

N. Korea fires missiles after carrier drill

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles toward its eastern waters on Sunday, the latest of a recent barrage of weapons tests, a day after it warned the redeployment of a U.S. aircraft carrier near the Korean Peninsula was inflaming regional tensions.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement that it detected two missile launches Sunday between 1:48 a.m. and 1:58 a.m. from the North's eastern coastal city of Munchon. It added that South Korea's military has boosted its surveillance posture and maintains a readiness in close coordination with the United States.

Japanese Vice Defense Minister Toshiro Ino also confirmed the launches, saying Pyongyang's testing activities are "absolutely unacceptable" as they threaten regional and international peace and security.

Ino said the weapons could be submarine-launched ballistic missiles. "We are continuing to analyze details of the missiles, including a possibility that they might have been launched from the sea," Ino said.

North Korea's pursuit of an ability to fire missiles from a submarine would constitute an alarming development for its rivals because it's harder to detect such launches in advance. North Korea was believed to have last tested a missile launch from a submarine in May.

The South Korean and Japanese militaries assessed that the missiles flew about 217 miles and reached maximum altitudes of 56 to 60 miles before falling into the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida separately instructed officials to gather and analyze all information they could and expedite any updates about the tests

to the public. His office said it also was seeking to ensure the safety of all aircraft and ships in waters around Japan while preparing for any contingencies.

South Korea's presidential office said National Security Director Kim Sung-han called an emergency security meeting over the launches where members reviewed the South's defense preparedness and discussed ways to strengthen cooperation with the U.S. and Japan to counter the growing North Korean threats. Seoul warned that Pyongyang's consecutive provocations will deepen its international isolation and increase the "instability of the regime" by worsening its economy and people's livelihoods.

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said in a statement that the launches didn't pose any immediate threat to U.S. personnel or territory, or to its allies. But it said the launches highlight "the destabilizing impact" of North Korea's

unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs. It said U.S. commitments to the defense of South Korea and Japan remain "ironclad."

The launch, the North's seventh round of weapons tests in two weeks, came hours after the U.S. and South Korea wrapped up two days of naval drills off the Korean Peninsula's east coast.

The drills involved the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan and its battle group, which returned to the area after North Korea fired a powerful missile over Japan last week to protest the carrier group's previous training with South Korea.

On Saturday, North Korea's Defense Ministry warned that the Reagan's redeployment was causing a "considerably huge negative splash" in regional security. The ministry called its recent missile tests a "righteous reaction" to intimidating drills between South Korea and the U.S.

Cardone takes command of USS Ronald Reagan

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

Command of the USS Ronald Reagan changed hands Friday in waters east of the Korean Peninsula, where the aircraft carrier recently redeployed in response to an uptick in North Korean missile launches. Capt. Daryle Cardone, of Nanticoke, Pa., took command from Capt. Fred Goldhammer, of New York City, during a ceremony inside one of the ship's cavernous hangar bays, according to a news release from U.S. 7th Fleet.

The carrier's schedule was altered Tuesday after North Korea launched an intermediate-range ballistic missile over Japan for the first time since 2017.

The 7th Fleet's commander, Vice Adm. Karl Thomas, alluded to the about-face in a speech during Friday's ceremony.

"Not only do we ask you to be ready at a moment's notice, we often must change the plan, just like we did a few days ago when you sailed back into the Sea of Japan," he said, according to the release. "That's what makes these magnificent ships such a flexible and powerful deterrent — you adapt to world events."

The Sea of Japan is known in Korea as the East Sea.

The nuclear-powered carrier and its strike group initially made a port call in and around Busan, South Korea, on Sept. 23, ahead of a four-day exercise with South

Korean and Japanese warships aimed at preparing for "North Korean provocations," according to the South's Ministry of National Defense.

The strike group returned to the area on Wednesday to respond to the "highly unusual" timing of the North's launches, the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a news release the same day.

On Thursday, ships from the strike group, including the guided-missile cruiser USS Chancellorsville and guided-missile destroyer USS Benfold, took part in a trilateral missile-defense exercise with South Korean and Japanese forces. Those drills happened the same day Pyongyang

fired two short-range ballistic missiles in the sea off its eastern coast.

While Cardone is new to Ronald Reagan, he has a long history with Goldhammer. The two started out serving together in Airborne Early Warning Squadron 125, now known as Airborne Command and Control 125.

"I am honored to take the helm of USS Ronald Reagan from my former squadron mate and long-time friend," Cardone said, according to the release. "This crew will continue to build and demonstrate credible combat power, and we will continue to strengthen our regional alliances and partnerships as we further integrate with partner forces."

Simpson, Peterson win Army 10-Milers

By JOE GROMELSKI

Special to Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — George Washington University law student Luke Peterson doesn't have any collegiate cross country eligibility left, so his plan for 2022 was to "simulate a fall season" by running in a series of races.

