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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Islamic State claims US hostage was killed in Jordanian airstrikes

The Associated Press

BEIRUT — A statement by the Islamic State group claimed that an American female hostage was killed in a Jordanian airstrike on Friday.

The statement identified the woman as Kayla Jean Mueller and said she was killed during Muslim prayers — which usually take place around midday on Fridays — in airstrikes that targeted “the same location for more than an hour.” The statement said the airstrike occurred on the outskirts of the northern Syrian city of Raqqa, the militant group’s main stronghold.

No Islamic State militants were killed in the airstrikes, the statement further claimed.

It published photos allegedly of the bombed site, showing a severely damaged three-story building, but no images of the woman.

American officials said they were looking into the report. The White House said it did not have immediate comment.

The statement could not be independently verified. It appeared on a militant website

commonly used by the Islamic State and was also distributed by Islamic State-affiliated Twitter users.

Mueller, 26, is an aid worker whose identity was never disclosed out of concerns for her safety.

A family representative told The Associated Press last year that Mueller was working with humanitarian groups in Syria when she was captured in 2013.

Mueller, of Prescott, Ariz., had been working in Turkey assisting Syrian refugees, according to a 2013 article in The Daily Courier, her hometown newspaper. Mueller told the paper that she was drawn to help with the situation in Syria.

“For as long as I live, I will not let this suffering be normal,” she said. “It’s important to stop and realize what we have, why we have it and how privileged we are. And from that place, start caring and get a lot done.”

According to the local paper, Mueller had been working with the humanitarian aid agency Support to Life, as well as a local NGO that helped female Syrian refugees develop skills.

On Sunday, President Barack Obama said the U.S. was “deploying all the assets that we can” to find Mueller.

“We are in very close contact with the family trying to keep them updated,” he said in an interview with NBC’s Today Show. “Obviously this is something that is heart-breaking for the family and we want to make sure we do anything we can to make sure that any American citizen is rescued from this situation.”

Jordan, which is part of a U.S.-led coalition bombing Islamic State group targets in Syria, stepped up its attacks after the Islamic State announced it had killed a captive Jordanian pilot. The Syrian government said Thursday that dozens of Jordanian fighter jets had bombed Islamic State training centers and weapons storage sites. It did not say where the attacks occurred.

There was no word from the Jordanian government on whether its planes had struck Raqqa on Friday.

If her death is confirmed, she would be the fourth American to die while in the captivity of the Islamic State militants.

Internal Navy email: Safety of Sea Dragons in question

The (Norfolk) Virginian-Pilot

NORFOLK, Va. — More than a year after a Navy helicopter caught fire and crashed off the coast of Virginia, killing three crewmembers, high-ranking military officials are now worried the tragedy could be repeated, according to confidential documents obtained by The Virginian-Pilot.

After an MH-53E Sea Dragon went down on Jan. 8, 2014, the military ordered crews to inspect every other Sea Dragon in the fleet — and every CH-53E Super Stallion, the Marine Corps variant — for signs of

damaged fuel lines and wires like those that caused the crash.

There’s now evidence that many of those inspections were conducted haphazardly, if at all, leaving dozens of potentially unsafe helicopters in service and sending officials scrambling to come up with a plan to fix the problems, according to a chain of emails circulating last week among leaders at Naval Air Systems Command, the Maryland-based office that oversees all Navy and Marine Corps aircraft programs.

“Engineering is very concerned that the original bulletin intent was not met,” a Marine

officer wrote in one email, referring to the fuel line and wiring inspections that were conducted almost a year ago. “We don’t need another mishap as a result of chaffing wiring on a fuel line.”

The emails included attachments detailing the seriousness of the situation, including a spreadsheet documenting discrepancies in the original inspection process and a PowerPoint presentation apparently used during a briefing last week by Col. Hank Vanderborcht, the Sea Dragon and Super Stallion program director.

Bottom line up front, Vander-

borcht wrote to begin the slides: “The risk of cabin fire was not mitigated and the hazard of chafing on fluid-carrying lines and wires was not eliminated.”

