

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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## Dunford: Foreign special ops to join fight

BY CHRIS CHURCH  
*Stars and Stripes*

MANAMA, Bahrain—Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford said Monday that special operators from other countries may be joining in the fight against the Islamic State group.

“Although I can’t talk to you about the countries right now, because we are still in the process of discussing with them, we have a number of other countries that we are working with right now to provide additional special operations in Syria and Iraq,” Dunford said at a stop in Bahrain during a USO tour of U.S. installations in several countries.

Servicemembers he’s met along the way recognize the nature of the threat and have expressed their eagerness to do battle, he said.

“I had dinner with two sailors and about six Marines from FAST Company, and what they wanted to know is when do we need them to get in the fight,” Dunford said. “They say, ‘Hey sir, what do you need us to do? We are ready to do it.’”

Dunford told Stars and Stripes in an interview Monday he heard the same motivation from servicemembers in Sicily and Djibouti before his trip to Bahrain.

Last week the Pentagon announced plans to send to Iraq a new special forces unit of 100 men to fight the Islamic State group, also known as ISIS or ISIL. Soon after that announcement, Germany’s parliament—responding to France’s request for support in the wake of the Nov. 13 terrorist attacks in Paris—voted to send reconnaissance planes, a frigate and fueling capacity to the Middle East.

Dunford said the U.S. has received encouraging responses from regional allies regarding

### Russia blames coalition strategy in camp bombing

*Associated Press*

MOSCOW — Russia’s Foreign Ministry on Tuesday voiced concern about the reported bombing of a Syrian army camp, without addressing a U.S. claim that Russia was responsible for the incident.

The Syrian government blamed aircraft from a U.S.-led coalition for targeting the army camp in the eastern city of Deir el-Zour Sunday night, killing three Syrian soldiers and wounding 13. The U.S. denied the claim, and a senior U.S. military official said Monday that Washington was “certain” it was a Russian airstrike that hit the camp. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn’t authorized to discuss the issue publicly.

Without commenting on the U.S. claim, Russia’s Foreign Ministry on Tuesday said it has a “serious concern” about reports of the coalition strike in Deir el-Zour. It said the incident was rooted in the U.S.-led coalition’s reluctance to coordinate with Damascus on its campaign against the Islamic State group.

The ministry also mentioned a coalition strike in

Syria’s province of Hassake that reportedly involved civilian casualties.

“These incidents show that the situation on the front against the [Islamic State] in Syria and Iraq is exacerbating,” the ministry said, adding that the Turkish military’s deployment to a base near Mosul in Iraq without Iraqi government sanction has added to the tensions.

“We consider such presence unacceptable,” the ministry said.

Moscow’s relations with Ankara have been badly strained over Turkey’s downing of a Russian warplane at the Syrian border. Turkey said it shot down the plane after it violated its airspace for 17 seconds despite repeated warnings, while Russia insisted that the aircraft had stayed in Syria’s airspace.

Russia has responded by deploying long-range air defense missiles from its air base in Syria and introducing economic sanctions against Turkey.

On Tuesday, Russia’s Interfax news agency reported that a Russian submarine equipped with long-range cruise missiles has deployed to an area near the Syrian shore.

the deployment of forces to fight the Islamic State group but is waiting to see actual boots on the ground.

“It didn’t take Paris for us as Americans to recognize the nature of the threat, or many others, in fairness,” Dunford

said. “But if anyone in the wake of Paris doesn’t think it’s their problem, they aren’t thinking hard enough.”

Though the 28-nation NATO alliance said it will not provide ground troops, the coalition against the Islamic State group

already involves special operations contributions from individual NATO member states and may have more in the future, Dunford said.

The 60-plus-member coalition has seen an increase in contributions in the wake of the Paris attack from a number of countries, including Italy, Germany, France and, most recently, the United Kingdom.

However, the U.S. is still pushing for more involvement from regional allies, Dunford said. The U.S. has written letters to several countries identifying how they could contribute to the campaign, especially in the wake of the Paris terrorist attack.

During the last week, the Iraqi government, including Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, has said the country doesn’t need additional foreign ground combat troops, but Dunford said everything the U.S. is doing is in conjunction with the Iraqi government.

