

Hegseth, Senate Dems spar over Iran war

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Senate Democrats grilled Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on his handling of the Iran war on Thursday, accusing him of sugarcoating the cost and fallout of the conflict as the secretary again lashed out at critics.

Making his second public appearance before Congress in two days, Hegseth defended the war as a “great success” and dismissed the claims of Democrats on the Senate Armed Services Committee that the conflict has left the U.S. worse off.

“We are two months into a historic military success in Iran, and you want to call it a defeat,” he said in response to questioning from Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn. “And it’s defeatist Democrats like you that cloud the mind of the American people.”

Polls have consistently shown that the majority of Americans oppose a war the U.S. launched alongside Israel against Tehran on Feb. 28.

Hegseth appeared before the committee one day before the

conflict was set to reach the 60-day mark, a deadline that under federal law requires President Donald Trump to either seek congressional approval for the war or withdraw forces.

Hegseth indicated Thursday that the Pentagon will not abide by that time frame, arguing, “We are in a ceasefire right now, which our understanding means the 60-day clock pauses, or stops.”

Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia, a Democrat on the committee who has led the charge to assert congressional war powers and force a debate on the Iran war, said that interpretation of the statute was incorrect.

Democrats repeatedly challenged Hegseth’s assessment of the war and its prosecution, citing Iran’s retention of highly enriched uranium, the ongoing closure of the Strait of Hormuz and its impact on energy prices and the bombing of an Iranian girls’ school for which the Pentagon has yet to officially take responsibility.

Hegseth said the bombing, which took place two months ago, remains under investigation and declined to say when

the Pentagon will release its findings. He emphasized that “no military, no country works harder” to avoid civilian casualties.

Several Democrats on Thursday also doubted the accuracy of the Pentagon’s stated \$25 billion cost for the campaign. Blumenthal said he believed the estimate was “well below” the actual costs, based on information available to lawmakers.

Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the top Democrat on the committee, offered a blistering critique of Hegseth’s leadership and said he was concerned Hegseth was telling President Donald Trump “what he wants to hear” about the war.

“Bold assurances of success are a disservice to both the commander in chief and the troops who risk their lives based on them,” Reed said. “Our military has performed heroically, but military force without a sound strategy is a path to long-term defeat.”

He also assailed Hegseth’s tenure as secretary, from his firing of dozens of senior military leaders to last week’s can-

cellation of the flu vaccine requirement for troops.

“Unfortunately, Mr. Secretary, I believe you are causing lasting harm to the military,” Reed, an Army veteran, told Hegseth. “The American people’s trust in our military took 250 years to build. You are dismantling it in a fraction of that time.”

Several Republicans came to Hegseth’s defense, many of them praising the decision to attack Iran.

Sen. Eric Schmitt of Missouri credited Hegseth with taking on the Biden administration’s efforts to improve diversity, equity and inclusion, describing them as a “sort of cultural Marxism.” Sen. Tim Sheehy of Montana, a former Navy SEAL, said the Iran war was just.

“President Trump did not start this war; we did not start this war,” Sheehy said. “These radical, barbarian, savage clerics who started killing Americans 47 years ago in a unilateral campaign of terror, murder, treason, kidnapping, torture had been murdering our countrymen all over the world almost every single year.”

Iran delivers new proposal as Hormuz remains shut

Bloomberg News

Iran delivered a new proposal to the U.S. and President Donald Trump vowed to maintain a naval blockade, as the two sides pursue behind-the-scenes diplomacy to turn a fragile ceasefire into a lasting peace.

Tehran relayed its latest position to Washington via Pakistan, which mediated a first round of direct negotiations last month, Iran’s state-run Islamic Repu-

blic News Agency said on Friday.

The fate of the Strait of Hormuz — through which about a fifth of the world’s oil and liquefied natural gas flowed before the war — lies at the heart of the current stalemate. Both Iran and the U.S. have signaled they are waiting for the other to move first before they agree to ease restrictions on traffic.

IRNA didn’t elaborate on

what the Iranian proposal entailed on key issues such as Hormuz or Iran’s nuclear activities.

Trump said on Thursday that the blockade of Iranian ports is depriving the Islamic Republic of much-needed oil revenue, claiming the pressure would force Tehran back to the negotiating table.

Trump was briefed at the White House on Thursday by the head of U.S. Central Com-

mand, which oversees American forces in the Middle East, and Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, according to Axios, which cited two unnamed U.S. officials. Axios reported earlier that CENTCOM had prepared a plan for a brief wave of strikes to break the negotiating deadlock.

The U.S. is pitching allies on a joint naval force to secure the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump inks bill to fund DHS, Coast Guard

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump signed a bill funding most of the Department of Homeland Security within hours of it clearing the House on Thursday, ending a 76-day shutdown.

The department had been shut down since Feb. 14, making it the longest partial government shutdown in U.S. history. Democrats objected to funding Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol.

Senate Republicans struck a deal on April 1 to fund the rest of DHS except those two agencies, but House Republicans rejected the plan.

