

# STARS AND STRIPES®

Wednesday, November 14, 2018

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Study: US military has lost its edge

*The Washington Post*

WASHINGTON — The United States has lost its military edge to a dangerous degree and could potentially lose a war against China or Russia, according to a report released Wednesday by a bipartisan commission that Congress created to evaluate President Donald Trump's defense strategy.

The National Defense Strategy Commission, comprising former top Republican and Democratic officials selected by Congress, evaluated the Trump administration's 2018 National Defense Strategy, which ordered a vast reshaping of the U.S. military to compete with Beijing and Moscow in an era of renewed great-power competition.

While endorsing the strategy's aims, the commission warned that Washington isn't moving fast enough or investing sufficiently to put the vision into practice, risking a further erosion of American military dominance that could become a national security emergency.

At the same time, according to the commission, China and Russia are seeking dominance in their regions and the ability to project military power globally as their authoritarian governments pursue defense

buildups aimed squarely at the U.S.

"There is a strong fear of complacency, that people have become so used to the United States achieving what it wants in the world, to include militarily, that it isn't heeding the warning signs," said Kathleen Hicks, a former top Pentagon official during the Obama administration and one of the commissioners. "It's the flashing red that we are trying to relay."

The picture of the national security landscape that the 12-person commission sketched is a bleak one in which an American military that has enjoyed undisputed dominance for decades is failing to receive the resources, innovation and prioritization its leaders need to outmuscle China and Russia in a race for military might reminiscent of the Cold War.

The military balance has shifted adversely for the U.S. in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, undermining the confidence of American allies and increasing the likelihood of military conflict, the commission found after reviewing classified documents, receiving Pentagon briefings and interviewing top defense officials.

"The U.S. military could suffer unacceptably high casualties and loss of major capital assets in its next conflict. It might struggle to win, or perhaps lose, a war against China or

Russia," the report said. "The United States is particularly at risk of being overwhelmed should its military be forced to fight on two or more fronts simultaneously."

In its list of 32 recommendations, the commission urged the Pentagon to explain more clearly how it intends to defeat major-power rivals in competition and war. It assailed the strategy for relying at times on "questionable assumptions and weak analysis" and leaving "unanswered critical questions."

The commission argued that despite a \$716 billion American defense budget this year, which is four times the size of China's and more than 10 times that of Russia, the effort to reshape the U.S. defense establishment to counter current threats is under-resourced. It recommended that Congress lift budget caps on defense spending in the next two years that in the past have hobbled the military's ability to plan for the long term.

To counter Russia and China, the commission said the Navy should expand its submarine fleet and sealift forces; the Air Force should introduce more reconnaissance platforms and stealth long-range fighters and bombers; and the Army should pursue more armor, long-range precision missiles and air defense and logistical forces.

## Ex-Navy captain pleads guilty in corruption case

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS

*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A former Navy captain and public affairs director pleaded guilty Tuesday to criminal conflict of interest after accepting \$65,000 from defense contractor Leonard Glenn "Fat Leonard" Francis in exchange for advice on a Navy corruption investigation that ultimately snared Francis and several service officials.

Jeffrey Breslau, 52, of Cumming, Ga., admitted to writing, reviewing or editing 33 documents, sending at least

135 emails of advice to Francis, offering 14 "talking points" to prepare Francis before his meetings with "high-ranking U.S. Navy personnel" and ghostwriting numerous emails as Francis to the Navy, according to a Justice Department statement Tuesday.

Also on Tuesday, retired Master Chief Petty Officer Ricarte Icmat David, 62, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 17 months in prison on fraud charges related to the Fat Leonard scandal.

Francis, a Malaysian national, pleaded guilty in U.S. court in 2015 to bribery and

fraud charges after admitting to running a "massive, decade-long conspiracy involving 'scores' of U.S. Navy officials, tens of millions of dollars in fraud and millions of dollars in bribes," according to the Justice Department.

Breslau is the latest of 22 defendants to plead guilty in connection with the scandal. In total, 33 people have been charged. Many of the defendants admitted to accepting payment or gifts — including "luxury travel," "top-shelf alcohol," Cuban cigars and the services of prostitutes, according to the Justice Department

statement.

Breslau's case stands out as it appears he used the same skills he needed as public affairs director for the U.S. Pacific Fleet to help Francis in the corruption scandal.

Breslau admitted to advising Francis on public relations from March 2012 through July 2013 while Breslau was serving as U.S. Pacific Fleet public affairs director and later from August 2013 to September 2013 when he was assigned to the commanding officer for Joint Public Affairs Support Element in Norfolk, Va.

# Nondeployables must fix issues in 6 months

BY COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Army no longer must wait until soldiers have been in a nondeployable status for one year to dismiss them from the service under new guidelines developed from the Pentagon's so-called "deploy or get out" policy.

The service on Tuesday rolled out its long-awaited new policy governing soldiers serving in a nondeployable status, announcing troops who cannot deploy for any administrative reason must fix it within six months or they will be forced from the service as outlined in a Nov. 8 memorandum from Army Secretary Mark Esper.

"We must have a deployable and fit culture in the Army," Esper wrote in the memo. "Our nation deserves no less."

