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Suicides highest among infantry



GREGORY SUMMERS/U.S. Army

A U.S. soldier overlooks the sunset during pre-combat checks and inspections in Iraq, Aug. 3, 2020. New data released by the Defense Department found that suicide rates among infantrymen are higher than their counterparts in other military career fields.

New data shows rates for divers, EOD techs also near top of DOD report

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Infantrymen, armed forces divers and personnel who work with explosives had higher suicide rates than their counterparts in other military career fields, according to new Defense Department data.

The analysis, which was completed in July and posted Wednesday on the website of Sen. Angus King, looked at 5,997 service member suicides and scores of different jobs associated with those who took their own lives between 2011 and 2022.

Overall, enlisted infantrymen had higher suicide rates than those in 21 other occupation codes, followed by service members involved in ordnance disposal, diving, combat engineering and medical care, according to the DOD data.

Troops in the infantry, diving and explosive ordnance fields had suicide rates ranging roughly between 30 and 35 per 100,000.

In comparison, the rate for fixed-wing pilots was 9.49 per 100,000, and for helicopter pilots it was 8.29 per 100,000. Other jobs with comparatively lower instances of suicide included intel-

ligence, food service and computer specialties.

Troops working with artillery also had evidence of higher suicide rates than when compared with a DOD population based on combined suicide rates from the Army, Marine Corps, and Navy, the Pentagon found.

A total of 14 occupations, all of which were among enlisted personnel, had evidence of a higher suicide rate than the U.S. adult population as a whole, the DOD report said.

The analysis was mandated by Congress.

SEE DATA ON PAGE 5

Air Force: Osprey crash caused by cracks in a gear, pilot's decisions

BY TARA COPP
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A deadly Osprey aircraft crash last November off Japan was caused by cracks in a metal gear and the pilot's decision to keep flying, instead of heeding multiple warnings that he should land, according to an Air Force investigation released Thursday.

The CV-22B Osprey crash killed eight Air Force Special Operations Command service members and led to a monthslong military-wide grounding of the fleet. It's among four fatal Osprey crashes in the last two years driving investigations into the Osprey's safety record. It's created a split among the services about the future role of the unique aircraft, which can fly like an airplane but land like a helicopter.

For months, the Air Force would only say an unprecedented component failure caused the crash. On Thursday, it identified

SEE CRASH ON PAGE 6



AP

Debris believed to be from a U.S. Osprey is seen off the coast of Japan on Nov. 29.

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES								
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel				
Germany	\$3.893	\$4.391	\$4.742	\$4.177	Azores	..	..	\$4.592
Change in price	+1.3 cents	-0.8 cents	+0.2 cents	+1.1 cents	Change in price	..	..	+0.2 cents
Netherlands	..	\$4.691	\$4.961	\$4.826	Turkey	..	..	\$4.408
Change in price	..	-3.9 cents	-0.4 cents	-0.4 cents	Change in price	..	..	\$4.590*
U.K.	..	\$4.391	\$4.742	\$4.177	Fuel prices are updated daily. These prices are effective Aug. 2. The change in price is from July 26.			
Change in price	..	-0.8 cents	+0.2 cents	+1.1 cents				

PACIFIC GAS PRICES								
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel				
Japan	..	\$4.379	..	\$3.819	South Korea	\$3.569	..	\$4.419
Change in price	..	No change	..	-1.0 cents	Change in price	+2.0 cents	..	+1.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.539	..	..	\$3.819	Guam	\$3.599**	\$4.089	\$4.449
Change in price	+2.0 cents	..	..	-1.0 cents	Change in price	+2.0 cents	No change	+1.0 cents
					*DieselEFD **Midgrade			
					Pacific prices for the week of Aug. 2-8			

EXCHANGE RATES			
Military rates			
Euro costs (Aug. 2)	\$1.05	Switzerland (Franc)	0.8747
British pound (Aug. 2)	\$1.25	Thailand (Baht)	35.55
Japanese yen (Aug. 2)	150.00	Turkey (NewLira)	33.0786
South Korean won (Aug. 2)	1332.00	(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.)	
Commercial rates			
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3769		
Britain (Pound)	1.2826		
Canada (Dollar)	1.3796		
China (Yuan)	7.2460		
Denmark (Krone)	6.8984		
Egypt (Pound)	48.6902		
Euro	0.9249		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8150		
Hungary (Forint)	365.76		
Israel (Shekel)	3.7843		
Japan (Yen)	150.38		
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3056		
Norway (Krone)	10.8611		
Philippines (Peso)	58.28		
Poland (Zloty)	3.97		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7528		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3355		
South Korea (Won)	1367.05		
INTEREST RATES			
Prime rate	8.50		
Interest Rates Discount rate	6.00		
Federal funds market rate	5.33		
3-month bill	5.29		
30-year bond	4.31		

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MILITARY

USS Florida returns from Pacific deployment

Sub circumnavigated the globe in over 700 days

By CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

The USS Florida, an East Coast-based submarine, returned to the U.S. on Wednesday following a rare deployment in the Pacific.

“We operate undetected anywhere,” said Capt. Peter French, one of two commanding officers of the submarine. “The biggest takeaway from this is the versatility to go to multiple theaters of operation and be able to operate successfully.”

The submarine’s homecoming at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay in Georgia culminated a more than 700-day deployment during which it circumnavigated the globe.

An East Coast submarine operating in the Pacific, Navy leaders said, is unprecedented.

Aside from the Pacific, the warship operated in the Navy’s 5th and 6th Fleets, which encompasses the waters of Europe, Africa and the Middle East, sailing more than 60,000 nautical miles.

The Florida is one of four Ohio-class, guided-missile submarines capable of carrying 154 precision

Tomahawk missiles that have a range of 1,000 nautical miles. The Florida was manned by two teams — a blue crew and a gold crew — which alternated running the ship every five months, leaders said.

Two crews, consisting of 15 officers and 150 enlisted sailors, are used to keep the submarine staffed at all times. One crew, typically the blue, will sail the submarine into a region, and the other crew conducts maintenance on the ship while it is in port.

Navy leaders were unable to provide specific deployment details, only saying the crew operated or trained to the full breadth of the submarine’s mission set, including anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, and surveillance and reconnaissance.

“I can tell you from the operations we did out there, we developed lots of lessons learned and passed on several very long messages detailing all the things that we learned from what we did,” French said.

A spokesperson for Submarine Group 10, which oversees the Florida, said the submarine most

recently supported the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower during an extended deployment to the Middle East and transited to Guam for a scheduled re-loading of Tomahawk missiles.

Submarine movements are typically closely guarded secrets, but the Pentagon on rare occasions has highlighted a submarine’s presence as a deterrent to enemies.

In April 2023, the Navy announced the Florida’s arrival in the Middle East in a show of force as Iran-backed militant attacks on U.S. forces escalated.

Later that year, in September, the Florida became the first-ever guided missile submarine to visit Norway. Rear Adm. Stephen Mack, director of maritime operations for U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, said the visit was a “visible demonstration of the strength of the U.S.-Norway partnership.”

Navy leaders said the submarine also worked with special forces to practice coordinated missions. The Florida is capable of hosting 66 special operations forc-



TRAVIS S. ALSTON/U.S. Navy

Sailors of the gold crew assigned to the guided-missile submarine USS Florida make preparations Wednesday to moor after returning to the ship’s homeport at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, Ga., following a deployment to 5th and 7th Fleet areas of operations.

es onboard and is equipped with a dry deck shelter, a removable cylindrical module meant to allow divers and SEALs and their vehicles to enter and exit the submarine while it is submerged.

U.S. Central Command, which oversees military operations in the Middle East, announced in November that an unnamed Ohio-class submarine had entered its area of responsibility alongside a photo that appeared to show the submarine in the Suez Canal. The announcement came less than one

month after the deadly Oct. 7 surprise attack on Israel by Hamas militants, triggering a war in Gaza and regional tensions and hostilities.

Cmdr. George Thompson, the executive officer for the Florida’s blue crew, said the submarine was en route to relieve another crew when it was directed to deploy to the Middle East.

“The plan changed, and we just executed the new plan,” he said. “That is what we train for and that is what we prepare for.”

5th-generation fighters fly mock dogfights over Australian Outback

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE BASE TINDAL, Australia — F-22 Raptors and F-35 Lightning II stealth fighters took turns flying as red air — the opposing force — during multinational airpower drills Down Under, mimicking the threat the United States and its allies might face in a conflict with China or Russia.

Pitch Black, a biennial exercise that began July 12 and ends Friday, brought 140 aircraft and 4,400 personnel from 21 nations to the Northern Territory and neighboring Queensland.

U.S. Air Force F-22s, Australian F-35As and Italian F-35Bs soared over the Outback in high-tech mock dogfights.

The fifth-generation aircraft, loaded with advance sensors and other avionics, alternated in friendly and aggressor roles, said



PHOTOS BY SETH ROBSON/Stars and Stripes

Australian air force Flight Lt. Jaqui Ozanne refuels a fighter jet aboard at KC-30A tanker over Australia’s Northern Territory, Thursday.

Australian air force Squadron Leader Eamon Hamilton, a spokesman for Pitch Black, at RAAF Tindal on Thursday.

Red air pilots mimic the tactics of advanced Russian and Chinese fighters they might encounter in a real-world conflict.

China’s J-20 Mighty Dragon fighter, launched in 2017, is thought to incorporate stolen F-35 technology. Russia’s new Sukoi Su-57 fighter also boasts stealth capabilities and has seen combat in Ukraine.

F-22s and F-35s as the opposi-

tion at Pitch Black makes sense, retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Dan Leaf said by email Thursday.

“With appropriate limits on speed, maneuverability, avionics settings, and weapons they can replicate potential adversary aircraft,” said the former deputy commander of what is now called Indo-Pacific Command.

Flying opposition tactics, techniques and procedures as red air gives Raptor and Lightning II pilots a deeper understanding of what to expect in combat, Leaf said.



A U.S. Air Force F-22 Raptor takes off from Royal Australian Air Force Base Tindal during the Pitch Black exercise Thursday.

The Raptors in Australia are from the 27th Fighter Squadron at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., according to information posted on the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service’s website.

Six Raptors, deployed to Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, are at Tindal for Pitch Black, detachment commander Lt. Col. Ryan Nickell told reporters during a Zoom interview Wednesday.

“It’s an absolute benefit being here for Pitch Black,” he said, highlighting the chance to work with many foreign aircraft and train in a massive amount of airspace.

The Raptors primarily served as escorts during the exercise,

Nickell said. “It’s the first Pitch Black that we have participated in, and it happens to be the largest Pitch Black,” he said.

The Raptors are operating out of facilities used by the Tindal-based 75 Squadron, which flies Lightning IIs, Nickell said.

“Having face-to-face debriefs and face-to-face briefings with these guys is huge,” he said.

Nickell said he saw little difference in capability between European and Asian pilots and aircraft at Pitch Black.

“They fly similar platforms,” he said. “Everybody is trying to pitch in.”

Alongside the Americans at Tindal, Australian air force Flight Lt. Jaqui Ozanne operated the boom on a KC-30A tanker assigned to No. 33 Squadron from RAAF Amberley in Queensland.

Her tanker refueled German, Italian and Spanish Typhoons, Italian F-35Bs and an Australian F/A-18 Hornet on Thursday.

On Wednesday the tanker refueled Raptors from Tindal.

It also performed an elephant walk with five of the F-22s and six Australian F-35As from No. 75 Squadron, she said.

“We love having the Americans come to Australia,” she said after her mission Thursday. “They always bring good energy and a good attitude, and we learn a lot.”

Correction

A story in Thursday’s edition about a record-breaking medevac should have identified Lt. Col. Samuel Shamburg as commander of the 459th Airlift Squadron at Yokota Air Base, Japan.

PACIFIC

Parents of toddler abused at Navy day care to file lawsuit

By Wyatt Olson
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The parents of a toddler who was physically abused by employees at a Navy child care center in Hawaii intend to file a lawsuit in federal court alleging the service was negligent.

Attorneys for Jeremy and Kaitlin Kuykendall, whose 15-month-old daughter Bella was abused in 2022 at the Ford Island Child Development Center, filed a pre-litigation SF-95 claim on Wednesday, according to a news release that day by Just Well Law, the Austin, Texas-based firm representing the family.

Filing the claim is the first step in seeking compensation under the Federal Tort Claims Act in federal court.

Two center employees were convicted in Hawaii District Court of misdemeanor assault in the case and handed jail terms in January.

Video footage from August 2022 revealed that employees pinched, slapped, squeezed, shook and smothered the toddler, according to the SF-95 claim. At times, the employees made the girl punch herself.

The SF-95 claim alleges the Na-

vy was negligent in its oversight of the day care facility.

“The necessary background checks were either inadequately performed or completely overlooked, allowing individuals unfit for childcare responsibilities to be employed at the facility,” the claim states. “At least one employee and potentially more were hired without the completion of necessary background checks.”

The Navy did not immediately respond to a request for comment Wednesday.

In an interview last year, Army Capt. Jeremy Kuykendall said he and his wife had noticed bruising on Bella’s legs and an unusual redness on her cheeks soon after she started attending the day care. Her demeanor also changed.

The Kuykendalls brought their concerns to the day care director on Aug. 26, 2022, and the Honolulu Police Department was called in to investigate.

The director initially said they could view video from the day care’s closed-circuit system, but that offer was quickly withdrawn, the SF-95 claim states.

The investigation languished, and the couple felt that Navy officials were downplaying the episode, the claim states.

Four months later, the Kuykendalls acquired complete access to videos from the days Bella had attended the day care.

“[Jeremy] spent hundreds of hours reviewing 75 hours of footage from multiple angles that ultimately confirmed their worst fears,” the SF-95 claim states.

“Over the three days spent at the CDC, [Bella] was consistently isolated, mishandled, neglected, and/or assaulted by three separate caregivers,” the claim states. “What started as negligent or basic inappropriate care on her first day rapidly escalated to violent acts.”

On her third and final day of attendance, Bella was “assaulted from the time she was dropped off until the time she was picked up,” the claim states.

On that day, she experienced “a host of batteries, including being pinched in multiple locations on her body including the back of her thighs, stomach, head, neck, and the side of her face,” the claim states.

“She was kicked in her side, forcefully pulled by her wrist, pinned down, hit on the back of her head, held in a chokehold, and excessively squeezed,” the claim states.

During nap time, caregivers



Kaitlin Kuykendall

Bella Kuykendall, now 3, with her mother, Kaitlin Kuykendall, an Army spouse.

wrapped her blanket so tightly around her body and head that she could not move.

After Jeremy Kuykendall lodged a formal complaint with the inspector general at the Naval Criminal Investigative Service in Quantico, Va., criminal cases were filed against two workers from the child care center by local Honolulu prosecutors, the claim states.

Analyn DeGuzman and Marilyn Kanekoa were each charged with assault in the third degree.

During separate hearings Jan. 17 in Honolulu, DeGuzman was given 30 days in jail and Kanekoa received eight.

Attorneys for the family allege that the Navy failed to follow policy mandating that CCTV video footage be displayed in the lobby

during operational hours.

“During the week of [Bella’s] attendance, fewer than five TVs were operational, with none showing footage from [her] classroom,” a breach of the center’s guidelines, the claim states.

“There were obstructions in the camera view due to artwork hanging from the ceiling and the placement of [Bella’s] cot between a bookshelf and a table, both of which are against [policy],” the claim states.

The Pentagon’s inspector general announced in May that investigators would evaluate how the Defense Department and military services respond to child abuse allegations at its day care facilities.

The evaluation will look at how allegations are addressed and communicated to parents.

Japan to replenish US Patriot missiles sent to Ukraine

By Hana Kusumoto and Alex Wilson
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Japan will begin selling domestically produced missiles to the United States in a bid to bolster U.S. weapon supplies in the region.

The U.S. will purchase approximately \$19.6 million worth of Patriot Advanced Capability-3 interceptors, or PAC-3 missiles, the Japanese Defense Ministry’s agency for acquisition, technology and logistics said in a Sunday news re-

lease.

The number of missiles included in the deal was not disclosed.

U.S. stocks of PAC-3 missiles, commonly used in the MIM-104 Patriot surface-to-air missile system, have decreased over the past year due to U.S. support for Ukraine.

“The missiles transferred to the U.S. forces will complement the U.S. force inventory and help strengthen security and defense cooperation with the United States, as well as contribute to Ja-

pan’s security and peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region,” the agency said.

Japan has given Ukraine equipment, but no weaponry, in part due to public opposition, said James Brown, an international affairs expert at Temple University’s Japan campus.

The deal marks the first time a Japanese-manufactured weapon will be transferred back to the licensee since Tokyo revised its guidelines on weapons transfers to other countries, an agency offi-

cial said Tuesday.

Some Japanese officials are required to speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

Japan in December revised rules governing the transfer of weapons produced under license. Missiles under the new deal will be transferred from the Japan Air Self-Defense Force’s stockpile back to the U.S.

A spokesperson for the office of the secretary of defense declined to comment.

The deal follows security talks

between Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and their Japanese counterparts in Tokyo on Sunday, when the four committed to pursuing increased production of PAC-3 interceptors and advanced medium-range air-to-air missiles.

The four ministers in a joint statement Sunday “welcomed high-priority efforts” to expand co-production of the two missiles to meet the “critical demands for such advanced systems.”

Air Force identifies airman killed in fiery crash in northeastern Japan

By Jonathan Snyder and Hana Kusumoto
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force has identified the airman who died July 14 when a car crashed into a roadside garage near Misawa Air Base, Japan.

Airman 1st Class Tyler Jacobs, 19, died that morning in the crash near Misawa Station that killed another occupant, injured a third and set the garage on fire, according to Japanese police and an Air Force news release Wednesday.

The Air Force did not identify Jacobs’ hometown. On his Facebook page, Jacobs listed Chattanooga, Tenn.

Jacobs and Mikio Imanami, 26, of Rokkasho village, were believed to have burned to death in the 4 a.m. crash, a Misawa Police spokesman said by phone Wednesday.

The crash victims were too bad-



Jacobs

ly burned to immediately identify, the Misawa Police spokesman said on July 16. The previous day, a spokesman for the 35th Fighter Wing said the Air Force had identified the airman but withheld his name pending family notification.

Misawa police are still investigating the accident’s cause but found that Jacobs, the driver, had a blood-alcohol level above the legal limit in Japan, according to the police spokesman.

The legal limit for driving under the influence in Japan is

0.03%. By comparison, the legal limit across the U.S. is uniformly 0.08%.

A surviving passenger, Yuta Onoue, 20, was treated at a local hospital for a broken leg and burns to his back.

A base spokeswoman, Senior Airman Brieanna Bolfiging, referred questions about Jacobs’ duty assignment to Misawa city police. A Misawa Police spokesman declined Wednesday to provide that information.

The base is still planning a me-

morial service for Jacobs and the return of his remains to his family, Bolfiging said.

“The Air Force has received Tyler’s body from the local Japanese Government,” the airman’s father, Jason Jacobs, of St. Petersburg, Fla., posted on his Facebook page Tuesday. “We think his body should be sent home to Florida sometime next week.”

The family expects to hold a funeral service on Aug. 10 at the Cavalry Catholic Cemetery in Clearwater, Fla., he wrote.

MILITARY

Military families found more retirement ready

By JONATHAN SNYDER
Stars and Stripes

Military households reported more savings and confidence in their retirement prospects than non-military households, according to annual survey results released recently by the Employee Benefit Research Institute.

Military households are more likely to have saved for retirement, to have prepared for retirement and to be collaborating with a financial adviser, Craig Copeland, wealth benefits research director for the nonprofit institute, said in a July 24 news release announcing the 2024 Retirement Confidence Survey results.

“Military households seem to be in better financial shape and are more likely to be confident in having enough money to last throughout retirement as well as

various other aspects about retirement than non-military households,” Copeland said in the release.

They are less concerned about the effects of rising housing costs, higher costs of living and higher inflation on their retirement savings, according to the research institute.

Specifically, 89% of military households with incomes of \$75,000 or more are confident that they will have enough to live comfortably, compared with 81% of non-military households in the same income bracket, according to the study.

That percentage drops for military households earning \$35,000 to \$74,999, of whom 72% are confident of their retirement prospects, versus 61% of civilian households.

Being better positioned for re-

tirement takes planning and patience, according to a recently retired Air Force master sergeant.

“They do pay us well in the military, but it takes a few years to get into those better pay bands,” Nicholas Kurtz, 44, said Monday.

After almost 23 years of military service, Kurtz retired last year with more than \$600,000 in his Thrift Savings Plan, he said. Add to that his pension, VA disability pay and rental income, and Kurtz is not worried about running out of money in his later retirement years.

“I earned what I feel was a fairly average military salary for my entire career, and I was married,” he said. “My wife did work as well; she didn’t make a ton of money, but between our two incomes, that was enough for us to be able to pay our bills and put money away for

retirement.”

When Kurtz was still on active duty last year and stationed in Washington, D.C., their combined income was just under \$200,000, he said.

Overall, the survey found that 68% of American workers feel they’ll have enough money to live comfortably throughout their retirement, with 21% feeling very confident, according to the survey. Those findings were not statistically significantly different from survey results in 2023.

However, military and civilian households earning less than \$35,000 overwhelmingly agree they are not confident they will have enough money for a comfortable retirement, according to the survey.

“There are definitely situations with our younger service mem-

bers where maybe you got a couple of kids and a wife at home and you’re the sole source of income,” Kurtz said. “It’s going to be really tight for a while, until you start getting some rank under your belt.”

Military households are more likely to report financial assets of \$250,000 or more and less likely to consider debt to be a problem than non-military households, the survey said.

“If you’re smart with debt, you can definitely use it to your advantage, especially when you’re young,” Kurtz said. “But you don’t want debt on depreciating assets — that’s a common mistake service members make.”

Automobiles, furniture, computers and appliances are the most common household depreciating assets.

Checkpoints added to pinpoint source of PFAS found in wells

By BRIAN McELHINEY AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION FUTENMA, Okinawa — Okinawa added four more checkpoints outside this U.S. base in its hunt for the source of PFAS in nearby wells, the prefecture announced in a meeting Wednesday.

The prefecture began digging the checkpoints last week between MCAS Futenma and wells registering high levels of PFAS contamination, a spokesman for the prefecture’s Environmental Protection Division said by phone Thursday.

The prefecture announced the additional checkpoints at a meeting of PFAS experts on Wednesday in Naha.

The checkpoints — part of a three-year project to find the source of PFAS contamination in the affected wells — may be finished in August or September, the spokesman said. Eight checkpoints — four per year — were dug in 2022 and 2023, he added.

“I think we will be able to get data

by around October and hope we can show it in November when the next meeting will happen,” the spokesman said.

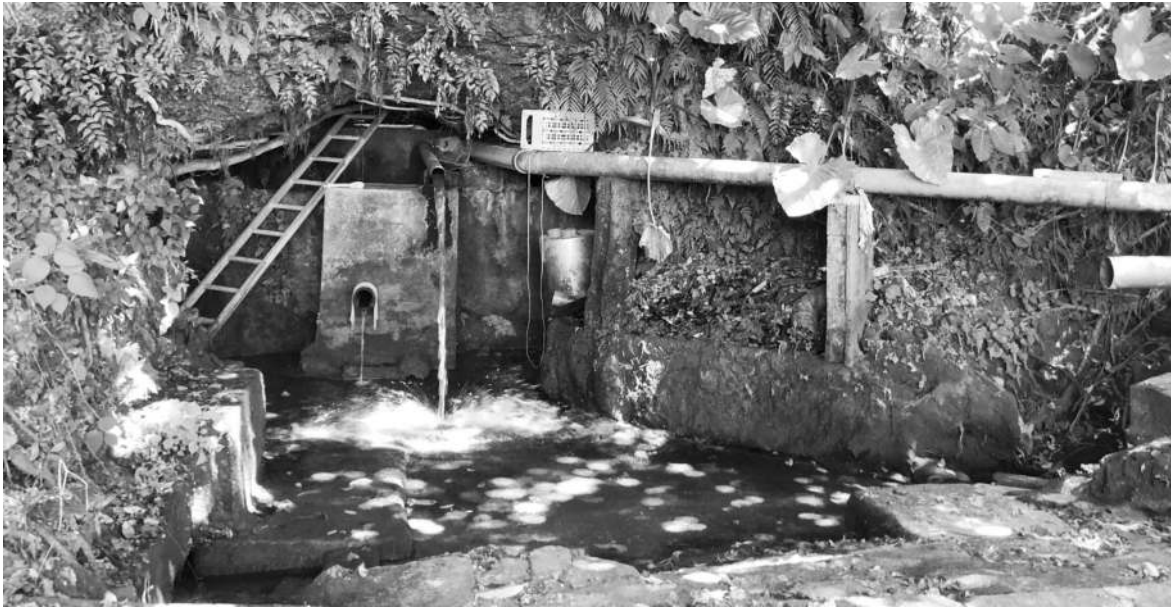
Some Japanese government officials are required to speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

“We still think that contaminated groundwater is accumulated or exists under MCAS Futenma and this is flowing to these wells,” the spokesman said.

Researchers at two Okinawa universities also discovered PFOS — a component of PFAS — at levels 82 times Japan’s national average in porcupinefish caught in a canal where groundwater from MCAS Futenma flows, according to a Thursday report by Okinawa Times.

Japan’s Ministry of the Environment surveys the level of chemical substances in living organisms each fiscal year.

Professor Yutaka Tashiro of Meio University, who conducted the study with associate professor Takuma Ito of Okinawa Interna-



Aranakigaa, a spring about a quarter-mile from Marine Corps Air Station Futenma’s southwestern fence line, is pictured in Ginowan city, Okinawa, on Thursday.

KEISHI KOJA/Stars and Stripes

tional University, could not be reached by email Thursday. The report was not available online.

PFAS and its components, PFOS and PFOA, are found in firefighting aqueous film forming foam, once commonly used on some U.S. military bases. They are also found in a wide variety of consumer products, including nonstick cookware and stain-resistant clothing and fabrics.

In April 2020, 38,000 gallons of firefighting foam spilled into a stream and neighborhood near MCAS Futenma.

The Defense Department has removed the firefighting foam from all its Navy and Marine Corps bases in Japan and from all Army bases and Misawa Air Base on Honshu, the largest of the country’s four main islands, U.S. Forces Japan said in June 2023.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency dubbed PFAS and its components “forever chemicals” because they persist a long time in the environment. They pose a potential danger to the body’s immune system and may be linked to kidney

and testicular cancer, low birth weight and lower anti-body response to vaccines, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The prefecture’s Environmental Protection Division discovered PFAS above Japan’s provisional safe drinking water standard in 19 of 37 sites it sampled around MCAS Futenma between August 2023 and January, according to an annual report released by the division in April. Japan’s provisional standard is 0.05 micrograms per liter.

Data: DOD struggles to bring down number of suicides in its ranks

FROM PAGE 1

King, a Maine independent who first requested the study, said Wednesday that the findings should help the military better understand underlying cultural issues affecting service members’ mental health.

For years, the Pentagon has

struggled to bring down the number of suicides in the ranks. The new data details for the first time which career fields carry the highest risks.

Of the nearly 6,000 suicides examined in the analysis, 3,665 suicides were among active-duty personnel, 930 among reservists and

1,402 among National Guard troops.

DOD also examined rates by service branches.

In the case of the Army, DOD performed 27 job comparisons and found that soldiers in the infantry, combat engineering and armament and munitions jobs had evi-

dence of higher suicide rates than the total enlisted Army population.

Likewise, Marine infantry had a higher suicide rate than the total enlisted Marine Corps rate in a comparison of 11 job fields.

For the Navy, only sailors in law enforcement had evidence of a higher suicide rate than the total

enlisted Navy rate in a comparison of 14 jobs.

Of the 11 comparisons for the Air Force, all occupation codes had suicide mortality rates consistent with the total enlisted Air Force rate except for those deemed “not occupationally qualified,” which had a lower rate.

MILITARY

Navy base at Souda Bay receives new commander

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

A Navy pilot with more than 2,000 flight hours and experience managing a helicopter squadron in the Indo-Pacific assumed command Thursday of Naval Support Activity Souda Bay on the Greek Island of Crete.

Capt. Stephen Steacy relieved Capt. Odin Klug, who had led the base since July 2022, NSA Souda Bay said in a statement Thursday. Rear Adm. Brad Collins, commanding officer of Navy Region Europe, Africa, Central, presided over the change-of-command ceremony.

In taking command, Steacy acknowledged the base's increasingly vital role in the service's operations in the Eastern Mediter-

anean Sea.

Small but strategically situated, NSA Souda Bay provides support for Navy operations, including port services. It is the homeport for the expeditionary sea base USS Hershel "Woody" Williams, which is assigned to U.S. Africa Command.

"Our location is key to the Navy's ability to respond swiftly and effectively to nearby crises," the California native and George Washington University graduate said during the ceremony.

Steacy's assignments include executive officer and commanding officer of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 77 deployed throughout the Indo-Pacific as part of the Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group, according

to his Navy biography.

He also was assistant navigator aboard the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt.

Most recently, he was associate director for integration in the Chief of Naval Operations assessments division, his biography states.

Klug was praised for his leadership during the ongoing mission against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and the fight against attacks on commercial shipping by Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Also, several joint task forces were stood up during his Souda Bay tenure in response to the Israel-Hamas war, according to the statement.

Klug was recognized for strengthening ties between the



FACEBOOK/NSA Souda Bay

Rear Adm. Brad Collins, left, head of Navy Region Europe, Africa, Central, shakes hands Thursday with the outgoing commander of Naval Support Activity Souda Bay in Greece, Capt. Odin Klug, as new commander Capt. Stephen Steacy watches.

U.S. and Greece. Several months before his arrival, the two countries inked a defense cooperation deal that gives American forces greater access to Greek bases.

Klug's next assignment is at Navy Installations Command headquarters in Washington.

Crash: Probe finds Osprey pilot misinterpreted warning message

FROM PAGE 1

that a toothed piece called a pinion gear — a critical part of the prop rotor gearbox — was to blame. The prop rotor gearbox serves as the aircraft's transmission: Inside each gearbox, five pinion gears spin hard to transmit the engine's power to turn the Osprey's masts and rotor blades.

While the Air Force is confident it was the pinion gear that failed, it still doesn't know why.

But Pentagon leadership in charge of the V-22 Ospreys knew that "total loss of aircraft and crew were possible" should those prop rotor gearbox components fail, lead investigator Lt. Gen. Michael Conley told reporters Wednesday in a call ahead of the report's release. In a rare move, the investigation also faulted that office, saying it did not share safety data that could have educated crews on the severity of the risk.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Conley said he believed it was the pilot's instinct to complete the military exercise that drove his decisions.

"To a degree, it's a way of life here. I mean, we want people in this command that that are biased towards 'yes,' biased towards getting the mission done," Conley said. "As we went through the investigation, I saw someone that was confident in the aircraft but not cocky."

On the day of the crash, the Osprey was flying along the coast of mainland Japan headed to Okinawa when the first indications of trouble began.

In aircraft, vibrations are monitored as signs of potential trouble.

A data recorder noted vibrations on the left side of the driveshaft that links the two engines and acts as a fail safe in case one engine loses power.

A second vibration followed. This time one of the five pinion gears inside the left prop rotor gearbox was vibrating.

But pilot Maj. Jeff Hoernemann and his crew never knew about the vibrations, because that data can only be downloaded at the end of a flight.

Five minutes after the first vibration, a left prop rotor gearbox chip burn warning posted in the cockpit. The warning lets the crew know there's metal flaking coming off the Osprey's gearing, another indication of stress.

Chipping is a common enough occurrence in rotary flight that there's a safety net designed into the Osprey. The chip detector can burn the chips off so they don't travel in the oil and destroy the transmission.

If the burn is successful, the warning clears.

The crew got six chip warnings that day. Each presented an opportunity for Hoernemann to heed the warning and land as a precaution, but he did not, and investigators found that decision was a causal factor in the crash.

When the third chip burn warning posted, the crew was still close to mainland Japan and just 10 miles from its nearest airfield. The official guidance after three chip burns was to "land as soon as practical," guidance that still leaves that decision to the pilot's discretion.

According to the voice data rec-



PATRICK SEMANSKY/AP

An Osprey aircraft taxis at Joint Base Andrews, Md.

order, Hoernemann and the crew were looking for secondary indications of a problem, such as the prop rotor gearbox overheating, but saw none. So Hoernemann instead directed his co-pilot to keep monitoring the situation and elected to continue the 300-nautical-mile flight over water to Okinawa.

Hoernemann was likely balancing split priorities in his decision-making, the investigation found. He was leading the airborne portion of the military exercise and had spent months planning for it.

Until almost the final minutes of flight, he kept his primary focus on completing the exercise, not the evolving aircraft situation, the investigation found. He rejected his co-pilot's suggestions on using an onboard mapping tool to identify the closest airfield to land. But the co-pilot was also not direct about "his uneasiness with the evolving issues," the investigation found, based on the recovered voice data.

The fourth and fifth chip burn warnings came fast. Then with the sixth, escalation: just chips. It

meant the Osprey could not burn them off. "Land as soon as practical" turned into "land as soon as possible." Still, the crew members did not act with urgency.

In the final minutes of flight, they'd begun to position the aircraft to land. The Osprey was half a mile from an airfield at Yakushima, flying about 785 feet above the water.

But they waited again and deferred as Japanese traffic controllers told them to hold for local traffic to take off, even as Hoernemann confirmed over the radio they had an in-flight emergency.

The Osprey gave its final chip-related warning three minutes before the crash: chip detector fail. Hoernemann told the crew he was no longer worried, he now assumed the earlier warnings were errors due to a faulty chip detector. Instead, investigators later found the fail message occurred because the detector "had so many chips on it, it couldn't keep up," Conley said.

Hoernemann then directed his co-pilot to "do one more big, right-

hand loop and come in and just set up for landing."

But inside the prop rotor gearbox, the pinion gear was breaking apart. At least one piece wedged into the teeth of the larger transmission gearing system, jamming and breaking off gearing teeth until the left prop rotor gearbox could no longer turn the Osprey's left prop rotor mast.

Within six seconds of the prop rotor gearbox failing, catastrophic destruction splintered through the Osprey gearing and interconnected drive system. At that point, there was nothing the crew members could have done to save themselves or the aircraft, the investigation found. The Osprey rolled violently, inverted twice with its left engine housing on fire and crashed into the water, killing all on board.

Following the crash, crews are now directed to land as soon as practical on a first chip burn and as soon as possible on the second. The joint program office is also working on a new system that would communicate vibration data in real time to pilots, to give them better awareness during flight.

The accident killed Maj. Eric V. Spendlove, 36, of St. George, Utah; Maj. Luke A. Unrath, 34, of Riverside, Calif.; Capt. Terrell K. Brayman, 32, of Pittsford, N.Y.; Tech. Sgt. Zachary E. Lavoy, 33, of Oviedo, Fla.; Staff Sgt. Jake M. Turnage, 25, of Kennesaw, Ga.; Senior Airman Brian K. Johnson, 32, of Reynoldsburg, Ohio; Staff Sgt. Jacob M. Galliher, 24, of Pittsfield, Mass.; and Hoernemann, 32, of Andover, Minn.

NATION



NICK PERRY/AP

People clean up damage from flash floods in Lyndonville, Vt., on Wednesday. Parts of the state hit by flooding this week are bracing again as a new round of severe thunderstorms moves through the region.

Vermont gets flood warnings respite as wider disaster aid package sought

Associated Press

LYNDON, Vt. — Vermont residents awakened Thursday to a quieter weather forecast with no flood warnings following another round of destructive storms, as a U.S. senator from the state asked Congress to pass a disaster aid package that would help communities across the country dealing with wildfires, floods, hurricanes and tornadoes.

There were downpours Wednesday night in parts of Vermont and New Hampshire. St. Johnsbury, Vt., which got more than 8 inches of rain on Tuesday, saw less than an inch of rain Wednesday, the National Weather Service said.

Vermont Gov. Phil Scott said at a news conference Wednesday that

the latest storms to hit the state have undone much of the cleanup and recovery work from its last major bout of flooding only weeks ago, and he called on residents to “stick together.”

State officials said preliminary information indicated that 50 homes were destroyed or suffered significant damage. More than half a dozen roads were closed, a lightning strike knocked out water for part of the town of St. Johnsbury, and flooding had contaminated several wells that serve the village of Lyndonville.

