

US says Iran should give answer Friday

Trump wants response to proposal as clashes continue near Strait of Hormuz

Bloomberg News

The U.S. said it expects Iran to respond to President Donald Trump's latest proposal to end their war imminently, as overnight clashes threatened to further fracture a monthlong ceasefire.

Iran "should" give an answer on Friday, Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters.

Iran has still given no indication whether it will accept Trump's plan, sent on Wednesday, which proposes that Tehran reopen the Strait of Hormuz and the U.S. end a blockade on Iranian ports over the next month.

The one-page document implies Iran's acceptance would end the war, which has killed thousands of people across the Middle East and sent energy prices soaring, even though the two sides would still need to negotiate a deal over Iran's nuclear program.

Tensions worsened as U.S. forces targeted missile and

drone launch sites in Iran that they said were responsible for attacking three American warships transiting the strait on Thursday evening. No vessels were hit, U.S. Central Command said. The ceasefire remains in effect, Trump said after the exchanges of fire.

The U.S. carried out more airstrikes on empty oil tankers that were trying to break the blockade on Friday, Fox reported, citing an unnamed senior U.S. official.

Trump is under plenty of pressure to end the war, with Americans increasingly against it and frustrated by soaring fuel prices.

Iran criticized the U.S. on Friday and said it had violated their ceasefire agreement. It added that a cargo vessel was hit in the overnight fighting, injuring 10 sailors. It didn't specify if it was an Iranian ship, but said the injured seafarers were taken to hospitals in the Islamic Republic.

The skirmishes highlight "the confusion and inability of the ruling authorities in the United States to properly understand the situation and find a reasonable solution to exit their self-created impasse," Iran's foreign ministry said on X.

The United Arab Emirates said Iran fired two ballistic missiles and three drones at it on Friday, causing three moderate injuries. The UAE was also targeted on Monday by Iran, which was reacting then to a U.S. operation, dubbed Project Freedom, to help stranded commercial ships exit the Persian Gulf. Iran warned ships not to go through Hormuz without its permission and attacked some U.S. naval vessels, which weren't hit. Even so, Trump canceled Project Freedom the next day.

Separately, Iran said it seized a tanker in the Gulf of Oman, which appeared to be a sanctioned vessel carrying the Islamic Republic's own oil. It

didn't explain why, but said the tanker Ocean Koi was "attempting to disrupt oil exports and the interests of the Iranian nation."

Trump has threatened more intense strikes if Iran refuses his terms, raising the risk of a longer war that has already killed thousands and sparked a global energy crisis.

"Just like we knocked them out again today, we'll knock them out a lot harder, and a lot more violently, in the future, if they don't get their Deal signed, FAST," Trump said in a social media post on Thursday evening.

Iran effectively shut the Strait of Hormuz, through which about a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas typically flows, after the war erupted with U.S. and Israeli strikes on the Islamic Republic in late February.

The U.S. "does not seek escalation but remains positioned and ready to protect American forces," CENTCOM said.

Ukraine ramps up drone strikes before Moscow parade

Bloomberg News

Ukraine conducted heavy overnight drone attacks on Russia, giving no indication that Kyiv is ready to observe Moscow's self-declared ceasefire despite threats of retaliation if Victory Day celebrations on Red Square are disrupted.

Russia's Defense Ministry said its forces intercepted 264 Ukrainian drones between midnight and 7 a.m. local time. Moscow alone faced more than 30 strikes after midnight, when a

Russian-declared ceasefire that was supposed to run until the end of May 9 came into effect.

Ukraine's attack spanned from southern Russia to the Urals, some 1,056 miles from the border, and targeted key energy infrastructure.

It also temporarily halted operations at 13 airports in the south after Ukrainian drones hit an administrative building at the air traffic control center in Rostov-on-Don, the Transportation Ministry said.

Airlines delayed or canceled more than 80 flights, upending travel for at least 14,000 passengers mostly on domestic flights, amid a traditionally busy period around May holidays, according to the Association of Tour Operators of Russia.

The overnight strikes underscore how Kyiv has advanced its drone capabilities over the course of the war, allowing it to disrupt activity inside Russia — even while not being able to target most Russian cities with

missiles.

The Kremlin will host its annual World War II Victory Day parade in Moscow on Saturday. Russia has warned Ukraine that any attempt to disrupt the celebrations in Moscow would trigger a retaliatory missile strike on central Kyiv.

The Russian Foreign Ministry also said this week it urged accredited embassies to take that threat seriously and evacuate staff and citizens from Ukraine's capital.

Pentagon watchdog declines to probe Kid Rock flights

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department's independent watchdog is declining to investigate a U.S. Army helicopter flight near the home of musician Kid Rock and at a "No Kings" protest against President Donald Trump, according to a letter from the Pentagon's new inspector general.

The letter, dated April 24 and released on Thursday by a non-profit advocacy group, said Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth had the authority to terminate any administrative review.

It said the Pentagon chief had "decided not to pursue this matter" and that the inspector general "will not investigate" his decision.

