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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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World leaders vow to destroy militants

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — Western leaders stepped up the rhetoric against the Islamic State group on Sunday as residents of the Belgian capital awoke to largely empty streets on the second day under the highest threat level.

With a menace of Paris-style attacks against Brussels and a missing suspect in the deadly Nov. 13 attacks in France last spotted crossing into Belgium, the city kept subways and underground trams closed for a second day.

Officials also recommended that sports competitions and all activities in public buildings be canceled and malls and commercial centers closed.

Western leaders, meanwhile, vowed to stand up to the Islamic State group, which has claimed responsibility for the attacks in Paris that killed 130 people and wounded hundreds more; the suicide bombings in Beirut that killed 43 people and injured more than 200; and the downing of the Russian airliner carrying 224 people in Sinai. They all happened within the past month.

Speaking from Kuala Lumpur, President Barack Obama said the world would not accept the extremists' attacks on civilians as the "new normal," and vowed the United States and its international partners would not relent in the fight against the Islamic State militants.

French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said the Islamic State group must be destroyed at all costs.

"We must annihilate Islamic State worldwide ... and we must destroy Islamic State on its own territory," Le Drian said. "That's the only possible direction."

France has intensified its aerial bombing in Syria and

Obama urges calm

Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Reassuring a nation on edge, President Barack Obama said Sunday that the Islamic State group "cannot strike a mortal blow" against the U.S., and he warned that overreacting to the Paris attacks would play into extremists' hands.

"We will destroy this terrorist organization," he vowed.

Ending a trip to Asia, Obama implored Americans not to let the specter of terrorism cause them to compromise their values or change the way they live.

"We do not succumb to fear," he said. "The most powerful tool we have to fight ISIL is to say that

we're not afraid, to not elevate them, to somehow buy into their fantasy that they're doing something important," Obama said, using an acronym for the terrorist organization.

Since Islamic State militants killed 130 in France nine days ago, Obama's strategy has come under repeated questioning. He dismissed the group's global prowess and said, "They're a bunch of killers with good social media."

Rejecting the notion of an existential threat, Obama said the Islamic State group "can't beat us on the battlefield, so they try to terrorize us into being afraid."

Le Drian said the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, which has been sent to help operations against Islamic State militants in Syria, will be "operational" from Monday and "ready to act."

French President Francois Hollande is scheduled to meet in Paris with British Prime Minister David Cameron on Monday, and he will travel to Washington and Moscow later in the week to push for a stronger international coalition against the Islamic State group. Cameron is expected to outline his plan for combating the Islamic militants this week as he seeks parliamentary approval to join France, the United States and Russia in striking the group's strongholds in Syria.

Russia is also trumpeting action it's taking to fight the Islamic State group. Last week, it intensified its airstrikes in Syria in retaliation for the bombing on Oct. 31 of its passenger plane in Egypt. On Sunday, Russian law enforcement officers raided a hideout of armed militants in the North Caucasus, killing 11 of them in an exchange of fire.

The militants were part of a group whose members had pledged allegiance to the militants, the National Anti-Terrorist Committee said in a statement.

Islamic State atrocities like the Paris attacks are partly aimed at provoking the West, as the group hopes that stepped-up military action in the region will reinforce its narrative of a

clash of civilizations and thus drive more Muslims into its ranks. The Islamic State group and other jihadi groups seize on harsh Western rhetoric and civilian deaths to portray themselves as defending Muslims from modern-day "crusaders."

While the group's end-goal is a Western retreat from the Middle East, in the near term it would likely welcome the arrival of foreign ground troops, viewing it as an opportunity to drag Western nations into a costly and bloody war of attrition.

Tensions have been high in Europe since the attacks in Paris. France has extended a state of emergency — which allows police raids, searches and house arrest without permission from a judge — for three months, and on Saturday extended a ban on demonstrations and other gatherings through Nov. 30, when a U.N. climate conference with more than 100 heads of state is scheduled to start.

The markets in Brussels were closed on Sunday, and Minister of Education Joelle Milquet told Le Soir newspaper that there was a 50 percent chance schools would be closed Monday.

