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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Decade later, Big Easy still feeling Katrina

McClatchy Washington Bureau

NEW ORLEANS — David Herzenberg is back in the city he once called home — back to the place that is blighted and dysfunctional and infuriating yet at the same time magical and musical and wonderfully distinctive.

Ten years ago, Hurricane Katrina swamped New Orleans and surrounding areas and forced away hundreds of thousands of residents, Herzenberg among them. During the ensuing decade, he went to Norfolk, Va.; Charleston, S.C.; and Tacoma, Wash.

He is now hard at work in the Upper 9th Ward, one of the neighborhoods hit hard when Katrina came ashore and the city's levees failed, flooding 80 percent of New Orleans — with some neighborhoods under 10

or more feet of water.

Although precise numbers aren't available, at least 986 Louisiana residents died from drowning, injuries, heart conditions and other causes, nearly half of them 75 or older. More than 1 million people from the region were displaced, — sometimes for weeks or months as they decided whether they could salvage their moldy, waterlogged homes.

While the most prominent images of Katrina were from New Orleans, the storm zone was far wider — from suburban areas such as St. Bernard Parish that also were inundated, to Mississippi, where the storm surge simply flattened coastal homes.

But today, in New Orleans, Herzenberg is back, as is the city around him.

For evidence you can ask the

mayor, Mitch Landrieu, who talks of an “ascendant city” that has come back unevenly but has basically come back everywhere.

“You see kind of a mish-mash,” he said in an interview at City Hall. “It's not really a tale of two cities. Most of the city — in most of the neighborhoods — is moving back in the right direction.”

You can ask health, education, demographic and economic experts. They regularly catalog the progress the city has made, while also documenting some of the very serious problems that remain. Some of those are because of Katrina, but many existed long before the storm chugged its way across the Gulf of Mexico.

Or you can ask the residents. They live in neighborhoods pockmarked with poverty and

still-abandoned properties; they drive over cracked, warped and pothole-filled streets to get to their homes.

Overall, the city has regained 79 percent of its pre-Katrina population. The census stood at 485,000 in 2000, dropped to an estimated 230,000 in 2006, and was back to 384,000 by 2014, according to the Data Center. The broader metropolitan area is back to 93 percent of its pre-Katrina, 2000 population of 1.3 million people.

But concerns remain — and among the biggest are those levees and flood walls that bracket canals throughout the city.

Asked if she was confident about the levee flood walls that tower above her backyard, Juanita Doyle — who lives in the Lakeview section of New Orleans — said, “Do I get to laugh?”

US agrees to help protect Philippines in disputed sea

BY ERIK SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The United States reassured the Philippines it will patrol areas of the South China Sea disputed by Manila and Beijing, Philippine officials said after a visit from the head of U.S. Pacific Command.

Philippine Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin said Wednesday he asked Adm. Harry Harris to fly patrol planes over island territory claimed by China but garrisoned by Philippine troops, according to The Associated Press.

Chinese vessels in recent years have attempted to block the resupply of Second Thomas Shoal, a small island within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone. The island is garrisoned by a handful of Philippine ser-

vicemembers aboard a rusting, former U.S. World War II-era ship grounded on the shoal.

“If there are Americans flying around there, we won't be troubled,” Gazmin told the AP. “We need to be helped in our resupply missions. The best way they could assist is through their presence.”

Harris did not speak publicly after his Wednesday visit, according to media reports. However, he has criticized China's methods of asserting its ambiguous claims to nearly 90 percent of the South China Sea, where the Philippines and several other countries have competing claims.

In July, Harris called out China for “essentially creating false sovereignty” and for destroying fragile reefs by building artificial islands on top of them in the disputed Spratly

Islands.

This isn't the first time the Philippines has consulted with the U.S. after a dispute with China. In 2012, after a Philippine-China standoff at Scarborough Shoal, another South China Sea island, the Philippines spoke with the U.S. about providing Navy P-3 surveillance flights in the area.

The U.S. contends the South China Sea's water and airspace are part of the global commons under international law and are open to military transit and surveillance. China rejects that interpretation and maintains that its island claims are “indisputable,” despite claims on seas and territory by the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia and Taiwan.

