

# STARS AND STRIPES®

Tuesday, January 27, 2015

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## In Saudi Arabia, Obama seeks balance

*The Associated Press*

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — President Barack Obama defended the U.S. government's willingness to cooperate closely with Saudi Arabia on national security despite deep concerns over human rights abuses, as he joined an array of current and former American statesmen Tuesday in paying respects following the death of King Abdullah.

U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia had been strained by Obama's decision not to launch airstrikes against the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad over the use of chemical weapons and by the White House's negotiations on a nuclear deal with the Saudis' archrival Iran. The Saudis also opposed U.S. policy toward the Arab Spring uprisings, accusing Washington of abandoning

its longtime friend Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

However, the rise of the Islamic State group and its battlefield successes in Syria and Iraq have given new importance to shoring up relations with the Saudis, despite ongoing differences such as terrorist funding that flows from the kingdom and Saudi human rights abuses.

In a bid to balance human rights with strategic interests, Obama said he has found it most effective to apply steady pressure over human rights "even as we are getting business done that needs to get done."

"Sometimes we need to balance our need to speak to them about human rights issues with immediate concerns we have in terms of counterterrorism or dealing with regional stability," Obama said in a CNN interview

in advance of his arrival.

King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud formally greeted Obama and the U.S. delegation at Erga Palace on the outskirts of Riyadh, where dozens of Saudi officials filed through a marble-walled room to greet the Americans under massive crystal chandeliers. After a three-course dinner of grilled meats, baked lobster and Arabic and French deserts, Obama and Salman sat down for their first formal meeting without making any comments to reporters covering the visit.

Ahead of his arrival, Obama suggested that he would not be raising U.S. concerns about Saudi Arabia's flogging of blogger Raif Badawi, who was convicted of insulting Islam and sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes.

"On this visit, obviously a lot

of this is just paying respects to King Abdullah, who in his own fashion presented some modest reform efforts within the kingdom," Obama said.

Obama cut short the final day of his trip to India to make the four-hour stop in Riyadh. Further underscoring the key role Saudi Arabia has long played in U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East was the extensive delegation that joined Obama for the visit.

Secretary of State John Kerry joined Obama in Riyadh, along with former secretaries of state Condoleezza Rice and James Baker III, both of whom served Republican presidents. Former White House national security advisers Brent Scowcroft, Sandy Berger and Stephen Hadley also made the trip, as did Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz.

## Blizzard howls in Boston; NY gets off easy

*The Associated Press*

BOSTON — A howling blizzard with wind gusts over 70 mph heaped snow on Boston along with other stretches of lower New England and Long Island, N.Y., on Tuesday but failed to live up to the hype in Philadelphia and New York City, where buses and subways started rolling again in the morning.

In New England, the storm that arrived Monday evening was a bitter, paralyzing blast, while in the New York metro area, it was a bust that left forecasters apologizing and politicians defending their near-total shutdown on travel. Some residents grumbled, but others sounded a better-safe-than-sorry note and even expressed sympathy for the weatherman.

At least 2 feet of snow was expected in most of Massachusetts, potentially making it one of the top snowstorms of all time. The National Weather Service said a 78 mph gust was reported on Nantucket, and a 72 mph one on Martha's Vineyard.

"It felt like sand hitting you in the face," Bob Paglia said after walking his dog four times overnight in Whitman, a small town about 20 miles south of Boston.

Maureen Keller, who works at Gurney's, an oceanfront resort in Montauk, N.Y., on the tip of Long Island, said, "It feels like a hurricane with snow."

As of midmorning, the Boston area had about a foot of snow, while the far eastern tip of Long Island had more than 2 feet. Snowplow operators around New England struggled to keep

up, and Boston police drove several dozen doctors and nurses to work at hospitals.

"At 4 o'clock this morning, it was the worst I've ever seen it," said Larry Messier, a snowplow driver in Columbia, Conn. "You could plow, and then five minutes later you'd have to plow again."

