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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Carter: 'There is a lot more work to do'

Decision on troops in Afghanistan looms as new DOD chief visits Kandahar

BY JON HARPER

Stars and Stripes

KANDAHAR AIR FIELD, Afghanistan — Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter met with military commanders at Kandahar Air Field in Afghanistan on Sunday as the Obama administration weighs whether to keep troops there.

The base has been a major hub for the U.S. military during the war in Afghanistan. Its strategic location in Kandahar province, the heartland of the Taliban, made it an ideal place from which to launch operations against Islamic extremists.

The air field is now a key training site where the U.S. and NATO are advising the Afghan army as they take the fight to the insurgents. It also hosts American counterterrorism forces, which continue to attack Taliban and al-Qaida targets.

"What you are doing right here in Kandahar ... is now becoming the heart of the effort in Afghanistan that will make the success that we have been aiming for all these years —

and have sacrificed so much for — stick," Carter told members of the U.S. Army's 1st Cavalry Division and other units during a troop talk after he met with NATO and Afghan commanders. "When our presence here is reduced to something much smaller than today, we want to make sure that the Afghans themselves are able to preserve the environment which our forces have created over the last few years — one of relative security and stability. And they can't do that without you."

Thirteen years after the ouster of the Taliban, the insurgents remain undefeated. Last year was the deadliest of the war for Afghan troops and police as well for civilians caught up in the fighting.

Analysts have warned that a precipitous pullout of all foreign troops and advisers could result in a collapse of the government forces, similar to what happened in Iraq last year after an offensive by the Islamic State group.

The troop talk at Kandahar

was the first that Carter has held since he became secretary of defense last week.

As overall U.S. troop levels have come down in Afghanistan, so too has the force presence at Kandahar. The base, which once housed 26,000 coalition troops, is now home to 2,600 NATO servicemembers, including 1,900 American troops. The total U.S. troop presence throughout Afghanistan stands at around 10,000, down from 100,000 in 2011.

U.S. trainers are slated to pull out of Kandahar at the end of the year as part of the Obama administration's plan to reduce force levels to a mere embassy presence by the end of 2016. But U.S. officials are reconsidering the drawdown plan, including whether to keep training and advising operations going at Kandahar Air Field.

During a joint press conference with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani at the presidential palace in Kabul on Saturday, Carter said that President Barack Obama is considering "a

number of options" to enhance U.S. support to the Afghan National Security Forces, including changing the timeline for the troop drawdown and altering the timing and sequencing of base closures.

Army Gen. John Campbell, the commander of all international forces in Afghanistan, suggested that he wants to keep troops at Kandahar Air Field as long as possible.

"It's a great platform for us to work that [train, advise and assist] piece," he told reporters at his headquarters in Kabul on Saturday. "I would lose that capability" if we pull out, and "Kandahar is very important from that perspective."

During a discussion with reporters after the troop talk, Carter declined to say whether he would recommend to Obama that U.S. trainers and advisers remain in Kandahar beyond the end of the year, but noted that "there is a lot more work to do" there.

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Ukraine: Peace plan-demanded weapons pullback to begin

The Associated Press

KIEV, Ukraine — Ukraine planned to begin pulling back heavy weaponry from the front lines of its fight with Russia-backed separatist rebels on Sunday, in accordance with a peace plan whose initial step was a cease-fire that is still being violated, a military spokesman said.

Ukrainian military spokesman Col. Andriy Lysenko told a briefing that the withdrawal was to begin, but did not give

further details.

Rebel spokesman Eduard Basurin said the pullback from both sides is to take place between Sunday and March 7, but he did not specify whether rebels had made any moves yet. There was no immediate confirmation that the withdrawal had begun.

Both sides are to pull back their big guns and rockets from 15 to 43 miles away from the conflict line — depending on the weapons' size — creating a buffer zone of between 31 and

87 miles.

The buffer zone was a main element of a peace agreement worked out in marathon negotiations 10 days ago in Minsk, Belarus. It also calls for a full exchange of war captives. Late Saturday, 139 Ukrainian soldiers and 52 rebels were exchanged. It remains unclear how many prisoners in total are on each side and when other swaps might take place.

