

Trump says China offered help with Iran

Bloomberg News

President Donald Trump signaled China is willing to support negotiations with Iran, as he pushes for a diplomatic resolution to end the war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, after a commercial vessel was apparently seized near the United Arab Emirates.

Trump, who is visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, said his counterpart offered to help, something China has not explicitly confirmed. In a readout of the meeting between Trump and Xi, a White House official said the two sides agreed that the Strait of Hormuz must be open to support the free flow of energy.

“He said he’s not going to give

them military equipment,” Trump said, according to a clip of an interview with Fox News. “President Xi would like to see a deal made. He would like to see a deal made. And he did offer; he said if I can be of any help at all I would like to be of help.”

China is the Islamic Republic’s largest oil buyer and a key diplomatic partner, granting it a degree of diplomatic sway over the Islamic Republic. It supplies Tehran with goods from consumer products to electronics.

A commercial vessel was apparently seized by unauthorized personnel near the United Arab Emirates earlier on Thursday, adding to uncertainty over control of the critical

Strait of Hormuz.

The ship, whose identity wasn’t disclosed, was taken 38 nautical miles off the UAE coast, the U.K. Maritime Trade Operations said, adding the vessel was bound for the Islamic Republic.

The incident happened as there appears to be an uptick in vessels transiting the strait, which usually handles about a fifth of the world’s oil and liquefied natural gas supply. Its effective closure since the U.S. and Israel began bombing Iran in late February has upended energy markets and led to global supply shortages.

Iran said Thursday a number of Chinese vessels will transit the strait following discussions

with Beijing’s foreign ministry, the semiofficial Fars news agency reported, citing a source it didn’t identify. Vessels will be allowed through according to “Iranian management protocols,” the agency added.

A separate report by Iranian state TV said over 30 ships have been allowed passage through the strait since Wednesday night, according to an official from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ navy.

The U.S. hasn’t commented on movements through the Persian Gulf’s choke point, where it’s refused to lift a blockade on Iranian ports. Yet, 10 vessels carrying oil, fuel and gas have made it through since Sunday, an increase from recent weeks.

Trump noncommittal to Xi over Taiwan, arms sale

Bloomberg News

President Donald Trump said he made no commitment to Chinese President Xi Jinping over Taiwan, and would make a decision soon over a planned \$14 billion arms deal with the island.

“On Taiwan he feels very strongly; I made no commitment either way,” Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One on Friday. The U.S. president said he would ultimately “make a determination over the next fairly short period” about the weapons after speaking to the person “that’s running Taiwan,” without specifying who he means.

“I may do it. I may not do it,” Trump said separately in a Fox News interview.

Trump said he and Xi “talked a lot” about the issue, and the Chinese leader “does not want to see a fight for independence,

because that would be a very strong confrontation.” The U.S. president told Fox he wants China to “cool down” on Taiwan.

Trump also said Xi asked him directly if the U.S. would defend Taiwan in a conflict.

“There’s only one person that knows that, you know, it is me, I’m the only person,” Trump said.

Trump’s extended conversation with Xi over Taiwan policy was itself remarkable, and represented a possible break that could reverberate both internationally and domestically.

The U.S. has a long-standing policy of strategic ambiguity over whether it would come to the aid of Taiwan, with Washington reserving the right to use force but never explicitly saying whether it would actually intervene. But negotiating any arms transfers with Xi would flout

diplomatic policy.

U.S.-Taiwan relations have been dictated since 1982 by President Ronald Reagan’s “six assurances,” which take a deliberately vague stance toward the island’s sovereignty but explicitly state that the U.S. would not consult with China on arms sales to Taiwan and would not revise the Taiwan Relations Act, which requires Washington to provide the island with defensive arms.

Trump was asked explicitly whether he risked undermining the assurances, a bipartisan bedrock of U.S. foreign policy, by a reporter aboard Air Force One. He responded by saying 1982 was “a long way” away, but reiterated he didn’t make commitments to Xi. At the same time, he sowed doubt about whether he would follow through with the arms sale.

“I think the last thing we need right now is a war that’s 9,500 miles away,” Trump said.

Still, he told Fox News that “nothing’s changed” with regard to the U.S. stance on Taiwan.

Hsiao Kuang-wei, spokesperson for the foreign ministry in Taipei, pointed to comments from senior U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio, affirming that Washington’s policy towards Taiwan “remains unchanged,” adding that weapons sales are stipulated under current U.S. law and “represent a form of joint deterrence against regional threats.”

“Taiwan appreciates President Trump’s continued support for security in the Taiwan Strait since his first term in office, with the most recently announced arms sales package reaching a historic high in value,” Hsiao said in a statement.

DOD extends Guam missile defense contract

By JONATHAN BAEZ
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon approved another \$407 million for Lockheed Martin's work on the Enhanced Integrated Air and Missile Defense System on Guam, bringing the company's contract total to \$1.9 billion, according to a recent announcement.

The contract, first awarded in November 2020, calls for the company to engineer, develop and certify integrated air and missile defense capabilities into the Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense system being built on the island.

The Lockheed contract is part of an \$8 billion project to defend the U.S. island territory from cruise, ballistic or hypersonic missiles that could come from China or North Korea in the event of hostilities.

