

STARS AND STRIPES®

Saturday, February 21, 2015

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Study finds lies common in military

The Washington Post

A new study by Army War College professors found that not only is lying common in the military, the armed forces, themselves, may be inadvertently encouraging it.

The study, released Tuesday, was conducted by retired Army officers and current War College professors Leonard Wong and Stephen J. Gerras. They found that untruthfulness is “surprisingly common in the U.S. military even though members of the profession are loath to admit it.”

The paper’s release follows a series of high-profile incidents involving bad behavior across the services.

The new study found that many Army officers have become “ethically numb” in the face of overwhelming demands and the need to put their reputations on the line to verify all required standards and training have been met.

The issue affects the whole military, but the professors focused their effort on the Army because they are the most familiar with it, they wrote. They interviewed officers at several East Coast bases, many of whom bristled initially at the notion they colored the truth.

“When pressed for specifics on how they managed, officers tended to dodge the issue with statements such as, ‘You gotta make priorities, we met the intent, or we got creative,’ ” the report said. “Eventually words and phrases such as ‘hand waving, fudging, massaging, or checking the box’ would surface to sugarcoat the hard reality that, in order to satisfy compliance with the surfeit of directed requirements from above, officers resort to evasion and deception.”

“In other words, in the routine performance of their duties as leaders and commanders, U.S. Army officers lie,” the paper concludes.

Similar issues occur when reporting the maintenance and accountability of equipment, the completion of evaluation reports for lower-ranking officers, and even combat situations, the professors found. Junior leaders were required to develop a PowerPoint narrative of events in a unit while deployed, and avoided doing so, one senior officer said.

“Every contact with the enemy required a storyboard,” the senior officer said, according to the paper. “People did not report enemy contact because they knew the storyboard was useless and they didn’t want to go through the hassle.”

The study attributes the lies to “ethical fading,” in which outside factors subtly alter an ethical dilemma. The professors recommend reinforcing restraint and acknowledging ethical shortfalls in the military.

Carter weighs Afghan course

By JON HARPER

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Obama administration may make significant changes to its plans for pulling American troops out of Afghanistan, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter said Saturday.

In remarks during a joint news conference with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani at the presidential palace in Kabul, Carter said that President Barack Obama is considering “a number of options” to enhance U.S. support to the Afghan National Security Forces.

Carter arrived in Afghanistan on Saturday.

The new Pentagon chief, who was sworn in Tuesday, is slated to meet with Afghan political leaders and American military commanders to discuss the way ahead.

U.S. troops in Afghanistan are training, advising and assisting the ANSF and carrying out joint counterterrorism operations. But current plans call for the 10,000 troop U.S. force level to be roughly halved by the end of this year. By the end of 2016, the American military footprint in the country would be reduced to an embassy presence.

Carter said one option under consideration is changing the time line for the troop drawdown. Another would be altering the timing and sequencing of base closures.

The potential moves would be intended “to ensure we have the right array of coalition capabilities to support our Afghan partners” and “the right force protection footprint for our remaining personnel,” he said.

Army Gen. John Campbell, the commander of U.S. and international forces in Afghanistan, has told lawmakers and Pentagon officials that he wants to keep more troops at more bases for a longer period of time to support the ANSF in their ongoing fight against the Taliban.

Ghani said he plans to discuss troop levels and other security issues when he meets with Obama next month in Washington.

In their meeting Saturday, Carter and Ghani talked about the future of American counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan.

“I think it’s safe to say ... counterterrorism will be a continuing preoccupation and commitment of ours here ... and we are discussing and rethinking the details of the counterterrorism mission and how

the environment has changed here with respect to terrorism since we first laid out our plans,” Carter said.

The Pentagon chief did not specify what changes might be made to the counterterrorism mission. But a senior U.S. defense official, speaking condition of anonymity, told reporters that the counterterrorism mission “is very much going to be a topic of discussion when Ghani comes to D.C., [including] whether or not there needs to be adjustments to the footprint and to the types of CT missions that our guys are conducting.”

The official said it’s possible the size of the U.S. counterterrorism element in Afghanistan might “not get smaller or simply not get smaller as fast” as planned.

