

## How Tom Cruise got an aircraft carrier

*Bloomberg*

For fans of Tom Cruise's "Mission: Impossible" series, the Pentagon can answer the incredulous question at the climax of its latest trailer: "You gave him an aircraft carrier?"

Yes, the U.S. Navy and Air Force Special Operations decided to accept the mission: help Cruise's secret agent Ethan Hunt save the world. Or, at least make a movie about it.

For Paramount Global's "The Final Reckoning," released Friday in the U.S., Cruise and the crew spent three days in the Adriatic Sea filming aboard the USS George H.W. Bush, a nuclear powered Nimitz-class carrier commissioned in 2009.

It's the latest cinematic incarnation of Cruise's career-long affinity for the U.S. military and its aircraft (as well as doing his own stunts). It's also an example of the Pentagon's willingness to showcase its hardware and martial might through a classic piece of

American soft power, the Hollywood blockbuster.

The Pentagon has a long history as a supporting character, most famously the 1990 spy thriller "The Hunt for Red October" — the one where Scotsman Sean Connery plays a Soviet submarine captain.

Before getting on board, the Defense Department reviews scripts for accuracy and depictions of the military. (The Pentagon declined, for instance, to support Oliver Stone's multi-Oscar-winning Vietnam War drama "Platoon.")

The U.S. military also charges for equipment use, as well as transportation and lodging for personnel. For 2022's "Top Gun: Maverick," for example, the Navy was paid as much as \$11,374 an hour to use its F/A-18 Super Hornets — which Cruise couldn't control as he flew in the fighter jet's backseat.

For "The Final Reckoning," however, Paramount's reported blowout budget of \$400 mil-

lion got a break because the carrier and crew were already on scheduled training missions.

"Most, if not all, of the aircraft time was logged as official training requirements, and therefore not reimbursable," the Pentagon said in a statement.

The cast and crew — including Cruise, co-star Hannah Waddingham and director Christopher McQuarrie — were ferried to the carrier aboard Sikorsky Aircraft MH-60S Seahawks, flown by the Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 5 based in Norfolk, Va.

While aboard from Feb. 28 to March 3, 2023, Cruise hosted a "Top Gun: Maverick" viewing in the ship's hangar bay and visited with sailors, who had been deployed for about six months at that time, the Navy said in a statement Friday.

"Given that we were on deployment, operational and safety plans were in place so that if called upon, we were ready to

execute our mission on a moment's notice," spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Matthew Stroup said in the statement.

The crew also filmed flight sequences, a scene in the navigation bridge and Hunt's departure aboard a CV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft, from the 352nd Special Operations Wing out of Souda Bay, Crete, which was on a joint training exercise with the carrier group.

The film "supplemented the already scheduled training and did not interfere with any requirements," said Air Force Special Operations Command spokesperson Lt. Col. Rebecca Heyse.

The USS Hyman G. Rickover, a Virginia-class attack submarine, also makes a cameo, shot off the coast of Massachusetts. The interiors, however, were pure Hollywood: stage sets and actors for sailors. They did, however, have the help of a Navy representative and a retired submarine commander as a technical adviser.

## At Annapolis, Vance deplores 'ideological crusades'

*Capital Gazette*

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Vice President JD Vance used his keynote address at the U.S. Naval Academy on Friday to lambast the foreign policy of previous administrations and offer advice to the new graduates.

"You're not just graduates of some random university about to embark on careers in the private sector. And I'm not just giving another political speech. I'm your vice president, and the minute you walk off this stage with your diploma and your commission, you will be officers in the United States Navy and

the United States Marine Corps, and that is an incredible thing," Vance said.

This year, while graduates marked the end of commencement by tossing their hats into the air, at least 150 people gathered at the corner of Rowe Boulevard and Taylor Avenue to protest Vance.

His motorcade passed a banner that read, "Congrats Mids! Teach VP honor."

Vance used his time at the podium to congratulate the graduates and discuss foreign policy in what he called "this new and very dangerous era for our

country."

A former Marine, Vance criticized past administrations, seemingly both Republican and Democrat, for pursuing "ideological crusades."

"No more undefined missions, no more open-ended conflicts," Vance said. "This doesn't mean that we ignore threats, but it means that we approach them with discipline."

He added that the Trump administration would never deploy service members without a "clear path home."

Rather, the administration will favor efficient military ac-

tions, he said, pointing to the bombing that President Donald Trump recently ordered against Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Speaking as a veteran, Vance offered advice from "a junior enlisted guy to a bunch of new officers."

"People will look at you as graduates of the Naval Academy in a different way," Vance said. "More often than not, you will be giving them orders, and just as I see you as our most precious resource, so you must see the men and women who call you 'sir' and 'ma'am' as your most sacred charge."

# \$6B spent in 3 years to recruit, keep troops

Associated Press

The U.S. military spent more than \$6 billion over the past three years to recruit and retain service members, in what has been a growing campaign to counter enlistment shortfalls.

