

In Buffalo, Biden condemns racism

Associated Press

BUFFALO — President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden paid their respects Tuesday at a makeshift memorial to the 10 people killed in the white supremacist attack in Buffalo, confronting again the forces of hatred he once said called him back to seek the White House.

Speaking to victims' families, local officials and first responders, Biden said America's diversity is its strength and the nation must not be distorted by a "hateful minority."

"In America, evil will not win, I promise you," Biden said. "Hate will not prevail, white supremacy will not have the last word."

Biden spoke after he and first lady Jill Biden paid their respects Tuesday at a makeshift memorial outside the Tops supermarket, where on Saturday a young man armed with an assault rifle targeted Black people in the deadliest racist attack in the U.S. since Biden took office.

"Jill and I have come to stand with you, and to the families, we have come to grieve with you," Biden said.

He added: "Now's the time for people of all races, from every background, to speak up as a majority and American and reject white su-

premacym."

Biden condemned the poison of white supremacy and said the nation must "reject the lie" of the racist "replacement theory" espoused by the shooter.

Replacement theory can be described as a racist ideology, which has moved from white nationalist circles to mainstream, that says white people and their influence are being intentionally "replaced" by people of color.

Biden's condemnation of white supremacy is a message he has delivered several times since he became the first president to specifically address white supremacy in an inaugural speech, calling it "domestic terrorism that we must confront."

However, such beliefs remain an entrenched threat at a time when his administration has been focused on addressing the pandemic, inflation and the war in Ukraine.

On Monday, Biden paid particular tribute to one of the victims, retired police officer Aaron Salter, who was working as a security guard at the store.

He said Salter "gave his life trying to save others" by opening fire at the gunman, only to be killed himself.

Upon arrival in Buffalo, the president and

New York's two senators were greeted by Gov. Kathy Hochul, Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown and local police and fire officials.

The shooter's hateful writings echoed those of the white supremacists who marched with torches in 2017 in Charlottesville, Va, a scene that Biden said inspired his decision to run against President Donald Trump in 2020 and that drove him to join what he calls the "battle for the soul of America."

"It's important for him to show up for the families and the community and express his condolences," said Derrick Johnson, the president of the NAACP. "But we're more concerned with preventing this from happening in the future."

It's unclear how Biden will try to do that.

Proposals for new gun restrictions have routinely been blocked by Republicans, and racist rhetoric espoused on the fringes of the nation's politics has only grown louder.

Payton Gendron, 18, was arrested at the supermarket and charged with murder. He has pleaded not guilty.

Before the shooting, Gendron is reported to have posted online a screed overflowing with racism and antisemitism.

Ukraine's Mariupol fighters in custody of Russians

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Hundreds of Ukrainian fighters, including wounded men carried out on stretchers, left the vast steel plant in Mariupol where they mounted a dogged last stand and turned themselves over to Russian hands, signaling the beginning of the end of a siege that became a symbol of Ukraine's resistance to Moscow's invasion.

Russia on Tuesday called the operation a mass surrender. The Ukrainians avoided using that word — but said the garrison had completed its mission, and that they were working to pull out the fighters that remain.

On Monday, more than 260 fighters left the Azovstal plant — their last redoubt in Mariupol — and were transported to two towns controlled by Moscow-backed separatists, officials on both sides said. Other fighters — their precise numbers unknown

— remain inside the ruins of the fortified mill that sprawls over 4 square miles in the otherwise Russian-held city.

Azovstal's fall would mark the complete capture of Mariupol, a significant milestone in one of the bloodiest battles of the war. It would give Russia its biggest victory yet after multiple setbacks — both military and diplomatic. Its troops have suffered costly losses, and President Vladimir Putin is increasingly isolated internationally, with Finland and Sweden announcing in recent days that they intend to join NATO, a major blow to the Russian leader.

Wrapping up Mariupol's capture would give Russia an unbroken land bridge to the Crimean Peninsula, which it annexed from Ukraine in 2014, and also deprives Ukraine of a vital port. It could also free up Russian forces for fighting elsewhere in the industri-

al heartland of eastern Ukraine.

But Ukraine also sought to turn the evacuation into a symbol for its side, highlighting the role the Azovstal fighters played in boosting Ukrainian morale and tying up Russian forces who couldn't be deployed elsewhere.

"Ukraine needs Ukrainian heroes to be alive. It's our principle," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in announcing that troops had begun leaving the relentlessly bombarded mill and its warren of tunnels and bunkers.

"The work continues to bring the guys home, and it requires delicacy and time," he said.

It's not clear what will happen to the fighters — and a Russian official cast doubt over whether Moscow would agree to hand over all of the men in a prisoner of war exchange.

Air Force test fires hypersonic weapon

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Air Force achieved a “major accomplishment” in successfully firing a hypersonic weapon from a B-52 bomber on Saturday, the service announced Monday.

The Stratofortress released an AGM-183A Air-launched Rapid Response Weapon, or ARRW, off the Southern California coast, the Air Force said in a news release.

The service said the weapon traveled five times faster than the speed of sound.

