

Ukrainians try to rebuild their cities

The Washington Post

BUCHA, Ukraine — The mere sight of a child here — wearing sunglasses, pulling a scooter, bugging his mother to buy him candy — was enough to impress Petro Trotsenko, a stall owner at a market in Bucha that reopened this past week.

Just over a month ago, the market lay bare, looted of all its wares, cut up by shrapnel. The nearby glass factory where Trotsenko, 74, worked in his younger years was being used as a torture chamber by Russian soldiers occupying this suburb of Kyiv. The bodies of 22 people from his neighborhood, summarily executed over the course of March, lay where they had fallen in the streets. Nearly every yard was filled with rubble, burned-out vehicles and makeshift graves. Nearly every family with children had fled.

Trotsenko and his wife, who hid for weeks in their basement, burned wood from the fence that surrounded their house to boil rainwater. That's how they cooked the gruel that kept them alive.

But in about the same amount of time as the Russians occupied Bucha, the city has

remade itself. The market is open, and Trotsenko has restocked. Huge divots in roads where the shells fell have been paved over. The suburban train to Kyiv is running again. Water and electricity have been largely restored. Families are returning.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said it will cost Ukraine at least \$600 billion to rebuild what has been destroyed in Bucha and across the country during the Russian invasion. But local officials and regular citizens are not waiting for some new Marshall Plan. They are cleaning up and rebuilding their cities, even as the question of when the war will end remains unanswerable.

The rebuilding effort is imbued with a sense of optimism that Ukraine will outlast Russia's assault. Volunteers are mostly carrying it out, allowing government funds to remain focused on the war.

In places where scars are still fresh, such as Bucha, or still being inflicted, like Kharkiv and other cities in eastern Ukraine, the driving force behind rebuilding is Ukrainians' determination to prove to Russia — and to themselves — that Ukraine is any-

thing but defeated.

In Kharkiv, Stas Bocharnikov, a manager at a distribution company, felt so restless to get back to normal that he could only bear one week in a bomb shelter at the beginning of the war. Since then, he has spent nearly every day wrangling volunteers to clear the debris from strike sites — work that allows for more-specialized crews to get on with the task of either demolishing or rebuilding damaged structures.

Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-most-populous city, is just 25 miles from the Russian border. For more than 70 days it has been battered by artillery and air bombardment, and most buildings in the city have at least lost their windows to blasts. But Bocharnikov now has enough volunteers that he fills buses with them, dispatching them every day to different parts of the city.

Once Bocharnikov gets the word from the local emergency services unit that an area has been cleared of cluster munitions, the teams get to work, sometimes with the booms of artillery in the background.

The risk is worth it for one simple reason, he said: "I don't want to live in crap."

Analysts: China raid on Taiwan would be 'disaster'

By **SETH ROBSON**

Stars and Stripes

An effort by Beijing to invade Taiwan could become a "huge disaster" for China if the move provoked a Western response similar to the one that followed Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, security experts believe.

"Even without a U.S. military response, I seriously question the [Chinese military's current] ability to seize and then hold the island," Ralph Cossa, president emeritus of the Pacific Forum think tank in Hawaii, recently told Stars and Stripes in an email. "Especially if the rest of the world responded similarly to how it has responded to [Rus-

sia's invasion of Ukraine], with massive amounts of military aid and equipment and severe political and economic consequences for the attacker."

China could overtake Taiwan, which Beijing regards as a rebellious province, and force reunification "in the next six years," then-Indo-Pacific Command leader Adm. Philip Davidson warned the Senate Armed Services Committee in March 2021.

But occupying the self-ruling democracy wouldn't make China much stronger, according to Lyle Goldstein, director of Asia Engagement at Defense Priorities and Visiting Professor at

Brown University.

"They would be a couple of hundred miles farther east and the Pacific is thousands of miles wide," he told Stars and Stripes by phone Saturday.

Ukraine's battlefield successes against invading Russian troops are likely having a sobering effect on Beijing, Goldstein said. Outnumbered and outgunned Ukrainian forces are using weapons, including Javelin anti-tank missiles, supplied by the United States and its allies to extract a heavy toll on Russian invaders.

"The Chinese are watching carefully," Goldstein said. "It's going to be very clear to Chi-

nese strategists that these (missile) systems like the Stinger or Javelin make a big difference."

There are indications that the U.S. and its allies would help defend the democratic territory of over 23 million if China attacks.

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen confirmed the presence of a small contingent of U.S. troops on the island on Oct. 28 and told CNN she was confident America would come to the island's defense. A week earlier, President Joe Biden said the U.S. would defend Taiwan if China attacked, although his comments were walked back by the White House.

Japan bar brawl video sparks Navy probe

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The Navy is investigating a Friday-night brawl in Yokosuka's Honcho district after a video surfaced showing five men fighting as uniformed sailors, likely shore patrol members, looked on.

In the approximately 50-second clip posted to Instagram by bar owner Kram Azonim on Friday, five men presumed to be U.S. service members throw punches outside the New Yokosuka Hotel just two blocks from the naval base's main gate.

The footage initially shows

three men yelling expletives at each other before one takes off his shirt and begins to fight the other two. Two more men get involved shortly after. The brawl continues off-screen and to the west, toward a nearby convenience store, before the video ends.

