

USS Harry S. Truman has left Red Sea

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy—The aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman has left the Middle East after a deployment marked by the loss of three fighter jets and weeks of nearly constant flight operations in a U.S. bid to cripple Houthi militants in Yemen.

Truman, the destroyer USS Jason Dunham and the cruiser USS Gettysburg are now in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations as part of a routine deployment, Cmdr. Tim Gorman, a spokesman for the fleet, said in a statement Monday.

The 6th Fleet AOR includes the Mediterranean Sea.

The carrier and its strike group will next participate in a

NATO military exercise in the Mediterranean, officials said Monday. The strike group will be under the command and control of NATO as part of the Neptune Strike exercise, Allied Joint Force Command Naples said in a post Monday on X. The command didn't say when that will happen.

Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO, which oversees the exercise, did not immediately respond to an email asking about the strike group's participation.

Gorman's statement did not say when Truman and the other ships left the Red Sea, which is part of the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations, citing operational security.

But open-source intelligence analysts said on X that satellite imagery showed Truman and Gettysburg transiting the Suez Canal toward the Mediterranean on Saturday. Navy images posted online showed Truman operating in the Mediterranean on Sunday.

It's unclear whether the destroyer USS Stout, also part of the strike group, was in the 6th Fleet area of responsibility as well.

Truman's departure leaves just a single aircraft carrier, USS Carl Vinson, in the Middle East.

The Truman's departure comes nearly two weeks after President Donald Trump paused Operation Rough Rider,

an aggressive air campaign aimed at stopping attacks on military and commercial ships in the Red Sea by the Iran-backed Houthis.

Last week, Vinson was operating in the Arabian Sea along with the destroyers USS Sterett and USS William Lawrence and the cruiser USS Princeton, USNI New reported May 12.

Since March 15, U.S. forces have hit more than 1,000 Houthi targets in Yemen, killing group leaders and fighters and degrading the group's capabilities, the Pentagon said last month.

In declaring a ceasefire on May 6, Trump said the Houthis didn't want to fight anymore and had agreed to stop attacking ships in the vital waterway.

Trump says ceasefire talks to start 'immediately'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Monday that Russia and Ukraine will "immediately" begin ceasefire negotiations after what he described as an "excellent" call with Russian President Vladimir Putin that lasted more than two hours.

Trump also spoke with Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European leaders in hopes of making progress toward a ceasefire.

"The conditions for that will be negotiated between the two parties, as it can only be, because they know details of a negotiation that nobody else would be aware of," Trump said in a social media post. The conversations came after the White House said the U.S. leader has grown "frustrated" with both leaders over the contin-

uing war in Ukraine.

After the call, Putin said Russia was ready to continue discussing an end to the fighting, but he indicated there was no major breakthrough in what he termed a "very informative and very frank" conversation with Trump. Putin said the warring countries should "find compromises that would suit all parties."

"At the same time, I would like to note that, in general, Russia's position is clear. The main thing for us is to eliminate the root causes of this crisis," the Russian president said.

Trump has struggled to end a war that began with Russia's invasion in February 2022. That makes these conversations a serious test of his reputation as a deal maker after having claimed he would quickly settle the conflict once

he was back in the White House, if not even before he took office.

Trump expressed his hopes for a "productive day" Monday — and a ceasefire — in a social media post over the weekend.

His effort also included calls to NATO leaders. But ahead of the call, Vice President JD Vance said Trump is "more than open" to walking away from trying to end the war if he feels Putin isn't serious about negotiation.

"He's grown weary and frustrated with both sides of the conflict," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters Monday ahead of the call.

"He has made it clear to both sides that he wants to see a peaceful resolution and ceasefire as soon as possible."

The Republican president is

banking on the idea that his force of personality and personal history with Putin will be enough to break any impasse over a pause in the fighting.

Trump's "sensibilities are that he's got to get on the phone with President Putin, and that is going to clear up some of the logjam and get us to the place that we need to get to," said Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff.

Still, there are fears that Trump has an affinity for Putin that could put Ukraine at a disadvantage with any agreements engineered by the U.S. government.

Bridget Brink said she resigned last month as the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine "because the policy since the beginning of the administration was to put pressure on the victim Ukraine, rather than on the aggressor, Russia."

Aid trucks enter Gaza after nearly 3 month blockade

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — The first aid trucks have entered Gaza following nearly three months of Israel's complete blockade of food, medicine and other supplies, Israel and the United Nations said Monday.

Five trucks carrying baby food and other aid entered the territory of over 2 million Palestinians via the Kerem Shalom crossing, according to the Israeli defense body in charge of coordinating aid to Gaza, COGAT.

The U.N. called it a "welcome development" but said far more aid is needed to address the vast humanitarian crisis. Food security experts last week warned of famine in Gaza.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier said his

decision to resume limited, "basic" aid to Gaza came after pressure from allies who said they couldn't support Israel's renewed military offensive if there are "images of hunger" coming from the Palestinian territory.

The U.N. humanitarian chief, Tom Fletcher, said the few trucks were a "drop in the ocean of what is urgently needed." He said an additional four U.N. trucks were cleared to enter Gaza. Those trucks may enter tomorrow, according to COGAT.

