

82nd ‘devils’ make ‘Valiant Strike’

By Spc. Marie Schult
CJTF-180 PAO

KANDAHAR AIR FIELD, Afghanistan — Operation Valiant Strike kicked off in the pre-dawn hours Thursday when members of the 82nd Airborne Division’s 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Fort Bragg, N.C. air assaulted into the Sami Ghar Mountains.

“Don’t let them bring it to you, you bring it to them,” said Lt. Col. Charlie Flynn, commander, 2nd Battalion, 504th PIR “White Devils,” referring to the enemy in a pep talk to his soldiers. The troopers then boarded a fleet of Chinooks that dropped them off in various locations in eastern Kandahar province.

The purpose of Valiant Strike is to clear and search villages, gather intelligence, search for weapons caches and seek out remaining al-Qaida and Taliban forces, according to 1st Sgt. Brian Severino, Company B, 3rd Bn., 504th PIR “Blue Devils.”

By the end of the third day the long days, sleepless nights, and sore feet paid off with four people, more than 50 rifles, two heavy machine guns, 170, 107mm rockets, 400, 82mm



Photo by Darren McColleston, Getty Images

Two soldiers of the 82nd Airborne Division search a house Thursday as part of Operation Valiant Strike in Laday Village in the Sami Ghar Mountains in Maruf District.

mortar rounds under control, according to Combined Joint Task Force-180 spokesman Col. Roger King.

During the first day of Valiant Strike, B Co. troops spent a greater part of the day searching the village of Laday.

The company commander, a civil affairs specialist and some soldiers locate village elders and ask them to tell the heads of households to declare any weapons they have.

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Sgt. Gwendolyn McFadden, non-commissioned officer in charge, 32nd Blood Supply Unit, Fort Bragg, N.C. organizes the blood in the cooler here.

Iced blood provides life saving support

Story and photo by
Pfc. Debralee P. Crankshaw
11th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan —Americans, Afghans and coalition forces here and forward need not worry about receiving blood if they are injured.

The 32nd Blood Supply Unit, Fort Bragg, N.C. is responsible for shipping blood to forward units in northern Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Kurdistan. The BSU also works with the units they supply to ensure they know the proper procedures and storage of the blood.

The blood is received from Armed Service

Blood Processing Lab, McGuire Force Air Base, N.J. The blood must be iced so it will stay a constant temperature. When the blood arrives, the unit splits it up and sends it to the forward units.

The BSU supplies eight units including the 48th Combat Support Hospital here, forward medical companies and forward surgical teams.

The amount of blood a unit has is determined by their storage capacity and the operation tempo.

The CSH usually has between 50 and 70 units while forward teams usually have 25-35

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World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



A soldier with the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division patrols in a dense sandstorm Tuesday.

Battle may be biggest so far

CNN — U.S. forces killed between 150 to 200 Iraqis Tuesday in a massive battle — possibly the biggest firefight of the war so far — in the Euphrates Valley east of Najaf, Pentagon officials said.

According to reports, the fighting about 95 miles south of Baghdad pitted elements of the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division against Iraqi foot soldiers firing rocket-propelled grenades and other weapons.

Officials said the division's 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry encountered a large Iraqi ground force, but a sandstorm in the region prevented troops from calling in air cover.

Pentagon officials said there were no immediate reports of U.S. casualties.

It was not clear what Iraqi division was involved in the fighting, officials said. It is known that some elements of the Republican Guard's crack Medina Division were near Karbala, about 40 miles closer to Baghdad.

U.S.: Marines seize hospital hiding Iraqi soldiers

NASIRIYA, Iraq — U.S. Marines on Tuesday seized a hospital in Nasiriya and captured nearly 170 Iraqi soldiers who had been staging military operations from the facility, U.S. authorities said.

No civilians were in the facility, which U.S. Central Command said was "clearly marked as a hospital by a flag with a Red Crescent." Marines confiscated more than 200 weapons, more than 3,000 chemical suits with masks and Iraqi military uniforms in the hospital, and found a T-55 tank in the hospital compound, Central Command said.

Marines had been fired at from the hospital a day earlier.

