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Is high military suicide rate 'new normal'?

USA Today

Seven years after the rate of suicides by soldiers more than doubled, the Army has failed to reduce the tragic pace of self-destruction, and experts worry the problem is a "new normal."

"It's very clear that nothing that the Army has done has resulted in the suicide rates coming down," said Carl Castro, a psychologist who retired from the Army in 2013, when he was a colonel overseeing behavioral health research programs.

The sharp rise in the Army's suicide rate from 2004 through 2009 coincided with unusually heavy demands on the nation's all-volunteer military, as hundreds of thousands of troops, most of them in the Army, deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. The vast majority have since come home, but suicide rates remain stubbornly high.

The Army's suicide rate for active-duty soldiers averaged

nearly 11-per-100,000 from Sept. 11, 2001, until shortly after the Iraq invasion in 2004. It more than doubled over the next five years, and, with the exception of a spike in 2012, has remained largely constant at 24-to-25-per-100,000, roughly 20 to 25 percent higher than a civilian population of the same age and gender makeup as the military.

Since the Army is the largest service branch in the military, the Pentagon suicide statistics reflected a similar increase.

"Seven years of relative stability at these profoundly higher rates may well be the new normal," said David Rudd, president of the University of Memphis, who served on a panel of scientists that reviewed military mental health programs and issued a critical report in 2014.

Rudd worries that a sense of heightened concern that gripped Congress and the Army

when military suicides spiked has dissipated. "You don't see any significant outrage about it now," he said.

The Army used to post suicide statistics promptly each month, but data is now published by the Pentagon each quarter and often is delayed for months.

"I do think there is a sort of creeping mindset of, 'Well, this is just how it is now,' " said Craig Bryan, executive director of the National Center for Veterans Studies at the University of Utah. "The sense of urgency about this problem has started to fade away."

Scientists still don't know exactly why suicides increased so dramatically in the military. Major studies have shown no direct link between the deaths and being deployed overseas, and suicide increased even among soldiers who did not deploy.

Many experts remain certain that combat is a crucial factor of suicide, and that after 9/11, the

Army came under enormous pressure. Scientists argue that deployment does not always equate to combat. Many troops are sent to non-combat zones or serve on large bases with little exposure to violence.

Some say lower suicide rates in the military before wars in Iraq and Afghanistan made sense. Soldiers, in a period of peace, have advantages that should make them less susceptible to self-destructive urges. Unlike many civilian peers, soldiers have jobs, health insurance, stability, a sense of purpose and are screened for mental and physical issues before entering the military.

Pentagon officials say that is changing. Adam Walsh, director of research and program evaluation for the Defense Suicide Prevention Office, said a series of new programs enhancing peer support, suicide prevention training and interventions are being evaluated.

NATO to supply forces to Afghanistan next year

Stars and Stripes

NATO will continue to deploy troops to military hubs across Afghanistan into 2017 as part of an extended training mission that will ensure an alliance presence, NATO's top official said Wednesday.

"We will have a flexible regional approach, meaning we will be in Kabul but also out in the different regions," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday after two days of high-level talks in Brussels with the alliance's 28 defense ministers.

The decision to keep a "hub and spoke" style presence — as President Barack Obama weighs whether to move forward with a planned draw-

down later this year — offers allies more flexibility as the alliance presses forward with a train and advise mission in the country.

While NATO had already committed to extend its 15-year presence in Afghanistan, it was expected that it would pull forces from regional bases into a centralized training center in Kabul in 2017.

In the year ahead, allies will determine precise troop levels, but several member states have already committed to the mission, Stoltenberg said.

Defense Secretary Ash Carter, who said Obama would be examining troop levels in the months ahead, welcomed NATO's decision.

U.S. plans still call for slashing the current American troop presence from 9,800 to 5,500 by the end of 2016, but concerns about gains by the Taliban mean those numbers could be altered.

NATO's decision to keep a wider footprint comes as Afghan forces suffer high casualties in their fight against the insurgents, who have proved resilient despite the international military campaign that started with the ouster of the Taliban regime in 2001.

Last week, the White House granted more flexibility to U.S. forces on the ground, authorizing troops formally on a training mission to take part in combat operations as needed.

