

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Hagel touts Marines' high-tech future

By JON HARPER

*Stars and Stripes*

ABOARD THE USS AMERICA — The Marine Corps' future will be high-tech and amphibious, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel said Wednesday while visiting the Navy's newest amphibious assault ship.

For more than a decade, the Marines have been slogging through counterinsurgency wars and essentially serving as a second land army. Now that they are out of Afghanistan and pivoting to the Pacific, the service is transitioning back to an emergency response force that operates from the sea.

As Marines return to their roots, their tools will be cutting-edge, Hagel said on what is expected to be his last trip as Pentagon leader. He visited the USS America to discuss what lies ahead for the military.

"You run, maintain and sail one the most sophisticated Navy platforms we have, with more capabilities than almost anything else," he told troops aboard the ship, which is undergoing sea trials off the California coast. "Capabilities represented on this ship [showcase] the amphibious possibilities that our Marines are getting back to after 13 years of long war. ... What you're doing here represents that in every way."

The America, commissioned in October,

**'Capabilities represented on this ship [showcase] the amphibious possibilities that our Marines are getting back to after 13 years of long war. ... What you're doing here represents that in every way.'**

Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel

is designed to carry Marines and their most technologically advanced aircraft, including the F-35B Lightning II fighter jet and the MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor troop transport. Both can take off and land vertically.

The America's design is different than previous amphibious assault ships. It has an enlarged hangar deck and no well deck, which frees up space for aircraft. It is as large as the aircraft carriers of some nations.

The realignment and expansion of aviation maintenance facilities provides a significant increase in available stowage for parts, support equipment and aviation fuel. Having two hangar bay areas with overhead cranes instead of just one greatly speeds up and facilitates aircraft maintenance, according to Navy Chief Petty Officer Leandro Suarez.

Capt. Michael Baze, the ship's executive

officer, said the America is optimized for aviation and "being able to deliver Marines very fast over great distance."

He said the Osprey in particular "allows you the flexibility and maneuverability that you might not have with ... a traditional landing force on the beach."

The America can hold up to 31 aircraft, depending on the types in the mix, according to Baze.

"It's awesome. I've got to pinch myself every once in a while," he said.

He noted that, when deployed, The America will likely be the flagship of an amphibious ready group, which would include ships that could put Marines ashore using traditional sea-to-land connector vessels.

Baze anticipates the ship's first deployment will come next year.

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## Navy bribery scandal contractor expected to plead guilty

*The Associated Press*

SAN DIEGO — A contractor at the center of a massive Navy bribery case, who prosecutors allege used illegal information to bilk the U.S. out of at least \$20 million, scheduled a change-of-plea hearing Thursday.

Leonard Glenn Francis, a Malaysian defense contractor known in military circles as "Fat Leonard," was expected in federal court in San Diego. His lawyer could not be reached for comment Wednesday, and prosecutors declined to comment.

Francis has pleaded not guilty to conspiracy in a bribery case that has led to the arrest of

Navy commanders and rocked the military branch.

Prosecutors say Francis, chief executive of Singapore-based Glenn Defense Marine Asia Ltd., or GDMA, bought information from Navy officials that allowed his company to overbill the military branch by at least \$20 million for services it provided to Navy ships at Asian ports since 2009.

Francis paid for plane tickets, hotels and prostitutes for Navy officials who helped him, according to prosecutors. GDMA has provided fuel, food and supplies for Navy ships for 25 years. He was arrested in 2013 on a trip to San Diego.

The hearing comes barely a week after a Navy commander acknowledged sharing confidential information with Francis.

Jose Luis Sanchez said he provided shipping schedules and other information to Francis in exchange for bribes. He became the highest-ranking Navy official to plead guilty in the case after Daniel Layug, a petty officer who admitted providing classified shipping schedules and other internal Navy information to Francis.

Sanchez faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison when he is sentenced March 27 for bribery and conspiracy to commit bribery.

