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GOP to Obama: Don't veto defense bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House and Senate Republicans sent President Barack Obama a \$612 billion defense policy bill on Tuesday, warning him not to veto it as part of a partisan fight over government spending.

House Speaker John Boehner noted that the annual bill is one of the few bipartisan measures in Congress that has readily become law for 53 consecutive years. He urged Obama to pick a different way to make his point in the standoff over whether Congress should break through spending caps when it comes to defense, but adhere to them for domestic agencies.

Obama and his Democratic supporters say no. Republicans argue that the bill authorizes money for national security amid global threats.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he was “stunned” at Obama’s veto threat and said there were

enough votes in the Senate to override it. Both the House and Senate would have to override the veto, but if the House sustains Obama’s veto, the Senate would not even vote.

The bill authorizes an increase in defense spending that Obama requested, but he doesn’t like the way Congress did it. Lawmakers increased defense spending by padding a separate war-fighting account with an extra \$38.3 billion.

That account — for overseas contingency operations — is not subject to spending limits Congress imposed on itself a few years ago.

Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, asked: “If you are a U.S. servicemember today ... do you really care what budget category your support and maintenance comes from? I don’t think so. This is an inside Washington political game at the expense of

our nation’s security.”

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, ticked off a few of the hundreds of provisions in the bill that: provides \$300 million to arm Ukrainian forces fighting Russia-backed rebels; identifies \$11 million in waste and unnecessary spending; accelerates shipbuilding; modernizes an outdated military retirement system; reforms defense acquisition; and provides for better cyber defenses.

“If the president of the United States vetoes this bill, we can only reach one conclusion and that is that the president of the United States is more concerned about a budgetary issue in nondefense spending than he is about defending this nation,” said McCain, a staunch critic of Obama’s foreign policy.

The White House says Obama opposes the bill because it uses a “funding gimmick” to get

around spending caps. Obama also is upset about provisions in the bill that would make it harder for him to transfer suspected terrorists out of the military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, as part of his plan to close it before he leaves office.

Separately, 101 House Republicans have written a letter to Boehner and Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, saying that “in this increasingly unstable world, it is clear that further reductions to national defense accounts are irresponsible.”

In the letter, the Republicans said they are against a full-year spending bill to keep the government funded through next year at current levels. They said taking such action would deprive the U.S. military of roughly \$41 billion required to meet basic readiness requirements and execute modernization programs needed to maintain an edge over adversaries.

Admiral who erred on whistleblowers to be promoted

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Navy is poised to promote the admiral in charge of its elite SEAL teams and other commando units even though Pentagon investigators determined that he illegally retaliated against staff members whom he mistakenly suspected were whistleblowers.

Rear Adm. Brian Losey was investigated five times by the Defense Department’s inspector general after subordinates complained that he had wrongly fired, demoted or punished them during a vengeful but fruitless hunt for the person who had anonymously reported him for a minor travel-policy infraction, according to documents obtained by The Wash-

ington Post.

After conducting separate, yearslong investigations that involved more than 100 witnesses and 300,000 pages of emails, the inspector general upheld complaints from three of the five staff members. In each of those cases, it recommended that the Navy take action against Losey for violating whistleblower-protection laws, the documents show.

The Navy, however, dismissed the findings this month and decided not to discipline Losey, a pre-eminent figure in the military’s secretive Special Operations forces who once commanded SEAL Team 6, the clandestine unit known for killing terrorist targets such as Osama bin Laden. He now

leads the Naval Special Warfare Command and has served in Afghanistan, Iraq, Panama, Bosnia, Somalia and other conflict zones.

Senior Navy leaders reviewed the inspector general’s investigations but “concluded that none of the allegations rose to the level of misconduct on Admiral Losey’s part,” Rear Adm. Dawn Cutler, the Navy’s chief spokeswoman, said in a statement. She added that “no further action is contemplated.”

Losey did not respond to requests for comment placed through the Navy. Documents show that he vigorously contested the complaints, asserting that the staff members were poor performers and that he had acted within his authority

as a commander.

The decision clears the way for Losey to pin on a higher rank as a two-star admiral. He was selected for the promotion in 2011, but it was put on hold for four years as the inquiries unfolded.

