

US wrapping up dock for aid to Gaza

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In the coming days, the U.S. military in the Eastern Mediterranean is expected to jab one end of a hulking metal dock — the length of five U.S. football fields — into a beach in northern Gaza.

And that may be the end of the easy part for the Biden administration's two-month-long, \$320 million effort to open a sea route to get humanitarian aid into Gaza, with dangers and uncertainties ahead for aid delivery teams as fighting surges and the plight of starving Palestinians grows more dire.

For President Joe Biden, the Pentagon's new floating pier and causeway are a gamble, an attempted workaround to the challenges of getting aid into Gaza from intensifying war and the restrictions its ally Israel has placed at land crossings since Hamas' deadly attacks on Israel launched the conflict in October.

Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pen-

tagon press secretary, said Tuesday that humanitarian groups were ready for the first shipments through the U.S. maritime route.

"In the coming days, you can expect to see this effort underway. And we are confident that we will be able to, working with our NGO partners, ensure that aid can be delivered," he said.

Relief groups are watching to see if Israeli officials will allow a freer flow of food and other supplies through this sea route than they have by land and follow through on pledges to protect aid workers. They say protections for humanitarian workers have not improved and point to aid already piling up at Gaza's border crossings, waiting for decisions by Israeli officials to distribute it.

Because land crossings could bring in all the needed aid if Israeli officials allowed, the U.S.-built pier and sea route "is a solution for a problem that doesn't exist," said Scott Paul, an associate director of the Oxfam hu-

manitarian organization.

"Like all of the land crossings, it comes down to the consent of the government of Israel" on allowing aid through its screening process and ensuring aid teams are safe to distribute it within Gaza, Paul said.

"If Israel is comfortable with allowing the maritime corridor to function ... then it will work in a limited way," he said this week, as the U.S. military said it was waiting out bad weather to put the pier and dock in place. "And if they don't, it won't. Which is why it's a very, very expensive alternative."

Ophir Falk, foreign policy adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said Tuesday that the country had enabled the entrance of thousands of aid trucks into Gaza and would continue to do so. It repeated accusations that Hamas was disrupting aid distribution by hijacking and attacking convoys.

U.S. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller

said this month that there was only one major incident of Hamas commandeering aid trucks.

The Israeli military said in a statement Tuesday that it will keep acting in line with international law to distribute aid to Gaza. It has also previously said there are no limits on aid, it is trying to keep crossings open despite Hamas attacks and has blamed the U.N. for problems with distribution.

With food and aid in short supply in Gaza throughout the war, the head of the U.N. World Food Program and others have said that famine has taken hold in northern Gaza and is spreading south.

Last month, truckloads of aid entering Gaza increased by 13%, said Anastasia Moran, an associate director for the International Rescue Committee, a global humanitarian group. But the daily average of trucks entering in April was still about half the average of 500 trucks a day that crossed before the war.

Pilot dies after ejection seat activates on the ground

By ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — An instructor pilot died Tuesday morning from injuries caused by an aircraft ejection seat activating on the ground at Shepard Air Force Base in Texas, service officials said.

Air Force Capt. John Robertson, a pilot with the 80th Operations Support Squadron, was inside a T-6A Texan II at the time of the accident and sustained serious injuries, base officials said. A student pilot was in the aircraft's second seat and

did not eject or sustain injuries, said George Woodward, a spokesman for the base.

Robertson's family was at his side when he died at United Regional Hospital, officials said.

"We are thankful for the [contractor] maintenance team who immediately provided life-sustaining care, and for the heroic efforts of the security forces, fire and medical personnel here on base and at United Regional Hospital. Their efforts allowed time for Capt. Robertson's family to be at his side when he passed," said Col. Mitchell J.

Cok, the acting wing commander. "This is a devastating loss for Capt. Robertson's family and loved ones, and for the entire 80th Flying Training Wing."

An interim safety board investigation was convened immediately following the incident, and an Air Force Safety Investigation Board is expected to be in place later this week, base officials said. The board will release its report when the investigation is complete.

The T-6A Texan II is a fixed-wing training aircraft with two seats. It is the primary trainer

for student pilots learning basic flying skills.

The Air Force in 2022 sidelined roughly 40% of its combat training and primary training aircraft to review the safety of a potentially defective ejection seat part — specifically a cartridge-actuated device that activates when aviators pull the ejection handle or deploy a parachute.

The Navy and Marine Corps replaced the part in its fleets after the manufacturer Martin-Baker contacted the Navy about the potential defect.

US Army Pacific: Land forces key for peace

By **WYATT OLSON**
Stars and Stripes

HONOLULU — The commanding general of U.S. Army Pacific stood before hundreds of soldiers from armed forces around the region Tuesday and continually returned to one topic: peace.

“Through our unity and collective commitment to each other, we must achieve a lasting peace,” Gen. Charles Flynn said during the keynote speech kicking off the three-day Land Forces Pacific, or LANPAC, symposium on Waikiki Beach.