Interior Minister Jan Jambon said several suspects tied to the Paris attacks were thought to be at large and that the threat wouldn't necessarily disappear if Salah Abdeslam — who is believed to have played a key role in the attacks — was found.

"Unfortunately, the threat is wider than this (one) figure," he told Flemish broadcaster VRT.

In a sign of the nervousness that has swept through Paris since the attacks, some travelers at the Gare Du Nord train station ran out of their trains Sunday after hearing noises they thought were gunshots. The noises were actually caused by a pigeon being electrocuted on the tracks.

States assured on vetting of Syrian refugees

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration is assuring governors that refugees who come to the United States in its resettlement program undergo a “rigorous security vetting process,” particularly if they are fleeing from Syria.

“In short, the security vetting for this population — the most vulnerable of individuals — is extraordinarily thorough and comprehensive,” Secretary of State John Kerry and Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson wrote in letters sent to all state and territorial governors and to the mayor of the District of Columbia.

A copy of the letter, dated Friday, was obtained by The Associated Press.

After the attacks in Paris and the Islamic State group’s claim of responsibility, several governors vowed to block efforts to resettle Syrian refugees in the U.S. for fear their ranks would be infiltrated by militants planning domestic attacks.

In the House of Representatives, lawmakers voted overwhelmingly to erect high hurdles for Syrian and Iraqi refugees.

The administration is countering that the vetting process is thorough and can take nearly three years. President Barack Obama has said the U.S. will remain a welcoming place for refugees from around the world.

In their letters to governors, Kerry and Johnson say the vetting process is multi-layered and intensive and involves multiple

law enforcement, national security and intelligence agencies.

They say the process includes even more precautions for Syrian refugees.

Noting that more than 4 million people have fled Syria, the American officials say some of the closest U.S. allies and other nations are pledging to take in Syrian refugees. They say the plan to bring at least 10,000 to the U.S. this fiscal year “represents a modest commitment by our government.”

Most of the refugees, they add, are families, children and victims of torture.

A refugee applicant cannot be approved for travel and admission to the U.S. until all required security checks have been completed and cleared, according to the letter.

SE Asian leaders create economic community

Associated Press

KUALALUMPUR, Malaysia — Thirteen years after mooted the idea, Southeast Asian leaders on Sunday formally created a unified economic community in a region more populous and diverse than both the European Union and North America, and one that hopes to compete with China and India.

The 10 leaders in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations signed a declaration during their summit establishing the ASEAN Economic Community as part of a larger ASEAN Community that aims for political, security, cultural

and social integration.

The community, known by its acronym AEC, is already a reality, and many of its fundamentals have been applied in the region, including the removal of tariff barriers and visa restrictions. It has also led to greater political and cultural cooperation.

AEC will bolster income and employment and will provide the region with stronger economic muscle in facing the other giants, said Michael G. Plummer, a professor of international economics at the Europe Center of Johns Hopkins University, based in Bologna, Italy.

Myanmar landslide kills about 100; many missing

YANGON, Myanmar — A landslide near a jade mine in northern Myanmar killed about 100 people, most of them villagers digging for green stones in a mountain of displaced earth, a witness and a community leader said Sunday. Many other people were missing.

The collapse occurred Saturday evening in the Kachin

state community of Hpakan, said Brang Seng, a jade businessman, who watched as bodies were pulled from the debris and were taken to a hospital morgue.

An estimated 100 to 200 people were still missing, he said. Search-and-rescue teams wearing bright orange uniforms combed through the rubble Sunday for survivors.

From The Associated Press

DOJ to look into Minn. shooting by 2 officers

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — U.S. Justice Department attorneys were expected to fly to Minnesota on Sunday to investigate the killing of a black man that has prompted protests and calls for the two Minneapolis police officers involved in the shooting to be prosecuted.

A key issue during their visit will be whether authorities should release to the public videos of the fatal shooting of Jamar Clark, 24, a week ago.

