

Study: White men earn most in DOD tech jobs

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

White men in high-tech Defense Department jobs earn more than their counterparts with similar skill sets, raising concerns about bias in career fields that are a Pentagon recruiting priority, a new study found.

The disparities held even after researchers at the Rand Corp. accounted for differences in worker and organizational conditions, such as duty locations and other criteria that could skew the results, the think tank said in its review of military personnel records.

The report, which was released Thursday, found “a significant unexplained compensation difference among White men and all other demographic groups,” adding that the pay inequities are

“especially prevalent when White men are compared with Black men and women.”

“Our analyses cannot rule out the possibility that decision making biases affect compensation and could factor into compensation differences,” the report authors wrote.

The study comes as DOD struggles to recruit and retain civilian workers in the STEM fields of science, technology, engineering and math.

Among the report’s findings, if Black women were compensated at the same level as similarly situated white men, they would receive an additional \$7,500 annually on average, the report said.

While the pay differences between white and Asian men were relatively small, the disparity be-

tween the earnings of white men and Hispanic women employed by the department stood at nearly \$12,000, almost double the difference found between other groups, the report said.

“These unexplained differences could be attributable to discrimination,” the report said. “However, additional analysis and data with other measurable information... would be required to further reduce the level of uncertainty.”

The study also found that women earned less than their male counterparts across the board, with white women earning 4% less than white men, Hispanic women 3% less than Hispanic men, Black women 4.4% less than Black men and Asian women 1.8% less than Asian men. All of the discrepancies were deemed

statistically significant.

Rand recommended that DOD take numerous steps to address the differences, including an assessment to better grasp the underlying reasons for demographic-group disparities.

Since civilian personnel decisions tend to happen in local DOD units, addressing any potential inequities likely requires a local-level review of policies and practices, the report said.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense should direct subordinate service components to review how local policies and labor market conditions affect compensation in all demographic groups, the report said.

“The service components would then report findings from the assessments to OSD to review,” Rand said.

Refreshed US-Philippines ties revive long-paused jet drills

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

For the first time in more than 30 years, American and Filipino fighter pilots are flying together in airpower drills that were among the largest in the Indo-Pacific during the Cold War.

Cope Thunder, which kicked off Monday and runs until May 12, includes 160 U.S. airmen and a dozen aircraft from the 35th Fighter Wing at Misawa Air Base, Japan, according to a Pacific Air Forces statement Friday. The wing flies F-16 Fighting Falcons.

“Cope Thunder Philippines is designed to provide bilateral fighter training with the Philippine Air Force,” the statement said.

The exercise at Clark Air Base, a former U.S. facility on the Philippines’ main island of Luzon, began in 1976 and was last held

there in 1990, according to the statement.

Clark was badly damaged in the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in 1991 and U.S. forces left the following year.

Cope Thunder moved to Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, in 1992, and was eventually renamed Red Flag Alaska.

Airpower exercises are also part of Balikatan, the annual, multi-service U.S.-Philippine training in the islands that ran from April 11 to Friday.

For Balikatan, the U.S. Air Force sent two MC-130J Commando II gunships, a pair of MQ-9 Reaper drones and 16 F-16C Fighting Falcons, Capt. Denise Guiao-Corpuz, a 15th Wing spokeswoman, said by email Monday.

In the 1970s and ’80s Cope Thunder involved up to 90 air-

craft with as many as 60 in the air at the same time, retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Dan Leaf, who flew in 10 Cope Thunders, said by phone Monday from Hawaii.

“We were doing cutting-edge tactics,” said Leaf, who from 2005 to 2008 was the deputy commander of U.S. Pacific Command, now called Indo-Pacific Command.

Reactivating the drill signals that the U.S.-Philippine alliance, for all its ups and downs over more than a century, is back up, Leaf said.

“It demonstrates that the U.S. remains the preferred security partner in the Indo-Pacific,” he said. “China wishes that wasn’t the case.”

More evidence of a strengthening alliance was provided Friday by U.S. Pacific Fleet’s commander, Adm. Samuel Paparo, who told Japan’s Nikkei newspaper

that the United States is ready to help the Philippines as China interferes with Manila’s efforts to resupply a grounded warship in the South China Sea.

Beijing has “frequently interfered with those resupplies,” something that’s “clearly unlawful,” Paparo said. The Chinese coast guard on Sunday blocked a Philippine patrol vessel from reaching the BRP Sierra Madre in Ayungin Shoal, also known as Second Thomas Shoal, in the Spratly Islands, according to The Associated Press.

The World War II-era vessel, crewed by a small Philippine navy contingent, was intentionally grounded in 1999 to support Philippine territorial claims.

“We stand ready to come to the Philippines’ assistance, in their exercise of their sovereign rights,” Paparo told Nikkei.

Second round of Russian strikes fails to hit Kyiv

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia launched its second large salvo of missiles at Ukraine in recent days early Monday, damaging buildings and wounding at least 34 people in the eastern city of Pavlohrad but failing to hit Kyiv, officials said.

Air raid sirens began blaring across the capital at about 3:45 a.m., followed by explosions as Ukrainian defense systems intercepted missiles.

