

Explosion hits key Crimean Bridge

The Washington Post

KYIV, Ukraine — A giant explosion ripped across the Crimean Bridge, a strategic link between mainland Russia and Crimea, in what appeared to be a stunning blow early Saturday morning to a symbol of President Vladimir Putin's ambitions to control Ukraine.

The damage to the bridge, which provided a road and rail connection from Russia to the Ukrainian peninsula the Kremlin illegally annexed in 2014, marks another serious setback to Russia's war effort in Ukraine by disrupting a crucial supply route.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov acknowledged the government had no timeline for repairing the 12-mile bridge.

Russia's Investigative Committee, a top law enforcement body, said a truck explosion had ignited fuel tankers as a freight train crossed the bridge. The cause of the truck blast was not immediately clear. After the explosion, thick plumes of smoke and flames could be seen from a distance.

Putin personally opened the \$4 billion bridge, also known as the Kerch Bridge because it spans the Kerch Strait between the Black and Azov seas, in 2018 — a move in-

tended to symbolize Russia's ownership of Crimea.

Russia's invasion and illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 turned out to be a precursor to the invasion Putin launched this year, in which Crimea has been used as a major base of operations for Russian forces. Russia has now claimed to annex four other Ukrainian regions.

The blast was celebrated in Kyiv, where government officials hailed the incident and posted images on social media of collapsed concrete spans of the bridge and footage of the apparent moment of the blast, showing vehicles driving across the bridge just seconds before a giant fireball consumed the area.

Mykhailo Podoloyak, a senior adviser to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called it "the beginning." "Everything illegal must be destroyed," Podoloyak added on Twitter. The Ukrainian government provided no immediate official statement on the cause of the blast. But in a taunt, the government's official Twitter account posted: "sick burn."

A Ukrainian government official told *The Washington Post* on Saturday that Ukrainian special services, were behind the

bridge attack. The *Ukrainska Pravda* news site first reported the government's role, citing an unidentified law enforcement official who said Ukraine's security service, the SBU, was involved.

Ukraine previously has mounted daring attacks deep into Russian-held territory, including on an air base in Crimea, and on military targets across the border in Russia's Belgorod region. But if the bridge explosion is confirmed as intentionally planned, it would mark the most stunning strike yet by Ukraine, which has been under invasion since late February by Russia's far larger and better equipped military.

Russian authorities said the blast occurred around 6 a.m. local time. A video posted by government newspaper *Izvestia* appeared to show it at 6:03 a.m.

The Investigative Committee later said that initial information suggested that three people had died in the incident, including the driver of the truck that exploded and two people whose bodies were recovered from the water.

The Investigative Committee said the truck's driver had been identified as a resident of the Krasnodar region of Russia.

N. Korea: US carrier's return aggravates tensions

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea warned Saturday the U.S. redeployment of an aircraft carrier near the Korean Peninsula is causing a "considerably huge negative splash" in regional security, as it defended its recent missile tests as a "righteous reaction" to intimidating military drills between its rivals.

The North Korean Defense Ministry statement came a day after the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan began a new round of naval drills with South Korean warships off the peninsula's east coast. The Reagan and its battle group returned to the area after North Korea fired a powerful missile over Japan earlier this week to protest the carrier group's previous training with South Korea.

The Reagan's redeployment is "an event

of considerably huge negative splash to the regional situation," an unidentified spokesman at the North Korean Defense Ministry said in remarks carried by state media. "The armed forces of (North Korea) is seriously approaching the extremely worrisome development of the present situation."

He also called the Reagan's return "a sort of military bluffing" to issue a warning over North Korea's "righteous reaction" to "the extremely provocative and threatening joint military drills of the U.S. and South Korea."

North Korea regards U.S.-South Korean military exercises as an invasion rehearsal and is especially sensitive if such drills involve U.S. strategic assets like an aircraft carrier. North Korea has argued it was forced to pursue a nuclear weapons program to cope with U.S. nuclear threats. U.S.

and South Korean officials have repeatedly said they have no intentions of attacking the North.

In the past two weeks, North Korea has fired 10 ballistic missiles into the sea in five launch events, adding to its record-breaking pace of weapons tests this year. The recent weapons tests include a nuclear-capable missile that flew over Japan for the first time in five years and demonstrated a range to strike the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam and beyond.

Earlier this year, North Korea tested other nuclear-capable ballistic missiles that place the U.S. mainland and its allies South Korea and Japan within striking distance.

North Korea's testing spree indicates its leader, Kim Jong Un, has no intention of resuming diplomacy with the U.S. and wants to focus on expanding his weapons arsenal.

'Armageddon' talk beyond US intel bounds

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden's warning that the world is at risk of a nuclear "Armageddon" was designed to send an unvarnished message that no one should underestimate the extraordinary danger if Russia deploys tactical nuclear weapons in its war against Ukraine, administration officials said Friday.