Federal and state authorities have resisted releasing the footage — from an ambulance, a mobile police camera, public housing cameras and people’s cellphones — because they said it doesn’t show the full incident and making the recordings public would compromise their investigations.

Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton said Saturday that he had asked Clark’s family and representatives of the Black Lives Matter group protesting his death to meet with the federal government lawyers.

“I will urge that the tapes be provided to the family and released to the public as soon as doing so will not jeopardize the

Department of Justice’s investigation,” Dayton said after meeting with the family and leaders of the protesters.

Dozens of demonstrators huddled around bonfires early Sunday in frigid temperatures outside a Minneapolis police station at an encampment that they have said will not be dismantled until their demands are met.

Minneapolis civil rights activist Mel Reeves said the primary goal of the protests is to see the officers involved in the death of Clark prosecuted based on statements of people who say they saw the shooting.

Both officers involved in the shooting, Mark Ringgenberg and Dustin Schwarze, have been placed on standard administrative leave. Authorities haven’t said who fired the fatal shot.

Police have said the officers were responding to an assault call and found Clark interfering with paramedics. Authorities say there was a struggle. The head of the Minneapolis police union has said Clark was shot after reaching for an officer’s gun.

Some people in the community say they saw him handcuffed at the time of the shooting — a claim police have disputed.

Navy grinds out big win

Associated Press

TULSA, Okla. — Now that No. 19 Navy has dispatched Tulsa in dominating fashion, the Midshipmen can focus on bigger goals.

Quarterback Keenan Reynolds ran for 81 yards and a touchdown while directing a Navy offense that rolled up 512 yards on the ground and the Midshipmen beat Tulsa 44-21 on Saturday night.

Reynolds, who also threw for a touchdown, became Navy's all-time leading rusher with 4,195 yards, breaking Napoleon McCallum's record of 4,179 yards. His 82 career touchdowns remain one behind the career NCAA touchdown record of 83 set by Wisconsin's Montee Ball.

Navy (9-1, 7-0) will play at Houston (10-1, 6-1) for the American Athletic Conference West Division title Friday and a spot in the league title game. No. 13 Houston lost 20-17 to UConn on Saturday.

Tulsa (5-6, 2-5) has a final chance to become bowl eligible Friday at Tulane.

"Those guys have scored a ton of points on a lot of good teams," said Navy coach Ken Niumatalolo. "I thought our defense played great. We held a very high-powered offensive team down."

Toneo Gulley ran 70 yards for a touchdown in the first quarter, the longest run by a Navy runner this season, to give the Midshipmen a 7-0 lead. They would never trail as six different offensive players took turns scoring in the rout.

"Hats off to Navy," said Tulsa coach Phillip Montgomery. "They are a very talented football team, very difficult to prepare for. I thought our defense played very well early, it's just hard to keep them contained."

It was no surprise that Navy chewed up the Golden Hurricane's 115th-ranked run defense. The question was whether Tulsa's ninth-ranked offense would be able to keep pace against the AAC's best defense.

Golden Hurricane quarterback Dane Evans threw for 279 yards but was sacked four times. Tulsa was limited to 356 yards,

well below the Golden Hurricane offense's average of 526.

Rutgers 31, Army 21: Paul James rushed for 116 yards and three touchdowns, and the visiting Scarlet Knights beat the Black Knights to snap a four-game losing streak.

Rutgers (4-7) has won nine straight in the series with Army (2-9).

Army was poised to pull within a field goal with 5:22 left in the fourth quarter when Josh Hicks' interception in the end zone sealed it for the Scarlet Knights.

Chris Carter, who took first-team snaps at quarterback in Army practices during the week while starter Ahmad Bradshaw wore a boot on an injured right foot, made his first career start.

Carter gained 111 yards rushing on 20 carries and scored once, and was spot-on with several pitches to help key Army's triple option. He also completed 4 of 6 passes for 140 yards and one touchdown.

N. Iowa surprises No. 1 UNC

Associated Press

CEDAR FALLS, Iowa — North Carolina only scheduled a trip to Northern Iowa as a homecoming for Marcus Paige.

The Tar Heels could've used their injured senior star against the Panthers.