In Washington, Democratic U.S. Sen. Peter Welch asked Congress to pass a supplemental disaster aid package.

“We can’t recover without that

federal help,” he said in a speech on the Senate floor Wednesday night. “I just can’t stress this enough. We need Congress to step up. And we need the help of all of us here because well, it’s Vermont this time, it may be New Hampshire next time. It may be Texas next month. And I believe all of us have to help one another when an event occurs causing such harm to people we represent. And it’s through no fault of their own.”

Vermont experienced major flooding earlier in July caused by what was left of Hurricane Beryl. The flooding destroyed roads and bridges and inundated farms, and it came exactly a year after a previous bout of severe flooding hit Vermont and several other states.

US arrests former Green Beret who was part of failed raid into Venezuela

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — A former U.S. Green Beret who in 2020 organized a failed cross-border raid of Venezuelan army deserters to remove President Nicolás Maduro has been arrested in New York on federal arms smuggling charges.

A federal indictment unsealed this week in Tampa, Fla., accuses Jordan Goudreau and a Venezuelan partner, Yacsy Alvarez, of violating U.S. arms control laws when they allegedly assembled and sent to Colombia AR-styled weapons, ammunition, silencers, night vision goggles and other defense equipment requiring a U.S. export license.

Goudreau, 48, also was charged with conspiracy, smuggling goods from the United States and unlawful possession of a machine gun, among 14 counts. Goudreau appeared in federal court following his Tuesday arrest in Manhattan but it was not clear a day later whether he would be released from custody pending trial.

Goudreau, a three-time Bronze Star recipient for bravery in Iraq and Afghanistan, claimed responsibility in 2020 for the amphibious raid by a ragtag group of soldiers that had trained in clandestine camps in Venezuela’s neighbor Colombia. He said he and others were acting to protect Venezuela’s democracy after Maduro’s 2018

reelection was boycotted by the opposition and condemned as undemocratic by the U.S. and dozens of other countries.

Two days before the incursion, The Associated Press published an investigation detailing how Goudreau had been trying for months to raise funds for the harebrained idea from the Trump administration, Venezuela’s opposition and wealthy Americans looking to invest in Venezuela’s oil industry should Maduro be removed.

Election authorities declared Maduro the winner of Sunday’s presidential vote but a growing chorus of nations refuse to recognize the results.

Mohammed set to plead guilty

Lawyer of man accused as main 9/11 plotter requests life sentence

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, accused as the mastermind of al-Qaida’s Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, has agreed to plead guilty, the Defense Department said Wednesday. The development points to a long-delayed resolution in an attack that killed thousands and altered the course of the United States and much of the Middle East.

Mohammed and two accomplices, Walid bin Attash and Mustafa al-Hawsawi, are expected to enter the pleas at the military commission at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, as soon as next week.

Defense lawyers have requested the men receive life sentences in exchange for the guilty pleas, according to letters from the federal government received by relatives of some of the nearly 3,000 people killed outright on the morning of Sept. 11.

Terry Strada, the head of one group of families of direct victims of the 9/11 attacks, invoked the many relatives who have died while awaiting justice for the killings when she heard news of the plea agreement.

“They were cowards when they planned the attack,” she said of the defendants. “And they’re cowards today.”

Pentagon officials declined to immediately release the full terms of the plea bargains.

The U.S. agreement with the men comes more than 16 years after their prosecution began for al-Qaida’s attack. It comes more than 20 years after militants commandeered four commercial airliners to use as fuel-filled missiles, flying three of them into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon.

Al-Qaida hijackers headed the fourth plane to Washington. But crew members and passengers tried to storm the cockpit, and the plane crashed into a Pennsylvania field.

The attack triggered what President George W. Bush’s administration called its war on terror, prompting the U.S. military invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and years of U.S. operations against armed extremist groups elsewhere in the Middle East.

The attack and U.S. retaliation brought the overthrow of two governments outright, devastated communities and countries caught

in the battle, and played a role in inspiring the 2011 Arab Spring popular uprisings against authoritarian Middle East governments.

U.S. authorities point to Mohammed as the source of the idea to use planes as weapons. He allegedly received approval from al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden to craft what became the 9/11 hijackings and killings. U.S. forces killed bin Laden in 2011.

Authorities captured Mohammed in 2003. Mohammed was subjected to waterboarding 183 times while in CIA custody before coming to Guantanamo, along with other torture and coercive questioning.

The use of torture has proven one of the most formidable obstacles in U.S. efforts to try the men in the military commission at Guantanamo, owing to the inadmissibility of evidence linked to abuse. Torture has accounted for much of the delay of the proceedings, along with the courtroom’s location a plane ride away from the United States.

Daphne Eviatar, a director at the Amnesty International USA rights group, said Wednesday she welcomed news of some accountability in the attacks.

She urged the Biden administration to close the Guantanamo Bay detention center, which holds people taken into custody in the war on terror. Many have since been cleared, but are awaiting approval to leave for other countries.

Michael Burke, one of the family members receiving the government notice of the plea bargain, condemned the long wait for justice, and the outcome.

“It took months or a year at the Nuremberg trials,” said Burke, whose fire captain brother Billy died in the collapse of the World Trade Center’s North Tower. “To me, it always been disgraceful that these guys, 23 years later, have not been convicted and punished for their attacks, or the crime. I never understood how it took so long.”

Burke’s brother, New York City fire captain Billy Burke, ordered his men out but remained on the 27th floor of the North Tower with two men who’d stayed behind: a quadriplegic who, because the elevators had gone out, was essentially stuck there in his wheelchair and that man’s friend.



Mohammed

NATION

Trump: Harris misled voters on her race

By MATT BROWN
AND MICHELLE L. PRICE
Associated Press

CHICAGO — Donald Trump falsely suggested Kamala Harris had misled voters about her race as the former president appeared Wednesday before the National Association of Black Journalists in Chicago in an interview that quickly turned hostile.

The Republican former president wrongly claimed that Harris, the first Black woman and Asian American to serve as vice president, had in the past only promoted her Indian heritage.

“I didn’t know she was Black until a number of years ago when she happened to turn Black and now she wants to be known as Black. So, I don’t know, is she Indian or is she Black?” Trump said while addressing the group’s annual convention.

Harris is the daughter of a Jamaican father and an Indian mother, both immigrants to the U.S. As an undergraduate, Harris attended Howard University, one of the nation’s most prominent historically Black colleges and universities, where she also pledged the historically Black sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha. As a U.S. senator, Harris was a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, supporting legislation to strengthen voting rights and to reform policing.

Trump has leveled a wide range of criticism at Harris since she replaced President Joe Biden atop the likely Democratic ticket last



CHARLES REX ARBOGAST/AP

Former President Donald Trump walks off stage after speaking at the National Association of Black Journalists, NABJ, convention, Wednesday, in Chicago.

week. Throughout his political career, the former president has repeatedly questioned the backgrounds of opponents who are racial minorities.

Michael Tyler, the communications director for Harris’ campaign, said in a statement that “the hostility Donald Trump showed on stage today is the same hostility he has shown throughout his life, throughout his term in office, and throughout his campaign for president as he seeks to regain power.”

“Trump lobbed personal attacks and insults at Black journalists the same way he did throughout his presidency — while he failed Black families and left the entire country digging out of the ditch he left us in,” Tyler said. “Donald Trump has already proven he cannot unite America, so he attempts to divide us.”

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre was asked during her briefing with reporters on Wednesday about Trump’s re-

marks and responded with disbelief, initially murmuring, “Wow.”

Jean-Pierre, who is Black, called what Trump said “repulsive” and said, “It’s insulting and no one has any right to tell someone who they are, how they identify.”

Trump has repeatedly attacked his opponents and critics on the basis of race. He rose to prominence in Republican politics by propagating false theories that President Barack Obama, the nation’s first Black president, was

not born in the United States. “Birtherism,” as it became known, was just the start of Trump’s history of questioning the credentials and qualifications of Black politicians.

He has denied allegations of racism. And after Biden picked Harris as his running mate four years ago, a Trump campaign spokesperson then pointed to a previous Trump political donation to Harris as proof that he wasn’t racist.

“The president, as a private businessman, donated to candidates across all aisles,” the spokesperson, Katrina Pierson, told reporters. “And I’ll note that Kamala Harris is a Black woman and he donated to her campaign, so I hope we can squash this racism argument now,” Pierson said.

During this year’s Republican primary, he once referred to former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, the daughter of Indian immigrants, as “Nimbra.”

Later Wednesday, Trump did not repeat his criticism of Harris’ race at a campaign rally in Harrisburg, Pa., although he called her “phony” and said she has been trying to change her image. He also repeatedly mispronounced her first name.

“If she becomes your president, our country is finished,” Trump charged.

Before he took the stage, Trump’s team displayed what appeared to be years-old news headlines describing Harris as the “first Indian-American senator” on the big screen in the arena.

Trump ramps up his defense of Vance

Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Donald Trump is used to defending himself. But this week, the Republican presidential nominee has been put in the rare position of having to defend someone else — his running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance.

When Vance was first introduced at the Republican National Convention last month, many GOP officials said they didn’t know much about him. Since then, the void has been filled with multiple reports of controversial statements — especially Vance’s previous suggestion that Vice President Kamala Harris and other so-called “childless cat ladies” want to make the country miserable — that have made his rollout among the most turbulent in recent history.

“I’m just speaking for myself. And I think I’m speaking for him, too,” Trump said during a contentious interview Wednesday at the National Association of Black Journalists conference in Chicago. “My interpretation is he’s strongly family-oriented. But that doesn’t mean that if you don’t have a family, there’s something wrong with that.”

Conservative commentators, Republican strategists and GOP elected officials on Capitol Hill publicly and privately agree that Vance’s introduction to America has

not gone well, with Democrats highlighting his past statements on abortion rights and a suggestion that parents should have more of a vote than adults without children. Harris and her allies have started calling both Vance and Trump “weird,” messaging that has taken off online.

Seventeen days later, Trump and his allies have yet to quiet criticism from within their own party.

“I think if he was thinking two years ago or three years ago, ‘I might be on a presidential ticket in a couple of years,’ he might have chosen different words,” North Dakota Sen. Kevin Cramer, a longtime Trump ally, said Wednesday. Cramer also suggested that Vance could apologize for his comments about childless Americans, saying, “If he feels the need to apologize, people are very forgiving.”

Vance has not apologized. And a senior Trump adviser said Tuesday there has been “zero conversation” about replacing Vance as his running mate.

Soon, the adviser predicted, voters would shift their attention away from Vance and toward Harris’ choice for vice president on the Democratic ticket, which is expected in the coming days. The adviser spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal cam-

paign strategy.

Vance, a 39-year-old Republican senator, has held office for less than 18 months but quickly established himself as a thought leader in the “Make America Great Again” movement.

The first-term Ohio senator was not the most popular choice of many Republicans on Capitol Hill, especially compared to more experienced candidates such as Sens. Tim Scott and Marco Rubio. Some believe that the pick came during a moment of overconfidence as Trump’s team was predicting a blowout victory against a diminished President Joe Biden.

But the presidential contest changed profoundly once Biden stepped aside and endorsed Harris. And now, Trump’s allies acknowledge that his victory in November is no sure thing.

Twice in the last century, vice presidential nominees were replaced after being announced. But it hasn’t happened since George McGovern dropped Missouri Sen. Tom Eagleton in 1972 after it was revealed Eagleton had received electroshock therapy for a mental health issue.

More recently, Arizona Sen. John McCain’s selection of Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin helped sink his 2008 campaign.



JAE C. HONG/AP

Republican vice presidential candidate Sen. JD Vance, R-Ohio, speaks during a campaign event in Glendale, Ariz., on Wednesday.

There is a sense that things would need to get much worse before Vance would become a serious political liability for Trump, who could theoretically replace him — a possibility that Democrats have been eager to promote in recent days.

“This is a short-term bump in the road,” Republican pollster Neil Newhouse said.

NATION



EVAN VUCCI/AP

President Joe Biden speaks during a meeting on combating fentanyl in the Roosevelt Room of the White House on Nov. 21, in Washington. Biden is currently calling on Congress to do more to reduce the flow of fentanyl into the United States from Mexico.

Biden prods Congress to act to curb fentanyl coming from Mexico

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden is prodding Congress to help him do more to combat the scourge of fentanyl before he leaves office.

The Democratic administration is making the new policy push as Republican former President Donald Trump steps up attacks against Vice President Kamala Harris, painting her as Biden’s feckless lieutenant in the battle to slow the illegal drugs and immigrants without authorization coming into the United States from Mexico.

The White House on Wednesday announced a series of proposals from Biden aimed at curbing the ongoing drug epidemic. These include a push on Congress to pass legislation to establish a pill press and tableting machine registry and enhance penalties against convicted drug smugglers and traffickers of fentanyl.

Biden also wants to tighten rules on importers shipping small packages into the United States,

requiring shippers to provide additional information to Customs and Border Protection officials. The move is aimed at improving the detection of fentanyl precursor chemicals that frequently find their way into the United States in relatively low-value shipments that aren’t subject to customs and trade barriers.

The president’s new efforts at combating fentanyl may also benefit Harris, the likely Democratic nominee, as Trump and his surrogates are trying to cast her as a central player in the Biden administration’s struggles at the U.S.-Mexico border.

“Still, far too many of our fellow Americans continue to lose loved ones to fentanyl,” Biden said in a statement. “This is a time to act. And this is a time to stand together — for all those we have lost, and for all the lives we can still save.”

Biden also signed a national security memorandum aimed at improving the transfer of information between law enforcement and federal agencies. The hope is

to better understand the flows of production and smuggling of the synthetic opioid that has ravaged huge swaths of America. In the last five months, more than 442 million doses of fentanyl were seized at U.S. borders, according to the White House.

“Since day one, the administration, President Biden, Vice President Harris, have prioritized action to combat the scourge of illicit fentanyl and beat this crisis,” White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said during a briefing with reporters on Wednesday. Biden was briefed on the issue Wednesday afternoon by his top aides and senior Cabinet officials, including Attorney General Merrick Garland and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

The Trump campaign launched its first television ad of the general election cycle on Tuesday, dubbing Harris the “border czar” and blaming her for a surge in illegal crossings into the United States during the Biden administration.

Schumer touts bill to reverse court’s immunity decision

BY MARY CLARE JALONICK
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer planned to introduce legislation Thursday reaffirming that presidents do not have immunity for criminal actions, an attempt to reverse the Supreme Court’s landmark decision last month.

Schumer’s No Kings Act would attempt to invalidate the decision by declaring that presidents are not immune from criminal law and clarifying that Congress, not the Supreme Court, determines to whom federal criminal law is applied.

The court’s conservative majority decided July 1 that presidents have broad immunity from criminal prosecution for actions taken within their official duties — a decision that threw into doubt the Justice Department’s case against Republican former President Donald Trump for his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss.

Schumer, of New York, said that Congress has an obligation and the constitutional authority to check the Supreme Court on its decision.

“Given the dangerous and consequential implications of the court’s ruling, legislation would be the fastest and most efficient method to correcting the grave precedent the Trump ruling presented,” he said.

The Senate bill, which has more than two dozen Democratic cosponsors, comes after Democratic President Joe Biden called on lawmakers earlier this week to ratify a constitutional amendment limiting presidential immunity, along with establishing term limits and an enforceable ethics code for the court’s nine justices.

Rep. Joseph Morelle, D-N.Y., recently proposed a constitutional



Schumer

amendment in the House.

The Supreme Court’s immunity decision stunned Washington and drew a sharp dissent from the court’s liberal justices warning of the perils to democracy, particularly as Trump seeks a return to the White House.

Trump celebrated the decision as a “BIG WIN” on his social media platform, and Republicans in Congress rallied around him. Without GOP support, Schumer’s bill has little chance of passing in the narrowly divided chamber.

Speaking about Biden’s proposal, Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell said that Biden’s proposal would “shred the Constitution.”

A constitutional amendment would be even more difficult to pass. Such a resolution takes a two-thirds vote in both the House and the Senate, which is highly unlikely at this time of divided government, and ratification by three-fourths of the states. That process could take several years.

Still, Democrats see the proposals as a warning to the court and an effort that will rally their voting base ahead of the presidential election.

Vice President Kamala Harris, who is running against Trump in the November election, said earlier this week the reforms are needed because “there is a clear crisis of confidence facing the Supreme Court.”

The title of Schumer’s bill harkens back to Justice Sonia Sotomayor’s dissent in the case, in which she said that “in every use of official power, the President is now a king above the law.”

Senate Democrats tee up vote on child tax credit in pitch to families

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democratic Senate Leader Chuck Schumer is daring Republicans to vote against a bipartisan tax cut package aimed at expanding the child tax credit for millions of families and restoring some business tax breaks. And Republicans appear prepared to do just that on Thursday, with many arguing they will have more leverage to enact the tax changes they want if their party wins control of the White House

and both chambers of Congress in November’s election. Large parts of the tax cut package passed under Republican control in 2017 are set to expire after 2025, pushing tax issues to the forefront.

“I think we can do better next year,” said Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas.

It’s expected to be the final vote senators will take before heading home for the August recess, and underscores how both parties are trying to spotlight issues they be-

lieve will play well with voters in November. Democrats are also looking to counter assertions from Donald Trump’s running mate, Sen. JD Vance of Ohio, that Democrats are “anti-family.”

“The American people will get a chance to see which senators in reality support tax relief for parents and businesses and housing, and who opposes it,” Schumer said.

The roughly \$79 billion package passed the House overwhelmingly in January, 357-70. But it has

stalled in the Senate. The procedural vote to advance the measure will require support from 60 senators, which is unlikely.

The bill was fashioned through negotiations by Rep. Jason Smith, the Republican chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, and Sen. Ron Wyden, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. It would restore full, immediate deductions that businesses can take for the purchase of new equipment

and machinery, and for domestic research and development expenses. It also would help more low-income families take fuller advantage of the child tax credit.

The changes in the child tax credit would lift as many as 500,000 out of poverty when the proposal is fully in effect, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. In all, the families of some 16 million children would benefit, the liberal think tank said.



A hiring sign is displayed at a grocery store in Deerfield, Ill., last week. The number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits jumped to its highest level in a year last week.

Number filing for jobless claims hits highest level in year

Associated Press

The number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits jumped to its highest level in a year last week, even as the labor market remains surprisingly healthy in an era of high interest rates.

Jobless claims for the week ending July 27 climbed by 14,000 to 249,000, from 235,000 the previous week, the Labor Department reported Thursday. It's the most since the first week of August last year and the 10th straight week that claims have come in above 220,000. Before that stretch, claims had remained below that level in all but three weeks this year.

Weekly unemployment claims are widely considered as representative of layoffs, and though they have been slightly higher the past couple of months, they remain at historically healthy levels.

Strong consumer demand and a resilient labor market has helped to avert a recession that many economists forecast during the extended flurry of rate hikes by the Federal Reserve that began in March of 2022.

As inflation continues to ease, the Fed's goal of a soft-landing —

bringing down inflation without causing a recession and mass layoffs — appears within reach.

On Wednesday, the Fed left its benchmark rate alone, but officials hinted strongly that a cut could come in September if the data remained on its recent trajectory. And recent data from the labor market suggest some weakening.

The unemployment rate ticked up to 4.1% in June, despite the fact that America's employers added 206,000 jobs. U.S. job openings also fell slightly last month. Add that to elevated layoffs and the Fed could be poised to cut interest rates next month, as most analysts expect.

The four-week average of claims, which smooths out some of the weekly ups and downs, rose by 2,500 to 238,000.

The total number of Americans collecting unemployment benefits for the week of July 20 jumped by 33,000 to 1.88 million. The four-week average for continuing claims rose to 1,857,000, the most since December of 2021.

Continuing claims have been on the rise in recent months, suggesting that some Americans receiving unemployment benefits are finding it more challenging to land jobs.

Proposal bars airline fees for parents to sit near kids

By VALERIE YURK
CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration on Thursday proposed a rule that would prevent airlines from charging extra for families with young children to sit near each other in a push to crack down on so-called junk fees.

The rule is the administration's third this year focused on passenger protection, adding to one seeking price transparency and another requiring quick refunds on canceled flights.

"This is, of course, part of the bigger picture of the Biden-Harris administration's work to protect the rights of consumers, including airline passengers," Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said on a call with reporters. "Families don't need any additional stresses or costs when flying on top of how demanding it can be to be a parent flying with your kids."

The proposed rule would require airlines to seat parents next to their young children, defined as 13 and under, for free within 48 hours of booking. That means adjacent or in the same row, but not separated by an aisle, in every class of service. Airlines would be prohibited from

defining class in a way that limits availability of family seating.

In situations where it is impossible to provide adjacent seating for multiple young children, it would require seats across the aisle from, directly in front of, or directly behind the parent or accompanying adult.

If adjacent family seats are not available at booking, airlines would be required to provide passengers the choice between receiving a full refund or waiting for family seating to become available later. If they choose to wait and adjacent seats do not free up, airlines must give families an option to rebook for free on the next flight with available family seating.

Airlines would also have to disclose "clearly and conspicuously" that family seating is free. Airlines that violate the rule would be subject to civil penalties for each violation.

White House officials said on a call with reporters that the fee-free family seating rule would save a family of four as much as \$200 per round trip if seat fees are \$25. Buttigieg added that it would also avoid situations where passengers are asked to give up their seat for a family to sit together.

The notion of fee-free family seating has been popular among lawmakers in Congress. Lawmakers included a provision directing the Federal Aviation Administration to propose a rule banning such fees in an FAA reauthorization bill passed earlier this year.

Airlines for America, which has opposed many Biden administration airlines rules, has argued that many airlines already provide family seating free of charge.

According to DOT's Airline Customer Service Dashboard, Delta Air Lines, Southwest Airlines, Spirit Airlines and United Airlines are among the larger air carriers that have not committed to fee-free family seating.

The proposed rule comes after the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals sided with airlines and blocked a previous Biden administration rule requiring airlines to disclose extra service fees. In a decision filed Monday, the court said the rule likely exceeds DOT authority and will "irreparably harm" airlines.

"The airline industry lobby is trying to tie this up with lawsuits, but we will not back down from protecting passengers," Buttigieg wrote on X after the ruling.

Trump's gag order still in effect after hush money conviction, court rules

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A New York appeals court on Thursday denied Donald Trump's bid to end a gag order in his hush money criminal case, rejecting the Republican former president's argument that his May conviction "constitutes a change in circumstances" that warrants lifting the restrictions.

A five-judge panel in the state's mid-level appellate court ruled that the trial judge, Juan M. Merchan, was correct in extending parts of the gag order until

Trump is sentenced, writing that "the fair administration of justice necessarily includes sentencing."

Merchan imposed the gag order in March, a few weeks before the trial started, after prosecutors raised concerns about Trump's habit of attacking people involved in his cases. During the trial, he held Trump in contempt of court and fined him \$10,000 for violations, and he threatened to jail him if he did it again.

The judge lifted some restrictions in June, freeing Trump to

comment about witnesses and jurors but keeping trial prosecutors, court staffers and their families — including his own daughter — off limits until he is sentenced.

Trump, who has denied any wrongdoing, was originally scheduled to be sentenced July 11, but Merchan postponed it until Sept. 18, if necessary, while he weighs a defense request to throw out his conviction in the wake of the Supreme Court's presidential immunity ruling.

Hollywood's video game performers set to picket over AI protections

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Hollywood's video game performers were heading to the Warner Bros. Studios lot Thursday to picket against what they call an unwillingness from top gaming companies to protect voice actors and motion capture workers equally against the unregulated use of artificial intelligence.

The protest marks the first large labor action since game voice actors and performance workers voted to strike last week. The work stoppage

came after more than 18 months of negotiations with gaming giants, including divisions of Activision, Warner Bros. and Walt Disney Co., over a new interactive media agreement stalled over protections around the use of AI.

Union leaders have billed AI as an existential crisis for performers. Game voice actors and motion capture artists' likenesses, they say, could be replicated by AI and used without consent and fair compensation. The unregulated use of AI, the

union says, poses "an equal or even greater threat" to performers in the video game industry than it does in film and television because the capacity to cheaply and easily create convincing digital replicas of performers' voices is widely available.

Audrey Cooling, a spokesperson for the video game producers, said the companies have offered AI protections as well as "a significant increase in wages for SAG-AFTRA represented performers in video games."

"We have worked hard to deliver proposals with reasonable terms that protect the rights of performers while ensuring we can continue to use the most advanced technology to create a great gaming experience for fans," Cooling said. "We have proposed terms that provide consent and fair compensation for anyone employed under the (contract) if an AI reproduction or digital replica of their performance is used in games."

SAG-AFTRA's negotiating com-

mittee argued that the studios' definition of who constitutes a "performer" is key to understanding the issue of who would be protected.

"The industry has told us point blank that they do not necessarily consider everyone who is rendering movement performance to be a performer that is covered by the collective bargaining agreement," SAG-AFTRA Chief Contracts Officer Ray Rodriguez said last week, adding that some physical performances are being treated as "data."

MIDEAST

Israel says July strike killed chief of Hamas' military wing

BY MELANIE LIDMAN AND SAMY MAGDY
Associated Press

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military said Thursday that it has confirmed that the head of Hamas' military wing, Mohammed Deif, was killed in an airstrike in Gaza in July. The announcement came a day after an apparent Israeli strike in the Iranian capital killed Hamas' top political leader.

The rapid events this week have left U.S., Egyptian and Qatari mediators scrambling to salvage talks for a cease-fire deal in Gaza. At the same time, international diplomats tried to avert an escalation into all-out regional war after the assassination in Tehran of Hamas' Ismail Haniyeh, Israel's killing of a top Hezbollah commander in a Beirut strike and — now — Israel's announcement of Deif's death.

There was no immediate comment on the Israeli claim by Hamas, which had previously said Deif sur-

vived the July strike in Gaza. A member of Hamas' political bureau, Izzat al-Risheq, said in a statement Thursday that confirming or denying his death is the responsibility of the group's military wing, known as the Qassam Brigades, which so far has been silent.

The elimination of Haniyeh and Deif — two of Hamas' most senior figures — brings a victory for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. It also puts him at a crossroads.

It potentially presents him with a political off-ramp to end the war, allowing him to retreat from his lofty promises of "total victory" while showing Israelis that Hamas' military capabilities suffered a debilitating blow.

It could also lead him to harden Israel's position in cease-fire talks, with Israeli officials insisting the blows to Hamas will force it to compromise. Hamas too could dig in as well in the talks — or quit them entirely.

Israel believes that Deif, the head of Hamas' military, and Yahya Sinwar, the top Hamas leader in Gaza, were the chief architects of the Oct. 7 attack that killed some 1,200 people in southern Israel and triggered the Israel-Hamas war. Sinwar is believed to remain in hiding in Gaza.

Israel targeted Deif in a July 13 strike that hit a compound on the outskirts of the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis. The military said at the time that another Hamas commander, Rafa Salama, was killed. More than 90 other people, including displaced civilians in nearby tents, were killed in the strike, Gaza health officials said at the time.

In a statement Thursday, the Israeli military said that "following an intelligence assessment, it can be confirmed that Mohammed Deif was eliminated in the strike."

In its 10-month-old campaign of bombardment and offensives in Gaza, Israel has killed some 39,480 Palestinians and wounded more than



VAHID SALEMI/AP

An Iranian woman holds up a poster of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh during his funeral ceremony and of his bodyguard, after they were killed in an assassination blamed on Israel on Wednesday, at Enqelab-e-Eslami (Islamic Revolution) Square in Tehran, on Thursday.

91,100 others, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, whose count does not differentiate between civilians and combatants. More than 80% of the population of 2.3 million has been driven from their homes, the majority crammed into tent camps in the southwest corner of the territory, with limited food and water.

Sofar Netanyahu has said he is determined to continue the war until Hamas is destroyed. Far-right na-

tionalist coalition partners, on whom he relies to stay in power, have threatened to bolt the government if he halts the war.

After the announcement on Deif, far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said the "defeat of Hamas is closer than ever." He said the military would continue to "eliminate thousands of other terrorists until our security is restored and we bring the hostages home."

STARS AND STRIPES

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The Daily Guide to Navigating The Military Business Market



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WORLD

US and Russia swap dozens of prisoners

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States and Russia completed their biggest prisoner swap in post-Soviet history on Thursday, with Moscow releasing journalist Evan Gershkovich and fellow American Paul Whelan, along with dissidents including Vladimir Kara-Murza, in a multinational deal that set two dozen people free, the White House said.

Astonishing in scope, the trade followed years of secretive back-channel negotiations despite relations between Washington and Moscow being at their lowest point since the Cold War after Russian President Vladimir Putin's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

The deal was the latest in a series of prisoner swaps negotiated between Russia and the U.S. in the past two years but the first to require significant concessions from other countries, with seven nations agreeing to give up 24 prisoners. It was trumpeted as a "diplomatic feat" by President



Clockwise from left: Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, corporate security executive Paul Whelan, and Russian opposition figure Ilya Yashin.

Joe Biden, who called the news an "incredible relief" and said the detainees' "brutal ordeal was over."

"Today is a powerful example of why it's vital to have friends in this world," he said in an address from the White House while joined by

families of four — three Americans and one green card holder — who were released.

But the welcome news was still sure to spark concerns over the imbalance of the deal — with Russia freeing journalists, dissidents

and others convicted in a highly politicized court system in exchange for people the West regards as rightfully charged — and whether it gives foreign actors seeking leverage over the U.S. an incentive to take prisoners.

Under the deal, Russia released Gershkovich, a reporter for The Wall Street Journal who was jailed in 2023 and convicted in July of espionage charges that he and the U.S. vehemently denied and called baseless; Whelan, a Michigan corporate security executive jailed since 2018, also on espionage charges he and Washington have denied; and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist Alsu Kurmasheva, a dual U.S.-Russian citizen convicted in July of spreading false information about the Russian military, accusations her family and employer have rejected.

The dissidents released included Kara-Murza, a Kremlin critic and Pulitzer Prize-winning writer serving 25 years on charges of treason widely seen as politically

motivated, 11 political prisoners being held in Russia, including associates of the late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, and a German national arrested in Belarus.

The Russian side got Vadim Krasikov, who was convicted in Germany in 2021 of killing a former Chechen rebel in a Berlin park two years earlier, apparently on the orders of Moscow's security services.

Russia also received two alleged sleeper agents who were jailed in Slovenia, as well as three men charged by federal authorities in the U.S., including Roman Seleznev, a convicted computer hacker and the son of a Russian lawmaker, and Vadim Konoshchenok, a suspected Russian intelligence operative accused of providing American-made electronics and ammunition to the Russian military.

Norway returned an academic arrested on suspicions of being a Russian spy, and Poland also sent back a man it detained.

Teen suspect in UK stabbings named in effort to counter misinformation

By JILL LAWLESS
AND BRIAN MELLEY
Associated Press

LONDON — The 17-year-old boy charged with murder in the deaths of three girls and stabbing 10 other people in a dance class was named in court Thursday partly to counter misinformation about his identity that has been blamed for triggering violent protests across England.

Judge Andrew Menary said his decision to allow Axel Rudakubana to be named was exceptional given the boy's age. But he said the teen will lose his right to anonymity when he turns 18 next week and continuing to shield his identity could allow rumors about him to metastasize.

"Continuing to prevent the full

reporting has the disadvantage of allowing others to spread misinformation, in a vacuum," Menary said in Liverpool Crown Court.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer summoned British police chiefs to address the crisis Thursday after officers in several cities have been pelted with bottles and rocks during two nights of violent clashes.

The attack Monday on children at a Taylor Swift-themed summer holiday dance class shocked a country where knife crime is a long-standing and vexing problem, though mass stabbings are rare. The deaths have been used by far-right activists to stoke anger at immigrants and Muslims — though the suspect is not an immigrant, and his religion has not been disclosed.

Rudakubana, who police said was born in Wales, has not been charged with terrorism offenses but faces three counts of murder in the deaths of Alice Dasilva Aguiar, 9, Elsie Dot Stancombe, 7, and Bebe King, 6, in the town of Southport in northwest England.

He also has been charged with 10 counts of attempted murder for the eight children and two adults who were injured. Rudakubana did not enter a plea and was ordered held without bail and returned to youth detention.

The adults, who were listed in critical condition, were named for the first time as Leanne Lucas, who led the dance and yoga class, and John Hayes, who worked nearby and intervened in the attack to protect children.

Russia launches drone barrage, none hurt

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian forces shot down all 89 Shahed drones launched by Russia in a nighttime attack on the country, Ukraine's air force said Wednesday, in what was one of the largest drone barrages this year.

No damage or injuries were immediately reported in the bombardment, which mostly targeted the region of Kyiv, the capital.

Russia used the same number of Shahed drones in a Jan. 1 attack,

an air force statement said.

Both Ukraine and Russia have relied extensively on explosive drones during the war and have scrambled to come up with more countermeasures.

The Russian drones are being shot down by Ukraine's Soviet-era aircraft, according to Anatolii Khrapchynskyi, an aviation expert in Kyiv.

"The air force is using electronic jamming against the drones' GPS which forces the drones to fly

at a higher altitude, which then makes it easier for Ukrainian aircraft to strike them down," he told The Associated Press.

He said that tactic will likely also be used when U.S.-made F-16 fighter jets are delivered in coming weeks by Kyiv's European partners.

Ukraine received the first F-16s, a U.S. official said Wednesday. A Ukrainian lawmaker confirmed Ukraine had received a small number of F-16 fighter jets.

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WEEKEND



Titles that can
take you away
Video games, Page 18



Comfort, community and country

Orville Peck letting others see what's behind the mask
as he collaborates with some of the genre's biggest stars

Music, Pages 28-29

Country music artist Orville Peck's
third album, "Stampede," is all duets.
MATT LICARI, INVISION/AP

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY

Don't sweat your hot electronics

While it's normal for devices to emit heat, here are ways to lower your energy output

BY SHIRA OVIDE
The Washington Post

When it's sweltering outside, it's hard to ignore my living room's heat zone. My Wi-Fi router feels so hot to the touch that I worry it's dangerous. My TV set, streaming TV gadget and work laptop emit noticeable heat, too.

This heat isn't just unpleasant. It's wasted energy. When your electronics spit out heat, imagine your electric bill climbing.

Your TV, computer, internet router and video game console aren't big electricity hogs individually, but they are in aggregate. Nearly one-quarter of Americans' average home energy consumption is from devices including appliances and electronics, according to government data.

I'll explain how much you should worry about literally hot tech and what you can do to keep your electronics cooler and your energy costs lower:

Why do electronics get hot?

Like the human body or other machines, your electronics use energy and waste a bunch as heat.

Devices dissipate the heat slowly to keep delicate electronic innards cool enough to work, said Mark Gallina, a mechanical engineer and thermal expert with computer chip company Intel.

The size, shape, design and use of the device affects its heat emissions.

A router or laptop that sits flat generally has less air flow and may feel hotter than a vertical router or a TV that has more surface area for ventilation. A powerful PC for video games uses far more energy and emits more heat than a simpler computer.

Even when your device feels hot, Gallina said it's usually fine and safe.



It's normal for laptops to get hot. But the cooling fan should not be whirring constantly, and devices should not be so hot that they burn your skin.

iStock

Are electronic devices making your home hotter?

You might notice your warm electronics more when you want to cool your home or if you have a small living space. But it's not a huge impact.

A small laptop plugged into an outlet has a heat loss of about 17 watts of energy, according to Gallina's rough calculations. A furry house cat emits about 28W of lost heat, he said. (Gallina's cats, Odin and Darcy, were essential to these calculations.)

You probably don't worry about your kitty or spouse (roughly 340W of heat loss) making your home hotter, but they do — at least more than most electronics.

How to keep electronics cooler

- Check that devices have space around them for ventilation. Don't keep your router, laptop or TV set somewhere

like a shelf crammed with books where it doesn't have good air flow. It probably won't work as well and may get hotter, said Gabe Kassel and Mark Sieglock, executives with Amazon's Eero brand of routers and other devices.

They also recommended keeping heat-emitting devices apart. Otherwise, each device might emit more heat to cool itself off from its neighbor.

- Unplug devices that you don't use often. Or use plugs to turn them off on a schedule. Even when you're not using devices, they still might suck electricity and get warm in standby mode or to power the clock on devices like the microwave. I unplug my TV set and streaming box when I'm not using them, but it's annoying.