The cease-fire that was the first element of the Minsk plan was called into effect Feb. 15.

Ukrainian officials said Russia-backed separatists violated the cease-fire a dozen times during the night with artillery and rocket attacks and an attempt to storm a Ukrainian encampment. Lysenko said one serviceman was killed and three were wounded during the past day.

Explosions were heard in the main rebel-held city Donetsk around dawn Sunday. A rebel website says several buildings in the city were damaged by artillery.

Some GOP governors back Hill showdown

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Several Republican governors are urging their party's congressional leaders to stand firm in opposing legislation funding the Department of Homeland Security if it doesn't also overturn President Barack Obama's executive action on immigration.

Governors in both parties meeting in Washington this weekend warned of economic and security concerns should Congress fail to resolve its latest budget standoff. The agency's \$40 billion budget runs out Feb. 27, giving federal lawmakers only a few days to reach an agreement once they return from recess.

While some call for compromise, a handful of high-profile Republicans charged that stopping what they see as Obama's unconstitutional power grab may be as important as resolving the funding dispute. The Obama administration put on hold plans to shield more than 4 million immigrants living in the country illegally from deportation after a federal judge in Texas temporarily blocked the effort the day the program was scheduled to begin.

Twenty-six states, led by Texas, filed a lawsuit in December arguing that the president does not have the authority to allow the groups of immigrants to legally stay and work in the United States. The White House is appealing the ruling.

Indiana Gov. Mike Pence, who is weighing a Republican presidential bid, said the court ruling "vindicates the efforts of the Congress to use the power of the purse to prevent the administration from doing what the constitution does not permit them to do."

The stakes are high for millions of immigrants in the country illegally and the political fortunes of both parties heading into a presidential election campaign.

Turkish military evacuates troops from Syria overnight

The Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkish soldiers launched an overnight mission into neighboring Syria, evacuating dozens of besieged troops guarding an Ottoman tomb and moving the crypt Sunday back to Turkey after ceremonially planting the country's crescent-and-star flag.

The mission, saving Turkish soldiers reportedly stuck for months at the tomb of the grandfather of the founder of the Ottoman Empire, saw hundreds of troops backed by tanks cross the border near the frontier town of Kobani once besieged by the Islamic State group.

Turkey was widely criticized for not intervening for months in the Kobani battle, which finally saw Kurdish fighters backed by U.S.-led airstrikes push out the extremists.

"We had given the Turkish armed forces a directive to protect our spiritual values and the safety of our armed forces personnel," Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said in televised remarks.

Nearly 600 Turkish soldiers on some 100 tanks and armored personnel carriers crossed into Syria on Saturday night as drones and airplanes flew reconnaissance missions over-

head, Davutoglu said Sunday.

One group traveled to the tomb, some 22 miles from Turkey on the banks of the Euphrates River in Syria's embattled Aleppo province, he said. Another group seized an area only 200 yards from the Turkish border in Syria's Ashma region to be the new home for the tomb, according to a statement from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's office.

The U.S.-led coalition forces were informed of the Turkish operation after its launch to prevent any casualties, Davutoglu said. U.S. officials offered no immediate comment.

Bangladesh ferry sinks; 31 dead

The Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh — A river ferry carrying about 100 passengers capsized in central Bangladesh on Sunday after being hit by a cargo vessel, killing at least 31 people, officials said. A rescue operation was underway, but it was not clear how many people were

missing.

The ferry was struck by the cargo vessel at the Daulatdia-Paturia crossing on the Padma River on Sunday afternoon, said fire department official Shahzadi Begum. Rescue teams were deployed and passing boats were helping in the operation, he said.

Ferry accidents are common

in Bangladesh, an impoverished South Asian nation that is crisscrossed by more than 130 rivers.

The ferry was submerged at a depth of up to 20 feet, said Inspector Zihad Mia, who is overseeing the rescue operation.

A passenger who survived said many people got trapped inside when the ferry sank.

Malcolm X's efforts remembered

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Activists, actors and politicians gathered Saturday in New York City to honor civil rights leader Malcolm X with a ceremony at the Harlem site where he was killed 50 years ago.