The financial incentives to reenlist in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines increased dramatically from 2022 through last year, with the Navy vastly outspending the others, according to funding totals provided by the services. The overall amount of recruiting bonuses also rose steadily, fueled by significant jumps in spending by the Army and Marine Corps.

The military services have routinely poured money into recruiting and retention bonuses over the years. But the totals spiked as Pentagon leaders tried to reverse falling enlistment numbers, particularly as COVID-19 restrictions locked down public events, fairs and school visits that recruiters relied on to

meet with young people.

Coupled with an array of new programs, an increased number of recruiters and adjustments to enlistment requirements, the additional incentives have helped the services bounce back from the shortfalls. All but the Navy met their recruiting targets last year and all are expected to do so this year.

President Donald Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth repeatedly point to Trump's election as a reason for the recruiting rebound. But the enlistment increases began long before last November, and officials have tied them more directly to the widespread overhauls that the services have done, including the increased financial incentives.

The Army, the military's largest service, spent more on recruiting bonuses in 2022 and 2024 than the other services. But it was significantly outspent by the Navy in 2023, when the sea service was struggling to over-

come a large enlistment shortfall.

As a result, even though the Navy is a smaller service, it spent more overall in the three years than the Army did.

The Navy also has spent considerably more than the others to entice sailors to reenlist, doling out retention bonuses to roughly 70,000 service members for each of the past three years. That total is more than double the number of troops the Army gave retention bonuses to each year, even though the Army is a much larger service.

"Navy is dedicated to retaining our most capable sailors; retention is a critical component of achieving our end-strength goals," Adm. James Kilby, the vice chief of naval operations, told a Senate Armed Services subcommittee in March.

He said reenlistment for enlisted sailors "remains healthy" but officers are a challenge in specific jobs, including aviation,

explosive ordnance disposal, surface and submarine warfare, health professionals and naval special operations.

He added that the Navy has struggled to fill all of its at-sea jobs and is using financial incentives as one way to combat the problem.

The Army has seen the greatest recruiting struggles over the past decade and by using a range of new programs and policies has had one of the largest comebacks. The Navy has had the most trouble more recently and took a number of steps to expand those eligible for service and spend more in bonuses.

The Marine Corps and the tiny Space Force have consistently hit their recruiting goals, although the Marines had to dig deep into their pool of delayed entry candidates in 2022 to meet their target. The Corps spends the least on bonuses and tends to spread the amount among a larger number of service members.

## More than 1,100 troops OK'd for southern border mission

By MATTHEW ADAMS

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — More than 1,100 troops have been approved to deploy to the U.S.-Mexico border, U.S. Northern Command announced Thursday.

Some of the duties for the approximately 1,115 service members with Joint Task Force-Southern Border will include coordinating logistics, providing food and water to personnel in the field and constructing mobility routes and force protection infrastructure, NORTHCOM said in a statement.

There are now more than 10,000 military troops — including active-duty soldiers and Marines and National Guard forces — stationed along the border to assist Border Patrol officers.

Those troops include infantry forces with Stryker combat vehicles, troops that fly drones and helicopters, logisticians and engineering forces. Navy ships are also part of the border mission.

The Department of Homeland Security recently announced it has requested 20,000 National Guard troops to bolster efforts to remove undocumented migrants from the U.S. National Guard forces have long been mobilized to conduct domestic operations, including disaster response and aiding other federal agencies, including Homeland Security — especially at the U.S.-Mexico border where they have operated since 2018. It's unclear how the latest Guard troops could be used.

Since President Donald Trump's return to the White

House, his administration has made the crackdown on undocumented migrants one of its highest priorities. Under Trump's orders, the Pentagon has surged thousands of active-duty troops to the U.S. southern border and declared large swaths of border-adjacent land in New Mexico and Texas as military installations to increase its authorities to arrest and charge people caught crossing the border illegally.

The personnel announced Thursday include:

- 65 Joint Individual Augmentees from the Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force to fill in at Joint Task Force-Southern Border headquarters.

- 250 soldiers from an Expeditionary Sustainment Command to coordinate logistics and man-

age sustainment requirements.

- 140 soldiers from a Quartermaster Field Feeding Company to provide field feeding support to deployed personnel.

- 125 soldiers from an Engineer Brigade Headquarters and 145 soldiers from an Engineer Battalion to coordinate and execute construction missions.

- 310 soldiers from two Engineer Construction Companies to construct mobility routes, force protection infrastructure and mission-critical facilities.

- 75 soldiers from a Medical Area Support Company to provide health resources.

- Five airmen from an Air Force Logistics Support Element from Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., to coordinate rapid logistics and sustainment planning.

# National Security Council hit with staff cuts

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is ordering a major overhaul of the National Security Council that will shrink its size, lead to the ouster of some political appointees and return many career government employees back to their home agencies, according to two U.S. officials and one person familiar with the reorganization.

The number of staff at the NSC is expected to be significantly reduced, according to the officials, who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive personnel matter.