During the ceasefire, some 600 aid trucks entered Gaza each day.

Fletcher added that given the chaotic situation on the ground, the U.N. expects the aid could be looted or stolen. He urged Is-

rael to open multiple crossings in northern and southern Gaza to permit a regular flow of aid.

Still, the announcement raised hope among Palestinians that more desperately needed food, medicine and other supplies would enter.

Israel over the weekend launched a new wave of air and ground operations across Gaza, and the army ordered the evacuation of its second-largest city, Khan Younis, where Israel carried out a massive operation earlier in the 19-month war that left much of the area in ruins.

Netanyahu said Monday that Israel plans on "taking control of all of Gaza," as well as establishing a new system to distribute aid that circumvents Hamas.

Graduation in limbo for 9 Air Force athletes

The Gazette, Colorado Springs

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — With less than two weeks until graduation, nine senior Air Force Academy soccer players and their families are unsure if they will march with their classmates after an alleged hazing incident that most reportedly did not witness.

According to family members, the senior members of the academy soccer team have been informally told that they may not graduate on time as a disciplinary measure related to off-field incidents that took place during the fall semester. Commencement is scheduled May 29 at Falcon Stadium.

"Graduation is in two weeks, and we have no idea if we're going to see our kids graduate," said Mark Stoup, a soccer parent and retired colonel who taught at the academy from 2000 to 2003.

In an emailed statement Thursday to The Gazette, an academy spokesman acknowledged an investigation and subsequent disciplinary actions following "allegations of physical, unprofessional, and demeaning misconduct inflicted on other members of the men's soccer team."

Four academy soccer parents, including Stoup, spoke with The Gazette. Three would speak only on condition of anonymity.

One parent shared a redacted paragraph from a letter of reprimand that characterized the alleged hazing incident as "disgraceful."

All nine senior soccer players received similar letters, according to the parents.

Blue Ridge makes historic stop in New Zealand

BY ALEX WILSON

Stars and Stripes

The amphibious command ship USS Blue Ridge arrived in Wellington Harbor last week, marking a historic first visit to New Zealand for the flagship of the 7th Fleet, the service said.

The ship's port call Friday was also the first by a U.S. warship in the island nation in four years. The last Navy vessels to visit were the guided-missile destroyers USS Howard in 2021 and USS Sampson in 2016, according to a 7th Fleet news release.

A 1987 New Zealand law bans visits by nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed warships, a long-standing obstacle for many Navy vessels. In keeping with U.S. policy, the Navy does not confirm or deny the presence of

nuclear weapons aboard its ships.

However, the law allows the New Zealand prime minister to waive the restriction if satisfied that no nuclear weapons are present.

The Blue Ridge departed Yokosuka Naval Base on April 3. Since then, it has visited Australia, Fiji and New Caledonia, according to the Navy.

Although the ship serves as a mobile command center during wartime, in peacetime it functions as a platform for diplomacy and humanitarian efforts.

The vessel is "engaging with regional allies and partners to address shared maritime security priorities," fleet spokesman Victor Murkowski told Stars and Stripes in a May 6 email.

The Sampson's 2016 port call

was the first visit by a U.S. warship to New Zealand in three decades, following a thaw in military relations that included the 2010 Wellington Declaration aimed at increased cooperation.

New Zealand is part of the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing alliance with the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.

It also occupies a key position in the third island chain, a strategic line stretching from Alaska's Aleutian Islands through Hawaii and down to New Zealand.

That geography plays a role in the broader island chain strategy — a decades-old military doctrine that has regained focus amid U.S. efforts to counter China's expanding influence in the Indo-Pacific.

Biden diagnosed with prostate cancer

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former President Joe Biden has been diagnosed with prostate cancer, his office said Sunday.

The finding came after the 82-year-old reported urinary symptoms, which led to discovery of a nodule on his prostate. He was diagnosed with prostate cancer Friday, with cancer cells having spread to the bone.

“While this represents a more aggressive form of the disease, the cancer appears to be hormone-sensitive which allows for effective management,” his office said. “The President and his family are reviewing treatment options with his physicians.”

In a post on Monday morning,

Biden posted a photo of himself and his wife, Jill Biden, and wrote: “Cancer touches us all. Like so many of you, Jill and I have learned that we are strongest in the broken places. Thank you for lifting us up with love and support.”

Prostate cancers are graded for aggressiveness using what’s known as a Gleason score. The scores range from 6 to 10, with 8, 9 and 10 cancers behaving more aggressively. Biden’s office said his score was 9, suggesting his cancer is among the most aggressive.

When prostate cancer spreads to other parts of the body, it often spreads to the bones. Metastasized cancer is much harder to treat than local-

ized cancer because it can be hard for drugs to reach all the tumors and completely root out the disease.

However, when prostate cancers need hormones to grow, as in Biden’s case, they can be susceptible to treatment that deprives the tumors of hormones.

Outcomes have improved in recent decades and patients can expect to live with metastatic prostate cancer for four or five years, said Dr. Matthew Smith of Massachusetts General Brigham Cancer Center.

Many political leaders sent Biden wishes for his recovery.