Kassel uses programmable power plugs to turn on and off his exterior lights and basement dehumidifier on a daily schedule. Sieglock also has a switch to discon-

nect many of his electronics from electricity overnight.

Consumer Reports and Wirecutter have smart plug reviews, or you can use a manual dial timer to disconnect devices from electricity.

- Look at energy efficiency ratings. Again, the more energy efficient a device is, the less heat it will generally emit.

Energy Star from the Environmental Protection Agency has efficiency certifications for computers and some TV brands. TVs are by far the largest energy guzzlers among home electronics, government figures show.

There are also self-reported energy disclosures for routers and cable TV boxes. Look up electricity usage for models from Netgear, TP-Link, Eero and the cable companies Xfinity and Spectrum. (Note: The documents aren't all easy to understand.)

Johanna Neumann with the environmental organization Environment America said it would help us make informed choices if more electronics product reviews measured and prominently mentioned the devices' energy efficiency.

- Sometimes there's nothing you can do. A laptop that your employer loaded with security software churning in the background will probably use more energy — and therefore feel warmer and drain the battery faster — than a typical home computer.

When you should worry

It's abnormal if you can hear your computer's cooling fan whirring constantly or if your electronics crash because they're overheated.

Gallina suggested restarting your device or unplugging it from the outlet. Wait a few minutes and plug it back in or restart. You might also need to update the device's software, sometimes called firmware.

If your electronics are so hot that they burn your skin, something is clearly wrong or it's defective.

Revolve Pizza Oven puts another spin on pies with revolving stone

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

What is the No. 1 favorite food in the world? Wonderopolis.org says, "According to research done in 2020, it's ... pizza! Whether it's piled high with pepperoni, cheese or other toppings, many people around the world reach for this marinara-covered pie come dinnertime."

This brings me to the Revolve Pizza Oven. In a press release to promote the oven, Revolve stated that in the U.S., 350 slices of pizza are eaten every second, and 93% of Americans eat pizza at least once a month.

Now that you know these facts, why not contribute to the pizza epidemic with a home pizza oven right in your backyard? It does a

great job cooking and helps entertain your guests.

The assembly takes just minutes and then you must connect your propane tank to the 20,000 BTU gas burner. The 13-inch Cordierite pizza stone sits on a slow-turning turntable tray and is powered by three AAA batteries in a removable heat-proof electric motor magnetically attached to the bottom.

I've used several pizza ovens, and if there's one essential feature, it's a rotating pizza stone. It's that critical and worth every penny. On the Revolve, the stone helps the pizza cook evenly and fast. In just 60 seconds, I had mine cooked to perfection.

The Revolve Pizza Oven heats to more than 900 degrees Fah-

renheit, ideal for a 60-second homemade pizza on a preheated stone. The heat can easily be adjusted for other contents, including dessert pizzas and meats or vegetables. An infrared thermometer is included and works very well to get accurate interior temperatures.

The oven stands on three legs, which fold out of the way when not in use. It has a double-walled, insulated construction and is portable. However, at 22.2-by-16.3-by-16.1 inches and 42 pounds, it won't fit in your backpack. It does, however, come with a water-resistant carry case.

Our finished pizzas were nothing short of outstanding, if I do say so myself, and my invited company agreed. We made all



REVOLVE/TNS

The Revolve Pizza Oven is easy to use, portable and great for entertaining. It has a 13-inch Cordierite revolving pizza stone.

kinds with a variety of ingredients and a lot of trial and error, but nothing was left uneaten at night's end.

A stainless steel pizza paddle, which ensures no burnt hands or fingers, and a gas regulator attachment are included. On the

Revolve site, there are recipes, including for a rib-eye steak pizza and a Mexican chipotle pizza, and, trust me, you'll want to leave room for the chocoholic dessert pizza.

Online: revolvepizzaoven.com; \$599

WEEKEND: MOVIES

Blurring the lines between real, fake

How the 1999 ‘Blair Witch Project’ revolutionized movie marketing using the power of the internet

By JOSH ROTTENBERG
Los Angeles Times

In the beginning was, as they call it in Hollywood, word of mouth.

For as long as there have been movies, studio marketers have relentlessly pursued ways to get people to talk about them. Whether through grabby trailers, glowing reviews or the water-cooler recommendations of satisfied audiences, word of mouth was the engine that could organically turn a little-known film into a sleeper hit through the power of communal buzz.

In the 1990s, the explosive growth of the internet promised to supercharge this engine into a high-speed, global force, extending the reach of movie marketing campaigns into uncharted corners of what was still being quaintly called “cyber-space.” But at a time when the concept of virality was still confined to infectious diseases, it took a low-budget, under-the-radar horror movie called “The Blair Witch Project” to wake up the industry to this new tool’s full revolutionary potential.

Directed by Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez on a shoestring budget of \$60,000, “Blair Witch” purported to be not a fictional story but the actual footage found in camcorders left behind by three young filmmakers who disappeared in the Maryland woods in 1994 while making a documentary about a mythical local hermit who abducted and slaughtered children. When “Blair Witch” premiered at the 1999 Sundance Film Festival, the film’s cast of unknowns — who had used their real names in the movie — were listed as either “missing” or “deceased.”

Snapping up the film’s distribution rights for \$1.1 million, Artisan Entertainment set about creating a guerrilla-style marketing campaign that would further blur the line between what was real and what was not. Lacking the deep pockets of a major studio to run costly TV ads, the marketing team at Artisan launched a website two months before the film’s release that expanded the “Blair Witch” mythology with fictional police reports, newspaper articles and interviews.

John Hegeman, Artisan’s head of mar-

keting, was a true believer in the potential of the internet, having set up the first promotional movie website for the 1994 sci-fi film “Stargate.” Whereas a traditional studio movie marketing campaign could easily run to \$25 million or more, Hegeman recognized that the internet could get the word out to an even wider audience, at just a fraction of the cost of print and TV ads.

“There are a lot of other ways to get to people other than throwing money at them,” Hegeman told *The Times* in a 1999 interview, noting that the film’s total pre-release marketing spending came to just \$1.5 million. “When people say something can’t be done, that in itself is motivation enough to say, ‘Yes, it can.’”

Within weeks of its launch, the “Blair Witch” site, which was regularly updated to stoke the mystery, was racking up 3 million hits a day. Artisan extended the unsettling marketing campaign with documentary-style trailers that featured stark, hand-held footage accompanied by frightened voices and screams. Young interns at the company were deployed to cafés and dance clubs around the country to ask people what they knew about the supposed legend of the Blair Witch, armed with realistic-looking “missing” posters for the film’s three stars.

By the time “Blair Witch” was released in July 1999, anticipation had reached a fever pitch — and the rest of Hollywood had taken notice. Jim Fredrick, professor of entertainment marketing at Chapman University’s Dodge College of Film and Media Arts, was senior vice president of creative advertising at Warner Bros. at the time and remembers marveling at the amount of buzz the indie distributor was able to generate through its grassroots campaign.

“The whole concept of found footage and making it a question of ‘Is this real or not?’ was just ingenious,” Fredrick says. “At any major studio, you’ve got big marketing budgets and you’re using research and testing things. Artisan didn’t have those tools or the money, so they had to figure out other ways — and lo and behold, here’s this thing called the internet and it’s



TNS

Heather Donahue stars in “The Blair Witch Project,” a low-budget, under-the-radar 1999 horror movie that demonstrated the full revolutionary potential of the internet for film marketing. The film’s website was regularly updated, racking up 3 million hits a day.

incredibly cheap, if not free. These guys fooled the world, like Orson Welles with [the 1938 radio drama] ‘The War of the Worlds,’ and it became a phenomenon.”

Opening in just 27 theaters, “Blair Witch” proved an instant sensation with audiences, earning a staggering \$56,000 per screen, despite reports that some audience members vomited from the mix of fear and motion sickness caused by the film’s shaky footage. By the end of its theatrical run, the movie had expanded to more than 2,000 theaters and grossed nearly \$250 million worldwide, more than 4,000 times its original budget, making it one of the most profitable independent films of all time.

As the “Blair Witch” filmmakers worked to expand the film into a multimedia franchise including books, comics, video games and a sequel, others in Hollywood tried to emulate its formula. In the years that followed, movies like “Cloverfield,” “Paranormal Activity” and “The Last Exorcism” would borrow the found-footage concept with varying degrees of success. But recapturing the lightning-in-a-bottle cultural phenomenon of “Blair Witch” proved difficult as audiences grew more savvy to such marketing trickery.

“I can’t remember a horror movie I worked on after 1999 where the producer didn’t say, ‘Can’t you do for me what they did for “Blair Witch”?’” Fredrick says.

“It’s very frustrating to have to tell the producer, ‘No, you don’t understand — we can’t repeat history here.’ The public has gotten very smart and they’re very hard to trick. You’re talking about the stars aligning in a way that may never be repeated again.”

Still, though it may have proven difficult to replicate, “Blair Witch” offered a proof of concept of the power of internet-based marketing, prompting studios to look for innovative ways to reach audiences through interactive digital campaigns and shared experiences rather than traditional media outlets. More broadly, it helped usher in a new era of pop culture in which the lines between reality and fiction would grow ever murkier.

A quarter-century later, Fredrick says even the young students in his film marketing course, who were born in the smartphone era, recognize the pivotal moment “Blair Witch” represented.

“Every semester, I have an assignment for students to present a case study of their favorite marketing campaign, and every semester someone pulls out ‘Blair Witch,’” he says. “Even though they weren’t alive when the movie came out, they’re impressed — and kind of astounded — by the gullibility of people believing this was real. That’s a real nod to just how effective ‘Blair Witch’ was. People love unwinding a mystery.”

“Every semester, I have an assignment for students to present a case study of their favorite marketing campaign, and every semester someone pulls out ‘Blair Witch.’ Even though they weren’t alive when the movie came out, they’re impressed — and kind of astounded — by the gullibility of people believing this was real. That’s a real nod to just how effective ‘Blair Witch’ was. People love unwinding a mystery.”

Jim Fredrick

professor of entertainment marketing at Chapman University; former senior vice president of creative advertising at Warner Bros.

WEEKEND: MOVIES



20th Century Studios/Marvel Studios

Emma Corrin plays Cassandra Nova in “Deadpool & Wolverine.” The long-lost sister of Charles Xavier, the “X-Men” comic villain uses mind control to exterminate mutants.

‘I don’t think she was born evil’

Corrin, who plays Cassandra Nova in ‘Deadpool & Wolverine,’ says the ‘X-Men’ comic villain felt rejected by her brother

BY HERB SCRIBNER
The Washington Post

Cassandra Nova isn’t like other Marvel villains. She isn’t purple with massive gold armor. She doesn’t have a mythical staff. She’s not a super soldier with a metal arm. She’s actually a lot like her brother, Charles Xavier. Only, instead of opening a school for the gifted to help mutants and humans live together, she’s ... gouging out eyeballs (through mind control) and trying to exterminate every last mutant on the planet.

Cassandra Nova, who got her start in the “X-Men” comics in the early 2000s, sees her live-action debut in the Marvel Cinematic Universe film “Deadpool & Wolverine.” She’s among the deepest of Marvel deep cuts when it comes to finding an antagonist for Wolverine and Deadpool’s buddy-cop duo, and she just happens to be one of the most threatening and evil villains out there.

Emma Corrin, who plays Cassandra in “Deadpool and Wolverine,” never read the comic book material to prepare for the character. Instead, they skimmed through Marvel’s character database, collecting notes and nuggets about the character’s origin. Corrin chose to drill into Cassandra’s relationship with her brother.

“She is the way that she is because of being hurt or feeling rejected by family, or feeling like he rejected her before they were born,” Corrin said. “And now he’s just a very benevolent, revered person and she has become the opposite out of bitterness or because she had no other choice.”

Without getting into too much detail, Corrin’s version of Nova spends time inflicting gruesome pain on people (presumably through mind control).

“She’s manipulating minds. She does a lot of mind work,” Corrin said.

In the comics, Cassandra Nova’s story is rather gnarly. She’s the long-lost sister of Charles Xavier. (She’s actually “chaotic cell matter” that survived after Charles “murdered” his twin in the womb, but sister is the easiest way to describe her.) Her debut came as something of a twist: She covertly put Charles Xavier’s mind into her body, and hers into his, to the eventual shock of the X-Men (and readers).

Early on, Cassandra ordered a “Wild Sentinel” — that is, a mutant-killing robot — to commit the genocide of millions of mutants. Yeah. Dark.

The X-Men eventually thwarted her by — bear with me — trapping her in a sluglike alien and basically erasing her brain. She’s returned from time to time, most recently as a member of the Marauders, though the team left her stranded somewhere in the past. We should all be relieved.

Though Corrin never read the comic book material, they say their version of Cassandra shares a bond with the original. They’re both humans who feel like they’ve lost a piece of themselves and want to do whatever they can to reclaim it. Even if it means bloodshed and broken minds.

“You don’t just end up as a villain; you’re not born a villain,” Corrin said. “As fantastical as these characters are, I’d like to believe the same applies. I don’t think she was born evil. I think certain things happened, and she was made that way.”

In the movies, Cassandra Nova resides in The Void, a portion of the multiverse first seen in the “Loki” television series that basically serves as a plot and Easter egg

trash can for the MCU. It’s littered with variants of MCU characters (there’s an entire batch of Lokis there) and locations from multiple timelines. Everything that ends up there has been “pruned” by the Time Variance Authority, which controls the flow of time (or as I like to call them, the Plot Hole Police).

Cassandra, it appears from the trailers, lives within a dead variant of Ant-Man, whose enormous skeleton rests in The Void. We can’t say much else about her role without resorting to spoilers, though it’s clear from preview footage shared with journalists that she’s got mind-bendy powers and is seeking something from Deadpool and Wolverine, who end up there after a run-in with the TVA (who are hunting them down because they’re skipping through timelines).

Cassandra’s arrival is another sign the X-Men are now a major part of Marvel Studios’ plans for its cinematic universe, after Disney won the franchise in the acquisition of 21st Century Fox, which had produced the “X-Men” films over the last two decades.

After that cameo at the end of “The Marvels” last November, the animated series “X-Men ’97” revived the popular heroes for MCU fans. “Deadpool & Wolverine” promises a few nods and winks to the characters, too. Case in point: Wolverine is now wearing his classic yellow-and-blue X-Men uniform. (There are also rumors of an “Avengers vs. X-Men” film on the way.)

According to Corrin, the MCU will be the perfect playground for more Cassandra Nova — if the villain survives this film, of course.

“I was given so much freedom,” they say, “and it was like a real playground. You can kind of try anything, and there were no wrong answers, and that’s kind of rare.”

WEEKEND: MOVIES

A creative ‘Coup!’

Indie comedy, starring Magnussen and Sarsgaard, takes risk with original script full of ‘elevated material and ideas’

By LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

It’s the early days of the 1918 pandemic when a mysterious new chef descends on a wealthy family’s estate in the new film “Coup!”

The chef, played by Peter Sarsgaard, is a worldly and questioning sort with a mischievous streak who torments his employer, Billy Magnussen, a self-styled progressive journalist looking out for the plight of the worker from his gilded fortress. As the world shuts down around them and the grounds become ever more isolated, tensions continue to rise with both comedic and tragic outcomes.

“I fell in love with it right away,” Magnussen said.

But “Coup!”, opening this weekend in stateside theaters, is the kind of original script that doesn’t often see the light of day. Its tonal and aesthetic inspirations range from the works of playwright Harold Pinter to Luis Buñuel’s “The Exterminating Angel” and the genre-bending work of the Coen brothers. So, when co-writers and directors Austin Stark and Joseph Schuman asked Magnussen if he was interested, the actor went a step further. He brought his production company HappyBad Bungalow into the fold.

“I was like, ‘Yeah, and I’ll help make this thing with you,’” Magnussen said. “This was us getting down and dirty, you know? Doing it all ourselves. It was finding the locations, getting the people organized, getting all the department heads

together. It was a whole team effort.”

Sarsgaard was one of their earliest asks, someone Stark and Schuman said they imagined while writing Floyd. He’s the kind of actor who they knew had the dexterity to handle the complex character, who may or may not have murdered someone, and whose arrival hastens the unraveling of Magnussen’s gentleman journalist and the delicate social structure of his household.

“It was kind of unlike anything I’m usually offered,” Sarsgaard said. “I thought of him as really a man of the world. A guy who knew more than this rich fella sitting pretty in his castle. He doesn’t have the intellectual 30,000-foot understanding of what’s going on. But he certainly has the on-the-ground understanding, and something more interesting than street smarts.”

Sarsgaard, too, became an executive producer, wanting to help make sure the film was made at the right price point that would also maximize creativity, like staying in one main location.

“He elevated the character in ways we never imagined,” the co-directors said in an email. “Probably because he shares our twisted sense of humor.”

Sarsgaard is also having a bit of a moment with his riveting small-screen turn as prosecutor Tommy Molto on the AppleTV+ series “Presumed Innocent,” and not just because of the bolo tie (his idea, by the way). Though both Tommy and his “COUP!” character are a little



GREENWICH ENTERTAINMENT/AP

Peter Sarsgaard plays a chef who torments his progressive journalist employer (Billy Magnussen) during the early days of the 1918 pandemic in “Coup!”

mysterious and odd, Sarsgaard insists he isn’t consciously toying with audience expectations in either case.

“I think the filmmakers are doing that for you and not me. I truly just honored the way I thought a person would act in a given moment,” he said. “When people would tell me that the character seemed like he was up to something or, God forbid, said he was creepy, I truly didn’t understand.”

“Coup!” debuted at the Venice Film Festival last year where it garnered strong reviews, but even so, it’s an uphill battle for a small distributor like Greenwich Entertainment to get something like it to audiences. It’s not one that you’re necessarily going to hear about from an ad during the Olympics, or through a flashy international press tour with stops in Tokyo and London. It’s the kind of

film that needs word of mouth most of all.

“It’s challenging when everyone’s like ‘the market doesn’t do this,’” Magnussen said. “You’re like, what market? It’s art. Let’s remember that. And audiences are capable of elevated material and ideas.”

Hollywood has churned out its share of remakes, reboots and popcorn fare this summer. But there’s also an undercurrent of enthusiasm for original gambles, with films as different as “Thelma” and “Longlegs” finding audiences without the marketing budgets of “Twisters” or “Deadpool & Wolverine.”

“It’s kind of a rollicking good time,” Sarsgaard said. “I think at this current moment, the news has taken over the slot for movies that make you think real hard. I respect that. This is not that: This is absurd and fun.”

‘Harold and the Purple Crayon’ unoriginal but sweet

By KAITLYN HUAMANI
Associated Press

“Harold and the Purple Crayon,” the famed 1955 children’s picture book, is getting the three-dimensional treatment nearly 70 years after its release.

The picture book, written and illustrated by Crockett Johnson, follows Harold, a child who can create whatever he can imagine, so long as he draws it with his magic purple crayon. The film adaptation opens with a short animated sequence that gives life to the book’s famous illustrations. But how far can a children’s picture book stretch across an hour and a half-long movie? Not very.

After the film gets through the book’s story in about a minute, the narrator says that the book’s ending was not the close of Harold’s story. Cut to an animated adult Harold, all grown up but still in a onesie, with his purple sketched friends, Moose and Porcupine, as they venture around their two-dimensional existence and wonder what goes on in “the real world.”

After some brief exposition and short narration by Alfred Molina, Harold (Zachary Levi) draws a door labeled “Real World” and walks through it. He’s then miraculously spit out in Providence, R.I., as a “real” person. Moose and Porcupine, played by Lil Rel Howery and Tanya Reynolds, respectively, follow through the magical door. Together, they embark on a mission to find the book’s narrator and author — the “old man,” as they call him — to ask him why he created them and their story.

What we get from there is something that feels like a hybrid of characters played by Amy Adams in “Enchanted” and Will Ferrell in “Elf”: an adult person who left



SONY PICTURES/AP

Zachary Levi stars in “Harold and the Purple Crayon.”

their animated or fantasy world and is incredibly unfamiliar with reality. It’s an entertaining idea to see someone so naive navigating everyday life, but it feels rather derivative.

Much like her character in “Elf,” Zooey Deschanel plays Terry, a “real world” woman who is unenthused by our other-worldly protagonist’s antics for the better part of the movie. As the mother of the young and creative Mel (Benjamin Bottani), Terry hits Harold and Moose with her car, and eventually lets them stay at her house after some convincing from her son.

Predictably, shenanigans ensue as Harold lacks understanding of how to behave as the adult everyone sees him as (and wreaks havoc with his magic crayon). Levi is

terribly earnest as Harold, making his hijinks more endearing.

Director Carlos Saldanha, an animation veteran who helmed the “Ice Age” franchise and the “Rio” movies, keeps the story moving with light humor and fun visuals sprinkled throughout. The imaginative animation over the live-action shots is the movie’s highlight, as Harold can still create anything with his purple crayon in the real world. With more colors and dimensions to play with now, he draws everything from a plane they fly in to Mel’s imaginary pet, some sort of dragon-lizard hybrid.

The plot, again, feels familiar when we meet the villain, librarian Gary, who wants to wield the powers of the crayon to feed his self-serving interests. Gary (Jemaine Clement) uses the crayon to make the fantasy world of his failing book come to life so he can get “revenge” on the publishers who turned it down. As far as conflict goes, it falls a little flat, but it does result in a sweet lesson of empathy; Gary says he just wanted to be in a place where he can fit in and Harold, using the crayon for good, creates that world for him.

While much of the movie may feel well-worn, I’d wager many copies of “Harold and the Purple Crayon” have seen better days. It’s the kind of children’s book that’s stayed on shelves through multiple generations. Even if the book’s story has been told and the movie’s format has been done before, a movie that reminds us to be imaginative — and that delivers some imaginative visuals to boot — can’t really get old.

“Harold and the Purple Crayon” is rated PG for mild action and thematic elements. Running time: 92 minutes. Now playing in select on-base theaters.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Destination: virtual reality

These 4 recent games can transport you to exotic places, no shoes, plane or car required

By GIESON CACHO
The Mercury News

Sometimes a vacation isn't in the cards. Budget constraints or family commitments mean that one can't leave home. When that happens, video games offer an answer. Many of them can transport players to a desired destination, though it may not be a one-to-one reproduction. Some of those destinations may not be even real at all.

With that in mind, here are recent titles that can make players feel as if they were at a vacation destination while staying put in the living room:

Like a Dragon: Infinite Wealth

Do yourself a favor and play Yakuza: Like a Dragon before jumping into this sequel. Otherwise, you won't be able to appreciate this adventure to the fullest. The first title in the series re-vamp transports players to Yokohama and Osaka in Japan so you'll be getting your money's worth from these games.

The sequel follows new series protagonist Ichiban Kasuga as he discovers that his mother is actually alive and residing in Hawaii. That takes him to Oahu and an area that looks like Waikiki as he searches for her and ends up embroiled in more drama involving gangs. It's the first time the series has gone beyond Japan's shores, but Infinite Wealth maintains the turn-based combat introduced in the previous title.

It was a controversial move, but the right one as it opens up more avenues for storytelling and turns the game from an experience focused on one character into a campaign involving an ensemble cast. Despite the new approach, Infinite Wealth maintains the offbeat side quests and touching dramas that are a hallmark of the Sega franchise, but this time, they're at a vacation hot spot.

Available on PlayStation 5, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Xbox Series X/S and PC

Avatar: Frontiers of Pandora

If you can't take a trip to Walt Disney World to check out the Avatar Flight of Passage ride, this is the next best thing. In fact, this first-person shooter is even better. The adventure plays similarly to that of Ubisoft's Far Cry series except players are on the Alpha Centauri moon.

In this original adventure, players take on the role of a Na'vi from a lost tribe of traveling storytellers called the Sarentu. When they were children, the Sarentu were abducted by the Resources Development Administration and trained to be soldiers. But the events of the first Avatar film squashed the program. Years later, the children are rediscovered by a former scientist who cared for them, and the campaign follows their reintegration into Na'vi society.

They also have to battle the RDA, which has taken over and despoiled the Western Frontier. For Avatar fans, this game unlocks whole new areas of the rich world that director James Cameron envisioned and expands the lore, taking players to meet different tribes that have distinct ways of living within the environment.

Although the game borrows a lot from the Far Cry formula, the environment is distinctly Avatar-like with unusual fauna and flora. It's a game that transports you into a faraway world.

Available on PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X/S and PC

Dragon's Dogma II

Capcom's sequel to its underrated action role-playing game asks a lot from players. It throws them into a dark-fantasy environment and pushes them to explore it. As the Arisen, whose heart is stolen by a dragon, players embark on a quest to defeat the beast. That's easier said than done.

They'll craft a main companion called a Pawn, who will help the protagonist throughout the quest. They'll also recruit two other Pawns, which are created by other players. With a party of four, they'll explore the kingdoms of Battahl and Vermund,



Ubisoft

In Avatar: Frontiers of Pandora, players take on the role of a Na'vi from a lost tribe of traveling Sarentu storytellers who must integrate back into society.

fighting monsters and embroiling themselves in political drama.

What makes Dragon's Dogma II so different from other open-world adventures is its dedication to making players explore the world. Fast travel is an expensive option so it pushes players to venture across the world on foot. Along the way, they may run into people in need or other quest-givers. Some of the tasks are timed or go on without the players' involvement, creating different outcomes.

If players want to immerse themselves in a fantasy world for a vacation, this is your best bet.

Available on PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X/S and PC

Arcade Paradise VR

This unusual game generated buzz in 2022. On the surface, it looks boring as players take on the role of Ashley, whose father tasks with running the King Wash Laundromat in 1993. It seems like a fairly boring job, but in the back room, there's a collection of old arcade machines that customers can use, which happen to generate loads of money.

The goal of the game is to convert the laundromat into a full-blown arcade, but players have to handle the work-life balance. The game has been ported recently to Meta Quest devices and works well with intuitive controls and tweaks that immerse players into the narrative. Players don't just press buttons to do laundry: They'll have to toss it in the washer and dryers.

Meanwhile, the interface



Ubisoft

Avatar: Frontiers of Pandora unlocks new areas of the world created by director James Cameron and expands the lore as players meet tribes that have distinct ways of living within the environment.



Sega

In Infinite Wealth, the sequel to Yakuza: Like a Dragon, players leave Japan's shores and travel to Hawaii in a search for the protagonist Ichiban Kasuga's mom.

works well when it comes to managing the arcade, but the best thing about the game is that players get to explore the arcade they've built in virtual reality. For those who grew up in that era of gaming, Arcade Paradise VR offers a heavy dose of nostalgia and transports them to another summer of their childhood.

Available on Meta Quest 3, Meta Quest 2, Meta Quest Pro

The regular version is available on PlayStation 5, PlayStation 4, Xbox Series X/S, Xbox One and PC

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

The easy streets of Copenhagen

Copenhagen, Denmark’s capital and Scandinavia’s largest city, has plenty to offer the most ambitious sightseer: world-class museums, a stately Renaissance castle, a dazzling royal palace ... and yet one of my favorite Copenhagen activities is to simply stroll the streets, tuning into the little details of everyday life here.

For the tourist, Copenhagen is compact. The train station, National Museum, Tivoli amusement park and City Hall huddle together around Rådhuspladsen (City Hall Square), the bustling heart of Copenhagen. It’s also the top of the pedestrian thoroughfare called Strøget, a series of lively streets and inviting squares that stretches through the heart of the old town. It leads directly to the salty mini-harbor of Nyhavn, just 15 minutes away — but why rush it?

Established in 1962, Strøget was Europe’s first major pedestrian boulevard. Walking here now, I love taking in the mix of cobbled cuteness and modern bustle. Even with a million people, the city feels remarkably

hyggelig — the Danish version of “cozy,” an aesthetic highly prized here.

Strøget leads right through the area that had once been the køben (merchant’s) havn (harbor) — hence the city’s name. As this is a particularly good place to sample Denmark’s enticing open-faced sandwiches, I drop into a no-name, family-run shop to grab some smørrebrød to go. Tradition calls for three sandwich

courses: herring first, then meat, and then cheese, washed down with a local beer.

Before long I’m in Nyhavn, a formerly sleazy sailors’ quarter that’s now a comfy people zone centered around its canal. A few lonely tattoo parlors and smoky taverns stubbornly defend their salty turf against a rising tide of trendy, expensive cafés. I notice that glamorous sailboats fill the canal. Any historic sloop is welcome to moor here, temporarily joining the ever-changing fleet of



Rick Steves



CAMERON HEWITT/Rick Steves' Europe

The colorful Nyhavn neighborhood is the place to moor on a sunny day in Copenhagen.

leisure boats, a scene of modern-day Vikings gone soft.

And just a few blocks farther along the water, the city’s most famous citizen, the Little Mermaid, sits demurely on her rock, posing patiently and wondering when a prankster will steal her head again. (The poor mermaid has been victim to decapitation and other acts of vandalism over the past century.)

From Nyhavn you can easily cross the harbor on the retractable, ultramodern Inderhavnsbroen pedestrian bridge to land on the island of Christianshavn. With pleasant canalside walks

and trendy restaurants, this former merchants’ district is one of the city’s most delightful neighborhoods to explore. Christianshavn’s centerpiece is Our Savior’s Church, with a unique exterior spiral staircase that rewards those who climb it with commanding views of the city.

With so much to enjoy before dark, I like to wrap up a Copenhagen day back near the top of Strøget at the historic Tivoli Gardens, Europe’s most famous amusement park. It’s been operating since 1843, when the king cleverly quelled a French Revolution-type thirst for democracy

by giving his people Europe’s first great public amusement park. Open all day and late into the night, it’s a festival of entertainment — 20 acres, 100,000 lanterns and countless calories. It’s a joy to get lost in this wonderland of rides, restaurants, music and games. I find it worth the admission just to see Danes — young and old — at play. Tivoli, so comfortable with its identity, is happily Danish, and wonderfully Copenhagen.

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Fests with knights, balloons, magic among those kids might enjoy

With just a couple more weeks of summertime freedom for the kids before it’s time to hit the schoolbooks once again, thoughts may be turning to visiting an event of specific interest to the younger family members. Here are just a few ideas bound to spark their imaginations:

Medieval festivals

Traveling back to the times of knights’ jousts on horseback and minstrels’ entertainment is always a little easier when the setting is a castle courtyard. Several prime locations use August school vacation period as a time to host Middle Ages-themed events.

The spectacular Vianden Castle in Luxembourg is home to the country’s largest spectacle of this kind. Through Aug. 4, visitors can enjoy medieval music, the antic of jesters and jugglers, knights’ camps, battle reenactments, fire shows, a marketplace and much more. Adult admission costs 11 euros, youth pay 7 euros and ages six-12 pay 3 euros. Online: castle-vianden.lu

The Suedtiroler Ritterspiele, or Medieval Knight Games of South Tyrol, unfold in the Vinschgau Valley beneath the Churburg Castle in Schluderns/Sluderno. From Aug 16-18, knights, damsels and market folk create a picture of how life might have looked in days long past. Campfires, wooden tubs used for bathing, fortune tellers, craftspeople, pony and camel rides and birds of prey shows are bound to cast a spell on all comers. A highlight of the event is its opening parade with costumed participants, many on horseback. Adult entry tickets go for 20 euros adults, 13 euros for youth, and 6 euros for children ages 3-6. Online: ritterspiele.it

Germany’s Medieval Fantasy Spectaculum (MFS) is an itinerant festival of medieval culture, calling in at some seven locations annually. On Aug. 16-17, the show alights



Karen Bradbury



iStock

British National Hot Air Balloon Championships in Bristol is Europe’s largest ballooning event.

in Weil am Rhein with nobles, archers, jesters, musicians and all the other characters needed to build a proper medieval community of the 13th century. The medieval marketplace and knights’ battle reenactments ensure no one’s left back in modern times. Part of the fun is concerts featuring top names of bands playing in this specific genre of music; tickets including entry to the concerts come at an additional cost. Online tickets offering basic entry without the concerts cost 24 euros for ages 15 and over and 12 euros for ages 7-14. Another MFS event takes place in Speyer Aug. 24-25. Online: spectaculum.de

Street artists and magicians

It’s easy to be amazed by sleight of hand when it’s carried out by a professional, and the street magicians calling in to the German city of Sankt Wendel in Saarland for its annual magic festival know their tricks inside and out.

Representing countries from around the world, they not only perform but compete to be named best in show. These artists perform Aug. 2-4 as part of the Zauberhaftes St. Wendel. Admission is free, but tips are much appreciated. Online: tinyurl.com/5c8tca6v

Slaying of the dragon

The German town of Furth im Wald, deep in the Bavarian forest, has had a dragon problem for centuries, but instead of dreading the beast, they celebrate him. The Drachensticht, or Slaying the Dragon, is the reenactment of a tale featuring an invading Bohemian army and love blossoming between the lady of the castle and a soldier well beneath her station. The action hits full-tilt when the high-tech beast, snorting and thundering, enters the ring. The city’s annual historical parade, with some 1,200 costumed figures, takes place on Aug. 11; on Aug. 17, some 60 costumed children take to the stage to act out the show. Dates of regular performances are Aug. 2-4, 8-11 and 14-18. Adult admission starts at 27 euros. Online: drachenstich.de

Beautiful balloons

The city of Bristol in southwest England is home to what’s billed as Europe’s largest ballooning event. From Aug. 9-11, ballooning enthusiasts can enjoy events such as mass ascents in which up to 100 balloons rise into the skies at once, Friday’s night glow event in which the balloons are illuminated at dusk, and the British National Hot Air Balloon Championships, in which teams compete in fulfilling various tasks such as dropping markers in specific locations. Apart from the ballooning action, visitors can enjoy family-friendly entertainment on stage, motorbike stunt teams, model plane displays and more. Entry is free, but a parking ticket for a car must be purchased; these are available online for 11.20 UK pounds (about \$14.45) and up. Online: bristolballoonfiesta.co.uk

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

What would a Swede do on vacation?

Practice ‘lagom’ when traveling to balance rest and adventure

By Anne Roderique-Jones
Special to The Washington Post

If you’re the planning type, your vacations may begin to feel so structured that you need a do-nothing holiday by the time you return. Sound familiar? It may be time to consider the Swedish practice of “lagom.”

The word, pronounced lah-gom, means “not too much, not too little.” When applied to a trip, it means striking the ideal balance of exercise, adventure, food and relaxation.

Remember the coziness craze inspired by the Danish concept of “hygge”? Similarly, lagom has been practiced for generations but is now gaining steam worldwide. Lagom is an overarching mindset that applies to balancing all aspects of life, but it is ideal for travel.

Helen Russell, journalist and author of “The Atlas of Happiness: The Global Secrets of How to Be Happy,” says that the word “lagom” derives from the Swedish word “lag,” or “team,” and that Swedish folklore suggests that “laget om” — or “around the team” — was a phrase Vikings used to make sure everyone got their fair share when a horn full of mead was passed around.

There’s no exact science or recipe to lagom; it varies by each individual’s own balance. Lola Akinmade Åkerström, travel photographer and author of the book “Lagom: The Swedish Secret of Living Well,” says to think of lagom as an internal scale that must always stay balanced. Too much or too little of any one thing stresses the scale.

“Lagom actually means the optimal (not best) solution for maintaining balance and removing stress within your control,” she says. “As a personal ethos, it’s trying to help you live a sustainable life you can comfortably maintain.”

This means that lagom can be as simple as the “just-right” amount of salt in your soup or an entire idea such as eschewing bigger and better. Here are a few practical ways to fold lagom into your travel plans:

Start with a declutter

I grew up in a Southern household devoted to maximalism, so every suitcase-packing session ended with a good sit-and-zip because you never knew when you’d need a silk caftan and feather fascinator. But packing items you don’t need is the antithesis of lagom. Clutter can make a person anxious. Packing light (but smart), as with a travel uniform, better suits lagom travel.

My husband once told me that I have an otherworldly talent of turning our hotel room into a disaster zone in a matter of seconds. But with the practice of lagom, I now spend five minutes organizing my belongings and there’s an instant sense of calm in a new environment.

Akinmade Åkerström says that while traveling, you want to think simple, practical and sturdy, “from the gear you pack, so it lasts for a long time, to the activities you engage in.”

Pause for fika

In Sweden, “fika” is loosely defined as a practice to stop and recharge. And while Swedes do this on a daily basis, a vacation is the perfect time to dip your toe into the concept.

