

# STARS AND STRIPES®

Wednesday, May 11, 2016

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Bombs kill scores in Baghdad attacks

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Three car bombings in the Iraqi capital Wednesday killed at least 93 people and wounded at least 165.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for all three bombings. In recent months, the extremist faction has lost some of the Iraqi territory it conquered in a 2014 blitz. But Wednesday's carnage demonstrates the group's lingering ability to launch significant attacks across the country and in the heart of the capital.

In the largest attack of the day, a car bomb ripped through a commercial area in the predominantly Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City on Wednesday

morning, killing at least 63 people and wounding at least 85.

Later in the afternoon, two more car bombs killed at least 30 and wounded 80, police officials said. One bomber targeted a police station in Baghdad's northwest Kadhimiyah neighborhood, killing 18, of whom five were policemen, and wounding 34. Another bombing on the northern Baghdad neighborhood of Jamiya killed 12 and wounded 46.

Medical officials confirmed the casualty figures. All officials spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to brief the press.

The Sadr City bomb struck a crowded outdoor market and officials said the death toll could

rise further.

Officials say the increase in assaults in Baghdad is an attempt by the Islamic State to distract from battlefield losses.

The bombings also come at a time of political deadlock that has paralyzed the work of the Iraqi government and parliament, adding to the country's complex set of military, security, humanitarian, economic and human rights challenges.

The market struck in Sadr city is one of four main outdoor shopping venues in the sprawling slum that is home to about 2.5 million residents — almost half of Baghdad's population of around 6 million.

The Islamic State group, which views Shiite Muslims as

apostates, said the attack was carried out by a suicide bomber, something that Iraqi officials denied.

In its online statements, the Islamic State group said Wednesday's attacks targeted Shiite militiamen. The Associated Press could not immediately verify the authenticity of the claim but it appeared on a website commonly used by the Sunni militants.

Baghdad's Sadr City is a stronghold of supporters of influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr who have been holding protests and sit-ins for months to demand an overhaul of the political system put in place by the U.S. following the 2003 overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

## Lockheed grapples with LCS shortfalls

BY TONY CAPACCIO

Bloomberg

Lockheed Martin Corp. is under orders from the U.S. Navy to correct quality control failures in building its version of the littoral combat ship, an issue that has delayed deliveries and resulted in three citations from the service's shipbuilding inspectors.

The Navy's supervisor of shipbuilding issued "Corrective Action Requests" in May, June and July of 2015, with one of the three withdrawn after the contractor's plan to resolve the issue was accepted, Dale Eng, a spokesman for the service, said in an email.

The quality questions, which hadn't been disclosed previously, add to concerns about the \$29 billion program that Defense Secretary Ash Carter has reduced to 40 vessels from 52. The citations also could hurt Lockheed's chances in a future competition with Austal Ltd., which builds another version of the ship. No corrective action requests have been issued against Austal, according to Eng.

The Pentagon plans to choose one of the two companies by 2019 to build as many as

nine ships in a new, heavier version intended to be more armed and survivable, like a frigate. The littoral combat ship, intended for missions such as mine-clearing in shallow coastal waters, has been criticized as too vulnerable to attack in combat.

The Defense Contract Management Agency found Lockheed has "systemic quality deficiencies" at the Marinette Marine Yard in Wisconsin, where it builds the ships, agency spokesman Mark Woodbury said in an email.

The citations to Lockheed were for inadequate oversight of vessel propulsion systems, an "inability to adequately control critical system cleanliness" on those systems for the USS Milwaukee and USS Detroit and a failure by the company and its subcontractor, the marine unit of Fincantieri, "to ensure adequate subcontractor oversight," according to Eng.

The citation for inadequate oversight of the propulsion system was withdrawn on April 7 after the Navy and the contract management agency concluded Lockheed's corrective action plan was adequate, but the other two remain in effect, Eng said. Lockheed "has been diligently working

their plan of action and milestones schedule toward closure" of the remaining citations by mid-September, he said.

Lockheed spokesman John Torrisi said in an email that the company takes each "Corrective Action Request very seriously, as each one identifies manufacturing and training improvements, which our industry team implements, in close coordination with the Navy."