President Donald Trump, a longtime opponent, posted that he was saddened by the news and “we wish Joe a fast and suc-

cessful recovery.”

Biden’s vice president, Kamala Harris, said on social media that she was keeping him in her family’s “hearts and prayers during this time.”

“Joe is a fighter — and I know he will face this challenge with the same strength, resilience, and optimism that have always defined his life and leadership,” she wrote.

In 2022, Biden made a “cancer moonshot” one of his administration’s priorities with the goal of halving the cancer death rate over the next 25 years. The initiative was a continuation of his work as vice president to address a disease that had killed his older son, Beau, who died from brain cancer in 2015.

More cuts sought before Trump’s big bill advances

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Speaker Mike Johnson acknowledged there are still details to “iron out” on President Donald Trump’s big tax breaks bill as conservative Republicans insist on quicker cuts to Medicaid and green energy programs before giving their full support.

House Republicans narrowly advanced the 1,116-page package in a rare weekend vote late

Sunday, as GOP leaders promise more negotiations ahead. It’s all setting up a difficult week for the GOP leadership racing toward a Memorial Day deadline, a week away, to pass the package from the House on their own, over staunch opposition from Democrats.

“The bill does not yet meet the moment,” said Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, a leader of the House Freedom Caucus, in a social media post after the late-

night session.

Johnson is working to hold his slim House majority together to pass the president’s top domestic priority of extending tax breaks while pumping in money for border security and deportations — all while finding at least \$1.5 trillion in spending cuts elsewhere.

Republicans criticizing the measure argued that the bill’s new spending and tax cuts are front-loaded, while the mea-

sures to offset the cost are back-loaded. In particular, they are looking to speed up the new work requirements that Republicans want to enact for able-bodied participants in Medicaid. They also want to more quickly end nationwide tax breaks for green energy projects.

If the bill passes the House this week, it would then move to the Senate, where Republicans are also eyeing changes.

Bessent says tariffs may increase prices at Walmart

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent acknowledged Sunday that Walmart, the largest U.S. retailer, may pass along some of the costs from President Donald Trump’s tariffs to its shoppers through higher prices.

Bessent described his call with the company’s CEO a day after Trump warned Walmart to avoid raising prices from the

tariffs at all and vowed to keep a close watch on what it does.

As doubts persist about Trump’s economic leadership, Bessent pushed back against inflation concerns, praised uncertainty caused by Trump as a negotiating tactic and dismissed the downgrade of U.S. government debt by Moody’s Ratings.

Yet Walmart does not appear prepared to “eat the tariffs” in full, as Trump has insisted the

company and China would do.

Bessent said he spoke Saturday with Walmart CEO Doug McMillon, stressing in two news show interviews that what he thought really mattered for Walmart customers was the decline in gasoline prices. Gas is averaging roughly \$3.18 a gallon, down from a year ago but also higher over the past week.

“Walmart will be absorbing some of the tariffs, some may

get passed on to consumers,” Bessent said on CNN. “Overall, I would expect inflation to remain in line. But I don’t blame consumers for being skittish after what happened to them for years under Biden,” a reference to inflation hitting a four-decade high in June 2022 under then President Joe Biden as the recovery from the pandemic and government spending pushed up costs.

Central US braces for more severe storms

Associated Press

LONDON, Ky. — Officials in Kansas and Texas were evaluating damage on Monday after tornadoes touched down overnight, just days after more than two dozen people were killed in storms that swept through parts of the Midwest and South.

Kentucky was hardest hit by last week's storms.

A devastating tornado damaged hundreds of homes, tossed vehicles, left many homeless, and killed at least 19 people, most of them in southeastern Laurel County.

Meteorologists predicted a fresh "multi-day" mix of dangerous weather conditions across the central U.S. with heavy rains, thunderstorms and potential tornadoes, according to the National Weather Service.

A powerful tornado tore through Reno County, Kan., late Sunday, moving through rural areas and into the small community of Plevna, county Emergency Management officials said in a news release on Monday.

The tornado damaged several homes, trees and utility poles,

then continued to cause damage for about 5 miles north and east of the city.

Damage was extensive, but no injuries or deaths were reported.

A National Weather Service team planned to head out Monday to survey Plevna tornado damage, said Andy Kleinsasser, a meteorologist with the service's office in Wichita.

There were no known injuries or fatalities, Kleinsasser said. The tornado started in Stafford County and cut a path that was at least 20 miles long through Reno County, he said.

In the western part of Kansas, Interstate 70 was reduced to one lane near Grinnell, a town of 260 people, because of tornado damage and downed power lines.

The city of Greensburg, Kan., said on social media Monday morning that there were power outages but it was safe after the "storm scare."

In 2007, Greensburg was slammed by an EF5 tornado that was more than 1.5 miles wide and packed winds up to 205 mph, leveling more than

90% of the town of 1,400 and killing 12.

The weather service confirmed a "large and extremely dangerous" tornado Sunday afternoon near Mingus, Texas, about 70 miles west of Fort Worth.

Significant damage but no immediate casualties were reported in Palo Pinto County, which includes Mingus, a sheriff's office dispatcher said.

