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Navy shifts strategy with 'warfighting'

BY STEVEN BEARDSLEY

Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The Navy has spoken softly. Now it's reaching for the big stick.

After years of emphasizing global amity and cooperation across the seas, the service is

ANALYSIS

speaking more about combat power, the threat of "anti-access" technologies like cheap missiles, and the challenges posed by nations like China and Iran.

"Warfighting" has suddenly become the new buzzword across commands.

Friday's release of the new Maritime Strategy epitomizes the shift in message. The joint document was developed by the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard as an update to a 2007 strategy that focused on cooperation with foreign navies and generally avoided reference to confrontation.

Despite carrying the same title — "A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower" — the update moves in a different direction, identifying regional competitors and unstable regimes by name and detailing force deployment by theater.

The strategy elevates "domain access" — the ability to operate at will in a theater — alongside traditional naval goals of deterrence and forward presence. It includes

more about Marine Corps posture than in 2007, and it frames naval forces as forward-pressing instead of maintaining status quo.

"It is an appropriately harder-edged document," said Bryan McGrath, a former Navy officer who worked on the 2007 document and reviewed the new one before release. "The threat has clarified in a meaningful way."

A big part of that threat is financial. Current Navy plans call for more than 300 ships in the fleet by the early 2020s, about 20 more ships than the fleet currently operates. Just maintaining and replacing the current fleet is costly. The program to replace the Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine is expected to be too large to wedge into the Navy budget when the program begins in 2020.

What's more, budget cuts set to return in fiscal 2016 threaten to stop shipbuilding plans before they can begin unless Congress acts to overturn or offset them.

Global threats also appear to be on the rise compared with 2007, when the Navy was concerned with fostering foreign cooperation in the wake of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, said Robert Rubel, a former professor at the Naval War College who helped draft the original strategy document.

The result in 2007 was a much softer message that

framed the U.S. as on the strategic defensive, its goal not to assert itself militarily but to maintain a global world order that benefited many nations.

"We never named any names in there; we never called out any country. We added humanitarian assistance to the list of core capabilities of the Navy," Rubel said. "This rankled a lot of realists-slash-hawks in the Navy and elsewhere. But we felt this kind of language was necessary."

By the time Adm. Jonathan Greenert, chief of naval operations, called for a strategy update in 2011, the climate already had changed. Naval cooperation among nations had improved, but global power dynamics had shifted. China and Iran were asserting themselves as regional powers. Russia was newly assertive, having invaded Georgia in 2008. Affordable missile technology was challenging the assumptions of naval power projection by making access to shore more costly.

Naval strategists continued to push for a more detailed vision of naval power in the world. Rep. J. Randy Forbes, R-Va., chairman of the House Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee, wrote a letter to Greenert last July decrying the Navy's lack of strategy and encouraging him to speak openly of China's rise as a threat to U.S. interests.

"If this (document) had come

out and was as general as the last one, it would have been a failure," McGrath said.

It is instead far more detailed. While few, if any, of its statements are new, the document labors to place maritime strategy in the context of recent world events, from Russia's seizure of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula last March to the January terrorist attacks in Paris and the resurgence of the Boko Haram terrorist group in western Africa.

It names military hardware like warships and weapons systems and details Marine Corps efforts to scale unit size to mission in places like Africa and Australia. It argues that the sea services will embody the U.S. shift to the Pacific. Navy plans call for roughly 60 percent of ships and aircraft to be based in the Indian and Pacific oceans regions by 2020.

The strategy still emphasizes cooperation and maintenance of a shared global system. But the message this time, said Rubel, is intended more for Capitol Hill than foreign nations.

"It doesn't need to address the rest of the world," he said. "[The original] CS-21 took care of that. It needs to have an internal message."

The question is whether that message will resonate with Congress.

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Guardsmen killed in Fla. helo crash ID'd

NEW ORLEANS — The Louisiana National Guard on Monday identified the pilots and crew of a Black Hawk helicopter that crashed in the Santa Rosa Sound along Florida's

Panhandle in a nighttime training exercise in dense fog last week with seven elite Marines aboard. All 11 on the Black Hawk were killed when the helicopter crashed into about 25 feet of water in the channel of the sound.

