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US aircraft carrier exits Persian Gulf

BY CHRIS CHURCH

Stars and Stripes

MANAMA, Bahrain — The USS Theodore Roosevelt exited the Persian Gulf on Friday, a Navy spokesman said, marking the first time since 2007 the U.S. hasn't had an aircraft carrier deployed there.

The scheduled gap of carrier presence comes during a time of increased tensions in the region, including Russian military involvement in Syria, ongoing fighting in Iraq

and a civil war in Yemen.

The next aircraft carrier isn't expected to arrive in the Gulf until this winter.

The Navy believes the gap is necessary after years of increased demand for carrier strike groups and extended deployments that have worn down the force, Lt. Cmdr. Tim Hawkins, a Navy spokesman, said Thursday. He said maintenance delays due to sequestration added to the problem.

"We have to get to a point

where we can sustain the pace without breaking our force," Hawkins said.

Lt. Ian McConnaughey, a spokesman for U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, said the command constantly reviews force allocation and has been preparing for the carrier gap for some time.

"Together with the other services and coalition partners, we are confident we have the necessary combat power to meet theater security commitments

and effectively prosecute the ongoing conflict against ISIL," McConnaughey said, using an alternative name for the Islamic State group, which controls vast swaths of Iraq and Syria.

Some analysts and politicians have criticized the carrier gap as placing limits on military options.

The Theodore Roosevelt had been deployed to the 5th Fleet Area of Responsibility since April.

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Navy tests new F-35C fighter off Va. coast

Daily Press (Newport News, Va.)

Pilots flying the Navy's newest and most expensive jet say they successfully completed the flight portion of a second round of developmental testing on Friday.

About 100 miles off the Virginia coast, two F-35C Lightning II strike fighters have taken turns for about a week catapulting off the Norfolk-based aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, and within minutes coming to an abrupt, ship-shuddering stop as the arresting landing gear stops the plane. The exercise was then repeated at a slower speed or with added weight.

The time in the air between "cats" and "traps" wasn't as important as the time spent on the carrier. This phase of testing was all about integrating this version of the aircraft into carrier operations, and according to the Eisenhower's Capt. Stephen Koehler, "it's ready to go."

The F-35C is a variant of the Lightning that the Navy will use. It eventually will replace the F/A-18 Hornet after it's in-

troduced to the fleet in 2018. There are also iterations for the Marines that are already operational, and for the Air Force, due next summer.

On Friday, the exercises pushed the lower limits of the aircraft's "flight envelope," testing the slowest speed at which it can be shot off the carrier and still get enough lift to fly.

The F-35C Lightning II Pax River Integrated Test Force is aboard Dwight D. Eisenhower conducting follow-on sea trials.

Koehler said he was impressed recently when the plane landed aboard the carrier as Hurricane Joaquin churned not too far away — impressed because he hadn't yet seen the \$116 million jet and because it seemed to fit with ease into flight operations.

"It's pretty darned cool looking," he said.

A group of sailors from the Eisenhower had trained at Naval Air Engineering Station Lakehurst, N.J., where the shipboard arresting gear was tested onshore. They simulated flight operations there so it wasn't

all new to them last week.

"Knowing that when the ship was out of the shipyard that the crew was able to give back a little to the fleet and ensure that we were helping with the future of naval aviation has been a really positive thing for them," the skipper said. "They are pretty fired up."

A squadron at Naval Air Station Oceana is expected to fly F-35s when they make it to the fleet.

Test pilot Cmdr. Tony Wilson, who has logged about 200 hours flying the F-35, said there were no surprises during testing last week.

Wilson got his start in the Navy more than two decades ago working on submarines out of Norfolk and got a degree in mechanical engineering from Old Dominion University. Now, he said, he's "living a childhood dream."

He said that on Thursday night, three of the four pilots tested the Generation III Helmet Mounted Display, which shows the pilot not only what's around him — including enemy aircraft — but all of his sen-

sors, as well. This was their first time using the helmet in a true "operation environment," Wilson said.

"When you're flying at sea, the ship is the only source of light," he said, whereas flying onshore, there is ambient lighting from cities.

