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Diplomats seek temporary truce in Syria

Associated Press

MUNICH — Diplomats agreed Friday to work toward a temporary “cessation of hostilities” in Syria’s civil war within a week, although efforts to secure a lasting cease-fire fell short.

The deal appeared to be the result of a compromise between the United States, which had wanted an immediate cease-fire, and Russia, which had proposed one to start on March 1.

Although foreign ministers from the International Syria Support Group managed to seal an agreement to “accelerate and expand” deliveries of humanitarian aid to besieged Syrian communities beginning this week, their failure to agree on a cease-fire leaves the most critical step to resuming peace talks unresolved. It was not clear from their comments afterward if deep differences regarding the truce and which groups would be eligible for it could be overcome.

Secretary of State John Kerry, however, defended the agreement as what the Syrian opposition wanted.

“They wanted it called and defined as a cessation of hostilities. That is very much in line with their thinking and their hopes,” he said.

Speaking for the group, Kerry praised the results as a significant accomplishment but noted that a cessation-of-hostilities agreement, if it can be achieved, would only be a “pause” in fighting and that more work would need to be done to turn it into a full-fledged cease-fire.

He also allowed that the agreements made were “commitments on paper” only.

“The real test is whether or not all the parties honor those commitments and implement them,” he told reporters after the nearly six-hour meeting at a Munich hotel, which ran into the early hours of Friday.

Syria dominates Munich talks on world security

JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

MUNICH — The Syrian civil war loomed as the most pressing issue as global leaders converged here Friday to discuss the world’s security challenges against a backdrop of war, mass migration and great state rivalries.

The three-day, annual Munich Security Conference opened just hours after U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov announced an agreement to work toward a cessation of hostilities in Syria within a week. But questions remained about whether all parties could be persuaded to abide by the agreement.

Lavrov said Russia would continue airstrikes against terrorist groups — which Moscow considers all rebels, including those back by the U.S. — and Defense Secretary Ash Carter said the U.S. would continue its campaign against the Islamic State group, The Associated Press reported.

On the eve of the U.S.-Russian announcement, Syrian President Bashar Assad told the French news agency that

any proposed truce “does not mean we stop fighting terrorism” until all of Syria is under government control.

Nonetheless, Kerry and Lavrov likely will continue to meet on the sidelines of the Munich conference as they try to cement the deal.

As a refugee crisis fueled by the Syrian war bears down on Europe, skepticism runs deep among Western leaders that a pause in hostilities can be achieved.

“Words must follow deeds,” German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen said as the conference opened. “The announced cessation of hostilities must take effect in the streets of Aleppo,” the rebel-held city under siege by Assad’s forces, who are backed by Russian airstrikes.

In Munich, some 30 heads of state and more than 70 foreign and defense ministers are assembled alongside scores of parliamentarians and security experts to debate a range of security issues that are as complex as any the West has faced since the end of the Cold War.

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Dramatizing the high-stakes nature of the Munich talks, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev argued that a full-scale ground operation in Syria could widen the conflict.

“A ground operation draws everyone taking part in it into a war,” Medvedev was quoted

as saying in an interview published by the German newspaper Handelsblatt.

When asked about a recent proposal from Saudi Arabia to send in ground troops to Syria, the prime minister answered that “the Americans and our Arab partners must consider

whether or not they want a permanent war.”

Meanwhile, humanitarian access to the battle-scarred country was to be discussed by a working group on Friday in Geneva. It is key to relieving the suffering of millions of Syrians in the short term, a durable and lasting cease-fire will be required if stalled negotiations between Syrian President Bashar Assad’s government and the opposition are to resume on or before a U.N.-set target date of Feb. 25. The talks broke down last month before they really started, due largely to gains by Assad’s military with the heavy backing of Russian airstrikes.

Syrian forces backed by Russian airstrikes have been making major gains the past weeks in a campaign aimed at encircling the rebel-held half of Aleppo, Syria’s largest city, and if they succeed, it would strike a significant defeat to the rebellion. After taking a series of villages, Syrian troops are poised to target the last main supply line to the Aleppo rebels, Syrian TV and an opposition activist group said.

Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said the U.S. and Russia would co-chair both the working group on humanitarian aid as well as a task force that will try to deal with the “modalities” of the temporary truce. That task force will include members of the military along with representatives from countries that are supporting various armed groups in Syria. The Syrian government and the opposition both would have to agree to the details.

Russia had proposed the March 1 cease-fire date, which the U.S. and others saw as a ploy to give Moscow and the Syrian army three more weeks to try to crush Western- and Arab-backed rebels. The U.S. countered with demands for an immediate stop to the fighting.

DOD sets maternity leave date

The (Norfolk, Va.) Virginian-Pilot

The cutoff is March 3 for sailors and Marines to become pregnant and still qualify for 18 weeks of maternity leave, according to a memo issued by the Defense Department.

Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced Jan. 28 that all branches of the military would offer 12 weeks of maternity leave for new mothers, doubling what the Army and Air Force had offered but shrinking by a third what the Navy and Marines had given in the past year. The move was an effort to retain

women, with research showing work and home conflicts are one of the primary reasons women leave the military.

At the time, Carter said sailors and Marines who were already pregnant or those who became pregnant within 30 days of his policy's enactment would still qualify for 18 weeks of leave.

Defense Department officials said Carter's policy was signed the following day, Jan. 29, placing the cutoff at the end of February. But Carter's memo to the secretaries of each military branch, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other

officials gives sailors and Marines a few more days.

"Service members, irrespective of Military Department, who become pregnant after March 3, 2016, will be entitled only to the new, 12-week benefit of non-chargeable Maternity Leave," the memo says.

The memo says maternity leave will begin immediately following a birth or after one's release from hospitalization following a birth.

The memo does not specify how the conception date will be determined.

Ejection seat fixes in F-35s a year away

(Ogden, Utah) Standard-Examiner

HILL AIR FORCE BASE — The Pentagon says it has solved the problems associated with the F-35's potentially dangerous ejection seat, but the fixes may take at least another year to be implemented.

During a media roundtable event Wednesday in Arlington, Va., F-35 Joint Program Office Director Lt. Gen. Christopher Bogdan said three upgrades to the seat will allow the office to remove a flight restriction that has been in place since August.

All U.S. services prohibited pilots who weigh less than 136 pounds from flying the jet after testing found an increased risk of serious neck injury that the lighter-weight pilots could face during low-speed ejections.

According to a report from the Department of Defense News, Bogdan told reporters that engineers have built a "heavy/light" switch into the ejection seat that, when adjusted for lighter pilots, delays the parachute's release by fractions of a second, reducing impact to the pilot's neck.

Bogdan also said a support device has been added to the parachute, itself, that would prevent a pilot's head from moving backward. The general said both the switch and the support device have been tested and will go into production by the end of 2016.

The third fix necessary to clear the restriction is a different matter, Bogdan said.

The F-35 JPO has to shave several ounces off the jet's \$400,000 helmet to reduce too-high neck loads for the lighter pilots. The helmet currently weighs 5.1 pounds, but for it to be safe, its weight has to be reduced to somewhere between 4.6 and 4.8 pounds.

According to the DOD report, Bogdan said the helmet weight-reduction fix is at least eight or nine months behind the other two solutions. All three must be in place before the restriction is removed.

Seoul, US to hold missile defense talks

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — Looking to take a harder line after North Korea's recent nuclear test and rocket launch, Seoul and Washington will begin talks as early as next week on deploying a U.S. missile defense system in South Korea, officials said Friday.

The new, tough stance follows South Korea's decision to shut down an inter-Korean factory park that had been the rival Koreas' last major symbol of cooperation, but that Seoul said had been used by North Korea to fund its nuclear and missile pro-

grams. North Korea responded by deporting South Korean citizens, seizing South Korean assets and vowing to militarize the park.

South Korea on Friday cut off power and water supplies to the industrial park and announced that its planned talks with the United States on deploying the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, one of the most advanced missile defense systems in the world, could start next week. Officials say they have yet to set a starting date for the talks.

South Korean media have

long speculated that the two countries are working on a THAAD deployment in South Korea, but it took the North's rocket launch, which outsiders see as a test of banned ballistic missile technology, for the allies to formally announce the start of the missile defense talks.