The president's grim assessment, delivered during a Democratic fundraiser on Thursday night, rippled around the globe and appeared to edge beyond the boundaries of current U.S. intelligence assessments. U.S. security officials continue to say they have no evidence that Vladimir Putin has imminent plans for a nuclear strike.

Biden veered into talk about Ukraine at the end of his standard fundraising remarks, saying that Putin was "not joking when he talks about the use of tactical nuclear weapons or biological or chemical weapons."

"We have not faced the prospect of Armageddon since Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis," he added. He suggested the threat from Putin is real "because his military is — you might say — significantly underperforming."

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre on Friday did not directly re-

spond to a question about whether Biden had gone into the event intending to invoke Armageddon, as the White House sought to clarify the president's off-the-cuff comments.

She told reporters: "Russia's talk of using nuclear weapons is irresponsible and there's no way to use them without unintended consequences. It cannot happen." She added that "if the Cuban missile crisis has taught us anything, it is the value of reducing nuclear risk and not brandishing it."

Biden's national security team for months has warned that Russia could use weapons of mass destruction in Ukraine as it has faced a series of strategic setbacks on the battlefield. But the president's remarks were the starkest warnings yet by the U.S. government about the nuclear stakes.

One U.S. official said Biden was also trying to warn against underestimating the danger any level of tactical nuclear weapons.

There's some concern in the administration that Russia has determined it can use its nuclear arsenal in a manner short of a "full-blown" nuclear attack on Ukraine and face only limited reaction from U.S. and Western allies who are determined to keep the Ukraine conflict from turning into a broader war, according to the official, who

spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss administration thinking

Putin has repeatedly alluded to using his country's vast nuclear arsenal, including last month when he announced plans to conscript Russian men to serve in Ukraine.

"I want to remind you that our country also has various means of destruction ... and when the territorial integrity of our country is threatened, to protect Russia and our people, we will certainly use all the means at our disposal," Putin said. "It's not a bluff."

In Europe, leaders sought to turn down the volume after Biden's stark warning.

Asked about Biden's remarks, French President Emmanuel Macron said it was crucial to speak with care on the nuclear threat.

"I have always refused to engage in political fiction, and especially ... when speaking of nuclear weapons," Macron said at a EU summit in Prague. "On this issue, we must be very careful."

European Council President Charles Michel told reporters that leaders take "every escalation very seriously,"

"Threats will not intimidate us," Michel said. "Instead, we are going to remain calm. We are going to keep cool heads and we will, each time, denounce the irresponsible character of these threats."

Turkey favorable toward Finland's NATO bid

Associated Press

PRAGUE — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Thursday there is a difference in the approaches by Sweden and Finland to meeting Turkey's security demands for them to join NATO, suggesting they might join at separate times.

Turkey had threatened to block Sweden and Finland's membership in the 30-member defense alliance, accusing Stockholm and — to a lesser extent — Helsinki of supporting groups that Ankara deems to be terrorists.

NATO operates by consensus and the two Nordic coun-

tries need Turkey's approval to join. The parliaments of Turkey and Hungary have yet to ratify their accession.

"As long as the terrorist organizations are demonstrating on the streets of Sweden, and as long as the terrorists are inside the Swedish parliament, there is not going to be a positive approach from Turkey towards Sweden," Erdogan said at a news conference at the inaugural summit of the European Political Community.

Erdogan said, however, Turkey's stance toward Finland is more positive.

"The relations with Finland are quite different in nature

than those between Sweden and Turkey," Erdogan said. "Finland is not a country where terrorists are roaming freely."

The Turkish leader added: "NATO will have to make an eventual decision, and if they make a decision that is in favor of Finland, of course, we will do everything that we are required to."

Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin said Helsinki favors joining the alliance at the same time as Sweden.

"From our perspective, it would be very important that Finland and Sweden would enter NATO together because we

are both in the northern part of Europe, both in the same security geopolitical position," she said.

"But of course, we will continue the discussion and it's now up to Turkey and also Hungary to make the decisions for ratification," Marin added.

Last week, Sweden announced that it would lift an arms embargo that it imposed on Turkey in 2019, following a Turkish military operation against the Kurdish militia YPG in Syria.

The move was widely seen as a step aimed at securing Ankara's approval for its NATO membership.

Appeals court rejects abortion ban in Arizona

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Abortions can take place again in Arizona, at least for now, after an appeals court on Friday blocked enforcement of a pre-statehood law that almost entirely criminalized the procedure.

The three-judge panel of the Arizona Court of Appeals agreed with Planned Parenthood that a judge should not have lifted the decades-old order that prevented the older law from being imposed.

The brief order written by Presiding Judge Peter J. Eckerstrom said Planned Parenthood and its Arizona affiliate had shown they are likely to prevail on an appeal of a decision by the judge in Tucson to allow enforcement of the old law.

Planned Parenthood had argued that the lower court judge should have considered a host of laws restricting abortions passed since the original injunction was put in place following the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade* that said women have a constitutional right to an abortion.

