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Obama trying to end sequestration

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama will ask Congress to boost government spending by roughly 7 percent above current limits, the White House said Thursday, setting up a certain clash with Republicans who insist that federal spending must be held in check.

Obama's budget, to be formally released Monday, will call for \$74 billion more than the levels frozen in place by across-the-board cuts agreed to by both Democrats and Republicans and signed by Obama into law. The White House said his new budget proposals will "fully reverse" the so-called sequestration cuts by increasing spending on both the domestic and military sides by similar amounts.

Under Obama's proposal, national security programs would see an increase of \$38 billion over current spending limits, raising the defense budget to \$561 billion. On the domestic side, Obama is calling for \$530 billion in spending — an increase of \$37 billion.

"If Congress rejects my plan and refuses to undo these arbitrary cuts, it will threaten our economy and our military,"

Obama warned in an opinion article Thursday on The Huffington Post.

The proposal from the president, two months after voters booted his party from control of the Senate, reflects the White House's newfound confidence in the economy.

Obama's aides believe that improving conditions give Obama credibility to push his spending priorities unabashedly — despite the fact that Republicans still believe the government spends far too much.

Federal deficits, gas prices and unemployment are all falling, while Obama's poll numbers have crept upward. The president has been newly combative as he argues it's time to ease the harsh measures that were taken to help pull the economy out of recession.

Obama was to promote his proposed spending levels to House Democrats at their annual retreat in Philadelphia on Thursday evening. The White House said his budget will be "fully paid for with cuts to inefficient spending programs and closing tax loopholes," but taxpayers will have to wait until the budget is made public to find out

exactly how.

While the proposal to spend more on things like education, sick leave and health care was sure to delight many members of Obama's own party, the Republicans now fully control Congress.

"This is not a surprise," said Don Stewart, deputy chief of staff for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. "Previous budgets submitted by the president have purported to reverse the bipartisan spending limits through tax increases that the Congress — even under Democrats — could never accept."

Yet Obama's move also puts Republicans in a precarious position.

Many in the GOP want to spend more on defense, especially in light of threats from terrorism and extremist groups. But Republicans are divided about how to pay. While some have argued for ignoring the spending limits, others want to offset the increases with cuts to either domestic programs or mandatory programs such as Social Security and Medicare.

By proposing to raise defense

spending by about the same amount as domestic programs, Obama is putting the GOP on notice that he won't accept cuts to his own priorities just to make way for more spending on national security programs that both parties are in the mood to support.

The Pentagon's base budget is currently \$496 billion, plus another \$64 billion for overseas missions. Obama's increases would allow for next-generation F-35 fighter jets, for ships and submarines and for long-range Air Force tankers.

Military leaders have said the earlier cuts forced reductions in pilots' flying hours, training and equipment maintenance.

On the domestic side, Obama has proposed two free years of community college and creating new or expanded tax credits for child care and spouses who both work.

He's called for raising the top capital gains rate on some wealthy couples and consolidating education tax breaks, although some of those ideas have already faced intense opposition.

3 US contractors killed in Kabul insider attack

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Three U.S. contractors were killed and a fourth was wounded Thursday in Kabul, a U.S. defense official said.

Two media outlets reported that the shooter was an Afghan in a military uniform.

U.S. Army Col. Brian Tribus, a spokesman for the NATO-led Resolute Support mission, said the shooting occurred at about 6:40 p.m. at the military side of Kabul's international airport. The shooting is under investigation, he said.

Tribus said an Afghan national also was

killed, but would not confirm whether the Afghan was a member of the security forces or whether he was the shooter. Afghan military officials reached late Thursday night could not provide any more details.

The military base at the airport hosts Afghan military units as well as advisers from a variety of NATO and allied countries. In 2011 the airport was the scene of the deadliest insider attack of the war when eight U.S. airmen and a contractor were killed by an Afghan officer.

Green-on-blue, or insider, attacks peaked in 2012 as the NATO forces were ramping up training of the ANA.

