

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Marines to target recruits in online ad

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — For the first time in 30 years, the U.S. Marine Corps will be airing an ad during a Super Bowl, using an online-only spot Sunday to target a young, tough, tech-savvy audience for potential recruits who are looking for a challenge.

The high-powered, battle-heavy, 30-second ad shows Marines deploying off ships in amphibious vehicles, dropping bombs from aircraft and hurling a

shoulder-launched drone into the air.

“It’s not just the ships, the armor or the aircraft. It’s something more. It’s the will to fight and determination to win found inside each and every Marine that answers a nation’s call,” the announcer says, as the camera follows a squad of Marines storming off helicopters into a mock firefight while explosions erupt around them.

The goal, said Maj. Gen. Paul Kennedy, head of the Marine

Corps Recruiting Command, is to reach a key demographic — young men and women who have faced and conquered challenges in their life, probably played combat sports like wrestling or rugby, and have a bit of that fighting spirit.

Network television viewers of the game won’t see the Marine spot. But those watching through online streaming services — which charge a fraction of the advertising price — will see it twice.

“I’m not trying to enlist fathers or mothers, I’m trying to enlist 18- to 24-year-olds,” said Kennedy. “And they tend to be cord cutters. They take in entertainment differently and they tend to do it on a device rather than a television.”

The Marine Corps would not provide the exact cost because the specific pricing is proprietary. But the online ad represents a savings of nearly 85 percent over the broadcast price. Thirty-second slots are going for more than \$5 million for broadcast airtime alone.

And the online ad — which can be viewed on [www.marines.com](http://www.marines.com) — is expected to reach more than 20 million viewers.

As the military services struggle to meet recruitment goals in these times of low unemployment, they are competing for many of the same young people — physically fit high school graduates who can score 50 or higher on the military’s aptitude test.

The Marine Corps is on target to meet its recruitment goal of about 38,000 for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30. But recruiters have historically found that the months of February through May are the toughest for finding new enlistments. By this time, many high school seniors have decided what they will do, or what college they will attend.

So Kennedy is hoping the ad will reach some who may still be open to serving in the Marine Corps. Targeting the streaming broadcast has now become a more effective option as viewership online grows,

he said, and is the best way to reach more young people while spending less money.

“I don’t have unlimited funds,” he said. “And this is probably the most-watched event, as we move into the toughest months of recruiting.”

The visuals in the ad, he said, go to the heart of what Marines do, deliberately focusing on the fight rather than some of the intangibles such as the potential for paid college tuition, bonuses or other incentives. And they are designed to attract people who are tough and resilient — key words the Marines use repeatedly to describe the force.

The battle scenes were filmed on the West Coast with actual Marines participating in a military exercise called Dawn Blitz in order to show more realistic scenarios. The ad also shows Marines deployed on the USS Essex, an amphibious assault ship, which was off the California coast for training, to mimic a deployment near the shores of an adversary.

## Syrian rebels down Russia plane; militants kill pilot

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Al-Qaida-linked militants in Syria downed a Russian fighter jet on Saturday and killed its pilot after he ejected from the plane and landed on the ground in the embattled northwestern province of Idlib. The pilot resisted being captured and fired at the militants who then shot and killed him, according to one of the militants and Syrian monitors.

The Russian Defense Ministry confirmed the downing of the Su-25 and said the pilot was killed in fighting with “terror-

ists.” A report on the ministry’s Zvezda TV said preliminary information indicated the plane was shot by a portable ground-to-air missile in an area under control of al-Qaida’s branch in Syria.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the plane was downed on Saturday afternoon near the rebel-held town of Saraqeb, which Syrian troops have been trying to take under the cover of Russian airstrikes.

Russia is a key ally of President Bashar Assad, and has been waging a military cam-

paign on behalf of his forces since 2015. Since then, Syrian troops have captured wide parts of the country and in recent weeks have been making advances in Idlib. The province is also a base for al-Qaida’s branch in Syria and other Islamic groups.

A Syrian militant in the area told The Associated Press that the Russian pilot was shot and killed when he resisted capture. The pilot opened fire with his pistol as the militants were trying to seize him, said the militant, who refused to be identified by his real name

because was not authorized to speak to the media.

A video circulating on social media shows a lifeless body of a man, his face stained with blood, as bearded gunmen stand around him. One of the armed men shouts: “He is Russian.”

Earlier in the day, the Observatory and the media arm of al-Qaida-linked militants reported intense airstrikes in Idlib. The Observatory reported more than 35 airstrikes on Saraqeb since late Friday, adding that many of its residents are fleeing.

# VA glitch halts payments to disabled vets

*The Washington Post*

Monthly stipends for 11,000 disabled student veterans are delayed this month, potentially causing the former troops to be late paying for rent, food and other expenses.

The money from the program known as Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment subsistence allowance payments would normally have been disbursed Jan. 31. But now they will be delayed until Tuesday, due to a computer glitch, according to an internal memo obtained by *The Washington Post*.

The memo instructs operators to apologize to veterans and tell them their payments

are on the way.

The program is popular because it helps disabled veterans who return home get job counseling and obtain college degrees or pursue technical skills. They are offered internships and help with contacts and resumes, which will allow them to work despite often severe injuries.

