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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Search for missing Marines suspended

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS BASE HAWAII — The Hawaii Coast Guard said Tuesday it was suspending the active search for 12 Marines missing in the waters off the North Shore.

No survivors or bodies have been found since the Thursday night crash of two helicopters, despite round-the-clock searching by ships and aircraft from the Coast Guard, Marines, Navy, Army, National Guard and local emergency agencies.

“Today, as we also continued our search for the missing Marines, we’ve also conducted an extensive review of the case,” Capt. James D. Jenkins, commander of 14th Coast Guard District in Hawaii, said at a news conference at the Marine base. He said they had reviewed all searches done by all agencies, the data and metrics produced by the Coast Guard’s search-and-rescue tools, and the particular circumstances of this case.

“Based on this careful analysis — and in

close coordination with the United States Marine Corps — I am announcing that the Coast Guard intends to suspend active search efforts tonight at sunset,” he said.

Jenkins wore the heartrending decision on his face as he talked to reporters, saying several times that it was particularly difficult to call off the search without finding any survivors. Jenkins had said Sunday that the families of the missing Marines would be notified first if the decision to suspend the search was made.

Key in the decision was the retrieval of all four life rafts from the helicopters, he said. None showed signs that they had been used.

They also got a close look at the underwater crash site, which is about 2 miles off shore and about 325 feet deep. Using underwater remotely controlled vehicles, they located and examined a widespread debris field littered with parts of an aircraft.

“We are confident that these aircraft parts are associated with this crash, and we’re expecting information even as we speak here,” Jenkins said.

The Marine Corps will now take over as lead agency as the operation switches to recovery and salvage, said Brig. Gen. Russell Sanborn, commander of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, who arrived in Hawaii on Sunday from Okinawa to facilitate the search.

An Aircraft Mishap Board has been formed to investigate the crash and will eventually issue findings and recommendations, he said. The cause of the crash remains unknown.

Sanborn said the helicopters were not equipped with crash-survivable “black boxes” such as commercial airliners carry, which can provide detailed voice recordings and flight perimeters.

The Marines will continue to search for remains of the crew for the sake of closure for the families, he said. A memorial for the 12 Marines is tentatively planned for Friday at the base.

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Militants kill 20 in assault on school in Pakistan

Associated Press

CHARSADDA, Pakistan — Islamic militants stormed a university in northwestern Pakistan on Wednesday, killing at least 20 people and triggering an hours-long gunbattle with security forces in an attack that echoed a horrifying assault by the Taliban a little more than a year ago on a nearby army-run school.

The attack began shortly after classes started at the Bacha Khan University in Charsadda, a town 21 miles outside Peshawar, said Deputy Commissioner Tahir Zafar. The school may have been targeted because it is named for a late secular icon.

The attackers climbed over the back walls of the university and shot at a security guard

before making their way to the administration building and the male students’ dorms, police official Saeed Khan Wazir said.

Soldiers and police raced to the scene and exchanged fire with the attackers. The sound of gunfire and explosions echoed across the campus. Troops later cornered the attackers inside two university blocks, killing all four of them, the army said.

Lt. Gen. Asim Bajwa, the army spokesman, said 18 students and two teachers were killed.

Television footage showed a heavy military presence at the university, with soldiers rushing in and people fleeing. Ambulances raced away, taking the wounded to hospitals.

Botany teacher Mohammad

Ishtiaq said he saw five gunmen enter the building he was in and begin firing automatic assault rifles as students ran in all directions. He said he locked himself inside a second-floor bathroom and then jumped out the window when he saw one of the attackers approaching. He broke his leg in the fall.

Gov. Sardar Mehtab Abbasi later said the attack was over and that troops were combing nearby areas. Pakistani army chief Gen. Raheel Sharif visited the campus, as well as wounded people in a nearby hospital.

The attack revived painful memories of the Taliban assault on an army-run school in December 2014, in which gunmen killed around 150 people, nearly all of them children.

A Taliban leader, Khalifa Umar Mansoor, claimed re-

sponsibility for Wednesday’s attack in a phone call to The Associated Press from an undisclosed location.