The new policy follows Defense Secretary Jim Mattis' order in February that all the military services develop guidelines to address growing rates of nondeployable servicemembers. Mattis' order sought to remove troops who remained nondeployable for a variety of reasons — including medi-

cal conditions, fitness problems or administrative failures — for more than a year. Last month, Pentagon officials said Mattis' policy was working, announcing the military had seen a reduction of about 100,000 nondeployable troops since February.

Commanders who determine that soldiers classified as nondeployable for administrative reasons are unlikely to resolve their issues within six months can begin the separation process immediately, according to the Army policy.

It was not clear Tuesday how many soldiers would be removed from the service through the new policy, said Maj. Gen. Joseph Calloway, the service's military personnel management director. He estimated about 10,000 soldiers were listed now as nondeployable for administrative reasons.

Likewise, soldiers with a permanent medical condition that affects their ability to perform their jobs will be referred to the Disability Evaluation System, which will determine whether they can remain in the Army, according to the policy.

The Army has reduced its number of

nondeployable soldiers since the Pentagon mandated the services develop their own guidelines. Last fall, the Army reported about 121,000 nondeployable soldiers, or about 15 percent of the force, across active-duty units, the National Guard and the reserves. That tally dropped to about 59,000 as of November, Calloway said.

The reduction is primarily due to the Army's changing view on who is considered nondeployable. For example, the service no longer considers soldiers nondeployable simply for missing a yearly medical or dental exam, though soldiers are still required to receive those exams.

"That is a huge jump," Calloway told reporters Tuesday at the Pentagon. "... We considered every single one of those soldiers who had not gotten their medical exam nondeployable, when we knew in fact that over 90 percent of them were deployable. So, we were overly conservative in the way we reported those."

About 80 percent of the soldiers who remain categorized as nondeployable are so for medical reasons.

## 1 pilot dead, 1 hurt in Texas T-38C crash

BY COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — One pilot was killed and another was hospitalized when their T-38C Talon crashed late Tuesday at Laughlin Air Force Base in Texas, service officials said about the fifth crash of the training jet in the last 12 months.

The aircraft, which is used for training student pilots to fly fighter or bomber jets, crashed about 7:40 p.m. local time on the south Texas base just outside Del Rio, according to a statement posted on Laughlin's Facebook page.

The names of the pilots involved in the crash were not released.

An Air Force spokesman at Laughlin declined Wednesday to provide a condition of the hospitalized pilot, who was taken to Val Verde Regional Medical Center in Del Rio after the jet

went down.

The spokesman said he did not know whether the base would suspend flight operations at Laughlin. Officials had begun an investigation into the incident Wednesday, he said.

The crash came just weeks after the Air Force removed three of the top commanders at Laughlin, citing concerns about dangerous and threatening behavior at the major pilot training installation, the service's Air Education and Training Command announced Oct. 31.

The commander of the 47th Flying Training Wing, Col. Charles Velino, was fired by Lt. Gen. Steven Kwast, the AETC chief. The commanders of the wing's operations group and a flight training squadron were also removed by Kwast, who cited "chronic leadership failures" found in an investigation.

## 2 USS Truman sailors arrested in Portugal

BY SCOTT WYLAND  
*Stars and Stripes*

Two sailors were arrested Monday on suspicion of assaulting a taxi driver and stealing his cellphone while they were on shore leave from the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman in Lisbon, Portugal.

The sailors were released to U.S. authorities and are back aboard the carrier, Navy officials said Wednesday. They said that the Portuguese justice system will handle the case.

"The personal behavior of the two sailors is not in keeping with the standards and expectations of the U.S. Navy or Harry S. Truman," spokeswoman Lt. Cmdr. Laura Stegherr said in a statement Wednesday. "We offer our sincerest regrets and apologies to the gentleman involved in the incident and to our gracious hosts in the city of Lisbon."

A taxi driver told Portuguese

police that two American sailors assaulted him and took his phone about 2 a.m. Monday after he picked them up in Lisbon, the Portuguese news outlet Cofina Media reported.

The driver was treated at a hospital for injuries, Cofina reported. The sailors later appeared in Lisbon criminal court with a lawyer and representatives from the U.S. Embassy and Portuguese navy.

Portuguese authorities were not immediately available for comment, and it was not clear Wednesday whether charges had been filed.

The incident occurred while the aircraft carrier was making a port stop in Lisbon after participating in the NATO exercise Trident Juncture in the North Atlantic.



# China's bomber could be game changer

BY WYATT OLSON

*Stars and Stripes*

For almost two decades, China has been designing and building its answer to America's B-2 long-range stealth bomber, and Chinese state media have recently hinted that the Hong-20 will soon undergo trial flights.

Although little is known about its specifications, some Western defense analysts suggest the introduction of this new generation of stealth bomber could usher in a sea change for U.S. military operations in the Pacific region.

"I think it's indicative of their larger strategy and their desire to continue to develop capabilities that could significantly impact how we conduct operations if need be in the Pacific region and eventually in other regions as well," said Mark Gunzinger, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, a Washington-based think tank.