Those laws include a new one blocking abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy that took effect last month. The previous limit was 24 weeks, the viability standard established by now-overruled U.S. Supreme Court cases.

"Arizona courts have a responsibility to attempt to harmonize all of this state's relevant

statutes," Eckerstrom wrote, mirroring arguments made by attorneys for Planned Parenthood.

The U.S. Supreme Court overruled *Roe* in June, and Republican Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich then asked that the injunction blocking enforcement of the pre-statehood abortion be lifted. It had been issued in 1973, shortly after *Roe* was decided. Pima Court Superior Court Judge Kellie Johnson agreed on Sept. 23 and lifted the order two weeks ago.

"Today's decision provides a desperately needed sense of security for both our patients and providers," Alexis McGill Johnson, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, said in a statement. "We can now breathe a sigh of relief and serve patients. While the fight isn't over, for now, Arizonans will once again be able to make their own decisions about their bodies, health care decisions, and futures."

Brnovich spokeswoman Brittni Thomason said in a statement that "our office understands this is an emotional issue, and we will carefully review the court's ruling before determining the next step."

Republican Gov. Doug Ducey has said the 15-week law he signed in March takes precedence. But his lawyers did not seek to argue that position in court.

Ohio abortion law blocked as suit proceeds

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — An Ohio law banning virtually all abortions will remain blocked while a state constitutional challenge proceeds, a judge said Friday in a ruling that will allow pregnancy terminations through 20 weeks' gestation to continue for now.

Hamilton County Common Pleas Judge Christian Jenkins issued the preliminary injunction from the bench after a daylong hearing where courthouse guards screened spectators and one abortion provider testified to wearing a Kevlar vest over fears for her safety.

In impassioned remarks announcing his decision, Jenkins knocked the state's arguments that the Ohio Constitution doesn't ever mention abortion and so doesn't protect the right to one. He said a right doesn't have to be named to be protected.

"This court has no difficulty holding that the Ohio Constitution confers a fundamental right on all of Ohioans to privacy, procreation, bodily integrity and freedom of choice in health care decision-making that encompasses the right to abortion," he said.

He said the state failed to prove that the ban on most abortions after detection of fetal cardiac activity is narrowly tailored enough not to infringe on those rights. Rather, Jenkins said, the law is written "to almost completely eliminate the rights of Ohio women. It is not narrowly tailored, not even close."

The state is expected to appeal.

Ohio Right to Life President Michael Gonidakis said his organization was "saddened but not surprised" by the decision.

"The abortion clinics literally forum shopped to get the outcome they wanted. This is a moment in time for the pro-life movement and we are convinced that the Ohio Supreme Court will overturn this ruling," Gonidakis said in a statement. "Nowhere in Ohio's Constitution does a right to an abortion exist."

The law signed by Republican Gov. Mike DeWine in April 2019 prohibits most abortions after the first detectable "fetal heartbeat." Cardiac activity can be detected as early as six weeks into pregnancy, before many women know they're pregnant. The law had been blocked through a legal challenge, briefly went into effect when the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision was overturned, and then was again put on hold in court.

Uvalde school district suspends entire police force after outrage

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Uvalde's school district suspended its entire police force Friday amid fresh outrage over the hesitant law enforcement response to the gunman who massacred 21 people at Robb Elementary School.

The extraordinary move follows the revelation that the district hired a former state trooper who was among hundreds of officers who rushed to the scene of the May 24 shooting.

School leaders also put two members of the district police department on administrative leave, one of whom chose to retire instead, according to a statement released by the Uvalde Consolidated Independent

School District. Remaining officers will be reassigned to other jobs in the district.

Uvalde school leaders' suspension of campus police operations one month into a new school year in the South Texas community underscores the sustained pressure that families of some of the 19 children and two teachers killed have kept on the district.

Brett Cross, the uncle of 10-year-old victim Uziyah Garcia, had been protesting outside the Uvalde school administration building for the past two weeks, demanding accountability over officers allowing a gunman with an AR-15-style rifle to remain in a fourth-grade classroom for more than 70 minutes.

"We did it!" Cross tweeted.

Las Vegas stabbing suspect cites 'anger'

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — A man who allegedly stabbed eight people on the Las Vegas strip, killing two, said some had laughed at him and he “let the anger out,” according to an arrest report released Friday.

Yoni Barrios, 32, also told one victim “sorry, man” before stabbing him in the back and also said that he hoped police would shoot him, the report said.

He was covered in blood when he was arrested after a brief chase Thursday, authorities said. They seized a large, long-bladed knife.

It wasn't immediately known whether Barrios had a lawyer who could comment on his behalf. The Clark County Public Defender's office was closed Friday.

Clark County District Attorney Steve Wolfson said he intends to file two counts of murder with the use of a deadly weapon against Barrio along with six counts of attempted murder with the use of a deadly weapon.

He said his office would give serious consideration to pursuing the death penalty but it was too early to make that decision.