Eighteen cruise missiles were fired from the Murmansk and Caspian regions, and 15 of them were intercepted, said Ukrainian Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi.

The head of Kyiv's city administration, Serhii Popko, said all missiles fired at the city were shot down, as well as some drones. He didn't provide further details.

The attack follows Friday's launch of more than 20 cruise missiles and two explosive drones at Ukraine, the first to target Kyiv in nearly two months.

In that attack, Russian missiles hit an apartment building in Uman, a city about 135 miles south of Kyiv, killing 21 people, including three children.

In Monday's attack, missiles hit Pavlohrad,

in the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, wounding 34 people, including five children, according to Serhii Lysak, the region's top official.

Seven missiles were shot at the city and "some were intercepted" but others struck an industrial facility, sparking a fire. Damage was reported to 24 apartment buildings, 89 homes, six schools and five shops, according to regional authorities.

Missiles also hit three other areas in the Dnipropetrovsk region, damaging residential buildings and a school, Lysak said.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said Monday that Russia conducted "a group missile strike with long-range precision-guided airborne and sea-borne weapons on facilities of Ukraine's defense industry ... all designated facilities were struck."

A Russian-installed official in the occupied Zaporizhzhia region, Vladimir Rogov, said the attack hit ammunition and fuel depots in Pavlohrad, which he said would impede Ukraine's planned counteroffensive.

The attacks also damaged Ukraine's power network infrastructure, which will take several days to repair, according to Ukraine's energy minister, Herman Haluschenko.

First Republic Bank seized and sold to JPMorgan

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Regulators seized troubled First Republic Bank early Monday, making it the second-largest bank failure in U.S. history, and promptly sold all of its deposits and most of its assets to JPMorgan Chase Bank in a bid to head off further banking turmoil in the U.S.

San Francisco-based First Republic is the third midsize bank to fail in two months. The only larger bank failure was Washington Mutual, which collapsed at the height of the 2008 financial crisis and was also taken over by JPMorgan.

First Republic has struggled since the March collapses of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank and investors and depositors had grown increasingly worried it might not survive because of a high amount of uninsured deposits and exposure to low interest rate loans.

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. said early Monday that First Republic Bank's 84 branches in eight states will reopen as branches of JPMorgan Chase Bank and depositors will have full access to all of their deposits.

Regulators worked through late last week and this weekend to find a way forward before U.S. stock markets opened.

They solicited bids for First Republic Bank's assets and once again turned to JPMorgan Chase, the nation's biggest bank, with a reputation as a dealmaker during times of crisis. Treasury officials also enlisted JPMorgan last month to spearhead a \$30 billion funding package for First Republic.

"Our government invited us and others to step up, and we did," said Jamie Dimon, chairman and CEO of JPMorgan Chase.

As of April 13, First Republic had approximately \$229 billion in total assets and \$104 billion in total deposits, the FDIC said.

The FDIC estimated its deposit insurance fund would take a \$13 billion hit from taking First Republic into receivership. Its rescue of Silicon Valley Bank cost the fund a record \$20 billion.

First Republic shares fell 75% last week and closed Friday at \$3.51. Any remaining shareholders are likely to get wiped out.

The shares traded at \$115 on March 8, right before Silicon Valley Bank failed.

Suggestive post on Facebook spurs UN Command review of its policies

By DAVID CHOI

Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The U.N. Command is reviewing its social media policies after a short, sexually suggestive post was published recently on the organization's official Facebook page.

The post — "Make love to me ..." — appeared around midnight March 24. By mid-morning the message had disappeared.

The post "was made unrelated to the mission and goals of our command," Army Col. Isaac Taylor, who also serves as spokesman for U.S. Forces Korea, said in a statement emailed to Stars and Stripes on Wednesday.

"We are reviewing and updating our cur-

rent practices and security protocols to ensure it does not happen again," he wrote.

Taylor's email did not answer questions about who was responsible for the post and whether any disciplinary actions were taken. Speaking by phone Monday, he said the investigation into the incident is ongoing.

The U.N. Command's Facebook account posts news and information about its activities and history.

"To the followers of the Facebook page, we thank you for choosing us as your trusted source for content related to the amazing work and history of the [command's] member states here on the Korean Peninsula," Taylor's statement added.

Mississippi River tests flood defenses

Associated Press

DAVENPORT, Iowa — The rising Mississippi River tested flood defenses in southeast Iowa and northwest Illinois as it neared forecasted crests in the area Monday, driven by a spring surge of water from melting snow.

The peak water levels this spring will likely rank in the top 10 of all time in many places, but the National Weather Service said river levels will generally remain well below past records. That should help most towns along the river withstand the floodwaters, though officials will be checking their floodwalls and sandbag barriers closely in the next few days.

Officials in towns along the river have said they are optimistic they will escape severe flooding this year, thanks to improved

floodwalls and other prevention measures.

“Luckily we’ve had relatively dry weather over the last week or so and not expecting much in the way of rainfall as well,” National Weather Service meteorologist Tom Philip said. “So it’s coming through as forecast for the most part.”