The Pentagon announced the extension on May 7.

Guam is the westernmost U.S. territory and a key forward operating base in the Pacific. Andersen Air Force Base, Marine Corps Camp Blaz and Naval Base Guam, which includes the Polaris Point submarine base, are located there.

The defense system is a 360-degree integrated air and missile defense network on 16 sites around the island. Eight sites are on Naval Base Guam, six are at Andersen and two are on Blaz.

The system is composed of 36 missile launchers, 23 communication towers and 14 radar systems. Construction is scheduled for completion in 2035.

The project could have consequences for the island's environment and living standards, according to an Environmental Im-

pact Statement released in July.

An influx of contractors and service personnel to build and operate the system may strain the island's housing supply and health care system, according to the report.

Construction is expected to destroy 282 acres of limestone forest and remove nearly 5,500 fadang trees, an endangered species unique to the region, while also threatening the habitat of the endangered Mariana fruit bat, according to the impact statement.

An Aegis system on Guam would give the U.S. its third operational Aegis Ashore installation.

The other two are in Deveselu, Romania, operational since 2016, and Redzikowo, Poland, operational since 2024. Both sites are designed to protect NATO allies

and U.S. personnel from potential missile attacks originating in the Middle East.

Both European Aegis systems incorporate radar stations from the SPY-1 family and an integrated fire-control system.

The Guam system was planned to include AN/TPY-6, a ground-based radar derived from SPY-7 and Long Range Discrimination Radar technology.

However, the Pentagon halted its development in January 2025 while retaining an experimental panel for potential future use, according to Defense News on May 30, 2025.

Lockheed Martin was the only company considered for the modification. The company faces no competitive bidding pressure on a contract that has grown by more than \$400 million.

Coast Guard crew seizes 8,000 pounds of cocaine

Miami Herald

MIAMI—A U.S. Coast Guard cutter crew unloaded more than 8,000 pounds of cocaine at Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale on Thursday. The agency says it is worth almost \$62 million.

The drugs were seized in the Caribbean Sea about 90 miles off the coast of Cartagena on May 8, the Coast Guard said in a press release.

The Cutter Tahoma, which is based in Newport, R.I., brought the contraband to South Florida on Thursday upon its return from serving a drug-interdiction tour off Colombia as part of ongoing operations with the U.S. Navy and other agencies in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific Ocean.

Most of the cocaine was seized from three vessels stopped at sea by small-vessel

crews launched from the Tahoma, as well as a helicopter crew that shot out the engines of one of the smuggling boats, according to the Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard released a video showing a helicopter gunner using a machine gun to shoot in front of the smuggling boat, then a sniper rifle to disable the engines. Once the vessel stopped, the gunner threw three flotation devices to the suspected smugglers, who jumped overboard.

"This interdiction prevented a significant number of illegal narcotics from reaching America's shores, and their teamwork underscores the Coast Guard's mission to protect our nation and saving lives," Cmdr. Nolan Cuevas, the Tahoma's commanding officer, said in a statement.

Russian vessels sailed near Japan's southwest islands

By BRIAN McELHINEY
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

Ten Russian ships, including four naval vessels, sailed between Japan's southwestern islands this week, an event a Joint Staff spokesman called "rare to see."

The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force spotted the Russian vessels at 11 p.m. Tuesday about 30 miles northwest of Iriomote Island, the Joint Staff said in a news release Wednesday.

The vessels included two Russian Steregushchiy-class frigates with hull numbers 333 and 343, a Dubna-class replenishment ship, a Bulk-class ocean-going tug and six cargo ships, according to the release.

Russian state-run news agency TASS identified hull number 333 as the RFS Sovershenny in a

photo posted online May 14, 2020. The other frigate is the RFS Rezky, U.S. Naval Institute News reported Monday.

The vessels sailed southwest toward the Pacific Ocean through waters between Yonaguni Island and Iriomote over the next few hours, according to the release. The islands are part of Okinawa prefecture.

The same vessels were spotted at 5 p.m. Saturday about 87 miles northeast of Tsushima island, according to a Joint Staff news release Monday. The vessels then sailed southwest between Tsushima and Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's main islands.

Japan dispatched the fast attack craft JS Shirataka and a P-1 maritime patrol aircraft to monitor the passage, Monday's release said.

Judge weighs pause to Trump order on mail voting limits

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — A federal judge in Washington acknowledged Thursday the tight timeline he faces in deciding whether to pause President Donald Trump's executive order to create a national voter list and limit mail voting nationwide.

Congressional Democratic leaders, the Democratic National Committee and party campaign committees, as well as civil rights groups and advocacy organizations, urged Judge Carl Nichols for the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to pause aspects of the executive order Trump issued at the end of March.

The executive order sought to have the Department of Homeland Security create a nationwide "state citizenship list" and then have the government coordinate with states to use that list as they manage their voter rolls. Separately the order would have the U.S. Postal Service create a rule to restrict election mail to only people on state voter lists.

Additionally, the order directed the attorney general and other agencies to seek to investigate and punish states or local governments that did not comply, including by rescinding federal funds.

