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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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US military begins to recruit women

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The military services are already beginning to recruit women for combat jobs, including as Navy SEALs, and could see them serving in previously male-only Army and Marine Corps infantry units by this fall, according to new plans endorsed by Defense Secretary Ash Carter and obtained by The Associated Press.

Some of the services predict that only small numbers of women will volunteer or get through training courses, details of the plans show. The Marine Corps estimates 200 women

a year will move into ground combat jobs. And the U.S. Special Operations Command said it anticipates a “small number” of volunteers for its commando jobs.

The Navy said it is already collecting submission packages from prospective SEAL candidates and could see women in entry-level enlisted and officer training in September and October. The Navy started collecting the packages last month.

All of the services say they have made required changes to base bathrooms and other facilities to accommodate women, and they will monitor training, injury assessments and possible

sexual harassment or assault problems.

The plans have been under review by senior Pentagon leaders and have not been made public.

Carter said Thursday that he accepted the services’ implementation recommendations, but provided no details. He is expected to sign a memo in the coming days telling the military to begin executing the plans next month.

The top Army and Marine Corps generals told senators last month that it will take up to three years to fully integrate women into all combat jobs. They have insisted they will not lower standards for the combat

posts or bow to pressure or quotas to get more women into the grueling front-line jobs.

After a lengthy review by the services and the Pentagon, Carter in December ordered all combat jobs open to women. The Marine Corps initially sought to keep certain infantry and combat jobs closed, citing studies showing combined-gender units are not as effective as male-only units. But Carter and Navy Secretary Ray Mabus rejected that proposal.

Since then, the military services have put together plans outlining exactly how they will incorporate women into the male-only units.

Body armor rolling out to suit female form

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Men and women are now equal on the battlefield but that does not mean one size fits all when it comes to gear.

The integration of women into all military combat positions including elite special operations — is putting increased pressure on the Army and Marine Corps to solve issues of ill-fitting body armor and is pushing a minor revolution in smaller-size options in the life-saving apparel.

Both services are fielding thousands of sets of newly sized armor designed to better fit the female form just as recruitment begins for the gender-neutral infantry ordered by Defense Secretary Ash Carter in December. The new female soldiers and Marines could begin service as early as this fall.

The Army has added eight new sizes to its body armor to accommodate women, said Lt.

Gen. Michael Williamson, the principle military deputy to the assistant secretary of the Army for acquisition, logistics and technology.

“Anybody who’s worn a piece of body armor knows that it’s inconvenient enough without being [unable] to appropriately size it,” Williamson told Congress this week. “In the design of our new protective equipment, we’ve worked very hard as you look at both the torso, the hard armor protection, the extremities with the soft armor and the sizing so that we can fit both women and smaller male soldiers appropriately.”

The difference in female body armor is not just about size. The anatomy of women also called for a redesign of how the gear fits, Williamson said.

“There’s a level of complexity here, so it’s not just being smaller, it’s proportions,” he said. “That’s why there are so many additional sizes.”

About 5,500 sets of the new

Army body armor have already been fielded, and the service said it hopes to eventually bring that up to 7,200 sets in the near future. Meanwhile, the Marine Corps said it has fielded 3,800 sets of its new body armor so far.

The new Marine sizes will allow the service to fit the smallest 2 percent of its women for the first time. They were the product of a study of female physiology that wrapped up just as the combat integration of women was decided, said Brig. Gen. Joe Shrader, the commander of Marine Corps Systems Command.

“The timing of it was fortuitous that it ended along with this decision that was made,” Shrader said. “It led us to look at those extra-small stature sizes and led us to purchase ... the 3,800 extra sets that were down in that 2 percentile range.”

Rep. Niki Tsongas, D-Mass., said the military services in the past had been unresponsive to the gear needs of female ser-

vicemembers and had allowed “alarming” disadvantages for women who were forced into male-centric armor.

“One of the more alarming things I learned after the Army first began to develop body armor for women was ... they were wearing the male version [and] that often it compromised a woman’s ability to lift her arm appropriately to fire,” Tsongas said.

“So there are real risks to not moving ahead in a very expeditious way, especially given the opening of all these combat positions to women,” she said.