Sanchez admitted taking bribes valued between \$30,000 and \$120,000 from 2009 to 2013, a prostitute, \$7,500 to travel from Asia to the U.S. and five days at Singapore's luxury Shangri-La Hotel, according to a 24-page plea agreement. In exchange, he provided classified Navy ship and submarine schedules and other internal information to Francis.

Cmdr. Michael Vannak Khem Misiewicz, has pleaded not guilty to accepting bribes in exchange for providing confidential information to Francis. He was indicted last week on an additional seven counts of bribery.

# FBI: Ohio man planned attack on Capitol

The Associated Press

CINCINNATI — A 20-year-old Ohio man's Twitter posts sympathizing with Islamic terrorists led to an undercover FBI operation and the man's arrest on charges that he plotted to blow up the U.S. Capitol and kill government officials.

Christopher Lee Cornell, also known as Raheel Mahrus Ubaydah, told an FBI informant they should "wage jihad," and showed his plans for bombing the Capitol and shooting people, according to a criminal complaint filed in federal court in Ohio on Wednesday. The FBI

said Cornell expressed his support for the Islamic State group.

Cornell's arrest came only days after a grand jury indictment charged another Cincinnati-area resident with threatening to murder House Speaker John Boehner.

The complaint against Cornell charges him with attempting to kill officers and employees of the United States.

Cornell was arrested Wednesday after buying two semi-automatic rifles and about 600 rounds of ammunition, authorities said.

The public was never in danger, said John Barrios, acting

special agent in charge of the FBI's Cincinnati division.

A phone message and an email were left Wednesday for attorney Karen Savir, a federal public defender listed in court records as Cornell's attorney. A working phone number could not be found for Cornell's family.

His father, John Cornell, told The Cincinnati Enquirer in a story for Thursday's editions that his son was a "momma's boy who never left the house." He said his son endured frequent incidents of abuse as a practicing Muslim.

"Everything you're hearing

in the media right now, they've already painted him as some kind of terrorist," John Cornell told the newspaper. ... "They've painted him as some kind of jihadist. ... (Christopher) is one of the most peace-loving people I know."

The complaint alleges that an FBI informant began supplying agents with information about Cornell last year. The informant and Cornell, who lives in Green Township, first began communicating through Twitter in August 2014 and then through an instant messaging platform separate from Twitter, according to the complaint.

## 2 friends reach top of Yosemite's El Capitan in historic 19-day climb

The Associated Press

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, Calif. — American rock climber Tommy Caldwell was first to pull himself atop a 3,000-foot sheer granite face in Yosemite National Park, followed minutes later by his longtime friend Kevin Jorgeson.

The pair embraced and then Jorgeson pumped his arm in the air and clapped his hands above his head. After years of practice, failed attempts and 19 grueling days scaling the vertical wall on El Capitan by their bloodied fingertips, the friends at last grasped success.

"That's a deep, abiding, lifelong friendship, built over suffering on the wall together over six years," said Caldwell's mother, Terry, among some 200 people in the valley floor thousands of feet below who broke into cheers at the climbers' historic feat Wednesday.

She said her son could have reached the top of the world's largest granite monolith several days ago but he waited for his friend to ensure they made

it together.

The men completed what had long been considered the world's most difficult rock climb, captivating the world through social media and live-streamed video coverage while documentary filmmakers dangled from ropes capturing each move.

Caldwell, 36, and Jorgeson, 30, became the first to free-climb the rock formation's Dawn Wall, a feat many had considered impossible. They used ropes and safety harnesses in case of a fall but relied entirely on their own strength and dexterity to ascend by grasping cracks as thin as razor blades and as small as dimes.

The two dealt with constant falls and injuries. But their success completes a yearslong dream that bordered on obsession.

At the top, another crowd was waiting for them, including Caldwell's wife and Jorgeson's girlfriend, who welcomed them with hugs and kisses before they hiked down the peak.