Wearing a dark blue jumpsuit and orange hand restraints for his first court appearance Friday, Barrios was ordered held without bail. An initial arraignment was scheduled for Tuesday.

The coroner's office identified those killed as Las Vegas residents Brent Allan Hallett, 47, and Maris Mareen DiGiovanni, 30. Hallett was stabbed in the back and DiGiovanni died from a chest wound, authorities said.

DiGiovanni was part of the Best Showgirls In Vegas modeling and talent agency, according to Cheryl Lowthorp, who runs the business. She said two others with the agency were among the wounded and a third escaped without injury.

DiGiovanni was “the life of any gathering,” her family said in a statement to The Associated Press.

“Maris always saw the best in people, al-

ways gave them a chance, and always accepted people for who they were,” it said. “... She was a beautiful spirit and soul, and we'll miss her for the rest of our lives.”

DiGiovanni, who went by her husband's last name on her own Facebook page, was with three other women on a pedestrian bridge over Las Vegas Boulevard. All were street performers dressed as showgirls who accept money to have their photographs taken with tourists.

Barrios, who told police he had arrived in Las Vegas two days earlier, asked to take a photo with them, according to the arrest report.

He was wearing a chef's long-sleeved white jacket, said he was a chef, and removed a black carbon knife from a suitcase, according to the report.

Some performers said he made them feel uncomfortable and one backed away. One woman said he stabbed her in the back, then stabbed DiGiovanni, according to the report.

Brother of suspect in Calif. family's killing arrested

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The younger brother of a man suspected in the kidnapping and killings of an 8-month-old baby, her parents and an uncle, was arrested on suspicion he helped his brother destroy evidence, authorities said Friday.

Alberto Salgado, 41, was arrested late Thursday and accused of criminal conspiracy, accessory, and destroying evidence, the Merced County Sheriff's Office said. He's booked in the Merced County Jail — the same place where suspect Jesus Salgado, 48, is being held on kidnapping and murder charges. It wasn't clear whether either brother had a lawyer who could speak on

their behalf.

The bodies of Aroohi Dheri; her mother Jasleen Kaur, 27; father Jasdeep Singh, 36; and uncle Amandeep Singh, 39, were found by a farm worker late Wednesday in an almond orchard in a remote area in the San Joaquin Valley, California's agricultural heartland.

Jesus Salgado — a convicted felon who tried to kill himself a day after the kidnappings — had worked for the family's trucking business and had a longstanding feud with them, Merced County Sheriff Vern Warnke told The Associated Press Thursday.

He was treated at a hospital before being

taken to jail. Warnke had said detectives were also seeking a person of interest believed to be his accomplice.

Relatives of the victims and fellow members of the Punjabi Sikh community were shocked by the killings.

Jaspreet Kaur, Amandeep Singh's widow, said in a GoFundMe fundraiser that her husband and his brother had been in the United States for 18 years and supported not only their families in California but also their elderly parents back in India.

“This is the story of our shared American dream gone wrong,” she wrote. “Our loving family was violently taken away from us on October 3rd.”

Hospitals to pay \$165M to women abused by gynecologist

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Two New York hospitals have agreed to pay more than \$165 million to 147 former patients who have accused a former gynecologist of sexual abuse and misconduct.

Columbia University Irving Medical Center and New York-Presbyterian announced the agreement Friday. Last year, the two hospitals reached a settlement to es-

tablish a \$71 million compensation fund with 79 of Hadden's former patients.

The doctor, Robert Hadden, surrendered his medical license after being convicted in 2016 on sex-related charges in state court but was not sentenced to prison. He currently awaits trial on separate federal charges of sexually abusing dozens of young and unsuspecting female patients for over two decades.

The Englewood, N.J., resident has pleaded not guilty to six counts of inducing others to travel to engage in illegal sex acts. A message was left Friday with an attorney representing Hadden.

Prosecutors have described Hadden as a “predator in a white coat,” accusing him of singling out young and unsuspecting victims, including a young girl he had delivered at birth.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man who had 3 pythons in pants charged

NY ALBANY — A New York City man has been charged with smuggling three Burmese pythons in his pants at a U.S.-Canadian border crossing.

Calvin Bautista, 36, is accused of bringing the hidden snakes on a bus that crossed into northern New York on July 15, 2018. Importation of Burmese pythons is regulated by an international treaty and by federal regulations.

Bautista, of Queens, was arraigned in Albany on the federal smuggling charge and released pending trial, according to the office of U.S. Attorney Carla B. Freedman.

The charge carries the potential for a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a fine as high as \$250,000, according to federal prosecutors.

Teen's death prompts removal of drop tower

FL ORLANDO — A towering amusement ride in central Florida's tourism district where a Missouri teen fell to his death will be taken down because of the accident, the owner said.

The decision to remove the more than 400-foot ride which opened last December in Orlando's International Drive district was directly linked to the death of 14-year-old Tyre Sampson last March, the owner, Orlando Slingshot, said in a statement.