The river peaked in the Dubuque area Saturday at 23.03 feet — well below the record of 25.7 feet — but officials there were grateful to have the floodwall the city built 50 years ago in place.

Without that floodwall, the city would be facing significant problems, said Deron Muehring, a civil engineer for the city of Dubuque.

“The floodwaters would be up to 6 feet deep in the Port of Dubuque and more than 7 feet deep in the south port,” Muehring told

the Dubuque Telegraph-Herald.

The river was expected to crest at around 21.6 feet Monday in the Quad-Cities area, where several neighboring cities sit along the Iowa-Illinois line. Some roads and parks near the river are closed. The record at that spot is 22.7 feet.

Once the river crests in an area, it may take up to two weeks for the floodwaters to fully recede.

The flooding is expected to ease as the spring surge of water from melting snow works its way further down the 2,300-mile length of the river on its way to the Gulf of Mexico. Most of the tributaries in Iowa, Illinois and other Midwest states are running lower than usual, so they won’t exacerbate the flooding by dumping large amounts of water into the river.

Tornado damages up to 100 homes in Virginia Beach

The (Norfolk, Va.) Virginian-Pilot

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. — Dozens of downed trees, debris and damaged property littered the Great Neck section of Virginia Beach Sunday evening following a suspected tornado.

City Manager Patrick Duhaney declared a local state of emergency Sunday evening, and the city said the number of homes damaged in the storm was still unknown, but was estimated to be between 50 and 100. No injuries have been reported.

The city reported a tornado on the ground in the area of River Road and North Great Neck Road just after 6 p.m. Some of the damaged homes included those in Upper Chelsea Reach and Haverham Close, the city said in a news release. Virginia Natural Gas staff were onsite to assess several homes with gas leaks.

The National Weather Service con-

firmed seeing a debris signature for a tornado on its radars, which means meteorologists could see debris caused by the storm.

Virginia Beach Public Schools announced late Sunday that three schools in the Great Neck area were to be closed on Monday.

Residents said the 2200 block of Haverham Close saw some of the worst damage, with some roofs partially removed and windows shattered. Dozens of firefighters worked Sunday night to cut down trees, and some stood atop roofs to assess damage. Tara Frey, who lives in the neighborhood, said she was washing lettuce from her garden when she heard the tornado alert, which prompted her family to hunker in place with their two dogs.

“I could literally feel the pressure drop in the house and I looked out the back and

the wind picked up and the rain started and I just knew it in my gut that it was coming,” she said, adding that it lasted about 10-15 seconds.

Frey said she saw her neighbor’s boat fly by her window before it landed across the street in front of her home.

“It looks like I’m pretty lucky,” she said, adding that she lost her fence and a window was damaged.

Great Neck resident Heather Sweeney posted photos of some of the damage she saw on Twitter.

“I saw multiple large trees down on Great Neck Road, as well as a car that was damaged by fallen trees,” she said in a private exchange with a reporter. “Bystanders talked about the fear of gas leaks, and emergency vehicles were everywhere, blocking off street entrances and asking people to return to their homes.”

Tornado in coastal Fla. city flips cars, damages homes

Associated Press

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. — A tornado touched down in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., on Saturday as a powerful storm system brought intense rain and powerful winds to the state, overturning cars, damaging homes and snapping tree branches.

The National Weather Service in Miami said the tornado hit late Saturday afternoon with winds of 100 mph near Palm Beach Gar-

dens Medical Center and headed northeast toward the coast.

Storm damage forced authorities in the coastal city to close major roadways as workers cleared debris and inspected wreckage. Images from the scene showed cars flipped over on top of each other, cracked tree limbs resting on vehicles and homes, as well as other debris littering streets.

The Palm Beach Gardens Police Department has not reported any major injuries or fatalities. A spokeswoman for the city said officials have deactivated emergency protocols and had been working through lingering issues Sunday.

The National Weather Service had placed a large stretch of central Florida under a tornado watch on Saturday afternoon as thunderstorms were cutting across the state.

Marcos visit reflects upturn in ties

The Washington Post

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. met with President Joe Biden at the White House on Monday, kicking off a week's worth of high-level engagements that mark a sharp turnaround in a relationship that has emerged from the deep freeze in a surprisingly short time.

In less than a year, Marcos, the son of the late dictator deposed in 1986, has noticeably warmed to Washington and agreed to allow the U.S. military not just to maintain a presence on Philippine bases but gain access to four new sites.

The move is aimed at helping the Philippines better defend its own waters and become a more capable partner in deterring China in the South China Sea.

His predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, by contrast, had pledged to distance Manila from Washington and align more closely with Beijing, threatened to end an agreement that gave legal protections to the U.S. military in the country, and snubbed President Donald Trump's offer to visit the White House. By the end of his presidency last year, Duterte's dalliance with Beijing having failed to produce results, he was edging back toward Washington.

Since becoming president in July, Marcos has witnessed Beijing's increasingly coercive actions in the region, from ongoing harassment of Philippine fishermen in their territorial waters to the use of lasers to temporarily blind a Philippine coast guard crew. Last week, a Chinese coast guard vessel cut off a Philippine vessel and nearly caused a collision.