As the storm pushed into the Northeast on Monday, the region came to a near standstill, alarmed by forecasters' dire predictions. More than 7,700 flights were canceled, and schools, businesses and government offices closed.

But as the storm pushed northward, it tracked farther east than forecasters had been expecting, and conditions improved quickly in its wake. By midmorning Tuesday, New Jer-

sey and New York City lifted driving bans, and subways and trains started rolling again, with a return to a full schedule expected Wednesday.

While Philadelphia, New York and New Jersey had braced for a foot or two of snow from what forecasters warned could be a storm of potentially historic proportions, they got far less than that. New York City received about 8 inches, Philadelphia a mere inch or so. New Jersey got up to 8 inches.

A National Weather Service forecaster in Mount Holly, N.J., apologized on Twitter for the off-target forecast.

"You made a lot of tough decisions expecting us to get it right, and we didn't. Once again, I'm sorry," Gary Szatkowski tweeted.

## Shots prompt halt of flights to Baghdad

*The Associated Press*

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Several airlines suspended flights to Baghdad on Tuesday after a passenger plane arriving from the Middle East's busiest airport in Dubai came under fire as it landed in the Iraqi capital.

A prolonged suspension of flights could seriously limit travel options for Iraqi travelers and overseas businesspeople, diplomats and aid workers who rely on foreign carriers to deliver them to larger international transit hubs, particularly in the oil-rich Gulf.

Discount carrier FlyDubai said Flight 215 was struck on the fuselage by what appeared to small-arms fire Monday. All passengers were able to disembark normally and none required medical attention, the Dubai government-owned carrier said. Passengers heading back to Dubai were put on a different plane as an investigation into the incident got underway, the airline said. A FlyDubai flight due to depart to Baghdad on Tuesday was canceled.

Dubai-based Emirates, the region's biggest airline, said it is suspending flights to and from the Iraqi capital because of "operational and safety concerns" until further notice.

Iraqi officials said bullets hit the FlyDubai flight as it touched down Monday. It was unclear who was behind the shooting and whether the plane was deliberately targeted.

# Philippines rejects Marine's request to drop murder case

*The Associated Press*

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines on Tuesday rejected an appeal by a U.S. Marine that it drop a murder case against him in the death of a transgender Filipino woman last year.

A Department of Justice panel said evidence from prosecutors against Pfc. Joseph Scott Pemberton showed that he killed Jennifer Laude after picking her up in a bar in Olonapo city in October.

Police said Laude, formerly known as Jeffrey, was found dead in a hotel minutes after Pemberton left the room.

The case has refueled opposition to a military agreement between Manila and Washington that allows U.S. custody over American servicemembers accused of crimes in the Philippines.

Pemberton, from Bristol, Mass., took part in combat exercises involving thousands of American and Filipino troops.

U.S. Ambassador Philip Goldberg has said Washington is sensitive to Filipino sentiments over the killing and agreed to have Pemberton detained inside a Philippine military camp in Manila but under U.S. guard.

Pemberton's lawyers argued in the appeal that there was no direct evidence that he killed Laude, but the panel said prosecutors can utilize circumstantial evidence to prove their case.

## Mental health could play role in Kyle trial

*The Washington Post*

Eddie Ray Routh barely knew Chris Kyle when he shot and killed the famed Navy SEAL sniper on a remote Texas shooting range on Feb. 2, 2013.

Routh, who admitted to police that he killed Kyle and the marksman's friend, Chad Littlefield, will have his day in court early next month. By then, news of Kyle's life, his "unverifiable" legacy and his tragic death will have already ricocheted around the world, thanks to the box-office hit "American Sniper."

The circumstances of Kyle's death aren't discussed in detail in the Oscar-nominated biopic, which mostly focuses on Kyle's career as one of the coun-

try's most praised and skilled snipers.

Though the movie is presented as a mini-chronicle of America's modern wars, it omits a chapter in Kyle's real-life story that reflects on war's dark, lingering consequences: his death at the hands of another veteran — one who had been scarred by the effects of war-related mental illness.

