

Texas hit again as storms continue

Associated Press

Strong storms with damaging winds and hail pummeled north Texas on Tuesday morning as much of the U.S. recovered from severe weather, including tornadoes, that killed at least 23 people during the Memorial Day holiday weekend.

Widespread power outages were reported in the region, which includes Dallas and Fort Worth, where an oppressive, early-season heat wave added to the misery. Nearly 800,000 customers lacked electricity Tuesday, including close to 390,000 in Dallas County, according to PowerOutage.us.

Destructive storms over the weekend caused deaths in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri and Kentucky.

Seven people were killed in Cooke County, Texas, from a tornado that tore through a mobile home park Saturday, offi-

cials said, and eight deaths were reported across Arkansas.

Two people died in Mayes County, Okla., east of Tulsa, authorities said. The injured included guests at an outdoor wedding. A Missouri man died Sunday after a tree limb fell onto his tent as he was camping.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear said at a news conference Monday that five people had died in his state.

A possible tornado damaged a high school and a half-dozen homes in Pennsylvania on Monday night. No injuries were reported, but school was canceled in Mahanoy City, Pa., said David Truskowsky, spokesperson for the city's fire department.

Roughly 160,000 homes and businesses lacked electricity Tuesday following the weekend storms in Kentucky, Arkansas, West Virginia and Missouri.

It has been a grim month of

tornadoes and severe weather in the nation's midsection.

Tornadoes in Iowa last week left at least five people dead and dozens injured. Storms killed eight people in Houston this month.

April had the second-highest number of tornadoes on record in the country. The storms come as climate change contributes in general to the severity of storms around the world.

Late May is the peak of tornado season, but the recent storms have been exceptionally violent, producing very strong tornadoes, said Victor Gensini, a meteorology professor at Northern Illinois University.

"Over the weekend, we've had a lot of hot and humid air, a lot of gasoline, a lot of fuel for these storms. And we've had a really strong jet stream as well. That jet stream has been aiding in providing the wind shear nec-

essary for these types of tornadoes," Gensini said.

Harold Brooks, a senior scientist at the National Severe Storms Laboratory in Norman, Okla., said a persistent pattern of warm, moist air is to blame for the string of tornadoes over the past two months.

That air is at the northern edge of a heat dome bringing temperatures typically seen at the height of summer to late May.

The heat index — a combination of air temperature and humidity to indicate how the heat feels to the human body — neared triple digits in parts of south Texas on Monday. Extreme heat was also forecast for San Antonio and Dallas.

In Florida, Melbourne and Fort Pierce set new daily record highs Monday. Both hit 98 degrees. Miami set a record high of 96 on Sunday.

Missile attack damages ship off the coast of Yemen

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A missile attack damaged a ship Tuesday in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen, with a private security firm saying radio traffic suggested the vessel took on water after being struck.

No group immediately claimed responsibility, but suspicion immediately fell on Yemen's Houthi rebels, who have launched a number of attacks targeting ships over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The attack happened off the port city of Hodeida in the southern Red Sea, near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait that links it to

the Gulf of Aden, according to the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center. The vessel "sustained damage" in the assault and later reported an "impact in the water in close proximity to the vessel," the UKMTO said.

"The crew are reported safe and the vessel is proceeding to its next port of call," the center said.

The private security firm Ambrey said the vessel reported by radio of having "sustained damage to the cargo hold and was taking on water."

The location of the attack corresponded to the Marshall Is-

lands-flagged bulk carrier Laax. The vessel reported being heading to Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates.

Grehel Ship Management of Piraeus, Greece, manages the Laax. A man who answered the phone at Grehel declined to answer questions about the attack and an emailed request for comment was not returned.

The Houthis did not immediately acknowledge the attack, though it can take the rebels hours or even days to claim their assaults.

The Houthis have launched attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden in recent months, demanding that

Israel ends the war in Gaza, which has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians there. The war began after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, killing about 1,200 people and taking some 250 hostage.

The rebels have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, seized one vessel and sunk another since November, according to the United States Maritime Administration.

Shipping through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden has declined because of the threat. In recent weeks, the tempo of Houthi attacks has dropped, though the rebels have claimed shooting down U.S. surveillance drones.

Trump lawyer: Key witness lied on stand

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Donald Trump's defense team attacked the hush money case against him Tuesday by calling the star witness a liar, seeking to discredit weeks of testimony that prosecutors say prove the former president interfered in the 2016 election through a scheme to suppress stories seen as harmful to his campaign.

The closing arguments, which were expected to last the entire day, gave attorneys one last chance to address the Manhattan jury and to score final points with the panel before it starts deliberating the fate of the first former American president charged with felony crimes.

"President Trump is innocent. He did not commit any crimes, and the district attorney has not met their burden of proof, period," said defense at-

torney Todd Blanche, who said the evidence in the case should "leave you wanting."

In an hourslong address to the jury, Blanche attacked the foundation of the case, which charges Trump with conspiring to conceal hush money payments prosecutors say were made on his behalf during the 2016 presidential campaign to stifle a porn actor's claim that she had a sexual encounter with Trump a decade earlier.

