

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Carter fires back at McCain criticisms

By TARA COPP  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Secretary of Defense Ash Carter on Monday defended his focus on personnel reforms during a time of war, contending that improving conditions for servicemembers is necessary to prepare the U.S. military for future conflicts.

Carter's Force of the Future initiative, which includes an overhaul of the military promotions system, the retirement system and a significant extension of family-oriented benefits such as 12 weeks of maternity leave and more career flexibility, came under fire last week by Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., who called the

efforts an "outrageous waste of time" given the budgetary challenges and ongoing war-time operations the military is concurrently handling.

Carter fired back Monday, saying he hopes to be able to help the Senate see the logic of the program reforms when he testifies before them in the next few weeks.

"Our objective here is simply force effectiveness," Carter said during a news conference at the Pentagon with Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "We're not trying to be futuristic; we're not trying to be progressive. We're trying to make sure that we continue to attract and maintain the very best,"

Carter said.

The reforms come at a time when the Army is cutting its forces and each of the services is struggling to afford the training opportunities and depot repairs needed to maintain readiness due to continued combat operations against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, and now Afghanistan and Libya.

The U.S. military is further straining its resources to address Russia's aggression against the Ukraine and China's military buildup of islands in the South China Sea.

Carter said the Defense Department could not wait on the reforms.

"Do we have to do all these

things at the same time? Yeah, we have to make investments in future technology; we have to make ... human investments" and "do all the things we're doing around the world," he said.

Disagreements about the reforms and how they have been introduced has imperiled the nomination of former Rep. Brad Carson, D-Okla., as the DOD's undersecretary for personnel and readiness.

Carson has served in the position as an acting secretary since his nomination last April and has been chiefly responsible for moving forward Carter's reforms plans.

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## Navy SEAL presented with Medal of Honor

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — A member of Navy SEAL Team 6 who covered an American civilian with his own body to protect him during a deadly firefight deep in the remote eastern Afghanistan mountains was presented the Medal of Honor on Monday.

Senior Chief Petty Officer Edward C. Byers Jr. stood stoic in front of a large crowd in the East Room of the White House as President Barack Obama placed the nation's highest military honor around his neck.

Byers, 36, received the honor more than three years after he and a small team of the military's most elite special operators were sent on a "no-fail" mission to retrieve Dr. Dilip

Joseph, an American who had been captured by the Taliban days earlier. As the second SEAL through the door of the tiny, one-room building where Joseph was being held, Byers quickly engaged two Taliban fighters, calling out to locate Joseph.

"Hearing English, Ed leapt across the room and threw himself on the hostage, using his own body to shield him from the bullets," Obama said, adding that Byers simultaneously pinned an armed Taliban fighter to a wall with his bare hand long enough for a teammate to eliminate the threat.

"It was over almost as soon as it began, in just minutes," Obama said. "By going after those guards, Ed saved the lives of several teammates and that hostage."

Despite his actions, Byers told reporters on Monday that he was not the hero that day. That person, the SEAL insisted, was Petty Officer 1st Class Nicolas Checque, the first teammate through the door, who was mortally wounded.

"This award is truly his," Byers said after the ceremony. "He was an American hero and the hero of that operation. ... Our nation owes him a debt of gratitude."

Byers is the 11th living servicemember to receive the Medal of Honor for actions in Afghanistan. He's the sixth Navy SEAL to be awarded the medal and the first living SEAL to receive it since the Vietnam War.

That made Monday's ceremony especially unique, the president said, acknowledg-

ing the dozens of uniformed SEALs, senior special operations leaders and retired operators who joined Byers' family and friends for the ceremony.

The honor, Obama said, was "a rare opportunity for the American people to get a glimpse of a special breed of warrior that so often serves in the shadows."

Byers, who enlisted in the Navy in 1998 and has been a SEAL since 2003, will continue to serve as a special operator.

"Thoughts of Nic and other brothers who have paid the ultimate sacrifice, I believe is what will carry me through bearing the responsibilities that come with this honor," Byers said. "I don't know for sure how this will change my life. I just plan on taking it one step at a time."