The shake-up is just the latest shoe to drop at the NSC, which is being dramatically made over after the ouster early this month of Trump's national security ad-

viser Mike Waltz, who in many ways had hewed toward traditional Republican foreign policy.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio has been serving as national security adviser since the ouster of Waltz, who was nominated to serve as Trump's ambassador to the United Nations.

The move is expected to elevate the importance of the State Department and Pentagon in advising Trump on important foreign policy moves.

But, ultimately, Trump relies on his own instincts above all else when making any policy decisions.

The NSC, created during the Truman administration, is an arm of the White House tasked with advising and assisting the president on national security

and foreign policy and coordinating among various government agencies.

Trump was frustrated in his first term by political appointees and advisers who he felt gummed up his "America First" agenda.

There were roughly 395 people working at the NSC, including about 180 support staff, according to one official.

About 90 to 95 of those being ousted are policy or subject-matter experts seconded from other government agencies. They will be given an opportunity to return to their home agencies if they want.

Many of the political appointees will also be given positions elsewhere in the administration, the official said.

The NSC has been in a contin-

ual state of tumult during the early going of Trump's second go-around in the White House.

Waltz was ousted weeks after Trump fired several NSC officials, just a day after the influential far-right activist Laura Loomer raised concerns directly to him about staff loyalty.

This latest shake-up amounts to a "liquidation" of NSC staffing, with both career government detailees on assignment to the NSC being sent back to their home agencies and several political appointees being pushed out of their positions, according to the person familiar with the decision.

A White House official who spoke on the condition of anonymity confirmed that the overhaul, first reported by Axios, was underway.

## Harvard's foreign enrollment ban on hold

*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."

The ruling from U.S. District Judge Allison Burroughs puts the sanction against Harvard on hold, pending the lawsuit.

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 Har-

vard sports are now left deciding whether to transfer or risk losing legal status to stay in the country, according to the filing.

The impact would be heaviest at graduate schools such as the Harvard Kennedy School, where about half the student body comes from abroad, and Harvard Business School, which is about one-third international. Along with the impact on current students, the move would block 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.

Harvard enrolls almost 6,800 foreign students at its campus in Cambridge, Mass.

## White House: Civil rights of Jewish students violated

*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — The Trump administration is accusing Columbia University of violating the civil rights of Jewish students by "acting with deliberate indifference" toward what it describes as rampant antisemitism on campus.

The finding was announced late Thursday by the Health and Human Services Department, marking the latest blow for an Ivy League school already shaken by cutbacks and sustained government pressure to crack down on student speech.

It comes hours after the Department of Homeland Security said it would revoke Harvard University's ability to enroll international students, a major escalation in the administration's monthslong attack on higher education.

The civil rights division of HHS said it had found Columbia in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which blocks fed-

eral funding recipients from discrimination based on race, color or national origin. That final category, the press release notes, includes "discrimination against individuals that is based on their actual or perceived Israeli or Jewish identity or ancestry."

The announcement did not include new sanctions against Columbia, which is already facing \$400 million in federal cuts by the Trump administration over its response to pro-Palestinian campus protests.

A spokesperson for Columbia said the university is currently in negotiations with the government about resolving its claims of antisemitism.

"We understand this finding is part of our ongoing discussions with the government," the spokesperson said. "Columbia is deeply committed to combating antisemitism and all forms of harassment and discrimination on our campus."



# Russia, Ukraine swap 300 prisoners

Associated Press

Russia and Ukraine swapped hundreds more prisoners on Sunday, the third and last part of a major exchange that reflected a rare moment of cooperation in otherwise failed efforts to reach a ceasefire in the more than three years of war.

Hours earlier, the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, and other regions came under a massive Russian drone-and-missile attack that killed at least 12 people and injured dozens. Ukrainian officials described it as the largest aerial assault since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Russia's Defense Ministry said each side brought home

303 more soldiers, after each released a total of 307 combatants and civilians on Saturday, and 390 on Friday — the biggest swap of the war.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed the exchange, saying on X on Sunday that "303 Ukrainian defenders are home." He noted that the troops returning to Ukraine were members of the "Armed Forces, the National Guard, the State Border Guard Service, and the State Special Transport Service."

In talks held in Istanbul earlier this month — the first time the two sides met face to face for peace talks — Kyiv and Moscow agreed to swap 1,000 prisoners

of war and civilian detainees each. The exchange has been the only tangible outcome from the talks.

For Kyiv, the day was particularly somber as the city observed Kyiv Day, a national holiday that falls on the last Sunday in May, commemorating its founding in the 5th century.

Zelenskyy said Russian missiles and drones hit more than 30 cities and villages and urged Western partners to ramp up sanctions on Russia — a longstanding demand of the Ukrainian leader but one that despite warnings to Moscow by the United States and Europe has not materialized in ways to deter Russia.

"These were deliberate strikes on ordinary cities," Zelenskyy wrote on X, adding that Sunday's targets included Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Khmelnytskyi, Ternopil, Chernihiv, Sumy, Odesa, Poltava, Dnipro, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv and Cherkasy regions.