An estimated \$5.2 trillion in annual trade passes through the South China Sea, making

security in the region a global affair. It is part of the reason the U.S. announced in recent years a military, diplomatic and economic emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region known as the “pivot” and the “rebalance.”

Despite those plans, Asian leaders have expressed concerns that the U.S. strategy won't materialize, considering pressing concerns in the Middle East and other parts of the world. However, Philippine officials said Wednesday the U.S. plans to increase exercises and patrols in the region. That would be in keeping with U.S. plans to station 60 percent of its surface fleet in the Pacific by 2020. The Navy already stations 60 percent of its submarine fleet in the region.

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Victims of Afghanistan attack were special ops

BY CARLO MUNOZ
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The two servicemembers killed in southern Afghanistan on Wednesday by a shooter in an Afghan uniform were Air Force special operations troops, the Pentagon said Thursday.

Capt. Matthew D. Roland, 27, and Staff Sgt. Forrest B. Sibley, 31, were shot and killed Wednesday by a lone gunman dressed in an Afghan uniform.

He opened fire on their vehicle near Camp Antonik in Helmand province, the Pentagon said in a news release.

Officials initially reported two gunmen carried out the attack and were killed.

But on Thursday, coalition officials said the shooter and another individual dressed as a member of the Afghan security forces were wounded.

It was unclear, coalition officials said, whether the killings were the result of a so-called insider attack or an accidental shooting by Afghan forces.

Roland, from Lexington, Ky., was attached to the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Fla. Sibley, from Pensacola, Fla., was part of the 21st Special Tactics Squadron, based at Pope Army Air Field, N.C., the Pentagon statement said.

Both are part of the Air Force Special Operations Command.

Gen. John Campbell, commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, and his counterparts in the Afghan security forces are leading an inquiry into the shootings, Col. Brian Tribus, spokesman for NATO's Resolute Support train and advise mission, said Thursday.

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Will Pentagon honor civilians in train attack?

The Washington Post

Three American friends were among a handful of individuals who helped stop a potential terrorist attack on a train in France on Aug. 21, receiving international praise and France's highest honor, the Legion of Honor. Two of them are American servicemembers and have been nominated for a valor award in the U.S. military. But what about civilian Anthony Sadler?

Sadler does not qualify for the Airman's Medal or Soldier's Medal, the awards for which his friends, Airman 1st Class Spencer Stone and Army Spc. Alek Skarlatos, were nominated. They go to servicemembers who display heroism away from the battlefield.

But Sadler and Mark Moogalian, a French-American man who was wounded attempting to stop the attack, could be eligible for another medal from the Defense Department, the Office of the Secretary of Defense Medal

for Valor. It was created after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and recognizes "private citizens who perform an act of heroism or sacrifice, with voluntary risk of personal safety in the face of danger, either on or off the job," according to a 2010 DOD news release.

They received the Legion of Honor on Monday.

The friends have credited each other with helping to tackle, subdue and tie up Ayoub El-Khazzani, a suspected Moroccan Islamist militant. He had a Kalashnikov rifle, a pistol, a box cutter and nine magazines of ammunition on the train, and shot Moogalian after he attempted to stop him on the high-speed ride from Amsterdam to Paris, authorities said.

Moogalian was reportedly shot after attempting to disarm the gunman, not realizing he had a pistol in addition to his rifle. The three American friends then rushed him, beat him and tied him up.

News station remembers colleagues slain on-air

Associated Press

MONETA, Va. — One day after the on-air killings of a reporter and cameraman shocked millions across the world, the grieving staff at WDBJ-TV came together Thursday for an emotional broadcast of its "Mornin'" show.

At 6:45 a.m. — the time of the shooting that killed reporter Alison Parker and cameraman Adam Ward — the station observed a moment of silence, showing the victim's photos.

The fatal shooting happened during a live TV interview as tens of thousands of viewers watched. Within hours, the carefully scripted carnage carried out by a disgruntled former colleague spread to millions of viewers gripped by

what had transformed into a social media storm.

Anchor Kim McBroom, who was on the anchor desk during the shooting and tried to reassure viewers immediately after the attack was broadcast, joined hands Thursday morning with weatherman Leo Hirsbrunner and fellow anchor Steve Grant, who came in from sister station KYTV in Springfield, Mo.

