

Russia pounds targets across Ukraine

Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine — Complaining that the West is “stuffing Ukraine with weapons,” Russia pounded railroad stations and other supply-line points across the country, as the European Union moved to further punish Moscow for the war Wednesday by proposing a ban on oil imports, a crucial source of revenue.

Heavy fighting also raged at the Azovstal steel mill in Mariupol that represented the last pocket of Ukrainian resistance in the ruined southern port city, according to the mayor. But a Russian official denied Moscow’s troops were storming the plant, as Ukrainian commanders claimed a day earlier.

The Russian military said Wednesday that it used sea- and air-launched missiles to destroy electric power facilities at five railway stations across Ukraine, while artillery and aircraft also struck troop strongholds and fuel and ammunition depots.

The flurry of attacks comes as Russia prepares to celebrate Victory Day on May 9, marking the Soviet Union’s defeat of Nazi Germany. The world is watching for whether Russian President Vladimir Putin will use the occasion to declare victory or expand what he calls a “special military operation.”

A declaration of all-out war would allow Putin to introduce martial law and mobilize reservists to make up for significant troop losses.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov dismissed the speculation as “nonsense.”

As areas across Ukraine came under renewed attack, Belarus, which Russia used as a staging ground for its invasion, announced military exercises starting Wednesday. A top Ukrainian official said the country will be ready to act if Belarus joins the fighting.

The attacks on rail infrastructure were meant to disrupt the delivery of Western weapons, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said. Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said the West is “stuffing Ukraine with weapons.”

A senior U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the Pentagon’s assessment, said that while the Russians have tried to hit critical infrastructure around the western city of Lviv, specifically targeting railroads, there has been “no appreciable impact” on Ukraine’s effort to resupply its forces. Lviv, close to the Polish border, has been a major gateway for NATO-supplied weapons.

Western weaponry pouring into Ukraine

helped its forces thwart Russia’s initial drive to seize Kyiv and seems certain to play a central role in the growing battle for the Donbas, the eastern industrial region that Moscow now says is its main objective.

Ukraine has urged the West to ramp up the supply of weapons ahead of that clash. Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany, which had been slow at first to help arm Ukraine, said his government is considering supplying howitzers, in addition to Gepard anti-aircraft guns and other equipment it has agreed to send.

The governor of the eastern Donetsk region, which lies in the Donbas, said Russian attacks left 21 people dead on Tuesday, the highest number of known fatalities since April 8, when a missile attack on the railway station in Kramatorsk killed at least 59.

In addition to supplying weapons to Ukraine, Europe and the United States have sought to punish Moscow with sanctions. The EU’s top official called on the 27-nation bloc on Wednesday to ban Russian oil imports.

The EU has also started talking about a possible embargo on Russian natural gas. The bloc has already approved a cutoff of Russian coal.

As COVID cases rise, mask mandates stay shelved

Associated Press

NEW YORK — An increase in COVID-19 infections around the United States has sent more cities into new high-risk categories that are supposed to trigger indoor mask wearing, but much of the country is stopping short of bringing back restrictions amid deep pandemic fatigue.

For weeks, much of upstate New York has been in the high-alert orange zone, a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention designation that reflects serious community spread. The CDC has urged people to mask up in indoor public places, including schools, regardless of vaccination status. But few, if any, local jurisdictions in the region brought back a mask requirement despite rising case counts.

In New York City, cases are again rising and this week crossed the city’s threshold for

“medium risk,” indicating the widening spread of the subvariant known as BA.2 that has swept the state’s northern reaches. But there appears to be little appetite from Mayor Eric Adams to do an about face just a few months after allowing residents to shed masks and put away vaccine cards that were once required to enter restaurants and concert halls. Adams has said the city could pivot and reimpose mandates, but has stressed that he wants to keep the city open.

“I don’t anticipate many places, if any, going back to mask mandates unless we see overflowing hospitals — that’s what would drive mask mandates,” said Professor David Larsen, a public health expert at Syracuse University in upstate New York, whose own county is currently an orange zone. “People are still dying, but not in the same numbers.”

Nationally, hospitalizations are a bit up but

still as low as any point in the pandemic. Deaths are steadily down in the last three months to nearly the lowest numbers.

An abundance of at-home virus test kits has led to a steep undercount of COVID-19 cases that were once an important benchmark. Researchers have estimated that more than 60% of the country was infected with the virus during the omicron surge, bringing high levels of protection on top of the tens of millions of vaccinations. Hospitalizations have increased, but only slightly.

“If a mask mandate were reinstated right this minute, I don’t think it’d be very successful,” said Jim Kearns, a videographer at the State University of New York in Oswego, another upstate New York community in the CDC’s orange zone.

“I think a lot of people are just over it,” he said.

N. Korea test-fires a ballistic missile

BY DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

North Korea launched a ballistic missile Wednesday off its eastern coast, according to South Korea's military.

The missile, launched at 12:03 p.m., flew 292 miles toward the East Sea at an altitude of 485 miles, according to messages from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to reporters that afternoon. The East Sea is also known as the Sea of Japan.

The launch marks the 13th round of tests by North Korea this year and the first since April 16.