The letter was addressed to Donald Sherman, the president

of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, who posted it online after requesting the inspector general look into the unusual use of U.S. military equipment.

"This response is antithetical to the role of an inspector general, and is something we've never seen before," Sherman said in a statement. "Inspectors General need to be independent, not defer to the head of their agency. This incident raises serious questions about the potential misuse of military aircraft, abuse of taxpayer funds and public safety."

Hegseth has publicly supported the pilots and Kid Rock over the episode. The pilots were initially suspended by the Army for their flight near the musician's home but Hegseth

later reversed that decision.

Trump's defense chief later said he joined Kid Rock aboard an Army Apache helicopter and posted photos of the musician visiting the Pentagon.

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington alleged the flight over the pro-Trump entertainer's home in late March, and above a "No Kings" demonstration appeared to be "a staged political stunt" using U.S. military equipment at taxpayer expense.

The group argued the Defense Department's inspector general, Platte Moring, should probe the matter to see if it violated federal or departmental ethics rules, and asked how much taxpayer funds were spent on the flybys.

Tenn. OKs map lacking district with Black majority

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — Tennessee state legislators on Thursday passed a congressional map that dismantles the state's lone majority-Black district and gives Republicans the advantage in all nine of the state's House seats.

The move comes a little over a week after the Supreme Court limited the use of race in drawing congressional districts, prompting several GOP-controlled Southern states to weigh redrawing their House maps ahead of the midterm elections.

Both chambers of the Tennessee General Assembly, where Republicans hold supermajorities, approved the new map Thursday in the face of loud protests at the state Capitol in Nashville.

Republican Gov. Bill Lee, who called the special session to address redistricting, signed the bill into law, according to news reports.

The new map targets the Memphis-anchored 9th District, held by Democrat Steve Cohen since 2007.

Shelby County, which is home to Memphis, would be split between three districts, and the new 9th would stretch from Memphis to the Nashville area while hugging the Mississippi border.

The current version of the 9th District has been a Democratic stronghold and backed Kamala Harris for president by 43 points in 2024, according to calculations by Inside Elections with Nathan L. Gonzales.

But under the new lines, the district would shift to one that would have backed Trump by 21 points.

DOGE slammed by judge for using AI in cutting \$100M in humanities funding

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — A U.S. judge blasted the Trump administration's Department of Government Efficiency project for relying on artificial intelligence tools as it orchestrated roughly \$100 million in cuts to federal funding for humanities programs last year.

U.S. District Judge Colleen McMahon released a 143-page opinion on Thursday blocking the National Endowment for the Humanities from carrying out DOGE's grant terminations. The New York-based judge found that the government's actions were unconstitutional and that DOGE officials didn't have authority to direct them.

McMahon slammed DOGE for how it had used the AI platform ChatGPT as part of its process for deciding which grants to cut. She wrote that the prompts inputted into the platform to review project descriptions were ill-defined, lacked context and ended up unconstitutionally focusing on race and other protected characteristics.

"DOGE's use of race was certainly not remedial," the judge wrote. "It was punitive."

"The government's asserted interests for terminating grants — administrative convenience, merit, and waste reduction — do not justify making race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, or sexual orientation the deter-

minative grounds for terminating previously awarded grants," McMahon continued.

The judge held that the administration ultimately was responsible for ChatGPT's output and how it factored into the grant decisions. There was "not a scintilla of evidence" that DOGE employees "undertook any meaningful review" of whether the rationale provided by ChatGPT "made sense," she found.

"One cannot treat ChatGPT and the government as distinct actors for constitutional purposes," she wrote. "Any argument to the contrary is unworthy of representatives of the Department of Justice."

US trade court rules 10% tariffs unlawful

Bloomberg News

President Donald Trump's 10% global tariffs were declared unlawful by a federal trade court in a fresh blow to the administration's economic agenda, just months after the Supreme Court vacated earlier levies he'd imposed.

A divided three-judge panel at the U.S. Court of International Trade in Manhattan on Thursday granted a request by a group of small businesses and two dozen mostly Democrat-led states to invalidate the tariffs.

Trump imposed the 10% duties in February under Section

122 of the Trade Act of 1974, which had never previously been invoked.

The court for now only immediately blocked the administration from enforcing the tariffs against the two companies that sued and Washington state, however, making clear that it was not issuing a so-called "universal injunction."

The panel found that the other states lacked standing because they aren't direct importers, instead arguing that they were harmed by having to pay higher prices when businesses passed on tariff costs.

It wasn't immediately clear what the ruling would mean for now for other importers that have been paying the contested levies.

Jeffrey Schwab, a senior counsel for Liberty Justice Center, who represented the small businesses that filed one of the cases, said the next steps would depend on how the administration responds and whether the Justice Department will appeal.

The White House and a Justice Department spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

U.S. customs authorities col-

lected roughly \$8 billion in Section 122 tariffs in March alone, according to government data analyzed by We Pay the Tariffs, a coalition of small businesses.