Mansoor, who masterminded the Peshawar school attack, said a four-man Taliban team carried out the latest assault. He said it was in revenge for scores of militants killed by Pakistani security forces in recent months, and that the university was attacked because it was “an instrument of the government and army.”

However, a spokesman for the main Taliban faction in Pakistan later disowned the group behind Wednesday’s attack, describing the assault as “un-Islamic.” Mohammad Khurasani said those who carry out such attacks should be tried before an Islamic court.

Palin endorses Trump

The Associated Press

AMES, Iowa — Donald Trump is brandishing the endorsement of conservative Republican firebrand Sarah Palin in the increasingly intense 2016 GOP presidential sweepstakes, giving the billionaire businessman a boost against Texas Sen. Ted Cruz less than two weeks before Iowa's kick-off caucuses.

"Media heads are spinning," the former vice presidential candidate said after taking the stage at a Trump rally Tuesday at Iowa State University. "This is going to be so much fun."

Palin, the former governor of Alaska and 2008 GOP vice presidential nominee, said that with Trump as president, America would no longer apologize.

"No more pussy-footing around," Palin said.

The endorsement comes as Trump is locked in a dead heat with Cruz in Iowa. The two have been ramping up their attacks against one another as the Feb. 1 caucuses have neared.

Palin offered her full-throated support for Trump and slammed President Barack Obama as the "capitulator in chief." Trump, she said, would be a commander in chief who would "let our warriors do their job and go kick ISIS' ass!"

More military drones crashing

The Washington Post

A record number of Air Force drones crashed in major accidents last year, documents show, straining the U.S. military's fleet of robotic aircraft when it is in more demand than ever for counterterrorism missions in an expanding array of war zones.

Driving the increase was a mysterious surge in mishaps involving the Air Force's newest and most advanced "hunter-killer" drone, the Reaper, which has become the Pentagon's favored weapon for conducting surveillance and airstrikes against the Islamic State, al-Qaida and other militant groups.

The Reaper has been bedeviled by a rash of sudden electrical failures that have caused the 2 1/2-ton drone to lose power and drop from the sky, according to accident-investigation documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. Investigators have traced the problem to a faulty starter-generator but have been unable to pinpoint why it goes haywire or devise a permanent fix.

All told, 20 large Air Force drones were destroyed or sustained at least \$2 million in damage in accidents last year, the worst annual toll ever, according to a Washington Post investigation.

The Pentagon has shrouded the extent of the problem

and kept details of most of the crashes a secret.

The aircraft losses pose another challenge for the Air Force as it struggles to provide sufficient drone coverage for counterterrorism operations in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen, Libya, Mali and Cameroon, among other countries.

The Reaper's mishap rate — the number of major crashes per 100,000 hours flown — more than doubled compared with 2014. The aircraft, when fully equipped, cost about \$14 million each to replace.

The Air Force's other primary drone model, the Predator, also suffered heavy casualties.

Governor vows to end Flint crisis

Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. — Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder said he has failed Flint residents but pledged to take new steps to fix the city's drinking water crisis, starting with committing millions in state funding and deploying more National Guard members.

The second-term Republican, who devoted most of his annual State of the State speech Tuesday night to the emergen-

cy in Flint, also pledged greater transparency. He said he would release on Wednesday his own emails regarding Flint's water, which became contaminated with too much lead when the city switched its water source in 2014 as a cost-cutting measure.

"I'm sorry most of all that I let you down," Snyder, whose administration is engulfed in criticism, said in the 49-minute address as hundreds of protesters demonstrated outside the Capitol. "You deserve better."

The lead contamination — which can lead to behavior problems and learning disabilities in children and kidney ailments in adults — has left Flint residents unable to drink unfiltered tap water. The National Guard, state employees, local authorities and volunteers have been distributing lead tests, filters and bottled water.

"To you, the people of Flint, I say tonight as I have before: I am sorry, and I will fix it," he said.

Pentagon reinstates University of Phoenix after probation

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Active-duty military students can once again use their tuition assistance benefits at the University of Phoenix after the Pentagon lifted its temporary probation on the for-profit higher education giant last week.

The University of Phoenix will be subject to a "heightened compliance review" for a year, according to the Defense Department, but its probationary status was removed Friday after

about three months, allowing the school to return to recruiting on military installations and for active-duty troops to pay for courses through the military's Tuition Assistance Program.