One of the main reasons that Obama is willing to reconsider the Afghanistan plans that he laid out last May was the election of Ghani and the exit of former Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Ghani’s predecessor often criticized the U.S. and its international partners and was wary of the foreign troop presence in his country. He also tried to limit coalition military activities and placed a ban on nighttime raids.

Ghani has embraced the military relationship with the United States. Shortly after taking office in September he ended the ban on night raids and signed a bilateral security agreement with the U.S. He also appointed his political rival, Abdullah Abdullah, to a high-level position in his government.

While in Afghanistan, the new defense secretary will meet with American military officials, including Campbell and Gen. Lloyd Austin, the head of U.S. Central Command. He will also meet with Afghan political leaders.

Carter will also meet with U.S. troops in the field.

Although the U.S. combat mission in Afghanistan officially ended in December, American forces continue to participate directly in the fight.

The rout of the Iraqi army by members of the Islamic State group after the U.S. withdrew its troops from Iraq has raised concerns in Washington that something similar could happen in Afghanistan if the drawdown proceeds too quickly.

harper.jon@stripes.com
Twitter: @JHarperStripes

Families hope for hostage policy changes

The Washington Post

After Peter Theo Curtis, an American journalist, was kidnapped in Syria and later turned over to an al-Qaida's affiliate in the country, his family traveled to Washington. During a meeting with officials from the State Department, they asked what would happen if they paid off the kidnappers.

The answer was that they could be prosecuted under American law for providing a ransom to a terrorist group.

Nancy Curtis, Theo's mother, later told the FBI negotiator

working closely with her family what had happened. "They'd have a hard time prosecuting if I was in the room with you," she recalled him saying.

The episode underlined the sometimes bewildering situation faced by families of Americans held hostage overseas. Now, as the White House nears the midpoint of a review of its hostage policies, families who have endured the crises are hopeful the government will become more open in its dealings with them and settle on one federal agency to be in charge of the process to eliminate inter-

agency confusion.

Launched in December, the review is the culmination of months of complaints from the families of hostages kidnapped and killed in Syria by the Islamic State.

In a Dec. 17 letter sent to the families, Lisa Monaco, President Barack Obama's top counterterrorism adviser, made the administration's intent clear. "The scope of this review will not include a reconsidering of our no-concessions policy," Monaco wrote.

So far, 18 of 82 families invited to participate have been

interviewed. Officials are interviewing others with relevant expertise, including Reporters Without Borders and a well-respected former FBI hostage negotiator. The review is expected to be completed this spring.

The FBI, State Department, Pentagon and U.S. intelligence community are all taking part in the review under the supervision of the National Counterterrorism Center. The effort is being led by Army Lt. Gen. Bennet Sacolick, director of strategic operational planning at NCTC.

Wrong tax data sent to health care site users

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a new setback for the health care law and the people it's supposed to help, the government said Friday it made a tax-reporting error that's fouling up the filings of nearly a million Americans.

Officials said the government sent the wrong tax information to about 800,000 HealthCare.gov customers, and they're asking those affected to delay filing their 2014 returns. The issue involves a new government form called a 1095-A, which is like a W-2 form for health care for those who got subsidized private coverage under Obama's law.

Separately, California announced earlier that it had sent out inaccurate tax forms affecting about 100,000 households. The state is not part of the federal market but runs its own insurance exchange.

The administration also announced a special sign-up extension for uninsured people who would face the health care law's tax penalties for the first time this year.

Mosul operation worries Iraqis

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With the military operation to retake Iraq's second largest city from Islamic State militants just a few months away, questions persist about whether the struggling Iraqi military will be ready for the fight.

Iraqi officials continue to insist they haven't gotten the advanced weapons they need for the operation in the northern city of Mosul, and some question whether they will be ready for a spring offensive. But the Pentagon insists the U.S. has

sent tens of thousands of weapons and ammunition and more is in the pipeline.

Hakim al-Zamili, the head of the security and defense committee in the Iraqi parliament, told The Associated Press on Friday that "any operation would be fruitless" unless the brigades are properly prepared and have the weapons they need.