The decision is the latest setback for the president's effort to levy tariffs without input from Congress. Earlier duties — overturned by the Supreme Court on Feb. 20 — were issued under a different law, the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. In that case, the justices ruled Trump had exceeded his authority, kicking off a legal scramble by importers for almost \$170 billion in refunds.

Florida governor says it 'would be great' to shut down Alligator Alcatraz

Miami Herald

MIAMI — Gov. Ron DeSantis is now backing plans to shutter Florida's state-run immigration detention facility in the Everglades, 10 months after the state opened it and after spending hundreds of millions of dollars on its construction and operation.

He told reporters in Lakeland on Thursday that "it would be great for us to break that facility down," following a New York Times report that the Department of Homeland Security and state officials were considering closing Alligator Alcatraz.

DeSantis said discussions with the federal government about shutting down the facility started after Markwayne Mullin was confirmed as the new DHS secretary in late March.

"It's been discussed," DeSantis said of shutting down the facility. "You had a new secretary come in, take a fresh look at these things."

DeSantis met with Tom Homan, the White House's "border czar," on Monday, according to

his schedule. He said Thursday they talked about the \$608 million DeSantis promised taxpayers was coming from the federal government to reimburse the state for the cost of the facility, but never arrived.

"We're getting it and you will see that very shortly," DeSantis vowed.

The federal government has repeatedly said in federal court that it won't reimburse the DeSantis administration for the site construction costs, only per-detainee cost. That might leave Florida taxpayers still picking up the tab for the millions of dollars the state spent in quickly erecting the site in the middle of the Everglades.

The apparent willingness to abandon the facility now marks a sudden turn for the state and federal administrations that have promoted the detention center as an exemplar for Trump's mass deportation agenda. The state spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in court fending off efforts to close it down.

La. urges court to block abortion pills sent by mail

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — Louisiana's state attorneys on Thursday urged the Supreme Court to stand aside for now and to uphold an appeals court ruling that would stop the mailing of abortion pills nationwide.

They blamed former President Joe Biden for undermining the state's strict bans on abortion and the Trump administration for slow-walking a study on the federal regulations that permit sending the pills through the mail.

The justices are likely to act soon on emergency appeals filed by two makers of mifepristone. They argued the pills have been shown to be safe and effective for ending an early pregnancy.

But last week, the conservative 5th Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans ruled for Louisiana and revived an earlier regulation that would require women to obtain the pills in person from a doctor.

The three-judge panel also took an unusual step for putting its order into effect immediately. On Monday, Justice Samuel A. Alito, who oversees the 5th

Circuit, issued an administrative stay that will keep the case on hold through Monday.

The justices have to decide whether Louisiana had standing to sue over the federal drug regulations, and if so, whether judges have the authority to overrule the Food and Drug Administration.

Two years ago, the Supreme Court by a 9-0 vote dismissed a similar challenge to the abortion pills that came from the 5th Circuit. And Chief Justice John G. Roberts has said in the past that judges should usually defer to the federal agency that is responsible for regulating drugs.

In response to anti-abortion advocates, Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. agreed to have the FDA review the safety record of mifepristone.

It was approved in 2000 as safe and effective for ending early pregnancies. And in the past decade, the agency had relaxed earlier restrictions, including a requirement that pregnant women visit a doctor's office to obtain the pills.

But the FDA said last month its review is far from complete.

Israel tightens grip on Gaza as deadlock with Hamas persists

Bloomberg News

Israel has expanded its control of Gazan territory and is considering more intense military action, further squeezing the war-torn enclave.

The army advanced beyond the agreed temporary boundary and now controls 60% of Gaza, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich told Tel Aviv radio station 103 FM this week.

That figure was corroborated by another Israeli official and a foreign diplomat involved in monitoring the ceasefire, both of whom asked not to be identified by name discussing sensitive matters. The original boundary gave Israel control of 53% of Gaza.

“We are advancing and moving the yellow line and deepening the destruction of infras-

tructures,” Smotrich said.

It’s been seven months since U.S. President Donald Trump announced the Gaza ceasefire. The truce was to begin the area’s rehabilitation following two years of Israeli strikes that killed tens of thousands of people and reduced vast sections to rubble.

But with the wars in Iran and Lebanon shifting the focus away from Gaza, it’s been sinking deeper into misery.

Hamas, the Iran-backed militant group which rules over the inhabited areas, isn’t disarming, Israel is stepping up air strikes, and hundreds have been killed since the ceasefire went into effect.

Spokespersons for the Israeli military and the Board of Peace, the international group charged

with implementing Trump’s plan, declined to comment.

Smotrich, a member of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s security Cabinet, said Hamas’ ability to rearm is severely limited, but the group must be defeated.

“We shall have to decide at what moment we’ll go back to fighting in Gaza, and in what configuration,” he said. “What’s clear is that we need to end this war without there being a Hamas in Gaza.”

Israel is weighing further air strikes to keep Hamas from rebuilding, a senior aide to Netanyahu said, asking not to be identified by name because of the sensitivity of the matter. That would likely entail district-by-district attacks on remaining Hamas bastions, they said.