The U.S. and NATO then began a major review of the vetting process for Afghan recruits for the police and the army to include checking on the identities and loyalties of village elders and Afghan officials who are required to vouch for the trainees, the officials said.

Maj. Gen. Harold J. Greene, a 34-year veteran, who was the deputy commanding general of Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, is the highest ranking victim of such attacks. He was killed in Kabul on Aug. 5, 2014, when an Afghan soldier fired into a group of Americans from a bathroom window.

Welsch grilled about 'treason' comment

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Welsh faced tough questioning Wednesday in the Senate over whether the service is investigating airmen who have spoken to Congress about the planned retirement of the A-10 Thunderbolt aircraft.

Sen. Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H., said she was told about the internal probes after the two-star vice commander of the Air Force Air Combat Command caused a minor scandal and prompted an ongoing inspector general investigation by warning airmen that discussing the aircraft's capabilities with lawmakers could

amount to "treason."

The service is trying to retire the close-air-support aircraft — known for its 30 mm Gatling-type cannon — to save money, but has run into resistance from troops and members of Congress who believe the so-called Warthogs are still highly valuable on the battlefield.

Maj. Gen. James Post's comments and the report of internal investigations come as the White House prepares to release the proposed defense budget and likely opens another year of wrangling between the Air Force and Congress over the aircraft's retirement.

"What I'm hearing is there is actually an investigation going on in reverse — to find out who

has communicated with Congress — and to me that seems the opposite of what we would be trying to accomplish in looking at what Gen. Post said and whether it was lawful or not," Ayotte said during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing. "So, I hope there will be no punishment or any kind of pursuit of people trying to communicate with Congress."

Welsh, who had been called to testify on budget caps, denied any involvement or knowledge of the probes.

"I know of nothing along those lines at all. I would be astonished by it," Welsh said. "Certainly, I am not part of it; the secretary is not part of it; and I would not condone it."

Federal and military law gives all troops the right to communicate with congressional lawmakers through official and private channels, though they are not to use their service or rank to endorse partisan political causes or campaigns.

Post made his comments to a roomful of officers at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada earlier this month.

"If anyone accuses me of saying this, I will deny it ... anyone who is passing information to Congress about A-10 capabilities is committing treason," Post told the airmen, according to the military blog John Q. Public.

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Farewell ceremony held for Hagel

BY JON HARPER

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The man who held the exalted post of defense secretary for the past two years is more proud of the position he held 48 years ago: Army grunt.

Outgoing Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel volunteered to join the service in 1967 during the height of the Vietnam War. The following year, he deployed to South Vietnam, where he led an infantry squad through rice paddies, canopy jungle and the urban battlefield of Saigon. During his 12-month tour, he was seriously wounded and received two Purple Hearts.

When Hagel was appointed secretary of defense in 2013, he became the first former enlisted man to lead the Pentagon. Early next month, he is expected to be replaced by Ashton Carter, President Barack Obama's nominee to take over the job. Carter's Senate confirmation hearing is scheduled for next week.

"Of all the opportunities my life has given me ... I am most proud of having once been a soldier," Hagel said Wednesday during a farewell ceremony at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Va. "The lessons from my time in uniform about trust, responsibility, duty, judgment and loyalty to your fellow soldier

— these I have carried with me throughout my life."

The former infantryman praised those who have followed in his footsteps.

"To the men and women who serve our country, and their families, whose service and sacrifice is unequalled, you have my deepest gratitude," Hagel said. "We salute your high purpose and defense of our freedoms and our values. Every day, you wake up and you go to work knowing that this department ... is charged with one fundamental mission: the security of this nation. It's been my absolute privilege to have been on your team."

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Fort Hood shooter in court clean-shaven

FORT LEAVENWORTH, Kan. — The gunman who killed 13 people at a Texas military base in 2009 appeared in court Thursday without the beard he had fought to keep and said he wanted to keep his lead appeals lawyer.

Nidal Hasan appeared in court at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., where he is being held on the military death row. He no longer has the beard he wore during his August 2013 trial, where he was convicted and sentenced to death for a November 2009 rampage inside a medical readiness building at Fort Hood in Central Texas.