Afghanistan War Army veteran Rick Collin in Portland, Ore., is one of the veterans who didn't receive his stipend. He said he had to put off paying bills and will now have to pay late fees. Collin is suffering from severe memory loss and post-traumatic stress disorder, along with chronic back and

shoulder pain from a car accident on his way to psychiatric therapy at Fort Riley, Kan. He has four children, ages 9, 7, 2 and 9 months.

"This was going to be my first month with money left over after bills, and now that will all go to late fees," said Collin, 30. He is studying photography at Portland Community College.

He said he's currently in his fifth week of the term, has yet to receive a computer he was promised and only last week received his camera. The troubled Department of Veterans Affairs has been under scrutiny for a range of issues, from long wait times for appointments to a surgeon leaving a scalpel in a

veteran's gut.

"Any large bureaucracy has their glitches, but anytime veterans are not getting their benefits on time, especially when on a program like this, it's a real hardship," said Garry Augustine, executive director of 1.3 million-member Disabled Veterans of America.

Curt Cashour, press secretary of Department of Veterans Affairs, said in an emailed statement after receiving inquiries from *The Washington Post* that the glitch has been fixed and won't happen again the future.

"We apologize to the Veterans affected by this inconvenience," Cashour wrote.

## USS Monsoor passes sea test

*Associated Press*

PORTLAND, Maine — The second Zumwalt-class stealth destroyer built at Maine's Bath Iron Works has passed its sea test.

A statement from Naval Sea Systems Command said the future USS Michael Monsoor successfully completed its acceptance trials Thursday.

The Portland (Maine) Press Herald reported that the statement says onboard systems such as navigation, damage control, mechanical, combat, communication and propulsion met or exceeded specifications.

The 610-foot-long Monsoor headed out to sea for the first time in December, but its first sea trials were cut short because of equipment failures.

The Monsoor is the second in a class of three futuristic-looking ships that feature electric-drive propulsion, new radar and sonar, powerful guns and missiles and a stealthy shape.

The cost of the three Zumwalt-class destroyers is estimated at \$22 billion, the most expensive destroyers ever built.

## Ravens cheerleaders visit Afghanistan

*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — Members of the Baltimore Ravens Cheerleading Squad visited NATO's Resolute Support headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan, on Saturday to perform and meet with troops.

It was one of several bases that the group visited in Afghanistan to help boost morale among U.S. and coalition servicemembers.

The co-ed team included five males and six females and began with a routine in which female members were catapulted into the air. Afterward, three spectators were selected and asked to do pushups with a cheerleader sitting on their backs.

"It means a lot that people

come out here to support us and increase morale to keep on with the mission," said Air Force Lt. Col. Anthony Walker, one of the three spectators selected from the crowd.

Army Spc. Elijah Baker said he and fellow American troops had been looking forward to the event for days.

"We saw the sign in the chow hall and were all waiting. We were excited," Baker said. "I'm glad they came out to see us."

Cheerleader Amanda R., whose last name is abbreviated for security reasons, said she was nervous before traveling to Afghanistan but was happy on Saturday that she volunteered for the trip.

"It's an honor for us to be here," she said. "It's been amazing to meet the troops and get to know what they do. We want them all to feel that they have a little piece of home while we're here."

After the performance, the cheerleaders mingled with the crowd and took photos with troops.

"I think there are a lot of happy men in the room right now," said Air Force Capt. Vanessa Koodray after taking a photograph with four of the cheerleaders. "I'm happy as well. It's nice to see people smiling."

## Officials from Pakistan, Afghanistan hold talks

*Associated Press*

KABUL, Afghanistan — Pakistani and Afghan officials have met for a second round of talks about allegations leveled against Islamabad in the wake of recent deadly militant attacks in Kabul that have killed

over 200 people.

A joint statement after the daylong meeting in the Afghan capital said the two sides promised to keep talking.

After the recent attacks, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's government insisted Pakistan's failure to rout Taliban mili-

tants from safe havens on its soil is spurring the insurgency inside Afghanistan. Kabul also accused Islamabad of harboring the Taliban, who are allegedly being trained in Islamic seminaries in southwestern Pakistan.

Pakistan denies the charges.

# Not all details in GOP memo help undercut Mueller probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump and his supporters are using a congressional memo alleging FBI surveillance abuse to raise questions about the origins of an investigation into his campaign's ties to Russia. But the four-page document includes revelations that might complicate the effort to undermine special counsel Robert Mueller's ongoing probe.

The document contends that the FBI relied excessively on a former British spy whose opposition research was funded by Democrats when it applied for a surveillance warrant on a Trump campaign associate. Yet it also says the investigation into potential Trump ties to Russia actually began several months earlier — “triggered,” it says, by information involving a separate campaign aide.

The spy who compiled the allegations admitted to having strong anti-Trump sentiments, but he was a “longtime FBI source” with a credible track record, says the memo from the House Intelligence Committee's Republican chair-

man, Rep. Devin Nunes, and his staff.

The warrant authorizing the FBI to monitor the communications of campaign adviser Carter Page? Approved by a judge on four occasions, according to the memo, and signed off on by Trump's hand-picked deputy attorney general, Rod Rosenstein.