Wes Washpun scored 21 points and Northern Iowa stunned top-ranked North Carolina 71-67 on Saturday — just a week after losing to Colorado State at home.

The Panthers used a 29-8 stretch over 12 minutes of the second half to turn a 50-34 deficit into a 63-58 lead, and held on for the upset.

"Very disappointed in me, more so than my team. We acted like a team that had not been coached very well out there," North Carolina coach Roy Williams said. We "made a lot of mistakes."

Northern Iowa also got 19 points from Matt Bohannon — whose three-pointer with 2:51 left gave Northern Iowa the lead for good — and 14 points from Paul Jespersion.

Justin Jackson had 25 points for the Tar Heels (3-1), who didn't force a single turnover in the second half. Nate Britt was just 1-for-6 shooting and finished with only four points.

Paige didn't play because of a broken bone in his right hand. The Tar Heels missed him badly, as Paige's replacement, Joel Berry, had just five points on 2-for-7 shooting.

"He's our best player offensively and defensively and as fine a young man as I've ever been around in my life, so I'd like to have him on the court," Williams said of Paige. "But North Carolina still plays."

The Panthers (2-1) also beat the Tar Heels in the paint, 24-22, after Kennedy Meeks scored the first eight points for UNC.

Meeks finished with just 10 points, a total matched by Brice Johnson. The 6-foot-10 and 6-foot-9 forwards never established the inside game for UNC, and the Panthers were able to exploit that the rest of the way.

No. 9 Wichita State 76, Emporia State 54: Ron Baker scored 23 points for the host Shockers, who played without injured senior point guard Fred VanVleet. He has hamstring and ankle injuries.

No. 10 Gonzaga 101, Mount St. Mary's 56: Domantas Sabonis had 15 points and 14 rebounds and Silas Melson added 15 points for host Gonzaga (2-0) in a game that was part of the Battle 4 Atlantis tournament.

No. 18 Notre Dame 83, UMass Lowell 57: Zach Auguste had 19 points and 10 rebounds for the host Irish.

With no River Hawk taller than 6-foot-8 to challenge him in the post, the 6-10 Auguste found his way to the basket early and often, scoring 15 of his points in the first half on 6-for-8 shooting.

No. 19 UConn 83, Furman 58: At Storrs, Conn., Shonn Miller had 18 points and seven rebounds for the Huskies.

No. 21 Purdue 61, Old Dominion 39: At Uncasville, Conn., center A.J. Hammons scored 12 of his 18 points in the first half for the Boilermakers in the Basketball Hall of Fame Tip-Off Tournament.

How the AP College Football Top 25 fared

1 Clemson (11-0) beat Wake Forest 33-13. At Clemson, S.C., Deshaun Watson threw three touchdown passes and ran for a another score, and Clemson topped 500 yards of offense for the seventh straight game.

Next: at South Carolina, Saturday.

2 Ohio State (10-1) lost to No. 9 Michigan State 17-14. At Columbus, Ohio, the Buckeyes managed just 132 yards and lost for the first time to a Big Ten team in the regular season since Urban Meyer became coach four seasons ago.

Next: at No. 14 Michigan, Saturday.

3 Alabama (10-1) beat Charleston Southern 56-6. At Tuscaloosa, Ala., Cyrus Jones returned two punts for touchdowns to become the only Alabama player to score twice on punt returns, according to school records dating to 1944.

Next: at Auburn, Saturday.

4 Oklahoma State (10-1) lost to No. 10 Baylor 45-35. At Stillwater, Okla., Mason Rudolph passed for 430 yards and three touchdowns in the Cowboys' loss.

Next: vs. No. 7 Oklahoma, Saturday.

5 Notre Dame (10-1) beat Boston College 19-16. At Boston, DeShone Kizer threw for two touchdowns — and three interceptions — and Notre Dame survived five turnovers to win at Fenway Park.

Next: at No. 15 Stanford, Saturday.

6 Iowa (11-0) beat Purdue 40-20. At Iowa City, Iowa, C.J. Beathard threw three touchdown passes and Iowa wrapped up a spot in the conference championship game.

