

Biden forges new path on N. Korea crisis

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration is charting a new course in an attempt to end North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile program, striking a balance between President Donald Trump's grand bargain, leader-to-leader diplomacy and President Barack Obama's arm's length approach to the crisis, said U.S. officials familiar with the plan.

The decision to pursue a phased agreement that leads to full denuclearization follows a monthslong review that was briefed to President Joe Biden last week by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, national security adviser Jake Sullivan and the chairman of the joint chiefs, Gen. Mark Milley.

The plan represents a rejection of the strategy devised by Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton, who insisted that the United States hold out for a "go big or go home" agreement — a deal that would remove all sanctions in exchange for the full dismantlement of North Korea's weapons program.

That approach was flatly rejected by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un during

a 2019 summit in Hanoi that collapsed after U.S. officials made clear they would not lift sanctions unless Pyongyang put its entire nuclear program on the table.

"We are not seeking a grand bargain or an all-or-nothing approach," a senior administration official said in an interview Thursday. "What we've settled on is what we think is a calibrated, practical approach to diplomacy with the North with the goal of eliminating the threat to the United States."

The administration has begun sharing the review's results with allies and partners, including Japan and South Korea, as well as members of Congress, who were frequently consulted over the last several months, officials said.

The specifics of the proposal Washington will put forward remain unclear, and U.S. officials are not using familiar terms that previous U.S. administrations have used, such as a "step-by-step" agreement.

"We are not putting those kinds of labels on our approach," a U.S. official said.

The conclusion of the review comes amid increasing U.S. concerns that North Korea may be considering a fresh provoca-

tion, such as the testing of another long-range intercontinental ballistic missile, or a submarine-launched ballistic missile.

U.S. officials said they planned to convey the new strategy to North Korean officials, but acknowledged that it was not likely to change the regime's near-term calculus regarding nuclear provocations.

One of the many challenges facing U.S. officials is whether they can create momentum behind a phased approach that exchanges partial sanctions relief for partial denuclearization until the program is fully dismantled. One U.S. official said the effort is a "careful, modulated diplomatic approach, prepared to offer relief for particular steps" with an "ultimate goal of denuclearization."

The removal of economic sanctions is a key priority for Kim, who conceded last year that his country faced "two crises at the same time": the spread of the coronavirus and crippling U.S. and United Nations sanctions banning many of its exports, including textiles, coal and iron ore. The virus also forced the regime last year to close the border with China, which accounts for about 90% of the country's external trade.

Aquilino takes over INDOPACOM reins

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — Adm. Philip Davidson took a parting shot at Beijing on Friday as he ended his 39-year Navy career and handed the reins of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command to the former head of the Pacific Fleet.

"Make no mistake, the Communist Party of China seeks to supplant the idea of a free and open international order with a new order, one with Chinese characteristics, one where Chinese national power is more important than international law," he said during an afternoon

ceremony that included remarks by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Beijing's approach to the region includes efforts to "coerce, corrupt and co-opt businesses, organizations and the people of the Indo-Pacific," Davidson said.

INDOPACOM's new leader, Adm. John Aquilino, who took command of the Pacific Fleet in May 2018, is expected to maintain that hard line regarding China.

During his confirmation hearing earlier this spring, he told senators the United States

needs to bolster funding for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative to better challenge Beijing's influence in the region. He also warned that China was increasing its stockpile of nuclear weapons "faster than anyone previously believed."

Austin told the audience in socially distanced seating that Davidson had done "an absolutely superb job — at the helm of this organization."

"He is a so-called 'old salt' — the Navy's longest serving surface warfare officer," he said.

Austin praised Davidson for the 40 freedom-of-navigation operations conducted under his three years at the helm. The

missions, in which ships are sent through contested international waters, are intended to underscore America's support for open access to shipping lanes.

The operations have been primarily directed toward China and its contested claims of sovereignty over most of the South China Sea.

Aquilino, a naval aviator, earned his flight wings in 1986, and has flown F-14 Tomcats and F-18 Hornets, according to his official biography. He deployed for numerous operations, including in support of Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

US denies report of Iran prisoner deal

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran will free prisoners with Western ties in Iran in exchange for billions of dollars from the United States and the United Kingdom, state television reported Sunday. The U.S. immediately denied the report, while the U.K. did not respond.

The state TV report quoted an anonymous official just as Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei began giving what authorities earlier described as an “important” speech. However, Khamenei did not immediately discuss any proposed swap amid negotiations in Vienna over Tehran’s tattered nuclear deal with world powers.

The official quoted by Iranian state TV

said a deal made between the U.S. and Tehran involved a prisoner swap in exchange for the release of \$7 billion in frozen Iranian funds.

“The Americans accepted to pay \$7 billion and swap four Iranians who were active in bypassing sanctions for four American spies who have served part of their sentences,” state TV said, quoting the official in an on-screen crawl.

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price immediately denied the Iranian state TV report.

“Reports that a prisoner swap deal has been reached are not true,” Price said. “As we have said, we always raise the cases of Americans detained or missing in Iran. We will not stop until we are able

to reunite them with their families.”

Price did not elaborate.

