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Switch 2 treat **Page 15**

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Army officials grilled over restructuring plan

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

House lawmakers grilled top Army officials on Wednesday about their plans to transform the service branch under a new, cost-cutting program aimed at eliminating outdated equipment and shrinking the staffs of unit and command headquarters.

Republicans and Democrats on the House Armed Services Committee expressed various concerns about the lack of detail put forward by the service under its Army Transformation Initiative announced last month. That plan was announced in part as a response to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth orders for the Pentagon's

military services to cut their budgets by 8% and eliminate dozens of general officer positions.

Army Secretary Dan Driscoll told lawmakers that the initiative — which he calls ATI — is a work in progress but is being driven more by a need to make the service more lethal in a potential conflict with a near-peer adversary,

such as China, than as an across-the-board money saver. The first step of the transformation process, he said, was to move some 1,000 soldiers — including general officers — out of headquarters elements and into combat formations.

"The way that we envision [the transformation] and how we have

described it throughout the formations, is this will be an iterative process and so there will be no one date where everything with our first batch of ATI will be completed," Driscoll said during a lengthy hearing meant to examine the Army's fiscal 2026 budget proposal,

SEE PLAN ON PAGE 8



PHOTOS BY STRATOLAUNCH / Copyright 2002-2017, Stratolaunch, all rights reserved

The Stratolaunch plane is pushed out of the hangar for the first time in California's Mojave Desert on May 31, 2017. Stratolaunch is vying to be a contender in the market for air-launching small satellites, possibly using its six-engine jet, which has the world's longest wingspan at 385 feet.



Talon-A2 is a recoverable autonomous hypersonic testbed designed for repeated air launch.

Chasing China

US start-ups aim to close hypersonic missile gap with adversaries

BY GERRIT DE VYNCK
The Washington Post

A silver rocket shot into a bright blue New Mexico sky on a recent morning, accelerating on a streak of blue-and-orange flame.

The launch by Houston-based Venus

Aerospace marked the first U.S.-based flight of a powerful new variety of rocket called a rotating detonation engine. The design has been theorized for decades as a way to significantly increase the fuel economy of rockets, but was only recently made practical by advances in materials,

manufacturing and design software.

Engineers betting on the new engines say they could one day make it cheaper to send satellites into space and even let airliners cross oceans in just a couple of

SEE CHASING ON PAGE 3

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel				
Germany	\$3.557	\$4.142	\$4.499	\$3.881	Azores	..	..	\$4.357
Change in price	-3.3 cents	-2.8 cents	-3.3 cents	-3.6 cents	Change in price	..	..	-3.3 cents
Netherlands	..	\$4.664	\$5.235	\$4.772	Turkey	..	..	\$4.149
Change in price	..	+6.2 cents	+7.0 cents	+6.3 cents	Change in price	..	..	\$4.104*
U.K.	..	\$4.154	\$4.511	\$3.893				
Change in price	..	-2.8 cents	-3.3 cents	-3.6 cents	Fuel prices are updated daily. These prices are effective June 6. The change in price is from May 30.			

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel				
Japan	..	\$4.139	..	\$3.519	South Korea	\$3.219	..	\$4.169
Change in price	..	-3.0 cents	..	-3.0 cents	Change in price	-4.0 cents	..	-3.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.229	..	..	\$3.519	Guam	\$3.249**	\$3.839	\$4.189
Change in price	-1.0 cents	..	..	-3.0 cents	Change in price	-3.0 cents	-2.0 cents	-4.0 cents

*DieselEFD **Midgrade
Pacific prices for the week of June 6-12

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		
Euro costs (June 6)	0.85	Switzerland (Franc)
British pound (June 6)	\$1.33	Thailand (Baht)
Japanese yen (June 6)	140.00	Turkey (NewLira)
South Korean won (June 6)	1322.00	0.8174
		32.48
		39.3143
Commercial rates		(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3743	
Britain (Pound)	1.3602	
Canada (Dollar)	1.3643	
China (Yuan)	7.1525	
Denmark (Krone)	6.4975	
Egypt (Pound)	49.6531	
Euro	0.8711	
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8458	
Hungary (Forint)	351.39	
Israel (Shekel)	3.4895	
Japan (Yen)	143.08	
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3059	
Norway (Krone)	10.0459	
Philippines (Peso)	55.57	
Poland (Zloty)	3.72	
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7460	
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2826	
South Korea (Won)	1354.08	

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	7.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.50
Federal funds market rate	4.38
3-month bill	4.36
30-year bond	4.88

WEATHER OUTLOOK

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FRIDAY IN EUROPE



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MILITARY

CENTCOM, AFRICOM leaders nominated

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

President Donald Trump has nominated a Navy admiral to become the next leader of U.S. Central Command and an Air Force general to take charge of U.S. Africa Command, the Pentagon announced Wednesday.

Vice Adm. Charles “Brad” Cooper II was nominated to lead CENTCOM, which oversees U.S. forces and operations across the Middle East and central Asia, according to a Pentagon statement. Air Force Lt. Gen. Dagvin R.M. Anderson was nominated to helm U.S. Africa Command, which oversees U.S. troops and operations across most of that continent.

If confirmed by the Senate, both veteran officers would receive a

fourth star.

Cooper, who now serves as CENTCOM’s deputy commander, is a career surface warfare officer who commissioned in 1989 after graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. He would replace Army Gen. Michael “Erik” Kurilla, who has led CENTCOM since April 2022 and is slated to retire. Kurilla in recent months has overseen U.S. strikes against Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, attacks on Islamic State group leaders in Syria and American efforts to support Israeli operations against Hamas militants in Gaza.

Cooper, a veteran of the war in Afghanistan, would become the first Navy admiral to lead the command since its establishment in 1983. Central Command, based at



Anderson



Cooper

MacDill Air Force Base near Tampa, Fla., encompasses 21 countries and includes troubled areas such as Iraq, Yemen and Israel.

Before becoming CENTCOM’s deputy commander, Cooper served as the commander of U.S. 5th Fleet and U.S. Naval Forces Central Command in Bahrain. He also has commanded U.S. Naval Force Atlantic, Expeditionary Strike Group 7, U.S. Naval Forces Korea, and a guided-missile destroyer and a

cruiser, according to his Navy biography.

Anderson, a pilot who has worked in various roles including in the Air Force special operations community, would replace Marine Gen. Michael Langley as the leader of AFRICOM. Langley has led the command since August 2022 and faced issues including the expulsion of U.S. troops from its key drone base in Niger, a rise in ISIS and al-Qaida affiliated terrorist groups on the continent and continued operations against al-Shabab and other extremist groups in Somalia.

Anderson would become the first Air Force officer to helm the Stuttgart, Germany-based Africa Command, which oversees operations and military relations in 53 African

nations.

Anderson is now assigned to the Pentagon, where he has worked as the director for Joint Force Development on the Joint Staff since August 2022.

He was commissioned into the Air Force in 1992 after graduating from Washington University in Missouri, according to his biography. He has flown KC-135 Stratotanker jets and MC-130 and U-28 special operations aircraft during his career, racking up some 3,400 hours of flight time including more than 700 hours in combat.

Anderson has previously commanded the 19th Special Operations Squadron, the 58th Special Operations Wing and U.S. Special Operation Command-Africa, according to his biography.



FRED BROWN/U.S. Army

A U.S. soldier participates in air assault training with Syrian Free Army forces at al-Tanf Garrison, Syria, on Feb. 23.

CENTCOM touts string of operations against ISIS

BY LARA KORTE
Stars and Stripes

American-aided efforts to ward off an Islamic State group resurgence in Iraq and Syria saw a flurry of recent successes with the capture of an ISIS leader and the killings of two militants, according to U.S. Central Command.

Iraqi and Syrian partner forces carried out six anti-ISIS missions last month with U.S. assistance, a CENTCOM statement Thursday said.

Five of the operations took place in Iraq from May 21-27. They were in the northern provinces of Salah ad-Din and Kirkuk and also in Fallujah, CENTCOM said.

Iraqi forces destroyed multiple locations, confiscated weapons and arms, killed two ISIS operatives and took a leader of the group captive, the statement said.

The mission in Syria, carried out May 21-22 near Deir ez-Zur in the northeast, resulted in the cap-

ture of an operative, CENTCOM said.

“Operations like these underscore the commitment ... to the enduring defeat of ISIS in the region,” CENTCOM commander Gen. Michael Erik Kurilla said in the statement.

CENTCOM did not elaborate on its role in the operations.

In addition to regularly striking ISIS targets, the U.S. also helps train and assist partner forces in the region. As of last fall, the U.S. had approximately 2,000 troops in Syria and 2,500 troops in Iraq.

But after more than a decade, President Donald Trump is looking to wind down the U.S. military presence in the region.

The American military pullout in Iraq is slated for completion by no later than September. And the number of U.S. bases in Syria will eventually shrink from eight to one, the American ambassador to Turkey, Tom Barrack, said in an interview this week.

Chasing: Cost issues a concern

FROM PAGE 1

hours. But their initial use case is likely to be military, inside the super-fast hypersonic missiles and aircraft the Pentagon says it will need to keep the U.S. military’s edge over China and Russia in the coming decades.

Venus is one of a growing number of start-ups pushing the limits of aerospace engineering as they test engines and airframes to fulfill the Defense Department’s desire for faster aircraft and missiles.

“This has been such a theoretical engine that lots of folks are so surprised that it’s here and it’s real,” said Sassie Dugleby, Venus’s chief executive. “This isn’t a science experiment. It is here, it is now.”

Last month’s test appears to be only the second instance of a rotating detonation rocket engine launching under its own power, after a test by researchers at Poland’s Lukaszewicz Institute of Aviation in 2021.

Venus’ rocket flew far higher than the Polish test flight did, burning its engine for a total of 7 seconds, Venus Chief Technology Officer Andrew Dugleby said in an email.

“No other company or country has come close to this level of performance,” he said.

On May 5, aerospace test start-up Stratolaunch said it had recently completed two successful test flights of its new hypersonic plane, which is powered by a rocket engine built by another start-up, Ursa Major. The Talon-A2 autonomous plane flew faster than Mach 5, five times the speed of sound, before landing at the Vandenberg Space Force Base in California. It was the first time a hypersonic test aircraft was flown in the United

States since NASA wound down the X-15 program in 1968.

Other companies, including California-based Castelion and Georgia-based Hermeus, are also working on hypersonic engines and airframes.

Hypersonic aircraft are generally defined as flying faster than Mach 5, or 3,800 mph. A commercial jetliner cruises at about 550 mph, and an F-35 fighter jet can reach 1,200 mph.

That immense speed can help hypersonics evade intercepting missiles and fighter jets, allowing them to escape existing air defenses. China, Russia and the U.S. have been working on them for decades, but in recent years American politicians and military planners have warned that the U.S. military has fallen behind.

A Pentagon report last year said that China has the “world’s leading hypersonic missile arsenal.” Russia claims it has used the speedy weapons in its war with Ukraine. A 2022 Washington Post investigation found that Chinese military research labs working on hypersonics were using American-made design and testing software.

Work on the technology was once in the realm of only big-budget Pentagon programs run by giant defense contractors. More recently, the success of Elon Musk’s SpaceX in disrupting the market for space launches showed that private companies can succeed in rocketry, and the growing interest from Silicon Valley in military work has enabled smaller and scrappier entrants to join the market.

“The hypersonic community is ripe for an injection of nontraditional start-ups,” said Nick Estep, an Air Force officer who serves as

director of the emerging technology portfolio at the Defense Innovation Unit, a Pentagon office that works with start-ups to integrate their tech into the military.

Breakthroughs in additive manufacturing, or 3D printing with high-performance metals, have made it cheaper and easier to produce complex rocket engines, test them and then quickly build improved versions. The efficient engine that Venus is working on will allow for hypersonic weapons that are 10 times cheaper than those currently available, Andrew Dugleby said.

Cutting down the cost of high-performance weapons is a key priority for the Pentagon. Today, a single cruise missile can cost millions of dollars, while deadly one-way drones used by Iran and Russia can be built for just tens of thousands of dollars.

“If we ever want to use it as more than an exquisite nicety, we have to get to affordable missions,” Estep said of hypersonic weapons.

Dan Jablonsky, Ursa Major’s CEO, said his company aims to simplify its rocket engines and use readily available parts and materials to make them less costly and faster to build.

“Fewer part counts equals less complexity, equals faster, more-predictive manufacturing,” Jablonsky said. Right now, Ursa Major can build about one of its Hadley rocket engines a week, he said. It’s aiming to cut that down to one per day.

Start-ups are also trying to find low-cost ways to test how rocket engines, airframes and internal components handle extreme heat and acceleration that would destroy parts meant for regular aircraft.

MILITARY

Soldier to be court-martialed in friend's death

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

FORT CAVAZOS, Texas — A Fort Cavazos soldier who argued in a preliminary hearing that he acted in self-defense when he shot and killed a fellow soldier along a highway in Texas will face a court-martial, service officials said.

The Army Office of Special Trial Counsel decided last week to charge Spc. Kip D. Holloway, 25, in the death of Spc. Clarence “CJ” White, 26. The general nature of the charges are unpremeditated murder, voluntary manslaughter and aggravated assault, according to Michelle McCaskill, spokeswoman for the special trial counsel.

Both soldiers were assigned to the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Cavalry Division, she said. Holloway was a tank crew member, and White was an infantryman.

During a preliminary hearing held April 1, military attorneys discussed 44 pieces of evidence.

Maj. Jack Gibson, an attorney with the 1st Cavalry Division, was tasked with reporting to the special trial counsel on whether there was enough evidence to court-martial Holloway and whether prosecutors could sustain a conviction. Gibson recommended the case move forward to a trial, McCaskill said.

“The next step is for a military judge to be assigned to the case and a date scheduled for Spc. Holloway’s arraignment,” she said.

On Jan. 27, 2024, both soldiers, who attorneys said were friends, were driving throughout central Texas in Holloway’s gray Nissan. Holloway was driving, and an intoxicated White was in the passenger seat. White had called and texted Holloway throughout the night to pick him up from a nightclub, according to evidence presented at the hearing in April. His autopsy would later show a blood alcohol content of 0.216, or nearly three times the legal limit for driv-

ing, said Capt. Michael Green, an attorney for Holloway.

At about 6:30 a.m., the two soldiers were pulled over, and White told the police that Holloway was his sergeant bringing him home because he was drunk, said Maj. Tara Goble, a prosecutor in the case.

By about 9 a.m., Holloway called 911 from the side of Interstate Highway 14 in Nolanville to report the shooting. White had a “direct contact” gunshot wound to the head, and Holloway had a “close range” gunshot wound in his right leg, Goble said.

“He tried to kill me,” Holloway said on the 911 recording, which was played during the hearing. “We were in the car fighting for [the gun].”

On the call, Holloway said he shot White after wrestling for control of the weapon, but attorneys disagreed over exactly what Holloway told the operator about his own gunshot wound.

Goble argued Holloway said, “I shot my friend, and I shot myself.”

Green said Holloway’s words were: “I shot my friend, and I’m shot myself.”

No one presented evidence that directly pointed at who shot Holloway, though Goble said only White’s blood was found inside the vehicle. Holloway’s blood is only found on the doorframe leading out of the car.

However, White’s DNA was found on the grip and trigger of the firearm, Green said.

Both sides also lacked clear evidence on whether the shooting occurred on the highway while the vehicle was moving or if it happened after the vehicle exited and stopped in a field along the access road. There was no evidence of a struggle in the car, Goble said.

Blood spatter evidence supported that the doors were all closed when White was shot, Goble said. A door was likely open when Holloway was shot, but evidence is not

definitive, she said.

In response, Green presented evidence to show White, who was physically larger than his friend, had violent tendencies. White’s medical records stated he told his behavioral health care provider about thoughts of suicide and a need to put his hands on someone, Green said.

He described an instance when White broke his hand and told his unit it happened while putting his niece to bed. Investigators found he broke his hand while he was fighting, Green said.

While the records mentioned White had issues with his boss and other soldiers, there was no mention of problems with Holloway specifically. They could not find “any reason why it would happen,” Green said.

Nolanville, home to about 6,000 people, is roughly 15 miles east of Fort Cavazos. Nolanville police said last year that they gave jurisdiction of the case to the Army.

Conflicting accounts emerge in Marine’s trial on Okinawa

By BRIAN McELHINEY AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

NAHA, Okinawa — A U.S. Marine accused of injuring a woman during an attempted sexual assault told a Japanese court Thursday he was “not violent” and spent only five minutes at her home.

Lance Cpl. Jamel Clayton, 22, of Ohio, testified for the first time on the fourth day of his trial at Naha District Court. He is accused of strangling and injuring an Okinawa woman, then 25, while attempting to sexually assault her in the home she shared with her then-boyfriend in Yomitan village on May 26, 2024.

Clayton said he left the woman’s house after realizing she lived there with her boyfriend, according to his responses to questions from defense attorney Kotaro Ito.

Lead prosecutor Shuhei Hisaoka later countered that claim, citing security camera footage showing Clayton walking near the home with the woman and then walking there alone about 30 minutes later.

Clayton said the discrepancy was due to getting lost in the area.

The boyfriend — an active-duty U.S. airman who arrived on Okinawa in September 2023 — testified Wednesday.

He and the woman, who were not named in court, have since married, according to testimony from both parties.

Clayton testified that he met the woman around 6 that morning on Gate 2 Street in Okinawa city. He said he had been drinking but was not intoxicated.

“I literally asked her, ‘Is it all



Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Jamel Clayton trains at Rodriguez Live Fire Complex in South Korea on March 7, 2024. He is accused of injuring a Okinawa woman during an attempted sexual assault in May 2024.

right if I walk and talk with you?” he told Hisaoka.

Clayton said the two walked and talked, visited a convenience store and sat in her car parked at Koza Music Town. At one point, he testified, she sat on his lap.

This account conflicts with the woman’s testimony on Tuesday. She told assistant prosecutor Rihoko Kosaka that she repeatedly asked Clayton to leave her alone on Gate 2 Street. She said she “barely” remembered getting into her car with him before taking a taxi and could not recall their conversation.

Her testimony was delivered

from a separate room and shown by video to the judges, prosecutors and Ito.

Both testified that they later took a taxi together to Yomitan. Clayton said they held hands while walking to a convenience store and that she used the bathroom for about five minutes while there.

During that time, the woman texted a friend for help, she testified. She also said she repeatedly asked Clayton to leave.

Clayton said the woman invited him to her home, where her dog greeted them at the entrance. He said the dog jumped on him and

knocked over bags of bottles and cans. The woman briefly entered another room, he said, then returned and told him the home belonged to her boyfriend.

He said they hugged goodbye and that he left after she declined to give him her phone number or Instagram handle.

The woman testified that Clayton entered the home, discovered her boyfriend sleeping in a bedroom and said, “I took your girl home,” though the boyfriend did not awaken. She said they then moved back to the entryway, where Clayton put his arm around her neck and strangled her, caus-

ing her to lose consciousness several times.

She said Clayton also unbuttoned and tried to unzip her pants but stopped when she resisted. He then masturbated, saying, “If you’re not gonna let me do it, I’m gonna do that [expletive],” according to her testimony.

The woman said the struggle caused the mess in the entryway.

“I thought that he was trying to kill me,” she said. “I thought that people can die easily from this. I thought that he chased me to kill me.”

She broke down crying multiple times during her testimony and vomited while describing the assault.

Her friend, identified as Yuka, corroborated her testimony in court Wednesday.

The airman testified that he did not remember the night or morning of the incident due to intoxication but clearly recalled being woken by her crying and police arriving shortly after.

Clayton said the woman did not appear drunk when they met. She testified that she drank more than usual the previous night and could not clearly remember parts of the evening or following morning.

“I don’t know what’s going on here — I hope we can find out,” Clayton said. “Not to sound rude or anything; I know she suffered. I don’t know what caused it or who did it, but it wasn’t me. She’s not the only one who’s been going through stuff.”

Closing arguments are scheduled for Monday, and a verdict and sentence will be rendered June 24.

PACIFIC

2 F-16 pilots feted after emergency landing

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

Two U.S. Air Force pilots stationed in South Korea received a warm welcome — including homecooked meals and a wedding invitation — after their F-16 fighter jets made an emergency landing on a remote island in the Bering Sea last month.

One of the two Fighting Falcons experienced a significant drop in oil levels during flight on May 19 and was forced to land at the nearest suitable airfield, on St. Paul Island, Alaska, Capt. Alvin Nelson, an 8th Fighter Wing spokesman, said in an email Wednesday.

The second F-16, which did not suffer a malfunction, landed along with its formation partner on the same airstrip, about 300 miles west of mainland Alaska. The Kunsan Air Base jets were en route to Eielson Air Force Base near Fairbanks for a routine exercise.



U.S. Air Force

Residents of St. Paul Island, Alaska, pose with an F-16 Fighting Falcon aircrew following an emergency landing there on May 19.

Maintenance personnel from Eielson were redirected to St. Paul to repair the jet, a process that took 10 days, Nelson said.

While the pilots waited, island residents offered traditional Alaskan foods, including reindeer and golden king crab.

“One community member even extended a wedding invitation to our pilots, who unfortunately were unable to attend,” Nelson said.

St. Paul, incorporated in 1971, is home to about 344 people and spans 44 square miles, said acting Public Works Director Phillip Za-

vadil in an email Thursday. The island’s economy is largely based on crab and halibut fishing, according to its official website.

City clerk and St. Paul native Aubrey Wegeleben described the island as small but welcoming.

“I feel the community is gener-

ally close-knit — everyone knows each other and there is a sense of comfort,” she said by email Thursday. “Though we are remote in the Bering Sea, we’re not too isolated from the world.”

The noise from the F-16 engines “broke the usual quiet of everyday life” and quickly attracted residents’ attention, Wegeleben said. When the jet was repaired on May 29, a crowd gathered to see them off.

“As word spread, excitement grew, and many made their way to the airport eager to see the jets,” she said.

Lt. Col. James Divine, deputy commander of the 8th Operations Group, expressed gratitude to St Paul’s residents.

“The incredible outpouring of compassion and support has been remarkable,” he said in an email Wednesday. They “welcomed our aircrew and response teams with open arms.”

Retiring DODEA art, music teacher leaves anthem for students

By JANIQUEA ROBINSON
Stars and Stripes

A music teacher at a Defense Department school in Japan, along with American and Japanese students, has recorded an unofficial anthem for U.S. military children living overseas.

Ryan Davis — an art and music instructor at Jack N. Darby and Sasebo elementary schools on Sasebo Naval Base — wrote “The Military Kid Song” in 2017 while working for Department of Defense Education Activity schools at Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo.

On April 12, Davis and a group of students, ages 4 to 16, recorded the song at a studio in Sasebo, accompanied by local Japanese children on instruments.

Davis, who plans to retire after this school year, said he’s leaving the anthem as a parting gift to the DODEA community.

“I’m going to miss the DODEA kids for sure,” he told Stars and Stripes in a phone interview on May 15. “But bringing the song through a recording and getting it out there as I’m leaving kind of makes the closing of this chapter in my life a happy ending, like I’m giving something back to the kids and the families.”

Davis said he wrote the song for a Month of the Military Child event at Yokota.

“So, I’m going through the internet, Googling songs for military kids and nothing would pop up,”



DODEA music teacher Ryan Davis directs a recording session for “The Military Kid Song.”

he said. “We could sing the National Anthem, we could sing the Air Force song, the Army song, the Navy song, but nothing about the military kids. So, I was like, ‘Man, we need a song for the kids and about their experience.’”

A former DODEA student himself, Davis studied music at East Central College in Union, Mo., but left in 1997 to join the Air Force as a geospatial intelligence specialist.

While on active duty, he completed his music degree at Yuba Community College in Yuba City, Calif., and later earned a degree in classical guitar with a minor in education from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

“So that background helped me to be like, ‘Oh yeah, we don’t have a song, so we’re going to make a song,’” he said.

The original version of “The Military Kid Song” included only



Photos courtesy of Arielle Davis

Children pose during a recording session for “The Military Kid Song” in Sasebo, Japan, in April.

a few verses and a chorus, with Davis on guitar.

“The parents loved it; the kids loved it,” he said. “They were like, ‘Oh, we need more, we need more.’ So, the next year the song developed even more.”

After Davis moved to Sasebo in August 2020, a Yokota parent emailed him asking for a recording of the song. So, he scored it for horns, keyboard, drums and bass, and then found a studio to record it.

“It was a cultural exchange event,” Davis said, adding that the studio offered to record the song for free if its students could participate.

The studio houses the Sasebo

Jazz Fan Club, which aims to nurture young musicians, according to its website.

“We went in there, we all knew what we were doing, and the kids recorded their parts with one take,” Davis said. “It was a lot of fun.”

Darby fourth-grader Arabella Sanchez sang in the chorus on the recording, said her mother, Marine Corps spouse Johanna Cupa, during phone and email interviews on May 16.

Cupa, a mother of four who works as a special education assessor for Sasebo schools, said Arabella “was having a hard time making friends” after moving to Sasebo from North Carolina. Da-

vis’ song helped her connect with others and prepare for another move.

“The students are very lucky to have him as their teacher,” Cupa said.

After 18 years of teaching, Davis said he plans to turn his attention to family, food and live music.

“The DOD community gave me a lifetime of memories,” he said. “Along with the great fortune to meet so many extraordinary people from many different walks of life, the memories I’ve collected will fill my heart with joy for the rest of my days. I’m incredibly grateful for the military life and that’s why I’m so happy I could give back with a song.”

MILITARY

Ex-military members arrested in base robbery

By GENE JOHNSON
Associated Press

SEATTLE—Two men arrested in Washington state with an arsenal that included dozens of guns, explosives and body armor, along with Nazi paraphernalia, were former military members who attacked a soldier with a hammer while stealing gear from Joint Base Lewis-McChord last weekend, investigators say.

Levi Austin Frakes and Charles Ethan Fields were arrested Monday night at their home in Lacey, near Olympia, according to a criminal complaint filed Wednesday in U.S. District Court.

One of the defendants told investigators the pair had been stealing equipment from the base for the past two years to sell or trade, and agents found about \$24,000 in cash at the home, wrote Special Agent Christopher J. Raguse of the Army Criminal Investigation Division.

Washington state business license records show that Frakes and Fields have a company called Sovereign Solutions, which featured an “SS” logo with the letters separated by a lightning bolt. Its website advertises “Quality Training and Equipment for the Modern Warfighter,” including marksmanship classes, as well as a T-shirt with the company logo and the words “Professional War Crime Committer.”

The federal complaint charges them with robbery, assault and theft of government property. They also face investigation on state charges of unlawful possession of incendiary devices, short-barreled rifles and a machine gun. Each was being held at the Thurston County Jail on \$500,000 bail.

Agents found rifles staged at the



In this undated photo released by the Thurston County Sheriff's Office, a cache of military weaponry and Nazi paraphernalia are photographed during a raid at a home in Lacey, Wash.



Two suspects in an assault and robbery on June 1 at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

upstairs windows, a probable cause affidavit filed in Thurston County Superior Court said.

The federal complaint said agents “observed numerous Nazi/white supremacy memorabilia,

murals, and literature in every bedroom and near several stockpiles of weapons and military equipment.”

Photos from inside the home included in court documents showed a wall decorated with a red Nazi flag emblazoned with a black swastika and a black SS flag — the letters shaped like lightning bolts — referencing the Schutzstaffel, the Nazi paramilitary led by Heinrich Himmler.

According to the complaint, a soldier entered a building at the Army Ranger compound at Joint Base Lewis-McChord on Sunday night and found two men, partially masked, with a cluster of U.S. Army property around them.

The soldier questioned them about what they were doing and told them to pull down their

masks, which they did.

A fight ensued, and one of the men brandished a hammer and struck the soldier in the head. The soldier continued to fight despite losing a large amount of blood and managed to get control of the hammer — at which point, one of the men pulled a knife. The soldier then let them go, the complaint said.

They had attempted to steal about \$14,000 worth of body armor, ballistic helmets and communications equipment Sunday, most of which they left behind when they dropped their rucksacks as they fled, the complaint said.

During the fight, one of the men dropped his hat.

It said “Fields” on the inside. Using base entry logs and surveil-

lance video, investigators determined that Fields and Frakes had entered Lewis-McChord together about an hour before the attack, investigators said.

Additionally, the wounded soldier, who required hospital treatment, told investigators that he asked around his unit about the name Fields after finding it on the hat.

The soldier learned that Fields had been assigned to the Ranger Battalion around 2021, and he was able to identify him as one of the attackers based on photos shown to him by others in his unit, the complaint said.

The men had access to the base because they were veterans, the probable cause statement filed in state court said.

Court documents did not include details of Frakes’ military service. Public information officers for Department of Defense, Joint Base Lewis-McChord and Army CID did not immediately provide further information about the men’s service history in response to requests from The Associated Press.

The FBI executed a search warrant at a home shared by the defendants on Monday and arrested them.

Authorities said agents seized about 35 firearms at the home, including short-barreled rifles and an MG42 machine gun — a type typically supported with a bipod and which was used by German troops during World War II.

Other seized gear included 3D-printed silencers and Army-issued gear that included explosives such as smoke grenade and blasting caps, ballistic plates and helmets, and night-vision devices, authorities said.

Hawaiian court hears dramatic testimony in wife, fetus killings

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

WHEELER ARMY AIRFIELD, Hawaii — Army Pfc. Dewayne A. Johnson II said in a Hawaii courtroom Wednesday that he hated himself “every day” for killing his wife and unborn child in a rage last summer.

“There are no words strong enough to express the pain I feel for what I did,” Johnson said as he read from a written statement in the Wheeler Army Airfield courthouse during the second day of a court-martial in which he has pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter in the deaths of Mischa Johnson and the fetus she carried.

The sentencing phase began Wednesday, and Judge Rebecca Farrell was scheduled on Thursday morning to impose a sentence of 18 to 23 years based on a plea agreement.

“I loved Mischa and my unborn child more than anything,” Johnson said, sobbing at times. “There’s nothing I can say, nothing I can do, to take away what I did.”

Johnson’s words of remorse, however, were undercut by the prosecution’s next witness, an Army Criminal Investigation Division agent, who testified that Johnson continued to seek women through a dating app — even as he concocted a complex scheme to fool family and friends into thinking his wife was alive as he dismembered her body and destroyed evidence.

Johnson admitted in court Tuesday that he had killed her on July 12 with a blow to the head with a machete in the bedroom of the home they shared on Schofield Barracks. He then spent the next 19 days posing as Mischa in text

messages and social media posts as he disposed of evidence.

On Aug. 1, he called 911 and reported her missing as of that day.

Special Agent Chelsea Banks also testified that CID had obtained a video of Johnson having sex with a woman during those 19 days in the very bedroom in which he had killed his wife.

Johnson has also pleaded guilty to obstruction of justice and providing false official statements.

A charge for possession of child pornography and the production and distribution of child pornography was dropped under the plea deal.

Close family members testified or read written statements describing Mischa Johnson and how her loss has affected them.

“She followed me around, like little sisters are supposed to do,” older sister Marianna Tapiz said

of their childhood. “She was someone you could call if you were having a bad day.”

Mischa made everything better, Tapiz said.

“Now there will always be an empty seat at our family gatherings,” she said.

A prosecutor asked Tapiz how she felt when she heard that Johnson had dismembered her sister with a chainsaw, bagged up the pieces and threw them in a dumpster used by his unit on Schofield Barracks. She paused before looking at Johnson.

“I don’t know how you can tell us you loved her after doing a thing like that,” she said.

To audible gasps in the spectator’s gallery, the prosecutor placed a photo of the incinerator into which the dumpster was emptied and her remains destroyed.

Frances Tapiz, Mischa’s moth-

er, described her as loving, caring and helpful.

“Mom, do you need something?” she recalled her daughter frequently asking. “Mom, are you OK?”

“I am in pain; I am hurting,” she said in court. “I miss Mischa.”

Her death has been like “losing a piece of yourself that only she could bring to life,” Tapiz said as she broke into loud sobs.

“The harsh reality is that time isn’t always a healer,” she said.

Johnson’s father and three brothers testified via phone from Maryland, each saying they would support his return to society when he completed his sentence.

“I know he has potential to be a better person,” Devon Johnson said of his older brother.

“I seen the difference,” he said. “He’s making steps to be a better person.”

EUROPE

Hegseth stresses hard power for deterrence

‘It can’t just be US capabilities’ to protect Continent, NATO defense chiefs are told

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Increased military spending in Europe must be directed toward hard-power capabilities to give NATO credibility that goes beyond American firepower, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Thursday.

His remarks at the opening of a defense ministers meeting in Brussels drove home President Donald Trump’s insistence that all members increase defense spending to 5% of gross domestic product, up from the current NATO 2% benchmark.

“It’s that hard power that actually deters. And it can’t just be U.S. capabilities,” Hegseth said.

He added that Washington will not tolerate exceptions on meeting the new threshold. For many countries, that will require a huge increase in expenditures.

“The reason I’m here is to make sure every country in NATO understands (it) has to contribute at that level of 5% as a recognition of the nature of the threat,” Hegseth said.

Some allies, such as Italy and Spain, are yet to reach even the 2% level. It’s not clear what the consequences will be if members balk at Trump’s demands.



Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, left, and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte make opening remarks at a defense ministers meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Thursday. Hegseth said that for NATO to remain credible, Europe must channel growing defense budgets into hard power.

For NATO, the stakes are high. Trump has long made clear that the United States’ commitment to NATO hinges on fulfillment of defense spending obligations.

In the past, Trump also has sug-

gested that the U.S. could be unwilling to defend a member that lagged on military spending.

Allies are now fine-tuning the details on timelines for reaching the 5% mark, which is expected to be

agreed to during a June leaders summit in the Dutch city of The Hague. Trump is expected to attend the meeting.

On Thursday, NATO defense ministers also agreed on new capa-

bility targets that designate what forces and weapons systems individual countries must provide toward allied defense plans.

The capability targets are focused on needs such as air and missile defense, long-range weapons and large land maneuver formations.

Those targets will help NATO track where the increased spending is going and ensure that it results in a more formidable combat force, Hegseth said.

Among European allies, there has been greater urgency to develop military capabilities in connection with concerns that the United States could reduce its military presence on the Continent.

Germany, which has a long track record of lackluster defense spending, now says it’s prepared to meet the 5% mark.

Such moves are aimed at ensuring that allies can manage the conventional defense of Europe should the U.S. redirect forces to the Pacific, which has been a Pentagon priority.

Hegseth is reviewing global force posture across the military, and that could have implications on where troops are deployed worldwide.

Pick of 3-star as EUCOM boss keeps American in lead of NATO forces

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — A three-star Air Force general has been tapped to be the next commander of U.S. forces in Europe, the Pentagon announced Thursday.

Lt. Gen. Alexis Grynkeiwich, who now serves on the Joint Staff, also was nominated to become NATO’s next supreme allied commander in Europe, the Pentagon said.

If confirmed, Grynkeiwich will replace Army Gen. Christopher Cavoli, who has served as the leader of U.S. European Command and led NATO forces for the past three years.

Unlike other commanders, Grynkeiwich comes into the job with a direct promotion from three to four stars. In recent history, it has always been an incumbent four-star general to command EUCOM and NATO troops.

Grynkeiwich, a former F-16 and F-22 fighter pilot, commanded the combined forces air component at U.S. Central Command before serving as director of operations on the Joint Staff.

