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# STARS AND STRIPES®

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Volume 82 Edition 99 ©SS 2023

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2023

平成12年4月5日 第三種郵便物認可 日刊(土日除く)  
発行所 星条旗新聞社 〒106-0032 東京都港区六本木7丁目23番17号 定価 ¥100

\$1.00



COREY DICKSTEIN/Stars and Stripes

Security Force Assistance Brigade soldiers — known as advisors — help a soldier with a simulated injury during a pre-deployment training exercise on Aug. 23 at Muscatatuck Training Center in Indiana.

## Building trust through training

### Army brigades help allies through mass casualty exercise

BY COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

MUSCATATUCK TRAINING CENTER, Ind. — Mortar fire echoed in the background as Army Sgt. Joshua Corday leaned over a wounded soldier, preparing to pluck an IV into his arm.

“Direct fire,” another soldier shouted into the dark, cement block basement where Corday and other troops with a Security Force Assistance Brigade set up a makeshift hospital amid the ongoing attack. A handful of other soldiers sprinted out of the basement toward the gunfire, leaving Corday and other medics behind to tend to a handful of troopers wounded in early waves of the attack on their position.

Moments later, as Corday stuck his patient

with the needle, gunfire from an SFAB .50-caliber machine gun drowned out the low rumbling of voices inside the building.

“You’re good, man,” Corday reassured the injured trooper, as he continued to work. “You’re going to be fine.”

The simulated mass casualty event came several days into a training exercise dubbed Operation Combined Victory at Indiana’s Muscatatuck Training Center, where some 270 SFAB soldiers — known as “advisors” — have spent recent weeks preparing for upcoming deployments in the fall to multiple countries around the world. At those locations, the SFAB troops will do what the brigades were assembled to do — provide small teams of expert U.S. soldiers to partner with allied military forces to

train, advise and assist them with critical combat skills.

Corday, a medic and advisor with the Army National Guard’s 54th Security Force Assistance Brigade, worked alongside active-duty troops with the 3rd Squadron, 3rd SFAB from Fort Cavazos, the Texas base formerly called Fort Hood, during the training. His team will join 3rd Squadron, 3rd SFAB troops deploying in late September or early October to several countries in the Middle East, while some other National Guard advisors from Corday’s 54th SFAB will deploy to South America.

The first-of-its-kind training event, Operation Combined Victory was built to stress the

SEE TRAINING ON PAGE 4

## North Korea says it has simulated ‘scorched earth’ attacks on South

BY HYUNG-JIN KIM  
*Associated Press*

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea said Thursday its latest missile launches simulated “scorched earth” nuclear strikes on South Korea and that it’s also been rehearsing an occupation of its rival’s territory in the event of conflict.

Pyongyang has previously tested nuclear-capable missiles and described how it would use them in potential wars with South Korea and the U.S. But the North’s disclosure of detailed war plans reaffirmed its aggressive nuclear doctrine to intimidate its opponents, as it escalates its protest of the ongoing South Korean-U.S. military exercises that it views as a major security threat, observers say.

North Korea’s military said it fired two tactical ballistic missiles from the capital on Wednesday night to practice “scorched earth strikes” at major command centers and operational airfields in South Korea, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

The North’s military said the missiles carried out their simulat-

SEE KOREA ON PAGE 12



KOREAN CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY/AP

This photo provided by the North Korean government shows what it says a tactical nuclear strike drill in Pyongyang, North Korea, on Wednesday.

# BUSINESS/WEATHER

## EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	Azores	..	..	\$4.954	..
Germany	\$4.159	\$4.731	\$5.065	\$4.857	Change in price	..	..	-3.4 cents	..
Netherlands	..	\$4.974	\$5.247	\$5.247	Turkey	..	..	\$4.753	\$4.637*
U.K.	..	\$4.667	\$5.001	\$4.793	Change in price	..	..	-3.4 cents	No change

Fuel prices are updated daily. These prices are effective Sept. 1. The change in price is from Aug. 25.

## PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	South Korea	\$3.889	..	\$4.759	\$4.549
Japan	..	\$4.729	..	\$4.519	Change in price	-5.0 cents	..	-3.0 cents	+9.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.859	..	..	\$4.519	Guam	\$3.869**	\$4.409	\$4.739	..
Change in price	-6.0 cents	..	..	+8.0 cents	Change in price	-6.0 cents	-4.0 cents	+4.0cents	..

\*DieselEFD \*\*Midgrade  
Pacific prices for the week of Sept. 1-7

## EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		Commercial rates	
Euro costs (Sept. 1)	\$1.06	Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
British pound (Sept. 1)	\$1.24	Britain (Pound)	1.2675
Japanese yen (Sept. 1)	143.00	Canada (Dollar)	1.3529
South Korean won (Sept. 1)	1287.00	China (Yuan)	7.2591
		Denmark (Krone)	6.8687
		Egypt (Pound)	30.9004
		Euro	0.9217
		Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8431
		Hungary (Forint)	350.57
		Israel (Shekel)	3.8130
		Japan (Yen)	146.15
		Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3083
		Norway (Krone)	10.6506
		Philippines (Peso)	56.64
		Poland (Zloty)	4.12
		Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7509
		Singapore (Dollar)	1.3517
		South Korea (Won)	1323.63

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

## INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	8.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	6.00
Federal funds market rate	5.33
3-month bill	5.48
30-year bond	4.23

## WEATHER OUTLOOK

### FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



### FRIDAY IN EUROPE



### SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

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## MILITARY

# Time capsule thought to be empty yields coins



U.S. Military Academy at West Point

Archaeologists from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., found several coins after a closer inspection of the contents of a nearly 200-year-old time capsule opened earlier this week.

By DOUG G. WARE  
*Stars and Stripes*

A nearly 200-year-old time capsule that appeared to include only dirt when opened earlier this week at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., has now yielded several old items found in the sediment, officials said Wednesday.

The capsule, a lead box about 1 cubic foot in size, was found a few months ago when workers were renovating the academy's bronze monument of Thaddeus Kosciuszko, a Polish-born engineer who fortified West Point in the late 18th century. When archaeologists opened the box during an unveiling event on Monday, nothing recognizable was immediately apparent.

"We are not certain if it's soil

or mud or dust," Paul Hudson, a West Point archaeologist, said at the time. "It may not be anything."

Not so fast, the academy said in an update Wednesday.

"[The] time capsule from 1828 opened by the U.S. Military Academy's archeologist team during a ceremony on Monday contained six American silver coins and a commemorative medal," the academy said in a statement. "The historic artifacts were discovered in the sediment."

Among the artifacts scientists uncovered were a liberty dollar coin from 1800, a 50 cent piece from 1828, a quarter from 1818, a dime from 1827, a 5 cent coin from 1795, a penny from 1827 and an Erie Canal commemorative

medal from 1826, which was issued to celebrate the completion of the Erie Canal in upstate New York in 1825.

"This is an incredible story that involves so many of West Point's heroes and many of them are the Army's and our nation's heroes," said Brig. Gen. Shane Reeves, the dean of the academy's academic board. "We should reflect upon and be inspired by our history to pause and realize we have the immense honor and responsibility to continue the legacy that Kosciuszko started."

The academy said the "historical preservation process" is ongoing and there could be more updates on what was found in the box.

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## Fort Cavazos opens military's 1st breast milk drop-off site

By ROSE L. THAYER  
*Stars and Stripes*

AUSTIN, Texas — Fort Cavazos opened the military's first breast milk donation center to allow mothers to share their excess milk with patients across the country.

The Milk Depot, which opened Aug. 23, operates in partnership with the Mothers' Milk Bank at Austin — a nonprofit that has provided milk to the neonatal intensive care unit at Fort Cavazos for three years. The depot will save donors the hassle of transporting frozen milk to the next closest location about 30 minutes east in Temple.

Officials at Fort Cavazos and the milk bank said this is the first time a military base has opened a facility to collect donated milk.

Grace Wolford, a 23-year-old Army spouse with a 10-month-old son, said the opening of the Milk Depot has allowed her to donate more than 400 ounces of milk.

"I didn't really always have a lot of time to be able to make the hour drive, and I didn't have the equipment to be able to transport my milk and keep it frozen," Wolford said. "Having something that's only like 10 to 15 minutes away made it 1,000 times easier."

The milk bank transports the raw milk to its facilities an hour south in Austin and pasteurizes and screens it using standards created by the Human Milk Banking Association of North America, said Kim Updegrave, executive director of the Mothers' Milk Bank at Austin and chairwoman of the association's standards committee. It's then distributed to 180 hospitals in 26 states, similar to the way blood banks distribute blood products, she said.

Also, like donating blood, donors must be screened and approved before they can provide milk.

"Fort Cavazos is a line leader. They are beginning what I hope is a precedent," Updegrave said. "By opening this depot and therefore dipping into this pie of donor human milk, we're simply helping members of the community to be lifesavers. They're able to be superheroes and save other people's children in a safe and helpful way."

Even before the Milk Depot began accepting donations, donors connected to Fort



U.S. Army photos

Kim Updegrave, director of the Mothers' Milk Bank at Austin, speaks Aug. 23 during a ceremony to open the military's first breast milk drop-off site at Fort Cavazos, Texas.

Cavazos had been making the drive or shipping their milk, providing 9,225 ounces of milk to the bank this year, she said. That nearly meets the 9,777 ounces that the base's neonatal intensive care unit has ordered for its patients in the hospital and those being monitored at home.

Each year, the Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center at Fort Cavazos admits between 150 and 200 premature babies into its neonatal unit, said Maj. Matthew Nestander, an Army doctor serving as chief of inpatient pediatrics and neonatal unit medical director at Darnall.

More than half of the neonatal patients use donor breast milk, and it is covered by Tricare, the military's health insurance, he said.

Studies have shown that for babies born below 3 pounds, 4 ounces, breast milk can reduce the risk by 75% of premature babies developing necrotizing enterocolitis, a condition that causes intestinal tissue to die and requires them to undergo surgery, Updegrave said.

"That is the primary source of death in those babies born that small," she said.

The mothers delivering those premature babies often face their own health challenges or struggle to produce their own breast milk, which is why the donor milk is vital.

Darnall's neonatal unit can treat babies

born as early as 27 weeks into pregnancy but does not have surgical capabilities, Nestander said. A baby who could need surgery must be transferred to a nearby civilian hospital, which increases the stress on new parents who will have to travel farther to see their child.

The milk also saves the hospital money by reducing those complications, he said.

"I think a lot of people are not familiar with [donor milk] and are kind of surprised," Nestander said of telling parents about the benefits and availability of the donated milk. "It's well-received information and they're appreciative."

Some babies might still benefit from breast milk once they leave the hospital and the milk bank also fills prescriptions for the donated milk from pediatricians, Updegrave said. About two-thirds of the milk provided to the Fort Cavazos community goes directly to patients at home instead of the hospital.

"We know that babies, once stable enough to go home, they do better at home," Updegrave said. "They're not exposed to all the other babies in the hospital, and the calmness of the home environment is helpful to them once they're ready."

There are 32 milk banks in the U.S. and Canada providing milk, but Updegrave said she wants to expand the group's reach into



Army spouse Grace Wolford, holding her son, Azreal, said donating has helped her through post-partum depression.

the military community — eventually finding a way to get donated breast milk to babies in need at overseas military hospitals.

"We might sequester away our military, we might not see them all the time, but they're defending our safety all the time. They're also facing the same burdens that we have in terms of these infants," she said. "Our military families deserve the same level of care that we provide outside military bases, which is authorized donor human milk to babies in the [neonatal unit] when moms of those babies cannot produce their own milk."

For Wolford, she said the experience of donating her milk was healing for the post-partum depression that she experienced.

"There were several days when I would look at my son, and I'd be like, 'I have no idea what I'm doing. I'm doing everything wrong.' But then I would look at my [breast] pump, and I'd be like, 'This is the one thing that I 100% know I can do right.'"

Mothers interested in donating milk can visit the Mothers' Milk Bank at Austin website, [www.Milkbank.org](http://www.Milkbank.org), or call 512-494-0800 to complete the process to donate. Those interested outside of Fort Cavazos can visit [www.hmbana.org](http://www.hmbana.org) to find their nearest human milk bank.

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## MILITARY

# Training: SFAB soldiers building trust within teams

## FROM PAGE 1

abilities of SFAB soldiers, who undergo specialty training to advise and assist conventional military forces of partner and ally nations. During the training, the troops operate under stressful combat scenarios and test their communications abilities across large distances, said Lt. Col. Mike Ziegelhofer, an armor officer who took command of 3rd Squadron, 3rd SFAB in July.

Ziegelhofer, a U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., graduate with multiple combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, will lead his squadron on the upcoming six-month tour, which will see his advisors replace SFAB soldiers now deployed in Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

From inside a makeshift tactical operations center at Muscatatuck Training Center last week, Ziegelhofer said Operation Combined Victory should prove his squadron has prepared to take over advising operations in much of the Middle East, where 3rd SFAB has maintained a permanent presence since 2021.

The Pentagon views those partnerships as a critical tool to keep partner forces close, especially amid a worldwide competition for influence between the United States and other powers such as China and Russia.

“We’re really building trust as a team by putting ourselves through these tough training scenarios,” Ziegelhofer said in an interview during the training rotation. “Advisors [from the SFABs] are such small teams that when we deploy out to conduct these different missions everybody’s got to fill two and three and four roles.

“So, we’re out here building trust in each other, not just to be able to fulfill our own [individual] responsibilities, but to backfill each other in their roles and really expand out the knowledge that each team member brings to the fight.”

## Combined victory

In Operation Combined Victory’s scenario, SFAB advisers initially deployed for a peacetime mission to aid a partner force in conducting a combat training center-style rotation, like those that Army forces would see at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., or the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Johnson, formerly Fort Polk in Louisiana.

That mission would be typical for any of the SFABs in any of the 50 countries where adviser teams now have a permanent presence, Ziegelhofer said.

When his 3rd Squadron, 3rd SFAB deploys in the coming weeks, it will conduct similar training for its partner forces in



NOGA AMI-RAW/Stars and Stripes

several countries in the Middle East. But in the exercise, the mission suddenly changes. While SFAB soldiers are training partner forces, a neighboring nation invades the country where the SFAB advisers are working — launching a war in a U.S.-partner nation with American troops present.

The SFAB soldiers are forced to move from training partner forces into advising them to fight off invaders — a modern military with skills and equipment like the U.S. Army.

“Our team is built for conflict,” Ziegelhofer said of the scenario, the kind of incident that could lead to the United States sending in a larger combat force to defend its ally or partner from the attack. “As the SFAB, we’re already plugged in, we have the same systems that the team coming in has, and so we’re the guys who can provide that immediate operability and that liaison effort to say, ‘Here’s what the partner force is up to, here’s what they expect, and here’s what they’re kind of counting on us for.’”

In the training event, teams live side-by-side with their partner forces at Muscatatuck and nearby Camp Atterbury, another Indiana National Guard installation about 40 miles northwest of Muscatatuck.

The operation marks the first

time an SFAB unit has trained at Muscatatuck. The remote Army training center run by the Indiana National Guard spans some 1,000 acres near southern Indiana’s Butlerville.

Largely hidden by dense corn fields that line state highways for miles, the training complex features an “abandoned city,” with nearly 200 buildings, many left over from its time as a mental institution. Those buildings include a former hospital, a jail, a radio station, a school, two massive rubble piles and a neighborhood of buildings partially submerged in water.

Beneath the city lies more than one mile of tunnels that connect most of the 1930s- and 1940s-era buildings. Muscatatuck also boasts some 900 meters of man-made caves dug beneath a hill, officials at the post said.

The unique mix of buildings has made Muscatatuck a popular training location in recent years, especially among some of the military’s most elite units who can tailor training at the post to rehearse for specific missions, officials there said.

For the SFABs, the complex gave soldiers an expansive training area where planners could tailor their pre-deployment exercise to simulate conditions that they might see in the countries with which they partner. In Operation



COREY DICKSTEIN / Stars and Stripes

Army Sgt. Joshua Corday treats a simulated wounded soldier during a pre-deployment training exercise Aug. 23, at Muscatatuck Training Center in Indiana.

Combined Victory, SFAB soldiers found themselves in combat in wooded areas and Muscatatuck’s urban environment fending off drone attacks and enemy forces, officials said.

Army 1st Sgt. Andrew MacVey described Muscatatuck’s training as “peerless,” especially because of the digital environment that the Army has provided for troops at Muscatatuck. The Army built a closed cellular network with its own social media platforms to test soldiers’ abilities to respond to information warfare while conducting training exercises.

“We’re able to do things here that we could not do back home at Fort Cavazos,” said MacVey, who will deploy to Saudi Arabia with 3rd Squadron, 3rd SFAB. “The partnership with the role players playing our partners — it adds some real-world scenario effects, and I think it’s really stressing our systems. Our troops are learning a lot and quickly.”

## The brigades

The SFABs were initially designed in 2017 to take deployment pressure off the Army’s brigade combat teams, which had for years been rotated in and out of war zones in Afghanistan and Iraq to train those nations’ forces to fight the wars there.

With a growing Chinese military and increased Russian aggression during the last decade, top U.S. Army generals saw the need for its combat brigades to re-focus their efforts on the kind of large-scale operations that American troops would need to master to fight a near-peer adversary.

Gen. Mark Milley, the Army’s top general before becoming chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, pitched the SFABs as purpose-built to conduct the kind of

training, advising and assisting operations that brigade combat teams had been doing in Iraq and Afghanistan. This would allow the service’s combat brigades — the backbone of the U.S. military’s conventional land power — to build combat readiness for a major war.

The five active-duty SFABs have been aligned to the Pentagon’s geographic combatant commands to provide a constant presence of small adviser teams to partner nations.

The 1st SFAB from Fort Moore, Ga., is committed to U.S. Southern Command, the 2nd SFAB from Fort Liberty, N.C., to U.S. Africa Command, the 3rd SFAB is aligned to U.S. Central Command, the 4th SFAB from Fort Carson, Colo., is aligned to U.S. European Command, and the 5th SFAB from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., to the Indo-Pacific Command. The sixth SFAB, the National Guard’s 54th SFAB, augments the active-duty SFABs with additional forces when needed.

The point is to maintain consistent presence in key locations where no matter which SFAB soldiers are deployed, they are offering the same kind of advice and training oversight to partner forces, Ziegelhofer said.

“We like to talk about our value proposition as persistent presence in partnership,” he said. “We’re just always there. Our brigade is the persistent presence because it’s not the same faces every day for 18 months, but it’s the same uniform, the same patch, same hat, the same unit, the same training, same equipment, same knowledge that are coming in.”

The concept has proven popular among nations seeking to work

SEE TRUST ON PAGE 5

# MILITARY

## Trust: Because squads are small, troops fill multiple roles

FROM PAGE 4

with the United States. There are not enough SFAB teams to meet the demand among allied and partner nations, said Master Sgt. Adrian Patoka, a spokesman for the Army's Security Force Assistance Command, which is headquartered at Fort Liberty, N.C., formerly Fort Bragg, and oversees the Security Force Assistance Brigades.

The SFABs are built from volunteer officers and noncommissioned officers who can only join the unit after completing the specialty advisory training course at Fort Moore, the former Fort Benning, which teaches them advanced skills in combat first aid, language and leadership.

Units are small. An SFAB brigade consists of only some 800 soldiers — all officers and noncommissioned officers — and the advisor teams that embed into partner forces are typically 12 soldiers led by a captain.

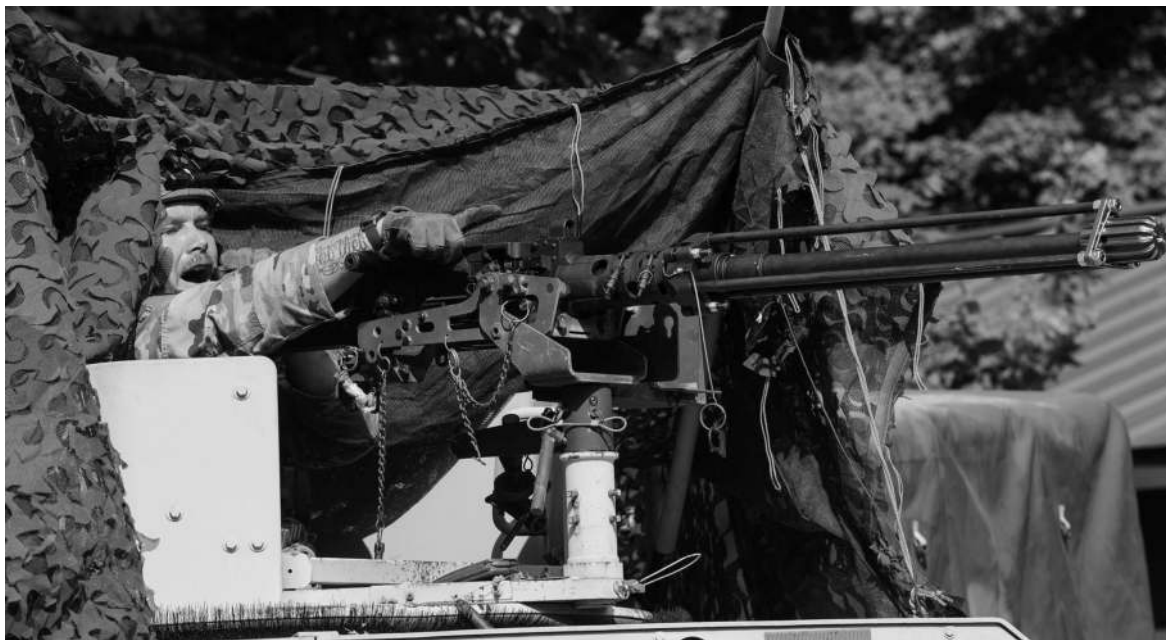
MacVey will soon deploy with a unit that size to Saudi Arabia. The first sergeant, an Iraq War veteran who long served as a cavalry

scout before joining the SFAB ranks, said he was attracted to the advisor mission for the opportunity to work in small teams.

"What's unique about being in an SFAB is you deploy with a small team, you're self-sustaining, self-sufficient, and you're offered a lot of freedom and latitude to go out and find your own work with our partners," MacVey said. "I've gone through a lot of training with SFAB that has really expanded my knowledge base, that I wouldn't have ever been exposed to in the regular Army. And, now, we'll take that and teach and coach and advise our [Saudi] partners."

Ziegelhofer, who is commanding an Army battalion for a second time, said he has been awed by his SFAB troops.

He pointed to the medical expertise that he saw among the SFAB troops, such as Corday, who during Operation Combined Victory are working on providing prolonged care to wounded troops because SFAB advisers might not be able to rely on traditional medical infrastructure in the areas where they deploy.



COREY DICKSTEIN/Stars and Stripes

**A Security Force Assistance Brigade soldier mans a .50-caliber machine gun during a pre-deployment training exercise Aug. 23, at Muscatatuck Training Center in Indiana.**

During the training event, medics simulated blood donations using blood collected from soldiers on their teams to keep wounded advisors alive.

"You've got to rely on yourself, and so I for the first time got to see our medical teams in action to provide prolonged care to a patient with a [simulated] gunshot wound," the squadron commander said. "At a typical Army battal-

ion, you're maybe able to provide that kind of care for a couple of hours, these guys just did it for 18 hours."

He said those advanced abilities built into the SFABs breed trust in the unit's advisors during training such as Operation Combined Victory.

"You're going to send these guys in small teams out into distributed places, so knowing that

they have a medical team within them that's going to be able to provide the level of care after watching them do it — having been one of the guys here sitting as they're taking blood — talk about building trust on the team," Ziegelhofer said. "That's a good way to do it. It is absolutely eye-opening."

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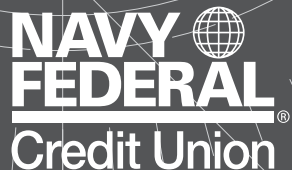
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## MILITARY

# AFRICOM monitoring apparent coup in Gabon

By JOHN VANDIVER

*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. Africa Command said it is monitoring an apparent coup in Gabon, a country that has played a key role in the American military's network of crisis response outposts on the continent, officials said.

On Wednesday, Gabon's military leaders announced that they had seized power following the reelection of President Ali Bongo Ondimba and that Gen. Brice Oligui Nguema will serve as the country's transitional leader.

Events in Gabon could have im-

plications for U.S. military operations in Africa. The country has played host to a cooperative security location, which functions as a bare-bones launching pad for quick-reaction missions.

Establishing such facilities became a priority for AFRICOM following the deadly 2012 attack on a diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya. Since then, numerous outposts have been set up across Africa.

Former AFRICOM boss Gen. David Rodriguez said in 2015 that sites such as the one in Gabon "enable us to be within four hours of all

the high-risk, high-threat (diplomatic) posts."

The broader region has a recent history of political instability. In 2019, 80 combat-equipped U.S. troops were deployed to the country to monitor potential violence in the nearby Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Soon after their arrival, Gabon's military launched a coup attempt and seized control of state radio. That revolt was short-lived, with the government regaining control the same day.

Since then, AFRICOM has maintained ties. In January, Gen.

Michael Langley was in Libreville, the capital of Gabon, to meet with political and military leaders.

"We're grateful for our strong and evolving partnership here and the continued cooperation to help strengthen security in the region for years to come," Langley said at the time.

The Bongo family has ruled for the past 55 years in Gabon, an oil-rich state with high levels of unemployment and poverty. Bongo came to power in 2009 following his father's death and has served two terms as president.

But his time in office has been

rife with discontent. There was public jubilation following the military's announcement that Bongo had been deposed in the wake of his election victory, The Associated Press reported.

Gabon is the latest African country to see a military takeover, following the overthrow of Niger's elected government in July.

Niger is home to a sprawling \$110 million U.S. Air Force drone site that carries out counterterrorism missions in the region.

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## Police: German man with history of stealing Army Humvees goes on joyride

By MICHAEL SLAVIN  
AND ALEXANDER RIEDEL

*Stars and Stripes*

ANSBACH, Germany — A German man who police say has a history of going joyriding in U.S. military vehicles saw his latest escapade end when he was found earlier this week drunk and unconscious after a 24-mile trip in a stolen Army Humvee.

The 21-year-old swiped the vehicle from Shipton Kaserne in Obereichbach sometime between 2:30 p.m. Monday and 6:45 a.m. Tuesday, Ansbach police said Wednesday in a statement.

He then drove nearly 24 miles north to Neuherberg while intoxicated and was found inside the Humvee early Tuesday, according to the statement.

Army officials are coordinating with German police to investigate, Kate Necaie, a spokeswoman for U.S. Army Garrison Ansbach, said Thursday.

The vehicle belongs to the 5th

Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, Necaie said. No vehicle damage was reported and the Humvee was returned to Shipton Kaserne.

The suspect does not have a driver's license, Ansbach police said.

He was cited twice in 2021 after taking Humvees from Shipton and Bismarck barracks, police said.

On one of those occasions, he took the vehicle for a 50-mile joyride across six villages and towns, Ansbach police told Stars and Stripes.

As of Thursday, the man was hospitalized for a mental health evaluation, and German prosecutors will decide later whether to charge him, an Ansbach police spokesman said.

Many military vehicles, which are designed for expedient battlefield use, do not need an ignition key and instead rely on a simple switch to start, making them a target for theft.

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YESENIA CADAVID/U.S. Army

**Soldiers with the 5th Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, train on the Avenger Air Defense System in Grafenwoehr, Germany, in July. A German man recently stole one of the unit's Humvees and took it for a joyride while intoxicated, Ansbach police said Wednesday.**



HEATHER SALAZAR/U.S. Air Force

**A B-2 Spirit bomber assigned to Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., taxis into place for a hot pit refuel at Orland Air Base, Norway, on Tuesday, the first landing of the stealth bomber in the country, the Air Force said.**

## American B-2 stealth bomber lands in Norway for first time

By JENNIFER H. SVAN

*Stars and Stripes*

An American B-2 Spirit made a historic pit stop in Norway this week, marking the first landing of the stealth bomber in the Scandinavian country, the Air Force said.

On Tuesday, the plane arrived at Orland Air Base for hot pit refueling, a procedure that minimizes the jet's time on the ground and allows it to quickly gas up without shutting down its engines before relaunching.

"This clever technique extends our reach, establishing temporary operational hubs at strategically chosen and even unpredictable locations," Gen. James Hecker, commander of U.S. Air Forces in Europe and Air Forces Africa, said in a statement Wednesday.

The B-2 is one of three Spirit bombers from Whiteman Air Base in Missouri that are deployed to

Iceland's Keflavik Air Base.

About 150 airmen from the 509th Bomb Wing also deployed Aug. 13 in support of the overseas mission, marking the jets' first return to Europe since the wing's last deployment to the Continent in 2021.

The aircraft began flying again in May after a five-month grounding of the fleet for safety checks, prompted by a fire in one of the jets in December.

The Air Force has yet to release the findings of its investigation into the cause of the fire.

While in Europe, the B-2 bombers are training with NATO and U.S. Air Force units for an undisclosed duration.

The brief mission to Norway comes as the Air Force continues to practice its agile combat employment concept. One of its goals is to move aircraft and airmen around to different airfields and

avoid making them a static target in the event of a large-scale conflict.

In June, two Texas-based B-1B Lancer bombers landed for the first time at Lulea Kallax Air Base in Sweden while deployed to RAF Fairford in England.

All 20 of the U.S. B-2s are based at Whiteman. The aircraft can carry conventional and nuclear weapons.

The U.S. has conducted strategic bomber missions in Europe since 2018 to familiarize crews with the territory, as well as with NATO allies and partners.

The plane can travel 6,000 nautical miles without refueling and reach any point in the world within hours, according to manufacturer Northrop Grumman.

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## PACIFIC

# Air Force eyes additional Indo-Pacific bases

By **SETH ROBSON**

*Stars and Stripes*

The Air Force plans to increase the number of bases it can operate from in the Indo-Pacific so that it can disperse forces in wartime, according to a general responsible for logistics and force protection.

Air Force bases in the region “will grow in increments that are visible through time, across probably [10 to 15 years] as we work through that,” Brig. Gen. Michael Zuhlsdorf, deputy director of resource integration for engineering, logistics and force protection, said Tuesday during a webinar hosted by the Mitchell Institute, a nonpartisan aerospace research

organization in Arlington, Va.

Zuhlsdorf did not say how many additional bases the force could operate from.

“The overall number is continuing to change based on the resourcing that we have ... there’s a number of different airfields that we’re working through, and based on the resourcing, that number will shift,” he said.

World War II-era airfields throughout the Pacific provide available real estate, Zuhlsdorf



Zuhlsdorf

said.

“We’re going to capitalize in investing in that and bringing some of those ... bases to life,” he said. “We’re going to bring to life some mothballed bases that are out there.”

The Air Force will team with allies and partners such as Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, the Philippines and Japan in the effort, the general said.

“The bottom line with this resilient basing ... we need to make sure that we set the theater so that our airman, soldiers, sailors, Marines ... the guardians that will be out front ... are taken care of and have the tools they need to suc-

ceed in that kind of an environment, frankly an environment that we haven’t been challenged with for quite a long time,” he said.

Lacking a peer threat in recent decades, the Air Force has focused on efficiency and concentrated forces at large, established bases, Zuhlsdorf said.

“We have not had that threat that is now present with our near peers, whether that’s [China] or Russia or whoever it is that’s out there,” he said. “We’ve concentrated a lot of resources in some specific bases.”

The plan is to build robust infrastructure to support Agile

Combat Employment, he said. ACE is the ability to move aircraft rapidly to a network of smaller airfields to avoid being targeted by missiles in the event of war.

Meanwhile, the Air Force is looking at ways to make established bases more resilient, such as improved missile defense, camouflage and dispersing forces on those bases, Zuhlsdorf said.

“We need to bolster the existing bases that we have, from a facilities and infrastructure and command-and-control and air base air defense perspective,” he said.

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## Sand of Iwo Jima brings closure to families of fallen Japanese soldiers

By **MATTHEW M. BURKE**

AND **KEISHI KOJA**

*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A group of U.S. and Japanese historians are breaking a taboo and distributing black sand from Iwo Jima to relatives of Japanese soldiers who perished in the bloody World War II battle.

Texas-based author Dan King, a volunteer with the Iwo Jima Association of America, partnered in April with Japanese researchers Ko Fujiwara and Tetsuya Inada to give 15 families approximately one ounce of sand each, Fujiwara said by phone Thursday.

The families accepted the sand in lieu of their relatives’ remains, which have not been recovered.

Iwo Jima, an island approximately 750 miles southeast of Tokyo, was the scene of heavy fighting at the end of World War II. It is now the site of a Japan Self-Defense Force base and off-limits to most visitors. The U.S. Navy has conducted carrier-landing training on the island for Carrier Air Wing 5 since 1991.

Japanese citizens who are granted access to the island also known as Iwo To are prohibited

from removing the black volcanic sand that covers its beaches, a spokesman from Japan’s Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare said by phone Wednesday. No such rule bars American visitors, many of whom are in the U.S. military.

Some government officials in Japan may speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

Makiko Harada, 86, was just a child when her father, Kumao Nei, died on Iwo Jima, she said by phone Thursday. She has been to the island to pray for him but brought nothing home in remembrance.

“I felt very happy when I received this sand,” she said. “I feel like this sand came home as the remains of my father.”

King — author of “A Tomb Called Iwo Jima: Firsthand Accounts from Japanese Survivors” — first met Fujiwara, a military historian from Oita prefecture, in 2019 while researching for a book, King said by email Tuesday. The pair kept in touch and began talking again in the run up to this year’s annual Battle of Iwo Jima ceremony, the Reunion of Honor, which took place March 25.

Fujiwara asked if King would



GARY HILTON/U.S Air Force

**A U.S. airman from Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, collects sand from Iwo Jima in April 2022.**

make an offering of rice and water from Miyazaki prefecture for the families of the deceased after the event, King said. He brought back sand from the beach in return.

“I was a little afraid,” Fujiwara said. There is a myth that those who take the sand are cursed; Self-Defense Force troops even clean their shoes when leaving the island, he added.

Fujiwara decided to dedicate the gift at Miyazaki Gokoku Shrine. Inada, after speaking with

a family group, decided to pass the sand on to relatives of the dead.

The family group’s director, Tadashi Sekiya, called a dozen families he knew had lost loved ones at Iwo Jima and planned a ceremony in the shrine’s main hall on July 8, he said by phone Wednesday. Another two families saw news coverage of the event and contacted Sekiya.

The sand was handed over in clear, plastic discs that resembled a hockey puck, Sekiya said.

It could possibly be the first time Japanese people have received sand from Iwo Jima, Fujiwara said. He said only time will tell if they are able to give sand to families in other prefectures.

“If we continue this activity, maybe what used to be a taboo will stop being so, and maybe we will be allowed to take sand from the island, too,” he said.