“When Prime Minister Abadi made that statement, he was really talking about large formations of U.S. combat forces and was not referring to special operations forces or other unique capabilities that the Iraqis have actually asked us for and we’ll support,” he said.

Dunford also said he’ll continue to make recommendations he believes will advance the momentum of the campaign, including increasing unique U.S. capabilities and special operators.

“At the end of the day, while it’s going to take a coalition to defeat ISIL, and while many nations have to deal with this issue, it’s also a threat to the homeland, to the United States,” Dunford said. “So we have significant interest in making sure that we defeat ISIL.”

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## Navy 2-star reprimanded for escapade

*The Washington Post*

The Navy announced Monday that it has reprimanded a two-star admiral for getting drunk and wandering naked around a Florida beachfront hotel while attending a conference with defense contractors.

Rear Adm. David F. Baucom, the director of strategy and policy at the U.S. Transportation Command, became so intoxicated in April that he struck his head on a barstool, wet his pants and needed an escort back to his room, according to an investigative report by the Naval Inspector General.

A few hours later, still in a haze, Baucom re-emerged from his room without any clothes on — as his door automatically locked behind him, the report states. As the admiral stumbled around desperately looking for a towel to wrap around his waist, he was spotted by two alarmed female guests who reported him to hotel security.

## Pearl Harbor commemorated

*Stars and Stripes*

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — The survivors of the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor cheated death while many of their comrades died that day and in the four years of war that followed.

Now, with the very youngest among them in their early 90s, they have outlived virtually their entire generation, but some who attended Monday's commemoration ceremonies at the joint Navy-Air Force base in Hawaii were already vowing not to miss next year's milestone 75th anniversary.

"Time will not dim the glory of their deeds and the legacy they left behind," said U.S. Pacific Command chief Adm. Harry Harris Jr.

# USS Zumwalt starts sea trials

BY TARA COPP  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Navy's new stealth destroyer began a week of sea trials Monday to try and prove that after years of setbacks, the next-generation warship was worth the wait.

The USS Zumwalt (DDG-1000) is the first in a class of futuristic destroyers that will have an angular but low external profile to maximize stealth on the outside, and next-generation power systems to enable the ship to run energy-demanding future weapons and sensor systems on the inside.

The ship sailed Monday from its port in Bath, Maine, for a weeklong test of its onboard systems, according to the Navy.

"Over the next several days, the Navy will demonstrate many of the ship's key systems and technologies," said Capt. Thurraya Kent, a Navy spokeswoman. "The Navy and the shipbuilder are executing the test program of this first of class ship with extreme rigor, and this initial at-sea period will allow for earlier issue identification and risk mitigation."

The Zumwalt was designed to replace the Navy's current fleet of Arleigh-Burke destroyers

but cost overruns and program delays led the Navy to cap the ship's production to three. The procurement costs of the three Zumwalt ships is estimated to top \$12.3 billion, about 37 percent more than their initial \$8.9 billion program estimate. The program as a whole, including research and development costs, is estimated to reach \$22 billion.

Critics have questioned whether the ship is the right fit for future warfare, and its escalating price tag hasn't helped, said Peter Singer, a senior fellow at the New America Foundation and co-author of "Ghost Fleet: A Novel of the Next World War."

"No ship is more interesting in the way that it links the past with the questions that surround the future of naval war," he said. "It is both a throwback and a breakthrough. It is the size of a World War I battleship, originally designed for gun-fire shore bombardment, a role many are not sure we even need anymore, but utterly revolutionary in other ways."

Singer said the Zumwalt's focus won't be fighting the Islamic State group, but deterring China.

"Given the re-entry of the great power rivalry to 21st-

century politics, that is a good thing," he said.

While the ship has experienced setbacks, the Zumwalt offers technological improvements that will be required in the Navy's future fleet whether it is the future platform of choice, said naval expert Ron O'Rourke, of the Congressional Research Service.

Unlike with the current fleet of destroyers and cruisers, an integrated electric drive powers the Zumwalt's stealth and weapons systems such as lasers and an electromagnetic rail gun developed to compete with Chinese and Russian technology, O'Rourke said.

