

STARS AND STRIPES®

Tuesday, October 27, 2015

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

US ship sails near disputed Chinese reef

By ERIK SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The USS Lassen sailed within waters surrounding a reef claimed by China on Tuesday, affirming freedom of navigation in the South China Sea and drawing a sharp complaint from China, which sees the move as an infringement on its sovereignty.

The Yokosuka-based destroyer sailed within a 12-nautical-mile territorial water limit claimed by China at Subi Reef, according to China's foreign ministry.

A foreign ministry statement Tuesday stated that China holds "indisputable sovereignty" to several islands, including Subi Reef, and their adjacent waters. The Chinese statement accused the Lassen of illegally entering its waters without permission, and endangering the safety of its personnel and facilities.

"The Chinese side expresses its strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition," the statement said.

U.S. 7th Fleet officials deferred questions about the operation to the Pentagon, which declined comment.

The reef is at the northern part of the Spratly Islands, a collection of hundreds of reefs, rocks and islets whose ownership is disputed by several nations.

In recent years, Chinese vessels have held showdowns at sea with Vietnamese and Philippine commercial ships, and attempted to regulate fishing and other activities. Although no shots were fired, Vietnam and the Philippines have claimed damage to fishing vessels.

In May, China also told a U.S. Navy surveillance plane flying over international

airspace, farther than 12 miles from Fiery Cross Reef, to "go away," according to a report from an onboard CNN crew.

China maintains a broad, ambiguous claim to about 90 percent of the South China Sea. More than \$5 trillion in global sea trade and \$1.2 billion in U.S. trade transits there annually, according to U.S. government statistics.

The U.S. views China's position on the sea as a claim on the global commons that clashes with international law.

"It should not be a surprise to anybody that we will exercise freedom of navigation wherever international law will allow," Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson said Oct. 15 during a visit to Tokyo. "We do this all over the world. We're present in the South China Sea routinely."

However, the Lassen's operation Tuesday took a step further than most recent operations.

The U.S. routinely conducts "freedom of navigation" operations globally but hadn't conducted one near the disputed islands since 2012, according to congressional testimony in September. Since then, China has artificially added more than 2,000 acres of landfill to the territories it claims.

China has added 976 acres of landfill to Subi Reef since July 2014, according to the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, a branch of the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Satellite photos show a helipad, a clearing for a potential military-grade airstrip, a dredged channel and a multilevel structure, among other improvements.

The reef is submerged at high tide in its natural state, according to AMTI.

If it had so much as a rock peeking above the high-tide water mark, it could generate

a 12-nautical-mile territorial limit for its owner, according to the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, which China has ratified and the U.S. adheres to unofficially.

If the natural reef is entirely submerged, at Subi's distance from other islands, UNCLOS states it would have no territorial sea. Landfill on top of a submerged reef doesn't change that.

"Artificial islands, installations and structures do not possess the status of islands," according to UNCLOS. "They have no territorial sea of their own."

A patrol near Subi Reef also put the Lassen about 40-50 miles from Mischief Reef, where satellite photos show extensive landfill construction began earlier this year.

Asked for comment about the U.S. move on Monday, a spokesman at the Chinese Embassy in Washington, Zhu Haiquan, told AP that China respects freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

"Freedom of navigation and overflight should not be used as excuse to flex muscle and undermine other countries' sovereignty and security," he said. "We urge the United States to refrain from saying or doing anything provocative and act responsibly in maintaining regional peace and stability."

China "watched, followed and warned the American ship according to the relevant law," the foreign ministry statement said. A media report stated that a Chinese Kunming-class destroyer watched the Lassen, but Chinese officials had not yet confirmed that Tuesday afternoon.

It also unknown whether the U.S. notified China of the Lassen's plans. State Department spokesman and retired Navy Rear Adm. John Kirby told reporters on Monday that notification isn't necessary.

Maintenance, pilot judgment cited in Marines crash

Los Angeles Times

A helicopter crash in January that killed two Marines from Camp Pendleton was caused by improper maintenance that led the transmission to seize up and the main rotor to stop, according to a Marine Corps investigation.

Pilot misjudgment was also listed as a factor in the crash.