During his forecast Thursday morning, Hirsbrunner's voice trembled as he recalled how Ward would check in with him every morning before going out on assignment.

"I don't even know how to do weather on a day like this," he said. McBroom told him: "Good job, partner. We're going to get through this together."

Holmes gets life sentence

Associated Press

CENTENNIAL, Colo. — Belittled by the judge and jeered by spectators, James Holmes was sent to prison for the rest of his life, while survivors of his attack on a Colorado movie theater wondered how they would spend the rest of their days.

Judge Carlos A. Samour sentenced Holmes on Wednesday to the maximum — 12 consecutive life terms without parole plus 3,318 years — then made a final, contemptuous order: "Sheriff, get the defendant out of my courtroom, please."

Survivors and victims' family members in the gallery cheered, and someone shouted "Loser!" as deputies took him away.

The trial came to its formal conclusion three years and 37 days after Holmes murdered 12 people and tried to kill 70 more

during a midnight showing of "The Dark Knight Rises" in the Denver suburb of Aurora.

Samour, who was respectful toward Holmes throughout the trial, launched into a condemnation of him as someone who knew right from wrong but "robbed the world of all the good these victims would have accomplished" and damaged the lives of hundreds more.

Outside the courthouse, prosecutors and victims broke into smiles and even cracked a few jokes. But they also wondered what their futures would hold without the trial and each other's presence.

Kathleen Larimer, whose son, John, was murdered in the attack said, "Now that this is over, I have to go home and live with all that emptiness, and yet somehow be happy with life going on," she said.

Giants' Beckham now a target

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Odell Beckham Jr. is well aware how annoying he can be on the field.

Not only does the New York Giants' receiver catch passes with ease, he has that infuriating habit of yapping to defensive backs and making celebratory gestures after big plays.

It's no wonder that some cornerbacks and safeties want to put a big hit on him.

Beckham doesn't mind the added attention, and the NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year has no plans on changing his style.

"I still have to play with the same passion and come to the field the same way every time," Beckham said Wednesday. "People are going to talk, you're going to talk, you get caught up in the game. It's heat of the moment, things are going to get said, and after the game, all is forgotten."

All wasn't forgotten after the Giants' preseason game with the Jacksonville Jaguars on Saturday.

Fellow receiver Victor Cruz said some of the Jags defensive backs appeared to be

targeting Beckham, looking to make a big hit rather than make a play on the ball.

Beckham agreed with the assessment, to a point.

"It's football, you're going to get hit, you're going to have to take shots, and you're going to have to get up and compete," Beckham said.

"I'm not so much worried about being targeted. I know maybe (it's) a little self-inflicted with that, that's what it's going to be like. I'm just going to be a target in other people's eyes, something that I have to look out for, so just protecting yourself and knowing that there are 52 other people that have your back."

Beckham certainly is worth protecting. He had 91 receptions for 1,305 yards and 12 touchdowns in just 12 games last season. He missed the first four with a hamstring injury.

For the most part, Beckham has been healthy in training camp. The Giants haven't pushed him and he's not missed much time.

The preseason has not been productive. Eli Manning has thrown seven passes his way and not one has been completed. The

timing between the two has been off at times and Beckham also dropped a pass.

"I feel as if we'll be all right whether we get a pass going or not," Beckham said. "Like I said, I'm just looking forward to be able to go against some very good competition."

Beckham should get that this weekend going against Darrelle Revis and Antonio Cromartie in the annual preseason game against the Jets.

With Cruz out with a calf injury and Rueben Randle just getting back from tendinitis in his knee, the Giants will need Beckham to play well.

"The receiving corps, starting with myself, I know I need to step it up and take it to another level as far as bringing energy, and everything that's going on," Beckham said. "It's time for this team to take another step."

Manning said that the offense can make it tough for defenders to cover Beckham by moving him around.

"There's still going to be opportunities, opportunities to make plays and it's just what you do with those opportunities," Manning said.

Top golfers going after \$10 million

Associated Press

EDISON, N.J. — The points are slightly different for the FedEx Cup playoffs. The principle remains unchanged.

For those who narrowly got into the top 125 to qualify for golf's ultimate bonus series, it's time to play well or go home. That applies to players such as Lee Westwood and Jason Dufner, Stewart Cink and Luke Donald, and possibly Adam Scott.