"If you don't do that through integrated electric drives, you have to do that with other power structure — batteries and capacitors and such," said O'Rourke, who was speaking at a U.S. Navy Institute conference in Washington on future U.S. sea power challenges. "Right now we don't have ships on the books on the shipbuilding plan beyond the three Zumwalts that will do that. So now the question becomes, Are you going to do that in some other way? We need to address that."

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## Senators seek military sex crime records

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Responding to an Associated Press investigation, three U.S. senators on Tuesday urged Defense Secretary Ash Carter to lift what they called the military justice system's "cloak of secrecy" and make records from sex crimes cases readily accessible.

In a letter to Carter, Democrats Barbara Boxer, of California; Kirsten Gillibrand, of New York; and Mazie Hirono, of Hawaii, say the lack of transparency in military legal proceedings "calls into question the integrity of the institution and hides the system's shortcomings."

The AP's investigation, pub-

lished last month, found more inmates are in military prisons for sex crimes against children than for any other offense. But the military's opaque justice system prevents the public from knowing the full scope of their crimes or how much time they spend behind bars.

The letter underscores the dissatisfaction among a small but vocal group of lawmakers with the Defense Department's efforts to stamp out sexual assaults and punish offenders. The senators do not threaten legislative action if Carter doesn't take the steps they recommend, yet that remains an option. Boxer, Gillibrand and Hirono have previously advocated more ag-

gressive changes in military law and policy to prevent sexual assaults.

The senators said Carter should begin to restore public confidence in military justice by applying the standards of openness that civilian courts use, among them making trial records and documents from appellate cases readily available through the online Public Access to Court Electronic Records service. The military does not have a comparable repository. Most records from military sex crimes cases and other offenses are available only through the Freedom of Information Act and it can take months to get a response.



# Early season logjam atop NBA's Eastern Conference

Associated Press

MIAMI — After six weeks of the season, the Eastern Conference looks better than it did a year ago.

Looks messier, too.

Out West, it's easy to see who stands out. Golden State's record-setting 22-0 start has the reigning NBA champions as the league's unquestioned favorites, and San Antonio is the only team that hasn't let the Warriors run away and completely hide in the early season standings.

But in the East, Cleveland's 13-7 mark is good enough for first place right now, Indiana's 12-7 mark is second-best — and Detroit's 12-10 start wouldn't be good enough to get in the playoffs if that field was decided today, after two teams with losing records got into the postseason mix last season.

"I think the players and the teams should take pride in it," said Miami coach Erik Spoelstra, whose team fell from first to third with its loss to Washington on Monday night. "This is what you want as competitors. You want it to be really

competitive in your conference. You want your games to have significance and meaning every single night."

That's been the case so far, without question.

The top 10 teams in the East are separated by two games, the top seven separated by only one. To put it in further context, the eight-game gap between No. 1 Cleveland and No. 14 Brooklyn in the East is actually smaller than the nine-game divide between No. 1 Golden State and No. 3 Oklahoma City in the West — probably both a testament to the parity-laden start on one side of the league and the dominance by the Warriors on the other.

"It's not like kind of the past couple seasons in the East where there was three, four teams and then it was a big gap between everybody else," said New York's Carmelo Anthony, whose Knicks are off to a 10-12 start. "Seems like everybody is playing good basketball this season, especially in the East, so we don't want to dig ourselves a hole."

The season isn't even one-quarter complete, so this logjam almost certainly won't last. But it's a sign the East isn't

dreadful, either.

"Seems that way," Washington coach Randy Wittman said. "From top to bottom, it's a lot more competitive than it has been."

Well, maybe not the actual bottom.

Philadelphia fell to 1-21 with its blow-out home loss to San Antonio on Monday night, the 31st defeat in the last 32 games for the 76ers going back to last season.

The Sixers are on pace to finish with the worst record in NBA history and seem well on their way to seeing their win total drop for the fifth straight season — so it's a safe bet that even the most ardent Philly fan isn't exactly counting on a playoff berth happening next spring.

