

STARS AND STRIPES®

Saturday, January 24, 2015

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Leader releases plan to change Marine Corps

The Washington Post

The new top general in the Marine Corps released a 16-page plan on Friday detailing his vision for the service, emphasizing a realignment of troops to meet demands in the Pacific and Africa, better coordination with Special Operations units and new psychological testing to assess resiliency in recruits.

Commandant Gen. Joseph Dunford's planning guidance is intended to outline how the Marine Corps "will set the conditions to fight and win against future enemies," he wrote. He took over as the service's top officer on Oct. 17, replacing the retiring Gen. James F. Amos.

Dunford, who previously served as the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, said in his planning guidance that the need for Marines is strong, citing recent operations in Af-

ghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Liberia and South Sudan. He outlined broad changes, including a new plan that will provide each four-star geographic combatant commander with a "properly tailored and effective Marine component."

"This will include changes to General Officer assignments and organization/manning of the staffs," Dunford wrote. "The sources realigned to our components will come from other headquarters elements ... The desired end state is the effective employment and support of assigned, allocated and apportioned Marine Corps forces."

The service will focus heavily in 2015 and 2016 on preparing to fight from the sea in an "anti-access, area denial" environment. Fighting from the sea has long been considered a Marine Corps mission, but the service

did much less of as it deployed tens of thousands of troops at a time to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The commandant also signaled a desire to have Marine units work more closely with special operations troops, something Maj. Gen. Joseph Osterman, the top general overseeing Marine Special Operations, also indicated was coming in a recent interview with Checkpoint. Marines and special operations units are "highly complementary," Dunford wrote, making it "only natural" that the service should improve its ability to operate with U.S. Special Operations Command.

With fewer Navy ships available than there once were, the Marine Corps also will aggressively develop plans to use "alternate platforms," Dunford said. He did not elaborate in the plan released on Friday, but the

service has been exploring deploying troops from new, smaller vessels rather than just the amphibious assault ships that traditionally carry Marines.

Dunford also calls for changes at home. While attending boot camp "changes a person forever," he said, the service should explore adopting new psychological testing for recruits to make sure they are capable of not only becoming Marines, but successfully completing their time in service.

"We will quickly assess the efficacy of available psychological screening tools currently used by special operations forces, law enforcement organizations, and industry," the general said. "The end state is to enhance the quality and resilience of the force — thereby making us more combat ready."

Japan condemns video claiming hostage slaying

The Associated Press

TOKYO — Japanese officials said Saturday they were investigating a new online message purporting to be from the extremist Islamic State group about the two Japanese hostages it holds.

The purported message claimed one hostage has been killed and demanded a prisoner exchange for the other. But the post was deleted quickly, and militants on a website affiliated with the Islamic State group disagreed about the message's authenticity.

The Associated Press could not verify the contents of the message, which varied greatly from previous videos released by the Islamic State group,

which now holds a third of both Syria and Iraq.

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said government ministers were holding an emergency meeting about the new message.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters as he rushed into his office that the release of the new message was "an outrageous and unforgivable act. We demand their immediate release."

Kyodo News agency reported that the same video has been emailed to the wife of one of the hostages.

The Islamic State group had threatened on Tuesday to behead the men within 72 hours unless it received a \$200 million ransom.

Some US counterterror work in Yemen suspended

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration has been forced to suspend certain counterterrorism operations with Yemen in the aftermath of the collapse of its government, according to U.S. officials, a move that eases pressure on al-Qaida's most dangerous franchise.

Armed drones operated by the CIA and the U.S. Joint Special Operations Command remain deployed for now over southern Yemen, where al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula is based. But some U.S. officials said that the Yemeni security services that provided much of the intelligence that sustained that U.S. air campaign are now controlled by Shiite rebels, known as Houthis, who have seized control of much

of the capital.

Even before the disintegration of the government, officials say, the growing chaos in Yemen had resulted in a steady erosion in intelligence-gathering efforts against al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and a de facto suspension in raids by Yemeni units trained, equipped and often flown to targeted al-Qaida compounds by U.S. forces.

"The agencies we worked with ... are really under the thumb of the Houthis. Our ability to work with them is not there," said a senior U.S. official closely involved in monitoring the situation. In a measure of U.S. concern over the crisis, officials also signaled for the first time a willingness to open talks with Houthi leaders.