Trump announced this month

he would sign an executive order to pay all DHS workers who have gone without paychecks during the record-long partial government shutdown.

House leaders finally took it up on Thursday ahead of a 12-day break, and after the White House requested the bill pass immediately.

“In spite of our razor thin, historically small majority, House Republicans continue to deliver for the American people,” said House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La.

The funding provides money for the Coast Guard.

“The reality today is the Coast Guard is operating in a crisis,” Adm. Kevin Lunday, the service’s commandant, told lawmakers

on Tuesday. “This is needlessly harming our people and hollowing out our readiness.”

Thousands of personnel moving stations this summer are not receiving advance allowances, forcing them to take on debt, take out loans or deplete personal savings, he said. Some service members are delaying medical treatments due to the uncertainty over pay.

The service owes more than \$300 million in unpaid obligations, CBS News reported. With thousands of utility bills overdue, totaling \$5.2 million, duty stations and housing worldwide are facing service shutdowns.

Among them are missed payments for cloud and satellite communications services that

threaten to sever vital command-and-control links, Adm. Thomas Allan, the vice commandant of the Coast Guard, told House members in March.

It ceased activities that do not protect human life or property from imminent danger, including routine patrols and fisheries enforcement. Many preparations for this summer’s World Cup and America’s 250th birthday celebrations have also been paused, he said.

DHS is the third-largest department of the federal government, Johnson said, which includes the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Transportation Security Administration and the Secret Service.

Suspect in DC incident to remain jailed until trial

Los Angeles Times

The man charged with trying to kill President Donald Trump at last weekend’s White House Correspondents’ Association dinner, will remain in federal jail pending trial.

Cole Tomas Allen, the 31-year-old Torrance, Calif., agreed to his ongoing detention during a brief hearing in federal court in Washington, D.C., on Thursday.

“He’s conceding detention at this time,” one of his federal public defenders, Tezira Abe, told Magistrate Judge Moxila Upadhyaya, according to CNBC.

He did not enter a plea during the hearing, according to The Associated Press.

Abe and Allen’s other public defender, Eugene Ohm, had argued in a filing Wednesday for Allen’s pretrial release, citing his lack of a criminal record, family support and ties to his church, as well as inconsistencies and weaknesses they allege

exist in the government’s case against him.

Abe and Ohm did not respond to a request for comment following the hearing.

In addition to trying to kill Trump, a terrorism-related charge that carries a potential life sentence, Allen faces two firearms charges related to his allegedly transporting two guns across state lines as he traveled from California to Washington by Amtrak train, and allegedly discharging one of those firearms — a shotgun — during the incident.

In arguing for Allen’s release in their Wednesday filing, his attorneys not only insisted he was no danger to the community, but questioned the government’s reasoning and evidence for the charges against him.

Allen was captured on a hotel video camera sprinting past U.S. Secret Service agents and into the secured event space a floor above the dinner while armed, according to prosecu-

tors, with the shotgun, a pistol and various knives. He then fell to the ground and was detained, according to prosecutors.

Trump administration officials who were at the dinner, including Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche and Jeanine Pirro, the U.S. attorney for D.C., charged him swiftly — leaning heavily on an email Allen had sent to family just as he was breaching event security, which Trump and others referred to as a “manifesto” but which was titled an “Apology and Explanation.”

In that document, Allen allegedly wrote that he was targeting top Trump administration officials, with the highest ranking among them receiving top priority. He allegedly wrote that he would “go through” others at the event to get to those officials, but that he was not targeting guests or hotel staff and had chosen buckshot rather than slugs to “minimize casualties” in the room.

The charge of attempting to kill the president hung largely on that document, according to charging documents.

Blanche and Pirro also alleged that Allen had fired a shot during the encounter with Secret Service agents, in which they said a Secret Service agent was shot in the ballistic vest. Prosecutors also alleged in court that Allen had fired his shotgun, noting their recovery of one spent casing, but made no mention of a Secret Service officer being shot in the vest.

That alleged shot served as the basis for the one count of discharging a firearm.

In their filing arguing for Allen’s release, his attorneys questioned the legitimacy of both arguments.

They wrote that the government’s “sole proffered evidence” of Allen’s intent to kill Trump — the “Apology and Explanation” letter — was “far from clear” and never actually mentioned Trump by name.

Trump selects contributor to Fox News as surgeon general

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump dropped Casey Means' nomination for surgeon general and named radiologist and Fox News contributor Nicole Saphier for the role after Means struggled to clinch the support to advance her nomination.

Saphier is an associate professor at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. She is the host of the iHeart Radio podcast, "Wellness Unmasked with Dr. Nicole Saphier" and has served as a Fox News medical contributor since 2018, according to her LinkedIn profile.

She has advocated in the past against administering COVID-19 vaccines to children, citing possible heart complications, and during the pandemic she spoke out against masking of children and school closings. She has authored several books, including "Make America Healthy Again" and "Panic At-

tack: Playing Politics with Science in the Fight Against COVID-19."