## USAREUR: Don't drive if license is not up to date

BY JOHN VANDIVER  
AND MARCUS KLOECKNER  
*Stars and Stripes*

U.S. Army Europe is cautioning personnel without a currently valid stateside driver's license to avoid driving on public roads while the U.S. seeks to clarify a dispute with Germany over a new policy governing driving rules in the country.

However, the German Foreign Ministry made clear in a statement that it did not perceive there to be a dispute, saying the decision to require a valid stateside license in conjunction with a USAREUR license was made two years ago and that U.S. authorities were informed at the time.

A USAREUR advisory posted Thursday said the U.S. considers this a new policy and said the issue has been raised with the German government.

"This new policy is based on a recent unilateral change in interpretation of the German Supplementary Agreement to the NATO Status of Forces Agreement by host nation authorities," USAREUR said. "The U.S. Forces dispute this new interpretation, and have

raised the matter via the U.S. Embassy in Berlin to the German Federal Government.

"However, U.S. Forces authorities currently have no control over the application of this policy by the German authorities," USAREUR said.

The German Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the federal government is not responsible for driver's license issues and that they are determined by the country's 16 states.

"In line with the common practice of U.S. authorities toward members of the German military in the U.S., the (German) states decided in spring 2013 that valid drivers' licenses are to be required from the U.S. military. The U.S. Embassy was informed of this in spring 2013."

No one could be reached at the U.S. Embassy Thursday evening for comment.

USAREUR said this policy had begun to be enforced only recently, but cautioned USAREUR license holders that they would be legal on the roads only if in possession of both a valid U.S. license and the USAREUR license.



# A long, winding road to Super Bowl

*The Associated Press*

Remember when the Patriots were 2-2 and coming off a 41-14 loss at Kansas City?

Or when the Seahawks looked fat with Super Bowl success after dipping to 3-3 with a loss at St. Louis?

The Colts lost their first two games of the year and couldn't stop good teams, giving up 51 points to Pittsburgh and 42 to Dallas, in the second half of the season.

And Green Bay started slowly again and didn't get rolling until routing Chicago after its bye.

No, none of these teams was a juggernaut this season the way previous Patriots teams or last year's Seahawks were.

Yes, all four teams in this weekend's conference championships navigated a long and winding road to the title games.

"It's been quite gratifying because of the challenge of answering the Super Bowl accomplishment," said Seahawks coach Pete Carroll, whose Seahawks were fighting off the championship hang-over in October.

They've won 10 of 11 since, and their defense became immovable once All-Pro inside linebacker Bobby Wagner returned from a right foot injury.

Just as much in the doldrums back in early autumn as the Seahawks: Tom Brady and the Patriots. That ugly loss at Kansas City in prime time had some calling for Brady to be benched.

The three-time Super Bowl winner had little cohesion with a mediocre group of wide-

outs, and questions abounded concerning the running game, the offensive line, and a defense that had been torched in two of the first four games.

In the next 12 weeks, the Patriots won 10 times. Between Oct. 5 and Nov. 23, they never scored fewer than 27 points and averaged more than 39 points in a seven-game winning streak.

"It's hard to be oblivious to things," Brady said of commentaries that the Patriots were no longer elite. "We all have TVs or the Internet, or the questions I get and the emails that I get from people that are concerned. Nobody died or anything. It's just a loss and I think we've always done a great job putting losses behind us quickly."

Coach Bill Belichick sees no magical formula for getting on the straight and narrow.

"I think at this point really it's just about everybody doing their job," he said. "I don't think it really matters how many games you've played or how long you've been here."

Green Bay's issues in a 1-2 start — spotty offense, weak blocking, questions about the secondary — soon disappeared as the Packers won nine of 10.

But one bugaboo that never truly was answered could be especially damaging on Sunday at imposing CenturyLink Field: Green Bay's road performances.

Consider that the Packers had only one truly memorable performance in going 4-4 away from Lambeau Field, a 38-17 rout of Chicago in Week 4. And pretty much everyone did that to the Bears at Soldier Field.

The Packers' journey truly has been wind-

ing on the road.

Not that they're backing down when they've traveled so far.