Officials were evaluating damage Monday morning, said county Emergency Management Coordinator Chad Jordan.

The Kentucky storms emerged from a weather system Friday that killed seven in Missouri and two in northern Virginia, authorities said.

Damage assessments were underway Sunday as Kentucky readied its request for federal disaster assistance, Gov. Andy Beshear said.

Some of the two dozen state roads that had closures could take days to reopen.

In St. Louis, Mayor Cara Spencer said five people died, 38 were injured and more than 5,000 homes were affected.

On Sunday, city inspectors were going through damaged areas to condemn unsafe structures, Spencer said.

About 130 miles south, a tornado in Scott County killed two people, injured several others and destroyed several homes, Sheriff Derick Wheatley wrote on social media.

About 1,200 tornadoes strike the U.S. annually, and they have been reported in all 50 states.

Researchers found in 2018 that deadly tornadoes were occurring less frequently in the traditional "Tornado Alley" of Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas and more frequently in parts of the more densely populated and tree-filled mid-South.

Meanwhile, triple-digit temperatures were forecast for parts of south Texas with the potential to break daily records. The hot, dry air also sets the stage for critical wildfire conditions through early this week in southern New Mexico and West Texas.

Up to a foot of snow was expected in parts of Idaho and western Montana.

Court lets Trump end protections for some Venezuelans

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Monday allowed the Trump administration to strip legal protections from 350,000 Venezuelans, potentially exposing them to deportation.

The court's order, with only one noted dissent, puts on hold a ruling from a federal judge in San Francisco that kept in place Temporary Protected Status for the Venezuelans that would have otherwise expired last month. The justices provided no rationale, which is common in emergency appeals.

The status allows people already in the United States to live and work legally because their

native countries are deemed unsafe for return due to natural disaster or civil strife.

A federal appeals court had earlier rejected the administration's request to put the order on hold while the lawsuit continues.

The case is the latest in a string of emergency appeals President Donald Trump's administration has made to the Supreme Court, many of them related to immigration. Last week, the government asked the court to allow it to end humanitarian parole for hundreds of thousands of immigrants from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela, setting them up for potential deportation as well.

The high court also has been involved in legal battles over Trump's efforts to swiftly deport Venezuelans accused of being gang members to a prison in El Salvador under an 18th century wartime law called the Alien Enemies Act.

The administration has moved aggressively to withdraw various protections that have allowed immigrants to remain in the country, including ending the temporary protected status for a total of 600,000 Venezuelans and 500,000 Haitians. That status is granted in 18-month increments.

The protections had been set to expire April 7, but U.S. District Judge Edward Chen or-

dered a pause on those plans. He found that the expiration threatened to severely disrupt the lives of thousands of people and could cost billions in lost economic activity.

But Solicitor General D. John Sauer wrote on behalf of the administration that Chen's order impermissibly interferes with the administration's power over immigration and foreign affairs.

Congress created TPS in 1990 to prevent deportations to countries suffering from natural disasters or civil strife.

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson said she would have rejected the administration's emergency appeal.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man who stabbed
Rushdie gets 25 years

NY MAYVILLE — A man who attacked Salman Rushdie with a knife in front of a stunned audience in 2022, leaving the prizewinning author blind in one eye, was sentenced Friday to 25 years in prison.

Hadi Matar, 27, stood quietly as the judge pronounced the sentence. He did not deny attacking Rushdie, and when he was invited to address the court before being sentenced, Matar got in a few last insults at the writer.

He said he believed in freedom of speech but called Rushdie “a hypocrite.”

“Salman Rushdie wants to disrespect other people,” said Matar. “He wants to be a bully, he wants to bully other people. I don’t agree with that.”

Rushdie, 77, did not return to western New York for the sentencing.

New atomic clock
called most reliable

CO BOULDER — A new atomic clock is one of the world’s best timekeepers, researchers said — and after years of development, the “fountain”-style clock is now in use helping keep official U.S. time.

Known as NIST-F4, the clock is at the Boulder, Colo., campus of the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

The clock relies on cesium atoms, which oscillate between quantum states at a frequency of over 9 billion times per second.

NIST-F4 uses lasers to cool a

ball of cesium atoms to near absolute zero, then measures the frequency of the atoms as they pass through a microwave chamber.

As they rise and fall like water in a fountain, the atoms oscillate, “ticking” more than 9 billion times per second.

Cuts lead to layoffs,
hiring freeze at colleges

MD BALTIMORE — At the University of Maryland at Baltimore, administrators are laying off about 30 people and eliminating about 30 vacant positions. Towson University is implementing a hiring pause. And Morgan State University is consolidating some programs in addition to cutting jobs and vacancies.

The moves come as the Trump administration threatens to further cut research and other federal funding to universities, and after the Maryland state legislature passed a budget with deep reductions to help close a \$3 billion spending gap — and amid an already-difficult fiscal environment for smaller state schools.

The state cuts included a 7% reduction — amounting to \$155 million — to the University System of Maryland, which is made up of 12 schools and three regional centers.

Each school must now find ways to raise revenue or reduce costs to offset the loss.

