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EUROPE & PACIFIC WEEKEND EDITION

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE
Ideas abound for every style
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PHOTOS BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN/Stars and Stripes

Guards at U.S. Army Regional Correctional Facility-Europe practice a maneuver used to remove noncompliant inmates from cells on Nov. 22.

Expecting the unexpected

Rank means almost nothing at obscure US military jail in Europe

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

SEMBACH KASERNE, Germany — Forest and farmland surround this small American military base, which is home to some of the least popular temporary accommodations in southwest Germany.

For nearly a decade, U.S. service members accused or convicted of crimes in Europe and Africa have been brought to a jail that many Germans and Americans

living in the area know little about.

"Some people on Sembach don't even know we're here," said Army chaplain Capt. Jeremi Wodecki, who has worked at U.S. Army Regional Correction Facility-Europe for almost two years. "But we're a very busy facility and we make a huge impact across the armed forces."

Despite its name, the facility is also used by the Air Force, Navy

SEE JAIL ON PAGE 6



Security fencing surrounds the facility in Sembach Kaserne, Germany.

Droning on: Navy testing unmanned boats, aircraft

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

MANAMA, Bahrain — Unmanned boats with onboard aerial drones ready to launch sailed through the waters off Bahrain on Thursday, carrying with them the Navy's vision of a 100-vessel unmanned surface fleet in the Middle East by the end of next summer.

A three-week training event dubbed Digital Horizon, which started last week, features 15 types of unmanned systems, 10 of which are new to the Navy in the region, service officials said.

"This is a notable influx of new systems that 5th Fleet hasn't worked with before, especially at one time," Cmdr. Timothy Hawkins, Naval Forces Central Command and 5th Fleet spokesman, said Thursday. "This event, we haven't done something like this yet, but we've been building up to it."

The Navy aims to rely more on unmanned vessels aided by artificial intelligence to help patrol Middle East waterways through which much of the world's trade transits.

A naval unit known as Task Force 59 was created last year to focus on integrating drones and AI into 5th Fleet operations. Unmanned systems can operate for long stretches on their own as they gather information.

As boats with observers approached the drones out at sea Wednesday, the vessels' artificial intelligence alerted contractors and sailors at Task Force 59's robotics operations center at NSA Bahrain.

Some of the drone boats can

SEE DRONE ON PAGE 7

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES								
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel				
Germany	\$3.916	\$4.435	\$4.765	\$5.523	Azores	..	..	\$4.644
Change in price	..	..	..	..	Change in price	..	..	..
Netherlands	..	\$4.262	\$4.523	\$5.141	Turkey	..	..	\$4.964
Change in price	..	..	..	..	Change in price	..	..	\$5.201*
U.K.	..	\$4.371	\$4.701	\$5.459				
Change in price	..	..	..	..				

Fuel prices are updated daily. These prices are effective Dec. 2

PACIFIC GAS PRICES								
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel				
Japan	..	\$4.429	..	\$5.189	South Korea	\$3.609	..	\$4.459
Change in price	..	-13.0 cents	..	-9.0 cents	Change in price	-11.0 cents	..	-12.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.579	..	..	\$5.189	Guam	\$3.589	\$4.109	\$4.439
Change in price	-12.0 cents	..	..	-9.0 cents	Change in price	-12.0 cents	-12.0 cents	-13.0 cents

*DieselEFD **Midgrade

Pacific prices for the week of Dec. 2-8

EXCHANGE RATES		
Military rates		
Euro costs (Dec. 2)	\$1.02	
Dollar buys (Dec. 2)	0.9295	
British pound (Dec. 2)	\$1.19	
Japanese yen (Dec. 2)	135.00	
South Korean won (Dec. 2)	1267.00	
Commercial rates		
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3769	
Britain (Pound)	1.2297	
Canada (Dollar)	1.3425	
China (Yuan)	7.0512	
Denmark (Krone)	7.0622	
Egypt (Pound)	24.5915	
Euro	0.9496	
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7813	
Hungary (Forint)	391.01	
Israel (Shekel)	3.3907	
Japan (Yen)	135.65	
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3067	
Norway (Krone)	9.7253	
Philippines (Peso)	56.06	
Poland (Zloty)	4.45	
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7586	
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3529	
South Korea (Won)	1301.24	
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9371	
Thailand (Baht)	34.78	
Turkey (NewLira)	18.6312	

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

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate7.00

Interest Rates Discount rate4.50

Federal funds market rate3.83

3-month bill3.91

30-year bond3.75

WEATHER OUTLOOK



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

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MILITARY

Fighter damaged following Okinawa landing

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A Marine Corps stealth fighter was damaged Thursday following a precautionary landing at an Okinawa air base, a Marine official said Thursday evening.

A suspected electrical problem prompted the pilot to land the F-35B Lightning II, assigned to VMFA-121 at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, at Kadena Air Base without incident at approximately 1:40 p.m., 1st Marine Aircraft Wing spokesman Maj. Rob Martins wrote in a statement to Stars and Stripes.

Kadena Air Base is home to the Air Force's 18th Wing.

While the fifth-generation fighter



JUSTIN MARTY/U.S. Marine Corps

A Marine Corps F-35B Lightning II stealth fighter at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa.

was being towed on the flight line, the front landing gear malfunctioned and the aircraft's nose dropped onto the ground, Martins said. He said the incident caused no injuries. Video from Japanese public broadcaster NHK shared Thursday on Twitter showed the F-35 stopped on a taxiway with its nose

gear collapsed.

"The pilot performed as trained and chose the safest option, landing the aircraft safely in accordance with standard procedures," Martins said in the statement. "Operating our aircraft safely and effectively is a top priority and our aviators take great precautions to ensure the safety of the aircrew and the surrounding areas."

The fighter was conducting "standard training operations" in local ranges at the time of the incident, Martins said in a follow-up email to Stars and Stripes. After the aircraft landed, it was surrounded by fire engines and emergency vehicles, NHK reported Thursday afternoon.

It is unclear how much damage was done to the fighter, Martins

said in his email. He said a "detailed investigation" will be conducted.

"The mishap class will be determined by the investigation," Martins wrote in the email.

The military defines mishaps by class from A to D. Class A mishaps involve repair costs exceeding \$2 million or the death or permanent disability of a service member. A Class D mishap involves \$25,000 to \$59,999 in property damage and injuries ranging requiring first aid up to missing a day from work.

The Marine Corps has had three Class A mishaps in manned aircraft in 2022, according to data on the Naval Safety Command's website.

A spokesman for the Okinawa Defense Bureau, a branch of the Japanese Ministry of Defense, said Thursday evening it is aware "the

nose of an F35 touched the ground" but is awaiting details.

A spokesman for Okinawa prefecture's Military Base Affairs Division said it was waiting for information from the defense bureau. Gov. Denny Tamaki had not yet made a public comment on the incident.

The short-takeoff, vertical-landing fighter has been plagued by high costs and technical issues since its inception.

The pilot of an F-35A Lightning II, the Air Force variant, survived a crash at Hill Air Force Base, Utah on Oct. 19. A replacement F-35A costs about \$75 million, Reuters reported in July.

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2 Navy ships nearly collide in waters of San Diego Bay

By DOUG G. WARE
Stars and Stripes

The Navy has initiated an investigation of a near collision between two ships that occurred in the waters off San Diego, service officials said Wednesday.

The USS Momsen and USS Harpers Ferry were moving in opposite directions in San Diego Bay on Tuesday when they came close to colliding, officials said.

The vessels were able to maneuver past each other safely and neither ship was damaged, a Navy spokesperson said.

No related injuries were reported.

"The incident is under investigation," a spokesperson for the 3rd Fleet said.

A webcam in the bay captured the near miss and the video was posted online.

The USS Momsen is an Arleigh Burke-class, guided-missile destroyer based in San Diego that entered service in 2003, while the USS Harpers Ferry is a dock-landing ship based near Seattle that's been in service with the Navy since the mid-1990s.

Dock landing ships are used to transport landing crafts and amphibious vehicles.

The near miss was the second incident on Tuesday involving a San Diego-based Navy ship.

A fire broke out and injured nine sailors aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln as the aircraft carrier performed routine operations off the Southern California coast.

The Navy said none of those injuries were serious and the fire is under investigation.

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Screengrab from Twitter

The USS Momsen, a guided-missile destroyer, and USS Harpers Ferry, a dock-landing ship, were moving in opposite directions in San Diego Bay on Tuesday when they came close to colliding, officials said.

Federal judge tosses veteran's lawsuit blaming antimalarial drug for psychosis

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A federal judge threw out a lawsuit against the maker of an anti-malarial drug blamed for causing psychotic behavior and neurological damage to U.S. servicemembers, ruling that the case had no right to be filed in California.

The proposed class-action case brought last year by an Army veteran accused Roche Laboratories Inc. and Genentech Inc. of intentionally misleading the Department of Defense and the Food and Drug Administration about the dangers of mefloquine, the generic version of the drug Lariam.

Similar cases had been brought in Canada and Australia, but the lawsuit in federal

court in Northern California was the first large-scale case of its kind in the U.S., attorneys said.

The U.S. military, which developed the drug during the Vietnam War, was once its largest user to combat malaria. It was given to hundreds of thousands of troops sent to Afghanistan and Somalia.

Roche, which was granted the intellectual property rights and won FDA approval for Lariam in 1989, said it manufactured its last lots for U.S. distribution in 2005. Those drugs expired in 2008 — a year before the company's 2009 merger with Genentech.

The Pentagon continued to distribute generic versions of the drug, though elite Army units

were ordered to stop using mefloquine in 2013 after the FDA put a black box warning on it after it was found to cause permanent brain damage in rare cases. The warning said it caused side effects such as dizziness, loss of balance and ringing in the ears that could become permanent.

The Army has mainly replaced mefloquine with drugs found to be safer.

John Nelson of Florida brought the suit after he said he became permanently disabled from taking the drug during his Army service from 2005 to 2015. Nelson said he never experienced any neuropsychiatric symptoms until he began taking mefloquine just before being stationed in Afghanistan.

9 sailors injured after fire breaks out on USS Lincoln

By DOUG G. WARE
Stars and Stripes

Nine sailors were recovering from injuries on Wednesday after a fire broke out aboard a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier off the West Coast, Navy officials said.

The Nimitz-class USS Abraham Lincoln was performing "routine operations" on Tuesday roughly 30 miles off the Southern California coast when the blaze began, according to a statement from the Navy's 3rd Fleet. The Navy did not say precisely where the Lincoln was located off California at the time.

"The fire was quickly identified and extinguished through the crew's firefighting efforts," the 3rd Fleet said.

"Nine sailors aboard are report-

ed to have suffered minor injuries and have been treated aboard the ship."

A spokesman for the 3rd Fleet said six of the injured sailors showed signs of dehydration.

Officials said the cause of the blaze is not yet known, but they noted it didn't force the Lincoln to return to port.

The sudden fire is the second safety-related incident to occur aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln in the last few weeks. In September, E. coli bacteria was found in several of the ship's potable water tanks, but the Navy said no sailors were sickened by it.

The Lincoln was built during the 1980s and commissioned in 1989. It's based at Naval Air Station North Island in San Diego.

MILITARY

Troops in Japan given longer curfew

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

Liberty policies for U.S. service members in Japan ages 20 and older are about to become a little more generous, according to changes announced Thursday by U.S. Forces Japan.

New policies that take effect Monday will permit individual commands to shift their curfews from rank-based to age-based, USFJ spokesman Maj. Thomas Barger told Stars and Stripes by email Thursday. The standard 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. curfew in place since March 2020 that applies to enlisted service members of E-5 and below will apply instead to members ages 19 and younger, he

said.

Eligible service members may have another drink in that extra hour. The changes move the deadline for consuming alcohol off-base from midnight to 1 a.m., according to Barger.

Service members in Japan are currently prohibited from consuming alcohol anywhere but their residence, hotel or other quarters between midnight and 5 a.m. The same conditions will apply under the 1 a.m. deadline.

The changes significantly relax restrictions on sailors ages 20 and older, but installation and unit commanders may impose more stringent restrictions “as deemed necessary in order to maintain

good order, discipline and unit readiness,” Barger said.

“The current update is part of the order’s ongoing review of the order’s necessity and provisions therein to allow for more individuals to experience the local communities they work and live in while maintaining relevant liberty safeguards,” he wrote in the email.

The new policy accounts for the host nation’s cultural standards and a U.S. military force that has, on average, grown older, according to Barger. Service members ranked E-6 and lower are an average 25.6 years old, while E-4s and below are an average 22.6 years old, according to a 2021 Defense

Department report.

“This update better serves our military personnel while recognizing a shift in demographics to older, more mature, junior enlisted members now serving in the U.S. military,” Barger said. “Japanese society traditionally recognizes those 20 years and older as adults, therefore bringing the USFJ policy in line with local culture and norms.”

A third change eliminates the requirement for a “liberty buddy” for some service members. Under that system, military personnel below E-5 were required to be accompanied on liberty by another approved individual, such as another service member

or a family member, between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.

The new policy does away with the buddy requirement entirely, a decision influenced by the military’s built-in culture of camaraderie, Barger said.

“A buddy/wingman concept is engrained in our military culture, therefore administratively mandating a nationwide policy was deemed not relevant nor necessary to maintain military readiness,” he wrote in the email. “We always have and will continue encouraging our personnel to look out for each other.”

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Students prepare for the ASVAB Career Exploration Program aptitude test at Yokota High School, Tokyo.

Record number of students sit for career aptitude test at Yokota base

By JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A record 144 students at Yokota High School recently sat for a battery of tests to discover their career potential, according to the Defense Department school system in the Pacific.

The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Career Exploration Program identifies students’ skills and interests and provides them “an opportunity to explore career and post-secondary options as well as various college major and career field pathways,” according to a news release Wednesday from Miranda Ferguson, spokeswoman for Department of Defense Education Activity-Pacific.

Generations of service members are familiar with the ASVAB,

a series of tests the military uses to match recruits with the jobs they’re best suited for. Similarly, the ASVAB Career Exploration Program, an aptitude test, provides students with possible matching careers, highlights their academic strengths and offers an “interest inventory,” along with career exploration tools that students can discuss with parents, according to the release.

The Career Exploration Program is a voluntary test sponsored by the Department of Defense, and although the results are available to military recruiters, students and their parents may opt out of that release, Ferguson said by email to Stars and Stripes on Thursday.

Last year, 116 students at Yokota High took the test battery, but this year another 28 signed on for

a record number of test-takers at the school, she said.

“The school attributes this increase to sustained work promoting and explaining the ASVAB Career Exploration Program to multiple audiences, including faculty, students, and parents,” Ferguson said. “Faculty encouragement, student word-of-mouth and parent interest contributed to robust participation.”

Nearly three-quarters, or 72%, of eligible students in grades 10 to 12 took the test this year, according to the release.

“The test was offered on four separate days to ensure all interested students had the opportunity to participate,” Ferguson said Thursday.

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Space Force to set up CENTCOM-focused component in Florida

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Space Force will establish its second geographically focused command on Friday when it activates U.S. Space Forces-Central at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., military officials announced Wednesday.

The new command will report directly to U.S. Central Command leaders and take responsibility for space-based operations within Central Command’s area of responsibility, according to a CENTCOM statement. CENTCOM, also headquartered at MacDill, is responsible for military operations throughout the Middle East and central Asia, where the command has spent recent decades overseeing wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria.

The new organization, which will be known as SPACECENT, will be responsible for ensuring satellite-based navigation and communications for troops in the CENTCOM region and conducting missile detection, among other things, according to CENTCOM. It will initially include about 28 Space Force guardians and be commanded by Col. Christopher Putman. A longtime, space-focused officer in the Space Force and Air Force, Putman has been serving recently as the director of Space Forces for U.S. Air Forces-Central, which is also headquartered at MacDill.

“Just as the evolution of space as a warfighting domain necessitated the establishment of a separate service, SPACECENT provides CENTCOM a subordinate command focused solely and continuously on space integration

across the command — with all domains and all components,” Putman said in the statement.

SPACECENT’s activation comes just days after the establishment of U.S. Space Forces Indo-Pacific on Tuesday at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in Hawaii. That command was the first geographic-focused Space Force component established. The Pentagon’s newest military service established its first component command in October 2020, which provided Space Force troops to U.S. Space Command.

Pentagon officials said the Space Force is expected to establish additional geographic component commands in the future, including a component assigned to U.S. European Command. It was not clear Wednesday when those additional Space Force elements would be established.

The Space Force was initially established in 2019 as a separate military service within the Department of the Air Force. By far the smallest of the military services, the Space Force is charged with providing troops trained to ensure the safety and operation of U.S. space-based assets such as satellites and conduct other space-based missions such as early warnings of incoming missiles.

CENTCOM said Wednesday that the new Space Force element would enhance its “ability to promote security and regional stability, while also advancing U.S. partnerships in the region throughout the space domain.”

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MILITARY

War, pandemic delay US pledge to arm Taiwan

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

The war in Ukraine is holding up already backlogged U.S. efforts to arm Taiwan, according to a recent U.S. government report.

Delays in delivery of weapons such as F-16 fighter jets, Stinger air-defense missiles and Paladin self-propelled howitzer artillery to Taiwan were noted in the November report to Congress by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission.

“The diversion of existing stocks of weapons and munitions to Ukraine and pandemic-related supply-chain issues have exacerbated a sizable backlog in the delivery of weapons already approved for sale to Taiwan, undermining the island’s readiness,” the commission said in its report.

More than 400 individual sales of U.S. equipment or technical assistance to Taiwan were pending, according to testimony by Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman to the House Foreign Affairs Committee in April. Sherman’s remarks do not specify whether those sales happened within the past few years, according to the November report.

The backlog of weapons deliveries was over \$14 billion in December 2021 and is now \$18.7 billion, according to congressional officials and others familiar with the

matter cited in a Wall Street Journal report Sunday.

The prospect of a naval blockade by China means getting weapons to Taiwan during any future conflict would be far more challenging than sending arms to Ukraine.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby, in a press briefing Monday, declined to comment on the backlog.

“I’m not going to get into it at a public podium ... talking about inventory stocks of any system anywhere,” he said Thursday, according to a transcript of the briefing provided by the State Department. “That just is not a good idea for — for us to do.”

The U.S. is constantly balancing its own weapons inventories, those of allies and partners and people who purchase arms as well as the Ukrainian armed forces, Kirby said.

“And it’s a balancing act,” he said. “And we’re in constant touch with, again, allies and partners about their readiness needs, because many of them are reliant on U.S. systems. And, of course, you know, that includes Taiwan.”

President Joe Biden recently approved another billion dollars in arms sales to Taiwan, Kirby said.

“And, of course, we’re going to continue to look at what the next it-



TAIWAN MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

Taiwanese soldiers participate in an exercise in this photo tweeted by Taiwan’s Ministry of National Defense. A U.S. government report says the war in Ukraine and pandemic supply chain issues have caused a delay in providing weapons sold to Taiwan for its defense.

eration of that needs to look like and when that would occur,” he said. “But we take very seriously our responsibility to help provide Taiwan the self-defense capabilities that it needs.”

The U.S. arms sales to Taiwan are in accordance with law and policy and that isn’t going to change, Kirby said.

“Taiwan would like to request that the weapons the U.S. sells to Taiwan be delivered as scheduled,” Gen. Wang Shin-lung, the vice minister for armaments at Taiwan’s Ministry of National Defense, said last month, according to the Wall Street Journal report.

Taiwan and the U.S. are both concerned about possible delays in weapons deliveries, according to Norah Huang, director for inter-

national relations at the Prospect Foundation, a security and foreign affairs think tank in Taipei.

The U.S. and Taiwan have been in discussions about joint manufacturing of weapons, she said in an email Wednesday.

“Weapons like stingers and javelins are in shortage already because of the war in Ukraine,” she said. “My sense is, joint manufacturing would be part of the U.S. burden sharing with its [allies] and partners.”

The slow weapons deliveries are an issue for Taiwan, especially as it faces mounting pressure from China, agreed Ian Chong, an associate professor of political science at the National University of Singapore.

“They’ve historically faced dif-

ficulties in getting arms due to [Chinese] pressure,” he said in an email Tuesday. “Cognizance of this challenge is also why Taiwan has always had a domestic arms industry with some pockets of advanced research and development.”

Local arms development has received a boost under Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen’s administration to address the uncertainties relating to foreign arms supplies, Chong said.

“Ships, submarines, aircraft, and missiles are particular areas of focus, although there is some effort to develop land systems like armored vehicles as well,” he said.

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Toxic firefighting foam spill seen as setback to facility closure

By **WYATT OLSON**
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — The hundreds of gallons of toxic firefighting foam spilled Tuesday in the Red Hill fuel storage facility in Hawaii is a “setback” in draining its tanks, the rear admiral in charge of that job said Wednesday.

About 1,100 gallons of Aqueous Film Forming Foam, or AFFF, was released from a tank near the top level of the vast underground facility.

Workers toiled through the night digging up soil contaminated with the foam, which contains PFAS, or perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl, a class of hazardous chemicals commonly used in manufacturing and fire suppressants.

The Navy is in the midst of a

two-year project to drain roughly 104 million gallons of fuel from the tanks before the facility is permanently closed. One year ago, a fuel leak from the facility contaminated drinking water for thousands of residents on and near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

“This is a setback, but the bigger picture here is that we’ve got to remove this fuel from the tanks above our aquifer,” Rear Adm. John Wade told reporters during a news conference Wednesday at the joint base.

Up to 50 workers at a time labored through the night to remove soil soaked with AFFF, as well as tearing up asphalt and concrete that may have absorbed the foam, Rear Adm. Stephen Barnett, commander of Navy Region Hawaii, said at the news conference.

About 250 cubic feet of soil was put into 131 drums and removed

as of Wednesday afternoon, Barnett said.

The Hawaii Department of Health said in a news release Wednesday that it had notified the Navy it would require the service to test for PFAS in the soil and groundwater. It is also requiring the Navy to contact the manufacturer of the foam to identify specific PFAS components in the AFFF.

“There continues to be no evidence of impact to surface water or drinking water,” the Health Department said.

Ernest Lau, manager and chief engineer at Oahu’s Board of Water Supply, expressed exasperation with the Navy during a news conference Wednesday, at one point struggling to hold back tears.

“I’m not asking anymore; I’m demanding,” Lau said. “We have

a right to know what’s stored there and being used there in addition to the 104 million gallons of petroleum. We want to know what kind of chemicals are being stored there and being used on that facility that could be a risk to the environment.”

The cause of the spill is still under investigation. The facility had only one holding tank for the

AFFF, which is now empty, Wade said.

Left with diminished capacity to suppress a fire, the facility has stationed a firetruck onsite round-the-clock, he added.

All maintenance in the facility is now on hold as a result, he said.

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EUROPE

Jail: Facility used by Africa, Europe theaters

FROM PAGE 1

and Marine Corps and is the only military jail for the Europe and African theaters. It's where U.S. service members stationed as far away as Italy, Turkey and Djibouti are taken to be confined.

Stars and Stripes was recently granted access to the site to observe daily operations.

A dozen inmates were being held at the time of the late November visit, about a third of the jail's capacity. While the number may seem small, officials say it's deceiving because of the high occupant turnover.

One of the jail's primary functions is to hold inmates en route to larger, branch-specific prisons in the United States. Those not bound for the U.S. are awaiting courts-martial or serving sentences of less than a year.

While most inmates are active-duty service members, Defense Department civilian employees also can be detained at the facility under certain circumstances.

The short stays mean more people arrive and get released at any hour of any day, including weekends and holidays, and that guards always must be prepared.

"It really is a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week service we provide," said Army Master Sgt. Marcus Mitchell, who supervises the guards.

Upon arrival, inmates are reminded that military rules and discipline are enforced and that staff members are to be addressed by their rank.

Staffers, meanwhile, must learn to engage with inmates of all seniority levels equally.

"Everyone is treated the same once they come through these doors: as a prisoner," Mitchell said. "As far as their rank, they kind of lose it because they are here, and they are confined."

A central control room allows guards to observe all areas holding inmates.

Three communal bays with bunkbeds house most occupants.

A row of individual cells — each a few yards long and only about an arm's length wide, equipped with a bed, toilet and sink — is where those who are segregated for disruptive behavior at the facility are kept.

Cameras monitoring the cells are programmed with blacked out areas that cover inmates' private parts when they use the toilet. This feature, which didn't exist a few years ago, is pretty much the only privacy afforded to the inmates.

Staffers say the cameras are vital to detecting self-harm and unruly behavior.

When things get out of hand with an inmate, a procedure known as a forced cell extraction may be required.

Five guards remove the inmate from his cell, search him and re-

"Everyone is treated the same once they come through these doors: as a prisoner. As far as their rank, they kind of lose it because they are here..."

Master Sgt. Marcus Mitchell
U.S. Army

turn him when the go-ahead is given. This has happened a few times in recent months, staffers said.

However, most inmates behave well and focus on rehabilitation, which includes counseling, services for substance abuse and vocational activities, they added. Stars and Stripes was prohibited from speaking with any inmates while at the facility.

Wodecki, the chaplain who specializes in teaching inmates how to cope with stress, said he's had to provide just as much support to guards, who often work 12-hour shifts in groups of six or seven.

"Here, you have to serve two groups of people," Wodecki said. "It's a tough job for the guards. They are far away from home. Many of them are single and have to work long hours, even on the weekends. It's stressful for them."

Watch commander Sgt. James Stanphill, who's been at the jail for nearly two years after stints at Guantanamo Bay and the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., agrees that the work can be difficult but said he's experienced what he calls "squad integrity" since assuming the role.

The facility recently received the Brig. Gen. Thomas F. Barr Award, which recognizes the best detachment-sized correctional unit with U.S. Army Corrections Command.

"Through our work, we have proven that you don't have to be the biggest unit to be the best," Stanphill said.

The Sembach jail is a level-one correction facility, the lowest level of security in the military's three-tier system. The Defense Department has one other level-one facility abroad, in South Korea.

In addition to the guards, a few dozen other troops make up the jail's small, multi-branch staff. Among the other staff members are medics, behavioral health specialists and non-Army liaisons, who focus on transporting their



PHOTOS BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN/Stars and Stripes

A computer in U.S. Army Regional Correctional Facility-Europes control room shows surveillance footage of a special housing unit cell, with blacked-out areas that are programmed in to provide privacy when inmates use the toilet.



Army chaplain Capt. Jeremi Wodecki said he provides equal support to inmates and prison staff at the correctional facility.



Resources are limited, but inmates have access to over 4,000 books and movies.



The special housing unit is an area that consists of several individual cells for inmates who must be kept apart from others.

branch prisoners to the U.S.

Since it opened in 2014, no one has tried to break out of the

facility.

But the fact that inmates are routinely transported to and from

the jail increases the chance of an escape attempt, said facility commander Army Maj. Randall Zamora.

"That's the one thing that keeps me up at night," Zamora said.

And finding an escapee off base could be challenging because there is minimal cooperation between the jail and German authorities, he said.

But both sides have made overtures to change that, with the goal of conducting a full-scale exercise with jail staff and German police sometime next year.

"It's important we establish these relationships and are able to build on them because this is a real-world operation," Zamora said. "We have to try to expect the unexpected."

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MILITARY

NORAD begins annual mission to track Santa

By PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

A military command that protects North America from potential air and sea threats has begun its annual side mission of preparing to track Santa Claus' journey around the world on Christmas Eve.

On Thursday, the North American Aerospace Defense Command at Peterson Space Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colo., reactivated its Santa-tracking website, which will provide live updates on his whereabouts on Dec. 24.

Until then, visitors to Noradsanta.org in English and seven other languages can access a countdown to Christmas, festive movies and stories, a Christmas song playlist and a new holiday-themed game each day.

The efforts continue a nearly seven-decade tradition by the joint U.S.-Canadian command, which constantly monitors air traffic over the continent.

"For the holiday season, we just add one extra mission that falls in line with our daily operations,"



JEFF FITZMORRIS/U.S. Air Force

NORAD Tracks Santa volunteers answer phones and emails in 2019 during the annual event in Colorado Springs, Colo.

spokeswoman Capt. Alexandra Hejduk of the Canadian armed forces told Stars and Stripes. "It's a mission of holiday cheer."

NORAD's predecessor, the Continental Air Defense Command, or CONAD, began tracking Santa's Christmas journey by coincidence in 1955, when an advertisement by Sears Roebuck in Colorado Springs misprinted a telephone number for children to call Santa. The published number was the CONAD commander-in-chief's operations hotline.

Recognizing the mistake, the director of operations at the time,



JHOMIL BANSI/Defense Department

Volunteers answer phones and emails from children around the globe during the NORAD Tracks Santa event in Colorado Springs, Colo., on Dec. 24.

Col. Harry Shoup, instructed his staff to tell young callers that radar was being monitored for indications of Santa traveling from the North Pole.

CONAD personnel provided live updates on his location, and thus the tradition was born.

NORAD Tracks Santa has since grown to reach millions each year. The website alone gets about 14 million views per season, according to figures provided by the command.

Its Santa-tracking app is also available on Android and iOS de-

vices, and the mission has several social media accounts on platforms like Facebook and YouTube.

Sticklers for tradition can still phone in for updates from anywhere in the world at 877-HI-NORAD (877-446-6723). And you never know who might pick up. Former first lady Michelle Obama answered calls when she participated from 2009 to 2016.

More than 1,500 Canadian and American uniformed personnel, Defense Department civilian employees and others help each sea-

son, according to the command.

Volunteers and donations from companies cover virtually all of the costs of running the program, which shows no signs of slowing down, Hejduk said.

"It's a tradition the NORAD team is proud to continue each year," Hejduk said. "As long as there are children asking, 'Where is Santa?' NORAD will be there each holiday season to keep them informed."

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Drone: 10 systems are new to Navy

FROM PAGE 1

identify objects in the water and spot suspicious behavior. This capability allows humans to focus on priority threats, Navy Capt. Michael Brasseur, commodore of Task Force 59, said Thursday.

"What we want to do ultimately is expand further how far we can see," Brasseur said. "And we want to leverage machine learning and AI to reduce the cognitive load on the watch-standers."

Over the past year, Task Force 59 operated unmanned surface ships in the Middle East for more than 25,000 hours, a Naval Forces Central Command statement last week said.

Some of the vessels known as Saildrone Explorers have operated at sea for as long as 220 consecutive days, the NAVCENT statement said.



PHOTOS BY J.P. LAWRENCE/Stars and Stripes

The doors of a box containing an aerial drone open aboard an unmanned ship at Naval Support Activity Bahrain on Thursday. The ship, the Elbit Systems Seagull, uses a human pilot while navigating busy harbors. The aerial drone, the Easy Aerial SAMS-T, can fly above the ship while drawing power via a 300-foot cable.

Iran seized those drones on separate occasions in August and September.

In both instances, Iranian sailors released them as U.S. war-

ships neared, the Navy said.

Iran has gained prominence for its own unmanned technology, specifically the aerial drones it is supplying to Russia for use in the



A Saildrone Explorer passes in front of the crewed Coast Guard cutter Emlen Tunnell on Wednesday in the waters of the Persian Gulf.

war in Ukraine.

The Digital Horizon exercise includes three aerial drones that will be tested in the Middle East for the first time.

Aerovel's Flexrotor and Shield AI's V-BAT each have vertical takeoff and landing systems. The other is tethered on a cable and can operate in harsh environments, a Navy statement said.

One aquatic drone being tested, the Ocean Aero Triton, can operate for eight days at a time as a submarine and three months as a surface vessel.

The Triton's sail rotated up and

down Thursday as the company representative demonstrated how the drone can go underwater within minutes if it detects a threat.

The 10 new drone systems in the exercise were selected from 100 companies that applied, Navy officials said.

Of the 100 unmanned surface vessels the task force wants sailing around the Middle East by next summer, the U.S. will contribute 20, while regional allies will contribute the rest, Navy officials said.

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EUROPE

Ukraine aims to stop Russia regrouping

BY LAURA KING
AND TRACY WILKINSON
Los Angeles Times

MYKOLAIV, Ukraine — On the desolate battlefronts of southern and eastern Ukraine, the clinging, claylike mud of late autumn is beginning to congeal into iciness. As snow flurries and freezing temperatures set in, the last thing this country's leaders want is for the war's front lines to harden in place as well.

Any wintertime letup in combat operations, Ukrainian officials believe, would give Russia's beleaguered army a chance to rest, regroup and try to seize momentum that has eluded Moscow's forces throughout more than nine months of fighting. So even during the coming cold months, Ukraine is determined to keep up military pressure on a numerically superior but faltering foe.

But Russia is employing a pressure tactic of its own: deliberate destruction of Ukraine's energy infrastructure, with civilian morale as an indirect target. Waves of bombardment that began in earnest in early October, aimed at targets such as thermal plants and electrical substations, have brought the national power grid to the brink of collapse just as temperatures are plummeting.

Ukrainian officials and Western allies have taken to calling it the weaponization of winter.

"This war has knocked on the door of each and every Ukrainian home," Iryna Maruniak, who oversees utility issues for the municipality of Lviv, western Ukraine's biggest city, said last week, citing power cuts that have left millions of households across the country dark and cold.

Ukraine expects the punishing onslaught to continue.

"As long as they have missiles, they won't stop, unfortunately," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a video address this week.

Acknowledging what has become the dual-front nature of the war — the military's need for sophisticated armaments, both of-



ROMAN CHOP/AP

Ukrainian MLRS Multiple Launch Rocket System takes a position on the frontline at an undisclosed location in the Donetsk region, Ukraine, on Nov. 24.

fensive and defensive, and the burgeoning needs of an electricity-starved populace — Ukraine's defense minister, Dmytro Kuleba, succinctly summed up his country's wish list.

"Patriots and transformers," he told reporters on the sidelines of this week's North Atlantic Treaty Organization summit in Romania, referring to sophisticated missile-defense systems and devices that transfer energy from one electrical circuit to another, which are in short supply as urgent power-grid repairs continue around the clock.

U.S. and NATO officials this week seemed to be addressing that wish list. As a supplement to the nearly \$40 billion in weapons and military equipment the West is shipping to Ukraine, the U.S. announced a \$53-million package of "energy aid," including the crucial transformers as well as generators and spare parts for electrical systems.

In Washington, a senior Defense Department official said the Pentagon is considering adding long-range Patriot surface-to-air missile systems to a future package of military aid to Ukraine.