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# Terrorists target Iraqi funeral

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A suicide bomber struck an Iraqi funeral on Monday, killing at least 25 people, including a Shiite militia leader, in a town north of Baghdad that saw a wave of revenge attacks after a similar bombing in January.

Another 52 were wounded in the bombing in Muqdadiah, about 60 miles north of the capital, security and hospital

officials said.

The dead included a local commander in Asaib Ahl al-Haq, a powerful Shiite militia that is part of the state-sanctioned Popular Mobilization Forces, responsible for much of the security in the area.

The Islamic State group bombed a cafe frequented by militiamen in Muqdadiah in January, killing at least 32 and triggering a wave of revenge attacks on Sunni mosques and

civilians. The New York-based Human Rights Watch blamed the reprisal attacks on powerful militias in the Popular Mobilization Forces.

The Islamic State group also claimed responsibility for Monday's attack, according to a statement posted online shortly afterward. On Sunday a double bombing in Baghdad claimed by the Islamic State group killed 73 people.

# Seabasing concepts to be tested

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE

Stars and Stripes

The Navy and the Marine Corps will operate new platforms at the Freedom Banner and Ssang Yong exercises that start in South Korea this week and experiment with new concepts they hope will streamline and improve future amphibious landing capabilities in the Pacific.

The first-in-class USNS Montford Point, delivered last year, is slated to link up with the USNS GySgt. Fred W. Stockham — a large, medium-speed, roll-on/roll-off cargo ship — to test joint seabasing capabilities, Marine Corps officials said.

Joint seabasing is essentially a base at sea from which amphibious assaults are launched on land-based targets.

The exercises will mark the first time a ship like the Stockham has moored itself to a Montford Point-class mobile landing platform in the Pacific since initial testing took place in San Diego.

Marine Corps officials hope the Montford Point class will revolutionize combat readiness in amphibious landings when port facilities and airspace are restricted. They will be able to get closer to a target and allow forces to be more combat-ready when an assault takes place.

The maneuvers, officially a part of Freedom Banner but also a piece of the Ssang Yong amphibious landing exercise, begin Wednesday when the bigger and faster Stockham moors "skin to skin" with the Montford Point, Sellers said. Marines will then be able to separate and reconfigure gear on the Montford Point's spacious, flat deck. When an assault takes place, Marine officials want them prepared to fight.

The Montford Point, which can submerge its midsection, will then launch landing craft air cushions and amphibious assault vehicles in a simulated port seizure.

# Police chief lauds slain Va. officer's bravery

Associated Press

WOODBIDGE, Va. — On her first day on the job, Officer Ashley Guindon responded to a call that could have become routine: a domestic disturbance in a well-kept suburban neighborhood.

But one woman had already been slain inside the northern Virginia home of a Pentagon worker, and Officer Guindon would be next. Army Staff Sgt. Ronald Hamilton opened fire as she arrived at his door, killing her and wounding two other officers, police said Sunday.

Prince William County Police Chief Stephan Hudson was stone-faced Sunday as he

lauded Guindon's bravery, intelligence and compassion. The chief offered no details about what might have provoked the gunman, who, according to neighbors, was about to be transferred to Italy.

Hamilton, 32, and his wife Crystal, 29, had been arguing all day Saturday, but it escalated after she called 911, the chief said. Hamilton fatally shot his wife and then fired at the arriving officers, killing Guindon and seriously wounding the others before emerging from his front door to surrender.

The couple's 11-year-old son was home at the time of the slayings and is being cared for by relatives, Hudson said.

Guindon, 28, was pronounced dead at the hospital where officers Jesse Hempen, 31, and David McKeown, 33, were being treated on Sunday. Police did not detail their injuries. Hudson said they face long recoveries.

Commonwealth's Attorney Paul Ebert said he would likely seek the death penalty against Hamilton, who was held without bond on charges including capital murder, first-degree murder and malicious wounding.

Guindon, a former Marine Corps reservist with a master's degree in forensic science, had been sworn in on Friday.

# New stealth bomber has a number, but no name

Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — It's a bird, it's a plane ... it's a bomber.

Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James on Friday revealed a prototype illustration of the service's next-generation stealth bomber — designated the B-21 — at the Air Force Association's Air Warfare Symposium. Not many details were shared about the highly secretive Long Range Strike Bomber, but James said there's one feature the Air Force community at large will have a part

in determining.

"So we have an image, we have a designation, but ... we don't yet have a name," James said at the symposium last week in Orlando, Fla.

James challenged active-duty, National Guard and Reserve servicemembers, as well as Air Force civilians and family members, "to give us your best suggestions for a name for ... America's newest bomber."

The Air Force will announce details on how to submit ideas soon, officials said.

The person who submits the selected name will help James

announce it at the Air Force Association conference in the fall, James said.

The artist's rendering of the bomber is based on an initial design concept. There are no existing prototypes of the aircraft yet, Air Force officials said. The B-21 designation recognizes the aircraft as the first bomber of the 21st century.

The Air Force in October awarded Northrop Grumman the contract to build the first 21 of 100 expected new bombers. The Air Force has said it will pay \$564 million per bomber for the first 21 aircraft.



# Johnson ties Earnhardt on Sprint Cup career wins list

Associated Press

HAMPTON, Ga. — Jimmie Johnson reached another milestone in his brilliant NASCAR career.

This one was really special.

Win No. 76.

Right up there with the Intimidator.

Johnson's victory at Atlanta Motor Speedway on Sunday pushed him into a tie for seventh place on the career list with the late Dale Earnhardt, who was killed in a last-lap crash at the 2001 Daytona 500 just a few months before Johnson joined the Cup series.

"I didn't have a chance to race against him," Johnson said. "There's been a big void in my mind ... so to tie him, for me personally, it gives me a little bit of attachment to the great Dale Earnhardt."

After a chaotic finish, the significance of the triumph didn't occur to Johnson at first. Then it hit him, so he took another spin in front of the grandstand, sticking his hand out of the car to hold up three fingers.

No. 3 was Earnhardt's number, of course.

And, in an appropriate twist, Johnson teammate Dale Earnhardt Jr. crossed the line next, edging out Kyle Busch for the runner-up spot by mere inches.

"I think dad would've liked Jimmie as a person," Junior said, "but he certainly wouldn't have enjoyed competing against him."

Next on Johnson's bucket list: another series championship. By winning the second race of the season, he essentially wrapped up his spot in the season-ending Chase, where he'll be attempting to join Earnhardt and Richard Petty as the only drivers to capture seven Cup titles.

"The six that I have, I know how special and meaningful they are," Johnson said. "If I have a chance to win a seventh and tie Petty and Earnhardt, that would be just monumental."

Polished and well-liked throughout the garage, Johnson would appear to have little in common with the Intimidator, a rough-and-tumble driver who didn't mind making others mad and doing whatever it took to win the race — even if it meant knocking someone out of the way.

"He didn't get that Intimidator title by being nice to everybody," quipped Rick Hendrick, the owner of Johnson's No. 48 car.

But Earnhardt Jr. thinks his father, if he had lived, would have become fast friends with Johnson.

Certainly, he would've respected Johnson's skills behind the wheel, which were on full display Sunday as he struggled to maintain control of his car on fading tires, having made his final green-flag pit stop ahead of everyone else in a strategic bid to snatch the lead away from Kevin Harvick.

"Knowing dad and knowing Jimmie's character, they would've gotten along tremendously and dad would've thought the world of him," Earnhardt Jr. said. "How can you not like Jimmie? He's just a good guy who never stepped over the line with anything he's ever said or anything he's ever done."

All he does is win, with staggering consistency.

The 40-year-old has now earned a victory in every full-time Cup season, extending the streak to 15 years in a row. As fit as any driver in the series, he could likely remain at the top of the game for another decade or more. While Petty's record of

200 career victories is unlikely to ever be duplicated — he competed largely in a different era with far more races each year — Johnson certainly has the potential to reach the second spot on the list.

David Pearson won 105 times. Johnson has averaged a bit more than five victories a year, a pace that would push him past the Silver Fox in another six seasons.

