

Wins boost Ukraine; Russia stalling

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Almost three months after Russia shocked the world by invading Ukraine, its military faced a bogged-down war, the prospect of a bigger NATO and an opponent buoyed Sunday by its wins on and off the battlefield.

Finland decided to seek NATO membership as top diplomats from the Western alliance met in Berlin. The leaders of the militarily neutral country said the invasion had changed Europe's security landscape — though NATO's chief declared that "Russia's war in Ukraine is not going as Moscow had planned.

"Ukraine can win this war," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said, adding that the alliance must continue to give the country military support.

Several hours later, Sweden's governing party also endorsed joining NATO, a move that could lead to the country's application within days.

The two nonaligned Nordic nations becoming part of the alliance would represent an affront to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has cited NATO's post-Cold War

expansion in Eastern Europe as a threat to Russia. NATO has said it is a purely defensive alliance.

While Moscow lost ground on the diplomatic front, Russian forces failed to make territorial gains in eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine said it held off Russian offensives Sunday in the country's east, and Western military officials said the campaign Moscow launched there after its forces failed to seize Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, had slowed to a snail's pace.

Ukraine, meanwhile, celebrated a morale-boosting victory in the Eurovision Song Contest. The folk-rap ensemble Kalush Orchestra won the glitzy pan-European competition with its song "Stefania," which has become a popular anthem among Ukrainians during the war.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy vowed his nation would claim the customary winner's honor of hosting the next annual competition.

"Step by step, we are forcing the occupiers to leave the Ukrainian land," Zelenskyy said.

Russian and Ukrainian fighters are engaged in a grinding battle for the country's

eastern industrial heartland, the Donbas. Ukraine's most experienced and best-equipped soldiers are based in eastern Ukraine, where they have fought Moscow-backed separatists for eight years.

Even with its setbacks, Russia has continued to inflict death and destruction across Ukraine. Over the weekend, its forces hit a chemical plant and 11 high-rise buildings in Siverodonetsk, in the Luhansk area of the Donbas, the regional governor said.

Gov. Serhii Haidaii said Russian troops were also preparing for another attempt to cross the strategically important Siverskiy Donets River, two days after Moscow suffered heavy losses in a Ukrainian attack that destroyed a pontoon bridge.

Britain's Defense Ministry said in its daily intelligence update Sunday that the Russian army had lost up to one-third of the combat strength it committed to Ukraine in late February and was failing to gain any substantial territory.

"Under the current conditions, Russia is unlikely to dramatically accelerate its rate of advance over the next 30 days," the ministry said on Twitter.

Official says Buffalo shooting was racially motivated

The Washington Post

BUFFALO — Ten people were killed during a mass shooting Saturday afternoon at a Buffalo grocery store in what law enforcement officials described as a racially motivated hate crime.

Law enforcement authorities said Payton Gendron, an 18-year-old white man, approached the store in a predominantly Black neighborhood and opened fire on shoppers and employees, shooting 13 people including a security guard.

The massacre ended when Gendron surrendered to police outside the store. Later Saturday, he was charged with first-

degree murder and held without bail. He pleaded not guilty.

Stephen Belongia, the special agent in charge of the FBI's Buffalo field office, said law enforcement officials were investigating the shooting as a hate crime and a case of racially motivated violent extremism. Buffalo Police Commissioner Joseph Gramaglia said 11 of the 13 people shot were Black.

Gramaglia added that the gunman, who was heavily armed and wearing tactical gear, used a camera to livestream the attack and shot several victims in the parking lot before entering the store.

The grocery's longtime se-

curity guard fired back, but the gunman's body armor blocked the shot, and the guard was killed in the encounter, Gramaglia said. He called the security guard a "hero." Four of those killed were store employees and six were customers, law enforcement officials said.

One of the customers was 86-year-old Ruth Whitfield, who had stopped at Tops after spending the day taking care of her husband at his nursing home. Now the family is rallying around his father to make sure he's cared for.

"Something she would be proud of us for," her son, retired Buffalo fire commissioner Gar-

nell W. Whitfield said. "So we've got a big task ahead of us."

Gendron grew up in Conklin, a New York town more than 200 miles from Buffalo near the city of Binghamton. The gunman was not known to law enforcement, said John Flynn, the Erie County district attorney. Flynn said there were pieces of evidence that indicate "racial animosity" on the part of the suspect, but he declined to elaborate.

Investigators are reviewing a creed they suspect was posted by the gunman describing his white-supremacist motivations and ideology.

Female pilot makes history with award

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Capt. Taylor Bye kept her composure as her A-10C Thunderbolt II fell apart midflight during a routine sortie two years ago in Georgia, pulling off a “wheels up” belly landing without a cockpit canopy as punishing winds blew in her face.

In recognition of the feat, Bye was presented Wednesday with the 2020 Koren Kolligian Jr. trophy at a Pentagon ceremony, becoming the first female recipient of the award since its creation in 1957, the Air Force said in a statement Thursday.

“The day she landed with 66% of her landing gear and wind in

her hair is one she’ll never forget,” Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. CQ Brown Jr. said in his presentation of the award, applauding Bye’s “exemplary performance.”