Critics say the previously undisclosed investigations into one of the Navy’s top SEALs underscore the weakness of the military’s whistleblower-protection law and how rarely violators are punished.

In comparison with other federal employees, whistleblowers working in the military or national security agencies must meet a higher burden of proof to win their cases. The odds are stacked against those who seek redress.

Biden's not running for president

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Vice President Joe Biden will not run for president in 2016, he said Wednesday, ending a monthslong flirtation with a third White House campaign and setting him on a glide path toward the end of his decades-long political career.

Biden's decision finalizes the Democratic field of White House candidates and bolsters Hillary Rodham Clinton's standing as the front-runner by sparing her a challenge from the popular vice president.

In an extraordinary appearance in the White House Rose Garden, Biden said he always knew that the window for a viable campaign might close before he could determine whether his family was emotionally prepared for another campaign so soon after the death of his son Beau in May. Biden said his family was prepared to back him, but that he nonetheless would not be a candidate.

"Unfortunately, I believe we're out of time," he said, flanked by President Barack Obama and Biden's wife, Jill.

Biden had spent several months engaged in discussions with his family and advisers about entering the primary.

Marine pilot killed in UK crash

BY ADAM L. MATHIS
AND STEVEN BEARDSLEY
Stars and Stripes

REDMERE, England — A Marine pilot was killed Wednesday in an F/A-18 crash in a field near RAF Lakenheath, local police and residents said.

The unidentified pilot was assigned to Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232, out of Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., and was returning from deployment to Bahrain at the time of the crash, said Marine Capt. Richard Ulsh of Marine Forces Europe. The single-seater plane went down about 11 a.m., soon after taking off, Ulsh said.

A Cambridgeshire police spokeswoman said the pilot was killed. No one else was believed

injured, police said.

The aircraft was one of six F/A-18C Hornets making the transit from Bahrain as a group, said a spokeswoman for 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, the squadron's parent command. The other five landed at nearby RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland following the crash, she said.

The incident is under investigation, military officials said.

Police on Wednesday kept reporters and onlookers away from the crash site, a farm field in Redmere, about 10 miles from RAF Lakenheath. Resident Patrick Turner, who lives near the crash site, said he heard the aircraft overhead but couldn't see it. The jet became so loud "I couldn't hear myself speak," he said. Then came the impact.

"All I saw was a complete fireball," Turner said.

Turner said he also saw a deployed parachute.

Col. Robert G. Novotny, commander of Lakenheath, said in a Facebook post that officials from his base and RAF Mildenhall were assisting in the post-crash work.

"Please keep the families, the unit and the USMC in your thoughts and prayers as we navigate this tragedy," he said.

The F/A-18 is a multirole fighter aircraft capable of carrying air-to-air and air-to-ground weapons. As the Navy's primary strike aircraft, the jet has been used extensively over the past year to conduct sorties over Iraq and Syria in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

House subpoenas 5 no-show VA officials

BY HEATH DRUZIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Members of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs were expecting to question five Department of Veterans Affairs employees about an inflammatory VA Inspector General report on a hiring scandal.

After the five failed to appear

at Wednesday's hearing, members voted to issue subpoenas to compel their testimony.

The hearing was convened to examine the findings of a VA Inspector General's report that said two regional directors manipulated the hiring system for financial benefit and made criminal referrals to the Department of Justice for their conduct.

In a letter to committee chairman Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., VA Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson said that it would be inappropriate for the employees to participate in the hearing, given ongoing investigations into their conduct. He said their testimony could violate their constitutional right against self-incrimination, and he offered to testify instead.

USS Ross ballistic missile defense system test successful

BY ERIK SLAVIN
AND STEVEN BEARDSLEY
Stars and Stripes

The USS Ross successfully tested its ballistic missile defense system during a live-fire demonstration Tuesday off the coast of Scotland, the first such test for a Navy ship overseas.

The Rota, Spain-based destroyer fired an SM-3 missile and shot down a Terrier Orion ballistic missile flying in space, according to a Navy statement. The Florida-based USS The

Sullivans also fired an SM-2 missile at two aerial targets simulating anti-ship cruise missiles targeting the Ross.