“And we’ll do so by mobilizing the collective capabilities and strengths of our strategic land power network,” he said. “We have to make the sum greater than its parts. Mobilizing our strategic land power network for the greater good is vital to our security and pros-

perity for each of our nations and for the region.”

The annual international symposium in Hawaii, organized by the Association of the U.S. Army, focuses on the role and use of land forces in the Indo-Pacific region.

As head of U.S. Army Pacific, Flynn oversees about 107,000 soldiers and civilian workers stationed over a vast area that includes Alaska, Hawaii, Japan, South Korea, Guam, American Samoa and Saipan.

The importance of land forces has been a central topic in most of Flynn’s public speaking engagements since he took command of Army Pacific three years ago.

“Well, just to beat that drum once more, here’s my view,” he said. “Land power is the security architecture that binds this

region together.

“Armies exist to defend their nations, to secure our territorial integrity and to guarantee our sovereignty,” he said. “We do so by holding ground and by defending key terrain.”

Throughout the speech, Flynn focused his comments on soldiers in the audience representing armies from 30 countries. Among them were 13 chiefs of armies.

Only through partnerships with the armies of those nations can peace be maintained in the region by deterring aggression by China, Russia and North Korea, Flynn said.

“Each of us bears a responsibility to maintain peace, safety and stability for our people, so that they may thrive,” he said.

Land forces are central to keeping that peace and helping

mobilize a joint, international force in the event of conflict, Flynn said.

“All branches of our militaries are dependent on land and will always return to land,” he said. “Ships require ports. Planes need airfields. Satellite communications with ground terminals and even cyber effects demand terrestrial based infrastructure.”

Russia’s ongoing invasion of Ukraine and the conflict within the Gaza Strip in the Middle East have made the global security situation more perilous, Flynn said.

“The last thing humanity could afford is another war, especially in this region and especially since the geostrategic weight of this century exists right here in Asia,” he said. “Our foremost task must be to preserve the peace.”

Court-martial considered for DOD leaker Teixeira

Associated Press

BEDFORD, Mass. — A Massachusetts Air National Guard member who pleaded guilty in March to federal crimes for leaking highly classified military documents appeared Tuesday before a military hearing of a judge who will recommend whether the guardsman should face a court-martial.

Jack Teixeira, of North Dighton, Mass., is facing three charges in the military justice system: one alleging he failed to obey a lawful order and two counts of obstructing justice.

Capt. Stephanie Evans said at Tuesday’s hearing that a court-martial was appropriate given that obeying orders “is at the absolute core of everything we do in the U.S. military” and that Teixeira acted with “malicious

intent to cover his tracks.”

But one of Teixeira’s attorneys, Maj. Luke Gilhooly, argued that further action would amount to prosecuting him twice for the same offense.

Teixeira was arrested just over a year ago in the most consequential national security leak in years. He pleaded guilty on March 4 to six counts of willful retention and transmission of national defense information under a deal with prosecutors that calls for him to serve at least 11 years in prison.

Referring to that agreement, Gilhooly said the government has now taken its “big feast of evidence” from the criminal courthouse and walked it “down the street here to Hanscom Air Force Base to get their own pound of flesh.”

Plebes end their 1st year with daunting tradition

Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — It took Naval Academy plebes two hours, 19 minutes and 11 seconds Wednesday to accomplish the ultimate in upward mobility: scaling a greased obelisk and swapping out a cup with a cap.

The annual grueling, slippery ritual marking the completion of the plebe year ended with 20-year-old Californian Ben Leisegang standing victorious on the shoulders of scores of classmates and placing an upperclassman’s hat atop the Herndon Monument.

The Class of 2027 worked together to scale the 21-foot obelisk covered in vegetable shortening to replace a white plebe “Dixie cup hat” with the upperclassman’s hat.

There are about 1,300 plebes in the class, according to academy

spokesperson Elizabeth B. Wrightson. After the climb is complete, they’re called fourth class midshipmen, not plebes.

Plebes linked arms around the monument’s base to build a pyramid, clearing grease from the monument’s surface, enduring a constant soaking spray from hoses. Around the two-hour mark, Leisegang finally got close enough to place the upperclassman’s hat near the obelisk’s pinnacle, but the Dixie cup remained in place. Minutes later, he whipped the top of the obelisk with a waterlogged shirt knocking down the upperclassman’s hat.

The hat was handed back up, and he finally slid the upperclassman’s hat into place, knocking down the Dixie cup hat and prompting uproarious cheers.

Biden and Trump agree to 2 debates

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump on Wednesday agreed to hold two campaign debates in June and September — the first on June 27 hosted by CNN — but their camps appeared far apart on key details like the ground rules for the presidential face-offs.

The quick agreement on the timetable to meet followed the Democrat's announcement that he will not participate in fall presidential debates sponsored by the nonpartisan commission that has organized them for more than three decades. Biden's campaign instead proposed that media outlets directly organize the debates with the presumptive Democratic and Republican nominees, with the first to be held in late June and the second in September before early voting begins. Trump, in a post on his Truth Social site, said he was "Ready and Willing to Debate" Biden at the proposed times.

