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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Report: US carriers' supremacy at risk

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The United States' aircraft carriers have always been an almost untouchable deterrent, steel behemoths capable of projecting the full weight of the U.S. military wherever they deploy. Yet while many militaries could never hope to match the U.S. carrier fleet in size and strength, countries such as China, Iran and Russia have spent recent years adjusting their forces and fielding equipment designed to counter one of the United States' greatest military strengths.

A report published Monday by the Center for a New American Security, a Washington-based think tank that focuses on national security, claims that the Navy's carrier operations are at an inflection point. Faced with growing threats abroad, the United States can either "operate its carriers at ever-increasing ranges ... or assume high levels of risk in both blood and treasure."

The report, titled "Red Alert: The Growing Threat to U.S. Aircraft Carriers," centers on China's burgeoning military posture in the Pacific and on a term that is starting to appear with an ever-increasing urgency in defense circles: anti-access/area denial, or A2/AD. The term A2/AD centers on a concept that has long existed in warfare: denying the enemy an ability to move around the battlefield. Currently, A2/AD strategy is as similar as it was when moats were dug around castles, except today's moats are an integrated system of surface-to-air missiles, anti-ship cruise missiles, submarines, surface ships and aircraft all designed to push enemy forces as far away as possible from strategically important areas.

The report focuses on Chi-

7th Fleet: Don't paint sea dispute as US-China fight

Associated Press

SYDNEY — The commander of the U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet said Monday that he is wary of the situation in the South China Sea being painted as a battle between the United States and China, but added the presence of a Chinese missile system on a disputed island will not stop the U.S. military from flying over the region.

U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Joseph Aucoin's comments come a week after it was revealed that Beijing had deployed surface-to-air missiles on an island in the fiercely contested region. The U.S. said the presence of missiles provided increasing evidence of militarization of the area by China.

China subsequently accused the U.S. of militarizing the region, saying patrols by U.S. Navy vessels and military aircraft had escalated tensions and raised concerns about stability in the area.

na's capabilities because of its "emphasis on long-range anti-ship missile procurement." This, coupled with its growing tech base, qualifies China as the "pacing threat" to the U.S. military. China, however, is not the sole architect of an A2/AD strategy designed to deter U.S. operations. In the Baltics, Russia's naval base in Kaliningrad is known to house a sophisticated air defense network and anti-ship missiles. NATO commanders also have warned of Russian A2/AD buildup around

Last month, a U.S. warship deliberately sailed near one of the Beijing-controlled islands in the Paracel chain in a so-called freedom-of-navigation exercise. China, Taiwan and Vietnam have overlapping claims in the Paracels.

Aucoin, whose Japan-based fleet covers a region from India to the international dateline in the Pacific Ocean, said the U.S. is not making such maneuvers to single out any country, and wants all nations that are reclaiming land to stop.

"I wish it wasn't portrayed as U.S. versus China," Aucoin told reporters in Sydney, one of his stops on a visit to Australia to meet with defense officials. "This shouldn't seem provocative. What we're trying to ensure is that all countries, no matter size or strength, can pursue their interests based on the law of the sea and not have that endangered by some of these actions."

Syria as Russia has moved advanced surface-to-air missiles into its airbase there as well as a flotilla of ships with robust anti-air capabilities.

As other countries focus on creating sophisticated A2/AD bubbles by using new technology such as drones, advanced missiles and newer aircraft, the U.S. — by operating as it always has — is putting itself more at risk. According to the report, that is particularly relevant as carrier groups have reduced their long-range strike

ability in lieu of being able to fly more air missions but at shorter ranges.

"Operating the carrier in the face of increasingly lethal and precise munitions will thus require the United States to expose a multi-billion dollar asset to high levels of risk in the event of a conflict," the report says. "An adversary with A2/AD capabilities would likely launch a saturation attack against the carrier from a variety of platforms and directions. Such an attack would be difficult — if not impossible — to defend against."

Last week, China's A2/AD strategy made international news after satellite imagery showed the deployment of HQ-9 surface-to-air missiles on Woody Island, a disputed atoll in the South China Sea. Though small, the island is claimed by both Taiwan and Vietnam.

The CNAS report classifies the HQ-9 as a short-range A2/AD threat but indicates that the movement of such systems into disputed territory in the South China Sea, if properly reinforced, is a potentially long-term problem for U.S. naval operations.

