains fundamentally healthy, with many employers still eager to hire. Fed Chair Jerome Powell told Congress this week that the Fed would likely ratchet up its

rate hikes if signs continued to point to a robust economy and persistently high inflation. A strong job market typically leads businesses to raise pay and then pass their higher labor costs on to customers through higher prices.

Last month, the government reported a surprising burst of hiring for January — 517,000 added jobs — though that gain was revised down slightly to 504,000 in Friday's report. Consumers also ramped up their spending in January, suggesting that the economy had strengthened at the start of the year. The Fed's preferred inflation gauge also accelerated.

With February's sizable job growth coming after January's

expansive gain, the Fed may accelerate its rate hikes to combat inflation. When the Fed tightens credit, it typically leads to higher rates on mortgages, auto loans, credit card borrowing and many business loans.

What the Fed may decide to do about interest rates when it meets later this month remains uncertain.

The vigorous job growth for January, reported early last month, was the first in a series of reports to point to an accelerating economy at the start of the year. Sales at retail stores and restaurants also jumped, and inflation, according to the Fed's preferred measure, rose from December to January at the

fastest pace in seven months.

The stronger data reversed a cautiously optimistic narrative that the economy was cooling modestly — just enough, perhaps, to tame inflation without triggering a deep recession. Now, the economic outlook is hazier.

High borrowing rates have cratered the housing market, with home sales having dropped for 12 straight months, a consequence of the average mortgage rate nearly doubling over that time. Manufacturing is also showing signs of weakness. Higher rates have made it harder for businesses and consumers to borrow to buy major factory goods, from machinery to cars to appliances.

Heat takes toll on Iditarod mushers

Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Mushers and their dogs in the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race face plenty of variables in the Alaska wilderness. An unexpected one this year has been heat that is taking a toll in a sport better suited for temperatures well below zero.

Jason Mackey said a thermometer hanging from the back of his sled hit 80 degrees at one point this week as he camped alongside the trail while mushers neared the halfway mark of the race. Other racers threw their game plans for the 1,000-mile race across Alaska out the window to deal with the heat and messy trail conditions.

Although it's warm, it wasn't 80 degrees in interior Alaska, which would probably be a record high in July, said Brian Brettschneider, a climate scientist with the National Weather Service's Alaska Region. Instead, when you leave a thermometer in the sun, it absorbs the solar energy, which is the reason official measurement

thermometers are kept in the shade.

But it's still warm and sunny, and it's having noticeable effects on people who are exposed to it, Brettschneider said.

Last weekend, the same area was much cooler than normal, with what appeared to be ideal mushing conditions. The warmer conditions are being driven by an area of high pressure, he said.

Many communities in the nation's largest state hit record highs this week, from Kodiak off Alaska's southern coast to Deadhorse, the supply town for oil companies operating on the state's North Slope, about 1,250 miles away.

Along the Iditarod race route, the community of McGrath didn't set records but had a high Wednesday of 36 degrees, 14 degrees above normal. More telling was a low temperature of 27 degrees.

"Normally it should be below zero," Brettschneider said.

That warmth was evident all along the Iditarod trail

Wednesday. "There's almost no places that were below freezing along the route," he said.

That was not news to Mackey. "I wish the temperatures would cool down," the musher told a television crew from the Iditarod Insider.

It's just not the heat that was bothersome. He said he looked down at his sled at one point and saw two mosquitoes.

"Yeah, it's spring," Mackey said.

The heat is taking its toll on Mackey's dogs, which he called "big boys" at 80 pounds. He said other teams were moving in the heat of the day, but he wasn't willing to do that. "I mean, it zaps them," he said of the dog team.

Kelly Maixner, a pediatric dentist, said his dogs don't like the heat, and he'd rather it be minus -20 degrees.

During the race, mushers must take one 24-hour layover at a checkpoint to rest. Part of where to take that layover plays into the strategy of most every musher.

Patient, crew survive NC copter crash

Associated Press

FRANKLIN, N.C. — A patient and three crew members survived when a medical transport helicopter crashed in North Carolina, authorities said.