Biden said he accepted an in-

itation from CNN to a debate on June 27, adding, "Over to you, Donald. As you said: anywhere, anytime, any place." Trump told Fox News Digital he accepted the invitation.

Still, the two sides appeared to be hold significant differences on key questions of how to organize the debates, including agreeing on media partners, moderators, location and rules — some of the very questions that prompted the formation of the Commission on Presidential Debates in 1987. Biden's proposal would exclude third-party candidates.

Trump's team did not immediately weigh in on the details of the Biden proposal, but Trump expressed his desire for a large live audience.

"I would strongly recommend more than two debates and, for excitement purposes, a very large venue, although Biden is supposedly afraid of crowds — That's only because he doesn't get them," Trump said. "Just tell me when, I'll be there."

Tariffs on Chinese products could raise consumer prices

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — New tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles and batteries, solar cells, medical equipment and other goods are intended to protect U.S. jobs and manufacturers. They could raise prices on certain specific items, experts say, though a broad inflationary impact is unlikely in the short term.

The tariffs will be phased in over the next three years, officials said. Those that take effect in 2024 include EVs and EV batteries, along with solar cells, syringes, needles, steel and aluminum and more. Some would not take effect until 2026.

The election-year tariffs could increase friction between the world's two largest economies. China's foreign ministry said in a statement that the tariffs "will seriously affect the atmosphere of bilateral cooperation."

Administration officials say they don't expect the tariffs to significantly escalate tensions between the two countries, although China is likely to explore ways to respond to the new taxes on its products.

Under the White House action, tariffs on EVs from China will quadruple, from 25% to 100% this year.

The price of solar panels also may rise because of the new tariffs. The tariff rate on solar cells will increase from 25% to 50% in 2024.

The White House said China has used unfair practices to dominate upward of 80% to 90% of the global solar supply chain.

Tariffs on steel and aluminum products will triple in some cases, from the current range of zero to 7.5% to 25% in 2024.

China controls over 50% of global production of steel and aluminum, and its products are "among the world's most carbon intensive," the White House said.

Tariff rates on syringes and needles will increase from zero to 50% in 2024, while certain personal protective equipment, including some respirators and face masks, will see tariffs increase from zero to 7.5% now to 25% in 2024.

Tariffs on rubber medical and surgical gloves will increase in 2026.

Senators urge \$32 billion in emergency spending on AI

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan group of four senators led by Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is recommending that Congress spend at least \$32 billion over the next three years to develop artificial intelligence and place safeguards around it, writing in a new report released Wednesday that the U.S. needs to "harness the opportunities and address the risks" of the quickly developing technology.

The group of two Democrats and two Republicans said in an interview Tuesday that while they sometimes disagreed on the best paths forward, it was

imperative to find consensus with the technology taking off and other countries like China investing heavily in its development. They settled on a raft of broad policy recommendations that were included in the report.

While any legislation related to AI will be difficult to pass, especially in an election year and in a divided Congress, the senators said that regulation and incentives for innovation are urgently needed.

"It's complicated, it's difficult, but we can't afford to put our head in the sand," said Schumer, D-N.Y., who convened the group last year after

AI chatbot ChatGPT entered the marketplace and showed that it could in many ways mimic human behavior.

The group recommends in the report that Congress draft "emergency" spending legislation to boost U.S. investments in artificial intelligence, including new research and development and new testing standards to try and understand the potential harms of the technology. The group also recommended new requirements for transparency as artificial intelligence products are rolled out and that studies be conducted into the potential impact of AI on jobs and the

U.S. workforce.

Republican Sen. Mike Rounds, a member of the group, said the money would be well spent not only to compete with other countries who are racing into the AI space but also to improve Americans' quality of life — supporting technology that could help cure some cancers or chronic illnesses, he said, or improvements in weapons systems that could help the country avoid a war.

"This is a time in which the dollars we put into this particular investment will pay dividends for the taxpayers of this country long term," he said.

France sends police to New Caledonia territory

Associated Press

PARIS — France's government rushed hundreds of police reinforcements to the French Pacific territory of New Caledonia and considered imposing an emergency Wednesday to curb violence that has killed four people on the island, where pro-independence supporters have long pushed to break free from France.

After successive nights of unrest, French authorities reported the first deaths on Wednesday, with a gendarme among the four people killed. More

than 300 people have been injured since Monday, when protests over voting changes pushed by Paris turned violent.

There have also been more than 130 arrests, French authorities said.

Decades of tensions have lingered on the archipelago between Indigenous Kanaks seeking independence and descendants of colonizers who want to remain part of France.

After a two-hour security meeting Wednesday with French President Emmanuel Macron and top ministers,

Prime Minister Gabriel Attal told parliament in Paris that the state of emergency would aim "to restore order in the shortest time possible."

The French Cabinet will consider a decree imposing the emergency measures Wednesday afternoon, he said.

Reinforcements were being rushed in to help security forces that have battled violent protesters. The Interior Ministry said 500 additional officers were expected within hours on the archipelago to bolster 1,800 police and gendarmes already there.