While he represented himself at trial, Hasan's appeals are being handled by a team led by Lt. Col. Kris Poppe, who has been named a military judge. In his new position, Poppe is subordinate to Col. Tara Osborn, Hasan's trial judge, who is now the chief trial judge of the Army.

Osborn on Thursday questioned whether Poppe could keep handling Hasan's appeals. "My concern is Maj. Hasan's defense counsel now works for the trial judge," she said.

Malaysia Flight 370 declared an accident

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Malaysia's government declared Thursday the crash of Flight 370 an accident to pave the way for compensation claims, angering victims' families still waiting for evidence while officials said the search

for wreckage will go on.

Civil aviation chief Azharuddin Abdul Rahman said the hunt for the Malaysia Airlines jet, which disappeared March 8, 2014, while flying from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 people, "remains a priority."

The plane is believed to have crashed in the southern Indian Ocean off the coast of western Australia.

"After 327 days and based on all available data as well as circumstances ... survivability in the defined area is highly unlikely," Azharuddin said in a prerecorded message broadcast on Malaysian television. All 239 passengers and crew on board are presumed to have lost their lives, he said.

From The Associated Press

Legacies on the line in Super Bowl

The Associated Press

PHOENIX — A historic Super Bowl is before us.

On Sunday, Seattle goes for a second straight title, seeking to be the first team to repeat since the Patriots a decade ago. A victory, particularly a convincing one, would stamp the Seahawks as one of the great teams of the Super Bowl era.

Meanwhile, New England's coach and quarterback chase a record-tying fourth Super Bowl ring.

Yet, as has been the custom this season, major distractions have taken focus away from the field.

As much as Tom Brady, Bill Belichick, Pete Carroll and Richard Sherman might want the spotlight to shine only on the game itself — and the potential achievements at hand — much of the buildup to the kickoff has been about anything but.

From the New England under-inflated balls saga to injuries for All-Pro defensive backs Sherman and Earl Thomas to Marshawn Lynch being fined yet again for his code of silence with the media, the 49th Super Bowl has taken on a circus

atmosphere.

Which seems fitting given all that has gone wrong for the NFL off the field — even as pro football remains as popular as ever.

Just finding any comments about the matchup of the dynamic defense from Seattle and the potent offense from New England has been a chore. Everything else, it seems, has been in play.

Indeed, here's how Seahawks All-Pro cornerback Sherman, recalling last year, described what the week leading up to the game is like:

"To us, it was just another week in the season, obviously. You're with these guys 180 or 190 of the 365 days, so you get to spend a special week with them. You get to know their families a little better because it's not just them there, but it's their families, their sons and daughters.

"A lot of times you don't get to meet them during these weeks, we're always at work from eight to six and everyone goes home. You get one day during training camp to meet people's family, but that's about it. So you have a good time getting to know people more."

Notice, no mention of football.

But Sherman does insist the left elbow he hurt in the NFC title game will be no factor.

"If I had to slap my brother, I'd be able to do it," he said jokingly.

Not much light-hearted stuff coming from New England. Not much football talk, either.

Belichick, who can equal Chuck Noll's four Super Bowl rings as a head coach, is grilled about the air pressure in a football, not about the pass pressure Seattle can bring on Brady.

Brady, in turn, gets cross-examined about the weight of the footballs, not about the weight of trying to reach Joe Montana/Terry Bradshaw territory with a fourth Super Bowl triumph.

"Obviously I'd much rather be up here talking about the Seahawks and preparing for the Super Bowl, which we've been trying to do for the last few days," he said.

As for Lynch, while it's certain the Patriots are scheming how to slow down Beast Mode, the league is trying to figure out what to do with him on media day and beyond. Lynch was fined \$20,000 Thursday for an obscene gesture in the NFC championship win over Green Bay.

In November, he was nailed for \$50,000 for not adhering to the league media policy. Another \$50,000 from 2013 that was withheld with the expectation he would cooperate in the future also was collected because, well, Lynch didn't speak up when required to.