Tehran holds four known Americans now in prison. They include Baquer and Siamak Namazi, environmentalist Morad Tahbaz and Iranian-American businessman Emad Shargi. The state TV report did not immediately name the Iranians that Tehran hoped to get in the swap.

State TV also quoted the official as saying a deal had been reached for the United Kingdom to pay 400 million pounds to see the release of British-Iranian woman Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe. The office of Prime Minister Boris Johnson referred calls to the Foreign Office, which could not be immediately reached.

UMGC graduation numbers up as lockdown boosts enrollment

By JENNIFER H. SVAN

Stars and Stripes

Some U.S. military personnel and their families in Europe hit the books during more than a year of various coronavirus restrictions.

This year, 1,360 students received diplomas from the University of Maryland Global Campus Europe — about 200 more graduates than last year, an increase university officials attribute in part to students signing up for more classes during lockdowns. A pivot from in-person to live-streaming instruction also opened more courses for students across UMGC Europe’s footprint in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, officials said.

Capt. Jawaan Thomas, 32, an Army reservist on active duty with a medical brigade in Sembach, spent more time on his master’s program in business administration “because I wasn’t traveling,” he said.

Being in Germany during the lockdowns “has been difficult, but I had this extra project on the side to occupy my time,” he said of his studies.

Thomas was among more than 100 UMGC Europe graduates who walked the stage Saturday on an Army airfield as family and friends honked horns from parked

cars.

The ceremony was the university’s second drive-in movie style graduation in less than a year, a new normal in the current pandemic.

The unusual backdrop of Saturday’s ceremony on Clay Kaserne shows “the unprecedented times we’ve all been living in over the last 18 months almost,” said Gen. Christopher Cavoli, the commander of U.S. Army Europe and Africa and the keynote speaker.

“It’s certainly my first experience participating in a drive-through graduation,” he said, while commending the graduates for “the long journey they took,” spending weekends and late nights “writing and re-writing and proofreading plenty of essays and on and on.”

More than 650 students earned bachelor’s degrees, while nearly 550 associate’s and more than 200 master’s degrees were awarded.

Air Force Master Sgt. Marlynn Cruz, 31, earned straight A’s for the first time while finishing her accounting degree.

“I was able to be more focused for sure,” said Cruz, who works in finance at Ramstein Air Base and began her studies eight years ago. “There was no going out, no late nights.”

China conducts exercises in South China Sea

Associated Press

BEIJING — China’s Shandong aircraft carrier group recently conducted routine annual exercises in the South China Sea, the People’s Liberation Army said Sunday, after Beijing criticized the U.S. for sending Navy ships into the strategic area.

The Chinese Defense Ministry last week urged the U.S. to restrain its frontline forces in the air and seas near China. U.S. reconnaissance aircraft and warships have become more active around China since President Joe Biden took office, it said.

The South China Sea is particularly contentious because China’s smaller neighbors also have competing claims to one of the world’s busiest sea lanes, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety. China has constructed several man-made islands in the disputed waters in what the U.S. says is a move to militarize the area.

Navy spokesperson Gao Xiucheng said in a statement that the exercises were completely legitimate and part of safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests, as well as maintaining regional peace and stability.

Indian court urges government to help struggling hospitals

Associated Press

NEW DELHI — With Indian hospitals struggling to secure a steady supply of oxygen, and more COVID-19 patients dying amid the shortages, a court in New Delhi said it would start punishing government officials for failing to deliver the life-saving items.

On Sunday, India recorded a slight drop in new infections with 392,488 from a high of 401,993 in the previous 24 hours. It also reported 3,689 additional deaths, bringing the total to 215,542. Experts believe both figures are an undercount.

The government has been using the railroad, the air force and the navy to rush oxygen tankers to worst-hit areas where overwhelmed hospitals are unable to cope with an unprecedented surge in patients gasping for air.

Twelve COVID-19 patients, including a doctor, on high-flow oxygen, died Saturday at a hospital in New Delhi after it ran out of the supply for 80 minutes, said S.C.L. Gupta, director of Batra Hospital.

The Times of India newspaper reported another 16 deaths in two hospitals in southern Andhra Pradesh state, and six in a Gurgaon hospital on the outskirts of New Delhi because of the oxygen shortage.

With the government unable to maintain a steady supply of oxygen, several hospital authorities sought a court intervention in the Indian capital where a lockdown has been extended by a week to contain the wave of infections.

“Water has gone above the head. Enough is enough,” said New Delhi High Court, adding it would start punishing gov-

ernment officials if supplies of oxygen allocated to hospitals were not delivered.

“We can’t have people dying,” said Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Patil.

The court said it would start contempt proceedings.

New Delhi recorded 412 deaths in the past 24 hours, the highest since the pandemic started.

The army opened its hospitals to civilians in a desperate bid to control the massive humanitarian crisis. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government also gave emergency financial powers to the army set up new quarantine facilities and hospitals and buy equipment.

The military also called up 600 doctors who had retired in the past few years. The navy deployed 200 nursing assistants in civilian hospitals, a government statement said.

On Saturday, India said all adults 18 and over could get shots. Since January, nearly 10% of Indians have received one dose, but only around 1.5% have received both, although the country is one of the world’s biggest producers of vaccines.