Douglas Barrie, a senior fellow for military aerospace at the London-based think tank International Institute for Strategic Studies, said people are paying a lot of attention to this because the Hong-20 is part of a far broader modernization and capability-enhancement program being seen across the board in

China.

"In terms of air-power projection, it just makes your defensive picture that much more demanding," he said.

Malcolm Davis, a defense analyst with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute in Canberra, said a fully realized long-range stealth bomber would give China the same "nuclear triad" structure possessed by the United States. A triad consists of land-launched nuclear missiles, nuclear-armed submarines and nuclear-capable strategic aircraft.

A stealthy, long-range bomber would significantly increase China's ability to deny intervention by U.S. forces as far out as Guam and Japan, Davis said.

A documentary broadcast in August by the state-run China Central Television said "the development of new long-distance strategic bomber, Hong-20, has made great progress." It was the first time the name of the bomber officially appeared in state media.

Some aviation observers had speculated that China would unveil the Hong-20 at this month's International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition in China's southern city of Zhuhai, but the bomber was a no-show.

Some China state media re-

ports have suggested that the bomber will make its first appearance next year during a parade celebrating the 70th anniversary of the People's Liberation Army Air Force.

The Hong-20 is meant to replace the 1950s-era H-6 bomber, a Soviet Union-designed aircraft that has received numerous updates in the decades since then and is now called the H-6K, Barrie said.

"It's pretty long in the tooth," he said. "The H-6K is many things, but it's not stealthy by any stretch of the imagination. You can see it coming from a long way off."

Information about the Hong-20 is mostly guesswork at this point, he said.

The Pentagon's 2018 annual assessment of China's military developments provided scant detail about the Hong-20, saying only that it would likely debut in the next decade, possess a flying-wing design, have a range of roughly 5,000 miles, carry a payload of at least 10 metric tons and employ both conventional and nuclear weapons.

It would basically be a clone of the U.S. B-2 bomber, which the Air Force intends to begin phasing out in the 2020s with the next-generation B-21 Raider.

"If someone had said 15, 20

years ago that the Chinese were going to be able to develop this, I'd have been very skeptical of it," Barrie said. "But given the progress the Chinese have made in the defense aerospace sector over the past two decades, I think it's now a credible claim. If somebody said the Chinese were going to roll out this kind of design in the next couple years and have it in service sometime before 2030, that would all be perfectly plausible."

Barrie said China observers at the International Institute for Strategic Studies agree that the Chinese air force does not now have a nuclear role — a function that could be provided by a long-range bomber like the Hong-20.

"That's partly colored by some of the statements we've seen recently where senior Chinese air force officials talk about their desire to have a strategic (nuclear) capability," he said.

Twenty years ago, China's air force was styled around homeland air defense, Barrie said.

"It's now much more about power projection out to the island chains, the ability to operate jointly, the ability to operate in contested environments," he said. "Within there is the ambition to revisit the nuclear role."

## Navy wants to expand Hawaii training events

*Associated Press*

HONOLULU — U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command has proposed tripling the number of training events allowed on non-federal lands in Hawaii for Navy SEALs and other special operations forces.

The Navy published a draft environmental assessment last week on the plan to expand training activities from Oahu and the Big Island to include sites on Kauai, Maui, Molokai and Lanai.

The review does not anticipate a significant environmental impact from the expanded training

scheduled to begin in 2019.

"Naval special operations personnel must be ready for a variety of military operations — from large-scale conflict to maritime security and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief — to respond to the dynamic, social, political, economic and environmental issues that may arise," Navy officials said in the report.

The training activities fit into three categories based on land, air and water, according to the report. They will occasionally integrate personnel from the Army, the Marine Corps and Air Force.

## US Marine suspected in wife's death after ball

*New York Daily News*

A U.S. Marine killed his wife following a military ball in Virginia earlier this month, authorities allege.

Police in Arlington found Natasha Rivera, 20, dead inside a hotel room on the morning of Nov. 3. Her husband, Rodolfo Valencia, who was at the scene, was taken into custody without incident.

Natasha Rivera was also a Marine, and the recently married couple were stationed at Quantico. They had an infant child. Rodolfo Valencia, 24, had told a dispatcher just after 10

a.m. that his wife was unconscious and that he believed he had killed her, according to a search warrant obtained by the Free Lance-Star of Fredericksburg, Va.

Natasha Rivera had injuries consistent with strangulation and a "brutal" beating, a detective wrote, according to the newspaper. Her husband indicated he blacked out after drinking the night before and did not remember what happened, according to investigators.

The couple had attended a ball celebrating the Marine Corps' 243rd birthday.

# Death toll from California fire increases

Associated Press

CHICO, Calif. — A message board at a shelter for the many people who fled California's deadliest wildfire is filled with photos of the missing, as well as pleas for any information about relatives and friends.

"I hope you are okay," reads one handwritten note on the board filled with white and yellow sheets of notebook paper. Another had a picture of a missing man: "If seen, please have him call."

Authorities on Tuesday reported six more fatalities from the Northern California blaze, bringing the total number of dead so far to 48. They haven't disclosed the total number still missing, but earlier in the week that figure was more than 200.

Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea said a list of the missing would be released soon and that 100 National Guard troops would help teams already looking for remains.