Some folks in the NFL offices must be wondering what else could happen to shift the focus from Patriots-Seahawks.

What the football-watching world hopefully prefers is to get back to the machinations on the 100-yard gridiron. Such as the showdown between tight end Rob Gronkowski and Seahawks safety Kam Chancellor, perhaps the only defender who can somewhat match Gronk's power and speed.

Such as how Seattle avoids the pitfalls that plagued it for much of the NFC title game, when it fell behind 16-0.

And how high-priced Patriots cornerback Darrelle Revis performs in his first Super Bowl after seven seasons of falling short (on the field if not at the bank).

Maybe it's time to move on from all the tangential stuff and concentrate on what the Super Bowl is supposed to represent: football.

Pats, Seahawks are well-armed

The Associated Press

PHOENIX — Tom Brady began winning Super Bowls when Russell Wilson was still a teenager, tuning in to see the big game on TV.

"Of course I remember watching Brady," Wilson said on Tuesday. "He won some incredible games. Incredible comebacks. Incredible throws. Incredible plays. Hopefully he doesn't make too many incredible ones this year."

When Wilson leads the Seattle Seahawks into the Super Bowl against Brady and the New England Patriots on Sunday, both quarterbacks know the outcome will affect the way each is viewed for quite a while.

Wilson can become the eighth starting quarterback to win consecutive Super Bowls, and the first since Brady did it 10 years ago.

According to STATS, Wilson also would be the first to claim two in his first three years in the league (as it is, he's the first starting quarterback to make it to two Super Bowls that quickly).

Brady, meanwhile, won titles in 2002, 2004, and 2005. But since then, he is 0-2 in Super Bowls, with a pair of losses to the New York Giants in 2008 and 2012.

A victory over the Seahawks would allow the 37-year-old Brady to match his idol as a kid, Joe Montana, and Terry Bradshaw with four championships.

But a defeat would drop Brady's career mark on Super Sunday to 3-3.

"You never get over any of those," Brady said about the defeats. "As time goes on, you gain perspective, and you still had some great years. ... It would be great for this team to try to leave a great legacy."

When he won his first NFL championship in 2002, with a 20-17 victory over the St. Louis Rams, Brady was in his first year as

a starter and second year in the league.

Initially a backup after being drafted in the sixth round, he took over from injured quarterback Drew Bledsoe — and the rest is history.

He knows full well that Super Bowl success is a major part of how quarterbacks' careers are defined. And Brady said he recalls the feeling of hoisting the Lombardi Trophy three times in a four-year span a decade ago.

"Those things happened so fast back then. I didn't even understand what was happening," Brady said. "It's not like I didn't appreciate those experiences. I certainly did. But ... we've had two tough ones."

Wilson, 26, has yet to play an NFL season that didn't include at least one playoff victory for his team.

Before a late comeback, Seattle trailed by 16 points. Wilson had a passer rating of zero at halftime and he finished the game with four interceptions.

But that did not concern him on Tuesday. The only thing that did was the final score.

"I want to be considered a winner," said Wilson, sporting a thick beard. "That's ultimately the goal in terms of playing quarterback: Win, win, win."

Asked which quarterbacks were his favorites while growing up, Wilson mentioned Brady and Peyton Manning, calling them "two guys that I've looked up to since I was a little kid."

In last year's Super Bowl, Seattle overwhelmed Manning's Denver Broncos 43-8, part of Wilson's 10-0 record in games against quarterbacks who have won a title.

That could become 11-0 on Sunday.

Murray, Serena advance to Aussie Open finals

The Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Andy Murray has reached the Australian Open final for the fourth time, beating Tomas Berdych in a tension-filled semifinal to earn one more shot at a long elusive title.

Serena Williams has five titles from five finals at Melbourne Park, and earned a chance at another one when she advanced to a championship match against Maria Sharapova, who has one Australian title from three trips to the final.