Broader questions about the littoral combat ship also persist. In a draft report stamped "For Official Use Only," the U.S. Government Accountability Office recommended that Congress "consider not funding" either of the two vessels requested by the Pentagon for next year "because of unresolved concerns with lethality and survivability," the Navy's lack of funding "to make needed improvements and the current schedule performance of the shipyards." The Navy is reviewing the report.

But congressional support for the ship, and the shipbuilding jobs it provides, remains strong. In H.R. 4909, its version of the defense authorization bill for fiscal 2017, the House Armed Services Committee added a third ship.

## US: No death penalty in Benghazi attacker case

*The Washington Post*

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department announced Tuesday that it will not seek the death penalty against Ahmed Abu Khattala, 54, a U.S.-designated terrorist prosecutors accuse of leading the 2012 attacks in Benghazi, Libya, that killed four Americans.

The announcement, contained in a notice to the federal trial court in Washington, clears the way for a major terrorism trial in the nation's capital, the first in the U.S. since 2015, barring a plea agreement by Abu Khattala.

The move marked somewhat of a shift for the department, one year after federal prosecutors last May secured a death sentence in a capital terrorism case against Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, for the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings.

However, analysts said the government faced a difficult calculation in the Benghazi case, pointing to complex legal, political and national security concerns that have produced a mixed record in capital terrorism cases, and to a history in which no District of Columbia jury has ever imposed the death penalty.

## SEAL trainee dies after pool exercise

*Associated Press*

SAN DIEGO — A 21-year-old Navy SEAL trainee died last week during his first week of training in Coronado, Calif., a Navy spokesman said.

Seaman James "Derek" Lovelace was pulled out of the pool Friday after showing signs he was having difficulty while treading in a camouflage uniform and a dive mask, Naval Special Warfare Center spokesman Lt. Trevor Davids said.

Lovelace lost consciousness after being pulled out of the

pool and was taken to a civilian hospital, where he was pronounced dead, Davids said Tuesday.

The death was first reported by NBC News and The Virginian-Pilot.

The exact cause of the death is unknown, and Navy officials are investigating, Davids said.

Lovelace was in his first week of training as a SEAL trainee after joining the Navy about six months ago, Davids said. The exercise is designed to assess students' competency, confidence and safety in the water, according to the

Navy.

Lovelace was born in Germany, enjoyed any activity on the water and dreamed of becoming a SEAL, according to a death announcement from Whitehurst Powell Funeral Home and Southern Heritage Crematory in his hometown of Crestview, Fla.

The death comes only days after another Coronado-based SEAL — Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Charles Keating IV — was shot and killed during a gunbattle involving Islamic State fighters in Iraq.

## West Point cadets cleared after inquiry

*The Washington Post*

A group of black female cadets who posed for a photograph with their fists raised in the air didn't break any Department of Defense or Army regulations, an inquiry into the matter has determined.

The inquiry found that the picture was "among several taken in the spur-of-the-moment," the U.S. Military Academy said in a news release Tuesday.

The news release continued: "It was intended to demonstrate 'unity' and 'pride,' according to the findings of the inquiry."

The photograph showed 16 cadets posed at the U.S. Military Academy, all pictured in cadet dress uniforms and raising their fists. The cadets won't face any punishment, the news release stated.

In a report last week, Army Times noted that the image had "been shared widely in military circles, with claims the women are supporting the Black Lives Matter movement." As the suggestion arose, however, others said the picture displayed something else entirely.

"It was a sign of unity," Mary Tobin, a 2003 West Point graduate, told The Associated

Press. "They weren't trying to imply any allegiance to any movement."

Army Times reported that "several readers" sent the picture to the publication, raising questions about whether the cadets were in violation of a DOD directive about political activities.

The inquiry found that there wasn't any violation of the directive, though, and stated: "[B]ased upon available evidence none of the participants, through their actions, intended to show support for a political movement."

## Family: Assailant in Mass. stabbing rampage was ill

*Associated Press*

TAUNTON, Mass. — A man described by his family as mentally disturbed went on a stabbing rampage hours after leaving a hospital, killing two people and assaulting and stabbing more in a house and a shopping mall before being fatally shot by an off-duty sheriff's deputy, authorities said.

The assailant in Tuesday night's attack was identified as Arthur DaRosa, of Taunton. Of-

ficials said they are searching for a motive.

DaRosa's sister and father said he had claimed that the devil was trying to make him do things, the Boston Herald reported.