In Brussels, allies also examined ways to contribute more to the U.S.-led campaign against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria. Areas of focus include the potential for a larger NATO role when it comes to training Iraqi forces as well as providing logistical support as Iraqi units move against Islamic State strongholds.

The military alliance also will consider how it can provide direct support to the U.S. coalition with AWACS surveillance aircraft.

In Warsaw, allies are expected to decide on an expanded training mission for the Iraqi military inside Iraq, one that would build on a current effort in neighboring Jordan.

Alligator drags toddler into lake near resort

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Wildlife officials pulled four alligators from a lagoon at Walt Disney World after a 2-year-old boy was dragged into the water by an alligator near the upscale Grand Floridian Resort & Spa as his father frantically tried to rescue his son.

Meanwhile, Disney closed beaches Wednesday at their resorts “in an abundance of caution,” divers remained on standby and stunned summer visitors to the Magic Kingdom waited to hear news of efforts to find the child.

The family of five from Nebraska was on vacation and wading in the Seven Seas Lagoon about 9:20 p.m. Tuesday when the child was taken from an area where “no swimming” signs are posted. The alligator was estimated to be between 4 feet and 7 feet long, Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings told a news conference early Wednesday.

From The Associated Press

Officials track killer's moves before Orlando bar rampage

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Omar Mateen drove around the Orlando area the night before the nightclub massacre, visiting several places, the mayor said Wednesday as investigators tried to piece together the killer's movements and zeroed in on how much his wife may have known about the plot.

An official who was briefed on the case but insisted on anonymity to discuss a continuing investigation said authorities believe the wife, Noor Salman, knew ahead of time about the attack that left 49 victims dead, but they are reluctant to charge her on that basis alone. Investigators have spoken extensively with her and are working to establish whether she recently accompanied Mateen to the

Pulse club, said a second official who was not authorized to discuss the case publicly. The official said investigators have not ruled out charging others.

The FBI has recovered Mateen's phone and will use location data to verify whether he previously visited the club, the official said. Orlando is nearly a two-hour drive from Mateen's home in Fort Pierce, Fla.

Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer said Mateen drove around on Saturday night before he opened fire at the gay nightclub about 2 a.m. Sunday in an attack that ended with the 29-year-old American-born Muslim being killed by a SWAT team.

When asked exactly where Mateen visited, and whether the locations included theme parks as reported in news ac-

counts, the mayor said, “I think it's been pretty accurately depicted on the news.” He gave no further details.

In other developments, Florida documents obtained by The Associated Press under open-records laws show Mateen passed a psychological evaluation in 2007 as part of his application to be a private security guard. Mateen was determined to be mentally and emotionally stable so that he could work for Wackenhut Corp., later renamed G4S Secure Solutions. The records say he took a written psychological test or was evaluated by a psychologist or psychiatrist. He also stated in his 2007 firearm application that he had not been diagnosed with a mental illness and had no history of alcohol or substance abuse.

Ex-SEAL beats Virginia lawmaker in primary

The chairman of a House subcommittee overseeing the U.S. Navy lost a Republican primary contest Tuesday to a former Navy SEAL who painted the veteran lawmaker as a Washington insider and “cowardly” political opportunist.

U.S. Rep. Randy Forbes, a 15-year House veteran and a senior member of the House Armed Services Committee, has been a leading voice in Congress on defense and national security issues.

As chairman of the subcommittee on Seapower and Force Projection, he led a markup of the National Defense Authorization Act that would add \$2.3 billion in funds for Navy shipbuilding, raising spending to levels unseen since 1988.

Forbes became the first political casualty of a newly redrawn Virginia congressional map. Forbes was set for an easy re-election bid in his home district, the 4th Congressional

District until a panel of federal judges ordered the state's congressional boundaries redrawn in a way that made the district far friendlier to Democrats.

Rather than seek re-election in his home district, Forbes opted to run in the neighboring 2nd District, after incumbent Rep. Scott Rigell announced his retirement. The district includes much of the defense-heavy Hampton Roads area, including the Norfolk Naval Base, the largest naval base in the world.

But Forbes was defeated Tuesday by Scott Taylor, 36, a state House delegate and former Navy SEAL. The decision to run in the new district opened Forbes up to fierce criticism from Taylor, who called Forbes a political opportunist who was acting “cowardly” by running in a supposedly easier district.