Body armor might not be the last gear issue that needs to be ironed out as women move into combat. Shoes could be next, according to Tsongas. “We know that in the area of shoes that are issued to our men and women, there hasn’t been a lot of thought about what a woman’s foot might need given the demands of what she needs to do,” she said.

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Truce brings drop in violence

Associated Press

BEIRUT — A shaky cease-fire in Syria brokered by Moscow and Washington has survived its first week, outlasting skeptics' expectations and providing some hope that a diplomatic solution to the 5-year-old war might be possible.

Much depends on if peace talks resume next week and make progress — and on the determination of the Russians and Americans to prevent a resumption of fighting.

The first few hours of the

cease-fire saw a drop in military operations, with residents reporting an eerie quiet not experienced in years. Russia grounded its warplanes, and skies were clear of government helicopters that drop barrel bombs on opposition-held areas. But complaints of violations have mounted, including reports of Russian and Syrian government strikes that have hit rebel targets.

So far, the cease-fire has failed to facilitate the free flow of aid supplies in Syria.

U.N. officials have cited a

shortage of available trucks as well as difficulties in gaining approvals from Syrian government officials, who have at times removed medical supplies from convoys.

The international community is hoping that if the cease-fire continues to hold, it will ease the refugee flow toward neighboring countries and Europe.

The sides agreed to an initial cease-fire of two weeks with the aim of extending, and there is no clear day-after scenario for what happens if no formal extension occurs.

Donald Trump continues to dominate race

Associated Press

DETROIT — The Republican establishment and its last best hopes to defeat Donald Trump spent a long and extraordinary day denouncing the businessman as dangerous, a “phony” and a “con man” unfit for office. Then, when it was all over, Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz and John Kasich swallowed hard and said they'd support Trump if he wins the GOP nomination.

Their pained commitments, at the end of the 11th GOP debate on Thursday, put into sharp focus the dilemma the Republican Party faces as Trump continues to dominate the campaign.

Beyond harsh words, GOP leaders see little opportunity to stop Trump's march toward the presidential nomination. Panicked party leaders are poring over complicated delegate math, outlining hazy scenarios for a contested national convention and even flirting with the idea of a third-party effort to derail Trump's insurgent candidacy.

A tumultuous day opened with Mitt Romney, the party's 2012 presidential nominee, denouncing Trump. Speaking to NBC's “Today,” Romney said he will “do everything within the normal political bounds to make sure we don't nominate Donald Trump.” He ruled out running for the presidency but also ruled out voting for Trump or Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton.

Also publicly criticizing Trump: House Speaker Paul Ryan, who was Romney's running mate, and 2008 GOP nominee John McCain.

In the evening debate in Detroit, he called Romney “a failed candidate” who lost to Barack Obama four years ago. “Obviously, he wants to be relevant,” Trump said dismissively.

Still, the front-runner is not yet on track to claim the nomination before the party's national gathering in July, according to an Associated Press delegate count.

Bill requires troops to report sex assaults

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A former Marine Corps officer-turned-congressman said Friday it was “pathetic” that the Defense Department does not require its troops to intervene if a child is raped by allied troops on American-controlled bases.

Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., introduced a bill Thursday that would require U.S. troops to respond to sexual abuse on U.S. bases, domestic and abroad.

The “Martland Act” is nicknamed for Green Beret Sgt. 1st Class Charles Martland, whose career is in limbo because he beat up an Afghan police commander after the man admitted he raped a child repeatedly.

Although officially illegal, sexual abuse of children, especially boys between 10 and 18, is prevalent in some parts of the country, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission found in 2014. A longstanding open secret commonly called “bacha bazi” is

typically committed by powerful men against boys from poor families, the commission found.

Reports that Americans were instructed to ignore such abuse came to light last year after the Army selected Martland, 33, for involuntary separation as part of its force strength reduction.

The Army on Monday delayed a final determination until May 1 on Martland's future to allow the service's Board for Correction of Military Records to consider his case.

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Yearlong spaceman Kelly takes a plunge in pool

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — NASA's yearlong spaceman Scott Kelly took a long-anticipated plunge Thursday, jumping into his backyard pool, astronaut outfit and all.