Routh's many troubles were the very reason Kyle and Littlefield were in contact with him. Kyle's trip to the Rough Creek gun range that day was likely part of an effort to help Routh deal with his post-traumatic stress disorder.

But at some point that day,

Routh, a 27-year-old former Marine, opened fire on the two men, killing them. He took their Ford 350 truck and fled.

"He's all crazy; he's [expletive] psychotic," Routh's panicked sister, Laura Blevins, told the 911 dispatcher that day.

It wasn't the first time Routh's family had called law enforcement pleading for help.

The people who knew Kyle best are not interested in the situation's dark irony.

"To try and even find an excuse is disgusting," his widow, Taya Kyle, recently told the Los Angeles Times. "I know people with PTSD, and it's very real and very hard. But it doesn't change your core character."

## Navy wants to use more sonar-emitting buoys off Pacific

*The Associated Press*

SEATTLE — The U.S. Navy is seeking permits to expand sonar and other training exercises off the Pacific Coast, a proposal raising concerns from animal advocates who say that more sonar-emitting buoys would harm whales and other

creatures that live in the water.

The Navy wants to deploy up to 720 sonobuoys at least 12 nautical miles off the coasts of Washington state, Oregon and Northern California. The devices, about 3 feet long and 6 inches in diameter, send out sonar signals underwater so air crews can train to detect submarines.

"It sounds drastic in numbers, but it's really not drastic in its impact," said John Mosher, Northwest environmental manager for the U.S. Pacific Fleet. "Anti-submarine warfare is a critical mission for the U.S. Navy."

The Navy's training range is home to endangered whales

such as orcas, humpback and blue, as well as seals, sea lions and dolphins.

Critics say the noise from sonar can harass and kill whales and other marine life. They worry the Navy is expanding training exercises without also increasing efforts to reduce the impacts.



# Pats' prep tested with pop quizzes

*The Associated Press*

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — Quick. Who are all the tight ends on the Buffalo Bills?

In his first week with the Patriots in 2009, Rob Ninkovich was stumped when Bill Belichick surprised him with that question.

"Afterward, he came up to me and he said, 'You should also know their shoe size,'" the defensive end said. "So from then on I made sure I knew every single tight end. Couldn't find the shoe size, but I was trying."

His coach's pop quizzes — in team meetings, passing players in the hallway or anywhere they meet — can be a source of fear.

And that makes them study so they'll be better prepared for the next game.

"I think that puts us all on edge," special teams captain Matthew Slater said. "It's not about embarrassing a guy. It's not about putting a guy on the spot. It's about us being prepared and being ready to go on Sunday."

They better have the answers for the

final test on Feb. 1 in the Super Bowl against the defending champion Seattle Seahawks in Glendale, Ariz.

Professor Belichick questions both veteran stars and young backups. Sometimes he'll ask one player if another's answer is correct.

"Heart's pounding, palms are sweating," running back Shane Vereen said of younger players' reactions.

What might an opposing defense do against a certain formation at a particular spot on the field?

What about that new play coaches added the previous day?

"We've all gotten caught," safety Devin McCourty said. "Some of the questions he asks you, you don't even think about it. I mean it usually results in us being very prepared at the end of the week."

His players, like school children crouching in their seats hoping not to be called on, know Belichick's surprise quizzes can keep them from being surprised in games.

For all his obsession with preparation, Belichick knows there are limits. He recently paraphrased former President and

five-star general Dwight D. Eisenhower while meeting with reporters.

"Preparation is everything until the battle starts, and then it doesn't mean anything," Belichick said. "Then you react to what happens in the game. In his case, what happens in the battle."

The Patriots are preparing for their sixth Super Bowl in 14 years, all under Belichick. They've won three of them.

"Bill knows everything about a team, from personnel to the coaching staff, the players, everything," McCourty said. "By the end of the week, we usually know it, too."