Earlier in his career, Grynkeiwich did a stint at EUCOM head-



WILLIAM J. SEIFERT/Joint Staff Support Center
Air Force Lt. Gen. Alexis Grynkeiwich is in line to become the next commander of U.S. forces in Europe, the Pentagon announced Thursday.

quarters in Stuttgart. He is a 1993 graduate of the Air Force Academy.

His nomination to the dual-hatted job means that the NATO slot known as SACEUR will remain in American hands for now.

There have been discussions about whether the time has come for a European commander to take over the NATO job, which has always been led by an American,

going back to Gen. Dwight Eisenhower.

Grynkeiwich also would come into the job at a time of high tension in Europe given the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. Changes to how the U.S. military is operating on the Continent also could distinguish Grynkeiwich’s role from Cavoli’s.

While a major aspect of Cavoli’s job has been coordinating American and allied support for Ukraine, Grynkeiwich would command NATO and EUCOM as the U.S. is shifting more of that responsibility to Europeans.

Also, the Pentagon has emphasized that Europe must prepare itself to handle the bulk of conventional security on the Continent so the U.S. can focus more on countering China in the Pacific.

While the U.S. hasn’t announced any plans for an immediate troop drawdown in Europe, allies are anticipating that the Pentagon will eventually reduce troop numbers.

In the event of any American withdrawal or reorganization of troops and bases in European countries, Grynkeiwich would likely be a key architect of the change.

Trump says it might be better to let Ukraine and Russia ‘fight for a while’

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Thursday that it might be better to let Ukraine and Russia “fight for a while” before pulling them apart and pursuing peace.

In an Oval Office meeting with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Trump likened the war in Ukraine — which Russia invaded in early 2022 — to a fight between two young children who hated each other.

“Sometimes you’re better off letting them fight for a while and then pulling them apart,” Trump said. He added that he had relayed that analogy to Russian President Vladimir Putin in their phone conversation on Wednesday.

Asked about Trump’s comments as the two leaders sat next to each other, Merz stressed that both he and Trump agreed “on this war and how terrible this war is going on,” pointing to the U.S. president as the “key person in the world” who would be able to stop the bloodshed.

But Merz also emphasized that Germany “was on the side of Ukraine” and that Kyiv was only at-

tacking military targets, not Russian civilians.

“We are trying to get them stronger,” Merz said of Ukraine.

Thursday’s meeting marked the first time that the two leaders sat down in person. After exchanging pleasantries — Merz gave Trump a gold-framed birth certificate of the U.S. president’s grandfather Friedrich Trump, who emigrated from Germany — the two leaders were to discuss issues such as Ukraine, trade and NATO spending.

Trump and Merz have spoken several times by phone, either bilaterally or with other European leaders, since Merz took office on May 6. German officials say the two leaders have started to build a “decent” relationship, with Merz wanting to avoid the antagonism that defined Trump’s relationship with one of his predecessors, Angela Merkel, in the Republican president’s first term.

The 69-year-old Merz — who came to office with an extensive business background — is a conservative former rival of Merkel’s who took over her party after she retired from politics.

MILITARY

Senate proposes \$150B for defense

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Senate’s version of a sweeping bill to advance President Donald Trump’s domestic agenda includes about \$150 billion for defense, deviating slightly from the House’s legislation with extra boosts for munitions and technology and less for shipbuilding.

The defense portion of the bill, released late Tuesday, is about the same amount as the \$150 billion allocated for the military in a measure that the House passed last month but makes several changes to funding amounts for individual priorities.

It otherwise shares the same broad defense spending goals as Republicans try to adopt Trump’s massive policy and tax-cutting legislation through a process called reconciliation, which bypasses Democrat opposition.

“This is a wonderful opportunity to jumpstart getting back where we need to be in national defense,” Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi, the Republican chairman of the



ERIC KAYNE/Stars and Stripes

Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

Senate Armed Services Committee, said Wednesday at a Defense Writers Group event.

The Senate is expected to vote on its version of the reconciliation measure in the coming weeks, with a goal of sending the final legislation to Trump by July 4.

Wicker noted while Democrats will vote against the overall legislation, many will be supportive of the spending increase on defense.

“I really think maybe 85 senators, if you ask them, ‘Do they

want this \$150 billion to be enacted?’ They would say yes — Democrats and Republicans,” he said. “We’re united on that and we’re ready to go, it’s the other parts that will take some massaging.”

The senator has been a vocal proponent of pushing the Defense Department’s budget higher to meet threats from China, Russia and other adversaries. He wants defense spending to reach 5% of gross domestic product from its current 3% and said the reconciliation bill is a “major opportunity” to catch up to that goal.

The Senate’s legislation matches the House in authorizing \$25 billion for the Golden Dome missile defense system, \$12 billion for U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and \$9 billion for improving quality-of-life issues for service members.

But it deviates from the House’s approved figures in other priorities.

It adds \$2.6 billion to the House’s \$20.4 billion authorization for munitions production, increases efforts to bolster readiness by \$4.5 billion on top of the \$11.5 billion

approved by the House and bumps up production of new technology such as drones by \$2.5 billion from \$13.5 billion.

Spending on aircraft procurement is increased by \$1.8 billion under the Senate plan while spending on shipbuilding, a priority for Trump, is decreased from the \$33.7 billion authorized by the House to \$28 billion.

The bill also includes \$1.7 billion less in funding for the military’s mission on the U.S.-Mexico border, for a total of \$3.3 billion.

Wicker said Wednesday that he and Rep. Mike Rogers of Alabama, the Republican chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, were in “very close” alignment on spending priorities, alongside the White House.

“We are largely of one mind on this,” he said. “We may have had to do an adjustment or two, but we’ve done it in coordination with the administration and the House.”

Rogers, in a statement, said he and Wicker worked closely together to identify “how we can

best modernize our military, re-grow our defense industrial base and build a ready, capable and lethal fighting force.”

The defense money authorized in the bill is required to be spent by the end of the 2034 fiscal year. The Senate is proposing \$10 million for the Pentagon to conduct oversight of the new funding.

Wicker, while praising the legislation, said it was still not a replacement for meaningfully increasing the Pentagon’s budget every year.

He bristled at the White House’s proposal to keep military spending flat for fiscal 2026 and said he viewed attempts by some in the administration to count the reconciliation bill as part of the Pentagon’s budget as a “sleight of hand.”

“We need a steady increase in terms of the baseline year after year after year to get to where we need to get,” Wicker said. “We cannot be asking our allies to go from their anemic 2% or less of GDP to 5% if we’re not willing to do that ourselves.”

Plan: Lawmakers express concern over proposed Army cuts

FROM PAGE 1

which has yet to be submitted to Congress. “We will be hopefully doing what the best companies in America do and learning as we go.”

To date, the Army has announced the initiative seeks to cut some outdated and underperforming vehicles including the decades-old Humvee and the newer Joint Light Tactical Vehicle, as well as cutting the AH-64D Apache attack helicopter in favor of new drones and the state-of-the-art AH-64E model Apache. Driscoll said the plan would also see three National Guard Armored Brigade Combat Teams trade their M1 Abrams tanks for lighter weapons systems. Driscoll also canceled the 2-year-old M10 Booker light tank-like armored vehicle program, under the transformation umbrella.

Lawmakers expressed various reasons for concern about the plan. Some members said they worried the Army would repeat mistakes of past military transformation efforts that ultimately failed at the expense of billions of dollars of taxpayer money. Others said they were concerned the service was being forced to make arbitrary cuts to meet a shrinking budget. Many, including the committee’s chairman, Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala., and its top Democrat, Rep. Adam Smith of Washington, said they were concerned the lack of a proposed budget —

the federal government budget request to Congress is now later than any budget proposal in recent U.S. history — would slow needed changes in the Army.

“The broad structure of the ATI sounds encouraging,” Rogers told Driscoll, who testified alongside Gen. Randy George, the Army’s chief of staff. “... But we need to see your homework. An overhaul of this significance should be based on thorough assessment of requirements, and it should include a detailed blueprint of the specific changes being proposed and how the Army plans to implement them.”

Rogers said he was worried the policy changes were a result of expected budget cuts.

“I can’t overstate that we are not going to be hostile to dramatic changes if it’s being driven by the need for change and not just to meet some budget number that somebody has handed to you,” he said.

Some of the efforts are already underway, Driscoll said. The service is moving quickly to combine some large commands under single four-star generals. Those include merging Futures Command and Training and Doctrine Command under one general as Transformation and Training Command to be headquartered in Austin, Texas. Futures Command and TRADOC are both led by four-star general officers. The Army has two additional four-star com-

mands — Army Materiel Command and Army Forces Command — which are also absorbing other missions under the plan.

But some lawmakers worried the lack of public detail about the changes was driving uncertainty and stress among troops in those commands.

Rep. Robert Wittman, R-Va., said there has been a “high level of anxiety” among his constituents at Fort Eustis, which houses Training and Doctrine Command.

“This does involve people’s lives,” Wittman said. “It involved uniformed service members and the civilian staffs, and they deserve to know what’s going on. ... I can tell you that the rumor mill there is running wild. There is chaos there at Fort Eustis because there’s lack of certainty.”

George, the Army’s top general since 2023, said he and other service leaders have been having “tough conversations” all around the Army as part of the initiative. But he said the service was dedicated to ensuring it took care of its soldiers amid the changes.

“I think this is going to make us better,” the general said.

The Army is also asking Congress, under the Army Transformation Initiative, for more flexibility in its funding — primarily as a way to purchase modern, commercially built weapons quickly and avoid the archaic acquisition process that forces the Pentagon to spend years designing and test-



ERIC KAYNE/Stars and Stripes

Secretary of the Army Daniel Driscoll, left, and Chief of Staff Gen. Randy George, U.S. Army, testify on Wednesday in Washington during a House Armed Services Committee hearing concerning the Army Fiscal Year 2026 Posture.

ing weapons before it can adopt the platforms.

Driscoll and George pointed to Ukraine’s use of cheap, off-the-shelf drones against Russian invaders as an example of what the U.S. Army could be doing with those authorities. He also said he believed there were smaller American companies that could build critical Army munitions for much cheaper than what the service now pays massive corporations.

“We are getting ready to do some tests this summer with long-range missiles that are a 10th of

the price” of what the Army pays for similar munitions, George said. “When you start talking about magazine depth ... we can invest in things like that that are much more cost effective, and I think that’s where we need the flexibility.”

Despite some new details Wednesday, lawmakers said the Army needs to make its transformation plans formal in the coming months.

“The Army Transformation Initiative has generated more questions than answers,” Rep. Derek Tran, D-Calif., concluded.

MILITARY

Guard prepping 20K troops for immigration crackdown

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Army officials confirmed Thursday that the service is preparing to provide 20,000 National Guard troops to crack down on immigration, raising concerns among lawmakers about the “unprecedented” nature of the deployment.

Army Secretary Dan Driscoll and Gen. Randy George, the service's chief of staff, said they did not yet know what role National Guard members would play in the immigration enforcement effort but said troop involvement would be legal and in line with training.

“I think the missions would be aligned with what our soldiers are trained to do,” George said in testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The Department of Homeland Security asked the Defense Department for the troops last month to help President Donald Trump's administration arrest and deport

masses of undocumented immigrants.

Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the top Democrat on the committee, described the request as “unprecedented” in mission and scope, marking the first time National Guard members are used to enforce an immigration crackdown within the United States.

Reed said he feared scenes of soldiers driving around in military vehicles, pulling people out of houses, putting detainees in the backs of trucks and driving them away.

“I don't think that's the image the Army has strove for 250 years to create,” he said.

Driscoll said he had no details on what National Guard troops would be doing, from which states they would come or what the cost of their involvement would be. He committed, however, not to deploy the National Guard “for any unlawful use.”

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H.,

citing an internal memo, said Homeland Security is asking up to 3,500 National Guard members to support investigative units for high-priority fugitive cases, surveillance and canvassing missions, data analysis and rural interdiction.

She noted the memo states the Defense Department is not going to be reimbursed for the operations.

“The Department of Homeland Security, if they're going to engage in these operations, then they ought to be footing the bill, not asking the Department of Defense and the Army or anybody else in the National Guard to do that,” Shaheen said.

Democrats also voiced concerns that the deployment of large numbers of Guard members would needlessly pull them away from their jobs and families and divert them from their traditional roles in disaster relief as hurricane season gets underway.

Thousands of Guard members are already deployed to the U.S.



ERIC KAYNE/Stars and Stripes

Army Secretary Daniel Driscoll, left, and Gen. Randy George, the service's chief of staff, testify Thursday during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing to examine the Army's force and budget.

Mexico border, where they have largely assisted with tasks such as security and logistics since 2018.

George assured senators that the mobilization of additional troops for the administration's immigration crackdown would not negatively impact disaster response.

“We're prepared to respond to emergencies, we've done that routinely,” he said.

Not all lawmakers are opposed to the National Guard's growing participation in immigration enforce-

ment.

Sen. Joni Ernst, a Republican from Iowa who served in that state's Army National Guard, said soldiers are eager for opportunities to put their training to use and the National Guard should take advantage of it.

“I say, the more that we can use our soldiers in jobs that are appropriate for our soldiers, I say go for it,” she said. “We can always further their skills by having those types of mobilizations.”

Blue Heeler set to join tanks and soldiers for Army's parade in DC

BY OLIVIA GEORGE
The Washington Post

While watching the dozens of tanks and thousands of soldiers scheduled to parade through the nation's capital later this month, keep an eye out for a pair of pricked ears and a bushy, white-tipped tail.

Man's best friend is participating in the sweeping June 14 celebration honoring the Army's 250th birthday and falling on President Donald Trump's 79th birthday. He's a 2½-year-old Blue Heeler named Doc Holliday — a nod to the gunslinger depicted in the American western movie “Tombstone.” Doc, for short.

He's been a member of the 1st Cavalry Division Horse Cavalry Detachment since he was a puppy. The unit is based at Fort Cavazos, Texas, about 65 miles north of Austin.

“He's living a very happy life,” said Capt. Daysha Wells, detachment commander and a vet in the Army Veterinary Corps.

Doc is used to sitting in a mule-pulled wagon and being a good boy, his handlers say. He's participated in big events before, though it's safe to assume that he isn't aware of the debate surrounding this particular parade.

He doesn't know that on June

14, 1775, the Second Continental Congress voted to establish the Continental Army, marking the creation of the country's first national military force. June 14 is also Flag Day, commemorating the adoption of the U.S. flag in 1777.

Trump has long mused about soldiers marching and armored vehicles rolling down the streets of the nation's capital. While planning for the Army birthday celebration has been in the works for almost two years, Army officials said it wasn't until this year that officials began exploring options to make the event even bigger — and expensive — with a parade. Doc probably doesn't know about that, either. Or that the multimillion-dollar price tag has stirred anger among some civilians and veterans alike. Or that locals are worried about damage to the roads.

Still, Doc is no stranger to pomp and circumstance. He travels with the 1st Cavalry Division Horse Cavalry Detachment across the country to represent the Army in various celebrations. The detachment picked a Blue Heeler because they are hardy and genetically bred for ranch work. Doc is comfortable around large animals. Large tanks, too. He's smart, said Wells, and knows how to



1ST CAVALRY DIVISION/U.S. Army

Doc Holliday is the only dog taking part in the military parade in D.C. on June 14.

shake hands and play dead. He loves to play fetch and to herd the formation at the beginning and end of each duty day, when the flag is raised and lowered.

He came to D.C. in January to take part in the inaugural parade. When frigid temperatures prompted Trump to order the inauguration indoors, Doc didn't get his moment in the wagon.

This time around, he'll be part of the military parade along Constitution Avenue, from near the Lincoln Memorial to the Washing-

ton Monument. Army officials expect 200,000 attendees and say it's a rain-or-shine event.

Doc will sit in a “M1878 Army Escort Wagon” pulled by two mules. It's made of wood, with big wheels and a canvas cover. He'll sit between two humans, the mule driver and the assistant. (The mule skinner and the swamper, in historical parlance.)

At home in Texas, Doc sleeps at the stables. In D.C., he'll stay in a hotel with a trooper, said Army spokesperson Lt. Col. Matt

McMillan. Thousands of participating soldiers will be sleeping in downtown government office buildings, The Washington Post previously reported.

The detachment will embark on its 1,500-mile drive to D.C. on June 10. Doc will be joined by about 25 soldiers, 12 horses and two mules, Wells said.

In the meantime, one can expect that Doc will continue to enjoy sniffing, fetching, running, eating and sleeping. You know, being a dog.

NATION

Trump's travel ban to take effect Monday

BY CHRIS MEGERIAN
AND FARNOUSH AMIRI
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Governments of 12 countries whose citizens will be banned from visiting the United States beginning next week scrambled Thursday to understand President Donald Trump's latest move to resurrect a hallmark policy of his first term.

The ban that Trump announced Wednesday takes effect at 12:01 a.m. Monday, a cushion that may avoid the chaos that unfolded at airports nationwide when a similar measure took effect with virtually no notice in 2017. Trump, who signaled plans for a new ban upon taking office again in January, appears to be on firmer ground this time after the Supreme Court sided with him.

Some of the 12 countries also appeared on the list of banned countries in the Republican president's first term. The new ban targets Afghanistan, Myanmar, Chad, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.

There will also be heightened restrictions on visitors from seven other countries: Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan and Venezuela. North Korea and Syria, which were on the banned list in the first Trump administration, were spared this time.

While many of the listed countries send few people to the United States, Haiti, Cuba and Venezuela had been major sources of immigration in recent years.

Trump tied the new ban to Sun-



EBRAHIM NOROOZI/AP

A cyclist passes in front of the former U.S. Embassy and a vendor, in Kabul, Afghanistan, on Thursday. Afghanistan is among the nations included in a travel ban President Donald Trump announced Wednesday.

day's terror attack in Boulder, Colo., saying it underscored the dangers posed by some visitors who overstay visas. The suspect, who is accused of turning a makeshift flamethrower on a group of people, is from Egypt, which is not on Trump's restricted list. The Department of Homeland Security says he overstayed a tourist visa.

The travel ban results from a Jan. 20 executive order Trump issued requiring government agencies to compile a report on "hostile attitudes" toward the U.S. and whether entry represented a national security risk.

Trump said some countries had "deficient" screening for passports and other public documents or have historically refused to take back their own citizens. He relied extensively on an annual Homeland Security report of people who remain in the U.S. after their visas expired.

Measuring overstay rates has challenged experts for decades, but the government has made a limited attempt annually since 2016. Trump's proclamation cites overstay rates for eight of the 12 banned countries.

While Trump's list captures

many of the most egregious offenders, it omits others. Djibouti, for example, had a 23.9% overstay rate among business visitors and tourists in the 12-month period through September 2023, higher than seven countries on the banned list and six countries on the restricted list.

The findings are "based on sketchy data and a misguided concept of collective punishment," said Doug Rand, a former official at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Venezuela's government had already warned its citizens against

traveling to the U.S. A video released last week by the foreign ministry told Venezuelans the U.S. "is a dangerous country where human rights of immigrants are nonexistent."

"If you are thinking about traveling, cancel your plans immediately," it urged.

But the administration's decision is a significant blow to Venezuelans, who were already limited in their U.S. travel plans since the governments broke off diplomatic relations in 2019.

The African Union Commission, meanwhile, appealed for reconsideration "in a manner that is balanced, evidence-based, and reflective of the long-standing partnership between the United States and Africa."

International aid groups and refugee resettlement organizations were harsher: "This latest proclamation is an attempt to further eviscerate lawful immigration pathways under the false guise of national security," said Sarah Mehta, the American Civil Liberties Union's deputy director of policy and government affairs for immigration.

Stephen Yale-Loehr, a retired Cornell University Law School professor and expert in immigration law, said the ban is likely to withstand legal challenges, noting the Supreme Court eventually allowed a ban to take effect in Trump's first term. Trump's invocation this week of national security, along with exceptions for green-card holders, athletes and others, could also help the ban stand up in court.

Judge: AmeriCorps must restore funding, members to states in suit

BY HANNAH FINGERHUT
Associated Press

The Trump administration must restore hundreds of millions of dollars in AmeriCorps grant funding and thousands of service workers in about two dozen states, a federal judge ruled Thursday.

U.S. District Judge Deborah L. Boardman granted a temporary block on the agency's cancellation of grants and early discharge of corps members but only for the states that sued in April.

The federal lawsuit, filed by Democratic state officials across the country, accused President Donald Trump's cost-cutting efforts through the Department of Government Efficiency of renegeing on grants funded through the AmeriCorps State and National program, which was budgeted \$557 million in congressionally approved funding this year.

Boardman also said all Ameri-

Corps National Civilian Community Corps members that were discharged from their service terms early should be reinstated, if they are willing and able to return.

But Boardman allowed the 30-year-old federal agency for volunteer service to proceed with its reduction in force, denying the states' request to restore the majority of staff that were put on administrative leave in April. The agency employs more than 500 full-time federal workers and has an operating budget of roughly \$1 billion.

The 30-year-old agency created to facilitate volunteer service across the country oversees several programs that dispatch hundreds of millions of dollars and tens of thousands of people to serve in communities.

It sends roughly 200,000 corps members across the country as part of its service programs. Most

corps members get a living stipend during their service and become eligible for funding for future education expenses or to apply for certain student loans.

As part of the AmeriCorps State and National grant program, state volunteer commissions distributed more than \$177 million in formula-based distributions, as well as \$370 million in competitive grants that supported nearly 35,000 corps members serving at 300 organizations, according to announcements last year.

The lawsuit was filed by officials in Maryland, Delaware, California, Colorado, Arizona, Connecticut, Washington, D.C., Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin.

Trump says after Xi call that trade talks will resume

BY CHRIS MEGERIAN,
DIDI TANG
AND WILL WEISSERT
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Thursday that his first call with Chinese leader Xi Jinping since returning to office was "very positive," announcing that the two countries will hold trade talks in hopes of breaking an impasse over tariffs and global supplies of rare earth minerals.

"Our respective teams will be meeting shortly at a location to be determined," Trump wrote on his social media platform after the call, which he said lasted an hour and a half.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick and U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer will represent the U.S. in negotiations.

Trump also said Xi "graciously" invited him and first lady Melania Trump to China, and Trump reci-

procated with his own invitation for Xi to visit the United States.

The Chinese foreign ministry said Trump initiated the call between the leaders of the world's two biggest economies.

The ministry said in a statement that Xi asked Trump to "remove the negative measures" that the U.S. has taken against China.

Trade negotiations between the United States and China stalled shortly after a May 12 agreement between the two countries to reduce their tariff rates while talks played out. Behind the gridlock has been the continued competition for an economic edge.

Trump has lowered his 145% tariffs on Chinese goods to 30% for 90 days to allow for talks. China also reduced its taxes on U.S. goods from 125% to 10%. The back and forth has caused sharp swings in global markets and threatens to hamper trade between the two countries.

NATION

Back in US, man charged with supplying chemicals to Calif. fertility clinic bomber

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Federal authorities arrested a man they say collaborated with the bomber of a fertility clinic in May, alleging that he supplied chemicals used to make explosives and traveled to California to experiment with them in the bomber's garage months before the attack.

The two men connected in fringe online forums over their shared beliefs against human procreation, authorities told reporters Wednesday. The blast gutted the fertility clinic in Palm Springs and shattered the windows of nearby buildings, with officials calling the attack terrorism and possibly the largest bomb scene ever in Southern California. The

clinic was closed, and no embryos were damaged.

Guy Edward Bartkus of California, the bomber, died in the May 17 explosion. Authorities arrested Daniel Park, 32, of Washington state, on Tuesday after he was extradited from Poland, where he fled to four days after the attack. Park is charged with providing and attempting to provide material support to terrorists.

Park spent years stocking up on ammonium nitrate, a chemical that can be used to make explosives, before shipping it to Bartkus and later visiting him in Twentynine Palms, Calif. He stayed for about two weeks earlier this year, and the two conducted bomb-making experiments in the de-

tached garage of Bartkus' family home, said Akil Davis, the FBI's assistant director in charge.

Park, 32, was taken into custody at New York's John F. Kennedy Airport, U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli told reporters. He appeared in federal court Wednesday in Brooklyn. Judge Cheryl Pollak ordered him to remain detained. He will be sent to California.

Park and Bartkus, 25, met in online forums dedicated to the anti-natalist movement, Davis said. Anti-natalism is a fringe theory that opposes childbirth and population growth and contends that people should not continue to procreate. Officials said Bartkus intentionally targeted the American Reproductive Centers

Judge bars deportation of Colo. suspect's kin

The Washington Post

A federal judge on Wednesday barred the Trump administration from deporting the wife and children of an Egyptian man accused of throwing molotov cocktails at a pro-Israel demonstration in Colorado after immigration officials detained them and vowed to immediately expel them from the country.

U.S. District Judge Gordon P. Gallagher in Colorado found that deporting the family "without process" could cause irreparable harm and said he was issuing his order "due to the urgency this situation presents." He scheduled a hearing in the case for June 13.

The development came after lawyers for Hayam El Gamal and her five children filed an emergency petition earlier in the day arguing that their detentions were illegal. The family's attorneys wrote that officials violated their constitutional rights and other federal laws by depriving them of due process and protection from being punished for another person's alleged crimes.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement detainee records showed El Gamal was being held on Wednesday at a detention center in Dilley, Texas, for families facing deportation. Lawyers for the family said her five children, ages 4 to 17, were with her. The White House and the Department of Homeland Security said Tuesday that they had detained Mohamed Sabry Soliman's wife and children, revoked their visitor visas and would deport them as soon as that evening.

Lawyers for Soliman's wife said in court documents that she was shocked to learn of her husband's arrest after he allegedly attacked a peaceful demonstration by a pro-Israel group Sunday in Boulder, but she said his family should not suffer the consequences.

"Mr. Soliman has not been convicted of any crime and retains the right to the presumption of innocence until proven guilty," the lawyers wrote. "In any event, it is patently unlawful to punish individuals for the crimes of their relatives."

More filers for jobless benefits than expected

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Filings for U.S. unemployment benefits rose to their highest level in eight months last week but remain historically low despite growing uncertainty about how tariffs could impact the broader economy.

New applications for jobless benefits rose by 8,000 to 247,000 for the week ending May 31, the Labor Department said Thursday. That's the most since early October. Analysts had forecast 237,000 new applications.

Weekly applications for jobless benefits are considered representative of U.S. layoffs and have mostly bounced around a historically healthy range between 200,000 and 250,000 since COVID-19 throttled

the economy five years ago, wiping out millions of jobs.

In reporting their latest earnings, many companies have either lowered their sales and profit expectations for 2025 or not issued guidance at all, often citing President Donald Trump's dizzying rollout of tariff announcements.

Though Trump has paused or dialed down many of his tariff threats, concerns remain that a tariff-induced global economic slowdown could upend what's been a robust U.S. labor market.

In early May, the Federal Reserve held its benchmark lending rate at 4.3% for the third straight meeting after cutting it three times at the end of last year.

Fed chair Jerome Powell said the

potential for both higher unemployment and inflation are elevated, an unusual combination that complicates the central bank's dual mandate of controlling prices and keeping unemployment low.

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WORLD

S. Korea's new president seeks middle ground between US, China

BY DAVID CHOI
AND YOOJIN LEE
Stars and Stripes

Lee Jae-myung, elected South Korea's newest president on Wednesday, immediately pledged to strengthen the nation's alliance with the United States while pursuing a pragmatic relationship with China — an approach that has challenged many of his predecessors.

In his inauguration speech Wednesday, Lee committed to reinforcing ties with Washington while building "relationships with other countries from the perspective of national interest and practicality," echoing the centrist foreign policy themes he emphasized during his campaign.

"We should not fully depend on the alliance," he said during a televised presidential debate last month. "There is no need for us to intentionally exclude or stand hostile against China or Russia. Di-

plomacy should always focus on national interest and practicality."

Foreign policy experts described Lee's position as an effort to shift South Korea's diplomatic stance toward a more centrist path, balancing its long-standing security ties with the U.S. and its economic dependence on China.

"South Korea's strategic balance between the U.S. and China, which Lee Jae-myung's administration is talking about, is not referring to a 50-50, perfectly equal balance," Lee Byong-Chul, a researcher with Kyungnam University's Institute for Far Eastern Studies, said by phone Wednesday. "It is a slight change, bringing something that was excessively biased to the U.S. to the middle. It is realistically impossible to achieve a 50-50 balance with the U.S. and China."

South Korea has relied on the U.S. for its defense since the 1950-53 Korean War. Roughly 28,500

American troops remain stationed in the country, supported by a \$1.1 billion cost-sharing agreement that President Donald Trump frequently criticized as unfair.

While Washington is Seoul's key military ally, Beijing remains critical to its economy, Hahm Sung Deuk, dean of Kyonggi University's Graduate School of Political Studies, said by phone Wednesday.

China has historically been South Korea's largest trading partner. Roughly \$273 billion in goods were traded between the two countries last year, according to data from the government-funded Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency.

"China is so important to us in our economic growth and economic export," he said. "The Trump administration must understand our current situation, that we cannot neglect China."

Tensions between the two re-



SOUTH KOREAN MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

President Lee Jae-myung visited the Joint Chiefs of Staff combat control room Wednesday. In the photo, from the first row on the left, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Kim Myung-soo, President Lee, and Acting Minister of National Defense Kim Seon-ho.

gional powers flared in 2017 when South Korea and the U.S. deployed a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, system in Seongju, about 130 miles south of Seoul, to counter North Korean missile threats.

Despite U.S. assurances that the system was aimed solely at North Korea, Beijing responded with a wide-ranging boycott of South Ko-

rean businesses, costing an estimated \$7 billion in lost revenue.

Still, Hahm said Lee's pragmatic stance could help foster a productive relationship with the business-oriented U.S. president.

"In my judgment, Lee will explain this situation very well to Trump and they will make a good deal," he said. "Trump and Lee are also deal-makers."

Israel says it recovered bodies of 2 Israeli-American hostages in Gaza

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israel has recovered the bodies of two Israeli-American hostages taken in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack that ignited the war in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli strikes overnight and into Thursday meanwhile killed at least 13 people, including three local journalists who were

in the courtyard of a hospital, according to health officials in the territory. The military said it targeted a militant in that strike.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the remains of Judith Weinstein and Gad Haggai were recovered and returned to Israel in a special operation by the army and the Shin Bet internal security agency.

"Together with all the citizens of Israel, my wife and I extend our heartfelt condolences to the dear families. Our hearts ache for the most terrible loss. May their memory be blessed," he said in a statement.

Kibbutz Nir Oz announced the deaths of Weinstein, 70, and Haggai, 72, both of whom had Israeli and U.S. citizenship, in

December 2023. Weinstein was also a Canadian citizen.

The military said they were killed in the Oct. 7 attack and taken into Gaza by the Mujahideen Brigades, the small armed group that it said had also abducted and killed Shiri Bibas and her two small children.

The army said it recovered the remains of Weinstein and Hag-

gai overnight into Thursday from the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis.

At least 10 Palestinians were killed in Israeli strikes in Khan Younis overnight, according to Nasser Hospital, which received the bodies.

It was not immediately clear if the strikes were related to the recovery mission.

STARS AND STRIPES

SERVICE DIRECTORY

The Daily Guide to Navigating The Military Business Market

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WEEKEND



Michael Cera finally
in Wes Anderson film
Movies, Pages 16-17



Pure fun

Mario Kart World a chock-full, seamless start for Switch 2
Video games, Page 15

Nintendo

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY

Not a magical answer fairy

How to fight your tendency to blindly trust AI

BY SHIRA OVIDE
The Washington Post

Two newspapers recently published summer reading recommendations that included made-up books. The list was created using artificial intelligence chatbots.

The Washington Post identified in recent days telltale signs of AI in a White House health report that cited nonexistent research. And attorneys keep getting scolded for using AI that generates bogus legal research in court filings.

You might believe that you would never be stupid enough to overrely on AI this way. You're wrong.

There are decades of research chronicling our tendency to blindly trust powerful software even when we know better — like the proverbial person who follows Google Maps directions off a cliff. New forms of AI, which are simultaneously powerful, seemingly mysterious, error-prone and excessively hyped, turbocharge this problem.

A necessary companion to using modern AI, then, is the humility to anticipate that you will trust the technology even when you know you shouldn't. Here's how to fight that tendency:

Automation bias

Many AI technologies say you

shouldn't treat them as gospel. ChatGPT's text box says, "ChatGPT can make mistakes. Check important info." Tesla says you must constantly be hands-on with its advanced car cruise control system that it calls "Autopilot." Companies that sell facial recognition software used by police departments say the information is for investigative leads and not grounds for an arrest.

The problem, AI researchers say, is that those warnings conveniently ignore how we actually use technology — as machines that spit out the right "answer."

Researchers have described for decades a series of human biases with computerized recommendations, including what's sometimes called automation bias, or a tendency to defer to machines even when they contradict your common sense or professional training.

Generative AI systems including ChatGPT and image-generating Dall-E from OpenAI amplify this tendency, said Kate Crawford, a professor at the University of Southern California and author of "Atlas of AI." (The Washington Post has a content partnership with OpenAI.)

"Generative AI systems have both an authoritative tone and the aura of infinite expertise, which can make users feel as though every response is correct without the need to verify it,"



iStock

We developed artificial intelligence to act as a tool to help us, but it's certainly fallible.

Crawford said. My favorite example of automation bias: For years, many people trying to pinpoint the location of a computer or phone used by identity thieves, runaway children and online harassers found the location of a single Kansas farm. It was a computer glitch in common online mapping software.

Otherwise sane Americans drove to Kansas to confront the person they believed stole their phone or harassed them online — because a computer spit out the wrong answer.

If you think you'd never do something like that, you've learned the wrong lesson. We're all prone to automation bias, especially when we're stressed or worked up.

'Distrust but verify'

Computer programmer Simon Willison has said it helps to assume that chatbots and other new forms of AI are wrong until you prove otherwise, an approach he described as "distrust but verify."

That's different from how

we've come to treat many other technologies. Weather forecasts aren't 100% accurate, but they tend to be reliable enough not to take an umbrella when the forecast is sunny. Mapping directions and Siri goof up constantly, but they're often good enough, or at least relatively low stakes when they're wrong.

Generative AI constantly makes up stuff, though, and it's getting worse rather than better. This knowledge of the inherent flaws is a necessary starting point when you use AI to summarize information, edit your emails and brainstorm.

It's also necessary to recognize that the wow factor of generating sentences or images doesn't make the technology intelligent.

"Generative AI may seem like it's smart because it has a conversational interface, but it is actually the opposite of smart," said Meredith Broussard, a data journalism professor at New York University who wrote "Artificial Unintelligence: How Computers Misunderstand the World."

Frank Pasquale, a Cornell Law

School professor, has been researching the recent examples of lawyers caught submitting bogus legal citations from chatbots. Lawyers are required to make sure that anything submitted to a court is reviewed by a human beforehand, but like the rest of us, attorneys are tempted by AI shortcuts.

Pasquale said that "concrete repercussions," such as steep fines or a temporary loss of lawyers' law licenses, might help override the appeal of using AI and not checking its work.

The temptation that Pasquale described to cut corners shows that there's a bigger-picture reason behind people pumping out flawed AI-generated material, said Evan Selinger, a Rochester Institute of Technology professor, who focuses on the philosophy of technology.

