

Ukrainians vow to reclaim Bakhmut

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Although Russia claims it has won control of Ukraine's eastern city of Bakhmut after a grinding nine-month conflict in which tens of thousands of fighters have died, top Ukrainian military leaders say the battle is not over.

Ukrainian officials acknowledge they control only a small part of Bakhmut. Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar said Monday that Ukrainian troops hold some areas in its southwestern outskirts, while fighting continues for the strategic heights in the northern and southern parts of the suburbs.

"The offensive potential of the enemy has been significantly reduced. Huge losses have been inflicted on the enemy. We have gained time for certain actions, which will be revealed later," Maliar said.

Ukraine says their fighters played a key role in their strategy of exhausting Russian forces. And they say their current positions surrounding Bakhmut will let them strike back inside the 400-year-old city.

"Despite the fact that we now control a small part of Bakhmut, the importance of its defense does not lose its relevance," said Col.-Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, who commands Ukraine's ground forces. "This gives us the opportunity to enter the city in case of a change in the situation. And it will definitely happen."

The fog of war made it impossible to confirm the situation inside Bakhmut. Russia's Defense Ministry said fighters of the Wagner private military contractor, backed by Russian troops, had seized the city. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the city was not being fully occupied.

In a video posted on Telegram, Wagner head Yevgeny Prigozhin said the city came under complete Russian control about midday Saturday, proclaiming it "completely taken" as he held a Russian flag with a group of at least nine masked fighters in body armor and heavy weapons.

Russian President Vladimir Putin badly needed a victory in Bakhmut, analysts say, especially after a winter offensive by his forces failed to take other cities and towns along the front.

But victory in Bakhmut does not necessarily bring Russia any closer to capturing the Donetsk region — Putin's stated aim at the start of the invasion. Rather, it opens the way to more grinding battles toward Sloviansk or Kostiantynivka, 12 miles away, said Kateryna Stepanenko, a Russia analyst at the Institute for the Study of War, a U.S.-based think tank.

For Ukraine, the important factor has been the high number of Russian casualties and sapping of their adversary's morale for the small patch of the 932-mile

front line as Ukraine gears up for a major counteroffensive in the 15-month-old war.

"The enemy failed to surround Bakhmut. They lost part of the heights around the city. The continuing advance of our troops in the suburbs greatly complicates the enemy's presence," Maliar said. "Our troops have taken the city in a semi-encirclement, which gives us the opportunity to destroy the enemy."

About 34 miles north of the Russian-held regional capital of Donetsk, Bakhmut was an important industrial center, surrounded by salt and gypsum mines and home to about 80,000 people before the war, in a country of more than 43 million.

The city, named Artyomovsk after a Bolshevik revolutionary when Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union, was known for its sparkling wine produced in underground caves. It was popular among tourists for its broad, tree-lined avenues, lush parks and stately downtown with imposing late 19th century mansions. All are now reduced to a smoldering wasteland.

Recent months have seen fierce fighting in Bakhmut's urban center. But even now, Ukrainian forces are making significant advances near strategic roads through surrounding countryside, chipping away at Russia's northern and southern flanks with the aim of encircling Wagner fighters inside the city.

Navy probes alleged drug ring on USS Ronald Reagan

BY ALEX WILSON

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Five years after cracking an LSD ring aboard the USS Ronald Reagan, Navy investigators are probing reports of new drug activity aboard the carrier, a spokeswoman for Naval Forces Japan said Monday.

The Naval Criminal Investigative Service is investigating an undisclosed number of sailors for "alleged drug use, possession and distribution," Cmdr. Katie Cerezo told Stars and Stripes by email.

"An investigation is presently ongoing," she said. "Possession, distribution and use

of drugs is in violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice and strictly prohibited."

Cerezo declined to detail the allegations, including the extent of drug use aboard the ship, the substances involved or if anyone had been arrested.

"The Navy takes this investigation seriously, and it would be inappropriate for us to comment on an active investigation," she said.

In 2018, Navy investigators implicated 15 sailors in a drug ring aboard the carrier that included the distribution and use of LSD and ecstasy. All but one of the sailors were assigned to the Ronald Reagan's nuclear re-

actor department.

Five sailors went to court-martial and 10 received nonjudicial punishments in connection with the case.

Four of the five court-martialed sailors pleaded guilty and agreed to cooperate with prosecutors. In exchange, they were reduced in rank and given bad-conduct discharges. One was sentenced to 10 months confinement, another to 90 days.

The Ronald Reagan departed Yokosuka, its homeport, on May 12 for sea trials ahead of its upcoming patrol before returning on Friday, and it remained in port as of Monday afternoon.

Iran lab may be too deep for US bomb

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Near a peak of the Zagros Mountains in central Iran, workers are building a nuclear facility so deep in the earth that it is likely beyond the range of a last-ditch U.S. weapon designed to destroy such sites, according to experts and satellite imagery analyzed by The Associated Press.

The photos and videos from Planet Labs PBC show Iran has been digging tunnels in the mountain near the Natanz nuclear site, which has come under repeated sabotage attacks amid Tehran's standoff with the West over its atomic program.