Now Marcos is bent on enhancing security ties with the United States, building on a 70-year-old mutual defense treaty. "We've

gone from talking about how much damage is being done to the relationship to how much progress is being made," said Zack Cooper, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

But while progress in the military area has been notable, the broader economic relationship is lagging, analysts say, and Marcos needs to show improvement there if he wants to sustain political support for a deeper security partnership with the United States.

"The alliance cannot work if the United States doesn't provide more assistance to the Philippines for economic development, food security and energy security," said Gregory Poling, director of the Southeast Asia program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "Those are the top priorities of every Filipino. Marcos needs to be able to make the case at home that there are tangible benefits with a closer relationship."

To that end, the Biden administration this week is unveiling some high-level meetings and initiatives. They include sending a presidential trade and investment mission to the Philippines that will be led by a top Commerce Department official.

On Wednesday, Marcos and his economic minister and aides are meeting with executives from at least a dozen American firms in the energy, banking, health care, retail, insurance and digital technology industries.

One senior administration official said that Marcos, whose family has historical ties to China dating back to his father's visit with Mao Zedong in Beijing in 1974, has "a strong desire to work closely with" both the United States and China and is "not seeking to position himself in some in-between

role." China is the Philippines' largest trading partner.

Some American business representatives are bullish on prospects for stronger economic ties. "The actions of the last nine months have made it crystal clear that the Philippines wants a greater relationship with us — not just in security, but a deeper economic relationship," said Ted Osius, president and CEO of the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council. "I see an enormous amount of energy in this relationship right now that did not exist a year ago."

But the significance of the security relationship cannot be overstated, analysts say. The countries are negotiating new bilateral defense guidelines — not as splashy as expanded access to military sites, but equally if not more consequential. They lay out in advance an understanding of who does what in a conflict. "If China shoots at a Filipino vessel, what do we do to make this mutual defense functional?" Poling said by way of explanation.

The United States has adopted defense guidelines with other allies such as Japan. But after the Philippines in the early 1990s closed U.S. military bases in the country and the Soviet Union dissolved, the military alliance stagnated, Poling said.

"The rise of Chinese coercion in the South China Sea changed this and has made the Philippines understand for the first time in a long time that they face an external threat and that the mutual defense treaty is worth implementing," he said. "For its part, the United States seems to realize that unlike during the Cold War, they need to make the treaty actually mutual. The Philippines has to be a partner, not just a place whose bases we can use."

DeSantis-picked board approves suing Disney

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Days after Disney sued Florida's governor in federal court for what it described as retaliation for opposing the state's so-called "Don't Say Gay" bill, members of Disney World's governing board — made up of Gov. Ron DeSantis appointees — authorized a lawsuit Monday against the entertainment giant.

Members of the Central Flor-

ida Tourism Oversight District voted unanimously to sue Disney in state court in the Orlando area, as well as defend itself in federal court in Tallahassee where the entertainment company filed its lawsuit last Wednesday. The Disney lawsuit against the governor, the board and its five members asks a judge to void the governor's takeover of the theme park district previously controlled by

Disney for 55 years. The oversight board's lawsuit seeks to maintain its oversight of design and construction in the district that governs Disney World's 25,000 acres after the previous Disney-controlled board signed over those powers to the company before the DeSantis-appointed board members held their first meeting earlier this year.

"We will seek justice in our own backyard," said Martin

Garcia, chair of the Central Florida Tourism Oversight District. An email seeking comment was sent Monday morning to Disney officials.

Disney filed its lawsuit last week after the oversight board appointed by DeSantis voted to void a deal that gave the company authority over design and construction decisions in its sprawling properties near Orlando.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

3 indicted in mail thefts involving stolen keys

AL BIRMINGHAM — Three Alabama residents have been indicted in a federal investigation that found a letter carrier illegally sold keys allowing others to open and pilfer Birmingham-area mailboxes.

The indictment filed Thursday in federal court in Birmingham accuses Keaundria Janae Gresham, 30, of Pleasant Grove, a letter carrier at a local post office, of selling two keys for \$3,000 each to Derrell Allen Matthews, 25, of Birmingham.

U.S. Postal Inspector Montaleto Barber said in a sworn statement on April 4 that thieves have hit boxes outside multiple post offices, with postal inspectors tracking down Matthews based on surveillance videos of a car registered to him. When they raided Matthews' house in October, Barber said they found an arrow key, stolen mail, stolen checks and counterfeit checks.

Matthews then bought a second arrow key from Gresham after the initial raid, Barber said, and resumed stealing mail. Matthews and Steven Cornelius Hudson Jr., 34, of Bessemer, were arrested April 2 after Barber said he watched them steal mail from boxes outside a Shelby County post office. They had multiple garbage bags of stolen mail in the car when they were arrested.

Wrongfully jailed man to receive \$7.5M payment

KS OSKALOOSA — A Kansas man who spent 16 years in prison for a rape and murder he didn't commit

will receive \$7.5 million from the county where he was arrested and convicted of the crime.

