

## Trump warns 50% tax on EU, 25% on Apple

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Friday threatened a 50% tax on all imports from the European Union as well as a 25% tariff on Apple products unless iPhones are made in America.

The threats, delivered over social media, reflect Trump's ability to disrupt the global economy with a burst of typing as well as the reality that his tariffs have yet to produce the trade deals he is seeking or the return of domestic manufacturing he has promised voters.

The Republican president said he wants to charge higher import taxes on goods from the EU, a long-standing U.S. ally, than from China, a geopolitical rival that had its tariffs cut to 30% this month so Washington and Beijing could hold negotiations.

Trump was upset by the lack of progress in trade talks with the EU, which has proposed mutually cutting tariffs to zero even as the president has publicly insisted on preserving a baseline 10% tax on most imports.

"Our discussions with them are going nowhere!" Trump posted on Truth Social. "Therefore, I am recommending a straight 50% Tariff on the European Union, starting on June 1, 2025. There is no Tariff if the product is built or manufactured in the United States."

That post had been preceded by a threat of import taxes against Apple for its plans to continue making its iPhone in Asia.

Apple now joins Amazon, Walmart and other major U.S. companies in the White House's crosshairs as they try to respond

to the uncertainty and inflationary pressures unleashed by his tariffs.

"I have long ago informed Tim Cook of Apple that I expect their iPhone's that will be sold in the United States of America will be manufactured and built in the United States, not India, or anyplace else," Trump wrote. "If that is not the case, a Tariff of at least 25% must be paid by Apple to the U.S."

In response to Trump's tariffs on China, Apple CEO Tim Cook said earlier this month that most iPhones sold in the U.S. during the current fiscal quarter would come from India, with iPads and other devices being imported from Vietnam. After Trump rolled out tariffs in April, bank analysts estimated that a \$1,200 iPhone would if made in America jump in price anywhere from \$1,500 to \$3,500.

Stock futures sold off after Trump's postings, with the S&P 500 index futures down roughly 1.3%. The markets have developed a hair trigger sensitivity to the U.S. president's statements, often slumping when he announces high tariffs and rallying when he retreats from those threats.

Until recently, the U.S. president repeatedly bragged about the \$500 billion that Apple in February pledged to invest domestically. But he publicly turned against the company last week while speaking in Qatar.

"I had a little problem with Tim Cook yesterday," Trump told the audience. "I said to him, 'My friend, I treated you very good. You're coming here with \$500 billion, but now I hear you're building all over India. I don't want you building in India.'"

## Report: US eyes pulling some troops from S. Korea

*Bloomberg News*

South Korea said there have been no discussions with the U.S. over a possible pullback of American troops stationed in the country, after a media report said Washington is reviewing a proposal to withdraw some of its forces.

The proposal could result in the removal of about 4,500 American troops based in South Korea, the Wall Street Journal reported, citing people familiar with the matter, a move that could further stir security concerns in the divided Korean peninsula.

South Korea's defense ministry said there has been "absolutely no discussion" with the U.S. regarding a potential U.S.

troop withdrawal.

U.S. troops stationed in South Korea are a core part of the two countries' alliance, helping to deter North Korea from invading or making provocations while contributing to peace and stability in the region, the ministry said in a text message to reporters.

The WSJ report said one of the options under discussion includes relocating some of the 28,500 U.S. troops in South Korea to other locations in the Indo-Pacific region, including Guam.

The proposal has not reached President Donald Trump's desk yet and is one of several ideas being discussed by senior officials conducting the review, the

report said.

Trump has pushed U.S. allies to step up military spending in return for deploying American troops in conflict zones. In October, just before winning the presidential election, Trump said South Korea would pay billions of dollars more every year to host U.S. troops if he were in the White House and called the long-time U.S. ally a "money machine."

Trump made those remarks less than two weeks after the U.S. and South Korea reached a new five-year cost-sharing deal for hosting American forces on the divided peninsula. Under the agreement, South Korea will raise its share of the costs to 1.52 trillion won (\$1.1 billion) in

2026, up 8.3% compared with this year.

A Pentagon spokesman was quoted in the report saying there were no policy announcements to make. National Security Council spokesman Pete Nguyen didn't address the troop-withdrawal issue but said Trump was committed to the "complete denuclearization" of North Korea, while South Korea's defense ministry declined to comment, according to the report.

Trump said in April that he discussed trade deficit, ship-building cooperation, the Alaska pipeline project and defense cost sharing during his phone call with Korea's then Acting President Han Duck-soo.

# Judge blocks White House ban of foreign enrollment at Harvard

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — A federal judge on Friday blocked the Trump administration from cutting off Harvard's enrollment of foreign students, an action the Ivy League school decried as unconstitutional retaliation for defying the White House's political demands.

In its lawsuit filed earlier Friday in federal court in Boston, Harvard said the government's action violates the First Amendment and will have an "immediate and devastating effect for Harvard and more than 7,000 visa holders."

"With the stroke of a pen, the government has sought to erase a quarter of Harvard's student body, international students who contribute significantly to the University and its mission," Harvard said in its suit. "Without its international students, Harvard is not Harvard."

