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Longhorns' speedy receivers could pose problem for Michigan **Page 48**



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Time to tighten the belt

K. KASSENS/U.S. Army

Competitors in the 2024 U.S. Army Special Operations Command Best Combat Diver Competition participate in a two-mile run as part of a physical fitness test at Naval Air Station, Key West, Fla., on June 11. A recent study found that obesity among troops is costing the Pentagon more than \$1 billion of taxpayer funding each year.

Study: Obesity among troops costs Pentagon more than \$1B a year

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

American troops are too fat, and it is costing the Pentagon more than \$1 billion of taxpayer funding each year, a study of obesity among active-duty service members published Wednesday found.

Obesity was the leading cause for disqualification among hopeful military recruit applicants, and the top driver of separations among active-duty troops in 2023, according to the new American Security Project study. The Washington-based think tank that studies modern national security issues found the Pen-

tagon spent some \$1.25 billion last year treating military patients for dozens of diseases related to obesity, and another \$99 million in lost productivity among hospitalized overweight troops.

"America can no longer afford to ignore this [obesity] crisis," American Security Project researchers wrote. "The United States armed forces face an unprecedented challenge as obesity prevalence among service members continues to rise. As combat and incidental injuries become less prevalent year-over-year, rates of obesity-related conditions, including diabetes, osteoarthritis, hypertension and

steatotic liver disease increasingly meet or exceed civilian trends."

Researchers suggested the Pentagon take a more proactive approach to preventing obesity, focusing on providing young, enlisted troops with health and nutrition education and access to quality foods. They also suggested the military replace long-held, appearance-based body composition standards with health-based standards driven by medical professionals and classify obesity as a disease in the military health system so troops can be treated medi-

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Army builds Ukraine war response into latest exercise

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

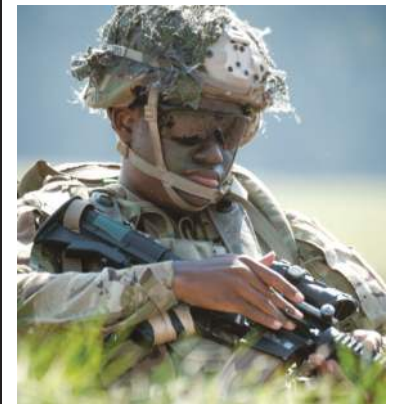
HOHENFELS, Germany — Farms in Bavaria served as the drop zone this week for a practice run showing what allied forces might experience if ever faced with a Russian incursion.

On Wednesday, scores of paratroopers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade jumped from Air Force C-130s and C-17s into the tiny hamlet of Eglsee as part of exercise Saber Junction.

After landing in freshly fertilized fields, the Vicenza, Italy-based "Sky Soldiers" marched about 2 miles to the 7th Army Training Command's Joint Multinational Readiness Center, where the realities of the Russia-Ukraine war had been readied: dragon's teeth, trenches, drones, electronic jamming devices and a seasoned opposition.

"What's awaiting them is probably the hardest fight they've ever been in," training unit command-

SEE UKRAINE ON PAGE 4



LYDIA GORDON/Stars and Stripes

A soldier inspects his weapon outside of the Joint Multinational Readiness Center Hohenfels Training Area, Germany, for an exercise on Wednesday.

MILITARY

Marine suspected of sexual assault on Okinawa

June case is third reported on island this year; man held on military installation in Japan

By BRIAN McELHINEY
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A U.S. Marine is suspected of sexually assaulting and injuring a woman in Okinawa in June, according to Okinawa Prefectural Police, the third case of its type to surface on the island this year.

Police forwarded a case on Thursday against a 20-year-old man to the Naha District Public Prosecutors Office, a spokesman for the prosecutor's office said by phone that day.

The Marine is suspected of non-consensual sexual intercourse resulting in injury, a spokesman for the police investigative team said by phone Thursday. He declined to identify the Marine, saying doing so may affect the investigation.

He said the incident occurred on Okinawa, and that medical personnel who treated the woman re-

ported it to police.

He said the Marine and the woman were acquaintances but declined to say how they knew each other.

Some government officials in Japan are required to speak to the media only on condition of anonymity. In Japan, police forward cases of alleged criminal conduct to area prosecutors for a charging decision.

The Marine is not in Japanese custody, but is confined to military installations in Japan, according to a spokesman for the III Marine Expeditionary Force.

"The Marine Corps is aware of an allegation of criminal misconduct by an Okinawa-based Marine, and we are fully cooperating with all appropriate authorities during the ongoing investigation," said 1st Lt. Owen Hitchcock, spokesman for III Marine Expeditionary Force, in an email Thurs-

day to Stars and Stripes.

Hitchcock declined to identify the Marine, his unit or duty station.

"The alleged behavior does not reflect the core values of the U.S. Marine Corps, nor does it represent the conduct of the overwhelming majority of Okinawa-based Marines. The Marine Corps goes to great lengths to instill these values in every Marine through regular education and training throughout their service and we take these allegations seriously," his email states.

This case follows indictments of two U.S. service members on separate charges of sexual assault and attempted sexual assault that came to light over the summer and roiled Okinawa.

Senior Airman Brennon R.E. Washington pleaded not guilty July 12 in Naha District Court to charges of kidnapping and sexual-

ly assaulting a minor in December. Marine Lance Cpl. Jamel Clayton was charged in May with attempting to sexually assault a woman in Yomitan.

Those cases led to formal complaints from the prefecture to the U.S. Embassy, U.S. military and the Japanese government and calls for changes to the status of forces agreement governing the U.S. military population in Japan.

The prefectural government, led by Gov. Denny Tamaki, also complained that it was kept in the dark about the two indictments and other reports against service members who were not charged.

Japan's investigative authorities announced in July that they would begin sharing more information about criminal cases involving U.S. service members with local governments as much as possible.

This case is the first under that

agreement.

"We believe that the notification was made in accordance (with the agreement)," the Military Affairs Division spokeswoman said.

U.S. Forces Japan commander Lt. Gen. Ricky Rupp announced in July a "new forum of cooperation" with the Japanese and Okinawan governments and community members.

The Marine Corps has increased courtesy patrols in Okinawa's popular nightlife spots and instituted near-100% outbound sobriety checks at all its Japan installations on weekends in response to the incidents.

Rupp, U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel and III MEF commander Lt. Gen. Roger Turner have called for consistent liberty policies for all U.S. troops in Japan.

But so far, no changes have been announced.

Senators push \$15M bill to study birth defects in vets' children

By LINDA F. HERSEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The generational effects of chemical warfare agents and other hazardous materials on the descendants of service members would be evaluated under a bill to fund \$15 million in research on birth defects identified in the children and grandchildren of toxic-exposed veterans.

The Molly R. Loomis Research for Descendants of Toxic Exposed Veterans Act would commission multiple studies that look at the connections between toxic exposures of service members in combat zones and severe disabilities that were later diagnosed in their descendants.

The bill is included in two separate appropriations bills for the Defense Department and the Interior Department that have advanced in the Senate. House lawmakers have not offered a companion bill.

Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee's subpanel on defense, and Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., co-sponsored the research legislation, which would fund multiple studies by federal agencies and nonprofit organizations.

"While there has been some research on the link between birth defects and generational exposure to toxins and chemicals, there has yet to be comprehensive, government-led studies into the effects of toxic exposure on descendants of toxic-exposed veterans," according to a statement from Tester's office.

The funds would support the



Molly Loomis

Molly Loomis, whose father was exposed to Agent Orange during military service in Vietnam, was born with spina bifida, a condition where the spine does not develop properly during fetal development. The birth defect has been identified in descendants of Vietnam War veterans exposed to the herbicide.

Toxic Exposures Research Program and build knowledge on the generational impact of chemical exposures on military members and their descendants, according to Tester, who also is chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

"This bill aims to empower the toxic exposures research group to conduct more vital research related to toxic exposure," Rubio said.