With Iran now producing uranium close to weapons-grade levels after the collapse of its nuclear deal with world powers, the installation complicates the West's efforts to halt Tehran from potentially developing an atomic bomb as diplomacy over its nuclear program remains stalled.

Completion of such a facility "would be a nightmare scenario that risks igniting a new escalatory spiral," warned Kelsey Davenport, the director of nonproliferation policy at the Washington-based Arms Control Association. "Given how close Iran is to a bomb, it has very little room to ratchet up its program without tripping U.S. and Israeli red lines. So at this point, any further escalation increases the risk of conflict."

The construction at the Natanz site comes

five years after then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the nuclear accord. Trump argued the deal did not address Tehran's ballistic missile program, nor its support of militias across the wider Middle East.

But what it did do was strictly limit Iran's enrichment of uranium to 3.67% purity, powerful enough only to power civilian power stations, and keep its stockpile to just some 660 pounds.

Since the demise of the nuclear accord, Iran has said it is enriching uranium up to 60%, though inspectors recently discovered the country had produced uranium particles that were 83.7% pure. That is just a short step from reaching the 90% threshold of weapons-grade uranium.

The Islamic Republic denies it is seeking nuclear weapons, though officials in Tehran now openly discuss their ability to pursue one.

The new project is being constructed next to Natanz, about 140 miles south of Tehran. Natanz has been a point of international concern since its existence became known two decades ago.

Satellite photos taken in April by Planet Labs PBC and analyzed by the AP show Iran burrowing into the Kuh-e Kolang Gaz La, or "Pickaxe Mountain," which is just beyond Natanz's southern fencing.

The scale of the work can be measured in

large dirt mounds, two to the west and one to the east. Based on the size of the spoil piles and other satellite data, experts at the center told AP that Iran is likely building a facility at a depth of between 260 feet and 328 feet. The center's analysis, which it provided exclusively to AP, is the first to estimate the tunnel system's depth based on satellite imagery.

The Institute for Science and International Security, a Washington-based nonprofit long focused on Iran's nuclear program, suggested last year the tunnels could go even deeper.

Experts say the size of the construction project indicates Iran likely would be able to use the underground facility to enrich uranium as well — not just to build centrifuges.

"So the depth of the facility is a concern because it would be much harder for us. It would be much harder to destroy using conventional weapons, such as like a typical bunker buster bomb," said Steven De La Fuente, a research associate at the center who led the analysis of the tunnel work.

The new Natanz facility is likely to be even deeper underground than Iran's Fordo facility, another enrichment site that was exposed in 2009 by U.S. and other world leaders. That facility sparked fears in the West that Iran was hardening its program from airstrikes.

Mount Etna scatters ash across Navy base on Sicily

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Naval Air Station Sigonella temporarily closed its runway over the weekend following the eruption of Italy's most active and powerful volcano in eastern Sicily, officials said Monday.

A base statement in response to a query didn't detail how long it took to remove ash on the runway following the eruption of Mount Etna on Sunday. It also didn't say whether flight operations had resumed.

"Any aircraft that were outside of their hangars underwent inspection to ensure they were fit for flight," Lt. Drake Greer, a NAS Sigonella spokesman, said in an email to Stars and Stripes.

The base is home to more than 34 com-

mands and activities, including U.S. 6th Fleet, NATO and special operations units. The 11,013-foot-tall volcano is about 25 miles north of the base.

Some facilities, including two pools and a skate park, were closed because of ash, the base's Morale, Welfare and Recreation office said Monday in a post on its Facebook page.

Sunday's event saw ash and rocks from the volcano spread across much of the island's eastern side. The airport in Catania, about 13 miles northeast of NAS Sigonella, resumed flights Monday morning following a suspension the day before, the airport announced in a tweet. The airport told passengers to expect some service limitations and delays.

NAS Sigonella emergency operations and management officials previously have said that ashfall from Mount Etna is a threat not only to aircraft and runways but to flat-roofed buildings on the base.

Ash also can enter buildings through heating and ventilation systems, they said.

The base monitors for volcanic activity, earthquakes and other natural disasters and has several plans in place to address Mount Etna eruptions. Those include grounding aircraft and securing them to prevent damage.

On Sunday, lava flow was evident from the volcano's southeast crater, but observations were limited by cloud cover, the National Institute of Geophysics and Vulcanology said in a statement that day.

Biden, McCarthy to hold debt limit talks

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy are set to meet at the White House at a pivotal moment as Washington works to strike a budget compromise and raise the nation's borrowing limit in time to avert a potentially chaotic federal default.

Negotiators for the White House met for nearly three hours with McCarthy's team at the Capitol ahead of the session between the Democratic president and the new Republican speaker that will be critical as they race to prevent a looming debt crisis as soon as next week. The teams wrapped up at noon-time, and no further talks were

planned before the White House meeting.

After a weekend of start-stop talks, both men have appeared upbeat as they face a deadline, as soon as June 1, when the government could run out of cash to pay its bills.

By Monday morning, McCarthy took a sharper edge, blaming Biden for having refused to engage earlier on annual federal spending, a separate issue but linked to the nation's debt.