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## Japan’s Defense Ministry seeks record \$52.9B for military buildup

By **HANA KUSUMOTO**

*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — Japan’s Ministry of Defense has asked for a 13.5% increase in military spending for next fiscal year, the second year of a buildup against perceived threats from China, North Korea and Russia.

The ministry on Thursday unveiled its \$52.9 billion spending request, a record-high amount

and the 12th consecutive year of increased military spending. If approved by the nation’s parliament, the plan would top this year’s defense budget by \$6.8 billion.

The spending increase is rooted in three significant policy statements Japan adopted in December, the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy and Defense Buildup Program.

A July white paper by Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada stressed diplomacy first in conflict resolution but said Japan must also prepare to “defend our country by ourselves” with increased deterrence. “In other words, we need to make the opponent think that ‘attacking Japan will not achieve its goals.’”

The proposed defense budget seeks \$5.2 billion to develop, man-

ufacture and acquire various types of stand-off missile capabilities, a key component of Japan’s strategy. This includes development and mass production of improved surface-to-ship guided missiles, which could be used to strike enemy bases.

It also requested \$259.6 million to build two destroyers equipped with the Aegis Combat System, the anti-air and anti-missile de-

fense system. The destroyers are an alternative to a previously scrapped plan for a land-based Aegis Ashore missile defense system.

Although no specific amount is listed, the budget request includes a plan to set up a permanent joint command with about 240 personnel that oversees three Self-Defense Force branches in central Tokyo by March 2025.

## PACIFIC

# Army floats tanks, builds bridges during drill

By DAVID CHOI  
Stars and Stripes

CHEORWON, South Korea — U.S. and South Korean combat engineers demonstrated their bridge-building prowess Thursday by moving an armored column across open water just 15 miles from the border with North Korea.

About 220 soldiers — 70 from the 11th Engineer Battalion, U.S. 2nd Infantry Division and 150 South Koreans — used 6½-ton floating sections to lay a bridge across a reservoir in Gangwon province.

The exercise culminated with a column of South Korean K1A2 tanks and K21 fighting vehicles moving a quarter-mile across the 23-foot-deep, open water, or “wet gap,” atop the floating bridge.

Perfecting the wet-gap crossing is essential to maintaining an effective deterrent against adversaries like North Korea, said battalion commander Lt. Col. Brent Kinney.

“We continually have to refine and achieve the highest state of readiness possible so that we can support that ‘fight tonight’ mentality,” he told reporters, invoking the U.S. Forces Korea motto. “It’s not a bumper sticker. You can’t just say we’re ready to fight tonight — we have to actually perfect and hone our skills such that if we’re called to serve in a deterrence posture, we are ready.”

The U.S. and South Korean armies use compatible bridging equipment, which simplifies a coordinated operation and training on each other’s methods, Kinney said.

Wet-gap training is particularly important in South Korea, where much of the terrain is either mountainous or wet, said Lt. Col. Nam Kung Kyung of the South Korean Mechanized Infantry Division.

The training was one of the roughly 30 drills during Ulchi Freedom Shield, an 11-day test of the U.S. and South Korean forces’ ability to defend against the North



PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER GREEN/Stars and Stripes

A South Korean K1A2 tank crosses a reservoir during “wet gap” training in Cheorwon county near the Demilitarized Zone on Thursday.



South Korean soldiers connect ribbon bridges during a wet-gap crossing drill on Thursday.

Korean military.

Last week, roughly 500 U.S. and South Korean troops practiced their street-fighting skills in the Urban Area Operating Center, a simulated city block eight miles from the Demilitarized Zone separating the two Koreas.

North Korea conducted its own exercise late Wednesday. It fired two short-range ballistic missiles, part of a simulated, “scorched earth” nuclear attack, followed by rehearsal of a South Korean occupation, the state-run Korean Central News Agency reported Thursday.

The missiles flew roughly 225 miles before splashing into the Sea of Japan, also known as the East Sea.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un oversaw the exercise, according to KCNA.

South Korea’s Ministry of National Defense in a statement to news reporters Thursday said it “strongly condemned” the launch and was conducting a joint analysis of the missiles with the U.S. military.

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South Korean soldiers direct a K21 infantry fighting vehicle onto the shore during Ulchi Freedom Shield training on Thursday.



A South Korean army K21 infantry fighting vehicle crosses a reservoir during Ulchi Freedom Shield training on Thursday.

## Canadian warships arrive in Japan for training, patrols

By ALEX WILSON  
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA, Japan — Three Canadian navy ships steamed into Tokyo Bay this week, signaling the start of a monthslong patrol of the Indo-Pacific as part of the country’s efforts to expand its presence in the region.

Two frigates, the HMCS Ottawa and HMCS Vancouver, and the replenishment ship MV Asterix arrived Monday at the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force’s naval base in Yokosuka, Vancouver spokeswoman Capt. Veronique Sabourin told Stars

and Stripes by phone Thursday.

“We’re happy to be here, to work with partner nations in order to enhance security in the region,” she said. “The Royal Canadian Navy has a proud history of being present in the Indo-Pacific region.”

The ships left Canada on Aug. 14 for a five-month deployment, according to a news release from Canada’s Department of National Defence. The Ottawa and Vancouver are the second and third warships to deploy to the Indo-Pacific this year; the frigate HMCS Montreal was to return to Halifax last month, according to the release.

The three recently arrived ships may depart this weekend for a surveillance mission near North Korea as part of Operation Neon, a multinational effort to enforce the U.N. Security Council’s sanctions against the isolationist country, Sabourin said.

The ships will look for “suspected maritime sanctions evasion activities,” such as ship-to-ship fuel and commodities transfers banned by the U.N., according to the Canadian National Defence Ministry website.

Other participant nations are the United States, Australia, France, Germany, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and the United

Kingdom.

The Canadian ships are expected to take part in additional patrols, training and exercises during their time in the region; they’re also expected make port visits in the Philippines, South Korea and elsewhere in Japan, Sabourin said.

Canada in November announced a new Indo-Pacific strategy that includes investment of approximately \$1.68 billion in trade, immigration, environmental health and regional security, according to the international development department Global Affairs Canada.



## NATION

# Tropical Storm Idalia heads out into ocean

By TERRY SPENCER

Associated Press

PERRY, Fla. — Tropical Storm Idalia headed out to sea Thursday after thrashing parts of Florida and Georgia with punishing rains and destructive winds, leaving residents to begin the arduous process of clearing fallen trees, restoring power and picking through the debris of devastated homes.

Thus far, authorities have only confirmed one death, that of a man hit by a falling tree in Georgia. But the storm's ferocious winds shredded homes in Florida's Big Bend area, where Idalia roared ashore as a major hurricane. As many as a half-million customers were without power at one point in Florida and Georgia as the storm ripped down power poles.

After pounding Florida, Idalia swung east, flooding many of South Carolina's beaches and leaving some in the state and North Carolina without power before heading back into the Atlantic Ocean. Forecasters said the weakened storm should continue heading away from the U.S. for several days, although officials in Bermuda warned that Idalia could hit the island early next week as a tropical storm.

Rescue and repair efforts were in full force in Florida's remote

Big Bend area, where Idalia roared ashore Wednesday as a major hurricane. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said he planned to tour the area with federal emergency officials on Thursday. He noted that because the storm came ashore in the remote region where Florida's Panhandle curves into the peninsula, Idalia was far less destructive than feared, providing only glancing blows to Tampa Bay and other more populated areas. In contrast, Hurricane Ian last year hit the heavily populated Fort Myers area, leaving 149 dead in the state.

"I think this one, there was definitely a lot of destruction but it was so much debris and so much woods and that's just going to require a lot to clean all that up," DeSantis said.

No hurricane-related deaths were officially confirmed in Florida, but the state's highway patrol reported two people killed in separate weather-related crashes just hours before Idalia made landfall.

The storm was still a menace when it reached Valdosta, Ga., about 80 miles inland. Nearly all of the 600 tarps that officials had set aside to cover damaged roofs had been claimed by Thursday morning, said Meghan Barwick, spokeswoman for surrounding



PHOTOS BY REBECCA BLACKWELL/AP

Pickup trucks and debris lie strewn in a canal in Horseshoe Beach, Fla., after the passage of Hurricane Idalia on Wednesday.



Jewell Baggett stands beside a Christmas decoration from the wreckage of her mother's home in Horseshoe Beach on Wednesday.

Lowndes County.

More than 24,000 homes and businesses in the county of about 120,000 people remained without electricity, according to Barwick, who said residents should be prepared for several days more without lights or air conditioning.

Still, the storm's impact on the state could have been much worse, Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp said.

"We're fortunate this storm was a narrow one, and it was fast moving and didn't sit on us," Kemp told a news conference Thursday in Atlanta. "But if you were in the path, it was devastating. And we're responding that way."

He noted that Valdosta, a city of 55,000 people, suffered a direct hit while Idalia remained a strong hurricane with 90 mph winds.

"I've had multiple people text me in Valdosta and say that city will not be the same once the cleanup is done," Kemp said.

A man in Valdosta died when a

tree fell on him as he tried to clear another tree out of the road, Lowndes County Sheriff Ashley Paulk said.

In South Carolina, the storm coupled with already really high tides to send seawater flowing over sand dunes in nearly every beach town, although in most places the water was only about ankle deep.

In Charleston, Idalia's surge topped part of the seawall that protects the downtown, sending ocean water into the streets and neighborhoods where horse-drawn carriages pass million-dollar homes and the famous open-air market.

Preliminary data showed the Wednesday evening high tide reached just over 9.2 feet, more than 3 feet above normal and the fifth-highest reading in Charleston Harbor since records were first kept in 1899.

Bands from Idalia also brought short-lived tornadoes. One flipped a car in suburban Goose Creek, S.C., causing minor inju-

ries, authorities said. No major damage was reported.

The worst damage was in Florida, where Idalia came ashore Wednesday morning near Keaton Beach.

Residents of the Big Bend region saw streets turned into rivers that submerged cars and homes, while howling winds tore off roofs, snapped tall trees, sent sheet metal flying and shredded homes.

At Horseshoe Beach in central Big Bend, Jewell Baggett picked through the wreckage and debris of her mother's destroyed home, finding a few pictures and her mother's pots and pans.

Her grandfather built the home decades ago and it had survived four previous storms, she said.

"And now it's gone," she said. "Nothing left. A few little trinkets here and there."

Baggett, whose mother had left before the storm hit, said at least five or six other homes also were destroyed.

## White House seeks short-term funding to keep government operating

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The White House said Thursday that Congress should pass a short-term funding measure to ensure the government keeps operating after the current budget year ends Sept. 30.

An official with the Office of Management and Budget said lawmakers would very likely need to pass a temporary spending measure in September to prevent a potential partial shutdown.

The official was not authorized to discuss the administration's plans and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Without such congressional approval, parts of the federal government could shut down when the new budget year begins Oct. 1. That would jeopardize federal programs on which millions of U.S. households rely. The shutdown is a risk because of disagreements on the annual spending bills to be passed by the Re-

publican-led House and Democratic-majority Senate. Neither side wants a shutdown despite their differences.

House Republicans are insisting on sharp cuts to many programs, reopening a tense debate about government finances from earlier this year when the White House and Congress reached a compromise in June to extend the government's legal borrowing authority through January 2025.

On Wednesday, White House

press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre faced questions at the daily briefing about preparations for a shutdown. Jean-Pierre said she would not address the "hypotheticals" of a closure, even as she sought to assign blame for a shutdown on Congress.

"There's absolutely no reason at all for Congress to shut down the government," she said. "There isn't. And this is a question for Congress to answer."

House Speaker Kevin McCar-

thy, R-Calif., told Fox News on Sunday that he "would actually like" to have a short-term funding measure because a shutdown "hurts the American public." He suggested an extension would allow the House to pass its own spending plans and improve its leverage in talks with the Senate.

The Washington Post first reported on Thursday that the White House said Congress should pass a short-term funding measure.

## NATION



LIZ DUFOUR, THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER/AP

Soon after this picture was taken on Wednesday, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., appeared to briefly freeze up and was unable to answer a question from a reporter during an event in Covington, Ky., weeks after he had a similar episode in Washington.

## McConnell appears to freeze at second news conference

BY MARY CLARE JALONICK  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell appeared to briefly freeze up and was unable to answer a question from a reporter at an event in Kentucky on Wednesday, weeks after he had a similar episode in Washington.

As seen on video from a local news station, the 81-year-old McConnell was asked whether he would run for reelection in 2026. The senator asked the reporter to repeat the question before trailing off and staring straight ahead for about 10 seconds.

An aide standing at the front of the room with McConnell then asked him whether he heard the question and repeated it to him. When McConnell did not answer, the aide announced to the room that “we’re going to need a minute,” and McConnell continued to stare ahead. In all, he was silent for around 30 seconds.

The latest incident in Covington on Wednesday only adds to the questions in recent months about McConnell’s health and whether

the Republican, who was first elected to the Senate in 1984 and has served as GOP leader since 2007, will remain in Congress and in his leadership post. His reaction was similar to an occurrence in July, when he froze for about 20 seconds at a news conference in the Capitol. That time, he went back to his office with aides and then returned to answer more questions.

McConnell eventually answered two additional questions at the Kentucky event — though not the one about a 2026 campaign — and appeared to have some difficulty speaking. The aide then ended the news conference and McConnell slowly left the room.

His office said afterward that McConnell was feeling “momentarily lightheaded” and would see a physician before his next event.

In March, McConnell suffered a concussion and a broken rib after falling and hitting his head after a dinner event at a hotel. He did not return to the Senate for almost six weeks. Since he returned, he has appeared to walk more slowly and his speech has often sounded more halting.

# Liberals, experts seek to use Constitution to nix Trump bid

BY NICHOLAS RICCARDI  
Associated Press

As former President Donald Trump dominates the Republican presidential primary, some liberal groups and legal experts contend that a rarely used clause of the Constitution prevents him from being president after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

The 14th Amendment bars from office anyone who once took an oath to uphold the Constitution but then “engaged” in “insurrection or rebellion” against it. A growing number of legal scholars say the post-Civil War clause applies to Trump after his role in trying to overturn the 2020 presidential election and encouraging his backers to storm the U.S. Capitol.

Two liberal nonprofits pledge court challenges should states’ election officers place Trump on the ballot despite those objections.

The effort is likely to trigger a chain of lawsuits and appeals across several states that ultimately would lead to the U.S. Supreme Court, possibly in the midst of the 2024 primary season. The matter adds even more potential legal chaos to a nomination process already roiled by the front-runner facing four criminal trials.

Now Trump’s very ability to run could be litigated as Republicans are scheduled to start choosing their nominee, starting with the Iowa caucuses on Jan. 15.

“There’s a very real prospect these cases will be active during the primaries,” said Gerard Magliocca, a law professor at Indiana University, warning that there could be different outcomes in different states before the Supreme Court makes a final decision. “Imagine you have an opinion that says he’s not eligible and then there’s another primary where he’s on the ballot.”

Though most litigation is unlikely to begin until October, when states

begin to set their ballots for the upcoming primary, the issue has gotten a boost from a recently released law review article written by two prominent conservative law professors, William Baude and Michael Paulsen. They concluded that Trump must be barred from the ballot due to the clause in the third section of the 14th Amendment.



Trump

That section bars anyone from Congress, the military, and federal and state offices if they previously took an oath to support the Constitution and “have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof.”

In their article, scheduled to be published in the University of Pennsylvania Law Review, Baude and Paulsen said they believe the meaning is clear.

“Taking Section Three seriously means excluding from present or future office those who sought to subvert lawful government authority under the Constitution in the aftermath of the 2020 election,” they write.

The issue came up during last week’s Republican presidential debate in Milwaukee, when former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson warned that “this is something that could disqualify him under our rules and under the Constitution.”

In 2021, the nonprofit Free Speech For People sent letters to the top election official in all 50 states requesting Trump’s removal if he were to run again for the presidency. The group’s legal director, Ron Fein, noted that after years of silence, officials are beginning to discuss the matter.

“The framers of the 14th Amendment learned the bloody lesson that,

once an oath-breaking insurrectionist engages in insurrection, they can’t be trusted to return to power,” Fein said.

The complex legal issues were highlighted on Wednesday when the Arizona Republic reported that Secretary of State Adrian Fontes said his hands are tied because of a ruling by that state’s high court that only Congress can disqualify someone on Arizona’s presidential ballot. Fontes, a Democrat, called the ruling “dead, flat wrong” in an interview with the Republic but said he would abide by it.

If Trump appears on the Arizona ballot, those who believe he’s not qualified can still sue in federal court to remove him.

Brad Raffensperger, the Republican secretary of state in Georgia who withstood pressure from Trump when he sought to overturn the 2020 results in the state, suggested the issue should be up to voters.

“As Georgia’s Secretary of State, I have been clear that voters are smart and deserve the right to decide elections,” he said in an emailed statement.

Trump and 18 others were charged earlier this month in a 41-count indictment that outlines an alleged scheme to subvert the will of Georgia voters who had chosen Democrat Joe Biden. Trump pleaded not guilty on Thursday and said he’ll skip a hearing next week in the case.

Trump argues that any effort to prevent him from appearing on a state’s ballot amounts to “election interference” — the same way he is characterizing the criminal charges filed against him in New York and Atlanta and by federal prosecutors in Washington, D.C., and Florida.

“And I think what’s happening is there’s really been a backlash against it,” Trump told the conservative channel Newsmax.

## Key Fed inflation gauge data hints at leaving interest rates unchanged

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — An inflation gauge closely tracked by the Federal Reserve remained low in July, adding to signs of cooling price increases and raising the likelihood that the Fed will leave interest rates unchanged when it next meets in late September.

Thursday’s report from the Commerce Department showed that prices rose just 0.2% from June to July, the third straight modest increase. Compared with a year earlier, prices rose 3.3% in July, up from a 3% annual increase in June. The year-over-year figure, though, is down sharply from the

7% peak it reached a year ago, though still above the Fed’s 2% inflation target.

The latest data follows other recent reports that suggest the economy and the job market may be slowing enough to cool inflation pressures. The number of advertised job openings, for example, tumbled in July, and fewer Americans are quitting their jobs to seek better opportunities. Both trends ease the pressure on companies to raise pay to find and keep workers — a move that tends to perpetuate inflation as employers raise prices to offset their higher labor costs.

Excluding volatile food and

energy prices, “core” inflation ticked up just 0.2% from June to July, the same as from May to June. Compared with a year earlier, core prices rose 4.2%, up slightly from 4.1% the previous month. The year-over-year core figures rose partly because of much smaller price increases a year ago. The Fed’s policymakers closely monitor core prices as a telltale signal of where inflation might be headed.

The inflation gauge that was issued Thursday, called the personal consumption expenditures price index, is separate from the better-known consumer price in-

dex. Earlier this month, the government reported that the CPI rose 3.2% in July from a year earlier, down from a peak of 9.1% in June 2022.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell underscored the tricky dynamics surrounding the economy and inflation in a high-profile speech last week at an annual conference of central bankers in Jackson Hole, Wyo. He stressed that the Fed would “proceed carefully” as it considers its next moves.

“Two months of good data,” Powell said, “are only the beginning of what it will take to build confidence that inflation is moving

down sustainably toward our goal. We can’t yet know the extent to which these lower readings will continue.”

Spending in July jumped around the July 4th holiday, according to data from the Bank of America Institute, which tracks consumer activity through its credit and debit cards. And a pick-up in online spending occurred in mid-month, likely because of Amazon’s “prime” shopping day, the institute said. Later in the month, entertainment spending surged, probably reflecting the popularity of the “Barbie” and “Oppenheimer” movie releases.

## NATION

# Agency aims to ease weed restrictions

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has delivered a recommendation to the Drug Enforcement Administration on marijuana policy, and Senate leaders hailed it Wednesday as a first step toward easing federal restrictions on the drug.

HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra said Wednesday on X, the plat-

form formerly known as Twitter, that the agency has responded to President Joe Biden's request "to provide a scheduling recommendation for marijuana to the DEA."

"We've worked to ensure that a scientific evaluation be completed and shared expeditiously," he added.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said in a statement that

HHS had recommended that marijuana be moved from a Schedule I to a Schedule III controlled substance.

"HHS has done the right thing," Schumer, D-N.Y., said. "DEA should now follow through on this important step to greatly reduce the harm caused by draconian marijuana laws."

Rescheduling the drug would reduce or potentially eliminate

criminal penalties for possession. Marijuana is currently classified as a Schedule I drug, alongside heroin and LSD.

According to the DEA, Schedule I drugs "have no currently accepted medical use in the United States, a lack of accepted safety for use under medical supervision, and a high potential for abuse."

Schedule III drugs "have a po-

tential for abuse less than substances in Schedules I or II and abuse may lead to moderate or low physical dependence or high psychological dependence." They currently include ketamine and some anabolic steroids.

Biden requested the review in October 2022 as he pardoned thousands of Americans convicted of "simple possession" of marijuana under federal law.



JAE C. HONG/AP

**Volunteers make food and supply deliveries to elderly residents impacted by a devastating wildfire in Lahaina, Hawaii, on Aug. 19.**

## Forecasters warn low humidity, wind boost fire threat in Hawaii

Associated Press

HONOLULU — The National Weather Service on Wednesday warned gusty winds and low humidity have increased the risk that fires could spread rapidly in the western parts of each Hawaiian island, three weeks after a deadly blaze tore through a coastal Maui town during a similar alert.

But the agency said winds would not be as powerful compared to Aug. 8 when flames burned down much of Lahaina, killing at least 115 people and destroying more than 2,000 structures. The fire was the deadliest in the U.S. in more than a century.

Lahaina's flames were fanned by wind gusts topping 60 mph. This time, winds are forecast to be 15 to 30 mph with gusts up to 50 mph, said Maureen Ballard, meteorologist at the agency's Honolulu office.

"There is a magnitude of difference between the wind speeds in

this event versus August 8th," Ballard said.

The agency issued a Red Flag Warning for the leeward sides of the Hawaiian Islands through Thursday afternoon. It said gusts, low humidity and dry grasses and trees could contribute to "extreme fire behavior." It urged people to delay activities that could throw off sparks.

"It's definitely still something to be concerned about," Ballard said.

The Lahaina fire was fueled by powerful winds whipped up by a combination of Hurricane Dora, which passed some 500 miles to the south, and a very strong high pressure system to the north of the islands.

The cause of the blaze hasn't been determined, but it's possible it was ignited by bare electrical wire and leaning power poles toppled by the strong winds.

Maui's electric utility, Hawaiian Electric, acknowledged its power lines started a wildfire on

Maui but faulted county firefighters for declaring the blaze contained and leaving the scene, only to have a second wildfire break out nearby.

Maui County has sued the utility.

As high winds re-entered the weather forecast on Tuesday, the county, Hawaiian Electric and Maj. Gen. Kenneth Hara, head of the Hawaii National Guard, issued a joint statement saying they were working together to minimize the risk of wildfire and ensure safety.

"In our lifetimes, Hawaii has never been tested like this," the statement said. "We will do what we have always done when confronted by hardship and heartbreak — we will stand together for our people and communities and work to keep them safe."

The electric utility serving Kauai said it would cut power to a mountainous western part of the island in response to the weather service warning.

## Critical fire weather arrives in north Calif.

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Gusty winds and low humidity brought a high risk of wildfires to the interior of Northern California on Wednesday, and a utility proactively cut electricity to about 8,400 customers to prevent potential ignitions in the blustery conditions.

Red flag warnings for critical fire danger were in effect until 8 p.m. in much of the Sacramento Valley and adjacent areas to the west, the National Weather Service said.

Pacific Gas & Electric said shortly before 2 a.m., it began public safety power shutoffs in "targeted high-fire-threat areas" of eight counties. Winds calmed throughout the afternoon, and by 5 p.m. the utility issued a weather "all-clear," saying it would begin the process of restoring electricity.

The gusty northerly winds were generated in the wake of a trough of low pressure that moved through Northern California on Tuesday, the weather service said.

Public safety power shutoffs are intended to prevent fires from starting when power lines are downed by winds or struck by falling trees or windblown debris. Such fires have caused destruction and deaths in California.

The issue of power shutoffs surfaced in Hawaii after the deadly fire that destroyed the Maui community of Lahaina. Maui County claims the Hawaiian Electric Company negligently failed to cut power despite high winds and dry conditions. The utility acknowl-



HAVEN DALEY / AP

**Pacific Gas & Electric employees monitor wind conditions at their Emergency Response Center in Vacaville, Calif., on Wednesday**

edges its lines started the fire, but it faults county firefighters for declaring the blaze contained and leaving the scene.

Wednesday's proactive power cuts were PG&E's first since 2021. PG&E first implemented the shutoffs in 2019, leaving nearly 2 million people in the San Francisco Bay Area and elsewhere in Northern California without power and drawing fierce criticism.

The utility has since been able to reduce the impact by adding more circuit switches to its grid, allowing it to more precisely determine which customers will lose power, said Paul Moreno, a PG&E spokesperson.

PG&E also added hundreds of weather stations in areas prone to wildfires, and now it has nearly 1,500 units that provide information on when fire conditions are present and when those conditions have passed, he said.

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## WORLD

# Zelenskyy: We refined long-range weapon

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Thursday his country has developed a weapon that hit a target 400 miles away, in an apparent reference to the previous day's strike on an airport in western Russia.

Zelenskyy said on his Telegram channel the weapon was produced by Ukraine's Ministry of Strategic Industries but gave no other details.

On Wednesday, a four-hour

wave of drones that Moscow blamed on Ukraine hit an airport near Russia's border with Estonia and Latvia, damaging four Il-76 military transport planes, according to local reports.

The airport is in Russia's Pskov region, about 400 miles north of the Ukrainian border.

In all, six Russian regions were targeted in the barrage amid the 18-month war.

The Associated Press was unable to determine whether the drones were launched from Uk-

raine or inside Russia.

Kyiv officials normally neither claim nor deny responsibility for attacks on Russian soil, though they sometimes refer obliquely to them. Zelenskyy's remark was the clearest hint that Ukraine was behind the strike.

The attack forced the closure of Pskov airport, though it reopened Thursday, according to Russian transport officials.

Another drone intercepted overnight near Moscow resulted in flight delays at several airports

around the Russian capital, officials said Thursday. No injuries were reported.

Russian news agency Interfax reported that security services killed two people and detained five members of a Ukrainian sabotage group in the Bryansk border region on Wednesday.

The apparent Ukrainian drones reaching deep into Russia and cross-border sabotage missions are part of Kyiv's efforts to heap domestic pressure on the Kremlin, militarily and politically.

Meantime, a Ukrainian counteroffensive launched in June is chipping away at some parts of the front line, Kyiv officials claim.

Ukraine is aiming to "erode Russian morale and increase pressure on its commanders," the International Institute for Strategic Studies, a think tank, said in an assessment.

The strategy is "to bring Russian forces to a tipping point where combat power and morale may begin to break," the IISS said in the analysis late Wednesday.



JEROME DELAY / AP

Medics stand by the covered bodies of victims of a deadly blaze in downtown Johannesburg on Thursday.

## Dozens die as fire rips through rundown building in South Africa

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG — A nighttime fire ripped through a rundown apartment building mainly occupied by homeless people and squatters in Johannesburg, forcing some to throw babies out of third-story windows in a desperate attempt to save them and leaving at least 74 people dead early Thursday, witnesses and emergency services in South Africa's biggest city said.

At least 12 of those killed were children, the youngest a 1-year-old, according to city and medical officials, who held a press conference to give an update on the death toll. They said an undetermined number of people were still missing and many bodies re-

covered were burned beyond recognition.

More than 50 people were injured and emergency services officials warned that the death toll could still rise as they continued to search the scene more than 12 hours after the blaze broke out at around 1 a.m.

Dozens of bodies recovered by firefighters lay on a side road outside the apartment block, some in body bags but others covered in silver sheets or blankets after the body bags ran out.

"Over 20 years in the service, I've never come across something like this," Johannesburg Emergency Services Management spokesperson Robert Mulaudzi said.

Authorities hadn't established the cause of the fire but Mgcini Tshwaku, a local government official, said the initial evidence suggested it started with a candle. Inhabitants used candles and fires for light and to keep warm in the winter cold, he said.

Some of the survivors described how they jumped out of windows to escape the blaze, but only after tossing their children to others below.

"Everything happened so fast and I only had time to throw the baby out," said Adam Taiwo, who managed to save his 1-year-old son and himself. "I also followed him after they caught him downstairs." Taiwo said he did not know where his wife, Joyce, was.

## Korea: North says launch was response to US flyover of B-1B bombers

FROM PAGE 1

ed strikes through air bursts, suggesting it confirmed the explosions of dummy warheads at a set altitude.

North Korea said its missile tests were a response to the United States' flyover of long-range B-1B bombers for a joint aerial training with South Korea earlier Wednesday as part of the allies' field exercises.

"(The aerial drill) is a serious threat to (North Korea) as it was just pursuant to the scenario for a preemptive nuclear strike at" North Korea, the Korean People's Army general staff said. "The KPA will never overlook the rash acts of the U.S. forces and the (South Korean) military gangsters."

The missile launches Wednesday were the latest in the North's barrage of weapons tests since last year.

According to South Korean and Japanese assessments, the two short-range missiles traveled a

distance of 225-250 miles at the maximum altitude of 30 miles before landing in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff called the launches "a grave provocation" that threatens international peace and violates U.N. Security Council resolutions that ban any ballistic launches by North Korea. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said the U.S. commitment to the defense of South Korea and Japan remains "ironclad."

South Korean and Japanese authorities said their warplanes conducted combined aerial drills with U.S. B-1B bombers respectively on Wednesday.

South Korea's Defense Ministry said that Wednesday's B-1B deployment is the 10th flyover by U.S. bombers on the Korean Peninsula this year.

North Korea is extremely sensitive to the deployment of U.S. B-1B bombers, which can carry a huge number of conventional weapons. The North describes the bombers as "nuclear strategic" although

the planes were switched to conventional weaponry in the 1990s.

On Aug. 21, the U.S. and South Korean militaries kicked off their summer Ulchi Freedom Shield computer-simulated command post exercise. During this year's training, where were slated to end later Thursday, the allies have included more than 30 kinds of field exercises, such as Wednesday's joint aerial exercise involving the B-1B aircraft.

North Korea calls major U.S.-involved military drills on and near the Korean Peninsula preparation for invasion. Washington and Seoul officials maintain their drills are defensive. The U.S. stations about 28,000 troops in South Korea.

KCNA said Kim on Tuesday visited an army post where his military has been holding command post drills in response to the South Korean-U.S. military training. It said the drills are aimed at practicing procedures for "occupying the whole territory of the southern half" of the Korean Peninsula in

the event of war.

Kim underscored the need to "deal a heavy blow at the enemy's war potential and war command center and blinding their means of command communication at the initial stage of operation." Kim also detailed tasks to acquire an ability to launch "simultaneous super-intense strikes" at key enemy military targets and other sites whose destruction can cause social and economic chaos, according to KNCA.

The North's report showed it has operational plans to launch full-blown attacks on South Korea in the event of military clashes between the rivals to achieve Korean unification by force, said analyst Cheong Seong-Chang at the private Sejong Institute in South Korea. He said that North Korea plots to conduct nuclear and EMP (electromagnetic pulse) attacks at the early stage of war.

South Korea's Unification Ministry said later Thursday it strongly condemns North Korea for openly revealing its intent to at-

tack the South. It warned North Korea will only face "an overwhelming response" by South Korea, the U.S. and Japan if it continues its provocation and military threats.

The ministry said it was North Korean state media's first report on command post drills involving the whole military since Kim took power in late 2011.

North Korea has openly threatened to use its nuclear weapons first in potential conflicts with South Korea and the U.S. since it last year adopted a new law that authorized the preemptive use of nuclear weapons in a broad range of situations.

Kim has been pushing hard to expand and modernize his weapons arsenals. Its second attempt at launching a spy satellite failed last week, but it plans a third attempt in October.

Foreign experts say Kim eventually wants to use his enlarged weapons arsenals to force the U.S. to make concessions when diplomacy resumes.

# WEEKEND



Denzel goes to Italy in 'Equalizer 3'  
Movies, Pages 16-17



Ryan Miller, who oversees Disney Lorcana at Ravensburger, has been designing collectible trading card games much of his adult life.  
JAY L. CLENDENIN, LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

## LORCANA

Next big collectible card game

Highly anticipated launch looks to cash in on Disney nostalgia, accessible design

Games, Pages 18-19

## WEEKEND: GADGETS &amp; TECHNOLOGY

## Is the world ready for the digital clone?

Japanese are open to idea of emerging technology that looks, talks just like its owners, but expect West to be hesitant

By YURI KAGEYAMA  
Associated Press

**K**azutaka Yonekura dreams of a world where everyone will have their very own digital “clone” — an online avatar that could take on some of our work and daily tasks, such as appearing in Zoom meetings in our place.

Yonekura, chief executive of Tokyo startup Alt Inc., believes it could make our lives easier and more efficient.

His company is developing a digital double, an animated image that looks and talks just like its owner. The digital clone can be used, for example, by a recruiter to carry out preliminary job interviews, or by a physician to screen patients ahead of checkups.

“This liberates you from all the routine (tasks) that you must do tomorrow, the day after tomorrow and the day after that,” he told The Associated Press as he showed off his double — a thumbnail video image of Yonekura on a computer screen, with a synthesized version of his voice.

When his digital clone is asked “What kind of music do you like,” it pauses for several seconds, then goes into a long-winded explanation about Yonekura’s fondness for energetic rhythmical music such as hip-hop or rock ‘n’ roll. A bit mechanical perhaps — but any social gaffes have been programmed out.

Yonekura, 46, argues that the technology is more personal than Siri, ChatGPT or Google AI. Most importantly, it belongs to you and not the technology company that created it, he said.

For now, having a digital double is expensive. Each Alt clone costs about \$140,000, so it will likely take some time



YURI KAGEYAMA/AP

**Kazutaka Yonekura, chief executive of Tokyo startup Alt Inc., demonstrates his digital clone on a personal computer Aug. 17 at his office in Tokyo.**

before there’s a clone for everyone.

In creating a digital double, information about a person is skimmed off social media sites and publicly available records in a massive data collection effort, and stored in the software. The data is constantly updated, keeping in sync with the owner’s changing habits and tastes.

Yonekura believes digital clones could pave the way for a society where people can focus on being creative and waste less time on tedious interactions.

For many Japanese — the nation that gave the world Pokemon, karaoke, Hello Kitty and emojis — the digital clone is as

friendly as an animation character.

But Yonekura acknowledges that cultures are different and that Westerners might not like the idea of a digital clone as much.

“I can’t tell you how many times I’ve been asked: Why does it have to be a personal clone, and not just a digital agent?” he said, a hint of exasperation in his voice.