Next: at Nebraska, Friday.

7 Oklahoma (10-1) beat No. 11 TCU 30-29. At Norman, Okla., Steven Parker batted away Bram Kohlhausen's two-point conversion pass attempt with less than a minute left.

Next: at No. 4 Oklahoma State, Saturday.

8 Florida (10-1) beat FAU 20-14, OT. At Gainesville, Fla., Treon Harris threw a 13-yard touchdown pass to Jake McGee in overtime to lift Florida.

Next: vs. No. 16 Florida State, Saturday.

9 Michigan State (10-1) beat No. 2 Ohio State 17-14. At Columbus, Ohio, Michael Geiger kicked a 41-yard field goal as time expired and the Spartans snapped Ohio State's 23-game win streak.

Next: vs. Penn State, Saturday.

10 Baylor (9-1) beat No. 4 Oklahoma State 45-35. At Stillwater, Okla., backup quarterback Chris Johnson threw two touchdown passes and ran for a score to top previously unbeaten Oklahoma State.

Next: at No. 11 TCU, Friday.

11 TCU (9-2) lost to No. 7 Oklahoma 30-29. At Norman, Okla., TCU had a chance to tie, but instead of the extra point, the Horned Frogs were turned away on a two-point conversion attempt.

Next: vs. No. 10 Baylor, Friday.

12 North Carolina (10-1) beat Virginia Tech 30-27, OT. At Blacksburg, Va., Marquise Williams hit Quinshad Davis with a 5-yard pass in overtime to spoil retiring coach Frank Beamer's final home game at Virginia Tech.

Next: at N.C. State, Saturday.

13 Houston (10-1) lost to UConn 20-17. At East Hartford, Conn., Houston quarterback Kyle Postma, playing in place of Heisman hopeful Greg Ward Jr., threw for 185 yards and a touchdown.

Next: vs. No. 19 Navy, Friday.

14 Michigan (9-2) beat Penn State 28-16. At State College, Pa., Jake Rudock was 25 of 38 and connected with Jake Butt and Amara Darboh for touchdowns.

Next: vs. No. 2 Ohio State, Saturday.

15 Stanford (9-2) beat California 35-22. At Stanford, Calif., Christian McCaffrey ran scored on a 49-yard touchdown catch and also scored on a 98-yard kickoff return.

Next: vs. No. 5 Notre Dame, Saturday.

16 Florida State (9-2) beat Chattanooga 52-13. At Tallahassee, Fla., Sean Maguire threw two touchdown passes and Dalvin Cook had his seventh 100-yard rushing game and added two more scores for the Seminoles.

Next: at No. 8 Florida, Saturday.

17 LSU (7-3) lost to No. 25 Mississippi 38-17. At Oxford, Miss., LSU rallied in the third quarter to cut it to 24-17, but the Rebels responded with two quick touchdowns.

Next: vs. Texas A&M, Saturday.

18 Utah (8-3) lost to UCLA 17-9. At Salt Lake City, Travis Wilson threw for 110 yards and ran for 67 in the loss and Joe Williams ran for 121 yards in place of Devontae Booker.

Next: vs. Colorado, Saturday.

19 Navy (9-1) beat Tulsa 44-21. At Tulsa, Okla., Keenan Reynolds ran for 81 yards and a touchdown while directing a Navy offense that rolled up 512 yards.

Next: at No. 13 Houston, Friday.

20 Northwestern (9-2) beat No. 21 Wisconsin 13-7. At Madison, Wis., Justin Jackson ran for 139 yards and a touchdown, and Northwestern held off Wisconsin.

Next: vs. Illinois at Chicago, Saturday.

21 Wisconsin (8-3) lost to No. 20 Northwestern 13-7. At Madison, Wis., coming in for an injured Joel Stave, Bart Houston's pass to the end zone sailed just out of reach of Tanner McEvoy.

Next: at Minnesota, Saturday.

22 Southern Cal (7-4) lost to No. 23 Oregon 48-28. At Eugene, Ore., Cody Kessler completed 30 of 41 passes for 248 yards and two scores for the Trojans.