This week's unrest erupted as the French legislature in Paris debated amending the French constitution to make changes to voter lists in New Caledonia. The National Assembly on Wednesday approved a bill that will, among other changes, allow residents who have lived in New Caledonia for 10 years to cast ballots in provincial elections.

Opponents have said the measure will benefit pro-France politicians in New Caledonia and further marginalize indigenous Kanak people.

Slovak PM in life-threatening condition after being shot

Associated Press

PRAGUE — Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico is in life-threatening condition after being wounded in a shooting after a political event Wednesday afternoon, according to his Facebook profile.

The populist, pro-Russian leader, 59, was hit in the stomach after four shots were fired outside the House of Culture in the town of Handlova, 93 miles northeast of the capital where the leader was meeting with supporters, according to reports on TA3, a Slovak TV station. A suspect has been detained, the country's president said in a televised statement.

A message posted to Fico's Facebook account said the leader "has been shot multiple times and is currently in life-threatening condition."

It said he was being transported by helicop-

ter to the Banská Bystrica, 63 miles away from Handlova because it would take too long to get to Bratislava due to the necessity of an acute procedure.

"The next few hours will decide," it said.

Outgoing President Zuzana Caputova, a political rival of Fico, said in a televised statement: "A physical attack on the Prime Minister is, first of all, an attack on a person, but it is also an attack on democracy. Any violence is unacceptable. The hateful rhetoric we've been witnessing in society leads to hateful actions. Please, let's stop it."

President-elect Peter Pellegrini, an ally of Fico, called the assassination "an unprecedented threat to Slovak democracy. If we express other political opinions with pistols in squares, and not in polling stations, we are jeopardizing everything that we have built to-

gether over 31 years of Slovak sovereignty."

There were reactions of shock from across Europe, and some were calling it an attempted assassination of the leader in the NATO state, although no motive for the shooting was immediately apparent.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg posted on the social media platform X that he was "shocked and appalled by the shooting."

The shooting in Slovakia comes three weeks ahead of crucial European Parliament elections, in which populist and hard-right parties in the 27-nation bloc appear poised to make gains.

Deputy speaker of parliament Lubos Blaha confirmed the incident during a session of Slovakia's Parliament and adjourned it until further notice, the Slovak TASR news agency said.

US museum curator held in Turkey for smuggling spiders

Associated Press

ISTANBUL — A curator at the American Museum of Natural History was detained in Istanbul while allegedly attempting to smuggle spider and scorpion samples, Turkish media reported. The curator said he had permits from the government to conduct his research.

Lorenzo Prendini, an expert on arachnids at the New York-based museum, was held by police at Istanbul Airport while al-

legedly trying to take about 1,500 samples out of the country, news outlets reported.

The state-run Anadolu news agency reported Monday that Prendini was detained for allegedly attempting to smuggle species found in Turkey. In emailed comments to The Associated Press, Prendini said he had appeared before a judge and was released without charge.

Video published by the Demiroren News Agency showed offi-

cers searching hand luggage and removing plastic bags that appeared to be packed with dead spiders and scorpions.

Prendini said the police had disregarded permits from the Turkish government allowing him to conduct his research in collaboration with Turkish scientists.

"The police completely ignored this and relied on the testimony of an 'expert' who has a conflict of interest with my col-

laborators ... and whose scientific research is highly questionable," he said.

"The police have completely violated due process and it appears they would like to find me guilty in the court of public opinion."

The museum's website lists Prendini as the curator of its spider, scorpion, centipede and millipede collections. It says his research into spiders and scorpions has taken him to more than 30 countries.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Bumble apologizes, pulls ads mocking celibacy

CA SAN FRANCISCO — The dating app Bumble got stung after running billboard ads that appeared to sneer at celibacy as an alternative to meeting people online.

On Monday, the company backtracked and apologized for billboards that bore the message “You know full well a vow of celibacy is not the answer” juxtaposed against an introduction to “the new Bumble.” The app launched a brand redesign in April in hopes of reviving user interest, which had been lagging.

Women on social media castigated the company for suggesting celibacy isn’t a valid personal choice. Some online critics read the slogan as reflecting patriarchal notions that women should be willing to have sex with men even if they don’t want to.

In an apology posted on Instagram, Bumble said it is removing ads that it called a mistaken attempt to “lean into a community frustrated by modern dating.” The company is also planning to donate to the National Domestic Violence Hotline and other organizations to support global efforts to “support women, marginalized communities, and those impacted by abuse.”

State to rebuild marred waterfront for \$25M

ME PORTLAND — Maine’s government will spend tens of millions of dollars to rebuild the state’s working waterfront communities after a series of devastating winter storms pummeled the

state’s docks, wharves and coastal businesses.

The back-to-back storms hammered the Northeast in January and hit Maine and New Hampshire especially hard, bringing flooding and heavy damage to dozens of businesses. State officials in Maine said the storms, which were later declared a “major disaster” by President Joe Biden, caused about \$70 million in damage in the state.

Applications for funding are now available to repair and rebuild working waterfront areas damaged by the storms, Democratic Gov. Janet Mills said last week. The \$25 million being made available is part of a \$60 million rebuilding package approved by the Maine Legislature for storm rebuilding, Mills said.