Yonekura’s company has drawn mostly domestic investments of more than \$40 million, including venture capital funds run by major Japanese banks, while also building collaborative relationships with academia, including the University of

Southern California and the University of Tokyo. But large-scale production of digital doubles is a long way off — for now, the company offers more affordable voice recognition software and virtual assistant technology.

INCS toenter Co., another Tokyo-based startup, has been successful as a production company of computerized music for animation, manga, films, virtual realities and games that uses so-called Vocaloid artists. The synthesized singers or musical acts known as Vocaloid are often paired up with anime- or manga- style characters.

Like Yonekura’s digital clone, Vocaloids are an example of Japanese technology that uses computer software to duplicate human traits or likeness.

Among INCS toenter’s hits is “Melt,” created on a single desktop in 2007 and performed by a group called Supercell, which has been played 23 million times on YouTube.

Some wonder whether digital clones or Vocaloids could become popular outside of Japan. Digital assistant and voice software, as well as computerized music, exist in the West, but they are not clones or Vocaloids.

Yu Tamura, chief executive and founder of INCS toenter, says he is encouraged by the increasing global popularity of Japanese animation and manga, but that one thing to watch out for is the “Galapagos syndrome.” The term is widely used in Japan to describe how some Japanese products, while successful at home, fail to translate abroad.

Overseas consumers could see it as quirky or too cutesy, except for Japanophiles, Tamura said. “They simply won’t get it,” he said.

## SwitchBot weather devices alert users to conditions in real time

By GREGG ELLMAN  
Tribune News Service

SwitchBot’s wireless Indoor/Outdoor Thermo-Hygrometer sets up in seconds with its accompanying smartphone app to let you know about actual weather conditions in real time.

After the quick setup, the Wireless Hygrometer Thermometer can be placed just about anywhere indoors or outdoors (IP65 rated) to monitor the temperature, humidity and other conditions.

Inside is a high-precision Swiss Sensirion sensor, providing pinpoint accuracy. It refreshes temperature and humidity data every four seconds.

The portable Thermo-Hygrometer could be especially helpful in rooms where the climate’s consistency is critical. That could be a baby’s room (or any bedroom, for that matter), rooms

where pets sleep, indoor gardens or a wine cellar.

When you place it in a specific location, you can set desired conditions for the space. If a room’s conditions exceed a pre-selected setting, the device will send a push notification.

Other readings on the app dashboard include relative humidity, absolute humidity, dew point and vapor-pressure deficit.

Charts can keep track of temperature readings by the hour, day, week, month or year.

The app also has other settings that can be customized for specific rooms or locations.

The temperature can be displayed in Fahrenheit or Celsius. Among the other customizable preferences are language, humidity type and notifications.

The compact (2.4-by-1.1-by-0.8-inch) device is \$8.99 at Amazon. It’s powered by two AAA batter-

ies; an email notification will alert you when the power is getting low. SwitchBot says the batteries should last for up to two years.

The wireless range is listed as 394 feet. A lanyard is included and attached to the corner for hanging the Wireless Hygrometer Thermometer.

Another easy-to-use weather reading gadget from SwitchBot ecosystem is the Thermometer and Hygrometer Plus.

The SwitchBot Thermometer Hygrometer (\$17.99 at Amazon) measures 3.1-by-2.5-by-0.85 inches. It has a 3-inch display for the room temperature in Fahrenheit or Celsius, and humidity.

A foldout stand is great for keeping it on a flat surface. Or use the magnetic backing for attaching it to a metal surface. A 3M metal plate with a self-stick backing is also included.



SWITCHBOT/TNS

**SwitchBot’s wireless Indoor/Outdoor Thermo-Hygrometer can be placed just about anywhere indoors or outdoors (IP65 rated) to monitor temperature, humidity and other conditions via its app.**

It’s powered by two AAA batteries, which should last about a year. It connects to the SwitchBot app with Bluetooth and also has a 394-foot range.

Once paired with the app it reads and displays temperature, relative humidity, absolute humidity, dew point and VPD.

It can be configured with specific ranges for the rooms it stays in, and it will alert you if the temperature or humidity falls out of range. Or, if you desire, set it to keep you up to date with real-time notifications.

Inside is the advanced Swiss-made sensor, which keeps the temperature and humidity readings accurate to  $\pm 0.4$  F and  $\pm 3\%$  relative humidity. It refreshes the data every four seconds to capture instant environment changes.

Both devices work with Alexa, Google Assistant, Siri and other smartphone services by adding a SwitchBot Hub.

System compatibility for both are iOS 11 and Android OS 5.0 and above.

Online: [us.switch-bot.com](http://us.switch-bot.com)

## WEEKEND: ENTERTAINMENT

# 'Money is so tight'

Costume shops, restaurants, studio rental companies among LA businesses impacted by writers and actors strikes

By **KRYSTA FAURIA**  
Associated Press

**T**he company had struggled for years, tossed around by pandemic-induced production shutdowns that began in March 2020. Last year, though, business for Valentino's Costume Group had finally picked back up.

Hoping to capitalize on that good fortune, the shop moved in January to a North Hollywood space twice the size of its old building.

Then Hollywood's screenwriters and actors went on strike. Now, says co-owner Shon LeBlanc, Valentino's can no longer afford to pay its rent.

"My chest is tightening because the money is so tight," says LeBlanc, bemoaning the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers' apparent lack of urgency to try to reach an agreement with the unions. "When is the mayor going to step in and say, 'I'm ordering you guys to figure something out because you're about to collapse the economy in Los Angeles?'"

It has been well over 100 days since members of the Writers Guild of America stopped working, and more than a month since the actors union joined them. LeBlanc's is just one story of many detailing the financial ripple effects.

From studio rentals and set construction to dry cleaning for costumes and transportation to sets, it's hard to find a corner of the Los Angeles economy that has entirely escaped the reverberations.

"A movie set in one day can generate tens of thousands of dollars," says Kevin Klwoden, chief strategist with the Milken Institute, a think tank that researches social and economic issues. "Depending on the level of activity, it can be hundreds of thousands of dollars."

The last writers strike, more than 15 years ago, took three months to resolve and is conservatively estimated to have cost \$2.1 billion in lost output. This time around, the number will be harder to measure given how much production costs, locations and timelines have changed in recent years thanks to technological improvements and increased globalization.

"We tend to think of productions as sort of a self-contained thing," Klwoden says, while in reality, a production often spans companies and even countries. Projects are often "shipped off" to New Zealand for the addition of visual effects, he cites as an example. "The larger a production is, the more likely you are to see a whole bunch of different tax credit mentions at the end."

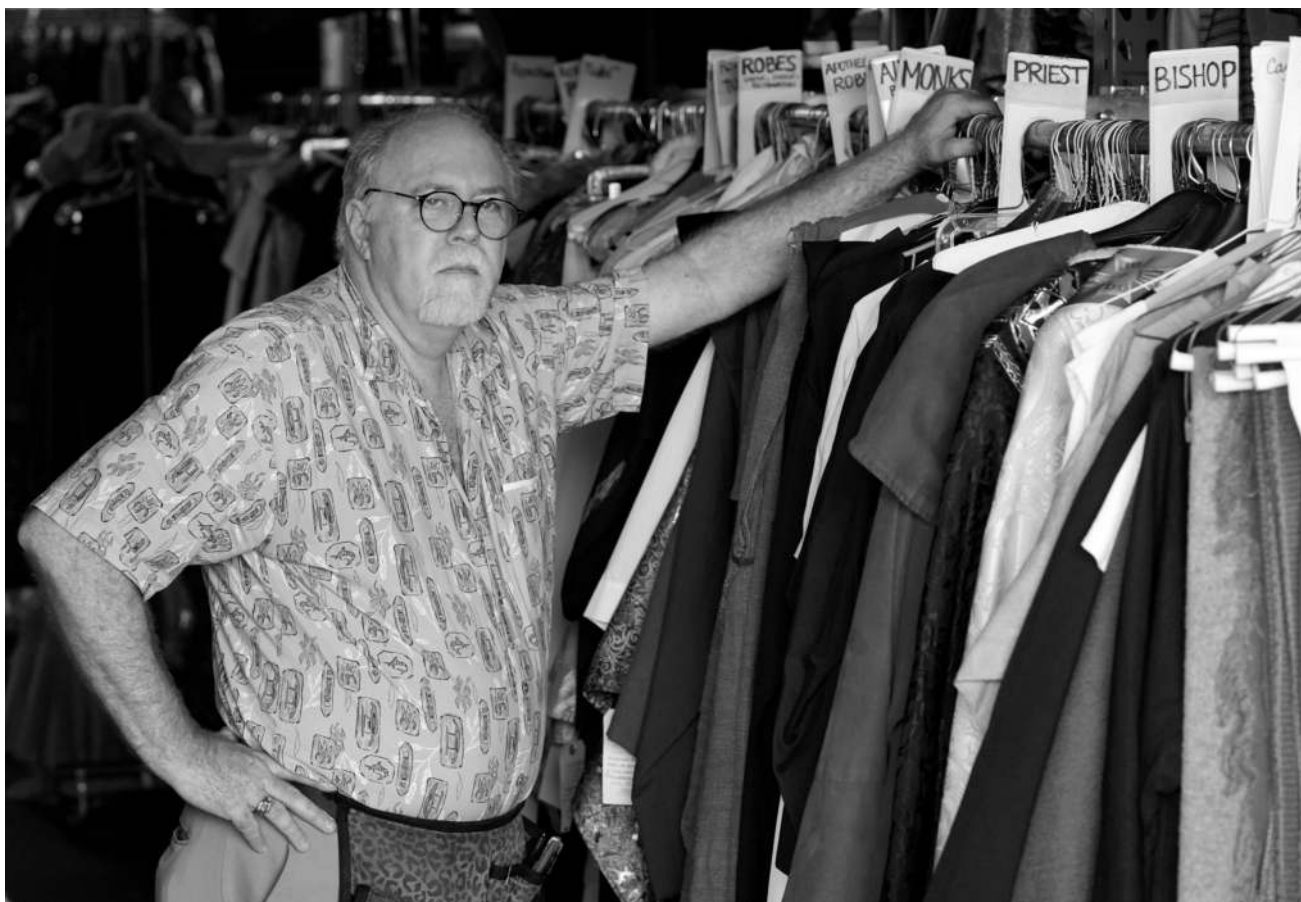
Both guilds are seeking to address issues brought about by the dominance of streaming services, which have changed all aspects of production, from how projects are written to when they're released.

For the writers, the guild has said the use of small staffs, known as "mini rooms" (a riff on the notion of the "writers' room"), for shorter time periods has made a living income hard to achieve. Actors' concerns include protections on the use of artificial intelligence.

Although talks between the WGA and the AMPTP have resumed, there are no plans between the actors and studios to return to the bargaining table.

"I'm not really understanding what the silent treatment is," SAG-AFTRA President Fran Drescher told The Associated Press last week. "It could be a tactical strategy to see if they can wait us out until we lose our resolve and then they can make a better deal for themselves."

In an earnings call at the beginning of August, Hudson Pacific executives tried to assuage concerns about the



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

**Shon LeBlanc, co-owner of costume rental service Valentino's Costume Group, poses May 26 among racks of themed clothing at his store in Los Angeles. LeBlanc has started a GoFundMe to pay rent amid the writers and actors strikes.**

**"The strike ... has just set everybody backwards again. Only this time, there's not the aid that is needed. No one's saying, 'Here's some free money to bail you out. Here's some money to float you through.' That's not there anymore. And it's affecting everybody."**

**Corrie Sommers**

VP of the Toluca Lake Chamber of Commerce, real estate agent

financial impact that the strikes are having on their businesses, while still conceding the reality behind those fears. The company owns both Quixote and Sunset Studios, two major equipment and studio rental companies in the entertainment industry.

"We're all hugely aware of the shrapnel around the industry in general and all of the residual businesses that are getting affected. It will start to feel fairly painful," warned its chair and CEO Victor Coleman when asked how long the strikes may last. "It will be damaging. And I think everybody is very cognizant of that."

The uncertain duration of the strikes looms large over every business feeling the financial effects, with fallout spreading well beyond the entertainment industry. Restaurants, coffee shops, even nail salons near major studios — they're all desperate for a quick resolution.

Patys Restaurant, a Toluca Lake staple that boasts regulars including Steve Carell and Adam Sandler, has seen a major slump in business from diners and catering orders, according to owner George Metsos. He cites lost businesses from obvious patrons — actors, writers, crew members — but also speaks of other regulars who aren't coming in: electricians, set carpenters and the drivers who stop in for breakfast on their way to work at the nearby valley studios.

Emmanuel Pelargos, who owns Astro Burger across the street from Paramount Studios in Hollywood, says the regular presence of writers and actors on the picket lines has not offset the decline in business from halted productions.

"They come in sometimes," he says of the picketers, "but it's mostly to use the bathroom."

Corrie Sommers, vice president of the Toluca Lake Chamber of Commerce, says the timing of the strikes — on the heels of financial recovery from the pandemic — hits small businesses particularly hard.

"The strike ... has just set everybody backwards again. Only this time, there's not the aid that is needed," Sommers says. "No one's saying, 'Here's some free money to bail you out. Here's some money to float you through.' That's not there anymore. And it's affecting everybody."

Sommers, also a real estate agent in the area, cites multiple clients who were interested in buying homes but changed their minds.

"I've personally had about five buyers in the last three months say, 'I'm going to have to wait until next year because I don't know what's happening,'" she says.

While many on strike acknowledge the financial burdens on both peers in the industry and their neighbors outside of it, the writers are standing by their decision with renewed vigor on the picket lines after the much larger actors guild joined them.

Luvh Rakhe, a member of the WGA negotiating committee who has written for hit shows like "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia" and "New Girl," is acutely aware of the financial costs. But he believes people across industries and professions know it is necessary.

"I don't think anyone is, like, blasé and happy about the momentary disruption to their lives," Rakhe says, "but they understand why it happened and what it is hoping to achieve."

Despite the burdens being placed on people in peripheral lines of work, many of them say there is a general sense of solidarity.

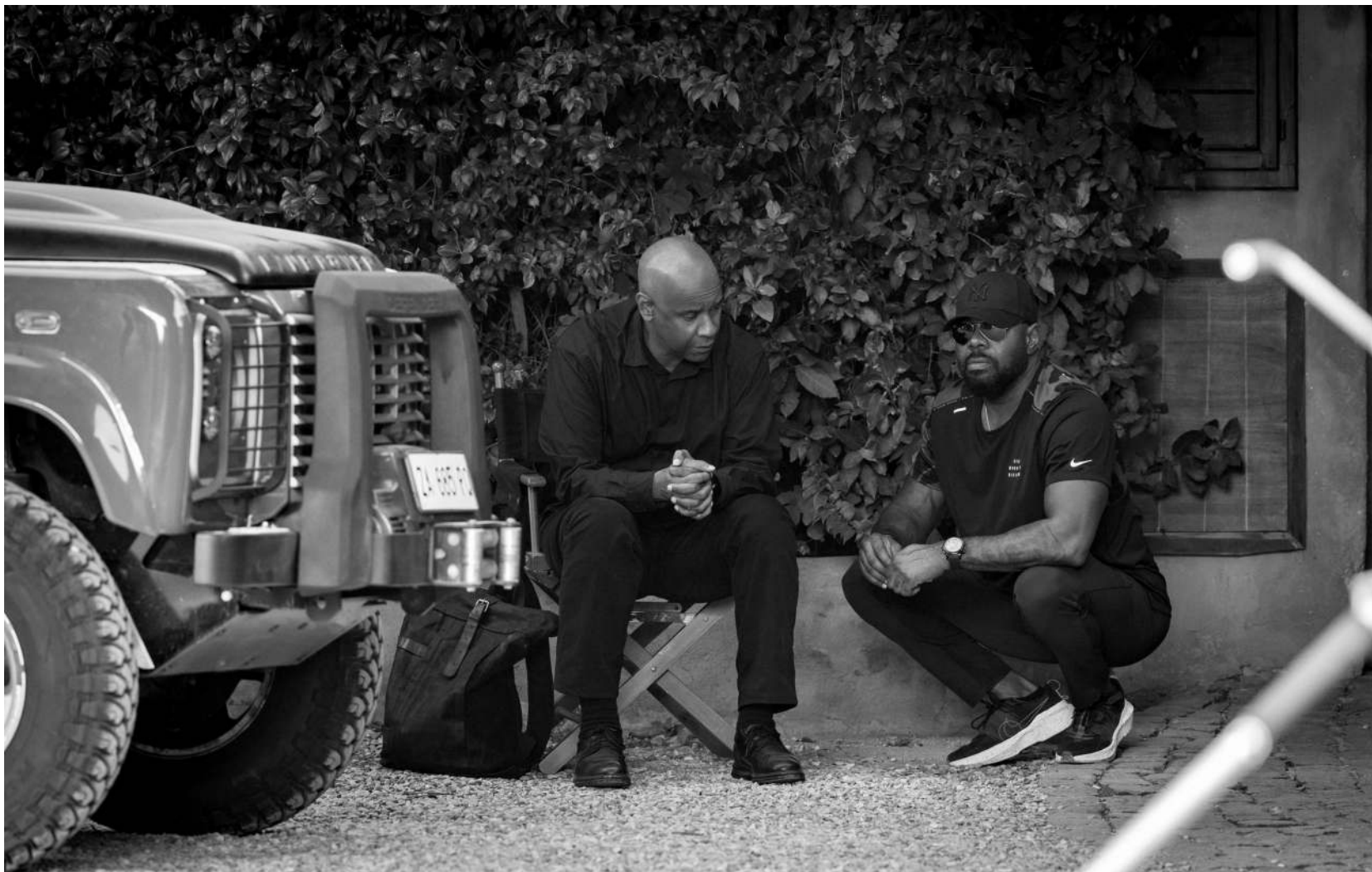
LeBlanc, the Valentino's co-owner, continues to underscore his support, even amid the uncertain future of his 25-year-old business.

(To answer his question, Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass hasn't indicated she will intervene, but did say in a statement in early August that she is "ready to personally engage with all the stakeholders in any way possible to help get this done.")

To keep the shop afloat, Valentino's has started a GoFundMe to pay the rent for now. LeBlanc is hopeful that if they can raise enough money for the next month or so, Halloween and school productions starting back up will get them through the rest of the year.

"We do have things coming up," he has assured the landlord. "We just need to get some money in here to get us over the hump."

## WEEKEND: MOVIES



SONY PICTURES ENTERTAINMENT/AP

Denzel Washington, left, and director Antoine Fuqua on the set of "The Equalizer 3." In addition to the "Equalizer" films, Fuqua directed Washington in "Training Day," which would win him his first lead actor Oscar, as well as in the recent remake of "The Magnificent Seven."

# 'It's not a travelogue'

Director Fuqua says people, challenges of filming 'Equalizer 3' on the Amalfi Coast served as a reminder of purpose

By LINDSEY BAHR  
Associated Press

Filmmaker Antoine Fuqua has been dreaming about taking the Equalizer abroad for years. The action franchise (very loosely based on a 1980s television series) starring Denzel Washington as the reluctant assassin Robert McCall had rooted itself in humble domestic beginnings, in Boston. But after two films and \$382.7 million in box-office receipts in the past decade, the time seemed ripe to travel.

"Denzel is an international movie star," Fuqua told The Associated Press. "We thought it would be nice to see a man of color in a story that's more international. Why not take this character around the world? Luckily, Sony loved the idea."

And there was only one place that was ever seriously on the list: Italy. Washington, Fuqua said, goes every summer and has since his kids were babies. He loves the culture, the people, the food. He even speaks some Italian.

"He just feels right there," Fuqua said.

And for Fuqua, it was the stuff of filmmaking dreams to get to shoot in Cinecittà Studios in Rome and bump up against cinema history, walking where Fellini and so many other greats have before him. In Naples, they found an authentically 1970s New York grittiness that required little to no production design for a pivotal showdown. And on the Amalfi coast, they stumbled on the small village of their, and McCall's, fantasies in the picturesque Atrani.

It's the kind of place you'd believe someone like McCall (or anyone, really) might feel immediately tied to and protective of, which is what happens in "Equalizer 3." The difference is that McCall is more uniquely suited to take on the Camorra. Single-handedly, of course.

"When we went to that small town, we knew that was the place," Fuqua said. "The people were so beautiful, we

were sitting around and they would just bring us coffee and espresso. We didn't even ask for it. Or big giant lemons because it was so hot. You fall in love with the people in a town like that."

The only complaint, which isn't even really a complaint, was about the steps. One of the jewels of Atrani is a medieval church perched on the mountainside high above the beach that they decided would be perfect for an important scene between McCall and Dakota Fanning's CIA analyst. But the only way to get there is to climb up over 700 steps. It wasn't a pleasant journey with all the equipment necessary to shoot a scene, but it was a good reminder of purpose for Fuqua and his cinematographer, three-time Oscar winner Robert Richardson. They wanted to show a real place, not a vacation destination.

"It's not a travelogue," Fuqua said. "It's beautiful in the Mediterranean, but for the people who live there it's real life. The fishermen live off what they catch. They live in small houses. They walk up those steps every day."

The film brings together a core team with decades of history, including producers Todd Black and Jason Blumenthal. In addition to the "Equalizer" films Fuqua directed Washington in "Training Day," which would win him his first lead actor Oscar, as well as in the recent remake of "The Magnificent Seven."

And Black has produced all of the films Washington has directed as well as several others. It was Washington who introduced Black and Fuqua for the first "Equalizer," which all assumed would just be one film, not a franchise.

"You can't think about franchises, or awards, when you're making a movie. If you're making a movie to win an award, or even to get nominated, or have a franchise, you're dead in the water going in probably," Black said. "Not 100% of the time, but you shouldn't think that way."

Instead, they took it one script at a time and "let the audience decide." The audience, it seemed, liked seeing

Washington as McCall more than once. Both the first and second film made over \$190 million each against production budgets that didn't exceed \$65 million, and Sony was interested in a third. It helped also that Black and Fuqua had become friends, with the priceless trust that comes along with it. Both know that on their films, everything will be safe and controlled, whether that's handling an unexpected fan situation for their star or making sure that it's not too dangerous to shoot in Naples at night.

"We've never had an incident at our movies because we are so vigilant," Black said. "And Antoine really protects actors."

Now Black and Fuqua have found themselves in the unusual situation of having to be the primary voices promoting "Equalizer 3" in lieu of their movie stars, who along with Hollywood writers, are deep into a long strike. But while some films released without the help of a star's late-night anecdotes and red carpet appearances have faltered at the box office over the past month, Black feels confident in "Equalizer 3."

"I have other movies coming out that definitely need my actors to promote them, but everyone knows Denzel Washington is the 'Equalizer,'" Black said. "We're very, very confident, thanks to Antoine for making a gorgeous film that works and that audiences love so far. We're in really good shape."

Both just mostly miss having Washington by their side for the press tour. The 68-year-old star, Black said, is much "mellower" now than years ago and is fun to do publicity with. Fuqua also observed that McCall in "Equalizer 3" might even mirror a bit how Washington is in his life too. Both are a little more quiet and a little more patient.

"He'll call me and Todd at 4 in the morning to look at the sunrise," Fuqua said. "That wasn't Denzel before. It's nice to see him really stopping and appreciating life."



## WEEKEND: MOVIES

## Have your own Fuqua streaming film festival

By KATIE WALSH  
Tribune News Service

Director Antoine Fuqua and star Denzel Washington reunite once again for a third installment of “The Equalizer,” this time set in Italy.

The pair have collaborated on the vigilante action series since 2014, so to catch up with the trilogy, be sure to catch “The Equalizer” on Starz, or rent elsewhere, or “The Equalizer 2” on Hulu or rent elsewhere. (Though the truth is you can enjoy these films without having too much knowledge of the previous installments.)

Perhaps the rewatch will inspire a Fuqua film festival, so here are some of the highlights from the busy career of the pulpy action director to check out on streaming:

Fuqua was a music video auteur until his debut feature in 1998, “The Replacement Killers.” The film was the international feature debut of Hong Kong action star and John Woo muse Chow Yun-Fat, starring opposite newly minted Academy Award winner Mira Sorvino. Woo served as producer and action choreographer on the film, so it bears his imprint, even if the critics weren’t kind to Fuqua’s tribute to Woo. But it’s worth a watch to revisit that moment in the late ’90s. Rent it on all platforms.

The high point of Fuqua’s oeuvre is easily 2001’s “Training Day,” his first collab with Denzel Washington, who plays a psychotic Los Angeles Police Department detective taking a rookie (Ethan Hawke) for a ride. It was one of the first times Denzel showed his dark side, which he clearly feels comfortable exploring with Fuqua as Robert McCall, vigilante hero.

Stream “Training Day” on Max or rent it elsewhere.

Fuqua had quite a run in the early 2000s, with “Bait” (2000), “Tears of the Sun” (2003) and “Lightning in a Bottle” (2004), but he tackled the historical epic with 2004’s “King Arthur,” starring Clive Owen and Keira Knightley. Check it out for its time capsule appeal and insane cast, including Ioan Gruffudd, Joel Edgerton, Hugh Dancy, Ray Winstone, Ray Stevenson, Stephen Dillane, Stellan Skarsgard and Mads Mikkelsen.

Crime drama “Brooklyn’s Finest” premiered at Sundance in 2009 and in theaters in 2010. Starring Richard Gere, Don Cheadle, Ethan Hawke and Wesley Snipes, the film follows a group of conflicted New York Police Department cops working in the Brownsville area of the borough, and was shot on location. Stream it on Starz or rent it elsewhere.

Fuqua also set off the ludicrous Gerard Butler “Has Fallen” action series with 2013’s “Olympus Has Fallen,” featuring the action star as Secret Service agent Mike Banning, who has to rescue the president (Aaron Eckhart) from terrorists who attack the White House. Rent it on all platforms.

Another one of Fuqua’s best films is the 2021 thriller “The Guilty,” starring his “Southpaw” leading man Jake Gyllenhaal. This confined suspense movie is a remake of the Danish film of the same name, and features Gyllenhaal as an LA 911 dispatcher who becomes embroiled in a kidnapping plot with a caller.

Filmed during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the limited setting and characters make this lean, performance-driven film shine. Stream it on Netflix.



SONY PICTURES ENTERTAINMENT/AP

Denzel Washington’s vigilante hero Robert McCall must rid an Amalfi Coast village of the Camorra gang before enjoying his retirement in Italy in “The Equalizer 3.”

# Denzel back for more carnage, Italian style

‘Equalizer 3’ prizes performance, dramatic imagery over strangely paced and structured plot about Camorra mafia

By KATIE WALSH  
Tribune News Service

The blood flows like wine in “The Equalizer 3,” as dark as Chianti, seeping into cobblestone streets, splattering onto stained glass and statuary. Yes, star Denzel Washington and director Antoine Fuqua have used the third installment of this trilogy as the opportunity for an Italian vacay, with vigilante hero Robert McCall (Washington) leaving Boston behind to follow a spate of movie sequels, TV productions and Instagram influencers to the old country for a taste of “la dolce vita.” But Robert has to take care of business before he can truly enjoy retirement on the Amalfi Coast, which means ridding a charming village of pesky mafiosi.

It’s clear Fuqua has been watching his Italian mafia movies, and he revels in the visual drama offered by the setting and subgenre. His compositions are stuffed with religious iconography, baroque embellishments, claustrophobic medieval alleys and lots of pasta. But he and cinematographer Robert Richardson put their own stamp on the imagery, draining and desaturating the color palette of the picturesque seaside town of Atrani.

Speaking of Atrani, the iconic town poses here as a village called Altomonte, which is a real place situated between Sicily and Naples, though it is much further inland. It’s unclear why Fuqua renamed such a recognizable slice of the Italian coast for another town, but it’s sort of par for the course when it comes to the plot of “The Equalizer 3,” which is the most ephemeral yet in the series.

We don’t come to “The Equalizer” movies (based on the 1980s TV series) for plot, and this third installment privileges performance and visceral, dramatic imagery over everything else. We start in medias res: Robert has already laid waste to a

group of anonymous men at a Sicilian winery, butcher knives buried in brains. He will soon punch a pistol into another guy’s head and get shot himself in the process while fleeing.

The bullet in Robert’s back will be extracted by a kindly doctor in Altomonte, and while recovering in the village, he will fall in love with the warm hospitality of the people, and the peaceful way of life. He just has to dispatch the bloodthirsty Camorra gang, who seek to intimidate the residents out of their homes so that they can develop resorts and casinos.

The appeal of this film is just watching Washington do what he does best, and he’s having a hell of a lot of fun here, quietly threatening bad guys, flashing toothy grins, pontificating about good and evil and the necessity to do evil in order to be good and putting the hurt on swaggering psychos. It’s also the reunion of Washington with his “Man on Fire” co-star Dakota Fanning, some 20 years later. Fanning plays a CIA agent, Collins, whom he tips off about “jihad drugs” being trafficked through the winery. She shows up in town to chase down the terrorists, but she’s really there to banter coolly with Robert. Fanning’s storyline could be excised from the film completely without losing anything except the extra-filmic significance of seeing these actors together again.

In “The Equalizer 3,” Fuqua goes for operatic style and pulp poetics, strung together with a strangely paced and structured plot that’s about as floppy as a spaghetti noodle. (The script is once again by Richard Wenk.) But that’s OK. Fuqua and Washington bring the audience along on their Euro trip and ask us simply to sit back, relax and enjoy the ride that is Robert McCall inflicting terror and mayhem on very bad people. Sometimes that’s as good as it gets.

“The Equalizer 3” is rated R for strong bloody violence and some language. Running time: 109 minutes. Now streaming in select AAFES theaters.



WARNER BROS, ZUMA PRESS/TNS

Denzel Washington, left, and Ethan Hawke in the 2001 film “Training Day,” directed by Antoine Fuqua.

## WEEKEND: GAMES



JAY L. CLENDENIN, LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

A selection of cards from one of the first Disney Lorcana starter decks, from tabletop game company Ravensburger. The game is set for wide release in early September.

# Shuffling up the trading card game space

Lorcana to play with Disney fans' nostalgia by referencing various characters, objects, songs from animated films, shorts

BY TODD MARTENS  
Los Angeles Times

When Ryan Miller first played Magic: The Gathering, he was hooked. It wasn't long before the Bakersfield, Calif., teen was attempting to design his own collectible card games. Early experiments were disastrous.

"Here's this new style of game," says Miller of Magic, which was first released in 1993. "I've gotta try this."

So he invested in 3-by-5 note cards, cut them in half and began creating his own characters. The goal? A dueling swordplay game. "I was going to do a fighting game. My brother eventually stopped playing. He's like, 'The game will never end, dude.' It was too easy to block attacks. And to me, that felt like we were sword fighting. I'm parrying! But at the end of the day, there was no forward progression. That was my first lesson. This type of game is really hard to design."

There would be others. Miller today is eloquent in describing the intricacies involved in designing a card game such as Magic. A game design veteran who eventually found his way to Magic parent Wizards of the Coast, Miller's path wasn't direct, and included time spent as a prison guard. Today, however, he's overseeing the launch of what has been described as the most anticipated collectible card game to arrive in years, one that already seems poised to take its place alongside Magic and The Pokémon Trading Card Game as a pillar of the medium.

Ravensburger's Disney Lorcana launched in August at a limited number of hobby shops before its wide release in early September. Though it hasn't arrived without some legal controversy, it appears to be an early hit, at least if the crushing lines it causes at game conventions are any indication, where fans wait hours to get their hands on product and promotional cards. Lorcana taps into Disney's storied animation history, as players will use cards to accrue ink, which can conjure images of popular characters, objects and songs, all in a quest for what the game defines as "lore."

Lorcana is also the first collectible card game from

longtime tabletop firm Ravensburger, known already among the Disney fan community for its Villainous line of board games. Lorcana, with its mix of recognizable as well as unexpected characters and objects — Anna and Elsa from "Frozen" will duke it out with Sergeant Tibbs from "101 Dalmations" and all eras of Mickey Mouse — aims to play with our nostalgia as much as it does game mechanics, as cards will reference signature Disney weapons (a frying pan) with recognizable songs ("Hakuna Matata," "Friends on the Other Side").

**"Quite simply, the launch of Disney Lorcana is the largest, most buzzed-about customizable trading card game launch that we've seen in several years."**

James Zahn

editor in chief, the Toy Book trade publication

For Miller, it represents a lifetime of trying to merge the impressionistic storytelling of collectible card games with relatively fast-paced, approachable gameplay.

"Card games have a level of abstraction," Miller says. "You can feel a story kind of unfolding. In Lorcana, one of my favorite mechanics is the song mechanic. You can have one of your characters sing for you. It's a great example of how cards can show you a little scene that's happening. When two characters challenge each other, I like to think that maybe they're not fighting; maybe they're just arguing. The nice thing about that abstraction is that instead of telling the player, 'Here is what is happening,' they get to bridge that gap."

For the game industry, it's hoped for as a potential blockbuster.

"Quite simply, the launch of Disney Lorcana is the largest, most buzzed-about customizable trading card game launch that we've seen in several years," says James Zahn, editor in chief of trade publication the Toy Book. "This is a space that is largely dominated by existing game platforms such as Magic: The Gathering and the Pokémon Trading Card Game, and Lorcana has the opportunity to connect with players who are familiar with that type of customizable gameplay, but also attract this entirely untapped fandom of Disney enthusiasts."

Lorcana is coming to market despite a lawsuit that attempted to stop its release. Trading card and game firm Upper Deck this summer sued Ravensburger for what it blasted in a release as a "stolen game," alleging essentially that Miller, while on a work-for-hire contract with Upper Deck, developed the game that would become Lorcana. The breach of contract suit contends that an Upper Deck game bears "remarkable, uncanny similarities" to Lorcana. Miller, the co-designer of Lorcana with Steve Warner, declined to address the lawsuit.

Ravensburger has sought to have the case dismissed: "We at Ravensburger stand behind the integrity of our team and the originality of our products," reads the company's official statement.

While the lawsuit goes to great lengths to show the ways in which Lorcana resembles the as-yet-unreleased Upper Deck title, game mechanics, generally, are not protectable by copyright law.

"They are rules, processes and mechanics that aren't on the same level as a song or a painting," says attorney Zachary Strebeck, who works primarily in the game space. "They protect creative work and not underlying functionality. It's unfortunate for games. There is plenty that's copyrightable in the game — all the artwork, and the way it's written, but not the underlying rules themselves."

SEE LORCANA ON PAGE 19

## WEEKEND: GAMES

# Lorcana: Magic players will find game familiar, strategically exciting

FROM PAGE 18

Thus, Upper Deck, if the case proceeds, is arguing a breach of contract and fiduciary duty. The company declined to comment beyond its official statements to the media. Yet the high profile of Lorcana has attracted a fair amount of attention and speculation to the case.