Everyone else, there's still reason for optimism.

"I think it's a lot better personally," Charlotte coach Steve Clifford said. "Of the three years I've been here, it's been by far better. And I think the discrepancy between the East and the West has narrowed a lot too. There's a lot of good teams in the East now. You're going to have to play well any night to win."

## Oklahoma rolls over Villanova

Associated Press

HONOLULU — The answer for No. 7 Oklahoma in facing No. 9 Villanova came from afar.

The Sooners made a season-high 14 three-pointers, including four apiece from senior guards Isaiah Cousins and Buddy Hield, to cruise to a 78-55 victory over the Wildcats on Monday in the Pearl Harbor Invitational.

Cousins scored 19 points and Hield added 18 for Oklahoma (6-0), which never trailed.

Half of the Sooners' field goals were three-pointers, including 8-for-12 from behind the arc in the second half.

"Villanova is an experienced team, too, but our coaches got us real prepared for this game," said Hield, who was named to the Preseason All-Big 12 Team. "We watched a lot of film and we studied them real well and they had different schemes, but we came out and executed. We came out with a great team win."

Five players scored in double figures for Oklahoma. Ryan Spangler had a double-double with 11 points and 10 rebounds. Dinjiyl Walker, a reserve, made three three-pointers and finished with 11 points in 18 minutes. Jordan Woodward added 10 points for the Sooners.

Josh Hart, Phil Booth and Ryan Arcidiacono scored 10 points each for the Wildcats (7-1), who shot 32 percent from the field, including going 4-for-32 on three-point attempts.

**No. 4 Iowa State 84, Buffalo 63:** Georges Niang had 31 points and 12 rebounds to lead the host Cyclones to a victory over the Bulls.

Niang's first double-double of the season was crucial for the Cyclones (7-0), who let the Bulls get within 47-46 early in the second half.

Iowa State responded with an 11-0 run and a late closing push to remain one of the nation's last unbeaten teams.

**No. 11 Purdue 80, IUPUI 53:** A.J. Hammons scored 14 points and Kendall Stephens added 13 to lead the host Boilermakers.

Caleb Swanigan added 11 points and 14 rebounds for the Boilermakers (9-0), while Vince Edwards and Isaac Haas added 10 points each.

**No. 18 Butler 93, VMI 66:** Kelan Martin scored 20 points and Roosevelt Jones added 14 to help the host Bulldogs' run away.

Just hours after the Bulldogs (7-1) moved back into the Top 25, they won their fourth straight in emphatic fashion.

**No. 24 Oregon 67, Navy 47:** At Honolulu, Dillon Brooks scored 19 points to lead four Ducks players in double figures in the Pearl Harbor Invitational.

Brooks, who finished 7-for-14 from the field, had 13 points by halftime.

Dwayne Benjamin scored 16 points, Chris Boucher had a double-double with 14 points and 14 rebounds and Casey Benson added 10 points for the Ducks.

## Raptors top Lakers, end skid

Associated Press

TORONTO — While the sellout crowd left no doubt it came to watch Kobe Bryant say goodbye to Canada, Terrence Ross took full advantage of his first start this season.

The former NBA slam dunk champion proved a sparkplug with 22 points, including a team-high nine in the fourth quarter, as the Toronto Raptors put two tough home losses in the rearview mirror and beat the Los Angeles Lakers 102-93 on Monday night.

Kyle Lowry scored 27 points for the Raptors, and Bismack Biyombo had a career-high 15 points with 13 rebounds.

It was Ross' strong, one-handed slam that finally gave Toronto the lead for good with 6:55 to go, and the Raptors quickly went on an 11-0 run to remove any doubt about the final outcome.

Ross started in place of injured forward DeMarre Carroll.

In what was almost certainly his last NBA appearance in Toronto, Bryant shot 8-for-16 for 21 points as the Raptors swept the season series from the Lakers for the first time.

After managing only five points in Sunday's loss at Detroit, where he was suffering from a stomach flu, Bryant looked much more like his old self — shooting 50 percent from the floor for the first time this season.