Beijing and Moscow are sensitive to the possibility of THAAD in South Korea; critics say the system could help U.S. radar spot missiles in other countries. North Korea previously has warned of a nuclear war if the THAAD deployment occurs.

Democratic presidential contenders clash

The Washington Post

MILWAUKEE — Fresh off her double-digit loss in New Hampshire, Hillary Clinton sought to undermine surging rival Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., here Thursday night, arguing that his expansive agenda for government action on health care, college costs and infrastructure investments is both impractical and far more costly than he has said.

The debate turned fiery only

in the closing minutes, when the two clashed over foreign policy and over comments by Sanders critical of President Barack Obama.

"I couldn't disagree more," Clinton said, accusing Sanders of leveling the kind of attacks on the president usually heard from Republicans.

"That is a low blow," Sanders said, saying he had worked with the president throughout the past seven years. "Have you ever disagreed with the

president?" he asked.

Overall, the debate highlighted anew the fundamental fault line between the two candidates for the Democratic nomination, with Sanders standing his ground on behalf of a big, bold agenda that has energized progressives across the country, and Clinton expressing her support for many of her rival's goals but arguing that she has the preparation to make real progress in a divided country.

Wizards' Wall earning recognition as one of NBA's top point guards

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—Fresh off scoring 51 points against the Washington Wizards, reigning NBA MVP Stephen Curry praised John Wall, who dropped a quiet 41 against the Warriors.

"He's a top-tier point guard," Curry said, "and it's like that — not his caliber every night — but obviously at the point guard position you're going to have some talent on the other side of the ball most nights."

Wall has never played better in what is now a point-guard league.

It doesn't stop with Curry. The talent pool includes Cleveland's Kyrie Irving, Toronto's Kyle Lowry, Boston's Isaiah Thomas, Portland's Damian Lillard, Oklahoma City's Russell Westbrook and the Los Angeles Clippers' Chris Paul, to name a few.

"I think I'm having a career year," Wall said. "I can say I'm playing my best basketball, but not the way I want to play because it's not equaling up to wins."

Wall is an All-Star for the third time but gets lost in the packed field of "top-tier" point guards. His 20.1 points a game are sixth at the position, while his 9.9 assists are third behind only Sacramento's Rajon Rondo and Westbrook.

But some nights there is just no denying

his talents.

Like Tuesday at New York's Madison Square Garden, Wall had 28 points and 17 assists to lead Washington past the Knicks. It was another showcase performance during a season that hasn't gone the way he or the Wizards have wanted.

The Wizards will be a sub-.500 team and outside the Eastern Conference playoff picture at the All-Star break. Injuries to sidekick Bradley Beal and many others have hampered Washington this season.

Wall is holding up his end, playing like a top-five point guard.

"His speed is probably second to none in the NBA. ... He's a one-man fast break and it's crazy because he logs so many minutes," Warriors guard Klay Thompson said. "His midrange jumper is also so much improved. You can tell he's been working on his game a lot, and you like to see that from guys."

Wall doesn't get the headlines like Curry, Irving or even Thomas, of late. He has only scored the most points in a game he's played in eight times this season, but Wall is the kind of player that teams have to game-plan against.

"You've got to build a wall against Wall," Cavaliers star LeBron James said. "You let him play in open court one-on-one, he's too fast, he's too strong. He's going to put

your defense at bay."

Opponents have tried to close off Wall's drives to the basket and force him to take jump shots. At times, it has worked, like when the Trail Blazers limited him to 4 of 17 shooting in a victory last month.

"When you're playing against an All-Star-caliber player like him, you work as hard as you can, you try and contain his penetration and hope he misses some jumpers," Portland coach Terry Stotts said.

More often than not, Wall makes the most of his time and space. Even so, Washington coach Randy Wittman believes Curry should get more recognition than Wall because of team results.

"John's body of work has been pretty good; he's been recognized with that," Wittman said. "You've got to go out and play, you've got to go out and win. Those are the two things in our league. You want recognition? Be a winner and play your butt off. That's how you get recognition, and John's gotten it."

Wall will travel to Toronto to attend the NBA's All-Star weekend festivities but is not sure if he will participate in the game Sunday after bruising his right knee in the first quarter of the Wizards' 99-92 loss to the Milwaukee Bucks on Thursday.