“Anytime you wind up with a situation where a new product is developed by a former employee of someone else in that space, eyebrows get raised,” says Zahn, who notes the case isn’t dulling anticipation for Lorcana.

Ravensburger’s global head of games Filip Francke says the company’s creative attention has not been diverted.

“Throughout this whole time, we have tried to keep our eyes on the ball,” Francke says. “Eyes on the ball means we’re following our plan. ... We didn’t want to get distracted by anything — lawsuits or anything else.”

If the allegations are stressing Miller, it isn’t apparent. He’s eager to demo the game and discuss how Lorcana cards dig deep into Disney’s animation vaults. The ways, for instance, different cards from “Sleeping Beauty” will accentuate distinct aspects of Princess Aurora’s personality, or how Lorcana consistently pulls from unexpected places — one card, for instance, may reference the tabard from the Mickey Mouse-starring “The Three Musketeers,” and another may simply point to the Beast’s ability to throw a tantrum. Anything in a Disney animated short or film is fair game, and it will need to be, as Francke says Ravensburger has a 10-plus-year road map for Lorcana.

The trick was creating a game in which players could interact with as many cards as they desired — if someone wants, for instance, a princess-themed deck, Miller wanted Lorcana to accommodate that — while creating a cohesive game that still felt family-friendly and readily approachable. Many experiments were attempted and discarded, including an early version that had Lorcana feeling more like what Miller describes as a “coding game.” Another tried to play up a good versus evil bent.

“I had this crazy idea — what if villains could only challenge heroes and heroes could only challenge villains?” Miller says. “It was very thematic. That’s a good example of wanting immersion at the gameplay level, and how the best intentions could crash and burn. That game was not very fun. You could build a deck that has half and half, but what if you don’t draw enough villains? Then you just can’t interact.”

Miller joined the project about six months in, and says it took about another six months to reach a gameplay loop that the team felt comfortable with. Then it was about three years of iterating based on the different actions cards could inspire. At times, Lorcana will feel familiar

to anyone who has dabbled in Magic, but its Disney animation focus allows it to pull from friendlier — and sometimes sillier — themes. There’s plenty of sword and sorcery here, courtesy of Disney’s wealth of fantasy material, but there are also cards of coconuts and songs such as “Be Our Guest.”

“If we innovate the trading card game rules, the trading card gamers get super jazzed about that, but we risk alienating folks who have never played a trading card game before,” Miller says. “If we go way too safe, we risk the other thing, where the trading card gamers say, ‘This isn’t for me.’ I think the reason it took so long to get where we got was that specific target we were trying to hit — to do something that we feel is welcoming, and strategically exciting for trading card gamers.”

“The trading card platform does this very well,” Miller continues. “The game itself needs to support inputs — cards. The game design is like the frame of a house, and it just needs to support a beautiful roof and wonderful walls and this furniture. What I mean by all that is the frame can be fairly welcoming, but the strategic depth comes on how you decorate it. That comes on the cards.”

The heroes-versus-villains idea, while it didn’t work, would have had nice symmetry with Ravensburger’s Disney tabletop game Villainous, which the company has stated has sold more than 1 million copies globally. But while Ravensburger was entering the collectible trading card space for the first time, Francke says the company leaned on its lessons from Villainous in making Lorcana. Namely, keep it simple.

“You’re playing the path of a specific character,” Francke says of Villainous. “So you’re trying to make the evil deeds that the character does, and then you play the good guy toward your opponent. I think there was an immediate understating of what the game is about. The Disney license makes it easier for people who normally don’t play these games to think that it’s familiar in some way, even if they don’t know the gameplay. That helps the accessibility, but I think the game came out, to some extent, a little more difficult than we wanted it to be. If you’ve never played a board game before, it is a little bit of a journey to get into. So we took some learning from that. Can we make something more accessible?”

Miller was brought into the fold in part because he’s been a longtime student of the collectible trading card medium. Before working his way up the ranks at Wizards of the Coast — starting at the company in a more promotional aspect more than 20 years ago — he honed his game design skills as a member of the military in the late ’90s. His career trajectory was one that was going to take him into law enforcement, but before committing he sought to pitch himself as a game designer.



JAY L. CLENDENIN, LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

**Disney Lorcana co-designer Ryan Miller says Ravensburger discarded multiple ideas before settling on a gameplay loop for the collectible card game.**

“I was a prison guard at Fort Leavenworth,” Miller says. “And that line of work is 98% boring and 2% terrifying. I still to this day have books from that period where I’m listing out Magic decks I want to make, or I’m working on my own ideas for trading card games.”

A Warhammer 40K trading card game that Miller co-designed in 2001 with Luke Peterschmidt has roots in that era: “The bones of that game are in those notebooks from the mid-’90s. I loved Warhammer 40K but I couldn’t afford the miniatures back then on a soldier’s salary. And the more I starting coming up with the ideas, the more it was exciting to me. Military police in the Army was my goal, but as I was leaving the Army, I decided to give [game design] a shot and go to Seattle where Wizards was based out of.”

He hasn’t left the game space since. But when pressed to think about his game design philosophies, Miller concedes that with Lorcana, in a way his career is becoming full circle. His first memories of play were not with dice and a board, but

with Anaheim’s Disneyland Park.

“Growing up in Bakersfield, kind of on the poor side, my grandmother would occasionally take me to Disneyland,” Miller says. “And immersion is the No. 1 feeling I get from Disneyland. You walk on Main Street, U.S.A., and you’re transported. You hang a left, and you go in Adventureland and all of a sudden you’re in a jungle. It impressed upon me the power of immersion.”

They were lessons he would recall when he discovered hobby games: “That’s one of the reasons it engaged me. That concept of decision immersion — of putting myself in a role of someone in that world — was a big part of getting into gaming. You can immerse someone by the environment, and the types of decisions they have to make. Suddenly I’m making decisions that someone wielding a sword in a dungeon might have to make, or someone piloting a 40-foot-tall walking robot.”

Or in the world of Lorcana, when to throw down a Maleficent, or when to conjure a romantic ballad.

**“I think the reason it took so long to get where we got was that specific target we were trying to hit — to do something that we feel is welcoming, and strategically exciting for trading card gamers.”**

Ryan Miller  
Disney Lorcana co-designer

## WEEKEND: TRAVEL

## Norway's scenic wonders, in a nutshell

**M**y grandparents came over on a boat from Norway, so I'm partial to that corner of Europe. But you don't have to be from Viking stock to appreciate Norway's otherworldly natural beauty. And you can appreciate it even on a short trip: From Oslo, northern Europe's most scenic train ride takes you up and over the country's mountainous spine and into the land of shiplap dreams in one day. The tourist board calls it "Norway in a Nutshell."

Norway's greatest claim to scenic fame is its deep and lush saltwater inlets. And, frankly, if you go to Oslo and don't get out to the fjords, your passport should be revoked. Sognefjord, Norway's longest (120 miles) and deepest (one mile), offers Norway's best combination of scenic wonder and accessibility.

For the most efficient one-day look at fjords, follow the Nutshell trip's series of well-organized train, ferry and bus connections, which puts this beautiful fjord country on a scenic platter. Ambitious and energetic travelers can see the whole shebang in a day; with more time or less energy, consider an overnight along the fjord or in Bergen.

You can book the Nutshell route from Oslo to Bergen on your own or take a package tour; either way, you'll want to make your reservations at least five weeks in advance. July and August are the best months to go.



Rick Steves

The Nutshell route starts with a spectacular train ride, leaving Oslo at about 6:30 a.m. for Bergen. As the train roars over Norway's mountainous backbone, the windswept heaths, glaciers, deep forests, countless lakes and a few rugged ski resorts create a harsh beauty. This stretch of railroad is an amazing engineering feat. Completed in 1909, it's 300 miles long and peaks at 4,266 feet — which, at this Alaskan latitude, is far above the tree line. You'll go under 18 miles of snow sheds, over 300 bridges and through 200 tunnels in just under seven hours.

At Myrdal, a 12-mile spur line drops you 2,800 breathtaking feet in 55 minutes to the village of Flåm, on an arm of the Sognefjord. The engineer even stops the train for photos at the best waterfall, Kjosfossen.



CAMERON HEWITT/Rick Steves' Europe

The boat-ride section of the trip takes Nutshellers past idyllic little Undredal, with its gorgeous mountain backdrop, on the north end of Norway's Aurlandsfjord.

While most Norway in a Nutshell tourists zip immediately from the train onto the scenic fjord boat in Flåm, those with time enjoy an overnight stop on the fjord.

Flåm is a handy tourist depot with several simple hotels. Aurland, a few miles up the fjord from Flåm, is more of a town. It's famous for producing some of Norway's sweetest geitost — goat

cheese. Aurland makes a good home base if you're staying longer.

From Flåm, Nutshellers catch the most scenic of fjord cruises (sightseeing boats leave throughout the day). For two hours, photo-snapping tourists can nearly reach out and touch the sheer, towering walls. The boat takes you up one narrow arm (Aurlandsfjord) and down the next

(Nærøyfjord) to the nothing-to-stop-for town of Gudvangen, where waiting buses shuttle you back to the main train line at Voss. From Voss, carry on into Bergen for a short evening visit — or skip Bergen and return to Oslo from here.

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## Harvest time means wine fests get their days in the sun

From droughts to deluges, there's always something unexpected winemakers are forced to contend with. But by now, the grapes have had their days in the sun and harvest time looms across Europe. To celebrate another year of plenty, make way to one of the abundant wine festivals to be staged over the next several weekends.

## Austria

**Baden:** From Sept. 2-3 and Sept. 9-10, the Wienerwald thermal spa region turns into a massive wine bar. The place to be in this convivial area just south of Vienna is along the so-called Water Pipe Hiking Trail, a vineyard-studded, 10-mile stretch running between the towns of Mödling and Bad Vöslau.



Karen Bradbury

Here, some 80 winegrowers will be serving wine, pear cider and the new wine locally referred to as "storm" alongside the culinary specialties of the region. The "pleasure mile" will be set up between noon and 7:30 p.m. on both Saturdays and Sundays. Entry is free. Online: [tinyurl.com/4k6ut6cb](http://tinyurl.com/4k6ut6cb)

## Czech Republic

**Prague:** The Vinohrady Wine Festival focuses wines from the regions of Moravia and Bohemia, as well as some vintages from abroad. Visitors can also enjoy burčák, the new, still-fermenting wine, alongside cheese, sausage and raclette. Musical performances and a children's program enliven the proceedings. The festival takes place from 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Sept. 8-9 at the Jirího z Poděbrad Square. Online: [tinyurl.com/ya5c2anu](http://tinyurl.com/ya5c2anu)

**Znojmo:** The handsome hill town of Znojmo in South Moravia sets the stage for a festival taking visitors back in time. Knights on horseback, staged battles, military encampment, jesters and fair maidens create the appropriate Middle Ages appeal for guests as they stroll from



iStock

Wine festivals are about to pour in across the Continent.

one historical wine stand to the next. Culinary treats, concerts and open-air theater round out the program that's set to unfold Sept. 8-10. A festivity highlight are the parades featuring King John of Bohemia; these take place from 8 p.m. Friday and from 2 p.m. on Saturday. The Znojmo Wine Festival is a ticketed event and prices vary by the day; admission to Saturday's program costs 600 Czech Koruna (about \$27). Children up to the age of 15 enter for free. Online: [znojemskevinobrani.cz](http://znojemskevinobrani.cz)

**Melník:** This historic town perched high above the confluence of the Elbe and Vltava rivers hosts its annual homage to wine Sept. 15-17. Winemakers from throughout the Czech Republic and beyond serve up their best vintages as a varied program of entertainment takes place across four stages. Culinary specialties and craft stalls round out the offerings. Melník's 14th-century chateau and ossuary give visitors yet another good reason to make time for this festival. Single-day entry tickets go for 250 Czech Koruna. Online: [vinobranimelnik.cz](http://vinobranimelnik.cz)

## France

**Chablis:** The Chablis Wine Festival takes place in the stunning Burgundy growing region Oct. 21-22. Visitors come from around the world to discover Chablis through tastings, seminars, themed dinners, auctions and other related activities, including a parade. Festival hours are 12:30 p.m.-6 p.m. Oct. 21 and 9:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Oct. 22. A tasting glass costs 6 euros. Online: [tinyurl.com/58cmf2nt](http://tinyurl.com/58cmf2nt)

## Switzerland

**Russin:** This town just outside Geneva is set to hold its annual Fête des Vendanges, or grape harvest festival, Sept. 15-17. In addition to sampling the region's best drops and culinary treats, visitors can look forward to a family-friendly program with plenty of activities for children. The Marche du Terroir offers visitors the opportunity to sample the fruit and veg of the region as they stroll through town. The grand parade is set for 2 p.m. Sept. 17. Online: [fetedesvendangesrussin.ch](http://fetedesvendangesrussin.ch)

**Neuchâtel:** The harvest will be celebrated in grand style Sept. 22-24. The first night, always a Friday, is celebrated by means of a massive parade featuring Guggenmusik, lively brass and drum music associated with carnival. Saturday afternoon's parade is made up of children in costume, whereas Sunday's procession features a sea of flower-bedecked floats. An entry bracelet costs 10 or 20 Swiss Francs, depending on date of attendance. Those under 12 enter for free. Online: [fete-des-vendanges.ch](http://fete-des-vendanges.ch)

**Döttingen:** This largely agricultural town of some 4,000 residents hosts the largest wine festival in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. From Sept. 29-Oct. 1, the program highlights are a competition between street artists and a wonderfully diverse selection of musical groups on stage on Saturday, along with a winegrower's parade on Sunday. At 12:30 p.m. Sunday, there will be an attempt to set a world record for the most people standing in a row and toasting one another. Online: [winzerfest.ch](http://winzerfest.ch)

## WEEKEND: TRAVEL



iStock

# News before you cruise

First-timers, take note: Much will depend on your particular line, ship

By CHRIS DONG  
*The Washington Post*

**N**ot all cruise vacations are the same. There are an increasingly diverse array of sailings for nearly every type of traveler — luxury cruise expeditions, family-friendly voyages and even mass-market cruise lines that are more adult-oriented and, well, just a bit cheeky. Earlier this summer, I went into my first cruise vacation as an adult with an open mind — and an empty stomach.

As a writer who focuses on land-and-air-based exploration, I'll admit that a cruise is out of my typical travel comfort zone. Beyond the floating-hotel-at-sea concept that makes novice cruisers a bit apprehensive, a cruise required me to give someone else full control of an itinerary. In other words, much of my type-A travel planning and intense oversight of a trip had to go out of the window — or in this case, out the ship's porthole.

A cruise's schedule is laid out before you — day by day, hour by hour. You know which port of call you will arrive and depart from at a given time, and there's even a daily printout of the happenings and events on board. However, it's not all just handed to you on a silver platter either; there are still quite a few adjustments to get that first cruise just right.

Here are six lessons from my first time cruising, from costs to planning:

## Manage expectations for land excursions

For this trip, I went on a weeklong sailing in the Mediterranean on the 1,400-cabin Valiant Lady, one of three medium-sized vessels that are currently sailing under Richard Branson's Virgin Voyages line. While this specific itinerary meant many stops along the rugged French and Spanish coastline, it also prompted a very rookie mistake — trying to do too much in one port of call.

Don't try to cram in everything while on land. Not only will it be rushed, but you won't be able to get a proper feel for a destination. On most sailings, you're only docked for a set period during the day (or at most, one night).

I learned this the hard way on one of our first port days, trying to squeeze in sightseeing in the city of Nice, the medieval village of Eze and the nation of Monaco, all in

one day. (Yes, in hindsight, it was a clear what-are-you-thinking moment.)

For cruises where you're in a place for less than 24 hours, the whole point is really to get a preview of a destination, not to fully immerse. Here's what I'd recommend instead: Pick one activity — say, sea kayaking along the French Riviera — or explore one specific neighborhood (in my case, one city) to give yourself plenty of time to make it back to the ship.

Then, next time, come back and see the rest.

## Research the vibe of your cruise line, ship

Cruise lines — and even specific ships — take all forms of shapes and sizes, with each having a specific vibe. Don't be fooled by a one-size-fits-all cruiser stereotype.

There are the boomer cruise lines. The family cruise lines. The gay cruises. The nudist cruises. You get the idea.

Virgin Voyages made a splash for being adults-only since its inaugural sailing in 2021. Travelers under the age of 18 years old aren't allowed onboard. The Virgin branding is also a bit irreverent and caters to a diverse and eclectic crowd. It's a little suggestive, a little risqué and sometimes a lot of both. A significant portion of guests identify as LGBTQ+.

Each cruise line is known for different things, though, so prepare accordingly.

## Remember that not everything is included

While cruises are often assumed to be a mostly inclusive experience, there are a bunch of additional expenses that can cause sticker shock at the end of a journey.

First of all, cruises typically operate cashless, so it's a simple tap of your key card or wristband to complete transactions onboard (that's tied to a credit card on file). It's frictionless, and perhaps maybe too easy.

Then, consider some of the basic expenses like alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks (cappuccinos, fresh-pressed juices and the like are usually not included). Of course, spa treatments, the casino and perhaps even a tattoo (yes, that's offered on board Virgin Voyages) can quickly add up and inflate the original price tag. Don't forget gratuities, which on some cruise lines can be upward of \$20 per person per day.

Finally, if you plan to spend time on land (and you should), there are necessary costs to consider. While you

can often pre-book land activities before you set sail, you have to decide whether to do that on your own or through the ship's shore excursion desk. The former may be more cost-effective but the latter is more convenient — and guarantees that the ship won't leave without you.

## Expect lines, even if your cruise isn't full

If you're on a medium- to large-sized vessel, there's just no getting around this one. While some of the more premium cruise lines will dedicate more space per person, the physics of a space-constrained vessel with a few thousand passengers (and crew) means that you should expect lines for a variety of day-to-day activities.

My particular sailing was only at half capacity, yet there were significant lines for getting on and off the ship (perhaps the biggest bottleneck for larger vessels) as well as the shuttle buses to and from the port. While it may be minor, you have to take into account queues for anything and everything, from getting into the evening's show to waiting for your turn at the photo booth.

Don't get me wrong: There are plenty of nooks and crannies to acquire some Zen, but there's just no way for a larger vessel to truly feel serene at all times.

## Arrive at your embarkation city early

Try to arrive at your embarkation point as early as possible, ideally the day before. Flight delays and travel mishaps can submerge your entire itinerary before even setting sail.

And during a peak travel period like the summer, there isn't a lot of slack in the system — one flight delay could mean the difference between making your cruise and missing it completely.

If you can, arrive at the port city a few days before and see the city. In my case, Barcelona was the starting point for my weeklong cruise journey. I used that opportunity to nibble on Spanish tapas, stroll along Passeig de Gràcia and gawk at Gaudi's iconic creations.

## Try everything on the ship at least once

If you're going on a bigger ship, odds are there are a number of dining venues, bars and entertainment spaces. Get a barometer for each experience and then go back to the things that you really enjoyed.

On Virgin Voyages, I sampled each of the main dining venues on consecutive nights. Then, I decided which to return to by Day 6 for an encore.

## WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

# Home base for Celtic culture

Replica village in Steinbach am Donnersberg, Germany, offers insights into ancient tribe's life

BY MATT WAGNER  
Stars and Stripes

Getting off the A63 highway at the Goellheim exit on my drive home from Kaiserslautern, Germany, I kept seeing signs for a Keltendorf, or Celtic village, which piqued my curiosity.

Research told me that it's a replica village in Steinbach am Donnersberg meant to teach visitors about the ancient Celts, a group normally associated with the British Isles and the salt mines of Hallstatt, Austria.

At their height, their influence stretched from western France and the Iberian Peninsula to Eastern Europe in the latter centuries B.C.

In the Pfalz region of Germany, signs of Celtic settlements and tribes have been found around Donnersberg, the highest peak in the area. A sign in the ticket office explained how a late-Celtic fortified settlement had been excavated on the mountain.

According to information at the village, though, that nearly 100-acre settlement didn't serve as the model for the Steinbach attraction.

Instead, the buildings were based on a settlement discovered near Germersheim by the Rhine River, where at least five timbered buildings and two wells have been found.

Visitors can walk around the replica village freely, but I stumbled on the start of an approximately one-hour tour in German and followed along.

The guide seemed knowledgeable on the subjects, even if I didn't catch everything he was saying because of my still-rough grasp of German.

It was interesting to see representations of Celtic life and hear about it. I appreciated details such as the length of time it took them to make a tunic (a year), as well as the commentary on the buildings and Celtic metalwork.

A lot of the information is secondhand, as told through Roman accounts and archaeological finds.

The tour ended with a drink: apple juice for the youngsters and mead for the adults. It was a nice way to cool off on a warm day.

Visitors also may tour a crafts

## On the QT

**Address:** Bruehlstrasse, 67808 Steinbach am Donnersberg, Germany

**Times:** Open 11 a.m.-4 p.m. every Sunday and holiday through Oct. 31; group programs are available from Monday to Saturday by request. Closed for the winter from Nov. 1 into late March 2024.

**Cost:** 7 euros for adults, 5 euros for kids ages 4 to 12 and 19 euros for families (two adults and their children). Group rates and half- or whole-day programs also are available.

**Information:** Phone: +49 63521712; Online: keltendorf-steinbach.de

Matt Wagner



PHOTOS BY MATT WAGNER/Stars and Stripes

The watchtower (below left) at the Keltendorf in Steinbach am Donnersberg, Germany, offers this view (above). The replica Celtic village was built in 2003, based on structures excavated near Germersheim.



The watchtower of the Keltendorf in Steinbach am Donnersberg also gives great views of the surrounding landscape.

building, where they can work with leather and felt and make such things as arrows or a stone pearl.

A 38-foot-tall watchtower in the village also gives great views of Donnersberg and the areas to the south and east.

Half-day and full-day programs during the week are offered for groups. The programs include the usual offered crafts, archery, Celtic fairy tales, weaving with wool, crafting with natural materials, copperwork, herb hunting and processing, food at an extra cost and fire making, for those 10 years and older.

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These displays at the Keltendorf in Steinbach am Donnersberg show replicas of Celtic clothing.



The forge at the Keltendorf in Steinbach am Donnersberg. Up to the 7th century B.C., the Celts had mastered the techniques to forge bronze and iron, according to a sign at the village.



A bed in a home at the Keltendorf in Steinbach am Donnersberg. The replica home is based off archaeological models and depictions on east Celtic bronze buckets.

## WEEKEND: FOOD &amp; DINING



PHOTOS BY MATT WAGNER/Stars and Stripes

**Markers Kleines Restaurant in Weilerbach, Germany, can seat up to 24 people indoors and 30 outdoors. The restaurant opened in a former freight forwarding agency the family ran until early 2008.**

# Like dinner at a neighbor's home

Markers Kleines Restaurant in Weilerbach a small space but big on hospitality, taste

BY MATT WAGNER  
Stars and Stripes

**R**arely does a restaurant leave a positive impression when turning down a would-be customer. Markers Kleines Restaurant in Weilerbach, Germany, is that exception.

On a Friday evening, a colleague and I walked in without a reservation, only to learn that no seating was available. Instead of letting us walk out, Martin Marker, who runs the restaurant with his wife, Brunhilde, suggested an alternative five minutes away.

That unexpected tip from Marker produced some inviting vibes, and my hunch was confirmed a week later when I returned, this time with a reservation.

The restaurant's mission is to create a fun, relaxing and welcoming environment. During our meal, the Markers made sure everyone felt as though they were at a neighbor's home for dinner.

It was a slow process to get the food, but groups still had a good time chatting, munching on some homemade bread and drinking on a beautiful summer night.

While we were there, my colleague had to take a work call. When the meal arrived and he still wasn't back, our server went out to the parking lot to tell him.

My colleague ordered the oxheart tomato appetizer with burrata, tomato sorbet, basil cream and arugula. He said the flavors were well-balanced.

I started with ricotta tortelloni



**AFTER  
HOURS  
GERMANY**

## Markers Kleines Restaurant

**Address:** Am Palmenkreuz 9, Weilerbach, Germany

**Hours:** Thursday through Saturday, 5-10 p.m. (kitchen open until 9 p.m.); Sunday, 12-2:30 p.m. and 5-9 p.m. (kitchen open until 8 p.m.)

**Prices:** Meals start from 17.50 euros, with the upper range between the high 20s and low 30s euros, depending on the menu. Appetizers start at 8.50 euros, while desserts cost around 10 euros.

**Information:** Phone: +40 6374 9912322. See the week's menu online at [markersrestaurant.de](http://markersrestaurant.de).

Matt Wagner

with chanterelle mushrooms and a side of summer vegetables that included broccoli, cauliflower, peas and carrots. The chanterelles were so meaty that at first I thought I had received the wrong dish.

Then came our second course. My colleague selected a noodle "alle vongole" with mussels, parmesan and grilled yellow squash, zucchini, bell peppers and onions. I sampled a few of the mussels, and they were delicious.

Meanwhile, I picked slices of venison with herb butter, rosemary potatoes and grilled yellow squash, zucchini and bell peppers.

Being from rural northeast



**Martin and Brunhilde Marker opened Markers Kleines Restaurant looking to create a fun, relaxing and inviting space for customers. The menu changes every couple of weeks.**



**This beer stein was gifted to the great-grandfather of restaurant co-owner Martin Marker after he served in the German army in Saarland from 1904-1907.**

Ohio, I'm ashamed to admit I hadn't eaten venison before. This meal made me feel like that was a grave oversight. The meat was so juicy and tasted so great that I didn't need the herb butter.

Markers Kleines Restaurant is unusual in another way as well. Every week or two, the menu changes. The Markers base their offerings on what they find at the market, meaning the eatery has no regular dishes.

Martin also said they don't offer things like schnitzel, which patrons can order just about anywhere else. The menu for the upcoming weekend is on the restaurant's website by Wednesday.

The restaurant has a wide selection of beverages, ranging from wine, beer and liquor, as



**Thinly sliced oxheart tomato topped with burrata and arugula and garnished with basil foam and tomato sherbet on Aug. 11.**



**Slices of venison as served on Aug. 11. The dish included potatoes, zucchini, bell peppers and butter filled with spices.**



**A dish of chanterelle mushrooms and ricotta-filled tortelloni as served on Aug. 11 with broccoli, peas, carrots and cauliflower.**



**The pasta "alle vongole" was served on Aug. 11 with mussels, garlic oil, Parmesan and grilled vegetables.**

well as coffee, tea and other nonalcoholic options. The wine offerings include options from Weingut Schroth of Asselheim, a town about 25 miles east of Kaiserslautern.

As good as our meal tasted, the food was not to be outdone by the atmosphere. The Markers shared pieces of their history, explaining how the family used to run a freight forwarding agency until early 2008.

Martin also showed off a beer stein his great-grandfather re-

ceived after serving in the German army in Saarbruecken from 1904-1907. He recalled that an American offered him 5,000 euros for what he considers a priceless family heirloom.

Overall, this was one of the best meals I've had since moving to the Kaiserslautern area, and I can't recommend Markers Kleines Restaurant enough. Just make sure to call ahead and place a reservation.

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# WEEKEND: TRAVEL

# Emus, dingoes & The Colonel

## Australia's favorite wild critters live at Rockhampton Zoo

BY KELLY AGEE  
Stars and Stripes

Visitors to the Rockhampton Zoo in Queensland will find in a catalog of Australia's unique wildlife, sometimes lined up for feeding time.

The zoo has close to 100 animals from more than 30 species, including kangaroos, koalas and emus. Admission is a donation, of which 15% goes to wildlife conservation programs.

In 2021, the zoo donated nearly \$31,000 to help support wildlife affected by Australia's 2020 bushfires, which killed or displaced more than 3 billion animals, according to the World Wildlife Fund.

In the kangaroo and emu area, a personal favorite, two emus and six kangaroos live together in a large open space with plenty of greenery. You're likely to find them relaxing in the shade of the trees.

In one area, only a wooden rail separates humans from the animal residents. The emus were the scariest species, thanks to the hissing sound they make that's reminiscent of the velociraptors in "Jurassic Park."

If guests want to learn more about the animals during their time at the zoo, they can download an audio tour from the Apple or Google Play stores. The zoo also has zookeeper talks at all the exhibits throughout the day; the schedules are posted outside of the exhibits, along with feeding times.

At feeding time for the otters, the animals dove to retrieve the fish zookeepers tossed into their indoor habitat, built to resemble a lake.

At the crocodile talk, I learned that the reptiles never stop growing, so their length, as well as their teeth, are indicators of their age. One of the crocodiles in the exhibit, The Colonel — a 14-foot, 1,110-pound monster — is an estimated 50 years old.

The Colonel has an interesting story. He was captured in northern Queensland, where he was bothering farmers and fishers, and moved to the Koorana Crocodile Farm in central Queensland as a breeding male. His aggressive disposition toward females, however, proved he was no family croc, so he was donated to the Rockhampton Zoo.

I was pleasantly surprised to see that



The dingoes at Rockhampton Zoo in Australia like to relax in hollow logs, but will come out every once in a while.



PHOTOS BY KELLY AGEE/Stars and Stripes

This emu resides with another emu buddy and six kangaroos in a large open space with plenty of greenery at Rockhampton Zoo in Australia. The zoo is small but engaging.

### Rockhampton Zoo

Address: 100 Spencer St, West Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia 4700

Times: Open daily, 9 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.

Costs: Free entry.

Food: The nearest restaurant, the Gardens Tea Room, is a short walk from the zoo. It serves all-day breakfast and a variety of teas. It's open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day.

Information: Online: rockhamptonzoo.com.au/Home

Kelly Agee

the zoo houses so many endangered and rescued animals.

Shaun, a koala, was born with a genetic condition that rendered him blind in one eye and with limited vision in the other.

Other highlights of the visit were the dingo and wombat exhibits, two Australian animals I'd never seen in person. The dingoes liked to relax in hollow logs but would come out every once in a while. Up close, they look like large dogs.

The meerkats were very friendly and would greet any guest by coming up close to their glass enclosure, as if they were posing for visitors. There were about a half-dozen chimpanzees, including a baby who rode on the mother's back.

The zoo is not large, although the animals seemed to have plenty of room in their exhibits. The complete tour took about two hours.

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A baby chimpanzee enjoys a meal at Rockhampton Zoo in Australia. The zoo has about six chimps in residence.



Shaun, a koala, was born with a genetic condition. He's completely blind in one eye, and the other has limited vision.



The Colonel, an approximately 50-year-old crocodile, is a 14-foot, 1,110-pound beast.

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## WEEKEND: FOOD &amp; DINING



PHOTOS BY KELLY AGEE/Stars and Stripes

At Down to Plant in Tokyo, vegans will find a cornucopia of salads priced between 1,200 and 1,400 yen.

# Plant-eaters' paradise

Down to Plant has healthful salads for all appetites in Tokyo's Roppongi district

BY KELLY AGEE  
Stars and Stripes

Vegans and meat eaters can find common ground, and healthier meals, at Down to Plant, a salad restaurant in Tokyo's Roppongi district.

A line of various potted plants outside the restaurant marks its location. The inside is cozy with big windows and a view of the busy street.

This small restaurant can seat 15 inside and 10 outside. An English menu is available, and credit cards are accepted.

Vegans will find a cornucopia of salads, from the ethnic curry topped with green curry and avocado for 1,300 yen (\$8.90) to the Korean spicy chicken made with plant-based yangnyeom chicken and rice for 1,280 yen.

For pescatarians, the Hawaiian poke (1,380 yen) is topped with ahi poke and raw yellowfin tuna with hijiki seaweed in the mix. Also try the garlic shrimp over rice and avocado, red onion and

purple cabbage (1,360 yen).

Omnivores will relish the grilled chicken with rice, avocado, tomato, red onions and carrots (1,180 yen), or the Asian meatball that comes with avocado and pumpkin (1,320 yen).

The Mexican chili salad is topped with vegan chili con carne, avocado, cilantro, tomato, red onion, rice and vegan cheese. The 1,340-yen dish was spicy and the fresh cilantro refreshing.

Down to Plant offers several premium toppings for 350 yen, including teriyaki green curry, tofu nanban and a vegan tartar or ahi poke garlic shrimp.

Standard extras for 150 yen are rice, tomato, red onion, cilantro, carrot, purple cabbage, hijiki seaweed and grilled pumpkin.

Drink options include juices: apple, grapefruit, pineapple, orange and carrot; coffee and tea.

Down to Plant is the perfect place to plant yourself for a healthy lunch.

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Down to Plant's Mexican chili salad has vegan chili con carne, avocado, cilantro, tomato, red onion, rice and vegan cheese.



## Down to Plant

**Location:** 7-3-13 Minato City, Roppongi, Tokyo 106-0032  
**Hours:** 10 a.m.-9 p.m. weekdays, 10 a.m.-8 p.m. weekends and holidays  
**Prices:** Most dishes cost between 1,200 yen and 1,400 yen.  
**Dress:** Casual  
**Directions:** A short walk from Nogizaka Station via Exit 3.  
**Information:** Online: [downtoplant.jp](http://downtoplant.jp)  
Kelly Agee

## Cool down with Spain's lesser-known chilled soup

BY CHRISTOPHER KIMBALL  
For The Associated Press

Salmorejo is Spain's lesser known but creamier tomato-based chilled soup. It has fewer than half the ingredients of gazpacho, but is no less flavorful thanks to a topping of savory ham and hard-cooked egg.

The version we tasted in Seville had a thick consistency, yet was refreshing and silky, with a bright flavor that played off the ham and creamy egg. It was so much more than the sum of its parts.

For our version, we prefer peak-season, perfectly ripe tomatoes. Out-of-season, Campari or cocktail tomatoes also are a good choice, as they are dependably sweet year-round.

Excellent results also require high-quality extra-virgin olive oil, so make sure the oil you use does not have bitter or harsh notes.

Bread helps thicken the soup and gives it its creamy consistency; choose a crusty, country-style loaf with a relatively soft interior so the bread blends easily into the soup, but remember to remove the crust.

A teaspoon of sugar brings out the sweetness of the tomatoes, and a few tablespoons of sherry



MILK STREET/AP

**Andalusian Tomato and Bread Soup, a version of Salmorejo, is simpler and creamier than its chilled soup cousin, gazpacho.**

vinegar balance the richness of the olive oil.

To keep the soup chilled for as long as possible at the table, we like to refrigerate the serving bowls.

And don't forget to taste the soup for seasoning after chilling, just before serving. Chilling blunts flavor, so though the soup may have initially tasted fine, after chilling it likely will need additional salt and pepper.