China and Russia have tested their own versions of hypersonic weapons. Russia claimed to be first to use one in combat by testing its version against Ukraine in March, according

to Al Jazeera on March 21. American military leaders want hypersonic weapons to defend against those developed by China and Russia.

“This was a major accomplishment by the ARRW team, for the weapons enterprise, and our Air Force,” Brig. Gen. Heath Collins, Air Force program executive officer for weapons, said in the news release. “The team’s tenacity, expertise, and commitment were key in overcoming the past year’s challenges to get us to the recent success. We are ready to build on what we’ve learned and continue moving hypersonics forward.”

Tests of the weapon in April, July and December of last year all failed during the launch process, according to a May 5 report by the

Congressional Research Service.

“The Air Force continues to assert that, despite these failures, ‘it is still possible to provide [early operational capability] in late calendar year 2022, provided future flight testing [of ARRW] concludes as per the current plan,’” the report said.

The Air Force has requested \$115 million for this hypersonic weapon in its budget proposed for fiscal year 2023, the report said. That is \$204 million less than was appropriated for fiscal year 2022.

Saturday’s test was executed by the 419th Flight Test Squadron and the Global Power Bomber Combined Test Force, both at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.

Navy sailor discharged after airsoft shooting at base

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — An active-duty sailor who triggered a two-hour lockdown at Naval Support Activity Naples last year by firing an airsoft gun on base is being booted from the Navy following a monthslong inquiry.

A probe led by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service found that the unidentified 22-year-old seaman shot at or near a group of adolescents with an airsoft rifle from the balcony of his on-base housing, said Lt. Cmdr. Matthew Comer, a spokesman for Navy Region Europe Africa Central. One of the adolescents alleged that they were struck with a plastic pellet.

As is policy with nonjudicial puni-

shments, the service is not naming the sailor, who was assigned to the Navy Computer and Telecommunications Station Naples, Comer said.

The Dec. 16, 2021, shooting happened on the base’s Gricignano di Aversa site. It was not reported to base police and the person who reported being hit did not have any apparent injuries, the NCIS investigation found.

No subsequent shots were fired, but about 45 minutes later another minor reported seeing a man carrying a gun on base. That report caused the lockdown and hunt for the service member, who ultimately was found in his room, Comer said.

“The service member was compliant with police instructions and immediately

turned over the airsoft gun,” he said.

The sailor is in the process of leaving Italy and separating from the Navy, Comer said.

Airsoft guns often are modeled to look like real weapons. They shoot nonmetallic soft pellets and frequently are used for target practice and military-style games.

Personal weapons, including airsoft guns, are prohibited on base, a Navy spokesperson said in December.

NSA Naples’ Gricignano di Aversa site includes schools, housing, a commercial center, a hospital and a hotel. It is about 13 miles from the base’s Capodichino site, which includes administrative and support services and is home to U.S. 6th Fleet.

Approximately 8,500 people are assigned to the base, according to its website.

DOD: US commissaries’ baby formula supply ‘adequate’

By JONATHAN SNYDER
Stars and Stripes

Defense Department commissaries are short of baby formula, just as civilian retailers are, but for now have an adequate supply for military families, the Pentagon’s press secretary said Monday.

“We’re not immune to the same supply chain problems that other families across America are experiencing,” John Kirby told reporters at the Pentagon.

A shortage in the United States began last year with supply chain and production issues

caused by parents stockpiling formula during the COVID-19 pandemic, The Associated Press reported Friday. In February, one of only a handful of makers recalled its product and shut down its Michigan factory when four babies suffered bacterial infections after consuming formula made there.

The Defense Commissary Agency is monitoring the market situation that is impacting the supply, Kirby said. The agency, headquartered at Fort Lee, Va., operates a worldwide chain of commissaries that provide groceries and other items to military personnel,

retirees and their families.

“Our assessment right now is that both overseas and remote commissaries are currently at an adequate level of supplies for baby formula,” Kirby said.

DeCA is working to ensure all overseas commissaries continue to receive baby formula shipments and address any issues with distributors, Kirby said.

“Current stock levels of available baby formula here in the continental United States is at 50%,” he said. “At our commissaries and overseas it stands at 70%” of normal stock.

US moves to ease travel restrictions on Cuba

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration said Monday that it will expand flights to Cuba, take steps to loosen restrictions on U.S. travelers to the island and lift Trump-era restrictions on remittances that immigrants can send to people on the island.

The State Department said in a statement that it will remove the current \$1,000-per-quarter limit on family remittances and will allow non-family remittance, which will support independent Cuban entrepreneurs. The United States will also allow scheduled and charter flights to locations beyond Havana, according to the State Department.

The administration said it will also move to reinstate the Cuban Family Reunification Parole Program, which has a backlog of more than 20,000 applications, and increase consular services and visa processing.

“With these actions, we aim to support Cubans’ aspirations for freedom and for greater economic opportunities so that they can lead successful lives at home,” State Department spokesman Ned Price added. “We continue to call on the Cuban government to immediately release political prisoners, to respect the Cuban people’s fundamental freedoms and to allow the Cuban people to determine their own futures.”

The policy changes come af-

ter a review that began soon after a series of widespread protests on the island last July.