Selection talk heating up as season winds down

Associated Press

Five weeks until Selection Sunday. Twenty-five more days in college basketball's regular season. The season is winding down, and that means constant bubble talk and discussions about seeding.

This NCAA Tournament is setting up to be a good one. Just ask the man who's running the show.

"We have had six No. 1 teams already. It is deeper at the top," Oklahoma athletic director and Selection Committee chairman Joe Castiglione said Wednesday. "How exciting and unpredictable March is setting up to be."

The committee is meeting in Indianapolis, kind of a refresher course for the veterans and a chance for new members — Ohio University athletic director Jim Schaus and Duke athletic director Kevin White — to get a chance to see the process in action.

"We have been meeting and tomorrow morning, after we have evaluated all 336 eligible schools, we will conduct a mock draft before we adjourn," Castiglione said before adding reasons this won't be just another NCAA Tournament.

"Usually there are between nine and 11 conferences that could send multiple teams to the tournament," Castiglione said. "This year I could make a case for 14 leagues to get multiple bids if a team doesn't win the automatic berth, and that's going to make for an exciting stretch run."

"Last year it was very obvious and at the start of the meeting we had eight teams locked in the top two lines, and that was unprecedented. That may not happen again next month. It just hasn't been that type of season, and I view it as a good thing for the fans."

Castiglione said the new emphasis on rules designed to open the game up has done just that.

"The pace of the game is better and scoring is up 8 percent and there are 6 percent more possessions and the games are a little shorter," Castiglione said. "Last season there were 30 teams that averaged 75 points per game. This season there are 139 scoring at that rate and that's significant. The changes have truly improved the game and that was our goal."

The committee will meet in New York for the first time, and 32 conference champions will be joined by 36 at-large teams.

Castiglione said injuries, suspensions and midseason eligibles will all be considered when a team is discussed, and he said the suspensions include those of coaches.

Louisville and SMU are two teams that otherwise would be considered locks for the tournament had they not become ineligible because of NCAA rules violations. Having played them won't hurt another team's chances.

"Games against any of the teams not under consideration will be included in any and all metrics, just like any other team," he said. "It's valued just the same."

Shaq, Yao, Iverson among this year's Basketball Hall of Fame nominees

Associated Press

TORONTO — Shaquille O'Neal should be a lock. Yao Ming and Allen Iverson could join him.

Two larger-than-life big men and one of basketball's most exciting little guys highlight the list of players, coaches and contributors who are eligible for induction this year into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

O'Neal and Iverson must get past an extra step by first being chosen as finalists Friday at a press conference during the NBA's All-Star weekend festivities. If they do, they would then require 18 votes from the 24-member Honors Committee, as do all nominees from the North American and Women's Committees.

But Yao was nominated by the Hall's International Committee, recognized as much for his impact in the growth of basketball in his native China as his play in the NBA. That committee elects players directly to the Hall.

The class of 2016 will be unveiled April 4 in Houston on the day of the NCAA championship game, and the enshrinement ceremony is set for Sept. 9 in Springfield, Mass.

College coaches Tom Izzo, Eddie

Sutton, Lefty Driesell, Bo Ryan and Muffet McGraw, and women's star Sheryl Swoopes were also among the finalists announced Friday.

O'Neal, Yao and Iverson earned a chance to be a part of it after a recent rule change that made players eligible for nomination after four full seasons of retirement. Previously, they had to wait five years, which meant they were actually six years removed from their playing days by the time they could take their place in the birthplace of basketball.

O'Neal won four NBA championships, an MVP award and is in the league's top 10 in career scoring. Iverson, just 6-feet tall, won four scoring titles and was the league's MVP in 2001, when his 48-point performance for Philadelphia in Game 1 of the NBA Finals handed O'Neal's Lakers their only loss of one of the most dominant postseason runs in NBA history.

Yao doesn't have as impressive a résumé, his career cut short by multiple foot injuries. But the 7-foot-6 center lasted long enough to make an enormous impact on and off the court after being selected No. 1 overall in 2002.

