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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Next special ops leader known for candor

The Washington Post

The Army's two most senior special operations officers, Gen. Joseph Votel and Lt. Gen. Raymond "Tony" Thomas, appear to be the Pentagon's new picks to lead two of its most influential four-star headquarters. The moves are not yet official, but they would put Votel and Thomas in charge of the U.S. Central Command and the U.S. Special Operations Command, respectively, both based in Tampa, Fla.

Votel, who will leave the latter command to lead the former, has been profiled by the media before. But Thomas, the heir-apparent to SOCOM, is a more shadowy figure. Like Votel, he is a veteran of the Army's elite Ranger light-infantry force. He has also held key posts in the top-secret counterterrorism unit popularly known as Delta Force.

Since last year, Thomas has

'He was the epitome, even as an officer, of what every young Ranger aspired to be.'

Nate Self

served under Lt. Gen. Raymond "Tony" Thomas in Afghanistan

headed up SOCOM's most prestigious component, the Joint Special Operations Command, or JSOC, which oversees terrorist-hunting missions from North Africa to Afghanistan and beyond. As head of SOCOM, Thomas will no longer direct the day-to-day activities of commandos and drone fleets in the field; the four-star command's role is to train and administer commando units, not employ them.

Asked to describe Thomas' personality outside the command post, one former subordinate would say only that the JSOC general is "business-ori-

ented" and an avid hockey fan loyal to the Philadelphia Flyers. The red-faced, even-keeled officer is widely known for his candor and by all accounts inspires deep loyalty among his subordinates.

"He was the epitome, even as an officer, of what every young Ranger aspired to be," wrote Nate Self — a soldier who served under Thomas in Afghanistan in early 2002 — in his memoir, "a no-frills operator, a former track star with strawberry-blond hair, piercing eyes, complex thoughts, and plain words."

Suggesting his famous can-

dor, Thomas described some of his own frustrations as JSOC's commander in the war against the Islamic State group, al-Qaida and other extremists in a rare interview at West Point last spring.

"From a leadership standpoint, if we can't explain to the nation, to subordinates, to the collective whole what we're trying to accomplish, then our strategy is by nature ill-defined and harder to achieve," the general said, a surprisingly harsh assessment from a serving commander, let alone the one at the helm of the shadow war.

"I'm told 'no' more than 'go' on a magnitude of about 10 to one on a daily basis," Thomas continued, apparently referring to missions for which JSOC sought but did not receive Pentagon approval. "I have to regulate my own frustration there to make sure it doesn't trickle down to the force."

Army acting secretary temporarily stepping aside

BY TARA COPP

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Acting Secretary of the Army Eric Fanning will step aside after lawmakers expressed concern over his holding the job without Congress confirming his nomination.

Fanning was nominated to the position in September by President Barack Obama to replace departed Army Secretary John McHugh. If confirmed, Fanning would be the first openly gay service secretary.

Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kan., put a hold on Fanning's nomination to oppose Obama's planned closure of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Fanning's nomination has not moved forward since Roberts sent a letter to Senate leadership in September.

On Monday, the Pentagon said Fanning would "step out" of the role and perform other duties at the Pentagon until Congress voted on the issue.

"In conversations relating to Fanning's confirmation, members of the Senate Armed Services Committee expressed some concerns about his designation as acting Army Secretary pursuant to the Vacancies Act," Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook said in a statement.

"As a show of comity to address these concerns, Fanning has agreed to step out of his

acting role to focus on achieving confirmation in the near future."

The Vacancies Act outlines who and for what amount of time a person can temporarily fill a presidentially appointed position.

In the interim, Undersecretary of the Army Patrick Murphy will serve as acting secretary, Cook said.

"We expect this move to be of a short duration and for Fanning to achieve speedy confirmation," he said.

Obama has vowed to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, but he decided not to submit a plan to Congress at the end of 2015 due to concerns

over the costs of moving the prisoners and political opposition from districts across the country that might be asked to house them.

"Yes, the senator has placed a hold on the Eric Fanning nomination until he receives the appropriate assurances from the administration that the remaining terrorists held at Guantanamo Bay will not be transferred to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas," Katherine Knight, a spokeswoman for Roberts, wrote in an email to Stars and Stripes.

Roberts vowed to continue the hold until the White House makes the guarantee.