An autopsy showed that Sampson suffered numerous broken bones and internal injuries in the fall, which was ruled an accidental death. It showed

Sampson weighed 383 pounds, well above the ride manual's weight limit of 287 pounds.

Officials confirm more wolf attacks on cattle

WA SPOKANE — Wolves from two packs in northeast Washington state have attacked more cattle, prompting the Department of Fish and Wildlife to consider whether to again try culling the Smackout pack after a botched attempt last month.

Fish and Wildlife officials confirmed that the Smackout pack recently wounded another calf in a private Stevens County pasture, the Capital Press reported. The pack has attacked at least 11 head of cattle since Aug. 17, according to Fish and Wildlife's count.

State biologists tried to kill one wolf from that pack in early September, but from a helicopter accidentally shot a pup that probably belonged to another pack, officials said.

Bodies of 2 researchers found after home fire

MO KANSAS CITY — Missouri homicide and arson detectives are investigating the deaths of two South American researchers whose bodies were found after a apartment fire near the Kansas City biomedical research center where they worked.

Kansas City police identified the victims as Camila Behrensen, 24, of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Pablo Guzmán Palma, 25, of Santiago, Chile.

The Stowers Institute for Medical Research said both Behrensen and Palma were

pre-doctoral researchers there.

Behrensen and Palma were suffering from what police described as "apparent trauma" when fire crews responded and extinguished the blaze.

Fan sues Patriots, says they ruined signed flag

MA BOSTON — The New England Patriots caused irreparable damage to a U.S. flag signed by Tom Brady by improperly displaying it in the team's hall of fame at Gillette Stadium, the flag's owner contends in a federal lawsuit.

After the flag, on loan to the hall of fame, had been on display a couple of months, Brady's signature written in blue Sharpie had significantly faded. The lawsuit says this reduced the flag's value by as much as \$1 million, according to the suit filed against the team in Boston.

Neither the lighting at the hall of fame nor the display case's glass were designed to protect autographed sports memorabilia, and there was "a significant gap in the glass directly in front of the flag through which unfiltered light and heat could pass," according to the lawsuit.

DEA says meth bust was largest in region

CA LOS ANGELES — Federal and local authorities investigating drug trafficking by Mexico's Sinaloa Cartel found more than 3,550 pounds of methamphetamine and 145 pounds of cocaine at a home in Southern California, officials said.

The bust marked the largest meth seizure in the Drug Enforcement Administration's Los

Angeles Division, the DEA said in a statement.

Investigators watching a possible stash house in Norco late last month saw a person carry three boxes from the residence to a vehicle. A search of the vehicle turned up the cocaine and the meth was found in the garage of the home, the DEA said.

The seized drugs have an estimated street value of \$33 million, officials said.

Coaches on leave after sex assault allegations

IN HUNTINGTON — A university placed its women's cross country head coach and an assistant on leave after two former runners claimed in a lawsuit they were doped and sexually assaulted.

Huntington University, a private, Christian liberal arts university, said it placed head coach Lauren Johnson and assistant coach Curtis Hines on administrative leave until further notice.

A lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court names as defendants former coach Nicholas Johnson; his wife, current coach Lauren Johnson; Hines; the university; its trustees; and unnamed administrators.

The complaint claims the Johnsons instilled a program at the university where some team members were invited to partake in a "study" or "experiment." Nicholas Johnson would also rub unknown substances on the runners, it said.

The runners claim Nicholas Johnson would perform massages or "treatments" on them and sexually assault them in 2020.

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Padres hammer Scherzer, rout Mets in opener

Associated Press

NEW YORK — After pounding Max Scherzer in a stunning romp, the San Diego Padres are halfway home in the wild-card round.

Josh Bell and Manny Machado smashed two of San Diego's four homers off an ineffective Scherzer, and the Padres blew out the New York Mets 7-1 on Friday night in their playoff opener.

"This is not a game that you normally see out of Max, so we were fortunate," manager Bob Melvin said.

Yu Darvish shut down the Mets once again, and San Diego also got long balls from leadoff batter Jurickson Profar and slumping Trent Grisham against Scherzer — booed off the mound in the fifth inning at sold-out Citi Field.

The three-time Cy Young Award winner exited his first postseason start for New York down 7-0, a massive disappointment after Scherzer was signed

to a \$130 million contract in December to pitch big games for his new team.

"Baseball can take you to the highest of highs and the lowest of lows, and this is one of the lowest of lows," Scherzer said.

San Diego needs one road win over the next two days to take the best-of-three National League wild-card series and advance to face the top-seeded Los Angeles Dodgers.

Blake Snell started Saturday night in Game 2 against scuffling Mets ace Jacob deGrom.

"Every game in a three-game series feels like it's monumental," Melvin said.

After winning 101 games during the regular season, second-most in franchise history, the Mets are suddenly facing elimination at home after falling flat before a revved-up crowd of 41,621 in their first playoff game since 2016.

"We've been really good and now we get to see what we're

made of," said slugger Pete Alonso, who struck out in the first two playoff at-bats of his career — including with runners at the corners and one out in the first inning.

