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Obama vetoes \$612B defense bill

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Republicans in the House will take on President Barack Obama with a Nov. 5 vote on overriding his veto of an annual defense budget bill that includes military pay and benefits.

An outraged GOP majority set the date Thursday, immediately after Obama made good on a promise to reject the National Defense Authorization Act, despite their warnings that the veto would put politics over the needs of troops.

It is the latest move in a protracted and increasingly bitter budget battle in Washington. Congressional Republicans, on one side, will not lift federal spending caps on defense and nondefense spending called sequestration. The Obama administration and Democrats, on the other side, have opposed any budget bill until sequestration is repealed.

Without a solution, the Department of Defense could be without a new budget in December and might be forced to freeze pay for troops and furlough about 350,000 civilian workers.

“By placing domestic politics ahead of our troops, President Obama has put America’s national security at risk,” House Speaker John Boehner said in a statement following the veto. “This indefensible veto blocks pay and vital tools for our troops while Iranian terrorists prepare to gain billions under the president’s nuclear deal. Congress should not allow this veto to stand.”

There was a torrent of similar Republican criticism of the veto, with many of the lawmakers hammering the president for standing between troops and needed resources. The NDAA has been vetoed as recently as 2007 — then by President George W. Bush — but typically such vetoes are due to measures included in the bill and not as part of a larger political fight.

“This bill gives them what they need — equipment, weapons, pay and important reforms to combat military sexual assault and expand military benefits,” said Rep. Martha McSally, R-Ariz., a retired Air Force colonel and former A-10 pilot. “The president is vetoing these provisions not over substance but as an act of stubborn political grandstanding.”

The 2016 NDAA includes a \$515 billion base defense budget that lays out troop pay, personnel benefits and policy for DOD, and the \$89 billion war fund called Overseas Contingency Operations. It calls for an historic reform of the 20-year pension system, hikes in Tricare fees, protections for the A-10 Thunderbolt II and a review of troops carrying personal guns on bases, among a raft of other initiatives.

Republicans in Congress have little chance at overriding Obama’s veto.

In the Senate, they were able to garner enough votes during an NDAA vote earlier this month to potentially overturn Obama. But House Republicans failed to gain the 290 votes for a veto-proof majority.

Obama rejected the bill because it funnels about \$38 billion in daily DOD expenses through the war fund, which allowed Republicans to fully fund defense while avoiding a larger debate over removing the sequester caps on federal spending.

“I’m going to be sending it back to Congress, and my message to them is very simple: ‘Let’s do this right,’” Obama said during the veto signing.

Special operations soldier killed in Iraq rescue ID’d

BY TARA COPP
AND COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The U.S. special operations soldier killed during a raid in Iraq on Thursday to free hostages from their Islamic State captors was a veteran of more than a dozen deployments and earned a handful of awards for battlefield valor.

Master Sgt. Joshua L. Wheeler, 39, of Roland, Okla., died in Irbil, where he was transported and treated after being shot during the raid at a prison outside Hawijah, a town in Kirkuk province, according to the Army.

Wheeler was a 20-year veteran who served 17 overseas deployments including at least four combat tours in Afghanistan and seven in Iraq, said Su-

zanne Nagel, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Army Special Operations Command. He spent seven years — including his five deployments — with the 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington, leading fire teams, weapons squads and an anti-tank section. In 2004, he was assigned to USASOC headquarters at Fort Bragg, N.C., serving 12 more deployments, including his final one to Iraq.

Wheeler’s awards portray him as a brave soldier, willing to go above and beyond on the battlefield. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with “V” for valor four times and received seven additional Bronze Stars. He also was awarded a Joint Service Commendation Medal with “V.”

The raid on Thursday was led by Kurdish peshmerga forces with American special operators serving in an advisory role, said Peter Cook, Pentagon spokesman. American forces also provided helicopter and airstrike support at the request of the Kurdish Regional Government.

Cook said Defense Secretary Ash Carter approved the mission under the authority of Operation Inherent Resolve and notified the White House national security team.

At least 70 prisoners, including more than 20 Iraqi soldiers, were freed from captivity. The prisoners were believed to be facing imminent execution, Cook said.

Wheeler and some of the other U.S. soldiers entered the compound behind Peshmerga,

Cook said. At some point, a firefight broke out and Wheeler was shot.