The investigative report was released to the Marine Corps Times after a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

Maj. Elizabeth Kealey and Capt. Adam Satterfield were the only Marines aboard the

UH-1Y Venom helicopter that crashed Jan. 23 at the Twenty-nine Palms base just 400 yards from its landing point.

The investigation found that an improperly installed filter cover caused the transmission to lose its oil during the flight from Camp Pendle-

ton, according to the Marine Corps Times.

Although the warning light came on, the pilots had decided against diverting to a closer airport at Yucca Valley or Palm Springs. That decision "was directly causal to this mishap," the investigative officer wrote.

Budget deal defended by House leader

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republican leaders on Tuesday pushed toward a vote on a two-year budget deal despite conservative opposition, relying on the backing of Democrats for the far-reaching pact struck with President Barack Obama.

In his last days as speaker, John Boehner was intent on getting the measure through Congress and head off a market-rattling debt crisis next week and a debilitating government shutdown in December. The deal also would take budget showdowns off the table until after the 2016 presidential and congressional elections, a potential boon to the eventual GOP nominee and incumbents facing tough re-election fights.

“The agreement isn’t perfect by any means, but the alternative was a clean debt limit increase” without any entitlement reform or money for troops, the Ohio Republican told reporters. “So this is a good deal.”

He later said his goal was to “clean out the barn” for the next speaker.

US raids to increase in Iraq, Syria

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Ash Carter said Tuesday that raids such as the one that killed Master Sgt. Joshua Wheeler will be at the center of a revamped U.S. strategy in Iraq and Syria.

Carter told a Senate panel that more direct raids on the ground and from the air will be accompanied by renewed support for local forces to take Ramadi and Raqqa, two of the front lines in the stymied war against the Islamic State group. However, he said the Defense Department does not support a no-fly zone to protect allied rebels in Syria from Russian bombing, despite calls for it from some lawmakers, Hillary Rodham Clinton and former Pentagon officials.

President Barack Obama’s administration is rethinking its campaign after a year of setbacks including the failure of a train-and-equip program in Syria, a lack of progress in taking back territory from Islamic militants in Iraq and the recent entry of Russia on the side of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

“We won’t hold back from supporting capable partners in opportunistic attacks against [the Islamic State], or conduct-

Obama weighs new strategy

The Washington Post

The president’s most senior national security advisers have recommended measures that would move U.S. troops closer to the front lines in Iraq and Syria, officials said, a sign of mounting White House dissatisfaction with progress against the Islamic State group and a renewed Pentagon push to expand military involvement in long-running conflicts overseas.

The debate over the proposed steps, which would for the first time position a limited number of special operations forces on the ground in Syria and put U.S. advisers closer to the firefights in Iraq, comes as Defense Secretary Ash Carter presses

the military to deliver new options for greater military involvement in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

The changes would represent a significant escalation of the American role in Iraq and Syria. They still require formal approval from President Barack Obama, who could make a decision as soon as this week and could decide not to make any changes to the current course, said U.S. officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the discussions are still ongoing. It’s unclear how many additional troops would be required to implement the changes being considered by the president, but the number for now is likely to be relatively small, these officials said.

ing such missions directly, whether by strikes from the air or direct action on the ground,” Carter said during testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee.

More ground raids mean higher risk for American servicemembers and will no doubt raise questions over mission creep more than one year into the new war in the Middle East.

Afghans struggle to reach remote areas hit by quake

BY JOSH SMITH
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Afghan government launched a major rescue-and-recovery effort Tuesday in remote areas of Afghanistan most devastated by a magnitude-7.5 earthquake a day earlier as the death toll more than doubled.

The NATO-led coalition was aiding the Afghan government’s relief efforts.

Rescue workers in neighboring Pakistan also were struggling to reach areas affected by Monday’s quake, centered in a remote area of northern Afghanistan.

The death toll in Afghanistan rose to at least 115, with 538 injured, President Ashraf Ghani said in a statement on Twitter. Casualty numbers were expected to rise further as rescuers move deeper into remote areas.

In northern Pakistan, 237 people were reported killed and more than 1,500 injured, according to The Associated Press. There, at least 2,000 buildings were reported to have sustained damage.

Abdullah Abdullah, chief executive of Afghanistan’s unity government, said international organizations were helping in the recovery, and officials at

the State Department and the White House said they were ready to provide aid if needed.