Former President Donald Trump had increased sanctions against Cuba, including the cancellation of permits to send remittances and the punishment of oil tankers bound for the island.

These measures and the pandemic contributed to an economic crisis in Cuba, where people suffer from shortages of basic products, power outages and rationing.

The economic situation led thousands of people to the streets across Cuba on July 11, 2021 — the largest such protests in decades on the island. Many people were frustrated with

shortages and low salaries, as well with the socialist government. Nongovernmental organizations have reported more than 1,400 arrests and 500 people sentenced to up to 20 years in prison for vandalism or sedition.

In recent weeks, both the U.S. and the Cuban governments have started some conversations, amid a surge of Cubans trying to emigrate illegally to the U.S.

The first week of April, the U.S. Embassy in Havana resumed processing visas for Cubans, though on a limited basis, more than four years after stopping consular services on the island amid a hardening of relations.

Cross-border tunnel found linking Tijuana, San Diego

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — U.S. authorities on Monday announced the discovery of a major drug smuggling tunnel — running about the length of six football fields — from Mexico to a warehouse in an industrial area in the United States.

The secret passage from Tijuana to San Diego featured rail and ventilation systems, electricity and reinforced walls, authorities said. It was discovered near San Diego’s Otay Mesa border crossing in an area where more than a dozen other sophisticated tunnels have been found in the last two decades.

U.S. authorities said it was unknown how long the tunnel had been operating and what amount of drugs, if any, got through undetected. They seized 1,762 pounds of cocaine, 165 pounds of meth and 3.5 pounds of heroin in connection with the investigation.

Six people, ages 31 to 55, were charged with conspiring to distribute cocaine. All are South-

ern California residents.

The tunnel is in one of the most fortified stretches of the border, illustrating the limitations of border walls. While considered effective against small, crudely built tunnels called “gopher holes”, walls are no match for more sophisticated passages that run deeper underground.

The latest passage, discovered Friday, ran one-third of a mile to Tijuana. It was 4 feet in diameter and about six stories deep.

Authorities declined to link the latest tunnel to any specific cartel. They claimed victory despite not knowing how long it had been operating.

“There is no more light at the end of this narco-tunnel,” said Randy Grossman, U.S. attorney for the Southern District of California. “We will take down every subterranean smuggling route we find to keep illicit drugs from reaching our streets and destroying our families and communities.”

Retail sales up 0.9% in April

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. retail sales rose 0.9% in April, a solid increase that underscores Americans’ ability to keep ramping up spending even as inflation persists at nearly a 40-year high.

The increase was driven by greater sales of cars, electronics, and at restaurants, the Commerce Department said Tuesday.

Even adjusting for inflation, which was 0.3% on a monthly basis in April, sales increased. Gas prices fell slightly last month, restraining inflation, after soaring in March in the aftermath of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Consumers are providing critical support to the economy even after a year of seeing prices spiral higher for gas, food, rent and other necessities. The economy contracted in the first three months of the year, but consumer and business spending still increased at a healthy pace.

Strong hiring, rapid wage increases and a healthy level of

savings — on average — have bolstered consumers’ financial health, despite a sharp increase in consumer prices of 8.3% in April compared with a year ago. The increase was just below a four-decade high reached in March.

Still, economists are watching closely to see if consumer spending can continue to outpace inflation. Slower spending would drag down the economy’s growth. While that might bring down inflation, it would also threaten to push the economy into recession.

The retail sales figures suggest that some supply chain snarls may be easing. Sales at auto dealers rose 2.2%, and they increased 1% at electronics stores and 0.7% at furniture stores.

Purchases at online retailers jumped 2.1% and climbed 2% at restaurants and bars.

The ongoing strength of consumer demand, fueled by a robust labor market, is a key reason the Federal Reserve has accelerated its efforts to tighten credit and cool the economy.

Authorities: Taiwanese hate led to church attack

Associated Press

LAGUNA WOODS, Calif. — A gunman motivated by political hatred against Taiwan chained shut the doors of a California church and hid firebombs inside before shooting at a gathering of mostly elderly Taiwanese parishioners, killing a man who tackled him and possibly saved dozens of lives, authorities said Monday.

David Chou, 68, of Las Vegas — a U.S. citizen who authorities said grew up in Taiwan — drove to Orange County on Saturday. The next day, he attended a lunch held by Irvine Taiwanese Presbyterian Church, which worships at Geneva Presbyterian Church in the community of Laguna Woods. Though he knew no one there, he spent about an hour mingling with about 40 attendees

and then executed his plot, authorities said at a news conference.

Authorities said Chou chained the doors and put super glue in the keyholes.

He had two 9 mm handguns — legally purchased years ago in Las Vegas — and three bags, containing among other things four Molotov-cocktail-type incendiary devices and extra ammunition.

He opened fire and in the ensuing chaos Dr. John Cheng, 52, tackled him, allowing other parishioners to subdue him and tie him up with extension cords.

Cheng died and five people were wounded, the oldest 92. Sheriff Don Barnes called Cheng's heroism "a meeting of good versus evil" that probably

saved the lives "of upwards of dozens of people."

