

Ukrainians brace for winter's brutal bite

Associated Press

KIVSHARIVKA, Ukraine — Nine-year-old Artem Panchenko helps his grandmother stoke a smoky fire in a makeshift outdoor kitchen beside their nearly abandoned apartment block. The light is falling fast and they need to eat before the setting sun plunges their home into cold and darkness.

Winter's bite is coming. They can feel it in their bones as temperatures drop below freezing. And like hundreds of thousands of other Ukrainians, they are facing a season that promises to be brutal.

Artem and his grandmother have been living without gas, water or electricity for around three weeks, ever since Russian missile strikes cut off the utilities in their town in Ukraine's eastern Kharkiv region. For them and the few other residents that remain in the complex in Kivsharivka, bundling up at night and cooking outdoors is the only way to survive.

"It's cold and there are bombings," Artem said Sunday as he helped his grandmother with the cooking. "It's really cold. I'm sleeping in my clothes in our apartment."

Adding to the foreboding about the coming winter, Russian strikes on Monday and Tuesday in Kyiv, the capital, and several other Ukrainian cities by drones and mis-

siles targeted power plants. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a tweet Tuesday that over the past week, Russian attacks have knocked out 30% of his country's power plants, causing "massive blackouts across the country."

As the freeze sets in, those who haven't fled from the heavy fighting, regular shelling and months of Russian occupation in eastern Ukraine are desperately trying to figure out how to dig in for the cold months.

In the nearby village of Kurylivka, Viktor Palyanitsa pushes a wheelbarrow full of freshly cut logs along the road toward his house. He passes a destroyed tank, the remnants of damaged buildings and the site of a 300-year-old wooden church that was leveled as Ukrainian forces fought to liberate the area from Russian occupiers.

Palyanitsa, 37, said he's gathered enough wood to last the entire winter. Still, he planned to begin sleeping beside a wood-burning stove in a rickety outbuilding and not his home, since all the windows in his house have been blown out by flying shrapnel.

"It's not comfortable. We spend a lot of time on gathering wood. You can see the situation we're living in," Palyanitsa said, quietly understating the dire outlook for the next several months.

Authorities are working to gradually re-

store electricity to the area in the coming days, and repairs to water and gas infrastructure will come next, according to Roman Semenukha, a deputy with the Kharkiv regional government.

"Only after that will we be able to begin to restore heating," he said.

Authorities were working to provide firewood to residents, he added, but had no timeline for when the utilities would be restored.

Standing beside his pile of split wood, Palyanitsa was not waiting for government help. He said he didn't expect heating to be restored anytime soon, but that he feels ready to fend for himself even once winter sets in.

"I have arms and legs. So I'm not scared of the cold, because I can find wood and heat the stove," he said.

Authorities in the Ukrainian-controlled areas of the neighboring, hotly contested Donetsk region have urged all remaining residents to evacuate, and warned that gas and water services in many areas will likely not be restored by winter. Like in the Kharkiv region, ordinary Ukrainians are still living in thousands of homes that have been wrecked by Russian strikes, with leaky or damaged roofs and blown-out windows that are unable to provide protection against cold or wet weather.

Ukraine's power, water supplies under attack again

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Airstrikes cut power and water supplies to hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians on Tuesday, part of what the country's president called an expanding Russian campaign to drive the nation into the cold and dark and make peace talks impossible.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said nearly one-third of Ukraine's power stations have been destroyed in the past week, "causing massive blackouts across the country."

"No space left for negotiations with Putin's regime," he tweeted.

Depriving people of water, electricity and heat as winter begins to bite and the

broadening use of so-called suicide drones that nosedive into targets have opened a new phase in Russian President Vladimir Putin's war. The bombardments appear aimed at wearing down the notable resilience Ukrainians have shown in the nearly eight months since Moscow invaded.

Even far from front lines, basic utilities are no longer certainties, with daily strikes reaching far into the country and damaging key facilities, sometimes faster than they can be repaired.

The latest city shorn of power was Zhytomyr, home to military bases, industries and leafy boulevards, about 85 miles west of Kyiv. The mayor said the whole city of 250,000 lost power and also water initial-

ly. Repairs quickly reconnected some homes but 150,000 people were still without electricity hours after the morning strike, regional authorities said.

Hospitals switched to backup power after the missile strikes Tuesday on an energy facility, said Mayor Serhiy Sukhomlyn.

In Kyiv, missile strikes damaged two power facilities and killed two people, city authorities said. The attack left 50,000 people without power for a few hours, the facilities' operator said.

Missiles also severely damaged an energy facility in the south-central city of Dnipro. Some homes lost power but the operator couldn't say how many.

Yen falls to 32-year low against US dollar

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Japan's plunging currency is softening the impact of inflation on American military personnel stationed in the country, even as the government cuts their allowances. A dollar bought just over 149 yen on Monday for the first time in 32 years and was hovering around that level Tuesday evening. The yen has dropped 23% against the dollar this year as Japan continues to keep interest rates near zero.