Named for 1st Lt. Koren Kolligian Jr., an Air Force pilot declared missing when his plane disappeared off the California coast in 1955, the trophy recognizes crew members who avert or minimize the seriousness of injury or property damage in an aircraft mishap, according to the Air Force.

Bye’s flight commander at the time of the crash noted the rarity of the plane failure she experienced, according to the Air Force. That meant there was no com-

plete emergency checklist for her to follow.

Bye’s A-10 began dismantling while she was preparing for a strafing run during an April 2020 training mission over Georgia at Moody Air Force Base’s Grand Bay Range, according to the service.

Her repeated attempts to fire the plane’s Gatling gun met with severe failures, the Air Force said in a statement last year. Her landing gear retracted, panels flew off and her canopy jettisoned. The jet’s two engines and hydraulic systems continued to work.

“We don’t necessarily train for this, but the split-second decision I made was my body’s natural re-

sponse,” Bye said in the Air Force statement.

She said that when her canopy flew off, her instinct was to “survive,” according to the statement. She maxed out the Warthog’s throttles, pitching the aircraft nose up and lowering her seat to reduce the wind blast. The lowered seat made it difficult to see the runway.

“I thought, ‘Where’s the ground, where’s the ground?’ I was holding my breath at that point,” Bye said in a statement last year.

She escaped the crash without injury. The Air Force investigation report into the cause of the crash was not available Friday.

Teacher barred from grade school on base

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii—A teacher at an elementary school on a Hawaii Army base has been barred from campus after Army officials became aware of misconduct allegations against him, according to U.S. Army Hawaii.

Military police were called to Solomon Elementary School on Schofield Barracks on Thursday morning after parents arrived at the school to remove their children after learning of the teacher’s return to the school, according to several parents involved.

“Allegations of an adult inappropriately touching students falls under mandatory reporting and there should have been an immediate criminal investigation,” Jackie Martin, whose son attends Solomon, commented Thursday on a post about the incident on U.S. Army Garrison Hawaii’s Facebook page. “This school and the

Hawaii [Department of Education] had no right to keep this ‘investigation’ in house to brush under the rug without letting any parents know of the situation!”

She wrote that “more than a dozen” individuals had reported misconduct by the teacher.

The school’s principal, meanwhile, said the claims against the teacher were investigated and deemed “unsubstantiated”, and that no child at the school is being put at risk.

U.S. Army Garrison Hawaii said in a Facebook post Thursday evening that base leaders had become aware of the allegations against the teacher only earlier in the day.

“The individual involved is not a U.S. Army Hawaii employee,” the Army said. “We contacted our partners in [the Hawaii Department of Education] and they assured us that they are in the lead in this situation.”

Base in Japan bars nightclub after reports of ‘illicit activity’

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The installation commander at the home of the U.S. 7th Fleet has placed a local nightclub off-limits due to “reports and evidence of illicit activity.”

Sailors and other uniformed service members will be barred from patronizing Club 54 in Yokosuka’s Honcho district for at least 90 days, the command announced Friday afternoon on its official Facebook page.

“Illicit activity violates Navy regulations and presents conditions that are detrimental to the safety and security of members of the U.S. Armed Forces,” base spokesman Randall Baucom told Stars and Stripes in an email Friday.

Club 54, which frequently draws large crowds on weekends, had been flagged for issues in the past and received a written notice in November,

Baucom said.

While he wouldn’t specify the reasons for the ban, Baucom said “illicit activity” could include serving alcohol to underage individuals, locking doors after curfew to prevent shore-patrol checks or hiding service members after curfew.

Active-duty U.S. military personnel are prohibited from consuming alcohol in public off base between midnight and 5 a.m., according to the U.S. Forces Japan liberty order.

The ban on Club 54 is limited to uniformed personnel only, but Baucom said civilians and contractors affiliated with the base are also encouraged to avoid the establishment.

A representative for Club 54 declined to comment on the ban when reached via Facebook Messenger on Friday afternoon. The unidentified individual said the bar had not yet been contacted by the base and was unaware of the specifics.

Okinawa marks 50 years end to US rule

Associated Press

TOKYO — Okinawa Governor Denny Tamaki on Sunday urged Japan's central government to do more to reduce the U.S. military presence in the southern island group as it marked the 50th anniversary of its return to Japan after 27 years of American rule, amid frustration and bitterness over a lack of support from the mainland.

Tamaki said Okinawa has come a long way since the devastation of World War II and nearly three decades of U.S. rule, which ended when it reverted to Japan on May 15, 1972. But the tiny island group's yearslong demand for the mainland to share its security burden remains unresolved.

"I call on the central government to share with the entire nation the significance of

Okinawa's reversion and the importance of permanent peace that Okinawans have long craved for," Tamaki said.

Ceremonies marking the anniversary were held simultaneously in two locations — one in the Okinawan city of Giowan, home to a disputed U.S. air station, and the other in Tokyo. The separate ceremonies symbolize the deep divide in views over Okinawa's history and ongoing suffering.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said he takes Okinawa's concerns seriously and will make efforts to reduce the burden while still maintaining U.S. military deterrence on the islands.