"What we have to do here is get the spending addiction to stop," McCarthy, R-Calif., told reporters as he arrived at the Capitol.

"The Democrats and the president refusing to even to ne-

gotiate, no household would run this way," he said. "That is why we go from crisis to crisis."

McCarthy said as he has many times before: "We're going to spend less than we did last year."

The contours of an agreement appear within reach, and the negotiations have narrowed on a 2024 budget year cap that would be key to resolving the standoff. Republicans have insisted next year's spending cannot be more than current 2023 levels, but Democrats have refused to accept the steeper cuts McCarthy's team first proposed.

A budget deal would unlock a separate vote to lift the debt ceiling, now \$31 trillion, to allow

more borrowing to pay bills already incurred. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Sunday that June 1 is a "hard deadline."

A top Republican negotiator, Rep. Patrick McHenry of North Carolina, told reporters that a round of talks late Sunday had gone "reasonably well."

"We know the deadline, we know the challenge," said McHenry, who is also chairman of the House Financial Services Committee. "People are working in good faith."

But he said: "All these things are tough."

"We'll keep working," said Steve Ricchetti, counselor to the president, as the White House team exited talks late Sunday.

More women sue Texas, seek hold on abortion law

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — One woman had to carry her baby, missing much of her skull, for months knowing she'd bury her daughter soon after she was born. Another started mirroring the life-threatening symptoms that her baby was displaying while in the womb.

An OB-GYN found herself secretly traveling to Colorado to abort her wanted pregnancy, marred by the diagnosis of a fatal fetal anomaly.

All of the women were told they could not end their pregnancies in Texas, a state that

has enacted some of the nation's most restrictive abortion laws.

Now, they're asking a Texas court to put an emergency hold on some abortion restrictions, joining a lawsuit launched earlier this year by five other women who were denied abortions in the state, despite pregnancies they have said endangered their health or lives.

More than a dozen Texas women have joined the Center for Reproductive Rights' lawsuit against the state's law, which prohibits abortions unless a mother's life is at risk — an exception that is not clearly de-

finied. Texas doctors who perform abortions risk life in prison and fines of up to \$100,000, leaving many women with providers who are unwilling to even discuss terminating a pregnancy.

"Our hope is that it will allow physicians at least a little more comfort when it comes to patients in obstetrical emergencies who really need an abortion," Molly Duane, the lead attorney on the case, told The Associated Press. "Almost all of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit tell similar stories about their doctors saying, if not for this law, I'd give you an abortion right now."

In hoodie, Fetterman tackles Senate after treatment

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Before Pennsylvania Sen. John Fetterman checked himself in to the hospital for clinical depression in February, he walked the halls of the Senate stone-faced and dressed in formal suits. These days, he's back to wearing the hoodies and gym shorts he was known for before he became a senator.

Male senators are expected to wear a jacket and tie on the

Senate floor, but Fetterman has a workaround.

He votes from the doorway of the Democratic cloakroom or the side entrance, making sure his "yay" or "nay" is recorded before ducking back out.

In between votes this past week, Fetterman's hoodie stayed on for a news conference with four Democratic colleagues in suits, the 6-foot-8 Fetterman towering over his colleagues.

People close to Fetterman say his relaxed, comfortable style is a sign the senator is making a robust recovery after six weeks of inpatient treatment at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, where his clinical depression was treated with medication and he was fitted for hearing aids for hearing loss that had made it harder for him to communicate.

His hospitalization came less than a year after he had a

stroke during his Senate campaign that he has said nearly killed him, and from which he continues to recover.

"He's setting a new dress code," joked Vermont Sen. Peter Welch, who is the only other newly elected Democrat in the Senate and spent a lot of time with Fetterman during their orientation at the beginning of the year.

"He was struggling. And now he's a joyful person to be around."

Meta hit with privacy fine for data transfer

Associated Press

LONDON — The European Union slapped Meta with a record \$1.3 billion privacy fine Monday and ordered it to stop transferring user data across the Atlantic by October, the latest salvo in a decadelong case sparked by U.S. cybersnooping fears.

The penalty fine from Ireland's Data Protection Commission is the biggest since the EU's strict data privacy regime took effect five years ago, surpassing Amazon's \$807 million penalty in 2021 for data protection violations.

The Irish watchdog is Meta's lead privacy regulator in the 27-nation bloc because the Silicon Valley tech giant's European headquarters is based in Dublin.

Meta, which had previously warned that services for its users in Europe could be cut off, vowed to appeal and ask courts to immediately put the decision on hold.

"There is no immediate disruption to Facebook in Europe," the company said.

"This decision is flawed, unjustified and sets a dangerous precedent for the countless other companies transferring data between the EU and U.S.," Nick Clegg, Meta's president of global affairs, and Chief Legal Officer Jennifer Newstead said in a statement. It's yet another twist in a legal battle that began in 2013 when Austrian lawyer and privacy activist Max Schrems filed a complaint about Facebook's handling of his data following former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden's revelations about U.S. cybersnooping.

The saga has highlighted the clash between Washington and Brussels over the differences between Europe's strict view on data privacy and the comparatively lax regime in the United States,

which lacks a federal privacy law.