With sweeping denials mirroring his client's "deny everything" approach, Blanche countered the prosecution's portrayal of Trump as a detail-oriented manager who paid dutiful attention to the checks he signed; disputed the contention that Trump and the porn actor, Stormy Daniels, had sex; and rejected the idea that the alleged hush money scheme amounted to illegal interfe-

rence in the election.

Prosecutors will tell jurors that they have heard enough testimony to convict Trump of all charges while defense attorneys aimed to create doubts about the strength of the evidence by targeting the credibility of Michael Cohen. Trump's former lawyer and personal fixer pleaded guilty to federal charges for his role in the hush money payments and served as the star prosecution witness in the trial.

"He's literally like an MVP of liars. He lies constantly," Blanche said of Cohen. "He lied to Congress. He lied to prosecutors. He lied to his family and business associates."

Trump's lawyers contended throughout the trial that they were legitimate payments for actual legal services. Blanche, delivering a PowerPoint presentation to jurors, pointed to

emails and testimony showing that Cohen did indeed work on some legal matters for Trump that year. While Cohen characterized that work as "very minimal," Blanche argued otherwise.

The attorney's voice became even more impassioned as he revisited one of the more memorable moments of the trial: when Blanche sought to unravel Cohen's claim that he had spoken to Trump by phone about the Daniels arrangement on Oct. 24, 2016.

Cohen said he had contacted Trump's bodyguard as a way of getting a hold of Trump, but Blanche asserted that at the time Cohen was actually dealing with a spate of harassing phone calls and was preoccupied by that problem.

"It was a lie," Blanche said. "That was a lie, and he got caught red-handed."

In-person class halted due to pro-Palestinian camp

Associated Press

DETROIT — Wayne State University in Detroit suspended in-person classes Tuesday and encouraged staff to work remotely to avoid any problems with a pro-Palestinian encampment that sprouted last week.

"All on-campus events are canceled until further notice. Critical infrastructure workers are expected to report to campus," the school said in a statement around 5:30 a.m.

Wayne State spokesman Matt Lockwood said there have been "public safety concerns," especially about access to certain areas.

There were two dozen tents on green space near the undergraduate library Tuesday. Participants milled around while

police and private security watched nearby. Two portable toilets were full and not usable.

"Yes, we have told the organizers to remove the encampment several times and they have declined to do so," Lockwood said.

Wayne State has 16,000 undergraduate students but fewer during the summer term.

Wayne State President Kimberly Andrews Espy said senior officials had offered to meet Tuesday if the camp had been cleared by Monday night but the deal was turned down.

Vice President Patrick Lindsey explained that Wayne State's investment policy would be publicly discussed at a June 26 meeting of the university's governing board.

Consumer confidence rise seen as trend reverses

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Consumer confidence in the U.S. rose in May after three straight months of declines, though Americans are still anxious about inflation and interest rates.

The Conference Board, a business research group, said Tuesday that its consumer confidence index rose in May to 102 from 97.5 in April. Analysts were expecting the index to decline again.

The measure of Americans' short-term expectations for income, business and the job market climbed to 74.6 this month from a dismal 68.8 in April. A reading under 80 can signal a potential recession in the near future.

Consumer expectations of a

recession in the next year rose again in May but are still well below their peak in May of 2023. More than two-thirds of respondents to the survey said they believe a recession is "somewhat" or "very" likely in the next 12 months. That's in contrast to the Conference Board's survey of CEOs, only about a third of whom foresee a recession in the next 12 to 18 months.

Most economic indicators show the U.S. economy in good shape by historical standards, though there have been some signs that it is cooling off.

The nation's economy slowed sharply in the first quarter to a 1.6% annual pace in the face of high interest rates, down from a brisk 3.4% growth rate in the final three months of 2023.

3 in EU formally recognize Palestinian state

Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain — Spain, Norway and Ireland formally recognized a Palestinian state on Tuesday in a coordinated effort by the three western European nations to add international pressure on Israel to soften its devastating response to last year's Hamas-led attack. Tel Aviv slammed the diplomatic move that will have no immediate impact on its grinding war in Gaza.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez told his nation in a televised address from Madrid that “this is a historic decision that has a single goal, and that is to help Israelis and Palestinians achieve peace.”

Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz quickly lashed out at Spain on X, saying Sánchez's

government was “being complicit in inciting genocide against Jews and war crimes.”

Ireland and Norway soon joined Spain in formalizing a decision they had jointly announced the previous week.

The Palestinian flag was raised in Dublin outside Leinster House, the seat of the Irish parliament.

“This is an important moment and I think it sends a signal to the world that there are practical actions you can take as a country to help keep the hope and destination of a two-state solution alive at a time when others are trying to sadly bomb it into oblivion,” Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris said before his Cabinet meets to formally sign off on the decision.

Norwegian Foreign Minister

Espen Barth Eide said in a statement that “for more than 30 years, Norway has been one of the strongest advocates for a Palestinian state. Today, when Norway officially recognizes Palestine as a state, is a milestone in the relationship between Norway and Palestine.”