Top-ranked Serena Williams beat 19-year-old Madison Keys 7-6 (5), 6-2 in an all-American semifinal Thursday, after Sharapova beat fellow Russian Ekaterina Makarova in straight sets.

In the night match, sixth-seeded Murray beat No. 7 Berdych 6-7 (6), 6-0, 6-3, 7-5. There was obvious animosity between the players due to a coach switching from the Murray to the Berdych camp.

An aggravated Murray bristled when Berdych spoke a few words to him after the first-set tiebreaker, and yelled profanities throughout the match. TV cameras appeared to show his fiancée, Kim Sears, uttering expletives in support.

Murray has lost three finals at Melbourne Park — to Roger Federer in 2010 and Novak Djokovic in '11 and '13. He'll get a chance to end that streak on Sunday, against either Djokovic or defending champion Stan Wawrinka.

Williams has put herself into a prime position. The 18-time Grand Slam champion, who has struggled with a cold for a week, said she'd benefit from a tough workout against Keys, who pounded her

with heavy groundstrokes and a big serve for the first set.

"She pushed me really hard the first set ... and I had to really dig deep mentally to get through that," Williams said. "It was a little frustrating. I had like nine or 10 match points and couldn't close it out."

Keys, playing in her first Grand Slam semifinal, saved seven match points on serve in a penultimate game that lasted more than 11 minutes. Williams kept her cool, though, wasting one match point on her serve before closing with an ace to reach her 23rd major final.

Sharapova, who beat No. 10-seeded Makarova 6-3, 6-2, has lost her last 15 matches against Williams. Her only two wins in their 18 career meetings were in 2004.

She won the 2008 Australian title, but was comprehensively outplayed in her two other trips to the final — by Williams in 2007 and by Victoria Azarenka in 2012.

"I think my confidence should be pretty high going into a final of a Grand Slam no matter who I'm facing and whether I've had a terrible record, to say the least, against someone," Sharapova said. "It doesn't matter. I got there for a reason. I belong in that spot."

The five-time major winner opened the 2015 season in confident style by winning the Brisbane International title but had a close call in the second round here, having to save match points against No. 150-ranked Russian qualifier Alexandra Panova.



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No. 8 Irish turn back Duke

The Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Jerian Grant had 23 points and 12 assists and No. 8 Notre Dame made two shots in the final 67 seconds as the shot clock ran out to beat No. 4 Duke 77-73 Wednesday night.

Grant lost control of the ball, picked it up at the free throw line and got a shot off just in time to give the Irish a 73-70 lead with 67 seconds left. After Quinn Cook hit a pair of free throws, Grant looked as though he was holding for a shot. But he fired it over to Steve Vasturia in the corner for a 3-pointer, giving the Irish a 76-72 lead. Grant then blocked a layup attempt to end the threat by Duke.

The win keeps Notre Dame (20-2, 8-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) in second-place in the league. Duke (17-3, 4-3) is off to its worst start in league play since opening the 1995-96 season 3-4.

No. 6 Arizona 90, Oregon 56: Gabe York scored 16 points, Brandon Ashley added 13 and host Arizona put on an offensive show to dismantle Oregon.

No. 9 Kansas 64, TCU 61: Frank Mason III scored 16 points with a

couple of key shots in the go-ahead run and Kansas held on for a victory at TCU after his missed free throws.

No. 10 Louisville 81, Boston College 72: Chris Jones scored 28 points, including a pair of three-pointers after Boston College cut a 10-point deficit to one, and Louisville held on.

Jones scored 10 of the visiting Cardinals' next 12 points after BC cut the lead to 62-61 with just over 5 minutes left. Terry Rozier scored 23 for Louisville (17-3, 5-2 Atlantic Coast Conference).

No. 12 Wichita State 58, Loyola 47: Fred VanVleet scored a career-high 27 points to lead host Wichita State.

No. 18 Northern Iowa 59, Southern Illinois 52: Paul Jespersen matched his season-high with 13 points and Seth Tuttle also had 13 to keep Northern Iowa in the hunt for the Missouri Valley Conference title with a win over host Southern Illinois.