At one point during Thursday's two-hour hearing, Nichols said that if he waited until July, when the order stated the postal service would finalize the rule, "now we're on the cusp of election season."

"Why shouldn't I take it up now?" Nichols asked the government.

Stephen Pezzi, attorney for the Justice Department, argued that the Democrats and civil

rights groups can't articulate how the federal government would violate the law because of the order, either in the creation of the voter list or with the postal service rule.

Both sides are "shadowboxing over a hypothetical list that hasn't been created yet," Pezzi said.

The DOJ, while acknowledging that the state lists would not contain perfect information about every eligible voter, can't be held responsible for potential unlawful actions by a state to remove an eligible voter from the rolls, Pezzi said.

State actions like that are "not a concern, for the most part, of the federal government," Pezzi said.

Nichols also pushed the challengers to explain how he could block a rulemaking the government has not started yet, as "we don't know how DHS is going to compile the list."

"We don't know, sitting here today, whether any of these steps are going to take place," Nichols said.

Lalitha Madduri, attorney for the Democratic groups challenging the order, argued that federal privacy law prohibits the creation of exactly the kind of list laid out by the executive order.

Madduri said Congress prohibited that sort of cross-referenced national database without explicit authorization in another law.

"There is no lawful way to compile the list," Madduri said.

Danielle Lang, attorney for the civil rights groups, pushed Nichols to act sooner rather than later, as "waiting will erode public confidence in elections."

Ship builder rejects Md. claims on power failures

Capital Gazette

BALTIMORE — The builders of the cargo ship that destroyed the Francis Scott Key Bridge are pushing back against Maryland's claims that they share responsibility for the collapse, arguing that the vessel's owners and operators failed to properly maintain the ship in the decade after it left the shipyard.

In a statement emailed to the Baltimore Sun Wednesday night, HD Hyundai Heavy Industries said that when it delivered the cargo ship Dali almost 10 years before the vessel struck the bridge, there was no indication of loose wires, which is what federal investigators say caused the first of two power outages before the ship crashed into the bridge on March 26,

2024.

"Even if a wire were to become loose over the course of a decade, Grace Ocean and Synergy should have detected that in a routine inspection and through normal maintenance," the company said.

Tuesday, the Maryland attorney general's office said the state reached a \$2.25 billion settlement with Dali owner Grace Ocean Private Limited and operator Synergy Marine Private Limited. In its announcement, the office said it would continue to pursue action against HD Hyundai Heavy Industries, which the National Transportation Safety Board blamed in a 2025 report for electrical failures aboard the Dali that caused the vessel to lose power before the collision.

Several candidates look to replace Pelosi in House race

The Mercury News

SAN FRANCISCO — As longtime U.S. House Rep. Nancy Pelosi heads into retirement, a slew of candidates are battling it out to replace the influential congresswoman.

Of the 11 on the June 2 ballot, three of the more prominent contenders for San Francisco's 11th Congressional District who have reported raising the most money include state Sen. Scott Wiener, San Francisco Supervisor Connie Chan and former tech engineer Saikat Chakrabarti.

Pelosi has not endorsed any candidate.

Wiener, 56, entered the race in October 2025, prior to when Pelosi's retirement plans were made public.

"People want representation in Congress by someone who is going to fight (Donald) Trump and authoritarianism," Wiener told the Bay Area News Group. "They want someone who's go-

ing to fight for the things they care about and a proven track record of getting things done."

Should he be elected, Wiener said his priorities would include reversing Trump administration cuts to public services such as Medicaid and education, funding food assistance programs and bulking up federal protections for members of the LGBTQ community.

Other Democrats in the race include rocket scientist John "Gus" Buffler, small business owner Keith Freedman, tech advocate Omed Hamid, civil rights advocate Gregory M. Haynes and attorney Marie Hurrabiell.

The two Republicans on the ballot include Santa Monica Observer publisher David Ganezer and Jingchao Xiong, a social management scientist. The sole independent candidate is Nathan Deer, a homeowners association treasurer.

Trump: China to order 200 Boeing aircraft

The Seattle Times

China has reportedly placed an order for 200 Boeing aircraft, marking Boeing's first order in nearly a decade from one of the fastest growing aviation markets.

President Donald Trump said on a Fox News interview Thursday that China's President Xi Jinping agreed to place an order for 200 Boeing planes, part of trade negotiations taking place during Trump's two-day visit to Beijing this week. Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg and several other business leaders joined Trump on the trip.

Ortberg told analysts on Boe-

ing's quarterly earnings call last month that a large China order may come during Trump's trade summit, noting that such an order was "100% dependent on the U.S.-China negotiations and relations."

Ortberg stopped short of detailing how many planes China might order but said "it's a big number."

The agreement Trump discussed on Fox News was far smaller than rumors circulating before the trade delegation's visit, which projected China might order 500 737 MAX planes, as well as 100 wide-body aircraft, including the 787 and

yet-to-be-certified 777X.

Boeing's stock fell nearly 5% Thursday after the order announcement.

Trump did not elaborate on what types of planes China agreed to purchase.

Boeing didn't respond immediately to a request for comment.

