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Foreign policy dominates Republican debate

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Tough talk on foreign policy and calls for a more muscular military carried the night during the second GOP presidential debate Wednesday.

Mike Huckabee, the former governor turned TV commentator, summed up the passionate but mostly unspecific positions on the armed services with a description of the United States at the end of his presidency: “We would have the most incredible, well-trained, well-equipped, well-prepared military in the history of mankind.”

Front-runner Donald Trump mentioned military buildup and caring for veterans during his introduction. Sen. Marco Rubio twice said the military has been “eviscerated.” None, however, offered a way to abandon automatic budget cuts, or sequestration, which the brass

says is responsible for planned cuts throughout the military.

Former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina was a stand-out at the debate for her tangles with Trump, but she also went further than any other Republican hopeful in proposing some lofty goals for the services, including a beefed-up Army and Marine Corps.

“We need to reform the Department of Defense, we need as well to invest in our military technology, and we need to care for our veterans so 307,000 aren’t dying waiting for health care,” Fiorina said.

Fiorina proposed the Army have 50 combat brigades, a major increase. The Army announced two years ago it would cut headquarters units but keep its combat capability by moving from 45 to 33 brigades, which retired Gen. Ray Odierno had described as “increasing our tooth-to-tail” ratio.

The Marine Corps also would get a significant boost

under a Fiorina presidency, increasing to 36 battalions. The service is pursuing a goal of 24 battalions after exiting the Afghanistan War.

Fiorina backed the Navy plan to increase from 273 deployable warships to 300 by the end of the decade, but she floated the possibility of up to 350 ships — which is unlikely.

Other candidates focused on the world no longer grasping that fact.

Ben Carson, who has been polling in the No. 2 slot just behind Trump, called out the capabilities and shortcomings of the individual services in Wednesday’s debate.

“There is no question that a lot of these problems that we have been talking about in terms of the international situation is because we are weak,” Carson said. “It is because our Navy is so small. It is because our Air Force is incapable of doing the same things that it

did a few years ago.”

He held his strongest criticism for the Marine Corps.

“It’s because our Marine Corps is not ready to be deployed,” said Carson, in a comment that likely led to Marines around the world clenching fists and gritting teeth.

The candidates also left out any debate on how to pay for the increased military forces.

The White House, the Pentagon and Congress are wrestling over the 2016 defense budget and ballooning personnel costs. Policy debates are focused on how to reduce runaway health care expenses, to reform retirement pay and to rein in troop benefits such as commissaries.

Jeb Bush, a former Florida governor and brother of former President George W. Bush, was the only candidate to call for an end to sequestration as part of his calls for a stronger military.

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DOD: A continuing resolution would be ‘disastrous’

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon is counting on Congress averting a government shutdown when the new fiscal year starts on Oct. 1, but the Defense Department’s No. 2 civilian is not ruling out the possibility of a “disastrous” continuing resolution to fund the military.

Deputy Defense Secretary Robert Work said Tuesday the DOD is resigned to at least beginning fiscal 2016 under a short-term continuing resolution that will likely extend until December, when officials hope Congress and the White House will reach a bipartisan budget deal to raise the spending caps.

But Work, who effectively

serves as the Pentagon’s chief operating officer, is also girding for the possibility that the two parties settle instead for a continuing resolution that extends throughout the fiscal year.

That would put the Defense Department in unfamiliar — and uncomfortable — territory.

For the last several years, the Pentagon has started October under a continuing resolution. But officials have always eventually gotten their budget, even if it has taken months.

Work, a veteran of many of the Obama administration’s past budget battles, says a yearlong continuing resolution would be disastrous and exacerbate an already difficult budget situation.

Continuing resolutions can wreak havoc on an agency’s funding because the money does not match the department’s current spending needs.

For the Pentagon, which consumes nearly half of all federal discretionary spending, stopgap spending measures also block new-start weapons and construction projects, affect multi-year procurement programs and cast doubt on funding levels for the next fiscal year.

If the Pentagon operates under a continuing resolution for the entire fiscal year, Work said he is hopeful — but not confident — that lawmakers will pack the continuing resolution with “anomalies” to give the de-

partment at least some ability to carry out its plans for 2016.