So far, his plan is working pretty well. Sunday morning, Peterson led from start to finish in the 38th Army 10-Miler, keeping a steady pace right around the five-minute mark for a winning time of 49 minutes, 58.24 seconds.

"It's my first 10-Miler," Pe-

terson said. "My coach thought it was a good idea, and I think he's right."

In the women's race, Jenny Simpson of Boulder, Colo., stepping up in distance and recovering from injuries that have sidelined her for a year, was the winner in a time of 54:15.43.

Peterson admitted that "I wasn't expecting" to win. "I really just wanted to break 50 (minutes) and just compete really well, and it just happened that I was out there in front and tried to hold everyone off."

Peterson enjoyed a comfortable lead throughout the run

through the streets of Washington, D.C., with a time of 24:53 at the halfway point, and although other runners occasionally seemed to be closing the gap he ended with a 15-second advantage over runner-up Makorobondo Salukombo (50:13.73).

"I was really hoping to break 50," Peterson said, "so the last 100 (yards) I really had to go for it."

The other runners hoping to outkick him weren't helped by the fact that Peterson ran a 4:10 mile while he was a student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Simpson, 36, gained fame on

the track at a shorter distance, the 1,500 meters. She is the 2011 world champion, and she earned a bronze medal in the 2016 Rio Olympics. She also has two world championships silver medals, in 2013 and 2017.

"I could tell late in the race that my legs still need some of that hardening up, some long effort," she said. "Today was just part of that."

Second place went to Sophia King in 56:08.49.

Simpson called the 10-Miler "a tuneup for the beginning of next year. I've never run a half, and I wanted to do this before I try to run a half marathon."

F-35 deliveries to resume after alloy-driven halt

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — Deliveries of Lockheed Martin's F-35 will resume after the Pentagon's acquisitions chief issued a "national security" waiver from a ban on a Chinese alloy used in a component on the fighter jet.

The component — a magnet in a device supplied by Honeywell International — has been used in the plane since 2003. After the Chinese alloy was discovered, the Pentagon suspended deliveries of new F-35s last month, citing regulations on "specialty metals."

William LaPlante, the undersecretary of defense for acquisition, signed the waiver to

allow deliveries of aircraft to resume despite the banned alloy, he said in a statement released Saturday. Lockheed said Honeywell has found an "alternative U.S. source" for the alloy that will be used in the production of future aircraft starting November.

Eighteen aircraft were held as part of the delivery pause, Lockheed said in a statement Saturday.

The waiver, signed Friday, lets the Pentagon accept 126 aircraft in current production contracts that run through Oct. 31, 2023.

"Acceptance of the aircraft is necessary for national security interests," LaPlante said.

The Defense Department's F-35 program office has said the part has no technical flaw and poses no security risk to the U.S.'s top stealth fighter.

Rather, it's a question of supply-chain security and why the banned alloy wasn't detected by Honeywell. The part was provided to a Honeywell subcontractor by a lower-tier supplier, Lockheed has said.

U.S. law and Pentagon acquisition regulations prohibit the use of specialty metals or alloys made in China, Iran, North Korea or Russia.

The Defense Contract Management Agency reported the violation to the F-35 program office on Aug. 19.

Kyrgyzstan says it won't host Russian-led military exercise

Associated Press

The Central Asian nation of Kyrgyzstan on Sunday unilaterally canceled joint military drills between the six nations comprising the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization, less than a day before they were due to start on its territory.

The Kyrgyz defense ministry did not specify the reason for canceling the "Indestructible Brotherhood-2022" command and staff exercises, which were set to be

held in the country's windswept eastern highlands Monday to Friday.

According to earlier reports, the exercises were set to involve army personnel from CSTO members Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and focus on securing cease-fires. Observers from five further states, including Serbia, Syria and Uzbekistan, had also been invited.

The move by Bishkek is the latest indica-

tion that tensions may be simmering within the alliance, formed in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Last month, Armenia skipped a two-week drill held by the collective in Kazakhstan, after criticizing the bloc for failing to openly side with it after large-scale fighting erupted on its border with non-member Azerbaijan in September. Russia and other CSTO countries effectively turned down Yerevan's request for military aid.

Russian missiles strike civilian areas near plant

Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine — A Russian missile barrage that crumbled apartment buildings and houses in Ukraine’s city of Zaporizhzhia killed at least dozen people, Ukrainian officials said Sunday as Moscow strained to enforce its takeover of illegally annexed territory.

The blasts that collapsed at least one high-rise residential building and blew out the windows of others came from six missiles launched in Russian-occupied areas of the Zaporizhzhia region, the Ukrainian air force said. The region is one of four Russia claimed as its own this month, but the regional capital remains under Ukrainian control.

In the immediate aftermath of the strikes, the city council said 17 were killed but later revised that down to 12. Regional police reported on Sunday afternoon that 13 had been killed and more than 60 wounded, at least 10 of whom were children.

The multiple strikes came after an explosion Saturday caused the partial collapse of a bridge linking the Crimean Peninsula with Russia. The Kerch Bridge attack damaged an important supply route for the Kremlin’s faltering war effort in Ukraine and a tower-

ing symbol of Russia’s power in the region.