In contrast, the U.S. Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark interest rate at each of its past three meetings, most recently in September, bringing the rate to between 3% and 3.25%. The

Wall Street Journal reported Thursday.

A higher interest rate is expected to slow inflation, but by promising higher yields, it also attracts investment to the United States, which strengthens the dollar compared to other nations' currencies.

The strong dollar is welcomed by U.S. service members in Japan, most of whom have hundreds of dollars less to spend each pay period due to cuts in their cost-of-living allowance this month.

Most are no longer receiving COLA — tax-free money to help offset the costs of living in expensive areas overseas — following changes announced by the State Department on Oct. 1.

The dollar's rise comes also as prices increase across Japan due to the weak yen and increased costs for energy, packaging and logistics. Public broadcaster NHK reported Oct. 9 that prices of 20,665 items have or will be raised this year by an average of 14%.

"This is the best time to go to restaurants or go out because the yen is a really good value right now," Air Force spouse Mel Reyes, 36, of Cebu, Philippines, told Stars and Stripes on Tuesday.

Her family, who lives on Yokota, took advantage of the exchange rate with a trip to Tokyo DisneySea last month. There are some good deals in local stores on items such as groceries and skin

care products, she said while eating lunch at Yokota's food court.

The dollar's strength against the Philippine peso (a dollar bought 58.89 pesos on Tuesday) is also helping with money Reyes sends to family back home, she said.

However, Air Force Master Sgt. Jose Punzo, 30, of Los Angeles, who works at Yokota's post office, said he thinks inflation is canceling out the savings gained through the exchange rate.

The costs of parking and things such as apples have gone up off base, he said.

"If the yen is going down that means prices are going to go up off base," said Punzo, also at the food court on Tuesday. "We don't feel it as much as the locals."

DOD civilians in Japan told to plan for off-base medical care

By **ALEX WILSON**
AND KELLY AGEE
Stars and Stripes

Civilian employees of the Defense Department in Japan should "have a plan in place" for medical care from a local provider in the event military hospitals are unable to see them, the head of military medical care in the Pacific said Monday.

The Defense Health Agency is legally obligated to prioritize active-duty service members and their families, Army Maj. Gen. Joseph Heck, director of DHA Region Indo-Pacific, told Stars and Stripes during a video call. DOD civilians and anyone not covered by the military's Tricare Prime medical plan are seen in military hospitals on a space-available basis.

Military hospitals at Yokosuka Naval Base, the homeport of 7th Fleet, and Yokota Air Base, the headquarters of U.S. Forces Japan, this year said some civilians must seek treatment from Japanese providers.

In response, the Japan Medical

Forum, a group of DOD civilians, started a petition Oct. 10 on change.org urging Congress to preserve civilians' access to routine health care at military hospitals and to protect them from denials by off-base providers. The petition had received 1,026 signatures by Monday.

Heck said DHA, which manages military medical facilities across the armed services, is attempting to make room for civilian patients, but they should be prepared for when that effort falls short.

"It really is incumbent upon the non-enrolled population to have a plan in place to get the care that they may require outside of the military treatment facility," he said.

Seeking health care in a foreign country may be difficult, Heck said, but the onus falls on those civilians.

"We commiserate and empathize with the difficulty that they may be having in getting the health care that they need for themselves or their families," he

said. "And we encourage them to work with their hiring agency and their human resources department to try to find care on the economy during this time."

Alexandra Cummings, a DOD civilian spouse at Yokosuka and a forum member, said DHA is negligent in creating a sudden, blanket ban on treating civilians without an agreement in place with Japan to provide them with medical care.

Many DOD civilians arrived in Japan after a cursory medical screening and have medical issues that would disqualify active-duty military members from serving overseas, Cummings told Stars and Stripes by Facebook Messenger on Monday.

"I think we were largely not informed," she said. "Circumstances have changed drastically on the ground so much that we have people having health [crises] and they can't even get into a Japanese medical provider. No one talked about that."

Heck said that under Chapter 55 of Title 10 U.S. Code, section

1071, and a 2018 DHA procedural instruction, the agency is obligated to prioritize care for active-duty service members.

DHA medical facilities "are expected to offer minimum or no-space available primary care" services, according to the procedural instruction. Routinely offering space-available appointments to civilian patients implies there is adequate space for active-duty patients.

The availability of appointments can change rapidly based on the number of providers or patients, he said. Changes in personnel are behind the recent lack of civilian appointments at Yokota, where civilian pediatric patients were sent off base, and at Yokosuka, where all civilians without Tricare Prime were diverted to local providers for certain services, such as pediatrics, mental health or family medicine.

However, DHA is working with U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka and other military providers to reopen space-available appointments for civilians, Heck said.