Without the underlying materials being made public, the memo only further intensified a partisan battle over how to interpret the actions of the FBI and Justice Department during the early stages of the counterintelligence investigation Mueller later inherited.

The memo, released over the objections of the FBI and Justice Department, could well give Trump and Republicans new grounds to challenge the Mueller investigation as politically tainted. Even before its declassification Friday, Trump had been telling confidants he believed the document would validate his concerns that the FBI and Justice Department conspired against him.

The central allegation is that agents and prosecutors,

in applying in October 2016 to monitor the communications of campaign adviser Carter Page, concealed from a judge that a former spy whose findings had provided grounds for suspicion had been funded by Hillary Clinton's campaign and the Democratic National Committee.

Research from former spy Christopher Steele, according to the memo, “formed an essential part” of the application to receive the warrant, though it's unclear how much or what information he collected was included in the application, or how much has been corroborated.

Steele's opposition research effort was initially funded by the conservative Washington Free Beacon. It was later picked up by the Clinton campaign and the DNC through a Washington law firm.

The FBI this week expressed “grave concerns” about the memo and called it inaccurate and incomplete. Democrats called it a set of cherry-picked claims aimed at smearing law enforcement.

## Man fires on Africans in Italian city

Associated Press

MILAN — An Italian gunman wounded six African immigrants in a two-hour drive-by shooting spree Saturday in a small Italian city where just days earlier a Nigerian man was arrested in the gruesome killing of a teenager, officials said.

The shooting suspect was identified as Luca Traini, 28, an Italian with no previous record. Traini had run as a candidate for the anti-migrant Northern League party in a local election last year in the city of Corridonia. He did not win.

A video posted by the newspaper *il Resto di Carlino* showed a man with an Italian flag draped over his shoulders being arrested by Carabinieri officers in the city center, near where he apparently fled his car.

The shooting spree came days after the slaying of Pamela Mastropietro, 18, and amid an electoral campaign in Italy where anti-foreigner sentiment has become a key theme as Italy struggles with migrant arrivals.

The head of the rebranded League, Matteo Salvini, has capitalized on the killing in campaign appearances, and is pledging to deport 150,000 migrants in his first year in office if his party wins control of parliament.

Macerata Mayor Romano Carancini confirmed that six foreigners, all black, were wounded in the shooting spree, one with life-threatening injuries.

“They were all of color; this is obviously a grave fact. As was grave what happened to Pamela. The closeness of the two events makes you imagine there could be a connection,” he said.

The teen's dismembered remains were found Wednesday in two suitcases two days after she walked away from a drug rehab community. A judge on Saturday confirmed the arrest of the main suspect, identified as Innocent Oseghale, 29.

## Trump seeks to pressure N. Korea

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With just a week before the Olympic Games begin on the Korean Peninsula, President Donald Trump on Friday sought to increase pressure on Pyongyang over its nuclear program by consulting with allies and highlighting the human rights abuses suffered by defectors from North Korea.

Trump hosted about a half-dozen North Korean defectors in the Oval Office, including Ji Seong-ho, who had used crutches to escape the reclusive country after a train ran over his limbs. Days earlier, Ji raised his crutches in triumph when Trump singled him out during his State of the Union address.

Trump called the defectors “great people that have suffered incredibly.”

“There were many, many others like them that have suffered so much,” he said.

Among the others Trump hosted were Hyeon-

seo Lee, an author who wrote about her escape from North Korea and her life as a fugitive in China, and Young-soon Kim, who was imprisoned for nine years after learning of a friend's affair with Kim Jong-il, the former dictator and father of the nation's current leader.

Lee said she was in the audience when Trump spoke last year in front of South Korea's National Assembly and told Trump she “wanted to shout with joy” because she was so moved.

“You put the spotlight on North Korea's human rights issues in front of the entire South Korean National Assembly, and refreshed the attention on these kind of issues,” she said, adding that she could not thank the president enough.

Trump also called the leaders of South Korea and Japan on Friday to ask them to keep up the pressure. He suggested that recent communication between North Korea and South Korea, which is hosting the Olympics in Pyeongchang, was a positive development.

# States see flurry of abortion bill activity

Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa — Republicans who control a majority of the nation's statehouses are considering a wide range of abortion legislation that could test the government's legal ability to restrict a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy.

The Mississippi House passed a bill Friday that would make the state the only one to ban all abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. In Missouri, lawmakers heard testimony last week on a bill that would ban abortions after 20 weeks.

The Ohio House is expected to consider bills, already passed in the Senate, that would prohibit the most common type of

procedure used to end pregnancies after 13 weeks and require that fetal remains be buried or cremated.

Abortion is a perennial hot-button issue in statehouses across the country. Republican-controlled states have passed hundreds of bills since 2011 restricting access to the procedure, while Democratic-led states have taken steps in the other direction.

The early weeks of this year's state legislative sessions have seen a flurry of activity around the issue. It comes as activists on both sides say they expect the U.S. Supreme Court to soon consider a question that remains unclear: How far can states go in restricting abortion in the interest of

preserving and promoting fetal life?

