

STARS AND STRIPES®

Friday, March 6, 2015

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Iraq: Militants 'bulldozed' ancient city

Islamic State group said to have razed renowned Nimrud archaeological site

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Islamic State militants “bulldozed” the renowned archaeological site of the ancient city of Nimrud in northern Iraq on Thursday using heavy military vehicles, the government said.

A statement from Iraq’s Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities didn’t elaborate on the extent of the damage, saying only that the group continues to “defy the will of the world and the feelings of humanity” with this latest act, which came after an attack on the Mosul museum just days earlier.

The destruction of the site of one of ancient Mesopotamia’s greatest cities recalled the Taliban’s annihilation of large Buddha statues in Afghanistan more than a dozen years ago, experts said.

Nimrud was the second capital of Assyria, an ancient kingdom that began in about 900 B.C., partially in present-day Iraq, and became a great regional power. The city, which was destroyed in 612 B.C., is located on the Tigris River just south of Iraq’s second-largest city, Mosul, which was captured by the Islamic State group in June.

The late 1980s discovery of treasures in Nimrud’s royal tombs was one of the 20th

century’s most significant archaeological finds. After Iraq was invaded in 2003, archaeologists were relieved when they were found hidden in the country’s central Bank — in a secret vault-inside-a-vault submerged in sewage water.

The Islamic State extremists, who control a third of Iraq and Syria, have attacked other archaeological and religious sites, claiming that they promote apostasy. Earlier this week, a video emerged on militant websites showing Islamic State militants with sledgehammers destroying ancient artifacts at the Mosul museum, sparking global outrage.

Last year, the militants destroyed the Mosque of the Prophet Younis — or Jonah — and the Mosque of the Prophet Jirjis, two revered ancient shrines in Mosul. They also threatened to destroy Mosul’s 850-year old Crooked Minaret, but residents surrounded the structure, preventing the militants from approaching.

Suzanne Bott, the heritage conservation project director for Iraq and Afghanistan in the University of Arizona’s College of Architecture, Planning and Archaeology, worked at Nimrud on and off for two years between 2008 and 2010. She helped stabi-

lize structures and helped survey Nimrud for the U.S. State Department as part of a joint U.S. military and civilian unit.

“It’s really called the cradle of Western civilization, that’s why this particular loss is so devastating,” Bott said. “What was left on site was stunning in the information it was able to convey about ancient life.

“People have compared it to King Tut’s tomb,” she said.

Iraq’s national museum in Baghdad opened its doors to the public last week for the first time in 12 years in a move Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said was to defy efforts “to destroy the heritage of mankind and Iraq’s civilization.”

Jack Green, chief curator of the Oriental Institute Museum at the University of Chicago and expert on Iraqi art, said Thursday that the Islamic State group seems bent on destroying objects they view as idols representing religions and cultures that don’t conform to their beliefs.

“It’s the deliberate destruction of a heritage and its images, intended to erase history and the identity of the people of Iraq, whether in the past or the present,” Green said. “And it has a major impact on the heritage of the region.”

General defends decision to retry Marine in slaying

BY JENNIFER HLAD
Stars and Stripes

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — A Marine general said Thursday that his decision to order a retrial for a sergeant who served six years for the killing of an Iraqi civilian was not affected by Navy Secretary Ray Mabus’ statement that the killing was premeditated murder.

Last year, Lt. Gen. Robert Neller ordered the new trial for Sgt. Lawrence G. Hutchins III, who was convicted of unpremeditated murder for the 2006 incident in Hamdania and was sentenced to 11 years in military prison. Hutchins’ conviction has

been overturned by military appeals courts twice.

During a Thursday hearing for pretrial motions, used to determine such things as what evidence might be used or who might testify in a trial, Neller was asked by defense counsel to explain his decision.

“I felt no external influence from anyone,” Neller told the court. Instead, he said, he decided to retry Hutchins because “I believe he committed a crime.”

In 2009, Mabus denied clemency for Hutchins, saying he thought the original, 11-year sentence was “commensurate with the crime.”