South Korea and the United States will "continue to maintain a robust combined defense posture," U.S. Forces Korea commander Army Gen. Paul LaCamera told South Korean military

leaders during a videoconference after the launch, according to the Joints Chiefs.

The chiefs said South Korea's troops "are currently maintaining their readiness posture, tracking and monitoring movements related to it in preparation for an additional launch."

The Joint Chiefs described North Korea's missile launches as "grave threats to harm peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and the international community." They added that the launches violate U.N. Security Council resolutions.

"We strongly urge North Korea to stop its ballistic missile launches immediately," the Joint Chiefs said.

The latest missile came down in the sea between Japan and the

Korean Peninsula but outside Japan's economic exclusion zone, an area that reaches 200 miles from its shores, Japanese broadcaster TBS reported Wednesday, citing government sources.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's office identified the projectile as a possible ballistic missile.

Kishida ordered related ministries to put their best effort into gathering and analyzing information, and to be fully prepared for any unexpected situation, according to a post on the leader's website.

North Korea on April 16 fired two missiles that it described as part of a "new tactical guided weapon system." South Korea's military estimated the projectiles flew 68 miles at an altitude of 15.5

miles and reached a maximum speed of Mach 4.

Just over a week later, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, at a parade to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the nation's army in Pyongyang, said he would speed development of his nuclear forces and use them if provoked.

Among the weapons displayed that day was the Hwasong-17, an intercontinental ballistic missile believed to be able to reach the continental U.S. State-run media claimed North Korea tested the missile March 24, though South Korea military experts cast doubt on that claim. Regardless of whether North Korea tested the Hwasong-17 or a modified version of the Hwasong-15, both missiles are theoretically capable of reaching the U.S.

Part failure caused fatal crash off the USS Lincoln

BY JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

A Navy investigation has absolved the pilot and aircrew of error in the August helicopter crash that killed five crew members off San Diego's coast, according to a news release Wednesday.

Severe vibrations in the main rotor of the MH-60S Seahawk caused by a failed damper hose led to the helicopter falling from the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and into the sea on Aug. 31, according to the release from Naval Air Forces spokesman Cmdr. Zach Harrell.

"The investigation found that there is no evidence that pilot or aircrew error was a causal factor in the crash," the release stated.

The Seahawk had just touched down on the Abraham Lincoln when it "experienced side-to-side vibrations causing the main rotor to strike [the] flight deck," ac-

ording to a Naval Safety Center report following the incident.

The Navy concluded its investigation April 18, according to the release.

The Navy in October recovered the bodies of Petty Officer 2nd Class James P. Buriak, Petty Officer 2nd Class Sarah F. Burns, Lt. Bradley A. Foster, Lt. Paul R. Fridley and Petty Officer 3rd Class Bailey J. Tucker, along with the helicopter's wreckage, from about 5,300 feet below the surface. Another five sailors were injured in the incident. A petty officer third class was rescued during the incident.

The Navy addressed the mechanical issues with instructions for maintenance of the affected parts and by ordering inspections within 60 days, according to the final report signed by Vice Adm. Kenneth Whitesell, commander of Naval Air Forces.

Expert: Warships show China is able to operate near Japan

BY ALEX WILSON
AND MARI HIGA
Stars and Stripes

A Chinese aircraft carrier and its strike group sailed into the Philippine Sea on Monday for a planned training exercise, according to a report by the Chinese military.

The Liaoning and a strike group of seven warships held routine, open-sea combat drills in the Western Pacific south of Japan, Chinese navy spokesman Senior Capt. Gao Xiucheng told the state-run China Military website Tuesday. The exercises are designed to "improve the aircraft carrier battle group's ability to fulfill its missions," Gao was quoted as saying. "The training complied with relevant international law and practice, not targeting any party."

The Liaoning strike group was spotted Monday passing south through the Miyako Strait, which separates Okinawa and Miyako,

two islands in Okinawa prefecture, Japan's Joint Staff said in a Monday news release. It was the first transit of the strait this year by Chinese naval vessels.

While the Chinese navy passes through the strait on a regular basis, its presence remains a concern for Japan, according to James Brown, an international affairs expert at Temple University's Japan campus.

"They are a demonstration of China's growing ability to conduct carrier-led exercises in the vicinity of Japan," he told Stars and Stripes by email Wednesday. "This is also a show of force intended to discourage Japan from deeper involvement in the security situation around Taiwan."

China also deliberately chooses to pass through Miyako Strait because Beijing knows military activity in the area "creates tremors within the security establishment in Tokyo," Brown said.

Abortion focus shakes up midterm elections

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The leaked draft of a Supreme Court abortion opinion that would overturn the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision is shaking the U.S. political landscape in what has been expected to be a difficult election year for Democrats.

While the Democrats decried the draft, they suddenly have a clear, unifying message. The real possibility that abortion could be outlawed in dozens of states in the coming months could animate their dejected base — especially young voters, people of color and suburban women, who are unhappy with the pace of progress under Democratic leadership in Washington.

Republicans, meanwhile, are struggling to contain their excitement at the prospect of winning a decadeslong fight, even as they suggest Democrats are exaggerating the likely real-world impact of a *Roe* reversal.