Purdue 83, No. 22 Indiana

67: Rapheal Davis scored 19 points and Purdue's stifling defense shut down Indiana.

Georgia Tech 70, No. 23 Miami 50: Marcus Georges-Hunt scored 24 points and Georgia Tech earned its first Atlantic Coast Conference victory of the season by upsetting host Miami.

No. 24 Oklahoma 81, Texas Tech 36: Host Oklahoma allowed the fewest points ever by a Big 12 team in a conference game.

Air Force 66, San Jose State 52: Matt Mooney scored 20 points off the bench to lead Air Force. Hayden Graham added 16 points and six rebounds for the Falcons (9-11, 2-7 Mountain West Conference). Trevor Lyons had 11 points.

Navy 64, American University 54: Worth Smith scored 19 points, Brandon Venturini chipped in 17 and host Navy snapped a four-game losing skid.

Navy (8-13, 4-5 Patriot League) shot 24-for-37 (65 percent) from the floor.

Irving's 55 powers Cavs past Blazers

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Kyrie Irving scored a career-high 55 points, breaking the arena record while LeBron James watched from the bench and leading the Cleveland Cavaliers to their eighth straight win, 99-94 over the Portland Trail Blazers on Wednesday night.

Irving took over with James sidelined with a sprained right wrist. He buried a three-pointer with 6.4 seconds left to break a 94-94 tie, grabbed a rebound off a missed three-pointer by Portland's Damian Lillard, and as many in the crowd chanted "M-V-P" and James danced near the bench, Irving dropped two free throws with 2.1 seconds remaining to seal the win.

Irving broke the previous scoring record at Quicken Loans Arena held by Allen Iverson. His point total was also the highest in the league this season, bettering the 52 scored by Golden State's Klay Thompson and Minnesota's Mo Williams.

Irving made a team record 11 three-pointers and finished 10-for-10 from the free-throw line in a tour-de-force performance. He scored 24 of Cleveland's final 28 points and 16 of the Cavs' 20 in the fourth quarter.

Hawks 113, Nets 102: Paul Millsap had 28 points and 15 rebounds, five other Atlanta players scored in double figures, and the Hawks stretched their franchise-record winning streak to 17 games in a row with a victory over visiting Brooklyn.

76ers 89, Pistons 69: Robert Covington scored 19 points, Michael Carter-Williams had 14 points and 10 assists, and host Philadelphia snapped a six-game losing streak.

Raptors 119, Kings 102: Lou Williams scored 27 points and host Toronto made a season-high 17 three-pointers in a victory over slumping Sacramento.

Spurs 95, Hornets 86: Tony Parker scored 17 points and San Antonio overcame another lethargic third quarter to beat visiting Charlotte.

Nuggets 93, Pelicans 85: Arron Afflalo scored 18 points and visiting Denver snapped a seven-game losing streak.

Knicks 100, Thunder 92: Carmelo Anthony had 31 points and 10 rebounds, Lance Thomas scored a season-high 17 points against his former team and host New York beat Oklahoma City.

Rockets 99, Mavericks 94: Josh Smith scored 18 points and James Harden added 17 as host Houston used a balanced scoring effort to outlast Dallas.

Timberwolves 110, Celtics 98: Kevin Martin scored 21 points in his first game in more than two months and Gorgui Dieng added 16 points and 14 rebounds to lift host Minnesota over Boston.

Clippers 94, Jazz 89: Jamal Crawford scored 21 points and Los Angeles used a fourth-quarter rally to beat host Utah.

Suns 106, Wizards 98: Goran Dragic scored 20 points to lead five Phoenix players in double figures and the host Suns held on to beat worn-out Washington.

Caps blank Penguins to end skid

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Alex Ovechkin scored twice to take the NHL lead in goals, Braden Holtby recovered from a mini-slump to get his fifth shutout of the season, and Sidney Crosby had one of his worst faceoff nights as the Washington Capitals broke a four-game losing streak with a 4-0 win over the Pittsburgh Penguins on Wednesday.