Jefferson County commissioners approved the settlement last week with Floyd Bledsoe, who was released from prison in 2015 after DNA evidence showed he could not have been the killer of Camille Arfmann, 14, in Oska-

loosa. Bledsoe will receive \$1.5 million initially, with the rest to be paid over the next 10 years, The Kansas City Star reported.

Bledsoe, who is now 46, was 23 when he was convicted in 2000 of killing the girl. He was arrested even though his brother, Tom, confessed to the killing in 1999, turned himself in and led authorities to the girl's body.

Student's scholarship offers surpass \$9M

LA NEW ORLEANS — He is a senior at 16. His grade point average is 4.98. Even before graduating from high school, he has earned 27 college credits and, perhaps the most impressive numbers of all, he has scholarship offers from around 130 colleges and universities that, as of Thursday, totaled more than \$9 million.

Dennis Maliq Barnes' achievements at the International High School of New Orleans are a source of pride for school administrators who are looking into whether Barnes has set a record for scholarship offers. But it wasn't a record he was looking for as he piled up around 200 applications to colleges around the nation. It was about making sure he had plenty of options.

"I just kept going forward, kept applying, kept applying to

different schools that I thought would even remotely interest me," he said during an interview in the urban charter school's computer room.

Roof collapse at house near university hurts 14

OH COLUMBUS — Part of a house collapsed and 14 people were injured near The Ohio State University Saturday evening when people climbed onto a roof that was not designed to hold significant weight, authorities said.

Columbus Division of Fire Battalion Chief Steve Martin said his department received a report around 7:40 p.m. of a roof collapse on East 13th Avenue and arrived to find the roof above a front porch had collapsed while the rest of the home remained intact.

"It appears the roof was overloaded with students," Martin said, with estimates ranging from 15 to 45 people on a rooftop "that was not designed to have anybody on it, and it gave way."

State passes 1st-in-US emission rules for trains

CA SACRAMENTO — California on Thursday approved a first-in-the-nation, ambitious rule limiting rail pollution to aggressively cut greenhouse gas emissions in the state's latest move to establish itself as a global leader in the fight against climate change.

The rule will ban locomotive engines more than 23 years old by 2030 and increase the use of zero-emissions technology to transport freight from ports and throughout rail yards. It would also ban locomotives in the state

from idling longer than 30 minutes if they are equipped with an automatic shutoff.

The standards would also reduce chemicals that contribute to smog. They could improve air quality near rail yards and ports.

But some have said it's too soon for the locomotive standards. Wayne Winegarden, a Pacific Research Institute senior fellow, said the rule would be expensive for rail companies, and increased costs will mean higher prices for many goods that move by rail.

Bills passed aimed at protecting abortion pills

VT MONTPELIER — The Vermont Legislature passed reproductive and gender-affirming health care bills on Thursday with a late addition aimed at protecting access to a medication widely used in abortions even if the U.S. Food and Drug Administration withdraws its approval of the pill, mifepristone.

The bills protect providers from discipline for providing legally protected reproductive and gender affirming health care services. Legislators recently tacked on medicated abortion to the definition of legally protected reproductive health care services, and believe the state is the first to do so.

In the identical bills passed by the House and Senate, "reproductive health care services" includes "medication that was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for termination of a pregnancy as of January 1, 2023, regardless of the medication's current FDA approval status."

— From wire reports

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Panthers oust record-setting Bruins

Associated Press

BOSTON — The Boston Bruins are done, with a long off-season to think about their failure to capitalize on the greatest regular season in NHL history.

The Florida Panthers are moving on, thrown right into their second-round series against the Toronto Maple Leafs beginning Tuesday night.

“Game 7. Overtime win. Against pretty much the best team in regular-season history. It’s unreal,” Panthers center Aleksander Barkov said after Florida beat Boston 4-3 in OT to eliminate the record-setting Bruins from the playoffs. “For sure it’s up there, and it’s hard to understand right now. I don’t think we need to understand right now. We’ll understand later.”

Brandon Montour tied it with 1 minute left in regulation, and Carter Verhaeghe scored the game-winner at 8:35 of overtime. The Panthers won three straight after falling behind 3-1

in the best-of-seven series.

Boston, the Presidents’ Trophy winner with NHL records of 65 wins and 135 points, had not lost three in a row all season.

“The fact that we were able to do what we did after what they did all year ... they’re an unreal team and the best I’ve played in my NHL career. The fact that we were able to beat them was crazy,” Panthers forward Matthew Tkachuk said. “Let’s be honest: Nobody in the whole world thought we were going to win that series except for the guys in that room.”

Sergei Bobrovsky made 33 saves for Florida, which advanced in the postseason for just the second time since reaching the Stanley Cup Final in 1996. The Panthers will face Toronto, which finished off the Tampa Bay Lightning on Saturday in six games.

“I don’t think you can find a harder team to play against than the Boston Bruins. They will test you,” said Florida coach Paul

Maurice, who improved to 4-0 in Game 7’s in his career. “The players here now have a shared experience of what hard is. ... It will make us better for five years. That’s how hard it was.”