About 300 people converged to hear remarks from one of Malcolm X's six daughters, Ilyasah Shabazz, as well as elected officials. The ceremony was held at the Malcolm X &

Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial and Educational Center.

A blue light shone onto the floor in the exact spot where he was killed. A mural with images of Malcolm X adorned a wall.

"He was just a young man who gave all that he possibly could," Shabazz said after a moment of silence marking the time of her father's death.

Malcolm X, whose full name was El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, was 39 when he was shot in the

theater on Feb. 21, 1965, as he was preparing to address several hundred followers.

By the time he died, the Muslim leader had moderated his militant message of black separatism and pride but was still very much a passionate advocate of black unity, self-respect and self-reliance. Three members of the Nation of Islam were convicted of murder in his death. He had repudiated the Nation of Islam less than a year earlier.

Safety questions arise after Daytona crash

The Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Kyle Busch broke his right leg and left foot in a vicious hit Saturday into a concrete wall during the Xfinity Series race. He'll miss the Daytona 500 on Sunday and is out indefinitely.

Busch sustained a right lower leg compound fracture and left mid-foot fracture in the crash with eight laps remaining. Joe Gibbs Racing said he had surgery to repair his left leg, was resting comfortably and will remain hospitalized for observation.

Later Saturday night, NASCAR's final appeals officer upheld Kurt Busch's indefinite suspension for an alleged domestic assault on an ex-girlfriend last fall. It means the Daytona 500 will not have one of the Busch brothers in the field for the first time since 2000.

Matt Crafton, a two-time Truck Series champion, will replace Busch in the No. 18 Toyota on Sunday in the season-opening Sprint Cup Series race. It will be Crafton's Daytona 500 debut.

Busch's injury occurred when his car slammed head-on into an interior wall that did not have an energy-absorbing SAFER barrier. It's a similar injury to the one suffered by Tony Stewart in an August 2013 sprint car crash, but not as severe as Stewart's was a double compound fracture.

Stewart missed the final 15 races of 2013, couldn't get in a race car until February, 2014, and underwent a fourth surgery in December to replace the rod in his leg. He walked with a limp for more than a year.

Stewart tweeted that he "felt terrible" for his former teammate. "He's tough and

will bounce back soon. Thinking about you bud!" the three-time NASCAR champion posted.

A somber Joie Chitwood, president of Daytona International Speedway, said the track failed in not having the soft walls and will start next week on having them installed "on every inch of our property."

"The Daytona International Speedway did not live up to its responsibility today. We should have had SAFER barrier there," Chitwood said. "We're going to fix that. We're going to fix that right now."

Track officials will install tire packs along that 850-foot linear square foot of wall that Busch hit in time for the Daytona 500 on Sunday. Chitwood said planning on covering the entire 2.5-mile facility would begin Monday.

"This is not going to happen again. We're going to live up to our responsibility," Chitwood said. "We really can't mention financials as a reason for this. Come Monday, we're going to start the plan to put SAFER barrier everywhere here and finances don't come into play. That's really not a question."

Following the hit, Busch was only able to climb halfway through his window and was pointing in the direction of his right leg when rescue personnel arrived.

Busch was pulled from the car and laid on the ground, and his leg appeared to be stabilized in a splint before he was placed on a stretcher then into an ambulance. His wife, Samantha, was crying as she left the infield care center with team owner Joe Gibbs and team president J.D. Gibbs. Samantha Busch is pregnant with the couple's first child, a boy due in May.

Busch was transported to a hospital, and NASCAR announced roughly an hour later that Busch won't participate Sunday

in the Sprint Cup Series' season-opening Daytona 500.

As Busch was being treated in a hospital, older brother Kurt was in front of NASCAR's final appeals officer trying to get his indefinite suspension lifted.

Stewart-Haas Racing will use Regan Smith in the Daytona 500 as Kurt Busch's replacement.

Ryan Reed won the race, his first career national series victory, in the debut event for Xfinity as sponsor of NASCAR's second-tier series.

Reed, the 21-year-old driver for Roush Fenway Racing, passed Brad Keselowski for the lead on the last lap to grab the win. Diagnosed four years ago with Type 1 diabetes, Reed thanked sponsor Eli Lilly, which runs a "Drive to Stop Diabetes" campaign.