Stars and Stripes reporter Travis J. Tritten contributed to this report.
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US, Philippines to discuss Chinese islands

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine foreign and defense chiefs will discuss with their American counterparts ways to address new security concerns arising from China's completion of artificial islands in the disputed South China Sea, an official said Monday.

Department of Foreign Affairs spokesman Charles Jose said the Philippines will ask the United States to continue patrols to ensure freedom of navigation in the area, a strategic passageway for many commercial and military ships, during Tuesday's talks in Washington.

The possibility of joint patrols by the U.S. and its Asian security allies may also be discussed, he said.

Recent Chinese flights to test a runway on one of the seven man-made islands, Fiery Cross, have raised concerns that Beijing may plan to impose an air defense identification zone over the South China Sea, officially or otherwise, Jose said.

Vietnam and the Philippines opposed the Chinese flights.

"They can declare it official or we may witness a de facto ADIZ," Jose said by telephone. "There's a need, therefore, to take actions showing that we won't recognize any such imposition."

In 2013, China declared such an aviation security buffer zone over the East China Sea, where Beijing and Tokyo have been contesting ownership of a chain of uninhabited islands. The

U.S. and its allies led by Japan protested the action and announced they would not recognize the Chinese defense zone. In the South China Sea, Beijing shooed away U.S. and Philippine planes even while it was building the islands from previously submerged reefs and atolls in the Spratly Islands, indicating its intention to control access to the region, Philippine diplomats said.

The U.S. sent a guided-missile destroyer close to one of the Chinese-built islands, called Subi Reef, in October in one of its boldest challenges yet to Beijing's territorial claims, sparking warnings from China. U.S. officials vowed to continue maneuvers to protect freedom of navigation and overflight.

Bowie dies of cancer

Associated Press

David Bowie, the otherworldly musician who broke pop and rock boundaries with his creative musicianship, nonconformity, striking visuals and a genre-spanning persona he christened Ziggy Stardust, died of cancer Sunday. He turned 69 on Jan. 8 and released a new album, "Blackstar," the same day.

Bowie, whose hits included "Fame," "Heroes" and "Let's Dance," died "peacefully" and was surrounded by family, representative Steve Martin said early Monday. The singer had fought cancer for 18 months.

Long before alter egos and wild outfits became commonplace in pop, Bowie turned the music world upside down with the release of the 1972 album, "The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars," which introduced one of music's most famous personas. Ziggy Stardust was a concept album that imagined a rock star from outer space trying to make his way in the music world. The persona — the red-headed, eyeliner-wearing Stardust — would become an enduring part of his legacy, and a touchstone for the way entertainers packaged themselves for years to come.

The singer, who was born David Jones in London, came of age in the glam rock era of the early 1970s. He had a striking androgynous look in his early days and was known for changing his appearance and sounds.

Bowie's performance of "Heroes" was a highlight at a concert for rescue workers after the 2001 World Trade Center attacks.

'El Chapo' extradition begun

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — Mexico has begun the process of extraditing drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman to the United States after he was recaptured following a dramatic, monthlong hunt featuring movie stars, sewer escapes and bloody shootouts.

That process will probably take "one year or longer," the head of Mexico's extradition office, Manuel Merino, told Radio Formula on Monday. He said the process had lasted as long as six years in one case because of legal challenges.

On Sunday, agents formally notified Guzman he was wanted in the United States. In a statement, the Attorney General's Office said Mexican agents assigned to the international police agency Interpol served two arrest warrants to the drug lord, who is being held at the Altiplano prison following his capture Friday.

Guzman's defense now has three days to present arguments against extradition and 20 days to present supporting evidence, beyond the plethora of other appeals they have already started filing.

Guzman's powerful Sinaloa cartel smuggles large shipments of cocaine and marijuana as well as manufacturing and transporting methamphetamines and heroin, mostly to the U.S. He is wanted in various U.S. states, and his July escape strained ties between Mexico and the U.S.

Guzman's attorney, Juan Pablo Badillo, has said the defense has already filed six motions to challenge extradition requests. Badillo said his client shouldn't be extradited to the U.S. because "our country must respect national sovereignty, the sovereignty of its institutions to impart justice."

When Guzman was captured in 2014, then-Attorney General Jesus Murillo Karam said the extradition would happen only after Guzman finished his sentence in Mexico in "300 or 400 years."