After nearly a year of space sponge baths, Kelly didn't even take time to change out of his blue flight suit. He walked right up to the edge of the pool, tilted sideways and fell in. He'd been yearning for this moment throughout his U.S. record-setting mission.

A video of his plunge was

posted to his Twitter account Thursday, a day after his return from the International Space Station.

Kelly — looking and acting remarkably hearty after 340 days in space — was reunited with his family earlier in the morning in Houston after a flight from Kazakhstan, where his mission ended.

Kelly's girlfriend, Johnson Space Center public affairs representative Amiko Kauderer, and his two daughters, ages 20 and 12, rushed into his arms after he exited the NASA jet. His identical twin, retired as-

tronaut Mark Kelly, and their father were next to greet him. Also welcoming him home: Mark's wife, former Arizona Rep. Gabrielle Giffords.

Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden greeted Kelly at a brief welcome ceremony. She brought him a gift of beer from President Barack Obama and some apple pie.

Kelly noted he was 50 when he left Houston in February 2015. He turned 52 on Feb. 21.

“It was a very long trip,” he said. “But it feels great. It's great to be back in Texas on U.S. soil.”

Court may restore Brady suspension

Associated Press

NEW YORK — U.S. appeals court judges seemed likely to restore New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady's four-game suspension for the scandal known as "Deflategate" after shredding some of his union's favorite arguments for dismissal on Thursday.

The 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Manhattan gave a players union lawyer a tough time, with Circuit Judge Denny Chin even saying evidence of ball tampering was "compelling, if not overwhelming," and that there was evidence Brady encouraged it and supported it.

"How do we simply second-guess a four-game suspension?" he asked attorney Jeffrey Kessler of the NFL Players Association.

The appeals court did not immediately rule, but it seemed to lean heavily at times against the union's arguments, raising

the prospect that the suspension Brady was supposed to start last September may begin next season instead.

The three-judge panel seemed receptive to the NFL's argument that it was fair for Commissioner Roger Goodell to severely penalize the star quarterback after concluding he tarnished the game by impeding the league's investigation into deflated footballs, including having an aide destroy a cellphone containing nearly 10,000 messages. The league concluded that deflated balls were used when the Patriots routed the Indianapolis Colts in January 2015 in the AFC Championship before they went on to win the Super Bowl.

Judge Barrington D. Parker said the cellphone-destruction issue raised the stakes "from air in a football to compromising the integrity of the proceeding."

The judges did not treat the NFL gingerly either, with Parker questioning whether Goodell took his authority too

far by designating himself the arbitrator and making findings that went beyond a report prepared by an investigator the league hired.

"Goodell is effectively the judge, the juror and executioner," Parker told NFL attorney Paul Clement, though he quickly added that executioner "is not the right word."

Clement said Goodell was the right person to preside over the proceedings because the dispute began as a conflict between two teams over ball deflation.

At another point, Parker said Brady's lengthy suspension seemed at "first blush a draconian penalty" for deflated footballs.

"What's the advantage you get from an underinflated football?" he asked.

The judges also questioned why deflating footballs would warrant a severe suspension.

But they seemed to answer that ques-

tion themselves as they noted repeatedly that it may well be within Goodell's authority to punish a player if he concludes that the player interfered with an investigation and thus engaged in conduct detrimental to the game.

After Goodell rejected Brady's appeal of the four-game suspension, the league went to federal court to get a judge's approval of its handling of the case. But Judge Richard Berman ruled against the NFL a week before the season began, eliminating Brady's suspension.

The NFL appealed.

Clement urged the court to rule quickly for the good of the game.

"It would be an awful shame if this issue has to hang over the league for another season," he said. "End it now."

Neither Goodell nor Brady was in court on Thursday. A decision could take weeks or months.

Mets renew All-Star deGrom for one year

Associated Press

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. — The New York Mets renewed All-Star pitcher Jacob deGrom's contract for \$607,000 Friday after the sides could not agree on a deal for the 2016 season.