The legislation is named after the daughter of a Vietnam-era Navy veteran exposed to Agent Orange during military service

aboard the USS Ogden, an amphibious transport dock ship.

Molly Loomis of Bozeman, Mont., was born with spina bifida, a presumptive disability that has been diagnosed in the biological children of Vietnam War veterans. Spina bifida is a condition where the spine and spinal cord do not grow properly during pregnancy.

Her father, Richard Loomis, died in 2013 from bladder cancer, which was presumed to be connected to his exposure to Agent Orange, according to the family.

"I try putting myself in my dad's shoes and how it might feel to face toxic exposure health issues. But then to learn your exposure could have resulted in the birth defects, disabilities, even shortened lifespans of your own children, perhaps grandchildren, too — I don't think I can fully imagine the nightmare of that," Loomis said. "Not everyone chooses to protect their country, but I'd say everyone wants to protect their children."

Service members exposed to toxic substances are more likely than the general population to develop rare cancers, heart conditions and chronic lung conditions, according to the legislation.

Descendants of toxic-exposed service members also can experience lifelong medical conditions related to their parents' or grandparents' exposure to toxic substances, the legislation said.

Mokie Porter, communications director for the advocacy group Vietnam Veterans of America, described the legislation as another mechanism for funding an area that historically has been overlooked in research by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"Before these Vietnam veterans pass on, they want to ensure their children are taken care of. The children and grandchildren of toxic-exposed veterans have health conditions that have not been fully addressed," Porter said. "Most of the evidence linking exposure to birth defects is anecdotal because the research isn't being done."

Porter said new research dol-

lars also would enable studies to be done outside the VA, including universities, medical centers and other nonprofit organizations with a background in studying birth defects and chemical exposures.

The VA presumes spina bifida in biological children of certain Vietnam-era veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and other herbicides was caused by military service.

People with spina bifida can have paralysis and require extensive surgeries and medical care.

But Porter said while spina bifida is the most recognized birth defect associated with military chemical exposure, the link is still considered limited for lack of scientific evidence.

The new legislation would require an interagency group on toxic exposures to work to raise awareness about associations between toxic exposures and birth defects, McManus said.

The bill also would require research and current treatments for serious health conditions identified in the descendants of toxic-exposed veterans to be published on a dedicated website.

The interagency group was established two years ago under the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act, or PACT Act.

The PACT Act awards disability benefits for veterans with diseases and injuries that are presumed to be linked to toxic exposures during military service, including from burn pits, radiation and other hazardous materials.

MILITARY



MATTHEW M. BURKE/Stars and Stripes

A soldier with the 173rd Airborne Brigade awaits his next task after parachuting near Joint Multinational Readiness Center Hohenfels Training Area on Wednesday.

Ukraine: Army studied Russian war ahead of drills

FROM PAGE 1

er Brig. Gen. Steven Carpenter said. "But we want it to be hardest here so when they get to combat, it seems just a little bit easier."

The annual Saber Junction land warfare exercise, which runs through Sept. 19, features approximately 4,300 troops, mostly from the U.S. and 10 other partner nations under an Italian high command.

It is being held at the training areas in Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels. The exercise includes simulated artillery, armor, medical, communications and even psychological operations.

Brigade commander Col. Joshua Gaspard said the Army had monitored "battle labs" like Ukraine in preparation for the exercise. The force had already flown drones to survey its surroundings and had its signals jammed.

The paratroopers face stiff resistance from the Army training center's resident opposition force, 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, which comes equipped with faux Russian vehicles.

Carpenter said Ukraine's ability to attack from the rear using a tactic known as vertical envelopment has frustrated Russian advances and showed the continued need for airborne operations.

"Our ability to get vertical envelopment, to get soldiers deep, not just to do reconnaissance operations, but disrupt the rear lines would be incredibly valuable," he said.

He stressed the importance of rotating all NATO allies and partners through the command's suite of yearly exercises. This year's participants include Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Italy, Lithuania, Montenegro, Moldova, North Macedonia and the United Kingdom, an Army statement said.

Georgia's continued participation is notable. Russia occupies about 20% of the once solidly pro-Western country's internationally recognized borders. But over the past year, Georgia's ruling party has moved closer to Russia politically amid fierce domestic opposi-



PHOTOS BY LYDIA GORDON/Stars and Stripes

Soldiers with the 173rd Airborne Brigade march through a town after parachuting into a village field outside of the Joint Multinational Readiness Center Hohenfels Training Area, Germany, for Exercise Saber Junction on Wednesday.



A soldier links up with his team after parachuting into a field.

tion.

After their landing, the paratroopers marched through villages toward the 40,000-acre training facility, known as "the Box." German spectators set up patio chairs



Spectators watch soldiers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade parachute outside of the Joint Multinational Readiness Center Hohenfels Training Area, Germany.

and gathered in groups to watch the spectacle.

Sgt. 1st Class Austin Pounds, a platoon sergeant from Galveston, Texas, said they had parachuted down a bit more quickly than ex-

pected. His troops had eight days of fighting ahead of them, he said.

"As soon as we get in, we're going to get our teeth kicked in," he said. "But we're scrappy, so we'll kick right back."

US Army officer found dead in Poland; 'no evidence of foul play'

BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — There are no initial signs of foul play related to the death of a U.S. Army officer in Poland, service officials said Thursday.

Lt. Col. Joshua Camara, 45, was found dead Tuesday, the Pentagon said in a statement.

He was stationed at Camp Kosciuszko in Poznan and had been assigned to V Corps forward headquarters.

"Our thoughts and sympathies are with Lt. Col. Josh Camara's family, friends, and teammates during this difficult time," V Corps chief of staff Col. Kevin Jackson said in the statement. "He was an outstanding leader and

mentor, and we will remember his legacy and impact."

Camara, a public affairs officer, served in V Corps since June. He served in the Army for over 20 years, according to his LinkedIn profile.

On Thursday, V Corps spokesman Maj. Joe Bush said there was "no evidence of foul play," contrary to earlier reports from some

Polish media outlets.

Polish police are conducting the main investigation into Camara's death. The Army's Criminal Investigative Division is carrying out its own probe, which is commonplace when a soldier dies, Bush said.

Polish news network TVP reported Wednesday that the body of an American officer had been

found inside an apartment in Poznan, not far from where V Corps forward is based.

Local officials ruled out murder, TVP reported, adding that autopsy results are expected early next week.

Camp Kosciuszko is home to the Army's garrison headquarters in Poland and the first permanent U.S. military base in the country.

MILITARY

Families of 2 US soldiers awarded \$364M

Court rules Syria owes hundreds of millions for torture and killing of pair by terrorists in Iraq in 2007

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Syria owes hundreds of millions of dollars to the families of two U.S. soldiers who were tortured and killed by Damascus-sponsored terrorists in Iraq more than 15 years ago, a federal court in Washington, D.C., ruled recently.

The decision by U.S. District Judge Reggie Walton on Aug. 30 awarded compensation and punitive damages of \$364 million to the families of Spc. Byron Fouty and Staff Sgt. Alex Jimenez.

It followed Walton's judgment in July that the Syrian government was liable for the deaths of Fouty and Jimenez, who were beheaded after their capture with a third soldier.

Fouty, 19, of Oxford, Mich.; Jimenez, 25, of Lawrence, Mass.; and Pfc. Joseph Anzack Jr., 20, of Torrance, Calif., were captured May 12, 2007, during an assault of a military observation post in the village of al-Taqa, near Yusufiyah, south of Baghdad. They served in the 10th Mountain Division, based in Fort Drum, N.Y.

Four other U.S. soldiers and an Iraqi interpreter died in the attack. Anzack's body was found about 10 days later in the Euphrates River. The remains of Fouty and Jimenez weren't found until July 2008 and



U.S. Army

Staff Sgt. Alex Jimenez, left, and Spc. Byron Fouty, who were assigned to the 10th Mountain Division, were captured and killed by terrorists in Iraq in 2007.

were identified through dental records.