No civilians were injured in the operation and none were found in the hospital when Marines from Task Force Tarawa of the 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines went in, according to Central Command. Before they moved in, Marines used loudspeakers to instruct any medical personnel or patients inside to evacuate, authorities said.

Civil uprising reported in Basra

LONDON — British troops and tanks are maneuvering around the city of Basra, where British commanders said it appeared a popular uprising was under way.

Two British soldiers were killed by friendly fire Tuesday night outside the southern Iraqi city, British military officials said. No further details were released.

Iraqi Information Minister Mohamed Saeed al Sahaf told the Arabic television network Al Jazeera that there was no revolt in Basra.

But Richard Gaisford, a reporter in the southern city for the British television network ITN, said British gunners had fired at Iraqi troops who attempted to suppress the revolt with mortar fire.

Journalists Juliet Bremner and Romilly Weeks said British forces were preparing to enter the city if they determined such a move would be useful.

They said British commanders had seen groups of 40 to 50 citizens at various locations on the streets.

Rumsfeld: 'Brutal' battles may lie ahead in Iraq

WASHINGTON — The military campaign to topple the regime of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein is on target, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said Tuesday, but he warned that the most "brutal" battles may lie ahead as coalition forces advance on Baghdad.

"This campaign could well grow more dangerous in the coming days and weeks as coalition forces close on Baghdad and the regime is faced with its certain death," Rumsfeld said. "But the outcome is as-

sured."

Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, described the forces as "on the doorstep of Baghdad."

"They'll have a lot more to be concerned about shortly," Myers said of Iraqi military leaders.

British deaths at Basra

DOHA, Qatar — Two British soldiers have been killed in a friendly fire incident around the southern Iraqi city of Basra.

Their tank was fired on by another British Challenger tank, British military officials told CNN.

The soldiers were from the Queen's Royal Lancers, part of the First Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Battle Group, a British military spokesman in Qatar said.

The incident occurred "during a period of multiple engagements from enemy forces on the outskirts of Basra," a British military statement said.

Intelligence suggests Baghdad poses U.S. challenges

WASHINGTON — U.S. forces face "a formidable challenge" as they try to take down Iraqi forces deployed in "layers" in and around Baghdad, U.S. intelligence and military officials said Tuesday.

The linchpin is made up of three armored Republican Guard divisions, numbering — before the U.S.-led coalition started bombing those forces — around 8,000 to 10,000 each, U.S. officials said.

"We are degrading those forces now," an official said.

In addition, close to the center of the city are the Special Republican Guard — a force U.S. officials said numbers around 5,000 men, but some outside experts estimate at as many as 15,000.

Intelligence reports suggest the Republican Guard may have been ordered to use chemical weapons against coalition forces if they cross a "red line" drawn around Baghdad, U.S. officials said. There are also reports some Republican Guard units have been issued artillery shells containing chemical agents.

Dignity, respect given to the fallen

Story and photo by
Pvt. 2 Terri Rorke
11th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – Like the tolling of a bell, the phone rings. It is another call informing the 54th Quartermaster Company, Mortuary Affairs Center, Fort Lee, Va., to be ready.

They are ready to perform a job that displays the true meaning of serving one's country. They are volunteers who ensure families have last moments with their loved ones. Surrounding themselves with misfortune, sorrow and mourning, the mortuary affairs specialists perform their duty willingly.

The unit is on standby here 24 hours a day. But, as soon as they receive a call, they are on mission.

Once alerted, they pick up the remains and annotate the casualty's personal effects that are on the person at the time of death.

They then prepare the deceased for transfer to an American flag-clad case and send it home.

The only active-duty mortuary affairs unit in the Army said their goal is to make sure the remains of the fallen are sent back to their families within 72 hours after they have possession of the remains.

"We make sure these soldiers get treated with dignity and respect," said Pfc. William Carson, mortuary affairs specialist. "They were fighting for their country, so they deserve it," he added.

"That could be me," said Spc. Angela Rollins, mortuary specialist. Even though she may not have known them, she said it some-



Pfc. William Carson, left, and Pfc. Ed Sandmeier, both from the 54th Quartermaster Co., Mortuary Affairs Center, Fort Lee, Va., annotate personal effects of casualties here Monday. This is part of the recovery process that helps identify the person.

times makes her job depressing to take care of fellow servicemembers.

