

STARS AND STRIPES®

Thursday, October 29, 2015

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Russian planes fly near US carrier Reagan

BY ERIK SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

The USS Ronald Reagan scrambled its fighter jets earlier this week after two Russian naval reconnaissance aircraft flew within 1 nautical mile of the U.S. aircraft carrier as it sailed in international waters east of the Korean Peninsula, according to 7th Fleet officials.

In the latest in a series of incidents involving Russian aircraft, two Tupolev Tu-142 Bear aircraft flew as low as 500 feet Tuesday morning near the Reagan, which has been conducting scheduled maneuvers with South Korean navy ships. Four F/A-18 Super Hornets took off from the Reagan's flight deck in response to the Russian advance, 7th Fleet spokeswoman Lt. Lauren Cole said Thursday.

U.S. officials attempted to contact the Russian aircraft but received no radio response.

A U.S. ship escorting the Ronald Reagan followed the Russian aircraft as they withdrew, Navy officials said.

Press officials at the Russian Embassy in Seoul were not immediately available for comment Thursday.

On multiple occasions in the past year, Russian aircraft have tested international boundaries by either violating other countries' airspace or engaging in what Pentagon officials have called "provocative" actions toward U.S. and NATO ships.

In April, a Russian SU-24 fighter jet made 12 "close-range, low-altitude" passes near the USS Donald Cook while the ship was in international waters in the western Black Sea near Romania, the Pentagon has said. Last month, NATO officials said Russian fighters violated Turkish airspace several times.

In September, Japan alleged

that Russia violated airspace over the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido.

The incidents continue to raise questions about Russian navy aircraft safety practices.

U.S. Navy officials say they have no objection to Russia, or any other nation, flying or sailing wherever international law allows.

"We are advocates of any country being able to operate within international norms," Cole said. "We do caveat that with the fact that all of these operations need to be conducted in accordance with the rights and regulations of other countries, and within a safe manner."

The Reagan is essentially a floating airport, complete with an air traffic control center that tracks and communicates with nearby aircraft.

When the carrier engages in flight operations, it institutes

a carrier control zone, which extends up to 2,500 feet and within a 5-mile radius, according to the Navy's flight training instruction carrier procedures.

Navy officials did not discuss Thursday whether the carrier was engaged in flight operations when the Russian aircraft approached.

"Even if we don't have flight operations ongoing, we are still very cognizant of what is going on in the airspace, within a good distance," Cole said.

The lack of communication by the Russian aircraft also conflicted with general aviation practice. Even commercial airports of any significant size generally expect two-way radio contact when aircraft fly as close as the Russians did, according to international aviation guidelines.

slavin.erik@stripes.com
Twitter: @eslavin_stripes

Army blimp breaks free in Md., follows wind to Pa.

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A massive, unmanned, military surveillance blimp broke free from its tether at a Maryland Army facility Wednesday and slowly drifted nearly 150 miles northwest, finally landing in a cluster of trees in rural central Pennsylvania.

The 243-foot-long blimp, a Joint Land Attack Cruise Missile Defense Elevated Netted Sensor System, or JLENS, floated for about four hours, reaching a height of 15,000 feet before partially deflating and falling toward earth near Muncy, Pa., where it remained Thursday in two "mostly intact" pieces a few hundred meters apart, Army Capt. Matthew Villa said.

U.S. military authorities said Thursday morning they are still uncertain why the blimp broke loose from its mooring at Ab-

erdeen Proving Ground just after 12 p.m. Weather should not have been a factor, said Navy Capt. Scott Miller, a spokesman for the North American Aerospace Defense Command. According to Raytheon, the JLENS manufacturer, it can withstand winds of up to 100 mph.

Soon after the JLENS escaped, the Pentagon scrambled a pair of armed F-16 Fighting Falcons to monitor and track the aircraft, but shooting the blimp down was never "seriously considered," Miller said.

NORAD focused on working with local and federal authorities, including the Federal Aviation Administration, to ensure civilian aircraft were not endangered, he said.

Still, the blimp caused problems for the people below as it dragged a length of tether and knocked out power lines. About 27,000 customers in two counties briefly lost power, according to electric utility PPL.

Villa said it could take days or weeks to remove the JLENS that remains stuck in trees along a ravine in a hard-to-access area with no roads directly leading to the site. Sensitive electronics aboard the aircraft were removed, and state troopers were using shotguns Thursday to deflate the blimp. An investigation into the incident is underway, he said.