### Andalusian Tomato and Bread Soup

Start to finish: 15 minutes, plus chilling

Servings: 4

#### Ingredients

2 pounds ripe tomatoes, cored  
2½ ounces country-style white bread, crust removed, torn into small pieces (about 1½ cups)  
½ medium red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded and chopped  
1 medium garlic clove, smashed and peeled  
1 teaspoon white sugar  
3 tablespoons sherry vinegar, plus more to serve  
Kosher salt and ground black pepper  
¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, and more to serve  
4 thin slices prosciutto (2 ounces), torn into pieces  
4 hard-cooked eggs, peeled and quartered (optional)  
¼ cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

#### Directions

In a blender, combine the tomatoes, bread, bell pepper, garlic, sugar, vinegar and 1 teaspoon each salt and pepper. Blend on high for about 1 minute. With the blender running, gradually add ¾ cup oil. Transfer to a large bowl, then taste and season with salt and pepper. Cover and refrigerate 2 to 4 hours.

In a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil until shimmering. Add the prosciutto and cook, stirring occasionally, until crisp, about 2 minutes. Transfer the prosciutto to a paper towel-lined plate and let cool completely, then roughly chop; set aside.

Taste the soup and season again with salt and pepper. Ladle it into chilled bowls. Top with the prosciutto, hard-cooked egg (if using) and parsley.

Exploring  
the Beauty of the Pacific



Available throughout the Pacific in the September 15th issue of Stars and Stripes.

STARS AND STRIPES

## WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

## Scent-imental value

Some perfumeries now taking advantage of fervor for customized fragrances, especially ones linked to events

BY ZOE GLASSER  
The Washington Post

**R**oxanne Lunsford can still smell her baby shower — violet, freesia, amber and musk — and not just from memory. The smell is sitting in a glass bottle on her vanity for whenever she wants a whiff of memory.

Lunsford didn't want to give her shower guests "a cheesy gift that people wouldn't use." So she combed through TikTok and Google for unique party-favor ideas, and found a perfumery in Columbia, Md., that would create a custom scent for her event. Lunsford filled out a questionnaire about her favorite fragrances, participated in at-home trials of different scent bases, and worked with the perfumery, B Parfums, to settle on the bouquet. At the shower, B Parfums had a "bar" where each guest — equipped with a travel-sized version of its "Bonjour Bebe" base — could add various top notes to the fragrance to make it their own. The partygoers loved it, and Lunsford got to keep a full-sized bottle of the fragrance, which she is hesitant to use because she wants to preserve it, and the memory, forever.

"It means the world to me because we almost were not able to have a baby, and we were told it probably wouldn't happen naturally, and then it did," Lunsford says. "It means a lot to my guests. Even to this day, some people contact me and talk about how they really did enjoy making their own fragrance."

As clothing and cosmetics have become increasingly personalized, in an era of ultra-unique fashion, so too has fragrance. Many perfumeries now create bespoke scents, or guide clients through perfume-making sessions: After all, why smell vaguely sweet or faintly floral when you could smell like the memory of being wrapped in a warm, clean towel after a day at the beach, or your baby shower or, most importantly, yourself?

Bontu Itana, the owner of B Parfums, got into custom fragrances during a distinctly scent-starved time: the isolation of quarantine. Itana, who created Lunsford's baby-shower scent, was working a government job before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. She had a passion for fragrance since she was given her first bottle of perfume at age 12.

"I was the one girl who came to school smelling like Versace instead of Bath and Body Works," she says.

She had been writing a perfume blog when the world went remote, and then decided to take up scent-making as a profession. She enrolled in perfuming classes online with materials shipped to her from France. One night, months later, she in-

vised her friends over so she could customize perfumes for each of them, and began teaching them how to make their own. That girls night was the inspiration for B Parfums.

The desire for a custom scent is fed by an eagerness for exclusivity, Itana says.

Customers say "I don't want to smell like anybody else, and I want people to be confused and not be able to pinpoint what's in my smell," Itana says. "So it's not only wanting to smell different, but wanting to have a unique combination of smells in their fragrance, too."

When you walk into DIY Scent Studio, which is nestled off Main Street in Fairfax, Va., you're greeted by a wall of scent. The storefront smells lovely, to be sure, but because of the variety of perfume ingredients, it also smells like everything. Next, you'll notice the rainbow of perfume materials themselves: more than 500 of them, according to owner Sherry Meredith — all in brown glass bottles, color-coded based on scent family and labeled with a "B" for base note, "M" for middle note or "T" for top note.

Meredith's self-declared "addiction" to high-quality fragrances that she encountered while traveling led her to take perfuming classes, where she learned about an array of natural and synthetic fragrances and the science behind them. She continued to take classes after graduating and opened DIY Scent Studio in 2016, where she also teaches the art of scent-making.

Meredith walks clients through each of the 90 scents in the "organ," which is like a desk organizer full of vials. She then allows them to sniff and experiment — giving advice along the way — until they find a combination they love. She compares creating a scent to painting: It's important to have an image or goal in mind, and to be strategic about the scents used to achieve it.

Like Meredith, Itana teaches individuals and parties how to make their own scents, guiding them through the chemistry of top, middle and base notes and what fragrances complement each other. She also takes commissions for custom scents for individuals who may not want to get their hands smelly. This process involves a consultation, after which Itana formulates assorted scents for them to try, and asks questions like "Would they prefer a sharper or powderier fragrance?" She adds and edits to bring forward the client's favorite elements.

Both Meredith's and Itana's businesses also work private events and lead team-building exercises centered on fragrance creation. Meredith has led forensics classes through the world of scent, focusing on



PHOTOS BY MARVIN JOSEPH/The Washington Post

Sherry Meredith is the owner of DIY Scent Studio in Fairfax, Va., which opened in 2016. Meredith's self-declared "addiction" to high-quality fragrances that she encountered while traveling led her to take perfuming classes.



DIY Scent Studio offers more than 500 perfume materials, color-coded based on scent family and labeled with a "B" for base note, "M" for middle note, or "T" for top note.

the science of the art form. For businesspeople, she emphasizes the goal-setting aspect of scent creation. Because olfactory memory is so powerful, guests can build their own signature scents with predetermined notes that will permanently link them to an event, as Lunsford's fragrance did for her baby shower.

Scent allows our brain to "directly touch the outside world," says Patric Rhys, a perfume copywriter and freelance fragrance journalist. "If I breathe in, the actual molecules are going up in the air up in my nose, getting on my olfactory bulbs directly ... and my brain is lighting them up before I can think about it. It's just so visceral."

Meredith and Itana both found that many people watched YouTube and TikTok videos about how to make their own fragrances while isolating at home, and others, like Itana, began taking courses as a result.

Once Virginia dropped its mask mandate, Meredith saw increased interest in the studio. She finds that people enjoy testing different scents just as much as they enjoy having an object to take home.

"We're not just a perfume studio," she says. "We focus on experiences. People come in and make it the experience of smelling and enjoying things that they've never smelled before."

To Rhys, the magic of fragrance comes from its primal relationship to human consciousness and its power to foster connection.

"I got into perfume because it's a composed story for your nose," Rhys says. "A really great way to feel connected is to take part in a story."

"I love to see how people approach it, and you learn a lot about people," Meredith says. "People learn more about themselves by smelling ... They discover things that they thought they would never like."

**"Customers say 'I don't want to smell like anybody else, and I want people to be confused and not be able to pinpoint what's in my smell.' So it's not only wanting to smell different, but wanting to have a unique combination of smells in their fragrance, too."**

Bontu Itana

owner, B Parfums in Columbia, Md.

WEEKEND: BOOKS

# Britney and Barbra bare their souls

Many celebrity memoirs including Spears' and Streisand's among fall's major releases, but fewer political titles

By HILLEL ITALIE  
Associated Press

**O**ne year ahead of the 2024 election, don't expect many new books about the presumed front-runners, President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump.

The wave of Trump releases that began six years ago with his presidency has subsided, with Jonathan Karl's "Tired of Winning" and former White House aide Cassidy Hutchinson's "Enough" among the handful of Trump-centered works due out this fall. Biden, meanwhile, continues to inspire far fewer publications than his immediate predecessors, whether by opponents or defenders.

For now, says Shannon DeVito, Barnes & Noble's senior director for books, there's "an exhaustion of interest in political titles."

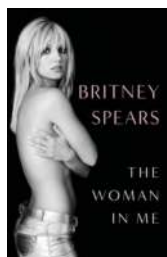
By this point in Trump's administration, he had been the subject of unflattering bestsellers from journalists, take-downs by former government officials and books of praise from supporters. With the Biden administration in its third year, detractors have been as interested in attacking his son Hunter Biden or the immunologist Anthony Fauci, the subject of Sen. Rand Paul's forthcoming "Deception," as going after the president himself. Insider memoirs have been relatively rare because Biden's administration has had far less turnover than Trump's.

Franklin Foer's upcoming "The Last Politician," which draws upon interviews with more than 100 administration officials, is one of the few in-depth accounts of the Biden presidency.

"You just don't have the kind of drama in the Biden administration that you do with others," says Foer, a staff writer for The Atlantic whose book will offer a mostly positive take on Biden. "His public image has been a bit boring by design. But Joe Biden is a fascinating political figure and his presidency has the chance to be more consequential than Trump's in the long run."

Many political titles this fall will explore broader trends, like Rachel Maddow's "Prequel" on a World War II-era far-right plot, or Tim Alberta's "The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory: American Evangelicals." Other topical books will include firsthand takes on two of the business world's most contentious figures: Walter Isaacson's "Elon Musk"

and Michael Lewis' "Going Infinite: The Rise and Fall of a New Tycoon," about disgraced FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried.



## Celebrity memoirs

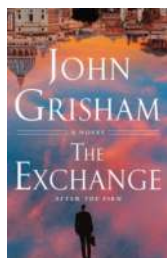
Even before her divorce was announced, Britney Spears' "The Woman In Me" was expected to be the most talked about memoir of the fall, while the weightiest celebrity book — literally — is Barbra Streisand's "My Name is Barbra," decades in the making and listed at more than 1,000 pages.

Others with memoirs this fall include Jada Pinkett Smith, Kerry Washington, John Stamos, Henry Winkler, Julia Fox, Elton John's longtime lyricist Bernie Taupin, filmmaker Werner Herzog, writer-comedian Sarah Cooper and Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth. Sly Stone will finally open up about his life and work in "Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin)." Staci Robinson's "Tupac Shakur" is the first authorized account of the late rapper and actor, whose long-unsolved killing has recently been back in the spotlight.

## Revisiting fiction franchises

Like the movie industry, book publishing has its share of popular franchises: Expected bestsellers include Christopher Paolini's latest "Inheritance" book, "Murtagh: The World of Eragon"; Rick Riordan's next Percy Jackson novel, "The Chalice of the Gods"; Rebecca Yarros' "Iron Flame," the second volume of her "Empyrean" fantasy series; and Ken Follett's fifth Kingsbridge historical novel, "The Armor of Light."

John Grisham's "The Exchange" is the sequel to his breakthrough book from 30 years ago, "The Firm," while Karin Smirnoff's "The Girl in the Eagle's Talons" continues the Lisbeth Salander series made famous by the late Stieg Larsson. Crime stories also will come from Stephen King, Anne Perry, James Ellroy, Lou Berney and Tod Goldberg. A famed Agatha Christie sleuth re-



turns in Sophie Hannah's "Hercule Poirot's Silent Night," authorized by the Christie estate.

## Returning literary icons

Ben Fountain's "Devil Makes Three" is his first novel since his 2012 debut "Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk" and Ayana Mathis' "The Unsettled" arrives more than a decade after "Twelves Tribes of Hattie," an Oprah Winfrey book club pick. Tim O'Brien's "America Fantastica" is his first fiction in more than 20 years and Teju Cole's "Tremor" is his first new novel since his lauded "Open City" came out in 2011.



Nobel laureate J.M. Coetzee, Pulitzer Prize winner Michael Cunningham and Booker Prize winner Anne Enright each have fiction coming this fall, along with Zadie Smith, Jonathan Lethem, Alice McDermott, Tan



Twan Eng, Sigrid Nunez, Kacen Callender and Lore Segal, who at 95 is releasing the story collection "Ladies' Lunch." In "Roman Stories," Jhumpa Lahiri and Todd Portnowitz translate back into English fiction what Lahiri first wrote in Italian. Lahiri, a Pulitzer Prize winner whose first language is English, sees her decadelong journey between languages as a kind of self-discovery. "It's part of the realization that whatever drove me to learn Italian — and not only to learn Italian, but learn how to write in Italian — (showed) there were things I needed to write about and that somehow I wasn't able to access parts of myself in English," says Lahiri, who has lived off and on in Italy since 2012.

## Explore poetry...

Classical scholar Emily Wilson, whose translation of "The Odyssey" was a best-seller in 2017, returns with her edition of "The Iliad." Modern poetry this fall includes collections from Jane Hirshfield, Major Jackson, Maurice Manning, Saskia Hamilton and an anthology of the late James Tate, with a foreword by National Book Award winner Terrance Hayes. Jerome Ellis, a self-defined artist and "proud stutterer," continues his "Multiverse" poetry series with "Aster of Ceremonies."

## ... and virtual life

Some books will touch upon the perils of identity and the internet. Naomi Klein's "Doppelganger: A Trip into the Mirror World" is the author and activist's story of being confused for "The Beauty Myth" author and anti-vaxxer Naomi Wolf. The Washington Post's Taylor Lorenz offers a wider take on virtual life with "Extremely Online: The Untold Story of Fame, Influence, and Power on the Internet."

## A dark future

Two prominent fiction writers have

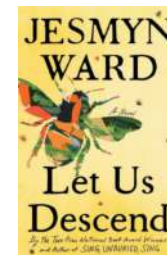
apocalyptic takes on the years ahead, with the internet among the culprits. Naomi Alderman's "The Future" forecasts a



world nearing destruction as tech billionaires plot their escape. In "Touched," Walter Mosley also imagines civilization collapsing, and points to the inherent fragility of human existence. "You realize that in the history of the planet, there have been all these life forms that existed before us. It's frightening, what can happen," Mosley says.

## Grim chapters of the U.S.' past

Lauren Groff's "The Vaster Wilds" is a colonial-era tale of an escaped servant that questions whether the world would have been better off had the Europeans never crossed the Atlantic. Jesmyn Ward's "Let Us Descend," her first novel since the National Book Award-winning "Sing, Unburied, Sing," is narrated by an enslaved girl who endures in part by dreaming of her ancestors. It's a story shaped by contemporary tragedy — Ward's husband, Brandon Miller, died in 2020 — and by, the author has said, her exploration into how the enslaved could retain their spirit "even through the deepest darkness."



## History, lesser told

In nonfiction, too, authors explore the lesser told stories of American history. Gregg Hecimovich's "The Life and Times of Hannah Crafts" is a biography of the country's first known Black female novelist, an escaped slave whose unpublished manuscript was finally released in 2002.

"Black Writers of the Founding Era: A Library of America Anthology" collects poetry, fiction, memoirs, petitions and other documents from around the time of the American Revolution and forms a "record of human perseverance and endurance" that helps complete "the picture of country's past," historian Annette Gordon-Reed writes in the foreword.

In her memoir-manifesto "To Free the Captives," the Pulitzer Prize winner and former U.S. poet laureate Tracy K. Smith remembers her family's passion for Otis Redding and other soul musicians as a testament to Black pride and resilience.

"Black people were the first folk I knew who invoked the soul constantly. Not with fear, not with threats of condemnation, but in outright joy — mirth even — as though what bolstered this facet of us was, in part, our laughter," she writes. "Black people falling out in glee, and Black people falling out in religious ecstasy, were two versions of the same thing. Proof of the undying and holy in us."



## WEEKEND: MUSIC

# Still a teenage girl in her 20s

On the road, Maisie Peters comes of age

By ELISE RYAN  
Associated Press

**W**ith British pop singer Maisie Peters' tour across North America underway, there's one city she's particularly looking forward to playing: Sacramento, Calif.

Why? The Greta Gerwig effect.

"That's like a 'Lady Bird,' Greta Gerwig pilgrimage," Peters told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "So I'm excited for that."

Peters' tour in the U.S. and Canada follows the June release of her sophomore album "The Good Witch." Interwoven are five dates opening for Ed Sheeran, who signed Peters to his Gingerbread Man Records in 2021, and whom she has already opened for in Europe and Australia. But New York's Radio City Music Hall presented a new achievement — her biggest headlining show so far.

"It was very surreal; it was like a real moment," Peters, 23, said in a Zoom call ahead of her show in Montreal. "Not many artists get to do something like that."

That moment was one Tina Hizon, Peters' keyboardist and friend, had been anticipating.

"I felt quite emotional when we were on stage," Hizon told the AP. "Like, oh, we've come a long way."

These are hardly the biggest crowds Peters and her band have seen — they played Glastonbury's Pyramid Stage in June and Chicago's Lollapalooza, their first U.S. festival, earlier this month. Two shows at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, with Sheeran in March, brought in a record 215,000 fans.

you're in middle school."

The album, and that energy, "feels very right," she said. "It's very calming and nice to feel so secure and confident in what you made, and to get to share that with the world."

At Radio City earlier in August, fans wore beaded friendship bracelets and baby tees embroidered with Peters' most memed lyrical quips: "Little miss unstable," "I am unhinged" and the line she wore on her own shirt at Glastonbury, "Women's hearts are lethal weapons." Halfway through her set, Peters — ever the fangirl herself — wove a cover of One Direction's "Night Changes" into a medley of songs spanning her discography, in homage to her own growth, but also her fans'.

Part of Peters' appeal is that earlier discussed quality — being a teenage girl in her 20s. Her lyrics are personal, but also aim to more broadly capture the experiences of existing as a young woman in 2023. She name-drops celebrities — real and fictional — with a specificity that feels like an already established inside joke with listeners. She alludes to her past works, strengthening her own mythology.

But this tour is their own. And it is a celebration of "The Good Witch," an album Peters says she feels "at peace with," because it accomplished her goal: reflecting who she is now. The album is about growing up ("Coming of Age"), moving on ("Run"), taking control ("You're Just a Boy (And I'm Kinda the Man)"), letting go ("There It Goes") and being, well, unhinged ("BSC"). It debuted at No. 1 on the U.K. charts.

It is also music that easily soundtracks what people online have fondly labeled the "summer of girlhood" — a celebration of all things nostalgic and angsty, pink and sequined, emotional and overly analytical — in the wake of events like Taylor Swift's Eras Tour and the release of Gerwig's "Barbie." Peters embraces that categorization.

"It's the classic teenage girl in their 20s, fun. And I'm such a teenage girl in my 20s," she said of her shows, using the tongue-in-cheek phrase that's been the subject of thousands of tweets and TikToks, often referencing fandoms, avoidant adulthood and nostalgia.

In the best way possible, she says, the shows feel "like a birthday party when

Kaitlyn Cunningham, 28, discovered Peters' music on an Apple Music playlist in 2019. She has attended all four of her shows in New York City.

"I love that she's been able to pull from past lyrics and her personal life and create these songs that everybody can relate to — that's my favorite part of music," Cunningham said.

One of the album's pillars is "The History of Man," its closing track. The bridge begins: "He stole her youth and promised heaven, the men start wars yet Troy hates Helen. Women's hearts are lethal weapons, did you hold mine and feel threatened?"

"I sort of half jokingly always say, it's about the unending pain of being a woman," Peters said of the song. "It also feels very 'Little Women,' Jo March-coded and Greta Gerwig-coded, very 'Barbie'-coded, as I've had people say to me since the song came out."

Cunningham brought as many fake sunflowers as she could to Peters' Radio City show, in honor of two lyrics in "There It Goes." She handed them out to fans in the pit, and (after asking that the flowers not be thrown) instructed everyone to hold

them up during the song.

"It's so fun to see familiar faces (at the shows) and to know that everybody is there because we all love Maisie, and we want to have a good time," Cunningham said. "Everyone is just so supportive of each other and friendly."

That community is a point of pride for Peters, who has cultivated it through TikTok, Discord and an Instagram book club.

"I just love seeing people so wholly in the moment, just losing their minds and making friends," she said of her shows. Bringing that energy to the stage is something she has also learned from watching her "boss," as she calls Sheeran, perform. Peters opened for Sheeran for the first time in the U.S. on Aug. 26, in Seattle.

"Ed's so good at holding a crowd and involving them as well and making them feel like it's as much their night as it is his, wherever he goes," she told the AP. "It's a good night out. That's how I want my shows to feel."

Back at Radio City, Peters paused while performing "Not Another Rockstar," a fan favorite.

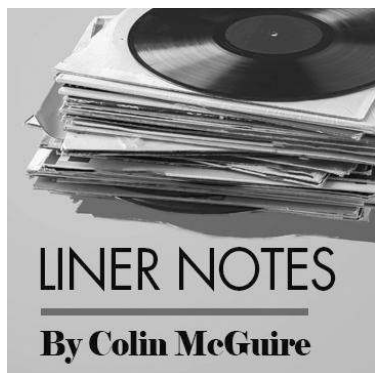
Looking up at the venue's balconies, she yelled: "Who's the rockstar now?"



JOEL C RYAN/AP

Maisie Peters performs June 23 at the Glastonbury Festival in Somerset, England. Peters, who released her album "The Good Witch" in June, is on tour in the U.S. and Canada.

## WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS



## Billboard Hot 100 No. 1: Oliver Anthony's 'Rich Men North of Richmond'

Well, what's there to say about this? When VH1 throws together episodes of "I love the 2020s!" this song and this guy will most certainly take up a good seven minutes. You can almost hear Michael Ian Black's jokes about Anthony's red beard now, right before the show flashes to a clip of the singer, who says something like, "I had no idea it would take off like it did." Oh, but it took off, Oliver. It most definitely took off.

All political nuances and contexts aside, the song is ... well, it's pretty standard. A guy in the woods with a guitar and a voice that screams more than it sings. It's not novel and it's certainly not on the Hot 100 bingo card these days, but it hit a nerve and has become an anthem for the right side of the political aisle regardless of its intention. Some might equate it to the days when folk-leaning protest music mattered in the American mainstream, but really, this is just a guy whining about The Man, his job and taxes on top of a wavering acoustic guitar that nearly loses its way at times throughout the song. It's probably unfair to doubt Anthony's sincerity, but it's also irresponsible to label him the next Woody Guthrie.

The truth might be in the middle, but it also might not be — theories about the guy being an industry and/or political plant are as prevalent as any debate surrounding what it takes to make America great again. As such, here's hoping this guy enjoys his time in the spotlight. It was hard to think anything could top Luke Combs' pedestrian interpretation of "Fast Car" — on both the chart and the cringe level. Turns out, one, Mr. Oliver Anthony knew just the trick.



KENDALL WARNER, THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT/AP

**Oliver Anthony came out of left field and shot to the top of the Billboard Hot 100 chart.**

## Hozier

Unreal Unearth (Columbia Records)

Andrew John Hozier-Byrne, the Irish musician who records under the moniker Hozier, has recently become associated with the cottagecore TikTok trend.

These TikToks consist of soft acoustic music — often "Would That I," from Hozier's 2019 album "Wasteland, Baby!" — playing in the background of imagery that can only be described as "cozy fall vibes." It's usually videos of fall leaves, people strolling in scenic hiking areas, or photos of decor that evoke a home in the woods.

Clearly, rich visual lyricism — about nature, love and beyond — are at the core of Hozier's songwriting. That continues on his third album, 2023's "Unreal Unearth."

The release highlights the singer-songwriter's soft acoustic ballads, the kind commonly associated with the aforementioned cozy falls, and he also shows off his vocal prowess in powerful songs meant to be sung at the top of his lungs.

The album opens with "De Selby Part 1," which starts off with a soft and slow melody. Its successor, the track, "De Selby Part 2," does not. Here, it's clear he is inspired by symphonic funk and soul music.

The album has firsts, like Hozier singing in Gaelic on a few tracks, including "To Someone From A Warm Climate (Uiscefhuaraithe)."

Ultimately, the album is a collection of his strengths. Hozier knows his way around a slow burn, like the ability to slowly build up and deliver a powerful chorus in "Francesca."

That differs from a track like "I, Carrion," which hits almost like a lullaby, quickly followed by "Eat Your Young," which swells with powerful bass and lyrics that exude a sense of danger and gluttony.

"Seven new ways that you can eat your young / Come and get some," Hozier sings.

A surprise collaboration on the album is an upbeat duet with Brandi Carlile on "Damage Gets Done," a celebratory soundtrack to a long road trip.

"Unreal Unearth" is a journey that ebbs and flows from start to finish. With each track, listeners learn to "unearth" a new layer of the journey, from loud to quiet, from dark to light.

— Karena Phan  
Associated Press



## Turnpike Troubadours

A Cat in the Rain (Bossier City Records/Thirty Tigers)

When a band steps aside just as it appears to be peaking, it sets up a unique challenge.

That's what the Turnpike Troubadours did a few years ago, taking a hiatus to deal with personal challenges after their first five albums turned them from an Oklahoma roadhouse band into a phenomenon.

The Troubadours are back with "A Cat in the Rain," their first new album since 2017. And they've returned with the kind of ferocity that feels destined to put them back on that long-term upward trajectory.

The album combines the Troubadours' signature blend of country and rock — the tight sound built around the plaintive singing and vulnerable lyrics of frontman Evan Felker — with a new message of resilience and gratitude. The fresh material will only endear them to their extremely devoted fans, and it's compelling enough to introduce a really good band to newcomers.

On "Brought Me," a Felker composition, he spells out how happy the band is to be back.

"Oh now, still beats steady, this heart I handed you for free / Should you ever need a thing, it won't be hard to find me / Standing at the ready, with a dance or two still left in me / Wager that it won't appear that I forgot who brought me."

The earnestness is palpable. The band's bass player, R.C. Edwards, says it's a love song to Felker's wife. Felker himself describes it as a message to fans who stuck with the band through difficult times, including his fight for sobriety. It's probably both.

Stick with them, they did. The Troubadours have been touring to sold-out shows, adding dates to meet demand and bonding warmly with concert halls full of people who know every word to every song and sing them right back at the band.

That's quite an achievement for a group that always conveyed a sense that its default venue should be a country dance hall with beer-soaked, boot-scuffed wood flooring. It's a tribute to a red-dirt sound that was always too smart, maybe even too heartfelt to fit in neatly with some of the metrics-tested country emerging from Nashville.

More than anything, though, it's a sign that the Troubadours haven't lost a step in their time away.

— Scott Stroud  
Associated Press



## Alice Cooper

Road (earMusic)

Seventy-five-year-old Alice Cooper has more miles on him than a 1968 Volkswagen, and in any given year, he's probably on tour somewhere. That's the theme of "Road," the latest album from the shock-rock king who's been losing his head onstage for half a century.

Cooper has outlasted his '70s theatrical rock peers not only through sheer endurance but by consistently birthing brilliant new hard rock, with one of the best backing bands in the business.

A frequent creator of concept albums ("From the Inside," about his recovery from alcoholism; "Welcome to My Nightmare," about the dreams of a child; "Along Came A Spider" about a serial killer; and the self-evident "Detroit Stories"), Cooper offers another one on "Road," which deals with aspects of life as a touring rock band.

From the lights-on adrenaline rush ("Welcome to the Show"), to painful goodbyes to a loved one at the start of a tour ("Baby Please Don't Go"), to the disorienting lack of a schedule after the tour ends ("100 More Miles"), this is a look at Alice on the road, from the inside.

It also introduces us to stalkers ("Go Away"), a gorgeous truck stop waitress ("Big Boots") and a maniacal truck driver ("White Line Frankenstein").

The sound is at once old and new, with references to past Cooper glory including the lyrics "like it/love it" harkening back to 1970's "I'm Eighteen."

— Wayne Parry  
Associated Press



## Bethany Cosentino

Natural Disaster (Concord Records)

Bethany Cosentino, one half of the surf-y indie rock duo Best Coast and its principal songwriter, is out with her debut solo album "Natural Disaster." It is a continuation of her high-energy, guitar-fueled group vibes.

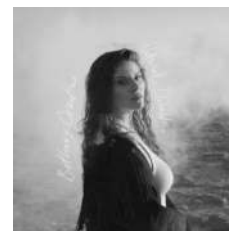
While easy enough on the ears, there's not really enough to delineate "Natural Disaster" from work with Best Coast bud Bobb Bruno. Usually, solo efforts offer much more of a departure than is evident here.

The construction, lyrics, singing and delivery are fine but uneventful with no earworm tracks for the casual listener. Songs like "It's Fine," "Easy" and "A Single Day" are cordial rock offerings, but each misses a sense of urgency, and Cosentino doesn't seem to deliver them with enough emotion to make them sound personal.

She shines, however, on "It's a Journey." It begins with some nice pared-down guitar work and there's just enough lilt in her voice to convince the listener she means this one. And if she ever considers a country crossover career, this track proves she could handle it.

In a press release, Cosentino says she hopes "Natural Disaster" might help listeners find their way through transformation and renewal. She's a capable musician and singer, but this debut album might have benefited from even more transformation of her own.

— Ron Harris  
Associated Press



## Buck Meek

Haunted Mountain (4AD)

Buck Meek, the stellar guitarist of Big Thief, is out with his third studio album, "Haunted Mountain." It is a lovely fusion of twang and rock with prime songwriting that works to define the art of caring.

Sure, this is largely love song territory for the troubadour. But it's a deft examination of how the heart grows, and not a breezy travelogue.

The title track is buoyed with hope as Meek sings "All of my life I've been a rounder / Traveling across this green land / But now that I live here on this haunted mountain / I know I'm never coming down."

Surprises abound. The Texas-reared Meek collaborated with filmmakers working on a project about the late Judee Sill, a folk singer-songwriter who died in 1979. Meek was asked to put some of her unreleased lyrics to music for the project, and he obliged in fine fashion — released here on "The Rainbow."

"Haunted Mountain" is a jangly collection of country chord structure with moments of electronic swoon, lush reverb and guitars in overdrive. He's Sufjan Stevens -adjacent, for those new listeners needing a cubbyhole to put him in. But his music stands on its own, and it is one of the most ear-friendly releases of 2023.

— Ron Harris  
Associated Press



## WEEKEND: MUSIC



PHOTOS BY JEENAH MOON/For The Washington Post

Kate Carniol considers a Taylor Swift “Reputation” CD at Village Revival Records in New York City. Carniol owns every Swift CD since 2010’s “Speak Now.”

## The CD continues to find new life among Gen Z collectors

BY ZOE GLASSER  
The Washington Post

**T**wenty-three-year-old Kate Carniol has collected every Taylor Swift CD since the original release of “Speak Now” in 2010. A new album release means a new CD purchase, a rule she reserves exclusively for Swift, whose complete discography lines a shelf in Carniol’s room at her parents’ house.

But Carniol doesn’t own a CD player. She hasn’t listened to her Swift CDs in years, instead opting for a streaming platform. Carniol, like other young collectors, considers the CD to be more akin to merchandise than a functional tool for consuming music. She loves the included photos, the design of the album. When interviewed in late June, she’d been hoping for a signed copy of “Speak Now (Taylor’s Version)” since the rerecord was announced.

“I stay up every night until midnight, waiting to see if she’s going to release a signed copy of it,” Carniol says. “That was the album that really got me into her. I need the signed copy of the rerecord just for the emotional aspect.”

CDs make up a tiny percentage of the music industry’s earnings: about 3% as of 2022, down from 96 percent in 2002. Dig-



A compact disc protrudes from the back pocket of collector Veronica Fuentes.

ital streaming services have dominated for more than a decade, with vinyl ticking upward year over year since the mid-aughts. CDs have enjoyed no such resurgence. But they have drawn a devoted user base of young adults who came of age long after the CD’s heyday. These are the self-proclaimed CD people, a small but devoted group that continues to love the

compact disc and hopes for a renaissance.

Tabby Bernardus, 22, a recent college graduate from Los Angeles, remembers when her parents gave her a bulky multi-disc CD player when she was a child. She would listen to her father’s favorite, the Shins, or her own favorite, Joni Mitchell; a new artist called Florence and the Machine; or a classic like Metallica. Bernar-

**“I like the collectible aspect of CDs and also just like the [feeling] of going into a store and buying something.”**

**Tabby Bernardus**  
Recent college graduate

dus has since collected about 200 CDs, some new and others dug out from thrift-store dollar bins. She pops them into her car stereo — the only CD player she has anymore, because the multi-disc player is long gone — and listens to the entire album in its intended order. Like her parents before her, she keeps a binder full of CDs in the car.

“I like the collectible aspect of CDs and also just like the [feeling] of going into a store and buying something rather than going on Spotify and adding it to your playlist, which is also ... something I do,”

**SEE COMEBACK ON PAGE 31**

## WEEKEND: MUSIC/TELEVISION

# AMC shows to run on Max this fall

'Fear the Walking Dead' among select series to be featured on 'pop-up' from Sept. 1-Oct. 30

BY STEPHEN BATTAGLIO  
*Los Angeles Times*

In an unusual move, Warner Bros. Discovery's streaming service Max is offering shows from cable network AMC for two months this fall.

Max announced Monday it will launch a "programming pop-up" from Sept. 1 through Oct. 30 that will offer 200 episodes of AMC programming.

The pop-up, called "AMC+ Picks on Max," will include episodes of "Anne Rice's Interview with the Vampire," "Killing Eve," "Dark Winds," "Fear the Walking Dead" and four other series.

The move is an attempt by AMC to get its programs sampled by more consumers as cord-cutting is shrinking its traditional cable business and the growth of its own streaming services have stalled. The two companies

have no common ownership and have not partnered in the past.

AMC Networks, known for such hits as "Breaking Bad" and "The Walking Dead," is a free-standing publicly held media company controlled by Charles Dolan and his family, which owns several cable networks.

In a statement, Dan McDermott, president of entertainment, AMC Studios and AMC Networks, described the move as a promotional arrangement.

"AMC Networks makes great shows, and our goal is to bring these shows to as many people as possible, in ways that best serve viewers," McDermott said.

AMC Networks has several subscription streaming services of its own, but it's still largely dependent on its traditional cable channels, which include AMC, BBC America and IFC. Like the rest of the cable business,

AMC is under pressure as consumers are dropping their pay TV subscriptions in favor of streaming services.

While AMC Networks has touted its own streaming business — it owns AMC+, Shudder, ALLBLK and Acorn — it's a minor player compared with WBD's Max, and is losing viewers. AMC reported having 11 million streaming subscribers at the end of June, down from 11.8 million at the end of 2022.

WBD says it has around 96 million subscriptions across its services Max, HBO and Discovery+.

Max was recently relaunched, combining the content from streaming services HBO Max and Discovery+ under the shortened moniker. The name change was part of Chief Executive David Zaslav's efforts to broaden the audience for the company's 3-year-old online video service.



AMC/TNS

AMC's "Fear the Walking Dead," which features actor Alycia Debnam-Carey, is coming to Max for two months this fall.

## Comeback: Low price point, ownership reasons for CD popularity

### FROM PAGE 30

Bernardus says. "You know what store you bought it at or the time in your life where you bought that CD, [and] I think [that] leaves a little more impact on you."

