

STARS AND STRIPES®

Tuesday, July 5, 2016

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Changes in store for Marines' fitness tests

BY AARON KIDD
Stars and Stripes

Major changes are in store for the Marine Corps' physical and combat fitness tests, while tweaks to the body composition program are already in place.

The changes are being implemented to "ensure standards are relevant, challenging and also allow for greater distinction between Marines of different fitness levels and age groups," said a Marine Corps statement issued Friday and signed by Gen. Robert Neller, the service's commandant.

Effective Jan. 1, all Marines will have the option of doing pullups or pushups; however, only those who choose pullups

will be able to earn maximum points on the PFT, the physical fitness test. The flexed arm hang for women will be eliminated.

"Push-ups become an option on the PFT, but Marines are incentivized toward pullups, as these are a better test of functional, dynamic upper body strength and correlate stronger to the physically demanding tasks," the statement said.

Also starting Jan. 1, Marines taking the combat fitness test, or CFT, will have to complete five pushups instead of three during the maneuver under fire following the simulated grenade throw.

Marines who score 285 and above on both the PFT and CFT will be exempt from

height, weight and body composition limits and will be allowed an additional 1 percent of body fat.

Other changes to the body composition program, or BCP, include relaxed weight limits for female Marines, the use of more precise tape-measuring devices and moving BCP waiver authority to the first general officer in a Marine's chain of command. Those changes take effect immediately.

More information, including new PFT/CFT scoring tables, physical training recommendations and BCP adjustments, are available at <https://fitness.usmc.mil>.

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Military mulls hydroponic gardens aboard submarines

Associated Press

NATICK, Mass. — When a Navy submarine goes to sea on a monthslong voyage, the lettuce, tomatoes and other fresh fruits and vegetables run out in a week or two, forcing the crew to rely on canned, frozen or dehydrated products.

But what if subs had their own gardens where food could be grown under lights?

The U.S. military is testing out the idea by growing plants hydroponically — that is, with nutrient solution instead of soil — inside a 40-foot shipping container on dry land at a laboratory outside Boston.

Engineering technician Don Holman, who grew up on a farm in Michigan before serving 30 years in the Navy, is running the \$100,000 project at the Army's Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center. He said sailors have been asking for more produce.

"When you give someone something they want, it improves their morale. And they perform better when morale is up," said Holman, who will present a technical report in

September so the Navy can decide whether to attempt gardening beneath the sea.

This is the second phase of the testing. Holman first tried to grow 83 varieties of fruits and vegetables to see which ones did best. The leafy greens and green onions thrived. Root vegetables did fairly well. Strawberries and rhubarb grew but probably wouldn't produce enough to make it worthwhile, Holman said.

The cucumbers, on the other hand, were a mess. The vines climbed everywhere. And the large leaves on the zucchini plants blocked the lights. The tomato plants grew but didn't produce fruit because the lighting wasn't bright enough and the temperature was too low.

Holman replanted the varieties that did well. He is now tending to those seedlings to see how much they produce.

On the dirt- and insect-free "farm," as Holman calls it, the plants are growing in trays of peat moss plugs and will be transferred this week to more than 250 towers suspended from overhead tracks and filled with growing material made

of recycled plastic. Strands of red and blue LED lights dangle from the ceiling.

He said vegetables could be planted before a vessel went to sea so that they would be ready for harvesting during the mission.

Retired Navy Capt. Ronald Steed, a former sub skipper, said it would be a real challenge to fit a garden on a submarine, where space is extremely tight, "but if they could do it, that would be awesome."

The newest fast-attack submarines are nearly 400 feet long and carry a crew of about 130, while ballistic-missile subs stretch about 560 feet and can have a crew of 170.

The idea originated at the Naval Undersea Warfare Center, a research and development lab in Newport, R.I.

A fast-attack sub has enough food on board for at least 90 days when it leaves for a deployment from the Navy base at Groton, Conn., said Lt. Cmdr. Christopher Shutt, supply officer for the waterfront.

After about a week, the lettuce in the salad bar becomes slightly translucent, then runs

out, and the fresh tomatoes, carrots and celery are gone, too. Thawed fruit, bean or pasta salad, and soups take their place at the salad bar. Pudding occasionally shows up when the fruit is gone.