The crowd of onlookers included at least six sailors thought to be shore patrol, although their identities could not be confirmed.

Yokosuka base spokesman Randall Baucom confirmed the video's veracity in a Monday email to Stars and Stripes. Base security's Criminal Investiga-

tions Division is investigating "all U.S. Navy personnel involved in the incident," he wrote.

The U.S. Navy's shore patrol, much like other armed services' military police, are tasked with maintaining order and suppressing "any unseemly conduct" by sailors or Navy-affiliated personnel while off base, according to the Code of Federal Regulations.

Baucom said he couldn't comment on the shore patrol's policies regarding off-base fights, citing the ongoing investigation.

"The Navy takes all allega-

tions involving misconduct of our sailors, Navy civilians and family members very seriously," he said.

The Kanagawa Prefectural Police were not aware of any arrests of U.S. personnel in relation to the incident, a spokesman told Stars and Stripes by phone on Monday. It's customary in Japan for some government officials to speak to the media with giving their names.

The Honcho district, commonly referred to as "The Honch" by American sailors, often sports large weekend crowds due to a high concentration of bars in the area.

DOD covers cost to move troops' empty gun safes

By ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

Service members of all branches now have the option to keep their guns in their in-home storage without cutting into their household goods weight allowance during moves, the Defense Department announced.

The Joint Travel Regulations were amended last week to allow empty gun safes up to 500 pounds in combined weight at no personal cost to military members go-

ing through a permanent change of station.

The update is part of a larger effort by the military to reduce gun accidents, suicide and domestic violence by incentivizing safe storage options for firearms, a DOD statement Wednesday said.

Weight allowances vary from 5,000 pounds to 18,000 pounds and are based on a service member's rank and number of dependents. Many weapons storage lockers weigh hundreds of

pounds or more, and that number previously counted against the weight a family could move at government expense.

The goal of the revision is to stop service members from second-guessing their household goods weight when shopping for gun storage solutions.

According to a Pentagon announcement, Air Force Undersecretary Gina Ortiz Jones sought the change and asked that it be implemented in April, which is

designated as the month of the military child, because of the importance of gun safes for child safety.

A rise in the number of child injuries and deaths in the United States is attributed to failures to secure loaded guns, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention mortality data. The CDC found that firearms were the leading cause of death among U.S. children and adolescents in 2020.

Judge drops \$25M suit against Baldwin by late Marine's family

Syracuse.com

NBC reported a Wyoming judge has dismissed a \$25 million defamation suit against Alec Baldwin filed by the family of a slain U.S. Marine.

According to the lawsuit, Baldwin sent a \$5,000 check to the sister of Lance Cpl. Rylee McCollum, one of 13 Marines killed outside of Afghanistan's airport in August as the United States sought to evacuate Americans during the Taliban

takeover, for his widow, Jienah Crayton, and their baby. In January, he accused Roice McCollum of participating in the Capitol riots, calling her an "insurrectionist" and posting photos on Instagram showing her in a "Make America Great" again hat at the Washington Monument on Jan. 6, 2021.

"When I sent the \$ for your late brother, out of real respect for his service to this country,

I didn't know you were a January 6th rioter," Baldwin wrote on Instagram.

Roice reportedly admitted in court documents that she attended a protest in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 6, but said she did not participate in the riots and was cleared after an interview with the FBI. She said that she and other family members received "hostile, aggressive, hateful" messages after Baldwin's "false" and "ir-

responsible, vindictive" comments, demanding at least \$25 million in damages for alleged defamation, invasion of privacy, negligence and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

According to NBC, the federal judge did not rule on the merits of the suit, but said Wyoming, where McCollum's family lived, lacked jurisdiction. An attorney for the McCollum family said the lawsuit will be refiled elsewhere.

Russian forces press on in Ukraine's south

Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine — Russian President Vladimir Putin used his country's biggest patriotic holiday Monday to again justify his war in Ukraine, but did not declare even a limited victory or signal where the conflict is headed as his forces pressed their offensive with few signs of progress.

The Russian leader oversaw a Victory Day parade on Moscow's Red Square, with troops marching in formation and military hardware on display to celebrate the Soviet Union's role in the 1945 defeat of Nazi Germany.

But his much-anticipated speech offered no new insights into how he intends to salvage the grinding war, and he instead stuck to allegations that Ukraine posed a threat to Russia, even though Moscow's nuclear-armed forces are far superior in number

and firepower.

"The danger was rising by the day," Putin said. "Russia has given a preemptive response to aggression. It was forced, timely and the only correct decision."

He steered clear of battlefield specifics, failing to mention the potentially pivotal battle for the vital southern port of Mariupol and not even uttering the word "Ukraine."

On the ground, meanwhile, intense fighting raged in Ukraine's east, the vital Black Sea port of Odesa in the south came under bombardment again, and Russian forces sought to finish off the Ukrainian defenders making their last stand at a steel plant in Mariupol.

In Washington on Monday, the United States announced it was suspending 25% import taxes on Ukraine's steel in a show of support for the country's belea-

guered economy during the Russian invasion.

