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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Army IG wants reforms to medal process

The Washington Post

The Army followed its rules while denying a Medal of Honor last year to a Green Beret soldier credited with staving off a brutal ambush in Afghanistan, according to a Defense Department Inspector General report released Wednesday. But it provides a glimpse into just how subjective decisions surrounding awards for valor can be.

The investigation examined the case of Army Sgt. 1st Class Earl Plumlee, who was recommended for the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for combat valor, for his role in repelling a Taliban attack Aug. 28, 2013, on Forward Operating Base Ghazni in eastern Afghanistan. Plumlee, a member of 1st Special Forces Group from Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington, is credited with killing several

attackers at point-blank range, using both small arms and hand grenades, as their suicide vests detonated.

The commander of Plumlee's task force nominated him for the Medal of Honor, and the recommendation was backed by senior battlefield commanders, including Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, then the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan. But in May 2015, Plumlee instead received a Silver Star, two levels below the Medal of Honor, drawing concerns from Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., and prompting Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter to request an inspector general investigation.

The Army Human Resources Command's awards branch received the Medal of Honor nomination in January 2014. The issue was taken up by the service's Senior Army Decora-

tions Board afterward, with two three-star generals and the top enlisted soldier in the service. Two of them recommended the Silver Star, while another saw the Distinguished Service Cross as more appropriate.

One of the voting members said his decision not to recommend the Medal of Honor came down in large part to one thing: Plumlee's rank. Then a staff sergeant, Plumlee was expected to be a leader once the Taliban attacked rather than "a private who would be seized by the moment and take extremely valorous and courageous action," the board member told the inspector general, according to the report.

Lt. Gen. James C. McConville, who had just taken over as the Army's deputy chief of staff for personnel, known as the "G-1," recommended a Medal of Honor for Plumlee.

McConville told the inspector

general that without Plumlee, enemy insurgents could have penetrated deep into the base.

The Silver Star recommendation received a positive recommendation from Gen. Raymond Odierno, then the Army chief of staff, and approval from then-Army Secretary John McHugh.

As part of its findings, the inspector general recommended that the Army consider developing a valor award eyewitness statement form that includes an "appropriate explanation of valor award criteria" and ask witnesses to provide enough facts and details about how a nominee's actions meet the standards required for an award. The IG also called for the Army to consider requiring that valor award recommendations include statements from all eyewitnesses.

It is not clear whether the Army will do so.

Most displaced Syrians in government areas

BY SLOBODAN LEKIC
Stars and Stripes

DAMASCUS, Syria — Syrians displaced by war and living in their own country are far greater in number than those fleeing to Europe, who have received the bulk of media attention in the past year.

International aid officials in Damascus say the civil war, now in its sixth year, has forced more than half of Syria's pre-war population of 23 million to leave their homes.

Although nobody has exact figures on the whereabouts of the internally displaced people, or IDPs, aid officials and non-governmental organizations say the vast majority have sought shelter in areas controlled by

the government of President Bashar Assad.

About 4.84 million Syrians have fled abroad since 2011, and 8.7 million are estimated to have been displaced within Syria, according to latest statistics released by the U.N. High Commission on Refugees. In 2016, the United Nations appealed for \$7.73 billion in vital new funding to help them.

Because many countries are now placing restrictions on the number of refugees who can enter their borders, thousands of vulnerable people have been left stranded within Syria. Many of those remaining are too poor to leave and depend heavily on international aid agencies.

Humanitarian aid groups say they are hard-pressed fi-

nancially to meet the needs of such large numbers of near-destitute people.

It has proved difficult for non-Islamic aid agencies to deliver food and medical supplies to some areas under opposition control because the pro-Western rebels are often intermingled with fighters from the Nusra Front, al-Qaida's Syrian affiliate.

Although regime security forces have lost control of large swaths of territory to opposition groups, including the al Qaida-affiliated Nusra Front and the extremist Islamic State, about three-quarters of the population still lives in regime-held territory.

Nearly 80 percent of those displaced by the war within

Syria have fled to government-held parts of the country, a European diplomat said.

Opposition sympathizers acknowledged that most Syrians preferred the government side but denied this was because they supported the regime.

