

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Abe criticized amid Japanese hostage saga

*The Associated Press*

TOKYO — From the prime minister to ordinary people, Japanese were shocked Sunday at a video purportedly showing one of two Japanese hostages of the extremist Islamic State group had been killed.

With attention focused on efforts to save the other hostage, some also criticized Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's drive for a more assertive Japan as responsible for the hostage crisis.

A somber Abe appeared on public broadcaster NHK Sunday demanding the militants release journalist Kenji Goto, 47, unharmed. He said the video was likely authentic, although

he added that the government was still reviewing it. He offered condolences to the family and friends of Haruna Yukawa, 42, an adventurer taken hostage in Syria last year.

Abe declined to comment on the message in the video, which demanded a prisoner exchange for Goto. He said only that the government was still working on the situation and reiterated that Japan condemns terrorism.

"I am left speechless," he said. "We strongly and totally criticize such acts."

Yukawa's father, Shoichi, told reporters he hoped "deep in his heart" that the news of his son's

killing was not true.

President Barack Obama condemned what he called "the brutal murder" of Yukawa and offered condolences to Abe. Obama's statement didn't say how the U.S. knew Yukawa was dead.

"The U.S. intelligence community has no reason to doubt the authenticity of the video," said Brian Hale, spokesman for the U.S. director of national intelligence.

On a visit to India, Obama said the United States will stand "shoulder to shoulder" with Japan and called for the immediate release of Goto.

The Associated Press could

not verify the contents of the video message, which was removed from websites soon after it appeared and varied greatly from previous videos released by the Islamic State group, which now holds a third of both Syria and Iraq.

Criticism of Abe has touched on his push for an expanded role for Japan's troops — one that has remained strictly confined to self-defense under the pacifist constitution written after the nation's defeat in World War II. About 100 protesters demonstrated late Sunday in front of the prime minister's residence, demanding that Abe save Goto.

## USS Ranger to be scrapped despite interest in saving it

*(Newport News, Va.) Daily Press*

A California group wants the Navy to reverse course on the USS Ranger, an aircraft carrier that proved itself in battle, starred in Hollywood and is now destined for the scrapyard.

Top Gun Super Carrier of Long Beach Inc. has secured \$14 million in pledges and has contacted members of Congress to try to save the ship, said project manager Michael B. Shanahan. Its campaign has spread to social media and an online petition at change.org.

A few years ago, a previous group tried to raise money to save the ship, which was built in Newport News, Va., but fell well short of its goal. Shanahan said his group has major corporate backing and is working on the logistical hurdles of parking the ship in Long Beach, Calif.

"We're for real," he said recently in a phone interview.

But so is the dismantling contract between the Navy and International Shipbreaking of Brownsville, Texas.

Under terms of a deal announced in December, the Navy will pay the company exactly 1 cent to tow the ship from Bremerton, Wash., around South America. The trip to Texas is expected to last four to five months.

As the group's name suggests, the Ranger appeared in the hit film "Top Gun" starring Tom Cruise. It also had a cameo in "Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home," where it served as a stand-in for the USS Enterprise — the carrier, not the starship.

More to the point, the Ranger proved its mettle in combat, earning 13 battle stars for service in Vietnam. In January 1991, it was among the flotilla that launched airstrikes in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

The third Forrestal-class carrier to be built, the Ranger was decommissioned in 1993. It was the only Forrestal-class ship to spend its entire career in the Pacific.

After decommissioning, it was kept for potential future reactivation until stricken from the Naval Vessel Register in 2004 and was redesignated for donation. For the next eight years, the Navy made the ship available, said Chris Johnson, a spokesman for Naval Sea Systems Command.

One group, the USS Ranger Foundation, expressed interest.

"Unfortunately, that organization was only able to raise \$105,000 of their estimated \$32 million in startup costs," Johnson said in an email to the Daily Press. "Because we're not able to keep ships in storage indefinitely, the Navy removed the ship from donation hold in 2012 and awarded the scrapping contract in December 2014."

"We are not entertaining any additional offers, and we have no plan to return the ship to donation hold," he said. "We expect the ship will be removed by the scrapping contractor in February."