It's not this way the entire time — a submarine will get fresh food when it stops at a port or another ship delivers it.

Chief Culinary Specialist Brian Pearson, who serves on the submarine USS Missouri, admitted that nothing beats fresh ingredients but said the crew still really likes his spaghetti or lasagna, made with canned tomatoes, dehydrated onions and extra spices. For mashed potatoes, he said, he can transform dehydrated potato flakes with butter, garlic and sour cream.

For his part, Steed allowed that the food aboard submarines is pretty good, considering what the cooks have to work with.

"It's just kind of one of those things where you accept that you're not going to have fresh fruits, vegetables, eggs," he said, "and given that, they do a great job."

Assertive Russia tests unity of NATO alliance

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

This has been the summer of war games in Europe, where thousands of NATO troops have been on the move in a series of eye-catching military drills stretching from Poland to the Baltics and beyond.

The show of force is a prelude to a summit this week in Warsaw, Poland, where alliance leaders will determine the future direction of the U.S.-led military pact.

The maneuvers aim to deliver a signal of readiness to Rus-

sia, whose 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula upended assumptions about a post-Cold War partnership with Moscow. And yet they mask a persistent gulf between rhetoric and reality regarding NATO's military capabilities along its eastern flank — a long-standing source of tension inside the organization and an issue allies will be forced to confront during the two-day summit, which begins Friday.

If the meeting is to be deemed a success, it will need to make headway in healing a rift between eastern and western

member states over the force mix required to confront a more assertive Russia.

"I think NATO will have to decide if it has enough political will to put the resources in place that it needs to and send an unequivocal message it is united," said Andrew A. Michta, a professor of national security affairs at the U.S. Naval War College. "[Russian President Vladimir] Putin sees Europe in flux."

Indeed, the gap in military capabilities in eastern Europe, and what should be done about it, is where allies appear to be

most divided. If some members question whether NATO has done enough, others think allies have already gone too far.

Such differences are likely to be papered over in Warsaw. When President Barack Obama and other heads of state from the 28-nation alliance meet, the public declarations out of NATO will be about solidarity and unity in the face of security challenges posed by Russia.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Monday that in Warsaw allies would demonstrate their commitment to defending member states.

No charges over Clinton emails

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The FBI won't recommend criminal charges against Hillary Clinton for her use of a private email server while secretary of state, agency Director James Comey said Tuesday, lifting a major legal threat to her presidential campaign.

Comey's decision almost certainly brings the legal part of the issue to a close and removes the threat of criminal charges. Attorney General Loretta Lynch said last week that she would accept the recommendations of the FBI director and of career prosecutors.

"No charges are appropriate in this case," Comey said in making his announcement.

Comey made that statement after he delivered a blistering review of Clinton's actions, saying the FBI found that 110 emails were sent or received on Clinton's server containing classified information. He said Clinton and her aides were "extremely careless" and added that it was possible that people hostile to the U.S. had gained access to her personal email account.

Yet he added that after looking at similar circumstances, the agency believed that "no

reasonable prosecutor would bring such a case."

The announcement came three days after the FBI interviewed Clinton for hours in a final step of its yearlong investigation into the possible mishandling of classified information.

Though his recommendation apparently ends the legal threat, it's unlikely to wipe away many voters' concerns about Clinton's trustworthiness. And it probably won't stop Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, who has called for criminal charges, from continuing to make the server a campaign issue.

Man held in death of US student in Rome

ROME — Italian police have detained a homeless man in the death of a 19-year-old American student whose body was found in the Tiber River in Rome two days after his credit card had been used in Milan.

Police on Tuesday identified the suspect as Massimo Galioto, 40, from Rome.

Police on Monday pulled the body of Beau Solomon from the Tiber. The student from Spring Green, Wis., was last seen early Friday morning at a pub, shortly after arriving in Rome for an exchange program at John Cabot University, an English-language university in Rome.

From The Associated Press

Army metes out punishment to 10 in anthrax scandal

USA Today

WASHINGTON — The Army has disciplined 10 of 12 civilian and military personnel deemed responsible for the poor laboratory practices and the "culture of complacency" that led to the bungled shipments of deadly anthrax samples to 50 states and nine foreign countries.