At the time, Mabus told the

Marine Corps Times the killing was “so completely premeditated, that it was not in the heat of battle, that not only was the action planned but the cover-up was planned, and that they picked somebody at random, just because he happened to be in a house that was convenient. He was murdered.”

Speaking by phone from Norfolk, Va., where he now serves as commander of Marine Forces Command, Neller said his decision was based on his personal knowledge of the case — he was serving in Iraq when the killing happened — along with statements made by Hutchins’ squad members and

“a fair amount” of the trial record that he went through.

Six other Marines and a Navy corpsman in Hutchins’ unit were convicted in the same killing, but none served more than 18 months.

Hutchins’ civilian attorney, Chris Oprison, said he is hoping to delay the retrial, saying investigators have been holding back roughly 3,000 pages of documents that he just got permission to review.

“NCIS was suppressing this” for the past eight years, Oprison said. “This story gets worse and worse ... We’re not close to finishing this fight.”

Laser weapon bores through engine in test

Stars and Stripes

Lockheed Martin's ATHENA laser weapon system burned through the engine block of a truck from more than a mile away during testing Tuesday, according to company officials.

The successful test of Advanced Test High Energy Asset moves the U.S. military one step closer to portable, universally effective laser weaponry, a result Lockheed Martin hopes will garner some attention in the Department of Defense.

"This test represents the next step to providing lightweight and rugged laser weapon systems for military aircraft, helicopters, ships and trucks," said Lockheed Martin's chief technology officer, Keoki Jackson, in a company news release.

ATHENA is a prototype that works off a technique called "spectral beam combining." By combining multiple laser modules, ATHENA can create a concentrated — and highly lethal — laser beam. It's based on the Area Defense Anti-Munitions laser weapon system that the defense firm has shown to be capable of taking out both missiles and seaborne vessels.

Last year, the U.S. Navy deployed its own laser weapon system, or LaWS, aboard the USS Ponce after years of extensive testing.

Actor Ford hurt in crash landing

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — Harrison Ford was recovering Friday after his vintage plane crashed on a golf course not far from Santa Monica Municipal Airport.

Ford's World War II-era plane's sole engine lost power Thursday afternoon, transit officials said. In a recording, the veteran actor is heard alerting the airport's control tower, "Engine failure; immediate return."

Just blocks from the runway, the plane clipped a tree at the Penmar Golf Course in Venice, then landed on a fairway.

Ford was hospitalized with fair to moderate injuries, said Los Angeles Fire Department spokesman Erik Scott.

Army secretary defends stripping officer of awards

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The secretary of the Army is defending his decision to strip awards for heroism from a former Green Beret officer, saying the soldier demonstrated a "lack of honorable conduct" after he earned the medals.

Maj. Mathew Golsteyn received the Silver Star in 2011 for valor in Afghanistan on Feb. 20, 2010, and later was approved for an upgrade to the even more prestigious Distinguished Service Cross. That award is considered second only to the Medal of Honor in recognizing heroism in combat.

Golsteyn later was investigated for an undisclosed violation of the military's rules of engagement in combat — a violation related to the killing of a known enemy bomb-maker, according to officials familiar with the case. The investigation closed in 2014 without Golsteyn's being charged with a crime, but Army Secretary John McHugh made the rare decision to strip him of both awards anyway.

The move has been scrutinized by the media and criticized by Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., a Marine veteran who has advocated on Golsteyn's behalf. But McHugh stood by his decision in a new letter to Hunter, saying that the senior officer who initially approved Golsteyn's Silver Star, Gen. David Rodriguez, agreed with his decision.

"Every step in the process of investigating Major Golsteyn's actions, and reviewing and subsequently revoking his valor awards has been thorough, objective and

justified," McHugh wrote in the Feb. 26 letter, obtained by The Washington Post. "The Army's investigation demonstrated that Major Golsteyn's service during or at the time of the distinguished act, achievement or meritorious service was not honorable, which led to the revocation of the Distinguished Service Cross."

Golsteyn, a former member of the 3rd Special Forces Group and graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., has declined to comment through his lawyer. In recent months, the Army has taken away his Special Forces tab, a qualification that goes to any soldier who completes Special Forces training, and has reassigned him to the conventional Army as an infantry officer.