"It's a great opportunity, it's kind of you against ... you and your guys, the people you bring with you, in a hostile environment," All-Pro quarterback Aaron Rodgers said. "It's kind of an all-in against their team and the elements, the crowd and the noise. So yeah, you feed off that."

Indianapolis has fed off being considered an outsider in the AFC, and especially among the remaining quarter. The other three have Super Bowl-winning quarterbacks, for instance.

Then again, the Colts might have the best bet for the future at the position in Andrew Luck.

Indy's losses (to Denver and Philadelphia to open the season, routs against Pittsburgh, Dallas and, yes, New England) were more notable than its victories, the best of which was a 27-0 romp past Cincinnati. The Colts looked vulnerable heading into January.

Then came the latest twist: wins over the Bengals and at Denver.

"That's the whole point of playing every single week," defensive end Cory Redding said. "We don't want to be the best team Week 1 and then basically shut it down for the remainder of the season. We want to grow and get better week in and week out, and in doing so you're going to take some tough losses, and you have to learn from them and bounce back. That shows you the resiliency of this team. That shows you the heart of this team. That shows you the character of this team."

## Colts LB, ex-Army player charged with rape

*The Associated Press*

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indianapolis Colts put Josh McNary on the commissioner's exempt list Thursday, less than 24 hours after prosecutors charged the backup linebacker with rape, criminal confinement with bodily injury and battery resulting in bodily injury.

The designation means McNary is not eligible to practice with the Colts or attend their games, including Sunday's AFC championship at New England.

Team officials issued a statement Wednesday after the prosecutor's office released a report detailing the charges and the accounts of McNary and a 29-year-old woman who made the allegations. The woman's name was redacted in the report.

Ed Schrager, McNary's lawyer, issued a statement early Thursday saying his client denied the allegations and immediately reported to law enforcement officials.

"After reviewing the documents supporting the very serious criminal charges filed yesterday afternoon against Josh McNary, the Colts have requested Commissioner Goodell to immediately place Josh on the league's Commissioner Exemption list," the team said. "If the request is granted, Josh will not be eligible to practice or attend games with the club while designated as Commissioner Exempt."

According to the probable cause affidavit, two Indianapolis police officers said the woman accused an unknown man they later determined to be McNary of attacking her in the early morning hours of Dec. 1. Police, according to the report, determined the man was McNary after investigating a cellphone the woman claimed she took from the man's apartment.

McNary finished his college career as Army's career leader in sacks and tackles for loss, then spent two years on active duty before applying for an early release to play in the NFL.

## Nats get Escobar from A's for RHP Clippard

WASHINGTON — Infielder Yunel Escobar is heading to the Nationals, and All-Star reliever Tyler Clippard is going to the Athletics, thanks to the ninth deal between those clubs in a little more than four years.

The swap, announced Wednesday, gives Washington a player who could solve its search for a starting second baseman. Escobar could play shortstop for the Nationals if they wind up trading away — or fail to agree to a new contract with — Ian Desmond, who can become a free agent after next season.

## Players in mid-30s contributing in playoffs

*The Associated Press*

Julius Peppers has his birthday coming up real soon.

This is one most NFL players don't get to celebrate while they're actually still players.

The same day the Green Bay Packers take on the Seattle Sea-hawks for the NFC championship, this Sunday, Peppers will turn 35. Not even to the midpoint of the average American lifespan, this is a relatively ancient milestone in a game where the typical player is, oh, 26.

Peppers, though, has hardly been showing his age. There are a few others who'll be in action this weekend, too, from Kevin Williams to Reggie Wayne to Vince Wilfork, still making meaningful contributions to their teams heading into the conference championship games.

Peppers was one of the most dominant players on the field last week in Green Bay's win over Dallas, matching the team high with six tackles, drawing a holding penalty and forcing two fumbles.

One came during a sack, which the Cowboys recovered. The other might have been the most pivotal play of the game, including the replay reversal of Dez Bryant's fourth-down grab near the goal line.