The draft opinion surfaced just as the most competitive phase of the primary season was beginning, with races unfolding Tuesday in Ohio and In-

diana. While the political fallout will take months to settle, this much is clear: Rarely in the modern era has a Supreme Court case had the potential to so dramatically reshape American life and politics.

“I hope that women across this country are going to rise up and realize this isn’t theoretical anymore,” warned Michigan Sen. Debbie Stabenow, a Democrat.

Republicans have been fighting to ban abortion since before the Supreme Court’s 1973 *Roe* ruling, but on Tuesday, many offered only modest estimates of the political impact of a decision eliminating the legal guarantee of the right.

The draft ruling, which the court emphasized was not final, would become the law of the land only after a formal announcement, which is expected in late June or early July. And privately, GOP strategists have worried that overturning *Roe* ahead of the election could trigger an anti-Republican backlash.

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, a Republican, acknowledged that a sweeping

change in the nation’s abortion laws might help Democrats in November, but he suggested the election would depend more on the state of the economy than the explosive social issue.

“They will have an issue to talk about. We will have an issue to talk about,” Graham said of *Roe* being overturned. “I think it will be a new issue, particularly at the state level, but I think most people, quite honestly, are not single-issue voters.”

Voters in some states would be affected more than others.

Twenty-two states in all, largely across the South, West and Midwest, already have total or near-total bans on their books — almost all now blocked in court because of *Roe*. They include deep-red states with elections this fall including Idaho, Missouri, North Dakota and Utah. But they also include high-profile swing states including Pennsylvania, Arizona, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin.

A White House adviser said a *Roe* reversal would serve as a galvanizing force for key segments of President Joe Biden’s coalition, giving Democrats a clear message to link to the

midterm elections. At the same time, the adviser, who insisted on anonymity to discuss internal strategies, acknowledged that an abortion change might not be enough on its own to overcome political headwinds come November.

Biden’s popularity remains weak amid increasing concerns about inflation and the direction of the country. History also suggests that the party that controls the White House almost always suffers losses in the first congressional elections of a new presidency.

As Democratic officials across the nation tried to sound the alarm, Republicans were quietly confident.

“There are now three things in life you can count on: death, taxes and Dems overplaying any hand,” said Republican strategist Chris Wilson, who is involved in several top elections this year. He noted that Democrats in states like New York and California wouldn’t be affected by abortion bans in Republican-led states.

For most Democrats, Wilson said, “life goes on exactly as usual.”

Okla. governor signs Texas-style ban on most abortions

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma’s Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt signed a Texas-style abortion ban on Tuesday that prohibits abortions after about six weeks of pregnancy, part of a nationwide push in GOP-led states hopeful that the conservative U.S. Supreme Court will uphold new restrictions.

“I want Oklahoma to be the most pro-life state in the country,” Stitt tweeted after signing the bill.

Stitt’s signing of the bill comes on the heels of a leaked draft opinion from the nation’s high court that it is considering weakening or overturning the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion nearly 50 years ago.

The bill Stitt signed takes effect immediately with his signature, and the Oklahoma

Supreme Court on Tuesday denied an emergency request to temporarily halt the bill. Abortion providers say now that the new law is in effect, they will immediately stop providing services for women after six weeks of pregnancy.

“While the law is in effect, which it now is because the governor signed it, abortion services after six weeks will be largely unavailable,” said Rabia Muqaddam, a staff attorney for the New York-based Center for Reproductive Rights, which is representing Oklahoma abortion providers in the case. “It’s a short-term loss, but we’re hopeful that the Oklahoma Supreme Court will still grant us relief.”

The new law prohibits abortions once cardiac activity can be detected in an embryo, which experts have said is roughly six weeks into a pregnancy, before many wom-

en know they are pregnant. A similar bill approved in Texas last year led to a dramatic reduction in the number of abortions performed in that state, with many women going to Oklahoma and other surrounding states for the procedure.

Dr. Iman Alsaden, the medical director of Planned Parenthood Great Plains, said Texas’ law that took effect in September has given their employees an idea of what a post-*Roe* country might look like.

“Since that day, my colleagues and I have regularly treated patients who are fleeing their communities to seek care,” Alsaden said. “They’re taking time off of work, taking time out of school and taking time away from their family responsibilities to get the care that until September 2021 they were able to get safely and readily in their communities.”

Vance wins Ohio's GOP Senate primary

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — “Hillbilly Elegy” author JD Vance won Ohio’s contentious and hyper-competitive GOP Senate primary on Tuesday, buoyed by Donald Trump’s endorsement in a race that was an early test of the former president’s hold on his party as the midterm season kicks into high gear.

A onetime staunch critic of Trump whose 2016 memoir about his Appalachian childhood lifted him to fame, Vance spent much of the campaign behind in the polls. But a late-stage endorsement from Trump pushed him to front-runner status and the two men downplayed Vance’s past scathing criticism of the former president, with Vance saying he was wrong.

