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EUROPE  
& PACIFIC

WEEKEND

EDITION

**MOVIES**  
'Deadpool & Wolverine'  
finally together again  
Summer preview, **Pages 14-19**

# STARS AND STRIPES®

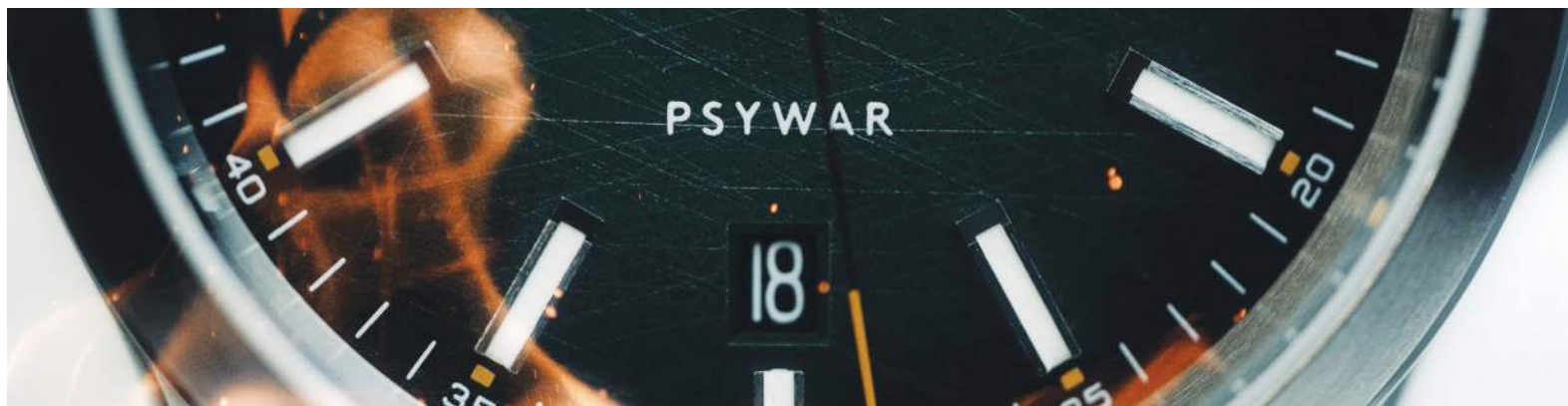
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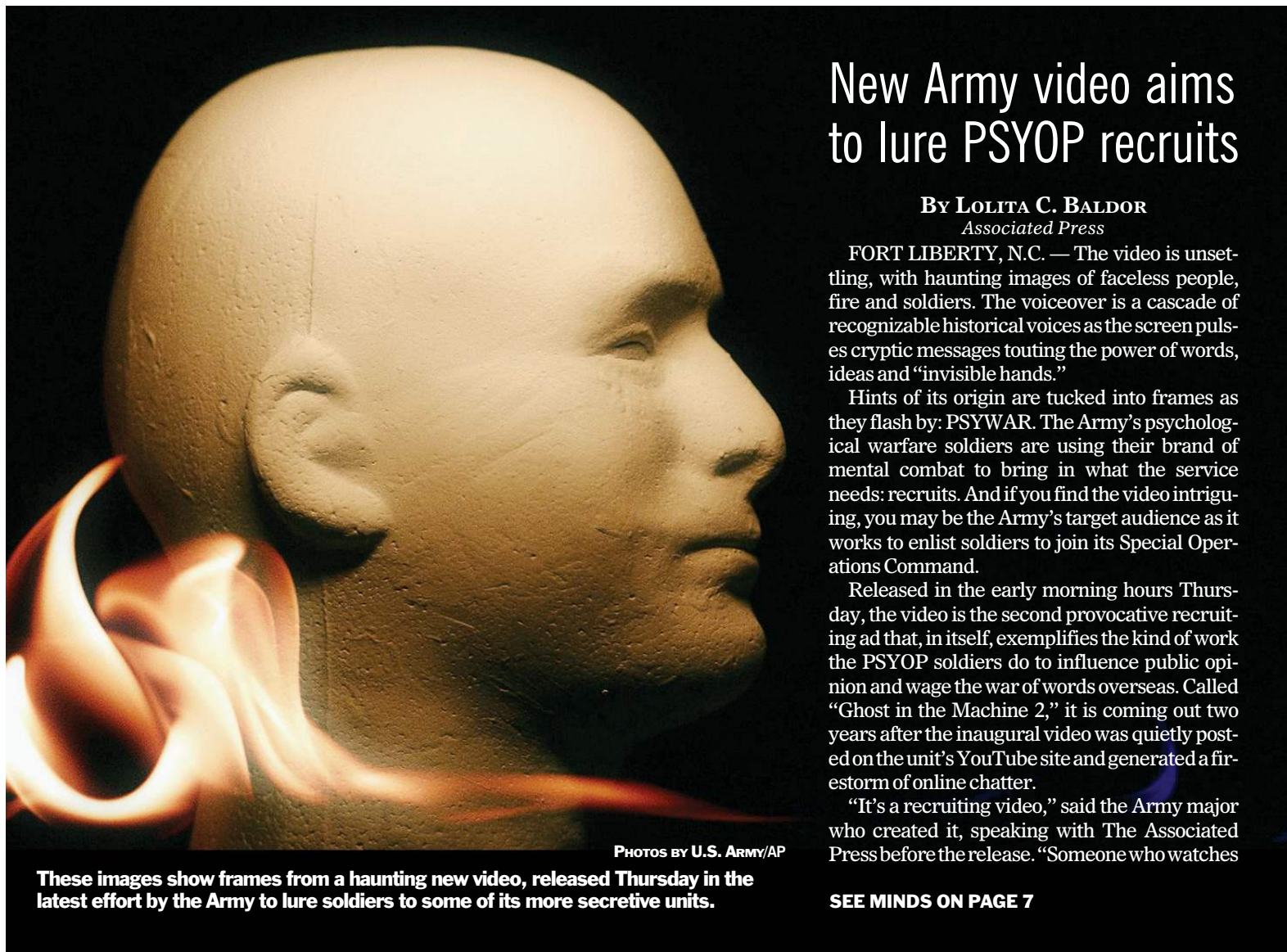
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## MINING FOR MINDS



PHOTOS BY U.S. ARMY/AP

These images show frames from a haunting new video, released Thursday in the latest effort by the Army to lure soldiers to some of its more secretive units.

## China's new carrier likely years from deployments

BY ALEX WILSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

China's newest and most advanced aircraft carrier began sea trials this week, but it is still likely years away from regular, routine deployments, according to two experts.

The Fujian, Beijing's third carrier, departed Shanghai Jiangnan Shipyard around 8 a.m. Wednesday to test the reliability and stability of its propulsion and electrical systems, according to the official China Military Online website that day.

The carrier — China's second built domestically and the first in its class — was launched in June 2022 and has since undergone "mooring trials, outfitting work and equipment adjustments," according to the report.

The Fujian is named for the Chinese mainland province opposite of Taiwan, the self-governing island that Beijing considers a breakaway province.

While sea trials typically mark one of the final milestones before a warship begins patrols, the Fujian is likely several years away from regular deployment, according to an analysis published online Tuesday by Mike Sweeney, a nonresident fellow at Defense Priorities, a think tank in Washington, D.C.

He estimated the carrier will not achieve initial operating capability for approximately another year and routine deployments are likely several years away due to the ship's new technology.

"This assumes China encounters no major technical challenges with the new carrier's design, which would not be unexpected with a first-of-class ship of the Fujian's complexity," Sweeney

## New Army video aims to lure PSYOP recruits

BY LOLITA C. BALDOR  
*Associated Press*

FORT LIBERTY, N.C. — The video is unsettling, with haunting images of faceless people, fire and soldiers. The voiceover is a cascade of recognizable historical voices as the screen pulses cryptic messages touting the power of words, ideas and "invisible hands."

Hints of its origin are tucked into frames as they flash by: PSYWAR. The Army's psychological warfare soldiers are using their brand of mental combat to bring in what the service needs: recruits. And if you find the video intriguing, you may be the Army's target audience as it works to enlist soldiers to join its Special Operations Command.

Released in the early morning hours Thursday, the video is the second provocative recruiting ad that, in itself, exemplifies the kind of work the PSYOP soldiers do to influence public opinion and wage the war of words overseas. Called "Ghost in the Machine 2," it is coming out two years after the inaugural video was quietly posted on the unit's YouTube site and generated a firestorm of online chatter.

"It's a recruiting video," said the Army major who created it, speaking with The Associated Press before the release. "Someone who watches

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## MILITARY



Stars and Stripes

F/A-18s from Carrier Air Wing 5 at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, take part in field carrier-landing practice at Iwo Jima, Japan, in May 2019.

## Pilots head to Iwo Jima to train for USS Ronald Reagan's patrol

By ALEX WILSON  
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Naval aviators are scheduled for 11 days of carrier-landing practice on Iwo Jima ahead of the USS Ronald Reagan's final deployment before returning stateside.

The training — an annual requirement for Carrier Air Wing 5 before it leaves with the Ronald Reagan on its annual patrol — will run between Saturday and May 15, Naval Forces Japan announced Thursday.

Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni-based pilots and crews of fixed-wing aircraft, including F-18 Super Hornets, EA-18G Growlers and C-2 Greyhounds, take part in the training.

Senior pilots fly at least six sorties — three during the day and three at night — and complete seven or eight touch-and-go landings. Junior pilots undergo more extensive training and may complete a dozen or more touch-and-goes.

This year's training will be the last before the Ronald Reagan relocates from Japan to Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, Wash., sometime this summer.

Its replacement, the USS George Washington, departed Naval Station Norfolk, Va., on April 25 for a deployment to Central and South America, after which it will steam for its new homeport with the 7th Fleet.

Most of the carrier-landing practice will take place at Iwo Jima, also known as Iwo To, where Carrier Air Wing 5 has carried out its training since 1991.

Other U.S. airfields in Japan, such as Yokota Air Base or Misawa Air Base, are reserved as alternative training sites in the case of bad weather or other circumstances, according to the announcement.

The island is not used as a permanent training site due to its remote location — about 750 miles southeast of mainland Japan — and lack of alternative landing sites.

However, the Japanese government has committed to finding a permanent training area for the Navy, according to the release.

The Japanese Defense Ministry began work in January 2023 on a new site for U.S. carrier-landing practice on Mageshima, an island 20 miles south of Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands.

The \$1.6 billion base will include an 8,000-foot main runway, a 6,000-foot crosswind runway, a port and ammunition and fuel storage facilities, according to the ministry. It's anticipated to be completed by 2027.

Naval Forces Japan spokesman Cmdr. Paul Macapagal on Thursday referred all questions regarding Mageshima or other alternative locations for a permanent training site to the Japanese government.

A spokesperson for Japan's Ministry of Defense did not immediately respond to an email requesting comment that afternoon.

## Japan says a collision during a nighttime drill caused deadly crash of 2 navy helos

Associated Press

TOKYO — Japanese investigators have determined that a collision during a nighttime drill caused the deadly crash last month of two Japanese navy SH-60K Seahawk helicopters, the country's defense minister said Thursday.

That is according to preliminary flight data analysis, said Defense Minister Minoru Kihara, adding that what exactly led to the collision is still being investigated.

Kihara ruled out mechanical failure of the SH-60K Seahawks from the Maritime Self Defense

Force and announced that the exercises, which were halted following the crash, would resume on Friday.

The two SH-60K reconnaissance helicopters carrying a total of eight crew lost contact late on April 20 during nighttime training east of the island of Torishima in the Pacific Ocean, about 370 miles south of the capital, Tokyo.

One crew member on the two helicopters was found in the waters and later pronounced dead, and the search for the seven missing, as well as the aircrafts' fuses, has continued since then.

The seabed at the crash site is about 3.4 miles deep and the recovery is considered a challenge. A navy oceanographic ship JS Syounan has been deployed since late April in the search.

Kihara said that a preliminary examination of the flight data records determined a collision caused the crash. The helicopters' flight data showed a "rapid and huge impact" simultaneously at the same location, an evidence of the collision, he said.

There was no indication of any malfunction in the aircrafts' mechanics.

# Navy water trial hears testimony from psychiatrist

By WYATT OLSON  
Stars and Stripes

HONOLULU — The trauma of exposure to petroleum-contaminated tap water left a Navy spouse with neurological injuries, anxiety and fear of water, a psychiatrist testified in Hawaii federal court Wednesday.

Dr. Steven Storage said Nastasia Freeman, one of 17 plaintiffs in *Feindt vs. United States*, suffered health problems that resulted from consuming water tainted by jet fuel in November 2021.

Traumatic events impede the flow of blood into the front part of the brain, which manages high-level functions such as planning, organizing and controlling responses, Storage said on the stand.

The group of plaintiffs, which does not include any uniformed service members, claims to have suffered medical, emotional and financial injuries from a jet fuel spill that contaminated the Navy's water system for military housing.

A spill at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility seeped into the groundwater and into one of the wells that served roughly 93,000 residents on and near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

More than 7,500 additional plaintiffs have joined several other lawsuits also seeking compensation.

U.S. District Court Judge Leslie Kobayashi is hearing the case without a jury.

Storage, who practices at Amen Clinics in Encino, Calif., began seeing Freeman in September 2022. She complained of dizziness, drowsiness, numbness, muscle spasms, tremors, brain fog and an impaired memory and slurred speech, he wrote in a declaration filed on behalf of the plaintiffs.

Freeman had moved to Hawaii in May 2021 with her husband, Koda Freeman, a Navy lieutenant, and their three children, according to a declaration she filed with the court.

The family moved into Aliamanu Military Reservation, one of the military housing communities closest to the Red Hill well.

Their problems with tainted water began on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 25, 2021, a meal that sickened several guests. Within a few days the Freeman children were vomiting and suffering from diarrhea.

For much of her life, Freeman had a condition called temporal lobe epilepsy, but her seizures had been dormant for about two years.

With exposure to the tainted water, the seizures returned, Freeman states in the declaration. The family relocated to California in February 2022.

Among the tests and examinations performed under Storage's care, Freeman was given a SPECT brain scan, which detects altered blood flow and indicates which parts of the brain are most and least active. It is used to diagnose conditions such as seizure, Parkinson's, epilepsy and traumatic brain injury.

"While there is one irregularity in Nastasia's SPECT scan that can be attributed to her seizure disorder, the other indications of brain injury, taken with the temporal nature of her symptoms, her exposure to contaminated water, and her medical history, indicate injury to the brain from toxic exposure and the resulting trauma," Storage wrote in his declaration.

On the stand, Storage said the circumstances of contaminated water coming into Freeman's home would be particularly traumatic.

"Home is supposed to be a safe place," he testified. "We are retreating from the world there. Our guard is down. It becomes much more traumatic because it is unexpected."

"Home no longer represents a place where you can live comfortably."

Freeman discussed her fear of water with Storage, he said.

The plaintiffs' attorney, Kristina Baehr, asked the psychiatrist if he thought that fear would be long lasting.

"I do," Storage said. "It is very, very hard to shake a fear like that. You will second guess water wherever you are."

Under cross examination by Justice Department attorney Eric Rey, Storage acknowledged that Freeman had not been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

The government has acknowledged responsibility for the water contamination from the fuel leak but holds that the Navy's quick response prevented widespread and lengthy exposure by residents of the housing areas.

The lines of cross examination by government attorneys since the trial began Monday suggests their defense will assert that the cause of maladies experienced by residents was largely due to pre-existing conditions and situational stress.

## MILITARY

# Coast Guard: NDAs should not hinder probe

By ROSE L. THAYER

*Stars and Stripes*

Coast Guard nondisclosure agreements should not stop service members from cooperating with investigations into the sexual misconduct scandal at its academy after some senators claimed the agreements have hindered them from attaining information, service leaders said in a memo reinforcing the policy.

Adm. Steven Poulin, vice commandant of the Coast Guard, sent the all-Coast Guard message April 18 after Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, claimed the agreements had been used to block sexual assault victims from speaking to anyone, including Congress, about their assault or related investigations.

“Current and former members and employees may have either signed nondisclosure agreements or been verbally advised not to disclose or discuss certain sensitive or

confidential matters. Generally, these warnings would have been given to protect individual privacy, integrity of ongoing investigations, or other sensitive material,” Poulin wrote.

“The intent” has not been, and is not, to restrict any individual’s right to make protected disclosures to Congress, the Office of the Inspector General, Office of Special Counsel, or to make internal reports within the chain of command, the Coast Guard Investigative Service, or other authorities responsible for investigating or processing complaints of alleged violations, he wrote to the force.

Cruz on Wednesday thanked the Coast Guard for quickly responding to a letter that he sent April 8 alerting Adm. Linda Fagan, commandant of the Coast Guard, to his discovery.

“Within a day of my letter alerting the commandant to the issue,

the Coast Guard ended this indefensible practice. The Coast Guard has now notified every Coast Guardsman that NDAs may not silence victims of sexual assaults, nor do they prevent anyone else from blowing the whistle to Congress or the inspector general,” Cruz said during an executive session of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee.

The senator said the agreements were stalling the committee’s investigations into the cover-up of Operation Fouled Anchor—a 2020 report based on a six-year inquiry into the handling of sexual assault and sexual harassment at the academy. Coast Guard officials only alerted Congress about the report’s existence after CNN uncovered it.

“One reason that the Coast Guard may have been successful in hiding the Operation Fouled Anchor investigation from Congress

and the public for so long — was that it had at least some of those involved in Operation Fouled Anchor either sign an NDA or orally agree to an NDA, forbidding them from speaking about the investigations,” Cruz wrote to Fagan.

Cruz also sent his concerns to the Department of Homeland Security inspector general, Government Accountability Office, and the Office of Special Counsel, an independent federal investigative and prosecutorial agency.

The Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations is also investigating the cover-up of Operation Fouled Anchor. Subcommittee leaders wrote Wednesday to Fagan to ask her to testify May 21 about Fouled Anchor and explain the Coast Guard’s failure so far to produce all documents and information requested.

“Simply put, the Coast Guard’s lack of responsiveness stands in

stark contrast to your previous commitments to be fully transparent with Congress and the American people,” wrote Sens. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., the subcommittee chairman, and Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, the top Republican on the subcommittee.

The senators, who began their inquiry in September, gave the Coast Guard until May 15 to supply all records without redactions.

“Should the Coast Guard continue to impede the subcommittee’s inquiry by withholding records or including inappropriate redactions that hinder our legitimate congressional oversight, the subcommittee will have no choice but to use compulsory process to ensure compliance,” they wrote.

The Coast Guard said in December that Fagan “is committed to being open and transparent with Congress” and would testify on Fouled Anchor as she has done in the past.

## Fort Johnson brigade tapped for rotation in Europe this summer

By COREY DICKSTEIN

*Stars and Stripes*

An Army infantry brigade from Fort Johnson, La., will deploy to Europe in summer to train alongside NATO forces in a regular troop rotation, the service announced Wednesday.

The 10th Mountain Division’s 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team will deploy to Eastern Europe to replace soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division’s 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Army officials said.

The deployment will come on the heels of another exercise in Europe in which Fort Johnson soldiers are now participating. Hun-

dreds of 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain soldiers deployed to northern Europe in recent weeks to train in an exercise known as Immediate Response 24, which will see the soldiers operate across Norway and Finland through the end of May, according to the Defense Department.

The later deployment will support the ongoing Operation Atlantic Resolve, which the United States launched in 2014 after Russia’s initial invasion of Ukraine when it annexed the Crimean Peninsula. The operation — meant to bolster NATO’s eastern flank and dissuade Russian forces from entering the alliance’s territory —

grew larger after Russia’s 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Since deploying to Eastern Europe in November, roughly 3,400 soldiers of the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne have operated in multiple NATO countries, including Estonia, Poland and Romania, photos on the unit’s social media pages show. The brigade will return to its home station at Fort Campbell, Ky.

While the rest of the 10th Mountain Division is based at Fort Drum, N.Y., the division’s 3rd Brigade is based at Fort Johnson, where it regularly trains at the Army’s Joint Readiness Training Center.



JAMES HONG/U.S. Navy

**Army Col. Ryan Barnett, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, left, and Navy Lt. Mason Mullins, assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 11, cross a medium girder bridge laid down in support of Immediate Response 2024 in Bjerkvik, Norway, on April 26.**

## DOD asked to provide data on troops’ tuition assistance complaints

By KELLY AGEE

*Stars and Stripes*

Four members of Congress have asked the Pentagon to bring them up to date on the Postsecondary Education Complaint System — reports the Defense Department stopped providing nearly a decade ago.

Sens. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., Tom Capper, D-Del., and Tim Kaine, D-Va., with Rep. Donald Davis, D-N.C., wrote Wednesday to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin asking the Pentagon to start publishing updates from the complaint system again.

“This will afford Congress and the public the ability to conduct oversight and ensure accountability over these programs, which receive hundreds of millions of dol-

lars in DOD funding annually,” said the letter, which was also addressed to the acting undersecretary for personnel and readiness, Ashish Vazirani.

The system was launched in January 2014 when the DOD collaborated with the Departments of Education and Veterans Affairs to provide “military students the opportunity to file education complaints against their schools,” the letter states.

It was spurred on by a Government Accountability Office probe in March 2011 that revealed the Pentagon was aware of concerns regarding “improper recruiting practices,” according to the letter.

But “without a centralized process to track complaints against schools and their resolu-

tion,” the DOD lacked the ability to discern trends requiring oversight and whether those concerns were adequately addressed.

In fiscal 2014, the DOD received hundreds of complaints from students receiving assistance from My Career Advancement Account Scholarships and the Tuition Assistance Program, according to the letter.

Most complaints focused on tuition and fees, refund or collections issues, quality of education and release of transcripts. Data from the following year “was similarly helpful in identifying and addressing institutions and behavior that put taxpayer dollars at risk,” according to the lawmakers.

After fiscal 2015, when the

DOD stopped releasing summary reports, information on complaint numbers and “critical information” about problems facing military-connected students was unavailable to Congress, according to the lawmakers.

“We write today to better understand the status of the Postsecondary Education Complaint System, and to urge the Department of Defense to prioritize this program in order to safeguard the hard-earned military education benefits of our service members and their families,” the letter states.

The letter also requests the DOD to release basic data from the complaint system on its website along with providing annual summary data again.

The four lawmakers asked for a response by May 15.

Up to 300,000 military members participate in tuition assistance programs annually, according to a report from the Congressional Research Service published Dec. 14.

The DOD alone provided \$644 million in tuition assistance in fiscal year 2022, according to the lawmakers’ letter.

Military spouses benefit from career scholarships and veterans benefit from the Montgomery and Post 9/11 GI Bills and loan programs from the federal government and commercial lenders.

All are encouraged to send their complaints to the Postsecondary Education Complaint System, according to the program’s website.

## PACIFIC

# Poll: Over 40% in US see China as an enemy

BY DIDI TANG  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — More than 40% of Americans now label China as an enemy, up from a quarter two years ago and reaching the highest level in five years, according to an annual Pew Research Center survey released Wednesday.

Half of Americans think of China as a competitor, and only 6% consider the country a partner, according to the report. The findings come as the Biden administration is seeking to stabilize U.S.-China relations to avoid miscalculations that could result in clashes, while still trying to counter the world's second-largest economy on issues from Russia's war in Ukraine to Taiwan and human rights.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen have both recently visited China in the administration's latest effort to "responsibly" manage the competition with Beijing. Despite those overtures, President Joe Biden has been competing with former President Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee in November's election, on being tough on China.

The Pew report, which is drawn from an April 1-7 survey of a sample of 3,600 U.S. adults, found that roughly half of Americans think limiting China's power and influence should be a top U.S. foreign policy priority. Only 8% don't think it should be a priority at all.

For the fifth year in a row, about eight in 10 Americans report an unfavorable view of China, the Pew report said.

"Today, 81% of U.S. adults see



MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/AP

**Chinese President Xi Jinping talks to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the Great Hall of the People on April 26 in Beijing. A new Pew Research Center report shows that more than 40% of Americans now label China as an enemy.**

the country unfavorably, including 43% who hold a very unfavorable opinion. Chinese President Xi Jinping receives similarly negative ratings," the report said.

About eight in 10 Americans say they have little or no confidence in Xi to do the right thing regarding world affairs. About 10% said they have never heard of him.

American attitudes toward China have turned largely critical after the U.S. launched a trade war against China in 2018 and since the

emergence of COVID-19, which was first reported in China. Beijing's human rights record, its closeness to Russia and its policies toward Taiwan and Hong Kong also have left Americans with negative views of the country, according to Pew's previous analyses.

At the same time, the U.S. government has been overt about competing with China on economic and diplomatic issues.

Following that, 42% of Americans say China is an enemy of the

U.S., the highest level since 2021, when Pew began asking the question.

The share is much larger among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents, Pew said, with 59% of them describing China as an enemy, compared with 28% of Democrats and those leaning Democratic.

Older Americans, conservative Republicans and those with a sour view of the U.S. economy are more critical of China and more likely to

**"Those who think the economic situation in the U.S. is bad are more likely to see China unfavorably and to see it as an enemy."**

Christine Huang  
Pew research associate

consider the country an enemy, the report said.

"Americans also see China more negatively when they think China's influence in the world has gotten stronger in recent years or when they think China has a substantial amount of influence on the U.S. economy," said Christine Huang, a Pew research associate.

"Even pessimism about the U.S. economy is related to how Americans evaluate China: Those who think the economic situation in the U.S. is bad are more likely to see China unfavorably and to see it as an enemy," she added.

Pew said a nationally representative sample of 3,600 respondents filled out online surveys and that the margin of error was plus or minus 2.1 percentage points.

## Carrier: Sea trials underway

FROM PAGE 1

wrote.

The carrier may not reach the Chinese navy for another two years, and even more time may be needed to make it a fully effective fighting ship, according to Sam Roggeveen, director of the international security program at the Australian think tank Lowy Institute.

The Fujian and its sister ships are powered by steam turbines rather than nuclear energy like the United States' 11 aircraft carriers.

It does, however, feature significant improvements over its predecessors.

The Shandong, China's first domestically built carrier, and the Liaoning, a rebuilt Soviet vessel, both use "ski-jump" flight decks. That system requires aircraft to carry fewer weapons and fuel and "limits their combat efficacy and operational reach," Sweeney wrote.

The Fujian bridges that techno-



Xinhua News Agency

**The Chinese aircraft carrier Fujian is pictured on April 30.**

logical gap with an electromagnetic catapult system like the one aboard the United States' newest carrier, the USS Gerald R. Ford, he said.

Roggeveen agreed.

"On the first aircraft carrier with that technology, the U.S. Navy had all sorts of problems with it," he told Stars and Stripes by phone Thursday. "China is basically introducing the same technology, but from a standing start, if you like, without the decades of experience that the U.S. has with aircraft carrier technology."

## Crews tackle fire at the headquarters of US Forces Japan, 5th Air Force in Tokyo

BY JOSEPH DITZLER  
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A fire broke out Thursday evening at this airlift hub in western Tokyo, spurring officials to warn people away from the headquarters building for U.S. Forces Japan.

A spokesman for Yokota's 374th Airlift Wing said no injuries resulted from the fire.

"The cause of the fire is under investigation, and the installation is taking all necessary measures to ensure the safety and security of all personnel and facilities," Master Sgt. Nathaniel Allen told Stars and Stripes in a text message at 10:22 p.m. Thursday.

He provided no statement on specific fire damage.

"We are in the process of accounting for all personnel and assessing any potential damage to base property," he wrote.

An 8:09 p.m. mass text alert

from the wing said a 500-foot cordon had been established around Building 714 — home to USFJ and 5th Air Force — and advised people to stay clear of the area.

That message and a subsequent social media post by the wing did not mention a fire.

"Emergency response teams were immediately dispatched to extinguish the fire, conduct all necessary sweeps, and establish a cordon," Allen told Stars and

Stripes.

A road adjacent to the building's rear was still blocked off by security forces around 11:30 p.m., with no visible signs of damage to the exterior.

Roads on both sides and near the front of the building were accessible.

USFJ is a liaison command that serves as a go-between for the U.S. military throughout the country and the government of Japan.

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## MILITARY

# Lawmakers challenge Navy's plans for fleet

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers are resisting plans by the Navy to cut the size of its ship and submarine fleet, rallying behind a push to procure an additional attack submarine and raising alarm about impending ship retirements.

A bipartisan group of 120 House members urged defense appropriators in a letter Wednesday to force the Navy to procure two Virginia-class attack submarines in fiscal 2025, one more than included in the White House's budget request.

Members of the House Armed Services Committee then added to the pile-on during a hearing with top Navy and Marine Corps officials on Wednesday, criticizing proposals that would shrink U.S. sea power.

"Our sailors and Marines are great but until they can walk on water, we better be building them new ships," said Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va.

The Navy's budget for fiscal

2025, which begins Oct. 1, calls for the construction of six warships, the retirement of 19 ships and the reduction of a two-per-year buy rate of Virginia-class submarines to one.

Lawmakers singled out the submarines as an issue of particular concern due to increased undersea competition from China and Russia and the inking of a deal with Australia to sell the country three nuclear-powered, Virginia-class submarines.

"I don't see how cutting the size of our fleet and shorting our AUKUS commitment will deter China," said Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala., chairman of the committee. AUKUS refers to a security pact between the U.S., the United Kingdom and Australia to counter China's growing power in the Indo-Pacific region.

Pentagon officials have said a procurement slowdown of Virginia-class submarines would allow for a "better, healthier dynamic" in the delay-plagued submarine production industry and pay for invest-

ments in supply-chain infrastructure.

Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro said Wednesday that the service would have five additional submarines in its fleet today if the defense industry, which is suffering from workforce shortages, was able to keep up with demand.

"We're investing \$18 billion in the submarine industrial base to actually try to increase the production rates to where they need to be so that we could actually build more submarines and well into the future," he said.

Lawmakers said they were worried about having enough resources now. They pointed to recent testimony from combatant commanders who said their missions require more attack submarines than the U.S. has in its inventory.

The Navy's attack submarine fleet is projected to decline to 47 boats in 2030 — a 19-boat deficit from the 66 boats required under the Navy's shipbuilding plan, according to the letter lawmakers sent appropriators. The fleet now

numbers 50 submarines.

Rep. Joe Courtney, D-Conn., said he and other lawmakers will make every effort to add a second Virginia-class submarine to the National Defense Authorization Act, an annual bill specifying expenditures for the Pentagon, and the accompanying appropriations legislation.

"We did it in 2013 when [former President Barack Obama's] administration eliminated a submarine and then in 2020 when [former President Donald Trump's] administration eliminated a submarine," he said. "We — using our constitutional duty Article One, Section Eight, Clause 13 to provide and maintain a Navy — stepped forward and filled that gap, and it's a good thing we did."

It is unclear whether lawmakers will challenge the Navy's other plans for its fleet. The service intends to retire 10 ships that have yet to reach the end of their service life, including two Ticonderoga-class cruisers, four expeditionary transports, two littoral combat ships and one expeditionary transport dock

ship.

The cuts will drop the fleet to 287 ships in fiscal 2025 and 280 ships in fiscal 2027, far short of the 355 ships outlined in the Navy's shipbuilding plan and significantly below the nearly 400 ships that China is expected to have by 2025.

"These retirements represent a huge loss of capability," Rogers said. "Cutting the buys for new ships, delaying deliveries and decommissioning ships before the end of their service lives will place significant additional stress on readiness of the fleet."

Adm. Lisa Franchetti, chief of naval operations, said every study that the Navy has done since 2016 shows the service needs to be larger and a 355-ship fleet remains a reasonable goal. But she also cautioned against solely looking at size when judging readiness.

"It isn't just about the numbers," she said. "It is about having ready ships, with the munitions, with the right number of people, with the training, that can fight as part of a joint war-fighting ecosystem."

## US federal workers' union adds more Army employees in Germany

BY REBECCA HOLLAND  
*Stars and Stripes*

Almost 200 U.S. Army civilian workers at two locations in Germany became the latest to approve membership in the largest U.S. labor union for federal employees.

As a result of the Wednesday vote, 163 non-appropriated fund employees at the Army's Edelweiss Lodge and Resort in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and 36 information technology staffers in Kaiserslautern will be represented by the American Federation of Government Employees.

The IT employees work at the Army Enterprise Service Desk, 2nd Signal Brigade. Kaiserslautern is home to the U.S. military's largest overseas community.

The union's national president, Everett Kelley, welcomed the 199

new additions to the at-large Local 14 and noted that the vote occurred as many countries were celebrating International Workers Day, which is a holiday in Germany.

Local 14 was established last year to expand representation to federal employees working for U.S. agencies overseas.

In December, 389 Army and Air Force Exchange Services workers in the Kaiserslautern Military Community also voted to join the American Federation of Government Employees.

That was the first of what the union expects to be a series of votes on membership by federal government employees in Europe.

About 10,000 federal workers in Europe, most of whom are in Germany, are eligible to join, accord-

ing to the union's estimate.

The move to offer membership to most federal civilian workers came last year in response to dozens of complaints the union said it had received, mostly from Defense Department employees.

Among those complaints is a practice known as bait-and-switch, in which civilians move overseas to take a job offer, only to be placed in a different position once they arrive.

Lack of work-life balance and last-minute schedule changes are also issues for U.S. federal employees in Europe, said Javier Soto, a legal rights attorney in Europe for the union.

Many foreign nationals who work on U.S. bases are covered by a different union, and Soto said there have been reports of disparities in how they are treated in



U.S. Army

**One hundred and sixty-three nonappropriated fund employees working at the Edelweiss Lodge and Resort in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, voted to join the American Federation of Government Employees, the union said in a May 1 statement.**

comparison with U.S. citizens.

"It's understandable," Soto said Thursday. "They do have very strong labor rules here in Germany, and they do have labor contracts, which is what we have in the U.S. for federal employees."

Local 14 joins more than 930 other locals that make up the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents around 750,000 workers in almost every agency of the federal government.

## Pentagon leaker Jack Teixeira set to face military justice proceeding

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Massachusetts Air National Guard member Jack Teixeira, who pleaded guilty to federal criminal charges for leaking highly classified military documents about the war in Ukraine and other national security secrets, will face a military justice proceeding later this month, officials said Wednesday.

Teixeira, of North Dighton, Mass., faces two charges in the mil-

itary justice system, including obstructing justice and failing to obey a lawful order, Air Force officials said. Prosecutors will present evidence during the military proceeding on May 14 at Hanscom Air Force Base in Massachusetts. The case could then move to a court-martial, if it's determined that there's sufficient evidence of the charges.

The military proceeding comes nearly two months after Teixeira

pleaded guilty in federal court to six counts of willful retention and transmission of national defense information under the Espionage Act. That was close to a year after he was arrested in the most consequential national security leak in years.

In court, he admitted illegally collecting some of the nation's most sensitive secrets and sharing them with other users on Discord, a social media platform popular with people playing online games.

Teixeira, who was part of the 102nd Intelligence Wing at Otis Air National Guard Base in Massachusetts, worked as a cyber transport systems specialist, essentially an information technology specialist responsible for military communications networks.

A spokesperson for Teixeira's family said they had no comment Wednesday and his attorneys in his criminal case didn't immediately respond to an email.

The stunning security breach raised alarm over America's ability to protect its most closely guarded secrets and forced the Biden administration to scramble to try to contain diplomatic and military fallout. The leaks embarrassed the Pentagon, which tightened controls to safeguard classified information and disciplined members found to have intentionally failed to take required action about Teixeira's suspicious behavior.

## MILITARY

# ISIS group is said to be in recruiting surge

By J.P. LAWRENCE  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Islamic State affiliate in Afghanistan is regenerating strength through aggressive recruitment and by taking advantage of instability in the country, a Pentagon watchdog agency report said Thursday.

ISIS-Khorasan province has claimed a wave of attacks this year in Russia, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. ISIS-K also claimed an attack this week in western Afghanistan that left six dead.

The group's resurgence is heightening ongoing U.S., U.N. and regional concerns that the country is once again becoming a terrorist haven, the Special Inspector General for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan report said.

The report follows testimony to Congress in March by Gen. Erik Kurilla, the top U.S. general in the Middle East, that ISIS-K is building an "expanding cadre of fighters."

The group is in the midst of a recruiting surge that extends its ability to strike outside Afghanistan, the SIGAR report and regional analysts said.

ISIS-K is taking advantage of poor economic conditions and instability in Afghanistan that came after the Taliban seized the country from the U.S.-backed government in 2021, said Kamran Bokhari, senior director of the Eurasian Security and Prosperity program at the Washington-based New Lines Institute.

"ISIS-K is having a resurgence," Bokhari



EBRAHIM NOROOZI/AP

**A Taliban fighter stands guard as women wait to receive food rations distributed by a humanitarian aid group, in Kabul, Afghanistan, in May 2023. The Islamic State group affiliate in the country has taken advantage of economic instability to increase its ranks, the Pentagon watchdog agency report said.**

said during a phone interview Wednesday. "The Taliban is trying to consolidate power; they have huge financial problems and social unrest. These are all the conditions you would expect ISIS to try to exploit, and they are."

ISIS-K is recruiting people disillusioned by Taliban rule, and recent attacks outside of Afghanistan show the additional man-

power is increasing the group's reach, he said.

Attacks claimed by the group and cited in Thursday's SIGAR report include a March 22 storming of a Russian concert venue that killed more than 130 people, a Feb. 7 attack in Pakistan that killed at least 30, and a Jan. 3 suicide bombing in Iran that left approximately 100 dead. ISIS-K also claimed a Jan-

uary church shooting in Turkey that killed one person and injured another.

The uptick in ISIS-K attacks beyond Afghanistan's borders comes as the group has launched fewer operations within the country, said Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center in Washington.

The Taliban are enemies of ISIS-K and fought them before and after the fall of the U.S.-backed government in 2021.

Fewer ISIS-K attacks within Afghanistan indicate that Taliban ground offensives against the group are having an effect internally, Kugelman said.

"The Taliban's (counterterrorism) efforts have produced tactical triumphs, but the jury's still out on whether they've succeeded strategically," Kugelman said in an email Thursday.

"The bigger issue is ISIS-K's growing capacity to project a threat far beyond Afghanistan, and the Taliban's inability to address that," he added.

Other militant groups such as al-Qaida remain in Afghanistan in a weakened state, Thursday's SIGAR report said.

The group that launched the 9/11 attacks that drew in U.S. troops to Afghanistan in 2001 can no longer launch sophisticated attacks, the report said, citing a U.N. sanctions monitoring team.

But the group continues to try to expand its recruitment, with eight new training camps, the monitoring team said.

## Minds: Service hopes new video will help bring in PSYOP recruits

### FROM PAGE 1

it and thinks, wow, that was effective, how was it constructed—that's the kind of creative mindset we're looking for."

The soldier, a member of the 8th Psychological Operations Group based at Fort Liberty, N.C., also made the first video. He asked that his name not be used to protect his identity, as is common among special forces troops.

PSYOP units are used for an array of missions that can range from simple leaflet drops to more sophisticated propaganda and messaging aimed at deceiving the enemy or shaping opinion on foreign soil. It's illegal for the U.S. military to conduct psychological operations on Americans.

Army Special Operations Command leaders and special forces recruiters hope that a new stream of chatter inspired by the video will help bring in recruits to an often unseen and little known job.

"From a tactical level, the PSYOP mission is extremely hard to show and tell," said Lt. Col. Steve Crowe, commander of the Special Forces Recruiting Battalion. And it's the job in Army special forces that recruiters say is the hardest to fill.