Secret Service paid high Trump hotel rates

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Donald Trump's private company arranged for the Secret Service to pay for rooms at his properties in excess of government-approved rates at least 40 times, including two charges for more than \$1,100 per room, per night, according to documents released Monday by a congressional committee.

The Secret Service was charged room rates of more than \$800 per night at least 11 times when agents stayed at Mar-a-Lago in Florida, the Trump hotel in Washington, D.C., and other properties, the Democratic-led House Oversight Committee said. It noted that Trump made over 500 trips

to his properties while president.

The "exorbitant" rates point to a possible "taxpayer-funded windfall for former President Trump's struggling businesses," Committee Chair Carolyn Maloney of New York wrote in a letter Monday to the Secret Service requesting more information.

The Secret Service said it had received the letter and was reviewing it.

The Trump Organization denied that the Secret Service charges were a problem and said it provided rooms and other services at cost, at big discounts or for free.

"The Trump Family is likely the first family in American his-

tory to have not profited off of the United States government," said Eric Trump in a statement. He added, "President Trump funded the vast majority of his campaign with hundreds of millions of dollars of his own money and turned away billions of dollars in real estate deals worldwide."

In total, the Trump Organization charged the agency responsible for protecting the president and his family at least \$1.4 million, according to Secret Service records released by the committee.

The committee said the total bill was likely higher because the panel only got records through September 2021 and payments for trips abroad were

not included.

The former president has been repeatedly criticized by Democrats and government watchdogs for what they have said were brazen attempts to make money from taxpayer funds during his presidency.

In addition to money from the Secret Service when he and his family visited his clubs and hotels, Trump played host to foreign officials at his properties, also requiring lodging for accompanying agents.

The president tried to arrange for his Trump National Doral Golf Club in Florida to be chosen as the venue for a Group of Seven meeting of global leaders, only to pull back after an outcry of about self dealing.

LA council members to lose committee positions

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The head of the Los Angeles City Council stripped two members of much of their power Monday to pressure them to resign for participating in a private meeting in which they did not object to a colleague's crude and racist remarks and at times joined in the offensive banter.

Acting Council President Mitch O'Farrell removed Gil Cedillo and Kevin de Leon from committee chairmanships and assignments and named them instead to a board that rarely meets as he turned up the heat on the veteran Democratic politicians.

"These members have lost all credibility, all standing," O'Farrell said at a City Hall news conference.

The two men have refused calls to step down despite widespread condemnation that led former council President Nury Martinez to resign last week.

The leaked recording of the three powerful politicians dis-

cussing with a labor leader how to maintain their grip on power and expand Latino influence in the city has plunged the council into chaos as angry protesters shut down meetings last week.

The recording has also derailed their personal ambitions.

By losing committee assignments, their influence in City Hall has dwindled and they have largely become token figures, unable to participate in the day-to-day work of the council and unwanted in council chambers where their appearance is likely to cause an uproar.

The council has moved to censure Cedillo and de Leon, but doesn't have the power to remove fellow elected officials from office unless they've been charged with a crime.

O'Farrell said the only path forward is through their resignation or a recall election in the case of de Leon, whose term ends in 2024. Cedillo lost his seat in the primary and will be replaced in December.

Student loan debt forgiveness application website goes live

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Monday officially kicked off the application process for his student debt cancellation program and announced that 8 million borrowers had already applied for loan relief during the federal government's soft launch period over the weekend.

He encouraged the tens of millions eligible for potential relief to visit studentaid.gov and touted the application form that the president said would take less than five minutes to complete. An early, "beta launch" version of the online form released late Friday handled the early stream of applications "without a glitch or any difficulty," Biden said.

"It means more than 8 million Americans are — starting this week — on their way to receiving life-changing relief," Biden, accompanied by Education Secretary Miguel Cardona, said Monday. The president called his program a

"game-changer" for millions of Americans saddled with student loan debt.

The number of borrowers who applied during the testing period already amounts to more than one-fourth of the total number of applicants the administration had projected would submit forms, underscoring the popularity of the program and the eagerness of borrowers to receive the debt relief. Some 8 million borrowers who have income information already on file with the Education Department would see their debt canceled without applying.

Biden's plan calls for \$10,000 in federal student debt cancellation for those with incomes below \$125,000 a year, or households that make less than \$250,000 a year. Those who received federal Pell Grants to attend college are eligible for an additional \$10,000. The plan makes 20 million eligible to get their federal student debt erased entirely.

Report: Taliban killed dozens of men in restive Afghan province

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — The Taliban captured, bound and shot to death 27 men in Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley last month during an offensive against resistance fighters in the area, according to a report published Tuesday, refuting the group's earlier claims that the men were killed in battle.

One video of the killings verified by the report shows five men, blindfolded with their hands tied behind their backs.

Then, Taliban fighters spray them with gunfire for 20 seconds and cry out in celebration.

