

STARS AND STRIPES®

Saturday, October 17, 2015

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Women in combat sparking fierce debate

McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The push for American women to join men on the front lines of combat took another step forward Friday when a third female candidate graduated from Army Ranger School in ceremonies at Fort Benning, Ga.

But the landmark success of the first three women to earn their Ranger tab, along with Defense Secretary Ash Carter's initiative to increase combat roles for female troops, has set off a new round of gender wars across the country.

When Carter visited U.S. sailors last week at Naval Air Station Sigonella in Italy, one of the first questions he fielded came from a Marine who asked why the Pentagon wants to place more women in battlefield infantry ranks.

After assuring the Marine that "we're going to make a data-based decision in all of the services," Carter said simple math dictates that Pentagon leaders open more combat jobs and other previously closed roles to female troops.

"They're going to have to recruit from the American population," he said. "Half the American population is female. So I'd be crazy not to be, so to speak, fishing in that pond for qualified servicemembers. Otherwise, it's like having a population that's half the size. So that's the reason, from a point of view of mission success."

On Oct. 1, the heads of the five military services gave Carter recommendations on which front-line combat jobs and special forces roles should remain closed to women, if any, along with data justifying the exclusions. Carter has pledged to accept or reject the recommendations, which he has not made public, by the start of

3rd female earns Ranger tab

Columbus (Ga.) Ledger-Enquirer

COLUMBUS, Ga. — Maj. Lisa Jaster wouldn't quit.

Friday morning at Victory Pond on Fort Benning, Ga., she got the fruits of that determination and grit when she received the Ranger tab, signifying she had met the standards for the Army's most difficult combat leadership course.

She wasn't the first woman to accomplish the feat: Capt. Kristen Griest and 1st Lt. Shaye Haver earned that distinction two months ago.

But the accomplishment of Jaster, 37, is no less significant. She is the mother of a 3-year-old daughter and a son who turned 7 in August while she was grinding out 180 days in a course that takes 62 days if one goes straight through without repeating a phase.

Jaster, a 2000 West Point graduate, also has a day job. She is a Shell Oil engineer in Houston and serves in an Army Corps of Engineer Reserve unit based in Huntsville, Ala. She is married to Marine Lt. Col. Allan Jaster.

She also becomes part of the first father-daughter Ranger tandem. Her father, William Peplinski, also a West Point graduate, completed Ranger School in March 1969, according to Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade records. He lives in Wisconsin and was too ill to attend the Friday ceremony.

"There is no quitting," Jaster said in a news conference on post a couple of hours before she and 88 other soldiers graduated. "I can't have quit in me. So, there was never an option to stop. There was never an option to quit."

Jaster, Griest and Haver had been part of a group of 19 women to start the course on April 19. They were the survivors as they moved from Fort Benning to the mountains in early July. The others had all been dropped from the course.

next year.

As it is in so many other cultural disputes, the Internet is now a main battleground in a fight over women's proper roles that, both inside and outside the military, goes back to the nation's founding and includes the 19th-century struggle for female suffrage, as well as the dispute two generations ago over whether women should be allowed to wear pants to work.

1st Lt. Shaye Haver and Capt. Kristen Griest, alumni of the United States Military Academy at West Point, completed the Ranger School's rigorous 62-day training program and graduated with 94 male coun-

terparts in August. Maj. Lisa Jaster, an engineer with two children, finished the course earlier this month and graduated Friday with her male peers.

News articles about the three women's historic achievements have prompted dozens or even hundreds of online comments over whether standards were lowered for them and, more broadly, whether women should join infantry and special forces units in war.

Many comments quickly divide along gender lines, with women advocating more opportunities for female troops and men arguing against them.

The gender wars also have

reached the halls of Congress and West Point.

Rep. Steven Russell, a Ranger School graduate who deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan and other war zones before his election last November to the House of Representatives from Oklahoma, sent a Sept. 15 letter to Army Secretary John McHugh, demanding the evaluations and related performance documents for Haver and Griest while they were testing to become qualified to join the Rangers.

Within a week, a group of female veterans and West Point graduates filed a Freedom of Information Act request for Russell's Ranger School files.

One of the women, former Army Capt. Sue Fulton, grouped Russell, 52, with "too many older men [who] have biases about what women are capable of."

Fulton told Stars and Stripes, "This is about the fact that these are the kinds of objections we (female servicemembers) have heard for 40 years. For some of us, enough is enough."