When your boss or child's school "expect AI to boost productivity and jobs feel precarious, the pressure inevitably will lead to overreliance on AI tools," Selinger said. "Many are doing what they believe it takes to survive."

Enter the vinyl world with an Electrohome record player, speakers

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

Electrohome's Montrose Vinyl Record Player and McKinley 2.0 Stereo Powered Bookshelf Speakers make an excellent combination for anyone entering the vinyl world or for others like myself who want to get back in.

Electrohome has been making modern high-fidelity audio products with a classic look for over 100 years. With the Montrose two-speed, belt-drive stereo record player you can have it unpacked and spinning vinyl in minutes.

Electrohome offers both a wired and wireless version of the Montrose. It's easy to say turntables all have a retro look since they have been around for more than a century. But Electrohome's Montrose Vinyl Record Player has what I'd call an attractive modern/classic look. Its exterior is made with medium-density fiberboard in teak or black.

They both come assembled and ready to play with a preinstalled Audio-Technica AT3600L diamond-tipped needle cartridge. An included adjustable counterweight keeps the needle and tonearm balanced for optimal sound reproduction.

There is also an auto-stop feature, which stops the rec-



ELECTROHOME/TNS

Electrohome's Montrose Vinyl Record Player and McKinley 2.0 Stereo Powered Bookshelf Speakers come in teak or black and can be bundled.

ord from spinning upon completion to preserve the stylus. The wireless (Bluetooth 5.1) model is ideal for streaming music to portable Bluetooth speakers or headphones. Each model has a built-in preamp and plays 33 1/3 RPM and 45 RPM (with the included adapter) records.

A hinged dust cover, rubberized feet to prevent vibrations from impacting playback, a felt turntable mat and the counterweight are included.

Both models can be wired directly to speakers with the included 4-foot RCA cable with ground wire.

The McKinley 2.0 Stereo Powered Bookshelf Speakers also have a modern/classic look, making them a great bundle with the Montrose turntable. They perform just as Electrohome promotes: Playback is warm and resonance-free with rich and natural sound; rear bass ports enhance the low-frequency performance of the speakers.

Each speaker has a built-in amplifier, 1-inch silk soft dome tweeters and a 4-inch woofer.

The Montrose Vinyl Record Player or any music source can be connected to the AC-powered speakers via Bluetooth 5, RCA connections or a 3.5 mm aux-in port. A wireless remote is included. The speakers are also made with MDF wood cabinets (teak or black). Bundle packs, which include the Montrose turntable and the McKinley 2.0 Stereo Powered Bookshelf Speakers, are \$199.99 for the wired and \$219.99 for the wireless, but you can also buy the record player and speakers separately.

Online: electrohome.com

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



Nintendo

Mario Kart World includes single-player, multiplayer and online options right from the startup screen, as well as an option to enter “free roam” mode.

A clear-eyed, fully featured Switch 2 treat

With its ‘free roam’ and classic game modes and vibrant soundtrack, Mario Kart World does all it can to earn its \$80 price

BY GENE PARK

The Washington Post

In an era of multiplayer video games releasing with portentous “plans” to add more content, Nintendo’s Mario Kart World is an anomaly.

It’s the marquee launch title of Nintendo’s Switch 2, the highly anticipated successor to the blockbuster Switch console. It’s also filled to the brim with content, including an unknown number of characters, the first seamless world of the series and all the gameplay modes one can hope for.

Mario Kart World producer and Nintendo veteran Kosuke Yabuki is not taking for granted his responsibility to develop a game consistent with the offerings of the series while expanding the formula. As a director and creator of the series since 2008’s Mario Kart Wii, Yabuki says he always hears about people on holiday playing Mario Kart with their families.

“I really feel honored that people would use such an important time like holidays or time with family and spend it playing Mario Kart together,” Yabuki said in an interview through an interpreter. “So from my perspective, I feel I want to make Mario Kart World worthy of people choosing to spend that important time together.”

Nintendo has treated Thursday’s release of the Switch 2 with secrecy and didn’t distribute review models for critics. Instead I attended a daylong preview event in New York City to test the system and play several hours of the first \$80 retail priced video game for the current generation of consoles. Yabuki wasn’t able to comment on the price, which raised eyebrows when it was revealed. That was not his decision to make. But his passion for a fully-featured game and player experience is evident.

Right at the menu, there are options for single-player and multiplayer modes. Solo options in multiplayer games are becoming rare. Just look at Bungie’s upcoming and troubled Marathon, the just-released FromSoftware game Elden Ring: Nightreign and even the story-driven critical success Hazelight Studio’s Split Fiction, all of which largely or completely abandon the solo experience. So it’s a relief to see Mario Kart World still offers solo modes for classic Grand Prix racing on individual tracks, as well as classic battle modes of balloon popping and coin collecting. For Yabuki, it’s all about reassuring the

player that the latest Mario Kart is a complete product.

“Sometimes that comes down to details like the menu. When you start up the game and you first see that screen, you’re going to see single-player, multiplayer and online, and that’s going to be very familiar to people and hasn’t changed from some previous titles,” he said. “It’s about getting people into the experience faster.”

Tucked away in that start screen is an option to immediately enter “free roam” mode, which allows drivers to explore the Mushroom Kingdom at their leisure. It’s likely the mode I will spend the most time in, since Mario Kart World is the first time the Mario universe — almost always separated out by levels (or boards, if you’re in Generation X) — has been constructed in a seamless format. Like the Switch’s first blockbuster Zelda game Breath of the Wild, this is new territory for the brand.

But don’t call it an “open world” game, at least to Yabuki and his team.

“We actually don’t use the phrase ‘open world’ in development. I think for us it’s just a little bit too ambiguously defined,” he said. “Even though we are creating this vast interconnected world with racing routes, you still do need some traditional elements. ... That’s why we have this opportunity to pull in classic courses from past titles and remake them for World.”

Classic Mario music has also been remixed. Mario Kart 8, the previous entry, mostly used electronic music for its melodies, but World opts for a full sound with a live band. Koji Kondo’s reggae, bluegrass and jazz compositions from classics like Super Mario Bros. 3 are revived with a full horn section and bounding bass lines. Cruising around in free roam mode is a joy while the game dynamically shifts the mood for each piece according to your region or the time of day. Day-night cycles and shifting weather are a first for the series as well.

“As the player drives along, they’re seeing changes in the scenery, but they can also feel changes in terms of what music comes in,” Yabuki said. “You’re not just racing, you also have this opportunity to free roam the world, so we need music that fits that also.”

I also got to test the new Game Chat feature for the Switch 2 in World. It’s a built-in video chat system that experienced gamers balk at, since many already use robust third-party chat solutions such as Discord. But it’s

clear this system isn’t made for them; it’s for anyone who might find such features cumbersome or daunting. The Switch 2 can actually use any USB-charged web camera, and Mario Kart World has tiny balloons above the player’s character showcasing their face. When a racer gets struck by a weaponized turtle shell, the profile picture cartoonishly twirls around, livening up the already lively races.

Yabuki said it was important to design the system for people in the same room as well as online. It echoes the very first Super Mario Kart for Super Nintendo in 1992.

“Historically, Mario Kart is a bunch of games people play together with family and friends, so that kind of communication is always present,” he said. “Game Chat is a continuing evolution of this communication alongside gameplay in Mario Kart.”

Yabuki understands the importance of Mario Kart as a launch title for the new console. He’s also following up his own successful work as director of Mario Kart 8, the fifth-best-selling video game in history with more than 76 million sold across the Wii U and Switch systems since its 2014 release. He’s shy about taking any credit for the success.

“Those sales happened after it left my hands,” Yabuki said. “I think looking back, perhaps the compatibility of Nintendo Switch and Mario Kart 8 Deluxe was really good, and you also see the effort that teams across the globe put into sales and marketing.”

Nintendo is hoping for that same synergy of hardware and software for the Switch 2 and World. After about seven hours of play, I can’t offer any final analysis of the game. The racing and battle modes were great fun with other journalists who attended the preview event, and I imagine that experience only gets better with, as Yabuki says, friends and family.

If you can afford it, Mario Kart World does all it can to soften the sticker shock of its \$80 price tag. And I’m eager to return to free roam and vibe out with ska versions of classic Mario tunes as I drive around in the closest thing to a Mushroom Kingdom virtual world. In a games industry full of flimsy proposals from “live service” titles with uncertain futures, Mario Kart World is a clear-eyed promise.

WEEKEND: MOVIES



SCOTT A GARFITT, INVISION/AP

Michael Cera, from “The Phoenician Scheme,” his first Wes Anderson film, poses May 18 during the 78th Cannes international film festival, Cannes, southern France.

Destined to make a movie together

Cera and Anderson, who have similar sensibilities, styles, finally get chance to team up on ‘The Phoenician Scheme’

BY JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

When Michael Cera was announced as joining the cast of a Wes Anderson movie for the first time, the prevailing response was: Hadn’t he already been in a Wes Anderson movie?

So seemingly aligned in sensibility and style are Cera and Anderson that you could easily imagine a whole fake filmography. It is, for a slightly more corduroyed corner of the movie world, an actor-director pairing as destined as Scorsese and De Niro — even if “The Phoenician Scheme” is (checks notes one last time) their first movie together.

“I would remember,” Cera deadpans. “I would never have passed up the opportunity.”



Anderson

“The Phoenician Scheme,” now in select on-base theaters, stars Benicio Del Toro as the international tycoon Zsa-zsa Korda, who after a lifetime of swindling and exploiting has decided to make his daughter, a novice named Liesl (Mia Threapleton), the heir to his estate. Cera plays Liesl’s Norwegian tutor, Bjørn Lund.

Because of the strong leading performances, you couldn’t quite say Cera steals the show, but he’s certainly one of the very best things about “The Phoenician Scheme” — and that’s something for a movie that includes Tom Hanks and Bryan Cranston playing a hoops game of H-O-R-S-E. Bjørn is an entomologist, which means Cera spends a sizable portion of the movie in a bow tie with an insect gently poised on his finger.

“He is sort of a bug, himself,” Cera, speaking in an interview at the Cannes Film Festival shortly before the premiere of “The Phoenician Scheme,” says with a wry smile. “And he sheds his skin and becomes his true self.”

If Cera’s role in “The Phoenician Scheme” feels like a long time coming, it is. He and Anderson first met more than 15 years ago. Cera, 36, was then coming off his early breakthroughs in “Arrested Development,” “Superbad” and “Juno.” A comic wunderkind from Ontario who stood out even among the “Arrested Development” cast as a teenager, Cera had caught Anderson’s attention.

“It was something arranged by an agent in New York and we went to a kind of cocktail party,” Anderson recalls by phone. “We were with Harvey Keitel, too. So it was me and Harvey and Michael Cera — a totally unexpected combination. But I loved him. For years I’ve kind of felt like: Why haven’t we already done some-

thing together?”

For Cera, the meeting was even more memorable.

“I remember being very excited to meet him,” Cera says. “I remember him being very disarming. Obviously, he was like a luminary inspiration. He has had a huge impact on my general sense of taste. I discovered his movies when I was a teenager and watched them over and over.”

‘It seemed like it had already happened’

They nearly did come together on a movie before “The Phoenician Scheme.” Anderson had a small role for Cera in “Asteroid City,” but when its production schedule got pushed, Cera had to drop out because of the coming due date for his first son with his wife Nadine.

“I was kind of worried that I blew it,” Cera says, “that I missed the chance to sneak in.”

But even though Anderson and Cera didn’t work together until “The Phoenician Scheme,” they developed a relationship. Cera, who aspires to write and direct his own films, would send Anderson scripts for feedback. “We became friends,” Cera says.

“In the case of this movie, it was everything short of written for him,” Anderson says. “As soon as we had the idea of the character, he was the guy who (co-writer Roman Coppola) and I started talking about. I think we talked to him about it before there was a script or anything.”

“It seemed like it had already happened,” Anderson adds. “And it was a very good fit, a natural thing.”

Adjusting to Anderson’s ways

Cera quickly adapted to Anderson’s unique style of moviemaking, in which the cast collectively stay at a hotel, begin the morning in makeup together and remain on set without trailers to retreat to.

“At first, you’re kind of exhausted,” Cera says. “At the end of the first day, you go: OK, I need to eat a bigger breakfast.” As the production went along, Cera often sat right next to Anderson to watch him work.

One very notable characteristic of Bjørn is a Norwegian accent. If there’s anything more fitting than Cera being in a Wes Anderson movie, it might be Cera doing a Norwegian accent in a Wes Anderson movie. It’s also a bit that, in “The Phoenician Scheme,” has a touch of spoiler to it. Cera calls it “sort of a jaunty, playful representation of an accent, not purporting to be a home run.”

“When I brought up the accent to Wes, I said, ‘How should we go about this accent?’” Cera says. “He was kind of caught

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WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEW

As Andersonian as a film can be

Director made 'The Phoenician Scheme' with familiar details, style but an exhausting plot

By JOCELYN NOVECK
Associated Press

The young would-be nun tells the shady tycoon, "They say you murdered my mother. I feel the need to address this."

There's something about the deadpan delivery and the clear-eyed manner that makes you sit up and take notice of Liesl, and even more of Mia Threapleton, who plays her in "The Phoenician Scheme." (And there's another thing, too obvious to ignore: Boy, does she ever resemble her mom, Kate Winslet.)

A vivid presence despite her dry-as-dust tone, Threapleton makes a splendid Andersonian debut here as half of the father-daughter duo, along with Benicio Del Toro, that drives the director's latest creation. Their emerging relationship is what stands out amid the familiar Andersonian details: the picture-book aesthetic. The meticulous production design (down to those fascinating closing credits). The chapter cards. The "who's who" of Hollywood cameos. And most of all, the intricate — nay, elaborate, nay, labyrinthine — plot.

Indeed, Anderson seems to be leaning into some of these characteristics here, giving the impression of becoming even more, well, Wes Anderson than before. He will likely delight his most ardent fans but perhaps lose a few others with the plot, which becomes a bit exhausting to fol-

low as we reach the midpoint of this tale.

But what is the Phoenician scheme, anyway? It's a sweeping, ambitious, somewhat corrupt dream of one Anatole "Zsa-zsa" Korda (Del Toro), one of the richest industrialists in Europe, to exploit a vast region of the world. We begin in 1950, with yet another assassination attempt on Korda's life — his sixth plane crash, to be exact, which occurs as he sits smoking a cigar and reading about botany.

Suddenly, in a hugely entertaining precredits sequence, Korda's in the cockpit, ejecting his useless pilot and directing his own rescue, asking ground control whether he should crash into a corn or soybean field. The media mourns his passing — and then he turns up, one eye mangled, biting into a husk of corn. As usual, reports of his death have been ... you know.

Recovering at his estate, with some truly fabulous tiled bathroom floors, Korda summons Liesl from the convent where he sent her at age 5. He wants her to be his sole heir — and avenger, should his many enemies triumph.

His plans are contained in a series of shoeboxes. But Liesl isn't very interested in the Korda Land and Sea Phoenician Infrastructure Scheme. What she wants to know is who killed her mother. She also mentions that she and her father haven't seen



TPS PRODUCTIONS, FOCUS FEATURES/AP

From left, Mathieu Amalric, Michael Cera, Benicio Del Toro, Mia Threapleton and Jeffrey Wright in a scene from "The Phoenician Scheme," Wes Anderson's latest film.

each other in six years. ("I apologize," he says.) And she wonders why none of his nine sons, young boys he keeps in a dormitory, will be heirs. But Korda wants her.

They agree to a trial period. We get the creeping feeling Liesl will never return to the convent — maybe it's the red lipstick, or the affinity she's developing for jewels? But we digress.

We should have mentioned by now the tutor and insect expert, Bjørn. In his first Anderson film but likely not the last, Michael Cera inhabits this character with just the right mix of commitment and self-awareness.

"I could eat a horse," he muses in a silly quasi-Norwegian accent before lunch, "and easily a pigeon!"

Now it's on the road they go, to secure investments in the scheme. We won't get into the financial niceties — we writers have word-length limits, and you readers have patience limits. But

the voyage involves — obviously! — a long line of characters only Anderson could bring to life.

Among them: the Sacramento consortium, aka Tom Hanks and Bryan Cranston, two American guys who hinge their financial commitment on the outcome of a game of H-O-R-S-E.

Next it's to Marseille Bob (Mathieu Amalric), and then to Marty (Jeffrey Wright), leader of the Newark Syndicate (we're not talking Jersey here, but Upper Eastern Independent Phoenicia), who offers a blood transfusion to Korda because, oh yes, he was shot by terrorists at the previous meeting. (Don't worry, the guy's indestructible.)

Then there's Cousin Hilda (Scarlett Johansson, continuing the cameo parade), whom Korda seeks to marry to get her participation in the investment.

And then back on the plane, the group is strafed by a fighter jet. Soon, it'll be revealed that one of them is a mole. We won't

tell you who, although it's hard to tell if anything is really a spoiler here — like the part when Benedict Cumberbatch appears with a very fake beard as Uncle Nubar, who may be someone's father or may have killed someone, and engages in a slapstick fight with Korda, complete with vase-smashing.

We also shouldn't tell you what happens with the big scheme — it was all about the journey, anyway. And about Korda and Liesl, who by the end have discovered things about each other but, even more, about themselves.

As for Liesl, at the end, she's clad stylishly in black and white — but definitely not in a habit. As someone famously said about Maria in "The Sound of Music": "Somewhere out there is a young lady who I think will never be a nun."

"The Phoenician Scheme" is rated PG-13 for violent content, bloody images, some sexual material, nude images and smoking throughout. Running time: 101 minutes. Now playing in select on-base theaters.

Cera: Actor shedding a 'skin,' soon to make directorial debut

FROM PAGE 16

off guard. I think he hears the movie in his head and maybe hadn't figured that in. It was something Wes had to compute."

As Anderson describes it, Cera was determined.

"I, at a certain point, was a little reluctant, like, I don't know if we need it," Anderson says. "He was like: 'No, let me show you what I'm going to do.'"

A determination in absurdism has long marked Cera's best performances. Though a private person who has resisted all urges to get a smartphone, Cera is remarkably fearless when it comes to the most awkward moments. It's a seriousness of purpose that, whether singing "These Eyes" in "Superbad" or waving hello as Allen in "Barbie," has made Cera a favorite of successive generations. Even in a billion-dollar blockbuster, Cera can be unassumingly hilarious.

"I feel like most people don't know I'm in that movie. I mean, not in a bad way. It was great for my personal disposition to get to be part of it," Cera says. "I can say I'm in it, but I can walk around. I'm nowhere near the center of the movie. I'm not on the poster, put it that way



TPS PRODUCTIONS, FOCUS FEATURES/AP

Michael Cera, left, plays entomologist Bjørn Lund, the Norwegian tutor of Mia Threapleton's Liesl in "The Phoenician Scheme."

(laughs). My nephew went and saw the movie with my sister. Afterwards he was like, 'I thought Uncle Michael was going to be in this movie.' It was a nice lane for me."

Cera's transition to behind the camera

Just before the premiere of "The Phoenician Scheme" in Cannes, it was announced that Cera, after writing a handful of scripts including an adaptation of Charles Portis' "Masters of Atlantis," will make his directorial debut with "Love Is Not the Answer," a film he wrote that has a cast including Pamela Anderson and Steve Coogan.

"You have a little more control over your destiny if you try to create something, even though it's hard to get it off the ground," Cera says. "But it's better than sitting around. You're like a hired contractor as an actor, and it's a great thing about it. But I think a lot of actors end up becoming frustrated directors because of how many opinions you have about the proceedings."

It may have taken many years for Cera and Anderson to finally team up, but it could have come at the right time, just as Cera is — ahem — shedding a skin. In any case, theirs remains an ongoing collaboration. Anderson tapped Cera for an ad they recently shot for Mont Blanc. Does that mean he's officially part of the troupe?

"That's up to him," Cera says. "I would never say no."

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

Sharks not the scariest thing in this movie

A serial killer weaponizes the fish in well-crafted, taut thriller ‘Dangerous Animals’

By Mark Kennedy
Associated Press

As if a movie about sharks wasn’t scary enough, the filmmakers behind “Dangerous Animals” have upped the screams by adding what every thriller needs — a serial killer.

While that may sound like very dangerous moviemaking, the result is actually taut and well-crafted, a worthy birthday present to “Jaws,” celebrating its 50th anniversary this summer.

“Dangerous Animals” stars Jai Courtney as an Australian boat captain who likes feeding his female customers to sharks and videotaping it, while also offering little brainy speeches about the nature of makos, mosquitoes or sailfish while toying with his prey.

He meets what seems like his match in Hassie Harrison’s Zephyr, an American antisocial surf queen who lives in a van and refuses to be tied down. “There was nothing for me on land,” she says. She’s kind of a handful for any serial killer. For instance, she can pick locks with the underwire from a bikini top.



In “Dangerous Animals,” an Australian boat captain (Jai Courtney) likes feeding his customers to sharks and videotaping it.

Nick Lepard’s screenplay is muscular and satisfying, with nods to “Jaws,” of course, but also to “Point Break,” “Hannibal” and even the song “Baby Shark.” He says he was inspired to write “Dangerous Animals” by seeing a surfboard bag and imagining it carrying a body, which says something about how Lepard’s mind works, though we’re not judging.

Director Sean Byrne has a super ability to build dread and his scenes are crisp without being exploitative. The movie was shot on Queensland’s Gold Coast, but may take a bite out of the region’s shark cage diving fleets.

Zephyr and the serial killer play an

engaging game of chess for most of the movie, and by chess we mean she’s fighting to stay alive by wriggling out of handcuffs and running or swimming away and he’s determined for her to be shark food.

“Oh, you’re a fighter. I love fighters. It makes for a better show,” he says, biting into the scenery almost as viciously as the sharks chomp on chum.

He also does that thing that all serial killers do — saying he and his victim are similar. “You’re hard as nails. Like me. You and me, we’re sharks,” he tells her. She tells him to stop talking so much and calls him ocean scum.

The music department has a fun wink

with the soundtrack. One scene uses Stevie Wright’s “Evie (Part One)” — in which the singer begs his love to let her hair hang down — as the serial killer makes mementos out of his victims’ hair. Another moment, astonishingly, plays Etta James’ “At Last,” the ultimate wedding song, just as the bad guy finally captures his quarry inches from rescue.

The setting of a boat in the middle of the Coral Sea unlocks a delicious new home for terror. Sealable hatches and no one for miles means screaming is no good. And the serial killer has weaponized Vegemite.

One thing Zephyr has up her sleeve is a boy, smitten after a meet-cute in which she tries to shoplift ice cream. He’s played by the hunky Josh Heuston and they’re perfect for each other, but she resists until she’s snatched by our nasty boat captain. But even though she blew him off, her boy is suspicious about her disappearance and is on the hunt.

“Dangerous Animals,” thankfully, doesn’t try to be more than it is, although the quite beautiful images of sharks sliding through the ocean show, naturally, that we are the species that inspired the title. After all, sharks don’t see a surfboard bag and wonder if they can put a body in it.

“Dangerous Animals” is rated R for strong, bloody violent content, grisly images, sexuality, language and brief drug use. Running time: 98 minutes. Now playing in select on-base theaters.

In ‘Mountainhead,’ billionaire tech bros watch the world burn

By Robert Lloyd
Los Angeles Times

At the beginning of “Mountainhead,” written and directed by Jesse Armstrong of “Succession” fame, three multibillionaire tech bros make their way by private plane, helicopter and SUV caravan to join a fourth in a big modernist house on an isolated, snowy mountaintop for a weekend of poker and drugs — “no deals, no meals, no high heels.”

Venis (Cory Michael Smith), the world’s richest man — imagine Musk, Bezos and Zuckerberg put in a blender — commands a social media site with 4 billion subscribers, and has just released new “content tools” that allow for super high-resolution “unfalsifiable deepfakes.” As a result, the sectarian world is going up in flames. Jeff (Ramy Youssef), a rival who had poached members of Venis’ team, has an artificial intelligence algorithm capable of filtering out the bad information that Venis wants to acquire, but Jeff, for reasons of profit, power and/or ego, is not going to let it go.

Randall (Steve Carell), their gray-haired guru — they call him “Papa Bear,” though Jeff also dubs him “Dark Money Gandalf” — controls a lot of international infrastructure, including military. Preoccupied with his mortality — his latest oncologist says his cancer is incurable — he’s hoping to upload his consciousness to the grid, a possibility Venis assures him is only five years off as long as he can get his hands on Jeff’s AI. The relatively inoffensive Hugo (Jason Schwartzman), whose house it is, hopes to expand the meditation app he created, into a lifestyle super app — offering “posture correction, therapy and a brand new color” — with his friends’ investment of “a b-nut,” i.e., a billion dollars. They call him “Souper,” for “soup kitchen,” because he is worth only \$521 million. He’s the runt of the litter, and the comedy relief.

For no given reason, they call themselves the Brewsters — perhaps just so they can crow “cock-a-doodle-brew.” They are full of themselves — “The great thing about me,” Randall says, “is that I know everyone and do everything” — and basically insecure.



Ramy Youssef, left, Cory Michael Smith, Steve Carell and Jason Schwartzman in “Mountainhead.”

They rewrite their fundamental nihilism into the belief that their business is good for mankind, whatever the actual human cost. “You’re always going to get some people dead,” Randall says. “Nothing means anything,” Venis says, “and everything’s funny and cool.” (But he does miss his mother and, in a particularly creepy interlude, his baby is brought up the mountain.) In the only scene to take them out of the house, the four travel to the crest of a mountain, where Hugo writes each man’s net worth in lipstick on his chest, they don hierarchical headgear and shout, “Mountain god accelerator legacy manifestation!” into the valley below, each adding a wish. It is, seemingly, something they have done before.

Randall name-checks philosophers he misunderstands to his advantage and drops references to the Catiline Conspiracy and the Battle of Actium to make base actions sound important and dignified. He calls the president a “simpleton,” but for all their power, money and influence, they all lack wisdom.

Venis thinks the violence engulfing the globe, which cannot touch him, may prove cathartic; Randall is “excited about these atrocities.” They discuss taking over “fail-

ing nations” to “show them how it’s done.” (In perhaps the film’s funniest line, Hugo, who has been working on his house, muses, “I don’t know if I want to run Argentina on my own — not on the back of a major construction project.”) They trade in gobbledygook phrases like “AI dooming and decelerationist alarmism,” “compound distillation effect” and “bootstrap to a corporate monarchy, cyberstate it to the singularity, eat the chaos,” which for all I know is just Armstrong quoting things people of this sort have actually said. It seems possible.

As the only one with a sense of humor and a semblance of perspective, Jeff is the most sympathetic of this toxic crew. He tracks the worsening world situation with some empathetic concern, but even though he holds the key to end the madness, he does not seem in a hurry to turn it. (Mostly he is concerned with his girlfriend, who is in Mexico, not so much because of the unrest, but because he fears she’s having sex.) Still, he stands a little apart, to his peril.

The first half of the film proceeds essentially as a play for four characters. Apart from Hugo’s asking for “help with the cold cuts” or inquiring whether everyone’s cool with reusing plates, there is a scarcely a line in which people talk like people; it is all theatrical declaration. To some extent it fits the coldness of the quartet — they hug and hoot and occasionally express a droplet of emotion, but the friendship on which they insist is competitive, transactional and illusory. They are not good company, but for those of us less than impressed by the whole “move fast and break things” ethos, or not willing to bow down before ChatGPT and OpenAI or the actual tech billionaires deforming the world, there is some fun in watching them fall apart. In some ways, “Mountainhead” feels as much a public service as an entertainment. So thanks for that, Armstrong.

When, in the farcical, action-oriented second half, some attempt to execute a ... plot, they bumble and argue and push each other to the front. It is an old kind of movie comedy, and works pretty much as intended.

“Mountainhead” is rated TV-MA. Running time: 108 minutes. Now streaming on HBO Max.

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEW

Like a bloody Fosse routine

Ultraviolence continues with dance-related twist in John Wick spinoff ‘Ballerina,’ starring Ana de Armas

By TY BURR
The Washington Post

You probably already know where you stand on the John Wick action movies. Either you think they’re dazzling displays of state-of-the-art fight choreography and darkly detailed world-building, or they’re deplorable wallows in gun fetishism and ultraviolence — the apex of R-rated commercial entertainment or the nadir of a culture that’s been numbed by video game carnage and can only cheer on the cleverness of the kill.

This being America, of course, they’re both. “Ballerina” — technically titled “From the World of John Wick: Ballerina” — is more and less of the same, a spinoff that stars Ana de Armas (“Knives Out,” “Blonde,” “No Time to Die”) as Eve Macarro, a dancer/killer in the secretive Ruska Roma school for assassins. The character turned up briefly in the third John Wick film played by Unity Phelan, a ballet dancer who has since been unceremoniously jettisoned for lacking the necessary star power and oomph.

Here, the character has been reenvisioned as a wide-eyed yet steel-nerved dispenser of mayhem and vengeance. An opening scene sees little Eve (Victoria Comte) traumatized by the death of her father (David Castañeda) at the hands of a secretive cult led by the Chancellor (a sepulchral Gabriel Byrne) and vowing revenge as she rises in the Ruska Roma ranks. Her mentors include the school’s Director (Anjelica Huston, doling out the ham with the finesse of a third-generation pro) and Winston (Ian McShane), the proprietor of the New York Continental Hotel for Hit Men and Ladies and a wel-

come holdover from the canonical films.

How’s de Armas? She handles the stunts with skill and enthusiasm, the acting chores less notably. (In her defense, Shay Hatten’s script is strictly functional, with all the best lines given to the colorful array of supporting characters.) Besides the baroque action scenes and the franchise’s vision of a global steampunk bureaucracy of evil, the main asset of the John Wick movies has always been Wick himself, as played by Keanu Reeves with a Zen exhaustion that’s a rare and mighty thing. De Armas simply doesn’t have a purchase on the cultural affection that Reeves has built over four decades of stardom, and that lack keeps “Ballerina” firmly in the minor leagues for about two-thirds of its running time.

At a certain point, however, two things happen. One is a special guest appearance that reenergizes the film, and the other is director Len Wiseman’s unexpected commitment to slapstick humor. Maybe call it slap-death. We’ve had a taste in a mid-movie sequence in which Eve is beating on a fellow assassin with a TV remote, causing a nearby screen to flicker on with clips of the Three Stooges, “Airplane!” and Buster Keaton. Later, there’s a marvelous game of dinnerware three-card monte with a gun hidden somewhere beneath a pile of fallen plates.

The many, many disposable extras are dispatched with a grim merriment you will find either to your liking — the audience at my screening hooted in approval — or actively depressing, and even a doubter may have to admit that the creative gymnastics with which people here get shot, stabbed, blown up, impaled, garroted, dismembered or finished off with



LIONSGATE/AP photos

Ana de Armas stars as Eve Macarro, a dancer/killer in the Ruska Roma school for assassins in “Ballerina.” She vows vengeance after the death of her father.



Anjelica Huston plays a mother figure called the Director, who oversees the training of ballerinas and the assassins of the Ruska Roma tribe, in “Ballerina.”

and notably dull until someone has the bright idea to open a case of grenades.) Likewise, the series’ vision of an underworld bound by arcane pacts of honor and maintained via dusty pneumatic tubes and CRT terminals from the 1970s would be pompous if it weren’t so engagingly silly. All those rules about who gets to kill whom and when and how! I thought the whole point of being a villain was that you didn’t have to follow rules. “Ballerina” takes this bizarro-world civic mindset to a logical extreme in a bravura third act set in a Czech mountain village, where every last inhabitant down to the schoolchildren is a professional assassin and where ordering a caffe latte is an invitation to a knife fight. It’s lunatic and just slightly too close to home in these fraught and fractured days. The world of “Ballerina” is one where everybody knows your name — and it’s written on every bullet.

“Ballerina” is rated R for strong/bloody violence throughout and language. Running time: 125 minutes. Now playing at select on-base theaters.

Go behind the scenes of action franchise with ‘Wick Is Pain’

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

The new “John Wick” spinoff “Ballerina” (or, “From the World of John Wick: Ballerina”) stars Ana de Armas in the title role as Eve, a ballerina training in the assassin traditions of the Ruska Roma. Directed by Len Wiseman and written by Shay Hatten, the film is produced by Chad Stahelski, who has helmed all of the “John Wick” movies.

“Ballerina” takes place between the events of “John Wick: Chapter 3 - Parabellum” and “John Wick: Chapter 4,” so if you need to refresh your memory on the lore of the franchise, now would be the time to do so. The decade-long franchise is one of the most unlikely success stories in Hollywood, though Keanu Reeves and some of the best action and fight choreographers in the business should be a no-brainer home run.

However, as detailed in the new documentary, “Wick Is Pain,” directed by Jeffrey Doe, bringing the first movie to the screen, and then to success, was a battle every step of the way. Available to rent now on all digital platforms, “Wick Is Pain” is a fascinating look behind the scenes at the development and creation of John Wick, starting with



LIONSGATE/TNS

Keanu Reeves in “John Wick: Chapter 4.”

director Stahelski’s career as a stunt performer and coordinator (doubling Reeves on “The Matrix”), as well as creating his stunt business, 87Eleven, with David Leitch. While at times, “Wick Is Pain” can feel a bit like a two-

hour DVD extra, with plenty of details about the making of the films, Reeves’ extensive training and even some outtakes, the entire piece is ultimately a tribute to the incredible amount of work and ingenuity that went into creating the world of John Wick — the lore, the fighting style, the action cinematography, the training, coming with a lot of blood, sweat and tears, and of course, pain.

Stahelski and Reeves share a kind of monastic approach to these movies, suffering for their art, and finding a kind of art in suffering. That ethos permeates the John Wick movies, elevating them beyond just simple revenge-fare (it’s now common to describe revenge movies as “John Wick”-esque). Reeves’ performance of a grieving assassin attains something soulful in his killer quest, while Stahelski and his creative team create an aesthetic that is nearly spiritual in its bloody beauty. None of that could be achieved without the pain, of course.

“Wick Is Pain” is worth the watch to truly appreciate the hard-fought, hard-wrought and deeply human artistry behind these movies, so it will likely enhance your re-watch of the films — all four are streaming on Peacock or available for rent.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Art, design and culture abound in Glasgow

Glasgow, astride the River Clyde, is a surprising city — and Scotland’s most underrated destination. Just an hour from Edinburgh (making it an easy day trip), Glasgow offers an energetic dining and nightlife scene, fanciful architecture and top-notch museums — most of which are free. Today, this once-run-down city feels revitalized, and Glaswegians (sounds like “Norwegians”) are eager to give visitors a warm welcome.

Locals here are some of the chattiest people in Scotland — and have the most entertaining (and impenetrable) accent. One once told me he was “British by passport, and Scottish by the grace of God.” Their unpretentious friendliness makes connecting with people here a cinch. You don’t find an upper-crust history or people putting on airs. In Edinburgh, people identify with the quality of the school they attended; in Glasgow, it’s their soccer team allegiance.

In its 19th-century heyday, Glasgow was one of Europe’s biggest cities and the second-largest in Britain, right behind London. It was at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution, and is said to have produced a quarter

of the world’s oceangoing ships. After World War II, the city was hit with tough times, giving it a gritty image. But modern Glasgow has rejuvenated itself with a thriving cultural scene and its



Rick Steves

trademark knack for design and artsy edge. Glasgow tells its story throughout its vibrant streets and squares. At the heart of the city is George Square, decorated with a “Who’s Who” of statues depicting great Scots, from top literary figures Sir Walter Scott and Robert Burns, to James Watt, who perfected the steam engine that helped power Europe into the Industrial Age.