Despite harsh weather conditions in the field, or perhaps because of them, Western analysts and officials believe Ukrainian commanders will keep pushing during the cold-weather months to recapture more territory controlled by Russia.

Ukraine wants to build on military successes that came both early and recent. In April, its forces repelled Russia's attempt to seize the capital, Kyiv. In September, Ukrainian forces retook thousands of square miles in the northeastern province of Kharkiv. Last month, Russian troops, cut off from their own supply lines, were forced to abandon the strategic city of Kherson, the only provincial capital they had managed to capture since February.

Better-equipped and more disciplined Ukrainian forces will probably stand up well against ill-trained, poorly supplied Russian troops who quickly found themselves thrust onto the front lines after being mobilized, Western military assessments suggest.

In a winter preview, British military intelligence said last month that "changes to daylight hours, temperature, and weather will present unique challenges" for both sides. The assessment said, though, that NATO-standard cold-weather gear provided to Ukrainian forces would help protect against hypothermia.

Autumn rain, and resulting thick mud, has slowed the pace of battle, but freezing ground later in winter will again allow freer movement of heavy equipment — one reason Putin waited until February to invade.

But the forecast is brutal in places such as Bakhmut, an eastern city that has been a vortex of

carnage unleashed by Russian forces, including mercenaries from the notorious private Wagner group. The devastated landscape, riddled with tree stumps and water-filled shell holes, hauntingly evokes scenes of trench warfare in World War I.

In the south, the Black Sea coast may now be a crucial springboard for Ukrainian forces. For months, Ukraine successfully defended the city of Mykolaiv, though deadly, near-constant missile attacks ravaged parts of it.

The city of Kherson, now freed from an eight-month Russian occupation, has been under fierce Russian shelling from across the Dnieper River, where Moscow's forces have been fortifying their defenses in anticipation of a renewed Ukrainian push.

For Ukraine, even victories are clouded by suffering. Last month, authorities began evacuating civilians from recently recaptured areas of Kherson and Mykolaiv provinces, foreseeing that winter conditions will simply be too difficult due to lack of heat, power and water.

Neither side gives a public accounting of its dead and wounded, although Western estimates suggest casualties on both sides number in the many tens of thousands. Ukraine's military said that, by its reckoning, 500 Russian soldiers were killed in one 24-hour period this week.

And every day across the country, intimate scenes of grief dot the conflict's vast canvas.

In a war in which not only the young but the middle-aged go off to fight, Yuriy Chernenko — killed on the eastern front two days before what would have been his 54th birthday — was mourned by classmates in Lviv, who remembered their kindergarten days together nearly half a century earlier.

"He was so happy to be a grandfather; it brought him such joy," said Iryna Krupchak, 53, who joined the solemn procession behind Chernenko's coffin. "I curse those who stole his life from him."

Russian shelling cuts off power again in liberated Kherson

Associated Press

KHERSON, Ukraine — Russian shelling cut off power in much of the recently liberated Ukrainian city of Kherson on Thursday, just days after it was restored amid Moscow's ongoing drive to destroy key civilian infrastructure as freezing weather sets in.

In Kyiv, Mayor Vitali Klitschko warned the capital's millions of residents that they should stock up on water and preserved food to see them through a winter that could

prove miserable if more energy infrastructure is damaged.

He also urged people to consider leaving the city to stay with friends or family elsewhere, if possible.

"Trying months lie ahead. The enemy still possesses substantial resources," Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said. He added, however, that "signs are accumulating that (Russia) needs a pause at all costs."

Ukraine has faced a blistering

onslaught of Russian artillery fire and drone attacks since early October.

The shelling has been especially intense in Kherson since Russian forces withdrew and Ukraine's army reclaimed the southern city almost three weeks ago.

Ukraine's presidential office said Thursday that at least two civilians were killed and six others wounded nationwide by the latest Russian shelling. In Kherson, a 70-year-old woman was killed in

her apartment and a 64-year-old man was wounded on the street. A 15-year-old boy died when a hospital in the northeastern Sumy region town of Bilopillia was hit, the presidential office said.

Local authorities said about two-thirds of Kherson had electricity as of Thursday night. Some residents congregated at the train station or at government-supported tents that provided heating, food, drinks and electricity to charge cellphones.

In the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, Russian forces fired "from evening till morning" at Ukrainian-held towns facing the Russian occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant across the Dnieper River, the regional governor said Thursday.

Elsewhere in eastern Ukraine, Russian forces continued their attempts to encircle the Donetsk region city of Bakhmut, focusing on several villages around it and trying to cut a key highway.

NATION

Biden, Macron discuss climate, Ukraine, China

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Presidents Joe Biden and Emmanuel Macron sat down Thursday for the centerpiece talks of a pomp-filled French state visit, with the two leaders eager to talk through the war in Ukraine, concerns about China’s increasing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific and European dismay over aspects of Biden’s signature climate law.

Biden was to honor Macron with the first state dinner of his presidency on Thursday evening, but first the two leaders met in the Oval Office to discuss difficult issues that they face.

At the top of the agenda is the 9-month-old war in Ukraine in which Biden and Macron face headwinds as they try to maintain unity in the U.S. and Europe to keep economic and military aid flowing to Kyiv as it tries to repel Russian forces.

“The choices we make today and the years ahead will determine the course of our world for decades to come,” Biden said at an arrival ceremony.

Macron at the start of the face-to-face meeting acknowledged the “challenging times” in Ukraine and called on the two nations to better “synchronize our actions” on climate.

In Washington, Republicans are set to take control of the House, where GOP leader Kevin McCarthy has said his party’s lawmakers will not write a “blank check” for Ukraine. Across the Atlantic, Macron’s efforts to keep Europe united will be tested by the mounting costs of supporting Ukraine in the war and as Europe battles rising energy prices that threaten to derail the post-pandemic economic recovery.

Macron at the arrival ceremony stressed a need for the U.S. and France to keep the West united as the war continues.

“Our two nations are sisters in the fight for freedom,” Macron declared.

Amid the talk of maintaining unity, differences on trade were shadowing the visit.

Macron has made clear that he and other European leaders are



French President Emmanuel Macron, left, and President Joe Biden stand during a State Arrival Ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House on Thursday.

concerned about the incentives in a climate-related law that favor American-made climate technology, including electric vehicles.

He criticized the legislation, known as the Inflation Reduction Act, during a luncheon Wednesday with U.S. lawmakers and again during a speech at the French Embassy. Macron said that while the Biden administration’s efforts to curb climate change should be applauded, the subsidies would be an enormous setback for European companies.

“The choices that have been

made ... are choices that will fragment the West,” Macron said. He said the legislation “creates such differences between the United States of America and Europe that all those who work in many companies (in the U.S.), they will just think, ‘We don’t make investments any more on the other side of the Atlantic.’”

The European Union has also expressed concern that tax credits, including those aimed at encouraging Americans to buy electric vehicles, would discriminate against European producers and

break World Trade Organization rules.

Macron also raised eyebrows earlier this month in a speech at a summit in Bangkok when he referred to the U.S. and China as “two big elephants” that are at the cusp of creating “a big problem for the rest of jungle.” His visit to Washington also comes as both the U.S. and France are keeping an eye on China after protests broke out last weekend in several mainland cities and Hong Kong over Beijing’s “zero COVID” strategy.

Inflation gauge slows down but still high at 6%

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A measure of inflation that is closely monitored by the Federal Reserve eased but remained at an elevated level in October, likely reinforcing the Fed’s intent to keep raising interest rates to cool the economy and slow the rise of prices.

Thursday’s report from the Commerce Department showed that prices rose 6% in October from a year earlier. That was down from 6.3% year-over-year increase in September. Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core inflation over the previous 12 months was 5%, less than the 5.2% annual increase in September.

Responding to the worst inflation bout since the early 1980s, the Fed has raised its benchmark rate six times since March, and its past four hikes have each been by a hefty three-quarters of a point. The central bank is hoping to engineer the difficult task of bringing inflation down to its 2% annual target without causing a recession in the process.

On Wednesday, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said in a speech that the central bank could slow its rate hikes to a half-point increase when it next meets in two weeks — a message that sent cheers through the financial markets. Yet at the same time, Powell made clear that the policymakers intend to keep their key rate, which affects many consumer and business



Signs advertise prices at a Walmart in Secaucus, N.J., on Nov. 22.

loans, at a high level for a prolonged period.

The Fed’s series of aggressive rate increases have made borrowing costs sharply more expensive across the economy. The housing market, in particular, has been hammered by a doubling of mortgage rates from a year ago: Sales of previously occupied homes have dropped for nine straight months. Many economists expect the United States to fall into a recession next year as the effects of those costlier loan rates take root.

Yet in the meantime, the overall economy is showing signs of surprising durability. On Wednesday, the government estimated that the economy grew at a solid 2.9% annual rate from July through September. The job market, the most important barometer of economic health, remains robust. Employers have added a healthy average of 407,000 jobs a month so far this year, and unemployment remains near a half-century low.

Applications for jobless benefits decline last week

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits came back down last week, hovering near levels suggesting the U.S. labor market has been largely unaffected by the Federal Reserve’s aggressive interest rate hikes.

Applications for jobless aid fell to 225,000 for the week ending Nov. 26, a decline of 16,000 from the previous week’s 241,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. The four-week moving average of claims, which evens out week-to-week swings, inched up by 1,750 to 227,000.

Applications for unemployment benefits are a proxy for layoffs, and viewed with other employment data, shows that American workers are enjoying extraordinary job security at the moment, despite an economy with some glaring weaknesses.

In spite of persistent inflation and rapidly rising interest rates, U.S. employers added 261,000 jobs last month and are creating an average of nearly 407,000 a month

this year. That pace would make 2022 the second-best year for hiring — after 2021 — in government records going back to 1940. There are nearly two job openings for every unemployed American. The unemployment rate is 3.7%, a couple of ticks above a half-century low.

The government issues its November jobs report on Friday.

New weekly applications for unemployment benefits have been extremely low early this year — staying below 200,000 for much of February, March and April. They began to tick up in late spring and hit 261,000 in mid-July before trending lower again.

The Labor Department said Thursday that 1.61 million people were receiving jobless aid the week that ended Nov. 19, up 57,000 from the week before.

The tech and real estate sectors have been outliers in an otherwise robust employment market, with Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, DoorDash, Redfin and Compass all announcing significant layoffs in recent months.

NATION

Amazon won't stop selling antisemitic film

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Amazon CEO Andy Jassy said Wednesday the company does not have plans to stop selling the antisemitic film that gained notoriety recently after Brooklyn Nets guard Kyrie Irving tweeted out an Amazon link to it.

Pressure has been mounting on Amazon to discontinue sale of the film, called “Hebrews to Negroes: Wake Up Black America,” since Irving shared the link to the documentary with his millions of Twitter followers in October. The syn-

opsis on Amazon says the film “uncovers the true identity of the Children of Israel.”

At The New York Times’ Deal-Book Summit in New York City, Jassy said it is difficult for the company to determine what content crosses the line to where Amazon doesn’t make it available to customers.

“As a retailer of content to hundreds of millions of customers with a lot of different viewpoints, we have to allow access to those viewpoints, even if they are objectiona-

ble — objectionable and they differ from our particular viewpoints,” the Times quoted Jassy as saying.

He said making decisions about what content to take down is “more straightforward” in some cases, such as when it “actively incites or promotes violence, or teaches people to do things like pedophilia.”

Dozens of celebrities, public figures as well as Jewish organizations and the Nets have called on the company to take down the film or add a disclaimer offering an explanation as to why the documen-

tary and related book are problematic.

Amazon told the newspaper last month that it would look into adding a disclaimer on the documentary’s main page. But that hasn’t happened.

The Seattle-based company did not reply to request for comment sent by The Associated Press last month on whether it would add a disclaimer or not. Jassy, who is Jewish, said Wednesday that Amazon has employees that flag content, but scaling that more broadly

could be challenging.

“The reality is that we have very expansive customer reviews,” he said. “For books with a lot of attention — especially public attention — customers do a good job monitoring other people.”

Irving was suspended by the Nets on Nov. 3 after he refused to issue the apology that NBA Commissioner Adam Silver sought for posting the link to the film. He returned after issuing an apology more than two weeks later. He missed eight games.

AG: Penalize doctor who spoke of Ohio 10-year-old’s abortion

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana’s Republican attorney general on Wednesday asked the state medical licensing board to discipline an Indianapolis doctor who has spoken publicly about providing an abortion to a 10-year-old rape victim who traveled from Ohio after its more-restrictive abortion law took effect.

The complaint alleges Dr. Caitlin Bernard violated state law by not reporting the girl’s child abuse to Indiana authorities and violated patient privacy laws by telling a newspaper reporter about the girl’s treatment.

That account sparked a national political uproar in the weeks after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June, with some news outlets and Republican politicians falsely suggesting Bernard fabricated the story and President Joe Biden nearly shouting his outrage over the case during a White House event.

Bernard and her lawyers maintain the girl’s abuse had already been reported to Ohio police and child protective services officials before the doctor ever saw the child. A 27-year-old man has been



Bernard

charged in Columbus, Ohio, with raping the girl.

Bernard’s lawyers argue Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita, who is stridently anti-abortion, has been spreading false or misleading information about the doctor with his investigation allegations for several months.

The attorney general’s complaint asked the licensing board to impose “appropriate disciplinary action” but doesn’t specify a requested penalty. State licensing boards ensure physicians have the appropriate training and education to practice in the state and can suspend, revoke or place on probation a doctor’s license.

“Dr. Bernard violated the law, her patient’s trust, and the standards for the medical profession when she disclosed her patient’s abuse, medical issues, and medical treatment to a reporter at an abortion rights rally to further her political agenda,” the office said in a statement. “Simply concealing the patient’s name falls far short of her legal and ethical duties here.”

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre on Wednesday condemned Rokita’s request.

“This is not about the concerns of the victim,” she said. “This is not about the victim at all. This is an elected official going after a doctor for helping a child who was raped and seeking health care.”



GREGORY BULL/AP

Ingrid Yang, left, and Kelly Bruno, both of San Diego, take a photo in front of lava erupting from Hawaii’s Mauna Loa volcano Wednesday near Hilo, Hawaii.

Viewers flock to watch glowing lava ooze from Hawaii volcano

Associated Press

KAILUA-KONA, Hawaii — The world’s largest volcano oozed rivers of glowing lava Wednesday, drawing thousands of awestruck viewers who jammed a Hawaii highway that could soon be covered by the flow.

Mauna Loa awoke from its 38-year slumber Sunday, causing volcanic ash and debris to drift down from the sky. A main highway linking towns on the east and west coasts of the Big Island be-

came an impromptu viewing point, with thousands of cars jamming the highway near Volcanoes National Park.

Anne Andersen left her overnight shift as a nurse to see the spectacle Wednesday, afraid that the road would soon be closed.

“It’s Mother Nature showing us her face,” she said, as the volcano belched gas on the horizon. “It’s pretty exciting.”

Gordon Brown, a visitor from Loomis, Calif., could see the bright

orange lava from the bedroom of his rental house. So he headed out for a close-up view with his wife.

“We just wanted ... to come see this as close as we could get. And it is so bright, it just blows my mind,” Brown said.

The lava was tumbling slowly down the slope and was about 6 miles from the highway known as Saddle Road. It was not clear when, or if, it would cover the road, which runs through old lava flows.

LAPD seeks Reddit search warrant over leaked city council remarks

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Police have sought a search warrant for the Reddit website as they try to identify the person who leaked a racist discussion between Los Angeles City Council members and a powerful labor leader, causing a scandal that has rocked the community and shaken faith in its lawmakers.

The LAPD is trying to determine the origin of the recording that appeared on the site in October, according to a Tuesday statement.

“The investigation involves interviews of persons present and any potential witnesses that have insight into this investigation. A search warrant request has been initiated to Reddit in order to identify the per-

son responsible for posting the recording,” said the statement.

There was no immediate information on whether the request had been granted or other details of the ongoing investigation, Officer J. Chaves, an LAPD spokesperson, said Wednesday.

An email to Reddit seeking comment wasn’t immediately returned.

Police Chief Michel Moore announced last month that detectives were investigating whether the recording made last year was made illegally.

The previously unknown recording was of a 2021 private meeting involving then-council president Nury Martinez and Councilmen Kevin de León and Gil Cedillo, as well as Ron

Hererra, head of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor.

The people at the discussion, all Latino Democrats, were captured on the recording scheming to protect their political clout in the redrawing of council districts during an hourlong, closed-door meeting that was laced with bigoted comments.

WORLD

China eases virus measures amid protests

Associated Press
BEIJING — More Chinese cities eased anti-virus restrictions and police patrolled their streets Thursday as the government tried to defuse public anger over some of the world's most stringent COVID measures and head off more protests.
Following weekend demonstrations at which some crowds made the politically explosive demand that leader Xi Jinping resign, the streets of major cities have been

quiet in the face of a crackdown that has been largely out of sight.
Guangzhou in the south, Shijiazhuang in the north, Chengdu in the southwest and other major cities announced they were easing testing requirements and controls on movement. In some areas, markets and bus service reopened. A newspaper reported Beijing, the capital, has begun allowing some people with the virus to isolate at home, avoiding crowded quarantine centers that

have prompted complaints. The government didn't immediately respond to a request for confirmation.
But many of the rules that brought people into the streets of Shanghai, Beijing and at least six other cities remain in force. The death of former leader Jiang Zemin this week could provide another opportunity for crowds to gather and potentially protest.
The announcements easing restrictions didn't mention last

weekend's protests of the human cost of anti-virus measures that confine millions of people to their homes. But the timing and publicity suggested Xi's government was trying to mollify public anger.
While experts say Beijing's policies are unsustainable, they warn it can't relax controls that keep most travelers out of China until tens of millions of older people are vaccinated. They say that means "zero COVID" might stay in place for as much as another year.

Taliban ban broadcasts from Voice of America

Associated Press
WASHINGTON — The Voice of America said Wednesday that Taliban authorities have banned FM radio broadcasts from VOA and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Afghanistan, starting Thursday.
VOA said Taliban authorities cited "complaints they have received about programming content" without providing specifics.
VOA and RFE are funded by the U.S. government, though they claim editorial independence.
The Taliban overran Afghanistan in August 2021 as American and NATO forces were in the final weeks of their pullout from the country after 20 years of war.
Despite initially promising a more moderate rule, they have restricted rights and freedoms and widely implemented their harsh interpretation of Islamic law, or Sharia.
The advocacy group Reporters Without Borders said recently that Afghanistan has lost 40% of its media outlets and 60% of its journalists since the Taliban takeover.

Suspicious package found at US Embassy in Spain

Associated Press
MADRID — Police in Spain detonated a suspicious envelope discovered at the U.S. Embassy in Madrid, Spanish officials said Thursday, a day after a similar package sent to the Ukrainian Embassy ignited upon opening and injured an employee.
"We can confirm a suspicious package was received at the U.S. Embassy in Madrid, and are aware of reports of other packages sent to other locations throughout Spain," the American embassy said in a response to an Associated Press inquiry.
"We are grateful to Spanish law enforcement for their assistance with this matter," it added.
Authorities cordoned off a wide area around the embassy, located in the center of Spain's capital.
The action followed police reporting that multiple explosive letters were sent in Spain over the past two days. Police said they were delivered to Spain's Defense Ministry, a European Union satellite center located at the Torrejón de Ardoz air base outside Madrid and to an arms factory in northeastern Spain

that makes grenades sent to Ukraine.
Spanish authorities have yet to determine who was responsible for the letters or link them to the war in Ukraine.
Authorities said a bomb squad also destroyed an explosive device that was dispatched by regular post to Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez on Nov. 24.
The Russian Embassy in Madrid on Thursday condemned the letter bombs, saying in a tweet that "any threat or terrorist attack, especially those directed at diplomatic missions, are totally condemnable."
The package sent to the Ukrainian Embassy was addressed to the country's ambassador to Spain. The employee handling it was slightly injured when it burst into flames.
Spain's National Court is investigating the incident as a terrorist act.
Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba ordered stepped-up security at all of Ukraine's foreign embassies abroad and asked his Spanish counterpart for a fast investigation.



Police officers stand guard as they cordon off the area next to the U.S. Embassy in Madrid on Thursday.

PAUL WHITE/AP

Cajun-style Turkey

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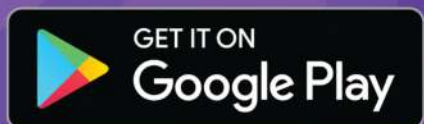
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afngo.net

WEEKEND



Titles show
variety of Switch
Video games, Page 29

Merry and bright ideas

Be the best St. Nick with just one
click with these gift suggestions for
the entertainment lovers in your life

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- Music, Page 19
- Puzzles, Page 20



iStock

WEEKEND: HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Tech gifts you won't get from the Apple Store

By JAIMIE DING
Los Angeles Times

As digital technology embeds itself ever more deeply in our lives and components get smaller and cheaper, the range of products that appeal to tech lovers approaches the infinite. Want a smart coffee cup? A desk lamp that's also a communication device? Jewelry that helps you relax?

It's all there for the buying. From the vital to the whimsical, these gifts will make you say, "Why didn't I think of that?" (And not a single one was made by Apple.)

Therabody Theragun mini massager

The original Theragun massage gun has developed a cult following for its ability to soothe sore hamstrings, unwind tight shoulders and ease aching backs with forceful, rapid-fire percussive hits to your muscles. Equally handy after a workout session or a long day sitting at your desk, the mini version fits easily in your gym bag or backpack.

\$199 at [therabody.com](#)

Larq PureVis bottle

It happens to the best of us: You forget your water bottle in your car for a few days, and a whiff of the musty odor makes you never want to use it again. Larq's self-cleaning water bottle tackles that problem by eliminating 99% of bio-contaminants like bacteria and mold in your water in 60 seconds using UV-C technology. While not in use, it runs a 10-second self-cleaning cycle every two hours. For backwoods hikes and other sketchy refill situations, it has an adventure mode that lasts three minutes, which the company says is the equivalent of boiling water for 20 minutes.

\$99 at [larq.com](#)

Long Distance Friendship Lamp

This synchronized lamp gives you an easy way to tell your friends and family across the country that you're thinking of them. Give yours a little tap, and their paired lamp also emits a glow. You can link up multiple lamps so each person in a friend group gets their own color to say hi with.

\$99 for one lamp and \$198 for two at [uncommongoods.com](#)

Airmega 150 air purifier

At under \$200 and available in various shades of pastel, Coway's Airmega 150 air purifier is both design-savvy and effective. This new cat owner saw a significant improvement in allergy symptoms and litter box odor after testing it for a few weeks.

\$189 at [Coway.com](#)



NANOLEAF/TNS

Nanoleaf's hexagon lights are customizable and sync to music.



UNCOMMON GOODS/TNS

The Long Distance Friendship Lamp can send loved ones a twinkle for you from afar.

Anker 511 PowerHouse

These days, a power bank for your phone isn't enough — your laptop needs one too. Instead of being chained to a power outlet, you can charge your laptop and other devices with the Anker 511 PowerHouse wherever you go.

\$209.99 at [anker.com](#)

Bonaok wireless Bluetooth karaoke microphone

If you have a friend who's always dragging you out for a long night of karaoke, give them the gift of drunkenly belting songs from the comfort of their own home. A combination microphone and handheld speaker, the Bonaok connects to your phone via Bluetooth. It also functions as a regular microphone if you prefer to play music from a separate speaker.

\$30.99 at [amazon.com](#)

Oura ring

There are tons of fitness trackers out there, but Oura has cultivated a particularly devoted following among the biohacking crowd. Its ring can track sleep, activity, heart rate variability and more; the company has published research showing its data can even flag early COVID infections. Oura sends you a sizing kit to make sure you receive a ring that fits snugly on your finger, and you can pick from gold, silver, black and stealth (matte).

\$299-\$449 at [oura.com](#)

Bose SoundLink Flex

The Bose SoundLink Flex is a popular portable speaker for good reason: It's light, waterproof and has a battery life of up to 12 hours, according to its manufacturer. It can survive a 30-minute dip in the pool or a few drops. Oh, and it sounds great.

\$149 at [bose.com](#)

Nanoleaf Hexagon lighting kit

Nanoleaf lighting kits' sleek design and endless customization options make them an exciting addition to your home if you can afford the splurge. The hexagon lights are easy to assemble and attach to your wall in any configuration you want. Music-synced lighting modes allow you to enjoy the sight of colored panels flashing in time with the beat.

\$199 at [Amazon.com](#)

Tile Starter Kit

It always happens when you're already running late — your keys and wallet conceal themselves in far corners of your apartment. As long as they're within the range of a Bluetooth signal, you can locate them with Tile beacons. The Starter Kit includes the original Tile Mate to attach to your keychain as well as the Tile Slim for your wallet. Bonus: If you're outside Bluetooth range, you can view your Tiles' last locations and use the network of anonymous Tile users to track their items.

\$54.99 at [tile.com](#)

Nebula Capsule

For something about the size of a soda can, the Nebula Capsule is a surprisingly powerful video projector with a built-in speaker. Enjoy movie streaming from a variety of apps wherever you go. You can connect with AirPlay, Bluetooth, HDMI and USB.

\$299 at [nebula.com](#)

Bellroy Mod phone case + wallet

Bellroy's slim leather case and magnetic wallet combo keeps your iPhone free from scratches and your credit cards always on hand. The wallet has a magnetic trapdoor that keeps your cards hidden and is removable for MagSafe charging.

\$98.90 at [bellroy.com](#)



LARQ/TNS

The Larq PureVis bottle is self-cleaning through the use of UV-C technology.



MEL MELCON, LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

The Bonaok wireless Bluetooth karaoke microphone combines a microphone and handheld speaker.



OURA/TNS

The Oura ring is an all-purpose fitness tracker.



THERABODY/TNS

The Therabody Theragun mini massager fits easily in a gym bag.

WEEKEND: HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Screen savorers

By LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

For the film buff in your life, there are plenty of gift options that go beyond a ticket to the cinema. Here are some ideas to get the reels rolling:

Academy Museum of Motion Pictures visit (from \$25)

Any cinephile worth their salt should have the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures on their list of places to visit, and you could surprise them with tickets (starting at \$25 for adults) or even an annual membership (which start at \$100 per year).

Limited Edition ‘Godfather’ vinyl (\$40)

In conjunction with the Academy Museum’s new “Godfather” exhibit, which runs through March 17, the museum’s store has a trove of exclusive “Godfather”-themed merchandise like a limited two-LP set of the trilogy’s music, performed by the Prague Philharmonic.

‘Top Gun: Maverick’ (\$29.99)

You probably already caught “Top Gun: Maverick” in the theaters, maybe even multiple times, during its blockbuster 23-week run. Now that the dust has settled from Maverick’s Mach 10 test flight, it’s finally available to watch in your home theater in glorious 4K. Or, if you wait a little bit, on Dec. 6, Paramount Home Entertainment is releasing a two-movie SteelBook edition (\$132.99) with 4K Ultra high definition and Blu-ray discs of both “Top Gun” and “Top Gun: Maverick,” with bonus behind-the-scenes features and Cruise’s Masterclass from the Cannes Film Festival earlier this year.

‘You Must Remember This’ Patreon (Starts at \$2/month)

Chances are if you love film, you’ve come across the podcast “You Must Remember This” in some way. Maybe it was the Charles Manson episodes that got you hooked, the dishy season about the life of Polly Platt, or the most recent installment analyzing what exactly led to the films of the “Erotic ’80s.” Film historian Karina Longworth has been churning out episodes of her addictive, insightful and deeply researched podcast about movies, movie stars and the culture around them since 2014, for free. YMRT also offers bonus content for Patreon subscribers, including posts about what Longworth is consuming and previews of upcoming seasons that help support its behind-the-scenes operations.



GIRLS ON TOPS/AP

Broadcast your favorite female filmmaker with a shirt, like the ones shown above with Sofia Coppola’s name on it, from Girls on Tops.



A24/AP

The A24 store sells a movie-themed crossword book, as well as items such as hats, water bottles and gloves.

‘Beyond the Best Dressed’ book (\$22)

Culture writer Esther Zuckerman takes a fun and novel approach to the Oscars red carpet in her coffee-table book “Beyond the Best Dressed: A Cultural History of the Most Glamorous, Radical and Scandalous Oscar Fashion” (Running Press). In 25 essays, with illustrations from Montana Forbes, Zuckerman looks at everything from Hattie McDaniel’s turquoise gown, worn to the segregated ceremony in 1940, to Sharon Stone’s white Gap T-shirt, to the dress Rita Moreno wore in both 1962 and 2018.

A24 crossword book (\$34)

The cool kids know to keep an eye on the A24 store for some of the best film merchandise out there. Their vintage editions tend to sell out immediately (as did the “Everything Everywhere All At Once” Hot Dog Finger Gloves), but they also have a lot of other options for film fans, including a movie-themed book of 99 crossword puzzles with themes running the gamut from stoner movies to Soviet cinema. Anna Shechtman edited contributions from the likes of Jenny Slate and filmmakers Lulu Wang and David Lowery. There’s also hats, water bottles and a Marcel the Shell pin.



RICHARD SHOTWELL, INVISION/AP

Surprise your cinephile with tickets to the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles. Tickets start at \$25 for adults; annual memberships start at \$100 per year.

Tickets to the TCM Classic Film Festival (starting at \$349)

Dust off that fedora and break out the screen siren red lipstick. The TCM Classic Film Festival is coming back to Hollywood Boulevard from April 13-16, in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of Warner Bros. Studios. Passes go on sale Dec. 8 with some early bird discounts, which tend to go quickly.

Girls On Tops tees (£25.00)

Broadcast your favorite female filmmaker, from Norah Ephron to Ava DuVernay, and support the next generation with a Girls on Tops T-shirt. Timely options include Sarah Polley (whose “Women Talking” arrives in November), Greta Gerwig (starring in “White Noise” and putting the finishing touches on her “Barbie” movie), Joanna Hogg (who has “The Eternal Daughter” coming in December) or Sofia Coppola (currently filming a movie about Priscilla Presley). These soft shirts have been worn by the likes of Timothée Chalamet, Rooney Mara and Laura Dern, who has her own tee too.



ACADEMY MUSEUM/AP

The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures store sells limited edition vinyl records of music from the “The Godfather” trilogy, performed by the Prague Philharmonic.

Criterion Collection’s ‘Infernal Affairs’ box set (\$76)

If you haven’t had the pleasure of watching Andrew Lau and Alan Mak’s “Infernal Affairs,” or its two follow-ups, just know that the 2002 film from Hong Kong inspired Martin Scorsese’s “The Departed.” Tony Leung and Andy Lau star in the crime saga, which got a 4K restoration and a Criterion Collection box set.

WEEKEND: HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

For the adults who haven't grown up yet

From Wordle to sweets, these gift ideas will make the grown-ups feel like children again

BY LEANNE ITALIE
 Associated Press

Adults. They, too, need fun stuff for the holidays. From sweet treats to things with wheels, some ideas for pleasing a child at heart:

Board games

The Shakespeare Game: This bard-in-a-box extravaganza has players collecting characters and racing around London's theaters. The idea is to put on as many plays as possible before others "steal your ideas, burn down your theaters or spread the plague!" The winner rakes in the most box-office bucks and is the fastest to fame and glory. \$35.

Wordle: The Party Game: Did you see it coming? Hasbro and The New York Times have made the get-it-in-six daily treat a board game. In each round, a player picked as host writes down a five-letter word. Others must figure it out in, you guessed it, six tries, competing to do it in the least number of attempts. Dry erase boards and familiar color coding are used. \$19.99.

Paco Sako: This chess variant was originally the subject of a Kickstarter by Felix Albers, the Dutch dad who created it. Played on a regular chess board with regular chess pieces, there are unions that look like hugs and the winner "embraces" the oppo-

nent's king, as opposed to capturing it. Pieces move the same as in chess but generally don't leave the board.

Still don't get it? Have a look at reviews and how-tos before you plunk down \$49.99.

Edible treats

Dylan's Candy Bar is a sugary, gifty playground year-round, especially at the holidays. The company's clear plastic tackle boxes offer a little something for everybody.

There's one for \$125 full of festive, shiny-wrapped candy bling. Another for \$85 is a trip down memory lane for boomers with Zots, Mallo Cups, Chick-O-Sticks and more. Millennials have their own sour feast at the same price.

Got a licorice lover? The Danish confectionery Lakrids by Bulow has brought back their Advent calendar filled with 24 days of licorice covered in chocolate. I repeat. Licorice encased in chocolate, with flavors like raspberry and salted caramel. The goodness comes in a sleek, black-and-white packaging design. \$55.



The Nostalgia XL Tackle Box from Dylan's Candy Bar. The company offers tackle boxes for both boomers and millennials.



HASBRO AND THE NEW YORK TIMES/AP

Board games like Wordle are among the many amusements for adults that make great holiday gifts.



NUTT HEADS GAMES/AP

In Paco Sako, a variation of chess, players "embrace" the opponents' pieces instead of capturing them.

Collectibles and nostalgia

A prize baseball card. A treasured stamp or coin. Figurines, vintage kitchenware. Surely you know at least one gift recipient with a collection of some sort. No? Then go the way of TikTok and embrace minis. They're everywhere in those round wrapped eggs and other mystery containers (You never know which mini in a set you'll get). For the truly obsessed, one company makes minis in minis featuring beloved candy brands. Those aren't actually edible. \$7.99.

For the beer lover, Etsy seller Pretentious Beer Glass has on offer four hand-blown Pilsner glasses for \$162.

Big fans of Little People alert: Fisher Price has a six-piece collector set of figures from the hit "Ted Lasso." The gang's all here: Ted Lasso, Rebecca Welton,



WARNER BROS. CONSUMER PRODUCTS AND FISHER-PRICE/AP

The Fisher-Price Little People "Ted Lasso" set features six characters from the hit TV series: Ted Lasso, Rebecca Welton, Keeley Jones, Coach Beard, Roy Kent and Sam Obisanya.

Keeley Jones, Coach Beard, Roy Kent and Sam Obisanya for a hit of toy nostalgia. \$29.97.

Feeding the taste for nostalgia, Build-a-Bear has launched "The Bear Cave" line of plush bears and other characters partaking of Champagne, cocktails and beer. All are under \$60.