A look at some others who could be Springfield-bound in September:

Jerry Krause: On the 20th anniversary

of the Chicago Bulls compiling the best record in NBA history, perhaps it's time to honor the executive who was one of the architects of the six-time champions?

Tom Izzo: The way he consistently gets his Michigan State teams to peak in March, don't be surprised if he's got a game to coach in Houston when the class he should be in appears during Final Four weekend.

Sheryl Swoopes: The first player signed by the WNBA went on to win three MVP awards and four championships in the league, but it was her 47-point performance in leading Texas Tech to the 1993 NCAA championship that many think of first when talking about one of the greats of women's basketball.

Marv Albert: Already a Hall of Famer as a broadcaster, Albert, like Krause, is now nominated by the Contributor Committee that directly elects to the Hall. Should he be honored again? As Albert might exclaim while calling a game, "YES!!"

Darell Garretson: He officiated more than 2,000 games in the NBA and spent 17 years as the league's chief of officiating. There aren't many easy calls for referees, but this seems an easy call about one.



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Ovechkin hat trick lifts Caps

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Scoring more than 500 goals in the NHL hasn't come without Washington Capitals star Alex Ovechkin being opportunistic. Thursday night was another example of being in the right place at the right time — with an unrivaled scoring touch.

Ovechkin scored three times in the second period for his 14th career hat trick, and Washington held on to beat the Minnesota Wild 4-3.

"It's incredible, the puck just comes to him," said teammate Nicklas Backstrom, who assisted on all three goals. "But he has that ability when it comes, to put it in the net. It's hard to do."

Jason Chimera added an empty-netter for Washington, which improved to a league-best 20-5-2 on the road. Braden Holtby made 33 saves for the Capitals, who won their fifth consecutive game and became the first team to reach 40 victories this season.

Charlie Coyle, Ryan Suter and Mikael Granlund scored for the Wild, but Minnesota lost for the 12th time in its past 13 games (1-10-2). Devan Dubnyk made 29 saves for the Wild, who have lost seven in a row at home (0-4-3).

"If this wasn't really maddening and really frustrating, it would almost be comical the way things are going right now," Minnesota coach Mike Yeo said.

Ovechkin, who took the league lead with 34 goals, has 13 in his past 13 games. He said he recently spoke with his parents, who told him he needed another hat trick. He followed Thursday with his first since he scored four goals against Tampa Bay on Dec. 10, 2013.

"It's a good feeling," Ovechkin said. "Obviously, when you get one, when you get the second one it's pretty cool. But when you have three goals in one game, it's kind of special."

Ovechkin's third goal, which deflected off both the post and the back of Dubnyk into the net, was upheld following a coach's challenge.

Stars 4, Blackhawks 2: Patrick Eaves scored three of his team's four goals in the first period, and visiting Dallas avenged an ugly home loss to the Blackhawks.

Eaves' second career hat trick helped

Dallas to its fifth win in six games and moved the Stars within one of the Blackhawks for the most points in the Western Conference. Dallas' lone loss during the strong stretch was a 5-1 rout for visiting Chicago on Saturday night. John Klingberg added a goal and an assist for Dallas.

Duncan Keith and Patrick Kane scored for the Blackhawks, who played without forward Artemi Panarin for the second straight game due to an illness.

Islanders 5, Kings 2: John Tavares had a goal and an assist, Thomas Greiss stopped 28 shots and host New York scored three times in the first 14 minutes and beat Los Angeles.

Johnny Boychuk, Casey Cizikas and Anders Lee all scored in the first period and Travis Hamonic added an empty-netter in the third to help the Islanders win their third straight overall and third in a row at home. New York improved to 15-4-2 against Western Conference teams.

Kyle Clifford and Milan Lucic scored, and Jhonas Enroth finished with 25 saves for the Pacific Division-leading Kings, who had won three straight on the road.

Flyers 5, Sabres 1: R.J. Umberger snapped a 50-game scoreless drought and Wayne Simmonds got his 20th goal of the season to help host Philadelphia beat Buffalo to end a three-game skid.

Brayden Schenn, Michael Raffl and Nick Cousins also scored for Philadelphia.

Jamie McGinn scored for Buffalo, and the Sabres lost their fourth in a row while wrapping up a three-game season series against the Flyers with their first loss.