Now they have more than a week to study, practice, and, perhaps, try to avoid Belichick's questions.

"They haven't been strange. They just catch you off guard," wide receiver Brandon LaFell said. "It's usually, 'What did we put in the game plan overnight on Tuesday,' just to see if you looked at the game plan."

And what if you don't answer correctly?

"You've got to," LaFell said, "or you'll have those questions every day."

# Beast Mode may be on the way out in Seattle

*The Associated Press*

RENTON, Wash. — For all the importance placed around finding the right quarterback, the trade that brought Marshawn Lynch to Seattle partway through the 2010 season could be considered the most important transaction Pete Carroll made in the makeover of the Seahawks.

Lynch brought more than just skills as a running back. Lynch provided the Seahawks an attitude that spread through the locker room.

"I kind of love his act," Seattle general manager John Schneider said.

All that Lynch has provided the Seahawks makes it seem unfathomable that next Sunday's Super Bowl against New England could be his finale in Seattle.

No more showers of Skittles. No more Beast Mode moments. No more cat-and-mouse game avoiding the media.

Both the Seahawks and Lynch have decisions to make in the offseason. Whether it's time for Lynch to move on or if he'll play out the final year of his contract with Seattle.

If Lynch returns under his current contract, it would cost Seattle \$8.5 million against the salary cap, a number that would be unusual for a to-be 29-year-old running back.

Seattle could attempt to restructure or extend Lynch's contract to take less of a hit against its salary cap. They could decide it's time for backups Robert Turbin and Christine Michael to get their opportunities as Seattle's featured running backs.

Or Lynch could follow through on rumors that have followed him for nearly a year and decide to walk away from football.

Lynch's 17 touchdowns in the regular season, including four TD catches, were a career high. He caught 37 passes for a career-best 367 yards, becoming a more reliable receiving option out of the backfield. He's consistently been a capable blocker in pass protection.

Where Lynch's value is understated, and possibly most appreciated, is the ability to make something out of nothing.

To break tackles before he gets to the line of scrimmage and create a 3-yard gain out of what should be a 3-yard loss. It's a skill others can try and emulate and never truly duplicate.

Of the 1,306 yards rushing this season for Lynch, 771 came after first contact according to STATS. That was the second-highest total in the league, but Lynch averaged 2.8 yards after contact per attempt — the best in the league for any running back.

In each of his four full seasons with Seattle, more than 600 yards rushing each season has come after Lynch was first hit. And 2014 was his highest total.

In the NFC title game last Sunday, Lynch's 157 yards rushing became a footnote to all the other craziness that occurred in Seattle's comeback. How good was Lynch's performance against the Packers? He was one of five running backs in the past five seasons to rush for more than 150 yards in a playoff game.

# Kraft defends Pats, seeks apology

*The Associated Press*

CHANDLER, Ariz. — The New England Patriots came out swinging upon their arrival at the Super Bowl.

Not star quarterback Tom Brady or All-Pro cornerback Darrelle Revis. Not coach Bill Belichick, either.

Robert Kraft.

The team owner on Monday night demanded an apology from the league once the Patriots are found to be not guilty of breaking any rules regarding using under-inflated footballs in the AFC championship game.

A conclusion Kraft is certain will occur.

In an unscheduled statement, Kraft strongly defended his team's actions and integrity, growing more fiery with each sentence.

"I want to make it clear that I believe, unconditionally, that the New England Patriots have done nothing inappropriate in this process or in violation of NFL

rules," Kraft said at the team's first media availability in Arizona.

"If the (Ted) Wells investigation is not able to definitively determine that our organization tampered with the air pressure in the footballs, I would expect and hope the league would apologize to our entire team, and in particular to coach (Bill) Belichick and Tom Brady, for what they've had to endure this week."

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 and has said the current investigation could last a while.

Kraft welcomes a thorough search.

"I'm disappointed in the way this entire matter has been handled and reported upon," Kraft said, pointing directly to reports citing anonymous sources. "We expect hard facts rather than circumstantial leaked evidence to drive the conclusion of this investigation."