Lite Brite sells a line of '50s and '60s pop art sets intended to be hung on a wall after they're created. They're in the \$100 range. Ho ho ho.

Wheels

The American icon Schwinn makes something called the Shuffle Deluxe Scooter. It has two wheels and bicycle-like handlebars but retains scooter status



THE LEGO GROUP/AP

"The Office" Lego set has 1,164 pieces and includes 15 mini figures of the show's main characters.

with a nostalgic wood step board. With kickstand. \$249. Razor's new Razor Icon is bigger, faster and electric.

SEE ADULTS ON PAGE 17

WEEKEND: HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Adults: Also consider wrapping booze, BroadwayHD

FROM PAGE 16
If scooters aren't how your giftees roll, try a longboard. They're everywhere. Koastals are plentiful and come in a range of prices and designs. They're handcrafted in Southern California. From \$99 to \$280. Buy complete or customize.

Theater
At \$129.99 a year, the streaming service BroadwayHD serves

up full-length stage plays and musicals, including exclusive livestreams. It's an unlimited, on-demand library of more than 300 theater productions from Broadway, the West End and beyond. Some ballets and concerts, too. Not looking to spend that much? Buy a month or two at \$11.99 each.
Or you could pick up an original cast recording of a favorite musical, or a biography on a

theater legend. "Free for All: Joe Papp, The Public, and the Greatest Theater Story Ever Told" by Kenneth Turan and Papp himself holds up. It's been out since 2009, so shop around for a good price.

Booze
Can't think of anything unusual? Research and reach for a special bottle. There are too many variables and options for too many palates to make one solid recommendation, but special splurges abound. Consider Garrison Brothers Distillery for bourbon. It has a range of price points.
Look for "premier cru" or "grand cru" on Champagne labels noting top vineyards, as in the Krug Grande Cuvée Brut. It's in the \$180 range. Got a wine buff? How about the 2019 Insignia from the Napa Valley Joseph Phelps Vineyards. \$330.

'The Office'
For whatever reason, considering all the Lego sets and all the TV shows in the land, folks are frothing for Lego's 1,164-piece set based on the Emmy-winning "The Office." It's Dunder Mifflin down to the tiniest detail and includes 15 mini figures of the show's main characters. A dozen of the figures have a second fa-



ELLIOTT ALEXANDER/AP

The Vibe Check Deck offers affirmations and prompts of positivity for a holiday giftee in need of a boost.

cial expression when their heads are turned around. Classic scenes come to life with Jim's teapot, Michael's World's Best Boss mug and Dwight's Jell-O-encased stapler. \$119.99.

Lots of big-kid sets are out there if this one doesn't do it. Among the Lego Ideas sets: a manual typewriter, the "Seinfeld" apartment set and a shout-out to "The Flintstones."

Outdoors
Remember the cozy hygge phenom? Well, the Scandinavian concept of friluftsliv (roughly FREE-loofts-leeve) is another Nordic secret that's spreading. It's the idea of enjoying slow nature, and being kind to the Earth. Swedish-American Linda Akeson McGurk has written a book, "The Open-Air Life," sharing the 10 principles of friluftsliv. She explains how to have a more meaningful relationship with the great outdoors. \$20.

Searches for all things sporty chic, mountainside-style, are up on Etsy, said Dayna Isom Johnson, the handmade marketplace's trend expert. Sellers there, and their buyers, are "looking to the mountains and snowy caps for inspiration," she said. That includes folks looking for vintage ski gear.

A cheaper alternative to feed the outdoor trend? One Etsy seller, Cai Cai Handmade, offers mountain soy and beeswax candles that can be customized by color and scent, including pine forest.

To further help a female giftee with friluftsliv, wrap up some Moment mints by MotherBar. They're nearly 100% organic and each includes 40 mg of full-spectrum CBD, along with Sichuan flower, peppermint and Bulgarian rose. \$65 for 10. Recommended to start with one at a time, but who's counting. The packaging and marketing are gender specific.

The vibrations
Know somebody who needs a little help shaking off their pandemic funk?
Gift a card deck of affirmations and good vibes. Two sisters, Shanna Cancino and Cherish Wilson, have created The Vibe Check Deck of 52 cards with prompts to help people perk up. Such as: "Give someone a hug for 20 seconds" and "Explore your senses. Name five things you see, four things you feel, three things you hear, two things you smell, one thing you taste." Not feeling those? How about: "Send a positive wish to your water and drink." Surely, your gift recipient will at least smile, wryly or otherwise. \$29.99.
Tarot decks are bountiful. For beginners, Clarkson Potter sells "Illuminated: A Journal for Your Tarot Practice." It offers ways to more meaningfully engage with a deck and log observations and reflections. \$16.

Nets and more nets
Move over pickleball, Jazzminton Sport is on your tail. It's an indoor-outdoor game played with paddles and birdies and a unique net with a horizontal cut out. There are no boundaries. No court is required. Set up is simple. Two people play. Just bat the birdie back and forth through the hole until the winner reaches an agreed-upon point number. \$199.99.

If one net isn't enough, go for four with Crossnet. It's a four-square-meets-volleyball game for indoors, outdoors, on sand or concrete, in water or on grass. Play is, uh, complicated. In a nutshell: Four people are up or break into teams of two. Play goes around one hit per return across four nets until the ball hits the ground or goes out of bounds. People are rotated in and out. The net height is adjustable. \$149.99 at Crossnetgame.com.



LEANNE ITALIE/AP

A set of handmade soy and beeswax candles in the shape of mountains by Cai Cai Handmade, which can be customized by color and scent, can help you deepen your relationship with the outdoors.



FUNSPARKS/AP

The indoor-outdoor game Jazzminton Sport is played with paddles and birdies like some other racquet sports, but it doesn't require a court and has no boundaries.

WEEKEND: HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Turn a new page with these reads

Books are an easy gift choice, but that doesn't mean they can't be fresh. There's always a great selection around the holidays for a range of ages and interests.

By LEANNE ITALIE
Associated Press

“Creature,” by Shaun Tan: It’s as if, Tan writes, “I need to throw the artistic pebble far across a pond of weirdness in order to see some meaning in the ripples ...” Those words in the introduction of his new book speak volumes. The artist, writer and filmmaker from Perth, Australia, has collected his dreamy, sometimes eerie paintings and drawings. Tan reflects at length on his childhood in thoughtful text. \$35.



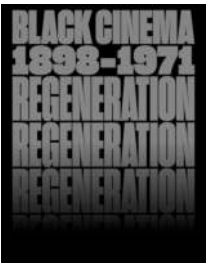
“Ugly-Cute,” by Jennifer McCartney: Is there beauty in just about anything? McCartney thinks so. She has put together a small-in-stature, full-color look at “cuglies”: oft-underappreciated species both well known and obscure. Gaze upon the male star-nosed mole and its 22 pink, fleshy appendages in place of a face. McCartney filled her little book with bite-size facts and fun quizzes. \$14.99.



“Africa in Fashion,” by Ken Kweku Nimo: The Ghanaian researcher and designer explores the complex role the continent plays in the global fashion world’s past and present. He spotlights a new wave of African talent while looking back on vast textile, craft and embellishment traditions that are hundreds of years old. Nimo also delves into the potential of Africa as a luxury hub. \$40. Also consider “Africa Fashion,” which accompanies an exhibition of the same name at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.



“Regeneration: Black Cinema, 1898-1971,” edited by Doris Berger and Rhea L. Combs: This companion to an exhibition of the same name at the Academy Museum in Los Angeles focuses on independent film. Features interviews with Charles Burnett, Julie Dash, Ava DuVernay and more. Essays, glamour portraits and a chronology by year included. The goal: To provide a more expansive view of how American cinema has been shaped by African-American creative expression. \$49.95.



“The Crown in Vogue,” by Robin Muir and Josephine Ross: Published for the late queen’s Platinum Jubilee, the two take readers through more than 200 images from British Vogue of the British royal family, starting in the early 20th century. At some point, every last one of the top royals graced the magazine’s pages, starting with the queen mother on through to Prince Harry and Meghan. With a range of commentary, from Evelyn Waugh to Zadie Smith. \$29.99.



“Emily in Paris: The Official Cookbook,” by Kim Laidlaw: Filled with 75 recipes inspired by the Netflix series. Lots of food porn here, along with photos of ex-pat Emily (Lily Collins) as fans await Season 3. Remember Gabriel’s omelette? How about when Emily struggled to pronounce un pain au chocolate? The tasty croissant is there, too. \$32.50.



“The Pigeon Will Ride the Roller Coaster,” by Mo Willems: The determined blue pigeon with seven playful books on his résumé is back with a not-so-topsy-turvy lesson in managing expectations. This time around, he’s set on riding a roller coaster as he plots out the process: buying a ticket, waiting in line, the possibility of the bad-tummy dizzies. What he gets instead might surprise you. Great for kids 3 to 5. \$17.99.



“Women Holding Things,” by Maira Kalman: The artist, designer and bestselling author has expanded a booklet of the same name that raised money to combat hunger. True to its title, Kalman’s paintings and ruminations feature women who often do the job of holding things together: a woman holds a baby; a woman holds court. Kalman includes a painting of Virginia Woolf, who’s “barely holding it together.” She writes of the book’s last image, a girl with pink balloons: “Hold on.” \$32.50.



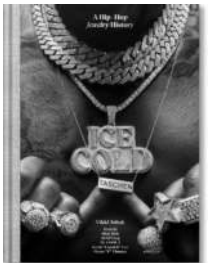
“It Starts With Us,” by Colleen Hoover: She has millions of fans on TikTok and elsewhere who eagerly awaited this sequel to her best-selling “It Ends With Us.” Her latest story of a dramatic love triangle and a woman’s struggle against domestic abuse helped cement her status on TikTok and made her the country’s most popular fiction writer. \$17.99.

“Adrift: America in 100 Charts,” by Scott Galloway: How did the country land here? The professor of marketing at New York University explores that and other key questions starting in 1945 and landing in the present. Brief text accompanies his simple charts on a range of subjects, from the perception vs. reality of the country’s crime rate to the earning potential of prospective male partners. The book isn’t for high-thinking statisticians but it’s full of conversation starters for the rest of us. \$35.

“Neverwhere,” by Neil Gaiman with illustrations by Chris Malbon: This dark urban fantasy from 1996 focuses on the dispossessed as the reader is taken into London Below, a secret world that exists in parallel with the London we know. Gaiman wrote the novel after the BBC made it into a TV series.

He wrote in 2005 that the story’s goal was to move adults as he was so moved by “Alice in Wonderland,” the Narnia books and “The Wizard of Oz” as a kid. A special edition comes in a slipcase with a new introduction by Susanna Clarke. \$140. Available exclusively at Foliosociety.com

“Ice Cold. A Hip Hop Jewelry History,” by Vikki Tobak: A photographic review of how hip hop helped redefine luxury with its over-the-top culture of bling. At the beginning, there was Run-DMC’s gold Adidas pendants and Eric B. & Rakim’s dookie rope chains and Mercedes medallions. They were followed by the likes of Pharrell Williams, Jay-Z, Gucci



Mane and Cardi B. There’s a foreword by Slick Rick and essays by A\$AP Ferg, LL Cool J, Kevin “Coach K” Lee and Pierre “P” Thomas of Quality Control Music. \$100.



iStock

WEEKEND: HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Noteworthy ideas that won't fall flat

By MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

Music is never out of fashion as a gift idea. Here are some outstanding vinyl box sets for lovers of Neil Young, Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald, Iron Maiden and a certain former Beatle, a book about the beginning of rock at Sun Records and another about The Byrds, tough-looking boots made in collaboration with The Clash, and even a perfume inspired by Whitney Houston.

Always young: Neil Young is releasing his 1972 album "Harvest" as a 50th anniversary edition. Young's fourth solo album remains one of his most beloved, with the songs "Heart of Gold" and "Old Man." The box sets on vinyl and CD boast the original album, three studio outtakes and an unreleased live 1971 BBC solo performance on CD, LP and DVD. Also included is the film "Harvest Time," a previously unseen two-hour documentary capturing the "Harvest" recording sessions. The package also contains a hardbound book and fold-out poster. Cost: \$150.

Boots made for walkin': The Clash and Dr. Martens — two British icons — have gotten together again for some punk-approved footwear. An eight-eye, high-shine boot (\$180) has a military green base, and a three-eye shoe (\$140) has a cherry red base. The heels are marked with The Clash's logo, and each pair comes with a set of dog tags based on those worn by the band, and seven sets of laces inspired by the colors of their most iconic albums. Here's a way to "Rock the Casbah" in style.

Baby rock: You can't talk about the birth of rock 'n' roll without talking about Sun Records, which recorded Elvis Presley, Roy Orbison, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl



DOC MARTENS/AP

Dr. Martens collaborated with The Clash to create a line of shoes. The heels are marked with The Clash's logo and each pair comes equipped with dog tags based on those worn by the band and laces inspired by the colors of their most iconic albums.

Perkins and Johnny Cash. To celebrate Sun's 70th anniversary, read "The Birth of Rock 'n' Roll: The Illustrated History of Sun Records & the 70 Records that Changed the World." It's written by Peter Guralnick and Colin Escott, and has entries for such hits as "Blue Suede Shoes," "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On," "Breathless," "I Walk the Line," "Mystery Train" and "Good Rockin' Tonight." Cost: \$60.

Sir Paul: Paul McCartney's three solo albums have been packaged into a single box. His first, "McCartney," was released in 1970 and features "Every Night," "Junk" and "Maybe I'm Amazed." "McCartney II" came out in 1980 and contained "Coming Up," "Waterfalls" and "Temporary Secretary." The third, in 2020, had tracks "Find My Way" and "Women and Wives." The vinyl versions come in creamy white or black, and there is a three-CD set. They include three photo prints with notes from McCartney about each album. Cost: \$40-100.

Smell like Whitney: Whitney Houston's estate has released a perfume inspired by the singer's "luminous" personality, warmth and zest for life. Simply named "Whitney," the scent features notes of pear and citrus, balanced by gardenia, ylang-ylang and jasmine. A touch of amber grounds the fragrance with a warm, sensual note, according to its maker. The bottle was similarly inspired, taking its tall, sleek silhouette from Houston's "elegant stature." Cost: \$9.95 for a 3 ml sample.



DECCA/AP

The three-LP box set "Ella Fitzgerald: Jukebox Ella: The Complete Verve Singles, Vol. 1" gathers Fitzgerald's singles together for the first time.

Billie & Ella: Limited edition vinyl box sets from legendary jazz vocalists Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald will make anyone's holiday brighter. Never before released on vinyl, the four-LP box collection "Billie Holiday: The Complete Decca Recordings" has 50 tracks, including "Guilty" and "Solitude," and a 20-page booklet. The three-LP box set "Ella Fitzgerald: Jukebox Ella: The Complete Verve Singles, Vol. 1" gathers her singles together for the first time, including "The Sun Forgot to Shine This Morning" and "Hotta Chocolatta." Cost: \$90 for Holiday; \$45 for Fitzgerald.

Iron gift: In honor of the 40th anniversary of Iron Maiden's third album, "The Number of the Beast," the heavy



DOWNTOWN RECORDS/AP

"For The Birds, The Birdsong Project" contains 242 original songs and readings, inspired by or incorporating birdsong, to benefit the National Audubon Society.

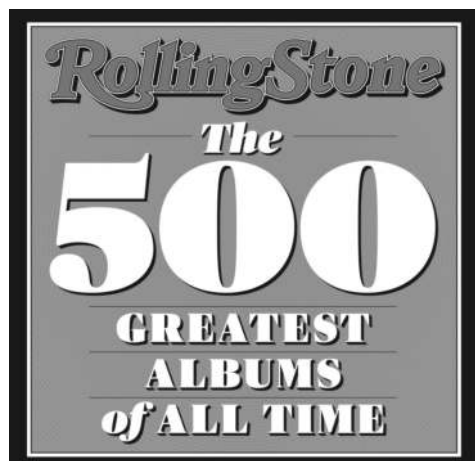
metal kings have released a three-disc vinyl rerelease. That was the album that first featured Bruce Dickinson on vocals and catapulted the band to international stardom, with songs like "Run To the Hills" and "Murders In the Rue Morgue." In the set, the band is also offering for the first time on vinyl their live concert from March 1982 at Hammersmith Odeon in London, "Beast Over Hammersmith." Cost: \$49.50.

Byrds, part one: "The Byrds: 1964-1967" is a 400-page coffee-table photo book that was curated by the band's three surviving founding members. It is available in three versions, signed by the surviving members, Chris Hillman, Roger McGuinn and David Crosby. The book features more than 500 images from legendary photographers such as Henry Diltz, Barry Feinstein, Curt Gunther, Jim Marshall, Linda McCartney, Tom Gundelfinger O'Neal and Guy Webster, as well as restored images from the Columbia Records archives. Cost: \$125-\$1,700.

Birds, part two: Fans of our feathered friends may love a massive, 20-LP set containing 242 recordings of original songs and readings inspired by or incorporating birdsong — all to benefit the National Audubon Society. Some of the artists included in The Birdsong Project are Mark Ronson, Beck, Karen O, Nick Cave, Elvis Costello, Robert Pattinson, Jonathen Franzen, The Flaming Lips, Bobby Cannavale, Greta Gerwig and Ad-Rock. There's also a 60-page book with essays from Randall Poster and Shearwater's Jonathan Meiburg, and 27 artists contributed original paintings and illustrations. Cost: \$400-\$440 depending on outlet.

Top of the charts: Who has the best album in the land? Rolling Stone magazine has waded into this ongoing fraught and contentious debate with "The 500 Greatest Albums of All Time." This is a book that will spark a thousand arguments — is "Superfly" by Curtis Mayfield better than "Red" by Taylor Swift, and is Pearl Jam's "Ten" correctly ranked above "The Bends" by Radiohead?

The magazine got its ranking by polling critics and musicians like Stevie Nicks, Questlove and Beyoncé. Let the debates begin (likely as soon as this gift is unwrapped). Cost: \$50.



ABRAMS BOOKS/AP

Critics and musicians were polled to help Rolling Stone magazine rank the "The 500 Greatest Albums of All Time."

WEEKEND: HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE



Minted offers a variety of personalized puzzles in square and heart-shaped layouts to celebrate family moments.

MINTED/AP

Jigsaw therapy for puzzlers of all ages

By KIM COOK
Associated Press

Jigsaw puzzlers found their happy place, and their people, during the pandemic. Puzzling was already a thing, but soon more groups formed on social media, while popular puzzles disappeared quickly from online and actual shelves. Sales for one big puzzle maker, Ravensburger, soared 370% in the first couple of weeks of lockdown in 2020, compared to sales in the same period the year before. Inventories have mostly recovered, although there are still “sold out” tags on some sites. And even though many people have returned to pre-lockdown life, the love of jigsaw puzzles stuck around. We’re still sorting and assembling, and getting that little kick when we successfully place a piece.

Puzzle pros say assembling the border is the best way to start. Then sort by color, pattern and, in really big puzzles, section. At this year’s World Jigsaw Puzzle Championship in Spain, Alejandro Clemente completed a 500-piece puzzle in just over 34 minutes. Most people take between two and seven hours on a puzzle of that size.

This holiday season, in a world that seems anxious on many fronts, maybe a good gift would be a jigsaw puzzle. A few hours can be spent putting something together, with a beautiful picture the result. Call it piecing together some personal peace or puzzle therapy.



Puzzles of Color, the company started by siblings Ericka Chambers and William Jones, promotes artists of color.

Special interests

One thousand-piece puzzles are perfect for confident puzzlers like Janet Rosen, a lawyer in Evanston, Ill., who loved puzzling as a child and got back into it during the pandemic. A gardener and reader, she was happy to receive a couple of hand-me-down puzzles from a friend: one of vintage gardening books, by Ravensburger, another of classic British book covers.

“I like the challenge, and the concrete method of overcoming the challenge,” she says.

At SeriousPuzzles.com, you’ll find Cavallini & Co’s gorgeous vintage illustrations of constellations, minerals, jellyfish, mushrooms and other collections, offered in gift-worthy reusable canisters. Also at the site is a fun retro Christmas puzzle from Cobble Hill featuring mid-century holiday imagery.

And the retailer offers a collection of dynamic, artsy jigsaws from Puzzles of Color, a company started by Texas siblings Ericka Chambers and William Jones to promote artists of color. The puzzles are standard sizes when finished, so you can easily frame and display them.

Some puzzlers like to sort by separating piece shapes. If that’s you, you’ll have fun with the lineup from Magic Puzzle Company, kick-started during the pandemic.

The puzzles, set in scenes like a magical maze, a sunny cityscape or an island paradise, have surprise shapes like animals and clouds amid the regular pieces. (Magic Puzzles also have a twist in each one, and let’s just say it involves a separate bag of pieces you aren’t meant to open until you’ve completed the main puzzle.)

Puzzle lovers Jena Wolfe and Rachel Hochhauser, colleagues at a Los Angeles creative agency, started the online shop Piecework a few years ago. They came up with the idea after Hochhauser was stuck during bad weather in a Yosemite rental cabin, and passed the time with a bunch of dusty old jigsaw puzzles she found in a cupboard. They wanted to design eye-catching and satisfying thematic puzzles where the art takes center stage.

“We like to balance the components that make a great puzzle — variation in color, objects and textures,” Hochhauser says. “We wanted to create jigsaws that someone would want to gift as a hostess present, or whip out after a dinner party to work on during dessert.”

Going a step further, the duo even created Spotify playlists to accompany many of their puzzles. A still life of moody flower heads gets a soulful, jazz-tinged playlist. One new one, Apres Ski, features ’80s-era alpine gear, a fondue pot and a snowy alpine backdrop. The playlist has a lot of Tears for Fears, TOTO, Flock of Seagulls and similar music to help set the Euro disco vibe.

To create a personalized puzzle, using your own photos, try Minted. There are square and heart-shaped layouts, and it’s a nice way to celebrate family members or a great



MELISSA & DOUG/AP

The sturdy, large pieces make this 48-piece Melissa & Doug floor jigsaw puzzle fun for the family to assemble.

vacation. For those planning a wedding, there are sweet little “reveal” puzzles in which you can ask the recipient to be a bridesmaid, ring bearer or other participant.

Younger kids

The folks at children’s toy company Melissa & Doug have boxed sets of wooden puzzles marked for ages 3 and up. Choose from four dinosaurs or four household pets; the lid serves as an assembling tray, and the wood box makes for easy storage.

The company’s got jigsaws with sound effects, too, to delight the littlest puzzlers. Choose from a farm, firehouse, zoo, orchestra and more, including licensed character tie-ins.

Large, colorful puzzles of the solar system or ocean floor should be fun to assemble: Their finished size is 2-by-3 feet, and their 48 pieces are big and sturdy.

Older kids

Puzzles shaped like a luscious cupcake, a feline friend, or a stack of books might appeal to middle and high schoolers. They’re available at Galison, which also has a cool, 500-piece, double-sided puzzle featuring artist Romare Bearden’s “Jazz II Deluxe” image on one side. On the other is a collage of images done by middle school students in the DreamYard in School Program, which provides residencies and after-school programs to Bronx public schools.

At Woodbests, look for beautiful wooden puzzles in various sizes, of zodiac symbols and famous paintings, or animals, birds and dragons.

Young travelers might like a bundled set of 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzles of Paris, London, New York and San Francisco, at Genuine Fred.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Gibraltar: A wee sliver of Britain

When in southern Spain, I can't resist popping into the British colony of Gibraltar. Gibraltar is hardly signposted in Spain, as if Spain wishes the British colony didn't exist. (Drivers follow highway signs to La Línea, the last Spanish town before the border.) But when you see that famous "Rock of Prudential" standing boldly above the sea, you know it's here to stay.

The 30,000 people living along a 2.5-mile lip of land under the famous and strategic rock are happily English. And quirky Gibraltar is determinedly not Spanish. But while more than 90 percent of its citizens chose to stay with Britain in a 2002 referendum, almost 96 percent chose to stay with the European Union during the 2016 Brexit referendum, showing the complicated position the colony faces.

Along with being "not Spanish," the colony is part English and part ... not. Gibraltarians have the big three-pronged British electrical plugs, their own

currency (it's the pound sterling — but, like the Scots, they have their own version), and their own Web domain (.gi).

Gibraltar's economy, once dominated by the military, is now based mostly on tourism. And that includes quickie weddings — which are nonetheless "legally British."

Rick Steves

Sean Connery got married here. And Beatle fans may remember from the "Ballad of John and Yoko" that the Lenons, too, "got married in Gibraltar near Spain."

While the British military presence is now dwarfed by the British sun-seeker presence, the colony is encrusted with military souvenirs — stout ramparts, war memorials and 30 miles of defense-related tunnels drilled into its rock. As you drive the military roads that switchback to the summit of the rock, you notice big rusted iron rings spiked into the pavement every 20 yards —



RICK STEVES/Rick Steves' Europe

The craggy, famous Rock of Gibraltar overlooks its namesake town, a British colony on the edge of Spain.

designed to enable soldiers to hoist up the giant cannons that once helped the Brits seal off the Mediterranean.

The town of Gibraltar is pretty humble. Spaniards come for duty-free sugar, tobacco and booze. For sightseers, the attraction here is the rock itself, with its viewpoint on the summit, gregarious "apes" (actually a gang of about 200 tailless monkeys — whose presence here supposedly assured the continued British control of the colony) and siege galleries — tunnels drilled for military purposes over the centuries. Several hundred

yards of tunnel are open to visitors, allowing you to hike across the face of the rock and actually peer out of the cannon holes back at Spain. You can ride a cable car to the rock's summit, or get there on a taxi tour. Gibraltar's taxi drivers give a fun circuit around the rock with several stops, grand views and some fun with those precocious monkeys. The lift and the 90-minute taxi tour each cost about \$40.

The Gibraltar business sense is quirky. The hotels are twice as expensive as those in Spain, but not as comfortable. For quite a while now, I've been quick to tell

travelers that English food no longer deserves its bad reputation. But after several Gibraltar visits, I'm now quick to add that the cliché is still accurate in Gibraltar. And the businesses here pad their bottom line by gouging anyone who comes in and spends euros. Businesses are keen to advertise that they accept euros; it's only later that most tourists realize this "convenience" comes with about a 20 percent loss in the exchange rate.

Rick Steves (www.ricksteves.com) writes European guidebooks, hosts travel shows on public TV and radio and organizes European tours. You can email Rick at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

Short December days amp up light displays across Europe

Since 1852, the city of Lyon, France, has had a wonderful way of bringing light to the darkest season of the year. On Dec. 8 of that year, a bronze statue of the Virgin Mary was to be ceremoniously inaugurated at a church on a hill overlooking the town. When a fierce storm forced these plans to be canceled, the citizens of the town instead lit candles, placed them on their windowsills and took to the streets to admire the scene. What started as a spontaneous local celebration is now a major event known as Fête des Lumières, or the Festival of Lights, attracting millions of visitors to France's third-largest city.

From Dec. 8-11, Lyon will once again bathe in light. The Renaissance façades and majestic buildings of the Old Town are the backdrop to 30 grand installations with themes of nature, distant constellations and fantasy worlds. Food and drink stands keep festivalgoers fueled. Entry is free. Online: fetedeslumieres.lyon.fr

Many European cities turn the lights up for several weeks running. Here are some places destined to brighten the short December days:

Amsterdam Light Festival: The 20 light artworks placed in and along the canals of the eastern part of town can be enjoyed in two ways: by means of a walking route, or aboard a ship. The installations are on from 5 p.m.-11 p.m. nightly through Jan. 22. Ticket prices for canal cruises start at 26.50 euros (\$27.55) adults, those for children ages 4-12 begin at 13.25 euros, and children ages 3 and under ride for free. Online: amsterdamlightfestival.com

Winter Wonders in Brussels: Belgium's capital city stylishly celebrates the holiday season with festivities organized around the term Winter Wonders. A Christmas market, skating rink, giant Ferris wheel and illuminated streets are just some of its attractions. Another aspect of its celebrations is a sound and light show projected onto the façade of the Town Hall of the Grand-Place, one of the



iStock

Lyon City Hall and other buildings in the French city's Old Town are illuminated during Fête des Lumières, or the Festival of Lights, which takes place Dec. 8-11 this year.

most majestic squares in Europe. This year's show takes its theme from music from around the world. The 10-minute show can be enjoyed from 5 p.m.-10 p.m. through Jan. 1. The free spectacle takes place once hourly Mondays through Thursdays, and once every half hour Fridays through Sundays. Online: plaisirsdhiver.be/en

Christmas at the Botanic in Edinburgh: Nightfall at the Royal Botanic Garden in Scotland's capital city awakens awe-inspiring light installations from sparkling tunnels of light to bouncing laser beams. Among this year's crop of installations are found giant lilies, floating feathers and one approximating the Northern Lights. Sightings of Father Christmas are not unheard of along the mile-long pathway. Hot chocolate and spicy winter warmers keep bodies warm and spirits high. The garden remains open through Dec. 30. Adult admission starts at 21.50 pounds; ages 4-16 pay 15 pounds and ages 3 and under enter free. Online: tinyurl.com/2yjddppk

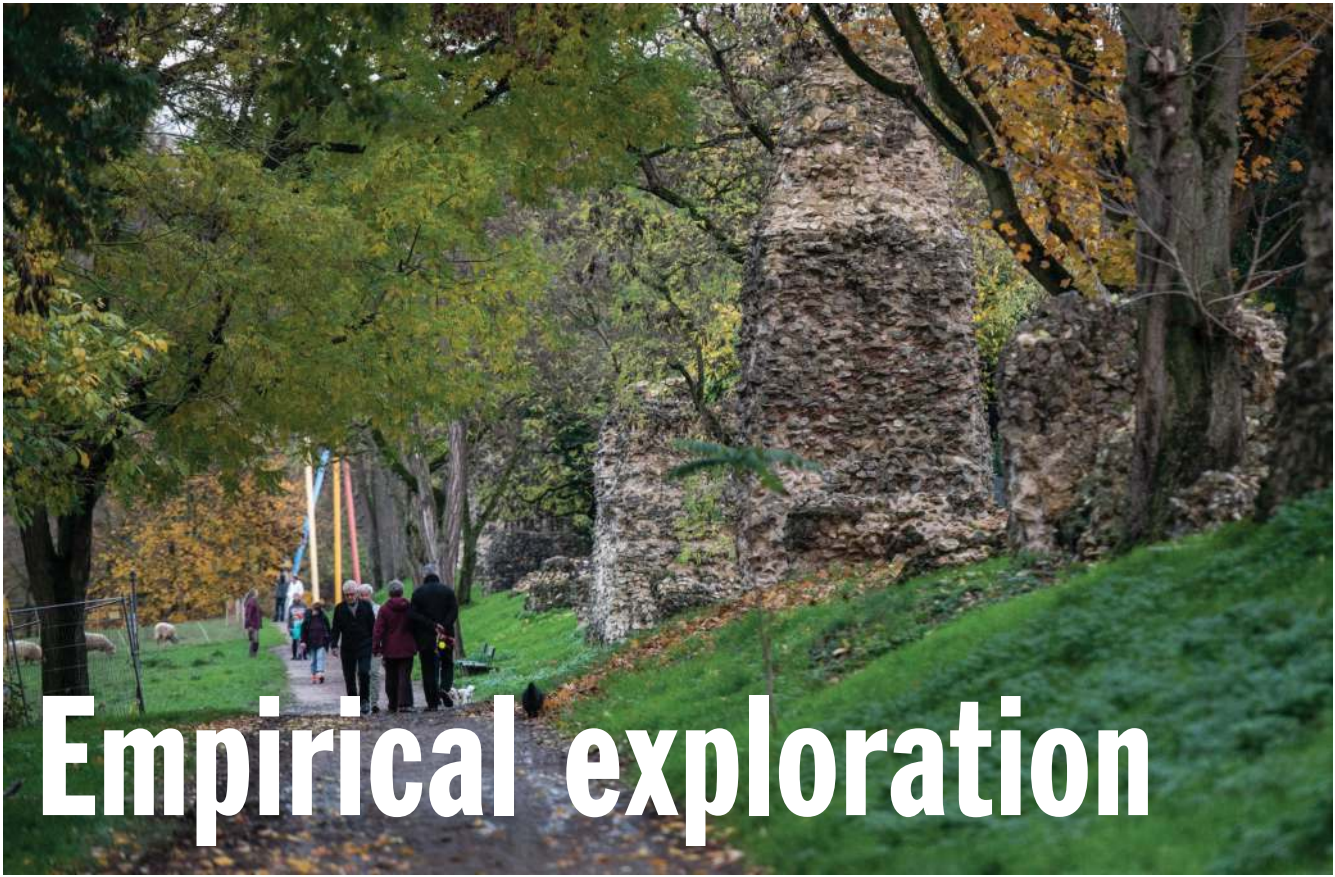
Christmas Garden in Frankfurt: The woodsy area outside Deutsche Bank Park, home stadium to the Eintracht Frankfurt soccer team, undergoes a seasonal transformation with the opening of its Christmas Garden. The attraction, which premiered in 2021, offers a mile-long trail lined with shimmering lights and illuminations. The Christmas Garden is open 4:30 p.m.-10 p.m. most evenings through Jan. 15. Adult ticket prices begin at 19.50 euros, tickets for school-age children start at 15 euros, and those under 5 enter free. Other German cities hosting Christmas Gardens include Berlin, Cologne, Dresden, Hanover, Koblenz, Muenster and Stuttgart. Online: christmas-garden.de/en/frankfurt

Christmas at Kew Gardens in London: Kew Gardens, one of the most extensive and important botanical gardens of the world, is located in the London borough of Richmond upon Thames. The UNESCO-listed site takes on a special aura around the holidays, as new editions of its mesmerizing winter trail are staged. The approximately 1.5-mile walk takes about 75 minutes. Among its sparkling tunnels of light, light-draped trees and a fire garden are found vendors offering seasonal street foods and warming beverages. The garden is open 4:30 p.m.-10 p.m. on most days through Jan. 8. Adult ticket prices begin at 21.50 UK pounds (\$25.90) for visits at off-peak times. Online: kew.org/kew-gardens/whats-on/christmas

Jardin Des Plantes Light Festival in Paris: The fourth edition of this light festival has chosen "Miniature Worlds" as its theme. The installation is open after 6 p.m. on most days through Jan. 15. Entry costs are 17 euros for adults, 14 euros for children ages 3-12 and is free for ages 2 and under. Online: tinyurl.com/cbmc863y

Luci D'Artista in Salerno: Since this event began in 2006 in this small port city on the Amalfi coast south of Naples, some 16 miles of streets, parks and piazzas have been adorned with fun lighting and quirky installations. The free event runs until Jan. 15. Online: lucidartista.it

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



Empirical exploration

People walk past the Roman Rocks, remnants of a Roman aqueduct in Mainz, Germany, on Nov. 18. The aqueduct once delivered more than 8,000 gallons of water per day to Roman military encampments in the city.