The state bills debated since the start of the year "are all tests designed to see how far government power to legislate on behalf of a fetus can reach," said Jessica Mason Pieklo, who has been tracking legislation as the senior legal analyst for Rewire, a website that promotes views supporting abortion rights.

She said the outcome will determine whether states can legally ban abortion after a specific time period and outlaw specific medical procedures. Advocates for abortion rights say those strategies undermine the Supreme Court's 1973 ruling that women have the right to terminate pregnancies until a fetus is viable.

## ND woman who cut child from mother's womb is sentenced

Associated Press

FARGO, N.D. — A North Dakota woman who earlier admitted to killing a pregnant neighbor to get her baby did it by cutting the baby from the mother's womb as she faded in and out of consciousness, prosecutors said Friday.

Brooke Crews, 38, was sentenced to life in prison without parole in a hearing that for the first time detailed the August death of Savanna Greywind, 22, of Fargo.

Ashton Matheny, the baby's father, said learning how his baby was born and his girlfriend died "tore me apart." Greywind's mother, Norberta Lafontaine-Greywind, fought back tears but said she was satisfied with the sentence — the toughest Crews could have received.

Prosecutors said the two women argued, and Greywind was pushed and briefly knocked out before Crews began cutting her. Greywind eventually bled to death, they said.

East Central District Judge Frank Racek cited the predatory and cruel nature of the crime in handing down the maximum sentence.

Crews, wearing orange prison clothing and cuffed at the wrists, cried as she read a statement of apology. She said she wished she could take the family's pain.

"There is no excuse. There is no rationalization. There is nothing," she said. Later, she showed no emotion as the judge passed sentence.

Crews' boyfriend, William Hoehn, faces a May trial in the case. He has pleaded not guilty. Prosecutors had cited his pending trial in withholding public details of Greywind's death earlier.

Greywind was eight months pregnant when she disappeared in August, sparking extensive searches. Kayakers found her body wrapped in plastic in a river. The baby was found alive in the apartment Crews shared with Hoehn.

Fargo police Chief Dave Todd earlier called Greywind's death a "cruel and vicious act of depravity."

Crews initially claimed that Greywind gave up her newborn daughter, but she later admitted taking advantage of the woman to get the child, according to court documents.

## Calls for change grow amid misconduct claims in state legislatures

Associated Press

An Arizona lawmaker who repeatedly harassed women has become the first since the swell of the #MeToo movement to get kicked out of office by colleagues but likely will not be the last to face repercussions amid intensifying scrutiny of sexual misconduct in state legislatures.

The heightened focus on harassment and misconduct has led to growing calls for change in a year that saw an unusually large number of women expressing interest in running for office.

"This conduct perpetuates the good-old-boys culture all too familiar to women in workplaces across the nation," said Ohio state Rep. Teresa Fedor, one of several female Democratic lawmakers who called last week for the resignation of Republican Rep. Bill Seitz because of offensive remarks. "Women and men deserve better, not more of the same tired excuses. It's time for a change."

With his expulsion on Thursday, Arizona Rep. Don Shooter became the 15th state lawmaker to leave office since the start

of 2017 (the others resigned) after being accused of sexual misconduct. About 20 others have faced lesser consequences, ranging from forced apologies to suspensions to the loss of powerful leadership posts, according to a state-by-state review by The Associated Press.

Sexual harassment investigations are ongoing against other state lawmakers, including in California, Hawaii, Kentucky and Oregon.

The issue already is beginning to resonate in election campaigns. Women have stepped forward as candidates in five of the eight upcoming elections across the nation to replace lawmakers who resigned amid sexual misconduct allegations.

In what could be a historic election, many women have said they plan to run for office this year for the first time at all levels of government, from statehouses to Congress. That is driven largely by Democratic frustration over the election of President Donald Trump, but the #MeToo movement also is playing a role.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Sloth born at zoo marks first birth of '18

**CO** DENVER — A two-toed sloth has been born at the Denver Zoo.

The Denver Post reported that the zoo's sloth, named Charlotte, gave birth to the baby last Sunday. The mother and her baby made their public debut together Thursday.

The baby sloth is the zoo's first announced birth in 2018.

Zoo officials have yet to name the baby or announce its gender.

The baby clung to its mother immediately after birth and will remain attached to her almost exclusively for at least six months.

## Pizza parlor workers foil masked robber

**MA** BARRE — Police said a former employee of a Massachusetts pizza parlor went to the restaurant masked and brandishing a fake gun in an attempt to rob it. He was instead tackled by workers and customers, and held until officers arrived.

According to police, Sean Coulson went to Northeast Pizza on Tuesday, jumped the counter and grabbed a bag of cash.

Surveillance video showed three people wrestling him to the floor. When they ripped off his mask, they realized he used to work there.

Coulson faces several charges including armed robbery. He told police he was just playing a joke.

## Scanner, 3-D printer reveal sculptor's molds

**NH** LEBANON — A team of hospital radiologists used a CT scanner and 3-D printer to view and recreate

what's inside of sealed molds of 19th century sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens.

Like many sculptors, Saint-Gaudens preserved his molds by sealing them between two plaster halves. The Valley News reported that over a year ago, the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site in Cornish, N.H., contacted Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center to see if a CT scanner could show what's inside. Art historians were reluctant to break them open.