Architecture buffs flock here to appreciate the unique Glaswegian flair evident across the city’s Victorian facades, early 20th-century touches and bold and glassy new construction. Most beloved are the works by Glasgow-born architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, Mackintosh brought an exuberant Art Nouveau influence to this otherwise practical, working-class city



Jessica Shaw/Rick Steves' Europe

Glasgow’s striking murals enliven its streetscape. Once gritty, the city is now known for its edgy design.

with his stimulating blend of organic shapes and Japanese-inspired design.

Glasgow’s artsy vibe permeates city streets with eclectic mural art. City officials have cleverly co-opted street artists by sanctioning huge, fun and edgy murals around town to prevent tagging. This creative problem-solving is typical of Glaswegians — taking counterculture energy

and turning it into something positive. There’s even a city map available that traces the city’s best mural art.

To feel the pulse of the city, head to busy Buchanan Street, nicknamed the “Golden Zed” (Brit-speak for “Z”), for the way it zigzags through town. And as home to the top shops in town, it’s also dubbed the “Style Mile.” This is the place to people-watch,

gaze up at the elegant architecture above the storefronts and enjoy the talented buskers that bring the boulevard to life.

The more time you spend in Glasgow, the more you’ll appreciate its edgy, artsy vibe and quirky, laid-back personality.

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Ancient Roman amphitheaters still used by modern spectators

Some things were truly built to last. Some two millennia ago, Romans constructed amphitheaters across their vast empire, as far north as modern-day Scotland and as far south as what’s now Libya. Large, circular or oval open-air venues with raised 360-degree seating, some 230 such structures are known to have existed. The most famous amphitheater, Rome’s Colosseum, could accommodate 50,000 or more spectators to its gladiator games, wild animal hunts and naval battles.

While most Roman amphitheaters have long since succumbed to the ravages of time, several remain or have been refurbished to a standard allowing them to host events in our own day and age. Here are just a few spectacles set in these historic venues:



Karen Bradbury

Pompeii, Italy: The Amphitheater of Pompeii was constructed around 70 BC, buried in ash by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD and excavated completely in the early 19th century. Nowadays known as the Archaeological Park of Pompeii, the venue is set to host a series of 14 live events between June 27 and Aug. 5. Some of artists performing as part of “Pompei è Musica” include Andrea Bocelli on June 27 and 28; Dream Theater on July 2; Jean-Michel Jarre on July 5; Ben Harper and The Innocent Criminals on July 15; Jimmy Sax and the Symphonic Dance Orchestra on July 17; Nick Cave on July 19; and Bryan Adams on July 25. Online: tinyurl.com/3fnzh25y

Verona, Italy: The city’s most famous event, an opera festival, traces its history back to 1913, when an event was staged to mark the centenary of the birth of Giuseppe Verdi. Since then, millions of music lovers and tourists have enjoyed the unique atmosphere of this iconic site.

From mid-June to early September each year, the Arena Opera Festival offers a wider variety of shows than its name suggests. The 2025 season, which runs from June



iStock

Italy’s ancient Arena di Verona amphitheater has hosted an opera festival since 1913. This year’s event begins June 13 and ends Sept. 6.

13 to Sept. 6, includes the following performances:

Opera: “Nabucco,” “Aida,” “Rigoletto” and “La Traviata,” all composed by Giuseppe Verdi; “Carmen” by Georges Bizet.

Concerts: The cantata “Carmina Burana” by Carl Orff on Aug. 15; Viva Vivaldi - The Four Seasons Immersive Concert on Aug. 27; and Jonas Kaufmann in opera on Aug. 3.

Dance: The ballets Roberto Bolle and Friends on July 22 and 23; Zorba the Greek on Aug. 26 and Aug. 31.

Ticket prices vary enormously, depending on seat location and performance, with the most expensive at 360 euros and the cheapest at 30 euros. Spectators holding the least expensive tickets are advised to bring cushions, as their places are on stone steps. Online: arena.it/en

Pula, Croatia: This coastal city on the tip of the Istrian peninsula is home to the sixth-largest amphitheater of

antiquity. The venue hosts a variety of events in summer. Opera: “Nabucco,” July 2.

Concerts: Tom Jones on June 24; Jean-Michel Jarre on June 28; Bryan Adams on July 29; Grace Jones on Aug. 8; and Jose Carreras on Aug. 26.

Spectacles: The Spectacula Antiqua, a performance of gladiator-inspired battles, takes place on June 7 and 13. Additional events are online at tinyurl.com/24zk5p6w.

The amphitheater also serves as one of the main venues of the Pula Film Festival. The event’s 72nd edition is set to run July 7-17. Online: pulafilmfestival.hr

Arles, France: After Rome, Arles is home to the largest number of Roman remains, eight of which have been listed as UNESCO World Heritage sites. The city’s wonderfully preserved amphitheater will host an equestrian show on July 28 and a show titled “Je suis ne Roi” on Aug. 4, along with other events related to bullfighting. Online: arenas-arles.com/r-servation-2025

Nîmes, France: This amphitheater, constructed at the end of the first century AD and considered one of the best preserved, will host concerts by Korn on June 24; Mika on June 26; London Grammar on June 29; Santana and Jimmy Sax on July 21; and Scorpions on July 24. The Marvel Infinity Saga, a cinematic concert performed by L’Orchestre National Montpellier Occitanie, will take place on June 27. Online: festivaldenimes.com

Trier, Germany: Founded in 16 BC during the reign of Roman Emperor Augustus, Trier is considered Germany’s oldest city. While the Porta Nigra city gate is its most prominent ancient landmark, thermal baths and an amphitheater are additional remnants of the Roman era.

On Aug. 2 and 3, the remains of the city’s amphitheater will host a contingent of gladiators. The remains of the imperial baths will serve as the site of a Roman crafts market on June 7-9, a Roman food and drink event July 5-6 and Roman military reenactors Sept. 6-7. Online: trier-info.de/highlights/roemer-leben

WEEKEND: TRAVEL



Left, the restored interior of Notre-Dame de Paris. Right, the exterior of Notre-Dame in October 2024, a few months prior to its reopening.

Bringing Notre-Dame back to life

What it’s now like inside the beloved Paris cathedral, more than 5 years after a devastating fire

Timeline of Notre-Dame

1163: The cathedral was built between 1163 and 1260, in French Gothic style.

1789: During the French Revolution, many statues and decorative elements of the cathedral were destroyed and it was at one time used as a warehouse. The 28 statues of saints were beheaded, mistaken for French kings, and some of the bells were removed and melted down.

1804: Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself emperor of France with the pope in attendance in Notre-Dame, and portions of the cathedral were restored. But the property continued to decay, and there was talk of demolishing it.

1831: “The Hunchback of Notre Dame” by Victor Hugo is published and becomes a massive bestseller, sparking a campaign to restore the cathedral.

1844: King Luis Philippe orders that the cathedral be restored. A grander spire than the one destroyed during the French Revolution is constructed.

1991: For the 800th anniversary of the cathedral, a 10-year-long restoration project repaired decorative elements that had fallen off, gargoyles, turrets and sculptures. The stone exterior was also cleaned of centuries of pollution.

2019: On April 15, a fire broke out in the attic and spread across the roof and spire before firefighters were alerted. They prioritized saving the two towers, because their heavy bells could have destroyed the interior if they fell. But 750 tons of debris, including toxic lead dust, fell into the sanctuary from the roof and spire.

2021: Two years of cleaning up from the fire and shoring up the structure meant that reconstruction could finally begin. Because the church is owned by the French government, the decision was to rebuild it as it was before.

2024: The new roof is completed in March. In September, eight massive tower bells returned after cleaning, with three new bells added later. In December, the church’s doors were symbolically reopened and the pipe organ’s 8,000 pipes could be heard for the first time since being covered with toxic dust, as the public was allowed inside for the first ceremonies and Masses.

2025: Construction continues on the massive project, hoped to be completed by 2027.

BY MARLA JO FISHER
The Orange County Register

Millions watched on television in horror on April 15, 2019, as plumes of fire shot up from the Notre-Dame de Paris, one of the world’s oldest and most celebrated cathedrals. At first, the devastation seemed nearly total, with much of the roof and the iconic spire lost to flames. But today, more than five years later, visitors once more pour into its sanctuary, eager to see how the \$1 billion restoration work has progressed.

I was lucky enough to visit on Easter Sunday this year, a day filled with Masses and special events. Thousands of families — tourists and locals alike — stood patiently for hours in line to get inside, to attend a Mass or just to have a chance to see the remarkable restoration.

The interior of the cathedral reopened to the public on Dec. 8, although much restoration work still remains to be done. Giant cranes hang over the building, but thousands of people a day line up to see the rebuilt interior.

Larger than a football field, the inside of the cathedral now glows with oatmeal-colored walls and cavernous vaulted ceilings, after the controversial decision was made to wash them with a latex solution, obscuring the old soot and candle smoke of the centuries. If you’re used to seeing gray, grimy walls in ancient buildings, you may be startled to walk in and see the light-filled interior.

The French government, which owns Notre-Dame, made the decision in 2019 to rebuild the cathedral as it was before the fire, and vowed to do it within five years — a

If you go

Address: Notre-Dame Cathedral of Paris, 6 Parvis Notre-Dame, Place Jean-Paul II, 75004 Paris

Hours: The cathedral is open and free to visit, 7:50 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mondays-Fridays (until 10 p.m. on Thursdays); 8:15 a.m.-7:30 p.m. Saturdays-Sundays.

Information: English language website: notredamedeparis.fr/en/
The famous “crown of thorns” is on display intermittently — check the website. Due to grueling long lines, it’s highly advisable to make an advance timed reservation at the above website. They can be made two days to several hours in advance. You don’t need to reserve to attend a Mass; arrive 20 minutes early and find the special line. Here’s the online Mass schedule: notredamedeparis.fr/en/pray/services-masses
If you’re disabled, talk directly to the staff at the far left of the cathedral for special entry. A schedule of sacred music concerts (tickets required) is online at billetterie-musiquesacree.mapado.com/en

deadline that was exceeded only by a few months. There have been some changes, including a modern bronze main altar, baptismal font and lectern. Some people would have preferred a more traditional style, but the new style is not jarring.

Fortunately for posterity, the cathedral’s three magnificent medieval rose windows, created in the 13th century, were saved from the inferno. The sanctuary is covered with stained glass, thanks to an architectural innovation of the time. The so-called flying

buttresses pulled the weight of the roof outside the structure, meaning that the interior walls could be opened up for spectacular displays of leaded and stained glass. The ancient 8,000-pipe organ was also saved and restored, after toxic dust that had settled there from the collapsed lead roof was removed.

No ancient European cathedral is complete without its holy relics, which are venerated by the faithful as sacred artifacts from various saints and the life of Jesus. Notre-Dame offers its believers the following: the remnants of the “holy crown of thorns,” which biblical accounts say was placed mockingly on Jesus’ head by Roman soldiers during his crucifixion, a piece of the cross used in the crucifixion and a nail from the cross.

The relics were rescued from the 2019 fire in dramatic fashion, involving a chain of police and firefighters, and moved temporarily to the Louvre. They were recently returned to Notre-Dame with pomp and ceremony, to be displayed in a newly built reliquary. The public can see them on the first Friday of every month.

One thing that surprised me on my visit: Even though the cathedral was absolutely jammed with people, it was relatively quiet. Visitors couldn’t help gasping when they entered and got their first looks but otherwise seemed more solemn and respectful than is often the case.

Hopefully, they appreciated the five years of slavishly devoted work by some 2,000 sculptors, engineers, art restorers, stonemasons, carpenters, roofers and iron workers to bring this church back to life. And it still continues today.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



A whole island's worth of Venice beaches

PHOTOS BY REBECCA HOLLAND/Stars and Stripes

The free section of Blue Moon Beach on the Lido di Venezia barrier island allows visitors to bring their own chairs and umbrellas, and a nearby concession stand is convenient for buying snacks. There are also other free beaches as well as a range of beach clubs on this sandy side of the island, which stretches for about 6½ miles.

Lido di Venezia, one of the Italian city's 118 barrier islands, is an easy day trip from US bases in Venezia, Aviano

BY REBECCA HOLLAND
Stars and Stripes

When people think of Venice, its opulent palaces, winding canals and crooning gondoliers are what generally come to mind.

The world-famous Italian city is not known for its beaches. But Lido di Venezia, one of Venice's 118 barrier islands, is almost exclusively beachfront and an easy day trip from Venice or nearby U.S. military bases in Vicenza or Aviano.

Of the more than 5.5 million tourists in 2023, only 2% went to Lido, according to the city's official tourism data. That means refreshingly less busy streets compared to mainland Venice. Sidewalks are wide, and unlike the case on other Venetian islands, you can drive on Lido di Venezia.

If you're visiting as a day trip from Venice, there are seven routes on the vaporetto, or water bus, that will allow you to reach the beach.

If you're visiting from Vicenza or Aviano, you can take the train and then the vaporetto, or drive to Tronchetto and catch a ferry. Once at Tronchetto, about a 50-minute drive from Vicenza, you can park your car and take a vaporetto, or bring your car and take the ferry.

The ferry costs 21 euros per car, plus 9.50 per adult passen-



Lido di Venezia features iconic Venetian canals and architecture but is distinct from the rest of Venice, Italy, in that there are cars and wide sidewalks. The streets here are also less busy than on the mainland.

ger. It's best to book ahead of time if possible on the ACTV website to avoid spending hours waiting for space on busy summer weekends.

The 30-minute ferry ride is gorgeous and worth the trip in itself, with the boat gliding past St. Mark's Square and other Venice highlights. On arrival, there are a few shops and restaurants on the main drag, but the beaches are why most people visit.

The sandy side of the island stretches for about 6.5 miles. There are free beaches and a range of beach clubs. The free

beaches of Murazzi, San Nicoletto and Alberoni have umbrellas for rent and concession stands but do not charge an entrance fee.

Blue Moon is the closest beach club to the ferry and is very family-friendly. It offers a pool, playgrounds, showers, clean bathrooms, restaurants and bars, and entry gets you a chair and umbrella or cabana. Nearby, Des Bains is a more luxurious option.

Prices vary depending on the type of chair and day of the week. At Blue Moon, they start at around 18 euros per person, and it's 50 euros per person and up at



The ferry from Tronchetto to Lido di Venezia passes the Basilica of Santa Maria della Salute in Venice. The 30-minute ride also passes other Venice highlights like St. Mark's Square.

Des Bains. There are about a dozen additional options along the water.

For those who prefer other activities besides just lounging on the beach, there are numerous bike rental stores around the island. Visitors can bike to the Alberoni Dunes, a protected site with a free beach, pine forest and kingfishers.

It feels worlds away from the palatial summer homes and buzzy beach clubs on much of the island.

I don't golf, but the course along the dunes is supposed to be quite nice.

After a day of sun, catch the ferry home or spend the night. There are dozens of hotels on the island in all price ranges.

If you're staying, watch the sunset with a glass of wine at Villa Laguna, then head back to the main strip, where bars and restaurants liven up as soon as the beach clubs close.

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Coffee first at Reismühle

And then plenty more to drink, eat at the Krottelbach farm shop, roastery and café

BY JENNIFER SVAN
Stars and Stripes

It takes some effort to find Reismühle — and a bit of patience once you get there — but it's not hard to see why people keep coming back.

I first learned of Reismühle at a festival in Ramstein, where its staff had a coffee stand. It was a memorable cup of joe, and I made a mental note to venture out there sometime.

“Out there” is a wooded area near fields and a small stream outside Krottelbach, tucked in the rolling hills between Ramstein Air Base and Baumholder.

A farm shop, coffee roastery and café are housed inside a renovated and restored rice mill dating back more than 400 years. Wolfgang Lutz, a certified coffee sommelier and his wife, Nadine, a barista, fulfilled a lifelong dream and opened Reismühle in 2011.

Much of the business is still dedicated to coffee roasting. The farm shop offers Reismühle's own selection of coffee beans as well as tea, chocolate and coffee-themed gifts such as cherry espresso spread and coffee soap. There's also a coffee bar serving cake, ice cream and sandwiches.

For a heartier meal, visit on the weekend and plan ahead. Using the easy online process, I made a Sunday reservation for two on a Friday afternoon.

It was raining when my 14-year-old son and I arrived, so we sat inside. We ended up in what looked like a loft above the main dining area — part of a beautifully restored barn with high ceilings and exposed beams.

The place was nearly full and my son's attitude soured quickly. He wasn't thrilled about being among other humans when he could have been home playing video games.

On first glance of the menu, I worried his groans might continue. The theme was asparagus, which is a German seasonal obsession.

That suited me, but not my teenager. I ordered an asparagus cream soup with garlic oil that had small pieces of white asparagus. My son tried the quiche Lorraine with a wild herb salad, which he devoured minus the greens.

With the arrival of appetizers and drinks, the mood from across the table began to lighten.



Reismühle coffee comes from beans roasted on site for about 20 minutes.



PHOTOS BY JENNIFER H. SVAN/Stars and Stripes

The courtyard at Reismühle in Krottelbach, Germany, is a welcome retreat for hikers and others who want to enjoy coffee and dessert after exploring the nearby countryside. Reismühle also has indoor seating.



Left, Quiche Lorraine with a side of greens. Right, several varieties of flammkuchen are on the lunch menu at Reismühle. The options include an Italian style with vegetables and tomato pesto, and a classic version with onions, bacon and cheese.



My cappuccino was a 10 out of 10, with a velvety milk foam and rich, well-balanced espresso.

We also enjoyed a drink from the restaurant's “aperitif recommendations.” The Crodino is a nonalcoholic spritz from Italy with a mix of herbs, spices and botanicals. It was aptly described as “spicy with a bittersweet aftertaste,” something we both enjoyed.

For the main course, my son settled on one of the few asparagus-free entrees: classic flammkuchen, with fresh cream, bacon, onions and cheese.

He also wanted to try the Italian version, which came with tasty dollops of tomato pesto, vegetables, mozzarella and arugula. I ordered that, and we split the two. The classic edged the Italian, both of us decided.

We should have stopped there, but the dessert menu was persuasive. An agreement to share something didn't last long, and we each ordered our own.

I chose the “depresso,” a hot espresso poured over hazelnut ice cream with a homemade cookie — a superb mix of hot, cold, creamy and crisp.

My son ordered a strawberry sundae, a dreamy concoction of strawberry sorbet, vanilla ice cream and sliced fresh strawberries, topped with whipped cream, strawberry sauce and shaved almonds.

My dessert came out first. Then we waited — and waited — for the sundae.

From our loft perch, we watched servers carrying trays of mostly coffee. Finally, our waitress noticed my son's sad eyes and returned with his dessert.

Those mopey eyes sparkled a bit when the sundae appeared.

The food was a bit pricey and we ended up being there for over two hours because of the slow service. But everything tasted fresh, and the outing provided a nice change from the predictable



Reismühle's “depresso,” a cup of hot espresso cooled by a scoop of hazelnut ice cream and topped with a homemade cookie, had the opposite effect implied by the dessert's name.

Kaiserslautern food circuit.

The sun was peeking out by the time we left, and some hikers from the nearby trails were sitting outside in the shaded courtyard enjoying coffee and cake. Next time, we'll do the same,



Reismühle

Address: Reismühle 1, Krottelbach, Germany

Hours: Coffee bar and farm shop, Thursday to Sunday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; country café, Saturday and Sunday, 9-11 a.m. for breakfast, and Sunday, noon-2 p.m. for lunch; reservations required.

Prices: 20-30 euros per person for an entree and drink, not including dessert.

Information: +49 6384 925771, www.reismuehle.info, @reismuehle kaffeemanufaktur on Instagram

Jennifer Svan

because sometimes all you really need is a good cup of coffee and a slice of dessert.

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL



Calling all Anne fans

‘Green Gables’ heroine still casts her spell on Prince Edward Island

PHOTOS BY AARON KIDD/Stars and Stripes

Prince Edward Island, Canada, encourages travelers to slow down, whether it’s watching the tide roll in over a stretch of red sand or lingering over a plate of fresh oysters.

BY AARON KIDD
Stars and Stripes

On Prince Edward Island, the land rolls like an old patchwork quilt — emerald fields stitched together by red dirt roads, bordered by the blue-gray shimmer of the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Canada’s smallest province rewards visitors with an unhurried pace, a thriving culinary scene and landscapes straight out of a story-book.

For many, a trip to P.E.I. is an homage to “Anne of Green Gables.” L.M. Montgomery’s 1908 novel about a red-haired orphan who falls in love with the island’s windswept beauty has drawn visitors for more than a century.



The Green Gables Heritage Place in Cavendish is a huge draw for fans of L.M. Montgomery’s 1908 novel “Anne of Green Gables.” The farmhouse, originally owned by Montgomery’s relatives, inspired the title.

SEE ANNE ON PAGE 25

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Anne: Museums, paths, cemetery draw book lovers

FROM PAGE 24

Green Gables Heritage Place in Cavendish is a must-see — its iconic farmhouse and surrounding landscape conjure the fictional Avonlea. The farmhouse originally belonged to Montgomery’s relatives, the McNeills, and served as the inspiration for Green Gables in her beloved novels.

Montgomery was a frequent visitor here, and the area around the home deeply influenced her writing. Iconic spots include Lover’s Lane, a meandering path through spruce and maple trees, and the evocatively named Haunted Wood, where Anne Shirley and her “bosom friend” Diana Barry imagined ghosts lurking around every bend.

A short walk away, the Site of L.M. Montgomery’s Cavendish Home offers a more personal glimpse into the author’s world. Though the house where she lived with her grandparents is gone, its foundation remains, surrounded by the same sweeping meadows and trees that filled her childhood.

One piece of the original home still stands — the attached kitchen where Montgomery penned “Anne of Green Gables.” Standing near the space where Anne’s story first took shape is a powerful experience for literary pilgrims.

For an even deeper connection to Montgomery, head to the Anne of Green Gables Museum in Park Corner. Housed in the Campbell family home, where Montgomery was a frequent visitor, the museum features original artifacts, including a glass cabinet that served as the inspiration for Anne’s enchanted bookcase. Just outside the house is a picturesque pond that inspired the novel’s Lake of Shining Waters.

To complete the literary tour, a visit to L.M. Montgomery’s Birthplace in New London is essential. This modest white-and-green house, where Montgomery was born in 1874, now houses a collection of her scrapbooks, early editions of her novels and family heirlooms.

Montgomery herself is buried at Cavendish Community Cemetery. Fans often leave flowers or notes of gratitude, paying tribute to the woman who immortalized P.E.I.’s landscapes in literature.

Call of the coast

The north shore is home to Prince Edward Island National Park, a protected stretch of dramatic red cliffs, sandy beaches and historic lighthouses hugged by rolling dunes. The park encompasses much of the famed Cavendish Beach, where visitors

can stroll barefoot along the natural sand or safely explore fragile dunes from a boardwalk.

For a more dramatic coastal view, head west to Cape Tryon Lighthouse, a striking red-and-white structure perched atop rugged cliffs overlooking the gulf. Built in 1905, the lighthouse continues to stand sentry over the breathtaking landscape.

Island flavors

P.E.I.’s reputation as Canada’s food island is well-earned. The province is famous for its oysters, with spots like Malpeque producing some of the world’s best.

To eat like a local, head to New Glasgow Lobster Suppers, a family-run institution since 1958 with a casual, communal atmosphere. Diners are treated to a feast that starts with fresh rolls, seafood chowder and mussels before the main event: a perfectly steamed lobster served with homemade potato salad.

For a more intimate dining experience, Blue Winds Tea Room in Clinton is a hidden gem for “Anne of Green Gables” fans. Run by a dedicated Montgomery enthusiast, this charming spot serves recipes straight from the author’s journals, including New Moon pudding and raspberry cordial — the very drink that got Anne into big trouble with Diana.

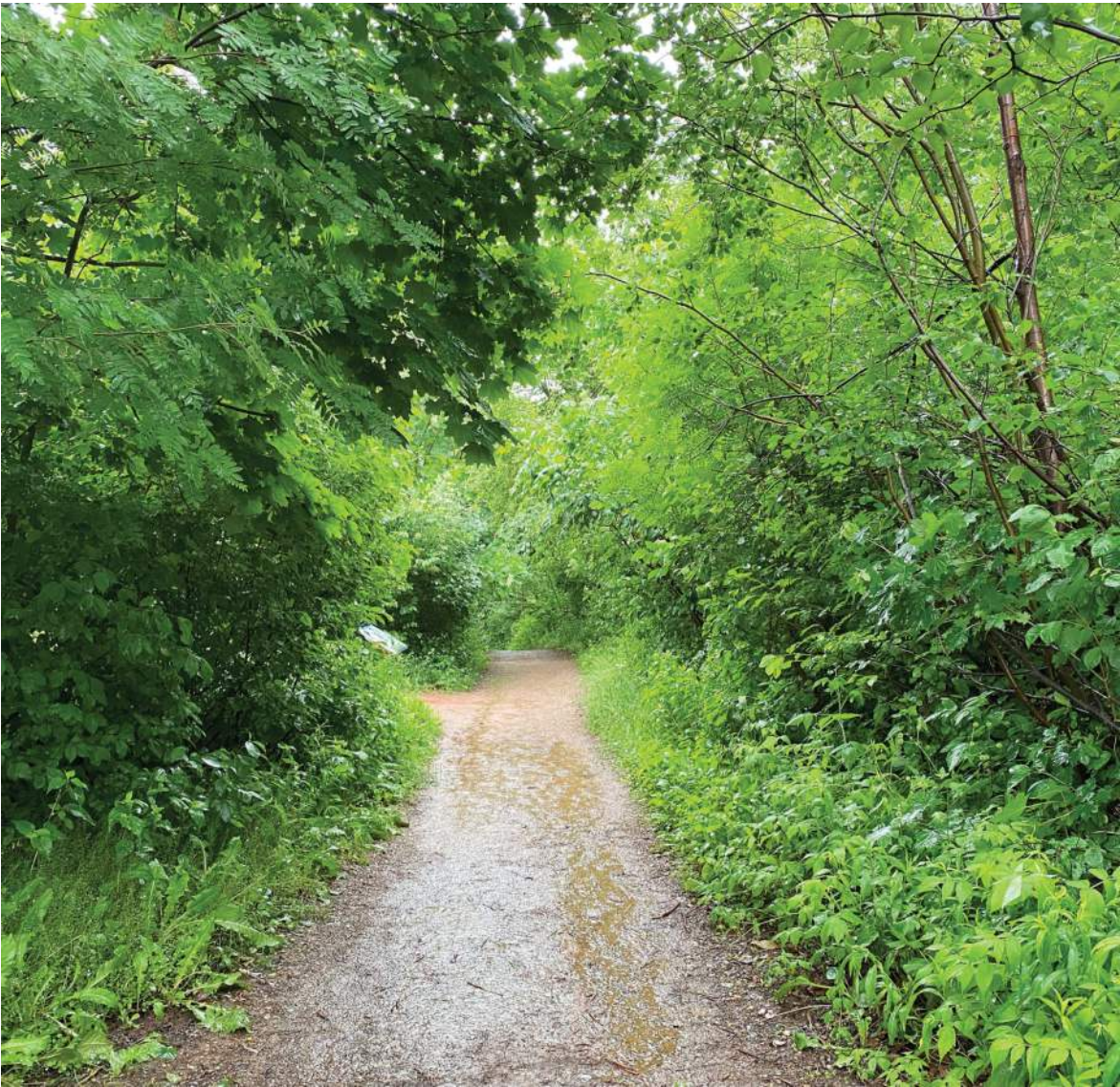
Happy trail

One of the most unique ways to experience P.E.I.’s beauty is by exploring the Confederation Trail, a 270-mile network of converted railway lines that once formed the island’s now-defunct train system. When the railway was abandoned in the 1980s, it was transformed into a scenic cycling and walking trail that meanders past potato farms, sleepy fishing villages and shimmering bays.

For “Anne of Green Gables” fans, the trail also offers a bit of literary history. In the novel, Anne first travels on P.E.I. by train, stepping off at Bright River, inspired by the real-life community of Hunter River. Though the trains are long gone, visitors can still stop in Hunter River and imagine Anne’s nervous excitement as she waited to meet Matthew Cuthbert, the quiet, kind man who would change her life.

P.E.I. encourages travelers to slow down, whether it’s watching the tide roll in over a stretch of red sand or lingering over a plate of fresh Malpeque oysters. Here, the reward is not in rushing to the next attraction but letting the island’s quiet charm unfold at its own unhurried pace.

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PHOTOS BY AARON KIDD/Stars and Stripes

The landscape surrounding L.M. Montgomery’s home, including Lover’s Lane, a meandering path through spruce and maple trees, deeply influenced her writing.



Blue Winds Tea Room serves recipes found in the pages of Montgomery’s books and journals, including raspberry cordial and New Moon pudding.



For a true Prince Edward Island experience, head to New Glasgow Lobster Suppers, a family-run institution since 1958.



Green Gables Heritage Place pays homage to famous fictional orphan Anne Shirley on Prince Edward Island, Canada.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Stamps of approval

Collectible items at Japanese ruins from Yayoi period gaining popularity

By HIROSHI TACHIBANA
The Japan News

Visiting ruins from the prehistoric Yayoi period and collecting goshuin stamps there has recently been seeing a quiet rise in popularity.

The Yayoi period started several hundred years B.C. and continued until around 300 A.D., when rice production began in Japan. Archaeological ruins from the period are found all over the country.

To promote the Yayoi-period ruins that they manage, museums and other facilities have begun offering original goshuin stamps, which are usually available at temples and shrines for people to use to commemorate their visit. The museums' and other facilities' goshuin stamps are resonating with archaeology enthusiasts and others not only due to their unique designs but also because they include catchphrases that capture the characteristics of each individual site.

Dozens of locations nationwide

The Tottori prefectural government's "Tottori Yayoi Kingdom" promotion department has arranged a scavenger hunt-like activity, in which participants collect goshuin stamps from Yayoi-period ruins throughout Japan. Tottori prefecture is home to such Yayoi-period ruins as the Aoya Kamijichi ruins, where many wooden artifacts and other items have been discovered. The prefecture started the project to help increase the number of visitors to these and other ruins.

The rules of the project require facilities related to Yayoi-period ruins to come up with their own catchphrases and for the size of the goshuin stamps not to exceed a length of 15.5 centimeters (6.1 inches) and a width of 9 centimeters. The project started in October 2022 at 19 ruins and 20 facilities around the country. Currently, 35 ruins and 38 facilities in 16 prefectures are participating.

Among the areas involved in the project, Hyogo prefecture is first in terms of the number of participating sites it has, with six ruins and seven related facilities. Many sites from the Yayoi period exist in the prefecture, and several of them are known for their unique remains, such as an old village, an iron workshop and burial mounds. The Onaka ruins in Harima, the Tano ruins in Amagasaki and the Gossa-Kaito ruins in Awaji, all in the prefecture, have been participating in the project since it started.

Catchphrases

The catchphrase for the Onaka ruins refers to the site as a Yayoi housing exhibition. About 140 round, hexagonal and other shaped pit dwellings were discovered there and at adjacent ruins. The Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Archaeology and the Harima town history museum are participating in the project in collaboration with the ruins.

"I hope the activity will provide an opportunity for people to get interested in archaeology," an official of the archaeology museum said.

The catchphrase for the Gossa-Kaito ruins references a Yayoi blacksmith workshop, as iron artifacts were discovered in a pit-type building site at the ruins.

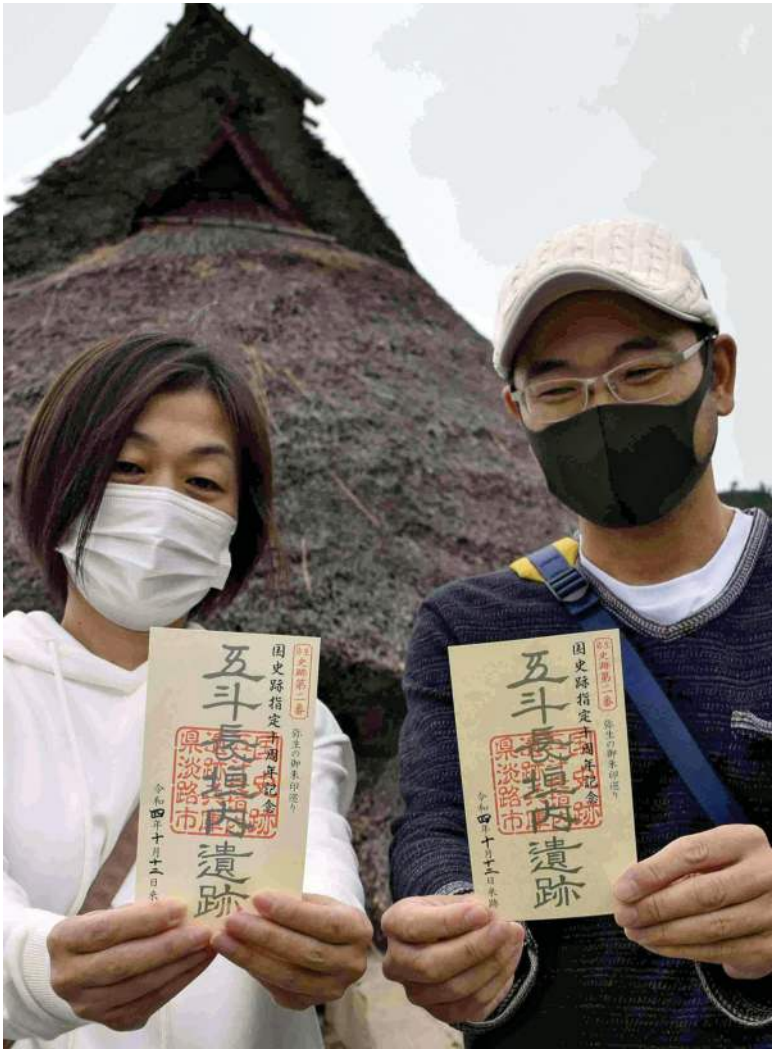
Meanwhile, the Kamo ruins in Kawanishi, which feature the remains of a settlement surrounded by a moat, have a catchphrase meaning "Yayoi hilltop moated settlement."

For the Shingu Miyauchi ruins in the city of Tatsuno, the catchphrase notes that the site houses one of the biggest Yayoi villages in the Harima region, the southwestern part of Hyogo prefecture. The catchphrase for the Une ruins in the city of Ako incorporates an allusion to the burial mounds of powerful leaders that characterize that site. All three of these latter ruins, also in Hyogo prefecture, joined the project last year.

Outside the prefecture, the catchphrase for the Yoshinogari ruins in Saga prefecture, where the appearance of a village in the Yayoi period has been re-created, is "Listen to the Yayoi Voice," while the catchphrase for the Toro ruins in Shizuoka prefecture can be translated to "It all began at the Toro ruins," noting that the ruins of Japan's first rice paddy were discovered at the site.

The designs of each location's goshuin stamps are unique and distinctive.