"I thought I would never drive a race car again. Now, I'm standing here in victory lane at Daytona with Roush Fenway," he said. "Not only for me and my family, but every kid who gets diagnosed with diabetes or anything that says you can't do something. Just go and there and overcome it and do it and win and do the best you can."

But the focus was on Busch's injury, which occurred when his car slid fast through the grass and slammed into a wall that did not have the Steel and Foam Energy Reduction barriers that were one of the many safety initiatives that came about after Dale Earnhardt's death in 2001. The SAFER Barrier debuted in 2002 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

The walls were developed by Dr. Dean Sicking at the University of Nebraska and are currently installed in some form at every track used by NASCAR's top series. The barriers, a combination of steel and

foam, cost about \$500 a foot which can be a hefty bill at a 2.5 mile superspeedway like Daytona. The soft walls absorb the energy during impact and lessen injuries sustained to a driver.

Tracks only install SAFER barriers where NASCAR recommends to them they should be placed. NASCAR, meanwhile, cites evaluations of high-impact areas in deciding where the material should be placed.

Reaction was swift after Busch's wreck on social media from drivers calling on NASCAR to install the energy-absorbing material everywhere at race tracks.

"It's beyond me why we don't have soft walls everywhere," tweeted six-time champion Jimmie Johnson.

Former driver Jeff Burton, now a television analyst, called on NASCAR to overcome costs, "It's very expensive but we have to find a way."

And Smith, who earlier in the race rolled his car for the first time in his career, said it was inexcusable in 2015 for tracks hosting national events not to have SAFER barriers everywhere.

"I'm genuinely furious right now," tweeted Smith, the driver who will replace Kurt Busch in the Daytona 500.

NASCAR executive vice president Steve O'Donnell said the series will accelerate talks with all tracks in the series about the installation of additional SAFER barriers.

"We all know that racing is an inherently dangerous sport, but our priority is safety, and we'll continue to put things in place that make this sport as safe as possible," O'Donnell said.

Blood clots on lung end Chris Bosh's season

The Associated Press

MIAMI — Not even a week ago, Chris Bosh was talking about how eager he was to get home in an effort to turn the Miami Heat's season around.

His focus will be on something far more important now.

The All-Star forward's season is over, with the Heat announcing Saturday that — as suspected — blood clots were found on one of his lungs. The problem, if it had not been caught, could have killed the 30-year-old Bosh, who had been fighting pain in his side and back for several days.

"He was able to get in front of it early," Heat guard Dwyane Wade said, adding that Bosh's wife, Adrienne, encouraged him to get checked out when the problem wouldn't subside. "That's the good thing that helps all of us sleep at night."

The team said Bosh "is receiving care under the guidance of Miami Heat team physicians" at a hospital, adding that "his prognosis is good."

Bosh posted a photo on social media accounts Saturday night showing him in a hospital gown and bed, with an oxygen

tube.

"Thank you for all the messages, love, and support. It has truly lifted my spirits through this tough process," Bosh wrote, adding several hashtags including one that read "Iwillbebacksoon."

Heat coach Erik Spoelstra sounded upbeat about Bosh's road to recovery. The team received the news Saturday morning, Spoelstra said, and welcomed the clarity after a frightening couple of days.

"His health will be restored," Spoelstra said before Miami's 105-91 home loss to New Orleans. "That's the most important thing. That's bigger than basketball."

In other NBA news:

■ Former Oklahoma City forward Kendrick Perkins has agreed to sign with the Cavs, a person familiar with his decision told The Associated Press on Saturday. Perkins, who won a title with the Boston Celtics in 2008, will sign with the Cavs as early as Monday said the person who spoke to The AP on condition of anonymity because the team has not made the signing official.

Shiffrin sets record with 12th slalom win

MARIBOR, Slovenia — Mikaela Shiffrin defied the pouring rain to comfortably earn her 12th career slalom victory Sunday, taking sole possession of the women's World Cup record for most wins in the discipline by a teenager.

The American, who turns 20 next month, had previously shared the record with France's Perrine Pelen, who set it in the 1980s.