Rear Adm. J.R. Haley, commander of Naval Air Force Atlantic, made an effort to refute one of the frequent critiques of the aircraft: that it won't win in a dogfight.

With the aircraft's stealth ability and sensors, the F-35C would be able to, from great distance, spy and shoot any plane that might challenge it close up, Haley said.

"It's not about stealthy. It's about the entire airframe itself and what it brings to the fight," Haley said. "And bringing that up and down off the carrier provides the country with huge, huge benefits and a lot of latitude of where we operate that air platform. It's going to change dramatically our tactics and how we fight the air wing and the ship and how we fight the battle group."

Russia caught US flat-footed

The Washington Post

Among the first clues that Russia was mobilizing for a military offensive in Syria were requests Moscow began making in mid-August for permission to cross other countries' territory with more and larger aircraft.

"We were getting the word the Russians were asking for inordinate overflights," a senior Obama administration official said, referring to reports from U.S. allies receiving the requests. Russia was seeking clearance for not only cargo planes but also "fighter aircraft and bombers" that Syrian pilots had never been trained to fly, the official said.

But despite that early suspicion — which only intensified as Russia then deployed fighter jets and teams of military advisers — the United States seemed to be caught flat-footed by the barrage of airstrikes that Moscow launched last week.

The attacks pounded Syrian rebels who were trained and armed by the CIA during the past two years but who appeared to get no warning that they were in Russian jets' crosshairs. The strikes also damaged a fragile U.S. strategy that sustained an additional blow Friday when the Pentagon acknowledged it was sharply scaling back its effort to build a force to battle the Islamic State group.

The setbacks involved separate programs with distinct

Syrian troops seize control of village

DAMASCUS, Syria — Syrian troops backed by Russian airstrikes seized control of a village in central Syria Saturday amid clashes with rebels in the area.

That offensive marked the first major assault since Moscow began its campaign in the country on Sept. 30. Russian officials say their airstrikes are targeting mainly Islamic State militants, but most are hitting areas where the group is not present.

The fighting is concentrated in Hama and northern Idlib provinces, where mainstream rebels as well as al-Qaida's branch in Syria, the Nusra Front, operate.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said government troops seized control of Atshan Friday amid Russian airstrikes in the region. It said troops also seized Um Hartein village.

From The Associated Press

missions. One is a covert intelligence effort to aid Syrian rebels trying to oust President Bashar Assad; the other is an

overt military operation using U.S. air power and aid to other rebel groups on the ground to decimate the Islamic State group. But U.S. officials and experts said that in both cases the Obama administration was slow to recognize and respond to trouble signs that seem abundant in hindsight.

"It seems to me there's some kind of gap or disconnect between the intelligence side and the policy and operational side" on Syria, said Jeffrey White, a former Defense Intelligence Agency analyst who tracks the Syria conflict at the Washington Institute. Amid Russia's buildup "we actually saw quite well what was going on — equipment was tracked," White said, "and then there was some kind of failure to read what the implications of that were."

The Russian airstrikes followed a series of moves by Russia that signaled a coming offensive, including the extension of a key runway for bombers and military cargo planes. Similarly, the DOD's rebel training program was beset by problems, including difficulties drawing recruits to a force set up to fight the Islamic State group when most militants' priority was the ouster of Assad.

White House officials defended their handling of the Russian escalation, saying they moved quickly to warn Moscow against making the conflict worse, beginning the first week in September.

Army official: No prison for Bowe Bergdahl

By NANCY MONTGOMERY
Stars and Stripes

The officer charged with recommending how to deal with desertion and misconduct charges against Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl has recommended that Bergdahl be spared both jail time and a punitive discharge, according to Bergdahl's defense.

Lt. Col. Mark Visger recommended that Bergdahl's case not proceed to a general court-martial, where Bergdahl could have been subject to life in prison and a dishonorable discharge if he had been found guilty. Instead, Visger recommended that the case be tried at a lower-level special court-martial, Eugene Fidell, Bergdahl's lawyer, said on Saturday.

Sentences at special courts-martial are limited to a maximum of a year in jail and a bad-conduct discharge.