The DOD drafted a list of requested anomalies, which includes keeping on schedule an “urgently needed” 15-ton bomb being designed with the capability to destroy Iran’s nuclear facilities. Defense officials also are seeking continuing resolution language to allow them to continue, as planned, everything from shipbuilding to space procurement programs and to begin new projects and expand others “without delay.”

In submitting its budget request for fiscal 2016, the Pentagon opted to blow past mandated spending caps by some \$35 billion.

Officials: Rosy reports on war didn't alter views

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Whether or not the U.S. Central Command was sugarcoating intelligence to create the appearance of progress in the fight against Islamic State militants, the command's upbeat reports didn't manage to convince the rest of the intelligence community, current and former officials say.

The Pentagon's inspector general is investigating allegations that Central Command's top intelligence officials pressured analysts to discard parts of their work product that reflected poorly on the war effort in Iraq and Syria, resulting in flawed assessments that overstated American progress.

But the allegedly purposeful editing did not affect separate intelligence reporting by the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency and other agencies, and therefore did not undermine the government-wide intelligence assessment that the war is at a stalemate, the officials added. The CIA and other agencies have concluded that the Islamic State organization has been able to replenish its dead with a steady influx of foreign fighters and has not lost significant amounts of territory.

Still, the potential intelligence puffery may have influenced comments by certain key figures, say current and former officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment. For example, John Allen, the Obama administration's special envoy to the global coalition against the Islamic State, said in July that the Islamic State is "losing."

A former Central Command official confirmed a report by the Daily Beast website that more than 50 intelligence analysts had complained that their conclusions were undercut.

Army lays out case vs. Bergdahl

BY NANCY MONTGOMERY
Stars and Stripes

SAN ANTONIO — An Army prosecutor Thursday laid out the government's case against Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, saying he deserted his post in eastern Afghanistan with "deliberate and knowing disregard for the consequences of his actions" and endangered other troops who had to search for him.

Bergdahl left — "snuck off," according to Maj. Margaret Kurz on the first day of his Article 32 hearing — to hike 30 miles to a larger base, FOB Sharana, to report what he said was misconduct to the commanding general there.

After he disappeared, Kurz said, "for 45 days, the only operations in Paktika province was to find the accused."

Bergdahl, 29, sat calmly during the proceeding at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, flanked by his attorney Eugene Fidell and two Army defense lawyers. There has been no announcement of whether he will testify. He is charged with desertion with intent to shirk hazardous or

important duty, which carries a maximum penalty of five years, and misbehavior before the enemy, which carries a possible life sentence.

According to testimony Thursday from his former platoon commander, Capt. John Billings, Bergdahl was a stellar soldier before he disappeared in the early morning hours of June 30, 2009. "A great soldier from all accounts," he testified. "Always did everything he was asked to do. Never complained. No issues."

His disappearance, Billings said, came as a shock that quickly became a burden. The operations tempo increased significantly, he said, with less planning and fewer safeguards, all seeking Bergdahl, who had been captured by the Taliban-associated Haqqani network. He was held for five years until a controversial Obama administration prisoner exchange freed him.

Soon after the disappearance, Billings said he took a nine-man foot patrol beyond the wire for 19 days to look for Bergdahl in searing heat.

Defense lawyer Lt. Col. Franklin Rosenblatt told Billings that many people believed the search for Bergdahl resulted in the deaths of six or seven soldiers and asked whether that were true.

"None of my guys died looking for Sgt. Bergdahl," Billings said.

Rosenblatt also revealed that Bergdahl, who had once sought to join the Foreign Legion, had been discharged from the Coast Guard for psychological issues before he was allowed to enlist in the Army in 2008, when standards had been lowered to field enough troops, and had also been found by an Army medical board to be suffering from a severe mental disease or defect.

The probable cause hearing, held in a basement conference room on the base and attended by scores of media from the U.S. and beyond, will result in a report that will be used to decide whether the case is strong enough to proceed to court-martial or should be resolved in another manner.

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Fatal Utah floods show canyon dangers

Associated Press

ZION NATIONAL PARK, Utah — The same unique geological quirks that lure people to the majestic slot canyons of the desert Southwest also make them deadly.