Next: vs. UCLA, Saturday.

23 Oregon (8-3) beat No. 22 Southern Cal 48-28. At Eugene, Ore., Vernon Adams Jr. threw for 407 yards and six touchdowns for the win.

Next: vs. Oregon State, Friday.

24 Washington State (8-3) beat Colorado 27-3. At Pullman, Wash., Gabe Marks and Dom Williams each had touchdown receptions.

Next: at Washington, Friday.

25 Mississippi (8-3) beat No. 17 LSU 38-17. At Oxford, Miss., Chad Kelly threw for 280 yards and two touchdowns and Ole Miss handed the Tigers their first three-game losing streak since 1999.

Next: at Mississippi State, Saturday.



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Heat rally, keep 76ers winless

Associated Press

MIAMI — Dwyane Wade scored 27 points and the Miami Heat survived a major scare from winless Philadelphia, rallying from 17 points down to beat the 76ers 96-91 on Saturday night.

Hassan Whiteside scored 13 points and added nine rebounds and eight blocks for the Heat, who went on a 19-2 run in a seven-minute stretch of the fourth quarter to escape. Chris Bosh also scored 13 for Miami.

Philadelphia is now 0-14 this season — the ninth-worst start in NBA history — and has dropped 24 consecutive games going back to last season. Few of those looked as winnable as this, but the 76ers simply folded in the final minutes.

Isaiah Canaan scored 22 for Philadelphia, and Robert Covington finished with 21.

Knicks 107, Rockets 102: Kristaps Porzingis had 24 points, 14 rebounds and seven blocked shots to lead visiting New York over slumping Houston.

The Knicks (8-6) won their fourth straight overall. They also snapped an 11-game losing streak against the Rockets and a 10-game skid when playing in Houston.

The Knicks didn't get their eighth win last season until Jan. 23, when they were 8-36.

James Harden had 24 points, 10 assists and seven rebounds as the Rockets lost for the sixth time in their last seven games.

Cavaliers 109, Hawks 97: Kevin Love scored a season-high 25 points, LeBron

James added 19 and host Cleveland beat Atlanta.

The teams met for the first time since the Cavaliers swept the Hawks in the Eastern Conference finals, and it didn't take long for Cleveland to continue its dominance.

The Cavaliers took control after trailing 17-16 midway through the first quarter. Cleveland quickly built a 10-point lead, stretched the margin to 57-40 late in the first half and the Hawks never recovered.

Hawks coach Mike Budenholzer was ejected in the second quarter after making contact with an official. Budenholzer was given a technical for arguing a call, bumped referee Ben Taylor after stepping on the floor and was quickly tossed.

Wizards 97, Pistons 95: Nene scored 18 points and Otto Porter added 17 as visiting Washington beat Detroit.

The Wizards had the ball and a two-point lead with 9.2 seconds left, but Porter was called for a five-second violation on the inbound attempt. That gave Detroit a last chance, but Marcus Morris missed a 3-pointer at the buzzer.

Marcin Gortat finished with 14 points and eight rebounds, while Ramon Sessions had 14 points and nine assists off the bench for the Wizards. Washington's reserves outscored Detroit's 51-15.

Reggie Jackson led the Pistons with 20 points and nine assists, while Morris had 18 points and nine rebounds. Andre Drummond failed to get a double-double for the first time this season, finishing

with eight points and 13 rebounds. He also didn't get an offensive rebound in 37 minutes.

Spurs 92, Grizzlies 82: Kawhi Leonard scored 19 points, Tony Parker had 18 and host San Antonio snapped Memphis' four-game winning streak.

Manu Ginobili added 15 points for San Antonio, which is unbeaten in six home games.

Tim Duncan had 10 points, including a pair of running floaters in the lane in the final 90 seconds to seal the victory, as well as 10 rebounds.

Neither team had its starting power forward. LaMarcus Aldridge was a late scratch with a sprained left ankle, his first missed game with San Antonio. Memphis' Zach Randolph did not play in his second straight game due to right knee soreness.