The Army took action against nine of 10 civilians and one of two Army officers found

responsible last year for the lapses at the Dugway Proving Grounds lab in Utah. The Army did not disclose the nature of the discipline, citing privacy concerns, said Col. Pat Seiber, a spokesman.

The discipline was meted out in the last month, about five months after the Army issued a harsh report on lab practices and poor oversight at Dugway.

Brig. Gen. William King, the most senior official found

responsible for the lapses, remains in command of the 20th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives command at Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland.

"Action is currently pending against Brig. Gen. King," Seiber said.

In January, senior Army officials said the discipline for those implicated could range from retraining to firing.

The Army's report on its in-

vestigation was unsparing in its criticism, although it did not attribute the errant shipments over a decade to an individual or group.

Instead, it found that leadership at Dugway "created conditions allowing a culture of complacency to flourish," according to the report. "As a result, laboratory personnel did not always follow rules, regulations and procedures.

Army reservist wins US pole vault title

Associated Press

EUGENE, Ore. — Army reservist Sam Kendricks now gets to represent his country in a whole new way.

On the Fourth of July, the second lieutenant captured the pole vault crown with a U.S. Track and Field Trials record jump that earned him an Olympic spot for Rio. He proudly waved around his red, white and blue flag — with a little extra vigor, too.

"I love to have the colors (of the flag) in my hands," Kendricks said. "I'm lucky and I'm very thankful for the grace to befall on me that I get to do this and compete for my country."

"My commitment to my country comes first and foremost."

It was a big day all around for the armed forces in the pole vault, with Air Force star Cale Simmons taking second. Logan Cunningham was third.

There were two other Air Force members in the field as well — Dylan Bell and Joey Uhle, who had a mishap with his pole when it snapped in the middle of one of his jumps. Uhle didn't clear a height.

"It messes with your mind a bit, throws you off your balance," Uhle said.

Kendricks was proud of his fellow servicemen.

"All great jumpers and serving their country on two fronts," Kendricks said.

The 23-year-old certainly didn't disappoint on this day as he cleared 19 feet, 4³/₄ inches to break the trials record set by Tim Mack in 2004. It just so happened that Mack was on the sideline and encouraging Kendricks to top his mark.

Later, Mack placed the gold medal around Kendricks' neck.

"The meet record was a by-product of a lot of great jumping," Kendricks said. "I was lucky enough to have a coach who had a plan."

For that, he gave thanks to his dad, who happens to double as Kendricks' coach. They hugged after he won.

"That was our goal, come out here and jump the bars like we did in practice," said Kendricks, a two-time NCAA champion at Mississippi who still trains in Oxford.

This was quite a contrast to four years ago at trials, when Kendricks showed up in Eugene ready to compete — but didn't. He boarded the plane with a spot in the field, but when he landed he was informed that, through some late additions, he was out.

Kendricks scrambled to buy a ticket and watched from the stands.

"I saw it as a blessing. It really allowed me to have a hard goal, not to be on the bubble again," Kendricks said. "An easy goal to set, but not necessarily easy to obtain when you don't know what future looks like. I made that promise, made stronger by fact I had to watch from

sidelines."

He was the clear favorite in this event, especially after taking second at the world indoor championships four months ago. What's more, he had the second-best vault in the world this season, only trailing Olympic champion Renaud Lavillenie of France.

The fans had his back, too.

"There's that thunder in your heart when you hear the crowd behind you, especially when you look around," Kendricks said. "It's funny, when you look to the left, you hear them right there in your ear, and then you look to your right and hear that clap, you get that double heartbeat action."

"It made me feel like everyone was behind me, and that's what I love about the pole vault. We get to be out there all day and you can really feel the crowd get behind you."

Montano trips in 800-meter final

Associated Press

EUGENE, Ore. — The first thing Alysia Montano thought was, "Get up. Get up."

By the time she finally did, everyone else was gone.

The 800-meter runner who has been victimized more than once by the unseemly side of her sport got the cruelest break of all at U.S. Track and Field Trials.