On Tuesday, the NATO-led military coalition was working with Afghan aid officials, said coalition spokesman Col. Mike Lawhorn.

The U.S. Agency for International Development said it was participating in relief assistance in coordination with the Afghan government and 15 partner organizations, including the International Organization for Migration, the World Food Program and the World Health Organization.

Among the hard-hit provinces was Nangarhar, where

Khair Mohammad, 41, brought his injured son to the central hospital in Jalalabad.

“We were finishing lunch, and suddenly there was a tremor,” he said. “It was slow for a few seconds, then quiet for one or two seconds and then it started with much force.”

He rushed out of the home with two of his children while his wife narrowly avoided being crushed by their collapsing roof. One son broke his leg after being trapped in a collapsed room.

The Taliban released a statement online calling on members to provide help and not to impede recovery efforts.

New faces lead KC back to World Series

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Luke Hochevar was a member of the Kansas City Royals who advanced to the World Series a year ago. He was in the dugout for every playoff game, took part in all the champagne celebrations, got an American League championship ring after the season.

He never threw a single pitch, though. That makes this year's return to the Fall Classic so much sweeter. Now recovered from Tommy John surgery that sidelined him last season, Hochevar has been able to contribute to the success of the club that made the reliever the No. 1 overall draft pick in 2006.

"It feels great. There's no other way to explain it," Hochevar said. "To experience it last year was unbelievable. To have the opportunity to come back and do it again is even better."

The easy argument is the Royals are back because they're the same team of a year ago. Their core players that became household names against the San Francisco Giants, such as first baseman Eric Hosmer and outfielder Lorenzo Cain, are still doing their thing in Kansas City.

The reality is the Royals are back largely because of all their new faces.

There were only 12 players on their 25-man roster for the AL Championship Series against Toronto that were on the

roster against the Giants. Just four of those were pitchers, and the only starter was Yordano Ventura, who helped Kansas City to victory in the decisive Game 6.

The Royals used the same roster in the divisional round against Houston, and figured to have a similar makeup when they opened the World Series on Tuesday night against the New York Mets.

"This is a different team," Royals manager Ned Yost acknowledged, "but we play the same."

By that, he means the Royals still rely on pitching and defense. They still win by making fewer mistakes than the opponent. They still cause havoc on the base paths, rarely strike out.

It's just that the cast of characters doing it is slightly different.

The Royals walked on an expensive option on designated hitter Billy Butler, signing Kendrys Morales to replace him. The move proved to be brilliant: Morales hit 22 homers during the regular season and has hit four more during the playoffs.

"He's been the middle-of-the-order bat from the first day," Yost said. "He put up tremendous numbers, power numbers, RBI numbers, he's been great from both sides of the plate."

In the field, the Royals moved on from right fielder Nori Aoki by signing Alex Rios, who is hitting .333 in the first playoff appearance of his 12-year career. Second

baseman Omar Infante has been hurt, so deadline-acquisition Ben Zobrist has taken over, hitting .326 while driving in six runs this postseason — including two homers against Toronto.

The backup catcher has been Drew Butera rather than Erik Kratz. The utility men have been Paulo Orlando and Christian Colon, rather than Josh Willingham and Jayson Nix.

All of them easily could be considered upgrades.

It's among the pitchers where the differences are most stark: Along with Ventura, the rotation consists of Edinson Volquez, Johnny Cueto and Chris Young, while last year it was James Shields, Jeremy Guthrie and Jason Vargas in the postseason.

Volquez was the Royals' big offseason signing after Shields left in free agency. But Young was signed at the start of spring training after spending time away from the game, and pitched his way into the playoff rotation, dominating the Blue Jays in Game 4 of the ALCS.

"When I started here, I had a conversation with [General Manager] Dayton Moore," Young said. "I said, 'Look, I want to be a part of a winning club. I believe I can contribute, help your team, and I'll do whatever you need me to do. And the Royals said, 'OK, we'd love to have you.' Now, to have this opportunity, I just can't thank the organization enough for believ-

ing in me."

Cueto was acquired at the trading deadline. And while he made a historically bad start in Game 3 against Toronto, he also dominated Houston in the decisive Game 5 of the divisional round.