While Carter and other Pentagon leaders stand accused in many online forums of bowing to "political correctness," the initiative to expand women's combat roles is a congressional mandate, required by the 2011 Defense Authorization Act.

These kinds of debates have left some of the nation's most elite male soldiers and sailors in a bind, even many who applauded the three female trailblazers who completed the Ranger School course.

While a few male classmates of Haver and Griest have said testing standards were lowered for the two women, they've done so anonymously, and their claims were rebutted by other male classmates speaking on the record.

Director of VA benefits resigns

BY HEATH DRUZIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The beleaguered undersecretary in charge of benefits for the nation's veterans resigned Friday after being implicated in the latest Department of Veterans Affairs scandal.

Allison Hickey, a former Air Force brigadier general, was in charge of the Veterans Benefits Administration and oversaw 20,000 employees. She was at the center of a recent VA In-

spector General's report that found she had helped two employees manipulate the hiring system for financial gain.

The IG referred criminal complaints for those directors, Diana Rubens in the Philadelphia VA Regional Office and Kimberly Graves in the St. Paul (Minn.) VA Regional Office. The IG report also suggested Hickey be considered for disciplinary action.

VA Secretary Bob McDonald released a statement Friday saying he had accepted her

resignation

"with regret."

In an email obtained by Stars and Stripes titled "My final love note — Thank you and God Bless!" Hickey lays out her accomplishments at the VA, including a reduction in the claims backlog, but does not mention the scandal.

"After 4.5 years of this blessed honor, it is time to serve others and you in a different way," she wrote Friday to her staff.

druzin.heath@stripes.com

Airman Stone out of hospital

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — U.S. Airman Spencer Stone, 23, was released Thursday from a California hospital, a week after he was stabbed three times in a fight outside a Sacramento bar.

The airman first class, one of the three Americans hailed as a hero after stopping a heavily armed gunman in August from opening fire on a Paris-bound train, expressed his appreciation for the care he received.

"Thanks very much to the first responders and the team here at UC Davis Medical Center for taking such good care of me," Stone said in a statement. "Thanks, also, to my amazing family and friends for their love and support. And, thanks to everyone who has sent encouragement during this challenging time."

Stone was stabbed multiple times in his upper body during the fight that took place at about 12:45 a.m. on Oct. 8. His wounds required emergency surgery.

An Air Force spokesman said after the attack that Stone would be provided ample time to recover and consult with medical professionals to determine when he will return to work.

In August, Stone and two of his childhood friends — Army Spc. Alek Skarlatos and college student Anthony Sadler — were vacationing in Europe when they took down a gunman with ties to Islamic extremism.

Stone suffered a cut thumb and other injuries in stopping the train attack.

Police said they are continuing their search for a pair of suspects in the incident. Ken Bernard, deputy chief for the Sacramento police, had described the suspects as "two male Asian adults ... wearing white T-shirts and blue jeans." They fled the scene in a dark-colored Toyota Camry, he said.

dickstein.corey@stripes.com

Servicemembers reminded leaked classified documents are off-limits

(Jacksonville, N.C.) Daily News

Servicemembers, civilian employees and government contractors who view a recently published cache of classified documents could be putting their security clearance at risk, a Washington attorney said.

"Individuals holding security clearances are technically not supposed to review the materials contained in the drone strike stories published by The Intercept," Bradley P. Moss, a national security attorney, said.

"The leaked materials are still considered classified, and viewing classified documents to which clearanceholders are

not authorized access is again, technically speaking, a security violation," he said.

The reports highlight the U.S. drone program operating in various countries by the Defense Department; the Joint Special Operations Command, which controls such units as Delta Force and SEAL Team 6; and the CIA.

The documents leaked to The Intercept come from an anonymous source who allegedly still works within the U.S. government and sheds light on how the U.S. government targets suspected terrorists and adds them to a "Kill/Capture" list.

The source told The Intercept that he decided to release the documents because he believes the public has a right to understand the process by which people are placed on kill lists and, ultimately, assassinated on orders from the highest echelons of the U.S. government.

Marine Corps public affairs officials told the Daily News no current policy or guidance existed for servicemembers trying to view the documents.

"We are still looking for old guidance," Marine Capt. Philip J. Kulczewski said. "(But) Marines should not be viewing these documents online."