An agreement covering EU-U.S. data transfers known as the Privacy Shield was struck down in 2020 by the EU's top court, which said it didn't do enough to protect residents from the U.S. government's electronic prying.

That left another tool to govern data transfers — stock legal contracts. Irish regulators initially ruled Meta didn't need to be fined because it was acting in good faith in using them to move data across the Atlantic. But it was overruled by the EU's top panel of data privacy authorities last month, a decision the Irish watchdog confirmed Monday.

Meanwhile, Brussels and Washington signed an agreement last year on a reworked Privacy Shield that Meta could use, but the pact is awaiting a decision from European officials on

whether it adequately protects data privacy. EU institutions have been reviewing the agreement, and the bloc's lawmakers this month called for improvements, saying the safeguards aren't strong enough.

Meta warned in its latest earnings report that without a legal basis for data transfers, it will be forced to stop offering products and services in Europe, "which would materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition and results of operations."

The social media company might have to carry out a costly and complex revamp of its operations if it's forced to stop shipping user data across the Atlantic. Meta has a fleet of 21 data centers, according to its website, but 17 of them are in the U.S. Three others are in the European nations of Denmark, Ireland and Sweden. Another is in Singapore.

Saudi astronauts, nation's 1st woman, to space station

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Saudi Arabia's first astronauts in decades rocketed toward the International Space Station on a chartered multimillion-dollar flight Sunday.

SpaceX launched the ticket-holding crew, led by a retired NASA astronaut now working for the company that arranged the trip from Kennedy Space Center. Also on board: a U.S. businessman who now owns a sports car racing team.

The four were set to reach the space station in their capsule Monday morning; they'll spend just over a week there before returning home with a splashdown off the Florida coast.

Sponsored by the Saudi Arabian government, Rayyanah Barnawi, a stem cell researcher, became the first woman from the kingdom to go to space. She was joined by Ali al-Qarni, a fighter pi-

lot with the Royal Saudi Air Force.

They're the first from their country to ride a rocket since a Saudi prince launched aboard shuttle Discovery in 1985. In a quirk of timing, they'll be greeted at the station by an astronaut from the United Arab Emirates.

"Hello from outer space! It feels amazing to be viewing Earth from this capsule," Barnawi said after settling into orbit.

Added al-Qarni: "As I look outside into space, I can't help but think this is just the beginning of a great journey for all of us."

Rounding out the visiting crew: Knoxville, Tenn.'s John Shoffner, former driver and owner of a sports car racing team that competes in Europe, and chaperone Peggy Whitson, the station's first female commander who holds the U.S. record for most accumulated time in space: 665 days and counting.

Civil rights groups warn about 'hostile' Fla. laws

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — The NAACP over the weekend issued a travel advisory for Florida, joining two other civil rights groups in warning potential tourists that recent laws and policies championed by Gov. Ron DeSantis and Florida lawmakers are "openly hostile toward African Americans, people of color and LGBTQ+ individuals."

The NAACP, long an advocate for Black Americans, joined the League of United Latin American Citizens, a Latino civil rights organization, and Equality Florida, a gay rights advocacy group, in issuing travel advisories for the Sunshine State, where tourism is one of the state's largest job sectors. The warning approved Saturday by the NAACP's board of directors tells tourists that, before traveling to Florida, they should understand the state "devalues and marginalizes the contribu-

tions of, and the challenges faced by African Americans and other communities of color."

An email was sent Sunday morning to DeSantis' office seeking comment. The Republican governor is expected to announce a run for the GOP presidential nomination this week.

Florida is one of the most popular states for tourists, and tourism is one of its biggest industries. More than 137.5 million tourists visited last year, marking a return to pre-pandemic levels, according to Visit Florida, the state's tourism promotion agency.

Several of Florida's Democratic mayors were quick to say Sunday that their cities welcomed diversity and inclusion.

"EVERYONE is always welcome and will be treated with dignity and respect," tweeted Mayor Ken Welch of St. Petersburg in a message echoed by the mayor across the bay in Tampa.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man charged in fire that razed historic building

IN EVANSVILLE — A southwestern Indiana man allegedly set a fire that gutted a building more than 100 years old that was listed decades ago on the National Register of Historic Places, police said.

Charles James Perrin, 25, was arrested Thursday, Evansville police said. The Evansville man is accused of setting a fire Wednesday that gutted the former Pearl Cleaners building, a historic structure once known as “Pearl Steam Laundry,” the Evansville Courier & Press reported.

A website maintained by the University of Southern Indiana states the structure dates to 1912 and it had been vacant since closing in 2017 in Evansville. The building is owned by The Pearl Development LLC, which said in a statement that nearly a year ago it had purchased “this historical landmark with the hopes of restoring it to usable commercial space.”

Mastodon bones found by crew go to museum

MI GRAND RAPIDS — A selection of bones belonging to a juvenile mastodon who roamed the woods of Michigan 13,000 years ago is now on display at the Grand Rapids Public Museum, after workers unearthed it by chance last year.

Excited museum officials showed off some of the long-extinct pachyderm’s remains on Thursday, although much of the skeleton still is going through the drying process.