Speaker’s diploma held
over Gaza speech

NY NEW YORK CITY — New York University said it is withholding the diploma of a student who used his

commencement speech to condemn Israel’s war in Gaza and what he referred to as the United States’ “complicity in this genocide.”

“The only thing that is appropriate to say in this time and to a group this large is a recognition of the atrocities currently happening in Palestine,” Logan Rozos, a graduating student from NYU’s Gallatin School, said in a speech Wednesday to cheers and applause.

Pro-Israeli groups demanded that NYU take action after footage of the speech was shared online. The university issued an apology the same day and announced it would withhold the student’s diploma while it pursues disciplinary action against him.

Spider monkey rescued
during meth bust

CA VALLEJO — A baby spider monkey is starting a new chapter at the Oakland Zoo after she was rescued by authorities during a methamphetamine bust in Solano County earlier this month.

On May 6, Solano County sheriff’s deputies seized half a pound of methamphetamine during a traffic stop in the unincorporated area of Vallejo, authorities said.

The driver, identified as Clifford Vicenty, 50, was taken into custody and charged with possession of a controlled substance for sale, the Sheriff’s Office said.

But that turned out to be only the tip of the iceberg.

The next day, detectives served a search warrant at Vicenty’s Vallejo home and found another pound of methamph-

tamine, more than \$2,000 cash, two rattlesnakes and the baby spider monkey, authorities said. The Sheriff’s Office estimated the street value of the confiscated meth to be \$26,000.

Vicenty now faces additional charges related to illegal possession of exotic animals and controlled substances. The 18-month-old spider monkey was taken to the Oakland Zoo’s Veterinary Hospital for treatment.

Governor vetoes slavery
reparations study

MD ANNAPOLIS — Maryland Gov. Wes Moore announced Friday he will veto a measure to create a commission to study potential slavery reparations in the state, saying that while it was a difficult decision, the issue already has been studied and now is the time “to focus on the work itself.”

Moore, a Democrat who is the state’s first Black governor and the only Black governor currently serving, wrote in his veto letter that he applauded the legislature’s work on the bill.

“But in light of the many important studies that have taken place on this issue over nearly three decades, now is the time to focus on the work itself: Narrowing the racial wealth gap, expanding homeownership, uplifting entrepreneurs of color, and closing the foundational disparities that lead to inequality — from food insecurity to education,” Moore wrote.

The governor also noted in his veto letter that Black politicians have risen to the highest levels of government in the state in recent years.

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Scheffler wins 3rd major at PGA Championship

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Scottie Scheffler had every reason to worry the PGA Championship was slipping away.

A five-shot lead on the front nine was gone in four holes. Every shot seemed to go left and Scheffler didn't know why. Jon Rahm was peeling off birdies and on the verge of tracking Scheffler down Sunday at Quail Hollow.

And that's when Scheffler showed why he has been golf's No. 1 player for two straight years, why he has compiled more PGA Tour titles quicker than anyone this side of Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus since 1950.

And why he now has the Wanamaker Trophy to go along with two Masters titles.

Scheffler turned a tense Sunday into another runaway by not missing a shot when the pressure was at its peak, giving himself another pleasant walk to the 18th green with another major title secure in the hands of golf's best.

"This back nine will be one that I remember for a long time," Scheffler said. "It was a grind out there. I think at one point on the front I maybe had a four- or five-shot lead, and making the turn, I think I was tied for the lead.

"So to step up when I needed to the most, I'll remember that for a while."

There was nothing fancy about it, just fairways and greens and holing the putts that eluded Rahm in his first time in serious contention at a major since he won the 2023 Masters and left at the end of the year for LIV Golf.

Rahm's hopes ended when he failed to convert birdie chances on the two easiest holes on the back nine at Quail Hollow, and then finished bogey-double bogey-double bogey. By then, the tournament was effective over. It only cost him money.

The only comfort for Scheffler was looking across the lake on the par-5 15th to see Rahm in a bunker, leading to bogey on the 16th that gave Scheffler a three-shot cushion. He recalled thinking, "If I birdie here, it's going to go a long way."

Scheffler drilled 3-wood just over the back of the green, and from the same spot where Rahm earlier that hit putter 12 feet by the hole, Scheffler co-zied it up to a foot for birdie.

Scheffler closed with a bogey he could afford for an even-par 71, giving him a five-shot victory and his third major title. He became the first player since Seve Ballesteros to win his first three majors by three shots or more.

The margin doesn't match up with the grind. That much was clear when Scheffler raised his arms on the 18th green and then ferociously slammed his cap to the turf, a brand of emotion rarely seen by the 28-year-old Texas star.

"Just a lot of happiness," he said. "Just maybe thankful as well. It was a long week. I felt like this was as hard as I battled for a tournament in my career."

It was a lot sweeter than last year, when Scheffler was arrested outside Valhalla Golf Club for charges later dropped that he wasn't following police instructions as they investigated a traffic fatality.

No chance of that happening at Quail Hollow. He stayed close enough to walk.

Inside the ropes, this was no walk in the park the final margin might suggest.

Scheffler had a five-shot lead standing on the sixth tee. But with a shaky swing that led to two bogeys, and with Rahm making three birdies in a four-hole stretch around the turn, they were tied when Scheffler got to the 10th tee.