The Army's Special Operations recruiters who recruit from already-serving soldiers say they are making about 75% of their overall goal, which is between 3,000 and

4,000. Of that, they have to bring in about 650 active-duty soldiers to psychological operations per year.

Recruiting struggles in Army Special Operations Command have mirrored those of the larger Army. The recruiters said they are responsible for bringing in several types of special forces — the most well-known are the Green Berets and Delta Force, but there are also Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations and the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, known as the Knight Stalkers.

The Army has said it intends to trim the number of PSYOP soldiers, but still has struggled to fill the ranks.

Perhaps the most celebrated PSYOP was in World War II, when the so-called U.S. Ghost Army outwitted the Germans using inflatable tanks, radio trickery, costumes and impersonations. In what was dubbed Operation Viersen, the soldiers used the inflatables, sound trucks and phony headquarters to draw German units away from the point on the Rhine River where the 9th Army was actually crossing. Several of the last surviving members of the unit were recently awarded the Congressional Gold Medal at a ceremony in Washington.

These days, PSYOP activities are often classified. But one of the last U.S. service members to die in Af-

ghanistan — killed by a suicide bomber at Abbey Gate during the chaotic evacuation in 2021 — was a PSYOP soldier: Army Staff Sgt. Ryan Knauss, 23, of Corryton, Tenn. His task that day was largely crowd control and influence, by using a bullhorn to communicate with the frantic throngs of Afghans and get them moving in the right direction.

A more recent example would be assistance to Ukraine. U.S. psychological operations soldiers have advised and assisted Ukrainian troops in their efforts to counter Russian disinformation campaigns since 2014. After the Russian invasion in February 2022, Ukrainian forces used a range of tactics — including leaflets and social media — to entice Russian troops to surrender and tell them how and where to give themselves up.

About half of the psychological operations troops are young people who join when they enlist. The rest are recruited from within the Army's existing ranks. The command's recruiters focus on the internal audience, which has its own challenges.

A growing hurdle, according to Crowe and Army Maj. Jim Maicke, executive officer of the Special Forces recruiting battalion, is that these days regular soldiers across the Army have less interaction with special operations forces than they did dur-

ing the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

In those conflicts, soldiers often worked side-by-side with commandos, or were deployed at the same bases and had a better view of what they did.

"Business was generally pretty good. And the reason, we believe, was all the interaction that was happening between special operations and conventional forces," said Crowe, adding that soldiers "got to see behind the curtain, how we operate. We don't have that anymore."

It's particularly difficult for PSYOP soldiers, whose work is often less visible than that of the more celebrated Army commandos and not always understood.

"We're all nerds for sure," said the Army major who created the ad. "But we're all nerds in different ways." Usually, those who are drawn to the job are "planners," he said. "They're writers, they're great thinkers. They're idea people."

Often, he said, they are creative, such as artists and illustrators, but others are tech experts who can bring those ideas to life in videos or online messaging.

The new "Ghost in the Machine" video is aimed at that audience.

Recruiters say the first video was successful.

"I think what he does with 'Ghost in the Machine' is it tells you what psychological operations is, and shows you it, without telling you in

words," said Crowe. "You watch the video and you're like, OK, this is how I'll influence and change behavior."

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## EUROPE/MIDEAST



JAE C. HONG/AP

Demonstrators are escorted out of a pro-Palestinian encampment on the UCLA campus Thursday, in Los Angeles, after hundreds of protesters defied orders to leave.

## Police, demonstrators clash at UCLA tent encampment

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Police removed barricades and began dismantling pro-Palestinian demonstrators' fortified encampment early Thursday at the University of California, Los Angeles, after hundreds of protesters defied orders to leave, some of them forming human chains as police fired flash-bangs to break up the crowds.

The California Highway Patrol said at least 132 protesters were arrested.

The action came after officers spent hours threatening arrests over loudspeakers if people did not disperse. A crowd of more than 1,000 had gathered on campus, both inside a barricaded tent encampment and outside it, in support. Protesters and police shoved and scuffled as officers encountered resistance. Video showed police pulling off helmets and goggles worn by some protesters as they were being detained.

With police helicopters hovering, the sound of flash-bangs, which produce a bright light and a loud noise

to disorient and stun people, pierced the air. Protesters chanted, "Where were you last night?" at the officers, in reference to Tuesday night, when counterprotesters attacked the encampment and the UCLA administration and campus police took hours to respond.

President Joe Biden said Thursday that "dissent is essential for democracy," but "chaos" has no part in a peaceful protest. He spoke as arrests continue on campuses around the U.S. as police dismantle camps of students protesting Israel's war in Gaza.

In Albuquerque, N.M., about two dozen protesters sat in the middle of a roadway blocking access to one of the main gates at Kirtland Air Force Base on Thursday morning, waving flags and vowing to "shut everything down" over U.S. military support for Israel's war in Gaza.

Base spokesman Rob Smith said Kirtland supports citizens' rights to peacefully assemble and protest and that base security would monitor the situation. Meanwhile, the gate would remain closed indefinitely

and people who work on the base were advised to use other routes.

Tent encampments of protesters calling on universities to stop doing business with Israel or companies they say support the war in Gaza have spread across U.S. campuses. The ensuing police crackdowns echoed actions decades ago against a larger movement protesting the Vietnam War.

In the Mideast, Iranian state television carried live images of the police action, as did Qatar's pan-Arab Al Jazeera satellite network. Live images of Los Angeles also played across Israeli television networks.

Police methodically ripped apart the UCLA encampment's barricade of plywood, pallets, metal fences and trash dumpsters and made an opening toward dozens of tents of demonstrators. Officers also began to pull down canopies and tents. The number of protesters appeared to diminish through the morning as some voluntarily left with their hands up and police detained others.

## As Hamas mulls cease-fire, Israel's endgame not clear

BY BASSEM MROUE  
AND LEE KEATH  
Associated Press

BEIRUT — Hamas on Thursday was considering the latest proposal for a cease-fire with Israel that the United States and other mediators hope will avert an Israeli attack on the Gaza town of Rafah. But chances for the deal are entangled with the question of whether Israel can accept an end to the war without reaching its stated goal of destroying Hamas.

The stakes in the cease-fire negotiations were made clear in a new U.N. report that said if the war in Gaza stops today, it will still take until 2040 to rebuild all the homes that have been destroyed by nearly seven months of Israeli bombardment and ground offensives in the territory. It warned that the impact of the damage to the economy will set back development for generations and will only get worse with every month fighting continues.

Hamas has insisted it won't sign onto the deal without assurances that, if it eventually releases all its hostages, Israel will end its onslaught in Gaza and pull its troops out of the territory.

The proposal that U.S. and Egyptian mediators have put to Hamas — apparently with Israel's acceptance — sets out a three-stage process that will bring an immediate six-week cease-fire and partial hostage release but also negotiations over a "permanent calm" that includes some sort of Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, according to an Egyptian official.

If Israel does agree to end the war in return for a full hostage release, it would be a major turnaround. Since Hamas' bloody Oct. 7 attack stunned Israel, its leaders have vowed not to stop their bombardment and ground offensives until the militant group is destroyed.

They also say Israel must keep a military presence in Gaza and security control after the war to ensure Hamas doesn't rebuild.

Publicly at least, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continues to insist that is the only acceptable endgame.

He has vowed that even if a cease-fire is reached, Israel will eventually attack Rafah, which he says is Hamas' last stronghold in Gaza. He repeated his determination to do so in talks Wednesday with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who was in Israel on a regional tour to push the deal through.

The deal's immediate fate hinges on whether Hamas will accept uncertainty over the final phases to bring the initial six-week pause in fighting — and at least postpone what it is feared would be a devastating assault on Rafah, Gaza's southernmost town where some 1.4 million Palestinians have taken refuge.

Egypt has been privately assuring Hamas that the deal will mean a total end to the war. But the Egyptian official said Hamas says the text's language is too vague and wants it to specify a complete Israeli pullout from all of Gaza. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to talk about the internal deliberations.

The group is still studying the offer, senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan said in a message Thursday to The Associated Press. He did not confirm whether it would formally give an answer later in the day.

On Thursday, Hamas said it was sending a delegation to Cairo to continue cease-fire talks. The group's supreme leader, Ismail Haniyeh, said in a statement that Hamas negotiators would travel to Egypt as soon as possible "to complete the ongoing discussions with the aim of working forward for an agreement."

## New US sanctions target Russia weapons development efforts

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States on Wednesday imposed new sanctions on hundreds of companies and people tied to Russia's weapons development program, more than a dozen Chinese entities accused of helping Moscow find workarounds to earlier penalties, and individuals linked to the death of Kremlin opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

The actions by the departments of Treasury and State target Russia's military-industrial base, chemical

weapons programs and people and companies in third countries that help Russia acquire weapons components as its invasion of Ukraine has entered its third year.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said the action "will further disrupt and degrade Russia's war efforts by going after its military industrial base and the evasion networks that help supply it."

The Senate, meanwhile, gave final approval to legislation barring imports of Russian uranium, boost-

ing U.S. efforts to disrupt Russia's war in Ukraine. Democratic President Joe Biden is expected to sign the bill into law.

About 12% of the uranium used to produce electricity at U.S. nuclear power plants is imported from Russia, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

A spokesperson for the National Security Council said Wednesday that Biden shares lawmakers' concerns about U.S. reliance on Russia for low-enriched uranium to sup-

port its domestic nuclear fleet.

Included in the administration's announcement are importers of cotton cellulose and nitrocellulose, which are used to produce gunpowder, rocket propellants and other explosives. The penalties also target Russian government entities and people tied to Russia's chemical and biological weapons programs, companies related to Russia's natural gas construction projects and three workers at the penal colony where Navalny died.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has railed against earlier rounds of U.S. and Western penalties, claiming they are "illegitimate sanctions" on his country.

A group of 16 targets in China and Hong Kong, most of which are related to Russian procurement workarounds, are named by the Biden administration. China has said it is not providing Russia with arms or military assistance, although Beijing has maintained robust economic connections with Moscow.



## NATION

# Biden to visit with families of fallen task force officers

BY COLLEEN LONG  
AND STEVE PEOPLES  
*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON—President Joe Biden, who heads to Wilmington, N.C., on Thursday to talk about the economy, is detouring to Charlotte to meet with the families of law enforcement officers shot to death on the job — just a week after he sat down with the grieving relatives of two cops killed in Upstate New York.

The visit is expected to take place with little fanfare behind closed doors, as the White House aims to respect the privacy of grieving families and avoid the appearance of using their grief for political purposes. The meeting was expected at the airport, an option meant to be the least taxing for local law enforcement still reeling from the deaths but who would have a hand in secur-

ing the president's trip.

Once again, Biden will seek to be an empathetic leader for a community reeling from gun violence, while also calling for stricter rules around firearms and better funding for law enforcement on the front lines.

Four officers were killed earlier this week in North Carolina, when a wanted man opened fire on a joint agency task force that had come to arrest him on a warrant for possession of a firearm as an ex-felon, and fleeing to elude capture. They were: Sam Poloche and William Elliott of the North Carolina Department of Adult Corrections; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Officer Joshua Eyer; and Deputy U.S. Marshal Thomas Weeks.

Four other officers were wounded in the gunfire; the suspect was killed. An AR-15 semi-automatic ri-

fle, a 40-caliber handgun and ammunition were found at the scene.

An AR-15 is among the weapons most often used in mass shootings, and it's the type of gun Biden is talking about when he says the U.S. should ban "assault weapons." Congress passed the most comprehensive gun safety legislation in decades in 2022, after a horrific school shooting in Uvalde, Texas. But it didn't go far enough, Biden often says.

And as he campaigns for the 2024 election, Biden has made curbing gun violence a major campaign platform, elusive to Democrats even during the Obama era, as he fends off attacks from Republican challenger Donald Trump that he is soft on crime and anti-police.

Biden said this week in a statement after the North Carolina killings that the U.S. must "do more to



PETER SMITH/AP

**Minister Mark Raley leads prayer alongside Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department officers during a candlelight vigil Wednesday evening in Charlotte, N.C., on behalf of four law-enforcement officers who were killed Monday while seeking to serve a warrant.**

protect our law enforcement officers. That means funding them — so they have the resources they need to do their jobs and keep us safe."

The violence came just about two weeks after another fatal shooting of law enforcement officers in Syracuse, N.Y.; Lt. Michael Hoosock and Officer Michael Jensen were killed while looking for a driver who fled a traffic stop. After his speech, Biden

met with relatives of both of the officers' families.

Biden had already been scheduled to come to Syracuse to celebrate Micron Technology's plans to build a campus of computer chip factories, but the local police union said officers were still coming to terms with the deaths and weren't happy with the president's trip and had hoped he would delay.

## Officials: Police killed student outside Wis. school after reports of a weapon

BY TODD RICHMOND  
*Associated Press*

MOUNT HOREB, Wis. — Police shot and killed a student outside a Wisconsin middle school Wednesday after receiving a report of someone with a weapon, the state's attorney general said in the first law enforcement briefing on gunshots that sent children fleeing and prompted an hourslong lockdown of local schools.

Authorities had previously said an active shooter who never got inside the building was "neutralized" outside Mount Horeb Middle School. State Attorney General Josh Kaul told reporters Wednesday evening no one else was harmed and that an investigation is ongoing.

"This incident took place outdoors. The subject in this case never gained entry," he said.

Authorities described the student as a juvenile male but didn't provide an age or indicate which of the Mount Horeb district's schools he attended.

Kaul declined to answer several questions about what happened once police responded, including whether the student had fired a weapon, what type of weapon he had, and whether he tried to get inside the school. Authorities said multiple Mount Horeb officers, wearing body cameras, had fired weapons but they did not say how many.

Police remained on the scene hours afterward while students were kept locked down in buildings late into the afternoon before slowly being released to relatives.

For panicked kids and their terri-



JOHN HART, WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL/AP

**People gather at a site designated for parent and student reunifications following a report of an armed person outside Mount Horeb Middle School in Mount Horeb, Wis., on Wednesday.**

fied parents, it was an anxious, unsettling wait. Parents described children hiding in closets, afraid to communicate on cellphones, and one middle schooler said his class initially fled the school gym on inline skates.

The district used Facebook posts throughout the day to give updates, with the earliest around 11:30 a.m. reporting all district schools were on lockdown. Authorities in Mount Horeb said the "alleged assailant" was the only person harmed, and witnesses described hearing gunshots and seeing dozens of children running.

"An initial search of the middle school has not yielded additional suspects," a post around noon said.

Earlier, the district posted without elaborating that "the threat has

been neutralized outside of the building" in Mount Horeb, a small village about 25 miles west of the state capital of Madison.

One middle schooler said his class was in the school gym practicing inline skating when they heard gunshots.

Max Kelly, 12, said his teacher told the class to flee. He said they skated to a street, ditched their inline skates and ran to a nearby convenience store and gas station and hid in a bathroom.

Max, shoeless, was reunited with his parents and sat on a hillside with them early Wednesday afternoon waiting for his younger siblings to be released from their own schools.

"I don't think anywhere is safe anymore," said his mother, 32-year-old Alison Kelly.

## Arizona governor set to sign repeal of 1864 near-total abortion ban

BY ANITA SNOW  
AND MORGAN LEE  
*Associated Press*

PHOENIX — Arizona is waving goodbye to a Civil War-era ban of nearly all abortions as a repeal bill reaches the desk of Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs.

Hobbs says the repeal, scheduled for signing on Thursday, is just the beginning of a fight to protect reproductive health care in Arizona. But the repeal may not take effect until 90 days after the end of the legislative session, in June or July. Abortion rights advocates hope a court will step in to prevent that outcome.

The effort to repeal the ban won final legislative approval Wednesday in a 16-14 vote of the Senate, as two GOP lawmakers joined with Democrats.

The vote extended for hours as senators described their motivations in personal, emotional and even biblical terms — including graphic descriptions of abortion procedures and amplified audio recordings of a fetal heartbeat, along with warnings against the dangers of "legislating religious beliefs."

At the same time Wednesday, supporters of a South Dakota abortion rights initiative submitted far more signatures than required to make the ballot this fall, while in Florida a ban took effect against most abortions after six weeks of pregnancy, before many women even know they are pregnant.

Democratic Arizona Attorney

General Kris Mayes, an opponent of the near-total abortion ban, has said the earliest the dormant abortion-ban law could be enforced is June 27, though she has asked the state's highest court to block enforcement until sometime in late July. But the anti-abortion group defending the ban, Alliance Defending Freedom, maintains county prosecutors can begin enforcing it once the Arizona Supreme Court's decision becomes final, which hasn't yet occurred.

The near-total ban, which predates Arizona's statehood, permits abortions only to save the patient's life and provides no exceptions for survivors of rape or incest. In a ruling last month, the Arizona Supreme Court suggested doctors could be prosecuted under the law first approved in 1864, which carries a sentence of two to five years in prison for anyone who assists in an abortion. A repeal means that a 2022 statute banning the procedure after 15 weeks of pregnancy would become Arizona's prevailing abortion law.

Physician Ronald Yunis, a Phoenix-based obstetrician gynecologist who also provides abortions, called the repeal a positive development for women who might otherwise leave Arizona for medical care.

"This is good for ensuring that women won't have to travel to other states just to get the health care they need," Yunis said. "I was not too concerned because I have a lot of confidence in our governor and attorney general. I'm certain they will continue finding ways to protect women."

## NATION

# Lawyer tells of shock at likely role in Trump win

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A lawyer who negotiated a pair of hush money deals at the center of Donald Trump's criminal trial recalled Thursday his "gallows humor" reaction to Trump's 2016 election victory and the realization that his hidden-hand efforts might have contributed to the win.

"What have we done?" the attorney, Keith Davidson, texted the then-editor of the National Enquirer, which had buried stories of extramarital sexual encounters to prevent them surfacing in the final days of the bitterly contested presidential race. "Oh my god," came the response from Dylan Howard.

"There was an understanding that our efforts may have in some way — strike that — our activities may have in some way assisted the presidential campaign of Donald Trump," Davidson told jurors.

The testimony from Davidson was designed to directly connect the hush money payments to Trump's presidential ambitions and to bolster prosecutors' argument that the case is about interference in the 2016 election rather than simply sex and money. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg has sought to establish that link not just to secure a conviction but also to persuade the public of the significance of the case, which may be the only one of four Trump prosecutions to reach trial this year.

"This is sort of gallows humor. It was on election night as the results were coming



DOUG MILLS, THE NEW YORK TIMES/AP

Press aide Margo Martin, center, looks on as former President Donald Trump arrives at Manhattan criminal court before his trial in New York, on Thursday.

in," Davidson explained. "There was sort of surprise among the broadcasters and others that Mr. Trump was leading in the polls, and there was a growing sense that folks were about ready to call the election."

Davidson is seen as a vital building block for the prosecution's case that Trump and his allies schemed to bury unflattering stories in the run-up to the 2016 presidential election. A lawyer who represented porn

actor Stormy Daniels and Playboy model Karen McDougal — both of whom have said they had sexual encounters with Trump — Davidson is one of multiple key players testifying in advance of Michael Cohen, the star prosecution witness and Trump's former lawyer and personal fixer.

Davidson represented both Daniels and McDougal in their negotiations with the National Enquirer and Cohen in deals that re-

sulted in the rights to their stories being purchased and then stifled in exchange for money.

Jurors on Thursday viewed a confidential agreement requiring Daniels to keep quiet about her claims that she had an extramarital tryst with the former president a decade earlier. The agreement, dated less than two weeks before the 2016 presidential election, called for her to receive \$130,000 in exchange for her silence.

The money was paid by Cohen, and the agreement referred to both Trump and Daniels with pseudonyms: David Dennison and Peggy Peterson.

"It is understood and agreed that the true name and identity of the person referred to as 'DAVID DENNISON' in the Settlement Agreement is Donald Trump," the document stated, with Trump's name written in by hand.

Before the start of testimony, prosecutors requested \$1,000 fines for each of four comments by Trump that they say violated a judge's gag order barring him from attacking witnesses, jurors and others closely connected to the case. Such a penalty would be on top of a \$9,000 fine that Judge Juan M. Merchan imposed Tuesday related to nine separate gag order violations that he found.

Merchan did not immediately rule on the request for fresh sanctions, though he indicated that he was not particularly concerned about one of the four statements flagged by prosecutors.

## Charges revealed against Meadows in Arizona fake elector case

By JOSH KELETY

Associated Press

PHOENIX — The chief of staff for former President Donald Trump faces the same conspiracy, fraud and forgery charges as the other named defendants in Arizona's fake elector case, the state attorney general's office said Wednesday.

Mark Meadows wasn't named in a grand jury indictment last week because he hadn't been served with it, although he was readily identifiable based on descriptions in the

document. He has since been served, revealing nine felony counts, Richie Taylor, a spokesman for the attorney general's office, wrote in an email to The Associated Press.

George Terwilliger, an attorney for Meadows, did not immediately respond to a request for comment from the AP. He previously referred to the Arizona indictment as a "blatantly political and politicized accusation and will be contested and defeated."

With the indictments, Arizona

becomes the fourth state where allies of the former president have been charged with using false or unproven claims about voter fraud related to the election. Joe Biden won Arizona by more than 10,000 votes.

Charges have not yet been made public against one defendant, Rudy Giuliani, the former New York mayor and Trump-aligned attorney.

Trump himself was not charged but was referred to as an unindicted co-conspirator.

The 11 Arizona Republicans who submitted a document to Congress falsely declaring that Trump won in Arizona are among the 18 defendants in the case. They include a former state GOP chair, a 2022 U.S. Senate candidate and two sitting state lawmakers.

The 11 people who had been nominated to be Arizona's Republican electors met in Phoenix on Dec. 14, 2020, to sign a certificate saying they were "duly elected and qualified" electors and claiming that Trump carried the state. A one-

minute video of the signing ceremony was posted on social media by the Arizona Republican Party at the time. The document was later sent to Congress and the National Archives, where it was ignored.

The others are Mike Roman, who was Trump's director of Election Day operations, and four attorneys accused of organizing an attempt to use fake documents to persuade Congress not to certify Biden's victory: John Eastman, Christina Bobb, Boris Epshteyn and Jenna Ellis.

## Louisiana won't immediately get 2nd majority-Black House district

By KEVIN MCGILL

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — A new congressional map giving Louisiana a second majority-Black House district was rejected Tuesday by a panel of three federal judges, fueling new uncertainty about district boundaries as the state prepares for fall congressional elections.

The 2-1 ruling forbids the use of a map drawn up in January by the Legislature after a different federal judge blocked a map from 2022. The earlier map maintained a single Black-majority district and five mostly white districts, in a state with a population that is about one-third Black.

"We will of course be seeking Supreme Court review," state Attorney General Liz Murrill said on social media. "The jurisprudence and litigation involving redistricting has made it impossible to not have federal

judges drawing maps. It's not right and they need to fix it."

Gov. Jeff Landry and Murrill had backed the new map in a January legislative session after a different federal judge threw out a map with only one mostly Black district.



Fields

in place while appeals are pursued.

U.S. District Judges David Joseph and Robert Summerhays, both of whom were nominated to the bench by former President Donald Trump, said the newest map violated the

Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment because "race was the predominate factor" driving its creation.

Judge Carl Stewart dissented, saying the majority gave too little weight to the political motivations involved in drawing the map.

The ruling means continued uncertainty over what the November election map will look like. Another federal district judge, Shelly Dick of Baton Rouge, had earlier ruled in a separate lawsuit that the state is likely in violation of the federal Voting Rights Act because it divides Black voters not included in majority-Black District 2 among five other congressional districts. Dick dismissed that case after the new maps were passed.

But Tuesday's ruling from the divided federal panel noted that "outside of southeast Louisiana, the State's Black population is dispersed." The majority criticized the new

mostly Black district, which stretched across the state from Shreveport in the northwest into southeast Louisiana, linking black populations from the Shreveport, Alexandria, Lafayette and Baton Rouge metro areas.

The panel set a Monday status conference, and state election officials say they need to know the district boundaries by May 15.

The decision gives new hope to Rep. Garret Graves, a white Republican incumbent whose district was seriously altered by the new map. And it raises questions for state Sen. Cleo Fields, a Democrat and former Congress member who had declared he would run in the new district.

Rep. Troy Carter, the only Democrat and only Black member of the state's current congressional delegation, criticized the ruling.

"This is just plain WRONG," Carter posted on the social platform X on Tuesday evening.

## NATION

# Google, Apple now threatened by antitrust cases

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The U.S. Justice Department's double-barreled antitrust attack on Google's dominant search and Apple's trendsetting iPhone is reviving memories of the epic battle that hobbled Microsoft before it roared back to yet again become the world's most valuable company.

The parallels to the Justice Department's landmark antitrust case in 1998 could provide a window into the potential breakthroughs that could be unleashed if regulators succeed in their attempts to crack down on Google and Apple.

Federal lawyers have even gone as far as to assert Google and Apple may never have created so many popular products or become as powerful as they are now if Microsoft hadn't been reined in a quarter century ago.

In closing arguments of a Washington, D.C., trial that began last September, regulators Thursday will apply the finishing touches to a



SETH WENIG/AP

**People arrive at the Google building in New York, in February. The U.S. Justice Department's antitrust attack on Google's search and Apple's iPhone is reviving memories of the battle that hobbled Microsoft before it roared back.**

case alleging Google has turned its search engine into an illegal monopoly that stifles competition and innovation. The Apple case, which was only filed a month ago, is still years away from its resolution.

Although regulators have lodged separate complaints against Google and Apple, the two cases are shadowed by Microsoft's legal saga that began when both those were mere specks on the

technology landscape.

When they went after Google in October 2020, regulators compared the lucrative deals that the company cut with Apple to lock its search engine into the iPhone and Safari web browser to the same tactics Microsoft deployed in its personal computer software to block competition.

And in the antitrust lawsuits that they filed against Apple last month, the Justice Department pointed back to complaints that company co-founder Steve Jobs had raised in 1998 against Microsoft's "dirty tactics" while urging regulators to take steps to force the PC software maker "to play fair."

And that is what the Justice Department did in an antitrust case against Microsoft that caused massive distractions that opened the door for Google's search engine to become the internet's main gateway. It also culminated in a series of concessions that paved the way for Apple to extend the reach of its iTunes music store that increased the popularity of the iPod

that spawned the iPhone.

The Microsoft case "created new opportunities for innovation in areas that would become critical to the success of Apple's consumer devices and the company itself," the Justice Department crowed in the lawsuit that casts the iPhone as an illegal monopoly.

Earlier this year, Microsoft's market value hit \$3 trillion for the first time, surpassing Apple as the world's most valuable company while taking the early lead in artificial intelligence technology that's expected to reshape the world.

It's an odd juxtaposition that has thrust regulators into battling two companies they helped create when they caged a colossus now angling to seize the mantle in technology's next frontier.

"It's not about an agenda about trying to pursue and destroy companies, it's about trying to restore competition in a market," said Rebecca Haw Allensworth, a Vanderbilt University law professor who focuses on antitrust law issues.

## Job openings hit a 3-year low, showing cooling labor market

By JARRELL DILLARD

Bloomberg News

U.S. job openings fell in March to the lowest level in three years while quits and hiring slowed, indicating more softening in the labor market.

Available positions decreased to 8.49 million from an upwardly revised 8.81 million reading in the prior month, the Bureau of Labor Statistics Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, known as JOLTS, showed Wednesday. The figure was lower than all but one estimate in a Bloomberg survey of economists.

The report illustrates the kind of cooling that the Federal Reserve would like to see, with demand for workers slowing through fewer openings rather than outright job losses. Policymakers held interest rates at the highest level in two decades at the conclusion of their meeting Wednesday.

The so-called quits rate, which measures people who voluntarily leave their job, fell to 2.1%, the lowest since August 2020. A decline in the metric recently suggests that people are holding onto their current roles as they feel less confident in their ability to find new jobs that may pay better.

The latest month's pullback in vacancies was concentrated within construction as well as finance and insurance. Meantime, openings increased somewhat for state and local education jobs.

A separate report Tuesday showed a broad gauge of U.S. labor costs closely watched by the Fed accelerated in the first quarter by more than forecast, illustrating persistent wage pressures that are keeping inflation elevated.

The hiring rate dropped to 3.5%, matching the lowest since the onset of the pandemic. The decline was broad, led by trade and transportation. Layoffs also eased, with the fewest people let go since the end of 2022.

The ratio of openings to unemployed people dropped to 1.3, matching the lowest since August 2021. The figure — which Fed officials pay close attention to — has eased substantially over the past year. At its peak in 2022, the ratio was 2 to 1.

The government's monthly employment report due Friday is expected to show hiring moderated but remained strong in April. Including government positions, economists forecast U.S. employers added 240,000 jobs, while monthly wage gains and the unemployment rate likely held steady.

A separate report out Wednesday from the ADP Research Institute showed that private employers hired by more than forecast in April while pay growth cooled.

Some economists have questioned the reliability of the JOLTS statistics, in part because of the survey's low response rate.

## Federal Reserve: Interest rates to stay at 2-decade high until inflation further cools

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve on Wednesday emphasized that inflation has remained stubbornly high in recent months and said it doesn't plan to cut interest rates until it has "greater confidence" that price increases are slowing sustainably to its 2% target.

The Fed issued its decision in a statement after its latest meeting, at which it kept its key rate at a two-decade high of roughly 5.3%. Several hotter-than-expected reports on prices and economic growth have recently undercut the Fed's belief that inflation was steadily easing.

"In recent months," Chair Jerome Powell said at a news conference, "inflation has shown a lack of further progress toward our 2% objective."

"It is likely that gaining greater confidence," he added, "will take longer than previously expected."

Powell did strike a note of optimism about inflation. Despite the recent setbacks, he said, "My expectation is that over the course of this year, we will see inflation move back down."

Wall Street traders initially cheered the prospect that the Fed will cut rates at some point this year as well as Powell's comment that the Fed isn't considering reverting to rate increases to attack inflation.

"I think it's unlikely that the next policy rate move will be a

hike," he said.

Later, though, stock prices erased their gains and finished the day essentially unchanged from where they were before Powell's news conference.

Still, Powell sketched out a series of potential scenarios for the months ahead. He said that if hiring stayed strong and "inflation is moving sideways," that "would be a case in which it would be appropriate to hold off on rate cuts."

But if inflation continued to cool — or if unemployment rose unexpectedly — Powell said the Fed would likely be able to reduce

its benchmark rate. Cuts would, over time, bring down the cost of mortgages, auto loans, and other consumer and business borrowing.

Those comments were "a signal that the (Fed) is a lot less confident that they know how policies are going to unfold over the course of this year," said Jonathan Pingle, an economist at UBS. "We were all sort of hoping for an update on the committee's path forward. And instead what we got was, 'We're really not confident enough to tell you what our path forward is going to be.'"

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WORLD

# Holocaust survivors take on denial, hate in digital campaign

By **KIRSTEN GRIESHABER**  
Associated Press

DUESSELDORF, Germany — Herbert Rubinstein was 5 years old when he and his mother were taken from the Jewish ghetto of Chernivtsi and put on a cramped cattle wagon waiting to take them to their deaths. It was 1941, and Romanians collaborating with Germany's Nazis were rounding up tens of thousands of Jews from his hometown in what is now southwestern Ukraine.

"It was nothing but a miracle that we survived," Rubinstein told The Associated Press during a recent interview at his apartment in the western German city of Duesseldorf.

The 88-year-old Holocaust sur-

vivor is participating in a new digital campaign called #CancelHate. It was launched Thursday by the New York-based Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, also referred to as the Claims Conference.

It features videos of survivors from around the globe reading Holocaust denial posts from different social media platforms. Each post illustrates how denial and distortion can not only rewrite history but perpetuate antisemitic tropes and spread hate.

"I could never have imagined a day when Holocaust survivors would be confronting such a tremendous wave of Holocaust denial and distortion, but sadly, that day is here," said Greg Schneider,



MARTIN MEISSNER/AP

**Holocaust survivor Herbert Rubinstein shows pictures of him with his parents at his home in Duesseldorf, Germany, on April 25.**

executive vice president of the Claims Conference.

The Claims Conference's new digital campaign comes at a time when antisemitic incidents, triggered by Hamas' deadly attack on Israel on Oct. 7 and Israel's ensuing military campaign in Gaza, have increased from Europe to the U.S. and beyond, to levels not seen in decades, according to major Jewish organizations.

The launch of the Claims Confe-

rence campaign also comes days before Yom HaShoah — Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Day — next Monday.

Even at his old age, Rubinstein, who calls himself an optimist, says he will continue fighting antisemitism every single day. And he has a message, especially for the young generation of Jews.

"Don't panic," Rubinstein says. "The good will win. You just have to do something about it."

# New mpox that may spread easier found in Congo

Associated Press

KINSHASA, Congo — Congo is struggling to contain its biggest mpox outbreak, and scientists say a new form of the disease detected in a mining town might more easily spread among people.

Since January, Congo has reported more than 4,500 suspected mpox cases and nearly 300 deaths, numbers that have roughly tripled from the same period last year, ac-

ording to the World Health Organization. Congo recently declared the outbreak across the country a health emergency.

An analysis of patients hospitalized between October and January in Kamituga, eastern Congo, suggests recent genetic mutations in mpox are the result of its continued transmission in humans; it's happening in a town where people have little contact with the wild

animals thought to carry it.

"We're in a new phase of mpox," said Dr. Placide Mbala-Kingebeni, the lead researcher of the study, who said it will soon be submitted to a journal for publication. Mbala-Kingebeni heads a lab at Congo's National Institute of Biomedical Research, which studies the genetics of diseases.

The lesions reported by most patients are milder and on the

genitals, Mbala-Kingebeni said, making the disease trickier to diagnose. In previous outbreaks in Africa, lesions were mostly seen on the chest, hands and feet. He also said that the new form seems to have a lower death rate.

In a report on the global mpox situation this week, WHO said the new version of the disease might require a new testing strategy to pick up the mutations.

# South Korea parliament OKs probe of crush in 2022

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's parliament on Thursday approved special legislation mandating a new, independent investigation into the 2022 Halloween crush in Seoul that killed 159 people.

The single-chamber National Assembly passed the bill by a 256-0 vote. It will become law after it is signed by conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol and promulgated by his government agency — steps that are considered formalities because the president and his ruling party already agreed on the legislation.

The bill is meant to delve into the root cause of the crush, and look at how authorities handled the disaster and who should be blamed for it. It envisages the creation of a fact-finding committee with nine members that would independently examine the disaster for up to 15 months.

Once the committee determines who is responsible and who should face charges, it would report them to the government's investigation agencies. The agencies would then be required to conclude investigations of the suspects within three months, according to the bill.

The crush caused a nationwide outpouring of grief. The victims, who were mostly in their 20s and 30s, had gathered in Seoul's popular nightlife district of Itaewon for Halloween celebrations.

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# WEEKEND



Maggie Rogers  
lightens the mood  
Music, Pages 28-29



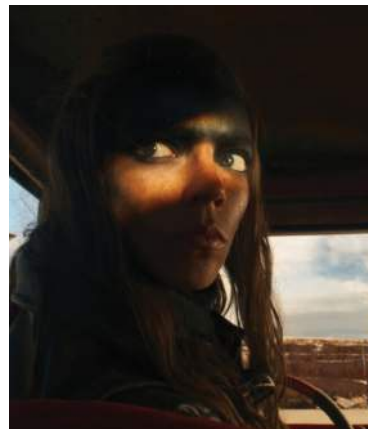
**"The Bikeriders"**  
FOCUS FEATURES/AP



**"Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F"**  
NETFLIX/AP



**"Inside Out 2"**  
PIXAR/AP



**"Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga"**  
WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP



**"The Fall Guy"**  
UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP



## A summer movie season heads-up

'Deadpool & Wolverine' a highlight of season's busy slate

Movies, Pages 14-20

20TH CENTURY STUDIOS,  
MARVEL STUDIOS/AP

## WEEKEND: SUMMER MOVIE PREVIEW

# The usual spectacle

Hollywood wins, loses some in the summer after 'Barbenheimer' and the actors and writers strikes

By LINDSEY BAHR  
Associated Press

**“B**arbenheimer” is a hard act to follow. The summer of 2023 brought a new enthusiasm for moviegoing, with the fortuitous counterprogramming of “Barbie” and “Oppenheimer,” and surprise hits like “Sound of Freedom,” helping the season’s box office crack \$4 billion for the first time since 2019. But before the industry could take a victory lap, there was another crisis looming with the dual Hollywood strikes, which shuttered most productions for months.

In the fallout, theaters lost big titles like “Mission: Impossible 8” and “Captain America: Brave New World” to 2025. But they gained a gem in Jeff Nichols’ “The Bikeriders” (June 21), about a 1960s Midwestern motorcycle club, as studios moved films around on the summer chessboard. “Deadpool & Wolverine,” once set to kick off the summer season on May 3 like many Marvel movies before it, is now opening July 26, patiently waiting to dominate the summer charts.

The kickoff weekend instead belongs to an original film about a different kind of superhero: the stunt performer. “The Fall Guy,” starring Ryan Gosling and Emily Blunt, is an earnest crowd-pleaser that could jump-start a season that feels like a throwback, with full-throttle spectacle (“Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga,” “Twisters”), comedies (“Babes”), IMAX wonder (“The Blue Angels”) and even a Kevin Costner Western.

Producer Jerry Bruckheimer has seen the highs and lows of summer movies over the decades. This season, he has three very different offerings on the calendar: Two are fourth installments in popular franchises — “Beverly Hills Cop” (July 3, Netflix) and “Bad Boys” (June 7, theaters) — and one was planned for streaming but tested so well that it’s getting a theatrical rollout (“Young Woman and the Sea,” May 31).

“People just want to be entertained,” Bruckheimer said. “It really comes down to us to make the right movies that they want to go see.”

“The Bikeriders” could be one of those. It already has stellar reviews from last fall’s Telluride Film Festival, hailing star turns for Austin Butler and Jodie Comer, and was originally planned for December but pushed when it became clear that the strikes weren’t going to resolve in time for a press tour.

“It was kind of like walking on frozen glass for three months,” Nichols said. “I was touring around doing press and trying to build this energy on my own. Let me tell you, it’s not the same as Austin Butler.”

Later in June, after a splashy Cannes debut, Kevin Costner will begin rolling out his two-part Western epic “Horizon: An American Saga,” set during the Civil War. And as always there are a slew of Sundance breakouts peppered throughout the summer, from “I Saw the TV Glow” and “Didi” to “Thelma” and “Good One.”

Family films also go into hyperdrive in the summer, capitalizing on long days out of school. This year has plenty, like “The Garfield Movie” and “Despicable Me 4.” But perhaps none has more anticipation behind it than “Inside Out 2” (June 14, theaters), which meets up with Riley as she enters her teenage years as a new group of emotions crash Joy’s party, including Anxiety, Envy, Ennui and Embarrassment.



DISNEY, PIXAR/AP

From left: Anger, voiced by Lewis Black; Fear, voiced by Tony Hale; Joy, voiced by Amy Poehler; Sadness, voiced by Phyllis Smith; Disgust, voiced by Liza Lapira; Envy, voiced by Ayo Edebiri; Anxiety, voiced by Maya Hawke; and Embarrassment, voiced by Paul Walter Hauser, in “Inside Out 2,” a highly anticipated family film out on June 14.



FOCUS FEATURES/AP

Austin Butler stars in “The Bikeriders,” about a 1960s Midwestern motorcycle club. The Jeff Nichols film was pushed back from December to June 21.



NETFLIX/AP

Eddie Murphy’s Axel Foley reunites with his estranged daughter, played by Taylour Paige, in “Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F.” The fourth film in the franchise is out July 3.



WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP

Chris Hemsworth in a scene from “Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga,” a full-throttle spectacle that comes out May 24.

“That age gives us everything we need and love for a Pixar film,” director Kelsey Mann said.

John Krasinski is also delving into the inner world of children with his ambitious live-action hybrid “IF” (May 17, theaters) about the imaginary friends that get left behind and two humans (Ryan Reynolds and Cailey Fleming) who can still see them.

Audiences seeking the adrenaline rush of horrors and thrillers have an array of options, including “MaXXXine,” the conclusion to Ti West’s accidental Mia Goth trilogy (“X” and “Pearl”) that debuts around the July 4 holiday.

Goth’s aspiring actress has made her way to Hollywood where a killer is stalking Hollywood starlets around the time of the home video boom of the 1980s.

“We re-created the sleazy side of Hollywood in a hopefully charming way,” West said. “It’s definitely a pretty wild night at the movies.”

On June 28, audiences can also delve into the beginnings of “A Quiet Place” with a prequel set on “Day One” starring Lupita Nyong’o and “Stranger Things” Joseph Quinn. Later, Fede Álvarez brings his horror acumen to



PARAMOUNT PICTURES/AP

Lupita Nyong’o, left, and Djimon Hounsou in a scene from “A Quiet Place: Day One.” The prequel is out June 28.

“Alien: Romulus” (Aug. 16), set between the first two.

M. Night Shyamalan is back with a thriller set at a pop concert (“Trap,” Aug. 9) and his daughter, Ishana Night Shyamalan, makes her directorial debut with the spooky, Ireland-set “The Watchers” (June 7) with Dakota Fanning. “It’s very suspenseful and unexpected,” Ishana said. “And it’s very much built for the experience of being in a theater.”

The streamers have movie stars and spectacle, too, with the festival favorite “Hit Man,” the Anne Hathaway romance “The Idea of You,” Jerry Seinfeld’s starchy Pop-Tart movie “Unfrosted” and a Mark Wahlberg/Halle Berry action comedy “The Union.”

In “Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F,” Eddie Murphy’s Axel Foley reunites with his estranged daughter (Taylour Paige). The film also sees the return of Judge Reinhold, John Ashton, Paul Reiser and Bronson Pinchot and adds Kevin Bacon and Joseph Gordon-Levitt.

“We raised our hand to make sure we got the franchise right and kept the integrity and fun of the original,” Bruckheimer said.

## WEEKEND: SUMMER MOVIE PREVIEW

## Shaking up the Marvel Cinematic Universe

'Deadpool & Wolverine,' which unites characters for 1st time since an '09 'X-Men' film, poised to be theatrical event of summer

BY LINDSEY BAHR  
Associated Press

Shawn Levy is no novice when it comes to rumors around his projects. Years on "Stranger Things" taught him how to tune out the noise. Yet even he's found himself astonished by the sheer volume of speculation around "Deadpool & Wolverine."

"The rumors around this movie are overwhelming," Levy said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. "But so is the anticipation, which is a nice situation."

Anticipation might be an understatement for a movie that is poised to be the theatrical event of the summer when it opens on July 26. The first trailer, which aired during the Super Bowl, was viewed a record 365 million times online in its first 24 hours. The second, which dropped this week, broke another record — for the most "F-bombs" in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. (six in less than three minutes).

Much of that excitement is because this film marks the first time Ryan Reynolds' foul-mouthed Deadpool/Wade Wilson and Hugh Jackman's Wolverine are being folded into Kevin Feige's MCU. Both properties existed previously under the 21st Century Fox banner.

When Disney acquired the studio's film and TV assets in early 2019, Wolverine had already died in "Logan," a third "Deadpool" was in development and Marvel was still firmly in the PG-13 business, a rating that allows for only one F-bomb.

On a call with investors as the deal was going through, Walt Disney Company CEO Bob Iger was already reassuring people that a Disney Deadpool would remain R-rated. Soon after, Reynolds also posted a photo on social media showing his character with Mickey Mouse ears on a yellow school bus labeled "Disney." The meta humor, it seemed, was also firmly intact.

But what would the story be? Levy was announced as the film's director in early 2022, coming in as a fan of Reynolds' snarky tone and fourth-wall-breaking.

"There was no way I was going to reinvent a wheel, a tonal wheel, that works so beautifully," Levy said. "Both Disney and Marvel, up and down the food chain, empowered Ryan and I to make this movie exactly as we dreamed."

### Wait, how is Wolverine here?

Things really started to take shape when Jackman signed on that fall, however. It would mark the first time that the characters would be together in a movie since 2009's "X-Men Origins: Wolverine." In the years since, Reynolds and Jackman have staged a very tongue-in-cheek, very funny "feud" with one another on social media, dancing around the idea of sharing the big screen again.

The dream seemed to have died after "Logan" and Jackman's retirement as Wolverine. But death is never exactly final in the multiverse, and, they promised, this film would not interfere with "Logan."

"It's a really interesting duo," Levy said. "They're built for huge conflict with each other because they're so different individ-



20TH CENTURY STUDIOS, MARVEL STUDIOS/AP

Hugh Jackman as Wolverine/Logan, left, and Ryan Reynolds as Deadpool/Wade Wilson. The characters' dynamic is partially fueled by the actors' decade-long, real-life friendship with "Deadpool & Wolverine" director Shawn Levy.

ually. But that makes for a very interesting story, because the best two-hander stories, whether it's 'Midnight Run' or '48 Hours' or 'Planes, Trains and Automobiles,' yes, it's littered with conflict. But it's ultimately about something more as well, and that's what audiences will see."

The dynamic was also fueled by the real-life friendship between Levy, Jackman and Reynolds that goes back a decade off-screen and includes films like "Free Guy" and "Real Steel."

"The real benefit of being friends off set is that you can try crazy stuff without fear of falling. Because some of it won't work, and that will be momentarily embarrassing, but if you're among friends, it's OK to make a fool of yourself in the pursuit of something surprising and something unexpected," Levy said. "This movie is filled with moments, both comedic and character based, that we didn't expect and were the result of a freedom that that came from being friends."

### No homework required

The Marvel multiverse has gotten a bit overwhelming in recent years for the more casual fans, who may have seen most of the films but only dabbled in the Disney+ offerings that regularly introduce new concepts and characters that eventually find their way into the films. "Deadpool & Wolverine," for instance, uses the Time Variance Authority (TVA) — a major part of "Loki," but new to the movies — to help get Deadpool to the MCU. But Levy promises that enjoyment of "Deadpool & Wolverine" requires no

bingeing or studying beforehand.

"I was a good student in school. I'll do my homework as an adult. But I am definitely not looking to do homework when I go to the movies," Levy said. "I very much made this film with certainly a healthy respect and gratitude towards the rabid fan base that has peak fluency in the mythology and lore of these characters and this world. But I didn't want to presume that. This movie is built for entertainment, with no obligation to come prepared with prior research."

### A silver lining in the strikes

Like many productions, "Deadpool & Wolverine" was affected by the strikes. It was "pencils down" when the writers walked out, including for Reynolds who is credited on the script, and a complete shutdown when the actors went to the picket lines.

"The impact was real," Levy said. "For me as the director, and the producer, the multi-month pause happened right in the middle of filming. All I could do was edit and review the footage. But it taught me about my movie, and it really revealed what was working and what the movie wanted to be."

When they resumed shooting post-strike, Levy wasn't panicked about rushing to the finish. Instead, he felt like he'd come back with a deeper knowledge of what they needed to do.

"It really focused our work, and I think improved our work in the second half," Levy said. "That's not a luxury we ever get in live-action filmmaking."

### Oh, right, the movie...

So, what about what's IN the film? Well, that's something that Levy can't really talk about. For one, he's busy finishing the movie ("it's coming together nicely," he said). Also, "Deadpool & Wolverine" doesn't need to tease out plotlines to stoke enthusiasm — there are near-daily articles speculating about a Taylor Swift cameo (and a Wikipedia page that's nearly 5,000 words). It's unclear what the Venn Diagram overlap is for Swifties and Marvel fans, but one thing is apparent: United, they're a powerful bunch.

Marvel has had some Phase 5 bumps, with films like "The Marvels" underperforming financially and others underwhelming critics. And outside of the MCU, the industry is feeling the pains of so-called "superhero fatigue" that has sent DC back to the drawing boards to start anew. But "Deadpool & Wolverine" is not to be underestimated.

It could be the first MCU movie since "Spider-Man: No Way Home" to crack \$1 billion, which would also put it in the running to become the highest grossing R-rated film of all time. That title currently belongs to "Joker" with its \$1.08 billion.

"Audiences are hungry for a great time at the movies," Levy said. "They want to be delighted, transported and entertained. And when they are given that, whether it's 'Barbie,' 'Oppenheimer' or any number of other recent movies, they show up."

He added: "The movie is built for audience delight. I think that (they're) in for a very fun ride."

## WEEKEND: SUMMER MOVIE PREVIEW



PHOTOS BY PARAMOUNT PICTURES/AP

Director John Krasinski on the set of "IF." Krasinski also plays the father of Cailey Fleming's character Bea, right, whose imaginary friend Blue, far right, is voiced by Steve Carell.

# Bringing a child's imaginary friends to life

'IF' director Krasinski says film has 'high-level' concepts and psychology that he wanted to take 'as seriously as I could'

BY LINDSEY BAHR  
Associated Press

John Krasinski doesn't usually fret about reviews. But for his new film "IF," he is terrified of the response from two people: his 7- and 10-year-old daughters.

"I've never been worried about two reviews more in my life," Krasinski told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "I'm genuinely terrified. I hope it goes well."

"IF," about a young girl (Cailey Fleming) and her neighbor (Ryan Reynolds) who can see everyone's imaginary friends including those that have gotten left behind, is one of this summer's major studio releases, opening on May 17. In a landscape full of brands and franchises, it's the rare original idea that has the backing of a big studio, Paramount, and an ambitious scale and scope. It was shot largely in New York by Oscar-winning cinematographer Janusz Kaminski and blends live-action and animation with an army of celebrity voices including Steve Carell, Phoebe Waller-Bridge, Matt Damon, Jon Stewart, Maya Rudolph and the late Louis Gossett Jr.

The idea to make a film about imaginary friends started and evolved with his kids, whom he shares with actor Emily Blunt (who also voices a character). At first, it just sounded like a fun, family-friendly idea.

"My kids are extremely imaginative," Krasinski said. "I always used to say to Emily, 'I just, I wish we could go wherever it is they go, just for a little bit.'"

Paramount agreed, and in October 2019 signed on to help make and distribute the film, with Krasinski and Reynolds' Maximum Effort. Then the pandemic hit and like so many parents of young children, he saw his daughters' worlds alter dramatically.

"They started asking questions like, 'Are we going to be okay' and 'what's going on?' I got so panicked. I just said, no way, we've got to do something about

this," he said. "That's when it hit me to make this movie about something a little bit more, a little bit deeper than just imaginary friends."

When he started to look into the psychology behind imaginary friends, he began to understand that these weren't just whimsical creations. They were in fact coping mechanisms to "metabolize" daily life, whether it's bullies at school, a divorce at home, a projection of dreams and ambitions, or any number of stressors that find their way into young minds. He understood it now as a sacred place.

**"It's about this little girl, but it has adults asking when they gave up on their imaginary friends and imaginations and dreams. The beauty of the movie is it tells you that all you've got to do is turn around and you can always go back."**

John Krasinski  
"IF" director, actor

"Once I realized that we were dealing with some high-level stuff, some highly imaginary, flammable stuff, I was like, this is really, really exciting," he said. "I knew we were on to something special, and I just wanted to take it as seriously as I could."

## Directing with figments of the imagination

To play the young girl, Bea, Krasinski cast 15-year-old Cailey Fleming (she's now 17), an actor who played Judith Grimes on "The Walking Dead." She'd just wrapped Season 11 and was getting ready to go back to high school when she got the call that Krasinski wanted her to audition.

"I've never had a lead role in a movie," Fleming said. "I was so nervous. But I couldn't have asked for a better cast or crew."

On a set where most of the characters would be added in postproduction, Krasinski took pains to ensure that they weren't just acting with tennis balls as stand-ins. Sometimes he'd have puppets, or a picture, or even a friend be Carell's character, Blue.

Other times he'd just jump in and do it himself (in addition to directing and playing Bea's dad).

"Cailey is Meryl Streep-level. She could have acted with a hot dog on a stick," Krasinski said. "I've been there; I've acted with the tennis ball. You just try to create

ing the pandemic. He hopes that like "Some Good News," "IF" is something that can bring people a little joy.

## Giving up 'A Quiet Place'

Taking on "IF" also meant passing the torch on the new "A Quiet Place" prequel. "A Quiet Place" helped put Krasinski on the map as a filmmaking force, and its sequel was an early and important boon to struggling movie theaters during the pandemic. But between "IF" and the "Jack Ryan" show, something had to give.

He'd developed a story about the first day of the invasion in New York City, and sought out "Pig" filmmaker Michael Sarnoski to see if he was interested.

"(John) really helped me early on. Then he let me run free and explore things," Sarnoski said. "He came to set the first day and sort of passed the baton symbolically. I got really lucky that he was like, 'Hey, this is a Michael Sarnoski film. Make this your own.'"

Far from being bittersweet, Krasinski said it's exciting and an honor "to have created a sandbox that anyone can play in." Another big summer release, "A Quiet Place: Day One" opens in theaters on June 28.

He's done both films in partnership with Paramount, a studio he credits for trusting and supporting his vision.

"Once 'IF' became more emotional and had more of a backbone to it, I think they leaned in even further. Some studios would go like, 'Oh, no, we want the zany version,'" he said. "I think because 'A Quiet Place' had that same backbone, that same emotional motor, they just said, 'Go do what it is you're seeing in your head.'"

Krasinski has just put the finishing touches on "IF," which means that his daughters will be seeing it very soon. They're planning to do "a little family premiere."

"We're going to get all dressed up," he said. "Basically we're going to pretend it's their own special premiere. Don't tell them that it's not the real thing."

a world where everyone feels not only safe and excited, but also feels like their imagination takes over.

"My job as a director is to try and make every day feel like you're doing a play rather than a movie, that it feels intimate and it feels for today only," he added.

Many of the starry voice actors are people whom Krasinski considers friends. He wasn't sure how they'd respond to his idea, but he said he got some of the quickest "yesses" in his career, whether they had kids or not.

"It's about this little girl, but it has adults asking when they gave up on their imaginary friends and imaginations and dreams," he said. "The beauty of the movie is it tells you that all you've got to do is turn around and you can always go back."

Recently a friend of his said "IF" reminded them of "Some Good News," the popular web series Krasinski started dur-



## WEEKEND: SUMMER MOVIE PREVIEW

## When, where to watch

A week-by-week guide to the summer's new movies

Associated Press

Releases are in theaters unless otherwise noted.

## May 3

**"Turtles All the Way Down" (MAX, streaming):** Based on John Green's popular novel, Isabela Merced plays 17-year-old Aza in this coming-of-age story.

**"The Fall Guy":** A love letter to stunt performers (and a funny, slick send-up of the movie industry), Ryan Gosling plays a veteran stunt guy who's enlisted to find a missing movie star (Aaron Taylor-Johnson) so that his crush (Emily Blunt) can finish her directorial debut.

**"The Idea of You" (Amazon, streaming):** Anne Hathaway plays a single mother in Los Angeles who begins a relationship with a younger pop star, played by Nicholas Galitzine.

**"Unfrosted" (Netflix, streaming):** Jerry Seinfeld makes his directorial debut with this film about the race between cereal rivals Kellogg's and Post to create a new pastry. Seinfeld stars alongside Melissa McCarthy, Jim Gaffigan, Amy Schumer, Hugh Grant, Max Greenfield and more.

**"Wildcat":** Ethan Hawke directs his daughter Maya Hawke in this unconventional, artful portrait of American author Flannery O'Connor.

**"Evil Does Not Exist":** Ryūsuke Hamaguchi's follow-up to "Drive My Car" is an unnerving slow burn about a father and daughter and their quiet town in the woods outside of Tokyo, whose way of life threatened when a company decides to build a glamping retreat nearby.

**"Jeanne du Barry":** Maïwenn co-wrote, directs and stars in this period drama about a working-class woman who wins over King Louis XV (Johnny Depp).

**"Tarot":** A horror about what happens when a group of friends use someone else's card deck.

**"Mars Express":** A future-set animated noir about a private detective and her android partner on the hunt for a hacker, from filmmaker Jérémy Perin.

**"Catching Fire: The Story of Anita Pallenberg":** A documentary that goes beyond the headlines about the actress and muse forever associated with the Rolling Stones.

## May 10

**"Mother of the Bride" (Netflix, streaming):** Brooke Shields plays mother to Miranda Cosgrove in this romantic comedy about her daughter's engagement to the son of the man who broke her heart.

**"Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes":** Generations after Caesar, apes have become the dominant species. Owen Teague stars as the young ape Noa whose world is upended when an intelligent human (Freya Allan) arrives.

**"Gasoline Rainbow":** Filmmakers Bill and Turner Ross direct this largely improvised road trip film about teenagers in Oregon searching for The Party at the End of the World.

**"Lazareth":** Ashley Judd stars in this thriller about a woman who adopts her nieces and raises them isolated in the woods.

**"Poolman":** In Chris Pine's directorial debut, Pine plays a normal Los Angeles guy who's asked to do some sleuthing around a shady business deal. Annette Bening, Danny DeVito and Jennifer Jason Leigh also star.

**"Force of Nature: The Dry 2":** Eric Bana is a federal agent investigating a missing corporate whistleblower.

**"The Image of You":** Based on a best-selling thriller about identical twins pulled apart by a new love, with Sasha Pieterse and Mira Sorvino.

**"Power" (in theaters, then streaming May 17 on Netflix):** Yance Ford ("Strong Island") studies the evolution of policing in America in this riveting documentary.

## May 17

**"IF":** This family film about a girl (Cailey Fleming) and her upstairs neighbor (Ryan Reynolds) who can see all the imaginary friends (aka IFs) who have been left behind was written and directed by John Krasinski. IF voices include Steve Carell, Emily Blunt, Maya Rudolph, Matt Damon and the late Louis Gossett Jr.

**"I Saw the TV Glow":** Realities blur for two teenagers (Justice Smith and Brigette Lundy-Paine) watching a mysterious late-night television show.

**"Thelma the Unicorn" (Netflix, streaming):** This animated film about a pony whose dreams of becoming a pop star come true was written by "Napoleon Dynamite" duo Jared and Jerusha Hess.

**"The Blue Angels" (IMAX, streams May 23 on Prime Video):** This new documentary about the Navy's Flight Demonstration Squadron was filmed with IMAX cameras for over a year. It's directed by Paul Crowder and produced by J.J. Abrams and Glen Powell.

**"Back to Black":** Marisa Abela plays Amy Winehouse in this biographical drama about the "Rehab" singer who died at 27 in 2011. Sam Taylor-Johnson directs.

**"Babes":** "Broad City's" Ilana Glazer co-wrote and stars in this raucous comedy about an accidental pregnancy, friendship and growing up.

**"The Strangers: Chapter 1":** Masked strangers terrorize a young couple (Madeleine Petsch and Froy Gutierrez) who have to spend a night in a remote cabin after their car breaks down in this horror.

## May 24

**"Darkness of Man":** Jean Claude Van Damme plays a former Interpol operative.

**"Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga":** George Miller is back with another high-octane Mad Max tale focusing this time on a young Furiosa, played by Anya Taylor-Joy, and a warlord named Dementus (Chris Hemsworth).

**"The Garfield Movie":** Chris Pratt voices another classic character in this animated film about the feline lasagna lover.

**"Atlas" (Netflix, streaming):** Jennifer Lopez is a skeptical data analyst who must learn to trust artificial intelligence to save humanity. Directed by Brad Peyton.

**"Sight":** An inspirational drama about an eye surgeon who wants to restore a blind child's vision. Starring Terry Chen and Greg Kinnear.



BLEECKER STREET/AP

From left: Robert De Niro, Rose Byrne, Bobby Cannavale and William A. Fitzgerald star in "Ezra," about a father (Cannavale) fighting to protect his autistic son. It's out May 31.



LIONSGATE/AP

Bill Skarsgård, left, and FKA twigs star in a reboot of "The Crow," out Aug. 23.



SIDESHOW AND JANUS FILMS/AP

Theo Kircher, left, and Lea Drucker in a scene from "Last Summer," out June 28.

**"The Keeper":** Based on the true story of Army vet George Eshleman, who endeavors to raise awareness about military suicides by hiking the Appalachian trail.

## May 31

**"Robot Dreams":** This Oscar-nominated animated charmer, about a dog who builds himself a robot companion, is finally getting a proper theatrical release in the U.S.

**"Young Woman and the Sea":** Daisy Ridley plays Trudy Ederle, the first woman to swim across the English Channel.

**"Jim Henson: Idea Man" (Disney+, streaming):** Ron Howard takes us inside the mind of the man behind "The Muppet Show," and countless other entertainments, in a new documentary.

**"Ezra":** A down-on-his-luck father (Bobby Cannavale) fights to protect his young autistic son (William A. Fitzgerald). Also stars Robert De Niro, Whoopi Goldberg.

**"The Dead Don't Hurt":** Vicky Krieps and Viggo Mortensen play star-crossed lovers in the 1860s American West, divided and fractured when he enlists to fight for the Union and she is left behind to defend herself in a corrupt frontier town.

**"Summer Camp":** Diane Keaton, Kathy Bates and Alfre Woodard are childhood friends who meet again at a camp reunion.

**"HAIKYU!! The Dumpster Battle":** Already a hit in Japan, this installment in the anime volleyball series finds old nemesis teaming up to defeat a rival high school team.

**"Backspot":** Devery Jacobs is an ambitious cheerleader and Evan Rachel Wood is her demanding head coach.

**"PROTOCOL 7":** A corporate thriller based on real events about a group that challenges a pharmaceutical company.

**"In a Violent Nature":** An undead golem pursues teens on vacation in this horror.

**"Flipside":** A documentary about a filmmaker's attempt to revive the New Jersey record store he worked in as a teen.

**"Invisible Nation":** A documentary about Tsai Ing-wen, the first female president of Taiwan.

## June 7

**"Hit Man" (Netflix, streaming):** An undercover police officer poses as a hitman in the Richard Linklater-directed romantic action comedy starring Glen Powell.

**"Bad Boys: Ride or Die":** Will Smith, in the first major movie he's made since slapping Chris Rock at the 2022 Oscars, reunites with Martin Lawrence for the fourth installment in the franchise.

**"The Watchers":** Dakota Fanning plays an artist who gets stranded in a forest in western Ireland where mysterious creatures lurk in the night in this film from Ishana Night Shyamalan.

**"I Used to be Funny":** "Bottoms" star Rachel Sennott plays an aspiring stand-up comic in Ally Pankiw's debut.

## June 14

**"Inside Out 2":** Riley is a teenager now and some new emotions are coming onto the scene to join Joy (Amy Poehler) and the gang, including Anxiety (Maya Hawke), Envy (Ayo Edebiri), Ennui (Adèle Exarchopoulos) and Embarrassment (Paul Walter Hauser).

**"Treasure":** Lena Dunham and Stephen Fry play father and daughter in this 1990s road-trip movie about a Holocaust survi-

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# Guide: July holds the only Marvel movie

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vor returning to his homeland, Poland.

**“Ultraman: Rising”** (Netflix, streaming): Animator Shannon Tindle (“Kubo and the Two Strings”) directs this animated action film about a baseball star/superhero who has to raise the child of a foe.

**“Tuesday”**: Julia Louis-Dreyfus is the mother of a teen daughter who meets death in the form of a talking bird in this fairy tale-esque film.

**“The Grab”**: A documentary investigation into the run on natural resources by governments, financial investors and private security forces.

**“Summer Solstice”**: Friends go away for a weekend for the first time after one has transitioned.

## June 21

**“The Bikeriders”**: Director Jeff Nichols captures the spirit of a Midwestern motorcycle club in the 1960s in this exciting drama starring Jodie Comer, Austin Butler, Tom Hardy and Mike Faist.

**“Thelma”**: June Squibb goes on a “Mission: Impossible”-style adventure across Los Angeles with Richard Roundtree to try to reclaim her money from a phone scammer in this delightful comedy.

**“Kinds of Kindness”**: Emma Stone is back with “Poor Things” director Yorgos Lanthimos for this film, described as a triptych fable.

**“Green Border”**: Filmmaker Agnieszka Holland takes audiences to the area between Belarus and Poland where refugees from Africa and the Middle East are trying to reach the European Union.

**“Fancy Dance”** (in theaters, streaming June 28 on Apple): Lily Gladstone stars in this gem about a woman caring for her niece on the Seneca-Cayuga reservation in Oklahoma, the search for her missing sister and the plight of Indigenous women.

**“What Remains”**: Andrea Riseborough and Stellan Skarsgård star in a film about an alleged serial killer, his therapist and a detective attempting to solve a cold case.

**“Bread & Roses”** (Apple TV+, streaming): This Jennifer Lawrence-produced documentary sheds light on Afghan women since Kabul fell to the Taliban in 2021.

## June 28

**“A Quiet Place: Day One”**: Michael Sarnoski takes over directing duties for John Krasinski in this prequel about the invasion, set in New York City. It stars Lupita Nyong'o and “Stranger Things” Joseph Quinn.

**“Diane von Furstenberg: Woman in Charge”** (Hulu, streaming): The story of the mogul behind the iconic wrap dress.

**“I Am: Celine Dion”** (Prime Video, streaming): A behind-the-scenes look at Dion's life now, living with the rare neurological disorder stiff person syndrome.

**“Horizon: An American Saga – Chapter I”**: Kevin Costner's two-part Western epic focuses on the westward expansion during the American Civil War.

**“A Family Affair”** (Netflix, streaming): Nicole Kidman, Joey King and Zac Efron



20TH CENTURY STUDIOS/AP

Isabela Merced plays a woman who lives on a mining colony in “Alien: Romulus.”

# ‘Alien: Romulus’ returns franchise to horror roots

BY LINDSEY BAHR  
Associated Press

Ridley Scott's Alien franchise has sunk its teeth into different genres over its 45 years, but for “Alien: Romulus,” filmmaker Fede Álvarez wanted to take it back to its roots: Horror.

“It's a return to form,” Álvarez said. “At its core, at its heart, it's a horror thriller.”

The original two films were formative for Álvarez, known for the 2013 “Evil Dead” reboot and the 2016 horror “Don't Breathe.” He recalled a “primal memory” of watching them on VHS and feeling like he was watching an R-rated “Star Wars.”

“It was a world that felt familiar, that I thought I knew, but it was going into way more adult and scary places,” he said.

The new film (opening Aug. 16) is set around the time of “Alien” and “Aliens,” focusing on a group of 20-somethings, including Cailee Spaeny, David Jonsson and Isabela Merced,

star in this film about a mother and daughter, a movie star boss and an unexpected romance with comic consequences.

**“Janet Planet”**: Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Annie Baker makes her film debut with this dreamy tale of an 11-year-old girl and her mother in western Massachusetts one summer.

**“Last Summer”**: Anne and Pierre's life is lovely in Paris with their daughters, 6 and 8, until her stepson Theo moves in and begins an affair with her in this Catherine Breillat film.

**“Daddio”**: Dakota Johnson and Sean Penn star as a woman and her taxi driver one night in New York.

## July 3-5

**“Despicable Me 4”**: Gru and the minions are back, with a new baby in the mix, in this animated romp.

**“Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F”** (Netflix, streaming): Forty years after Axel Foley crossed jurisdictions to investigate a

looking to escape their dull lives in a mining colony. But of course, it comes with some complications from that terrifying creature who likes to lurk in the corners.

Álvarez enlisted a lot of the behind-the-scenes creatives and concept artists who worked on the Scott and James Cameron films to help get the look right. Sometimes, they were excited to use new technologies that weren't available in the 1970s and 80s. And other times, they realized the old school way is still the best way.

Case in point: Álvarez said a big question was how they were going to get the set to melt when it's hit with the alien's blood.

“It's not an easy CG thing to create,” he said. “It's like, it has to be practical.”

Luckily, special effects expert and creature creator Alec Gillis was there to help.

“He was like, ‘I've done it many times. I'll show you how,’” Álvarez said. His secret? Styrofoam and acetone.

crime, Eddie Murphy is back for a fourth film, alongside Judge Reinhold and Paul Reiser.

**“MaXXXine”**: After “X” and “Pearl,” Ti West concludes his unlikely trilogy by bringing Mia Goth's aspiring star Maxine to Los Angeles in 1985 in this slasher.

**“Touch”**: A thrilling romance about a widower's search for his first love 50 years after she disappeared.

**“Kill”**: Set on the Rajdhani Express to New Delhi, this bloody action thriller stars Lakshya as an army commando who takes on a gang of violent thieves terrorizing passengers while on his way to derail his true love's arranged marriage.

**“Possum Trot”**: Based on a true story about 22 families in a small East Texas town who adopt 77 difficult-to-place children out of the foster system.

**“Space Cadet”** (Prime Video, streaming): Emma Roberts plays a woman who embellishes an application and lands in NASA's astronaut training program.

## July 12

**“Fly Me to the Moon”**: Scarlett Johansson and Channing Tatum star in this romantic comedy from Greg Berlanti about a marketing executive hired by NASA to fake the moon landing ... just in case.

**“Tyler Perry's Divorce in the Black”** (Prime Video, streaming): Meagan Good stars as a woman realizing the ugly truth about her husband.

**“Sing Sing”**: Colman Domingo stars in this movie about a few incarcerated men who begin acting in a theater group. This fall festival breakout is based on “The Sing Sing Follies” by John H. Richardson and “Breakin' the Mummy's Code” by Brent Buell and co-stars Paul Raci as well as several former prisoners.

**“Longlegs”**: Nicolas Cage and Maika Monroe lead this thriller about an FBI agent assigned to an unsolved case involving a serial killer.

**“National Anthem”**: Photographer Luke Gilford's directorial debut, about queer rodeo subculture, stars Charlie Plummer.

## July 19

**“Twisters”**: Daisy Edgar-Jones, Glen Powell and Anthony Ramos lead a new band of storm chasers in this sequel to the 1996 blockbuster directed by Lee Isaac Chung and produced by Steven Spielberg.

**“Skywalkers: A Love Story”** (Netflix, streaming): An adventurous couple dream of climbing the world's “last super skyscraper” and performing acrobatics there.

## July 26

**“Deadpool & Wolverine”**: The Merc with a Mouth (Ryan Reynolds) and the previously dead X-Man (Hugh Jackman) find their way to one another at last, and the Marvel Cinematic Universe, in this Shawn Levy-directed film.

**“The Good Half”**: Nick Jonas stars in this tragicomedy about a writer going home after the death of his mother in this film from Robert Schwartzman.

**“Didi”**: This coming-of-age pic from Sean Wang about a 13-year-old Taiwanese-American kid (Izaak Wang) in the Bay Area on his last summer before high school in 2008 won the audience award at the Sundance Film Festival.

**“The Fabulous Four”**: Lifelong friends (Susan Sarandon, Megan Mullally and Sheryl Lee Ralph) go to Key West for the wedding of a college pal (Bette Midler).

## August 2

**“The Instigators”** (in theaters, streaming Aug. 9 on Apple TV+): A Doug Liman-directed comedic heist film starring Matt Damon, Casey Affleck and Hong Chau.

**“Harold and the Purple Crayon”**: Many years after Spike Jonze was supposed to adapt the classic 1955 children's book, the family fantasy film is finally making it to theaters. Starring Zachary Levi as Harold and Lil Rel Howery, it blends animation and live action.

**“Kneecap”**: Naoise Ó Cairealláin, aka “Móglai Bap”; Liam Óg Ó Hannaidh, aka “Mo Chara”; and JJ Ó Dochartaigh, aka “DJ Provaí,” all play themselves in this film about their rap trio from Belfast.

**“Cuckoo”**: Hunter Schafer stars in this unnerving, blood-soaked thriller set in the German Alps. Dan Stevens plays her father's creepy boss.

## August 9

**“Trap”**: Josh Hartnett stars in an original thriller from M. Night Shyamalan

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## WEEKEND: SUMMER MOVIE PREVIEW

# Guide: August brings thrillers

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about a murderer at large inside a massive arena concert.

**“It Ends With Us”**: Blake Lively and Justin Baldoni star in this adaptation of the Colleen Hoover novel about romantic love and childhood trauma.

**“The Fire Inside”**: Ryan Destiny plays professional boxer Claressa “T-Rex” Shields in this biographical sports drama from Oscar-nominated cinematographer Rachel Morrison, in her feature debut.

**“Borderlands”**: After a few years of delays, Eli Roth’s colorful action-adventure film based on the video game of the same name is barreling to theaters starring Cate Blanchett, Ariana Greenblatt and Kevin Hart.

**“My Penguin Friend”**: Based on a true story, a fisherman (Jean Reno) finds hope in a penguin rescued from an oil spill.

**“Good One”**: A 17-year-old (Lily Collias) goes on a backpacking trip in the Catskills with her dad (James Le Gros) and his oldest friend in this poignant coming-of-age drama.

## August 16

**“Horizon: An American Saga – Chapter 2”**: Kevin Costner continues the story of the American West.

**“Alien: Romulus”**: This terrifying new installment in the Alien series stars Cailee Spaeny, Isabela Merced and David Jonsson.

**“The Union” (Netflix, streaming)**: Halle Berry and Mark Wahlberg are former high school sweethearts turned spies in this action-comedy-romance.

**“Close to You”**: Elliot Page plays Sam, who goes to his hometown for the first time since his transition for his father’s birthday.

## August 23

**“Blink Twice”**: Zoë Kravitz makes her directorial debut, with Channing Tatum starring as a tech billionaire who invites a waitress (Naomi Ackie) to his private island where odd things start happening.

**“The Crow”**: Bill Skarsgård, FKA twigs and Danny Huston star in director Rupert Sanders’ reboot of the comic-based series about a dead musician resurrected to avenge his and his fiancée’s deaths.

**“Between the Temples”**: Jason Schwartzman and Carol Kane develop an unlikely friendship while she studies to get a late-in-life bat mitzvah.

**“Slingshot”**: Casey Affleck and Laurence Fishburne star in this sci-fi thriller about an astronaut whose grasp on reality starts to dwindle on a dangerous mission.

**“Place of Bones”**: Heather Graham plays a mother who gets an unexpected visit at her isolated ranch by a bloodied bank robber.

## August 30

**“They Listen”**: A mysterious Blum-house horror from writer-director Chris Weitz, starring John Cho and Katherine Waterston.

**“Reagan”**: Dennis Quaid plays Ronald Reagan in this childhood to White House biopic, the first full-length film about the 40th U.S. president.



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

Sasha Lane, left, and Glen Powell in a scene from “Twisters.” In it, Powell, Daisy Edgar-Jones and Anthony Ramos are storm chasers.

# Heading straight into the storm

‘Twisters’ director insisted on shooting disaster film in Oklahoma, not on soundstages

BY LINDSEY BAHR

Associated Press

Growing up in the Midwest, filmmaker Lee Isaac Chung developed both a healthy fear of tornadoes and a reverence for Jan de Bont’s 1996 disaster film “Twister.” He saw the movie in the theater with his family when he was a teenager.

“I remember thinking, ‘I didn’t know you could chase after these things,’” Chung said. “That, to me, was very mind-blowing.”

These were forces of nature he and his schoolmates in rural Arkansas, near the Oklahoma border, were being taught how to safely hide from. And here’s Helen Hunt, Bill Paxton, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Alan Ruck driving toward them. Intentionally.

When he was hired to direct “Twisters,” storming theaters on July 19, he knew one thing was non-negotiable: They needed to shoot in Oklahoma, not on soundstages.

“I told everyone this is something that we have to do. We can’t just have blue screens,” Chung said. “We’ve got to be out there on the roads with our pickup trucks and in the green environments where this story actually takes place.”

There would be sacrifices that would have to be made, cutting the number of shooting days to make the budget work, but it was important. “Twister” might have been a major blockbuster, the second-highest grossing film of 1996 behind “Independence Day,” but for Chung it always seemed like a local film done in his backyard. He’d also filmed “Minari” there, his autobiographical family film that got six Oscar nominations, including best picture and director.

While most might remember “Minari” as a quiet, contemplative film, it was actually the one that got him thinking about doing something with more spectacle. At the end, there’s a dramatic fire.

“We actually lit this barn on fire and just took the risk of filming it in one take,” Chung said. “I remember being so filled with adrenaline after that that I was like, ‘I want to make a disaster film.’”

The first place he went to location scout for “Twisters” was a farmhouse. The owner came out and greeted Chung with a hug and the tidbit that he was actually an extra in “Minari.”

“I felt like I was coming back home. It was a confirmation that we made the right call,” Chung said. “‘Minari’ and ‘Twisters,’ even though they’re very different, I kind of think of them as my Oklahoma movies.”

There had been talk of a “Twister” follow-up for a few years, with Universal Pictures and Amblin Entertainment working with “The Revenant” screenwriter Mark L. Smith to develop a new story and figure out the best director for the job. Separately, Hunt was even reportedly at work on a next chapter, and there were several directors under consideration.

But Chung proved his passion to Steven Spielberg, Universal and Warner Bros., which is overseeing international distribution.

“It’s like I could see it,” he said. “I was firing off in my mind all the emotions that I want the audience to feel.”

The movie, considered a standalone and not a direct sequel to the 1996 film, stars Daisy Edgar-Jones, Anthony Ramos and Glen Powell as a new bunch of storm chasers. None of the characters from the original are returning, but the legacy of their work is there — the Dorothy sensors are back, and so are references to the fictional Muskogee State University.

“We do highlight the idea and the fact that, environmentally speaking, storms have become more unpredictable. Tornadoes have become more unpredictable as well. That’s just hard science,” Chung said. “We also address the fact that the technology around what we can under-

stand about tornadoes is growing as well.”

They hit the ground running with production starting in spring 2023, to capitalize on the area’s actual tornado season. One day, they were filming a scene of Edgar-Jones and her friends running from a giant tornado, trying to find safety. The crew was also getting warnings of a giant storm coming in and were cautioned to film what it needed as quickly as possible. Soon after the crew had finished and sent everyone home, it got a report that a tornado had touched down 40 miles away.

Chung and his associate producer decided to celebrate with some of El Reno’s famous fried onion burgers.

“We got the shots we needed. The skies were perfect because it looked like a tornado. We got everyone out of there safely. And a tornado actually touched the ground after we filmed it,” Chung said. “It felt like a strange, ‘only when you’re making a movie’ sort of day.”

Everyone had gotten so used to shutting down for weather, tornadoes, storms and lightning, that when it became obvious that the actors were heading for a walkout there were plenty of jokes about “what’s another strike?” Similar to Shawn Levy’s experience with “Deadpool & Wolverine,” it gave them time to take a breath and reassess.

“It felt good to go back in with renewed energy,” Chung said.

Spielberg executive produced the original, but his fascination with tornadoes goes back further than that. Remember the scene in “The Fabelmans” when his mother takes the kids out to try to chase one themselves?

“He is a true tornado fanatic,” Chung said. “I had clips for my pitch to him from YouTube of actual tornadoes and every single one of them, he would say, yes, I’ve seen that. I’ve seen that. It turned out he had seen every single YouTube clip of a tornado that is out there.”

## WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS



PHOTOS BY UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

Above and below, Ryan Gosling, as a stuntman, and Emily Blunt, as a rookie director, in "The Fall Guy."