Heat slated to blast much of California

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — Sweltering weather will descend on much of California over the next few days, possibly ushering in temperatures deeper into the triple digits earlier than ever for some areas.

Temperatures could climb over 100 degrees in the Central Valley for the first time this year. By Monday, Fresno could see temperatures as high as 102 degrees — which would be the earliest in the year the thermometer has hit that mark since records have been kept, according to Brian Ochs, meteorologist with the National Weather Service office in Hanford.

Fresno hasn’t seen 102-degree heat this early since 2013, when it hit that mark on May 12.

Ochs warned of the heat: “People won’t be as used to it” at this time of year and so may be more affected by the high temperatures.

Forecasters warned of elevated fire danger across Los Angeles, Ventura, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties; the Kern County desert and the slopes of the Mojave Desert.

By Monday, Barstow could hit 102; Borrego Springs, 107; Palm Springs, 108; and Death Valley, 111. Afternoon temperatures could reach as high as 112 degrees in Imperial County.

Meteorologists issued an “extreme heat watch” starting Mother’s Day morning through Tuesday evening for Palm Springs and the rest of the Coachella Valley, the deserts of San Diego County and the San Geronio Pass.

An extreme heat watch was also issued for swaths of Imperial County starting Sunday morning through Monday night.

Officials monitor Americans who were aboard hantavirus-stricken cruise ship

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — Six Americans were among the 147 passengers and staff aboard a luxury cruise ship stricken by a suspected outbreak of hantavirus that has left three people dead and several others severely ill, officials confirmed Thursday.

California public health officials say they are currently monitoring the situation after being notified by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that some state residents were passengers on the MV *Hondius*. The precise status of those individuals, however, remains murky.

Hantavirus is a rare but deadly disease that attacks the lungs and is typically contracted by humans through inhalation of particles contaminated with the urine, feces or saliva of a wild

rodent.

However, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the World Health Organization, confirmed Thursday that the Andes virus — a form of hantavirus that can spread from person to person — was involved in the outbreak.

As its name suggests, the Andes virus is typically found in South America. The Dutch-flagged MV *Hondius* was on a 46-day journey that traveled from Antarctica with stops in Argentina.

In the case of human-to-human transmission, a person would first be infected by a wild rodent’s contaminated particles and then pass the infection to someone else, said Dr. Gaby Frank, director of the Johns Hopkins Special Pathogens Center.

On April 1, 114 guests boarded the cruise ship in Ushuaia, Argentina. Twenty-three days later, 30 passengers — including six people from the United States — disembarked on a stop in St. Helena, a remote island about 1,100 miles off the coast of Africa, according to the cruise operator Oceanwide Expeditions.

Among those who left was a woman accompanying the body of her husband, who had died on April 11 while the ship was at sea in the Atlantic. At the time, the cause of the man’s death could not be determined, the ship operator said. The woman also became ill, and died on April 27.

The CDC notified public health agencies in California, Georgia and Arizona that some of their residents were among the passengers on the cruise.

FIFA ups World Cup final ticket to \$33K

FIFA tripled the price of its best available tickets to the World Cup final, making \$32,970 seats available Thursday for the July 19 match at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J.

Soccer's governing body listed those seats as front category one on its sales site.

It previously had a high price of \$10,990 for category one. The \$10,990 category for the final was available Thursday night only as wheelchair and easy access amenity category one.

Tickets for the July 14 semifinal at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, were listed at \$11,130, \$4,330, \$3,710 and \$2,705.

Seats for the following day's semifinal at Atlanta's Mercedes-Benz Stadium were at \$10,635, \$3,545 and \$2,725.

Seats for the U.S. opener against Paraguay on June 12 at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, Calif., were available for \$2,735, \$1,940 and \$1,120.

Canes go up 3-0 on Flyers

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Jordan Staal and Andrei Svechnikov scored on the power play and Jalen Chatfield added a short-handed goal, keying a special teams effort that helped the Carolina Hurricanes win their seventh straight playoff game, 4-1 over the Philadelphia Flyers in Game 3 on Thursday night.

The Hurricanes — who outshot the Flyers 30-19 — can complete their second straight postseason series sweep in Game 4 on Saturday in Philadelphia.

“Not the prettiest of games for anyone,” Hurricanes coach Rod Brind’Amour said. “It’s kind of been our calling card all year, whatever way the game kind of goes, I think we’ve been able to adapt to it and figure it out. It says a lot about our group.”

The Hurricanes — who were coming off a Game 1 shutout and a Game 2 overtime thriller — again rode the hot hand of Fre-

derik Andersen in net.

“You need goaltending like that,” Chatfield said. “He’s been nothing short of excellent. We know he’s going to keep going like that.”

The Flyers, the last team in the East to clinch a playoff spot who then beat Pittsburgh in the first round, had a few sensational early looks at the net but again failed to finish and again failed on the power play. They had the worst power-play efficiency (15.7%) in the NHL this season and did not score with the man advantage in Game 3.