But Visger, who presided over Bergdahl's preliminary hearing last month on charges stemming from Bergdahl's leaving his post in Afghanistan in 2009, recommended no prison time and no punitive discharge in the report he sent on Oct. 5 to officials who will decide the matter.

In a letter Bergdahl's defense team sent to Visger in response to the lieutenant colonel's report, the defense praised Visger's "balanced, judicious, and humane approach." It referred to his conclusion and suggested that even a special court-martial was too severe.

"Given your conclusion — with which we agree — about whether confinement or a punitive discharge are warranted, and the factors you cited in support of that conclusion," nonjudicial punishment under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice would be the appropriate case disposition, Bergdahl's lawyers wrote in the letter, which was released Friday.

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N. Korea holds lavish military parade

Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un declared Saturday that his country was ready to stand up to any threat posed by the United States as he spoke at a lavish military parade to mark the 70th anniversary of the North's ruling party and trumpet his third-generation leadership.

The parade, which featured thousands of goose-stepping soldiers and military hardware, kicked off what is expected to be one of the North's biggest celebrations ever — an attention-getting event that is the government's way of showing the world and its own people that the Kim dynasty is firmly in control and its military a power to be reckoned with.

Kim walked down a red

carpet and saluted his honor guard before walking up to a podium to deliver a speech laced with the fiery rhetoric that is commonly used by the communist regime.

"Our revolutionary force is ready to respond to any kind of war the American imperialists want," said Kim, flanked by visiting Chinese official Liu Yunshan and senior North Korean officials.

Mets hand Kershaw fifth consecutive playoff loss

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Jacob deGrom sure seems to thrive on baseball's biggest stages.

He struck out the side on 10 pitches in one inning of the All-Star game in July.

He was even better in his postseason debut.

DeGrom struck out 13 over seven scoreless innings and Daniel Murphy homered off a star-crossed Clayton Kershaw to help the New York Mets defeat the Los Angeles Dodgers 3-1 on Friday night for a 1-0 lead in their NL Division Series.

"Before the game I was pretty nervous," said deGrom, who at 27 is in just his second major league season. "But once I got out there warming up, I kind of settled down. It really went away after the first pitch I threw."

DeGrom (1-0) limited the Dodgers to five hits and walked one. The right-hander's strikeouts tied the franchise playoff record set by Tom Seaver in Game 1 of the 1973 NL Championship Series.

"I've got a little more confidence out there," deGrom said. "There were a couple times tonight, 3-2, where I threw a couple change-ups. Last year I probably wouldn't have done that."

Kershaw (0-1) endured his fifth straight postseason loss after giving up the seventh playoff homer of his career. Last season's NL MVP allowed three runs and four hits in 62/3 innings, struck out 11 and walked four.

"I got outpitched, plain and simple," he said.

Three of Kershaw's walks came in

the seventh, before Mets captain David Wright had a two-out, two-run single off Pedro Baez that put New York up 3-0.

"It's been nine years since I felt this," said Wright, who missed 115 games with injuries this season. "That's about as sweet as I thought it was going to be."

Runs will likely again be at a premium when the Dodgers try to even the series Saturday night in Game 2. They start major league ERA leader Zack Greinke against Noah Syndergaard of the Mets.

With a game-time temperature of 92 degrees, both pitchers came out throwing heat. Kershaw, the major league strikeout leader with 301 in the regular season, retired six of his first nine batters. DeGrom, last year's NL rookie of the year, struck out two batters in each of his first four innings.

"He was unbelievable right from the get-go," Mets catcher Travis d'Arnaud said. "He had command of all four of his pitches and he was just being himself out there, having fun. There's a lot of good seats out there, but I had the best seat in the house."

DeGrom became the first Mets pitcher with 10 or more strikeouts in the playoffs since Dwight Gooden in Game 1 of the 1988 NLCS at Dodger Stadium. DeGrom retired his final 11 batters, subduing the white towel-waving crowd of 54,428.

"To have him go out there against Clayton tonight and win the game is a huge lift for us," said Mets manager Terry Collins, who got a victory in his postseason debut at age 66. "This is a good start for a team that hadn't been in the postseason for a long time. We needed a con-

fidence boost and Jake gave it to us."

Jeurys Familia got four outs to earn the save.