Stunned residents watched from behind police tape as emergency crews tried to reach the upper floors of a building that took a direct hit. The attack collapsed several floors, leaving a smoldering chasm at least 40-feet wide where apartments had stood. Several hours later, the top floors caved in as well.

In an adjacent apartment building, the barrage blew windows and doors out of their frames in a radius of hundreds of feet. At least 20 private homes and 50 apartment buildings in all were damaged, and at least 40 people were hospitalized, city council Secretary Anatoliy Kurtev said.

Russian officials did not immediately comment on the strikes. Following Russian President Vladimir Putin’s annexation of the Zaporizhzhia region last week, Russia has repeatedly bombarded the city of the same name. At least 19 people died in Russian missile strikes on apartment buildings in the city on Thursday.

“Again, Zaporizhzhia. Again, merciless attacks on civilians, targeting residential buildings, in the middle of the night,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wrote in a Telegram post.

THAAD system in South Korea gets upgrades

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — U.S. Forces Korea has delivered equipment that will add functionality to a missile-defense system stationed on the peninsula and better “protect the South Korean people from North Korea’s missile threats,” according to a statement from the Ministry of National Defense on Friday.

The new equipment will provide “better performance” for the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, system by “improving interoperability” between it and the United States’ Patriot missile system, the statement said.

Interoperability is a term often used by the military to describe the ability of a country’s armed forces to use another country’s training methods and equipment.

Another THAAD system was not delivered as part of the package, the ministry added. The new equipment will replace parts in the existing system, and the older equipment will be returned to the United States.

South Korea’s alliance with the U.S. is more prepared to respond to the North’s “advanced nuclear and missile threats” because of the THAAD upgrade, the Eighth Army’s deputy commander, Gen. Mark Holler, said in the statement. THAAD is a defensive system that will not “interfere with strategic and security interests of neighbor countries,” he added.

U.S. missile defense agencies have worked toward integrating the Patriot and THAAD systems for at least two years.

Multiple tests in 2020 attempted to provide THAAD-generated tracking data on a simulated target to a Patriot system, which would then intercept the target.

The benefits of blending the systems include a “tightly integrated, layered missile defense system” designed to track and intercept targets in various altitudes, Lockheed Martin said in a March press release.

Since 2017, an \$800 million THAAD system operated by the U.S. military has been deployed at a South Korean base in Seongju, about 130 miles south of Seoul. The U.S. military at the time said the system was a defensive asset aimed at threats from North Korea.

Italy’s new leadership not expected to hinder US military commitment

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Italy’s relationship with the U.S. and NATO should stay strong under the leadership of incoming Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, but a cold winter and a worsening economy could challenge her support for Ukraine, according to observers.

Under Meloni, who last month became the first woman elected to the position, Italian support for the U.S. and its policies largely will continue, said Riccardo Alcaro, a researcher at the Rome-based think tank Istituto Affari Internazionali.

“If anything, [there will be] even greater attention to being fully aligned or perceived as a reliable, close ally of the U.S.,” Alcaro said.

Meloni’s right-wing, nationalistic Broth-

ers of Italy party along with two others that make up the country’s new governing coalition long have been vocal in their willingness to “bet on the relationship with the U.S.,” he said.

According to the latest Defense Department statistics, the U.S. has 12,477 active-duty service members stationed in Italy.

Meloni’s pro-NATO stance hopefully will mean continuity in Italy’s position on Ukraine and its approach to the alliance, said Max Bergmann, director of the Europe program at the Washington-based think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies.

But the troublesome connections to Russia of Meloni’s fellow coalition leaders, Silvio Berlusconi and Matteo Salvini, could foment problems, he said.

Ian leaves scenes of recovery, despair

Associated Press

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Just days after Hurricane Ian struck, a crowd of locals gathered under a huge banyan tree at a motel's outdoor tiki bar for drink specials and live music. Less than 10 miles away, crews were finishing the search for bodies on a coastal barrier island. Even closer, entire families were trying to get comfortable for the night in a mass shelter housing more than 500 storm victims.

On a coast where a few miles meant the difference between life and death, relief and ruin, the contrasting scenes of reality less than two weeks since the hurricane's onslaught are jarring, and they point to the way disaster can mean so many different things to different people.

Arlan Fuller has seen the disparity while working in the hurricane zone to serve marginalized communities with Project Hope, a nonprofit that provides medical relief services.

A few factors seem to account for the vast differences from one place to the next, he said: People and places closest to the coast

usually fared the worst, as did people with lower incomes.

"There's an interesting combination of location, the sturdiness of the structure people lived in, and means," said Fuller.

On Pine Island, where the state quickly erected a temporary bridge to replace one washed out by the storm, volunteers are handing out water, ice, food and supplies. The island's Publix grocery store reopened with generator power faster than seemed possible, pleasing island resident Charlotte Smith, who didn't evacuate.