Those with mediocre seasons on the PGA Tour — Phil Mickelson and Henrik Stenson are two who come to mind — they get at least two tournaments, maybe three, to play better golf and wind up at East Lake for the Tour Championship.

Jordan Spieth? That's a tricky one. The No. 1 player in the world, and No. 1 in the FedEx Cup, all that really matters is winning the Tour Championship to capture the \$10 million prize. Spieth could win three straight playoff events and finish runner-up at East Lake and finish second.

"After the major season is over, which is where we wanted to peak, we've sat back over the last week and said, 'How can we get that same kind of momentum to where we can try and peak for the Tour Championship?'" Spieth said.

The playoffs began Thursday at The Barclays with a 120-man field because five players chose not to play for various reasons.

Only 100 players advance to the Deutsche Bank Championship. From there, only 70 players move on to the BMW Championship. And that gets whittled down to the top 30 players who reach the Tour Championship.

Here's what to look for at The Barclays at Plainfield Country Club:

Lonely at the top: The No. 1 seed at the start of the playoffs has gone on to claim the \$10 million prize just two times since the FedEx Cup began in 2007. This might not come as a surprise, but both times involved Tiger Woods.

Woods has been No. 1 in the standings a record five times, including 2008 when he stopped playing in June because of knee surgery.

That's because the points are reset going into the Tour Championship to give all 30 players a mathematical chance at winning the FedEx Cup. For all the top seeds, it's a matter of having your best week at East Lake. It's not that simple.

Here's where the eight FedEx Cup champions were seeded going into the playoffs: 1-7-13-15-19-9-69.

No-shows: Rory McIlroy is sitting out The Barclays to give his ankle a precautionary week of rest. It shouldn't matter that much to McIlroy, who is No. 9 in the FedEx Cup. He is virtually assured of playing at East Lake and has two tournaments to move up the list.

Louis Oosthuizen (No. 28) is taking the week off with a sore back. Sergio Garcia (No. 31) is out for reasons unknown.

Francesco Molinari (No. 99) is home with a new baby, while Retief Goosen (No. 112) is not playing for personal reasons. Their seasons are over.

QBs turning to virtual reality to gain edge

Associated Press

OXFORD, Miss. — Mississippi quarterback Ryan Buchanan straps on a headset that covers his eyes, and instantly, he sees a scene that looks like a video game, all set from his perspective.

In about a minute, he runs through a handful of plays, checking his receivers, deciphering defensive coverages and making split-second decisions about where to throw the football.

And just like that, practice is over. "I felt like I was in the future putting this thing on — something that you would see on TV shows," Buchanan said with a wide grin.

Getting a few "mental reps" has never been easier at Ole Miss: The Rebels are one of a growing number of football programs in the NCAA and NFL dabbling in virtual reality technology to help supplement work on the field.

Buchanan is one of three Ole Miss quarterbacks fighting for the starting job this fall. Part of their offseason regimen has been 10 tests on the simulator that include 20 plays each.

When it's time for the test, Buchanan can look around just like in real life, with a complete 360-degree field of vision. He hears the play call from a coach or another player and then checks the formation and reads the defense pre-snap. After the ball is snapped, he watches how the defense reacts and then turns his head to the player he wants to receive the ball.

If it's the right choice, the ball flies through the air and connects with the receiver. If not, the simulator informs the QB a wrong decision has been made.

The tests can even be loaded onto a smartphone app and then the phone can be placed into a portable headset. Quarterbacks could theoretically do the

tests from home and then the results can be emailed to coaches.

"You do it over and over again, watching where guys go and seeing where windows open up on certain plays," Buchanan said. "It's pretty much what you see on the field."

Ole Miss is using a program developed by EON Sports, which is a subsidiary of EON Reality based in California. UCLA, Kansas, Syracuse, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and about 100 high schools are among EON's clients. Brendan Reilly — the company's 28-year-old CEO — says more potential clients are in the works and interest has been high.

Reilly said EON's software was partially developed from programs that do things such as train fighter pilots and help doctors practice surgeries.