In the bullpen, All-Star closer Greg Holland and left-handed specialist Tim Collins are out because of Tommy John surgery. Brandon Finnegan has been traded, Jason Frasor released. In their place are Hochevar, Kris Medlen, Franklin Morales and Ryan Madson, another reclamation project who was out of the game before Kansas City gave him one last chance.

So while the core group that ended the Royals' 29-year playoff drought is back, it's a new batch of players who will try to help them win their first World Series title since 1985.

"We feel really confident," Zobrist said. "We just keep coming, one after the other. It says a lot about how this club thinks about themselves. We believe that each guy is going to get the job done. We're not looking for one guy to do it. We're looking for everybody to come with their best game. Somebody always shows up to get the big win for us."

Wright living boyhood dream with Mets in Series

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Gary LaRocque thought back to a spring afternoon in 2001 at Hickory High School in Chesapeake, Va. A touted 18-year-old came onto the field after his last class to take some batting practice.

"Every ball he hit over the fence, he went over there and picked them all up, too," said LaRocque, then the New York Mets' director of amateur scouting.

That kid?

David Wright.

Reminded of the story Monday on the eve of his World Series debut, he laughed.

"Who else is going to pick 'em up?" he said. "I went out and bought the baseballs, and baseballs are expensive. I wasn't going to lose them."

Wright hasn't changed much over the past 14 years. Now a seven-time All-Star and the fourth captain in Mets history, his boyish enthusiasm and puppy-like excitement invigorate his teammates.

He has organized early morning floor hockey competition that turns the clubhouse into a rec room. When he returned in August from four months on the disabled list, Wright greeted the Mets in the lobby of the Westin Philadelphia hotel. In full uniform. With cookies.

But there also is a stubborn seriousness. He's the one who called out young pitcher Noah Syndergaard for eating lunch during a spring training game instead of watching with his teammates on the bench.

Wright made it to the major leagues a

little more than three years after signing. When the Mets finished fourth for the fourth straight season, he signed a \$138 million, eight-year contract in December 2012 instead of waiting a year to find out his worth as a free agent.

Now he's living his dream, gushing like a fan about seeing the Mets logo next to a World Series patch as they prepared to play the Kansas City Royals.

New York has Mike Hampton to thank for Wright. New York selected Wright with the 38th overall draft pick in 2001, received as compensation when the pitcher left in December 2000 to sign with Colorado.

Wright had grown up a Mets fan, attending games of their Triple-A farm team in Norfolk. He always wanted to play for them, even as a kid.

Back when he was 9, his father coached his youth team for players ages 9-12. David was among the youngest.

"The returning team that year had some pretty good middle infielders, so I played David in the outfield," Rhon Wright said. "To this day, he does not let me forget that, calls it one of the worst coaching decisions he's ever seen in his life, yada, yada, yada."

By the time he was a high school senior, Wright was attracting attention. Former major leaguer Randy Milligan, then a Mets scout, pushed for the team to draft him. Other teams were interested.

"Sometimes there were 30, 40 scouts there, sometimes GMs, sometimes assistants GMs, scouting directors," said Keith Miller, the former Mets and Royals

infielder who works for Wright's agency, Aces Inc.

By his second full season in the majors, Wright topped 100 RBIs. In his third, the Mets won the NL East and came within one win of reaching the World Series.

Eight long years followed for the Mets, including a terrible start in 2011, when owner Fred Wilpon denigrated Wright with the analysis: "A really good kid. A very good player. Not a superstar." New York's finances were damaged by losses from the collapse of Bernard Madoff's Ponzi scheme. The fan base was depressed.

Still, when Mets chief operating officer Jeff Wilpon and general manager Sandy Alderson offered Wright a long-term deal, the third baseman was sure it was the right move.

Just when the Mets looked capable of ending their skid of six straight losing seasons, Wright injured a hamstring on April 14. On May 23, the Mets said he had been diagnosed with stenosis, a narrowing of the spinal column.

Dr. David Altchek, the Mets' medical director, delivered the news.

"The first thing he says is, 'Just don't Google it,'" Wright remembered. "And the first thing I do is Google it, and you see different athletes from different sports, that this has forced them into an early retirement, so of course you spend a couple of days moping around, kind of feeling sorry for yourself. But then you have a decision to make: Do I continue to do this and whine and moan? Or do you do everything you can to get back? And I'm glad I chose the second option."