US troops headed to Mideast to survey rebel training sites

BY JON HARPER
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — An advance team of fewer than 100 U.S. troops will arrive in Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar in the “coming days” to survey training sites where moderate Syrian rebels will be taught to fight radical groups within Syria, Pentagon press secretary Rear Adm. John Kirby said Friday.

Kirby would not identify which units the contingent belongs to, other than to say that most of them are special operations forces.

The team will be followed in the “next few weeks” by several hundred trainers and enablers,

who will begin training the rebels in early spring if everything stays on track, Kirby said.

“Right now, signs are looking good. Things are moving in the right direction,” Kirby said.

However, recruiting and vetting of potential Syrian trainees has not yet begun, according to Kirby.

The Pentagon hopes to have U.S.-trained rebels rejoin the battlefield this fall. The goal is to train 5,000 moderate fighters each year for the next few years to take on the Islamic State. Officials have estimated that the group has 20,000 to 30,000 followers.

In Iraq, training of anti-

Islamic State fighters is already under way. The training site in Irbil came online Friday, and all four designated training sites in Iraq are now up and running. Kirby said there are 3,600 Iraqi security forces and Kurdish Peshmerga already in the training pipeline, with 600 at Al Asad, 1,600 at Taji, 1,300 at Besmaya, and 100 in Irbil.

The initial training phase for Iraqi troops will last six weeks, Kirby said.

There are currently about 1,550 American troops in Iraq training, advising and assisting Iraqi forces. The U.S. plans to train 12 Iraqi brigades to take on the Islamic State.

Saudi king unlikely to change path on oil policy

McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Barely 24 hours into his reign, every aspect of King Salman’s life was under scrutiny Friday as foreign policy analysts attempted to divine how he’ll lead Saudi Arabia through domestic pressures, messy regional conflicts and a showdown over plummeting crude oil prices.

Salman took the throne late Thursday upon the death of his half brother, King Abdullah, and within hours reports were flying about the 79-year-old monarch’s health (claims of dementia), his family (one son is the first Muslim astronaut; another is a fighter pilot who’s flown sorties against jihadists in Syria) and his trajectory (a half-century as governor of Riyadh).

Perhaps to counter the image of yet another septuagenarian shuffling to power in a nation where roughly half the population is younger than 25, one of Salman’s first acts as ruler was to use his official Twitter account to ask God to help him maintain stability and to “protect the kingdom from all evils.”

The royal tweet might be as groundbreaking as it gets for now. Saudi Arabia watchers say that so far, the new king appears to favor continuity over shaking things up in a region that’s already aflame.

Analysts don’t expect the king’s death to change the Saudis’ position in the international showdown over oil prices. Saudi Arabia is refusing to cut production despite a worldwide glut that’s driven prices down by more than half since the summer. The Saudis are betting they can outlast U.S. shale oil drillers and expensive production in the Gulf of Mexico and the Russian Arctic.

Analyst Kloza suggested the Saudis might eventually decide to dump even more oil on the glutted market.

US troops might soon leave West Africa

BY STEVEN BEARDSLEY
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — U.S. troops in West Africa turned over their final Ebola treatment center Tuesday and could begin returning home in early February, pending a final decision by U.S. officials.

U.S. officials indicated last month they might send some DOD personnel to another country in the region as infection rates fell in Liberia and continued rising elsewhere. Case numbers still remain high in Sierra Leone and Guinea, but infection rates have fallen in recent weeks, a hopeful sign the region might be turning a corner. The neighboring country of Mali was declared Ebola-free after going 42 days without an infection, another victory for the area.

Task force members handed over the last of 10 Ebola treatment centers under its mandate on Tuesday, this one in the village of Barclayville in the south-east corner of Liberia.

Members finished their other

primary mission, training health care workers, at the end of December, said task force spokesman Lt. Col. Brian DeSantis. Some units are still spinning blood samples for Ebola detection, but even that role has been increasingly assumed by other organizations.

The relief charity World Food Programme and the U.S. Agency for International Development, which oversees the entire American response in West Africa, have assumed the military’s logistics role.

“They were there as a bridging solution because of what the military can bring,” Lt. Col. Mark Cheadle, spokesman for U.S. Africa Command, said of the task force. “Since they’ve been there, USAID has worked very hard, and they’re close to the point where they can assume the mission themselves.”