Wheeler’s death, the first at the hands of enemy forces in Iraq since the U.S. withdrawal from that country in 2011, raised questions about whether the U.S. forces were operating beyond the “train, advise, assist” mission that President Barack Obama authorized when the United States began attacks against the Islamic State last year.

Four peshmerga fighters also were wounded in the raid and five Islamic State fighters were taken prisoner, Cook said.

Wheeler, a 2004 graduate of Muldrow High School in Muldrow, Okla., is survived by his wife and four children, according to USASO.

Obama, Pakistan leader focus on peace talks

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama spoke directly to the Taliban and its backers in Pakistan when he announced his plan last week to keep 5,500 troops in the country indefinitely.

“The only real way to achieve the full drawdown of U.S. and foreign troops from Afghanistan is through a lasting political settlement with the Afghan government,” Obama said.

The president had the opportunity to deliver that same message to Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif — this time in person — when he visited the White House on Thursday. For Obama, who until recently

had promised to bring home American forces before the end of his presidency, the pledge to extend America’s longest war offers a new and potentially important point of leverage. The Taliban and its Pakistani patrons will no longer be able to wait out the American presence.

“It’s a powerful statement and one Obama has never been able to make before because there had always been a fixed end date,” said former ambassador James Dobbins, who served as the administration’s special representative on Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The two leaders sidestepped areas of major disagreement between their coun-

tries in their public remarks from the Oval Office. “Both leaders expressed their commitment to advance an Afghan-owned and led peace and reconciliation process” and called on the Taliban to initiate “direct talks” with the Afghan government, according to a joint statement released by the Pakistanis following the meeting.

It’s unclear, though, whether Sharif has enough influence over Pakistan’s shadowy security services to nudge the Taliban to the negotiating table. “He has to make his own judgements about how far he can push his security establishment,” Dobbins said. “After all, he’s already been deposed once before.”

Syphilis rate on the rise among servicemembers

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Syphilis cases are on the rise in the U.S. military, where a 53 percent hike in infections constitutes a growing public health concern.

The increase, which coincides with similar trends in the civilian population, suggests troops are engaging in riskier sexual behavior, such as casual encounters fueled by the rise of Internet dating, the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center said in a monthly report on communicable diseases.

Between January 2010 and

August 2015, 2,976 cases of syphilis were diagnosed in the Armed Forces, the report said. Rates increased from 30.9 cases per 100,000 troops in 2010 to 47.4 cases per 100,000 in 2015. Men accounted for 88.7 percent of the cases. Rates were highest among black, non-Hispanic servicemembers or those ages 20 to 29.

When caught in the early stages, syphilis is easy to treat, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Untreated, however, the disease can cause extensive organ damage or death.

‘Joke’ turns to horror in Sweden school stabbing

At first, students thought it was a Halloween prank.

The man walked into the Kronan school in Trollhättan, Sweden, on Thursday morning dressed like Darth Vader, with a long black trenchcoat, black boots, black helmet and a mask similar to the “Star Wars” villain. He played eerie music but didn’t say a word.

Strangest of all, he carried a sword.

“When we first saw him we thought it was a joke,” a student

named Laith, 14, told Swedish state broadcaster SVT.

When a teacher told the masked man to leave because he was scaring the students, the Darth Vader impersonator suddenly stabbed the teacher. Then the attacker turned his weapon on the students, according to police.

The bizarre attack ended when police arrived at the school and fatally shot the intruder.

The teacher died at the scene, while a 17-year-old student died later at a hospital, police said, according to *The Guardian*.

From *The Washington Post*

Family, friends mourn Marine killed in crash

By JENNIFER SVAN
AND ADAM MATHIS
Stars and Stripes

Maj. Taj Sareen, the Marine Corps pilot killed Wednesday when his F/A-18C Hornet fighter jet crashed near RAF Lakenheath in England, left behind a young daughter and a close-knit family in Hillsborough, Calif.

Sareen, 34, was remembered by grieving friends and family on social media and in interviews with local media outlets this week as a confident yet humble person, a devoted father, friend and son with a zest for life and a passion for fast cars.

“I spoke to my son two hours before he took off. He said, ‘See you in two days, Dad,’” K.B. Sareen said in a tearful interview Thursday with San Francisco ABC affiliate KGO-TV.