"We want to be able to cover as much

ground as quickly as we possibly can," he said. "This is a very difficult task."

As authorities increased efforts, people waited for any word on those still not found.

Greg Gibson was one of the people searching the message board Tuesday, hoping to find information about his neighbors. They've been reported missing, but he doesn't know if they tried to escape or hesitated a few minutes longer than he did before fleeing Paradise, the town of 27,000 which was consumed last Thursday. About 7,700 homes were destroyed.

"It happened so fast. It would have been such an easy decision to stay, but it was the wrong choice," Gibson said from the Neighborhood Church in Chico.

More than 1,000 people were at shelters set up for evacuees.

Inside the church, evacuee Harold Taylor chatted with newfound friends.

Taylor, 72, a Vietnam veteran who walks

with a cane, said he received a call Thursday morning to evacuate immediately. He saw the flames leaping up behind his house, left with the clothes on his back and barely made it out alive.

Along the way, he tried to persuade his neighbor to get in his car and evacuate with him, but the neighbor declined. He doesn't know what happened to his friend.

"We didn't have 10 minutes to get out of there," he said. "It was already in flames downtown, all the local restaurants and stuff," he said.

The search for the dead was drawing on portable devices that can identify someone's genetic material in a couple of hours rather than days or weeks.

Before the Paradise tragedy, the deadliest single fire on record in California was a 1933 blaze in Griffith Park in Los Angeles that killed 29.

## Overheated machines hinder recount in Florida

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Florida's election recount drama is intensifying as lawyers return to court and tallying machines break down ahead of a Thursday deadline to complete reviews of the senate and governor races.

Much of the trouble centers on the Democratic stronghold of Palm Beach County, where tallying machines have overheated.

That's caused mismatched results with the recount of 174,000 early voting ballots, forcing workers to go back and redo their work with no time to spare.

A mechanic was flown in to fix the problems, but "we don't have a lot of assurances," Palm Beach County Elections Supervisor Susan Bucher told WPTV Tuesday night. Bucher did not immediately respond to messages from The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, lawyers for Democrats planned to ask a federal judge on Wednesday to set aside the state law man-

dating that mailed-in votes be thrown out if the signature on the envelope doesn't match the signature on file with election authorities.

The developments are sure to fuel frustrations among Democrats and Republicans as the recount unfolds more than a week after Election Day. Democrats have urged state officials to do whatever it takes to make sure every vote is counted. But Republicans, including President Donald Trump, have argued without evidence that voter fraud threatens to steal races from the GOP.

The state elections department and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, both run by Republican appointees, have said they have seen no evidence of voter fraud. A Broward County judge challenged anyone who has evidence of fraud to file a report.

As it all plays out, the Republican candidates for governor and Senate, Ron DeSantis and Rick Scott, still hold the narrowest of leads over their Democratic counterparts, Andrew Gillum and Bill Nelson.

## Calif. Dem upsets GOP incumbent for House seat

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — First-time candidate Josh Harder defeated four-term Republican U.S. Rep. Jeff Denham on Tuesday in California's farm belt, giving Democrats their fourth pickup of a GOP House seat in California.

Harder, 32, a venture capitalist, had anchored his campaign to Denham's vote against the Affordable Care Act while arguing that he would push for universal health care in Congress. He also argued that Denham and other Washington Republicans ignored poverty and health care in the agricultural 10th District in California's Central Valley.

"Washington is broken because our leaders have put party over country. I pledge that I will always put this community before anything in Washington," Harder said in a statement.

As ballot-counting continued, Democrats gained ground in two undecided House races in Orange County, raising the possibility of a Democratic sweep of four closely contested

congressional races in the one-time Republican stronghold.

In the 45th District in Orange County, Democrat Katie Porter jumped into a 261-vote lead over Republican Rep. Mimi Walters after trailing the incumbent since Election Day.

And in the 39th District, anchored in Orange County, Democrat Gil Cisneros tightened the gap with Republican Young Kim.

Earlier, Democrats claimed the seats of Republican Reps. Dana Rohrabacher in the county's 48th District and retiring Darrell Issa in the 49th District, which cuts through the southern end of the county.

With votes continuing to be counted, Harder's edge has grown after Denham grabbed a slim lead on Election Day. After the latest update, Harder had a 4,919-vote lead out of about 185,000 votes counted, a margin too large for the congressman to overcome with remaining votes.

Denham's campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## 2 college students kidnapped, assaulted

**MO** POINT LOOKOUT — A convicted felon has been charged with abducting two Christian college students and forcing them to perform sex acts on each other at gunpoint after they violated curfew and were locked out of their southwest Missouri campus.

The Springfield News-Leader reported that Robert Hyslop, 49, is jailed without bond on charges of kidnapping, sexual abuse and sodomy.

Charging documents say the College of the Ozarks students fell asleep in a commuter parking lot after the campus' front gate was locked when they returned after curfew.

The documents say Hyslop made the man and woman drive to a highway lookout, where he forced them to perform sex acts.

Hyslop also is accused of making the woman touch him sexually.

## Chair used to guide deer out of school

**IA** JANESVILLE — A parent used a chair to guide a deer out of a northeast Iowa school after it jumped in through a window.