Shanahan's group has offered to donate money so the Navy can keep the carrier in Bremerton while plans are finalized. Johnson said the Navy can't accept private money for an inherently military purpose.

"It is not accurate when the organization says they have funds available to keep the ship in storage," Johnson said.

Johnson also pointed out that putting the Ranger in Long Beach would compete with the battleship Iowa museum 6 miles away in San Pedro and the aircraft carrier Midway museum 100 miles away in San Diego.

Shanahan said his group envisions the ship as a self-sustaining commercial attraction.

The Navy preferred to see the ship converted into a memorial or a museum, which is why it was available for eight years, Johnson said. When the previous effort fell through, the Navy decided it was time to move on.

# 2nd firm cuts ties with shipper of Gl's' cars

Belleville (Ill.) News-Democrat

For the second time in a month, a key subcontractor for the company that ships military members' cars overseas has parted ways with the firm because of a payment dispute.

The upshot of North Carolina-based Fayetteville Vehicle Processing Center & Storage ending its ties with International Auto Logistics — which in late 2013 was awarded a \$1 billion contract — could mean even longer delays for IAL's already frustrated military customers around the nation.

Fayetteville Vehicle Processing Center, or VPC, which specializes in the storage of privately owned vehicles, was one of the original 10 subcontractors that International Auto

Logistics had listed in its bid to win the contract from the U.S. Transportation Command, which is based at Scott Air Force Base, Ill.

IAL, of Brunswick, Ga., parted ways with Fayetteville VPC because the latter had complained about \$4.2 million in unpaid bills owed by IAL for the storage of thousands of cars, according to Terry Johnson, owner of Fayetteville VPC.

"They are basing their termination on slow pay for the employees, slow pay for the vendors," Johnson said, adding that his firm's failure to pay its employees and vendors was a direct result of IAL's nonpayment for services provided.

Amanda Nunez, an IAL spokeswoman, declined to com-

ment for this story.

"Both parties are subject to a mutual non-disclosure agreement, therefore we cannot comment further," according to a statement Nunez issued to the News-Democrat.

In late December, another of IAL's top subcontractors announced it was terminating its relationship with IAL by early 2015 because of IAL's performance and payment problems, including the alleged nonpayment of \$20 million in fees.

Liberty Global Logistics LLC, of Lake Success, N.Y., which coordinates ocean cargo ships, exercised its termination rights with IAL "due to the prime contractor's failure to cure contract defaults," according to Robert G. Wellner, Liber-

ty's executive vice president.

Gen. Paul Selva, the commander of Transcom, which oversees the IAL contract, declined to comment Friday about IAL's latest pay dispute with a contractor.

Nor would Selva discuss the Feb. 1 deadline he had set for IAL to present a plan for avoiding the delays and glitches that plagued the company when it took over the car shipment contract on May 1, the start of the peak vehicle shipping season.

Navy Cmdr. David Nunnally, a Transcom spokesman, issued a statement Friday stating that the command has "every confidence IAL will submit their 2015 plan before the Feb. 1 deadline as U.S. Transcom has requested."

## WHO mulling reforms after Ebola damaged reputation

The Associated Press

GENEVA — The World Health Organization is debating how to reform itself after botching the response to the Ebola outbreak, a sluggish performance that experts say cost thousands of lives.

On Sunday, the WHO's executive board planned to discuss proposals that could radically transform the United Nations health agency in response to criticism over its handling of the West Africa epidemic.

"The Ebola outbreak points to the need for urgent change," said Dr. Margaret Chan, the WHO's director-general. She acknowledged that the WHO was too slow to grasp the significance of the Ebola outbreak, which is estimated to have killed more than 8,600 people, mainly in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Critics say the reform being debated is long overdue.

"The groundswell of dissatisfaction and lack of trust in WHO over Ebola has reached such a crescendo that unless

there is fundamental reform, I think we might lose confidence in WHO for a generation," said Lawrence Gostin, director of the WHO Collaborating Center on Public Health Law and Human Rights at Georgetown University.

"Ebola revealed all of WHO's inherent weaknesses and the international community saw painfully what it was like to see WHO not being able to lead," he said. "That resulted in thousands of deaths that were completely avoidable."