The Onaka ruins' goshuin stamp includes the kanji characters of its name and a picture of Hot-tan, the archaeology museum's mascot. The goshuin stamp of the Ikegami-Sone ruins, offered by the Osaka Prefectural Museum of Yayoi Culture in Izumi, Osaka prefecture, incorporates an illustration of a dragon believed to have been drawn by a person from the Yayoi period. At the Sugu Okamoto ruins in Kasuga, Fukuoka prefecture, the site's goshuin stamp carries a picture of a bronze mirror, one of the most representative artifacts discovered at those ruins.



The Japan News photos

Visitors display the goshuin stamp offered at the Gossa-Kaito ruins in Awaji, Hyogo prefecture. Collecting the stamps is like a treasure hunt.



A re-created dwelling from the Yayoi period in the Tano ruins in Amagasaki, Hyogo prefecture. The location has been participating in the goshuin stamp collecting since the program started.

For summer, Tokyo hotel offers ‘Ice Cream Republic’

By AYAKO ISHIGURO
Japan News

Ice Cream Republic, a sweets buffet perfect for the upcoming hot season, has begun at the Hilton Tokyo in Shinjuku Ward, Tokyo.

The buffet includes a lineup of 12 new ice cream-inspired sweets, and the Ice Cream Island, an area of the buffet, allows customers to create an original treat with more than 10 types of cold desserts, such as ice cream and soft serve, and more than 30 toppings.

Best of all, the colorful interior decorations in pastel colors are so cute and photogenic that you can't help snapping a photo.

The treats are located in the Marble Lounge within a designated space on the hotel's lobby floor. The entire buffet table is decorated in pastel colors with cute objects.

All of the 12 new cakes, which were created by executive pastry chef Ratheesh Nair, were prepared as large whole cakes for the photo shoot, with smaller versions lined up in front of them for actual tasting.

Inspired by ice cream and gelato, the cakes are vibrant to the eye and palate, such as the Lemonade Semi-sphere, a lemon-shaped cake with a refreshing kaffir lime flavor. The Caramelia Capsule, a glossy-looking mousse

cake, tastes mildly salty.

"[We hope customers] will enjoy and explore new flavors, feel exotic and like it," said Nair.

At Ice Cream Island, after choosing from more than 10 types of cold desserts, guests can make their own original treat by adding their favorite toppings from an array of nuts, marshmallows, frozen fruits and other ingredients.

Soups, hamburger steaks and other light meals are also available, making it the perfect place for a late lunch. The buffet opens from 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. through Aug. 27. It costs 5,700 yen per adult on weekdays and 6,200 yen on weekends and holidays.



The Japan News

New sweets line the buffet table decorated with adorable pastel-colored decorations at the Hilton Tokyo in Shinjuku, Tokyo.

WEEKEND: BOOKS

Q&A

The sky's the limit for author

Reid discusses her newest novel and the media adaptations of 2 of her other books

By ALICIA RANCILIO
Associated Press

Taylor Jenkins Reid recalls a moment writing her new novel, "Atmosphere: A Love Story," set against NASA's robust 1980s shuttle program, where she felt stuck. She went, where she often goes, to her husband to talk it through:

"I said, 'I can't write this book. I don't know enough about the space shuttle. I don't know what happens when the payload bay doors won't shut and you have to get back within a certain amount of revs, but they can't land at White Sands. They have to land at Cape Kennedy.' And he's like, 'Just listen to yourself. You know so much more than you knew a couple months ago. Keep doing what you're doing.'"

"Atmosphere," which came out Tuesday, follows the journey of Joan Goodwin, an astronomer selected to join NASA's astronaut program. She and fellow trainees become like family and achieve their dream of going to space — until tragedy strikes.

The story unfolds in two timelines: One when Joan first joins the NASA program and the other in December 1984 when a mission goes terribly wrong. The duo behind "Captain Marvel," Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, are adapting the book into a film with a theatrical release in mind.

Reid knew that she had to do more than just her average six to eight weeks of research. Research and rabbit holes, by the way, are Reid's jam. She's written blockbuster novels set in the golden age of Hollywood in "The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo," the 1970s rock scene in "Daisy Jones & the Six," 1980s surf culture in "Malibu Rising" and professional tennis in "Carrie Soto is Back." With "Atmosphere," though, it took extra time, reading and understanding.

"It feels like a fever dream now when I think about it," Reid told The Associated Press. "It was a very intense period of time."

For this endeavor, she needed assistance: "I had to reach out to people, complete strangers that I did not know, and say, 'Will you please help me?'"

Reid was surprised at how many people said yes. One of the most important voices was Paul Dye, NASA's longest-serving flight director.

"He spent hours of time with me," Reid said. "He helped me figure out how to cause a lot of mayhem on the space shuttle. He helped figure out exactly how the process of the connection between mission control and the space shuttle work. The book doesn't exist if he hadn't done that."

In an interview, Reid also talked about astronomy, social media and, yes, the latest on "The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo" movie at Netflix.

Answers are condensed for clarity and length:

Associated Press: How has writing "Atmosphere" changed you?

Reid: I'm really into astronomy. Last Thanksgiving my family took a road trip to the Grand Canyon. I routed us through Scottsdale, Ariz., because I wanted to go to a dark sky park.

Because of light pollution, we can only see the brightest stars when we go out and look at the night sky in a major city. Whereas when you go to a dark sky park, there is very limited man-made light. So you can see more stars. We got there and it was cloudy. I was beside myself. The next night we got to the Grand Canyon and all the clouds had disappeared and you could see everything. I stood there for hours. I was teary-eyed.

I can't emphasize enough: If anyone has any inclination to just go outside and look up at the night sky, it's so rewarding.

Last fall you left social media. Where are you at with it now?

I didn't realize how much social media was creating so many messages in my head of, you're not good enough. You should be better. You should work harder. You should have a prettier home. You should make a better dinner. And when I stopped going on it, very quickly I started to hear my own voice clearer.

It was so much easier to be in touch with what I thought, how I felt, what I valued. I was more in touch with myself, but also I'm going out into the world and I'm looking up at the sky and I am seeing where I am in relation to everything around me and I starting to understand how small my life is compared to the scale of the universe.

Serena Williams is executive-producing "Carrie Soto" for a series at Netflix. Did you meet her?

Yes. It's the only time I've been starstruck. I was, in my bones, nervous. I had to talk to myself like, "Taylor, slow down your heart rate." The admiration I have for her as an athlete but also as a human is immense. The idea that I might have written something that she felt captured anything worth her time is a great honor. That she's coming on board to help us make it the most authentic story we possibly can, I'm thrilled.

It's one thing for me to pretend I know what it's like to be standing at Flushing Meadows and win the U.S. Open. Serena knows. She's done it multiple times. And so as we render that

world, I think it is going to be really, really special because we have Serena and her team to help us.

Now for your favorite question. What's up with the "Evelyn Hugo" movie?

There's not much that I am allowed to say, but a lot of times I think people mistake me not saying anything as a lack of interest or focus, and that's not the case. Everyone is working incredibly hard to get this movie made, and everyone knows that there is a lot of pressure to get it exactly right. We're all hard at work. We're taking it very seriously, and I give Netflix so much credit because they have an immense respect for the readership of that book. They want to make them happy.

Author Taylor Jenkins Reid, shown in February 2023, released her newest novel, "Atmosphere," on Tuesday.

CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP



Gay astronauts risk love, safety in 'Atmosphere'

By ROB MERRILL
Associated Press

Is there a popular fiction writer alive who conveys falling in love better than Taylor Jenkins Reid?

Consider these lines between the two central characters of her new love story, "Atmosphere," set in the 1980s as two NASA astronauts in the space shuttle program fall for each other: "I feel like I could know you forever and still be curious about what you're going to say next" and "I want to show you every good thing I've ever found" and "You're the first woman I've ever met who I feel like understands things about me before I even say them."

Of course, Houston, we have a problem. The characters — Joan and Vanessa — are gay. Forced to hide their love for one another in public for fear of losing a ride on the shuttle, the pair meet up away from NASA for trysts and are careful at the frequent astronaut get-togethers that make for perfect set pieces in the novel.

It would all feel a little passé if it wasn't so well told. Reid is great at creating characters that while they fit a stereotype, exist on the page as comfortably (or awkwardly) as readers imagine they would in real life.

There's mission specialist Lydia, who Joan clocks as "terrifyingly invincible," navigating the NASA campus "as if enjoying the walk would threaten to waste her time," and Hank, the Top Gun pilot, "tall and broad-shouldered," who "wore dark-tinted aviators that made him look like a movie star."

Some of the best moments in the book are musings between Joan and Vanessa about the stars, God and their shared love of space exploration.

If there's any nit to pick, it's the pacing toward the end, as major life events seem to happen quickly before the ultimate do-or-die sequence between Mission Control and the astronauts aboard STS-LR9.

Beyond that, the plot of the novel doesn't really need much sketching. These are astronauts, after all, willing to risk an awful lot to join the exclusive club of humanity that has ventured into orbit. But are they willing to risk true love?

WEEKEND: MUSIC



From left: Brad Tursi, Matthew Ramsey, Trevor Rosen and Geoff Sprung, of Old Dominion, pose in the press room with the award for vocal group of the year during the CMA Awards on Nov. 20, 2024, at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville. The group recently won its eighth group of the year honor at the Academy of Country Music Awards.

Unchanged by success

Old Dominion’s new album, ‘Barbara,’ won’t lean on band’s record-breaking laurels

BY GARY GERARD HAMILTON
Associated Press

When Old Dominion’s eighth group of the year victory broke the tie for consecutive wins at the Academy of Country Music Awards last month, it changed the record books — but not their perspective.

“They’re certainly wonderful honors that we get, but that’s not in any way how we really measure our success or think. We can’t let that kind of stuff creep in to the creative process because that’s when we’ll start to get off course,” said Matthew Ramsey, lead vocalist and guitarist. “We try to protect each other from those outside influences a little bit and just make sure that we’re ... not chasing after some sort of reaction or award, or chasing after



Old Dominion has spent the past two years crafting “Barbara,” out Aug. 22.

what we think the radio wants to play. We just have to make what we love.”

Old Dominion has been celebrated for intertwining different musical styles while within country music. Along with Ramsey, the band includes Brad Tursi (guitar/banjo), Trevor Rosen (guitar/piano), Geoff Sprung (bass) and Whit Sellers (percussion). They have spent the last two years crafting “Barbara,” out Aug. 22 via Columbia Nashville/Sony Music Nashville.

The project follows 2023’s “Memory Lane” album and last year’s “Odies But Goodies” compilation, which Ramsey says is even more eclectic than past works.

“We just write constantly. And we’ve had albums where we’ve kind of gone deeper into the well and picked out older songs,” explained the 47-year-old. “This one, not so much the case.”

The 13-track album is not named after a real woman but is an imagined composite of a person who embodies many of the group’s various personality traits. It includes the released singles “Me Most Nights” and “Making Good Time,” along with the four-on-the-floor “Talk Country” and the R&B-infused “What Doesn’t Kill a Memory.” Just as introspection is a fundamental element of country music, it’s also the sweet spot on this album.

“Miss You Man” is dedicated to friend and writing collaborator Andrew Dorff, who died in 2016 during a vacation, while “Goodnight Music City” reflects on the band’s career.

“It has all the reverence about Nashville and a little bit of the jaded side to it, too.”

SEE UNCHANGED ON PAGE 29

WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS

Unchanged: Band has been successful on its own terms

FROM PAGE 28

We’ve been through it in Nashville, as anyone goes through when they’re trying to chase this crazy dream,” said Ramsey, who revealed the song is inspired by the children’s book “Goodnight



Ramsey

Moon” by Margaret Wise Brown. “It’s such a meaningful song to us all ... we’ve played it live one time at the Ryman Auditorium, and we were all crying by the end of it.”

The band also looks within on “Man or the Song,” as Ramsey questions, “If I put my guitar down, would I disappear? / Move back to my hometown, would you still be here?” Ramsey says it’s his favorite song.

“That’s kind of what it feels like once you get to this level and you’re surrounded by all these people that are helping you make your dreams come true,” he said. “Who’s around for the right reasons can certainly creep into the conversation. It can be a lonely profession ... I hope you love me for me, and not for this crazy job I have.”

Coinciding with the release of “Barbara,” the band is prepping its “How Good Is That” world tour, which launched Thursday at Credit One Stadium in Charleston, S.C.

Throughout the past decade, Old Dominion has earned a loyal fan base in a genre often criticized as rigid, with frequent debates about equal radio play, what determines pure country music and who should be allowed to participate. But while there’s no denying the group is authentically country, the irony is not lost on them that they’ve been able to cut through the Nashville noise by not sticking to only traditional country sounds.

“Whenever we wrote a song and recorded it, we just wanted to make sure that we were not chasing anything other than the truest form of that song and what was going to deliver that message as clearly as we wanted it to be,” said Ramsey.

“Our fans now, I think, are coming to expect that from us; they’re looking for the surprise that we’re gonna throw in there, rather than the same old thing. ... We don’t take that for granted. We know that’s a rare thing in the genre.”

Miley Cyrus

Something Beautiful (Columbia)

For longtime Miley Cyrus fans, her ninth studio album is bound to live up to its name. It truly is “Something Beautiful.”

Over the years, the Grammy winner has demonstrated that she is unequivocally a pop star. She’s also a dedicated student of contemporary music history and various genres, something she’s made clear through her love of performing cover songs and across her diverse discography (lest anyone forget her 2020 glam rock-inspired concept album, “Plastic Hearts”).

On “Something Beautiful,” Cyrus proves that she is most in her element musically when firmly holding onto those myriad identities, weaving an inventive tapestry of pop, rock, electronic, disco and even funk — like in the album’s soulful, heartache anthem, “Easy Lover.”

Most of Cyrus’ album comprises ABBA-channeling earworms; “End of the World” has a piano riff that screams “Dancing Queen.” But she balances ’70s nostalgia with belting vocals and wide-ranging instrumentation throughout. Cyrus arguably hasn’t had this kind of sonic variation on a record since 2010’s “Can’t Be Tamed.”

“Something Beautiful” is accompanied by a musical film of the same name. The aptly named first track, “Prelude,” is a narrated introduction, which gives the wrong impression that the album only serves as a score to the film. It stands on its own.

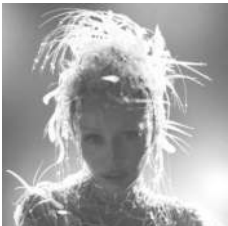
That’s because most of the 13 tracks reflect Cyrus’ work over the past two decades. “More To Lose,” for example, is a big-hearted ballad that sounds like it could have been featured on a “Hannah Montana” soundtrack, though her vocals and musical sensibilities have matured. “Walk of Fame” — her upbeat collaboration with Brittany Howard — also harks back to her early discography, reminiscent of songs like “Liberty Walk” and “Scars” on “Can’t Be Tamed.”

The album does benefit from a newfound sense of structure, perhaps from the presumed guardrails in place by the accompanying film. Where Cyrus has previously struggled to fit certain songs, especially ballads, into the context of her previous albums — the stripped-down “Wonder Woman” felt arbitrarily tacked onto the otherwise elaborate “Endless Summer Vacation,” for example — there is a continuity throughout “Something Beautiful” in its eclecticism.

There’s an electronic, energetic pivot toward the second half of the album, specifically on “Reborn” and “Every Girl You’ve Ever Loved.”

In many ways, the record is a return to form for the 32-year-old, whose pop reputation has always been in tension with her interest in other genres. But she demonstrates, through those electronic songs in particular, how her sound has evolved and expanded over time.

— Krysta Fauria
Associated Press



Ty Segall

Possession (Drag City)

Much of the virtuosic guitarist Ty Segall’s prolific career has been characterized by a sludgy, almost primal, intensity. But his 16th LP crystalizes a new, less-aggressive era for the indie rocker, as he trades in his additive synths for strings and horns — all while maintaining his singular garage-psych.

“Possession” isn’t Segall’s first album to reel in his trademark heaviness. Following the release of his 2021 record “Harmonizer” — the apex of a Black Sabbath-inspired, electronics-assisted sound he had for years — the singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist has mellowed out and gone more analog in the myriad solo projects he’s released since.

His signature psychedelic sound and distorted guitar solos are still there, like in “Shining” and the album’s title track. But the songs are also subdued and refined, with a surprising arrangement of strings and horns on songs like “Skirts of Heaven” and “Shoplifter.”

Despite that addition of new instruments, there’s a kind of back-to-basics sound to the record, bringing to mind the soulful, easy-listening rock bands of the ’70s like Cheap Trick and Steely Dan.

This album also marks a lyrical shift, thanks in part to the fact that he co-wrote it with his longtime friend, documentary filmmaker Matt Yoka. He brings a clear narrative framework to Segall’s poetic, sometimes opaque, writing style.

Last year while promoting his 14th solo LP, “Three Bells,” Segall told The Associated Press that he was trying to be less prolific. He’s since recorded an album under a new band with Color Green’s Corey Madden, Freckle, as well as two more solo LPs, including “Possession.” Segall’s failed resolution is to the benefit of his fans, even as he pushes himself into creative directions he’s yet to go before.

— Krysta Fauria
Associated Press



Garbage

Let All That We Imagine Be the Light (BMG Records)

Buzz-saw guitars, dense synthesizers and throbbing percussion can sometimes brighten the mood.

That’s the goal of the new album from the American rock band Garbage, “Let All That We Imagine Be the Light.” It’s the sound of frontwoman Shirley Manson pushed to the brink by health issues and the fury of our times.

The band’s familiar sonic mix provides a pathway out of the darkness, with heavy riffing and dramatic atmospherics accompanying Manson’s alluring alto.

“This is a cold cruel world,” she sings on the crunchy “Love to Give.” “You’ve gotta find the love where you can get it.”

The album is Garbage’s eighth and the first since 2021’s “No Gods No Masters.” The genesis came last August, when Manson aggravated an old hip injury, abruptly ending the band’s world tour.

The other members of the group — Butch Vig, Duke Erikson and Steve Marker — retreated to the studio and began work on new music. Manson added lyrics that lament fatalism, ageism and sexism, acknowledge vulnerability and mortality, and seek to embrace joy, love and empowerment.

That’s a lot, which may be why there’s a song titled “Sisyphus.” The sonics are formidable, too. A mix that echoes the Shangri-Las, Patti Smith and Evanescence helps to leaven the occasional overripe lyric, such as, “There is no future that can’t be designed / With imagination and a beautiful mind,” in the title track.

Most of the material is less New Age-y, and there’s a fascinating desperation in Manson’s positivity. “Chinese Fire Horse,” for example, becomes a punky, Gen X, age-defying fist-pumper.

“But I’ve still got the power in my brain and my body / I’ll take no (expletive) from you,” she sings.

Manson sounds just as defiant singing about a love triangle on “Have We Met (The Void),” or mourning in America on “There’s No Future in Optimism.” The album peaks on the backside with the back-to-back cuts “Get Out My Face AKA Bad Kitty,” a battle cry in the gender war, and “R U Happy Now,” a ferocious post-election rant.

Then comes the closer, “The Day That I Met God,” a weird and whimsical benedictory mix of horns, strings, faith, pain management and more. Hope and uplift can sound good loud.

— Steven Wine
Associated Press



Matt Berninger

Get Sunk (Concord Records)

Matt Berninger’s brooding, droning baritone is difficult to separate from The National.

His second solo album, “Get Sunk,” doesn’t diverge much from the alt-rock band he’s fronted for more than a quarter-century. And why should it?

The National’s sad-dad brand exists in the bittersweet spot between Berninger’s complex lyrics and a melodic versatility. And “Get Sunk” sounds more like an extension of the band’s catalog than a self-serving experiment for a restless songwriter.

The record arrives a few years after a struggle with pandemic-driven depression, as he detailed in an interview with David Letterman. Berninger was hit by a bad case of writer’s block after his first solo record, “Serpentine Prison,” came out in 2020.

The National’s release of two new albums five months apart in 2023, after a four-year hiatus, helped thaw some of Berninger’s frozen creativity. His family moved from California to Connecticut that year, furthering his reset; he began reading and painting in the fresh air.

On “Get Sunk,” the third track, “Bonnet of Pins,” brings a hard edge, evoking the band’s “The System Only Dreams in Total Darkness” record from 2017. “Get Sunk” producer Sean O’Brien cranks on the guitar. Drummer Sterling Laws does his best impression of The National stalwart Bryan Devendorf. Julia Laws, whose indie rock band Ronboy has been touring with Berninger, sings backup on this smoky, stressful encounter with an ex-lover.

Much like The National’s 2019 album “I Am Easy to Find,” which brought in several women to pair vocals with his gravelly baritone, “Get Sunk” follows suit. Laws sings on eight of the 10 tracks, and Meg Duffy of the band Hand Habits joins Berninger on the sentimental “Frozen Oranges.”

The sleepiness of “Frozen Oranges” is also the first warning there’s just not enough energy to cover a whole album, not quite enough strength for “Get Sunk” to swim on its own. Berninger will be forever intertwined with The National, a connection there’s no need to undo.

— Dave Campbell
Associated Press



WEEKEND: TELEVISION

Being a leading man? Matthew Goode quite likes it.

He's the star of "Dept. Q," based on the books by Danish author Jussi Adler-Olsen and set in the cold case division of an Edinburgh police station. From "The Queen's Gambit" showrunner Scott Frank, the nine-part miniseries, which launched May 29, sees Goode playing a one-man combination of good cop/bad cop. While Detective Chief Inspector Carl Morck is a brilliant investigator, he is equally successful at annoying people — even begrudging respect for his talent quickly turns into intense dislike.

It's not that Goode hasn't been No. 1 on the call sheet before, it's just that he didn't enjoy it.

"It's something I shied away from after the beginning of my career where I was there for a bit and then I had some sort of bad things ... things weren't necessarily positive at that point, after that. And I just went, I just want to be, you know, not the lead anymore," he says.

Goode also acknowledges that actors don't get to choose if a main part is "bestowed" on them and notes that Frank fought to cast him in "Dept. Q." The pair first worked together on "The Lookout" (2007) with the English actor portraying an American thief, a long way from the period dramas Goode has been recently known for: playing suave Brits in "The Crown," "Downton Abbey" and "Freud's Last Session."

Goode and Frank talked and teased each other in an interview with The Associated Press about working together, cast bonding and breaking Goode out of his period drama groove. The conversation has been edited for clarity and brevity:

Associated Press: To start with, can I get you to describe your relationship?

Goode: Father and son.

Frank: Taxing, toxic, troubling.

Goode: Well, he's the genius and I just do what he says, basically.



'To know him is to want to strangle him'

'Dept. Q' director Frank, lead Goode discuss their new Netflix miniseries, based on a series of Danish books about a cold-case investigator

By HILARY FOX
Associated Press



Actor Matthew Goode, top, and director Scott Frank, above, pose for portrait photographs to promote their new television series "Dept. Q" on May 27 in London.

SCOTT A GARFITT, INVISION/AP

Frank: I wish. We go way back. We made a film together, the first film I ever directed, in fact. And I was lucky that I had Matthew because he was outstanding and made it easier for me at that point. And I think we both just really know one another and I love this man — I would work with him in everything I ever did, but he's a pain in the ass.

Goode: Well, you know. There has to be some cost!

Frank: He is Carl Morck, in many ways. To know him is to want to strangle him. Does that sum it up?

Goode: OK, so now you see what I'm working with. This is the second time he's given me a character that I genuinely don't think that many other people would have taken that chance, because I don't really scream Kansas City bank robber (in "The Lookout"). And I think this is a part that some people would have kind of gone, it's a bit more sort of Tom Hardy-ish, perhaps. But that's what we are, we're actors, but you don't necessarily get to be versatile a lot of the time, so I feel very indebted to you.

And did you write this with Matthew in mind?

Frank: I had always thought he would be terrific for this, and I didn't know if we would end up doing it together, but from the minute I started thinking about it, doing it here, I really thought, oh, and I knew he would love it.

I think a lot of times people only see actors in one way or a particular way, is because they don't really see them, they just see the roles they've already played; they're not really paying attention to what else is happening.

It's not a period drama.

Goode: There you go, that's a prime example, yeah.

So is that part of the appeal?

Goode: I mean, a career is, for want of a better way of explaining it, is a bit like a river where essentially you can go, there's the main channel in it, but there's eddies and you get caught in certain things and you get cast in certain ways. So you're not really ever particularly in control of it. Certainly unless you have your own production company or you become a massive star where you actually sort of have the keys to Hollywood and then you have a bit more of a sphere of influence and you can dip your toes in different waters. And he had to fight for me a little bit for this one. He had to go bat for me to actually do the part.

Have you played a detective before?

Goode: No, this is my first time, I think. I've got a memory like a sieve now. I've got three kids; that's the only thing I really think about. But no, I think this is my first time.

SEE INVESTIGATOR ON PAGE 31

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

Investigator:
History between
actor and director
laid a foundation

FROM PAGE 30

Frank: I don't think you have.
Goode: Only with my wife with some dress-up, but that's about it.
Carl seems to wind everybody up.
Frank: A lot of people he winds up are people you want him to wind up and then a lot of times he's shooting down. But then, the people he's shooting down at surprise you by coming straight back at him. They don't necessarily let him get away with Carl being Carl.
And he's not a posh character.
Goode: No, because (Frank) transposed it from the original Danish setting, Copenhagen, and it works brilliantly, obviously, in Edinburgh, and it becomes this amazing character. But he made the character English. But we haven't given too much detail yet as to his past, which I love the fact, because we're aiming to be able to keep doing this because there's 10 books.



Byrne

I spoke to Leah Byrne and Alexej Manvelov, who both had first-day nerves and are so good in this. Did it surprise you that they needed reassurance?



Manvelov

Frank: We all need reassurance. Including me.
Goode: Every actor I've ever met.
Frank: Your first day is really scary. There are all these people ... and acting, as I like to say, is the most difficult job in all of this because you're making yourself so vulnerable in front of a hundred strangers. So Day 1 is even worse.
And Matthew went out with Alexej for a long lunch?
Goode: I know it sounds a bit unprofessional, but actually, it's really, for me, that's the way that I like to work is to give myself to the other people that I've got major relationships in the show with, because I'm not competitive as an actor. I really want to share the screen. I find it weird when it doesn't happen the other way toward me. And so that's a really important relationship ... and I wanted us to have a great friendship.
Frank: The one thing you can't fix in postproduction is casting if you've not cast well. And there were a lot of different relationships happening here, so they all had to work together. And they were all terrific. I would be surprised every day by something one of these actors would do. And, what was really fun for me too, is how much Matthew appreciated the skill on the other side. He was never, like, threatened or felt he was being shown up; it was like this delight.
Goode: Probably was being shown up.
Frank: Oh, you were, trust me; they all steal it from you.



DISNEY/AP

From left, Isabella, Buford, Baljeet, Phineas and Ferb are among the original characters from “Phineas and Ferb” who will appear in the newest season of the Disney Channel cartoon, which last aired in 2015.

A less boring summer vacation

‘Phineas and Ferb’ returning after decade away with zany new episodes, new cameos

BY MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

The beloved cartoon duo Phineas and Ferb is returning for new episodes this summer after a decade away, and pretty much nothing has changed. Except maybe one thing.
“The more observant of you will notice Phineas’ shirt has one extra stripe,” says co-creator Jeff “Swampy” Marsh. Dan Povenmire, Marsh’s creative partner, adds: “He hasn’t actually gotten any taller, but we’re giving him the illusion of getting taller.”
Other than a fourth stripe on Phineas’ orange-and-white T-shirt, “Phineas and Ferb” returns with all the characters that Generation Z viewers so adored, including Perry the Platypus, the mad scientist Dr. Doofenshmirtz, the easily excitable older sister Candace and the bully Buford.
“We were a little worried at first, like, are we going to get in the writer room and just get a lot ‘No, did that.’ ‘Did that.’ ‘Did that,’” Povenmire says. “But it hasn’t been like that at all. It’s been great, fresh, new stories with these characters that we’re just thrilled with.”
‘It’s like old times’
The series restarts with Phineas and Ferb enjoying summer vacation, Doofenshmirtz back to his evil ways — he updates his social media status to “Evil Again” — and Candace once more on her everlasting quest to get her brothers in trouble.
“Isn’t it great? It’s like old times,” Doofenshmirtz says.
The first two episodes of the 40 ordered air June 5 on Disney Channel and Disney XD, while the first full batch of 10 episodes will premiere on Disney+ starting June 6.
The decision to restart the series was a no-brainer. According to Disney internal

streaming data, the show has been streamed some 650 million hours on Disney+ globally to date. According to Nielsen, “Phineas and Ferb” is among the top 10 most-watched animated kids series on streaming platforms despite not offering new episodes in 10 years.
The show — which had four seasons between 2007 and 2015 — centers on the titular stepbrothers — the triangular-headed Phineas and the quiet Ferb — who stave off boredom by turning their backyard into things like ski resorts, surfing beaches or monster truck rallies.
Unbeknownst to the pair, Perry, their mute pet platypus, is a secret government agent code-named P who regularly dons a hat and trench coat to save the world from Doofenshmirtz, voiced by Povenmire.
The show is pitched to both kids and adults, mixing references to Nietzsche and Girl Scouts. Each episode also includes an original — often very catchy — song, written by Povenmire and Marsh. (“Squirrels In My Pants” is a proven winner.)
“It’s something that the whole family can enjoy together,” Marsh says. “We made a commitment never to cut anything just because somebody said it was too smart. We just believed kids are smarter than you think.”
A labor of love
The idiosyncratic show had a hard birth, created in 1993 but not airing until 2007. Povenmire and Marsh, both veterans of shows like “The Simpsons” and “Family Guy,” hit it off and stuck with their vision.
“Whenever anybody would ask us to pitch them something, we would always dust this off and say, ‘Well, here’s the show we really want.’ And most of the time people were just like, ‘I think it’s too complicated,’” Povenmire says.
The creators insisted on using no double entendres, took out mean humor and refused to make the moms and dads idiots.

Even the so-called villains — Candace and Doofenshmirtz — are good, deep down.
“If you’re trying to get a laugh, shocking somebody or putting somebody down are the two easiest, cheapest laughs to get,” Povenmire says. “We’d made this decision to make it nicer than the shows that we had seen on the air at the time.”
The show has been a magnet for celebrity cameos and the upcoming season is no different, with Michael Bubl , John Stamos, “Ted Lasso” stars Brendan Hunt and Cristo Fern ndez, Alan Cumming, Leslie Jones, Anna Faris, Megan Rapinoe, Meghan Trainor and Ruth Negga all making guest spots.
A champion of engineering
Phineas and Ferb’s penchant for building things like a submarine sandwich submarine or a vaporizer machine has over the years had an unintended effect — inspiring a generation of engineers.
When Povenmire visits colleges, engineering students routinely approach to say his TV show was the reason they are studying the field. “So we’re expecting a thank-you letter from all of the engineering schools around the world,” Marsh jokes.
Marsh recalls the first time he realized that he and Povenmire had a hit on their hands. He was with his child at an outdoor skating rink in Santa Monica, Calif., early in the show’s run when a little girl came skating by, singing their song “S’Winter,” a mashup of summer and winter. (One lyric goes: “You can freeze while you get tan.”)
“So I started singing along with her, and she circles back and sings the entire song and then she looks at me and she goes, ‘Wow, how do you know that song?’ I said, ‘Well, I watched the show,’” Marsh says. “It was the first time anything I’d written I heard somebody else sing back to me. It was like, ‘All right!’”

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

The One Where I Attempt to Pvolve like Jen

Washington Post travel writer tries an on-the-road edition of ‘Friends’ actor Aniston’s workout routine

By ANDREA SACHS
The Washington Post

I will never have Rachel’s hair, the famous ‘do on the hit show “Friends.” But, on my next trip, I thought I could get Jennifer Aniston’s body.

The actress, 56, is as chiseled as an action hero. She credits her next-level fitness and figure to Pvolve, a low-impact exercise program co-founded by Rachel Katzman in 2017. According to the company, Aniston became a Pvolve acolyte in 2021 and an ambassador and adviser two years later.

Jen, as those of us in the virtual Pvolve community call her, does not appear in any of the 1,600 or so streaming videos included in the monthly and annual membership plans. She mainly flaunts her biceps and obliques on the website and in marketing materials. However, her personal trainer, Dani Coleman, leads about 175 of the online classes, and you can also search for “Jen’s Picks” in the classes filter, a collection with nearly 40 workouts. The celebrity also shares a few of her favorite pieces of Pvolve equipment. Five of them are packaged in the Sculpt Anywhere Travel Bundle, the company’s latest launch.

To Pvolve, all you need is a floor and internet connection. The program features “specialized equipment,” such as the P.band, P.ball and P.3 Trainer.

So, on an April trip to California, I decided to test the Pvolve travel kit, which the company sent us to try out, plus a free month of classes. This is “The One Where I Attempt to Get Fit Like Jen.”

The writer found the Pvolve gliders a bit difficult to use in her hotel room: They either fell off or caused her to skid across the room and nearly hit a wall so she stopped using them.

MARVIN JOSEPH/The Washington Post

What is Pvolve?

According to the company, Pvolve sprang from Katzman’s disenchantment with boutique classes and studios, which often adhere to the “no pain, no gain” principle. The entrepreneur, who suffers from scoliosis, teamed up with several seasoned trainers, including Coleman, to create a gentler, more holistic fitness program. They landed on a collection of low-impact exercises that focus on “strength, mobility and overall well-being,” with a little cardio in the mix.

The Pvolve equipment — resistance bands and straps, mats, ankle weights, gliders, etc. — is a critical element to the workouts. Though about 280 of the classes do not require the specialized gear, the majority do. The company sells the items individually or as sets.

The travel bundle, which retails for \$342.97 (but is currently on sale for \$290.00), comes with five items: the P.band and P.3 Trainer, both of which are patented; light ankle bands, gliders (for hands and feet) and a heavy resistance band. You also receive three months of free online classes, which go for \$24.99 a month or less than \$20 each if you sign up for a \$224.91 annual membership. The gear fits in a sleek black neoprene case.

The company said it works with a clinical board of advisers composed of professionals in such fields as physical therapy, exercise physiology, sports science, nutri-

tion, injury prevention, obstetrics and gynecology.

For my experiment, I consulted with Todd Miller, an associate professor at George Washington University’s Milken Institute School of Public Health. After watching several classes online, he characterized the workout as a fusion of Pilates, barre and physical therapy.

Pvolve seems to target female members of a certain vintage, such as members of Generation “Friends.” In its marketing materials, the company frequently cites a healthy aging study by the University of Exeter, which probed the program’s benefits on perimenopausal and menopausal women. Among the findings: a bump in energy, strength, balance and flexibility.

Miller said casual exercisers trying to not be complete blobs on vacation can maintain or gain strength from the band exercises. Over a longer period, however, they will need to increase the difficulty level to avoid flatlining.

“It has to get progressively harder or you’re going to plateau relatively quickly with this kind of equipment,” Miller said. “It doesn’t provide enough resistance.”

The workout

The travel bundle weighs about four pounds, according to my luggage scale. Dragging it around in my carry-on felt like a workout itself.

Once at my hotel, I dove into Pvolve by watching several videos. I needed to rearrange the furniture so I could always see my laptop whether we were horizontal or vertical.