The deer broke through a window in the superintendent's office Monday afternoon at the Janesville Consolidated School District school building in Janesville.

Superintendent BJ Meaney said the parent was picking up his child when the deer broke in. Meaney credited the parent, Josh Smith, with quick thinking in grabbing the chair to guide the deer out of the building.

Meaney said classes went on as scheduled.

## Baby girl born on Nov. 11 at 11:11 p.m.

**MN** ST. PAUL — A Minnesota baby girl was born on Veterans Day — the 11th day of the 11th month — at 11:11 p.m.

Erin and Mike Potts, of Hugo, welcomed their first child on Sunday, the 100th anniversary of the armistice that ended World War I.

The girl was born at The Mother Baby Center in St. Paul.

WCCO-TV reported that the new mom said it was a long labor, from about 5 a.m. until 11 p.m., "but the delivery went smoothly."

## Pair of dogs left at freezing park rescued

**NC** HILLSBOROUGH — Police in North Carolina rescued two dogs abandoned at a freezing dog park in Hillsborough.

Hillsborough police Lt. Andy Simmons told The News & Observer officers were locking up a park Sunday night when they heard barking. The officers found the two dogs locked behind the park's dog park fence, and neither had a microchip or collar.

He said both seemed healthy despite the temperature.

Police said Monday that the dogs' owner had been found.

## Dog aiding robbery victim is wounded

**DC** WASHINGTON — Police in the nation's capital said a dog was shot while trying to save its owner from a robbery.

The Washington Post reported that District of Columbia police said the dog was severely wounded and taken to veteri-

nary hospital.

Police said the owner was getting out of his car Friday night when a man approached and robbed him at gunpoint.

Police said the dog was in the car and leapt from the vehicle when the robber attempted to flee to a getaway car. The dog was shot by someone in the waiting car.

## Runaway elephant returned to sanctuary

**NY** WESTTOWN — An elephant that was burned by napalm during the Vietnam War has been returned to an upstate New York animal sanctuary after taking a late night stroll.

State police in Middletown said they went to the Sanctuary for Animals in Westtown on Sunday night when they got a call about a wandering elephant.

Amanda Brook, whose family owns the sanctuary, told the Times Herald-Record that the 46-year-old Asian elephant, named Fritha, wandered off after a worker forgot to turn on an electric fence that keeps her in her designated space at night.

## Police take 47 cats, 6 dogs from home

**IN** GRIFFITH — Authorities who rescued 47 cats and six dogs from a feces-filled home in northwestern Indiana had to wear face masks while removing the animals.

Griffith police spokesman Commander Keith Martin said the home was declared "unfit for human habitation" due to the stench of urine and feces.

Police, animal control officers and others wore protective clothing and face masks while rescuing the animals last week in the town 5 miles south of Gary.

Authorities obtained a search warrant following complaints about the residence, which Martin said had been an "illegally run" animal rescue. The house's owner faces charges of abandonment and neglect of vertebrate animals.

## Teacher suspended for student in KKK garb

**MO** POPLAR BLUFF — A southern Missouri school district has suspended a teacher who oversaw a class presentation in which a ninth-grader dressed as a Ku Klux Klan member.

The Springfield News-Leader reported that Poplar Bluff district Superintendent Scott Dill visited the American History class Monday to read the suspended teacher's letter of apology.

The student, who dressed as a Klansman on Friday, was among a group assigned to study the 15th Amendment, which awarded voting rights to black men.

## Military dog memorial unveiling set next year

**WY** CODY — A statue commemorating military dogs and their handlers is scheduled to be unveiled around Memorial Day weekend next year at the State of Wyoming Veterans Memorial Park in Cody.

The War and Service Dog Memorial statue was inspired by Powell resident and Iraqi war veteran Matt Bessler and his late dog, Mike, that was killed by a bicyclist in October 2015 after the two were discharged.

The Cody Enterprise reports that the statue was originally set to be unveiled in June 2017 but was delayed for various reasons.

From wire reports

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# Saints on pace for team mark in points

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — The dynamic Saints running back duo of Mark Ingram and Alvin Kamara agree that the word “savage” best describes New Orleans’ offense.

Certainly, the Saints are scoring so often, and in so many ways, it’s enough to bruise defenders’ egos.

“I’m glad we don’t have to play them,” Saints linebacker Alex Anzalone said Monday, a day after New Orleans broke the 50-point mark in a victory over Cincinnati.

Even by the lofty standards offensive-minded coach Sean Payton and record-setting quarterback Drew Brees have set since joining forces in 2006, New Orleans is putting points on the board with exceptional proficiency.

The Saints have never averaged better than 34.2 points per game for an entire season. That mark was set by New Orleans’ 2011 squad that featured

Brees and four skill players that each gained more than 950 yards from scrimmage: tight end Jimmy Graham, receiver Marques Colston and running backs Darren Sproles and Pierre Thomas.

The 2018 Saints, who host defending Super Bowl champion Philadelphia on Sunday, currently lead the NFL with an average 36.7 points through nine games. Maintaining that pace for the rest of the regular season would put them third all-time in scoring behind the 2013 Denver Broncos (37.9 points per game) and the 2007 New England Patriots (36.8). And the way the Saints are playing, their current scoring average could very well increase before the season is out. They’ve scored at least 40 points in five of nine games so far.