"I don't try to think about too many records as they might get in my way," Shiffrin said. "But it's motivation. It's not always about breaking records but about doing a good job."

A week after retaining her world title in Beaver Creek, Shiffrin certainly did a good job again Sunday. She held on to a big first-run lead to finish in a total time of 1 minute, 39.12 seconds for a convincing win, 1.03 ahead of Veronika Velez Zuzulova of Slovakia. Czech skier Sarka Strachova was another 0.02 back in third.

In other skiing news:

■ In Glemm, Austria, Olympic downhill champion Matthias Mayer won a super-G on Sunday for his second victory in two days.

'Miracle on Ice' team reunites on anniversary

LAKE PLACID, N.Y. — The ovation wasn't quite as deafening as it was 35 years ago. It was riveting, nonetheless, for Dave Christian and his old Olympic buddies, together again to celebrate their Miracle on Ice.

"It feels exactly the same," Christian said Saturday night as the members of the 1980 U.S. Olympic hockey team returned to the rink they made famous with their triumph over the Soviet Union. "You could feel the electricity in the (locker) room. It's still there."

The "Relive the Miracle" reunion at Herb Brooks Arena attracted more than 5,000 fans for a two-hour celebration of one of the most memorable upsets in sports history.



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Gonzaga rallies to top Gaels

The Associated Press

MORAGA, Calif. — Gonzaga found itself in a rare fight and facing a huge deficit with so much at stake: a West Coast Conference crown, a school-record winning streak and possibly even a No. 1 seed in the NCAA tournament.

It was just the kind of adversity the Bulldogs believe will make them better.

Kyle Wiltjer had 16 points and 12 rebounds, and third-ranked Gonzaga rallied from 17 points down to beat Saint Mary's 70-60 on Saturday night. The Zags (28-1, 16-0) claimed the outright WCC regular-season championship and rolled up a school-record 21st straight victory.

"It shows character, it shows toughness, it shows great teaminess," Bulldogs coach Mark Few said. "There was nobody in there at halftime pointing fingers at anybody or panicking. They were eager to kind of get lectured, for lack of a better term. They certainly needed it."

Wiltjer teamed with Przemek Karnowski to make some big shots down the stretch. The comeback kept the Zags on track for a top tournament seed and gave them some confidence for those March moments.

No. 1 Kentucky 110, Auburn 75: Karl-Anthony Towns scored 19 points to lead six Kentucky players in double figures, and the host Wildcats recorded their highest scoring total since 2002 with a blowout of Auburn. Kentucky also equaled the 1995-96 squad's school-record 27-game winning streak, a performance that culminated with its sixth NCAA title.

No. 4 Duke 78, Clemson 56: Quinn Cook matched a career high with 27 points for host Duke, and the Jahliil Okafor-less Blue Devils routed Clemson.

Three freshmen — Justise Winslow (20 points), Tyus Jones (11) and Grayson Allen (10) — also reached double figures to help Duke (24-3, 11-3 Atlantic Coast Conference) win its seventh straight. Okafor is out with a sprained ankle.

No. 5 Wisconsin 63, Minnesota 53: Frank Kaminsky scored 21 points, Bronson Koenig added a career-high 17 and host Wisconsin (25-2, 13-1 Big Ten) beat Minnesota for its 10th straight win.

No. 6 Villanova 87, Marquette 76: Darrun Hilliard scored 17 points, and Ryan Arcidiacono added 16 for visiting Villanova.

Dylan Ennis and JayVaughn Pinkston each had 14 to help Villanova (25-2, 12-2 Big East) extend its winning streak to eight games.

No. 7 Arizona 57, UCLA 47: Gabe York scored 13 points and Dusan Ristic added 12, providing host Arizona an unexpected lift in a difficult victory over UCLA.

Arizona (24-3, 11-2 Pac-12) was abysmal offensively to start both halves and allowed UCLA to rally from a 14-point half-time deficit.

No. 8 Kansas 81, TCU 72: Perry Ellis scored 23 points, Devonte' Graham added a career-high 20 and host Kansas bounced back from a frustrating loss to hold off foul-plagued TCU.