"My home is OK. The lower level did flood somewhat. But I'm dry. They have the water back on running. Things are really getting pretty good." Smith said.

Life is very different for Shanika Caldwell, 40, who took her nine children to a mass shelter located inside Hertz Arena, a minor league hockey coliseum, after another shelter located at a public high school shut down so classes could get ready to resume. The family was living in a motel before the storm but had to flee after the roof flew off, she said.

"If they say they are going to start school next week, how am I going to get my kids back and forth from school all the way here?" she said Saturday. Nearby, a huge silver statue of an ice hockey player looked out over the arena parking lot.

Ian, a strong Category 4 storm with 155 mph winds, was blamed for more than 100 deaths, the overwhelming majority of them in southwest Florida.

It was the third-deadliest storm to hit the U.S. mainland this century behind Hurricane Katrina, which left about 1,400 people dead, and Hurricane Sandy, which had a total death count of 233 despite weakening to a tropical storm just before it made landfall.

For some, the recovery has been fairly quick. Barber shops, car washes, chain restaurants, a gun range and vape shops — lots of vape shops — already have reopened on U.S. 41, known in southern Florida as the Tamiami Trail. Many traffic lights are operating, yet residents of low-lying homes and mobile home parks just off the highway are still shoveling mud that was left behind by floodwaters.

Taylor warrant details deepen mistrust in police

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Recent revelations about the search warrant that led to Breonna Taylor's death have reopened old wounds in Louisville's Black community and disrupted the city's efforts to restore trust in the police department.

Former Louisville officer Kelly Goodlett admitted in federal court that she and another officer falsified information in the warrant. That confirmed to many, including U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland, that Taylor never should have been visited by armed officers on March 13, 2020.

Protest leaders who took to the streets of Louisville after she was fatally shot by police say Goodlett's confession confirms their suspicions that Louisville police can't be trusted and that systemic issues run deep.

"What bothers me so incredibly is that so many lives were lost because of this lie," said Hannah Drake, a Louisville poet and leader in a push for justice after Taylor's death. "They don't even understand the far-reaching tentacles of what they did."

More than once during that summer, officers escalated rather than calmed a situation. Days before a Black man was shot dead by a National Guard member in his restaurant's kitchen, an officer who wounded the man's niece taunted demonstrators on social media, daring them to challenge police.

"We were right to protest," Louisville Urban League President Sadiqa Reynolds tweeted shortly after Goodlett's plea. "People are dead and lives upended because of a pile of lies."

Military conscription still being considered for BTS

From wire reports

South Korea's military appears to want to conscript members of the K-pop supergroup BTS for mandatory military duties, as the public remains sharply divided over whether they should be given exemptions.

Lee Ki Sik, commissioner of the Military Manpower Administration, told lawmakers on Oct. 7 that it's "desirable" for BTS members to fulfill their military duties to ensure fairness in the country's military service.

Last week, Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup made almost identical comments about BTS at a parliamentary committee meeting, and Culture Minister Park Bo Gyeon said his ministry would soon finalize its position on the issue.

Whether the band's seven

members must serve in the army is one of the hottest issues in South Korea because its oldest member, Jin, faces possible enlistment early next year after turning 30 in December.

Under South Korean law, all able-bodied men are required to perform 18-21 months of military service.

But the law provides special exemptions for athletes, classical and traditional musicians, and ballet and other dancers who have won top prizes in certain competitions that enhance national prestige.

Without a revision of the law, the government can take steps to grant special exemptions. But past exemptions for people who performed well in non-designated competitions triggered serious debate about the fairness of the system.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Convicted 'fake heiress' released from ICE

NY NEW YORK — Phony socialite and convicted swindler Anna Sorokin, whose scheme inspired a Netflix series, has been released from U.S. immigration custody to house arrest, immigration officials and her spokesperson said.

Anna Sorokin is on home confinement in New York City, said her spokesperson, Juda Engel-mayer.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement confirmed her release. Sorokin, 31, is fighting deportation to Germany.

She was convicted in 2019 of conning \$275,000 from banks, hotels and swank New Yorkers to finance her deluxe lifestyle. Using the name Anna Delvey, she passed herself off as the daughter of a German diplomat, or an oil baron, and lied about having a \$67 million bankroll overseas to create the impression that she could cover her debts, prosecutors said.

The case became the basis for the Netflix series "Inventing Anna," released this year.

Cop fired after shooting hamburger-eating teen

TX SAN ANTONIO — A Texas police officer who shot and wounded a teenager who had been sitting in his car eating a hamburger has been fired, police said.

San Antonio Officer James Brennand was fired after shooting Erik Cantu, 17, in a fast food restaurant parking lot, police training commander Alyssa Campos said in a video

statement. Brennand had responded to an unrelated disturbance at the restaurant when he saw the Cantu inside the car, which had evaded him a day earlier, Campos said.