Kerri Devries said her younger brother had battled depression for years and was hospitalized as recently as Monday.

"He told them how depressed he was and how he didn't want to live anymore and they still

let him leave," Devries told the Herald.

Authorities said the rampage began when DaRosa, 28, crashed a car around 7 p.m. outside a house in the city, about 40 miles south of Boston. He walked inside the home and stabbed two women. An 80-year-old was taken to a hospital, where she later died. The other woman was being treated for life-threatening injuries.

DaRosa then drove to the Silver City Galleria mall, where he

crashed into the front of a Macy's department store, authorities said.

Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III said that when DaRosa got out of the vehicle, he assaulted a number of people inside Macy's before making his way to Bertucci's restaurant. Once inside the restaurant, he stabbed two people, including a 56-year-old man who later died, Quinn said. An off-duty sheriff's deputy intervened and shot DaRosa once.



# Thunder push Spurs to brink

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Russell Westbrook couldn't be stopped down the stretch, not even when the San Antonio Spurs were trying to foul him.

Westbrook had 35 points, 11 rebounds and nine assists, and the Oklahoma City Thunder rallied in the fourth quarter to beat the Spurs 95-91 on Tuesday night and take a 3-2 lead in the Western Conference semifinals.

"We got stops and Russ was a maniac tonight, keeping us in it," Oklahoma City forward Kevin Durant said.

Durant added 23 points as the Thunder won for the second time in San Antonio in the series. Oklahoma City can close out the series Thursday in Game 6 at home.

"I hope we respond a little angry with a chip on our shoulder," Spurs guard Danny Green said. "If you want to be a championship team you have to win on the road. Simple as that."

But the Spurs have rallied from a 3-2 deficit only once in their prolific playoff history, winning the final two games in 2008 to defeat the then-New Orleans Hornets.

After losing only once at home during the regular season, San Antonio has dropped two straight there now.

After Oklahoma City won Game 2 in San Antonio, the NBA acknowledged five incorrect non-calls in the final stretch. There were a couple of calls the Spurs felt did not go their way in the final minutes Tuesday, but it was Westbrook who left no question of the outcome.

He sealed the victory with a three-point play with 6.3 seconds remaining, scoring after Kawhi Leonard was not able to foul intentionally, enabling him to drive for a layup while being fouled by LaMarcus Aldridge. Leonard said he "definitely fouled him" on the initial attempt, but Westbrook continued turning the corner and attacking the rim.

"He got away, attacked the rim and got an and-one," Spurs guard Manu Ginobili said. "Very tough outcome. I didn't watch the replay. I don't know how emphatic the foul was, but it's not the point. We should have arrived to that point in a better situation. For most of the game we were up. We had couple of oppor-

tunities to get a good lead. They made some tough shots and we couldn't capitalize."

San Antonio led 88-82 with 4 minutes remaining when Westbrook took over. He had seven points, two rebounds and an assist in the final 4 minutes.

"He dictated how we wanted to play," Durant said. "He was getting to the rim, knocking down the jump shot, knocking down the three. So he had all levels working tonight. Once he does that, he's too dangerous because they play back on him not wanting him to get to the rim and he's knocking the jump shot down."

The Thunder took a 92-90 lead with 54 seconds remaining on a pair of free throws by Durant after Green fell into his legs when he appeared to be tripped by Steven Adams on an attempted screen.

Oklahoma City outrebounded San Antonio 54-36.

"The key was physicality," Thunder forward Enes Kanter said. "Me and Steven just went and tried to get every rebound. It worked out well for both of us."

Kanter had eight points and 13 rebounds, and Adams had 12 points and 11 rebounds.

Westbrook settled in after an erratic first half in which he committed six of the Thunder's 13 first-half turnovers. He only had two turnovers after halftime.

"I was overthinking the first half, overpassing trying to find ways to get my guys involved, making some bad mistakes," Westbrook said. "In the second half I was trying to do a better job of taking care of the basketball, especially with the game on the line."

Besides scoring at least 28 points for the fourth time in the series, the electrifying point guard had four offensive rebounds and two steals in 39 minutes.

The aggressive defense that brought Oklahoma City back into the series after an embarrassing Game 1 loss continued Tuesday night. The Thunder bodied the Spurs on the wings and then collapsed fully when San Antonio attempted to attack the lane.