China hasn't placed an order for Boeing aircraft since 2017. Two fatal 737 MAX crashes, the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tension with the U.S. have kept the country from committing to a high-value order.

China's last order with Boeing also came during a visit with

Trump, during his first term in office.

At the time, China placed an order for 300 single-aisle and twin-aisle aircraft, valued at more than \$37 billion, according to a Boeing news release.

It's unclear how many Boeing aircraft China has already ordered in total; the manufacturer often lists orders as slotted for unidentified customers. But China likely accounts for 10% of Boeing's backlog, which totaled more than 6,000 planes at the end of April, according to an investor note from Jefferies analyst Sheila Kahyaoglu before Trump's visit.

Cuba accepts \$100M US aid and says it has run out of oil

Miami Herald

Cuba's leader, Miguel Díaz-Canel, said Thursday that his government will accept a U.S. offer to provide \$100 million in humanitarian aid, as the country runs out of fuel and Washington signals its impatience with stalled diplomatic talks between the two countries.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Friday the U.S. government had offered to send \$100 million in humanitarian aid to the country, but that Cuban authorities had not accepted it. Earlier this week Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez said his government had no knowledge of the offer and accused Rubio of lying.

But after the State Department on Wednesday said the offer was still standing, Díaz-Canel said the Cuban government would not stand in its way.

"If the U.S. government is truly prepared to provide aid in the amounts it has announced—and in full conformity with universally recognized practices for humanitarian assistance—it will encounter neither obstacles nor ingratitude on the part

of Cuba, however inconsistent and paradoxical such an offer may seem to a people whom that very same U.S. government systematically and ruthlessly subjects to collective punishment," Díaz-Canel wrote in a posting on X.

The State Department said the aid could be distributed by the Catholic Church and other reliable independent humanitarian organizations. Rubio discussed the aid delivery in a meeting at the Vatican with Pope Leo XIV last week.

Cuba's leader said his government's "experience working with the Catholic Church is rich and productive." He said, "The priorities are more than evident: fuel, food, and medicines."

The Herald reached out to the State Department for comment, but had not had a response by the time this story was published.

On Wednesday, the country's energy minister said the government has run out of fuel and diesel entirely, just when the island's hot summer season is starting.

Pope: Europe rearmament is a risk to social spending

Bloomberg News

Pope Leo XIV has criticized a European rush to rearm, warning it is diverting resources from education and health, as he reiterated his message of peace.

"Over the past year, the increase in military spending worldwide, and particularly in Europe, has been enormous," the pope said in a speech at the Sapienza University in Rome on Thursday. "Let us not call defense a rearmament that increases tensions and insecurity, deprives investment in education and health, undermines trust in diplomacy, and enriches elites who care nothing for the common good."

The pontiff's remarks are some of the most direct yet against the escalation of military spending and international conflicts. They could also be seen as another indirect swipe at President Donald Trump, who last year forced North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies to ramp up defense spending.

Pope Leo, who has called himself a peacemaker, Italian

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Trump have clashed over the last few weeks after the pontiff condemned the war in Iran. Earlier this month, Trump said that the pope was "endangering" Catholics and suggested that he was too tolerant of Iran's nuclear ambitions.

"If someone wants to criticize me for proclaiming the Gospel, let him do so truthfully," the pope said in an apparent response.

Addressing students and faculty, Pope Leo invoked the legacy of past conflicts, saying that "the tragedies of the twentieth century must not be forgotten. The cry 'never again war!' of my predecessors, so in line with the rejection of war enshrined in the Italian constitution, urges us to form a spiritual alliance with the sense of justice that dwells in the hearts of young people."

Pope Leo, the first pontiff to hail from the U.S., has become increasingly vocal in his defense of peace since being elected in May of 2025. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio visited Rome in a fence-mending trip last week.

NFL to open with Super Bowl rematch

Associated Press

The 2026 NFL season will kick off with a Super Bowl rematch.

Mike Macdonald, Sam Darnold and the Seattle Seahawks will face off against Mike Vrabel, Drake Maye and the New England Patriots after raising their championship banner on Sept. 9 in the first of the NFL's 272 games.

The Seahawks dominated the Patriots in a 29-13 victory in February that secured the franchise's second NFL title.

The game will mark just the third time that the teams that played in the Super Bowl face off in Week 1. The last time came in 2016, when the Broncos beat the Panthers.

Super Bowl opponents have met 11 times the following season, including each of the past three years. The defending champs are 8-3 in those games.

The Eagles followed up a Super Bowl victory with another win over the Chiefs in Week 2 last year.

"Yes, it was definitely a key data point for us," NFL executive Hans Schroeder said. "We saw what a big draw that was and so we just thought it was really fun. I think it's been a decade since we did Denver and Carolina in Super Bowl 50 and came back in Week 1 the next year. We thought it was a fun way to start the season again with New England in Seattle, coming off that Super Bowl, certainly a ton to play for. Let our fans see if they play again."

The season will open on a Wednesday for the second time in NFL history — the Giants

hosted the Cowboys on Sept. 5, 2012.

The opener will be Vrabel's first game since the reigning AP Coach of the Year missed Day 3 of the NFL draft to seek counseling following the publication of photos showing him and longtime football reporter Dianna Russini at an Arizona resort. The photos led to Russini's resignation from The Athletic less than a week later.