Three members of the flight crew were from Louisiana and

one was from Virginia. Piloting the helicopter were Chief Warrant Officer George Wayne Griffin Jr., 37, of Delhi, and Chief Warrant Officer George David Strother, 44, of Alexandria. Both were decorated veteran pilots. Also killed were Staff Sgt. Lance Bergeron, 40, of Thibodaux and Staff Sgt.

Thomas Florich, of Fairfax, Va.

Military burials with full honors were being planned for the dead, said Maj. Gen. Glenn H. Curtis, the adjutant general of the Louisiana National Guard.

From The Associated Press

Man charged in shooting attended rally

The Associated Press

CLAYTON, Mo. — Authorities said a man charged in the shooting of two police officers in Ferguson during a demonstration had attended the protest earlier that night in the Missouri city.

Multiple activists said the suspect, Jeffrey Williams, 20, wasn't a consistent fixture in their tight-knit group.

Racial tensions are high in the city following the police killing of a black 18-year-old and a Justice Department report detailing bias within the police and judicial systems.

The police officers were shot early Thursday as a late-night demonstration began to break up following the resignation of Ferguson Police Chief Tom

Jackson in the wake of the Justice Department report.

St. Louis County Prosecutor Robert McCulloch said Sunday in announcing the charges that Williams told authorities he was firing at someone with whom he was in a dispute.

"We're not sure we completely buy that part of it," McCulloch said, adding that there might have been other people in a vehicle from which Williams is accused of firing.

Williams is charged with two counts of first-degree assault, one count of firing a weapon from a vehicle and three counts of armed criminal action.

Several activists who've been involved in the protests since the Aug. 9 fatal shooting of Michael Brown by a Ferguson po-

lice officer told The Associated Press they were not familiar with Williams.

The Ferguson police department has been a national focal point since Brown, who was unarmed, was killed by now-former police Officer Darren Wilson. A grand jury led by McCulloch declined to indict Wilson in November, and Wilson was cleared of civil rights charges by a Justice Department report released March 4.

But a separate Justice Department report found widespread racial bias in the city's policing and in a municipal court system driven by profit extracted from mostly black and low-income residents.

Six Ferguson officials, including Jackson, have resigned or

been fired since the federal report was released.

Williams used a handgun that matches the shell casings at the scene, McCulloch said. He also said tips from the public led to the arrest.

Brittany Ferrell, 26, a protest leader with the group Millennial Activists United, had just left a meeting with other leaders Sunday when word of the arrest circulated. She said no one in the group knew Williams, and they checked with other frequent protesters — who also hadn't heard of him.

Williams was on probation for receiving stolen property, McCulloch said.

The two officers were released from the hospital later Thursday.

Fighting severely damages Saddam's tomb

The Associated Press

OUJA, Iraq — The tomb of Iraq's late dictator, Saddam Hussein, was virtually leveled in heavy clashes between militants from the Islamic State group and Iraqi forces in a fight for control of the city of Tikrit.

Fighting intensified to the north and south of Saddam's hometown Sunday as Iraqi security forces vowed to reach

the center of Tikrit within 48 hours. Associated Press video from the village of Ouja, just south of Tikrit, shows all that remains of Saddam's once-lavish tomb are the support columns that held up the roof.

Poster-sized pictures of Saddam, which once covered the mausoleum, are now nowhere to be seen amid the mountains of concrete rubble. Instead, Shiite militia flags and photos

of militia leaders mark the predominantly Sunni village.

The extremist Islamic State group has controlled Tikrit since June, when it waged its lightning offensive that saw Mosul come under their control. The Islamic State was helped in its conquest of northern Iraq by Saddam loyalists who appealed to Sunnis who felt victimized by Baghdad's Shiite-dominated government.

Russia launches military drills

The Associated Press

MOSCOW — The Russian military on Monday launched sweeping military maneuvers in the Arctic and other areas, a show of force ordered by President Vladimir Putin amid spiraling tensions with the West over Ukraine.

The five-day Arctic drills involving 38,000 servicemen, more than 50 surface ships and submarines and 110 aircraft are intended to check the readiness of Russia's Northern Fleet and the military's ability to deploy additional forces from central Russia.

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said "the new challenges and military threats require further increase of the armed forces' capabilities."

The war games come as Russia-West ties are strained over the Ukrainian crisis; the West is also boosting its military preparedness.

The United States is planning to conduct joint exercises with forces from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania later this month.