Many collectors are involved in fandom spaces, where purchasing CDs is an extension of their love for their favorite musician or band.

If a fan purchases a CD, they are supporting their favorite musician more than hundreds of streams would. The fan bases of some genres seem particularly drawn to CDs — country and K-pop being among the strongest, said Jon Strickland, vice president of sales at Sub Pop Records.

For Ben Fitchett, a 23-year-old music memorabilia collector from Los Angeles, it's about having signed collector's items. Fitchett owns record certification plaques from artists such as Selena Gomez and Justin Bieber, along with a cloudlike tulle gown that Ariana Grande once wore onstage. He specifically collects signed CDs and is a member of several Facebook groups in which fans buy, sell and advise each other about whether signatures look legit or forged.

"People will be like, 'I'm in search of this CD. Does anyone have it?' And someone would be like, 'Yes, but I'm in search of this.' There's a lot of trades. People often go to those sorts of pages because they know it's other fans," Fitchett says.

Another potential reason for the collection subculture is simple: People like objects, and these objects are relatively inexpensive. CDs are both easier to store and less pricey than vinyl records.

The low price point is part of



JEENAH MOON/For The Washington Post

Veronica Fuentes looks through CDs at Record Runner in New York City.

the appeal for 20-year-old Veronica Fuentes. Fuentes began collecting because she thought it would be funny to purchase a Lindsay Lohan CD she found at a thrift store. Since then, she's established an assortment of mostly '90s alt rock, which she uses in part for decoration. She's recently been digging through sale bins for albums from Fiona Apple and the Doors. She plays her modest collection of CDs in the car — she too doesn't have a stand-alone CD player, though she does have a port that allows her to burn CDs from her computer.

"I think maybe there's an uptick now because there is this whole generation of people who are getting out of the house for the first time and moving into their own spaces, and if this does grow as a decoration piece, it's accessible to us and affordable

and on trend in its own way," she says. "Because it is so stuck in one period, it is kind of timeless."

Fuentes also appreciates the definite structure of CDs and their limited ability to skip tracks or shuffle, in addition to their Y2K aesthetic and their value to up-and-coming artists.

Collectors, eager for a CD renaissance, were excited when, in 2021, CD sales experienced their first uptick in sales volume year over year since 2004. Strickland says CD sales have increased at Sub Pop Records in the past few years. "It's a way to get yourself out there and develop a pretty loyal fan base," Fuentes says. "If you go to a house show and you buy a CD for 10 bucks, you're always going to have that CD and be like, 'Oh, I remember that band.'"

But the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA),

which tracks the quantity and medium of American music sales by gathering data from the major record labels and third-party sources, has no data to indicate that CDs are making a comeback. RIAA Research Director Matthew Bass says that if any physical medium is here to stay, it's vinyl.

"While we have seen a little bit of a blip in the radar the last couple of years, if you zoom out to the larger picture, it's actually been a pretty steady decline for CDs," Bass says.

Notably, RIAA's data only tracks first sales — lots of CDs are sold secondhand, and it's all but impossible to track them. John T. Kurz, owner of Waterloo Records in Austin, says that his used CD sales have remained consistent, even as his new CD sales wobbled during the rise of streaming.

The data also can't quantify what's drawing a small but devoted segment of Gen Z to CDs. Kurz finds that young people tend to be interested in listening to an album in the order the artist originally intended, and that it is increasingly important to consumers that they financially support their favorite artist as much as possible.

"I think people are looking to have ownership of their music as opposed to just getting it free or if they're doing a subscription service for streaming, they're basically leasing their music," he says. "The educated fan base has learned ... you know, sometimes you'd have enough to buy a sandwich if you have 100,000 streams. [Collectors want] to truly be respectful and supportive of the artist who's looking to have ownership of their music, and know that there's a decent return going back to the artists."

Regardless of whether CDs will ever again meet or surpass vinyl in sales, the physical medium doesn't seem to be slipping from the public consciousness anytime soon. The ability to hold, touch and permanently own music is beloved, and listeners enjoy the ritual of interacting with the art further than just hitting play.

"It takes the act of listening to music, which has become so easy for everybody nowadays and so accessible, and just makes it feel more like active listening," Fuentes says.

"It makes it feel more like I'm not just hitting shuffle on my liked songs. I want to listen to these songs, and I have a specific vibe that I want to curate for me and my friends. I think it gives a little bit more respect to the music."

## WEEKEND: HEALTH &amp; FITNESS



# Calories in/out are key to weight loss

Types of food eaten will affect health and how the body uses molecules, but the familiar formula still applies

BY TAMAR HASPEL  
The Washington Post

All calories are the same, and the only way to lose weight is to burn more of them than you absorb, but nothing good happens if you go out in the world and say that out loud.

“LOL!” the responses tend to go. “Calories-in-calories-out has been debunked.” Then there’s the addendum: “This idiot thinks that 1,000 calories of sugar is the same as 1,000 calories of lentils!”

Sigh. You know who thinks that? Nobody. Because it’s idiotic.

There’s massive confusion about calories-in-calories-out (often abbreviated CICO), but it’s a fundamental weight-loss truth, so I’m going to try to clear it up. (And I hear you saying “Good luck with that.”)

The debunking crowd seems to have gotten the idea that a calorie is a unit of food. It isn’t; it’s a unit of energy. The calorie count tells you only one thing about what you eat: the amount of energy that is theoretically available for your body to absorb.

Saying all calories are the same is like saying all kilometers, or ounces, or minutes are the same. All minutes are definitely the same! Although you may be feeling that the ones you spend, say, watching baby panda videos are way better than the ones you are spending reading this article.

Despite being all the same, the calories come in a food package, and there are lots of other things about food that can affect both the calories-in and the calories-out sides of the equation. The real disagreement isn’t over whether this is true; it’s whether the effect is large enough to make a difference in weight loss.

So let’s look at how what you’re eating can affect how many of the available calories you absorb and how many you burn. Let’s do absorption first; there are several ways the food matters:

**Hard-to-digest carbohydrates:** While some carbs (think sugar) are easy for our bodies to break down, others (think lentils) are harder. Foods that are high in fiber and other digestion-resistant carbs, like oligo-saccharides, and resistant starch don’t get completely broken down. They exit your body, if all goes smoothly, first thing in the morning.

**Particle size:** The bigger the particle size of your food, the less surface area your digestive enzymes have to work with, and the less efficiently you absorb the energy. Almond butter, for example, will net you more calories than whole almonds. Ditto instant oats vs. whole oats. And if you’ve ever eaten corn on the cob, you may have noticed that some of those large particles pass right through you. (This is one of the reasons highly processed foods, which tend to be pulverized, are so insidious.)

**Your microbiome:** Microbes gotta eat! And different foods feed different kinds of microbes. If your microorganisms use the calories, you can’t. We’re just starting to get a handle on how food content fosters, or doesn’t, different microbial communities.

Now let’s look at the burn side:

**Macronutrient content:** Food is made up of carbohydrates, fat and protein, and your body has to break all of those down to make the calories accessible. That breaking down takes energy (calories!). I think of this as digestive overhead, but scientists call it the “thermic effect of food,” and estimate that it’s about 10% of the calories you burn in a day.

Each macronutrient is different, though. Fat is easiest for your body to access, and requires under 3% of its calories. Carbohydrates are next, at 5 to 10%, and protein is highest, at 20 to 30%. (People sometimes disagree about the specific numbers, but not the concept or the ballpark.)

**Metabolism boosting:** Some foods may rev you up, at least a little. There’s some evidence that caffeine and capsaicin (the heat in chile peppers), for example, can increase resting metabolism.

**Hormonal effects:** Food can affect the hormones that regulate your metabolism. Low-carb diets, for

example, hang their hat on the idea that, if you release less insulin (a hormone integral to fat storage), you cannot store fat, and your body will burn more calories.

There are undoubtedly other ways in which what you eat affects how many calories you absorb, many of which we have yet to discover. Of course, there’s also the issue of satiety; if what you eat helps you eat less later, you obviously absorb fewer calories. What all those effects have in common is that someone has tried to sell you a diet based on them.

So here’s the burning question: Given all the ways different foods affect calorie absorption and burn, why the focus on calories rather than food? Because all those ways are small. So small that, in trial after trial, no diet, based on any of these things, significantly outperforms any other diet in the long term.

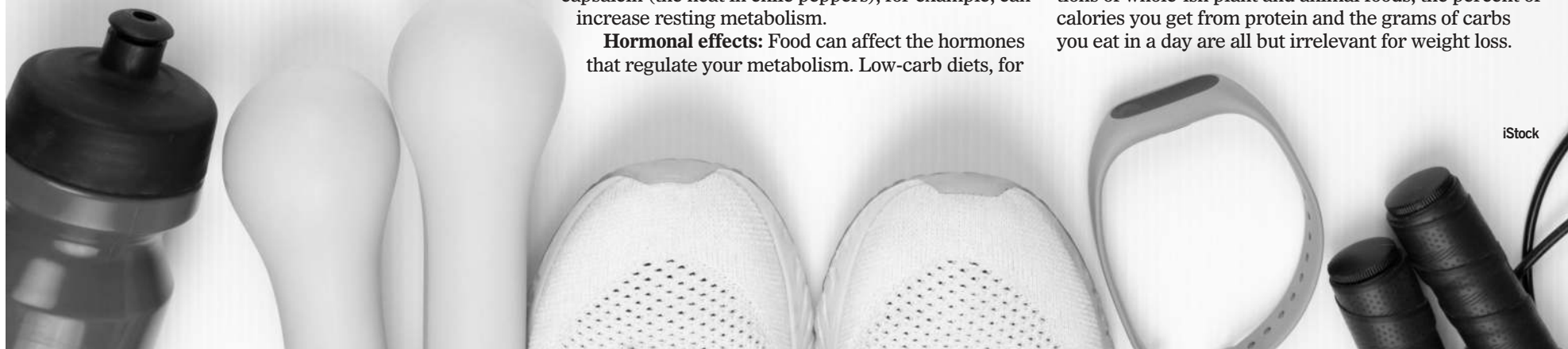
And yet, the idea that what you eat is more important than the number of calories you consume has taken hold in the public understanding of weight loss. To figure out why, I checked in with nutrition scientist Marion Nestle. She’s co-author of the book “Why Calories Count,” so you know exactly where she stands.

I started off talking about all those ways that what you eat affect how we absorb or burn calories, but she dismissed them wholesale.

“It’s trivial!” she said. “In studies where people were locked in metabolic wards, if the calories were lower, they lost weight at a predictable rate, regardless of the composition of the diet.” The diets, she said, “varied from 80 or 90% carbs to 80 to 90% fat.” And it just didn’t make much difference.

This doesn’t mean your food choices are irrelevant. Take highly processed foods, which tend to be calorie-dense, nutrient-challenged, easily eaten and absorbed and minimally satiating. That’s a combination that can easily lead to overeating, which means, as I’m sure you know by now, more calories.

To conclude: if you’re looking at reasonable permutations of whole-ish plant and animal foods, the percent of calories you get from protein and the grams of carbs you eat in a day are all but irrelevant for weight loss.





## WEEKEND: FAMILY



LUKE JOHNSON, SEATTLE TIMES/TNS

The Telephone of the Wind, created by Corey Dembeck, has been in Squaxin Park in Olympia, Wash., for three years. The phone is not connected to anything, which allows users to make “calls” to deceased loved ones.

# The power of wind phones

Unconnected calls to deceased help users deal with grief in a tangible way

BY PAIGE CORNWELL  
*The Seattle Times*

**B**rittany Bacinski prepared to connect with her first love, putting into words what she should have told him years ago. She had traveled more than 2,000 miles from her home in Michigan to speak with him in an Olympia, Wash., park.

The one-sided conversation would be through a vintage rotary phone. She picked up the receiver, the dense weight matching the heaviness she felt. She stuck her finger into the clear holes, dialed a number and began talking.

The phone wasn't connected to anything; her words didn't go anywhere. And that was the point. The man she called in 2022 — whom she didn't want to break up with all those years ago, whose missed call before her wedding day stayed in her mind during and after her ill-fated marriage — died in 2019.

But with the 10-minute call in the forest, she finally said all she needed to say. Hello. You were right all along. I should have chosen you.

Bacinski used the Telephone of the Wind in Olympia's Squaxin Park, where users speak to the dead through an unconnected telephone. Known as “wind phones,” they are meant to carry the griever's words to the wind in phone booths or isolated swaths of forests.

The phones provide dedicated spaces to address grief in a tangible way in a culture that's increasingly focused on “moving on” from loss. The phones, coordinators and users say, are especially important now as society grapples with lingering trauma from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The concept is modeled after a wind phone in Japan that, in the years after the deadly 2011 earthquake and tsunami, has had thousands of visitors. Dozens of wind phones have popped up throughout the U.S. over the past few years.

The day in 2020 that Corey Dembeck found out his family friends' 4-year-old daughter, Joelle, had died,

Dembeck ran to a thrift store to find a rotary phone. He took some plywood, attached the phone and sneaked it into Squaxin Park, then known as Priest Point Park.

“I was in shock,” he recalled. “How many families are ready to bury their 4-year-old daughter?”

He wrote a blog post about the phone to point readers to the family's GoFundMe. A few weeks later, he received a call asking for the phone's exact location. Then another, and another. More people began showing up, to the point where parkgoers formed lines to use the phone connected to nowhere.

The city of Olympia asked if he would be willing to replace what he admits was a rush job when he screwed the phone to a tree. The original Japanese wind phone has an English-style phone booth, but that was too large, so Dembeck decided to pay homage instead by using Japanese construction techniques. He watched countless hours of YouTube videos, mostly in Japanese, to teach himself how to carve by hand and copy the marks for the joints from a big tree stump.

“I felt like if I carved them, it should be done with thought and intent and care, and maybe more sweat than just screwing something together,” he said.

“Telephone of the Wind” is carved into the display that holds the phone, as is a dedication:

“This phone is for everyone who has lost a loved one. The phone is an outlet for those who have messages they wish to share with their friends and family. It is a phone for memories and saying the goodbyes you never got to say.”

The phone is in an isolated area of the park, where visitors tend to take a few wrong turns along the trails before finding the spot. Even on hot days, temperatures seem to fall a few degrees in the lush forest. Only birdsong or nearby hikers break the silence.

You might feel stupid at first, Dembeck says, but just start talking, about your life now or what you miss about them or what you wish you had said.

“You feel mentally better,” he said. “You feel a weight lifted off your shoulder.”

## THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



## My creative process: giving birth weekly

Sixteen years ago, I had a eureka moment. Military life, overseas tours, deployments and raising three children had rendered my legal career not only stale, but practically impossible. I worried that I'd never earn income again.

However, when a relative commented on how funny my annual Christmas letters were, it came to me in a flash of genius. “I'll become a writer!” I thought, envisioning myself happily tapping away at our home computer (back then, a behemoth Dell), earning a tidy second income along with international prestige while the children played in the yard and pot roast simmered in the oven. Writing was the perfect work-from-home military-spouse career!

I had no clue how to be a writer, much less a paid writer. But ignorance is stupidity masquerading as bliss, so I started immediately, writing humorous commentary from our powder-blue Formica kitchen desk.

It took two years to get columns published. Another year to learn blogging. Two more years to get paid for columns. Three more years to land a decent column contract. And four more years to publish a book.

My plan to become a legitimate writer took more than a decade to implement, and even then, I hardly earned enough money to break even on printer ink.

Throughout this endeavor, friends, family and readers have often asked me, “What's your creative process?”

They expect me to describe being ensconced in an Irish sweater and vintage Levi's, using a classic Smith Corona typewriter with a sticky “e,” in a charming shed-turned-writer's-retreat adorned with flower-filled window boxes.

Instead, I admit the reality of my writing process: I've scribbled most of my column ideas willy-nilly on crumpled receipts, torn envelopes or my hand while driving to piano lessons or sitting in orthodontists' offices. I've never had a writer's retreat, or vintage Levi's that actually fit. When I write, I procrastinate by searching Etsy, watching dumpster-diving hauls on Reels, balancing my checkbook, painting my nails or doing anything else BUT writing.

Through writers' groups, I've known other writers who proclaim, “I write, therefore I am.” Or, “I live to write; I write to live.” They portray themselves as artistic scribes, burdened by their gift with words. Their inspirations fuel their innate drive to put pen to paper, else they shrivel and die without their “craft.”

I still have a lot to learn, but one thing I know for certain: Writers who say those things don't have a weekly deadline.

Don't get me wrong; I love writing. I find great satisfaction in seeing my work in print.

That said, there are days when I'd rather chew my own arm off than muster the brainpower required to write my column. Writing on a weekly deadline is hard work. I've felt actual, physical pain while trying to write.

Occasionally, my friends and family offer to help. “I've got your next column!” they'll say, and bestow their brilliant cultural observations on me like precious gifts. What these well-intentioned people fail to understand is that ideas come easily. But when I'm required to turn an idea into a well-written piece with a compelling story arc and a logical conclusion before my Thursday deadline, my brain bleeds.

Syndicated humor columnist Erma Bombeck referred to her creative process as “giving birth to 450 words.” Other than there being no stitches, stretch marks or 18 years of parental responsibilities, Bombeck's description is spot-on.

Just as a person who touches a hot oven will flinch, my brain recoils from deadline writing. It's human nature.

It took me 16 years to learn how to write columns each week. I have no lofty creative process. It's real work, and it hurts. But when the task is done, and the blood is all mopped up, the feeling of accomplishment makes it worth the pain.

Read more at [themeatandpotatoesoflife.com](http://themeatandpotatoesoflife.com) and in Lisa's book, “The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com.” Email: [meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com](mailto:meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com)

# WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

## NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

### CRUNCH TIME

BY MICHAEL SCHLOSSBERG / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Michael Schlossberg is an internist in Bend, Ore., who has been making crosswords for The Times since 2020. He says he got the idea for this one while thinking about the books he read to his kids when they were little. He tried to get all the circles in the puzzle to line up, but that proved to be impossible. Michael says his favorite part of constructing is converting a theme idea into a completed grid — “more fun and challenging than actual solving.” — W.S.

#### ACROSS

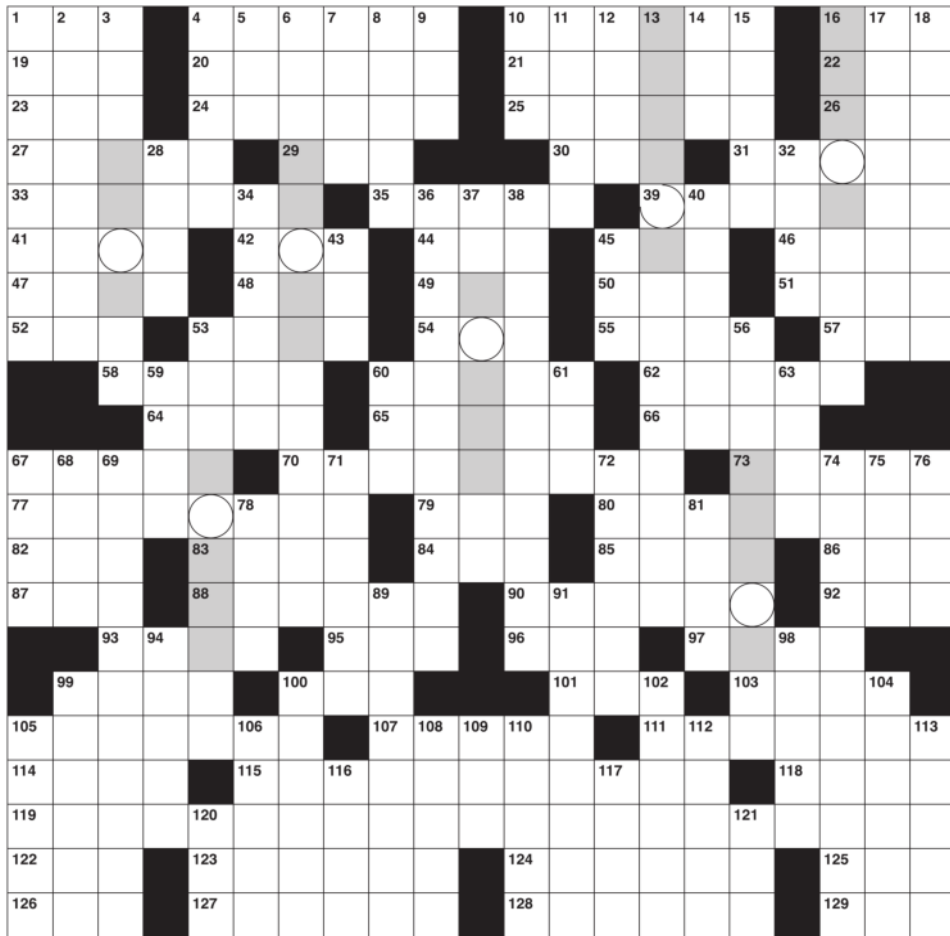
- 1 Wildfire season stat, for short
- 4 Title feline in a Hanna-Barbera cartoon
- 10 Act impartially
- 16 Capital of Peru?
- 19 Hebrew letter on a dreidel
- 20 Communities for some commuters
- 21 Gridiron standout
- 22 Article in El Mundo
- 23 Taylor Swift's “\_\_\_\_\_ the Damn Season”
- 24 Spanish wine classification
- 25 Produce in bunches
- 26 Trojans' sch.
- 27 Big shows
- 29 Grassy area
- 30 Parliament member
- 31 TikTok alternative, familiarly
- 33 Neologism
- 35 Family feud participant
- 39 Brainstorming aid
- 41 “Really, you too?”
- 42 Nutrition fig.
- 44 Word said four times in the Lord's Prayer
- 45 Each
- 46 Page in a passport, perhaps
- 47 Machine-shop tools

- 48 Actor Somerhalder of “The Vampire Diaries”
- 49 Longtime newswire inits.
- 50 When repeated, reply to “Who wants a cookie?”
- 51 Woman in Camelot
- 52 “Green”
- 53 Italian wheels
- 54 SCOTUS appointee of '93
- 55 Since
- 57 Home of Umm al Quwain: Abbr.
- 58 Gent
- 60 Crashed and burned
- 62 Cat scratchers
- 64 Draws
- 65 Heavy lifter?
- 66 Words in an analogy
- 67 French vineyard region
- 70 “The highest result of education,” according to Helen Keller
- 73 Sheep shelters
- 77 Excited jackpot cry
- 79 Goofy image, maybe
- 80 Forewarned
- 82 Base of a nonmeat burger
- 83 “\_\_\_\_\_ I a Woman?”
- 84 Stumbling sounds
- 85 Look at quickly . . . or closely
- 86 Many a fed. holiday
- 87 Thrill in Manila result, in brief
- 88 Does some massaging
- 90 Least inviting

- 92 Fade out
- 93 Like many consigned goods
- 95 Part of the fam
- 96 When repeated, slangy sound of eating
- 97 Makes some alterations to
- 99 Sound like a real jackass
- 100 Org. with a Canine Good Citizen certification
- 101 \_\_\_\_\_ Easley, where Luke Skywalker meets Han Solo
- 103 “Tarnation!”
- 105 Serenades, as the moon
- 107 Audibly gobsmacked
- 111 Spot for a bowler
- 114 “Thanks \_\_\_\_\_”
- 115 Strings entered during checkout
- 118 Magic word
- 119 Classic children's book character eating its way through this puzzle, with “the”
- 122 Choice words
- 123 And others, in Latin
- 124 Sold products on behalf of
- 125 Grp. that measures 1-Across
- 126 Place to crash while camping
- 127 Brother of Eos and Selene
- 128 Navarra's land
- 129 Harden

#### DOWN

- 1 Go before
- 2 Idealistic, and then some
- 3 Notwithstanding
- 4 Actress Thompson of “Thor: Love and Thunder”
- 5 Big name in spatulas
- 6 Tricked somebody
- 7 First Nations group
- 8 Middle name of James Garfield
- 9 Govt. agency established in November 2001
- 10 Clutch, for one
- 11 Jetson son
- 12 Gemologist's consideration
- 13 Civil engineering or molecular biology
- 14 Pique
- 15 Riveting icon
- 16 ±
- 17 “1984” superstate
- 18 Feature of an action comedy
- 28 Heavy load
- 32 Place for a pew
- 34 Merely cosmetic feature of some electric vehicles
- 36 Time to stop trying?
- 37 Server at a royal table, once
- 38 Tasting the forbidden fruit
- 40 Slobbers
- 43 What makes her hear?
- 45 Italian novelist Pera



- 53 Singer with the 2001 No. 1 hit “Fallin’ ”
- 56 What makes an avocado rich
- 59 Kind of jacket inspired by a school's uniform
- 60 Femur-tibia connector, for short
- 61 What “puppy paws” equal, in craps
- 63 “Hurray!”
- 67 Drops in midair
- 68 Member of a furry race
- 69 “Go ahead, I'm not scared”
- 71 Focused, workwise
- 72 \_\_\_\_\_ de' Medici, who founded the Medici dynasty
- 74 Subjects of some grade- school posters
- 75 Paul Krugman's subj.
- 76 Thrill
- 78 Air force?
- 81 Poet who wrote “The Cow” and “The Panther”
- 89 “What's Eating Gilbert Grape” actor
- 91 Fruity desserts
- 94 Brackish
- 98 Certain subway art
- 99 Slow dance with quick turns
- 100 Keyless
- 102 Tibetan language
- 104 Difficult situation
- 105 State of mayhem
- 106 Sharp
- 108 “La Maja Desnuda” and others
- 109 Anti-apartheid org.
- 110 Near miss
- 112 Rocky Mountain town
- 113 Assayer's unit
- 116 Wrinkly fruit
- 117 “What's Eating Gilbert Grape” actor
- 120 Little chuckle
- 121 Gilbert and Sullivan princess

## GUNSTON STREET



“Gunston Street” is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

## RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



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## FACES

# Squeeze's Difford psyched about tour

'80s British pop band joins Psychedelic Furs on the road

By **RODNEY HO**

*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

British duo Squeeze had only had two Top 40 hits in the United States and not a single album ever reached the Billboard top 30.

But the band's 1982 greatest hits album "Singles 45 and Under" — featuring pop classics like "Tempted," "Black Coffee in Bed" and "Up the Junction" — did go platinum stateside and helped the band build a loyal fan base.

The band toured in 2019, co-headlined with Hall and Oates in 2021 and is now getting ready to hit the road with fellow 1980s Brit-pop band Psychedelic Furs.

This is first time the two compatible acts have worked together. The bands have a few tour dates in England before they launch the U.S. side of the tour Sept. 6 in Amagansett, N.Y.

"I'm looking forward to it," said Chris Difford, the band's primary lyricist and one of two original members of Squeeze with Glenn Tilbrook, in a recent Zoom interview with *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* from his home in England.

"It will be interesting to see what the audience makes of the two of us together. 'Pretty in Pink' was played pretty regularly in my house for a period of time."

At age 68, Difford is pragmatic about touring: "It's what I've always done since I was 17 years old. It's kind of part of what you do in the morning. You are the guy who goes out on the road. As much as it pains me to be away from home, it's also what puts food on the table. It's an incredibly enjoyable existence once you have your spirits in line."

He and Tilbrook have been together as creative partners for nearly 50 years with

only a few years apart. Difford remembers when they were teens, he was envious of how well Tilbrook could play guitar "and the fact his voice was so angelic. I had never heard anybody with that much confidence in their voice before. I have to say he hasn't lost a bit of that over the years."

Difford said he still writes a bit but not nearly as much as he used to: "There are so many distractions in life when you get older. When you're a teenager in a band, all you think about is the next gig and writing the next song. When you're approaching 70, it's a bit of been there, done that. I was writing today. I have to find that inspiration. Sometimes that takes some concentration."

Off stage, he and Tilbrook are not best buds who hang out in each other's homes.

"Our orbits really only mingle when it concerns the band," Difford said. "We are not sociable that way. We accept each other's differences and similarities and make the most of those."

Tilbrook on stage is the more garrulous one, and that is the case off stage as well.

"I think in the past I've been quieter than Glenn," he said. "He can get on a table top and sing you any song from any genre. That kind of personality is a gift I don't have. I suppose I'm more under the table. He is more over the table."

While Squeeze doesn't change the set list for American audiences vs. European audiences, Difford does believe "American audiences can be more expressive, particularly when we were first touring. The energy is amazing. The commitment is always there. There is an understanding between the band and our audience. I respect that."



ZUMA PRESS/TNS

Chris Difford of Squeeze, shown in 2021 in Birmingham, England, is hitting the road with fellow 1980s Brit-pop band Psychedelic Furs.

## Prince Harry says he lacked support when he returned from Afghanistan

From wire reports

Britain's Prince Harry says he didn't have the support he needed when he returned home from combat in Afghanistan as he reached out to other veterans in a new Netflix series about the Invictus Games for injured soldiers.

The new series launched on Wednesday on the streaming service.

In talking about post-traumatic stress disorder, Harry said that his return from Afghanistan in 2012 triggered emotions that he suppressed after the death of his mother, Princess Diana, when he was just 12 years old. The prince, whose troubles with the royal family have been chronicled in the past, said the impact of Diana's death was never discussed.

"The biggest struggle for me was no one around me really could help; I didn't have that support structure, that network or that expert advice to identify what was actually going on with me," Harry

said. "Unfortunately, like most of us, the first time you consider therapy is when you are lying on the floor in the fetal position probably wishing you had dealt with some of this stuff previously."

"Heart of Invictus" features a group of injured soldiers as they prepared for last year's Invictus Games in The Netherlands.

Modeled after the Warrior Games in the United States, Harry founded the Invictus Games in 2014 as a Paralympic-style event designed to inspire military veterans around the world as they work to overcome battlefield injuries.

Harry and his wife, the former Meghan Markle, signed a lucrative contract to produce content for Netflix after they stepped away from royal duties in 2020 and moved to Southern California.



Prince Harry

"Harry & Meghan," a six-part series detailing the couple's split from the royal family, premiered last year.

### Anthony's 'Rich Men' still No. 1 song in U.S.

Oliver Anthony's hit "Rich Men North of Richmond" remains at the top of the charts after being featured in the first Republican presidential debate.

For the second straight week, the self-penned tune — which takes aim at lawmakers, the misuse of tax dollars and dead-end jobs — is the No. 1 song in the country.

According to Billboard, "Rich Men" saw a 31% increase in streams, garnering 22.9 million impressions and selling 117,000 downloads during the last week.

The folksy track isn't only topping the Hot 100, it is also No. 1 on the Hot Country Songs, Digital Song Sales and Streaming Songs

rankings and has cracked the Country Airplay chart with a No. 45 debut.

### Hulu cancels 'The Great' after 3 seasons

Hulu's fan-favorite series "The Great" has been canceled after three seasons.

Starring Elle Fanning and Nicholas Hoult and created and produced by Tony McNamara, "The Great" followed Catherine the Great — Russia's longest-reigning empress from 1762 to 1796 — as she navigated her roller-coaster relationship with husband Peter III of Russia. "The Great" is subtitled "An occasionally true story," but it's more of a flamboyant, darkly comedic autofiction than it is a factual biopic.

Hulu has not given a reason for the acclaimed dramedy's cancellation.

During its three-season run, "The Great" scored seven Emmy nominations.

### Other news

■ Shakira is receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2023 MTV Video Music Awards on Sept. 12. The award, also known as MTV's Michael Jackson Video Vanguard Award, is presented to an artist for their "outstanding contributions and profound impact on music video and popular culture." The 46-year-old Columbian singer is the first Latin music artist to receive this honor, joining Britney Spears, Beyoncé, Jennifer Lopez, Rihanna and Jackson, among others.

■ A concert film shot during pop superstar Taylor Swift's recent six-night stand in SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, Calif., will open at movie theaters across North America on Oct. 13, Swift announced early Thursday. "Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour," as the movie is called, will bring to the screen Swift's first road show since 2018.

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**Bacon & Swiss**



**Spicy**

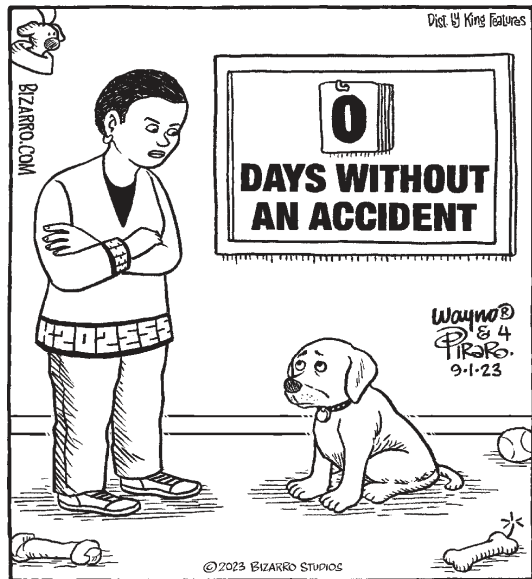


**Classic**

**BK ROYAL CRISPY CHICKEN**



Bizarro

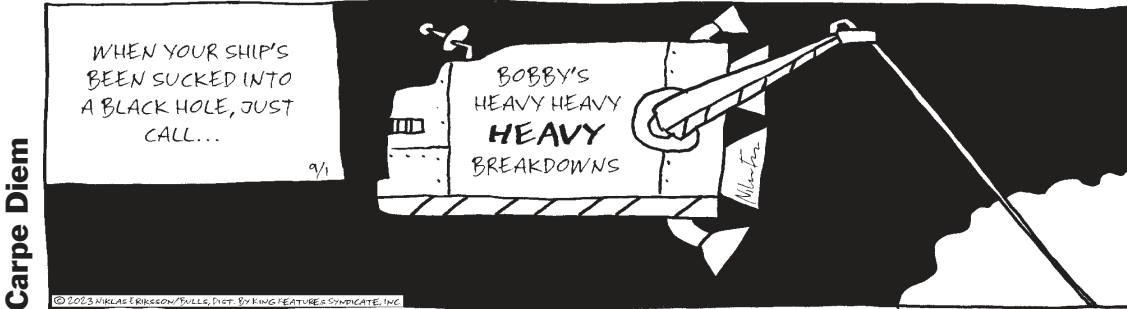
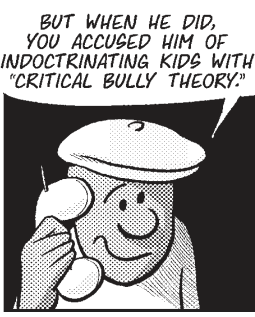
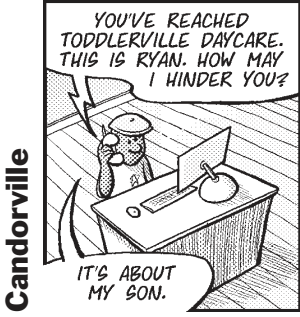
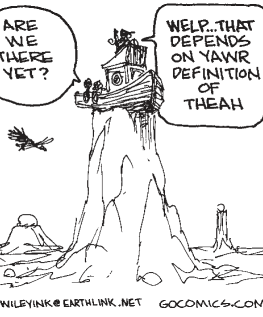
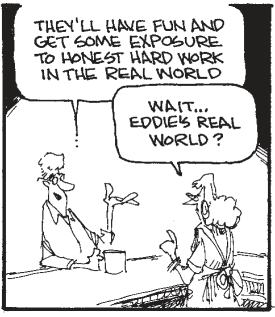
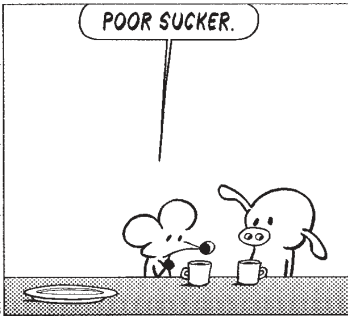
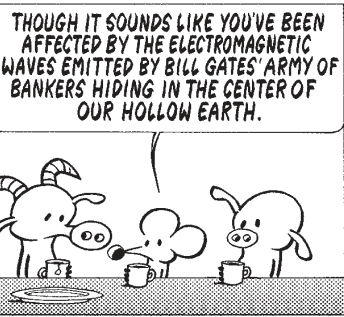
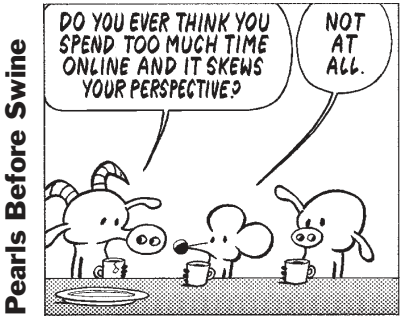
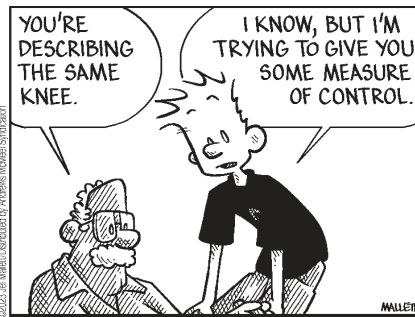
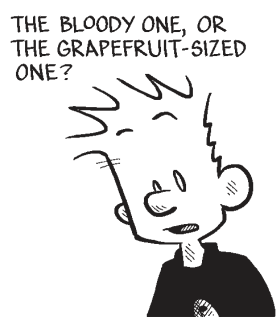


Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

Grid for Eugene Sheffer Crossword with numbered squares.