Chou, who for years worked as a security guard, was booked on suspicion of murder and attempted murder and jailed on \$1 million bail.

He was expected to appear in state court Tuesday.

A federal hate crimes investigation is also ongoing. There was no immediate word on why Chou chose to target the church in Laguna Woods, a scenic and affluent coastal area whose population mainly consists of retirees.

Barnes said the motive for the shooting was Chou's hatred toward Taiwan that was documented in handwritten notes that authorities found.

Chou's family was apparently among many forcibly removed

from mainland China to Taiwan sometime after 1948, Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer said.

Relations between mainlanders forced to flee a Communist takeover and native Taiwanese were frequently tense as the new arrivals crowded into slums and military communities. Separated by language and lifestyle, bullying and confrontation were frequent as President Chiang Kai-shek tightly restricted civil liberties under nearly four decades of martial law.

Barnes said Chou acted alone and was "not believed to be associated with any specific church or any religion, and there's no direct connection to the church or any member of the church that we're aware of."

Rain brings relief to record wildfire in NM

Associated Press

Lightning sparked a few new small fires in the drought-stricken Southwest Monday, but the thunderstorms brought welcome rain to the monster blaze that's been churning for a month in New Mexico and is now the state's largest in recorded history.

"We haven't seen rain in a really long time, so that's exciting," San Miguel County Sheriff Chris Lopez said Monday night at a briefing on the biggest active fire in the United States burning east of Santa Fe.

"It gave us a little bit of a breather," he said at one of the command posts in Las Vegas, N.M., on the southeast flank of the blaze that's charred 465 square miles.

More than 2,000 fire personnel remain on the lines in the Sangre de Cristo mountain range south of Taos. The fire now covers an area nearly one-quarter the size of Delaware.

More than 260 homes have burned and more evacuations were prompted over the weekend as the blaze moved through dry — and in some cases dead — stands of pine and fir trees. Huge columns of smoke could be seen from miles away, and fire officials and weather forecasts continue to refer to it as an unprecedented situation.

Stepped up aerial attacks also helped about 1,000 firefighters continue to make progress Monday on a big fire west of Santa Fe.

Forecasters said the weather will remain unstable throughout the week with shifting winds and rising humidity. But crews should enjoy at least another day of more favorable fire conditions.

It should be a "good work day for the crews," fire behavior specialist Stewart Turner said Monday night. "Not suspecting big growth at all."

Chinese students protest over 'zero-COVID' strategy

Associated Press

BEIJING — Administrators at an elite Beijing university have backed down from plans to further tighten pandemic restrictions on students as part of China's "zero-COVID" strategy after a weekend protest at the school, according to students Tuesday.

Graduate students at Peking University staged the rare but peaceful protest Sunday over the school's decision to erect a sheet-metal wall to keep them further sequestered on campus, while allowing faculty to come and go freely. Discontent had already been simmering over regulations prohibiting them from ordering in food or having visitors, and daily COVID-19 testing.

A citywide lockdown of Shanghai and expanded restrictions in Beijing in recent weeks have raised questions about the economic and human costs of China's strict virus controls, which the ruling Communist Party has trumpeted as a suc-

cess compared to other major nations with much higher death tolls. While most people have grumbled privately or online, some Shanghai residents have clashed with police, volunteers and others trying to enforce lockdowns and take infected people to quarantine centers.

Many of the Peking University students protesting Sunday outside a dormitory took cellphone videos as Chen Baojian, the deputy secretary of the university's Communist Party committee, admonished them through a megaphone to end the protest and talk with him one-on-one.

"Please put down your mobile phones, protect Peking University," he said, to which one student yelled: "Is that protection? How about our rights and interests?"

The crowd of about 200 clapped and cheered as a half dozen protesters broke through the sheet-metal barrier behind Chen.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man killed after taking refused in trash bin

MT HELENA — A man who apparently sought shelter in a cardboard recycling bin in Montana's capital city was killed after the container was picked up by a garbage truck, the Helena Police Department said.

The man's body was found in a collection of recycled cardboard by an employee of Pacific Steel & Recycling in Helena, officials said.

The victim was Jacob Daniel Garza, 24, from Utah, Lewis and Clark County Sheriff Leo Dutton told the Independent Record. Dutton did not know Garza's hometown.

Investigators believe Garza "climbed into a recycling bin to stay warm." The driver of the garbage truck was unaware Garza was in the recycling bin.

Bobcat enters home and attacks resident

VT WINDSOR — A bobcat burst into a home in Vermont and attacked a man before he was able to trap the animal in the bathroom, police said.

Windsor Police Chief Jennifer Frank told WCAX-TV that the bobcat had apparently been chasing a cat and ran through an open door and into the house.

An elderly man suffered injuries in an altercation with the animal but was able to get it in the bathroom and shut the door.

The resident was taken to the hospital for evaluation. Vermont Fish and Wildlife officials responded and euthanized the bobcat, which will be tested for rabies and other pathogens.

Grandma gets honorary degree for aiding others

NM SANTA FE — An 84-year-old woman has received an honorary degree from Northern New Mexico College for her contributions to the small community north of Española.