The Michigan skeleton was

discovered by Kent County drain commission workers digging about 30 miles north of Grand Rapids. The skeleton was discovered last August on private property belonging to the Clapp family, who donated it to the museum.

US approves renewable energy transmission line

NM ALBUQUERQUE — The U.S. government is greenlighting a proposed multibillion-dollar transmission line that would send primarily wind-generated electricity from the rural plains of New Mexico to big cities in the West.

The Interior Department announced its record of decision for the SunZia project Thursday. It comes about a year after an environmental review was completed as part of a broader effort by the Biden administration to clear the way for major transmission projects as it looks to meet climate goals and shore up the nation’s power grid.

New Mexico’s renewable energy authority is among those invested in the SunZia project, which would include roughly 520 miles of transmission lines and a network of substations for getting wind and solar power to Arizona and California.

7 treated for fentanyl overdoses in prison

WA EVERETT — A man in custody in a jail north of Seattle is facing additional charges after officials said seven incarcerated people were treated for signs of overdosing on fentanyl.

The Snohomish County Sheriff’s Office said officials admin-

istered Narcan to seven people in the jail in Everett on Wednesday evening, The Daily Herald reported.

A corrections deputy first noticed a person in custody showing signs of an opiate overdose at about 7:30 p.m. Wednesday. While medical staff were responding, another person in the same area of the jail began showing similar signs. A total of seven inmates began displaying physical signs of an overdose, according to the sheriff’s office. Jail staff called a medical emergency and administered naxalone to the inmates.

Everett firefighters took them to a local hospital and all were expected to survive, authorities said. Five have since been returned to the jail, said Courtney O’Keefe, spokesperson for the Snohomish County Sheriff’s Office.

The man now faces two drug possession charges, according to the sheriff’s office.

Teenager charged in alleged overdose deaths

TN SOMERVILLE — A juvenile has been charged with second-degree murder in the deaths of two Tennessee teenagers who officials believe overdosed in the parking lot of their high school, authorities said Thursday.

The Fayette County Sheriff’s Office told news outlets that a teenage girl had been charged in the deaths.

Two teenage girls were found dead last Tuesday at Fayette Ware Comprehensive High School in Somerville and a third was hospitalized before being released Wednesday, the sheriff’s office said. All three of the

students attended Fayette Ware, the school said.

A judge decided on Thursday that the girl charged in the deaths would be released to the custody of her grandmother and be placed on house arrest, District Attorney Mark Davidson told WMC-TV. A hearing was set for June 7 to decide whether to send the case to adult court.

Remains confirmed as serial killer’s victim

GA MACON — The remains of a Georgia woman killed 46 years ago were identified and confirmed as a victim of Samuel Little, known as the most prolific serial killer in U.S. history, authorities said Thursday.

Yvonne Pless was about 20 when Little killed her in 1977, according to a news release from the Bibb County Sheriff’s Office and the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. She had been dubbed “Macon Jane Doe” by The Telegraph newspaper in the city.

Little, who died in December 2020, confessed in 2018 to killing two Macon women, prompting Georgia investigators to travel to Texas in 2019 to interview him. They confirmed that his confessions matched the unsolved Macon cold case. They notified a remaining family member of the other woman, Fredonia Smith, who was killed in 1982.

But Pless’ remains hadn’t been identified, so her family was not known. Last year, investigators used forensic genetic genealogy to identify Pless’ remains and then identified a relative who connected them with her remaining family in Macon.

— From wire reports

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Koepka wins third PGA Championship

Associated Press

PITTSFORD, N.Y. — Confidence was never an issue for Brooks Koepka until the injuries piled up, the doubts crept in and he began to wonder if he still belonged among golf's elite.

Koepka answered every question at the PGA Championship with a performance that ranks among his best. His fifth major title was the sweetest of them all. No doubt about that, either.

"It feels damned good. Yeah, this one is definitely special," Koepka said. "I think this one is probably the most meaningful of them all with everything that's gone on, all the crazy stuff over the last few years."

One knee injury kept him from the Masters, another from the Presidents Cup in Australia. Two years ago, he tried to pop his knee back into place and shattered his knee cap. Then last summer, uncertain about his future, he left the PGA Tour for the guaranteed Saudi riches of LIV Golf, bringing a mixture of criticism and skepticism.

And there he was Sunday at Oak Hill, looking good as new, dominant as ever, against the best collection of golfers in the world on a punishing golf course.

Koepka ran off three quick birdies early, never lost the lead amid a gritty fight from Viktor Hovland, and closed with a 3-under 67 for a two-shot victory.

He held up his index finger as he posed next to the Wanamaker Trophy, but he may as well have held up all five.

With three PGAs and two U.S. Opens, he became the 20th player with five or more majors. He won his third Wanamaker Trophy — only Jack Nicklaus and Walter Hagen with five and Tiger Woods with four have won the PGA Championship more times — and captured his first major in what felt like four years.

And to think that over the past few years, Koepka was so wounded he felt he couldn't compete, a decision that might have led to him leaving the PGA Tour for Saudi-funded LIV Golf in a shocking move last June after the U.S. Open.