The damage award is vindication for the soldiers' families, their attorney, Ron Jenkins, said Wednesday.

"I think they do feel a sense of justice," he said, adding that no amount of money can "undo that type of loss."

Gordon Dibler, Fouty's stepfather, said Thursday that he "never looked at it as, 'Oh, this will make me feel better.'"

But it's a relief for the court "to acknowledge the people responsible," he said.

Jenkins filed a complaint in 2018 against Syria on behalf of the soldiers' families. It

alleged that Syrian assistance enabled the former Islamic State of Iraq "to abduct, torture and execute Fouty and Jimenez."

Anzack's family was not a party in the lawsuit. The plaintiffs consisted of four family members of Fouty and eight of Jimenez, as well as the soldiers' estates.

The case was tried under the Foreign Sovereignty Immunities Act, which gives U.S. courts jurisdiction over a foreign country that has engaged in terrorism or provided material support to a terrorist group that injures or kills American citizens.

In his July ruling, Walton found that the Zarqawi Terrorist Organization, the renamed Islamic State of Iraq, had acted "with the training, funding, material support, protection, and direction of Syria, as part of a coordinated scheme by Syria to target" U.S. service members in Iraq, according to court documents.

The case had aggravating factors, Jenkins said, which enabled the judge "to make a very sizable award."

Jimenez's widow, Yaderlin Jimenez, testified to the emotional pain she suffered while waiting to learn of her husband's fate.

"It was very hard for the family not knowing what had happened, what (was)

being done to him. It was a very desperate (14) months for everybody," she said, according to court records.

Dibler said he's always had trouble sleeping but sometimes will "wake up kind of suddenly, thinking about what they were going through," he said of Fouty and Jimenez. "I still live this every day."

The plaintiffs were awarded varying amounts, the court ruling shows. The Syrian government did not appear in court or otherwise respond to the complaint, according to court documents.

However, the Syrians will be notified of the court's decision, said Jenkins, who has been involved in similar cases.

In this case, the U.S. could freeze Syrian assets in the United States, for example, and make those available, or lawyers could try to seize Syrian assets abroad, Jenkins said.

"It's not easy to do," he said. "But it is a project we will undertake. If it takes years, we will work on it for years."

Dibler said that the last time he spoke to his stepson was on his 19th birthday on April 17, a month before the attack. Fouty had been in the Army less than five months, not including boot camp, he said.

"Things happened so fast," he said. "We miss him every day."

Belt: Prevention urged

FROM PAGE 1

cally for the condition.

"Unlike nearly all other diseases affecting service members today, obesity itself is not considered a disability nor disease by the service branches nor the Department of Veterans Affairs, making it difficult to proactively identify and treat," the report reads. "Without this written classification and its associated protections, service members face bias and discrimination for 'exceeding weight standards,' becoming ineligible for promotion, educational privileges, deployment or disability compensation."

Last year, the American Security Project found nearly seven in 10 active-duty troops were overweight or obese, according to their body mass index, including some 21% of active-duty troops qualified as obese, a rate that more than doubled in the past decade. Body mass index, or BMI, is a long-used but controversial method of assessing a person's body classification by height and weight. A person between 25 and 30 on the BMI is considered clinically overweight and more than 30 is considered obese, according to the National Institutes of Health.

The researchers found the weight problem within the military was at least two-pronged because of rising obesity rates among the civilian population

from which the military needs to recruit, and the loosening of military fitness standards to ensure the services have enough troops in their ranks amid recent enlistment struggles. The Pentagon, the researchers found, has lowered fitness standards to keep overweight troops in the ranks and increased the use of body composition waivers to bring overweight recruits into the military.

The military services have taken steps in recent years to counter obesity. The Army and Navy introduced fitness courses to engage potential recruits early and get them into shape to qualify for service. The Marines, meanwhile, began using more accurate biometric scanning machines last year to assess body fat.

But the American Security Project concluded those measures were not enough to mitigate the threat of increasing weight problems in the force, which were exacerbated during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, which forced many troops away from daily exercise during lockdowns. Obesity rates have not improved since the lockdowns ended, according to the researchers.

They charge reversing military policies that stigmatize obesity — such as tape measure tests — and focusing instead on providing treatment for troops susceptible to obesity or diagnosed with obesity



MARY KOHLMANN/U.S. Marine Corps

U.S. Marines and Navy sailors with 2nd Marine Logistics Group participate in an obstacle course during the Force Fitness Instructor Course culminating event on Camp Lejeune, N.C., on Feb. 14. Marines and sailors participated in the course to understand how to utilize structured functional exercise science.

would improve military readiness and save the services money — up to \$1 billion each year, according to the study.

"These recommendations aren't just well-justified by the existing research, they are highly cost-effective," the researchers concluded. "Upfront investments in clinical care saves tens of thousands of dollars per patient in the long run, even if those patients remain overweight."

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MILITARY

‘Looks more intentional than accidental’

Experts, ambassador agree China signaling dominance by crossing Japanese territory

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Recent incursions by China into Japan’s territorial waters and airspace showcase a deliberate effort by Beijing to normalize its increasingly assertive actions against its regional neighbors, according to two defense experts.

A Chinese survey vessel on Saturday briefly entered territorial waters off Kagoshima prefecture on Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan’s four main islands. Five days earlier, on Aug. 26, a Chinese Y-9 surveillance aircraft breached Japanese airspace over a small island off Kyushu, an unprecedented action by a Chinese military aircraft.

The incidents add to an already tense relationship between China and Japan, whose claims in the Senkaku Islands are repeatedly tested by the Chinese coast guard. China’s coast guard is even more aggressive against the Philippine coast guard, bumping hulls and employing water cannons and other measures in territorial disputes in the Philippine exclusive economic zone of the



Pixabay

Recent Chinese incursions into Japan’s airspace and territorial waters represent a larger strategy, defense experts say.

South China Sea.

The two incursions of Japanese territory were “provocative and risked flaming tensions in the region,” according to Brian Hart, a fellow with the Center for Strategic and International Studies’ China Power Project.

“The greater long-term implication is that Beijing is employing its military forces in increasingly provocative ways, which heightens the risks of misperceptions, miscalculations, and dangerous accidents,” Hart told Stars and Stripes by email

Wednesday.

The actions also underscored Beijing’s “strategy of expansively asserting its power in the region” and highlight its goal to be a dominant power in the Indo-Pacific, according to Jeff Kingston, a professor of Asian studies and history at Temple University’s Japan campus.

“[China] is keen to demonstrate that it is not deterred by the heightened security cooperation between the U.S. and its allies in the region,” he told Stars and Stripes by email Thursday.

Beijing will continue to “probe and assert in an effort to normalize such actions,” something it’s been doing since 2010, Kingston said.

China’s Foreign Ministry denied the military aircraft intended to enter Japan’s airspace, and later defended the survey vessel’s actions as a “fully lawful and legitimate” exercise of its right to transit the area, according to transcripts of press conferences on Aug. 28 and Sept. 2.

“There is no need to arbitrarily link or interpret them,” Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning

said Sept. 2, according to the transcript. “China remains firmly committed to the peace and stability in this region.”

However, Hart said connecting the two is not difficult given they occurred just five days apart.

Neither Kingston nor Hart could pinpoint Beijing’s motivations for the two incursions.

Kingston suggested that the ongoing U.S. presidential election and the upcoming election for Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party leadership on Sept. 27 could play a part.

The U.S. campaign particularly has featured negative rhetoric about China, but Chinese President Xi Jinping “should not be so thin skinned,” Kingston added.

Hart pointed to a variety of possible causes, including the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force’s own incursion into Chinese territorial waters on July 4 and a joint search and rescue drill by Japan and Taiwan’s coast guards on July 18.