The investigation by Afghan Witness, an open-source project run by the U.K.-based nonprofit Center for Information Resilience, is a rare verification of allegations that the Taliban have used brutal methods against opposition forces and their supporters, its researchers said. Since taking power in

August 2021, the Taliban have imposed a tighter and harsher rule, even as they press for international recognition of their government.

David Osborn, the team leader of Afghan Witness, said the report gives the "most clear-cut example" of the Taliban carrying out an "orchestrated purge" of resistance fighters.

Afghan Witness said it analyzed dozens of visual sources from social media — mostly videos and photographs — to conclusively link one group of Taliban fighters to the killings of 10 men in the Dara District of Panjshir, including the five seen being mowed down in the video.

It said it also confirmed 17 other extrajudicial killings from further images on social media, all showing dead men with their hands tied behind their backs. Videos and photos of Taliban fighters with the bodies aided geolocation and chrono-loc-

ation, also providing close-ups of the fighters at the scene. These were cross-referenced with other videos suspected to feature the group.

"Using open-source techniques we have established the facts around the summary and systematic execution of a group of men in the Panjshir Valley in mid-September," Osborn said. "At the time of their execution, the detained were bound, posing no threat to their Taliban captors."

Enayatullah Khawarazmi, the Taliban-appointed spokesman for the defense minister, said a delegation is investigating the videos released on social media.

He said he was unable to give further details as the investigation is ongoing.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesman for the Taliban-run government, was not immediately available for comment.

Biden set to prioritize abortion bill before midterms

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden will promise Tuesday that the first bill he sends to Capitol Hill next year will be one that codifies *Roe v. Wade* — if Democrats control enough seats in Congress for Biden to sign abortion protections into law.

It's the first time Biden has prioritized abortion legislation in this way ahead of the November midterms.

Republicans are widely projected to gain control of at least the House. Abortion rights have been a key motivating factor for Democrats this year, although the economy and inflation still rank as chief concern for most voters.

Biden plans to make the remarks at a Democratic National Committee event in Washington.

A Democratic official says the president will also make a contrast between his party and Republicans who are calling for a federal abortion ban that would punish doctors for performing the procedure.

The official previewed Biden's remarks on condition of anonymity.

For the White House, it won't be enough just to keep control of both chambers of Congress, already an uphill battle, to be able to enshrine the protections of the landmark 1973 ruling into law. The Senate would need to abolish the filibuster, the legislative rule that requires 60 votes for most bills to advance in the chamber, in order to pass an abortion measure with a simple majority of senators.

Spacey testifies sex abuse claims 'Not true'

Associated Press

NEW YORK — An emotional Kevin Spacey testified in a New York courtroom Monday that he never made a sexual pass at the actor Anthony Rapp, who has sued for millions of dollars in damages, claiming the Academy Award-winning actor tried to take him to bed when he was 14.

Repeatedly, Spacey denied Rapp's claims that a then-26-year-old Spacey picked him up like a groom does a bride after a 1986 party at his Manhattan apartment and put him on his bed before lying on top of him.

Rapp testified earlier in a civil trial in which he has accused Spacey of assault and battery that he squirmed out from underneath an inebriated Spacey in the fully clothed encounter before fleeing, only to have Spacey follow him to the door and ask if he was sure he wanted to leave.

"They are not true," Spacey said of the allegations, first made in 2017 in an interview with

BuzzFeed.

The accusations, along with more made by others, brought an end to Spacey's popular role on the Netflix series "House of Cards" and abruptly derailed his career.

Spacey, 63, dabbed tears from his eyes with a tissue and sniffled as he described immediate intense pressure from publicists and lawyers to respond with compassion and empathy and an apology to Rapp's claims.

"They told me I couldn't push back on the story," Spacey recalled. "I knew I wouldn't have any sexual interest in Anthony Rapp or any child. That I knew."

At the time, with the #MeToo movement gaining momentum, "The industry was very nervous. There was a lot of fear in the air about who was going to be next," he said.

He added: "I was shocked. I was frightened and I was confused. ... I knew I had never been alone with Anthony Rapp."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Outlaw on horseback arrested for DUI

CA WHITTIER — An outlaw suspected of being under the influence while riding a horse through city streets was arrested after leading police on a pursuit in Southern California, authorities said.

Officers in a patrol car chased the suspect in Whittier, about 20 miles southeast of downtown Los Angeles, according to police.

“An intoxicated person on a horse, galloping through traffic ... refusing to pull the horse over ... that was our afternoon,” Whittier police posted on Instagram.

The pursuit ended with the DUI suspect in custody and the horse receiving lots of love from officers, police said.

2 people shot at college homecoming concert

NC SALISBURY — Two people were shot and others were injured as they fled gunfire that broke out at a North Carolina college homecoming concert featuring rapper Asian Doll, officials said.

Officers called to the campus of Livingstone College in Salisbury found two people shot and others who were hurt as attendees fled the gunfire, city officials said in a statement.

Video footage from the concert showed that a fight broke out while Asian Doll was on stage. One person, who isn't a Livingstone student, then fired one or more shots, police and school officials said in a joint statement.