When I was finally ready, I cued up the 32-minute “Core Sculpt,” which was supposed to strengthen my abs, back and inner thighs and improve the mobility in my spine and hips. I pushed the coffee table against the wall, making room for the gliders, basically slippery mitts for your feet or hands, and the P.3 Trainer, a combo set with two resistance bands, a weighted ball and a

triangle with a stretchy cord that resembles a water ski handle. In place of the precision mat (\$99), which was not included in the bundle, I used the shag green carpeting.

The routine didn’t have me gasping for air; it was more cardio-lite. But my arms were huffing and puffing from the strength moves. I kept apace with the instructor until she introduced a plank exercise. The gliders wouldn’t coast on the carpet, but really my core — not the decor — was to blame.

Still energized, I added the 15-minute “Full Body Sculpt,” a short but intense routine that I could imagine squeezing in before a morning flight or during downtime between excursions. Minus slamming my hand on the chandelier, the routine was pain-free.

Coleman’s eight-class Sculpt Anywhere Travel Series, set at the tropical Sugar Beach resort in St. Lucia, helped me forget the freeway outside the window. I was digging the 25-minute “Full Body Sculpt,” but not the gliders, which either fell off or caused me to skid across the room and nearly hit a wall. So, I ditched them.

My feelings for the P.band were the opposite. I wanted more exercises with the gear — imagine fingerless gloves connected by a resistance band — and could see myself putting them on for a quick stretch.

Wrapping up my trial, I sampled the 16-minute “Upper Body Sculpt & Burn,” again with Coleman in the Caribbean. The class involved concentrated strength exercises and twisting and hopping on a mat. I worked up a sweat but also tweaked my knee (old sports injury).

The takeaway

If you travel a few times a month, Pvolve is a better deal than a drop-in barre or Pilates class, which can be pricey. If you typically use the hotel gym, the whole kit is a bit excessive and heavy.

Instead, you could buy one or two pieces of equipment you can’t find anywhere else, such as the P.band and P.3 Trainer, and incorporate them into your routine. With the monthly membership, you can sign up on a trip-by-trip basis.

Personally, I liked the freedom of working out anytime and not having to worry about wearing a presentable outfit. With so many classes, I could always find one that matched my time constraints and energy level.

I returned from vacation feeling healthy but with a sore knee and my arms, not Jen’s.



WEEKEND: FAMILY



From astronaut to artist

How to help children explore the world of careers at a young age

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ
Associated Press

When Angelina Rivera was a third grader, she wanted to be a scientist and was excited by bugs, rocks and everything in the natural world.

But a family trip to visit relatives in Honduras changed her perspective. Police stopped her family’s car and aggressively questioned her father about a crime someone else committed the night before. The experience left Rivera, then 8, shaken but also realizing that people may be treated differently based on their appearance and location.

Over time, that pivotal experience evolved into an interest in politics. After studying international relations in college, Rivera, now 22, works as an assistant at the Consulate General of Japan in Detroit.

“The more I tried to explore different interests ... I found that it was hard for me to ignore that urge, that calling, to go into diplomacy,” she said.

Sometimes career paths follow a straight line, with early life ambitions setting us on a clear path to training or a degree and a specific profession. Just as often, circumstance, luck, exposure and a willingness to adapt to change influence what we do for a living.

Developmental psychologists and career counselors recommend exposing children to a wide variety of career paths at a young age.

“It’s not so that they’ll pick a career, but that they will realize that there’s lots of opportunities and not limit themselves out of careers,” said Jennifer Curry, a Louisiana State University professor who researches career and college readiness.

Sometimes children assume they can’t work certain jobs because of their gender, race or background, Curry said. “That’s what we’re trying to avoid, because kids do start limiting very young, like age 5,” she said.

Here’s what experts have to say about how to talk with kids about careers.

Start young

Toddlers begin making sense of occupations while visiting a pediatrician’s office or waving to garbage truck crews. Encourage their curiosity by pointing out the people working at a post office or bakery, or appearing in books or on television.

You can ask young children, “What jobs do you see? What kind of things do they do?” advised Curry, who consults on career content for the PBS show “Skills-

ville,” which is geared toward children ages 4-8.

Once kids identify different jobs in the community, they can try those roles while playing at home.

If children enjoy pretending to be a doctor, explain that nurses, X-ray technicians and receptionists also work in hospitals. If they love building with Lego bricks, talk about how architects, construction workers, brick masons and welders all played a part in building a certain bridge, Curry said.

“If we were to give kids lots of exposure and access, and ask them, ‘What do you think of yourself in that career? It seems to me you enjoy this kind of thing,’ that can really open the door for kids to see themselves and those possibilities.” Curry said.

There are many occupations that children don’t learn about in early reader books, which frequently portray police officers, firefighters or doctors. After finding no children’s books about public relations, Curtis Sparrer wrote “Game Face: Becoming a PR Detective,” which places a 10-year-old at the center of the action.

Aside from topic interests, there are personality traits to consider. Children know from an early age whether they like to be around a lot of people or by themselves, whether they prefer using their hands or enjoy reading, according to Jobs for the Future CEO Maria Flynn. “Very early you can start helping kids get a sense of what are they drawn to, and make that connection, how those skills and attributes show up in jobs,” Flynn said.

Exploring careers through school

Some U.S. high schools offer elective courses in fields like marketing, computer science and health care. They also are again investing in vocational classes such as wood shop, welding and mechanics, which fell out of fashion as school systems came under criticism for not preparing enough students for college. Meanwhile, some middle schools are offering career exploration courses.

“Really help them see — at an earlier age, even in middle school — what is the apprenticeship option? How does that work?” Flynn said. “How does the pay work on things like that? What are different trade school options?”

Some young people have questioned the value of four-year degrees because of spiraling costs, student debt loads and difficulty finding jobs. Many want to be able to earn and learn at the same time, Flynn said.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Teetering uncomfortably on the threshold of old age

When I was a kid, anyone over 30 was “old.”

This week, I turned 59, so I guess by my own standards, I’m downright ancient. Fifty-nine isn’t much older than 58, but according to the “round up” rule I learned in elementary school, for all intents and purposes, I’m actually 60. Yikes.

I’ve never been particularly stressed about aging, but reaching 59 (well, 60) has presented me with a dilemma.

Somewhere in the latter half of one’s life is a fine line. A threshold, if you will, across which there is no turning back. A precipice from which one inadvertently steps off into that vast chasm known as “old age.”

Have you ever been at a stoplight, and glanced over at the car next to you to see an elderly woman in a large sedan with her seat fully forward and a death grip on the steering wheel, wearing an enormous pair of wraparound sunglasses?

Have you ever been in a buffet line, and as the older gentleman ahead of you scoops the cottage cheese, you notice he has on elastic-waisted polyester pants hiked well above his waistline, likely ordered in multiple colors from an ad in the back of Parade Magazine?

Have you ever scanned the sunbathers at the community pool and noticed older women wearing skirted bathing suits that cover their crepey thighs and sensible sandals that won’t bother their knobby toes? And, on those occasions, did you think to yourself, “I’ll never be like that”?

But the old timers we see in our everyday lives didn’t raise a white flag and surrender to old age. They sauntered unsuspectingly over life’s invisible threshold without a care in the world, completely unaware that old age was creeping up on them like the Delta Force. Before they knew it, they were seized. No longer able to identify fashion and lifestyle trends, old timers find that their main objective is comfort, and who could begrudge them that?

Now that I am practically 60, I’m scared that old age might happen to me before I’m ready. I still dream of future travel adventures, transformative self-discoveries and personal physical achievements. I’m not ready to throw in the towel just yet. But what if I’ve already stepped off the precipice without knowing it?

Recently, I needed a pair of new sneakers, but I refused to order HOKAs for the mere fact that all my older friends swear by them. “They’re so comfortable!” they tell me, a sure sign of old age. In denial of my arthritic joints, I stubbornly insisted on finding “cool” sneakers. I tried on at least a dozen pairs but was unable to find shoes with a stiff enough arch, a wide enough toe box and enough ankle support to not set off my bad knee, my arthritic lower back and my achy bunions. I realized that HOKAs, like aging, might be unavoidable.

I often comment that the house feels chilly. I watch Court TV. I can name the birds that perch on our bird feeder. I suddenly have the urge to play Mahjong. Uh oh ...

Should I give up and embrace aging? Stock up on glucosamine? Don wraparound shades? Appreciate well-cooked vegetables? Ensnare myself in granny squares? Take up Spider Solitaire? Or, should I resist the inevitable advancement of time with all my might? Cram myself into trendy jeans? Bone up on hip-hop? Inject my face with fillers? Develop a taste for seaweed? Take surfing lessons?

Probably not a good idea, and besides, my children would be traumatized from embarrassment. I suspect that the key to aging gracefully is to accept that it will happen.

Regardless, I will pray that God grants me the serenity to accept that while I may not be a geezer, I’m certainly no spring chicken. The courage to resist the urge to order \$19.99 poly-blend slacks from the weekly newspaper insert, instead of buying a decent pair of Levis at the PX. And the wisdom to know the difference between all-you-can-eat tapioca pudding and good creme brulee.

Amen.

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

TRAVEL BUG

BY DYLAN SCHIFF / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Dylan Schiff is a middle-school science teacher in Millsboro, Del. This is his fourth crossword for The Times. In his spare time, Dylan enjoys making and editing quizzes for Sporcle.com, where he uses the handle Purple Parrot. One of my favorites of his there is “Badly Misspelled Signs,” which is good for a lot of laughs. — W. S.

ACROSS

1 Woodworking byproduct

8 Most-awarded musician at the American Music Awards

13 Outkast, for one

19 Angioplasty tube

20 Mammal with a prehensile snout

21 Something to run

22 Like floppy disks and typewriters

23 Gaming company whose logo is known as “the Fuji”

24 Must

25 Melittologist’s study

26 Army bosses, informally

28 Exam in which using notes is allowed

30 Inventor’s pride

33 “Sorta”

34 “The Last Judgment” is found in one in the Sistine Chapel

35 Search around, as a truffle-hunting pig

36 “I’m so frustrated!”

38 Thereabouts

40 Going on to say

43 Harry Houdini and David Blaine, for two

46 Escalator part

50 Beheader of Medusa

52 Guaranteed

53 Magazine with an annual Person of the Year issue

54 53-Across, reversed

55 Praise highly

58 Gal of Hollywood

60 Groove on

61 Not too shabby

63 Synagogue greeting

66 Cotton and flax, for two

68 Set (down)

69 Theoretical paths depicted by the circled squares

73 Snazzily dressed gent

74 Musical sections

77 Wellness product derived from an Australian bird

78 Cappuccino topper

81 Fat stack of cash

82 “Hang loose” sign

86 City destroyed in Genesis

88 Manhattan neighborhood that’s adjacent to the East Village

89 “Whatever!”

91 Like the subject of a photograph, ideally

94 Cyclist, e.g.

96 Grandmother’s nickname

97 Brand known as “the San Francisco Treat”

100 Has trouble swallowing

101 Roman who opposed Julius Caesar

103 “All right!”

104 Senator’s home

106 Battle of Normandy city

108 “Defending Our Nation. Securing the Future” org.

110 Not breaking, as an actor

115 Lightweight Apple laptop

117 Color-coated candies

118 Healthful smoothie ingredient

119 Slant skyward

120 Brand that merged with BP

122 Compound used to make synthetic rubber

125 Witches

126 Have a night on the town

127 Oprah delivered them for Rosa Parks and Toni Morrison

128 Peckish and peevish

129 Bender

130 Spot of madness, metaphorically

15 Making hotel reservations in advance

16 Certain parents, to their tots

17 Loosen

18 Baking soda target

19 Kind of salad with bacon and hard-boiled eggs

27 GPS suggestions: Abbr.

29 Buzzed

31 Top-notch

32 “X-Men” character portrayed by Anna Paquin

33 “Ain’t that the truth!”

37 Some tough H.S. classes

39 No longer burdened by

40 Mammals with prehensile feet

41 Showcase at an expo

42 Taught by repetition

44 “Stay in touch”

45 Rita ____, “Let You Love Me” singer

47 Habitats for hermit crabs and sea stars

48 Qatari ruler

49 Parts of a coatrack

51 Annual Austin music festival, in brief

56 However, in shorthand

57 Flat-headed crew driver?

59 Small row

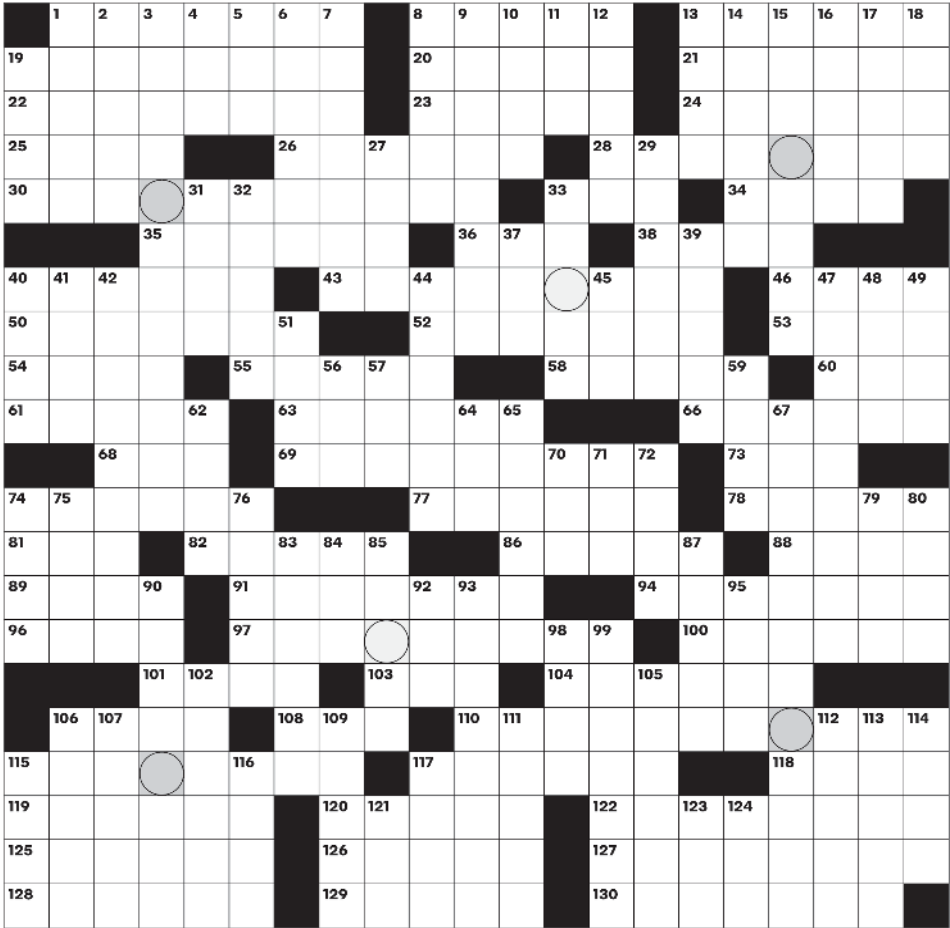
62 What spinach leaves and beets can be used as

64 Its symbol is omega

65 Moves a cursor (over)

67 Many an evangelical

70 Best place to go in London?



- 71 Holiday that celebrates the end of Ramadan

72 Spill (over)

74 Metaphor for a late bloomer

75 “Mi ____ es su ____”

76 T follower

79 Nickname alternative to Teddy

80 What disbudding prevents the growth of

83 Negatively charged particles
- 84 Fast-food chain that’s headquartered in Louisville

85 Floor covering in many a living room

87 Mullally who played the ex-wife of her real-life husband on “Parks and Recreation”

90 Certain social media update

92 Loved, loved, loved, with “up”

93 Be late in the theater?
- 95 Canine in “Hi and Lois”

98 Leathery-skinned hopper

99 Unable to progress

102 Coatrack, in many a lodge

105 What might be given for crying out loud?

106 Frank who directed “It Happened One Night”

107 Follow, as an impulse

109 A few bucks?

111 Govt. bond
- 112 Strand at a chalet, say

113 Like a bowling alley or Olympic pool

114 Runs out of power

115 “____ obliged!”

116 Craftsperson’s online marketplace

117 Tie up, as a boat

121 “Miracle” product from inventor Joy Mangano

123 “Well done, torero!”

124 Sound from a kid with a roll of Bubble Wrap

GUNSTON STREET



“Gunston Street” is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



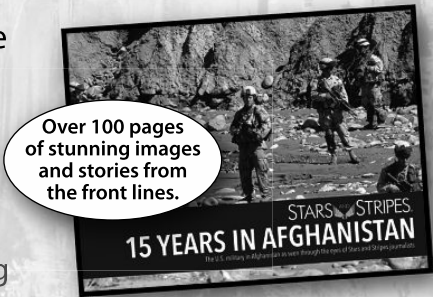
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FACES



ELÍAS VALVERDE II, THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS/TNS
Filmmaker Ken Burns says his upcoming six-part, 12-hour documentary “The American Revolution” includes great voice casting.

Burns wants us to be proud of America again

Documentarian says lifelong learning, recommitting to values are key

BY SARAH HEPOLA
The Dallas Morning News

Ken Burns needs no introduction. As the designated documentarian of the American experience — with series about the Civil War, Vietnam, jazz and baseball, among many other topics — Burns is a brand name, a “Simpsons” reference and a national treasure.

This November, as we head into the country’s 250th year, his much-anticipated six-part, 12-hour series “The American Revolution” will hit PBS.

Burns recently chatted about the documentary and the nation’s anniversary.

The Dallas Morning News: The Founding Fathers are on stamps and bills and monuments. How do you bring them alive again?

Burns: When you put people on marble statues, they become un-human. We lose them. George Washington on the dollar bill, and he never told a lie, which is not true, and he’s chopping down the cherry tree, all exaggerations. ...

So you give back their humanity. Show their flaws. When George Washington starts out, he’s a 22-year-old militia colonel firing at the French to set off the

French and Indian War. He’s this rich planter from Virginia who’s coming to Philadelphia to figure out our developing rift with the mother country.

We also do a lot of first-person voices, and we have the greatest cast ever assembled. Tom Hanks, Meryl Streep, Morgan Freeman, Samuel Jackson, Sir Kenneth Branagh, Damian Lewis, Laura Linney, Claire Danes.

It was your documentary on Benjamin Franklin, watching Franklin fall out with his son [who stayed loyal to the crown], when I started to wonder, for the first time: If I’d lived back then, would I have been a Loyalist?

Thank you! People always ask, what do you want audiences to take away? We’ve told a big, complicated story with lots of moving parts. How people respond is how they respond. But I’d love people to place themselves into this moment: What would I have done? Would I have been willing to die for a cause? Would I have been willing to kill for a cause?

History is only a powerful teacher if you realize these people are very much like us.

Recent Gallup polls show record lows of pride in America. What do you make of that?

They’re not informed, or they’re distracted by the binary world we live in. ... Good or bad, red state or blue state, I’m right, you’re wrong. There’s nothing like that in real life.

I find everything about the United States extraordinary. Do we have problems? Every country has problems. But we invented the idea of citizens. We had the first revolution proclaiming the unalienable rights of all people. Everybody that came before us were “subjects.” And the great danger in the atrophy of knowledge — because we’re taking civics and history out of our curriculum — is that you become ignorant and susceptible to being superstitious peasants and subjects again.

When the founders talked about the “pursuit of happiness,” they meant lifelong learning. They were borrowing from the classical period. That virtue would make you a good citizen, the highest thing in the land.

This series comes out shortly before the U.S. celebrates 250 years as a country, and I keep thinking: We need this. We need to celebrate who we are.

Let’s recommit to the values that our founders fought so hard to create.

TV’s ‘King of the Hill’ revival taking shape

BY UWA EDE-OSIFO
The Dallas Morning News

“King of the Hill,” the beloved animated sitcom inspired by co-creator Mike Judge’s time living in Richardson, Texas, returns on Aug. 4, more than 15 years since it last aired.

Hulu announced Season 14’s premiere with a clip of the opening credits posted on YouTube last week.

“After years working a propane job in Saudi Arabia to earn their retirement nest egg, Hank and Peggy Hill return to a changed Arlen, Texas, to reconnect with old friends Dale, Boomhauer and Bill. Meanwhile, Bobby is living his dream as a chef in Dallas and enjoying his 20s with his former classmates Connie, Joseph and Chane,” a logline in the video’s description reads.

“King of the Hill” ran on Fox for 13 seasons between 1997 and 2009 before it was canceled.

Judge drew inspiration for Hank’s character from former neighbors in Richardson, he said in a 2022 interview on Howie Mandel’s podcast.

“We had these neighbors and they were just these four dudes who were always out there drinking beers in the alley,” he said.

He went on to describe a time when his neighbors helped him fix a section of his fence after it was knocked down in a storm. “After a while, they’re all pouring concrete and ... I realize that I’m kind of use-



20TH TELEVISION ANIMATION/TNS
From left, Peggy, Bobby and Hank Hill are back as “King of the Hill” returns from a 15-year hiatus.

less here and I went back inside.”

The credit sequence reveal features a time lapse, a nod at the years since viewers last saw the Hill clan.

In the clip, Bobby transforms from a kid to an adult. There also appears to be a brief reference to the pandemic, with some of the characters donning masks and standing spaced apart in one frame.

“A lot has happened in the world since the original run of the show ended,” Judge told Vulture in an article published May 30. “There’s just a lot more for Hank to complain about.”

The 10-episode season will stream on Hulu.

Pop singer Jessie J shares cancer diagnosis

The English pop singer Jessie J says she has been diagnosed with breast cancer and will undergo surgery after her performance at the London music festival Capital’s Summertime Ball this weekend.

Jessie J, 37, shared the news in an Instagram video on Wednesday. “I was diagnosed with early breast cancer,” she said in the clip. “Cancer sucks in any form, but I’m holding onto the word ‘early.’”

She told her social media audience that she felt compelled to share her diagnosis. “I just wanted to be open and share it,” she said.

The Grammy-nominated Jessie J has long been celebrated for her robust soprano and R&B-informed pop hits, like the 2014 collaboration with Nicki Minaj and Ariana Grande, “Bang Bang,” and 2011’s “Domino.”

She has been releasing new music in 2025, including the singles “Living My Best Life” and “No Secrets.” A new album is expected later this year.

Associated Press

A-ha frontman Harket says he has Parkinson’s

A-ha frontman Morten Harket has been diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease, he revealed in an article published on the band’s website Wednesday.

The “Take On Me” singer told biographer Jan Omdahl that he underwent a procedure for deep brain stimulation (DBS) in June 2024, addressing the left side of his brain, and a similar one in December for the right.

Parkinson’s causes parts of one’s brain to deteriorate and affects muscle control, balance and movement, as well as thinking ability and mental health, according to the Cleveland Clinic.

Harket said he doesn’t “expect to be able to achieve full technical control” of his voice anymore, even as he works on unreleased music.

“The question is whether I can express myself with my voice,” he told Omdahl. “As things stand now, that’s out of the question.”

The synth-pop trio A-ha split in 2009 but briefly reunited in 2015.

New York Daily News

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Town official claims self-defense in shooting

NY CHESTER — An upstate New York town official accused of shooting and wounding a food delivery person says he was protecting his family and has pleaded not guilty to attempted murder and other charges.

Ring doorbell camera footage shows John Reilly III, the highway superintendent in Chester, a town nearly 60 miles north of Manhattan, shooting at the DoorDash driver's car on May 2 as the person was trying to leave Reilly's property. Prosecutors allege the shooting was unprovoked, saying the driver was lost and his cellphone battery was dead, as he only tried to see if Reilly had ordered the food he was trying to deliver.

But Reilly's lawyer, Thomas Kenniff, said in a phone interview Tuesday that Reilly, worried about a home invasion, was defending his family after the driver insisted on entering his home.

Reilly pleaded not guilty Monday at the Orange County courthouse in Goshen.

Dave's Hot Chicken sold to firm that owns Subway

CA PASADENA — Dave's Hot Chicken said Monday it has been acquired by the private equity firm Roark Capital in a deal valued at \$1 billion.

Dave's Hot Chicken got its start in 2017 as a popup in a Los Angeles parking lot. It has grown exponentially since then and expects to end this year with 400 restaurants worldwide. The brand specializes in Nashville-style hot chicken.

Investors in Dave's Hot Chicken have included the rapper Drake, who gives away hot chicken sliders every year on Oct. 24, his birthday.

Atlanta-based Roark specializes in franchised businesses. It bought the Subway sandwich chain in 2023 and backs two holding companies that own multiple restaurant chains: Inspire Brands and GoTo Foods.

Dave's Hot Chicken said its leadership team will remain.

Pilot lands small plane in sound, then calls 911

CT BRANFORD — The pilot of a small plane that was about to crash managed to land it safely in the cool, choppy waters of Long Island Sound off Connecticut and called 911 to provide his precise coordinates before the aircraft sank, authorities said Monday.

The Coast Guard pulled two people wearing life jackets from the water shortly before 11 a.m. on Sunday, about a half-hour after the plane went down a few miles off the coast of Branford, Conn., officials said. The survivors were treated for minor injuries and hypothermia symptoms, and brought to a hospital, the Branford Fire Department said.

The water temperature at the time was about 60 degrees Fahrenheit,



DELICIA LOPEZ, THE (McALLEN, TEXAS) MONITOR/AP

It's clear to see

A window washer is framed by pallets of food while cleaning windows at the Food Bank of the Rio Grande Valley in Pharr, Texas, on Tuesday.

heit, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Branford Fire Chief Thomas Mahoney said the seas were a choppy 3 to 6 feet.

The single-engine Piper PA-32-300 Cherokee Six took off from Sikorsky Memorial Airport in Stratford, Conn., and was in the air for about 12 minutes when it went down, according to the flight-tracking company FlightAware. About 10 minutes into the flight, the pilot declared an emergency and contacted air traffic controllers in New York.

Mahoney said after the plane went into the water, the pilot used a cellphone to call 911 and report his plane crashed into Long Island Sound and was taking on water. The aircraft was completely submerged when rescuers arrived.

Man accused of trying to get witness deported

WI MILWAUKEE — A Wisconsin man is facing charges accusing him of forging a letter threatening President Donald Trump's life in an effort to get another man who was a potential witness against him in a criminal case deported.

Prosecutors said in a criminal complaint filed Monday that Demetric D. Scott was behind a letter sent to state and federal officials with the return address and name of Ramon Morales Reyes. Scott was charged Monday with felony witness intimidation, identity theft and two counts of bail jumping.

Immigration agents arrested Morales Reyes, 54, on May 21 after he dropped his child off at school in

Milwaukee. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem announced the arrest.

But the claim started to unravel as investigators talked to Morales Reyes, who doesn't speak English fluently, and obtained a handwriting sample from him that was different from the handwriting in the letters, according to court documents.

Morales Reyes is listed as a victim in the case involving Scott, who is awaiting trial in Milwaukee County Jail on armed robbery and aggravated battery charges.

Law enforcement officers listened to several calls Scott made from the jail in which he talked about letters that needed to be mailed and a plan to get someone picked up by Immigration and Customs Enforcement so Scott's trial could get dismissed, according to the criminal complaint. He also admitted to police that he wrote the letters, documents said.

COVID agreement shields some on death row

GA ATLANTA — The fact that the COVID-19 vaccine is not available for newborn babies is shielding a group of prisoners on Georgia's death row from execution.

Executions in Georgia were halted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the state attorney general's office entered into an agreement with lawyers for people on death row to set the terms under which they could resume for a specific group of prisoners. At least one of those conditions, having to do with the availability of the COVID-19 vaccine, has

not been met, and seeking an execution date for a prisoner covered by the agreement would breach the agreement, Fulton County Superior Court Judge Shukura Ingram ruled.

The agreement includes three conditions that had to be met before executions could be set for the affected prisoners: the expiration of the state's COVID-19 judicial emergency, the resumption of normal visitation at state prisons and the availability of a COVID-19 vaccine "to all members of the public." Once those conditions were met, the state agreed to give three months' notice before pursuing an execution warrant for one of the prisoners covered by the agreement and six months' notice for the rest.

The state has argued that the agreement should no longer apply. But defense attorneys say it's still valid because the vaccine isn't yet available to infants under 6 months old, and visitation at state prisons has not returned to normal.

Runway project done, but flight limits haven't eased

NJ NEWARK — A construction project on one of Newark Liberty International Airport's three main runways wrapped up nearly two weeks early, so the Federal Aviation Administration expects to be able to ease flight limits next week despite the ongoing shortage of air traffic controllers.

Federal Transportation Department officials said Monday that some of the runway equipment must be tested before the FAA can increase the flight limits at the second busiest airport in the New York

City area. The runway began to be used for departures Monday but won't be available for arrivals until after that testing is completed early next week.

Newark has been plagued by cancellations and delays this spring because of a shortage of air traffic controllers after the FAA had technical problems that twice briefly knocked out the radar and communications at a facility in Philadelphia that directs planes in and out of the airport.

Aircraft missing 60 years not found in new search

MI HOUGHTON — Experts searching for plane wreckage in Michigan's Lake Superior found logs and rocks on the bottom but no debris from an aircraft that crashed nearly 60 years ago carrying three people on a scientific assignment.

A team from Michigan Technological University returned last week by boat to get closer to 16 targets that appeared on sonar last fall, more than 200 feet below the surface of the vast lake. The crew used side-scan sonar and other remote technology.

"We did not locate any sign of the wreckage of the missing aircraft," said Travis White, a research engineer at the Great Lakes Research Center at Michigan Tech. "However, we did validate our technical approach, as we found physical objects in each target location."

The Beechcraft plane left Madison, Wis., for Lake Superior on Oct. 23, 1968.



**FROM THE HOME FRONT TO
THE FRONT LINES**

THE EXCHANGE IS A FORCE MULTIPLIER FOR WARFIGHTER AND FAMILY READINESS

Delivering the
best tastes
of home to
deployed troops

Providing career
opportunities
for Veterans and
military families

Supporting
critical
Quality-of-Life
programs

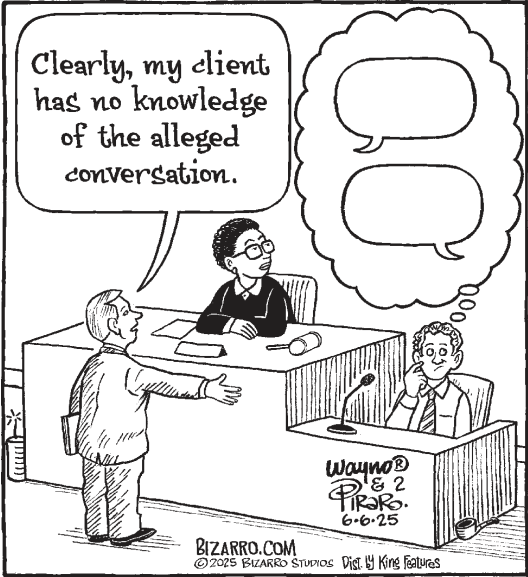


EXCHANGE



**Scan to learn more about how 100% of Exchange
earnings support Warfighters and their families**

Bizarro



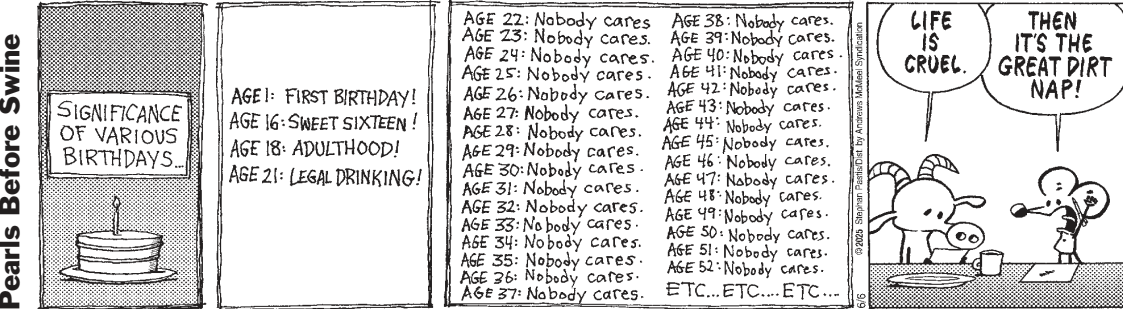
Loose Parts



Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



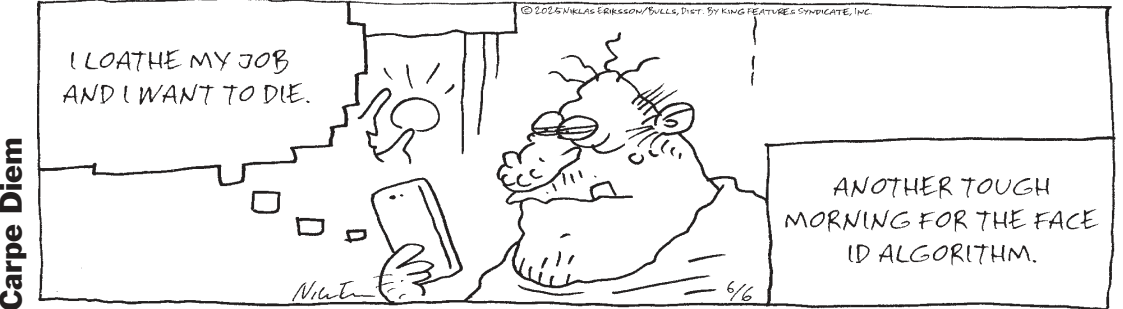
Non Sequitur



Wumo



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
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			40				41			42	43	44
45	46	47				48	49					
50						51				52		
53						54				55		

ACROSS

- 1 Heart chart (Abbr.)
4 Long story
8 First person
12 Bathroom, to a Londoner
13 Advanced math
14 Judicial garb
15 Prehistoric period
17 Hexagonal state
18 Soak up
19 Prattle
21 Scale members
22 Frightens
26 Doofus
29 Ecol. watchdog
30 A billion years
31 Slapstick arsenal
32 Law grads
33 New York's — Field
34 Corn spike
35 Greek cross
36 "Haystacks" painter
37 Sea of —
39 Wee dollop
40 "— who?"
41 Mistakes in print
45 WNBA star Leslie
48 Contemporaries
50 Say it's so
51 Impale
52 Jungfrau, for one
53 Favorites
54 Fencing sword
55 — Moines

DOWN

- 1 "Frozen" snow queen
2 Broadcast journalist Hoda
3 Sticky substances
4 Sound system
5 Riyadh residents
6 Showbiz job
7 Generational disparities
8 Island off Venezuela
9 Speck
10 Lawyers' org.
11 "I'm not impressed"
16 Benchmarks
20 Mode lead-in
23 Check
24 Bit of dust
25 Peevish fit

- 26 Detail, briefly
27 "Arrivederci!"
28 Frau's mate
29 College URL ender
32 Pre-Depression era
33 Hooded snake
35 Golf peg
36 "Little Women" matriarch
38 Autocrats
39 Plow pioneer
42 Slightly
43 Conference leader?
44 Nile vipers
45 Napkin's place
46 "— had it!"
47 Fixed
49 Republicans