“Chinese state media has also blasted Japan’s new proposed defense budget, accusing Tokyo of militarism,” he said. “Of course,

China’s own defense budget has grown continuously for decades, and Japan’s growing defense spending is largely in response to China’s military buildup and aggression.”

The incursions also drew criticism from U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel.

“China says it’s still ‘investigating and verifying’ the recent violation of Japan’s airspace by one of its surveillance planes,” he wrote Tuesday on social platform X. “But with a Chinese survey ship sailing into Japanese waters only the other day, two territorial incursions in less than a week looks more intentional than accidental.”

Emanuel doesn’t “pull his punches, which is unusual for a diplomat,” Kingston said. Rather than trying “grab the limelight,” his rhetoric may signal Washington’s support for allied interests in the region, he added.

“Some regional leaders may welcome his calling out Beijing’s unrelenting efforts to modify the regional status quo in its favor,” Kingston said.

Wildfire damages Navy base in Calif.; live fire suspected

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — About 75 miles northwest of San Diego, beyond the view of much of the mainland, the rugged and remote Navy outpost of San Clemente Island remains a mystery to most Californians.

For nine decades, San Clemente Island, the southernmost of the eight Channel Islands, has been owned by the Navy and is largely inaccessible to civilians. Throughout this time the volcanic isle’s sprawling shoreline and rolling hills have served as a crucial military training ground where U.S. troops detonate grenades and fire heavy artillery. It’s also the Navy’s last live-firing range for ship-to-shore bombardments.

So, in late July, few noticed when a catastrophic wildfire swept over more than 13,000 acres of the island outpost. Between July 24 and July 30, the blaze scorched more than a third of the island, damaging more than nine miles of high-voltage power lines, including more than 160 utility lines and a transformer, according to Navy documents.

The fire also swept through parts of the island that have rare habitats for sensitive plant and animal species found nowhere else, such as the endangered San Clemente loggerhead shrike, a carnivorous songbird.

The conflagration left the southern end of the island charred, and numerous Navy buildings without

power.

It is expected to take at least a year to restore electricity to those facilities. In the meantime, the Navy will rely on diesel-powered backup generators to maintain communications for its operations, as well as for Federal Aviation Administration air traffic control functions and Coast Guard search-and-rescue missions.

Navy spokesman Kevin Dixon said the fire may have been caused by live-fire military exercises in the so-called shore bombardment area, although it remains unclear what type of training might have sparked the blaze. After two years of above-normal rainfall, Dixon said, there was much more grass to catch fire. No one was injured or evacuated.

“We did have training going on there where there was bombardment,” Dixon said. “So I can’t definitively say that it is, but, just looking at it logically, it may be related to this.”

Just before the fire, several units of the California National Guard had been on the island for military training exercises that included the firing of howitzer shells and mortar rounds. The military units posted photos and videos of the exercises on social media.

California National Guard spokesperson Lt. Col. Brandon Hill said guard members did not spark the fire.

“If a fire would have started be-



WILLIAM FRANCO ESPINOSA, U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD/TNS

Owned by the Navy, San Clemente Island in California is used for live-fire military exercises. On July 24, a wildfire burned more than 13,000 acres and severely damaged the island’s electric system.

cause of those training rounds impacting it would have been immediately reported to range control,” Hill said. “We completed all training on July 23rd and cleared the training areas with no issues.”

NASA’s Worldview tool, which publishes daily satellite imagery and wildfire data, detected a possible wildfire on San Clemente Island around 5:30 a.m. July 24.

Previous reports commissioned by the Navy have found that weapons testing on San Clemente Island increases the likelihood of devastating wildfire and imperils some of the island’s species. In a 2009 environ-

mental assessment, a Navy contractor concluded that most fires were the result of military training, and about half occurred on the southern end of the island in the ship-to-shore bombardment zone.

In the past, the Navy has restricted the use of live ammunition during the wildfire season to curtail the risk of these disasters. No restrictions were apparently in place around the time of the July wildfire.

“If there was some type of fire danger then the units would not have been allowed to train, but that did not occur,” Hill said.

Despite decades of military bom-

bardment, the island remains home to a variety of native plant and animal species. The island’s mosaic of shrubs and grasslands provides habitat for mice, lizards, foxes and numerous birds. Bald eagles have also been spotted.

In recent decades, the Navy bolstered funding for environmental conservation.

The Navy has also found hundreds of ancient relics from the island’s original inhabitants.

An outcropping of volcanic rock, San Clemente Island was formed by eruptions millions of years ago. It had once been inhabited by a prehistoric Native American tribe, believed to be related to the Tongva who occupied present-day Los Angeles.

In the 1500s, Spanish explorers landed on the island and conducted trade with the tribe. By the early 1800s, however, the Indigenous population could no longer be found on the island. Some say they departed their ancestral home with Spanish missionaries.

Under President Franklin Roosevelt, the Navy acquired San Clemente Island in 1934. Workers built barracks, roads and piers, setting the stage for the island to become the Navy’s premier weapons testing ground. The naval island is where the Navy developed the Higgins boat — the pivotal landing craft that ferried troops to the beaches of Normandy during the D-Day invasion.

NATION

Teen charged in shooting interviewed in '23

Police talked to boy, now in custody after 4 killed at Ga. high school, about online threats

By JEFF AMY

WINDER, Ga. — The teen charged with opening fire at a Georgia high school denied making prior threats when police interviewed him last year as they looked into online posts threatening a school shooting. Investigators ultimately did not have enough evidence for an arrest, according to a report obtained Thursday.

The 14-year-old suspect has been charged as an adult in the shooting Wednesday outside Atlanta that killed four people and wounded nine. He is accused of using an assault-style rifle to kill two students and two teachers in the hallway outside his algebra classroom.

The same teenager was interviewed in May 2023 by a sheriff's investigator from nearby Jackson County who received a tip from the FBI that the boy, then 13, "had possibly threatened to shoot up a middle school tomorrow."

The tip came to the FBI from people in Australia and California who were concerned about comments made by a chat group user on the social media platform Discord, according to a Jackson County sheriff's report obtained by The Associated Press.

Classes were canceled Thursday at Apalachee High School, though some people came to pay respects by leaving flowers around the flagpole and kneeling in the grass with heads bowed. Among them was Linda Carter, who lives nearby. Though she has no children attending the school, Carter said the rampage left her angry and hurting.

"I'm upset, I'm crying constantly," Carter said. "These kids shouldn't have lost their lives.



MIKE STEWART/AP

Mourners pray during a candlelight vigil for two Apalachee High School students and two teachers shot and killed at the school, on Wednesday, in Winder, Ga. A 14-year-old suspect has been charged.

These parents, these adults, these teachers should not have lost their lives yesterday."

When the suspect slipped out of class Wednesday, Lyela Sayarath figured her quiet classmate who recently transferred was skipping school again. But he returned later and wanted back into the room. Some students went to open the locked door but instead backed away.

"I'm guessing they saw something, but for some reason, they didn't open the door," Sayarath said.

The teen then turned the gun on people in a hallway, authorities said.

He has been charged in the deaths of students Mason Schermerhorn and Christian Angulo, both 14, and teachers Richard Aspinwall, 39, and Christina Irimie, 53, Hosey said. The teen was to be taken Thursday to a regional youth detention facility.

When the teen was not allowed back into his classroom, Sayarath said she heard a barrage of gunshots.

"It was about 10 or 15 of them at once, back to back," she said.

The math students fell to the floor and crawled around, looking for a safe corner to hide.

Two school resource officers encountered the shooter within

minutes of a report that shots had been fired, Hosey said. The teen immediately surrendered and was taken into custody.

At least nine other people — eight students and one teacher at the school in Winder — were taken to hospitals. All were expected to survive, Barrow County Sheriff Jud Smith said. Authorities were still looking into how the teen obtained the gun and got it into the school with about 1,900 students in a rapidly developing area on the edge of metro Atlanta's ever-expanding sprawl.