"Nicole is a STAR physician who has spent her career guiding women facing breast cancer through their diagnosis and treatment while tirelessly advocating to increase early cancer detection and prevention, while at the same time working with men and women on all other forms of cancer diagnoses and treatments," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

Several senators, including Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Chairman Bill Cassidy, R-La., had questioned Means on her stance on the measles vaccine during her confirmation hearing Feb. 25. Means said that she was supportive of the measles vaccine, but when pressed by Cassidy, she didn't outright say that vaccines don't cause autism.

The announcement came minutes after Trump railed against Cassidy on Truth Social

for delaying Means' nomination.

"Nevertheless, despite Senator Cassidy's intransigence and political games, Casey will continue to fight for MAHA on the many important Health issues facing our Country, such as the rising childhood disease epidemic, increased autism rates, poor nutrition, over-medicalization, and researching the root causes of infertility, and many other difficult medical problems," Trump said.

Cassidy is facing a precarious primary on May 16. Trump has endorsed Rep. Julia Letlow, R-La., for the nomination, instead of Cassidy, who voted to convict Trump in his impeachment in 2021 following the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Speaking to reporters Thursday afternoon, Cassidy said Means didn't have the votes to advance, adding that the White House has known that for "a while."

Senate bans betting on prediction markets

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — Senators will now be barred from trading on prediction markets, after adopting a resolution by unanimous consent Thursday afternoon.

It's the latest in a flurry of efforts to squash insider trading by government officials as prediction markets grow in popularity.

Led by Ohio Republican Sen. Bernie Moreno, the resolution adopted Thursday changes the standing rules of the Senate, adding a ban on buying and selling contracts tied to the outcomes of specific events.

Lawmakers in both chambers have introduced several bills this year aiming to prohibit trading on prediction markets by government officials, including in the executive branch and beyond.

But Moreno's resolution applies solely to the Senate and is merely a change to its rules, not the passage of a law regulating the markets.

It applies to senators and their staff but does not extend to the House, which has separate rules governing its own members.

"We're urging the House and the executive branch to do the same," Sen. Alex Padilla, D-Calif., said.

How to handle prediction markets has become a pain point for lawmakers, especially as users score big payouts from well-timed trades before sensitive events.

A special operations soldier pleaded not guilty this week to allegedly using confidential government information to bet on Polymarket that Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro would be out of office, raking in more than \$400,000.

Trump lifts his tariff on spirits to help Kentucky, Scotland at behest of king

Lexington Herald-Leader

Shares in spirits companies rose on Thursday after President Donald Trump announced he is lifting the 10% tariffs on alcohol sales between the United Kingdom and the U.S.

The move came at the behest of King Charles III and Queen Camilla, according to Trump's post on Truth Social.

Trump imposed 10% across-the-board tariffs for 150 days on imports in February after the Supreme Court struck down his previous trade measures.

Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., praised Trump's move, saying in a statement, "With the 152nd

running of the Kentucky Derby this Saturday, the President's decision to roll back tariffs on bourbon and whiskey is timely and welcome news.

Ninety-five percent of the world's bourbon is produced in the Commonwealth and the industry employs more than 23,000 hardworking Kentuckians."

Shares in Brown-Forman, the maker of Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey, which is the biggest selling American whiskey, were up 3.62% at close of markets on Thursday, while other publicly traded spirits companies also rose, including Diageo,

maker of Bulleit Bourbon; Davide Campari, maker of Wild Turkey; and MGP Ingredients, a contract distiller for many brands.

The Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S., which had been lobbying for a return to zero tariffs, also hailed the news.

The spirits industry has been impacted by Trump's trade war, which has hurt bourbon sales to some of the biggest markets. Whiskey exports were down \$250 million in 2025.

Canada has largely boycotted American spirits for more than a year after Trump threatened to annex the country.

Maine governor drops out of Senate race

Move leaves controversial Army, Marine veteran as challenger to GOP incumbent

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — Maine Gov. Janet Mills ended her Senate campaign on Thursday, saying she lacked the funds necessary to continue on to the June Democratic primary.

“While I have the drive and passion, commitment and experience, and above all else – the fight – to continue on, I very simply do not have the one thing that political campaigns unfortunately require today: the financial resources,” she said in a statement.

Her decision clears the way for oyster farmer and Army and Marine Corps veteran Graham Platner to be the party’s nominee against longtime Republican incumbent Susan Collins,

Senate Democrats’ top target in the November elections.

“Republicans are preparing to run a scorched earth campaign, and we’re ready for that,” Platner told reporters on a media call Thursday evening. “I am very, very confident that the movement we are building is going to fight back against that kind of politics and flip the Senate in the state.”

Mills, a two-term governor, was recruited into the race by Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer and had the backing of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.

“After years of allowing (Donald) Trump’s abuses of power, Senator Collins has never been more vulnerable and we will

work with the presumptive Democratic nominee Graham Platner to defeat her,” Schumer and DSCC Chair Kirsten Gillibrand said in a joint statement Thursday.