Guzman was reapprehended Friday after a shootout between gunmen and Mexican marines.

Mexican authorities say actor Sean Penn's contacts with Guzman helped them track the fugitive. Penn's article on Guzman was published late Saturday by Rolling Stone magazine, a day after the drug lord's recapture.

Chief of personnel visits Reagan sailors

YOKOSUKA, Japan — Housing allowances for dual military families and selective re-enlistment bonuses were among topics the chief of naval personnel addressed Monday aboard the USS Ronald Reagan.

Visiting Yokosuka, Vice Adm. Bill Moran also discussed career advancement opportunities, deployment schedules and changes to the physical fitness assessment before taking sailors' questions.

Last year, discussion in Washington included phasing out double basic housing allowances for dual military families. Following concerns brought up by Adm. John M. Richardson, chief of naval operations, and Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, the decision was pushed back to a yet-to-be-determined date.

"It's not in effect now, but I can assure it will be revisited later this year," Moran said. "What isn't accounted for is the additional expenses that dual military couples incur that aren't seen anywhere else: long-term child care, paying rent and a mortgage," Moran said.

From staff reports

Vikes miss chance to advance

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Even as Minnesota Vikings kicker Blair Walsh trotted out for what his coach called a “chip shot” game-winning field goal try, ever-optimistic Seattle coach Pete Carroll kept right on believing his Seahawks weren’t done yet.

Walsh missed a 27-yard field goal in the closing seconds, keeping the Seahawks’ dreams of returning to the Super Bowl for a third straight season alive with a 10-9 victory over the Vikings in the wild-card playoff game on Sunday at frigid TCF Bank Stadium.

After making three field goals in the first three quarters, Walsh’s try to win the game missed to the left badly, and the Seahawks (11-6) moved on to face top-seeded Carolina next weekend.

“We were still talking like something good was going to happen, all the way through the kick,” Carroll said. “And he missed it. There was a lot of believing and a lot of hope at that time when it was all but hopeless.”

That’s been the season for the Seahawks. They started 2-4, dealt with safety Kam Chancellor’s holdout and just didn’t look like the same team that won the Super Bowl two years ago and were inches away from winning it again last year.

But Chancellor is back and made a big play on Sunday, Russell Wilson found just enough magic on offense and the Seahawks survived the third-coldest game on record in NFL history, with a kickoff temperature of minus-6 degrees.

“We’re fortunate. Very fortunate to get

that,” said Russell Wilson, who was 13-for-26 for 146 yards with a touchdown and an interception. “Like I said, anything can happen in the playoffs as we know. Keep believing and fortunately it went our way today.”

Steven Hauschka’s 46-yard field goal was the only other scoring for the Seahawks.

Here are five things to know about the game:

The great escape: Vikings coach Mike Zimmer compared Wilson to “Houdini” in comments to reporters during the week, and never was there a better example of that than early in the fourth quarter. Wilson wasn’t ready for a shotgun snap on first-and-10 at the Minnesota 39 that sailed through his hands.

He dropped to a knee to pick it up 16 yards behind the line of scrimmage, sprinted right to avoid a sack with two Vikings in close pursuit, then found Tyler Lockett wide open around the 30. Lockett ran all the way to the 4 to complete a 35-yard gain, by far the longest of the game, and set up Wilson’s touchdown pass to Doug Baldwin that finally put the Seahawks on the scoreboard with 11:37 remaining in the game.

“It just seemed like a whole bunch of bears chasing you,” Wilson said. “You’re just trying to get away.”

Baby, it’s c-c-c-c-cold outside: Seahawks cornerback Richard Sherman, a native of Los Angeles who played at Stanford, was confident the cold wouldn’t bother him until, oh, pregame warmups when he felt his contact lenses and eyelashes start to freeze.

“It was like sitting in a freezer, honestly,” Sherman said.

Many of the Seahawks wore huge capes and huddled around heaters when they weren’t in the game.

Wilson found throwing deep particularly challenging. He had Baldwin wide open in the second quarter behind the safeties at the goal line, but the ball hung in the wind and was easily batted down.

“But it’s no excuse,” Wilson said. “You have to find a way to win.”