Cheated out of medal after medal by Russians who were later found to have been doping — including at the London Olympics four years ago — Montano saw her chance at an Olympic victory come up painfully short when she tripped over a competitor's feet while lining up her last charge in Monday night's final.

"It doesn't really settle in in that moment where you're thinking, 'This is it,'" Montano said about the split second when she hooked shoes with Brenda Martinez, who was stumbling after making contact with the leader and eventual runner-up, Ajee Wilson. "And then, you get up and they're really far away. Your heart breaks."

Montano did get up. She jogged a bit, then stopped, fell to her knees and began to wail as she kicked her foot to the ground in disgust. She got up again and ran to the finish line, then collapsed to her knees, put her head on the ground, looked skyward, clutched her right hand to her heart and let out a primal wail.

"All of a sudden, they came around the corner and she wasn't there," said her husband, Louis, who was watching from the side with their daughter, Linnea, who turns 2 next month. "It was heartbreaking."

Officials reviewed the tape and deemed the smashup a result of incidental contact. They did not disqualify anyone. Asked if she would protest, Montano replied: "What good would that do me?"

The woman who showed her devotion to the sport by running on this track two years ago when she was eight months pregnant made herself the poster child for all athletes who've been robbed over the past several years by what investigators say is a state-sponsored Russian system that encourages doping.

Montano finished either fourth or fifth at 2011 and 2013 world championships, and at the London Olympics, behind Russians who were later found to have cheated. She may get medals for those races someday.

Williams sisters into semis

Associated Press

LONDON — The Williams sisters could be headed for another meeting in a Grand Slam final.

Venus Williams made it back to the Wimbledon semifinals for the first time in seven years on Tuesday, while defending champion Serena Williams advanced to her 10th final four at the All England Club.

Mounting another title run at age 36, five-time champion Venus beat Yaroslava Shvedova of Kazakhstan 7-6 (5), 6-2, advancing to the semifinals for the first time since 2009 and first time at any major since the 2010 U.S. Open. "I love playing the game, I always have," the eighth-seeded Venus said. "When you're winning matches it makes it that much sweeter. I can't lie about that."

From 5-2 down in the tiebreaker, she ran off five straight points to take the first set, then rolled through the second set on No. 1 Court. She's one win away from returning to the Wimbledon final for the first time since 2009, where she lost to Serena.

"The wins and the losses they all lead to these big moments," Venus said. "You can't always have this big moment. If you're Serena Williams, I guess that happens a lot. As Venus Williams, this is an awesome day."

A short while later, Serena beat Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of Russia 6-4, 6-4 on Centre Court, finishing the match with a 123 mph ace, to extend her record in Wimbledon quarterfinals to 10-2.

Venus will next face No. 4 Angelique Kerber, the Australian Open champion who held off No. 5 Simona Halep 7-5, 7-6 (2) in the first match on Centre Court, a defensive battle that featured 13 breaks of serve, including eight in a row in the first set.

Serena will play Elena Vesnina, a 50th-ranked Russian who defeated Dominika Cibulkova 6-2, 6-2, becoming the first unseeded women's semifinalist at Wimbledon since 2010.

Asked about the possibility of meeting her sister and doubles partner in Saturday's final, Serena smiled.

"It would be great," she said. "Obviously, she's such a tough opponent. But I want her to win so bad — obviously not in the final if I'm there. But, if I'm not there, I desperately want her to win."

Serena leads 16-11 overall and 4-2 at Wimbledon against her sister. Venus beat Serena in the 2000 semifinals en route to her first title and again in the 2008 final. Serena has beaten Venus in the 2002, '03 and '09 finals, and in the

fourth round last year.

Venus Williams, the oldest player in the women's field, has made a remarkable resurgence in her 19th appearance at Wimbledon. She was already the oldest player to advance to a Grand Slam quarterfinal since Martina Navratilova made it this far at Wimbledon in 1994 at the age of 37.

Venus, who also won Wimbledon titles in 2001, '05 and '07, has been slowed in recent years by Sjogren's syndrome, a condition that can cause joint pain and saps energy.