The aircraft was one of two such blimps stationed at Aberdeen, where it has been undergoing a three-year operational test to determine if it could provide improved air defenses for the United States. The blimp is the same kind commonly used in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars to provide ground surveillance around U.S. bases and other sensitive sites.

Information from The Associated Press was used in this report.
dickstein.corey@stripes.com
Twitter: @CDicksteinDC

GOP hopefuls battle each other, moderators

The Washington Post

BOULDER, Colo. — The leading Republican candidates for president tangled with the moderators and one another in a freewheeling, chaotic debate Wednesday night that swerved from one topic to another but featured a handful of notably sharp exchanges and breakout performances.

Sen. Marco Rubio was one of the dominant figures, getting the better of his onetime mentor, Jeb Bush, in deflecting an attack over Rubio's missed votes in the Senate. Rubio also warded off questions about his family's financial struggles by saying he did not "inherit" money from his family and can empathize with working- and middle-class Americans.

The media also became a punching bag during the tense, two-hour debate, which saw candidates shout over one another and the moderators struggle to quiet them. The White House aspirants lashed out at CNBC's moderators for their confrontational line of questioning about contradictions in their past statements or personal backgrounds.

Sen. Ted Cruz drew one of the loudest bursts of applause from the live audience when he said: "This is not a cage match. You look at the questions: 'Donald

Trump, are you a comic-book villain?' Ben Carson, can you do math? John Kasich, will you insult two people over here? Marco Rubio, why don't you resign? Jeb Bush, why have your numbers fallen?"

When Bush was asked about the intersection of fantasy sports and regulated gambling, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie jumped in.

"Wait a second," Christie said. "We have \$19 trillion in debt, we have people out of work, we have ISIS and al-Qaida attacking us, and we're talking about fantasy football?"

Meanwhile, the two political outsiders who hold commanding polling leads — businessman Donald Trump and retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson — were absent through long stretches of the debate. When they did speak, they often found themselves on the defensive — Trump over his real estate company's bankruptcies, Carson on his corporate board work, and both on the feasibility of their tax plans.

The debate was a high-pressure moment for Bush, the early favorite of the party establishment and donor class, who is trying to breathe new life into his struggling campaign. But he missed some clear opportunities on Wednesday night.

Seeking unity, House GOP elects Ryan speaker

WASHINGTON — Splintered House Republicans elected Rep. Paul Ryan to be the chamber's 54th speaker on Thursday, turning to the youthful but battle-tested Wisconsin lawmaker to mend the party's self-inflicted wounds and to craft a conservative message to woo voters in next year's elections.

"The House is broken," Ryan said in his first remarks to the chamber, seemingly referring as much to a GOP civil war between hard-liners and pragmatists as to the House's usual partisan divisions. "We are not

settling scores. We are wiping the slate clean."

In a slow-moving roll call that mixed politics with pageantry, 236 Republicans called out Ryan's name as their pick for the job. That put him second in line to the presidency and atop a chamber that has been awash in tumult ever since defiant conservatives hounded Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio, into announcing his resignation from that post last month.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., received 184 votes for speaker, all from Democrats.

From The Associated Press

China to work to halt US Navy sail-bys

Associated Press

BEIJING — China's military will take "all necessary measures" in response to any future U.S. Navy incursions into what it considers its territorial waters around islands in the South China Sea, a Defense Ministry spokesman said Thursday.

The statement by Col. Yang Yujun followed the sailing of a U.S. guided missile destroyer within the 12-nautical-mile territorial limit of one of the islands newly created by China in the strategically vital region. The U.S. refuses to recognize the man-made islets as deserving of sovereign territory status.

The Chinese side took no forceful action during the USS Lassen's sail-by on Tuesday, but strenuously protested the maneuver. China's reaction fits the pattern in similar such incidents in recent years. Yang offered no details on how Beijing might respond differently in the future.

"We would urge the U.S. not to continue down the wrong path. But if the U.S. side does continue, we will take all necessary measures according to

the need," Yang said. China's resolve to safeguard its national sovereignty and security interests is "rock-solid," he added.

China claims virtually the entire South China Sea and its islands, reefs and atolls as its sovereign territory, an assertion challenged by five other regional governments.