While the report discusses possible countermeasures for a sophisticated A2/AD network, including the Navy's future railgun project, the U.S. probably would employ a variety of systems and strategies, including hacking, to defeat the enemy threat. However, long-term strategies suggested in the report include putting U.S. combat power into systems such as submarines and long-range carrier-based drones. Submarines could evade A2/AD by remaining undetected, while carrier-based drones — with their increased range — would give carriers much-needed standoff from potential A2/AD threats.

US-Russia plan sets Syria cease-fire for Saturday

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States and Russia agreed Monday on a new cease-fire for Syria that will take effect on Saturday, U.S. officials said.

They said the former Cold War foes, who are backing opposing sides in Syria's civil war, agreed on all the terms and conditions for the "cessation of hostilities" between Syrian President Bashar Assad's government and armed opposition groups. Those sides still need to accept the deal.

The truce will not cover the Islamic State, the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front or any other militias designated as terrorist organizations by the U.N. Security Council. Both the U.S. and Russia are still targeting those groups with airstrikes.

An announcement is expected after Presidents Barack Obama and Vladimir Putin speak on the matter by telephone Monday, according to the officials, who weren't authorized to speak publicly on the matter ahead of time and demanded anonymity.

Kadena officials admit using restricted chemical

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND CHIYOMI SUMIDA

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Kadena Air Base officials have acknowledged using a restricted contaminant found in firefighting foam after high levels of the hazardous organic compound were detected in streams running through the base and in adjacent groundwater wells.

In a letter dated Feb. 17, Col. Dwayne Robison, commander of the 18th Civil Engineer Group, told Okinawa prefectural officials the base is in the process of replacing fire-extinguishing foam containing perfluorooctane sulfonate, known as PFOS, with products free of the substance.

PFOS was restricted under Japanese law in 2010 to special circumstances, such as etching agents, resists for semiconductors and in the manufacture of photographic film. Its use is also restricted in the United States.

The purchase of fire-extinguishing foam containing PFOS was banned in both the U.S. and Japan as of 2014, according to Okinawan officials

and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's website.

"As with all major airports in the world, to include those in Japan, Kadena Air Base has procured products in the past containing PFOS, such as aqueous film forming foam," Robison wrote to the Okinawa Defense Bureau.

The base has replaced most foams containing the banned chemical and will continue to do so, Robison said in his letter.

Air Force officials did not respond to requests for further comment.

Robison said Kadena uses the foam according to standard industry practices and that local officials could continue to monitor the base's wells.

Okinawa officials told Stars and Stripes they were not satisfied with that response. They met with Robison at Kadena on Monday and requested a joint working group be formed to investigate the source of the pollution, including tests of the base's river and drain outlets. They previously had called for an immediate suspension of the use of PFOS.

Russian surveillance request downplayed

BY TARA COPP

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon downplayed a request Monday by Russia to fly a spy plane over the continental United States, noting the flights are part of a regular treaty meant to prevent miscalculation about military threats.

The flights are allowed under the 2002 Open Skies Treaty, which permits the 34 countries that signed it to conduct surveillance flights of each other's military installations or nuclear facilities.

On Monday, Russia asked the Open Skies Consultative Commission, the Vienna group that oversees the treaty, for permission to conduct another round of flights. Once approved, the flights could occur over the United States or the other 33 member nations. Russia asked to conduct the flights with an upgraded digital sensor that it would add to its Tupelov Tu-154 medium-range jet for the surveillance. The Tu-154 looks like a commercial airliner.

The commission has 120 days to consider Russia's request.

On Monday, Pentagon spokesman Capt. Jeff Davis downplayed concern about the request, saying if the new sensor and flights are approved by the commission, any flight plan would have to be filed in advance and any imagery Russia collected would have to be shared with the commission publicly.

"This was signed in a day of wet film, and wet film is no longer made. It needs to be updated to digital and that is what this is about," Davis said. "We have to remember that while we have pretty good intelligence on a lot of the world, a lot of other countries don't necessarily have that great of intelligence on us. So in the interest of transparency and prevention of miscalculation ... sometimes it's worthwhile to allow them to have a look at what you are doing or what you are not doing."