"The officer abruptly opened the driver's door and ordered the driver out of the car" before the arrival of backup officers that Brennand had requested, Campos said.

Cantu, in the officer's body camera video, looks toward Brennand while holding a hamburger, then backs the car away, striking the officer with the open door.

Brennand then opened fire several times as the door closed and Cantu drove away.

Woman charged in hit-and-run that killed boy

IN ANGOLA — An Ohio woman accused of striking two northeastern Indiana boys with her SUV, fatally injuring one of them, allegedly fled the scene and tried to conceal her involvement in the accident, authorities said.

Hope Ann Richmond, 45, of Montpelier, Ohio, is charged with three felonies, including leaving the scene of an accident causing death and leaving the scene of an accident causing serious bodily injury.

She is charged in the accident along a Steuben County road that killed Wayden Bennett, 13, of Angola, and left Ryly Cummings, 12, of Angola, with a head laceration, The (Angola) Herald Republican reported.

In addition to the two leaving the scene charges, Richmond faces a felony obstruction of justice charge. She allegedly tried to conceal the damage to

her SUV by removing dents, removing a broken mirror and using towels to clean blood from the vehicle, account to court records.

Re-enactor charged with leaving pipe bomb behind

VA CHARLOTTESVILLE — A Civil War re-enactor pleaded not guilty to charges that he planted a pipe bomb at a Virginia battlefield in 2017 and threatened to disrupt additional events.

A federal indictment against Gerald Leonard Drake, 63, of Winchester, Va., was unsealed Thursday. The indictment accuses Drake of planting a pipe bomb at Cedar Creek Battlefield during an annual re-enactment in October 2017. The bomb did not detonate but resulted in cancellation of the re-enactment after its discovery.

According to the indictment, Drake was a Civil War re-enactor who regularly participated in events at Cedar Creek until he was expelled from his unit in 2014. The indictment, though, does not explicitly state that bitterness over his expulsion motivated his alleged misconduct.

Surfer kicked at shark's head, survives attack

CA ARCATA — A 31-year-old surfer in Northern California is recovering after a shark attack that left gruesome bites on his right thigh and leg.

Jared Trainor was unclear whether a seal or shark had knocked him off his board during an outing to Centerville Beach, he told the Times-Standard newspaper in Humboldt

County. The animal had his right leg and board clamped in its jaws, he said.

Underwater, the experienced surfer grabbed the attacker's body with one hand and kicked at its head with his free leg until it let him go and swam away, he said. Trainor returned to the beach where another surfer had a cellphone they used to call for help.

Surgeons stapled shut his open wounds, which spanned nearly 19 inches or the length of the shark's mouth.

Lost wedding ring found after Hurricane Ian

FL FORT MYERS — Ashley Garner had given up on ever seeing her wedding ring again.

She lost it outside her Fort Myers home just days before Hurricane Ian crashed into the coast of southwest Florida. Despite enlisting her husband and three young children to help search around their yard and garage for two days, there was no sign of the ring.

"I just accepted that it was gone," Garner said. "It was only a thing. It's replaceable, and I just let it go. We knew the hurricane was coming, so we just kind of said goodbye."

The family stayed at their home during the storm and went outside to clean up as soon as it had passed.

"We're about 10 minutes into cleaning, and my husband is cleaning up the brush and the trees right next to the garage door," Garner said. "There's a pile of brush and trees, and he moves over one pile, and the ring was right there."

— From wire reports

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and Military News

Mariners stage historic rally to sweep Jays

Associated Press

TORONTO — Carlos Santana and J.P. Crawford delivered before Adam Frazier capped Seattle's historic comeback with one sweet swing.

A little October fun for a new generation of Mariners.

Frazier hit a tiebreaking RBI double in the ninth inning, and Seattle erased a seven-run deficit while topping the Toronto Blue Jays 10-9 on Saturday for a sweep of their AL wild-card series.

"Those are the kind of moments you picture yourself in in the backyard when you're a kid," Frazier said.

It was the biggest road comeback win in playoff history and baseball's largest comeback victory to clinch a postseason series.

It was quite a day for a franchise making its first playoff appearance since Hall of Famer Edgar Martinez and company were eliminated by the New York Yankees in the 2001 AL Championship Series. Next up for this group of Mariners is Houston in the AL

Division Series.

"To go to the World Series, you have to go through Houston," manager Scott Servais said. "They're really good. We understand that. We're really good."

Seattle got off to a 29-39 start this season, but it went 61-33 from June 21 on, trailing only the Astros (65-31) among AL teams over that span.

After winning 4-0 in the opener of the best-of-three series, the Mariners trailed 8-1 through five innings in Game 2. But they roared back, tying it with four runs in the eighth.

With two out and the bases loaded, Crawford hit a blooper to center against All-Star closer Jordan Romano.

"I was praying to the baseball gods to just let that ball sit," Crawford said.

Center fielder George Springer and shortstop Bo Bichette went hard after the sinking liner, but it landed as the two collided. All three runners scored on the double, tying it at 9.