In accepting the GOP nomination, Vance struck a unifying tone, complimenting his rivals — including silencing boos for his

most bitter opponent, former state Treasurer Josh Mandel — and pledging to appeal to the state’s many moderates headed into November after an exceptionally bitter campaign that, at one point, saw two candidates nearly come to blows on a debate stage.

“Now this campaign, I really think, was a referendum on what kind of a Republican Party we want, and what kind of a country we want,” Vance told the crowd.

He now faces Democrat Tim Ryan in the general election race to fill the seat being vacated by retiring Republican Sen. Rob Portman. The 10-term Democratic congressman, who easily won his three-way primary Tuesday night, will likely have an uphill climb in a state Trump won twice by an 8-point margin. In a potential warning sign for Ryan, roughly twice as many Republicans participated in the primary than Democrats.

Meanwhile, Ohio’s Republican Gov. Mike DeWine secured his party’s nomination for a second term and will take on Democrat Nan Whaley.

In neighboring Indiana, incumbent Republicans in the state House fended off primary challengers who wanted to push the Legislature further to the right. Among the roughly two dozen so-called liberty candidates in Republican legislative races, one defeated a 10-term incumbent in northern Indiana, while a leader of the movement lost his primary race.

Tuesday’s contests ushered in a more competitive phase of the midterm primary season, with closely watched races in Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Georgia scheduled for later this month. The election will culminate in November, when control of Congress, governor’s mansions and key elections offices are at stake.

Residents wary as fire burns near New Mexico town

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS, N.M. — Martina Gonzales and her grandson watched from their front yard as aircraft disappeared into a giant plume of smoke to fight a growing wildfire that has burned hundreds of square miles, destroyed about 170 homes and threatens more destruction if weekend winds whip, as predicted, through the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

“My grandson has actually, um, been a little bit scared, nervous,” Gonzales said Tuesday — the day New Mexico’s governor asked President Joe Biden to declare a disaster so federal aid can come for the largest blaze burning in the U.S.

“The smoke was really bad yesterday,” Gonzales said as 4-year-old Lukas, despite

his fear, yelled “airplane” every time one flew to the fight to save Las Vegas, their small farm and ranch community in north-eastern New Mexico.

Gonzales’ car is packed with valuables in case an evacuation order comes. But she said that if the entire regional hub of about 13,000 people has to flee, she’s not sure where they’ll go. The residential care home where she works as a pharmacist started moving elderly clients out on Monday.

Nearly 200 patients at the state psychiatric hospital in Las Vegas also evacuated Monday.

During a briefing on the wind-whipped fire burning through dry landscape, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed her request for a presidential disaster declaration and

said she hoped it would bring financial help for recovery efforts. She called it important to seek the declaration now, rather than waiting until the fire is out.

Lujan Grisham, a first-term Democrat who is running for reelection, said Tuesday night that the number of homes under mandatory evacuation had jumped from 6,000 to about 15,500. The governor said the number of homes destroyed would likely go much higher.

“I have families who don’t know what the next day looks like,” she said. “I have families who are trying to navigate their children and health care resources, figure out their livelihoods and they’re in every single little community and it must feel to them like they are out there on their own.”

Employers post record 11.5M job openings in March

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Employers posted a record 11.5 million job openings in March, meaning the United States now has about an unprecedented two job openings for every person who is unemployed.

The latest data released Tuesday by the the Bureau of Labor Statistics further reveals an extraordinarily tight labor market that has emboldened millions of

Americans to seek better paying jobs, while also contributing to the biggest inflation surge in four decades.

A record 4.5 million Americans quit their jobs in March — a sign they are confident they can find better pay or improved working conditions elsewhere.

Layoffs, which has been running around 1.8 million a month before the pandemic hit the economy in early 2020, ticked up to 1.4 million in March from

1.35 million in February.

The U.S. job market is on a hot streak. Employers have added an average of more than 540,000 jobs a month for the past year. The Labor Department is expected to report Friday that the economy generated another 400,000 new jobs in April, according to a survey by the data firm FactSet. That would mark an unprecedented 12th straight month that hiring has come in at 400,000 or more.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Bleach sprayed into victim's eyes in attack

MD SILVER SPRING — Bleach was sprayed into a person's eyes during an attack at a Maryland mall, and police said they are searching for two teenage suspects.

Montgomery County police officers responded to the Westfield Wheaton mall in Silver Spring for a report of an assault, police said in a news release.

Detectives learned that two people approached the victim inside the mall, pushed her to the ground and began kicking her in the face, police said. Before they fled, police said one sprayed bleach in the victim's eyes.

Police released surveillance video of the suspects described as females in their late teens, and they are asking for help identifying them.

Man accused of setting car ablaze over religion

CT TORRINGTON — A Connecticut man has been charged with a hate crime after telling police he set a vehicle on fire because he didn't like the owner's Mormon faith.

The fire, which destroyed a 2022 Chevy Equinox, started outside a multifamily home in Torrington, police said.

Witnesses said they saw a man start the fire near the SUV's gas tank and pointed authorities to the 22-year-old suspect, who lived nearby.

Police said the man admitted starting the fire and said he did it because he didn't agree with the man's religious beliefs and doesn't like the Mormon faith.