The curved, narrow sandstone walls glow in the sun with a cathedral-like light. When it rains, however, they can fill

with raging rainwater in an instant, leaving people with no escape.

That's exactly what happened Monday evening to a group of seven hikers from California and Nevada who were trapped by floodwaters in the popular Keyhole Canyon in Zion National Park. The canyon is as narrow as a window in some

spots and several hundred feet deep.

Six have turned up dead. One is still missing.

"That little bit of rain can turn what was a very comfortable daylong excursion into a horror story, literally in a split second," said Colorado-based canyoneering expert Steve Allen.

8.3-magnitude quake rattles northern Chile

ILLAPEL, Chile — Thousands of residents of this small city in northern Chile were sleeping outside Thursday after a powerful earthquake destroyed their homes, forced

more than 1 million to evacuate and killed at least eight people in the quake-prone South American nation.

Several coastal towns were flooded from small tsunami waves set off by late Wednesday's quake, which shook the Earth so strongly that rumbles

were felt across South America.

The magnitude-8.3 quake lasted for three minutes, causing buildings to sway in the capital, Santiago, and prompting authorities to issue a tsunami warning for the Andean nation's entire Pacific coast.

From The Associated Press

SEC looks to move on after bad week

Associated Press

Trying to keep his Razorbacks focused after a stunning defeat, Arkansas coach Brett Bielema points to reigning national champion Ohio State's turnaround from an early season loss last year for encouragement.

Bielema just as easily could mention Alabama.

The Southeastern Conference, so mighty and strong a week ago with a record 10 teams in the Top 25, suddenly looks a lot less powerful after an ugly weekend.

Arkansas lost 16-12 to Toledo at home, Auburn needed overtime at home to beat Football Championship Subdivision program Jacksonville State and Tennessee blew a 17-point lead and lost in overtime to Oklahoma. Falling out of the Top 25 were Arkansas, Tennessee and Mississippi State, which lost to LSU.

Ah, but that was last week.

Divisional play cranks up this week with No. 18 Auburn at No. 13 LSU and No. 15 Ole Miss at No. 2 Alabama, starting the SEC's annual war of attrition in earnest. Now the league that put a team in the national championship game every year from 2006-13 has to work a bit harder to ensure someone stands among the nation's final four at season's end.

Tennessee coach Butch Jones said nothing has changed, although it's a little easier for him to say that since his Vols at least lost in double overtime to a Top 20 team. Tennessee's SEC debut comes Sept. 26 at Florida.

"The teams that can manage the natural adversities that a long football season brings about are the ones that go to bowl games and win championships," Jones said. "Everyone wants to push that red panic button across the country when something happens with their team."

Auburn and Arkansas might not have panicked last weekend, but neither game was pretty. Ranked sixth nationally, Auburn had fans scrambling to figure out where Jacksonville State is before the Tigers finally escaped 27-20 in overtime. Auburn, which had been ranked sixth, fell 12 spots in the Top 25.

Wide receiver Melvin Ray said Auburn isn't worried about suddenly facing diminished expectations or criticism.

"You have to tune it out because at the end of the day we're 2-0," Ray said. "If we just keep winning, what we did no matter how we won, it will still be a win. That's all that's going to matter."

That approach worked for Alabama after the Crimson Tide lost 23-17 to Mississippi last season. Alabama simply won every other SEC game along with the league championship to earn the No. 1 seed in the national playoffs. Winning three of the past six national championships has helped prep the Tide to be ready every week.

"That's the nature of the beast when you play at Alabama," Tide center Ryan Kelly said. "Now we're starting SEC play. So every week is going to be a test. ... Every time you get into SEC play, it feels like it gets ramped up

a little bit."

Especially Saturday night when Alabama gets its rematch with Ole Miss. Nobody in the Football Bowl Subdivision has scored more than Ole Miss this season, and coach Hugh Freeze says he really doesn't know if his Rebels are ready for SEC play.

"I believe we can win," Freeze said. "I also know that you can lose these games because you are playing really good teams. That's why I don't make too much of one game, win or lose."