Assad dismissive of Kerry remark on talks

The Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria — Syrian President Bashar Assad said Monday that only Syrians can decide his future — apparently dismissing Secretary of State John Kerry's remark that the U.S. would be willing to talk with Assad to help broker a political resolution to the country's civil war.

Asked about Kerry's statement regarding potential talks with the Syrian government, Assad said, "We are still hear-

ing statements and have to wait for actions. Then we will decide." Assad added that any "talk about the future of the Syrian president is for Syrian people alone."

Assad said Damascus is not concerned about comments made from abroad, describing them as "bubbles that disappear after some time."

The Syrian leader spoke to Iranian TV after a meeting with visiting Iranian Economy Minister Ali Tayebnia. Tehran is one of Assad's closest allies

and strongest backers in his battle against rebels trying to remove him from power.

Kerry said in an interview with CBS News that the U.S. is pushing for Assad to seriously discuss a transition strategy to help end Syria's four-year conflict, which has killed more than 220,000 people.

Some in the Middle East saw Kerry's statement as a shift in America's policy on Syria after President Barack Obama's repeated calls for Assad to step down.

Kentucky gets top overall seed

The Associated Press

The Kentucky Wildcats ended up where everyone expected them on Selection Sunday: seeded No. 1 on their quest to become the first undefeated team since 1976.

Oh, but there were surprises when the rest of bracket came out, too.

Big-conference UCLA and Texas made it. Colorado State and Temple did not.

Wisconsin is a No. 1 seed for the first time in program history. But it must play in the West Region, where second-seeded Arizona is certain to draw more fans.

As for those play-in games that start Tuesday in Dayton. Well, one of the teams playing is Dayton — a No. 11 seed that will have a distinct home-court advantage Wednesday night against Boise State. Generally, that's not allowed during the tournament, but there's an exception because the committee said the Flyers were the last team in the 68-team field, and thus, had to play in the opening-round game.

"It falls within our policies and procedures," selection committee chairman Scott Barnes said. "It's obviously a home-court advantage but we didn't waver from that decision."

Fans have a few days to fill out their brackets (Sorry, no billion-dollar prize available for a perfect one this year), then the action starts in full on Thursday, when Kentucky headlines the slate against the winner of a play-in game between No. 16 seeds Manhattan and Hampton. A '1' has never lost to a '16.'

The other No. 1 seeds were Villanova in the East and Duke in the South. Those were pretty easy picks.

And then there was the total no-brainer — placing Kentucky at the top of the Midwest Region, and at the very top of the bracket. The Wildcats defeated Arkansas 78-63 on Sunday to improve to 34-0. If they win six more, they'll become

the first team since then 1975-76 Indiana Hoosiers to go undefeated.

"I think I have the best team and the best players," said coach John Calipari, trying to lead the program to its ninth national title. "Does that mean we'll win? No, it doesn't."

The Wildcats are even-money picks in Las Vegas to win it all, and at least one coach, Bill Self of Kansas, thinks that might be a bargain.

"I shouldn't be talking about Vegas, but my point is, I think they're a pretty heavy favorite," said Self, whose Jayhawks are seeded No. 2 in the Midwest.

Other No. 2 seeds are Gonzaga in the South and Virginia in the East.

Barnes said Arizona and Virginia were the other teams in the mix for the top seed. He defended placing Duke there, saying the Blue Devils' road wins over Virginia, North Carolina and Louisville carried more weight than their lack of a conference title.

"Those strong, very elite wins, wins on the road — and let's not forget the eye test with Duke — all were considerations," he said.

Barnes called placing UCLA in the bracket as a No. 11 seed "one of the tougher decisions we had to make." But he defended putting the Bruins (20-13) in with an RPI of 48, which is 18 spots lower than Colorado State and 14 below Temple.

"We felt they were gaining steam," Barnes said. "They did have a good strength-of-schedule, they were playing better against tough competition. An example is the last game against Arizona (a 70-64 loss in the Pac-12 title game). I think the 'eye test' was also a plus in putting them in the field."

The Big Ten and Big 12 led the way with seven teams each in the bracket.

Other teams that just missed were Old Dominion and Richmond, which lost out to teams like Ole Miss and Texas that have stronger schedules baked into the cake

because they play in major conferences.

As is custom, Barnes was short on specifics, though he said Wyoming's surprise victory in the Mountain West Conference stole away an at-large bid that would've gone to Temple — the last team out.