Taylor is set to face Democrat Shaun Brown, who said she's hoping to be the first black woman from Virginia to serve in the House.

From staff and wire reports

Chinese intel ship in Japanese waters

A Chinese intelligence ship entered Japanese territorial waters Wednesday morning, one day after the U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet commander reportedly discussed tensions in the East China Sea with Japanese officials.

The Chinese Dong Diao-class intelligence ship spotted near Kuchinoerabi Island, in southern Japan, is believed to have been monitoring the annual Malabar exercise, a trilateral sea drill including the United States, Japan and India, a Japan Defense Ministry spokesman said Wednesday.

The Chinese vessel “followed Indian ships that were participating in this training and traveling in Japanese waters,” Defense Minister Gen Nakatani said, according to a ministry spokesman.

The Chinese ship also observed the U.S. Navy aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis, a Japanese official told Reuters,

though it was unclear whether that observation occurred in international waters.

Chinese monitoring of U.S. carriers isn't unusual. For example, a Chinese intelligence ship observed the USS George Washington during the Valiant Shield exercise in international waters off Guam in 2014.

The incursion on Wednesday came after a Chinese frigate sailed Thursday within a contiguous zone just outside the territorial waters of the Japan-administered Senkaku Islands, which China claims as its own. Japan protested the Senkaku operation by summoning China's ambassador at 2 a.m. as it occurred.

The Japan Foreign Ministry lodged a complaint Wednesday with the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo over the most recent activity. On Tuesday, Pacific Fleet Adm. Scott Swift met with Nakatani in Tokyo, where the two spoke about maintaining regional stability, according to media reports.

From staff reports

Spieth confident about Open

Associated Press

OAKMONT, Pa. — Jordan Spieth feels confident about his game, typical talk from most top players going into a major.

Unlike so many others at this U.S. Open, however, Spieth speaks from experience.

Not since Tiger Woods a decade ago has anyone had this kind of run in golf's biggest events. From the time he missed the cut at Valhalla in the 2014 PGA Championship, Spieth has not finished worse than fourth in his last five majors. He won the Masters and U.S. Open, missed a playoff at the British Open by one shot, was runner-up at the PGA Championship, and he tied for second at this year's Masters.

He made it sound Monday as though form were secondary to sheer belief.

"Is my game always (good) ... no," he said, answering his own question before he finished it. "The Masters this year, tee to green, I felt much worse than I did at events where I finished 25th at a tour event. But because I just felt that we were ready and that we could do it and I could draw on past experience — especially at that event — we got into contention. I willed the putts in."

"I couldn't really describe it to you other than it just being kind of a mental state of being confident at the majors."

Such streaks are rare. In the last 60 years, only Jack Nicklaus (three times), Woods (twice) and Arnold Palmer have gone at least five straight majors in the top five. Nicklaus went seven straight majors from the 1971 PGA Championship through the 1972 British

Open, while Woods' longest stretch of top 5s was six majors from the 1999 PGA Championship through the 2001 Masters. He won five of those six majors.

Whether the 22-year-old Texan can extend his streak depends largely on Oakmont.

The course has lived up to its reputation as the toughest championship test in golf over the last couple of days of dry weather. Spieth was among those who predicted no one will finish the week under par, as was the case in 2007 at Oakmont when Angel Cabrera won at 5-over 285.

Rain could change that. But rain won't make the rough shrink.

The density of the grass is as fearsome as the speed of the greens. Graeme McDowell had a bet with his caddie on Sunday in which the former U.S. Open champion would get \$30 for every birdie, and he would lose \$10 for every bogey. He played the back nine and lost \$50.

The wind was so strong Sunday that Spieth said he would have shot somewhere around 75 or 76 at best, and he would have been happy with it.

"But today, with less wind, I thought that it was more playable," he said. "Still extremely challenging, where par is a great score, but I thought if you hit the ball where you were looking you could have birdie opportunities on quite a few holes. At the same time ... I'd sign for even par. I don't think anyone is going to be in the red come 72 holes. So it will be a challenge. But I'm looking forward to it."

Spieth is coming off a stretch of playing four straight weeks, with one very important tournament.