Seattle will play at least six other stand-alone games, including Christmas night at home against the Los Angeles Rams. The Pats have five other stand-alone games.

Week 1

Other opening-week highlights were announced before the full schedule release on Thursday night.

The San Francisco 49ers will face the Rams in Melbourne on Sept. 10 in the first of a record nine international games.

The Cowboys and Giants meet in the first Sunday night game of the season while the Broncos and Chiefs go head to head in the first Monday night game.

Raiders fans get to see No. 1-overall pick Fernando Mendoza — probably on the sideline watching Kirk Cousins start — in Week 1 when Las Vegas hosts Miami.

Thanksgiving weekend

Josh Allen and the Bills host Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs on Thanksgiving night to complete a tripleheader. The Bears-Lions and Eagles-Cowboys matchups were previously released.

Aaron Rodgers — maybe — and the Steelers host the Broncos on Black Friday.

The Packers and Rams are playing on Thanksgiving Eve.

Christmas week

Santa Claus has to go through Philadelphia on Christmas Eve when the Eagles host the Texans on "Thursday Night Football."

The Christmas Day tripleheader features Packers-Bears, Bills-Broncos and Rams-Seahawks.

The two games on Saturday, Dec. 26, haven't been determined.

International games

The league will play across four continents, starting with the Week 1 game in Australia. Sixteen of the league's 32 teams will play at least one of their 17 regular-season games outside the U.S.

The 49ers and Jacksonville each have two international games. San Francisco also faces Minnesota in Mexico City in Week 11. The Jaguars have consecutive games in London in Weeks 5 and 6 against the Eagles and Texans. The Colts and Commanders also face off in London in Week 4.

The Steelers play the New Orleans Saints on Oct. 25 in Paris in the NFL's first regular-season matchup in France.

The Cowboys and Baltimore Ravens go head to head in Rio de Janeiro in Week 3.

The Bengals and Falcons are in Madrid in Week 8 and the Patriots and Lions play in Munich in Week 9.

O'Ward tops Indy leaderboard on 3rd day of practice

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — IndyCar driver Pato O'Ward finally saw his name at the top of the Indianapolis 500 leaderboard Thursday.

He's hoping his name is still in the No. 1 spot on May 24.

The Mexican driver who finished second in 2022 and 2024 and third last year in IndyCar's biggest race of the season posted

the fastest lap of the day on the third day of practice on Indy's 2.5-mile oval, going 227.308 mph. Four-time race winner Helio Castroneves, who tried his hand at Cup cars earlier this year, posted a 226.977.

"I like love the whole month, the practice days going into qualifying. The whole thing of qualifying on its own weekend, I love that," O'Ward said. "I really enjoy watching

as well, and it's cool to see the big runs, big numbers and then going out there yourself and trying to beat that."

But as O'Ward knows, Thursday's numbers don't mean much heading into qualifications Saturday and Sunday — or race day.

All 33 cars will have their power cranked up with a turbocharged boost Friday before starting their qualifying runs Saturday.

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Scheffler among 7 tied for PGA lead

Associated Press

NEWTOWN SQUARE, Pa. — Scottie Scheffler missed a 4-foot putt and laughed. Jon Rahm angrily swung his club after an errant shot and the grass divot hit a volunteer in the face. Garrick Higgo was 10 seconds late to the first tee and penalized two shots before he even swung a club.

Aronimink waited 64 years to host another PGA Championship and made up for lost time in a big way Thursday, including the biggest logjam in a major championship since 1969.

When the long day was over, most predictable was seeing Scheffler's name atop the leaderboard at 3-under 67, along with six other players. Another surprise: It's the first time the world's No. 1 player has at least a share of the lead after 18 holes of a major.

Scheffler wasn't buying it.

"Is it a really a lead when you're tied with like six guys?" he told ESPN with a laugh.

Scheffler took advantage of two long birdie putts and one big break on the 17th hole for his lowest start to a tournament since January. He was tied with six others — former PGA champion Martin Kaymer perhaps the most surprising — on a tough day in the Philadelphia suburbs.

Joining them at 67 were Aldrich Potgieter, Stephan Jaeger, Min Woo Lee, Ryo Hisatsune and Alex Smalley. The seven-way tie was the largest since nine players shared the lead in the 1969 PGA at NCR Country Club in Dayton, Ohio.

"At this moment, it's anybody's tournament," Scheffler said. Indeed, 48 players were within three shots of the lead. The difference between missing the cut and being part of the lead was six shots.

And to think it could have been eight players. Higgo had a 69, which included a two-shot penalty before he even hit a shot for being 10 seconds late to the

McIlroy has bad finish, rough start

Associated Press

The blister on Rory McIlroy's right pinky toe was the least of his worries Thursday in the PGA Championship. And it certainly didn't cause him as much pain as staring a scorecard that featured five bogeys over his last six holes.

He struggled mightily off the tee, a recipe for trouble at Aronimink. He was tentative over his putts, with three misses from the 7-foot range that could have made him feel a lot better.