"America's silence, the silence of others in the world, only encourages" Russian President Vladimir Putin, he said. "Without truly strong pressure on the Russian leadership, this brutality cannot be stopped. Sanctions will certainly help."

The POW exchange was the latest of scores of swaps since the war began but also the biggest involving Ukrainian civilians.

## US Judge reverses Guatemalan's deportation

Associated Press

A federal judge ordered the Trump administration late Friday to facilitate the return of a Guatemalan man it deported to Mexico in spite of his fears of being harmed there. The man, who is gay, was protected from being returned to his home country under a U.S. immigration judge's order at the time. But the U.S. put him on a bus and sent him to Mexico instead, a removal that U.S. District Judge Brian Murphy found likely "lacked any semblance of due process."

Mexico has since returned him to Guatemala, where he is in hiding, according to court documents.

An earlier court proceeding that determined the man, identified by the initials O.C.G., risked persecution or torture if returned to Guatemala, but he also feared returning to Mexico. He presented evidence of being raped and held for ransom there while seeking asylum in the United States.

"No one has ever suggested

that O.C.G. poses any sort of security threat," Murphy wrote. "In general, this case presents no special facts or legal circumstances, only the banal horror of a man being wrongfully loaded onto a bus and sent back to a country where he was allegedly just raped and kidnapped."

Murphy's order adds to a string of findings by federal courts against recent Trump administration deportations.

In his Friday ruling, Murphy nodded to the dispute over the verb "facilitate" in that case and others, saying that returning O.C.G. to the U.S. is not that complicated.

"The Court notes that 'facilitate' in this context should carry less baggage than in several other notable cases," he wrote. "O.C.G. is not held by any foreign government. Defendants have declined to make any argument that facilitating his return would be costly, burdensome, or otherwise impede the government's objectives."

## N. Korea detains shipyard officials over failed launch

Associated Press

North Korean authorities have detained three shipyard officials over the recent failed launch of a naval destroyer, an incident that leader Kim Jong Un said was caused by criminal negligence, state media said Sunday.

The 5,000-ton-class destroyer was damaged Wednesday when a transport cradle on the ship's stern detached early during a launch ceremony attended by Kim at the northeastern port of Chongjin. Satellite imagery on the site showed the vessel lying on its side and draped in blue covers, with parts of the ship submerged.

The vessel is North Korea's second known destroyer. The failed launch was subsequently an embarrassment to Kim, who is eager to build greater naval forces to deal with what he calls U.S.-led military threats.

Law enforcement authorities

detained the chief engineer, head of the hull construction workshop and deputy manager for administrative affairs at Chongjin Shipyard, who they said were responsible for Wednesday's failed launch, the official Korean Central News Agency said. Hong Kil Ho, the shipyard manager, also was summoned for questioning, KCNA previously reported.

Kim blamed military officials, scientists and shipyard operators for what he called a "criminal act caused by absolute carelessness, irresponsibility and unscientific empiricism."

North Korea denied the warship suffered major damage, saying the hull on the starboard side was scratched and some seawater flowed into the stern section.

North Korea said Friday it needed about 10 days to make repairs, but many outside observers said the country likely understated the damage.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Governor vetoes housing budget — by mistake

**ND** BISMARCK — When North Dakota Gov. Kelly Armstrong took up an agency budget bill approved by the legislature, he vetoed a couple of line items. At least, that was his intention. Instead, he accidentally vetoed \$35 million for the state's housing budget.

Now the state is figuring out how to deal with the unusual problem of a mistaken veto.

"I have no recollection of anything like this happening in the 37 years I've been here," John Bjornson, legislative council director, said. "So, yeah, I'd say it's a little extraordinary."

In North Dakota, the governor's staff called his veto of the housing budget in Senate Bill 2014 a markup error. Armstrong's staff met with the legislative council to discuss options.

### Chicks abandoned in truck have been adopted

**DE** CAMDEN — Thousands of chicks found abandoned inside a postal service truck for three days have gone to new homes, according to the Delaware shelter that had cared for them, with the last batch picked up on Thursday morning.

All the surviving birds, estimated as more than 5,000 chickens — it was too hard to get a specific count — plus some others like turkeys and quails, were primarily adopted by local families, rescues and farms, according to First State Animal Center and SPCA.

The chicks were part of a 12,000-bird shipment left unattended in a truck at a Delaware

mail distribution center. Trapped in high temperatures without food or hydration, thousands died, according to the state Department of Agriculture. The U.S. Postal Service has said it is investigating the "process breakdown" that occurred.

For more than two weeks, the surviving birds had been cared for at an overwhelmed First State Animal Center and SPCA, said John Parana, executive director. As a no-kill operation, the shelter would not take adopters planning to use the birds for meat, Parana said.

### 7 Penn State campuses to close amid enrollment dip

**PA** HARRISBURG — Penn State University's trustees voted to close seven of its 19 branch campuses amid declining enrollments, demographic shifts and financial pressures that backers say made it a necessary decision.

The 25-8 vote by the trustees came after a nearly two-hour public meeting that was streamed live online, and after hours of closed-door debate between the trustees.