Eduardo Escobar homered and doubled off Darvish, who has won all three of his starts against New York this year with a 0.86 ERA.

The star right-hander from Japan, coming off a 16-win season, was the NL pitcher of the month for September and picked up right where he left off. He wriggled out of trouble early when the game was still competitive and then settled in to throw seven innings of six-hit ball without a walk for his first postseason victory in five years.

Darvish is 5-0 with a 2.56 ERA in eight career regular-season starts against the Mets, including 3-0 at Citi Field.

"We're getting pretty spoiled," Melvin said, noting that Darvish "invents pitches" during his out-

ings. "It's kind of a typical Yu Darvish game."

The 38-year-old Scherzer also lost a critical game last weekend in Atlanta, giving up nine hits — including two homers — and four runs over 5½ innings. He missed about nine weeks this season during two stints on the injured list with left oblique injuries, but finished 11-5 with a 2.29 ERA and said Thursday that he was fully healthy.

Scherzer had little snap on his pitches, though, and the Padres took advantage. Bell launched a two-run homer in the first in his initial postseason plate appearance and flipped his bat after his first home run since Sept. 6.

"I kind of blacked out for it," Bell said. "It felt like I was on a cloud."

Grisham, batting eighth after hitting .107 since August ended, connected for a solo shot in the second.

"Hopefully this gets him going," Melvin said.

Phillies' 6-run ninth shocks Cardinals in wild-card victory

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — The Philadelphia Phillies showcased plenty of plucky resilience all season, bouncing back from a poor start and the firing of their manager to qualify for the postseason for the first time in more than a decade.

It was going to take more than a two-run deficit in the ninth inning Friday to keep them down, even against the playoff-tested St. Louis Cardinals.

Philadelphia rallied for six runs in the ninth, silencing a sellout crowd at Busch Stadium and sending Jean Segura and the Phillies to a 6-3 victory in the opening game of their National League wild-card series.

It was the first time in 94 postseason games that St. Louis, an 11-time World Series champion, had blown a lead of at least two runs going into the final frame, according to Sportradar.

"It's what we do. We fight," said Alec Bohm, who was plunked on the shoulder by Cardinals closer Ryan Helsley with the bases loaded to drive in the first run.

"We're never out of it. That's just kind of who we are."

Asked how it felt in the dugout during the go-ahead rally, Phillies manager Rob Thomson — who replaced Joe Girardi after their poor start to the year — replied simply: "Electric."

That's because the Cardinals, who were 74-3 on the season when leading after eight innings, were poised to put another one away after Juan Ypez hit the first go-ahead pinch-hit homer in franchise history with two outs in the seventh.

But after struggling all afternoon against José Quintana and the St. Louis bullpen, the Phillies finally got their offense going. JT Realmuto began the decisive rally with a single off Helsley, and walks for Bryce Harper and Nick Castellanos loaded the bases before the All-Star closer plunked Bohm.

The Cardinals training staff checked on Helsley, who jammed a finger on his pitching hand earlier in the week in Pittsburgh, and he was replaced by Andre Pallante. He gave up Segura's go-ahead sin-

gle through the right side of the infield.

"It was exactly what I wanted," Pallante said. "It just got through."

Edmundo Sosa added another run when he brazenly scored on Bryson Stott's grounder to first base, and Brandon Marsh drove in another run when a tough hop got past Cardinals shortstop Paul DeJong.

"Unfortunately," Cardinals manager Oliver Marmol said, "that last inning got away."

By the time Kyle Schwarber added a sacrifice fly, Phillies reliever Zach Eflin had plenty of wiggle room in the ninth.

It looked as if Eflin might need it, too, when Nolan Arenado and Dylan Carlson reached base and Nolan Gorman hit a two-out RBI single to right. But Eflin responded by striking out longtime Cardinals star Yadier Molina to end it, leaving Philadelphia one win away from facing NL East champion Atlanta in the divisional round.

"That's why you play 27 outs," the Phillies' Rhys Hoskins said. "There's just a ton of belief in this dugout."

Guardians take 1st game behind Ramírez, Bieber

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — The Guardians were certain of two things: José Ramírez would deliver, and Amed Rosario touched second base.

Cleveland's kids were right.

Ramírez connected for a two-run homer, Shane Bieber dominated Tampa Bay for 7½ innings and the young Guardians played with poise in their postseason debut, beating the Rays 2-1 in the wild-card opener on Friday.

Ramírez's shot off Tampa's Shane McClanahan in the sixth inning — the Rays initially appealed whether Rosario stepped on second — helped Cleveland end an eight-game postseason losing streak and left baseball's youngest team one win from advancing in its first season as the Guardians.

Though short on experience, the Guardians seem to have everything else.

"At this point we're dealing with what we got in that clubhouse," Bieber said, brushing off the team's youth. "And that's

a winning ballclub."