Rami Abdurrahman, director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a British-based monitoring group widely regarded as favoring the opposition, said, "It is 100 percent true that the large majority of people who don't want to escape Syria go to the regime areas." But, he added: "These people don't care about politics. They just want to stay alive and opposition areas are not safe."

Militant leadership target of US drones

Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON—U.S. drone operators had been stalking the baby-faced British terrorist for days with infrared cameras and other sensors before the order came to kill him.

As night fell on April 25, a U.S. warplane dropped a guided bomb that obliterated the SUV occupied by Raphael Saihou Hostey, 23, near Mosul, the Islamic State group's stronghold in Iraq.

Hostey, a recruiter for the militants, was targeted by a U.S. military campaign that has singled out and killed more than 120 Islamic State leaders, commanders, propagandists, recruiters and other so-called high-value individuals so far this year, officials said.

The leadership attacks have picked up recently due to intelligence collected by special operations teams on night raids, from captured militants and from intercepted of email, cellphone and other communications.

The focus on the Islamic State group's command-and-control structure, including its recruitment and funding systems, has helped weaken the Sunni extremist group as Iraqi, Syrian and Kurdish forces press the militants on the battlefield.

The targeted killings are so well known that militants have built "counter-drone screens" of cardboard and plywood to hide leaders and fighters in parts of Raqqa, the group's declared capital in Syria. They also have belittled the attacks

as insignificant.

"America, do you think that victory comes by killing a commander or more?" a spokesman, Abu Mohammed Adnani, said in a recorded message released May 21. "We will not be deterred by your campaign, and you will not be victorious."

U.S. commanders tend to agree that killing the Islamic State group's leaders one by one won't end the war any more than killing Osama bin Laden in 2011 ended the terrorist threat from al-Qaida.

Lt. Gen. Robert P. Otto, Air Force chief of staff for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, said leadership strikes have only a short-term effect. Bombing the group's oil production sites and cash hoards have hurt the group

much more.

"From my observation, when we take [high-value individuals] off the battlefield, there is a temporary impact on operations and then the adversary appoints someone else in his place," Otto said.

"There has always been somebody else to move into those positions and the fight continues. We cannot kill our way out of this war," he said.

The campaign, run by Joint Special Operations Command in Fort Bragg, N.C., emerged from the "kill-capture operations" that were used against insurgents in the Iraq War and that were expanded in Afghanistan. The command refers to each confirmed kill as a "jackpot."

Ashford University students may lose their GI Bill benefits

BY ALEX HORTON
Stars and Stripes

SAN ANTONIO—More than 5,300 student veterans and their beneficiaries enrolled in online courses at Ashford University could be cut off from their GI Bill benefits next month, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The potential interruption of education benefits — including tuition, books and a living stipend — will go into effect for students entering any term after June 30 if the school's parent company, Bridgepoint Education, is denied or delayed approval from the California State Approving Agency for Veterans Education by that date.

VA looks to state agencies to approve higher education programs to receive access to GI Bill tuition payments. Iowa's Department of Education pulled their certification for Ashford after the university announced it would shutter its

brick-and-mortar university in Clinton, Iowa, according to filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Ashford recently shifted its headquarters to San Diego, where Bridgepoint is based.

The vast majority of Ashford's students using the GI Bill attend online classes, according to VA's school comparison website. Another group of about 5,000 student veterans and beneficiaries are not currently enrolled but took classes on or after Aug. 1, 2015, according to a VA spokesman. Those students could also be affected if they choose to enroll in future classes.

Seeking approval in California could prove challenging, as the company was subpoenaed by the California Attorney General's Office in 2013 following investigations into their financial aid and enrollment practices. The state investigation is ongoing, according to a spokeswoman for the attorney general there.

Clinton, Trump both work to unify respective parties

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The presidential race shifted to the nation's capital Friday, with Democrats executing a carefully orchestrated plan to unify their party around presumptive nominee Hillary Clinton.

Her likely general election rival, Donald Trump, continued his monthslong effort to win over the Republican base, with events wooing top donors and evangelical voters.

With the primary contests all but over, a series of top Democrats formally announced their support for Clinton, headlined by the glowing endorsement of President Barack Obama on Thursday.