Macon County 911 Communications Supervisor Todd Seagle said the helicopter went down moments after it declared an emergency around 7 p.m. Thursday, WLOS-TV reported.

Macon County Sheriff Brent Holbrooks said the EC-135 helicopter was traveling to Mission Hospital in Asheville, when it crashed in Macon County.

The aircraft was transporting a patient from a medical facility in Murphy.

Three people involved in the crash were transported by ambulance to Mission Hospital with minor to moderate injuries and one was transported to Angel Medical Center for evaluation, Macon County Emergency Services Director Warren Cabe said.

China's Xi awarded 3rd term

Associated Press

BEIJING — Chinese leader Xi Jinping was awarded a third five-year term as the nation's president Friday, putting him on track to stay in power for life at a time of severe economic challenges and rising tensions with the U.S. and others.

The endorsement of Xi's appointment by the ceremonial National People's Congress was a foregone conclusion for a leader who has sidelined potential rivals and filled the top ranks of the ruling Communist Party with his supporters since taking power in 2012.

The vote for Xi was 2,952 to 0 by the NPC, members of which are appointed by the ruling party.

Xi, 69, had himself named to a third five-year term as party general secretary in October, breaking with a tradition under which Chinese leaders handed over power once a decade. A two-term limit on the figurehead presidency was deleted from the Chinese Constitution earlier, prompting suggestions he might stay in power for life.

No candidate lists were distributed, and Xi and those awarded other posts were believed to have run unopposed. The election remains almost entirely shrouded in secrecy, apart from the process in which delegates to the congress put four ballots into boxes placed around the vast auditorium of the Great Hall of the People.

Xi was also unanimously named commander of the 2 million-member People's Liberation Army, a force that explicitly takes its orders from the party rather than the country.

Xi's new term and the appointment of loyalists to top posts underscores his near-total monopoly on Chinese political power, eliminating any potential opposition to his hyper-nationalistic agenda of building China into the top political, military and economic rival to the U.S. and the chief authoritarian challenge to the Washington-led democratic world order.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, with whom Xi has formed close ties, issued his congratulations, saying Xi's new term is an

"acknowledgement of your achievements as the head of state, as well as wide support of your policy focused on China's socioeconomic development and protection of its national interests on the global stage."

Under Xi, China and Russia announced a "no limits" relationship and China has pointedly refused to criticize Russia's invasion of Ukraine while echoing Moscow's claim that the U.S. and NATO were to blame for provoking the Kremlin. Beijing has also blasted sanctions imposed on Russia, while Russia has staunchly supported China amid tensions with the U.S. over Taiwan.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, head of the ruling Worker's Party, also sent congratulations, saying "the two parties and the two countries are defending and advancing socialism, the common cause, while supporting and closely cooperating with each other." China is the impoverished and isolated North's most important political ally and source of food and fuel aid.

6 Jehovah's Witnesses shot dead in Germany

Associated Press

HAMBURG, Germany — A gunman stormed a service at his former Jehovah's Witnesses congregation in Hamburg, killing six people before taking his own life after police arrived, authorities in the German port city said Friday.

Police gave no motive for Thursday night's attack. But they acknowledged recently receiving an anonymous tip that claimed the man showed anger toward religious groups and might be psychologically unfit to own a gun.

Police said an unborn baby also died but didn't say whether the mother was among the dead. Eight people were wounded, and Chancellor Olaf Scholz said the death toll could rise.

Officers apparently reached the hall while the attack was ongoing — and heard one more shot after they arrived, according to witnesses and authorities. They did not fire their weapons, but officials said their intervention likely prevented further loss of life.

All of the victims were German citizens apart from two wounded women, one with Ugandan citizenship and one with Ukrainian.

Officials said the gunman was a 35-year-old German identified only as Philipp F., in line with privacy rules. Police said the suspect had left the congregation "voluntarily, but apparently not on good terms," more than a year ago.

Iran, Saudi Arabia agree to resume relations

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran and Saudi Arabia on Friday agreed to reestablish diplomatic relations and reopen embassies after years of tensions between the two countries, including a devastating attack on the heart of the kingdom's oil production attributed to Tehran.