The campuses to close — DuBois, Fayette, Mont Alto, New Kensington, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre and York — together are enrolling slightly over 3,000 students this year, or less than 4% of Penn State students, according to Penn State data. Branch campuses collectively have about 23,000 students, and the seven to be closed are among the smallest in terms of enrollment.

No campus will close before the end of the 2026-27 academic year and, under the plan, every student who begins a degree at a

closing campus will have the opportunity to complete their degree at Penn State.

### State to sue on Congress blocking climate waivers

**CA** SACRAMENTO — The Senate's unprecedented move to revoke California's ban on gasoline-powered cars by 2035 threatens to upend the U.S.'s status as both an economic powerhouse and a world leader on climate change mitigation, Gov. Gavin Newsom told reporters.

He and Attorney General Rob Bonta announced plans to sue to block Congress from revoking the ban.

In 2020, Newsom issued an executive order directing the state to phase out all sales of gas cars to encourage consumers to purchase electric vehicles and cut down on greenhouse gas emissions. Under the Clean Air Act of 1970, California can set its own climate emission standards that are more stringent than federal guidelines but must get federal approval to adopt individual rules.

The Senate's 51-44 vote using, for the first time, the Congressional Review Act to revoke that waiver now threatens to set a political precedent of impeding upon states while "selling out" future generations who will have to live in an increasingly hotter and inhospitable world, Newsom said.

### Prayer period in schools passes, sent to governor

**TX** AUSTIN — House lawmakers have passed a proposal allowing a period for praying and reading religious texts in Texas public schools.

School trustees would have to decide whether their districts would offer students and staff the period — outside of instruction time — under the bill.

The Senate passed the measure in March. It passed in the House on Friday and goes to Gov. Greg Abbott to be signed into law.

If adopted by trustees, public campuses would have to provide the daily period, and parents would have to sign a form to allow or forbid their child's participation.

GOP leaders said the bill protects religious freedom. But Democrats pushed back, calling the measure constitutionally ambiguous by infusing religion into public schools.

### Governor bans golf and hotels on state parks

**FL** TALLAHASSEE — Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a bill Thursday to prohibit the building of golf courses, hotels and other amenities on state park land, putting an end to a nearly yearlong controversy that united the state in support of public lands.

The Florida Senate website showed the bill, House Bill 209, called the "State Park Preservation Act," as having been signed just before 5 p.m.

DeSantis had previously said he would sign the bill, which passed the Legislature unanimously. But the measure directly challenged an initiative his administration had rolled out and supported: to add amenities in nine parks, including golf in Jonathan Dickinson State Park and pickleball in Pinellas County's Honeymoon Island.

— From wire reports

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# Wolves cut Thunder's West finals lead to 2-1

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Anthony Edwards was determined to keep Minnesota's spirits up, from the flight home after a frustrating trip to Oklahoma City into a crucial game in these Western Conference finals.

Positive energy is never hard for him to find.

Edwards had 30 points, nine rebounds and six assists in just three quarters for the Timberwolves in a 143-101 victory on Saturday night in Game 3 that cut the Thunder's lead in the series to 2-1.

"Just ultimate pressure on the ball," Edwards said, "and shoot it as much as I can."

Julius Randle added 24 points and rookie Terrence Shannon Jr. had 15 points in 13 minutes to highlight a big boost from the bench for Minnesota, which caused all kinds of cracks in OKC's NBA-best defense after struggling to solve it

in the two lopsided losses on the road.

"Their force on that end of the floor was better than our physicality and pressure, things that we typically do well," Thunder coach Mark Daigneault said.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had just 14 points on 4-for-13 shooting with four turnovers, subbed out with a 38-point deficit and 4:25 to go in the third quarter as Daigneault conceded on a night when his team was never closer than 22 points after early in the second quarter.

"It felt like we just eased into the game, and they didn't," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "They blitzed us pretty early, and then we were never able to get back because of it."

Game 4 is in Minneapolis on Monday night.

The travel north and venue shift triggered a sharp drop in shooting for Oklahoma City,

which made exactly half of their attempts from the floor over the first two games and went just 12 for 40 in the first half on Saturday.

Gilgeous-Alexander, the newly minted NBA MVP, went more than 13 minutes of game time between baskets while the Target Center crowd loudly booed him on every touch and taunted him at the line with the chant, "Free throw merchant!" in a nod to the popular notion that he draws an inordinate amount of fouls.

Randle, who had his first off night of this postseason in a Game 2 performance so disjointed he was benched for the fourth quarter, had his fire back — and his signature fadeaway.

"The home energy had me going today," said Randle, who had 9-for-15 shooting with four rebounds, three assists and no turnovers. "It gave me a lot of juice. I just wanted to feed off of

that energy. I know our team feeds off of it. I was just having fun out there."

Edwards rediscovered his 3-point shot, going 5 for 8 after shooting just 1 of 9 in Game 2. He gave the quick-handed, ball-pressing Thunder a taste of what it's like to play against themselves with a couple of relentless pursuits of loose balls he turned into breakaway dunks.