The SEC East also features a pair of conference games this week with Florida at Kentucky and No. 7 Georgia hosting South Carolina, although that matchup lost some of its luster when the Gamecocks lost quarterback Connor Mitch and fell to Kentucky last week.

Arkansas, which faces Texas Tech on Saturday, must wait another week before looking for some redemption on the SEC road. Arkansas was considered a fringe SEC hopeful after shutting out LSU and Mississippi to finish last season, but losing to a Mid-American Conference team damaged that perception. Bielema not only is pointing to Ohio State's rebound in 2014 but also is noting the Razorbacks themselves finished 7-6 with a late surge last year.

"We lost some games last year that could have taken your heart and soul and came back," Bielema said. "And hopefully we finish a lot better than that. But it's all around us. You've just got to grab it."

LSU eager to try pass rush on No. 18 Auburn

Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — LSU's hard-charging pass rushers are eager to see what they can do against a first-year starting quarterback.

If the 13th-ranked Tigers' performance against Mississippi State star Dak Prescott last weekend is any indication, Auburn's Jeremy Johnson could see his composure tested substantially more than it was in a pair of close victories over Louisville and Jacksonville State.

"We were pretty happy with the pass rush," said junior LSU defensive lineman Lewis Neal, who in his first career start recorded one of LSU's three sacks of Prescott on Saturday night. "But we missed a lot of sacks. We could have had seven or eight. There were more opportunities for us. We'll come out ten times better in the second game."

While Prescott ultimately amassed 335 yards passing in Mississippi State's 21-19 loss to LSU, he needed 52 attempts to reach that figure in a relatively one-dimensional performance for the usually dynamic quarterback.

Prescott, who was limited to nine yards on seven rushes, struggled to move the offense with anything but short passes.

His performance this season stood in sharp contrast to the tear he was on in Tiger Stadium a year ago, when the Bulldogs beat LSU 34-29. In that game, Prescott touched the ball 46 times and gained 373 yards — 268 passing and 105 rushing. This time, Prescott had 16 more touches (62) and 57 fewer yards (316).

LSU head coach Les Miles was quick to boast that his new defensive coordinator, Kevin Steele, held Prescott to a career-

low rushing total.

"He completed some passes, but our guys in the secondary kept everybody in front of them," Miles said.

Prescott had virtually no time to look deep down field. He had just one completion of more than 20 yards, which was a good sign for the Tigers' defensive front.

A year ago, Tigers defensive linemen had 10 sacks and 20 quarterback-hurries in 13 games. In addition to their three sacks last Saturday, they were credited with hurrying Prescott into incompletions six times.

Freshman defensive end Arden Key and sophomore defensive tackle Davon Godchaux each joined Neal in recording a sack apiece. Neal and Key both were credited with two quarterback-hurries. End Tashawn Bower and tackle Christian LaCouture each recorded one quarterback-hurry.

The expectations for the LSU defensive line have been elevated since the hiring of new assistant coach Ed Orgeron, whose reputation was built on his ability to develop college defensive linemen. One game into his time at LSU, the Tigers pass rush is on track to get better results.

"Coach 'O' gives us more freedom," said Bower, who also made his first career start last Saturday. "During the week, we have a real good tempo. He is a great teacher. He teaches (each player) differently because he knows people learn differently."

Key used his speed to sack Prescott from behind on just the second play of his college career.

Now comes LSU's first home game against Auburn, which whipped LSU 41-7 last season

Air Force presents new test for Spartans

Associated Press

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Michigan State's defense passed its first major test of the season, and now Mark Dantonio's Spartans face an entirely different type of challenge.

"You have to shift gears from going from an offense like Oregon to an offense like Air Force," Dantonio said. "A lot of different scenarios there involved with option football."

The fourth-ranked Spartans held off Oregon last weekend in one of the most anticipated games in Spartan Stadium history. Michigan State stopped the Ducks four times on fourth down, including once at the goal line, proving that the Spartans can still be a stingy bunch after losing defensive coordinator Pat Narduzzi. Now comes a major adjustment: Air Force and its multifaceted running game visits East Lansing this weekend.

"It's a lot different," linebacker Riley Bullough said Tuesday. "You've got different keys, different reads and different plays that you're going against. Completely different."