Information from The Associated Press was used in this report.

Apple defends resistance to iPhone hack for feds

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Apple Inc. CEO Tim Cook said in an early Monday morning email to employees that the U.S. government should withdraw its demand that Apple help the FBI hack a locked iPhone used by a shooter in the San Bernardino attack.

The message, subject-lined "Thank you for your support," is accompanied by an online question-and-answer page that reiterates many of the comments Cook made in a public letter after a magistrate judge's order last week. His commu-

nication to staff also brushes aside several key government claims made in Friday's filing, including an assertion that the company was acting out of business interests in saying it would not cooperate with an investigation of the California shootings by the FBI.

The comments from Apple and its CEO cap a week of back-and-forth filings and statements involving the Justice Department, the FBI and Apple after a U.S. magistrate ordered the company to break its iPhone security protocols to assist federal officials probing the San Bernardino shootings.

Hamlin earns closest Daytona 500 win

Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — When he was in second grade, Denny Hamlin wrote a letter to himself wishing for a Daytona 500 victory.

His childlike cursive stated he wanted to win the race in 1998. Hamlin had to wait considerably longer, just not as long as team owner Joe Gibbs.

With a Hail Mary move Sunday, Hamlin ended Gibbs' 23-year drought at the Daytona 500. It gave Hamlin his first Daytona 500 victory in 10 tries, and Toyota its first in "The Great American Race."

"You couldn't have written a better ending," Hamlin said. "It's the pinnacle of my career, for sure."

Hamlin pulled out of line with a lap to go and chased down teammate Matt Kenseth. He stayed off Kenseth's block, and wedged between Kenseth and Martin Truex Jr.

Hamlin stayed in the gas for a door-to-door dash to the checkered flag that ended in a photo finish with Truex. He beat Truex by 0.010 seconds, the closest finish in the history of the race.

"I don't know where that came from, I don't know what happened, I can't even figure out what I did," Hamlin said. "It all just came together. But this wouldn't be possible if it wasn't for Toyotas sticking together all race long."

Gibbs, who in November celebrated with Kyle Busch the team's first Sprint Cup title in a decade, won the race for the first time since Dale Jarrett in 1993.

Gibbs had made it clear that he had no use for the victories his drivers collected in the exhibition races leading into Sunday's season-opener — Hamlin and Busch each won one race in the buildup to the opener. But the three-time Super Bowl-winning coach was focused only on the 500 and his four drivers brainstormed on the best way to get a win.

"The thrill in football, you can't get any more excited than that, winning a Super Bowl. It's the same thrill over here," Gibbs said. "Most people never get to have a dream in life. I've had two from an occupational standpoint. I'm probably one of the most blessed guys in the world."

Hamlin, Kenseth, Busch and Carl Edwards stuck close together for most of the race, and they got assistance from Truex, who became a de facto JGR teammate this year when Furniture Row Racing moved to Toyota.

Kenseth led Truex until the final lap when Hamlin finally jumped out of line. Starting a second line on the outside, Hamlin got a push from Kevin Harvick that allowed him to catch Kenseth. Kenseth tried to throw a block but Hamlin wedged into the middle between Kenseth and Truex, and Kenseth had to save his car from wrecking.

"The last thing I wanted to do was wreck

off turn four with my Toyota teammates and none of us win," Hamlin said. "We had talked about a plan overnight to just work together, work together and I've never seen it executed so flawlessly."

"I said with two to go that we have to get the team victory no matter what it takes and I essentially was trying to go up there and block [Harvick] to keep him from getting to those guys."

But the push from Harvick was so strong, Hamlin was able to race for the win.

Truex wasn't sure what he could have done differently.

"It hurts a little bit," Truex said. "I think the only thing I should have done different was been a little more aggressive coming to the line, holding Denny up the race track. That last split second when he pulled off my door, that was it. It gave him that couple inches to beat me to the line."

"It's hard to make those decisions. Live and learn. I think if I get in that position again, I'll do it a little bit differently."

Toyotas swept the podium as Truex was second, and Busch third. Edwards was fifth as Toyota took four of the top five spots. It comes three months after Busch gave Toyota its first championship.

"This was our 10th try at the Daytona 500," said David Wilson, president of Toyota Racing Development, who called the win the biggest in Toyota history — trumping even the 2003 Indianapolis

500 victory.