# Spotlight on stunt work

Gosling film 'Fall Guy' a delightful blend of action, comedy, romance

BY LINDSEY BAHR

Associated Press

One of the worst movie sins is when a comedy fails to at least match the natural charisma of its stars. Not all actors are capable of being effortlessly witty without a tightly crafted script and some excellent direction and editing. But Ryan Gosling and Emily Blunt seem, at least from afar, adept at that game. Just look at their charming press tour for "The Fall Guy." Theirs is the kind of fun banter that can be a little worrisome — what if their riffing is better than the movie?

It comes as a great relief, then, that "The Fall Guy" lives up to its promise. Here is a delightful blend of action, comedy and romance that will make the audience feel like a Hollywood insider for a few hours (although there are perhaps one too many jokes about Comic-Con and Hall H).

Loosely based on the 1980s Lee Majors television series about a stuntman who made some extra cash on the side bounty hunting, Gosling takes up the mantle of said stunt guy, Colt Seavers.

Colt is a workaday stunt performer and longtime go-to for a major movie star, Tom Ryder (Aaron Taylor-Johnson). Tom is the kind of deeply egotistical and self-conscious A-lister who tells everyone he does his own stunts and worries out loud about Colt's jawline being distractingly softer than his. I think the word "potato" is thrown around as a descriptor. Taylor-Johnson has quite a bit of fun playing up all his eccentricities that you hope, and fear, are at least somewhat inspired by real horror stories of stars behaving badly.

The film comes from director David Leitch, the Brad Pitt stuntman and stunt coordinator who helped bring "John Wick" to the



world and directed "Atomic Blonde" and "Bullet Train." He's a guy who not only has the vision and know-how to bring the best in stunts to films and make them pop but also has a vested interest in putting them in the spotlight. Forget the Oscar, how about just any acknowledgment? Perhaps "The Fall Guy" is just one tiny step on the path to making audiences more aware of some of the behind-the-scenes people who really make movies better, and risk it all to do so.

It's revealing that the movie starts with Colt suffering a terrible injury on a set. The stunt that goes wrong is one he's just done and doesn't seem remotely nervous about. The film cuts to his recovery and semi-reclusive retirement until he gets a call from Tom's producer Gail (a delightfully over-the-top Hannah Waddingham) begging Colt to come back for a new film. They need him, she pleads, as does his longtime crush Jody (Blunt), who is making her directorial debut. She waits to inform him that Tom is missing, and he's the one who has to find him. On the quest, Colt encounters tough-guy goons, enablers, a sword-wielding actress and a dead body on ice that all lead up to something big and rotten. And like a selfless stunt guy, he does it all out of sight of Jody — trying his best to save her movie without giving her something extra to worry

about. Nothing about it is particularly plausible, but it's not hard to get on board for the ride, and much of that is because of Gosling.

While he's not quite underappreciated for his comedic timing, especially after "Barbie," it's fun to get to see him really embrace and lean into the goofiness — whether it's crying and singing along to Taylor Swift's "All Too Well" or quoting movie lines to his stunt coordinator pal (Winston Duke, always a good addition) in the midst of an actual fight.

There is something very juvenile and sweet about Jody and Colt's will-they-won't-they romance, with its mix of attraction, banter, misunderstandings and hurt feelings. It was a genius stroke to cast these two opposite each other, and it leaves you wanting more scenes with the two.

Working with a script from Drew Pearce ("Hobbs & Shaw"), Leitch packs the film with wall-to-wall action, in both the film's movie sets and its real world. And with the self-referential humor, the industry jokes and the promise of a little romance, it feels like one of those movies we all complain they don't make anymore.

"The Fall Guy" is rated PG-13 for action and violence, drug content and some strong language. Running time: 126 minutes. Now playing at select on-base theaters.

# Romantic drama 'The Idea of You' is pure escapism

BY MOIRA MACDONALD

The Seattle Times

Should you be in the mood for pure escapism, you can do a lot worse than "The Idea of You," a beguiling little romantic drama about love, passion and spectacular hair. Much of this hair is on the impeccably poised head of Solène (Anne Hathaway), who lives a delightfully only-in-the-movies life: She's an art gallery owner who wears expensively bohemian outfits, shares a perfectly curated Craftsman house with her equally well-tressed teen daughter Izzy (Ella Rubin) and occasionally pouts prettily about the failings of her ex-husband, Daniel (Reid Scott), whose habitual flaking-out-at-the-last-minute requires Solène to unexpectedly take Izzy and her friends on a long-promised trip to Coachella. But wait! At Coachella, Solène does not suffer sunburn or COVID-19 or temporary deafness, as you or I might; instead, she accidentally enters the private trailer of an extremely famous person (because Coachella is presumably full of such opportunities) and meets Hayes (Nicholas Galitzine), a handsome boy-band singer who promptly falls madly in love with her.

But, before you can say "Notting Hill" (and you may as well say it, as it's kind of the same movie; just substitute Hathaway's art gallery for Hugh Grant's bookshop), problems arise: namely that Solène is 40 (though looks 28) and Hayes is 24 (though looks 28), and that

because of Hayes' extreme famousness, people say nasty cougar-related things about them on the internet. "You're you and I'm me and we just don't fit," Solène says to Hayes, like every person in every rom-com ever, though it's clear to us that the two have raging chemistry and a sweet rapport. Will these crazy kids work things out, to enjoy a happy life of passionate kisses and excellent-looking room-service BLTs in fancy hotels? Well, you've seen "Notting Hill." (If you haven't, do; it's pretty good, too.)

Director Michael Showalter, who wrote the screenplay with Jennifer Westfeldt (whose comedic touch is recognizable in many funny throwaway lines) based on Robin Lee's novel, deftly manages the most important thing in this sort of movie: We fall in love with this couple, just a bit, and want them to be together. And Hathaway and Galitzine make a charmer of a pair. He's sweetly dazzled by her; she's warier, yet Hathaway lets us see this woman, who's been burned before, gathering herself to jump off love's diving board into unknown waters.

It's a lovely performance, in a career full of them: Hathaway has an uncanny way of bringing a world of knowing, a sense of rich past stories, into her dusky voice and bright smile. Solène may live a movie-perfect life, but Hathaway makes her real.

"The Idea of You" is rated R for some language and sexual content. Running time: 115 minutes. Now streaming on Amazon Prime.



AMAZON, MGM STUDIOS/AP

Nicholas Galitzine, left, and Anne Hathaway star in "The Idea of You." Galitzine plays a 24-year-old boy-band singer, Hayes, who falls in love with Hathaway's 40-year-old art gallery owner, Solène.

## WEEKEND: TRAVEL

## Slovakian capital makes comeback

Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia and once a nearly desolate ghost town, is one of Europe's great urban success stories. Its compact old town bursts with colorfully restored facades, lively outdoor cafés and swanky boutiques. Its ramshackle industrial quarter, just east of the center, is rapidly being redeveloped into a forest of skyscrapers. The hilltop castle gleams. It's arguably the fastest-changing city in Europe.

Sitting quietly in the very center of central Europe, wedged between bigger and stronger nations (Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic and Poland), Slovakia was brutally disfigured by its communist regime, then overshadowed by the Czechs. But in recent years, this fledgling republic has found its wings. Locals brag that the region around Bratislava has the hottest economy and highest per capita income of any region in the former Communist bloc.

Bratislava has also forged a twin-city alliance for trade and commerce with Vienna — which

is less than an hour's train ride away, and whose lights you can sometimes see from here — making this truly the nexus of eastern central Europe.



Rick Steves

Many Bratislavans fancy themselves the yang to Vienna's yin: If Vienna is a staid, elderly aristocrat sipping coffee, then Bratislava is a vivacious young professional jet-setting around

Europe. Bratislava at night is a lively place, thanks to tens of thousands of university students.

Though lacking blockbuster sights, Bratislava is made for strolling. If you have just a few hours to spend, head straight to the old town and wander its mostly traffic-free streets, finishing with one or more of the city's fine viewpoints: Ascend to the observation deck atop a funky bridge or hike up to the castle for the views.

With more time, stroll along the Danube riverbank to the thriving, modern Eurovea devel-



GRETCHEN STRAUCH/Rick Steves' Europe

The SNP Bridge's observation deck and "UFO" restaurant provide stunning views of Bratislava.

opment — essentially a riverside park with luxury condos and a modern shopping mall.

From the end of World War II until Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution in 1989, Bratislava was a damaged husk. The communist regime had no respect for the town's heritage, selling off the old town's medieval cobblestones to cute German towns rebuilding after the war. Locals avoided this stripped-down, desolate corner of the city, preferring to spend time in the Petřalka suburb across the river.

With the collapse of the com-

munist regime, the new government began returning buildings to their original owners. Over time, the city made the old town traffic-free, spruced up public buildings and encouraged private owners to restore their buildings as well. Life has returned with a vengeance, and Bratislava's old-town charm is on full display.

Spanning the nearby river, just downhill from Bratislava Castle, is the huge flying-saucer-capped SNP Bridge, the communists' pride and joy. ("SNP" is shorthand for the 1944 Slovak National Uprising against the Nazis.)

Locals don't love the structure — not only for its questionable Starship Enterprise design, but also because of the oppressive regime it represented. However, it's been reclaimed by capitalists, and the restaurant and observation deck have been renovated into a posh eatery called "UFO."

I admit that Bratislava used to leave me cold. But changes in recent decades have transformed it into a delightful destination.

This article is used with the permission of Rick Steves' Europe ([www.ricksteves.com](http://www.ricksteves.com)). Rick Steves writes European guidebooks, hosts travel shows on public TV and radio, and organizes European tours.

## Ethnic celebrations help outsiders discover rich local traditions

French, Spanish, German or Italian — it's pretty easy to name off some of Europe's largest nationalities. Among these well-known population groups reside dozens of ethnic groups with equally rich cultures and traditions. Here are some events and activities at which to get to know the minorities of Europe:

**Prague, Czech Republic:** The Khamoro Festival, May 26-June 1, shines a light on Romani culture through music, movies, exhibitions and activities. The festival bills itself as the biggest Romani festival in the world. Attendees can enjoy traditional Romani music, Gypsy jazz and classical performances. Other features of the festival, whose name means "sun" in Romani, include a day for children and a parade through Prague's city center. Online: [khamoro.cz/en](http://khamoro.cz/en)



Karen Bradbury

Just days later, other minorities residing in the Czech Republic are feted at the annual Heart of Nations Festival. From May 30-June 2, the event will showcase traditional folk arts in the form of music, dance, traditional clothing, exhibitions and handicrafts. The highlight event, the gala concert, will be held June 2 at Prague's Vinohrady Theater at 7 p.m. Online: [prahasrdcenarodu.cz](http://prahasrdcenarodu.cz)

**Manndalen, Norway:** The Riddu Riddu Festival is an international Indigenous festival set in a small community located a two-hour drive east from the city of Tromsø. For more than 30 years, Riddu Riddu has strived to increase awareness and pride in the Sámi, a northern people inhabiting the region of Sápmi, whose traditional lands stretched over the northern reaches of what's now Norway, Sweden and Finland, as well as Russia's Kola Peninsula. This summer festival offers free camping. Things to do include a concert by performers of indigenous backgrounds and workshops to learn the art of tin thread embroidery or a few words in the Kildin Sámi



iStock

Romani culture will be celebrated May 26-June 1 at the Khamoro Festival in the Czech Republic capital of Prague.

language. Movie screenings, a crafts market and a children's activity area are among the offerings. Each year, a different Indigenous people are named Northern People of the Year; in 2024, the Lakota people are given a platform to share their cultural expressions including drumming, singing and dancing. Some activities, such as workshops, require advance registration. A festival pass for the duration of the festival, July 10-14, goes for 1900 Norwegian Krone, about \$174. Youth, family, single-day and other types of tickets are also offered. Online: [riddu.no/en](http://riddu.no/en)

**Germany and Denmark:** From June 14-July 14, millions of fans will root for their countries' successes as their national teams take part in the 2024 UEFA European Football Championship, a series of men's soccer games to be played out in venues across host nation Germany. At roughly the same time, the European Football Championship of the autochthonous national minorities (EUROPEADA) 2024 will determine the newest Eu-

ropean Minority Football Champions. The tournament, now in its 5th edition, features 36 teams from national and ethnic minorities from 15 European countries, including 27 men's and 9 women's teams. The group phase runs from June 30-July 2 and is followed by the knockout round and placement matches July 4-6. A cultural day in the middle of the tournament gives the participating minorities the chance to present their cultures, languages and traditions to one other. EUROPEADA 2024 will be hosted by the Sinti and Roma and the Frisian minority in the German state of Schleswig-Holstein, the German minority in Denmark and the Danish minority in Germany and will play out in 14 locations in both countries. The tournament is organized by the Federal Union of European Nationalities, or FUEEN. Online: [europeada.eu/de](http://europeada.eu/de)

**Basque Country, Spain:** During the first week of September each year, Basque provinces organize events dedicated to their culture. The week known as Euskal Jaiak sees people compete in sporting events, perform Basque songs and dances and attend fairs. Sampling the local cuisine also figures prominently. Festivities will take place Aug. 28-Sept. 8. Online: [tinyurl.com/4kn5euu8](http://tinyurl.com/4kn5euu8)

**Workum, Netherlands:** In late autumn, this city of 4,500 in the province of Friesland hosts a week of festivities related to the area's fishing and agricultural heritage. Friesland is an area inhabited by a Germanic ethnic group called Frisians who are indigenous to the coastal parts of the Netherlands and northwest Germany. Four distinct events make up Stronkweek: the navigation of passenger boats and ferries to ports of call along the coast, fishing for pike-perch from traditional watercraft; the Liereliet music festival of sea-shanty singing, and a race between manure-filled barges, a nod to the time when the area's dung played an important role in fertilizing Holland's fields of flower bulbs. The festival takes place Oct. 25-Nov. 2. Online: [immaterieelerfgoed.nl/en/strontweek](http://immaterieelerfgoed.nl/en/strontweek)

## WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

# Meet Ötzi, Bolzano's chilliest cold case

Body, personal items of Bronze Age Iceman, killed 5,300 years ago, well-preserved at archaeology museum in Italian city

By KENT HARRIS

*Stars and Stripes*

One of history's greatest whoduns centers on a man killed in the Alps about 5,300 years ago and whose well-preserved body was discovered encased in ice in 1991.

Since then, the millennia-old cold case of Ötzi the Iceman has captivated professionals and the public alike, giving a museum in Bolzano, Italy, quite the showpiece with which to draw visitors.

A city of about 100,000 people roughly 50 miles south of the Austrian border, Bolzano is approximately two hours and 15 minutes from Vicenza by car.

The South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology houses Ötzi along with the clothing he was wearing and equipment he was using at the time of his death.

The Iceman can be viewed through a small window on the museum's first floor. Bits of clothing and other personal items, such as his ax, are displayed elsewhere on the same floor. Information is provided in Italian, German and English.

No photographs are allowed on the first floor, though visitors are allowed to use their cameras on the other two floors featuring exhibits.

One focuses on life in the Bronze Age in the area and offer some scientific guesses on Ötzi's life and demise. The top floor currently features an exhibition titled "Past Food: 15,000 Years of Nutrition."

Ötzi's story is largely known around Europe and has been told numerous times in American media outlets as well. The museum is well worth a visit for those interested in history.

But there's more to Bolzano than the Iceman, although the drive between Austria and Verona along the A22 autostrada doesn't reveal that. Nothing of the old town is easily visible from the highway, where the view is mostly of factories or large and uninteresting structures.

The city's heart, especially in winter, is Walterplatz, a square named after a famous German minstrel, Walter von der Vogelweide. Bolzano is known as Bozen to German speakers, and there are quite a lot of them. The Tyrol region has been a part of modern Italy only since the end of World War I. So don't be surprised if the place feels — and sounds — a bit more like Austria or Germany.

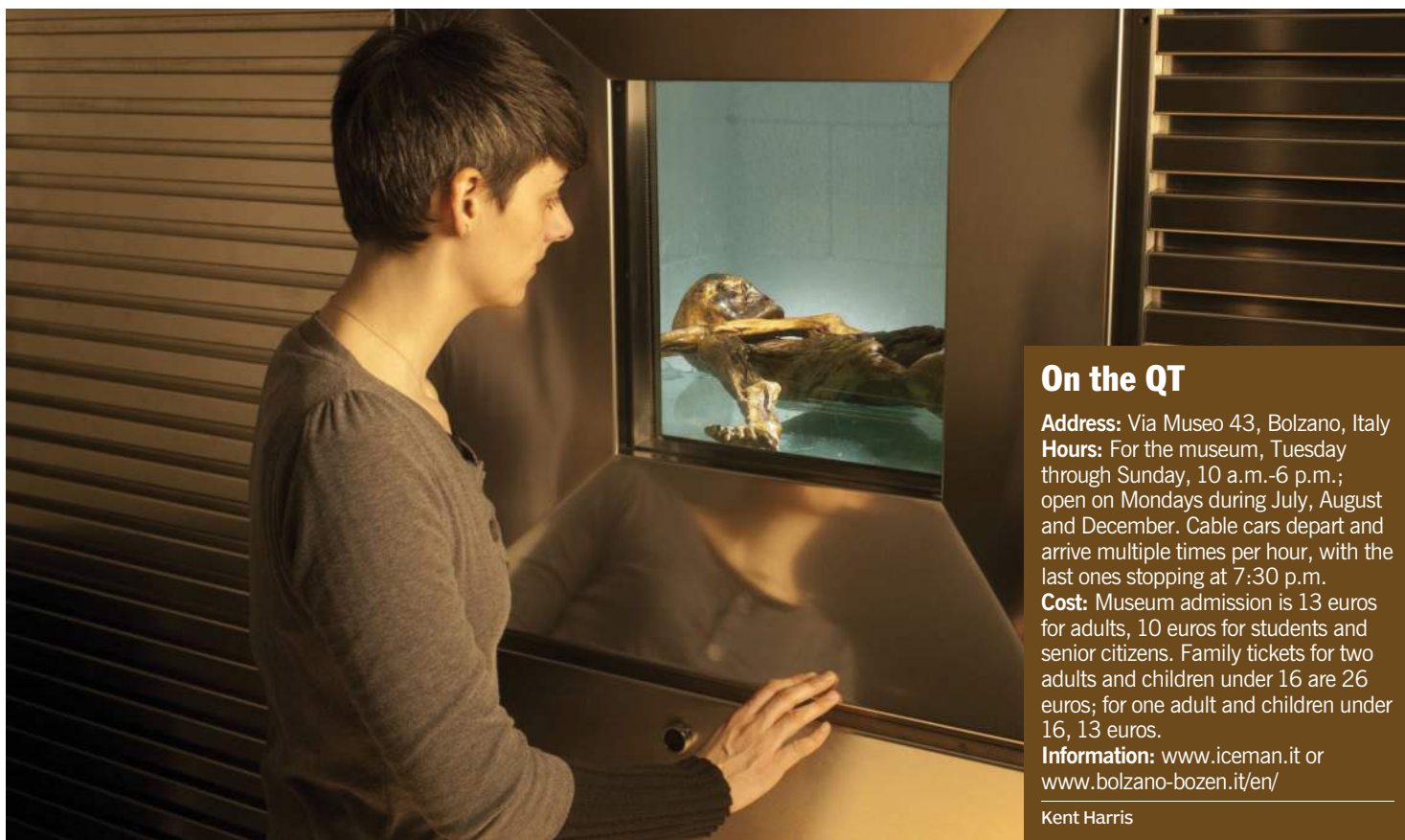
Restaurants serving dishes such as schnitzel are as common as pizzerias along the pedestrian streets that branch out from the square toward the museum. The Adige River and a tributary are a few more blocks away to the south and west.

Bolzano boasts a few churches, including the cathedral next to the main square, and a few small castles as well.

A cable car up takes people up into the Alps, providing an excellent option for hikers or those who just want to get above it all for a while and take in the views.

Bolzano also has consistently ranked near the top of annual surveys of most livable cities in Italy. So maybe you'll want to stay longer — though not likely as long as Ötzi.

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## On the QT

**Address:** Via Museo 43, Bolzano, Italy

**Hours:** For the museum, Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; open on Mondays during July, August and December. Cable cars depart and arrive multiple times per hour, with the last ones stopping at 7:30 p.m.

**Cost:** Museum admission is 13 euros for adults, 10 euros for students and senior citizens. Family tickets for two adults and children under 16 are 26 euros; for one adult and children under 16, 13 euros.

**Information:** [www.iceman.it](http://www.iceman.it) or [www.bolzano-bozen.it/en/](http://www.bolzano-bozen.it/en/)

Kent Harris

South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology

The preserved remains of Ötzi the Iceman can be viewed through a small window on the first floor of the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology in Bolzano, Italy. Other exhibits focus on life in the Bronze Age and offer some scientific guesses on his life and demise.



South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology

Visitors at the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology in Bolzano, Italy, look at the remains of the hat that Ötzi the Iceman was wearing when he was killed about 5,300 years ago. Personal effects, including his ax, are also on display at the museum.



KENT HARRIS/Stars and Stripes

A great view of the entire city of Bolzano, Italy, and much of the surrounding area, is in store for riders of a cable car that takes them up into the Alps.



KENT HARRIS/Stars and Stripes

Walterplatz, the main square in Bolzano, hosts one of Italy's most vibrant Christmas markets. The city's cathedral, dating to the 12th century, is close by.



South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology

An artist's rendition of what Ötzi the Iceman could have looked like. His body was discovered in 1991.

# WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING



PHOTOS BY DAVID EDWARDS/Stars and Stripes

Rada Arepa faces out onto Untere Strasse in the old town of Heidelberg, Germany. Rada combines a Venezuelan restaurant with a cafe and roastery where all the offerings are gluten-free.

## Visit Rada for some R&R

Restaurant and roastery brings Venezuelan classics to Heidelberg

By DAVID EDWARDS  
Stars and Stripes

When I pine for gluten-free Venezuelan food, my thoughts now gravitate toward the cobblestone streets and old-world charm of Heidelberg, Germany.

This isn't as strange as it sounds, judging by the brisk business I've seen at Rada Arepa. My first visit to the restaurant was also my introduction to the namesake food.

The arepa is a cornmeal cake with pre-Columbian origins that is stuffed with various savory ingredients. They're beloved as a staple snack or meal in Venezuela and Colombia, each of which has different preparations and traditions for them.

Rada Arepa is divided into a cafe and an adjoining restaurant. The small floor plan makes for tight quarters in both, and the combined number of tables is about 10.

There are other items for sale, including empanadas and some fuller meals that I'd try on a later visit. But for my baptism into Venezuelan cuisine, I went with the main attraction.

The smattering of arepa options included traditional versions with distinctive flourishes, such as the catirita, with braised chicken, Gouda cheese, avocado and marinated salad. A falafel-inspired arepa was among the vegetarian and vegan fare.

I went with the arepa domino, which is filled with black beans, rice, beef and fried plantains. On



**AFTER  
HOURS  
GERMANY**

### Rada Arepa

**Address:** Untere Strasse 21, Heidelberg, Germany  
**Hours:** Sunday through Thursday, 12-6 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 12-8 p.m.  
**Cost:** Empanadas, 4 euros; arepas, 9 to 13 euros; bowls, 12.50 to 13.50 euros; pabellon criollo, 15 euros  
**Info:** 06221 1805585, kaffeeoestereiheidelberg-rada.com

David Edwards

the plus side, the dish was so rich that I couldn't finish it.

But that also was due to my regret about including the sweet plantains. I tried them once long ago and it turns out I still don't like them. In addition, I drank a bottle of blackcurrant juice a little too quickly and ran out of beverage with about a third of the arepa still on my plate.

Redemption in the form of dessert was just across the way from my cafe table, where I had been eyeing all the items in the display case. A slice of chocolatey torte with peanuts and caramel stood out as the most tempting.

Saying adios to Rada on such a sweet note primed me for a second trip, this time with my brother, who had stopped to visit me before heading to Italy.

He turned out to be the ideal companion for this eatery. Unbe-

knownst to me, he had dated a Venezuelan woman in college and learned a thing or two about the country's staple dish.

For him, our lunch on a drizzly Tuesday started with a French press coffee followed by an arepa pelua, which contained shredded beef, Gouda cheese and jalapeños.

Both items made a favorable impression. The coffee was strong but satisfying, with hints of fruit. He described the arepa as "assertive without being pushy."

The fire from the jalapeños paired well with the savory meat, and the arepa was lighter and crispier than the ones from his college days.

He topped off the meal with a shot of espresso, which was smooth yet bold, leaving him happy with his experience.

I settled on pabellon criollo, the national dish of Venezuela. I skipped the plantains this time and enjoyed the filling combo of rice, black beans, shredded beef and flecks of chili.

This time, I had a little bit of orange-mango-passion fruit juice left in the bottle when I finished my meal. For dessert, I had a basic brownie and a vanilla chai latte, both of which were splendid.

The drink was made with David Rio chai powder, a brand that I knew from many a tea-filled morning at home. Rada also had another flavor of the chai powder, so I'll try to find that one during my next grocery run.

Rada owners Raphael Pulgar



The cafe portion of Rada Arepa is dedicated to coffee, tea and baked goodies. Bills for cafe orders and restaurant orders are paid in separate places.



A Venezuelan flag blends into the seating area of the restaurant portion of Rada Arepa in Heidelberg, Germany. Directly opposite are the cafe and roastery. The restaurant used to be called Arepas World.



The arepa pelua adds the fiery kick of jalapeño peppers to the shredded beef, black beans and cheese stuffed inside the circular cornmeal arepa.



Pabellon criollo normally has fried plantains. The order pictured here has avocado, cheese, black beans and shredded beef with minced red peppers, but no plantains at the customer's request.

Schwartz, Daisy Schwartz and Joel Urbaez have been operating their business on Untere Strasse since 2016. The restaurant used to be known as Arepas World and still appears that way on Google Maps.

The current moniker is a mashup of the first two letters in Raphael and Daisy.

In the early days, the establishment covered a mere 172 square feet, making it "probably the smallest coffee roastery in the region," according to the menu. The growth of the business allowed the family to add the restaurant.

Its coffee beans are sourced

mainly from Central and South America. In the restaurant, a pair of Venezuelan flags augment the culinary efforts to create the ambience of the home country.

The path to Rada on my first visit took me past another gluten-free restaurant called Cafe Ly, which I intend to try the next time I make tracks to Heidelberg.

Nonetheless, the tres leches in the cafe and the empanadas in the restaurant are exerting a pull on me even now, not to mention another arepa.

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## WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY KELLY AGEE/Stars and Stripes

Yokohama Air Cabin debuted in April 2021 in the city's Shinko district as Japan's first urban ropeway, the Japanese term for a cable-car system.

# Be part of the panorama in Yokohama

Air Cabin cable cars make journey of 2,000 feet a matter of sitting back, taking in the view from 130 feet up

BY KELLY AGEE

*Stars and Stripes*

**A** series of cable cars suspended over Yokohama's waterfront provides a thrilling, panoramic view of Japan's second-largest city.

Yokohama Air Cabin debuted in April 2021 in the city's Shinko district, part of the Minatomirai waterfront, as Japan's first urban ropeway, the Japanese term for a cable-car system.

The suspended cabins run between Sakuragicho and Unga Park, where visitors will find the Cup Noodles Museum, Red Brick Warehouse and the Yokohama Cosmo World theme park.

The 2,000-foot journey takes only five minutes and reaches a height of 130 feet. Yokohama Air Cabin has 36 cabins, each of which can hold up to eight people, although it's possible to ride solo.

Fares start at 1,000 yen, or about \$6.70, for adults and 500 yen for children for a one-way ticket. Round-trip tickets start at 1,800 yen for adults and 900 yen for children.

A combo deal includes Cosmo Clock 21, the 369-foot Ferris wheel at Cosmo World, starting at 1,500 yen for adults and 1,200 yen for children, one way.

The spacious, air-conditioned cabin has comfortable seats and an amazing view as it moves slowly from station to station.

## On the QT

**Directions:** A short walk from Sakuragicho or Bashamichi stations.

**Times:** Typically open 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekends. 2-1-2 Shinko, Naka-ku, Yokohama City 231-001.

**Costs:** Fares start at 1,000 yen for adults and 500 yen for children for a one-way ticket. Round-trip tickets start at 1,800 yen for adults and 900 yen for children.

**Food:** Many options available in the area.

**Information:** Online: [yokohama-air-cabin.jp/en](http://yokohama-air-cabin.jp/en)

Kelly Agee

With a round-trip ticket, passengers have plenty of time to explore the surrounding area and board the ropeway to return later in the day.

Weekends can be busy; a 30-minute wait to board is not unusual, but worth the time.

The glass-sided cabin might be a little scary for people who are afraid of heights, but the view is incredible and a perfect opportunity to get photos and videos of Yokohama from a bird's-eye view.

agee.kelly@stripes.com  
@KellyA\_Stripes



The 2,000-foot Yokohama Air Cabin journey takes five minutes and goes 130 feet high.



Yokohama Air Cabin runs between Sakuragicho and Unga Park, which has the Cup Noodles Museum, Red Brick Warehouse and the Yokohama Cosmo World theme park.





## WEEKEND: FOOD &amp; DINING

# Pisola brings Italy to Fussa

Dine Italian style at newest branch of a natural restaurant in western Tokyo

BY JUAN KING  
Stars and Stripes

A stylish restaurant that opened recently near Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo promises to revive your appreciation for Italian cuisine.

Pisola opened in early March in Fussa but is part of a chain of locations throughout the country.

As a dine-in or take-out spot for pasta, pizza and risotto, among other delectable choices, it combines a relaxing Bali-resort ambience with outstanding food.

Part of Pisola's appeal is that it strives to keep preservatives, chemical seasonings and artificial flavors out of its food.

The Fussa restaurant has seating for more than 180 people.

My family beat the evening dinner rush to the spacious restaurant and was promptly seated in a very comfortable, wood-framed sofa. Curtained booths are also available for a more private dining experience.

A set menu with a la carte options provides a confusing array of choices but also leaves plenty for future visits.

We ordered several options



**AFTER  
HOURS  
JAPAN**

## Pisola

**Location:** 36 Honcho, Fussa, Tokyo 197-0022

**Hours:** Open daily, 11 a.m. to midnight with last orders at 11 p.m.; lunch sets available 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Prices:** Varies anywhere from 1,000 yen to 4,000 yen; a la carte, all-you-can-eat and drink options also available.

**Dress:** Casual

**Directions:** A 5-minute drive from the main gate at Yokota Air Base. Parking is available.

**Information:** Phone: 042-513-3340; Online: pisola.jp. Takeout is available, and credit cards accepted.

Juan King

from the a la carte menu, including dessert. The brick-oven quattro formaggi, a medium-sized pizza with mozzarella, Gorgonzola, mascarpone and Grana Padano, is a good choice for cheese lovers. It came with a side of honey to drizzle on it and



PHOTOS BY JUAN KING/Stars and Stripes

**Dessert from Pisola near Yokota Air Base, Japan, included a rich tiramisu, a mascarpone pudding that came with a side of fruit and vanilla ice cream and a new addition, strawberry parfait.**



**Sliced, chargrilled prime beef with a side of puréed potatoes.**

was 1,648 yen, or about \$10.65, with tax.

My wife and I shared a tasty pile of sweet potato fries with maple syrup for dipping. A large, fresh mixed-green salad was a welcome addition to her two succulent pieces of fried chicken that were cooked to crispy per-



**Fried gnocchi with a side of maple syrup had pancake vibes.**

fection and free of messy grease.

A finely sliced, chargrilled prime beef with a side of puréed potatoes was prepared well done to my son's liking. Grilled lamb and roasted pork are other options.

We also sampled the fried gnocchi; the added maple syrup



**The brick-oven quattro formaggi pizza is great for cheese lovers.**

gave it a taste like a pancake.

We capped off our big meal with dessert that included a rich tiramisu, a mascarpone pudding that came with a side of fruit and vanilla ice cream and a new addition, strawberry parfait.

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## Don't roll vegetarian 'meatballs': Smash them for better flavor

BY CHRISTOPHER KIMBALL  
Milk Street/Associated Press

Keftedes are Greek meatballs, sometimes made with a mixture of chickpeas and sardines. For this vegetarian version, we substitute the sardines with feta cheese, which gives the keftedes a deeply savory note. Based on the chickpea and sardine keftedes from "Smashing Plates" by London chef Maria Elia, this version is just as flavorful.

In this recipe from "Tuesday Nights Mediterranean," which features week-night-friendly meals from the region, we flatten portions of the chickpea mixture into patties directly in the skillet, instead of shaping them into balls. This creates more surface area for browning and speeds the cooking.

Whisk an egg with paprika, cinnamon, cumin, salt and pepper, then add the chickpeas, mashing them with a potato masher until they are broken down but not completely smooth. Feta and herbs are mixed in, and the mixture is shaped into balls and refrigerated for 15 minutes, which helps them hold together in the skillet. Once smashed into a nonstick skillet, let the delicate keftedes cook undis-

turbed until they form a golden brown crust, and flip them only once.

These chickpea patties are great with a simple salad, or tuck them into pita with vegetables such as onions, tomatoes, cucumber and radishes. Serve with yogurt-tahini sauce and lemon wedges.

### Chickpea and Feta Keftedes

Start to finish: 45 minutes

Servings: 4

#### Ingredients

½ cup whole-milk plain yogurt  
¼ cup tahini  
6 teaspoons lemon juice, divided, plus lemon wedges to serve  
1½ teaspoons ground cumin, divided  
Kosher salt and ground black pepper  
1 large egg  
1½ teaspoons sweet paprika  
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
Two 15½-ounce cans chickpeas, rinsed and drained  
2 ounces feta cheese, crumbled (½ cup)  
½ cup finely chopped fresh mint, flat-leaf parsley or a combination, plus whole or torn leaves to serve  
2 tablespoons grapeseed or other neutral oil, divided



MILK STREET/AP

**Flattening chickpea mixture into patties creates more surface area for browning.**

#### Directions

In a small bowl, stir together the yogurt, tahini, 4 teaspoons of lemon juice and 1 teaspoon of cumin. Transfer ⅓ cup of the mixture to a large bowl.

Into the remaining yogurt mixture, stir the remaining 2 teaspoons lemon juice and ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper; set aside for serving.

To the large bowl, add the egg, paprika, cinnamon, the remaining ½ teaspoon cumin, ¾ teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon pepper, then whisk to combine.

Add the chickpeas and mash with a potato masher until broken down but not completely smooth. Add the feta and herbs, then mix well.

Form into 12 evenly sized balls (each about a scant ¼ cup); place on a plate and refrigerate for about 15 minutes. In a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium, heat 1 tablespoon of oil until shimmering.

Add 6 of the balls, spacing them evenly apart (return the remainder to the refrigerator), then flatten each with a metal spatula into a 2- to 2½-inch patty.

Cook until golden brown on both sides, 3 to 4 minutes per side, gently flipping them once. Transfer to a platter and tent with foil. Wipe out the skillet and repeat with the remaining oil and patties.

Top the keftedes with whole or torn herbs and serve with the yogurt-tahini sauce and lemon wedges.

## WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

# A slice of Korean cyberpunk beauty

SHIFT UP's *Stellar Blade* is studio's flawed yet fantastic first attempt at a big-budget single-player action game

By GENE PARK

*The Washington Post*

**A**s a Korean American who's visited South Korea many times, I'm keenly aware of my culture's obsession with appearances and looking attractive. It's an ever-present pressure that's felt even by Korean men. My elementary school reading wasn't Dr. Seuss, it was *GQ Magazine* — because my father felt it was important that I, at the age of 7, learn how men are “expected” to present and act.

In South Korea, “conventional” beauty is an aspiration, an ideal, a destination above all else. Want a good career? It'll come with good looks. Applying for a job? You might be required to submit a headshot first, a practice that has only recently ended for public jobs. Its vibrant cosmetics industry markets beauty products toward children who aren't even old enough to read. Advertisements for plastic surgery are everywhere and are not subtle about what's “ugly.” So now we have Eve, the player character of the latest PlayStation 5 exclusive game that was released April 26. She is a woman born from South Korea's culture and philosophy. Her presentation, slender and shiny, has caused discussion in U.S. games press over objectification and the “male gaze.”

The discourse has been uncomfortable for me to hear, because on one hand, of course Korean standards of beauty are rigid and often absurd. Hundreds of thousands of Korean women took to the streets during “Escape the Corset,” a protest begun in 2018 against social structures that demand women serve “traditional” roles. On the other hand, these are our unique struggles to address, and I've despised seeing a project from people who look and sound like my family used as a cudgel in a culture war that has nothing to do with this game. It's awful to see Eve used as an argument against diversity, and it was disturbing when an *IGN France* article (which they apologized for later) said *Stellar Blade* looked like it was made by people who never met a woman, never mind that the studio is staffed with many women.

Game director Kim Hyung-tae has paid attention to the debates, and tells me he's not surprised, especially since modern video games focus on realistic depictions of people. But Eve is meant to be a character whose expression of beauty is “with little restrictions and no constraints.”

“The game is a virtual reality, and I believe we need to have opportunities to see things not so realistic in the virtual space,” Kim said via an interpreter. “We're already familiar with reality; we live in it. So when you play a game, I want to be able to see something that's different from what I experience. There are many

things more realistic, and that should also be respected. And I feel games like *Stellar Blade* should exist.”

I think the discourse is missing that it's exceptionally rare in the global games market to see a video game with a Korean woman as its lead. Kim confirms to me that he defines Eve as a Korean woman, one that's designed by Koreans, modeled after a Korean woman, voiced by a Korean woman and in a Korean-made game backed by a gorgeous soundtrack (by master composer Keiichi Okabe) with Korean lyrics. She is Korean-coded in every sense that phrase could mean, and Kim is well aware that she represents only a singular, narrow definition of beauty.

“By taking this game to players, there is an opportunity for me to present to the world how Korean beauty and Asian beauty can be different, how Asians differ from each other,” Kim said, referring to a global games industry mostly dominated by Japan and the United States.