Kishida and his minister in charge of the islands were in Okinawa, where hundreds of protesters staged a rally Saturday de-

manding a speedier reduction of U.S. military forces, as fears grow that Okinawa may become a front line of conflict amid rising China tensions.

More protests were held Sunday on Okinawa, including one in the prefectural capital of Naha, where nearly 1,000 people renewed their demands for peace.

Resentment and frustration run deep in Okinawa over the heavy U.S. presence and Tokyo's lack of effort to negotiate with Washington to balance the security burden between mainland Japan and the southern island group.

Because of the U.S. bases, Okinawa faces burdens including noise, pollution, accidents and crime related to American troops, Okinawan officials and residents say.

Ex-diplomat: Japan's defense should be checked amid threat

BY HANA KUSUMOTO

Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Japan should carry out an exhaustive review of its defense strategy, including the role played by U.S. forces, now that the security threat from Russia is approaching that of China and North Korea, a former diplomat said last week.

"I am saying that we can't do without comprehensively reviewing the way the [U.S.] bases as well as defense and diplomacy should be, and the assessment of the security environment surrounding Japan," said Hitoshi Tanaka, who served as senior deputy minister for foreign affairs under former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. He spoke to reporters Monday during an online event hosted by the Foreign Press Center in Tokyo.

"Keep in mind that there are new threats," added Tanaka, who now serves as the chairman of the Institute for International Strategy at The Japan Institute. "Russia once again has become a threat."

Tokyo has imposed more than a dozen economic sanctions on Moscow in response to its ongoing invasion of Ukraine. In turn, Russia halted talks over a post-World War II peace treaty with Japan and ended visa-free entry for former residents of four Russian-controlled islands north of Hokkaido.

Japan and Russia never signed a peace treaty after WWII, and the status of four islands captured by the Soviets has been a

sticking point for more than seven decades.

Moscow has also increased its military activities around Japan.

Russia tested submarine-launched ballistic missiles in the Sea of Japan, also known as the East Sea, on April 14 and May 6. It also conducted military drills on the disputed islands in March that involved 3,000 troops, The Associated Press reported on April 15.

Russia has also sailed flotillas of warships through narrow Japanese straits, raising alarm in Tokyo.

Tanaka said there may be a need to respond by reallocating Japanese and U.S. forces in the country, including to Hokkaido.

But, he added, this doesn't mean Japan should backtrack on plans to reduce the U.S. military footprint on Okinawa, where about 70% of the U.S. facilities in Japan are based.

"The security environment surrounding Japan is becoming severe, so there could be discussions to increase military bases on Okinawa as a way to strengthen Japan's security structure, but that should not be done," Tanaka said.

Japan should instead build partnerships with other countries in the region, including South Korea, to build a deterrence that's stronger than just the U.S.-Japan alliance.

That said, Japan should not abandon efforts to relocate Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Tanaka said of a plan long opposed by Okinawa lawmakers who want the airfield totally removed from the island.

Marine dies in car crash near Camp Foster

BY FRANK ANDREWS

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Okinawa police say a Marine was killed early Saturday after the car he was driving veered off a road and crashed into a light pole and pedestrian fence outside this Marine Corps base on Okinawa.

The Marine corporal was pronounced dead at 6:14 a.m. at U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa on Camp Foster, according to Okinawa City Police Station interpreter Takaho Kinjo.

The crash happened at 4:50 a.m., Kinjo told Stars and Stripes by phone on Saturday. The service member's mangled white, late-model, four-door vehicle could be seen on the sidewalk along Route 58 in front of Camp Foster.

The accident's cause is under investigation, Kinjo said.

The Camp Foster Provost Marshal's Office declined to confirm any details on Saturday. Base public affairs could not be reached for comment.

The wrecked vehicle was spotted Saturday morning approximately 10 feet from where Katsuya Ishikawa, 61, was struck and killed by a vehicle driven by Lance Cpl. Joshua David Siegel on May 7.

Okinawa police said alcohol was not involved and Siegel was not arrested.

N. Korea reports 15 more suspected COVID deaths

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea has confirmed 15 more deaths and hundreds of thousands of additional patients with fevers as it mobilizes more than a million health and other workers to try to suppress the country's first COVID-19 outbreak, state media reported Sunday.

After maintaining a widely disputed claim that it's been coronavirus-free for more than two years, North Korea announced Thursday that it had found its first COVID-19 patients since the pandemic began.

It said a fever has spread across the country "explosively" since late April but hasn't disclosed exactly how many COVID-19 cases were found. Some experts say North Korea lacks the diagnostic kits needed to test a large number of suspected COVID-19 patients.

The additional deaths reported Sunday took the country's reported fever-related fatalities to 42. The official Korean Central News Agency also reported that another 296,180 people with fevers had been tallied, taking the reported total to

820,620.

The outbreak has triggered concern about a humanitarian crisis in North Korea because most of the country's 26 million people are believed to be unvaccinated against the coronavirus and its public health care system has been in shambles for decades. Some experts say North Korea might suffer huge fatalities if it doesn't immediately receive outside shipments of vaccines, medicines and other medical supplies.