"I'm not the type that likes to show off, but they gave me that honorary degree, and I'm glad," Socorro Herrera told the Santa Fe New Mexican in an interview after the ceremony.

According to the newspaper, Herrera is a great grandmother and is known for feeding the elderly, singing at weddings and running Socorro's Restaurant, a staple of the little town that has drawn high-profile customers including former President Barack Obama and actor John Travolta.

She married at 16, had the first of her four children by the time she was 17 and didn't graduate from high school.

Man dies after touching high voltage subway rail

MA BOSTON — A man who touched a high voltage rail at a Boston subway station has died, according to police.

The man, whose identity has not yet been released, fell onto the tracks at the Park Street subway stop downtown and touched the third rail that powers the trains.

MBTA Transit Police Superintendent Richard Sullivan said the man appeared to be unsteady on his feet on the subway platform before he fell. He said foul play is not currently suspected.

Suit: 3 firms violated school bus idling laws

NY NEW YORK — Three companies that operate more than 600 school buses in New York City are being sued by the state attorney general's office on allegations they repeatedly violated bus idling laws and polluted the city's air since 2019.

Attorney General Letitia James announced the lawsuits saying the state is seeking monetary relief and a court order for the companies to fully comply with city and state idling laws.

The companies being sued are Jofaz Transportation, 3rd Avenue Transit and Y&M Transit Corp., which are all based in New York City and are owned and operated by Joseph Fazzia and his family, the attorney general's office said.

The lawsuit alleges the companies' buses idled longer than state and local laws allow at locations around the city that are predominantly low-income and have high concentrations of Black and Hispanic residents. State law prohibits idling for more than five minutes and city law bans idling for more than three minutes. Both laws have certain exceptions.

Dog helps nab suspect who rammed police car

CA FRESNO — Authorities arrested a suspected car thief who rammed a police cruiser before leading officers on a chase that hit speeds of 100 mph on central California highways, officials said.

The man was captured with help from a K-9 after he abandoned the stolen Chevrolet Ta-

hoe and tried to hide in backyards of a residential neighborhood in Fresno, police said.

The chase began when police officers tried to pull over the Tahoe in the parking lot of a motel, the Fresno Bee reported.

The driver of the Tahoe intentionally crashed into a police cruiser before fleeing at high speeds onto state routes 41 and 168, Fresno Police Lt. Ignacio Ruiz said.

The man, who was not immediately identified, was treated for dog bites and taken into custody. He could face multiple charges including auto theft, resisting arrest and assault with a deadly weapon, Ruiz said.

Rockefeller home on island to be razed

ME MOUNT DESERT — A billionaire is tearing down David Rockefeller Sr.'s home to make way for something new.

Danaher Corp. co-founder Mitchell Rales bought the 14.8-acre Ringing Point property for \$19 million in January 2018, a year after Rockefeller died at the age of 101.

The property is under ownership of a limited-liability corporation, Ringing Point LLC, which obtained a demolition permit, the Bangor Daily News reported. The town has not received an application for a building permit, but it is expected that a new home will be built.

The seven-bedroom house was designed in 1972 by Rockefeller's wife, Peggy. The property in Seal Harbor, which is part of the town of Mount Desert, features a granite swimming pool and circular rose garden.

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Avalanche's Makar has been dominant

Associated Press

There's one area where Cale Makar still has plenty of room for growth — his playoff beard.

Even with a little bit of a head start, the Colorado Avalanche defenseman's rosy cheeks still shine through.

"It's like three weeks, right?" teased teammate Devon Toews before the Avalanche swept the Nashville Predators in a first-round playoff series dominated by Makar.

"Yeah, this is probably a couple of weeks already," Makar said with a laugh. "Hopefully we get to have a better look at (a beard) this year, what I can actually do if it's a couple months."

No bristling at this: His game is razor sharp.

Makar turned in one of the best regular seasons ever by a Colorado defenseman. It was quite a feat given the Avalanche's blue-line tradition, which includes Adam Foote, Rob Blake, Ray Bourque and Sandis Ozolinsh, but Makar is clearly special.

After helping the Avalanche put away the Predators with a three-goal, seven-assist series, his 10 points are the most in league history by a defenseman through four games in any playoff year, according to NHL Stats.

"He might be the best player in the league

right now," Colorado forward Nathan MacKinnon said. "He might be one of the best 'D' to ever play by the end of his career at this rate."

The 23-year-old from Calgary is averaging 1.05 goals per game in 39 career playoff appearances, which puts him second all-time among NHL defensemen, trailing only Bobby Orr (1.24 in 74 postseason games).

"He hasn't let up," Avalanche coach Jared Bednar said of Makar, the fourth overall pick by the team in the 2017 draft. "He keeps getting better and better."

Makar's 28 goals broke Ozolinsh's single-season franchise record by a defenseman. On the night he eclipsed Ozolinsh's mark, teammate Mikko Rantanen had to inform him of the milestone.

"I sound like a broken record, but those goals go back to the team," Makar said, insisting that individual records are "not really something I focus on."

Same with winning the Norris Trophy, which goes to the league's top defenseman. He's a finalist along with Victor Hedman of Tampa Bay and Nashville's Roman Josi.