A U.S. Central Command official provided some details of the battle plan Thursday, saying the coordinated military mission to retake Mosul will likely begin in April or May and will involve

up to 25,000 Iraqi troops. They have cautioned, however, that if the Iraqis aren't ready, the timing could be delayed.

The core of the fighting force will be five of Iraq's most accomplished brigades, who will go through additional U.S. training before the operation.

Al-Zamili said that while several of Iraq's units have gone through training recently, "these well-trained brigades cannot get involved in battles without being equipped with advanced and effective weapons that would enable them to penetrate enemy lines."

Yemen's ex-president Hadi flees capital

The Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen — Yemen's former president left the capital after Shiite rebels who surrounded his house let him go under international and local pressure, aides close to him said Saturday.

The aides said former President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi left Sanaa and later arrived in Aden. They say Hadi later plans to leave the country to receive

medical treatment.

Hadi has been under house arrest for several weeks following a coup by Shiite Houthi rebels. The rebels earlier captured the capital, Sanaa, in September.

The aides say the rebels let Hadi go after pressure from the United Nations, the U.S., Russia and local political parties.

The aides spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak to journalists.

Yemen has been locked in a political crisis since the Houthi rebels took over the capital and eventually forced the resignation of the elected, Western-backed president and dissolved the parliament while keeping Hadi under house arrest.

The political crisis cast also doubts on the United States' ability to continue its counterterrorism operations, especially with loss of Hadi, a strong U.S. ally.

NASCAR suspends Busch

The Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — NASCAR suspended Kurt Busch indefinitely on Friday after a judge said the former champion almost surely choked and beat an ex-girlfriend last fall and there was a “substantial likelihood” of more domestic violence from him in the future.

In a stunning move just two days before the season-opening Daytona 500, NASCAR said Busch would not be allowed to participate in any series activities until further notice given the “serious nature of the findings and conclusions” made by a Delaware judge involving the driver known as “The Outlaw.”

Busch becomes the first driver suspended by NASCAR for domestic violence.

Chevrolet immediately suspended its relationship with Busch.

In a 25-page opinion explaining why he issued the no-contact order this

week, Family Court Commissioner David Jones concluded that it was more likely than not that Busch abused Patricia Driscoll by “manually strangling” her and smashing her head into a wall inside his motorhome at Dover International Speedway last September.

The 36-year-old Busch has denied the alleged assault, which is the subject of a separate criminal investigation, but the judge said Driscoll’s version of the incident was more credible than Busch’s.

Driscoll said she was never motivated to have Busch punished by NASCAR.

“I reported a crime, just like anybody else who has been abused should do, because no one is above the law,” Driscoll said. “I’m very encouraged that NASCAR is taking steps to recognize that domestic violence is a serious issue, and I hope that we see them develop a very clear policy on it.”

It is Busch’s third career suspension. He was suspended in 2012 by NASCAR for

threatening a reporter, and for the final two races of the 2005 season by Roush-Fenway Racing after he was pulled over by police in Arizona.

The judge concluded that Busch did not appear to be a prototypical batterer who uses violence to subjugate or control, but that the incident instead was most likely a “situational” event in which Busch was unable to cope and to control his tendency to act out violently in response to stress and frustration, causing him to “snap.”

At the same time, however, Jones said he believes there’s real possibility that Busch will lash out again. Jones added that because Busch has a propensity to lose control in response to disappointing or frustrating situations involving racing and that “there is a substantial likelihood of acts of domestic violence by respondent against future intimate partners.”

Reddick gets Truck Series win

The Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Tyler Reddick checked his phone shortly after leaving victory lane and had 140 new text messages.

“That’s unreal,” he said. Team owner Brad Keselowski quickly put it in perspective.

“You get 140 text messages for your first win, and after your 40th win, you get a text from your mom,” Keselowski joked.

Either way, this was a victory Reddick may never forget.

With a little help from his teammate, Reddick won the Truck Series season opener Friday night at Daytona International Speedway.

Keselowski wanted a 1-2 finish, and for the final 20 or so laps, it looked as if he would get it. He settled for the next best thing.