"It seems everything that

could go wrong did go wrong in a very short period of time," interim Blue Jays manager John Schneider said.

Bichette was able to stay in the game, but the 33-year-old Springer had to be helped to his feet before he was carted off the field. The four-time All-Star encouraged the cheering crowd as he departed.

Schneider said Springer was "doing OK" and would be evaluated further.

The Blue Jays have lost five straight postseason games and eight of their last nine. Toronto, which finished one win short of a playoff berth in 2021, heads into another off-season on a disappointing note.

"It's going to take some time," Schneider said. "Probably take a vacation or two."

Cal Raleigh, who hit an RBI single for Seattle in the eighth, reached on a one-out double against Romano in the ninth. After Mitch Haniger flied out, Frazier drove in Raleigh with a double to right.

"I'm just glad the ball fell,"

Frazier said.

Bichette walked, stole second and advanced to third on a grounder in the eighth, but Andrés Muñoz retired Alejandro Kirk to end the threat.

George Kirby, Seattle's eighth pitcher of the game, handled the ninth for his first career save. Matt Chapman walked with one out, but Danny Jansen struck out and Raimel Tapia lined out to end the game.

"I figured he would step up, the adrenaline would be going, and he did a great job," Servais said of Kirby.

Ray, who signed a \$115 million, five-year contract with Seattle in November, allowed four runs and six hits in three-plus innings.

Blue Jays right-hander Kevin Gausman was charged with four runs and five hits over 5 2/3 innings in his second career postseason start. Gausman struck out seven and walked one.

"A heartbreaking loss," Gausman said. "Tough to watch."

Guardians sweep Rays on Gonzalez's homer in 15th

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — The Guardians have won with comebacks and walk-offs for months, turning an unexpected season more special by the day.

Cleveland wasn't supposed to be this good, this fast.

Baseball's youngest team has certainly grown up.

Rookie Oscar Gonzalez broke up the longest scoreless postseason game in history with a leadoff home run in the 15th inning, giving the Guardians a 1-0 win in Game 2 over the Tampa Bay Rays and sweep of the Wild Card Series.

Gonzalez, who walks to the plate to the "SpongeBob SquarePants" theme song, drove a 1-0 cutter — the 432nd pitch in the nearly five-hour game — off Corey Kluber over the wall in left-center to touch off a wild celebration.

As Gonzalez rounded the bases, and his

teammates gathered near home plate to greet him, the sellout crowd of 34,971 fans shook Progressive Field as Cleveland's surprise season added a story book chapter.

"There's no way to describe it," said Gonzalez, who punctuated his shot with an emphatic bat flip before strutting toward first. "It was such an exciting moment that it's hard for me to put into words."

Now, the Guardians, who have had been fun-loving, free and fearless since Opening Day, start the best-of-five Division Series on Tuesday in New York against the AL East champion New York Yankees.

On their visit to Yankee Stadium in April, the Guardians were swept and trash was thrown at them.

They're returning a different team.

Guardians president of baseball operations Chris Antonetti isn't buying any David vs. Goliath storyline.

"We haven't gotten caught up with that

and what the external narrative has been around our team," he said. "These guys have written their own story."

"The Yankees are obviously a great team and we know we have our work cut out for us, but these guys embrace the challenge."

Cleveland has defied odds in its first season after adopting the Guardians nickname. The team ran away in the AL Central by going 24-6 down the stretch, swept the more experienced Rays and now take on the Yankees with their big bats and bigger payroll (\$254 million to Cleveland's \$68 million).

Gonzalez was among 17 players to make their debut for the Guardians this season, so perhaps it was fitting he advanced them.

"I don't think by that point we cared," manager Terry Francona said. "It could have been one of the old guys. We didn't care. We're not biased. I was happy that he hit it."

Phillies hold off Cardinals to advance

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — The Phillies wasted no time taking their raucous celebration from the infield at Busch Stadium, where the Cardinals had trudged off to mourn the end of an era, into the visiting clubhouse, where the champagne flowed freely and Robyn's "Dancing On My Own" pounded through the speakers.

After more than a decade in baseball's wilderness, Philadelphia had finally won another postseason series.

It took Aaron Nola pitching four-hit ball into the seventh inning, an early home run from Bryce Harper and some gutsy performances out of the bullpen. But when Zach Eflin retired Tommy Edman to leave the tying run on base, the Phillies had squeezed out a 2-0 victory over the Cardinals on Saturday night for a sweep of their National League wild-card series.

"Everybody in that clubhouse, on this team, in this organization is super excited," Nola said. "Just a bunch of unselfish guys, doing whatever it takes to win a ballgame, no matter what

it is. It's a lot of excitement."

Long known for his September struggles, Nola proved to be an October ace. The unflappable right-hander struck out six and walked one on 101 pitches before leaving with two outs in the seventh. Jose Alvarado then retired longtime St. Louis star Yadier Molina on a popup, stranding a runner on first.