It looked like a duel to the finish, with Bryson DeChambeau

doing all he could to get in the mix. Under the most pressure he felt all day, Scheffler didn't miss a shot off the tee or from the fairway until his lead was back to four shots.

Rahm wound up seven shots behind, but the two-time major champion was the only serious threat. After bogey on the 16th hole, he had to take on a dangerous pin at the par-3 17th. It bounded over the sunbaked green into the water for double bogey. And his last tee shot went left off the grassy bank and into the stream for another double bogey.

All that work to make up a five-shot deficit at the start of the day and Rahm closed with a 73 to tie for eighth.

"Yeah, the last three holes, it's a tough pill to swallow right now," Rahm said.

"I'll get over it. I'll move on," Rahm said. "Again, there's a lot more positive than negative to think about this week. I'm really happy I put myself in position and hopefully learn from this and give it another go in the U.S. Open."

DeChambeau birdied the 14th and 15th to get within two shots, but he never had another good look at birdie and bogeyed the 18th for a 70. He tied for second with Harris English (65) and Davis Riley, who overcame a triple bogey on No. 7 to play bogey-free the rest of the way and salvaged a 72.

"I'm baffled right now. Just felt like things just didn't go my way this week," DeChambeau said. "I drove it as good as I can. ... I gave myself a good chance. I just felt like a couple breaks went a different way."

J.T. Poston, the North Carolina native who also flirted with an outside chance, bogeyed the last two holes for a 73 to tie for fifth.

English finished his Sunday-best score as Scheffler was making his way down the third hole. English had a flight to catch that afternoon. He was

also the clubhouse leader. But he looked at Scheffler's name atop the leaderboard and said with a smile, "I don't see him slipping a whole lot. I see myself catching my flight."

But then Scheffler was unable to find his swing. He hit only two fairway on the front nine. He failed to convert birdies on the par-5 seventh and the reachable par-4 eighth. On eight of his nine holes, his miss was to the left. And he was tied with the red-hot Rahm.

But part of Scheffler's greatness is his ability to wear down a field, which he did at the Masters both times he won.

"I hit the important shots well this week, and that's why I'm walking away with the trophy," Scheffler said.

Scheffler finished at 11-under 273 and picked up his 15th victory in just his sixth year on the PGA Tour. Dating to 1950, he is the third-fastest player to go from one to 15 tour wins, behind only Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus, and even then by a matter of months.

His victory comes a month after Rory McIlroy captured the Masters to complete the career Grand Slam. The PGA Championship was always going to be a tough act to follow and it didn't come close in terms of drama. But it served as a reminder why Scheffler has been No. 1 for two straight years, and why it will take a lot to replace him.

McIlroy made the cut on the number, shot 72-72 on the weekend and tied for 47th. It was his lowest 72-hole finish in four years in the majors. He declined all four days to speak to the media.

Scheffler came into the PGA Championship off an eight-shot victory in the CJ Cup Byron Nelson. And then he won a major by five. It was the first time since Woods in 2000 that a player won consecutive PGA Tour starts by five shots or more in the same season.

Thunder roll into West finals

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Oklahoma City Thunder grew up on Sunday.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 35 points, Jalen Williams added 24 and Oklahoma City rolled into the Western Conference finals, beating the Denver Nuggets 125-93 in Game 7.

The top-seeded Thunder will host the sixth-seeded Minnesota Timberwolves starting Tuesday. It's OKC's first trip to the conference finals since 2016.

The Thunder went a league-best 68-14 in the regular season, becoming the youngest team to win at least 60 games. To back up their status as the best team in the league, Oklahoma City had to get past three-time MVP Nikola Jokic and a Denver squad that won the NBA title in 2023 and beat the Los Angeles Clippers in seven games in the first round this year.

Coach Mark Daigneault said his players handled the pres-

sure well.

"There's not many games, you wake up in the morning and you know that you're going to remember the game for the rest of your life, and Game 7 is one of them," Daigneault said. "To be able to focus through that and perform the way these guys did today was very impressive."

Jokic had 20 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for the Nuggets. Aaron Gordon, a key player for Denver throughout the playoffs who hit the winner in Game 1 against the Thunder, started despite a strained left hamstring. Gordon had eight points and 11 rebounds in 24 minutes.

"What he played with today, I don't know many people that would even attempt to go out there and run up and down," Nuggets interim coach David Adelman said. "And he did it in Game 7 against Oklahoma City on the road. That that was one of most incredible things I've ever

seen. He was extremely close to not playing. I was surprised."

The Thunder fell behind by 11 in the first quarter, but took the lead early in the second. OKC outscored Denver 39-20 in the period to take a 60-46 lead at the break.

Gordon was called for a flagrant-1 foul for elbowing Gilgeous-Alexander in the face early in the third quarter. Gilgeous-Alexander made both free throws, and then Williams hit a short jumper to give the Thunder a 66-46 lead.

Cason Wallace got loose on a fast break and dunked on Jokic to put Oklahoma City up 78-57, sparking delirious roars from the crowd.

The Thunder cruised from there and now hopes to make another leap.

"We're better now than we were at the beginning of the series, and it's because of them," Daigneault said. "They pushed us to the limit."