Platner, who is making his first bid for elected office, has been the leading fundraiser in the Democratic race and consistently led Mills in recent polling ahead of the June 9 primary. He’s drawn large crowds at events across the state since launching his campaign late last summer and has the support of progressive heavyweights Sens. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren.

But Platner has also come under scrutiny for his since-deleted posts on Reddit, as well as for

having a tattoo resembling a Nazi symbol on his chest that he has since covered up. The Mills campaign ran several attack ads highlighting those controversies, while a super PAC backing Collins recently launched a similar ad campaign against him.

“Chuck Schumer and Senate Democrats just coronated a phony who is too extreme for Maine,” South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, the chair of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, said in a statement.

Ben Chin, Platner’s campaign manager, told reporters Thursday that “the vast majority of voters in Maine have seen these attacks, and they no longer find them convincing.”

Florida’s new election map would flip 4 seats

Tampa Bay Times

A new congressional map drawn by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis is expected to create four more Republican-leaning seats, and three of them will be whiter.

Staff for the governor repeatedly said they did not consider race when drawing the map, which legislators approved Wednesday.

Officials said they did, however, consider partisan data.

The new map would increase the number of majority- or plurality-white districts from 21 to 23, based on 2020 Census counts of the adult population, a Tampa Bay Times analysis found. States are required to use the decennial census data in redistricting.

The Fair Districts Amendment in the Florida Constitution bans the government from drawing maps to diminish racial or language minority

groups’ power to elect candidates of their choice.

It also bans it from partisan gerrymandering.

DeSantis’ team had argued it expected that a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in a case on Louisiana districts would “impact the current map” by overturning a key section of the Voting Rights Act that protects the voting power of racial minorities.

The court issued its ruling hours before Florida lawmakers voted to approve the new map. It said that Louisiana had illegally gerrymandered a majority Black district.

But while the ruling gutted the Voting Rights Act, it did not overturn it.

Still, the DeSantis administration, in a Wednesday letter, said the decision meant Florida could not comply with the Fair Districts Amendment’s requirements on race.

Stanford to be investigated for racial discrimination

The Mercury News

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Stanford is backing away from a program designed to support teachers of color after accusations of racial discrimination led to a federal investigation announced this week.

The Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights will determine whether Stanford violated Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act — a federal law that prohibits schools and educational programs that receive federal funds from racial discrimination.

The investigation comes as the Trump administration has cracked down on diversity, equity and inclusion efforts at universities, including race-based admission practices.

It centers on Stanford’s National Board Resource Center. Founded in 1998 within the Graduate School of Education, the center supports schools, educational agencies and teach-

ers seeking National Board of Professional Teaching Standards certification — a achievement for educators, often considered the “gold standard” in teacher certification.

The Office of Civil Rights investigation specifically focuses on a National Board partnership program with Stanford that prioritizes Black, Indigenous and people of color teachers in low-income schools in an effort to increase the diversity of National Board certified teachers.

The program is free to cohort members and funded by the California Teachers Association and the National Education Association, although cohort members must pay for their own certification — about \$2,000.

Stanford has begun winding down the program and is no longer accepting new participants, Luisa Rappaport, Stanford University’s director of media relations, said Wednesday.

LIV players' return to PGA Tour uncertain

Associated Press

DORAL, Fla. — Jordan Spieth is like everyone else in golf right now. When trying to figure out if LIV golfers who left the PGA Tour will try to return, he doesn't mind saying he has no idea. Nobody does.

"I think there's just too many unknowns for me to have a good gauge on what would happen," Spieth said Thursday.

The announcement that Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund will stop funding LIV Golf after this year means some of the biggest names in the sport — Jon Rahm, Bryson DeChambeau and Cameron Smith among them — may aim to return to the PGA Tour, in the way that Brooks Koepka has and Patrick Reed likely will.

It was, as would be expected,

a major talking point at the Cadillac Championship on Thursday.

"If there's a system for Brooks and a system for Patrick Reed, does that stay the same for guys in the same category as those two coming back or does it change now? Does it change for guys who sued and dropped their membership?" Spieth asked.

DeChambeau, for example, was among players who filed an antitrust lawsuit against the PGA Tour in August 2022. That lawsuit, along with a countersuit by the PGA Tour, was dismissed a year later.

"There's just a lot of different things that happened over the last four years for that," Spieth said. "I'm kind of glad I'm not in that room, and I trust the guys

that are in that room to make the right decision."

One of the guys who will be in the room — but isn't yet — is newly elected Player Advisory Council chairman Lucas Glover, who begins his four-year term on the board in January. It's possible that by then, whatever needs to be decided will be an afterthought.

"I will never begrudge anybody for making a decision for the betterment of their career, their life, whatever that may be," Glover said. "But do I think they should abide by the pathways back and pay the same penalties that the previous people have paid, absolutely."

Koepka's return, for example, came with stipulations including a \$5 million donation to various charities that he and the

tour selected, no access to PGA Tour equity shares for five years and no FedEx Cup bonus money he might earn this year.