They’ve also added yet another potential receiving target, signing veteran Brandon Marshall on Monday.

“He’s got good length and size. He’s another big target,”

Payton said of the 34-year-old Marshall, who became a free agent when he was released by Seattle on Oct. 30. “I thought size was important but (also) experience and someone that we felt had strong hands.”

Eleven different Saints have gotten in the end zone this season, including Brees, who dove over the pile at the line of scrimmage for his third rushing TD this season during Sunday’s 51-14 triumph at Cincinnati. The 39-year-old QB also is having one of his most efficient seasons, completing 77.3 percent of his passes for 21 TDs and only one interception.

Brees’ completion rate arguably has been aided by his decision to often throw shorter passes, particularly to Kamara, who has 55 receptions for 473 yards and three TDs.

But Brees asserts that the Saints’ offensive production has stemmed in no small part from their ability to methodically sustain drives with high-percentage plays.

“It pays dividends as the game goes on,” Brees said. “You wear a defense down. ... We say, ‘Don’t get bored with the (short) completions, the 4-yard runs. They result in big plays if we keep it up.’”

A case in point is Brees’ 72-yard game-breaking touchdown pass to receiver Michael Thomas in the final minutes of a Week 9 victory over the Los Angeles Rams, whose defenders crashed down to swarm Kamara on the play.

During the Payton-Brees era, the Saints have more often than not been a pass-heavy team. But not this season. New Orleans ranks eighth in yards rushing and seventh in yards passing.

“We’re hoping to have balance,” Payton said. “Our offensive line has played well. We’ve been consistent rushing the football.”

“I feel like Drew’s playing at a high level. ... Having that ability to rush or pass is something that can help.”

## Steelers’ Bell doesn’t sign tag, will miss rest of season

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Le’Veon Bell’s patience on the football field sets him apart.

In a game built on chaos, the star running back rarely hurries or makes hasty decisions.

His ability to put his hand on the back of an offensive lineman while waiting for the hole to open — much like a child sticking close to a parent in a crowded store — helps him make the remarkably difficult at times look remarkably easy.

His career at a crossroads partly of his own making, Bell will have to rely on that patience now more than ever after the two-time All-Pro declined to sign his one-year, \$14.4 million franchise tender with the Pittsburgh Steelers by Tuesday’s deadline, making him ineligible to play for the AFC North leaders or anyone else this season.

The unprecedented move sets Bell up for the potentially big-time payday he has long been searching when he becomes a free agent in the spring, provided there’s a team willing to splurge on one of the league’s more talented if mercurial players.

While TV cameras set up outside the team’s practice facility on Tuesday to catch Bell if he decided to show up for work for the first time in nearly 10 months, the 26-year-old never pulled up to the gates, ending — for now — one of the more unusual labor standoffs between a team and a player in the era of free agency.

Pittsburgh coach Mike Tomlin seemed resigned to Bell’s decision shortly before the 4 p.m. deadline, saying simply “so be it” when asked about the possibility of Bell not returning to the team that selected him in the second round of the 2013

draft and helped mold him into one of the league’s most dynamic threats.

“Even when we don’t understand it, we’re sensitive to it, so we’re not shocked when things happen from a business standpoint, no,” Tomlin said.

The Steelers (6-2-1), who have won five straight to sprint to the top of the division heading into a visit to Jacksonville on Sunday, will turn to second-year back James Conner and reserves Stevan Ridley and rookie Jaylen Samuels to help shoulder the load with Bell out of the picture.

Conner, third in the NFL with 771 yards rushing, remained in the concussion protocol on Tuesday after leaving last Thursday’s blowout win against Carolina but could practice as early as Wednesday.

All season Tomlin stressed he was focused on the players in the locker room and not

the ones outside it. He hardly seemed bothered by the idea of Pittsburgh’s quest for a post-season berth continuing without Bell.

“That train has left the station,” Tomlin said. “We’re comfortable with how we function, the people at our disposal, the division of labor and our ability to ready ourselves for the challenges.”

The Steelers drafted Bell with the 48th overall pick five years ago, won over by his youth, size and versatility. Along with wide receiver Antonio Brown, Bell became the linchpin in which the Steelers rebuilt themselves on the fly as the franchise’s identity shifted from away from the defense that fueled three Super Bowl appearances in six years from 2005 to 2010 toward an offense that ranked among the most explosive in the league.



# Melvin, Snitker named top managers

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Bob Melvin's job was a lot different as a rookie manager with Seattle in 2002, and even when he was voted Manager of the Year with Arizona in 2007 and Oakland in 2012.

"Organizations and certainly front offices are more a part of it now, and you have to understand that," Melvin said Tuesday after winning his third manager award.

Melvin won the American League honor after leading the Athletics to the playoffs despite the lowest opening-day payroll in the major leagues.

Atlanta's Brian Snitker won the National League award following a surprising first-place finish, a reward for a 63-year-old baseball lifer who has spent 42 seasons with the Braves. He thought back to how he returned to the minor leagues in 1986, 1991 and 2004 after stints on the staff of the big league Braves.