The service also decided recently to separate him from active duty, a move that likely would require Golsteyn to face an administrative board that could issue an other-than-honorable discharge. That could prevent him from receiving medical benefits once out of the military — important because Golsteyn has been diagnosed with spinal damage, a traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress, and had an operation on his heart while serving, said his attorney, Phil Stackhouse.

Neither Army officials nor Golsteyn's advocates have been willing to elaborate on the allegations he faced. The Army began investigating him after he interviewed for a job at the CIA, three sources with knowledge of the probe told The Post in February.

Cold slams South, Northeast again

The Associated Press

Clocks are springing forward in most states this weekend, but Friday still felt like winter for much of the country.

Temperatures of 10 to 30 degrees below average were expected from the South to Northeast, along with heavy snow in the Mid-Atlantic, according to the National Weather Service.

The late-winter storm means school is canceled yet again for students in several states, and many households found themselves without power. State offices and legislatures shut down, too. In the Washington area, federal offices were open but on a two-hour delay, and workers were given

telecommuting options.

Residents hoped the storm would be this tough winter's last wallop, with spring bringing relief soon.

Students unleashed a flurry of online protests in 140 characters or less when Montclair State University in New Jersey decided to stay open during the snowstorm.

School spokeswoman Suzanne Bronski told NJ.com that about 1,000 classes were scheduled Thursday and about 5,000 students were already on campus. Bronski said mass transit was running, and campus parking lots and roadways were adequately cleared.

Most online posters disagreed with those assessments.

MLB players reshaping bodies

The Associated Press

PEORIA, Ariz. — Big and bloated or slim and sleek, plenty of big league players showed up to spring training this year looking nothing like they did last season.

Ryan Howard trimmed down. CC Sabathia bulked up. Jered Weaver packed on muscle, Jesus Montero shed some flab. They all transformed their bodies with varying intentions, some hoping it leads to bounce-back seasons, others trying to stay healthy over a 162-game grind.

It makes sense that folks are paying so much attention to such a weighty issue.

After all, "The Biggest Loser" has been going strong for 16 seasons on NBC. Late-night TV is littered with infomercials for body wraps, pills and magic shakes. Diet books are regulars on the best-seller lists, and things like Spartan Race and CrossFit are driving people to the gym.

"I think I was just trying to find a good weight to play at," said Sabathia, who showed up at Yankees camp this spring at more than 300 pounds. "Last year I came in too light."

Sabathia actually began making headlines for his weight two years ago, when he shed about 30 pounds to take the strain off his troublesome knees. But the unintended consequence was that his mechanics were thrown out of whack — his balance was off, his timing out of sync.

So, after consulting with Yankees team physician Dr. Christopher Ahmad, he decided to pack the pounds back on.

Sabathia hopes a more familiar weight leads to more familiar results.

"I feel like this is a good weight. I feel a little stronger," he said. "I feel my legs under me, being a lot stronger, and being able to push off the mound."

Sabathia is a rare case, though. Most players spend all offseason trying to get trim, changing their diets and spending countless hours toiling away in the gym.

Take Howard, who cut back on sweets while ramping up his workouts last November. The Phillies slugger showed up to camp 20 pounds lighter. He hopes the changes make him look less like the .233 hitter of last season and more like the three-time All-Star of old.

"Just eating a little bit cleaner," he explained. "You have a cheat day or whatever once in a while, but for the most part, just trying to stick with it."

One of the most startling transformations was Jesus Montero, who was suspended last season for fighting with a scout over an ice cream sandwich.

Once a top prospect, Montero's weight ballooned to the point that he was no longer considered the Mariners' catcher of the future. Some wondered whether he had any future at all. But he dedicated himself to getting in better shape this offseason and arrived in Arizona about 30 pounds lighter, looking quicker on his feet and better on the base paths.

But it wasn't just performance that caused Montero to change his habits. It was also for his daughter, Loren, who provided inspiration during all those grueling

workouts.

"I want her to look at me as an example, not like somebody like a quitter," he said. "That's what I was thinking the whole time. I want to give her something when she grows up."