The result was a 4-over 74 that left McIlroy chasing the wrong kind of history as the Masters champion goes for the second leg of the calendar Grand Slam. Not since the late Payne Stewart in 1989 has a player started the PGA Championship with a 74 and gone on to win.

The question by a PGA of America moderator when it was over sounded innocuous: "How would you describe your opening round?" The response was one word. A four-letter stinky word.

McIlroy had said earlier this week at Aronimink that "strategy off the tee is pretty nonex-

istent. It's basically bash driver down there and then figure it out from there."

He never quite figured it out Thursday.

McIlroy was hanging around par for so much of the day, right there with Jordan Spieth and Jon Rahm in his group, not bad golf given the testing conditions at Aronimink.

But he started missing fairways — a lot of them.

His lone bogey on his front nine came on the opening hole from the right rough — he managed to only get that scooting down the fairway. But the miss to the right on the par-4 fourth (his 13th of the day) cost him another bogey. He holed a 30-foot birdie putt on the par-3 fifth. All was well.

And then it wasn't.

"I missed the fairway right on 4, the fairway right on 6, the fairway right on 7, fairway right on 9," he said. "From there, it's hard. I didn't have great angles, either. Then obviously you start missing it just off the edges of these greens, it gets tricky.

"I just got on that bogey train at the end."

tee for his group's starting time.

Masters champion Rory McIlroy bogeyed his last four holes for a 74 that sent him to the practice range for most of the afternoon.

Not since Oakland Hills in 2008 — Jeev Milkha Singh and Robert Karlsson at 2-under 68 — has the low score to par after the first round of the PGA Championship been worse than 3 under. Aronimink with its severely sloped greens, fast fairways and plenty of wind that shooed away morning clouds was every bit a major challenge.

Scheffler has struggled with opening rounds for most of the year since opening with a 63 in his season debut at The American Express, his only victory. He missed only one fairway, which cost him one of his two bogeys on the day.

"Definitely the best start I've gotten off to this year, maybe besides American Express," Scheffler said. "Your scores are

definitely going to be lower if you hit the ball on the fairway, but it's still really, really difficult to make birdies."

He made one from just inside 40 feet on the par-4 seventh, and another birdie from just inside 30 feet on the par-4 10th. And even the No. 1 player in the world needed a little help.

Scheffler was in the thick collar of rough to the right of the par-3 17th, facing a chip over a ridge and down toward the hole. But his golf ball was close enough to a sprinkler cap that he was given free relief, dropped on the fringe and putted it to close range for a par.

Kaymer won the PGA Championship in 2010 at Whistling Straits, giving him a lifetime exemption. Kaymer joined LIV Golf in 2022 and has yet to finish in the top 10 in the few European tour events he has played since then. He is No. 1,160 in the world ranking. He hasn't been in the top 10 after one round of any

major since the 2020 PGA Championship.

Patrick Reed was the only player who made it around Aronimink without a bogey, his two birdies giving him a 68 and in the large group with Xander Schauffele and Shane Lowry, who played the two par 5s in 3 under.

Jordan Spieth, lacking only the PGA Championship for the career Grand Slam, bogeyed two of his last three holes — and did not birdie the par-5 ninth, the easiest hole at Aronimink — to join the group at 69 that included Brooks Koepka, Rahm and Justin Thomas.

"Just didn't quite finish the way I wanted to the last three holes, but under par was a good score," Spieth said. "It was blowing really hard, and it was cold this morning. The course played very, very difficult. It was a good start. I'm going to need to improve on it, I think, each day."

Knights top Ducks, reach West finals

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Mitch Marner scored a tremendous goal 62 seconds after the opening faceoff, Pavel Dorofeyev scored twice in the third period and the Vegas Golden Knights cruised into the Western Conference finals with a 5-1 victory over Anaheim Ducks in Game 6 of the second round Thursday night.

Brett Howden scored his third short-handed goal of the playoffs and Shea Theodore got a power-play goal during a 3-0 first period for the Golden Knights, who reached the third round of the NHL postseason for the first time since they won their lone Stanley Cup championship in 2023 — and for the fifth time in this charmed expansion franchise's nine seasons of existence.

"You go into it and you want to score first, especially being on the road," said Theodore, an original member of the Knights after Anaheim traded him to Vegas in 2017. "I thought we responded well. We played great the first 15 minutes, and that's

what we had to do. ... Just a veteran group. We had the right mindset coming in, and it was good to see the results."

Marner played a role in all three of Vegas' first-period goals while raising his NHL-leading playoff point total to 18, and Game 5 overtime goal-scorer Dorofeyev put the game away with a huge third period. Carter Hart made 31 saves as the veteran-laden Golden Knights ended the upstart Ducks' first playoff appearance since 2018.

"It obviously feels great," said Marner, who got labeled a playoff underachiever while his Toronto Maple Leafs never reached a conference final. "We worked extremely hard for all these little goals that we set throughout the year, and another one (is) achieved. But obviously the work just keeps getting harder and harder."

Vegas will face an exponentially bigger challenge in the Colorado Avalanche, who won the Presidents' Trophy and then improved to 8-1 in the postseason on Wednesday by ousting

Minnesota in five games.