"Coaches already know how to make guys big and strong," Reilly said. "Now they want to figure out how to get them to make consistently better decisions on the field. We're figuring out ways to use data and technology to make that happen. And if you can game-ify the process to make it more enjoyable, players will hopefully embrace that."

Ole Miss graduate assistant Robert Ratliff spent several hours using the EON Sports software to install the team's offense into the system. He's also working on simulating defensive alignments for teams that the Rebels will face this season.

He said once the base system is installed, changing, adding or deleting plays isn't too difficult.

There is also a version of the simulator that uses real-life footage from the quarterback's perspective instead of a video game simulation. Ratliff said that version makes things more realistic, but once the video is taken, there is no way to change

the play without filming another one.

EON Sports isn't the only company vying for clients in the world of virtual reality. A company called STRIVR also has a growing list of clients, including Auburn, Arkansas, Stanford, the Minnesota Vikings and the Dallas Cowboys.

"You're always looking for things to help you get better," Auburn coach Gus Malzahn said. "The quarterback is one position that you can actually get some mental reps. Even if it's mental, it can help you in the fall."

Not everything can be simulated of course: The weather is always perfect when staring through the headset, the pocket stays relatively clean for the quarterback and the receivers always run a perfect route.

"And, of course, there aren't guys out there trying to kill you," Buchanan said laughing.

But the general consensus is the technology is only going to get better. And with limited practice time during the preseason, giving quarterbacks extra time to learn the playbook probably isn't a bad thing.

It's also a way to avoid risking fatigue or injury on the field. Minnesota Vikings coach Mike Zimmer said second-year quarterback Teddy Bridgewater immediately embraced the new training.

"It's going to be very helpful from the learning curve, for not only me but for other guys in the room," Bridgewater said. "We have backups who won't get the same amount of reps that I will get throughout the course of game week, so for them to be able to go in and steal reps is going to be very helpful."

Will it actually help the Vikings win more football games?

Zimmer isn't sure, but it's worth a shot.



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Bolt cruises to 200 crown

Associated Press

BEIJING — Turns out, only a man on wheels can take down Usain Bolt.

Shortly after the Jamaican great won a fourth 200-meter title and a 10th gold overall at the world championships, a cameraman on a two-wheel vehicle banged into Bolt from behind.

Suddenly, the Olympic champion was down on his back, flipping over before getting back on his feet and then briefly holding his left leg. After regaining his composure, he walked back to the cameraman to make sure he was OK, too.

"It took me out pretty well," Bolt said. "But I'm OK. No issues so I'm happy about it."

The unrivaled Jamaican outran Justin Gatlin again on Thursday in another sprint showdown. After bursting through the bend and powering down the finishing straight with no one close, Bolt had time to look left for Gatlin's red jersey. With nothing in sight, Bolt lifted both arms and punched his thumbs into his chest to show once again he is the greatest sprinter of all time.

"There was no doubt," Bolt said after winning his fourth 200 world title in a row to add to two Olympic titles. "I told you guys that I would do it."

He capped his performance with his trademark "Lightning Bolt" pose. After two years of doubt and worries that age had started to affect the bearded champion at 29, he again displayed the wide grin of a teenager.

With the clock reading 19.55 seconds, Bolt set the best time of the season. And despite slowing down, he still beat Gatlin

by .19 — much more than the .01-second edge Bolt had in Sunday's 100 final.

This season was supposed to be Gatlin's best chance to challenge Bolt and despite the best times of his career at 33, he still came up short when it counted.

"I am the oldest man in the field and still running," Gatlin said. "Running pretty well."

Bolt is now 2-0 in Beijing against Gatlin, who had been unbeaten in two seasons, with only the 4x100 relay to come on Saturday.

Once he sat down to savor his victory on a trackside chair, the American came over to congratulate Bolt and the two rivals shook hands and chatted.

Their rivalry in Beijing had been cast by some as "Good vs. Evil" because Gatlin served a four-year doping suspension midway through his career. By the end of their second showdown, however, they were joking with each other like boyhood buddies.

Explaining the cameraman incident to reporters, Bolt said: "The rumor I'm trying to start right now is that Justin Gatlin paid him off."

Gatlin, sitting beside him, retorted: "I want my money back. He didn't complete the job."