In the Netflix series "Full Swing" that aired earlier this year, he was quoted as saying his confidence had given way to doubt. "I'm going to be honest with you, I can't compete with these guys week in and week out."

Give him good health and a clear head, and good luck taking down Koepka in the majors. He now has won five of his last 22 majors, a rate exceeded only by Woods, Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Nick Faldo and Ben Hogan in the last 75 years.

He is the first player from LIV Golf to win a major, and it hits back at the notion that 54-hole events and guaranteed money would take the edge off the rival league's best players.

"I definitely think it helps LIV, but I'm more interested in my own self right now, to be honest with you," Koepka said. "Yeah, it's a huge thing for LIV, but at the same time I'm out here competing as an individual at the PGA Championship. I'm just happy to take this home for the third time."

Golden Knights top Stars in OT for 2-0 series lead

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — A slashing penalty in the first period and a retaliatory cross check in the second not only sent Vegas' Chandler Stephenson to the penalty box twice, but resulted in a conversation with coach Bruce Cassidy in the second intermission.

"Let's not let our egos get in the way of having success," Cassidy told Stephenson. "It's playoffs. You deal with it."

He did just that. Stephenson jumped on a rebound 1:12 into overtime and hit the back of the net to complete a rally and give the Golden Knights a 3-2 victory over the Dallas Stars on Sunday and a 2-0 lead in the Western Conference finals.

Stephenson, Jonathan Marchessault and Mark Stone each had a goal and an assist for Vegas, and Adin Hill saved 26 shots.

Miro Heiskanen and Jason Robertson each scored for the

Stars, and Ryan Suter had two assists. Jake Oettinger made 21 saves.

Game 3 is Tuesday in Dallas.

Teams that have won the first two games in the series preceding the Stanley Cup Final have advanced 91% of the time, one of the few times the odds have been in the Knights' favor. They have gone against the usual paths to victory during the NHL playoffs by going 7-3 when the opponent scores first and posting eight comeback wins.

Dallas led 1-0 and 2-1 before Marchessault forced overtime with a shot from the slot with just 2:22 left in the third period. He banged home the goal after a sensational no-look pass from Jack Eichel, who took advantage of a turnover by Suter.

"After that, it was like, 'All right we're back in this,' and I think we have that belief that we're not going to lose," Stephenson said.

The Stars have found over-

time to be a no-win proposition. They are 0-4 in OT games this postseason, the fifth team to lose that many. All four games of the conference finals have gone to overtime, the first time in NHL history that has occurred.

"I thought we did a bunch of really good things, fixed a lot of things from Game 1," Stars coach Peter DeBoer said. "I thought Jack Eichel and Marchessault make a big-time play there to tie it, and we respond. Our chance in overtime was as good or better than theirs. We've just got to stick it in the net."

Each team took advantage of funky bounces to score in the first period.

Heiskanen scored just 2:47 into the game for the Stars, the puck hopping over Hill. Vegas evened the score at 10:08 when the puck went off Dallas defenseman Esa Lindell's skate and Stone buried the 5-on-3 power-

play goal that came off an unusual double penalty on the Stars — their only two infractions.

Robertson scored for the second game in a row when he knocked in a rebound on a power play at 9:21 of the second period to put Dallas back in front at 2-1. That goal rewarded a Stars defensive effort that allowed just 10 shots on goal through the first two periods.

The Knights, however, picked up the pressure in the third period with 12 shots on goal, forced overtime and then won it quickly in the extra session.

Stephenson capped what had been a difficult day with a shot he will long remember.

"I obviously need to keep my emotions a little more in check," Stephenson said. "You never want to give a team with a good power play two good opportunities. It was nice to finish it off with that."

Heat roll to 3-0 series lead on Celtics

Associated Press

MIAMI — Erik Spoelstra had his team fully expecting that Game 3 of the Eastern Conference finals would be extremely difficult, that the Miami Heat were going to have to take the best shot that a desperate bunch of Boston Celtics could muster.

He was wrong.

It was a Heat romp — and a team that had to pull off a frantic rally just to make the playoffs is now one win from the NBA Finals.

Gabe Vincent scored a career-high 29 points, Duncan Robinson added 22 and the eighth-seeded Heat rolled past the Celtics 128-102 on Sunday night. Miami leads the series 3-0, with a chance to finish off a stunning sweep on Tuesday night at home in Game 4.

“That was a solid, mature, professional approach,” said Spoelstra, now on the brink of a sixth trip to the NBA Finals as Miami’s coach. “There’s a lot of pent-up stuff here and we’re getting closer, but we still have to finish this off.”

Caleb Martin scored 18, Jimmy Butler finished with 16,

Bam Adebayo had 13 and Max Strus added 10 for Miami.

Every team in NBA history that has won the first three games of a best-of-seven has ultimately prevailed; the Heat are 8-0 in that situation.

“The rim was as big as the ocean for everybody,” Adebayo said, after Miami shot 57%.

Jayson Tatum scored 14 and Jaylen Brown added 12 for the second-seeded Celtics, who won three times on Miami’s floor on the way to winning last season’s East finals — but simply never had a chance in this one and basically emptied the bench for the fourth quarter.