"When we came into the sport, we struggled. We were not ready. We didn't know. And so it's taken time for us to collectively build an organization of winning races and competing for championships."

Kenseth faded to 14th.

"They don't get much more crushing than that," Kenseth said. "If I can't win, I want my teammate to win. There's a million things you could do differently, but I did what I thought I should do at the time to try to win. We finished terrible, but that was the move I thought I had to make to try to preserve the win."

Dale Earnhardt Jr., seeking his third Daytona 500 victory, came up empty as he tried to force his way through the field late in the race.

Earnhardt was using the high line to inch closer to the front, and when he tried to get a side draft from another car, he spun through the fourth turn. His Chevrolet hit an interior wall and then ricocheted into the grass, where Earnhardt found himself stuck.

"Caught me by surprise there," Earnhardt said. "We were making some ground on the leaders a little bit so that was looking pretty good because the outside line really hadn't been doing anything all day. Just busted my butt there. Driver mistake."

US women shut out Canada

Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Lindsey Horan felt her breakthrough goal put the United States at ease.

Horan scored on a header in the 53rd minute, Tobin Heath tacked on another goal eight minutes later and the United States beat Canada 2-0 Sunday in the final match at the CONCACAF Olympic qualifying tournament.

"I'm so glad that we got that goal," Horan said about her big play set up by defender Becky Sauerbrunn. "I think it made us a little more comfortable in the match and it's always good to get that first goal obviously, so I'm really happy about that."

Both teams had already claimed the region's two spots in the Rio Olympics this summer with semifinal victories. Alex Morgan scored three goals in a 5-0 U.S. victory Friday over Trinidad and Tobago, while Christine Sinclair scored a pair of goals in Canada's 3-1 win over Costa Rica.

The United States has won the past three gold medals and four overall since women's soccer became an Olympic sport in 1996. Canada, the bronze medalists in the 2012 London Games, will be making its third straight trip to the Olympics.

The U.S. went with the same lineup it used for the semifinals, starting 17-year-old Mallory Pugh, who is headed to UCLA in the fall. It was the third start of the tournament for Pugh, the youngest player to start for the U.S. in a qualifier.

Canada coach John Herdman rested several of his usual starters, including Sinclair, Diana Matheson, Sophie Schmidt, and goalkeeper Erin McLeod. Matheson, Schmidt and Sinclair all came in as subs in the second half. Melissa Tancredi wore the captain's armband.

Herdman said afterward the plan was to hold the United States and then bring in the "flair" players for a late push. But Horan stepped up before the substitutions could be made.

Sinclair had been nursing a calf injury throughout the tournament, but nonetheless surpassed Mia Hamm for second on the career scoring list. Sinclair sits at 161 goals, behind Abby Wambach's 184.

"Bringing Schmidt, Matheson and Sinc on at the same time, we thought that was going to be the game-changing moment, a thing Canada hadn't tried before against the U.S.," he said. "But three minutes, that's as far as it was, and we wilted and broke. It's a shame."

Carli Lloyd's headers in the 13th and 23rd minutes were off and the Canadians were surprisingly adept at stopping the U.S. attack in the first half.

The match was physical, as goalkeeper Hope Solo had predicted: Co-captain Lloyd endured a kick to the back and was pulled to the ground with about five minutes to go before the break.

The U.S. finally punched through with Horan's header that was misjudged by Canadian goalkeeper Stephanie Labbe. Sauerbrunn, playing in her 100th match for the national team, laughed about the rarity of the assist.

"I think it was my 50th cap against Canada, I had an assist," Sauerbrunn said. "So it's been a while."

Horan's teammate on the Portland Thorns, Heath, added a goal in the 61st minute on an assist from Pugh.

"Canada had a plan and it was obviously very direct," U.S. coach Jill Ellis said. "I think we just stayed with it and were persistent in trying to play. And then I think we started to move the ball very well. I think we deserved the win tonight."

The U.S. team looks very different than the group that won the Women's World Cup last summer in Canada. Several players, including Wambach and Lauren Holiday, retired from the team. Amy Rodriguez and Sydney Leroux are taking time off because they are both expecting. And Megan Rapinoe is recovering from knee surgery.