“So, I’ll wait for those two days forever,” he said.

Sareen became a Marine Corps fighter pilot in 2005. At the time of the crash, he was assigned to Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232, based at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in San Diego.

The jet was one of six F/A-18C Hornets returning to California from Bahrain, where they were deployed as part of a Marine task force for operations against the Islamic State

group in Iraq and Syria.

Sareen’s last post on Instagram, dated two days ago, is a photo of a Hornet with the caption: “Our UK arrival. That much closer to #home.” The post drew hundreds of comments.

Chris Jewett, a photographer for ABC7 News who attended the University of San Francisco with Sareen, said Sareen “had this confidence and infectious smile.”

A military career seemed like something he was called to do, “something meaningful,” Jewett told the station.

Sareen’s aircraft went down soon after takeoff from RAF Lakenheath about 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, crashing in a farm field in the town of Redmere, about 6 miles northwest of Lakenheath.

Sareen ejected from the aircraft, said Gunnery Sgt. Donald Bohanner, a spokesman for Marine Corps Air Station Miramar.

Sareen served as an instructor at Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 101, an F/A-18 Hornet training squadron at MCAS Miramar.

His military awards include two Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals and one Air Medal Strike/Flight 5, according to the Marines.

Seattle Seahawks trounce 49ers again

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Menacing defender Michael Bennett has a new motto for these inconsistent Seattle Seahawks: keep chopping wood.

"When you're chopping wood, just keep chopping until the tree falls, man, you can't get ahead of yourself," Bennett said.

Bennett had 3½ sacks and defending NFC West champion Seattle certainly took a positive step on that path to regaining its contender status with a commanding 20-3 victory against the San Francisco 49ers just four days after a tough loss at home to Carolina.

Russell Wilson threw a 46-yard touchdown pass to Tyler Lockett, and the Seahawks (3-4) are ruling this rivalry with four straight wins, six out of seven and holding the Niners to single digits in the past three, outscoring them 56-13.

Now, they want to get back on a nice roll.

"It felt like a really normal Seahawk night tonight," coach Pete Carroll said.

Even if he didn't have nemesis and now-Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh facing him from the other sideline.

"We're on the verge," safety Kam Chancellor said of getting back on track.

For the 49ers, any momentum gained from ending a four-game losing streak by beating Baltimore on Sunday is gone. They lost to Seattle on another Thursday night at home, in an eerily similar scene to that 19-3 Thanksgiving defeat 11 months ago after which Richard Sherman chomped turkey on the field.

"Unacceptable....that was sorry," wide-out Torrey Smith posted on Twitter.

Here are some things to take from the Seahawks' latest lopsided result against San Francisco:

High-flying defense: Bennett led the way with 3½ sacks as the Seahawks took down Colin Kaepernick six times.

San Francisco's 55 yards in the first half were the fewest allowed by the Seahawks defense in an opening half since Week 17 of the 2013 season against St. Louis. The 49ers finished with 142, fewer than the 164 they managed on Thanksgiving and their worst total since 133 yards against the Vikings on Nov. 5, 2006.

It was Seattle's second-lowest total allowed under Carroll.

"It gets us back on track knowing that we're the team we always knew we were,"

linebacker Bruce Irvin said.

Finishing 'em off: While Carroll wasn't happy with two turnovers, he couldn't complain about how Seattle finished this one out after so many fourth-quarter collapses.

The Seahawks had been outscored 40-3 in the fourth quarter and overtime over their previous three games, blowing a 23-14 lead in the final 12 minutes Sunday against Carolina.

This was progress.

"That was the way it's supposed to be, it's supposed to be normal to finish a game like that," Carroll said. "I don't make a big deal about it. That's the way we should be playing. We should be finishing like that."

More Kap struggles: Kaepernick's errant passes sailed into both sidelines, one ball even hitting a 49ers staff member in the head early in the game and requiring him to be checked. The 49ers had more punts — nine — than first downs (eight).

Kaepernick fell to 1-6 in seven starts against the Seahawks with three touchdown passes to nine interceptions and 24 sacks.

"I'm not going to force a ball into a window and take a chance on a turnover,"

said Kaepernick, his right hand taped after the game because of a swollen thumb. "We just didn't make plays when we needed to. I do know we didn't play well enough to win."