While the U.S. takes no formal position on sovereignty, it insists on freedom of navigation and has urged China to cease its ambitious project to construct new islands complete with buildings, harbors and airstrips.

Yang reiterated Beijing's claim that the USS Lassen violated Chinese sovereignty and international law, although the sail-by appeared to fall under internationally allowed "innocent passage" rules. Yang gave no details of China's claims.

Yang said that the commander of the Chinese navy, Adm. Wu Shengli, would present China's "solemn position" on the issue in a video conference later Thursday with the U.S. head of naval operations, Adm. John Richardson.

Rare heavy storms flood Iraq capital, refugee camp

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — After a night of intense rainstorms, the joke being shared on social media Thursday assures Iraqis that they don't need to go far to catch a migrant boat to Europe.

"Grab a boat from Baghdad, and it will take you straight to Greece," the joke reads, as millions of Iraqis awoke to knee-deep floodwaters that seeped into homes and paralyzed parts of the city.

Blocks of ice, typically for sale, floated down the streets of

Baghdad's Sadr City neighborhood as men trudged through the water trying to assess damage.

The rainstorms began late Wednesday and continued Thursday, dumping heavy rain on the Iraqi capital and across the country. The government declared Thursday a holiday to ease the burden on people who may struggle to get to work and school.

Police and security forces were deployed in Baghdad to help residents navigate the floodwaters.

Royals top Mets, take 2-0 series lead

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Many Kansas City fans lingered in Kauffman Stadium after Wednesday's 7-1 win over the New York Mets, knowing the next time they see the Royals in the flesh, it may be in a ticker-tape parade.

Johnny Cueto pitched a complete game to give Kansas City a 2-0 lead in the World Series and a chance to clinch the title in New York, which is scheduled to host the next three games in the best-of-seven series, starting Friday.

However the Royals players and fans don't need long memories to recall what can go wrong, having also led San Francisco in last year's losing World Series.

"There's still a lot of work yet to do," said first baseman Eric Hosmer. "Last year we took a 2-1 lead in San Francisco and were feeling pretty good about ourselves."

Forty-one of the 51 teams to take 2-0 leads in best-of-seven World Series have

gone on to win the title, including nine straight since Atlanta stumbled against the New York Yankees in 1996.

After a 14-inning epic in Game 1, which the Royals won on Hosmer's sacrifice fly, Game 2 was a far quicker and more pedestrian affair.

The Mets went ahead through Lucas Duda's single to left field in the top of the fourth inning.

It was in the bottom of the fifth that the game turned, as the Royals wore down New York starter Jacob de Grom, hitting 14 fouls and scoring four runs.

De Grom had held Kansas City to one hit through the first four innings but soon got in trouble in the fifth, when he walked Alex Gordon leading off.

Alex Rios followed with a single and Alcides Escobar fouled off a pair of bunt attempts before driving an 0-2 pitch up the middle to tie the game 1-1.

Ben Zobrist's grounder advanced the runners, and Lorenzo Cain fouled off four pitches before a flyout to short center

brought in a second run. Hosmer's hit rebounded off the mound into center field for a 3-1 lead, and Kendrys Morales singled in another run.

Kansas City had the best contact hitters in the major leagues this season, missing on just 19.7 percent of swings, according to STATS. The Dodgers and Cubs swung and missed 58 times in deGrom's first three postseason outings, but he got just three swings and misses against the Royals — his career low.

"We don't swing and miss," Royals manager Ned Yost said. "We find ways to just keep putting the ball in play until you find holes."

Of deGrom's 94 pitches, 23 were fouled off.

"I told Jake not everything has to be a strike," Mets manager Terry Collins said. "You've got to move it around. You've got to change speeds, give them something to look at. If you continue to pound the strike zone, they're going to put it in play, and that's what they did."

Gordon added an RBI double in the eighth off Jon Niese, a ball off the glove of shortstop Wilmer Flores. Paulo Orlando, the first Brazil-born player to appear in a Series, followed with a sacrifice fly against Addison Reed, and Escobar tripled in a run as the Royals ran away with the game.

Cueto has struggled on the road, but since the Royals acquired him from Cincinnati in July, he's been Johnny on the spot at Kauffman Stadium. He pitched two-hit ball over eight innings to win Game 5 of the Division Series against Houston, and Kansas City lined up its Series rotation to have Cueto starting Games 2 and 6 at home.