While some 140 countries have recognized a Palestinian state — more than two-thirds of the United Nations — none of the major Western powers has done so. Still, the adherence of three European countries to the group represents a victory for Palestinian efforts in the world of public opinion, and will likely put pressure on European Union heavyweights France and Germany to rethink their position.

Previously only seven mem-

bers of the 27-nation EU officially recognized a Palestinian state. Five of them are former East bloc countries that announced recognition in 1988, as did Cyprus, before joining the EU. Sweden's recognition came in 2014.

Relations between the EU and Israel have nosedived with the diplomatic recognitions by two EU members, and Madrid insisting on Monday that the EU should take measures against Israel for its continued deadly attacks in southern Gaza's city of Rafah.

After Monday's meeting of EU foreign ministers, Irish Foreign Minister Micheál Martin said “for the first time at an EU meeting, in a real way, I have seen a significant discussion on sanctions” on Israel.

Israel: Fatal fire in Rafah caused by secondary blast

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — The Israeli military says an initial investigation into a strike that sparked a deadly weekend fire in a tent camp in the southern Gaza city of Rafah has found the blaze was caused by a secondary explosion.

A military official, speaking on condition of anonymity pending a formal announcement, said Tuesday that the military fired two 37-pound munitions that targeted two senior Hamas militants. The official said the munitions would have been too small to ignite a fire on their own and the military is looking into the possibility that weapons were stored in the area.

Palestinian health officials say at least 45 people, around half of them women and children, were killed in Sunday's strike. The fire also could have ignited fuel, cooking gas canisters or other materials in the densely populated camp housing displaced people.

The strike caused widespread outrage, including from some of Israel's closest allies. Prime Min-

ister Benjamin Netanyahu said it was the result of a “tragic mishap.”

New strikes in the same western Tel al-Sultan district of Rafah that was hit Sunday killed at least 16 Palestinians, the Palestinian Civil Defense and the Palestinian Red Crescent said Tuesday. Residents reported an escalation of fighting in the southern Gaza city once seen as the territory's last refuge.

An Israeli incursion launched in early May has caused nearly 1 million to flee from Rafah, most of whom had already been displaced in the war between Israel and Hamas. They now seek refuge in squalid tent camps and other war-ravaged areas.

The United States and other allies of Israel have warned against a full-fledged offensive in the city, with the Biden administration saying that would cross a red line and refusing to provide offensive arms for such an undertaking. On Friday, the International Court of Justice called on Israel to halt its Rafah offensive, an order it has no

power to enforce.

Netanyahu has vowed to press ahead, saying Israeli forces must enter Rafah to dismantle Hamas and return hostages taken in the Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war.

Israel says it is carrying out limited operations in eastern Rafah along the Gaza-Egypt border. But residents reported heavy bombardment overnight in Tel al-Sultan.

“It was a night of horror,” said Abdel-Rahman Abu Ismail, a Palestinian from Gaza City who has been sheltering in Tel al-Sultan since December. He said he heard “constant sounds” of explosions overnight and into Tuesday, with fighter jets and drones flying over the area.

He said it reminded him of the Israeli invasion of his neighborhood of Shijaiyah in Gaza City, where Israel launched a heavy bombing campaign before sending in ground forces in late 2023. “We saw this before,” he said.

Sayed al-Masri, a Rafah resident, said many families have

been forced to flee their homes and shelters, with most heading for the crowded Muwasi area, where giant tent camps have been set up on a barren coastline, or to Khan Younis, a southern city that suffered heavy damage during months of fighting.

Gaza's Health Ministry said two medical facilities in Tel al-Sultan are out of service because of intense bombing nearby. Medical Aid for Palestinians, a charity operating throughout the territory, said the Tel al-Sultan medical center and the Indonesian Field Hospital were under lockdown, with medics, patients and displaced people trapped inside.

Most of Gaza's hospitals are no longer functioning. The Kuwait Hospital in Rafah shut down Monday after a strike near its entrance killed two health workers.

A spokesperson for the World Health Organization said the casualties from Sunday's strike and fire “absolutely overwhelmed” field hospitals in the area, which were already running short on supplies to treat severe burns.

Belgium latest EU nation to commit aid to Ukraine

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Tuesday picked up a second \$1 billion promise of military aid in as many days for his war with Russia during a whirlwind tour through the European Union.

The pledge came from Belgium, which topped up the money with a commitment to give 30 F-16 fighter jets over the next four years. The Netherlands added to the goodwill by promising to quickly assemble with key EU partners a Patriot air defense system, which Zelenskyy sees as key in stopping Russia from hitting the power grid and civilian areas, as well as military targets, with devastating glide bombs that wreak wide destruction.

A day earlier, Zelenskyy signed a bilateral security agreement with Spain that allo-

cates \$1.1 billion of military aid to Ukraine in 2024, and \$5.4 billion by 2027.

The bilateral aid is essential since the 27-nation bloc is again struggling to overcome Hungary's objections to the bloc itself providing billions of dollars in military aid to Kyiv, which is in its third year of war following Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion.