The temporary restraining order was granted by U.S. Dis-

trict Judge Allison Burroughs.

The Trump administration move has thrown campus into disarray days before graduation, Harvard said in the suit.

International students who run labs, teach courses, assist professors and participate in Harvard sports are now left deciding whether to transfer or risk losing legal status to stay in the country, according to the filing.

The impact is heaviest at graduate schools such as the Harvard Kennedy School, where almost half the student body comes from abroad, and Harvard Business School, which is about one-third international.

Along with its impact on current students, the move blocks thousands of students who were planning to come for summer and fall classes.

Harvard said it immediately puts the school at a disadvantage as it competes for the world's top students. Even if it

regains the ability to host students, "future applicants may shy away from applying out of fear of further reprisals from the government," the suit said.

If the government's action stands, Harvard said, the university would be unable to offer admission to new international students for at least the next two academic years. Schools that have that certification withdrawn by the federal government are ineligible to reapply until one year afterward, Harvard said.

Harvard enrolls almost 6,800 foreign students at its campus in Cambridge, Mass. Most are graduate students and they come from more than 100 countries.

The Department of Homeland Security announced the action Thursday, accusing Harvard of creating an unsafe campus environment by allowing "anti-American, pro-terrorist agitators" to assault Jewish students on campus.

## Trump hosts top crypto investors

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump rewarded top investors in one of his cryptocurrency projects with a swanky dinner on Thursday night, an event that showed the ascendance of an emerging financial industry — and also the president's willingness to mix public office with personal profit.

Some 220 of the biggest investors in the \$TRUMP meme coin were invited to Trump's luxury golf club in Northern Virginia, where they dined on filet mignon and halibut. According to participants' posts on social media, Trump spoke for about half an hour before dancing to the song "YMCA."

Despite the White House insisting that Trump would be attending the event "in his personal time," he stood behind a lectern with the presidential seal as he touted an industry that's generating profits for his family business.

After feeling unfairly targeted under President Joe Biden, the crypto industry has quickly become a political force, donating huge sums to help Trump and friendly lawmakers.

As the president uses crypto as a platform to make money for his brand in unprecedented ways, it's also creating an opportunity for potentially shadowy buyers to use the anonymity of the internet to buy access to the president. The lack of transparency was evident on a poster board at the dinner, where participants signed a ranking of top investors. Some used their real names; others used pseudonyms.

No media was allowed into the dinner. Protesters gathered outside the club holding signs that said "stop crypto corruption" and "no corrupt fools."

## Supreme Court upholds Trump's firing of two independent agency officials

*Los Angeles Times*

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Thursday upheld, for now, President Donald Trump's decision to fire two agency officials who had fixed terms that were set by Congress.

By a 6-3 vote, the justices set aside rulings that would have reinstated Gwynne Wilcox to the National Labor Relations Board and Cathy Harris to the Merit Systems Protection Board. Both were appointees of President Joe Biden.

The decision is the latest in which the court's conservative majority sided with the president's power to fire agency officials in violation of long-standing laws.

"Because the Constitution vests the executive power in the President, he may remove without cause executive officers who exercise that power on his behalf," the court said in an unsigned order.

But the justices were quick to add the Federal Reserve Board is not affected by this decision.

"The Federal Reserve is a uniquely structured, quasi-private entity that follows in the distinct historical tradition of the First and Second Banks of the United States," the court said.

Trump has threatened to fire Fed Chair Jerome Powell, whose term extends to next year.

At issue is a fundamental dispute over whether the Constitution gave the president or Congress the power to set the structure of the federal government.

# Busy Atlantic hurricane season expected

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With warmer than normal ocean waters, forecasters are expecting yet another unusually busy hurricane season for the Atlantic. But they don't think it will be as chaotic as 2024, the third-costliest season on record as it spawned killer storms Beryl, Helene and Milton.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on Thursday unveiled its outlook for the Atlantic hurricane season that begins June 1 and stretches through the end of November, with a 60% chance it will be above normal, 30% chance near normal and just 10% chance it will be quieter than average.

The forecast calls for 13 to 19

named storms with six to 10 becoming hurricanes and three to five reaching major status with winds of more than 110 mph. A normal season has 14 named storms, seven of which strengthen to hurricanes and three power up further to major hurricanes.

Ocean warmth is not quite as high as last year's off-the-charts heat. But it's sufficient to be the top reason for the busy forecast, National Weather Service Director Ken Graham said.

"Everything is in place for an above average season," he said.

Despite massive job cuts at NOAA from the Department of Government Efficiency, "our ability to serve this country has never been better and it will be this year as well," Graham said

at a news conference Thursday in Gretna, Louisiana, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

"The hurricane center is fully staffed up and we're ready to go," acting NOAA administrator Laura Grimm said. "We are making this a top priority for this administration."