The Commerce Department said it would withdraw the tariffs for a year. Ukraine accounts for only about 1% of U.S. steel exports.

Some of the country's largest steel communities have been among those hardest hit during the war, including the Mariupol mill that's the only part of the strategically important port city not under Russian control.

Putin has long bristled at NATO's creep eastward into former Soviet republics, and argued Monday that Russia had to invade Ukraine before an "inevitable" clash. Ukrainian leaders and their Western backers have denied that Kyiv or NATO posed any threat.

As Putin laid a wreath in Moscow, air raid sirens echoed again in the Ukrainian capital. But Uk-

rainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy declared in his own Victory Day address that his country would eventually defeat the Russians.

"Very soon there will be two Victory Days in Ukraine," he said in a video. He added: "We are fighting for freedom, for our children, and therefore we will win."

Russia has about 97 battalion tactical groups in Ukraine, largely in the east and the south, a slight increase over last week, according to a senior U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the Pentagon's assessment. Each unit has roughly 1,000 troops, according to the Pentagon.

The official said that overall, the Russian effort in the Donbas hasn't achieved any significant progress in recent days and continues to face stiff resistance from Ukrainian forces.

'Everything shook': Last civilians leave steel mill

Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine — Pale and drawn, the last civilians sheltering in bunkers beneath a sprawling steel mill in the decimated Ukrainian port city of Mariupol arrived late Sunday night in Zaporizhzhia, the first major Ukrainian city beyond the frontlines.

The shattered survivors spoke of constant shelling, dwindling food, ubiquitous mold — and using hand sanitizer for cooking fuel.

Ten buses slowly pulled into Zaporizhzhia's deserted streets under darkness, carrying 174 evacuees from the Mariupol area. They included 31 of the 51 civilians evacuated in the last day from the Azovstal steel mill, where an estimated 2,000 Ukrainian fighters are making what appears to be their last stand. Both Ukrainian and Russian officials have said these civilians are the

last noncombatants from the industrial complex.

"It was terrible in the bunkers," said 69-year-old Lyubov Andropova, who had been in Azovstal since March 10. "Water would run down from the ceilings. There was mold everywhere. We were worried for the children, for their lungs."

The shelling was constant and there was fear "that our bunker would collapse," she said. "Everything shook, we didn't go out."

Despite the destruction of Mariupol, 18 of the 51 people evacuated from Azovstal chose to remain in the city, said United Nations officials, who were involved in securing safe passage for the evacuees. But several hundred more who wanted to join the evacuation convoy from other areas held by Russian forces had to stay behind after Russia and Ukraine failed to reach an agreement on their evacuation.

Zelenskyy toasts Patron, a bomb-sniffing Jack Russell

The Washington Post

Patron wagged his tail excitedly and barked as he was awarded a medal by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Sunday for his bomb-detection services.

The pint-size Jack Russell terrier has won hearts at home and abroad since the start of Russia's invasion for his role sniffing out land mines and educating children about the dangers posed by the explosives, which Russian troops scattered along their path of retreat from northern Ukraine.

Describing him as a "small but very famous sapper," Zelenskyy said in a statement after the ceremony that teaching children to avoid land mines "is now one of the most urgent tasks."

Dogs have been used for demining since World War II because of their ability to detect ordnance faster than humans.

Experts have said they're especially effective in conflict zones, where large amounts of debris impede standard metal detectors.

A dog's sense of smell is several times better than that of a human, and studies have suggested they're able to sniff out the explosive substances contained in land mines, as well as elements of the metal or plastic housing.

Patron — whose name means "cartridge" in Ukrainian, in reference to firearms — has also become a powerful patriotic symbol for Kyiv, attracting a viral following on social media and inspiring a range of artwork, cartoons and even knit toys. Zelenskyy on Sunday credited him with detecting more than 200 explosives since Russia's Feb. 24 invasion — an assertion The Washington Post could not immediately verify.

Jan. 6 panel debates calling Trump, Pence

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection has interviewed nearly 1,000 people. But the nine-member panel has yet to talk to the two most prominent players in that day's events — former President Donald Trump and former Vice President Mike Pence.

As the investigation winds down and the panel plans a series of hearings in June, members of the committee are debating whether to call the two men, whose conflict over whether to certify Joe Biden's 2020 presidential election win was at the center of the attack. Trump

pressured Pence for days, if not weeks, to use his ceremonial role presiding over the Jan. 6 count to try to block or delay Biden's certification. Pence refused to do so, and rioters who broke into the building that day called for his hanging.

There are reasons to call either or both of them. The committee wants to be as thorough as possible, and critics are sure to pounce if they don't even try. But some lawmakers on the panel have argued that they've obtained all the information they need without Trump and Pence.

Nearly a year into their wide-ranging investigation into the worst attack on the Capitol in

more than two centuries, the House committee has interviewed hundreds of witnesses and received more than 100,000 pages of documents. Interviews have been conducted out of the public eye in obscure federal office buildings and private Zoom sessions.

The Democratic chairman, Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, said in early April that the committee has been able to validate a lot of the statements attributed to Trump and Pence without their testimony. He said at that time there was "no effort on the part of the committee" to call Pence, though there have been discussions

since then about potentially doing so.