The deal, struck in Beijing amid its ceremonial National

People's Congress, represents a diplomatic victory for the Chinese as Gulf Arab states perceive the United States slowly withdrawing from the Middle East. It also comes as diplomats have been trying to end a year-long war in Yemen, a conflict in which both Iran and Saudi Arabia are deeply entrenched.

The two countries released a joint communique on the deal with China, which apparently

brokered the agreement. Chinese state media did not immediately report the agreement.

Iranian state media posted images and video it described as being taken in China of the meeting. It showed Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, with Saudi national security adviser Musaad bin Mohammed al-Aiban and Wang Yi, China's most senior diplomat.

STARS AND STRIPES®

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

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Grizzlies rout Curry, Warriors 131-110

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Tyus Jones had 22 points and 11 assists, Jaren Jackson Jr. added 21 points and nine rebounds and the Memphis Grizzlies beat the Golden State Warriors 131-110 on Thursday night.

The Grizzlies played their third game without Ja Morant, the star guard who is away from the team after posting a video last weekend in which he appeared to be displaying a gun at a Denver-area strip club. The Grizzlies have announced Morant will miss at least the next three games.

Demond Bane also had 21 points for Memphis.

Stephen Curry had 29 points and seven rebounds for Golden State.

Jordan Poole had 22 points, Draymond Green added 16 points and seven assists and Klay Thompson had 14 points.

The teams met in Memphis for the first time since their

heated Western Conference postseason that Golden State won 4-2.

Kings 122, Knicks 117: Domantas Sabonis had 24 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists for his ninth triple-double of the season, helping Sacramento hold off visiting New York.

The Kings are 7-1 since the NBA All-Star break to reach 39-26. De'Aaron Fox scored 16 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter for the Kings. Malik Monk had 19 off the bench.

RJ Barrett scored 25 points for New York. The Knicks dropped to 39-29 with their second straight loss after a nine-game winning streak.

Bucks 118, Nets 113: Brook Lopez had 24 points, 10 rebounds and a career-high nine blocks and Milwaukee outlasted short-handed Brooklyn at home.

The nine blocks are most by an NBA player this season. Bobby Portis added a season-high 28 points to go along with 13 re-

bounds to help the NBA-leading Bucks win for the 19th time in 20 games.

The Bucks were missing two-time MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo for a second straight game. Antetokounmpo didn't play due to a sore right hand after sitting out a 134-123 victory at Orlando on Tuesday with a non-COVID illness.

Patty Mills scored 23 points for Brooklyn.

Pacers 134, Rockets 125, OT: Tyrese Haliburton had 28 points and a career-high 19 assists, Buddy Hield hit the go-ahead 3-pointer in overtime and Indiana beat visiting Houston.

Hield broke a 117-all tie with his fifth 3-pointer and Haliburton scored 12 points after that as the Pacers outscored the Rockets 19-10 in overtime.

Houston rookie forward Jabari Smith Jr. made a 3-pointer with four seconds left to force overtime. Smith scored 21 of his 30 points in the second half and

had 12 rebounds.

Jazz 131, Magic 124: Lauri Markkanen scored 31 points, Talen Horton-Tucker had 23 and visiting Utah beat Orlando to snap a four-game losing streak.

Simone Fontecchio added 17 points for Utah, and rookie Walker Kessler's 13 points and 10 rebounds included a big three-point play with 35 seconds left after the Magic cut the deficit to a point.

Paolo Banchero scored 13 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter for Orlando. Markelle Fultz had 25 points and six assists.

Hornets 113, Pistons 103: Kelly Oubre Jr. scored 27 points, Terry Rozier had 21 points and nine assists and visiting Charlotte extended Detroit's losing streak to 10 games.

P.J. Washington added 20 points and Nick Richards had 13 points and nine rebounds for the Hornets. Cory Joseph scored 17 points for Detroit.