“I just didn’t have them ready to play,” said Boston coach Joe Mazzulla, who has been the subject of tons of criticism in this series — and will surely face more going into Tuesday. “Whatever it was, whether it was the starting lineup or an adjustment, I have to get them in a better place, ready to play. That’s on me.”

Grant Williams and Payton Pritchard each added 12 for Boston.

“To their credit, they’re

playing well above their means,” Brown said. “They’re ballin’ right now and I’ve got to give them respect. Gabe Vincent, Martin, Strus, Duncan Robinson, guys that we should be able to keep under control are playing their (butt) off.”

The NBA Finals start June 1, and the way things are going, that might mean the league is about to go a few days without games. The Western Conference finals could end Monday; Denver leads the Los Angeles Lakers 3-0. And now, the East finals could end Tuesday.

“It’s the first to four games,” Vincent said. “We’re not satisfied with three.”

There’s never been a season where both conference finals ended in sweeps; it happened in 1957 in the division finals immediately preceding the title series, when Boston beat Syracuse 3-0 and St. Louis beat Minneapolis 3-0.

Of all the 3-0 series leads in NBA history, this one might be the most unexpected — a No. 8 seed in the Heat, a team that struggled just to get into the playoffs, a team that was less than 3 minutes away from be-

ing eliminated in the play-in tournament, getting past top-seeded Milwaukee in five games, then fifth-seeded New York in six, and now on the brink of denying the Celtics a second consecutive East crown.

And the Heat let Boston know how much they were enjoying this one.

Mindful that Boston’s Al Horford directed a timeout signal toward the Miami bench during Game 1 when the Celtics were on a second-quarter spurt to build a comfortable lead, Butler did the same to Horford as the Heat were running away in the third quarter of Game 3.

Besides, the Heat rallied to win Game 1 anyway. There was no rally required in Game 3 by the Heat. There was barely one attempted by the Celtics, for that matter.

“I don’t even know where to start,” Brown said. “It’s an obvious letdown. I feel like we let our fan base, organization down. We let ourselves down. And it was collective. We can point fingers, but in reality, it was just embarrassing.”

Anthony retires as No. 9 scorer after 19-year career

Associated Press

Carmelo Anthony, the star forward who led Syracuse to an NCAA championship in his lone college season and went on to spend 19 years in the NBA, announced his retirement on Monday.

Anthony, who was not in the NBA this season, retires as the No. 9 scorer in league history.

Only LeBron James, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Karl Malone, Kobe Bryant, Michael Jordan, Dirk Nowitzki, Wilt Chamberlain and Shaquille O’Neal scored more than Anthony — who finishes his career with 28,289 points.

“Now the time has come for

me to say goodbye ... to the game that gave me purpose and pride,” Anthony said in a videotaped message announcing his decision — one he called “bittersweet.”

Anthony’s legacy has long been secure: He ends his playing days after being selected as one of the 75 greatest players in NBA history, a 10-time All-Star, a past scoring champion and a six-time All-NBA selection.

And while he never got to the NBA Finals, Anthony also knew what it was like to be a champion.

He was the Most Outstanding Player of the 2003 Final Four when he led Syracuse to the na-

tional championship, and he helped USA Basketball win Olympic gold three times — at Beijing in 2008, at London in 2012 and at Rio in 2016.

Anthony has played in 31 games in four appearances at the Olympics, the most of any U.S. men’s player ever. Anthony’s 37 points against Nigeria in the 2012 Games is a USA Basketball men’s record at an Olympics, as are his 10 three-pointers from that game.

He will remain part of international basketball for at least a few more months; Anthony is one of the ambassadors to the Basketball World Cup, FIBA’s biggest event, which will be

held this summer in the Philippines, Japan and Indonesia.

“I remember the days when I had nothing, just a ball on the court and a dream of something more,” Anthony said. “But basketball was my outlet. My purpose was strong, my communities, the cities I represented with pride and the fans that supported me along the way. I am forever grateful for those people and places because they made me Carmelo Anthony.”

Anthony was drafted No. 3 overall by Denver in 2003. He averaged 22.5 points in his 19 seasons, spending the bulk of those years with Denver and the New York Knicks.

Ohtani strikes out 9 as Angels beat Twins

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Shohei Ohtani struck out nine in six innings, Mickey Moniak delivered his second big hit of the series and the Los Angeles Angels defeated the Minnesota Twins 4-2 on Sunday.

Ohtani did not get a decision despite allowing one run and two hits. It was the fourth time in 10 starts this season the two-way star had nine or more strikeouts. He leads the majors with a .142 opponent batting average and is third in strikeouts with 80.

Moniak, who had a tying triple Friday night, came through with a two-run double off Pablo López (2-3) in the seventh for a 3-1 advantage.

“It was a really good one today,” Angels manager Phil Nevin said. “He’s got five wins and kept us in every game. He’s given up some runs when we’ve taken the lead, but he seems to have got us to the finish line with us having that lead. He knows when to dial it back for sure.”

The Angels improved to 8-2 when Ohtani starts and took a three-game series for the first time since early May. He threw 99 pitches. Of his 62 strikes, 22 were whiffs, which tied his season high.