He gave up only two hits, the lowest in a complete game by an AL pitcher in the World Series since 1967, and the first complete Series game by an AL pitcher since 1991.

"That's what they brought me here for, was to help win a World Series," Cueto said.

Heat on Mets' Syndergaard in Game 3

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The man-child on the mound was simply getting some work in, two simulated innings to keep sharp for the World Series.

It was late afternoon at Kauffman Stadium, dimmed by dark clouds on this overcast day in Kansas City, and even his New York Mets teammates wanted no part of 6-foot-6 Noah Syndergaard.

David Wright bounded into the batting cage, watched a few fastballs whizz by like pellets fired from a BB gun, and stepped right back out.

"How are you supposed to hit that?" he asked buddy Michael Cuddyer.

A chuckling group of Mets marveled at Syndergaard's sizzling cheese the day before the Series opener — but now they've placed the heat squarely on their rookie starter. With the National League champs trailing 2-0 in the best-of-seven set, the 23-year-old thunderbolt aptly nicknamed Thor pitches Friday night against Royals right-hander Yordano Ventura.

And the Mets know perfectly well they can't afford to lose.

"It's nice to have Noah going," second baseman Daniel Murphy said after a 7-1 defeat in Game 2. "We'll get back to New York and I know the guys will be excited."

The first World Series game at Citi Field features two of the hardest throwers in baseball.

Syndergaard's fastball averaged 97.1 mph during the regular season, the highest velocity of any major leaguer who pitched at least 150 innings, according to STATS.

The 24-year-old Ventura ranked third at 96.3 mph.

In the NL playoffs, Syndergaard threw 22 pitches at least 100 mph and topped out at 101, STATS said.

Ventura can touch the century mark, too.

But while Syndergaard certainly brings it, so do Mets aces Matt Harvey and Jacob deGrom. And despite their 95-98 mph fastballs, neither one was able to throttle a Royals lineup that's mastered the lost art of consistently making solid contact.

"This team likes the fastball," said ALCS MVP Alcides Escobar, the aggressive leadoff man who is batting .364 with 12 runs, eight RBIs and seven extra-base hits this postseason.

Alex Gordon proved that premise with a tying homer in the ninth inning of Game 1 on a 97 mph quick-pitch from New York closer Jeurys Familia.

"We're always ready for the fastball," Gordon explained. "Never miss a fastball and adjust to off-speed."

Scolded by Wright in spring training for eating lunch in the clubhouse during an intrasquad game, Syndergaard acknowledged a rookie mistake and agreed he should have been on the bench looking to learn something.

Despite all the attention Syndergaard's heater draws, the rapid development of his secondary pitches has been the key to his immediate success.

After making his major league debut in May, he picked up a two-seamer that runs to his arm side and fine-tuned his changeup. He gained control of his sharp slider without losing the ability to bend in that slower curveball.

All those improvements helped the right-hander finish 9-7 with a 3.24 ERA and 166 strikeouts in 150 innings — not to mention a long home run to straightaway center field.

Then he went 1-1 with a 2.77 ERA in three NL playoff games, including his first career relief appearance.

Powerful arm, swift progression. "He's a very fast learner," Mets manager Terry Collins said. "He has no fear."

Ventura generates velocity with a whip of his slender frame, perhaps generously

listed at 6-feet tall. Syndergaard, by contrast, is a 240-pound hammer who revels in his larger-than-life image.

With long, golden locks flowing out from beneath his baseball cap, 11 letters to that unusual last name arched around his shoulders on the back of a Mets jersey, Syndergaard resembles some sort of Viking pitcher sent from the ancient past.

The ninth century nearly straight to the National League, with an impressive pit stop at Double-A Binghamton.

Syndergaard was given the moniker Thor — the Norse god known for ferocious storms — after tweeting a photo of himself in costume doing squats on Halloween two years ago.

Before his NL Championship Series start against the Cubs, he changed the photo atop his Twitter page to a shot featuring lightning striking Chicago's famous Willis Tower. For the World Series, bolts descending on the Kansas City skyline.

Syndergaard has "Thor" embroidered in gold on one of his gloves. There's also a "Tyrion" model from "Games of Thrones" and "Drago" from "Rocky IV" and "Heisenberg" from "Breaking Bad," among others.