Within hours, Vice President Joe Biden and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren joined that effort, signaling to many of Sanders' supporters that it's time to unite around the party's presumptive nominee. Clinton and Warren met privately for about an hour Friday morning at Clinton's home in Washing-

ton, intensifying speculation that the progressive stalwart may be tapped for the vice presidency.

"If you really want to electrify the base you've got to get somebody who's been speaking to the base and is going to turn the base out," said Rep. Keith Ellison, D-Minn., one of Sanders' top supporters in Congress. He said he and other progressives would be thrilled if Clinton tapped Warren for her ticket.

Democrats in Washington are eager to unite their party against Trump. Primary rival Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., who's vowed to take his political revolution to their national Democratic convention in July, has been stressing his determination to defeat Trump, perhaps signaling he may exit the race or at least shift his focus after the final primary election Tuesday in Washington.

On Friday, he retreated to his home in Burlington, Vt., to plot his next steps.

Warriors one win from repeat

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — The Golden State Warriors have won 88 games this season, when factoring in the regular season and the playoffs. That's another NBA record to add to their collection, one more than the Chicago Bulls totaled in their 1995-96 season.

It's unclear if the Warriors even noticed.

The next victory is the only one that really matters to them.

They're on the verge of successive championships, and their first opportunity to close out their record-setting season in the only acceptable manner is set for Monday on their home floor at Oracle Arena. The Warriors earned that right by coming into Cleveland and beating the Cavaliers 108-97 in Game 4 on Friday, a win that gave Golden State a commanding 3-1 lead in the series.

"It's going to be our biggest game of the year, obviously," two-time reigning NBA MVP Stephen Curry said. "We always talk about just because we're going home doesn't mean you can relax or take things for granted. You work all regular season to have home-court advantage, and this is a great opportunity for us, and we need to play with a sense of urgency and a sense of aggression."

In other words, exactly as they did in Game 4.

The Warriors seemed to have grown tired of questions about their star backcourt's ineffectiveness. Golden State set an NBA Finals record with 17 three-point-

ers on Friday, outscoring the Cavaliers by 33 points from beyond the arc. Curry, who didn't have as much as a 20-point game in any of the first three matchups in this series, had 38. Klay Thompson had 25, many of them coming at the biggest points in the game.

Here's an oddity: The Warriors shot 47 percent from three-point range, 36 percent from two-point range. Weird, but it was good enough. The Larry O'Brien Trophy will be flying cross-country to Oakland, Calif., on Saturday, and Golden State will have a chance to mess it up with joyous fingerprints and champagne baths Monday.

It's hard to win an NBA title, harder still to go back-to-back. Only six franchises in league history have pulled that trick off, Golden State in line to be the seventh.

On paper years from now, it'll seem like it was easy. They've only made it look that way.

It'll eventually be forgotten that this team spent half a season without head coach Steve Kerr because of back trouble, that Curry got hurt twice in the playoffs, that the Warriors trailed Oklahoma City 3-1 in the Western Conference finals, and were essentially left for dead in that series.

Only 10 teams in NBA history have rallied from 3-1 down, and the Warriors doing it has to remind the Cavaliers that it's possible.

Problem is, the Warriors doing it also has reminded them that it's possible. On Friday, they left Quicken Loans Arena for what they hope was the final time this season talking about playing with the

appropriate fear and respect that teams can carry into any closeout game.

"I've already told our guys Game 5 will be the hardest game of the series," Kerr said. "Every closeout game is difficult, but when you're at home, for a strange reason it's even more difficult. You've got, you know, everybody in your ear, you've got friends, you've got family who want to come to the game and want to discuss everything."

"We have to understand that this series is not over."

True, for a lot of reasons.

Foremost among them, the Cavaliers — who know no team has escaped a 3-1 hole in the NBA Finals — still have LeBron James.

His second ring in 2013 with Miami came when the Heat needed to win two elimination games in the Finals to oust the San Antonio Spurs in what became a dramatic seven-game matchup, highlighted by Ray Allen's overtime-forcing three-pointer with 5.2 seconds left in Game 6.

The chips are obviously stacked a lot higher against James this time.

"We've already got to take a flight home back anyways, so we might as well come home with a win and play on our home floor again," James said, not long after Cavs coach Tyronn Lue offered similar sentiments. "Being a confident bunch, we feel like the chips have been stacked up against us all year anyway."

Either way, the ending of this series will be historic.