He is charged with arson, criminal mischief, breach of

peace and the deprivation of rights, a hate crime.

Ballerina statue cut down, sold for scrap

OK TULSA — A bronze statue depicting one of Oklahoma's most famous Native American ballerinas was cut from its base outside a Tulsa museum and sold for scrap to a recycling company, authorities said.

Museum officials received a call from CMC Recycling in southwest Rogers County to identify what was believed to be pieces of the Five Moons statue of Marjorie Tallchief, the Tulsa World reported.

Michelle Place, director of the Tulsa Historical Society and Museum, verified the recovered pieces came from the statue.

Pieces of the statute, including the head and part of an arm, are still missing.

Fishermen set seafood value record in 2021

ME PORTLAND — Maine's fishing industry set a state record for the value of seafood species brought to the docks in 2021.

Maine is one of the most important commercial fishing states in the country, in part because it's home to by far the largest lobster fishing industry. The Maine Department of Marine Resources said the value of commercially harvested species in 2021 was more than \$890 million.

The previous record of more than \$733 million was set in 2016. The increased value of several seafood products in 2021 helped the state set the record.

Lobster harvesters earned nearly 60% more at the docks for their catch in 2021 than in 2020.

Soft-shell clams, oysters and scallops also saw increases in value. Baby eels, which are important as seed stock for Asian aquaculture companies, also saw a big jump in per-pound value.

Woman charged after dogs kill health worker

AL RED BAY — An Alabama sheriff said a public health worker was killed by dogs after she went to a home to follow up on a report about dogs attacking and injuring another person days earlier.

Franklin County Sheriff Shannon Oliver said the dogs' owner, Brandy Dowdy, 39, was charged with manslaughter and with violating Alabama's dangerous dog law, WTVA-TV reported.

Deputies were investigating an unknown vehicle when they found the body of Jacqueline Beard, an Alabama Department of Public Health employee. Oliver said Beard was there because of a dog attack earlier in the week that sent someone to a hospital in Jackson, Miss., with injuries.

The sheriff said investigators believe the dogs attacked Beard as she tried contacting their owner.

Crews rescue hiker who sent up smoke signal

OR COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE — Search and rescue crews found a hiker who sent up a smoke signal near Munra Point in the Columbia River Gorge.

Dispatchers received a call from a person at the Bonneville Dam who spotted smoke from a signal fire near the top of a cliffside, KOIN-TV reported.

Multnomah County deputies activated Multnomah County Search and Rescue and sent a highly-skilled mountain rescue team known as the Hood River Crag Rats. According to the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office, the 51-year-old man was able to walk with search and rescue members but had early stages of hypothermia. Crews also said it took longer to come down partly because the man had misplaced his footwear.

The trail the man was on had been closed since the Eagle Creek fire in 2017.

Policy shift allows tribal regalia at graduations

AK ANCHORAGE — Alaska's largest school district has updated its policy to allow students to wear items expressive of their cultural heritage and identity during graduation.

The policy now allows students within the Anchorage School District to adorn their graduation cap or gown with "traditional objects of tribal regalia or recognized objects of cultural significance."

"It is completely inappropriate for there to be anyone in a position of authority to tell Native people when and where we can wear our cultural regalia, in particular around rites of passage," said Ayyu Qassataq, who is Inupiaq. Her son was one of the students last year who was told they could not wear regalia at graduation.

— From wire reports



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Astros manager Baker gets 2,000th win

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Just call him Mr. 2,000.

Houston Astros manager Dusty Baker won his 2,000th game Tuesday night, becoming the 12th skipper in major league history to reach the milestone and the first Black man to do it.

The benchmark victory came in Houston's 4-0 win over the Seattle Mariners and comes more than 29 years after he collected his first win on April 6, 1993, in San Francisco's 2-1 victory over St. Louis.

"I'm probably one of the luckiest men to ever walk on this earth," a grinning Baker said minutes after the final out.

The 72-year-old Baker said being the first Black manager to reach 2,000 wins makes the achievement even more meaningful.

"It means extra," he said. "It means extra to the culture. It

means extra to society. It means extra to my race, and it means extra hopefully for others to get an opportunity (so) I'm not the last."

It's the latest milestone in a storied career as a player and manager that has spanned more than 50 years. Baker has reached the World Series twice as a manager, last season with the Astros and in 2002 with the Giants. As a player, he went three times with the Dodgers, winning it all as a big-hitting left fielder in 1981.

So where does this moment rank?

"Right now it's at the top," he said. "But I ain't gonna stop now."

Ten of the 11 other managers who have accumulated at least 2,000 wins are in the Hall of Fame. Bruce Bochy (2,003), who isn't yet eligible, is the only exception.

"This should lead straight to

the Hall of Fame," Astros catcher Martín Maldonado said.

Baker's players presented him with a bottle of vintage Dom Pérignon champagne they signed with a gold marker to commemorate the achievement. The team toasted Baker with far more reasonably priced champagne in the clubhouse after the game.

His wife, Melissa, and a group of about 10 friends were at the ballpark. Melissa Baker smiled as she filmed her husband postgame from the stands as the big screen displayed a picture of him with the words "2K Wins" in huge white letters.