"If that doesn't light a fire for reform, I don't know what will."

In reports issued to its 34-member board earlier this month, the WHO identified major holes in its ability to stop outbreaks and "a culture that resists embracing operations, an essential element of emergency response." A year before Ebola broke out in West Africa, the WHO's outbreak department slashed its staff to save \$6 million. In proposals to be discussed Sunday, the WHO appears to be backtracking on that decision.

## High-value Guantanamo detainees call home for 1st time in nearly a decade

The Washington Post

For almost a decade, the 15 detainees considered to be the most dangerous at the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have been locked in a special top-security facility, deprived of some of the privileges granted to other prisoners, such as communal living, live television and periodic calls with their families.

Now, as the Pentagon moves to improve prisoner conditions, officials have allowed several "high-value" inmates to make Skype-like video calls to speak with their families for the first time since they were brought to Guantanamo Bay from secret CIA prisons overseas.

Officials have imposed strict security restrictions on the calls, monitoring both sides' statements to ensure no classified information is divulged, making for a disruptive experience that in one case stretched a 30-minute conversation to four hours.

The tightly controlled concession reflects not only ongoing sensitivity about information the prisoners, some of them charged with plotting the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, might divulge, but also unresolved disputes about the detainees' most basic rights.

Anna Nelson, a spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said the ICRC facilitated video conversations for two detainees on Jan. 17 and 18.

A U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss prison operations, confirmed the calls took place in "near real-time" and were subject to security screening.

Khalid Sheik Mohammed, the self-proclaimed mastermind of the Sept. 11 attacks, was offered a chance to participate in recording a message to his family, but he ultimately declined because of viewing restrictions, said David Nevin, his civilian lawyer.



# Pats' championship legacy on the line

The Associated Press

PHOENIX — When the conversation turns to Super Bowl losers, the Bills and Vikings immediately come up.

Both are 0-4, Buffalo managing the feat in consecutive seasons.

The Patriots were in that sinking ship until John Elway completed his Hall of Fame career with two championships.

The Patriots? They own a share of the short-term success mark in Super Bowls: three in a four-year span. They've been back twice since their previous championship victory and failed to add to their collection.

Should they lose to Seattle next Sunday, these Patriots will become three-time losers, too. Those with short memories could begin wondering where that winning touch went?

Then again, a win at University of Phoenix Stadium will tie Tom Brady with the likes of two more Hall of Famers, Joe Montana and Terry Bradshaw, for Super victories. It would lift Bill Belichick onto the same level as Chuck Noll, the only coaches with four Super Bowl rings.

But the other side of the ledger can't be ignored: Despite their amazing run of success in their division — the admittedly mediocre AFC East — the Patriots have gone a full decade between titles.

They used to be the champs, but since beating Philadelphia in Jacksonville for the 2004 NFL crown, the Patriots have seen the Giants grab the Lombardi Trophy twice against them; seen Pittsburgh also win it two times; seen Baltimore, Green Bay, Indianapolis, New Orleans, and Seattle conclude their seasons with a championship. New England also lost twice in the Super Bowl before Belichick and Brady took over.

What has happened for New England, other than dozens of wins except for one in the big game?

Many factors have contributed to the streak the Patriots can end next weekend:

**Slippage on defense.** Yes, Belichick earned his stripes as a defensive mastermind, but ever since Brady matured into a dominant passer, New England has been an offensive team. That's been important to remain a contender as the NFL has evolved into a high-scoring league. But in the biggest matchups, often against other potent attacks, the Patriots' defense has been lacking.

**Unbalanced offense.** Belichick has been willing to make do with inconsistent running backs or retreads, and he also has soured on some of them, especially if they can't hold onto the football. That disorder in the backfield has put more pressure on Brady and the passing game. Fortunately for New England, Brady is an all-time great.

But the changing cast behind him can be disruptive.

**Coaching.** Say what? Belichick holds the record for postseason victories with 21, surpassing Tom Landry last week. But twice he was outmaneuvered in Super Bowls by Tom Coughlin and his defensive coordinators. And two other times, John Harbaugh made many more correct moves in a playoff matchup.