In a statement, the DOD said the University of Phoenix had addressed concerns raised last year by the Pentagon in a letter announcing the probation to the school dated Oct. 7, 2015, from Dawn Bilodeau, chief of the Voluntary Education Program for the DOD.

Bilodeau's letter cited several issues including unauthorized use of official military seals and insignia, unapproved visits to military installations and ongoing investigations by California's attorney general and the Federal Trade Commission. She said the probationary period was intended to "minimize harm to students."

University of Phoenix President Timothy P. Slottow, who along with several Republican senators had been critical of the

DOD's probation, said he was pleased it had been removed.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., called the Pentagon's decision "a victory for due process and basic fairness," adding he had strongly opposed the probation.

According to statistics provided by the DOD, nearly 10,000 servicemembers attended the University of Phoenix through the tuition assistance program in fiscal 2014, at a cost to the department of more than \$20 million.

Kickers may decide AFC title

Associated Press

DENVER — Antonio Smith says nobody can get into Tom Brady's head. That didn't stop Denver's defensive lineman from trying by labelling New England's quarterback a crybaby.

"I've never seen any quarterback look to the referee right after he gets sacked more than Brady," Smith said with a smile. "Every time he gets sacked he looks at the ref like, 'You see him sack me? Was that supposed to happen? He did it a little hard. Please throw a 15-yard penalty on him. Get him fined.'"

Both teams know the AFC championship won't be decided by potshots — and maybe not even by the golden arms of Brady and Peyton Manning when they square off for the 17th — and likely final — time Sunday in Denver.

Maybe it'll come down to two of the greatest toes on turf instead.

Especially with Denver sporting the league's stingiest defense and Manning reduced to managing the Broncos' no-longer explosive offense.

New England's Stephen Gostkowski was the NFL's top kicker in 2015, winning his second All-Pro honor after leading the league with 151 points.

Denver's Brandon McManus tied an NFL record by nailing all five of his kicks in tricky crosswinds in Denver's 23-16 win over Pittsburgh in the divisional round.

Sunday's forecast in Denver calls for a clouds and temperatures at kickoff in the lower 40s, dipping into the 30s, which is

good news for both Manning and Brady.

Yet ... Last weekend's game was also supposed to be mild.

"During warmups, we went out there and it was a pretty calm day, a nice, tempered day," McManus said. "We come out seven minutes before kickoff and I see a 30 mph crosswind come in over the Rockies."

With the goal posts swaying wildly from the gusts almost the entire game, McManus converted field goals of 28, 41, 51, 41 and 45 yards, joking it was such a tricky task that he just kept aiming "at the guy holding the beer in the top left corner."

"I think all of them were big," said Demaryius Thomas, who had one of seven dropped passes thanks to the blustery winds. "He kept us in the game with the field goals. Him being able to kick with this wind helped us."

Gostkowski is accustomed to kicking in bad conditions, too. So, if it gets windy Sunday, neither he nor McManus will fret.

"You kind of have to hit a ball to a spot and hopefully the wind takes it," McManus said. "I had that 51-yarder right before halftime. I thought it was going to be easy down the middle, and it barely sneaked in."

Gostkowski's field goals from 40 and 32 yards in the fourth quarter last weekend helped the Patriots stave off Kansas City 27-20. He also nailed a 47-yarder as time expired to send the game to overtime when New England visited Denver on Nov.

29, a game in which McManus missed from the same distance.

While Gostkowski, a 10-year veteran, breezed to his first All-Pro honor since 2008, McManus started out hot, then slumped down the stretch. He made his first 13 kicks, including 57- and 56-yarders in the opener against Baltimore, and was named the AFC's special teams player of the month in October.

His late-season slump included missed kicks in five consecutive games, including one off the left upright in a three-point loss to Oakland. He also shanked one from 45 yards against Cincinnati with no time left but atoned for that miss with a 37-yarder in overtime.

His coach never lost faith in the second-year pro who'd been cut by the previous coaching staff last year and won his job back over the summer.

"I think Brandon's confidence is up right now," Gary Kubiak said. "I think he's had a really good year. He's worked through a little rough patch and he's come back. Now he's as good as he's been all season long."