"There's always been pathways back with penalty, so yeah, sure, it can be done, as we have seen," Glover said. "It's already happened a couple times. I'm sure the tour is working diligently to figure all that out. I'm not privy to those phone calls."

Brian Harman said he's still operating under the belief that golf fans want to see the best players competing in one place.

"Time heals all wounds," Harman said. "There's still some sentiment out here, especially with all the lawsuit stuff, that stuff's going to be tough to get past. We play with all those guys in the majors, so I think there should be a path back."

FIFA president: Iran will participate in World Cup

Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — FIFA President Gianni Infantino opened his address at Thursday's FIFA Congress by affirming that Iran will participate in the World Cup and that the team will play in the United States despite the conflict between the two nations.

"And the reason for that is very simple, dear friends, is because we have to unite. We have to bring people together. It is my responsibility. It is our responsibility," Infantino said. "Football unites the world. FIFA unites the world. You unite the world. We unite the world."

In an indication of how

fraught the situation is with Iran's participation in the World Cup, representatives from the Iranian soccer federation were denied entry into Canada this week.

Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand said it was her "understanding" that the Iranian officials were turned away, following a report by Tasnim, an Iranian news agency associated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The report said Iranian soccer federation president Mehdi Taj and two other officials were denied entry at Toronto's air-

World's tallest basketball player signs with UC Irvine

Associated Press

IRVINE, Calif. — The world's tallest college basketball player is going coast to coast.

Former Florida walk-on Olivier Rioux, a 7-foot-9 center from Canada and one of the most recognizable student-athletes in North America, announced Thursday he has signed with UC Irvine. The school in Southern California announced his arrival hours earlier.

"Olivier is a high-character young man whose presence will elevate our team, our university, and our community," UC Irvine coach Russell Turner said in a statement. "He embodies

the values that have defined our success at UC Irvine."

Rioux played sparingly in two years with the Gators, redshirting as a true freshman during the team's national championship season and then getting on the court in mop-up duty this past season. He played 15 total minutes, finishing with seven points, six rebounds and an assist.

Rioux became the tallest person to ever play college basketball when he made his debut in a 104-64 victory over North Florida last November. He scored three games later, making a free throw after getting fouled. He also recorded his first rebound.

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Knicks eliminate Hawks in 140-89 Game 6

Associated Press

ATLANTA — OG Anunoby scored 29 points in 27 minutes, Karl-Anthony Towns had his second triple-double of the series and the New York Knicks had their biggest playoff victory in franchise history, overwhelming and eliminating the Atlanta Hawks 140-89 in Game 6 on Thursday night.

The Knicks broke several NBA records by halftime. Their 40-15 lead at the end of the first quarter marked the largest of the shot clock era. Their 47-point halftime lead was the biggest in playoff history.

It was New York's third straight win after falling to 1-2 in the series following back-to-back one-point losses.

"It speaks volumes on our team that we were able to bounce back from two disappointing losses," Towns said. "We had to step up to the challenge of being down in the series — super proud of our guys for that."

New York's 51-point win tied for the sixth-largest margin of victory in NBA postseason history.

Dyson Daniels and Mitchell Robinson were ejected after fighting following a pair of free

throws from Anunoby that gave the Knicks a 50-point lead in the second quarter.

The Knicks exceeded 100 points with 8:21 remaining in the third quarter. New York's starters were done for the night with 2:45 remaining in the third.

"It was just a tough position to be in," Atlanta's Jalen Johnson said. "We dug ourselves a deep hole from the start and it was tough to climb out of that."

Anunoby scored 26 of his points in the first half. Mikal Bridges finished with 24. Towns, five days after becoming the fourth Knicks player with a playoff triple-double, had 12 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists.

The Hawks were 12 for 39 from the field in the first half and 4 for 18 from 3-point range. Atlanta had 14 turnovers in the first half.

The Knicks will face the winner of the Boston Celtics and Philadelphia 76ers series in the Eastern Conference semifinals.

76ers 106, Celtics 93: Tyrese Maxey scored 30 points, a resurgent Paul George had 23 points and Philadelphia, which lost by 32 points twice in this first-round playoff series, played its most complete game

of the season and forced Game 7 with a win over Boston.

The decisive game is Saturday in Boston.

Uplifted by Joel Embiid's early return from an appendectomy, the Sixers rebounded from two blowout losses to win Game 5 in Boston and were buoyed by a throwback effort from George to keep a comfortable lead in Game 6. Embiid did his part in Game 6 with 19 points.

The play of the game — and maybe the series — came in the third when Kelly Oubre Jr. blocked Jaylen Brown, Maxey scooped the loose ball and fed to George on the break who then dazzled with a behind-the-back pass to VJ Edgecombe who finished with a thunderous dunk for a 69-54 lead.

A night after the Flyers won in overtime to advance to the second round of the NHL playoffs, Sixers fans cut loose after that slam.

The 76ers will only go as far as Embiid can take them on his injury-prone 7-foot frame, and Maxey is a bona fide All-Star. Edgecombe's youthful exuberance has made him a fan favorite in Philly and an NBA Rookie of the Year finalist.