Murphy homered leading off the fourth to give New York a 1-0 lead before Kershaw retired the next three batters. Kershaw stumbled in the seventh, giving up three walks before being relieved by Baez, who served up Wright's hit.

Wright's hit whizzed past leaping second baseman Howie Kendrick and into center field, scoring Lucas Duda and Ruben Tejada.

The Dodgers finally scored in the eighth on Adrian Gonzalez's two-out RBI single that left them trailing 3-1. He struck out in his first three at-bats.

Catcher A.J. Ellis had one of the Dodgers' five hits off deGrom.

"Just electric stuff," he said of the Mets' ace. "That's as good of an arm as I've seen all year long. He's got great composure, great poise out there."

Kershaw nearly helped himself in the fourth when the Dodgers trailed by one. With two runners on, he hit a long flyball to center field that was caught by Yoenis Cespedes to end the inning.

The left-hander threw 22 pitches in the first inning, including 12 on a walk to Wright. In the second, a ball hit by Duda went off Kershaw's right foot, but he didn't appear to be affected and struck out the next two batters to end the inning.

Los Angeles lost its third straight postseason game, having been beaten in four games by St. Louis in last year's NLDS. The Dodgers lost the final two games, with Kershaw tagged for the loss while pitching on three days' rest in Game 4.

Kansas City evens series with Astros

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Kansas City Royals whipped out the same formula that carried them to last year's World Series to turn back the Houston Astros and tie their AL Division Series at a game apiece.

Some clutch hitting. Stingy defense. An unflappable bullpen.

Even a little help from replay. "Just battling," first baseman Eric Hosmer said. "That's what this team does so well."

The Royals rallied from a three-run deficit Friday, getting a go-ahead single from Ben Zobrist in the seventh inning, and then watched Wade Davis and the bullpen make it stand in a 5-4 victory that brought back memories of their nip-and-tuck postseason of a year ago.

The Royals knotted the game at 4 off Scott Kazmir and relievers Oliver Perez and Josh Fields in the sixth. Kansas City took the lead in the seventh when Alcides Escobar led off with a triple against Will Harris (0-1) and Zobrist followed with his single through the left side.

Kelvin Herrera (1-0) and Ryan Madson each tossed a scoreless inning for the Royals, and Davis came on to close it — though the real drama was only beginning.

Davis walked Preston Tucker with one out, and speedy Carlos Gomez came in as a pinch-runner. Davis snapped a throw to Hosmer at first, and he neatly snagged it on one hop as Gomez made a dive back to the bag. Gomez was initially ruled safe, but the call was overturned upon review.

"That play that Hos made on the pick-off, I don't know if there's a lot of first basemen that can make that play," Royals manager Ned Yost said. "It was tremendous."

Lackey, Cards top Cubs

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — John Lackey lived up to his reputation as a pitcher who craves the ball in October, helping the St. Louis Cardinals cool off the upstart Chicago Cubs.

Lackey outpitched old teammate Jon Lester, allowing two hits into the eighth inning, and rookies Tommy Pham and Stephen Piscotty each homered late for the Cardinals in a 4-0 victory Friday night in the opener of their NL Division Series.

"Tonight was special, for sure," Lackey said. "The atmosphere was outstanding, the crowd was really into it, and I knew I'd have to pitch well."

He did it in front of a standing-room-only crowd of 47,830 — the second-largest at 10-year-old Busch Stadium — with thousands of Cubs faithful mixed into the red throng for the first postseason game

between the two longtime rivals.

"Incredible. I thought his fastball was about as good as we've seen. Period," manager Mike Matheny said. "Anything you wanted to do, he pretty much had it."

Yadier Molina did his part behind the plate, too, wearing a splint to protect a strained left thumb ligament that sidelined him since Sept. 20. He was 0-for-3 but seemingly had no issues.

"You can tell he's been anxious to get in there," Matheny said. "The way he moved behind the plate, the way he and John were working, he is so valuable to our club in so many ways."

The 36-year-old Lackey outdid Lester, with whom he formed a potent 1-2 punch on the 2013 Red Sox, the team that knocked off the Cardinals in the World Series.

"Lester did his thing as well," Lackey said. "A really fun game, and fun to be a part of."