Ovechkin had a tip-in goal in the first period and then scored during a power play in the second. His 29 goals are one more than Rick Nash and Tyler Seguin. Eric Fehr and Mike Green scored in the third.

Holtby, who had allowed four goals

in each of his last three starts, stopped 27 shots to blank the Penguins for the second time in a little over a month. Pittsburgh hasn't scored on Washington in 120 minutes this season. He lost 15 of his first 18 faceoffs and lost 17 of 24 for the game. The Penguins also played their third straight without Evgeni Malkin, who also has a lower-body injury. Pittsburgh has lost five of six.

Devils 2, Maple Leafs 1 (SO): Jacob Josefson and Patrik Elias scored in the shootout and host New Jersey rallied late to extend Toronto's losing streak to a season-high seven games.

Cory Schneider made 29 saves through overtime and handled both Toronto

shootout attempts as the Devils won for the fifth time in eight games (5-2-1). Defenseman Adam Larsson scored the tying goal with 2:50 left in regulation.

Kings 4, Blackhawks 3: Jake Muzzin scored the tiebreaking goal with 3:37 to play, Jeff Carter had two goals and an assist, and Los Angeles roared back in the final minutes to snap its four-game losing streak with a victory over visiting Chicago.

Tyler Toffoli tied it with 6:11 left for the defending Stanley Cup champions, who made a dynamic rally in their first game back after stumbling into the break in ninth place in the Western Conference.

Chase Elliott will take over Gordon's slot

The Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Chase Elliott will replace Jeff Gordon when the four-time NASCAR champion retires at the end of this season.

Elliott is the reigning Xfinity Series champion, and Hendrick Motorsports had to find a Sprint Cup seat for him or risk losing the 19-year-old to another organization.

Elliott will drive a second season in NASCAR's second-tier series this year with JR Motorsports. He will also make five Sprint Cup starts, debuting in March at Martinsville in the No. 25 Chevrolet for Hendrick.

He'll be paired with Gordon's current crew chief, Alan Gustafson, next season. No sponsor was announced.

Confirmation that Elliott will replace one of NASCAR's greatest drivers came the day before Elliott's father, Bill, is to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. He had 44 career Cup wins, including the 1985 Daytona 500. Elliott was also voted NASCAR's most popular driver 16 consecutive times, but removed his name from consideration following his final win in 2002.

Gordon announced last week that his 23rd season will be his final full-time year as a driver.

Wiesberger holds one-shot lead at Dubai

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Bernd Wiesberger made seven birdies on his last 10 holes Thursday to take a one-shot lead after the first round of the Dubai Desert Classic.

The 29-year-old Austrian finished at 8-under 64.

Lee Westwood and Nicolas Colsaerts were among four players tied for second, along with American Peter Uihlein and Andy Sullivan.

In other golf news:

■ Jessica Korda, Stacy Lewis and Azahara Munoz each shot 6-under 66 in the opening round of the LPGA Tour season opener in Ocala, Fla.

Freese, Angels reach 1-year agreement

Third baseman David Freese has avoided arbitration with the Los Angeles Angels, agreeing to a one-year contract for \$6,425,000.

The deal Wednesday was the midpoint between the \$7.6 million Freese had

asked for and the \$5.25 million the Angels had offered.

In other baseball news:

■ Cuban outfielder Dian Toscano and the Atlanta Braves have agreed to a \$6 million, four-year contract.

The 25-year-old, a left-handed hitter, batted .356 during the 2012-13 season for Villa Clara in Cuba.

■ A person familiar with the negotiations said right-handed reliever Casey Janssen and the Washington Nationals have agreed to a one-year contract with an option for 2016.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the deal had not been announced.

Bode Miller makes US roster for worlds

The U.S. Ski Team announced its roster for world championships next week in Beaver Creek, Colo., and all the big names were on the squad, including Bode Miller as he tries to return from back surgery.

Miller has yet to compete in a World Cup race this season after having a herniated disk repaired in November. His race status for Beaver Creek still remains uncertain.