Blue Jackets 4, Ducks 3 (SO): Alexander Wennberg and Cam Atkinson each scored in the shootout and Joonas Korpisalo stopped shots by Corey Perry and Jakob Silfverberg to give host Columbus a victory over Anaheim.

Columbus' Brandon Dubinsky tucked a shot inside the left goal post on the power play to make it 3-all with 5:03 left in the third, eventually forcing overtime. Nine minutes before Dubinsky's equalizer, Brandon Saad scored his team-leading 20th goal on a rebound to get his team within a goal after Ryan Garbutt slipped a shot from a tight angle by Columbus' Joonas Korpisalo at 1:45 of the third.

William Karlsson also scored for

Columbus, while David Perron and Mike Santorelli had goals for Anaheim.

Avalanche 4, Senators 3: Jarome Iginla had two goals and an assist, Blake Comeau had a goal and an assist and visiting Colorado beat Ottawa to end a four-game losing streak.

Iginla has 15 goals this season and has scored at least that many in 17 of his 20 NHL seasons.

Nathan MacKinnon also scored for the Avalanche, and Carl Soderberg and Tyson Barrie each had two assists. Semyon Varlamov made 26 saves.

Mark Stone, Mike Hoffman and Chris Neil had goals for Ottawa.

Bruins 6, Jets 2: Patrice Bergeron scored twice, Brett Connolly had three assists and visiting Boston beat Winnipeg.

Brad Marchand had a goal and two assists, and Loui Eriksson and Jimmy Hayes each had a goal and an assist for the Bruins. David Pastrnak also scored to help Boston win its fifth straight road game.

Bryan Little had a goal and an assist and Nikolaj Ehlers also scored for Winnipeg.

Oilers 5, Maple Leafs 2: Connor McDavid had two goals and three assists, Jordan Eberle scored three times and added an assist, and host Edmonton snapped a three-game losing streak.

Josh Leivo and Jake Gardiner scored for the Toronto Maple Leafs, who have lost three in a row. Eberle had an empty-net goal with 54 seconds left in the game for his first NHL hat trick. Benoit Pouliot notched his fourth assist on the goal.

Flames 6, Sharks 5 (SO): Juri Hudler scored the winning goal in the shootout, leading visiting Calgary past San Jose.

After San Jose trailed 4-1 after one period, Joonas Donskoi and Dylan DeMelo scored early in the third period to give the Sharks a brief lead before Kris Russell tied it at 5 with just under 12 minutes left in regulation.

Sam Bennett and Mark Giordano scored within 1:06 of each other as the Flames scored four times in the first period. Sean Monahan and Mikeal Backlund also had goals for the Flames, who won their third straight.

Tommy Wingels, Patrick Marleau and Logan Couture also scored for the Sharks.

Hoosiers knock off No. 4 Iowa

Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. — Indiana's Kevin "Yogi" Ferrell wanted the ball Thursday night.

After taking blow after blow in the second half from No. 4 Iowa, Ferrell finally found a way to punch back.

The senior point guard beat the defensive pressure, found open teammates and finished the game by making four straight free throws to help the Hoosiers rally for an 85-78 upset victory — after they had blown a 16-point lead.

"I felt like they hit us in the mouth a little bit tonight," Ferrell said. "But against a great team like Iowa, you can't get down and crumble, you've basically got to get up and keep fighting."

He made sure none of the Hoosiers let their guard down after blowing a 16-point lead.

Instead, Indiana (20-5, 10-2) used a 14-2 run to erase a four-point deficit, seized control and moved into a share of the conference lead with the Hawkeyes and No. 2 Maryland.

Ferrell finished with 14 points and went 8-for-8 from the free-throw line, including two after he took an inadvertent shot to the face.

He also had plenty of help. Four other Indiana players reached double figures including Troy Williams, who had 13 points and seven rebounds, and Robert Johnson, who had 13 points and four rebounds.

Coach Tom Crean was more satisfied with how Ferrell found other ways to help his team on a poor shooting night.

"He wasn't shooting the ball well, but he settled in, made his teammates better," Crean said after winning No. 20 for the fourth time in eight seasons with the Hoosiers. "That's what he did tonight."