The next team out was Colorado State. Rams coach Larry Eustachy broke away from his team's "viewing party" to make a brief statement.

"They are devastated, and they should be, because they are certainly an NCAA Tournament team," Eustachy said.

The bracket includes its usual share of quirks and tear-jerkers.

■ UCLA's first game is against SMU, coached by Larry Brown, the 74-year-old turnaround artist who is taking his third team to the NCAA Tournament. The first team? UCLA, of course.

■ Harvard, coached by former Duke star Tommy Amaker, faces his old rival, North Carolina, in the first round.

■ Georgia State coach Ron Hunter watched the bracket unveiling with his left foot in a cast. He tore his Achilles' tendon while celebrating his program's first trip to the tournament since 2001. The 14th-seeded Panthers open against Baylor.

■ Also seeded No. 14 is Albany, which made the tournament on a 3-pointer with 1 second left by Peter Hooley, whose mother died six weeks ago from colon cancer. No. 14 Albany opens against Oklahoma.

■ Wichita State is in the same region with Kansas, an in-state program that won't schedule the Shockers, and Kentucky, which ended Wichita State's undefeated season last year in the second round.

This year, it's Kentucky that comes in with a '0' in that loss column.

"Everyone is zero-and-zero now," Calipari said. "That's the key to this. It's a one-game shot. It's not best-of-5."

**NCAA Tournament
FIRST ROUND
At UD Arena
Dayton, Ohio
Tuesday, March 17**
Hampton (16-17) vs. Manhattan (19-13)
BYU (25-9) vs. Mississippi (20-12)

Wednesday, March 18
N. Florida (23-11) vs. Robert Morris (19-14)
Boise State (25-8) vs. Dayton (25-8)

**EAST REGIONAL
Second Round
Thursday, March 19
At CONSOL Energy Center
Pittsburgh**
Villanova (32-2) vs. Lafayette (20-12)
N.C. State (20-13) vs. LSU (22-10)

**Friday, March 20
At Time Warner Cable Arena
Charlotte, N.C.**
Michigan St. (23-11) vs. Georgia (21-11)
Virginia (29-3) vs. Belmont (22-10)

**At Nationwide Arena
Columbus, Ohio**
Oklahoma (22-10) vs. Albany (24-8)
Providence (22-11) vs. Boise State-Dayton winner

**At KeyArena
Seattle**
N. Iowa (30-3) vs. Wyoming (25-9)
Louisville (24-8) vs. UC Irvine (21-12)

**SOUTH REGIONAL
Second Round
Thursday, March 19
At KFC Yum! Center
Louisville, Ky.**
Iowa State (25-8) vs. UAB (19-15)
SMU (27-6) vs. UCLA (20-13)

**At Moda Center
Portland, Ore.**
Utah (24-8) vs. Stephen F. Austin (29-4)
Georgetown (21-10) vs. Eastern Washington (26-8)

**Friday, March 20
At Time Warner Cable Arena
Charlotte, N.C.**
Duke (29-4) vs. North Florida-Robert Morris winner
San Diego St. (26-8) vs. St. John's (21-11)

**At KeyArena
Seattle**
Iowa (21-11) vs. Davidson (24-7)
Gonzaga (32-2) vs. N. Dakota St. (23-9)

**MIDWEST REGIONAL
Second Round
Thursday, March 19
At KFC Yum! Center
Louisville, Ky.**
Cincinnati (22-10) vs. Purdue (21-12)
Kentucky (34-0) vs. Hampton-Manhattan winner

**At CONSOL Energy Center
Pittsburgh**
Notre Dame (29-5) vs. Northeastern (23-11)
Butler (22-10) vs. Texas (20-13)

**Friday, March 20
At Nationwide Arena
Columbus, Ohio**
W. Virginia (23-9) vs. Buffalo (23-9)
Maryland (27-6) vs. Valparaiso (28-5)

**At CenturyLink Center
Omaha, Neb.**
Kansas (26-8) vs. New Mexico St. (23-10)
Wichita St. (28-4) vs. Indiana (20-13)

**WEST REGIONAL
Second Round
Thursday, March 19
At Jacksonville Veteran's Memorial
Arena
Jacksonville, Fla.**
Baylor (24-9) vs. Georgia St. (24-9)
Xavier (21-13) vs. BYU-Mississippi winner

N. Carolina (24-11) vs. Harvard (22-7)
Arkansas (26-8) vs. Wofford (28-6)

**At Moda Center
Portland, Ore.**
Arizona (31-3) vs. Texas Southern (22-12)
VCU (26-9) vs. Ohio State (23-10)

**Friday, March 20
At CenturyLink Center
Omaha, Neb.**
Oregon (25-9) vs. Oklahoma St. (18-13)
Wisconsin (31-3) vs. Coastal Carolina (24-9)

Westbrook leads Thunder over Bulls

The Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Russell Westbrook had 36 points, 11 rebounds and six assists as the Oklahoma City Thunder held off the Chicago Bulls 109-100 on Sunday.