Patrick Ewing is fired by Georgetown after 6 seasons

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Before coaching his first game at Georgetown — indeed, his first game as a head coach at any level of basketball — Patrick Ewing acknowledged that his tenure would be judged on one basis: his record.

“People could call me ‘the greatest Hoya ever,’ but as you know, if I don’t win, there will be another coach here, sooner or later,” Ewing said in 2017. “Every coach knows, as soon as ... you dot the I’s and cross the T’s, the writing’s on the wall. At some point in your career, you’re going to be let go. That’s just life in coaching.”

Ewing’s time as coach of the Hoyas came to an end on Thursday, when he was fired after going 75-109 over six seasons at the

school he led to an NCAA championship as a player in the early 1980s.

In a statement included with the news release about the change, school president Jack DeGioia called Ewing “the heart of Georgetown basketball” and described him as “tireless in his dedication to his team and the young men he coached.”

Ewing, meanwhile, thanked DeGioia “for giving me the opportunity to achieve my ambition to be a head basketball coach” and added: “I wish the program nothing but success. I will always be a Hoya.”

His last game was an 80-48 loss to Villanova on Wednesday night in the first round of the Big East Tournament at Madison Square Garden.

Ramey grabs Players lead in his debut at event

Associated Press

PONTEVEDRA BEACH, Fla. — Chad Ramey managed to avoid stress and bogeys Thursday in The Players Championship for an 8-under 64, making him an unlikely leader on a TPC Sawgrass course that rarely fails to deliver a surprise.

Ramey had a one-shot lead over two-time major champion Collin Morikawa in mild conditions. Roughly half the field was at par or better.

That doesn’t mean it was devoid of drama.

Hayden Buckley made an ace on the famed island green at the 17th, a hole he had only seen on TV until he arrived this week for his Players Championship debut.

Aaron Wise lost four balls in a

span of two holes — in the water on the 17th, and then three straight tee shots in the drink left of the 18th fairway, where he closed with a 10, one short of the record for highest score on the closing hole.

Rory McIlroy had his highest score in just over a year. The 2019 Players champion opened with a 6, closed with a 6 and was pretty ordinary in between on his way to a 76.

Ramey had no such problems, putting for birdie on all but two holes during the slightly more peaceful morning conditions.

Ramey qualified for his first Players Championship by winning in the Dominican Republic last year against a weak field held opposite the Dell Match Play.

No. 2 UCLA notches 11th straight win

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Freshman Amari Bailey scored a season-high 26 points and No. 2 UCLA beat Colorado 80-69 Thursday in the Pac-12 Conference Tournament quarterfinals.

The Bruins (28-4) kept pushing for a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament with their 11th straight win.

Tyger Campbell scored 18 points for the Bruins, Jaime Jaquez Jr. had 16 and Adem Bona totaled 11 points and 10 rebounds.

Tristan da Silva led the Buffaloes (17-16) with 17 points.

No. 3 Kansas 78, West Virginia 61: Playing without ailing coach Bill Self on the sideline, Kansas turned to big offensive performances from Jalen Wilson and Dajuan Harris Jr. along with some stingy defense to pull away from West Virginia in the quarterfinals of the Big 12 Tournament.

Wilson had 22 points and 11 rebounds, and Harris had 13 points with eight assists, as the top-seeded Jayhawks (26-6) began the defense of their tournament crown by knocking off the Mountaineers for the third time this season.

Erik Stevenson had 13 points to lead the No. 8 seed Mountaineers (19-14).

No. 6 Marquette 72, St. John's 70, OT: Tyler Kolek scored 19 of his points after half-time, including the tiebreaking free throws with 15.8 seconds left in overtime, and Marquette rallied past St. John's in the Big East Tournament quarterfinals.

Olivier-Maxence Prosper added 16 points with some highlight-reel dunks and Oso Ighodaro had 10 points and 11 rebounds for the top-seeded Golden Eagles (26-6).

Dylan Addae-Wusu and David Jones each scored 16 to lead eighth-seeded St. John's (18-15).

No. 7 Texas 61, Oklahoma State 47: Sir' Jabari Rice scored 13 points and Texas shut down

Oklahoma State in the Big 12 Tournament quarterfinals.