Gostkowski has missed on just three of 39 tries, counting the playoffs, and McManus is 35 of 40.

Of course, both would rather be kicking PATs Sunday than field goals.

"Any time No. 18 gets the ball, I'm thinking we're going to score a touchdown," McManus said. "I try to prepare my mind for the extra point. ... But I want to help my team any way I can. It's my job to go out there and make them."

McElroy, Spieth set to face off

Associated Press

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates — The latest stop for Jordan Spieth on his tour of the golfing world is the Middle East and an eagerly anticipated head-to-head with Rory McIlroy at the Abu Dhabi HSBC Championship this week.

It seems that two of the sport's biggest names have clashed before the first tee shot has even been struck.

For some pre-tournament publicity, Spieth and McIlroy were among those taking part in a "Rider Cup" challenge that included riding motorized golf scooters — so-called GolfBoards — along a fairway on a local course in the gulf emirate.

"It was quite competitive," McIlroy said with a smile. "Actually, Jordan nearly took me out. We collided halfway down the fairway — thankfully I didn't fall off."

On Thursday, it will be McIlroy trying to knock the top-ranked Spieth out of his stride.

Fresh off an eight-stroke win in Hawaii on his 2016 debut that backed up his sensational 2015, Spieth will make his first appearance in a regular European Tour event when he joins McIlroy and Rickie Fowler in a stellar three-ball for the first two rounds at Abu Dhabi Golf Club.

For No. 3-ranked McIlroy, it will be a first start of the year and a chance to see his biggest rival up close.

"I don't play the game on (laying down) markers at all," McIlroy said. "I want to play my best, and I don't have to just beat Jordan Spieth this week. I have to beat another 142 guys."

Since McIlroy last played competitively, in winning the World Tour Championship to clinch the European Tour's Race to Dubai, Spieth has competed in Australia, the Bahamas and Hawaii. What has become a virtual global tour for golf's new big thing started in October with the President's Cup in South Korea and continues with his Middle East debut in Abu Dhabi and an appearance at the Singapore Open next week.

"It's a bit tiring," said the 22-year-old Spieth. In fact, he looked as bouncy and excitable as ever Wednesday.

"Last year, I kind of wanted more of a break. This year I kind of wanted to go out and take advantage of the year and see places that I had never seen before, on and off the course."

While Spieth has been travelling, McIlroy underwent — laser eye surgery which he hopes will improve his short game and putting. He emerged from a two-month winter break with week of practice in Dubai last week, and says he is refreshed and refocused.

After four runner-up finishes in Abu Dhabi, including the last two years, McIlroy wants to take the extra step this week to give him momentum at the start of a seven-tournament stretch before the Masters at Augusta National, where he will bid once again to complete the career grand slam of majors.

Djokovic wins, faces match-fixing queries

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — For the second time in three days, Novak Djokovic won a match at the Australian Open and was confronted by questions about match-fixing in the sport.

The five-time champion had just beaten 19-year-old French wild-card entry Quentin Halys 6-1, 6-2, 7-6 (3) in the second round on Wednesday night — his 34th win in his last 35 matches at Melbourne Park — when his news conference veered to questions about the issue that has overshadowed the start of the season's first major.

After his first-round win, on the day when the BBC and BuzzFeed News published reports alleging match-fixing had gone unchecked in tennis, the No. 1-ranked Djokovic recalled when a member of his support team was approached with an offer to throw a match in Russia in 2007. That approach didn't reach him directly, he said, and was rejected immediately.

After his second-round win, he was asked about an Italian newspaper report casting doubt over his performance in a match against Fabrice Santoro in Paris in 2007.

Djokovic said the speculation was getting out of control.

"What (is there) to say? I've lost that

match. I don't know if you're trying to create a story about that match or for that matter any of the matches of the top players losing in the early rounds. I think it's just absurd," Djokovic said. "It's not true."

"My response is that there's always going to be, especially these days when there is a lot of speculation — this is now the main story in tennis, in sports world — there's going to be a lot of allegations," Djokovic said. "I said everything I needed to say two days ago. Until somebody comes out with the real proof and evidence, it's only a speculation for me."