The six-person team doesn't get a lot of recognition for the job they do.

"People don't understand that we are the ones who send their loved ones home. It takes a brave person to do this job. It is very important, (but) no one wants to do it," said Rollins.

Staff Sgt. James L. Fair, non-commissioned officer in charge of the unit said he enlisted as an infantryman and was re-classed in 1996 as a mortuary affairs specialist for the needs of the Army.

"The first thing I did was pray," said Fair. Never thinking he would end up doing

this, he said it turned out to be a virtue. The sergeant said it was a reality check. Once he realized it was to for the families back home, it seemed worthwhile. "I love my job. It brings you down to reality."

But, "each case gets harder not easier," said Fair. After being deployed here for more than four months, they recently had their twenty-first incident—the helicopter crash Sunday.

The unit not only takes care of American servicemembers, but also coalition and enemy forces.

Fair said they make sure they send the remains back to the family, whomever it may be.

Mailing Antique Weapons

Anyone wishing to send an antique firearm home needs to understand the rules before mailing it.

The Domestic Mail Manual 57, section C024.2.0, states "Antique Firearms sent as curios or museum pieces may be accepted for mailing." The weapons must include proper documentation signed by U.S. Customs officials.

Without the signed documents, the mailer is sending the weapon at their own risk, allowing U.S. Customs officials to confiscate the

weapon.

Since each weapon is unique, each requires certain forms. It is the responsibility of the individual to obtain all the required forms for their particular weapon before shipment or it will prevent the mailer from making a claim against the United States Postal Service, if the weapon is confiscated.

According to DMM 57, section C024.4.0,



"postmasters are not authorized to give opinions on the legality of any shipment of rifles or shotguns."

Post office personnel are not trained Customs officials, and will not question anyone mailing home what looks like an antique weapon. It is not the responsibility of the post office to ensure you have all the required documents.

To import a firearm, visit the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Web site at www.atf.tre.as.gov and download the ATF F-6 Part II (5330.3B) application form.

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units, and some only have 10 units.

The BSU receives more blood type O negative because it can be given to everyone.

The blood is divided into two different categories, red blood cells and fresh frozen plasma.

The red blood cells are used for major trauma when the body needs extra cells to carry oxygen to the body. Plasma is used when someone has lost clotting factors from serious blood loss. The plasma allows their blood to clot and stop bleeding.

Red blood cells must be stored between 33.8 and 42.8 degrees Fahrenheit and shipped in wet ice in temperatures between 33.8 and 50 degrees. The cells must be at this temperature so they don't freeze and break apart or get too hot and spoil.

The plasma is stored and shipped at -0.4 degrees in dry ice, which keeps blood colder than wet ice. The dry ice can keep the plasma at -0.4 degrees for up to 72 hours depending on the ambient temperature.

The plasma has no cells so they cannot freeze, however the clotting factors effectiveness will diminish if the blood begins to thaw.

The plasma is frozen within six hours of being drawn and must be used within 24 hours after being thawed.

According to Capt. Adam Peters, officer in charge, 32nd, the most difficult part of the unit is logistics. Because of the weather, flights for sending blood forward are hard to coordinate.

If the blood supply runs out during an emergency, the supply unit may collect blood from soldiers, but only in an emergency situation.

"There is a lab in the States that tests the blood to ensure it is good quality," said Peters.

The BSU is essential because they know how to handle the blood.

"It is important to have blood supply units because they have specialized personnel trained in handling and shipping the blood," said Peters. "As lab (technicians) they understand the importance of strict control."

Bagram Air Base MWR presents

1530Z at the MWR building: "Die Hard 2."
John McClane is forced to battle mercenaries who seize control of an airport's communications and threaten to cause plane crashes if their demands are not met.



Tomorrow's movie will be "Die Hard: With a Vengeance."

Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	Today	Thursday
Bagram:	Mostly cloudy H: 64F L: 43F	Scattered showers H: 66F L: 43F
Kandahar:	Dusty H: 79F L: 52F	Dusty H: 75F L: 55F
Kabul:	Mostly cloudy H: 68F L: 43F	Scattered showers H: 66F L: 43F
Uzbekistan:	Mostly cloudy H: 74F L: 43F	Scattered showers H: 65F L: 39F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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CJTF-180 Commander —

Lt. Gen. Dan McNeill

CJTF-180 Command Sergeant Major —

Command Sgt. Maj. Steven R. England

Public Affairs Officer —

Col. Roger King

Public Affairs Sergeant Major —

Master Sgt. Kelly Tyler

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Commander — Maj. William Mott

NCOIC — Staff Sgt. Christina Bhatti

Editor — Sgt. W. Cullen James

Journalists — Pfc. Christina Carde,

Pfc. Debralee P. Crankshaw, Pvt. 2 Terri Rorke

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STRIKE, from Page 1

Through a translator they explain that women should be separated, in order to be searched by female searchers; and the houses will be searched for contraband.

“The ones they don’t identify we are taking away from them,” said Severino, in reference to hidden weapons sometimes found in the compounds.

In Laday, a village consisting of four small compounds, several goats, donkeys and large dogs, several weapons were found hidden in manure piles and haystacks, including two AK47’s with bags of ammunition and a dirty syringe.

Akter Mohammed a 40-year-old shepherd said the reason they did not declare their weapons was because they were scared.

“We don’t know because we are mountain people,” he said. “We need the guns to protect our sheep from the wolves, or they will eat my sheep.”

Severino explained to the villagers that they do not need AK47’s to protect their sheep against wolves.

Friday morning B Co. air assaulted into a riverbed near the village of Narai, a large village with about 100 families. It was one of the wealthiest villages encountered, according to the village elders, with two wells and its own school building.

“For the most part these are the most friendly villagers we’ve found,” said Severino, “they actually came out to offer assistance to us.”

Shahghsy, a 50-year-old village elder said his people know the Americans come as friends.

“The Americans come to make peace in Afghanistan,” he said. “When the Russians were here the Americans helped push the Russians out.”

Although the village was friendly and the villagers brought pot after pot of tea out to thirsty soldiers, some houses were found to have more than simple, single shot, home security weapons.

Severino said they found some RPG’s and mines. The man of the house said his brother is a militiaman and he left these things here the last time he was in town, but failed to tell the man who owned the house.

“This is one less rocket that might be

fired against us and coalition forces,” said Flynn.

While the Blue Devils were finding RPG’s in the village of Narai, further down the riverbed, the White Devils of 2-505 were finding weapons, in the village of Luikely.

1st Sgt. Craig Pinkley, B Co., 2-504, and his men found ammunition, two antipersonnel mines, training rounds, Taliban recruiting documents, Taliban pamphlets, military uniforms, sleeping bags and bandoliers after the two men in the compound said they had nothing to claim.

“Its not a stack of RPG’s like we usually find but it’s pretty significant,” said Capt. Andrew Zieseniss, company commander, “the stuff is pretty new.”

The two men in the compound were taken under control and sent back to Kandahar Air Field the next day for questioning.

Motivated by their find, the entire company set out to find a compound with suspected “bad guys,” before the sun was up Saturday morning.

After walking a grueling seven kilometers with all their gear on their backs the suspected “bad guys” welcomed them in with open arms.

Pinkley said one of the best parts of participating in operations like Valiant Strike is

finding large weapons caches and taking them out of circulation.

As excited and pleased as everyone was with the find, Pinkley said there are still some difficulties.

“The difficult part is not knowing who’s who,” he said. “Sometimes they say they’re Afghan Militia Force and they’re not, they say they work for the government but they don’t, so it gets confusing.”

The redeeming part of not knowing who’s who is finding bad guys, said Pinkley.

It also motivates the soldiers when caches are found.

“It’s a good mission, we have these guys on the run,” said Spc. Dwayne Bailey, a medic with the White Devils.

“We’ve captured quite a few guys and the rest are on the run so they don’t have any time to plan any missions, that’s the best part,” said Bailey.

Pinkley said his men need the motivation in order to get through the next few weeks.

Even though Operation Valiant Strike is not finished Pinkley said, so far, the mission has been going well and he is positive about its future.

“It’s a hard job, the guys feel as if they’ve accomplished something though,” said Pinkley.