When the Mets visited Los Angeles in

early July, Wright spoke with Dodgers manager Don Mattingly, whose career ended prematurely because of a bad back. Mattingly told Wright he could play with the condition.

"Getting that peace of mind I thought was important to me probably emotionally," Wright said.

His pregame routine had changed completely. Now he arrives at the ballpark 6½ hours before game time, catching rides with the training staff on road trips. He sets aside 90-120 minutes for exercises and stretching, with some down time in between, to get his back in shape to play. He probably will have to continue the exercises for the rest of his life, as Mattingly has.

Wright's smile is extra wide this week. There's even more excitement in his eyes than usual. He has been waiting for this since he was in his backyard, imagining walking to the plate for World Series Game 7.

His parents plan to attend Games 4 and 5. They are skipping Friday night because of a dog days of October issue. Homer, David's 10-year-old boxer, lives with his parents.

"It's still David's," Rhon Wright said. "They adore each other, but he's had some health issues now. David understands. We can swing maybe two or three days away, but any more than that makes it real difficult for Homer."

Homer is part of the family, and with the Wrights, family comes first — even ahead of the World Series.



Ship's Store official new car program

Exclusive Navy at-sea offers:

www.navyauto.com or nasinfo@navyauto.com

Cardinals hold off Ravens

Associated Press

GLENDALE, Ariz. — Chris Johnson rolled to victory. His Arizona Cardinals had to hold on to win.

Johnson rushed for 122 yards, 62 on a play where he rolled over the belly of a big defender and kept on running to set up a field goal, and the Cardinals held on to beat the luckless Baltimore Ravens 26-18 on Monday night.

Baltimore drove to the Arizona 4 in the final seconds before Tony Jefferson's interception in the end zone clinched the victory.

"A lot of things happened during the game," Cardinals coach Bruce Arians said. "Good, bad and one ugly one, but we finished and made a great play at the end."

Arizona kept a grip on its NFC West lead, going to 5-2, while the Ravens added to their worst start in franchise history, falling to 1-6.

"We probably didn't play well enough to win the football game," Baltimore quarterback Joe Flacco said, "but we are always in them. It is going to be a fight down to the end and we are not giving up."

Arizona led 26-10 before Asa Jackson's blocked a punt to set up Joe Flacco's 1-yard touchdown pass to Kyle Juszczyk. The 2-point conversion pass to Nick Boyle made it an eight-point game with 4:26 to play.

Baltimore got the ball back and Flacco quickly moved the team downfield before the final ill-fated throw.

"The punt block and all of a sudden you let them in," Arizona's Carson Palmer said, "but that's what you want on 'Monday Night Football.' We made it a game at the end."

Coach John Harbaugh said the Ravens had trouble with the communications system throughout the game, particularly in the final drive.

"The phones were going out so he couldn't hear [offensive coordinator] Marc [Trestman]," Harbaugh said. "I don't know why the phones were going out on that drive but they went out on that drive. Mark had to yell, we couldn't get the personnel groups, all those things are really challenging when the phones are out."

Baltimore moved the ball just fine despite those issues, just not enough. The eight-point loss was the most one-sided of the season for the Ravens.

"Any time you lose it hits you in the gut," Baltimore's Justin Forsett said. "But we've been fighting. We just have to keep fighting."

Johnson also ran 26 yards for the first Cardinals touchdown. The 30-year-old running back, signed late in training camp after recovering from a gunshot wound during the offseason, topped 100 yards for the third time this season and didn't even play in the fourth quarter. The last Arizona player to do that was Edgerrin James in 2007.

Palmer completed 20 of 29 passes for 275 yards and two touchdowns. Flacco was 26-for-40 for 252 yards, with a touchdown and the interception. Forsett had a

14-yard touchdown run, but finished with only 36 yards on 12 carries.

A 26-10 lead seemed comfortable before Bryant burst up the middle to block Drew Butler's punt to set up the final Ravens touchdown.

The play of the night came in the third quarter, when Johnson hit the line and was pulled down, but he came to rest on the belly of 6-foot-1, 335-pound Brandon Williams. Johnson's knee or elbow didn't touch, so he alertly got up and kept running to the 4. Johnson said he'd never been part of a play like that.