Rangers win, now up 2-0

Associated Press

TORONTO — Fed up with his own bat, Hanser Alberto grabbed one belonging to teammate Delino DeShields.

Good choice, rookie. Alberto, the seldom-used backup infielder, lined a tiebreaking single to center in the 14th inning, helping the Texas Rangers beat the Toronto Blue Jays 6-4 for a 2-0 lead in the best-of-five American League Division Series.

"I didn't even ask him for it," Alberto said, smiling at DeShields sitting beside him on the postgame interview podium. "Good wood, too, you know?"

It sure was. DeShields then picked the bat up and put it to good use, driving in another run with an infield hit after Liam Hendriks replaced La Troy Hawkins (0-1).

The underdog Rangers will try to sweep the Blue Jays at home in Game 3 on Sunday. Martin Perez will start for Texas

against Marco Estrada.

"This is an uphill battle but it's been done before," Blue Jays catcher Russell Martin said.

San Francisco was the last team to do it, coming back to beat Cincinnati three straight times after losing at home in the first two games of their 2012 NL Division Series.

Alberto, batting last and only in the lineup because star third baseman Adrian Beltre was out with a strained back, made an error that led to Toronto's first two runs but redeemed himself with his big hit in extra innings.

"We were pretty confident going into the second game regardless of Adrian getting hurt," DeShields said. "We were kind of bummed out about that, but we kept our heads up."

The 22-year-old Alberto, who made his big league debut this season, also had a sacrifice fly.



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Hokies overtake Wolfpack

Associated Press

BLACKSBURG, Va. — Brenden Motley and Isaiah Ford had apparently heard enough about how missed opportunities had put Virginia Tech in a hole.

The pair teamed up for three second-quarter touchdown passes Friday night, pulling the Hokies out of a 10-0 hole and leading them to a 28-13 victory over North Carolina States that was like a soothing salve on open wounds suffered this season, and a few from recent seasons, too.

"We really needed to beat a good football team," coach Frank Beamer said. "I hope we can take this and build on it."

The Hokies (3-3, 1-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) avoided a three-game losing streak and their third home loss in four games by putting together their best offensive quarter of the season against FCS-level competition. Their defense was impressive, too, after a slow start.

The stars were Motley, the backup forced into action since the opening week, and Ford, who draws plenty of defensive attention.

"It's like basketball when you can't miss," Ford said with a wide smile. "I couldn't not get open, and 'Mot' was finding me."

The pair hooked up on touchdowns of 27, 5 and 2 yards in the quarter.

"The opportunities are always there," Motley said. "In the second quarter, we just

started to convert on them."

The scoring drives came on three successive possessions, the last ending with 18 seconds left in the half.

Ford became the first Hokies receiver with three touchdown catches in a quarter in Beamer's 29 seasons.

NC State (4-2, 0-2) lost its second straight league game after starting the season by beating four lesser opponents. The Wolfpack led 10-0 after just 16 minutes, but were outgained 156-2 in the second quarter. They managed just 125 yards of offense after the first 15 minutes.

"I just think we got a little undisciplined in how we were playing," linebacker Airius Moore said.

Motley, who has been filling in while injured starter Michael Brewer recovers from a broken left collarbone, got his fifth start when Brewer was cleared to practice, but not play in a game. Motley was 14 of 28 for 158 yards and ran for 44 yards on nine tries.

Travon McMillian added his first career touchdown with a 59-yard run in the fourth quarter for the Hokies.

Virginia Tech also ended Wolfpack quarterback Jacoby Brissett's streak of attempts without being intercepted at 241. Adonis Alexander did the honors, picking off a pass with 1:20 remaining. Brissett was 12 of 25 for just 113 yards. He was sacked four times.

"I have to do a better job of getting the ball out of my hands faster, making more plays in the passing game," Brissett said.

The Hokies, needing badly to reverse a trend that had seen them lose six of their last seven home games against teams from the Power Five conferences, and eight of their last 10, finally found some offensive consistency they had been lacking after falling behind.

Marshall 31, Southern Miss 10: Chase Litton threw two touchdowns and the defense forced five turnovers to help the Thundering Herd beat the visiting Golden Eagles.