Shorter term, Johnson can set his sights on Cale Yarborough (83 victories), Bobby Allison and Darrell Waltrip (84 apiece), and longtime teammate Jeff Gordon, who retired after last season with 93 wins.

"You've got to say that he's one of the best that's ever been in the sport," Hendrick said of Johnson. "It's going to be interesting to see how many races and championships Jimmie and Chad (Knaus, his crew chief) can win."

It was Knaus who made the call that essentially gave Johnson a shot at his latest victory. Knowing it would be tough to get around Harvick, who led more laps than anyone, the crew chief brought in the No. 48 for its last scheduled pit stop nine laps before Harvick, gambling that Johnson could make his tires last longer on the bruising Atlanta track.

The move worked, giving Johnson a big lead, though a late yellow flag forced overtime. Everyone came back into the pits for new tires, Johnson returned to the track still out front, and a four-car crash on the backstretch shortly after the restart sealed the win.

"Jimmie is pretty amazing, isn't he?" Knaus said, breaking into a big smile. "Let's be honest, he's just a heck of a race-car driver."

## Avs acquire Boedker at deadline

Associated Press

The Colorado Avalanche acquired winger Mikkel Boedker from the Arizona Coyotes in exchange for veteran forward Alex Tanguay, defensive prospect Kyle Wood and forward prospect Connor Bleackley shortly before the NHL trading deadline on Monday.

Boedker, a pending unrestricted free agent, has 13 goals and 26 assists for 39 point this season.

The Arizona Coyotes opened the final day of the NHL's trading period by acquiring winger Sergei Plotnikov from the Pittsburgh Penguins in exchange for prospect Matthias Plachta and a conditional seventh-round pick in 2017.

The teams announced the deal Monday morning, hours before the NHL trade deadline.

One of the biggest moves occurred on Sunday, when the New York Rangers acquired Hurricanes captain Eric Staal in exchange for Finnish prospect Aleksi Saarela and a pair of second-round draft picks.

## Scott uses short putter to outlast Garcia at Honda

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. — Adam Scott tapped in a 30-inch par putt to win the Honda Classic on Sunday, and the smile was more relief than joy over ending the longest drought of his career.

Yes, he still can win with a short putter. In his third tournament since a new rule that outlaws the anchored stroke Scott used for a long putter the last five years, he made enough putts at PGA National for an even-par 70 to hold off Sergio Garcia and win for the first time since Colonial in May 2014.

It was the first time Scott won with a short putter since the 2010 Singapore Open. Scott finished at 9-under 271 and moved to No. 9 in the world, his highest ranking in 10 months.

## Jets set to put franchise tag on DE Wilkerson

NEW YORK — Muhammad Wilkerson is staying put — at least for now.

A person with knowledge of the team's plans told The Associated Press on Monday that the New York Jets will use the franchise tag on the Pro Bowl defensive end, keeping him from becoming a free agent.

Wilkerson, who has been seeking a long-term extension, will be paid \$15.701 million for the 2016 season. He has until July 15 to reach a multiyear deal with the Jets, or he must play the season under the tag.

The 26-year-old Wilkerson, selected for his first Pro Bowl, had a career-high 12 sacks in coach Todd Bowles' defense. He broke his lower right leg in the season finale at Buffalo, but is expected to be ready for Week 1.

## Rio challenges top IOC meeting agenda

Associated Press

LAUSANNE, Switzerland — With five months to go until the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, the challenges keep piling up.

From the Zika outbreak to severe water pollution, from behind-schedule venues to delayed metro lines, from sluggish ticket sales to cuts in services, from Brazil's deep financial crisis to impeachment proceedings against its president, the buildup to South America's first Games faces a long list of concerns.

Rio's final preparations and the status of anti-doping efforts in Russia and Kenya will top the agenda when the International Olympic Committee executive board holds a three-day meeting starting Tuesday in Lausanne, Switzerland.

The board is also expected to discuss progress in identifying refugee athletes who will compete under the IOC flag in Rio, the proposed formation of an inde-

pendent agency to take over drug-testing for all sports, and plans for the Court of Arbitration for Sport to handle doping sanctions.