Either Cleveland does something no team has done, or Golden State will repeat and be poised to become a dynasty.

Two more NBA stars won't go to Olympics

Associated Press

Russell Westbrook and James Harden chose staying home over going for gold.

And as the losses pile up, the U.S. Olympic basketball team has to hope it still has enough to win when it gets to Rio.

Days after Stephen Curry announced he wouldn't play, Westbrook and Harden pulled out Friday, further weakening a backcourt that was expected to be a U.S. strength.

Westbrook and Harden played for the U.S. when it won gold in the 2012 Olympics, and both had also won a world championship.

"I have been extremely blessed to wear the 'red, white, and blue' and to compete at the highest international level with the greatest players representing the greatest country in the world," Harden said in a statement released by the Houston Rockets. "I sincerely hope I'll earn an opportunity to represent Team USA again in the future."

Neither player gave a reason for his decision. USA Basketball chairman Jerry Colangelo said this week that every player who had pulled out so far, which includes forwards Anthony Davis, Blake Griffin and LaMarcus Aldridge, had done so because of injury.

But the Zika virus is also a concern in Brazil, which has been hit hard by the mosquito-borne virus that has been linked to severe birth defects and possible neurological problems in adults. Spain star Pau Gasol had recently said he was considering skipping the Olympics for that reason.

Andrew Wiggins also said Friday he wouldn't play for Canada, which needs to win a qualifying tournament in July to earn an Olympic berth. Instead, he wants to remain in Minnesota to prepare for the Timberwolves' first season under Tom Thibodeau. Thibodeau will be in Rio as an assistant to U.S. coach Mike Krzyzewski, but it's getting harder to figure out what players will be there.

But Colangelo knew there would be absences, which is why he assembled a pool of 31 players. He plans to pick the 12 bound for Brazil on June 27.

"When we select our players, it's going to be after a lot of water under the bridge," he said earlier this spring. "There may be a few more players who for whatever reasons decide to drop out. There may be an injury, there may be a surgery scheduled, there are a lot of factors that we've talked about, the variables, so they won't be part of that final 12."

"But we have until June, the end of June, to have done all of our due diligence. We'll know way before then who wants to play and who's committed, or who is on the fence."

LeBron, Cavs on ropes after latest loss

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — LeBron James said Game 4 was another "do-or-die" scenario for the Cleveland Cavaliers.

He can only hope he was wrong.

The NBA Finals have all but slipped away from James and the Cavaliers, an offensive disaster of a fourth quarter their undoing in what became a 108-97 loss to the Golden State Warriors in Game 4 on Friday night. Cleveland trails the series 3-1, a deficit that no team has ever overcome in the championship round.

Game 5 is Monday in Oakland, Calif., where the defending champion Warriors are 50-3 this season. If Cleveland is going to pull off this miracle, it'll need to win there twice.

So it's not over.

It only seems that way, and James' all-too-familiar June nightmare is one loss away from being officially complete — although he certainly didn't sound Friday night like the series was over.

"We feel like the chips have been stacked up against us all year anyway," James said.

This is James' seventh trip to the Finals, and barring the most improbable of comebacks this will be his fifth time watching someone else hoist the Larry

O'Brien Trophy. He'll likely be blamed for yet another setback, even though he's averaging 24.7 points, 11 rebounds and 9.3 assists in this series. He told the Cavaliers to follow his lead, took the blame when they fell behind 2-0 in the series, has tried to say and do all the right things.

The Warriors are one victory from denying him again. It went six games last year when the Cavaliers didn't have Kevin Love for the entirety of the series and Kyrie Irving for most of the matchup. This one could end in five even though Irving has played well for much of this matchup and Love returned to the lineup for Game 4 after missing essentially six quarters with a concussion.

"If you don't think we can win, don't get on the plane," Cavaliers coach Tyronn Lue said, when asked what the approach is now. "I just think we've got to come back anyway, so we might as well come back and play. We've got to come back to Cleveland, don't we?"

Cleveland was threatening to take control early in the third of Game 4, leading by eight. Less than 30 seconds later, the lead was down to two.

Stephen Curry three-pointer. Splash.

Klay Thompson three-pointer. Splash.