Kings 97, Magic 91: DeMarcus Cousins had 29 points and 12 rebounds as visiting Sacramento held off Orlando.

Rajon Rondo added 13 points, nine assists and seven rebounds for the Kings, who had lost two in a row. Marco Belinelli chipped in 13 points off the bench.

Pacers 123, Bucks 86: C.J. Miles scored a season-high 21 points to lead host Indiana over Milwaukee.

Paul George had 20 points and seven rebounds, and Jordan Hill added a season-high 20 points off the bench for the Pacers (8-5), who have won five of six.

Greg Monroe had 11 points and 14 rebounds for the Bucks (5-8), who have lost three straight and five of six. Jabari Parker and O.J. Mayo each finished with 10 points.

Buescher wins Xfinity Series title

Associated Press

HOMESTEAD, Fla. — Chris Buescher never made a major mistake, never got rattled and never even tried to contend for a victory.

He gladly settled for a championship.

Buescher won the Xfinity Series title Saturday, helping offset the sting of an unsatisfying season in Sprint Cup for Roush Fenway Racing.

The 23-year-old Buescher won the championship by finishing 11th in the season finale at Homestead-Miami Speedway, bringing home a fifth second-tier series crown for team owner Jack Roush.

"I was a little bit nervous, but all things considered, that was exactly what we needed to do," Buescher said. "And we knew that and we knew we were capable of doing this. We made it through and now we get to celebrate."

Buescher was the last driver on the lead lap and finished 15.9 seconds behind race winner Kyle Larson.

Larson had led most of the race early and cleared Austin Dillon for good with four laps left for his third career Xfinity win.

"I love this track," Larson said. "I almost won the last two races here the last two years. It feels good to finally get it done."

Dillon, the 2013 series champion, was second, followed by Truck Series champ Erik Jones, Brian Scott and Ryan Blaney.

Buescher needed to finish 13th or better without leading a lap to win the championship in Homestead. He also held off defending series champion Chase Elliott, Ty Dillon and Regan Smith, all within striking distance of knocking off Buescher.

Dillon was seventh, Elliott was eighth and Smith ninth.

In 33 starts in the No. 60 Mustang, Buescher posted wins at Iowa and Dover. He had 11 top-fives, and 20 top-10s.

"I'm not a points racer," he said. "I don't like it. It's not the most fun way to run the last 10 races of the season. But it's important. This is what we've been fighting for since February and Daytona."

Not as well-known as his closest three rivals, Buescher held the lead this season for 23 straight weeks. He denied Elliott's bid to go back-to-back in his final full Xfinity season. Elliott finished 15 points behind Buescher.

Elliott, the son of Hall of Fame inductee and 1988 NASCAR champion Bill Elliott, is taking over Jeff Gordon's ride in the No. 24 Chevrolet at Hendrick Motorsports next year. The team had to find a seat for him at NASCAR's top level or risk losing the 19-year-old to another organization.

Elliott planned to keep a low profile on Sunday.

"I definitely don't want to get in the middle of what they have going on," Elliott said. "I'll be one of the biggest 24 fans here tomorrow night to see them compete for the championship."

Buescher, a former ARCA champion in his second full Xfinity season, joined Greg Biffle, Carl Edwards and two-time champ Ricky Stenhouse Jr. as series championship drivers for Roush.

Roush had put at least one driver in the Chase every season since its 2004 inception before missing the playoffs this season. Stenhouse, Biffle and 2011 Daytona 500 champion Trevor Bayne all struggled this season.

Roger Penske claimed the owners' championship, and Chevrolet took its 17th manufacturers' title. Daniel Suarez won rookie of the year with a sixth-place finish.

Marleau joins 1K club in Sharks' win

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — San Jose Sharks forward Patrick Marleau helped his team continue its roll on the same night he joined an elite group of NHL players.

Brent Burns scored twice and Marleau got his 1,000th career point to lift the San Jose Sharks over the Pittsburgh Penguins 3-1 on Saturday night for their fifth straight win.