It would be foolish to think that Belichick no longer can handle the sharpest spotlight — which he ignores anyway. So it will be one of the most intriguing story lines of this Super Bowl to see how the chess match goes against Pete Carroll, perhaps the finest coach Belichick will have faced at this juncture.

# Sherman, Seahawks already trash-talking Brady's Patriots

The Associated Press

Seattle cornerback Richard Sherman gave New England quarterback Tom Brady an earful and trolled him on Twitter a few years ago.

Now Sherman says Brady isn't really a choir boy.

Sherman vs. Brady. Jeremy Lane vs. Rob Gronkowski. Doug Baldwin vs. the world. This Super Bowl between the Seahawks and Patriots will feature some epic yapping from some of the best trash-talkers in the NFL.

"People get a skewed view of Tom Brady, that he's just a clean-cut, does-everything-right (guy), and never says a bad word to anyone, and we know him to be otherwise," Sherman says.

He says he dared Brady to throw his way during Seattle's 24-23 win over New England in 2012. He didn't like the three-time Super Bowl champion's response.

"He was pretty much saying that we were nobodies and that we should come up to him after they get the win," Sherman says.

Sherman intercepted one of Brady's passes in that game and got in his face after Seattle won. Sherman then posted a picture of the confrontation on Twitter with the caption: "U mad bro?"

Brady was too busy talking about deflated footballs to fire back this week. But he'll get plenty of chances in Arizona before the teams meet Sunday.

It also will be interesting to see if Gronkowski tries to bounce Lane after the slot cornerback dissed the Patriots tight end. "I actually don't think he's that good," Lane said on Thursday.

Those are fighting words for Gronkowski. When Sergio Brown riled him up in November, Gronkowski tossed aside the Indianapolis safety and joked that he

"threw him out of the club" because he was talking too much.

Here are some of the best Super Bowl trash-talking moments:

**Joe Namath.** Broadway Joe guaranteed the underdog New York Jets would beat the Baltimore Colts in the third Super Bowl. The Colts were 18-point favorites against the Jets, but Namath made his bold prediction three days before the game. Namath backed up his declaration, leading the Jets to a 16-7 victory.

**Lyle Alzado.** The intense defensive end was one of the NFL's wilder personalities. Alzado tried to intimidate opponents and often backed up his brash talk. Before the Los Angeles Raiders played the Washington Redskins in the 1984 Super Bowl, Alzado said: "I'm gonna take off Joe Theismann's head." Alzado didn't get any of the six sacks on Theismann, but his Raiders won 38-9.

**Thomas "Hollywood" Henderson.** The flamboyant linebacker known for his self-promotion caused a stir before the Dallas Cowboys played the Pittsburgh Steelers in the 1979 Super Bowl. Henderson questioned Steelers quarterback Terry Bradshaw's intelligence: "Bradshaw couldn't spell 'cat' if you spotted him the 'c' and the 'a'." Henderson said. Bradshaw got the last laugh, leading the Steelers to a 35-31 win.

**Shannon Sharpe.** The Hall of Fame tight end never stopped yapping throughout his career. After Atlanta Falcons cornerback Ray Buchanan said Sharpe looked like a horse before the 1999 Super Bowl, Sharpe responded: "Now I know he ain't talkin' with them big teeth in his mouth. I think he's ugly." Sharpe had just two catches, but his Denver Broncos beat Atlanta 34-19.

# Murray tops Dimitrov, prepares for Aussie challenge

The Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — After the clock ticked past midnight, Andy Murray became aware that it was officially Australia Day and he already knew from the crowd reaction what to expect in the quarterfinals.

Murray, a two-time Grand Slam champion and three-time Australian Open finalist, fended off racket-smashing Grigor Dimitrov 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-3, 7-5 in a fourth-round match that started Sunday but continued into the early hours of Jan. 26, the national holiday that regularly occurs during the Australian Open.

Midway through his match against No. 10-ranked Dimitrov, who beat him in the Wimbledon quarterfinals last year, Murray heard a distinctive roar that started somewhere in the distance and echoed through Rod Laver Arena.