Reddick held the lead down the stretch in the 100-lap race and had Austin Theriault tucked in behind him on a final restart with six laps left. Theriault could have challenged for the lead, but chose to be a team player and block for Reddick.

“I hope I can do the same for him down the road,” Reddick said. “It feels amazing. We got here in victory lane at Daytona. It’s unbelievable.”

Theriault spent the final few hundred yards blocking, preventing anyone from mounting a charge. Erik Jones pulled to the outside and beat Theriault to the finish line. Jones was second, followed by Scott Lagasse Jr., Theriault and Ray Black Jr.

“The 29 did a good job,” Lagasse said of Theriault. “He took care of his teammate and that’s what you’ve got to do in this deal. I wish I had my teammates there, too.”

Added Jones: “It’s tough. I didn’t really think we had anybody in front. I wish we could have won. Second’s no fun.”

It was the first Truck Series victory for Ford at Daytona since 2006, ending an eight-year winning streak for Toyota.

Fourteen trucks finished on the lead lap after a few wild crashes, including one that included more than a dozen trucks. Ben Kennedy got into the wall in the third turn, and drivers seemingly checked up behind him and created an accordion crash.

The top five trucks, including Reddick, avoided the melee.

It also left fewer challengers over the final laps. Several drivers tried to make runs toward the front and get by Reddick, but Ty Dillon and Daniel Suarez both went backward instead. Jones and Lagasse tried coming out of the final turn, but needed more room to get it done.

“There wasn’t a lot going on behind me so I was pretty rest assured my teammate was behind me,” Reddick said. “He’s an outstanding guy. He was doing just about everything to keep anyone from getting to me. He sure did.”

And it gave Keselowski his first win at Daytona as a team owner.

“It’s a huge day for our team and a statement of being able to win the opening race,” Keselowski said.

Partnership between Earnhardt, crew chief Ives off to rousing start

The Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Greg Ives plopped down in his chair, let out a sigh of a relief and asked, “Am I in the Chase now?”

Not quite.

But the newest Hendrick Motorsports crew chief is off to a rousing start in his first season with NASCAR’s most popular driver and defending Daytona 500 champion Dale Earnhardt Jr.

With Ives tuning the No. 88 Chevrolet and calling the shots, Earnhardt won the first of two qualifying races at Daytona International Speedway on Thursday and will start third in the Daytona 500 on Sunday.

It’s still way too early to assume the move will land Earnhardt in the Chase for the Sprint Cup championship for a fifth consecutive year or improve his chances of securing his first Cup championship. But getting off to a strong start can be pivotal for any relationship, and the driver-crew chief connection is arguably the most vital in auto racing.

“The relationship is gelling as quick as I knew it would,” said Ives, who cracked a few jokes after his first victory with Earnhardt on Thursday night. “When you bring great attitude, have some fun at the racetrack, have good finishes like, you’re going to gel pretty quickly.”

Of course, that was after two successful races at Daytona — a place where Earnhardt is always among the favorites.

The real challenge will come when they’re faced with adversity.

“I don’t think we’re even close to where we need to be,” Ives said. “I feel like

there’s areas I’m going to have to improve big time. There’s areas that Dale and I are slowly growing and continuing to make better. It’s just going to keep on flourishing from here.”

Earnhardt found consistent success alongside former crew chief Steve Letarte, who left the team at the end of last season to spend more time with his family. Letarte also took a job as a NASCAR analyst for NBC Sports.

Letarte revitalized Earnhardt’s career after two mediocre seasons at powerhouse Hendrick.

“I think change is a necessity in the sport,” Letarte said. “Greg is a very bright young mind. When they’re fast, they’re going to be crazy fast. I’ll be interested to see how they rebound through the lows. There are lows. There are always lows. ... I put a lot of that on Dale. Dale puts a lot of that on himself. He’s going to have to be the guy that keeps this team motivated and sharp. I don’t question at all that Greg Ives is going to be in there sunup to sundown trying to make the cars faster. He’s making the cars faster and Dale is going to have to try to embrace the rest of the team.”

Ives is widely regarded as one of the most detail-oriented guys at Hendrick.