On Tuesday, Shvedova — a 96th-ranked player from Kazakhstan contesting her third Grand Slam quarterfinal — saved a set point against Williams with a forehand winner while serving at 5-4 in the first set. Shvedova then went up 5-2 in the tiebreaker, but stalled as Williams rallied to take command.

"What a day it was against an opponent who was just on fire," Williams said.

Kerber has a 3-2 career edge against Venus, but they haven't faced each other since 2014. The German won in straight sets on grass at Wimbledon at the 2012 London Olympics, and captured her first major this year in Australia.

"We've had a lot of great matches, she and I. We haven't played in a while," Williams said. "Clearly, she's had a great year, another great result in the Slam. I would love to be walking toward the final, and progress made today."

Serena never faced a break point Tuesday, winning the last three games of each set to extend her record against Pavlyuchenkova to 6-0. She will go into the semifinals with a 4-0 record against Vesnina.

Cibulkova seemed to run out of energy after her long fourth-round win, which went to 9-7 in the third set against Agnieszka Radwanska. Her loss to Vesnina means Cibulkova can proceed with her wedding on Saturday — she had planned to postpone the ceremony had she won on Tuesday.

In the completion of a fourth-round men's match suspended by darkness on Monday at one set apiece, No. 10 Tomas Berdych overcame Czech countryman Jiri Vesely 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (8), 6-7 (9), 6-3.

Berdych, the 2010 Wimbledon runner-up, will play Lucas Pouille of France in Wednesday's men's quarterfinals.



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Hot bats lead Red Sox to rout

Associated Press

BOSTON — The ball was bouncing around Fenway Park for the Red Sox. It even bounced out when they needed it.

Brock Holt hit a two-run homer that hit the top of Boston's bullpen and fell in, Sandy Leon had four hits with three of a season-high nine doubles, and the Red Sox beat the Texas Rangers 12-5 Monday.

Mookie Betts hit a two-run homer, and Travis Shaw and Dustin Pedroia each added a solo homer as Boston banged out 13 extra-base hits.

The Red Sox fell into an early 4-0 hole before taking the lead on Holt's two-run shot that capped a four-run third inning.

The left fielder said he took some razzing in the dugout, but joked that his drive counted as much as if he hit one where former Red Sox player and Hall of Famer Ted Williams was reported to have hit the longest drive ever in Fenway Park — 502

feet away in right in 1946. It's marked by a red seat halfway up the bleachers.

"Yeah, when something like that happens people start poking fun," Holt said, breaking into a smile. "It counts the same as if I would have hit it to the red seat. As long as it gets out."

David Ortiz and Hanley Ramirez each had two doubles. The Red Sox had a season-high 21 hits to win their second straight after a 21-2 rout by the Los Angeles Angels.

"Setting aside the blowout game, we've been swinging the bat much better as the calendar has turned," Boston manager John Farrell said.

Rougned Odor hit a solo homer and two-run single for the Rangers, who have lost five of six.

Rick Porcello (10-2) overcame a rough first inning when he allowed four runs, improving to 7-0 in Fenway Park this season.

Nick Martinez (1-2) gave up six runs on 11 hits in 4¹/₃ innings.

"Momentum starts with the starting pitching," Rangers manager Jeff Bannister said. "Put four runs on the board early, we couldn't keep them from scoring. It was a tough day for Nick Martinez."

Porcello pitched six innings, giving up the four runs and 12 hits.

Trailing 4-1, Boston charged ahead with the four runs. Ortiz and Ramirez each hit run-scoring doubles before Holt's drive bounced out.

"Just trying to be too fine," Martinez said of his troubles.

Pedroia had an RBI single in the fifth and homered into the Green Monster seats two innings later, making it 9-4.

The Rangers jumped ahead 4-0 in the first when Odor hit his single, and Adrian Beltre and Jurickson Profar each had RBI singles.

NBA free agency moves fast and furious

Associated Press

MIAMI — The math is staggering, as everyone knew it would be. In the first 96 hours of free agency, NBA teams committed about \$3 billion toward contracts that can start becoming finalized later this week.

That's almost \$9,000 a second. Every second. For four days.