PHOTOS BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

Ancient Roman roots, rocks abound in modern-day Mainz

BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

Historical sights beckon to visitors throughout Europe and the German state of Rheinland-Pfalz is no exception, with its numerous castles and palaces that tell the stories of medieval ruling families and long-gone empires.

In the state capital of Mainz, some less conspicuous artifacts offer traces of the city's ancient roots, beginning with its earliest settlement, Mogontiacum, named after the Celtic god Mogo.

The Mainz area didn't become prominent until Roman legionnaires settled there in the first century B.C., thanks to its strategic location along the banks of the Rhine and Main rivers.

The Roman military camp in Mainz is said to have thrived under the Roman politician and military general Drusus the Elder, who led the first major invasion into northern Germania.

When he died, his soldiers built a tower in his memory. Today, the remains of the ancient memorial are considered the oldest building ruins in the city.

Roughly 65 feet tall, two-thirds its original height, the memorial to the general is thought to have been painted and decorated. Standing next to the entry of the legionnaires' fort, it must have been an impressive sight.

The rough surface of the monument today leaves its former appearance to the imagination. However, the column could almost pass as a natural rock formation, which explains its common name, Drusus' Stone.

The tower was constructed with opus caementicium, a kind of early concrete. Despite weath-

ering and the ravages of time, this original core stands firm.

It was used as a watchtower throughout the Middle Ages and during later iterations of the city's defense system as part of the historic Mainz Citadel.

Multiple Roman legions had a headquarters at Mainz, according to Initiative Roman Mainz, a local conservation society.

Later, as the frontier moved north, the town became an administrative and trading center as the capital of a Roman province. Traders and families made a home there as the empire sought to extend its holdings.

As the population increased, so did its appetite for entertainment, evidence of which was unearthed in the late 1990s as the city began expanding its railway station.

Workers found the remains of an ancient Roman theater complex that seated up to 10,000.

Today, regional trains rumble in and out of the adjacent station, right behind what was once the 130-foot-long stage. Colored tiles on the train platform show the extent of the original theater.

A few miles away, construction of an indoor shopping mall and adjacent underground parking garage in early 2000 brought to light an even more impressive archaeological treasure in the city center.

Just steps from Mainz's magnificent sandstone cathedral lies the highlight of a journey to the Roman roots of this German city, the Isis and Mater Magna shrine.

As Roman life expanded north, well-traveled soldiers and foreign recruits brought a pantheon of oriental gods and goddesses to pagan Germania.

Inscriptions found at the Mainz

On the QT

Directions: All four Roman sites are in central Mainz. The Isis and Mater Magna shrine is at Roemerpassage 1. For easy access to the Roman theater and Drusus' Stone, paid and time-limited parking is available on the Mainz Citadel grounds, or take regional trains connecting to Roemisches Theater station. The Roman Rocks are best reached by car via the adjacent parking lot or the Roemersteine bus and surface rail stop.

Times: The only time-limited site is the Isis and Mater Magna shrine, which is open Monday to Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Cost: Admission to all sites is free. The historic preservation society is accepting donations.

Information: The local preservation society offers comprehensive info on the sites online at roemisches-mainz.de. The website is in German but can be translated using the Safari or Chrome browsers.

Alexander Riedel

shrine show that military units built the sanctuary in the first century to honor Isis and Mater Magna, goddesses from Egypt and Anatolia, respectively.

After frantic archaeological digs, construction of the shopping mall went ahead. A small fraction of an originally much larger temple compound was made accessible to the public via an underground hall.

Visitors can view some of the artifacts from an elevated walkway. One impressive example is a small figurine of a couple locked in a loving embrace. It is believed to have been offered at the temple by newlyweds seeking the goddesses' blessings.

Those who want to dive deeper into how the Romans came to the Rhine should visit the Museum of Ancient Seafaring, where the



The Roman theater in Mainz, Germany, is next to a train station named after the theater. The ancient venue could seat up to 10,000.



Drusus' Stone at the citadel in Mainz, Germany. The tower commemorates Drusus the Elder, a Roman general who led expeditions into Germania.

remains of five wooden Roman warships are on display.

Like the Isis temple, the boats surfaced from what must have been the river harbor of Mogontiacum in 1980s excavations during construction work at the Hilton hotel.

A final recommended stop on the trail of the empire is what locals call the the Roman Rocks, or Roemersteine in German.

It is easy to see why. A row of 59 weathered rock piles of varying heights lines a foot path



A sheep grazes next to the remnants of a Roman aqueduct.

near the Johannes Gutenberg University botanical gardens.

They were once part of an architectural marvel of its time: the highest aqueduct north of the Alps.

Constructed around A.D. 70, the aqueduct served as a show of Rome's engineering prowess and is estimated to have transported up to 8,000 gallons of water per day to the Roman military encampments and baths throughout Mainz, according to the city.

As they may have done 2,000 years ago, families nowadays can take evening walks as sheep graze at the foot of the former aqueduct, a comforting reminder that despite the buzz of progress, some things remain the same.

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Bring on the sugar bomb

Pastries from Pappa Roti bakery in Qatar require a potent coffee pairing

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

Sometimes you just want to break into the control room and crank the levers that make your brain chemicals go boom. That's the appeal of Pappa Roti, a bakery in Doha, Qatar, that I visited after being told they had coffee buns with a stick of butter inside.

It was a simple pitch and the reality didn't disappoint. Eating the bakery's trademark pastries gave me the dopamine blast I expected, with the post-sugar rush crash narrowly averted due to a potent dose of Turkish coffee. Think Four Loko, but the original formula of that energy drink, the one that got banned in multiple states.

Pappa Roti is about 40 minutes from Al Udeid Air Base and the one I visited is part of a huge mall within Al Emadi Financial Square, right by a major highway in Doha.

I learned about Pappa Roti from the spouse of an Air Force

pilot who used to drive to the bakery to pick up orders of two dozen buns at a time for crew members at Al Udeid. The pilot told me his favorite was the Nutella-covered bun, and that one of his crew members raved about the place and swore he'd open a Pappa Roti franchise in America one day.

Pappa Roti started in Malaysia in 2003 and now has more than 400 locations, mostly in Asia, according to the company's website.

The company's signature pastry goes into the oven as little dough balls covered in coffee caramel. When cooked, the buns have a thin, crunchy crust, akin to the fragile snap of a Christmas meringue treat. Inside, the buns are pillowy and chewy, with an interior core of salty butter.

It's a lot, and sometimes too much, especially if you add some calorific options like chocolate syrup, cheese or ice cream.

The sweet shop's somewhat bland motto is "One Bite. Different Expressions," and I could see



AFTER
HOURS
QATAR

Pappa Roti

Address: Al Emadi Financial Square, C Ring Rd, Doha, Qatar
Hours: 8:30 a.m. to midnight daily
Prices: One bun is 12 Qatari riyals (\$3.30), with toppings adding 5 riyals. Coffees and juices are between 20 and 30 riyals, with a shot of espresso going for 16 riyals. Pappa Roti delivers within Doha via the app Talabat.
Information: Online: hamadandsons.com/our-brands/papparoti.html

J.P. Lawrence

how someone else could take a bite of a bun and grimace at the turbocharged excess.

I tried one of my leftover buns later in the day, and my warning is that when the butter cools down, the bun goes from a guilty pleasure to another sad, bread-like reminder of a string of failed diets.



J.P. LAWRENCE/Stars and Stripes

Pappa Roti, a bakery in Doha, Qatar, about a 40-minute drive from Al Udeid Air Base, offers sweet buns filled with sugar and coated in a baked-in crust of coffee caramel.

Pappa Roti also offers cupcakes, milkshakes and juices, all of which I was too sugar-saturated to try.

The menu features many macchiatos, lattes and teas in various permutations. I tried the Turkish coffee and drank most of a cappuccino. Both were sufficiently caffeinated but not exemplary.

The shop's lunchtime clientele

consists mostly of youthful patrons from the nearby office buildings and Filipino airline staff.

Maybe it was my imagination, but their eyes seemed to get wider as they spent more time and ingested more sugary, caffeinated concoctions in that cafe.

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WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

National treasures

Tokyo museum marks 150th anniversary with special exhibit

BY JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

Time is running out to experience the Japanese history and treasures that abound in a special exhibit at the Tokyo National Museum in Ueno Park.

Tokyo National Museum: Its History and National Treasures is housed in the Heiseikan, or special gallery built in 1993 on the occasion of the wedding of Crown Prince Fumihito Akishino.

About 90 national treasures are on display, along with more than 640 important cultural properties, for the first time in 150 years at the museum in Ueno Park.

Visitors can catch a glimpse of the priceless artifacts and treasures until Dec. 11. They include "Cypress Trees," a painting on a folding screen by Kano Eitoku that dates to the late 1500s.

A large portrait of Takami Senseki, a scholar during the Edo

period, is another major work situated among the treasures. It is considered as one of the greatest paintings by Watanabe Kazan (1793-1841).

Tickets were selling fast for each exhibit day, so it took a little website refreshing to finally land one on a weekday soon after the opening, at the first available slot, 9:30 a.m.

Adult admission is 2,000 yen, or about \$14.45, and visitors may either print their QR-coded ticket or display it on their mobile phone at the entrance.

The special exhibit area on the second floor includes eight display categories, including paintings, calligraphy and the Horyuji Treasures, which include more than 300 precious objects, mostly from the 7th and 8th centuries.

"Pitcher with Dragon Head" from the Asuka period, is among the rare items included in the metal works exhibit. You'll also come across gilt bronze Buddhist

On the QT

Location: 13-9 Uenokoen, Taito City, Tokyo 110-8712

Directions: A 10-minute walk from Ueno Station.

Hours: Open daily, except Mondays, from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., until the exhibit ends on Dec. 11. Open until 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

Costs: 2,000 yen for adults; free for students junior high and younger.

Food: There are cafes within or near the museum, and the Ueno area has an abundance of dining options.

Information: Tickets must be reserved online at tohaku150th.jp/ticket.

Juan King

statues, vases and ritual bowls.

Archaeology, lacquerware and a wonderful collection of priceless sword blades, crafted by famous Japanese sword makers from the 10th through the 14th centuries, round out the exhibits on that floor.

I made haste on the second floor because visitors are allotted



PHOTOS BY JUAN KING/Stars and Stripes

Tokyo National Museum in Ueno Park is marking its 150th anniversary by exhibiting a plethora of special treasures.

only an hour to see all its exhibits. Photography is prohibited in the special exhibition area, except near the exit of the last area where I was able to photograph a couple of tall, 12th-century gate guardian statues. Museum staff stood strategically throughout the floor to enforce the rules, including remaining quiet.

Allow yourself extra time to

view the expansive number of regular exhibits, which are also accessible with the price of admission. One area allows you to make your own stamped card copy of kabuki actor Otani Oniji III as the character Yakko Edo-bei, famous during the Edo period.

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Twelfth century gate guardian statues stand inside Tokyo National Museum. The final day of the current special exhibit is Dec. 11.



An ancient coffin at Tokyo National Museum. Photography is prohibited through much of the gallery that houses the temporary exhibits.



Japanese armor and helmets made of iron are displayed.

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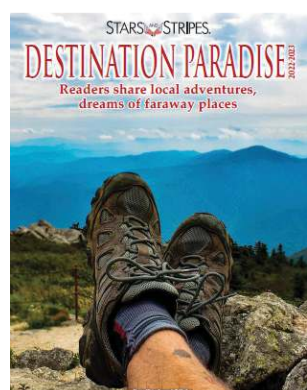
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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

A feast fit to share with friends

Okinawa's Panama Genjin Awase offers a rare all-you-can-consume opportunity

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

When it's too hot to stand over a scorching barbecue grill in the Okinawa summer heat, Panama Genjin Awase has the remedy.

This all-you-can-eat-and-drink restaurant features a wide-ranging menu that focuses on barbecue, small plates and cold beer — perfect for good times out with family and friends.

Panama Genjin is in the small seaside fishing district of Awase, a section of Okinawa city on the island's east-central coast. It features prominently on the main thoroughfare, Route 20, with a giant sign that beckons you to "Grill & Beer."

The exterior looks like a mash-up of a Quonset hut and a Polynesian tiki bar.

At 2,980 yen per person, or about \$21.85, patrons may eat and drink all they want. During the week, there is no time limit, but there's a three-hour limit on Saturdays and before Japanese holidays.

It sounds like a great deal, but there are some rules.

First, each diner in a group may simultaneously order a maximum two dishes per person, so as not to overwhelm the kitchen staff, according to the menu. Latecomers to your party are held to the group time limit.

Patrons are not allowed to shout while drinking or chug any alcohol. Waste a substantial amount of food, and the restaurant will put you on blast on social media.

I visited Panama Genjin Awase with my family on a weekday



PHOTOS BY MATTHEW M. BURKE/Stars and Stripes

Consume all your heart desires with no time limit on weekdays at Panama Genjin Awase in Okinawa city.

evening. We sat outside, which offered a nice breeze after the sun went down. I made a highball with the pitcher of whiskey on our wooden table — the drinks are self-serve.

We started off with some hors d'oeuvres: edamame, crackers with guacamole, tomato slices and smoked cheese. We graduated to Panama Genjin Awase's specialty, jerk chicken, which arrived on a skillet with some sliced sausage and tortilla chips.

The chicken was succulent and delicious. However, it appeared as if the jerk spice was added to the chicken after it was cooked rather than before. That didn't affect the taste, but the spices weren't cooked into the meat for that jerk crust.

The sausage was tender, flavorful and just salty enough to inspire thirst, which was welcome.

The "Mexican salad" in a tortilla bowl was cool and refreshing with fresh vegetables, bursting

with flavor. It was big enough to offer everyone a few bites, which sufficed. Then we tried a salad topped with imitation crab, which was equally tasty.

My son enjoyed the French fries, which were crispy and came with copious amounts of ketchup. Last, we tried the jerk fried chicken. Again, a tasty dish, but it lacked the cooked-in jerk spice.

The menu also offers quesadillas, enchiladas, Buffalo wings, homemade kimchi, chilled noodles and desserts like vanilla ice cream, pancakes and Belgian waffles.

The drink menu is enormous and includes many soft drinks and non-alcoholic drinks. The restaurant also has a wide variety of beer, highballs, chu-hi, umeshu (a Japanese plum wine), shochu and the locally made liquor of choice, awamori. Habu sake shots are 500 yen apiece.

The only drawback to Panama Genjin Awase is that the menu is



Panama Genjin Awase

Location: 3-2-17 Awase, Okinawa, 904-2172, or GPS 26.31597425964102, 127.83049450478676.

Directions: On Route 20 at its intersection with Awase Sanchome, next to the Awase Family Mart.

Hours: Open 5 p.m. to midnight Tuesday through Thursday and 5 p.m. until 1 a.m. on Friday and Saturday.

Prices: 2,980 yen per person, plus add-ons for not included items.

Dress: Casual

Information: Phone: 080-6489-6677

Matthew M. Burke

in Japanese only and seats fill up fast even during the week, so reservations are recommended.

burke.matt@stripes.com
Twitter: @MatthewMBurke1



Panama Genjin Awase's tasty jerk fried chicken arrives at the table in a hot skillet.



The smoked sausage was tender and flavorful.



The Mexican salad in a tortilla bowl is a crowd pleaser and includes fresh vegetables.



Smoked cheese is one of many delicious appetizers offered at the all-you-can-consume eatery.

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WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

Which type of Christmas tree is greener?

Both real and artificial kinds have environmental benefits

By ALLYSON CHIU
The Washington Post

Many American households are beginning to prepare for one of the biggest holidays of the year: Christmas. And for those who celebrate, that often means figuring out what to do about a tree — the time-honored centerpiece of the season's festivities.

What type of tree you choose largely comes down to personal preference. For many people, a real tree represents tradition — a chance to re-create memories of finding “The One” and hauling it home from the forest or a neighborhood tree lot — with a fresh scent that helps create a holiday atmosphere. On the other hand, artificial trees offer convenience, since they can be reused year after year and typically come with built-in lights or decorations.

But with more consumers becoming increasingly concerned about their purchases' environmental impact, you might be wondering which type of Christmas tree is more planet-friendly. Here's what you need to know when it comes to whether real or artificial trees are better for the environment:

The argument for real trees

While you might worry that chopping down tens of millions of trees each year amounts to an environmental nightmare, a real Christmas tree can be more sustainable than an artificial one, says Bill Ulfelder, executive director of the Nature Conservancy in New York.

“There should be no remorse, no guilt, like, ‘Oh my goodness, it's a cut tree.’ It's absolutely the contrary,” says Ulfelder, who has a master's degree in forestry. “Trees are a renewable resource. When they're being cut, they're being harvested in ways that they're being replanted, so it's a great renewable resource that provides lots of environmental, conservation and nature benefits.”

For one, living trees absorb carbon dioxide — a main contributor to global warming — from the air and release oxygen. It can take at least seven years to grow a Christmas tree to its typical height of between six and seven feet, according to the National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA), a trade group that in part represents growers and sellers of real trees. While estimates can vary significantly, one study suggests that growing Christmas trees may sequester nearly a ton of carbon dioxide per acre, according to the Sightline Institute. What happens to that carbon depends on how these trees are treated once they're cut and discarded.

As these trees grow, not only do they provide clean air, but they can also serve as wildlife habitats, help improve water quality and slow erosion, and preserve green spaces. Christmas trees are often grown on hillsides that wouldn't be suitable for farming other types of crops and for every tree harvested, one to three seedlings are planted the following spring, according to NCTA.



iStock photos

Real trees, such as those lovingly selected from a Christmas tree farm, provide shelter for wildlife and act as carbon sinks for years. Artificial trees, though, can be reused for many years.

What's more, real trees can be repurposed in ways that continue to benefit the environment even after they're no longer living. Cities such as New York and D.C. have municipal programs that collect dead Christmas trees and turn them into mulch. The trees can also be used to prevent dune erosion or sunken in ponds and lakes to create natural habitats for freshwater wildlife, Ulfelder says.

“There's life for [real] Christmas trees after Christmas,” he says.

But Ulfelder and other experts recognize that there is an environmental cost to farming and distributing real trees. Growing trees requires water and, in many cases, fertilizers and pesticides. On top of that, harvesting trees and shipping them from farms to stores or lots can produce emissions.

Still, real trees may be the preferred choice over artificial ones when it comes to overall sustainability, which also takes into account economic and social impacts, says Bert Cregg, a professor of horticulture and forestry at Michigan State University. “That's where I think the real trees are head and shoulders above” artificial trees, Cregg says.

There are nearly 15,000 Christmas tree farms in the United States, the vast majority of which are family-owned operations, and the industry provides full or part-time employment to more than 100,000 people, according to NCTA.

Going artificial

Most of the artificial trees sold in the U.S. are manufactured in China, according to NCTA, citing data from the U.S. Department of Commerce. The trees are typically loaded onto fossil-fuel-burning ocean freighters bound for the U.S., where they are distributed nationwide. But experts say the emissions associated with transporting artificial trees are less significant than what is produced when making them.

Artificial trees are often made of plastic, a petroleum-based material, and steel.



Many trees use polyvinyl chloride, or PVC, which has been linked to health and environmental risks. Trees can also be made of polyethylene, another type of plastic, says Mac Harman, founder and CEO of Balsam Hill, a leading retailer of artificial Christmas trees and holiday decor in the U.S.

Although not much about artificial trees initially sounds Earth-friendly, in certain cases they can be the more environmentally conscious choice, according to the American Christmas Tree Association (ACTA), a nonprofit industry group that represents artificial tree manufacturers.

One 2018 study analyzed real and artificial Christmas trees across different environmental metrics, including global warming potential, primary energy demand and water usage, among others, and found that artificial trees may have less environmental impact if they are reused for at least five years compared to buying a new real tree each year.

“The impact of both types of trees varies based on how far consumers travel to get their tree, how they dispose of their tree (for live trees, landfill, incinerate or compost), and how long consumers use their trees,” according to a summary of the study from ACTA, which released the assessment conducted by WAP Sustainability Consulting.

But another in-depth study released in 2009 concluded that artificial trees would only become better than natural ones if they were used for 20 years.

According to Harman, a Nielsen survey paid for by ACTA found that nearly 50% of artificial tree owners reported planning to use their trees for 10 or more seasons.

He adds that artificial trees also are often given away or donated, which can

extend their life span. The downside, though, is that once these trees are no longer of use to anyone “they do end up mostly in landfills at this point,” he says.

More plastic eventually winding up in landfills should worry consumers, Ulfelder says.

“If you keep artificial trees truly long enough, the carbon footprint may be smaller, but then you've still got plastic and then there's plastic going into the landfill,” he says. “So that's just one way of looking at the comparison, and I think we just need to look at the whole of the nature benefits of the natural trees.”

What you should do

If you're interested in a real tree, Ulfelder recommends trying to buy local whenever possible. Driving a long distance in a gas-guzzling car to get to a farm or seller can be a significant source of emissions. Buying your tree from a farm or lot in your area can also help support the local economy. The top Christmas tree producing states include Oregon, North Carolina, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Washington, according to NCTA.

Looking for an organically grown tree is an additional step you can take to help the environment, Ulfelder says.

The U.S. Forest Service also sells permits to people who want to cut down their own tree. “For every tree that is found, cut and carried home as a holiday fixture, you're also contributing to the overall forest health,” according to a government website selling the permits.

Buying a living tree, or one that can be replanted outdoors, is another option. “The big trick is getting the tree to live afterward,” Cregg says.

If you have a living tree, it's critical not to keep it inside your home for too long, especially if you're in northern parts of the country, or it may begin to lose its ability to withstand cold temperatures, he says. He suggests leaving the tree up for two weeks at most before moving it to an unheated garage or patio until springtime. “Then, you can plant it just like your normal spring planting routine.”

It's also important to take care of real trees, Cregg says. The trees need a lot of water and he recommends checking your tree stand daily to make sure your tree isn't drying out.

And how you dispose of your real tree matters. “If people put the tree in a bonfire, all that carbon is back in the atmosphere,” Cregg says.

If you're planning to mulch your tree, make sure to remove any decorations, Ulfelder says. Leftover ornaments, lights or pieces of tinsel can create a headache for mulchers.

For those who prefer artificial trees, try to keep them in use and out of landfills for as long as possible.

And although real and artificial trees can have varying impacts, experts say it's important to consider this holiday decision in the context of other personal choices that can contribute to climate change.

“At the end of the day, assuming that an artificial tree is used for at least five years, neither tree has a significant impact on the environment when compared to other activities of daily living like driving a car,” Harman says.

WEEKEND: BOOKS

Bob Dylan shares his 'Philosophy'

New book about songwriting is fascinating, amusing, unexpected

BY JON BREAM
Star Tribune

Bob Dylan has thrown us another curveball. Surprise! Surprise!

His just-published third book, "The Philosophy of Modern Song," promised to offer Dylan's insights into the nature of popular music. Actually, the breezy book reads more like a late-night, old-school, once-hipster DJ riffing on dozens of songs you may or may not know.

The Nobel Prize winner for literature (for his songs, not his prose) has given us a 338-page, photo-heavy hodgepodge that is part criticism, part social commentary, part pulp fiction, part comedy, part rebaked Wikipedia and, indeed, part philosophy. It's informative, sometimes fascinating, occasionally insightful, generally entertaining and, of course, totally Dylanesque.

In the book, contemporary music's greatest songwriter offers his take on 66 tunes, ranging from Stephen Foster's not-exactly-modern "Nelly Was a Lady" (1849) to Warren Zevon's "Dirty Life and Times" (2003). Dylan tackles pieces by big names like Little Richard, Ray Charles, the Who, the Clash and Cher, as well as standards and blues, bluegrass and country numbers.

Dylan's short essays sometimes read like pulpy two-page movie treatments inspired by the lyrics. But that is probably not what readers expect from this book.

The Hall of Famer riffing in prose is often as appealing — and enigmatic — as his riffing in music.

Commenting on the Eagles' "Witchy Woman," he warns whoever encounters her: "Let me tell you brother, better watch yourself. You were once a diamond in the rough, had a clear conscience and clean hands — now you're a self-admiring unchivalrous worthless fellow with an evil nature — the scum of the earth, and she's had it up to here with you. What are the odds you'll survive?"

Oftentimes the Minnesota icon offers background on the artist, sometimes relevant and sometimes not, gleaned by his researchers. (This feels like what he did with his "Theme Time Radio Hour" program on SiriusXM from 2006-09.) For example, in a chapter on Ricky Nelson's "Poor Little Fool" (1958), Dylan mentions various songs about fools and then talks about Nelson's showbiz background in TV but never really discusses "Poor Little Fool."

Occasionally Dylan gets distractingly off-key, such as when he turns a discussion of "Mack the Knife," the Brecht-Weill song made into a smash by Bobby Darin in 1959, into a declaration on the greatness of Frank Sinatra, whom he says "just about invented the Roman Catholic Church" while Darin was an altar boy. Or when Dylan's discourse on "Viva Las Vegas" becomes all about Elvis Presley's conniving manager, Colonel Tom Parker, instead of the song.

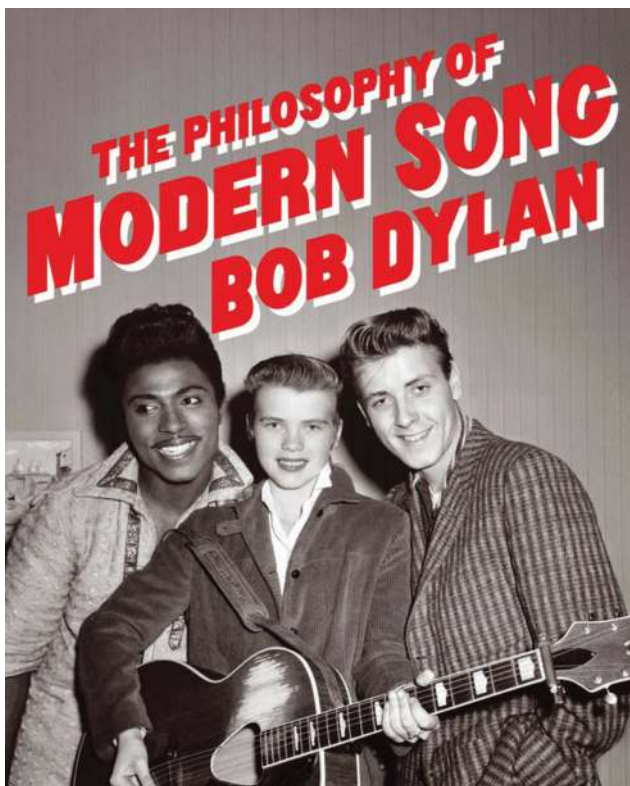
Sometimes, though, Dylan actually analyzes a tune or the recorded version of it. For instance, he explains that Johnny Cash's "Big River" (1957) is a takeoff on Woody Guthrie's "The Biggest Thing That Man Has Ever Done," and the key element to Cash's ditty is "the chain-gang thump of the acoustic rhythm guitar."

In his critique of "Blue Moon" (the Rodgers & Hart piece recorded by Dean Martin in 1964), the bard observ-



GETTY IMAGES/TNS

Bob Dylan smiles during a meeting with the British press on April 28, 1965. His third book, "The Philosophy of Modern Song," is a 338-page, photo-heavy, fascinating hodgepodge.



es "the simplicity of the lyrics makes it universal with enough detail to rescue it from being generic."

Dylan, a noted borrower of melodies from folk and blues, offers lists of pop songs based on classical melodies, including "Can't Help Falling in Love," and songs with English lyrics based on foreign melodies, including "Beyond the Sea."

In his randomly arranged, freewheeling book, Dylan makes all kinds of curious observations:

- "Volare" (1958) could have been the first hallucinogenic song.
- "Ball of Confusion" (1970) was "one of the few non-embarrassing songs of social awareness."
- Hank Williams can sing anything and make the song his own. Willie Nelson would be "the only one who could be considered even in the same neighborhood."
- Jerry Garcia plays guitar "like Charlie Christian and Doc Watson at the same time."
- Putting melodies to diaries doesn't guarantee a heart-felt song.

- Few songs made during the video age went on to become standards "because we are locked into someone else's messaging of the lyrics."
- "Like any other piece of art, songs are not seeking to be understood."
- "Bluegrass is the other side of heavy metal. Both are musical forms steeped in tradition. They are two forms of music that visually and audibly have not changed in decades."

As a critic, he is mostly polite toward the artists but takes a few shots like positing that Elvis Costello's "Pump It Up" (1978) exhausted people. "Too many thoughts, way too wordy," writes Dylan, who has often been accused of being too wordy himself.

The Jokerman isn't above cracking wise. After gushing that Roy Orbison's "Blue Bayou" (1963) is a spectacular song and record, Dylan points out that when former Minnesota Twins announcer Herb Carneal saw a fastball that "blew by you" for a called strike, he declared, "Thank you, Roy Orbison."

There's philosophizing here, though not necessarily about a particular song. Dylan uses the chapter on Edwin Starr's "War" (1970) as an opportunity to preach about war in what's his longest soliloquy in the book.

Dylan turns his chapter on Elvis Presley's "Money Honey" (1956) into a treatise on money and wealth, concluding: "Money don't matter. Nor do the things it can buy. Because no matter how many chairs you have, you only have one ass."

Throughout the book, the master wordsmith pens some indelible lines.

Discussing the traditional tune "Jesse James" (1928), he proclaims: "Criminals can wear badges, army uniforms or even sit in the House of Representatives."

Writing about Johnnie Taylor's "Cheaper to Keep Her" (1973), he opines: "Marriage without kids is two 'friends with benefits and insurance coverage.'"

Waxing on Carl Perkins' "Blue Suede Shoes" (1956), he predicts: "Carl wrote this song, but if Elvis [Presley] was alive today, he'd be the one to have a deal with Nike."

"The Philosophy of Modern Song" is not the long-promised sequel to 2004's "Chronicles: Volume One," Dylan's formidable but not comprehensive, scattershot memoir. (His first book was the prose poem "Tarantula," published in 1971.) And this new effort is not likely to lead to any distinguished literature awards. But it could take Dylan back to the top of the charts — the bestselling book lists, that is.

WEEKEND: MUSIC

REVIEW

Tom Petty doesn't back down in 1997 Fillmore shows

Collection culls highlights from
legendary residency 25 years ago

BY SCOTT BAUER
Associated Press

Listening to “Live at the Fillmore (1997),” it’s easy to see why Tom Petty said at the time he thought it was a career high point.

This archival release pulls highlights from the final six shows of Petty and the Heartbreakers’ 20-show residency at the San Francisco venue 25 years ago. It serves as a live tour, of sorts, through rock history, with a heavy emphasis on the influences that shaped Petty’s musical DNA.

Anyone expecting a rundown of Petty’s top 40 hits should look elsewhere. Some of his most loved songs are here, of course, most notably a 10-minute jammed-out version of “Mary Jane’s Last Dance.” But this set is more about Petty and the Heartbreakers going farther afield from what made them famous.

Petty cuts a wide swath, covering songs by collaborator and friend Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, the Kinks, Chuck Berry, Bill Withers, the Grateful Dead and more. On the expanded edition, spread over four CDs or six LPs, 35 of the 58 tracks are covers.

There is also a two-CD set with 33 songs, 18 of which are covers.

Blues legend John Lee Hooker and Roger McGuinn, founder of the Byrds, a seminal influence on Petty and his early sound, also make guest appearances.

It’s easy to hear the joy in Petty’s voice both in the songs and in the breezy on-stage banter, most hilariously his announcement that the show was live on the internet: “Whatever that is.”

Tom Petty’s “Live at the Fillmore (1997)” pulls performances from the final six concerts of a 20-show residency.

Martyn Atkins



WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Switching it up

Pokémon, Bayonetta 3 show Nintendo platform’s diversity of exclusive titles

BY SAMUEL WEINSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

With the console wars heating up, it is worth wondering where Nintendo’s Switch stands.

As PlayStation and Xbox duke it out over Call of Duty, Nintendo has been publishing platform exclusive after platform exclusive — ranging from family friendly to mature.

But how do these games hold up?

Pokémon

With decades of Pokémon experience, I was prepared to once again catch them all. But since I wanted to write a timely review. I decided to catch some, level up a few and beat the story-line quickly.

The story begins with your character attending his first day of school.

You’re then introduced to three different Pokémon: a fire type; a water type; a grass type. I went with the fire type crocodile, Fuecoco. (A strong choice for players, since he will be a dual-type Pokémon by the final evolution.)

After picking your Pokémon, you are introduced to Arven, a character whose request will send you on a series of side missions. You then trot your way to the center of the map where the academy is conveniently located.

Outside the campus is a bunch of bullies whom you can choose to confront. They introduce themselves as Team Star.

After familiarizing yourself with the campus, you go back to your dorm room and sleep.

The next morning you attend a ceremony where the director tasks the students with finding their treasure. The “treasure” will be found in three storylines.

The first narrative is the typical path of Pokémon trainers — battling with Pokémon to become champion.

The second is beating Team Star, but the storyline evolves into understanding why the team exists.

The third plot is finding magical herbs with Arven, which takes you across all parts of the region.

Verdict: Pokémon Violet and Scarlet are must-have games for the Switch. They are crafted perfectly for veteran and novice players.

I appreciated that it was possible to gain experience points to level up Pokémon by having automatic battles with wild Pokémon and capturing new ones.

The storylines themselves were as captivating as they were difficult. This means that if you hope to beat the campaign, you will have to play all storylines and capture a good deal of Pokémon to get to the endgame.

I would recommend Pokémon to anyone with a Switch. However, if you are looking to play something a little more on the wild side, I have another suggestion for you.

Bayonetta 3

When I think of Nintendo-exclusive games, Bayonetta is not the first franchise that comes to mind. I think of Pokémon or something else family friendly.

Bayonetta 3 does not pretend to be that. (Although, if you want a more PG version, you can play in Naïve Angel Mode. I didn’t.)