"I heard a lot of noise — I had to ask my box what it was for," he said. It was for 19-year-old Nick Kyrgios, who came back from two sets down and saved a match point to beat Andreas Seppi 5-7, 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (5), 8-6 on Hisense Arena — the No. 3 court at Melbourne Park — to become the first Aussie male to reach the last eight at the Australian Open since Lleyton Hewitt in 2005, and the first male teenager since Roger Federer in 2001 to reach two Grand Slam quarterfinals.

Kyrgios has developed quite a reputation for his audacious blend of shots, for his crowd interaction, for his outbursts and for his results: as a wild-entry with a No. 144 ranking at Wimbledon last year, he beat then No. 1-ranked Nadal in the fourth round. That was after he'd saved nine match points and come from two sets down to beat Richard Gasquet in the second round.

Murray, who was broken when serving for the second set and lost the subsequent tiebreaker, rallied from 5-2 down in the fourth set to beat Dimitrov, who shattered his racket on the court after surrendering his last service game.

Murray has a 10-0 winning record against Australian players, but hasn't come across anyone quite as precocious as Kyrgios.

"I would say maybe he's more confident than I would have been at that age ... he obviously backs himself a lot," Murray said. "I'm going to have to play a great match to win against him."

"He's had an unbelievable tournament so far and he's only going to keep getting better. Hopefully my streak doesn't end in a couple of days."

The high-energy night matches overshadowed the day session Sunday, when Nadal continued his comeback from a

long-term injury layoff with a 7-5, 6-1, 6-4 win over towering Kevin Anderson to set up a quarterfinal against No. 7 Tomas Berdych, who had a 6-2, 7-6 (3), 6-2 win over Bernard Tomic.

No.2-ranked Maria Sharapova won the last eight games of her 6-3, 6-0 victory over Peng Shuai and will next play seventh-seeded Eugenie Bouchard, who had a see-sawing 6-1, 5-7, 6-2 win over Irina-Camelia Begu. French Open finalist Simona Halep beat Yanina Wickmayer 6-4, 6-2 to set up a quarterfinal against No. 10 Ekaterina Makarova, who beat Julia Goerges in straight sets.

Bouchard made it to the last four at the first three Grand Slam tournaments of 2014, including a semifinal loss on debut at the Australian Open and a semifinal loss to eventual champion Sharapova at the French Open.



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# Zags' home win streak hits 36

The Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — Przemek Karnowski and Gary Bell Jr. each scored 13 points as No. 3 Gonzaga routed Pacific 91-60, extending the nation's longest home winning streak to 36 games.

Silas Melson added 12 points and Byron Wesley 11 for Gonzaga (20-1, 9-0 West Coast), which is off to the best start in program history. The Zags have won 13 consecutive games since their only loss at No. 7 Arizona in overtime.

Eric Thompson and T.J. Wallace scored 12 points each for Pacific (10-11, 2-7), which lost its second straight.

**No. 1 Kentucky 58, South Carolina 43:** Devin Booker scored 18 points, Aaron Harrison added 13 and Kentucky matched its best start under coach John Calipari with a victory over host South Carolina.

The Wildcats (19-0, 6-0 Southeastern Conference) pulled away with 14 straight points after the Gamecocks (10-8, 1-5) took their last lead at 24-23 with 4:31 in the opening half.

**No. 6 Wisconsin 69, Michigan 64 (OT):** Frank Kaminsky scored eight of his 22 points in overtime, and visiting Wisconsin held off Michigan.

Derrick Walton's three-pointer with 1.3 seconds left in regulation tied the game at 57, but the Badgers never trailed in the extra session.

**No. 7 Arizona 73, California 50:** Stanley Johnson had 19 points and nine rebounds, Dusan Ristic scored 12 points and Arizona avenged last season's loss in Berkeley by crushing host California.

**Texas Tech 78, No. 9 Iowa State 73:** Devauntnah Williams scored a career-high 22 points and Toddrick Gotcher added 17, leading Texas Tech over visiting Iowa State for its first Big 12 win.

Gotcher made five of Texas Tech's 11 three-pointers, tying the team's high for the season. Williams, a junior transfer, added three threes.

**No. 11 Kansas 75, No. 17 Texas 62:** Cliff Alexander had 15 points and nine rebounds, and Kansas beat host Texas for a key road win in the rugged Big 12.