“We’re trying,” Flyers coach Rick Tocchet said. “We’re trying to get these guys to understand certain things. That’s on us. It’s on me to try to figure it out, it really is.”

To make it worse, Chatfield scored to make it 2-1 in the second just 11 seconds into the Flyers’ power play with Taylor Hall in the box for boarding.

“My job isn’t to be the flash-

iest guy on the blue line,” Chatfield said. “It’s put pucks on the net. Keep it simple. When I get the lane, just rip it on the net.”

The Flyers hit Andersen with 15 shots during 19 minutes of overtime in Game 2 and whiffed on their chance at the win — and perhaps their best shot at making this a competitive series — when Travis Konecny missed a makeable look on a breakthrough.

Konecny fired another clean look minutes into Game 3, only for Andersen to knock it away with his pads. Porter Martone, the Flyers’ teen sensation, rang the right side of the post moments later and two great chances at goals meant nothing on the scoreboard.

The Flyers still had a chance on the power play but were stymied and fell at that point to 1 for 12 in the series and 3 for 29 in nine playoff games.

“Lot of sacrifice,” Brind’Amour said at silencing the Flyers’ power play.

Tigers’ Triple-A manager: Fired for ‘inappropriate’ text

Associated Press

TOLEDO, Ohio — The Detroit Tigers’ Triple-A manager says he was fired this week after sending an “inappropriate” text message to a female colleague.

The Tigers announced Tuesday that Gabe Alvarez had been fired for what they called a “violation of club policy,” but they did not specify the violation.

Alvarez told ESPN on Wednesday that he sent “a single text message to a colleague that I intended as a lighthearted joke.

“Shortly after sending it, I recognized that the message was inappropriate and did not reflect the values and judgment I strive to uphold, and I immediately reached out to clarify my intent,” he said.

“I never intended to cause discomfort or offense, and I regret that the message created this situation. This was an isolated incident and not reflective of my long-standing record of professionalism, respect for colleagues and conduct over the course of my career.”

Alvarez, 52, played parts of three big league seasons as a third baseman for Detroit and the San Diego Padres before working as an assistant coach with USC. He was hired as a minor league hitting coordinator by Detroit in 2021, began managing Double-A Erie in 2022 and was promoted to managing Triple-A Toledo in 2025.

Last September, The Athletic reported that the Tigers had at least eight employees accused of misconduct toward women over the previous two years.

The report published in September followed an investigation that started in April 2025 and included interviews with 45 current and former employees along with access to emails, human resources documents, text messages and court records.

Six of the eight men alleged to have harassed and abused women were fired or did not have their contracts renewed and one was suspended after The Athletic requested comment about allegations against him.

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Holmgren, SGA pace OKC in Game 2

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander isn't scoring the way he usually does, but the Oklahoma City Thunder are still winning the way they normally do.

Gilgeous-Alexander, the reigning NBA MVP, averaged 31.1 points during the regular season. In the Western Conference semifinals against the Los Angeles Lakers, he's averaging 19 points and taking only 14 shots per game.

Oklahoma City has still won the first two games by an average of 18 points. Gilgeous-Alexander and Chet Holmgren each scored 22 points, and the defending champion Thunder beat the Lakers 125-107 on Thursday night.

Ajay Mitchell, starting in place of injured Jalen Williams, is averaging 19 points on 50% shooting in the series for Oklahoma City.

"I think the coaching staff does a good job at just getting all of us ready," said Mitchell, a second-year guard.

"And we have a lot of competitors. Like, everyone's a competitor on our team. So every time the lights are bright, everyone's ready to go."

Holmgren is the leading scorer for the Thunder in the best-of-seven series with 23 points per game. The 2026 All-Star also is averaging 10.5 rebounds and 2.5 blocks.

Jared McCain, a midseason acquisition

from the Philadelphia 76ers, barely played in the first round against Phoenix but has averaged 15 points and made 8 of 10 3-pointers in the series.

"He goes in there, stays in character, stays aggressive," Thunder coach Mark Daigneault said. "He's going to shoot the next shot. He makes the right plays, plays inside the team. He competes defensively, has had good defensive possessions for us. And he was huge tonight. You need that in a playoff series."

The Lakers again were without scoring champion Luka Doncic, who is out indefinitely with a strained left hamstring. They also were missing forward Jarred Vanderbilt, the reserve forward who dislocated the pinkie on his right hand during the second quarter of Game 1. The Lakers also had three players finish with five fouls, limiting their aggressiveness late in the game.

Los Angeles guard Austin Reaves, who struggled with his shot in Game 1, scored 31 points on 10-for-16 shooting in Game 2. LeBron James, coming off a 27-point effort in Game 1, followed that up with 23.

With the Lakers up 63-61 early in the third quarter, Gilgeous-Alexander got tied up with Reaves and was called for his fourth foul. Upon review, it was upgraded to a flagrant 1 for Gilgeous-Alexander's follow-through. Oklahoma City's Alex Caruso was called for a technical foul as the situation

was being sorted out.