The exercise was part of the nine-nation Maritime Theater Defense Forum sea demonstration at the United Kingdom's Hebrides Range. Canada, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, the U.K. and the U.S. provided ships and aircraft for the exercise, while Germany contributed personnel to the combined task group staff.

Vice Adm. James Foggo, commander of U.S. 6th Fleet, said the test demonstrated a cooperative approach to ballistic missile defense in the theater.

"That is a big missile and a highly, technically complex weapons system," he said by phone Wednesday. "[The test] was in my estimation a wonderful thing for us to be able to demonstrate for our allies and partners."

The exercise recorded several additional firsts, including the first time the allied coali-

tion used its integrated air and missile defense in a scenario with a simultaneous attack from anti-ship cruise and ballistic missiles, the Navy statement said.

The Ross used its Aegis system to track and destroy the missile target, while other, nonshooting ships tracked the missile with their own systems. Dutch and Spanish vessels also transmitted targeting information to the Ross, another first for the forum.

Royals rip Jays in Dickey's rough start

Associated Press

TORONTO — Whether it's a long ball by Ben Zobrist, a slashing single from Lorenzo Cain or another exhilarating trip around the bases for Alcides Escobar, these Kansas City Royals are relentless — and one win from a return trip to the World Series.

Zobrist hit a two-run homer on knuckleballer R.A. Dickey's fourth pitch of the game, Alex Rios connected an inning later against his former team and the Royals romped past the Toronto Blue Jays 14-2 Tuesday for a 3-1 lead in the American League Championship Series.

"We're very confident," Rios said. "We have a very well-balanced team from top to bottom."

Cain scored on a passed ball and Mike Moustakas had a sacrifice fly in an LCS-record four-run top of the first.

Escobar had four RBIs and Cain drove in three runs as the Royals bounced back from an 11-8 loss Monday. Kansas City led 5-2 in the seventh before breaking away.

Kansas City could win the pennant Wednesday, when Edinson Volquez was to start against Toronto's Marco Estrada in a Game 1 rematch.

"It's a do-or-die game for us," Toronto manager John Gibbons said. "But they do it all year. I think these guys will let this one go and they'll show up to play tomorrow. ... I know these guys will be ready."

After flashing power to build a 5-0 lead on the long ball, the Royals returned to their pesky ways late in the game

against the Blue Jays' struggling bullpen. They scored nine runs with three more sacrifice flies, a barrage of slashing hits and heads-up baserunning.

"We're a good offensive team," first baseman Eric Hosmer said. "Our park, our style of play is a little different. We like to use our legs and be athletic, but when we come to some of these parks where the fences aren't as deep we've got some guys that can put the ball in the seats."

Blue Jays fans had seen enough after Cain's two-run single in the eighth, turning their ever-optimistic cheers to jeers when Mark Lowe replaced Ryan Tepera.

The 36-year-old Chris Young bested Dickey, 40, in a bookish matchup of veteran starters — only the pairing of the Yankees' Randy Johnson and Detroit's Kenny Rogers in the 2006 ALDS tops the duo for combined age.

But just like his counterpart's effort in Game 4 of the Division Series against Texas, the 6-foot-10 Young was lifted one out shy of qualifying for a victory when Ned Yost went to his bullpen with a runner on first with two outs in the fifth. Yost wasn't willing to take any chances against Josh Donaldson, who already had an RBI double.

"It's not about personal stuff," Young said. "It just feels great to contribute to such a great team win."

Dickey never had a chance to get that first playoff victory in a 13-year big league career.

Escobar got a hit leading off for the fourth straight game, starting this one with a bunt down the third-base line. Zobrist connected for his first homer of the ALCS.

Rios homered in the second for a 5-0 lead. Boored all series by his old fans, he didn't get any extra satisfaction out of the hit.

"It's just another team we have to go out and beat," Rios said.

After Dickey hit Escobar with a pitch — a call that needed replay review to get it right — he walked Cain one out later and was done after 1²/₃ innings.