“This social act is often translated as taking a break several times during the day to socialize with friends,



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People enjoy the day at an outdoor coffee shop at Lilla Fiskaregatan, a small shopping street in Lund, Sweden. The Swedes embrace the wisdom of pausing to recharge. In its simplest form, “fika” is about recharging.

“Lagom actually means the optimal (not best) solution for maintaining balance and removing stress within your control. As a personal ethos, it’s trying to help you live a sustainable life you can comfortably maintain.”

Lola Akinmade Åkerström
travel photographer and author

loved ones and colleagues over cups of coffee and pastries like cinnamon buns,” Akinmade Åkerström says. “The unspoken reason why we fika is to center and reconnect with ourselves.”

Fika means swapping your order-ahead Starbucks latte for a sit-and-chat over a drink in a real mug. For solo travelers, it’s a fine time to people-watch in a new environment.

In its simplest form, fika is about recharging — perhaps by sitting for half an hour to rest your tired feet, or taking a refreshing nap before your next tour.

Leave room for spontaneity

Confession: I used to rely heavily on my No-Fun-Type-A Travel Planning Document, a spreadsheet that documented down-to-the-minute plans for every single day of our vacation. A sample:

- 6 a.m. Wake up, everyone!
- 6:30 a.m. Please shove breakfast in your face, and make it snappy.
- 6:35 a.m. Leave hotel for a must-do tour. (Don’t be late!)
- Noon: Exhausted, but who cares because we have coveted restaurant lunch reservations!
- 3 p.m. Not hungry? It doesn’t matter — we have a food tour on tap.

- 4 p.m. Wanna nap? Too bad, it’s museum time.
 - 5 p.m. Happy hour? What’s that? No one here is happy.
- I’ve since pared down my planning to a skeletal version that contains important details and a few plans but also some room for relaxation or spontaneity.
- My husband and I have adopted a new acronym that fits with lagom travel: T-WOO, for “The world is our oyster.” In other words, no plans!
- This approach has led to glorious days spent zooming around Laos on a motorbike, stumbling upon perfectly briny oysters near a peat-fed stove in Ireland and making a last-minute decision to drive the Mississippi Blues Trail and finding live music in a smoky juke joint.

Spread out the indulgences

I don’t have enough fingers to count the number of times I’ve overeaten (and over-imbibed) on vacation. I wish I could turn back the clock and tell 21-year-old me that “all-you-can-drink mimosas” doesn’t mean you actually have to drink all the mimosas.

With lagom, the idea is to savor. Swedes have a diet rich in whole grains, lean proteins, veggies and berries — but they also have a serious sweet tooth (as in those beloved cinnamon buns for fika).

So eat the rich dessert and drink the beautifully-made cocktail or mocktail, but do so with a sense of balance. For me, this means putting the brakes on at the breakfast buffet so that I can splurge on the multicourse prix fixe dinner.

Exercise — but also rest

I’ve always envied a skier’s vacation that includes a vigorous day of swooshing down the slopes and then the reward of an après-ski hot toddy and a warm soak.

Lagom allows you to forgo the hotel gym and instead enjoy the offerings of your destination. I like to think of it as making exercise local: a jog along the sea in San Juan, Puerto Rico; a hike in a Swiss forest; a bike ride in Amsterdam.

Aside from T-WOO, Russell suggests we embrace the letters WWASD: What Would a Swede Do? In short: Be mindful of biting off more than you can chew.

“To vacation like a Viking, lagom-style, think WWASD — is your cup really half-empty, or is there, in fact, just enough?” Russell says.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Haggling with honor

How to bargain in foreign markets without being a jerk

By ANDREA SACHS
The Washington Post

Years ago at a crafts market in Mexico City, I found a shadowbox of Day of the Dead figurines and immediately started bargaining for it. When the vendor would not go down further, I walked away, a common ploy. But this time, it backfired. Instead of enticing me back with the lower price, he closed up shop.

I was left empty-handed and ashamed, all because of a \$5 difference over a box of skeletons. In destinations around the world, haggling is an ancient tradition integral to the shopping experience. Visitors are not expected to pay the original price. Instead, buyer and seller engage in a verbal fandango that — depending on the circumstances — can feel lighthearted and fun or uncomfortable and offensive, especially in a time of widening inequity and threatened resources.

Katie Leary Sebastian, director and co-founder of Ixöq, which specializes in home goods and accessories made by Guatemalan women, said she once relished the competitive sport of haggling. These days, she will fold more quickly and accept a higher price.

“They might have gone lower,” she said, “but I’m much more sensitive to their circumstances.”

Travelers can avoid conflicts and score a deal by learning the business and customs of ethical bargaining. The ultimate goal: sharing the victory.

Know where to bargain

Many countries, such as Egypt, Turkey and Ecuador, are known as hot spots for bargaining. But don’t assume the practice is a nationwide pastime. Though it’s common in many parts of Mexico, for instance, the popular tourist destination of Oaxaca does not embrace it as enthusiastically.

“There’s not a big culture of haggling here. The local people don’t do it much,” said Suzanne Barbezat, co-owner of Discover Oaxaca Tours and a travel expert with Go Ask a Local. “But some tourists expect that, so it can be an issue sometimes.”

Even in the same city, the activity may be acceptable in one type of commercial venue, such as a souk or open-air market but discouraged in another, such as a mall or international retailer. As a deterrence, some proprietors will post signs stating that the prices are fixed.

“Attempts to negotiate in these scenarios ... may be considered disrespectful, and any such efforts usually do not result in discounts,” Ignacio Curbelo, the general director of Uruguay’s Ministry of Tourism, wrote in an email.

Fernando Rodriguez, Intrepid Travel’s general manager in Peru, encourages travelers to bargain in the South American country’s produce and crafts markets. Touristy areas, where the markups are typically higher than in local haunts, are especially receptive to bargainers. But travelers should abstain from the practice in stores with cashiers and price tags, Rodriguez said.

Sherif Khalil, managing partner with Dunes & Beyond Travel and a Go Ask a Local expert, said the guidelines



iStock

Bargaining while traveling should be light and friendly: Both sides should feel good about the final exchange. Christine Buzinde, a professor and director of Arizona State’s School of Community Resources and Development, reminds travelers about the greater purpose of bargaining: connecting on a humanistic level, not a materialistic one.

are similar in Egypt. He tells his clients to banter over prices in bazaars, such as Khan el-Khalili in Cairo, but not in shopping malls with brand-name stores. He said visitors used to bargain for cab fare, but the rise of meters has nixed that habit.

Leary Sebastian, who visits Guatemala several times a year, will often buck custom on principle. She refrains from bargaining at produce markets because the goods are already inexpensive, even at the “tourist” price.

“Vegetables are so cheap that I don’t care if I’m paying five quetzals and the Guatemalan woman next to me is paying three quetzals,” Leary Sebastian said. “I just got an avocado for 50 cents.”

If you are unsure about whether bargaining is appropriate, take a reconnaissance stroll around the venue and observe the exchanges between customers and merchants. To avoid any missteps, hire a guide or consult with a local. While they can offer advice and tips, they are usually not allowed to haggle for you.

Adopt the right negotiating attitude

When you are ready to take the plunge, start with a soft opener, such as “Is this the best price?” Or suggest a price that is a third or half off — or whatever custom dictates. (Rodriguez said it’s 10 to 20% in Peru, for example.) If the vendor reciprocates, then proceed. Go back and forth until you land on an amount that works for both of you.

Anu Taranath, a professor at the University of Washington and author of “Beyond Guilt Trips: Mindful Travel in an Unequal World,” said to keep negotiations light, friendly and fun. Taranath, who has haggled all over the world, encourages travelers not to take the transaction — or themselves — too seriously.

“There has to be some joviality to it,” she said. “If one gets tangled up in the sense of superiority or the sense of being aggrieved, that sours the interaction.”

Hala Benkhaldoun, Intrepid Travel’s general manager in Morocco, said a novice or hypercompetitive haggler can insult a vendor by suggesting a sharp discount, such as 70% off the original price, and then standing firm on the amount.

If negotiations turn tense, pause and take stock of the situation.

Christine Buzinde, a professor and director of Arizona State’s School of Community Resources and Development, reminds travelers about the greater purpose of bargaining: connecting on a humanistic level, not a materialistic one.

“If we have a more interrelated approach to being world citizens, then we’re less likely to worry so much about how low can I go price-wise,” Buzinde said. “We can move beyond the transactional elements to more of a

‘How can I get to know this person?’”

If you can’t reach a compromise, accept the final price or walk away. Extricating yourself from the situation is not an insult, experts say. If the vendor is still interested in the sale, they will come after you.

Don’t feel dispirited when a deal falls through, Khalil said. Markets sell many of the same objects, so get back in the game — all the wiser.

Understand the souvenirs you’re haggling for

When shopping around for souvenirs and crafts, you might notice a range of prices for the same item. One reason for that is the influx of cheap imports that has devalued and commodified once unique and handcrafted items. Before kicking off a bargaining round, ask the vendor about the origins of the product and the efforts involved in producing it. Adjust your asking price depending on whether it was made by hand or purchased in bulk from abroad.

One of Peru’s most popular trinkets is a llama set in a miniature Machu Picchu, Rodriguez said, and vendors in tourist markets welcome rigorous bargaining because they purchase the items from China and sell by volume. Such bargaining is inadvisable, however, when you purchase directly from local artisans, many of whom spend hours toiling on their craft.

“We ask people to avoid bargaining because local communities are not merchants. They don’t feel comfortable doing this,” Rodriguez said. “It may be very expensive, but it’s a fair price.”

To help you calculate a “just” price, Buzinde said to take into account the country’s cost of living, wages and economic and political stability.

“What might be a good deal for us might be robbing them of the quality of life that we seek for ourselves,” Buzinde said. “At the end of the day, you might feel as though you’ve gained, but you’ve left them at loss.”

Taranath said travelers should be mindful when engaging with locals but warns against overthinking. If you’re fretting over social inequities, you may miss the joy of the interaction.

“If I am in a Guatemalan market and an auntie is selling something that I am interested in purchasing, I would like that exchange to be pleasurable for both of us,” she said. “Only thinking about how much I have in relation to how much she might not takes us away from the experience of that moment.”

If you feel racked with guilt, you can always pay full price. A few years after the tough lesson I learned in Mexico City, I bought a hand-carved stool in Ankara, Turkey, without haggling at all. To show his gratitude, the vendor threw in a free pillow he had woven, too.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



Bärensee
Location: The lake is in the larger Rotwild Park in Stuttgart. Easiest access is from Mahdentalstrasse, where there is a parking lot and street parking.
Hours: Open 24 hours a day year-round.
Cost: Free
Food: Near the Bärensee there is a restaurant, Bärenschlössle, which serves a wide variety of dishes. It's open daily except for Monday.
John Vandiver

PHOTOS BY JOHN VANDIVER/Stars and Stripes

The Bärensee is an outdoor recreation area on the outskirts of Stuttgart, Germany, that is great for a quick getaway from hectic city life. There is an extensive network of trails.

Escape from Stuttgart’s hustle, bustle

Within the city limits is a forested park containing a lake, multiple trails that is a bucolic place to hike, bike, jog or picnic

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes
On balmy summer days, it’s sometimes nice to get away from the congested urban bustle of Stuttgart, Germany, with all the concrete and fumes that make everything feel hotter. And it just so happens that a bucolic reprieve is available within the city limits. On Stuttgart’s western edge sits the Bärensee, a lake in a forested park with two other little lakes and an extensive network of hiking trails.

The location is a popular destination year-round. In the warmer months, the forest provides a shady canopy for long hikes. And in the fall, the changing leaves make the area one of the prettiest places in Stuttgart. I made a recent trip to get in some exercise on a hot day, trudging around the lakes en route to the Bärenschlössle, a pavilion with a restaurant that makes for a good rest stop within the park grounds. Bikers, joggers and hikers all seem to congregate there after excursions out on the trails.



The human-made Bärensee lake was created in 1768 as a place for Duke Carl Eugen’s gondolas, which he brought from Italy. No swimming is allowed in this lake or the other little ones nearby.

The Baerenschlössle, like the surrounding lake park, has an interesting backstory. It was built in 1768 to serve as a retreat for Duke Carl Eugen, who wanted a vacation spot with a Roman flair. The Bärensee, a human-made lake, also was created at that time so that the duke could have a place for gondolas, which

he brought back from his Italy travels. But when the duke died, King Wilhelm had the palace demolished in 1817 and replaced with a hunting lodge. That building was mostly destroyed in 1943 during the World War II Allied bombing campaign over Stuttgart. It was reconstructed in the 1960s and then again after a fire in 1994.



The Bärenschlössle, a restaurant along the Bärensee trails, is a nice resting spot that provides pleasant views of the bucolic surroundings. The restaurant offers a menu of local specialties.

These days, the Bärenschlössle offers a pastoral view and a menu of local specialties, such as maultaschen and spaetzle. You also can just order drinks and sit at one of the outdoor benches or have a picnic in the meadow. Unfortunately, no swimming is allowed in the lakes, so the Bärensee isn’t the place to go if sand and sunbathing are what

you’re looking for. But the wide-ranging trails easily afford users several hours of wandering around. After a quick refreshment on my recent stop, it was back to the trails to enjoy the lush scenery and easygoing atmosphere before heading back to the bustle.

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

A better brew

Top London hotels advise how to make a perfect cup of black tea

By **GEORGE HOBICA**
Tribune News Service

Afternoon tea in London — whether at a posh hotel such as the Ritz or the Savoy or in a department store like Harrods or Fortnum & Mason — is a special occasion treat for visitors and locals alike. It’s not an inexpensive affair, as you’ll be sitting in elegant surroundings, perhaps dressed up a bit. The freshly baked scones with clotted cream and strawberry jam, the traditional dainty crustless sandwiches and the cakes and pastries are so popular at some venues that you’ll need to book well in advance.

But what about the tea itself?

Claire Ptak, a Californian now living in London where she writes cookbooks and owns a celebrity-endorsed cake shop, has this to say about afternoon tea at one of London’s luxury hotels: “I will always associate England with tea. The Ritz is a magical experience, having all these little things brought to you. The tea itself is not the most ‘flavour-forward.’”

Amen to that. Most people who brew tea, whether at home or as part of their job, don’t know how to extract full flavor from tea leaves. Indeed, tea has been neglected compared to other popular beverages. We have craft beer, craft coffee and craft cocktails — but where’s the craft tea?

Perhaps it’s due to bad tea advice, which can be found wherever you look. Here’s an example from Yorkshire Tea, a popular supermarket brand in the U.K.: “Treat your water kindly. Run the tap a little so the water’s nicely aerated, and only boil it once to keep the oxygen level up. Add tea and water. Pop a tea bag into your mug, pour over the hot water and stir briefly. Wait patiently.”

Or this top entry from Reddit, the social news forum: “Teabag in cup. Pour hot water over. Leave for 2 minutes. Remove tea bag.” Or this from Siri, Apple’s voice-activated digital assistant, quoting the Food Network: “Pour one tablespoon of tea leaves into a teapot for two six-ounce servings. Pour boiling water over the tea leaves and allow to brew 3-5 minutes.”

Much of this is simply wrong if you want a great cup of tea. Read on to see why:

How to make tea perfect

The good news: Several London hotels that serve afternoon tea recognized that their tea did not match the quality of the scones and fancy sandwiches and decided to do something about it.

Let’s start with the basics. Traditionally, when you order black tea in London, several items will come to your table: a teapot with tea leaves already brewing, sugar and milk, a tea strainer sitting in its holder, and a second pot of hot water for a second or third infusion. You have no idea how long the tea has been in contact with the water by the time it reaches you (it matters). You pour a cup through the strainer and the rest of the water sits in the pot getting stronger and more bitter by the minute. Meanwhile, the water in the second pot has gone cold, so it’s useless.

Recently, I went back to London and ordered a pot of tea at my hotel, the new 199-room BoTree in the Marlybone neighborhood.

The only thing that arrived at my table was a perfectly brewed pot of tea, with the brewing already stopped in the pantry. No tea leaves in sight, no straining.

I went back to the pantry and saw a barista making pots of tea, timing each brew precisely to two minutes. He made the tea in one pot and transferred the brew into a second one, the one that arrived at table. That’s how you make a decent cup of tea.

But it’s not the whole story. To find out more, I visited several London hotels I had heard were improving their tea service. I spoke to staff and to their tea purveyors.

Simply tea

When you’re paying up to \$100 for an afternoon tea experience at a posh London hotel, it’s a crime to be served bitter tea. However, if all you’re after is a perfectly brewed pot of tea without all the fixings, I recommend:

Mariage Frères
38 King Street, Covent Garden, London
The only U.K. location of Paris’ most renowned tea merchant. In business since 1854. Almost 1,000 varieties of tea for sale, and they’ll make you a pot from any of them, with varying prices. It’s truly a tea-lover’s heaven.
The BoTree Hotel
30 Marylebone Lane, London.
thebotree.com
No fancy afternoon tea, but for £6 (about \$8), you get a perfectly brewed pot.



One hotel with good tea, the boutique Milestone in Kensington, referred me to their tea guy, Dananjaya Silva, who is 36 and the third-generation proprietor of Ceylon- and London-based PMD Tea. I pumped him with questions about what makes a good cup of tea.

“Tea is king,” he told me when we met, “but water is god. A cup of our tea served in Edinburgh will not taste the same in London, all else being equal. That’s because London water is very hard while Edinburgh’s is softer. The softer the water, the better the tea.”

Tip No. 1: Use soft water or filter it

If your tap water has a lot of chlorine or minerals such as calcium, or just isn’t that great, use a neutral-tasting bottled water or filter it.

Many London hotels that care about tea, I learned from my tastings, brew it with good spring water. At London’s Conrad St. James, which sources tea from London’s Lalani and Company, Aqua Panna from Italy is used; at the Rubens across from Buckingham Palace Gardens, it’s Belu water from Wales.

Before I go on, let me make it clear that we are talking about making only black tea here, not green, blue or herbal. Different rules apply for those.

Tip No. 2: Do not boil the water

Claridge’s and several other top London hotels, I soon discovered, get their tea from London’s Rare Tea Company, so I reached out to founder and tea expert Henrietta Lovell. Contrary to the “BS” advice online, she told me, “Whatever water you choose, do not boil tea water. Heat it to just boiling.” That’s because boiling removes oxygen and oxygen is part of what makes water taste good. As Lovell explained, “Ever wonder what those bubbles are when you boil water? It’s oxygen escaping.”

Most of the hotels and tea experts I queried agreed the ideal brew temperature for black tea is about 202-203 F, although at the BoTree they heat it closer to the boiling point, and several recommended preheating the pot with water at the same temperature to prevent a cold pot from cooling the water.

Tip No. 3: Time the brewing to the minute

Lovell advises that most of the best flavor from black tea is extracted in the first 90 seconds, and one should never let the leaves steep for more than three minutes: “After that you get bitter tannins, although if you’re adding milk it’s OK to brew up a bit longer.” Set a timer because it’s easy to get distracted while you wait.

But do time it. The tea connoisseurs I interviewed agreed that overbrewing is a sin. PMD’s Silva: “Steeping time must be monitored by the minute and the tea leaves must be removed after they’ve done their job!”

Tip No. 4: Carefully measure leaves, water

I also learned that the ideal ratio of black tea to volume of water is basically a level teaspoon of tea, to about ⅔ cup (5 to 6 ounces) of water—or what the average tea cup holds (a coincidence that the teaspoon and the tea cup are ideal measures? I think not). Because the leaf size can vary between types of tea, true believers use a scale to

weigh the leaves. At the Rubens, they bring out a small scale with calibration weights and weigh the tea in front of you.

Tip No. 5: The type of teapot and cup matter

Cast iron? Silver-plate? Bone china? At the Conrad, where servers are encouraged to do a taste test before delivering the finished product, only glass tea pots (from Bodum) are now used.

“Silver might look posh, but the metal might react with the tea’s flavor,” Manager Luigi Volpe told me. “Plus, glass shows the tea’s color.”

PMD’s Silva advises against using a teapot with a built-in mesh strainer. Tea wants to be free, he insists, so he recommends putting the leaves directly in the pot and stirring both immediately when adding water and then just before pouring.

Some experts even think the cup you drink from matters. According to Mariage Frères, a Paris-based tea merchant with an outpost in London’s Covent Garden, in the 8th century, the celebrated Chinese poet Lu Yu wrote that to enjoy really delicious tea, a porcelain cup should be used, preferably beside a lily pond in the company of desirable women or gentlemen.

Tastes (and access to ponds and desirable company) do vary, but just as a fine wine may not live up to its full potential when drunk from a mug, the same can be said of fine teas.

Tip No. 6: Let’s not forget the tea leaves

Start with good-quality loose leaf tea, not “industrial” tea bags, from a reputable source such as those already mentioned, all of which do international mail order. Store it in a cool, dry place in a sealed container. At the Savoy, leaves are kept in the fridge.

“Tea is one of the mainstays of civilisation and the best manner of making it is the subject of violent disputes,” wrote George Orwell in his essay “A Nice Cup of Tea.”

The author of “1984” and “Animal Farm” exaggerates, but clearly there is a right way and lots of wrong ways to make good tea. I took what I learned in London and put it into practice when I returned to New York. Finally, a good cup of tea at home. I’d been missing so much.

How to make black tea

1. Heat water to about 203 F, preferably a soft pH neutral water like Evian. You can also filter tap water. Never boil the water. Use a kitchen thermometer, a temperature-adjustable electric tea kettle or just boil to where the water starts to simmer.

2. Add one teaspoon of tea for every ⅔ cup of water into a preheated pot.

3. Set a timer. Don’t be afraid to experiment with the brewing time; anywhere from 90 seconds to three minutes will do.

4. Strain, don’t contain. Do not use a tea ball or other mesh device to hold the leaves. Give them a stir. Strain the tea into cups or another vessel to stop the brewing. But definitely stop the brewing process at three minutes unless you prefer tannins or are using milk and sugar, which can counteract any bitterness.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Saturation in entertainment, education

A finless species of porpoise among the aquatic creatures that await at Miyajima Public Aquarium in Hiroshima Bay

By KELLY AGEE
Stars and Stripes

Miyajima Public Aquarium, on Itsukushima, an island just offshore of Hiroshima, is home to 15,000 creatures representing 350 species of aquatic life.

Itsukushima in Hiroshima Bay is known for its iconic floating torii, its forests and wildlife. But the aquarium has some distinct claims to fame, including a unique species of porpoise.

The aquarium has two floors divided into 15 areas where visitors can see the interesting aquatic creatures that inhabit the Seto Inland Sea, the water body separating Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu, three of Japan's four main islands.

Exhibit displays are in Japanese and English, so English-speaking visitors will have no problems learning about the many aquatic creatures.

The Mudflats of Miyajima exhibit showcases the ecosystem of the tidal flats at Itsukushima Shrine, a nearby popular destination. Animals include Kabuto-gani, or horseshoe crab; koi; catfish and turtles.

The Sea of Healing is the aquarium's largest tank, with a view from three levels of blacktip reef sharks and stingrays.

One of the most popular exhibits is Umi no Megumi, which re-creates a raft used in oyster farming. Visitors can see what oyster farming looks like from underwater.

A highlight of the aquarium is the Whales of Setouchi exhibit, which is home to finless porpoises native to the area. They are the only porpoises to lack a true dorsal fin. Visitors can view these crea-

On the QT

Directions: 10-3, Miyajima-cho, Hatsukaichi-shi, Hiroshima 739-0534. By train from Iwakuni Station on the Sanyo Line to Miyajimaguchi Station and the JR Miyajima Ferry. By auto, take Route 2 to the ferry terminal. About a half-hour walk from the island terminal, or an eight-minute cab ride.

Times: Open daily, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Costs: 1,420 yen, or \$9.21, for adults; 710 yen for elementary and junior high school students; 400 yen for young children; free for kids younger than 4.

Food: Miyajimarine Kitchen on site.

Information: Online: miyajima-aqua.jp/english

Kelly Agee

tures and learn about their habitat and conservation status.

At Setouchi Laboratory, visitors can learn about the island's conservation efforts and aquarium projects to protect marine life.

Live Show Pool offers sea lion performances throughout the day. The marine mammals do tricks, including balancing a ball on the tips of their noses, catching rings and waving at the audience.

On the aquarium's second floor, the Miyajimarine Kitchen provides dining options, including a sea otter curry, which is the shape of the sea creature and made from chicken meat and topped with chicken slices for 1,100 yen.

The museum shop offers a variety of marine-themed gifts including plush toys, educational books on aquatic creatures, local crafts and T-shirts.



PHOTOS BY KELLY AGEE/Stars and Stripes

An octopus hangs around at Miyajima Public Aquarium near Hiroshima, Japan.



Sea lion performances take place throughout the day.



Miyajima Public Aquarium has two floors divided into 15 areas where visitors can see the rare aquatic creatures that inhabit the Seto Inland Sea.



Eels take cover in the aquarium, which has 350 species of aquatic life.



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STARS AND STRIPES

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

French cuisine and Mount Fuji

Fancy eatery gives every diner a fantastic view

By **KELLY AGEE**
Stars and Stripes

Et at a luxurious Japanese-influenced French meal with a view of Mount Fuji at Maison Kei in Gotemba.

Maison Kei offers a multi-course dining experience; the menu is a creation of Kei Kobayashi, the first Japanese chef to win three Michelin stars for Restaurant Kei, his establishment in Paris, in 2020.

The restaurant can seat 24, and each table has a perfect view of Fuji.

Maison Kei offers three types of dining experiences: the De-couverte, a two-hour course with two appetizers, a main dish and two desserts for 5,500 yen, or \$35.66; the Voyage, a 2½-hour course consisting of two appetizers, a fish and a meat dish and two desserts for 9,500 yen; and Prestige, a 2½ to three-hour chef's choice course of six to seven dishes, where customers can choose from several types of main meat dishes, including upgrades for 14,000 yen.

Drinks aren't included in the price, but guests may order from an extensive list of wines, beers and champagnes from France, Italy and Japan.

My friend and I opted for the Voyage course.

Throughout the dining experience, the maître d' explains the ingredients of each dish and makes sure that the drinks are



**AFTER
HOURS
JAPAN**

Maison Kei

Location: 527-1 Higashiyama, Gotemba, Shizuoka 412-0024
Hours: Open 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. for lunch and 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. for dinner, Thursday through Monday. Closes Tuesday and Wednesday.
Prices: 5,500 yen to 14,000 yen.
Dress: Smart casual
Directions: Between an hour and an hour and 45 minutes by car from most Tokyo-area bases. Free parking.
Information: Online: maisonkei.jp; reservations are available by phone or on the restaurant's website. Those with dietary restrictions can ask at booking that the kitchen adjust the course to their needs.

Kelly Agee

filled by the sommelier. After each course, the utensils are replaced with a fresh set.

All the food is plated to perfection.

At the opening, madeleines are served, plated on rocks, with small radishes and a salsa verde topping. Bread with olive oil is available throughout the meal.

The Jardin des Legumes, the restaurant's signature, stands out. The salad is picture-perfect, covered in a large ball of foam with colorful edible flowers on top.



PHOTOS BY KELLY AGEE/Stars and Stripes

Maison Kei offers a multicourse, French-inspired dining experience with a view of Mount Fuji.



Truffle-topped scrambled eggs are a meatless main dish option.



Pigeon, with the liver and a wing on the side, at Maison Kei.



Dinner concludes with coffee, either espresso or a latte, with crackers served with beni hoppe strawberry jelly on top.

The servers sprinkle an almond-and-black-olive crumble on top and toss the combination, which becomes a salad with green sauce. The dish is earthy, and the ingredients are fresh from Shizuoka prefecture.

My meat-free main dish was scrambled eggs topped with truffles, which added a pungent and earthy flavor to the eggs.

My friend's main dish was pigeon. The tradition of eating this game bird in France goes back centuries and is considered a delicacy. The breast of the pigeon is served on a large plate with the liver and a wing on the side.

My friend said it has a unique flavor — gamey, yet tasty.

Dinner concludes with coffee,

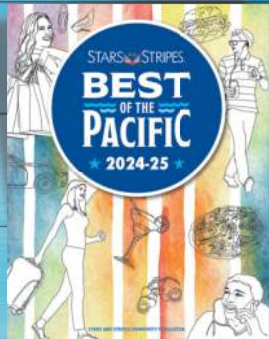
either espresso or a latte, with crackers served with beni hoppe strawberry jelly on top. The server then adds a nice addition to the experience, a Fuji-shaped sugar bowl.

As guests depart, they receive a caramel toffee in a small bag to end their fine dining experience.

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL



PHOTOS BY STEVE HAGGERTY/TNS

Natadola Bay’s public beach, beside the Intercontinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, is one of Viti Levu’s best. Viti Levu is the largest of Fiji’s 330 islands.

Dazzling beaches & deep traditions

The popular South Pacific destination of Fiji rewards those who have just an overnight to spare as well as those making an umpteenth trip

BY ANNE Z. COOKE
Tribune News Service

“That’s Tom Hanks’ island, in ‘Cast Away’ the movie,” said the passenger sitting nearby, on the rear deck.
 We’d seen him standing in line, a college kid in a red shirt, packing and repacking a knapsack while we waited to board the early morning ferry out of Viti Levu, largest of Fiji’s 330 islands. Leaning over the railing, he pointed at the horizon and a faint grey-green shape.
 “Its real name is Modriki, and it’s small, just 100 acres,” he said. “But the beach is awesome. Tourists can’t wait to go.”
 No surprise there. For most South Pacific travelers, nothing rivals Fiji’s sandy beaches, palm-shaded gardens, starry nights and Melanesian hospitality. We’d island-hopped over the years, tried a dozen different beach resorts and liked most of them. Until 2019, when we joined a hiking group for a long look at the island’s mountains.

Finally last fall, with COVID- 19 in decline and Fiji open for tourists, we hopped a plane and headed back, this time for another look at what makes the country tick. Finding hotels wasn’t easy; Fiji is to Australians what Hawaii is to Americans. But we crossed our fingers, found five with available rooms and struck gold at three places begging for a repeat visit.
 The Fiji Orchid, a stately manor house near Viti Levu’s northwest shore and the former home of Hollywood actor Raymond Burr, star of the detective series “Perry Mason,” felt nothing like a hotel and everything like a home away from home. With an inviting living room and framed memorabilia, it beckoned at the end of a very long day.
 Hotel manager Deepika Dimlesh arranged an authentic Fijian dinner, and co-owner Gordon Lee-wie told tales of Fiji life in the early days. Though Nadi (NAN-dee) International Airport was 20 minutes away, our bure (BOO-ray, room, house), one of

SEE FIJI ON PAGE 27



For a last-minute weekend at the adults-only Lomani Island Resort on Malolo Lailai island, take the one-hour ferry trip from Port Denarau.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Fiji: With its many resorts and hundreds of villages, the country blends urban, rural life

FROM PAGE 26

six in the lush tropical garden, was as quiet as a cemetery.

“We’ve had guests who stayed for weeks,” said Dimlesh at dinner. “One was even writing a book. But most are international travelers, businessmen flying through. We tell them, if you have a layover, don’t try to sleep in the lounge. We’ll pick you up, you can use the pool, eat dinner or go to bed, and we’ll drive you back.”

Curious about Lautoka, Viti Levu’s second-largest town on the northwest shore, we hired tour guide and driver Kesho Goundar, who (like many Fijians) speaks Fijian, English and Hindi. Stopping at the town’s huge covered market, he bought a couple of kava “sticks,” the gifts we would need — for the chief — if we visited a village.

Then it was on to the Sabeto Mountains and the Garden of the Sleeping Giant. A popular park, it was founded by Burr, a worldwide orchid collector. Hundreds of orchids, planted along the trail to the summit, a huge head-like rock, are the highlight of a visit. And the adjacent forest — a tower of vines, shadowy branches and strange flowers — was a set waiting for a movie.

The next day we headed up-country to Navala Village, the country’s last thatched village, driving past barnyards, gardens, sugarcane fields, villages, the occasional manufacturing plant and Methodist, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and Catholic-oriented primary schools.

At first glance Navala looked empty, until guide Mark Navaroka came out to collect our \$25 entrance fee and a kava stick for the chief.

“This is how we used to build houses,” he said, leading us inside the chief’s official structure, where a couple of village leaders sat cross-legged, talking. “They built it in 1954 when five dying Catholic villages joined together,” he continued, leading the way to the school and church.

Turning onto the Nausori Highland Road — not another car in sight — we lurched uphill over a rocky, pot-holed track for more than an hour, each hill steeper than the one before, until we rounded the top, a photographer’s delight. Finally, around the corner, we passed two hunters on horseback with rifles and dogs.

Moving to Viti Levu’s southwest corner, we checked into the Intercontinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, a 35-acre landscaped property on Natadola Bay. And instead of salesmen in suits, the hotel was as busy as a country club on a holiday weekend. Dads and kids played volleyball; moms worked out at a fitness center. We spotted kids racing hermit crabs, and others learning Fijian words and Polynesian dances. Menus at the hotel’s several restaurants listed continental and some Fijian dishes, and our favorite, the lively Toba Bar & Grill, took our order in five minutes and served the food in 10.

Coaxed into trying the Jet Ski “experience,” we flew over the waves, riding tandem behind two watersports guides. But the skis were trumped by the hotel’s Coral Planting project, headed by marine scientists Lawaci Koroyawa and Luke Romatanababa. Joining them in the water, we learned how to plant healthy corals onto damaged reefs.

Most memorable was the river cruise with Singatoka River Safari. Wide and long, the river winds through an endless valley, weaving past rocky hills, farms and meadows. Children splashed in it and men scrubbed their horses, waving as we passed. Pastoral and peaceful, it was a nod to an older century.

The 35-mile-long trip ended at a village, with a tour, lunch at the community center and a kava ceremony — shared cups — with the chief and town fathers. Kava is calming, some say. Just more weak tea, say others.

How many villages are there, we wondered. “Hundreds, but that’s not all,” said the hotel’s desk clerk. Each indigenous Fijian family belongs to a village that owns the



PHOTOS BY STEVE HAGGERTY/TNS

Navala Village, Fiji’s last traditionally thatched village, is an hour from the Fiji Orchid Hotel and welcomes visitors. The village is located on Viti Levu island. Make sure to bring some kava “sticks” to give the village chief if you visit.



Daring travelers join a Fijian warrior at the Intercontinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa evening Torch Lighting Ceremony. The resort is on Viti Levu island.

land it’s on. It’s like a clan, she explained. And only indigenous Fijians can own land. So add all the villages and their land, and it’s nearly 90% of the country. “The government makes Fiji’s laws, but the villages rule themselves. That’s why they’re important.”

As our last week approached, we took the ferry to Lomani Island Resort — yes, an adults-only beach resort — on Malolo Lailai island, a single hour’s ferry ride to the mainland and Nadi International Airport. You can stay overnight and still make it to the airport on time.

But it wasn’t the beach that earned the gold star. It was the charming cottages, each with a private yard and plunge pool. The smiling waiters and creative, chef-designed meals, served at candle-lit tables. The “double-X” swimming pool and the water sports center.

“It’s peaceful here,” said Shelley White, the general manager. “And quiet. But with Nadi next door, we stay busy with weddings and anniversaries, and lately, even business retreats. We can order everything we need and get it delivered the next day.

“Still, we love to have visitors like you, people who know this place and like it,” she added, with a puckish smile. “Let me know the next time you travel. I might decide to come along.”



Fiji’s farming families grow vegetables year-round to sell at Nadi’s Outdoor Market. Each indigenous Fijian family belongs to a village that owns the land it’s on, like a clan.



Horses are cheaper than trucks, say Fiji farmers, if you’re out to see a neighbor.

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Nonconformity and Nashville

Orville Peck, who makes inclusive country, gets stars like Willie Nelson to join the fun

By MARIA SHERMAN
Associated Press

It is not easy to be an outsider in country music, but Orville Peck has made a career out of it.

On his third album, “Stampede,” his nonconformist spirit has led to collaborations with everyone from Willie Nelson and Elton John to Mickey Guyton and Kylie Minogue.

When the South African musician released his debut album, “Pony,” in 2019, little was known about him. A country crooner with a deep baritone more in line with outlaws like Merle Haggard and Waylon Jennings than anything on contemporary radio, Peck hid his identity (Peck is a pseudonym) and his face behind a mask.