India has so far given more than 156 million vaccine doses. Some states have already said they don’t have enough for everyone, and even the ongoing effort to inoculate people above 45 is sputtering.

The United States, Britain, Germany and several other nations are rushing therapeutics, rapid virus tests and oxygen to India, along with some materials needed for India to boost its domestic production of COVID-19 vaccines.

4 astronauts return in rare night splashdown

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — SpaceX safely returned four astronauts from the International Space Station on Sunday, making the first U.S. crew splashdown in darkness since the Apollo 8 moonshot.

The Dragon capsule parachuted into the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Panama City, Fla., just before 3 a.m., ending the second astronaut flight for Elon Musk’s company.

It was an express trip home, lasting just 6½ hours.

The astronauts, three American and one Japanese, flew back in the same capsule — named Resilience — in which they launched from NASA’s Kennedy Space Center in November.

“We welcome you back to planet Earth and thanks for flying SpaceX,” SpaceX’s Mission

Control radioed moments after splashdown. “For those of you enrolled in our frequent flyer program, you’ve earned 68 million miles on this voyage.”

“We’ll take those miles,” said spacecraft commander Mike Hopkins. “Are they transferrable?” SpaceX replied that the astronauts would have to check with the company’s marketing department.

Within a half-hour of splashdown, the charred capsule — resembling a giant toasted marshmallow — had been hoisted onto the recovery ship, with the astronauts exiting soon afterward. NASA and SpaceX managers marveled at how fast and smooth the operation went. The company’s senior adviser, Hans Koenigsmann, said “it looked more like a race car pit stop than anything else.”

2 killed, gunman slain in Wis. casino attack

Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — A gunman killed two people at a Wisconsin casino restaurant and seriously wounded a third before he was killed by police late Saturday, in what authorities said appeared to be a targeted attack.

Brown County Sheriff’s Lt. Kevin Pawlak said investigators believe the gunman was seeking a specific person he was angry at.

“He was targeting a specific victim who was not there, but he decided to still shoot some of the victim’s friends or co-workers, it appears,” Pawlak said.

Neither the gunman nor the shooting victims were immediately identified.

Pawlak wasn’t sure if the shooter was a former employee of the restaurant, but said “it ap-

pears there’s some relationship that had to do with employment.”

“Whether or not they all worked there, we’re still working on,” he said.

The wounded person was being treated at a Milwaukee hospital, Pawlak said.

The attack happened around 7:30 p.m. at the Oneida Casino, operated by the Oneida Nation on the western side of Green Bay, with the casino tweeting that an active shooter was on the scene.

Jawad Yatim, a witness, said he saw at least two people shot.

“I know for sure two, because it happened right next to us, literally right next to us,” Yatim said. “But he was shooting pretty aggressively in the building, so I wouldn’t doubt him hitting other people.”

Ala. looking at return of cruises by mid-July

Associated Press

MOBILE, Ala. — With demand for COVID-19 vaccinations lagging at an immunization clinic set up at the Alabama Cruise Terminal, an official said the site could shut down soon as the cruise industry prepares to restart.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued guidelines recently that would allow companies that meet certain benchmarks to resume operating around mid-July, and officials are hopeful Carnival Cruise Lines can resume its trips to the western Caribbean from Mobile.

The city's cruise terminal near downtown is currently being used as a mass vaccination site by the Mobile County Health Department, but Health Officer Dr. Bert Eichold told WALA-TV he expects the operation to wrap up in the next couple of weeks.

More than 22% of the residents of Mobile County are fully vaccinated, according to CDC statistics. But the county, with about 413,000 residents, also has one of the higher levels of community disease transmission in Alabama, according to the state.

Alaska

ANCHORAGE — Alaska Gov. Mike Dunleavy on Friday ended the state's COVID-19 disaster declaration, saying the state is in such a good position that he doesn't need emergency powers bestowed by the Legislature.

Dunleavy acted on the recommendation of health commissioner Adam Crum, who concluded the emergency disaster declaration is no longer necessary.

Last month, Alaska became the first state in the nation to make COVID-19 vaccinations available to anyone over the age of 16 who lives or works in the state. Of the state's 733,391 residents, 255,876 are consid-

ered by the state to be fully vaccinated.

Dunleavy also signed a bill that the governor's office said ensures the continuation of COVID-19 federal relief to impacted Alaskans and liability protections for Alaska businesses.

Georgia

ATLANTA — Georgia's governor is removing many remaining requirements for social distancing and masked employees from businesses, saying that the state's efforts to control COVID-19 have been successful even as its vaccination rate lags and federal officials continue to warn that the infection rates remain relatively high.

While Gov. Brian Kemp was touring the Mexican border in Texas on Friday, the Republican's office released a new executive order that takes effect Saturday and runs through May 30. But public health experts fear another surge, possibly driven by more infectious variants of the virus.

More than 6 million doses of vaccines have been given in Georgia, but the state ranks 44th in doses administered per capita to people 18 and older.

Georgia still ranks among the 10 worst states per capita for newly reported deaths and among the 10 worst states per capita for hospitalized COVID-19 patients.

Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS — Gamblers will have to keep wearing face masks inside Indiana's casinos at least through the end of May.

Updated health guidelines issued by the Indiana Gaming Commission said operators of the 13 state-licensed casinos decided to keep the mask rule in place to stem COVID-19 spread even though Gov. Eric Holcomb lifted the statewide mask mandate as of April 6.

The casino rules require customers to wear masks except when eating, drinking or smoking while seated at a slot machine, bar or restaurant table. Gamblers must wear masks at table games and employees are required to have masks on at all times.

The gaming commission said casinos will review whether to continue the mask requirement past June 1.

Missouri

CARTHAGE — A gathering that traditionally has drawn tens of thousands of Vietnamese Catholics from across the United States to southwest Missouri has been canceled for a second straight year because of the pandemic.

The Joplin Globe reported that the city of Carthage and the Congregation of the Mother of the Redeemer in Carthage have decided that the risk of COVID-19 transmission is still too great to hold the Marian Days celebration. Before 2020, the event had taken place in the city every year since 1978, reuniting families and friends separated after the fall of Saigon.

The Rev. John Paul Tai Tran, provincial minister of the congregation, said the decision not to hold the celebration during the first week of August was again difficult.

Carthage police Chief Greg Dagnan said the leaders of the congregation met with city officials Tuesday about the event, but had pretty much decided beforehand that it would still be too dangerous.

Nebraska

OMAHA — A Nebraska community college is using federal COVID-19 relief funds to pay for tuition and books for high schoolers from the state to take courses this summer.

The Omaha World-Herald reported that officials at the Metropolitan Community Col-

lege hope their newly approved offer will pull in thousands of students. The college saw about a 15% drop in summer enrollment from 2019 to 2020, said Bill Owen, the college's vice president for strategic initiatives.

Typically, high school students who enroll in a program called CollegeNow that is designed for high school students to jump-start their college education pay \$33 per credit hour — half the full rate.

While students will be allowed to attend courses for free this summer, they will be responsible for tools or other required supplies.

Washington

REPUBLIC — About 10% of the population of Republic, a small city in north-central Washington, has tested positive for COVID-19 in an outbreak traced to large indoor events last month at the local Fraternal Order of Eagles hall.

Ferry County Memorial Hospital officials have confirmed more than 100 cases, with one reported death, since the April 9-11 events, including a membership drive that featured dinner, live music and a 1980s-themed karaoke night. Some patients have had to be transferred to Wenatchee and Yakima because of a lack of capacity at the 25-bed hospital — the only hospital in a 50-mile radius — and other closer facilities.

The county previously had relatively few COVID-19 cases, and many in the conservative, rural community saw mask mandates as infringing on their liberty. Less than one-quarter of the county's residents have received a vaccine to date, according to the health district, but officials said the outbreak has increased interest in it.

The situation should serve as a warning to other communities about the danger of large indoor events with unvaccinated people, they said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

240-pound sturgeon, age 100, caught in river

MA DETROIT — Now that’s a whopper — a very old whopper!

A 240-pound sturgeon that could be more than 100 years old was caught in the Detroit River by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The “real life river monster” was nearly 7 feet long, the agency said on Facebook, where the photo was shared more than 24,000 times by late afternoon.

“Based on its girth and size, it is assumed to be a female and that she has been roaming our waters over 100 years.

She was quickly released back into the river” after being weighed and measured, the Fish and Wildlife Service said.

FBI seeks forfeiture of 19 dogs taken in seizure

VA CHARLES CITY — Federal authorities are seeking the forfeiture of more than a dozen pit bulls seized in Virginia during the investigation of a multistate narcotics and dog fighting network, according to court documents.

The dogs were recovered by the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration and Virginia law enforcement agencies carrying out federal search warrants in Sussex County and Charles City County in November, according to court records obtained by the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

Now, federal officials are formally asking the court to terminate the unidentified suspects’ rights to 19 of the 41 dogs recovered, according to a complaint for forfeiture filed Monday.

State’s favorite guessing game ends in twist

AK NENANA — The ice has gone out on the Tanana River, ending the annual Nenana Ice Classic, one of Alaska’s most famous guessing games.

Ice classic manager Cherrie Forness said the game ended at 12:50 p.m. Friday when the ice shifted and the clock inside a tripod set up on the river ice tripped.

When the ice goes out, the tripod usually starts going down-river or toward the south bank. This year, it went the other direction, upriver, apparently just enough to trip the mechanism that stopped the clock.

It’s not known how many people paying \$2.50 per ticket correctly guessed the day, hour and minute the ice went out.

Wu-Tang Clan imposter gets prison for scams

GA AUGUSTA — A Georgia man was sentenced to more than eight years in federal prison for using stolen credit cards to live large in hotels and limousines while claiming to have ties to the hip hop group Wu-Tang Clan.

Walker Washington of Augusta was sentenced to 100 months in prison after pleading guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud, David H. Estes, acting U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Georgia, said in a news release.

U.S. District Judge Dudley H. Bowen also ordered Washington, 53, to pay about \$300,000 to 19 businesses defrauded in the scheme, according to the release.