No charges in rare liquor probe of alcohol agency

OR PORTLAND — Criminal charges are not warranted in the rare liquor probe that shook Oregon’s alcohol agency last year and forced its executive director to resign, state justice officials said Monday.

In February 2023, the Oregon Department of Justice began investigating whether employees of the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission improperly used their positions to obtain bottles of top-shelf bourbon for personal use. The department reviewed thousands of documents and emails, and interviewed dozens of people, including current and former commission employees and liquor store agents.

It concluded it did not have

sufficient evidence to prove the criminal offenses it had considered — official misconduct and misuse of confidential information — beyond a reasonable doubt.

AGs sue over rules on gas-powered trucks

NE OMAHA — A large group of Republican attorneys general on Monday took legal action against the Biden administration and California over new emissions limits for trucks.

Nebraska Attorney General Mike Hilgers is leading the group that filed a petition with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit to overturn an Environmental Protection Agency rule limiting truck emissions.

A separate lawsuit against California claims a phased-in ban on internal-combustion trucks is unconstitutional and will hurt the U.S. economy.

Hilgers in a statement said the EPA and California rules “will devastate the trucking and logistics industry, raise prices for customers, and impact untold number of jobs across Nebraska and the country.” EPA officials have said the strict emissions standards will help clean up some of the nation’s largest sources of planet-warming greenhouse gases.

Body recovered in Grand Canyon National Park

AZ GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK — The body of a New Mexico man has been recovered from the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park, authorities

said Monday.

National Park Service personnel were notified Friday about a body being spotted in the river.

Authorities said the body appears to be that of 58-year-old Thomas L. Robison, of Santa Fe.

Park officials said Robison was believed to have attempted to travel down the river with his dog on a wooden raft after abandoning his vehicle at Lees Ferry.

Adult-use sales of pot could begin by mid-June

OH COLUMBUS — Recreational marijuana could be available for sale in Ohio by mid-June, after new licensing rules for dispensaries cleared a key legislative hurdle Monday.

Adult-use sales have been in limbo in the state since December, when an initiated statute approved by voters went into effect. Ohioans over 21 were immediately able to legally grow and possess cannabis at home, but they had nowhere to legally buy it — prompting concern by Gov. Mike DeWine and some fellow Republicans in the Legislature that openings would be created for a black market.

On Monday, the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review allowed rules to proceed without objection that clear the way for a dual licensing program that will allow existing medical marijuana dispensaries to also sell non-medical pot products. Jim Canepa, superintendent of the Division of Cannabis Control, said applications will be available by no later than June 7, as the new law requires.

— From wire reports

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Jokic, Nuggets defense handle T-wolves

Associated Press

DENVER — Nikola Jokic received the Michael Jordan award from Commissioner Adam Silver before tipoff, then delivered a memorable playoff performance to celebrate his third MVP trophy Tuesday night.

Jokic scored 40 points and dished out 13 assists and the Denver Nuggets shut down Anthony Edwards in a 112-97 win over the Minnesota Timberwolves that put the reigning NBA champs one win away from the West finals.

Jokic also had seven rebounds with no turnovers as the home team won for the first time in this semifinal series.

"He did everything for us tonight," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said. "And it was fun to watch."

Jokic's domination even had his opponents smiling.

"I just laugh. That's all I can do," Edwards said of watching Jokic go off for 16 points and assist on four other baskets in the third quarter when the Nuggets

seized control for yet another rout.

"I can't be mad," Edwards said. "He's good, man. I think I said that after Game 1 when we won, and Game 2, he's the MVP. He's the best player in NBA. He showed it the last three games, three games in a row. He was special tonight. I've got to give him his flowers. He was that guy tonight."

Jokic even had another rim-rattling dunk, something he's not known for. When asked if Minnesota's collection of rim protectors necessitated such moves, Jokic cracked, "You know, I'm a freak of nature. Why not show off my athleticism?"

Aaron Gordon added 18 points and 10 boards, and Jamal Murray scored 16.

"If Jokic's scoring like that, there's no need to do anything special," Murray said.

Trapped and doubled all night, Edwards was held to 18 points on 5-for-15 shooting. Karl-Anthony Towns led the Wolves with 23 points and Rudy Gobert scored 18.

"I think we did a great job, not just on (Edwards) but everybody," Murray said.

With their first three-game losing streak of the season, the Wolves will have to snap their skid Thursday at Target Center to force a Game 7 in Denver.

Jokic, who was presented with his third MVP trophy in a pregame ceremony, scored 19 first-half points in leading Denver to a 50-44 lead at the half. He added 16 points in the third quarter when the Nuggets pushed their lead to 14.

After the Wolves used a mini-run to pull to 103-92, Jokic nailed a 3-pointer at the shot clock buzzer over a helpless Gobert, who recently won his fourth NBA Defensive Player of the Year award, to make it a 14-point cushion with just over 3 minutes left.