And for all the dominoes that fell between July 1 and July 4 — Kevin Durant leaving Oklahoma City for Golden State, Al Horford leaving Atlanta for Boston, Mike Conley staying in Memphis with what would be the richest contract in NBA history — there are still plenty of fireworks remaining, most notably what will LeBron James do with his next deal and if Dwyane Wade will stay in Miami or wear another team's uniform for the first time in his pro career.

As expected, the unexpected has reigned so far.

"The NBA and other businesses, they're not created equally," Thunder general manager Sam Presti said Monday, a few hours after Durant announced that he was taking a two-year deal with Golden State that would be worth \$54 million if he plays it out. There is a player option for the second season, the AP was told by a person familiar with the terms.

The league's about-to-kick-in \$24 billion television contract sparked a jump in the salary cap from \$70 million last season to just over \$94.1 million for the coming year, and that enormous increase created a market that was unpredictable.

Conley's deal will be worth \$153 million over five years. Joakim Noah is a two-time All-Star, a former All-NBA first-team player and a former defensive player of the year; he got four years and \$72 million from the New York Knicks. That's basically the same deal that Kent Bazemore — a career 6.4-point-per-game scorer — got to stay with the Atlanta Hawks.

Hassan Whiteside made about \$980,000 last year in Miami; he'll sign a contract that will call for him to make \$98 million over the next four seasons. And that might not even be the league's biggest right-place, right-time success story right now — with that distinction likely going to Whiteside's probably-soon-to-be-former teammate in Miami, guard Tyler Johnson.

A year ago at this time, Johnson went home from the Orlando summer league with a broken jaw and a partially guaranteed contract that left him with a most uncertain future. On Thursday, he'll sign an offer sheet with the Brooklyn Nets that will assure him of making \$50 million over the next four years and finally allow his mother to retire.

Master Sgt. Jennifer Johnson of the California Air National Guard's 129th Rescue Wing has shed a few tears in the last couple days. So has her son, undrafted two years ago out of Fresno State and who went from the D-League to the Heat to \$50 million (and Miami is almost certainly going to be unable to match the deal). When he got the numbers, Tyler Johnson was actually overcome by nausea.

Durant's departure for Golden State has been the major development so far, and it's tough to see anything topping that one — no matter what James or Wade decide to do. For all the billions spent elsewhere, the \$26 million or so that Durant will make next year figures to make a Warriors team that won a record 73 games this past regular season even more daunting.

Mets rally to top Marlins

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Chased early again, Matt Harvey took a seat in the Mets dugout after helping Miami to a 6-0 lead in the fourth inning, a white towel draped over his left shoulder, a despondent look on his face as he leaned forward and stared at the field.

"It wasn't fun being out there while I was," he said, "but it was obviously fun watching the team battle back like that."

And what a comeback it was. Travis d'Arnaud and Curtis Granderson started the revival with solo homers, Yoenis Cespedes hit a tiebreaking, two-run double off Fernando Rodney in the eighth and Jeurys Familia escaped trouble by inducing a game-ending double play. New York scored in every inning from the fourth through the eighth, spraying key hits like Fourth of July fireworks to beat the Marlins 8-6 Monday and extend its winning streak to five.

"These ones are special," rookie Brandon Nimmo said. "These ones take a lot of heart and a lot of grit."

Harvey tied his season high by allowing 11 hits in 3²/₃ innings and made a throwing error that led to three runs, but Erik Goedel, Logan Verrett, Hansel Robles, Jerry Blevins (3-0) and Familia combined for shutout relief. The Mets even overcame a pair of replay reviews overturning calls that originally went their way.

Down after losing three games at first-place Washington last week, New York followed its four-game sweep of the Chicago Cubs with its biggest comeback win since rallying from a 7-1, seventh-inning deficit to win 8-7 at the Nationals last Sept. 8, and the Mets closed within four games of the NL East leaders.

Indians 5, Tigers 3: Mike Napoli hit a tiebreaking two-run homer in the seventh inning and host Cleveland remained perfect in 10 games against Detroit this season.

Napoli hit an 0-1 pitch from Bruce Rondon (2-1) into the left-field bleachers, helping the Indians to their 12th straight win at home.

Giants 3, Rockies 1: Angel Pagan hit a two-run homer and Buster Posey also connected to back Jake Peavy as host San Francisco beat Colorado.