Leonard had 26 points and Green added 20 points, going 6-for-9 shooting on three-pointers. Aldridge added 20 points but shot just 6-for-21.

# Penguins oust Caps

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — A three-goal lead gone — and his team's momentum right along with it — Pittsburgh Penguins coach Mike Sullivan provided a reminder heading to overtime of Game 6 of a relentlessly entertaining playoff series against the Washington Capitals.

Keep skating. Play fast. Be confident.

In the span of a dozen frantic seconds early in the extra period on Tuesday night, Carl Hagelin, Phil Kessel and Nick Bonino did all three, sending their resilient club to the Eastern Conference final in the process.

Bonino tapped a rebound of Hagelin's shot past Braden Holtby 6:32 into overtime to give the Penguins a 4-3 win to wrap up the series in six games and set up a showdown with Tampa Bay for the right to play for the Stanley Cup.

Kessel went to the corner to retrieve the puck and passed it to Hagelin in the slot. Hagelin's shot caromed off Holtby's right pad directly to Bonino, who had little trouble pushing it into the net for his 10th career playoff goal, and easily his most important.

"I just went to the front," Bonino said. "The puck always ends up there and I was able to get a stick on it. It wasn't pretty, but they're usually not."

Not that style points mattered much during a taut dozen days in early spring. The Capitals overcame a three-goal deficit in the final 22 minutes of regulation and earned a break when Jay Beagle went to his belly on the goal line to steer a shot by Patric Hornqvist out of harm's way early in the extra period.

There was no stopping Bonino's tap-in, however, sending the Presidents' Trophy winners to their dressing room with an all-too familiar feeling.

Nine times the longtime rivals have met in the playoffs. Eight times the post-series handshake line has ended with Pittsburgh celebrating while Washington trudges toward the offseason.

"It's just kind of setting in right now that it's over," Beagle said. "We had high expectations. The Cup was our goal all year and unfortunately we didn't (make it)."

While Washington kept Pittsburgh stars Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin under wraps — they combined for all of four points in six games — the Capitals struggled to keep up with one of the fastest lines in the league.

Kessel scored twice and helped set up the winner. Hagelin added a goal and two assists for Pittsburgh, including the shot that allowed Bonino to send Consol Energy Center into a frenzy.

"I thought we did a really good job on Crosby and Malkin the whole series, but a lot of the other people hurt us," Washington coach Barry Trotz said.

T.J. Oshie, Justin Williams and John Carlson scored during Washington's comeback, one completed after three straight delay of game penalties against the Penguins gave one of the league's best power plays enough time to tie it up.

The Capitals have just four wins beyond the second round of the postseason in franchise history after another promising spring ended abruptly.

# US not fazed by losing players for Rio

Associated Press

Anthony Davis can't play. Chris Paul doesn't want to.

Three months before the Olympics, the U.S. men's basketball team has already been losing players. Not just any players, but some of the best in the sport.

Davis and Paul are NBA All-Stars, perhaps two of the top 10 players in the league, and could have been the starting center and point guard when the Americans took the floor for their Olympic opener. Paul seems like a particularly big loss, given how many key plays he made four years ago against Lithuania and Spain in the only close games the U.S. faced.

This has to be cause for concern, right?

"We have too many players over here to kind of get worried about that," U.S. veteran Carmelo Anthony said.

The Americans are losing bodies, but clearly not any sleep.

Not when they're armed with a roster pool of 31 players, giving them quality backups and then if necessary, backups to those backups. They hope everyone would say yes to playing but are prepared when some of them say no.

Even when a couple of them happen to be at the top of the list?

"No, I don't think of things that way," USA Basketball chairman Jerry Colangelo said.

"We have a lot of terrific players and

athletes and flexibility, and we're going to be just fine."

The original list of 31 is probably down to the mid-20s. Blake Griffin had a procedure on his left quad tendon after aggravating an injury in the playoffs on the same day that Clippers teammate Paul broke his right hand, which may have knocked him out of a third Olympics even if he hadn't already decided he wouldn't play.

Washington's John Wall had surgery on both knees and fellow point guard Mike Conley had his season cut short by injury as he heads into free agency, though they would've had a tough time making the team at perhaps its deepest position.