DeMarco Murray burst through a big hole that Peppers was being pushed away from, but the eight-time Pro Bowl defensive end

escaped his block and knocked the ball out just as Murray approached the secondary with plenty of room to run.

The Packers fell on the ball near midfield and drove the other way for a field goal to pull within 14-13. Until that point early in the third quarter, the Cowboys were beginning to pull away.

"You need all hands on deck right now and everybody making these plays at crucial times," Peppers said.

The soft-spoken Peppers, who has played the outside linebacker position this season for the first time in his career, has been just as valuable as an adviser for his younger teammates.

Coach Mike McCarthy recently mentioned a one-on-one conversation between Peppers and teammate David Bakhtiari that gave the 23-year-old left tackle some valuable insight about his strengths and weaknesses after the two faced each other the previous season when Peppers played for the Chicago Bears.

"I know David was thankful for that," McCarthy said.

The Seahawks have been grateful they took a chance with Williams, who considered retirement after Minnesota let him become a free agent following 11 years with the Vikings.

The long-time 3-technique defensive tackle was moved to the nose tackle spot after Brandon Mebane suffered a season-ending

injury, and the 34-year-old has been stellar since then. Williams, like Peppers with the Packers, is the oldest player on the team.

"He's such a savvy player that it just made sense to him because he's been around so long," Sea-hawks coach Pete Carroll said.

That's the great advantage these guys have, of course, the tricks of the trade accumulated over the years. Despite the natural decline in strength and speed, age can still give an edge in this sport.

Wayne, who has been picked for six Pro Bowls and tallied six seasons of 1,200 yards receiving or more, has been relatively quiet at age 36 with T.Y. Hilton taking over as Andrew Luck's top option. Wayne has been playing with a torn left triceps.

But, like 42-year-old kicker Adam Vinatieri and 34-year-old defensive end Cory Redding, Wayne — making the 12th postseason appearance of his 14-year NFL career — still has a useful role.

"Let's live in this moment. Let's not worry about what goes on afterward," he said.

On the other side of the ball for the Patriots will be Wilfork, the 33-year-old five-time Pro Bowl defensive tackle who recovered well from an injury-filled season.

"I worked my tail off just to get back and play football like I know how to play," he said, "and I never take nothing for granted."



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# Baylor's late jumper sinks Iowa State

The Associated Press

WACO, Texas — Kenny Chery got No. 22 Baylor started with a three-pointer on the very first shot, part of a game-opening 16-1 spurt for the Bears.

After they fell behind late, Chery hit the game-winner against No. 11 Iowa State.

Chery, the senior point guard who struggled shooting for most of the game, made a jumper with 4.7 seconds left and the Bears won 74-73 after blowing a 14-point lead in the final 8½ minutes.

"For him to knock down that last shot after not being as efficient from the field as he normally is, I thought that showed a lot of poise, character, guts," coach Scott Drew said. "And I know with our team, there's no one we'd rather have with the ball in his hands at the end of the game."

**No. 5 Villanova 88, Xavier 75:** Ryan Arcidiacono had 18 points and six assists, Dylan Ennis finished with

17 points and six rebounds, and host Villanova made a season-high 15 three-pointers to beat Xavie.

Josh Hart added 15 points and seven rebounds for the Wildcats (16-1 overall, 4-1 Big East), who have won three straight conference games by an average of nearly 15 points since their only loss of the season.

**No. 12 Notre Dame 62, Georgia Tech 59:** Jerian Grant scored 12 points, Steve Vasturia added 11 points and Notre Dame beat host Georgia Tech.

Despite the absence of starting forward Zach Auguste, the Fighting Irish (16-2, 4-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) secured their best start to a season since 1978-79.

**No. 13 Wichita State 67, Southern Illinois 55:** Darius Carter scored a career-high 25 points on 11-for-15 shooting, leading host Wichita State.

Ron Baker had 11 points and Tekele Cotton added 10 as the Shockers (15-2, 5-0 Missouri Valley) won their 23rd straight conference game.