A sample inspection of helicopters conducted two weeks ago produced disturbing results, according to the slides. Of 28 helicopters that were looked at, all but eight were found to have bad fuel lines or wiring, including at least one with chafing lines in the exact location that led to the deadly crash a year ago, when a worn-out wiring bundle released an electrical arc that connected with jet fuel, igniting an explosive fire.

Coalition airstrikes aid Afghan troops

BY CARLO MUNOZ
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — U.S. and allied aircraft struck Taliban forces in eastern Afghanistan last month, according to a coalition spokesman, in the first confirmed airstrikes in support of Afghan forces since the end of the international combat mission.

The mid-January attacks were not announced by U.S. forces at the time but were confirmed when asked about them by Stars and Stripes.

The air attacks were carried out in the Dangam district of Kunar province in support of

Afghan efforts to push back Afghan and Pakistani Taliban fighters, according to coalition spokesman Col. Brian Tribus and Afghan officials.

Gen. John Campbell, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, ordered the attacks in coordination with Afghan National Security Forces leaders who planned and led the operation, Tribus said in a statement last week. He would not say how many airstrikes were carried out nor what kinds of aircraft were used.

Zubair Babakarkhail contributed to this report.
munoz.carlo@stripes.com

NBC anchor's apology gets mixed reviews from crew

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Apologies by NBC "Nightly News" anchor Brian Williams for a false claim of being on a helicopter forced down by Iraqi rocket fire in 2003 satisfied some soldiers who were there but left a few insisting that details were still misrepresented.

Williams admitted on air Wednesday that he was not aboard a Chinook struck by hostile fire on a flight from Kuwait in March 2003, saying instead he was aboard a "following aircraft."

In a Facebook apology to the soldiers, Williams said, "I was indeed on the Chinook behind the bird that took the RPG (rocket-propelled grenade)." He blamed the discrepancy on poor memory almost 12 years after the fact.

Since the 2003 incident, Williams has said on different occasions that he "came under fire" and that his helicopter was forced down due to the attack.

Former and active-duty soldiers who were on the same

mission had said the anchor's aircraft landed in the Karbala area because of a blinding sandstorm, not hostile fire.

Williams' admission and his insistence that he had made an innocent mistake drew sharp criticism on social media, which subjected the veteran newsman to enormous ridicule, including posts depicting him in other historical events.

Among those who were part of the mission, reaction was less intense.

"I have a feeling that he didn't have a choice [but to apologize]," said David Luke, a former soldier and flight engineer with the 159th Aviation Regiment who was aboard a helicopter flying along with the one carrying Williams and his NBC crew.

Mike O'Keeffe, who was a door gunner on the Chinook hit by RPGs, said he was generally satisfied with the apology and no longer wanted to press the issue by making public comments.

tritten.travis@stripes.com

Fort Hood victims to receive Purple Heart

BY PATRICK DICKSON
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army announced Friday that it will award the Purple Heart and its civilian counterpart, the Secretary of Defense Medal for the Defense of Freedom, to victims of a 2009 shooting at Fort Hood, Texas.

Thirteen people were killed and more than 30 wounded in the attack by Maj. Nidal Hasan, who was convicted in August 2013, of 13 counts of premeditated murder and 32 counts of attempted murder. Hasan is being held on the military death row at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., while post-trial and appellate processes continue.

An Army statement said Secretary of the Army John McHugh has approved the awards following a change in the medals' eligibility criteria mandated by Congress.

"The Purple Heart's strict eligibility criteria had prevented us from awarding it to victims of the horrific attack at Fort Hood," McHugh is quoted as saying. "Now that Congress has changed the criteria, we believe there is sufficient reason

to allow these men and women to be awarded and recognized with either the Purple Heart or, in the case of civilians, the Defense of Freedom medal. It's an appropriate recognition of their service and sacrifice."

Under Section 571 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015, Congress expanded the eligibility for the Purple Heart by redefining what should be considered an attack by a "foreign terrorist organization" for purposes of determining eligibility for the Purple Heart, the Army release said.

The legislation states that an event should now be considered an attack by a foreign terrorist organization if the perpetrator of the attack "was in communication with the foreign terrorist organization before the attack" and "the attack was inspired or motivated by the foreign terrorist organization."