The United States has never dropped a game in Olympic qualifying, going 18-0-1.

US gets Colombia in Copa opener

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The United States will play Colombia, Costa Rica and Paraguay in what appears to be a difficult first-round group in the Centennial Copa America.

In the opener of a special 16-nation tournament whose business deals led to indictments against a slew of top soccer executives on corruption charges, the Americans play the Colombians on June 3 at Santa Clara, Calif. The U.S. meets regional rival Costa Rica four days later at Chicago, then closes Group A play against Paraguay at Philadelphia on June 11.

To U.S. coach Jurgen Klinsmann, the daunting group that emerged from Sunday night's draw reminds him of the 2014 World Cup, where the U.S. opened with a 2-1 win over Ghana, tied Portugal 2-2 and lost to Germany 1-0, to finish second. The Americans were eliminated with a 2-1 extra-time loss to Belgium in the round of 16.

"It's doable. We had a similar kind of scenario in Brazil, and we went through," Klinsmann said. "First or second with that group is both tremendously fine."

Other groups are:

- B: Brazil, Ecuador, Haiti, Peru
- C: Jamaica, Mexico, Uruguay, Venezuela
- D: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Panama

Colombia went 3-0 in its group at the World Cup and was knocked out by Brazil in the quarterfinals. Ranked eighth in the world, Colombia has a player pool that includes stars James Rodriguez and Jackson Martinez.

In a famous match during the group stage of the 1994 World Cup, the U.S. upset the Colombians 2-1, a result that led 10 days later to the murder of Andres Escobar, a 27-year-old Colombian defender who had deflected a pass into his net for an own goal.



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Maryland holds off Michigan

Associated Press

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — There was no panic by Maryland coach Mark Turgeon or his players after the Terrapins suffered a pair of Big Ten losses last week.

Turgeon was confident his team has enough talent and depth to overcome that type of adversity.

It proved to be the correct assessment as Maryland responded with one of its most hard-fought performances of the season.

Robert Carter scored 17 points and the sixth-ranked Terrapins toppled Michigan 86-82 on Sunday.

"It's great to win and it is great to play well," Turgeon said. "You lose two in a row, it felt like two months. I was really proud of our team. We beat a really good team that plays really, really well in Michigan."

Jake Layman had 16 points, while Melo Trimble finished with 13 for Maryland (23-5, 11-4 Big Ten). Freshman Diamond Stone added 13 points after being suspended for the previous game for a flagrant foul against Wisconsin.

Junior Mark Donnal went 10-for-13 from the field and had 25 points for Michigan (19-9, 9-6).

Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman had 16 points, Derrick Walton Jr. scored 14 and Zak Irvin had 11 points for the Wolverines.

No. 21 SMU 74, East Carolina 63: Nic Moore had 22 points, including four three-pointers after halftime, and seven assists as SMU beat East Carolina.

Markus Kennedy added 19 points while Jordan Tolbert had 12 points and 12 rebounds for the Mustangs (22-4, 10-4 American), who have alternated losses and wins in their last eight games since an 18-0 start.

SMU never trailed after an 8-0 run going into the halftime, and took the lead for good when Moore hit consecutive threes in a 27-second span after that.

Utah 80, USC 69: At Los Angeles,

Jakob Poeltl made his first four shots and two free throws, putting Utah's big man in a comfortable rhythm early.

The 7-footer from Austria had 29 points, on 11-for-13 shooting, and 13 rebounds, and the Utes shot 54 percent to hand the Trojans their first loss in 16 home games.

Jordan Loveridge added 13 points and Brandon Taylor had 10 assists for the Utes (21-7, 10-5 Pac-12). They won their fourth in a row and ninth in 11 games to remain third in the league standings.

California 80, Washington State 62: Tyrone Wallace scored all of his game-high 17 points in the second half to lead the visiting Bears (19-8, 9-5 Pac-12).

California's victory, combined with USC's loss to Utah earlier in the day, moved the Bears past the Trojans into fourth place. The top four seeds in the Pac-12 tournament receive first-round byes.

Wichita State 84, Indiana State 51: Ron Baker scored 14 points and visiting Wichita State clinched the No. 1 seed in the Missouri Valley Conference tournament.