**No. 14 Maryland 73, Rutgers 65:** Dez Wells scored 17 points, Jake Layman had a career-high 13 rebounds and host Maryland used a late surge to beat Rutgers.

Layman and Jared Nickens each scored 12 points for the Terrapins (16-2, 4-1 Big Ten), who finished with an 18-6 run to avert an upset.

**No. 15 North Carolina 81, N.C. State 79:** Marcus Paige scored 23 points and North Carolina barely held off a late comeback.

Kennedy Meeks added 15 points and 10 rebounds for the visiting Tar Heels (13-4, 3-1 Atlantic Coast Conference).

**San Diego State 60, No. 25 Wyoming 52:** Aqeel Quinn scored

14 points and Winston Shepard 10 as San Diego State snapped Wyoming's 13-game home winning streak.

Wyoming (15-2, 4-1) lost just three days after breaking into the AP Top 25 for the first time since 1988.

**Army 72, Holy Cross 70 (OT):** Dylan Cox made a game-winning layup with two seconds left in overtime for visiting Army.

Tanner Plomb scored 28 points — 25 of those in regulation — and Kyle Wilson added 22 for Army (11-5, 2-3 Patriot League).

**Bucknell 65, Navy 63:** John Azzinaro scored 19 points and drilled three late three-pointers, including the go-ahead three with 11 seconds left to lift host Bucknell.

**New Mexico 60, Air Force 48:** Sam Logwood scored a career-high 17 points and hit a crucial three-pointer for host New Mexico.

## Hawks top Celts, extend streak to 10

The Associated Press

BOSTON — DeMarre Carroll and Jeff Teague each scored 22 points to help the Atlanta Hawks win their 10th straight game, 105-91 over the Boston Celtics on Wednesday night.

Paul Millsap added 18 points and 10 rebounds for Eastern Conference-leading Atlanta, 31-8 overall and 15-5 on the road. The Hawks have their first double-digit winning streak since winning 11 in a row early in the 1997-98 season. They also have won 10 straight on the road, the longest streak in club history.

Teague, Millsap and Carroll were well-rested after getting a night off Tuesday, when Al Horford led the Hawks past Philadelphia with his first career triple-double. On Wednesday, it was Horford and veteran outside shooter Kyle Korver resting up as their teammates easily took care of the Celtics.

Avery Bradley had 17 points and Jared Sullinger finished with 14 points and nine rebounds for Boston.

**Warriors 104, Heat 89:** Stephen Curry made seven three-pointers and finished with 32 points and host Golden State overwhelmed undermanned Miami for its eighth straight victory.

With a strained left hamstring sidelining Heat star Dwyane Wade, the NBA-leading Warriors (31-5) mowed down Miami the way they have most opponents recently. Golden State has won by an average of 19.8 points during its current streak.

**Spurs 98, Hornets 93:** Manu Ginobili had 27 points on 10-for-14 shooting and visiting San Antonio snapped Charlotte's winning streak at five games.

**Clippers 100, Trail Blazers 94:** Jamal Crawford scored 25 points, DeAndre Jordan had 17 points and 18 rebounds and visiting Los Angeles rallied in the fourth quarter.

**Wizards 105, Bulls 99:** Paul Pierce had 22 points and visiting Washington beat Chicago, despite Derrick Rose's season-high 32 points for the home team.

The Bulls played the second half with-

out Joakim Noah after he injured his right ankle.

**Pelicans 105, Pistons 94:** Anthony Davis had 27 points and 10 rebounds as New Orleans handed Detroit only its second loss in 11 games.

**Grizzlies 103, Nets 92:** Zach Randolph had 20 points and 14 rebounds and visiting Memphis beat slumping Brooklyn in its first matchup against former coach Lionel Hollins.

**Magic 120, Rockets 113:** Victor Oladipo had 32 points, Nik Vucevic added 25 and 12 rebounds and host Orlando rallied to beat Houston.