**No. 15 North Carolina 78, Florida St. 74:** Brice Johnson had 18 points and 14 rebounds to help North Carolina beat visiting Florida State.

Marcus Paige scored 19 points to lead the Tar Heels (16-4, 6-1 Atlantic Coast Conference), who won their fifth straight league game.

Freshman Xavier Rathan-Mayes scored a school freshman record 35 points to lead the Seminoles (10-10, 2-5).

**No. 18 West Virginia 86, TCU 85, OT:** Jevon Carter sank two free throws with 1 second left in overtime to lift host West Virginia past TCU.

Devin Williams and Juwan Staten had 18 points apiece for the Mountaineers. Jonathan Holton added 15 points and Daxter Miles Jr. scored 10.

Kyan Anderson scored 22 points to lead six players in double figures for the Horned Frogs (14-5, 1-5).

**No. 21 Baylor 69, No. 19 Oklahoma 58:** Lester Medford had

17 points, Rico Gathers provided the rim-rocking highlight in a game-clinching run and host Baylor beat Oklahoma.

Medford hit a three-pointer in a late 10-0 run that finally put the Bears ahead to stay.

**No. 22 Dayton 63, Richmond 60:** Dyshawn Pierre scored 21 points, and Dayton let a double-digit lead slip away before rallying to beat Richmond, remaining unbeaten at home.

The Flyers (16-3, 6-1 Atlantic 10) led by 10 points at halftime but went cold at the start of the second half, allowing the Spiders (10-9, 3-3) to make it a game.

**Purdue 67, No. 25 Iowa 63:** Rapheal Davis scored 16 of his 24 points in the first half to lead Purdue past host Iowa.

**Holy Cross 76, Navy 65:** Malachi Alexander scored 17 points and shot 10-for-13 at the foul line to lead host Holy Cross over Navy.

The Mids (7-13, 3-5 Patriot League) took an 11-point lead midway through the first half but were held to just six points in the final 6 minutes before the break.

Tilman Dunbar made a layup for the Midshipmen's only points in the first 7:50 of the second half, and the Crusaders led by 19 with 13 minutes left to play.

**Boise State 77, Air Force 68:** Derrick Marks scored 28 points and Nick Duncan added a career-high 20 to lead Boise State.

The Falcons held a 31-30 lead at intermission. Boise State pulled ahead on Marks' three-pointer — the first shot of the second half — and never trailed again, although there were five ties in the the final 20 minutes.

# Aldridge gives Blazers boost

The Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Each time that LaMarcus Aldridge went to the free-throw line late in the game against the Washington Wizards, the Trail Blazers' forward was showered with a chant of "MVP, MVP," from the hometown fans.

Just two days before, Aldridge had announced he was going to have surgery to repair a ligament in his left thumb and would miss the next six to eight weeks.

But in a dramatic turn, he announced Saturday that he'd play through the pain. And hours later, he had 26 points and nine rebounds in the Blazers' 103-96 victory over the Wizards.

Damian Lillard added 20 points and seven assists as the Blazers snapped a two-game losing streak.

Nene's layup closed the Wizards to 94-91 but he missed a free throw then fouled Meyers Leonard on a three-point attempt on the other end. Leonard made all three free throws to put Portland up 97-91 with 1:07 left and Washington couldn't catch up.

**Grizzlies 101, 76ers 83:** Zach Randolph had 17 points and 14 rebounds and Jeff Green scored 18 as host Memphis coasted.

Vince Carter added 13 points as the Grizzlies (31-12) won their sixth in the last seven games.

**Bucks 101, Pistons 86:** O.J. Mayo scored 20 points, and host Milwaukee relied on perimeter shooting and defense in the win.

The Bucks went 11-for-17 from three-point range, including a 4-for-5 performance from Mayo.

**Hornets 76, Knicks 71:** Brian Roberts scored 17 points, and host Charlotte beat New York for its ninth victory in the last 11 games.

Roberts, who started in place of the injured Kemba Walker, was 5-for-9 from the field and made all six free throws as the Hornets snapped the Knicks' three-game win streak.