Colangelo knows there could be other injuries, or players who pull out because of contract situations or simply because they don't want to give up their summers. The Americans sustained heavy losses just four years ago, when Derrick Rose, Dwyane Wade, Chris Bosh and Dwight Howard all had to withdraw in the months leading up to the Olympics.

The Americans then went to London and rang up stats that rivaled the Dream Team's while winning their second straight gold medal.

"It goes all the way back to the reason for developing this national team concept, to create the depth that we have and the culture that we have," Colangelo said. "And so I think we're blessed to have that kind of a roster where we can take a few hits and still be very strong."

Removing Davis, sidelined by shoulder and knee problems, and Paul, the remainder of the current roster is:

Guards: Stephen Curry, Klay Thompson and Andre Iguodala (Golden State), Russell Westbrook (Oklahoma City), Kyrie Irving (Cleveland), James Harden (Houston), Damian Lillard (Portland), Wall and Bradley Beal (Washington), Conley (Memphis), Jimmy Butler (Chicago), DeMar DeRozan (Toronto).

Forwards and centers: LeBron James and Kevin Love (Cleveland), LaMarcus Aldridge and Kawhi Leonard (San Antonio), Anthony (New York), Kevin Durant (Oklahoma City), Paul George (Indiana), Draymond Green and Harrison Barnes (Golden State), Howard (Houston), Griffin and DeAndre Jordan (Clippers), DeMarcus Cousins and Rudy Gay (Sacramento), Kenneth Faried (Denver), Andre Drummond (Detroit), Gordon Hayward (Utah).

Colangelo plans to name the roster around June 27, and there are plenty of questions until then.

■ Could James pass on a U.S.-record fourth Olympics to rest if he's in the NBA Finals for a sixth straight season?

■ Might Curry, who's played on two world championship-winning teams, need to skip what would be his Olympic debut after a pair of injuries in the playoffs?

■ Would Aldridge and Leonard, who withdrew in previous years, do so again if San Antonio reaches the Finals?



## Ship's Store official new car program

Exclusive Navy at-sea offers:

[www.navyauto.com](http://www.navyauto.com) or [nasinfo@navyauto.com](mailto:nasinfo@navyauto.com)

# Rua's HR caps Texas rally

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Trailing by five runs in the eighth inning and scheduled for another game to begin barely 13 hours later, the Texas Rangers could've just decided it wasn't their night.

Instead, Ryan Rua hit a three-run homer to cap a seven-run rally, and Texas beat the Chicago White Sox 13-11 on Tuesday.

"Incredible," Rangers manager Jeff Banister said. "We've talked about the sheer will and heart and resilience. These guys believe."

Chicago led 11-6 before Elvis Andrus led off the bottom of the eighth with a single. Pinch-hitter Mitch Moreland singled home a run, Adrian Beltre drove in another with a sacrifice fly and Ian Desmond hit a two-run triple.

The Rangers still trailed 11-10 with two outs. Rua had only one home run in his previous 48 at-bats, and was just 4-for-26 (.154) against right-handers such as Matt Albers (1-1).

"I kind of swung at two bad fastballs," Rua said. "I had it in the back of my mind that he might come back fastball again, so I was kind of sitting on it."

The ball sailed toward center field, and landed about halfway up the batter's-eye grassy hill beyond the fence.

"It's frustrating. We should have won that game," Albers said. "I pitched around Prince (Felder) on purpose, and then to Rua got 1-2, and was beating him in, and was trying to go away. The ball leaked right back down the middle."

The AL Central-leading White Sox had won six straight against Texas. Chicago's bullpen entered the game with a major league-leading 1.98 ERA. After the relievers allowed seven earned runs in 1 1/3 innings, the ERA jumped to 2.61.

"We've been using these guys a lot," White Sox manager Robin Ventura said. "It was an off night, I think, bullpen-wise, and that's going to happen in a long sea-

son. This is a game where you tip the cap to those guys. They didn't give up."

Alex Claudio (1-0) gave up a three-run double to the first batter he faced in a five-run fourth inning but allowed only one run of his own in a career-high 4 1/3 innings.

"You can talk about the hitting of Rua and the pinch hitters and the ABs," Banister said, "but it was a tremendous job by Alex Claudio. For a guy who's probably the second-to-last guy in the bullpen, he just kept challenging hitters, going at them."