Westbrook's final assist came on the game-turning play. With the Thunder up 99-95 in the final minute, he held the ball until near the end of the shot clock, then passed to Anthony Morrow, who hit a three-pointer.

Nikola Mirotic scored 27 points and Pau Gasol added 20 for Chicago.

Cavaliers 123, Magic 108: Kyrie Irving scored 33 points, and J.R. Smith had 25 as Cleveland rolled past host Orlando.

LeBron James finished with 21 points, 13 assists and eight rebounds to help the Cavaliers win their fourth straight and sixth in seven games.

Hawks 91, Lakers 86: Dennis Schroder had 24 points and 10 assists,

and Al Horford scored 21 points as visiting Atlanta beat Los Angeles.

Atlanta (52-14) moved within a half-game of idle Golden State for the NBA's best record with 16 games left — including a showdown with the Warriors on Wednesday night at Oakland.

Rockets 100, Clippers 98: James Harden scored 34 points in Houston's win over host Los Angeles.

Trevor Ariza had 19 points and nine rebounds, helping Houston move within two games of idle Memphis for the Southwest Division lead.

Nuggets 118, Pelicans 111 (2OT): Will Barton scored 25 points, including the game-leveling three-pointer late in the first overtime, as undermanned Denver beat host New Orleans for its fourth straight victory.

Anthony Davis had 36 points, 14 rebounds, nine blocks and a career-high seven assists for New Orleans.

Trail Blazers 113, Raptors 97: LaMarcus Aldridge had 24 points and 10 rebounds as visiting Portland beat Toronto for the 12th time in 13 meetings.

Damian Lillard scored 23 points to help the Trail Blazers open a five-game trip with their eighth victory in nine games.

Suns 102, Knicks 89: Eric Bledsoe fell a rebound short of a triple-double and host Phoenix overcame a sluggish first half to beat New York.

Bledsoe finished with 21 points, 11 assists and nine rebounds.

Spurs 123, Timberwolves 97: San Antonio lost Manu Ginobili to a sprained right ankle in the third quarter of its victory over visiting Minnesota.

Ginobili was injured when he went up for a rebound and landed on the side of Gorgui Dieng's left foot with 43 seconds left in the period.



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Harvick rules at Phoenix

The Associated Press

AVONDALE, Ariz. — There have been dominant drivers in NASCAR before, seasons where Jeff Gordon or Jimmie Johnson would reel off win after win to break the spirits of the rest of the garage.

Dale Earnhardt had stretches where he was unbeatable, Tony Stewart's had his share of hot streaks, and Rusty Wallace had an unbelievable 1993 season that opened with four wins in eight races.

But it has been 41 years since NASCAR has seen a run like the one Kevin Harvick is making across the country.

The defending Sprint Cup champion won his fourth consecutive race at Phoenix International Raceway on Sunday with yet another rout of the field. The 42 other drivers knew this was Harvick's race to win, and he made it look easy.

He led more than 200 laps for the third straight time at Phoenix, where he has won five of the last six races and a record seven overall.

More important, he continued a streak of dominance that dates to last season. He has seven consecutive top-two finishes and has won four of the last six races, which includes the final two of last year's championship season. Dating back to the Chase last season, Harvick has won five of the last 10 races.

He opened this season with two runner-up finishes, then won last week at Las Vegas and now Phoenix.

The last driver to score seven consecutive top-two finishes? Hall of Famer Richard Petty in 1974.

"When you said the Richard Petty part, that gives me chills," Harvick said after learning the Petty stat.

He then praised his Rodney Childers-led team, which has given him unbelievable

race cars since he first climbed in the No. 4 Chevrolet in late 2013.