The scanner looked at over 16 pieces and determined there were busts and heads, hands and legs, folds of fabric, and an eagle, parts of the Phillips Brooks Memorial in Boston. A digital model was created, and a 3-D printer reconstructed the pieces on a smaller scale.

## NASA turns selfies by rover into self-portrait

**FL** CAPE CANAVERAL — NASA has transformed selfies taken by its Mars rover Curiosity into a self-portrait.

Released last week, the photo shows Curiosity in the middle of the dusty, red Martian terrain, with Mount Sharp in the background. The rim of Gale Crater is also visible.

A small, self-focusing camera on the end of Curiosity's arm took the selfies. Dozens of pictures, all snapped Jan. 23, were used to create the mosaic.

Curiosity has been roaming Mars since 2012.

NASA is getting ready to put another lander on Mars, a robotic geologist named InSight. Liftoff is targeted for May from California.

## Man reported father, brother as terrorists

**OR** PORTLAND — A Clackamas, Ore., man pleaded guilty to placing

calls to airports in Nevada and Texas, reporting his father and brother as terrorists because they got an invitation to a family wedding, and he didn't.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reported Sonny Donnie Smith, 38, admitted to placing anonymous phone calls to security offices at McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas and the Midland International Air and Space Port in Midland, Texas.

The calls prompted an FBI investigation that revealed no terrorist threats. Smith's father and brother were detained and questioned by investigators, and the brother missed his flight.

Smith faces up to two years in prison, a \$250,000 fine and one year of supervised release at sentencing set for May.

## 'Satanic' group signs up for trash program

**AZ** CASA GRANDE — A group that advocates for separation of church and state has signed up to help pick up trash along a 2-mile stretch of Interstate 10 in southern Arizona.

The Casa Grande Dispatch reported the Satanic Temple of Arizona signed up with the state Department of Transportation to clean up along the interstate near Casa Grande under the department's Adopt a Highway program.

The Satanic Temple seeks to participate in government-sponsored projects and activities as a way to test compliance with the First Amendment's provisions on religion, and the group has stirred controversy in various cities by applying to give invocations at official meetings.

Chapter spokesman Stu de Haan said the group doesn't believe in a supernatural Satan but rather embraces the literary Satan as a symbol of rebellion.

## Man ticketed for rude gesture sues trooper

**IN** TERRE HAUTE — An Indiana man who was ticketed after making a crude gesture at a state police trooper filed a federal lawsuit, alleging his constitutional rights were violated.

The Tribune-Star reported that the lawsuit was filed Thursday on behalf of Mark May of Terre Haute against Indiana State Police Master Trooper Matt Ames.

The lawsuit alleges May flipped his middle finger to the trooper because he was cut off while Ames pulled over another motorist. May alleges he was issued a "provocation" ticket after the action.

Kenneth Falk, the legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana, argued that May's gesture to Ames was expressive conduct fully protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

## Legislature to consider allowing ballot selfies

**NJ** TRENTON — New Jersey lawmakers are once again considering a bill to formally legalize taking selfies at the polls.

The state Assembly's State and Local Government Committee voted Thursday in Trenton to approve the measure. NJ.com reported the bill would make it legal for voters to take a photograph of their ballots inside the voting booth and post the photo on social media.

Democratic Assemblyman Raj Mukherji of Hudson County, and a main sponsor of the bill, said the law must be amended to make sure no one gets in trouble, as current state law prohibits taking ballot selfies, although there are no documented prosecutions.

From wire reports

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# Eagle Way is similar to Patriot Way

Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. — Bill Belichick's impressive résumé makes it easy for the five-time championship head coach to mandate that players check their egos before joining the New England Patriots.

Doug Pederson didn't have a hard sell, either.

The Philadelphia Eagles are an unselfish group that prioritizes winning over personal accomplishments. It's a major reason why the Eagles (15-3) are playing the Patriots (15-3) in the Super Bowl on Sunday.

"It's a group that doesn't really care who gets the ball. The bottom line is trying to win the game," Pederson said. "I didn't have to sell it too much."

Pederson was 7-9 last year in his rookie season as head coach but has guided the Eagles from worst to first in search of the franchise's first NFL title since 1960. He found a way to blend a young locker room with a mix of accomplished veterans.

The team added veteran receivers Alshon Jeffrey and Torrey Smith, running backs LeGarrette Blount and Jay Ajayi, defensive linemen Chris Long and Tim Jernigan and defensive backs Ronald Darby, Patrick Robinson and Corey Graham.

"I can remember this team showing up in April and talking about being at this place, talking about our dreams, aspirations and focusing on a grind," safety Malcolm Jenkins said.

"Guys being unselfish, adding guys along the way that added to the team and continued to push, and every time we won and had some success — we even had some adversity — the team believed more and more. It's been awesome to be a part of."

Blount led the NFL with 18 touchdowns rushing and earned his second Super Bowl ring last season in New England. He didn't get a carry in a loss at Kansas City in Week 2 and never complained. Same

with Jeffery, who went from No. 1 receiver in Chicago to being one of the guys in Philadelphia.