Since the attack, victims' families and their allies in Congress had butted heads with the Army and the White House on whether this was a terrorist attack or "workplace violence."

dickson.patrick@stripes.com

Army vet threatens attack at US Capitol

WASHINGTON — An Army veteran was arrested this week after authorities say he threatened to shoot his wife and others at the U.S. Capitol.

Michael Bogoslavski, 33, had sent his wife, a federal employee working at the Capitol, a series of text messages Monday threatening to harm her and indicating that he would hurt anyone who got in his way, according to a criminal complaint filed in U.S. District Court in Greenbelt, Md.

Text messages quoted in the complaint released Thursday

indicate that Bogoslavski accused his wife of being involved with another man, who court papers say is a U.S. Capitol Police officer. In one message, the criminal complaint says, Bogoslavski threatened to shoot the officer in the face.

Police detained Bogoslavski at a home in Cheverly, Md., the day the texts were sent and took him for an emergency mental health evaluation, said Cheverly police Detective Bernard Jones. Officers from the U.S. Capitol Police arrested Bogoslavski after he was released from the hospital.

From The Washington Post

Miller injured during crash at worlds

The Associated Press

BEAVER CREEK, Colo. — Bode Miller's world championships are now over. His career? On hold for the moment.

Miller underwent surgery to fix a torn right hamstring tendon when his ski appeared to slice him after a gruesome crash in a super-G race Thursday.

The injury is supposed to sideline the 37-year-old for at least two months.

Might be longer. Maybe even for good.

The six-time Olympic medalist was on the fence about a return to ski racing next season long before the crash. He had back surgery in November and his aim was to return in time for worlds.

He did. But in his first race this season, he wiped out. A bad wipeout, too.

Miller's not the kind to return to the World Cup scene simply for a farewell tour or anything. That's not his style.

"If this is it, then I'll talk to my wife and make a plan," Miller said last month after squeezing in some training at Beaver Creek to test his back. "If my body feels good, maybe I keep skiing?"

"I've had a remarkable run and put my body through so much. To expect it to come back again and not run into the same things you see 21-, 22-year-old kids running into? I'm not delusional. It's a risk."

On the course, he's all about risks. And for the first half of his race Thursday, he was vintage Miller.

"Bode was skiing outstanding," U.S. men's coach Sasha Rearick said. "He was going for it."

Then Miller's left arm hooked a gate, sending him spiraling out of control. Both of his skis popped off and he rolled head-over-ski-boots down the hill.

After coming to a stop, he slowly got up,

gathered his skis, clicked back in and finished his run, even with a deep gash on his leg.

He waved to the crowd, perhaps one final nod to the fans who've always rooted for him because of his gambler's mentality.

"Bode is an exciting racer to watch," teammate Ted Ligety said. "He knew he had to put it on the limit in order to get on the podium today."

Here are things to know:

Moving tribute: Before the super-G on Thursday, there was a moment of silence for two U.S. Ski Team prospects killed in an avalanche in Austria last month. There were green-painted signs honoring Ronnie Berlack, 20, and Bryce Astle, 19, saying, "Ski in Peace." The tributes touched Berlack's father. "Bryce and Ronnie were two bright stars and sometimes the bright stars leave the night sky

first," Steve Berlack said. "That's just sadly what happened here." Sam Morse, a good friend of Ronnie Berlack, was one of the forerunners for the race and skied with "RB" and "BA" stickers on his helmet and with his friends on his mind.

Reichelt's course: Hannes Reichelt of Austria loves this hill. His first-ever World Cup win was a super-G race at Beaver Creek in 2005. He won another super-G event here in December and now a world title Thursday. "I said, 'OK, you have to repeat the success of December,'" Reichelt said. "To repeat something is so difficult."

Making friends: Tina Maze of Slovenia had a fast downhill training run Thursday, finding the right line. Her secret? "Finally, I became friends with this slope," said Maze, who tied Dominique Gislin of Switzerland for the Olympic downhill gold medal in Sochi.

Tiger pulls out of tourney, cites back pain

SAN DIEGO — New season, same old story with Tiger Woods.

Only it's no longer a happy tale.