"Without COVID-19 test kits, North Korea is resorting to body temperature checks to guess at infections. But with such a very inferior and inaccurate method of examination, it's impossible to find asymptomatic virus carriers and control viral surges," said analyst Cheong Seong-Chang at South Korea's Sejong Institute.

"As North Korea's (suspected) COVID-19 infections are explosively increasing, its death toll is expected to continue to rise," Cheong added.

Since Thursday, North Korea has imposed a nationwide lockdown to fight the virus.

Some Shanghai businesses to reopen Monday

Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan — Supermarkets, malls and restaurants in Shanghai will be allowed to open in a limited capacity starting Monday, officials said, even while it remained unclear whether residents would be let out from their homes.

The city's Vice Mayor Chen Tong said Sunday at a daily press briefing that grocery stores, malls, convenience stores and pharmacies will be allowed to reopen while implementing measures that "reduce the flow of people."

Agriculture markets will also be allowed to reopen while ensuring "no contact" transactions. Restaurants will be allowed to serve takeout.

However, Shanghai's transportation department said Sunday that all subway lines in the city had stopped operating. It was unclear when those services would restart.

City residents are waiting cautiously to see how the new measures will actually play out. Although the city's official total lockdown began at the end of March, many have been stuck in their homes for longer.

Study finds cleaner air linked to more hurricanes

Associated Press

Cleaner air in the United States and Europe is brewing more Atlantic hurricanes, a new U.S. government study found.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration study links changes in regionalized air pollution across the globe to storm activity going both up and down. A 50% decrease in pollution particles and droplets in Europe and the U.S. is linked to a 33% increase in Atlantic storm formation in the past couple decades, while the opposite is happening in the Pacific with more pollution and fewer typhoons, according to the study published in Wednesday's Science Advances.

NOAA hurricane scientist Hiroyuki Murakami ran nu-

merous climate computer simulations to explain change in storm activity in different parts of the globe that can't be explained by natural climate cycles and found a link to aerosol pollution from industry and cars — sulfur particles and droplets in the air that make it hard to breathe and see.

Scientists had long known that aerosol pollution cools the air, at times reducing the larger effects of greenhouse gases from the burning of fossil fuel and earlier studies mentioned it as a possibility in the increase in Atlantic storms, but Murakami found it a factor around the world and a more direct link.

Hurricanes need warm water — which is warmed by the air — for fuel and are harmed by wind shear, which changes in

upper level winds that can decapitate storm tops. Cleaner air in the Atlantic and dirtier air in the Pacific, from pollution in China and India, mess with both of those, Murakami said.

In the Atlantic, aerosol pollution peaked around 1980 and has been dropping steadily since. That means the cooling that masked some of the greenhouse gas warming is going away, so sea surface temperatures are increasing even more, Murakami said. On top of that the lack of cooling aerosols has helped push the jet stream — the river of air that moves weather from west to east on a roller-coaster like path — further north, reducing the shear that had been dampening hurricane formation.

"That's why the Atlantic has

gone pretty much crazy since the mid-90s and why it was so quiet in the 70s and 80s," said climate and hurricane scientist Jim Kossin of the risk firm The Climate Service. He wasn't part of the study but said it makes sense. The aerosol pollution "gave a lot of people in the 70s and 80s a break, but we're all paying for it now."

There are other factors in tropical cyclone activity with La Nina and El Nino — natural fluctuations in equatorial Pacific temperatures that alter climate worldwide — being huge. Human-caused climate change from greenhouse gases, that will grow as aerosol pollution reductions level out, is another, and there are other natural long-term climatic oscillations, Murakami said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Mom charged for giving Narcan to overdosing kid

ME BANGOR — A woman is charged with child endangerment after she allegedly used the opioid antidote naloxone to revive her 2-year-old daughter after the toddler got into the mother's drugs.

The prosecution will test Maine's so-called Good Samaritan law, which provides immunity to people who report an overdose or provide medical assistance, said Christopher Almy, the district attorney. The law was recently expanded, but that expansion won't go into effect for several months.

The Bangor Daily News reported the woman is charged with domestic violence, endangering the welfare of a child, and reckless conduct with a dangerous weapon.

Baby giraffe fitted with orthotic for her leg

CA ESCONDIDO — Over the past three decades Ara Mirzaian has fitted braces for everyone from Paralympians to children with scoliosis. But Msituni was a patient like none other — a newborn giraffe.

The calf was born Feb. 1 at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park in Escondido, north of San Diego, with her front limb bending the wrong way.

Safari park staff feared she could die if they didn't immediately correct the condition.

She was in braces for 39 days from the day she was born. The problem has been corrected, and she now runs with the other giraffes, the staff said.

2nd arrest after video of popped balloons in bay

FL MIAMI — A second person was arrested after a viral video showed people popping party balloons on a yacht at a South Florida marina and dumping the rubbery scraps into the bay, officials said.

A 26-year-old woman was arrested and charged with willful disregard for the environment, according to a Miami-Dade police news release. A 29-year-old man was arrested on a similar charge. Detectives have also issued more than \$25,000 in civil citations.