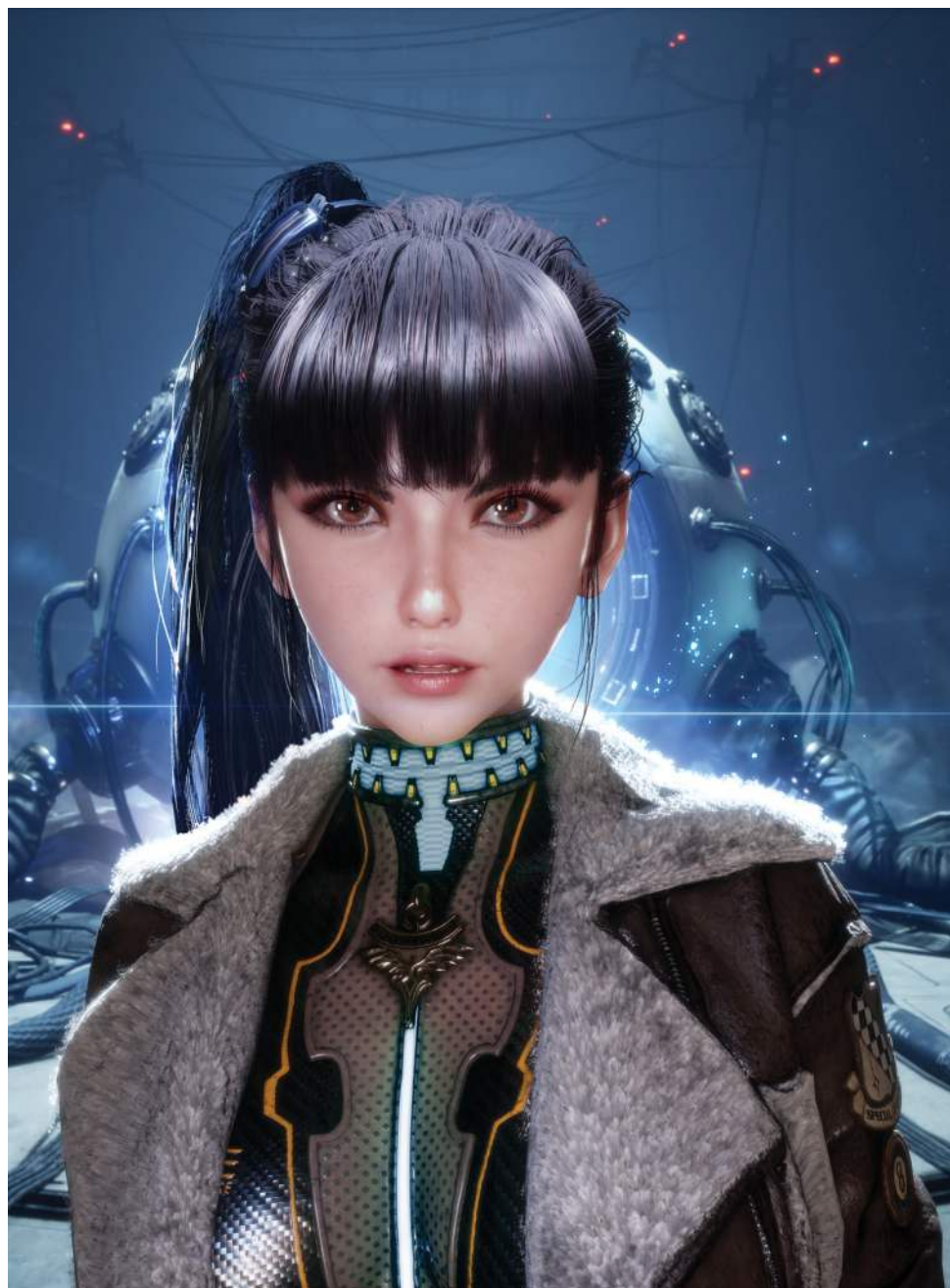
The discourse has especially been frustrating because *Stellar Blade* is a fantastic, if flawed, first attempt by the studio to develop a big-budget single-player action game. Kim is unusually direct about citing his inspiration, *Nier: Automata*, often described by critics, including myself, as one of the masterpieces of the medium. Kim isn't out to make a masterpiece, necessarily; he's simply having fun wearing his influences on his sleeve.

“Of course there is pressure there, but it's also been a very fun journey for me to create a game similar to *Nier*. As a fan, it's been an enjoyable experience,” Kim said.

The game's opening will likely affirm the assumptions of skeptics, as it did mine. For hours, it feels like a vapid, me-too copy of *Nier: Automata*, taking only the most surface-level interpretations of its characters and story. Earth is overrun with monstrous beings, and *Mother Sphere* sends down an army of warrior women including Eve to kill the head monster. A catastrophic landing ends with Eve as the sole survivor, and she's helped by a stranger named Adam to complete her mission. Any veteran sci-fi reader will predict this game's plot beats from hours away.

The moment-to-moment writing doesn't help. “Classic Eve,” quips Lily, a person Eve only just met. The dialogue implies more history and personality than what's actually shown. Conversations feel unnatural and stilted. Eve is the star of the show, and shows a worrying lack of personality.

But more playtime reveals this void is part of her character arc. Eve is bland by design, an obvious metaphor for the creation story who gains personhood through the forbidden fruit of knowledge. In fact, this concept is woven directly into the



SHIFT UP

**Eve, the Korean woman at the heart of *Stellar Blade*, is meant to be a character whose expression of beauty is “with little restrictions and no constraints.”**

narrative design, as one of the game's multiple endings depends on the amount of knowledge Eve gains through reading books and interacting with other humans. Like the story, it's simple stuff, but effective and clear.

The game stumbles when it tries to be too many other types of games at once, leaving peripheral elements undercooked. It's littered with mind-numbing, boring puzzles that have appeared in numerous other video games in the last several decades: bouncing laser lights off mirrors, aggravating block-sliding segments and even a “Pipe Dream” minigame that does nothing with the formula. This game would've been better served as a leaner experience without distracting ideas lifted wholesale from every other game.

Thankfully, *Stellar Blade* keeps things interesting by bouncing between a linear, level-based structure to open-ended regions complete with side quests, hidden stories and even a city hub. Boring creature designs of the opening hours (your typical goop and tentacles) make way for far more interesting fusions of tech and organic life. Scatter these across a desert landscape and suddenly *Stellar Blade* is moving like a *Final Fantasy* game, ethereal and majestic.

The third and final act manages to send the game off with a flurry of memorable, challenging and engaging battles, every one a winner with interesting moves and compelling visual design, and finally in-

troduces some true narrative stakes. (A story mode makes things noticeably easier for those not inclined to sweat it out in battles.) As predictable as this story is, it ends with a familiar sense of empowerment — a strong enough conclusion that I felt compelled to start the 20-hour experience again.

The combat design is this game's winning feature, addictive, crunchy and unique despite its visual similarities to that of games like *Bayonetta*, another game featuring shapely battle femmes. Eve's combat may feel slow compared to combat of that game, but I would describe it more as heavy. Later, Eve gains counterattacks that sling her behind or away from the battle, creating new opportunities of attack. These, and weighty enemy reactions, help the game's battles stand apart from *Bayonetta's* and this game's other inspiration, *Dark Souls'*.

*Stellar Blade* doesn't make the strongest first impression, but it leaves a lasting one. What's more important, it's actually able to carve out its own distinguished identity by the end, much like Eve. Over the years there's been critical discussion about how cyberpunk fiction is rooted in xenophobic fears, and that the genre appropriates Asian culture. Now here is *Stellar Blade*, an authentic slice of Korean cyberpunk; like Eve, it's beautiful in its own absurd way.

**Platform:** PlayStation 5

**Online:** stellar-blade.com

# WEEKEND: MUSIC



**WIG WAM of Norway perform during the semifinal dress rehearsal of the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest in Kyiv, Ukraine.**



**Finnish group Lordi celebrate after their victory in the 2006 Eurovision Song Contest in Athens, Greece.**



**Ukraine's Verka Serduchka sings "Dancing Lasha Tumbai" at a dress rehearsal for the 2007 Eurovision in Helsinki.**



**Cezar, of Romania, performs his song "It's My Life" during the semifinal round of the 2013 Eurovision in Malmö, Sweden.**



**Krista Siegfriids, of Finland, performs her song "Marry Me" during a rehearsal for the final of the 2013 Eurovision in Sweden.**



**Moldovan band Zdob si Zhub performs the song "So Lucky" during the rehearsal for the second semifinal of the Eurovision Song Contest in Duesseldorf, Germany, in 2011.**

AP photos



**Austrian singer Conchita Wurst performs "Rise Like a Phoenix" during a rehearsal for the second semifinal of the 2014 Eurovision.**



**The Tolmachevy Sisters, of Russia, perform "Shine" during the final of the 2014 Eurovision in Copenhagen, Denmark.**



**Sweden's Mans Zelmerlow performs "Heroes" during a dress rehearsal for the second semifinal of the 2015 Eurovision in Austria's capital, Vienna.**



**Måneskin, from Italy, receive the trophy after winning the Eurovision contest in 2021 in Rotterdam, Netherlands.**



**Ukrainian singer Jerry Heil, left, and rapper Alyona Alyona pose for a photo during a AP interview in Kyiv, Ukraine, on April 25.**

## Pop music and politics

### What to know about the 2024 Eurovision Song Contest in Sweden

BY JILL LAWLESS  
*Associated Press*

It's springtime in Europe — time for the annual blossoming of spectacle and sound known as the Eurovision Song Contest. Taking place in May in Malmö, Sweden, the 68th annual competition will see acts from 37 countries vie for the Continent's pop crown in a feel-good extravaganza that strives — not always successfully — to banish international strife and division. And you don't have to be in Europe to watch, or to help pick the winner.

Here's a guide to all things Eurovision:

#### What is Eurovision?

On one level, it's simple: Eurovision is an international pop music competition in which acts from countries across Europe, and a few beyond it, compete in a live televised contest to be crowned Eurovision champion.

But it's also much more — a celebration of diversity, national pride and the joyous power of pop. And glitter. So much glitter.

Launched in 1956 to foster unity after World War II, Eurovision has become a campy, feel-good celebration of pop music with an audience of hundreds of millions around the world. It has grown from seven countries to almost 40, including non-European nations such as Israel and Australia.

It's now known for songs that range from anthemic to extremely silly, often with elaborate costumes and spectacular staging.

Paul Jordan, an expert on the contest who is known as "Dr. Eurovision," said the contest "is almost indescribable in terms of its scale, in terms of its craziness — but I would liken it to probably the musical version of the Olympic Games."

#### When and where is Eurovision?

This year's contest will be held in Malmö in southern Sweden, with two semifinals on May 7 and 9 followed by a grand finale on May 11. Traditionally the competition is hosted by the previous year's winner, and Sweden triumphed in 2023 with "Tattoo," a power ballad by pop diva Loreen.

The Nordic nation is a Eurovision powerhouse that has won the contest seven times, a number equaled only by Ireland.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Eurovision's most iconic moment, ABBA's victory in the 1974 contest with "Waterloo." The win propelled the band toward superstardom and helped jumpstart Sweden's music industry.

Fans are hoping for an appearance by the Swedish supergroup in Malmö, though the band members have played down those suggestions.

#### Are there political controversies?

Eurovision's motto is "united by music" and organizer the European Broadcasting Union strives to keep political divisions out of the competition, though it doesn't always succeed.

Russia has been banned since its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Last year's contest was held in the English city of Liverpool because the 2022 winner, Ukraine, was at war. This year, pro-Palestinian activists and some musicians have urged organizers to drop Israel from the event over its conduct in its war against Hamas, which has killed more than 33,000 people in Gaza, according to its Health Ministry.

Israel has not been suspended, but it was ordered to change the lyrics of its competing song, originally titled "October Rain," an apparent reference to Hamas' cross-border Oct. 7 attack that killed some 1,200 Israelis. Renamed "Hurricane," the power ballad will be performed by singer Eden Golan, 20.

Organizers issued a statement saying they "firmly oppose any form of online abuse, hate speech, or harassment directed at our artists or any individuals associated with the contest."

Jordan said Eurovision organizers have sometimes been accused of inconsistency in setting the contest's boundaries: "You're not allowed political entries ... and yet Finland 2013 has a song about equal marriage," he said. "You had other songs about world peace — technically they're political too. So what is the division between politics and non-politics is quite a blurred line."

Pro-Palestinian groups are planning demonstrations in downtown Malmö during Eurovision week that they hope will draw thousands of protesters from Sweden and neighboring countries.

Malmö district police chief Petra Stenkula said security would be "rigorous," with Swedish police reinforced by officers from Denmark and Norway.

#### How to watch Eurovision and vote

Eurovision's complex voting system awards points from juries of music industry professionals as well as viewers across Europe. Winners have ranged from Canadian chanteuse Celine Dion, who competed for Switzerland in 1988, to fright mask-wearing Finnish metalheads Lordi in 2006, bearded Austrian drag performer Conchita Wurst in 2014, Italian rock band Måneskin in 2021 and Ukrainian folk-rap group Kalush Orchestra in 2022.

The competition will be aired by national broadcasters in participating nations, on streaming service Peacock in the U.S. and on the Eurovision YouTube channel. Viewers in the U.S. and other nonparticipating countries can vote online or using the Eurovision app; viewers in participating countries can also vote by phone or text message.

## WEEKEND: MUSIC

Q&amp;A

# Relaxed and roadworthy

Maggie Rogers on 'Don't Forget Me,' the album she wrote for a Sunday drive

BY ELISE RYAN  
Associated Press

**M**aggie Rogers wrote and recorded her new album, "Don't Forget Me," over five days last winter. The songs came quickly and chronologically, as if she was writing "different scenes in a movie."

"I've been writing songs now for 15 years, and so I think I've just come into this place where I really trust my process and my craft. I think because of that, I was in a place where I was willing to just play," Rogers said in a Zoom interview ahead of the album's release.

The result is a record that Rogers calls "relaxed," one that finds her "un-guarded and present."

The mood is lighter than Rogers' electric 2022 album "Surrender," which was in many ways a release of pent-up pandemic energy — a collection of songs that begged to be experienced live and with a crowd. And it leans more heavily on acoustic sounds than 2019's "Heard it in a Past Life," the first album Rogers released after a video of Pharrell Williams reacting to her song, "Alaska," in a New York University class went viral.

As Rogers explains it: If "Heard it in a Past Life" is air and "Surrender" is fire, "Don't Forget Me" is earth.

Like her past projects — and her studies at Harvard's Divinity School — community is a through line of "Don't Forget Me." Rogers name-drops friends and tells their stories alongside hers. She has welcomed the way the new songs have united crowds, and looks forward to continuing to foster that joyous, present environment on tour.

"I'm excited to be able to meet people in it," she said, referencing the album's April 12 release.

That community-first quality of her music is something that fans, too, embrace: New York's Gaia Music Collective, for example, organized a "one-day choir" of Rogers' song "Light On." Four hundred people gathered to learn and perform an arrangement of the song, a cappella.

"She also is thinking about music as a

"In each record, I'm just trying to be as present and authentic as I can."

Maggie Rogers

Maggie Rogers performs at the Lollapalooza Music Festival on Aug. 5 at Grant Park in Chicago.

AMY HARRIS, INVISION/AP

SEE RELAXED ON PAGE 29

## WEEKEND: MUSIC

**Relaxed:** Rogers looks forward to upcoming tour

FROM PAGE 28

connective force, as a thing that can bring us and our stories together," said Matt Goldstein, the group's founder and co-director. "It's no accident that her music feels good to sing together."

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

**AP: "Surrender" felt like an album that had to be moved through and experienced with a crowd. How do you see this album being embodied?**

**Rogers:** This record was always made for the car. I really wanted to make a record that felt like a Sunday driving record, because to me, those are some of the most intimate moments that I've had with music or with an album — when I'm singing along to a song in the car and it feels like that artist or that song is like a friend in my passenger seat. Those are some of my favorite records, and they're the records I turn to for comfort over and over again. And you know, in this big, crazy, completely insane, existential world, if that's something that I could offer to the world through my music, I think that that is really special.

**Could you say more about how you see your three studio albums in relation to each other? I liked how you described each of them as elements — air, fire, earth.**

I think categorizing them in that way is just a way to help give context to them. To me, they're all really important reflections on different periods in my life. And my songwriting is pretty consistent at the center of all these things. It's mostly the way that, like, my producer brain has chosen to dress up the songs at their core, and that has more to do with creative expression or curiosity more than anything.

In each record, I'm just trying to be as present and authentic as I can. "Don't Forget Me," what I love about it, is that it's this really, like, kind of woven tapestry. Like in so many ways I created a character that sort of led me through this album, rather than trying to make a snapshot of my life in the exact moment. But there are real truths woven into that character and into those stories.

And you know, it comes out two weeks before I turn 30, and in a way it feels like this big ode to my 20s and everything I've experienced. Even if the narrative plot line isn't exactly 1:1 with my life, the essence of all of the feelings within all of the songs feels really, really truthful.

**Looking ahead, what do you think you learned after putting what you had studied at Harvard**

**into practice while touring last year?**

It's funny because I spend all this time thinking about live music and the way people come together around it, and I had this thought that when I got on stage that it would be like, you know, that meme of the woman with the math problem above her head? I was like, that's going to be me. And then I got on stage. And what I love about being on stage is that I'm not thinking, I'm just moving. I'm just feeling. It's, like, deeply instinctual.

When I think about the tour that I'll be on for the next year, I think I'm mostly just really excited to have fun. Like, I've worked for so many years and been in so many bands, whether it was, like, at some underground club in New York City or being 18 and playing in bars or being on the road in a van at the beginning of my career, that now I feel really comfortable on stage and I love playing live. I'm so happy that live music is back in this way.

**You posted a video around the holidays about a journal entry you found from the end of your time at NYU.**

So trippy.

**How does that kind of reflective writing fit into your daily practice and songwriting now?**

It's such a massive part of my life. I mean, I write every day. I kind of can't sleep without it. It's usually the last thing I do at the end of the day. And it, like, really is a meditation.

I wrote a ton through grad school and have continued working on essays and I'm turning my master's thesis into a book. My long form writing practice feels as much a part of my life as my short form songwriting practice, and it helps me to stay really present in my life because I'm paying attention to detail all the time.

**You said that writing this album felt like writing scenes from a movie. Do you look to films for inspiration when you're developing a storyline and character like this?**

No, I mean, the movies that I love often have a strong female lead — like, "10 Things I Hate About You" was a really big, big part of "Surrender." And "Thelma and Louise" was a big part of this record. I don't know — maybe it makes me a basic b—, but, like, I'm a lover of a Meg Ryan rom-com, or a Julia Roberts movie. But that's just what I like. That to me has the same sense of comfort as the album that is the passenger in the passenger seat that you're singing along to in your car — they hold the same space for me.

## REVIEW



Alex Da Corte

St. Vincent's new album, "All Born Screaming," continues a trend toward more accessible songwriting.

**St. Vincent's art-rock burns bright on her seventh album**

BY JIM POLLOCK  
Associated Press

St. Vincent is on fire. On her seventh full-length studio album, Annie Clark, who performs as St. Vincent, unleashes her broad range of art-rock gifts, from the crackling ember of her textured vocals to the raging infernos of swirling, epic orchestration.

St. Vincent canonized her name in the 2010s with twitchy, dense compositions. On the 2021 release, "Daddy's Home," her last album, she embraced a looser, 1970s-infused sleaze funk. "All Born Screaming" continues a trend toward more accessible territory, seamlessly spinning elements of acid-jazz, industrial grind, retro-futurism and heavy distortion into apocalyptic walls of sound.

The St. Vincent persona is a restless shape-shifter, and the album art of this iteration — tailored shirt, pencil skirt, the artist alone and in flames — is an apt representation. "All Born Screaming" is Clark's first self-produced release, and she is the primary songwriter and musician throughout, playing multiple instruments on every track. The album includes excellent and meticulously placed contributions from musicians including Justin Meldal-Johnsen, Rachel Eckroth, Cian Riordan, David Ralicke, Cate Le Bon and Dave Grohl. But this is Annie Clark's show, and, as in the cover image, she is buttoned up and executing a delicate dance between complete control and self-immolation.

The first few tracks set the stage. Opener "Hell is Near" hits like Enya with an ethereal delivery of the lines, "Empty cup and a can full of marigolds / half burned candle a picture pinned on the wall," before shifting gears into a cool groove and building to a huge, spacy outro. "Reckless" follows, starting intimate and quickly upping the stakes. She sings, "Stranger come in my path / I'll eat you up tear you

limb from limb or I'll fall in love" as the song works toward its explosive crescendo.

"Broken Man" continues to raise the temperature. The song features three drummers, including Grohl, and it opens with bonks and clanks reminiscent of Nine Inch Nails' "Closer," and the provocative lyrics, "on the street I'm a king-size killer / I can make your kingdom come." Clark's vocal command on this song is terrific, starting sultry and steadily gaining strength and intensity as the industrial-rock cacophony builds.

The album is generally heavy, but it offers a campy breather with "Violent Times." She channels the classic John Barry theme composition for the 1964 James Bond film "Goldfinger." The song is also a lovely lyrical sketch, with Clark singing "Ashes of Pompeii / lovers discovered in an embrace for all eternity."

"The Power's Out" starts with a programmed drum break evocative of David Bowie's apocalyptic classic, "Five Years." The lyrics and waltz construction consciously echo its inspiration, with slice-of-life vignettes as people come to grips with impending catastrophe. "It was pouring like a movie," Clark sings. "Every stranger looked like they knew me." It is an oddball track within this collection, but it stands as a fascinating Rashomon-like alternate perspective on Bowie's storytelling.

The album ends with the title track. It starts uncharacteristically upbeat, with a guitar sound falling somewhere between Paul Simon and The Smiths' Johnny Marr. It changes gears midway, building to a climactic chant of the title words, "All Born Screaming" over spacey synth, as if Gregorian monks infiltrated a laser show.

It is a fitting end, returning the listener back to the mysterious terror with which we all enter this world.

**St. Vincent**

All Born Screaming  
(Total Pleasure/Virgin)

## WEEKEND: TELEVISION



FX/AP photos

Members of the Wrexham A.F.C. Bulldogs in a scene from the third season of “Welcome to Wrexham.” The third season premiered Thursday.

# ‘An absolute nail-biter yet again’

Wales’ Wrexham AFC chairmen Reynolds and McElhenney discuss the 3rd season of their club’s FX docuseries

BY ALICIA RANCILIO  
Associated Press

**F**our years after purchasing Wales’ Wrexham A.F.C., Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney seem to have no regrets about their investment — despite the high costs of ownership.

The Wrexham Red Dragons recently clinched a promotion and are now two tiers away from the top level, known as the Premier League.

The last few years have been a crash course for Reynolds and McElhenney in both the game of English soccer and the economics behind it.

The experience has been captured in the FX docuseries “Welcome to Wrexham,” which debuted its third season on Thursday. The actors spoke with The Associated Press about separating their inner fan with public-facing jobs as chairmen and how the new episodes will be released closer to real time.

**Associated Press: Has learning the business of sports changed you as a spectator?**

**McElhenney:** No. I have to separate myself. I think what’s important about that is it allows me to give space to the supporters of Wrexham, because they deserve the right to complain and get upset when things aren’t going well because that’s their right as supporters.

I have that relationship with the Philadelphia Eagles. I both have respect for all the players in the organization, but (football) is a way I deal with my frustrations and anxiety and it’s something I look forward to on the weekend. It’s also something I have passionate feelings about that I express to my friends, not necessarily publicly.

As chairmen of a football club, we have to hold ourselves to a different standard. We have to have at least a modicum of decorum in our exchanges about how we talk about things, because these are human beings, not characters on a screen. These are not athletes who mean nothing to us. These are our friends. These are our employees. These are people who we have to treat with dignity, grace and respect, and to recognize that this is their livelihood, so there’s a very clear line of demarcation.

**Reynolds:** Just to piggyback on that, we do have each other. We have the public facing side of it, but then we can also take a moment to enjoy a festival of expletives



Ryan Reynolds, left, and Rob McElhenney in a scene from the third season of “Welcome to Wrexham.” Reynolds and McElhenney are chairmen of the club.

when we’re frustrated or if things aren’t going according to plan. You obviously express your joy for the team succeeding outwardly. You want to make sure it’s being expressed to all those supporters who have been there.

Some have spread the ashes of their grandparents and parents on the field where this club is playing. We have an impossible amount of respect for that tradition and that fan base and everything that they’ve been through, all the ups and downs. But I’m always grateful that Rob and I can have that sidebar where we both go, you know, “Holy (expletive), I can’t believe this is happening right now. I can’t believe we got out of the National League. I can’t believe we’ve just lost to this club.”

**With a show like this, viewers can do an internet search to see some of the outcome. Has there become a pressure to churn out episodes quicker?**

**Reynolds:** Absolutely, but what we’re most excited about with respect to Season 3 is that as the episodes are finished, we will get closer and closer to continuity with the actual football season happening. So, by the time we’re midway through Season 3, you’ll see we don’t have any idea what’s going to happen. Just from that sort of

macro 30,000-foot narrative standpoint, we have no clue. Everything that we’re doing right now is for broke. We have to get promoted. There’s no real consolation prize if we don’t. So we are all in.

**McElhenney:** That’s truly the most exciting part about Season 3 is that it will coincide with the end of the season. There was such a large gap between the end of last season and the documentary coming out. And we thought, ‘Well, if we’re going to continue to make the show, we want to innovate a little bit, so that it becomes more exciting, so both the fans and the documentarians don’t know what’s going to happen.’ We will catch up with the end of the season and those final few episodes. We actually will have trucks in the racecourse parking lot that will have editing facilities in them, and they will be taking footage and cutting the show as quickly as possible to get it out on onto the air, because we want it to happen in real time.

**Reynolds:** And if this season so far has taught us anything, this is going to be an absolute nail-biter yet again.

**Obviously the money that’s been put into the team has helped and it’s been a great emotional investment. What about financially? Where are you at?**

**Reynolds:** Accountants don’t really want to hear about the emotional investment.

**McElhenney:** You want to know, like, how far in the red I am? It’s pretty significant. It’s true that in the beginning when we asked our advisers if this was a good economic investment, there was not one person that I can remember that was like, “Yes.”

It was more like, “Don’t.”

**Reynolds:** Run away, yeah. History has an unbelievable amount of examples of how this was not the best idea, but we’re not in it to make money, and [expletive] it, we won’t. (Laughs) I think we recognize how lucky we are that we can be in this position where it isn’t about making money or any of those things. I mean, you have to be in a pretty privileged spot to be able to do this to begin with. But eventually, you know, as we climb up the leagues, we’re going to need outside help in order to sustain this club. One of our great mission statements and — this is something that is still a huge target — is to create a sustainable model for a sports club like this and allow it to support itself long after we’re dead and gone.

## WEEKEND: TELEVISION



Hulu

Riley Keough and Lily Gladstone star in “Under the Bridge,” about the 1997 murder of Indian Canadian teenager Reena Virk. Keough plays Rebecca Godfrey, the author of a 2005 nonfiction book investigating the crime; Gladstone plays the fictional character of Cam Bentland, a police officer.

# Bringing humanity to true-crime genre

Based on a nonfiction book, Hulu’s ‘Under the Bridge’ attempts to understand motivations of teens involved in ‘97 murder

BY SONIA RAO

*The Washington Post*

Riley Keough wasn’t sure at first whether she wanted to star in a true-crime project. The genre relies on a grim fascination with horrific violence, and dramatizations risk doing the victims a disservice.

But in “Under the Bridge,” a new Hulu series about the 1997 murder of Indian Canadian teenager Reena Virk, Keough saw an opportunity to paint everyone involved as human beings — not just 14-year-old Reena and her family but, to an extent, the perpetrators as well. Why did a group of teenagers, some of whom had befriended Reena in previous months, beat her to the brink of death? And why did two of those teenagers, one of them a complete stranger to Reena, drown her in a river? Perhaps there was a societal benefit to trying to understand their motivations — and remorse, as became the case for that 16-year-old stranger.

“I’m always asking why. ... What am I putting out in the world?” Keough said in a recent interview. She added that executive producers Quinn Shephard and Samir Mehta “were really open to having more complicated conversations about things that are usually looked at as very black and white.”

“Under the Bridge” draws from the 2005 nonfiction book by Rebecca Godfrey, a writer who investigated the crime that rocked her idyllic hometown of Victoria, British Columbia, and its surrounding area. The book is defined by its literary quality, turning years of research and interviews into a vivid exploration of what sparks senseless brutality. Though Godfrey doesn’t figure much into her own narrative, the series uses her investigation as a framing device. She is played by Keough, who also produced the show.

Reena (Vritika Gupta) appears in flashbacks, depicted as a passionate and caring but lonely girl who rebels against her Jehovah’s Witness upbringing in a desperate effort to fit in. Through these flashbacks and Rebecca’s research, viewers encounter the girls Reena tried to befriend: Josephine Bell (Chloe Guidry), a tempestuous teenager living at a group home who starts her own gang; Dusty Pace (Aiyana Goodfellow), a kinder kid with a

troubled past who also lives at the group home; and Kelly Ellard (Izzy G.), Josephine’s cruel, well-to-do friend. After the incident, Rebecca also strikes up an acquaintance with Warren Glowatski (Javon Walton), a boy who runs in similar circles and lives alone in his estranged father’s trailer.

Keough’s involvement in the series piqued the interest of another true-crime skeptic: Lily Gladstone, who was fresh off shooting “Killers of the Flower Moon” — the Martin Scorsese film about a slew of murders afflicting the Osage Nation in the 1920s, for which Gladstone would later receive an Oscar nomination — and hesitated to embark on another foray into the genre. Gladstone had befriended Keough on social media years before she was pitched the fictional role of Cam Bentland, a police officer who pushes the local precinct to investigate Reena’s sudden disappearance.

“[Keough] was amplifying some of the posts I would be making about missing murdered Indigenous relatives or Savanna’s Act,” said Gladstone, who has Blackfoot and Nez Percé heritage. “She cared about a lot of the same things I did ... so knowing that she was coming on both as an actor and as a producer, I was like: ‘OK, she believes in the character, and she believes in the project. I’ll take the meeting.’”

In a way, Cam mirrors Reena. Her experience as the sole Indigenous member of the police department recalls some of the discrimination the Virks face in their very white town, where Reena is bullied by peers who pretend to be her friends. Cam frequently argues with her white father, the police chief who adopted her as a child, just as Reena clashes with her parents over cultural differences. (Per Gladstone’s request to incorporate local history, Cam discovers that she was taken from her Indigenous community as part of the Sixties Scoop, a decadeslong period of targeted policies that enabled Canadian child welfare authorities to forcibly “scoop up” Indigenous children so they could be adopted by white families.)

Gladstone was reassured by the fact that Shephard and Mehta had optioned a memoir written by Reena’s father, Manjit Virk, to better empathize with and depict the family.

“That gave me a lot of faith, because coming off ‘Kill-

ers of the Flower Moon,’ part of what made that so successful — particularly the adaptation of an Osage perspective through it — was community involvement,” Gladstone said. She was also encouraged by Shephard’s commitment to exploring the concept of restorative justice.

In real life, after the group of teenagers beat and abandoned Reena, Ellard and Glowatski followed her. They continued the assault and drowned her, and they both were convicted of second-degree murder. Reena’s parents, Manjit and Suman Virk, eventually forgave Glowatski, who had been a stranger to their daughter. Suman described him upon his 2007 release on day parole as “a young man who has taken responsibility for his actions and is trying to amend the wrong that he did.” In the show, Suman (Archie Panjabi) asks Rebecca to take her to meet Warren before he begins serving his sentence.

Cam and Rebecca, old friends in this fictional rendering of events, come to blows over Rebecca’s desire to humanize the teenage suspects through her writing — particularly Warren, who seems to remind Rebecca of her late brother, who accidentally drowned when he was 16 years old (a tragic detail pulled from Godfrey’s real life).

“A lot of her journey is a personal exploration of her own feelings and emotions ... and I think sometimes that can come across as a bit selfish,” Keough said. It was a challenging role to inhabit, but one the actress considered to be “about honoring [Rebecca] and her grief.”

Keough never spoke to Godfrey, who died of lung cancer in late 2022, before “Under the Bridge” began filming. (The author is listed as an executive producer for the three years she spent developing the series with Shephard.) The series paints the fictional Rebecca as conflicted — determined to understand why the teenagers committed such brutality, while also grappling with “a sense of guilt,” per Keough, over her desire to do so. The actress theorized that it might be easier for some to extend grace to children.

“Two things can be true: Something can be horrific, and also a mistake,” Keough said. “It’s a gray area that I’m always thinking about ... and I like putting that out there for others to consider.”

## WEEKEND: HEALTH &amp; FITNESS

# ‘Weight loss is a matter of health care’

How drugs like Ozempic are reshaping US health and fitness industries, originally built on eating less and exercising more

By ANNE D’INNOCENZIO  
Associated Press

Ever since college, Brad Jobling struggled with his weight, fluctuating between a low of 155 pounds when he was in his 30s to as high as 220. He spent a decade tracking calories on WeightWatchers, but the pounds he dropped always crept back onto his 5-foot-5-inch frame.

A little over a year ago, the 58-year-old Manhattan resident went on a new weight loss drug called Wegovy. He’s lost 30 pounds, and has started eating healthier food and exercising — the habits behind many commercial diet plans and decades of conventional wisdom on sustainable weight loss.

Yet Jobling’s experience also has altered his perspective on dieting. He now sees obesity as a disease that requires medical intervention, not just behavioral changes. In fact, he thinks he will need to stay on a drug like Wegovy for the rest of his life even though it has taken some of the joy out of eating.

“I don’t see how you can maintain (the weight) without medication,” Jobling said. “Obviously, it’s all about self-control. But I think it’s less of a struggle to really maintain healthy eating when you got that assistance.”

Like the lives of the people taking them, recent injected drugs like Wegovy and its predecessor, the diabetes medication Ozempic, are reshaping the U.S. health and fitness industries. They have proven successful in eliminating unwanted pounds more quickly and easily than consuming fewer and burning more calories alone. Such is their disruptive power that even established diet companies like WeightWatchers and brands like Lean Cuisine are getting makeovers.

Although celebrities like Oprah Winfrey have spoken publicly of the drugs as revolutionary, some health experts worry that businesses without any expertise will start dispensing the prescription medications along with bad advice and unproven therapies.

## A demand too big to ignore

At least 3 million prescriptions for the class of medications known as GLP-1 agonists were issued each month in the U.S. during the 12 months that ended in March, according to data from health technology company IQVIA. They include semaglutide, the drug in Ozempic and Wegovy, and tirzepatide, the drug in Mounjaro and Zepbound. Morgan Stanley research analysts have estimated that 24 million people, or 7% of the U.S. population, will be using GLP-1 drugs by 2035.

The world’s leading diet programs have taken note of such statistics and incorporated the popular drugs into their existing subscription plans.

WeightWatchers, which was founded in 1963, last year acquired telehealth provider Sequence, enabling members to get prescriptions for weight loss drugs. Weight-Watchers is sticking with its focus on behavior change as the cornerstone of weight reduction but launched virtual clinics that provide customized exercise and nutrition plans, as well as prescription care, for individuals who want to lose 20% of their body weight on average.

“The weight loss space will be led by the acknowledgment that weight loss is a matter of health care,” WeightWatchers CEO Sima Sistani told analysts earlier this year. “This is a paradigm shift because weight loss has been and, unfortunately, often still is viewed as a vanity issue.”

The Mayo Clinic, which first offered a weight management plan in book form in 1949, has published an updated version of the longtime bestseller, titled “The Mayo Clinic Diet: Weight-Loss Medications Edition.”

The Mayo Clinic Diet program also has expanded to include access to weight loss drugs and advice on managing any side effects, according to Digital Wellness CEO Scott Penn, whose company developed an online platform for the original program.

The new drugs have made being very overweight “feel more medical as a condition,” he said.



iStock

**Established diet companies and fitness chains are incorporating weight loss drugs like Wegovy and Ozempic in their programs, after taking note of their popularity and success in eliminating unwanted pounds more quickly and easily than diet and exercise alone.**

## Gyms, diet food companies look to muscle in

Luxury athletic club operator Life Time launched a membership program last year that offers comprehensive medical testing, personalized training and a host of alternative therapies like cryotherapy. Members of the Miora program also can get Ozempic and other weight loss drugs through the medical staff of a clinic that opened in Minneapolis last year.

Jeff Zwiefel, executive director of Life Time Miora, called the new drugs a “game changer” for the fitness industry.

**“This is a paradigm shift because weight loss has been and, unfortunately, often still is viewed as a vanity issue.”**

Sima Sistani  
WeightWatchers CEO

“We have an opportunity and an obligation and a responsibility to help people achieve results in conjunction with medical providers and make sure that that’s the way to go,” he said.

Fitness chains are banking on the idea that people on the drugs will lose enough weight to overcome any self-consciousness or physical limits that kept them from exercising. The gym franchise Equinox started a new personal training program in January for prescription-holders who want to preserve or build muscle mass as they shed unwanted pounds.

The world of drug-assisted weight loss also is altering the ambitions of food companies. Sales of SlimFast, a line of meal replacement shakes and snacks sold at supermarkets, have dropped as people turn to weight loss drugs and retailers cut shelf space for diet products, the

brand’s parent company, Glanbia, told investors in February.

Since the drugs suppress the appetites of people taking them, Glanbia and other companies are marketing their products as a source of adequate nutrients for people taking GLP-1s. Swiss multinational Nestle SA thinks it can benefit from the drugs’ popularity and is expanding its Lean Cuisine frozen meals and OPTIFAST protein shakes.

“Diets are cool again,” Nestle SA CEO Ulf Mark Schneider told analysts in February. “It’s something that people used to do quietly on the side, uncertain about their outcomes.”

## Promising results and a wealth of unknowns

Research has shown that about a third of people lose 5% or more of their body weight with diet and exercise alone, according to Dr. Louis Aronne, director of the Comprehensive Weight Control Center at Weill Cornell Medical school. In comparison, the medicine in the diabetes drug Mounjaro helped people with obesity or who are overweight lose at least a quarter of their weight when combined with restricted calories and exercise, a new study showed.

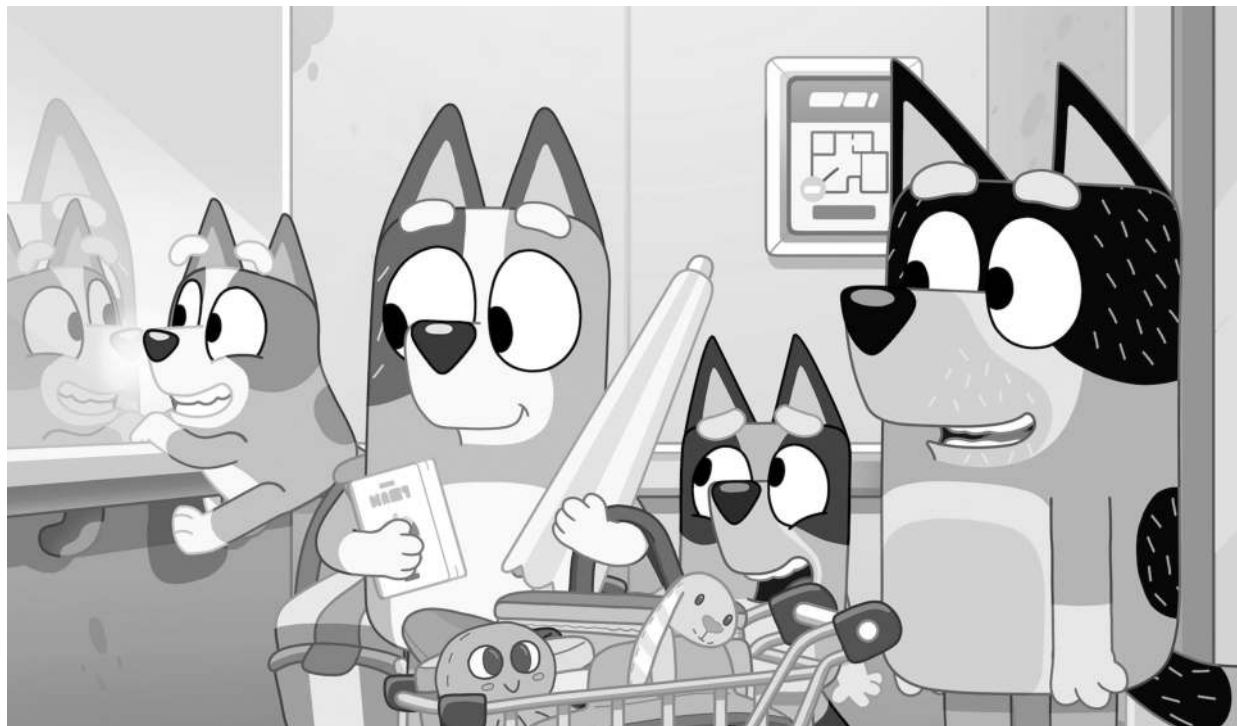
But some experts worry about businesses marketing the drugs or serving as fitness coaches for patients on the medications. Dr. Cian Wade, a health care consultant for the global strategy and management firm Kearney, said he’s concerned about a proliferation of clinics that don’t have as much experience with obesity and related health conditions.