Outscored 69-37 in the third quarter over the first two games, the T-wolves made sure to avoid another post-halftime malaise. Edwards, tightly guarded by Isaiah Joe in the corner, found enough space to drive along the baseline and spin an up-and-under reverse layup off the glass for a 79-52 lead.

"That's what we need him to do, and when he does it, it takes us to another level," coach Chris Finch said.

## Late surge pushes Panthers to verge of sweeping Canes

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — It was tied 1-1 going into the third period. It turned into a blowout. And after a five-goal barrage, one like none other in Florida playoff history, the Panthers are one win from their third consecutive trip to the Stanley Cup Final.

Niko Mikkola and Aleksander Barkov each scored twice, and Florida — fueled by five goals in a span of nine minutes — rolled past the Carolina Hurricanes 6-2 on Saturday night to take a 3-0 lead in the Eastern Conference finals.

Jesper Boqvist — playing for the injured Sam Reinhart — scored the go-ahead goal early in the third for the Panthers and Brad Marchand also scored for Florida, which got 23 saves from Sergei Bobrovsky.

"In the third period, I think we took over," Barkov said.

That's an understatement from the Panthers' captain.

Logan Stankoven and Seth Jarvis scored for Carolina, which has now dropped 15 consecutive East finals games — getting swept by Pittsburgh in 2009, Boston in 2019, Florida in 2023 and are now on the

brink of it happening again.

Game 4 is Monday in Sunrise.

"They're a good team, for sure," the Hurricanes' Sebastian Aho said. "But I feel like we've been giving them the momentum or a goal at the wrong time — and obviously they've made us pay"

The Panthers' five third-period goals were a club record for any playoff period and ruined what had seemed like a good move by Carolina to switch goaltenders going into Game 3. The Hurricanes went with Pyotr Kochetkov in net, after Frederik Andersen gave up nine goals on just 36 shots in the first five periods of the series.

Kochetkov stopped 14 of 15 shots through two periods. The third, not so much. A tie game became a rout in a hurry.

"I don't think the way the games have been played is really an indication of what the outcomes have been score-wise," Marchand said. "They've been pretty tight. It just seems like we've got a couple of bounces and a couple lucky breaks here and there that have kind of given us a pretty good lead."

Florida got a break to make it 1-0. Barkov threw a pass across the goal crease, the puck hitting the stick of Evan Rodrigues before finding Mikkola — who tried to feed it back across for Barkov.

It never got there. Mikkola's pass deflected off Carolina defenseman Dmitry Orlov and past Kochetkov, opening the scoring and giving the Panthers an 11-2 cumulative score lead in the series to that point.

Stankoven — who was flat-out robbed by Bobrovsky earlier in the game — tied it on the power play at 14:51 of the second, a breakthrough of sorts for the Canes.

Brent Burns took a shot from near the blue line that Bobrovsky stopped. The rebound skipped off Bobrovsky's leg and Stankoven redirected it home to make it 1-1 — the first tie of the series, other than 0-0 scores to begin games.

But the third, like the bulk of the series, was all Florida.

"We have to try to put our best foot forward," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "I felt like we did tonight for two periods."



# Canadian teen wins first major match

Associated Press

PARIS — Victoria Mboko is still just 18, still rather new to the top level of professional tennis, and yet with a big serve, a terrific backhand and enviable court coverage, the Canadian is making the most of her first season on tour, including a victory in her Grand Slam debut Sunday at the French Open.

When it was mentioned that her 6-1, 7-6 (4) elimination of 2024 Wimbledon quarterfinalist Lulu Sun meant Mboko has claimed all eight sets she's played over the past week-plus on the red clay at Roland-Garros — including six in a trio of triumphs in the qualifying rounds — the teen laughed, revealing the braces on her teeth.

"This does, obviously, feel really quick for me. Although it feels quick, I feel like I'm also adapting very quickly. I want to be in this level," said Mboko, represented by talent agency IMG since the age of 12. "To

adapt really fast is really important to me. The more I feel like I make it seem normal to me, the more normal it's going to be in these tournaments."

Against the left-handed Sun, Mboko's serve — which she considers her game's greatest strength — played a significant role in the outcome.

With her father and two of her older siblings in the stands at Court 9, a short walk from Court Suzanne-Lenglen, Mboko reached a top speed of 115 mph and delivered seven aces. She won all 10 of her service games, saving all seven break points accumulated by Sun.

"I love to dictate points on my serve, and I love to use that as an opportunity to be more aggressive and be up in the score," said Mboko, who is currently ranked 120th. "Especially in women's tennis, having a good serve and holding all the time is pretty crucial. It helps me get out of a lot of sticky situations."

Her favorite player as a kid — not all that long ago, actually — was Serena Williams, whose 23 Grand Slam titles often came with the help of top-notch serving.

"I always modeled myself on the idea of her game. Of course, not everything I do is the same. But she had such a powerful game, and that's something that I would love to replicate and love to present my game off of that," Mboko said. "It's great to have a role model like that and try to do something like she did."