Abandoned mine shaft covered to protect hikers

NC ASHEVILLE — The U.S. Forest Service has put a grate over an abandoned pit mine shaft in North Carolina that had posed a hazard on a popular biking trail.

Nicknamed the "sinkhole," the 30-foot-deep mine shaft is on the Holly Springs Trail in Pisgah National Forest, the forest service said on its Facebook page.

The forest service said several options were considered before officials decided to cover the sinkhole with a 12-foot by 10-foot flat aluminum grate that meets safety requirements while maintaining the character of the trail.

Man in 'lost baggage' scam ordered to pay \$13K

LA NEW ORLEANS — A man who said he never was paid for his part in a \$300,000 lost baggage scam was

ordered to pay nearly \$13,500 in restitution.

Donmonick Martin, 30, of Chalmette also was ordered to spend two months on house arrest and three years on probation, U.S. Attorney Duane A. Evans said in a news release.

He pleaded guilty in February to conspiracy to commit mail fraud, signing a statement saying \$17,400 in false claims could be traced to him and about \$10,500 of that was sent to his home or PayPal account. But he said codefendant Pernell Jones Jr. of Kenner got all the money.

Ex-convict admits fraud targeting pro athletes

VA ALEXANDRIA — An ex-convict from California has pleaded guilty to fraud schemes totaling more than \$25 million that included exaggerated tax returns for professional athletes and exploiting federal pandemic relief programs.

Quin Ngoc Rudin, 45, of Chino, Calif., pleaded guilty to wire fraud in U.S. District Court in Alexandria.

Rudin, who served as director of California-based Mana Tax Services, represented himself as an expert in the tax code who could get the athletes big refunds. He admitted as part of his plea agreement to submitting tax returns on behalf of nine athletes that grossly inflated the returns to which they were entitled.

Rudin also submitted more than \$100 million in fraudulent loan applications under the government's Paycheck Protection Program on behalf of multiple companies.

Record-breaking sunfish caught in Satilla River

GA FOLKSTON — Wildlife officials said a redbreast sunfish caught in on the Satilla River breaks a 24-year-old state record.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources said Lester Roberts of Blackshear reeled in a redbreast sunfish weighing 1.75 pounds and measuring nearly 11.5 inches.

That beat the previous state redbreast sunfish record caught in 1998 and may tie a world record, the wildlife agency said. It said redbreast sunfish typically weigh less than a pound.

Drivers can get DUIs for driving while high

WA OLYMPIA — The Washington state Supreme Court ruled people can be cited for driving under the influence for driving while high, a decision that upholds the state's decade-old law regulating marijuana use behind the wheel of a car.

The Seattle Times reported all nine justices rejected Douglas Fraser's argument that his 2017 DUI was based on an arbitrary and vague standard for THC levels in the blood.

A state trooper said he pulled over Fraser in July 2017 after seeing him speeding, driving alone in an HOV lane, changing lanes erratically and cutting off other drivers.

A test showed Fraser had a THC blood concentration of 9.4 nanograms per milliliter, with a margin of error of 2.5. That put the concentration above the state's 5 ng/ml limit.

— The Associated Press



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Lightning close out Leafs in Game 7

Associated Press

Nick Paul came through with the best playoff performance of his career when the Tampa Bay Lightning needed it most and the two-time defending champions are moving on again.

Paul scored twice, including an incredible individual effort on the tiebreaking goal late in the second period, and the Lightning beat the Toronto Maple Leafs 2-1 in Game 7 on Saturday night to win their first-round playoff series.

"The electricity in this building was nuts," said Paul, a native of Mississauga, Ontario. "To come in and work as hard as we did, there was no doubt in our game. We stuck together."

Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 30 shots for Tampa Bay.

Morgan Rielly scored for the

Maple Leafs, who haven't reached the second round since 2004 and are now 0-9 in elimination games over the last five postseasons after also losing 4-3 in Game 6 at Tampa, Fla., two nights earlier. Jack Campbell had 23 saves.

"A great hockey team," the Lightning's Steven Stamkos said of Toronto. "They've got all the pieces. It's not easy this time of the year. We've had some failures in the past ... you just move on and you just gotta get over that hump."

The Maple Leafs were once again unable to push through and finally flip a long, ugly narrative of playoff failures for a franchise that has now lost its last seven series, including six straight dating back to 2017.

"It's hard to explain," Toronto captain John Tavares said. "It's

frustrating, hard to fathom. It stings, it hurts, it's disappointing."

The Leafs are now 7-3 all-time at home in Game 7s, including a loss at Scotiabank Arena last season after blowing a 3-1 series lead against the Montreal Canadiens.

"A game of inches," said Toronto star Auston Matthews, who scored 60 goals during the regular season and four more in playoffs. "Unfortunately we're on the bad side of things tonight. It's really frustrating. Every guy in there competed and gave it their all. They made one more play than us."

Down 1-0 after 20 minutes in this one, the Maple Leafs appeared to tie the score at 11:28 of the second when Tavares roofed a shot on Vasilevskiy, but the

goal was waved off after Toronto defenseman Justin Holl was whistled for interference.