Mikael Granlund scored a power-play goal for the Ducks, whose return from a seven-year playoff drought ended when their young roster was unable to match the veteran Knights' playoff poise in three losses over the final four games.

Lukas Dostal stopped 16 shots for Anaheim, which couldn't overcome another poor first period in Game 6, ending their encouraging first season under coach Joel Quenneville.

"Vegas got better every single game," Quenneville said. "They played well. They checked well. They deserved to win. Tonight was kind of what happened too many times this year, where we give up a couple of quick ones early, and it's a tough comeback against a team that knows how to play hockey."

The Knights are 15-4-1 since John Tortorella replaced Cup-winning coach Bruce Cassidy on March 29, surging past the Ducks to claim the Pacific Division title before beating Utah and Anaheim in the first two playoff rounds.

Tortorella, 67, refused to speak to the media after the game.

Marner set the tone for Game 6 very early: The Anaheim crowd hadn't calmed down from the pregame festivities before William Karlsson found Marner behind the defense at the blue line. Marner fought off Jackson LaCombe while driving the net and somehow got turned around, only to flip a shot between his legs and past Dostal for his seventh goal of the postseason and fifth of the series.

"I just tried to make a move," Marner said. "Dostal had me covered, I thought, on the backhand, so I tried to do that move, and luckily it worked out."

Eight minutes after Marner's opening goal, he found an unmarked Howden for his eighth goal and the Knights' NHL-best fourth short-handed goal of the postseason.

Theodore then got a long shot through Marner's screen and over Dostal's shoulder just 5 seconds into a power play, silencing the Honda Center.

Canadiens ride surge to 3-2 series lead over Sabres

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Captain Nick Suzuki and the Canadiens' top line brought the offense, goalie Jakub Dobes shook off a rough start, and Montreal is one win from advancing to the Eastern Conference finals.

Suzuki and Jake Evans capped a three-goal second period surge by scoring 68 seconds apart in a 6-3 win over the Buffalo Sabres on Thursday night, giving the Canadiens a 3-2 lead in their second-round playoff series.

Montreal didn't lead until Evans swept a loose puck over the goal line behind Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen to put the Canadiens up 4-3 with 3:45 remain-

ing in the second period. Ivan Demidov set up the goal when his shot glanced off Luukkonen's glove and then dribbled behind him.

Suzuki then scored 10 seconds into a power-play opportunity by converting Juraj Slafkovsky's one-handed pass from the end boards and beating Luukkonen through the legs with a shot from the lower right circle.

"The power-play goal was huge, felt like it gave us a little bit of breathing room," Suzuki said. "Just kept trying to put the foot on the gas a little bit, too."

Demidov, Cole Caufield, Josh Anderson and Alexandre Texier also scored for Montreal, which will host Game 6 on Sat-

urday night.

Dobes allowed three goals on the first four shots he faced before stopping the final 32. The rookie goalie was pleased with coach Martin St. Louis' decision to keep him in the game, especially after Dobes acknowledged he sagged after rookie Konsta Helenius beat him through the legs to put Buffalo up 3-2.

"I told him thank you for leaving me and trying to prove myself," Dobes said. "I'm really proud of myself too for not giving up and keep making saves."

Josh Doan and Jason Zucker also scored for the Atlantic Division champions, who are facing elimination for the first time

this postseason.

Luukkonen allowed five goals on 23 shots, and was pulled after two periods — the second time he's been yanked this postseason. Alex Lyon mopped up, allowing a goal on three shots. Lyon is potentially in line to regain the starting duties after losing the job following a 6-2 loss in Game 3.

"It's not good enough. Not good enough," Sabres forward Alex Tuch said. "I thought we had a pretty good start actually, too. We should have locked it down better and played better defensively. It's frustrating."

The Sabres have dropped two of three at home in the series, and are 2-4 in the playoffs.

Schwarber's MLB-best 18th HR lifts Phils

Associated Press

BOSTON — Kyle Schwarber hit his major league-leading 18th home run, a two-run shot that broke a scoreless tie in the eighth inning, as the Philadelphia Phillies defeated the Boston Red Sox on Thursday night.

Schwarber has seven homers in his past seven games, the first Phillies player to hit at least that many in a similar span since current teammate Trea Turner in 2023. Schwarber's towering shot in this one cleared the visiting bullpen in right field and traveled an estimated 417 feet.

Bryson Stott added an insurance run in the eighth on an infield hit on which he was initially called out, but it was overturned after the Phillies challenged.

Brad Keller (2-1) struck out two in one relief inning for the win and Jhoan Duran struck out the side in the ninth for his seventh save.

Wilyer Abreu's RBI single in the eighth accounted for Boston's lone run. The Red Sox wrapped up a homestand during which they dropped two of three in series against Tampa Bay and Philadelphia.

Brewers 7, Padres 1: Luis Rengifo drove in three runs, Kyle Harrison recorded seven strikeouts in five scoreless innings and Milwaukee beat visiting San Diego.

The victory capped a 5-1 homestand for the Brewers, who swept the New York Yankees before winning two of three from San Diego.

Harrison (4-1) allowed five hits and no walks to improve his ERA to 2.09.