He missed the cut at The Players Championship, his first tournament back since losing a five-shot lead on the back nine at the Masters. He lost a good chance to win in his hometown at the AT&T Byron Nelson when he shot 74 in the final round. The important week was Colonial, where Spieth birdied his last three holes to win. He started well at the Memorial until fading badly on the weekend, but that win in Texas was big for his morale.

And it eased some of the sting from Augusta.

"That was a huge week for us, especially to win before any of the next majors," he said. "If we can get ourselves in contention here, I can draw back on Colonial, what happened at the end there. I think it would have been that much harder."

The really hard part is winning at Oakmont — not just because it's Oakmont, but the history against him. Curtis Strange is the only player in the last 65 years to win the U.S. Open in back-to-back years. Strange won in 1988 and 1989.

No one has come particularly close, either. Retief Goosen was defending champion in 2005 and took a three-shot lead into the final round at Pinehurst No. 2 only to close with an 81 to finish eight shots behind.

Different about this major title defense is that Spieth doesn't go to a special locker room for champions. He doesn't have to host a dinner for past champions.

"It just honestly feels like a normal week that I got here earlier for and I'm preparing harder for," he said. "I feel very confident about my game right now. I wish the tournament started tomorrow."

Mindset concerns Klinsmann

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Jurgen Klinsmann wants a transformed mentality when the United States opens the knockout phase of the Copa America against Ecuador on Thursday.

"The whole old story is the underdog story, and I cannot hear that story anymore," the U.S. coach said. "I want to see them risk things. Let's go for it. Because if you're not going for it, sooner or later they're going to break you down."

After beating Paraguay 1-0 on Saturday despite playing nearly the entire second half a man down, the U.S. won Group A on goal difference over Colombia and advanced to a quarterfinal in Seattle. The Americans defeated Ecuador 1-0 in a May 25 exhibition on Darlington Nagbe's 90th-minute goal.

The Americans still can be timid at times against soccer powers. Although they have won exhibitions at Italy, Germany and the Netherlands in recent years, they struggled to maintain possession. And when the U.S. played Belgium in the second round of the 2014 World Cup, the Americans extended the game to extra time only because of goalkeeper Tim Howard's outstanding play.

Klinsmann won the 1990 World Cup with West Germany and the 1996 European Championship with Germany, spending 15 years with high-level clubs.

"Knockout stage is very mental driven," he said. "It's when you step on the field and you see certain jerseys, it's kind of sniffing at each other and saying: 'I'm ready for you.'"

Aside from the CONCACAF Gold Cup, the Americans' only knockout stage wins in competitive events have been over Mexico in the second round of the 2002 World Cup, against Spain in the semifinals of the 2009 Confederations Cup and over Mexico on penalty kicks in the 1995 Copa America quarterfinals.

They've lost World Cup knockout games against Brazil (1994), Germany (2002), Ghana (2010) and Belgium (2014), plus Confederations Cup semifinals versus Saudi Arabia (1992) and Mexico (1999) and a Copa America semifinal against Brazil (1995).

In the 2009 Confederations Cup final, they wasted a two-goal lead in a 3-2 loss to Brazil. (They're also 1-2 in Confederations Cup third-place matches.)

For the first time since the 1930 World Cup and only the second time ever, the U.S. has started the same 11 players in three consecutive games. That streak will end because right back DeAndre Yedlin is suspended after receiving two yellow cards in a 57-second span against Paraguay starting in the 47th minute.

Alejandro Bedoya, Michael Bradley, John Brooks, Fabian Johnson, Jermaine Jones, Michael Orozco and Bobby Wood have single yellow cards, and for each of them, another one Thursday would result in a suspension for the semifinal, should the U.S. advance. Orozco is likely to take Yedlin's spot on the back line.

Willett goes after 2nd leg of Grand Slam

Associated Press

OAKMONT, Pa. — More than five decades of history is enough to remind Masters champion Danny Willett that winning the calendar Grand Slam is unlikely.

He only needs to look back one year to at least think about the possibilities.

Jordan Spieth followed up his Masters victory a year ago by winning the U.S. Open at Chambers Bay, making him only the fourth player since 1960 to get halfway to the Slam, which is winning all four majors in one year. His hopes ended when he missed the playoff at the British Open by one shot.