A male victim with a gunshot wound was flown to Novant Health Presbyterian Medical

Center in Charlotte, where he was in stable condition, and a female victim with a graze wound was treated at a local hospital and released, city spokesperson Linda McElroy said in a text.

Bear mauls 10-year-old in grandparents' backyard

CT MORRIS — A 250-pound black bear mauled a 10-year-old boy playing in his grandparents' backyard in Connecticut and tried to drag him away before the animal was fatally shot by police, authorities said.

The child was attacked in the town of Morris, the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection said. He was taken to a hospital for treatment of injuries that were not life-threatening.

Officers from the state police and DEEP's environmental conservation force responded and shot the bear, authorities said.

James Butler, and his wife, Christina Anderson, who was inside the house when the bear attacked, said the boy suffered a puncture wound to one thigh, bite marks on a foot and ankle and claw marks on his back.

UFO Festival brought over \$2M in spending

NM ROSWELL — Roswell officials said recently that the city's UFO Festival had an economic impact of more than \$2 million.

The economic report for the event showed over 40,000 visitors came to the four-day festival, which ran from June 30-July 3. The cost for the city to mount it was more than \$200,000. Officials applauded the results as a “10 to 1 return on your money.”

This year's festival marked

the 75th anniversary of the alleged Roswell Incident. Something crashed at what was then the J.B. Foster ranch in 1947, with the U.S. Army announcing it had recovered a “flying disc” but later saying the debris was merely the remnants of a high-altitude weather balloon.

Pilot guides failing plane to neighborhood road

TX DALLAS — A small airplane experiencing technical problems made an emergency landing on a road in a Dallas neighborhood.

Engine problems forced the plane to land on West Kiest Boulevard, WFAA-TV reported.

The unnamed husband and wife who were operating the airplane escaped injuries and there were no injuries on the ground, Dallas Fire-Rescue officials said.

The Federal Aviation Administration said the multiengine DA-622 landed about 2 miles from Dallas Executive Airport. The plane was en route to the airport from Winston Field in Snyder, Texas, about 250 miles west of Dallas, WFAA reported.

There was no fire or leaked fuel at the landing site, but some power lines were knocked down and a speed limit sign was struck, Dallas Fire-Rescue said.

Death at correctional facility ruled homicide

MD BALTIMORE — The death of a detainee at a Baltimore correctional facility has been ruled a homicide, officials said.

Officers at Baltimore Central Booking and Intake Center found the man unresponsive and he was pronounced dead a short time later, officials said.

Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services spokesperson Mark Vernarelli identified the man as Javarick Gantt, 34, of Annapolis, news outlets reported. Gantt's body was taken to the medical examiner's office, which ruled his death a homicide.

Department detectives are working with the Baltimore State's Attorney's Office to criminally charge a suspect and the department has also opened an administrative investigation, Vernarelli said.

Person of interest in death of couple arrested

VT BURLINGTON — A man described as a person of interest in an unsolved homicide in New Hampshire was ordered held without bail after he was arrested in Vermont on a charge of being a fugitive from justice from Utah.

Logan Clegg, 26, who was described as homeless, was arrested by police in South Burlington after detectives from New Hampshire spotted him in the area.

South Burlington Police described him as a person of interest in an unsolved April homicide in Concord. The New Hampshire Attorney General's office said police made contact with a person of interest in Vermont in connection with the April killings of Stephen and Djeswende Reid. The office didn't name the person.

No one has been arrested or charged with the shooting deaths of the Reids, who were found dead three days after they went for a walk on some local trails.

— From wire reports

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Warriors seek fifth NBA title in 9 years

Associated Press

Golden State coach Steve Kerr went into last season uncertain if his club would be good enough to contend for another NBA championship.

He got his answer. He's getting another ring.

And now, the Warriors will try to do it all again.

The NBA's 77th season started Tuesday night, the opening doubleheader — Philadelphia at Eastern Conference champion Boston, then the Los Angeles Lakers at the Warriors — wasted no time in putting title contenders on display. Commissioner Adam Silver was in San Francisco for Golden State's ring night as the Warriors began their quest for a fifth championship in nine seasons.

"We're back in it," Kerr said. "But there's a lot of teams that are right in it, and the league is super competitive. I think the West has gotten even stronger. There's a lot

of competition out there. And so, we're one of the teams that is in the mix and that's exciting. But we have to start over. It doesn't just automatically happen from one year to the next, so we've got a lot of work."

There is no shortage of contenders for the Warriors to fend off and no shortage of teams that made big moves with hopes of being the last team standing this season. Minnesota traded with Utah for Rudy Gobert and Cleveland traded with Utah for Donovan Mitchell; the Timberwolves and Cavaliers are trying to reach the league's upper echelon, and the Jazz are starting on a new path after a few years of being good but nowhere near good enough.