An estimated \$7 billion is stalled by the Hungarian government of Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who is considered Russia's staunchest ally in the 27-nation bloc. Single member states have wide veto powers and Hungary has long held up funds aimed at boosting Ukraine's defense efforts.

Zelenskyy met with Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo on Tuesday and as well as the immediate money obtained a security agreement aimed at

providing guarantees of military help until Ukraine joins the NATO alliance.

The use of Western-supplied long-range weapons by Ukraine to strike Russian territory could bring a dangerous escalation, President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday, speaking to reporters while on a trip to Uzbekistan.

The use of such weapons would rely on Western intelligence data and imply the involvement of NATO military personnel, Putin said, warning the alliance that they should be aware of the possible consequences.

"Representatives of countries that are NATO members, particularly in Europe, should be aware of what they are playing with," he said, adding that "countries with small territory and dense populations" should be particularly careful.

Polish FM: Don't rule out troops in Ukraine

Reuters

WARSAW, Poland — Poland should not rule out sending troops to Ukraine, Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said in comments published on Tuesday, as Kyiv struggles to repel Russian advances, but Sikorski did not specify what role Polish troops would play.

While Ukraine's NATO allies have vowed to supply the war-torn nation with money and weapons for as long as it takes to repel a Russian invasion, they have generally ruled out the possibility of sending soldiers to the country.

Asked in an interview whether Poland was ready to send troops to Ukraine, Sikorski said: "We shouldn't rule it out. We should leave Putin guessing as to our intentions."

The interview was published in Poland's *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Italy's *La Repubblica* and Spain's *El Pais*.

French President Emmanuel Macron opened the door to sending troops to Ukraine at a conference in Paris on Feb. 26, suggesting that one area Western troops could help with would be to train Ukrainians in Ukraine.

Sikorski himself has previously said that the presence of NATO troops in Ukraine is "not unthinkable."

On Monday, Ukraine's top commander said he had signed paperwork allowing French military instructors to visit Ukrainian training centers soon.

Russia has been gaining ground in Ukraine since the failure of Kyiv's 2023 counter-offensive to make any serious inroads against well dug-in Russian troops, with Kyiv's forces hampered by delays in supplies of weapons and ammunition.

Ukraine army chief preparing in case France sends military instructors

Bloomberg News

Ukraine is preparing for a possible initial visit from French military instructors as the government asks NATO allies to help train Kyiv's troops to the fight against the Russian invasion, according to commander in chief Oleksandr Syrskyy.

The statement on Monday came after a phone call that the army chief and Ukraine's Defense Minister Rustem Umerov held with French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu. Syrskyy praised France for its initiative to send instructors to train Ukrainian troops, without saying when they would arrive or for how long. Paris has given

no public indication yet that such a visit was imminent.

"I've already signed the documents that will allow the first French instructors to visit our training centers soon and familiarize themselves with their infrastructure and staff," Syrskyy said on Telegram.

Training troops inside Ukraine has been one of the options discussed since a conference that President Emmanuel Macron convened in Paris in February, according to a French defense ministry official.

France continues to work with Ukraine to understand their exact needs, the official said.

With Russia advancing on the battlefield, Ukraine has pushed the U.S. and other NATO allies to send instructors to train its depleted forces and to deliver more weapons and ammunition.

Macron sparked tensions with allies earlier this year when he said "nothing should be ruled out" when asked about sending Western troops to Ukraine.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda, who was reelected for a second term on Sunday, has said repeatedly that his country is prepared to send professional soldiers for training missions to Ukraine should Kyiv request it.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Bear slips into cabin and attacks teen, family says

AZ PHOENIX — A 15-year-old boy was on vacation with his family when a black bear entered their cabin and attacked him, Arizona officials and news outlets reported.

The bear attack happened near Alpine, near the New Mexico border, on May 23, the Arizona Game and Fish Department said in a news release. The adult male bear slipped into the cabin through an open door seemingly unnoticed and came up behind the teen as he was sitting, then struck him in the head with its paw, officials said.

Family members came to help and the bear ran out of the cabin, according to wildlife officials, but it returned moments later and attacked the boy a second time. But his family didn't back down and the bear left the cabin again, and stayed out, KTVK reported.

Lawsuit filed in case of mislabeled cookie death

CT WATERBURY — The estate of a young dancer who died after eating a mislabeled cookie containing peanuts has filed a wrongful death lawsuit, claiming the failure to properly label the package was grossly negligent.

Orla Ruth Baxendale, 25, died Jan. 11 after eating a Florentine cookie sold by grocery retailer Stew Leonard's and suffering an anaphylactic reaction, according to the lawsuit. Baxendale, who had a severe peanut allergy, had moved to New York City from England to pursue a career as a dancer and was in "the prime of her life," according to the lawsuit filed in Superior

or Court in Waterbury.

The batch of holiday cookies sold at Stew Leonard's stores in Danbury and Newington in Connecticut late last year were later recalled. They were produced by the Long Island-based wholesaler Cookies United and labeled with the Stew Leonard's brand name, state officials said.