The game provided a vastly different experience that would change my perception of what is truly a Nintendo game.

First, let me dive into the campaign.

It begins with playing as an alternate version of Bayonetta.

After button-mashing for a little while, Bayonetta is quickly defeated by the mysterious Singularity. This leads Bayonetta’s friend, Viola, to travel to an alternate universe.

In the second universe, a second Bayonetta is introduced and quickly enters a battle against monsters dispatched by the main villain Singularity.

Bayonetta is quickly joined by her friend Jeanne in combat to battle the monsters.

Both Bayonetta and Jeanne retreat into Rodin’s bar. Rodin, the arms dealer from hell, then begins to explain that the monsters aren’t from supernatural



NINTENDO/TNS photos

Bayonetta 3 is the third title about the Umbran witch who faces another threat to humanity.



Pokémon Violet and Scarlet are must-have Switch titles, and are suitable for newbies and veterans.

plains of existence. Viola then introduces herself and explains where the monsters come from and the threat to their world posed by Singularity.

Viola presents a solution to the second Bayonetta and Jeanne to find gears that can help defeat Singularity.

The campaign ensues from there.

Verdict: The rest of the campaign is a hack-and-slash adventure that tests your ability to button-mash through some difficult challenges.

As you traverse through bosses and hordes of minions, you will find that Bayonetta has unique outfit choices.

There is a better part of a level where Bayonetta wears a revealing swimsuit while dancing on a giant spider.

This doesn’t detract from the

multiverse plot that will keep you entertained, but I wouldn’t recommend this for younger audiences if you have an issue with nudity.

I would buy this game if you were looking to play a mature Nintendo exclusive.

With that said, why combine two reviews into one?

It’s because these two games demonstrate the complexity of Nintendo’s overall situation in the console war — which is waged largely between Microsoft and Sony.

While Xbox and PlayStation owners battle over the teraflops of processing power that their respective consoles display, Nintendo is fending for itself pretty well.

Nintendo’s vitality comes from appealing to wide audiences with memorable characters and ga-

meplay, which these games accomplish.

Pokémon succeeds easily with its story, familiar gameplay and constantly improving features.

Bayonetta is truly for a unique audience and doesn’t fit the mold that Nintendo generally offers. Yet Bayonetta proudly waves its banner as a Nintendo exclusive, regardless of first appearing on Xbox and PlayStation.

Bayonetta’s existence on the Switch shows that Nintendo is willing to go outside the realm of family-friendly games to ensure that the company appeals to a vast audience.

Each game, though quite different, demonstrates the high quality of a Nintendo exclusive.

Platform: Nintendo Switch

Online: platinumgames.com/games/bayonetta-3; scarletviolet.pokemon.com

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

Season's streaming

Don't miss a tinsel-strewn moment with this ultimate guide to new holiday films

By AMANDA KONDOLOJY
Orlando Sentinel

Streamers like Netflix, HBO Max, Disney+ and more are getting into the holiday spirit early this season, with merry and bright new movies releasing now through the end of the year. If you're looking to settle in for some feel-good holiday films, here's your ultimate guide to what's streaming. All movies are now available unless otherwise indicated.

Apple TV+
"Spirited": This musical upending of "A Christmas Carol" finds the Ghost of Christmas Present (Will Ferrell) finding the wrong Scrooge in Clint Briggs (Ryan Reynolds), who instead ends up reexamining his own past, present and future.

Discovery+
"A Christmas Open House": Sparks fly when Atlanta property stager Melissa Norwood (Katie Stevens) reconnects with her old high school crush, real estate agent David Phelps, to sell her mom's old home before the holidays. However, complications arise and with the Christmas deadline looming, will these two find their happily ever after in time for the holidays?

"Designing Christmas": Interior designer Stella (Jessica Szohr) harbors complicated feelings for contractor Pablo (Marco Grazzini), who co-hosts a popular home renovation show with her. Although Stella is planning her wedding with fiancé Jack (My-kee Selkin), she is having second thoughts, especially after production delays create more time with Pablo.

"A Gingerbread Christmas": Hazel Stanley (Tiya Sircar) is

hoping to save the family bakery by winning \$100,000 in a gingerbread house competition led by food celebrity Mark Clemmons (Duff Goldman). However, will an unexpected romance with local contractor James Meadows (Marc Bendavid) tear everything apart?

"One Delicious Christmas": Abby Richmond (Vanessa Marano) inherits a struggling restaurant and needs to secure an investment from restaurant mogul Alexandra Grandfield (Kathy Maloney) to keep it going in the wake of a bad review by Tom Kingsley (Bobby Flay). In response, Abby hires hot-shot chef Preston Weaver (Alex Mallari Jr.) to shake up the menu, and finds love burning in the kitchen. But will it be enough to save the restaurant?

Disney+
"The Santa Clauses": The fan favorite series starring Tim Allen as Scott Calvin returns, with Calvin realizing that he can't be Santa forever, setting out to find a suitable replacement while preparing his family for a new adventure in a life south of the pole.

"The Guardians of the Galaxy Holiday Special": The Guardians



"Scrooge: A Christmas Carol" is another retelling of Dickens' story.



Warner Bros. Entertainment
From left: River Drosche, Julianna Layne, Erinn Hayes and Peter Billingsley star in "A Christmas Story Christmas," now streaming on HBO Max. Billingsley starred as Ralphie in the franchise's original film.



Disney+
Pom Klementieff is back as Mantis in "The Guardians of the Galaxy: Holiday Special."

of the Galaxy get into holiday high jinks, which include getting Star-Lord the perfect gift.

HBO Max
"A Christmas Story Christmas": Peter Billingsley returns as Ralphie, who returns to the house on Cleveland Street to give his kids a magical Christmas like the one he had growing up.

"A Christmas Mystery": Magical Christmas bells, which have protected a small Oregon town for a century, are missing, and it's up to a group of intrepid kids to solve the case, find the bells and restore the Christmas magic.

"Holiday Harmony": Singer-songwriter Gail is on her way to compete in an iHeartRadio Christmas competition, but her car gets stuck in Oklahoma. While there, she meets a local jack-of-all-trades, Jeremy, and mentors a group of misfit kids hoping to perform in a Christmas Eve gala of their own. Gail and Jeremy grow close, and Gail wonders if she can leave this new town behind to pursue her dream.

"A Hollywood Christmas": Up-and-coming filmmaker Jessica has made a name for herself directing Christmas movies, but when network executive Chris-



NBC
In "Mountain Magic Christmas," Dolly Parton journeys into her past.

topher shows up threatening to halt production on her latest movie, Jessica's assistant Reena points out the irony: Jessica isn't just trying to save her Christmas movie, she's actually living in one.

Netflix
"Falling for Christmas": Lindsay Lohan stars as a hotel heiress with a fiancé who suffers total amnesia after a skiing accident and finds herself in the care of a handsome, blue-collar lodge owner (Chord Overstreet) and his young daughter in the days leading up to Christmas.

"Christmas with You": Feeling career burnout, pop star Angelina (Aimee Garcia) escapes to grant a young fan's wish in a small town in New York, where she not only finds the inspiration to revitalize her career but also a shot at true love with a music teacher (Freddie Prinze Jr.).

"The Noel Diary": Bestselling author Jake Turner (Justin Hartley) discovers a diary in his mother's old house at Christmas that may hold secrets to his own past and that of Rachel (Barrett Doss), an intriguing young woman on a mission of her own.

"Scrooge: A Christmas Carol": An animated, musical adaptation of Charles Dickens' timeless tale starring Luke Evans, Olivia Colman, Jessie Buckley and Jonathan Pryce.

Peacock
"Dolly Parton's Mountain Magic Christmas": A modern-day movie musical about the making of a network TV special, this film finds Dolly Parton taking a private journey into her past, guided by the mysterious appearances of her personal Three Wise Men. Guest stars include Tom Everett Scott, Ana Gasteyer, Angel Parker, Jimmy Fallon, Willie Nelson, Billy Ray Cyrus, Jimmie Allen, Zach Williams and Miley Cyrus.

Prime Video
"Something from Tiffany's": Rachel and Gary (Zoey Deutch, Ray Nicholson) are a happy New York couple not quite ready for that big commitment. However, when a gift mix-up with another couple causes all of their paths to cross, it sets off a series of twists and unexpected discoveries that lead them where they're truly meant to be. Streaming Dec. 9

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

‘Violent Night’ slices into holiday spirit

Alt-Christmas action comedy features a sociopathic Santa with a desire to hurt people

BY MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

The holiday season is upon us and how better to celebrate than watching Santa slip several pool balls into a Christmas stocking, swing them in the air menacingly and see him cave in someone’s face?

Such is “Violent Night,” a film that clearly no one wanted but somehow nicely acts as a chaser to all the sticky sentimentality this time of year. It is billed as an “alt-Christmas action-comedy” and it may be a litmus test of who your real tribe is: If you think watching Santa try to strangle a guy with Christmas lights is funny, this is the film for you.

Directed by Tommy Wirkola, “Violent Night” has taken the season’s naughty or nice dichotomy deeply to heart, offering pounds of gore and wounds that spurt mini-fountains of blood along with tooth-aching sweetness about believing in Santa and the true meaning of Christmas.

It’s easy to initially dismiss it as an “SNL” digital short that got high on its own tinsel, but there is a sort of perverse glee to seeing Santa suck on the tip of a candy cane until it is a sharp shard and then plunge it into a bad guy’s neck. Isn’t it time for Kris Kringle as a sociopath?

Few people can balance all these demands as Santa other than David Harbour, who specializes in gruff-on-the-outside, sweet-on-the-inside teddy bears. This time, his beard soaked in blood, he



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

David Harbour, left, must escape from anti-Christmas madman John Leguizamo, right, and his gang and save the family they’ve taken hostage in “Violent Night.”

must save an ultra-rich family from a murderous group of home invaders with automatic weapons and military training.

On his side: “Christmas magic,” which he reveals multiple times he does not understand and which allows the screenwriters — Pat Casey and Josh Miller — a yuletide-sized logical loophole. They’ve even given Santa an origin story as a centuries-old Viking raider with a fondness for crushing skulls with a hammer. He’d be on the naughty list, naturally.

We initially meet Santa in the present

day at an English pub. It’s Christmas Eve and he’s hammered. There are other men dressed as Santas this night, but they’re just pretenders, like “Bad Santa.” He’s the real thing.

Tonight, Santa is worn out and fed up. The children these days just demand more and more presents — just grubby consumers. He even calls them junkies.

“I forgot why I started doing it in the first place,” he says. “Maybe this is my last year.”

During his rounds, he happens to linger

too long at the Lightstone family compound in Connecticut. A ruthless gang has just stormed inside hoping to relieve the family of \$300 million and trapping Santa with just his magic bag of presents and a pent-up desire to hurt people.

John Leguizamo, so often the comedy relief in films, here is as heavy as it gets, an anti-Christmas madman who tortures with a nutcracker and gets some of the best over-the-top lines like “Christmas dies tonight” and “Time to kill Santa.” The film soon moves into “Die Hard” territory as terrorists play cat-and-mouse with a good guy inside the building.

Santa connects with one of the hostages — a little girl (Leah Brady, sparkling like an ornament) — who still believes in Santa.

“You are more than the presents you bring,” she tells him.

And so he proves that Christmas is indeed alive by systematically murdering every single bad guy and girl with a sled-gehammer, aided by his new friend’s “Home Alone” boobytrapping skills and all to a soundtrack of Christmas songs by Burl Ives, Bryan Adams and Slade.

This is not a Norman Rockwell vision of Santa, of course. He has a torso full of tattoos and sutures his own wounds with Christmas tree ornament hooks. He vomits, impales baddies in spiky Christmas decorations and uses the sharp parts of a pair of ice skates with surgical precision. Few films have earned their R rating better. All that’s missing is you, as long as you think it’s time to add a little blood to Christmas?

“Violent Night” is rated R for strong bloody violence, language throughout, sexuality, some nudity and violence. Running time: 112 minutes.

‘Inspection’ a lyrical boot camp story about a Black, gay Marine

BY MARK JENKINS
The Washington Post

Most of “The Inspection” transpires in a U.S. Marine Corps boot camp, the sort of place whose cruelties have been dramatized in movies many times before. Two things distinguish writer-director Elegance Bratton’s lyrical debut feature from its predecessors: a clanking, droning, energizing score by experimental rock band Animal Collective and a central character — based on Bratton himself — who’s Black and gay.

The semi-autobiographical movie is set in 2005, during the military’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” era. Yet Ellis French (Jeremy Pope) is harangued about possibly being a homosexual (or a communist or a druggie) when he arrives for Marine training. He says no, but his life has been defined by his sexuality ever since he was kicked out at 16 by his conservative Christian mother, Inez French (Gabrielle Union,

who’s also one of the film’s executive producers). Nine years later, Ellis is living in a New Jersey homeless shelter when he makes a risky bet on the Marines as his vehicle to a better life.

In a narratively slippery show-er scene that melds fantasy and reality, Ellis is outed. This alienates most of his fellow trainees and unleashes the brutality of drill instructor Laws (Bokeem Woodbine) and his thuggish protege, squad leader Harvey (McCaul Lombardi). That Ellis and Laws are Black and Harvey is white makes no difference, although cultural identities do affect two other characters: Muslim recruit Ismail (Eman Esfandi), who takes almost as much abuse as Ellis, and Latino drill instructor Rosales (Raúl Castillo), whose empathy French misconstrues as romantic interest.

In the boot-camp scenes, the specificity of Ellis’ plight is somewhat blunted by the familiarity of his circumstances. Dic-

tatorial instructors and ostracized recruits have faced off in “Full Metal Jacket” and many other movies. But where most films that recount military training ultimately lead to the battlefield, this one is preparation for a different sort of combat.

Although training sequences comprise the bulk of the movie, they serve foremost to separate and spotlight two poignant book-ends in which Ellis attempts to reconcile with his mother. (“The Inspection” is dedicated to the memory of Bratton’s mom.) In both encounters, minor conflicts spiral into a frenzy as son and mother’s hopes for each other are thwarted.

Pope, a well-regarded stage actor, endows Ellis with drive and dignity. Since the aspiring Marine must hide his feelings — resentment against his vicious superior as well as erotic impulses — Pope conveys the man’s emotions most often with furtive glances and stifled expressions.



A24 Films

Jeremy Pope goes through Marine training in “The Inspection,” inspired by the experience of writer-director Elegance Bratton.

In a smaller but showier role, Union is startling. Known mostly for amiable performances in romantic comedies and action flicks, the actress here is raw and courageously dislikable.

At the end of basic training, Ellis gets the same job the filmmaker did: combat camera specialist, making photographs and videos. That’s an assignment

Bratton pursued into civilian life, where he made “Pier Kids,” a documentary about homeless LGBTQ youths in New York City, and now “The Inspection.” It seems the Marine Corps was a good judge of Bratton’s potential after all.

“The Inspection” is rated R for coarse language throughout, sexuality, some nudity and violence. Running time: 95 minutes.

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

What it's like to live with brain fog

COVID spotlighting the condition, a form of cognitive dysfunction

BY LINDSEY BEVER
The Washington Post

Haze. Slow. Drunk. Lost. These are the words some people use to describe “brain fog.”

The condition, a form of cognitive dysfunction, has been plaguing people with certain chronic illnesses for years. But now, a new wave of people with long-COVID-19 are experiencing it, casting a spotlight on the often debilitating condition.

“It’s a moment where the public and the medical community are realizing that this is real. This is what happens after certain infections,” said Akiko Iwasaki, a professor of immunobiology at Yale University and a co-author of a review article on COVID-19-related cognitive impairment.

“I think it’s their time to be recognized,” she said.

Research shows a majority of people experiencing long-COVID have reported brain fog — a collection of symptoms, including impaired attention, concentration, memory and processing speed. Iwasaki and Michelle Monje, a professor of neurology at Stanford University, examined more than 100 studies relevant to cognitive dysfunction after COVID-19.

They outlined six potential causes for COVID-19-related cognitive dysfunction and concluded that a likely common cause is lung inflammation that causes inflammation in the brain and, subsequently, the dysfunction of neural cells.

Patients who have experienced brain fog, caused by a wide range of conditions, say the effects can be life-altering and devastating. They say it keeps them from many activities such as driving, biking and public speaking. Some have had to alter their work schedules or stop working entirely. And nearly all of them say it has forced them to rely on a notebook — keeping to-do lists that include the most basic tasks such as remembering to eat.

Depending on the underlying cause, there are treatments for brain fog ranging from exercise protocols to cognitive rehabilitation, but there is no method proven to work for all patients.

Dennis Kolson, a neurologist at the Penn Neuro COVID Clinic at the University of Pennsylvania, said that since the clinic opened last year, physicians have evaluated about 350 long-COVID patients for complaints, including



brain fog. He said people uniformly appreciated having the chance to talk with a physician who understands their symptoms.

“Am I like the others? Are you seeing people like me? I get that question every time,” Kolson said. “I say, nearly always, ‘Yes. You’re not alone.’”

Edwin Hall, a 65-year-old Navy veteran from Fulton, Mo., spent 12 days during the summer of 2021 in a medically induced

coma because of COVID-19, breathing with help from a ventilator. Doctors also discovered signs of a probable stroke, though they did not know its timing, he said.

Even now, he said, he wrestles with brain fog. He searched for words to describe it. “Lost,” he said.

He recalled an incident during a Walmart trip not long after his hospitalization that he attributes to brain fog. He and his wife went down separate aisles, and once she was out of sight, he

“You know when you dream and then you wake up and you can almost remember what you were dreaming about, but then as the seconds pass, the dream gets further and further away? That’s kind of what it felt like all the time.”

Angela Hernandez, 36

could not remember whether she told him where she was going or think about how to handle it. “I went into a major panic attack then and there,” he said, adding that he clung to a pillar and waited for his wife to find him.

Earlier this year, he said, his symptoms forced him to retire as the application systems manager for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

the dogs,’ ‘get the mail,’ ‘do the laundry,’ ‘do the dishes,’” he said.

He’s now working with a cognitive therapist, which isn’t covered by insurance, to try to deal with his impairment.

Brain fog also can affect people with myalgic encephalomyelitis (also known as chronic fatigue syndrome), fibromyalgia, postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS), Lyme disease and depression, experts say.

Patients who have undergone chemotherapy also report brain fog, which is often described as “chemo brain.”

The severity and duration vary but the symptoms can have “an adverse effect on occupational, familial and social lives and can result in diminished quality of life,” said Jeffrey Wefel, a professor and chief of neuropsychology at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

Angela Hernandez, 36, of Houston, said she fought through months of brain fog starting in 2018 after four rounds of chemotherapy for ovarian cancer.

“You know when you dream and then you wake up and you can almost remember what you were dreaming about, but then as the seconds pass, the dream gets further and further away?” she said. “That’s kind of what it felt like all the time.”

For Kelsey Botti, it started with a concussion from a snowboarding accident in 2012. Later, Botti, a 32-year-old physical therapist from Pittsburgh, was diagnosed with POTS, a syndrome often characterized by a

fast heart rate, low blood pressure, and oftentimes dizziness, lightheadedness and fainting upon standing — and in some cases, brain fog.

“I wanted to cry because I was so thankful that someone was helping me, and I had a diagnosis and a direction,” she said. “And then I also wanted to cry because the person that I was, was completely gone.”

Botti underwent months of treatment that included medication and a controlled exercise program to build her tolerance. And though there were bumps and emergency room visits along the way, she said that her symptoms have improved.

One challenge in treating brain fog is that patients can appear healthy, but feel terrible, said Robert Wilson, a neurologist with Cleveland Clinic’s Neurological Institute.

“If they don’t find the right medical team to understand them, they will pull away from health care and access health care less, so there are less opportunities for them,” he said.

A barrier to effectively care for patients with brain fog is the stigma attached to it, said Jacqueline Becker, a neuropsychologist in the Mount Sinai Health System in New York City who has studied cognitive impairment after COVID-19.

“The stigma prevents people from getting adequate care where physicians tend to write them off and say, ‘No, you’re young. Don’t worry about it. You’ll get better.’ Or, ‘Look, your brain scan came back as normal. There’s nothing wrong with you,’” she said. “And on the other side of that, you have a patient who is really struggling to function.”

Rachael Grossman, 22, from Chagrin Falls, Ohio, said she started developing symptoms of brain fog after a bout of whooping cough when she was 17. “I was bounced back and forth to so many different physicians, told it was in my head, told it was anxiety,” she said.

Two years later, in 2019, she was diagnosed with POTS. Grossman is now a neuroscience major at Baldwin Wallace University in Berea, Ohio, and works part time as a medical scribe. She said she has to find ways to try to overcome her “haze.”

On bad days, she said she can spend hours studying for a test without retaining a word, struggle to perform at the level she wants to at work, or feel uncomfortable driving because she worries that she may zone out.

“It will continue to affect me, sadly, but it’s just figuring out ways to get around it,” she said.

WEEKEND: FAMILY



Solo, secure #sittervising

Letting kids play alone feels like a revelation to some parents, but shouldn't

By ELIZABETH CHANG
The Washington Post

In a recent child-rearing trend making the rounds on social media, parents have been posting photos of adorable youngsters playing alone and tagging them #sittervising.

The term, coined by Susie Allison, author and creator of the popular blog Busy Toddler, starting taking off in July, when she shared a video titled “The art of sittervising.”

“You do not need to hover over kids while they play OR feel like you absolutely must be playing with them at all times,” she wrote. “You can supervise kids from a seated position.”

Sittervising, of course, is only the latest parenting trend that isn't. Allowing children to entertain themselves is a practice that has existed at least since hunter-gatherer societies. Its popularity probably tells us more about the anxiety-riddled state of privileged parenting than anything else.

But the fact that this concept is attracting such a passionate following offers an opportunity to revisit the reasons kids need solo play and to consider why so many parents seem to believe they must spend all their free time with their children.

Mark Sabbagh is a psychology professor and lead investigator at the Early Experience Lab at Queen's University in Ontario. He agrees that, whatever you call it, encouraging your kids to play on their own is a good idea and always has been.

Kids use play to explore the world, Sabbagh said. “So sometimes they're working through how physics works by building with blocks, or sometimes they're working on how people work in a dramatic play kind of setting.” They've usually got ideas about how things work, he added, so through play, “they're trying out those ideas, and then they're observing the results of those ideas in an environment that they have themselves sculpted.”

This is an important part of development, Sabbagh said. When parents think they need to be involved or impart some kind of lesson, “they can interrupt this natural process of learning.” If you're invited to play, great. But if you aren't, “then let them do their thing,” he said.

Brandi Hawk, an expert in Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), which was developed as an intervention for children who are noncompliant and oppositional, looks at the issue of sittervising through the lens of attachment theory.

“Attachment theory says that there's two really important roles that a caregiver plays in a child's life,” said Hawk, who is the supervising psychologist at the PCIT training center at University of California, Davis,

Children's Hospital. “One is to be a safe haven, so when your child is afraid, scared, upset, they know they can come to you for support.”

But, Hawk added, “the other, equally important piece is to be a secure base from which your kids can explore. So, to be the person that your child can look at and say, ‘you know, my mom or dad is there so I can go off and find out new things.’” Parents who need to be reminded that it's okay for kids to play on their own are hewing closer to the safe haven role than the secure base role.

Kids also grow through measures other than play, said Nancy Darling, chair of the Department of Psychology at Oberlin College who has researched different styles of parenting. One way is watching parents as they do chores or run errands.

“There's a zillion things we learn about being adults by hanging around with our parents when they're not paying attention to us,” Darling said. Allowing children to explore the wider world means “they're not just playing with us, they're playing with other kids, they're playing with dogs, they're playing with random children who they have to learn to negotiate with, or slightly older and slightly younger kids.” And if they play without parents interfering, they have to learn how to solve problems on their own or with the help of other kids, which is empowering.

So where did many parents get the idea that they have to spend all of their time with their kids?

“I think that work at home tends to be undervalued,” Sabbagh said. “So that creates cultural pressure to publicize the work that one's doing,” through blog posts and social media.

Hawk agrees: “There's this real push that if you're a good parent, you should be posting pictures of you and your kids having a great time together,” she said.

Some parents feel obligated to stuff more parenting into fewer hours, Darling said. “One of the things that's changed radically over the last couple of generations of parenting is we spend much less time with our kids, but we focus on them,” she said. “So it's not like you're with your kids and you do something, and they come with you, and they're sort of part of an activity. They are the activity.” That makes any parent who isn't 100% focused on their child when they're together feel like a slacker.

But, Darling points out, that guilt is a feeling based on a misconception about the past. After all, the stay-at-home mothers of yesteryear did not spend every hour after school engaged with their kids.

“I just think we've really upped the stakes of what we say is good parenting, and then we don't give anybody support,” she added. “So, no matter what you do, it's not enough.”

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



True generosity at times means giving 'til it hurts

Here you go again. You're running from store to store, buying baking supplies, twinkle lights, a pineapple Squishmallow for your niece, a Nerf Rival Nemesis Gun for your son and an Amazon Echo Show 5 for your husband. You've got to get home to bake 12 dozen pecan tarts for the base neighborhood cookie exchange, when it dawns on you.

You forgot the butter.

For the second time today, you approach the irresistibly cute Salvation Army bell ringer outside the grocery store. You want to tell the sweet, little, old man freezing his bippy off in the name of the needy, “I gave earlier today,” but you know darned well he doesn't remember and will think you're a cheapskate. So you sort through the gum wrappers and paper clips to see if you can find a few more quarters in your purse.

But you realize that you put all your coins in the kettle during your last trip to the store, so you look for a single or two, only to find that you've only got a five-spot. With trembling hands you fork over the \$5 bill you were hoping to use for a Vente Skinny Peppermint Mocha Latte with extra sprinkles on the way home.

You intentionally hesitate with your hand over the red kettle, wanting the bell ringer and everyone else to see your bill and think, “Wow, she gave five whole dollars.”

“Thank you for your kindness,” the old man says, and you walk into the grocery store feeling good about your decision to feed the poor rather than slurp another overpriced coffee.

In fact, you feel so charitable that you buy a few canned goods, in addition to your stick of butter, to put in the food bank collection at the front of the store. While you're at it, you grab a whiffle ball set to put in the Toys for Tots box.

With a sanctimonious flip of your wrist, you zip your debit card through the reader just as the cashier asks, “Would you like to give a dollar to the Orphaned Kittens' Sweater Knitting Guild?” Seven other impatient customers are in line behind you. The cashier is staring blankly into your eyes.

You think, “Another dollar? Seriously? Don't you remember that I just gave a dollar for the stinking kittens when I was in here an hour ago, for criminy's sake? This is entrapment! Let someone else dress the orphaned kittens! I just want to buy this damned stick of butter and go home!”

As you search your brain for a valid excuse to say “No thanks,” you wonder why you bother searching for bargain gifts when you end up giving so much away.

Charitable organizations raise the bulk of their income between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve, when people are feeling generous. Salvation Army, for example — the largest nongovernmental provider of social services — raised \$520 million last holiday season to fund its programs for the homeless and the poor, and about \$110 million of that came from donations to its iconic red kettles.

Military charities rely on public generosity during giving season, too. The U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program collects toys to give to less fortunate youngsters as a message of hope to encourage them to become responsible, productive, patriotic citizens. Other national military charities that rely on donations to help the military community include The Gary Sinise Foundation, the USO, Fisher House Foundation, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), Homes for Our Troops, Semper Fi & America's Fund and many more.

Is giving season about risking death by trampling to get the best bargain on Hollow Knight for Nintendo Switch at Walmart? Is it about looking good when you drop a bill into the red kettle? Or is it about giving unselfishly to provide for those who are in need?

“Absolutely,” you tell the cashier, realizing that in order to be truly generous, your gift must be no bargain at all.

Read more at themeatandpotatoesoflife.com and in Lisa's book, “The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com.” Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

FAN CLUB

BY JOE DEENEY / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Joe Deeney, of Melrose, Mass., is a supply-chain director for Philips, a health-technology company based in Amsterdam. He's been solving crosswords for as long as he can remember. In 2015 he was solving one he wasn't particularly fond of and thought, I can do better than that! This is Joe's 14th Times crossword and his first Sunday. He has now reached a personal goal — having a puzzle published on every day of the week. — W.S.

ACROSS

1 Tot's rocker

6 Gets lost

12 Squeeze, as a mop

17 Die down

18 Eventual outlet for Lake Victoria

20 Joan of Arc, for one

21 Geomorphiles . . .

23 A little off?

24 Abound (with)

25 Member of a colony

26 Rapture

28 Put down in writing

29 Sad ____

31 Imagophiles . . .

33 Old "The beer of quality" sloganeer, in brief

36 Actress Witherspoon

38 "You wanted to see me?"

39 Cabaret accessories

40 Something you sleep through

42 Sunny-side-up "suns"

45 In stitches

46 Gastrophiles . . .

51 "The Eagle ____ landed"

54 Close out

55 Ready for a drive

56 Rightmost menu heading, often

57 Long campaigns

61 Org. that partners with Lyft and Uber to promote safe ridesharing

62 "Ish"

63 Dextropodophiles . . .

68 Come after

69 Nugget from a noggin

70 Sinister smiles

71 Novosibirsk negative

72 Come out of la-la land with a jolt

74 To whom it is said "You have a grand gift for silence. . . . It makes you quite invaluable as a companion."

78 Small parlor piece?

79 Autotumulophiles . . .

83 Bird-feeder fat

85 Symbol of laziness

86 High winds

87 Actress Rowlands

88 PC component

91 Even slightly

93 "Inside the N.B.A." channel

94 Aurophiles . . .

98 The ____ that bind

100 Certain fluency-building subj.

101 Game with cestas and a pelota

102 ____ Rule, true-crime writer

103 Periphery

107 Tap

109 Chronomechanophiles . . .

112 Feel like [grrrr]

113 Take care of business

114 Goosebump-inducing

115 Actress Kaitlin of "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia"

116 Schnozzes

117 Palatial

20 Secure, as a skiff

22 Zoom

27 Passports, e.g., in brief

30 Private affairs?

31 Pummel, as with snowballs

32 "That was unexpected!"

33 Things Acrobat Reader reads

34 Hill by a loch

35 "Seasons of Love" musical

37 . . . — . . .

41 Seeks attention, in a way

43 "Krazy ____"

44 Sarcastic response to a complaint

45 Longtime NASCAR sponsor

47 Habitat threatened by bleaching

48 Brings up

49 Extra something

50 What might accompany a wink

52 Choral voice

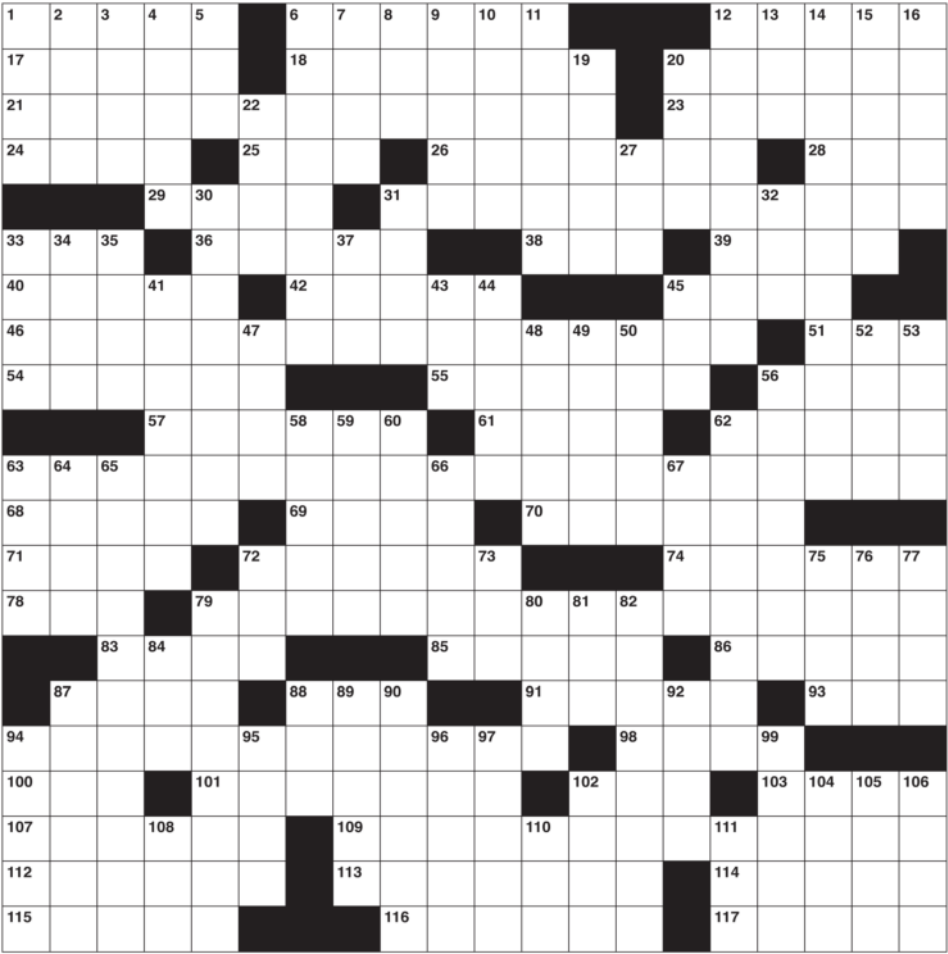
53 Minor disagreement

56 New York university that hosted presidential debates in 2008, 2012 and 2016

58 Word repeated in a classic Energizer slogan

59 Finish by

60 The N.B.A.'s Curry, to fans



- 62 Fall behind the pack

63 Bloke

64 Singer born Eithne Pádraigín Ní Bhraonáin

65 Sub-Saharan pests

66 Can't tolerate

67 Axed

72 Obedience-school command

73 Cooking staple

75 Cooking staple
- 76 Cooking place

77 Fit snugly

79 Announcement of a split decision?

80 Word with trip or test

81 Baseball Hall-of-Famer Mel

82 Shelves for knickknacks

84 Card game shout

87 Preacher's preaching

88 X
- 89 Rings

90 2005 Scott Westerfeld sci-fi novel with the sequel "Pretties"

92 "The Mod Squad" role

94 Painter's primer

95 Home to many Constables and Sargents

96 Like some whiskey barrels

97 Not be straight with
- 99 Ninja Turtles' abode

102 Came down

104 TV girl with the catchphrase "Swiper, no swiping!"

105 Emulate the Cheshire cat

106 Stretched (out)

108 Classic muscle car

110 Co.'s second in command, usually

111 Gunpowder holder

GUNSTON STREET



“Gunston Street” is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



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15 YEARS IN AFGHANISTAN

FACES

Feeling festive

Debbie Gibson embraces Christmas with album, tour

By RODNEY HO
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

It's a bit shocking that pop songstress Debbie Gibson waited more than 35 years into her career to release her first holiday album, "Winterlicious."