ACROSS

- 1 "You've got mail" co.
4 Juan's home
8 Pinnacle
12 Part of TNT
13 "... three men in —"
14 Cool veggie
15 25th U.S. president
17 Pundit's piece
18 Pop singer Easton
19 Navy address
21 "I do," for one
22 Quarterback Donovan
26 Resurrected
29 Menlo Park monogram
30 "Norma —"
31 Sharif of "Funny Girl"

- 50 Gymnast Korbust
51 Earth orbiter
52 Calendar abbr.
53 Bump into
54 "— girl!"
55 Annex

- 23 Desertlike
24 Island near Java
25 Composer Bartok
26 Meander
27 Apple variety
28 Swedish car
29 Spigot
32 Pickle
33 Soup mix brand
35 "So there!"
36 Big lizard
38 Brilliance
39 Spaceship Earth locale
42 Jazz singer James
43 Barak of Israel
44 Turned blue?
45 — Pérignon
46 Land in la mer
47 Get older
49 Camp bed

DOWN

- 1 \$ dispensers
2 Symphonic gp.
3 Facebook action
4 Big gun
5 Attorney- —
6 Take to court
7 Very bad
8 Future oak
9 Young seal
10 Squeeze (out)
11 Deleted
16 "When will — learn?"
20 "Rocks"

Answer to Previous Puzzle

Grid for Answer to Previous Puzzle with words like WASH, FULL, YDS, etc.

9-1

CRYPTOQUIP

P B U T C X P V W P D E D C B
D S P V D M E D W O C S D T A F U A
C W P M P C M T C M D F C X V T U O D
B U X T D , P A Y D X P D T Y D X P D B T .
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: ONE TIME WHEN PERFUMER ESTEE WAS TOO ILL TO DO THE WASH HERSELF, I HELPED LAUDER LAUNDRER.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals O

**Bizarro**

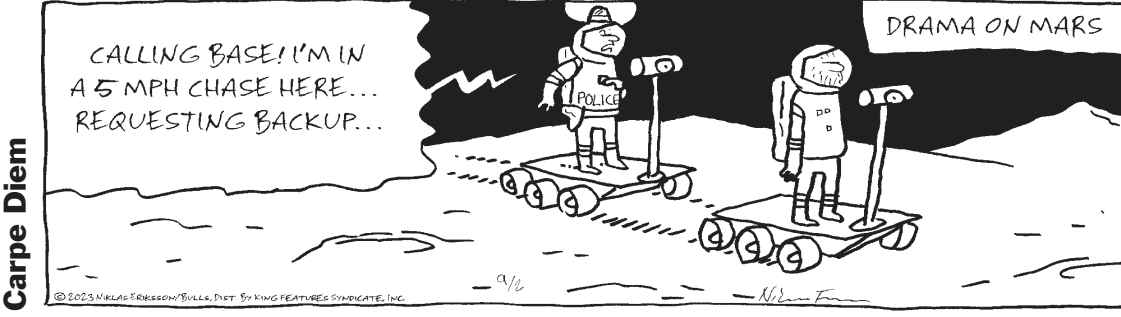
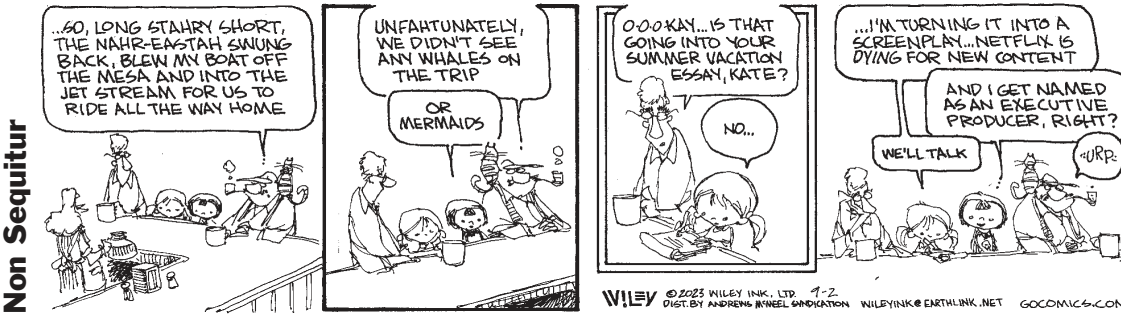
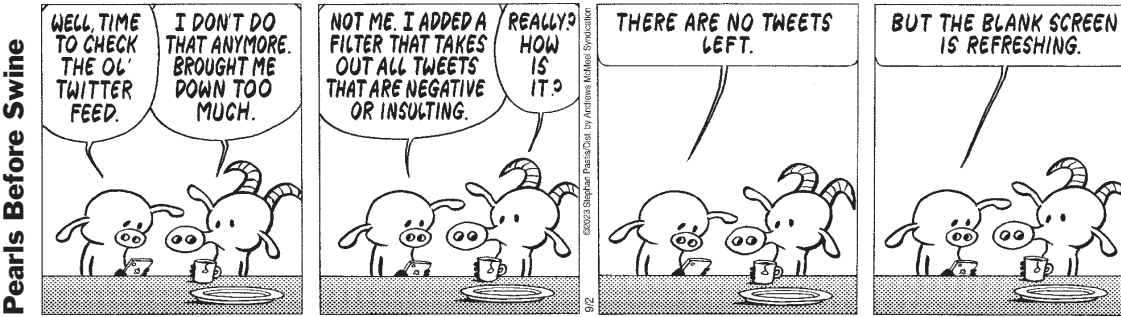
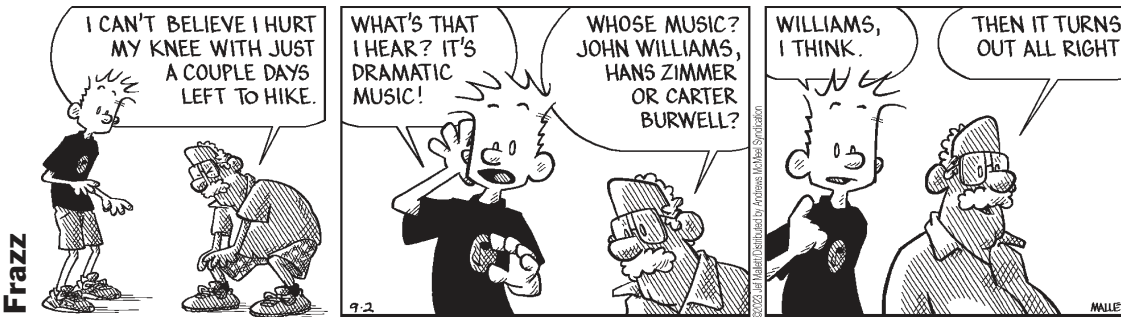


**Loose Parts**



**Eugene Sheffer Crossword**

	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	11
12							13					
14							15					
16					17	18				19		
			20	21			22	23				
24	25	26		27			28	29		30	31	
32			33				34					
35					36					37		
		38		39		40			41			
42	43			44	45				46	47	48	49
50			51					52	53			
54								55				
56								57				



**ACROSS**

- 1 Nasality
- 6 Loath
- 12 Pub on wheels
- 13 Suds
- 14 One-named folk singer
- 15 Church leaders
- 16 iPod model
- 17 Some GIs
- 19 Make lace
- 20 Valley in California
- 22 Punk rock offshoot
- 24 Atty.'s title
- 27 Jessica of "Fantastic Four"
- 29 Actor Bana
- 32 Pulitzer-winning author of "The Night Watchman"
- 35 Oil cartel
- 36 Zwei follower
- 37 Corp. boss
- 38 Heart chart (Abbr.)
- 40 Pace
- 42 Prince Valiant's son
- 44 Ornamental jug
- 46 Dutch cheese
- 50 Poolside structure
- 52 Strike caller
- 54 German art songs
- 55 Profited

- 56 Anxiety
- 57 Fizzy drinks

- 24 "Xanadu" band
- 25 Soak (up)
- 26 Hive ruler
- 28 Floor coverings
- 30 "Rocks"
- 31 Comedian Margaret
- 33 "Nasty!"
- 34 Cato's 502
- 39 Trait carriers
- 41 Lukewarm
- 42 Rights advocacy org.
- 43 April forecast
- 45 Bit of merchandise
- 47 Actress Merrill
- 48 Villain in "Wonder Woman"
- 49 Club —
- 51 Nabokov novel
- 53 Chairman of China

**DOWN**

- 1 "There!"
- 2 Wee songbird
- 3 Take, as advice
- 4 D.C. baseballer
- 5 Tried to deal (with)
- 6 Sir Guinness
- 7 Ravel's "La —"
- 8 Takeoff stat
- 9 Art of speaking
- 10 Antitoxins
- 11 Formerly, once
- 12 Rock's — Jovi
- 18 Maker of ornate eggs
- 21 Small batteries
- 23 Mal de —

**Answer to Previous Puzzle**

A	O	L		C	A	S	A		A	P	E	X
T	R	I		A	T	U	B		C	U	K	E
M	C	K	I	N	L	E	Y		O	P	E	D
S	H	E	E	N	A		S	I	R			
				V	O	W		M	C	N	A	B
R	I	S	E	N		T	A	E		R	A	E
O	M	A	R		D	A	L		K	I	L	L
A	A	A		H	I	P		I	N	D	I	A
M	C	B	E	A	L		E	G	O			
				C	H	E		P	U	R	E	E
D	I	A	L		M	C	C	A	R	T	H	Y
O	L	G	A		M	O	O	N		T	U	E
M	E	E	T		A	T	T	A		A	D	D

**9-2**

**CRYPTOQUIP**

Q A U I L N U O C Y M Y U N Y W U P  
 O C Y C E A Y E C J I E H  
 D U C F - G U Y L F P I G F A U Y Q P U T H G F  
 A Y F J H D A D X H : T U C Y U W C P M.  
**Yesterday's Cryptoquip:** IF A SOLID PIECE OF EVIDENCE PROVES THAT OPINIONS ONE HOLDS ARE FALSE, IT BELIES BELIEFS.  
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals G

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## OPINION

## Ukraine's future isn't German or Israeli but Korean

BY ANDREAS KLUTH

Bloomberg Opinion

It seems increasingly likely that the Ukrainians won't be able to drive out the Russian invaders, and that the Russians won't succeed in swallowing any more of Ukraine either. What, aside from unimaginable human misery, comes next?

As they've done since the start of this invasion, pundits and leaders instinctively grasp for historical analogies to guide their thinking, and three stand out. One "model" for Ukraine is West Germany in the 1950s, another is Israel starting in the 1970s, and a third is the Korean Peninsula, also since the 1950s.

People citing the case of West Germany argue that NATO should accept the unoccupied part of Ukraine into the Western alliance as soon as possible. That would deter Russia from any additional land grabs and allow free Ukraine to rebuild itself into a prosperous democracy, as West Germany did during the Cold War.

Embracing just the free part of Ukraine into the NATO fold, this reasoning goes, should be feasible legally, politically and strategically, since that's roughly what NATO did with West Germany in 1955. Germany at the time was divided and occupied by the Allied victors of World War II. Nonetheless, NATO extended Article 5 — the one which says that an attack against one is an attack against all — just to West Germany, the entity that represented the zones of the three Western Allies — the U.S., U.K. and France — but not to East Germany, which lay in the Soviet sector.

That collective guarantee deterred the Soviet Union from attacking for the remainder of the Cold War, the argument continues. And eventually Germany reunited peacefully, as Ukraine too might do one day. Conclusion: Let the Ukrainians join NATO, with whatever territory they control now.

Others point to Israel as a better model. That country never joined any collective alliance. Starting in the 1970s, however, the U.S. formalized its security guarantees and armed the Israelis to the teeth. As an undefeatable warrior nation and American ally, Israel too prospered until it eventually started making peace with its Arab enemies from a position of strength. Give the Ukrainians the same bilateral assurances, money and weapons, the argument goes, and Russia will understand that it'll never win.

A third group counters that the front line in Ukraine most closely resembles that on the Korean Peninsula from about 1952. Neither side seems able to make big gains anymore, even as both are incurring unsustainable or unconscionable casualties and costs. The longer all sides — belligerents and their supporters — refuse to talk, the longer this dying and suffering continues, without changing the overall situation. The only way out, as in Korea in 1953, is therefore to fight and negotiate at the same time, with a view to signing not a peace treaty but an armistice that leaves insoluble questions open but makes the guns fall silent.

## Kyiv isn't Bonn

The West German analogy seems tempting, but is off target. True, Bonn governed only one part of a nation that it still claimed in theory to represent as a whole. But under American, British and French auspices, the West Germans had constituted a new country, the Federal Republic, with fixed bor-



LIBKOS/AP

**A Ukrainian soldier looks through binoculars from the shelter at the front line near Bakhmut, in Ukraine's Donetsk region, on Wednesday.**

ders that all four Allies, including the Soviets, accepted. At the time of NATO accession, there was no fighting.

Moreover, West Germany's chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, formally accepted his country's division as indefinite in return for integrating it into the West. This earned him dire acrimony from the opposition, which wanted to hold out for reunification in return for neutrality — the path that Austria (which had also been part of the Third Reich) took at the time.

In all these ways, Ukraine differs from West Germany in 1955. Its internal borders demarcating Russian control are neither recognized nor fixed. NATO would constantly have to decide whether Article 5 extends to the same town even when it changes control (Bakhmut for much of the past year, say). Eventually the allies would either have to enter the fray and shoot at Russians (risking World War III) or dilute their vaunted mutual-defense clause. But then Article 5 would lose its deterrent effect, putting the whole alliance at risk.

Alternatively, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy could channel Adenauer and formally say goodbye to the five Ukrainian regions his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, claims to have annexed — the equivalent of East Germany in this analogy. But Kyiv wants all of its territory back. Neither Zelenskyy nor any other Ukrainian leader can drop that war aim as of today.

Even hoping for eventual and peaceful reunification a la 1990 doesn't stack up. The Soviets during the 45 years in which they ran East Germany never attempted to ethnically cleanse or Russify the local population. In Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia and Crimea the Russians have been doing so this entire time.

## Warrior nation in the making

The analogy with Israel may therefore seem more apt, but a closer look reveals equally gaping holes. The American security guarantee became formal only after Israel had already won four wars against its Arab enemies. Rather than fighting the foes on its own soil, as Ukraine is doing, Israel was by the 1970s waging war on theirs. Around that same time, it also built its own nuclear weapons — although it has never confirmed this arsenal. To this day, none of its Arab foes has nukes. (Iran, which isn't Arabic but close to going nuclear, is another

matter.)

The Ukrainians are therefore in the opposite situation from Israel's in the 1970s. They've never trounced the Russians, even if they held them at bay in the Donbas region between 2014 and 2022. Nor do they have nukes — they surrendered their own Soviet-era stocks in the 1990s in return for security guarantees from Moscow, of all places.

So the Israelis, at the time they became U.S. allies, were already victors and had a nuclear deterrent, whereas their enemies were vanquished and had no atomic bombs. It's out of that situation that Israel became a thriving economy and society. But the Ukrainians are fighting without nukes for their existence against an enemy, Putin, who constantly rattles his nuclear saber.

## Cease-fire without peace

What about the Korean analogy, then? While also imperfect, it may be the best available. Then as now, Moscow and Beijing backed the side of the aggressor (North Korea in 1950), while the U.S. led an international coalition in defense of the victim. In Korea as in Ukraine, a kinetic opening phase gave way, from mid-1951, to a grinding and bloody stalemate. By that time, both the U.S. and the Soviet Union had nukes.

Even then, however, the main antagonists weren't ready to talk yet. Pyongyang and Beijing entertained the idea, but Josef Stalin in Moscow was rigid. On the U.S. side, President Harry Truman and his successor, Dwight Eisenhower, had to worry about domestic politics and looking weak on communism. South Korea pursued its own interests, which weren't aligned. President Syngman Rhee wanted the whole peninsula and took his American allies aback with abrupt gestures such as a mass prisoner release.

And yet, after much delay, negotiations eventually began, even as the killing continued. That's one lesson of Korea, according to Carter Malkasian at the Naval Postgraduate School: You have to be prepared to talk and fight at the same time.

And still the negotiations kept failing. Even when they picked up again after Stalin died in March of 1953, they led to a result that satisfied nobody. In effect, the armistice recognized the front line as it had been for two years. It settled nothing else of consequence, merely freezing the conflict. But the cease-fire holds to this day. And in the intervening seven decades South Korea has become a bustling and prosperous democracy.

If Korea is the right model, the lesson is that combatants take far too long to begin talking even after it's obvious that neither side can win militarily, and then far too long to silence the guns once it's clear that the outcome won't change, and that the only parameter left is how many people will unnecessarily die until that's acknowledged.

None of this is about who's right; history will record that one man, Vladimir Putin, is guilty of the disaster unfolding in Ukraine. But the wisdom of the past suggests that the time has come to fight and talk at the same time — not in the hope of scoring any sort of victory, but in the resignation that, somehow, this horror must end.

Andreas Kluth is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering U.S. diplomacy, national security and geopolitics. A former editor in chief of Handelsblatt Global and a writer for The Economist, he is author of "Hannibal and Me." This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.





## BASKETBALL/MLB

# US among nations in good spot for next round of World Cup

By **TIM REYNOLDS**  
Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The opponent names will become more recognizable for USA Basketball now. Nikola Vucevic awaits on Friday, Jonas Valanciunas on Sunday, and if the Americans keep progressing through this FIBA World Cup the challenges will only get tougher.

To that, they say this: Good.

Second-round play at the World Cup starts Friday, with a 32-team field to start the tournament now down to 16 contenders for the Naismith Trophy. The United States is one of eight teams with 3-0 records, and those are the teams that have the easiest path to the quarterfinals.

“There’s an immediate respect level from guys going against them in the NBA,” U.S. coach Steve Kerr said. “The familiarity really helps as well. The hard part is when you go into a game and there’s a great player who these guys don’t know, and he’s got a last name with lots of letters, and you have to refer to him as No. 5 or whatever and our guys aren’t ready for how good this player is. That’s a huge challenge in this tournament.”

Not anymore. Nobody will need to Google most of the best players on the teams that made Round 2. Luka Doncic is headed there, along with Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, Karl-Anthony Towns, Dennis Schroder, Patty Mills, Bogdan Bogdanovic, Vucevic and Valanciunas — among others.

In Round 2, the U.S. plays Montenegro on Friday and Lithuania on Sunday.

“For us as a country, to get to play against the U.S. will be a huge thing,” said Vucevic, Montenegro’s best player. “We have to go out there and show our best ... and enjoy that game.”

Joining the U.S. in Round 2 with

3-0 records out of group play are Slovenia, defending World Cup champion Spain, Canada, Germany, Serbia, the Dominican Republic and Lithuania. For those eight teams, the task is this simple: Win two games this weekend, and the quarterfinals are certain. Each could also lose one of their next two games and still advance.

Also in the second-round field are eight teams that advanced with 2-1 records: Montenegro, Greece, Italy, Puerto Rico, Australia, Georgia, Brazil and Latvia.

The Americans are the only team in the tournament that has won every game so far by at least 27 points. Canada’s closest win margin so far is 26; Lithuania’s is 20.

“Nothing changes,” U.S. captain Jalen Brunson said. “The approach has to be the same. It’s almost the knockout stage, and we approach the game like it’s our last game every game. We’ve got to keep that same mentality. There’s just a lot more at stake now.”

There’s more than just the World Cup at stake, even.

Australia has already qualified for next year’s Paris Olympics. All 15 remaining second-round teams are still in the mix to clinch an automatic berth in those games based on their finish here; two of the five Americas teams will get Olympic spots, two of the 10 European teams left will get them as well.

For those teams that keep winning, the Olympic spots will take care of themselves.

“Our goal, our first goal, was to win the group stage,” said Gilgeous-Alexander, Canada’s top player and one of two current All-NBA players in the tournament — Doncic, the Dallas star who leads Slovenia, being the other. “But we’re not done. We’re not satisfied. And we have five more games to try to go win.”



**U.S. guard Anthony Edwards reacts after a dunk during a World Cup Group C match against Jordan in Manila, Philippines, on Wednesday.**

## MLB scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Baltimore	83	50	.624	—
Tampa Bay	82	52	.612	1½
Toronto	73	61	.545	10½
Boston	69	65	.515	14½
New York	65	68	.489	18
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	69	65	.515	—
Cleveland	64	70	.478	5
Detroit	59	74	.444	9½
Chicago	53	81	.396	16
Kansas City	41	94	.304	28½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	76	57	.571	—
Houston	77	58	.570	—
Texas	75	58	.564	1
Los Angeles	64	70	.478	12½
Oakland	39	95	.291	37½
National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	87	45	.659	—
Philadelphia	74	59	.556	13½
Miami	66	67	.496	21½
Washington	62	72	.463	26
New York	61	73	.455	27
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	74	59	.556	—
Chicago	71	62	.534	3
Cincinnati	69	66	.511	6
Pittsburgh	61	73	.455	13½
St. Louis	58	76	.433	16½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	83	49	.629	—
San Francisco	69	64	.519	14½
Arizona	69	65	.515	15
San Diego	62	72	.463	22
Colorado	49	84	.368	34½
Wednesday's games				
L.A. Angels 10, Philadelphia 8				
Chicago White Sox 10, Baltimore 5				
Cleveland 5, Minnesota 2, 10 innings				
Toronto 7, Washington 0				
Seattle 5, Oakland 4				
Houston 7, Boston 4				
Tampa Bay 3, Miami 0, 10 innings				
N.Y. Yankees 6, Detroit 2				
N.Y. Mets 6, Texas 5, 10 innings				
Pittsburgh 4, Kansas City 1				
Chicago Cubs 3, Milwaukee 2				
St. Louis 5, San Diego 4				
Cincinnati 4, San Francisco 1				
Atlanta 7, Colorado 3				
L.A. Dodgers 7, Arizona 0				
Thursday's games				
N.Y. Yankees at Detroit				
Miami at Washington				
San Francisco at San Diego				
Atlanta at L.A. Dodgers				
Friday's games				
Chicago Cubs (Wicks 1-0, TBD) at Cincinnati (Ashcraft 7-8, TBD), 2				
Miami (Perez 5-4) at Washington (Irvin 3-5)				
Seattle (TBD) at N.Y. Mets (Senga 10-7)				
Tampa Bay (Glasnow 7-4) at Cleveland (Quantrill 2-6)				
Minnesota (Ryan 9-8) at Texas (Scherzer 12-5)				
Philadelphia (Wheeler 10-6) at Milwaukee (Peralta 11-8)				
Boston (Paxton 7-4) at Kansas City (Lyles 3-15)				
Detroit (Rodriguez 9-7) at Chicago White Sox (Toussaint 2-6)				
N.Y. Yankees (Rodon 1-4) at Houston (Verlander 10-6)				
Pittsburgh (Keller 11-8) at St. Louis (Hudson 5-1)				
Toronto (Ryu 3-1) at Colorado (Flexen 1-6)				
Baltimore (Irvin 1-3) at Arizona (Davies 1-5)				
L.A. Angels (Sandoval 7-10) at Oakland (Sears 2-11)				
San Francisco (TBD) at San Diego (Wacha 10-2)				
Atlanta (Fried 5-1) at L.A. Dodgers (Urias 11-7)				
Saturday's games				
Miami at Washington				
L.A. Angels at Oakland				
Tampa Bay at Cleveland				
Chicago Cubs at Cincinnati				
Boston at Kansas City				
Seattle at N.Y. Mets				
Detroit at Chicago White Sox				
N.Y. Yankees at Houston				
Philadelphia at Milwaukee				
Pittsburgh at St. Louis				
Minnesota at Texas				
Baltimore at Arizona				
Toronto at Colorado				
San Francisco at San Diego				
Atlanta at L.A. Dodgers				



LINDSEY WASSON/AP

The Seattle Mariners' Teoscar Hernandez has seeds poured on him by teammates as they celebrate his three-run home run against the Oakland Athletics during the third inning Wednesday in Seattle.

# Seattle wins 21st game in August

By **TIM BOOTH**  
Associated Press

SEATTLE — After the most successful month in franchise history, the Seattle Mariners might prefer if August just never ended and rolled right into October.

“There’s like 60 days in August isn’t there? I wish there was,” manager Scott Servais quipped. “What a month.”

What a month, indeed. The Mariners closed out the winningest month in team history by beating the Oakland Athletics 5-4 on Wednesday and moving back into sole possession of the AL West lead.

J.P. Crawford dropped a two-run single into left field in the seventh inning to put Seattle ahead, and the Mariners rallied from a pair of deficits.

Seattle went 21-6 in the month, bettering the previous franchise record of 20 victories in a month. The Mariners have won 13 of their last 15 games and will head into September in the middle of an AL West title race with Houston and Texas. The Mariners are one percentage point ahead of the Astros, with the Rangers one game back.

The last time Seattle went into September with at least a share of first place was 2001, also the last time the Mariners won the AL West.

“Twenty-one wins in a month and there was a really special team here that won 116 games one year and they didn’t even do that,” Servais said, referencing Seattle’s 2001 team that had four months of 20 victories during that record-setting season.

Teoscar Hernandez capped his hot month with a three-run homer in the third inning — his 23rd of the season — to erase a 3-0 deficit. But it was Crawford who came through after Seattle fell behind 4-3.

The Mariners’ rally in the seventh inning came off reliever Kirby Snead (1-2), who had not allowed an earned run in his previous 10 appearances. Dominic Canzone doubled, Mike Ford singled and Dylan Moore walked to load the bases.

Following a strikeout, Crawford hit a soft liner the opposite way to score a pair and give Seattle the lead. Crawford is 7-for-11 this season when hitting with the bases loaded.

“J.P. is going to put the ball in play and he’s not going to try to do too much in those spots,” Servais said. “He’s learned that through the years and I think it’s a great example for our younger players to look at.”

Justin Topa (4-4) got the victory despite giving up the lead in the seventh. Aledmys Diaz lined a ground-rule double down the left-field line and Esteury Ruiz followed with his own double that barely eluded the dive of Eugenio Suarez at third base. Pinch-runner Nick Allen scored easily and Oakland had a 4-3 lead.

Oakland tried to add on but Ruiz was thrown out at home plate by Hernandez attempting to score on Ryan Noda’s flyout to right field. It was Hernandez’s 12th assist this season, most among AL outfielders.

Ruiz was initially ruled safe but the call was overturned on replay.

“I was surprised when he was called safe but I know I made a really, really good throw. I’m glad they overturned it,” Hernandez said.

Matt Brash worked through the eighth, striking out pinch-hitter Tony Kemp to end the inning with Brent Rooker standing at third as the tying run. Andrés Muñoz pitched the ninth for his 11th save in 14 chances.

## US OPEN/NFL

# Tiafoe advances to third round again

BY HOWARD FENDRICH  
Associated Press

NEW YORK — There was not much drama involved in Frances Tiafoe's second-round victory at the U.S. Open on Wednesday night. He quickly grabbed a lead and never let go. He only faced one break point — and saved it. He volleyed terrifically. His outmatched opponent needed some help from a trainer for a bothersome neck.

And there was no escaping the feeling that the 10th-seeded Tiafoe was having the time of his life. This is where he wants to be, no matter the details of the match. Under the lights at a Grand Slam tournament, absorbing the attention of thousands of folks in the Arthur Ashe Stadium stands and reciprocating the love while getting past Sebastian Ofner of Austria 6-3, 6-1, 6-4 in a tad more than 1½ hours.

"I love it. I love it. I love all of it. I love the 1-on-1 battle. You're putting your heart on the line. Everyone's there to watch you and one other guy. You're competing like crazy. Everyone's anticipating the match. And it's like, 'Who wants it more?'" Tiafoe, a 25-year-old from Maryland, said during an interview before the U.S. Open. "If you don't love that, it's the wrong sport for you. I just absolutely love being in those positions and those atmospheres."

He knew this was Ofner's U.S. Open debut and said after Wednesday's encounter that he wanted to use "the environment to my advantage."

Tiafoe took a step forward on a day two highly seeded men exited



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

**Frances Tiafoe, of the United States, returns a shot to Sebastian Ofner, of Austria, during the second round Wednesday in New York. Tiafoe won by a score of 6-3, 6-1, 6-4 to advance to the third round.**

on his half of the draw: No. 5 Casper Ruud, last year's runner-up, and No. 7 Stefanos Tsitsipas. With No. 4 Holger Rune out in the first round, three of the tournament's top seven men already are gone.

A year ago at Flushing Meadows, Tiafoe's career changed and his life did, too. He beat Rafael Nadal in the fourth round along the way to reaching the semifinals of a major for the first time, then pushing eventual champion Carlos Alcaraz to the limit before bowing out.

All the way, the fans—including some well-known ones, such as for-

mer first lady Michelle Obama and NBA All-Star Bradley Beal — showered Tiafoe with affection. And he certainly enjoyed basking in that adulation and the extra attention that came with his higher profile, including a role in the Netflix docuseries about tennis, "Break Point."

"I'm totally cool with putting myself fully out there and seeing what happens. Let the chips fall where they may. I love feeling the crowd with me. Everyone paid their hard-earned money to come watch. So I want them to enjoy," said Tiafoe, who went over to the

stands to greet rapper Pusha T, a guest of his, after the triumph over Ofner. "And also, I want to win."

Next up for Tiafoe is No. 22 Adrian Mannarino of France, who produced one wild on-the-run 'tweener during his win Wednesday.

"He's very tricky. He's got an unorthodox game style," Tiafoe said. "I'm ready. I'm ready for him."

Three other U.S. men joining Tiafoe in the third round with victories were No. 9 Taylor Fritz; No. 14 Tommy Paul, an Australian Open semifinalist in January who collected his first career come-

back from two sets down to beat Roman Safiullin 3-6, 2-6, 6-2, 6-4, 6-3; and Ben Shelton, who advanced when 2020 champion Dominic Thiem stopped playing in the second set after being visited by a physiotherapist.

His win was followed in Ashe by 2018 Australian Open champion Caroline Wozniacki's 7-5, 7-6 (5) victory over two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova. Wozniacki recently came out of retirement after 3½ years away from the game.

In earlier action Wednesday, defending champion Iga Swiatek and Coco Gauff remained on course for a quarterfinal showdown with straight-set victories, while 23-time major champ Novak Djokovic also had little trouble moving into the third round.

But Ruud, who lost to Alcaraz in last year's final in New York and also was the runner-up at the French Open in 2022 and 2023, was beaten by Zhang Zhizhen of China 6-4, 5-7, 7-2, 0-6, 6-2.

And Tsitsipas, a two-time Slam finalist never past the third round in New York, was eliminated by 128th-ranked Swiss qualifier Dominic Stricker 7-5, 6-7 (2), 6-7 (5) 7-6 (6), 6-3.

"I consider myself a good player, and I don't want to be a person that can be beaten easily or (give) my opponents an easy time on the court against me," said Tsitsipas, who served for the win at 5-3 in the fourth set. "I try to make it as hard as I can, and if it doesn't work, it doesn't work. I move on with my life."

# Colts still uncertain about timetable for Taylor's return

BY MICHAEL MAROT  
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indianapolis Colts already know running back Jonathan Taylor will miss four games.

It's unclear how much longer he could be out. Or whether he'll stay with the Colts.

One day after the 2021 NFL rushing champ landed on the physically unable to perform list following offseason ankle surgery, general manager Chris Ballard did not provide a timetable for Taylor's return and would not talk about any trade offers he received for the 24-year-old All-Pro.

Instead, he'd rather get Taylor back on the field.

"We've got to work through it and we're going to do everything we can to work through it. Look, relationships are repairable." Ballard said Wednesday. "We have work to do, we do. We've got work to do on the relationship."

Ballard's comments come after ESPN.com reported the Miami



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

**Indianapolis Colts running back Jonathan Taylor watches drills during practice at the team's training camp in Westfield, Ind., on July 31.**

Dolphins and Green Bay Packers both expressed interest in acquiring the 2021 All-Pro.

During earlier news conferences Wednesday, Dolphins general manager Chris Greir called the discussions "exploratory" and

that no offers were exchanged."

Packers general manager Brian Gutekunst wasn't as direct, but inferred he took a similar position.

"First of all, I can't talk about players on other teams," Gutekunst said. "We try to be in every

conversation. Anytime we have good players available to us, we'd like to make the Green Bay Packers better, and we'll look at those opportunities."