"He rebounded the ball, played much better under control, took some great

shots," Scott said. "We had some great looks all night long, we just didn't knock them down; I like the pace that we played at much better as well."

Scott shuffled his starting lineup before the game, removing rookie guard D'Angelo Russell and second-year forward Julius Randle and replacing them with Lou Williams and Larry Nance Jr. Russell, the second overall pick in this year's draft, and Randle, the seventh choice in 2014, had previously started every game.

**Clippers 110, Timberwolves 106:** DeAndre Jordan had 20 points, 12 rebounds and four blocks to lift Los Angeles over host Minnesota.

Blake Griffin had 16 points and 11 rebounds, and Chris Paul, making a surprise return to the lineup after missing the previous two games with a rib injury, finished with 14 points and five assists in 32 minutes.

**Hornets 104, Pistons 84:** Cody Zeller scored 20 points and host Charlotte snapped Detroit's four-game winning streak.

Marvin Williams added 14 points and 12 rebounds, and Kemba Walker had 14 points and nine rebounds for Charlotte.

**Celtics 111, Pelicans 93:** Isaiah Thomas scored 22 points, Kelly Olynyk added 21 in a reserve role and visiting Boston defeated struggling New Orleans.

**Bucks 90, Trail Blazers 88:** Greg Monroe's layup put his team ahead with seconds left and John Henson swatted

away Meyers Leonard's potential game-winning shot to help Milwaukee edge visiting Portland.

**Wizards 114, Heat 103:** John Wall scored 26 points one night after leaving a game with a sore knee and Gary Neal added 21, including a debated three-pointer with just over a minute left, to lead visiting Washington.

**Suns 103, Bulls 101:** Mirza Teletovic scored 21 points, including a follow basket with 0.3 seconds left, to cap visiting Phoenix's furious fourth-quarter rally from 16 points down.

Phoenix outscored Chicago 42-24 in the final period.

**Spurs 119, 76ers 68:** With new front office executive Jerry Colangelo sitting courtside, host Philadelphia showed him just how far away it is from becoming a competitive franchise.

Tim Duncan, Manu Ginobili and Kawhi Leonard all sat out and San Antonio still rolled past the Sixers.

**Mavericks 104, Knicks 97:** Dirk Nowitzki scored 25 points and Dallas withstood a comeback attempt sparked by Kristaps Porzingis to beat host New York.

Porzingis finished with 28 points in his first matchup with Nowitzki, the German great he has been compared to for his perimeter shooting skills by a 7-footer.



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# Three Heisman Trophy finalists named

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Alabama's Derrick Henry and Stanford's Christian McCaffrey are hoping to return the Heisman Trophy to the running backs. Clemson's Deshaun Watson can keep it with the QBs.

The two star running backs with very different styles and the dual-threat quarterback of the No. 1 team in the country are headed for New York after being named Heisman finalists Monday night.

Henry and McCaffrey will be looking to break a five-year streak of quarterbacks winning college football's top honor when the trophy is presented Saturday night in Midtown Manhattan.

Mark Ingram of Alabama in 2009 was the last running back to win the Heisman. Since 2000, 13 of the 15 Heisman winners have been quarterbacks.

All three had impressive performances in conference championship games on Saturday. Henry ran for 189 yards and a touchdown on 44 carries in Alabama's vic-

tory against Florida. McCaffrey had 461 all-purpose yards with touchdowns running, receiving and passing as Stanford beat Southern California, and Watson had 420 total yards and accounted for five touchdowns in Clemson's win against North Carolina.

Close Heisman voting has been uncommon in recent years. The last three winners — Marcus Mariota, Jameis Winston and Johnny Manziel — all won by comfortable margins.

## Henry

The 6-foot-3, 240-pound junior set an SEC record with 1,986 yards and nation's best 23 touchdowns. Alabama has leaned heavily on Henry in its biggest games. He carried the ball 90 times in the past two games and averaged 180 yards per game against SEC opponents.

"The Heisman Trophy has been a dream of mine since I was a little kid and the chance to go to New York as a finalist is amazing, but none of this would be possi-

ble without my coaches and teammates," Henry said in a statement. "The offensive line, the quarterback, wide receivers and tight ends have done an unbelievable job all season and our coaches always put us in a position to be successful."