"I feel like we get better as we go through different situations," Harvick said. "You see these guys hang out together, how mellow everybody is, how everybody gets along. It's really, really special to be a part of. It's scary how well we get along with each other. I don't want to talk about it sometimes so I don't jinx it."

Harvick now heads to California looking to sweep NASCAR's three-race West Coast swing. It's not out of the question, particularly with how well he's running. But Harvick won at Auto Club Speedway in 2011, and has been among the best drivers there since 2009.

"I think at this point, everybody just expects you to keep winning. That's what makes it hard on all of us," Childers said. "We've got a team that can do that. We have a driver that can do that. We have the resources to do that. The more you win, the more you expect out of yourself and the more pressure you put on yourself."

And although Harvick denied earlier this weekend that he headed west determined to take all three races, Childers admitted Sunday it's been the goal since they grabbed Las Vegas a week ago.

"When we left Vegas last week, he made a point to say, 'I want to win all three of these West Coast races,'" Childers said. "I think anybody that knows Kevin Harvick, if he puts his head to something, he's going to try to make it happen."

Two late cautions forced Harvick to sweat a little bit, as he twice had to hold off Jamie McMurray on restarts to preserve his victory.

He cleared McMurray on the final restart with 12 laps remaining and beat the Chip Ganassi Racing driver by 1.154

seconds.

Ryan Newman was third and followed by Kasey Kahne and Kurt Busch as Chevrolet drivers took the top five spots.

It was a strong run for Busch, who was making his season debut following a NASCAR suspension that lasted the first three races. He was sidelined for an alleged domestic assault on a former girlfriend, but reinstated this week and promptly returned to Stewart-Haas Racing's No. 41 Chevrolet.

"I've got a strong team, and personally, it's great to get back to them," Busch said. "The way we raced today was with heart."

It wasn't a perfect day for SHR, though. Team co-owner Stewart, in desperate need of a good finish, crashed out of his third race of the season. He wound up 39th and has not finished higher than 30th this season.

He had been much improved, though, and had steadily picked his way through the field — at times showing his fiery side by nudging both Ricky Stenhouse Jr. and Austin Dillon out of his way — and into the top 10. But he spun while racing Justin Allgaier, had to go to pit road for repairs, and lost three laps before he got back on the track.

Stewart later slammed hard into the outside wall to bring out the first of two late cautions.

Stewart is 36th in the Sprint Cup Standings, seven points behind teammate Busch, who missed three races. He's the lowest ranked driver who has competed in every event.

Busch, who needs to be 30th or better in the points and win a race to make NASCAR's championship field, is 33rd in the standings after one race. But, he's only 17 points out of 30th.

Ducks rally with 4 in 3rd

The Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — After two strong periods, the Nashville Predators were poised to shake off their recent struggles by climbing back atop the NHL standings.

In 13 incredible minutes, the Anaheim Ducks sent them packing with maybe their most impressive comeback victory in a season full of escapes.

Kyle Palmieri scored the tying goal and Nate Thompson put the Ducks ahead 35 seconds later, leading Anaheim back from a two-goal deficit with a four-goal third period in a 4-2 victory Sunday.

Captain Ryan Getzlaf scored early in the third and Cam Fowler added a power-play goal as the Ducks roared back from two scoreless periods in a meeting of division leaders, reclaiming sole possession of the Western Conference lead and a share of the overall NHL lead.

"When you get the crowd into it, they always believe that can do it," Anaheim coach Bruce Boudreau said. "It makes life a little easier when you believe you can do it."

Anaheim scored four goals in 12:39 to earn its NHL-leading 11th victory when trailing after two periods. Those imposing numbers still don't capture the energy of Anaheim's comeback against a top defensive team fronting Pekka Rinne, one of the NHL's best goalies.

When the Ducks finally got rolling, not even Nashville could contain them.

"It's like a momentum wave when we get the lines going like that," said Thompson, the grinding forward who got the tiebreaking goal with 10:09 left. "You could see it in the third period."

Rangers 2, Panthers 1: Cam Talbot made 38 saves and streaking host New York earned its 14th victory in 17 games.

New York (44-17-7) is tied with Anaheim with an NHL-best 95 points and has earned at least one point in 17 of 18 games.

Hurricanes 3, Blue Jackets 2: Brad Malone's goal capped a big second period for Carolina and helped the Hurricanes end a three-game losing streak with a victory against Columbus.

Red Wings 5, Penguins 1: Teemu Pulkkinen scored twice for the first multigoal game of his career and visiting Detroit thrashed Pittsburgh.