Peterson’s fumble: Walsh was hardly the only Viking to blame for another gut-wrenching playoff defeat. Peterson’s fumble problems returned in the fourth quarter when he coughed one up after catching a pass for a first down. The turnover led to Hauschka’s field goal that put the Seahawks in front and ultimately proved to be the game-winning kick.

“I look back on that and say that if I don’t put that ball on the ground, they’re not able to get that field goal and take the lead,” Peterson said. “That’s something that will haunt me throughout the offseason.”

Technical difficulties: The Seahawks burned all three of their first-half timeouts early in the game, the result of some miscommunication and difficulties getting the plays into Wilson. Carroll said they had issues with the headsets and communication during the game, perhaps because it was so cold.

Packers get past Redskins

Associated Press

LANDOVER, Md. — Green Bay Packers coach Mike McCarthy doesn’t want to hear any more about his team’s two losses to end the regular season — or the anemic offense that caused them.

After the Packers beat the Washington Redskins 35-18 Sunday to reach the divisional round, McCarthy and his players were quick to put all their recent struggles in the rearview mirror.

“You don’t have to talk about the regular season no more,” McCarthy said. “The playoffs are different.”

It looked like the same old problems early against Washington when the Packers fell behind 11-0 and couldn’t move the ball. Then Aaron Rodgers found his groove.

After starting 1-for-8 for 11 yards with a safety, Rodgers was 20-for-28 for 199 yards and two TDs the rest of the way and had the passing game clicking so well that the Redskins couldn’t keep up. Rodgers said getting the offense going was a huge mental boost, and it showed.

“We scored 35 points and we moved the ball a little bit better,” Rodgers said. “The playoffs bring that out of all of us. It’s a one-and-done mentality. The focus goes up and the intensity goes up.”

Green Bay set up a rematch with the NFC West champion Arizona Cardinals on Saturday night.

Green Bay lost 38-8 at Arizona in Week 16, so this is a chance for some redemption.

“There’s not too many times you have an opportunity to go back and have a redo,” McCarthy said.

Here are other things to know about Sunday’s game:

Cousins’ day: Nearly three hours before kickoff, folks gathered outside a stadium tunnel to greet Redskins players — and when QB Kirk Cousins got off the team bus, a chant arose: “You like that! You like that!” That’s the catch phrase coined by Cousins after a comeback victory earlier this season, and he heard it again, loudly, after scoring on a draw from 3 yards out early in the third quarter of his first playoff start, putting Washington ahead 18-17. Washington wouldn’t score again. Now Cousins — surprisingly superb in his first season as a starter — can become a free agent.

“You want to be where you’re wanted and play for people who believe in you. It hasn’t been discussed at all,” said Cousins, 29-for-46 for 329 yards with one throwing TD and one lost fumble. “This process is new to me. We’ll see how it goes.”

Redskins taste playoffs: After finishing last in six of the past seven seasons, the Redskins put a positive spin on making the postseason by winning the NFC East in Jay Gruden’s second year as coach. “We’re headed in the right direction,” defensive end Chris Baker said. “This is just a taste.”

Spieth opens year with 8-stroke victory

Associated Press

KAPALUA, Hawaii — Jordan Spieth went on Twitter in the final hour of 2015 to say, “Would rather this year not end.”

Maybe it never did.

Coming off a blockbuster year including the Masters, U.S. Open, five victories and the FedEx Cup, Spieth delivered a statement Sunday in the Hyundai Tournament of Champions by crushing the winners-only field at Kapalua for an eight-shot victory.

“I felt like it was a short three-week break and continue what we were doing last year,” he said. “That’s the way I’ll keep on thinking about it. It worked well this week. All parts were firing.”

He made an 8-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole for a 6-under 67 and a spot in the PGA Tour record book with Ernie Els. They are the only two players at 30-under par or lower in a 72-hole event. Spieth, playing smart with a big lead on the back nine, finished at 30-under 262. That was one short of the record Els set at Kapalua in 2003.

He also joined Tiger Woods as the only players since full records began in 1970 to win seven times on the PGA Tour at age 22. Woods was a month younger, and he turned pro later. Spieth collected his seventh win in his 77th start. Woods won his

seventh in only his 38th tournament as a pro.