Seven years ago, Bolt started his amazing run of gold at the Beijing Olympics and has not lost a major 200 race since. The Jamaican, however, had been struggling with injury since winning his third straight 200 title at the 2013 world championships in Moscow.

Behind Gatlin, Anaso Jobodwana won bronze with a South African record of 19.87.

In the absence of gold from Gatlin, triple

jumper Christian Taylor and Allyson Felix made up for it for the United States, both with superlative performances.

Taylor produced the second-best triple jump of all time with a leap of 18.21 meters on his final attempt to pad his lead over rival Pablo Pichardo of Cuba.

The 2012 Olympic gold medalist and 2011 world champion has been in a duel all season with Pichardo, with both clearing the 18-meter mark in the last two months to raise the prospect of the world record falling in Beijing.

In the end, Taylor narrowly missed the 18.29 world record which Jonathan Edwards set at the world championships in Gothenburg in 1995. Pichardo took silver at 17.73.

In the race preceding the men's 200, Felix won her first gold medal in the 400 meters and ever so briefly matched Bolt's record of nine golds in the world championships. A few minutes later, Bolt pulled away again with his 10th.

On a night of great performances, Anita Wlodarczyk broke the championship record twice on consecutive throws to win her second world title in the hammer throw with a mark of 80.85 meters.

The 30-year-old Polish thrower set the world record of 81.08 meters on Aug. 1.

Zhang Wenxiu of China won the silver medal in 76.33, ending a sequence of three consecutive bronze medals at the worlds. Alexandra Tavernier of France was third at 74.02.

Lewisberry to play for US Little League title

Associated Press

SOUTH WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. — The closest thing to a home team at the Little League World Series is headed for the final of the U.S. bracket. And Lewisberry can expect a full house when it goes for the title.

Left-hander Adam Cramer struck out 13 in five innings, and the undefeated Pennsylvania team beat Pearland, Texas, 3-0 on Wednesday night while thousands of red-shirted fans stood and cheered.

Manager Tom Peifer gathered his team on the field and said aloud what they already knew: They'll be playing for the title of best team in the U.S.

"I never thought those words would come out of my mouth," he said.

A quiet left-hander took them the final step.

Cramer threw 87 pitches, allowed three hits, and got only two outs other than by strikeout — a fly ball and a comeback grounder. Jaden Henline moved over from shortstop and got three more strikeouts in the sixth, escaping a bases-loaded threat.

"Adam's always done that as long as I've known him in big games," Peifer said. "He's a big-game pitcher for sure. To have 13 strikeouts and 15 outs, that's pretty incredible."

Cramer got a flyout to end the first inning and a comeback grounder to open the second. Every other out the rest of the way came by strikeout.

"In the first inning, I threw 28 pitches," he said. "In the next inning, it was like 13. Then I knew I was in a groove."

Cole Wagner hit a solo homer, and Henline had an RBI single among his three hits.

Pearland will play Bonita, California, on Thursday for a spot in the U.S. title game against Lewisberry. The winner of that game Saturday will face the International bracket winner for the World Series title a day later.

At least they won't have so many people rooting against them in that one.

"I don't think it really affected them," Pearland manager Andrew Solomon said of his team. "I could be wrong. They're really a focused group. Obviously it's not easy to play before 35,000 people when 34,900 are rooting for Pennsylvania."

Thousands of fans made the two-hour drive from Lewisberry for the game. The crowd estimated at 35,000 packed Lamade Stadium, leaving no room to cardboard slide down the steep, grassy slope beyond the outfield wall.

The dominant performance followed the most exciting games of the tournament, featuring two big comebacks and one pulsating win that sent the undefeated team from Tokyo to the title game of the International bracket.

Tokyo got down to its last strike in the bottom of the sixth inning before rallying to it, then overcame a two-run deficit in the bottom of the eighth for a 5-4 victory over Barquisimeto, Venezuela, that was among the tournament's most exciting.

For Barquisimeto, it was as tough as could be. Twice the Venezuelans had a chance to finish them off and couldn't do it. And they had to go deep into their pitching to get through the loss, leaving them in a tough spot for their win-or-else game.

Barquisimeto was to play Mexicali Baja California, Mexico, on Thursday. The winner gets a rematch with Tokyo on Saturday — the Japanese team also beat Mexico 3-1 in the tournament — for the International title.