Police praised for halting scam on grandmother

MA DRACUT — Three Massachusetts police officers and a dispatcher are earning praise for preventing a Florida grandmother from losing \$25,000 to a scammer.

Dracut Sgt. Lawrence Flynn, Lt. Wilmer Buote, Detective Megan Farley and dispatcher Andrew Talmacci went into action when a woman called Dracut and Miami police and said her mother had sent the money to an address in Dracut, Chief Peter Bartlett told The Sun of Lowell.

The woman told police her mother had received a call from someone claiming that her grandson had been arrested and needed \$25,000 for a lawyer so he could be released.

The package had not yet been delivered, so the officers intercepted it.

Young wrestler takes 1st place in world contest

HI HONOLULU — A new world wrestling champion is a 9-year-old girl from Hawaii.

Kaiulani Diamond Kekahuna of Waianae won first place at the World of Wrestling 2021 Reno Worlds in the 65-pound weight class April 17, KHON-TV reported.

The third-grader at Kamehameha Schools Kapalama campus competed in the 9 and under division. She defeated Mireya Barraza of New Mexico in the quarterfinal, Harley Miller of Oklahoma in the semifinal and Mylah Henebry of Idaho in the final, the Honolulu news station reported.

Man arrested after theft of thousands in chips

WA RIDGEFIELD — A Kelso man who is banned from a casino in southwest Washington is accused of stealing \$12,500 in chips after a casino break-in.

Police said Lucas Bunn entered the ilani Casino Resort while disguised in a gray wig and construction vest, The Columbian reported.

Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency advised authorities that a man was in the casino’s high limits area using a drill to break into the chips table, according to an affidavit.

The man, thought to be Bunn, ran when security approached him, the affidavit said. A responding Clark County sheriff’s deputy chased the man and he was detained shortly after, according to the affidavit.

Rangers find marijuana grow in national park

CA DEATH VALLEY — Federal park rangers discovered a large illegal marijuana grow in Death Valley National Park near the border between California and Nevada, authorities said.

The 40-acre grow was found in Jail Canyon, a rarely visited canyon on the western side of the Panamint Mountains, the National Park Service said in a news release.

The illegal grow is one of hundreds that authorities have found in Death Valley over the last decade, officials said, and marijuana grow sites can damage or destroy parts of the national park.

— From The Associated Press



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Medina Spirit gives Baffert 7th Derby win

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — John Velazquez was in a familiar place, in the lead aboard Medina Spirit in the Kentucky Derby and holding off the stretch bid of three challengers. This time, Bob Baffert couldn't believe what he was seeing.

Medina Spirit won by a half-length on Saturday, giving Baffert his seventh victory, the most of any trainer in the race's 147-year history.

The jockey and trainer — both Hall of Famers — teamed up eight months ago to win a pandemic-delayed Derby in September with Authentic, who raced to an early lead and hung on. That wasn't so surprising.

This one was.

Sent off at 12-1 — astronomical odds for a colt trained by the white-haired, two-time Triple Crown winner — Medina Spirit was in a street fight thundering down the stretch.

The dark brown colt was pressed by Mandaloun on his outside. Hot Rod Charlie was coming fast outside of Mandaloun, with 5-2 favorite Essential Quality giving chase on the far outside.

"I kept waiting for all those horses to pass him," Baffert said. "When he got to the eighth pole, we said, 'This guy has got a shot.'"

Velazquez knew he had plenty of horse left.

"We got to the 16th pole and he put his ears down and kept fighting," the jockey said. "I was so proud of him."

In the paddock, Baffert watched in amazement as one of the least heralded Derby runners of his long career dug in at the front.

"You could tell he was laying it down and Johnny was riding hard," Baffert said. "He was just relentless."

Medina Spirit led all the way and ran 1 1/4

miles in 2:01.02. He paid \$26.20, \$12 and \$7.60. The victory was worth \$1.86 million.

Velazquez earned his fourth Derby victory aboard the colt that was purchased as a yearling for \$1,000 and was a bargain-basement buy at \$35,000 for current owner Amr Zedan of Saudi Arabia. By comparison, Zedan recently paid \$1.7 million for an unraced 2-year-old.

"He doesn't know how much he cost," Baffert said, "but what a little racehorse."

Baffert punched his right arm in the air after watching the finish on the video board. He was buried in celebratory hugs by his wife, Jill, and youngest son, Bode. Jill Baffert had reason to celebrate earlier, when a horse she co-owns and is trained by her husband won a \$500,000 race on the undercard.

"I'm really, really surprised," the 68-year-old trainer said of Medina Spirit.

It wasn't false modesty. Baffert had been low-key about his chances after two of his best horses — Life Is Good and Concert Tour — were derailed along the Derby trail.

Medina Spirit isn't the typical high-priced talent with a fancy pedigree in Baffert's California barn.

"I cannot believe he won this race," the trainer said. "That little horse, that was him, all guts. He's always shown that he's been an overachiever. His heart is bigger than his body."

Medina Spirit has never finished worse than second in six career starts and two of his three losses came to Life Is Good, who likely would have been the Derby favorite had he not been injured.

"I've rehearsed this speech in the shower and treadmill," Zedan said. "Never thought I was going to do it, but here I am."