DeGrom, who helped the Mets reach the World Series for the first time since 2000, gets a 9 percent raise from his earnings last year, when he had a \$531,875 salary plus a \$25,000 bonus for winning the 2014 NL Rookie of the Year award, a total of \$556,875.

"That's the business side of the game," deGrom said. "That's why I hired my agents. I feel like I have some of the best in the business, and it's a business decision that we decided to make. We have great respect for the Mets and the system they have, and I feel like we have a great relationship with them. As I've said before, I love playing here and I want to be in this uniform for a long time. It was just a decision based on the business side of the game."

Under baseball's collective bargaining agreement, the Mets had the right to unilaterally renew deGrom's contract from March 2-11.

DeGrom has 1 year, 139 days of service time and could be eligible for salary arbitration next winter if he is among the top 22 percent by service time for players with more than 2 years but less than 3. The cutoff was 130 days this year and 133 in 2015.

"Kind of the only right you have is your renewal," deGrom said. "I don't think it was a back and forth number thing, it was just what we decided to do at the time."

He said he is open to discussing a long-term deal but the team has not yet approached him about one.

DeGrom was 14-8 with a 2.54 ERA and

205 strikeouts in 191 innings last year, his first full season in the majors, and was 3-1 with a 2.88 ERA in four postseason starts.

"We respect the Mets' right to determine a pre-arbitration player's salary and their effort to be consistent with their players," deGrom's agent, Brodie Van Wagenen of CAA Baseball, said in a statement. "But given Jacob's standing as one of the top pitchers in Major League Baseball and his 2015 performance, his worth cannot be properly valued by a formula. Like the Mets, he is simply exercising his rights under the CBA. This will not affect Jacob's relationship with the Mets. Both parties are focused on preparing for the season and getting the Mets back to the World Series."

Two tied for lead in Doral Championship

DORAL, Fla. — Scott Piercy and Marcus Fraser are tied after the opening round of the Cadillac Championship, each shooting 6-under 66 on Thursday in the first World Golf Championships event of the year.

Phil Mickelson is alone in third, one shot back after a 67.

Adam Scott, Jason Dufner, Charley Hoffman and Danny Willett all shot 68s, and world No. 1 Jordan Spieth was in another group at 69, three shots back. In all, 15 players finished within four shots of the lead on Doral's Blue Monster.

Defending champion Dustin Johnson struggled, shooting even-par 72 and finishing the day tied for 28th in the 66-man field.

In other golf news: South Korea's Ha Na Jang has developed a habit of making the extraordinary

seem normal.

In January, she made a hole-in-one on a par-4 and last month she won her first LPGA title, at the Coates Golf Championship in Florida.

The 23-year-old was at it again on Friday, holing a monster eagle putt from off the green on her way to a 6-under 66 to grab a share of the halfway lead with her compatriot Mirim Lee at the LPGA's Women's Champions tournament in Singapore.

Lee got up and down from a greenside bunker to birdie the last and shoot a 67 to join Jang in a two-way tie at the top of a congested leaderboard after a wet and windy second round at Sentosa Golf Club.

Thailand's Pornaning Phatlum carded a 67 and Norway's Suzann Pettersen signed for a 69 to be equal third, a stroke behind the leading pair.

Pinturault wins fourth straight World Cup GS

KRANJSKA GORA, Slovenia — Alexis Pinturault won his fourth straight World Cup giant slalom on Friday, intensifying the battle with defending champion Marcel Hirscher for the season's discipline title.

The Frenchman closed the gap on Hirscher in the GS standings to 91 points, with two races remaining and a win worth 100 points.

Another GS is scheduled for Saturday, followed by the season-ending race in St. Moritz, Switzerland, in two weeks.

The Frenchman built on his first-run lead to beat Philipp Schoerghofer and Hirscher by 0.47 and 0.69 seconds, respectively.

The rest of the field finished more than a second off the pace. It was

Schoerghofer's first World Cup podium since December 2011.

Soccer's rule makers ready to try replay

CARDIFF, Wales — The first week of Gianni Infantino's FIFA presidency is set to end with soccer further embracing technology once blocked by Sepp Blatter.

Four years after the International Football Association Board approved technology to rule on disputed goals, the rule-making body is due to experiment with in-game video replay systems on Saturday at its annual meeting.