"Hey, I've been recycled three times from the major leagues as a coach," he

said. "Everything that I've been through I think has prepared me better to understand what these guys go through and what this job entails."

A big league catcher from 1985-94, Melvin became a scout, instructor, front office assistant and coach before he got his first big league managing job in 2002 from Mariners general manager Pat Gillick, a future Hall of Famer. Now he works for Oakland executives Billy Beane and Dave Forst, proponents of the analytics movement that has swept baseball.

"When I started doing this a long time ago with Mr. Gillick in Seattle, their job was to give me the players and then it was my job to put guys in the right spots. And things have changed since then," Melvin said.

"It can be a little bit top heavy as far as where the information comes from, from our front office now, and you have to be able to adapt, or at some point in time you might not have one of these jobs. So I'm lucky enough to be with an organization that not only it's my hometown but from a guy that

I've known for quite a while in Billy, and they do the best they can to consistently try to implement stuff and get us better. And it's my job to accept it and move forward."

Melvin received 18 first-place votes, 19 seconds and one third for 121 points from the Baseball Writers' Association of America. He is the eighth manager to win three or more times and is one shy of the record shared by Bobby Cox and Tony La Russa.

His A's went 97-65, a 22-win improvement over 2017, even with a \$68.6 million payroll when the season began. They overcame a 34-36 start to go a big league-best from June 16 on. They lost to the New York Yankees in the AL wild-card game.

Boston's Alex Cora was second with seven firsts and 79 points after leading the Red Sox to a team-record 108 wins.

Snitker received 17 firsts, nine seconds and one third for 116 points, the only manager picked on every NL ballot. Milwaukee's Craig Counsell was second with 11 firsts and for 99 points.

## Stringer gets 1,000th win

Associated Press

PISCATAWAY, N.J. — As the red and white confetti rained down on the court to celebrate C. Vivian Stringer's 1,000th career victory, the Hall of Fame coach took a moment to soak it all in.

She was surrounded by family, friends, former players and coaches from all three schools where she coached.

"Let me tell you something, sometimes people ask how did I accomplish these things?" Stringer said. "This was only done with my family first of all and they mean everything in the world. They lifted me up."

Stringer became the fifth Division I women's basketball coach to achieve the milestone and sixth woman overall when the Scarlet Knights beat Central Connecticut State 73-44 on Tuesday night.

The Hall of Fame coach joined Pat Summitt, Geno Auriemma, Tara VanDerveer and Sylvia Hatchell in the 1,000-victory club. Division II coach Barbara Stevens also has won over 1,000 games. Stringer, 70, is the first black coach to reach the milestone.

As the final seconds ran down, the

4,583 fans held up signs and chanted the coach's name. Her current team dumped a Gatorade bucket full of the confetti over their coach's head.

Video tributes from all the other living Division I members of the 1,000-win club were played as Stringer sat under balloons that spelled out CVS1K.

Stringer also received many online tributes on social media, including one from Hillary Clinton. Rutgers presented her with a banner to celebrate her 1,000th win that will hang in the arena's rafters.

She also received a customized pair of shoes that listed the number of wins she had each of her three schools — Cheyney State, Iowa and Rutgers.

Many of her former players were on hand to witness the milestone victory. She's 1,000-402 in her career. New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy was also sitting courtside for the historic win.

South Carolina coach Dawn Staley also made the trip to New Jersey with her staff that included Jolette Law, who was an assistant for Stringer at Rutgers for many years and played for her at Iowa.

## Top 25 roundup

### Vols remain perfect

Associated Press

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Grant Williams scored 22 points and No. 5 Tennessee used its stingy defense to beat cold-shooting Georgia Tech 66-53 on Tuesday night.

Tennessee (3-0) was playing one day after moving up a spot in the Top 25 to earn its first top-five ranking since the 2007-08 season. After the Yellow Jackets made the game's first basket, Tennessee scored the next seven points and stayed in control the rest of the way.

Georgia Tech (1-1) shot just 27.6 percent from the field — its lowest mark since Josh Pastner took over as coach in 2016. The Yellow Jackets had nearly twice as many fouls (30) as baskets (16). They missed 15 straight shots during one stretch, including their first 11 attempts of the second half.

Jordan Bone had 15 points for Tennessee. Brandon Alston led Georgia Tech with 16.

**No. 22 LSU 85, Memphis 76:** Skylar Mays scored 19 points, transfer Kavell Bigby-Williams added a career-high 14 and host LSU held off a relentless effort by Memphis under first-year coach Penny Hardaway.

Each of LSU's three freshman starters — Naz Reid, Ja'Vonte Smart and Emmitt Williams — scored 11 points. Williams also grabbed 10 rebounds for the Tigers (3-0), who trailed briefly with about 13 minutes to go.

## NHL roundup

## Suspension cut, Wilson helps lift Caps

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Tom Wilson returned early from his suspension and scored a first-period goal, helping the Washington Capitals cool off Minnesota with a 5-2 victory on Tuesday night for the Wild's first regulation loss at home.