Speaking about Pence, Thompson said the panel had "initially thought it would be important" to call him, but "there are a lot of things on that day we know — we know the people who tried to get him to change his mind about the count and all of that, so what is it we need?"

A lot of the people they are interviewing, Thompson added, "are people we didn't have on the original list."

The panel, comprised of seven Democrats and two Republicans, has said that the evidence it has compiled is enough to link Trump to a federal crime.

Taliban divisions deepen as Afghan women defy veil edict

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Arooza was furious and afraid, keeping her eyes open for Taliban on patrol as she and a friend shopped Sunday in Kabul's Macroyan neighborhood.

The math teacher was fearful her large shawl, wrapped tight around her head, and sweeping pale brown coat would not satisfy the latest decree by the country's religiously driven Taliban government. After all, more than just her eyes were showing. Her face was visible.

Arooza, who asked to be identified by just one name to avoid attracting attention, wasn't wearing the all-encompassing burqa preferred by the Taliban, who on Saturday issued a new dress code for women appearing in public. The edict said only a woman's eyes should be visible.

The decree by the Taliban's hardline leader Hibaitullah Akhunzada even suggested

women shouldn't leave their homes unless necessary and outlines a series of punishments for male relatives of women violating the code.

It was a major blow to the rights of women in Afghanistan, who for two decades had been living with relative freedom before the Taliban takeover last August — when U.S. and other foreign forces withdrew in the chaotic end to a 20-year war.

A reclusive leader, Akhunzada rarely travels outside southern Kandahar, the traditional Taliban heartland. He favors the harsh elements of the group's previous time in power, in the 1990s, when girls and women were largely barred from school, work and public life.

Like Taliban founder Mullah Mohammad Omar, Akhunzada imposes a strict brand of Islam that marries religion with ancient tribal traditions, often blurring the two.

The Taliban have been divided between

pragmatists and hardliners, as they struggle to transition from an insurgency to a governing body. Meanwhile, their government has been dealing with a worsening economic crisis. Taliban efforts to win recognition and aid from Western nations have also floundered, largely because they have not formed a more representative government, and restricted the rights of girls and women.

Until now, hard-liners and pragmatists in the movement have avoided open confrontation.

Torek Farhadi, a former government adviser, said he believes Taliban leaders have opted not to spar in public because they fear any perception of divisions could undermine their rule.

"The leadership does not see eye to eye on a number of matters but they all know that if they don't keep it together, everything might fall apart," Farhadi said. "In that case, they might start clashes with each other."

Sri Lankan prime minister resigns after weeks of protests

Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — An official said Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa has resigned following weeks of protests demanding that he and his brother, the president, step down over the country's

worst economic crisis in decades.

An aide to the prime minister, Wijayananda Herath, confirmed Rajapaksa gave a letter of resignation to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

The resignation follows at-

tacks by Rajapaksa supporters on peaceful protesters demanding that the brothers leave office.

The resignation of the prime minister means the entire Cabinet is dissolved, paving the way for a new government.

Sri Lanka is near bankruptcy and has suspended repayments of its foreign loans. A severe foreign currency shortage has resulted in acute shortages of imported essentials such as fuel, cooking gas and medicine.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police: Man sought after woman strangled on bus

AZ PHOENIX — Phoenix police have asked the public for help in locating a man sought in the strangulation death of a woman who was found not breathing on a city bus, Phoenix police said.

Police identified Joshua Bagley, 26, as a suspect in the death Friday of Diane Craig, 41, who died at a hospital after being found on a bus at about 8 a.m. with signs of strangulation.

“Throughout the course of the investigation, detectives were able to gather enough evidence to name Joshua Bagley a suspect in her death. Bagley has not been located,” a police statement said.

No additional information was released.

Large black bear eludes capture in western area

WA ISSAQUAH — Wildlife officials in Washington trying to capture a 300-pound black bear for two years said his GPS collar that was supposed to fall off hasn’t and could be too tight.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife also told The Seattle Times in a story on Friday that the GPS collar stopped working.

Officials want to capture the bear because they said he’s too comfortable around homes in Issaquah and gets into garbage.

“This can be unfortunate, as it’s not the bear’s fault that garbage or bird feeders were left out and served as attractants,” said department spokesman Chase Gunnell.

The agency has received more than 50 tips from the public in re-

cent weeks but so far hasn’t captured the bruin. Officials said they haven’t decided what to do with the bear if they capture him, but will check if there’s any injury or infection from the collar.

Drone technology used to help fight mosquitoes

LA SHREVEPORT — Drones are being used to help fight mosquitoes in north Louisiana.

The Caddo Parish Animal Services and Mosquito Control fights a mosquito population for over 900 square miles, using eight mosquito trucks to respond across the entire parish. This year, it is introducing new, state-of-the-art drone technology to assist in mosquito eradication efforts.

The drones will spray insecticide into hard-to-reach areas in the parish to kill mosquito larvae and keep the population under control before the breeding season kicks into high gear in the summer months, The Times reported.

Osprey nest moved away from live wires for safety

IN AVILLA — A pair of ospreys that nested near live electrical lines atop a northern Indiana utility pole now have a safer home thanks to a utility crew that moved their nest.