"We couldn't care less how many catches or how many yards any one guy has," Blount said. "We all have one common goal in hand. We all have one thing that we all want more than anything. You can't be selfish when everybody has one common goal because you have to make sacrifices for the better of the team. We've done that and it's gotten us this far."

Pederson set the tone and Carson Wentz carried it out with his team-first attitude and that filtered down the roster.

"He's the most humble guy you come across," Pederson said. "He'll give it right back to the team."

It was a smooth transition to Nick Foles after Wentz got hurt. Foles also is a respected leader who leads by example. It's not a coincidence the Eagles sought this type of player.

"This is the most selfless

team I've ever been around," Pro Bowl tight end Zach Ertz said. "Guys don't care about stats. They only care about winning. Doug is the best coach I've been around in managing players. He lets us show our personalities and if he needs to talk to somebody, he does it quietly and in a mild-mannered way. His selfless leadership is a big reason we're here."

The team is one of the closest-knit groups in the league and players genuinely care about each other and spend plenty of time together.

"When you see guys hanging out with players from other position groups, it's special," defensive tackle Fletcher Cox said. "I would go eat dinner with Donnie Jones. You don't see a guy hanging out with a punter."

If the Eagles win a few championships, perhaps the standard Pederson has set will eventually become similar to Belichick's Patriot Way. They have to get the first one, though.

## Super Bowl could come down to Gronkowski vs. Ertz

Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. — Rob Gronkowski gets to play in this year's Super Bowl after missing last year's game with a bad back. Zach Ertz gets the chance to match his wife, Julie, a soccer star who's already won a world championship.

Super Bowl 52 could come down to which of these terrific tight ends shines brighter.

The two had similar statistics and impact on their team's fortunes this season.

Gronkowski led the New England Patriots with 69 catches for 1,084 yards and eight touchdowns.

Ertz led the Philadelphia Eagles with 74 catches for 824 yards and eight TDs — double his previous career best.

Ertz also has 11 grabs for 125 yards in the playoffs and Gronkowski has seven catches

for 102 yards and a touchdown in the playoffs despite missing most of the AFC championship against Jacksonville after taking a helmet-to-helmet hit from Barry Church before halftime.

That led to concerns Gronkowski might miss his second straight Super Bowl. He was sidelined for last year's 34-28 overtime win against Atlanta after undergoing back surgery.

Gronk, however, returned to practice Thursday and said he is "ready to roll" after clearing the concussion protocol.

He said he never doubted he'd get to play Sunday.

"There was no reason to get frustrated," Gronkowski said. "We had that extra week, which was awesome."

The return of the All-Pro tight end gives Tom Brady another key option against a punishing Eagles defense that

ranked fourth in the league.

"He's a dynamic player. He means a ton to our offense. He really has since he got to our team. It's always great when he's out there," Brady said.

"I've played with him a long time, I've thrown him a lot of footballs. He knows exactly what to do, he knows where to expect the ball, when to expect it. He's just a tremendous player for our team."

Ertz is just as important to Nick Foles and the Eagles' offense.

The fifth-year pro made his first Pro Bowl this season, leading all NFC tight ends in receptions. He added eight catches for 93 yards in the NFC championship game against Minnesota.

Despite his breakout season and postseason, Ertz knows he won't be the best tight end on the field Sunday. Gronkowski

led all NFL tight ends in receiving yards for the fourth time.

Gronk is the gold standard.

"He's a beast after the catch, I think that kind of separates him from all the other tight ends," Ertz said. "And he's also able to be open even when he's not open because he's got such a big frame and extremely good ball skills. And obviously Tom Brady is a phenomenal quarterback, too, but even without Tom, I think he would still be doing the same type of things regardless of where he was."

Ertz knows the numbers off the top of his head, too.

"He has all the (single-season) tight end records in the league," Ertz said. He's got the yards — 1,327 — and he's got the touchdowns — 17 — he's just a phenomenal player."

With a pair of Super Bowl rings.

## Sports briefs

# Vonn edges Goggia for 80th WC victory

Associated Press

GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN, Germany — Lindsey Vonn edged Sofia Goggia in a preview of the Pyeongchang Olympic downhill on Saturday, raising her career total to 80 World Cup victories.

The American standout beat Goggia by two hundredths of a second as their ongoing rivalry in Alpine skiing's fastest discipline continued.

"It's a big number," Vonn said of her 80 wins, which is just six short of the all-time record set by Swedish great Ingemar Stenmark in the 1980s.

"I remember when I got my 50th here, I never thought I would even get close to Annemarie Moser-Proell's record (of 62 wins) and now I am getting close to Stenmark's. It's incredible," she said.

"Also the timing of this win, coming into the Olympics," Vonn added. "I really feel strong mentally and physical-

ly. I never thought in my life I would get 80 wins so it's a big day."

Vonn skied a solid run but didn't seem to go to the limits as she trailed Italian rival Goggia by 0.08 at the last split time. However, Vonn overcame the deficit in the final section.

"I definitely skied aggressively, don't get me wrong, but I didn't leave all the cards on the table," Vonn said. "I hold those extra aces for the Olympics."

It was Vonn's second straight downhill win after Cortina, Italy, two weeks ago. She and Goggia are the only racers with more than one downhill victory this season.