Weaver, the Angels' ace, has bulked up to more than 220 pounds in the hopes of going deeper in games. Royals pitcher Danny Duffy added a few pounds to improve his durability, too.

Then there's Cubs infielder Javy Baez and Indians second baseman Jason Kipnis, both of whom took rather unconventional — and largely unintentional — routes to losing weight.

Baez lost a few pounds playing winter ball in Puerto Rico, where it was always hot and humid. But he also underwent minor surgery on his teeth that kept him from eating normally.

Asked what Kipnis did to lose weight, he replied: "Food poisoning. I threw up a lot more."

Of course, Kipnis also changed his off-season workout regimen to focus more on stretching, cardio and agility and less on bulking up for power. Now, after hitting .240 with a career-low six home runs a season ago, Kipnis hopes he'll be back in the All-Star game this year.

"I don't look like a guy who should be trying to put out 30 a year. That's not my game," he said. "It just came down to finding out what we needed to do, find out what works for me."

Charges against Busch dropped

The Associated Press

DOVER, Delaware — NASCAR driver Kurt Busch will not face criminal charges over claims by his ex-girlfriend that he smashed her head into a bedroom wall and choked her, Delaware prosecutors said on Thursday.

The decision by the state attorney general's office ends the criminal investigation of Busch, known in NASCAR circles as "The Outlaw," over allegations by Patricia Driscoll, whom Busch's attorneys portrayed as a scorned woman who tried to destroy Busch's career after he ended their relationship.

State prosecutors said there was not enough evidence to bring criminal charges.

"It is determined that the admissible evidence and available witnesses would likely be insufficient to meet the burden of establishing beyond a reasonable doubt that Mr. Busch committed a crime during the September 26th incident," the attorney general's office said in a prepared statement.

A spokesman for the Dover Police Department, which investigated the incident and turned over its findings to the attorney general's office, said the department respects the decision, and would have no further comment.

In a prepared statement, Busch thanked prosecutors, and his supporters for standing by him "throughout this nightmare."

"As I have said from the beginning, I did not commit domestic abuse," Busch said. "I look forward to being back in racing as soon as possible, and moving on with my life."

Driscoll said in a prepared statement she was disappointed "full justice" was not served. Driscoll, who made the rounds of television shows after being granted a no-contact order, also suggested media coverage of the case was marked by "distortions" and "sensationalism." She offered no specifics.

NASCAR officials indefinitely suspended Busch last month after a Delaware Family Court commissioner granted Driscoll a "protection from abuse," or no-contact, order, saying the former champion more than likely choked and beat her inside his motorhome at Dover International Speedway last fall.

Busch lost two rounds of appeals for reinstatement before the season-opening Daytona 500, and has missed the first two races of the season, but NASCAR officials said on Monday he has agreed to follow their recommended guidelines to be eligible for eventual reinstatement.

Nose tackle Wilfork won't return to Pats

Sun Sentinel

The New England Patriots are parting ways with prominent nose tackle Vince Wilfork, immediately making the 11-year veteran an unrestricted free agent.

Wilfork, who restructured his contract last season to remain with New England, announced the news on his Facebook page in a statement to his fans. He also stated that he's still interested in continuing to play, but didn't exactly commit to playing in 2015.

"Can I still play football? Hell yeah! Do I still love football? Hell yeah!" Wilfork wrote. "One major injury. A lot of gas still left in my tank."

"All that I can say is I'm blessed. I'm thankful. I'm grateful," said Wilfork, who turns 34 in November. "I will take my time and think things through, take into consideration many things, my family, and see where life goes from there. But regardless, remember I will always be a New Englander, a Patriot forever."

Wilfork, a five-time Pro Bowl selection and two-time Super Bowl Champion, started every game last season after missing all but four games in 2013 because of an Achilles injury.

He contributed 47 tackles and one interception for the Patriots in the 2014 regular season.

Wilfork, who was due a \$4.5 million roster bonus based on the restructured

deal the Patriots signed him to late last summer, will clear a little over \$8 million from the Patriots salary cap, putting New England under their projected cap space of \$144,578,084.