Former sailor guilty of drug distribution

The (Norfolk, Va.) Virginian-Pilot

NORFOLK, Va. — Hospital corpsmen on the aircraft carrier George H.W. Bush scrambled in February to revive a sailor found unconscious aboard the Norfolk, Va.-based ship.

The sailor, having overdosed on heroin, had no detectable pulse, but medics managed to revive the servicemember.

In federal court Thursday, a former Bush crewmember and

his wife pleaded guilty to sneaking heroin aboard the warship and selling the drugs to the sailor and others on board.

Donald G. McManus, 22, and his wife, Breanna L. McManus, 23, each face up to 20 years in prison in connection with the distribution, according to a news release.

Donald McManus was an active-duty sailor on the Bush in February, already on restricted status with the Navy for

prior drug use. He had his wife smuggle heroin and syringes on board inside her bra, according to a criminal affidavit.

The couple sold heroin to the unidentified sailor, who later was found unresponsive.

The McManuses were charged in August and indicted by a federal grand jury in September.

Donald McManus will be sentenced Jan. 21; his wife will be sentenced Jan. 27.

Royals, Volquez silence Jays

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Edinson Volquez planned to pitch the Toronto Blue Jays inside in Game 1 of their American League Championship Series, just as he did during their contentious series earlier this season.

Then, after chatting with Kansas City Royals catcher Salvador Perez, he changed his mind.

"We know they got a lot of pull hitters over there, and power hitters, and he told me, 'How you feel pitching down and away?' And I said, 'I feel sexy tonight,'" Volquez recalled. "And he was like, 'All right, we're changing the plan right now. We're pitching those guys away.'"

They never touched him all night. Volquez combined with three relievers on a three-hitter, Perez hit a soaring home run off Toronto starter Marco Estrada, and Kansas City rolled to a 5-0 victory Friday to open the best-of-seven series.

"Tonight was the Volquez show. He was tremendous," Blue Jays manager John Gibbons said. "He shut down a good-hitting team, I know that. His ball was ducking and darting everywhere."

Volquez (1-1) ramped up his fastball to 97 mph to slice through a potent Blue Jays offense, never allowing a runner past second base over six innings. His only trouble occurred when he walked the first two batters in the sixth, but he wiggled out of it without any damage.

The Royals' bullpen finished off the club's eighth straight ALCS victory.

"There was a lot of energy," said Volquez, who had been 0-3 with an 8.76 ERA in three

career postseason starts. "I don't know. I was just making my pitches."

Alcides Escobar and Lorenzo Cain drove in runs off Estrada (1-1), while Eric Hosmer and Kendrys Morales added two more off LaTroy Hawkins to put the game away.

The Blue Jays' three hits were their fewest ever in a postseason game. They were shut out five times in the regular season.

As if the outcome wasn't bad enough for them, designated hitter Edwin Encarnacion left in the eighth inning to get X-rays on the middle finger of his left hand. The initial report was a strain of the ligament and Encarnacion was listed as day-to-day.

"He's been battling this thing," Gibbons said. "We'll see how it goes."

The Royals will try to take a 2-0 series lead when they send Yordano Ventura to the mound on Saturday. Toronto will counter with former Cy Young Award winner David Price.

"Hopefully things change to our favor tomorrow," Toronto catcher Dioner Navararo said.

The teams entered the series with plenty of history.

To start with, the defending AL champs beat Toronto in the 1985 league championship series, then beat the St. Louis Cardinals for the Royals' only World Series triumph. But far more recently were the tense, benches-clearing game that the teams played at Rogers Centre in August.

Volquez was right in the thick of things.

The veteran starter kept pitching the Blue Jays inside, finally hitting Josh Donaldson with a fastball. Tensions escalated as the game went on, with Toronto

reliever Aaron Sanchez returning the favor by hitting Escobar to trigger the first of two benches-clearing scuffles.

Afterward, Volquez said Donaldson was "crying like a baby" over his inside approach. And to nobody's surprise, Donaldson was booed lustily by the Kansas City crowd on Friday night.

That was the only reason for the packed house to boo, though.

After squandering a scoring chance in the first inning, the Royals jumped ahead in the third. Alex Gordon led off with a double, Escobar sent an RBI double down the right-field line, and Cain's two-out single helped Kansas City — so accustomed to playing from behind — to a 2-0 lead.

Perez added his third homer of the post-season on the first pitch he saw in the fourth, the cheering of the throaty, flag-waving crowd reaching a crescendo as it passed over the wall.