Indiana Michigan Power workers installed a new, stand-alone pole Thursday near the nest the raptors had built on a utility pole inches from live electrical lines in the Noble County town of Avilla. The crew then carefully moved the ospreys’ nest to the new pole, which was outfitted with a nest support platform and

wooden perches for the lovebirds.

By Friday, the nesting pair had accepted their new nesting site, which is not far from their original nesting location, WPTA-TV reported.

4 hurt in San Francisco after car drives off cliff

CA SAN FRANCISCO — Four people were injured when their car plummeted about 120 feet off a San Francisco cliff in the pre-dawn darkness Friday, authorities said.

Two of the people were critically injured and two were stable, the San Francisco Fire Department said in a statement. Fire officials rescued the four and transported them to a hospital after responding to a report at 3 a.m. that a vehicle had driven over a cliff near the famed Sutro Baths.

It was unclear what caused the accident, the San Francisco Police Department said. It identified the four people as a 23-year-old man and three females ages 17, 19 and 22.

Pictures taken by rescuers showed a dark sedan with its front end crashed into the sandy hillside near the bottom of the cliff on the western edge of San Francisco. Police said in a statement that the car came to a rest about 120 feet from the roadway above.

Man admits to theft of \$1.8M from company

MD BALTIMORE — A man has pleaded guilty to the theft of more than \$1.8 million from the Maryland company where he worked, according to a federal prosecutor.

Duane G. Larmore, 47, of Salisbury, Md., pleaded guilty on Friday to wire fraud conspiracy and

to aggravated identity theft, said U.S. Attorney Erek Barron in a news release.

Larmore’s plea agreement said that from mid-September 2016 through about March 2020, Larmore conspired with others to steal more than \$1.8 million from Shore Appliance Connection, where he was an employee in charge of maintaining the books and records.

Prosecutors said Larmore and his co-conspirators stole over \$1 million from the business for their own purposes, including to make investments and to pay business expenses for the co-conspirator’s business without the knowledge and consent of the store owners.

Lincoln Memorial art exhibit honors 100 years

MA STOCKBRIDGE — An art exhibit featuring multimedia works and artifacts inspired by the iconic seated Abraham Lincoln sculpture in Washington opened Saturday at the Norman Rockwell Museum to commemorate the memorial’s 100th anniversary.

The museum is located in Stockbridge, the same small Massachusetts town where Lincoln Memorial sculptor Daniel Chester French’s studio, Chesterwood, is located. The museum and studio worked together on the Lincoln Memorial Illustrated exhibit.

At least eight works of the celebrated American illustrator Norman Rockwell featured the Civil War-era president. A couple of those pieces, including the illustration “Lincoln for the Defense” which shows the former president in his early years as a lawyer, are included in the exhibit.

— From wire reports

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Embiid, Harden drive 76ers past Heat

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — James Harden took a sensational step forward in the postseason for the Philadelphia 76ers with step-back threes that rekindled his dominant form. Joel Embiid is playing better by the game, and the MVP finalist might have his best basketball ahead.

Embiid is ready. So is Harden. And if the Miami Heat can't figure out The Mask and The Beard, the next thing they face could be the offseason.

"I don't think we've played our best basketball," Embiid said.

Harden scored 31 points, Embiid had 24 points and 11 rebounds and the 76ers beat the Heat 116-108 on Sunday night in Game 4 to even the Eastern Conference semifinal series.

Miami won the first two games at home with Embiid out with a right orbital fracture and mild concussion. Philadelphia won Games 3 and 4 at home with Embiid and his mask in the lineup.

Game 5 is Tuesday night in Miami.

Oh yeah, this time Embiid is along for the ride. No wonder the 76ers feel better about their chances on this trip to Florida.

"Joel's going to be able to play," coach Doc Rivers said, laughing.

The Heat pecked away at the lead and got within five until Harden sank his fifth three-pointer of the game with three minutes left. Harden crushed Miami on catch-and-shoot

threes and hit one clutch shot after another for 16 points in the fourth. He at last played in the postseason like the three-time scoring champion Philadelphia needed when it traded for him in February.

"Nothing really changed. I just made shots," Harden said.

Harden drilled a step-back three for a 114-103 lead that sent the crowd into a frenzy — and the Sixers off to Miami with new life. He finished with six threes, nine assists and seven rebounds.

"It's just James being James," Rivers said. "I felt like he was going to have a big game tonight. You can just sense it."

Jimmy Butler scored 40 points on 13-for-20 shooting from the floor, 12-for-13 free throws and nearly one-man willed the Heat to victory. Miami, which shot 38% on threes during the season, missed 28 of 35 three-pointers.

"I thought we had some really good looks. We just missed them," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said.

Embiid worked out the Game 3 cobwebs and returned to the dominant form that earned him seasonlong "MVP!" chants from the Philly diehards. His first quarter was about as good as it gets for the center. He made 5 of 6 shots, including a three-pointer, and scored 15 points to put the Sixers ahead. Worn out in Game 3 from days of inactivity because of the concussion, Embiid played all 12 minutes in the quarter.

Here's a scary thought for Miami.