One remaining question is whether the Liberian government can sustain treatment centers after the military’s departure, especially if infection rates rise again.

Announced in September

when infection rates were high, Operation United Assistance was meant to bolster a fledgling international response to the outbreak by providing the logistics and engineering support otherwise unavailable in the region.

But infection rates began slowing in late October, according to the WHO, before the military had opened its first treatment center in Monrovia. A plan to spend as much as \$1 billion and deploy as many as 3,000 troops to build 17 treatment centers quickly began to change.

The military ultimately built, or contracted, 10 treatment centers, with USAID taking on another five. The final seven centers were built with 50 beds instead of 100, an acknowledgment of the declining need. Some centers have yet to see a single patient, DeSantis said.

As of Jan. 8, the Department of Defense had spent less than \$350 million, with troop levels reaching a high point of roughly 2,300. Scores of DOD contractors and civilians have also been part of the mission.

Chicago Cubs legend Ernie Banks dies at 83

The Associated Press

Even as the Chicago Cubs lost one game after another, Ernie Banks never lost hope.

That was the charm of "Mr. Cub." Banks, the Hall of Fame slugger and two-time MVP who always maintained his boundless enthusiasm for baseball despite decades of playing on miserable teams, died Friday night. He was 83.

The Cubs announced Banks' death, but did not provide a cause.

Banks hit 512 home runs during his 19-year career and was fond of saying, "It's a great day for baseball. Let's play two." In fact, that sunny finish to his famous catchphrase adorns his statue outside Wrigley Field.

And on a cold winter night Friday in Chicago, the ballpark marquee carried the sad news for the entire town to see: Ernie Banks. "Mr. Cub." 1931-2015.

"Words cannot express how important Ernie Banks will always be to the Chicago Cubs, the city of Chicago and Major League Baseball. He was one of the greatest players of all time," Cubs chairman Tom Ricketts said in a statement. "He was a pioneer in the major leagues. And more importantly, he was the warmest and most sincere person I've ever known."

"Approachable, ever optimistic and kind hearted, Ernie Banks is and always will be Mr. Cub. My family and I grieve the loss of such a great and good-hearted man, but we look forward to celebrating Ernie's life in the days ahead."

In a statement Saturday, President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama expressed their condolences "to the family of Ernie Banks, and to every Chicagoan and baseball fan who loved him." The president said Banks became known as much for his optimism and love of the game as his home runs and back-to-back National League MVPs.

"As a Hall-of-Famer, Ernie was an incredible ambassador for baseball,

and for the city of Chicago," President Obama said. "He was beloved by baseball fans everywhere, including Michelle, who, when she was a girl, used to sit with her dad and watch him play on TV. And in 2013, it was my honor to present Ernie with the Presidential Medal of Freedom."

"Somewhere, the sun is shining, the air is fresh, his team's behind him, and Mr. Class — "Mr. Cub" — is ready to play two."

Though he was an 11-time All-Star from 1953-71, Banks never reached the postseason. The Cubs, who haven't won the World Series since 1908, finished below .500 in all but six of his seasons and remain without a pennant since 1945.

Still, he was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1977, the first year he was eligible, and was selected to baseball's All-Century team in 1999.

Banks' infectious smile and non-stop good humor despite his team's dismal record endeared him to Chicago fans, who voted him the best player in franchise history. One famous admirer, actor Bill Murray, named his son Homer Banks Murray.

In 2013, Banks was presented with the Presidential Medal of Freedom — by a noted Chicago White Sox fan, President Barack Obama. The award is one of the nation's highest civilian honors.

"Ernie Banks was more than a baseball player. He was one of Chicago's greatest ambassadors. He loved this city as much as he loved — and lived for — the game of baseball," Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel said. "This year, during every Cubs game, you can bet that No. 14 will be watching over his team. And if we're lucky, it'll be a beautiful day for not just one ballgame, but two."

Banks' No. 14 was the first number retired by the Cubs, and it hangs on a flag from the left-field foul pole at the old ballpark.

"I'd like to get to the last game of the World Series at Wrigley Field and

hit three homers," he once said. "That was what I always wanted to do."

But even without an opportunity to play on the October stage, Banks left an indelible mark that still resonates with fans and athletes from all sports.