But now that she's committed, she's going all in with a holiday tour.

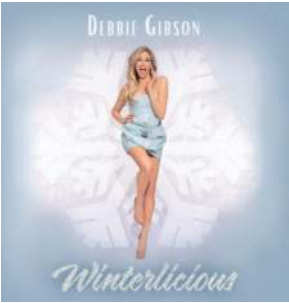
"I always wanted to make a holiday album," Gibson, 52, said during a recent Zoom interview. "I'm just a big fan of timing. The universe deemed this the moment for the second act for me."

In a sense, Gibson has had far more than two acts. Besides teen pop superstar, she's been a Broadway star, a TV show judge and an actress. But her fan base loves her for her hit songs from the late 1980s including "Only In My Dreams," "Shake Your Love," "Out of the Blue" and two No. 1 ballads, "Foolish Beat" and "Lost in Your Eyes."

The Christmas show will be "cozy like those Andy Williams specials," Gibson said. "We might wear jammies doing easy, breezy versions of some of my hits and songs from the holiday album. Break out the s'mores! It's holiday time. There will also be a feeling that is super festive and, dare I say, almost theme park. Good old-fashioned musical numbers mixed in with a 'what the holiday means to everyone' vibe. These venues are smaller so we can really commune with the audience."

The holiday album, a mix of originals and covers, follows her 2021 comeback album "The Body Remembers," which contained the dance hit "Girls Night Out."

The new album includes a frothy original single "Christmas Star" she released a year ago, a duet with her dad Joe on "White



"Winterlicious" contains originals and covers.

Christmas," an original Hanukkah tune ("Illuminate") and a cover of Sammy Davis Jr.'s "Candy Man," a song she first performed in 2020 remotely on "The Talk" for a Halloween episode during the pandemic.

"Winterlicious" also includes a remastered version of "Sleigh Ride," which was on the 1992 "A Very Special Christmas 2" CD benefiting the Special Olympics.

Gibson also reunited with her buddy Joey McIntyre of New Kids on the Block. They co-wrote and recorded "Heartbreak Holiday," which she imagines could be turned into a holiday movie.

"Cheers!," the final cut on the record, is a piano-heavy homage to her mom and manager Diane, who died this year at age 76. Diane helped shepherd Gibson through the minefield of a brutal record business resistant to a teen songwriter and performer. She long preceded the likes of Lorde, Billie Eilish and Olivia Rodrigo.

Gibson is still the youngest female artist to top the Billboard Hot 100 for a song she sang, wrote and produced with "Foolish Beat" in 1988.

"Cheers!" is also "really about all of life's special but simple and profound moments and to all the baristas, artista and each stage-door Johnny," Gibson noted, quoting her own song. "My career and my life is about moments. It's great to have charting singles and awards but at the end of the day, it's about the connections we make with people."

Music, she said, brings people together. "My die-hard Debheads have been brought together through my music and inevitably by each other. They formed their own relationships outside of me. It's raising a glass to those moments and people."



Nick Spanos

Debbie Gibson has released her first holiday album, "Winterlicious," more than 35 years into a career that has included pop stardom, Broadway, TV show judging and acting.

Fleetwood Mac singer-songwriter, keyboardist Christine McVie dies

By HILLEL ITALIE
Associated Press

Christine McVie, the British-born Fleetwood Mac vocalist, songwriter and keyboard player whose cool, soulful contralto helped define such classics as "You Make Loving Fun," "Everywhere" and "Don't Stop," died Wednesday at age 79.

Her death was announced on the band's social media accounts. No other details were immediately provided, but a family statement said she "passed away peacefully at hospital this morning" with family around her after a "short illness."

McVie was a steady presence and personality in a band known for its frequent lineup changes and volatile personalities — notably fellow singer-songwriters Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham.

Her death is the first among Fleetwood Mac's most famous incarnation of McVie, Nicks, Buckingham, drummer Mick Fleetwood and bassist John McVie, Christine's ex-husband. In recent years, the band had

toured without Buckingham, who was kicked out in 2018 and replaced on stage by Mike Campbell and Neil Finn.

Fleetwood Mac started out as a London blues band in the 1960s, and evolved into one of the defining makers of 1970s California pop-rock, with the talents of McVie, Nicks and Buckingham anchored by the rhythm section of Fleetwood and John McVie. During its peak commercial years, from 1975-80, the band sold tens of millions of records and fascinated fans as it transformed personal battles into melodic, compelling songs. The McVies' breakup — along with the split of Nicks and Buckingham — was famously documented on the 1977 release "Rumours," among the best-selling albums of all time.

Fleetwood Mac was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1998, when at the ceremony they played McVie's "Say You Love Me." The group's many other hit singles included Nicks' "Dreams," Buckingham's "Go Your Own Way" and McVie's



AP

Christine McVie, who composed some of Fleetwood Mac's greatest songs, died Wednesday at 79. No cause was given.

"Little Lies." One of McVie's most beloved works, the thoughtful ballad "Songbird," was a showcase for her in concert and covered by Willie Nelson, among others.

The midtempo rocker "Don't Stop," inspired by the end of her marriage, would gain unexpected political relevance when Bill Clinton adopted the song — and its "Don't stop thinking about tomorrow" refrain — as a theme to his 1992 presidential run. The band, which had essentially stopped making albums at the time, reunited to perform at his inauguration gala.

Other news

■ The Rolling Stones plan to release what they're calling their "ultimate live greatest hits album," featuring multiple guest stars, on Feb. 10. The 24-track "GRRR Live!" contains songs recorded Dec. 15, 2012, at the Prudential Center in Newark, N.J. The show included guest appearances by The Black Keys ("Who Do You Love?"), Gary Clark Jr. and John Mayer ("Going Down"), Lady Gaga ("Gimme Shelter"), Mick Taylor ("Midnight Rambler") and hometown hero Bruce Springsteen ("Tumbling Dice"). Shown on pay-per-view in 2012, the concert has not otherwise been available to fans until now.

■ A new production of "The Wiz" is heading out on a national tour next fall before following the yellow brick road to Broadway in 2024. "The Wiz" opened on Broadway in 1975 and won seven Tonys, including best musical. A 1978 movie version starred Diana Ross, Lena Horne and Richard Pryor. Michael Jackson co-starred as the Scarecrow, with Nipsey Russell as the Tin Man and Ted Ross as the Lion.

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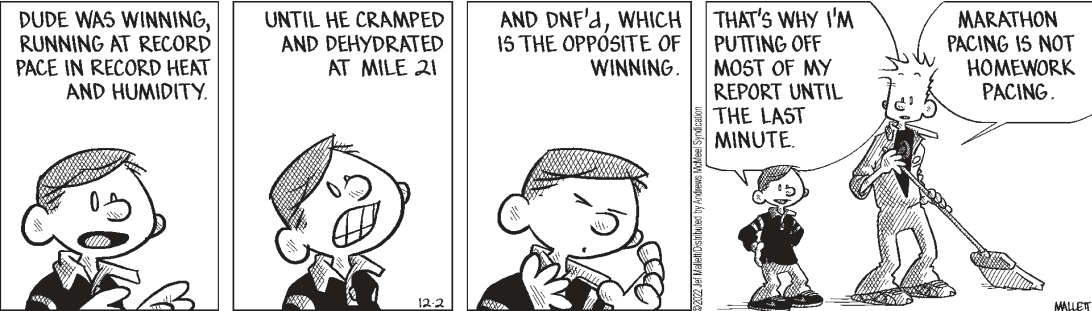
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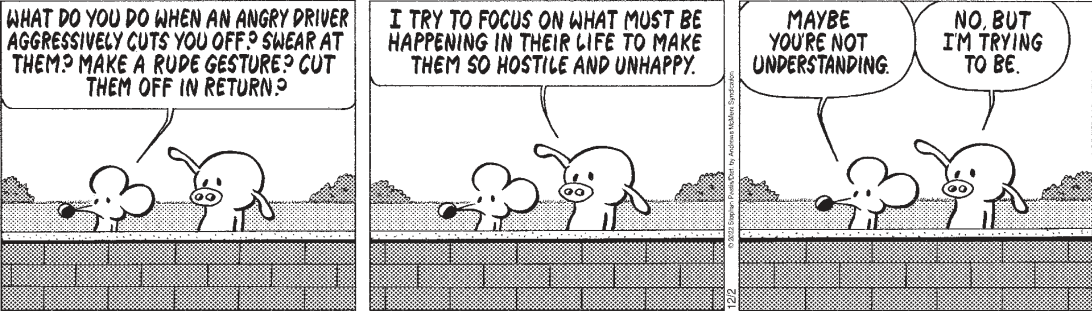
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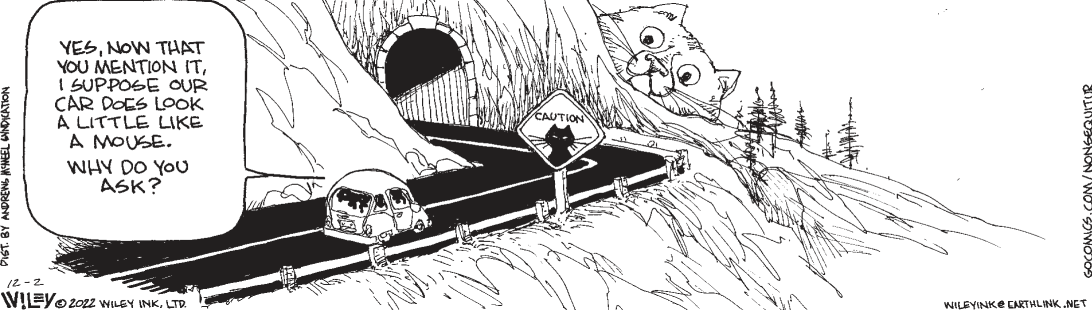
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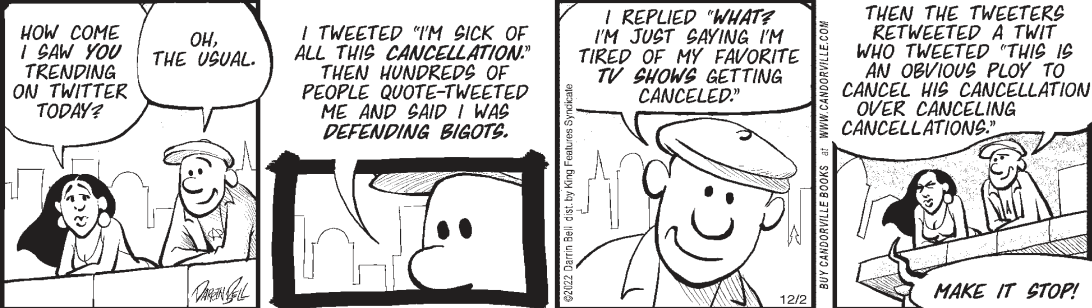
Pearls Before Swine



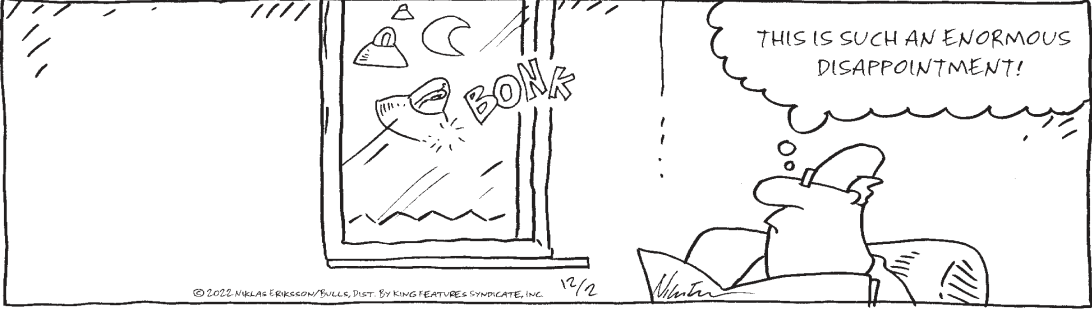
Non Sequitur



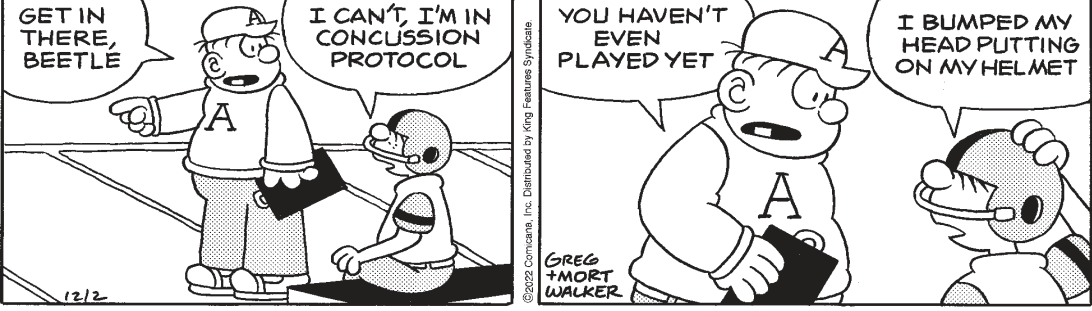
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Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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41				42	43					44	45	
46				47					48			
49				50					51			

- ACROSS
- 50 Yonder item
- 51 Lamb's mama
- 25 Hefty horn
- 26 Clairol's business
- 27 Austen heroine
- 28 Roasting rod
- 30 Lewd material
- 33 Regard as identical
- 34 Detail, briefly
- 36 Exhausted
- 37 Peevish fit
- 38 Takeout request
- 39 Exceeding
- 40 Gumbo veggie
- 42 Hanoi holiday
- 43 Contented sound
- 44 Squabble
- 45 Summer in Arles
- DOWN
- 1 USMC rank
- 2 Bond rating
- 3 Lax
- 4 Vaults
- 5 Shore bird
- 6 "— you kidding?"
- 7 Caviar base
- 8 Legal filings
- 9 Trenches
- 10 Sir Guinness
- 11 Ms. Moore
- 16 Dutch cheese
- 19 Asset
- 20 Kotb of "Today"
- 21 "The Haj" author
- 22 Chef Julia
- 23 Bohemian

Answer to Previous Puzzle

W	A	F	T		S	R	I		P	T	A	S
A	C	L	U		T	I	M		R	O	M	O
I	T	E	M		A	M	P		I	P	A	D
T	I	E	B	A	R		U	D	O	N		
			L	I	T	T	L	E	R	O	C	K
D	E	T	E	R		O	S	E		T	H	Y
E	R	R	S		E	W	E		S	C	A	R
A	G	A		A	R	E		M	E	H	T	A
R	O	C	K	G	A	R	D	E	N			
			T	A	T	S		I	N	S	I	D
F	A	I	R		U	P	S		O	D	I	N
O	B	O	E		R	O	C		R	E	E	D
G	U	N	N		E	D	S		Y	A	M	S

12-2 CRYPTOQUIP

D G M F U R C S D L B S Z M H F X

R V C A R U R O H A R O X K C Z L C C F

I R A G F A U Z L R V Z U D L Z C D F L , D C ' M

Z L D L M I R K C A R I R O O R L C .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I GOT MY BROTHER A SIGNED COPY OF A "LORD OF THE RINGS" BOOK AS A TOLKIEN OF MY APPRECIATION.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals G

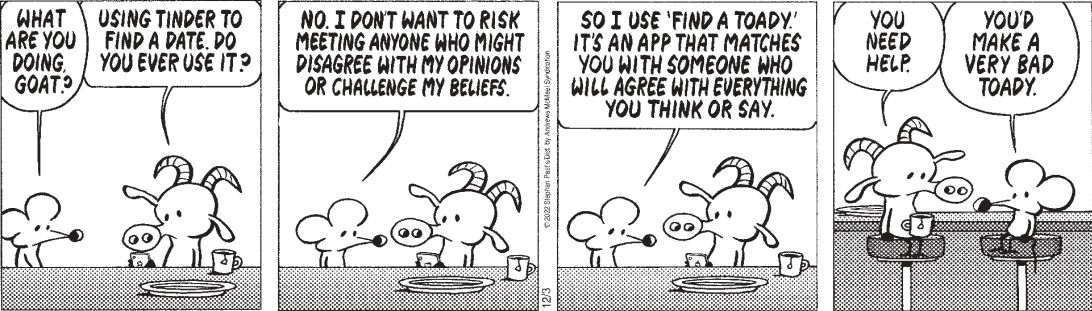
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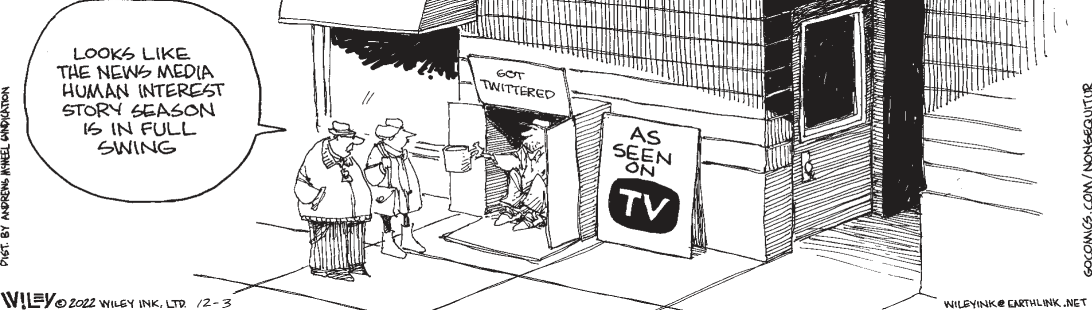
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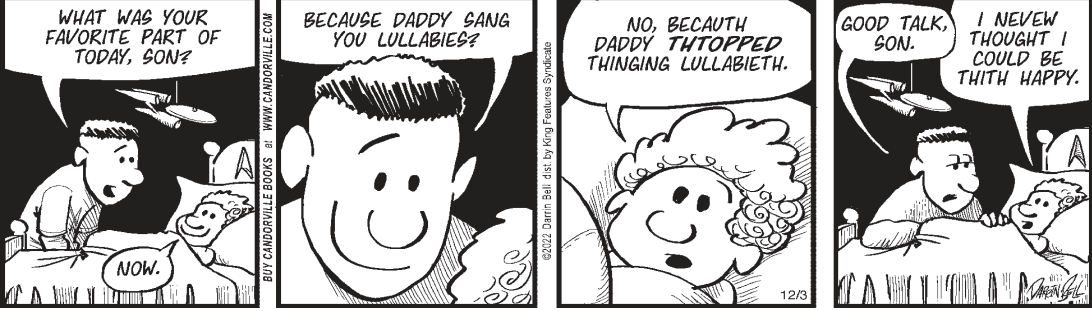
Pearls Before Swine



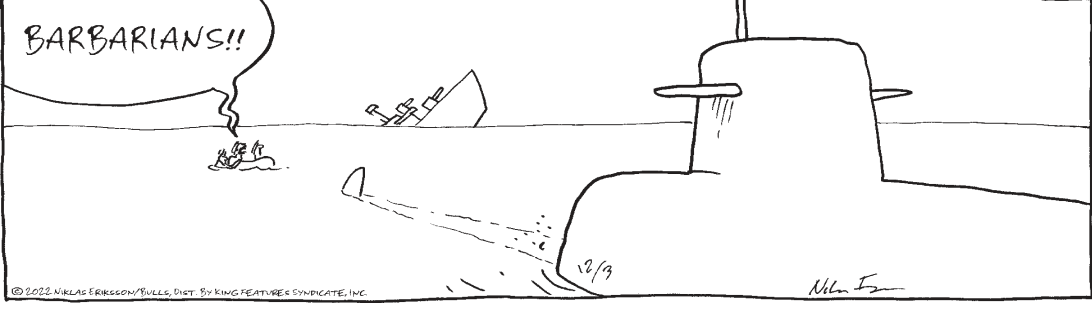
Non Sequitur



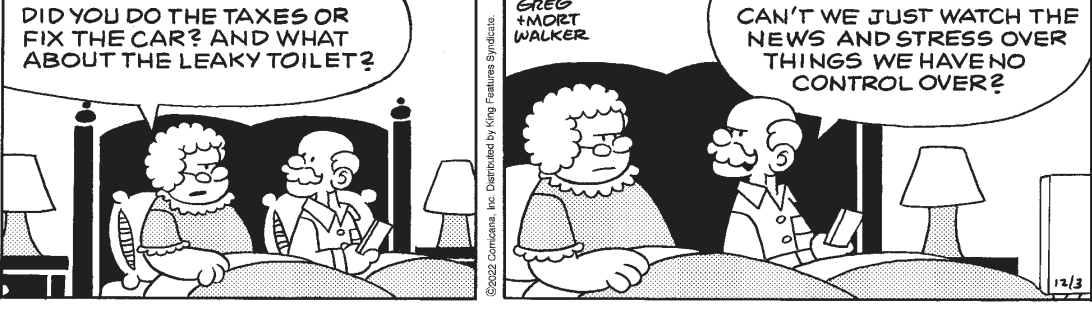
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Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11
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48					49				50			
51					52				53			
54					55				56			

- ACROSS
- 1 Poet of yore
- 5 Fed. workplace monitor
- 9 Small ammo
- 12 Shakespearean king
- 13 Bring up
- 14 Water (Fr.)
- 15 Singer India.—
- 16 Ernie's pal
- 17 Director Ang
- 18 — fide (genuine)
- 19 Hip-hop record producer Gotti
- 20 Armstrong's music
- 21 Convened
- 23 Sch. URL ender
- 25 Fits together
- 28 Emphatic agreement
- 32 Severity
- 33 Expiate
- 34 Sense
- 36 Set aside time for
- 37 Salty expanse
- 38 "Acid"
- 39 Apportion
- 42 GI entertainers
- 44 Bar
- 48 Mensa stats
- 49 Cornfield intruder
- 50 Big fair, for short
- 51 "How's it goin'?"
- 52 Chaste
- 53 Regrettably
- 54 "— the season ..."
- 55 Secondhand
- 56 Prescriptions, for short
- DOWN
- 1 Spill the beans
- 2 Plane-related
- 3 Picnic spoiler
- 4 Ideal residence
- 5 Planetary paths
- 6 Crystal gazer
- 7 Jimmy Stewart film
- 8 Skill
- 9 Composer Bartok
- 10 Folk singer Joan
- 11 Canal zone
- 20 2010 hit single by Nelly
- 22 Haunting
- 24 Bargains
- 25 Hosp. scan
- 26 Aachen article
- 27 Pvt.'s superior
- 29 Thither
- 30 Rock's Brian
- 31 Capitol Hill VIP
- 35 Zodiac sign
- 36 Turned the soil
- 39 Fine spray
- 40 Iso-
- 41 Recipe amts.
- 43 Achy
- 45 Car bar
- 46 Apple tablet
- 47 Defeat
- 49 PC's brain

Answer to Previous Puzzle

P	A	C		S	T	A	R		B	R	A	D
F	A	A		A	E	R	O		R	U	L	E
C	A	R	E	F	R	E	E		I	T	E	M
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H	U	L	A	S		C	A	L	F			
O	R	E	M		T	H	R	U	S	H	E	S
D	I	S		S	U	I	T	S		A	M	P
A	S	S	E	M	B	L	E	Y		S	I	M
			Q	U	A	D			S	P	R	A
S	T	O	U	T			O	P	E	C		
N	O	V	A			T	A	K	E	C	A	R
I	G	E	T			E	A	R	N		R	O
T	O	R	E			T	H	A	T		E	W

12-3 CRYPTOQUIP

ZRQJT AOMHALG AZ MVG HVGII

LJMHV NGMEGGQ MVG MEA

VAYIGI RQ MVG NJYQ: J

IMJNTGLJMG IMJTGLJMG.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF SOMETHING HAS YOU EXTREMELY RELUCTANT TO PERFORM AN EXAMINATION, IT'S AN INSPECT REPELLENT.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: I equals S



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OPINION

Jury delivered truth: Jan. 6 was seditious conspiracy

By HARRY LITMAN
Los Angeles Times

The conviction of Oath Keepers leaders Stewart Rhodes and Kelly Meggs on charges of seditious conspiracy is a historic legal victory for the Department of Justice, but it is much more than that as well.

Tuesday's verdicts in federal court in Washington will go a long way toward defining the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol melee, once and for all, as a heinous, purposeful crime orchestrated by enemies of democracy.

The Justice Department richly deserves a victory lap for its efforts. Seditious conspiracy is a notoriously difficult charge to prove — the last successful prosecution was in 1995 — and it has a checkered history in the department.

In fact, it was only after contentious internal debate that the department greenlighted the charges in Jan. 6 cases as righteous and winnable.

Even so, only Rhodes and Meggs were convicted on the sedition count. All five of the defendants were found guilty of obstructing a government proceeding, but none was convicted on all the various charges the government brought.

For some observers, the mix of verdicts tempers the government's victory. That's the wrong way to look at it.

The prosecutors' focus was always first on convicting Rhodes, and to a lesser degree Meggs, of seditious conspiracy.

On all the other counts and with the other defendants, the jury's meticulous evaluation of the various charges — accepting some, rejecting others — only bolsters the credibility of their decisions. The lack of a clean sweep shows that the jurors exercised independent judgment; they didn't simply swallow the government's case whole. And all the defendants

were convicted of serious charges carrying the potential for significant jail time.

Tuesday's decisions will have immediate, practical legal ramifications. First, those still to be tried for their involvement in the Jan. 6 riot, including Proud Boys and additional Oath Keepers, may want to think hard about pleading guilty and offering to cooperate with the government investigation.

The verdicts also cast a shadow over anyone who consorted with the conspirators in the days after the 2020 election. Perhaps the most obvious example: Roger Stone, whose encrypted messages with Rhodes were a key part of the evidence at trial. (Rhodes messaged Stone right after Joe Biden's victory: "What's the plan? We need to roll ASAP.")

More generally, the convictions represent a major advance in the Department of Justice's pursuit of accountability for all those involved in efforts to prevent a peaceful transfer of power. Now more than ever, the department is all in on treating the riot as the existential danger it was.

That means a no-stone-unturned approach to the role of political officials in the scandal, and in particular to the investigations that are now in the hands of special counsel Jack Smith, which mainly involve Donald Trump and his circle.

The practical and legal effects of the landmark result are only a fraction of the import of the convictions.

Some of the country's most prominent political leaders continue to embrace a ludicrous narrative that minimizes the events of Jan. 6. In their twisted telling, the riot was a legitimate political protest that got a little out of hand or even, in the words of Trump himself, represented courageous acts of patriots who have been treated unfairly by the Justice

Department. The same denial of reality underlies the announced resolve of the new Republican majority in the House to investigate the Jan. 6 committee, as if that body has been engaged in an illegitimate examination of political trivialities.

Tuesday's verdicts offer a decisive rebuttal to these preposterous accounts and one that is far more effective than the protestations of political opponents, law professors or op-ed columnists, however well reasoned.

A jury trial represents our system's ideal of authoritative fact-finding, a process enshrined in the Constitution for getting as close as a society can to the truth of a matter that is in dispute. And the jury in this trial plainly took its duty seriously and exercised its power with meticulous attention to detail.

That doesn't mean that the whole country will agree to call Jan. 6 a criminal conspiracy, but the holdouts are suddenly swimming against a stronger current.

The effect of these guilty verdicts, in a trial conducted with thoroughness and care, will be to marginalize the apologists for Jan. 6. They can't help but look more and more like wingnuts or monsters now, inveighing against what a critical mass of society has accepted and denying a jury's account that squares with what the whole country saw in real time.

That goes for history as well. The Oath Keepers convictions (and the other sedition prosecutions) will be among the rare trials — perhaps one or two a generation — to appear in high school history books. And what future students will learn is that the trials mattered deeply because they vindicated the truth about Jan. 6, 2021.

Harry Litman is a Los Angeles Times columnist.

Craft therapy can smooth the road back from a concussion

By JOE MCCLAIN
Special to Stars and Stripes

The recent injuries suffered by NFL players Matthew Stafford, Joe Mixon, Tua Tagovailoa and Cameron Brate have refocused our attention on concussions. The national conversation about concussion protocols, recovery time, and the long-term consequences of concussions is once again at the forefront of people's minds.

While the current conversation stemmed from incidents on a professional sports field, concussions are not just a sports phenomenon. Concussions occur every day, in every community, and often with perilous consequences either immediately or in the long term. According to 2020 data from the National Center for Health Statistics, about 7% of all children have had concussions. Among 12- to 17-year-olds, about 12% have had concussions. Among adults, 29% report having had a concussion. Within the Department of Defense, the Traumatic Brain Injury Center of Excellence reports that more than 458,000 service members have sustained a traumatic brain injury worldwide since the year 2000, with more than 82% being classified as mild TBI.

A concussion is a mild TBI caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head. This sudden movement can cause the brain to bounce or twist in the skull or cause chemical changes in the brain, disrupting the brain's normal function. And while concussions are referred to as mild TBIs, they can be debilitating. This is the brain we are talking about after all.

"Mild" or not, the list of symptoms caused by concussions is lengthy. People experience a range of physical, emotional and psychological symptoms, including headaches, nausea, dizziness, sensitivity to light, feeling sluggish or confused — and the list goes on. Walking through your daily life with any of these symptoms can be uncomfortable, even frightening, but imagine trying to focus on school or on the job with these symptoms on your mind. And while the list of symptoms is long, the list of treatments is not.

Recovering from a concussion sounds simple. Doctors usually say it takes time and rest, with care to avoid re-injury. But patients do not have to be passive participants in their recovery from concussion. There are therapies that engage people recovering from concussive injury in their own healing and allow them to mark their progress.

Craft therapy is an effective activity for concussion patients. It is a proven and effective component of occupational therapy that addresses cognitive, neurological and sensory motor skills by using crafts to focus the brain on cognitive performance and manual skills. Engaging in craft activities has been shown to help cognitive, neurological, and sensory-motor needs by targeting performance skills. It has also been shown to help promote the use of right- and left-brain function and help maintain cognitive functioning. All of these benefits can be useful when someone is attempting to recover from a concussion.

For the past 50 years, the nonprofit organization Help Heal Veterans (I'm its CEO) has

been using craft therapy to help military service members address the visible and invisible wounds of war, including concussions and their lingering effects. The therapeutic craft kits Heal Vets provides have helped injured service members and veterans recover their motor and cognitive functioning and develop a more positive outlook. In a recent survey of veterans, three out of four said they found the use of craft kits as a form of therapy helpful.

The National Intrepid Center of Excellence has developed a model integrative arts program to assist military personnel who are challenged by concussion or mild TBIs. It focuses on reducing psychological, social, physical and cognitive impairments by reducing anxiety, decreasing isolation, and increasing eye-hand coordination and dexterity. Craft therapy can help with organizational skills, problem-solving and memory in cases where the frontal lobe has been affected by TBI.

Concussions do not discriminate, and with millions of people — young, old, military, non-military, athlete, nonathlete — sustaining TBIs each year, doesn't it make sense to incorporate any accessible and effective therapy available? Craft therapy meets all these criteria and has proven its value over decades.

While the NFL continues to grapple with repeated concussions, it's a good time to remind people of the value of craft therapy in the healing journey.

Joe McClain, a retired U.S. Navy captain, is CEO of Help Heal Veterans, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping injured veterans and active duty military through use of craft therapy.

SCOREBOARD/SPORTS BRIEFS

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Schedule
Friday's games EAST Akron (2-9) at Buffalo (5-6) SOUTHWEST UTSA (10-2) vs. North Texas (7-5), Confe- rence USA Championship at San Antonio FAR WEST Southern Cal (11-1) vs. Utah (9-3), Pac-12 Championship at Las Vegas Saturday's games SOUTH Troy (10-2) vs. Coastal Carolina (9-2), Sun Belt Championship at Troy, Ala. Jackson St. (11-0) vs. Southern U. (7-4), SWAC Championship at Jackson, Miss. Georgia (12-0) vs. LSU (9-3), SEC Cham- pionship at Atlanta Tulane (10-2) vs. UCF (9-3), American Athletic Conference Championship at New Orleans North Carolina (9-3) vs. Clemson (10-2), ACC Championship at Charlotte, N.C. MIDWEST Ohio (9-3) vs. Toledo (7-5), MAC Cham- pionship at Detroit Michigan (12-0) vs. Purdue (8-4), Big Ten Championship at Indianapolis SOUTHWEST TCU (12-0) vs. Kansas St. (9-3), Big 12 Championship at Arlington, Texas FAR WEST Boise St. (9-3) vs. Fresno St. (8-4), Moun- tain West Championship at Boise, Idaho
NCAA FCS playoffs Second Round Saturday's games South Dakota St. (10-1) vs. Delaware (8-4) Holy Cross (11-0) vs. New Hampshire (9-3) William & Mary (10-1) vs. Gardner-Webb (7-5) Montana St. (10-1) vs. Weber St. (10-2) North Dakota St. (9-2) vs. Montana (8-4) Samford (10-1) vs. Southeastern La. (9-3) UIW (10-1) vs. Furman (10-2) Sacramento St. (11-0) vs. Richmond (9-3)
DEALS

Wednesday's transactions
BASEBALL Major League Baseball American League SEATTLE MARINERS — Named Andy McKay assistant general manager. Agreed to terms with RHP Trevor Gott on a one-year contract. TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Named Don Mattingly bench coach. National League PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Designated 1B Lewin Diaz for assignment. FOOTBALL National Football League ARIZONA CARDINALS — Re-signed WR Andre Baccellia to the practice squad. ATLANTA FALCONS — Designated OL Eli- jah Wilkinson to return to practice from in- jured reserve. BALTIMORE RAVENS — Designated RB J.K. Dobbins to return to practice from in- jured reserve. Signed WR Shemar Bridges to the practice squad. CHICAGO BEARS — Signed QB Tim Boyle from Detroit's practice squad and DT An- drew Brown from Arizona's practice squad. Placed DB Dane Cruikshank on in- jured reserve. DALLAS COWBOYS — Designated WR James Washington to return to practice from injured reserve. DENVER BRONCOS — Designated RB Mike Boone to return to practice from in- jured reserve. Signed LB Harvey Langi and RB Devine Ozigbo to the practice squad. KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Signed DT Bran- don Williams to the practice squad. LOS ANGELES RAMS — Designated LB Daniel Hardy to return to practice from in- jured reserve. Signed WR Jaquarri Roberson to the practice squad. MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Placed CB An- drew Booth on injured reserve. Reinstated TE Ben Ellefson from injured reserve. NEW YORK JETS — Released WR Dontae Spencer from the practice squad. PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Designated DT Jordan Davis to return to practice from in- jured reserve. Signed WR Kawaan Baker and OL Tyrese Robinson to the practice squad. Released DT Marvin Wilson from the practice squad. SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Claimed S Joh- nathan Abram off waivers from Green Bay. TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Designated DB Logan Ryan to return to practice from injured reserve. TENNESSEE TITANS — Designated OLB Olasunkanmi Adeniyi to return to practice from injured reserve. WASHINGTON COMMANDERS — Desig- nated OL Wes Schweitzer to return to practice from injured reserve. HOCKEY National Hockey League LOS ANGELES KINGS — Reassigned LW Samuel Fagemo to Ontario (AHL). Placed G Cal Petersen on waivers. NEW YORK ISLANDERS — Returned D Robin Salo to Bridgeport (AHL). TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS — Returned G Erik Kallgren to Toronto (AHL). VANCOUVER CANUCKS — Recalled LW Phil Di Giuseppe from Abbotsford (AHL). VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS — Recalled D Zack Hayes from Henderson (AHL). SOCCER Major League Soccer ATLANTA UNITED — Signed M Derrick Etienne Jr. to a three-year contract. MINNESOTA UNITED — Signed M Joseph Rosales to a one-year contract. ORLANDO CITY SC — Signed G Adam Grinwall to a one-year contract. SEATTLE SOUNDERS FC — Promoted Craig Waibel to general manager and chief soccer officer. National Women's Soccer League WASHINGTON SPIRIT — Signed M Maris- sha Sheva to a one-year contract.