"We haven't seen the best of Joel in this series yet," Rivers said. "He's still trying to figure out how to play with that mask sliding all over his face."

After a scoreless first quarter, Harden followed Embiid's hot start and scored 13 in the second. He missed his first four shots of the game until he buried a three and then got rolling. He scored a bucket in transition during a 15-2 run and then waved his arms toward the crowd, calling on them to get louder.

Philadelphia shot 64% from the floor in the half. But 10 turnovers — that the Heat converted into 13 points — kept the Sixers from stretching the lead well into double digits. They made nine threes in the half to Miami's four.

Butler kept the Heat in the game with six straight points. He hit a layup, was nailed in the face by Embiid — who was whistled for a flagrant foul, then helped his former teammate to his feet — and Butler made the free throw. Butler hit a three off the possession and the Heat pulled to 74-70.

Butler drew Embiid's third foul with 1:37 left in the third and converted the three-point play that pulled Miami within four. Butler trolled Embiid on Instagram after Philadelphia posted a picture of him in the mask and quoted a line from "The Dark Knight Rises."

"(Expletive) yo mask," Butler wrote.

Doncic, Mavericks beat foul-plagued Paul, Suns

Associated Press

DALLAS — Luka Doncic tumbled toward the baseline after getting bumped by Chris Paul just before the halftime buzzer, the apprentice showing he has watched one of the masters at drawing fouls.

The trick spurred a critical fourth foul on Paul, setting up the Dallas Mavericks to get even in the Western Conference semifinals.

Doncic scored 26 points while helping Dallas take advantage of foul trouble for Paul to beat the Phoenix Suns 111-101 on Sunday for a 2-2 series tie.

"I saw he was going for the rebound and I was surprised,"

Doncic said. "He said to me, 'Did I push you that hard?' I said, 'No, not that hard. But it was a smart play.' And he said, 'Yeah, I know.'"

Paul ended up being out of Game 4 early in the fourth quarter, the period when he often dominated the Mavericks during an 11-game winning streak that ended with consecutive home victories for Dallas. Game 5 is Tuesday night in Phoenix.

Dorian Finney-Smith scored a playoff career-high 24 points on the most three-pointers he's had, regular season or playoffs. He was 8 of 12 from deep, including consecutive threes for a 14-point lead midway through

the fourth.

The Mavs matched their 20 threes (20 of 44) from a Mother's Day rout of the Los Angeles Lakers in 2011, a win that completed a sweep in the second round on the way to the championship. Dallas is playing beyond the first round for the first time since then.

Devin Booker scored 35 points for the Suns, who dropped two straight on the road with a 2-0 lead just as they did in last year's NBA Finals. Milwaukee won the last four to take the title. Top-seeded Phoenix lost consecutive games for the first time in the playoffs.

"Last year was a learning ex-

perience for us," Booker said. "We went to six games last year with the Lakers, six games with the Clippers, six with the Bucks, six with New Orleans (this year). We understand that it's a series. It's the playoffs for a reason."

Turnovers were the story with Paul in the Mavs' Game 3 win, when he had the most in any half of his playoff career with seven before halftime.

This time it was fouls, and it started when coach Monty Williams put him back in the game with three in the final minute of the first half. Williams had taken Paul out after his third at the 1:52 mark.

Marchand, Bruins top Canes, tie series

Associated Press

BOSTON—Brad Marchand had two goals and three assists, including the tiebreaker early in the third period, and the Boston Bruins beat the Carolina Hurricanes 5-2 on Sunday to even their first-round playoff series at two games apiece.

Boston was playing without its top two defenseman after Charlie McAvoy was a last-minute scratch and joined Hampus Lindholm on the sideline, but the Bruins twice rallied for their second straight playoff win.

Patrice Bergeron had a goal and two assists, and David Pastrnak had one of each for Boston. Rookie Jeremy Swayman made 23 saves.

Brett Pesce and Jordan Staal scored for Carolina, and Antti Raanta returned to stop 23 shots for the Metropolitan Division champions.

Game 5 of the best-of-seven series is Tuesday night in Carolina, and Game 6 will be in Boston on Thursday.

Lightning 7, Maple Leafs 3: Ross Colton scored twice, Andrei Vasilevskiy had 22 saves and host Tampa Bay got off to a fast

start and evened the first-round playoff series.

Steven Stamkos, Pierre Edouard Bellemare and Pat Maroon scored in the first eight minutes against Game 3 star Jack Campbell in the opening period. Corey Perry and Ondrej Palat also scored, and Brandon Hagel and Nikita Kucherov each had two assists for the Lightning.

Vasilevskiy improved to 17-0 in games following a playoff loss over the past three post-seasons for the two-time defending Stanley Cup champions.

William Nylander scored twice and Jake Muzzin also had a goal for the Maple Leafs. Campbell gave up five goals on 16 shots before being replaced in the second period by Erik Kallgren, who stopped all 10 shots he faced.

Game 5 is Tuesday night in Toronto.

Kings 4, Oilers 0: Jonathan Quick tried to make a couple of his 31 saves without his glove during a masterful performance, Carl Grundstrom scored two third-period goals and host Los Angeles evened the first-round playoff series.