Man taken into custody after series of stabbings

MA BRAINTREE — A Massachusetts man will be arraigned Tuesday on multiple charges including assault with the intent to murder after six people, including four girls at a movie theater, were stabbed in separate attacks, officials said.

Jared Ravizza, 26, of Chilmark, was arrested Saturday night after a police pursuit.

Police said a person entered the AMC Braintree 10 south of Boston about 6 p.m. Saturday and went into one of the theaters without paying. The girls, ages 9 to 17, were inside the theater when the individual suddenly attacked them before running out, the Braintree Police Department said in a news release. The four suffered non-life-threatening injuries and were taken to hospitals.

Video footage showed the suspect's vehicle and a license plate, police said. A vehicle matching that description was later seen in Plymouth, about 27 miles south of Braintree. Police said it had left a McDonald's restaurant, where a 21-year-old woman and a 29-year-old man were found stabbed. Both were taken to hospitals with injuries.

Surveillance video appears to show Ravizza allegedly reaching through the drive-through

window and stab the man, according to the district attorney's office.

State police found the vehicle another 20 miles south, in Sandwich, and unsuccessfully attempted to pull it over. The vehicle later crashed. Ravizza, the driver, was taken into custody shortly afterward and was being treated at a hospital for non-life-threatening injuries, police said.

Ravizza is being charged in the restaurant attack and is being investigated in the theater stabbings, officials said.

Lightning strike kills rancher, 34 head of cattle

CO DENVER — A lightning strike killed a Colorado rancher and 34 head of cattle over the weekend, officials said Sunday.

Mike Morgan, 51, was feeding his cattle from a trailer when he was struck and died on the scene despite life-saving efforts, the Jackson County Sheriff's Office said.

The lightning bolt struck on wide open pasture outside the town of Rand, about 80 miles northwest of Denver, said George Crocket, the county coroner.

The strike also bowled over around 100 head of cattle that had bunched around the trailer loaded with hay, said Crocket. "All but the 34 got up," he said.

Man accused in liquid attacks on subway riders

NY NEW YORK — A man set a cup of liquid on fire and tossed it at a fellow subway rider in New York City, setting the victim's shirt ablaze and injuring him, police said.

The random attack happened on a No. 1 train in lower Manhattan Saturday, city police said, adding that the suspect was in custody on an array of criminal charges. Authorities also charged the man in connection with a similar fiery assault on the subway in February.

The victim, a 23-year-old man, was recovering at a hospital. He told the New York Post that he shielded his fiancée and cousin from the burning liquid and his shirt caught fire.

The suspect in Saturday's assault, Nile Taylor, 49, was arrested a short time after it happened when police tracked a phone he allegedly stole from another subway rider to his location, authorities said.

Skydivers, pilot parachute to safety before crash

MO BUTLER — Six skydivers and a pilot on board a small plane parachuted to safety before it crashed near a county airport in western Missouri, leaving the plane "a total loss," officials said.

Preliminary information indicates the plane that crashed was flying a skydiving mission, according to the National Transportation Safety Board.

The wreckage was found in a field east of the runways at Butler Memorial Airport, the Bates County Sheriff's Office said on social media. The Federal Aviation Administration said the plane was a single-engine Cessna.

Bates County Sheriff Chad Anderson said in an email that all passengers parachuted to safety before the pilot did the same.

— From wire reports

STARS  AND STRIPES.

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit www.stripes.com.

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Celtics go into Finals with 1 goal left

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — The Boston Celtics completed one quest Monday night by returning to the NBA Finals.

Now, they'll chase an even bigger goal, the one that's eluded this team for more than a decade: capturing the franchise's 18th championship.

Yes, despite playing for six conference titles in eight seasons, this marks only the second time Boston has advanced to the Finals during that span. And since winning their first NBA title in 1957, the Celtics' current 16-year drought is the second-longest in franchise history.

It would be the crowning achievement to what has already been a remarkable season.

"Boston has a great team. They led the league from wire to wire," Indiana Pacers coach Rick Carlisle said after his team was swept 4-0 in its first conference finals appearance since 2014. "They didn't want this thing to go on any longer. They blocked shots, they got offensive rebounds, they made key shots."

Boston has excelled in seemingly every possible way in this

year's playoffs.

The Celtics have won seven straight games overall, they improved to 6-0 on the road with yet another comeback victory, 105-102 in Game 4 against Indiana, and they are 3-0 in elimination games. They beat Indiana three times down the stretch, rallying in the last two games with decisive 13-2 and 7-0 closing spurts to end the Pacers' perfect 2024 playoff run at home — and their season.

Next up will be the Dallas Mavericks or Minnesota Timberwolves. Dallas leads the Western Conference finals 3-0 and can clinch the series on its home court Tuesday night.

Boston has been finding help in all corners.

While Jayson Tatum garnered the usual headlines for two 36-point outings and a near triple-double in Game 4, 37-year-old Al Horford defied the odds by making seven 3-pointers in Game 3, Jrue Holiday overcame an illness to deftly pick Andrew Nembhard's pocket, and Derrick White delivered the go-ahead 3-pointer in Game 4, everyone seemed genuinely happy it was Jaylen Brown who

was chosen series MVP.