Campbell had to make a couple of desperation stops on the ensuing penalty kill to set the stage for Rielly's equalizer off a setup from Mitch Marner and Auston Matthews to score his third of the playoffs at 6:35 to send the crowd of 19,316 into a chaotic frenzy.

The goal was the first surrendered by Vasilevskiy and Tampa Bay in the Lightning's last six series-deciding games. William Nylander then missed high on a breakaway and the Tampa Bay goaltender robbed Matthews with the Maple Leafs buzzing.

But Paul scored his second of the night — and second ever in the playoffs — with 3:28 remaining in the period.

McDavid carries Oilers past Kings

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Captain Connor McDavid has seen his team through to the second round of the Stanley Cup playoffs.

McDavid had a goal and an assist as the Edmonton Oilers got a nerve-racking 2-0 victory over the Los Angeles Kings in Game 7 on Saturday night.

"It feels good to do it in that fashion," McDavid said of the shutout. "There is always a lot of talk about the defensive side of the game, so for our group to step up in a big moment and play like that in a 2-0 win with (goalie Mike Smith) playing great and contributions from everyone, it feels good."

"But that being said, it is just one round. There is a long way to go here. We're happy to move on to the second round, but that is all we did, survived another day."

Cody Ceci also scored and Smith made 28 saves for his second shutout of the playoffs for the Oilers, who last won a Game 7 in 1998 and celebrated their first playoff series win since 2017.

"I don't think I've ever heard a building so loud and I've been in the playoffs a few times with some pretty wild times, but that was incredible to be a part of," Smith said. "The last couple of years with no fans has sucked, nobody in the building was disappointing.

To win a Game 7 before home fans who gave us a boost before the drop of the puck, that was an incredible feeling and hopefully it'll stick around for the next round."

Jonathan Quick made 39 saves for the Kings, who have not won a playoff series since they won their second Stanley Cup in 2014 — also the last year they won a series in a Game 7.

"Right now it's very frustrating obviously," said Los Angeles veteran Anze Kopitar. "This series was hard-fought, and we gave it all and we should be proud of that. There is certainly an element of growth within the group, and throughout the season and throughout the playoffs. It didn't go for us today, and it's extremely frustrating because we came in here believing we can get it done and we didn't."

Kings coach Todd McLellan said he felt the experience was an important one, even if it is hard to see right now.

"I think they're small picture, big picture," he noted. "Small picture, we're disappointed. We said all along we were in it to win it, we weren't just coming here just to gain experience and when you're all in and you want to win and you don't, it's disappointing. We were all-in and it stings right now."

Domi, Raanta put 'Canes past Bruins to clinch

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Twice before, the Carolina Hurricanes had reached the playoffs only to see their ascent to becoming a serious Stanley Cup contender blocked by the Boston Bruins.

Two newcomers helped the Hurricanes finally push past their playoff bully — and in a Game 7, at that.

Midseason acquisition Max Domi scored twice in the second period while Antti Raanta had 27 saves to help the Hurricanes beat the Bruins 3-2 on Saturday to win their first-round playoff series.

Teuvo Teravainen also scored for Carolina, which finally put away a team that swept it in the 2019 Eastern Conference finals then took a five-game first-round series in the Toronto bubble a year later.

"It's such a different feeling coming into this one," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "I think back in the other ones, if we would've won, you guys might have been a little surprised. This time around, I felt like it was our time. Our guys have matured. I think they felt that, too."

Herta steers way to win IndyCar GP

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — As Colton Herta set up his winning pass Saturday, all he could see were red flashing lights.

He still charged forward.

The 22-year-old California driver quickly darted to the inside of Pato O'Ward on a late restart, took the lead for good with nine laps to go and beat Simon Pagenaud to the finish line by 3.0983 seconds to win a wild, wacky, wet IndyCar Grand Prix.

"Pure talent," Herta joked when asked how he persevered for his first win of the season despite the incredibly challenging weather conditions. "The most interesting thing is you never have a car that handles great in the wet and great in the dry, but it happened today."

Getting to victory lane certainly wasn't easy for Herta, who earned his first Indy win in his 10th series start at the track. He also became the first Honda driver to reach victory lane this season.

But on Saturday, he made all the right calls.

After qualifying 14th on the 27-car grid, he made the gutsy choice to switch from rain tires to dry tires just three laps into the race. While he initially struggled to keep the cold tires on the track and nearly spun out on Lap 4 when he got sideways in the 10th turn on the

14-turn, 2.439-mile road course, Herta never flinched.

Somehow he hung on, quickly taking the lead and advantage of a move that allowed him to go from 15th to first. He stayed near the front of the pack the rest of the race, leading 50 of 75 laps in a two-hour race that had just 53 minutes, 22 seconds of green flag time.

Even when it appeared Herta made the wrong choice — like running on dry tires after Alexander Rossi and made an early switch back to rain tires — things worked out.