After Trevor Moore and Troy Stecher scored in the first period, Quick earned his 10th career playoff shutout while the Kings firmly shut down Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl. Los Angeles earned its first playoff victory on home ice since the club raised the Stanley Cup for the second time in 2014.

Mike Smith stopped 42 shots for the Oilers.

Game 5 is Tuesday night in Edmonton, with Game 6 back in Los Angeles on Thursday.

Blues 5, Wild 2: Jordan Kyrrou and David Perron each scored twice, Jordan Binnington made 28 saves in his first start this post-season and host St. Louis evened the best-of-seven Western Conference series at two games apiece.

Ryan O'Reilly added a goal and two assists, and Perron also had an assist for the Blues.

Kirill Kaprizov and Matt Boldy scored for Minnesota. Marc-Andre Fleury made 29 saves.

Game 5 is Tuesday night at St. Paul, Minn., before returning to St. Louis for Game 6 on Thursday.

Logano bumps Byron to end slump

Associated Press

DARLINGTON, S.C. — After William Byron squeezed him against the wall on a final restart, Joey Logano knew what he'd do if he got the chance to regain the lead.

Logano bumped Byron from behind on the next-to-last lap to win at Darlington Raceway on Sunday. Byron hit the wall in turn three and Logano went on to his first win of the season and first at the track "Too Tough To Tame."

"There's something to be said for an angry race car driver," said Logano, who broke a 40-race winless drought.

Logano, who started from the pole, had one of the strongest cars all day and was in front coming out of the pits before a restart with 25 laps left. But Byron, who started low, forced Logano into the wall and out of the lead.

"If someone's going to be willing to do that to you, then the gloves are off," Logano said.

Byron was not happy with the maneuver, calling Logano an "idiot" and a "moron" who has raced others questionably throughout his career.

The fans at Darlington let the Team Penske driver know what they thought, booing the 2018 NASCAR champion when he

got out of his car.

"I've been called a lot of things, a lot worse than moron," Logano said.

Byron, who signed a contract extension with Hendrick Motorsports, seemed as if he'd keep up his team's dominant season over the final laps. Instead, Logano broke a 40-race winless drought.

Tyler Reddick was second followed by Justin Haley, Kevin Harvick, Chase Elliott, Christopher Bell, Michael McDowell, Ricky Stenhouse Jr., Austin Dillon and Daniel Suarez.

Byron fell to 13th. He said the restart was just close racing and that he didn't deserve a hard hit on the rear bumper so close to the end.

"He slammed me so hard, it knocked all the right side off the car and sent me into the corner," Byron said. "He's just a moron. He can't win a race, so he does it that way."

Logano led 108 of the 293 laps and reached victory lane for the first time since winning on the dirt at Bristol in 2021.

It was the first time the new Next Gen car took on NASCAR's oldest superspeedway and the results were mixed. The racing was strong, although several of the top competitors didn't last to the end.

Verstappen cruises to win first Miami GP

Associated Press

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. — His first day racing around the new Formula One circuit in Miami was absolutely horrible. Then he made a mistake in qualifying that cost him a spot on the front row.

By the time race day rolled around, Max Verstappen had knocked it all out of his system. Verstappen was explosive at the start Sunday and used a pair of aggressive passes to get past Ferrari and current championship leader Charles Leclerc. Once out front, the reigning world champion controlled the inaugural Miami Grand Prix for his third win in five races to start the season.

"We still have a few issues we have to solve," Verstappen said. "I mean, we are quick, but my Friday was terrible, which is not great. But there's a lot of potential."

The 23rd win of the Dutchman's career sliced eight points off Leclerc's lead in the standings. Verstappen now trails him by 19 points headed into the Spanish Grand Prix in two weeks.

Ohtani, Rendon lift Angels past Nats

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Shohei Ohtani hit a tying double in the ninth inning, Anthony Rendon followed with a game-ending single against his former team and the Los Angeles Angels beat the Washington Nationals 5-4 on Sunday.

The Angels trailed 4-2 going into the ninth. Luis Rengifo drew a one-out walk and advanced to third on Taylor Ward's hit. Mike Trout struck out, but Ohtani lined a two-run double off Tanner Rainey (0-1). The reigning AL MVP had been 1-for-11 during the series.

Rendon then lined a single to center field and Ohtani slid to avoid Victor Robles' throw home.

Jack Mayfield also drove in two runs for the Angels. Jaime Barria (1-0) got the win.

"What's so fun about this team and this offense is that we can ignite at anytime," Rendon said.

Yankees 2, Rangers 1; Rangers 4, Yankees 2: Brad Miller snapped Michael King's impressive scoreless streak with a pinch-hit, two-run homer in the seventh inning that lifted Texas at New York to salvage a doubleheader split.

The Yankees took the opener 2-1 on Gleyber Torres' game-ending homer leading in the ninth. New York had three hits in the nightcap after getting just five in the early game.

King (2-1) had pitched 14⅓ consecutive innings without allowing a run before Miller smacked a fastball out to center field for a two-run lead. The right-hander hadn't given up a run since an RBI double by Toronto's George Springer on April 11.