"Characters I like," he said. Off the field, however, Syndergaard is not all nasty.

He speaks in soft tones with an air of confidence, and graciously posed for cellphone photos Monday night with Mets and Royals rooters alike — even a disgruntled Cubs fan — following dinner at a popular Kansas City barbecue joint.

Now, back home where he's pitched his best, Syndergaard will try to win a World Series game his team must have, just as Ventura did as a rookie last year in Game 6 against San Francisco.

"He believes he belongs here," Collins said. "And that speaks volumes."

Mattingly headed to Marlins

Associated Press

MIAMI — Don Mattingly is moving to a different coast and a new payroll neighborhood.

Mattingly was hired as manager of the Miami Marlins less than a week after he parted with the Los Angeles Dodgers, two people familiar with the situation said Thursday. The people confirmed the hiring to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the decision hadn't been announced.

Mattingly, who interviewed for the job Monday, will face a big change in resources. The Dodgers led the majors by far this year with a payroll of \$270 million; the Marlins ranked next to last at \$69 million, and little change is expected in 2016.

The injury-riddled Marlins finished 71-91, their sixth consecutive losing season. But Miami does have roster full of young, talented players led by slugger Giancarlo Stanton and ace Jose Fernandez.

Mattingly went 446-363 in five years with the Dodgers and won the NL West the past three years. The Dodgers, however, have not reached the World Series since winning the title in 1988, and they lost to the New York Mets this year in the NL Division Series.

In Miami, Mattingly succeeds Dan Jennings, who made the unusual move from general manager to manager in May. Jennings' status is unclear. After the season team officials said Jennings would return to his old job, but he hasn't done so. He's under contract through 2018.



Ship's Store official new car program

Exclusive Navy at-sea offers:

www.navyauto.com or nasinfo@navyauto.com

Westbrook, Thunder top Spurs

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Billy Donovan's team executed well in the final minute of his NBA coaching debut.

Five-time NBA champion coach Gregg Popovich's squad executed poorly.

Russell Westbrook had 33 points and 10 assists as the Oklahoma City Thunder overcame a seven-point deficit in the fourth quarter to beat the San Antonio Spurs 112-106 on Wednesday night.

"I was very pleased that our guys just kept their composure," Donovan said. "They kept battling, they kept fighting, and I think everyone knew it was going to be a game that was going to come down that way."

Kevin Durant missed most of last season with a broken right foot and scored 22 points in his first regular-season game since February.

Donovan won two national titles as University of Florida coach. Durant was glad to help him get his first professional win.

"I know it's one of many games, but to get him his first 'W,' especially at home on a big stage against a big-time team felt good," Durant said. "He was calm all night, and that kind of rubbed off on us."

Durant made just 6 of 19 field goals, but hit two critical free throws with 11.5 seconds remaining to put the Thunder in control.

Enes Kanter had 15 points and 16 rebounds off the bench for the Thunder.

Kawhi Leonard scored a career-high 32 points and grabbed eight rebounds for the Spurs. LaMarcus Aldridge had 11 points and five rebounds in his debut with San Antonio after nine years with the Portland Trail Blazers.

Manu Ginobili scored 11 points and Tony Parker added 10 for San Antonio.

Westbrook found Durant for a three-pointer with just more than four minutes remaining to put the Thunder up 99-97. It was Westbrook's 10th assist, and it helped Durant feel normal again.

After Parker put the Spurs up two, back-to-back baskets by Dion Waiters put the Thunder ahead by two. A three-pointer by Westbrook with 54.2 seconds to play put Oklahoma City up by five.

Timberwolves 112, Lakers 111: Ricky Rubio had a career-high 28 points, and visiting Minnesota rallied from a 16-point deficit in the second half to beat Los Angeles in their first game since Flip Saunders' death.

Rubio also had 14 assists and Kevin Martin scored 23 points. The Timberwolves played with heavy hearts three days after they lost Saunders, the longtime coach and team president who battled Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Cavaliers 106, Grizzlies 76: Kevin Love had 17 points and 13 rebounds, Richard Jefferson had 14 points and visiting Cleveland ruined Memphis' season opener.

LeBron James, Jared Cunningham and Matthew Dellavedova had 12 points each.