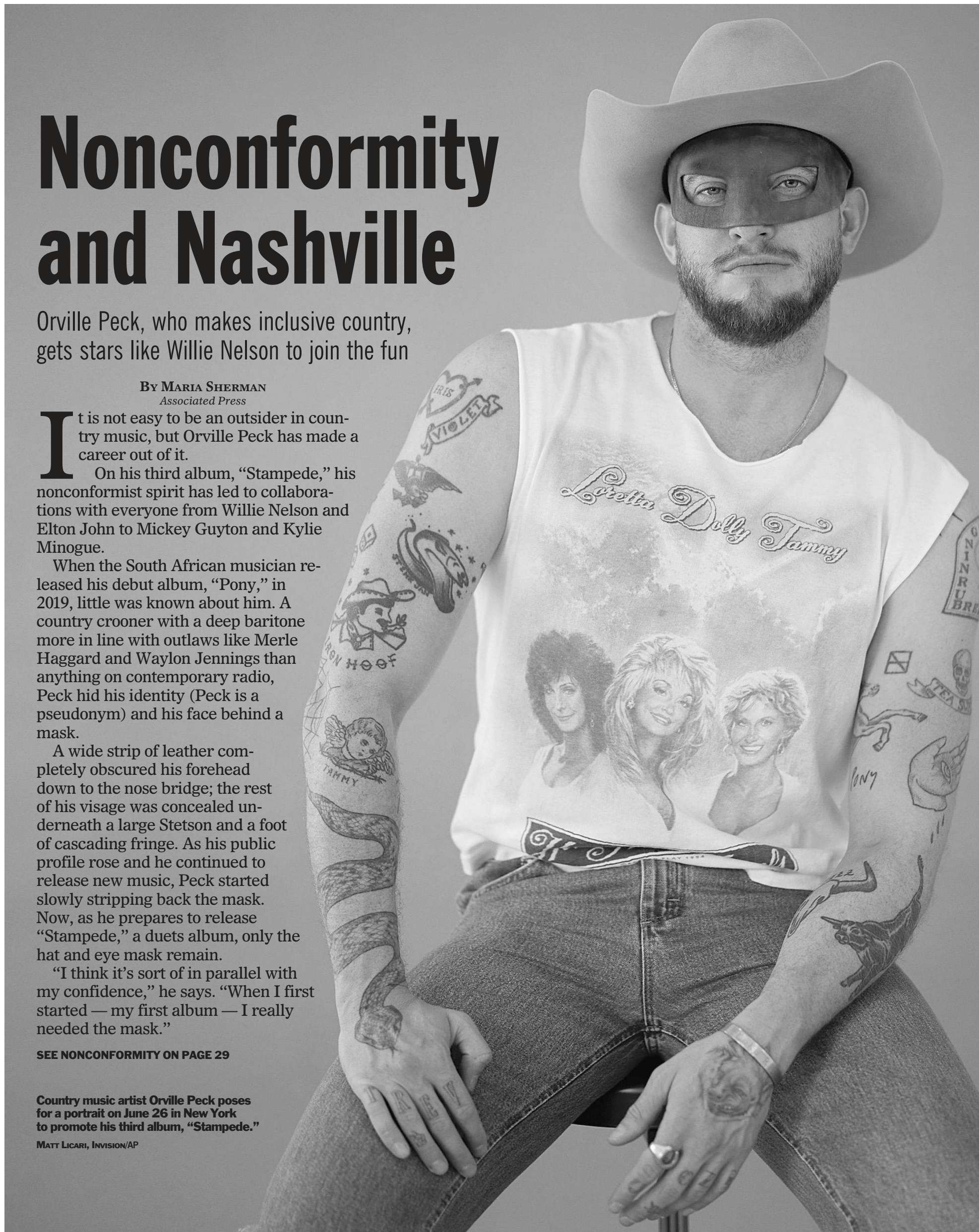
A wide strip of leather completely obscured his forehead down to the nose bridge; the rest of his visage was concealed underneath a large Stetson and a foot of cascading fringe. As his public profile rose and he continued to release new music, Peck started slowly stripping back the mask. Now, as he prepares to release “Stampede,” a duets album, only the hat and eye mask remain.

“I think it’s sort of in parallel with my confidence,” he says. “When I first started — my first album — I really needed the mask.”

SEE NONCONFORMITY ON PAGE 29

Country music artist Orville Peck poses for a portrait on June 26 in New York to promote his third album, “Stampede.”

MATT LICARI, INVISION/AP



WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS

Ice Spice flexes her flow on brief debut album

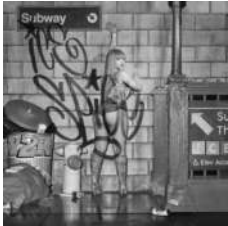
BY MARIA SHERMAN
Associated Press

Virality, it could be assumed, is a gift and a curse.

Hit big online and channel that momentum into mainstream appeal, then the work comes: How does an artist sustain success? Ice Spice, the laid-back Bronx rapper born Isis Naija Gaston with the too-cool-for-school, lackadaisical flow and the bright orange curls now iron straight, knows a thing or two about the topic. First came the raunchy “Munch (Feelin’ U),” with its delightful dismissal of “You thought I was feeling you?” (the song inspired the name of her fanbase, who are called Munchkins). Then there was the effortless, SpongeBob SquarePants-referencing “Bikini Bottom.”

Her 2023 debut EP, “Like.?.” produced by her longtime collaborator RiotUSA, only further confirmed her talents; “Boy’s a Liar, Pt. 2” with U.K. hyperpop-garage producer-artist PinkPantheress became the song of the summer. Taylor Swift even tapped her for a remix of her hit “Karma.” Ice Spice, in two years, has become a four-time Grammy nominee — and one of the most divisive names in mainstream rap — before she even released an album.

“Y2K!” is Ice Spice’s first full-length project, but don’t expect an introduction. (The title functions in that way, sort of: Ice Spice was born on Jan. 1, 2000, perhaps emblematic of her aesthetic ideology and prescience for her future, social media-indebted success. It is hard to think of another MC that better encapsulates the current moment.) At the core of “Y2K!” are her immediately quotable — and let’s be



Ice Spice
Y2K!
(10k Projects/Capitol)

honest here, meme-able — booty-shaking bars, ripe for internet consumption. And so are the cheeky hooks that made her household name.

A few songs directly recall the Ice Spice listeners have grown to know: Like “Think U the S— (Fart),” which leans into her characteristic playfulness while maintaining her necessary bravado. “Think you the s—?” Ice Spice recites in the chorus. “You not even the fart.” Or “Gimme A Light,” which samples Sean Paul’s dancehall classic “Gimme the Light.”

Across the release’s 23-minute run time, drill is still a priority, as she mentions on “Gimme A Light”: “Let’s talk drill / Who bigger than she?” she posits. Brevity is also a strong suit of Ice Spice’s — she understands modern attention spans and she cuts the fat across the album.

Previously released single “Phat Butt” might’ve been the clearest tease of some new sonic explorations in the world of Ice Spice, still one indebted to Nicki

Minaj. She launches into a quick nod to Minaj’s “Beez in the Trap” in the intro (“Uh, Man”) and works in a sample of the 2005 hit “I Think They Like Me” by rap group Dem Franchize Boyz with Jermaine Dupri, Da Brat and Bow Wow. Closer “TTYL” sees Ice Spice raising her voice for a rare rap-rock kiss-off. Standout “BB Belt” is bed-squeaking Jersey club.

The 10-track release uses collaborations sparingly: the self-referential, trap “Oh Shhh...” with Travis Scott, nods back to “Deli” in certain lyrics, the hard-hitting “Bitch I’m Packin’” with Gunna, and the infidelity-revenge anthem “Did It First,” brings the hottest contemporary rapper, Central Cee.

Across “Y2K!”, Ice Spice flexes her lackadaisical flow and traverses new territory, pushing her voice in subtle moments — if only there were more. If anything, she is further manicuring her distinctiveness, offering listeners a hot, short and sweet album.



SCOTT A GARFITT, INVISION/AP

Ice Spice was nominated for four Grammy Awards before releasing her first full-length album.

Nonconformity: Peck comfortable with his career as Nashville outsider

FROM PAGE 28

It takes some self-assurance to release a duets album. Each song is a brand-new collaboration, a previously unexplored creative experiment, and a balancing act. “Every single song is me, 50%, and then 50% the other artist,” he says. “It’s a long tradition in country to do duets and have sort of duos. You know, I think of Johnny Cash and June Carter, Gram Parsons and Emmylou Harris,” he says, suggesting that this kind of album would arrive later in his career.

“But then when Willie asked me to do (the song) ‘Cowboys,’ it was like, ‘Oh, is this maybe the right moment?’ And so, then I asked Elton, and then I asked Kylie, and then, you know, so on, so forth.”

A dream get that didn’t work out? Dolly Parton.

In the case of Nelson, Peck is referring to the 1981 queer country cult classic, Ned Sublette’s “Cowboys Are Frequently, Secretly Fond of Each Other,” covered by Nelson in 2006 and an infrequent staple of Peck’s live show. When Nelson and Peck played a festival together a few years ago, the country legend invited Peck onto his tour bus for a cup of coffee and suggested they re-do the song as a duet. He told Peck, “It’s more important



Orville Peck’s country duets album, “Stampede,” includes the cult classic “Cowboys Are Frequently, Secretly Fond of Each Other,” with Willie Nelson. “I’ve learned over the years how important visibility is,” Peck says, “Bringing something that’s really joyful and inclusive.”

now than ever,” Peck recalls.

“I think the fact that he wanted to do this particular song with me, and the fact that his reasoning behind it was in support, and motivated in the encouragement of LGBTQ people, I mean, it’s like the most validating thing ever.” Later, they’d film a music video for the duet at Nelson’s Luck Ranch in Texas.

Across “Stampede,” too, are non-traditionalist duets and covers. There’s “Papa Was a Rodeo,” a bluegrass cover of the Magnetic Fields’ indie rock song, now with Molly Tuttle and Gold-

en Highway. There’s an ode to Sin City, “Death Valley High,” with Beck, who told the AP the song was inspired by “Elvis in Vegas is, you know, Vegas by way of Memphis. It’s a totally different thing from Sinatra Vegas.”

There’s also “Midnight Ride,” a disco number with Kylie Minogue and Diplo, which the trio debuted live during a Pride event in Los Angeles in June.

“I’ve learned over the years how important visibility is,” Peck says, “Bringing something that’s really joyful and inclusive.”

A kind of outsidership is where Peck feels home. “Country radio — country with a capital C — it’s sort of its own thing,” he says. “You got to do a lot of kissing babies and shaking hands to kind of play the Nashville game. And it’s just something I’ve never been interested in doing.”

“I just want to have my music and my art speak for itself, and I don’t feel like I need to go kiss asses in Nashville to be accepted and be validated,” he continued.

“I know how country I am. I get to work with incredible legends like Willie Nelson, Tanya Tucker, all these people that I grew up idolizing, that love me. So, you know, that’s enough validation for me. And if I’m not on top 40 radio on country music, you know, that’s fine with me.”

Glass Animals

I Love You So F***ing Much (Polydor/Republic)

Love songs have existed for millennia, but leave it to Glass Animals to give them a refreshing spin, where love isn’t always a honey-moon phase or heartbreak — it’s much, much more.

The British indie-pop band, known for hits like 2014’s “Goosey” or 2020’s viral “Heat Waves,” has won listeners over with its unique, often dreamlike sound. Singer-songwriter Dave Bayley’s moody lyrics and simple harmonies meld with experimental instrumentals from guitarist Drew MacFarlane and bassist Edmund Irwin-Singer, who also play keys, and drummer Joe Seaward.

On Glass Animals’ fourth full album, “I Love You So (F***ing) Much,” Bayley’s up-and-down vocals reach the occasional falsetto and weave a different depiction of love in each song. Over the course of the 10-track album, love is beautiful, terrifying, painful, complicated, and, ultimately, what connects us all.

It’s also a tricky word for rhyming, as Bayley twists vowels to somehow match “love” with words like “apartment” and “chasm.”

The album starts strong with “Show Pony,” a catchy vignette of a complex, roller coaster relationship that Bayley grew up seeing. The summery pop-rock song tells the story of a love that burns bright off the start and then fades out until all that’s left is the memory of the good times. “When’s it going to end? / Maybe when you’re dead,” he sings. “Maybe you’re a fool / But he loved you.”

“Wonderful Nothing” introduces orchestral strings and spacey synths as Bayley sings of when hate and love collide. The track has bite to it with lyrics like “I’d say burn in hell / But they’d hate you, too,” but, nonetheless, the last line admits, “I’m trying to stop / But I still love you.”

Imagery of oceans and outer space are used throughout the album, signifying the lost-in-the-universe feeling Bayley says inspired it.

While a simple rise-and-fall melody pattern repeats throughout the album to the point of redundancy, it gets better with every listen as the concepts in the lyrics come into focus.

See “I Can’t Make You Fall in Love Again” for an example. At first blush, it’s an awkwardly syncopated track that flips between dull and lively. But listen again and it’s a layered, emotional ballad that pulls close and pushes away a loved one from the past. The chorus is pretty catchy, too.

“I Love You So (F***ing) Much” is ultimately an emotional exploration of love, where it’s so complicated and yet so simple. At the end of the day, it’s all we’ve got.



— Kiana Doyle
Associated Press

WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE



PHOTOS BY MATT YORK/AP

“Teddy,” a 7-year-old chow mix, wears his sunglasses and paw booties, left, and his doggie cap, right, on a July 15 walk at a park in Phoenix.

How to keep pets cool in summer

Here are some safety tips, protective accessories you can buy that can help your furry friends survive rising temperatures

BY TERRY TANG
Associated Press

As much of the world swelters, it’s not just people who need help with these dog days. Pet owners have to consider how to both shield and cool down furry family members as intense — at times deadly — heat waves become more common.

“It’s really important to remember that if it’s hot outside for you, it’s even hotter for your pets,” says Dr. Sandra Faeh, American Veterinary Medical Association president. A dog’s breed, weight and chronic health issues also matter. “There’s not one specific temperature that we can say, ‘this is the right temperature to go outside,’ because they’re all different.”

In the U.S., more than 180 million people, or 63% of households, have at least one pet, according to an American Pet Products Association report. Pet-related spending is projected to be more than \$150 billion this year, yet a lot of pooch parents aren’t accustomed to changing routines or buying items for hot weather. This summer’s heat is making that more normal.

Simple safety steps

Of course, the surest strategy against high temperatures is to take pets out in the morning and evening, Faeh advises. If you must take them out during the day, be quick and stick to shade, grass and dirt. Pavement can be a scorcher on paws.

“We often think that their paws are

thicker, they’re not as susceptible to the heat, but they are. They can blister; they can hurt,” Faeh said.

One paw-sitive measure: Faeh says dog booties made with a thick fabric can help with hot surfaces. Dogs just need time to get the hang of walking in them.

Pets can also suffer sunburns, which can manifest as lighter pigment on the nose, or around the face on short-hair breeds. Veterinarians can prescribe special sunscreen.

Providing relief even after brief sun exposure is as important as sun protection. Cooling mats and small fans can help. And besides giving dogs water, you can wet their bodies with cool water. But not too cold, Faeh warns.

“If they get cold too quickly, their vessels constrict and then they have a harder time cooling off,” she said.

In a power blackout, Faeh suggests putting pets in a cooler part of the home like a basement or a windowless room. Keep fresh water on hand and any blinds or curtains closed.

Signs to look for if a dog is experiencing heat-related stress or heatstroke include restlessness, excessive panting, drooling and even vomiting. Cats show distress through open-mouth breathing. In any of these scenarios, contact a veterinarian immediately, Faeh advises.

The importance of accessorizing

There’s a wide array of pet accessories

and devices available to help beat the heat, says Pete Scott, American Pet Products Association president. But some markets have been caught off guard by the higher temperatures.

“You don’t think of Connecticut as being 100 degrees,” said Scott, who is based in Stamford. “You’ve got to be vigilant and be prepared. Like, if it’s a week out when they say a heat wave is coming, everybody stocks up on bottled water. But they don’t also stock up for their pets.”

Besides booties, protective gear can mean a sun visor and doggy sunglasses or goggles, if your pet will wear them.

David Escalante started Kaykos Dog Shades out of his San Francisco Bay Area home in 2016 after putting a makeshift pair of sunglasses on his family’s pit bull. Now, Escalante, his father and brother handmake every pair in his San Jose garage. They have sold nearly 15,000 in the past three years.

Each pair has a drawstring, nose bridge rest and lenses that he says protect against ultraviolet light rays.

“We try to push ... to let people know, ‘Hey, you know, think about your dog’s eyes now that you’re out and it’s super bright,’” said Escalante, who sells more during heat waves.

Other helpful tools include cooling collars and elevated dog beds that help with airflow, Scott says. You can also feed Fido chilled goodies like canine-friendly gelato, pup-sicles and ice cream mixes.

“When it’s hot, we all like a little frozen treat. So do dogs, so do cats,” Scott said.

Indoor playtime

Another solution is an indoor dog park. Spencer Mak and his wife, Lauren, have operated two Mak Pack Dog Training & Boarding facilities in suburban Phoenix since 2020. The 10,000-square-foot Chandler location includes an indoor dog park with agility exercises, climbing obstacles and a bounce house. It has a \$10 drop-in rate and a \$49 monthly membership.

At its busiest, the indoor area has accommodated as many as 100 dogs. In June, when temperatures spiked, Mak saw 520 admissions compared to 300 in May — a nearly 75% jump.

He’s currently working on building an indoor doggy pool with ramps and floats.

And ugh, the car...

Summertime also sees cases of people leaving or forgetting pets in hot cars. The temperature inside a vehicle can surpass that of the outside very quickly.

“It is so much better to just leave them at home and know that they’re gonna be wagging their tail and giving you kisses when you walk in the door,” Faeh says.

Some vehicles come with dashboard alerts if a child or pet is still in the back. There are also back seat car alarms on the market. But ultimately, “it always comes down to the human that owns the pet,” Scott says.

WEEKEND: BOOKS

Q&A

The last movie star?

Film writer Sean O’Connell discusses his new book about Bruce Willis, who he says is the end of classic Hollywood

BY ZACH DENNIS
The Charlotte Observer

You’ve probably — no, definitely — seen a Bruce Willis movie. Maybe it was in 1999 for “The Sixth Sense” (and now you lie to people and tell them you knew the twist). Probably it was 1994 and you couldn’t get enough of “Pulp Fiction.” If you’re a true fan, you might point to “Moonlighting” to really impress folks. Obviously, you’ve seen “Die Hard.” Over the course of the 1990s and 2000s, Willis was not only one of the highest-paid stars in Hollywood but one of the biggest. It wasn’t just “Die Hard,” either. Willis moved his way through comedies such as “The Whole Nine Yards,” science fiction stories like “The Fifth Element” and worked with a slew of film auteurs such as Wes Anderson with “Moonrise Kingdom.” It wasn’t just the action spectacle; it was the star. Sean O’Connell, a film writer, posits Willis as the last of the classic Hollywood movie stars in his latest book, “Bruce Willis: Celebrating the Cinematic Legacy of an Unbreakable Hollywood Icon.”

O’Connell, who also has written books on Zack Snyder’s “Justice League” and the 2000s “Spider-Man” trilogy, recently spoke with The Charlotte Observer. Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

The Charlotte Observer: What about Bruce Willis caught your attention?

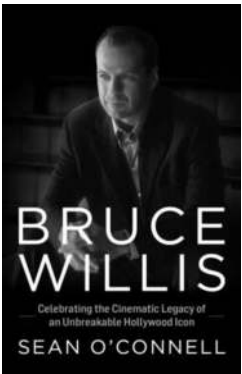
O’Connell: I’ve always been a huge fan, dating back to his ‘Moonlighting’ days. I appreciated his sense of humor. I liked his sarcastic tone that he brought to comedies, but also in the action genre in ‘Die Hard.’ Then over the years, I just really appreciated the risks that he took as an actor and the way that he kind of pushed himself to work with really talented filmmakers, to explore different genres that pushed him as an actor. I think he gets lumped in a lot with the Planet Hollywood guys, (like) Arnold Schwarzenegger or Sly Stallone. But I always thought he was a much better actor than either of those guys and took more versatile roles.

So when he announced his retirement, I kind of thought that’d be a really good time to look back over a body of work and just sort of reassess (his career) through a critical lens and sort of prove that he’s more than just the action.

A line I circled in the introduction for the book was when you referred to Willis as “the last of a dying breed” in Hollywood. With the production quality of television rising and actors bouncing between TV and movies now, it’s tough to say who is an actual movie star. Willis was a guy who would do the big movies but also take chances on interesting mid-budget work.

The one thing I learned about him, too, while researching his career and going back over those films, is how often he found a script that he really loved or a

director that he absolutely wanted to collaborate on and (would) use his star power to kind of work with those people, like when he went to work with M. Night Shyamalan on ‘Sixth Sense,’ M. Night was not M. Night at that point. He was still very young in his career. When he does ‘Pulp Fiction,’ Quentin Tarantino’s coming off of ‘Reservoir Dogs.’ He’s got some heat, but he’s not Quentin yet. And Bruce takes a chance on these guys.



Then in the science fiction section, when I wrote about those, both Terry Gilliam for ‘12 Monkeys’ and Luc Besson for ‘Fifth Element’ say that they would not have been able to make the type of movie that they were able to make if not for Bruce stepping up for them (and) running studio interference because they had a movie star. That guaranteed a (good) opening weekend. And that kind of power doesn’t exist in the industry anymore. No other celebrity or actor is really able to push something through the pipeline the way that Bruce did.

We’ll talk about ‘Die Hard,’ but I’m curious about his approach to other action movies. I’m sure they hire Bruce and want John McClane, but how did he avoid playing the same character each time?

I think that’s something that he wrestled with over the course of his career because that movie was so influential that it affected the entire genre. How many rip-offs of ‘Die Hard’ do we have, and all these other action stars who then turned around and tried to become relatable? That gave birth to Keanu Reeves doing ‘Speed.’

I think it was difficult for Bruce to distance himself from that John McClane personality. Even in some of his biggest hits, like ‘Last Boy Scout,’ it’s still a variation of John McClane. It’s still someone who’s kind of an underdog, maybe a little down on their luck, trying to fight through impossible odds. And instead, what he ends up doing is that he takes McClane in the ‘Die Hard’ sequels and he changes him. And in my opinion, kind of got away from what made John McClane special by the end of the ‘Die Hard’ franchise.

Looking at ‘Die Hard,’ what did you glean from viewing it with a more critical lens as you prepared to dissect his performance for the book? Did anything new stand out?

It’s really funny. I have analyzed that movie straight up and down, because I view it as a perfect movie. And so for somebody who has spent a career studying film, you ask yourself, why? Why is this perfect? How come this works on



Bruce Willis, shown in 2013, is the subject of film writer Sean O’Connell’s new book, “Bruce Willis: Celebrating the Cinematic Legacy of an Unbreakable Hollywood Icon.”

every level? How come it makes you feel the way that you feel, and it’s this marriage of script and performance and casting, like, everything in it just clicks.

It’s just one of those instances where all of the pieces snapped so snugly into place that by the time you get to the end, it’s a perfect vision of a film coming together. I think a lot of that is (Willis’) casting; like, you could put anyone else in (the part of) John McClane, but it wouldn’t be the same movie. It wouldn’t be as successful. Bruce was exactly what that movie needed.

I think the interesting thing about Willis, and this is highlighted through your book, but he was versatile. He could do a comedy and then turn around and be an action star. He could do a science fiction movie and then hold his own in a drama. He wasn’t specialized. Why can’t that happen anymore?

I think a lot of that is just the industry not willing to take chances anymore, right? I don’t know if we’re going to get a Jim Carrey anymore or even an Adam Sandler — someone who becomes the brand — because the film industry doesn’t do that. Everything’s cyclical. We could very well go back to what we had in the ‘90s where people were sort of branching out and establishing themselves as leads. But currently, everything has to be a proven franchise, a safe brand they can roll out. It’s why this summer is nothing but sequels to things that we’re really familiar with. But I think that the industry can course correct.

Willis was always someone, especially in his peak years, who you could toss in a movie and expect him to make it a little bit better. Even the movies that he took a swing at that missed (like) ‘Bonfire of the Vanities.’ Films that, at least on paper, you understood what he was trying to do ... Maybe it misses the mark a little bit, but he wasn’t a paycheck guy, which is what kind of blows my mind for those last three years in those movies (he made) down in Georgia that he was shooting only for paycheck roles, and I didn’t think he had to do that.

So back in all my research, like, what led him to do those and even the diagnosis [for frontotemporal dementia], the diagnosis tells us why he’s not good in them. It tells us why his performance is sort of degrading, but it didn’t really touch on what he needed to take those parts for. I don’t understand why somebody in his camp didn’t step forward and just say, ‘Hey, you don’t need to do (this).’

You profiled so many of his movies; was there one that you feel is underrated?

‘The Kid.’ It was one of his only forays into doing family comedy. ‘Look Who’s Talking’ was huge for him in the early days but then after that, he really doesn’t do the family comedy bit. He doesn’t really play the dad in a movie like that, but in ‘The Kid,’ he does, and it’s really sweet. It’s sweeter than I remember and he’s very funny in it, and kind of upbeat, and it made me wish he did a little bit more of that.

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS



DAVID BEHM/AP

David Behm, author of “The Science and Physiology of Flexibility and Stretching: Implications and Applications in Sport Performance and Health,” stretches in Philips, Newfoundland, Canada, on May 27. Behm says static stretching isn’t always necessary before exercise.

Guidance on stretching is flexible

Human kinetics researcher offers advice on when, how to expand and flex your muscles

BY ALBERT STUMM
Associated Press

For many people of a certain age, high school gym class began with reaching for their toes. Then, over the years, we were told it was better to stretch after exercise.

It turns out, both those things can be true, but the differing advice has created some confusion.

Stretching can help make you more flexible, improve range of motion in your joints — and feel good. David Behm, who researches human kinetics at Memorial University of Newfoundland in St. John’s, Canada, offers this advice on when to stretch and how to do it safely:

Warm up first

It’s almost always good to stretch, but it’s better if you warm up first, said Behm, author of “The Science and Physiology of Flexibility and Stretching.” He recommends a light aerobic activity such as jogging, walking or cycling for five or 10 minutes.

Follow that with some static stretching, the traditional way of reaching and holding a position (think back to that gym class). You can then do activity-specific dynamic stretching, in which you warm up the muscles with repetitive movements like leg lifts.

Behm says one minute is “the magic number” for how long to do static stretching per muscle group without fatigue.

Redefine ‘stretching’

Should you always stretch before exercising? If it’s traditional stretching, not necessarily.

The better question, Behm says, is, “Should people increase their range of motion? Should people have better flexibility? And that is yes, because it helps prevent injuries. It helps with health. But you don’t have to stretch to achieve that.”

Resistance training, for instance, can be an effective form of stretching, he said. Doing a chest press increases range of motion in your deltoids and pecs, whether with barbells, dumbbells or machines, so there is no need to stretch beforehand. Just make sure to start with a small amount of weight to warm up and then add more to train.

“You probably don’t have to do extra stretching unless you’re a gymnast, a figure skater, or even a golfer who needs a great range of motion through that swing,” Behm said.

Nor do you need to stretch first if you’re going for a leisurely run. Simply start with a slow jog to warm up and then increase the pace.

Don’t do it if it hurts

After exercise, “light stretching is OK, as

long as you don’t reach a point where you’re feeling pain,” Behm said. Since your muscles will be warm by that point, overdoing it makes you more likely to injure yourself.

Foam rollers can help with muscle recovery and have been shown to increase range of motion as well as stretching.

Static stretching before sports

If you’re playing a sport, Behm said, static stretching beforehand helps reduce the risk of muscle and tendon injury.

“If you’re going to do an explosive movement, change of direction, agility, sprint, any of these explosive activities that involve your muscles and tendons,” he said, “you’re going to be stronger if you do static stretching.”

People can especially get in trouble when they go back to a sport they used to play, whether it’s tennis, surfing or any sort of team activity.

Also, stretch both sides equally. Lacking flexibility on one side also can lead to injury.

Why all the confusion?

Different studies over the years have either encouraged or discouraged stretching before exercise. Behm says that partly because some studies didn’t reflect real-life conditions, or were designed with elite athletes in mind, not regular people.

“If you’re Usain Bolt, it makes a difference,” Behm said. Not so much for the rest of us.

How karaoke helped scientists study blushing

BY KYLE MELNICK
The Washington Post

Research participants faced a question when they arrived at an Amsterdam laboratory in 2020: Would they rather sing Adele’s “Hello” or “Let It Go” from the movie “Frozen”?

The songs were among four options offered by European scientists who asked volunteers to perform what some consider a nerve-racking activity: karaoke. Many participants smiled coyly, fidgeted and scratched their arms while singing, Milica Nikolic, one of the researchers, told The Washington Post.

But the scientists weren’t done embarrassing the volunteers. In the weeks after singing, the participants returned to the lab to watch a video of their performance while an MRI exam studied how much they blushed and which parts of their brains activated that blushing.

The resulting study, published last month in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, found that most of the 40 participants blushed while watching themselves sing due to increased activity in the cerebellum, an area of the brain that has been found to help process emotions. The researchers said that the blushing was probably an automatic emotional response to feeling exposed.

Nikolic, a professor of developmental psychopathology at the University of Amsterdam, and her fellow scientists thought participants might feel vulnerable while watching themselves sing karaoke. They selected a subject group with ages 16 through 20 because research has found that people in that age group are more likely to feel self-conscious about how they’re perceived.

For the music, they sought out songs that are hard to sing so that participants would be more likely to make a mistake and feel embarrassed, Nikolic said.

The researchers settled on four songs: “Hello” by Adele, “Let It Go” by Idina Menzel, “All I Want For Christmas Is You” by Mariah Carey and “All The Things She Said” by Russian pop duo t.A.T.u.

Researchers found that many participants’ cheek temperature increased by about one degree while they watched the videos of themselves singing — an indication that they were blushing. When viewing videos of other participants singing, most of the volunteers didn’t blush, Nikolic said. The cerebellum was most active when participants watched themselves sing, leading researchers to believe they were most engaged then and blushed as a spontaneous reaction.

WEEKEND: FAMILY



Decluttering parents’ home

Experts offer their tips for handling the conversation, process tactfully

By Kristin Luna

Special to The Washington Post

After my 91-year-old grandfather died, it took my mom three years to sort through the mountain of paperwork and memorabilia that he’d amassed over seven decades with my grandmother. As I begrudgingly think of my own mother’s mortality — especially after unexpectedly losing my dad two years ago — I worry about landing in the same kind of mess, all while trying to process the grief.

My Type A wiring makes me want to get a jump on things now by decluttering drawers and closets every time I’m at her house. But approaching this topic with my healthy, albeit aging, parent feels morbid and more than a little insensitive.

Psychiatrist Helen Lavretsky, who specializes in geriatric mental health and teaches at the University of California, Los Angeles, says it’s common to avoid such discussions out of fear of death or not wanting to appear controlling.

But she says there is a way to handle the conversation tactfully, primarily by emphasizing that you’re interested in knowing — and respecting — your parents’ wishes and preferences regarding their personal belongings.

If you’re ready to have the decluttering conversation with your own parents, here’s what else experts recommend:

How to get started

Sharon Praissman Fisher, founder of Nurtured Well, a provider of online and in-person therapy, says the biggest mistake adult children make is having a one-sided conversation in their head about the situation.

“They visit Mom and Dad, feel overwhelmed and then start the process mentally on their own,” she says. “Instead, it’s much better to express interest in what your parents think and feel about downsizing.”

Rather than telling them they need to get rid of their belongings, Fisher recommends posing questions in a more neutral manner: How is it for you keeping up with this house? Have you ever thought about downsizing? Do you plan on staying here indefinitely? The answers can help you set clear intentions and goals as a first step in the process.

“Write them down and refer back to this when emotions run high,” Fisher says. This theme of respecting your parents’ autonomy must continue throughout the process, she adds. Rather than assuming a leadership role when it’s time to start purging, ask what they need from you, or gently suggest ways you can help.

Jennifer Collie, a senior associate at Pfeffer Torode Architecture who specializes in aging in place, recom-

mends identifying each family member’s role and level of involvement in the project from the outset to help establish boundaries and not overwhelm the parents.

“Empower your parents to lead on scope, pace and goal setting,” she advises. “Parents may prefer to simply advise what is and is not fair game to purge.” From there, other family members or professional helpers may be tapped with the actual process of sorting and removing items.

Take your time

Once your parents are on board and it’s time to start decluttering, experts advise taking a gradual approach.

For one thing, speeding through a purge can be a surefire way to toss something meaningful or valuable by mistake. For another, going slowly can keep the project from feeling overwhelming.

“This is a walk down memory lane, so allow yourself time to process both the good and bad memories,” Fisher says. “I like the KonMari Method: thanking the item and acknowledging it served its purpose.”

Lavretsky suggests turning organizing into a group activity by having a “ceremony of a spring or winter cleaning” to get rid of old memories to clear space for new ones. “Or consider setting a simple program of decluttering by getting rid of portions of stuff at a time,” she adds.

Collie recommends sorting belongings by what’s essential, what’s beautiful and what’s sentimental. Categorizing items “breaks down the process into more manageable steps,” she says.

Lindsay Kratzer, founder of Reflections Management and Care, a support organization for seniors in New York, suggests color-coding the piles with sticky notes — “like red for do not take, yellow for donating or giving away, green for good to go,” she explains. “This gives you an organized way to look at what is important and enables your parents to be in control.”

For things that may be valuable — or for parents with a higher volume of belongings — it’s often helpful to bring in an estate expert who can take items to auction or sell them online.

Jacquie Denny, co-founder of Everything But The House, is one such estate planner who has been helping families downsize for more than 35 years. When aging adults move to smaller homes, they only take 25% of their belongings on average, she says. Of the 75% left, there is usually a market for about 60%.

“Remember to give Mom and Dad grace,” Denny says. “When they get stuck on an item, revisit it and let them come to the conclusion that they don’t need it to move forward.”

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



A fresh start, or yet another reset button?

Our first child, Hayden, attended three middle schools and three high schools. His younger sisters had slightly better luck — Anna attended two middle schools and two high schools. Lilly, three middle schools and one high school. Such are the lives of Navy brats.

We always believed that, through it all, our children would build strength, character, worldliness and resilience, and for the most part, they did. What we didn’t know was that all that instability during adolescence would leave our son and daughters with some unwanted baggage as young adults.

When each of our three children were separately diagnosed with anxiety in their late teen years, my husband and I wondered, “Are we rotten parents?” And, we sometimes blamed each other for passing down “anxiety genes.”

However, a 2024 study involving one million people tells a surprisingly different story.

Scientists looked at the entire population of Denmark born between 1982 and 2003, analyzing them for evidence of two variables: poverty level and residential moves prior to the age of 15. Then, the scientists followed the one million 15-year-olds to see how their lives turned out.

The data showed that people who moved during childhood had a significantly higher risk (61 percent for those who moved more than once) of developing adult depression than those who did not move, regardless of whether they had experienced poverty as children. The study suggested that “a settled home environment in childhood may have a protective association against depression.”

Furthermore, in a related 2016 study of 1.5 million Danes, scientists found a clear association between childhood residential mobility and adult incidents of attempted suicide, violent criminality, psychiatric illness, substance misuse and unnatural deaths, “with elevation in risk being particularly marked if frequent residential change occurs during early/mid-adolescence.”

Although these studies didn’t address why moving during childhood increased the incidents of adult depression and other negative outcomes, study author Dr. Clive Sabel thought moving might disrupt “children’s social networks, requiring them to replace their friend groups, athletic teams and religious communities.”

Essentially, stability in childhood “is really, really important,” Dr. Sabel told The New York Times. But what does this mean for military families, who can’t avoid moving without defying military orders?

In the National Military Family Association’s Military Teen Experience survey, one teen recently reported, “For some, moving is a fresh start. But for me, it feels like I’m forced to press the reset button every time I start to feel comfortable in my new environment. It’s as if life is slapping me across the face every time I start to smile.”

However, NMFA’s CEO, Besa Pinchotti, recommends that transitioning military families take advantage of NMFA programs such as Bloom: Empowering the Military Teen, a youth leadership organization begun by two teens who had trouble coping after PCS moves. Bloom’s all-teen staff wrote a “Field Guide for Military Teens” to support military teenagers experiencing moves.

For younger kids, Besa recommends Sesame Street’s resources. “Elmo and Rosita are military kids,” she says. “Younger military kids can feel safe in their moves as they go through the process with beloved characters they trust.”