"Ernie Banks... We are going to all miss you. (hash)Legend," quarterback Russell Wilson tweeted as he and the Seattle Seahawks were getting ready to defend their Super Bowl title.

Banks was playing for the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro Leagues when the Cubs discovered him in 1953, and purchased his contract for \$10,000. He made his major league debut at shortstop on Sept. 17 that year, and three days later hit his first home run.

Tall and thin, Banks didn't look like a typical power hitter. He looked even less so as he stood at the plate, holding his bat high and wiggling it as he waited for pitches. But he had strong wrists and a smooth, quick stroke, and he made hitting balls out of the park look effortless.

When he switched to a lighter bat before the 1955 season, his power quickly became apparent. He hit 44 homers that season, including three against the Pittsburgh Pirates on Aug. 4. His five grand slams that year established a major league record that stood for more than 30 years before Don Mattingly hit six in 1987.

Banks' best season came in 1958, when he hit .313 with 47 homers and 129 RBIs. Though the Cubs went 72-82 and finished sixth in the National League, Banks edged Willie Mays and Hank Aaron for his first MVP award. He was the first player from a losing team to win the NL MVP.

Banks won the MVP again in 1959, becoming the first NL player to win it in consecutive years, even though the Cubs had another dismal year. Banks batted .304 with 45 homers and a league-leading 143 RBIs.

He led the NL in homers again in 1960 with 41, his fourth straight season with 40 or more. His 248 homers

from 1955-60 were the most in the majors, topping even Aaron and Mays.

"Mr. Cub. What you have done for the game of baseball the city of Chicago and everyone you have ever touched will never be forgotten. RIP," tweeted Cubs first baseman Anthony Rizzo.

Though Banks didn't break the 40-homer barrier again after 1960, he topped the 100-RBI mark three more times, including 1969, his last full season. Then 38, he hit .253 with 23 home runs and 106 RBIs, and was chosen an All-Star for an 11th time.

On May 12, 1970, he hit his 500th home run at Wrigley Field, becoming only the eighth player at the time to reach the plateau.

Banks retired after the 1971 season. He owned most of the Cubs' career slugging records, some of which still stand today.

Known mostly for his power at the plate, Banks was a solid fielder, too. He is best known as a shortstop, where he won a Gold Glove in 1960, but he switched to first base in 1962. He played 1,259 games at first and 1,125 games at shortstop.

Born and raised in Dallas, Banks would be bribed to play catch by his father, who always wanted him to be a baseball player. Banks grew to love the game and was a standout in high school, along with participating in football, basketball and track and field.

He joined a barnstorming Negro Leagues team at 17 and was spotted by Cool Papa Bell, who signed him to the Monarchs in 1950. Banks played one season before going into the Army. He returned to Kansas City after he was discharged, playing one more season before joining the Cubs.

"He was one of the great crossover baseball players of his day," the Rev. Jesse Jackson said. "His personality was a racial bridge builder. He treated all people with dignity and respect. He never stopped reaching out to bridge the racial chasms."

NFL: No conclusion yet on Patriots' deflated footballs

The Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Massachusetts — The NFL said Friday it has interviewed dozens of people and collected physical evidence but has no conclusions yet on how the New England Patriots used underinflated balls in their last game, offering no timetable for resolving the cheating accusations with the Super Bowl nine days away.

The league said evidence shows the Patriots used underinflated footballs during the first half of the AFC championship game Sunday night against the Indianapolis Colts.

It issued a statement that the Patriots have pledged full cooperation and have given the league information it requested and made personnel available upon request. Quarterback Tom Brady said Thursday afternoon he had not been contacted at that point.

The NFL said it began its investigation Sunday night and expects cooperation from other clubs. It hired an

investigatory company to help review electronic and video information.

Patriots owner Robert Kraft said investigators were in Foxborough for three days this week after he received a letter from the league Monday informing him of the probe.

"We provided access to every full- and part-time employee the league's representatives requested to speak with and produced every communication device that they requested to search," he said. "I very much support the league's desire to conduct a complete investigation."

The Patriots are preparing to meet the defending champion Seattle Seahawks in the Super Bowl on Feb. 1 in Glendale, Arizona.

The league said its conclusions will be quickly shared when reached.