Gilgeous-Alexander left the game with the Lakers up 65-61, but the Thunder rallied and took control without him. On a fast break, Holmgren found a trailing Jaylin Williams, who hit a 3-pointer and was fouled. His free throw put the Thunder up 85-74.

The Thunder outscored the Lakers 32-15 while Gilgeous-Alexander was out in the third quarter to take a 93-80 lead into the fourth.

"It was amazing," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "They strung together stops, they're playing the right way offensively and things are going their way. Full confidence in those guys. They know how to win basketball games. And we've proven that. They've proven that no matter who's on the floor, they know how to get the job done. And they just did it again tonight."

The Lakers cut Oklahoma City's lead to five in the fourth quarter before the Thunder pulled away again.

Los Angeles will host Game 3 on Saturday.

"We just stuck with it," Holmgren said. "It's the game of basketball. It's not always going to go your way. It's about how you respond. And this team has proven many times that we know how to respond. And we did so tonight."

Cunningham lifts Pistons to 2-0 lead over Cavaliers

Associated Press

DETROIT — Cade Cunningham had 25 points and 10 assists, Tobias Harris scored 21 points and the Detroit Pistons beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 107-97 on Thursday night to take a 2-0 lead in their second-round series.

Game 3 is Saturday in Cleveland, where the Cavaliers were 4-0 in the first round against Toronto.

The top-seeded Pistons have won five straight games since Orlando put them on the brink of elimination in the first round.

"We're going to keep swinging," reserve guard Daniss Jenkins said. "We're still trying to prove something to ourselves."

Donovan Mitchell scored 31 points and Jarrett Allen had 22 points and seven rebounds, bouncing back from a poor performance in Game 1 for the fourth-seeded Cavs.

Cleveland's James Harden, though, missed 10 of 13 shots and was limited to 10 points. He had four turnovers, including one with 33 seconds left when the Cavs trailed by just six.

"We just wear on you," Pistons coach J.B. Bickerstaff said. "That's what our objective is."

Cleveland's Max Strus scored just three points after he had 19 in the series opener. The Cavs went 0 for 11 from 3-point range in the fourth quarter, with Strus having four of the misses.

"Unfortunately, it was not a night where we shot the ball well — 7 of 32 from 3," Cavs coach Kenny Atkinson said.

Detroit's Duncan Robinson had 17 points, making 5 of 9 3-pointers, and Jenkins came off the bench to score 14 points, his third straight game in double figures.

"I don't think people can keep up with my pace and my speed," Jenkins said.

Cleveland made the first shot but didn't lead again until Evan Mobley's dunk put the visitors ahead 81-79 early in the fourth quarter.

The Pistons led by 11 points in the first quarter and 14 in the second quarter.

"I don't know what it is with the start of games," Atkinson said. "They came out super aggressive of course, but it's the playoffs. Obviously, we haven't figured that one out. Still back to the drawing board."

The Cavs scored the first six points of the final quarter and Detroit responded with plays at both ends of the court.

Robinson had a tiebreaking 3-pointer with 9:40 left and Cunningham made a 3-pointer to put the Pistons ahead by nine points with 2:12 to go, sealing the victory.

Cavs reserve guard Sam Merrill missed Game 2 with a hamstring injury after he was hurt in the series opener.

Cubs beat Reds for 9th straight win

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Michael Conforto went 3 for 3 with a homer and two RBIs, Shota Imanaga pitched six innings of one-run ball and the Chicago Cubs extended their winning streak to nine games with an 8-3 victory over the Cincinnati Reds on Thursday.

The Cubs completed a four-game sweep of the Reds and won their 15th straight game at Wrigley Field for their longest home winning streak since 1935.

The Cubs (26-12) seized control by scoring seven runs in the fourth inning. Reds starter Rhett Lowder left the game in the inning with what the team said was right shoulder tightness. The Reds (20-18) lost their seventh straight.

Imanaga (4-2), who threw seven scoreless innings in his previous start, extended that run to 12 innings before Sal Stewart hit a solo homer in the sixth. The 32-year-old left-hander allowed four hits and three walks while striking out 10 for his fifth career double-digit strikeout game.

Lowder (3-3) walked the first two batters of the fourth before leaving with a 1-0 count to Michael Busch. Reliever Connor Phillips allowed both inherited runners to score as the Cubs pushed seven runs across for their highest scoring inning of the season.

Yankees 9, Rangers 2: Trent Grisham hit a go-ahead, three-run double in a six-run sixth inning, and New York beat visiting Texas for its 16th win in 19 games on an afternoon the Rangers misplayed four balls in a difficult sun.

Yankees left fielder Jasson Domínguez left in a cart after crashing into the wall while catching Brandon Nimmo's drive leading off the first. Domínguez went for an MRI of his left shoulder and was put into a concussion protocol.

AL-best New York won its sixth straight series while sending the Rangers to their seventh loss in 10 games.

Yankees scheduled starter Ryan Weathers was scratched because of illness, Paul Blackburn pitched the first and 27-year-old right-hander Brendan Beck allowed two runs, two hits and three walks in three innings-plus of his major league debut.