Since 1995, 21 of the 30 Atlantic hurricane seasons have been officially classified as above normal, with nearly half of those considered "hyperactive," according to NOAA. It classifies seasons based on their Accumulated Cyclone Energy (ACE) index, which takes into account the number and strength of storms and how long they last. In the last 10 years, only 2015 was below normal and 2022 was

near normal.

Last year started with a record early Category 5 hurricane in Beryl but then had a lull during the early part of peak storm season from mid-August to mid-October.

But then six storms, including Helene and Milton, formed in just two weeks. With 18 named storms, 11 of those becoming hurricanes and five major hurricanes, 2024 was considered a hyperactive season in the Atlantic. And it was the third such in the last 10 years.

"With a warming climate, forecasting above the long-term mean is always a safe bet," said Kristen Corbosiero, a University at Albany tropical meteorology professor who was not part of the NOAA research.

## Papers: Suspect in embassy deaths said he 'did it for Gaza'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The man accused of fatally shooting two staff members of the Israeli Embassy in Washington outside a Jewish museum told police after his arrest, "I did it for Palestine, I did it for Gaza," federal authorities said Thursday in announcing charges in the killings they called a targeted act of terrorism.

Elias Rodriguez, 31, shouted "Free Palestine" as he was led away after his arrest, according to charging documents that provided chilling new details of the Wednesday night shootings in the nation's capital that killed an American woman and an Israeli man who had just left an event at the museum. They were set to become engaged.

The stunning attack prompted Israeli missions to beef up their security and lower their flags to half-staff. It came as Israel pursues another major offensive in the Gaza Strip in the war with Hamas that has heightened tensions across the

Middle East and internationally, and that law enforcement officials have repeatedly warned could inspire violence in the U.S.

Rodriguez faces charges of murder of foreign officials and other crimes and did not enter a plea during a perfunctory court appearance.

Additional charges are likely, prosecutors said, as authorities continue to investigate the killings as both a hate crime against the Jewish community and terrorism.

"Violence against anyone based on their religion is an act of cowardice. It is not an act of a hero," said Jeanine Pirro, the interim U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia. "Anti-semitism will not be tolerated, especially in the nation's capital."

After the shooting, the suspect went inside the museum and stated that he "did it." He was no longer armed by the time he was taken into custody, according to the affidavit.

## Kid Cudi says car set on fire after 'Diddy' broke into home

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Rapper Kid Cudi testified Thursday that Sean "Diddy" Combs broke into his Hollywood Hills home in 2011 after finding out he was dating Combs' ex-girlfriend, the R&B singer Cassie, and said he was sure Combs was behind the firebombing of his car weeks later.

Speaking at Combs' federal sex trafficking trial in Manhattan, Cudi said that while he and Cassie were briefly dating, he took her to a West Hollywood hotel in order to get her away from the seething Combs. While there, he said, he got a call from Combs' assistant Capricorn Clark. She told him Combs and an affiliate were in Cudi's house and she had been forced to go with them.

Cudi, whose legal name is Scott Mescudi, said he called Combs while driving home and asked why he was in his house. He said Combs calmly replied, "I want to talk to you."

But Combs wasn't there when

he arrived, Cudi testified. Instead, he found that someone had opened Christmas presents he'd bought for his family and locked his dog in a bathroom. Cudi wasn't sure what was going on, so he called the police.

A few weeks later, Cudi testified, his Porsche 911 convertible was damaged by fire while parked in his driveway. Cudi said he was at a friend's house when his dog-sitter called and told him his car was on fire. Jurors were shown photos of the car's red leather interior scorched and burned, with a hole apparently cut in the fabric roof. A Molotov cocktail was found on the passenger seat, Cudi said.

Cassie, whose legal name is Casandra Ventura, testified last week that Combs threatened to blow up Cudi's car and hurt him after he learned she was dating the Grammy Award-winning rapper.

Cudi said he didn't have conflicts at the time with anyone other than Combs.



# Mediator: US-Iran talks made some progress

Associated Press

ROME — Iran and the United States made “some but not conclusive progress” Friday in a fifth round of negotiations in Rome over Tehran’s rapidly advancing nuclear program, the talks’ Omani mediator said.

The remarks by Badr al-Busaidi suggested the negotiations between the two longtime enemies would continue even as the talks run up against their toughest challenge: Trying to find middle ground between American demands that Iran stop enriching uranium while Tehran insists its program must continue.

“The fifth round of Iran US

talks have concluded today in Rome with some but not conclusive progress,” al-Busaidi wrote on X. “We hope to clarify the remaining issues in the coming days, to allow us to proceed towards the common goal of reaching a sustainable and honourable agreement.”

Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi after the talks told Iranian state television that al-Busaidi presented ideas that will be conveyed to the two nations’ capitals “without creating any commitments for either side.”

“These negotiations are too complex to be resolved in just two or three meetings,” he said.

“I am hopeful that in the next one or two rounds — especially given the better understanding of the Islamic Republic’s positions — we can reach solutions that allow the talks to progress.”

He added: “We are not there yet, but we are not discouraged either.”