The Warriors suddenly had life. Cleveland's lead was 83-81 when James

scored with 10:21 left, and it was about seven minutes before the Cavaliers managed another field goal. A 12-1 run in the fourth put the Warriors on top for good, and that 11-point margin was the exact difference between the teams when time expired.

"I went with my best players in the fourth quarter ... and it didn't work," Lue said.

All James could do then was glumly slap hands with a few of his teammates, his face hardly showing any emotion. Fans started leaving long before the final horn, quite possibly for the final time this season.

Since the Cleveland Browns won their last football title in 1964 — the championship game wasn't even known as the Super Bowl then — Cleveland has experienced 147 NBA, NFL, MLB and NHL opening days with title dreams that ultimately were dashed. (Yes, an NHL team was briefly here.) Over that span, 56 franchises in the four biggest U.S. sports leagues have at least one championship.

James returned to Cleveland after four successful years in Miami to end that drought.

His summer might start Monday, the drought still there. For now, all James is thinking about is Game 5.



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Avila, White Sox help Sale get 10th win

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Alex Avila hit two of Chicago's season-high four home runs and the struggling White Sox beat Kansas City 7-5 on Friday night to give a shaky Chris Sale his major league-leading 10th win and the Royals their eight straight loss.

The defending champions matched their longest losing streak since May 2013, while the White Sox opened the weekend series with their second straight win after dropping 20 of 26.

Sale (10-2) pitched into the seventh and got the victory despite giving up a season-high three home runs — two solo drives to Eric Hosmer and one to Salvador Perez. But the White Sox also used the long ball to come out on top after beating Washington the previous night.

Avila came through with his first two homers since signing with Chicago in the offseason. He hit back-to-back solo drives with Brett Lawrie in the fourth and added a two-run shot in the sixth off Ian Kennedy (4-5) to make it 7-3.

Melky Cabrera also homered for Chicago.

Top prospect Tim Anderson added two hits for Chicago in his major league debut, including a double in his first at-bat, and scored a run. The promising shortstop was called up before the game to replace veteran Jimmy Rollins, who was designated for assignment. Those moves came a day after the White Sox let pitcher Mat Latos go and signed former AL MVP Justin Morneau — and less than a week after they acquired starter James Shields from San Diego.

Sale got the win after going 0-2 in his previous three starts even though he gave up 11 hits. He struck out eight and walked one.

Cardinals 9, Pirates 3 (12): Pitcher Adam Wainwright, pinch-hitting because his team was out of position players, hit a two-run, two-out double to spark a six-run 12th inning in visiting St. Louis' victory over Pittsburgh.

Wainwright batted for reliever Jonathan Broxton after Matt Carpenter drew a two-out walk from Juan Nicasio and Pirates manager Clint Hurdle decided to intentionally walk Aledys Diaz to bring up Broxton's spot in the order. Wainwright followed with a drive to the gap in left-center to score both runners. He is hitting .261 this season, going 6 for 23 with four doubles, one triple and one home run.

The Cardinals added four more runs. Matt Adams hit an RBI double to extend his hitting streak to 10 games and scored on Jhonny Peralta's single. Brandon Moss' two-run homer, his 14th, capped the outburst.

Dodgers 3, Giants 2: Clayton Kershaw (9-1) struck out 13 in eight innings, Justin

Turner hit a go-ahead homer in the ninth and visiting Los Angeles beat San Francisco.

Kershaw outdueled Johnny Cueto to improve to 7-0 over his last eight starts, and with 82 strikeouts to just three walks during that stretch since an April 26 loss to Miami. He is 3-0 in six road starts.

Turner hit a 2-1 pitch from Santiago Casilla (1-2) to left field to start the ninth and the Dodgers shaved a game off the Giants' NL West lead to pull within three — though both clubs know this race surely will be decided down the stretch.

Mariners 7, Rangers 5: Dae-Ho Lee hit two home runs, including a three-run blast off starter Derek Holland (5-5), and host Seattle beat Texas.

Hisashi Iwakuma (5-5) allowed three runs — all on solo home runs — over seven innings for Seattle. Steve Cishek earned a four-out save, his 14th of the season.

Lee gave the Mariners the early lead with a solo shot off Holland (5-5) in the second inning.