With next Saturday marking the five-month countdown to the Aug. 5 Opening Ceremony at the Maracana Stadium, Brazilian organizers are tackling issues on several fronts. Carlos Nuzman, head of the Rio organizing committee, will give his latest update to the IOC board on Wednesday.

Rio is preparing for the Games at a time when Brazil is mired in its worst recession since the 1930s, President Dilma Rousseff is fighting impeachment and the country is dealing with a vast corruption scandal centered on state-controlled oil-and-gas giant Petrobras.

If that weren't enough, Brazil is now at the epicenter of the spread of Zika, the mosquito-borne virus that has been linked to a rise in cases of babies born with abnormally small heads. While the

link to microcephaly has not been confirmed, the Zika outbreak has raised concerns among some athletes and fans ahead of the Games.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advised Friday that pregnant women consider not going to Brazil and that their male sexual partners use condoms after the trip or abstain from sex during the pregnancy. Women who are trying to become pregnant should talk to their doctors before making the trip, the CDC advised.

The IOC has repeatedly said it is monitoring the situation and following the guidance of the World Health Organization, which has declared Zika a global health emergency but has not issued any travel restrictions for Brazil.

"We're very confident that the athletes and the spectators will enjoy safe conditions in Rio de Janeiro," IOC President Thomas Bach said this month.



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# Wizards capitalize on James' rest day

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — That the Cleveland Cavaliers would drop a road game against a would-be playoff team while giving LeBron James a rare day off might not be all that surprising to most.

Still, trailing by as many as 30 points along the way to a 113-99 loss to John Wall and the Washington Wizards on Sunday did not sit well with Cleveland's J.R. Smith.

"If we're going to play with a lack of energy ... and come out and play the way we did today," Smith declared, "we shouldn't be who we are and be in these uniforms."

Smith, who had eight points and four rebounds in 18 minutes, continued: "We can't play basketball like this going down the stretch. ... You talk about contending or being a championship contender and you're blown out ... and get thrashed, make it look good at the end. We can't do that. If we're serious about who we're supposed to be, we can't do this."

It was the second consecutive loss for Eastern Conference-leading Cleveland, which is in the middle of a stretch of three games in four days.

That busy schedule was one of the reasons coach Tyrone Lue gave for resting James, who had skipped only one other game this season, on Dec. 5 at Miami.

"Any time you (make) that kind of move, it kind of lets the guys down a little bit," Lue said. "But that's a decision that we made."

James left the locker room without speaking to the media.

Taking advantage of not having to deal with the four-time NBA MVP, the Wizards got a boost in their bid to move into playoff position, using Wall's 21 points, 13 assists and seven rebounds, and 21 points from Otto Porter

Jr., to improve to 5-2 since the All-Star break.

"Doesn't matter (if) they want to rest guys," Wizards coach Randy Wittman said. "This game still counts."

**Miami 98, Knicks 81:** Dwyane Wade scored 26 points, Joe Johnson made a three-pointer on his first shot in a Heat uniform during a big game-opening run, and Miami beat New York.

Johnson was in the starting lineup a day after signing with the Heat and contributed to their 13-2 burst to start the game, a lead they never relinquished.

Hassan Whiteside added 16 points and 11 rebounds for the Heat, who matched a franchise record with their fifth straight victory in New York. Luol Deng scored 15 points and Johnson finished with 12.

**Hawks 87, Hornets 76:** Kent Bazemore scored 14 points and Al Horford had 13 points and tied a season high with 16 rebounds to help host Atlanta beat Charlotte.

Marvin Williams finished with 16 points and Jeremy Lin scored 15 for Charlotte, which trailed the entire game. The Hornets were trying to be the first Charlotte team since 1996-97 to win eight games in February.

**Mavericks 128, Timberwolves 101:** Chandler Parsons scored 29 points and host Dallas started fast in its first game since getting booed by the home crowd during a bad opening half, beating Minnesota.

Parsons scored 13 straight Dallas points in a stretch covering the second and third quarters to help the Mavericks restore a 20-point lead they built in the first 11 minutes of their sixth straight victory against Minnesota.