Mets 5-2, Guardians 4-1: Justin Verlander outpitched Shane Bieber in a marquee matchup of Cy Young Award winners, and host New York edged Cleveland for a doubleheader sweep.

Francisco Lindor homered against his former team and Jeff McNeil knocked in the tiebreaking run with a sacrifice fly off Bieber (2-2) in the eighth inning. Brooks Raley closed out New York’s fifth consecutive comeback victory — all by one run — since a 6-16 slide.

In the opener, Starling Marte ended a long power drought by hitting a go-ahead homer in the eighth off Trevor Stephan (2-2). Max Scherzer pitched six shutout innings despite a callus on his right thumb.

Brewers 6, Rays 4: Willy Adames, Rowdy Tellez and William Contreras homered as visiting Milwaukee avoided a three-game sweep.

Freddy Peralta (5-3) gave up three runs and five hits in six innings as the NL Central-leading Brewers (25-21) stopped a three-game skid.

Yankees 4, Reds 1: Harrison Bader and Gleyber Torres homered as visiting New York completed a three-game sweep

for its first four-game winning streak this season.

Luis Severino returned from a strained lat muscle that had sidelined him since spring training and allowed one run and four hits in 4⅓ innings.

Astros 2, Athletics 0: Framber Valdez (4-4) pitched a four-hitter as host Houston completed a three-game sweep that extended its winning streak to seven.

Braves 3, Mariners 2: Jared Shuster (1-2) allowed one hit in six innings for his first big league win, and host Atlanta took two of three for its first series victory over Seattle in 12 years.

Phillies 2, Cubs 1: Bryson Stott hit his first career pinch-hit homer, a two-run drive in the seventh, to lift host Philadelphia.

Diamondbacks 8, Pirates 3: Christian Walker had three RBIs, hitting a two-run double in a three-run seventh inning for visiting Arizona, which has won seven of nine.

Nationals 6, Tigers 4: Riley Adams had a career-high four hits and finished a triple short of the cycle as host Washington tied its season high with 18 hits.

White Sox 5, Royals 2: Luis Robert Jr. homered and Romy

González went 3-for-3 with two RBIs as host Chicago finished a three-game sweep, winning for the fifth time in six games.

Orioles 8, Blue Jays 3 (11): Cedric Mullins had five hits and three RBIs and Austin Hays had a tiebreaking single in a five-run 11th inning as visiting Baltimore completed a three-game sweep.

Cardinals 10, Dodgers 5: Oscar Mercado tied his career high of five RBIs and had three hits, Paul DeJong hit a three-run homer and host St. Louis won for the 11th time in its past 14 after a 10-24 start.

Rangers 13, Rockies 3: Corey Seager hit a two-run homer in a five-run second inning and an RBI double in a six-run fifth, helping host Texas complete a three-game sweep.

Giants 7, Marlins 5: Patrick Bailey hit his first major league homer and drove in a run with a squeeze bunt, helping host San Francisco win for the fifth time in six games.

Padres 7, Red Sox 0: Rowned Odor hit a three-run double off struggling Corey Kluber (2-6) in the first inning, Matt Carpenter homered and host San Diego stopped a four-game skid by winning for the third time in 14 games.

Larson wins 3rd NASCAR All-Star race, takes home \$1M

Associated Press

NORTH WILKESBORO, N.C. — Kyle Larson didn’t mince words after his third All-Star race victory in the last five years.

“That was an old school (butt)-whipping, for sure,” Larson said.

Larson turned in a dominating effort to run away with his third All-Star race and earn \$1 million Sunday night in the Cup Series’ return to North Wilkesboro Speedway following a 27-year absence.

He became the fourth driver to win the All-Star race at least three times. Jimmie Johnson has the most with four wins, while Larson, Jeff Gordon and Dale Earnhardt have three. Larson is the first to win the All-Star race at three different tracks, also having won in Charlotte in 2019 and Texas in 2021.

He celebrated the win with a full lap of burnouts around the .625-mile track as Hendrick Motorsports won its 11th All-Star race.

Bubba Wallace finished second in the 200-lap non-points exhibition race, followed by Tyler Reddick, Chase Briscoe and Chase Elliott.

But only Larson collected prize money in the winner-take-all event.

Wallace joked he won the “best of the rest.”

“Larson was lights out, so congrats to him,” Wallace said. “They have been hitting it on the head all season, so to run second to them is not a bad thing. But to run second in the All-Star race sucks because you go home with nothing.”

Larson was unsure if he would finish bet-

ter than 15th after struggling in the heat races Saturday night.

“I didn’t think there was enough there for (my crew) to get me better,” Larson said.

So when Larson was penalized for speeding on lap 24 and sent to the back of the field, he figured it was not his night.

But after taking on the new tires, he drove his No. 5 Chevrolet to the front of the field blowing past 16 cars, including polesitter Daniel Suarez on lap 56. Larson went on to build an 11-second lead before the first competition caution at lap 100.

“Once I was picking people off, I was like, man, is my car that good or is it the tire disparity?” Larson said. “Then I was like shoot, our car is pretty good. So I tried to lap as many as I could.”