No. 10 Notre Dame 87, Boston College 70: Bonzie Colson had 16 points and six rebounds in 15 minutes off the bench, leading visiting Notre Dame.

No. 11 Northern Iowa 56, Bradley 39: Nate Buss and Wes Washpun each scored 11 points off the bench and host Northern Iowa (26-2, 15-1 Missouri Valley) rolled past Bradley to match a school record with its 15th straight win.

No. 12 Louisville 55, Miami 53: Montrezl Harrell had 21 points, 14 rebounds and key free throws in the final minute to lift host Louisville past Miami.

No. 14 Iowa State 85, Texas 77: Georges Niang and Matt Thomas scored 17 points for visiting Iowa State.

Iowa State (20-6, 10-4 Big 12) won its second straight Big 12 road game, something the Cyclones had not accomplished since the 2005-06 season.

No. 15 North Carolina 89, Georgia Tech 60: North Carolina opened the game by scoring on a "Four Corners" play as a tribute to the late Dean Smith, then rolled to a victory over visiting Georgia Tech.

Smith was known for using the Four Corners to spread the floor and work the clock, which ultimately helped lead to the implementation of a shot clock in college basketball.

The Hall of Famer, who retired in 1997 as the winningest coach in men's Division I history with 879 wins, died two weeks ago, but this was UNC's first home game since his death.

No. 17 Oklahoma 79, Texas Tech 75 (OT): Isaiah Cousins scored 22 points and Frank Booker added a career-high 17 points in visiting Oklahoma's overtime victory over Texas Tech.

Buddy Hield hit back-to-back three-pointers and Cousins made a field goal

and two free throws to help the Sooners (19-8, 10-5 Big 12) seal the win.

No. 18 Arkansas 65, Mississippi State 61: Rashad Madden scored 16 points, Michael Qualls added 14 and Arkansas rallied to beat host Mississippi State.

Xavier 73, No. 19 Butler 56: Myles Davis scored 18 points, and Xavier never trailed during a victory over visiting Butler, the Musketeers' fourth win over a Top 25 team this season.

No. 20 Baylor 69, Kansas State 42: Taurean Prince scored 14 points, Rico Gathers had 13 points and 10 rebounds and host Baylor secured another 20-win season under coach Scott Drew.

No. 23 West Virginia 73, Oklahoma State 63: Juwan Staten scored 22 points and had seven assists, Gary Browne added a career-high 18 points and West Virginia beat Oklahoma State.

No. 25 VCU 78, Massachusetts 72: Treveon Graham scored 24 points and host VCU rebounded after blowing a 16-point lead.

Georgetown 68, DePaul 63: D'Vauntes Smith-Rivera scored 19 points and Georgetown held off visiting DePaul from the free throw line for a victory.

The victory keeps the Hoyas (18-8) in second place in the Big East at 10-5, a half-game ahead of Providence, which plays conference leader Villanova on Tuesday.

Colorado State 66, Air Force 53: Daniel Bejarano scored 20 points and J.J. Avila added 18 to lead host Colorado State.

Joe De Ciman added 12 points for the Rams (23-5, 10-5 Mountain West).

Marek Olesinski led the Falcons (12-14, 5-10) with 11 points.

Pittsburgh 65, Syracuse 61: Chris Jones tied his career high with 19 points, Jamel Artis had 16, and Michael Young chipped in 14 as Pittsburgh held off host Syracuse.

LSU 70, Florida 63: Jarell Martin scored a career-high 28 points and grabbed 13 rebounds to help host LSU.

Duquesne 83, Dayton 73: Micah Mason had 17 points and matched a career-high with nine assists to help Duquesne.

Pelicans cruise past Heat

The Associated Press

MIAMI — Eric Gordon scored 16 of his 24 points in the third quarter and, even after losing Anthony Davis and Ryan Anderson to injuries, the New Orleans Pelicans had no trouble beating the Miami Heat 105-91 on Saturday night.

Omer Asik scored 15 points and Tyreke Evans added 13 to help the Pelicans snap a four-game slide.

Mario Chalmers scored 20 points for Miami, which was playing for the first time since learning that All-Star forward Chris Bosh will miss the remainder of the season with blood clots on one of his lungs.