The BBC and BuzzFeed reports said 16 players had been repeatedly flagged to tennis authorities for suspicious performances, including a Grand Slam winner, and half of them were at this year's Australian Open.

Djokovic has said he didn't believe any elite players were involved. Roger Federer agreed, and said people making the accusations should name names.

On Wednesday, Federer extended his streak of reaching the third round at the Australian Open to 17 consecutive years. The four-time Australian Open champion, playing his 65th consecutive major, advanced 6-3, 7-5, 6-1 over Alexandr Dolgoplov. It was Federer's 299th match win at a major.

Federer will next play Grigor Dimitrov, who beat Marco Tringelliti 6-3, 4-6, 6-2, 7-5.

Jo-Wilfried Tsonga went to the aid of a ball girl in his match, gently helping her off the court in the third set when she became ill before finishing off a 7-5, 6-1, 6-4 win over Omar Jasika.

Other seeded players advancing included No. 6 Tomas Berdych, No. 7 Kei Nishikori and 2014 U.S. Open champion Marin Cilic.

Serena Williams set a record when she played her 79th main draw match at the Australian Open, and beat No. 90-ranked Hsieh Su-wei 6-1, 6-2.

In the biggest upset of the day, two-time Wimbledon champion and sixth-seeded Petra Kvitova was beaten 6-4, 6-4 by Russian-born Australian Daria Gavrilova.

Williams' next opponent will be 18-year-old Russian Daria Kasatkina, who beat Croatia's Ana Konjuh 6-4, 6-3, and she faces a potential quarterfinal match against 2015 finalist Maria Sharapova, who reached the third round with a 6-2, 6-1 win over Aliaksandra Sasnovich.

No. 13 Roberta Vinci beat Irina Falconi 6-2, 6-3 to advance, and is a potential fourth-round rival for No. 4 Agnieszka Radwanska, who beat Eugenie Bouchard 6-4, 6-2 in a match featuring two former Wimbledon finalists.



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Oklahoma State upends No. 3 Kansas

Associated Press

STILLWATER, Okla. — Freshman Jawun Evans had 22 points, eight assists and six rebounds to help Oklahoma State upset No. 3 Kansas 86-67 on Tuesday night.

The Cowboys beat Kansas in Stillwater for the third straight time and the fifth in seven years.

Jeff Newberry scored 13 points and Jeffrey Carroll added 11 for the Cowboys, who had lost four straight. Oklahoma State shot 50 percent from the field, made 11 of 21 three-point attempts and outrebounded the Jayhawks 38-31.

Frank Mason III scored 14 points and Perry Ellis added 13 for Kansas (15-3, 4-2 Big 12), which has lost two of its past three and fell out of a tie for the Big 12 lead.

Oklahoma State made 23 of 26 free throws while Kansas made just 13 of 24.

The Cowboys (10-8, 2-4) nearly knocked off then-No. 2 Oklahoma six days earlier, but they missed a last-second shot and lost 74-72.

Oklahoma State showed it might compete early. Carroll stole the ball, then hit a three-pointer to give Oklahoma State an 18-13 lead midway through the first half. Kansas battled back to take the lead, but Carroll later hit three-pointers on consecutive possessions, both on assists from Evans, to give the Cowboys a 40-38 lead. Evans hit a three-pointer on the following possession, and Oklahoma State led 43-38 at halftime.

Georgetown 81, No. 5 Xavier 72: Tre Campbell scored a career-high 21 points — 17 in the first half — and

the visiting Hoyas held off the Musketeers.

Georgetown (12-7, 5-2 Big East) pulled ahead 39-33 at halftime behind Campbell's big game and led by as many as 11 in the second half while sending Xavier (16-2, 4-2) to its first home-court loss of the season.

No. 7 Maryland 62, Northwestern 56 (OT): Melo Trimble scored 18 points and Diamond Stone made a pivotal three-point play with 1:13 left in overtime for the host Terrapins.

Maryland (17-2, 6-1 Big Ten) shot 44 percent and was outrebounded 41-31 by the scrappy, hustling Wildcats (15-5, 3-4).

No. 8 SMU 77, Houston 73: Nic Moore scored 23 points and had some part in five consecutive baskets down the stretch as the host Mustangs remained Division I's only undefeated team.