Two nights after scoring 27 points to help Dallas rally from 23 down in the second quarter of an overtime victory against Denver, Parsons was 10 of 15 from the field,

made four of seven from three-point range and hit all five of his free throws.

**Trail Blazers 111, Pacers 102:** Damian Lillard had 33 points and five rebounds to lead Portland to a victory over host Indiana.

CJ McCollum and Gerald Henderson each scored 19 points for the Trail Blazers, who have won eight of nine games.

Monta Ellis had 18 points and Jordan Hill added 15 off the bench for the Pacers, who have lost three of four games.

Meyers Leonard made a three-pointer at the buzzer to give the Trail Blazers an 87-77 at the end of the third quarter. Then Leonard opened the fourth with a basket and two three-pointers, including one to give Portland a 95-79 lead with 10:16 remaining.

**Pistons 114, Raptors 101:** Andre Drummond had 15 points and 18 rebounds, and host Detroit took advantage of Kyle Lowry's absence to beat Toronto.

Lowry sat out for the first time all season because the Raptors wanted to rest him after a 43-point performance against Cleveland on Friday. Detroit (31-29) won its fourth straight game and moved into a virtual tie with Charlotte (30-28) and Chicago (30-28) for seventh place in the Eastern Conference.

**Magic 130, 76ers 116:** Rookie Mario Hezonja dunked four seconds into his first NBA start, finishing with 13 points, and host Orlando led all the way in a victory over Philadelphia.

Nik Vucevic and Victor Oladipo scored 28 points each and Aaron Gordon added a career-high 22 for the Magic. Jahlil Okafor scored 26 points for the 76ers, who lost their eighth straight.

## Blackhawks top Capitals

Associated Press

CHICAGO — For all the star power with the Washington Capitals and Chicago Blackhawks, it was a pretty connection between fourth-line forwards that proved to be the difference.

Richard Panik kicked the puck from behind the net to a streaking Dennis Rasmussen for the rookie's fourth goal at 12:47 of the third, and the new-look Blackhawks topped the NHL-leading Capitals 3-2 on Sunday.

"I thought it was a beautiful pass," Chicago coach Joel Quenneville said with a grin, "one of best passes I've seen all year."

Jonathan Toews and Patrick Kane also scored as the Blackhawks (39-20-5) won for only the third time in their last eight games. Corey Crawford made 28 saves, helping Chicago leapfrog idle Dallas for the top spot in the Western Conference with 83 points.

The Blackhawks were coming off disappointing losses to Minnesota and Nashville, but the defending Stanley Cup champions got a boost from two of their newest players acquired in a flurry of moves last week. Andrew Ladd got an assist in his return to Chicago after he was reacquired in a trade with Winnipeg on Thursday night, and Tomas Fleischmann had a solid debut after he came over in a trade with Montreal on Friday.

Marcus Johansson and Evgeny Kuznetsov scored for Washington (45-12-4), which had won five of six. Braden Holtby made 20 saves while dropping to 39-7-3 on the year.

"You can definitely see why their top players are their top players," Capitals coach Barry Trotz said. "I thought today had a little bit of a playoff feel. It's just another good experience for us."

**Ducks 4, Kings 2:** Corey Perry got his ninth career hat trick and host Anaheim climbed within two points of their Southern California rivals for the Pacific Division lead.

The Ducks trailed the Kings by 15 points on Jan. 2, but have gone 19-4-1 while Los Angeles is 12-10-2 in that span. The Kings have a game in hand on Anaheim with 21 games remaining on their schedule, including two more showdowns with the Ducks.

**Lightning 4, Bruins 1:** Ryan Callahan scored twice and Steven Stamkos converted a penalty shot to help visiting Tampa Bay beat Boston for its sixth straight win.

Ben Bishop stopped 32 shots for the Lightning and Alex Killorn also scored. Stamkos also had an assist and has scored in all six games of the winning streak.

**Blues 5, Hurricanes 2:** David Backes and Kyle Brodziak scored in the second period to lead visiting St. Louis to a victory over short-handed Carolina.

Ty Rattie, Robby Fabbri and Alex Pietrangolo also scored for St. Louis, and Jake Allen stopped 32 shots.