Edwards averaged 33.3 points in the first four games of the series and the Wolves were looking for somebody else to step up. Although Towns did just that, Edwards missed eight of his first nine shots, had five

points at halftime and didn't find his shooting touch until the game had gotten away from the Timberwolves.

Minnesota's point guard Mike Conley was scratched just before tipoff with a sore right Achilles. Nickeil Alexander-Walker started in his spot and had 14 points and five assists.

When Towns went to the bench with his third foul late in the first half, Gobert pointed at Kyle Anderson, instructing him to guard Jokic. TNT announcer Reggie Miller was aghast at Gobert, saying, "You're the Defensive Player of the Year! You guard the MVP!"

It mattered little who was guarding him on this night.

"He's amazing," Murray said, "just the way he picks apart the game and reads the game and trusts his teammates. I'm guessing that for the big fella getting the trophy tonight probably motivated him a little bit. Just being at home was a lot of fun, the place was rocking, kind of felt the energy and he definitely had it going."

Brunson scores 44, Knicks on brink of conference finals

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The New York Knicks have one more step to climb to reach the Eastern Conference finals for the first time since 2000.

Jalen Brunson, after a couple of rough games, looks ready to take it.

Brunson scored 44 points, reaching 40 for the fifth time in this postseason, and the Knicks beat the Indiana Pacers 121-91 on Tuesday night for a 3-2 lead in their playoff series.

The Knicks rebounded from a blowout loss and guaranteed themselves at least one more game at Madison Square Garden in front of their roaring fans who had been aching to see big games in late spring again. Josh Hart had 18 points and 11 rebounds, and Deuce McBride scored 17 points

after he was inserted into the starting lineup.

The No. 2-seeded Knicks can win the series Friday night at Indiana after the first two-day break between games in the series. Caitlin Clark's WNBA home debut with the Indiana Fever is scheduled for Thursday night at Gainbridge Fieldhouse, causing the extra day that perhaps can benefit a New York team that is playing without four key players.

Game 7, if necessary, would be Sunday afternoon.

"We still need one more win so we can't get too excited about it," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said. "We have to understand what we need to do, stay focused on the task at hand. If you feel good about yourself you get knocked down in this league. We've got to be ready to go."

Brunson hurt his right foot in Game 2 and was limited to 18 points Sunday, his lowest of the postseason, when the Pacers ran the Knicks off the floor in a 121-89 romp. He kept insisting he was fine and there was no reason to question that Tuesday.

"I think as a team, no matter what the situation is, we have the same mindset no matter what," Brunson said. "And regardless of how I'm feeling or someone else is feeling, we know what's at stake, we know what we have to do and we're going to figure it out."

Pulling up quickly for 3-pointers off the dribble or using his series of fakes and spins to set up soft jumpers in the lane, Brunson shot 18-for-35 and again looked like the player who finished fifth this season in MVP voting, not the one who shot 10-for-26 in Game 3

and 6-for-17 on Sunday.

He scored 28 in the first half, a Knicks playoff record, and then put away the game in the fourth with seven straight points, capped by a three-point play that made it 106-86 with 7:57 to go.

Brunson, who scored 43 in Game 1 to become the fourth player in NBA history with four consecutive 40-point games in the playoffs, had plenty of help.

Alec Burks, who had been out of the rotation entirely until re-emerging after a rash of injuries, added 18 points off the bench and Isaiah Hartenstein had seven points and 17 rebounds. Hartenstein grabbed 12 on the offensive end, helping the Knicks overwhelm the Pacers 53-29 on the glass, with 20 offensive rebounds leading to 26 second-chance points.

No. 1 Scheffler eyes PGA title after Masters win

Associated Press

Only 31 days separate that moment from when Scottie Scheffler slipped on the Masters green jacket to when the world's No. 1 player embarks on the second leg of the Grand Slam at the PGA Championship.

And yet it seems so much has transpired in such a short period of time.

Fresh off his second Masters victory, Scheffler beat another strong field in the RBC Heritage for his fourth win in five tournaments. That made the gap between him and everyone else in the world ranking the widest since the peak years of Tiger Woods. And then he disappeared to Dallas to await the birth of his first child.

A sleepy time in golf came to life, however.

First it was Rory McIlroy, coming off another Masters disappointment, injecting much-needed fun back into his golf by partnering with Irish pal Shane

Lowry to win in New Orleans. It was a team event, sure. It felt important to McIlroy. That much was evident when he got on stage and belted out, "Don't Stop Believin'" by Journey.

"I couldn't believe he was doing it, to be honest," Lowry said.

And then halfway around the world, Brooks Koepka finally got fed up with his ordinary play. He called his performance at the Masters — he never broke par over four rounds — a wake-up call. And he woke up with 17 birdies in 54 holes to win in Singapore.

The significance was not so much becoming the first player to win four LIV Golf titles. It was the timing — his final start before defending his title in the PGA Championship.

"I think the embarrassment of Augusta really kicked things into overdrive for me and really having to put my nose down and grind it a little bit harder," Koepka said. "I'm not looking to do

that again."