Brent Headrick (3-0) pitched 1½ hitless innings. Grisham and Cody Bellinger had three hits each.

Nationals 7, Twins 5: Keibert Ruiz homered, doubled twice and drove in four runs to lift Washington to a victory over visiting Minnesota.

Ruiz's solo shot off John Klein (0-1) broke

a 5-all tie in the seventh, and Curtis Mead added an RBI single later that inning. PJ Poulín (3-0) won in relief, and Gus Varland got four outs for his fourth save.

Ryan Jeffers homered for Minnesota.

Guardians 8, Royals 5: Bo Naylor hit a three-run home run in the seventh inning and Kyle Manzardo a two-run double that opened the scoring in the first to lead Cleveland over host Kansas City.

The Guardians greeted Seth Lugo with five hits in a three-run first inning highlighted by Manzardo's double to the wall in right-center.

In 5½ innings, Slade Cecconi (2-4) limited the Royals to two runs on six hits while walking three and striking out three.

Cade Smith struck out two to earn his 10th save.

Pirates 4, Diamondbacks 2: Brandon Lowe had three hits, including his 10th homer, and Joey Bart also went deep to back Mitch Keller as Pittsburgh won at Arizona.

Keller (4-1) went six-plus innings, retiring 10 straight between Corbin Carroll's solo home run in the third and Ildemaro Vargas' single leading off the seventh. That hit ended Keller's day after 84 pitches. He gave up four hits and two runs, walked two and struck out four.

The Pirates won two of three in the series.

Gregory Soto retired the side in order in the ninth for his third save.

Arizona starter Zac Gallen (1-3) pitched six innings, allowing six hits and four runs, walking two and striking out five.

Rockies 6, Mets 2: Jake McCarthy hit a grand slam and matched a career-high with five RBIs as Colorado snapped a six-game losing streak with a victory over visiting New York.

The eighth-inning grand slam snapped a 2-2 tie and was the second home run in as many days for McCarthy, who had entered the series without a homer in his previous 22 games with at least one at-bat.

McCarthy, hitting .354 since April 5, had previously tied the game in the sixth inning with an RBI double to center field.

Antonio Senzatela (2-0) threw two scoreless innings to earn the win. Colorado's bullpen shut out the Mets across 3½ innings, a stretch in which they allowed just one hit.

Craig Kimbrel (0-2) took the loss after allowing McCarthy's grand slam, a swing that ballooned his ERA from 3.68 to 7.56.

Athletics 12, Phillies 1: J.T. Ginn pitched eight stellar innings, Zack Gelof homered, tripled and drove in three runs, and the Ath-

letics cruised to a win at Philadelphia to avoid a three-game sweep.

Shea Langeliers, Brent Rooker and Jacob Wilson also went deep for the AL West leaders. Nick Kurtz extended his on-base streak to 31 games with a first-inning walk.

Kyle Schwarber homered for the Phillies, who lost for just the second time in 10 games under interim manager Don Mattingly.

Ginn (1-1), making his sixth start after being elevated from the bullpen, allowed one run on four hits with eight strikeouts and one walk.

Marlins 4, Orioles 3: Joe Mack scored the winning run in the ninth inning on a throwing error by third baseman Coby Mayo, and Miami beat visiting Baltimore to avoid a series sweep and snap a four-game losing streak.

Mack, called up from the minors on Monday, hit a two-out double off Andrew Kittridge (0-1) before Javier Sanoja sent a grounder to third. Mayo bobbled the ball and then made a wild throw to first base, allowing Mack to score.

Pete Alonso tied it for Baltimore in the eighth with a run-scoring single that stretched his season-high hitting streak to eight games. He finished the series in Miami with four hits, six RBIs and a homer.

Rays 8, Red Sox 4: Pinch-hitter Chandler Simpson broke a sixth-inning tie with a two-run single and Tampa Bay won its seventh straight game by beating host Boston.

Simpson added an RBI triple in the eighth for the Rays, who have won 13 of 14 overall. Junior Caminero hit a two-run homer in the ninth, his 10th of the season, and Yandy Díaz got his 1,000th career hit.

Tampa Bay used four relievers to cover the final five innings. Hunter Bigge (1-0) pitched two scoreless innings for the win.

Making his second major league start, Boston left-hander Jake Bennett (1-1) allowed four runs and six hits in 5½ innings. He walked two and struck out one.

Cardinals 2, Padres 1: Jordan Walker doubled and scored the tiebreaking run on Masyn Winn's triple in the seventh inning of St. Louis' victory at San Diego.

Alec Burleson homered in the opener of a seven-game California trip for the Cardinals, who have won eight of 10.

Matthew Liberatore (2-1) yielded three hits and three walks over six innings with six strikeouts for St. Louis. His bullpen gave up one hit while facing the minimum nine batters, with Riley O'Brien pitching the ninth for his 11th save in 13 opportunities.