The NFL has said evidence shows the

Patriots used underinflated footballs during the first half of the AFC title game victory over Indianapolis. The league is still determining why the balls were underinflated.

This hardly is the first time the Patriots have been under such scrutiny. Most famously was 2007, their undefeated regular season. Revelations that New England videotaped New York Jets coaches' signals during a game cost Belichick a \$500,000 fine, and the team was fined \$250,000 and stripped of its 2008 first-round draft choice by the NFL.

During this year's playoffs, Ravens coach John Harbaugh accused the Patriots of being deceitful with some alignments on offense. The NFL exonerated Kraft's team of any wrongdoing.

Now, Kraft has taken the offensive.

"I, and our entire organization," he said, "believe strongly in the integrity of the game and the rules of fair play are properly, equitably and fairly enforced."

# Unfit Nadal falls in Aussie quarterfinals

*The Associated Press*

MELBOURNE, Australia — Rafael Nadal, who had played only eight matches since last June coming into the Australian Open because of a right wrist injury and appendix surgery in early November, was knocked out in the quarterfinals 6-2, 6-0, 7-6 (5) on Tuesday by Tomas Berdych — who had lost 17 straight matches to the Spaniard.

"It is obvious that I needed something more to be more competitive," Nadal,

a 14-time major winner, said. "As I said when I arrived here, the process always is not easy. When you have injuries, comebacks are difficult. But without being at my top level of tennis, I was able to be here in quarterfinals. Is not a bad result at all for me."

Berdych will play sixth-seeded Andy Murray in the semis after the British player beat local hope Nick Kyrgios 6-3, 7-6 (5), 6-3.

On the women's side, Maria Sharapova moved closer to another Australian

Open title, defeating 20-year-old Eugenie Bouchard 6-3, 6-2. The Russian made all the big points look easy and advanced to play Ekaterina Makarova, who earlier beat third-seeded Simona Halep 6-4, 6-0.

The other women's semifinalists will be determined on Wednesday when No. 1-ranked Serena Williams plays last year's finalist, Dominika Cibulkova, and Venus Williams, playing in her first Grand Slam quarterfinal in nearly five years, takes on 19-year-old American Madison Keys.



## Ship's Store official new car program

Exclusive Navy at-sea offers:

[www.navyauto.com](http://www.navyauto.com) or [nasinfo@navyauto.com](mailto:nasinfo@navyauto.com)

# Davis, Pelicans rout Sixers

The Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Anthony Davis had 32 points, 10 rebounds and four blocked shots as the New Orleans Pelicans stretched their season-long winning streak to four games with a 99-74 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers on Monday.

Ryan Anderson scored 19 points and Eric Gordon added 13 for New Orleans, while Tyreke Evans tied a season high — set one night earlier — with 12 assists.

K.J. McDaniels scored 16 points for the 76ers, who lost their sixth straight. Henry Sims and Luc Mbah a Moute had 14 points.

Philadelphia played without Michael Carter-Williams, who was sidelined by an upper respiratory infection.

Davis was 12-for-19 shooting, including five layups and five crowd-pleasing dunks, and made all eight of his free throws as New Orleans (24-21) went three games above .500 for the first time since coach Monty Williams' first season in 2010-11.

**Thunder 92, Timberwolves 84:** Russell Westbrook scored 18 points as host Oklahoma City got the win while playing without the injured Kevin Durant.

**Clippers 102, Nuggets 98:** Jamal Crawford scored 21 of his 23 points in the fourth quarter as Los Angeles held off visiting Denver for its fifth straight victory.

Crawford scored the final five points

and had a key save that led to a basket in the closing seconds, when the Clippers completed their biggest comeback of the season after being down by 16 earlier in the game.

**Grizzlies 103, Magic 94:** Zach Randolph had 24 points, 10 rebounds and six assists in host Memphis' third straight win, and Marc Gasol added 16 points and 10 boards.