"I didn't expect that at all," Brown said before explaining the emotions of being left off the all-NBA teams. "But as time has gone by and I got to this point, I just stopped caring and I don't care who sees what as long as my team knows my value, my city knows my value, my family knows my value. That's all I really care about."

There's little doubt the Celtics understand where they would be — and where they wouldn't be — without Brown.

He scored 29 points and grabbed six rebounds to help Boston erase an eight-point deficit in the final six minutes Monday night. And after the defense forced two late turnovers, Brown helped close it out with a brilliant block of Nembhard just before White's big shot.

The reaction was telling for Holiday, who won an NBA title with the 2020-21 Milwaukee Bucks.

"I think it's even better that he didn't expect it. That really means that didn't matter to him," Holiday said. "It was about winning and whatever it took, however long it took. That's

what was important to him and I think when you have that mentality and that mindset, you see great people rewarded for the things they do."

Holiday understands.

When the Bucks traded him to Portland in September to acquire Damian Lillard, he wasn't sure what would happen next. Four days later, the Celtics made another deal with the Trail Blazers to get the two-time All-Star and defensive whiz, hoping he could help them complete their championship quest.

So far, the Celtics' investment in Holiday has delivered big dividends.

And now everyone's about to find out if the addition of Holiday and the possible return of starting center Kristaps Porzingis from a strained right calf that has kept him out since April 29 just might help Boston earn another crowning achievement.

"Obviously, we fell short of our ultimate goal last year, lost in the conference finals," Tatum said. "So I think we've just applied everything we learned to this season and this postseason and it's been working really well."

Robertson's hat trick helps Stars rally past Oilers

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Jason Robertson completed his first career playoff hat trick midway through the third period as the Dallas Stars defeated the Edmonton Oilers 5-3 on Monday night to take a 2-1 lead in the NHL's Western Conference finals.

Wyatt Johnston and Miro Heiskanen, into the empty net, had the other goals for Dallas. Jake Oettinger made 26 saves. Roope Hintz, Tyler Seguin and Jamie Benn had two assists each.

"You want to help the team win, you want to score goals," said Robertson, who hadn't found the back of the net since Game 6 of the first round. "Scoring one gives you confidence ... like a domino effect."

Connor McDavid, with a goal and an assist to give him 100 career playoff points,

Zach Hyman and Adam Henrique scored for Edmonton, which got 17 stops from Stuart Skinner.

"A real good start," said McDavid. "I'm not sure where those 10, 15 minutes come from, but it's as bad as it's been throughout the playoffs."

Dallas, which reestablished home-ice advantage with the victory and owned the league's best regular-season road record, is now 6-1 in the playoffs away from American Airlines Center.

The Stars saw the return of Hintz, who hadn't dressed since suffering an upper-body injury in Game 4 of the second round against the Colorado Avalanche.

"We gutted it out while (Hintz) was out of the lineup," Dallas coach Pete DeBoer said. "It wasn't pretty, it wasn't as pretty as it was

tonight when he was out, but we still found ways. Guys still found ways to contribute without a key player."

"That's what I'm most proud of. It was great that he was back tonight, but I'm really proud of how we handled his absence."

Game 4 of the best-of-seven series is Wednesday night.

Henrique returned to the lineup after sitting out seven of Edmonton's last eight games with a suspected ankle injury.

After the Oilers dominated the opening 20 minutes and the Stars grabbed momentum back in the second period, and Robertson snapped a 3-3 tie at 11:54 of the third on a jam play that squeezed through Skinner.

Edmonton pulled the goaltender late, but Heiskanen iced it into an empty net.

Hoops HOF player, broadcaster Walton dies

Associated Press

Bill Walton was never afraid to be himself.

Larger than life, only in part because of his nearly 7-foot frame, Walton was a two-time NCAA champion at UCLA, a two-time champion in the NBA, a Basketball Hall of Fame inductee, an on-court icon in every sense of the word. Off the court, Walton was a chronic fun-seeker, a broadcaster who adhered to no conventional norms and took great joy in that, and a man with a deeply serious side about the causes that mattered most to him.

"Bill Walton," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said, "was truly one of a kind."

Walton died Monday at age 71 after a prolonged fight with cancer, the league announced on behalf of his family. He was the NBA's MVP in the 1977-78 season, the league's sixth man of the year in 1985-86 and a member of the league's 50th anniversary and 75th anniversary teams. That followed a college career in which he blossomed while playing under coach John Wooden at UCLA, becoming a three-time

national player of the year.

"I am sad today hearing that my comrade and one of the sports world's most beloved champions and characters has passed," Julius "Dr. J" Erving, a fellow Hall of Famer, wrote on social media. "Bill Walton enjoyed life in every way. To compete against him and to work with him was a blessing in my life."

Tributes immediately began pouring in, and the NBA held a moment of silence to commemorate Walton's life before Game 4 of the Boston Celtics-Indiana Pacers matchup in the Eastern Conference finals on Monday night.