Baker's career record is 2,000-1,745 and he's the only manager in major league history to take five different teams to the postseason.

He collected 840 wins in 10 years with the Giants, 322 in four seasons with the Cubs, 509 in six years with the Reds, 192 in two

seasons with the Nationals and he has 137 in his tenure with the Astros.

"I'm just doing my job," Baker said. "I'm not that proud of myself yet."

He reached 500 wins while with the Giants in a 6-5 victory over the Phillies on June 1, 1999. His 1,000th win came on Aug. 30, 2004, while managing the Cubs to a 5-2 victory over Montreal. Win No. 1,500 came on May 9, 2012, with the Reds in a 2-1 triumph over Milwaukee.

"It's an honor to play for somebody who loves the game and loves his team and is so knowledgeable about the game of baseball and who has had such a storied career," Houston third baseman Alex Bregman said. "To be able to learn from him, play for him and just to be able to suit up with him every single day is very special and nobody in here takes that for granted."

Jeffers' three-run home run lifts streaking Twins

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Ryan Jeffers hit a tie-breaking, three-run homer in the sixth inning and the surging Minnesota Twins defeated the Baltimore Orioles 7-2 Tuesday night for their fourth straight victory.

The Twins have won 12 of 13 to move six games over .500 (15-9) and into first place in the AL Central, which does not have another team with a winning record. Minnesota has outscored the opposition 63-25 during its 13-game run, including 25-7 during its current four-game win streak.

Good hitting and solid pitching has played a part. So has the team's confidence and poise.

"You can definitely see it, and you see it everywhere you look," manager Rocco Baldelli said. "You expect someone to come through and get the job done."

Jeffers was that person on this night, immediately after the Orioles tied the game at 2 in the bottom of the fifth.

Gary Sanchez hit a one-out double off Joey Krehbiel (1-3), Trevor Larnich walked and Jeffers followed with a drive over the center-field wall. He has three home runs this season, all in his last seven games.

Yankees 9, Blue Jays 1: Aaron Judge homered and drove in three runs, Jameson Taillon allowed one run in six innings, and New York extended its streak to 11 games by winning at Toronto.

Rays 10, Athletics 7 (10): Pinch-hitter Mike Zunino tied the game with a two-run homer in the ninth inning and Yandy Diaz hit a go-ahead double in Tampa Bay's five-run 10th in a win at Oakland.

Dodgers 3, Giants 1: Chris Taylor had an early two-run single, Julio Urías pitched six scoreless innings of four-hit ball, and host Los Angeles opened its annual rivalry series against San Francisco with a win.

Mets 5-3, Braves 4-0: Carlos Carrasco dodged trouble for eight innings and Pete Alonso homered against Kyle Wright on an off night for Atlanta's breakout right-hander as host New York completed a doubleheader sweep.

In the first game, Alonso had two RBI singles as the Mets pounced early against Charlie Morton, and New York's bullpen closed out a five-hitter for a win over the Braves.

Brewers 6, Reds 3: Brandon Woodruff struck out 12 to tie his career high, Willy

Adames hit a three-run homer and host Milwaukee beat Cincinnati.

Rangers 6, Phillies 4: Mitch Garver and Jonah Heim homered and Zach Reks snapped a tie game with a two-RBI double, leading Texas to a win at Philadelphia.

Red Sox 4, Angels 0: Rafael Devers homered, Michael Wacha pitched into the sixth inning and host Boston beat Los Angeles.

Royals 7, Cardinals 1: Bobby Witt Jr. hit his first major league home run, Brad Keller pitched shutout ball into the seventh inning and Kansas City beat visiting St. Louis to end a four-game losing streak.

Diamondbacks 5, Marlins 4: Christian Walker had a home run, double and three RBIs, and Arizona held on to win at Miami.

White Sox 3, Cubs 1: Tim Anderson homered and José Abreu made two nice plays at first base, helping the White Sox beat the Cubs on a rainy, chilly night at Wrigley Field.

Nationals 10, Rockies 2: Erick Fedde pitched seven sharp innings, Josh Bell and Juan Soto homered, and Washington continued its high-scoring ways on the road with a victory over Colorado.

Morant scores 47, pulls Grizzlies even

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Ja Morant struggled to see out of his left eye after being punched going for a rebound late in the third quarter.

Determined to make up for missing a would-be winning layup at the end of Game 1, the All-Star guard proved he could still find the basket.

Morant scored 47 points to match his postseason high and carry the Memphis Grizzlies into a tie in the Western Conference semifinals with a 106-101 victory over the Golden State Warriors on Tuesday night.

He scored the last 15 points for Memphis, starting with 4:16 left. He drove and turned around a defender before hitting a 7-foot jumper with 1:42 left to put Memphis ahead to stay at 100-99. He finished with 18 in the fourth quarter all while unable to see well out of one eye.

“That loss was on my mind a lot, obviously missing that layup late,” Morant said of his miss at the end of Game 1. “But

coming into today, I told myself we needed a win, and we were going to get a win. I just took it upon myself to go out there and do that for us.”