As shaky as Estrada was, Volquez was downright stoic as he circled the mound.

He did not allow a hit until his 56th pitch, when Chris Colabello chopped a single up the middle with two outs in the fourth. It snapped a postseason hitless streak of 10 2/3 innings for the Royals, one out shy of matching the record set by the New York Yankees in 1939.

The biggest of the Blue Jays' big bats made the quietest outs, too.

Jose Bautista went down looking in the fourth inning, while Encarnacion struck out looking in the sixth. Donaldson managed a walk off Volquez but little else, while Tulowitzki — one of the Blue Jays' big deadline acquisitions — went 0-for-4 with two strikeouts.

QB Manziel questioned after dispute

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Browns quarterback Johnny Manziel told police that he had been drinking alcohol before they questioned him following a domestic incident with his girlfriend while driving on a highway.

Manziel was parked in a gravel driveway Monday when Avon, Ohio, police located him after he had an argument with girlfriend Colleen Crowley.

According to a police report, a witness said Crowley tried to exit Manziel's moving vehicle as the former Heisman Trophy winner tried to keep her in his car. When they spoke to him, police said Manziel told them he had consumed two alcoholic drinks earlier in the day.

Manziel wasn't arrested and Crowley told police she didn't want to press charges. The couple was allowed to leave the scene together.

Manziel, who was drafted by the Browns in the first round in 2014, spent 70 days in a Pennsylvania rehab facility earlier this year for an unspecified condition. It is not known if his aftercare prohibits him from drinking.

Browns general manager Ray Farmer released a statement Friday night.

"It is a matter that we take seriously and have expressed our concerns to Johnny directly," Farmer said. "Those conversations will remain private and we will refrain from further comment at this time."

A team spokesman said Manziel's status for the Browns' home game Sunday against Denver has not changed. He could face discipline by the NFL per its personal-conduct policy.

Manziel, whose rough rookie season was followed by him checking himself into a center that specializes in treatment for alcohol and substance abuse, has been Josh McCown's backup for the past three games. He started for an injured McCown in Week 2 and led the Browns to a win over Tennessee.

Shortly after the Browns issued their statement, Manziel posted an explanation on his Twitter account.

"Colleen and I got into a dumb public argument on the way home Monday afternoon," Manziel wrote. "It probably looked more interesting than it was and I know I would stop and check if I saw a couple arguing on the side of the road. It was embarrassing but not serious and when we talked to the police and they realized everything was alright and I was sober, we went home together and everything is fine."

Crowley gave her explanation of the event on Instagram.

"J & I are good," she said. "I appreciate the people who stopped to check on us and call the police. I could see how it may have looked. Anytime anyone sees a guy and a girl arguing on the side of a road they should definitely stop, you never know what that could be. Fortunately it was just an argument, it was private, and we are all good!"

Top starters pay off as playoff relievers

Associated Press

Sure, Noah Syndergaard had pitched in relief. Back when he was a teenager, for the Lansing Lugnuts.

No matter that it'd been a while. The New York Mets needed their young ace.

So the bullpen gate swung open and Syndergaard trotted into the seventh inning of the Mets' most important game in nearly a decade, an all-or-nothing playoff matchup at Dodger Stadium.

"I was a little juiced up," he said.

Evidently so. He hit 100 mph with his first pitch, helped his team reach the NL Championship Series and heated up an annual October debate: Is it wise to use starters in relief during the postseason?

Already this week, the AL's only 20-game winner, a guy who tossed a no-hitter this year and a former Cy Young Award winner reversed roles in the playoffs.

Dallas Keuchel struggled and Mike Fiers did so-so for Houston. David Price wound up with a win for Toronto.

Having thrown 50 pitches at Texas in the AL Division Series on Monday — his first relief appearance since 2010 — Price was set start Game 2 of the ALCS at Kansas City on Saturday.

"I don't think I'm out of routine," Price said Friday, before the series opener.

"Like I said before, the dimensions that I'm throwing are still 60 feet, 6 inches. That stuff doesn't change. At this point in the season you know where home plate is. You have a good feel for what you're trying to do out there," he said.

Said Blue Jays manager John Gibbons: "He ended up getting in, pitching longer than most people thought he would."

"But that was a little bit of strategy, too," he said, without elaborating.

Of course, the ultimate save came last fall, right there at Kauffman Stadium.