Cornelia Huetter of Austria was 0.13 behind in third, while Vonn's American teammate Breezy Johnson finished fourth for her career best result.

Vonn's joy was tempered, however, by a crash that ruled her teammate Jacqueline Wiles out of the Olympics with a knee injury.

## Ravens GM Newsome to step down in 2018

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — Ozzie Newsome's reign as the only general manager in Baltimore Ravens history will come to an end after the 2018 season.

Newsome signed a five-year extension in 2014 with the understanding that he surrenders the post to assistant GM Eric DeCosta at the end of the contract, Ravens owner Steve Bisciotti said Friday.

"Ozzie will step down as GM and has assured me that he's not going anywhere," Bisciotti said. "He will work with me and work with Eric for a smooth transition and he'll be the highest paid scout in America when Eric takes over next year."

Newsome, 61, has been in charge of filling out the roster since the Ravens arrived in Baltimore in 1996. His first two draft picks were Jonathan Ogden — who became a Hall of

Fame offensive lineman — and Ray Lewis, who is expected to enter the Hall this year.

## Bucks' Brogdon out up to eight weeks

MILWAUKEE — Milwaukee Bucks guard Malcolm Brogdon will be sidelined for up to eight weeks with a partially torn left quadriceps tendon.

Brogdon suffered the injury during the second quarter of the Bucks' 108-89 loss at Minnesota on Thursday night. The reigning Rookie of the Year went down after a dunk and needed to be helped off the floor.

The Bucks said in a statement Friday they learned the extent of Brogdon's injury after he underwent an MRI and an examination by the team's doctor.

Brogdon has played in 46 games this season and is averaging 13.3 points, 3.3 rebounds and 3.2 assists per game.

## NHL roundup

# Surging Penguins down Capitals, win fourth straight

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Evgeni Malkin had two goals and two assists, Phil Kessel added two goals and an assist, and the surging Pittsburgh Penguins topped the Washington Capitals 7-4 on Friday.

Bryan Rust, Carl Hagelin and Patric Hornqvist also scored for the two-time defending Stanley Cup champions, who won their fourth straight to pull within four points of first-place Washington in the crowded Metropolitan Division.

Sidney Crosby had two assists to push his scoring streak to 11 games, the longest active streak in the NHL. Matt Murray stopped 29 shots for Pittsburgh, which won its seventh consecutive home game by

jumping on the Capitals early then pulling away late.

Alex Ovechkin scored twice to push his season total to an NHL-best 32 and Dmitry Orlov and Evgeny Kuznetsov also scored for the Capitals. Braden Holtby finished with 27 saves but gave up three goals in the opening 8 minutes of the third period before being pulled in favor of Philipp Grubauer as Pittsburgh broke open a tight game.

**Wild 5, Golden Knights 2:** Eric Staal had two goals and an assist to lead host Minnesota past Vegas.

Charlie Coyle, Tyler Ennis and Jared Spurgeon also scored, Jonas Brodin had three assists and Matt Dumba added two to help the Wild win their

second straight after the All-Star break. Devan Dubnyk stopped 22 shots.

Eric Haula had a goal and an assist, Nate Schmidt also scored, and Colin Miller added two assists for Vegas, which remained a point behind Tampa Bay for the best record in the league. Malcolm Subban made 30 saves.

**Red Wings 4, Hurricanes 1:** Darren Helm had a goal and two assists, Petr Mrazek stopped 36 shots, and visiting Detroit beat Carolina.

Gustav Nyquist, Danny DeKeyser and Trevor Daley also scored for the Red Wings, who won their second straight after dropping six of eight.

Helm was at the center of it all, assisting on DeKeyser's

tying goal and Daley's go-ahead score before finding the net himself on a breakaway in the third period.

Sebastian Aho scored for the Hurricanes, who snapped a three-game winning streak. Scott Darling made 34 saves while losing for the sixth time in his last seven starts.

**Sharks 3, Blue Jackets 1:** Kevin Labanc had a goal and an assist, and Martin Jones stopped 28 shots to help visiting San Jose snap a four-game losing streak.

The Sharks' first two goals came on power plays, with Labanc getting a wide-open look at the net with a 5-on-3 advantage in the second period. Logan Couture and Marc-Edouard Vlasic also scored for San Jose.

## NBA roundup

# Bucks top Knicks in Parker's return

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Giannis Antetokounmpo made a driving layup with 1.9 seconds remaining after Jabari Parker chipped in with 12 points in his first game in nearly a year, lifting Milwaukee over New York 92-90.

Antetokounmpo, who sprained his left ankle late in Thursday night's loss to Minnesota, showed no ill effects and led all scorers with 29 points.

Parker hadn't played since tearing his left ACL on Feb. 8, 2017, in a game against Miami. He made 4 of 7 shots over nearly 15 minutes as a reserve.

**Celtics 119, Hawks 110:** Terry Rozier had a career-high 31 points and seven rebounds in his second NBA start, Jayson Tatum added a career-high 27 points and host Boston beat Atlanta.

Rozier started in place of the injured Kyrie Irving. The third-year guard became the second player in league history with a triple-double in his first start, totaling 17 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists in Wednesday's blowout of the Knicks.