Markus Kennedy had 16 points and 10 rebounds, and his two free throws with 5:35 left broke the game's 12th and final tie to put SMU (18-0, 7-0 AAC) ahead to stay. Kennedy's tip-in a minute earlier tied the game and was part of an 8-0 spurt.

No. 10 Texas A&M 71, LSU 57: Jalen Jones scored 20 points and freshman Tyler Davis tied a season-high with 18 to lead the host Aggies to their ninth straight win.

The victory improves Texas A&M (16-2) to 6-0 in Southeastern Conference play, which is its best start to league play since it won its first seven in 1993-94 when it was in the Southwest Conference.

No. 13 Virginia 69, Clemson 62: Malcolm Brogdon

scored 20 points and Anthony Gill had two big baskets late for the host Cavaliers.

Virginia (14-4, 3-3 Atlantic Coast Conference) led 52-39 after a 17-4 run with 9 minutes left, then saw the Tigers close within 55-53 with about 3½ minutes remaining. But Gill scored on a putback after a miss by Brogdon, then took a feed from Brogdon moments later for a fast-break dunk that built the margin back up to 59-53.

No. 16 Providence 71, No. 18 Butler 68: Ben Bentil scored 13 of his 20 points in the second half for the host Friars.

Rodney Bullock added 16 points for Providence (16-3, 4-2 Big East), which improved to 3-1 this season against ranked opponents. It was Providence's second victory over Butler this season.

No. 24 South Carolina 77, Mississippi 74 (OT): Michael Carrera scored 19 points and Laimonas Chatkevicius added 17 for the visiting Gamecocks.

Ole Miss led 64-53 with 5:17 remaining in regulation, but South Carolina tied the game at 66 with 43 seconds on a layup by Carrera.

No. 25 Indiana 103, Illinois 69: Troy Williams scored 21 points and Kevin "Yogi" Ferrell finished with 16 points and nine assists for the host Hoosiers.

It was a milestone night for Ferrell. The senior guard broke Michael Lewis' career record for assists (545. He has 553. Ferrell moved within 13 points of passing Eric Anderson for No. 10 on the Hoosiers' career scoring list.

Pelicans get win, but lose Gordon to finger fracture

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Anthony Davis and the New Orleans Pelicans found a way to win convincingly despite an early 17-point hole.

Now they'll have another substantial hurdle to overcome at a crucial juncture of the season: the loss of guard Eric Gordon to a fractured ring finger on his shooting hand. He had surgery and is expected to miss 4-6 weeks.

Davis scored 35 points and the Pelicans used a dominant second half to beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 114-99 on Tuesday night for New Orleans' third victory in four games. But Davis wasn't about to absolve his team for the way it started the game.

"That first half was kind of terrible," Davis said. "They were outworking us and playing harder than us and we just wanted to change that in the second half, so we came out with a lot of energy."

"We kind of played with desperation," Davis added, "but we can't wait until we're down to start playing with desperation."

Gordon scored 11 points, including two three-pointers, before leaving late in the third quarter. Gordon has averaged about 15 points this season, hitting 101 three-pointers.

"He brings a lot to the table," Davis said. "He's shooting the ball well and it's going to be tough without him, but we've still got to find a way to win."

Jrue Holiday, who could wind up back in the starting lineup because of Gordon's injury, scored 19 points. Tyreke Evans added 13 for the Pelicans, now four games out of the eighth and final playoff spot in the Western Conference with their next six games at home.

Andrew Wiggins scored 21 points and Karl-Anthony Towns added 20 points and 13 rebounds for Minnesota, which has lost 10 of 11. Ricky Rubio added 15 points, but the Timberwolves were outscored 63-39 in the second half.

Minnesota coach Sam Mitchell said the

problem for his team in the second half was a lack of ball-movement as players increasingly looked to score instead of buckling down defensively or helping create open shots for teammates. Rubio agreed.

"We started to get selfish," Rubio said. "When we play hard on defense and can run, that is our style of game."

Thunder 110, Nuggets 104: Kevin Durant and Russell Westbrook each had double-doubles for visiting Oklahoma City.

Durant finished with 30 points and 12 rebounds to lead the Thunder, who have won five in a row.