The U.S. was again represented in the talks by Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff and Michael Anton, the State Department’s policy planning director. They had no immediate comment afterward, with the Iranians saying Witkoff left early from the negotiations at the Omani Embassy in Rome.

The talks seek to limit Iran’s

nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of some of the crushing economic sanctions the U.S. has imposed on the Islamic Republic, closing in on half a century of enmity.

President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened to unleash airstrikes targeting Iran’s program if a deal isn’t reached. Iranian officials increasingly warn they could pursue a nuclear weapon.

Asked about the negotiations, State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said “we believe that we are going to succeed” in the talks and on Washington’s push for no enrichment.

## Iran may take ‘special measures’ to defend nuclear sites

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran’s top diplomat warned Thursday that his country would take “special measures” to defend its nuclear facilities if Israel continues to threaten them, raising the stakes further ahead of a new round of talks with the United States.

The comments by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi offered no specifics on what Tehran would do, but international

inspectors already have seen their access limited to Iran’s program. That’s even as Tehran enriches uranium to 60% purity, a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%.

“I have called on the international community to take effective preventive measures against the continuation of Israeli threats, which if unchecked, will compel Iran to take special measures in defense of our nuclear facilities

and materials,” Araghchi wrote on X after sending letters to United Nations officials.

“The nature, content and extent of our actions will correspond and be proportionate to preventive measures taken by these international bodies in accordance with their statutory duties and obligations.”

Iran’s mission to the United Nations later posted Araghchi’s letter online, which included a warning to the U.S. as well.

“We are likewise of the firm

conviction that — in the event of any attack against the nuclear facilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran by the Zionist regime — the government of the United States shall bear legal responsibility, having been complicit therein,” the letter reads.

It added any change involving Iranian nuclear sites would be communicated to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N.’s nuclear watchdog.

## N. Korea head: Arrest for those at fault in failed launch

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea is seeking to arrest those responsible for the failed launch of its second naval destroyer, as it denied the warship suffered major damage — a claim quickly met with outside skepticism.

A statement from North Korea on its handling of the botched launch came after leader Kim Jong Un expressed fury over the incident that he said was caused by criminal negli-

gence. The main military committee said Friday that those responsible would be held accountable for their “unpardonable criminal act.”

Satellite imagery on the site showed the vessel lying on its side and draped in blue covers, with parts of it submerged. North Korea says it will take about 10 days to repair the damage, but outside observers question that timeframe because damage to the ship appeared much worse than what North

Korea claims.

North Korea’s state media said Friday the severity of the damage to the 5,000-ton-class destroyer was “not serious” as it canceled an earlier assessment that the bottom of the hull had been left with holes.

It said the hull on the starboard side was scratched and some seawater had flowed into the stern section.

It said it needs a total of 10 days to pump out the seawater, set the ship upright and fix the

scratches.

It’s almost impossible to verify the assessment because of the extremely secretive nature of North Korea.

The official Korean Central News Agency said Friday that a team of prosecutors and experts began steps to arrest and investigate those responsible as part of their full-scale investigation into the case. KCNA said that Hong Kil Ho, manager of the Chongjin shipyard, has been summoned for questioning.

# Russia, Ukraine swap prisoners

Associated Press

CHERNIHIV REGION, Ukraine — A major prisoner exchange between Russia and Ukraine began Friday, a senior Ukrainian official said, in one of the few signs of progress from their direct talks last week in Istanbul — part of a U.S.-led effort that so far has failed to produce a ceasefire in the three-year-old war.

The swap was taking place at the border with Belarus in northern Ukraine, according to the Ukrainian official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

Moscow did not immediately confirm the exchange.

Ukraine and Russia agreed to the exchange of 1,000 prisoners from each side a week ago in Turkey in their first direct peace talks since the early weeks of Moscow's 2022 invasion of its neighbor. That meeting lasted only two hours and brought no breakthrough in efforts to stop the fighting.

Word of the developments emerged when U.S. President Donald Trump said Russia and

Ukraine had carried out a large exchange of prisoners.

"A major prisoners swap was just completed between Russia and Ukraine," Trump said on the Truth Social platform. He said it would "go into effect shortly," although it was not clear what that meant.

"This could lead to something big???" Trump added in his post, apparently referring to international diplomatic efforts.

White House and National Security Council officials did not immediately respond to requests for further details.

After the May 16 talks, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan called the prisoner swap a "confidence-building measure" and said the parties had agreed in principle to meet again.

But Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday that there has been no agreement yet on the venue for the next round of talks as diplomatic maneuvering continued.

European leaders have accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of dragging his feet in peace efforts while he tries to

press his larger army's battlefield initiative and capture more Ukrainian land.

The meeting revealed both sides remained far apart on conditions for ending the fighting. One condition for Ukraine, backed by its Western allies, is a temporary ceasefire as a first step toward a settlement.

The Kremlin has pushed back on a temporary halt to hostilities, and Putin has said any such truce must come with a freeze on Western arms supplies to Ukraine and an end to Ukraine's mobilization drive.