San Francisco lefty Madison Bumgarner cemented himself as the World Series MVP by winning two starts, then pitching the final five innings to preserve a 3-2 lead in Game 7 against the Royals.

Others have smoothly made the switch, be it for one game or the entire post-season. Tim Lincecum, Orel Hershiser and David Cone are among the aces who've excelled over the years.

It's not always an easy adjustment, especially for pitchers whose long seasons are predicated on routines. Fatigue can also be a factor.

Bartolo Colon, who tied for the team lead in wins, and Jonathon Niese moved from the Mets' rotation to the 'pen this month.

Syndergaard could start Game 2 of the Chicago Cubs-Mets series Sunday night at

Citi Field, if he's recovered in time.

"I'm certainly well aware that I got him up four times last night," Mets manager Terry Collins said Friday. "That could have almost been five innings of work because I knew he threw over 100 pitches warming up."

Collins called on Syndergaard with the Mets leading Los Angeles by a run in the deciding Game 5 Thursday night in the NLDS. The 23-year-old righty, who last entered midgame in 2012 with Lansing in the Class-A Midwest League, worked a hitless seventh inning against the top of the Dodgers' lineup.

"Throughout the game I was just trying to take little mental photographs of everything around me, just trying to soak in as much as I could," he said.

Keuchel was cruising through these playoffs until Game 5 of the ALDS against the Royals. He entered in the eighth with the Astros trailing 4-2 and gave up a three-run homer to Kendrys Morales.

The bearded lefty went 20-8 in the regular season, shut down the Yankees in the AL wild-card game and beat Kansas City in Game 3. His first relief appearance since 2013 didn't go quite so well.

Astros manager A.J. Hinch said it was an easy call to summon Keuchel.

"Empty our tank with our best to try to give us a chance," he said.



Ship's Store official new car program

Exclusive Navy at-sea offers:

www.navyauto.com or nasinfo@navyauto.com

Utah State whips Boise State

Associated Press

LOGAN, Utah — Utah State entered Friday night having lost 12 straight games to No. 21 Boise State with its last victory over the Broncos coming 18 years ago. That streak was all but officially over after two quarters.

Utah State upset its Mountain West Conference rival 52-26 thanks to seven first-half turnovers, including a 90-yard interception return by Marwin Evans as time expired in the half. The Aggies scored 21 points in the final 85 seconds of the first half thanks to two fumbles and the interception.

The 52 points are the most Boise State has ever allowed as a ranked team.

"I don't know if I've ever seen anything like it in the first half," said Utah State coach Matt Wells, who called it "maybe the greatest win in program history. "... It's huge. I make no bones about it. I've been saying it — out of respect — the road to the championship goes through Boise. Till someone knocks them off the throne, it's theirs.

"I told our guys on Sunday, this isn't the championship game, but it puts you in the driver's seat."

Utah State (4-2, 3-0) holds onto a share of first place in the Mountain Division

with the win. Boise State (5-2, 2-1) falls out of first with its first conference loss of the season. Air Force (3-2, 2-0) is at Colorado State (2-4, 0-2) on Saturday.

Utah State hasn't won a championship in any sport since joining the Mountain West in 2013. The Aggies lost 50-19 in this meeting last year.

"I wanted to beat Boise State so bad since last year," Utah State quarterback Kent Meyers said. "We really wanted revenge."

The Broncos served up four fumbles and three interceptions in the first half, including Evans' score at the end of the half.

The Aggies defense ruled the day with a historic effort. The eight total turnovers were the most since forcing seven against Arkansas State in 2003 — and matched that in the first half.

Boise State receiver Thomas Sperbeck fumbled the ball away on the second snap of the second half.

"You try to stop the bleeding as fast as possible," Boise State coach Bryan Harsin said. "You've got to go make plays. You've got to hang onto the football."

"We needed guys to work together. We needed to pus some field position in our favor. It just didn't go that way."

Harsin called Utah State's Kyler Fackrell

one of the best in the country earlier in the week and the senior linebacker didn't disappoint. He finished with 11 tackles, 2.5 for loss. He also forced a fumble and recovered two. Fellow linebacker Nick Vigil had a game-high 14 tackles, nine in the first half, two sacks, a forced fumble and a fumble recovery.

"I've never been a part of anything like that, that was amazing," Vigil said of the turnovers. "Even our defensive coordinator said, 'I don't even know what to say right now.'"