Bieber, rocked in his only other playoff appearance two years ago by the Yankees, was spectacular, allowing just three hits and striking out eight before being lifted in the eighth to a thunderous ovation.

Emmanuel Clase took it from there, getting four outs for his first postseason save and finishing a game that took just 2 hours, 17 minutes — the fastest in the postseason since 1999 and Cleveland's quickest since its World Series-clinching win in 1948.

Jose Siri homered for the Rays, who dropped their sixth straight game overall and turn to starter Tyler Glasnow in Game 2 on Saturday to keep their season alive. The series winner plays AL East champion New York in the Division Series starting Tuesday in the Bronx.

With 17 players making MLB debuts this season, the Guardians entered the playoffs unsure of what to expect. Fortunately, Ramírez and Bieber had been

here before, and both came through for the AL Central champions.

With Cleveland down 1-0 after Siri's homer in the sixth and running out of outs, Ramírez delivered — as usual.

"Nothing surprises me," Rosario said of his teammate, who is batting .455 with homer and six RBIs in his last three playoff games. "For me, he's the best player in baseball."

Bieber wouldn't argue.

"He's inevitable," Cleveland's ace said. "To do it right away, that was huge."

Rosario singled with one out and Ramírez, a four-time All-Star who finished second to Aaron Judge in RBIs in the AL this season, drove a 1-1 changeup over the wall for just his second postseason homer in 97 at-bats.

As the red-towel waving fans in Progressive Field screamed, however, Rays manager Kevin Cash appealed whether Rosario missed second. TV replays showed him slowing and touching the bag, but that didn't give Guardians manager Terry

Francona any comfort as the Rays proceeded to challenge.

"When they start huddling like that, you start to get a little nervous," he said.

Cash couldn't tell whether Rosario missed the bag.

"It was kind of grainy," he said. "But it certainly looked like there was reason to take a look at it and let's see what New York had to say."

While the umpires waited for an official ruling, the crowd spontaneously sang "José ... José ... José," like never before, prompting Ramírez to pop out for a curtain call. The home run stood and Cleveland had a slim lead it protected.

McClanahan has given up just two homers all season on changeups.

"Shane's pitch," Cash lamented.

McClanahan knew he made a mistake.

"Left it up," the left-hander said. "He's such a good hitter, you're not going to fool him with a bad pitch again in the same spot."

Castillo sharp, Mariners blank Jays in AL wild-card opener

Associated Press

TORONTO — The Seattle Mariners gave Luis Castillo a three-run lead before he threw his first pitch in Friday's wild-card opener against the Toronto Blue Jays.

It was all the support he needed, and more.

Castillo and Andrés Muñoz combined on a shutout, Cal Raleigh hit a two-run homer and the Mariners won in their first postseason game since 2001, beating the Blue Jays 4-0.

Eugenio Suárez had two hits and two RBIs and rookie Julio Rodríguez reached base three times and scored twice for the Mariners, who can wrap up the series with a win in Game 2 Saturday.

The series winner plays AL West champion Houston in the Division Series starting Tuesday in Texas.

Suárez hit an RBI double off Blue Jays All-Star right-hander Alek Manoah in the first inning and Raleigh followed with a drive to right. Raleigh is the first player in

Mariners history to homer in his first career postseason at-bat.

"It was very good going out there and having that lead," Castillo said through a translator. "That gives me that little extra energy when I go on the mound."

Throwing two different kinds of fastballs at 100 mph and his changeup at 92 mph, Castillo scattered six singles over 7½ innings. He struck out five and walked none, facing the second-highest scoring team in the AL.

"When you've got two pitches over 99 that are doing two different things, that makes it tough," Blue Jays infielder Whit Merrifield said.

Castillo, acquired in a midseason trade from Cincinnati, became the first pitcher in Mariners history to throw more than seven scoreless innings in a postseason start.

Raleigh said Castillo was "awesome." Suárez called him "unbelievable."

"Credit to Luis, he was in total command today," Seattle manager Scott Servais said.

The right-hander turned away from home plate and pumped his fist after fanning designated hitter Danny Jansen to end the seventh, Castillo's third straight strikeout.

"Wow," Servais said. "Some kind of performance by him."

Castillo's only other postseason start came with Cincinnati in 2020, when he lost to Atlanta in the wild-card round. Castillo allowed one run in 5½ innings in that one, but the Reds were eliminated with a 5-0 defeat.

Toronto has lost four straight postseason games and seven of their past eight.

"It's two out of three," Manoah said. "We'll be back (Saturday)."

Muñoz came on in the eighth after Castillo hit George Springer on the left wrist with his 108th pitch. Springer went down in pain and was checked by the trainer but remained in the game. X-rays on Springer were negative, interim manager John Schneider said.

Predators down Sharks in NHL opener

Associated Press

PRAGUE — The Predators' new additions made a quick impact in the NHL's first regular-season game.

Nino Niederreiter scored his debut goal for Nashville, which beat the San Jose Sharks 4-1 in the Czech capital on Friday night.