Major League Soccer, the Bundesliga and the English Football Association all want to be part of the pilot phase.

The use of video would be restricted to referees ruling on whether a goal has been scored, a penalty should be awarded, a player should be sent off or cases of mistaken identity.

"It's a fundamental decision, something we've debating for many, many years," Football Association of Wales chief executive Jonathan Ford, who is hosting and chairing the IFAB meeting, said in a recent interview. "Ultimately, it could lead to referees being assisted by video."

FIFA controls half of the eight votes on IFAB, which also features the four British federations. A motion requires at least six votes to be approved.

It is Infantino's first major meeting since winning last Friday's presidential election. In a sign of changing times at FIFA, the former UEFA general secretary shunned the private jets favored by Blatter to fly to Britain on a low-cost airline.



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Anaheim wins 10th in a row

Associated Press

GLENDALE, Ariz. — Kevin Bieksa leaned in to listen to teammate Cam Fowler's lengthy answer to reporters about the Anaheim Ducks' team record-tying 10th straight win and was unimpressed.

"What a boring answer!" Bieksa said, smirking.

Everything else surrounding the Ducks lately is quite entertaining.

Corey Perry had a goal and two assists, Jamie McGinn and Rickard Rakell scored on Anaheim's first two shots, and the Ducks rolled along Thursday night with a 5-1 victory over the reeling Arizona Coyotes.

Fowler and Josh Manson also scored, and Frederik Andersen stopped 27 shots as Anaheim stayed atop the Pacific Division — tied with Los Angeles, which beat Montreal 3-2.

Perry, who has five goals and three assists in three games, helped the Ducks match the 2013-14 team's winning streak despite injured captain Ryan Getzlaf's absence.

Not bad for a team that was 16 points back before embarking on a 17-1-1 stretch.

"Obviously, I'm proud of the group from where we've come to where we are now," said Ryan Kesler, who had two assists. "We all believed in this room."

Anthony Duclair scored, and Niklas Treutle allowed five goals on 16 shots in first NHL start for the Coyotes in their seventh straight loss.

McGinn collected Treutle's mishandled puck behind the net and jammed in his second goal in two games since being acquired from Buffalo.

Rakell's one-timer on the power play 46 seconds later made it 2-0 less than 6 minutes in.

"It's tough when you're playing one of the best teams in the league and you're chasing from the beginning," Treutle said.

Asked why he started Treutle against the NHL's hottest team, Arizona coach Dave Tippett said "I had no choice" be-

cause Louis Domingue had started 11 straight games.

"I'll take the responsibility," Tippett said. "We put a young player in a position he's not ready for."

Fowler's slap shot on the power play early in the second period made it 3-0, allowing Anaheim to look forward to Saturday's showdown with Los Angeles for the Pacific Division lead.

The Ducks went 3 for 7 on the power play and have scored with the man-advantage in every game during the win streak.

"Our power play has been ridiculous," coach Bruce Boudreau said.

McGinn, who also assisted on Manson's goal, gives the Ducks even more offense. Perry, meanwhile, reached 49 points with his goal late in the second period that chased Treutle.

Duclair's 17th goal in the second period, a one-timer on the power play, is Arizona's only score in two games.

It was the Coyotes' first home game since they traded third-leading scorer Mikkel Boedker to Colorado at the end of an 0-5 trip. Veteran Alex Tanguay, acquired from the Avalanche, didn't dress with an injury despite practicing the day before.

Treutle, who made four saves in his only other NHL game Feb. 20 against St. Louis, replaced the struggling Domingue. And he was overwhelmed with nerves early.

The 24-year-old also earned a penalty for sending a clearance into the stands before recording his first save.

"He was probably a little rattled," Boudreau said.

Domingue stopped five shots in the third period.

The Coyotes fell to 5-15-2 since Jan. 14 to fall 10 points behind Minnesota for the final playoff spot in the Western Conference.

Getzlaf was a late scratch with a lower-body injury, but Anaheim looked sharp despite traveling after a home shootout win over a Montreal a night earlier.

"We're winning hockey games in a variety of ways," Fowler said. "I think we're showing a lot about ourselves."