Mboko began to really get noticed in the world of tennis at the start of this year, when she won 22 matches in a row — all in straight sets — to earn four lower-level International Tennis Federation titles. Her first WTA match arrived at the Miami Open in March, and she won that debut, too.

She's been impressing opponents along the way, including 2023 U.S. Open champion Coco

Gauff. Mboko pushed the American, who is ranked No. 2 right now, to three sets on clay at the Italian Open this month.

"She's playing top-level tennis," Gauff said after that win. "For sure, on the movement, I would say she's up there with me on that. As far as the other parts of her game, she's obviously a big hitter, can play well, moves pretty well, has a nice backhand, same on the forehand."

Mboko grew up playing mostly on indoor hard courts in Canada and calls that her "favorite surface for my whole life."

That said, Mboko's starting to get used to — and enjoy — the clay used at the French Open.

"In the future? I guess we'll see. You never know. I feel like I've been doing pretty OK on the clay so far, even though it was my least favorite surface and I thought it was my worst surface, too," Mboko said. "But you never know."

## Norris wins Monaco GP, cuts into Piastri's F1 lead

Associated Press

MONACO — Lando Norris realized a childhood dream as he won the Monaco Grand Prix on Sunday, and boosted his chances of achieving an even bigger goal, the Formula 1 title.

Norris took his first Grand Prix win since the season-opening Australian Grand Prix — though he did win a sprint race in Miami this month — and reduced his McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri's lead from 13 points to three.

Starting on pole position, Norris locked up a wheel into the first corner but still managed to hold off last year's winner, Charles Leclerc of Ferrari.

"It feels amazing. It's a long, grueling race, but good fun," Norris said. "This is what I dream of. This is what I did dream of when I was a kid."

Leclerc was second after closing in on Norris late in the race — though he wasn't able to attempt a pass — while Piastri was third and defending champion Max Verstappen fourth, with seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton a distant fifth.

Verstappen was the leader on track until the second-to-last lap, but only because he had yet to make his mandatory second pit stop under a rule change introduced in an attempt to spice up the Monaco Grand Prix, where overtaking is almost impossible.

Verstappen was almost certain to end the race fourth, no matter when he stopped, so he eased off, slowing down Norris and allowing Leclerc and Piastri to catch up. Verstappen seemed to be trying to pressure Norris into a costly mistake.

Norris said the end of the race was a "little bit nervous with Charles close behind and Max ahead, but we won in Monaco, so it doesn't matter how you win, I guess."

Despite predictions it could allow some teams and drivers to spring a surprise, the rule had little overall impact on the results, except for a few cases of teams seemingly slowing down one car to benefit a teammate.

"We lost the race yesterday," was Leclerc's verdict, referring to the importance of qualifying on pole in Monaco, his home race.

It was McLaren's record-extending 16th win in Monaco and its first since a victory for a young Lewis Hamilton in 2008. Hamilton went on to win his first championship that year.

McLaren leaves Monaco with six wins from the first eight races of 2025 as its two drivers battle for the title. Even with just a third of the season gone, a second successive constructors' title for McLaren looks all but assured, as the team's 319 points are more than double the total of any other team.

Piastri was on the podium for the second year running in Monaco, and being disappointed with third was a sign of the progress he's made in those 12 months. Second place a year ago was only the third career podium finish for the Australian, who had yet to win a Grand Prix. Third place Sunday was Piastri's seventh podium finish in a row.

"If this is a bad weekend," Piastri said, "then it's not going too badly at all."

# Lee gives Twins 2nd straight walk off

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Brooks Lee hit an RBI single with two outs in the ninth inning to give the Minnesota Twins their second straight walk off against the Kansas City Royals, this time overcoming a four-run deficit for a 5-4 win on Saturday.

Harrison Bader and Kody Clemens homered for Minnesota, which won for the 16th time in 18 games.

Pinch-hitter Carlos Correa walked against Daniel Lynch IV (3-1) to open the Twins' ninth and advanced to second two batters later when pinch-hitter Ryan Jeffers also walked. With Steven Cruz pitching, Lee grounded a ball up the middle for his first career walk-off hit.

Ty France hit a two-run home run in the ninth in Minnesota's 3-1 win Friday.

Twins closer Jhoan Duran (3-0) pitched a scoreless ninth for the win.

Vinnie Pasquantino had three hits for Kansas City, which struck out a season-high 18 times. Bobby Witt Jr. tied a career high with four of those.

Pasquantino had an RBI double and Salvador Perez an RBI single in the fifth for a 4-0 Royals lead, but Bader homered and France had a two-out, two-run single in the inning to get the Twins within 4-3.

**Red Sox 6-1, Orioles 5-2:** Ryan O'Hearn hit a two-out, tiebreaking single in the eighth and reliever Seranthony Domínguez got Rafael Devers to pop out to end the bottom of the inning, helping visiting Baltimore beat Boston and avoid a sweep of the split doubleheader.

Dylan Carlson added an RBI double for the Orioles, who have won two of their last 12.