Medina Spirit broke sharply out of the gate while Essential Quality and 9-2 second choice Rock Your World bumped shortly after the start.

"We were done," Rock Your World's trainer John Sadler said. "No chance."

Essential Quality was five horses wide in both the first and second turns before taking aim at Medina Spirit in the stretch and coming up short in fourth place.

"He didn't get the greatest trip," trainer Brad Cox said of the favorite. "That can happen when you start from the 14-hole."

Mandaloun — Cox's other entry — finished second and returned \$23.00 and \$13.40. Hot Rod Charlie, partly owned by five former Brown University football players, was another half-length back in third and paid \$5.20 to show.

Trainer Todd Pletcher saddled four runners, with his highest finish being ninth with Known Agenda. Sainthood was 11th, Bourbonic 13th and Dynamic One 18th.

Baffert won back-to-back, having tied Ben Jones with his sixth victory last year when the race was run in September without spectators because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"The seven wins? I can't believe I won two," Baffert said. "That's what I love about this business: Nobody knows for sure."

A week earlier, Baffert sat in front of the Arkansas Racing Commission appealing a 15-day suspension that was part of his punishment for a pair of drug positives involving two of his horses from May 2020. He was successful, with the commission voting unanimously to reduce his fines and overturn the suspension.

"I'm just so grateful I can still compete at this level," Baffert said.

Protests force postponement of Manchester United game

Associated Press

Manchester United's Premier League game against Liverpool was postponed on Sunday in Manchester, England, after supporters stormed into the stadium and onto the pitch as thousands of fans gathered outside Old Trafford to demand the Glazer family ownership sells the club.

Long-running anger against the American owners has boiled over after they were part of the failed attempt to take United into a European Super

League. United and Liverpool players were unable to travel to the stadium.

Busch makes up for restart, wins truck race

Kyle Busch blew a restart in overtime that should have cost him a race he'd dominated at Kansas Speedway. Given a second chance, Busch corrected his mistake and earned the 61st Truck Series win of his career Saturday in Kansas City, Kan.

The win Saturday night was

the fifth straight for Kyle Busch Motorsports and manufacturer Toyota has won all seven Truck Series races this year. Busch has won twice this year. Busch won the first two stages and led a race-high 59 of the 140 laps.

Dixon wins again in IndyCar race in Texas

Scott Dixon finished first in a race of two New Zealanders, the veteran six-time IndyCar champion ahead of the series

rookie racing in his debut on an oval track.

"Definitely the most happy I've ever been finishing second," Scott McLaughlin said.

It was another dominating victory for Dixon at Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth, winning Saturday night in the first of two races on consecutive days at the series' first oval this season. He passed Chip Ganassi Racing teammate and polesitter Alex Palou at the start of the third lap and went on to lead 206 of 212 laps.

Questionable call helps Mets down Phils

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Michael Conforto hit a tiebreaking home run in the ninth inning and the New York Mets benefited from a very questionable call by the second base umpire to beat the Philadelphia Phillies 5-4 Saturday night.

Conforto led off the ninth by connecting against Hector Neris (1-3).

Conforto also had a two-run double in a four-run first inning against former teammate Zack Wheeler. The Mets squandered the 4-0 lead but recovered to win for just the fourth time in 12 games — even after center fielder Brandon Nimmo and third baseman J.D. Davis exited with hand injuries.

Alec Bohm tied it with a two-run homer for the Phillies, who have alternated wins and losses in their past 10 games. Philadelphia hasn't won consecutive games since a three-game sweep of Atlanta to open the season.

With one out in the bottom of the seventh, second base umpire Jose Navas ruled Andrew McCutchen ran out of the baseline to avoid an attempted tag by shortstop Francisco Lindor on what became an inning-ending double play. Replays showed McCutchen ran in a straight line from first to second.

Phillies slugger Bryce Harper, sitting out after getting hit in the face by a pitch Wednesday, was ejected for arguing from the top step of the dugout.

Trevor May (2-1) pitched a scoreless eighth and Edwin Díaz struck out two in a perfect ninth for his third save. New York relievers have thrown 19 straight scoreless innings.

Nationals 7, Marlins 2: Patrick Corbin ended his 10-game losing streak, pitching seven solid innings and leading host Washington over Miami.

Josh Bell hit a bases-loaded double and drove in four runs, Yan Gomes had a two-run homer and Josh Harrison had three hits as the Nationals won their third in a row.

Corbin (1-3), who opened the season on the COVID-19 injured list and began the afternoon with a 10.47 ERA in four starts, limited the Marlins to two runs and four hits.

White Sox 7, Indians 3: Tim Anderson hit a grand slam, Leury García drove in three runs from the No. 9 spot in the lineup and host Chicago beat Cleveland.

Lance Lynn (2-1) allowed three runs in five innings in his return from the injured list for the White Sox, who have won seven of nine.

Austin Hedges homered and Josh Naylor had two hits for the Indians, who have dropped eight of 13.

Cubs 3, Reds 2: Nick Hoerner hit a go-ahead single in the sixth inning and visiting Chicago's bullpen shut down Cincinnati.

Hoerner drove in Javier Báez with one of his three hits, a two-out single off reliever Sean Doolittle to complete the Cubs' comeback from a 2-0 deficit.