Boston rallied from a two-goal deficit to take a 3-2 lead, but Maurice pulled Bobrovsky in the final minutes and called timeout with 88 seconds left to give his players a breather. Montour tied it with his second of the game.

Maurice, who was on the Winnipeg bench when the Jets eliminated Presidents’ Trophy-winning Nashville in the second round in 2018, admitted his confidence was waning.

“We’re down a goal with under two minutes to go against Boston. I wouldn’t bet everything, because the match doesn’t add up,” he said. “But when that goal goes in you go, ‘Ohhh, we’re going to win this game.’”

Verhaeghe won it on a wrist shot from the right faceoff circle

that just made it under the crossbar.

That eliminated the Bruins, who became the second Presidents’ Trophy winner in five years to lose in the first round. No team with the best regular-season record has won the Stanley Cup since 2013, when the Chicago Blackhawks beat Boston in the Final.

“It was an honor to coach that group,” said Bruins coach Jim Montgomery, who took over in Boston this year after Bruce Cassidy was fired. “I know we didn’t get to where we wanted. I get that. But their professionalism, their work ethic, their commitment to being pros. It was a joy to be around.”

Montour scored Florida’s first goal, and Sam Reinhart made it 2-0 early in the second period. David Krejci and Tyler Bertuzzi scored to tie it, and David Pastrnak gave the Bruins their only lead of the game on a power-play goal 55 seconds into the third period.

Grubauer, Kraken finish off defending champion Avs

Associated Press

DENVER — The Seattle Kraken converged from all points on the ice to the same spot — Philipp Grubauer’s net.

A fitting gathering place to celebrate another first for this young franchise.

Grubauer was stellar in stopping 33 shots, Oliver Bjorkstrand scored twice and the Kraken eliminated the defending Stanley Cup champion Colorado Avalanche with a 2-1 win in Game 7 on Sunday night.

The Kraken became the first expansion team to beat the reigning Stanley Cup champs in their inaugural playoff series, according to NHL Stats.

“A great accomplishment,” said Kraken forward Yann Gourde, who had two assists.

“Our fans have been amazing. They deserve this.”

Bjorkstrand scored one goal on a fortuitous deflection — the puck hit off a stick and glove — and another with a liner past goaltender Alexandar Georgiev that clanged off the post. Seattle grabbed the lead in every game in the series.

Next up for the second-year Kraken is a second-round series against the Stars that opens in Dallas on Tuesday night. Seattle was 1-1-1 against Dallas in the regular season.

The Kraken take a heap of momentum with them, too.

“It gives them that check mark of success,” Seattle coach Dave Hakstol said.

Mikko Rantanen was credited with a power-play goal for Colorado after a shot by Nath-

an MacKinnon clipped him and went in. MacKinnon appeared to score early in the third period to tie it at 2, but Seattle challenged the play and the goal was disallowed due to Colorado being offside.

Seattle’s video crew turned in an MVP-caliber performance all series.

The Avalanche pulled Georgiev with under 2 minutes remaining but couldn’t get the equalizer. It allowed the Kraken to accomplish another franchise first — a series-clinching celebration.

“Lots more to come from our group,” Grubauer said. “That was only series one.”

Colorado has now lost its last six Game 7s. The last time the Avalanche won a winner-take-all Game 7 was 2002, when

they beat San Jose 1-0 courtesy of a goal from Hall of Fame forward Peter Forsberg.

MacKinnon energized the crowd with what looked like a tying goal. But it was taken off the board following a challenge as Artturi Lehkonen was ruled in the zone before the puck entered.

It’s the second time this series the Kraken have used a challenge to negate an Avalanche score. The Kraken also deflated the capacity crowd by doing what they’ve done in every game this series — score first.

“This is a really good hockey team,” Avalanche coach Jared Bednar said of the Kraken. “The one thing they were that we weren’t in the series was consistent.”

Curry scores 50, Warriors eliminate Kings

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — With his big-game swagger on display for the world and that signature mouthpiece dangling from a celebratory grin, Stephen Curry drove fearlessly to the basket with jaw-dropping acrobatics all afternoon and he fired with precision from way back in a Game 7 extravaganza for the ages.

He even playfully pretended to push the button and Light the Beam, Sacramento-style.

Curry scored a playoff career-high 50 points in the most prolific Game 7 performance ever and answered time and again to will the Warriors on in their quest for a repeat, sending Golden State into the Western Conference semifinals with a 120-100 win against the Sacramento Kings in Sunday's winner-take-all Game 7.

Curry led a memorable comeback in the series, too, perhaps improbable even for the defending champions when they got down 2-0 and given their road woes all season.

"It's amazing 'cause you're still in the fight," Curry said. "Better

than the alternative of on the outside looking in. Having been down 0-2 in this series, nothing was guaranteed, you don't take anything for granted."

Curry's points are the most in NBA history in a Game 7, topping former teammate Kevin Durant's 48 for the Nets against Milwaukee in 2021.

"For Steph to be the first player ever to get 50 in a Game 7, he's sublime," coach Steve Kerr said.