Abraham Toro hit a solo homer for the Red Sox — his second of the day — on a play

that sent Baltimore centerfielder Jorge Mateo tumbling over the bullpen wall trying to make the catch in the ninth.

Devers grounded a single up the middle to drive in the winning run in the opener.

**Pirates 2, Milwaukee 1:** Oneil Cruz tripled home Isiah Kiner-Falefa with two outs in the seventh inning and host Pittsburgh edged Milwaukee.

Kiner-Falefa singled off Tyler Alexander (2-5) with one out and Cruz followed two batters later by sending a shot to the gap in right-center field.

The 6-foot-7 Cruz — coming off the first multihomer game of his career in a victory Friday night — slid head-first into third, then popped up to celebrate.

**Phillies 9, Athletics 6 (11):** Kyle Schwarber hit his 18th homer, then had a tiebreaking, two-run double in the 11th inning that lifted visiting Philadelphia to a victory, extending its winning streak to nine and sending the Athletics to their 11th straight loss.

Max Kepler tied the score 6-6 in the ninth with a home run on a 101.4 mph pitch from Mason Miller.

**Cardinals 6, Diamondbacks 5:** Jordan Walker had two hits and drove in three runs, rebounding from a critical fielding gaffe with an RBI single that lifted host St. Louis to a win over Arizona.

After his failed sliding attempt to catch Josh Naylor's two-run triple in the eighth allowed the Diamondbacks to rally into the lead, Walker delivered the winning run with an RBI single off Justin Martinez (1-2) in the bottom half of the inning.

**Nationals 3, Giants 0:** James Wood hit a two-run homer in the first inning and Jake Irvin pitched eight innings of three-hit ball as host Washington beat San Francisco.

Irvin (4-1) struck out seven

and walked two in a 96-pitch effort as the Nationals bounced back following a 4-0 loss to the Giants on Friday and won for the seventh time in nine games.

**Astros 2, Mariners 1:** Christian Walker and Jeremy Peña had two hits apiece, and host Houston scored two runs in the first inning on errors by Seattle to hold on for a win.

There were two outs in the first and Jose Altuve was at second base when Christian Walker singled and Altuve scored when Bryan Woo (5-2) badly overthrew first base.

**Braves 7, Padres 1:** Ronald Acuña Jr. homered for the second straight game in his return from a nearly year-long absence due to a knee injury, leading host Atlanta to a win over San Diego.

Acuña homered on the first pitch he saw in his season debut Friday. On Saturday, he hit a 411-foot, two-run shot to left field in the sixth inning, going 1 for 5.

**Yankees 13, Rockies 1:** Max Fried threw 7½ sharp innings and visiting New York broke open a tight game with a 10-run fifth to beat reeling Colorado.

Fried (7-0) tied Arizona's Brandon Pfaadt for the major league lead in wins. The Yankees lefty scattered six hits and gave up one run in an efficient outing in which he only tossed 83 pitches. He has allowed two earned runs or less in all 11 of his starts this season.

**Reds 6, Cubs 4:** Elly De La Cruz drove in four runs and host Cincinnati defeated Chicago to end a four-game losing streak.

Justin Turner and Michael Kelly homered as the Cubs had a three-game winning streak snapped. Kelly came into the game in the fifth inning after catcher Miguel Amaya suffered a left oblique strain.

**White Sox 10, Rangers 5:** Andrew Benintendi hit a two-run double in host Chicago's

six-run sixth inning and the White Sox handed Texas its sixth consecutive loss.

Joshua Palacios hit a two-run homer for Chicago, atoning for a costly error. Mike Tauchman also went deep and Lenyn Sosa drove in three runs.

**Mets 5, Dodgers 2:** Slumping Juan Soto hit a tiebreaking, two-run double with the bases loaded in a three-run fourth inning and host New York beat Los Angeles in their rematch of last year's NL Championship Series.

David Peterson (3-2) matched his career high of 7½ innings, striking out Shohei Ohtani three times and inducing three double-play grounders. He allowed two runs and five hits.

**Rays 3, Blue Jays 1:** Junior Caminero hit a three-run home run in the first inning to back a strong start by Shane Baz, and host Tampa Bay beat Toronto for its fourth straight win.

Pete Fairbanks issued two walks before retiring Myles Straw on a fly ball to center for the final out in his second straight save and 10th this season.

**Guardians 7, Tigers 5 (10):** Kyle Manzardo and Angel Martínez hit RBI doubles in visiting Cleveland's four-run 10th inning, helping the Guardians beat Detroit for the third straight game.

Bo Naylor homered and drove in two runs, including a sacrifice fly that was part of Cleveland's big inning. Nolan Jones added an RBI single in the 10th.

**Marlins 6, Angels 2:** Connor Norby had three hits, including a three-run homer in the seventh inning, and visiting Miami beat Los Angeles, snapping the Angels' eight-game win streak.

Norby's third home run came on a 1-2 pitch from reliever Caden Dana (0-1) as the Marlins stopped a three-game slide.