"What I said is with the track conditions right now it's probably wets, but if you think it's going to be dry we'll go with slicks," Herta said referring to the first of two late pit stops. "Immediately when I got out there, I knew it was going to be tough so we came back in. Luckily, everybody followed our lead and did the wrong thing so we didn't lose too many spots."

Pagenaud and pole-winner Will Power struggled to navigate the spray coming off the other cars. Neither could see well enough or long enough in the first IndyCar rain race with the aeroscreens to catch Herta.

Still, the the two three-time race winners and former teammates felt as if they too had accomplished something. Pagenaud, the French driver, gave Meyer Shank Racing its

best finish of the season.

"That was nuts. The racing was phenomenal and the strategy was the name of the game today," he said. "Sometimes second feels like a win. I would have liked to win today, but we'll probably celebrate tonight like it was a win."

Power took the points lead away from defending series champ Alex Palou and posted Team Penske's best finish.

"At the end, you couldn't see. I can't imagine being back in 10th or something," the Australian said. "Pretty crazy day, one to keep you on your toes and when to pick the right tire and don't overdo it. Just survival."

Race organizers knew weather would be a factor.

They moved the start time up about 30 minutes with the hope of a wet track. Instead the start was delayed — first because of nearby lightning in the area and then because of a steady light rain.

The cooler, damper track changed everything. There were spins and crashes, even cars struggling to stay in line under caution. And nobody, not even the series' top names, were immune.

Team Penske scrambled to get two-time series champ Josef Newgarden back on the course after his car was damaged in a Lap 17 crash.

Djokovic appears back in top form with Italian title

Associated Press

ROME — Just in time.

Novak Djokovic raised his first trophy of the year at the Italian Open on Sunday and showed that he's back in top form exactly a week before the French Open starts.

After missing a large portion of the season because he wasn't vaccinated against the coronavirus, the top-ranked Djokovic beat Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-0, 7-6 (5) for his sixth Rome title.

"I've been building my form the last few weeks," Djokovic said. "It couldn't be better timing coming into Roland Garros."

"Perfect scenario for me," Djokovic added later.

Earlier on the red clay, Iga Swiatek defended the women's title by overwhelming Ons Ja-

beur 6-2, 6-2 to extend her winning streak to 28 matches.

Djokovic didn't drop a set all week, having won his 1,000th career match over Casper Ruud in the semifinals.

Djokovic, who was deported because of his unvaccinated status ahead of the Australian Open, hadn't won a tournament since raising the Paris Masters trophy in November.

"This year it was a particular situation. With everything that happened in Australia, it took some time," Djokovic said. "I found my best shape here. I'm going to Paris with a lot of confidence."

It was Djokovic's 12th final at the Foro Italico.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion reached the final of

his home Serbia Open last month. He was beaten by 19-year-old Carlos Alcaraz in the Madrid Open semifinals last week.

Djokovic produced 24 winners to Tsitsipas' eight and had only 14 unforced errors to Tsitsipas' 20.

Swiatek also is going into the French Open on quite a run.

Swiatek was a surprise champion at the French Open in 2020 when she was ranked No. 54. Now the 20-year-old Polish player is the favorite to add a second title at Roland Garros when the year's second Grand Slam starts next Sunday.

"I already know that I did some great stuff this season, so I feel like I can just play freely," Swiatek said. "For sure the ex-

pectations around are higher, but I never had a problem to cut it off and not to think about it. Also I'm gaining experience at that."

Swiatek has won five straight titles during her run.

"All these tournaments that I've won seem pretty surreal right now," she said.

Jabeur was on a streak of her own with 11 consecutive wins entering the final after her Madrid Open title last week but the Tunisian's crafty game of drop shots and spins proved no match for Swiatek's swift movement and accurate groundstrokes.

"Iga is the No. 1 for a reason," Jabeur said. "She's really the leader here on tour. I personally have a lot to learn from her."

Ozuna, Riley spur Braves past Padres

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Marcell Ozuna homered and Austin Riley hit a tiebreaking double during a four-run rally in the eighth inning in the Atlanta Braves' 6-5 victory over the San Diego Padres on Saturday.

The Braves tagged reliever Steven Wilson (3-1) for Ozzie Albies' RBI single, Ozuna's two-run homer and Riley's go-ahead hit.

"It's what you play for here every day," Albies said. "You want to win games, so we came back and it was huge. We never give up. That's our game. We keep pushing and pushing envelopes every day because we want to win. You guys saw it. We got down and we came back because that's how we play the game."

The game appeared to turn in the Padres' favor in top of the eighth when first baseman Matt Olson misplayed Trent Grisham's grounder for a two-base error with one out. Grisham advanced on Will Smith's wild pitch and scored on Jorge Alfaro's single to tie it at 2.

After Jake Cronenworth doubled, Jurickson Profar drew a walk to set the stage for Atlanta closer Kenley Jansen (2-0) to face Manny Machado with the bases loaded. Machado hit a grounder to Riley at third base, but his throw to second sailed into shallow center field for an error that allowed two runs to score. San Diego added another run to make it 5-2 on Eric Hosmer's RBI force-out.

Athletics 4, Angels 3; Angels 9, Athletics 1: Shohei Ohtani hit his 100th career home run, Taylor Ward hit a grand slam and visiting Los Angeles salvaged a split of a day-night doubleheader by beating the Oakland in the nightcap.