"Basically, you just keep playing until the whistle," Johnson said. "That is something Arians teaches us, we always have to play to the whistle and have to finish. That is something you learn coming up from little league: Keep playing until the whistle blows."

The play set up Chandler Catanzaro's second 21-yard field goal, making it a two-possession game at 20-10.

After Arizona scored again, Catanzaro's try for the conversion bounced off the right upright and was no good, setting the stage for the tight finish.

The only turnover of the night, before Jefferson's interception, led to a touchdown that put the Cardinals up 14-10 at the half and Arizona never trailed again.

Justin Bethé stripped the ball from punt returner Jeremy Ross' hands and recovered at the Ravens 25. Penalties gave Arizona a series of chances inside the 5 and, finally, Palmer threw 3 yards to Michael Floyd for the score.

Baylor loses QB for season

Associated Press

Second-ranked Baylor's pursuit of a playoff spot will go on without star quarterback Seth Russell, who needs season-ending neck surgery.

Russell saw a specialist Monday, two days after he fractured a bone during a win over Iowa State. The school said surgery was recommended to repair damage to his cervical vertebra, and that the typical recovery time is six months.

"Seth exemplifies the spirit and will of our football team, and through this our team will keep that spirit alive and well for him," coach Art Briles said in a statement released by the school.

The junior quarterback got hurt on a run late Saturday against Iowa State, when the two-time defending Big 12 champion Bears improved to 7-0 with a 45-27 win.

Russell is the top-rated passer in the Bowl Subdivision, completing 119 of 200 passes for 2,104 yards with 29 touchdowns and six interceptions. He also ran for six scores in his first season starting for the NCAA's top offense (686 total yards, 61 points a game).

Freshman Jarrett Stidham will take over as the starter. He has played in every game so far, and has some extra time to prepare for his first start since the Bears are off this week before playing Nov. 5 at Kansas State.

Stidham has completed 24 of 28 passes for 331 yards with six touchdowns and no interceptions.

"We certainly have tons of confidence in Jarrett. ... Maturity-wise, he doesn't seem like a freshman, act like a freshman or perform like a freshman," Briles said earlier Monday on the weekly Big 12 coaches teleconference. "He's a guy that's instinctively and athletically ready to play."

Russell, a devout Christian, posted a message on his Twitter and Instagram accounts Sunday that read, "His plan isn't always clear...but trusting in His plan for me. Thanks for all the prayers Baylor."

While Russell had no updates about his condition Monday on Twitter after Baylor announced the surgery, he did respond to get-well messages from TCU quarterback Trevone Boykin and running back Aaron Green.

After Boykin tweeted, "Get well soon bruh..," Russell replied, "Thanks man! Y'all keep ballin'" to the quarterback of the fifth-ranked Horned Frogs.

Baylor, which has won by an average margin of 36 points this season, still faces the most difficult portion of its schedule. After Kansas State, the Bears play 14th-ranked Oklahoma and then have visits to 12th-ranked Oklahoma State and TCU before the finale against Texas.

Stidham takes control of an offense that includes Corey Coleman, the FBS leader with a school-record 18 touchdown catches, and Big 12 rushing leader Shock Linwood. There is also a big, experienced offensive line led by All-America tackle Spencer Drango.

"Just makes all the difference in the world. Especially with the offensive line that we have, plus the dynamic skill people," Briles said. "It certainly takes a lot of pressure off that position, but you know the thing about it is, (Stidham) is a capable player. ... We're not putting a guy out there that's not capable. This guy's good. He's ready."

Immediately after Baylor won its FBS-best 20th consecutive home game, Russell was described as having a strained neck. X-rays and a CT scan later Saturday revealed the fractured bone.

Blackhawks top struggling Ducks in OT

Associated Press

CHICAGO — All that open ice in the NHL's new 3-on-3 overtime suits Jonathan Toews and the Chicago Blackhawks quite nicely.

Toews scored 51 seconds into the extra period, Corey Crawford made 39 saves and the Blackhawks beat the Anaheim Ducks 1-0 on Monday night in a rematch of last season's Western Conference finals.