After Narduzzi left to take the head coaching job at Pittsburgh, Harlon Barnett and Mike Tressel became co-defensive coordinators. Both were with the staff previously, so there wasn't too much concern about continuity, but it was fair to wonder what the results would look like.

The Oregon game was a solid showing from Michigan State's defense. The Ducks finished with 432 yards offense, but after scoring a touchdown on the game's opening drive, Oregon's offense was shut out

until the fourth quarter.

The Ducks did score on a punt return in the third, and two fourth-quarter TDs kept the outcome in doubt, but the Spartans held on for a 31-28 victory.

Dantonio credited Barnett and Tressel with a blitz that forced Oregon into a fourth-and-long situation late.

"When you have success, your confidence grows. Not just as a player, but as a coach as well," Dantonio said. "I think that's important to recognize. So there's proof, there's proof. That's positive."

Air Force won its first two games this season and attempted only 18 passes total. The Falcons ran for 428 yards last week against San Jose State, with four players exceeding 75 yards on the ground.

The quarterback is crucial in any option system, and Air Force's Nate Romine was helped off the field after getting hit in the right knee during that 37-16 win over San Jose State.

"What they do, they do extremely well," Dantonio said. "They may have lost their quarterback, so they'll deal with that, but they'll have somebody who has played before in that situation. ... What they do from a formation standpoint, the variations of option football is text book. It's where people go to learn about option football. They go to Navy, they go to Georgia Tech, they go to Air Force."

The Michigan State staff anticipated how difficult it would be to prepare for Air Force. The Spartans were working on Air Force's system last month during fall camp — so they have some familiarity with it.



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Unsung TEs have big weekend

Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. — A big, dynamic tight end is a mismatch nightmare for NFL defenses.

Rob Gronkowski and Jimmy Graham are too quick for a linebacker and too big for a safety.

“When you have a tight end you can count on to catch the football, especially in the red zone, it’s huge,” Arizona Cardinals coach Bruce Arians said. “It gives the defense another guy to worry about. You have to pick who you are going to single cover and if you are going to double cover one of them.”

A new crop of sure-handed, athletic tight ends surfaced in a big way in Sunday’s season openers.

“It’s a special position,” Cincinnati coach Marvin Lewis said. “The way football is going, it seems like kids aren’t gravitating as much to running back, they’re going to receiver.”

Austin Seferian-Jenkins, Tyler Eifert and Darren Fells may not be familiar names around the league, but they soon could be.

Arizona safety Tyrann Mathieu, who stands 5-foot-9, is as good as anyone at defending the big guys, but says it’s a huge challenge.

“It’s tough to get around their bodies,” he said. “They’re just so good at boxing you out and keeping you from the flight of the football. You just have to play ball-hawking football and just be extra competitive.”

Seferian-Jenkins was a rare bright spot for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in their

42-14 loss to Tennessee. Slowed by injuries, the 2014 second-round pick out of Washington caught five passes for 110 yards. His two touchdowns matched his total for all of last season. His yards receiving in one game were almost half of his total of last year (221).

“I wasn’t here last year,” Tampa Bay offensive coordinator Dirk Koetter said, “but Austin looked like he was moving towards the type of player that we all want him to be.”

The Bengals expected big things from Eifert a year ago, but he injured his elbow in the opener and never played again. He emphatically showed he was back with his nine-reception, 104-yard performance in Cincinnati’s 33-13 win over Oakland on Sunday.

Perhaps no one has a more interesting story than Fells. The 6-foot-7, 281-pound Arizona tight end played basketball at Cal-Irvine, then spent five years playing hoops in Belgium, Finland and Argentina before deciding to switch to football.

Fells toiled on the Cardinals practice squad in 2013, then played in 10 games last season, catching just five passes for 71 yards.

“It was like trying to learn Chinese coming in here,” he said. “All the coaches were talking and I had no clue what they were talking about. Having to pick up the language first, then the playbook was second after that. It took a lot of time.”

Fells’ biggest challenge was learning to block. Catching came easier, thanks to all those years of basketball.

After a strong preseason, and with other tight ends struggling with injuries,

Fells won the starting job.