Jarrod Uthoff led the Hawkeyes (19-5, 10-2) with 24 points, Mike Gesell had 17 points and Adam Woodbury finished with 13 points and tied a career high with 15 rebounds, and Peter Jok left for several minutes with what appeared to be a lower left leg injury before returning.

California 83, No. 11 Oregon 63: Jabari Bird scored 16 of his season-high 24 points in the first half and punctuated his big night with a reverse dunk in the final seconds, leading the Golden Bears to a victory over the visiting Ducks.

California (16-8, 6-5 Pac-12) never trailed and led by as much as 25 while remaining unbeaten at Haas Pavilion this season.

It's Cal's third win over a ranked team this season and second in less than three weeks.

Jaylen Brown added 16 points, Ivan Rabb had 13 points and seven rebounds, while Tyrone Wallace finished with 10 points in his return to the lineup after missing nearly a month due to injury.

Dillon Brooks scored 17 points, and Chris Boucher added 11 points and six rebounds for Oregon. The Ducks (20-5, 9-3) had their six-game winning streak snapped.

Cal lost to Oregon 68-65 when the two teams met in Eugene. This time, the Bears left no doubt.

Bird got Cal off to a fast start with three quick three-pointers early and repeatedly burned the Ducks from the perimeter. He finished with five threes and the Bears had nine overall.

Oregon made one final push late and pulled within 72-57 with 4:51 remaining before Kameron Rooks scored on a tip-in to half the Ducks' surge. Brown followed with three consecutive baskets for Cal before Bird scored on a reverse dunk.

Westbrook leads Thunder past Pelicans

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Playing with a heavy heart a night after Thunder assistant and former Pelicans coach Monty Williams' wife died, Russell Westbrook led Oklahoma to a 121-95 victory over New Orleans on Thursday.

Ingrid Williams was involved in a car crash Tuesday night in Oklahoma City and died Wednesday. A moment of silence was observed for her before the game. Monty Williams coached the Pelicans last season before coming to Oklahoma City to help new coach Billy Donovan.

Westbrook had 23 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds. Kevin Durant scored 23 points, and Serge Ibaka added 18 for the Thunder. They have won 14 of 16 heading into the All-Star break.

Anthony Davis and Jrue Holiday each scored 23 points for the Pelicans.

Oklahoma City joined Golden State and San Antonio as the only teams with at least 40 wins.

The Thunder led 62-53 at halftime behind 18 points from Westbrook and 17 from Durant.

Westbrook got his 10th assist on Ibaka's three-pointer that gave the Thunder a 79-65 lead. He had his ninth rebound with just under 3 minutes to go in the third quarter before heading to the bench for his usual rest and the Thunder ahead 86-68. Oklahoma City led 95-74 at the end of the third quarter.

Oklahoma City's backups expanded the lead early in the fourth quarter, and Westbrook didn't return.

Bucks 99, Wizards 92: Khris Middleton scored 27 points, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 17 points and 13 rebounds, and host Milwaukee held off Washington.

Middleton scored 14 points in the final quarter, giving the Wizards trouble off the dribble and from the perimeter.

Washington got within three when John Wall made two free throws with 1:36 left.

But Middleton answered again, hitting a jumper in the lane on the next possession before setting up a drive-and-dish to Greg Monroe that gave the Bucks a 97-90 lead with 15 seconds left.

Middleton tied a season high with nine assists.

Bradley Beal scored 19 points for the Wizards, and Wall had 15 points and 10 assists.

The Wizards go into the All-Star break 3-7 in their last 10 games.

The Bucks will take a modest but badly needed two-game winning streak into the break. At 22-32, Milwaukee needs to inch back closer to .500 before it can start thinking about making a run at a second straight playoff appearance.

At least the Bucks gained confidence from the win after the lead saw-sawed much of the night against Washington.

Sparked by better defense, the Wizards rallied from an 11-point deficit late in the second quarter to turn it into a tight contest after halftime.

Milwaukee used a 25-5 surge in an eight-minute span to help build a 55-44 lead with 45 seconds left in the second quarter. Jabari Parker scored 12 points during that quarter, when the Bucks made their run using primarily a three-guard lineup that attacked with the ball.

Middleton made the clutch plays in the end to spark the win.