Lightning 4, Senators 1: Ben Bishop made 33 saves as visiting Tampa Bay tied a franchise record with its eighth straight victory.

Penguins 4, Rangers 1: Sidney Crosby, Evgeni Malkin and Patric Hornqvist each scored in the final 2:13 of the second period, leading host Pittsburgh past New York.

Bruins 4, Blackhawks 2: Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand each had a goal and an assist to help lead host Boston over Chicago.

Oilers 4, Flyers 0: Taylor Hall, Nail Yakupov, Patrick Maroon and Lauri Korpikoski all scored, and Cam Talbot made 35 saves to lead visiting Edmonton to its third straight victory.

Sabres 6, Flames 3: Johan Larsson scored the go-ahead goal with 9:31 left and Marcus Foligno had a goal and two assists in host Buffalo's win over Calgary.

Wild 2, Maple Leafs 1: Mikko Koivu and Mikael Granlund scored power-play goals to lead visiting Minnesota past Toronto.

Islanders 4, Jets 3 (OT): Kyle Okposo scored off a quirky rebound 2:20 into overtime to lift visiting New York over Winnipeg.

Devils 5, Predators 4 (OT): Adam Henrique forced overtime with a goal, then scored 1:54 into the extra period on the power play as visiting New Jersey snapped Nashville's five-game winning streak.

Avalanche 3, Panthers 2: Gabriel Landeskog had a goal and an assist and Calvin Pickard made 24 of his 38 saves in the third period to lift host Colorado over Florida.

Sharks 3, Canucks 2: Patrick Marleau scored the go-ahead goal in the third period as visiting San Jose won its third straight, beating Vancouver.

Kings 3, Canadiens 2: Anze Kopitar and Tanner Pearson scored less than 3 minutes apart early in the first period and Dwight King scored on a breakaway in the third, leading host Los Angeles over Montreal.

Arizona upends California

Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. — Gabe York has been in a lot of big games for Arizona, and the senior guard ranks Thursday night's win over California his best.

York made two three-pointers in the final minute, the last to give his team the lead with 19 seconds to play, and the 18th-ranked Wildcats scored the final 11 points of the game to beat the 25th-ranked Bears 64-61.

Arizona coach Sean Miller called it "one of the great finishes that I've been a part of."

And York was at the center of it.

After poor performances in Arizona's losses at Colorado and Utah, he scored all 19 of his points in the second half as the Wildcats (23-7, 11-6) moved into a tie for third place with Cal (21-9, 11-6) in the Pac-12, although the Bears still hold the tiebreaker for seeding in the conference tournament.

"I'm not someone who's always about myself, but for me, this would probably be No. 1," York said, "a very hostile team that we lost to last time and I missed the game-winning shot, so I had a little chip on my shoulder coming into this game."

Ryan Anderson had 18 points and 10 rebounds for Arizona, which had lost two straight, while Kaleb Tarczewski added 10 points and 12 rebounds.

Ivan Rabb had 15 points and 13 rebounds for Cal. Jabari Bird added 13 points and Jordan Mathews had 12 for the Bears, who seemed headed for their eighth straight win after an Arizona turnover led to Tyrone Wallace's layup that put Cal ahead 61-53 with 1:52 to play.

No. 14 Maryland 81, Illinois 55: Melo Trimble and Jake Layman scored 18 points each, and the Terrapins closed out their home schedule with their best game in weeks, a rout of the Illini.

Jared Nickens and Robert Carter Jr. had 14 points apiece for the Terrapins, who never trailed. Maryland (24-6, 12-5 Big Ten) had lost three of four since climbing to No. 2 in the AP poll in early February.

Trimble made half of his 14 shots, collected eight rebounds and added five assists. The standout sophomore guard was 11-for-37 from the field over the previous four games.

Maverick Morgan reached career highs with 21 points and 10 rebounds for Illinois (13-17, 5-12). The junior center made 10 of his 13 field goal tries, but his teammates were a collective 12-for-44, including 5-for-20 from three-point range.

Malcolm Hill, who came in averaging 18.2 points per game for the Illini, finished with 10.