Young used that steep arm angle to outwit the powerful Jays, who were 53-28 at home in the regular season but just 11-14 with the roof closed — which it was Tuesday.

He held them hitless until Ryan Goins' one-out single in the third. Donaldson drove him home with a ground-rule double down the left-field line on an 83 mph slider. Jose Bautista added an RBI grounder to close the gap to 5-2 and get those white towels twirling at Rogers Centre.

But Luke Hochevar, Ryan Madson, Kelvin Herrera and Franklin Morales shut down the Blue Jays the rest of the way.

Kansas City's four-spot in the seventh to make it 9-2. Escobar and Hosmer had sacrifice flies to deep center, Cain singled to extend his postseason hitting streak to 13 games and Alex Gordon scored on Tepera's wild pitch.

Cain hit a two-run single in the eighth, and Escobar drove in two off Pennington in the ninth.

"We feel good. We like the way we're playing right now," Royals manager Ned Yost said. "Our offense has been really, really good."

Mets 1 win from pennant 2B gives relief for Toronto

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Daniel Murphy is a contact hitter known for shaky fielding and occasionally getting lost on the bases.

This playoff impersonation of Babe Ruth, Roberto Alomar and Derek Jeter all rolled into one, he can't explain it. Nor can his manager.

"Question is, who is this guy?" skipper Terry Collins said.

Murphy homered in his record-tying fifth straight postseason game, Jacob deGrom pitched seven strong innings and the New York Mets beat the Chicago Cubs 5-2 Tuesday night for a 3-0 lead in the NL Championship Series.

"I've watched a lot of baseball over the years, I don't think I've seen anybody put on this kind of a show on this stage like he has so far," Collins said. "I mean, even the guys in the dugout, they're baseball guys, too, and they're saying the same thing."

A cluster of New York fans gathered in the rain behind their team's dugout after the final out and chanted "Let's go, Mets!" And with a win Wednesday night at Wrigley Field, the Mets would be going to their first World Series in 15 years.

Rookie Steven Matz was slated to start for New York in Game 4 while Jason Hammel goes for the Cubs.

Murphy tied the homer mark set by Houston's Carlos Beltran in 2004 with his drive off Kyle Hendricks in the third.

Murphy's home run was his sixth of the postseason in his 30th at-bat — he's hit just 62 in 3,354 at-bats in the regular season. The free agent-to-be second baseman also is making sharp plays in the field and showing heads-up, aggressive instincts running the bases.

"I wish I could explain it," said Murphy, who hit a career-high 14 homers in the regular season. "I would have done it like

six years ago. I can't explain it."

After going 0-7 against the Cubs during the regular season, New York is overpowering them with their arms and bats.

Yoenis Cespedes and David Wright each had three hits for the Mets. Cespedes scored the go-ahead run on a two-out wild pitch by Trevor Cahill on a strikeout of Michael Conforto in the sixth inning.

DeGrom followed up dominant starts by Matt Harvey and Noah Syndergaard in New York with one of his own. The NL Rookie of the Year held the Cubs' big bats to just two runs and four hits. He struck out seven, walked one and retired his final 11 batters.

The righty with the flowing hair improved to 3-0 in his first postseason, with all of the wins coming on the road. Jeurys Familia closed for his fifth save of the postseason.

Kyle Schwarber had the towel-waving crowd shaking 101-year old Wrigley Field to its foundation in the first inning with his club-record fifth homer of the postseason. Jorge Soler also had them roaring with his solo drive in the fourth. But manager Joe Maddon's Cubs have just five runs in this series.

Barring an epic comeback, a World Series drought that dates to 1908 will continue. Only one other team has won a playoff series after dropping the first three games.

Theo Epstein's Red Sox came back against the New York Yankees in the 2004 AL Championship Series and ultimately ended one long championship curse. Now, the team he constructed in Chicago, that stirred the imaginations of long-suffering fans, finds itself in a similar spot.

Associated Press

TORONTO — The Toronto Blue Jays made their pitch for baseball history Tuesday, not that they wanted to.

Trying to preserve their best bullpen arms in the final inning of a blowout loss to Kansas City, the Blue Jays made Cliff Pennington the first primarily position player to pitch in a postseason game, sending the second baseman to the mound with two outs in the ninth.