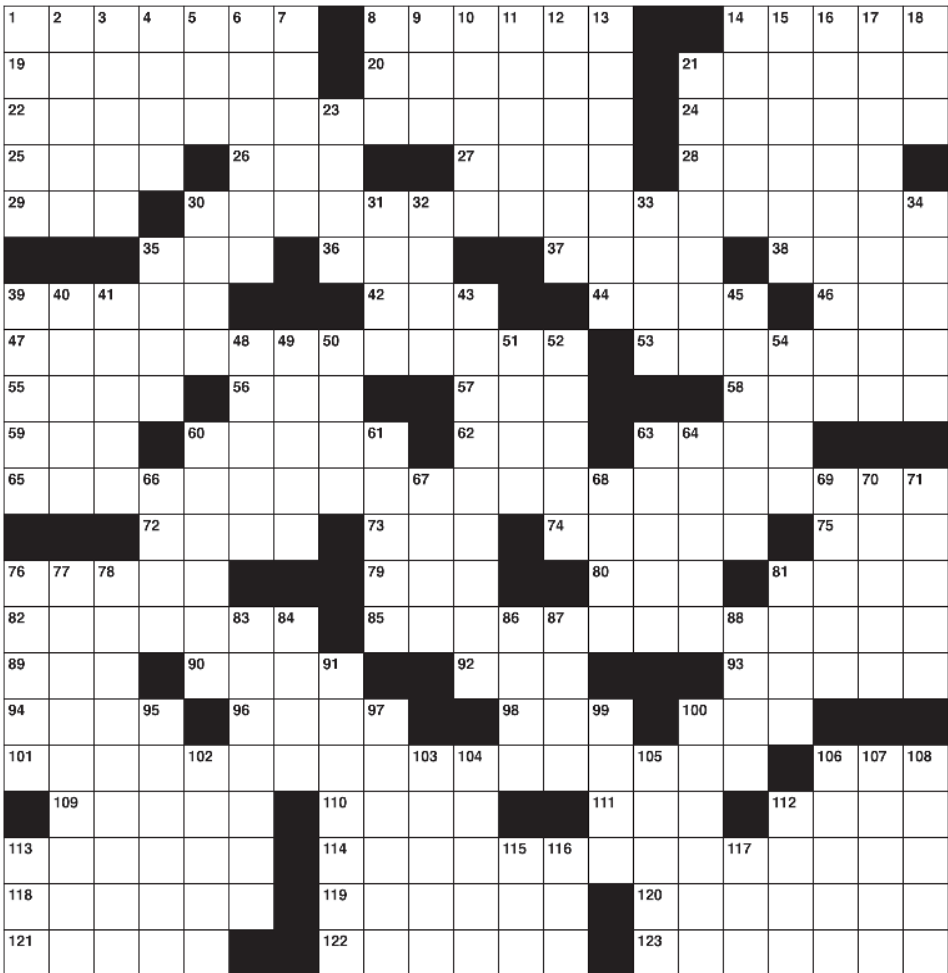
Besa’s most important message is to local communities: “Wherever you are, military families are there too. As they PCS with a parent to your town, please welcome them in your schools, your sports teams, your social gatherings. They need to know they’re in a community that cares about them, and we need your help to achieve that.”

Read more at themeatandpotatoesoflife.com and in Lisa’s book, “The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com.” Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

BY JOHN EWBank / EDITED BY JOEL FAGLIANO

Across	46 Nintendo avatar	94 Sled-dog command	6 Email address, often
1 Fills, as a moving van	47 I sent this crossword to	96 Punishment for goofing off in practice, perhaps	7 Wannabe
8 "Incorrect!"	100 friends, and two of them really liked it!	98 Org. whose website has a "What Can I Bring?" section	8 Bachelor's last words
14 Country on the Gulf of Guinea	53 Fixed sum, for some	100 Certain publication, in brief	9 Part of a sleeve, in brief
19 "Oh, really?" informally	55 Make like a nomad	101 Besides, The New York Times said it was good!	10 Commercial lead-in to cart
20 River through the Black Forest	56 Story ____	106 Trisolarans in "The Three-Body Problem," e.g., for short	11 Region of ancient Mesopotamia
21 Corkscrew-shaped pasta	57 "What did I say?!"	109 Model material	12 Pro hoopsters
22 All crossword fans love this puzzle; anyone who doesn't love this puzzle can't be a *real* crossword fan!	58 Hint of color	110 Humble reply to a compliment	13 React to a sensitive subject, say
24 Capable	59 Balance provider	111 "Go on . . ."	14 Camera that comes with a head strap
25 "Seat" for a toddler	60 Shrank (from)	112 Blind piece	15 Harmonize
26 Bygone auto inits.	62 16th-birthday present, sometimes	113 Home of Mount Doom in "The Lord of the Rings"	16 Certain cyborgs
27 Pieces of apparel that might have concert dates printed on them	63 Locale	114 Part of a flawed argument, examples of which are seen throughout this puzzle	17 What Homer Simpson gives to Marge as jewelry
28 Mars, a star	65 What's more, one of those friends won the lottery right after solving it — coincidence? I think not!	118 Corpulent	18 Very conservative player, in poker lingo
29 Flash	72 Piece worth approximately five pawns	119 Previously, poetically	21 Erases
30 Why was this chosen as today's puzzle? Because it's great! What makes it great? I mean, it was chosen for publication!	73 Many, many years	120 Not touched, in a way	23 Pixar movie with the song "Un Poco Loco"
35 Kind of candidate	74 "Capeesh?"	121 Zoom alternative	30 Singer with No. 1 hits in the '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s
36 Plastic ____ Band	75 Squeeze (out)	122 What fingerprints and mountains have	31 Insensitive, in a way
37 Sport with the rank yokozuna ("grand champion")	76 Paintball impact sound	123 Credulous quality	32 Style
38 Light beige	79 Beetle juice?		33 Old Testament book
39 Tear	80 Opposite of bien		34 Tourist's aid
42 Comic-book sound	81 ____ gift (common spring purchase)		35 Treatment whose name suggests its long-lasting effects
44 What "you better not" do, in "Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town"	82 Lizard's grippers		39 Quarrel
	85 If you criticize this puzzle, where will it end? Before long, you'll be criticizing your mother's cooking!		40 Snap
	89 Make a choice	Down	41 Stationery stacks
	90 Expresses disapproval, in a way	1 Hot ____ (breakfast side)	43 Where Barbie is originally from, according to her creators
	92 Aberdeen denial	2 Global protection	45 Giggle
	93 World capital or the name of its gulf	3 Onetime pyramid builder	48 "Yippee!"
		4 Go out on a limb	49 Cause to pop, say
		5 Bassist Cook of Creedence Clearwater Revival	50 Summer treat
			51 Semimonthly tide
			52 Leader of the Pacemakers in 1960s pop



54 Fishing spot	71 Gives up	91 Plot ruiner	106 Overjoy
60 Aimed for	76 Leaf opening	95 Aged well	107 "Don't play,"
61 Last sips	77 Story with many	97 Enlightened	on a music score
63 Weapon for Achilles	dimensions?	state in Zen	108 "Funny Girl"
64 Four-time FIFA	78 "Time to celebrate!"	Buddhism	composer Jule
World Cup winner	81 Noise at a beer	99 Asia's ____ Sea	112 Eastern European
66 Hunter's construction	festival	100 13,000+-foot peak	113 Title awarded
67 Cry from a hockey	83 Slow-witted sort	in Yosemite	after a match?
commentator	84 Number in a recap	102 All together	115 Iowa college
68 "Great heavens!"	86 Way	103 Prodded	116 Sympathetic sounds
69 Night ____ (bird)	87 MXN, on a currency	104 Like a dramatic	117 Gift tied together
70 Mammal endemic	chart	ninth-inning run,	with string
to the Democratic	88 Hotel visit	perhaps	
Republic of the		105 Just for kicks	
Congo			

PERFECT!

GET YOUR BROTHER.

I DON'T CARE WHO GOES NEXT.

“Gunston Street” is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

L	O	A	D	S	U	P	I	T	I	S	N	T	G	A	B	O	N
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FACES

Underwood to be new ‘Idol’ judge

By KAITLYN HUAMANI
Associated Press

Carrie Underwood will be the next singer to sit behind the judges’ table on “American Idol,” filling Katy Perry’s spot after her departure from the show in May.

Underwood, who rose to fame after she won the singing competition show in 2005, will return 20 years later as a judge for the upcoming season, set to premiere in spring 2025. She’s the first “American Idol” alum to become a judge.

In an emotional video announcing Underwood’s new hosting gig, she said, “I’m proud of everything that I was able to accomplish on the show, and I’m so proud of everything that I’ve accomplished since.”

The country singer, who is the most decorated artist in CMT Music Awards history

with 25 wins, made waves with her rendition of Bonnie Raitt’s “I Can’t Make You Love Me” at her audition, and she quickly became a fan favorite.

Underwood has also won eight Grammy Awards and consistently tops the charts with her albums and singles. She will join Luke Bryan and Lionel Richie, who each have seven seasons of judging experience, for the franchise’s 23rd season.

“This upcoming season marks 20 years since Carrie won America’s hearts on ‘Idol’ and launched her successful multi-Grammy Award-winning career. As a former Idol and dynamic musical force, she brings a remarkably unique perspective to one of the most popular shows on television,” said Craig Erwich, president of Disney Television Group, in a news release. “This is a full-

circle moment for the show and audiences at home who have been tuning in for over two decades. Welcome home, Carrie.”

Longtime host Ryan Seacrest, who has been with the show since it premiered, will also return. Seacrest is also taking over Pat Sajak’s role as the host of “Wheel of Fortune” this fall.

Auditions for the new season will kick off Aug. 12. The season is set to premiere in the spring and will be available to watch on ABC and Hulu.

“American Idol” premiered in 2002 on Fox and was a hit for the network, but it was canceled in 2016. After two years off the air, the show was revived by ABC and has aired there for seven seasons. Perry was the first of the revival judges to leave the judges’ post.



AP

Carrie Underwood will be the next singer to sit behind the judges’ table on “American Idol,” filling Katy Perry’s spot.

The other Affleck

Matt Damon teaming up with friend Ben’s younger brother Casey for ‘The Instigators’

By MADELEINE MARR
Miami Herald

Matt Damon is teaming up with a different member of the Affleck family these days.

The Oscar winner, 53, is co-starring with his best friend Ben’s younger brother Casey, 48, in “The Instigators.”

But Ben, 51, was at work behind the scenes on the Apple Original Film, which begins streaming on Apple TV+ Aug. 9. He and Damon share producing credits, while Casey co-wrote the script. All three grew up together in the same neighborhood in Cambridge, Mass.

Damon and Affleck play Rory and Cobby, reluctant partners in the action flick, shot in their old Boston stomping grounds.

The mismatched pair attempt to

pull off a robbery of ill-gained earnings from a corrupt politician, but the heist goes terribly wrong, and chaos ensues. The A-list cast also includes Ving Rhames, Alfred Molina and Ron Perlman, as well as cameos by musician Jack Harlow and retired NFL star Rob Gronkowski.

Damon and Affleck did a promotional appearance in Miami on Monday for the film, which was directed by Doug Liman, who worked with Damon on 2002’s “The Bourne Identity.”

Casey showed off some impressive Spanish, thanks to spending time in Mexico as a child while his big brother was filming PBS’ “The Second Voyage of the Mimi.”

“Puedo hablar un poquito,” Affleck said as Damon laughed. “Si habla muy despacio, puedo enten-



LIBBY O’NEILL, BOSTON HERALD/TNS

Boston natives Matt Damon, left, and Casey Affleck stand on the View Boston Observation Deck to promote the new film “The Instigators.”

der todo, pero usted habla muy rapido.”

Translation: “I can speak a little ... If you talk very slowly I can understand everything, but you talk very fast.”

While “The Instigators” is billed as an action thriller, with

the usual guns and high-speed car chases, there’s constant hilarious banter between the leads.

“We wanted to make a really fun film,” Damon told Entertainment Tonight of the project. “Hopefully, you laugh the whole way through it.”

Costner’s 2nd ‘Horizon’ gets Venice premiere

The second part of Kevin Costner’s “Horizon: An American Saga” will have its world premiere at the Venice Film Festival in September, organizers said Wednesday. “Chapter Two” was originally set for a mid-August theatrical debut but was pulled from the schedule after “Chapter One” underperformed.

The continuation of the Western epic will play out of competition on Sept. 7, the last day of the festival, alongside a screening of part one. Costner, in a statement, said that his “dream” was always to show the film at Venice. The first installment had a glitzy premiere at the Cannes Film Festival earlier this year.

The 81st edition of the Venice Film Festival kicks off on Aug. 28. Among its most anticipated world premieres are “Joker: Folie à Deux,” “Beetlejuice Beetlejuice,” “The Room Next Door,” “Maria,” “Queer” and “Wolfs.”

Rudolph returns to ‘SNL’ as Harris until election

Maya Rudolph will be back to reprise her Emmy-winning role as Kamala Harris on “Saturday Night Live” through the November election.

Rudolph, who was a regular cast member on the NBC sketch show from 2000 to 2007, made a return to the series to debut her portrayal of Harris in 2019. The comedian also brought back the impersonation when she appeared on the show’s 46th season in 2021.

Initially, the fate of her return next season was unclear due to production for the third season of her show on Apple TV+, “Loot.” However, after filming for the comedy series was pushed back to January 2025, Rudolph’s schedule cleared up, allowing for her highly anticipated “SNL” return.

The 52-year-old will take on the role during the upcoming 50th season, which starts on Sept. 28.

From wire services

YouTube star MrBeast acknowledges past comments

By JAMES POLLARD AND THALIA BEATY
Associated Press

MrBeast, YouTube’s biggest star and a philanthropic force with nearly unrivaled influence among young audiences, acknowledged Wednesday that he used “inappropriate language” in his early online days, as numerous controversies bubbled up around him and a former collaborator.

MrBeast, whose real name is Jimmy Donaldson, and his reported \$700 million empire have come under new fire in recent weeks after accusations of past racist comments by Donaldson surfaced along with allegations that a longtime colleague made inappropriate sexual comments to minors.

“When Jimmy was a teenager he acted like many kids and used inappropriate language while trying to be funny,” a spokesperson for the YouTuber said in a statement to The Associated Press. “Over the years he has repeatedly apologized and has learned that increasing influence comes with increased responsibility

to be more aware and more sensitive to the power of language. After making some bad jokes and other mistakes when he was younger, as an adult he has focused on engaging with the MrBeast community to work together on making a positive impact around the world.”

His highly produced videos of whimsical challenges and lavish gifts, often accompanied by expressive thumbnails and punchy titles, have drawn a record 307 million Youtube subscribers. His latest uploads include “Ages 1 - 100 Decide Who Wins \$250,000” and “I Built 100 Houses And Gave Them Away!” which, like most of his videos, garnered more than 100 million views.

But before overtaking YouTube with his often-absurd charitable acts, Donaldson built a sizable following as a gaming content creator who sometimes interacted with viewers on livestreams.

In a 2017 clip circulated by YouTube influencer Rosanna Pansino in a July 24 post on X,

Donaldson responded to a viewer who commented about selling Black people and said that “the most I would pay is probably 300.”

Pansino told AP she’d worked on various potential business ventures with Donaldson over the past several years, though none ever launched. Last fall, she complained publicly about an edit in a MrBeast video that included her, though eventually deleted the posts after she said she received death threats from fans.

Also under scrutiny are clips of longtime MrBeast collaborator Ava Kris Tyson’s past conversations with an underage teenage fan, including public posts where the two discussed nude images and anime pornography.

Last week, a former employee accused Donaldson of rigging the contests in his videos, running illegal lotteries and deceiving his fans. The person made the sweeping accusations under an alias in a YouTube video that has reached over 6.9 million views.

Donaldson has not publicly responded to the unsubstantiated claims.



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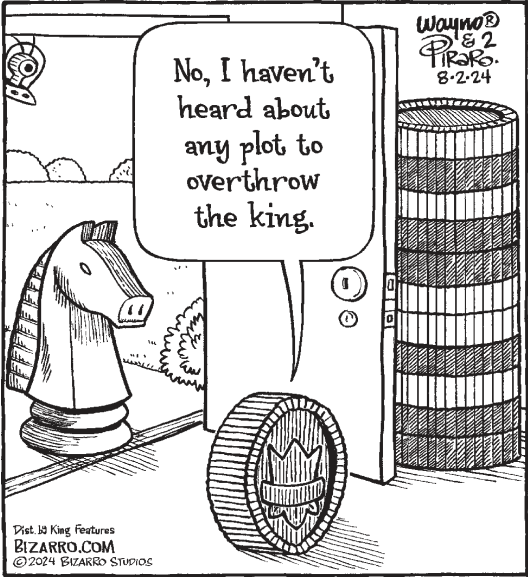


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Bizarro

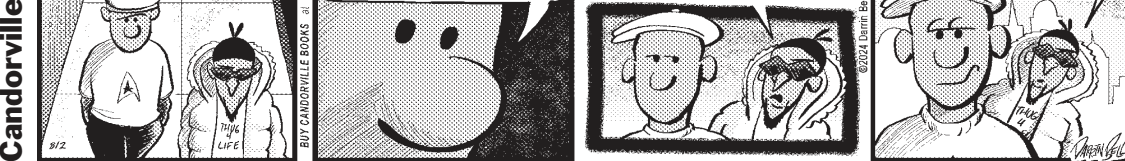
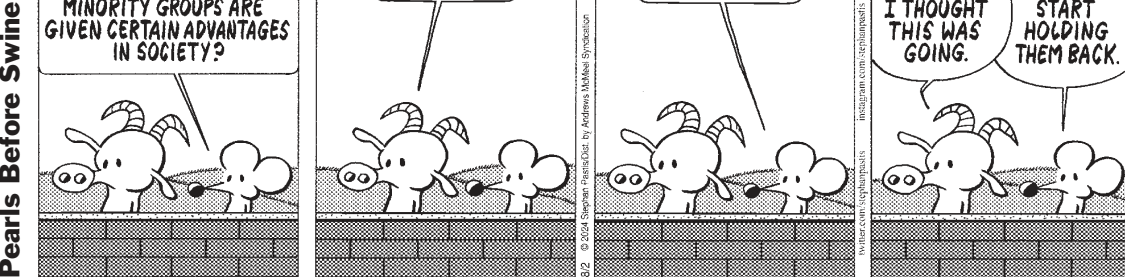
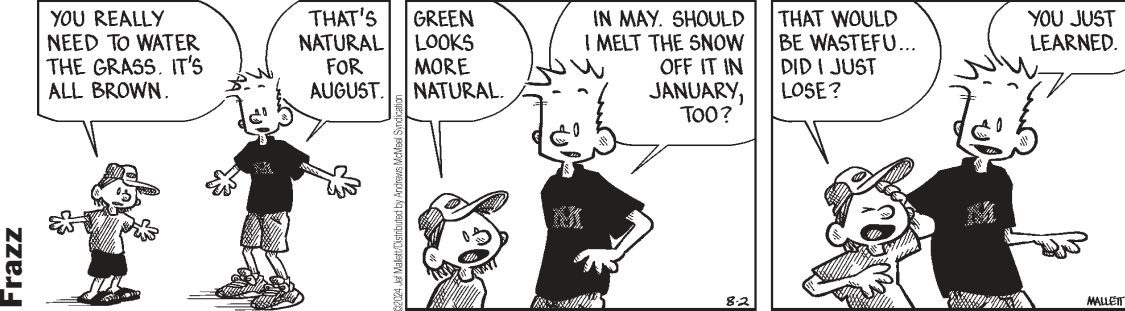


Loose Parts



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		



- ACROSS**
1 Heart chart (Abbr.)
4 — butter
8 Soccer legend
12 Navy address
13 Cash drawer
14 Tied
15 "Betsy's Wedding" actor
17 Look after, as a flag
18 Open up, as a flag
19 Damage
21 — Moines
22 One expressing a view
26 Antlered animals
29 Calif. clock setting
30 Revue segment
31 "Stay in your —!"
32 Bond rating
33 Tart fruit
34 Mork's home
35 Devious
36 Diving ducks
37 Sheep sounds
39 Aachen article
40 Priestly garment
41 Apple music service
45 Krasinski of "The Office"
48 Scaremonger
50 Pundit's piece
51 "— Lisa"
52 Baton Rouge sch.
- DOWN**
1 Jacob's twin
2 Pottery oven
3 Tennis great Steffi
4 Gazes
5 Rolling landscape
6 Days of yore
7 Colorado city or county
8 — dish
9 Prior night
10 Cariou of Broadway
11 Conclusion
16 Elbow
20 Likely
23 "The Lion King" lioness
- 53 Hamilton's bills
54 Fired
55 Cry
- 24 Earth sci.
25 GPS suggestions
26 Neatnik's nightmare
27 Skater Lipinski
28 "My Way" composer
29 Salary
32 Mobile home?
33 Blood part
35 Bando of baseball
36 Foursome
38 Wedding rings
39 Keaton of "Annie Hall"
42 Guitarist Lofgren
43 Old U.S. gas brand
44 Concert souvenir
45 Scribble (down)
46 Unlock, in verse
47 Coop dweller
49 Bagel topper

Answer to Previous Puzzle

G	A	I	N			B	O	D	E			G	E	M
A	L	S	O			R	U	N	T			R	A	E
G	O	L	D	W	A	T	C	H				A	R	A
S	E	A	D	O	G					E	G	Y	P	T
			E	N			S	C	R	E	W			
B	I	G	D			R	A	H			S	O	R	E
U	S	O				I	T	O				L	E	T
S	H	O	D			T	A	P			B	F	F	S
			D	I	T	Z	Y			O	R			
H	O	W	S	O				U	T	O	P	I	A	
I	W	O				G	R	A	N	T	W	O	O	D
F	E	R				A	B	I	T			N	O	T
I	N	K				S	I	L	O			S	L	A

8-2 CRYPTOQUIP

WYLRODY DTVY LTXXYY DFTA
YVAITGYD EYMY UYIICJP
XOJJG DUTMCYD, UFYMY ERD
R ITU TX WMYE-FR-FR.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I THINK I WOULD LIKE TO WORK IN A MIRROR MANUFACTURING FACTORY. I COULD SEE MYSELF DOING THAT.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: F equals H

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 Volleyball putaway
- 6 Geronimo, for one
- 12 "Aeneid" poet
- 13 Pricey spread
- 14 Tristan's love
- 15 Bar orders
- 16 Japanese soup
- 17 Roman 301
- 19 Formerly known as
- 20 "Beetle Bailey" dog
- 22 Aromatherapy spot
- 24 Yule quaff
- 27 Florence's river
- 29 Help crooks
- 32 Symbols of world-class athletic achievements
- 35 Audition CD
- 36 Hairdo
- 37 Wardrobe malfunction
- 38 Farm grazer
- 40 Queue after Q
- 42 Web address
- 44 Coal carriers
- 46 Carte
- 50 Stone of "Basic Instinct"
- 52 Mythical flyer

- 54 Bagel choice
- 55 "Twelfth Night" duke
- 56 Skin problems
- 57 Odor detectors

- 24 Auction signal
- 25 Flamenco cheer
- 26 Course taught by a PE teacher
- 28 Oversight
- 30 Football's Manning
- 31 Recipe abbr.
- 33 Farm sound
- 34 Newt
- 39 Feigned denial
- 41 Bay State sch.
- 42 Cold War initials
- 43 Ostrich kin
- 45 Till bills
- 47 Part of HOMES
- 48 Convent
- man-agers
- 49 GI-entertaining gp.
- 51 Fan's shout
- 53 — -Magnon

DOWN

- 1 Spanish ayes
- 2 Experts
- 3 Nome home
- 4 Tease
- 5 Type of guitar
- 6 Outlet letters
- 7 Seine city
- 8 Bird (Pref.)
- 9 Vivid red color
- 10 Cod cousin
- 11 Gaelic
- 12 Pep
- 18 Grape variety
- 21 Spigot
- 23 Cushion

Answer to Previous Puzzle

E	K	G		S	H	E	A		P	E	L	E
S	I	R		T	I	L	L		E	V	E	N
A	L	A	N	A	L	D	A		T	E	N	D
U	N	F	U	R	L		M	A	R			
			D	E	S		O	P	I	N	E	R
S	T	A	G	S		P	S	T		A	C	T
L	A	N	E		A	A	A		S	L	O	E
O	R	K		S	L	Y		T	E	A	L	S
B	A	A	B	A	A		D	E	R			
			A	L	B		I	T	U	N	E	S
J	O	H	N			A	L	A	R	M	I	S
O	P	E	D			M	O	N	A		L	S
T	E	N	S			A	X	E	D		S	O

8-3

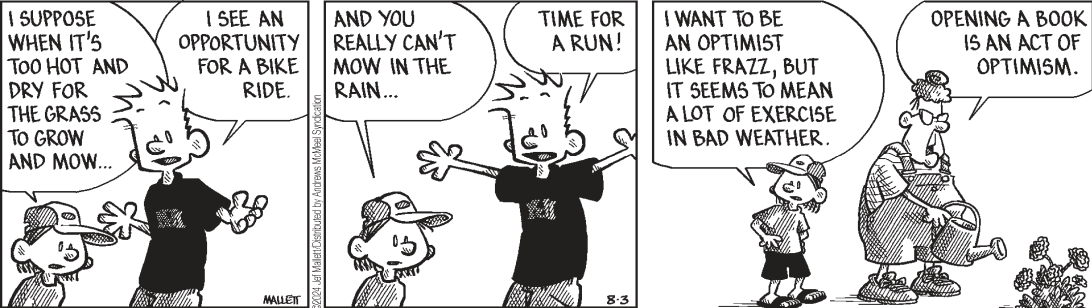
CRYPTOQUIP

PV Y IGYV GV LCPBD GS SND
LDSD JQB QAWDS IGFZ YAW
ZDN, LCYB LGQIW PB RD?
RSDYW PA FYJBMPBN.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: BECAUSE SOME COFFEE SHOP EMPLOYEES WERE TELLING FUNNY STORIES, THERE WAS A LOT OF BREW-HA-HA.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals W

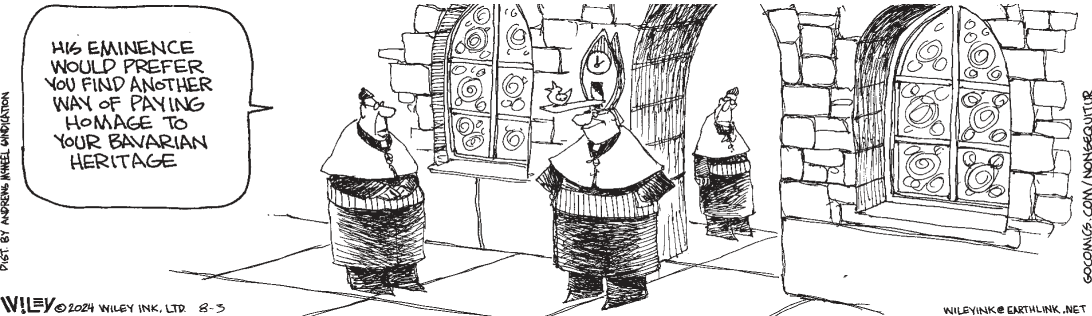
Frazz



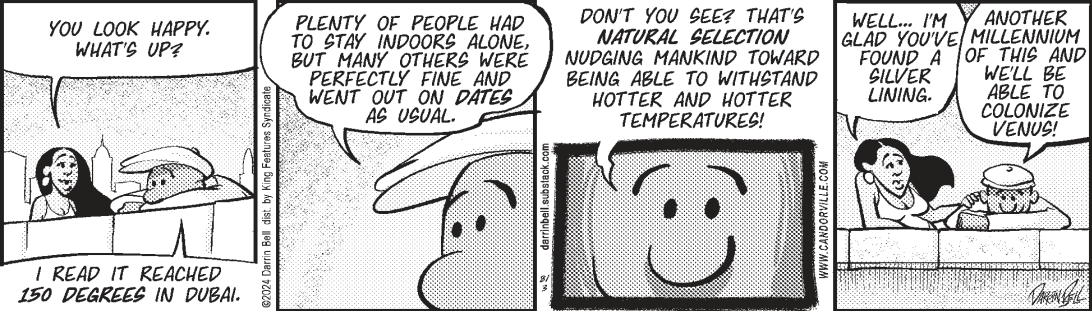
Pearls Before Swine



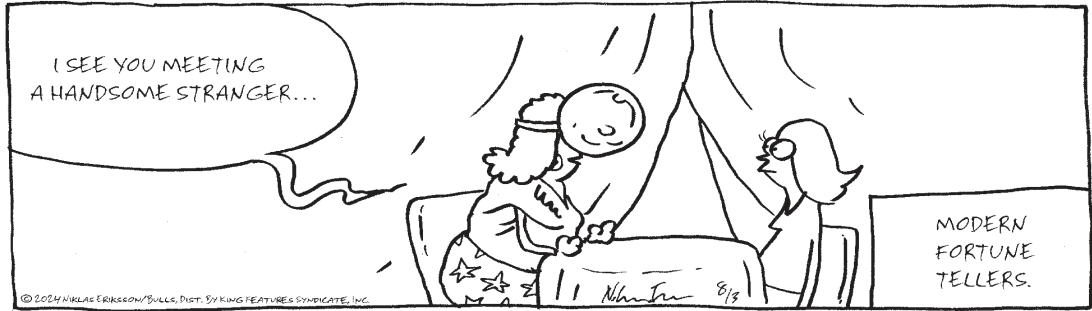
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey





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 Lt. Col. Katie R. Fidler, Europe commander
 John Rodriguez, Europe chief of staff
 Lt. Col. Marci Hoffman, Pacific commander

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OPINION

Behind Russia’s Olympics absence, a deepening fury

BY LEE HOCKSTADER
The Washington Post

PARIS
 Flags are talismans of national pride, but their absence can also reflect a venomous divorce. The flags that have gone missing lately, at the Paris Olympics and a central square in downtown Moscow, symbolize the embittered estrangement between the West and Russia — and what top military and strategic experts are warning will be a dangerous postwar struggle when the shooting in Ukraine subsides. The Kremlin has not disguised its rage at having been all but excluded from the 2024 Summer Games — just 15 Russians are competing as designated neutral athletes, and Russian teams, the Russian anthem and the Russian flag have been banned, including during the parade of nations at last week’s Opening Ceremonies. Days before the Olympics began, Russian authorities renamed downtown Moscow’s Square of Europe, having earlier removed the 48 European flags — alongside Russia’s own standard — that had flown there since 2002. The square, once an aspirational symbol of Russia’s turn to the West, will now be known as the Square of Eurasia. That reflects the extent to which the Kremlin is convinced, and has persuaded Russians, that the war in Ukraine is a proxy for a long-term struggle with the West. When top U.S. and European generals assess Russia’s postwar intentions, they see a country consumed by fury and bent on revenge. In three to five years — the time Moscow will need to reconstitute its battered forces — strategists believe the Kremlin will gear

up to intensify a payback campaign that has already begun with sabotage attacks in Europe, and might also target the United States. “At the end of a conflict in Ukraine — however, it concludes — we are going to have a very big Russia problem,” U.S. Gen. Christopher Cavoli, the supreme allied commander in Europe, told the Aspen Security Forum last month. “We are going to have a situation where Russia is reconstituting its force, is located on the borders of NATO, is led by largely the same people as it is right now, is convinced that we’re the adversary, and is very, very angry.” Similarly, the new British armed forces chief, Gen. Sir Roland Walker, warns that Russia is unlikely to settle for a cold peace with Washington and its European allies. “The lesson from history is the Russians don’t forget, and they will come back ... wanting retribution for the support that was given to Ukraine,” he told a conference in London last week. “The tragedy is that what started two and half years ago as Putin’s war — really one person’s war — in year three is much more Russia’s war than just Putin’s war,” Alexander Gabuev, director of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center in Berlin, told me. “Too many people have died, too much animosity has been created between Russians and Ukrainians and Russia and the West.” Gabuev, who left Moscow after the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, believes that the Kremlin’s ubiquitous domestic propaganda, combined with Western sanctions that have essentially cut off Russians from Europe, have intensified the grip of Putin’s acrid nationalism. The Paris Olympics ban dovetails with Moscow’s narrative that a

blameless Russia has been canceled by the West. Just as ominously, Gabuev told me, the war in Ukraine will be the formative experience for future Russian leaders, forged in a struggle against the West, who will be promoted through the military, intelligence apparatus and other key agencies. “It will be impossible to tell people in the Russian army and security apparatus that the war in Ukraine was unjust,” he said. “It will be set in stone that people explain to themselves that they were fighting all of NATO combined, and that will enshrine all this animosity and hostility.” That attitude is already hardening throughout Russian society and culture. It is ingrained in revised history texts and even in elite cultural institutions, as an insightful story in The Washington Post described this week. Schoolteachers; factory chiefs; museum directors; music and ballet performers — all of their jobs now depend on toeing Putin’s line. Many ordinary Russians have been cowed into silence and active dissenters forced into exile. It’s critical that U.S. and European leaders take stock of what Russia has become: an increasingly galvanized society led by elites who see the Western powers as Moscow’s sworn enemy; the war in Ukraine as the outcome of Washington’s provocations; and Putin as an irreplaceable leader on a righteous mission to avenge the Soviet Union’s ignominious collapse. That toxic stew is a recipe for generational struggle.

Lee Hockstader has been The Washington Post’s European Affairs columnist, based in Paris, since 2023. Previously he was a member of the Post editorial board; a national correspondent, a foreign correspondent, and a local reporter.

Astronaut, senator, VP short-lister ... vitamin huckster

BY JIM GERAGHTY
Special to The Washington Post

In 2015, former astronaut Mark Kelly rode a motorcycle onto a stage in China, with an American flag on one handlebar and the flag of the People’s Republic of China on the other. After dismounting, he told the audience before him how terrific Shaklee vitamins were, and how he took Shaklee Vitalizer on the space shuttle Endeavour in 2011, an out-of-this-world event honored on the Shaklee Facebook page. “I took Shaklee vitamins and the Shaklee rehydration drink while in orbit aboard the space shuttle!” Kelly said, pumping his fists before the audience. “They worked very well for me in a very demanding environment. Now, it is up to you. It is up to all of you to take those tools that Shaklee and Roger” — company CEO Roger Barnett — “has given you, and turn it into something big! Each and every one of you can create your own successful Shaklee business, and it is the rewards from that business that will help you achieve your own dreams!” In a video of his appearance in China, a Mandarin-language introduction says Kelly “lives in the hearts of the American people.” Then Kenny Loggins’s “Danger Zone” — straight out of “Top Gun” — plays, and Kelly drives his double-flagged motorcycle onto the stage. Yes, that Kelly. The former Navy combat pilot in the Gulf War, the Democratic U.S. senator from Arizona since 2020, and a guy who’s reportedly on the shortest of shortlists

to be Vice President Kamala Harris’ running mate. Are we paying our astronauts enough? Just how hard up for cash was Kelly, who had retired from the Navy and NASA duty four years earlier, when he decided to fly to China to tout this stuff? What, did he have to settle for this because Ben Carson already had the Mannatech gig tied up? It was a family affair, as the senator declared in a 2016 video — wearing his blue NASA astronaut jumpsuit. Speaking of his twin brother, astronaut Scott Kelly, “who just got back from the International Space Station,” Kelly said, “we’re really excited to be with you at Shaklee Live in Orlando coming up this August. You know, I told my brother all about Shaklee, Roger and the Shaklee difference. He even took Shaklee vitamins with him up in space with him, to the International Space Station, and I did, too.” If the words “every one of you can create your own successful Shaklee business” made the hairs on the back of your neck stand up, you get a gold star. Yes, Shaklee is a multilevel marketing company. Those aren’t illegal, but the Federal Trade Commission warns, “most people who join legitimate MLMs make little or no money. Some of them lose money. In some cases, people believe they’ve joined a legitimate MLM, but it turns out to be an illegal pyramid scheme that steals everything they invest and leaves them deeply in debt.” Nice gig, Senator. It makes your \$55,000

speech in 2018 for Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, then the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, look respectable. (Kelly returned the money amid his 2019 Senate candidacy; the United Arab Emirates’ human rights record at that time and since is ... bad. Lots of politicians equivocate about U.S. alliances with dubious Middle Eastern allies. But it’s unclear how many have accepted five-figure checks from them.) No doubt, some Kelly fan is scoffing and insisting this is no big deal, and that surely Donald Trump — the guy behind Trump University — is the last person who could criticize Kelly for making a quick buck on an unsavory endorsement deal. Then again, the whole point of the Democratic ticket is to be a clearly better option than Trump, not just a different flavor of the same willingness to smile for a quick buck from chumps. If Harris chooses Kelly, the Trump campaign would likely try to tie Kelly’s vitamin-pushing days to the Chinese investors in Kelly’s balloon company. The campaign ad labeling Kelly a “Mark-churian candidate” practically writes itself. But there would be no need to gild the lily; the absurd image of Kelly on the motorcycle, touting Shaklee vitamins and the Shaklee rehydration drink, is thoroughly cringe-inducing. And there’s no getting around it. For a stretch, Kelly’s name, image and reputation — largely built at NASA — was for sale. Choose carefully, Madam Vice President.