Rex Brothers (1-0) struck out all three batters he faced in the sixth, the first three of eight strikeouts piled up by five Chicago relievers in five innings.

Royals 11, Twins 3: Andrew Benintendi hit two homers, Salvador Perez homered and drove in three runs, and visiting Kansas City cruised past Minnesota.

Danny Duffy (4-1) continued his strong start to the season in helping the AL Central-leading Royals bounce back from Friday night's 9-1 loss. He allowed one run and two hits in seven innings while striking out seven.

Astros 3, Rays 1: Jose Urquidy scattered four hits over seven shutout innings and visiting Houston made an early lead stand up.

Jose Altuve doubled on the first pitch of the game, leading to a three-run inning. The Astros got three hits in the first inning and only one more the rest of the game.

Orioles 8, Athletics 4: Matt Harvey won his third straight start and Baltimore took advantage of host Oakland's sloppy play to score six runs in the third inning.

The Athletics made two errors and threw a pair of wild pitches to help the Orioles break loose.

Harvey (3-1) allowed two runs and four hits in 5½ innings. It marked the first time since 2018 with Cincinnati that the former All-Star had won three starts in a row.

Yankees 6, Tigers 4: Jameson Taillon earned his first win in exactly two years, Aaron Judge had three hits and three RBIs, and host New York beat Detroit.

Gleyber Torres also drove in three runs as the Yankees won for the sixth time in seven games.

Blue Jays 6, Braves 5 (10): At Dunedin, Fla., Randal Grichuk lined an RBI single in the 10th inning, George Springer hit his first two homers with the Blue Jays, and Toronto rallied to beat Atlanta.

Grichuk won it with two outs and the bases loaded when he hit an 0-1 pitch from Nate Jones (0-2) into center field.

The Braves' Ronald Acuña Jr. connected for his ninth home run this season.

Rangers 8, Red Sox 6: Isiah Kiner-Falefa homered and had an RBI triple among his trio of hits, and Willie Calhoun's three hits included a two-run homer as host Texas topped Boston.

Ian Kennedy whiffed all three hitters in the ninth for his sixth save in six opportunities.

Cardinals 12, Pirates 5: Jack Flaherty pitched six solid innings to keep his record perfect and Paul DeJong hit a three-run homer in the first to send visiting St. Louis over Pittsburgh.

Flaherty (5-0) struck out nine while winning his fifth straight start. He gave up three runs on six hits and two walks.

DeJong's drive off Trevor Cahill (1-3) capped a four-run first and helped the Cardinals win for the seventh time in nine games.

Padres 6, Giants 2: Blake Snell earned his first win for San Diego, backed by Manny Machado's early three-run homer against visiting San Francisco.

Snell (1-0) gave up one earned run and five hits in five innings, striking out six.

Rockies 14, Diamondbacks 6: Dom Nunez launched a grand slam, Trevor Story had three hits that included a two-run homer and visiting Colorado pounded out 18 hits in a win over Arizona.

It was a good start to May for the Rockies, who had the most losses in the National League during April with a 9-17 record.

Brewers 6, Dodgers 5 (11): Travis Shaw homered and hit a game-winning single, and host Milwaukee scored three runs in the 11th inning to beat scuffling Los Angeles.

In the 11th, Drew Smith hit a two-run triple off Drew Rasmussen to give the Dodgers a 5-3 lead.

The Brewers loaded the bases with no outs after Alex Vesia (0-1) started the inning with two walks. Mitch White gave up a sacrifice fly to Kolten Wong, an RBI single to Avisail Garcia and the game-ending hit to Shaw.

Angels 10, Mariners 5: Jared Walsh homered in consecutive innings, and Los Angeles star Mike Trout hit his 28th long ball in Seattle.

Walsh followed Trout's 10th career first-inning homer in Seattle with a solo shot, then added a two-run drive in the second that made it 8-0. The Angels have won four of six.

Trout is the only Mariners opponent with more than 20 home runs in Seattle.

Islanders blank Rangers to reach playoffs

Associated Press

UNIONDALE, N.Y. — Anthony Beauvillier scored twice and Semyon Varlamov stopped 28 shots for his league-leading seventh shutout of the season as the New York Islanders beat the rival Rangers 3-0 Saturday night to clinch a playoff spot for the third straight year.

Mathew Barzal added a breakaway goal and Josh Bailey had three assists to help the Islanders beat the Rangers for the sixth time in eight meetings this season, including the last three by a combined 13-1 margin.

The 33-year-old Varlamov, who had three shutouts against the Rangers at Madison Square Garden, added another as the Islanders dominated from start to finish.

Alexandar Georgiev finished with 22 saves for the Rangers.

Bruins 6, Sabres 2: Craig Smith scored three goals to help host Boston win for the ninth time in 11 games.

The Bruins remained in fourth place in the East Division, a point behind the third-place Islanders, who beat the Rangers 3-0. Boston's next point will clinch a playoff berth. It also will earn a spot if the fifth-place Rangers don't win all of their final four games.

Devils 4, Flyers 1: Mackenzie Blackwood stopped 30 shots as visiting New Jersey got its third straight win.