"Over the past several days, nearly 40 interviews have been conducted, including of Patriots personnel, game officials, and third parties with relevant information and expertise," the

statement said.

NFL Executive Vice President Jeff Pash and Ted Wells of the law firm of Paul Weiss are leading the probe.

Wells was the investigator in the Miami Dolphins bullying scandal. His report last February detailed widespread harassment in the team's locker room that extended beyond the two players at the center of the probe. It said guard John Jerry and center Mike Pouncey followed Richie Incognito's lead in harassing offensive lineman Jonathan Martin.

The NFL requires game balls to be inflated to between 12½ and 13½ pounds per square inch.

It wants to find out why footballs were underinflated during the first half and whether "deliberate action" caused it.

"We have not made any judgments on these points and will not do so until we have concluded our investigation and considered all of the relevant evidence," the league said.

The balls were properly inflated for the second half and remained properly inflated after the game, the statement said.

Colts general manager Ryan Grigson declined to comment.

"Everything, I'm sure is going to come out in the investigation," he said when asked if the Colts alerted the NFL to the underinflated balls. "It's in the league's hands."

A former NFL ball boy said it's easy to remove air discreetly with a small pin that fits in the palm of a hand.

"This isn't a big deal. Everyone does it because each quarterback likes a different grip," said Nader Kawash, a Philadelphia Eagles ball boy from 1996-2000. "I'm not saying a ball boy or equipment guy did anything on purpose to cheat. Sometimes the balls are overinflated so it's easy to take some air out on the sideline without the referees noticing. You can use a helmet pin. Players can stand around in a circle. Anybody can do it."



Ship's Store official new car program

Exclusive Navy at-sea offers:

www.navyauto.com or nasinfo@navyauto.com

Djokovic easily wins third-round match

The Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Novak Djokovic fine-tuned his voice and his game at the Australian Open on Saturday, advancing to the fourth round with a straight-sets win over Fernando Verdasco and then urging the crowd of 15,000 to sing Happy Birthday to his mother back home.

After his 7-6 (8), 6-3, 6-4 win, the four-time Australian champion had a lengthy on-court interview with Jim Courier discussing a range of topics including his childhood memories of tennis, when “I was constructing little trophies out of plastic and pretending I was a Wimbledon champion.”

The flashback jogged his memory. It was Jan. 24, his mother Dijana’s birthday.

“It’s my mom’s birthday, can you sing happy birthday?” he asked the crowd, before singing the whole song live on camera.

The Williams sisters had their own celebration of sorts, progressing together to the fourth round of a Grand Slam tournament for the first time since Wimbledon in 2011. Two other Americans joined them, with 19-year-old Madison Keys upsetting two-time

Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova with a 6-4, 7-5 victory and Madison Brengle beating Coco Vandeweghe 6-3, 6-2 in an all-U.S. match. The two Madisons will meet in the fourth round, meaning one will become a first-time major quarterfinalist.

When 18-time Grand Slam champion Serena Williams noticed that older sister Venus was advancing to the second week, it inspired her own 4-6, 6-2, 6-0 win over No. 26-ranked Elina Svitolina.

When top-ranked Serena walked onto Rod Laver Arena, Venus was already down a set and a break on Margaret Court Arena. Venus, who was diagnosed with an auto-immune condition called Sjogren’s syndrome in 2011 and has struggled at the highest level ever since, rallied for a 4-6, 7-6 (3), 6-1 win over Camila Giorgi, and that inspired her younger sister.

“I thought, ‘Wow, she’s been through so much with her illness, with everything that she’s had to do. Gosh, if she can do it, I’m perfectly healthy, I’m fine. I should be able to do it, too,’” the five-time Australian Open champion said. “It just got me so motivated, really helped me push through those next two sets at a rapid rate.”

She’ll have to be at the top of her

game in the next round when she meets No. 24 Garbine Muguruza, who beat her in the second round at the French Open last year. Muguruza defeated Timea Bacsinszky 6-3, 4-6, 6-0.

In the other fourth-round match in that quarter, two-time champion Victoria Azarenka will meet 2014 finalist Dominika Cibulkova.

Azarenka, the winner here in 2012 and 2013 but who is unseeded this year because of an injury-interrupted 2014, had a 6-4, 6-4 win over No. 25 Barbora Zahlavova Strycova. Cibulkova beat No. 19 Alize Cornet 7-5, 6-2.