It was the 30th mass killing in the U.S. so far this year, according to a database maintained by The

Associated Press and USA Today in partnership with Northeastern University. At least 127 people have died in those killings, which are defined as events in which four or more people die within a 24-hour period, not including the killer — the same definition used by the FBI.

The teen had been interviewed after the FBI received anonymous tips in May 2023 about online threats to commit an unspecified school shooting, the agency said in a statement.

The FBI narrowed the threats down and referred to the case to the sheriff's department in Jackson County, which is adjacent to Barrow County.

The sheriff's office interviewed the then-13-year-old and his father, who said there were hunting guns in the house but the teen did not have unsupervised access to them. The teen also denied making any online threats.

The sheriff's office alerted local schools for continued monitoring of the teen, but there was no probable cause for arrest or additional action, the FBI said.

Hosey said the state Division of Family and Children's Services also had previous contact with the teen and will investigate whether that has any connection with the shooting. Local news outlets reported that the teen's family home in Bethlehem, Ga., was searched Wednesday.

On Wednesday evening, hundreds gathered in Jug Tavern Park in downtown Winder for a vigil. Volunteers handed out candles. Some knelt as a Methodist minister led the crowd in prayer after a Barrow County commissioner read a Jewish prayer of mourning.

Lawyers clash in Trump case that could set the path ahead

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Prosecutors and defense lawyers clashed in court Thursday over the next steps in the federal election interference prosecution of Donald Trump in the first hearing since the Supreme Court narrowed the case by ruling that former presidents are entitled to broad immunity from criminal charges.

The dueling proposals reflected the extent to which the justices' July opinion had upended the path of the case that charges Trump with plotting to overturn the results of the 2020 election in the run-up to the Capitol riot on Jan. 6, 2021.

Moving to salvage the case, special counsel Jack Smith's team filed a new indictment that

stripped out certain allegations against Trump for which the Supreme Court said Trump enjoyed immunity from prosecution.

A member of that team, Thomas Windom, said Thursday that prosecutors were prepared to file within three weeks a legal brief explaining why the new indictment was sound. But defense lawyer John Lauro said the special counsel "proposes a device which turns the criminal rules on its head" by seeking to submit a filing before the defense has had a chance to try to dismiss the indictment.

"We may be dealing with an illegitimate indictment from the get-go," Lauro said. He added: "We want an orderly process that does justice to the Supreme Court

opinion."

As the hearing opened, U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan noted that it has been almost a year since she saw the lawyers in her courtroom. The case has been frozen since last December as Trump pursued his appeal on immunity grounds.

Lauro joked to the judge that "life was almost meaningless without seeing you."

"Enjoy it while it lasts," Chutkan said.

Trump, the Republican nominee for president, was not present. A not guilty plea was entered on his behalf for the revised indictment.

Defense lawyers said they intend to file multiple motions to dis-

miss the case, including one that piggybacks off a Florida judge's ruling that said Smith's appointment was unconstitutional.

Neither side envisions a trial happening before the November election, especially given the amount of work ahead. Chutkan is tasked with determining which of the acts alleged in the indictment can remain part of the case in light of the Supreme Court opinion.

The justices in July ruled that former presidents enjoy absolute immunity for the exercise of their core constitutional duties and are presumptively immune from prosecution for all other official acts.

Smith's team responded to the ruling with a revised indictment

last week that removed references to Trump's efforts to use the law enforcement powers of the Justice Department to remain in power, an area of conduct for which the Supreme Court said Trump is immune.

The case is one of two federal prosecutions against Trump. The other, charging him with illegally hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Fla., was dismissed in July by U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon. She said Smith's appointment as special counsel was unlawful.

Smith's team has appealed that ruling. Trump's lawyers say they intend to ask Chutkan to dismiss the election case on the same grounds.

NATION

US takes aim at disinformation from Russians

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—The Biden administration seized Kremlin-run websites and charged two Russian state media employees in its most sweeping effort yet to push back against what it says are Russian attempts to spread disinformation ahead of the November presidential election.

The measures, which in addition to indictments also included sanctions and visa restrictions, represented a U.S. government effort just weeks before the November election to disrupt a persistent threat from Russia that American officials have long warned has the potential to sow discord and create confusion among voters.

Washington has said that Moscow, which intelligence officials have said has a preference for Republican Donald Trump, remains the primary threat to elections even as the FBI continues to investigate a hack by Iran this year that targeted the presidential campaigns of both political parties.

“The Justice Department’s message is clear: We will have no tolerance for attempts by authoritarian regimes to exploit our democratic systems of government,” Attorney General Merrick Garland said.

One criminal case disclosed by the Justice Department accuses two employees of RT, a Russian state media company, of covertly funding a Tennessee-based content creation company with nearly \$10 million to publish English-language videos on social media platforms including TikTok and YouTube with messages in favor of the Russia government’s interests and agenda, including about the war in Ukraine.

The nearly 2,000 videos posted by the company have gotten more than 16 million views on YouTube alone, prosecutors said.

The two defendants, Kostiantyn Kalashnikov and Elena Afanasye-

va, are charged with conspiracy to commit money laundering and violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act. They are at large. It was not immediately clear if they had lawyers.

The Justice Department says the company did not disclose that it was funded by RT and that neither it nor its founders registered as required by law as an agent of a foreign principal.

Though the indictment does not name the company, it describes it as a Tennessee-based content creation firm with six commentators and with a website identifying itself as “a network of heterodox commentators that focus on Western political and cultural issues.”

That description exactly matches Tenet Media, an online company that hosts videos made by well-known conservative influencers Tim Pool, Benny Johnson and others.

Johnson and Pool both responded with posts on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, calling themselves “victims.” Calling Russian President Vladimir Putin a “scumbag,” Pool wrote that “should these allegations prove true, I as well as the other personalities and commentators were deceived.”

Tenet Media’s shows in recent months have featured high-profile conservative guests, including RNC co-chair Lara Trump, former Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy and U.S. Senate candidate Kari Lake.

In the other action, officials announced the seizure of 32 internet domains that were used by the Kremlin to spread Russian propaganda and weaken international support for Ukraine. The websites were designed to look like authentic news sites but were actually fake, with bogus social media personas manufactured to appear as if they belonged to American users.



SHUJI KAJIYAMA/AP

House Republicans issued a subpoena Tuesday for Secretary of State Antony Blinken to testify on Afghanistan. A State Department spokesman said Blinken has testified before Congress on Afghanistan more than 14 times.

GOP seeks Blinken testimony on US withdrawal from Afghanistan

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Republicans have issued a subpoena demanding testimony from Secretary of State Antony Blinken as they wrap up a sprawling years-long investigation into the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021.

Rep. Michael McCaul, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, sent a subpoena letter late Tuesday ordering Blinken to appear before the committee by Sept. 19 or face a contempt of Congress charge.

“You served as the final decision maker for the department on the withdrawal and evacuation,” McCaul wrote.

He added that three years later, Blinken is “in a position to inform the Committee’s consideration of potential legislation aimed at helping prevent the catastrophic mistakes of the withdrawal, including potential reforms to the Department’s legislative authorization.”

Matthew Miller, a State Department spokesman, said Blinken is unable to testify on the dates proposed by the committee as he will

be traveling for diplomatic work the majority of September. He claimed the committee denied “reasonable alternatives” to the subpoena date.

“The Secretary has testified before the Congress on Afghanistan more than 14 times — more than any other Cabinet-level official,” Miller said, adding that four of those times were directly before the Foreign Affairs committee at the request of McCaul. “It is disappointing that instead of continuing to engage with the Department in good faith, the Committee instead has issued yet another unnecessary subpoena.”

The subpoena for Blinken’s testimony is the latest in a series of moves by McCaul and other House Republicans over the last 18 months to hold the Biden administration accountable for what they have called a “stunning failure of leadership” after Taliban forces seized the Afghan capital of Kabul, far more rapidly than U.S. intelligence had foreseen as American forces pulled out.