Dmitry Orlov had his first two goals of the season and an assist, Andre Burakovsky and T.J. Oshie also scored and Pheonix Copley made 26 saves for the Capitals, whose four-game trip was jump-started in the morning by an arbitrator's reduction of Wilson's 20-game ban by six games to make him immediately eligible.

Mikko Koivu and Matt Dumba had goals for the Wild, who played at home for the first time in 17 days after a 5-2 finish on their franchise-record seven-game road swing. They fell to 5-1-2 at Xcel Energy Center, becoming the last team in the NHL to lose at home in regulation this season.

**Sabres 2, Lightning 1:**

Carter Hutton stopped 29 shots and host Buffalo won its third straight game by beating Eastern Conference-leading Tampa Bay.

Jeff Skinner scored his team-leading 13th goal and Kyle Okposo also scored for Buffalo, which improved to 10-6-2 for its best start since opening 11-7 in 2011-12.

**Red Wings 6, Coyotes 1:**

Defenseman Mike Green had a goal and two assists, and host Detroit extended its winning streak to four games.

Andreas Athanasiou added a goal and an assist for the third straight game for Detroit, which has won seven of its past eight to get back to .500 (8-8-2) after a 1-7-2 start.

**Panthers 2, Flyers 1:**

Aaron Ekblad and Evgenii Dadonov scored goals, Roberto Luongo made 29 saves and visiting Florida beat Philadelphia for its fifth straight win.

Jakub Voracek had the lone goal for the Flyers, who had

won three straight and five of six.

**Islanders 5, Canucks 2:**

Tom Kuhnhackl scored two goals to lead host New York past Vancouver.

Jordan Eberle had a goal and an assist and Josh Bailey also scored to help the Islanders end a three-game skid.

**Devils 4, Penguins 2:**

Taylor Hall scored the game-winning goal on a breakaway at 8:07 of the third period and added an empty-net tally to lead host New Jersey past struggling Pittsburgh.

Hall also had two assists, and Travis Zajac and Damon Severson each had a goal and an assist as the Devils snapped a three-game losing streak by beating the Penguins for the second time in just more than a week.

**Maple Leafs 5, Kings 1:**

Nazem Kadri scored two power-play goals and John Tavares had a goal and two assists for visiting Toronto.

Morgan Rielly and Andreas

Johnsson also scored in Toronto's fourth win in five games overall and its seventh win in eight road games this season.

**Oilers 6, Canadiens 2:** Leon Draisaitl had a goal and two assists, Connor McDavid added three assists and host Edmonton snapped a four-game losing streak that marked its longest of the season.

Matt Benning, Drake Cagigiula, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Darnell Nurse and Kris Russell also scored for the Oilers, who inched back over .500 at 9-8-1.

**Sharks 5, Predators 4:** Joe Thornton broke a third-period tie with his 400th goal, Joe Pavelski scored twice and host San Jose defeated Nashville after squandering a three-goal lead.

Marcus Sorensen and Antti Suomela also scored to help the Sharks win their second straight and fourth in six games.

Filip Forsberg had two goals and an assist for the Predators, who dropped to 8-1-1 on the road this season.

## NBA roundup

## Durant leads Warriors after Green suspended

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Kevin Durant never found his typical offensive flow and found it a little strange playing without fiery Draymond Green, even if they have yet to make up from all that went down a night earlier in Los Angeles.

Durant isn't sharing any details.

"I'm going to keep that in house; that's what we do here," Durant said. "I'm not trying to give nobody no headlines. What happened, happened. We're trying to move on; we're just trying to play basketball."

Durant scored 29 points with a key jumper in the final minute, a day after a shouting episode on the bench with Green at least in part led to his teammate's suspension Tuesday, and the undermanned Golden State Warriors held off the Atlanta Hawks 110-103.

Klay Thompson added 24 points as Splash

Brother Stephen Curry missed his third straight game with a strained left groin. The two-time MVP shuffled and danced as he celebrated big plays from the bench.

Taurean Prince scored 22 points, making four three-pointers and finishing 8-for-14 from the floor in the Hawks' fifth straight loss and ninth in 10.

Durant led the way despite shooting 9-for-23 hours after the Warriors suspended All-Star Green for one game without pay for conduct detrimental to the team. He got into it with Durant on the bench at the end of regulation in a 121-116 overtime road loss to the Clippers and Green wasn't even at the arena Tuesday.

General manager Bob Myers declined to offer specifics on the All-Star forward's behavior that was considered going too far. Myers and Steve Kerr collaborated on the decision.

Jonas Jerebko started in place of Green

and had season bests of 14 points and 14 rebounds.

**Rockets 109, Nuggets 99:** James Harden scored 19 of his 22 points in the second half and Houston pulled away to hand host Denver its fourth straight loss.

Harden also had 11 assists, with several going to Clint Capela, who led the Rockets with 24 points, including a series of dunks. Chris Paul added 21 points for Houston, playing for a third straight game without Carmelo Anthony because of what the team said was an illness.

**Cavaliers 113, Hornets 89:** Jordan Clarkson scored 24 points, Tristan Thompson had 21 rebounds and 11 points, and injury-riddled host Cleveland won for the second time this season.

The Cavaliers (2-11) broke a five-game losing streak.