A senior Ukrainian official said that in Istanbul, Russia had introduced new, "unacceptable demands" to withdraw Ukrainian forces from huge swaths of territory. The official, who was not authorized to make official statements, spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity. The proposal had not been previously discussed, the official said.

Putin has long demanded as a key condition for a peace deal that Ukraine withdraw its troops from the four regions that Russia annexed in 2022.

# Dozens die in strikes as minimal aid arrives

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — At least 60 people were killed by Israeli strikes across Gaza in a 24-hour period, Gaza's health ministry said Friday, as Israel pressed ahead with its military offensive and let in minimal aid to the strip.

The dead included 10 people in the southern city of Khan Younis, four in the central town of Deir al-Balah and nine in the Jabaliya refugee camp in the north, according to the Nasser, Al-Aqsa and Al-Ahli hospitals where the bodies were brought.

Israel is facing mounting international criticism for its latest offensive and pressure to let aid into Gaza amid a catastrophic humanitarian crisis.

Amid pressure, Israel started letting in aid.

Israeli officials said Friday they let in more than 100 trucks of aid, including flour, food, medical equipment and drugs. The trucks came in through the Kerem Shalom crossing.

But U.N. agencies say the amount is woefully insufficient, compared with around 600 trucks a day that entered during a recent ceasefire and that are necessary to meet basic needs. U.N. agencies say Israeli military restrictions and the breakdown of law and order in Gaza make it difficult to retrieve and distribute the aid.

As a result, little of it has so far reached those in need.

# Record flooding hits eastern Australia

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Record floodwaters on Australia's east coast have left four people dead and one missing, officials said Friday as rain eased over the disaster area.

Some 50,000 people have been isolated by flooding along the coast of New South Wales state north of Sydney after days of heavy rain. The low-pressure weather system that brought the deluge had moved further

south to Sydney and its surrounds Friday.

Four bodies have been retrieved from floodwaters in New South Wales since Wednesday. Three of the victims had driven into floodwaters, while a man's body had been found on the veranda of his flooded home.

The latest victim was a man in his 70s whose body was found in a car in floodwater Friday near Coffs Harbour, a police state-

ment said. The car had run off the road.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and New South Wales Premier Christopher Minns on Friday were inspecting devastated areas, some of which had been inundated by the highest floodwaters on record.

Minns praised emergency services and volunteers for rescuing 678 people from floodwaters in recent days, including 177 in the past 24 hours.

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# Thunder overwhelms Timberwolves again

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 38 points a day after being named the NBA's MVP, and the Oklahoma City Thunder overwhelmed the Minnesota Timberwolves again, winning 118-103 on Thursday night to take a 2-0 lead in the Western Conference finals.

Gilgeous-Alexander made 12 of 21 field goals and 13 of 15 free throws after receiving his MVP trophy from Commissioner Adam Silver before the game.

"I feel like all my emotions were so high, but I was a little bit tired out there, especially at the start," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "I was a little too juiced up. Special moment. I'm happy we won so I can really enjoy the last

couple days and soak it up. That really helps."

Jalen Williams had 26 points and 10 rebounds and Chet Holmgren added 22 points for the Thunder.

Oklahoma City's Lu Dort was named first-team all defense and Williams was named second-team all-defense earlier in the day. They helped anchor a unit that held Minnesota to 41.4% shooting.

"When you win games, you do it together and you have fun out there, everything else — all the individual stuff you want — it comes with it," Gilgeous-Alexander said.

Anthony Edwards scored 32 points but it took him 26 shots to get them. Jaden McDaniels scored 22 points and Nickeil

Alexander-Walker added 17 for the Timberwolves.

Game 3 is Saturday in Minneapolis.

Gilgeous-Alexander hit a 3-pointer with 16 seconds left in the first half, then made a pair of free throws with 3 seconds remaining to help Oklahoma City take a 58-50 lead. He scored 19 points before the break.

"We didn't close the half very well," Minnesota coach Chris Finch said. "I thought if we close the half better then we don't put ourselves on such a razor edge in the third."

In the third quarter, Gilgeous-Alexander drove to the paint and threw up a wild shot that went in as he was fouled by his cousin, Alexander-Walker. Gilgeous-Alexander made the

free throw to give the Thunder a 73-64 lead.

A lob by Cason Wallace to Holmgren for a two-handed jam on a fast break put Oklahoma City up 82-65 late in the third quarter. The Thunder took a 93-71 advantage into the fourth.

Minnesota cut the lead to 10 in the final period, but Oklahoma City kept the Timberwolves at bay late. Now, Minnesota gets to go home, where it is 4-1 in the playoffs.

Finch remained optimistic.

"Every minute in a series is a chance to find something," he said. "So we're going to go back home. This is a good team at home. So we're going to go home and fight for Game 3. Heads up, look at the tape and get ready for Game 3."

## College Football Playoff shifting to straight seeding

Associated Press

The College Football Playoff will go to a more straightforward way of filling the bracket next season, announcing Thursday that it will place teams strictly on where they are ranked instead of moving pieces around to reward conference champions.

Ten conference commissioners and Notre Dame's athletic director came to the unanimous agreement they needed to shift the model that drew complaints last season.