No. 24 SMU 80, UConn 54: Sterling Brown scored 20 points in the final home game for seniors Nic Moore and Markus Kennedy, the only players with coach Larry Brown for all four of his seasons during an incredible turnaround for the Mustangs.

Moore had 16 points and four assists in his 99th career game for the Mustangs, while Kennedy had only four points but a career-high nine assists. Jordan Tolbert, another senior in his final SMU home game, had 14 points and seven rebounds.

SMU (25-4, 13-4 American Athletic Conference) remained tied with Temple for the conference lead. The Owls, who on Jan. 24 handed the Mustangs their first loss after an 18-0 start, beat Memphis earlier Thursday.

Sterling Gibbs had 20 points for UConn (20-10, 10-7), while Daniel Hamilton had 12.

Curry, Warriors match another record

Associated Press

OAKLAND, California — Stephen Curry and the Golden State Warriors matched one record set by Michael Jordan's Chicago Bulls as they closed in on the bigger mark.

Curry scored 33 points in his return from an ankle injury and the Warriors tied Chicago's NBA record by winning their 44th straight regular-season home game, 121-106 over the Oklahoma City Thunder on Thursday night.

"That's an amazing accomplishment," Curry said. "It's a compliment to us as a team, our coaching staff and obviously our fans who bring that atmosphere every night to give us the ultimate home-court advantage."

Five days after tying the NBA record with 12 three-pointers in an overtime win at Oklahoma City, Curry went 5-for-15 from long range in the rematch. But he got more than enough help from his bench to help the Warriors (55-5) move 50 games above .500 in their quest to break the Bulls' single-season mark for victories.

The Bulls won 44 consecutive home games from March 30, 1995, until April 4, 1996. That helped them set the record with 72 wins in 1995-96, a mark the Warriors remain on pace to surpass after beating the Thunder for the third time in as many tries this season.

Kevin Durant scored 32 points, Russell

Westbrook had 22 and Serge Ibaka added 20 for the Thunder, who have lost six of eight since the All-Star break.

"We've definitely got to get it under control," Durant said. "I'm not happy with the way we're playing. Obviously we want to win, but this is where you see what you're made of."

Klay Thompson scored 21 for the Warriors, and Shaun Livingston provided 11 points, eight assists and tough defense on Durant.

Spurs 94, Pelicans 86: Kawhi Leonard capped a 30-point, 11-rebound performance with a huge three-pointer in the final minute as visiting San Antonio extended its winning streak to seven games with a victory over New Orleans.

LaMarcus Aldridge had 26 points and Danny Green scored 11 for the Spurs, who trailed 86-82 before closing the game on a 12-0 run during the final 3:10.

Leonard was 12-for-22 shooting, including 6-for-10 from three-point range.

The Pelicans missed their last six shots and allowed the Spurs to grab a pair of critical offensive rebounds that led to five second-chance points during San Antonio's game-ending run.

Heat 108, Suns 92: Dwyane Wade scored 27 points, Goran Dragic added 25 against his former team and host Miami never trailed on the way to beating Phoenix for its third straight victory.

Luol Deng scored 12 and Hassan Whiteside grabbed 11 rebounds for Miami, which led by as many as 21 in the first half.

Rookie guard Devin Booker kept the Suns in the game, scoring 15 of his 34 points in the fourth quarter. Alex Len had 12 points and 13 rebounds for Phoenix, which tied a club record by losing its 17th consecutive road game. The Suns have dropped 30 of 33 overall.

Kings 104, Mavericks 101: Rajon Rondo had 18 points and 12 assists in his first game in Dallas since an ugly split with that team last season as Sacramento ended a 22-game regular-season losing streak on his old home floor.

Booted almost every time he touched the ball, Rondo was the steady hand the Kings needed late. He missed a January loss at Dallas when Sacramento blew a lead in double overtime to keep alive the Mavericks' longest home winning streak against one opponent.

DeMarcus Cousins had 22 points and 13 rebounds as the Kings snapped a four-game losing streak with just their fifth win in the past 17 games.

Chandler Parsons scored 28 to lead the Mavericks, who had a three-game winning streak snapped in the finale of a six-game homestand, their longest of the season.