PRO FOOTBALL

NFL						
AMERICAN CONFERENCE						
East						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Buffalo	8	3	0	.727	309	199
Miami	8	3	0	.727	282	256
N.Y. Jets	7	4	0	.636	230	196
New England	6	5	0	.545	239	202
South						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Tennessee	7	4	0	.636	209	205
Indianapolis	4	7	1	.375	190	244
Jacksonville	4	7	0	.364	244	232
Houston	1	9	1	.136	174	260
North						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Baltimore	7	4	0	.636	275	227
Cincinnati	7	4	0	.636	285	231
Cleveland	4	7	0	.364	263	286
Pittsburgh	4	7	0	.364	194	261
West						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Kansas City	9	2	0	.818	326	243
L.A. Chargers	6	5	0	.545	252	282
Las Vegas	4	7	0	.364	265	276
Denver	3	8	0	.273	157	194
NATIONAL CONFERENCE						
East						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Philadelphia	10	1	0	.909	303	216
Dallas	8	3	0	.727	279	187
N.Y. Giants	7	4	0	.636	225	232
Washington	7	5	0	.583	233	236
South						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Tampa Bay	5	6	0	.455	200	203
Atlanta	5	7	0	.417	272	293
Carolina	4	8	0	.333	230	266
New Orleans	4	8	0	.333	249	280
North						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Minnesota	9	2	0	.818	262	257
Detroit	4	7	0	.364	275	310
Green Bay	4	8	0	.333	235	283
Chicago	3	9	0	.250	251	305
West						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
San Francisco	7	4	0	.636	249	173
Seattle	6	5	0	.545	291	281
Arizona	4	8	0	.333	264	321
L.A. Rams	3	8	0	.273	178	253

Thursday's game
Buffalo at New England
Sunday's games
Cleveland at Houston Denver at Baltimore Green Bay at Chicago Jacksonville at Detroit N.Y. Jets at Minnesota Pittsburgh at Atlanta Tennessee at Philadelphia Washington at N.Y. Giants Miami at San Francisco Seattle at L.A. Rams Kansas City at Cincinnati L.A. Chargers at Las Vegas Indianapolis at Dallas Open: Arizona, Carolina
Monday's game
New Orleans at Tampa Bay
Thursday, Dec. 8
Las Vegas at L.A. Rams
Sunday, Dec. 11
Baltimore at Pittsburgh Cleveland at Cincinnati Houston at Dallas Jacksonville at Tennessee Minnesota at Detroit N.Y. Jets at Buffalo Philadelphia at N.Y. Giants Kansas City at Denver Carolina at Seattle Tampa Bay at San Francisco Miami at L.A. Chargers Open: Indianapolis, Atlanta, Chicago, Green Bay, New Orleans, Washington
Monday, Dec. 12
New England at Arizona
TENNIS

WTA money leaders
Through Nov. 29
1. Iga Swiatek \$9,875,525
2. Ons Jabeur \$4,997,069
3. Caroline Garcia \$3,729,317
4. Elene Rybakina \$3,613,440
5. Jessica Pegula \$3,611,716
6. Coco Gauff \$3,051,953
7. Maria Sakkari \$2,481,419
8. Aryna Sabalenka \$2,461,320

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Wednesday's men's scores
EAST
Albright 91, Lebanon Valley 73 Army 88, Merchant Marine 57 Assumption 68, St. Michael's 67 Bloomfield 73, Nyack 69 Bridgeport 86, Post (Conn.) 66 Bridgewater (Mass.) 81, Mass.-Dart- mouth 79 Bucknell 89, St. Francis (Pa.) 65 Cabrini 64, Moravian 62 Caldwell 66, Lincoln (Pa.) 65 Carnegie Mellon 63, Penn State-Erie 52 Catholic 68, Marymount 53 Centenary (NJ) 65, Sarah Lawrence 61 Colby 68, Bowdoin 52 Concord 81, Alderson-Broaddus 66 Connecticut College 81, Coast Guard 63 Dartmouth 99, Northern Vermont-John- son 41 Davis & Elkins 77, Wheeling Jesuit 75 DeSales 78, Kings (Pa.) 66 Dominican (NY) 85, Felician 72 Drew 63, Brooklyn College 46 Drexel 64, Lafayette 56 Endicott 78, Salve Regina 73 FDU-Florham 60, Arcadia 59 Fairmont St. 74, Charleston (WV) 61 Farmingdale St. 76, E. Connecticut 74 Fordham 72, Maine 67 Franklin Pierce 68, Le Moyne 63 Geneva 85, Allegheny 69 George Washington 79, South Carolina 55 Georgian Court 61, Holy Family 58 Gordon 88, New England 60 Grove City 83, Franciscan 78 Gwynedd-Mercy 55, Goucher 43 Hamilton 87, Alfred St. 71 Hartford 74, Fairleigh Dickinson 66 Harvard 72, Holy Cross 38 Hood 102, Stevenson 67 Jefferson 99, Chestnut Hill 63 Kean 80, Ramapo 56 Lancaster Bible 63, Neumann 59 Lehman 87, St. Joseph's (NY) 76 Loyola (Md.) 84, Binghamton 70 Marshall 68, Akron 57 Mass.-Boston 81, Rivier 64 Mass.-Lowell 77, Merrimack 51 Md.-Eastern Shore 64, Lehigh 60 Mercy 69, Staten Island 67 Messiah 68, York (Pa.) 64 Millersville 69, Bowie St. 60 Mount Aloysius 101, Penn College 72 New Haven 81, American International 54 Penn St.-Abington 61, Immaculata 55 Pratt 77, Valley Forge 57 Princeton 92, Cairn 58 Purchast 92, Medgar Evers 85 Rider 88, Monmouth (NJ) 62 Roger Williams 87, Nichols 67 Rowan 87, College of New Jersey Lions 82 S. Connecticut 59, Pace 52 S. Maine 86, Maine-Farmington 77 S. New Hampshire 70, Adelphi 65 SUNY-Cobleskill 68, Mount St. Mary 67 SUNY-Delhi 106, Clarks Summit 79 Sacred Heart 66, New Hampshire 61 Saint Joseph's 85, Penn 80, OT Scranton 88, Eastern 82 St. Anselm 66, St. Rose 59 St. Bonaventure 71, Middle Tennessee 64 St. Francis (NY) 81, Delaware St. 73 St. Thomas Aquinas 83, Dist. of Columbia 78 St. Vincent 63, Waynesburg 57 Stevens Tech 67, Delaware Valley 50 Stockton 75, Rutgers-Camden 55 Stonehill 92, Eastern Nazarene 45 Temple 67, La Salle 51 Thiel 82, Bethany (WV) 70 Trinity (Conn.) 76, Springfield 65 UMBC 109, Coppin St. 82 W. New England 75, Suffolk 68 W. Virginia St. 100, Frostburg St. 85 Washington & Jefferson 70, Chatham 69 West Liberty 121, WV Wesleyan 54 Widener 78, Alvernia 76, OT Wilkes 78, Lycoming 44 William Paterson 85, NJ City 79 Wilson College 74, Shenandoah 53 Yale 86, Howard 40
SOUTH
Augusta 80, Catawba 76, OT Belmont Abbey 83, Southern Wesleyan 67 Chattanooga 81, Tennessee Tech 74 Chowan 101, Mount Olive 88 Converse 81, North Greenville 78 Duke 81, Ohio St. 72 E. Michigan 80, FIU 68 ETSU 84, Mars Hill 56 FAU 84, South Alabama 59 Ferrum 87, Lynchburg 74 Florida 102, Florida A&M 62 Florida Gulf Coast 70, Georgia Southern 53 Florida Southern 88, Eckerd 79 Florida Tech 65, Tampa 59 Francis Marion 89, UNC-Pembroke 76 Gardner-Webb 71, W. Carolina 55 George Mason 81, Hofstra 77, OT Georgia 73, Hampton 54 Guilford 76, Randolph 49 Hampden-Sydney 71, Averett 67 High Point 84, Elon 70 King (Tenn.) 96, Lees-Mcrae 86 LaGrange 88, Birmingham Southern 84 Limestone 74, Georgia Southwestern 61 Lipscomb 82, Navy 77 Mary Baldwin 88, Christendom 57 Memphis 87, North Alabama 68 Miami 68, Rutgers 61 Millsaps 69, Belhaven 62 NC A&T 73, UNC-Greensboro 56 Nova Southeastern 112, Lynn 50 Palm Beach Atlantic 93, Rollins 89 Purdue 79, Florida St. 69 Randolph Macon 66, Va. Wesleyan 49 Rhodes 82, Hendrix 61 Roanoke 78, Bridgewater (Va.) 60 SC-Aiken 72, Coker 47 SC-Upstate 93, Columbia (SC) 59 Shaw 108, Morris 53 Tennessee 76, McNeese St. 40 The Citadel 76, Charleston Southern 73 UAB 80, Jacksonville 61 UNC-Wilmington 60, Coastal Carolina 58 VCU 70, Vanderbilt 65 W. Kentucky 75, Austin Peay 74 Washington & Lee 74, E. Mennonite 65 Winston-Salem 84, Johnson & Wales (NC) 57
MIDWEST
Alma 111, Grace Bible 84 Bethany Lutheran 99, Simpson 96 Bluffton 57, Mount St. Joseph 50 Bradley 68, N. Iowa 53 Butler 76, Kansas St. 64 Carleton 84, Augsburg 67 Central College 73, Nebraska Wesleyan 67 Chicago 72, Kalamazoo 63 Cincinnati 86, NJIT 60 Crown (Minn.) 64, Macalester 61 Dayton 67, W. Michigan 47 DePaul 103, Samford 98, OT DePauw 82, Denison 60 Dubuque 76, Buena Vista 60 Earlham 65, Wabash 57 Hamline 90, Bethel (Minn.) 77 Heidelberg 99, Baldwin Wallace 83 Illinois Wesleyan 68, Elmhurst 54 Indiana 77, North Carolina 65 Indiana St. 75, Drake 73 Iowa St. 63, North Dakota 44 Kenyon 58, Muskingum 56 Lindenwood (Mo.) 103, East-West 56 Loras 86, Coe 79, OT Loyola Chicago 85, Cent. Arkansas 70 Manchester 86, Defiance 76 Marietta 66, Otterbein 61 Missouri St. 66, Ill.-Chicago 51 N. Illinois 90, E. Illinois 70 Nebraska 88, Boston College 67 North Central College 73, Carroll (Wis.) 50 North Park 64, Millikin 62 Notre Dame (Ohio) 77, Glenville St. 73 Notre Dame 70, Michigan St. 52 Ohio 113, Cincinnati Clermont 44 Rose-Hulman 69, Fontbonne 58 S. Illinois 80, Evansville 53 Saint Louis 80, Tennessee St. 63 St. John's (Minn.) 81, St. Scholastica 58 St. Olaf 75, St. Mary's (Minn.) 69 Toledo 90, Richmond 67 Trine 68, Anderson (Ind.) 53 W. Illinois 86, S. Indiana 78 Wartburg 74, Luther 64 Wheaton College (IL) 75, Augustana (Ill.) 61 Wis.-Eau Claire 71, Wis.-River Falls 53 Wis.-La Crosse 88, Wis.-Whitewater 74 Wis.-Oshkosh 75, Wis.-Platteville 66, OT Wis.-Stout 93, Wis.-Stevens Pt. 69 Wittenberg 81, Wilmington (Ohio) 61 Wooster 87, Hiram 73 Xavier 95, SE Louisiana 63
SOUTHWEST
Abilene Christian 93, North American 46 Dallas Baptist 58, Midwestern St. 56 Incarnate Word 112, Dallas Christian 64 Rice 70, Prairie View 62 S. Nazarene 75, SE Oklahoma 66 St. Leo 76, Embry-Riddle (AZ) 75 TCU 75, Providence 62 Texas A&M 83, SMU 64 Texas Tech 79, Georgetown 65 Texas-Tyler 69, Cameron 57
FAR WEST
Air Force 81, Ark.-Pine Bluff 53 Cal Baptist 65, UC-Riverside 60 Cal Lutheran 78, La Verne 69 Claremont Mudd 93, Chapman 71 Colorado St. 87, Loyola Marymount 71 Montana St. 86, S. Utah 83 New Mexico 69, Saint Mary's (Cal.) 65 New Mexico St. 95, UTEP 70 Pomona Pitzer 69, Occidental 61 Portland 100, Multnomah 79 Portland St. 114, Portland Bible 31 Redlands 87, Whittier 78 San Francisco 90, UALR 68 Santa Clara 89, Wyoming 85, OT Seattle 69, Cal St.-Fullerton 62 Southern Cal 66, California 51 Texas Rio Grande Valley 89, Texas A&M-CC 82
Wednesday's women's scores
EAST
Albany (NY) 59, Canisius 48 Boston College 75, Rutgers 61 Bucknell 59, St. Bonaventure 44 Cornell 71, Binghamton 48 Delaware 74, Delaware St. 52 Fairfield 82, Fordham 75, OT Fairleigh Dickinson 67, NJIT 52 Harvard 66, Mass.-Lowell 66 Holy Cross 60, Brown 45 Howard 83, American 70 Illinois 92, Pittsburgh 71 Iona 62, Hofstra 46 Lafayette 72, UMBC 38 Lehigh 81, Rider 67 Morgan St. 76, Towson 48 New Hampshire 64, CCSU 45 Northeastern 75, Merrimack 47 Toledo 62, Loyola (Md.) 40 UMass 72, Yale 57 Virginia 89, Penn St. 68 West Virginia 89, NC Central 58
SOUTH
Alabama 88, Mercer 52 Auburn 70, UALR 48 Chattanooga 74, Georgia St. 60 Coastal Carolina 87, SC State 56 Coll. of Charleston 79, Radford 60 Drexel 74, Longwood 61 FIU 96, Florida National 38 Florida 68, Prairie View 53 Georgia Southern 126, Agnes Scott 35 Jacksonville St. 75, Samford 59 Lipscomb 77, Oakwood 46 Morehead St. 104, Brescia 54 Murray St. 71, UT Martin 52 Ohio St. 96, Louisville 77 Old Dominion 77, Temple 65 Presbyterian 67, UNC-Greensboro 54, OT Southern Miss. 74, Mississippi College 42 Tulane 90, New Orleans 37 UNC-Asheville 89, Warren Wilson 40 Wofford 72, Davidson 51
MIDWEST
Kansas 74, Texas A&M 42 Missouri 82, Saint Louis 52 Purdue 87, Syracuse 78 Tarleton St. 84, W. Illinois 69 Wake Forest 63, Minnesota 59 Wichita St. 61, Denver 54
SOUTHWEST
Oklahoma 88, Northwestern St. 45 Texas St. 60, UTSA 55 UTEP 65, New Mexico St. 61
FAR WEST
Arizona St. 80, Grand Canyon 72 Colorado 75, W. Michigan 37 Montana St. 71, S. Dakota St. 66 Portland 87, Evergreen St. 35

BRIEFLY

Baseball Hall of Famer Gaylord Perry dies at 84

GAFFNEY, S.C. — Baseball Hall of Famer and two-time Cy Young Award winner Gaylord Perry, a master of the spitball who wrote a book about using the pitch, died Thursday. He was 84.

Perry died at his home in Gaffney at about 5 a.m. Thursday of natural causes, Cherokee County Coroner Dennis Fowler said. He did not provide additional details.

The native of Williamston, N.C., made history as the first player to win the Cy Young in both leagues, with Cleveland in 1972 and San Diego in 1978 just after turning 40.

Perry, who pitched for eight major-league teams from 1962 until 1983, was a five-time All-Star who was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1991.

He had a career record of 314-255, finished with 3,554 strikeouts and used a pitching style where he doctored baseballs or made bat- ters believe he was doctoring them.

College Football Playoff expands in 2024 season

The College Football Playoff an- nounced Thursday it will expand to a 12-team event starting in 2024, completing an 18-month process that was fraught with delays and disagreements.

The announcement comes a day after the Rose Bowl agreed to amend its contract for the 2024 and 2025 seasons, which was the last hurdle CFP officials needed cleared to triple the size of what is now a four-team format.

The first round of the new playoff in 2024 will take place the week ending Saturday, Dec. 21. Exact dates are still to be deter- mined.

NBA making plans for in-season tournament

The NBA is planning for the in- augural version of its in-season tournament — should it become reality — to begin early next sea- son, according to a memo sent to teams Wednesday.

If the tournament is approved, 80 regular-season games for each team would be announced in Au- gust, with two more games set to be scheduled depending on which eight teams make the tourna- ment's knockout stage. Those games would be added in-season to the schedule.

NBA Commissioner Adam Sil- ver has pushed for the past several years for the in-season event to be added. Talks have gone on about it since at least 2016, and in 2019 the league even created a proposal in which teams would play eight di- visional games in the group stage, followed by quarterfinals for the top eight clubs and then semifi- nals and finals at a neutral site in December.

NBA/COLLEGE BASKETBALL



MARK J. TERRILL/AP
 Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic, left, shoots as Los Angeles Clippers center Ivica Zubac defends during the first half of their game Friday in Los Angeles.

AROUND THE NBA

Early NBA MVP race has crowded candidate field

BY PAT GRAHAM
Associated Press
 DENVER — Nikola Jokic may just be putting together his best season.
 It still may not be enough to get the Denver Nuggets’ big man a third straight NBA MVP.
 Chalk that up to MVP fatigue. Or to the glaringly good numbers of a crowded field of early candidates, including Luka Doncic, Giannis Antetokounmpo, Jayson Tatum and Stephen Curry.
 Jokic isn’t having to shoulder as much of the load with the return this season of fellow Nuggets stars Jamal Murray and Michael Porter Jr. He’s also taken his unselfish play to another level, which may not do him any favors in the MVP race, but it sure does help the Nuggets.
 That’s just fine with coach Michael Malone. He’ll gladly take this version of the player nicknamed “Joker,” the one averaging a career-best 8.8 assists to go with 23 points and 9.8 rebounds through the first quarter of the season.
 “I don’t worry about the MVP buzz,” said Malone, whose team moved to 13-7 after a 129-113 win over Houston on Monday night where Jokic had 32 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists. “If we continue to win, Nikola is going to be in the MVP conversation because of the fact that he impacts the game on so many different levels.”
 Last season, Jokic put up 27.1 points, 13.8 rebounds and 7.9 assists because that was the best way for Denver to win. The Nuggets didn’t have Murray (knee) and barely had Porter (back).
 These days, Jokic lets the game dictate which stat category he dominates. Sometimes, it’s through his pinpoint passes. Others, with his deft shooting touch.
 To illustrate: He took nine shots and had 14 asists in a win at Oklahoma City on Nov. 3. Twenty days later, and back at Oklahoma City, he erupted for 39 points in another win.
 Jokic is trying to join the company of Larry Bird, Wilt Chamberlain and Bill Russell as players who’ve each won the MVP award in three straight seasons. But Jokic is well down the

odds list of early favorites.
 Antetokounmpo and Doncic are both the favorites at +280, according to FanDuel Sportsbook. Behind Tatum, Curry, Joel Embiid, Donovan Mitchell, Ja Morant and tied with Kevin Durant, is Jokic (+2700).
 Nuggets point guard Ish Smith, who’s crossed paths with former league MVPs Russell Westbrook and Durant during his 13-team excursion, has a theory of why Jokic is not a front-runner.
 “People like to see something different. He’s a two-time MVP, so obviously people are advocating for Luka, he’s playing at a high level. Giannis, too,” Smith said. “Sometimes people like the new ‘It,’ the new thing.”
 Much like Jokic last season, Doncic needs to produce in a big way for the Mavericks to succeed. He is averaging 33.1 points, 8.7 rebounds and 8.4 assists.
 Antetokounmpo, a two-time MVP winner, is on pace for his highest scoring average (30.9). Curry, another two-time winner, continues to shoot lights out from everywhere — 52.2% from the floor, 44.1% from three-point range and 91.1% from the free-throw line. Then there’s Tatum, who’s averaging more than 30 points a game as his Celtics have won a league-best 17 games.
 The Nuggets don’t mind the throwback play of Jokic, who has the most triple-doubles of any center in NBA history.
 “He’s such a dominant force,” Smith said. “He’s pretty special.”
 Unassuming, too. Smith caught a glimpse of that when a few of the Nuggets attended a Los Angeles Dodgers-Padres game while in San Diego for training camp. There was Jokic, just walking around like any ordinary baseball fan.
 That’s just his personality. Don’t forget: He accepted the MVP trophy last season from his horse stable in Sombor, Serbia.
 “He’s not flashy. I love it,” Smith said of Jokic, the second-round pick in the 2014 draft. “I don’t think I’ve ever been around a superstar like that.”

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference					
Atlantic Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Boston	18	4	.818	—	
Philadelphia	12	10	.545	6	
Toronto	11	10	.524	6½	
Brooklyn	12	11	.522	6½	
New York	10	12	.455	8	
Southeast Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Atlanta	12	10	.545	—	
Washington	11	11	.500	1	
Miami	10	12	.455	2	
Charlotte	6	15	.286	5½	
Orlando	5	17	.227	7	
Central Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Milwaukee	15	5	.750	—	
Cleveland	14	8	.636	2	
Indiana	12	9	.571	3½	
Chicago	9	12	.429	6½	
Detroit	5	18	.217	11½	
Western Conference					
Southwest Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
New Orleans	13	8	.619	—	
Memphis	12	9	.571	1	
Dallas	10	10	.500	2½	
San Antonio	6	16	.273	7½	
Houston	5	16	.238	8	
Northwest Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Denver	14	7	.667	—	
Utah	13	11	.542	2½	
Minnesota	11	11	.500	3½	
Portland	11	11	.500	3½	
Oklahoma City	9	13	.409	5½	
Pacific Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Phoenix	15	6	.714	—	
L.A. Clippers	13	10	.565	3	
Sacramento	11	9	.550	3½	
Golden State	11	11	.500	4½	
L.A. Lakers	8	12	.400	6½	
Wednesday's games					
Cleveland 113, Philadelphia 85					
Atlanta 125, Orlando 108					
Boston 134, Miami 121					
Milwaukee 109, New York 103					
Brooklyn 113, Washington 107					
New Orleans 126, Toronto 108					
Oklahoma City 119, San Antonio 111					
Minnesota 109, Memphis 101					
Denver 120, Houston 100					
Phoenix 132, Chicago 113					
Utah 125, L.A. Clippers 112					
Sacramento 137, Indiana 114					
L.A. Lakers 128, Portland 109					
Thursday's game					
Dallas at Detroit					
Friday's games					
Washington at Charlotte					
Denver at Atlanta					
L.A. Lakers at Milwaukee					
Miami at Boston					
Orlando at Cleveland					
Toronto at Brooklyn					
New Orleans at San Antonio					
Philadelphia at Memphis					
Houston at Phoenix					
Indiana at Utah					
Chicago at Golden State					
Saturday's games					
Dallas at New York					
Sacramento at L.A. Clippers					
Milwaukee at Charlotte					
Oklahoma City at Minnesota					
Orlando at Toronto					
Houston at Golden State					
Portland at Utah					
Sunday's games					
Denver at New Orleans					
Phoenix at San Antonio					
Boston at Brooklyn					
Chicago at Sacramento					
Cleveland at New York					
L.A. Lakers at Washington					
Memphis at Detroit					
Indiana at Portland					
Scoring leaders					
Through Wednesday					
	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Doncic, DAL	19	218	154	636	33.5
Tatum, BOS	21	216	158	664	31.6
Curry, GS	20	214	97	628	31.4
Antetokounmpo, MIL	17	195	129	532	31.3
G-Alexander, OKC	20	215	170	621	31.1
Durant, BKN	23	246	169	699	30.4
Booker, PHO	21	218	122	609	29.0
Mitchell, CLE	20	196	100	568	28.4
Morant, MEM	18	176	124	508	28.2

Brutal slate for Gonzaga goes on with No. 6 Baylor

Associated Press
 Gonzaga coach Mark Few always builds an ambitious nonconference schedule, helping not only harden his team for March but also to balance the Bulldogs’ weaker West Coast Conference slate when it comes to the NCAA selection committee.
 They’ve taken their lumps already this season, losing to second-ranked Texas and fifth-ranked Purdue to fall out of the top 10 for the first time since February 2018. But the No. 14 Bulldogs also have marquee wins over No. 19 Kentucky and No. 20 Michigan State, the latter played on the USS Abraham Lincoln at North Island Naval Air Station in California.
 Next up in the meatgrinder: No. 6 Baylor on Friday night at the Sanford Pentagon in Sioux Falls, S.D.
 Oh, and it just happens to be a rematch of the 2021 national title game won by the Bears in a rout.
 “Every time I see Baylor playing,” Bulldogs guard Julian Strawther said, “I just kind of think to that national championship game. For sure excited to get out there and play against a great team on a neutral site. Those are the games that all great players want: two top teams, a bunch of great players. I’m super excited for it.”
 It’s not as if the Bears, who face Marquette on Tuesday night, will have had an easy road to South Dakota, either. They lost to third-ranked Virginia in Las Vegas before knocking off No. 21 UCLA in the Continental Tire Main Event.
 “(Baylor) is one of the most amazing stories in sports, from where it was — how low it could be, which is apathy plus all the stuff that happened there,” said Few, who has grown close to Bears coach Scott Drew over the years.
 “He’s just such a positive person and force and that’s what his program is like,” Few said. “They really got, not a system but they recruit to what works at Baylor. Their perimeter players in the national championship game were terrific, the ones they have now are terrific. They have size inside. They’ve really got that thing going.”



RICK BOWMER/AP

Gonzaga coach Mark Few watches during the first half of the team’s game against Xavier in the Phil Knight Legacy tournament Sunday in Portland, Ore.

NFL



Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce celebrates a touchdown with quarterback Patrick Mahomes (15) and JuJu Smith-Schuster against the Los Angeles Rams on Sunday in Kansas City, Mo.

Chiefs’ Mahomes turns to Bengals after son’s birth

By DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes showed up bright-eyed and energetic for practice on Wednesday.

Perhaps the adrenaline was still flowing from the birth of his baby boy.

Or his wife was handling all the late-night diaper changes.

“Brittany is a champ,” said Mahomes, who along with his wife welcomed Patrick “Bronze” Mahomes III on Monday night, and gave 1-year-old daughter Sterling a little brother. “Everything went great and everything went smooth.”

Mahomes said the addition to the family — his father, Pat Mahomes Sr., and many other family members happened to be in town for the birth — won’t affect his preparation for one of the marquee games on the Chiefs’ remaining schedule.

They’re headed to Cincinnati on Sunday for a rematch of the AFC championship game, when Kansas City jumped out to a 21-3 lead and still led 21-10 at halftime before its offense collapsed and the Bengals rallied for a 27-24 victory.

It’s a game that has stuck with everyone in the Chiefs locker room for the past 11 months.

“I think you have to keep it in perspective. It’s a brand-new season,” Mahomes said. “But any time a team beats you before, you

Kansas City Chiefs (9-2)
at Cincinnati Bengals (7-4)
AFN-Sports
10 p.m. Sunday CET
6 a.m. Monday JKT

want to beat them, especially when they beat you in a game like they did to go to the Super Bowl.”

Mahomes acknowledged that his play went downhill in the second half that night, his fundamentals going awry as the lead shrank and the pressure mounted.

It’s something he worked on throughout the offseason, and weekly during the season, and those finely tuned fundamentals have put him in the conversation for a second MVP award.

He leads the league in passing by a wide margin — Mahomes has thrown for 3,585 yards while the Bills’ Josh Allen is next with 3,183. Ditto for touchdowns with Mahomes throwing 29 to Allen’s 23. He’s throwing for more yards per game (325.9) than any point in his career, his yards-per-attempt is the highest in three years, and Mahomes is completing better than two-thirds of his throws for a third consecutive season, all despite an injury-riddled wide receiver group.

It helps that Travis Kelce is having a similar stupendous season. The three-time All-Pro tight end already has 12 touchdown receptions, which is tied with the entire rosters of the Browns, Texans and

Rams and more than seven other teams.

“A quarterback like him, he’s a special guy, man. Those don’t come around very often,” Chiefs wide receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster said. “You look at Tom Brady — Tom played with how many receivers? And you can’t name them all? Same thing with Pat, man. He threw to 10 different guys (last week against the Rams) and was just making plays.”

Smith-Schuster has missed time with a concussion and was out of practice Wednesday with an illness. Mecole Hardman is on injured reserve with an abdominal injury and Kadarius Toney is still out with a hamstring issue.

Yet with Mahomes under center, the Chiefs offense keeps on humming. It has eclipsed 400 yards seven times this season, and five straight, which is tied for the longest streak in franchise history.

“He stays pretty focused on the task at hand,” said Chiefs coach Andy Reid, when asked whether the arrival of Bronze this week has caused any wrinkles in their preparation for Cincinnati.

“He has a great wife that takes care of a lot of that,” Reid said. “Bronze, man, I love it. Patrick Mahomes III. I think Bronze is in good hands. The players all got on Patrick: ‘If he plays long enough, we’ll have another quarterback here.’”

Titans rookie doesn’t listen to comparisons between him, Brown

By TERESA M. WALKER
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Treylon Burks has been compared to former Titans wide receiver A.J. Brown from the moment Tennessee drafted him using the selection gained in the trade that sent Brown to Philadelphia.

It’s a heavier topic of conversation as the Titans (7-4) prepare to visit Brown and the Eagles (10-1) on Sunday.

For Burks, it’s simply not an issue.

“I just don’t listen to it,” Burks said Wednesday.

The 6-foot-3, 225-pound Burks will likely be compared to Brown for the rest of their careers, tied together by the stunning draft night trade in April that sent a Pro Bowl wide receiver to Philadelphia for draft picks including the 18th selection overall.

Tennessee immediately used that on Burks, an All-Southeastern Conference wide receiver out of Arkansas as a junior. Right now, there’s no comparison in production for either this season or for both receivers’ first NFL seasons.

Brown, the 51st pick overall out of Mississippi in 2019, posted a 100-yard receiving game in his NFL debut. He finished with 52 catches for 1,051 yards and eight touchdowns starting 11 of 16 games.

Burks has started three games, sidelined for four with a stint on injured reserve. He currently has 24 catches for 334 yards and just scored his first NFL touchdown recovering Derrick Henry’s fumble in the end zone of last week’s loss to Cincinnati.

“I’m Trey, he’s A.J.,” Burks said. “I play my game. He plays his game.”

Brown currently ranks ninth in the NFL with 831 yards receiving on 53 catches and has seven TDs. No Titans wide receiver has more

Tennessee Titans (7-4)
at Philadelphia Eagles (10-1)
AFN-Sports2
7 p.m. Sunday CET
3 a.m. Monday JKT

than 400 yards receiving on an offense that currently ranks 29th in the NFL averaging a mere 175.9 yards per game.

Burks has a chance to join Brown in one category if he can catch at least four passes for 70 yards receiving Sunday. Brown is the only other receiver to do that in three straight games for Tennessee, and he did it in his lone Pro Bowl season of 2020-21.

Burks was compared to Brown frequently before the NFL Draft.

Titans coach Mike Vrabel said Wednesday that they saw a receiver in Burks they thought could run a lot of different route trees and playing all levels along with the ability and willingness to block, catch and run and adjust to the ball while running downfield. Burks flourished in training camp and early in the season.

Then an injured left toe put him on injured reserve.

Since the rookie was activated off IR, Burks has had his two best games of the season. He posted his first 100-yard receiving game on Nov. 17 in a win at Green Bay, catching seven of eight passes for 111 yards. Burks fought off a defender for a 51-yard catch and finished with four catches for 70 yards against the Bengals.

Vrabel noted the rookie’s attitude and hard work while on injured reserve to be ready when activated. The coach said Wednesday that Burks showed the ability to fix mistakes with receivers coach Rob Moore on a short week before the Titans played Green Bay on a Thursday night.

“Just think his overall attitude, I think his competitiveness is good. Just keep working,” Vrabel said.



Tennessee Titans wide receiver Treylon Burks catches a pass in front of Packers cornerback Jaire Alexander on Nov. 17 in Green Bay, Wis.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Trojan transformation: Riley's remarkable fix at USC paying off big

By GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — When Lincoln Riley took over Southern California's four-win football program one year ago this week, the coach stood on the top rim of the Coliseum and boldly declared his Trojans should be competing for championships right away.