Nationals 9, Phillies 6: Stephen Strasburg (10-0) struck out 10 and won his 13th straight decision despite a rocky beginning, and host Washington overcame a four-run deficit to beat Philadelphia. The Nationals scored in five straight innings after trailing 4-0 in the third. Wilson Ramos, Stephen Drew and Danny Espinosa homered off Jeremy Hellickson (4-4), and Daniel Murphy drove in three runs.

Tommy Joseph homered twice for the Phillies. They have lost 11 of 14.

Strasburg labored early but finished strong, retiring the final 14 batters he faced after Joseph's two-run homer in the third. The right-hander allowed four runs, five hits with one walk over seven innings. Strasburg's winning streak, already a franchise record, matches the longest in D.C. baseball history since Walter Johnson won 13 in a row for the Washington Senators in 1924.

Yankees 4, Tigers 0: CC Sabathia (4-4) kept up his recent resurgence with seven sharp innings, Brett Gardner sparked another scoring burst and host New York beat Detroit for its fifth straight victory.

Carlos Beltran and Didi Gregorius each added two hits to help the Yankees (31-30) move over .500 for the first time since they were 4-3. The Tigers began a 10-game trip by losing for the second straight time following a five-game winning streak.

Sabathia gave up five singles, walked two and struck out four. He hasn't allowed more than two runs in his last six starts and left with a 2.28 ERA — his lowest after 10 starts or more in any season.

Blue Jays 4, Orioles 3 (10): Edwin Encarnacion homered in the 10th inning to help host Toronto snap Baltimore's winning streak at five.

Encarnacion hit an opposite field shot off Brad Brach (5-1) to begin the 10th and

end an 0-for-19 slump. Drew Storen (1-2) pitched one inning for the win.

Chris Davis hit a two-run homer and Jonathan Schoop added a solo blast for the Orioles.

Braves 5, Cubs 1: Bud Norris (2-7) pitched seven strong innings, Adonis Garcia and Tyler Flowers hit home runs and host Atlanta beat Jason Hammel (7-2) and Chicago.

Making his second start since returning to the rotation, Norris allowed one run on four hits and no walks with six strikeouts. He gave up only one hit in his last four innings.

Garcia and Flowers gave the weak-hitting Braves back-to-back homers for the first time this season. Garcia's homer off Hammel with one out in the second inning barely cleared the center-field wall. Flowers followed with a homer high over the left-field wall for a 2-0 lead.

Mets 2, Brewers 1 (11): Matt Reynolds drove home the go-ahead run in the 11th inning with a fielder's choice after a line hit off shortstop Jonathan Villar's glove, leading visiting New York past Milwaukee.

With the bases loaded, Reynolds hit a 1-0 slider from Blaine Boyer (1-1) on a line up the middle that glanced off Villar's glove. The deflection gave Asdrubal Cabrera enough time to dash home from third.

Jeury's Familia held the Brewers hitless in the bottom of the 11th for his major league-leading 21st save in 21 opportunities. Jerry Blevins (2-0) pitched a scoreless inning for the win.

Reds 2, Athletics 1: Adam Duvall doubled home the tying run in the seventh and scored on Sonny Gray's second wild pitch of the inning, rallying host Cincinnati past Oakland for its first interleague victory of the season.

The Reds had dropped their first seven interleague games and didn't manage a hit off Gray (3-6) through the first five innings. Gray let a 1-0 lead slip away in the seventh.

Brandon Phillips singled for Cincinnati's second hit and advanced on a wild pitch. Duvall doubled for the tying run, advanced on Eugenio Suarez's infield single, and scored on another errant throw by Gray, who leads the majors with 11 wild pitches.

Red Sox 8, Twins 1: Xander Bogaerts hit a three-run homer and matched his career high with four hits, Steven Wright (7-4) pitched into the eighth inning, and visiting Boston beat Minnesota.

Bogaerts opened the scoring with his homer in the fifth inning off Twins starter Tyler Duffey (2-5). Bogaerts' seventh homer of the season landed in the bullpen in left-center field for a 3-0 lead. The home run was one of 16 hits by the Red Sox.

Bogaerts' chance to homer was the result of Minnesota's inability to turn a

double play in the inning. Mookie Betts hit a grounder to third baseman Trevor Plouffe, who threw to second base. But Minnesota's Brian Dozier lost handle on the ball and couldn't make the throw to first.