In Arizona’s 31-19 opening win over New Orleans, he caught four passes for 82 yards, the most yards receiving in game for a Cardinals tight end since 1989. With fellow tight end Jermaine Gresham delivering a crushing block that cleared two defenders out of the way, Fells gained 48 yards on one play. His fingertip catch of Carson Palmer’s 17-yard pass for a touchdown clinched the victory with 1:33 to play.

“He knew he had to step up and make plays,” Palmer said, “and to see him do what he did and exceed expectations was huge.”

Not unexpectedly, Gronkowski and fellow veteran tight ends Jared Cook and Heath Miller had big days.

So did Travis Kelce, who may not be a household name but probably should be. He had six catches for 106 yards and two scores in Kansas City’s 27-20 win over Houston. For Chiefs fans, his performance was not unexpected: Kelce led the Chiefs with 67 catches for 862 yards last season.

“It’s one of those things where I want to have all the eyes on myself, so other guys can shine when I’m on the field,” Kelce said. “Taking coverages, taking defenders away from other guys so they can get open. It’s going to be fun what we can really accomplish here.”

Lions’ duo combines for dud

Associated Press

ALLEN PARK, Mich. — Calvin Johnson was cloaked all game by the San Diego Chargers, whose game plan included trying to shut down the superstar with multiple defenders.

It worked and the Lions paid the price. Johnson had a career-low two receptions in a season-opening game, catching half of the four footballs thrown his way, and finished with just 39 yards receiving in a loss at San Diego.

“It felt like a light day for the lack of plays that we had more so than anything,” he said Wednesday.

Detroit had just 47 snaps — much fewer than San Diego’s 74 — as it blew a 21-3 lead in the second quarter in a 33-28 setback.

If there is a bit of good news for Johnson and the Lions (0-1) going into Sunday’s game at Minnesota (0-1), perhaps it is that Johnson feels fresh physically.

“I didn’t take hardly any punishment,” he said.

Matthew Stafford, meanwhile, shouldered some blame for failing to get Johnson the ball more.

“Everybody’s got answers for everything,” Lions coach Jim Caldwell said.

Stafford said he gets it.

“Anytime you lose a game, you’re going to get questions about why you lost and a guy like that only has two catches,” he said. “Totally understand it.”

Johnson and Stafford have shown what is possible, despite double-teaming coverage, in their six-plus seasons together that include two postseason appearances.

In 2012, Johnson set an NFL single-season record with 1,964 yards receiving and had a league-high 122 receptions. The three-time All-Pro also had an NFL-high 1,681 yards receiving in 2011.

“You have a great player like that you want to give him the ball as much as you can, there’s no question,” Stafford said. “Have I been guilty in my career of throwing it to him when some other guys in this league may not have? Yeah. But, I trust in him and understand that. But, at the same time we have a lot of play makers.”

Johnson’s surrounding cast includes receiver Golden Tate, who had career highs with 99 receptions and 1,331 yards receiving last year; second-year tight end Eric Ebron, who matched a personal best with four receptions at San Diego; and dual-threat running backs Ameer Abdullah and Joique Bell.

“It makes my job easier,” Stafford said.

Stafford’s tasks were made more difficult against the Chargers because he appeared to hurt his throwing arm. He was able to participate in all of Wednesday’s practice with what the team labeled a right-upper arm injury, which Johnson noticed during the game.

“You could see little grimaces and stuff like that, but he’s fine,” Johnson said. “He’s fought through worse things in his career, so I have no doubt that he’ll be ready to go.”

Stafford’s arm was covered by a protective sleeve on Wednesday, but he didn’t sound concerned about the ailment.

“I feel good,” he said. “I’m ready to go.”

If Johnson goes long stretches of a game without getting targeted, he plans to stay cool and collected while he communicates on the sideline with teammates and coaches.

“I’m not going to be over there berating them on the sideline or anything like that,” he said.

Yankees stay 3 back in AL East

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Two youngsters sent the New York Yankees to a big win in the pressure of a pennant race.

Prized rookie Luis Severino rebounded from his worst start, Greg Bird homered and drove in two runs, and the Yankees beat the Tampa Bay Rays 3-1 on Wednesday night to keep pace in the AL playoff chase.