“My putting feels like it’s 100 percent ready for major championships, and I’ve just got to dial in everything else just a little bit more,” he said. “But I can sit here and say that my putting certainly is ready for the Masters to be next week. It’s a really good feeling to have that confidence with the flat stick.”

Brooks Koepka played with Spieth in the final round and started five shots behind. On the first hole, Spieth’s approach somehow settled inches away on the top of a steep bunker about 50 yards from the hole. His pitch rode the grain to 4 feet for par. Koepka three-putted for bogey. Then, Spieth rolled in a 35-foot birdie putt.

“It’s incredible the way Jordan manages his game going around all 18 holes,” Koepka said. “He doesn’t seem to make a mistake. When he does get in trouble, he gets out of it and he makes those 15-foot clutch putts to keep the round going. It’s impressive to watch, it really is. It’s fun to watch.”

Koepka shot 71 and tied for third. Defending champion Patrick Reed had three birdies in five holes, and he pulled within three shots with a birdie at No. 9. The next time he saw a leaderboard, Spieth was five shots in front and the gap

only got bigger from there. Reed closed with a 69 and was runner-up.

“He hasn’t given anyone opportunities to really catch up,” said Rickie Fowler, who finished 10 shots behind in fifth place. “It’s just solid golf, and I think you’re going to see a lot of that like he did last year. You’re going to have to play a good, solid golf tournament to have a chance to win.”

Spieth is uncomfortable with comparisons with Woods, though he bought into one philosophy going into the final round.

“When Tiger is in contention, why is his record so phenomenal? Well, sure, he played the best golf and he was the strongest mentally,” Spieth said. “But everyone else knew that he could do it and maybe tried to do a bit too much.”

Spieth was waiting in the 18th fairway when he said caddie Michael Greller said to him, “Way to make a statement.”

“That was cool,” Spieth said. “It’s not what I’m going for. It’s not why I do what I do. I don’t do it to talk back to any people that believe it’s not possible or ‘He got a lucky year’ or something.”

And then he paused with a smile and added, “But I still think it’s going to be very difficult to have a year like last year.”



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Blazers rally past Thunder

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — After hitting his third consecutive three-pointer, Damian Lillard flapped his arms above his head and motioned to the crowd while screaming, "Come on man, let's go!"

"I got some good looks at the rim and let them fly," Lillard said.

The star guard scored 31 points, including five three-pointers in the last 3:07, and the Portland Trail Blazers rallied to beat the Oklahoma City Thunder 115-110 on Sunday night.

Portland coach Terry Stotts said calling Lillard's performance "big" would be an understatement.

"You don't see that very often," Stotts said.

CJ McCollum added 22 points for Portland, which hit a season-high 19 three-pointers to snap a three-game losing streak. Lillard finished with eight threes, matching his career high.

Thunder guard Russell Westbrook nearly had his fourth triple-double of the season, but fell just short with 25 points, 15 assists and nine rebounds. Last season, Westbrook led the NBA with 11 triple-doubles.

Kevin Durant had 28 points for Oklahoma City and has scored 20 or more in 23 consecutive games.

With 3:19 remaining, Andre Roberson hit a buzzer-beating three to put Oklahoma City up 103-95. That started a three-point shootout. Lillard hit three straight threes and Allen Crabbe drained another to cut the Thunder's lead to 108-107 with 2 minutes left.

Lillard wasn't done.

He hit two more threes to give Portland a three-point lead, and an offensive foul on Oklahoma City with a minute left

brought fans to their feet. But it was Mason Plumlee's block for the Blazers with 30.9 seconds left, Lillard said, that made all the difference.

"Changed the game completely," Lillard said. "That was the game-winner right there."

Lillard finished with 17 points in the final quarter. Durant went scoreless in the fourth.

"They played well in the fourth and we didn't," Durant said. "All those made shots kind of broke our backs."

Cavaliers 95, 76ers 85: LeBron James raised the roof, then lifted visiting Cleveland to its seventh straight win.

James tied a season high with 37 points and pushed both hands up in the air after several powerful dunks, drawing a rise out of the nearly 20,000 fans at the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia. He had nine assists and seven rebounds in Cleveland's 13th win in the last 15 games.

Clippers 114, Pelicans 111 (OT): Chris Paul had 25 points and 11 assists, Jamal Crawford added 21 points, and host Los Angeles beat New Orleans in overtime to extend the NBA's longest active winning streak to nine games.