However, the Patriots have a few more tough decisions to make this offseason, and one of them involves Pro Bowl cornerback Darrelle Revis, who has a \$25 million cap number. Releasing Revis this month will clear \$20 million in cap space for the Patriots, but their goal is to re-sign the shut-down corner. Wilfork's release could help New England do that.

Wilfork's inclusion in the 2015 free agent class will shake up the defensive tackle market because he's averaged 47 tackles in his 11 seasons, and has tallied 16 sacks, three interceptions, and four forced fumbles throughout his career.

With Wilfork as the pillar of granite on New England's defensive line the Patriots defense finished ninth against the run, and were eighth in total points allowed in 2014.

The Dolphins are actively shopping for defensive line help, but Miami's sights appear set on signing Lions defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh, the top free agent on the market. However, Wilfork could be an excellent fall-back plan if he does indeed plan to continue playing, and is interested in playing for his hometown team.

However, Wilfork has never been a fan of the Dolphins, and it is more realistic

that he'd opt to sign with a contender to put the finishing touches on what many believe is a career worthy of Hall of Fame consideration.

Wilfork isn't the only elite nose tackle that might part ways with his team. The Ravens are also expected to release Haloti Ngata this week if they can't restructure his contract, which has him counting \$16 million against the cap. Cutting Ngata would create \$8.5 million in cap space for the Ravens.

Wayne leaving Colts

INDIANAPOLIS — The Colts have announced they will not re-sign veteran wide receiver Reggie Wayne.

Indianapolis' longtime standout has been part of a club-record 143 wins and ranks second in franchise history in receptions (1,070), yards receiving (14,345) and touchdown catches (80). He was Indy's first-round draft pick in 2001 and has never played for another team. But after tearing the ACL in his right knee in October 2013 and injuring his left elbow in October 2014, Wayne didn't look the same.

In a statement issued Friday, general manager Ryan Grigson called Wayne the "catalyst" to the Colts' turnaround.

Team owner Jim Irsay says the decision was made in the "best interests of the team."



Ship's Store official new car program

Exclusive Navy at-sea offers:

www.navyauto.com or nasinfo@navyauto.com

Bulls squeak past Thunder despite Westbrook's 43 points

The Associated Press

CHICAGO — E'Twaun Moore finished off Russell Westbrook and the Oklahoma City Thunder.

Moore hit a go-ahead three-pointer with 2.1 seconds left and the Chicago Bulls rallied to beat the Thunder 108-105 on Thursday night, ending Westbrook's triple-double streak at four.

After Moore's three put the Bulls up 107-105, Westbrook stepped out of bounds after taking the inbounds pass, not seeing that Serge Ibaka was open for a potential tying shot.

"Just trying to get a good shot. I should have passed to Serge," Westbrook said. "That was a bad decision on my part. He was open and I should have hit him."

Westbrook had 43 points on 14-for-32 shooting and added seven assists and eight rebounds. On Wednesday night in Oklahoma City, he had career highs with 49 points and 16 rebounds and added 10 assists in an overtime victory over Philadelphia.

Westbrook was the first player to have four straight triple-doubles since Michael Jordan had seven in a row in 1989. The All-Star MVP scored at least 40 points for the third straight game. Westbrook wore a mask and a headband for the second straight game after fracturing a bone in his right cheek Friday night in Portland. He had surgery Saturday and sat out Sunday against the Los Angeles Lakers.

Ibaka had 25 points and nine rebounds for Oklahoma City.

"He's not happy that he scored a bunch of points and got a bunch of rebounds and assists and we lost the game," Thunder

coach Scott Brooks said. "Russell is about winning and about winning only."

Westbrook scored 19 points in the third quarter to help the Thunder take a 79-72 lead into the fourth. He split two free throws with 1:07 to play, and Enes Kanter rebounded the miss and scored to give Oklahoma City a 103-99 lead.

Mirotic made a three-pointer, and Westbrook hit a jumper with 37.1 seconds left. Mirotic made two free throws with 28.9 to go, pulling Chicago within one. Westbrook then had an air-ball with the shot-clock expiring, and Moore followed with his three-pointer that gave the Bulls the lead.

Moore got the chance to hit the three after Pau Gasol got the ball and the defense collapsed on him in the post. Instead of forcing a shot, Gasol read the play and sent it back out to Moore for the winner.