Indians 6, Angels 2: Corey Kluber (6-6) pitched a three-hitter with eight strikeouts and Jason Kipnis had three hits in visiting Cleveland's victory over slumping Los Angeles.

Mike Napoli doubled home the first run in a four-run first inning for AL Central-leading Cleveland, which has won eight of 10 in June. The Indians led 6-1 in the second inning while chasing Hector Santiago (3-4), who got just four outs in his shortest start of the season.

Kluber started the game by giving up Escobar's double off the wall in center field, but Los Angeles' next 17 batters couldn't get a hit off the right-hander.

Padres 7, Rockies 5: Wil Myers hit a two-out, three-run homer in the ninth inning off closer Jake McGee (0-2), helping visiting San Diego rally past Colorado.

Myers lined a 3-2 fastball from McGee over the fence in center, capping a four-run inning.

Kevin Quackenbush (3-2) threw two innings for the win, and Fernando Rodney picked up his 12th save by retiring the Rockies in order to end the game.

Colorado's Nolan Arenado hit a two-run homer in the first for his NL-leading 19th of the season.

Marlins 8, Diamondbacks 6: Justin Bour hit a pinch-hit grand slam and visiting Miami overcame a four-run deficit to beat Arizona.

Bour's first career slam, and the first pinch-hit grand slam for the Marlins in 11 years, came off reliever Tyler Clippard and tied it at 5-5 during a seven-run seventh inning, erasing a solid outing by Arizona starter Patrick Corbin.

Clippard (2-3) walked the next two batters then Christian Yellich doubled down the left field line off lefty Zac Curtis, scoring both runners to put Miami up 7-5. Marcell Ozuna capped the outburst with an RBI single off reliever Jake Barrett to make it 8-5.

Rays 4, Astros 3: Steve Pearce had three hits and two RBIs in host Tampa Bay's victory over Houston.

Pearce had a two-run double in the first inning, and Logan Forsythe and Brad Miller drove in runs with two-out hits off Lance McCullers (3-2) in the second to give Matt Andriese (5-0) a four-run lead.

Houston rallied with three runs in the sixth, two on Jason Castro's homer that chased Andriese.

McCullers, who grew up in Tampa, allowed four runs and seven hits in six innings.

Alex Colome pitched the ninth for his 18th save.

Penguins goalie Murray confident heading into Game 6

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Matt Murray's slender frame has spent the past two months seemingly impervious to the increasingly massive weight on his shoulders.

Until Thursday. Skating onto the ice at Consol Energy Center with a chance to help the Pittsburgh Penguins raise the franchise's fourth Stanley Cup, the enormity of the moment — however briefly — may have gotten the best of the 22-year-old rookie.

Murray used phrases like "a little bit jittery" and "a little bit nervous" to describe

the opening minutes of Pittsburgh's 4-2 loss to San Jose in Game 5, a stretch when he allowed three goals on five shots as the Sharks earned a return trip to the West Coast for Game 6 on Sunday night thanks to 44 saves from goaltender Martin Jones.

"As a team we really settled down after a tough start but we came back and stayed resilient," Murray said. "We played the way we needed to to win the game but their goalie stood on his head."

Something Murray has done at times during Pittsburgh's run to the final, particularly after a rare bumpy patch. He

has yet to drop consecutive starts during the playoffs, going 5-0 with a 1.76 goals against average in games following a loss. Having a team peaking in front of him — one that doesn't think twice about stepping in front of shots before they ever make it to Murray — helps. So does Murray's healthy self-confidence.

Murray knows he's at a portion of the season where being OK won't be good enough. In the big picture, he has a very real shot at capturing the Conn Smythe Trophy given to the playoff MVP. His 14 wins during the postseason are one away from the NHL record for victories by a

rookie.

Still, it's not the number of goals Murray is giving up but the nature of them that's a bit problematic.

There was Joel Ward's breakaway slap shot from the slot in Game 3 that set the stage for Joonas Donskoi's wrist shot from in overtime that gave the Sharks life. There was Brent Burns' opening goal on Thursday, a score that in some ways mirrored Donskoi's winner, zipping past Murray's right shoulder. There was Melker Karlsson's flip late in the first period that went through the same hole between left pad and his glove that Ward found.