For the third time in his last eight PGA Tour events, Woods got into a cart in the middle of his round and was driven to the parking lot because of back pain. Most troubling about Thursday in the Farmers Insurance Open was he spoke only a week ago of feeling "great" physically, and this was only his second event of the year.

He blamed this one on the weather, which caused his "glutes" to shut off.

Woods walked off the course after 11 holes on the North Course at Torrey Pines, citing tightness in his lower back from standing around for more than an hour in the cool Pacific air during a fog delay in the morning. He never looked comfortable, and Billy Horschel noticed it right away. Woods was reaching for his back at the turn. Horschel tried to help by picking up the tee for Woods on their 10th hole and the ball from the cup when Woods made birdie.

"I was ready to go," Woods said. "I had a good warmup session the first time around. Then we stood out here and I got cold, and everything started deactivating again. And it's frustrating that I just can't stay activated. That's just kind of the way it is."

Woods now has gone 12 straight PGA Tour events without a top 10, dating to his runner-up finish in The Barclays in 2013 when back pain dropped him to his knees. This was his first round since a career-high 82 last week in the Phoenix Open to tie for last with a club pro and miss the cut by 12 shots.

"It's tough to see a guy I look up to, a guy I consider a friend, to have issues with spasms," Horschel said. "It's tough to see him go, but he was in quite a bit of pain."

Nicholas Thompson had an 8-under 64 on the North Course and had a one-shot lead over Michael Thompson when play was suspended by darkness. Brooks

Koepka, coming off his victory in the Phoenix Open, had a 66 on the North. The best score on the tougher South Course belonged to Jhonnatan Vegas, who shot 67.

Dustin Johnson, playing for the first time since his six-month leave for "personal challenges," holed out for eagle on No. 4 on the South Course as his lone highlight. He had five bogeys and was 2 over with one hole remaining.

But this day was all about Woods, which used to be typical at Torrey Pines because he has won the tournament seven times. Thursday was different. Several players came out of the scoring area and said, "What happened to Tiger?"

"It's just my glutes are shutting off," Woods said, sound more like a physical therapist than a 14-time major champion. "Then they don't activate and then, hence, it goes into my lower back. So I tried to activate my glutes as best I could in between, but they never stayed activated."

It has become a troubling trend for Woods. In his last six tournaments since back surgery last March, he has missed the cut three times, withdrawn twice and finished 69th in the British Open, his lowest 72-hole finish in a major.

"It's just tough not seeing him have his best, whether it's with his game or with his health," said Rickie Fowler, who played in the group with him.

Woods was 2-over par through 11 holes and in a tie for 130th when he withdrew.

He will fall to his worst world ranking since before he won his first PGA Tour event as a 20-year-old in 1996, and he most likely will not qualify for a World Golf Championship for only the second time in his career. Woods is not expected to play again until the Honda Classic in three weeks. Doral is the following week. He did not indicate earlier in the week that he would add tournaments to his schedule ahead of the Masters, which is

April 9-12.

The front nine at Torrey Pines was more of the same kind of golf he showed in the Phoenix Open last week, when he missed the cut by 12 shots with a short game that was shocking. On his first hole, the par-4 10th, Woods short-sided himself right of the green and he bladed his chip some 35 feet beyond the hole for a bogey.

He was in trouble again on the next hole, facing the same chip, and this time struck it perfectly. He chipped in to save par.

From there, it was a mixed bag of poor tee shots (he hit only one fairway) and poor iron shots. His tee shot on the par-3 12th wound up on a front tee box at the 13th hole. He missed the green long and right from the 13th fairway.

Woods made a 6-foot birdie on the 16th and he made birdie on the par-5 first hole. The last hole he completed was the most telling.

Horschel and Woods were in the right rough, about 70 yards short of the green. Horschel hit to about 12 feet on the collar of the green behind the hole. Woods went about a yard from a tee box on the next hole, the shot sailing over the heads of the gallery and down a slope. From there, he duffed his flop shot halfway up the hill, hit the next one too hard about 15 feet past the cup and two-putted for double bogey.

Woods won five times in 2013 and was PGA Tour player of the year. He has never looked further from the elite in golf as he does now. Woods took four months off to let his back fully heal and to regain his strength. On Thursday, he headed home early from Torrey Pines to a future as mysterious as fog.