Answer to Previous Puzzle

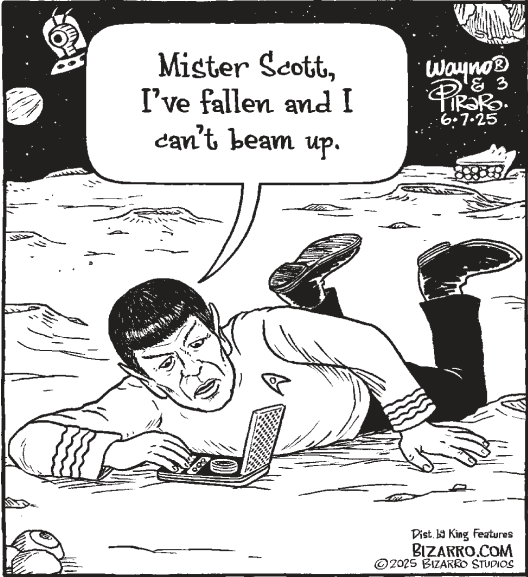
M	A	A	M	T	U	B	S		T	I	P
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C	U	P	O	F	S	O	U	P		G	O
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			O	P	E	L	S		M	R	
D	E	F	E	R			E	N	T	R	A
A	V	G			E	A	S	E	O	F	U
M	A	O			C	O	A	L		U	N
E	N	D			T	K	O	S		L	E

6-6

CRYPTOQUIP

Y U C E N U C G E N W D M W
W Q H Z K Q M W U A N M G E
W X Q M G G U N M C Q C N R U C Y E
A Q U E C Z K M N W D K X R K Q K
M N Y K K A : E H G U - N G U Q K N .
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I DID A TERRIBLE JOB COOKING A POPULAR MARINATED JAPANESE DISH. YOU MIGHT CALL IT TERI-YUCKY.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: R equals W

Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

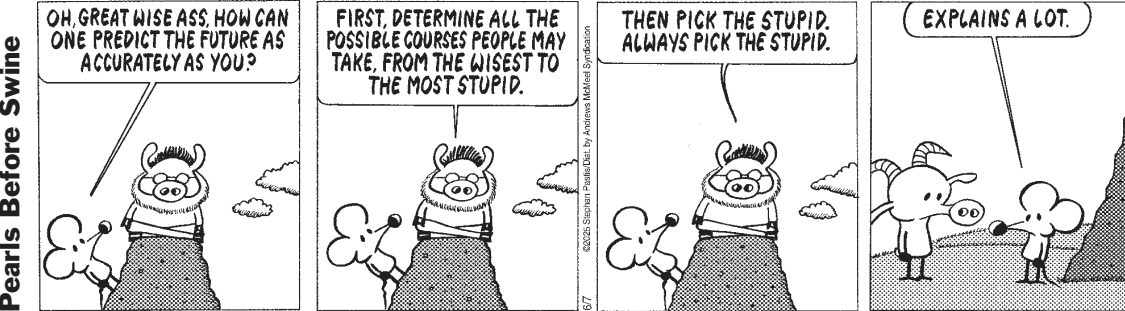
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50			51				52	53				
54							55					
56							57					

- ACROSS
- 56 Pays out
- 57 Rush
- 25 Trigger's rider
- 26 Big film festival name
- 28 Assets minus liabilities
- 30 Mouths (Lat.)
- 31 Letter addenda, for short
- 33 Quilters' meet-up
- 34 "Do — say!"
- 39 Revise
- 41 Concepts
- 42 "— fair in ..."
- 43 Gumbo or bisque, e.g.
- 45 Creative pursuits
- 47 Final bio
- 48 Finito
- 49 Approves
- 51 Mil. bigwig
- 53 Geological period
- DOWN
- 1 Give a darn
- 2 Pitcher Hershiser
- 3 Vatican masterpiece
- 4 Finale
- 5 Merits
- 6 Hot tubs
- 7 Roots used in poi
- 8 Goal
- 9 Tree limbs
- 10 Sultry Horne
- 11 Redact
- 12 Cato's 1200
- 18 Seattle athlete
- 21 Cartoon frame
- 23 Succor
- 24 Proof-of-age docs
- 1 Managed somehow
- 6 Not wobbly
- 12 "Semper Fi" soldier
- 13 Coupled (with)
- 14 Doctrines
- 15 Designer Giorgio
- 16 Ancient Brit
- 17 Canadian gas brand
- 19 Rebellion leader Turner
- 20 Ranch measure
- 22 Pouch
- 24 Tax-collecting org.
- 27 Novelist Hunter
- 29 Breakfast chain
- 32 Ballpark marathons
- 35 "Auld Lang —"
- 36 Pre-college exams
- 37 Airline to Sweden
- 38 Narc's org.
- 40 D-Day conflict
- 42 Botanist Gray
- 44 Shark variety
- 46 Nitwit
- 50 More protracted
- 52 Athletic shoe giant
- 54 Glowing with light
- 55 Lionel toys

Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



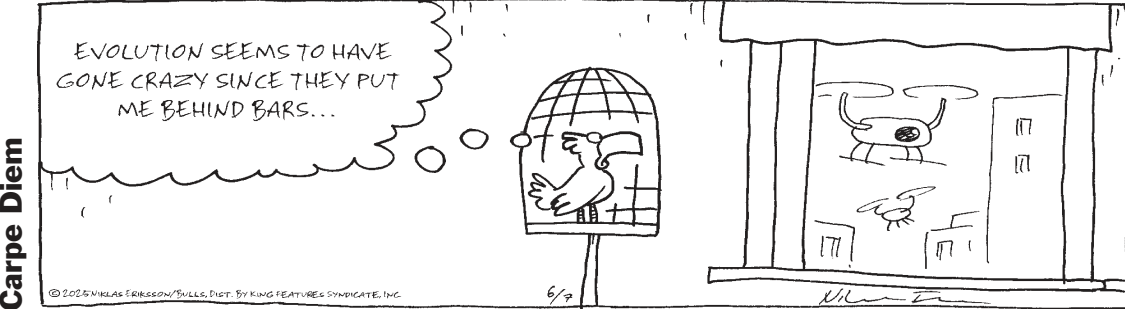
Non Sequitur



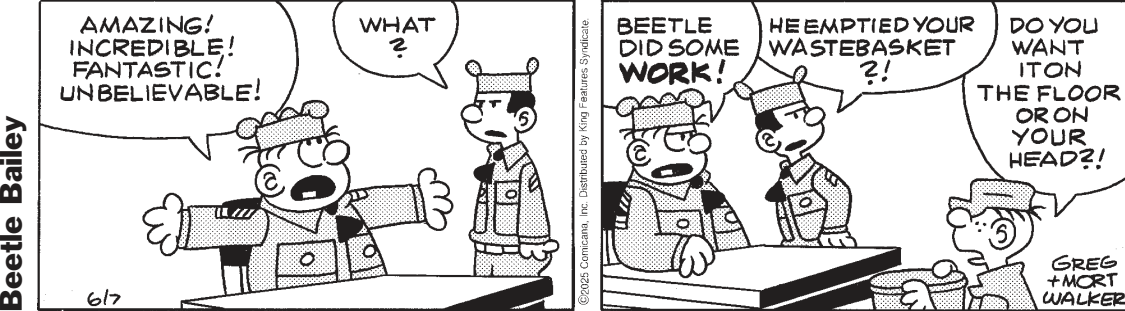
Wumo



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Answer to Previous Puzzle

E	K	G		S	A	G	A		A	D	A	M	
L	O	O		T	R	I	G		R	O	B	E	
S	T	O	N	E	A	G	E		U	T	A	H	
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			R	E	S		A	L	A	R	M	S	
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P	I	E	S		J	D	S		C	I	T	I	
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C	O	R	T	E	Z		D	A	B				
			S	E	Z		E	R	R	A	T	A	
L	I	S	A			A	G	E	M	A	T	E	S
A	V	E	R			G	O	R	E		A	L	P
P	E	T	S			E	P	E	E		D	E	S

6-7

CRYPTOQUIP

R T L X S R W Y Z S Z K E X P Z
U V G G Z R L V N Z K K Y R L T E, W J N R
U V L ' N G R L K N B Z P V L O S B Z Y Z.
N B Z O ' Y Z V W E Z L N N Z V E.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: LOUD SOUNDS THAT TRICERATOPS AND TYRANNOSAURUS WOULD PRODUCE AS THEY WERE ASLEEP: DINO-SNORES.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals C



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Laura Law, Chief Operating Officer
Lt. Col. Katie R. Fidler, Europe commander
John Rodriguez, Europe chief of staff
Lt. Col. Marci Hoffman, Pacific commander

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Jacqueline Smith

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OPINION

Ukraine’s valor is reminiscent of Britain’s in 1940

BY GEORGE F. WILL
The Washington Post
Ukraine’s breathtaking ingenuity, the latest example of which destroyed or damaged dozens of Russia’s long-range bombers on bases 2,500 miles from Ukraine, is in the service of an unflagging valor reminiscent of Britain’s in 1940, when it was isolated and embattled, with the German army at the English Channel. Ukraine’s resilience is inconvenient for those Americans who are eager to proclaim that the geographically largest nation entirely within Europe is inevitably doomed to defeat, dismemberment and domination.

Such Americans’ unseemly “realism” has them invested in, and even eager for, Ukraine’s disappearance from the map of European nations. Those Americans should remember Winston Churchill’s 1941 response to French military “realists” who had said in 1940 that Britain would soon have its neck wrung like a chicken. Said Churchill: “Some chicken. Some neck.”

Today’s faux “realism” cannot fathom what is at stake in Ukraine. Michael Kim-mage can. The director of the Wilson Center’s Kennan Institute, writing in Foreign Affairs, says Putin has “renormalized the idea of large-scale war as a means of territorial conquest.” Putin is, therefore, undoing a war aim enunciated before the United States entered World War II. In August 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Churchill, meeting on war-ships in Placentia Bay, off Newfoundland, propounded the Atlantic Charter, item two of which looked to a future without “territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned.”

It was to buttress this principle that Presi-

dent George H.W. Bush in 1991 orchestrated a broad coalition of nations for the limited but luminous purpose of forcing Iraq to leave Kuwait. It was for this principle that in 1982 British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher sent British forces to the South Atlantic to undo Argentina’s seizure of the Falkland Islands. An Argentine intellectual dismissed this military event as “a fight between two bald men over a comb.” Actually, it was a fight for a principle that again seems perishable.

Vice President JD Vance uses flippancy, as adolescents do, for the fun of being naughty: “I don’t really care what happens to Ukraine one way or the other.” He has dismissed as “moralistic garbage” a distinguished historian’s mildly different opinion about Ukraine’s prospects. Vance wonders whether Niall Ferguson of Stanford’s Hoover Institution is “aware of the reality on the ground, of the numerical advantage of the Russians, of the depleted stock of the Europeans or their even more depleted industrial base?”

Ukraine, says Vance, never had “any path-way to victory.” Vance’s ventriloquist, the U.S. president, has called Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy a “dictator,” although it is unclear how much disapproval Trump conveys using that term. Trump has said to Zelenskyy, “You don’t have the cards.” But Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine’s minister of foreign affairs 2020-24, writing May 30 in Foreign Affairs, says:

“In December 2023, Russia controlled approximately 42,000 square miles of Ukrainian territory. In December 2024, that figure had grown only slightly, to around 43,600 square miles As of late May, Russia held approximately 43,650 ... the country suppos-

Chinese coercion is energizing Asia’s middle-powers

BY DANIEL DePETRIS
Chicago Tribune
Last June, during an annual security conference in East Asia, then-Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin underscored that the United States was not seeking conflict with China. Maintaining a consistent dialogue with Beijing, he hinted, was just as vital to effective deterrence as ensuring the U.S. military was fully equipped and prepared.

Fast-forward a year later and the message from Washington is far different. Unlike his predecessor, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth name-dropped China in his speech to the same security conference multiple times, as if to shame the Asian superpower for running roughshod over the so-called rules-based international order.

China, Hegseth warned, was trying to become a hegemon in Asia, where it could dominate its neighbors, exploit the South China Sea’s vast natural resources and coerce other countries into accepting Beijing’s demands.

In Hegseth’s words, “It has to be clear to all that Beijing is credibly preparing to potentially use military force to alter the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific.” An invasion of Taiwan, he added, could be “imminent.”

If this all sounds scary, that’s because it is. His comments raise the rhetorical gamesmanship to a level U.S. officials weren’t comfortable with in the past. The Biden administration was no slouch on China policy, but it still didn’t want to inflame things unnecessarily.

In other words, there was still an opportunity to defuse any tensions before they exploded into a war that could drag the United States in, kill tens of thousands of people and throw a heavy wrench into the global economy.

The Trump administration, however, has deployed noticeably sharper words during its first four months. Although the fundamentals of its wider policy in East Asia mimic the Biden administration’s own — reinforcing U.S. alliances; engaging in regular freedom of navigation exercises with Japan and the Philippines; and stressing the utility of preserving the status quo in the Taiwan Strait — President Donald Trump’s advisers aren’t afraid of poking Beijing in the eye.

If managing the systemic rivalry with Beijing was a core component of Washington’s overall strategy throughout President Joe Biden’s four years, it increasingly looks like the guardrails that were put in place to prevent miscalculations are now eroding.

Even so, does the Trump administration have a point? Is a conflict over Taiwan imminent as Hegseth suggests? And how real is the risk of China becoming Asia’s hegemon?

First, we should acknowledge that China is a threat in certain respects, particularly to its neighbors who have competing jurisdictional claims. The People’s Liberation Army, or PLA, is arguably the strongest military in the region today, a consequence of Chinese President Xi Jinping’s long-standing policy of pouring money into its coffers to fund a large-scale modernization campaign.

Yet the U.S. would be wise to refrain from

edly holding all the cards has gained just 1,650 of Ukraine’s 233,030 square miles over the last 16 months. ... Moscow has gone from occupying about 18 percent of Ukrainian territory in late 2023 to roughly 19 percent today.”

Russia, which Sen. John McCain called a “gas station masquerading as a country,” has one-third of the European Union’s population, one tenth of the EU’s gross domestic product, and last year had more than half a million more deaths than births. Writing in the Atlantic, Anna Nemtsova, a Daily Beast correspondent who covers Eastern Europe, reports: “According to one demographer, Russians may have had fewer children from January to March 2025 than in any three-month period over the past 200 years.”

Although some people similar to Vance admired British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain’s “realism” at Munich in 1938, Dalibor Rohac of the American Enterprise Institute cautions that it is “misleading and ahistorical” to compare Ukraine’s vulnerability in coming negotiations to Czechoslovakia’s in the negotiations that presaged Germany’s takeover of Czechoslovakia: Czechoslovakia was not forced to acquiesce to a fatal agreement “after defending itself successfully against Nazi military might for three years.”

President Donald Trump finds Russia “easier to deal with” than Ukraine, perhaps because he agrees more with Russia. Vance says Trump might walk away from peace talks if Putin is not “serious” about them. So, Vance has notified Putin that simply by being unserious about negotiations, he might provoke Trump to show that among the things he is unserious about is the principle affirmed at Placentia Bay.

overestimating China’s military capability and underestimating the capability of its allies like Japan, the Philippines, South Korea and Australia — all of whom have an even greater interest in preventing Chinese hegemony in Asia than Washington does. China is its own worst enemy in this regard: The more it presses its territorial claims, the more incentive its neighbors have to balance Beijing.

For the most part, this is exactly what China’s neighbors are doing. Japan is the most obvious case study. Traditionally a pacifist country that kept to an artificially low defense budget relative to its wealth, Japan has spent the last three years adding resources to its so-called Self-Defense Forces and buying American weapons off the shelf.

The Philippines is another example. While the country can’t possibly compete with China in conventional terms, the Philippine government under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has effectively given up on rapprochement with Beijing and thrown in its lot with Washington. Today, Manila is not only buttressing its navy and coast guard but also increasingly partnering with countries like Japan and Australia who have a similar threat perception about China.

In short, Asia’s middle-powers aren’t standing still. Chinese coercion is bringing them together. And ultimately, this is more important for stability in this area of the world than whatever the United States chooses to do.

Daniel DePetrís is a fellow at Defense Priorities and a foreign affairs columnist for the Chicago Tribune.

SCOREBOARD/SOCCER

DEALS

Wednesday’s transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball American League

ATHLETICS — Recalled INF Max Muncy from Las Vegas (PCL). Optioned INF C.J. Alexander to Las Vegas.

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Sent C Gary Sánchez and LF Ramón Laureano to Norfolk (IL) on rehab assignments.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Claimed RHP Ryan Cusick off waivers from the Detroit Tigers and optioned him to Charlotte (IL). Transferred RHP Miguel Castro from the 15-day IL to the 60-day IL. Placed 2B Lenyn Sosa on the 10-day IL. Recalled 1B Tim Elko from Charlotte. Sent LHP Tyler Gilbert to Charlotte on a rehab assignment.

DETROIT TIGERS — Reinstated RHP Sawyer Gipson-Long from the 60-day IL. Placed RHP Jason Foley on the 60-day IL. Optioned RHP Dylan Smith to Toledo (IL).

KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Sent RHP Kyle Wright on a rehab assignment to Omaha (IL).

LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Agreed to terms with RHP Carson Fulmer on a minor league contract.

NEW YORK YANKEES — Sent RHP Carlos Carrasco outright to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (IL).

SEATTLE MARINERS — Recalled RHP Casey Legumina from Tacoma (PCL). Placed RHP Collin Snider on the 15-day IL.

TAMPA BAY RAYS — Reinstated RF Travis Jankowski from the 10-day IL and sent him outright to Durham (IL).

TEXAS RANGERS — Reinstated RHP Kumar Rocker from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Codi Heuer to Round Rock (PCL). Agreed to terms with C Tucker Barnhart on a minor league contract.

TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Sent C Ali Sánchez outright to Buffalo (IL).

National League

CINCINNATI REDS — Agreed to terms with LHP Wade Miley on a major league contract. Placed RHP Hunter Greene on the 15-day IL. Transferred RHP Rhett Lowder to the 60-day IL.

COLORADO ROCKIES — Sent LHP Austin Gomber to Hartford (EL) on a rehab assignment.

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Recalled RHP Mick Abel from Lehigh Valley (IL). Placed RHP Zach Wheeler on the paternity list.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Agreed to terms with 1B Dominic Smith on a major league contract. Selected the contract of OF Daniel Johnson from Sacramento (PCL). Selected the contract of C Andrew Knizner from Sacramento. Optioned 2B Christian Koss to Sacramento. Designated INF LaMonte Wade Jr. and C Sam Huff for assignment.

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Agreed to terms with RHP Briam Reyes on a minor league contract.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association

PHOENIX SUNS — Hired Jordan Ott as head coach.

Women’s National Basketball Association

MINNESOTA LYNX — Waived C Marieme Badiane.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

CLEVELAND BROWNS — Signed WR Jaalen Gill to a contract. Waived K Andre Szmyt. Signed QB Dillon Gabriel to a four-year rookie contract.

DETROIT LIONS — Signed OL Trystan Colton to a one-year contract. Waived/Injured CB Divaad Wilson.

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Signed OLB Dennis Gardeck and DE Dawuane Smoot to one-year contracts. Waived OL Cooper Hodges with a failed physical designation.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — Signed OLB Bud Dupree to a contract extension.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Signed WR Ife Adeyi to a rookie contract.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Signed S Quindell Johnson to a contract.

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Waived WR Nate McCollum.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

COLORADO AVALANCHE — Signed F Brock Nelson to a three-year contract extension.

SOCCER
Major League Soccer

HOUSTON DASH — Signed F Messiah Bright to a contract extension through the 2026 season with a team option for the 2027 season

National Women’s Soccer League

HOUSTON DASH — Signed F Messiah Bright to a two-year contract extension with a 2027 club option.

UTAH ROYALS FC — Acquired \$50,000 in allocation money in exchange for G Cristina Roque.

COLLEGE SOFTBALL

Division I World Series
Championship Finals Series
Best-of-three; x-if necessary
Wednesday

Texas 2, Texas Tech 1

Thursday

Texas vs. Texas Tech

Friday

x-Texas Tech vs. Texas

PRO SOCCER

MLS							
Eastern Conference							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
Philadelphia	10	3	4	34	32	18	
Cincinnati	9	5	3	30	25	24	
Inter Miami CF	8	3	5	29	36	27	
Nashville	8	4	5	29	30	21	
Columbus	7	3	7	28	27	24	
New York	8	6	3	27	28	19	
Orlando City	7	4	6	27	31	22	
Charlotte FC	8	8	1	25	28	27	
NYC FC	7	6	4	25	20	20	
New England	6	4	5	23	19	14	
Chicago	6	5	4	22	28	28	
D.C. United	4	7	6	18	16	29	
Atlanta	4	8	5	17	21	30	
Toronto FC	3	10	4	13	18	24	
CF Montréal	1	11	5	8	12	32	
Western Conference							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
Vancouver	9	1	5	32	27	12	
San Diego FC	9	5	3	30	29	18	
Minn. United	8	3	6	30	26	16	
Portland	7	4	5	26	25	22	
Seattle	7	5	5	26	25	22	
LAFC	6	4	5	23	27	22	
San Jose	6	7	4	22	34	28	
Colorado	6	6	4	22	18	22	
Houston	5	7	5	20	22	25	
Austin FC	5	7	5	20	11	20	
FC Dallas	4	6	6	18	18	26	
Sporting KC	4	8	4	16	25	28	
Real Salt Lake	4	10	3	15	16	25	
St Louis City	3	8	5	14	13	21	
LA Galaxy	1	12	4	7	15	36	
Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.							
Sunday’s game							
Minnesota 3, Seattle 2							
Saturday’s games							
Chicago at D.C. United Austin FC at Colorado							
Sunday, June 8							
St Louis City at Portland Seattle at Vancouver Sporting Kansas City at Los Angeles FC							
Thursday, June 12							
Atlanta at New York City FC							
Friday, June 13							
Toronto FC at Los Angeles FC San Jose at Portland							
Saturday, June 14							
LA Galaxy at St Louis City Vancouver at Columbus Cincinnati at New England Charlotte FC at Philadelphia New York at Austin FC Nashville at Chicago CF Montréal at Houston FC Dallas at Sporting Kansas City San Diego FC at Minnesota Orlando City at Colorado D.C. United at Real Salt Lake							
NWSL							
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	
Kansas City	8	2	0	24	22	7	
San Diego	6	2	2	20	21	12	
Orlando	6	3	1	19	18	8	
Washington	6	3	1	19	18	16	
Portland	4	2	4	16	16	11	
Seattle	4	4	2	14	9	9	
Angel City	4	4	2	14	17	19	
Louisville	4	4	2	14	12	16	
Gotham FC	3	4	3	12	12	10	
North Carolina	3	4	3	12	13	15	
Bay FC	3	4	3	12	12	14	
Houston	3	5	2	11	10	16	
Utah Royals FC	1	7	2	5	8	19	
Chicago	1	8	1	4	6	22	
Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.							
Friday’s games							
Utah Royals FC at Louisville Seattle at San Diego							
Saturday’s games							
Kansas City at Gotham FC Houston at Orlando Portland at Bay FC Chicago at Angel City							
Sunday’s game							
North Carolina at Washington							
Friday, June 13							
San Diego at Houston Gotham FC at Utah Royals FC Orlando at Bay FC							
Saturday, June 14							
Seattle at Chicago Louisville at Kansas City North Carolina at Angel City							

COLLEGE BASEBALL

Division I Super Regionals			
Best of Three Louisville Friday-Sunday			
Miami (34-25) vs. Louisville (38-21)			
Corvallis Super Friday-Sunday			
Florida St. (41-14) vs. Oregon St. (45-13-1)			
Chapel Hill Friday-Sunday			
Arizona (42-18) vs. North Carolina (45-13)			
Auburn Friday-Sunday			
Coastal Carolina (51-11) vs. Auburn (41-18)			
Los Angeles Saturday-Monday			
UTSA (47-13) vs. UCLA (45-16)			
Durham Saturday-Monday			
Murray St. (42-14) vs. Duke (40-19)			
Baton Rouge Saturday-Monday			
West Virginia (44-14) vs. LSU (46-15)			
Fayetteville Saturday-Monday			
Tennessee (46-17) vs. Arkansas (46-13)			
PRO BASKETBALL			
WNBA			
Eastern Conference			
	W	L	Pct GB
New York	7	0	1.000 —
Atlanta	5	2	.714 2
Indiana	3	4	.429 4
Washington	3	5	.375 4½
Chicago	2	4	.333 4½
Connecticut	1	6	.143 6
Western Conference			
	W	L	Pct GB
Minnesota	8	0	1.000 —
Las Vegas	4	2	.667 3
Phoenix	5	3	.625 3
Seattle	4	4	.500 4
Golden State	2	4	.333 5
Los Angeles	2	6	.250 6
Dallas	1	7	.125 7
Tuesday’s games			
Indiana 85, Washington 76 Minnesota 88, Phoenix 65 Seattle 83, Dallas 77			
Wednesday’s games			
No games scheduled			
Thursday’s games			
New York at Washington Golden State at Phoenix			
Friday’s games			
Atlanta at Connecticut Los Angeles at Dallas			
Saturday’s games			
Las Vegas at Golden State Indiana at Chicago Seattle at Phoenix			
Sunday’s games			
Connecticut at Washington Minnesota at Dallas			
AP SPORTLIGHT			
June 6			
1946 — The National Basketball Association is founded at the Commodore Hotel in New York.			
1966 — The NFL and American Football League announce their merger.			
1969 — Joe Namath resigns from the NFL after commissioner Pete Rozelle said Namath must sell his stake in a bar.			
1999 — Andre Agassi rallies to win the French Open and become the fifth man to complete a career Grand Slam. After losing the first two sets, Agassi surges back to beat Andrei Medvedev 1-6, 2-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-4. Agassi won the 1992 Wimbledon, 1994 U.S. Open and 1995 Australian Open.			
2007 — Trevor Hoffman becomes the first major leaguer with 500 career saves when he closes out the San Diego Padres’ 5-2 victory over the Los Angeles Dodgers.			
2011 — The Bowl Championship Series strips USC of its 2004 title, leaving that season without a BCS champion. BCS officials vacated the championship after the Trojans were hit with heavy NCAA sanctions last year for rules violations committed during the 2004 and ’05 seasons.			
2015 — American Pharoah leads all the way to win the Belmont Stakes by 5½ lengths, becoming the first horse in 37 years to sweep the Kentucky Derby, Preakness and Belmont Stakes. The bay colt, trained by Bob Baffert and ridden by Victor Espinoza, is the 12th horse and first since Affirmed in 1978 to win the Triple Crown.			
2018 — LeBron James passes Michael Jordan’s record of 109 for the most 30-point games in NBA playoff history in a 110-102 loss to the Golden State Warriors.			

PRO BASEBALL

MLB				
American League East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	37	23	.617	—
Tampa Bay	32	29	.525	5½
Toronto	32	29	.525	5½
Boston	30	34	.469	9
Baltimore	24	36	.400	13
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	41	22	.651	—
Minnesota	34	27	.557	6
Cleveland	33	27	.550	6½
Kansas City	32	29	.525	8
Chicago	19	43	.306	21½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	33	28	.541	—
Seattle	32	28	.533	½
Texas	29	33	.468	4½
Los Angeles	28	33	.459	5
Athletics	23	40	.365	11
National League East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	39	23	.629	—
Philadelphia	37	24	.607	1½
Washington	29	32	.475	9½
Atlanta	27	33	.450	11
Miami	23	37	.383	15
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	38	23	.623	—
St. Louis	33	27	.550	4½
Milwaukee	34	29	.540	5
Cincinnati	30	33	.476	9
Pittsburgh	23	39	.371	15½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	37	25	.597	—
San Diego	35	25	.583	1
San Francisco	34	28	.548	3
Arizona	30	31	.492	6½
Colorado	12	50	.194	25
Wednesday's games				
Colorado 3, Miami 2 Milwaukee 9, Cincinnati 1 Boston 11, L.A. Angels 9 Pittsburgh 3, Houston 0 Washington 2, Chicago Cubs 0 Cleveland 4, N.Y. Yankees 0 Toronto 2, Philadelphia 1 Arizona 2, Atlanta 1 Tampa Bay 5, Texas 4 Detroit 5, Chicago White Sox 4 Baltimore 3, Seattle 2 San Francisco 6, San Diego 5 Minnesota 6, Athletics 1 N.Y. Mets 6, L.A. Dodgers 1 Kansas City at St. Louis, ppd.				
Thursday's games				
Arizona at Atlanta Kansas City at St. Louis, 2 Detroit at Chicago White Sox Philadelphia at Toronto Minnesota at Athletics Baltimore at Seattle San Diego at San Francisco N.Y. Mets at L.A. Dodgers Houston at Pittsburgh Chicago Cubs at Washington Cleveland at N.Y. Yankees Texas at Tampa Bay				
Friday's games				
Miami (Cabrera 2-1) at Tampa Bay (Littel 5-5) Philadelphia (TBD) at Pittsburgh (Falter 4-3) Texas (Corbin 3-4) at Washington (Sorka 2-3) Boston (Buehler 4-3) at N.Y. Yankees (Warren 3-3) Arizona (TBD) at Cincinnati (Lodolo 4-4) Chicago Cubs (Brown 3-3) at Detroit (Skubal 5-2) Houston (Gordon 0-1) at Cleveland (Allen 3-3) Kansas City (Lugo 3-5) at Chicago White Sox (Martin 2-6) Toronto (Gausman 5-4) at Minnesota (Ober 4-1) San Diego (Vásquez 3-4) at Milwaukee (Patrick 3-4) L.A. Dodgers (TBD) at St. Louis (Gray 6-1) N.Y. Mets (Senga 6-3) at Colorado (Senzatela 1-10) Seattle (Miller 2-4) at L.A. Angels (Hendricks 2-6) Baltimore (Kremer 5-5) at Athletics (Sears 4-5) Atlanta (Schwellenbach 4-4) at San Francisco (Birdsong 3-1)				
Saturday's games				
Chicago Cubs at Detroit Toronto at Minnesota L.A. Dodgers at St. Louis Philadelphia at Pittsburgh Texas at Washington Atlanta at San Francisco Arizona at Cincinnati Houston at Cleveland Kansas City at Chicago White Sox Miami at Tampa Bay Boston at N.Y. Yankees San Diego at Milwaukee Seattle at L.A. Angels N.Y. Mets at Colorado Baltimore at Athletics				

COLLEGE BASEBALL

After regional upsets, supers look wide open

BY ERIC OLSON
Associated Press

Super regionals are the next stop on the NCAA baseball tournament's Road to Omaha.

Four of the best-of-three series are Friday through Sunday: Miami (34-25) at Louisville (38-21); No. 9 national seed Florida State (41-14) at No. 8 Oregon State (45-13-1); Arizona (42-18) at No. 5 North Carolina (45-13); and No. 13 Coastal Carolina (51-11) at No. 4 Auburn (41-18).

The four series Saturday through Monday: UTSA (47-13) at No. 15 UCLA (45-16); Murray State (42-14) at Duke (40-19); West Virginia (44-14) at No. 6 LSU (46-15); and No. 14 Tennessee (46-17) at No. 3 Arkansas (46-13).

The eight winners advance to the College World Series in Omaha, Nebraska, starting June 13.

SEC flameout

The Southeastern Conference advanced only four of its record 13 tournament teams to super regionals. That ratio doesn't cut it when the metrics say you're the most powerful conference and you've produced the last five national champions, 10 of the last 15 and have had a team in 14 of the last 15 CWS finals.

The top two national seeds, Vanderbilt and Texas, are among the nine eliminated SEC teams. Since 2009, the SEC has failed to get fewer than half its qualifiers through regionals only four times but never fewer than a third until this year.

Van Horn's home stretch?

Arkansas is the highest remaining national seed and its matchup with Tennessee is sure to draw the most eyes. The Razorbacks won two of three at home against Tennessee three weeks ago.

A national title is about all that's missing from the resume of 23rd-year coach Dave Van Horn. The Razorbacks have a nation-leading 379 wins since 2017 and were a dropped foul ball away from the 2018 championship. They'll be playing for an eighth CWS appearance under Van Horn, and this could be his last best chance to win the title if he makes it to Omaha.

While shaking hands with retiring Creighton coach Ed Servais after the regional final, the 64-year-old Van Horn told him, "I'm not too far behind you."

ACC on the rise

The Atlantic Coast Conference tied the record it set last year with five of its tournament teams making it through regionals. Miami-Louisville is the only all-ACC super regional, so the league is in position to send



MICHAEL WOODS/AP

Arkansas' Kuhio Aloy watches the ball in the regional against North Dakota State. The Razorbacks are the highest remaining national seed, and they take on defending national champ and SEC rival Tennessee this weekend.

four teams to the CWS for a second straight year.

North Carolina is 13-3 since April 27 and has one of the best feel-good stories in ACC pitcher of the year Jake Knapp, who missed 2024 recovering from Tommy John surgery. Florida State, in supers for a record 19th time, has one of the top offensive players in .400 hitter Alex Lodise.

Duke has a 40-win season for the second straight year and third time overall, all under Chris Pollard. Miami is in its first super regional since 2016 after winning at Southern Mississippi as the No. 3 regional seed. Louisville lost six of seven games before going 3-0 in the Nashville Regional.

Defending champs alive

Defending national champion Tennessee will be playing in its fifth straight super regional, but this year has not been a smooth ride. The Volunteers are 26-17 since starting 20-0. Despite losing key pieces from the 60-win title team to the MLB draft, they remain one of the nation's most talented teams.

Look at these lefties

The super regionals will feature three left-handers who are projected as the Nos. 2, 3 and 4 picks in the Major League Baseball amateur draft, according to MLB.com's Jim Callis.

Tennessee's Liam Doyle (10-3, 2.84) leads the country with 158 strikeouts and pitched nine innings over two appearances in regionals with 16Ks. LSU's Kade Anderson (9-1, 3.28) has 156 strikeouts and is coming off seven shutout innings with 11 Ks against Dallas Baptist. Florida State's Jamie Arnold (8-2, 3.12) struck out 13 in seven innings against Mississippi State.

Those lovable Racers

With apologies to UTSA, Murray State earned the lovable underdog label by joining 2023 Oral Roberts and 2024 Evansville as No. 4 regional seeds to make supers.



SEAN RAYFORD/AP

West Virginia outfielder Jace Rinehart runs to first against Kentucky during the regionals. The Mountaineers slumped late in the season but went 3-0 in Clemson.

Murray State beat No. 10 national seed Mississippi to become the 10th advancing No. 4 regional seed since 1999. Afterward, the Racers tweaked the SEC about the league's "It Just Means More" slogan, posting on X, "It Just Meant More."

The Missouri Valley Conference's Racers scored 42 runs over four regional games and have won 27 of their last 32.

About the Roadrunners

UTSA, like Murray State, is a team nobody wants to face right now. The Roadrunners earned their first NCAA bid since 2013 and beat the big-brother Longhorns on back-to-back days to make their first super regional. UTSA entered the season 6-26 all-time against the Longhorns but went 3-0 against them this season.

Chants are back

The hottest team in the nation is Coastal Carolina, which is in its first super regional since the 2016 Chanticleers won the championship under Gary Gilmore.

Kevin Schnall, an assistant on the title team, took over for Gilmore this year and has the Chants poised to make another run. They've won 21 straight, have the nation's best winning percentage (.823) and are

built on pitching, defense and a versatile offense.

Auburn will be a major challenge. The Tigers held a 28-11 scoring margin while going 3-0 in their regional and will host a super regional for the first time under 10th-year coach Butch Thompson.