SCOREBOARD/SPORTS BRIEFS

TENNIS

Citi Open

Wednesday

At William H.G. FitzGerald Tennis Center

Washington

Purse: \$2,100,230

Surface: Hardcourt outdoor

Men's Singles

Round of 32

Arthur Rinderknech (16), France, def. Juncheng Shang, China, 2-3, ret.

Thanasi Kokkinakis, Australia, def. Aleksandar Vukic (14), Australia, 6-4, 7-6 (4).

Alejandro Davidovich Fokina (8), Spain, def. Mitchell Krueger, United States, 3-6, 7-6 (3), 6-4.

Flavio Cobolli (10), Italy, def. David Goffin, Belgium, 7-6 (4), 6-3.

Aleksandar Kovacevic, United States, def. Roberto Carballes Baena (11), Spain, 7-6 (4), 7-6 (3).

Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard (9), France, def. Emil Ruusuvuori, Finland, 7-6 (6), 7-6 (6).

Alex Michelsen (15), United States, def. Mattia Bellucci, Italy, 6-3, 7-6 (1).

Seongchan Hong, South Korea, def. Karen Khachanov (3), Russia, 6-2, 6-4.

Andrey Rublev (1), Russia, def. Luca van Assche, France, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Jordan Thompson (7), Australia, def. Reilly Opelka, United States, 6-4, 6-3.

Ben Shelton (2), United States, def. Radu Albot, Moldova, 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-3.

Women's Singles

Round of 16

DEALS

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL

Major League Baseball American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLAS — Activated LHP Gregory Soto. Recalled SS Jackson Holliday from Norfolk (IL). Optioned C Blake Hunt and SS Terrin Vavra to Norfolk. Assigned RHP Levi Stoudt outright to Norfolk.

BOSTON RED SOX — Activated RHP Lucas Sims. Selected the contract of INF/OF Nick Sogard from Worcester (IL). Optioned INF/OF Jamie Westbrooke to Worcester. Designated RHP Yohan Ramirez for assignment.

HOUSTON ASTROS — Optioned RHP Seth Martinez to Sugar Land (PCL). Activated LHP Yusei Kikuchi and LHP Caleb Ferguson. Designated RHP Rafael Montero for assignment.

KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Activated RHPs Lucas Erceg and Michael Lorenzen. Optioned RHPs Alec Marsh and Jonathan Bowlan to Omaha (IL).

LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Activated RHP Mike Baumann.

MINNESOTA TWINS — Placed RHP Brock Stewart on the 15-day IL retroactive to July 30. Activated RHP Trevor Richards.

NEW YORK YANKEES — Recalled RHP Ron Marinaccio from Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (IL) then returned him after today's game. Optioned RHP Will Warren to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre.

OAKLAND ATHLETICS — Activated RHP Will Klein.

TAMPA BAY RAYS — Activated CF Dylan Carlson. Optioned 3B Austin Shenton to Durham (IL).

TEXAS RANGERS — Activated LHP Andrew Chafin. Sent RHP Tyler Mahle to Round Rock (PCL) on a rehab assignment.

TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Recalled RHP Paolo Espino from Buffalo (IL). Optioned RHP Jose Cuas to Buffalo.

National League

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Released RHP Miguel Castro.

ATLANTA BRAVES — Activated RHP Luke Jackson and RF Jorge Soler. Optioned RHP Bryce Elder and 3B Nacho Alvarez Jr. to Gwinnett.

CHICAGO CUBS — Reinstated RHP Caleb Kilian from the 60-day IL.

CINCINNATI REDS — Agreed to terms with 3B Jalen Hairston on a minor league contract. Activated RHP Jakob Junis. Optioned RHP Lyon Richardson to Louisville (IL).

COLORADO ROCKIES — Sent LHP Lucas Gilbreath to Albuquerque (PCL) on a rehab assignment.

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Activated RHP Jack Flaherty. Optioned LHP Justin Wroblewski to Oklahoma City (PCL).

MIAMI MARLINS — Activated CF Kyle Stowers. Optioned 2B Connor Norby to Jacksonville (IL).

MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Optioned LHP Tyler Jay to Nashville (IL). Activated RHP Frankie Montas.

NEW YORK METS — Sent RHP Sean Reid-Foley to Binghamton (EL) on a rehab assignment. Activated RHP Huascar Brazoban. Optioned RHP Tyler Zuber and LHP Matt Gage to Syracuse (IL). Agreed to terms with OFs Carson Benge, Eli Serrano III and Jacoby Long. LHP Jonathan Santucci, RHPs Nate Dohm, Will Watson, Ryan Lambert, Brendan Girton, Ethan Lanthier, R.J. Gordon, Tanner Witt, Owen Woodward, Josh Blum, Jace Hampson, Frank Elissalt, Hayden Cooper, Hoss Brewer, Channing Austin, Hunter Hodges, Eldridge Armstrong and Chandler Marsh, INFs Trey Snyder, Corey Collins and Nick Roselli on minor league contracts. Released RHPs Adrian Houser and Ty Adcock. Sent RHP Sean Reid-Foley to Binghamton (EL) on a rehab assignment.

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Sent RHP Taijuan Walker on a rehab assignment to Reading (EL). Activated LHP Tanner Banks. Sent RHP Dylan Covey to Reading (EL) on a rehab assignment.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Agreed to terms with SS Konnor Griffing, LHP Jacob Bimbi and CF Andrew Patrick on minor league contracts. Placed CF Joshua Pala-

Amanda Anisimova, United States, def. Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (7), Russia, 6-1, 6-7 (4), 6-4.

Emma Raducanu, Britain, def. Peyton Stearns, United States, 7-6 (6), 6-2.

Caroline Dolehide, United States, def. Daria Kasatkina (2), Russia, 2-6, 7-5, 6-0.

Aryna Sabalenka (1), Belarus, def. Kamilla Rakhimova, Russia, 7-5, 4-6, 6-4.

Men's Doubles

Round of 16

Jack Withrow and Nathaniel Lammons (4), United States, def. Arthur Rinderknech, France, and Alexander Erler, Austria, 7-5, 2-6, 10-7.

Santiago Gonzalez, Mexico, and Lloyd Glasspool (5), Britain, def. Evan King and Vasil Kirkov, United States, 6-3, 6-4.

Sebastian Korda and Alex Michelsen, United States, def. Julian Cash, Britain, and Robert Galloway (7), United States, 6-4, 6-2.

Women's Doubles

Round of 16

Xinyu Jiang, China, and Fang-Hsien Wu, Taiwan, def. Alexandra Panova, Russia, and Giuliana Olmos (2), Mexico, 6-2, 6-2.

Yana Sizikova and Anastasia Potapova, Russia, def. Robin Montgomery and Clerve Ngounoue, United States, 3-6, 7-6 (5), 10-4.

Asia Muhammad and Taylor Townsend (1), United States, def. Hailey Baptiste and Peyton Stearns, United States, 6-0, 4-6, 10-4.

cios on the 10-day IL, retroactive to July 30. Activated RF Bryan De La Cruz.

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Designated RHP Jacob Bosiokovic for assignment. Placed RHP Lance Lynn on the 15-day IL. Recalled RHP Ryan Louts from Memphis (IL). Optioned RHP Chris Roycroft to Memphis. Selected the contract of RHP Michael McGreevy from Memphis.

SAN DIEGO PADRES — Designated LHP Austin Davis for assignment. Activated RHP Bryan Hoeing and LHPs Tanner Scott and Martin Perez. Placed RHP Stephen Kolek on the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Logan Gillaspie to El Paso (PCL).

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Agreed to terms with OFs James Tibbs III, Dakota Jordan, Jakob Christian and Andy Polanco. INF Robert Hipwell, SS Zane Zielinski, 3B Zander Darby, 1B Jeremiah Jenkins, C Fernando Gonzalez, LHPs Greg Farone and Tyler Switalski and RHPs Niko Mazza, Cade Vernon, Drake George, Evan Gray, Hunter Dryden and Ryan Slater on minor league contracts.

FOOTBALL

National Football League

ATLANTA FALCONS — Waived WR Isaiah Wooden.

BALTIMORE RAVENS — Waived DT Rayshad Nichols with an injury settlement.

BUFFALO BILLS — Signed DB Terrell Burgess to the roster. Waived LB Shayne Simon and P Jack Browning.

CAROLINA PANTHERS — Signed RB Dillon Johnson. Waived WR Daewood Davis with an injury designation.

GREEN BAY PACKERS — Waived CB Zyon Gilbert, WR Alex McGough, TE Henry Pearson and K James Turner.

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Signed DL Levi Bell to the roster. Waived OL Lewis Kidd.

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Waived DE Andre Carter and ILB Trey Kiser.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Activated DB Jaylen Watson from the physically unable to perform (PUP) list.

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Placed LB Darien Butler on the physically unable to perform (PUP) list after clearing waivers.

MIAMI DOLPHINS — Signed WR Willie Snead IV. Waived DT Mario Kendrick.

MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Signed DB Fabian Moreau to the roster. Waived LB Abraham Beauplan.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Agreed to terms with DT Davon Godchaux on a two-year contract extension.

NEW YORK GIANTS — Claimed CB Mario Goodrich off waivers from Philadelphia. Waived CB Aaron Robinson and DB Stanlety Thomas-Oliver.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Signed WR Tarik Black to the roster. Waived DL Jonathan Marshall.

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Signed DT Rodney Matthews and RB Kai're Robinson. Waived LB Easton Gibbs. Waived RB Ricky Person Jr. with an injury settlement.

WASHINGTON COMMANDERS — Re-signed WR Byron Pringle. Claimed K Riley Patterson off waivers from Jacksonville. Waived WRs Damiere Byrd and Dax Milne.

BASKETBALL

National Basketball Association

CHARLOTTE HORNETS — Signed F Mousa Diabate to a two-way contract.

HOCKEY

National Hockey League

CALGARY FLAMES — Announced LW Dillon Dube signed a one-year contract with Dinamo Minsk (KHL).

CAROLINA HURRICANES — Announced C Evgeny Kuznetsov signed a four-year contract with SKA St. Petersburg (KHL).

MONTREAL CANADIENS — Signed D Kai-den Guhle to a six-year contract.

SOCCER

Major League Soccer

COLUMBUS CREW — Acquired D DeJuan Jones from New England in exchange for D Will Sands and \$600,000 in general allocation money (GAM).

REAL SALT LAKE — Signed D Javain Brown to a contract through the 2024 season from Vancouver waivers.

COLLEGE

CHOWAN — Named Kellan Hollingsworth head volleyball coach.

PRO SOCCER							
MLS							
EASTERN CONFERENCE							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
Inter Miami CF	16	4	5	53	56	39	
Cincinnati	15	7	3	48	44	33	
Columbus	12	4	7	43	47	22	
New York	10	4	11	41	42	31	
NYCFC	11	9	5	38	36	30	
Charlotte FC	10	8	7	37	30	27	
Orlando City	9	9	7	34	39	38	
Toronto FC	9	14	3	30	34	47	
Atlanta	7	11	7	28	35	36	
Philadelphia	6	10	9	27	45	42	
CF Montréal	6	10	9	27	34	49	
Nashville	6	11	8	26	26	39	
D.C. United	6	11	8	26	35	50	
Chicago	6	12	7	25	30	42	
New England	7	14	2	23	23	47	

WESTERN CONFERENCE							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
LA Galaxy	14	5	7	49	50	36	
LAFC	14	5	5	47	48	30	
Real Salt Lake	12	5	8	44	51	34	
Colorado	12	9	5	41	50	43	
Vancouver	11	8	5	38	43	35	
Houston	10	7	7	37	35	30	
Seattle	10	8	7	37	34	29	
Portland	10	9	6	36	50	42	
Minnesota	9	10	6	33	40	41	
Austin FC	8	10	7	31	28	37	
FC Dallas	8	11	6	30	38	39	
Sporting KC	6	14	6	24	41	52	
St Louis City	4	10	11	23	32	46	
San Jose	4	19	2	14	31	61	

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Saturday, Aug. 24							
Seattle at Minnesota							
Los Angeles FC at Vancouver							
New York at Charlotte FC							
FC Dallas at D.C. United							
Cincinnati at Miami							
New England at CF Montréal							
Chicago at New York City FC							
Columbus at Philadelphia							
Toronto FC at Houston							
Orlando City at Sporting Kansas City							
Austin FC at Nashville							
San Jose at Real Salt Lake							
Atlanta at LA Galaxy							
St Louis City at Portland							

NWSL							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
Orlando	11	0	5	38	32	12	
Kansas City	10	1	5	35	40	22	
Washington	11	4	1	34	32	18	
Gotham FC	9	3	4	31	19	13	
Portland	8	5	3	27	27	20	
North Carolina	8	7	1	25	20	17	
Chicago	7	7	2	23	23	22	
Bay FC	6	10	0	18	19	28	
Louisville	3	6	7	16	21	22	
San Diego	3	7	6	15	12	17	
Angel City	4	9	3	15	16	26	
Houston	3	8	5	14	11	23	
Seattle	2	9	5	11	16	28	
Utah Royals FC	2	11	3	9	8	28	

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Friday, Aug. 23	
Orlando at Houston	
Bay FC at Utah Royals FC	

AUTO RACING

NASCAR Cup points leaders

Through July 29

1.	Kyle Larson	749
2.	Chase Elliott	739
3.	Tyler Reddick	734
4.	Denny Hamlin	706
5.	Ryan Blaney	676
6.	William Byron	654
7.	Martin Truex Jr	653
8.	Christopher Bell	651
9.	Brad Keselowski	615
10.	Alex Bowman	606
11.	Ty Gibbs	587
12.	Chris Buescher	562.
13.	Ross Chastain	552
14.	Bubba Wallace	545
15.	Joey Logano	525
16.	Chase Briscoe	469
17.	Daniel Suárez	460
18.	Kyle Busch	440
19.	Austin Cindric	438
20.	Todd Gilliland	434
21.	Michael McDowell	404
22.	Josh Berry	388
23.	Noah Gragson	383
24.	Carson Hocevar	383

BRIEFLY

Source: Cavs, Allen agree to extension

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Cavaliers center Jarrett Allen has agreed to a three-year, \$91 million contract extension with Cleveland, a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Allen, who has become indispensable for the Cavs as well as one of the Eastern Conference's top big men, will be guaranteed \$131 million over the next five seasons, said the person who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the deal has not been signed.

The Cavs hoped to announce Allen's extension as early as Thursday, the person said.

One of Allen's agents, Derrick Powell, gave details of the deal earlier to ESPN.

The affable Allen is part of Cleveland's "Core 4" of players along with All-Star guard Donovan Mitchell, guard Darius Garland and forward Evan Mobley.

The group helped Cleveland make the playoffs for the second year in a row and the Cavs advanced past the first round before losing to eventual champion Boston in the conference semifinals.

The 26-year-old Allen is the third key player to sign an extension with the Cavs this summer, following deals for Mitchell (3 years, \$150.3 million) and Mobley (5 years, \$224 million). The team also hired Kenny Atkinson as its new coach.

An All-Star in 2022, Allen averaged a career-high 16.5 points and 10.5 rebounds and 2.7 assists in 77 games for Cleveland last season.

NFL moving closer to replacing chain gang

The NFL is moving closer to replacing the chain gang with new technology to measure line to gain.

NFL executive Gary Brantley told The Associated Press the league will test Sony's Hawk-Eye technology during some preseason games. The system most likely wouldn't be ready for full implementation until next season, though it could happen sooner.

Sony, which was named the NFL's official technology partner on Wednesday, has expanded its sports technology through Hawk-Eye Innovations to support officiating and the development of on-field and sideline technologies, including a new coach's sideline headset that will debut in 2025.

Its Hawk-Eye tracking services for line-to-gain measurement adds cameras to stadiums to track

players, officials and the ball. The optimal tracking system notifies officials instantly if a first down was gained after the ball is spotted by hand.

The NFL has long used two bright orange sticks and a chain to measure for first downs. That method would remain in a backup capacity.

Beyond new technology for line-to-gain measurement and new headsets for coaches' communication, Sony is partnering with the NFL to enhance sideline photography, broadcast cameras and production, and more.

In other NFL news:

■ The judge who presided over the class-action lawsuit filed by "Sunday Ticket" subscribers against the NFL in Los Angeles said the jury did not follow his instructions in determining damages.

U.S. District Judge Philip Gutierrez made the remark as he heard the NFL's post-trial motion asking that Gutierrez rule for the league if he finds the plaintiffs did not prove their case.

Gutierrez could also order a new trial because the eight-person jury came up with its own calculations for damages.

There isn't a timeline for when Gutierrez could rule on the motion.

In his jury instructions before closing arguments on June 26, Gutierrez said "damages may not be based on guesswork or speculation. Plaintiffs must prove the reasonableness of each of the assumptions upon which the damages calculation is based."

The federal jury on June 27 awarded \$4.7 billion in damages to residential and commercial subscribers after it ruled the NFL violated antitrust laws in distributing out-of-market Sunday afternoon games on a premium subscription service.

The lawsuit covered 2.4 million residential subscribers and 48,000 businesses in the United States who paid for the package on DirecTV of out-of-market games from the 2011 through 2022 seasons. The lawsuit claimed the league broke antitrust laws by selling the package at an inflated price. The subscribers also say the league restricted competition by offering "Sunday Ticket" only on a satellite provider.

The jury of five men and three women found the NFL liable for \$4,610,331,671.74 in damages to the residential class (home subscribers) and \$96,928,272.90 in damages to the commercial class (business subscribers).

ANALYSIS

Many stars stayed at trade deadline

BY NOAH TRISTER
Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Tarik Skubal, Blake Snell and Garrett Crochet all stayed put.

Similarly, so did baseball’s most highly regarded prospects.

Whether it was stingy sellers or cautious buyers, the biggest potential trade targets weren’t dealt before Tuesday’s deadline. There were still plenty of moves, but they involved players with a bit less star power and prospects further down the food chain.

“Its hard to expect it to go any differently. You expand the playoffs, a whole host of things, and the deadline hasn’t moved,” Baltimore general manager Mike Elias said. “Maybe if they moved the deadline back 10 or 15 days or something like that, it could change things, but there’s no talk of that happening yet. For the foreseeable future, you have more playoff teams, you have fewer teams that want to give up on the season.”

The Tampa Bay Rays did trade All-Star infielder Isaac Paredes to the Chicago Cubs for third baseman Christopher Morel and a couple of minor leaguers, but Luis Robert Jr. of the White Sox and Vladimir Guerrero Jr. of the Blue Jays didn’t go anywhere, and although plenty of relievers switched teams, they did not include Oakland standout Mason Miller.

Instead, a lot of deals resembled what Detroit and the Los Angeles Dodgers did. The Tigers traded right-hander Jack Flaherty — who is having a nice season this year after a couple of uneven ones — and received minor league catcher Thayron Liranzo and infielder Trey Sweeney from the Dodgers. Sweeney becomes Detroit’s 24th-best prospect, according to MLB Pipeline. Liranzo is ranked fifth for the Tigers but hasn’t played above Class A.

None of Baseball America’s top 100 prospects were traded.

Florida exodus

The Rays and Miami Marlins both shed a lot of talent. That was no surprise in Miami’s case, but Tampa Bay remains above .500 and not too far out of a playoff spot.

In addition to Paredes, the Rays dealt away Amed Rosario, Zach Eflin and Randy Arozarena. Given their track record, you’ll probably be hearing about some of the prospects Tampa Bay received at some point down the road.

Small ball

If any team had the ability to swing a trade for a potential ace like Skubal, it was Baltimore, with its wealth of young talent. But the



DUANE BURLESON/AP

Detroit Tigers starting pitcher Tarik Skubal, a favorite for the AL Cy Young award this season, was not traded before the deadline with the Tigers intent on keeping their ace despite interest from several teams.



STEPHANIE SCARBROUGH/AP

Baltimore Orioles rookie Jackson Holliday was given a second chance in the majors, being promoted for his second stint Wednesday instead of being traded after a disappointing debut earlier this season.

Orioles held onto their top three prospects — infielders Jackson Holliday and Coby Mayo and catcher Samuel Basallo — and traded for Eflin and Miami lefty Trevor Rogers instead. Baltimore also added a couple of relievers but ultimately steered clear of a real blockbuster deal.

Then the Orioles promoted Holliday back to the majors Wednesday.

Wheeling and dealing

San Diego general manager A.J. Preller was a busy man again. He traded a huge package of prospects for Juan Soto at the deadline in

2022, then he dealt Soto to the New York Yankees this past offseason — and traded for Dylan Cease soon after that.

The Padres recently went on a seven-game winning streak that put them in decent position for a wild card — with an outside chance at challenging the Dodgers atop the NL West. Now Jason Adam, Tanner Scott, Bryan Hoewing and Martín Pérez have been added to San Diego’s pitching staff after a recent flurry of moves.

No sale

Although the number of teams still in playoff contention probably led to less selling, even some teams that are completely out of it were pretty quiet. The Chicago White Sox traded Erick Fedde and Tommy Pham but kept Crochet and Robert. Oakland still has Miller and Brent Rooker. Colorado didn’t do anything all that drastic either.

Immediate dividends

It remains to be seen who the big winner of this deadline will be, but the New York Yankees are off to a fine start. They acquired Jazz Chisholm Jr. from Miami, and he hit four homers in his first three games.

Scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Baltimore	65	44	.596	—
New York	65	45	.591	½
Boston	57	50	.533	7
Tampa Bay	55	53	.509	9½
Toronto	50	59	.459	15
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	65	42	.607	—
Minnesota	59	48	.551	6
Kansas City	60	49	.550	6
Detroit	52	57	.477	14
Chicago	27	84	.243	40
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	56	52	.519	—
Seattle	57	53	.518	—
Texas	52	57	.477	4½
Los Angeles	47	61	.435	9
Oakland	45	65	.409	12
National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	65	43	.602	—
Atlanta	58	49	.542	6½
New York	57	51	.528	8
Washington	49	60	.450	16½
Miami	40	68	.370	25
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	61	47	.565	—
St. Louis	56	52	.519	5
Pittsburgh	55	53	.509	6
Cincinnati	52	56	.481	9
Chicago	52	58	.473	10
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	63	46	.578	—
San Diego	59	51	.536	4½
Arizona	58	51	.532	5
San Francisco	54	56	.491	9½
Colorado	39	70	.358	24

Wednesday's games

Miami 6, Tampa Bay 2
N.Y. Yankees 6, Philadelphia 5
Baltimore 10, Toronto 4
Minnesota 8, N.Y. Mets 3
Kansas City 10, Chicago White Sox 3
St. Louis 10, Texas 1
Boston 3, Seattle 2, 10 innings
Houston 5, Pittsburgh 4
San Francisco 1, Oakland 0
Colorado 2, L.A. Angels 1
Atlanta 6, Milwaukee 2
Arizona 5, Washington 4
Chicago Cubs 13, Cincinnati 4
San Diego 8, L.A. Dodgers 1

Thursday's games

Baltimore at Cleveland
Kansas City at Detroit
Miami at Atlanta
St. Louis at Chicago Cubs
Colorado at L.A. Angels

Friday's games

St. Louis (Fedde 7-4) at Chicago Cubs (Assad 5-3)
Kansas City (Ragans 7-7) at Detroit (Skubal 12-3)
Arizona (Pfaadt 5-6) at Pittsburgh (Ortiz 5-2)
Milwaukee (Montas 4-8) at Washington (Irvin 8-8)
Toronto (Gausman 9-8) at N.Y. Yankees (Stroman 7-5)
Baltimore (Kremer 4-7) at Cleveland (Carrasco 3-9)
San Francisco (Harrison 6-4) at Cincinnati (Abbott 9-7)
Miami (TBD) at Atlanta (Schwellenbach 4-5)
Boston (Crawford 6-8) at Texas (TBD)
Chicago White Sox (Martin 0-0) at Minnesota (Ryan 6-7)
Tampa Bay (Baz 0-1) at Houston (Kikuchi 4-9)
N.Y. Mets (Blackburn 4-2) at L.A. Angels (Anderson 8-9)
L.A. Dodgers (Stone 9-4) at Oakland (Estes 4-4)
Philadelphia (Phillips 3-0) at Seattle (Woo 4-1)
Colorado (TBD) at San Diego (Vásquez 3-6)

Saturday's games

Toronto at N.Y. Yankees
St. Louis at Chicago Cubs
Milwaukee at Washington
Kansas City at Detroit
Arizona at Pittsburgh
Boston at Texas
Chicago White Sox at Minnesota
Baltimore at Cleveland
San Francisco at Cincinnati
Tampa Bay at Houston
Miami at Atlanta
Colorado at San Diego
L.A. Dodgers at Oakland
N.Y. Mets at L.A. Angels
Philadelphia at Seattle

OLYMPICS

Scoreboard

Medals Table				
At Paris Thursday, Aug. 1 84 of 329 total events				
Nation	G	S	B	Tot
United States	6	13	12	31
France	8	11	8	27
China	11	7	4	22
Britain	6	7	7	20
Australia	7	6	4	17
Japan	8	3	4	15
Italy	5	6	4	15
South Korea	6	3	3	12
Canada	2	2	3	7
Germany	2	2	2	6
Netherlands	2	2	1	5
New Zealand	2	2	1	5
Brazil	0	2	3	5
Romania	2	1	1	4
Hong Kong	2	0	2	4
Sweden	1	1	2	4
Spain	0	1	3	4
Georgia	1	2	0	3
Belgium	1	0	2	3
Ireland	1	0	2	3
Kazakhstan	1	0	2	3
South Africa	1	0	2	3
Hungary	0	2	1	3
Poland	0	1	2	3
India	0	0	3	3
Azerbaijan	2	0	0	2
Croatia	1	0	1	2
Guatemala	1	0	1	2
Uzbekistan	1	0	1	2
North Korea	0	2	0	2
Israel	0	1	1	2
Kosovo	0	1	1	2
Mexico	0	1	1	2
Switzerland	0	1	1	2
Turkey	0	1	1	2
Ukraine	0	1	1	2
Moldova	0	0	2	2
Argentina	1	0	0	1
Ecuador	1	0	0	1
Serbia	1	0	0	1
Slovenia	1	0	0	1
Fiji	0	1	0	1
Mongolia	0	1	0	1
Tunisia	0	1	0	1
Austria	0	0	1	1
Egypt	0	0	1	1
Greece	0	0	1	1
Portugal	0	0	1	1
Slovakia	0	0	1	1
Tajikistan	0	0	1	1

Thursday's medalists	
ATHLETICS	
Men's 20km Race Walk	
GOLD —Brian Daniel Pintado, Ecuador	
SILVER —Caio Bonfim, Brazil	
BRONZE —Alvaro Martin, Spain	
Women's 20km Race Walk	
GOLD —Jiayu Yang, China	
SILVER —Maria Perez, Spain	
BRONZE —Jemima Montag, Australia	
CANOE SLALOM	
Men's Kayak Single	
GOLD —Giovanni de Gennaro, Italy	
SILVER —Titouan Castryck, France	
BRONZE —Pau Echaniz, Spain	
JUDO	
Men -100 kg	
GOLD —Zelym Kotsoiev, Azerbaijan	
SILVER —Ilia Sulamanidze, Georgia	
BRONZE —Peter Palatchik, Israel	
BRONZE —Muzaffarbek Turoboev, Uzbekistan	
Women -78 kg	
GOLD —Alice Bellandi, Italy	
SILVER —Inbar Lanir, Israel	
BRONZE —Zhenzhao Ma, China	
BRONZE —Patricia Sampaio, Portugal	
ROWING	
Men's Four	
GOLD —United States (Nick Mead, Justin Best, Michael Grady, Liam Corrigan)	
SILVER —New Zealand (Ollie Maclean, Logan Ullrich, Tom Murray, Matt Macdonald)	
BRONZE —Britain (Oliver Wilkes, David Ambler, Matt Aldridge, Freddie Davidson)	
Men's Double Sculls	
GOLD —Romania (Andrei Sebastian Cornea, Marian Florian Enache)	
SILVER —Netherlands (Melvin Twellaar, Stef Broenink)	
BRONZE —Ireland (Daire Lynch, Philip Doyle)	
Women's Four	
GOLD —Netherlands (Marloes Oldenburg, Hermijntje Drenth, Tinka Offereins, Benthe Boonstra)	
SILVER —Britain (Helen Glover, Esme Booth, Sam Redgrave, Rebecca Shorten)	
BRONZE —New Zealand (Jackie Gowler, Phoebe Spoors, Davina Waddy, Kerri Williams)	
Women's Double Sculls	



LINDSEY WASSON/AP

United States rowers Liam Corrigan, from left, Michael Grady, Justin Best and Nick Mead pose with their gold medals after winning men's fours at the Olympics in Vaires-sur-Mame, France, on Thursday.	
GOLD —New Zealand (Brooke Francis, Lucy Spoors)	
SILVER —Romania (Ancuta Bodnar, Simona Radis)	
BRONZE —Britain (Mathilda Hodgkins Byrne, Rebecca Wilde)	
SHOOTING	
50m Rifle 3 Positions Men	
GOLD —Yukun Liu, China	
SILVER —Serhiy Kulish, Ukraine	
BRONZE —Swapnil Kusale, India	
Thursday's scores	
BASKETBALL	
Women	
Germany 75, Japan 64	
Australia 70, Canada 65	
France 75, Nigeria 54	
3X3 BASKETBALL	
Men	
Serbia 21, Netherlands 19	
Latvia 22, China 8	
Lithuania 21, Poland 12	
Netherlands 20, France 13	
Women	
Australia 21, China 15	
Germany 19, Canada 15	
France 15, Azerbaijan 10	
Australia 17, United States 15	
China 14, Spain 11	
Germany 12, Azerbaijan 8	
BEACH VOLLEYBALL	
Men	
Germany 2, Australia 1 (21-16, 18-21, 17-19)	
Qatar 2, Australia 0 (21-14, 21-18)	
Cuba 2, Morocco 0 (21-14, 21-11)	
United States 2, Brazil 1 (21-17, 14-21, 15-8)	
Italy 2, Sweden 0 (24-22, 21-17)	
Women	
Spain 2, Egypt 0 (21-18, 21-14)	
Australia 2, Canada 0 (21-10, 21-16)	
HOCKEY	
Men	
Belgium 2, India 1	
Australia 5, New Zealand 0	
Britain 2, France 1	
Argentina 2, Ireland 1	
Women	
Britain 5, United States 2	
Spain 1, South Africa 0	
HANDBALL	
Women	
Netherlands 31, Brazil 24	
Sweden 27, South Korea 21	
Hungary 27, Spain 24	
France 38, Angola 24	
VOLLEYBALL	
Women	
Turkey 3, Dominican Republic 1 (21-25, 25-18, 25-22, 25-15)	
Brazil 3, Japan 0 (25-20, 25-17, 25-18)	
Italy 3, Netherlands 0 (29-27, 25-18, 25-19)	
WATER POLO	
Men	
Greece 13, United States 11	
Spain 15, Serbia 11	
Australia 9, France 8	
Italy 11, Montenegro 9, Italy wins 3-1 in shootout	
Wednesday's medalists	
CYCLING BMX FREESTYLE	
Men's Park	
GOLD —Jose Torres Gil, Argentina	
SILVER —Kieran Darren David Reilly, Britain	
BRONZE —Anthony Jeanjean, France	
Women's Park	
GOLD —Yawen Deng, China	
SILVER —Perris Benegas, United States	
BRONZE —Natalya Diehm, Australia	
CANOE SLALOM	
Women's Canoe Single	
GOLD —Jessica Fox, Australia	
SILVER —Elena Lilik, Germany	
BRONZE —Evy Leibfarth, United States	
DIVING	
Women's Synchronised 10m Platform	
GOLD —China (Yuxi Chen, Hongchan Quan)	
SILVER —North Korea (Jin Mi Jo, Mi Rae Kim)	
BRONZE —Britain (Andrea Spendolini Si-rieix, Lois Toulson)	
FENCING	
Men's Sabre Team	
GOLD —South Korea (Bongil Gu, Sanguk Oh, Sangwon Park, Gyeongdong Do)	
SILVER —Hungary (Csanad Gemesi, Aron Szilagyi, Andras Szatmari, Krisztian Rabb)	
BRONZE —France (Bolade Apithy, Maxime Pianfetti, Sebastien Patrice, Jean-Philippe Patrice)	
ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS	
Men's All-Around	
GOLD —Shinnosuke Oka, Japan	
SILVER —Boheng Zhang, China	
BRONZE —Ruoteng Xiao, China	
JUDO	
Men -90 kg	
GOLD —Lasha Bekauri, Georgia	
SILVER —Sanshiro Murao, Japan	
BRONZE —Maxime-Gael Ngayap Ham-bou, France	
BRONZE —Theodoros Tselidis, Greece	
Women -70 kg	
GOLD —Barbara Matic, Croatia	
SILVER —Miriam Butkerei, Germany	
BRONZE —Michaela Polleres, Austria	
BRONZE —Gabriella Willems, Belgium	
ROWING	
Men's Quadruple Sculls	
GOLD —Netherlands (Lennart van Lie-rop, Finn Florijn, Tone Wieten, Koen Metsemakers)	
SILVER —Italy (Luca Chiumento, Luca Rambaldi, Andrea Panizza, Giacomo Gentili)	
BRONZE —Poland (Dominik Czaja, Mateusz Biskup, Miroslaw Zietarski, Fabian Baranski)	
Women's Quadruple Sculls	
GOLD —Britain (Lauren Henry, Hannah Scott, Lola Anderson, Georgina Brayshaw)	
SILVER —Netherlands (Laila Youssifou, Bente Paulis, Roos de Jong, Tessa Dulle-mans)	
BRONZE —Germany (Maren Voelz, Ta-bea Schendekehl, Leonie Menzel, Pia Grei-ten)	
SHOOTING	
Trap Women	
GOLD —Adriana Ruano Oliva, Guatemala	
SILVER —Silvana Maria Stancio, Italy	
BRONZE —Penny Smith, Australia	
SWIMMING	
Men's 100m Freestyle	
GOLD —Zhanle Pan, China	
SILVER —Kyle Chalmers, Australia	
BRONZE —David Popovici, Romania	
Men's 200m Butterfly	
GOLD —Leon Marchand, France	
SILVER —Kristof Milak, Hungary	
BRONZE —Ilya Kharun, Canada	
Men's 200m Breaststroke	
GOLD —Leon Marchand, France	
SILVER —Zac Stubblety-Cook, Australia	
BRONZE —Caspar Corbeau, Netherlands	
Women's 100m Freestyle	
GOLD —Sarah Sjoestroem, Sweden	
SILVER —Torri Huske, United States	
BRONZE —Siobhan Bernadette Haughey, Hong Kong	
Women's 1500m Freestyle	
GOLD —Katie Ledecky, United States	
SILVER —Anastasiia Kirpichnikova, France	
BRONZE —Isabel Gose, Germany	
TRIATHLON	
Men's Individual	
GOLD —Alex Yee, Britain	

SILVER —Hayden Wilde, New Zealand	
BRONZE —Leo Bergere, France	
Women's Individual	
GOLD —Cassandra Beaugrand, France	
SILVER —Julie Derron, Switzerland	
BRONZE —Beth Potter, Britain	
Wednesday's scores	
BASKETBALL	
Men	
Serbia 107, Puerto Rico 66	
United States 103, South Sudan 86	
Women	
Spain 63, Puerto Rico 62	
Serbia 81, China 59	
3X3 BASKETBALL	
Men	
Latvia 21, Netherlands 12	
China 21, Serbia 15	
France 21, Lithuania 20	
Women	
Australia 21, Germany 19	
Canada 21, China 11	
Spain 17, France 12	
Azerbaijan 20, United States 17	
BEACH VOLLEYBALL	
Men	
Czech Republic 2, Austria 0 (21-18, 21-13)	
Netherlands 2, Chile 0 (21-19, 21-16)	
Brazil 2, Canada 0 (21-13, 21-16)	
Women	
Switzerland 2, Germany 0 (21-9, 21-15)	
Germany 2, Czech Republic 0 (21-17, 21-9)	
Latvia 2, Paraguay 0 (21-19, 21-15)	
United States 2, France 0 (21-16, 23-21)	
Spain 2, France 0 (21-12, 21-15)	
Switzerland 2, Canada 1 (18-21, 21-13, 11-15)	
HOCKEY	
Men	
Germany 1, Netherlands 0	
Spain 3, South Africa 0	
Women	
Argentina 2, Spain 1	
Britain 2, South Africa 1	
Germany 5, France 1	
Australia 3, United States 0	
Belgium 3, Japan 0	
Netherlands 3, China 0	
HANDBALL	
Men	
Norway 26, Hungary 25	
Croatia 31, Germany 26	
Spain 37, Japan 33	
Slovenia 29, Sweden 24	
France 26, Egypt 26	
Denmark 38, Argentina 27	
FOOTBALL	
Women	
Spain 2, Brazil 0	
Japan 3, Nigeria 1	
United States 2, Australia 1	
Germany 4, Zambia 1	
VOLLEYBALL	
Men	
Poland 3, Brazil 2 (22-25, 25-19, 19-25, 25-23, 15-12)	
Japan 3, Argentina 1 (25-16, 25-22, 18-25, 25-23)	
Women	
United States 3, Serbia 2 (17-25, 20-25, 25-20, 25-14, 15-17)	
Poland 3, Kenya 0 (25-14, 25-17, 25-15)	
WATER POLO	
Women	
Australia 15, Netherlands 14, Australia wins 8-7 in shootout	
Canada 12, China 7	
United States 10, Italy 3	
Spain 10, Greece 8	
Tennis	
Thursday	
At Stade Roland Garros	
Paris	
Surface: Red clay	
Men's Singles	
Quarterfinals	
Carlos Alcaraz (2), Spain, def. Tommy Paul (9), United States, 6-3, 7-6 (7).	
Lorenzo Musetti (11), Italy, def. Alexander Zverev (3), Germany, 7-5, 7-5.	
Women's Singles	
Semifinals	
Zheng Qinwen (6), China, def. Iga Swiatek (1), Poland, 6-2, 7-5.	
Men's Doubles	
Semifinals	
Rajeev Ram and Austin Krajicek (4), United States, def. Adam Pavlasek and Tomas Machac, Czechia, 6-2, 6-2.	
Women's Doubles	
Quarterfinals	
Karolina Muchova and Linda Noskova, Czechia, def. Hsieh Su-wei and Chia Yi Tso, Taiwan, 1-6, 6-4, 14-12.	
Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini (3), Italy, def. Heather Watson and Katie Boulter, Britain, 6-3, 6-1.	
Diana Shnaider and Mirra Andreeva, Russia, def. Barbora Krejckikova and Kate-rina Siniakova (2), Czechia, 6-1, 7-5.	
Sara Sorribes Tormo and Cristina Bucsa (8), Spain, def. Lyudmyla Kichenok and Na-dia Kichenok, Ukraine, 6-3, 2-6, 12-10.	
Mixed Doubles	
Semifinals	
Zhang Zhizhen and Wang Xinyu, China, def. Demi Schuurs and Wesley Koolhof, Netherlands, 2-6, 6-4, 10-4.	