LPGA Tour: Brooke Pancake shot a 6-under 67 on Thursday to take a one-stroke lead in the suspended first round of the Bahamas LPGA Classic.

Play was suspended for the day at 2:47 p.m. and more than an inch of rain fell on Atlantis Resort's Ocean Club course. In

May 2013, the inaugural event was reduced to three 12-hole rounds because of flooding.

Playing in calmer morning conditions, Pancake birdied six of her first seven holes in her bogey-free round.

"I luckily got to get out early this morning," Pancake said. "I gave myself a lot of birdie looks and I really took advantage of those."

Second-ranked Inbee Park was tied for second with Natalie Gulbis and Brittany Lincicome. Gulbis is making her first start since having hip surgery in November.

"I hit it good," Gulbis said. "It's been like any other getting ready for the season. I didn't play last week. I wasn't quite ready last week. I'm just happy to be back."

Lincicome played in wind gusting around 20 mph.

"It was different out there," Lincicome said. "Every time I was with a left-to-right wind, I either snap-hooked it way left or blocked it way right. But when the wind was right to left, I crushed it and I did really well."

Lydia Ko, playing her first event since taking the No. 1 spot in the world ranking, was 1 under through eight holes. The 17-year-old New Zealander tied for second last week in the season-opening event in Florida, to break Tiger Woods' record as the youngest player to reach No. 1.

PGA European Tour: Defending champion Lee Westwood was joined by a fast-finishing Alejandro Canizares of Spain to top the Malaysian Open leaderboard by three shots after the second round on Friday.

Westwood followed his opening 6-under-par 66 with a 67, at one stage holding a three-shot lead at Kuala Lumpur Golf and Country Club.

But Canizares caught him with birdies on three of the last four holes in a bogey-free 65, the best score of the tournament. He has shot in the 60s in eight of his last 10 rounds.



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Hornets top slumping Wizards

The Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Gerald Henderson scored 27 points and Charlotte defeated Washington for the second time this week, 94-87.

Henderson was 10-for-15 from the field as the Hornets beat the Wizards for the fifth straight time. Charlotte won at Washington 92-88 on Monday night.

The Wizards have dropped five in a row overall.

Brian Roberts had 12 points and provided a huge spark late in the third quarter after Charlotte fell behind by 11. Lance Stephenson, Michael Kidd-Gilchrist and Jason Maxiell added 11 points apiece for the Hornets (22-27).

Paul Pierce scored 19 for the Wizards. John Wall had 15 points and 13 assists.

Charlotte picked up its defense in the fourth quarter, holding the Wizards to 5-for-19 shooting.

Wizards guard Bradley Beal left in the first half with an injury to his right big toe and did not return.

Mavericks 101, Kings 78: Monta Ellis had 21 points and six assists to lead visiting Dallas, minus Dirk Nowitzki and Rajon Rondo, over struggling Sacramento.

The Mavericks broke open a tie game in the second quarter when they made nine straight shots, including four three-pointers, in a 3½-minute span as they outscored the Kings 22-6. Dallas had a 37-20 edge in the second to take a 60-43 halftime lead.

Tyson Chandler had 16 points and 16 rebounds for the Mavericks. Devin Harris and J.J. Barea each scored 15 points, and Richard Jefferson added 14.

Dallas coach Rick Carlisle chose to rest Nowitzki on the second night of a back-to-back. Rondo (broken orbital bone) missed his third straight game.

DeMarcus Cousins had 23 points and 11 rebounds for the Kings, who have lost two straight and 10 of 11. Sacramento missed 18 of 21 attempts from three-point territory and shot 36.7 percent overall.

Trail Blazers 108, Suns 87: LaMarcus Aldridge had 19 points and 13 rebounds for his team-record 220th double-double in host Portland's victory over Phoenix.

Nicolas Batum scored 20 points and Robin Lopez, playing his second game after missing 23 with a broken right hand, had 11 points and 12 rebounds for the Blazers, who won their second straight

after a three-game skid.