“There’s a potential worry that for some patients, (the clinics) will not have the right expertise at hand to be able to appropriately manage the side effects, nutrition-related issues,” he said.

Since GLP-1 medications are so new, it’s unclear how many patients will stick with their drug regimens, which produce intolerable side effects for some people. Another reason patients may drop the drugs is cost. A month’s supply of Wegovy costs \$1,300, and Zepbound is priced at \$1,000.



## WEEKEND: FAMILY



DISNEY+/AP

The Disney+ kids' program "Bluey" has also resonated with parents (as well as adults without kids). The series provides a child's perspective into morning routines, errands and chores, while also giving viewers a glimpse of what life is like for parents through mother Chilli and father Bandit.

## Finding comfort in cartoons

Even adults say they appreciate topics discussed on kids' TV series 'Bluey'

BY CHEYANNE MUMPHREY  
Associated Press

A small blue dog with an Australian accent has captured the hearts of people across the world.

She's the title character of "Bluey," a kids' program consisting of seven-minute episodes that have enraptured children and adults alike. Last month, its longest episode yet — at a whopping 28 minutes — prompted an outpouring of appreciation for the show, even from those who are neither toddler nor parent.

"Bluey" follows an Australian blue heeler who, along with her sister (a red heeler named Bingo), navigates the days between home and school. It's a favorite among children for its playful humor, but it also appeals to adults reminiscing about childhood.

"My childhood experience wasn't the greatest, so I've always resonated with shows where life is good," says Miriam Neel, who lives in Colorado. "The parents in 'Bluey' enable imagination and creativity and really get involved with their kids, and I wish I had those experiences."

Neel is 32 and has chosen not to have any children of her own. She says the show has become part of her morning routine and is often a go-to choice for background noise when she is working from home.

"I'm not going to speak for the entire generation, but millennials find comfort in cartoons. It's what a lot of us grew up watching," she said. "And if I'm going to spend time watching something I'd rather watch something that doesn't make me afraid of the world, like any of the 'Law & Order' shows."

"Bluey," which now boasts more than 150 episodes, premiered in Australia in 2018 and began streaming on Disney+ in 2020. It also has been adapted into a digital series where famous fans like Bindi Irwin and Eva Mendes read some of the popular storybooks, and a live theater show that travels around the world.

The show has also won multiple awards, including the Australian Film Institute Award for best children's television drama every year since 2019 and an International Emmy Kids Award.

The series provides a child's perspective into morning routines, errands and chores, while also giving viewers a glimpse of what life is like for parents through mother Chilli and father Bandit.

The 28-minute special episode, "The Sign," explores the emotions surrounding themes that resonate with

both children and adults — moving houses, marriage, infertility and relationships after divorce. In addition to these universal themes, the episode wraps up the third season with Easter eggs for dedicated fans.

Lindsey Schmidt, 40, says the show's continuity keeps her family looking forward to more.

"There are so many callbacks to previous episodes," says Schmidt, who lives in Ohio with her husband and three children. "The shows that we watch with our kids regularly don't reflect our lives like this show does. These anthropomorphic dogs feel just like us."

But there are mixed feelings about the ending of the episode — SPOILER — in which the Heeler family scraps their move. Some families who relocate often for work found it unrealistic. Meg Korzon, 31, is in the process of a cross-country relocation with her four children because her husband is in the military. It's her seventh move in 10 years.

"I was hoping it would be an episode that aligned itself with the realities of life, our lives, as a military family," she says. "I was selfishly disappointed because it could have been an episode about change and growth."

But the show does not shy away from other difficult topics — and that is part of the charm for adults as well.

"As a parent you aspire to be as good of parents as Chilli and Bandit are as parents. They always have a great way of talking kids through issues," Schmidt's 40-year-old husband John says, adding that the couple often refers back to episodes when trying to explain things to their children.

The series has touched on topics of aging, death and making friends as an adult. It also has introduced a character who uses sign language and another with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

Jacqueline Nesi, an assistant professor of psychiatry and human behavior at Brown University, notes that "Bluey" promotes self-regulation and conflict resolution for children and engaged parenting and patience for adults.

"We see them working through some of the challenges that we, as parents, might be facing, too. And at the same time, they offer a nice model for different parenting skills — asking open-ended questions to facilitate kids' creativity, using natural consequences when they misbehave, actively playing with them and letting them take the lead," she says.

## THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



## I fought the lawn, and the lawn won

Every year, when the the forsythia is in bloom and the neighborhood greens up with tender blades of new grass, I can't wait to escape the chilly confines of our drafty old house and head outdoors.

Admittedly, I romanticize this annual occurrence, envisioning myself dreamily stepping barefoot onto the lawn, wearing a flowing sundress and a straw hat and carrying a basket for placing freshly picked flowers. Like some kind of suburban Snow White, I picture baby bunnies at my feet, tweeting robins landing on my shoulders and cheeky squirrels scampering along bud-studded tree limbs nearby.

I prepare for my springtime sojourn by buying myself a spiffy new pair of gardening gloves, along with a surprisingly overpriced array of horticultural items such as grass seed, lime, fertilizer, loam, planting soil, annuals, perennials, vegetables, shrubs, bulbs, tomato cages, plant stakes, fence stakes, hardware cloth, weed block, ethanol-free fuel, grub killer and at least four cubic yards of mulch.

The credit card bill won't come for a month, so I remain blissfully in denial of my reckless spending, and resolve to occupy the entire weekend gardening. Besides, after almost three decades of itinerant active duty military life, I deserve to indulge my gardening fantasies.

During the first sunny weekend in mid-April, I burst from our front door, donning my new gloves. Standing on our porch surveying the blank canvas of our neglected yard, I detect the aroma of soil, grass and flowering trees. I hear birds chirping and bees buzzing. I see tulips, daffodils and shoots of lilies and irises waving gently in the breeze.

My mouth waters, anticipating the cold beer I'll drink later that day, after I've transformed our yard into Epcot.

I close my eyes and inhale deeply, allowing the fresh air to fill the depths of my overwintered lungs while envisioning the Monet-esque garden masterpiece I will soon create.

"AH-CHOO!" I emit involuntarily, knocking myself off balance and temporarily silencing the birds. "Must've inhaled a gnat," I conclude, ignorant of the histamine reaction that will soon turn my sinuses into a veritable swamp.

I tromp off the porch and into the yard, ready to begin. But I stop, realizing there are many things to do. Cut grass, weed whack, rake beds, trim shrubs, edge sidewalks, pull weeds, erect barriers, fertilize, treat, mulch, prune, plow and plant. "Where do I start?" I wonder.

A pungent odor wafts up to my nostrils, and I glance down at my shoe. "First task — pick up doggy doo." Thirty minutes later, I've filled an entire shopping bag, convinced that our yellow lab has secretly been ordering Uber Eats.

Despite nearly dislocating my shoulder starting the lawn equipment, I mow, trim, blow and bag the clippings. While digging weeds in the vegetable garden, my nose begins a drip that will last a month. While planting the azaleas, I develop Quasimodo-worthy limp. While hacking at a root, my tennis elbow flares. While under the hedges, my knee locks.

Exhausted and feeling pain in hip, knee, neck, elbow, back and shoulder, I collect my garden tools, checking behind me to see if I've left my vertebrae, meniscus or uterus in the yard somewhere. I decide I can put one small finishing touch on my garden before knocking off. I spread a bit of mulch around the mailbox, only to have a sudden breeze blow the shredded wood bits into my eye.

Two weeks later, my garden masterpiece still isn't complete. I've been too busy taking allergy meds for incessant postnasal drip. I had to ask my foot doctor for a cortisone shot for my limp. When my eye swelled up, a nurse practitioner at urgent care prescribed antibiotics for an eye infection.

And thanks to all the BENGAY I've slathered over my aching joints, I can't smell the flowers anyway.

Read more at [themeatandpotatoesoflife.com](http://themeatandpotatoesoflife.com) and in Lisa's book, "The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com." Email: [meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com](mailto:meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com)

# WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

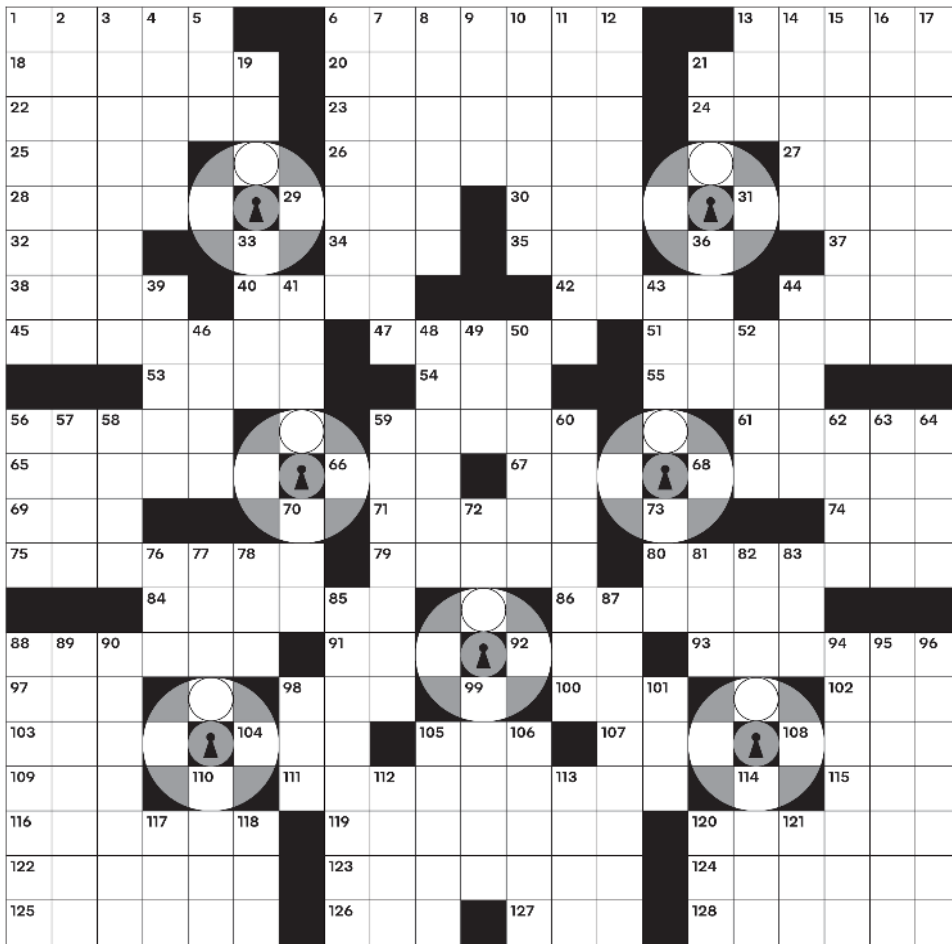
## NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

### GET CRACKING

BY MICHAEL SCHLOSSBERG / EDITED BY JOEL FAGLIANO

Michael Schlossberg, of Bend, Ore., is a doctor specializing in internal medicine. This is his 11th crossword for the paper, and his fifth Sunday.  
Note: Standing between you and the score of a lifetime are the seven locks of this safe. After completing the puzzle, rotate each dial 90 degrees, 180 degrees or 270 degrees to the only other position that forms four valid crossword answers. The new letters in the 12 o'clock (circled) positions will spell out an appropriate exclamation.

- ACROSS**
- 1 Staff symbol
  - 6 Items on the backs of some Jeeps
  - 13 Test pilot's attire
  - 18 Bedridden
  - 20 Creditor, in legalese
  - 21 Champion boxer Errol \_\_\_\_ Jr.
  - 22 Once or twice
  - 23 Like Mary Shelley when she wrote "Frankenstein"
  - 24 Marketing expenditure
  - 25 Bearing
  - 26 Natural source of rubber
  - 27 County that's home to the White Cliffs of Dover
  - 28 Unimpressed
  - 29 Sheet under a tent
  - 30 Sharp pain
  - 31 Major vessel
  - 32 Chinese \_\_\_\_ (bonsai choice)
  - 34 Rhyme for "away" in "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas"
  - 35 Agent Deirdre Beaubeirdre's org. in "Everything Everywhere All at Once"
  - 37 No. on a résumé
  - 38 Ewes' guys
  - 40 "Invisible hand" subj.
  - 42 Quattro e quattro
  - 44 President during the Mexican-American War
  - 45 Ice-cream shop employee, e.g.
  - 47 Shakespearean misanthrope
  - 51 Small Southwestern birds of prey
  - 53 "The Harlequin's Carnival" painter
  - 54 Nickname for a British relative
  - 55 Brouhahas
  - 56 Buds
  - 59 Ben who starred in Broadway's "Dear Evan Hansen"
  - 61 Role for Michelle Williams in "The Fabelmans"
  - 65 Wordle player's pride
  - 66 "Who, me?"
  - 67 Partner ship?
  - 68 Belief
  - 69 "\_\_\_\_ magic!"
  - 71 Title pig of kids' TV
  - 74 Schmeat topper
  - 75 Annoying bot
  - 79 They have the Guinness distinction of Longest Running Fan Club for a Group
  - 80 Work like the devil?
  - 84 "Who, me?" response
  - 86 Pixy Stix containers
  - 88 Carpentry vise
  - 91 \_\_\_\_ service
  - 92 Percival of legend, for one
  - 93 Mystical Buddhist text
  - 97 Minecraft material
  - 98 Cooper's tool
  - 100 Folder flap
  - 102 End of a sports movie, often
  - 103 Advance
  - 104 Block (up)
  - 105 Some four-year degs.
  - 107 Letters that sound out a sentence
  - 108 First-rate
  - 109 Playful hit
  - 111 Speculative fiction subgenre that envisions a sustainable-energy future
  - 115 Limited number
  - 116 Bitter-tasting salad ingredient
  - 119 Fun facts
  - 120 Sophisticated
  - 122 Farm machine
  - 123 French form of "Stephen"
  - 124 Area 51 sighting
  - 125 "C'mon, you'll love it!"
  - 126 "And \_\_\_\_ . . ."
  - 127 Celebration in late January or early February
  - 128 Tweaks
- DOWN**
- 1 Ascends with one's hands and feet
  - 2 Escalade, e.g.
  - 3 Blanks' opposite
  - 4 Shangri-las
  - 5 Hair of the dog
  - 6 "See ya later"
  - 7 Not normal
  - 8 Like beach towns in the winter
  - 9 Cannes subject
  - 10 Tennis great known as "the Punisher"
  - 11 Former name of the electron
  - 12 Ignore, as a shortcoming
  - 13 Application fig.
  - 14 Casio rival
  - 15 Shore hazard
  - 16 "That much is obvious"
  - 17 Speeches with an 18-minute limit
  - 19 Channel with on-air fund-raising
  - 21 Mole, e.g.
  - 33 Taunt
  - 36 Shout at an auction
  - 39 1916 battle site, with "the"
  - 41 Boast
  - 43 Blue-green
  - 44 Hypothesize
  - 46 City on the Arno
  - 48 Taking the place (of)
  - 49 "Here's looking at you, kid"?
  - 50 Like old audiobooks
  - 52 Why some app users check their notifications constantly, for short
  - 56 Several CBS dramas
  - 57 Link letters
  - 58 \_\_\_\_ Major
  - 59 Classroom surprise
  - 60 Passage of a planet across a star, e.g.
  - 62 Noted export of Portugal



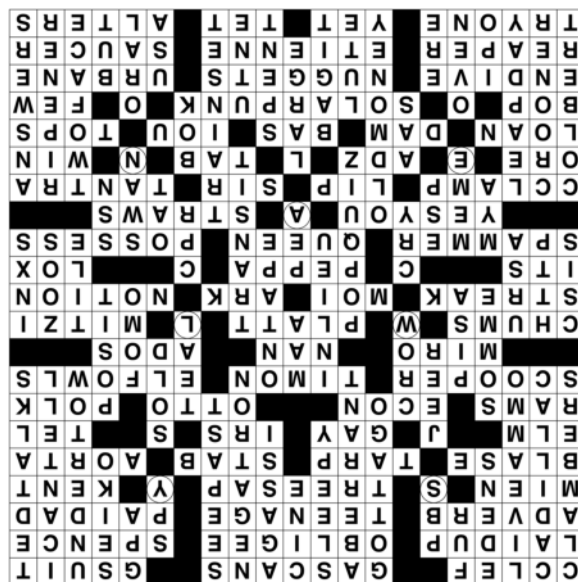
- 63 Common field-trip destinations
- 64 "Need You Tonight" band, 1987
- 70 Blubber
- 72 Stew tidbit
- 73 E.M.T.'s technique
- 76 One-named singer on 1998's "Ghetto Supastar"
- 77 Distracted Boyfriend, e.g.
- 78 One of Eleven's powers on "Stranger Things"
- 81 \_\_\_\_ milk
- 82 Gift on the seventh day of Christmas
- 83 Mr. Burns supposedly received the second one ever on "The Simpsons": Abbr.
- 85 What Tom and Daisy embody in "The Great Gatsby"
- 87 Gift for an aspiring conductor
- 88 Last name in late-night
- 89 Ol' Blue Eyes, e.g.
- 90 Quadrennial occurrence
- 94 District attorney turned Batman foe
- 95 Ethylene gas, to tomatoes
- 96 Key components
- 98 Some batteries
- 99 Ginormous
- 101 \_\_\_\_ choy
- 105 Throw in the towel
- 106 Didn't save
- 110 Appliance that may self-clean
- 112 Renaissance instrument
- 113 \_\_\_\_ Reader
- 114 Kind of tradition
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## RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE

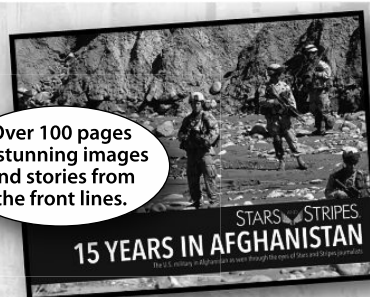


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## FACES

## Universal Music artists head back to TikTok

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN  
Associated Press

Artists from Universal Music Group, which include Drake, Adele, Bad Bunny and Billie Eilish, will be returning to TikTok as the two parties have struck a new licensing agreement following an approximately three-month-long dispute.

The two sides said Thursday that they are “now working expeditiously to return music by artists represented by Universal Music Group and songwriters represented by Universal Music Publishing Group to TikTok in due course.”

Taylor Swift, whose recently released album, “The Tortured Poets Department,”

has hit No. 1 on the Billboard 200 chart, had some of her songs return to TikTok last month, but the details of how that happened are unclear, according to Variety.

UMG said in January that it had not agreed to terms of a new deal with TikTok, and planned to stop licensing content from the artists it represents on the social media platform that is owned by ByteDance, as well as TikTok Music services.

At the time, UMG had been pressing TikTok on three issues: “appropriate compensation for our artists and songwriters, protecting human artists from the harmful effects of AI, and online safety for TikTok’s users.”

TikTok pushed back against the claims by UMG, saying that it had reached ‘artist-first’ agreements with every other label and publisher.

On Thursday, the two sides announced that their new agreement would give significant benefits to UMG’s global stable of artists, songwriters and labels and would return their music to TikTok.

“Music is an integral part of the TikTok ecosystem and we are pleased to have found a path forward with Universal Music Group,” TikTok CEO Shou Chew said in a statement. “We are committed to working together to drive value, discovery and promotion for all of UMG’s amazing artists and

songwriters, and deepen their ability to grow, connect and engage with the TikTok community.”

Part of the new deal includes UMG and TikTok working together to find new monetization opportunities. They will also work together on campaigns supporting UMG’s artists across genres and territories.

The companies also will put their combined efforts toward ensuring that AI development across the music industry will protect human artistry and payments for artists and songwriters. TikTok will also work with UMG to remove unauthorized AI-generated music from the platform, as well improving artist and songwriter attribution.



Netflix

Jerry Seinfeld attends Netflix’s “Unfrosted” premiere April 30 in Los Angeles.

## Seinfeld: ‘Extreme left and PC crap’ hurting TV comedy

By KAITLYN HUAMANI  
Los Angeles Times

Ahead of his stint at the Hollywood Bowl and the release of his Netflix comedy about Pop-Tarts’ origin this week, Jerry Seinfeld reflected on the “Seinfeld” storylines that wouldn’t be aired today and other ways “the extreme left” is influencing comedy.

In an interview with the New Yorker, the comedian said some of his jokes from the ’90s would be subject to “cancel culture” today. Of one plot from “Seinfeld” involving Kramer’s business venture to have “homeless people pull rickshaws” because “they’re outside anyway,” the comedian asked, “Do you think I could get that episode on the air today?”

When the New Yorker’s David Remnick said he couldn’t watch “Unfrosted” without thinking about the Israel-Hamas war and

other global humanitarian issues, Seinfeld dismissed the idea that comedy could or should be affected or diluted by world events.

“Nothing really affects comedy. People always need it,” he said. “They need it so badly and they don’t get it.”

Seinfeld went on to reflect on the lack of comfort sitcoms like “The Mary Tyler Moore Show,” “M\*A\*S\*H,” “Cheers” and “All in the Family,” which guaranteed audiences had something funny to watch. He said he doesn’t think that’s the case anymore.

“This is the result of the extreme left and P.C. crap, and people worrying so much about offending other people,” Seinfeld continued.

He noted that if audiences are looking for edgier comedy, they have to turn to stand-up comics because they “are not policed by

anyone,” adding that they know when they’re “off track.”

Seinfeld said he doesn’t think a younger person could start out today making television shows like “Seinfeld” or “Curb Your Enthusiasm,” even though audiences seek out boundary-pushing content on HBO and its competitors, as opposed to network sitcoms.

“HBO knows that’s what people come here for, but they’re not smart enough to figure out, ‘How do we do this now? Do we take the heat, or just not be funny?’ And what they’ve decided to be is, ‘Well, we’re not going to do comedies anymore.’”

The comedian said that younger stand-up comedians are pushing the envelope, like he and his peers did before, and commended Nate Bargatze, Ronny Chieng, Brian Simpson, Mark Normand and Sam Morril on their work.

## Twangy guitar master Duane Eddy dies at 86

Associated Press

Duane Eddy, a pioneering guitar hero whose reverberating electric sound on instrumentals such as “Rebel Rouser” and “Peter Gunn” helped put the twang in early rock ‘n’ roll and influenced George Harrison, Bruce Springsteen and countless other musicians, has died at age 86.

Eddy died of cancer Tuesday at the Williamson Health hospital in Franklin, Tenn., according to his wife, Deed Abbate.

With his raucous rhythms, and backing hollers and hand claps, Eddy sold more than 100 million records worldwide, and mastered a distinctive sound based on the premise that a guitar’s bass strings sounded better on tape than the high ones.

“I had a distinctive sound that people could recognize and I stuck pretty much with that. I’m not one of the best technical players by



AP

Duane Eddy, shown at the 2014 Stagecoach Music Festival in Indio, Calif., died Tuesday.

any means; I just sell the best,” he said in a 1986 interview.

“Twang” defined Eddy’s sound from his first album, “Have Twangy Guitar Will Travel,” to his 1993 box set, “Twang Thang: The Duane Eddy Anthology.”

He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1994.

## Ex-Nickelodeon producer sues documentary makers

Associated Press

Former Nickelodeon producer and writer Dan Schneider sued the makers of “Quiet on Set: The Dark Side of Kids TV” on Wednesday, alleging the makers of the documentary series wrongly implied that he sexually abused the child actors he worked with.

Schneider filed the defamation suit against Warner Bros. Discovery and other companies behind the series in Los Angeles Superior Court.

Schneider was central to Nickelodeon’s dominance of kid culture in the 1990s and 2000s with his work on sketch shows “All That,” “The Amanda Show” and “Kenan & Kel,” and as an executive producer on shows including “Zoey 101,” “iCarly” and “Victorious.”

He is also the key figure in “Quiet on Set,” which has been

streaming on Max. It uses cast and crew interviews to describe the shows’ sexualization of young teens and a toxic and abusive work environment that many said Schneider was responsible for. It also includes descriptions of sexual abuse of child actors, including Drake Bell, by crew members who were later convicted for it.

But Schneider, who parted ways with Nickelodeon in 2018, said in the suit that the “Quiet on Set” trailer and episodes of the show deliberately mix and juxtapose images and mentions of him with the criminal sexual abusers to imply he was involved.

The four-part series suggests that Schneider’s shows had a tendency to put young women in comic situations with sexual implications, and depicts him as an angry and emotionally abusive boss.

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## 1 dead, 14 hurt after SUV crashes into thrift store

**NM** LAS CRUCES — One person died and 14 others were injured Tuesday after an SUV crashed through the front glass wall of a thrift store in Las Cruces, authorities said.

First responders said 10 of the injured in Tuesday's crash were taken to hospitals for treatment and a 67-year-old woman was critically injured and died.

The 69-year-old woman who was driving the SUV was not injured, Las Cruces police said.

The woman apparently was trying to park her vehicle and stepped on the accelerator instead of the brake, police said.

The vehicle entered the Savers store near a self-checkout area and went all the way to the back side of the building, police said.

## Elimination of 'X' for sex on licenses spurs suit

**AR** LITTLE ROCK — Several transgender, intersex and nonbinary Arkansas residents sued the state of Arkansas on Tuesday over its decision to no longer allow "X" instead of male or female on state-issued driver's licenses or identification cards.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Arkansas asked a Pulaski County judge to halt the state's decision to reverse a practice that had been in place since 2010. The new emergency rule will also make it harder for a person to change their sex on the cards.

The state Department of Finance and Administration announced the change last month, and a legislative panel approved an emergency rule carrying it out. The lawsuit argues that the state did not follow the proper steps for implementing the rule.

"By forcing plaintiffs to adopt gender markers that do not cohere to their own identities, the rule imposes a dignitary harm — one they are forced to carry around with them and relive every time they use their identification," the lawsuit reads.

All previously issued Arkansas licenses and IDs with the designation will remain valid through their existing expiration dates, the department said last month.

## Homeless families face limits on shelter stays

**MA** BOSTON — Massachusetts will begin limiting how long homeless families can stay in shelters as the state continues to grapple with an influx of homeless migrants.

Beginning June 1, the total length of stay will be limited to nine months, at the end of which families will be eligible for up to two 90-day extensions, under a supplemental budget approved by state lawmakers and signed by Democratic Gov. Maura Healey on Tuesday.



RICHARD VOGEL/AP

## Flexible feast

**Cirque du Soleil contortionist Sender Enkhtur takes a bite on a pretzel as she poses for a photo at Santa Monica Beach, on Monday, in Santa Monica, Calif. Cirque du Soleil announced their return to the Santa Monica Pier this fall after being gone for over a decade.**

The law also requires the state Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities to create a rehousing plan and provide case management for all individuals in shelters after they leave the program and requires the plan to be recertified every 60 days so that families can remain eligible.

Extensions would be based on circumstances that include employment or participation in a workforce training program, veteran status, imminent placement in housing, avoiding educational interruptions for children in public school and pregnancy or having recently given birth.

## Bill dies, mobile sports betting to remain illegal

**MS** JACKSON — Mobile sports betting will remain illegal in Mississippi after legislative negotiators failed to advance a final proposal Monday.

The House and Senate passed versions of the Mississippi Mobile Sports Wagering Act earlier in the state's legislative session. The bill would have allowed Mississippi to join the 30 other states where mobile sports betting is legal. Sports wagering has been permitted in the state for years, but online betting has remained illegal amid fears the move could harm the bottom line of the state's casinos.

To assuage the concerns of casinos and lawmakers who represent areas where gambling is big business, the bill would have required

betting companies to contract with brick-and-mortar establishments.

During legislative debates, some lawmakers raised concerns that gambling platforms would have no incentive to partner with smaller casinos, and most of the money would instead flow to the Mississippi Gulf Coast's already bustling casinos.

## Effort to build green city submits ballot signatures

**CA** SAN FRANCISCO — A wealthy Silicon Valley-backed campaign to build a green city for up to 400,000 people in the San Francisco Bay Area has submitted what it says are enough signatures to qualify the initiative for the November election.

The campaign submitted more than 20,000 signatures but would need only about 13,000 valid ones to qualify for the ballot. If verified by Solano County's elections office, voters will decide in the fall whether to allow urban development on land currently zoned for agriculture. The land-use change would be necessary for the development to be built.

Jan Sramek, a former Goldman Sachs trader who heads the company behind the campaign, California Forever, said Tuesday that he heard from thousands of people who want careers and homes in the county where they grew up but can no longer afford them because of high housing costs and a lack of

nearby work.

The yet-unnamed development would mix homes, green space, a walkable downtown and jobs between Travis Air Force Base and the Sacramento River Delta city of Rio Vista. Sramek said he expects to start with 50,000 residents within the next decade, with homes starting at \$400,000.

The proposal includes an initial \$400 million to help residents and Air Force base families buy homes in the community or for new affordable housing, as well as an initial guarantee of 15,000 local jobs paying a salary of at least \$88,000 a year.

## Dems retain US House seat in special election

**NY** BUFFALO — Democratic state Sen. Timothy Kennedy won a special election Tuesday for the New York congressional seat vacated by Democrat Brian Higgins.

Kennedy easily defeated Republican Gary Dickson for the upstate New York seat, helped by a 2-to-1 Democratic registration advantage in the district, which includes Buffalo, Niagara Falls and several suburbs.

Kennedy has been in the state Senate since 2011. Describing Washington as "chaotic and dysfunctional," he said he would focus in Congress on reproductive rights, immigration and stronger gun laws like those passed in New York after a 2022 mass shooting at

a Buffalo supermarket.

Kennedy will serve in Congress for the rest of the year. He is on the ballot, along with Republican attorney Anthony Marecki, for the general election.

## Vote backs punishing stalkers using Bluetooth

**PA** HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania took a step Tuesday toward becoming the latest state to punish someone for using a Bluetooth-connected device to track someone without their permission.

The state House of Representatives voted 199-1 to approve legislation that would make using a tracking device to secretly track another person part of Pennsylvania's laws against stalking. The crime would be punishable as a third-degree misdemeanor, or up to 90 days in jail. The bill goes to the Senate, where a separate bill is pending that would make the crime a second-degree misdemeanor, or punishable by up to two years in jail. Most states have a provision in state law that prohibits remote tracking.

The House bill's passage comes a few weeks after a federal judge denied Apple's motion to dismiss a class-action lawsuit contending that the tech giant hasn't done enough to prevent stalkers from using its AirTag devices to track victims.

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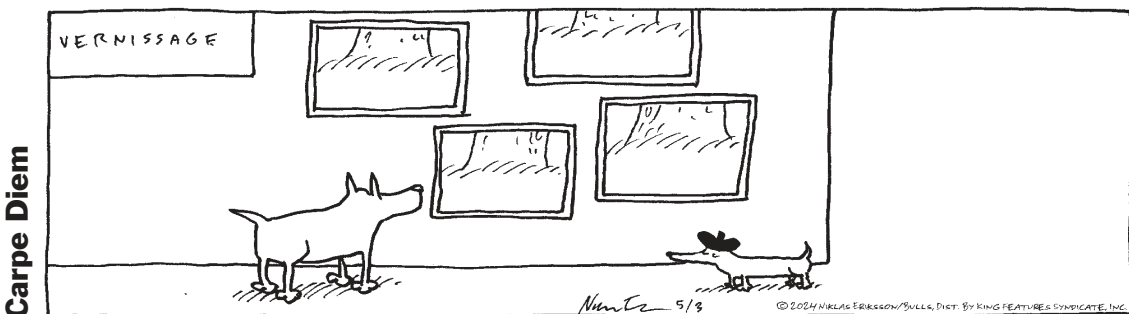
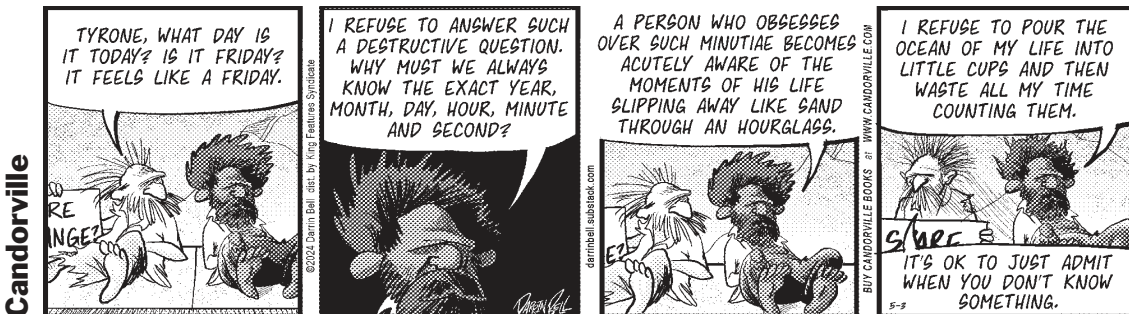
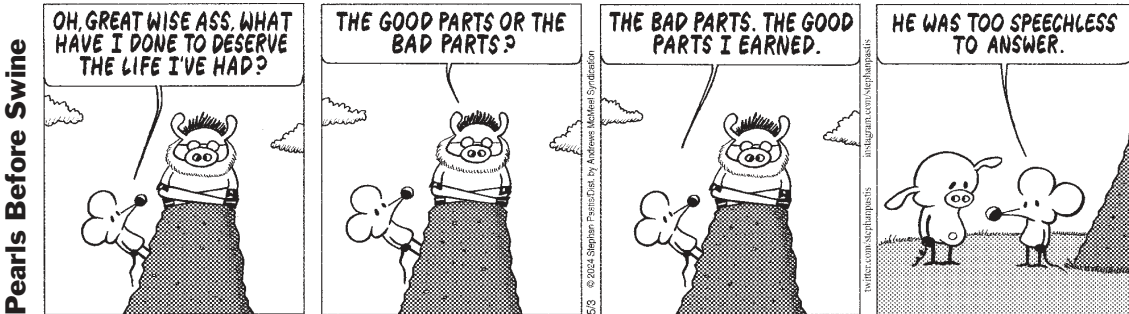
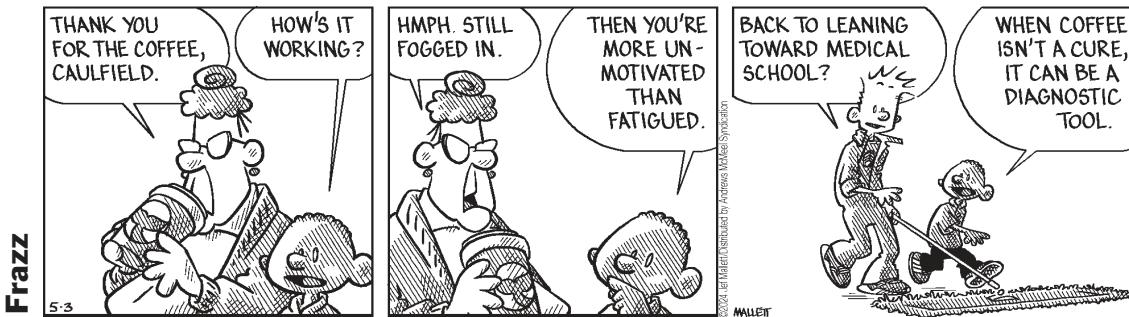
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Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8		9	10	11
12						13				14		
15						16				17		
		18				19				20		
21	22			23				24				
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29				30			31			32	33	34
			35			36			37			
38	39	40				41		42		43		
44						45			46			
47				48				49			50	51
52				53				54				
55				56				57				

ACROSS

- 1 "Be silent," in scores
- 6 Pledge
- 9 Old map letters
- 12 Sleepy mammal
- 13 A Gershwin brother
- 14 Menlo Park monogram
- 15 Tubular pasta
- 16 Emmy-winning actress Jane
- 18 Body art
- 20 Chaplin of "Game of Thrones"
- 21 Punk rock offshoot
- 23 Put on TV
- 24 Senate broadcaster
- 25 "The Bourne Identity" director Liman
- 27 — Park, Colorado
- 29 Hue and cry
- 31 Folk singer Pete
- 35 Inventor Nikola
- 37 — gin fizz
- 38 Loathe
- 41 Canine greeting
- 43 Moreover
- 44 Canine greeting
- 45 Curator's workplace
- 47 Nickname for The Beatles
- 49 New stem

- 52 City area, for short
- 53 JFK info
- 54 Guided trips
- 55 Mormon church, for short
- 56 — Moines
- 57 Lovable ogre

- 17 Forest growths
- 19 Levels
- 21 College URL ender
- 22 Swab the deck
- 24 Middling grade
- 26 Disembarked
- 28 Despots
- 30 — Lingus
- 32 "Allure" alternative
- 33 Ages and ages
- 34 Wine selection
- 36 Dern and Linney
- 38 Terrible
- 39 Plank
- 40 "The Natural" character Roy
- 42 Big celebrations
- 45 TV remote button
- 46 "Oops!"
- 48 British ref. work
- 50 Tram load
- 51 "For shame!"

DOWN

- 1 Recipe abbr.
- 2 Hearty quaff
- 3 Outline
- 4 Sicilian spouter
- 5 Eighth Greek letter
- 6 Tennis players' headgear
- 7 Popular cookie
- 8 Method
- 9 Brownstone feature
- 10 Place for sweaters?
- 11 Showed again

Answer to Previous Puzzle

S	L	I	D		L	B	S		S	C	A	T
L	I	M	E		I	O	N		O	R	C	A
A	M	A	L		T	A	O		O	A	H	U
P	A	N	A	M	A		B	O	N	N	E	T
				Y	E	N			L	E	N	
T	A	B	S		I	S	C	A	R	I	O	T
S	I	R			E	E	O			E	R	R
P	R	O	P	O	S	A	L			E	S	A
				W	O	O		O	H	M		
D	A	N	S	O	N		N	I	C	E	S	T
E	L	I	S		O	B	I		E	L	L	A
E	P	E	E		O	R	E		E	M	I	R
R	O	S	S		N	O	S		S	S	T	S

5-3

CRYPTOQUIP

O YQGRTQX MZQTLQ HRVXQJ  
 BLZ OYRNZ URGAM HBR SOV  
 SJQOZQ CQUQSZ VQQXGQHRJA:

"MNCQJ MZLZSBLV".