The committee is expected to summarize its work in an investigative report to be released Mon-

day, amid the contentious presidential election where Republican nominee Donald Trump has tried to elevate the withdrawal from Afghanistan as a campaign issue.

While the GOP report is expected to place blame on President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, who is now the Democratic nominee for president, independent watchdog reports over the last three years have documented a much more nuanced and bipartisan case for which administration was at fault.

A 2022 report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, or SIGAR, concluded it was decisions made by both President Donald Trump and Biden to pull all U.S. troops out of Afghanistan that were key factors in the collapse of that nation’s military.

That report mirrors assertions made by senior Pentagon and military leaders in the aftermath of the withdrawal. Military leaders have made clear that their recommendation was to leave about 2,500 U.S. troops in the country, but that plan was not approved.

Biden promotes administration’s rural electrification funding in Wis.

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—President Joe Biden is returning to southwest Wisconsin to make good on his promise to provide new investments in rural electrification and other infrastructure improvements.

Biden was to be in Westby on Thursday to announce \$7.3 billion in investments for 16 cooperatives that will provide electricity for rural

areas across 23 states. The intent is to bring down the cost of badly needed internet connections in hard-to-reach areas.

Funding for the project comes from the Democrats’ Inflation Reduction Act, signed into law in August 2022 and passed in Congress along party lines.

The law invests roughly \$13 billion in rural electrification across multiple programs and will create

4,500 permanent jobs and 16,000 construction jobs, according to the White House.

The administration calls it the largest investment in rural electrification since the New Deal in the 1930s.

Democrats consider Wisconsin to be one of the must-win states in November’s presidential election between Republican Donald Trump and Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris. Biden won the

state in 2020 by about 20,000 votes, flipping Wisconsin to the Democratic column after Trump narrowly won it in 2016.

And Thursday’s trip will be a return to a state that Biden visited early in his presidency. Then, he made a promise to provide, among other infrastructure improvements, better internet to rural areas.

“It isn’t a luxury; it’s now a necessity, like water and electricity,” Bi-

den said at the La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility in June 2021. “And this deal would provide for it for everyone, while bringing down the cost of internet service across the board.”

White House deputy chief of staff Natalie Quillian told reporters Wednesday that when the president returns to Wisconsin, “he will have delivered on so many of those promises.”

NATION



ARVIN TEMKAR/AP

State Election Board member Rick Jeffares asks the crowd to settle down during a hastily planned State Election Board meeting at the Capitol in Atlanta on July 12.

Lawsuits filed in multiple states could be a way to contest presidential election

BY NICHOLAS RICCARDI
Associated Press

Before voters even begin casting ballots, Democrats and Republicans are engaged in a sprawling legal fight over how the 2024 election will be run, a series of court disputes that could even run past Election Day if the outcome is close.

Both parties have bulked up their legal teams for the fight. Republicans have filed more than 100 lawsuits challenging various aspects of vote-casting after being chastised repeatedly by judges in 2020 for bringing complaints about how the election was run only after votes were tallied.

After Donald Trump has made “election integrity” a key part of his party’s platform following his false claims of widespread voter fraud in 2020, the Republican National Committee says it has more than 165,000 volunteers ready to watch the polls in November.

Democrats are countering with what they are calling “voter protection,” rushing to court to fight back against the GOP cases and building their own team with over 100 staffers, several hundred lawyers and what they say are thousands of volunteers for November.

Despite the flurry of litigation, the cases have tended to be fairly small-bore, with few likely impacts for most voters.

“When you have all this money to spend on litigation, you end up litigating less and less important stuff,” said Derek Muller, a law professor at Notre Dame University.

The stakes would increase dramatically should Trump lose the election and then try to overturn

the result. That’s what he attempted in 2020, but the court system rejected him across the board. Trump and his allies lost more than 60 lawsuits trying to reverse President Joe Biden’s win.

Whether they could be successful this year depends on the result of the election, experts said. A gap of about 10,000 votes — roughly the number that separated Biden and Trump in Arizona and Georgia four years ago — is almost impossible to reverse through litigation. A closer one of a few hundred votes, like the 547-vote margin that separated George W. Bush and Al Gore in Florida in 2000, is much more likely to hinge on court rulings about which ballots are legitimate.

“If he loses, he’s going to claim that he won. That goes without saying,” Rick Hasen, a law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, said of Trump. “If it looks like what we had last time ... I expect we’ll see the same kind of thing.”

Trump has done nothing to discourage that expectation as he seeks his return to the White House. He has said he would accept the results of the election only if it’s “free and fair,” which raises the possibility it would not be, something he continues to falsely contend was the case in 2020. He also continued to insist that he could only lose due to fraud.

“The only way they can beat us is to cheat,” Trump said at a Las Vegas rally in June.

To be clear, there was no widespread fraud in 2020 or any election since then. Reviews, recounts and audits in the battleground states where Trump disputed his

loss four years ago all affirmed that Biden won, and Trump’s own attorney general said there was no evidence that fraud tipped the election.

Trump installed his daughter-in-law, Lara Trump, as co-chair of the Republican National Committee, which then named attorney Christina Bobb as the head of its election integrity division. Bobb is a former reporter for the conservative One America News Network who has been indicted by Arizona’s attorney general for being part of an effort to promote a slate of Trump electors in the state, even though Biden won it.

Echoing its presidential candidate, the RNC said it’s trying to counter Democratic mischief.

“President Trump’s election integrity effort is dedicated to protecting every legal vote, mitigating threats to the voting process and securing the election,” RNC spokeswoman Claire Zunk said in a statement. “While Democrats continue their election interference against President Trump and the American people, our operation is confronting their schemes and preparing for November.”

This time around, Democrats say they’re prepared for whatever Trump and the RNC might do.

“For four years, Donald Trump and his MAGA allies have been scheming to sow distrust in our elections and undermine our democracy so they can cry foul when they lose,” Jen O’Malley Dillon, Vice President Kamala Harris’ campaign manager, said in a statement. “But also for four years, Democrats have been preparing for this moment, and we are ready for anything.”

Harris, Trump agree to the rules for presidential debate

BY FALLON ROTH
The Philadelphia Inquirer

PHILADELPHIA — The rules for next week’s presidential debate in Philadelphia are officially set after Vice President Kamala Harris’ and former President Donald Trump’s campaigns agreed to a list of guidelines that include muting candidates’ microphones when they are not speaking, debate host ABC News said Wednesday.

The battle between the campaigns over the muted microphones at the debate at the National Constitution Center had grown increasingly contentious.

For more than a week, the Harris campaign had fought to keep the mics live for the duration of the debate, saying that Harris is “ready to deal” with Trump’s interruptions or falsehoods, while the Republican’s campaign insisted the microphones should be muted. Harris said Saturday on X that the mic issue is a matter of debating in a “transparent way.”

While Harris ultimately agreed to mute the mics during the Sept. 10 debate, her campaign was not happy about it, according to a letter to ABC News, CNN reported.

According to CNN, Harris’ campaign wrote that as “a former prosecutor, [Harris] will be fundamentally disadvantaged by this format, which will serve to shield Donald Trump from direct exchanges with the Vice President.”

Harris’ direct, prosecutorial debating style has created big moments on the national stage in the past, making live mics more beneficial to her debate strategy as opposed to muting them, where any of Trump’s interruptions or extraneous remarks could be muffled.

“Mr. Vice President, I’m speaking,” became one of Harris’ most viral lines during the 2020 election as she fended off interruptions from former Vice President Mike Pence during their debate.

The Trump campaign sought to have the mics muted at the forthcoming debate against Harris, as they were when Trump debated President Joe Biden in June — a change from the 2020 presidential debate, when the Trump campaign advocated for them to be left on.

Trump himself originally appeared to be indifferent to the mic issue. “We agreed to the same rules. I don’t know. It doesn’t matter to me. I’d rather have it probably on, but the agreement was it would be the same as it was last

time. In that case, it was muted,” the former president told NBC News.