He added: "We have conversations about players throughout the National Football League, players on our team, with other teams, all the time. People ask about our guys all the time. That's part of it."

Taylor's health is one reason teams might be hesitant to meet Indy's trade demands.

The former Wisconsin star initially went on PUP when Indy reported to training camp July 25. He hasn't practiced since last season. By starting the regular season on PUP, Taylor will not be eligible to play until at least Week 5 when Tennessee visits Lucas Oil Stadium.

"As for the decision to put him on PUP, we're not going to put a guy on the field who's still complaining about the ankle," Ballard said. "So what Jonathan will do is rehab his butt off. He still has pain

in the ankle."

The Colts also want to see Taylor playing healthy in new coach Shane Steichen's offense.

Perhaps the bigger question is whether Taylor still wants to play in Indy.

He's been one of the most vocal running backs to complain about how teams value the position. The franchise tag of \$10.1 million is the lowest for any position other than punters and kickers.

The result has been an ugly contract dispute as Taylor enters the final year of his rookie deal. Taylor is due to make \$4.3 million this season.

"They asked if we would use it (the franchise tag) and I said it's a tool," Ballard said. "I told Jonathan this: I don't want to say something that's not true. I don't want to lead him down a path and then he looks at me and says 'You're a liar.' I know it (the relationship) is not the best right now, but I know I've never lied to him."

## COLLEGE FOOTBALL



TIM BOOTH/AP

Western Oregon players huddle with a member of the coaching staff at practice Aug. 9 in Monmouth, Ore.

# Across West, only 2 schools still offering D-II programs

By **TIM BOOTH**  
Associated Press

MONMOUTH, Ore. — When Arne Ferguson started as an assistant coach at Western Oregon in 1989, road games meant bus trips. Sometimes a few hours to schools in Washington. Sometimes just a few minutes up the road to Oregon towns like Salem, Forest Grove and McMinnville.

All on the bus and neatly contained inside the Pacific Northwest.

Now entering his 18th year as the head coach, those bus days are long gone. Ferguson and his team are frequent flyers as one of only two NCAA Division II programs remaining on the West Coast.

During this upcoming season, the Wolves will fly six times. They will play nonconference games in South Dakota and Minnesota, and play league games in Texas and New Mexico.

It's a massive undertaking, financially and logistically. It requires 3 a.m. wakeup calls on Fridays, followed by buses to the airport, four-hour commercial flights, Saturday games and doing it all in reverse on Sundays.

There will be more than 160 programs in the country playing football at the Division II level this season and only two of them — Western Oregon and Central Washington — are in an area of more than 68 million people. There are no D-II football programs in California, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Utah,

Wyoming or Montana.

“That’s the biggest challenge, financially, but it’s also a really great opportunity for our department and our university because we’re very visible on the entire West Coast and down into Texas,” Western Oregon athletic director Randi Lydum said. “I try to tell people that we’re like walking billboards when you see a football team walking through an airport and they’re all wearing their Western Oregon University gear.”

Western Oregon and Central Washington are affiliate members of the Lone Star Conference for football — opponent schools are in Texas and New Mexico — while their other athletic programs play closer to home in the Great Northwest Athletic Conference.

Division III and NAIA programs remain strong in the West. But at Division II there is a concerning void. A progressive disappearance of programs spanning 30 years has created challenging travel decisions and raised questions of whether it’s worth the investment.

“(The players) wouldn’t know what it would be like to hop on a bus and drive a few hours to some of these closer locations. It’s just kind of life as we go here,” Central Washington coach Chris Fisk said. “But I think it’s a positive, the move to the Lone Star Conference, and even though it comes with that travel, and the kids don’t worry about the budget ... but it’s just

kind of what we need to do to be able to compete and play really good teams.”

Ferguson, for one, seems determined that Western Oregon plugs ahead. He played for the Wolves in the mid-1980s, returned as an assistant and outside of one year as a high school coach, has been associated with Western Oregon for more than 30 years.

He has seen the evolution of the program, located about 65 miles southwest of Portland in a town of about 11,000 residents. During Ferguson’s time, Western Oregon has gone from an NAIA program competing with public and private schools in the Pacific Northwest to the current state of jet-setting to find games.

His primary concern is about the opportunities lost with cuts elsewhere. During training camp, Ferguson had 138 players on the field. For a school with a total enrollment of less than 4,000, that’s a notable percentage of the total student body.

“We’ve had kids that come in here and didn’t think they were going to play and all of a sudden they’re a starter (and) all-league. We’ve seen them come through here and all of a sudden they’re a doctor,” Ferguson said. “And providing that opportunity and that platform for them to just to put their head down and work, and be good people and learn how to grow up and be successful. That’s what we’re proud of.”

# Colorado Mines QB Matocha among top small-school players

By **ERIC OLSON**  
Associated Press

With only a few Division I walk-on offers, John Matocha seriously considered giving up football after high school.

He wasn’t quite ready, though, and decided to pursue a small-school option that took him far from home.

It was a good decision. He enters his fourth season as Colorado Mines’ starting quarterback and is bidding to win a second straight Harlon Hill Trophy as the top player in Division II.

Last year, Matocha passed for a nation-leading 4,778 yards and 52 touchdowns and led the Oregians to 13 straight wins and the national championship game following an 0-2 start.

Mines brings back 18 starters and begins the season ranked a program-best No. 2 behind Ferris State, the team that beat the Oregians in the title game.

Matocha grew up in Magnolia, Texas, and was named to the Greater Houston first team after putting up huge numbers as a high school senior. But he didn’t fit the mold of a major college quarterback.

“I’m not the most impressive-looking guy — 5-11, 180, not very strong, not very fast,” Matocha said. “I’m not a big measurables guy. My 40-yard dash isn’t impressive, vertical jump isn’t impressive.

“But when I get into a game,” he added, “I can play football.”

Matocha has already earned his bachelor’s degree in computer science and is working on his master’s. He was named the 2022-23 top scholar-athlete in Division II by College Sports Communicators, formerly the College Sports Information Directors of America.

Matocha would like to play at the pro level, and the Denver Broncos and Arizona Cardinals have called head coach Pete Sterbick to ask about him. The CFL and USFL also are possibilities. If football ends for

him this year, he’s prepared to work 9 to 5.

“My family always pushed academics,” Matocha said. “The college you choose and decisions you make and the degree you get really matter. I knew that whatever happened with my football career, I would be set for life afterward by attending Colorado School of Mines.”

**DB Adam DeJong, Dakota Wesleyan (South Dakota)**

The 5-11, 210-pound senior from Watertown, S.D., was an NAIA first-team All-American and led the nation with seven interceptions. He tied the school record with three interceptions against Briar Cliff, returning two of them for touchdowns.

**CB Michael Brown, UW-River Falls (Wisconsin)**

The 6-1, 190-pound junior from Victoria, Minn., tied for the Division III lead with eight interceptions and was a first-team All-American. His late interceptions preserved narrow wins over UW-Oshkosh and UW-Stout, and he ran one back for a touchdown against UW-Whitewater.

**WR DeAngelo Hardy, North Central (Illinois)**

The 6-1, 202-pound senior from Lake Villa, Ill., ranked second in Division III with 20 touchdowns and fifth with 1,198 receiving yards. The first-team All-American set the school record for longest reception when he caught a 94-yard TD pass in the unbeaten Cardinals’ national championship game win over Mount Union.

**DL Hector Johnson, Endicott (Massachusetts)**

The 6-1, 225-pound junior from Worcester, Mass., was Commonwealth Coast Conference defensive player of the year after recording 14½ sacks, the most of any returning Division III player. He finished with 21½ tackles for loss and he blocked a punt that he ran back 78 yards for a touchdown.



EMIL LIPPE/AP

Colorado School of Mines quarterback John Matocha looks for an open receiver during the second half of the NCAA Division II championship against Ferris State on Dec. 17 in McKinney, Texas.

## COLLEGE FOOTBALL



EDUARDO MUNOZ AVAREZ/AP

Army running back Jakobi Buchanan (33) celebrates with teammates after scoring one of his 18 touchdowns of the past two seasons. He is back in the Black Knights backfield.

## Army scraps triple option for more options on offense

BY ROBERT STEWART  
*Stars and Stripes*

After failing to secure bowl eligibility for the second time since 2015 last season, the Army Black Knights are gearing up for the 2023 campaign with their priorities clearly laid out.

Among them, as 10th-year head coach Jeff Monken and players made clear after opening fall camp, are a new offensive scheme, a greater emphasis on run defense and sustained special teams success.

Gone are the days of the triple option, a physical and grueling method of moving the ball downfield. NCAA rules that took effect before the beginning of the 2022 season prohibit blocking below the waist on the perimeter and more than 1 yard beyond the line of scrimmage, forcing Monken and company to reevaluate the practicality of the decades-old scheme.

The triple option offense was great and helped the Black Knights win a lot of football games, Monken said, but it was also complex. Shifting to a spread will simplify the learning process for newcomers, and the returning players have had little trouble adapting.

"We still want to be a tough, hard-nosed football team that runs the football and stops the run," Monken said. "We want to be an offense that can control the clock and limit the possessions of the other team. Those philosophies are all still there. We're just going to be structured a little differently, presented a little differently."

The chief architect of the new-look Army offense is Drew Thatcher, who spent the past four seasons as the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at Division II Nebraska-Kearney. In each of the past two seasons, the Lopers averaged at least 33 points and 400 yards per game.

One of the biggest areas of improvement Thatcher said he wants to see is the ability to adapt on the fly.

"We've still got to run the ball, but you've got to be able to have a little better balance," Thatcher said. "When really good teams can take away one part of your game, you've got to be able to have an answer, whether it's by a really good player that does that or by a scheme and loading the box."

Jakobi Buchanan, who has scored 18 times in the past two seasons; Tyson Riley, whose 443 rushing yards in 2022 lead all returners; and Tyrell Robinson, who has averaged 8 yards per carry during his three-year

career, all promise to keep the rushing attack alive and well.

A strong running game and the ability to make in-game adjustments both start with the offensive line. Senior Connor Finucane said the offensive line is moving better than it ever has, even with 10 returning offensive linemen checking in at or above 300 pounds for the first time in Army history.

"It's like a more forgiving golf club," Finucane said. "You can make a little more error, and you can still get away with some stuff."

Finucane, one of four team captains, also touted the experience of his unit, which includes six players who racked up a total of 44 starts in 2022.

"I think experience is going to be helpful, regardless of what offense we've played in," Finucane said. "That experience of knowing how to attack a game week, knowing how to lead younger guys, knowing how to come together to accomplish a win in a game is certainly applicable to now."

Experience is not as plentiful under center, where competition for the starting quarterback role appears to be wide open during the early part of fall camp. Monken said junior Bryson Daily took first-team reps in the first practice, but sophomore Dewayne Coleman is also in the mix for the job, along with the injured Zach Mundell.

Whoever becomes the primary signal caller will have the two leading receivers from 2022 again this season. Isaiah Alston and Ay'Jaun Marshall combined to account for more than half of the Black Knights' 42 catches, 920 yards and five scores last year.

On defense, the other three Army captains emphasized stopping the run, something the Black Knights struggled with last season. They allowed 199 rushing yards per game, a huge increase from marks under 118 during the first two years under defensive coordinator Nate Woody.

Senior linebackers Leo Lowin and Jimmy Ciarlo expressed confidence in their position group, and senior Austin Hill said the defensive linemen are the strongest, biggest and fastest the Black Knights have had during his career.

"Statistically, we probably didn't perform the way we wanted to last year," Lowin said. "There's going to be a couple new faces, but for the most part, we know this defense. We've just got to execute better."

The Black Knights have fared well against Navy and Air Force in recent years, having defeated both in four of the past six meetings to claim the trophy three times.

# 'Significant rebuilding' this year for Air Force

BY ROBERT STEWART  
*Stars and Stripes*

The last three full football seasons arguably have been the best in the history of the U.S. Air Force Academy. The Falcons won at least 10 games, finished no worse than second in the Mountain Division of the Mountain West Conference and claimed bowl victories in all three.

While that run of sustained success has been pretty common with Troy Calhoun as coach, Air Force is facing some unprecedented turnover heading into 2023. Keeping it alive will require the services of many new faces.

Using the triple option, the Falcons rushed for 326.7 yards per game last season, the only mark in the Football Bowl Subdivision above 290.

However, five of their top six rushers — who accounted for more than two-thirds of their 4,247 yards — are gone, including quarterback Haaziq Daniels and Brad Roberts, the nation's leading individual rusher. Beyond that, just two starting offensive linemen are back, and the Falcons will be without their two most productive receivers from 2022.

"This is one of the more significant rebuilding years that we've had since we've been here," said Calhoun, who is entering his 17th season.

Two seniors on offense gathered pre-season all-conference nods from the media — running back John Lee Eldridge, whose 7.7 yards per carry led all qualified runners in 2022, and center Thor Paglialong, who started all 13 games last year.

On defense, junior nose guard Payton Zdroik and senior safety Trey Taylor also received all-conference recognition. Zdroik recorded 30 tackles, 5½ sacks and a fumble recovery last season, and he is the only returning starter on the defensive line. Taylor led Air Force with 69 tackles, adding a sack and a pair of interceptions.

That duo leads a group of six regular

starters returning including safeties Jayden Goodwin and Camby Goff, cornerback Eian Castonguay and inside linebacker Alec Mock, all of whom are seniors. In 2022, they led the Falcons to post Mountain West lows in yards (254.4) and points allowed per game (13.4) under first-year defensive coordinator Brian Knorr.

"This is a squad that's going to take us a good number of weeks, maybe months just as far as growth and development," Calhoun said.

Despite the uncertainty, a media panel predicted them to finish second in the Mountain West, behind Boise State. Two of the 36 voters even picked them to win the conference.

"The Mountain West championship is our total focus. That's our No. 1 goal this season," Paglialong said at the Mountain West Conference media day.

Confidence of success may come from the track record of offensive coordinator Mike Thiessen, who joined the Air Force coaching staff with Calhoun in 2007 and took over his current role in 2014. The Falcons have been among the top seven FBS teams in rushing every year since then, and they have led the country in each of the past three. Only three times during that stretch have they failed to eclipse 300 rushing yards per game.

"You want to have continuity somewhere, and if it's not necessarily on the field, then we are lucky to have it certainly on our coaching staff," Calhoun said.

Ten wins will be tough to replicate for the Falcons, as will holding onto the Commander in Chief's Trophy, which they won in 2022 after prevailing in low-scoring affairs against Navy and Army. The top priority, Calhoun said, is to see his team play well against every opponent.

"If you ever again could get to six wins and get to a bowl game, that'd be a tremendous achievement," Calhoun said. "Can that be this year? I guess we'll find out."



TREVOR COKLEY/U.S. Air Force Academy

Air Force's John Lee Eldridge III leaps over a Baylor defender during the Armed Forces Bowl last year. Eldridge averaged 7.7 yards per carry in 2022.

# COLLEGE FOOTBALL

## ANALYSIS

# Empires set to regain poise in 2023

By RALPH D. RUSSO  
Associated Press

During the final season of the College Football Playoff's four-team format, the empires will strike back.

Alabama, Clemson, Ohio State and Oklahoma have made more CFP appearances than any other schools through the nine years of the postseason system, but only two combined in the past two seasons. The Crimson Tide, Tigers, Buckeyes and Sooners are no longer the safe bets to win their conferences like they were through most of the last decade.

No. 1 Georgia has bullied its way past fourth-ranked 'Bama to the top of the Southeastern Conference and the sport.

In the Atlantic Coast Conference, No. 9 Clemson has gone two seasons without making the playoff and now faces a legitimate threat in No. 8 Florida State.

No. 2 Michigan has displaced No. 3 Ohio State atop the Big Ten.

No. 20 Oklahoma is coming off its worst season in more than two decades, slipping into the crowded pack of Big 12 hopefuls after being a clear favorite for years.

In this last season before the playoff expands from four to 12 teams, Georgia is an overwhelming favorite to win a third straight national title, according to FanDuel Sportsbook and AP Top 25 voters.

To predict a national championship for anyone other than the Bulldogs, who have both the best roster and an accommodating schedule, feels like just trying to be different. That said, no team has ever won three straight national championships and still with only four teams making the CFP, the margin for error in the regular season (including conference title games) is thin.

This column has always taken the position that it's more fun to be different than right. And besides, how often do you get the chance to take Alabama and have it be a bold choice?

And is it, really?

Reminder: The Crimson Tide have not gone more than two seasons without a national title since Nick Saban took over in 2007.

### Over/underachievers

Three teams that start the season ranked but will finish unranked:

■ **No. 14 Utah.** The Utes start the season with uncertainty at quarterback as Cam Rising recovers from knee surgery with his backup also ailing. Not an ideal way to head into a September schedule that features Florida, Baylor, UCLA and Oregon State.



MICHAEL WOODS/AP

Alabama quarterback Jalen Milroe tries to get past Arkansas linebacker Drew Sanders during the second half Oct. 1 in Fayetteville, Ark. Alabama opens its season at home against Middle Tennessee on Sept. 2.

■ **No. 16 Kansas State.** In 2021, Baylor beat Oklahoma State in a thrilling Big 12 title game between two surprising participants. Both started 2022 ranked. Neither finished that way. Can TCU and K-State avoid similar regression after being last season's surprising success stories? Pencil the Wildcats in for a big step back.

■ **No. 21 North Carolina.** QB Drake Maye won't be able to cover the Tar Heels' deficiencies as well as he did last season.

Three teams that start the season unranked but will finish ranked:

■ **UCLA.** Five-star freshman quarterback Dante Moore behind a good offensive line in a Chip Kelly offense: Promising.

■ **Kentucky.** If the Wildcats' rebuilt offensive line can protect North Carolina State transfer Devin Leary, this could be the second-best team in the SEC East.

■ **Boise State.** The Broncos have a brutal early schedule (at No. 10 Washington, UCF, at San Diego State, at Memphis), which presents both a challenge and opportunity to assert themselves as the best team outside the Power Five.

### Conference champions

**American Athletic Conference** — SMU over UTSA. The Mustangs win their first league title since 1984 in the Southwest Conference.

**Atlantic Coast Conference** — Clemson over Florida State. New coordinator Garrett Riley brings the juice back to the Tigers' offense and sends Clemson back to the CFP.

**Big 12** — Oklahoma over Texas. Will the Big 12 even paint the logo on the field for a title game with their SEC-bound heavyweights?

**Big Ten** — Ohio State over Iowa. The Buckeyes fix their Michigan problem and then dispatch the Hawkeyes in the final East vs. West Big Ten title game.

**Conference USA** — Western Kentucky over Liberty. WKU QB Austin Reed passed on opportunities to transfer to bigger schools to stay and lead the Hilltoppers to a title.

**Mid-American Conference** — Ohio over Eastern Michigan. If in doubt, pick the team with the best quarterback. In the MAC, that's Kurtis Rourke.

**Mountain West** — Boise State over Air Force. Broncos win their first league championship since 2019.

**Pac-12** — USC over Oregon. Nothing sums up the Pac-12's recent fortunes better than USC finally getting its act together in football after it triggers the demise of the conference.

**Southeastern Conference** — Alabama over Georgia. In a stunning upset, the Crimson Tide snap their one-game losing streak against the Bulldogs.

**Sun Belt** — Marshall over South Alabama. Thundering Herd's Charles Huff could be the next Sun Belt coach to make a big jump.

### Coaching carousel

Early firings were all the rage last season. The hot spot that could pop before October this year is in West Virginia. Neal Brown drew a bad September schedule (No. 7 Penn State, Pitt, Texas Tech, No. 17 TCU) for a coach in need of a fast start.

Who could replace Brown? As mentioned, maybe Charles Huff of Marshall. James Madison head coach Curt Cignetti and North Carolina State defensive coordinator Tony Gibson, a former DC at WVU, could also get a look, depending on how 2023 plays out.

### New Year's Bowl picks

Just can't quit the Aggies.  
**Cotton Bowl** — Texas vs. USC.  
**Orange Bowl** — Florida State vs. Penn State.  
**Fiesta Bowl** — Oklahoma vs. Boise State.  
**Peach Bowl** — Texas A&M vs. Michigan.

### Playoff

**Rose Bowl** — Ohio State vs. Georgia.  
**Sugar Bowl** — Alabama vs. Clemson.

### National Championship

Alabama over Ohio State.

## Scoreboard

### Schedule

#### Friday, Sept. 1

**SOUTH**  
Miami (Ohio) (0-0) at Miami (0-0)  
Georgia Tech (0-0) vs. Louisville (0-0) at Atlanta

#### MIDWEST

Howard (0-0) at E. Michigan (0-0)  
Cent. Michigan (0-0) at Michigan St. (0-0)  
Missouri St. (0-0) at Kansas (0-0)

#### FAR WEST

Stanford (0-0) at Hawaii (0-1)

#### Saturday, Sept. 2

#### EAST

Villanova (0-0) at Lehigh (0-0)  
Edinboro (0-0) at Duquesne (0-0)  
N. Illinois (0-0) at Boston College (0-0)  
Marist (0-0) at Georgetown (0-0)  
Bowie St. (0-0) at Delaware St. (0-0)  
New Hampshire (0-0) at Stonehill (0-0)  
Akron (0-0) at Temple (0-0)  
Merrimack (0-0) at Holy Cross (0-0)  
Towson (0-0) at Maryland (0-0)  
Wofford (0-0) at Pittsburgh (0-0)  
Colgate (0-0) at Syracuse (0-0)  
American International (0-0) at CCSU (0-0)

Wagner (0-0) at Fordham (0-1)  
Albany (NY) (1-0) at Marshall (0-0)  
Lafayette (0-0) at Sacred Heart (0-0)  
West Virginia (0-0) at Penn St. (0-0)

#### SOUTH

Bowling Green (0-0) at Liberty (0-0)  
Ball St. (0-0) at Kentucky (0-0)  
Tennessee (0-0) vs. Virginia (0-0) at Nashville, Tenn.

Davidson (0-0) at VMI (0-0)  
Mercer (1-0) at Mississippi (0-0)  
Virginia St. (0-0) at Norfolk St. (0-0)  
ETSU (0-0) at Jacksonville St. (1-0)  
Hampton (0-0) vs. Grambling St. (0-0) at Harrison, N.J.

South Florida (0-0) at W. Kentucky (0-0)  
Umass (1-0) at Auburn (0-0)  
Gardner-Webb (0-0) at Appalachian St. (0-0)  
MVSU (0-0) vs. Central St. (Ohio) (0-0) at Chicago

Winston-Salem (0-0) at NC Central (0-0)  
SE Louisiana (0-0) at Mississippi Tech (0-0)  
Morgan St. (0-0) at Richmond (0-0)  
Southern U. (0-0) at Alabama St. (0-0)  
UT Martin (0-0) at Georgia (0-0)  
St. Thomas (FL) (0-0) at Stetson (0-0)  
Monmouth (NJ) (0-0) at FAU (0-0)  
The Citadel (0-0) at Georgia Southern (0-0)

Bucknell (0-0) at James Madison (0-0)  
SC State (0-1) at Charlotte (0-0)  
Maine (0-0) at FIU (0-1)  
Presbyterian (0-0) at Murray St. (0-0)  
Alabama A&M (0-0) at Vanderbilt (1-0)  
Alcorn St. (0-0) at Southern Miss. (0-0)  
Stephen F. Austin (0-0) at Troy (0-0)  
Army (0-0) at Louisiana-Monroe (0-0)  
Bethune-Cookman (0-0) at Memphis (0-0)

Chattanooga (0-0) at North Alabama (0-1)  
South Carolina (0-0) vs. North Carolina (0-0) at Charlotte, N.C.  
Middle Tennessee (0-0) at Alabama (0-0)  
Old Dominion (0-0) at Virginia Tech (0-0)  
South Alabama (0-0) at Tulane (0-0)  
Tarleton St. (0-0) at McNeese St. (0-0)  
Northwestern St. (0-0) at Louisiana-Lafayette (0-0)

#### MIDWEST

East Carolina (0-0) at Michigan (0-0)  
LIU Brooklyn (0-0) at Ohio (0-1)  
Utah St. (0-0) at Iowa (0-0)  
Fresno St. (0-0) at Purdue (0-0)  
Dayton (0-0) at Illinois St. (0-0)  
Black Hills St. (0-0) at St. Thomas (Minn.) (0-0)

N. Iowa (0-0) at Iowa St. (0-0)  
Tennessee St. (0-0) at Notre Dame (1-0)  
N. Dakota St. (0-0) vs. E. Washington (0-0) at Minneapolis

Buffalo (0-0) at Wisconsin (0-0)  
Ohio St. (0-0) at Indiana (0-0)  
E. Kentucky (0-0) at Cincinnati (0-0)  
Drake (0-0) at North Dakota (0-0)  
Austin Peay (0-0) at S. Illinois (0-0)  
SE Missouri (0-0) at Kansas St. (0-0)  
Toledo (0-0) at Illinois (0-0)

#### SOUTHWEST

Colorado (0-0) at TCU (0-0)  
Arkansas St. (0-0) at Oklahoma (0-0)  
Louisiana Tech (1-0) at SMU (0-0)  
W. Carolina (0-0) at Arkansas (0-0)  
Rice (0-0) at Texas (0-0)  
California (0-0) at North Texas (0-0)  
Cent. Arkansas (0-0) at Oklahoma St. (0-0)

Texas State (0-0) at Baylor (0-0)  
New Mexico (0-0) at Texas A&M (0-0)  
UTSA (0-0) at Houston (0-0)  
Arkansas Baptist (0-0) at Houston Christian (0-0)  
Prairie View (0-0) at Texas Southern (0-0)  
Incarnate Word (0-0) at UTEP (0-1)

#### FAR WEST

Robert Morris (0-0) at Air Force (0-0)  
Butler (0-0) at Montana (0-0)  
Portland St. (0-0) at Oregon (0-0)  
Boise St. (0-0) at Washington (0-0)  
Bryant (0-0) at UNLV (0-0)  
San Diego (0-0) at Cal Poly (0-0)  
Nevada (0-0) at Southern Cal (1-0)  
Washington St. (0-0) at Colorado St. (0-0)  
Texas Tech (0-0) at Wyoming (0-0)  
Utah Tech (0-0) at Montana St. (0-0)  
W. Illinois (0-0) at New Mexico St. (0-1)  
N. Arizona (0-0) at Arizona (0-0)

Sam Houston St. (0-0) at BYU (0-0)  
Coastal Carolina (0-0) at UCLA (0-0)  
Idaho St. (0-0) at San Diego St. (1-0)  
**Sunday, Sept. 3**

#### EAST

Northwestern (0-0) at Rutgers (0-0)  
**SOUTH**  
Florida A&M (0-0) vs. Jackson St. (1-0) at Miami Gardens, Fla.  
Florida St. (0-0) vs. LSU (0-0) at Orlando, Fla.

#### FAR WEST

Oregon St. (0-0) at San Jose St. (0-1)

## COLLEGE FOOTBALL

# Gamecocks' first job is stopping Maye

Tar Heels offense presents many problems for South Carolina defense in opening game

By PETE IACOBELLI  
Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — South Carolina's defensive team room has a large poster that shows a group of celebrating Gamecocks with the words, "Get off the field."

South Carolina will need to get that done in the opener instead of being driven off the field by No. 21 North Carolina and its Heisman Trophy hopeful, quarterback Drake Maye.

"We're just going to have to do our jobs," Gamecocks middle linebacker Stone Blanton said. "Keep him contained and play good football."

Easier said than done against Maye, who was the ACC player of the year as a freshman. Maye threw for 4,321 yards with 38 touchdowns and ran for 698 yards and seven scores. His passing yards, 342 completions and 517 attempts were all single-season records at South Carolina.

"It's just playing sound defense," nose tackle Alex Huntley said. "Trust that everybody on the team is doing their job and know we can do this and we will do it."

That's tough enough to do with a veteran team, yet South Carolina enters the opener with many questions and new faces from the defense that ended last season with wins over No. 5 Tennessee and No. 8 Tennessee before a close bowl loss to No. 21 Notre Dame.

Cornerback Cam Smith was a

No. 21 North Carolina  
vs. South Carolina  
at Charlotte, N.C.  
AFN-Sports  
1:30 a.m. Sunday CET  
8:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

second-round pick in the NFL Draft while defensive tackle Zacch Pickens was a third-round selection. Former five-star recruit defensive end Jordan Burch transferred to Oregon.

In all, only five defensive starters from the 45-38 loss to the Fighting Irish in the Gator Bowl return to open against the Tar Heels.

South Carolina had plenty of areas to fix even if everyone had returned. The team was 10th in the Southeastern Conference in total defense (404 yards allowed per game) and scoring defense (28 points per game).

The Gamecocks were 11th in sacks in the SEC. The strongest area from last year was against the pass, where they led the league with 15 interceptions.

That back end has the most returning talent in safeties Nick Emmanwori and DQ Smith and cornerback Marcellus Dial.

The group played a big role in frustrating the Vols and quarterback Hendon Hooker in South Carolina's stunning 63-38 victory. A week later, the defense tightened up in the second half to overcome Clemson's double-digit lead and win 31-30.



JACOB KUPFERMAN/AP

North Carolina quarterback Drake Maye, left, was the ACC player of the year as a freshman, throwing for 4,321 yards and 38 touchdowns. He also ran for 698 yards and seven TDs.

Smith, the sophomore safety, respects Maye's talent, but the team believes it's capable of matching up well with anyone in the country.

"He does a lot of things well," Smith said of Maye. "He's a person who can stay in the pocket, make every throw. He's a great quarterback. Obviously, we've got to be on our A game."

Behind Maye, North Carolina averaged just less than 35 points a game. It only twice scored fewer than 20 points a game, in losses to Georgia Tech (21-17) and Clem-

son (39-10) in the Atlantic Coast Conference championship game.

Gamecocks coach Shane Beamer sees the complete package when he watches film of Maye. He says the key is limiting North Carolina's run game. "We've got to tackle well in space and stop the run," the coach said. "Certainly, when he does throw, we've got to get pressure on him."

A boost to South Carolina's cause would be help from its own offense. The Gamecocks and second-year quarterback Spencer Rattler got hot at the end, with

Rattler throwing for 1,044 yards and 10 touchdowns over the final three games of 2022.

"They had a lot of momentum at the end of the season," Tar Heels coach Mack Brown said of South Carolina's attack.

Rattler's not putting one second of thought into a quarterback competition. He said his focus is on doing what he must to help the team's offense move, no matter who's on the opposite sideline.

"It'll be fun," Rattler said. "But I'm trying to make plays for my team and lead us to victory."

## Maximum: Georgia uses its 'unicorn' in many different ways

FROM PAGE 48

No wonder they call him the "unicorn."

"I'm glad he's a Georgia Bulldog," said Mike Bobo, who's heading into his first season as Kirby Smart's offensive coordinator and knows his job will be a lot easier with No. 19 in the lineup.

At 6-foot-4 and 240 pounds, Bowers certainly has the physique of a tight end. Then, he starts running. Suddenly, he's transformed into an Olympic-worthy sprinter. Linebackers have no chance of sticking with him. Heck, tiny little cornerbacks are hard-pressed to keep up.

Defensive back Tykee Smith, who goes against Bowers every day in practice, knows what a handful he can be to defend.

"A really special player," Smith said. "Strong. Once his hands get on the ball, it's kind of hard to get it out, even if you're playing the best defense in the world. And with him being able to run like he does,



ASHLEY LANDIS/AP

Georgia tight end Brock Bowers, left, had seven catches for 152 yards and a touchdown during the title game against TCU.

you don't expect that out of a tight end."

Bowers comes from good stock athletically. His dad starred in football at Utah State. His mother was a top softball player at the

same school. Their kid made his mark at Napa High School, quickly turning heads even though his senior season was wiped out by the COVID-19 pandemic.

When Georgia offered him a

scholarship, Bowers jumped at the chance to play on the other side of the country.

"People always said the SEC was the best football," Bowers said. "I wanted to come compete against the best, practice against the best every single day. I wanted to win games and try to win championships."

He made an impact right away, hauling in 56 catches for 882 yards and 13 touchdowns — plus 56 yards rushing and another score — as Georgia won its first national title in 41 years.

It was more of the same as a sophomore. Sixty-three catches for 942 yards and seven TDs. Nine carries for 109 yards and three more scores. Another national championship for the Dawgs.

To put his numbers in jaw-dropping perspective, Bowers has averaged more than 15 yards each time he's gotten the ball in his hands over the last two seasons. On nearly one out of every five

touches, he's taken it all the way to the end zone.

Bobo knows what he's got to do.

"If a guy has the unique ability to make plays and turn an explosive (play), we've got to do a good job as a staff of designing plays that get him touches," the offensive coordinator said.

Bobo knows he'll always get Bowers' best. He's not just some freak athlete who gets by on his supernatural talents. This is the kid who used to run up the steep hills around Napa to stay in shape. He carries that work ethic with him every day.

"I feel like ever since I was younger, I just always wanted to be, at least try to be, the best," Bowers said. "I feel like that's what really pushed me. I don't know. It's just kind of always been there, I guess. I try to outwork the person next to me."

And once he's done outworking them, chances are he'll just run right by them.

# SPORTS



## Quick work

No. 10 Tiafoe eases into third round in straight sets » **US Open, Page 43**

### COLLEGE FOOTBALL

# Maximum potential

## Listed as a TE, Georgia's Bowers shines anywhere

BY PAUL NEWBERRY  
*Associated Press*

**B**rock Bowers is a player who defies labels. Sure, the Georgia depth chart lists him as a tight end.

But there are times when he looks like the fastest receiver on the field. Other times, one would swear he's one of the best running backs in the country.

Bowers is a big reason the Bulldogs have won two straight national championships and will open the season Saturday against Tennessee-Martin as an overwhelming favorite to pull off an unprecedented three-peat.

"Wherever the coaches put me and trust me to help the team win, I'll do it," Bowers said with a shrug. "If that's at running back or receiver or tight end, wherever they want me, I'll go. I don't pay much attention to it."

Heading into his third — and surely final — season between the hedges, the California native already has put together a career's worth of highlight-reel plays:

- That 78-yard touchdown catch against South Carolina, when he hauled in a pass over the middle, broke one tackle, ditched another defender with a nifty cutback and outran everyone else to the end zone.

- That 75-yard scoring run on the first play of the game against Kent State, when he took a handoff and was barely even touched while speeding down the sideline.

- That juggling catch he made against Florida, a remarkable bit of hand-eye coordination that sent him off on another long TD.

SEE MAXIMUM ON PAGE 47

Georgia tight end Brock Bowers has averaged more than 15 yards the past two seasons every time he touches the ball, whether by reception or taking a handoff.

JOHN BAZEMORE/AP



# Seattle wins club-record 21st game August » MLB, Page 42