Josi's 96-point season was the best by an NHL defenseman in 29 years, but Colorado held him to one goal and one assist in sweeping a first-round series for a second straight postseason.

Makar is a big fan of Josi, with the two chatting at the All-Star Game and briefly again in the handshake line Monday night.

"He's an unbelievable player," said Makar, the 2019-20 Calder Trophy winner as rookie of the year. "He pushed me a lot this season. He had one incredible year."

The respect is mutual.

"He's such a fun player to watch," said Josi, who won the Norris the same year Makar took home the Calder. "He's so dynamic. ... I love watching him play."

Except for maybe this: Makar setting up the winning goal Monday by avoiding a check and sending a pass across the ice to an open Valeri Nichushkin. It capped the three-point night for Makar, whose sweet performance included fans throwing Skittles at him in the closing moments.

The Avs, who have been eliminated in the second round in each of the past three postseasons, will try to end that skid against the St. Louis Blues.

Makar will draw plenty of attention after his performance in the first round.

"We're going to have to be tight on him," Blues coach Craig Berube said. "When he's in the offensive zone, he's very dynamic. He will make one little move on you and he's gone."

Derby runner-up Epicenter is favorite for Preakness

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Kentucky Derby runner-up Epicenter was set Monday as the 6-5 morning line favorite for the Preakness Stakes, which will be run without Rich Strike.

The surprise Derby winner at 80-1 is not in the field of nine for Saturday's \$1.65 million race. Rich Strike's owner said he felt the two-week turnaround did not give the colt enough rest and plans to enter him in the Belmont.

Kicking off the Preakness draw at a Baltimore-area restaurant, emcee Britney Eurton talked about Rich Strike pulling off "one of the greatest upsets in sports history. Though we might not have the Kentucky Derby winner, there is no shortage of talented runners," she said.

Rich Strike's absence clouds

the second jewel of horse racing's Triple Crown and makes this the second Preakness in four years without the Derby winner.

Last year, Medina Spirit ran and finished third at Pimlico after testing positive at Churchill Downs for a substance that was not allowed on race day and was eventually disqualified. In 2020, the races were run out of order because of the pandemic. And in 2019, neither DQ'ed Derby champion Maximum Security nor elevated winner Country House went to the Preakness.

This time, Steve Asmussen-trained Epicenter, who drew the No. 8 post, fourth-place finisher Simplification and 14th-place finisher Happy Jack are the only horses back for the Preakness from the Derby, which Rich Strike won with a furious charge down the stretch.

No. 6 Happy Jack, trained by 2012 Derby and Preakness winner Doug O'Neill, is 30-1. Simplification is 6-1 and drew the rail spot with the No. 1 post position and jockey John Velazquez set to ride.

Kentucky Oaks winner Secret Oath is the third betting choice on the morning line at 9-2 after Hall of Fame trainer D. Wayne Lukas opted to enter the filly in the Preakness. She drew post No. 4.

Early Voting is the 7-2 second choice after skipping the Derby. Trainer Chad Brown targeted the Preakness for Early Voting, who drew the No. 5 post position.

While Taiba and Messier aren't in the Preakness, there is a Bob Baffert presence in Armagnac, a late entry whom the two-time Triple Crown winning trainer transferred to Tim Yak-

teen. Baffert is serving a suspension in Kentucky for medication violations and would not have been allowed to saddle any horses in the Preakness. No. 7 Armagnac is 12-1.

Added to the field at the extra cost of \$150,000, No. 2 Creative Minister is 10-1. No. 9 Skippy-longstocking is 20-1, and long shot No. 3 Fenwick is 50-1.

Beyond Rich Strike, a handful of other horses expected to run in the Preakness were removed from the field before the draw.

Un Ojo, the one-eyed gelding whose bruised foot kept him out of the Derby, was taken out of consideration Monday after the injury flared up. Brown's Zandon was also a possibility for the Preakness but now may also skip the June 11 Belmont with eyes on the Travers Stakes this summer at Saratoga.

Spoelstra, Udoka ready for East finals

Associated Press

MIAMI — He grew up in Portland, Ore., basketball in his blood. Wasn't exactly a big-time recruit before eventually playing some college ball in the West Coast Conference. Took a circuitous route into coaching, guided along the way by one of the game's legendary sideline bosses. And last summer, he was part of the brain trust that helped USA Basketball win Olympic gold.

That is Erik Spoelstra's story.

That is also Ime Udoka's story.

There is enormous respect between those men, who have known one another for decades and have deep ties. Spoelstra coaches the Miami Heat, Udoka is in his first season coaching the Boston Celtics, and one of them will be representing the Eastern Conference in the NBA Finals. Game 1 of the East title series is Tuesday night, the top-seeded Heat playing host to the second-seeded Celtics.

"We have great respect for what they've done during the regular season, to develop the right habits," said Spoelstra, now in his 14th season after taking over as Miami coach for Hall of Famer Pat Riley. "And like I said,

this is the way it should be — the two teams that played most consistently at the top of the East for most of the year, and we're meeting in the conference finals to figure it out."