"I mean, what Jordan did last year was awesome," Willett said Tuesday. "You look at the strength of the field and it would be fantastic to even be somewhere thereabouts come Sunday. We're just going to have to play golf and see what happens. Hopefully, we can be somewhere there and get a little bit of a feeling for it."

Spieth had a slight advantage last year being at Chambers Bay, where he tried to qualify for the U.S. Amateur and where his caddie, Michael Greller, used to work in the summers when he wasn't teaching math.

Oakmont is entirely different, a course that is demanding from tee-to-green

with the thickest rough of the year, deep bunkers and the reputation for the fastest greens in golf. Willett referred to it as "great fun," mainly because of the different options to play various holes.

"The only thing I say around this place is you're probably not going to see a ton of birdies," Willett said. "It's going to be a lot of pars and trying to limit your mistakes to when you do get out of position. So hopefully, we can keep it in the fairways and keep it on the greens and make life as stress-free as possible."

Whatever stress there is off the golf course is starting to subside.

Willett, who played on the Walker Cup team with Rory McIlroy in 2007, had been slowly rising to become one of golf's elite players when he closed with a 5-under 67 and overcame a faltering Spieth on the back nine at Augusta National to win his first major.

His first child was born 11 days earlier. He got more attention than he has ever received. He took a month off to adjust to his new life on and off the golf course and didn't take long to get back on form. He finished third in the BMW PGA Championship at Wentworth in his most recent start.

The euphoria of having a green jacket hasn't worn off.

"I don't think it will for a while. It's still

a great achievement," he said. "It doesn't mean you don't get home and you don't work hard, you don't practice, you don't train. We had a few weeks celebrating and stuff. ... But there is now another job at hand, and that's trying to get as well prepared as we can for this week."

As for that calendar Grand Slam? Willett said he was surprised no one has ever won the Masters, the U.S. Open, the British Open and the PGA Championship in the same calendar year.

The modern slam dates to 1960 when Arnold Palmer raised the idea after winning the Masters and U.S. Open. He finished one shot behind at the British Open. Jack Nicklaus got halfway home in 1972 until he finished one shot behind at the British Open. Tiger Woods dominated the Masters and U.S. Open in 2002, only to get caught in bad weather at Muirfield on his way to an 81 in the third round to lose his bid.

"You can't look at it as a whole," Willett said. "It is quite funny because running up to this week, you are the only guy that can do it in the same year. But, again, that's not to say you're not going to win the Masters again and have another chance to do it a few more times in your career. It's just nice that we have got that chance. What comes of that? You don't really know."



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Taillon, Bucs blank Mets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jameson Taillon was almost untouchable in his second major league start.

Pittsburgh's touted rookie took a no-hit bid into the seventh inning, dominating the New York Mets while pitching the Pirates to a 4-0 victory that snapped their five-game losing streak Tuesday night.

"The kid's special," Pittsburgh catcher Chris Stewart said. "I think this is just the beginning."

Jung Ho Kang and Starling Marte each hit a two-run homer for the Pirates, backing eight efficient innings of two-hit ball from Taillon.

One of baseball's top pitching prospects, the sturdy right-hander from Texas held New York hitless until Curtis Granderson grounded a leadoff single in the seventh, squeezing it through the shift between two diving infielders on the outfield grass.

Taillon never wavered, though, and promptly got slugger Yoenis Cespedes to ground sharply into a double play.

"I was pretty locked in," Taillon said.

"Once I gave up the hit, I felt like I kept my emotions in check."

Taillon (1-0) was recalled from the minors before the game when Pittsburgh put ace Gerrit Cole on the 15-day disabled list with a strained right triceps. The 6-foot-5, 240-pound Taillon certainly showed what all the fuss is about, outpitching All-Star Jacob deGrom (3-3) in a rematch with the defending NL champions.

"It's a big shot in the arm," Pirates manager Clint Hurdle said. "Very impressive outing."

The second overall pick in the 2010 amateur draft, the 24-year-old Taillon sat out the past two seasons while recovering from Tommy John surgery and a sports hernia operation. He made his long-awaited big league debut last Wednesday in Pittsburgh against the Mets, allowing three runs and six hits over six innings.

The Pirates lost 6-5 in 10 innings, ending their nine-game winning streak over the Mets, and Taillon was optioned back to Triple-A Indianapolis the following day.