He cut his teeth while working under Jimmie Johnson’s longtime crew chief, Chad Knaus — arguably the most cunning and calculated guy in the NASCAR garage. Ives served as race engineer for Johnson’s run of five consecutive championships. And he guided Chase Elliott to the 2014 Xfinity Series championship at JR Motorsports, which is co-owned by Earnhardt.

While still celebrating in victory lane

Thursday night, Ives turned to Earnhardt and started giving him a rundown of what they planned to do in practice Friday and Saturday.

“I was a little nervous,” Ives said.

Earnhardt laughed it off, probably because he’s already grown accustomed to Ives’ business-like approach.

“He’s got a tough mental attitude,” said Earnhardt, who will try to become the first driver since Sterling Marlin in 1995 to win consecutive Daytona 500s. “I think that he focuses real hard on his work, and I don’t think he really will be too affected by anything on the outside. It will be interesting. I just look forward to getting in there and seeing how we communicate.”

The team didn’t have the luxury of offseason testing, so they’re “kind of starting from scratch here at Daytona,” Earnhardt said.

“We’re trying to build that communication and trust and starting to understand how we can talk and communicate and work together,” he added. “That’s going to be real important for us. I mean, I don’t even know what it’s like to sit in a hauler and be in that environment during the race weekend with him. A lot of new things to sort of work ourselves through, and I’m excited, nervous — not apprehensive — but very anxious and excited to go ahead and start working.”

No one doubts the new combination will work and eventually land that Chase spot.

“He was the obvious choice,” Letarte said. “But there’s no other name I could dream up or put on front of the wall that I could put in front of Greg’s.”



Ship’s Store official new car program

Exclusive Navy at-sea offers:

www.navyauto.com or nasinfo@navyauto.com

Raptors cruise past Hawks

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — The Toronto Raptors proved they're a team to watch in the Eastern Conference.

They also showed once again they can beat the Atlanta Hawks — and in convincing fashion.

The matchup of the Eastern Conference's top teams turned into rout as Toronto opened the second half of the season with a surprisingly lopsided 105-80 win over the Hawks on Friday night.

Lou Williams had 26 points while making seven of 10 three-pointers and DeMar DeRozan had 21 points for Toronto. The Raptors outscored the Hawks 28-13 in the third quarter to turn a close game into a 23-point lead.

Atlanta still has a 5½-game lead over Toronto in the Eastern Conference standings, but the Raptors won the season series 3-1. No other team has two wins over the Hawks.

Williams said the Raptors were motivated by Atlanta's similarly lopsided 110-89 win at Toronto on Jan. 16.

"We were embarrassed on our home court so we wanted to come out and play with that on our mind," Williams said.

The Raptors won with defense. Williams had four of Toronto's 15 steals — matching the team's season high. The Raptors blocked nine shots.

"We were scrambling," said DeRozan, who had three steals. "We tried not to let them get anything easy. We didn't want to let them get going, get a rhythm. As long as we do that, we can live with the outcome."

Hawks coach Mike Budenholzer said the Raptors "really took it to us."

Atlanta's Al Horford said the Hawks wouldn't be worried about a matchup with Toronto if the teams meet in the playoffs.

"No. Give them credit, they're a great

team," Horford said. "But we're a confident group."

The Hawks have lost four of seven following a team-record 19-game winning streak.

The Hawks and Raptors set team records for wins before the All-Star break, and neither made moves before Thursday's trade deadline. Toronto backed up that show of confidence in the final regular-season meeting of the clubs.

The Raptors stretched their 49-45 half-time lead with a dominant third quarter. Atlanta made only three of 19 shots. Kyle Korver had a dismal period, missing all five of his shots while committing two turnovers.

Budenholzer turned the game over to backups such as Mike Muscala, John Jenkins and Shelvin Mack for much of the final period.

Korver, Paul Millsap and Jeff Teague had only 11 points each to lead Atlanta. The Hawks set a season low by making only 33 percent of their shots — 29 of 88. Horford had seven points and 12 rebounds.

"We just didn't play well at all," Horford said, adding their play was "just sloppy" in the third period. "We were throwing the ball all over the place."

Heat 111, Knicks 87: With Chris Bosh hospitalized in South Florida for tests and Goran Dragic not yet available, eight of nine players scored in double figures in visiting Miami's victory over New York.