## McCaffrey

While Henry is the prototypical power runner, McCaffrey is all about elusiveness and versatility. The 200-pound sophomore broke Barry Sanders' NCAA record for all-purpose yards in a season with 3,496. He has scored 13 touchdowns and thrown two TD passes.

He would be Stanford's second Heisman winner, joining Jim Plunkett in 1970. The Cardinal did have a recent run of three straight seasons with the runner-up, Toby Gerhart finished second behind Ingram in '09 and Andrew Luck came in second to Cam Newton (2010) and Robert Griffin III (2011).

"Just found out five minutes ago. I'm a little emotional," McCaffrey told reporters at Stanford.

## Watson

The sophomore fits the mold of recent Heisman winners Cam Newton, RGIII, Manziel and Mariota as a dual-threat quarterback, capable of dominating as a runner or passer.

Watson is the only player in the country who has surpassed 800 yards rushing (887) and 3,500 yards passing (3,512), and he has accounted for 41 touchdowns.

"This is recognition for a great performance on the field and for the hard work he has put in over the last year after suffering a torn ACL," Clemson coach Dabo Swinney said. "A year ago Saturday night he was in the hospital having surgery. Exactly a year later he will be in New York as a Heisman finalist."

# Win over Redskins keeps Dallas in hunt

Associated Press

LANDOVER, Md. — After the game's 10th drive finally resulted in the evening's first points, Dallas Cowboys receiver Dez Bryant stalked around the sideline, cursing and yelling and, oddly, even removing his shoes.

He was upset that the football wasn't being thrown his way.

On the game's final scoring drive, Matt Cassel's only two completions both went to Bryant, helping set up Dan Bailey's 54-yard field goal with 9 seconds left Monday night that gave Dallas a 19-16 victory over the Washington Redskins and allowed the Cowboys to somehow keep themselves in the thick of the playoff chase in the woe-ful NFC East.

"I was frustrated," Bryant said of his first-half tantrum. "But then I had to calm down and understand that this is the game. Everybody wants to make plays and be there for their team."

At halftime of a game that was dull until the last 90 seconds, Bryant had zero catches and had been targeted twice. He finished with three receptions for 62 yards, including a diving 42-yard grab that led to — what else? — a field goal.

"I have to do a better job of giving him more opportunities," said Cassel, who is now 1-4 as a starter in place of injured quarterback Tony Romo.

The last-place Cowboys (4-8) won for the first time this season without Romo and now are only one game behind the Redskins, New York Giants and Philadelphia Eagles, who are all 5-7.

Here is what else to know about Monday's game:

**No tablets:** A power issue led to the teams not being able to use their sideline tablets during the game. "We didn't have tablets, and we didn't have pictures. Typically, if the headsets are off for one side, they immediately go off for the other side.

But the NFL is working their way through the ruling with tablets and pictures and it took a little while before it was balanced

on each side," Dallas coach Jason Garrett said.

**Up and down:** The Redskins had won their past five home games, including a 20-14 victory over the Giants last weekend, but they continued a pattern: Washington has not collected consecutive wins all season.

"We've shown flashes. Good quarters, good games, here and there," coach Jay Gruden said. "But the great teams, the ones that advance in the playoffs and win Super Bowls are consistent. And we have not been."

**Jackson:** With the score 9-all and about 1½ minutes left, Washington's DeSean Jackson fielded a punt at his own 16 and headed up the field. Jackson, who hadn't been used as a punt returner this season until last week, got past the 20, before reversing course and heading backward all the way to the 1, with various Cowboys in pursuit.

As he again tried to move forward, Jackson was surrounded and the ball popped out, recovered by punter Chris Jones at the 15 with 86 seconds remaining. Two plays later, Dallas turned that fumble into its only TD.

Jackson said he heard some encouraging words from Gruden afterward. "The best thing I could say was, 'I laid an egg; I messed up,'" Jackson said.

**Witten's 1,000th:** Dallas TE Jason Witten became the second NFL player at that position to reach 1,000 catches, joining Tony Gonzalez. Witten already was one of only two tight ends — Gonzalez is the other — with more than 10,000 yards receiving.