Tyrese Hunter and Dylan Disu scored 11 points apiece and Arterio Morris had 10 as the second-seeded Longhorns (24-8) breezed into the semifinals and a matchup with No. 6 seed TCU.

Caleb Asberry had 16 points for the Cowboys (18-15).

No. 8 Arizona 95, Stanford 84: Oumar Ballo scored 24 points and Arizona broke away late to beat Stanford and reach the Pac-12 Conference Tournament semifinals.

Cedric Henderson Jr. had 23 points and Azuolas Tubelis added 20 for the Wildcats (26-6).

Spencer Jones led Stanford (14-19) with 22 points.

Iowa State 78, No. 10 Baylor 72: Gabe Kalscheur hit six 3-pointers and scored 24 points to help Iowa State beat Baylor in the quarterfinals of the Big 12 Tournament.

Jaren Holmes scored 17 points, Tamin Lipsey had 12 and Tre King 10 for the fifth-seeded Cyclones (19-12), who followed up a win over the Bears (22-10) on Saturday by beating them for the fifth time in six conference tournament games.

Baylor forward Jalen Bridges went 10 of 11 from the field, 6 of 6 from the 3-point arc and finished with a career-best 28 points.

No. 11 UConn 73, Providence 66: Jordan Hawkins scored 19 points and UConn held off a furious second-half rally to beat Providence in the Big East Tournament quarterfinals.

The fourth-seeded Huskies (25-7) pushed their winning streak to six games and advanced to face top-seeded Marquette in Friday night's semifinals.

UConn led by as many as 26 with 12:30 left. The Friars (21-11) turned up the pressure and had the lead down to five several times in the final few minutes.

No. 22 TCU 80, No. 12 Kansas State 67: Mike Miles and Chuck O'Bannon scored 22

points apiece, and TCU rode the hot shooting of its two guards past Kansas State to reach the semifinals of the Big 12 Tournament.

JaKobe Coles added eight points and Emanuel Miller seven for the sixth-seeded Horned Frogs (21-11), who had been beaten by the Wildcats in four of the past five tournaments.

Keyontae Johnson had 14 points and seven boards to lead the No. 3 seed Wildcats (23-9).

No. 13 Virginia 68, North Carolina 59: Jayden Gardner had 17 points and 10 rebounds, and No. 13 Virginia dealt a damaging blow to North Carolina's already shaky NCAA Tournament hopes, beating the Tar Heels in the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament quarterfinals.

Reece Beekman added 15 points, five assists and five steals for the second-seeded Cavaliers (24-6).

R.J. Davis scored 24 points to lead the Tar Heels (20-13).

No. 14 Miami 74, Wake Forest 72: Jordan Miller had 18 points and nine rebounds for Miami, which held off Wake Forest's furious comeback in the quarterfinals of the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament.

ACC player of the year Isaiah Wong had 17 points and five assists and Norchad Omier had 14 points and 10 rebounds for top-seeded Miami (25-6).

Tyree Appleby had 24 points behind five 3s for ninth-seeded Wake Forest (19-17).

No. 15 Xavier 89, DePaul 84: Jack Nunge had 23 points and 10 rebounds, Colby Jones scored 22 and No. 15 Xavier needed a late comeback to beat DePaul in the Big East Tournament quarterfinals.

Souley Boum added 16 points for the second-seeded Musketeers (24-8).

Umoja Gibson had 22 points and six assists for the 10th-seeded Blue Demons (10-23).

No. 17 Tennessee 70, Mis-

issippi 55: Josiah-Jordan James had 20 points and seven rebounds to lead Tennessee past Mississippi in the quarterfinals of the Southeastern Conference Tournament.

The fifth-seeded Vols (23-9) will play No. 4 seed Missouri in the semifinals Friday.

Myles Burns scored 14 points and also had three steals for Mississippi (12-21).

No. 20 San Diego State 64, Colorado State 61: Lamont Butler scored 16 points and San Diego State held on to beat Colorado State in the Mountain West Conference Tournament quarterfinals.