Markieff Morris had 18 points for the Suns, who dropped their third in a row. Phoenix climbed back into the game in the third period after trailing by 19 in the first half, but ultimately the Blazers thwarted the rally with a dominant fourth quarter.

Cavaliers 105, Clippers 94: LeBron James scored 23 points, Kevin Love had 24 and host Cleveland pushed its winning streak to 12 games Thursday night with an easy win over Los Angeles.

The Cavs built a 32-point lead in the third quarter, allowing James and Love to sit out the fourth and rest. With their longest winning streak since a franchise-best 13-gamer in 2010, the Cavs moved into first place in the Central Division. Cleveland was seven games behind Chicago when the streak began with a victory over the Lakers on Jan. 15.

The Clippers were whistled for five technical fouls, including four in a contentious third quarter when they lost their California cool and forward Matt Barnes was ejected.

Blake Griffin scored 16 points for Los Angeles, whose subs made the score respectable in the fourth.

No. 2 Zags rally to 16th straight win

The Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — As soon as Gonzaga stopped giving the ball away, the Bulldogs shot their way to another victory.

Byron Wesley scored 17 points and keyed a crucial second-half run that helped No. 2 Gonzaga rally for its 16th straight win with a 77-63 victory over Santa Clara on Thursday night.

Kyle Wiltjer led the way with 22 points and Gary Bell Jr. added 16 for the Bulldogs (23-1, 11-0 West Coast Conference), who shot a season-high 69 percent from the field to overcome a sloppy first half and win the game.

"We had 10 turnovers in the first half," Wesley said. "That's unlike us. We knew once we started taking care of the ball and make them take tough shots, we'd be fine."

Jared Brownridge scored 25 points to lead the Broncos (11-13, 5-7), who have lost 26 straight games against ranked teams and 10 straight to the Bulldogs.

"We have to understand that if we play that hard all the time, we'll win some games," coach Kerry Keating said.

Gonzaga fell behind by six early in the second half on a three-pointer by Brandon Clark despite shooting better than 70 percent from the field.

The Bulldogs then tightened up on defense while still converting at a torrid pace offensively and tied the game at 47 when Kevin Pangos hit a three-pointer for his first points of the game with 14:37 left.

Wesley then scored the next five points to give Gonzaga the lead for good. The Bulldogs went on a 16-3 run overall as the Broncos missed eight of nine shots to end their upset bid.

"In the first half, they were hitting a lot of shots," Wiltjer said. "What really made the difference was our defensive efficiency. We got stops in the second half. That's what really changed the momentum."

CINCINNATI 62, NO. 23 SMU 54: Once Cincinnati settled down and got away from an early turnover-per-minute pace, everything turned out OK against No. 23 SMU.

So far, the Bearcats are the only American Athletic Conference team to beat coach Larry Brown's squad. And they have done it twice.

Jermaine Sanders scored 15 points, including one of two huge three-pointers for Cincinnati as it started to pull away late in a 62-54 win Thursday night over a Mustangs team playing its first game since getting back into the Top 25.

"We shot ourselves in the foot by throwing the ball away so much. Once we got past that, then we were fine," associate head coach Larry Davis said. "It could have been a disaster. We could have been down 20 the way we were turning the ball over."

Cincinnati (16-6, 7-3 American Athletic) didn't miss a shot in the first 10 minutes of the game, but took only three shots while committing 10 turnovers in that span.

After being plagued by all those miscues and down only 25-20 at halftime, the Bearcats pulled out the game that featured nine lead changes and eight ties after that. They led for good after Octavius Ellis made two free throws to make it 45-44 with 7½ minutes left, then Sanders and Shaq Thomas hit big threes late.

"Players made plays in the second half," Davis said. "I can't say enough about the kids' character and how they just kept fighting when they were turning it over, and it wasn't going right for them."

Blues stretch point streak to 13 games with victory over Sabres

The Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — David Backes and the St. Louis Blues have goalie Jake Allen to thank for extending their point streak to a franchise-best 13 straight games.

Though the Blues were far from perfect, Allen was unbeatable in stopping 23 shots in a 3-0 win over the Buffalo Sabres on Thursday night.

"We're not going to put a bow on it and send it to anybody. But we're going to take the two points," Backes said. "We had phenomenal goaltending once again that kept us in the game long enough for where we were able to capitalize on a few chances."