Irving, who missed his second straight game with a right quad contusion that he suffered in Monday's win at Denver and was one of four Boston players who sat with injuries on Friday.

**Raptors 130, Trail Blazers 105:** DeMar DeRozan scored 35 points, Jonas Valanciunas had 18 and host Toronto beat Portland for the sixth straight time.

Fred VanVleet scored 16 points, Kyle Lowry had 15 and Pascal Siakam 13 as the Raptors improved their home record to 20-4, the best mark in the NBA.

**Warriors 119, Kings 104:** Kevin Durant scored 13 of his 33 points in the fourth quarter and matched his season-high

with six three-pointers, and visiting Golden State held on to beat Sacramento.

**Pelicans 114, Thunder 100:** Anthony Davis scored 43 points to help New Orleans beat visiting Oklahoma City.

New Orleans had lost two straight since All-Star DeMarcus Cousins was lost for the season with a left Achilles tendon rupture. They righted the ship by shooting 51 percent from the field against the Thunder.

**Jazz 129, Suns 97:** Donovan Mitchell scored 40 points, one shy of his career high, and Utah beat host Phoenix to win its fourth in a row.

The Jazz rookie sensation made 14 of 19 shots and a career-best seven threes in nine attempts. It was the sixth game of at least 30 points in his young NBA career.

**Hornets 133, Pacers 126:** Kemba Walker scored 41 points on 11-for-22 shooting and Charlotte beat visiting Indiana with the help of a record-setting first quarter.

Buoyed by 16 points from Nicolas Batum, the Hornets scored 49 points in the first, a franchise-best for a quarter. Charlotte connected on 7 of 11 from three-point range and hit 19 of 23 from the field in that stretch. It marked the highest point total for an NBA team in any quarter this season.

**76ers 103, Heat 97:** Joel Embiid opened the first set of back-to-back games in his NBA career with 17 points and 11 rebounds to help lead host Philadelphia past Miami.

**Lakers 102, Nets 99:** Brook Lopez scored 19 points in his return to Brooklyn, making Los Angeles' final basket with 1:28 left.

The Nets' career leader in scoring and blocked shots also had a big block down the stretch as the Lakers did just enough to avoid a third straight loss.

# Matthews, Terrell lift URI over VCU

Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Rhode Island coach Dan Hurley has come to VCU in the past with a young team and seen it get drummed.

He was happy to return the favor when he returned with the senior-laden and 22nd-ranked Rams on Friday night.

E.C. Matthews scored 18 points, Jared Terrell had 16 and URI beat VCU 81-68 for its 14th consecutive victory.

"I thought we were really, really sharp, particular our passing," Hurley said. "We're just a veteran team that took advantage of our experience. We out-seniored them, out-experienced them."

Cyril Langevine added 12 points and a career-high 18 rebounds for the visiting Rams (19-3, 11-0 Atlantic 10) in a matchup of teams with the same mascot. The winning streak is the program's longest since the 1939-40 Rams won 15 straight.

Rhode Island also stretched its road winning streak in conference games to 11, the longest such streak in program history.

"It's a lot of things," said Matthews, one of four seniors in the starting lineup. "Being resilient. The non-conference games we had earlier in the season is why we play the way we do now. Having older guys, we kind of set the tone."

Justin Tillman scored 22 points to lead VCU (14-9, 6-4), which dropped out of a three-way tie for second place in the conference. Sean Mobley added 15, all in the first half. The home Rams trailed just 41-38 at halftime, but couldn't overcome being beaten 47-31 on the boards and outscored 26-6 on second-chance points as URI gradually took control after halftime.

"We felt they were going to try to come out and bully us and control the game and come out hard from the start, so we tried to come out with energy," Tillman said. "I thought we did

that in the first half. ... We kept letting them get second-chance rebounds and they were scoring off those."

Rhode Island scored 13 of the first 20 points after halftime to open a 54-45 lead, its biggest of the game at that point. Consecutive baskets by VCU closed the gap to 54-49, but Rhode Island scored 10 of the next 15 points and VCU never got closer than six again.

The first half was played at a breakneck pace, with URI pulling away from a 27-all tie by scoring nine straight points. Mobley then hit three three-pointers in a span of less than two minutes to keep VCU close.

## Big picture

**Rhode Island:** The Rams' winning streak coincides with Matthews' return from a broken wrist. In coach Dan Hurley's favored four-guard lineup, Matthews, Terrell, Jeff Downtin and Stanford Russell also make it difficult for even defensively disruptive teams to cause ball security issues. URI had just eight turnovers against VCU.

"It's not me at all. It's a mixture. We've got young guys, older guys. We're just trying to make history and be better every game," Matthews said.

**VCU:** Tillman was his usually effective self, but the Rams' No. 2 scorer, freshman De'Riante Jenkins (13.1 points per game) managed just nine points, and No. 3 scorer Johnny Williams (10.2) had two. VCU also was sloppy too often with the ball, committing 14 turnovers that Rhode Island turned into 16 points.

## Up next

Rhode Island has a week off before playing at home against Davidson next Friday night.

VCU plays at cross-town rival Richmond on Wednesday night.