Finding the holes: Wilson exploited San Francisco's defensive failures at every chance, regularly finding wide-open receivers down the middle, while Lynch powered his way to 122 yards and a leaping 1-yard touchdown.

While Wilson's five sacks pushed his NFL-leading total to 31 and he threw two interceptions, he made enough big plays to get Seattle back in the win column.

"The biggest thing was we were able to put everything together, get the running game together," Lockett said.

Hampered Hyde: Carlos Hyde played on an injured left foot and was limited to 40 yards on 11 carries. Kaepernick didn't have a rush for the first time in his 46 career starts, and the 49ers wound up with just 61 yards on the ground.

When asked if he had a stress fracture, Hyde said, "something like that," and noted he was at a 6 on a pain scale to 10.

"Offensively, we weren't in a rhythm," left tackle Joe Staley said.

Late rally lifts Temple

Associated Press

GREENVILLE, N.C. — No. 22 Temple finally cracked the Top 25 because of its defense and its ground game. Some timely passing will help the Owls stay there.

P.J. Walker threw a 23-yard touchdown pass to Robby Anderson, and Temple scored 14 points in the fourth quarter to rally past East Carolina 24-14 on Thursday night.

Walker finished 19 of 35 for 250 yards for the Owls (7-0, 4-0 American Athletic Conference). Anderson caught eight passes for 126 yards, with five of those grabs coming in the fourth quarter.

"We just haven't thrown it a ton," coach Matt Rhule said. "We needed to throw it. They were taking away the run. ... We took (Anderson) off the return duties and just said, 'Go concentrate on being a great receiver.'"

The Owls ensured their first appearance in national rankings since 1979, and the best start in school history, will last a little longer — at least until No. 11 Notre Dame visits next Saturday night.

"I told my team in there, 'We're all going through this for the first time,'" Rhule said. "I'm going through this for the first time. So we're all making mistakes. But we all love each other, we're battling, and guys made plays."

East Carolina's Blake Kemp was 31 of 48 for 272 yards with a 7-yard touchdown pass to Quay Johnson. Chris Hairston added a 1-yard scoring run for the Pirates (4-4, 2-2).

"They've got to know we've got a lot of season left," coach Ruffin McNeill said.

"Temple did a lot of good things tonight. We didn't. We didn't do things that we've got to do to win the game."

Temple's Jihad Thomas ran for two touchdowns, from 2 and 14 yards, the last sealing it with 2:18 to play. The American's leading rusher finished with just 66 yards — 60 fewer than his average.

The Owls gained 82 total yards while going scoreless on their first five possessions of the second half, before the passing game got hot just in time.

Walker hit Anderson over the middle for 51 yards to the East Carolina 34 with about 5½ minutes to go. Five plays later, they hooked up again, with Anderson slipping past a defender between the hash marks on his way across the goal line with 3:31 remaining.

After Temple forced a three-and-out, Sharif Finch blocked Worth Gregory's punt at the East Carolina 15. Two plays later, Thomas iced it with the longer of his two scoring runs.

The Owls forced two second-half turnovers and blocked two punts while occasionally sloppy East Carolina finished with nine penalties for 99 yards and lost to Temple for the second straight year. The Pirates had five turnovers in a 20-10 loss in Philadelphia last season that knocked them from the Top 25.

The Pirates came in as 2½-point favorites and led 14-10 after a back-and-forth final 10 minutes of the first half, when the lead changed hands on three straight possessions.

UCLA routs No. 20 Cal

Associated Press

PASADENA, Calif. — No. 20 California arrived at the Rose Bowl with the same 5-1 record they held at the halfway point last season, determined not to repeat the collapse that saw 2014 end with a losing record.

Instead, the Golden Bears were left with another round of questions about their mental and physical toughness.

With UCLA's season seemingly teetering on the brink of collapse, Josh Rosen completed a school-record 34 passes and threw two of his three touchdown passes to Devin Fuller, and the Bruins got back on track with a 40-24 victory over Cal on Thursday night.

Cal quarterback Jared Goff passed for 295 yards in a second straight disappointing game, leaving the Bears two games behind rival Stanford in the Pac-12 North. But the bigger concern is the lack of physicality displayed on both sides of the ball.