The A's won the opener when Luis Barreira overcame a couple of earlier blunders by hitting a walk-off, three-run shot for his first career home run.

The Angels took little time to rebound in the second game with Ward hitting his second slam of the season in a five-run second inning against Adam Oller (0-3).

Ohtani then got in on the action in the fifth inning when he followed Mike Trout's RBI double with his seventh homer of the season to make it 8-1.

White Sox 3, Yankees 2: Luis Robert singled off Aroldis Chapman to drive home the winning run in the ninth inning and host Chicago ended New York's winning streak at five.

The Yankees had slugged away for a total of 25 runs in taking the first two games of the

series. They rallied for the tying run in the ninth inning, but a baserunning mistake cost them a chance to score more.

With one out in the White Sox ninth, Tim Anderson singled and Yoán Moncada walked against Chapman (0-1). Robert followed with his big hit to right, setting off a lively celebration on the field.

Red Sox 11, Rangers 3: J.D. Martinez extended his on-base streak to 31 games with a first-inning homer, 42-year-old Rich Hill pitched into the seventh in his return from the COVID-19 list and visiting Boston beat Texas for its first series victory in a month.

Rafael Devers also homered for the Red Sox, who set a season high for runs and has won the first two in the three-game weekend series.

Boston (13-20) had won only one of its first 10 series, taking two of three at Detroit from April 11-13 during the first week of the season. It had gone 0-6-2 in its series since.

Mets 5, Mariners 4: Patrick Mazeika hit a tiebreaking homer leading off the seventh inning in his first major league game this season and host New York took advantage of some sloppy Seattle defense.

Starling Marte tripled, doubled, singled and scored three times for the Mets, who squandered a 4-0 lead when Jesse Winker tied it with a three-run homer off Chasen Shreve in the top of the seventh.

Phillies 8, Dodgers 3: Bryce Harper homered at Dodger Stadium for the third straight game and finished with three hits and Philadelphia went deep four times in a victory over reeling Los Angeles.

Jean Segura, Kyle Schwarber and Rhys Hoskins also hit home runs off Dodgers starter Julio Urías (2-3). The Phillies have won four straight and five of six.

Mookie Betts hit a solo shot for the Dodgers, who have dropped four straight for the first time since last June.

Pirates 3, Reds 1: Zach Thompson took a no-hitter into the sixth inning and Daniel Vogelbach homered to lead host Pittsburgh past Cincinnati.

Brandon Drury broke up the no-hit bid by lining a clean single to right field with two outs.

Cardinals 4, Giants 0: Dakota Hudson and four relievers combined for host St. Louis' sixth shutout of the season to end San Francisco's winning streak at six.

Hudson (3-2) worked around five hits and two walks in five innings. Génesis Cabrera, Andre Pallante, Ryan Helsley and Giovanny Gallegos teamed up to pitch the final four in-

nings.

Nationals 13, Astros 6: Yadiel Hernandez and Maikel Franco homered and host Washington ended Houston's winning streak at 11.

Manager Dusty Baker and the Astros fell one game short of matching the franchise record set in 1999 and matched in 2004 and 2018.

Blue Jays 5, Rays 1: Teoscar Hernandez and Danny Jansen homered in the eighth inning and visiting Toronto beat Tampa Bay to end a five-game skid.

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. singled in the first inning off Rays starter Ryan Yarbrough, extending his hitting streak to 11 games.

Tigers 3, Orioles 0: Tigers starter Michael Pineda exited early after being hit in the hand by a line drive and the Detroit bullpen did the rest, teaming on a four-hitter to beat visiting Baltimore.

Pineda had to leave after Ramon Urias' liner hit him in the pitching hand in the second inning. Wily Peralta replaced him, set down eight batters, and four more relievers finished.

Eric Haase and Willi Castro homered.

Guardians 3, Twins 2 (10): Andrés Giménez ripped a go-ahead double in the 10th inning and scored after a collision on the bases in visiting Cleveland's victory over Minnesota.

Giménez scored the automatic runner, but ran into Twins first baseman Jose Miranda as he turned the corner toward second. He was shaken up and met with an athletic trainer but remained in the game. Umpires awarded him second base, and he then scored on Myles Straw's single.

Marlins 9, Brewers 3: Jesús Aguilar, Jorge Soler and Brian Anderson homered to help host Miami beat Milwaukee.

Marlins starter Trevor Rogers pitched 5½ innings of one-run ball, allowing five hits and striking out eight.

Rockies 4, Royals 1: Charlie Blackmon, Sam Hilliard and Ryan McMahon hit home runs, Germán Márquez overcame a rough inning for his first victory this season and host Colorado beat Kansas City to snap a five-game losing streak.

Cubs 4, Diamondbacks 2: Yan Gomes hit a solo homer and added a go-ahead single in the ninth inning in visiting Chicago's victory over Arizona.

It was another tough outing for D-backs reliever Mark Melancon (0-5), who didn't record an out and let the first four Cubs batters of the ninth reach base.