Jesper Bratt, Janne Kuokkanen, Nico His-

chier and Yegor Sharangovich all scored for the Devils, who had lost 10 straight games before this recent stretch during a four game series against the Flyers.

Hurricanes 2, Blue Jackets 1 (OT): Dougie Hamilton scored on a breakaway 4:07 into overtime to lift host Carolina past Columbus.

Goalie Alex Nedeljkovic picked up the assist on the winning play as the Central Division-leading Hurricanes extended their points streak to 10 games.

Wild 4, Blues 3 (OT): Kevin Fiala scored 2:16 into overtime and Minnesota rallied to beat visiting St. Louis.

Nico Strum and Jonas Brodin scored late in the third period to force overtime for the Wild, who won for the first time in three games. Mats Zuccarello had a goal and an assist.

Avalanche 4, Sharks 3: Nathan MacKinnon bounced back from a rare scoreless night with a goal and an assist to lead host Colorado.

Mikko Rantanen scored his 28th of the season and added an assist for the Avalanche. Andre Burakovsky and Patrik Nemeth also scored, and Devan Dubnyk stopped 22 shots against his former team.

Panthers 5, Blackhawks 4: Anthony Duclair had two goals and an assist and visiting Florida won its third straight.

Aleksander Barkov scored his team-leading 25th goal and had an assist.

Predators 1, Stars 0 (OT): Erik Haula scored at 3:32 of overtime to give the host Nashville its third win in four games.

Golden Knights 3, Coyotes 2 (OT): Jonathan Marchessault scored on a power play at 3:04 of overtime, Marc-Andre Fleury moved into a tie for the third on the NHL's all-time wins list and Vegas won at Arizona.

Penguins 3, Capitals 0: Bryan Rust scored two unassisted goals, Tristan Jarry made 23 saves and Pittsburgh won at Washington to regain first place in the East Division.

Red Wings 1, Lightning 0 (SO): Sam Gagner scored to end an eight-round shootout and Thomas Greiss stopped 33 shots, lifting host Detroit past Tampa Bay.

Canadiens 3, Senators 2 (OT): Cole Caufield scored his first NHL goal 2:25 into overtime and host Montreal rallied to beat Ottawa.

Maple Leafs 5, Canucks 1: Auston Matthews scored twice to raise his NHL-leading goal total to 38 as host Toronto won its fifth straight.

Oilers 4, Flames 1: Connor McDavid had a goal and two assists to lead host Edmonton to a win.

Ducks 6, Kings 2: Ryan Miller made 23 saves to win the final home start of his 18-year NHL career, and Anaheim ended a 23-game streak without a home regulation victory.

Sabonis' triple-double leads Pacers' rout of Thunder

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Domantas Sabonis had a triple-double in the first half and the Indiana Pacers flirted with the most lopsided victory in NBA history before beating the Oklahoma City Thunder 152-95 on Saturday night.

Sabonis finished with 26 points, 19 rebounds and 14 assists, and the Pacers scored their most points in a game since joining the NBA in 1976.

They led by 67 points with 4:12 remaining, before the Thunder scored the game's next 10 points. The NBA's largest victory margin remains 68, set by Cleveland against Miami in 1991.

The Pacers' previous record was 150 points against Denver in 1982. Indiana shot 65.5% from the

field — the highest percentage for an opponent in Thunder history.

Hornets 107, Pistons 94: LaMelo Ball returned from a 21-game absence with 11 points, leading host Charlotte over Detroit. A leading candidate for Rookie of the Year, Ball had surgery to repair a broken wrist sustained on March 20. The point guard played 28 minutes and added eight rebounds and seven assists.

Nuggets 110, Clippers 104: Nikola Jokic had 30 points and 14 rebounds, Michael Porter Jr. scored 25 points and Denver won at Los Angeles to take over the third seed in the Western Conference.

Mavericks 125, Wizards 124:

Dorian Finney-Smith hit a go-ahead three-pointer in the final seconds, Luka Doncic ended his longest stretch without a triple-double since his rookie season and host Dallas won a thriller over Washington.

Warriors 113, Rockets 87: Stephen Curry bounced back from a rough first half with 23 of his 30 points in the third quarter, and Golden State won at Houston.

Magic 112, Grizzlies 111: Cole Anthony made a three-pointer with 0.1 seconds remaining, giving him a career-best 26 points and Orlando a victory over visiting Memphis.

Jazz 106, Raptors 102: Bojan Bogdanovic scored 34 points — including six three-pointers — to

lead host Utah over Toronto.

Hawks 108, Bulls 97: Trae Young scored 33 points, Clint Capela had 20 points and 11 rebounds and host Atlanta snapped a three-game slide with a victory over undermanned Chicago.

Pelicans 140, Timberwolves 136 (OT): Zion Williamson scored seven of his 37 points in overtime and New Orleans came back to win at Minnesota.

Lonzo Ball had a career-high 33 points, tying a career best with eight three-pointers, and grabbed 11 rebounds.

Heat 124, Cavaliers 107: Kendrick Nunn scored 22 points and Duncan Robinson had 20, helping visiting Miami move into a tie for sixth place in the Eastern Conference.