The top-seeded Aztecs (25-6) never led by more than five points in the second half, and Isaiah Stevens' 3-pointer gave the eighth-seeded Rams (15-18) a 59-58 lead with 1:42 left. Jordan LeDee and Matt Bradley each hit two free throws to give San Diego State a 62-59 lead with 16 seconds remaining.

No. 21 Duke 96, Pittsburgh 69: Kyle Filipowski overcame an early ankle injury to score 22 points, Tyrese Proctor added 11 points and 10 assists, and Duke cruised past Pittsburgh in the ACC Tournament quarterfinals.

Dereck Lively II had 13 points and Mark Mitchell added 12 for the fourth-seeded Blue Devils (24-8).

Nike Sibande had 17 points and Guillermo Diaz Graham had 14 for Pitt (22-11).

Duke (24-8) moves on to face Miami in Friday's semifinals.

No. 24 Creighton 87, Villanova 74: Ryan Kalkbrenner scored 21 points, Ryan Nembhard added 17 and Creighton beat Villanova 87-74 at the Big East Tournament in a rematch of last season's championship game.

The third-seeded Bluejays (21-11) advanced to the semifinals Friday night to face second-seeded and 15th-ranked Xavier.

Eric Dixon led Villanova (17-16) with 20 points.

McDavid hurt as Oilers defeat Bruins

Associated Press

BOSTON — The Edmonton Oilers escaped a scare when NHL scoring leader Connor McDavid limped off the ice late in Thursday night's 3-2 win over the Boston Bruins, minutes after Darnell Nurse scored the tie-breaking goal with 4:49 remaining.

McDavid struggled to the bench after a knee-on-knee collision with teammate Derek Ryan. But the two-time NHL MVP returned to help the Oilers hold on when Boston pulled goalie Jeremy Swayman for an extra skater in the final minutes.

Boston led 2-0 after one, but Evan Bouchard scored in the second and Ryan McLeod tied it six minutes into the third. Stuart Skinner made 26 saves to snap Boston's 10-game winning streak and deprive the Bruins of a chance to be the first team in the league to clinch a playoff berth.

Brad Marchand and David Pastrnak scored, and Swayman stopped 19 shots for the Bruins, who could have set an NHL record as the fastest-ever to 50 wins.

Hurricanes 1, Flyers 0: Pyotr Kochetkov returned from the minor leagues and made 19 saves as Carolina blanked Philadelphia.

Andrei Svechnikov scored an early power-play goal and that was enough for the Hurricanes, who've won four games in a row and nine of their last 11.

Kochetkov was recalled from Chicago of the American Hockey League on an emergency basis for his first NHL action since Jan. 15 after goalie Antti Raanta suffered an injury Tuesday night at Montreal.

Philadelphia's Felix Sandstrom was a hard-luck loser with 27 saves, though he fell to 1-9-1 this season.

Devils 3, Capitals 2, SO: Erik Haula and Dawson Mercer scored 37 seconds apart, trade deadline pickup Timo Meier

had the shootout winner and New Jersey beat the fading Washington Capitals to keep pace in the Metropolitan Division playoff race.

Akira Schmid made 20 saves in regulation and overtime and was a perfect 4 of 4 in the shootout to pick up his seventh win in 10 starts this season. Meier was the only player to score in the shootout, making up for a couple of recent penalties since joining the Devils.

Darcy Kuemper made 38 saves in regulation and overtime.

Trevor van Riemsdyk and Dylan Strome scored for the Capitals.

Golden Knights 4, Lightning 3, OT: Alex Martinez scored 3:09 into overtime as Vegas defeated Tampa Bay for the seventh time in 10 games since Vegas entered the NHL for the 2017-18 season

Jack Eichel's shot from the slot was stopped by Lightning goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy, but the puck slipped through his pads and sat in the crease as Martinez dove and poked it into the open net for the win.

William Karlsson, Chandler Stephenson and Keegan Kolesa scored for Vegas. Jonathan Quick made 34 saves.