Mountaineers on ascent

West Virginia's only super regional appearances have come in back-to-back years. The Mountaineers were swept at North Carolina in Randy Mazey's final season. Steve Sabins picked up where Mazey left off and led the Mountaineers to their first Big 12 regular-season title and a program-record 44 wins.

They regained their mojo in regionals, going 3-0 in two games against Kentucky and one against host Clemson. They had entered the tournament off losses in nine of their previous 13 games.

Ghosts of the Pac-12

The legacy of the Pac-12 is alive and well with Oregon State, Arizona and UCLA in super regionals.

Oregon State is playing two seasons as a baseball independent while it waits for the Pac-12 to reactivate July 1, 2026. The Beavers notably played only 19 regular-season games at home because of scheduling difficulties. They would end up playing eight postseason games in Corvallis if their series with FSU goes three games.

Arizona, now in the Big 12, is in its first super regional since 2016. UCLA, now in the Big Ten, is in supers for the first time since 2019, when it got knocked out by Michigan as the No. 1 national seed.

Home field advantage

Since the tournament went to its current format in 1999, the team hosting a super regional on its home field has won 69.5% of the time. That's 137 of 197 and does not include three series that were played at neutral sites.



BEN MCKEOWN/AP

North Carolina's Jake Knapp is 13-0 and threw 8⅓ shutout innings in regionals.

FRENCH OPEN

Gauff, Sabalenka set up rare 1 vs. 2 final

By HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

PARIS — Coco Gauff reached her second final at Roland-Garros by beating Lois Boisson 6-1, 6-2 on Thursday to end the surprising, upset-filled run by a French wild-card entry who is ranked No. 361.

The victory by No. 2 Gauff sets up a blockbuster championship match against No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka on Saturday.

Sabalenka is a three-time major champion and earned a shot at a fourth by ending Iga Swiatek's 26-match French Open winning streak. Sabalenka's 7-6 (1), 4-6, 6-0 win in the semifinals prevents Swiatek from becoming the first woman to win four consecutive championships in Paris.

"It feels incredible, but I also understand that the job is not done yet," said Sabalenka, a 27-year-old from Belarus who took the top WTA ranking from Swiatek last October. "She's the toughest opponent, especially on the clay, especially at Roland-Garros. I'm proud that I was able to get this win. It was a tough match. ... but I managed it, somehow."

This will be just the second No. 1 vs. No. 2 women's final at the French Open in the last 30 years.

It's also a rematch of the 2023 U.S. Open final, in which Gauff beat Sabalenka to claim her first major trophy at age 19.

Gauff was the runner-up to Swiatek at Roland-Garros in 2022.

Much to the chagrin of the 15,000 or so locals pulling for their countrywoman under a closed roof at Court Philippe-Chatrier on a drizzly day, Gauff vs. Boisson wasn't much of a contest, as might be expected from their rankings and relative experience.

Then again, that didn't stop Boisson from eliminating both No. 3 Jessica Pegula and No. 6 Mirra Andreeva en route to becoming the first woman since 1989 to get to the semifinals in her Grand Slam debut.

Loud as the crowd was, repeatedly singing Boisson's first name, Gauff's play spoke volumes, too, as she took 20 of the first 30



THIBAUT CAMUS/AP

Aryna Sabalenka reacts during her semifinal match against Iga Swiatek at the French Open. Sabalenka ended defending champ Swiatek's 26-match winning streak.

points for a 4-0 lead. That pattern held, and by the end, Gauff had claimed 34 of the 51 points that lasted at least five strokes.

The most remarkable thing about Sabalenka's win, perhaps, was the way she dominated in crunch time, racing through the last set.

"I mean, 6-love," she said. "What can I say? Couldn't be more perfect than that." Swiatek's explanation?

"I lost my intensity a bit," she said. "Just couldn't push back."

With the Court Philippe-Chatrier roof closed, there was no wind or other elements for the players to confront, and both produced some terrific tennis for stretches. But in the end, the difference was that when Sabalenka decided to swing away, she rushed Swiatek into mistakes.

The third set included 12 unforced errors off Swiatek's racket, and zero off Sabalenka's.

This continues a rough stretch for Swiatek, a 24-year-old from Poland, who has not even reached a final at any tournament since walking away with her third trophy in a row — and fifth Grand Slam title overall — from Paris 12 months ago. She recently slid to No. 5 in the rankings.

Swiatek's rut includes a surprising exit in the semifinals at the 2024 Summer Olympics, which were contested at Roland-Garros; she ended up with the bronze medal. Then, later last season, she was banned for a month after testing positive for a banned substance. Her explanation was accepted that the result was unintentional and caused by a contaminated medicine.



AURELIEN MORISSARD/AP

Coco Gauff of the United States celebrates after winning her semifinal match against France's Lois Boisson on Thursday. Gauff will play for the title Saturday.

Sabalenka is, unquestionably, as good as it gets in women's tennis right now.

Even before getting to this final, Sabalenka's six appearances in title matches this year were the most for a woman entering the French Open since Serena Williams in 2013.

And Sabalenka's first-strike tennis, always such a threat on faster surfaces, is clearly quite useful on the slower clay, too. The thuds generated by her contact with the ball reverberated off the inside of the retractable roof.

"She didn't doubt," Swiatek said. "She just went for it."

No. 1 Sinner, defending champ Alcaraz favored in semis

By HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

PARIS — It is unusual to think of Novak Djokovic as not being the favorite to win a French Open semifinal, given that his greatest clay-court rival Rafael Nadal has retired.

After all, Djokovic has won three titles at Roland-Garros among his men's record 24 Grand Slams. He also owns prestigious winning head-to-head records against 22-time major winner Nadal (31-29) and 20-time major champion Roger Federer (27-23).

Yet when Djokovic faces Jannik Sinner on Friday for a place in Sunday's final, against defending champion Carlos Alcaraz of Spain or No. 8-seeded Lorenzo Musetti, the favorite could be Sinner.

Top-ranked Sinner has beaten Djokovic in their past three meetings and four of the past five, including in the 2024 Australian Open semifinals. The Italian is 4-4 against him and 15 years younger than the 38-year-old Djokovic.

Given this, and Djokovic's early losses in Doha, Indian Wells, Monte Carlo and Madrid, his title chances were subdued before

the French Open.

"He's a bit underrated," 2024 French Open runner-up Alexander Zverev said after losing to Djokovic in the quarterfinals on Wednesday. "A lot of people count him out already. But this year he's had wins over Carlos (Alcaraz) at the Australian Open, he has had a win over me at the French Open. Forget the age."

Losing the match, including a 41-stroke exchange, convinced Zverev that Djokovic was far from a spent force.

Just before the French Open, Djokovic won his 100th career title.

"The way I won the tournament definitely helped me mentally approach Roland-Garros in a better way," Djokovic said. "I think the win against Alcaraz in quarters of Australian Open, to win quarters against Zverev (on Wednesday) proves to myself and others that I can still play on the highest level, and I just thrive on these occasions."

So does Sinner, the Australian Open champion, who is 3-0 in major finals.

"Jannik is in tremendous form, and he has been the best player for the last couple of years," Djokovic said. "But these kind of

matchups and challenges extract the best out of me. Playing best of five, late stages of a Grand Slam against No. 1 in the world, you can't get more motivated than that for me at this age."

Sinner thinks Djokovic presents the same threat as always.

"He has shown in the last period that he is back to the level," Sinner said. "He's such an experienced player, 24 Grand Slams. I think that says everything."

Musetti's record against Alcaraz

This will be their seventh meeting in what could blossom into a big rivalry. The 23-year-old Musetti beat Alcaraz on clay in the 2022 Hamburg final, but has lost five straight matches to him since then, including three on clay.

The 22-year-old Alcaraz is chasing a second French Open title and fifth major overall. Alcaraz beat Musetti twice on clay this season — in the Italian Open semifinals and the Monte Carlo Masters final.

"He just joined a really short (list) that made at the least the semifinals of the big events in the clay season," Alcaraz said.

"It's going to be great for the people to watch."

Djokovic needed four sets in the quarterfinals to reach the semifinals, as did Musetti against Frances Tiafoe. But Alcaraz, the No. 2 seed, and Sinner saved valuable energy with straight-sets wins.

"We've seen Sinner really destroy people lately. And I guess today was Carlos' turn," No. 12 Tommy Paul said after his quarterfinal defeat to Alcaraz. "Both of them are playing at an extremely high level right now."

Seven-time major winner John McEnroe said Djokovic looked "unbelievable" at 38, that his serve, his volleying were "better than ever" and his hunger was undiminished.

Still, he thought he and Musetti faced a tall order.

"If Sinner or Alcaraz bring their A game, I think it's going to be really difficult to win," said McEnroe, who is working on French Open telecasts for TNT Sports. "(Musetti's) done everything he can do, he's got fitter ... He's clearly better than he's ever been, but the problem is so is Alcaraz."

AUTO RACING/NFL

In-season Challenge ups the ante for all NASCAR

BY TERESA M. WALKER
Associated Press

LEBANON, Tenn. — Bubba Wallace sees NASCAR having all the momentum possible right now with different media partners.

Perfect timing then for NASCAR's "In-season Challenge" to debut, right?

Well, Wallace forgot that was about to debut.

"For me to forget about it and remember how exciting it was when they announced, I think it's going to be big for the fans to tune in and and give them a little bit more ... you're just invested more," Wallace said.

Kyle Larson just tried his latest attempt at "the Double" of the Indianapolis 500 and the Coca-Cola 600. Count him among those who didn't realize NASCAR's new in-season competition had its field of 32 set after Sunday night's Cup Series race at the Nashville Superspeedway.

"I just really haven't seen anything promoted about it, so I think it's easy to forget about it," Larson said.

NASCAR announced this new in-season competition in May 2024, so drivers can be forgiven for being focused on the second half of the season.

The format is simple: 32 drivers race for seeding over the next three races starting at Michigan on Sunday and concluding at Pocono on June 22. Drivers are seeded by their best finish for the five-race competition starting at Atlanta.

Then it goes to single elimination with the field cut to 16 at Chicago, eight at Sonoma, four at Dover and the final two at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

The winner gets \$1 million, and that does get drivers' attention as part of the new media rights deal that includes TNT.

"It's going to be something fun that you pay attention to, and there's good money on the line," said Larson, the 2021 Cup Series champ. "So, you've just got to be really consistent throughout."

Chris Buescher of RFK Racing is among those who didn't realize this challenge is starting. He needs race victories after losing points for a penalty at Kansas in May. The prize is nice.

"That's real money," Buescher said. "But I don't want that to change how we go to the race track. We need to figure out how to win races. There's a lot more than that on the line at the end of the year."

Three-time Cup Series champ Joey Logano compared this



GEORGE WALKER IV/AP

Bubba Wallace puts on his helmet before a NASCAR Cup Series race last Sunday. Wallace is looking forward to the new Challenge ahead.

event's prize to the money up for grabs in the All-Star Race and this new competition like a stage win.

"This is a little longer thing, but it's a race within the race," Logano said. "So you're not willing to give up a lot to do that, right?"

Denny Hamlin was excited when the In-season Challenge was first announced.

Then he saw the courses for this competition, and his enthusiasm dimmed with the number of road courses included.

"Truthfully, we're going to get pretty lucky or have such a good draw that just things kind of work out," Hamlin said. "I wish it was more conventional ovals, but I think that's just the way the schedule works out. And it's unfortunately not probably my prime part of the season."

Brad Keselowski and his No. 6 Ford for RFK Racing went into Nashville at 32 — right on the line to be included in that chase for seeding. He hadn't given the competition much thought focused on this season. But he thinks it will be fun once it starts.

"It's good for the sport, good for our fans and it's a competition," Keselowski said. "If there's competition, we want to win it. But that said, I think our heads down on

one week at a time, in some ways one day at a time. ... And it's hard to look further ahead than that."

Team Penske already set for the playoffs

With Ryan Blaney's first victory of the season at Nashville Superspeedway, Team Penske now has its three drivers qualified for the NASCAR Cup playoffs even with Nashville the first race of the second half of this year.

Blaney, who hadn't won since November, joined Austin Cindric, who won at Talladega, and three-time Cup Series champ Joey Logano, a winner at Texas.

Josh Berry, whose Wood Brothers Racing team has a relationship with Team Penske, also won at Las Vegas.

Michael Nelson, president of Team Penske's NASCAR operations, said it was nice to have that pressure off all the teams.

"It's obviously pretty awesome to have a little bit of that pressure off for the guys," Nelson said. "And again ... it gives you a chance to go out and take some chances here and there and try to rack up a bunch of wins. So now we're grateful to be at this point with our cars this time of year."



ABBIE PARR/AP

Wide receiver Justin Jefferson runs drills during voluntary camp. Jefferson is attending because this offseason is key for the Vikings.

Vikings' Jefferson steps up for offseason training

BY DAVE CAMPBELL
Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. — The Minnesota Vikings urged Justin Jefferson to fully participate in their off-season program, a commitment some established NFL stars aren't willing to make each spring.

The sixth-year wide receiver was already a step ahead of the coaching staff. This is a critical offseason for Jefferson and the Vikings, breaking in a new quarterback in J.J. McCarthy, so he was planning to make his attendance a priority.

"It's definitely important to gain a little bit of a sight of what the new year is coming to look like, to build that connection with my teammates and especially with my quarterback," Jefferson said after practice on Monday. "It's definitely great to be out here early to kind of get into the feel."

These late spring practices, known in league parlance as organized team activities, are when the basic installation of the playbook begins, even though only the three-day minicamp next week is contractually mandated. It's also a prime opportunity to build that rhythm and trust between the quarterback and his receivers.

"He's a tremendous talent, tremendous leader, but his leadership really shows up when he's here," said McCarthy, who accompanied Jefferson to a Timberwolves playoff game last month when they sat together in court-side seats. "Just being able to get that chemistry building on and off the field has been invaluable."

Jefferson, whose 7,432 receiving yards are the most in league history through a player's first five seasons, said he doesn't concern

himself with the style or tendencies of who's throwing.

"As long as the ball gets close to my face, I'm going to try to catch it," he said. "It doesn't matter how fast the ball is going, the spin of it or if it's coming from a lefty or a righty. My job is to catch the ball."

What's most important to Jefferson is the quarterback learning to adjust to his route-running preferences, with an exceptional stride length and side-to-side agility that helps set him apart.

"It's that timing, those reps," McCarthy said. "All of that has to be built up over time."

"He's an energy igniter of the whole building, and I think he's come back with a purpose and a mindset," coach Kevin O'Connell said. "You hear his voice, you hear his interaction with teammates, and they just carry such a long way."

McCarthy, whose rookie season was spent entirely in the training room recovering from knee surgery, at least had some meaningful time in strategy meetings that helped him start to build the knowledge base in the offense even if he wasn't taking snaps on the field.

"I've been really surprised by some of the things that he does know. You're like, 'Man, we covered that in a 10-minute burst in Week 11 last year. How do you remember that?'" O'Connell said. "And then there's some other things where you're like, 'Oh, I assumed he knew that.' So it's our job — baseline teaching and stacking days and layered learning so that we're constantly making him feel like he's growing but never comfortable."

Jefferson can see that too.

NBA

Thunder-Pacers ratings could bring in all fans

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — It's No. 25 Indiana vs. No. 47 Oklahoma City in the NBA Finals.

That's not their seeding. That's their media market ranking. To some, that might matter. To others, it probably won't — and probably shouldn't — matter whatsoever.

A title matchup that started Thursday night between the Pacers and Thunder — two young, fun teams that score a ton and are led by marketable stars in MVP Shai Gilgeous-Alexander for Oklahoma City and Olympic gold medalist Tyrese Haliburton for Indiana — is the type of series that real basketball fans clamor for. It has everything: star power, good coaching, All-Stars on both sides. And it adds to the NBA's recent run of parity.

That's the good news. Here's the inevitable: The ratings, especially at the start of the series, probably aren't going to be good because the home markets are so small. Those who like the NBA won't be dissuaded by that. Those who don't like the NBA will tout it as great failure.

"I think this finals is a great representation with the two teams that are in it," Thunder coach Mark Daigneault said. "You know, they're teams that play good, exciting styles of basketball. Players that have great individual stories, teams that have a great story collectively. And we're proud to be a part of that."

People are watching; they just



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

Tyrese Haliburton is a marketable All-Star in a Finals series featuring a lot for dedicated fans to like. What it lacks is a big media market.

may not be watching on television. The social media tracking site Videocites says NBA content is getting consumed at a 64% higher clip than last season — 32 billion views and counting so far in these playoffs. Gilgeous-Alexander is the most viewed player, Haliburton is No. 3 and playoff clips of those two have about 1.5 billion views between them to this point.

There are 76 billion reasons the NBA won't be bothered by whatever the ratings are over the next couple of weeks. The new media rights deals — an 11-year, \$76 billion pact between the NBA and broadcast partners Disney (ABC/ESPN), Peacock (NBC) and Ama-

zon (Prime Video) that kicks in at the start of next season — show that clearly somebody is watching NBA games or consuming NBA content. The days of straight relying on Nielsen ratings seem to be long gone, with more and more people ditching cable for streaming and more and more young fans just watching everything on their phones and often in condensed versions. If the ratings tank for Pacers-Thunder, those deals are still worth \$76 billion. The ad buys for these playoffs have long been paid for. So, the numbers for this series are largely irrelevant to the NBA's bottom line. Haliburton was asked Tuesday what fans who

Scoreboard

Finals
Indiana vs. Oklahoma City
Best-of-seven; x-if necessary
Thursday: at Oklahoma City
Sunday: at Oklahoma City, **AFN-Sports, 2 a.m. Monday CET, 10 a.m. Monday JKT**
Wednesday, June 11: at Indiana, **AFN-Sports, 2:30 a.m. Thursday CET, 10:30 a.m. Thursday JKT**
Friday, June 13: at Indiana, **AFN-Sports, 2:30 a.m. Saturday CET, 10:30 a.m. Saturday JKT**
x-Monday, June 16: at Oklahoma City
x-Thursday, June 19: at Indiana
x-Sunday, June 22: at Oklahoma City

watch will see if they tune in to these finals.

"I think (they'll see) two high-level teams that play an elite style of basketball, who share the ball really well, a lot of different people that can chip in," Haliburton said. "I think that's the exciting part about this. I don't want to say it's like a passing of the torch because the old heads are still here. They're still playing very, very well. But definitely to see two young teams, two young organizations, fighting to win a championship, I think is a very big deal."

Late in the regular season, as numbers were bouncing back from a slow start to the season, NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said the league's ratings were down about 2% from a year ago.

"But in this environment, where particularly when you're largely featured in legacy media and particularly cable, and no question cable subscriptions are going down, that seems like a victory," Silver said.

In short, nobody at the league

office is panicking about ratings, especially right now. Whichever team wins will be the seventh different champion in the last seven seasons, and without question the Thunder and Pacers will be featured in more national broadcasts next season than they were this season and their ratings will be higher Go ahead and expect Indy and OKC in the Christmas Day package next season as well; neither team was among the 10 picked for that this season, which was probably a mild disappointment for the Pacers and was a huge disappointment for the Thunder.

"I'd love to play on Christmas Day," Gilgeous-Alexander said earlier this season. "And I think we're that caliber of team. The NBA makes their decisions. Can't slight them for it. Ball's in our court to prove to them why we deserve to be in that game."

It can easily be argued that both teams did it right: didn't overspend, didn't go into the luxury tax and tried to build around young stars. And the Thunder and Pacers were teams that combined to win 49 games just three seasons ago; their success now has to be a reason for hope for teams like Utah, Washington, Portland, Charlotte and others that have been sputtering. Turnarounds can happen, and they can be rewarded. Some people will watch, some won't, but true fans probably are expecting a pretty good series.

"I think that's exciting," Haliburton said, "for any basketball fan."

Cavs assistant Ott to coach Suns

By DAVID BRANDT
Associated Press

PHOENIX — The Phoenix Suns hired Cleveland Cavaliers assistant Jordan Ott as their head coach, opting for a young, emerging leader to rebuild a franchise that has regressed over the past few seasons, a person familiar with the search told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the hire hasn't officially been announced.

Ott will be the team's fourth head coach in four seasons and replaces Mike Budenholzer, who was fired following a miserable 36-46 season that ended without a trip to the playoffs despite the high-priced trio of Devin Booker, Kevin Durant and Bradley Beal.

The 40-year-old Ott has worked for the Atlanta Hawks, Brooklyn Nets, Los Angeles Lakers and the Cavaliers. He also worked as a video coordinator under Tom Izzo at Michigan State, which is where Suns owner Mat Ishbia played as a

walk-on from 1999 to 2003.

It remains to be seen if Durant or Beal will be on next season's roster — both could be moved in trades. Booker seems like the only player on the roster who is truly untouchable after 10 seasons in the desert, including four All-Star appearances.

Ott and fellow Cavs assistant Johnnie Bryant were the two finalists for the job. Both worked under Kenny Atkinson, helping lead Cleveland to a 64-18 record this season, which was the best record in the NBA's Eastern Conference.

Ishbia and general manager Brian Gregory led a lengthy, deliberate search that lasted 1½ months and included more than a dozen candidates. Gregory also has Michigan State ties as a former assistant coach.

Ott takes over a franchise that's had a quick rise and fall over the past five years. The Suns made the NBA Finals in 2021 with a core that included Booker, Deandre Ayton, Mikal Bridges, Chris Paul,

Cameron Johnson and coach Monty Williams, but lost to the Milwaukee Bucks in six games. Phoenix had the best record in the NBA the next season before losing to the Dallas Mavericks in the second round.

Ishbia blew up that nucleus shortly after purchasing the team in 2023, trading for superstar Kevin Durant, but the Suns lost again in the postseason's second round, this time to the eventual champion Denver Nuggets. Williams was fired following the season, which started the franchise's sideline shuffle.

The Suns traded for three-time All-Star Bradley Beal and hired coach Frank Vogel during the ensuing offseason, but the group never seemed to gel. Phoenix was swept by the Minnesota Timberwolves in the opening round of the playoffs in 2024, leading to Vogel's firing.

Budenholzer replaced Vogel before last season, but the Suns didn't even make it to the play-in tournament in 2025.

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WOMEN'S COLLEGE WORLD SERIES/NHL

Atwood's hit on walk attempt lifts Texas in finals opener

By TIM WILLERT
Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Reese Atwood hit a go-ahead, two-run single for Texas when Texas Tech ace NiJaree Canady was trying to walk her intentionally in the sixth inning, and the Longhorns beat the Red Raiders 2-1 in Game 1 of the Women's College World Series finals Wednesday night.

Teagan Kavan pitched a three-hitter for Texas (54-11), which can secure its first national title with a victory in Game 2 on Thursday night. Texas Tech (53-12) would have to win two straight to claim its first championship in its first WCWS appearance.

Canady allowed four hits and struck out seven, but she has lost four of five career starts against the Longhorns, with two of those defeats for the Red Raiders this season and two for her previous school, Stanford.

This one came down to a pitch that Canady tried but failed to throw well out of the strike zone.

"I made that mistake," she said. "I think that loss is on me, and I apologize to my team."

Canady struck out the first two batters in the sixth but ran into trouble when Kayden Henry singled to left and stole second. Mia Scott reached on an infield single, moving Henry to third, and Scott took second without a throw.



STEPHEN SPILLMAN/AP
Texas catcher Reese Atwood drove in both the Longhorns' runs on a single despite Texas Tech attempting to walk her.

With first base open and a 3-0 count on Atwood, Texas Tech catcher Victoria Valdez stood up to set a target well out of the zone for Canady, but the pitch came in letter-high and Atwood hit a hard grounder through the left side.

"You've got to give credit to Atwood there," Red Raiders coach Gerry Glasco said. "She wanted to play ball. She wanted to make a play. She made a difference in the game at a time we were trying to take her out of the game."

Texas Tech scored in the fifth inning with the help of an obstruction call. Pinch-hitter Logan Hallemann reached on a fielding error and Atwood threw her out trying to steal second. The Red Raiders challenged the call, and umpires ruled that shortstop Leighanne Goode had obstructed Hallemann's path to the bag.

Mihya Davis singled to right-center to drive in Hallemann.

Kavan has not allowed an earned run in four WCWS appearances. Over 24 innings, she has allowed 12 hits and struck out 15. She got 10 groundouts Wednesday night.

Texas Tech threatened in the first, loading the bases with no outs. Canady, who leads the Red Raiders with 11 homers, hit a grounder to third to start a 5-2-3 double play, and Alexa Langeliers grounded out to the pitcher to end the inning.

"Obviously it was a hard-fought game," Texas coach Mike White said. "It could have gone either way, a game of inches. A lot of things happening for a 2-1 ballgame for sure. Fortunately we were able to come out on top of it. NiJaree Canady is just an extremely good pitcher. We have one on our side too with Teagan Kavan. They kind of matched toe-to-toe for quite a while, and it was good."



KYLE PHILLIPS/AP
Texas players celebrate during the first game of the Women's College World Series finals, a best-of-three series, which they won 2-1 over Texas Tech in Oklahoma City on Wednesday.



KARL B. DEBLAKER/AP
Former New York Rangers assistant coach Dan Muse, right, is set to take over as head coach of the Penguins from Mike Sullivan, the winningest coach in Pittsburgh franchise history with 409.

Pens hire Rangers' Muse as new coach

By WILL GRAVES
Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The Pittsburgh Penguins are trying to navigate their way through the twilight of the Sidney Crosby era to the dawn of whatever comes next.

It's a transition general manager Kyle Dubas has repeatedly said will not be easy, or particularly quick, and would require a coach who can connect with veterans while simultaneously developing young talent.

Enter Dan Muse, who has spent the last two decades dabbling in the former and excelling in the latter.

Dubas hired the 42-year-old Muse as Penguins coach Wednesday, tasking the former New York Rangers assistant with helping Pittsburgh find its way back to relevance after three straight springs spent with their noses pressed to the glass while the Stanley Cup playoffs went on without them.

Muse replaces Mike Sullivan, who split with the Penguins in April after a nearly decade-long tenure that included back-to-back Stanley Cups in 2016 and 2017. The Rangers scooped up Sullivan in early May.

Sullivan's departure was amicable. He even took out a billboard in Pittsburgh last week thanking the city. In New York, Sullivan will find a more experienced roster ready to win now.

That won't be the case for Muse with the Penguins, as he walks into a job that will require patience, prodding and maybe a bit of politicking to thrive.

Dubas said the team met with "many candidates" before deciding on Muse, who has spent the last half-decade as an assistant at the NHL level. He also has a track record as a cultivator of talent and served as the head coach of USA Hockey's National Team Development Program from 2020-23.

"What separated Dan was his ability to develop players, win at all levels where he has been a head coach and his consistent success

coaching special teams in the NHL," Dubas said. "From his success in developing college and junior players, to his impactful work with veteran players during his time in the NHL, Dan has shown a proven ability to connect with players at all stages of their careers and help them to reach their potential."

Muse has been part of coaching staffs that have won titles at multiple levels. He was an assistant at Yale when the Bulldogs claimed the NCAA championship in 2013. He served as the head coach for the Chicago Steel of the United States Hockey League — the top junior league in the United States — when the Steel captured the Clark Cup in 2017 and helped the U.S. under-18 and under-20 teams win world titles.

When Muse reached the NHL in 2017 with Nashville, he oversaw a penalty-kill unit that was among the league's best. He produced similar results when he took over a similar role with the Rangers in 2023.

"His overall body of work, attention to detail and vision for our group showed us that he is the best coach to take our team forward," Dubas said.

The list of players Muse has worked with during his time at USA Hockey includes forward Rutger McGroarty, a 21-year-old now considered the top prospect in the Penguins' system.

Muse's job will be to find a way to mesh McGroarty and the rest of what likely will be a substantial youth movement with a team that for now remains defined by franchise icons Crosby, Evgeni Malkin and Kris Letang.

Crosby signed an extension last fall that could keep him in Pittsburgh for two more seasons. Letang is signed through 2028. Malkin, who turns 39 in August, is about to enter the final season of his contract, with retirement perhaps not far behind.

STANLEY CUP FINAL

Draisaitl's OT goal sends Oilers past Panthers in opener

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — When the Stanley Cup was brought out onto the ice prior to Game 1 of the final, just as it was last year, everything the Edmonton Oilers expressed about this time being different came into focus.

“Last year, I was kind of looking at it with googly eyes,” goaltender Stuart Skinner said. “This year seeing it, it’s: ‘I was here last year, I saw it. It’s time to get back to work and do my thing.’ It definitely felt completely different.”

Edmonton made the start of the series completely different, erasing a multigoal deficit to beat the defending Florida Panthers 4-3 on Wednesday night on Leon Draisaitl’s power play goal in overtime. A year since falling behind three games to none, the Oilers have a lead in the rematch and are one step closer to flipping the script.

“It’s huge,” said Skinner, who made some big stops among his 29 saves. “The way that we showed up right from the get go and the way that we continued to keep on going, even though we were down by two, that shows a lot of character by us.”

Draisaitl provided the heroics, scoring on the power play with 31 seconds left in the OT period after Tomas Nosek’s penalty for putting the puck over the glass. The goal

was his third in overtime this year in the playoffs, tying the record for a single postseason, after Draisaitl had six during the regular season.

“He’s invaluable,” said Edmonton captain Connor McDavid, who set up the tying and winning goals. “He does so many good things: clutch, faceoffs. You name it, he does it.”

For a while, it appeared the Oilers would lose Game 1 this year as well. Draisaitl’s goal 1:06 in was followed later in the first period by Sam Bennett deflecting a shot past Skinner after falling into him.

Edmonton coach Kris Knoblauch unsuccessfully challenged for goaltender interference, with the NHL’s situation room ruling that the Oilers’ Jake Walman tripped Bennett into Skinner. The resulting penalty paved the way for Florida’s Brad Marchand to score the go-ahead goal on a power play.

Bennett scored his second of the night early in the second period to put the Panthers up 3-1. They entered 31-0 over the past three playoffs since coach Paul Maurice took over when leading at the first or second intermission.

“I mean, they pushed,” Marchand said. “They obviously are a very good team, and doesn’t take much for them to score. So not surprising, the push they did. They’re a great team. We’ve just



DARRYL DYCK, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

From left to right, the Oilers’ Leon Draisaitl, Evan Bouchard and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins celebrate Draisaitl’s winning goal in Game 1 of the Stanley Cup Final against the Florida Panthers in Edmonton on Wednesday.

got to keep going.”

Fourth-liner Viktor Arvidsson brought the crowd back to life early in the second, and fellow Swede Mattias Ekholm — playing in just his second game back from an extended injury absence — tied it with 13:27 remaining in regulation off a perfect pass from McDavid.

Florida counterpart Sergei Bobrovsky’s made some incredible saves, including one to rob Trent Frederic earlier in overtime. In between, he was greeted with derisive chants of “Ser-gei! Ser-gei!” that followed goals he allowed.

At the other end, Skinner made a handful of saves that were vital to keeping the Panthers from ex-

tending their lead or going back ahead late in the third, getting friendlier chants of “Stuuuu! Stuuuu!” every time he turned aside a difficult shot.

“He was great again,” McDavid said. “He gave us a chance.”

Game 2 is Friday night in Edmonton before the series shifts to Florida for Games 3 and 4.

Potential: Florida could appreciate thrilling game despite loss

FROM PAGE 48

play goal less than two minutes later.

Edmonton rallied from a two-goal deficit to tie it. And Sergei Bobrovsky and Stuart Skinner each made some stops on high-danger scoring chances along the way.

“It’s my job to give us a chance to win,” Skinner said. “I think you’ve got to give a lot of props to Bob over there, too. He made some fantastic saves, especially in overtime.”

There were times the play bogged down, particularly late in regulation and in sudden death OT when two powerhouse teams minimized the risks they were taking. Even for long stretches when the Panthers had the lead, there was not much ice for the Oilers to get through — and they expect more of that moving forward.

“Tight checking,” said Mattias Ekholm, who scored Edmonton’s



DARRYL DYCK, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Florida Panthers goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky had another strong outing in Game 1 of the Stanley Cup Final, but it wasn’t enough to prevent the Edmonton Oilers from winning 4-3 in overtime.

tying goal in the third period. “I think that there’s two very experienced lineups with a lot of playoff

experience and have been in these situations. Everybody’s pretty confident and comfortable in

Scoreboard

Finals	
Best-of-seven; x-if necessary	
Edmonton 1, Florida 0	
Wednesday:	Edmonton 4, Florida 3, OT
Friday:	at Edmonton, AFN-Sports, 2 a.m.
Saturday:	CET, 10 a.m. Saturday JKT
Monday, June 9:	at Florida, AFN-Sports, 2 a.m.
Tuesday:	CET, 10 a.m. Tuesday JKT
Thursday, June 12:	at Florida, AFN-Sports, 2 a.m.
Friday:	CET, 10 a.m. Friday JKT
x-Saturday, June 14:	at Edmonton
x-Tuesday, June 17:	at Florida
x-Friday, June 20:	at Edmonton

these. I think it’s going to be a lot of the same.”

Part of what made it masterpiece hockey was how good both teams are when the pressure is on. Sure, mistakes were made that led to goals, including the puck over the glass penalty in OT, but much of the game was textbook fundamentals.

“The pucks go deep that are supposed to go deep,” Maurice

said. “I think we had one all night we didn’t like, maybe two all night that we didn’t like our decision of the line. They didn’t fool around with it, either.”

A year after Florida went up 3-0 in the series only to lose three in a row and then defeat the Oilers in a tight Game 7, it’s clear these opponents are again evenly matched. That is a recipe for some fun times ahead, with Game 2 Friday night in Edmonton the next chapter of a growing rivalry.

“It’s two great teams,” Ekholm said. “The thing now, too, is we know exactly how they play, they know exactly how we play. It’s those little, little details that are going to matter so much in the end. It’s one lost coverage for a second here or there, or a penalty like you saw tonight, or whatever it is. It’s teams that are also very comfortable in these moments and in these high stake games.”

SPORTS



Stepping up
Jefferson increases training with Vikings ahead of McCarthy's debut » **NFL, Page 44**



STANLEY CUP FINAL
The Oilers' Leon Draisaitl celebrates his game-winning goal against the Florida Panthers during overtime in Game 1 of the Stanley Cup Final in Edmonton, Alberta, on Wednesday. JASON FRANSON, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Spectacular potential

Game 1 shows Oilers-Panthers rematch could be classic series

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — If the series opener of the Stanley Cup Final is a hint of things to come, the Edmonton Oilers and Florida Panthers are about to give everyone a memorable show.

The two best teams in the NHL over the past couple of years traded hits, goals and saves through an instant-classic Game 1 that ended with Leon Draisaitl scoring 19-plus minutes into overtime.

It was at the same time tight-checking and also wildly entertaining. Even Panthers coach Paul Maurice on the losing end could appreciate the value of must-see hockey.

“Its potential (is) just a spectacular seven-gamer,” Maurice said “Up and down the ice, it’s still fast. There isn’t any casualness. ... It was honest, it was hard, it was fast and it was tight. It was an overtime game.”

It had a little bit of everything, from Draisaitl scoring 66 seconds in to Oilers coach Kris Knoblauch unsuccessfully challenging Florida’s tying goal by Sam Bennett only to watch Brad Marchand get a power-

SEE POTENTIAL ON PAGE 47

Sabalenka, Gauff set to face off for title » French Open, Page 43