Timberwolves 110, Nuggets 98: Jaden McDaniels had 32 points and 10 rebounds and Terrence Shannon Jr. scored 24 points in a surprise start for injury-ravaged Minnesota in a victory over Denver in Game 6 that finished off another tense NBA playoff series between the rivals.

With their top three guards missing because of injuries, the Timberwolves went big with Rudy Gobert, Julius Randle and Naz Reid fueling a 64-40 advantage in points in the paint and an 50-33 edge in rebounding.

Minnesota, the No. 6 seed in the Western Conference, will start the second round at San Antonio on Monday. The second-seeded Spurs beat Portland in five games in their first-round series.

Nikola Jokic had 28 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds to lead the Nuggets, but sidekick Jamal Murray struggled to get free from McDaniels and finished with just 12 points on 4-for-17 shooting. Cameron Johnson scored 27 points to lead Denver's 10-for-27 night from deep, but Jokic and the 3-pointers simply weren't enough to keep up with a fiercely motivated Timberwolves team.

Hughes scores 2 as Wild beats Stars 5-2 to win series

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Quinn Hughes led Minnesota to its first playoff series victory in 11 years, scoring twice in the Wild's 5-2 victory over the Dallas Stars in Game 6 on Thursday night.

Minnesota will face Presidents Trophy winner Colorado in the second round. The Avalanche have not played since sweeping Los Angeles on Sunday.

The Wild won a playoff series for the first time in 10 tries since 2015. The past eight came in the first round, including against

Dallas in 2016 and 2023.

After Hughes broke a tie midway through the third period, Matt Boldy scored his team-leading fifth and sixth goals of the series into empty nets to seal it.

Vladimir Tarasenko also scored and Jesper Wallstedt made 22 saves.

Hughes, acquired from Vancouver in December in the biggest trade in franchise history, took a shot from the left dot that deflected off the skate of Stars defenseman Ilya Lyubshkin and past goalie Jake Oettinger. Hughes also had an assist.

All three Wild goals came at full strength. Minnesota outscored Dallas 17-5 at even strength in the series, including 12-4 at five-on-five.

Ducks 5, Oilers 2: Leo Carlsson, Troy Terry and Chris Kreider had a goal and two assists apiece, and Anaheim eliminated Connor McDavid and two-time defending Western Conference champion Edmonton with a victory in Game 6 of their first-round playoff series.

Cutter Gauthier had a goal and an assist, Ryan Poehling scored the opening goal and Lukas Dostal made 25 saves in a

standout performance for the upstart Ducks, who stormed to their team's first playoff series victory since 2017.

After ending a seven-year postseason absence by knocking out the powerhouse Oilers, Anaheim will face the winner of the Vegas Golden Knights' series with the Utah Mammoth. Vegas leads 3-2 heading to Salt Lake City on Friday night.

Connor Murphy and Vasily Podkolzin scored as Edmonton followed up its worst regular season since 2021 by going out in the first round for the first time since that season.

Cardinals sweep Pirates with a 10-5 win

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — JJ Wetherholt led off with a home run against Pirates ace Paul Skenes, and the St. Louis Cardinals finished off a four-game sweep of the Pittsburgh Pirates with a 10-5 win on Thursday.

Skenes (4-2) fell to 0-5 against the Cardinals after allowing five runs, four earned, in five innings. The reigning NL Cy Young Award winner's brilliant April finished with a rare dud, as Pittsburgh's losing streak hit five. The 23-year-old had been masterful after a shaky performance on opening day, allowing only three runs over his last five starts. The Cardinals matched that in the first inning alone.

Wetherholt, who grew up in the Pittsburgh suburbs, sent a cutter into the right-field seats three pitches into the game. Jordan Walker followed three batters later by turning on a sweeper that scraped over the left-field wall, marking just the second time in Skenes' 62 big-league starts that he surrendered multiple homers in the same inning.

Alec Burleson finished with three hits and drove in three runs for the Cardinals. Wetherholt, Walker, Nolan Gorman and Pedro Pages had two hits each. Nathan Church added a two-run double during a five-run eighth to give the Cardinals some breathing room after the Pirates had cut a four-run deficit to one.

Gordon Graceffo (2-0) won in relief of starter Hunter Dobbs, who didn't make it out of the fifth inning in his first major-league start since tearing the ACL in his right knee last summer while playing for Boston. Dobbins was acquired in December's trade that sent Willson Contreras to the Red Sox.

Tigers 5, Braves 2: Gleyber Torres had three hits and drove in the go-ahead run with a sacrifice fly in the eighth inning as Detroit rallied to beat Atlanta to

avoid a three-game sweep.

With Atlanta leading 2-1, Kerry Carpenter tripled off Joel Payamps (0-2) starting the eighth. Matt Vierling's double tied the game and Payamps walked Hao-Yu Lee. Aaron Bummer relieved and walked Kevin McGonigle, and Torres' fly ball drove in Vierling for a 3-2 lead.

Detroit, which got back to .500 at 16-16, added two runs in the ninth.