Kings 109, Celtics 101: DeMarcus Cousins had 31 points and 15 rebounds, Rudy Gay scored 28 points and host Sacramento beat Boston to make new coach George Karl a winner in his return to the NBA.

Bucks 89, Nuggets 81: Khris Middleton scored 15 points, John Henson added 14 and host Milwaukee beat Denver in its first game since tweaking its roster

at the NBA trade deadline.

Pistons 100, Bulls 91: Andre Drummond had 18 points and 20 rebounds to lead short-handed Detroit past visiting Chicago.

Pacers 106, 76ers 95: Rodney Stuckey scored a season-high 30 points off the bench, C.J. Miles added 17 and visiting Indiana beat Philadelphia for its fifth victory in six games.

Mavericks 111, Rockets 100: Devin Harris scored 17 points, Al-Farouq Aminu set season highs with 17 points and 12 rebounds, and balanced Dallas held on to beat visiting Houston.

Timberwolves 111, Suns 109: Kevin Martin scored 28 points and Andrew Wiggins added 20 to lead host Minnesota past Phoenix.

Magic 95, Pelicans 84: Victor Oladipo scored 22 points, and Nik Vucevic had 18 points and 13 rebounds in host Orlando's victory over New Orleans.

Jazz 92, Trail Blazers 76: Gordon Hayward scored 20 points, and Trey Burke had 19 points off the bench to help host Utah beat Portland.

Nets 114, Lakers 105: Joe Johnson scored 23 points and Brook Lopez added 22 off the bench, leading visiting Brooklyn to a victory over skidding Los Angeles.

Cavaliers 127, Wizards 89: LeBron James set aside first-half foul trouble to finish with 28 points in only 25 minutes and Kyrie Irving scored 25 points, helping surging Cleveland overwhelm host Washington.

Warriors 110, Spurs 99: Stephen Curry had 25 points and 11 assists, Klay Thompson scored 20 and host Golden State returned from the All-Star break to beat San Antonio.

Pacquiao, Mayweather set to fight

The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — The Fight is finally on.

Floyd Mayweather Jr. will meet Manny Pacquiao on May 2 in a welterweight showdown that will be boxing's richest fight ever. Mayweather himself announced the bout Friday after months of negotiations, posting a picture of the signed contract online.

"I promised the fans we would get this done and we did," Mayweather said.

The long anticipated bout at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas will almost surely break every financial record, and make both boxers richer than ever. Mayweather could earn \$120 million or more, while Pacquiao's split of the purse will likely be around \$80 million.

The fight, which matches boxing's two biggest attractions of recent years, has been in the making for five years. It finally came together in recent months with both fighters putting aside past differences over various issues — including drug testing and television rights — to reach agreement.

Pacquiao was sleeping in the Philippines when the fight was announced, but his camp issued a statement saying the fans deserve the long awaited fight.

"It is an honor to be part of this historic event," Pacquiao said. "I dedicate this fight to all the fans who willed this fight to happen and, as always, to bring glory to the Philippines and my fellow Filipinos around the world."

While the fight rivals the 2002 heavyweight title bout between Lennox Lewis and Mike Tyson for interest, it comes more than five years after the first real effort to put the fighters together in their prime. Most boxing observers believe both have lost some of their skills, though Mayweather remains a master defensive fighter and Pacquiao showed in his last fight against Chris Algieri that he still has tremendous quickness in his hands.

Still, Pacquiao is 36 and has been through many wars in the ring. And while Mayweather has been largely untouched in his career, he turns 38 on Tuesday.

"I am the best ever, TBE, and this fight will be another opportunity to showcase my skills and do what I do best, which is win," Mayweather said in his announcement. "Manny is going to try to do what 47 before him failed to do, but he won't be successful. He will be No. 48."

Odds makers believe Mayweather will do just that, making him a 2½-1 favorite in the scheduled 12-round bout. The fight is expected to do record business in Nevada's legal sports books, with tens of millions wagered on the outcome.