Then in the eighth, Seranthony Dominguez struck out Paul Goldschmidt and Nolan Arenado to wiggle out of a two-on, one-out jam — the leading contenders for NL MVP were a combined 1-for-15 in the series with no RBIs and six strikeouts.

With one final chance in the ninth, the Cardinals got consecutive two-out singles from Corey Dickerson and Molina. But Eflin, the Phillies' starter-turned-closer, responded by getting Edman to foul out, giving Philadelphia its first postseason series win since topping Cincinnati in the 2010 divisional round.

The Phillies will face a familiar foe, the NL East champion Braves, beginning Tuesday night in Atlanta.

"Our players, they love being in this situation," said Phillies manager Rob Thomson, who took over a struggling club when Joe Girardi was fired early in the season. "And that's what I'm really proud about. There's so many guys that never played in the playoffs and they played really well. The moment didn't get the best of them and I'm really happy about that."

Miles Mikolas allowed two runs and two hits for St. Louis before leaving with two outs in the fifth. Albert Pujols had a pair of singles, including one in the eighth in what was likely the final at-bat of his career, while Molina had gone 0-for-3 before his own single in the last time he will don a Cardinals uniform.

"This was never about me coming back here," Pujols said. "This was about an organization that opened the door for me to finish my career here. My mission was always to help this ballclub to win every day."

The sellout crowd of 48,515, the third-largest in Busch Stadium history, was at its flag-waving throatiest trying to keep the Cards' dream season alive. In-

stead, their fans watched the NL Central champions go down with a whimper, losing in the first round of the playoffs for the third consecutive year.

"It's a tough one, when you know it's Yadi's last year and Albert's last year," Cardinals manager Oliver Marmol said. "There's just extra motivation to deliver for them, and do something special, and allow that story to end with a championship."

"It's obviously disappointing," Marmol said, "but it's where we're at."

Harper, who was hitless in the opener, staked the Phillies to the lead when a 76 mph curveball left his bat at 111.6 mph on the first pitch of the second inning. The ball sliced through the cold October breeze and landed 435 feet away.

The way pitchers have dominated the wild-card round, it figured Harper's one mighty swing might be the difference.

"I didn't play well at all. That's what I look at," Goldschmidt said. "If I could have played better, maybe we could've won at least one of them, if not both of them. That's disappointing."

Stars come through as Mets top Padres to force Game 3

Associated Press

NEW YORK — With their season on the brink, the biggest stars for the New York Mets shined bright.

Pete Alonso launched a tiebreaking homer and Jacob deGrom pitched well enough to help save New York with a 7-3 victory over the San Diego Padres that evened their wild-card playoff series at one game apiece Saturday night.

"Win or go home," deGrom said. "Love pitching here. Mets fans have been great to me. Didn't want to disappoint."

Francisco Lindor also went deep, Jeff McNeil laced a critical two-run double and All-Star closer Edwin Díaz entered much earlier than usual to protect a one-run lead in the seventh inning.

New York broke open the game by scoring four times in the bottom half, keyed by

the bases-loaded double McNeil lined off Adrian Morejon through a drawn-in infield.

Seth Lugo retired cleanup batter Josh Bell on a grounder with the sacks full for the save, ending a game that took 4 hours and 13 minutes.

"It was a close game in the middle innings and then it got away from us there in the seventh," San Diego manager Bob Melvin said.

The teams play a decisive Game 3 on Sunday night at Citi Field, with the winner advancing to a best-of-five NL Division Series against the top-seeded Los Angeles Dodgers beginning Tuesday. Joe Musgrove is scheduled to start for his hometown Padres against 15-game winner Chris Bassitt.

"Go out there and compete and leave it all on the field," San Diego slugger Manny Machado said. "At this point it's all about 27 outs."

Leadoff batter Brandon Nimmo had three hits and a walk for the Mets, including a go-ahead single in the fourth that chased wild starter Blake Snell to the delight of a boisterous sellout crowd waving orange rally towels.

The left-hander walked four of his first 12 batters and six in all over 3½ shaky innings in his first postseason start for San Diego.

In a matchup between the 2018 Cy Young Award winners, deGrom struck out eight in six innings of two-run ball for his fourth career postseason win.

It was deGrom's first playoff start at home — the right-hander helped pitch the Mets into the 2015 World Series, but all four of his starts that postseason came on the road.

"I actually felt like I had my best stuff in the sixth inning," he said.

Hooker, No. 8 Tennessee too much for No. 25 LSU

Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — As dynamic quarterback Hendon Hooker and his Tennessee teammates left the field in a mostly empty Tiger Stadium, nearly all the fans who remained were wearing orange and belting out the lyrics to “Rocky Top.”

Hooker passed for two touchdowns, Jabari Small ran for 127 yards and two scores, and No. 8 Tennessee punished No. 25 LSU for its mistakes and risk-taking in a resounding 40-13 victory on Saturday.

A morning kickoff lured fans to Death Valley earlier than usual — and many were gone by the end of the third quarter, when Tennessee led 37-7.