Brayden Point scored twice, Nikita Kucherov added a goal and Vasilevskiy finished with 17 saves for Tampa Bay.

Kings 5, Avalanche 2: Adrian Kempe and Phillip Danault each scored twice as Los Angeles earned its fifth straight win.

Gabriel Vilardi also added a goal and Anze Kopitar had three assists for the Kings, who remain tied with Vegas for the top spot in the Western Conference. No team in the West has been hotter than the Kings since the All-Star break, going 10-2-1.

Joonas Korpihalo stopped 28 shots.

Evan Rodrigues and Nathan MacKinnon scored for the

slumping Avalanche, who are 1-3-1 over their last five games. MacKinnon's goal extended his home points streak to 15 games. Alexandar Georgiev finished with 26 saves.

Stars 10, Sabres 4: Jamie Benn had a goal and two assists, Radek Faksa scored twice and the Central Division-leading Dallas Stars enjoyed their best offensive output in 14 years.

Joe Pavelski, Joel Kiviranta, rookie Wyatt Johnston, Evgenii Dadonov and Mason Marchment also scored in a game the Stars had 16 players earn at least a point. Jake Oettinger stopped 25 shots and Dallas improved to 5-1-1 in its past seven and 4-0-1 in its past five road games.

Jeff Skinner had a goal and assist for Buffalo.

Rangers 4, Canadiens 3, SO: Mika Zibanejad scored the shootout winner, giving the New York Rangers the victory over Montreal.

Patrick Kane scored his first goal with the Rangers and Alexis Lafreniere and Jacob Trouba added goals in regulation. Artemi Panarin finished with three assists. Igor Shesterkin made 23 saves as New York snapped a two-game losing streak.

Kaiden Guhle, Alex Belzile and Josh Anderson scored for Montreal, which lost its fifth straight. Sam Montembeault stopped 30 shots.

Islanders 4, Penguins 3, OT: Brock Nelson scored on a breakaway in overtime and the New York Islanders rallied to defeat Pittsburgh.

Nelson beat Tristan Jarry to the blocker side at 2:13 of the extra period as the Islanders — who trailed 3-1 late in the third — swept the season series against the Penguins for the first time in franchise history. New York also solidified its first winning record on the road at Pittsburgh since the 2014-15 season.

Anders Lee had two goals and Hudson Fasching also scored for the Islanders, who scored

twice in the final 5:29 of regulation to force overtime. Ilya Sorokin stopped 33 shots and assisted on the winning goal for New York, which is two points ahead of Pittsburgh for the top wildcard spot in the Eastern Conference.

Jake Guentzel, Jason Zucker and Josh Archibald scored for Pittsburgh. Tristan Jarry made 24 saves for the Penguins.

Coyotes 4, Predators 1: Rookie Ivan Prosvetov stopped 39 shots, Brett Ritchie scored in his Arizona debut and the Coyotes beat Nashville.

Ritchie scored in the first period of his first game since being traded from Calgary on Friday. Barrett Hayton and Jack McBain scored 49 seconds apart in the third period, and Nick Schmaltz added an empty-net goal.

Juuse Saros had 39 saves and Cody Glass scored for the Predators.

Blues 4, Sharks 2: Jakub Vrana scored his first goal with St. Louis and highlighted the Blues' victory over San Jose.

Robert Thomas, Sammy Blaise and Torey Krug also scored for the Blues. Jordan Binnington made 32 saves in his 50th start of the season and improved to 1-5-2 in his last eight starts.

Tomas Hertl and Erik Karlsson scored for San Jose. Kaapo Kahkonen made 26 saves and slipped to 1-5-0 against the Blues in his career.

Senators 5, Kraken 4: Alex DeBrincat scored the tiebreaking goal with less than three minutes remaining in the third period to lead Ottawa past Seattle.

Shane Pinto, Jakob Chychrun, Claude Giroux and Patrick Brown also scored for Ottawa. Mads Sogaard made 29 saves.

Jared McCann scored twice and Vince Dunn and Jaden Schwartz added goals for the Kraken. Philipp Grubauer had 26 saves.