Even more March Madness on tap

Fueled by beer ads, NCAA tournaments will expand to 76 teams each starting next season

Associated Press

The magical March Madness cocktail will now include eight more teams, eight more games and more of one other ingredient: beer. Maybe wine, too.

The NCAA on Thursday announced a long-expected expansion of its men's and women's basketball tournaments to 76 teams each starting next season, explaining that it financed the change by opening sponsorship opportunities to a long-restricted alcohol category.

"I would say that expansion would not have happened without that agreement," said Dan Gavitt, the NCAA's senior vice president of basketball.

The new, 76-team brackets will jam eight extra games — for a total of 12 involving 24 teams — into the first week of each tournament. It will turn what's now known as the First Four into a bigger affair that will now be called the March Madness Opening Round.

The 12 winners will move into the main 64-team bracket that will begin, as usual, on Thursday for the men and Friday for the women. In all, there will now be 120 games across the two tournaments over seven days to set the table for the Sweet 16s.

"Things will look a little different, but feel very, very similar," said Amanda Braun, the women's tournament committee chair.

Because the added games were unlikely to sell themselves, the first expansion of the men's tournament in 15 years — it was bumped to 68 teams in 2011, followed by the women in 2022 — will be bankrolled by around \$300 million in extra funding courtesy of new sponsorship opportunities for beer, wine, spirits and hard seltzer that includes more advertising space on CBS, TNT and other partners whose \$8.8 billion deal runs through 2032.

Key numbers

The NCAA will expand its Division I basketball tournaments from 68 to 76 teams next season. The change isn't expected to radically disrupt the familiar bracket for most casual fans. Here is a breakdown of some key numbers to know:

0 — The number of mid-major schools that advanced past the first weekend of either tournament the last two seasons.

1 in 9.2 quintillion — The estimated odds against picking a perfect bracket even before adding eight games to the mix.

4 — Games matching No. 12 seeds and No. 16 seeds in the opening round.

8 — The number of teams being added to each tournament (men and women). It's also the number of new games being added to each tourney.

15 — The number of years since the NCAA last expanded the men's tournament (from 65 to 68 in 2011). The women's tourney grew from 64 to 68 in 2022.

120 — Total number of games for the two tournaments over seven days between the bracket announcement and the conclusion of the second round.

131 — As in \$131 million, the amount of new revenue the NCAA expects to share with tournament participants under the expansion.

300 — As in \$300 million, the extra funding the NCAA expects to get from new advertising opportunities tied to expansion, including the addition of liquor ads that had largely been off-limits.

2032 — The year the current \$8.8 billion broadcast deal between the NCAA and partners like CBS, TNT and others expires, raising the potential for more change.

350,000 — As in \$350,000, the value of a NCAA-distributed "unit" for a men's team that reached the tournament.

— Associated Press

The NCAA said it will distribute more than \$131 million of the new revenue to schools that make the tournament.

'Money grab' for big conferences

The number of at-large selections will increase from 37 to 44, ESPN reported, most of which are expected to go to teams from the power conferences that were already commanding the lion's share of entries in the bracket. The Southeastern Conference placed a record 14 teams in the men's bracket two years ago. Last season, the Big Ten had nine.

In an interview earlier this week, UConn women's coach Geno Auriemma spelled out the bottom line.

"This is strictly a money grab

for the Power Four conferences to get teams that finished 6-10 in their conference to get into the tournament," he said.

He also questioned the need to expand the women's bracket. Only seven of 32 round-of-64 games this year were decided by single digits compared to 11 for the men.

The move is a sign of the times, which includes massive expansion — the Atlantic Coast Conference, for instance, has grown from nine to 17 teams since 1996 — and the reality that mid-major schools with talented players will often see them plucked away by programs with bigger budgets and the ability to pay them through revenue sharing. The rich get richer.

Cinderella? There will still be room for those stirring runs in

the tournaments, though not a single mid-major advanced past the first weekend of either tournament the last two seasons.

"As someone who has been both David, and won some, and Goliath, and lost some, that's what makes this tournament special," Arkansas coach John Calipari said earlier in the week. "We can't afford to lose that special piece of our sport."

Moving 'units' and more chances for little guys

The new beer and wine money will add to what the NCAA can distribute in "units" that are earned for placing teams in the bracket and then for every round those teams advance. Last year, that amounted to about \$350,000 per unit for the men's tournament.

Some of that extra money will go to the small guys, too. This gives all the 16 seeds (and some 15s) a chance to play an evenly matched game in the play-in round, then maybe win that game and the extra "unit" that comes with it.

Gavitt said the new games will likely be part of triple-headers on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The NCAA will find a site to join the traditional First Four host, Dayton, Ohio, for some of the games.

Then, come Thursday, there will be 64 teams in a bracket and a tournament that looks comfortably familiar: three weeks of hoops capped off by the Final Four.

Gavitt said it was impossible to predict what might come after the current TV deal expires but that 76 teams is "maxing out the opportunity here."

"Anything's possible, I guess, in 2032 or beyond," he said. "But I can say with confidence that this is the format that will be in place through 2032, and, we think, for a long time after that."