Kiefer Sherwood, another newcomer, became the first player to score this season, putting Nashville on top 1:01 into the game. Eeli Tolvanen also scored and Matt Duchene finished it off with an empty-netter.

"All of the new guys to our team obviously contributed a lot," coach John Hynes said. "The style, the game they played really fits the identity we want to play."

The teams played again Saturday at Prague's O2 Arena as part of the league's return to Europe for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tomas Hertl scored for San Jose in the first period, delighting the roaring crowd of 16,648 in his hometown. Tolvanen's goal at 1:24 of the second put the Predators ahead to stay.

The Predators outshot the Sharks 32-31 while Nashville goaltender Juuse Saros stopped 30 shots.

Niederreiter and defenseman Ryan McDonagh were key offseason additions for the Predators, who are hoping to continue a run of eight straight playoff berths. That's tied with Washington for the second-longest active streak in the league.

Niederreiter made it 3-1 late in the second period with his a one-timer off a feed from Dante Fabbro.

"To be honest, this trip has been very easy for all the new guys," Niederreiter said. "We glued together very well. I mean they're very welcoming, so I think it's a big reason why we clicked on the ice."

Sherwood scored on a rebound past goaltender James Reimer, who finished with 28 saves.

The 28-year-old Hertl, who recently signed a \$65.1 million, eight-year contract to remain with San Jose, picked up a feed from Timo Meier and found the roof of the net just 6 seconds after a Sharks power play ended.

"It was a pretty special moment, obviously," new San Jose coach David Quinn said. "We were a little bit inspired by that and we played better after that."

Quinn was hired after the Sharks missed the NHL playoffs for a third straight season.

The Sharks converted on just 19% of power plays last season, and they struggled again on Friday, going 0-for-4 with the man advantage. Nashville also came up empty on four power plays.

Across the pond hockey

This is the ninth season the NHL has played games in Europe, where it hopes to connect with fans in hockey-mad countries including the Czech Republic, Sweden and Finland.

Nashville played in Europe for the first time. The Predators were set to open the 2020-21 season in Prague against the Boston Bruins before the pandemic scrapped those plans.

The Sharks have contested four previous games outside North America. They faced the Columbus Blue Jackets twice in Stockholm and played two games against the Calgary Flames in Tokyo in 1998.

Friday's opener was the first NHL game in Europe since the Tampa Bay Lightning and Buffalo Sabres faced off in Stockholm on Nov. 9, 2019.

The Chicago Blackhawks and Philadelphia Flyers on Oct. 4, 2019 were the last NHL teams to play in Prague.

England women beat US in statement win at Wembley

Associated Press

LONDON — Ten weeks after conquering Europe, England's women proclaimed themselves ready for even more after beating the world champion United States 2-1 in a friendly at Wembley Stadium on Friday.

Lauren Hemp and Georgia Stanway scored to help England beat the U.S. for the first time since 2017, and less than 10 months before the Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

Stanway's penalty in the 33rd minute put the hosts in front for good before 76,893 fans. Victory extended England's unbeaten run to 23 games under coach Sarina Wiegman. England stopped the Americans' 13-game winning streak and 21-match unbeaten streak dating to a 1-0 defeat to Canada in a 2021 Olympics semifinal.

"It was a great result," Hemp told broadcaster ITV. "There's a lot of preparation now for the World Cup. It's important that we stay grounded."

England, which won the European championship in late July, took the lead in the

10th when Beth Mead sent a low cross into the box. Defender Alana Cook tried to make a sliding block but the ball wiggled through to Hemp, who finished from close range.

The Americans equalized just before the half-hour mark. Millie Bright tried to pass out of the back to a tightly covered Stanway, and Lindsey Horan poked the ball forward to Sophia Smith, who turned and fired low to the left corner past a diving Mary Earps.

Stanway made amends from the spot, though, shooting the ball into the right corner as goalkeeper Alyssa Naehner went the wrong way.

The visitors thought they tied the game again just minutes later, but Trinity Rodman's strike was ruled out for offside after a video review.

England and the U.S. wore teal arm-bands in solidarity with sexual abuse victims and together held a banner that read "Protect the Players" just before kickoff. A report this week into the scandals that erupted in the National Women's Soccer League last season found emotional abuse

and sexual misconduct were systemic in the league.

There was also a moment of silence for the victims of the deadly crush of fans at a soccer match in Indonesia.

Forward Alyssa Thompson entered in the 84th minute and at 17 years, 334 days became the youngest to debut for the U.S. since Mallory Pugh in January 2016. Thompson was the 70th teenager to appear for the Americans.

Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers and wide receiver Allen Lazard were among the stars in attendance. The Packers play the New York Giants on Sunday in an NFL game at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. "Ted Lasso" actor Jason Sudeikis was also on hand.

U.S. winger Crystal Dunn went on as a second-half substitute — less than five months after giving birth to her son. It was her 124th international appearance and first in nearly 13 months.

The draw for the World Cup will be in Auckland on Oct. 22.