**Celtics 99, Jazz 90:** Tayshaun Prince scored 19 points as Boston held on for the road win.

Tyler Zeller had 14 points and seven rebounds for the Celtics, who grabbed control with a big second quarter.

# UNC pulls away from Syracuse

The Associated Press

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — Brice Johnson had 15 of his 17 points after halftime and No. 13 North Carolina shot 55 percent to beat Syracuse 93-83 on Monday night.

Nate Britt added a career-best 17 points and four three-pointers off the bench for the Tar Heels (17-4, 7-1 Atlantic Coast Conference), who pulled away in the final 4 minutes for their sixth straight win. UNC shot 62 percent in the second half and took control once it stopped turning the ball over against the Orange's zone defense.

Johnson was key in UNC's second-half production. After managing just two points on one shot attempt in the first half, the 6-foot-9 junior went 5-for-5 after the break — including three straight baskets in the first 90 seconds of the half — and finished with 11 rebounds.

By the final horn, UNC had the best shooting percentage and scoring total allowed all season by Syracuse (14-7, 5-3).

**No. 15 Iowa State 89, No. 19 Texas 86:** Georges Niang scored 19 points, Bryce Dejean-Jones had 18 and Iowa State held off visiting Texas.

Jameel McKay had 14 points for the Cyclones (15-4, 5-2 Big 12), who bounced back from a loss at last-place Texas Tech by running up a huge lead that nearly slipped away.

Iowa State broke open a tight game with a 27-12 run and went ahead by 21 with 11:36 left. The Longhorns answered with a furious rally that pulled them to 87-84 on Jonathan Holmes' three-pointer with 22 seconds left.

**Army 68, American U 66:** Tanner Plomb made six of nine three-pointers and scored 26, and Dylan Cox hit the go-ahead jumper with four seconds left to help Army slip past host American University.

A layup by Marko Vasic gave American (11-9, 4-4 Patriot League) a 66-61 lead with 1:45 remaining.

Cox made a layup and, after a back-court violation by American, Plomb knocked down a three to tie it with 1:14 to go.

Vasic missed a layup on the other end and Plomb grabbed the rebound, setting up Cox's game-winner.

# Caps among NHL East contenders

The Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Alex Ovechkin's familiar gap-toothed grin has returned with the Washington Capitals in the thick of the Eastern Conference playoff hunt.

Hardly anyone's smiling in the West, where the standings are far more convoluted heading into the post-All-Star break of the NHL schedule, which opened with 11 games Tuesday night.

"It's hard," St. Louis Blues defenseman Kevin Shattenkirk said during the All-Star festivities in Columbus, Ohio, over the weekend. "If you lose three, four games in a row, it's scary because you find yourself in eighth place when you were in first a week ago."

It's a tale of two conferences.

In the West, seven points separate the fourth-place San Jose Sharks from the 11th-place Dallas Stars. Don't count out the 12th-place Minnesota Wild, who rode a 23-10-7 second-half surge to clinch a playoff spot last year.

And then there's the defending Stanley Cup champion Los Angeles Kings, who are a single point out of the postseason picture at the moment.

"We've had some spurts where we played pretty good," Kings forward Anze Kopitar said. "But we also had some moments where we didn't play very good at all."

In the East, the Capitals (24-13-9) are

seventh, but part of a top-eight group of contenders that have begun separating themselves from the bottom eight.

And that, so far, is fine with, Ovechkin who is feeling much better after one of his most trying years.

"Before the season, I said it's a very important year for us, for me, for the whole group of guys on the team," said Ovechkin, who made his fifth career NHL All-Star Game appearance. "We all wanted to come back and show last year was maybe a little bit of no luck."

The Capitals not only missed the playoffs for the first time in seven seasons, Ovechkin's frustrations were compounded on the other side of the Atlantic. That's where he and his fellow Russians wilted under immense national pressure by failing to even sniff an Olympic medal on native soil at the Sochi Games.