"A long journey. A lot different than I could have imagined, but I'm here now and I never lost confidence," Taillon said.

Back in the big leagues less than a week after his debut, Taillon commanded his 95 mph moving fastball and sharp curve to win the opener of a three-game series between 2015 playoff teams.

"Threw more two-seamers probably than the other night," said Mets manager Terry Collins, who was back on the bench and feeling better after missing Sunday's loss at Milwaukee, where he spent a night in the hospital. "You saw he got his breaking ball over consistently for strikes. When he got ahead, he expanded the strike zone. So, he pitched like a big leaguer."

Taillon said he was told Sunday in Indianapolis he was going to start two days later at Citi Field, where Pittsburgh has now won eight of its past 10. Following that brief blip last week, the Pirates quickly got back to their winning ways against New York and stopped their longest skid of the season.

"It's been a whirlwind couple of days for me," said Taillon, given a keepsake lineup card to go with his souvenir game ball that got stained when he was doused with Gatorade.

Warriors confident despite loss

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Stephen Curry sat on the bench and buried his head in his hand. Fellow Splash Brother Klay Thompson wrapped a towel around his face.

This was misery for the Warriors and their fired-up fans, who made for the exits early during Monday's 112-97 NBA Finals loss to the Cavaliers that sent the series back to Cleveland for a Game 6 on Thursday night.

They wanted so badly to do it for Draymond Green, do it for each other, and for their home crowd this time.

Instead, Golden State is going to Ohio again. One flight the Warriors surely would have preferred not to take at this road-weary stage of another extra-long season, but it will be well worth it if they hoist a second straight trophy when these NBA Finals finally end.

Their "Strength in Numbers" mantra was tested once more in a game that mattered so much. The Warriors lost at home for only the second time this postseason and fourth overall.

Yet there's no panic now for the defending champions after LeBron James and the Cavs forced at least one more game in what has become quite the testy rematch. The Warriors lead the series 3-2 and still have the upper hand.

"We're all disappointed. We want to win," guard Shaun Livingston said. "With the stakes being what they are right now, obviously it's a gut punch. But it's the Finals. It's not going to be easy. They're not going to lay down. It doesn't matter who's on the court. We've got to play."

Golden State will get a boost having emotional leader and All-Star forward Green back after he sat out Game 5 serving a suspension for a Game 4 swipe at James' groin.

While Green returns for Game 6, the Warriors might be down big man Andrew Bogut. The 7-foot center sprained his left knee early in the third quarter Monday and traveled with the team to Cleveland after undergoing further tests. An update on his status was planned for Wednesday, team spokesman Raymond Ridder said.

Bogut has been an imposing presence with his shot-blocking ability, but the Warriors have some depth at the position and often use a center-by-committee approach with Festus Ezeli and Marreese Speights among others such as Anderson Varejao getting regular opportunities to contribute.

"If there's a chance he's out Thursday, our bigs are just going to have to step up. Been doing it all year," Thompson said.

Defensively, the Warriors must find a way to keep James and Kyrie Irving from going off the way they did Monday, with each scoring 41 points.

Not that the always-confident Warriors are overly concerned. They are a group that bounced back from every rare loss during a record-setting, 73-win regular season. Golden State is 14-1 following a loss.

The Warriors are trying to close out the fifth championship in franchise history and third since moving out West from Philadelphia in 1962-63. Each of the last two since coming to the Bay Area have been clinched on the road — the first title in 40 years last June and also in 1975, when the Warriors won at Washington with a four-game sweep of the Bullets.

"It [stinks] that it happened tonight with the opportunity we had in front of us to close out a series at home in front of our home fans, and it's a tough feeling," Thompson said. "But you work hard in the series early to put ourselves in this position again on Thursday, and we'll be ready."

Cubs rally past Nats in ninth

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Albert Almora Jr. drove in the go-ahead run with a ninth-inning double, Dexter Fowler had two hits and the Chicago Cubs beat the Washington Nationals 4-3 on Tuesday night.

Addison Russell led off the ninth with a walk from Sammy Solis (1-2) and was sacrificed to second before Almora, who entered the game in the eighth inning, lined a shot to left center.

Jason Heyward provided a two-run single for Chicago, which evened the three-game series between division leaders.