Riley chuckled Tuesday when he was reminded of that exhilarating time in his life after his shocking departure from Oklahoma, but he has no interest in gloating about just how right he turned out to be.

"I feel a lot right now like I did then," Riley said. "When you do sit back for a second and think about where we were a year ago, and some of the things that have transpired for this team and the program during that time, it's fun to think about. But it's just not the time and place right now."

Riley has delivered on his declaration with a swiftness that even surprises some of the players who have turned USC (11-1, 8-1 Pac-12) into the nation's fourth-ranked team with a chance at both the Pac-12 title and a College Football Playoff berth. The Trojans even won both of their biggest rivalry matchups against UCLA and Notre Dame in the past two weeks, reclaiming the Victory Bell and the Jeweled Shillelagh.

It's a stunning correction to a miserable decade-plus for the West Coast's marquee program, which has won just one conference crown since 2008 and has never played in the CFP, which began in 2014.

USC will be in Las Vegas on Friday night for the Pac-12 title game against No. 12 Utah, the only team to beat Riley's Trojans this season. One more payback victory in a year dubbed "a revenge tour" by star USC defensive end Tuli Tuipulotu would punctuate this season with an exclamation point, even if it isn't over yet.

"It is a crazy story, but I think we knew that we had to turn everything around, and we've been working

**Pac-12 Championship
USC vs. Utah**
AFN-Sports
2 a.m. Saturday CET
10 a.m. Saturday JKT

ever since Lincoln Riley came in," said Tuipulotu, the FBS leader with 12½ sacks. "We knew it was going to happen if we kept working."

Riley and Heisman Trophy favorite Caleb Williams are the faces of this turnaround as two former Sooners who moved to California and immediately hit it big. But the coach and his players have all said this flashy transformation happened because of 12 months of hard work and a fierce commitment to team-building.

"From spring ball to summer workouts, I thought we were going to be a great team," said Williams, the elusive quarterback with 3,712 yards passing and a school-record 44 total touchdowns. "The outside world is going to say what they want to say, and we're 11-1 right now, so obviously it doesn't matter. We thought we were a great team, and we've shown that."

USC restocked its roster with a host of talent from the transfer portal, particularly at the offensive skill positions, but the bedrock of this hard-hitting team is the players left behind after seven modestly successful seasons under Clay Helton. That veteran core was hurt and humbled after going 4-8 last year under Helton and interim coach Donte Williams — but almost nobody left, and almost everybody improved under the guidance of Riley's staff.

"Some teams really whooped us last year and disrespected us, even in our home stadium," center Brett Neilon said. "I think that made the bond even tighter between the guys that are left here, and I think it had a trickle-down effect to some of the new guys. I feel like last year we had really good talent, and we were just getting beat. Coming back here this year, we're making the wrongs right."



Southern California coach Lincoln Riley speaks with quarterback Caleb Williams during their game against Utah on Oct. 15.



Georgia running back Kenny McIntosh is tackled by Kentucky defensive back Zion Childress during the second half of their game in Lexington, Ky., on Nov. 19.

Georgia's strong running to test LSU in SEC title game

By CHARLES ODUM
Associated Press

ATHENS, Ga. — A healthy Kenny McIntosh and strong play from the offensive line have No. 1 Georgia's running game peaking just in time for the postseason.

The Bulldogs ran for more than 200 yards in each of their last two regular-season games, providing valuable momentum for Saturday's Southeastern Conference championship game against No. 11 LSU in Atlanta.

The Tigers' run defense will try to recover after giving up Devon Achane's career-high 215 yards and two touchdowns in last week's 38-23 loss to Texas A&M.

Georgia (12-0) led Georgia Tech only 10-7 at halftime last week before coach Kirby Smart called for a re-commitment to a physical running game. The Bulldogs answered the call by scoring on their first five possessions in the second half of a 37-14 win.

McIntosh and Kendall Milton ran for touchdowns as Georgia outrushed Georgia Tech 264-40. McIntosh posted game-high totals of 86 rushing yards and 91 receiving yards.

"When he flips the switch and really starts going, he's got great vision and great hands," said Smart of McIntosh. "He's a weapon."

After dealing with two deep thigh bruises this season, McIntosh looks strong for the postsea-

**SEC Championship
Georgia vs. LSU**
AFN-Atlantic
10 p.m. Saturday CET
6 a.m. Sunday JKT

son. That's a good sign for Georgia's hopes of defending its national championship.

"It's my last year and I know what I want and I've been waiting all my life for this moment," McIntosh said after the Georgia Tech game. "I want to take full advantage of this opportunity."

Daijun Edwards, Milton and Branson Robinson shared the carries with McIntosh. The Bulldogs averaged 6.5 yards per carry against Georgia Tech, boosted by a 45-yard run by McIntosh and a 44-yard gain by Milton.

LSU linebacker Micah Baskerville said he expects Georgia to challenge the Tigers' run defense, especially after last week's poor showing.

"They have a good offensive line, good size," Baskerville said. "I see that they're physical. Our goal is to stop the run. We feel they're going to come out and run it on us because of last week. That's our challenge that we're going to have to stop so it doesn't happen back-to-back weeks."

Georgia ran for 247 yards while passing for only 116 yards in a 16-6 win at Kentucky on Nov. 19.

Smart credits "the physicality at the line of scrimmage" for the late-

season surge in the running game. "I think the line of scrimmage is playing really well, they're playing really physical," Smart said. Georgia has completed back-to-back undefeated regular seasons. The Bulldogs will try to snap a streak of three straight SEC championship game losses. They lost last year's SEC title game to Alabama before winning the rematch in the national championship game.

Depth at running back and an efficient passing game provided balance to the offense. Stetson Bennett threw two touchdown passes on only 135 yards against Georgia Tech.

Georgia ranks No. 8 in the nation with 488 yards per game in total offense, including 203 on the ground.

"Those guys have played physical," said Smart of the running backs. "The backs have done it by committee. That's been helpful."

LSU (9-3) ranks only 59th against the run, allowing 144 yards per game. Defensive end BJ Ojulari said the Tigers' run defense must recover from last week's "very disappointing" game against Texas A&M.

"We all know what the task at hand is," Ojulari said. "We're still going to have to go out to Atlanta and play our best game. We know our potential. We know how we can play and the level we can play at."

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



Kansas State running back Deuce Vaughn carries the ball on a touchdown run during the first half of the Wildcats' game against TCU on Oct. 22 in Fort Worth, Texas.

Big 12 title game RBs look distinct with similar results

By Stephen Hawkins
Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — The body types are certainly different for TCU's Kendre Miller and Kansas State's 5-foot-6 dynamo Deuce Vaughn, yet the third-year running backs that will be featured in the Big 12 championship game look pretty similar in what they do on the field.

Like Vaughn, the 6-foot, 220-pound Miller can be shifty, elusive and quick. While being nearly 50 pounds lighter, Vaughn can also be hard to tackle and doesn't shy from contact whether running or blocking. That was on display last week when he bulldozed a Kansas defensive back to spring Malik Knowles for a touchdown.

Miller has rushed for 1,260 yards and 16 touchdowns, running for a score in every game this season for third-ranked TCU (12-0, 9-0 Big 12, No. 3 CFP). His 153 yards six weeks ago against Kansas State included two TDs after halftime for the Horned Frogs, who won 38-28 after overcoming an early 28-10 deficit.

"He's a physical hard runner that doesn't come down with arm tackles. We didn't wrap up well. We have to get more bodies to the ball," K-State coach Chris Klieman said. "He makes guys miss and runs through arm tackles and drags guys for another 3 yards."

No. 13 Kansas State (9-3, 7-2, No. 10 CFP) gets another shot at Miller and the playoff hopeful Frogs on Saturday, when the Wildcats play in their first Big 12 title game since upsetting then-undefeated No. 1 Oklahoma in 2003.

While Vaughn (1,295 yards) and Miller are 3-4 in the Big 12 in rushing yards, both also catch the ball out of



TCU running back Kendre Miller breaks through the Oklahoma defense during their game on Oct. 1 in Fort Worth, Texas.

Big 12 Championship
TCU vs. Kansas State
AFN-Sports2
6 p.m. Saturday CET
2 a.m. Sunday JKT

the backfield. That has been a bigger part of K-State's offense since Will Howard took over as the primary quarterback after dual-threat Adrian Martinez got hurt on the opening series against TCU. Vaughn has 25 catches for 274 yards with all three of his receiving TDs since.

"He's a load trying to tackle him when they hand it do him, but they've done a really nice job getting him on linebackers and him running routes. They've been really creative in some of the things they've done as far as making him a receiver," TCU coach Sonny Dykes said. "So that's going to be challenging for us to try to not only stop him carrying the football, and also receiving the football."

Vaughn and Miller don't have to do it by themselves for their respective offenses, with plenty of other talented skill players around them.

Kansas State also has a bigger back in DJ Gidden, and Howard can also throw to all-around receiver Malik Knowles (46 catches, 679 yards, three TDs), who also has run for three scores. The Frogs have one of the NFL's top prospects in receiver Quentin Johnston (49 catches, 764 yards, five TDs), while senior quarterback Max Duggan leads the Big 12 with 3,070 yards and 29 TDs passing.

"It's a big deal, just having other people to lean on. Our offense is a pretty high-power offense," Miller said. "Just having dudes like Q and Max who can make plans any time, it's a really big deal, because as a defense game planning, it's pretty hard to scheme for us because you don't know who's going to make big plays."

Sainristil's switch to CB at Michigan proves to be wise

By Larry Lage
Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Mike Sainristil, whose family fled Haiti when he was an infant and raised him in suburban Boston, wanted to have the ball in his hands to make plays at receiver when he chose to attend Michigan.

Sainristil got his wish, scoring touchdowns in each of his first three seasons and emerging as a dependable player on offense last season when the Wolverines won their first Big Ten title since 2004.

Jim Harbaugh asked Sainristil last spring to switch to cornerback and it has proved to be a win-win move.

"The way this year is going, I can make plays on defense, too," Sainristil said.

The second-ranked Wolverines (12-0, 9-0 Big Ten) will likely line up Sainristil at times against stand-out receiver Charlie Jones on Saturday night when they face Purdue (8-4, 6-3) in the conference championship game in Indianapolis.

"New week. New mindset. New opponent," Sainristil said Monday. "It's time to hit that reset button. We're currently where we want to be, but we know that in order to get where we want to go, it starts on Saturday."

"We can't get to the playoffs, we can't win the national championship without winning the Big Ten championship."

Michigan is coming off a win over rival Ohio State on the road for the first time since 2000 to reach the conference championship game for a second straight season due to a slew of key plays.

One of Sainristil's pass breakups might have been the most pivotal play during the game on a third down from the Michigan 9.

Buckeyes tight end Cade Stover had his hands on the football in the end zone until Sainristil used his closing speed and strength to break up the pass with his left hand. That

Big Ten Championship
Michigan vs. Purdue
AFN-Sports
2 a.m. Sunday CET
10 a.m. Sunday JKT

forced Ryan Day to settle for a field goal, cutting Ohio State's deficit to eight points midway through the fourth quarter.

Sainristil finished with seven tackles — one shy of his career high — and two pass breakups in the 45-23 win in the Horseshoe, where he put a Michigan flag on the block "O" at midfield.

Harbaugh said the senior is one of many players on the team that made a personal sacrifice for the good of the team.

"Easily could have been another guy, 'I'm a great receiver. I'd rather get more targets than take on the challenge of changing positions,'" Harbaugh said. "Anything for the team. Changed positions. Voted captain. He's been phenomenal and had a phenomenal game, his best game of the year."

Sainristil has been one of Michigan's most steady players on defense this season. He has 48 tackles, including 4½ for losses and two sacks, and has broken up seven passes.

Over his first three seasons, he made 36 receptions for 532 yards and five touchdowns along with occasionally returning kickoffs and punts.

Sainristil can stay in college for another season, taking advantage of the NCAA granting an extra year of eligibility for any student-athlete who endured the COVID-affected 2020-21 school year, or he can take his versatile talents to the NFL.

"As far as next year goes, I'm not sure. I haven't decided what I'm doing," he said. "I'm just still focused on what's in the present moment and that's helping Team 143 be the best it can be and Purdue on Saturday."



Michigan defensive back Mike Sainristil celebrates breaking up a pass to Ohio State tight end Cade Stover during the second half of Saturday's game in Columbus, Ohio.

NHL/WORLD CUP



CHARLES REX ARBOGAST/AP
The Oilers' Connor McDavid, right, scored a goal and had an assist in Wednesday's win over the Blackhawks. He leads the NHL in points.

McDavid on familiar path to be the best

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

As he approached his 500th regular-season NHL game on Wednesday, Connor McDavid marveled at how Sidney Crosby has maintained a high level of play for more than twice that long.

“Just the longevity of it,” the Edmonton Oilers captain said. “You look at a guy like Sid, who I think has changed his game a little bit here and there a few times over, it’s so incredible to see.”

And familiar. McDavid is a much different player 500-plus games into his career than he was seven years ago when he made his debut. He is arguably the best player in the world after following a Crosby-like blueprint of isolating individual weaknesses and turning them into strengths.

“I’d like to think I’m a more responsible player, probably not as reckless as I was at 18 years old,” said McDavid, who will turn 26 in January. “I play the game a little bit different, but you have to adapt in the NHL otherwise you don’t go very far.”

Only five players in league history have put up more points through 500 games than McDavid’s 724 and the list does not include Crosby, Alex Ovechkin and other elite players.

He again leads the NHL in points a quarter of the way through the season with 41 in 23 games, and McDavid’s next trick could be scoring 50 goals in a season for the first time. Before training camp he said that would be nice but pale in comparison to team success.

“Numbers, really, at this point, I’ve kind of been there and done that,” McDavid said. “I’ve won my Art Rosses and Hart trophies and that stuff’s all kind of a moot point.”

McDavid has won the Art Ross Trophy as the league’s leading scorer four times and Hart as

MVP twice. The furthest he and the Oilers have advanced in the the playoffs was last season, when they reached the Western Conference finals before losing to the eventual Stanley Cup-champion Colorado Avalanche.

Edmonton needs more than just McDavid and longtime running mate Leon Draisaitl to make another deep run. But if the storied franchise is going to hang a sixth Cup banner from the rafters, McDavid’s evolution will be a big reason for it.

After winning just 41.2% of his faceoffs in his rookie year, McDavid has steadily improved in the circle to the point he’s now in the top 25 players in the league in that category. He had 89 giveaways in 2018-19 and has not approached that number since. And he has become a serviceable penalty killer.

“I think there is evolving his personal game,” coach Jay Woodcroft said. “I see a 200-foot player, I see a lot of defensive details in his game and I see someone who has adapted offensively. He doesn’t just resort to doing the same thing day in and day out, year in and year out.”

All that after entering the NHL with the pressure of not only being the top pick in the 2015 draft but called hockey’s “Next One” as a generational talent expected to follow in Crosby’s skate tracks.

McDavid was immediately the face of the franchise and soon after the youngest captain in NHL history at 19 years, 266 days old. He credits now-retired winger Matt Hendricks for helping him evolve as a leader, another area of his development.

“I don’t think he gets enough credit on the leadership side of things,” Woodcroft said. “For Connor, it’s not just about setting an example, it’s also holding the team to a certain standard and holding people accountable to that standard.”

NHL scoreboard

Eastern Conference								
Atlantic Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Boston	22	19	3	0	38	88	48	
Toronto	25	15	5	5	35	76	62	
Tampa Bay	22	13	8	1	27	76	71	
Detroit	22	11	6	5	27	72	70	
Florida	23	10	9	4	24	78	81	
Montreal	22	11	10	1	23	65	77	
Buffalo	23	10	12	1	21	86	83	
Ottawa	22	8	13	1	17	67	74	
Metropolitan Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
New Jersey	23	19	4	0	38	87	51	
N.Y. Islanders	24	15	9	0	30	78	62	
Carolina	23	12	6	5	29	64	63	
Pittsburgh	23	11	8	4	26	79	73	
N.Y. Rangers	24	11	9	4	26	72	68	
Washington	24	10	11	3	23	67	75	
Philadelphia	23	8	10	5	21	56	75	
Columbus	21	7	12	2	16	60	87	
Western Conference								
Central Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Dallas	23	13	6	4	30	88	66	
Winnipeg	21	14	6	1	29	68	53	
Colorado	20	12	7	1	25	68	52	
Minnesota	21	10	9	2	22	62	62	
Nashville	21	10	9	2	22	55	66	
St. Louis	22	11	11	0	22	63	78	
Arizona	20	7	10	3	17	54	70	
Chicago	22	6	12	4	16	56	83	
Pacific Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Vegas	24	17	6	1	35	83	63	
Seattle	22	14	5	3	31	84	68	
Los Angeles	25	12	9	4	28	85	90	
Edmonton	23	13	10	0	26	79	82	
Calgary	22	10	9	3	23	67	70	
Vancouver	23	9	11	3	21	80	88	
San Jose	26	8	14	4	20	77	92	
Anaheim	23	6	15	2	14	59	96	
Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.								
Wednesday's games								
Toronto 3, San Jose 1 N.Y. Rangers 3, Ottawa 1 Buffalo 5, Detroit 4, SO Edmonton 5, Chicago 4								
Thursday's games								
Colorado at Buffalo Nashville at New Jersey Tampa Bay at Philadelphia Vegas at Pittsburgh Carolina at St. Louis Edmonton at Minnesota Anaheim at Dallas Montreal at Calgary Florida at Vancouver Washington at Seattle Arizona at Los Angeles								
Friday's games								
Ottawa at N.Y. Rangers Nashville at N.Y. Islanders Columbus at Winnipeg								
Saturday's games								
Anaheim at Minnesota Colorado at Boston Montreal at Edmonton New Jersey at Philadelphia San Jose at Ottawa St. Louis at Pittsburgh Toronto at Tampa Bay Vegas at Detroit Chicago at N.Y. Rangers Arizona at Vancouver Florida at Seattle Washington at Calgary Carolina at Los Angeles								
Sunday's games								
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	GP	G	A	PTS				
Connor McDavid, EDM	23	18	23	41				
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	23	15	21	36				
Jason Robertson, DAL	23	19	17	36				
Nikita Kucherov, TB	22	10	25	35				
Erik Karlsson, SJ	26	11	21	32				
David Pastrnak, BOS	22	14	18	32				
Sidney Crosby, PIT	23	12	19	31				
Mitch Marner, TOR	25	8	21	29				
Matthew Tkachuk, FLA	21	10	19	29				
Mikko Rantanen, COL	20	13	16	29				
Tage Thompson, BUF	23	14	15	29				

Ghana, Uruguay meet again after 2010 Cup drama

BY GERALD IMRAY
Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar — Ghana and Uruguay meet at the World Cup on Friday in a repeat of one of the tournament’s most contentious games, and Luis Suarez still isn’t apologizing for his central role in the controversy 12 years ago.

Uruguay striker Suarez’s deliberate handball on the goal line at the end of extra time in the quarterfinals of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa denied Ghana a certain goal and a place in history as the first African team to reach the semis. Suarez was sent off for the handball but celebrated wildly on the sidelines when Asamoah Gyan hit the penalty off the crossbar. Uruguay won the ensuing penalty shootout.

To make it worse, Suarez boasted after the 2010 game: “Truth is, it was worth it.”

On Thursday, he remained unrepentant.

“I don’t apologize because I take the handball and the red card but the Ghana player missed the penalty. It’s not my fault because I didn’t miss the penalty,” Suarez said.

Ghana can now go some way toward settling the score. By beating Uruguay in its final Group H match, Ghana would advance to the round of 16, while knocking Uruguay out of the tournament.

Though the match in Al Wakrah has been circled as one to watch ever since the World Cup draw was made, Ghana coach Otto Ado tried his best to cast it as a “normal game” despite 2010 remaining a raw and painful memory for many Ghanaians, who are demanding revenge for the handball.

“For me, it’s not a big topic,” Ado said, adding he wouldn’t criticize one of his own players if they did the same as Suarez. “I would expect every player to do all he can to make sure his team goes through. Even sacrificing himself with a red card.”

“What happened in 2010 is very sad but we can’t change it. We want to look forward and we want to win this game,” he said. “No matter how.”

Ghana, which squeezed out a thrilling 3-2 win over South Korea in its last game, must win again in Al Wakrah to be certain of going past the group stage for the first time since 2010. A draw could also be enough depending on the result of South Korea vs. Portugal.

Captain Andre Ayew is the only Ghana player in Qatar who was on the 2010 squad.

Uruguay has a handful, includ-



MARTIN MEISSNER/AP
Uruguay's Luis Suarez remains unrepentant for a handball that denied Ghana a goal at the 2010 World Cup.

ing the 35-year-old Suarez, who is playing what’s likely his farewell World Cup before winding down a career that saw him celebrated as one of the best forwards in the world at one point. He won the Copa America with Uruguay and Spanish league titles and a Champions League trophy with Barcelona.

Suarez also carved out a reputation as one of the game’s most controversial characters and has been punished three times for biting opponents, including a four-month ban for biting Italy’s Giorgio Chiellini on the shoulder at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

Uruguay must beat Ghana and hope South Korea doesn’t beat Portugal to extend its stay at the World Cup and Suarez’s international career for at least one more game. Goal difference will decide it if Uruguay and South Korea both win.

Stoking it just a little bit more, Suarez said the 2010 game against Ghana does still mean something to Uruguay.

“We are going to put our lives and soul into this match,” Suarez said. “Ghana is a good team but we know them, we have beaten them before and we know how to beat them again.”

Scoreboard

ROUND OF 16	
Saturday, Dec. 3	
Netherlands vs. United States	
Argentina vs. Australia	
Sunday, Dec. 4	
France vs. Poland	
England vs. Senegal	
Monday, Dec. 5	
Group E winner vs. Croatia	
Group G winner vs. Group H second place	
Tuesday, Dec. 6	
Morocco vs. Group E second place	
Group H winner vs. Group G second place	

WORLD CUP



PHOTOS BY THANASSIS STAVRAKIS/AP

Australia's Mathew Leckie, left, celebrates with teammate Riley McGree after scoring his team's only goal in its 1-0 defeat of Denmark on Wednesday. Australia is in the round of 16 for the first time since 2006.

No pressure for Australia as Messi, Argentina await

By ANDREW DAMPF
Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar — Australia center forward Mitchell Duke plays in the Japanese second division. Midfielder Ajdin Hrustic of Hellas Verona — the last-placed team in Italy's Serie A — is the team's lone player based in Europe's top five leagues.

After unexpectedly surviving the World Cup group stage, the Socceroos will once again rely on teamwork, determination and self-belief when they go up against star-studded Argentina in the round of 16.

"We have no real pressure," said forward Mathew Leckie, who scored in a 1-0 win over Denmark. "We just need to enjoy the moment, enjoy the occasion. No one expects us to win. So let's shock the world."

Center back Harry Souttar, the man who will be charged with stopping Lionel Messi in Australia's next match, is the tallest outfield player at the World Cup at 6-foot-6.

He only recently returned from ACL surgery but his and the team's confidence has been building game after game while advancing from a difficult group featuring defending champion France and European Championship semifinalist Denmark.

"It's 11 against 11. There's not 11 Messis. There is one," right back Milos Degenek said Thursday. "We know their squad is full of stars. Even (Paulo) Dybala is on the bench and (Lautaro) Martinez

Round of 16
Argentina vs. Australia
AFN-Sports
7:45 p.m. Saturday CET
3:45 a.m. Sunday JKT

comes off the bench. So it's a squad that's immaculate.

"I always loved Messi, and I think he's the greatest to ever play the game," Degenek added. "(But) it's not an honor to play against him, because he's just a human, as we all are."

Australia's performance has been a testament to team spirit and proving doubters wrong.

"No one believed in us apart from us and the people around us," Degenek said Thursday. "So it's phenomenal."

It's only the second time in six World Cups that Australia has reached the knockout stage. The 2006 team was beaten by eventual champion Italy in the round of 16 on a controversial stoppage-time penalty.

Australia only qualified for this tournament following a penalty shootout win over Peru in an intercontinental playoff in June. But planning for the World Cup started long before that.

Degenek left Red Star Belgrade in January for the Columbus Crew in MLS, specifically to get more playing time in view of the tournament in Qatar.

Duke, who scored with a difficult header in Australia's 1-0 win over Tunisia, once considered becoming an electrician when his soccer career stalled. Then coach

Graham Arnold gave him a chance with the Central Coast Mariners and the pair are now reunited with Australia.

"Obviously I've got a lot of faith in the kid," Arnold said. "Everyone talks about where he plays but when he walks over that white line he gives 100% for the nation and the jersey."



Right back Milos Degenek celebrates Australia's 1-0 victory over Denmark that put the Socceroos in the round of 16.

Amid protests, Iran gets tepid welcome

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iran's national soccer team received a subdued welcome home after its World Cup defeat against the United States, a match played against the backdrop of ongoing anti-government protests in Iran. One Iranian man was shot dead celebrating the American victory.

The players returned from Qatar late Wednesday, a day after their 1-0 loss. Anti-government protesters, considering the team a symbol of Iran's clerical rulers, had celebrated the loss in some Iranian cities with fireworks and cheers.

One man was shot dead by Iranian security forces in northwest Iran for honking his car horn in support of the U.S. victory, the Oslo-based rights monitor Iran Human Rights reported on Thursday.

Iran's treatment of the players will likely be scrutinized because they refrained from singing the Islamic Republic's national anthem during their opening World Cup match. Many considered the move a show of solidarity with the protests. The team did sing the anthem in subsequent matches.

A few dozen fans greeted the national team's return at Tehran's international airport late Wednesday, with people cheering and

waving the Iranian flag.

Yet the players have faced biting criticism from anti-government protesters who have blamed the team for not being more vocal about the security force's violent putdown of the demonstrations. Human rights groups say over 400 protesters have been killed in the crackdown, with thousands more arrested.

An image of players bowing in the presence of President Ebrahim Raisi before setting off to the tournament was widely criticized by activists on social media. A hardline cleric, Raisi has likened protesters to "flies" and dismissed the movement as a foreign plot, without offering any proof.

Mehran Samak, 27, was shot dead after honking his car in support of the U.S. win after Tuesday's match in the city of Bandar Anzali in northwest Iran. Oslo-based Iran Human Rights reported he was "shot in the head by state forces when he went out to celebrate the Islamic Republic's loss."

Samak is also a childhood friend of Iranian midfielder Saeed Ezatollahi, who mourned his death on his social media. But again he received criticism from activists for not explicitly stating Samak was killed by government forces.

Boost: Along with youth, Americans provide speed

FROM PAGE 48

"We may be the underdog," said Brenden Aaronson, who replaced Pulisic at the start of the second half. "The Dutch are a world power and they've been that for many, many tournaments. So I think for us, it's just going in there with no fear and playing the way we have been this entire tournament. And I think good things will come out of it."

Matt Turner, the first U.S. goalkeeper with consecutive World Cup shutouts since 1930, was overcome with emotion at the final whistle. Turner thought back to how the U.S. performance in 2010 helped convert him to soccer.

He was a high school baseball player who played soccer full time, then switched emphasis. Turner's journey took him to a Major League Soccer debut in 2018, a transfer to Arsenal last summer and now success on soccer's biggest stage.

"This is just an unbelievable experience for me, given my story," he said. "Almost everything is a carbon copy of the feelings that I felt as a fan in 2010. And to be able to have a say in the result that gets us through to the next round is

huge — it was just very emotional for a lot of reasons for me."

The American lineup against Iran was the youngest of any team at this year's tournament and the youngest for the Americans since 1990, averaging 24 years, 321 days. Iran coach Carlos Queiroz, a former U.S. Soccer Federation adviser, praised their pace, which forced his team to adjust.

"When we play a team with Ferraris who need space to accelerate, the best way to play against them is to close the highways so they can't gain speed," he said.

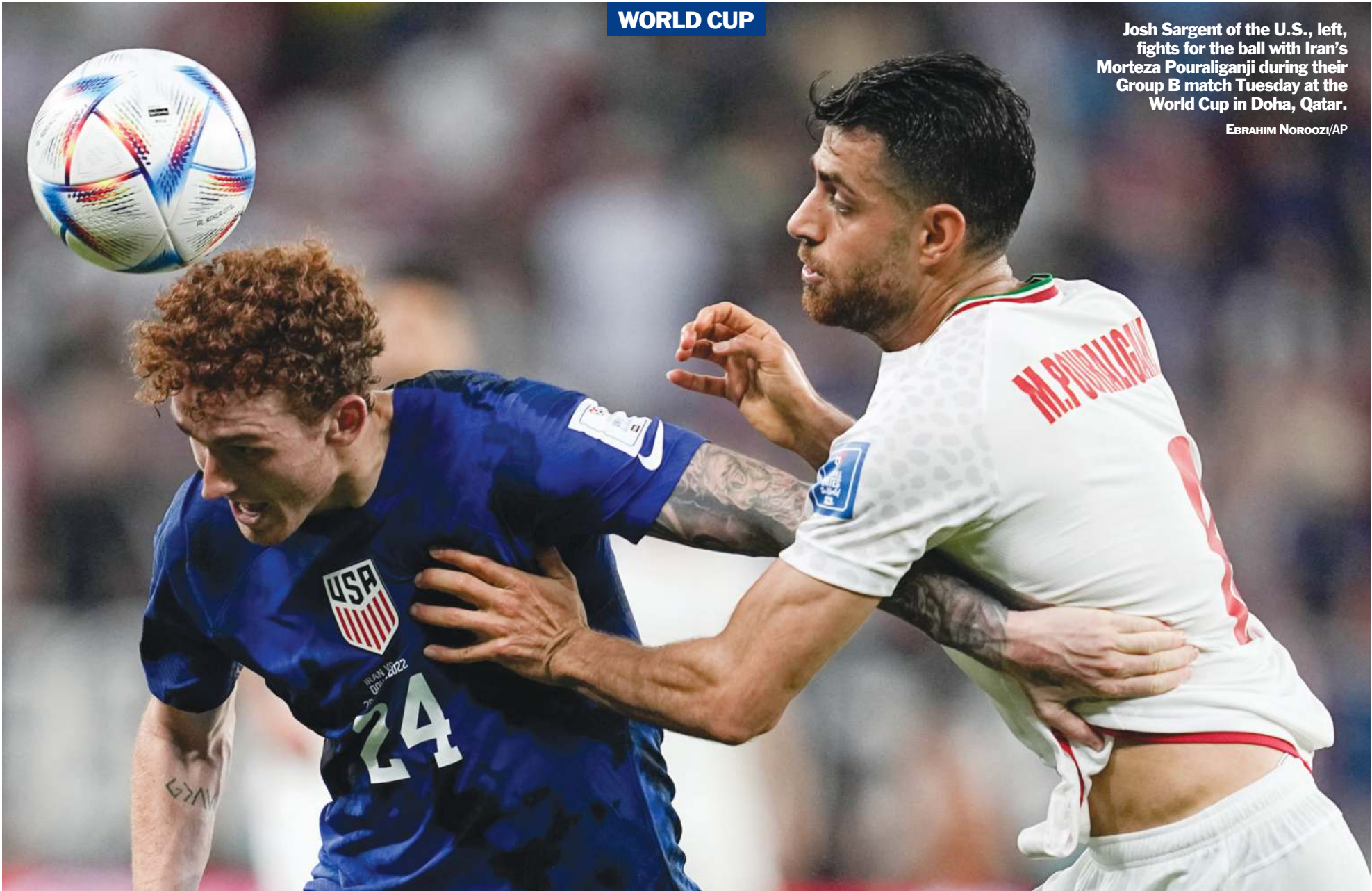
A daunting task against the Dutch is ahead: The U.S. has five losses and six draws in 11 World Cup matches against European opponents since upsetting Portugal 3-2 in a 2002 opener.

"It's a great opportunity but it's not something that we're going into it thinking it's an honor. We deserve to be in the position we're in and we want to keep going," Berhalter said. "So for us, it's about how we recover from this game and prepare to play against a very good Dutch, very well coached, ton of quality all over the field, and we have to come up with an idea of how to beat them."

SPORTS



Remarkable turnaround
In just his first season, Riley has USC on cusp of playoff » **College football, Page 44**



WORLD CUP

Josh Sargent of the U.S., left, fights for the ball with Iran's Morteza Pouraliganji during their Group B match Tuesday at the World Cup in Doha, Qatar.
EBRAHIM NOROOZI/AP

Trying to boost interest

Advancing to knockout round another big step for US soccer

BY RONALD BLUM
Associated Press
DOHA, Qatar — American soccer hopes to be ascendant, to challenge the NFL, Major League Baseball and the NBA in the competition for the U.S. market share.
Reaching the final 16 with Tuesday's 1-0 win over Iran was another step for a team whose success is measured in television viewers and buzz along with final scores.
"I don't know the final numbers, but I'm sure there was a lot of people watching," U.S. coach Gregg Berhalter said. "You see how resilient this group is. You see how unified this group is. You see what

Round of 16
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type of energy and output they put into every single game. And then along the way, there's some pretty good soccer. That's the American spirit, the way this group plays, and I think people will appreciate that, especially back home."
The Americans opened with a 1-1 draw with Wales that was seen by 11.7 million on English- and Spanish-language U.S. broadcasts and followed with a 0-0 tie against

England that was viewed by 19.98 million on Black Friday, when schools were off and many offices closed.
President Joe Biden took note of the victory over Iran when speaking in Bay City, Mich.
"They did it! God love 'em," Biden said.
A victory on Saturday against the Netherlands would put the U.S. in the quarterfinals for the first time since 2002. The status of



Berhalter

Christian Pulisic is uncertain after he bruised his pelvis crashing into the goalkeeper while scoring against Iran. The U.S. Soccer Federation did not make Pulisic available to media on Wednesday but posted a video of him dribbling a ball.
Pulisic hopes to play Saturday. He said he was going to consult with the medical staff in the hope of joining Thursday's training session.
"I will do everything in my power to work with this medical team and make sure I can play," he said.
SEE BOOST ON PAGE 47



RICARDO MAZALAN/AP

U.S. goalkeeper Matt Turner was inspired to switch from baseball to soccer by the 2010 team.

Early NBA MVP race has plenty of candidates » Page 42