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I REALLY THINK THAT A PERSON NEVER OUGHT TO PUT ANY TRUST IN ATOMS. THEY MAKE UP EVERYTHING.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: V equals N

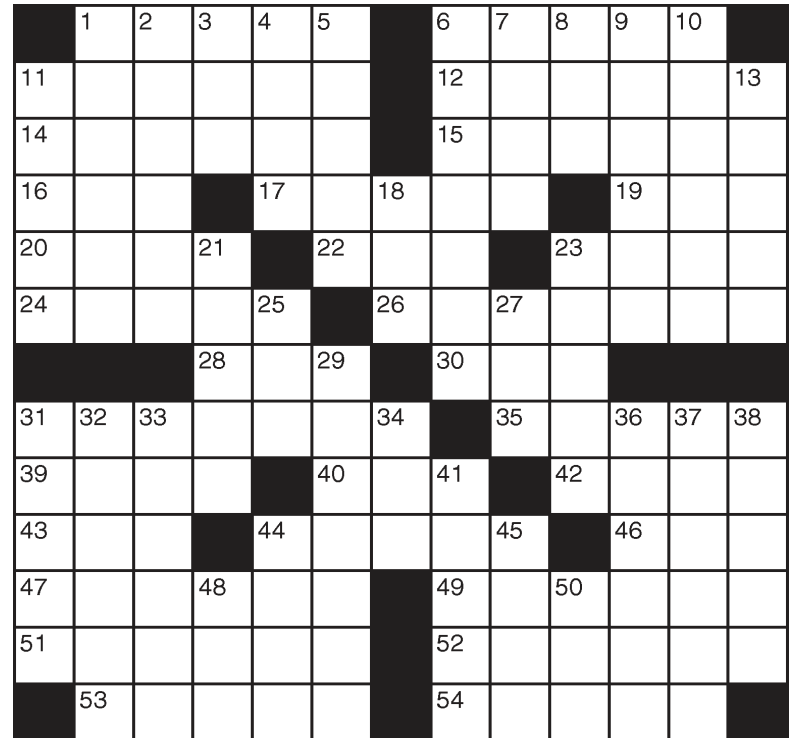
**Bizarro**



**Loose Parts**



**Eugene Sheffer Crossword**



**ACROSS**

- 1 Alligator's home
- 6 "Peer Gynt Suite" composer
- 11 Small burger
- 12 Pitcher, in slang
- 14 Politico Nancy
- 15 Store fodder
- 16 Dorm VIPs
- 17 Brainy
- 19 Western st.
- 20 Sport shirt 'brand
- 22 Mork's home
- 23 Tubular pasta
- 24 Music category
- 26 Kind of energy
- 28 Sort
- 30 "Stillmatic" rapper
- 31 Yokel
- 35 Violin student's assignment
- 39 Cupid's alias
- 40 Eggy quaff
- 42 Goblet feature
- 43 Wander about
- 44 Fess up
- 46 World Series org.
- 47 Playwright Eugene
- 49 Quaint "Omigosh!"
- 51 Skirmish

52 Pencil part

53 Remains

54 Pub projectiles

**DOWN**

- 1 Vulgar type
- 2 28th President
- 3 Ruckus
- 4 Disorder
- 5 First-rate, in slang
- 6 Small pickle
- 7 Litter's littlest
- 8 Apr. check cashier
- 9 Draw forth
- 10 Trattoria desserts
- 11 Parsley piece
- 13 Museum artifact
- 18 Biblical boat

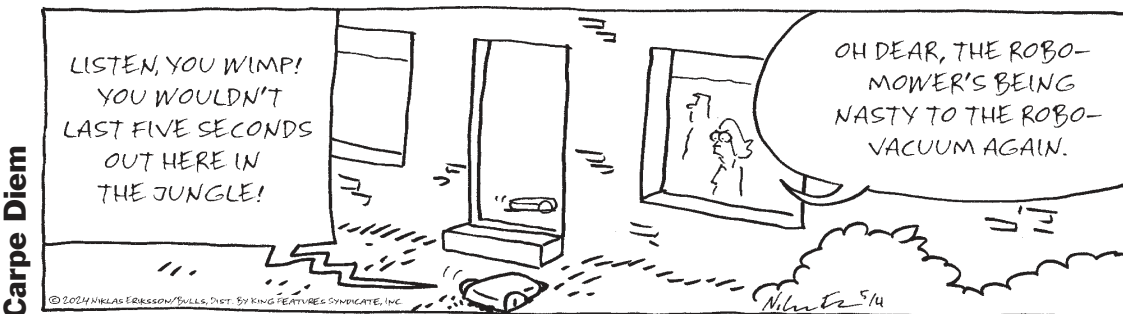
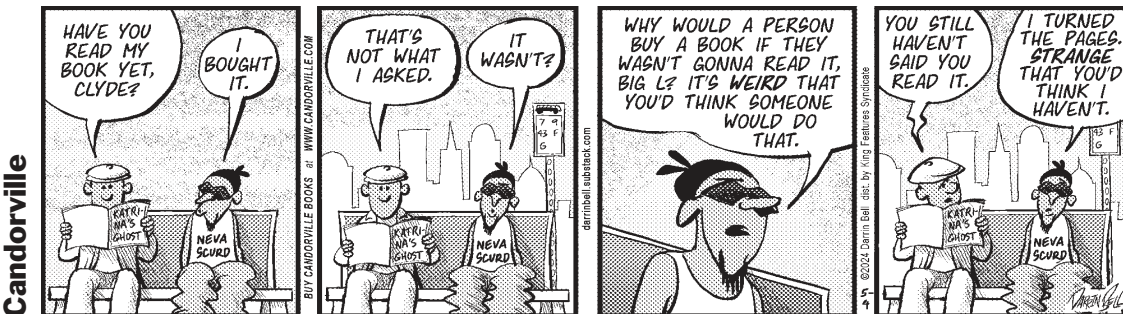
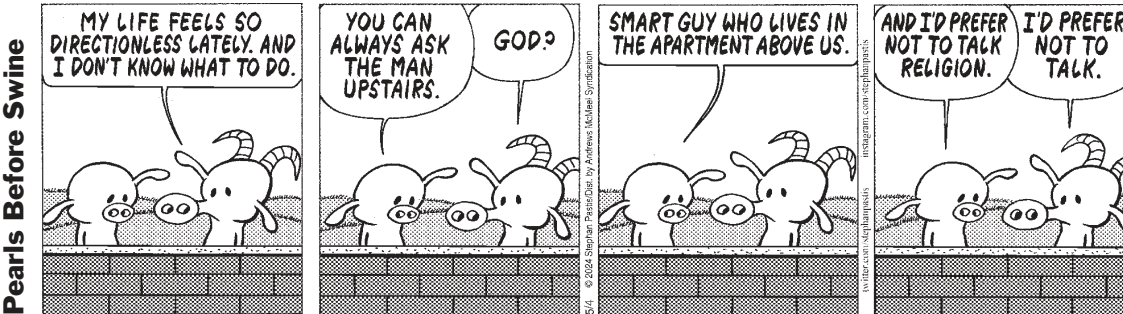
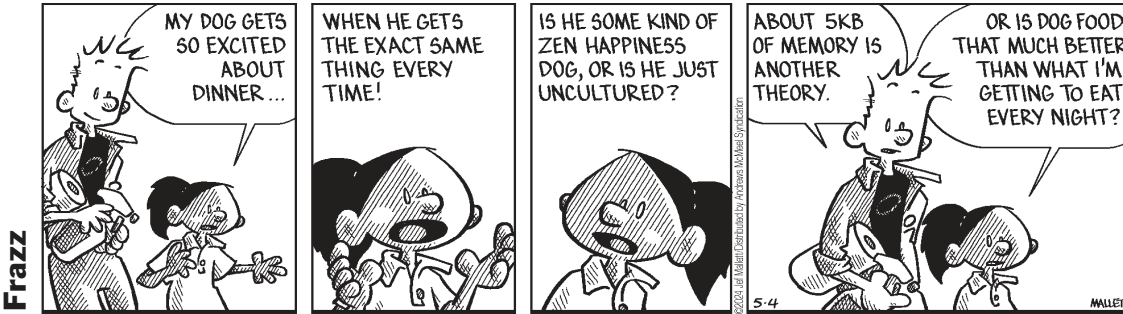
- 21 Painting mishaps
- 23 Orange peel scrapings
- 25 Wapiti
- 27 Dundee denial
- 29 Amazon e-readers
- 31 Sired
- 32 Seventh planet
- 33 Humble
- 34 — de plume
- 36 Maximum
- 37 Searches deeply
- 38 Glowing coal
- 41 Mocked
- 44 Friend
- 45 Model Banks
- 48 "This — recording"
- 50 Honey holder

**Answer to Previous Puzzle**



**CRYPTOQUIP**

BQCH KEZ OXH'V MCVCSNHC  
 BQCVCQCY TESCVCQNHU NT  
 XOVZXJK YCXJ, N'M OXJJ  
 VQXV XH CHVNVK OYNTNT.  
**Yesterday's Cryptoquip:** A BELOVED STEVIE WONDER HIT ABOUT FOLKS WHO CAN CREATE PERFECT NEEDLEWORK: "SUPER STITCHIN'."  
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals C



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## OPINION

## What we keep getting wrong about campus protests

BY JONAH GOLDBERG

Tribune Content Agency

The current campus demonstrations are a reminder that of all the mossy clichés and puffed-up pieties of polite (and impolite) American discourse, the sanctity of protest is the hardest to question.

Doubting the loftiness of protest invites elite scorn more than any other skepticism about a constitutional right. Proposing limits on free speech, for example, attracts far less outrage. Indeed, people question free speech all the time: in debates about “hate speech,” campaign finance, social media and more. (Let’s not even get into the fashionableness of questioning Second Amendment rights).

But if I say that most protests are performative cosplay, or mass meet-ups of the angry, the radical, the lonely or the misinformed, someone is bound to point to the civil rights protests of the 1960s or the campaign for women’s suffrage, followed by a string of righteous how-dare-yous.

This gets to part of my objection. There’s nothing inherently good or bad about protesting. Organized protest is a form of speech, and, like speech, it is rightly protected by the First Amendment. But, also like speech, its morality — though not its legality — is wholly dependent on the content.

You have a right to say, or protest for, awful things. Invoking that right doesn’t make your view any nobler.

The Jim Crow-era civil rights protests were noble because the cause was noble. They did not prove that protesting is always good, merely that it can be. Replace the

March on Washington with the Nazi march on Skokie, Ill., and you get the point.

The aesthetics and psychology of protest are often ugly because crowds encourage extremism and intimidation. Well-intentioned protest organizers know this better than anybody; they often struggle to keep the crowds from becoming dangerous mobs. The core message of mass protest is “strength in numbers,” a primordial feeling that can often lead to a kind of illiberal power-drunkenness. “The hallucinations of alcoholics provide us with an opportunity to study crowds as they appear in the minds of individuals,” Elias Canetti wrote in his brilliant book “Crowds and Power.”

Some argue that democracy is all about strength in numbers, and that’s partly true. But democratic will is exercised by the private actions of individual voters casting secret ballots. The strength in numbers invoked by most large protests is better understood as populism, and populism has an uglier history than democracy, from the long history of race riots to Jan. 6.

The irreducible political unit in America is the individual, not the crowd. The highest form of protest (and speech) is captured by Norman Rockwell’s famous painting of a lone, working-class dissenter standing up for his conscience as his neighbors listen politely, not by images of mobs shouting insults, blocking traffic, occupying buildings or worse.

Again, not all protests are ugly riots or mass tantrums. But the tolerance often shown for both is a product of romantic impulses driven by ’60s nostalgia. As a generation, progres-

sive baby boomers take a back seat to nobody in their stunning self-regard and overestimation of their historical importance. But these people have shaped the narratives of academia, entertainment and journalism. They’ve convinced themselves, and the young minds they shape, that protest is self-justifying, a rite of passage of enlightened youth.

Elite universities, run by acolytes of this cult, struggle to deal with protests because they believe, as a matter of educational philosophy, that giving voice to authentic passion is the route to self-actualization. As one headline conveniently summarized, “Student Protest Is an Essential Part of Education.” Who says? People who love student protest, duh.

I could have salted this column with examples of today’s protesters revealing how precious little they know about the issues supposedly motivating them — or of fawning coverage of mobs openly siding with terrorists. But my point isn’t about these protests in particular. It’s about the broader cult of protest.

The nostalgic champions of the campus protests of the ’60s would have Americans believe they were a heroic success, stopping the Vietnam War. But what they actually helped achieve was Richard Nixon’s election and seven more years of war.

Performative protest feels good for those drunk on their own, unearned sense of importance. But such spectacles are often terrible for their intended ends. That’s one more reason not to glorify protest for its own sake.

Jonah Goldberg is editor-in-chief of The Dispatch and the host of The Remnant podcast.

## What we need as we go back to Gaza to feed people

BY JOSÉ ANDRÉS

Special to The Washington Post

Our decision to resume feeding in Gaza is both the hardest and the simplest one we could make.

Hardest because barely a month has passed since Israeli forces killed seven of our World Central Kitchen family, despite knowing their location, movements and the nature of their essential work. Our colleagues risked everything to feed people they did not know.

Yet it’s a simple decision for us because the need is so great. We cannot stand by while so many people are so desperate for the essentials of life. Food is a universal human right, and we will not cease until those basic human rights are respected.

This week, we are restarting our operations at scale: We have 276 trucks, representing almost 8 million meals, ready to enter Gaza through the Rafah crossing in the south. We are also sending trucks from Jordan as we push to distribute food into northern Gaza, where the situation is most dire.

These convoys will be met by our partners in Gaza. The vast majority of our work around the world is done by locals, not by international staff: Ukrainians feeding in Ukraine, Moroccans feeding Moroccans, and, in Gaza, Palestinians feeding Palestinians.

But we are returning to Gaza with what is at best a limited understanding of how humanitarian aid workers will be protected in the coming weeks and months.

We expect and insist that the Israel Defense Forces protect and respect the lives and work of our Palestinian team members, just like citizens from other nations.

That sort of treatment has been rare since we have been in the region. For example, though every team member is vetted and cleared before every food delivery mission, our Palestinian team members have been stripped and humiliated by Israeli soldiers while engaged in work that has been coordinated with, and approved by, the IDF.

Our convoys have been held up at IDF checkpoints for hours on end, despite coordination with the Israeli government groups who run point on humanitarian aid.

Those delays create crowds desperate to receive food, add to the food panic and push our missions into nightfall, dramatically increasing the dangers faced by our aid workers.

After the April 1 attack, the IDF issued general statements about improving communication between aid groups such as ours and its own military operators. We welcome those statements, as we welcome the increase in aid that is now flowing into Gaza. But the communication failures inside the IDF continue. There are multiple reports of other convoys coming under fire since April 1, signaling that little has changed to increase protection.

The biggest challenge is the one the Netanyahu government has failed to address. Without law and order on the ground in Gaza, there is a constant threat to civilians around any food aid. Humanitarian groups have very limited means to establish security to protect our own workers — or the civilians we are trying to help. The IDF cannot police Gaza through airstrikes, faulty intelligence, AI-enhanced analysis and dismal communications.

As we resume operations, we need to see Israeli forces step up to their responsibilities and promises to let humanitarian groups do

their work. We expect the IDF to develop, communicate and deliver clear safety protocols and measures for humanitarian aid workers across Gaza immediately.

These should include reliable, direct and secure communications with aid workers on the ground, live tracking of aid convoys, clear lists of deconflicted zones, and approval for international media to report on our operations.

We expect the IDF to abide by its own protocols, chain of command, laws of war and moral values. We expect it to cooperate with an independent investigation into airstrikes on our own team. We also expect the Biden administration to hold the Netanyahu government true to its commitments on humanitarian aid.

If the Israeli government cannot or will not fully explain how it will protect humanitarian aid workers in Gaza, it can at least do one thing. May 12 is Yom Hazikaron — the day of remembrance — in Israel. It’s a solemn day when the sirens sound, life comes to a halt, and people remember those who have died in war and as victims of terrorism. This day of remembrance will be a heavy one. There is too much suffering in Palestine, in Israel and across the Middle East. The hostages need to be freed by Hamas; a cease-fire needs to begin.

My hope and my prayer are that the names of our seven heroes will be remembered and mourned in Israel, as they are in Gaza, Britain, Canada, Australia and Poland.

Sharing our grief is as human as sharing our food. It’s a small step toward healing and hope in a world that desperately needs both.

José Andrés is founder and chief feeding officer of World Central Kitchen.



# SCOREBOARD/KENTUCKY DERBY

## TENNIS

**Madrid Open**  
**Wednesday**  
**At Caja Magica Madrid**  
**Purse: Euro 7,877,020**  
**Surface: Red clay**  
**Men's Singles Quarterfinals**  
 Andrey Rublev (7), Russia, def. Carlos Alcaraz (2), Spain, 4-6, 6-3, 6-2.  
 Taylor Fritz (12), United States, def. Francisco Cerundolo (21), Argentina, 6-1, 3-6, 6-3.  
**Women's Singles Quarterfinals**  
 Elena Rybakina (4), Kazakhstan, def. Yulia Putintseva, Kazakhstan, 4-6, 7-6 (4), 7-5.  
 Aryna Sabalenka (2), Belarus, def. Mirra Andreeva, Russia, 6-1, 6-4.  
**L'Open 35 De Saint-Malo**  
**Wednesday**  
**At Tennis Club J.A. Saint-Malo Saint-Malo, France**  
**Purse: \$100,000**  
**Surface: Red clay**  
**Women's Singles Round of 16**  
 Celine Naef, Switzerland, def. Daria Saville (5), Australia, 6-2, 6-2.  
 Clara Burel (1), France, def. Zeynep Sonmez, Turkiye, 6-7 (6), 7-5, 6-3.

## PRO HOCKEY

### PWHL

	GP	W	L	OW	OL	Pts	GF	GA
x-Toronto	23	12	7	4	0	44	64	48
x-Montreal	23	10	5	3	5	41	57	53
Minnesota	23	8	8	4	3	35	52	49
Ottawa	23	8	8	1	6	32	60	58
Boston	23	7	9	4	3	32	46	54
New York	23	4	12	4	3	23	48	65

Teams awarded three (3) points for a regulation win, two (2) points for an overtime or shootout win, one (1) point for an overtime or shootout loss, and zero (0) points for a regulation time loss.  
 x-clinched playoff position

**Tuesday, April 30**  
 New York 4, Ottawa 3  
**Wednesday's game**  
 Toronto 4, Minnesota 1  
**Saturday's games**  
 Minnesota at New York  
 Montreal at Boston  
**Sunday, May 5**  
 Ottawa at Toronto

## AUTO RACING

### NASCAR Cup points leaders

Through April 29

1. Kyle Larson	410
2. Martin Truex Jr	395
3. Chase Elliott	377
4. Denny Hamlin	361
5. Tyler Reddick	354
6. William Byron	348
7. Ryan Blaney	342
8. Ty Gibbs	323
9. Alex Bowman	302
10. Ross Chastain	302
11. Kyle Busch	275
12. Chase Briscoe	274
13. Joey Logano	266
14. Chris Buescher	265
15. Bubba Wallace	263
16. Brad Keselowski	261
17. Christopher Bell	258
18. Daniel Suárez	240
19. Austin Cindric	214
20. Carson Hocevar	187
21. Noah Gragson	185
22. John H. Nemechek	181
23. Erik Jones	181
24. Josh Berry	174
25. Daniel Hemric	168
26. Todd Gilliland	167
27. Ricky Stenhouse Jr	165
28. Ryan Preece	163
29. Michael McDowell	158
30. Corey LaJoie	155

## GOLF

### World rankings

Through April 29

1. Scottie Scheffler	14.86
2. Rory McIlroy	7.21
3. Wyndham Clark	6.42
4. Xander Schauffele	6.05
5. Jon Rahm	6.01
6. Ludvig Aberg	5.73
7. Viktor Hovland	5.41
8. Patrick Cantlay	4.93
9. Brian Harman	4.19
10. Max Homa	4.19
11. Tommy Fleetwood	4.03
12. Sahith Theegala	3.99
13. Collin Morikawa	3.96

## PRO SOCCER

### MLS

#### EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Inter Miami CF	6	2	3	21	26	16
Cincinnati	5	2	3	18	12	9
New York	4	1	5	17	14	10
Toronto FC	5	4	1	16	11	13
Columbus	3	1	6	15	12	9
NYCFC	4	4	2	14	11	10
Philadelphia	3	3	4	13	19	17
D.C. United	3	3	4	13	14	15
Atlanta	3	3	3	12	13	9
CF Montréal	3	3	3	12	12	16
Charlotte FC	3	5	2	11	10	13
Chicago	2	4	4	10	11	18
Orlando City	2	4	3	9	11	17
Nashville	1	3	5	8	10	17
New England	1	7	1	4	6	18

#### WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Real Salt Lake	5	2	3	18	17	9
LA Galaxy	5	2	3	18	21	17
Vancouver	5	2	2	17	18	10
Minnesota	5	2	2	17	15	10
LAFc	4	3	3	15	18	16
Colorado	4	3	3	15	16	15
Austin FC	4	3	3	15	14	13
Houston	4	4	1	13	9	10
Seattle	3	5	3	12	16	15
St Louis City	2	1	6	12	15	14
Sporting KC	2	3	5	11	18	18
Portland	2	4	4	10	20	21
FC Dallas	2	5	2	8	9	12
San Jose	1	8	1	4	14	25

**Note:** Three points for victory, one point for tie.

**Saturday's games**  
 Minnesota at Atlanta  
 Portland at Charlotte FC  
 Philadelphia at D.C. United  
 New York at Miami  
 Cincinnati at Orlando City  
 Los Angeles FC at San Jose  
 FC Dallas at Toronto FC  
 New England at Chicago  
 St Louis City at Houston  
 CF Montréal at Nashville  
 Sporting Kansas City at Real Salt Lake  
 Austin FC at Vancouver

**Sunday's games**  
 Colorado at New York City FC  
 LA Galaxy at Seattle

**Saturday, May 11**  
 D.C. United at Atlanta  
 Nashville at Charlotte FC  
 Miami at CF Montréal  
 New England at New York  
 Orlando City at Philadelphia  
 New York City FC at Toronto FC  
 Cincinnati at Columbus  
 Austin FC at FC Dallas  
 Houston at Sporting Kansas City  
 Chicago at St Louis City  
 San Jose at Colorado  
 Real Salt Lake at LA Galaxy  
 Vancouver at Los Angeles FC

**Sunday, May 12**  
 Seattle at Portland

### NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Kansas City	5	0	1	16	20	11
Washington	5	2	0	15	15	9
Orlando	4	0	3	15	13	7
North Carolina	4	3	0	12	12	9
Portland	3	3	1	10	15	13
Chicago	3	3	1	10	9	10
Louisville	1	0	5	8	10	6
San Diego	2	2	1	7	4	4
Angel City	2	3	1	7	7	10
Bay FC	2	5	0	6	12	17
Gotham FC	1	2	2	5	3	5
Houston	1	3	2	5	6	14
Utah Royals FC	1	4	1	4	4	11
Seattle	1	5	0	3	5	9

**Note:** Three points for victory, one point for tie.

**Wednesday's games**  
 Orlando 4, North Carolina 1  
 Washington 4, Chicago 2  
 Portland 3, Bay FC 2

**Friday's games**  
 Angel City at Utah Royals FC  
 San Diego at Seattle

**Saturday's games**  
 North Carolina at Gotham FC  
 Washington at Portland

**Sunday's games**  
 Kansas City at Houston  
 Louisville at Orlando  
 Chicago at Bay FC

**Wednesday, May 8**  
 Gotham FC at Houston  
 Utah Royals FC at San Diego  
 Kansas City at Seattle

**Friday, May 10**  
 Washington at Louisville

## DEALS

### Wednesday's transactions

#### BASEBALL

**Major League Baseball**  
**MLB** — Suspended Milwaukee Brewers RHP Freddy Peralta five games for intentionally throwing at Jose Siri, manager Pat Murphy two games for Peralta's actions and inappropriate conduct toward umpires, RHP Abner Uribe six games for causing the benches clearing incident and agreed to reduce Tampa Bay Rays OF Jose Siri three game suspension to two games for his actions, with all receiving undisclosed fines for their parts in the on-field incident on March 30th.

**American League**  
**BALTIMORE ORIOLES** — Reinstated LHP John Means from the 15-day IL. Placed RHP Grayson Rodriguez on the 15-day IL, retroactive to April 30.

**BOSTON RED SOX** — Acquired INF Zack Short from the New York Mets in exchange for cash considerations. Agreed to terms with 1B/DH Dominic Smith on a one-year contract. Placed OF Masataka Yoshida on the 10-day IL, retroactive to April 29. Designated RHP Vladimir Gutierrez for assignment. Sent LHP Joely Rodriguez outright to Worcester (IL).

**CHICAGO WHITE SOX** — Recalled LHP Jared Shuster from Charlotte (IL). Optioned RHP Prelander Berroa to Charlotte.

**DETROIT TIGERS** — Optioned RHP Matt Manning to Toledo (IL).

**HOUSTON ASTROS** — Recalled 3B Trey Cabbage and SS Jacob Amaya from Sugar Land (PCL). Optioned 1B Jose Abreu to Sugar Land. Placed RF Chas McCormick on the 10-day IL, retroactive to April 28.

**LOS ANGELES ANGELS** — Selected the contract of OF Willie Calhoun from Salt Lake (PCL). Placed INF Miguel Sano on the 10-day IL, retroactive to April 28. Designated RHP Zac Kristofak for assignment. Agreed to terms with OF Imanol Vargas on a minor league contract. Released CF Aaron Hicks.

**MINNESOTA TWINS** — Selected the contract of RHP Caleb Boushley from St. Paul (IL). Optioned LHP Kody Funderburk to St. Paul.

**SEATTLE MARINERS** — Announced Brad Smith and Kathy Surace-Smith have joined the Mariners Partnership Group.

**National League**  
**ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS** — Recalled LHP Blake Walston from Reno (PCL). Optioned LHP Andrew Saalfrank to Reno.

**CHICAGO CUBS** — Sent LHP Justin Steele to Iowa (IL) on a rehab assignment.

**LOS ANGELES DODGERS** — Recalled RHP J.P. Feyereisen from Oklahoma City (PCL). Optioned RHP Landon Knack Oklahoma City.

**MIAMI MARLINS** — Recalled RHP Rodery Munoz from Jacksonville (IL). Optioned RHP Emmanuel Ramirez to Jacksonville. Sent 3B Jake Burger to Jacksonville on a rehab assignment.

**MILWAUKEE BREWERS** — Optioned RHP Abner Uribe to Nashville (IL).

**ST. LOUIS CARDINALS** — Optioned RHP Kyle Leahy to Memphis (IL).

**SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS** — Recalled RHP Dalton Jefferies from Sacramento (PCL). Optioned RHP Landen Roupp to Sacramento.

**BASKETBALL**  
**Women's National Basketball Association**

**CONNECTICUT SUN** — Waived G Kianna Smith.

**FOOTBALL**  
**National Football League**

**ARIZONA CARDINALS** — Waived WR Kaden Davis and CB Quavian White.

**CHICAGO BEARS** — Waived P Trenton Gill. Promoted Tanesha Wade to executive vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion/chief impact officer.

**DALLAS COWBOYS** — Declined their fifth-year option for QB Trey Lance.

**GREEN BAY PACKERS** — Received an exemption for international DT Kenneth Oduemegwu.

**NEW ORLEANS SAINTS** — Signed DB Will Harris.

**NEW YORK GIANTS** — Signed DB David Long.

**PITTSBURGH STEELERS** — Received an exemption for DE Julius Welschof and then signed him to a contract.

**SEATTLE SEAHAWKS** — Waived LB Levi Bell.

**HOCKEY**  
**National Hockey League**

**CAROLINA HURRICANES** — Signed G Ruslan Khazheyev to a three-year, entry-level contract.

**DALLAS STARS** — Reassigned D Lian Bichsel to Texas (AHL) from Rogle (SHL).

**ST. LOUIS BLUES** — Signed F Simon Robertsson from the Swedish Hockey League to a three-year, entry-level contract. Signed F Otto Stenberg to a three-year, entry-level contract.

**TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS** — Recalled LWS Nick Abruzzese and Kyle Clifford, FS Dylan Gambrell and Alex Steeves, DS Mikko Kokkonen, Max Lajoie, Topi Niemela and Marshall Rifai and G Dennis Hildeby from Toronto (AHL).

**VANCOUVER CANUCKS** — Returned LW Vasily Podkolzin to Abbotsford (AHL) on loan.

**SOCCER**  
**Major League Soccer**

**SPORTING KANSAS CITY** — Signed D Jake Davis to a contract through the 2027 season.

**National Women's Soccer League**  
**UTAH ROYALS FC** — Announced has mutually agreed to part ways with assistant coach Vanessa Mann for personal and family reasons.

# Thriving: Horses only get one shot to run race

## FROM PAGE 48

souvenir glasses, the crowd singing “My Old Kentucky Home” and the hand-sewn garland of red roses for the winner. The Derby was the second-most watched sporting event of 2023 behind the Super Bowl.

“I’ve heard a lot of people say it’s on their bucket list to attend and the one horse race that they watch every year,” said trainer Todd Pletcher, a two-time Derby winner who has this year’s early favorite in Fierceness.

## One chance only

Part of what makes the Derby unique is horses have just one chance to run in it since only 3-year-olds are eligible. It’s also the only race in America with a 20-horse field. Since 2013, horses have to accumulate points in qualifying races to earn their way in. Previously, money won in graded stakes races decided the field.

“It’s very tough to keep them on the path to get to the Derby, get into the Derby and then, hopefully, it all goes well, and you get a good, clean trip,” said trainer Brad Cox, a Louisville native who will saddle Catching Freedom, Encino and Just a Touch on Saturday.

Louisvillians take pride in their city’s tradition that dates to 1875, whipping up at-home versions of such high-calorie delicacies as Benedictine dip (grated cucumber, cream cheese, sour cream and mayo), Derby pie (chocolate chips and nuts) and cocktails if they’re not going to the track.

## Diversity struggles

Thirteen of the 15 jockeys in the first Derby were Black, including Oliver Lewis, who rode Aristides to victory in front of 10,000 cheering fans in 1875.

Black riders won 15 of the first 28 Derbies, and then there were none from 1920-2000. As Jim Crow laws were introduced, segregation spread throughout the nation, including horse racing where it was nearly impossible for Black riders to get licensed.

The last Black jockey in the race was Kendrick Carmouche in 2021.

Black trainers also dominated the Derby’s early years, winning seven of the first 17 from 1875-1891. On Saturday, Larry Demeritte will be just the second since 1951 and 17th overall when he saddles long shot West Saratoga.

Protesters demanding racial justice and an end to police brutality demonstrated outside Churchill Downs in 2020 and 2021 after Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old Black EMT, was killed by police in a botched drug raid at her Louis-

ville home.

Women have been a sporadic presence in the Derby, too. Only six have ridden in the race, the last being Rosie Napravnik in 2014. Seven women have trained Derby runners, with Vicki Oliver last doing so in 2021.

## Horse safety

Cox was declared the 2021 winner, nine months after the race when Medina Spirit was disqualified for a failed drug test — only the second such DQ in race history — and Mandaloun was elevated to first.

“We’re all trying to win this race to experience the thrill of victory,” Cox said, “and we’ve yet to do that.”

The Derby’s image took a major hit last year when 12 horses died at Churchill Downs in the weeks surrounding the race. An independent investigation cleared the track of any fault, and no singular cause was found. The track continued training, but moved the remainder of its spring racing meet to western Kentucky.

The trainer who owns a record-tying six victories isn’t in Louisville for the third straight year. Bob Baffert has been banned by Churchill Downs Inc. ever since Medina Spirit’s failed drug test upended the 2021 results.

Baffert fought his original two-year suspension in court, but lost a year ago. Last summer, the track said it was extending the suspension through 2024. It cited “continued concerns regarding the threat to the safety and integrity of racing he poses.”

## Sparkling showcase

Churchill Downs Inc., the track’s publicly traded parent company with shareholders to satisfy, has spent \$500 million renovating and modernizing over the last decade. Its newest showpiece is the \$200 million paddock, where fans who don’t mind dropping up to \$12,000 can dine and watch the horses being saddled before the races.

In its 150th year, the Derby’s purse has been boosted to a record \$5 million, with \$3.1 million going to the winning owner.

Despite all the changes with the race, the track and the intrusion of current events over the years, the first Saturday in May endures.

“The one thing that continues is you got 20 of the best 3-year-olds from around the world,” said trainer Doug O’Neill, a two-time Derby winner.

“It seems like the one mainstay that we can really rely on,” Pletcher said.



Baffert

## FOOTBALL

# Out with a bang

Pac-12 had its most players drafted in its final season

By JOSH DUBOW  
Associated Press

The final season of the Pac-12 turned out to be as big a hit in the NFL Draft as it was on the field.

The conference that is breaking up with 10 schools joining new leagues next season produced a record haul over the draft weekend led by No. 1 overall pick Caleb Williams of Southern California.

The Pac-12 produced six of the top 15 players and eight overall first-rounders, trailing only the 11 from the SEC. It was the best total for the Pac-12 since it had nine first-rounders in 2015.

The conference had 43 total players drafted after failing to get more than 28 in the previous three drafts, setting a record for the conference in the seven-round era that started in 1994. The previous high was 39 Pac-12 players picked in 2015. Washington, which was the first Pac-12 team to make the playoff since the 2018 season, led the way with 10.

The Pac-12 had the second-most players taken overall, trailing only the 59 for the SEC — which was the lowest total for that conference since the 2018 draft when 53 players were taken.

But it's a far different story when looked at through the lens of 2024 conference affiliations with Pac-12 holdovers Oregon State and Washington State each having three players taken. The rest get divvied up to other major conferences, along with the moves of Oklahoma and Texas from the Big 12 to the SEC.

The SEC still leads the way thanks to boosts from its newcomers with 73 picks, followed by the Big Ten with 69 thanks to the 27 draftees from Washington, Oregon, UCLA and USC.

In all, 55.3% of players drafted over the weekend finished their college careers at schools that will play in the SEC and Big Ten next season.

The top five individual schools were the top five teams in the final College Football

Playoff rankings with national champion Michigan leading the way with 13 — the fourth-most for any school in the seven-round era.

Texas was next with 11 after making it to the semifinals, with national runner-up Washington and semifinalist Alabama at 10. Florida State, which finished fifth in the final CFP rankings, also had 10 draftees.

There were 11 teams that played in the Power Five last season that had no players who finished their college careers at the school drafted over the weekend.

Syracuse, Georgia Tech and Virginia Tech of the ACC; Indiana, Nebraska and Northwestern of the Big Ten; Arizona State and Colorado of the Pac-12; Baylor and Oklahoma State of the Big 12; and Vanderbilt of the SEC had no players picked.

This draft marked the end of the Power Five era that began with the dissolution of Big East football following the 2012 season.

In the 11 drafts in that era, the SEC dominated the first round with 116 players picked — nearly doubling the total of 63 from the second-place Big Ten. The ACC had 56, the Pac-12 had 50 and the Big 12 had 26.

Alabama led the way individually with 33 players drafted in the first round during that span, followed by Ohio State with 24, Georgia with 19, Clemson with 16 and LSU with 15.

## Doubling up

LSU and Washington both had quarterbacks and receivers from their high-powered offenses go in the top 10 of the draft.

LSU's Heisman winner Jayden Daniels went second to Washington and his star receiver Malik Nabers went four spots later to the New York Giants. Washington quarterback Michael Penix and receiver Rome Odunze then went off the board at No. 8 and 9 to Atlanta and Chicago, respectively.

This was the first time in the common draft era than any school had a quarterback and receiver go in the top 10 of the same draft.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The five teams with the most players selected in the NFL Draft were the top five teams in the final CFP rankings last year.

SOURCE: Associated Press



LINDSEY WASSON/AP

Washington wide receiver Rome Odunze, left, and quarterback Michael Penix Jr. were selected on consecutive picks in the first round the NFL Draft, two of the six players from the Pac-12 to go in the top 15. The Huskies will play in the Big Ten next year.

The Tigers also had another receiver, Brian Thomas Jr., go off the board at No. 23 to Jacksonville, marking the fourth time since 1967 that a college had a QB and two receivers taken in the first round of the same draft. Alabama did it in back-to-back years in 2020 and '21, and LSU did it previously in 2007.

The Bears ended up with both Odunze and No. 1 overall pick Caleb Williams, becoming the fourth team in the common draft era to take a QB and receiver in the same first round.

The other teams were the 2010 Broncos (Demaryius Thomas and Tim Tebow), the 2004 Bills (Lee Evans and J.P. Losman) and the 1968 Lions (Greg Landry and Earl McCullouch).

## High-skilled

The Falcons made a surprising choice to draft Penix less than two months after handing a four-year, \$180 million contract to Kirk Cousins in free agency.

The pick follows selections made by general manager Terry Fontenot of tight end Kyle Pitts with the fourth pick in 2021, receiver Drake London eighth in 2022 and

running back Bijan Robinson eighth last season.

Atlanta was the first team in the common draft era to take an offensive skill position player in the top 10 in four straight drafts.

## Protect the passer

The importance of the passing game was evident by the six QBs that went off the board in the first 12 picks as teams recognize the need for an elite passer.

They also stressed the importance of protecting them with nine offensive linemen being taken in the first round for just the fourth time since at least 1967. The only year with more in the common draft era came in 1968 when 10 offensive linemen were taken.

The eight tackles selected in the first round led by No. 5 pick Joe Alt to the Chargers tied a record set in 2008 and there were 55 offensive linemen taken overall, edging out defensive backs (54) for the most players taken at any position.

Wide receivers and defensive linemen were next with 35, followed by linebackers with 31, including several edge rushers designated at the position.

# Big 12 out to prove it's still a peer of SEC, Big Ten

By RALPH D. RUSSO  
Associated Press

SCOTTDALE, Ariz. — Before the realigned Big 12 — sans Oklahoma and Texas — even kicks off, the expanded College Football Playoff's new revenue structure has created a perception that the conference is no longer the equal of the Big Ten and Southeastern Conference.

Instead of a Power Five, college football now has a "Big Two," with the expanded SEC, now home to the Sooners and Longhorns, and Big Ten at the top of the pack.

Big 12 commissioner Brett Yormark's job is to push back against the narrative that bigger bank accounts automatically means better football teams.

"As I've said before, I'm betting on the Big 12," Yormark said Wednesday after wrapping up two days of meetings with the

conference's athletic directors and football and basketball coaches.

The Big 12 becomes a 16-team conference this upcoming season with the additions of former Pac-12 schools Arizona, Arizona State, Colorado and Utah.

The CFP is expanding, too, from four teams to 12 this season, with five spots reserved for conference champions. That all but ensures the winners of the Big Ten, SEC, Big 12 and Atlantic Coast Conference will be in the field.

The demise of the Pac-12 prompted a change in the 12-team format before it even went into effect from six conference champions being guaranteed a spot in the field to five.

How those seven at-large spots will be divvied up among what is now a Power Four in college football figures to be much debat-

ed, but the Big Ten and SEC have already established something of a pecking order.

"You're kind of either labeled as one of the haves, one of the have-nots," TCU coach Sonny Dykes said.

When the new contracts kick in for the expanded CFP in 2026, the Big Ten and SEC are guaranteed to share nearly 60% of the revenue. The Big 12 and ACC will split up about 30%. In the original four-team playoff agreements, the Power Five received equal revenue shares.

"When you look at the first 10 years of the CFP, we didn't perform probably as well as we would have liked. That's OK. History might not repeat itself."

Yormark said he "certainly wasn't happy" with where the CFP revenue distribution landed.

"I guess you could say in some respects I

was satisfied. It was fine, but certainly not happy about it," he said.

Yormark said he pushed for a look-in on the new CFP deal after the 2027 season, where adjustments could be made to the CFP financial agreement.

When the new deal begins in 2026, the CFP could expand again to 14 teams. Yormark said he likes the idea of a bigger field, but said he would like to see at least this season play out before any decision is made on further expansion.

Talk of the Big Ten and SEC getting more automatic bids than the other leagues and guaranteed first-round byes went by the wayside for now, but the message has been sent: The Big 12 and ACC are no longer true peers.

How that plays out come selection Sunday remains to be seen.

## WNBA/COLLEGE BASKETBALL



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

Two WNBA teams have moved home games to bigger arenas when Caitlin Clark and the Indiana Fever visit to capitalize on her popularity.