Photo by Darren McColester, Getty Images

Soldiers of the 82nd Airborne Division run toward a Chinook helicopter during Operation Valiant Strike conducted in the Sami Ghar Mountains in the Maruf District. The operation’s goal is to seize weapons caches, gather intelligence, and capture remaining Taliban and al-Qaida members.



Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from ESPN.com)

Numbers back up Najera's impact

ESPN — If not quite cast as a savior, the Mavericks see Eduardo Najera as their playoff difference-maker, especially against Sacramento's Chris Webber. If Najera can stay healthy, that is.

Of course, even if Najera does, it's still a big burden to place on a 6-foot-8 power forward who averages 7.0 points and 4.7 rebounds in his third NBA season. Yet there actually is some statistical justification for Dallas' faith.

When Najera plays 20 minutes or more, the Mavericks are 21-3. They're 11-0 when he scores at least 10 points, 8-0 when he grabs at least eight rebounds, and 13-1 when Najera gets at least three offensive boards — the first loss coming Thursday at home to San Antonio.

Mavericks insiders are convinced they beat Sacramento in the teams' last meeting largely because Najera was playing against the Kings for the first time since getting hurt in warm-ups of Game 1 of the teams' playoff series last spring. Webber, pestered by the Mavs' grittiest defender, needed 26 shots for his 24 points.

The issue with Najera isn't just health, though. In the playoffs, Mavericks coach Don Nelson figures to be faced with this decision: Najera vs. Nick Van Exel in crunch time. Nelson generally prefers to have his five best players on the court whenever he can, but that alignment — Van Exel, Steve Nash, Michael Finley, Dirk Nowitzki

and Raef LaFrentz — renders Dallas small and especially vulnerable defensively and on the boards. With Najera, they're less explosive but indisputably tougher.

Factor in the Van Exel numbers and you'll understand Nelson has to be strongly considering more burn for Najera once the playoffs start. When Van Exel plays 24 minutes or less, the Mavericks are 22-2. When he plays 30 minutes or more, the Mavs are 13-13. When Van Exel is forced to take 15 shots or more — fact is, he has generally been a reluctant shooter since coming to Dallas — the Mavs are 5-9.

All of which suggests that small ball hasn't been as successful for Dallas as you'd imagine for a team with an overall record of 52-17.



The Mavericks are a different team with a healthy Eduardo Najera on the floor.

Hardaway expected to join Indiana as a player

ESPN — Former Miami Heat guard and ESPN basketball analyst Tim Hardaway is expected to sign with the Indiana Pacers within the next few days, according to his agent Henry Thomas.

Contract details were not immediately known, but Hardaway will join the team as a player.

Pacers team president Donnie Walsh had told the Indianapolis Star recently that he wanted to wait before making the move.

"I want our team to settle in," Walsh told the newspaper. "I just don't think it's time to do anything with our team. We don't even have all of our own players back. We're going through so many difficulties, this would be the wrong time to do something like that."

Indiana is fourth in the Eastern Conference with a 41-29 record. The Pacers trail Detroit by three-and-a-half games for the top spot in the East.

Hardaway had averaged 17.9 points and 8.3 assists for his career.

Jazz win fourth straight by edging Celtics at home

SALT LAKE CITY — The Utah Jazz and Boston Celtics are on opposite paths to the playoffs.

The Jazz won their fourth straight by beating the slumping Celtics 96-91 on Monday night, extending Boston's longest losing streak of the season to five games.

"We have 12 games left. It really doesn't matter if we win against the Clippers or Boston. It's just a win, and

2002 NBA standings



Eastern Conference

Atlantic

(2)New Jersey	42-28
(3)Philadelphia	41-28
(6)Boston	38-33
(7)Orlando	37-34
Washington	32-37

Central

(1)Detroit	44-25
(4)Indiana	41-29
(5)New Orleans	40-31
(8)Milwaukee	34-36
Atlanta	29-43

Western Conference

Midwest

(1x)Dallas	53-17
(3)San Antonio	49-20
(4)Minnesota	45-26
(6)Utah	41-29
(8)Houston	37-33

Pacific

(2x)Sacramento	50-21
(5)Portland	44-25
(7)L.A. Lakers	40-30
Phoenix	36-34
Golden State	34-37

x = clinched playoff berth.