Shwartzman first rookie to win Indy pole since '83

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — A rookie driver for a brand new team won the pole for the Indianapolis 500 on a strange day at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, where Team Penske was disqualified before the final two rounds of qualifying.

Robert Shwartzman, a 25-year-old with dual nationality in Israel and Russia, became the first Indy 500 rookie to qualify on the pole since 1983 when he did it for Prema Racing.

The last rookie to qualify on the Indy 500 pole was Teo Fabi. Coincidentally, he was an Italian — just like Prema, which also was founded in '83. Prema is established in Europe and races in the Formula 2 series. It made its IndyCar debut this season.

Shwartzman initially raced under the Russian flag until the start of the war with Ukraine. He now races under the Israeli flag, which makes the Tel Aviv native the first driver from Israel to make "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing."

Shwartzman, who has never before raced on an oval, was mobbed by a sea of red-clad team members as soon as his pole-winning run became official.

"Honestly it feels like I'm dreaming. I just had it in my dreams when I was going how would it feel to do such a good job in quali," Shwartzman said. "It's the Indy 500. It's the main race of the year. Honestly it feels unbelievable."

The pole was wide open for the taking first when Team Penske was disqualified from qualifying for an illegal modification on the cars of two-time defending Indy 500 winner Josef Newgarden and Will Power, and Scott McLaughlin destroyed his car in a Sunday morning crash during practice.

Panthers rout Maple Leafs in Game 7

Associated Press

TORONTO — Sergei Bobrovsky made 19 saves, Florida scored three times in a 6:24 span in the second period and the Panthers routed the Toronto Maple Leafs 6-1 in Game 7 on Sunday night to advance to the Eastern Conference final.

Defending Stanley Cup champion Florida will play the Carolina Hurricanes in the conference final, opening on the road Tuesday night.

Seth Jones, Anton Lundell and Jonah Gadjovich scored in the second-period burst and Eetu Luostarinen, Sam Reinhart and Brad Marchand — into an empty net — added goals in the third. Marchand, Luostarinen and Aleksander Barkov each had two assists.

"We were very quick at closing when pucks were coming around the wall," said Mar-

chand, a Toronto killer in his Boston Bruins days who played in a Game 7 for the 13th time in his career and is 5-0 against the Maple Leafs. "They weren't able to get a whole lot going."

Max Domi scored for Toronto. Joseph Woll stopped 28 shots.

"I just don't think we had our best stuff in the most important game of the season," Leafs defenseman Morgan Rielly said. "That's unacceptable. That's the result you get when that's the case."

Jones opened the scoring at 3:15 of the second, beating Woll to the far post with a shot from the right side. Lundell struck at 7:18, putting in a rebound. Gadjovich followed at 9:39 off another rebound.

Domi cut it to 3-1 at 2:07 of the third, beating Bobrovsky between the legs. Luostarinen countered 47 seconds later for

the Panthers, and Reinhart scored at 9:24.

Toronto led the Atlantic Division matchup 2-0 on the back of consecutive home victories before Florida won three straight to go up 3-2, the last a 6-1 romp in Game 5 that looked a lot like Sunday. The Maple Leafs staved off elimination with a 2-0 road victory Friday.

"The games were so tight," said Panthers coach Paul Maurice, who led his team past Toronto in five games in 2023 and is 6-0 in Game 7s. "This is a much better team than we played two years ago."

The Leafs have won just two series in 11 tries across the Auston Matthews-Mitch Marner era, with Marner set to become a free agent July 1.

"Just weren't on the same page," Matthews said. "It's very, very frustrating."

Bellinger powers Yankees over Mets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Cody Bellinger hit a grand slam that capped a six-run eighth inning and tied his career high with six RBIs on Sunday night, sending the New York Yankees to an 8-2 victory over the New York Mets.

A throwing error by Mets first baseman Pete Alonso allowed Jasson Domínguez to score the tiebreaking run in the eighth. Paul Goldschmidt added an RBI single off Ryne Stanek (1-4) and Bellinger connected against left-hander Génesis Cabrera for his ninth career slam.

"I thought it was very fun," Bellinger said after the finale of his first Subway Series. "I really enjoyed it."

In a matchup of first-place teams, Max Fried pitched six effective innings as the Yankees took two of three at home in the first Subway Series this season. The crosstown rivals meet again July 4-6 at Citi Field in Queens.

Juan Soto was booed all weekend and went 0-for-4 with two strikeouts Sunday to the vocal delight of Yankees fans. Soto finished 1-for-10 with four walks during his first series back in the Bronx since leaving the Yankees for a record \$765 million, 15-year deal with the Mets.

"It was good to see him," Yankees star Aaron Judge said, "but happy we were kind of — either walk him or not let him do any damage, especially in this series."

Phillies 1, Pirates 0: Mick Abel outdueled Paul Skenes to win his major league debut, striking out nine over six innings to lead host Philadelphia over Pittsburgh for a three-game sweep and the Phillies' 15th win in 20 games.

Abel (1-0), a 23-year-old right-hander selected 15th overall by Philadelphia in the 2020 draft, allowed five hits and walked none. The nine strikeouts tied a Phillies high for a debut, set by Curt Simmons against the New York Giants on

Sept. 28, 1947.