José Suarez walked pinch-hitter Wenceel Pérez, who scored when left fielder Mike Yastrzemski bobbled Vierling's third hit for an error. After Suarez walked Hao-Yu Lee, Dillon Dingler's double drove in Vierling as Lee was thrown out at the plate on shortstop Mauricio Dubón's relay to Drake Baldwin.

Eli White and Dubón singled in runs off left-hander Framber Valdez for a 2-0 lead. The Braves clinched the series on Wednesday night when Matt Olson's two-run homer off Kenley Jansen in the ninth provided a 4-3 win.

Drew Anderson (1-0) pitched two scoreless innings. One day after Jansen's third blown save in nine chances, right-hander Kyle Finnegan pitched the ninth for his first save.

Reds 6, Rockies 4: Nathaniel Lowe homered for the fifth time in six games and Andrew Abbott pitched six strong innings as Cincinnati beat Colorado to take two of three in the series.

Cincinnati (20-11) is off to its best 31-game start since 2006. The Reds have won 20 games prior to May 1 for the first time in franchise history.

Tyler Freeman's first home run of the season put the Rockies ahead 2-0 in the first inning. It was his first homer since Aug. 16, 2025, against the Diamondbacks.

It was an important start for Abbott (1-2), who posted a 6.54 ERA in his first six starts. He allowed two runs on five hits with

five strikeouts and two walks to earn his first victory of the season.

Lowe's solo homer came off former Red Michael Lorenzen to make the score 2-1 in the second.

Lorenzen (2-3) allowed four earned runs on four hits including two home runs in 5½ innings. He walked three and fanned five.

Orioles 10, Astros 3, 1st game — Astros 11, Orioles 5, 2nd game: Yordan Alvarez went 3 for 4 with his 12th homer and scored three runs as Houston beat Baltimore to split a doubleheader.

Lance McCullers Jr. (2-2) pitched six innings, allowing three runs and two hits. He struck out nine and walked four.

Cam Smith launched an early three-run homer and Yainer Diaz got three hits for the Astros, who finished with 15 to salvage the finale of the three-game series. Leody Taveras had a two-run double, and Isaac Paredes went 5 for 10 in the doubleheader.

Adley Rutschman and Jeremiah Jackson each hit a grand slam in the opener to help the Orioles cruise to a 10-3 win. Chris Bassitt (2-2) tossed 6½ innings for his longest outing this season and allowed one run on seven hits.

Houston outhit Baltimore 27-12 in the twinbill.

Yordan Alvarez went 3 for 4 with his 12th homer and scored three runs as the Houston Astros beat the Baltimore Orioles 11-5 to split a doubleheader Thursday.

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In the second game, the Astros sent nine batters to the plate in the first inning and jumped on Baltimore starter Brandon Young for five runs, two on a single by Dustin Harris and three on Smith's homer.

Alvarez, whose 13-game hitting streak ended in the opener, made it 6-0 with a solo homer in the second.

Phillies 3, Giants 2, 1st game — Phillies 6, Giants 5, 10 innings, 2nd game: Kyle Schwarber hit a tying double with two outs in the ninth inning, Alec Bohm delivered with his glove and bat in the 10th, and Philadelphia defeated San Francisco to sweep their split doubleheader.

Philadelphia trailed in the ninth inning of both games before rallying for two walk-off wins on the same day for the first time since July 24, 1998, a pair of 12-inning victories against the Florida Marlins.

Schwarber homered in the first inning of each game. Trea Turner launched a leadoff shot on Adrian Houser's first pitch in the nightcap, and Schwarber followed with a 446-foot drive to right-center.

Jung Hoo Lee put San Francisco ahead 5-4 with a two-out RBI single in the top of the ninth against José Alvarado, but pinch-hitter Brandon Marsh doubled off Keaton Winn to open the bottom half. Garrett Stubbs walked and Turner grounded into a double play before Schwarber, who was 4 for 4 with two RBIs and two runs, doubled to right field on a full-count splitter.

SEE MLB ON PAGE 8

MLB: Abrams homers as Nationals defeat slumping Mets

FROM PAGE 7

Nationals 5, Mets 4: CJ Abrams hit a go-ahead, two-run homer in the eighth inning and Washington beat New York for the Mets' 17th loss in 20 games.

James Wood robbed Juan Soto of a home run with a leaping catch at the right-field wall in the first inning and Washington dropped the Mets to a major league-worst 10-21. New York's .323 winning percentage through April is its fourth-lowest behind starts in 1962 (3-13), 1964 (2-10) and 1981 (4-10).

New York, which opened the season with the major leagues' highest payroll at \$358.4 million, went 3-6 on its homestand and headed to California for a nine-game trip.

After overcoming a 3-0 deficit to take a 4-3 lead on MJ Melendez's three-run homer in the third off Miles Mikolas and Mark Vientos' RBI double in the sixth against Mitchell Parker (1-0), the Mets lost a game in which they were ahead for the 10th time this year.