SPORTS, from Page 6

every game is important,” said Matt Harpring, who led the Jazz with 25 points. “All these are big.”

Karl Malone had 19 points and 12 rebounds, and John Stockton, who turns 41 on Wednesday, added 17 points and eight assists for the Jazz. Utah is in sixth place in the Western Conference with 12 games left in the regular season.

Utah shot 50 percent in the second half (16-for-32) and held the Celtics to one field goal in the final two minutes.

“We had some really good screens and nice shots. It was nice to see that because we have gone from one extreme to another,” Utah coach Jerry Sloan said. “I thought we did a good job defensively, coming down the stretch, hanging on and getting the win.”

Paul Pierce led the Celtics with 24 points and eight rebounds. Antoine Walker added 20 points for Boston, which has lost five straight for the first time under coach Jim O’Brien. In a week and a half, the Celtics have gone from being 10 games above .500 and among the conference leaders to being tied with Orlando for sixth in the East.

“We need to regather ourselves and get back to playing Celtic basketball,” Walker said. “Worrying about our playoff position kind of threw off our focus.”

Mavs sweep season series

DENVER — Nick Van Exel expects to be booed when he plays in Denver. But he isn’t about to let it get under his skin.

Dirk Nowitzki scored 25 points and Van Exel had 24 against his former team to help the Dallas Mavericks beat Denver 108-96 Monday night, completing their second straight season sweep of the Nuggets.

Nowitzki overcame a 6-for-23 shooting night by going 12-of-12 from the line. Van Exel, who played nearly four seasons with the Nuggets, was soundly booed throughout the game. He made two layups in the final two minutes.

“I never look forward to coming here, especially when I know I am going to get booed,” Van Exel said. “It’s suppose to bother me, but I’m not really worried about the fans. We got the win and that was the most important thing.”

It was the eighth straight win over Denver for the Mavericks, who increased their lead over idle San Antonio to three-and-a-half games in the Midwest Division.

“I thought Nick responded well to the boos,” Dallas coach Don Nelson said of Van Exel, who reached double figures for the 35th time this season. “We needed Nick to come on big and score, and he did.”

Hornets guard’s return remains on hold

NEW ORLEANS — Guard David Wesley will sit out a fourth game because of his bruised left foot, the New Orleans Hornets said Tuesday.

Wesley had been expected to return Wednesday against the Orlando Magic at the New Orleans Arena.

Defensive specialist George Lynch has been starting in his place. Coach Paul Silas had wanted to work his regular rotation of Wesley and Davis in the backcourt to get them ready for the playoffs. Davis started last Wednesday against the New York Knicks.

Eisley sparks key run for Knicks

NEW YORK — The New York Knicks have caught the Washington Wizards in the win column, and they still believe they can catch the Milwaukee Bucks in the standings.

Howard Eisley hit two 3-pointers as part of an 8-0 run to end the third quarter, putting the Knicks in control for good in a 100-90 victory over the Toronto Raptors on Monday night.

New York, in 10th place in the conference, moved within two-and-a-half games of the Bucks while matching ninth-place Washington’s total of 32 victories. The Knicks still have two more losses than the Wizards, who are currently on a six-game Western road trip that began with two defeats.

If the Knicks can move past Washington, there will be only one more team standing between them and the postseason.

“That’s what we’re thinking, but honestly it’s one game at a time,” Latrell Sprewell said. “You can’t look too far ahead, but we are definitely watching the standings and seeing where other teams are. That’s why a game like tonight’s is very important to win.”

Entering a crucial five-game stretch in which they will play the Raptors and Nets twice apiece before traveling to Denver to face the Nuggets, the Knicks probably need to win at least four times to stay in the playoff hunt.

Because they lost the season series with Milwaukee, they must finish a game ahead of the Bucks to claim the eighth spot in the East. It would be quite an accomplishment for a team that began the season with eight losses in the first nine games.

“How’s a fella’ supposed to get any shut-eye ‘round here?!”



kevin_kilgore@hotmail.com

By Kevin Kilgore

Laugh Support