The Volunteers (5-0, 2-0 South-

eastern Conference) matched their best start to a season since 2016 with balance on offense, sound defense that corralled dual-threat LSU QB Jayden Daniels and opportunistic special teams play.

“We have found a way to be the best team on the field the last five weeks,” Tennessee coach Josh Heupel said. “Our players have worked hard and more importantly expect to play very well. They expect to win.”

The dominant Tennessee triumph in Tiger Stadium will only add to the hype surrounding the Volunteers’ next game — a home date with SEC powerhouse No. 1 Alabama.

“Everybody understands the opponent that we have coming

in,” Heupel said. “It’s important that the staff and the players enjoy this win on the ride home, but turn to the next one tomorrow.”

Hooker passed for 239 yards against LSU (4-2, 2-1), with scoring passes of 45 and 14 yards to Jalin Hyatt. The fleet-footed QB also accounted for 56 of Tennessee’s 264 yards on the ground. Bru McCoy caught seven passes for 140 yards, drawing howls of “Bruuuuuu!” from Tennessee fans.

Tennessee sacked Daniels five times with Byron Young accounting for half of that total.

“They were able to dominate and control the line of scrimmage,” Heupel said of Tennessee’s defensive front. “There wasn’t anywhere for (Daniels) to escape.”

Giants rally in 4th, hold off Packers

Associated Press

LONDON — Saquon Barkley took a direct snap and ran for a 2-yard touchdown in the fourth quarter to cap the New York Giants’ 27-22 comeback victory over the Packers on Sunday at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, spoiling Green Bay’s international debut.

Aaron Rodgers drove the Packers to the 6-yard line, but his pass on fourth-and-goal was swatted down at the line of scrimmage by safety Xavier McKinney with just over a minute left.

After Giants punter Jamie Gillan ran out of the end zone for a safety, the Packers (3-2) got the ball back and set up a desperation pass, but Rodgers was sacked by Oshane Ximines at the Green Bay 29, fumbling as the clock ran out.

The Giants (4-1) scored 17 unanswered points in the second half as Daniel Jones, playing on a sprained ankle, led three scoring drives to erase a 20-10 deficit. It’s the Giants’ best start since 5-0 in 2009 and matches their win total from last season (4-13).

Gary Brightwell’s 2-yard touchdown tied the score at 20-20 to complete a 15-play, 91-yard drive with just over 10 minutes to play. On the drive, Jones scrambled for two first downs — after carrying just once in the first half for 3 yards.

Rodgers threw for 222 yards and two touchdowns, but couldn’t get any points on the board in the second half. He connected with Allen Lazard and Mercedes Lewis for first-half scoring strikes.

The Giants entered the game as the NFL’s top rushing offense, but struggled to run the ball early, falling behind 17-3 after Lazard’s 4-yard touchdown reception and Lewis’ 2-yard scoring catch.

Milroe, Alabama push past Texas A&M

Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Alabama was plagued by turnovers and other mistakes and was once again pushed to the brink by Texas A&M, this time with Bryce Young watching from the sideline.

Things turned out differently this time.

Jalen Milroe threw for three touchdowns in his first start and No. 1 Alabama made a final goal-line stand to escape with a 24-20 victory over Texas A&M on Saturday night in a battle of backup quarterbacks.

Playing without the injured Heisman Trophy winner Young, the Crimson Tide (6-0, 3-0 Southeastern Conference) needed two late stops from Will Anderson Jr. and the defense. They got them, just barely, to survive four turnovers and two missed field goals against a team that beat the Tide 41-38

last season.

“That was not our best football out there tonight,” Alabama coach Nick Saban said. “When you don’t have your quarterback out there and the second-teamer has to play, everybody’s got to play better.”

But the Aggies were in a similar boat, albeit with a more experienced quarterback sub.

Haynes King, subbing for injured starter Max Johnson (throwing hand), drove the Aggies (3-2, 1-2) 69 yards in the final 1:50 with big passes to Evan Stewart and Moose Muhammad III. Jordan Battle appeared to end the threat with an interception in the end zone, but Brian Branch was flagged for pass interference.

That set up one final shot from the 2 with three seconds left, but King’s pass to Stewart fell incomplete.

Milroe passed for 111 yards

and ran for 183, but also threw an interception and lost two fumbles. Jahmyr Gibbs ran for 159 yards after gaining most of his 206 after Young’s shoulder injury early against Arkansas.

The big question now is if Young will play against No. 8 Tennessee.

King completed 25 of 46 passes for 253 yards and a pair of touchdowns with an interception but faced constant pressure. The Tide had three sacks and Anderson was credited with eight quarterback hurries.

Texas A&M coach Jimbo Fisher wasn’t buying any narrative that the Aggies kept it close because Alabama was without its star quarterback and made a number of mistakes.

“We’re playing the backup, quarterback too,” Fisher said. “Two good teams locked up and battled and went at it and we showed what we’re capable of.”