"I was aware of the time management," Moore said. "I knew we only had four seconds (when the play started) and if he kicked it out, I knew there's not much time left. I just shot it with confidence."

Trail Blazers 94, Mavericks 75: The mood was somber in Portland's locker room following its victory over host Dallas. The win had come at a cost, with Wesley Matthews lost for the season because of a ruptured Achilles tendon.

"I make that same cut a hundreds of thousands of times in my life," Matthews said. "I felt the initial pop. And you guys could probably tell on the replay. I looked back — it feels like someone's kicked you. I was praying. I was praying someone was back there."

LaMarcus Aldridge had 17 points and 12 rebounds and the Blazers pulled away in the second half for a 94-75 victory for their fifth straight victory.

But shortly after came the news about Matthews, who had started every game this season. Matthews was averaging 16.1 points and 3.7 rebounds for the Blazers going into the game.

"It's tough, man. He's the heart and soul of this team, he brings a lot to this team," Aldridge said. "I've played with him seven, eight years now, so not having him out there is going to be tough."

Nicolas Batum added 15 points and a season-high 12 rebounds for Portland, which had four players in double figures despite coming off back-to-back games.

Monta Ellis and Amare Stoudemire each had 12 points for the Mavericks, who saw the return of veteran center Tyson Chandler after a three-game absence.

Chandler, who was out with a left hip injury, finished with four points and 14 rebounds.

"This is a difficult matchup, period," Mavericks coach Rick Carlisle said. "We've got to stick together when it's not going well. We've got to fight through this."

The Mavericks remained without Chandler Parsons, who continues to nurse a left ankle injury that has kept him out of six games so far and should also cause him to miss Friday night's matchup against the Warriors.

However, the Mavericks said he could make his return Sunday when the team visits the Lakers. In his absence, Dallas continued to lean on veteran Richard Jefferson.

Arizona tops Cal for title

The Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. — Brandon Ashley matched his career high with 21 points, T.J. McConnell tied his career best with 11 assists and No. 5 Arizona won the Pac-12 regular-season title for the second year in a row with a 99-60 rout of California on Thursday night.

The Wildcats (27-3, 15-2) already had clinched at least a tie for the conference title and the No. 1 seed in next week's Pac-12 tournament.

Tyrone Wallace scored 16 points for the Golden Bears (17-13, 7-10).

It was the most one-sided victory for Arizona and most lopsided loss for Cal this season.

Kaleb Tarczewski added 14 points and Stanley Johnson had 12 for the Wildcats, who had six players in double figures in their seventh straight win since an upset loss to Arizona State. McConnell finished without a turnover.

The Wildcats won their 37th straight at home, the longest active streak in NCAA Division I.

No. 6 Wisconsin 76, Minnesota 63: Frank Kaminsky had 25 points on 10-for-15 shooting, Sam Dekker added 20 points and the visiting Badgers won the Big Ten regular-season championship.

Nigel Hayes had 12 points and nine rebounds for Wisconsin (27-3, 15-2), which had at least a tie for first place already wrapped up last weekend. This is the school's fourth title under coach Bo Ryan and the first in seven years.

The Badgers made seven of their first 10 attempts from three-point range and finished with 18 assists against just nine turnovers.

Nate Mason had 15 points and Carlos Morris added 11 for the Gophers (17-13, 6-11), who fell behind by 20 points in the first half.

No. 13 Utah 67, Washington State 59: Delon Wright scored 18 points and Jordan Loveridge added 16 as the visiting Utes came back to beat the Cougars.

Brandon Taylor added 11 points for Utah (23-6, 13-4 Pacific 12), which closed the game with a 26-11 run to remain second in the Pacific-12.

DaVonte Lacy scored 16 points for Washington State (12-17, 6-11)

Utah, coming off a loss to No. 5 Arizona, shot just 40 percent from the floor. But it won the rebound battle 37-26.

The game was tied at 23 at halftime.

No. 18 Arkansas 78, South Carolina 74: Bobby Portis had 24 points and eight rebounds to lead the visiting Razorbacks.