"This is obviously a huge win, but it doesn't mean nothing if we don't do anything the rest of the season." Jalen Davis, Torrey Green and Evans all picked off Boise State quarterback Brett Rypien in the first half.

The Broncos had 10 first downs and the seven turnovers in the first half and allowed 35 points off those turnovers. The Boise State offensive line was simply overwhelmed in the first 30 minutes and Rypien was regularly under pressure.

Meyers threw for 157 yards and a career-high three touchdowns and added 63 yards rushing and a touchdown. Hunter Sharp caught two touchdown passes.

Rypien threw for 299 yards with three interceptions. He entered the game with one interception in four games.

Houston remains unbeaten

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Houston can only hope its final six games as a ranked team this season go as comfortably as its first.

Greg Ward Jr. ran for three touchdowns and threw for another to help No. 24 Houston beat Tulane 42-7 on Friday night.

Playing as a ranked team for the first time since 2011, the Cougars (6-0, 3-0 American Athletic) won by at least 21 points for the fourth time this season. Houston took a half-game lead over Memphis and Navy in the conference's West Division.

Despite three starting offensive linemen sitting out with injuries and losing its starting center to illness early, Houston piled up 461 total yards, including 239 on the ground, and went 7 of 15 on third down.

Ward completed 17 of 25 passes for 222 yards and had 14 carries for 77 yards.

"This was the best defensive front four that we've played all year, including Louisville," first-year Houston coach Tom Herman said. "With the makeshift offensive line, they were getting good push. We were getting guys open."

"He was having a tough time finding some windows to throw and probably scrambled around a little bit because of that. When he does scramble, good things usually happen."

Tulane safety Darion Monroe agreed with Herman's assessment of Ward after failing to stop the quarterback time and again.

"He's good," Monroe said. "That's why he's getting votes right now for the Heisman. He does things with his legs that other quarterbacks can't do. If you blitz him and you miss him, he can go for a touchdown."

But as good as the Cougars' offense was Friday night, Houston's defense matched the performance.

Houston held Tulane (2-4, 1-2) to 262 total yards, forced 11 punts and held the Green Wave to fewer first downs (11) than penalties (12). Devin Powell completed 11 of 28 passes for 88 yards. He got the start for the Green Wave with Tanner Lee out after he sustained a concussion a week ago against Temple.

"We knew it was going to be a new quarterback coming into the game so we knew it was going to be a lot of quick passes," Cougars linebacker Elandon Roberts said. "His reading wasn't going to be all the way through, but we prepared for him like he was a starter."

Houston's sixth-ranked offense took just one offensive play to score. Chance Allen ran past a stumbling defensive back and Ward lofted a pass that hit the receiver in stride for a 49-yard touchdown.

Ward put the Cougars up 14-0 on the first play of the second quarter with a 12-yard run. Tulane's Nico Marley was called for roughing the passer on a third-and-14 play to keep the drive alive.

Tulane answered with Dontrell Hilliard's 3-yard touchdown run on a drive that featured Rob Kelley's 43-yard run on a fake punt.

Ward scored again on a 5-yard run on Houston's next drive, and Demarcus Ayers' 15-yard touchdown run on an end around made it 28-7 late in the second quarter.

Ward's third touchdown run of the game, a 2-yard scamper in the third quarter, and Ayers' 73-yard punt return capped the scoring.

Sharks prevail in SO, keep Devils winless

Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — Martin Jones didn't seem disappointed.

After the San Jose goalie came within 3:38 of his third consecutive shutout, Jones was happy with winning his fourth straight game and helping the unbeaten Sharks get a 2-1 shootout win over the winless New Jersey Devils.

"I don't think there are any secrets," Jones said after making 31 saves. "My focus is to take the game as it comes and just focus on the process, whether it's a 1-1 game or a 5-0 game. The process needs to stay the same."

The low-key 25-year-old has been the Sharks' best player under new coach Pete DeBoer, who was fired by the Devils last season. He has given up two goals in four games, going a franchise-record 234 minutes, 33 seconds without allowing a goal.

"The D have done a good job in front of the net, and I am seeing pucks, but you don't go four games like that with one guy," said Jones, who was acquired in a trade with Boston. "We've played really, really solid both ends of the ice, and we haven't spent a lot of time in our zone in the four games. It has been a good start."