Walton, who entered the Hall of Fame in 1993, was one of the game's most celebrated figures. His NBA career — disrupted by chronic foot injuries — lasted only 468 games combined with the Portland Trail Blazers, the San Diego/Los Angeles Clippers and the Celtics. He averaged 13.3 points and 10.5 rebounds in those games, neither of those numbers exactly record-setting.

Still, his impact on the game

was massive.

"I love him as a friend and as a teammate," Celtics legend Larry Bird said. "It was a thrill for me to play with my childhood idol and together we earned an NBA championship in 1986. He is one of the greatest ever to play the game. I am sure that all of my teammates are as grateful as I am that we were able to know Bill. He was such a joy to know and he will be sorely missed."

Walton's most famous game was the 1973 NCAA title game, UCLA against Memphis State, in which he shot 21-for-22 from the field and led the Bruins to another national championship.

"One of my guards said, 'Let's try something else,'" Wooden told The Associated Press in 2008 for a 35th anniversary retrospective on that game.

Wooden's response during that timeout: "Why? If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

They kept giving the ball to Walton, and he kept delivering in a performance for the ages.

"It's very hard to put into words what he has meant to UCLA's program, as well as his tremendous impact on college

basketball," UCLA coach Mick Cronin said Monday. "Beyond his remarkable accomplishments as a player, it's his relentless energy, enthusiasm for the game and unwavering candor that have been the hallmarks of his larger-than-life personality."

"It's hard to imagine a season in Pauley Pavilion without him."

When Walton retired from the NBA he turned to broadcasting, something he never thought he could be good at — and an avenue he sometimes wondered if it would be possible for him, because he had a pronounced stutter at times in his life.

Turns out, he was excellent at broadcasting: Walton was an Emmy winner, eventually was named one of the top 50 sports broadcasters of all time by the American Sportscasters Association and even appeared on The New York Times' bestseller list for his memoir, "Back from the Dead." It told the story of a debilitating back injury suffered in 2008, one that left him considering taking his own life because of the constant pain, and how he spent years recovering.

Ruud, Sabalenka win opening matches at French Open

Associated Press

PARIS — Two-time finalist Casper Ruud began his French Open with a 6-3, 6-4, 6-3 win against Felipe Meligeni Alves on Tuesday.

"I think I am having a pretty good clay season," the No. 7 seed said.

Ruud, who leads the ATP with 36 wins this season, won clay-court titles at the Geneva Open and the Barcelona Open and was the runner-up at Monte Carlo, where he lost to Stefanos Tsitsipas.

Ruud made it to the final at Roland Garros each of the last two years, losing to Rafael Nadal in 2022 and Novak Djokovic in 2023.

The final day of the first round featured autumn-like temperatures as low as 61 degrees. Heavy rain delayed play on most courts for nearly five hours, with matches continuing only in the two main stadiums, which have retractable roofs.

Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka defeated Erika Andreeva 6-1, 6-2 in Court Philippe Chatrier to reach the second round. On Court Suzanne Lenglen, 2022 Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina beat Greet Minnen 6-2, 6-3. Sabalenka and Rybakina could meet in the semifinals.

Sabalenka is aiming to become the first player since Serena Williams in 2015 to win

both the Australian Open and Roland Garros in the same season.

Veteran French player Alizé Cornet, who is 34, retired from tennis after losing to Zheng Qinwen 6-2, 6-1. Cornet was feted in a farewell ceremony afterward.

In an emotional speech, Cornet thanked her family and French fans, expressing her gratitude for their support over the years.

"You gave me incredible emotions. It's tough to realize that it's the last time I'm feeling this," she said.

Cornet reached a career-high ranking of No. 11 in 2009 and is currently No. 106, after going 1-7 this season. She holds the

women's record for most consecutive Grand Slam tournaments played at 69, a streak that ran from the 2007 Australian Open to this French Open.

Her career highlights include defeating No. 1 Serena Williams in the third round at Wimbledon in 2014 and one major quarterfinal appearance, at the Australian Open in 2022.

No. 11 Alex De Minaur eliminated Alex Michelsen 6-1, 6-0, 6-2.

Djokovic was scheduled to start his title defense on Tuesday against Pierre-Hugues Herbert in the main stadium. Djokovic, who holds 24 Grand Slam titles, has yet to win any tournament this year.

Stowers' career-high 4 RBIs lead O's

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Kyle Stowers had three hits, including two doubles and a career-high four RBIs, Ryan Mountcastle also had three hits and the Baltimore Orioles cruised to an 11-3 victory over the Boston Red Sox on Monday.

Cedric Mullins added a two-run triple as Baltimore scored five runs in the fourth off Boston's Cooper Criswell (2-2) to help open the series with its fifth consecutive win.

"It was fun for me to have a big day, fun for the team to get a win," Stowers said. "Just cool to have a big moment."

Cole Irvin (5-2) pitched five shutout innings in a return to the rotation spurred by the Orioles placing John Means and Dean Kremer on the 15-day injured list last week.