Luis García Jr. singled on the first pitch of the eighth from Luke Weaver (2-1) and Daylen Lile beat out the relay throw to avoid a double-play grounder. Abrams drove a hanging changeup 403 feet to right-center.

Gus Varland got four outs for his second save. He retired Ty-

rone Taylor on a flyout in the eighth that stranded Soto on second and struck out Ronny Mauricio on a full-count slider for the final out with Francisco Alvarez at second.

Brewers 13, Diamondbacks 1: William Contreras went 4 for 4 with a homer and four RBIs as Milwaukee overcame Brandon Woodruff's early exit and trounced Arizona.

The Brewers took two of three from Arizona to cap a 3-3 homestand.

Woodruff had a 1-0 count on Nolan Arenado when he left with one out in the second inning. The two-time All-Star didn't exceed 86.9 mph on any of his 21 pitches, and his average fastball velocity was 85.4 mph.

Contreras delivered an RBI double in the first inning and a two-run homer in the third. He hit an RBI single in the fourth, walked in the sixth and singled again in the eighth.

Sal Frelick homered and Tyler Black and Luis Rengifo had three RBIs apiece for the Brewers. Contreras and Garrett Mitchell each scored three runs.

Arizona right-hander Michael Soroka (4-1) gave up eight runs over three-plus innings as his ERA soared from 2.60 to 4.70. He faced four batters in the fourth but didn't retire any of them.

Shane Drohan (1-1) earned his first career win after allowing one run in four innings of relief.

Arizona's Ildemaro Vargas went 2 for 4 and has hit safely in each of his 23 games played this season. Vargas has a 26-game overall hitting streak, including his final three games in 2025.

Athletics 6, Royals 3: Nick Kurtz drew a walk for his 19th consecutive game and hit a two-run double, helping the Athletics defeat Kansas City.

Shea Langeliers added three doubles, while Darell Hernaiz had three hits and two RBIs. Jacob Wilson had two hits and scored twice to help the A's to their sixth win in nine games.

Elias Diaz hit his first home run of the season for the Royals, and Maikel Garcia and Starling Marte had three hits apiece. Vinnie Pasquantino missed his second straight start because of lower back tightness but pinch hit in the ninth and hit a game-ending flyout with a man on against Jack Perkins, who got his third save.

Kurtz built a 4-2 lead when he lined a 1-0 slider from Noah Cameron (2-2) to right-center in a four-run second that put the A's ahead 5-2.

Langeliers had an RBI double earlier in the inning, and Kurtz scored on shortstop Nick Loftin's throwing error.

Kurtz was walked by John Schreiber in the seventh. He tied Ted Williams for the third-longest streak behind Detroit's Roy Cullenbine in 1947 and San Francisco's Barry Bonds in 2002-03. Records date to 1910 in the National League and 1913 in the American.

Twins 7, Blue Jays 1: Byron Buxton homered for the third time in four games and Ryan Jeffers hit a go-ahead, two-run drive that led Minnesota over Toronto in the opener of a four-game series.

Daulton Varsho homered off Bailey Ober (3-1) in the fourth and Jeffers put the Twins ahead to stay at 2-1 in the bottom half against Kevin Gausman (2-2).

Buxton homered two innings later, his team-leading eighth, and Austin Martin added an RBI single later in the sixth. Buxton was 3 for 4 in his third three-hit game this season.

Minnesota won for the second time in its last nine games and the third time in 14.

Ober allowed four hits in six-plus innings. Anthony Banda, Andrew Morris and Justin Topa combined for two-hit relief for a Twins bullpen that entered with a 5.30 ERA, fourth-worst among big league bullpens.

Gausman allowed four runs, four hits and two walks in 5⅓ innings. The four earned runs off him were a season high.

Vonn not ready to decide on her future in competition

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Lindsey Vonn is still recovering physically and emotionally from her frightening crash at the Winter Olympics. For now, the tough decisions about the future can wait.

She has undergone eight surgeries after suffering a complex left leg fracture — one that nearly led to a leg amputation — in the women's downhill skiing race on Feb. 8.

She needs at least one more to

repair a torn ACL in that same knee.

So if the 41-year-old races again — and she's not ready to make that decision — a return is at least a year and a half away, Vonn told The Associated Press in an interview Wednesday.

"I just don't want to jump to any conclusions or even speculate on what I might do," Vonn said. "I may retire. I may never race again and that would be completely fine, but I'm not in a position emotionally to make

that decision at this point."

Vonn thinks she would have returned to retirement had she been able to complete a comeback season that rivaled one of the best of her career. She ended a six-year absence from the sport largely to race at Cortina, Italy, one of her favorite courses, and the venue for the Milan Cortina Games.

The winner of three Olympic medals, including a downhill gold in 2010, crashed just 13 seconds into the race and suffered a

complex tibia fracture, shocking a star-studded crowd and ending a season in which she led the World Cup downhill standings and hadn't finished worse than fourth in any race.

She's returned from an assortment of injuries before — she has a titanium implant in her right knee — but this one was different. The pain was different.

The eight surgeries are just one shy of the total she had for all the others combined.