Marc-Andre Fleury stopped just 12 of the 16 shots before being pulled in the second period as the Penguins lost their second straight.

Blues 3, Stars 0: Jake Allen made 28 saves for his fourth shutout this season, and Vladimir Tarasenko broke a scoreless tie with a goal in the third period in St. Louis' win over host Dallas.

Capitals 2, Bruins 0: Braden Holtby made 32 saves for his eighth shutout of the season, Nicklas Backstrom became host Washington's career assists leader, and the Capitals cooled surging Boston.

Holtby rebounded from being pulled during the second period of Friday night's loss after allowing four goals on 22 shots. Washington moved two points ahead of Boston for the first Eastern Conference wild-card spot.

Senators 2, Flyers 1 (SO): Bobby Ryan scored the shootout winner and Andrew Hammond stopped 27 shots to improve to 10-0-1 in his first 11 NHL starts, lifting host Ottawa.

Jean-Gabriel Pageau scored the lone goal in regulation for the Senators.

Spieth wins Valspar on third playoff hole

The Associated Press

PALM HARBOR, Fla. — Jordan Spieth and his world-class short game came up big in a playoff victory Sunday at the Valspar Championship.

Spieth capped off the afternoon by making a 30-foot birdie putt on the third extra hole of a playoff at Innisbrook to beat Ryder Cup teammates Patrick Reed and Sean O'Hair.

The 21-year-old Spieth won for the second time in his PGA Tour career and fourth time worldwide to reach a career-high No. 6 in the world.

In other golf news:
 ■ George Coetzee won the Tshwane Open at Pretoria Country Club, closing with a 5-under 65 for a one-stroke victory over countryman Jacques Blaauw. Coetzee finished at 14-under 266.

New York City FC wins in home debut

NEW YORK — David Villa had a goal and an assist to help MLS' New York City FC beat 10-man New England 2-0 on Sunday in its home debut at Yankee Stadium.

Patrick Mullins made it 2-0 in the 84th minute for New York City FC (1-0-1).

In other MLS games:
 ■ Alan Gordon scored in stoppage time to pull Los Angeles even with host Portland.

Fanendo Adi scored twice for Portland, the second in the 90th minute.

Williams, Federer, Nadal advance at Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS, Calif. — Serena Williams is settling right into the BNP Paribas Open, producing a quick, business-like effort in advancing to the fourth round Sunday while enjoying her return after a 14-year absence.

She beat up-and-comer Zarina Diyas of Kazakhstan 6-2, 6-0 in 53 minutes.

Four-time Indian Wells winner Roger Federer needed 10 more minutes than Williams to dispatch Diego Schwartzman 6-4, 6-2 in the men's second round. Rafael Nadal defeated Igor Sijsling 6-4, 6-2.

Sneeze sidelines Blue Jays' Pillar

DUNEDIN, Fla. — Toronto Blue Jays outfielder Kevin Pillar is being sidelined — by a sneeze.

Pillar is expected to miss a week to 10 days with an oblique strain sustained while sneezing.

Pillar said he sneezed and felt a sharp pain in his right side, but opted not to tell team trainers about it until after he was pulled in the fifth inning of Toronto's win over a Yankees split squad.

In other baseball news:

■ Mets right-hander Zack Wheeler has a torn elbow ligament, a blow to a team hoping to compete for a playoff berth following Matt Harvey's return from Tommy

John surgery.

If Wheeler needs elbow ligament-replacement surgery, he likely would be out until early during the 2016 season.

Smith re-elected NFLPA executive director

DeMaurice Smith retained his position as executive director of the NFL players' union in voting Sunday by 32 player representatives.

It took just one ballot for Smith to gain his third three-year term in charge of the NFL Players Association. He beat eight other candidates by immediately getting a majority of the votes at the union's annual meeting in Kapalua, Hawaii.

Boxer dies 2 days after collapsing after fight

BRISBANE, Australia — A 23-year-old boxer died Monday two days after losing consciousness after losing a 10-round featherweight bout.

Family spokesman James O'Shea confirmed Braydon Smith had been in an induced coma at a Brisbane hospital since collapsing 90 minutes after a WBC Asian Boxing Council continental title bout with John Moralde of the Philippines on Saturday.

O'Shea said Smith was alert and talkative immediately following the bout before collapsing.