"You never know what it's about until it's done and over with," Marleau said. "Just having everybody come up, congratulating me and throwing different numbers out there, it kind of takes shape how big this is."

Marleau became the 83rd NHL player to reach 1,000 points with an assist on Burns' first goal 7:54 into the game. The 36-year-old Marleau, in his 18th NHL season, is just the 16th to accomplish the feat with one team.

"You think about the players and the history of the game and to be the 83rd player to do that is something special," Sharks assistant coach Steve Spott said. Spott filled in for coach Peter DeBoer, who missed the game to deal with an undisclosed personal matter.

Burns has seven goals this season, and the Sharks have won the first five of a season-high six-game trip that ends Sunday night against Columbus. San Jose lost three of four at home before the trip but won its sixth straight on the road for the first time since a nine-game run during the 2009-10 season.

Martin Jones stopped 38 shots and tied for the league lead with his 11th win.

Sharks defenseman Paul Martin scored his first goal of the season and had an assist against his old team. Martin spent five years with Pittsburgh and was one of

the Pens' most reliable defensemen last season.

"I just wanted this game to be over as fast as possible and to get a win," Martin said. "To get some points on the board as well feels good."

Wild 4, Predators 0: Devan Dubnyk made 23 saves for his third shutout of the season and Ryan Suter had a goal and two assists against his former team, helping host Minnesota win.

Mikael Granlund, Jonas Brodin and Thomas Vanek also scored for Minnesota, which had dropped three in a row. Suter notched his first career goal against the team he played for his first seven NHL seasons.

Stars 3, Sabres 0: Antti Niemi got his second shutout this season, Jamie Benn scored two third-period goals and host Dallas beat Buffalo for its fifth straight win.

Niemi made 22 saves to shut down a Sabres team that has only scored four goals in its last four games.

Canucks 6, Blackhawks 3: Daniel Sedin had three goals and an assist and twin brother Henrik Sedin added a goal and four assists, leading host Vancouver to the win.

Daniel Sedin's ninth goal of the season snapped a 3-3 tie at 14:35 of the third, and he scored again just two minutes later. Alexandre Burrows added an empty-netter with 38 seconds left as Vancouver stopped a four-game slide.

Red Wings 4, Blues 3 (OT): Teemu Pulkkinen scored 4:41 into overtime, lifting visiting Detroit to the victory.

Pavel Datsyuk, Luke Glendening and Dylan Larkin also scored and Jimmy Howard made 30 saves for the Red Wings. Detroit has won three of its last four, including a 3-2 win at home over Los

Angeles on Friday night.

Rangers 5, Panthers 4 (OT): Rick Nash scored 2:01 into overtime for his third goal of the game, lifting the Rangers to the road win.

Mats Zuccarello and Viktor Stalberg scored in the third period to put the Rangers ahead 4-2. Henrik Lundqvist made 39 saves as New York bounced back after a loss at Tampa Bay on Thursday night snapped its nine-game winning streak.

Capitals 7, Avalanche 3: Alex Ovechkin scored one of Washington's four goals in the first, leading the host Capitals to the win.

Evgeny Kuznetsov had two assists before adding his seventh goal of the season in the third period, providing Washington some insurance.

Lightning 5, Ducks 0: Steven Stamkos had two goals and an assist for host Tampa Bay, and Ben Bishop made 30 saves.

Bruins 2, Maple Leafs 0: Zdeno Chara scored at 16:17 of the third period and Tuukka Rask held on for his second shutout of the season, powering host Boston to the victory.

Boston outshot Toronto 37-22, but goaltender James Reimer kept the Maple Leafs in the game.

Senators 4, Flyers 0: Mike Hoffman had a goal and an assist for host Ottawa, and Craig Anderson made 36 saves for his second consecutive shutout.

Mika Zibanejad, Milan Michalek and Kyle Turris also scored for the Senators.

Jets 3, Coyotes 2: Chris Thorburn scored a short-handed goal with 8:51 left, lifting host Winnipeg to the victory.

Mark Scheifele and Dustin Byfuglien also scored to help the Jets earn consecutive wins for the first time since Oct. 31.