The Heat needed five games to get past Atlanta in Round 1, then six games to oust Philadelphia in the East semifinals. Boston swept Brooklyn in Round 1, then ended Milwaukee's reign as NBA champions by finishing off a seven-game series win in the other East semi that ended Sunday.

It's a rematch of the 2020 East finals, held in the restart bubble at Walt Disney World, when Miami topped the Celtics 4-2 to earn a berth in the NBA Finals. That was the third East finals loss in a four-year span for Boston — and many of the players from some of or all those defeats, like Jayson Tatum, Jaylen Brown and Marcus Smart, are the team's core today.

For its part, the Heat — seeking a seventh trip to the NBA Finals and what would be a sixth in the last 12 seasons — isn't looking back at the bubble win or much of anything else, All-Star forward Jimmy Butler insisted.

"We just want to focus in on today, right

now, the group of guys that we get to go to war with every single day," Butler said.

So, players might not look back.

It's a little different for the coaches.

Udoka remembers meeting Spoelstra when he was a kid — at 44, Udoka is seven years younger than Spoelstra — and watching him play in pro-am runs alongside other Portland basketball legends like Damon Stoudemire. Udoka played against Spoelstra-coached Miami teams four times before becoming a coach, spending the bulk of his years as an assistant under Gregg Popovich in San Antonio.

Hence, the Olympic ties they share: Popovich was USA Basketball's coach in the last Olympic cycle, and asked Udoka and Spoelstra to be part of his circle of confidants for that journey.

"He's always had success," Udoka said of Spoelstra. "One of the best coaches in the league, in my opinion. It'll be a task for us because he has his team well-prepared, hard-fought, Heat Culture mentality. I got to know him on a more personal level in that time spent in Tokyo in preparations for the Olympics, but I've known Erik for a while."

Curry gets degree from Davidson 13 years after leaving

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — "Pomp and Circumstance" played as Stephen Curry stepped up to the podium after practice Monday as he prepared with the Golden State Warriors for the Western Conference Finals.

A playful, makeshift moment to honor his new status as college graduate.

Curry completed his Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology to join the Davidson College class of 2022, even if he couldn't be there to walk for the commencement ceremony Sunday but watched on video.

He fulfilled a promise to mother Sonya that he would receive his degree. She had been bragging for the past decade that two of her children — son Seth and daughter Sydel — had college degrees.

"It's cool to kind of relive the sights and sounds of school and

campus and all that," Curry said. "This is a long time coming, obviously. Since I left campus it was a goal to finish. Just obviously a sense of accomplishment but a promise I made to my mom and Coach (Bob) McKillop when I left after my junior year. It was pretty special, they had the Fathead (cutout) over on campus in my honor."

This marks another important accomplishment to add to a list that includes three NBA championships, two MVPs and a pair of scoring titles. Curry will receive his diploma at a later date. He completed his coursework 13 years after leaving Davidson a year early following his junior season, then was drafted by the Warriors seventh overall.

Next up is Gary Payton II, who said Sunday he is close to earning his degree from Oregon State in a month or so.

"It doesn't surprise me. We have guys who are really conscientious about the world beyond basketball and their impact in their communities. Also, Steph is a really curious guy, he's constantly trying to expand his horizons and getting his college degree was really important to him," coach Steve Kerr said. "I think it's fantastic, and same with Gary. It's wonderful when you see guys go back and finish up."

Curry also worked toward his major during the 2011 lockout, then reenrolled for this spring's semester.

His thesis was focused on advancing gender equity through sports and he even did a research project about tattoos and got his teammates who have ink involved by asking them about the meaning behind their choices and other details such as how they feel about the tattoos now.

"My guys helped me out on that research project," Curry said.

He credited a half-dozen people for helping him get it done, including a former professor from Davidson now at UC Santa Cruz, another Davidson professor in collaboration with one at Stanford and even Davidson athletic director Chris Clunie.

Payton, one player who contributed to the tattoos project, congratulated Curry on Sunday. Curry watched the ceremony over live stream and was announced as "Wardell Stephen Curry II."

"I told him that's huge, a big relief off his shoulders I can imagine," Payton said. "So, yeah, I'm proud of 30 getting that done. It took a couple years after but it doesn't matter as long as you get the paper, that's all that matters. I'm proud and excited for 30."

Toronto's Kikuchi stymies Seattle

Associated Press

TORONTO — Yusei Kikuchi allowed one hit over six shutout innings to beat his former team, Bo Bichette and Matt Chapman backed the left-hander with home runs and the Toronto Blue Jays topped the Seattle Mariners 6-2 on Monday night.

Bichette went 3-for-5 with two RBIs and scored twice as the Blue Jays returned home from a 2-7 trip.

Raimel Tapia hit an RBI single in the sixth and pinch-hitter Alejandro Kirk added a two-run single in the seventh as Toronto scored more than five runs for the first time since May 7 at Cleveland. The Jays mustered seven runs over three games at Tampa Bay this past weekend.

"It was good to see our offense score that many runs today," manager Charlie Montoyo said. "The timely hitting was big."

The Mariners have not won back-to-back games since victories over Kansas City on April 24 and Tampa Bay on April 26. Seattle is 7-13 on the road.