## Some teams consider bigger arenas when Clark comes to town

By DOUG FEINBERG  
Associated Press

WNBA teams have started making moves to capitalize on the popularity of Caitlin Clark.

Some are booking bigger venues for when Clark and the Indiana Fever come to town.

The Las Vegas Aces and Washington Mystics have moved their games against the Fever to bigger arenas. The numbers Clark generated in college indicate it's a smart move.

While at Iowa, when the No. 1 pick in the draft and the Hawkeyes went on the road this past season, there were sellout crowds and attendance records.

"She helps ticket sales, so I think it's a really great time to have eyes. She's going to be an elite player," Aces coach Becky Hammon said. "She has been in college. She's done stuff in college that nobody else has. She's going to be a great player in the W. There's no doubt about it.

"So the more people we can pack into the building to cheer against her, we'll take it, although I don't know if they'll be cheering against her," Hammon quipped. "I guess they might be cheering for her."

The two-time reigning WNBA champion Aces relocated their game on May 25 from the 12,000-seat Michelob Ultra Arena to the 18,000-seat T-Mobile Arena.

Aces players credit Clark, but also know that their own team, which has won the past two WNBA championships, has done a great job increasing attendance at games over the past few seasons.

"We're not rolling out any red carpet. We're here to be a business and sell a lot of tickets. Kudos to her (Clark), but we also have done that in previous years in big games

as well," Las Vegas guard Kelsey Plum said. "There are a lot of people that play basketball. People are coming to watch A'ja Wilson. People are going to watch Chelsea Gray.

"That's not a slight on anyone, but I'm saying that's not for her. We played in Chicago last year. We sold it out last year."

Clark will make her preseason debut on Friday night at Dallas — a game that is already sold out.

The Mystics' game against Indiana on June 7 will be played at Capital One Arena — Washington's old home. Their normal home, the Entertainment and Sports Arena, can seat up to 4,200 fans, but the Capital One Arena has a maximum basketball capacity of more than 20,000.

Nearly half of WNBA teams play in NBA arenas, so there's no need to move those games.

Still, a few others that don't are feeling a push to move games to larger arenas, including the Chicago Sky. The Sky and Angel Reese play their home games in the 10,000-seat Wintrust Arena. Fans started a petition to move their first home game against Indiana to the bigger United Center. There's a concert scheduled at that arena on June 23 when the Fever come to town — so that's not going to happen.

The Los Angeles Sparks are another team that could move their game against Indiana.

The Sparks are playing their first five home games at Long Beach because of arena conflicts from construction and the NBA and NHL playoffs. They are hosting the Fever on May 24, which is scheduled to be played at Long Beach. The team's first five games will be played there in a 4,000-seat arena.

# UConn, Kentucky, others transform through portal

By PAT EATON-ROBB  
AND AARON BEARD  
Associated Press

A few days after winning a second consecutive national championship, UConn coach Dan Hurley posted a photo of himself on social media, lying on the floor and covering his eyes.

The caption read "Day 1 in the portal ..."

Several weeks later, Hurley has added several key pieces as the portal window closed Wednesday, with the Huskies trying to become the first team to win three straight NCAA titles since UCLA's run of seven straight from 1967-73. And they're among numerous major programs shuffling their decks through portal work.

UConn, which could lose all five starters from this year's title winner, has added former Michigan center Tarris Reed and former Saint Mary's star guard Aidan Mahaney from the portal. The Huskies also landed top recruit Liam McNeeley, who decommitted from Indiana while the Hoosiers revamp their roster with transfers.

"Obviously, we've utilized the portal to great benefit and players that it hasn't made great sense for them here, you know, have departed," Hurley said. "But, obviously there's a lot more structure that we need in our game because there's no other sports league that operates this way."

Here's how the portal has affected some other top programs this season.

### Big movers

**Kentucky:** The biggest job changing hands in the offseason carousel has meant plenty of changes through the Wildcats roster with John Calipari's exit to Arkansas and Mark Pope's arrival from BYU. Portal additions include guard Lamont Butler, who hit the buzzer-beating winner for San Diego State in the 2023 Final Four against Florida Atlantic; Oklahoma forward Otega Oweh; Wake Forest forward Andrew Carr; Oklahoma State big man Brandon Garrison; Dayton guard Koby Brea, the nation's top 3-point shooter at 49.8%; and Dayton big man Amari Williams. And on Wednesday, former Arizona and West Virginia guard Kerr Kriisa committed to Kentucky, according to On3 Sports.

**Arkansas:** Calipari's portal additions are headlined by Florida Atlantic guard Johnell Davis, the leading scorer on the Owls' Final Four team in 2023 and the No. 2-ranked transfer in 247Sports'



AARON DOSTER/AP

Dayton guard Koby Brea, who led the nation in 3-point shooting last season at Dayton, will play his final season at Kentucky. Brea is the fifth player this week and sixth overall to sign with the Wildcats.

rankings. Arkansas also landed Tennessee forward Jonas Aidoo and Kentucky big man Zvonimir Ivisic. A mass of departures included leading scorer Tramon Mark (to Texas), though Calipari has also added 247Sports' No. 6-ranked recruiting class with three four-star prospects who originally committed to him at UK.

**Duke:** Jon Scheyer's third team will look nothing like his second. Seven players pursued transfers, headlined by veteran guard Jeremy Roach landing at Baylor and forward Mark Mitchell going to Missouri. But Duke added veteran pieces in Syracuse forward Maliq Brown and Purdue forward Mason Gillis, while the departures have largely cleared the way for the nation's top recruiting class to come into starring roles: a six-player class that includes 247Sports No. 1 overall prospect Cooper Flagg, No. 3 prospect Khaman Maluach and three other top-20 recruits.

**Michigan:** The Wolverines have added six transfers with the hiring of Dusty May from Florida Atlantic while losing Reed and four other players. Newcomers include 7-foot-1 center Vladislav Goldin, who followed his coach from FAU after withdrawing his name from the NBA Draft. Other big names coming in include center Danny Wolf from Yale, forward Sam Walters from Alabama and guard Roddy Gayle Jr. from rival Ohio State.

**Indiana:** Mike Woodson has grabbed four big names out of the portal, including 247Sports' top-ranked transfer in Arizona big man Oumar Ballo. He joins former Stanford guard Kanaan Carlyle, former Washington State guard Myles Rice and former Illinois guard Luke Goode.

**Kansas:** The Jayhawks aggressively jumped into the portal by adding AJ Storr (Wisconsin), Riley Kugel (Florida) and Zeke Mayo (South Dakota State). The haul included Rylan Griffen, a starter on the Alabama team that reached the Final Four. "Rylan's won everywhere he's been," said coach Bill Self, who also re-recruited star big man Hunter Dickinson for a second season in Lawrence following his transfer from Michigan.

### Notable

**Memphis:** Penny Hardaway helped his backcourt by luring Texas guard Tyrese Hunter (11.1 points) and Tulsa's PJ Haggerty (21.2).

**North Carolina:** The Tar Heels found perimeter help by adding Belmont scoring wing Cade Tyson (16.2 points) and got a boost when top defender Seth Trimble reversed course on transferring to return for his third season alongside RJ Davis — a first-team Associated Press All-American returning for a fifth season.

**North Carolina State:** Wolfpack coach Kevin Keatts relied on transfers to make an unexpected run to the program's first Atlantic Coast Conference title since 1987 and its first Final Four since 1983. His next wave includes Louisville big Brandon Huntley-Hatfield and Georgetown wing Dontrez Styles, who started his career at Wolfpack rival UNC.

**UCLA:** A 16-17 stumble led coach Mick Cronin to add multiple transfers, including forward Kobe Johnson from cross-town USC, Louisville guard Skyy Clark, Oregon State forward Tyler Bilodeau and Oklahoma State forward Eric Dailey Jr.

MLB

# Trout no longer defined by talent

Extensive injuries in recent seasons have dimmed Angels' star

By GREG BEACHAM  
Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Mike Trout never had a significant injury in his charmed baseball career until May 2017, when he tore a thumb ligament sliding headfirst into second base.

On his first day back from a 39-game absence, the superstar slugger stole second — and he slid headfirst again.

“I’m not changing the way I play,” a grinning Trout said that night in the Los Angeles Angels’ clubhouse, a singular young athlete confident in his exceptionalism.

Less than seven years later in the hallway outside that same Anaheim clubhouse, Trout repeatedly fought back tears Tuesday while he publicly addressed his fourth major injury in the past four seasons.

“It’s just frustrating,” he said quietly, his eyes downcast. “But we’ll get through it. ... I play the game hard, and (stuff) happens.”

Trout still might be the greatest baseball player produced by his generation, but he’ll never again be that 25-year-old who seemed pretty sure he was invincible. Like Ken Griffey Jr. before him, Trout’s mid-career injury problems have waylaid a meteoric career and stalled his historic rate of production at the plate.

The 32-year-old Trout’s talent and passion still shine when he’s on the field, but they haven’t kept him healthy in his second decade in baseball.

Since the start of the 2021 season, Trout has played in 266 games. The Angels’ loss to Philadelphia on Wednesday was the 251st game he has missed in that stretch.

Trout had 285 career homers when he won his third AL MVP award in 2019. The Angels’ center fielder has hit just 93 homers in the four-plus seasons since then, with COVID-19 shortening his 2020 campaign and injuries doing the rest.

Trout had 1,324 hits after the 2019 season, but he has compiled just 324 since, greatly slowing his march toward 2,000 or 3,000. His batting average (.277) and OPS (.958) since 2019 are also significantly below his career marks.

While Trout’s bat speed remains among the fastest in the majors, he has acknowledged several struggles with his mechanics for the past two seasons, including a declining contact rate and troubles with high-velocity pitching. Trout still led the majors with 10 homers when he got hurt this



RYAN SUN/AP

**Los Angeles Angels center fielder Mike Trout went the first five full seasons of his major league career without any significant injuries, but has now suffered four major injuries in as many seasons.**

week, but his batting average was down to .220 — even dipping his career average below .300 shortly before his injury.

Trout now has a torn meniscus in his left knee. Compounding his frustration, he doesn’t know how it happened — perhaps while running in the outfield, perhaps while simply walking to the dugout.

“Nobody wants to play more than Mike does,” Angels general manager Perry Minasian said. “He loves this. He loves everything about this. He wakes up thinking about it. He goes to bed thinking about it. He eats, sleeps and breathes baseball. I really feel for him.”

Trout was baseball’s breakout star of the 2010s, a strapping slugger from small-town southern New Jersey who dazzled the sport when he landed in Orange County. He’s an electrifying hitter, an exciting fielder and a fiery competitor often described as the spiritual heir to Mickey Mantle.

Trout seemed capable of anything, even if he only got the Angels to the playoffs once in 2014. But as the Halos’ losing seasons piled up, he gradually became familiar with pain, sleepless nights and interminable medical procedures.

Trout missed all but 36 games of the 2021 season with a strained calf that healed confoundingly slowly. He missed five weeks of the 2022 season with a back injury, although he still hit 40 homers.

## 266

The number of games Mike Trout has played for the Angels since the start of the 2021 season. He played in 29 games this season before going down with another injury, giving him an average of just 79 games played for the past three seasons.

Trout then broke a bone in his hand on a foul ball July 3 last season. He tried to return in August when it briefly looked like the Angels might make a postseason run, but he played only one painful game before shutting it down for the year.

Trout had been in “a good frame of mind” this season, new Angels manager Ron Washington said. “He was loving coming to the ballpark, and he was loving going out there, trying to get in the swing of things of the season, and then this happened.”

The Angels have provided no timeline for Trout’s recovery from surgery, but most athletes with the injury miss at least a couple of months, often more.

With or without Trout, the Angels are reeling.

The club lost Shohei Ohtani to a \$700 million free-agent deal with the nearby Dodgers, and the front office signed no significant help for Trout. At 11-19 heading into May after losing 10 of 12, a 10th consecutive non-playoff season

and a ninth straight losing season — both the longest active streaks in the majors — seem increasingly likely for the Halos.

Trout’s injury problems have been crushing for his franchise — but so have the extensive injury woes of Anthony Rendon, the \$245 million third baseman signed by owner Arte Moreno to provide Trout with a dynamic counterpart. Rendon is currently out with yet another injury, a hamstring tear that probably won’t heal quickly.

When Rendon arrived for the short 2020 season, he and Trout played together 46 times in 60 games. Since then, the Angels’ two highest-paid players have appeared together in only 118 of the Angels’ 516 games (22.8%) from the start of the 2021 season.

Trout is older and more fragile than that golden youth of the previous decade, but he’s also wiser: When he slides these days, he tries to go feet-first — and he wears a bulky sliding mitt.

His \$426.5 million contract runs through 2030, and he has repeatedly said he isn’t interested in leaving Anaheim. Trout still wants to turn the Angels into a winner, believing it will be even sweeter because it took so long.

But first, another surgery and another recovery await.

“It’s a pretty simple procedure,” Trout said. “I’ll have it right away and get back as fast as I can. (But) this is tough.”

## Scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Baltimore	19	11	.633	—
New York	20	12	.625	—
Boston	18	13	.581	1½
Toronto	15	17	.469	5
Tampa Bay	14	18	.438	6
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	20	10	.667	—
Kansas City	19	13	.594	2
Detroit	18	13	.581	2½
Minnesota	17	13	.567	3
Chicago	6	25	.194	14½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	17	14	.548	—
Texas	16	15	.516	1
Oakland	15	17	.469	2½
Los Angeles	11	20	.355	6
Houston	10	20	.333	6½
National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	20	9	.690	—
Philadelphia	21	11	.656	½
New York	15	15	.500	5½
Washington	15	15	.500	5½
Miami	8	24	.250	13½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	19	11	.633	—
Chicago	19	12	.613	½
Cincinnati	16	15	.516	3½
St. Louis	14	17	.452	5½
Pittsburgh	14	18	.438	6
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	20	13	.606	—
San Diego	16	18	.471	4½
San Francisco	14	17	.452	5
Arizona	14	18	.438	5½
Colorado	7	23	.233	11½
Wednesday's games				
Detroit 4, St. Louis 1				
Milwaukee 7, Tampa Bay 1				
Minnesota 10, Chicago White Sox 5				
Kansas City 6, Toronto 1				
Oakland 4, Pittsburgh 0				
Atlanta 5, Seattle 2				
Philadelphia 2, L.A. Angels 1				
N.Y. Yankees 2, Baltimore 0				
Boston 6, San Francisco 2				
Washington 1, Texas 0				
Cleveland 3, Houston 2, 10 innings				
San Diego 6, Cincinnati 2				
Miami 4, Colorado 1				
Chicago Cubs 1, N.Y. Mets 0				
L.A. Dodgers 8, Arizona 0				
Thursday's games				
Colorado at Miami				
N.Y. Yankees at Baltimore				
Chicago Cubs at N.Y. Mets				
San Francisco at Boston				
Washington at Texas				
Cleveland at Houston				
Friday's games				
Milwaukee (Ross 1-3) at Chicago Cubs (Wesneski 2-0)				
Baltimore (Irvin 2-1) at Cincinnati (Greene 1-2)				
San Francisco (Hicks 2-0) at Philadelphia (Nola 4-1)				
Colorado (Quattrill 0-3) at Pittsburgh (Pérez 1-1)				
Toronto (Kikuchi 2-2) at Washington (TBD)				
N.Y. Mets (Quintana 1-2) at Tampa Bay (Civale 2-2)				
Detroit (Olson 0-4) at N.Y. Yankees (Stroman 2-1)				
L.A. Angels (Soriano 0-4) at Cleveland (TBD)				
Texas (Lorenzen 2-1) at Kansas City (Singer 2-1)				
Boston (Houck 3-2) at Minnesota (Padack 2-1)				
Seattle (Kirby 3-2) at Houston (Blanco 3-0)				
Chicago White Sox (Keller 0-0) at St. Louis (Gray 3-1)				
San Diego (Cease 3-2) at Arizona (Ceccolini 1-1)				
Miami (Weathers 2-2) at Oakland (Sears 1-2)				
Atlanta (Morton 2-0) at L.A. Dodgers (Stone 2-1)				
Saturday's games				
Detroit at N.Y. Yankees				
Boston at Minnesota				
Chicago White Sox at St. Louis				
Milwaukee at Chicago Cubs				
Colorado at Pittsburgh				
Toronto at Washington				
Miami at Oakland				
San Francisco at Philadelphia				
L.A. Angels at Cincinnati				
Baltimore at Cleveland				
Texas at Kansas City				
Seattle at Houston				
N.Y. Mets at Tampa Bay				
San Diego at Arizona				
Atlanta at L.A. Dodgers				

## NHL



CHRIS O'MEARA/AP

Lightning center Steven Stamkos celebrates his goal in front of Florida Panthers center Eetu Luostarinen during the first period of Game 4 of their first-round playoff series April 27 in Tampa, Fla.

# Stamkos, Lightning have mutual interest in return

## Tampa Bay's career scoring leader set to become free agent

By FRED GOODALL  
Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Steven Stamkos wants to hoist the Stanley Cup again with the Tampa Bay Lightning.

The 34-year-old captain, who can become a free agent this summer, reiterated Wednesday that he'd like to remain with the only franchise he's played for in a stellar 16-season career.

And, general manager Julien BriseBois said the club definitely wants him back, adding he's already spoken with Stamkos and his agent to begin discussions in the aftermath of Tampa Bay's loss to the Florida Panthers in the first round of the NHL playoffs.

"From the trade deadline on, he elevated his level of play, which was incredible to see," BriseBois said.

"For someone who you can say has already earned his Hall of Fame plaque and has accomplished so much for so long — for him to play arguably the best two months of hockey of his career at a time when our team needed it most was incredible."

Stamkos is the Lightning's career leader in points (1,137) and goals (555), a seven-time All-Star

and a two-time winner of the Maurice "Rocket" Richard Trophy as the league's leading goal scorer.

He expressed frustration at not receiving a contract extension last summer, then went out and delivered the seventh 40-goal season of his career.

The No. 1 overall pick from the 2008 draft was especially effective down the stretch with 28 points (16 goals, 12 assists) after March 8 to help the Lightning overcome a slow start and key injuries to make the playoffs.

"It was harder for us this year to get into the playoffs, but they found a way. ... From the midpoint of the year, which was Jan. 8 through April 5, when we clinched a playoff spot, we actually had the third-best record in the NHL," BriseBois said.

"That, plus the players that are under contract, give me every reason to believe we're going to be highly competitive again next year," the GM added. "We want (Stamkos) to be part of that group."

Stamkos, who helped the Lightning win consecutive Stanley Cup titles in 2020 and 2021, finished with 40 goals and 41 assists in 79

games this season.

He scored five goals during Tampa Bay's first-round playoff loss to the Panthers, becoming the third player in franchise history to reach 100 postseason points.

Despite losing in the opening round of the playoffs for the second straight year, Stamkos is confident the Lightning are not far away from contending for another Stanley Cup title.

"I think the window's certainly open when you have some of the premier players at every position," Stamkos said. "You look at all the teams that have won the Cup in the last five years, and we talk about really good defensemen, an elite goalie and elite forwards."

Coach Jon Cooper agrees the Lightning, who made three consecutive appearances in the Stanley Cup Final from 2020-22, remain a formidable team.

"We're still a good team, but everybody else is trying to find a way to improve as well, and they have a say in what you're going. But I think our standard and how we've gone about our business in the league is still exceptional," Cooper said.

# Rangers rookie Rempe doesn't mind playing villain role in playoffs

By STEPHEN WHYNO  
Associated Press

Matt Rempe stretched on the bench several minutes before warm-ups when the chants started.

A chorus of "Rempe! Rempe!" emerged from nearby New York Rangers fans, sounding almost like the Yankees "Bleacher Creatures" roll-calling players from the outfield.

The popular 6-foot-8 rookie waved and got a big cheer when he went down the tunnel.

Then, every time he touched the puck during the game in Washington, the Capitals crowd booed Rempe, unhappy about a hit he made two nights earlier that injured defenseman Trevor van Riemsdyk and sparked more criticism about his play. The 21-year-old forward shrugged it off, happy to play the villain role on the road knowing back home at Madison Square Garden he'll be applauded just as much, if not more.

"I've got no issue with it," Rempe said last weekend. "In New York there, they love it when I'm playing hard. And if you go on the road and they don't like it, that means you're playing hard, you're playing physical."

That's what the Rangers want from Rempe, called up in February to bring some size and toughness to a team that went on to finish atop the NHL and win the Presidents' Trophy. They'll next face the Carolina Hurricanes in the second round of their pursuit of the franchise's first Stanley Cup since 1994.

Rempe unintentionally injured two Washington Capitals players in Game 3 of the first-round sweep: van Riemsdyk on a hit he was penalized on for interference and winger T.J. Oshie on an otherwise innocuous hit that caused a broken right hand.

Tom Wilson tried to fight Rempe afterward. Rempe declined.

"I just felt like there's a certain point where he hits enough of your teammates — that are kind of bor-

derline hits — that it doesn't matter whether it's the playoffs or a big game, it doesn't mean anything: It's still hockey. You can still stand up for your teammates," Wilson said Tuesday. "I felt like in that moment I wanted to do that. He didn't want to do it."

Rempe fought New York Islanders tough guy Matt Martin on his first shift in the league back in February in front of nearly 80,000 fans outside at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J. He fought four more times over his final 17 games of the regular season, and the balance between dropping the gloves and the trappings of that from five minutes in the box to risk of injury is a constant conversation between Rempe and the coaching staff.

"He's been a really effective player for us," coach Peter Laviolette said. "He's done it on the ice with his game. He's done it through his physicality. He's done it through fighting when he's had to. We're just trying to manage him and make sure he understands that he's important when he's on the ice, as well."

Rempe scored a goal, blocked a shot and dished out 18 hits in his first NHL playoff series, skating just 27 minutes (average of 6:46) over four games. Based on practice Wednesday, he'll be in the lineup for the series opener against Carolina, which could be Sunday or Monday in New York.

His status could certainly change if Laviolette opts for more speed against the Cup favorite Hurricanes or if Filip Chytil is able to play his first game since Nov. 2. But for now, the Rangers enjoy having Rempe on the ice with them.

"He's just a big kid having fun playing hockey," captain Jacob Trouba said. "Players love him. He's been a big part of our team, a big part of momentum, a big part of just the attitude and the energy around the Rangers recently. That's a lot to carry for someone like him, but I think he's done a great job of it."



TOM BRENNER/AP

Washington Capitals right wing T.J. Oshie, left, collides with New York Rangers center Matt Rempe on April 26 in Washington.

## NHL PLAYOFFS

## Stars hold serve, lead Knights 3-2

By **STEPHEN HAWKINS**  
Associated Press

DALLAS — Jason Robertson scored on a power play after Tyler Seguin was smacked in the face, Jake Oettinger had another flawless finish and the Dallas Stars finally got a home win in these NHL playoffs.

Robertson's goal late in the second period put the Stars ahead to stay and they beat the Vegas Golden Knights 3-2 in Game 5 on Wednesday night. They now lead the series after the visitors had won each of the first four games.

"The resilience ... I think it's great how we've been able to battle back," said Wyatt Johnston, the 20-year-old forward who had two assists.

Evgenii Dadonov and Matt Duchene also scored for the Stars, who have won three in a row after dropping the first two games at home last week as the No. 1 seed in the Western Conference.

"A credit to our group. You know, there wasn't a lot of believers at that point," Stars coach Pete DeBoer said. "We went on the road into a tough environment, and kind of rolled up our sleeves and went to work. And you look up and six days later you've got a 3-2 lead and a chance to close out the the Stanley Cup champions."

Seguin was down on the ice and a bit dazed after Alex Pietrangelo took a big backhanded swing and connected to the face of the Stars forward when they were together against the boards.

The play was initially called a five-minute major, but changed to a minor penalty after replay review.

Still, it was a major hit against the Knights. Robertson's third goal of the series came after he got his own ricochet and knocked the puck through traffic and past Adin

Hill, the goalie starting his first game for the Knights this series.

Pietrangelo's hit was certainly some retaliation against Seguin, who had taken a penalty for an illegal check to the head of Shea Theodore earlier in the second period, another call that was initially a major penalty but was downgraded after replay review.

"A veteran guy should know better," Vegas coach Bruce Cassidy said of Pietrangelo, while acknowledging his team wasn't happy about the hit on Theodore. "You're going to be upset, but that's playoff hockey. You've got to find a way to channel it."

Stars goalie Jake Oettinger stopped 25 shots, including a nearly full-split save to deny Chandler Stephenson on a breakaway with about 2½ minutes left in the game.

"I was on the ice watching that breakaway and said a prayer but I should have just trusted in Jake," Seguin said.

"He really has the ability to go to another level at the most important time of the game," DeBoer said. "That was the third period tonight, that was the third period the other night."

Oettinger had 11 saves in the third period, and has stopped all 55 shots he has faced in the third period or overtime in this series.

Hill had 22 saves after Logan Thompson had started the first four games.

Mark Stone and William Carrier scored the goals for Vegas.

Game 6 is Friday night in Las Vegas, where the Stars won 3-2 in overtime in Game 3, then 4-2 in Game 4.

Vegas never trailed the Stars in the Western Conference finals last year, winning the first three games before wrapping up the series in six games.



TONY GUTIERREZ/AP

Stars goaltender Jake Oettinger uses his right leg to deny Golden Knights center Chandler Stephenson on a breakaway late in the third period of Game 5 of their playoff series Wednesday in Dallas.



JASON FRANSON, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

The Kings' Matt Roy chases the Oilers' Connor McDavid as goalie David Rittich poke checks the puck during the second period of Game 5 of their first-round playoff series Wednesday in Edmonton, Alberta.

# Draisaitl scores 2 goals to help Oilers oust Kings

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — The Edmonton Oilers and Los Angeles Kings played a tight-checking series at even strength. The special teams matchup, however, was lopsided — and that's why it ended in five games.

"That was a difference in this series," Oilers head coach Kris Knoblauch said.

Leon Draisaitl scored twice, and the Edmonton Oilers beat the Los Angeles Kings 4-3 in Game 5 on Wednesday night to win their first-round NHL playoff series.

The Oilers power play went 1-for-5 on the night but scored twice just after time had expired on a penalty. Edmonton finished 9-for-20 with the man-advantage in the five games. Los Angeles, meanwhile, was 0-for-1 in this game, going scoreless on 12 power plays in the series.

"It's pretty simple to write this one," Kings interim head coach Jim Hiller said. "You saw one team execute, and one team not, on special teams."

Zach Hyman — with his seventh goal of the postseason — and Evander Kane also scored for Edmonton, which only dropped a 5-4 loss in overtime of Game 2 in the best-of-seven series.

Evan Bouchard added three assists, and Connor McDavid and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins had two each as Edmonton's offense broke out at Rogers Place. McDavid extended his points total to a playoff-leading 12 (one goal, 11 assists). Stuart Skinner made 18 saves

## Scoreboard

### First round

(Best-of-seven; x-if necessary)

#### EASTERN CONFERENCE

Carolina 4, N.Y. Islanders 1

Carolina 3, N.Y. Islanders 1

Carolina 5, N.Y. Islanders 3

Carolina 3, N.Y. Islanders 2

N.Y. Islanders 3, Carolina 2, 2OT

Carolina 6, N.Y. Islanders 3

Florida 4, Tampa Bay 1

Florida 3, Tampa Bay 2

Florida 3, Tampa Bay 2, OT

Florida 5, Tampa Bay 3

Tampa Bay 6, Florida 3

Florida 6, Tampa Bay 1

Boston 3, Toronto 2

Boston 5, Toronto 1

Toronto 3, Boston 2

Boston 4, Toronto 2

Boston 3, Toronto 1

Toronto 2, Boston 1, OT

Thursday: at Toronto

x-Saturday: at Boston

N.Y. Rangers 4, Washington 0

N.Y. Rangers 4, Washington 1

N.Y. Rangers 4, Washington 3

N.Y. Rangers 3, Washington 1

N.Y. Rangers 4, Washington 2

N.Y. Rangers 4, Washington 2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Colorado 4, Winnipeg 1

Winnipeg 7, Colorado 6

Colorado 5, Winnipeg 2

Colorado 6, Winnipeg 2

Colorado 5, Winnipeg 1

Colorado 6, Winnipeg 3

Edmonton 4, Los Angeles 1

Edmonton 7, Los Angeles 4

Los Angeles 5, Edmonton 4, OT

Edmonton 6, Los Angeles 1

Edmonton 1, Los Angeles 0

Wednesday: Edmonton 4, Los Angeles 3

Vancouver 3, Nashville 2

Vancouver 4, Nashville 2

Nashville 4, Vancouver 1

Vancouver 2, Nashville 1

Vancouver 4, Nashville 3, OT

Nashville 2, Vancouver 1

Friday: at Nashville, AFN-Sports2, 1 a.m.

Saturday CET; 8 a.m. Saturday JKT

x-Sunday: at Vancouver

Dallas 3, Vegas 2

Vegas 4, Dallas 3

Vegas 3, Dallas 1

Dallas 3, Vegas 2, OT

Dallas 4, Vegas 2

Wednesday: Dallas 3, Vegas 2

Friday: at Vegas, AFN-Sports2, 4 a.m.

Saturday CET; 11 a.m. Saturday JKT

x-Sunday: at Dallas

The Oilers move on to the second round, where they'll face the winner of a matchup between the Vancouver Canucks and Nashville Predators. Vancouver leads the series 3-2 heading into Game 6 on Friday in Nashville.

The Oilers now get some rest while waiting for their next opponent.

"Rest is always a good thing, rest is a weapon this time of year," McDavid said. "That being said, we have to make sure we're ready to roll. Practice hard against each other ... make sure there's no change in our game."

Adrian Kempe, Alex Laferriere and Blake Lizotte scored for Los Angeles, and David Rittich stopped 22 shots in his second straight start.

Edmonton eliminated Los Angeles in the opening round for the third straight year after coming out on top in six games in 2023 and seven in 2022.

"You're out of the playoffs regardless of who beats you, but definitely not a great feeling getting the worst of it three years in a row," the Kings' Anze Kopitar said. "We've just got to play better, really. Special teams hurt us a lot, obviously, this series. There were parts of the games where we were good, we were dictating the game, but you've got to do it, obviously, more often and every game, too, in order to win the series."

Down 2-1 in the second period, the Oilers scored three consecutive goals to take a 4-2 lead and control of the game.

after posting a shutout in Edmonton's 1-0 win at Los Angeles in Game 4.

## NBA PLAYOFFS

## Celtics rout short-handed Heat to advance

By KYLE HIGHTOWER  
Associated Press

BOSTON — If this playoff run is about redemption for the Boston Celtics, it had to start with exacting some revenge against the Miami Heat.

A year ago, Miami embarrassed Boston in a Game 7 showdown at TD Garden.

This time, the Celtics returned the favor.

Jaylen Brown and Derrick White each scored 25 points and the Celtics advanced to the Eastern Conference semifinals, beating the short-handed Heat 118-84 in Game 5 on Wednesday night.

Boston will face the winner of the Cleveland-Orlando series. The Cavaliers lead 3-2, with Game 6 in Orlando on Friday night.

Brown said they went into the game with a business-like approach.

"It is a lot of history, back and forth. But it didn't matter who it was," Brown said. "We just had to get the job done."

That was echoed by teammate Jayson Tatum.

"I think this is my fourth time playing them in playoffs," Tatum said. "They all count the same. ... We did our job. We took care of business."

Brown also had six assists, and White hit five 3-pointers. Sam Hauser added 17 points and Tatum had 16 points and 12 rebounds. The top-seeded Celtics never trailed and led by 37 points.

Bam Adebayo scored 23 points and Tyler Herro had 15 for Miami, which made its first exit from the playoffs prior to the conference finals since 2021. The Heat struggled throughout, going 3-for-29 from 3-point range.

Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said it was clear early that the Celtics



CHARLES KRUPA/AP

**Boston Celtics guard Jaylen Brown, right, gets a slam dunk against Miami Heat center Bam Adebayo in the first half of Game 5 on Wednesday in Boston. The Celtics won 118-84 to advance to the second round.**

were playing with some extra energy from the opening tip.

"They probably had something to motivate them even more against us," he said.

Despite the lopsided loss and the way their season ended, Adebayo said he is taking lessons into the offseason.

"We've gained a lot of mental toughness," he said. "Going through that as a captain, it helped me understand that the ship's going to get rocky sometimes."

Boston played for the first time this postseason without center Kristaps Porzingis after he strained his right calf in the Celtics' Game 4 victory. His team-

mates filled in the gaps, as the Celtics' lead reached 30 points in the first half.

Boston exploited a Heat team that was the most injured it'd been in the series. Jaime Jaquez Jr. sat out after suffering a hip injury in Game 4. He was replaced in the lineup by Delon Wright, marking the 37th starting five the Heat used this season. Jaquez joined Jimmy Butler (knee) and Terry Rozier (neck), who had both been sidelined since the start of the series.

It made for unique rotations for Miami, which included veteran Patty Mills logging minutes for just the third time in the series.

Boston seized on the vulnerabilities in the Heat's defense, spreading them out and knocking down eight 3-pointers in the opening period. It helped the Celtics carry an 18-point lead into the second quarter.

The highlight of the opening 12 minutes came courtesy of White, who pulverized Miami from long distance with eight 3s in Game 4. He stayed on the attack early Wednesday, faking a 3-point attempt and then driving in for an uncontested one-handed dunk.

White played to the home crowd afterward, holding his hand in front of his face as he backpedaled up the court. After

## Scoreboard

## First Round

(Best-of-seven; x-if necessary)

## Eastern Conference

Indiana 3, Milwaukee 2

Milwaukee 109, Indiana 94

Indiana 125, Milwaukee 108

Indiana 121, Milwaukee 118, OT

Indiana 126, Milwaukee 113

Milwaukee 115, Indiana 92

Thursday: at Indiana

x-Saturday: at Milwaukee

Boston 4, Miami 1

Boston 114, Miami 94

Miami 111, Boston 101

Boston 104, Miami 84

Boston 102, Miami 88

Wednesday: Boston 118, Miami 84

Cleveland 3, Orlando 2

Cleveland 97, Orlando 83

Cleveland 96, Orlando 86

Orlando 121, Cleveland 83

Orlando 112, Cleveland 89

Cleveland 104, Orlando 103

Friday: at Orlando, AFN-Sports, 2 a.m.

Saturday CET, 9 a.m. Saturday JKT

x-Sunday: at Cleveland

New York 3, Philadelphia 2

New York 111, Philadelphia 104

New York 104, Philadelphia 101

Philadelphia 125, New York 114

New York 97, Philadelphia 92

Philadelphia 112, New York 106, OT

Thursday: at Philadelphia

x-Saturday: at New York

## Western Conference

Dallas 3, L.A. Clippers 2

L.A. Clippers 109, Dallas 97

Dallas 96, L.A. Clippers 93

Dallas 101, L.A. Clippers 90

L.A. Clippers 116, Dallas 111

Wednesday: Dallas 123, L.A. Clippers 93

Friday: at Dallas, AFN-Sports, 4:30 a.m.

Saturday CET, 11:30 a.m. Saturday JKT

x-Sunday: at L.A. Clippers

Denver 4, L.A. Lakers 1

Denver 114, L.A. Lakers 103

Denver 101, L.A. Lakers 99

Denver 112, L.A. Lakers 105

L.A. Lakers 119, Denver 108

Denver 180, L.A. Lakers 106

Oklahoma City 4, New Orleans 0

Oklahoma City 94, New Orleans 92

Oklahoma City 124, New Orleans 92

Oklahoma City 106, New Orleans 85

Oklahoma City 97, New Orleans 89

Minnesota 4, Phoenix 0

Minnesota 120, Phoenix 95

Minnesota 105, Phoenix 93

Minnesota 126, Phoenix 109

Minnesota 122, Phoenix 116

## Doncic leads Mavericks to 3-2 series lead over Clippers

By GREG BEACHAM  
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Luka Doncic is playing on a sprained right knee that would probably sideline him in the regular season. The Dallas star has also been congested and ill for several days, fighting a bug that's forcing him to blow his nose during timeouts.

Doncic simply refused to be slowed in Game 5 — not by multiple ailments, and certainly not by any Los Angeles Clippers during a blowout victory that put his Dallas Mavericks on the brink of the second round.

Doncic scored 20 of his 35 points in the second half and added 10 assists and seven rebounds, propelling the Mavericks to a 123-93 victory Wednesday night and a 3-2 lead in the first-round series.

Maxi Kleber hit five 3-pointers



MARK J. TERRILL/AP

**Dallas Mavericks guard Luka Doncic drives toward the basket as Clippers guard Brandon Boston Jr. follows Wednesday in Los Angeles. Doncic scored 35 points in the Mavericks' 123-93 win.**

and Kyrie Irving added 14 points for the Mavericks, who clamped down on the Clippers defensively

and handed Los Angeles the biggest margin of defeat in its playoff history. Dallas needs one more

win to claim its first playoff series victory since 2022 and only its third since winning the NBA title in 2011.

"I think it was a very big game," Doncic said. "We win, and now we've got to win one out of two. We've got to go back to Dallas and play the same way."

Game 6 is Friday night in Dallas. If necessary, Game 7 will be back in Los Angeles on Sunday.

Doncic's injured knee has limited him at times in the series, and the symptoms of his apparent illness are slowing him down as well. But he clearly got more comfortable and more dangerous as the night went on in downtown Los Angeles.

He had 14 points in the third quarter while the Mavs stretched their lead to 25 and eventually took an 89-69 advantage into the

fourth, where the Clippers never threatened to do an imitation of Dallas' rally from a 31-point deficit in Game 4.

Doncic said his illness made things "tough," and his knee is "not really good."

"But you talk about adrenaline in a playoff game," he added. "Once you get started, you want to do everything you can to help your team win. I just wanted to keep going."

Paul George and Ivica Zubac scored 15 points apiece for the Clippers, who played their second straight game and third of the series without Kawhi Leonard. LA's leading scorer has right knee inflammation at the most critical point in the season, and his teammates were unable to win without him in Game 5 after doing it twice earlier in the series.

# SPORTS



## Cooling off the Heat

Top-seeded Boston eliminates Miami in five games » **NBA playoffs, Page 47**



DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP

Victor Espinoza rides American Pharoah to victory in the 141st running of the Kentucky Derby at Churchill Downs in 2015. American Pharoah went on to win the Triple Crown.

# Surviving and still thriving



DARRON CUMMINGS/AP

Dressing up and donning a unique hat is part of the pageantry.

## Through 150 years, the Kentucky Derby has spanned world wars, several controversies

BY BETH HARRIS  
*Associated Press*

**A**s a record crowd cheered, American Pharoah rallied from behind and took aim at his remaining two rivals in the stretch. The bay colt and jockey Victor Espinoza surged to the lead with a furlong to go and thundered across the finish line a length ahead in the 2015 Kentucky Derby.

“There’s nothing like winning the Kentucky Derby,” recalled Espinoza, a three-time winner. “To me it’s the most important thing in horse racing.”

America’s longest continuously held sporting event turns 150 years old this Saturday. By age, it’s got the Westminster dog show beat by two years. The Derby has survived two world wars, the Depression and pandemics, including COVID-19 in 2020, when it ran in virtual silence without the usual crowd of 150,000.

The first Saturday in May is Derby Day with all its accompanying pageantry, including fancy hats, fans dressed in their Sunday best, mint juleps served in

**SEE THRIVING ON PAGE 41**

## Oilers oust Kings for 3rd straight season » **NHL playoffs, Page 46**