But as the date of Harris and Trump’s first debate drew closer, the battle over the microphones escalated, with both campaigns digging in their heels.

Jason Miller, Trump’s senior adviser, said in a statement last week that the Trump campaign “accepted the ABC debate under the exact same terms as the CNN debate,” which had the muted mics.

In a statement Wednesday, Miller said that the Trump campaign is “thrilled” the Harris campaign “finally accepted” the rules of the debate.

“Americans want to hear both candidates present their competing visions to the voters, unburdened by what has been,” Miller said. “No notes, no sitting down, no advance copies of the questions. We’ll see you in Philadelphia next Tuesday.”

ABC on Wednesday released the full list of rules for next week’s debate at the National Constitution Center, which will be presented without a live audience.

Among the rules is that candidates will be allocated two-minute answers to questions, two-minute rebuttals, and one extra minute for follow-ups, clarifications, or responses. Harris and Trump will not be permitted to ask questions of each other.

Additionally, the candidates will stand behind their podiums for the duration of the debate, are not allowed to bring prewritten notes on stage, and will not make opening statements, ABC said in a news release. Harris and Trump will have two minutes for closing statements. Trump will make the final closing statement, choosing his spot after winning a coin toss, ABC said.

At his rally in Johnstown, Pa., last week, Trump said that he looked forward to debating Harris, after he originally cast doubts on his participation. The Harris campaign in its letter to ABC referenced Trump’s equivocation as another reason for agreeing to the Sept. 10 debate rules, CNN reported.

“Notwithstanding our concerns, we understand that Donald Trump is a risk to skip the debate altogether, as he has threatened to do previously, if we do not accede to his preferred format. We do not want to jeopardize the debate,” the campaign wrote.

NATION

Crews slow progress of high Sierra wildfire

Associated Press

Firefighters battling a California wildfire that has burned through more than 5 square miles of the high Sierra made significant progress slowing its growth on Wednesday, but hundreds of residents whose homes are threatened remained under evacuation orders.

The battle against a wildfire also got a boost in South Dakota thanks to cooler weather and lighter winds. Residents of the state's second-largest city have been on edge, ready to flee if flames from a nearby blaze moved dangerously close.

Estimated containment of the Northern California fire burning about 50 miles north of Lake Tahoe remained at 0%. But fire officials said it grew only a few hundred acres on Wednesday as more than 400 firefighters successfully attacked the flames directly on the ground and with retardant drops from the air.

Greg Lowdermilk, a sections operation chief for the inter-agency team, said they were continuing to build new fire lines by hand and with bulldozers and began laying additional hose "so we can continue to increase containment."

The Sierra County sheriff's office said evacuation orders for more than 500 residents of the mountain community of Sierra Brooks, about 25 miles northwest of Reno, Nev., would remain in



MATT GADE, RAPID CITY JOURNAL/AP

A crew member with the Mormon Lake Hotshots, out of Arizona, works a bone pile while battling the First Thunder Fire on Wednesday west of Rapid City, S.D. in the Black Hills.

place "until a safe containment level is achieved."

In South Dakota, officials were optimistic homes in Rapid City would remain safe from the First Thunder Fire.

The blaze was reported Monday just a few miles from Rapid City, a community of 80,000 residents near Black Hills National Forest.

Mount Rushmore National Memorial, about 25 miles away, is far out of harm's way.

The fire burning nearly 160 acres was fueled by uncommonly hot and dry weather. Tuesday's high in Rapid City was 96 degrees, well above the normal early-September high of 75. Winds gusted to 45 mph.

As late as Tuesday evening, residents in an evacuation warning area of Rapid City were being told to pack their bags, gather vital belongings and be prepared to leave at a moment's notice. By Wednesday morning, the temperature was far cooler, the winds calmer and the air more humid.

"Firefighters got a good handle

on the wildfire last night," an update from the Pennington County Sheriff's Office said. "It's currently at 157 acres. Weather conditions are very favorable today. They are mopping up a large portion on the west side and are hoping to get everything contained and under control today."

Officials don't yet know what caused the fire, which has burned across a steep, rocky area. No structural damage has been reported.

In central California, meanwhile, firefighters working in triple-digit temperatures were battling a blaze that scorched more than 17 square miles of dry brush in mostly open space. A handful of homes were evacuated outside of Coalinga in Fresno County. The Boone Fire was 5% contained Wednesday.

Across the state, red flag warnings for increased wildfire risk were issued. The desert communities of Palm Springs, Twentynine Palms, Needles and Barstow were heating up, with highs of up to 118 in Death Valley's Furnace Creek expected at week's end.

In Southern California's Santa Barbara County, officials issued a health alert due to spiking temperatures in inland areas. The health department urged residents to stay indoors during the day and take other measures to avoid heat-related illnesses. Cooling centers were set up across Los Angeles County.

Alaska governor vetoes bill to expand access to birth control

Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska — In competing developments about reproductive rights in the nation's largest state, Alaska Gov. Mike Dunleavy vetoed a bill to expand birth control access while a judge struck down decades-old restrictions on who could perform abortions.

The Republican governor's veto Wednesday stunned supporters of the measure, which would have forced insurance companies to cover up to a year's supply of birth control at a time, something considered especially important in providing access in distant rural communities.

The bill overwhelmingly passed the state Legislature this year: 29-11 in the Republican-controlled House and 16-3 in the Senate, which has bipartisan leadership. It was not opposed by insurance companies, supporters noted.

But in an emailed statement, Dunleavy spokesperson Jeff Turner said he vetoed it because

"contraceptives are widely available, and compelling insurance companies to provide mandatory coverage for a year is bad policy."

Supporters of the bill said the veto would keep barriers in place that make it difficult to access birth control in much of the state, including villages only accessible by plane, and for Alaska patients on Medicaid, which limits the supply of birth control pills to one month at a time.



Dunleavy

"Governor Dunleavy's veto of HB 17, after eight years of tireless effort, overwhelming community support, and positive collaboration with the insurance companies, is deeply disappointing," said Democratic Rep. Ashley Carrick, the bill's sponsor. "There is simply no justifiable reason to veto a bill that would ensure every person in Alaska, no matter where

they live, has access to essential medication, like birth control."

Meanwhile Wednesday, Alaska Superior Court Judge Josie Garton found unconstitutional a state law that said only a doctor licensed by the State Medical Board can perform an abortion in Alaska. Planned Parenthood Great Northwest, Hawaii, Alaska, Indiana, Kentucky sued over the law in 2019, saying advanced practice clinicians — which include advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants — should also be allowed to perform medication or aspiration abortions.

Such clinicians already perform procedures that are "comparably or more complex" than medication abortion or aspiration, such as delivering babies and removing and inserting intrauterine contraceptive devices, the lawsuit said. Those care providers help fill a void in the largely rural state where some communities lack regular access to doctors, according to the group's lawsuit.

Applications for US jobless benefits fall to 2-month low

Associated Press

The number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits fell to its lowest level in two months last week, signaling that layoffs remain relatively low despite other signs of labor market cooling.

Jobless claims fell by 5,000 to 227,000 for the week of Aug. 31, the Labor Department reported Thursday. That's the fewest since the week of July 6, when 223,000 Americans filed claims. It's also less than the 230,000 new filings that analysts were expecting.

The four-week average of claims, which evens out some of the week-to-week volatility, fell by 1,750 to 230,000. That's the lowest four-week average since early June.

Weekly filings for unemployment benefits, considered a proxy for layoffs, remain low by historic standards, though they are up from earlier this year.

During the first four months of 2024, claims averaged a historically low 213,000 a week. But they started rising in May. They hit 250,000 in late July, adding to evi-

dence that high interest rates were finally cooling a red-hot U.S. job market.

Employers added just 114,000 jobs in July, well below the January-June monthly average of nearly 218,000. The unemployment rate rose for the fourth straight month in July, though it remains relatively low at 4.3%.