The second-place Yankees, who lead the wild-card standings, took two of three from Tampa Bay and stayed three games behind Toronto in the AL East.

“It’s great to help the team win,” Severino said.

Severino (4-3) allowed one run and six hits in 5²/₃ innings. The right-hander gave up a career-high six earned runs over 2¹/₃ innings in an 11-5 loss Friday to Toronto.

“He bounced back extremely well, which is good to see,” Yankees manager Joe Girardi said.

After Bird had a second-inning RBI double, Chase Headley put the Yankees up 2-0 with a run-scoring single in the sixth. Bird, also a rookie, made it 3-1 on his ninth-inning shot.

Rangers 14, Astros 3: Prince Fielder hit two of Texas’ season-high five homers and drove in five runs in the AL West-leading Rangers’ victory over visiting Houston.

Blue Jays 9, Braves 1: David Price allowed one run in seven innings, Russell Martin hit a homer and drove in four runs, and visiting Toronto beat Shelby Miller and Atlanta to protect its AL East lead.

Price (16-5) gave up six hits and had nine strikeouts. He improved to 7-1 since coming to Toronto in a trade with Detroit,

and lowered his ERA to 2.42.

Cubs 3, Pirates (12): Pinch-runner Quintin Berry raced home on Anthony Rizzo’s sacrifice fly in the top of the 12th inning, and Chicago slipped by host Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh rallied to tie it in the eighth against Jake Arrieta, spoiling his bid to become the first 20-game winner in the majors this season. Arrieta allowed two runs, one earned, and six hits, but failed to pick up a win for the first time since Aug. 4.

Marlins 6, Mets 0: Adam Conley slowed New York’s pursuit of the National League East title with a career-high seven innings for streaking host Miami.

Nationals 12, Phillies 2: Jayson Werth hit two homers, Bryce Harper also went deep and Gio Gonzalez tied his career high with 12 strikeouts in Washington’s victory over host Philadelphia.

Dodgers 2, Rockies 0: Alex Wood pitched one-hit ball for eight innings on only 78 pitches and retired his last 19 batters, leading Los Angeles past visiting Colorado.

Giants 5, Reds 3: Giants pitcher Jake Peavy homered through the low-hovering mist for his first long ball in more than nine years, leading host San Francisco past Cincinnati.

Cardinals 5, Brewers 4: Tommy Pham homered twice and tripled, Matt Carpenter added a solo shot and Jaime Garcia went 6¹/₃ innings in St. Louis’ 5-4 victory over host Milwaukee.

Carpenter led off the third with his 22nd home run and 74th RBI of the season, both team highs.

Red Sox 10, Orioles 1: Dustin Pedroia homered twice and had a season-high

five RBIs to back a dominant pitching performance by rookie Henry Owens in Boston’s victory over host Baltimore.

David Ortiz also went deep for the last-place Red Sox, his 35th homer of the season and 501st overall.

Indians 5, Royals 1: Francisco Lindor was 3-for-4 with a home run and four RBIs to lead host Cleveland past Kansas City.

Lindor had a solo homer in the first for his 100th hit since being called up from the minors June 14, added a two-run single in the second and an RBI single in the fourth.

Tigers 7, Twins 4 (12): Ian Kinsler’s two-out RBI single preceded a two-run homer by J.D. Martinez in the top of the 12th inning, pushing Detroit past host Minnesota in a game delayed by rain.

Mariners 3, Angels 1: Jesus Montero continued to get the best of Los Angeles’ Jered Weaver, hitting a three-run homer to help Seattle hand the visiting Angels their third loss in four games.

Padres 4, Diamondbacks 3: Matt Kemp hit a three-run homer to back Andrew Cashner and San Diego beat host Arizona.

Cashner (6-15) allowed seven hits and three runs, striking out six and walking two in seven innings. He had lost 13 of his previous 17 decisions since April 24.

White Sox 9, Athletics 4: Mike Olt hit a two-run homer and Melky Cabrera had a two-run double in a six-run fourth inning to help host Chicago beat Oakland.

Jose Abreu hit his 29th home run, and Carlos Sanchez also connected for the White Sox.