"I was happy to get it," Witten said. "I'm just humbled by it."

**Quite a quarter:** There were 18 points over the first 58½ minutes, 17 the rest of the frenzied way. The first quarter-plus was particularly ugly. The first nine possessions resulted in eight punts and one turnover, a combined four first downs, only 68 yards of offense, and a half-dozen penalties for 66 yards.

In all, the teams totaled four turnovers and 16 penalties.

# Vrbata scores 6th career hat trick to lift Canucks

Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Pulsating postgame music in the home dressing room at Rogers Arena has been far from the norm this season.

For one night at least, the Vancouver Canucks could relax.

Radim Vrbata scored three goals for his sixth career hat trick and Vancouver beat the Buffalo Sabres 5-2 on Monday to snap a five-game losing streak.

"We were looking for a good performance for a win and to feel a little better about ourselves," Vrbata said. "Even though it's just one game, it's a good start."

Brandon Prust had a goal and an assist, and Henrik Sedin also scored for Vancouver (10-11-8). Ryan Miller stopped 32 shots against his former team, and the Canucks won for just the fourth time in their last 17 games.

"It's a good feeling for sure coming in here and seeing a lot of smiles on guys that haven't been scoring," Sedin said. "Hopefully we can build on this one."

Daniel Sedin and Adam Cracknell each added two assists as Vancouver improved to 4-6-3 at home.

"We've talked about getting our confidence back, getting our swagger back where you're going into games and you're feeling like you're going to win," Prust said. "That's what this does."

Brian Gionta and Sam Reinhart scored for Buffalo, and Linus Ullmark made 26 saves.

"We want better within this room," Gionta said. "We know we're capable of that, so that's why it's so disappointing."

Vancouver extended its lead to 3-1 at 4:34 of the second period as Prust scored his first of the season off a nice pass in front from Derek Dorsett. Prust, fined \$5,000 for his spear on Brad Marchand in Saturday's 4-0 loss to Boston, celebrated his first goal in 50 games.

"We have been frustrated a little bit with our game," Prust said. "We have done some good things, but haven't been rewarded. It's good to finally be rewarded."

Vancouver made it 4-1 with 2:42 left in the period on a 4-on-3 power play when Henrik Sedin tipped Alexander Edler's shot past Ullmark for his ninth of the

season.

"There has been a stretch here you can tell there's been guys that have been thinking hockey differently," Henrik Sedin said. "Some guys want to get it deep and work it down low and other guys want to make plays. Tonight we were on the same page."

Vrbata, who scored twice in the first, completed his hat trick with 5:32 to go as he fired a shot past Ullmark for his ninth. It was his first three-goal game since Oct. 3, 2013, with the Coyotes.

"The last couple games you could see we were not a very confident group," Vrbata said. "It seemed like every mistake we made, it turned against us. It's good to have a game like that where you have a good performance and you get a result."

Bo Horvat and Chris Higgins had great chances for the Canucks early, but the Sabres grabbed the lead at 6:48 of the first when Gionta batted a puck out of the air past Miller for his third on a play that stood up after video review.

**Avalanche 2, Wild 1 (OT):** John Mitchell scored the winner at 3:35 of overtime for host Colorado.

Mitchell got the winner when he took a pass from Matt Duchene in the right circle and beat goalie Darcy Kuemper with a shot that banged off the right post.

Tyson Barrie had a goal and an assist and Semyon Varlamov made 19 saves for the Avalanche. It was Colorado's first win in three games against the Wild this season.

Kuemper finished with 18 saves and Zach Parise scored for Minnesota, which had won three in a row.

**Predators 3, Bruins 2:** Viktor Arvidsson scored with 4:56 left, Roman Josi had two goals and visiting Nashville won for just the third time in its last seven games.

Kevan Miller and Loui Eriksson scored for Boston. The Bruins had collected at least one point in each of their last eight games (6-0-2).

Boston's Jonas Gustavsson made 30 saves in a matchup of backup goaltenders. Carter Hutton stopped 15 shots.