Heat 104, Hornets 94: Chris Bosh scored 21 points in his first game since getting sick last February. Dwyane Wade added 20 and host Miami beat Charlotte in the season opener for both teams.

Clippers 111, Kings 104: Blake Griffin scored 33 points and Paul Pierce endeared himself to his new teammates by putting visiting Los Angeles ahead for good with a late jumper.

Chris Paul had 18 points and 11 assists and J.J. Redick scored 15.

Bulls 115, Nets 100: Jimmy Butler scored 24 points, Nikola Mirotic had 18

and visiting Chicago won for the second time in two nights to open the season.

Trail Blazers 112, Pelicans 94: CJ McCollum scored a career-high 37 points, including six three-pointers, and Portland opened with a victory over depleted New Orleans.

It was Portland's 15th straight home-opening victory, surpassing Boston's record of 14 (1979-92).

Raptors 106, Pacers 99: Jonas Valanciunas had 21 points and 15 rebounds, DeMar DeRozan scored 25 and host Toronto beat Indiana on opening night for each team.

Mavericks 111, Suns 95: Raymond Felton scored 18 points to lead eight Dallas players in double figures.

Dirk Nowitzki, in his 17th NBA season, scored nine of his 11 points in the third quarter.

Nuggets 105, Rockets 85: Danilo Gallinari scored 23 points and Denver never trailed in a victory over host Houston in the season opener for both teams.

Pistons 92, Jazz 87: Reggie Jackson put Detroit ahead on a driving layup with 17 seconds left, and the host Pistons held on for their second straight win to start the season.

Knicks 122, Bucks 97: Derrick Williams scored 24 points, 20-year-old Kristaps Porzingis had 16 in his NBA debut, and New York beat host Milwaukee in the season opener for each.

Celtics 112, 76ers 95: Isaiah Thomas had 27 points and seven assists, and host Boston beat Philadelphia in the season opener for each.

Wizards 88, Magic 87: John Wall hit a floater with 12.7 seconds to play and visiting Washington rallied to defeat Orlando in the season opener for both teams.

Packers use bye to heal

Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Aaron Rodgers had a noticeable pep in his step when he walked to his locker.

A bye week left the Green Bay Packers quarterback refreshed, and gave his sore teammates a chance to rest up before the showdown Sunday with the Denver Broncos.

"Yeah, it would be nice to get everybody back," Rodgers said Wednesday after practice. "It's good for all of us, but especially us older guys and the guys up front."

It is at the skill positions where the down time could help the most.

Receiver Davante Adams is back at practice after being sidelined for much of the last month with a sprained ankle. Randall Cobb (shoulder) and James Jones (hamstring) benefited enough from the time off that they weren't even listed on the injury report Wednesday.

The injury toll has slowed an offense not quite operating to the Packers' high standards. Even teammates are bugging Adams about when he'll be back.

"They've been saying it just as much as you guys have ... just looking out for me and also wanting me back out there on the field," Adams told reporters. "It's getting better day by day and just hoping this is the week, and we're pushing and it's looking good so far."

There was one new name to add this week after running back James Starks hurt his hip during Green Bay's last game, a 27-20 win over San Diego on Oct. 18.

Following last week's bye, McCarthy hopes Starks will make enough progress to play in Denver. Starks and receiver Ty Montgomery (ankle) didn't practice Wednesday.

Starks ran for 112 yards on 10 carries against the Chargers, starting for Eddie Lacy, who finished with 3 yards on four carries. Lacy sprained his right ankle in Week 2, though he hasn't missed a game.

Lacy has said he wasn't limited in the Chargers game, and understood that McCarthy stuck with Starks because he was running well.

"Well, he looks good, just watching him work out and watching his work Monday," McCarthy said about Lacy before practice Wednesday. "Particularly in the individual stuff, that's where you try to really stress each position, so I don't think the injury is affecting him anymore."

Otherwise, Lacy is off to a slow start, though that's not necessarily unusual for the third-year back:

■ Lacy hasn't rushed for a touchdown since the season opener against Chicago. He has 260 yards on the season on 67 carries, averaging 3.9 yards a carry.

■ Last year through six games, Lacy had 306 yards on 80 carries, averaging 3.8 yards an attempt. He finished with 1,139 yards for that season on 246 carries, averaging 4.6 yards.

Lacy tends to finish strong. McCarthy in part thinks more production will come about from more opportunities.