On the men’s side, defending champion Stan Wawrinka had a 6-4, 6-2, 6-4 win over Jarkko Nieminen and will have a score to settle in the next round against Guillermo Garcia-Lopez, who beat Vasek Pospisil in straight sets.

Wawrinka lost to Garcia-Lopez in the first round of the French Open last year, making him the first first-time major winner in 12 years to lose in the first round of his next Grand Slam event.

No. 8 Milos Raonic fired 22 aces in a 6-4, 6-3, 6-3 win over Benjamin Becker and will next play No. 12 Feliciano Lopez, who had a 7-6 (6), 6-4, 7-6 (3) win over Jerzy Janowicz.

No. 5 Kei Nishikori, the U.S. Open finalist, beat Steve Johnson 6-7 (7), 6-1, 6-2, 6-3 and will next meet former French Open finalist David Ferrer, who struggled to finish off No. 18 Gilles Simon in four sets.

Gilles Muller beat No. 19 John Isner 7-6 (4), 7-6 (6), 6-4 to set up a fourth-round clash with Djokovic.

Venus Williams couldn’t contain her delight after her win, beaming a smile as she turned to wave to all sides of the stadium. She said the sibling relationship, and rivalry, helped both of the Williams sisters.

“I’ve been motivated by Serena though since day one. The way she faces her life, the way she is fearless on the court,” Venus Williams said. “We’ve had the fortunate relationship to be able to motivate each other and grow from each other.”

The 34-year-old, seven-time major winner next faces sixth-seeded Agnieszka Radwanska, who advanced with a 6-0, 7-5 win over Varvara Lepchenko.

“I like to win titles ... that’s what I play for,” she said. “So, yes, it’s great to be in the second week but is fourth round my goal when I come to these tournaments? No.”

Hawks extend winning streak to 15 games

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — The Atlanta Hawks romped to their 15th straight victory, the longest streak in franchise history.

Don’t expect them to savor it for long.

This team is focused firmly on what’s in front of them.

Paul Millsap scored 22 points, Jeff Teague added 17 and the Hawks broke the record with a 103-93 victory over the Oklahoma City Thunder on Friday night.

“It’s a good accomplishment,” Millsap said, sitting in a rather somber locker room. “But it’s just another win.”

The wins keep piling up for a team that no one expected to be a title contender at the beginning of the season. Before a raucous sellout crowd, the Hawks came out on top for the 29th time in 31 games to extend their Eastern-best record to 36-8.

As usual, pretty much everyone chipped in.

Four starters were in double figures and backup point guard Dennis Schroder led a spurt at the start of the fourth quarter that helped the Hawks pull away. He finished with 13 points and five assists, igniting the arena with a towering finger roll that dropped gently through the net.

“Give me five really good guys,” Millsap said, “and I’ll go out there and win with ‘em.”

Russell Westbrook led the Thunder with 22 points, but it wasn’t enough to extend their four-game winning streak.

Kevin Durant added 21 points, while Serge Ibaka with 13 was the only other Thunder player in double figures.

The Hawks were much more balanced. Al Horford had 14 points and 12 rebounds, while DeMarre Carroll chipped in with 13 points. Kyle Korver was the only starter who didn’t reach double figures, but even he chipped in with a play that had everyone talking: another dunk in the waning seconds of the first half that sent the Hawks to the locker room with a 48-47 lead.

Warriors 126, Kings 101:

Klay Thompson scored the most points in a quarter in NBA history, a 37-point third period that powered host Golden State to victory.

Thompson, who finished with a career-high 52 points, pleased the announced sellout crowd of 19,596 at rowdy Oracle Arena with a performance that will long be remembered in the basketball-loving Bay Area. The All-Star hopeful made all 13 shots, including a league-record nine from 3-point range, and hit both of his free throws during a 12-minute span.

His streaky shooting touch helped the Warriors (35-6) erase a sloppy showing for its franchise-best 18th consecutive home victory. Golden State became the 10th NBA team to win at least 35 games halfway through a season.

The last player to score at least that many points in a quarter was Carmelo Anthony with 33 in 2008 while with Denver.