Scheffler remains the overwhelming favorite — +350 according to BetMGM Sportsbook, with McIlroy next at +1200 — when the 106th PGA Championship returns to Valhalla in Louisville, Ky., on Thursday for the fourth time.

The last two PGA champions at Valhalla were No. 1 in the world — McIlroy in 2014, Tiger Woods in 2000. The difference is the calendar. This will be the first PGA Championship at Valhalla in May. The club, now privately owned, changed the fairway turf from bent to zoysia, which can be cut shorter and runs faster.

Scheffler had high expectations at Augusta National, coming off two wins and a runner-up finish, and he delivered a four-shot victory.

The only question for the PGA Championship is going three weeks without competition — rare for Scheffler in the middle

of a season — and arriving amid a life-changing moment.

And to think it was only two months ago when his position as golf's No. 1 player was in question during a stretch of poor putting, to the point that Scheffler was expending a lot of energy off the course blocking out the noise.

He finds this more manageable.

"I think I'd rather have the target on my back than be in any other position," Scheffler said as he was leaving Harbour Town. "It is challenging walking into the press room every week because I was No. 1 in the world for a long time last year. But I was never answering questions like, 'Hey, you've been playing great.' It was more like, 'Hey, you've been playing great BUT you've been doing this one thing really, really bad.'"

He laughed before adding, "I think it might be tougher to handle that kind of stuff."

Bruins top Panthers in Game 5 to avoid elimination

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Jeremy Swayman said the series would return to Boston. And he backed up that claim in a big way.

Swayman made 28 saves, Charlie McAvoy added to the list of disputed goals in this matchup with the go-ahead score and the Bruins staved off elimination by beating the Florida Panthers 2-1 in Game 5 of their NHL playoff series Tuesday night.

The biggest stop of Swayman's night might have been his last: He stoned Florida's Sam Reinhart from close range with about 8 seconds left, and the Bruins — just as he vowed — left Florida winners.

"We have a goaltender that's extremely confident," Bruins coach Jim Montgomery said. "His swagger gives confidence."

Morgan Geekie also scored for the Bruins, who improved to 2-0 in elimination games this season — they also won a Game 7 over Toronto in Round 1 — and finally found a way to hold the Panthers' offense in check.

Reinhart scored for Florida, and Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 26 shots. The Panthers had just four shots in the first, then got 25 to Sway-

man in the final 40 minutes.

"We had our missed opportunities," Panthers coach Paul Maurice said. "There's a losing coach's line: 'We had our chances.' I didn't like our game. But I like the fact that from where we were in the first, we got into a much, much better place in the second and third."

Florida — which saw its series lead cut to 3-2 — had 15 goals on 107 shots in Games 2, 3 and 4 combined, all of them Panthers wins. But on Tuesday, the Panthers were held to 29 shots and Swayman looked in total control.

Game 6 is in Boston on Friday. Game 7, if necessary, would be back in Florida on Sunday.

Oilers 3, Canucks 2: Evan Bouchard scored the game-winning goal with 38.1 seconds remaining and host Edmonton beat Vancouver in Game 4 of its second-round playoff series.

The victory evened the best-of-seven Western Conference semifinal series at 2-all, with Game 5 set for Thursday night in Vancouver.

Leon Draisaitl opened the scoring for the Oilers on a first-period power play and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins added a tally late in the second period.

Conor Garland and Dakota Joshua had third-period goals for the Canucks, who lost their first road game of the postseason.

Calvin Pickard made 19 saves in his first-ever NHL playoff start, while Arturs Silovs stopped 27 of 30 shots for Vancouver.

The 32-year-old Pickard replaced Stuart Skinner, who allowed four goals on 15 shots in Edmonton's Game 3 loss on Sunday.

"(Pickard) looked like a guy who had played 100 playoff games," Oilers head coach Kris Knoblauch said. "Composed, really solid, seeing the puck really well."

In his 13th pro season, Pickard signed with Edmonton as a free agent in July 2022. He has spent much of his tenure playing for the club's American Hockey League affiliate, the Bakersfield Condors.

He was elevated to the NHL team's backup role in November, when the Oilers sent struggling netminder Jack Campbell down to the AHL.

"Continually, his starts have been solid, no matter how long he sat, a week, two weeks," Knoblauch said. "We have a lot of confidence in him and he came up big tonight."

Marlins slip past Tigers in 10 innings

Associated Press

DETROIT — Jesús Sánchez drove in Bryan De La Cruz with a 10th-inning groundout, and the Miami Marlins beat the Detroit Tigers 1-0 on Tuesday night.

Both starters — Miami's Ryan Weathers and Detroit's Reese Olson — allowed three singles in a career-best eight innings. Olson struck out six, and Weathers finished with four strikeouts.

Josh Bell hit a leadoff single in the 10th against Alex Lange (0-3), moving De La Cruz to third. Sánchez then hit a bouncer to second that resulted in a forceout at second base.

A.J. Puk pitched a scoreless 10th for his first save.

Weathers didn't allow a baserunner until Wenceel Pérez led off the sixth with a grounder through the infield. Javier Báez then grounded into a double play.