**Cubs 8, Padres 7:** Ben Zobrist went 4-for-4, Addison Russell had three RBIs and host Chicago beat San Diego for their eighth straight win.

Jon Lester (4-1) pitched six innings of three-run ball as Chicago improved to 25-6 for the best start by a major league team since the 1984 Detroit Tigers won 26 of their first 31 games.

Kris Bryant drove in two runs and Jason Heyward scored twice, helping the Cubs open an 8 1/2-game lead over second-place Pittsburgh in the NL Central.

**Tigers 5, Nationals 4:** Andrew Romine drove in the tiebreaking run on a play that withstood a replay challenge under the new slide rule, Miguel Cabrera tacked on a pinch-hit RBI, and visiting Detroit overcame Ryan Zimmerman's two homers to beat Washington and end a seven-game losing streak.

**Yankees 10, Royals 7:** Brett Gardner doubled home the tiebreaking run off Kelvin Herrera (0-1) in the eighth inning, and host New York overcame three home runs by Lorenzo Cain to beat reeling Kansas City.

**Dodgers 3, Mets 2:** Pinch-hitter Trayce Thompson connected for a solo home run with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning to give host Los Angeles a victory over New York.

**Brewers 10, Marlins 2:** Jonathan Villar got two hits, stole two bases and

scored twice, and visiting Milwaukee won its rematch against Adam Conley (2-2) by beating Miami.

**Orioles 5, Twins 3:** Adam Jones broke out of a long slump in a big way, delivering the go-ahead, two-run single in the ninth inning after a towering homer in the fifth to lead visiting Baltimore over skidding Minnesota.

**Red Sox 13, Athletics 5:** Mookie Betts, Hanley Ramirez and Travis Shaw each homered and host Boston continued its strong hitting with a victory over Oakland.

**Indians 4, Astros 0:** Trevor Bauer (3-0) pitched seven scoreless innings and Bryan Shaw and Cody Allen completed the four-hitter to help visiting Cleveland beat Houston for its sixth victory in the past eight games.

**Phillies 3, Braves 2:** Adam Morgan (1-0) allowed only one run in seven innings, Mikael Franco homered and visiting Philadelphia extended Atlanta's home misery.

**Blue Jays 4, Giants 0:** Troy Tulowitzki homered and drove in three runs, J.A. Happ (5-0) allowed five hits in 8 2/3 innings and visiting Toronto beat San Francisco for its sixth victory in eight games.

**Diamondbacks 5, Rockies 1:** Rubby De La Rosa (4-4) took a shutout into the eighth inning before running out of steam, Paul Goldschmidt homered and visiting Arizona beat Colorado for its fifth straight victory.

**Cardinals 8, Angels 1:** Matt Carpenter homered twice, including a leadoff shot on the fifth pitch of the game, and visiting St. Louis had nine extra-base hits in a rout of Los Angeles.

**Mariners 6, Rays 4:** Franklin Gutierrez hit a two-run homer in the first inning, Dae-Ho Lee added a three-run shot in the fourth and host Seattle beat Tampa Bay.

# Simonds leads A&M quest for national seeding

Associated Press

Fresh off a series win over Vanderbilt that was capped by Kyle Simonds' no-hitter, Texas A&M has the look of a team destined for a top-eight national seed for the NCAA Tournament.

The second-ranked Aggies (37-10, 16-8) have won 15 of their last 18 games, lead the SEC West and are fourth in the RPI. They won't allow themselves to get comfortable, though, not after being passed over for a national seed last year despite a résumé that appeared to merit one.

A national seed assures a team of playing at home through super regionals. Last year, the Aggies had to go on the road for super regionals and lost to TCU.

"The older guys, we want to make sure we get past that and punch our ticket to Omaha," Simonds said, "so I can't tell you how much it means to us to be playing well right now. We just have to keep doing what we're doing."

Simonds doesn't deny daydreaming about what it would be like to play in Omaha at the College World Series. He grew up in Grand Island, Neb., about 130 miles west of TD Ameritrade Park.

The senior right-hander has played a key role in the Aggies' surge. Since A&M was swept at Florida, Simonds (8-1) has regained command of his breaking ball and allowed just five earned runs in 352/3 innings (1.26 ERA) spanning five starts.