Cavaliers 129, Hornets 90:

LeBron James scored 25 points and host Cleveland put on a dominant performance by routing Charlotte for its fifth straight win.

The Cavaliers, with an artful display of shooting and passing, had the home crowd on its feet throughout the game. Cleveland’s 75-40 lead at half-time was its biggest in franchise history and the margin reached 49 points in the fourth quarter. J.R. Smith scored 21 points on seven 3-pointers, and Kyrie Irving added 18 in Cleveland’s biggest win of the season.

Charlotte had won eight of nine, but was no match for the Cavaliers, who have again looked like title contenders since James returned from an eight-game absence with knee and back injuries.

Al Jefferson led Charlotte with 22 points

Spurs 99, Lakers 85:

Tony Parker scored 17 points and host San Antonio never trailed in rolling over a depleted Los Angeles team that potentially has lost Kobe Bryant for the season.

Kawhi Leonard had 15 points and 14 rebounds, Manu Ginobili scored 15 points and Tim Duncan added 14 points for San Antonio.

Nick Young scored 17 points to lead the Lakers, who lost their seventh straight. Rookie point guard Jordan Clarkson, a San Antonio native, had 11 points and four assists in his first career start.

Bryant tore his right rotator cuff Wednesday in New Orleans.

Bulls 102, Mavericks 98:

Derrick Rose scored 20 points, Jimmy Butler had 14 of his 20 in the second half and visiting Chicago beat Dallas.

Pau Gasol had 13 points and 16 rebounds, and Joakim Noah added six points and seven boards in his return after missing four games with a sprained right ankle.

Dirk Nowitzki scored 24 points to lead the Mavericks.

Rockets 113, Suns 111:

James Harden scored 33 points, including a 20-foot jumper as time ran out, to lift visiting Houston over Phoenix.

Harden’s 33 points came in the absence of injured star center Dwight Howard for three quarters.

Harden, the NBA’s leading scorer entering the night at 27.2 points per game, added 10 assists and six rebounds and made 14 of 17 free throw attempts for the Rockets.

Eric Bledsoe had 25 points, eight rebounds and nine assists to lead the Suns,

Pelicans 92, Timberwolves 84:

Newly minted All-Star starter Anthony Davis had 21 points and 12 rebounds to help visiting New Orleans avoid what would have been another ugly road loss.

Eric Gordon scored 20 points and the Pelicans (22-21) shot 50 percent from the field to move over .500 for the first time since Jan. 2. Gorgui Dieng had 14 points and 15 rebounds for the Timberwolves (7-35), who have the fewest wins in the league.

Heat 89, Pacers 87:

Luol Deng

scored 23 points, Chris Bosh added 19 and host Miami survived another second-half struggle at home, hanging on to top Indiana.

Dwyane Wade scored 13 for Miami, which led by 20 late in the third quarter before Indiana ripped off an 11-0 run and got right back into the game. Indiana’s hope at overtime went awry when C.J. Watson’s open 20-footer from the right corner rimmed out at the buzzer. Luis Scola scored 14 points for the Pacers, who dropped their seventh straight

Knicks 113, Magic 106: Carmelo Anthony scored 25 points and host New York extended its season-high winning streak to three games.

Jason Smith added a season-best 19 points for the Knicks, who improved to 8-36. Lance Thomas had 16 points, and Langston Galloway 15; both are in the midst of their second 10-day contract. Nikola Vucevic led the way for the Magic (15-31) with 34 points and 18 rebounds

Raptors 91, 76ers 86: Kyle Lowry scored 17 of his 21 points in the fourth quarter to lead visiting Toronto to a comeback victory.

Patrick Patterson added 14 points and 13 rebounds for the Raptors, who overcame a nine-point deficit with 5½ minutes left. Robert Covington scored 18 points to lead six 76ers in double-figures. It was the fourth straight loss and sixth in seven games for Philadelphia.

Celtics 100, Nuggets 99:

Avery Bradley scored 18 points, including a go-ahead three-pointer with 1:24 left, and visiting Boston hung on to send Denver to its fifth loss in a row.

The Nuggets played without star guard Ty Lawson, who was away from the team for what the club said were personal reasons following his arrest earlier Friday on suspicion of driving under the influence.

Jameer Nelson had 23 points in his first start for the Nuggets in place of Lawson. Brandon Bass had 17 points for the Celtics.