Joe Pavelski and Brent Burns scored in a shootout as the Sharks improved to 4-0.

New Jersey is 0-3-1 under new coach John Hynes. The only time the team had a worse start was in 2001-02 when they opened with four straight losses.

"That was one of the better games for us," Hynes said after earning his first point as a coach. "Is it good enough yet? No. It is a step in the right direction."

Patrick Marleau scored for the Sharks about two minutes in and the goal stood until Adam Henrique ended Jones' shut-out bid with a tying power-play goal.

Henrique scored for New Jersey on its first shootout attempt, but Jacob Josefson was stopped on the second and Mike Cammalleri missed the net on the third.

"We easily could have had two points," said Devils goaltender Cory Schneider,

who had 33 saves.

Avalanche 3, Ducks 0: Reto Berra made 35 saves for his second career shut-out and Nathan MacKinnon scored in the opening minute of visiting Colorado's victory over winless Anaheim.

Jack Skille also scored for the Avalanche, who dominated their road opener against the three-time defending Pacific Division champions. The Ducks fell to 0-3-1 with just one goal all season.

Berra became the third goalie to shut out the Ducks this season, making several big saves. It was the Swiss netminder's 52nd NHL game.

Frederik Andersen stopped 22 shots for the Ducks, who haven't scored in more than 163 minutes since Sami Vatanen got their only goal against Vancouver on Monday.

Maple Leafs 6, Blue Jackets 3: Leo Komarov scored two late goals and visiting Toronto beat Columbus to give Mike Babcock his first franchise victory as the new coach.

Joffrey Lupul had a goal and an assist, and Jake Gardiner, James van Riemsdyk, and Nazem Kadri also scored to help Toronto improve to 1-2-1. Daniel Winnik added three assists, Morgan Rielly had two, and James Reimer finished with 24 saves. The Maple Leafs played for the first time in six days.

Scott Hartnell had a goal and an assist to reach 600 career points, and Boone Jenner and Nick Foligno also scored for Columbus. The Blue Jackets are 0-5-0, extending the worst start in franchise history.

Hurricanes 5, Red Wings 3: Eric Staal and Kris Versteeg each had a goal and two assists and visiting Carolina handed Detroit its first loss of the season.

Brock McGinn, playing on the line with Staal and Versteeg, added a goal and an assist in his NHL debut. Cam Ward only needed to make 17 saves to help Carolina to its first victory.

Justin Faulk and Chris Terry also scored for Carolina.

Gustav Nyquist, Riley Sheahan and

Teemu Pulkkinen scored for Detroit.

Kings 2, Wild 1 (OT): Anze Kopitar scored at 2:19 of overtime, Tyler Toffoli connected on a power play in the second period and host Los Angeles got its first victory of the season.

The Kings, who last season became the eighth team in NHL history to miss the playoffs a year after winning the Stanley Cup, were in danger of starting a season 0-4 for the first time. Their longest winless streak from the start of a season was nine games in 1984-85 (0-6 with three ties).

Kopitar scored on a 25-foot wrist shot in the first overtime game for either team in the new 3-on-3 format.

Minnesota coach Mike Yeo challenged that L.A. was offside on Kopitar's goal, but the goal was upheld.

For Minnesota, Darcy Kuemper stopped 35 shots in his season debut. Kings goalie Jonathan Quick stopped 25 shots.

Jets 3, Flames 1: Dustin Byfuglien broke a tie with 1:28 left, and Ondrej Pavelec made 19 saves in host Winnipeg's victory over Calgary.

Byfuglien forced a turnover, took a pass and went around defenseman Dennis Wideman and beat Karri Ramo with a sharp-angle, low shot. Calgary coach Bob Hartley challenged the goal to see if Byfuglien was offside, but the goal stood.

Blake Wheeler added an empty-net goal with 53 seconds left, the 150th of his career, and leads the Jets with seven points. Bryan Little also had a goal and assist for Winnipeg, The Jets are 4-1-0.

Mikael Backlund scored for Calgary.

Blues 4, Canucks 3: Alexander Steen had a goal and an assist for visiting St. Louis.

Jori Lehtera, Robert Bortuzzo and Kyle Brodziak also scored, and Jake Allen stopped 31 shots. The Blues have won three straight to improve to 4-1-0.

Brandon Sutter had a goal and two assists, and Jared McCann and Daniel Sedin also scored for Vancouver. Ryan Miller made 28 saves.