Devon Johnson had 82 yards rushing and a score and Deandre Reaves 76 yards receiving and a touchdown for Marshall (5-1, 2-0 Conference USA).

On fourth-and-3, Marshall lined up to attempt a 40-yard field goal but Southern Miss jumped offside, giving the Thundering Herd a fresh set of downs. Three plays later, Litton hit Ryan Yurachek for a 3-yard touchdown to make it 17-10.

Marshall's Gary Thompson had strip-sacks on back-to-back Southern Miss drives, the second of which Jarquez Samuel returned 3 yards to make it 31-10 with 1:49 left in the third quarter.

Southern Miss (3-3, 1-1) had seven second-half possessions, all of which ended with a fumble, an interception or a turnover on downs.

US lead down to 1 point

Associated Press

INCHEON, South Korea — Whether it was the South African juggernaut of Branden Grace and Louis Oosthuizen, the inspired play of Bae Sang-moon in front of his home crowd or a format change that reduced the number of matches, the Presidents Cup is truly up for grabs for the first time in 10 years.

That's all the International team ever wanted.

And it's what this event sorely needed. Grace delivered two big shots in the gathering darkness, and the South African duo went 4-0 in team matches. Bae and Hideki Matsuyama teamed for nine birdies in 11 holes for the biggest rout of the week. And the International team played the Americans to a draw in a double session Saturday to stay just one point behind.

Considering how lopsided the Presidents Cup has been, it felt like a lead.

"We need to win this," Oosthuizen said. "This is huge for us. We believe we can do it."

The Americans had a 9-8½ lead. They also have Jordan Spieth, the No. 1 player in the world. He made two clutch putts in morning foursomes to cap off the biggest comeback at the Jack Nicklaus Golf Club Korea, and he made eight birdies in 14 holes in a fourballs victory in the afternoon.

Not since the matches were tied going into Sunday in 2005 has the Presidents Cup featured a final day of drama.

"This is what we all came here for — for it to be exciting tomorrow," International captain Nick Price said. "I'm going to ask my team to go and play golf tomorrow. Each and every one of them has to play golf, and play to the very best of their ability. That's all we can do."

The South Africans have certainly done their part, with Grace producing two critical shots.

Grace and Oosthuizen were all square with Bubba Watson and J.B. Holmes, and it was clear their fourballs match would set the tone for the final round. Grace chipped in for birdie from left of the 16th green, raising his arm before the ball reached the cup and sharing a bear hug with his childhood friend.

The darkness was getting so thick that Grace had no idea Oosthuizen's second shot into the par-5 18th hole had gone into the water. Grace could barely see the green from 263 yards away with a chilly wind in his face. No matter. He smashed his 3-wood, watched it disappear into the gloaming and had no idea what happened until he heard a burst of cheers coming from the grandstands.

The ball narrowly cleared the bunker and settled on the edge of the green.

"I don't know where it finished or how it got to where it did," Grace said. "Just remarkable to pull a shot off like that."

Watson and Holmes both missed the green, and when neither chipped in for eagle, Grace rolled his putt close enough to be conceded the birdie and a crucial win.

"No moment is too big for him," Oosthuizen said.

The only other team to go 4-0 in the Presidents Cup was Tiger Woods and Steve Stricker in 2009. The South Africans knew they were playing well, and they suggested to Price on Thursday after their opening match to split them up so they could help lift other teammates.

Red Wings spoil Babcock's return

Associated Press

DETROIT — Mike Babcock bowed his head and rubbed his brow after seeing a fourth puck go in his team's net.

There wasn't much else the Toronto coach could do while watching his former team rout the franchise he's trying to revive.

Justin Abdelkader had a hat trick and Dylan Larkin scored in his NHL debut, helping the Detroit Red Wings beat the Babcock-led Maple Leafs 4-0 on Friday night.

"A little extra special for us to get a win against Babs," Abdelkader acknowledged.

Jimmy Howard stopped 22 shots for his 21st career shutout for the Red Wings, who won their season-opening game and dropped Toronto to 0-2.

"I don't think I was surprised at how good Detroit played or anything like that," Babcock said quietly after the game. "I just think we have to be better."