"The circumstances aren't what you want," said Pennington, who gave up two singles before retiring Ben Zobrist on a foul pop.

By the time Pennington fired his first pitch, a 90 mph strike to outfielder Paulo Orlando, Kansas City led Toronto by 10 runs. The Royals won 14-2, taking a 3-1 lead in the American League Championship Series.

Pennington, who hadn't pitched since college, volunteered his services to Gibbons, allowing the Blue Jays to save closer Roberto Osuna or setup man Aaron Sanchez for Wednesday's must-win game.

Toronto was also without its only left-hander, Aaron Loup, who had to leave during the game and return home for personal reasons. It's the second time this postseason Loup has had to leave the team.

With so few options, Gibbons was only too happy to accept Pennington's offer.

"I was more nervous in the 'pen," Pennington said. "Once I got out there, it was just like when you're playing. Once you actually hit the field, it gets better."

Catcher Russell Martin said he was "impressed" with Pennington's performance.

"He actually has good stuff," Martin said. "He's got a good arm, a good change-up."

Kansas City's offensive barrage began against Blue Jays knuckleballer R.A.

Dickey. The 2012 NL Cy Young winner allowed five runs, four earned, in 1²/₃ inning stint as the Royals pushed Toronto to the brink of elimination.

The Royals might not want to get too comfortable with their 3-1 series lead. In 1985, when Toronto and Kansas City met in the ALCS, the Royals rallied from a 3-1 deficit to win the series in seven games, going on to win their only championship with a seven-game triumph over St. Louis.

"Nobody expects this to be easy," Royals right-hander Chris Young said.

Toronto rallied from a 2-0 deficit to beat Texas in the previous round, winning twice on the road before clinching at home. With that in mind, Martin said the Blue Jays still have plenty of belief in their chances.

In the division series against Texas, Dickey came within one out of earning the win in his first career playoff start. He didn't come anywhere close this time.

"It hurts a little bit worse that it was on this stage," Dickey said of an outing that he called "a clunker."

Dickey, who threw 48 pitches, said he'd be available out of the bullpen in Game 5 if needed.

Dickey gave up a leadoff single to Alcides Escobar, then surrendered a two-run homer to Zobrist on his fourth pitch of the game.

"It was ugly today, no doubt about that," Gibbons said.

Lorenzo Cain walked, stole second and later scored on a passed ball before a sacrifice fly by Mike Moustakas capped Kansas City's four-run first, the biggest opening inning in LCS history.

Former Blue Jays outfielder Alex Rios hit a solo homer off Dickey in the second. Three batters later, Dickey departed after issuing a two-out walk to Cain.



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Disappointing Seahawks must turn it around quickly

Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — When Pete Carroll struggled as a head coach during his first stint in the NFL, and when Southern California was in its rebuilding phase during his early years in Los Angeles, there was a talent gap that explained some of the shortcomings.

That is why Carroll, above all others in the Seattle Seahawks hierarchy, is struggling to understand where his current team stands now. A team with starting talent the envy of many in the NFL could at 2-4 be arguably the biggest disappointment in the league through the first six weeks.

"I haven't really been in this kind of situation with a really good team where it felt so much different and the results are flipping," Carroll said.

The Seahawks sit at a crossroads headed into Thursday's game at San Francisco, beginning a critical two-week stretch that will determine where this season goes. Seattle is already facing long odds to reach its goal of making the playoffs. Only 8 percent of teams since 1990 that have started 2-4 ended up playing in the postseason.

There's no panic in Seattle's locker room now. That could change by the end of the week if they lose at San Francisco on Thursday night.

"We can only get better. I don't think our season will keep going like this where we keep giving them games like this. It's not in our DNA," linebacker K.J. Wright said. "We're going to turn it around."

The reasons that Seattle is in this position are plentiful, from missed assignments to a few key injuries to a lack of depth at some positions and perhaps a few too many distractions.

From a purely football standpoint, Seattle's top issue is an offensive line that seemed an afterthought in the Seahawks' roster construction and has left Russell Wilson scrambling for safety and been unable to get Marshawn Lynch going.