The NBA’s Most Improved Player, who also had 47 in Game 2 against Utah last year, became only the third player in league history to have multiple 45-point games in the postseason before turning 23. The other two? LeBron James and Kobe Bryant.

“It’s not just the plays,” Memphis coach Taylor Jenkins said. “It’s just the force that he plays with, the spirit that he plays with. It’s infectious. I’ve said it since day one. Like, you know he’s going to be built for moments like this, and this is super impressive”

Ziaire William hit four threes and finished with 14 points off the bench. Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 12 points before fouling out for the third time in eight games this postseason. Brandon Clarke added 10 points.

Now the youngest team to reach the semifinal round in the

last 25 years heads to San Francisco for Game 3 on Saturday night, knowing the series will return to Memphis for Game 5 with Morant leading the way.

“Ja is a very great player,” Clarke said.

Stephen Curry finished with 27 points on 3-for-11 shooting outside the arc. Jordan Poole added 20 off the bench but was 1-for-6 from three. Andrew Wiggins had 16, going 1-for-7 from three. Klay Thompson finished with 12 points and was 2-for-12 from three. The Warriors shot just 7-for-38 from three-point range.

The Warriors, in the semifinals for the seventh time in 10 years, had their chances. Trailing 104-101, Curry passed to Green, who tossed it to Thompson, who traveled with 17 seconds left. Morant hit two free throws for the final margin.

The Grizzlies are coming off the franchise’s first series win in seven years. But the NBA’s second-youngest squad during the regular season is trying to

take Memphis past the second round, something this franchise has done only in 2013.

It didn’t get easier when Dillon Brooks, averaging 15 points this postseason and whose job was defending Curry, was ejected with 9:08 left in the first quarter after hitting Warriors guard Gary Payton II across the head. Payton went for X-rays that showed a broken left elbow. He will have an MRI on Wednesday.

Golden State coach Steve Kerr said playoff basketball is expected to be physical, but called Brooks’ foul “dirty.”

“Dillon Brooks broke the code,” Kerr said. “That’s how I see it.”

Draymond Green, ejected from Game 1 for his own Flagrant 2, went down a couple of minutes later. He went to the locker room, flashing the middle digit on each hand at the fans. He returned for the second quarter after getting stitches for a cut at his right eye that was nearly swollen shut by halftime.

Brown gets hot, helps Celtics tie series with Bucks

Associated Press

BOSTON — There was a moment during the Celtics’ series-opening loss to the Bucks when it seemed as if Jaylen Brown would never make a shot.

Early in Game 2, it felt like he might not miss.

Brown scored 25 of his 30 points in the first half, and Boston beat Milwaukee 109-86 on Tuesday night to even the Eastern Conference semifinals at one game apiece.

“It’s the playoffs. That’s it,” Brown said. “We can’t let one game kind of dictate how this series goes. We wanted to be aggressive from the gate.”

Brown shook off a dismal shooting night in Game 1, going 9-for-10 in the first half, including 5-for-5 from the three-point line. Jayson Tatum added 19 points and eight assists. Grant Williams finished with 21 points. Al Horford had 14 points and 11 rebounds.

“We wanted to come and play like our season was on the line and we did,” Brown said.

The series doesn’t resume until Game 3 on Saturday in Milwaukee.

Boston finished 20-for-43 from beyond the arc and scored 24 points off 16 Milwaukee turnovers.

“We wanted to match their physicality and punch back tonight,” Celtics coach Ime Udoka said. “A big message was show them who we are.”

They did that.

The Celtics played without Defensive Player of the Year Marcus Smart after he was ruled out before the game with a bruised right thigh he sustained in Game 1. Derrick White took his place in the starting lineup, making his first start in a playoff game since 2019 when he was with San Antonio.

“The ship’s got to keep going. Everybody

got to do a little bit more,” Tatum said.

Even without Smart, the Celtics clamped down on Giannis Antetokounmpo after his triple-double in the series opener, limiting him to 28 points — mostly in the third quarter — nine rebounds and seven assists. Jrue Holiday added 19 points and seven assists. Bobby Portis chipped in 13 points and eight rebounds.

Antetokounmpo said the Celtics are doing a lot to make it tough for him inside.

“Strong bodies, being active, being physical — that’s pretty much it,” he said. “It’s gotten tougher to find your teammates.”

With Smart watching in street clothes from the bench, the Celtics scored the game’s first seven points on their way to taking an 18-3 lead and forcing a quick timeout by the Bucks.

Boston scored from a variety of different spots on the court during the run — attacking both at the rim and inside the paint.

Lindholm, Markstrom pace Flames' win

Associated Press

CALGARY, Alberta — One goal and a Jacob Markstrom shutout was enough for the Calgary Flames to take an early lead in their playoff series with the Dallas Stars.

Elias Lindholm scored and Markstrom recorded his second career playoff shutout as the Flames beat the Stars 1-0 Tuesday night in the opening game of their first-round series.

Lindholm scored a power-play goal early in the first period. Markstrom stopped all 16 shots he faced as Calgary earned just its second playoff win at the Saddledome since 2015.

"Even warmup was fun and I got goosebumps," Lindholm said. "The crowd was into it right away and obviously we had some good energy right away."