**Raptors 100, 76ers 84:** Kyle Lowry had 18 points and 12 assists and DeMar DeRozan returned from a groin injury to score eight of his 20 points in the fourth quarter in Toronto's victory over visiting Philadelphia.

**Nuggets 114, Mavericks 107:** Ty Lawson had 29 points and 12 assists to help host Denver beat Dallas for its fifth straight victory.

## Perry nets hat trick to lift Ducks

The Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Although the Anaheim Ducks have been one of the NHL's most dominant teams all season, they hadn't managed to blow out an opponent at home since late October.

With a hat trick from Corey Perry and a sputtering Toronto offense on the other end, the Ducks finally got to enjoy a stress-free third period in Anaheim.

Perry scored three goals and Frederik Andersen made 28 saves for his second career shutout in the Ducks' 4-0 victory over the Maple Leafs on Wednesday night.

Kyle Palmieri also scored in the Ducks' fourth victory in five games, putting them back atop the overall standings alongside Nashville. Anaheim's previous 11 home wins were all one-goal games, but the Ducks routed the Leafs in style.

"We want to be able to put teams away, and I think we did that tonight," said Andersen, who has 44 victories in just 64 career games.

Capping his league-leading third hat trick of the season with an empty-net goal, Perry took over the team lead with 18 goals this season despite missing 15 games with illness and injury.

**Capitals 1, Flyers 0:** Braden Holtby's iron-man run produced another shutout as he made 21 saves in his 20th consecutive start and lifted host Washington.

Holtby put up his fourth blank slate of the season, including three since he became too hot to rest.

**Canadiens 3, Blue Jackets 2:** Max Pacioretty scored two power-play goals, and P.K. Subban added another — all in a span of 3:53 of the third period — to lead visiting Montreal to a comeback victory over Columbus.

**Devils 5, Kings 3:** Steve Bernier netted his first two power-play goals of the season, and New Jersey scored three times during a 68-second span of the second period in a victory over host Los Angeles.

## College players have little time to make NFL call

The Associated Press

PHOENIX — The players who earned a chance to play in the inaugural College Football Playoff had more than a month to prepare for the biggest games of their lives.

Once the national championship game was over, the elite players had a much shorter window to make the biggest decision of their lives.

Try three days. The adrenaline of Monday night's national title game still flowing, top players like Ohio State's Cardale Jones had until Thursday to gather themselves and try to make a rational decision about whether to declare for the NFL Draft or stay in school.

That's not a lot of time for what will likely be a life-altering decision — no matter how it turns out.

"To me, it could be like one of those days like signing day: you can declare by that date, but you don't have to," Arizona

coach Rich Rodriguez said. "If you just played recently, why not wait another two weeks? It's a big decision and the kids should be able to gather as much information as possible."

The NFL Draft isn't until April 30-May 2, but the early date for declaring was put in place to prevent agents from having more time to recruit players for the draft and so college coaches can assess their rosters before signing recruiting classes. The first day high school players can sign a national letter of intent is Feb. 4 and the extra time gives the college coaches a chance to secure replacements for the top players who leave for the NFL.

Many of the top college players have already declared for the draft, including Heisman Trophy winner Marcus Mariota of Oregon, Florida State quarterback Jameis Winston, Washington linebacker Shaq Thompson and Arizona State receiver Jaelen Strong.

Mariota joined that list — and teammate Arik Armstead — when he declared for

the draft on Wednesday. Jones, despite leading the Buckeyes to a national title in his third career start, said he doesn't feel ready for the NFL, but hadn't made a final decision.

The NFL's advisory committee is far from the lone determiner in whether a player decides to stay in school or take a shot at the NFL.

A good starting point, for sure, but there's also input from a variety of other sources, family members, coaches — college, high school and sometimes pee-wee — friends and hangers-on who may not have the player's best interests in mind.

And the decisions don't always work out.

A record 98 underclassmen declared for the NFL Draft a year ago and that led to a record 36 underclassmen who went undrafted. The number is likely to be lower this year, but there's still likely to be a handful of players who declared for the draft but probably should have stayed in school another year or two.