Two-time All-Star Anthony Davis, the Pelicans' leading scorer and rebounder, did not play because of a back contusion.

Nicks 100, Bucks 88: Carmelo Anthony had 24 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists, Kristaps Porzingis had a few more highlight plays during New York's high-flying third quarter against visiting Milwaukee.

Grizzlies 101, Celtics 98: Zach Randolph had 25 points and 13 rebounds and host Memphis overcame a 21-point deficit in the second half to beat Boston. Isaiah Thomas, who led the Celtics

with 35 points, launched a three-pointer as time expired but officials confirmed the basket came after the horn, giving Memphis its biggest comeback victory of the season.

Rockets 107, Pacers 103 (OT): Trevor Ariza scored a season-high 24 points and Corey Brewer hit the go-ahead three-pointer in overtime to help host Houston beat Indiana.

James Harden had 21 points and Dwight Howard added 21 points and 17 rebounds for his fifth straight double-double in his return after missing a game with soreness in his lower back.

Mavericks 93, Timberwolves 87: Dirk Nowitzki scored 29 points, converted a big three-point play and grabbed a key loose ball in the final seconds to lead Dallas past host Minnesota.

Nowitzki hit four of Dallas' six 3-pointers.

Andrew Wiggins led Minnesota with 21 points.

Jazz 86, Lakers 74: Gordon Hayward scored 25 points and Utah beat Los Angeles to snap a seven-game road losing streak.

Kobe Bryant didn't play for the Lakers because of a strained right Achilles tendon.

Nuggets 95, Hornets 92: Danilo Gallinari scored 27 points, rookie Emmanuel Mudiay added 11 in his first game in a month and host Denver extended Charlotte's losing streak to seven games.

The Nuggets didn't score over the final 4:17 but squeaked out the win after Nicolas Batum's shot at the buzzer clanged off the side of the rim. Mudiay was back on the court after missing 14 games with a sprained right ankle.

Villanova holds off Butler

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Villanova found a winning combination Sunday night — a little defense and a lot of Hart.

With most of their top big men in foul trouble, Ryan Arcidiacono struggling to make shots and No. 18 Butler refusing to go away, the Wildcats buckled down defensively and gave the ball to Josh Hart, who scored 22 points to lead No. 11 Villanova past the Bulldogs 60-55.

It wasn't easy and it certainly wasn't pretty, but to coach Jay Wright, it was basketball at its finest.

"This game came down to defense, which is at the core of each of these teams. I love it," Wright said.

The Wildcats (14-2, 4-0) have won six straight and are the last unbeaten team in Big East play. Given the circumstances, this might have been their most impressive win, too.

Arcidiacono, last season's co-conference player of the year, went 1-for-9 from the field and missed all five of his three-pointers in the first half but rallied the team early in the second half with a flurry of scoring plays, passes and defensive stops. It led to a 14-0 run that erased Butler's seven-point lead and put Villanova in control. He finished with 11 points and four assists.

Forward Daniel Ochefu was averaging 17.0 points and 11.7 rebounds in league play but logged only 19 minutes because of foul trouble. He had six points and five rebounds.

So Hart got a chance to shine — and he did. He scored eight points in a challenging first half and the last eight in a 10-2 run that allowed Villanova to extend its 44-43 lead to 54-45 with 3:25 left.

No. 5 Michigan State 92, Penn State 65: Bryn Forbes scored 20 points and the visiting Spartans welcomed Denzel Valentine back from his knee injury with an easy victory.

Forbes made six of the Spartans' 10 three-pointers and scored all his points in the first half. Valentine scored all 10 of his points after the break.

No. 15 SMU 88, UCF 73: Ben Moore had a career-high 23 points, Nic Moore added 20 and the host Mustangs remained undefeated.

Clemson 66, No. 16 Louisville 62: Jaron Blossomgame scored 17 points to lead the host Tigers to an upset.

Louisville's scoring leader Damion Lee had six points on 2-for-12 shooting, and the Cardinals were 3-for-23 on three-pointers.

Illinois 84, No. 20 Purdue 70: Malcolm Hill scored 30 points and Kendrick Nunn added 22 to lead the host Illini past Purdue.

Nunn started slowly but scored 18 points in the second half for the Illini (9-8, 1-3 Big Ten).