The Capitals have successfully made the transition under new coach Barry Trotz, and shored up their defense by adding Brooks Orpik and Matt Niskanen.

Ovechkin's production has barely slowed, and put him in contention to win his fifth career and third straight scoring title. His 27 goals are one off the league lead shared by Dallas' Tyler Seguin and the New York Rangers' Rick Nash. And Ovechkin's defensive numbers are markedly improved. After finishing third to last in the NHL with a minus-35 rating, he's currently 40th with a plus-12.

The West is filled with intrigue, which shouldn't come as a surprise after many top teams spent last summer stocking up on high-profile free agents. Still, there are three teams — San Jose (fourth place), Winnipeg (seventh) and Calgary (eighth) — that are in the hunt despite not making many offseason splashes.

Chicago and St. Louis both find themselves looking up in the Central Division at Nashville.

"It's a tough division to be in, but it's also a good division to be in," Blackhawks defenseman Brent Seabrook said. "We're all playing meaningful games down the stretch, getting ready for the playoffs."

Not all will make it.

There is a race to watch at the other end of the standings. Buffalo (14-30-3) and Edmonton (12-26-9) have been locked in a battle for futility and, more important, the right to land the top draft prospects — Erie Otters forward Connor McDavid and U.S.-born, Boston University freshman Jack Eichel.

The Sabres are suddenly gaining the "edge" for last place and, with it, a guaranteed top-two selection. They entered the All-Star break having lost 11 straight in regulation — the NHL's worst streak since Pittsburgh lost 13 in a row from January to February 2004, according to STATS.

# Tiger explains how cameraman broke teeth

The Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Tiger Woods was all smiles Tuesday — and with a full set of teeth.

Woods gave a play-by-play account of how his front tooth was knocked out in Italy on Jan. 19 while celebrating girlfriend Lindsey Vonn's record 63rd World Cup victory. He said one tooth was chipped and the other was cracked. Both were replaced before he arrived to start his season at the Phoenix Open.

Woods said when the race was completed, the podium presentation was moved up on a hill for the photographers. He went to the top of the hill, behind the cameras.

"All the camera guys are below me on their knees or moving all around, trying to get a picture because she's hugging people, saying congratulations to the other racers as they are coming down," he said. "Some

already finished, some are there already in the changing area. Dude with a video camera on his shoulder right in front me, kneeling, stood up and turned and caught me square on the mouth."

Nicola Colli, the secretary general of the race organizing committee, told The Associated Press he was among those who escorted Woods from the tent to a snowmobile for him to leave "and there was no such incident."

Whether anyone believed the story from a week ago was not his concern.

"Dude, you guys ... it's just the way the media is," he said. "It is what it is."

**Yankees weigh A-Rod payments**

NEW YORK — The New York Yankees are thinking about not making a \$6 million

payment to Alex Rodriguez if he hits six home runs and ties Willie Mays at 660 for fourth place on the career list.

Rodriguez signed a \$275 million, 10-year contract with the team in December 2007 and a separate marketing agreement that called for \$6 million payments for up to five milestone accomplishments designated by the Yankees.

Rodriguez returns to the team next month after a season-long drug suspension and has three seasons and \$61 million in guaranteed money remaining in his contract.

New York's thought process on the \$6 million payment, first reported by the Daily News, was described to The Associated Press on Monday by a person familiar with the deal who spoke on condition of anonymity because no public statements were authorized. The Yankees are thinking of letting any accomplishment pass without declaring it a milestone.

# NASCAR: No changes to Chase formula

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — NASCAR won't change its new championship format, which chairman Brian France said Monday is "overwhelmingly popular" with fans.

The Chase was revamped last year into an elimination-style system that created a winner-take-all final race among four drivers.

NASCAR launched the Chase in 2004 and tweaked it several times in the first 10 years. But it got a dramatic overhaul before the 2014 season, when the field was expanded to 16 drivers with four eliminated after every third Chase race. The final four drivers then went to Homestead even in the standings, with the highest finisher guaranteed the championship.