Dmitrij Jaskin scored on a wraparound late in the second period, and Vladimir Tarasenko tapped in Backes' pass in the third period for St. Louis, which improved its run to 12-0-1. Jaden Schwartz added an empty-netter as the Blues won their seventh straight.

Allen did the grunt work in preserving the shutout, his third this season and fourth of his career.

First, he got his left pad out to stop former Blues teammate Chris Stewart on a breakaway with 7:32 left in the second period. Stewart was foiled again on a one-timer 3:45 into the third period. Some three minutes later, Allen stopped Brian Flynn on two chances during a short-handed breakaway.

"I was just trying to wait him out as long as I could and got a stick on it," Allen said of Flynn's chances. "We've had our moments where we've not been at our best. But that's where other guys step up and fill a role."

Allen carried the load against the Sabres, as St. Louis (34-13-4) won its seventh straight and moved into a tie with Nashville atop the Central Division standings.

St. Louis' 13-game point streak is the NHL's longest since the Boston Bruins

went 15-0-1 last March, according to STATS.

With the NHL's worst record, the Sabres (15-34-3) understood the missed opportunities were what cost them against one of the NHL's elite.

"We've got to dig deep to get those," forward Tyler Ennis said. "A lot of shoulda, coulda, woulda, but it wasn't enough."

The Sabres were shut out for the ninth time this season — one short of matching a franchise high. And they failed to build off the momentum of a 3-2 win at Montreal on Tuesday, when Buffalo snapped a team-worst 14-game skid.

"We have to play for a full 60 (minutes) if we want to have success," added defenseman Tyler Myers. "We shot ourselves in the foot tonight."

Islanders 3, Flyers 2 (SO): Cal Clutterbuck scored the deciding goal in the seventh round of the shootout. Clutterbuck also scored in regulation for visiting New York, as did Mikhail Grabovski.

After Clutterbuck's wrist got past Mason, Sean Couturier was denied by Jaroslav Halak on the tying attempt and Philadelphia's season-high four-game winning streak was over.

Panthers 3, Kings 2: Brandon Pirri scored with 3:05 remaining to lift host Florida over struggling Los Angeles.

Nick Bjugstad and Aleksander Barkov also scored for the Panthers, and Roberto Luongo stopped 29 shots.

Capitals 3, Senators 2: Alex Ovechkin scored the winning goal, Evgeny Kuznetsov also scored for visiting Washington and Braden Holtby picked up his 25th win of the season by stopping 25 shots.

Kyle Turris scored the lone Ottawa goal, and Robin Lehner made 27 saves.

Red Wings 3, Avalanche

0: Petr Mrazek had 28 saves for his first shutout of the season and visiting Detroit scored twice into empty nets.

Justin Abdelkader put the Red Wings on the scoreboard in the second period, and Darren Helm and Luke Glendening added empty-net goals in the last three minutes.

Ducks 5, Predators 2: Jakob Silfverberg scored two goals, and visiting Anaheim took the top of the NHL standings for itself.

Anaheim and Nashville came in tied atop both the NHL and the Western Conference with 72 points, though the Predators have a game in hand.

Lightning 5, Stars 3: Tyler Johnson scored two third-period goals, lifting visiting Tampa Bay.

Johnson tipped Brian Boyle's shot from the top of the left faceoff circle down between goalie Kari Lehtonen's legs to break a 3-3 tie with 3:37 remaining. He'd put Tampa Bay ahead 3-2 with a power-play goal at 12:27.

Hurricanes 2, Coyotes 1

(SO): Eric Lindholm scored the only goal of the shootout to lift visiting Carolina.

Carolina's Victor Rask and Arizona's David Moss scored early, then the teams went scoreless through the rest of regulation and overtime.

Sharks 5, Canucks 1: Antti Niemi made 33 saves as visiting San Jose defeated listless Vancouver.

Matt Irwin, Melker Karlsson, Joe Pavelski, Andrew Desjardins and Chris Tierney, with his first NHL goal, scored for San Jose. Brent Burns and Logan Couture each added two assists. Tierney also tacked on an assist.