"There's a very high level of competition this year," Gobert said. "I think a lot of teams got better."

Some teams might have gotten better by not doing something. Kevin Durant asked for a trade out of Brooklyn; cooler heads prevailed, and Durant remained with the

Nets, who also should have Kyrie Irving — whose decision not to get vaccinated against COVID-19 means he'll be tested often but won't keep him off the floor — for many more games this season than the 29 he was limited to last season. And Ben Simmons, who didn't play at all last season, will be out there with Durant and Irving as well.

Durant's reason for asking for a trade was simple: "I was more so worried about how we're approaching every day as a basketball team," he said. Those concerns were addressed, and in Brooklyn he stayed, with the Nets expected to joust with Boston, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Miami and probably others in a very deep Eastern Conference.

LeBron James enters this season 1,325 points behind Kareem Abdul-Jabbar for the NBA's all-time scoring lead, and the Lakers — if they can stay healthy — figure to be much better than the 33-49 record they posted last year.

Eastern Conference: Many contenders, many questions

Associated Press

Nobody can be certain how the Boston Celtics will perform under their third coach in three years, or whether James Harden can flourish in Philadelphia alongside Joel Embiid, or if Ben Simmons' first season playing with the Brooklyn Nets is already the last chance with Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving.

Talent is spread all over the Eastern Conference. So are the question marks.

It's easy to see any of those teams, along with Milwaukee, Miami and perhaps others, finishing atop the conference. It's also easy to see some of them derailed by drama.

For now, everybody is looking at the positives.

"There's a lot of good teams, a lot of talent in the East, but once the games are being played, that's when you'll declare who the best team is," Durant said. "I think obviously first third of the season, halfway through, you'll start to figure it out, but everybody feels great about their team around this time."

Durant didn't feel great over the summer, telling the Nets he wanted to be traded. At the same time, the Nets were declining to give Irving a contract extension after he was unavailable for so much of last season because he refused to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

But the Nets' problems were old news by the time the Celtics, coming off an NBA Finals appearance, suspended coach Ime Udoka just before training camp for at least this season for multiple violations of team policies involving a woman in the organization. Assistant Joe Mazzulla takes over for Udoka, who just finished his first season after replacing Brad Stevens.

A look at the East, in predicted order of regular-season finish:

Playoff bound

1. Milwaukee. The Bucks should be driven to get home-court advantage after their title defense ended with a Game 7 loss at Boston in the second round.

2. Boston. The coaching situation is an unknown. The players are not.

3. Philadelphia. The 76ers will hope for more than the 21 points Harden averaged for them last season.

4. Miami. Had the East's best record and was a game away from the NBA Finals last season.

5. Chicago. Bulls were in great shape last year until injuries to Zach LaVine and Lonzo Ball.

6. Cleveland. Donovan Mitchell and Darius Garland in the backcourt with Jarrett Allen and Evan Mobley up front should be good enough for a team that just fell short of

the playoffs last season.

Into the play-in

7. Brooklyn. Too explosive to be stopped. Maybe too small to stop others.

8. Toronto. Needs good bench play to keep the key starters from wearing down.

9. Atlanta. With Dejounte Murray joining Trae Young, guard play won't be a problem in Atlanta.

10. New York. Jalen Brunson takes over at the point and tries to get the best out of Julius Randle and RJ Barrett.

Facing long odds

11. Charlotte. Coach Steve Clifford's second stint depends, as with recent Charlotte seasons, on the health of LaMelo Ball and Gordon Hayward.

12. Washington. The potential is there, as long as Bradley Beal and Kristaps Porzingis are on the court together enough.

13. Indiana. Rick Carlisle for so long had playoff teams in Dallas. He doesn't in Indiana.

14. Detroit. With Cade Cunningham, No. 5 pick Jaden Ivey and other young talent, the Pistons won't be in this position in a few years.

15. Orlando. No. 1 pick Paolo Banchero is the latest good piece to join Magic's youth movement.

Hopkins, late turnover lift Chargers

Associated Press

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — Justin Herbert didn't throw a touchdown pass for the first time in 27 games. For once, it didn't matter thanks to the Los Angeles Chargers special teams.

Dustin Hopkins kicked four field goals, including a 39-yarder with 2:38 remaining in overtime, as the Chargers rallied for a 19-16 victory over the Denver Broncos.

Hopkins, who injured a hamstring during the first half, grimaced as he kicked the ball and fell to the ground before being picked up by teammates. The ninth-year kicker was inactive for last week's game against Cleveland due to a quadriceps injury.

Hopkins' heroics were set up when Deane Leonard recovered a muffed punt at the Denver 28-yard line.

Herbert, who is still recovering from fractured rib cartilage from a hit one month ago, appreciated Hopkins being able to gut it out.

"We've got so much respect for him. For him to go out there and play and put up with some pain like that, it was great to see," said Herbert, whose 56 attempts without a TD pass is an NFL record in a win.