**Jazz 108, Nets 73:** Gordon Hayward scored 24 points and Trey Burke had 19 as host Utah rolled over reeling Brooklyn.

Joe Ingles had a season-high 16 points and Dante Exum had 13 in his second straight start in front of Burke, who came off the bench.

# Players show skills during All-Stars contests

The Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Not that they did before, but it's official now: No one wants to get in front of Shea Weber's shot.

The Nashville Predators defenseman fired the hardest shot of 108.5 mph at the NHL All-Stars skills competition on Saturday night, taking advantage of five-time champion Zdeno Chara's absence.

"I knew I got it," Weber said. "But it's tough. You never know how hard it is until it registers on the gun. But it felt like I got pretty much all I could into it, and (you) just kind of hope for the best."

Washington Capitals star Alexander Ovechkin had led the competition with a pair of 101.4-mph drives.

But then Weber stepped into his final shot to win the event.

He said it felt strange with the 6-foot-9 Chara — who holds the record of 108.8 mph set in 2012 — not participating.

The team, captained by Columbus Blue Jackets forward Nick Foligno, defeated one led by Chicago Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews, 25-19. The teams were to meet in the 60th All-Star game on Sunday.

The other premier event at the skills competition featured Ryan Johansen of the hometown Blue Jackets winning the breakaway challenge.

Johansen pulled Blue Jackets trainer Mike Vogt's 7-year-old son, Cole, out of the stands to score a goal to the delight of the crowd. In addition, the center endeared himself to Ohio State fans by pulling off his Blue Jackets sweater to reveal a No. 5 Ohio State football jersey — similar to one worn by injured star quarterback

Braxton Miller — on his first shot.

In the fastest skater event, in which players were paired off and raced around the perimeter of the rink against the clock, Team Foligno went 5-0 — winning all four races and pocketing an extra point for Tampa Bay's Jonathan Drouin posting the fastest time of 13.103 seconds.

Toronto's Phil Kessel, who was dealt by Team Toews for Tyler Seguin on Friday in a duplicate of a real 2009 deal between Boston and Toronto, surprised many by edging the Dallas Stars star in the first speed pairing of the event.

In a matchup of Blackhawks teammates, Kane beat Toews by breaking four plates at the corners of a net almost 3 seconds faster — in a time of 13.529 — to push Team Foligno to a 10-1 lead through three events.

# Vonn keeps World Cup win streak going with No. 64

The Associated Press

ST. MORITZ, Switzerland — Lindsey Vonn mastered a tricky super-G race on Sunday for a record-extending 64th World Cup victory.

The American star raced down the Engiadina course in 1 minute, 23.55 seconds.

Anna Fenninger, of Austria, was runner-up for a seventh time this season, 0.24 back. Nicole Hosp of Austria was 1.10 behind Vonn in third.

Vonn now heads for her hometown

worlds — which open Feb. 2 at Vail-Beaver Creek, Colo. — having won three of her past four races in an eight-day span. In other skiing news:

■ Mattias Hargin of Sweden won a men's World Cup slalom on Sunday in Kitzbuehel, Austria, for his first career victory.

Hargin finished in a total time of 1 minute, 43.10 seconds. First-run leader Marcel Hirscher of Austria finished 0.49 behind in second and Felix Neureuther of Germany finished third.

## Kuchar stumbles, gives away Humana lead

LA QUINTA, Calif.— Matt Kuchar stumbled late in the third round of the Humana Challenge, handing the lead to Erik Compton, Bill Haas, Justin Thomas and Michael Putnam.

Two strokes ahead after a birdie on the par-5 14th, Kuchar bogeyed three of the final four holes for a 1-under 71 on PGA West's Arnold Palmer Private Course.

Compton shot a 67 on the Jack Nicklaus

Private Course to join Haas, Thomas and Putnam at 17-under 199.

In other golfing news:

■ Miguel Angel Jimenez shot an 8-under 64 in windy conditions Saturday in for a share of the lead with Rocco Mediate in the Champions Tour's season-opening Mitsubishi Electric Championship in Kaupulehu-Kona, Hawaii.

■ Branden Grace made a decisive eagle on the 16th to win the Qatar Masters on Saturday by one stroke and clinch his sixth European Tour title.