The Maple Leafs lured Babcock away from Detroit with an eight-year, \$50 million contract that more than doubled what any other coach is making is making per season in the league.

Abdelkader scored on Detroit's first shot, making the most of a power play 1:15 into the game. He had another goal midway through the first period off a centering pass from Larkin.

Just 20 seconds into the second period, Larkin lifted a shot from the bottom of the left circle over goalie Jonathan Bernier and pumped his right fist while celebrating the moment in front of 20,000-plus fans at Joe Louis Arena.

"It's an incredible feeling just to see it go in and see the Joe go pretty crazy," said Larkin, who is from suburban Detroit and played one season at Michigan.

Abdelkader became the first Red Wings player to score three times in an opener since Brendan Shanahan did it in 2001, according to STATS, and joined Adam

Brown (1945) as the only players who had a hat trick in a season- and home-opening game.

Larkin, a 2014 first-round pick, drew two defenders as he skated down the middle of the ice and Abdelkader took advantage of the space to score his third goal 3:54 into the second period.

NHL rookies Edmonton's Connor McDavid and Buffalo's Jack Eichel have generated a lot of buzz, but Babcock said more people should be talking about the 19-year-old Larkin.

"He obviously gives them speed and he competes on every shift," Babcock said.

Bernier was pulled after allowing Larkin's goal. He gave up three goals on nine shots. James Reimer stopped 12 of the 13 shots he faced in relief.

Rangers 4, Blue Jackets 2: Mats Zuccarello had two goals and visiting New York scored three times in a 1:17 span in the third period to rally past Columbus.

Brandon Saad, the Blue Jackets' blockbuster acquisition in the offseason, scored on a power play at 16:10 of the third to give the Blue Jackets a 2-1 lead in their season opener.

But after a Columbus turnover, Oscar Lindberg netted a low shot for his second goal in two games to tie it at 2. Just 17 seconds later, Kevin Hayes made it 3-2 with a shot from the right corner along the end line that found its way past Sergei Bobrovsky. Zuccarello capped the scoring a minute later.

Henrik Lundqvist finished with 21 saves for New York.

Cam Atkinson also scored for the Blue Jackets.

Blackhawks 3, Islanders 2 (OT): Patrick Kane scored on a power play at 1:49 of overtime to lift visiting Chicago and spoil New York's debut in Brooklyn.

With the Blackhawks awarded an extra skater after a slashing penalty on the Islanders' Nick Leddy during the 3-on-3 overtime, Kane sent the puck toward the

middle of the net from the right side.

Kane is the subject of a sexual assault investigation in western New York. He hasn't been charged, and has said he expects to be exonerated.

Kane also scored in the second period, Artem Anisimov added a goal and Corey Crawford stopped 34 shots. John Tavares and Marek Zidlicky scored for the Islanders.

Coyotes 4, Kings 1: Max Domi had a goal and an assist in his NHL debut to help visiting Arizona beat Los Angeles.

Mike Smith made 40 saves for the Coyotes in their opener after a tumultuous summer that featured a contentious battle over the terms of their arena lease.

Zbynek Michalek, Oliver Ekman-Larsson and Tobias Rieder also scored for Arizona.

Domi became the first player to score multiple points in his debut with the Coyotes franchise since current captain Shane Doan had two assists for the Winnipeg Jets on Oct. 7, 1995, according to Stats LLC.

Tyler Toffoli has a short-handed goal for Los Angeles. The Kings lost their second straight after opening with a 5-1 home loss to San Jose on Wednesday night.

Jets 3, Devils 1: Andrew Ladd and Blake Wheeler each had a goal and an assist in a big second period and visiting Winnipeg beat New Jersey to spoil John Hynes' NHL coaching debut.

Mathieu Perreault had two assists in the three-goal second period and Michael Hutchinson made 20 saves to help the Jets win for the second time in two nights. They opened with a 6-2 victory at Boston.

Mark Scheifele ignited the Winnipeg outburst with his second goal of the season.

Jiri Tlustý scored for New Jersey in his debut. It was actually an own goal that Winnipeg defenseman Jacob Trouba fired into his own net trying to clear a puck in front.