Kikuchi (2-1) walked three and struck out

six to win for the second time in three starts.

"The biggest thing was establishing the fastball and really commanding that pitch in the zone," he said through a translator.

Kikuchi didn't pitch past the fifth in any of his first four appearances with Toronto but has worked into the sixth in each of his last three outings. He's 2-0 with a 1.56 ERA during that span, striking out 20 in 17⅓ innings.

"He looks awesome," Bichette said. "He's one of the nastier lefties that I've faced. To see him being aggressive, going after hitters, I think that's huge for him."

Seattle didn't get a hit until Jesse Winker grounded a double down the first-base line to begin the fifth.

Kikuchi went 15-24 with a 4.97 ERA in 70 starts for the Mariners over the previous three seasons before signing with Toronto in March.

"He did a really good job commanding the fastball and mixing it with the slider," Seattle's Eugenio Suárez said.

Suárez hit a solo home run for the Mariners, the 200th of his career, off Trevor Ri-

chards in the seventh. Richards left after walking Torrens and pinch-hitter Mike Ford, and pinch-hitter Adam Frazier loaded the bases with a single off Yimi Garcia. Toronto escaped when Garcia got Abraham Toro to fly out and retired Ty France on a grounder.

"That was really the only big pressure we had," Mariners manager Scott Servais said.

Adam Cimber got two outs with two runners on for his fourth major league save and second this season.

Bichette homered in the first, his fourth, and Chapman added a two-out drive in the second, his sixth. Both came off right-hander Chris Flexen (1-6), who lost his fourth straight decision.

"Obviously, he made a couple of mistakes on the home run balls," Servais said. "Other than that, I thought he threw the ball really well. We didn't do anything offensively for him."

Flexen allowed three runs and six hits in 5⅓ innings. He walked two and struck out a season-high seven.

Robert powers White Sox past Royals in 10th inning

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Luis Robert hit a two-run homer in the 10th inning after Johnny Cueto's impressive Chicago debut, and the White Sox defeated the Kansas City Royals 5-3 on Monday night in the opener of a five-game series.

Yasmani Grandal also had a two-run shot for the White Sox, who squandered a 3-0 lead in the eighth.

"It was an important win for us," manager Tony La Russa said.

Robert connected off Scott Barlow (2-1) with two outs, scoring the automatic runner as well.

"I was just looking to make good contact and drive in that run," Robert said. "The first pitch he threw me was a breaking ball. I was prepared for a fastball, but he threw me a breaking ball. I just hit it hard."

The 36-year-old Cueto pitched six shutout innings in his first major league start this sea-

son after getting promoted from Triple-A Charlotte. He allowed just two hits and two walks, striking out seven. Only one runner reached second base against him.

Yankees 6, Orioles 2: Luis Severino allowed one hit in six innings, and Jose Trevino became the first New York catcher with a home run this year when he hit a three-run drive in the fourth in a win at Baltimore.

Josh Donaldson and Anthony Rizzo added back-to-back solo homers in the ninth for the Yankees, who won for the 19th time in 22 games. New York (26-9) is off to one of the best 35-game starts in franchise history. Only the 1939 and 1928 teams, at 28-7, were better at this point.

Cubs 9, Pirates 0: Willson Contreras led off with a double and became a rare leadoff hitter with a first-inning grand slam as host Chicago burst to an eight-run lead and beat Pittsburgh.

Contreras became the 10th

leadoff hitter since 1901 with a first-inning slam, the first since Houston's George Springer off Kansas City's Edinson Vólquez on June 24, 2016.

Brewers 1, Braves 0: Freddy Peralta dominated over seven innings, Hunter Renfroe scored on a wild pitch and Milwaukee two-hit visiting Atlanta.

Peralta (3-1) gave up two hits and a walk while striking out 10 and retiring his final 11 batters.

Tigers 3, Rays 2: Harold Castro hit his first home run of the year with two outs in the ninth inning, a tiebreaking shot that led visiting Detroit past Tampa Bay for its season-best fourth straight victory.

Castro connected off Andrew Kittredge (3-1) for his first long ball since going deep in consecutive games against Oakland in early September last year.

Red Sox 6, Astros 3: Trevor Story homered to tie the game in the seventh inning and Xander Bogaerts hit a two-run shot in

the eighth to propel host Boston past Houston.

Rangers 7, Angels 4: Eli White had the first and last of five hits during a six-run first inning off Noah Syndergaard, and host Texas beat Los Angeles.

Dodgers 5, Diamondbacks 4: Chris Taylor hit a two-run homer and Tony Gonsolin pitched six innings of three-hit ball in Los Angeles' victory over Madison Bumgarner and visiting Arizona.

Giants 7, Rockies 6: Curt Casali hit two home runs, Mike Yastrzemski delivered a go-ahead homer in the top of the ninth and San Francisco won at Colorado.

Marlins 8, Nationals 2: Sandy Alcantara retired his last 20 batters, pitching three-hit ball over eight innings to lead host Miami past Washington.

Twins 3, Athletics 1: Gary Sanchez homered, Royce Lewis scored twice and Minnesota won at Oakland.