On Saturday, he followed his first career complete game, against Arkansas on May 1, with the SEC's first no-hitter in a conference game since 1994. Simonds' bid was aided by two big defensive plays in the ninth inning — center fielder Nick Choruby's diving catch for the second out and Simonds' game-ending catch of Jeren Kendall's hot liner.

A look around the country:

**Rally possum:** LSU's sweep of Arkansas was highlighted by Saturday's 10-9, 10-inning win in which the Tigers rallied from a 9-1 fifth-inning deficit. It was LSU's biggest comeback win since April 10, 1988. The Tigers were still down 9-5 in the seventh when the game was delayed while a baby possum traipsed through the outfield. Arkansas committed four errors, leading to six LSU runs in the final four innings after the possum appeared.

**Here come the Huskies:** Washington will go into this weekend's home series against rival Washington State no worse than tied for first in the Pac-12. The Huskies (27-16, 13-8) took two of three on the road against Southern California.

**Forty and counting:** Top-ranked Florida (40-8) won two of three against Tennessee and reached 40 wins faster than any other Gators team, needing just 48 games. The previous best was 52 games to reach 40 wins, by the 1996 squad.

**Same old, same old:** Clemson has clinched its 52nd consecutive winning season, the third-longest active streak in Division I behind Florida State (69) and Miami (59). The Tigers (31-16) did it by winning two of three against North Carolina State.

**Crowded at the top:** The top eight teams in the Big Ten are separated by three games or fewer with two weeks left in the regular season. Indiana won its series at Minnesota to take over first place. The Gophers and Michigan are a half-game behind the Hoosiers.

# 2018 Super Bowl date set for Feb. 4

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The date has been set for the 2018 NFL Super Bowl to be played in Minneapolis.

The Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee said the NFL has scheduled the 2018 game for Feb. 4 at the U.S. Bank Stadium, which is currently under construction. The stadium is due to be completed in time for the upcoming Minnesota Vikings season.

Minneapolis was awarded Super Bowl 52 in 2014.

Super Bowl 51 is scheduled for Feb. 5, 2017, in Houston.

In other NFL news:

■ The Buffalo Bills will retire Bruce Smith's No. 78 at the home opener this fall.

The team announced Wednesday that the Hall of Fame defensive end will be honored with a jersey retirement ceremony to take place during halftime of the Bills' prime-time game against the New York Jets on Sept. 15.

Smith holds the NFL record with 200 career sacks, with 171 of them coming during his 15 seasons in Buffalo. He was the NFL's defensive player of the year in 1990 and '96.

Hall of Fame quarterback Jim Kelly's No. 12 is the only other jersey retired by the Bills.

## Kyle Busch's crew chief suspended for violation

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — NASCAR has suspended Kyle Busch's crew chief and tire changer for one race for violating the lug nut policy during the team's win at Kansas last weekend.

Adam Stevens was also fined \$20,000 and placed on probation through the end of the year. Front tire changer Josh Leslie is on probation until Dec. 31.

NASCAR said after Saturday night's race that all teams had passed the inspection of lug nuts. It was not clear Wednesday what changed regarding Busch's winning car.

## Ovechkin called up to Russian team after loss

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia — The Russian Hockey Federation said it is calling up forward Alex Ovechkin and Washington Capitals teammates Evgeny Kuznetsov and Dmitry Orlov for the world championships.

The Capitals lost in six games to the Pittsburgh Penguins in the second round of the NHL playoffs on Tuesday.

Russia's next game is against Denmark on Thursday in Moscow.

## Crawford, Postol to meet in title showdown

Terence Crawford and Viktor Postol, unbeaten 140-pound champions, will meet in a title unification fight July 23 in Las Vegas.

Promoter Bob Arum announced the bout at a news conference Tuesday in Los Angeles.

Both fighters are 28-0 and will put their title belts and unbeaten marks on the line in a scheduled 12-round fight from the MGM Grand arena.

## Royals prospect receives 50-game suspension

NEW YORK — Kansas City Royals prospect Raul Mondesi has been suspended for 50 games for testing positive for clenbuterol, a banned steroid.

The penalty was announced Tuesday against the 20-year-old infielder, who is on Kansas City's 40-man roster but had been optioned to Double-A.

Mondesi is the son of former NL Rookie of the Year Raul Mondesi. The younger Mondesi was the first player to make his big league debut in the World Series.