Swiatek bounced by Zheng

By HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

PARIS — Iga Swiatek lost to Zheng Qinwen of China 6-2, 7-5 in the Paris Olympics semifinals Thursday, a surprising setback for the No. 1-ranked woman and champion at the French Open four of the past five years.

The result was hard to predict for several reasons. Swiatek entered the day with a 6-0 edge in their head-to-head matchups. She has led the WTA rankings for nearly every week since April 2022, while Zheng is No. 7.

Plus, just when Swiatek appeared to be getting back into the match with a 4-0 lead in the second set, she faltered.

The really stunning part? Swiatek is as good as it gets on red clay and at this particular place. The 23-year-old from Poland has been dominant at Roland Garros, the facility used for the annual French Open and the site for tennis during these Summer Games.

Afterward, Swiatek didn't take any questions from print reporters in the mixed zone area for interviews.

Her face flushed and eyes red, Swiatek did not break stride as she passed journalists, saying only: "Sorry. Next time."

The 21-year-old Zheng, the runner-up to Aryna Sabalenka at the Australian Open in January, assured China of its first singles medal in Olympic tennis since the sport returned to the Games in 1988.

In Saturday's gold-medal match, Zheng will face 13th-seeded Donna Vekic of Croatia or unseeded Anna Karolina Schmiedlova of Slovakia, who were scheduled to face each other Thursday night at Court Philippe Chatrier.

Vekic eliminated No. 2 Coco Gauff, the 20-year-old American who is the reigning U.S. Open champion, in the third round.

The matchups in the men's quarterfinals Thursday were Novak Djokovic of Serbia vs. Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece, and Tokyo Games champion Alexander Zverev of Germany vs. Lorenzo Musetti of Italy in the top half of the bracket; Carlos Alcaraz of Spain vs. Tommy Paul of the U.S., and Casper Ruud of Norway vs. Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada in the bottom half.



Zheng

OLYMPICS

Maddalena leads 50m rifle qualification

Army sergeant seeks first medal

BY MATT WAGNER
Stars and Stripes

CHATEAURoux, France — Army Sgt. Sagen Maddalena entered the Chateauroux Shooting Centre on Thursday morning not feeling that confident.

While training for the women's 50-meter rifle three-position the day before, her results didn't meet her standards. She hoped it wasn't foreshadowing for Thursday afternoon's qualification round.

To remove that from her mind, Maddalena found a corner, paced a bit and tried to clear her head.

"I wasn't getting discouraged about it, but it was a little something in my head, a little bit of doubt," Maddalena said. "I was able to put that aside, and this morning even though I wasn't sure, I knew my job I had to do."

The 30-year-old sharpshooter not only advanced to Friday morning's final — she headed the field of 32 shooters. Maddalena scored 593 points out of a possible 600, and the University of Alaska Fairbanks alumna also amassed the highest bull's-eye total of 45.

That gave Maddalena the edge over China's Qiongyue Zhang, who finished with the same points but had 40 bull's-eyes.

Because rule changes that included the number of shots and the weapons used in the event wiped the Olympic record book clean this year, Maddalena estab-



MANISH SWARUP/AP

Sagen Maddalena of the United States competes in the 50-meter rifle 3 positions women's qualification round Thursday at the Olympics in Chateauroux, France. Maddalena advanced to Friday's final.

lished a new Olympic qualifying record.

"It's a big success, I'm proud of it, but the work's not done," Maddalena said.

She finished the kneeling position with 198 points and 17 bull's-eyes, putting her in third place after 20 shots.

Then the 5-foot-4 Groveland, Calif., native composed a perfect series in the prone position with 200. Maddalena mowed through her shots at a rapid pace and

strung together 13 consecutive bull's-eyes before one shot missed the dead center ring of the target.

Maddalena found herself in first place at that point, and everyone seemed to notice, as photographers present turned their lenses toward the American.

The standing position proved troublesome — at least in relation to the other two. She posted 195 points over the 20 shots.

Only four competitors — Switzerland's Chiara Leone, who

placed third overall; Mongolia's Yesugen Oyunbat (fourth); Poland's Natalia Kochanska (sixth) and Denmark's Rikke Maeng Ibsen (14th) — eclipsed Maddalena's standing total.

The shooters dealt with windy conditions throughout the round. Gusts sometimes silenced the range as competitors adjusted or waited for stillness.

Maddalena downplayed the elements, saying worse conditions exist.

"It's a big success, I'm proud of it, but the work's not done."

Army Sgt. Sagen Maddalena
U.S. sport shooter

"OK, it was windy, but it was consistent. So it was readable," Maddalena said. "The gusts came through but they didn't push the body, and that's a big thing. So, I was able to maintain control of myself and all I had to do was stay patient about when to take the shot, when to wait, when to take another hold."

So Maddalena and seven others turn their attentions to Friday's final.

For her, it's a chance to make her first Olympic podium after finishing fifth in the Tokyo Games in the event and fourth Monday in the 10-meter air rifle final in Paris.

She has USA Shooting's best chance so far to end its medal drought at the Paris Olympics.

She said she's focusing on the controllables.

"It's a clean slate tomorrow. Everyone starts from zero," Maddalena said. "Tomorrow is just going to be what I can control, taking ahoid of that and riding the high."

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Japan's Oka wins men's gymnastics all-around

BY SAMUEL PETREQUIN
Associated Press

PARIS — Shinnosuke Oka won the men's all-around gymnastics title at the Paris Olympics on Wednesday, upsetting the two main favorites to extend Japan's dominance in a final that came down to the wire.

The former junior world champion whose career was put on hold by a serious knee injury two years ago edged Zhang Boheng and Xiao Ruoteng, both of China, to claim his second gold medal in three days at his first Olympics, by just 0.233 points.

"I did not make any mistake at these Olympic Games," Oka said. "I was a challenger, but I wanted to win."

Oka's teammate Daiki Hashimoto, the defending champion, fell during his pommel horse routine, finishing sixth.

Despite Hashimoto's struggles, it was another sweet evening for Japan, which produced a remarkable last-minute turnaround in the team final on Monday to edge China on



ABBIE PARR/AP

Shinnosuke Oka, left, and teammate Daiki Hashimoto, of Japan, celebrate after Oka won the gold medal during the men's gymnastics all-around final at Bercy Arena on Wednesday in Paris.

the last rotation.

Hashimoto and Zhang have built a gripping rivalry over the past three years and were expected to be the top contenders. Zhang was the world champion in all-around in 2021 ahead of Hashimoto, who claimed the world title by defeating Zhang the next year.

But it was Oka, who recently resurfaced at the top, who grabbed the spotlight and kept his head cool in the final rotation on the horizontal bar to give Japan a fourth straight Olympic all-around title.

Oka, who won the junior world title when he was 15 but then tore his right ACL, made the most of the fa-

vorites' mistakes.

He delivered a solid pommel horse routine to surge into the lead after two rotations, then stuck a marvel vault. He was as impressive on the two remaining apparatuses, the parallel bars and bar.

Zhang had dominated qualifying ahead of Oka and Hashimoto. The trio started in the leaders' group. Hashimoto got off the blocks with an excellent floor routine, mixing clean passes and stuck landings. Zhang had a shaky start, bouncing onto the mat after landing on his hands and knees on his second pass.

The unusual error left him trailing, but it was then Hashimoto's turn to falter when he fell off the pommel horse after losing his balance. Hashimoto put his hands behind his head in frustration, finished his routine, then got a massage on the same right shoulder that had seemed to bother him during qualifying.

Zhang fought hard until the end, earning a 15.300 on the parallel bars that put him back in contention. He capped his evening with a 14.633 on

the horizontal bar, but that was too little, too late.

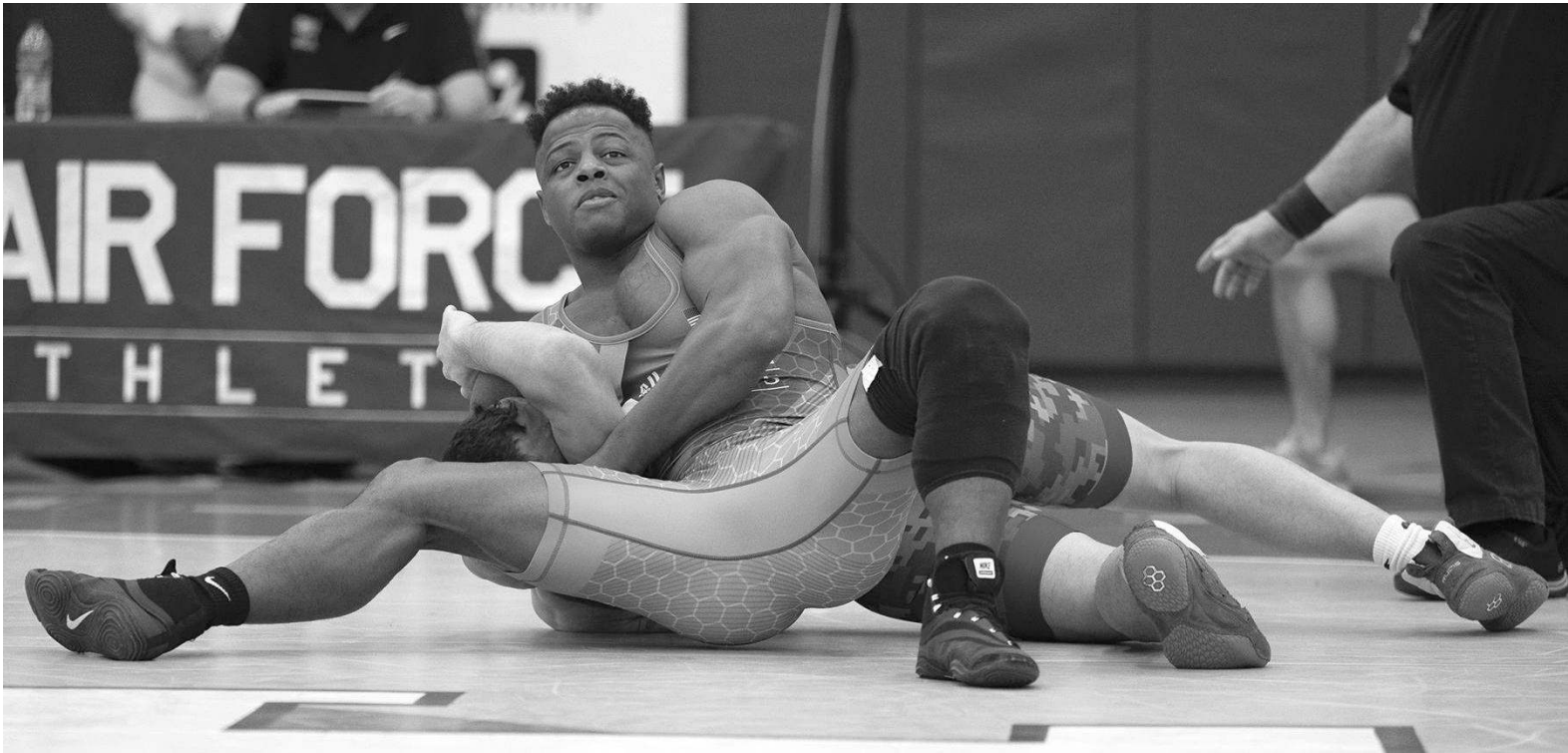
"I made some mistakes, but I managed to readjust and get back to my basics later on the other apparatus," Zhang said. "I did everything I could to catch up with the other gymnasts. I didn't win the gold medal, but losing is normal. It happens."

The 22-year-old Hashimoto, who in Tokyo became the youngest man ever to win the Olympic all-around title, failed in his bid to become only the fourth male gymnast to win a second all-around title. But he did not look too upset and joined Oka in his celebrations.

"Daiki never stopped telling me that I should have confidence and that I should do my best, right from the start of the competition, and that gave me confidence and strength," Oka said.

The women's all-around final will take place Thursday. Simone Biles and her U.S. teammate Suni Lee are set to become the first two Olympic all-around champions to face one another in the competition.

OLYMPICS



EJ HERSOM/Defense Department

Army Spc. Kamal Bey pins Air Force Senior Airman Samuel Adams during the Greco-Roman portion of the 2024 Armed Forces Wrestling Championship in Colorado Springs, Colo., on March 2. Bey will make his Olympic debut in Paris.

SOCCER

US women cruise past Australia

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

MARSEILLE, France — Trinity Rodman and Korbin Albert both scored and the United States remained undefeated at the Olympics with a 2-1 victory over Australia on Wednesday to conclude the group stage. The Americans, who already qualified for the quarterfinals, will play Japan on Saturday at Parc des Princes in Paris. Canada, despite losing points as punishment for a drone spying scandal, advanced to play Germany in Marseille. Brazil was set to play France in Nantes and Spain faces Colombia in Lyon.

The United States is the winningest team at the Olympics, with four gold medals in women's soccer. They're playing under new coach Emma Hayes, who is tasked with turning the team around after a disappointing Women's World Cup.

So far the team is off to a good start. The front trio of Rodman, Sophia Smith, and Mallory Swanson have scored seven of the team's nine goals in France.

"The team is feeling good, we've had three great performances," Crystal Dunn said. "Obviously there's always things that we look at where we're like, 'Alright, this could be better.' But overall I'm proud of the group. I think we really came together."

Dunn had a well-struck attempt from distance in the 38th minute but Australia goalkeeper Mackenzie Arnold pushed it up and over. Moments later, Arnold stopped Lindsey Horan's header from close range.

Rodman broke through in the 43rd minute when she poked in the ball in a scramble in front of the net. Video review stretched on for several minutes — apparently because of a technical issue — and Australia coach Tony Gustavsson was given a yellow card in the confusion.

Albert, who was subbed into the game during the second half, added a goal in the 77th. "I was trying and hoping for a goal," Albert said. "I've been working at it in practice and mentally, just trying to focus on it. And then it just happened. I actually closed my eyes and then I opened them and I was like, 'Oh my God it went in.'"

U.S. midfielder Sam Coffey got a second yellow card in the fourth minute, meaning she won't be available against Japan. Germany advanced in second place behind the U.S. by routing Zambia 4-1 in Saint-Etienne.

Not thrown by the timing

Army specialist aims to capitalize on late addition to wrestling roster

By MATT WAGNER
Stars and Stripes

Most people would be inconsolable after missing out on an Olympic berth. Yet Spc. Kamal Bey didn't worry too much after dropping an Olympic playoff match at 77 kilograms during the United World Wrestling Olympic Qualifiers in Istanbul on May 9-12. Bey, 26, had powered his way through the consolation bracket to set up the matchup against Hungary's Zoltan Levai for the last Olympic spot. After losing that match 3-0, the culinary specialist in the Army's World Class Athlete Program just waited for potential good news. And he received it on June 27 after an Individual Neutral Athlete, or an athlete who has a Russian or Belarussian passport and has qualified for the Paris Games, didn't accept the berth.

"I knew I was right there, so I knew if someone ended up either failing a drug test or someone was ineligible, then I would be the next athlete," Bey said. "The emotions I felt once I got the spot were excitement, relief and immediately focused because now we have to get after it." Despite the late addition, both Bey and assistant wrestling coach Spenser Mango expressed the belief he can compete for gold Aug. 6-7 at Champ-de-Mars Arena in Paris. Bey currently is ranked 13th in the world according to UWW, and he is the U.S. Olympic trials champion. His record this year on the world circuit hasn't been stellar. Bey is 6-4 in three tournaments with a third-place finish at the Seniors Pan-American Championships on Feb. 21-24 in Acapulco,

Mexico, and a fourth-place finish in Istanbul. It's a far cry from Bey's 2023 campaign, when he went 14-4 and won both the Pan-American Championships in Las Vegas and the Pan-American Games in Santiago, Chile. Bey also is a six-time U.S. Open champion. "He's a generational talent," Mango said of Bey. "He can do things that other people can't. He's one heck of an athlete, and I'm excited to see how the Olympics pan out. "I believe Kamal Bey, when he wrestles at his best, can beat anybody in that bracket." Bey's already proven himself capable of defeating one of the top wrestlers in his bracket. During the 2023 Pan-American Games, the American took down Cuban



NATE GARCIA/U.S. Army

Bey celebrates after winning the 77kg gold medal in Greco-Roman at the 2023 Pan American Games in Santiago, Chile.

Yosvanys Pena Flores, currently No. 5 in the weight class, twice — the first a 2-1 decision at the Senior Pan-American Championships and then a 4-3 victory at the Pan-American Games. He started to wrestle at the age of 3, eventually entered the junior world circuit and won a junior world crown in 2018. Bey joined the Army in May 2021 and entered the WCAP. Under the tutelage of Mango and others, Bey said he noticed the difference in his results immediately. "I already was sort of a big name before I got into the program in Greco-Roman wrestling, but to be competitive and be consistent, my consistency wasn't the same," Bey said. "I had the explosiveness, I had the strength, I had the athletic ability, but they definitely honed me into a fine-edge sword."

Bey said his defense when he's in the down position is one of his strengths. He also highlighted an ability to complete lifts when he's on top. While he anticipates a good reception from Team USA fans, he also mentioned his pride in being an Olympian feels even greater because of the backing of the Army. And it would make a medal feel even sweeter. "It's great having one, the support of the nation, but it's really cool having the support of the Armed Forces, the U.S. Army," Bey said. "The Army's been nothing but great to me, so the fact that I get to represent them and potentially go out there and win a medal, it would mean the world to me."

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OLYMPICS

Biles holds off Andrade in all-around

BY WILL GRAVES
Associated Press

PARIS — Simone Biles remains peerless. Even when she’s not quite perfect.

The American gymnastics star edged Brazil’s Rebeca Andrade during a tense Olympic all-around final on Thursday. Biles’ total of 59.131 was just over a point ahead of Andrade at 57.932, one of the closest calls Biles has ever endured at a major international event.

Sunisa Lee, the Tokyo Olympics champion, earned bronze despite spending much of the last 15 months dealing with multiple kidney diseases that left her return to the Games very much in doubt.

Still, the meet ended the way all the ones Biles has started and finished over the last 11 years have ended: with hugs and gold on the way.

The margin was the smallest in a major international event since Biles captured the third of her record six world championships in 2015.

She was a teenager then. She’s an icon now.

The 27-year-old who is redefining what a gymnast can do — and just as notably, for how long she can do it — became the third woman to become a two-time Olympic champion, joining Larisa Latynina of the Soviet Union in 1956 and 1960 and Vera Caslavskaja of Czechoslovakia in 1964 and 1968.

Biles also is the oldest woman to



MORRY GASH/AP

U.S. gymnast Simone Biles performs on the balance beam during the women’s all-around final in Bercy Arena on Thursday in Paris. Biles, 27, became the oldest champion in the event since 1952.

claim the biggest title in her sport since then 30-year-old Maria Gorokhovskaya of the Soviet Union won the first-ever Olympic all-around in Melbourne in 1952.

Yet the sixth gold and ninth overall medal — the same as Romanian great Nadia Comaneci, who was among the star-studded crowd that included the U.S. men’s basketball team — of Biles’ unparalleled career did not come as easy as so many that came before.

She misjudged a transition on uneven bars, the weakest of her four events, letting go of the upper bar too soon and forcing her to reach for a larger-than-expected gap.

While she didn’t fall — Biles muscled her way back into the routine — it blunted her momentum and led to major deductions that left her trailing Andrade through two rotations.

The deficit didn’t last.

Biles responded with a largely wobble-free 14.566 on the balance beam, the highest of the night among the 24 finalists, while Andrade was forced to do a major balance check during her slightly easier set that dropped her down to second heading into floor exercise, Biles’ signature event.

Andrade, the silver medalist behind Lee in 2021, needed the best floor set of her life to catch Biles. It didn’t quite happen. Andrade stepped out of bounds at one point, a minor problem but enough to create plenty of wiggle room for the 25-year-old who has rarely needed it over the years.

Biles incorporated music from pop icons Taylor Swift and Beyonce into her current routine, a 75-second set that began with the opening bars of Swift’s hit “Ready For It” and featured the hardest tumbling ever done by a woman in the history of the sport.

When she was done — sealing gold that served as a redemption of sorts three years after pulling out of multiple finals in Tokyo to focus on her mental health — Biles sprinted to hug Lee just off the podium and blew kisses to the cameras that have become fixtures wherever she goes under the Olympic rings.

While there may be more medals on the way — Biles is in three event finals later in the Games — the all-around puts her into the conversation as perhaps the greatest American Olympian ever.

Stage: Dutch distance runner may even try to run marathon

FROM PAGE 48

ists, courtesy of World Athletics, the organization that runs global track.

The nearly 2,200 athletes competing in the Olympics’ biggest sport are well aware that the money is great, but the gold medal brings an air of immortality that only an Olympic title can.

“The moment only comes once every four years,” Holloway said. “If you’re not training to be an Olympic gold medalist, then what the hell are you doing? That’s my mentality.”

Lyles goes for sprint double

Lyles attributes a lot of his bad finish in 2021 to depression that kept him from focusing. That race is the only 200-meter sprint he’s lost at a major championship.

By the time the 200 final comes around on Aug. 8, the 100 will be in the rearview mirror and we’ll know if Lyles has a chance to complete a sprint double, à la Bolt, and Lewis before him. Lyles is the reigning world champ at 100, but he’s less seasoned at that distance.

Just last month, another Jamaican, Kishane Thompson, ran 9.77 to head into his first Olympics with the world’s best time. Also, Jamaica’s Oblique Seville beat Lyles head-to-head at a meet in Kingston in June. But a

tune-up in Kingston and the Olympics in Paris are two different animals.

Richardson’s first Olympics

Richardson makes her Olympic debut after her much-discussed absence from the last Olympics due to a positive marijuana test.

Her current form, her status as the reigning world champion, along with the absence of two-time defending champion Elaine Thompson-Herah, all make Richardson the sprinter to beat in the women’s 100. But it won’t be a gimme.

Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce is heading to her fifth (and final) Olympics and has won this race twice. Jackson is a 200 specialist (see below) but also one of the fastest in the world at this distance.

Distance demons

In Tokyo, Sifan Hassan of the Netherlands pulled off one of the most amazing feats in Olympic history by winning medals in the 1,500 (bronze), 5,000 (gold) and 10,000 meters (gold).

She’s coming back for more, and has even floated the idea that she might do those three, then add the marathon, which takes place on the last day of the Olympics, to her schedule.

“I will decide a week before,” Hassan said in a recent interview. “Maybe I’m gonna have great training somehow, somewhere.”

As always, Hassan and her quest for medals will face a stern challenge from Faith Kipyegon of Kenya, who is the reigning world champion at 1,500 and 5,000 meters. Kipyegon broke her own world record at 1,500 in an Olympic tune-up this month, finishing in 3:49.04.

Holloway’s bad race

Holloway is a three-time world champion in the 110 hurdles, and a favorite to win on Aug. 8. He was a favorite three years ago in Tokyo, too, but weakened down the stretch and fell to Hansle Parchment of Jamaica.

Holloway is 9-3 in head-to-head matchups with Parchment, and even 2-1 against him at the Olympics. But the two victories came in preliminary rounds and that loss came with the gold medal on the line.

Jackson’s bad day

Jackson is the only woman other than the late Florence Griffith Joyner to run the 200 meters in 21.48 or faster. So, why hasn’t most of the world heard of her?

At the last Olympics, she put on the brakes too early in her opening heat, fin-

ished fourth and never even got to race in the final for the gold. It’s a mistake she called the most devastating of her career, and one that has fueled her run to Paris.

Now, more trouble. She failed to finish a July 9 tune-up race in Hungary, and it was unclear if she is healthy going into the Olympics.

If Jackson isn’t in the lineup, American Gabby Thomas, who comes in with this year’s fastest time (21.78) and a bronze medal from Tokyo, would be the clear favorite.

Jumping for Ukraine

Anyone who says sports and politics do not intersect might want to tune in Aug. 4, when Ukrainian high jumper Yaroslava Mahuchikh takes the field.

Mahuchikh is coming in just a few weeks after breaking a 37-year-old world record in her event, jumping 2.10 meters at an Olympic tune-up in Paris.

World Athletics has not allowed Russians in international meets since the war with Ukraine broke out. It means Maria Lasitskenskaya will not be on hand to defend her Olympic title. Lasitskenskaya also wasn’t present last year when Mahuchikh won the title on an emotional closing day at the world championships.

OLYMPICS



Léon Marchand, of France, celebrates after winning gold in the men's 200-meter breaststroke Wednesday night in Nanterre, France. Marchand won the 200 butterfly about two hours earlier.

Marchand owns the pool with an audacious double

Ledecky ties record for US women with 12th career medal

By PAUL NEWBERRY
Associated Press

NANTERRE, France — Turns out, those comparisons to Michael Phelps weren't far-fetched at all when it comes to Léon Marchand. They certainly weren't a burden for the 22-year-old Frenchman. Marchand completed one of the most audacious doubles in swimming history Wednesday night, winning the 200-meter butterfly and the 200 breaststroke about two hours apart in front of a home crowd cheering his every stroke. Two grueling races. Two very different strokes. Two Olympic records. Two gold medals.

Take that, Phelps, who did several doubles of his own while claiming a record eight golds at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. "I'm a really shy person," Marchand said. "I was kind of the center of attention during those two races. I was trying to get the energy from the whole crowd. They're amazing to me, pushing me in every final." Thrilling the French fans and claiming the spotlight even on a night when Katie Ledecky romped to another gold medal, Marchand notched his second and third victories at La Defense Arena and stamped himself — with the Olympics not even a week old — as one of the faces of the Paris Games. After rallying to beat world-record holder and defending Olympic champion Kristóf Milák in the 200 fly with a finishing kick for the ages, Marchand made it look easy in the 200 breast.



Katie Ledecky poses with her gold medal after winning the women's 1500-meter freestyle final in Olympic-record time.

He led all the way, touching in 2 minutes, 5.85 seconds as more than 15,000 fans — many of them holding up cardboard cutouts of his smiling face — nearly blew the roof off La Defense Arena. "Léon! Léon! Léon!" they screamed, a chant that was sure to carry on through the night in Paris. Trailing most of the way in the 200 fly, Marchand surged past the Hungarian Milák on the final lap to finish with an Olympic record of 1:51.21, touching first by just by .54 seconds. Marchand's final lap was nearly 0.66 faster than anyone else in the field — and 1.26 clear of Milák. "I've been watching so many races from him," Marchand said. "I know he has a lot of speed, way more than me, so I was just trying to get as close as possible, and then just push it until the end." Meanwhile, Ledecky made the most of her guest appearance on

The Marchand Show by romping to her seventh individual Olympic gold medal — she also has a relay gold — and 12th medal overall with a runaway victory in the 1,500 freestyle. The 27-year-old American started fellow Americans Dara Torres, Natalie Coughlin and Jenny Thompson for the most medals ever by a female swimmer. Ledecky already held the mark for most individual gold medals by a woman coming into these Games. "I try not to think about history very much," Ledecky said. "But I know those names, those people that I'm up there with, they're swimmers that I looked up to when I first started swimming. So it's an honor just to be named among them." Ledecky led right from the start and steadily pulled away, touching in an Olympic-record 15:30.02 in an event that joined the women's program at the Tokyo Games in 2021. After starting the Paris Games with a bronze in the 400 freestyle, this result looked more familiar for Ledecky. She was clearly thrilled to be on top again, splashing the water and pumping her fist several times walking across the deck — a rare show of emotion for a stoic athlete who performs with machine-like efficiency. "I know a lot of other people expected it of me," Ledecky said. "That doesn't make it easy. I mean, it's not easy to always follow through and you get the job done."

US tops South Sudan, moves to quarterfinals

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

VILLENEUVE-D'ASCQ, France — In the rematch, the United States had an easier time with South Sudan than it did when the teams met a couple of weeks ago. Easier. Not easy. The U.S. clinched a trip to the quarterfinals at the Paris Olympics by beating South Sudan 103-86 on Wednesday night — a game that wasn't ever really in doubt but was no romp either. Bam Adebayo scored 18 points and Kevin Durant had 14 for the Americans, who took control with a 25-4 run in the first half. The U.S. reserves, led by Adebayo, scored 66 points.

"We've been calling ourselves the bench mob for a long time now," Adebayo said. "And it doesn't matter who's in the lineup. We always seem to figure it out." Anthony Edwards scored 13 and LeBron James added 12 for the U.S. Nuni Omot led South Sudan with 21 points, while Carlik Jones scored 18 and Bul Kuol added 16. The win locked up a knockout-round berth and the No. 1 seed out of Group C for the U.S., which joined Canada, France and Germany in the quarterfinals. There are seven teams still alive for the other four quarterfinal spots; only Puerto Rico, which faces the Americans on Saturday, has been eliminated from contention to advance. That said, Saturday's game — the first between Puerto Rico and the U.S. at the Olympics since an embarrassing 92-73 loss for the Americans in Athens 20 years ago — isn't meaningless for the U.S. A 3-0 record in group play would give the Americans their best chance at a top-two seed for the knockout round and, in theory, an easier matchup in the quarterfinals. "It's not the goal," U.S. forward Anthony Davis said of making the quarterfinals. "It does give us a sense of satisfaction as far as being able to play next week. But

there's a lot that we can get better at, a lot that we can clean up, and we'll use Saturday's game against Puerto Rico to tighten the screws again and then just see where it takes us from there." South Sudan finishes group play against Serbia on Saturday, a game that has knockout-stage implications for both teams. The draw for the quarterfinals will be held Saturday night, and all four quarterfinal games will be played Tuesday in Paris. "We knew this wasn't going to be an easy task," Jones said. "Our spirits are still positive."

Scoreboard			
Men's basketball			
Group A			
Country	W	L	Pts
Canada	2	0	4
Australia	1	1	2
Spain	1	1	2
Greece	0	2	0
Group B			
Country	W	L	Pts
France	2	0	4
Germany	2	0	4
Brazil	0	2	0
Japan	0	2	0
Group C			
Country	W	L	Pts
United States	2	0	4
Serbia	1	1	2
South Sudan	1	1	2
Puerto Rico	0	2	0
Saturday, July 27			
Australia 92, Spain 80			
Germany 97, Japan 77			
France 78, Brazil 66			
Canada 86, Greece 79			
Sunday, July 28			
South Sudan 90, Puerto Rico 79			
United States 110, Serbia 84			
Tuesday, July 30			
Spain 84, Greece 77			
Canada 93, Australia 83			
France 94, Japan 90 2OT			
Germany 86, Brazil 73			
Wednesday, July 31			
Serbia 107, Puerto Rico 66			
United States 103, South Sudan 86			
Friday, Aug. 2			
Japan vs Brazil			
Australia vs Greece			
Canada vs Spain			
France vs Germany			
Saturday, Aug. 3			
Puerto Rico vs United States			
Serbia vs South Sudan			



Bam Adebayo, of the United States, dunks over Wenyen Gabriel, of South Sudan, on Wednesday in Villeneuve-d'Ascq, France.

SPORTS

More gold for Biles
Gymnast wins her second all-around title » **Olympics, Page 46**



GEORGE WALKER IV/AP

Noah Lyles celebrates winning the men's 100-meter final during the U.S. Track and Field Olympic Team Trials in June. The only hardware he's missing is an Olympic gold medal.



Stage just got bigger

Richardson, Lyles among track stars looking for first gold

BY EDDIE PELLIS
Associated Press

There are big races, and then there are the Olympics. When Sha'Carri Richardson, Noah Lyles and all the other fastest runners and best jumpers and throwers of 2024 line up for the Olympic track and field meet, little of what they've done on the road to Paris will mean much. What will matter is how they respond to pressure when the spotlight is on. Will they end up shining as brightly

as Usain Bolt or Carl Lewis, whose knack for performing when Olympic gold medals were at stake turned them into larger-than-life icons? Or will they be more like Jamaican sprinter Shericka Jackson and American hurdler Grant Holloway, among the best performers of their generation but still looking to parlay all that talent into a spot at the top of the Olympic podium? "Right now, I do not hold a gold medal in the Olympics," said Lyles, who counts the bronze medal he won in the 200 meters at the Tokyo Games among his biggest disap-

pointments. "I have multiple world championships, and national championships, as well. The only one that's missing from the list is an Olympic gold. And I'm planning on leaving with a lot of those." The dramas involving Richardson, Lyles and everyone else will play out in 48 events spread over 10 days, with most of the action taking place at the Stade de France, starting Aug. 2. As an added bonus, there will be a bonus: a first-of-its-kind \$50,000 payout to all 48 gold medal-

SEE STAGE ON PAGE 46

Sha'Carri Richardson is in the Olympics for the first time. She missed the Tokyo Games in 2021 after testing positive for marijuana.
PETR DAVID JOSEK/AP

Source: Cavs extend Allen for \$91 million » Sports briefs, Page 41