Goff was sacked five times, Cal struggled to run the ball, and a boom-or-bust defense that had lived off sacks and takeaways didn't produce either in the first half, ultimately allowing 573 yards of total offense.

"Things that we haven't done all year, we did tonight," Cal coach Sonny Dykes said. "That's not indicative of this football team, and we didn't play well tonight."

Despite showing many of the same issues from last season, Dykes was confident Cal would not repeat the second-half slide this time around.

"This is a different team," Dykes said. "Every year is different. Heck, every week is different, so we just got to pick up the

pieces, learn from the mistakes we made and improve."

Kenny Lawler, Darius Powe and Khalfani Muhammad caught TD passes for Cal, which arrived with its highest ranking in six years and a chance to clinch bowl eligibility for the first time since 2011. Instead, the Bears still have just one win in Pasadena since 1999.

Rosen passed for 399 yards in another splendid game for the standout rookie, and Thomas Duarte had career highs of 10 catches for 141 yards for the Bruins (5-2, 2-2). UCLA rebounded from consecutive losses to Arizona State and Stanford, along with a drop from the national rankings.

Rosen was smooth and confident in another big Pac-12 game, going 34-for-47 without a turnover. The frosh got plenty of help, too: Soso Jamabo rushed for a score after star UCLA tailback Paul Perkins left with an injury, and the Bruins' injury-plagued defense limited Goff and Cal's potent offense to 170 yards in the first half.

Ka'imi Fairbairn made four field goals, including a school-record 60-yarder at the halftime gun, and the UCLA defense caused trouble for Goff throughout.

Cal finally reached the end zone on Lawler's acrobatic grab 51 seconds before halftime, but Rosen moved the Bruins into position for that 60-yard kick by Fairbairn, who was mobbed by teammates when he broke Chris Sailer's UCLA record of 56 yards, set in 1997.



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MLB players don winter gear to stay warm in postseason

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Joe Maddon walked to the mound in a ski cap. Yoenis Cespedes wore a balaclava. As baseball's postseason keeps getting longer, the Boys of Summer are starting to resemble skiers on a Steamboat Springs lift line.

"This weather is not for me," Cubs infielder Javier Baez said. "I'm from Puerto Rico, and you know how the weather is in the island — it's hot all year long."

Players wish there was only 6 degrees of separation between the dog days of summer and the coolest venues in baseball they all try to reach — the postseason. It was 48 degrees when the NL Championship Series opener began at New York's Citi Field last weekend and 45 for the start of Game 2. The teams did get a break with a 72 degree night at Chicago's Wrigley Field for Game 4 on Wednesday.

"Baseball is a warm weather sport. Guys like to sweat," Toronto manager John Gibbons said. "The pitchers tend to have the advantage and dominate a little bit more because guys get sawed off and guys' hands are hurting. You're just not as loose and relaxed."

Before the start of the League Championship Series in 1969, the World Series ended by Oct. 16 each year except

for 1910, when the NL attempted to expand the regular season from 154 to 168 games before backing off, and 1911, when there were six days off between Games 3 and 4 because of rain.

Expanded playoffs and television have extended the schedule, with the Division Series round starting in 1995 and a one-game wild-card matchup added for 2012. Game 7 this year is scheduled for Nov. 4, which would match 2009 for the latest date a World Series game has been played.

All World Series games were played in the daytime until 1971, when the lure of television money started the night owl transformation. There hasn't been a Series day game since 1987 — and no outdoor day games since 1984.

When Bud Selig presided over his final All-Star Game as commissioner in 2014, a fan asked whether the wild-card round could expand to best-of-three.

"We start running into November and you are asking for trouble," Selig said.

Even the second half of October has been problematic.

When Bowie Kuhn was commissioner, he sat in the stands without a coat on cold nights during the 1976 World Series, trying to make it appear he was not impacted by the weather. When Cleveland hosted the Florida Marlins for Game 4 of the 1997

World Series, the game-time temperature was 38 degrees, the coldest at the start of a Series game since its records began in 1990, according to STATS.

"It was the coldest I've pitched in," said Cleveland pitcher Jaret Wright, who got the win that night. "It was tough to get a grip on the ball."