Crawford earned his second straight shutout and No. 14 for his career as the Blackhawks closed out a perfect 4-0 homestand. They also beat Tampa Bay 1-0 on Saturday night on Toews' first goal of the season 17 seconds into overtime.

"It can go either way," Toews said. "Huge stops by our goaltender, we get an opening, there's one defensive mistake — and they're easy to make 3 on 3."

Crawford denied Ryan Getzlaf before Toews got a pass from Patrick Kane and beat Frederik Andersen over his left shoulder, making Chicago a perfect 3 for 3 in overtime this season. Kane had the game-winning goal in a 3-2 overtime win at the New York Islanders on Oct. 9.

Chicago became the first team to win consecutive games by a 1-0 score in overtime with the same goal scorer and goaltender. The Blackhawks have allowed two goals in three games since Duncan Keith had right knee surgery last Tuesday, sidelining the All-Star defenseman for four to six weeks.

"We can always say we're going to miss him because that's for sure," coach Joel Quenneville said. "But we're finding ways to play well defensively. Tonight, we weren't as sharp, but we're still doing some good things without the puck."

The Ducks were shut out for the second straight game and became the first NHL team since the New York Americans in 1930-31 to be shut out five times in their

first eight games of the season. Andersen finished with 23 stops.

"It's the best game we've played all year," coach Bruce Boudreau said.

The Blackhawks appeared to have the go-ahead score with 5:35 left in the third, but Artemi Panarin's shot was waived off because Andersen knocked the net off its moorings before the puck crossed the goal line. Quenneville threw his arms up in protest and the crowd of 21,529 booed lustily, but the call stood after a replay review.

"That's something every goalie does now. They use the posts to give them balance," Andersen said. "The rubber thing inside the post just kind of gave away."

Anaheim had a 3-2 lead against Chicago in the conference finals in May, and then dropped the last two games, including a painful 5-3 loss in Game 7 at home. The Blackhawks went on to their third Stanley Cup title in six seasons, while the Ducks faced questions about their inability to get to the next level with their talented roster.

The hangover seemed to carry over into this season, with Anaheim bringing the NHL's worst offense to the rematch with Chicago. The Ducks had just six goals in their first seven games, and four of those came in their only win at home against Minnesota on Oct. 18.

It was more of the same against the Blackhawks, at least early on. Corey Perry shot it off the inside of the left post early in the second. He also was stuffed by Crawford at the right post on a prime opportunity about a minute into the third.

Chicago had similar problems generating quality offensive chances on the other side.

Andersen denied Toews at the end of the first period, and Ryan Garbutt whiffed on a potential rebound. Andersen also stopped Kane and then Andrew Shaw during one sequence while the Blackhawks

had a power-play opportunity in the second.

Islanders 4, Flames 0: Jaroslav Halak stopped 29 shots for his second shutout in three starts and Frans Nielsen scored twice as host New York cruised past Calgary.

Mikhail Grabovski and Cal Clutterbuck also scored and Kyle Okposo and Nikolay Kulemin each had two assists to help the Islanders improve to 4-1-1 at home this season.

Halak, making his fourth start, also had a shutout at Columbus last Tuesday night.

Grabovski beat Flames goaltender Joni Ortio with a snap shot on the power play with just under 6 minutes left in the second for a 1-0 lead. The Islanders then scored three in the third, with Nielsen make it 2-0 about 5 1/2 minutes into the period, and later capping the scoring with 1:50 left.

The Flames, coming off a 4-1 defeat at the New York Rangers the previous night, lost for the seventh time in nine games this season.

Coyotes 4, Maple Leafs 3: Max Domi and Shane Doan had power-play goals in the first period as Arizona held on to beat host Toronto.

Kyle Chipchura added a power-play goal in the third for the Coyotes (5-3-1), while Klas Dahlbeck also scored for Phoenix, which topped the Leafs (1-5-2) for a third straight time dating back to last season.

Mike Smith made 24 saves to improve to 4-2-1 on the season.

Shawn Matthias, James van Riemsdyk and Morgan Rielly had the Toronto goals while James Reimer made 20 saves for his first regulation loss of the season.

Rielly got the Leafs to within one at 17:34 of the third with Reimer pulled for an extra attacker, but Toronto was unable to find the equalizer.