Peavy (5-7) struck out six over 6²/₃ innings to bounce back from his third-shortest outing of the season.

Nolan Arenado hit two doubles, but

the run-starved Rockies lost their sixth straight game and fourth in a row held to one or fewer runs.

Colorado loaded the bases in the second on Ryan Raburn's one-out double, a single by Mark Reynolds and Nick Hundley's walk before Peavy was called for a balk to force in the game's first run.

Pirates 4, Cardinals 2: Gregory Polanco homered twice and Jonathon Niese turned in his best start in almost a month to help Pittsburgh win its fifth straight — all on the road.

Polanco's two-run homer in the sixth inning off Carlos Martinez (7-6) put the Pirates ahead to stay 2-1. He added a solo shot in the eighth for the first two-homer game of his career.

Phillies 8, Braves 2: Jerad Eickhoff pitched neatly into the eighth inning, and Odubel Herrera and Maikel Franco each hit a two-run homer as host Philadelphia beat Atlanta.

Eickhoff (6-9) gave up two runs and five hits, striking out eight in 7²/₃ innings to win for the fourth time in five decisions.

After sweeping three games in Arizona and taking two of three from the defending World Series champion Royals, the Phillies didn't let up against the worst team in the NL.

Cubs 10, Reds 4: Kris Bryant hit his 24th home run before leaving with a bruised leg, Willson Contreras and Addison Russell also went deep, and host Chicago pounded struggling Cincinnati.

Contreras capped a three-run second with a solo drive off Cody Reed (0-3) that made it 6-0. Russell drove in three runs and scored two.

Blue Jays 6, Royals 2: Aaron Sanchez pitched eight innings to win his eighth straight decision, and Josh Donaldson and Darwin Barney each hit a two-run single in a four-run seventh inning to send Toronto past visiting Kansas City.

Troy Tulowitzki had two hits as the Blue Jays won a rematch of last year's AL Championship Series, which Kansas City took in six games.

Brewers 1, Nationals 0: Junior Guerra outpitched Max Scherzer, Martin Maldonado homered and Milwaukee defeated host Washington to snap a four-game losing streak.

Guerra (6-1) allowed two hits in 7¹/₃ innings while striking out seven and walking two. The 31-year-old rookie threw eight scoreless innings of two-hit ball in his previous start and has won three

straight.

Astros 2, Mariners 1: Lance McCullers struck out 10 in seven strong innings and George Springer homered for the second straight day to lift host Houston over Seattle.

McCullers (4-2), who missed his previous turn with a blister on his right index finger, allowed five hits and one run while matching his season high for strikeouts. Luke Gregerson pitched a perfect eighth and Will Harris did the same in the ninth for his eighth save.

White Sox 8, Yankees 2: Tim Anderson and Dioner Navarro each hit a two-run homer off CC Sabathia, helping James Shields and host Chicago beat New York.

Chicago had a string of 15 consecutive solo shots, matching a franchise record, before Anderson connected in the third inning to tie it at 2. Brett Lawrie hit a tie-breaking sacrifice fly in the fifth before Navarro belted his fifth homer.

Rays 4, Angels 2: Logan Morrison homered and drove in two runs to help struggling Tampa Bay end a four-game losing streak with a victory over visiting Los Angeles.

Matt Moore (5-5) allowed two runs over 6²/₃ innings, improving to 4-0 in his career against Los Angeles and handing the slumping Angels their 12th loss in 14 games.

Athletics 3, Twins 1: Coco Crisp snapped a seventh-inning tie with a two-run single, and Oakland stopped a four-game skid by beating host Minnesota.

Dodgers 7, Orioles 5: Corey Seager tripled and scored the tiebreaking run on Justin Turner's sacrifice fly in the seventh inning to lead host Los Angeles to its fifth straight victory.

Chase Utley had three hits and drove in two runs for the Dodgers, who have won 10 straight at home after rallying to claim the opener in just Baltimore's second regular-season trip to Dodger Stadium.

Padres 8, Diamondbacks 4: Derek Norris drove in three runs with a home run and a double before leaving with an injury and San Diego handed Arizona yet another home loss.