Tigers' Verlander short of no-no

Associated Press

DETROIT — Justin Verlander leaned forward a bit, hoping this line drive would land foul.

Then he arched his back in disappointment when the ball hit the line, kicking up chalk on its way to the left-field corner.

Verlander lost a bid for his third no-hitter when Chris Iannetta hit a leadoff double in the ninth inning, and the Detroit Tigers beat the Los Angeles Angels 5-0 Wednesday night.

Trying to become the sixth major leaguer to throw three no-hitters, Verlander settled instead for a one-hit shutout.

He was an inch away from so much more.

"That's the toughest part of a no-hitter is getting through that last inning," Verlander said. "How many times have you seen guys break it up in the ninth? It happens. Guys really lock in and if you make a mistake guys can hit it."

Verlander (2-6) retired the next three batters after Iannetta, who is hitting .188, to finish his seventh career shutout and first in the regular season since May 18, 2012, against Pittsburgh. The right-hander struck out nine and walked two in his first win since July 29.

He faced only 28 hitters — one more than the minimum — after inducing double plays following both walks.

Miguel Cabrera, J.D. Martinez and Nick Castellanos homered to help the Tigers stop a five-game slide.

Verlander's most recent no-hitter came at Toronto on May 7, 2011. He also pitched one against Milwaukee on June 12, 2007.

Twins 5, Rays 3: Eduardo Escobar homered twice and Joe Mauer had a tiebreaking RBI single as visiting Minnesota beat Chris Archer and Tampa Bay for the Twins' sixth consecutive win.

Minnesota has its longest winning streak away from home since a six-game stretch Aug. 14-26, 2007. The Twins, 6-3 entering the final game of a 10-game trip Thursday night, lead Texas by one-half game for the final AL playoff spot.

Astros 6, Yankees 2: Evan Gattis hit two home runs, Collin McHugh excelled once again and visiting Houston exceeded last season's win total, improving to 71-57, a year after going 70-92.

With 34 games left, the Astros already have achieved their best season since 2010.

Blue Jays 12, Rangers 4: Edwin Encarnacion hit a grand slam to extend his hitting streak to 21 games, helping David Price get a win on his 30th birthday in Toronto's victory against host Texas.

Giants 4, Cubs 2: Buster Posey followed Brandon Belt's leadoff triple in the sixth with a go-ahead double, Jake Peavy won for the second time in six starts, and host San Francisco stopped Chicago's six-game winning streak.

Cardinals 3, Diamondbacks 1: John Lackey pitched seven strong innings and visiting St. Louis beat Arizona for the seventh straight time to move 36 games over .500 (81-45), its best mark since finishing the 2005 season plus-38.

Pirates 7, Marlins 2: Andrew McCutchen homered and drove in four runs to help visiting Pittsburgh to a victory over Miami.

Mets 9, Phillies 4: Bartolo Colon

tossed five-hit ball and struck out eight in seven sharp innings, Michael Cuddyer hit a long homer and NL East-leading New York beat host Philadelphia.

Dodgers 7, Reds 4: Scott Van Slyke, A.J. Ellis and Yasiel Puig all homered during a five-run fourth inning, and visiting Los Angeles held on for a victory.

Padres 6, Nationals 5: Justin Upton homered twice and had three RBIs, Matt Kemp added a two-run double and visiting San Diego held on to beat Washington.

Orioles 8, Royals 5: Chris Davis, Manny Machado and Jonathan Schoop each hit a two-run homer off Johnny Cueto, and visiting Baltimore had five long balls in all to power its way to a victory that snapped a six-game skid.

Rockies 6, Braves 3: Brandon Barnes had three hits, including a two-run homer, and visiting Colorado extended Atlanta right-hander Shelby Miller's winless streak to 18 starts.

Red Sox 3, White Sox 0: Rick Porcello pitched seven sparkling innings in his return from a triceps injury, leading visiting Boston to a victory over Chicago.

Mariners 8, Athletics 2: Felix Hernandez made just two mistakes in eight strong innings, Nelson Cruz hit his AL-leading 39th homer and drove in three runs for host Seattle.

Indians 6, Brewers 2: Jason Kipnis homered and drove in three runs, and host Cleveland used six pitchers in the win.