Baker had five rebounds, three steals and two blocked shots. Shaquille Morris, Zach Brown and Markis McDuffie all finished with 11 points for the Shockers (21-7, 14-2), who have won four of five.

Temple 69, Houston 66: Obi Enechionya scored a career-high 26 points as visiting Temple rallied from a 10-point deficit and beat Houston to remain alone atop the American Athletic Conference standings.

The Owls (17-9, 11-3) have won nine of their last 11 games — including an 83-67 home loss to No. 1 Villanova last Wednesday — and are a game up on SMU in the conference.

Dameyan Dotson made a three-pointer to give Houston a 54-44 lead. Temple answered with a 20-10 run to tie it at 64-all with 57 seconds left.

Seton Hall 62, St. John's 61: At New York, Isaiah Whitehead capped one of the worst games of his career by making two free throws with 5.6 seconds to play that

gave the Pirates their sixth win in the past seven games.

Whitehead, one of the Big East's top players, was 1-for-12 from the field, including missing all five three-point attempts, but he made the two free throws that gave Seton Hall (19-7, 9-5) a victory in a game it couldn't afford to lose as it pursues an NCAA bid.

Wisconsin 69, Illinois 60: Ethan Happ had 20 points and 12 rebounds, and helped spark a 17-0 run that allowed the host Badgers to roar back from a double-digit deficit in the second half.

Happ, an athletic 6-foot-9 freshman, had three steals during the decisive run for Wisconsin (17-10, 9-5 Big Ten), which avoided a potentially damaging loss to their NCAA Tournament résumé.

San Diego State 78, San Jose State 56: Malik Pope scored 17 points with a career-high 11 rebounds and the visiting Aztecs clinched at least a share of its 10th Mountain West Conference title.

Winston Shepard also scored 17 points in the victory that gave San Diego State (20-7, 13-1) a school-record 11th consecutive 20-win season.

Stony Brook 75, Maine 56: Jameel Warney scored 20 points and grabbed nine rebounds and visiting Stony Brook beat Maine to claim the America East regular-season title.

Warney, a 6-foot-8 senior forward, is the third player in America East history to reach 2,000 points and 1,000 rebounds.

Stony Brook (23-5, 14-1) bounced back from its only conference loss at Albany on Wednesday that snapped an 18-game winning streak.

George Washington 90, La Salle 50: Tyler Cavanaugh scored 22 points, Patricio Garino had 19 points and eight rebounds and the Colonials improved to 13-2 at home this season and avoided a damaging loss to their tournament résumé.

Davis' 59 leads Pelicans

Associated Press

AUBURN HILLS, Michigan — Anthony Davis scored a team-record 59 points and added 20 rebounds as the New Orleans Pelicans beat the Detroit Pistons 111-106 on Sunday.

Davis went 24-for-34 from the floor and made his only two three-pointers. He added nine free throws in 10 tries.

Davis also broke the scoring record for the Palace of Auburn Hills, set by LeBron James with 48 points in an Eastern Conference finals game on June 1, 2007. Davis joined Shaquille O'Neal and Chris Webber as the only NBA players with 50 points and 20 rebounds in a game since 1983.

Cavaliers 115, Thunder 92: Kevin Love scored 29 points to help the streaking Cavaliers to the road win.

Spurs 118, Suns 111: Patty Mills had 21 points, matching his career high with six three-pointers, and visiting San Antonio pulled away for the victory.

Trail Blazers 115, Jazz 111: C.J. McCollum scored 31 points, including two clinching free throws with 2.7 seconds left, and host Portland earned its fifth consecutive win.

Raptors 98, Grizzlies 85: DeMar DeRozan scored 21 points, Kyle Lowry added 18 and Toronto beat Memphis for its eighth consecutive home win.

Bulls 126, Lakers 115: Derrick Rose and E'Twaun Moore had 24 points apiece to lead Chicago to victory in Kobe Bryant's final game at the United Center.

Hornets 104, Nets 96: Kemba Walker scored 28 points, Al Jefferson added 18 in his second game back from right knee surgery, and visiting Charlotte extended its winning streak to a season-high five games.

Mavericks 129, 76ers 103: Wesley Matthews scored 21 points, Dirk Nowitzki had 18 and host Dallas won for just the second time in its last seven games.

Celtics 121, Nuggets 101: Isaiah Thomas had 22 points and 12 assists, leading visiting Boston to the road win.