The absence of center Max Unger, now in New Orleans, has loomed larger than the presence of tight end Jimmy Graham — the two key figures in an offseason swap between the Saints and Seahawks. Graham might have 29 catches, but Wilson is on pace for nearly 70 sacks.

There are the fourth-quarter meltdowns, especially the past two weeks in losses to Cincinnati and Carolina when the Seahawks' vaunted defense has been picked apart. Instead of coming through with clutch plays, the Seahawks have been left asking questions about why glaring mistakes are being made in the closing minutes.

"We're not perfect. Like I said, the last couple of years we could've been on different pages and been getting away with that," linebacker Bruce Irvin said. "But this year, it's bitten us in the butt twice."

Seattle's also lacking depth after a slow drain that followed its title in 2013. Players have capitalized on their success in Seattle and cashed in elsewhere. So have assistant coaches moving up the ranks by leaving for other teams.

And there is the question of fatigue,

both physical and emotional. Is that drive still there for a team that's played more games than any other the past two seasons? Has seeing all its top stars receive that important second contract caused a letdown? Did reaching the pinnacle of the league once and having a second title snatched away in crushing fashion leave the Seahawks drained?

Perhaps that's what Earl Thomas meant this week, saying he believed there were distractions.

"We're going to outlast this," Thomas said. "This is why we're in this position in the first place. This is why we're the best. These situations, they're not going to break us."

These are all questions Carroll is trying to answer. And there's little time. Much of what Seattle can accomplish this season will be determined in the next two games, beginning with the 49ers and then Nov. 1 at Dallas prior to its bye week.

"Coach (John) Wooden told me one time, it's every year the players change. You don't change your philosophy, you don't change your approach because the players adapt as they go through their years and things fit together. You always stay with what you believe in," Carroll said. "But in that times change, guys grow up, they mature, they get paid, they're heading into their contract year, there are a lot of things that factor into guys' makeup. And we have to be adaptable and fix and help and communicate and counsel all the way through that."

Ga. Tech's offense test for Fla. St. defense

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — At the midway point of the season, Florida State's improvement on run defense has gone mostly under the radar. That progress will be put to a big test on Saturday against Georgia Tech.

The ninth-ranked Seminoles (6-0, 4-0 Atlantic Coast Conference) are 19th nationally in run defense, allowing 113.5 yards per game. That is a marked improvement from last season when they allowed nearly double that at 226.8. Five of the top 20 worst run defense games by the program since 2000 happened last season, including 331 yards allowed in the ACC Championship Game against Georgia Tech.

But the Seminoles had their struggles against the Yellow Jackets' spread option in that game. Florida State won 37-35 but allowed 331 yards on the ground. The Yellow Jackets (2-5, 0-4 ACC) have three of the top six rushing games against Florida State's defense since 2000.

Despite losing five straight, the Yellow Jackets lead the ACC at 286.6 yards per game. During his weekly press conference, Florida State coach Jimbo Fisher said the biggest challenge isn't with the backs, but with Georgia Tech's blocking scheme.

"You've got to play those cut blocks and that's what this offense is based on, and years ago that's what football was across the country (with option and wishbone offenses)," Fisher said.

Adding to the challenge is that Georgia Tech is not a yearly fixture on the schedule. Due to being in different divisions, this is the first time the two have faced each other in the regular season since 2009. The previous two matchups have been in the ACC Championship Game. Fisher said that during the bye week last month, they did practice a little bit against the triple option and had more cut blocking drills than usual.

Florida State has allowed only one touchdown rushing this season, which came in the second quarter of the opener against Texas State. They also haven't allowed a run over 30 yards this season and only two over 20 yards. Last season they allowed 17 runs of 20-plus yards.

For the third straight week the Seminoles will be facing a back that is among the ACC leaders as Georgia Tech's Marcus Mitchell is eighth. Last week Louisville's Lamar Jackson was held to 32 yards and on Oct 10 Miami's Joseph Yearby gained just 33. Georgia Tech quarterback Justin Thomas ran for 104 yards in last year's game but is averaging only 44 yards per game this season.