Phillies 3, Mets 2; Mets 6, Phillies 1: Pete Alonso homered twice, had three hits and drove in five runs to lead New York at Philadelphia in the second game to salvage a doubleheader split.

Chris Bassitt (4-2) allowed one run in 5⅔ innings to help the NL East leaders take two of three in a rain-shortened series. Jean Segura homered for the Phillies.

In the opener, Bryce Harper homered again off Max Scherzer and Philadelphia became the first team to beat the new Mets ace, snapping a four-game skid.

Dodgers 7, Cubs 1: Walker Buehler pitched seven sparkling innings in his 100th career start, and Los Angeles won at sliding Chicago for its sixth consecutive victory.

Buehler (4-1) improved to 3-0 with a 0.43 ERA over his last three outings. The right-hander allowed one run and four hits, struck

out six and walked two.

Cody Bellinger had three hits for the Dodgers. The Cubs, who lost for the 14th time in 17 games, managed just three runs in the three-game sweep by the Dodgers.

Astros 5, Tigers 0: Aledmys Díaz hit a grand slam and Jake Odorizzi combined with two relievers on a one-hitter as host Houston finished a four-game sweep of Detroit for its seventh straight win.

Díaz's second home run of the season came in the third inning off reliever Drew Hutchison (0-3). Alex Bregman later added a solo homer off Joe Jimenez.

The Astros completed a 7-0 homestand against Seattle and Detroit.

Odorizzi (3-2) allowed one hit in five innings, striking out five. Cristian Javier struck out five in three innings and Hector Neris worked the ninth.

White Sox 3, Red Sox 2: Dallas Keuchel halted his three-start losing streak with six solid innings, José Abreu hit a two-run double and Chicago won at Boston for its season-high sixth straight victory.

Leury García added an RBI single for the White Sox (14-13), who moved over .500 for the first time since April 20 and completed a 5-0 road trip, including three wins at Fenway Park.

Christian Vázquez had an RBI single for the Red Sox (10-19), who have lost a season-worst five straight and 14 of 18.

Guardians 4, Blue Jays 3: Franmil Reyes lumbered home on Óscar Mercado's tie-breaking, two-out single in the eighth inning to lift host Cleveland over Toronto.

The Blue Jays took a 3-2 lead into the eighth, but Owen Miller's one-out homer off Tim Mayza tied it.

Adam Cimber (4-2) relieved with two outs. He allowed Reyes' single and walked Andrés Giménez before Mercado came through.

Twins 4, Athletics 3: Jorge Polanco delivered another key hit and host Minnesota's bullpen combined for 6⅔ shutout innings to send Oakland to its ninth consecutive defeat.

The Twins have swept three of their last five series and won 14 of 17 since beginning the season 4-8.

Polanco, who homered in a 1-0 win Saturday night, hit a two-run single in the third inning for a 4-3 lead.

Mariners 2, Rays 1 (10): Abraham Toro hit a tying homer in the ninth inning, Ty France singled home the winning run in the 10th and host Seattle edged Tampa Bay to snap a six-game losing streak.

Manuel Margot hit his third home run of the series for the Rays, who had won six straight overall and eight in a row on the road.

Padres 3, Marlins 2: Pinch-hitter Jorge Alfaro connected for a three-run homer with two outs in the ninth inning against his former team to lift host San Diego over Miami.

Alfaro went deep to center field on the first pitch he saw from Cole Sulser (0-1), sending Petco Park into a frenzy and earning him a curtain call. He was purchased from the Marlins for cash in December.

Giants 4, Cardinals 3: Mike Yastrzemski hit a tiebreaking home run into McCovey Cove in the sixth inning, and host San Francisco only struck out once while beating St. Louis.

Giants closer Camilo Doval whiffed slugger Nolan Arenado with the potential tying run on second base for his fifth save.

Royals 6, Orioles 4, Orioles 4, Royals 2: Bruce Zimmermann threw six effective innings and host Baltimore beat Kansas City 4-2 in the second game to earn a doubleheader split.

The Royals won the opener 6-4 when Michael A. Taylor hit a tiebreaking single in the ninth after a pair of two-out errors by the Orioles.

Braves 9, Brewers 2: Adam Duvall and William Contreras homered to help Charlie Morton win for the first time in five starts as host Atlanta cranked up its bats against Milwaukee.

Matt Olson hit a two-run double during a four-run second inning. Duvall homered in the third off starter Aaron Ashby (0-3), and Contreras added a three-run drive in the fifth off Jandel Gustave.

Diamondbacks 4, Rockies 0: Zac Gallen pitched seven crisp innings, Jose Herrera hit a two-run double for his first big league RBIs and host Arizona blanked Colorado.

Ketel Marte had three hits to boost his batting average to .206 and the Diamondbacks took advantage of another shaky start by Germán Márquez (0-3) to win for the ninth time in 12 games.

Reds 7, Pirates 3: Colin Moran hit a grand slam and a two-run homer against his former team, powering host Cincinnati past Pittsburgh.

Tyler Mahle pitched five solid innings and the Reds rallied from a 2-0 deficit in the sixth. Cincinnati took two of three against the Pirates to win a series for the first time this season, improving the majors' worst record to 5-23.