Caleb Swanigan and P.J. Thompson each had 12 points for Purdue (14-3, 2-2).

Oregon 71, Stanford 58: Dillon Brooks had 15 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists, and the Ducks (13-3, 2-1 Pac-12) pulled away in the second half to beat Stanford for their 18th straight win at home.

Indiana 85, Ohio State 60: Troy Williams scored 23 points and the host Hoosiers won their ninth straight game in convincing fashion.

Ovechkin joins 500 club in Caps' win

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Alex Ovechkin scored his 500th and 501st goals to become the 43rd NHL player to reach the milestone and the Washington Capitals beat the Ottawa Senators 7-1 on Sunday night.

Ovechkin reached the mark in vintage fashion, scoring from just beyond the left hash marks during a second-period power play to give the Washington Capitals a 5-1 lead.

Teammates mobbed Ovechkin, and he got an extended standing ovation and took a skate around the rink, acknowledging the cheering crowd that included his parents. He later drew another roar while waving to fans from the bench.

"It's a great feeling obviously to do it in front of our fans," Ovechkin said, adding that it was a "pretty special moment."

He added No. 501 midway through the third, beating a defender with a sweeping deke at the top of the zone before smacking a shot past goalie Andrew Hammond for the 7-1 advantage.

At 801 games, the Russian winger is the fifth-fastest player to 500 goals, trailing only Hall of Famers Wayne Gretzky (575 games), Mario Lemieux (605), Mike Bossy (647) and Brett Hull (693). The 30-year-old Ovechkin has 26 goals this season, including five over his past three games, and is the NHL leader in career goals by a Russian-born player.

Ovechkin was the first overall pick in the 2004 draft by Washington. He's been

named an All-Star in each of his 11 seasons and was voted a captain for this year's All-Star game. He's won three straight Richard Trophies as the league's leading goal scorer and five overall. He's also won three Hart Trophies as league MVP.

Washington has won four straight overall and 10 consecutive home games.

Justin Williams, T.J. Oshie, Zach Sill, Dmitry Orlov and Tom Wilson also scored for Washington. Jason Chimera and Nicklas Backstrom each had three assists, and Philipp Grubauer made 32 saves.

Mike Hoffman had Ottawa's lone goal, and Hammond stopped 29 of 36 shots.

Panthers 2, Oilers 1: Jaromir Jagr and Jonathan Huberdeau scored in the first period, Al Montoya made 24 saves and Florida beat host Edmonton to extend its franchise-record winning streak to 12 games.

Florida hasn't lost since Dec. 12 while climbing to the top of the Atlantic Division with 56 points. The Panthers won this one despite putting just 14 shots on goal.

Florida's winning streak is the longest for any NHL team since Boston won 12 straight in March 2014.

Mark Letestu scored for the Oilers, and Cam Talbot made 12 saves.

Blackhawks 6, Avalanche 3: Patrick Kane and Marian Hossa each scored two goals and host Chicago pounded Colorado to extend its season-high win streak to seven.

Jonathan Toews had a goal and two

assists to help Chicago chase Semyon Varlamov and improve to 18-5-1 at home. Brandon Mashinter scored his second career goal and Corey Crawford had 34 saves.

The Blackhawks (58 points) moved within four points of idle Dallas for the top spot in the Western Conference.

Sabres 4, Jets 2: Sam Reinhart scored three goals for his first NHL hat trick and visiting Buffalo beat Winnipeg to snap a six-game losing streak.

Former Jets forward Evander Kane had an assist on Reinhart's empty-net goal in his first game against the team that traded him Feb. 11 in a multi-player deal.

Red Wings 2, Ducks 1: Riley Sheahan scored with 3:44 remaining in the third period to lift Detroit over host Anaheim for its fifth straight win.

Tomas Tatar also scored and Petr Mrazek made 30 saves to help the Red Wings end a four-game losing streak to Anaheim.

Devils 2, Wild 1: Jon Merrill put New Jersey ahead in the third period with his first goal of the season, Cory Schneider made 17 saves and the Devils beat host Minnesota to snap a season-high three-game losing streak.

Adam Henrique scored for New Jersey 1:21 into the third, but Minnesota's Zach Parise got his 16th goal less than 2 minutes later. That score was Parise's first against his former team.