Westbrook scored 27 points and added 12 assists but fell five rebounds shy of another triple-double. He had two straight coming in and five on the season.

Pacers 97, Suns 94: Monta Ellis scored 20 points, Paul George had 19 and Indiana beat host Phoenix to end a three-game losing streak.

George added eight rebounds and Myles Turner scored 15 points for Indiana.

Devin Booker had a career-high 32 points for the Suns, who lost for the 14th time in 15 games and fifth in a row. Brandon Knight added 21 points.

The Pacers led by 20 points in the third quarter with the Suns struggling all night to make shots.

Bucks 91, Heat 79: Khris Middleton scored 22 points, Greg Monroe added 15 and visiting Milwaukee clamped down defensively on short-handed Miami throughout.

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 14 points for the Bucks, who have now beaten Miami five consecutive times.

Miami was without four players, including point guards Goran Dragic and Beno Udrih for the second straight contest. The offense struggled without them, as Miami shot only 36.5 percent.

Blackhawks extend winning streak to 12

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Patrick Kane had a goal and an assist, and the Chicago Blackhawks beat the Nashville Predators 4-1 Tuesday night for their franchise-record 12th straight win.

Chicago tied the Florida Panthers' recent streak for the longest in the NHL this season. The league record is 17 consecutive wins by the 1992-93 Pittsburgh Penguins.

"I think we're confident," Kane said. "I think at the same time I think we know we could probably play even better."

The Blackhawks get to test themselves Thursday night at Tampa Bay and then at Florida on Friday.

Kane matched his career high with his 30th goal and has 71 points in 49 games.

The Blackhawks scored the first goal for a 10th straight game when Anisimov pushed a backhand past a diving Pekka Rinne with 21.2 seconds left in the first period.

Rookie forward Richard Panik had a goal and an assist, Artemi Panarin added two assists, and Corey Crawford won his ninth straight.

Ryan Ellis scored for Nashville, which has lost six of seven.

Capitals 6, Blue Jackets 3: Nicklas Backstrom scored twice, Alex Ovechkin had a goal and an assist and Braden Holtby earned his league-leading 30th win to lift NHL-best Washington past last-place host Columbus.

Marcus Johansson added a goal and an assist, and Jason Chimera and Andre Burakovsky also scored for the Capitals, off to the best start in franchise history at 35-8-3.

Kings 3, Stars 2: Milan Lucic scored the tiebreaking goal early in the third period and Anze Kopitar added two assists to his recent scoring tear during Los Angeles' victory over visiting Dallas.

Vincent Lecavalier scored a power-play goal for the third straight game in Los Angeles' ninth win in 12 games since Christmas.

Bruins 4, Canadiens 1: Patrice Bergeron broke a 1-all tie in the second period and visiting Boston downed slumping Montreal, leaving the Canadiens winless in five games.

Max Talbot, David Pasternak and Brad Marchand, with an empty-net goal, also scored for the Bruins, who won their third straight and avenged a 5-1 loss to Montreal in the Winter Classic on Jan. 1.

Lightning 6, Oilers 4: Brian Boyle scored a go-ahead, short-handed goal in the third period and host Tampa Bay beat Edmonton to extend its winning streak to a season-high six games.

Tampa Bay will host Chicago on Thursday night in the Blackhawks' first game in Tampa since beating the Lightning in last season's Stanley Cup Final.

Maple Leafs 3, Flyers 2: Matt Hunwick's slap shot with 7.5 seconds left lifted visiting Toronto over Philadelphia.

Hunwick's first goal of the season snapped Toronto's five-game losing streak.

Rangers 3, Canucks 2 (OT): J.T. Miller scooped up his own rebound and scored on a wraparound 3:54 into overtime, and host New York rallied for a victory over Vancouver.

Mats Zuccarello tied the game in the third period for the Rangers, who outshot the Canucks 49-20 — including 19-3 in the third period and overtime.

Devils 4, Flames 2: Cory Schneider made nine of his 26 saves in the third period to lead New Jersey over visiting Calgary.

Adam Larsson, Lee Stempniak, Reid Boucher and Andy Greene scored for the Devils, who have won two straight after dropping three in a row.