This will be the third running quarterback that Florida State has faced this year as Fisher said Thomas does have some similarities to Jackson and South Florida's Quinton Flowers.

"You've got to have leverage on the ball. You're got to tackle well and you've got to get people to the ball," Fisher said.

Florida State's biggest challenge going into the week is trying to retool their secondary. Safety Tre Marshall is out for the remainder of the regular season due to a torn biceps and safety Nate Andrews remains limited due to a knee injury suffered on Oct. 3 at Wake Forest.

Canadiens stretch streak to 7

Associated Press

MONTREAL — Much has been made of how the Montreal Canadiens don't rely quite as much on star goalie Carey Price this season. However, he had to be at the top of his game for 1½ periods against the St. Louis Blues.

Price made a season-high 38 saves, including 17 in the first period, to post his second shutout in the last three games as the Canadiens beat the Blues 3-0 on Tuesday night. Montreal extended its club-record winning streak to start the season to seven games.

The save of the game was a spectacular glove effort early in the second on Blues star Vladimir Tarasenko, who was held off the scoresheet for the first time this season.

"I actually wound up overplaying it a little bit, so I kind of got a little bit lucky being able to get a piece of it," Price said. "But any time you can come up with the right save at the right time it's helpful."

The Blues dominated the opening period but the Canadiens came out with the lead on a goal from captain Max Pacioretty. Offseason signee Alex Semin got his first Montreal goal in the second and Torrey Mitchell scored in the third on Jake Allen, who made 33 saves.

The Blues ended a four-game winning streak, but finished a six-game road trip with four wins.

Price, the league's most valuable player

and top goaltender last season, has allowed only six goals in six starts. It was the 36th shutout of his career.

Pacioretty got the opening goal with just over 1½ minutes left in the first. Tomas Plekanec's shot went off Jay Bouwmeester's skate and off Pacioretty, who was skating across the front of the net, before sliding past Allen.

Semin scored on a spin-around wrist shot from the slot with just under 4 minutes left in the second.

Mitchell put a rebound of a shot by P.K. Subban into an open side with 8:07 left in the third.

Islanders 3, Blue Jackets 0: Jaroslav Halak stopped 37 shots for his 37th career shutout to lead visiting New York to their fourth straight win.

Nikolay Kulemin gave the Islanders the lead late in the first period, and Thomas Hickey, Cal Clutterbuck and John Tavares all scored in the third period. Halak made a second straight start after returning from an upper-body injury sustained during the preseason.

Devils 3, Coyotes 2 (OT): Travis Zajac had a goal, two assists and set up Adam Larsson's game-winner 43 seconds into overtime to lift host New Jersey.

Larsson slam dunked the game winner to cap a 3-on-1 break that started after he knocked Martin Hanzal off the puck in the Devils' zone.

Penguins 3, Panthers 2 (OT): Evgeni Malkin scored on the power play in

overtime and Sidney Crosby picked up his first goal of the season to lead host Pittsburgh.

Malkin's third goal in as many games withstood a video review. He took a pass from Kris Letang at the top of the right circle and fired a slap shot past Roberto Luongo.

Stars 2, Flyers 1: Tyler Seguin and Jamie Benn each had a goal and an assist as visiting Dallas won its fourth straight.

Antti Niemi made 34 saves to improve to 3-1 in four career starts against Philadelphia. Niemi was in because starting goalie Kari Lehtonen is 1-10-2 in 13 games against Philadelphia.

Predators 5, Lightning 4 (SO): Filip Forsberg scored the only goal of the shootout to help Nashville beat Tampa Bay.

In the tiebreaker, Forsberg skated to the right and beat Lightning goalie Ben Bishop with a quick wrist shot.

Capitals 6, Flames 2: Nicklas Backstrom scored twice and Alex Ovechkin added a goal and an assist for visiting Washington.

Ovechkin gave the Capitals the lead for good 30 seconds into the second period. His long shot was stopped by Calgary goalie Karri Ramo but mishandled, allowing him to poke in the rebound and put Washington ahead 2-1. It was Ovechkin's fourth goal of the season and 900th career point.