Coach Brandon Staley said Hopkins'

hamstring kind of cramped up early, but started to loosen up during the second half.

"You can't say enough about him hanging in there," Staley said. "At the end we had no choice. We were going to kick no matter what."

Hopkins has five games with four or more field goals. It is also the first OT game-winner of his career.

"I was trying to focus on a little backswing and just get through the ball. And that was it," Hopkins said. "I wasn't thinking about the circumstance or anything like that."

The Chargers have won three straight to improve to 4-2. They are tied with Kansas City atop the AFC West. For the second straight week, they have rallied from a double-digit deficit at the end of the first quarter to win.

Los Angeles was down 14-3 at the end of the first quarter last Sunday in Cleveland before pulling out a 30-28 win.

This game appeared to be headed toward a tie until Denver's Montrell Washington muffed JK Scott's punt at the Broncos 32-yard line. It was recovered by Deane Leonard at the 28.

Washington called for a fair catch, but Denver safety P.J. Locke didn't hear Wash-

ington and tried to block Ja'Sir Taylor when Locke bumped into Washington.

Herbert, who completed 37 of 57 passes for 238 yards and an interception, passed to Mike Williams for 9 yards on third-and-12 from the Denver 30 to get Hopkins closer.

Russell Wilson was 15-for-28 for 188 yards and a touchdown for the Broncos (2-4), who dropped a game in overtime for the second straight week.

It's over

Herbert had a 26-game TD passing streak snapped. It was the third-best run in franchise history and second-longest active streak in the league.

Flag night

The teams combined for 19 penalties and a season-high 240 yards. The Broncos were flagged 10 times for 151 yards, the 24th time since 2000 a team has drawn more than 150 penalty yards, according to TruMedia.

The Broncos had four pass interference calls for 87 yards.

Ron Torbert's crew had been conservative coming into the game. In their four previous contests this season, they averaged 12 flags for 92.8 yards.

Owners unlikely to vote on Snyder, roughing calls

Associated Press

Concussions, roughing-the-passer penalties and Washington owner Dan Snyder have dominated headlines six weeks into an NFL season that's featured plenty of comebacks and close games, too.

There wasn't expected to be any significant news on any of the hot topics when NFL owners met in New York on Tuesday.

Snyder's ownership of the Commanders became a big issue again last week when ESPN reported, citing anonymous sources, that he has hired private investigators and told people he has enough information to expose fellow owners and NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.

The Commanders denied the contents of the report, calling it "categorically untrue" and "clearly part of a well-funded, two-year campaign to coerce the sale of the team, which will continue to be unsuccessful."

Snyder's status has been widely debated for years amid several scandals and investigations into workplace conduct in Washington. There are no plans to vote on Snyder's

ownership because the league's investigation, conducted by attorney Mary Jo White, into allegations of sexual misconduct and financial impropriety is still ongoing.

It was expected, however, that Snyder's name would come up among owners.

Tanya Snyder, the team's co-CEO, and Commanders President Jason Wright were scheduled to represent the team at the meetings, a person familiar with the plans told The Associated Press on Monday. The person, speaking on the condition of anonymity because the conversations are private, said there has been no change to Dan Snyder's status since the league announced in July 2021 that he would be turning over day-to-day operations to his wife.

Snyder has owned the team since 1999. Removing him would be unprecedented and requires 24 votes from the other owners.

Miami Dolphins owner Stephen Ross also didn't attend Tuesday's meeting. His suspension for tampering with Tom Brady and Sean Payton was lifted on Monday, but he is

not allowed to attend any league meetings prior to next spring.

The NFL and NFL Players Association already revised their concussion protocol following a joint investigation into the procedures after Miami Dolphins quarterback Tua Tagovailoa suffered what was described as a back injury against the Buffalo Bills last month.

The league faced heavy criticism and scrutiny after Tagovailoa was carted off the field by stretcher just four days after stumbling off the field and being allowed to return to play.

A pair of disputed roughing-the-passer penalties in Week 5 frustrated defensive players and had players, coaches and fans questioning what constitutes a legal hit. But the league doesn't plan to soften its interpretation of the rule and will continue to allow referees to err on the side of caution in order to protect quarterbacks.

"We support those calls," league executive Troy Vincent said on ESPN before Sunday's games.

Ovechkin scores twice as Caps rally

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Alex Ovechkin and Washington's best players got going just in time to put together their best period of the season and avoid what would have been the Capitals' worst four-game start in nearly a decade.

Ovechkin scored twice, and the Capitals rallied past old coach Bruce Boudreau and the Vancouver Canucks 6-4 on Monday night for their second consecutive victory. They trailed by two going into the third period before turning the game around.

"We find ourselves down going into the third period and turning the puck over too much and it keeps us from playing fast and getting into their end," coach Peter Laviolette said. "And I thought in the third period, we straightened out and played a really good third period. ... We were on the attacking, and we were pushing the whole time."