Kevon Looney grabbed 21 rebounds for a Warriors team that needed to win twice on the road facing a hostile, cowbell-clanging crowd in the state capital to become the first reigning champion to drop the first two games and win any postseason series.

Now, bring on LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers in the Western Conference semifinals with all that NBA Finals history between James and Golden State dating to his Cleveland days. Game 1 is Tuesday night at Chase Center.

Sacramento's special comeback season is over long before these young Kings had planned.

After snapping a 16-year playoff drought — longest in NBA history — under Coach of the Year Mike Brown, playoff-starved Sacramento missed advancing to the second round for the first time since 2004.

Curry shot 20-for-38 with seven threes and delivered after almost every big play by Sacramento as Splash Brother Klay Thompson struggled on both ends again. But Thompson came through in some crucial moments.

"What an incredible performance," Thompson said. "This is a Game 7 I'll forever remember as the Steph Curry game."

Malik Monk's putback and three-point play with 14.6 seconds remaining in the third pulled Sacramento within six only for Thompson to hit a long three and convert a four-point play to make it 91-81 heading into the final 12 minutes.

Domantas Sabonis had 22 points, eight rebounds and seven assists, but the Warriors held De'Aaron Fox in check as he scored 16 points on 5-for-19 shooting in his third game play-

ing with a broken index finger on his shooting hand.

Trailing 58-56 at halftime, the Warriors opened the second half with a 13-4 burst and held the Kings to 42 points after intermission.

Sacramento had scored early on with a beautiful combination of classic give-and-goes and long jumpers off crisp passing around the perimeter.

But Curry kept coming, and Looney kept scrapping to create second and third opportunities to cap his brilliant series on the boards. They sent Kings fans to the exits late in the fourth.

Just before the final buzzer, Kerr offered a long embrace to Brown — Golden State's former top assistant who once coached the Warriors on the postseason stage during Kerr's extended health absence and just guided the Kings' remarkable turnaround.

"I can't dream of nothing like this, gotta see it in person," Monk said of all the successes. "You can't dream anything like this unless you're doing it. Looking forward to being back next year."

Heat top Knicks to open 2nd round; Butler injured

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jimmy Butler looked his coach in the eye and said he was staying in the game, no matter how much his ankle might have hurt.

The Miami Heat needed all season to turn into the team they expected, so no way Butler wants to miss a minute of it now.

Butler had 25 points and 11 rebounds, and the No. 8-seeded Heat kept rolling after barely reaching the postseason, beating the New York Knicks 108-101 on Sunday in Game 1 of the Eastern Conference semifinals.

"We're just playing great basketball," Butler said in a postgame interview on the court with ABC, while still showing a limp after a fourth-quarter ankle sprain.

"We're together, at home, on the road, through the good and through the bad. We believe that we can do something special."

Gabe Vincent scored 20 points for the Heat, who became the sixth No. 8 seed to beat a No. 1 when they toppled Milwaukee in the first round. They continue to look nothing like a team that was only three games above .500 when they reached April and needed to win a play-in game just to get the final postseason berth in the East.

They averaged 124 points in that series behind Butler's 37.6 per game, but they pulled this one out with old-fashioned defense and rebounding that has worked so well before for them at this time of year.

"It's the playoffs, number one. You expect it to be tough," coach Erik Spoelstra said. "Two, just because the regular season didn't go the way we wanted it to go or other people wanted it to go, doesn't mean we weren't developing grit and tough habits and good things. It wasn't just from the play-in."

RJ Barrett scored 26 points and Jalen

Brunson had 25 for the fifth-seeded Knicks, who are in the second round of the playoffs for the first time since 2013. They started strong and led most of the first half, but the Heat eventually got the Madison Square Garden crowd quieter and quieter as the game went on.

Game 2 is Tuesday night.

The Knicks were without All-Star forward Julius Randle because of a sprained left ankle, and they surely missed him when the transition points dried up and it became a half-court game.

They could've used his shooting on a day they went 7-for-34 behind the arc, missing a chance to break open the game early and then hindering any chances of coming back. Brunson was 0-for-7 from outside and committed five turnovers.

"I was horrific," he said. "Very uncharacteristic by me and this one's on me. I've got to be better."

Ohtani sets record for highest homer

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Shohei Ohtani hit a third-inning drive to center field, a no-doubt home run.

“I kept waiting for it to hit somewhere up on the scoreboard. Then I saw the metrics,” Los Angeles Angels manager Phil Nevin said. “I haven’t seen many like that. He’s special, and we see something new each day with him.”

Ohtani’s shot off Colin Rea reached 162 feet above the field, the highest since Statcast started tracking in 2015, and helped the Angels beat the Milwaukee Brewers 3-0 on Sunday to avoid a three-game sweep.

Ohtani hit his seventh home run of the season on an 85.9 mph cutter from Rea (0-2). The ball left the bat with 114.3 exit velocity and a launch angle of 39 degrees, and after a hang time of 6.98 seconds it landed 413 feet away in deep center.

“I watched it,” Rea said. “I knew it was gone.”