It will also do record business at the box office — with the MGM expected to be scaled far higher than the \$20 million live gate for Mayweather's 2013 fight with Canelo Alvarez. The pay-per-view revenue also is expected to be a record, though television executives said Friday they had yet to actually fix a price for people to buy the fight at home.

The fight will be televised as a joint venture between competing networks Showtime and HBO, which will share announcers with Jim Lampley and Al Bernstein reportedly handling the task at ringside.

Pacquiao began pushing hard for the fight after beating Algieri in November in Macau, and negotiations picked up last month when the two fighters met by chance at a Miami Heat basketball game and later talked with each other in Pacquiao's hotel room about making it happen.

Skapski, Rangers down Sabres

The Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — It took 14 seconds into his first NHL game for Mackenzie Skapski to give up his first career goal. The New York Rangers' 20-year-old goalie proved to be perfect over the rest of his debut.

After being beaten by Matt Moulson on the first shot, Skapski stopped the final 24 he faced in a 3-1 win over the Buffalo Sabres on Friday night. Rick Nash had a goal and assist, while Carl Hagelin and Mats Zuccarello also scored for New York.

"Super pumped," Skapski said, noting the victory came on his father's birthday. "I couldn't have scripted it better."

Even the opening minute? "I think I rebounded well from that," Skapski said. "It's tough to really sit back right now and acknowledge I got my first NHL win, so hopefully there's many more."

Coach Alain Vigneault was pleased how Skapski and the Rangers responded to the opening goal, when Moulson was left untouched in front to redirect Torrey Mitchell's centering pass.

"It wasn't the way we wanted to start, but sometimes stuff happens on the ice," Vigneault said. "But after that, I thought we played a pretty solid game."

The Rangers improved to 8-1-2 in their past 11, defeated Buffalo for the sixth straight time, and extended their road

winning streak to a season-best five straight.

Buffalo, coming off a 3-2 shootout win at Philadelphia on Thursday, dropped to 1-4-1 in its past six.

Blues 5, Bruins 1: Vladimir Tarasenko became the franchise's youngest player to score 30 goals in 23 years, getting the last two scores in host St. Louis' victory over Boston.

Tarasenko's 30th of the season capped the four-goal second and he got his 31st midway through the third. At 23 years, 65 days, he's the team's youngest 30-goal scorer since Brendan Shanahan got his 30th at 23 years, 63 days in 1991-92.

Avalanche 4, Blackhawks 1: Tyson Barrie had two goals and an assist, Gabriel Landeskog scored for the fifth straight game, and visiting Colorado beat Chicago.

Colorado used a pair of costly interference penalties on Chicago to win for just the third time in its last eight games. Brad Stuart added his second goal of the season when goaltender Corey Crawford badly misplayed his dump in from center ice.

Wild 4, Oilers 0: Devan Dubnyk stopped all 15 shots he faced for his sixth shutout of the season, leading visiting Minnesota past Edmonton.

The former Oilers goalie now has five shutouts in 16 games for Minnesota since

being acquired in a trade with Arizona on Jan. 14. He improved to 5-0 this season against Edmonton.

Ducks 6, Flames 3: Ryan Getzlaf scored a fluke tiebreaking goal midway through the third period to key visiting Anaheim's five-goal outburst in the final 14 minutes.

Getzlaf's slap shot from the blue line went over the net and caromed back off the end boards, deflecting in off the back leg of Calgary goalie Jonas Hiller at 8:53 of the third to put Anaheim up 3-2. Francois Beauchemin had tied the score less than 3 minutes earlier.

Devils 4, Canucks 2: Mike Cammalleri scored twice in host New Jersey's victory over Vancouver.

Jordin Tootoo and Patrik Elias also scored, defenseman Adam Larsson had three assists and Cory Schneider had 21 saves against his former teammates to give New Jersey points in 12 of its last 14 games (9-2-3) at the Prudential Center.

Hurricanes 2, Maple Leafs 1: Eric Staal had a goal and an assist and host Carolina beat Toronto to sweep the three-game season series.

Jordan Staal had the other goal for the Hurricanes. Carolina goalie Cam Ward, playing in his 499th NHL game — all for the Hurricanes — had 23 saves. Brandon Kozun had his first NHL goal for the Maple Leafs.