Since 1990, the coldest temperature at the start of a postseason contest was 35 degrees when Colorado hosted Philadelphia for Game 3 of a 2009 NL Division Series.

"Not the easiest conditions in the world to play baseball," Colorado manager Jim Tracy said.

While managing Tampa Bay in the 2008 postseason, Maddon became fond of caps with downflaps, nicknamed "Elmer Fudds" after Bugs Bunny's antagonist.

"I'm looking for it," Maddon said before his Cubs played the Mets last weekend, holding a cup of hot tea as he tried to overcome a head cold. "It didn't make the trip to New York."

Despite the chill, Cubs pitcher Jake Arrieta decided to pitch Game 2 in short sleeves.

"The way that clothes are made now," Chicago pitching coach Chris Bosio said, "they can outfit you and make you as cold as you want or as warm as you want."

Spurs' Popovich to take over Olympic duties

Gregg Popovich, who has led the San Antonio Spurs to five NBA titles, will replace Mike Krzyzewski as the U.S. basketball coach following the 2016 Olympics.

Popovich will take over starting with 2017 training camp and lead the Americans into the 2019 Basketball World Cup and 2020 Olympics if they qualify, USA Basketball said Friday.

Regarded as one of the best coaches in the game, Popovich was the choice when USA Basketball chairman Jerry Colangelo decided to return to an NBA coach. Krzyzewski has led the Americans since 2005. The Duke coach has guided the Americans to consecutive Olympic gold medals, two world titles and a 75-1 record. He will stay on as a special adviser to Colangelo.

Popovich was a U.S. assistant in the 2002 world championships and 2004 Olympics, the low point of U.S. basketball. Colangelo was hired to assemble the national team program following the bronze medal in Athens. He selected Krzyzewski as his coach after also considering Popovich.

Krzyzewski had decided that next summer will be his last as U.S. coach, and Colangelo decided not to wait to name a successor for the next Olympic cycle. He called Popovich "one of the NBA's best and most successful coaches."

"By making this decision now, it will allow us to have a clean, efficient and immediate transition following the 2016 Olympic Games," he said.

Popovich has a 1,022-470 record as an NBA coach, all with the Spurs, and will take over a U.S. program that has been nearly unbeatable under Krzyzewski.

"What the program has accomplished over the last decade under the leadership of Jerry Colangelo and Mike Krzyzewski is truly impressive," Popovich said in a statement. "I will do my utmost to maintain the high standards of success, class and character established by Jerry, Coach K and the many players who have sacrificed their time on behalf of USA Basketball."

Popovich had long been considered the best coach to take over once Krzyzewski decided not to return. He led the Spurs to championships in 1999, 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2014, and like Coach K has military ties as a 1970 graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy.

Army-Navy hoops to play at MSG for first time

NEW YORK — Madison Square Garden's 2015-16 college basketball schedule features two appearances by Duke as well as Army-Navy and Big Ten Super Saturday, a doubleheader featuring Michigan and Penn State in basketball and hockey.

The 2K Sports Classic Benefiting Wounded Warrior Project will feature Duke against VCU and Wisconsin facing Georgetown on Nov. 20-22.

On Dec. 8, the Jimmy V Classic has West Virginia against Virginia and Maryland facing Connecticut in support of The V Foundation for Cancer Research.

The matchup of Army and Navy men's and women's teams will be Jan. 23.

Big Ten Super Saturday is the first doubleheader of its kind at MSG. It will be Jan. 30 with the basketball game in the afternoon and the hockey game that night.

Chris Mullin will make his MSG debut as St. John's head coach on Dec. 6 when the Red Storm faces St. Francis, Brooklyn in the Holiday Festival.

Duke will return to the Garden on Dec. 19 to face Utah in a rematch of last season's Sweet 16.

The Gotham Classic features Pittsburgh against Davidson on Dec. 20.

The Big East will hold its tournament at MSG for the 32nd consecutive season and the schedule concludes with the 79th annual NIT.

The Associated Press

Jackets still winless after Wild loss

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Thomas Vanek scored the go-ahead goal in the second period and the Minnesota Wild beat Columbus 3-2 on Thursday night, pushing the Blue Jackets to 0-8-0 and spoiling John Tortorella's debut.