Arkansas (24-6, 13-4 Southeastern Conference) trailed by 11 points with 7 minutes left in a wild game during which they led by 20 in the first half.

With the win, Arkansas clinched second place in the SEC and will be on the opposite side of the league tournament bracket from top-ranked and undefeated Kentucky.

South Carolina (14-15, 5-12) managed only one point after leading scorer Tyrone Johnson left the game with cramps with 2:29 left. Johnson finished with 18 points.

Rashad Madden had nine points, nine assists and seven rebounds for Arkansas.

Three-goal third lifts Flyers over Blues

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The Flyers gave away hot dogs, pretzels, even tickets to those adventurous enough to brave a winter storm.

The die-hards left with a few extra bucks in their pockets — some cash they might need to pay for tickets for an unexpected playoff run.

After Philadelphia was a seller at the trade deadline, the Flyers continued their late postseason push as they head toward their biggest game of the season.

Michael Del Zotto and Wayne Simmonds scored third-period goals to rally the Flyers to a 3-1 win over the St. Louis Blues on Thursday night.

Del Zotto and Simmonds helped the Flyers erase a 1-0 hole and give them an important two points in the Eastern Conference playoff chase. Michael Raffl scored an empty-net goal.

The Flyers moved within four points of Boston for a wild-card berth. Up next for the Flyers, a Saturday date at Boston.

If they win that one, then the team that dealt defenseman Kimmo Timonen and Braydon Coburn in two deals for draft picks will have some momentum down the stretch.

"I think that's huge. It's a four-point swing," Simmonds said. "If we can grab those two points from them, that's two more points that they can't get, so it's in our favor. We have to be really prepared for that game and start right from the

drop of the puck."

Islanders 4, Predators 3: Brock Nelson scored with 6:08 left, helping visiting New York rally after blowing a two-goal lead in the third period with a win over slumping Nashville, which lost its season-worst fifth straight game.

The Islanders moved back atop the Metropolitan Division ahead of the idle Rangers and swept the season series with Nashville for the first time. The Islanders had been 2-7 in Nashville.

Kings 4, Canadiens 3 (SO): Marian Gaborik's second power-play goal tied it with 45 seconds left in regulation, and he scored again in the shootout as host Los Angeles rallied to beat Montreal.

Jeff Carter also scored in regulation and the shootout, and Anze Kopitar scored in the fourth round before Lars Eller put a shot off the post to end Los Angeles' second shootout victory in eight tries this season.

Flames 4, Bruins 3 (SO): Sean Monahan scored his team's first goal at Boston in more than eight years, and Calgary earned its first road win there since 2003 with a shootout victory.

David Schlemko ended the shootout in the eighth round with a series of fakes on Boston goalie Tuukka Rask, who wasn't ready for the last one as Schlemko tapped the puck into the net to clinch Calgary's first win at Boston since December 2003.

Wild 2, Capitals 1: Jason

Pominville scored two third-period goals, Devan Dubnyk made 24 saves, and visiting Minnesota rallied to edge Washington.

Pominville tied it with his 14th goal of the season off a scramble in front of the net at 9:19, then blasted a high shot past Braden Holtby from the left circle with 5:32 left after a Washington turnover in the neutral zone.

Stars 4, Panthers 3 (SO): Colton Sceviour scored the winning goal in the shootout to lift visiting Dallas over Florida.

Sceviour's goal came on a backhand shot past goalie Dan Ellis in the third round. The Stars won their second game in a row after losing the previous six. The Panthers have lost two straight.

Lightning 4, Maple Leafs 2: Ben Bishop made 25 saves, and host Tampa Bay topped Toronto.

Nikita Kucherov, Ryan Callahan, Vladislav Namestnikov and Alex Killorn scored for Tampa Bay. Steven Stamkos added two assists.

Coyotes 3, Canucks 2 (SO): Sam Gagner scored the lone goal in the shootout, helping host Arizona snap a 10-game losing streak with a victory over Vancouver.

Mike Smith kept the Canucks off the scoreboard in the shootout after the Coyotes allowed two third-period goals to relinquish a 2-0 lead. Smith finished with 32 saves for Arizona.