A second-round selection in the 2019 MLB Draft that produced Orioles stars Adley Rutschman and Gunnar Henderson, the 26-year-old Stowers has struggled to find time in Baltimore's lineup.

But he made the most of his 33rd career

start, and fourth since his most recent recall from Triple-A Norfolk.

"A lot more comfortable," Stowers said. "Playing with a lot of confidence, a lot of gratitude. And honestly just playing, just playing the game."

Twins 6, Royals 5: Joe Ryan pitched seven smooth innings for Minnesota, which got a two-run homer by Jose Miranda and a three-run shot from Trevor Larnach and hung on to beat visiting Kansas City.

Blue Jays 5, White Sox 1: George Springer, Bo Bichette and Davis Schneider homered to help visiting Toronto beat Chicago.

Reds 3, Cardinals 1: Nick Lodolo came off the injured list to pitch 5½ innings of one-run ball, Jeimer Candelario homered and host Cincinnati won a season-high fourth straight game.

Brewers 5, Cubs 1: Willy Adames hit a three-run homer during his team's five-run eighth inning, and host Milwaukee beat Chicago in Craig Counsell's return to American

Family Field.

Nationals 8, Braves 4: Mitchell Parker pitched five-hit ball into the seventh inning and CJ Abrams homered, helping visiting Washington beat Atlanta.

Rockies 8, Guardians 6: Charlie Blackmon homered to cap a six-run fourth inning and host Colorado ended Cleveland's nine-game winning streak.

Giants 8, Phillies 4: Brett Wisely doubled in a key insurance run in the sixth inning after an earlier RBI single, Patrick Bailey hit a go-ahead sacrifice fly in the fifth, and host San Francisco beat Philadelphia.

Padres 2, Marlins 1: Jake Cronenworth drew a bases-loaded walk with two outs in the seventh, one batter after shortstop Tim Anderson committed his second error of the inning, and host San Diego beat Miami.

Mariners 3, Astros 2: Bryce Miller allowed two runs in six innings to pick up his first win since April 17, and host Seattle used a big first inning against Framer Valdez to hold on against Houston.

50-win Vols are No. 1 seed after sweeping SEC titles

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Tennessee, the Southeastern Conference regular-season and conference tournament champion and the consensus No. 1 baseball team in the country for a month, on Monday was awarded the top national seed for the NCAA Tournament.

The 64-team tournament opens Friday with 16 double-elimination regionals. Winners advance to eight best-of-three super regionals. Those winners move on to the College World Series in Omaha, Neb., beginning June 14.

The Volunteers haven't lost consecutive games since mid-March and are the only team in the country to win 50 games three of the past four years. They will try to become the first No. 1 national seed to win the championship since Miami in 1999, the year the NCAA went to the current tournament structure.

Tennessee, which has

reached two of the past three College World Series, comes into regionals in the top 10 nationally in five offensive categories. The Vols' 147 homers are most in the nation, and Christian Moore has 28 to lead five Vols players with at least 17. The pitching staff has a 3.83 ERA and ranks in the top five in four other categories.

"If you look back to August when it started, the group has had good vibes up at the field every day," Vols coach Tony Vitello said. "That's a good start because when you win or lose, it's going to be fun to come to work every day, and you can probably improve because you have guys who are willing to listen and willing to work together."

The national seeds following Tennessee (50-11) are Kentucky (40-14), Texas A&M (44-13), North Carolina (42-13), Arkansas (43-14), Clemson (41-14), Georgia (39-15) and Florida State (42-15).

Seeds Nos. 9 through 16: Okla-

homa (37-19), North Carolina State (33-20), Oklahoma State (40-17), Virginia (41-15), Arizona (36-21), UC Santa Barbara (42-12), Oregon State (42-14) and East Carolina (43-15).

The last four teams to get at-large bids, in alphabetical order, were Coastal Carolina, Indiana, James Madison and UCF.

The first four teams left out were California, Charleston, Cincinnati and TCU.

The SEC set a record with 11 teams in regionals and five among the top eight national seeds. The Atlantic Coast Conference has eight teams in the tournament and the Big 12 has six.

Selection committee decisions sure to be debated were having East Carolina host a regional over other contenders and Coastal Carolina, Kansas State, Indiana and Florida receiving at-large bids. All five of those schools have representatives on the committee, and all

but East Carolina were thought to be on the bubble for bids.

Chairman Matt Hogue, the athletic director at Coastal Carolina, said NCAA protocols ensure fairness by requiring committee members to leave the room when their schools are discussed and to not participate if their schools are subject to a vote.

"One thing that you do want to have with a committee are folks who are tuned into the sport," Hogue said, "so just as an inherent natural result, if you have quality people on the committee, it's going to be likely in many years you're going to have teams in that situation. So I think that's important to note."

Defending national champion LSU, in danger of missing the tournament six weeks ago after losing 12 of its first 15 SEC games, has won 18 of its past 24 and made a run to the conference tournament championship game to earn a No. 2 regional seed at Chapel Hill, N.C.