"No. 1, we're not running enough plays," McCarthy said. "We need more attempts at the plate. Sixty plays a game, that's not what we're looking for."

McCarthy likes the run-pass balance, but would also like more volume. Running 70-plus plays is more like it.

Here's where the injury bug has played a role, though, beyond Lacy. The Packers' best deep threat, Jordy Nelson, was lost for the year during the preseason with a torn right ACL.

Fleury helps Penguins hold down Caps

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With Sidney Crosby and the rest of the Pittsburgh Penguins' skaters off to a low-scoring start to the season, goalie Marc-Andre Fleury is carrying the club.

Fleury made 33 saves, and Phil Kessel scored the go-ahead goal off Evgeni Malkin's pass less than 2 minutes after Beau Bennett tied it in the third period, leading Pittsburgh past Alex Ovechkin and the Washington Capitals 3-1 on Wednesday night.

"'Flower,' was big when he had to be," Penguins coach Mike Johnston said, using Fleury's nickname.

Never bigger than in the second period, when the Penguins were outshot 14-4.

"The more shots he sees, the better he plays," said Bennett, who returned after missing five games while injured. "We can't do that every night, but he was definitely our best player tonight and kept us in it, even when they had those flurries in the second period."

Fleury has started every game this season, and after opening with three losses, the Penguins have won five of their past six.

They also ended the Capitals' five-game winning streak.

After a pair of scoreless periods and superb play by both goalies, Capitals center Evgeny Kuznetsov put the hosts ahead about 1½ minutes into the third, when his wrist shot deflected off the left skate of Penguins defenseman Rob Scuderi and past Fleury.

"Our guy scored," Fleury said with a chuckle, "so that doesn't count."

Even Washington coach Barry Trotz couldn't help but concede it was "a little bit of a fortunate goal."

And then he lamented that the "next shift was huge."

That's because all of 24 seconds later, it was tied, thanks to Bennett. His initial shot was blocked by Braden Holtby, but Bennett put in the rebound. Soon after, Malkin sent the puck in front of the goal and through defenseman Karl Alzner's legs to Kessel for his fourth goal. In Pittsburgh's previous game, Kessel scored the winner 41 seconds into overtime to beat Nashville 2-1.

On Wednesday, Nick Bonino added an empty-net goal with less than 2 minutes left.

Fleury's save count included a stop on Ovechkin on a rush with Kuznetsov with 5½ minutes remaining. Neither Ovechkin nor Crosby — who has only one goal and two assists this season, all in the same game — registered a point.

Pittsburgh entered the game with a grand total of 13 goals, the second-lowest total in the entire NHL. And their power play has been the NHL's worst, now 2 for 31 this season.

Thanks to overlapping penalties on Washington's Chandler Stephenson and Brooks Orpik, the Penguins had 105 seconds of 5-on-3 time in the first period. But not only did they fail to score, they only managed to put two shots on net during that two-man advantage.

Then, 4 seconds after the game was

back at even-strength, Alzner was sent off for high-sticking. When a game official went over to get him off the bench and make him head across the ice to the penalty box, Alzner looked up incredulously and asked, "High stick?"

Senators 5, Flames 4 (SO): Mika Zibanejad scored the shootout winner to give Ottawa its first home win of the season.

Zack Smith, Bobby Ryan, Kyle Turris and Jean-Gabriel Pageau scored in regulation for the Senators, who snapped a four-game losing streak (0-2-2). Ottawa was also 0-2-2 at home. Craig Anderson made 34 saves through overtime.

Dougie Hamilton, Joe Colborne, Kris Russell and Sam Bennett scored for the Flames, who have now lost three straight (0-2-1). Jonas Hiller allowed four goals on 18 shots before leaving the game in the third with an injury. Joni Orto stopped all five shots he faced in relief.

Hiller was run into by Ryan in a crazy third period that featured five goals and two lead changes.

Predators 2, Sharks 1: Eric Nystrom scored early, Calle Jarnkrok scored late and Nashville beat host San Jose.

Pekka Rinne stopped 20 of 21 shots for the win. He had lost four of his previous five games against the Sharks.

The Predators rebounded from an overtime loss against Pittsburgh on Saturday.

Joe Pavelski scored for the Sharks, who have lost four of five since opening the season with four wins. Martin Jones had 22 saves.