Padres 6, Giants 4: Matt Carpenter capped an eighth-inning rally with a tiebreaking, two-run double off the glove of diving center fielder Mike Yastrzemski, and San Diego beat San Francisco for a two-game sweep of Major League Baseball’s first regular-season series in Mexico

City.

A day after winning an 11-home run slugfest 16-11, the Padres overcame a 4-0 deficit with three runs in the fifth and three in the eighth.

Astros 4, Phillies 3: Jake Meyers homered, Martín Maldonado ended his 0-for-24 slump with an RBI double and host Houston beat Philadelphia to avoid a three-game sweep.

The Astros beat Philadelphia in six games to win last year’s World Series. But the Phillies dominated the first two games of the rematch, winning by a combined score of 9-2.

Dodgers 6, Cardinals 3: Noah Syndergaard earned his first win in a Dodgers uniform and host Los Angeles got some timely hits and took advantage of mistakes by St. Louis pitchers.

David Peralta drove in two runs for the Dodgers. Syndergaard (1-3) allowed three runs on eight hits in 5½ innings.

Nationals 7, Pirates 2: Josiah Gray pitched six strong innings, Joey Meneses had four hits and host Washington finally cooled off Pittsburgh in a game delayed nearly 2½ hours by rain.

Jeimer Candelario and Victor Robles each had a two-run double for Washington, Luis García delivered a two-run single in the second, and every Nationals

starter got at least one hit.

Gray (2-4) allowed one run on three hits and three walks while striking out six.

Mariners 10, Blue Jays 8 (10): Cal Raleigh hit two of visiting Seattle’s four home runs, including a tiebreaking shot in the 10th inning, to rally the team past Toronto and snap a four-game losing streak.

Toronto was one strike away from completing a three-game sweep and extending its winning streak to seven, but Mariners shortstop J.P. Crawford hit a game-tying single off Yimi García in the ninth.

Marlins 4, Cubs 3: Luis Arraez hit a go-ahead sacrifice fly in the eighth inning to give host Miami the three-game series sweep over Chicago.

Red Sox 7, Guardians 1: Connor Wong hit a two-run homer and Alex Verdugo singled home a pair of runs and added a late solo homer to help host Boston top Cleveland.

Chris Sale (2-2) struck out five, holding the Guardians to three hits over 6½ innings.

Twins 8, Royals 4: Byron Buxton hit a three-run homer as part of a seven-run third inning and Sonny Gray kept rolling with six strong innings in host Minnesota’s win over Kansas City.

Gray (4-0) allowed one run on five hits while striking out seven batters. Gray has given up just three runs in 35 innings this season and saw his MLB-best ERA rise to 0.77 after the outing.

White Sox 12, Rays 9: Andrew Vaughn capped his team’s seven-run ninth inning with a three-run homer to help host Chicago stop a 10-game losing streak with a wild victory over Tampa Bay.

Orioles 5, Tigers 3: Adam Frazier homered in the fourth inning to help his team take a four-run lead, and Yennier Cano made sure visiting Baltimore held on against Detroit.

Rangers 15, Yankees 2: Josh Jung hit a first-inning grand slam, Nathaniel Lowe and Adolis García also homered off All-Star Nestor Cortes and host Texas handed New York its sixth loss in eight games.

Rockies 12, Diamondbacks 4: C.J. Cron had three hits, including a three-run homer, Austin Gomber gave up one run over six innings and Colorado beat Arizona to snap a seven-game home losing streak.

Athletics 5, Reds 4: Esteury Ruiz singled in the winning run in the bottom of the ninth inning, and host Oakland beat Cincinnati to halt its nine-game home losing streak.

McLaughlin passes Grosjean to earn IndyCar victory

Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala.— Scott McLaughlin was once again racing Romain Grosjean for a potential win.

That’s where the similarities to their last run-in ended.

McLaughlin got a late opening to surge past Grosjean, took advantage of it and was scarcely challenged the rest of the way Sunday at Barber Motorsports Park, where the New Zealander picked up his fourth career IndyCar win.

It was the second time this season they’ve been in that position, but this time McLaughlin and Grosjean avoided getting tangled up.

Grosjean had been furious with McLaughlin when the two touched heading into a corner at the season-opener in St. Petersburg, Fla., both slamming into a tire barrier. McLaughlin drew an avoidable contact penalty and later apologized to Grosjean.

After winning Sunday,

McLaughlin said “there’s no hard feelings” between the two. McLaughlin had hugged Grosjean after their race-ending crash at St. Pete.

“I knew if I hit him this time, it would be bad,” McLaughlin said. “I thought we were racing just like we normally do, very clean. It was hard. I knew it was going to be hard passing him. It was just a matter of me biding my time.”

Grosjean found himself with his fifth runner-up finish. And

while there was a bit of contact — “We kissed each other a touch,” Grosjean said, laughing — he wasn’t worried about McLaughlin getting recklessly aggressive.

McLaughlin wound up with Team Penske’s seventh win in 13 races at the permanent road course — and his first since breaking out with three victories last season. He’d had to catch Grosjean again after getting passed coming off of pit road.