**Wild 3, Panthers 1:** Erik Haula scored midway through the third period to lead host Minnesota past Florida.

Charlie Coyle and Jason Pominville also scored for Minnesota, which ended a nine-game winless streak (0-6-3) at the Xcel Energy Center. The Wild technically won a "home" game last Sunday beating Chicago in a Stadium Series contest at the University of Minnesota.

**Sharks 4, Canucks 1:** Joe Pavelski and Tomas Hertl scored 2:28 apart in the third period, helping lift San Jose over host Vancouver.

Patrick Marleau and Justin Braun, into an empty net, had the other goals for the Sharks, while Martin Jones made 23 saves.

**Oilers 3, Islanders 1:** Leon Draisaitl, Anton Lander and Brandon Davidson all scored in the third period for host Edmonton, helping the Oilers snap a seven-game losing streak.

## With Xavier upset, Seton Hall gets berth

Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — Seton Hall not only wrote an apparent ticket to the NCAA Tournament, it now has to be considered a legitimate threat to win the Big East Conference postseason get-together.

Desi Rodriguez had career-highs of 27 points and 12 rebounds and Seton Hall all but clinched its first NCAA Tournament berth in a decade with a stunning 90-81 victory over No. 5 Xavier on Sunday.

"We still have to be selected," said sophomore point guard Isaiah Whitehead, who added 22 points for the Pirates (21-7, 11-5). "We still have two more games to go but today was a huge, huge win."

What was remarkable was that Seton Hall dominated in knocking off Xavier (25-4, 13-4), just four days after the Musketeers upset No. 1 Villanova. The Pirates won the battle inside with Angel Delgado adding 17 points and eight rebounds and they used a suffocating defense that made Xavier struggle to score until the game was out of reach.

"My motto is once we win they can't keep us out," Pirates guard Khadeen Carrington said. "I think 11 wins in the Big East should do it. We got two more we're going to try to get, but we knew the opportunity we had coming in today and we just played desperately."

The Pirates, who have not been in the NCAA Tournament since 2006, had a season-high point total and shot 50 percent from the field in winning their fourth straight and eighth of nine.

**No. 6 Michigan St. 88, Penn St. 57:** Denzel Valentine had 19 points, eight rebounds and six assists for the host Spartans (24-5, 11-5 Big Ten), who have won four straight and eight of nine.

The Nittany Lions (15-14, 6-10) had won three straight and four of five, including

victories over then-No. 4 Iowa and then-No. 22 Indiana.

**Ohio St. 68, No. 8 Iowa 64:** Marc Loving scored 25 points, including both ends of a 1-and-1 with less than 2 seconds to go, as host Ohio State rallied from a late deficit.

Iowa lost its third game in a row and fell two games behind Big Ten leader Indiana with two games left on the schedule.

After Keita Bates-Diop preserved a two-point lead for Ohio State (19-11, 11-6 Big Ten) by blocking Mike Gesell's layup with under 5 seconds to go, Loving made the free throws to ice the game.

**No. 13 Oregon 86, Washington 73:** Elgin Cook matched his career-high with 26 points and Dillon Brooks added 19 points for the Ducks (23-6, 12-4 Pac-12), who won their 25th consecutive home game.

Oregon finished its fifth unbeaten home season in history at 18-0, and its first since 2001-02 when it won its only Pac-12 regular-season title.

**Pittsburgh 76, No. 15 Duke 62:** Jamel Artis scored 17 points as the host Panthers gave their NCAA hopes a needed jolt.

Senior point guard James Robinson added 14 points, seven assists and three rebounds in his final home game at the Petersen Events Center as Pitt (20-8, 9-7 Atlantic Coast Conference) overwhelmed the Blue Devils (22-8, 10-6).

**No. 24 SMU 74, Tulane 53:** At Dallas, Ben Moore scored 16 points and Sterling Brown added 15 for SMU, which moved back into a first-place tie in the American Athletic Conference with Temple.

SMU (24-4, 12-4) trailed 33-32 with 17:21 remaining in the game when it went on an 11-0 run to move ahead for good.