The new format will no longer guarantee an opening bye week for the four highest-ranked league champions, reserving that benefit for the four top-ranked teams in general. The change was widely expected after last season's jumbled bracket gave byes to Big 12 champion Arizona State and Mountain West champion Boise State, even though they were ranked 12th and ninth, respectively, by the playoff selection committee.

That system made the rankings and the seedings in the

tournament two different things and resulted in some matchups — for instance, the quarterfinal between top-ranked Oregon and eventual national champion Ohio State — that came earlier than they otherwise might have.

"After evaluating the first year of the 12-team Playoff, the CFP Management Committee felt it was in the best interest of the game to make this adjustment," said Rich Clark, executive director of the CFP.

The five highest-ranked conference champions will still be guaranteed spots in the playoff, meaning it's possible there could be a repeat of a different sort of shuffling seen last season when CFP No. 16 Clemson was seeded 12th in the bracket after winning the Atlantic Coast Conference. That ended up costing 11th-ranked Alabama a spot in the playoff.

Under the new arrangement, the four top-ranked conference champions will still receive \$8 million for their leagues — representing the \$4 million they earn for making the playoff and

\$4 million for advancing to the quarterfinals.

"That was the commissioners' way of — at least for this year — holding to the commitment that they have made financially to those teams, those conference champions in particular, that would have been paid those amounts under the former system that we used last year," Clark told ESPN.

Southeastern Conference commissioner Greg Sankey was among those who pushed for the change in the upcoming second year of the 12-team playoff, though he remained cautious about it being approved because of the unanimous vote needed.

The playoff for the upcoming season begins Dec. 19 on the campuses of the teams ranked 5-8.

### What might have been

Here's a look at possible first-round matchups had straight seeding been in play last season. (with result of actual matchup in parenthesis):

■ No. 12 Clemson at No. 5 Notre Dame. The Tigers still would have gotten in despite being ranked 16th. Notre Dame, a team without a conference, could benefit from this new arrangement because it is now eligible for a bye. (No. 5 Texas 38, No. 12 Clemson 24).

■ No. 11 Arizona State at No. 6 Ohio State. The Sun Devils face a juggernaut instead of receiving a first-round bye. (No. 6 Penn State 38, No. 11 SMU 10).

■ No. 10 SMU at No. 7 Tennessee. Yes, Alabama, 11th in CFP's final ranking, still would've been the odd man out because of Clemson. (No. 7 Notre Dame 27, No. 10 Indiana 17).

■ No. 9 Boise State at No. 8 Indiana. It could've been Ashton Jeanty vs. the Hoosiers in a matchup of two of the season's best stories. (No. 8 Ohio State 42, No. 9 Tennessee 17).

Byes: No. 1 Oregon, No. 2 Georgia, No. 3 Texas, No. 4 Penn State. Could Texas or Penn State have gone further without having to play that extra game?



# Angels extend win streak with sweep of A's

Associated Press

WEST SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Taylor Ward hit a go-ahead grand slam, Logan O'Hoppe homered in a five-run seventh inning and the Los Angeles Angels rallied past the skidding Athletics 10-5 on Thursday for their seventh consecutive victory.

Ward and O'Hoppe both connected off reliever Grant Holman (4-1), sending the A's to their ninth loss in a row.

It was the second go-ahead slam in 10 days for Ward, who finished with three hits and five RBIs. He has an extra-base hit in eight straight games — one shy of the club record set by Darin Erstad in 1998.

Ward has 17 RBIs in his last 10 games. He and O'Hoppe each have 14 homers this season. Zach Neto also had three of Los Angeles' 13 hits.

The Angels swept a four-game series from the Athletics on the road for the first time in 28 years. It's only their third seven-game win streak in the last 10 seasons.

Kevin Newman had an RBI single to cap a three-run ninth. Hunter Strickland (1-0) retired four batters for the win.

**Blue Jays 7, Padres 6, 11 Innings:** Nathan Lukes hit a game-winning single in the 11th inning as Toronto beat San Diego to complete a three-game sweep, extending Padres season-worst losing streak to six.

Gavin Sheets hit two home runs and had five RBIs for San Diego, but the Padres couldn't hold on after twice taking the lead in extra innings.

Luis Arraez gave San Diego a 5-4 lead with a two-out RBI single to center off Brendon Little in the 10th, but Toronto's Jonatan Clase led off the bottom half with a game-tying single off Robert Suarez, who blew his second save opportunity in 17 chances.

Sheets hit an RBI single off Brendon Little in the 11th, but Daulton Varsho led off the bottom half with an RBI triple off

Jeremiah Estrada (1-3).

**Yankees 1, Rangers 0:** Carlos Rodón pitched six innings of two-hit ball for his fifth straight win, and surging New York beat Texas to complete a three-game sweep.

New York rookie Jorbit Vivas hit his first major-league homer off Texas starter Nathan Eovaldi (4-3) in the fifth.