Ovechkin's first two goals of the season, 56 seconds in and with 2:58 left in regulation, bookended the Capitals blowing a lead and storming back. Dylan Strome got the comeback started with a power-play goal early in the third, continuing his strong start with his new team, before John Carlson tied it and Conor Sheary put the Capitals ahead.

"It was a great response by everybody," Ovechkin said. "You can see when we play the right way it doesn't matter what kind of score, we can always bounce back and win the game."

Winger Connor Brown, a newcomer like

Strome, exited with an apparent right leg injury after going into the boards awkwardly early in the third. The team said Brown had a lower-body injury, and Laviolette only added that an evaluation was ongoing.

Down a skater, the Capitals (2-2-0) were still able to get back into the game with goals from Carlson with 11:17 left in regulation and Sheary with 7:16 left.

They spoiled Boudreau's latest chance to reach 600 career regular-season NHL wins. Despite a goal and two assists from Elias Pettersson, the Canucks blew a two-goal advantage for a third consecutive game, all losses.

Avalanche 6, Wild 3: Mikko Rantanen scored the go-ahead goal midway through the second period and Nathan Mackinnon had a goal and two assists for visiting Colorado, which kept Minnesota winless.

Ben Meyers and Samuel Girard scored in the first period for the Avalanche. Josh Manson added an insurance goal in the third, and Valeri Nichushkin tacked on an empty-netter.

Kings 5, Red Wings 4 (OT): Phillip Danault scored 1:12 into overtime for his second goal of the game, and visiting Los Angeles handed Detroit its first loss.

Danault's winning shot in front hit a defender's skate and bounced into the net.

Wings forward Oskar Sundqvist scored in the final minute to send the game into overtime.

Bruins 5, Panthers 3: Jake DeBrusk

scored 21 seconds into the game and added an empty-netter as host Boston handed Florida its first loss of the season.

DeBrusk also assisted on the go-ahead goal, splitting a pair of defenders in a race for the puck and feeding Patrice Bergeron with a behind-the-back pass to help make it 2-1 with 7:25 left in the second period.

Rangers 6, Ducks 4: Mika Zibanejad had two goals and two assists, and Artemi Panarin had a goal and three assists for host New York.

Stars 4, Jets 1: Jani Hakanpaa and Joel Kiviranta scored during a frenzied two-minute span in the second period, and host Dallas beat Winnipeg.

Canadiens 3, Penguins 2 (OT): Kirby Dach scored 3:09 into overtime, lifting host Montreal to the victory.

After Jeff Petry was sent off in overtime for cross-checking for his third penalty of the game, Dach got a pass from Sean Monahan and beat Casey DeSmith for the power-play goal.

Evgeni Malkin had two goals for Pittsburgh.

Coyotes 4, Maple Leafs 2: Shayne Gostisbehere scored on a power play late in the third period and added an assist as visiting Arizona earned its first win of the season.

Hurricanes 5, Kraken 1: Andrei Svechnikov scored twice 70 seconds apart in the second period, Sebastian Aho had a goal and two assists, and visiting Carolina remained unbeaten.

South Carolina women top AP preseason poll

Associated Press

Dawn Staley and South Carolina picked up right where they left off: No. 1 in The Associated Press Top 25 women's basketball poll.

The defending national champion Gamecocks were the unanimous choice of the 30-member national media panel in the preseason poll released Tuesday. It's the third consecutive season South Carolina is the preseason favorite.

"This is where we wanted to be and envisioned for our program," Staley said. "I got to give it to our players. We constantly get some of the best players in

the country. They put us in this position as they work extremely hard. I don't know if they come in and say I want to be the No. 1 team in the country, but they do say they want to be national champions. This is a step to being a national champion."

Stanford, Texas, Iowa and Tennessee round out the top five teams in the preseason poll. It is Iowa's best ranking since 1994, when the Hawkeyes were also fourth in midseason.

South Carolina went wire-to-wire as the No. 1 team last year and has been the top team for 20 straight weeks. Only UConn (four times) and Baylor (once)

have had longer streaks at No. 1 since the 1994-95 season, when the Top 25 became a writers' poll.

The Huskies are ranked No. 6, the first time since 2006 that they weren't in the first five in the preseason poll. Louisville, Iowa State, Notre Dame and N.C. State finish off the top 10.

Hold that Tiger

Princeton has its first preseason ranking, coming in at No. 24.

The Tigers were ranked for the final two weeks of last season and return four starters from the team that pulled off one of the biggest upsets in

NCAA Tournament history, upending Kentucky in the first round before falling to Indiana by a point in the next game.

Cornhusker run

There are high expectations in the state of Nebraska. No. 21 Creighton has its first preseason ranking while No. 22 Nebraska has its first ranking since 2015. It's the first time in the history of the poll that both teams have been ranked in the same week.

"It's good to have Creighton and Nebraska in Top 25. It's good for the state," Creighton coach Jim Flanery said.