Pacers 105, Magic 102: Monta Ellis scored 21 points, Paul George had 20 and visiting Indiana won for the fourth time in five games.

Wild blow past Chicago in outdoor game

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Just one week ago, the Minnesota Wild were reeling from eight straight losses and the firing of their head coach.

So the scene on Sunday could not have been more surreal. They beat their biggest rival by five goals in a football stadium filled with 50,426 giddy fans for a season-best four-game winning streak.

Jason Pominville and Erik Haula each had a goal and two assists, and the Wild celebrated the first outdoor game in franchise history with a 6-1 victory over the Chicago Blackhawks.

"What a feeling," Haula said. "First to get the win, and have the whole team play that well."

With an ideal faceoff temperature of 35 degrees, the Wild turned the NHL's 17th edition of open-air hockey into a romp past their postseason nemesis and primary rival at TCF Bank Stadium on the University of Minnesota campus.

The Blackhawks pulled goalie Corey Crawford for Scott Darling after 19 saves in two periods. Nino Niederreiter and Ryan Carter each added a goal and an assist, and Matt Dumba and Thomas Vanek also scored.

"Just getting that confidence back. It's an amazing thing," said Wild goalie

Devan Dubnyk, whose shutout pursuit was stopped by Patrick Kane's Western Conference-leading 35th goal midway through the third period. Dubnyk stopped 31 shots.

Ten players tallied at least one point for the Wild, including all three former Golden Gophers in Vanek, Haula and Mike Reilly, whose college careers took place across the street at Mariucci Arena.

The Wild improved to 4-0 under interim coach John Torchetti and 3-0 this season against the Blackhawks, the team that has eliminated them from the playoffs in each of the past three years.

The only downside to the day for the Wild was the injury to left wing Jason Zucker, who took an elbow to the jaw from Blackhawks defenseman Michal Rozsival in the second period and had the back of his head slam against the ice. Zucker needed help to shuffle off after lying still on his side for a few minutes while five members of the Wild's medical staff examined him.

Rozsival was ejected for the hit and given a five-minute major penalty, and Zucker rode on a cart to the locker room.

Rangers 1, Red Wings 0 (OT): Kevin Klein scored on a 2-on-1 break at 1:59 of overtime and host New York spoiled a magnificent effort by Detroit goalie Jimmy Howard.

Henrik Lundqvist made 22 saves in his fourth shutout and helped the Rangers win for the seventh time in nine games (7-1-1).

Penguins 4, Sabres 3: Rookie Scott Wilson sparked a two-goal second period and extended his goal streak to three games in leading Pittsburgh over host Buffalo.

Ducks 5, Flames 2: Ryan Kesler had two goals and an assist, John Gibson made 22 saves and Anaheim returned from a long road trip to beat Calgary for its fifth consecutive victory.

Anaheim captain Ryan Getzlaf extended his point streak to eight games with a third-period goal for the streaking Ducks.

Lightning 4, Hurricanes 2: Ryan Callahan scored twice and Steven Stamkos had a goal and an assist to propel Tampa Bay past host Carolina for its third straight win.

Canucks 5, Avalanche 1: Jannik Hansen scored twice, Ryan Miller made 37 saves and Vancouver beat visiting Colorado to snap a four-game skid.

Adam Cracknell, Radim Vrbata and Christopher Tanev also scored for Vancouver. Henrik Sedin had four assists and Daniel Sedin had three assists.

Bubba Watson rallies for another win at Riviera

LOS ANGELES — Bubba Watson packed plenty of memories from his week in LA. He has a kidney stone as a keepsake. He had a cameo in "Girl Meets World." He received a text Sunday morning from Steph Curry offering shooting tips to Watson's son. And he capped it all with the best memento of all.

Two shots behind with four holes to play, Watson rallied with flawless golf and a pair of birdies over the last three holes to overtake Jason Kokrak and hold off Adam Scott to win at Riviera for the second time in three years and move back to No. 4 in the world.

All week long, Watson spoke of the importance of making putts at Riviera, and he needed all of them — the 10-footer for par on No. 10 to stay in the game, and a pair of birdies to twice tie for the lead, from 30 feet on No. 11 and from 5 feet on the par-3 16th.

From The Associated Press