Goran Dragic, making his Miami debut after being acquired in a trade from Phoenix, had 12 points.

Davis departed with 3:07 left in the first quarter, moments after he attempted a shot and made contact with Miami's Hassan Whiteside. Davis — who missed two games earlier this month, plus the All-Star Game because of the shoulder issue — immediately grimaced in pain, then hobbled off the court while grabbing the shoulder even before play could be stopped. Anderson was ruled out shortly before halftime after spraining his right knee jostling for a rebound.

Thunder 110, Hornets 103: Russell Westbrook had 33 points and 10 assists and visiting Oklahoma City beat Charlotte for its fifth straight victory.

Clippers 126, Kings 99: J.J. Redick scored 24 points, hitting four three-pointers and all eight of his free throws, and host Los Angeles routed Sacramento for its fourth straight victory.

Austin Rivers had a career-high 28 points and fellow reserve Jamal Crawford added 23 to help the Clippers improve to 4-1 without injured All-Star Blake Griffin.

Rockets 98, Raptors 76: Corey Brewer had a season-high 26 points, James Harden scored 16 of his 20 points in Houston's big third quarter and the Rockets topped visiting Toronto.

Bulls 112, Suns 107: Pau Gasol had 22 points and 14 rebounds and host Chicago beat revamped Phoenix for its fifth victory in six games.

P.J. Tucker led Phoenix with 20 points. Eric Bledsoe had 13, and so did Brandon Knight in his Suns debut. Phoenix lost for the seventh time in eight games.

Kings spoil Sharks' outdoor party in front of 70,000

The Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Marian Gaborik scored the tiebreaking goal early in the third period, and the Los Angeles Kings spoiled San Jose's outdoor party with a 2-1 victory over the Sharks on Saturday night.

Kyle Clifford also scored and Jonathan Quick made 31 saves as the Kings won their seventh straight game and dealt more heartbreak to their Northern California rivals after knocking San Jose out of the playoffs the past two seasons.

Gaborik silenced an enthusiastic crowd of 70,205 just over 4 minutes into the third period when he took the puck away from Brent Burns in the neutral zone and skated in before beating Antti Niemi with a

shot from the top of the circle.

Burns scored the lone goal for the Sharks, who have lost six of eight games to put their 10-season streak of playoff appearances in jeopardy. Niemi made 27 saves.

Capitals 3, Islanders 2 (SO): Evgeny Kuznetsov scored the lone goal in a shootout, Braden Holtby had 30 saves, and host Washington beat the New York Islanders for its fourth straight victory.

Red Wings 7, Stars 6 (OT): Niklas Kronwall scored 36 seconds into overtime and visiting Detroit defeated Dallas after overcoming a pair of two-goal deficits in a wild third period.

Lightning 4, Coyotes 2: Ondrej Palat scored twice, and Ryan Callahan

had a goal and an assist to help Tampa Bay hold off host Arizona.

Penguins 4, Blues 2: Blake Comeau had two goals and an assist to lead Pittsburgh past host St. Louis.

Flyers 3, Predators 2 (SO): Wayne Simmonds had a goal in regulation and the shootout to lead Philadelphia past visiting Nashville.

Canadiens 3, Blue Jackets 1: Max Pacioretty scored twice in the first period, and host Montreal held off Columbus to snap a two-game skid.

Tomas Plekanec added an empty-net goal for the Canadiens, and Carey Price stopped 32 shots for his 33rd win of the season.

Ducks 2, Oilers 1: Ryan Getzlaf scored the go-ahead goal with 7:13 remaining in the third period to lift Anaheim over host Edmonton.

Senators 4, Panthers 1: Kyle Turris had a goal and two assists to lead host Ottawa over Florida, giving the Senators consecutive wins for the first time in seven weeks.

Devils 3, Hurricanes 1: New Jersey defenseman Andy Greene capped a three-goal first period against visiting Carolina with his first in 71 games.

Maple Leafs 4, Jets 3 (OT): James van Riemsdyk scored 3:47 into overtime to give host Toronto a win over playoff-hopeful Winnipeg.