Reds 15, Nationals 1: Chase Burns threw six scoreless innings, JJ Bleday homered twice and drove in six runs, and host Cincinnati avoided being swept by Washington.

Burns (5-1) allowed two hits while striking out seven and walking two to win his fourth consecutive decision.

The 23-year-old right-hander worked around a three-error fifth inning — one of which was his after dropping a toss while covering first base — to keep the Nationals scoreless. He's allowed only one earned run in his last three starts.

Pirates 7, Rockies 2: Endy Rodriguez had two hits and drove in two runs in his return to the majors as Pittsburgh breezed past visiting Colorado.

Rodriguez, a catcher once considered among the top prospects in Pittsburgh's farm system before missing all of 2024 and most of 2025 due to a pair of elbow injuries, doubled off Chase Dollander (3-3) in the second and added a two-run single in the third in his first big league appearance

since June 6, 2025.

Ryan O'Hearn had three hits for Pittsburgh, including a two-run homer in the first as the Pirates raced to an early lead and cruised. Rookie shortstop Konnor Griffin and Jared Triolo added two hits each as Pittsburgh began a six-game homestand by taking two of three from the Rockies.

Mets 9, Tigers 4: A.J. Ewing hit his first big league home run to spark a comeback for host New York, which completed a three-game sweep of Detroit.

Ewing, who was promoted prior to the series opener Tuesday, hit a 405-foot shot off Keider Montero (2-3) leading off the third. He was 3 for 9 with three RBIs and four walks against the Tigers as the Mets recorded their first sweep since taking three straight from the Philadelphia Phillies in August.

Brett Baty hit a two-run homer in the fourth and Juan Soto laced a tie-breaking RBI single off Tyler Holton in the fifth, one pitch before Mark Vientos' two-run shot.

Twins 9, Marlins 1: Zebby Matthews threw seven scoreless innings in his season debut, and Minnesota beat visiting Miami to win consecutive series for the first time in a month.

Matthews, who was the last cut from the rotation competition at the end of spring training, was promoted from Triple-A to help manage workloads by pushing the other starters back. The right-hander pitched like he deserves to stay with just four hits and one walk allowed over 83 pitches. He had five strikeouts.

Austin Martin and Josh Bell had two-run doubles in a five-run second inning against Marlins starter Braxton Garrett, spoiling his first major league appearance in nearly two years.

Mariners 8, Astros 3: Luke Raley hit a three-run home run, Mitch Garver added his first homer of the season and Seattle won at Houston.

Raley scored the game's opening runs in the first inning with his 10th homer of the year and third of this road trip. Garver, starting at catcher in place of the injured Cal Raleigh, added a shot in the fourth that scored J.P. Crawford and put Seattle up 5-1.

Luis Castillo (1-4) earned his first win of the year after pitching 5½ innings and giving up three runs on four hits. He struck out six batters and walked four. Domingo Gonzalez pitched the final two innings, giving up one hit.

Cardinals 5, Athletics 4: Jordan Walker had a solo homer and drove in the go-ahead

run in the ninth inning to lead St. Louis to a win over the host Athletics.

Trailing 4-3, Iván Herrera tied the game with a single to left field that scored Thomas Saggese before Walker's double put the Cardinals ahead.

Jack Perkins (2-2) had his second blown save of the season in ⅔ innings.

Cubs 2, Braves 0: Ian Happ hit a long home run and five Chicago pitchers combined for a shutout of host Atlanta, snapping a four-game losing streak.

Ben Brown made his second straight start after starting the season with 12 appearances out of the bullpen. He allowed just one hit in four innings and struck out seven in 65 pitches. In his two starts, he has not allowed a run in eight innings.

Hoby Milner (1-0) earned the win with two scoreless innings, Phil Maton and Jacob Webb each threw a scoreless inning and Daniel Palencia struck out two in the ninth for his third save.

Chris Sale (6-3) allowed one unearned run in six innings for the Braves as he worked around five hits and two walks. He had eight strikeouts.

White Sox 6, Royals 2: Randal Grichuk hit a two-run homer and drove in four runs to lead host Chicago to its fifth straight win, beating Kansas City.

Chase Meidroth had two hits and an RBI as the White Sox improved to 22-21 and moved over .500 this late in the season for the first time since 2022. Chicago, losers of 101 or more games in each of the last three seasons, are within one game of idle Cleveland for first place in the AL Central.

Anthony Kay (3-1) allowed two runs and six hits in six-plus innings as Chicago swept its third series this season and extended the Royals' losing streak to four games.

Dodgers 5, Giants 2: Will Smith hit his first career leadoff home run and pinch-hitter Alex Call had a tiebreaking two-run single in the sixth inning, giving Los Angeles a victory over visiting San Francisco in the series finale.

Smith was in the leadoff spot that usually belongs to Shohei Ohtani, who was given a second straight night off as designated hitter amid an offensive slump. Smith went deep to right-center off Landen Roupp (5-4) in the bottom of the first.

The win moved the Dodgers back into sole possession of first in the NL West after the San Diego Padres lost earlier Thursday. Los Angeles salvaged a split in the four-game series to avoid losing its first series to the Giants at home since June 16-18, 2023.