The Yankees earned their fourth straight victory and won for the 11th time in 14 games. New York became the second American League team to reach 30 wins this season, joining the Detroit Tigers.

Rodón (6-3) allowed a single to Josh Jung three batters in and a double to Sam Haggerty in the third. It was the fourth time in 11 starts this season the left-hander permitted two hits or fewer.

Eovaldi allowed one run and five hits in six innings. He struck out six, walked one and had his three-game winning streak stopped.

Mark Leiter Jr. stranded two runners in the seventh and Devin Williams pitched a perfect eighth to continue his turnaround. Luke Weaver worked a 1-2-3 ninth for his seventh save.

**Phillies 2, Rockies 0:** Ranger Suárez pitched into the seventh inning to outduel Germán Márquez, and Philadelphia beat Colorado to sweep the four-game series.

Philadelphia has won seven straight overall and 11 of its last 12 on the road. The Phillies have captured four straight road series.

Colorado fell to 8-42, the worst 50-game start in the modern era (since 1901). The Rockies are 5-20 at home and have been shut out seven times this season.

Suárez (3-0) struck out six and walked three in 6 ⅓ innings. He left after allowing a two-out double to Jordan Beck and a walk to Ezequiel Tovar.

Orion Kerkering came on and retired Hunter Goodman on one pitch to end the threat. Jordan

Romano got the final three outs for his sixth save.

**Guardians 7, Tigers 0:** Carlos Santana had a two-run double in the fourth inning, Angel Martínez hit a solo homer in the fifth and Tanner Bibbee threw seven scoreless innings to lead Cleveland to a win over Detroit.

It was the first meeting between the teams since the Guardians won their AL Division Series last October.

The AL-leading Tigers had won seven of nine games and Cleveland had lost seven of its previous 10.

Bibbee (4-4) allowed just three hits and one walk while striking out eight.

Jack Flaherty (2-6) gave up three runs on three hits and three walks with eight strikeouts over 6 ⅓ innings.

**Nationals 8, Braves 7, 10 Innings:** Pinch-hitter Amed Rosario singled home the winning run in the 10th inning and Washington topped Atlanta for their fifth straight victory.

Atlanta tied it at 7 in the ninth on Matt Olson's one-out RBI double off closer Kyle Finnegan. Austin Riley tried to score the go-ahead run from first but was thrown out at the plate on the play.

Marcell Ozuna popped out to end the inning.

Automatic runner Robert Hassell III, making his major league debut, advanced from second to third on Alex Call's sacrifice bunt in the bottom of the 10th. Rosario then singled to left field against Dylan Lee (1-2).

The Braves dropped to 24-25 after losing both games in the rain-shortened series.

Olson and Ozuna hit back-to-back solo homers off Trevor Williams in the first to give Atlanta the lead. Olson has homered in four of his last five games.

**Astros 9, Mariners 2:** Jose Altuve homered twice and drove in a season-high four runs and Jeremy Peña tripled for his 500th career hit to help Houston

to a win over Seattle.

It was tied with two outs in the fourth when Jake Meyers singled off George Kirby (0-1) before Cam Smith walked. Mauricio Dubón's single on a grounder to right field scored Meyers to put Houston on top 3-2.

Peña then sent two more home with his triple off the wall in left-center to make it 5-2 and chase Kirby.

Altuve's solo shot came with no outs in the fifth to push the lead to 6-2. He connected again with one on and two outs in the sixth to make it 8-2 and give him his 12th career multihomer game.

Houston's Lance McCullers Jr. allowed five hits and two runs with a season-high eight strikeouts in 4 ⅓ innings in his longest start this season.

Kirby allowed six hits and five runs with four strikeouts in 3 ⅓ innings in his season debut after sitting out with inflammation in his throwing shoulder.

**Brewers 8, Pirates 5:** Christian Yelich homered twice and Milwaukee breezed past Pittsburgh in a game interrupted by rain.

Yelich hit a three-run drive against rookie Mike Burrows (0-1) in the first inning and a solo shot off reliever Isaac Mattson in the sixth for the 11th multihomer game of his career. Joey Ortiz added his second home run this season for the Brewers. Sal Frelick provided some breathing room with a late two-run single.

Carlos Rodriguez (1-0) struck out Bryan Reynolds with two on and two out in the sixth following a rain delay of 1 hour, 50 minutes, to earn his first major-league victory. Trevor Megill came on with two on and no outs in the ninth to secure his eighth save.

Milwaukee's Aaron Civale gave up two runs and four hits over four innings in his first start since going to the injured list in late March with a strained hamstring.

# Panthers roll past Hurricanes in Eastern final

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — The defending Stanley Cup champion Florida Panthers are rolling. The Carolina Hurricanes are reeling.

Sam Bennett scored one of his two goals in Florida's three-goal first period, Sergei Bobrovsky made 17 saves and the Panthers beat the Hurricanes 5-0 on Thursday night to take a 2-0 lead in the Eastern Conference final.

Gustav Forsling and Matthew Tkachuk also scored in another tone-setting opening 20 minutes for the Panthers, while Carter Verhaeghe had three assists.