The Tigers put two runners on against Tanner Scott (2-4) in the ninth, including Mark Canha reaching on the game's only walk, but Riley Greene grounded out to end the inning.

Brewers 4, Pirates 3: Sal Frelick homered for the first time this season, Joe Ross (2-4) and three relievers combined on a three-hitter, and host Milwaukee beat Pittsburgh.

Nationals 6-0, White Sox 3-4: Keibert

Ruiz and Trey Lipscomb each hit an RBI single during their team's three-run eighth inning, and visiting Washington beat Chicago in the opener of a double-header.

Andrew Vaughn hit his second homer of the season with two out in the third inning of the second game, connecting on a 1-1 pitch from Mitchell Parker (2-2). He went deep again in the eighth against Jackson Rutledge.

Phillies 4, Mets 0: Aaron Nola (5-2) pitched a four-hitter for his fourth major league shutout and visiting Philadelphia beat slumping New York for a two-game sweep.

Braves 7, Cubs 0: Matt Olson hit a three-run homer and drove in four, Chris Sale (6-1) pitched two-hit ball over seven innings and host Atlanta beat Chicago for its second straight shutout in the series.

Yankees 5, Twins 1: Giancarlo Stanton homered and Carlos Rodón (4-2) overcame a shaky start and worked six-plus strong innings as visiting New York beat Minnesota.

Red Sox 5, Rays 4 (12): Romy Gonzalez singled home the winning run in the bottom of the 12th as host Boston rallied to beat Tampa Bay.

Guardians 7, Rangers 4: Josh Naylor hit a three-run homer, Bo Naylor had a

two-run double and AL Central-leading Cleveland beat host Texas, handing the reigning World Series champion its season-high fifth consecutive loss.

Astros 2, Athletics 1 (10): Victor Caratini hit an RBI single in the 10th inning to lift host Houston over Oakland after starting pitcher Ronel Blanco was ejected following a foreign substance check.

Royals 4, Mariners 2: Nelson Velázquez hit a three-run homer in the seventh inning to put his team ahead, and Michael Wacha (3-4) worked six dominant innings as visiting Kansas City beat Seattle.

Rockies 6, Padres 3: Ezequiel Tovar homered and Colorado beat Dylan Cease (5-3) and host San Diego, extending its winning streak to a season-high six games.

Reds 6, Diamondbacks 2: Hunter Greene (2-2) pitched seven effective innings, Will Benson hit a two-run homer and visiting Cincinnati bounced back from a difficult loss with a win over Arizona.

Cardinals 7, Angels 6: Alec Burleson hit a two-run homer in the seventh inning, Pedro Pagés had a three-run double for his first MLB hit and visiting St. Louis defeated Los Angeles.

Dodgers 10, Giants 2: Shohei Ohtani had a solo home run and an RBI double among his three hits, and NL West-leading Los Angeles pounded rival San Francisco.

Clark struggles early before scoring 20 in Fever's loss

Associated Press

UNCASVILLE, Conn. — The Caitlin Clark era in the WNBA has officially begun, although it got off to a slow start.

Clark went scoreless for nearly the first 15 minutes, before getting more comfortable and finishing with 20 points in the Indiana Fever's 92-71 loss to the Connecticut Sun on Tuesday night.

She knows she'll have to play better and has a lot to work on, but also understands that it's only the first game in her career.

"It was physical and obviously it wasn't like the best start," Clark said. "It was just a lot of things to learn from."

Clark said before the game that she wouldn't get too caught

up on her play in her first game.

"If something isn't perfect, my life's not going to end," she said. "If, you know, we lose the game tonight, my life's not going to end. I'm just going to learn from it and come back on Thursday and try to help us win."

One thing that Clark definitely will want to improve on is her turnovers. She had 10 of Indiana's 25 — many unforced.

"Some uncharacteristic things, like pick the ball up and travel, dribble it off my foot," she said. "A few things that, you know, you have to be crisper."

Clark got off to a really slow start as she missed her first four shots before finally getting on the board midway through the second period. The NCAA's all-

time Division I scoring leader stole the ball around the foul line and drove the length of the court before laying the ball in. Clark had said before the game that she thought her first basket would come on a layup since it was a "high-percentage" shot.

Clark later added two free throws and hit a 3-pointer with 29.9 seconds left in the first half to finish the opening 20 minutes with seven points, hitting two of her seven shot attempts.

She carried some of that momentum into the third quarter when she scored five of her points to try to rally the Fever, but it just wasn't enough.

"We got to help her out, better job coming back to the ball," Fever coach Christie Sides said.

"We worked on that several times this week. We have to do a better job getting someone back to the ball."

Before her first basket, Clark struggled and got into early foul trouble. Her first shot was a drive to the basket that bounced hard off the glass and into Aliyah Boston's hands for a put-back. Clark missed a runner in the lane, and then her 3 from the left wing just rimmed out. She did have an assist on one basket and threw a nifty behind-the-back pass to teammate Boston, but last season's Rookie of the Year was called for a traveling violation.

Meanwhile, Clark was called for two fouls on the defensive end.