The Blue Jackets' start is the worst season-opening regulation losing streak in the NHL since the New York Rangers started 0-11-0 in 1943-44. Tortorella took over as coach Wednesday after Todd Richards was fired.

Zach Parise tied for the league lead with his sixth goal 5:04 in. After Alexander Wennberg and Brandon Dubinsky countered for Columbus, Nino Niederreiter tied it and Vanek scored the winner with 8:48 left in the second with his third goal of the season.

Devan Dubnyk made 27 saves for his fourth win in five games this season.

Sergei Bobrovsky made 20 saves for the Blue Jackets. They held an opponent to fewer than four goals for the first time this year.

Minnesota was hoping for this sort of scoring from Vanek when it signed him prior to last season. The former Minnesota college star scored 21 goals last season. It was the lowest output in a full season for Vanek, who surpassed 300 NHL goals earlier this season.

With Columbus' Cody Goloubef off for two minor penalties, Vanek redirected a pass from Jason Zucker past Bobrovsky — the Jackets goaltender has allowed 26 goals in six games this season.

Tortorella was hired as coach for the fourth time after previous stints with Tampa Bay, the New York Rangers and Vancouver. Tortorella said earlier in the day that he had consulted the team's media guide to learn about his new

players.

Columbus outshot Minnesota 13-6 in the first period. Dubinsky, who played under Tortorella in New York, scored on a power play in the first.

Parise got his goal when he drove the net and scored on a centering pass from Ryan Suter. Parise and Suter will likely be key members of the U.S. team in the upcoming hockey World Cup, which will be coached by Tortorella.

Stars 4, Penguins 1: Jason Spezza scored his fifth goal of the season and Dallas beat host Pittsburgh for its fifth straight victory.

Johny Oduya and John Klinberg scored their first goals of the season and Mattias Janmark got his third, helping the Stars finish a perfect four-game trip. They are 6-1-0 overall.

Antti Niemi stopped 33 shots for his third victory of the season and fourth straight against Pittsburgh.

Blackhawks 3, Panthers 2: Patrick Kane and Brent Seabrook each had a goal and two assists and Chicago beat visiting Florida in its first game since top defenseman Duncan Keith had surgery in his right knee.

Keith had a meniscal tear repaired Tuesday, sidelining the two-time Norris Trophy winner for four to six weeks.

Capitals 3, Canucks 2: Alex Ovechkin broke a tie with 4:55 left and visiting Washington beat Vancouver for their fourth straight victory.

Jay Beagle pulled Washington even at 5:42 of the third, and Ovechkin won it with his fifth goal of the season. Jason Chimera scored in the first for the Capitals, but Radim Vrbata and Henrik Sedin each had a goal and an assist in the second for Vancouver.

Washington's Braden Holtby made 23

saves.

Rangers 4, Coyotes 1: Henrik Lundqvist made 34 saves and Kevin Hayes broke a tie early in the third period in New York's victory over visiting Arizona.

Chris Kreider, former Coyotes defenseman Keith Yandle and Rick Nash also scored for New York. Nash's goal was his 700th career point. Mats Zuccarello added two assists.

Kings 4, Sharks 1: Jeff Carter scored twice, Jhonas Enroth made 39 saves and Los Angeles beat host San Jose for its third straight victory.

Tyler Toffoli and Milan Lucic also scored.

Joel Ward had a goal for the Sharks in their third straight loss. They've been outscored 13-4 over their past three games and have one power-play goal in their last 16 chances.

Devils 5, Senators 4 (SO): Lee Stempniak tied it with 32 seconds left in regulation and added the shootout winner in New Jersey's victory over host Ottawa.

Adam Henrique pulled New Jersey within a goal with 5:50 to go. Travis Zajac and Jordan Tootoo also scored, and Cory Schneider made 35 saves to help the Devils improve to 3-3-1.

Chris Neil, Mike Hoffman, Zack Smith and Mika Zibanejad scored for Ottawa. Andrew Hammond made 28 saves in his season debut.

Predators 5, Ducks 1: Colin Wilson and Ryan Ellis each had a goal and two assists and Pekka Rinne made 27 saves to lift host Nashville past Anaheim.

Mattias Ekholm and Mike Ribeiro each had a goal and an assist and Eric Nystrom also scored for the Predators.

Jiri Sekac scored for Anaheim. The Ducks have lost five of six this season.