"It might have been natural for us to take a little bit to get going tonight, and it was the exact opposite," said Tkachuk, whose putaway off the feed from Verhaeghe at the crease marked his first goal since Game 3 of the first round against Tampa Bay.

"It was an unreal start from us. The goals aside, just the way

we played in the first period was as good as it gets. Yeah, that's just a hell of a road trip."

Florida had already ripped home-ice advantage away Tuesday night with a 5-2 win, the opener in a rematch of the 2023 conference final swept by the Panthers with four one-goal wins.

Florida only tightened its grip on the series with this one, and now heads back south to host Game 3 on Saturday night.

Bennett scored a second time by skating in to clean up an attempt at the right post in the final minute of the second period to make it 4-0, ending a long shift in Carolina's end prolonged by Hurricanes defenseman Brent Burns being stuck on the ice after breaking his stick. Aleksander Barkov added a goal midway through the third as punctuation.

Bobrovsky had his third shut-out of the playoffs this year and the sixth of his career, with

Florida's defense smothering a Hurricanes team that typically peppers the net with shots but found little daylight.

Florida has won four straight road games by a combined score of 22-4, this time sending Hurricanes fans fleeing for the exits early.

"It's fun when you're on the road and it goes quiet," Verhaeghe said. "It feels like we're doing our job."

On the other bench, the Hurricanes found themselves on the receiving end of a crushing loss by a jarringly lopsided margin. And it marked their 14th straight loss in a conference final, going back to sweeps in 2009, 2019 and the 2023 tilt with Florida.

"From my standpoint, the seat I had, Florida was on it," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "And you've got to give them credit."

The Hurricanes managed just three first-period shots and

just seven through two periods, prompting a typically rowdy home crowd to vent its frustrations with two chants of "Shoot the puck! Shoot the puck!" Carolina had a brief boost when Sebastian Aho appeared to score on a turnover in the first minute of the second period to cut the deficit to 3-1.

But Florida successfully challenged that the play was off-sides. It turned out, Burns' stick-check on Tkachuk near the blue line forced the puck back into the zone and right to Aho in the slot for the finish.

By the third period, Carolina had pulled veteran Frederik Andersen from net and went with backup Pyotr Kochetkov for the final period.

It wasn't all great news for Florida. Veteran forward Sam Reinhart was knocked from the game in the first period after taking a hit from Aho in the left leg, causing Reinhart's knee to bend awkwardly.

## NHL playoff teams include 13 players from Finland

Associated Press

DALLAS — Dallas Stars coach Pete DeBoer has jokingly referred to himself as being Finnish during these NHL playoffs. After all, he has five of the 13 players from Finland who are on the rosters of the four teams still chasing the Stanley Cup.

The Stars' top line is a trio of Finns, with top-scoring forward Mikko Rantanen alongside Roope Hintz and Mikael Granlund. They also have veteran defensemen Miro Heiskanen and Esa Lindell, who both scored in the third period of a comeback win over Edmonton in the West semifinal opener.

"They're phenomenal," Stars forward Tyler Seguin said of his teammates playing more than 5,000 miles from their home country. "I'd say we're a Finnish-first team probably now."

In the East final, the Florida Panthers have four Finnish players who were also part of last year's Stanley Cup title: captain Aleksander Barkov, Eetu Luostarinen, Niko Mikkola and Anton Lundell. Carolina, which had Rantanen for a 13-game stretch this season before trading him to Dallas, has Sebastian Aho, Jesperi Kotkanie-mi and Juha Jaaska.

Luostarinen, who in 2017 was a second-round draft pick by the Hurricanes, had four points in Florida's series clincher over Tampa Bay in Round 1.

He added three more in Game 7 of the second round against Toronto.

"It's nice to see so many Finns getting so far, and I think playing key roles on their teams, playing high minutes," Luostarinen said. "I think it's just the work they put in in Finland,

from juniors all the way to the top level. It's top notch."

All 12 of the Finns who have played this postseason have scored goals, and half have at least 10 points through Wednesday. Rantanen, first traded from Colorado to Carolina and then six weeks later to the Stars, leads all players with nine goals and 20 points.

Kasper Kapanen is the Oilers' lone Finnish player, and his only point so far this postseason was a huge one: an overtime goal to wrap up the second round series against Vegas.

The Dallas and Miami metropolitan areas each has more residents than the entire country of Finland, but the nation of 5.6 million is a growing hockey power.

There were 53 Finns on NHL rosters this season among 268 all-time, according to Hockey-

Reference.com. Divide the number of NHL players into a country's population, and Finland sends about as many players to the league per capita as Canada or Sweden.

"They've done a great job of developing players over in Finland," Stars general manager Jim Nill said. "We know they're good players, but they're just really good human beings. ... When you talk about the Finnish players, they play the game the right way. They're well-coached; they understand both ends of the ice."

Dallas and Florida played two regular-season games in Finland in November, the 10th and 11th the NHL has played there. The Panthers won both games in Barkov's hometown of Tampere while the seven Finnish players combined for 11 points, led by his four.