Brandon Marsh grounded into a run-scoring forceout in the fifth against Skenes (3-5), who pitched a three-hitter with nine strikeouts and one walk in his first complete game in 33 big league starts.

Angels 6, Dodgers 4: Travis d'Arnaud broke an eighth-inning tie with his first home run of the season, and the visiting Angels beat the Dodgers for their first three-game Freeway Series sweep since 2010.

Angels left-hander Yusei Kikuchi gave up one run and three hits and struck out seven in 5½ innings before hurting his right ankle in a collision at first base with Tommy Edman.

Astros 4, Rangers 3: Isaac Paredes hit a go-ahead, three-run homer off reliever Robert Garcia (1-2) in the eighth inning after Texas rookie Jack Leiter lost a no-hit bid in the seventh, and visiting Houston rallied for a victory.

Leiter gave up Yainer Diaz's solo homer with two outs in the seventh as the Astros trimmed their deficit to 3-1. The 25-year-old right-hander was replaced after consecutive soft singles from Jake Meyers and Cam Smith to start the eighth.

Nationals 10, Orioles 4: CJ Abrams went deep on the first two pitches he saw from Zach Eflin, and visiting Washington hit five homers in a victory over free-falling Baltimore for a three-game sweep.

Luis Garcia Jr. and Dylan Crews also connected against Eflin (3-2) during a six-run second inning that helped the Nationals complete their first sweep of the season.

Braves 10, Red Sox 4: Marcell Ozuna homered for the second straight day, former Boston outfielder Alex Verdugo had three hits and visiting Atlanta beat the Red Sox to win the three-game series.

Austin Riley also had three hits for the Braves (24-23), who moved a game above .500 for the second time after opening

0-7. Every starter except lead-off hitter Verdugo had at least one RBI.

Tigers 3, Blue Jays 2: Spencer Torkelson drove in the tiebreaking run with a two-out single in the seventh inning and visiting Detroit beat Toronto, improving its MLB-best record to 31-16.

Jackson Jobe (4-0) allowed two runs and six hits in six innings, becoming the first pitcher in Tigers history to have the team win the first eight starts of his career. Detroit won the first seven starts right-hander Howie Koplitz made in 1961 and 1962.

Marlins 5, Rays 1: Otto Lopez hit a three-run homer in his first game off the injured list and Liam Hicks added a two-run shot to back a strong start by Cal Quantrill, powering host Miami to a victory over Tampa Bay.

Quantrill (3-4) allowed one run and two hits in five innings with six strikeouts for the Marlins, who improved to 12-13 at home with their first series victory since April 21-23.

Brewers 5, Twins 2: Jackson Chourio robbed Royce Lewis of a potential tying homer in the eighth inning, and host Milwaukee ended Minnesota's 13-game winning streak with a victory.

Isaac Collins and Sal Frelick each drove in two runs to help the Brewers end the second-longest win streak in Twins history. Minnesota won 15 straight in 1991, a season that ended with a World Series title.

Reds 3, Guardians 1: Will Benson had his first two-homer game, going deep for the fourth straight day to lead host Cincinnati to a victory and its first three-game sweep of Cleveland since 2012.

Benson followed Tyler Stephenson's fourth-inning single with a 399-foot drive to right off L.L. Ortiz (2-5) then added a sixth-inning shot off Hunter Gaddis for his fifth home run this season. The Reds won their fourth straight and got back to .500 at 24-24.

Cubs 6, White Sox 2: Pete Crow-Armstrong tripled, doubled and scored two runs, and the Chicago Cubs completed a three-game sweep with a victory over the crosstown Chicago White Sox at Wrigley Field.

Nico Hoerner doubled twice and had an RBI as the Cubs extended their franchise-record winning streak against the South Siders to eight games. Seiya Suzuki drove in two runs, and Michael Busch and Vidal Brujan each had two hits and an RBI.

Diamondbacks 1, Rockies 0: Merrill Kelly struck out a season-high 11 while giving up one hit over seven innings, Ketel Marte homered and host Arizona edged Colorado.

The Diamondbacks took two of three games over the weekend, denying the Rockies their first series win this season. Colorado fell to 8-38, the worst start for a big league team through 46 games since 1901.

Mariners 6, Padres 1: Randy Arozarena homered off Michael King in a three-run fourth inning and AL West-leading Seattle beat host San Diego for the sweep.

Bryan Woo (5-1) settled down after giving up a leadoff homer on an 0-2 count to Fernando Tatis Jr., his 12th. Only one Padres player reached scoring position against Woo, who allowed one run and five hits in seven innings. He struck out five, walked none and retired his final 11 batters and 16 of his last 17.

Royals 2, Cardinals 1: Drew Waters led off the seventh inning with a pinch-hit triple, Maikel Garcia drove Waters in with a single and host Kansas City snapped a four-game skid and avoided a series sweep with a victory over St. Louis.

Giants 3, Athletics 2: Heliot Ramos hit a leadoff homer in the first inning and had a go-ahead single in the eighth, lifting host San Francisco over the Athletics for a series sweep.