"I thought the first 10 or 15 minutes we played real well and the second and third, too many penalties."

Stars goalie Jake Oettinger stopped 25 of 26 shots and lost his NHL playoff debut.

Game 2 in the best-of-seven series is Thursday in Calgary. The series shifts to Dallas for Saturday's Game 3 and Monday's Game 4.

The Flames (50-21-11) topped the Pacific Division, while the Stars (46-30-6) entered the playoffs as the first wild-card

team in the Western Conference.

Calgary led 1-0 after a dominant opening period. The Flames held Dallas to three shots. The Stars' first shot on goal came at 11:05.

Both teams had to deal with the loss of a key defenseman at the end of the first period. Calgary's Rasmus Andersson and John Klingberg of Dallas were given game misconducts for fighting at the buzzer.

That tussle came after Matthew Tkachuk and Michael Raffl also threw punches at the close of the period. Tkachuk shoved Klingberg hard into the boards behind the Flames' net in the last few seconds.

Without Klingberg, their power-play quarterback, the Stars went 0-for-5 with a man advantage.

Dallas coach Rick Bowness said his team "bent a little but didn't break" over the first half of the opening period.

"I thought they were going to run us out of the rink, and they didn't," Bowness said. "We put up a good fight."

"It's clear our power play has to get clicking. That was a big issue for us. We need more pucks on the net. But the compete was there, the work ethic, everything was good."

The clubs traded chances in the third.

The Stars mustered more sustained pressure in Calgary's zone in the second period, but still trailed after 40 minutes.

A Blake Coleman goal for Calgary midway through the second period was waived off because of his interference penalty.

Stars defenseman Jani Hakanpaa was penalized for an illegal check to Coleman's head in the first period, and the Flames made the Dallas pay by scoring off the ensuing faceoff.

Lindholm won the draw and took a Tkachuk feed from the boards. Lindholm fired a wrist shot that beat Oettinger under his glove at 5:01 of the period.

"From our side, I think we can play better," Lindholm said. "It was a tight game. Both teams played good defensively, so there was not a lot going on out there, but we found a way."

"Their goalie saw the puck a lot, so we need to get more bodies to the net and create some more chaos."

Coleman, who signed with Calgary last year after winning back-to-back Stanley Cups with the Tampa Bay Lightning, went to the bench in distress after the Hakanpaa hit, but finished the period.

"I'm all right," Coleman said. "It's playoff hockey."

Caps rally past top-seeded Panthers, take Game 1

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — T.J. Oshie scored the go-ahead goal midway through the third period, Vitek Vanecsek stopped 30 shots and the Washington Capitals rallied past the top-seeded Florida Panthers 4-2 in the opener of their Eastern Conference first-round series Tuesday night.

Tom Wilson, Evgeny Kuznetsov and Lars Eller also scored for Washington, which trailed 2-1 going into the third period. Teams had been 0-39-1 against Florida in the regular season when trailing after 40 minutes, 0-22-0 when doing so on the Panthers' home ice.

The Capitals must have ignored those numbers. Kuznetsov tied the game after a Florida turnover with 11:46 left, then Oshie got behind the defense

and tapped a pass past Sergei Bobrovsky for what became the winner 2:23 later.

Eller wrapped it up with an empty-netter with 49 seconds left.

Claude Giroux and Sam Bennett scored for Florida, which has not won the opening game of a postseason series since 1997. Bobrovsky stopped 34 shots for the Presidents' Trophy-winning Panthers.

Game 2 is Thursday in Florida.

Penguins 4, Rangers 3 (3 OT): Evgeni Malkin scored on a deflection 5:58 into the third overtime, giving Pittsburgh a win at New York in Game 1 of their first-round playoff series.

Jake Guentzel scored twice and Bryan Rust had a goal and two assists for the Penguins.

Sidney Crosby also had two assists. Casey DeSmith had 48 saves before leaving the game midway through the second overtime. Louis Domingue, who appeared in only two games during the regular season, came on and had 17 saves.

On the winning goal, Malkin was positioned in front of the net when he tipped a long shot by John Marino over Rangers goalie Igor Shesterkin.

Chris Kreider had a goal and an assist, and Adam Fox and Andrew Copp also scored for New York. Mika Zibanejad had two assists. Shesterkin finished with 79 saves, second to the NHL record of 85 saves by Columbus' Joonas Korpi in the 2020 playoffs.

Avalanche 7, Predators 2: Nathan MacKinnon and Devon

Toews scored 22 seconds apart in a five-goal first period, sending host Colorado over Nashville in Game 1 of their first-round playoff series.

The five goals tied the team playoff record for a period and chased Predators backup goaltender David Rittich from the game with 4:56 remaining in the first.

Andrew Coglian, Cale Makar and Artturi Lehkonen also scored in the first. Rockies captain Gabriel Landeskog built the lead to 6-0 in the second period. MacKinnon finished with two goals and Darcy Kuemper made 23 saves.

Matt Duchene scored twice for Nashville. Rittich was replaced by Connor Ingram, who finished with 30 saves. Game 2 is Thursday in Denver.