Washington, which had won four straight, tied it in the eighth on a sacrifice fly by Anthony Rendon off closer Hector Rondon.

Rondon (1-1) pitched the final 1²/₃ innings for the win.

Orioles 3, Red Sox 2: Manny Machado hit a two-run home run, Chris Tillman (9-1) struck out seven and visiting Baltimore snapped a three-game losing streak with a victory over Boston.

Giants 3, Brewers 2: Madison Bumgarner (8-2) struck out eight over

eight innings to win his career-best seventh straight decision, Buster Posey had a season-high four hits and host San Francisco beat Milwaukee for its fourth straight victory.

Rangers 10, Athletics 6: Elvis Andrus, Ryan Rua and Robinson Chirinos homered to lead visiting Texas over Oakland.

Astros 5, Cardinals 2: Doug Fister (7-3) pitched effectively into the eighth inning and gave visiting Houston breathing room with a two-run single in a victory over St. Louis.

Rays 8, Mariners 7: Evan Longoria and Corey Dickerson had three RBIs apiece and host Tampa Bay rallied from an early four-run deficit to beat Seattle.

Royals 3, Indians 2: Salvador Perez hit a two-run homer with two outs in the eighth inning, and host Kansas City held on through a shaky ninth to beat Cleveland.

Tigers 11, White Sox 8: Justin Upton doubled, tripled and drove in four runs, J.D. Martinez had three of his team's season-high seven doubles and visiting Detroit this time held on to a big lead and beat skidding Chicago.

Dodgers 7, Diamondbacks 4: Chase Utley homered and had four RBIs, Joc Pederson hit two homers and visiting Los Angeles overcame Kenta Maeda's right leg injury to beat Arizona.

Rockies 13, Yankees 10: Carlos Gonzalez homered among his four hits, Trevor Story also went deep and drove in three runs and host Colorado beat New York.

Blue Jays 11, Phillies 3: Josh Donaldson hit a grand slam and finished with five RBIs, Edwin Encarnacion hit a two-run homer and host Toronto routed Philadelphia.

Angels 5, Twins 4: Johnny Giavotella hit a two-run homer, Kole Calhoun added a solo shot and doubled in another run and host Los Angeles beat Minnesota.

Marlins 5, Padres 2: Jeff Mathis hit a grand slam, Tom Koehler (5-6) pitched six quality innings and visiting Miami beat San Diego.

Reds 3, Braves 1: Jay Bruce had a three-run homer in the first, Brandon Finnegan (3-4) pitched six strong innings and visiting Cincinnati escaped a jam in the ninth to beat weak-hitting Atlanta.

Pistorius walks on stumps for defense

Associated Press

PRETORIA, South Africa — Oscar Pistorius walked on his stumps in a South African courtroom on Wednesday as part of his defense team's argument that the double-amputee athlete, convicted of murdering girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp, is a vulnerable man who deserves leniency when he is sentenced.

Defense lawyer Barry Roux asked Pistorius to remove his prostheses, and the former track star then hobbled in front of Judge Thokozile Masipa, who will deliver the sentence after hearings end this week. He appeared unsteady at times, and the demonstration drew gasps from some onlookers in the courtroom.

The former track star, who had changed from a suit into athletic clothes for the demonstration, then returned to a bench where he sat alone, head bowed.

Pistorius was on his stumps when he fatally shot Steenkamp through a toilet cubicle door in his home in 2013; he testified at his murder trial that he felt vulnerable and thought an intruder

was in the house. Prosecutors have said Pistorius intentionally killed Steenkamp after an argument.

Pistorius is currently living under house arrest after initially serving one year of a five-year prison sentence for manslaughter for shooting Steenkamp multiple times. That conviction was overturned last year by an appeals court, which convicted Pistorius of the more serious charge of murder.

Masipa, who initially acquitted Pistorius of murder, will announce Pistorius' sentence on July 6, she said at the end of three days of testimony and arguments in Pistorius' sentencing hearing.

Earlier Wednesday, defense lawyer Roux said it was not the "strong, ambitious" Pistorius, the Olympic runner and multiple Paralympic champion, who fired four shots that night. Rather, it was a disabled man standing on his stumps and in fear for his life, Roux argued.