Economists polled by FactSet expect Friday's August jobs report to show that the U.S. added 160,000 jobs, up from 114,000 in July, and that the unemployment rate dipped to 4.2% from 4.3%. The report's strength, or weakness, will likely influence the Federal Reserve's plans for how much to cut its benchmark interest rate.

Last month, the Labor Department reported that the U.S. economy added 818,000 fewer jobs from April 2023 through March this year than were originally reported. The revised total supports evidence that the job market has been steadily slowing and reinforces the Fed's plan to start cutting interest rates later this month.

WORLD

New foreign minister named in Ukraine as war set to shift

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine's parliament approved the appointment of a new foreign minister Thursday, two lawmakers said, as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy sought to breathe fresh life into his administration with the war against Russia poised for what could be a pivotal phase.

Andrii Sybiha, a former ambassador to Turkey, is the country's new chief diplomat. He replaced Dmytro Kuleba, who became one of Ukraine's most recognizable faces on the international stage as he petitioned and pleaded with Western countries to support Ukraine's war effort.

Sybiha, 49, has been working as Kuleba's deputy since April.

Zelenskyy wants to replace almost a dozen top officials in his biggest government shake-up since Russia's full-scale invasion in early 2022. Other possible new faces included the heads of strategic industries, farming and justice.

Parliament's approval is required for the changes. Ukrainian

lawmakers Yaroslav Zhelezniak and Oleksii Honcharenko confirmed the vote to The Associated Press.

Zelenskyy said Wednesday of the reshuffle that Ukraine needs "new energy."

The war, more than 900 days long, is on the cusp of what could be a key period.

A likely hard winter lies ahead, testing the country's resolve. Ukraine's power grid is under severe strain after Russian missiles and drones knocked out around 70% of the country's generation capacity. That could mean going without heat and water.

On the battlefield, Ukraine is waiting to see whether the military's gamble with its surprise thrust into Russia's Kursk border region a month ago pays dividends. Meanwhile, outgunned Ukrainian soldiers are gradually being pushed backward by Russia's monthslong drive deeper into eastern Ukraine, and Ukrainian civilians are at the mercy of Russia's deadly long-range aerial strikes.

Netanyahu demands open-ended control of Gaza border with Egypt

BY JOSEF FEDERMAN
Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Wednesday that Israel must keep open-ended control of Gaza's border with Egypt, digging in on his stance on an issue that has threatened to derail cease-fire efforts.

Netanyahu's comments came as the United States is developing a new proposal for a cease-fire and hostage release, hoping to break a long deadlock and bring an end to the nearly 11-month-old war.

The question of Israeli control of the Philadelphi corridor — a narrow strip of land along Gaza's border with Egypt, seized by troops in May — has become a central obstacle in the talks. Hamas has demanded an eventual full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in the multiphase truce deal.

Egypt, a mediator in the talks along with the U.S. and Qatar, has also demanded a concrete time-

line for Israeli troops to leave the Philadelphi corridor. And on Wednesday, the United Arab Emirates, which established formal ties with Israel in the 2020 Abraham Accords, also criticized the Israeli stance.

Speaking to foreign journalists, Netanyahu repeated his stance that Israel must maintain its hold on the border to prevent Hamas from rearming by smuggling weapons into Gaza. He said it was a vital part of the goal ensuring Hamas cannot repeat Oct. 7.

"Gaza must be demilitarized, and this can only happen if the Philadelphi corridor remains under firm control," he said, claiming Israeli troops had discovered dozens of tunnels under the border.

He said Israel would only consider withdrawing from the corridor when presented with an alternative force to police it.

"Bring me anyone who will actually show us ... that they can actually prevent the recurrence" of

smuggling, he said. "I don't see that happening right now. And until that happens, we're there."

Families of remaining hostages have stepped up their demands that he agree to a deal after Hamas killed six hostages last week as Israeli troops appeared to be moving to rescue them. In angry public statements, hostage families have accused Netanyahu of blocking a deal and potentially sacrificing their loved ones' lives for the sake of holding the border strip. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis have taken to the streets in recent days, calling for a deal and saying time is running out.

Netanyahu pushed back against the pressure, saying his stance was necessary to "ensure Hamas doesn't pose a threat to Israel."

"I can understand the torment of families," he said. "But the responsibility of leaders is not merely to share the sentiment, the emotion, but also to exercise judgment."

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WORLD

Armed man killed near Israeli Consulate in Munich

Associated Press

MUNICH — Police exchanged fire with a gunman near the Israeli Consulate in Munich on Thursday, fatally wounding him. Authorities said they believe he was planning to attack the consulate on the anniversary of the attack on the 1972 Munich Olympics.

No one else was hurt in the shootout shortly after 9 a.m. in an area near the consulate and a museum on the city's Nazi-era history. Officers had been alerted to a person carrying a gun in the Karolinenplatz area, near downtown Mun-

ich, and returned fire when he shot at them. The suspect, who was carrying an old long gun with a bayonet attached to it, died at the scene.

Police said the gunman was an 18-year-old from Austria, but investigators were still looking into his motive. They didn't give further details on the suspect, who left a car nearby, except to say that he lived in Austria.

"We have to assume that an attack on the Israeli Consulate possibly was planned early today," Bavaria's top security official, state Interior Minister Joachim Herr-

mann, told reporters at the scene. "It's obvious that, if someone parks here within sight of the Israeli Consulate ... then starts shooting, it most probably isn't a coincidence."

Prosecutors and police said in a statement later Thursday they currently believe the plan was for "a terrorist attack, also with respect to the consulate of the state of Israel," and that they are still investigating the man's motive.

Thursday was the 52nd anniversary of the attack by Palestinian militants on the Israeli delegation

at the 1972 Munich Olympics, which ended with the death of 11 Israeli team members, a West German police officer and five of the assailants.

Police said there was no evidence of any more suspects connected to the shooting.

The Austria Press Agency reported that the assailant, an Austrian citizen with Bosnian roots, had come to the attention of authorities there last year but wasn't considered high-risk.

Israel's Foreign Ministry said the consulate was closed Thursday

for a memorial ceremony for the 1972 attack and none of its staff was hurt. The nearby Munich Documentation Center for the History of National Socialism, which opened in 2015 and explores the city's past as the birthplace of the Nazi movement, also said its employees were unharmed.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog said he spoke with German counterpart Frank-Walter Steinmeier. He wrote on the social media platform X that "together we expressed our shared condemnation and horror" at the shooting.

French woman testifies in case accusing husband of inviting rape

Associated Press

AVIGNON, France — A woman who was allegedly drugged by her now ex-husband so that she could be raped while unconscious by other men testified Thursday that her world collapsed when police uncovered the years of alleged abuse.

Speaking in a calm and clear voice, Gisele Pelicot detailed to the court in the southern French city of Avignon the horror of discovering that her former spouse systematically filmed the suspected rapes by dozens of men — storing thousands of images that police investigators later found.

"It's unbearable," she testified. "I have so much to say that I don't always know where to start."

Dominique Pelicot, now 71, and 50 other men are standing trial on charges of aggravated rape and face up to 20 years in prison. The trial started on Monday and is expected to run until December. Thursday marked the first time that Gisele Pelicot had testified.

The abuse began in 2011 and lasted almost a decade.

The Associated Press doesn't generally identify victims of sexual crimes. But Gisele Pelicot's lawyer, Stephane Babonneau, said she accepted that her name be published in the same way that she insisted that the trial be held in public.

She told the court that she hopes her testimony might help spare other women from similar ordeals. She said she pushed for the trial in open court in solidarity with other women who go unrecognized as victims of sexual crimes.

She and her husband of 50 years had three children. When they retired, the couple moved into a house in a small town in Provence, before her world was torn apart in late 2020.

"I thought we were a close couple," she told the court.

But a security agent caught her husband taking photos of women's crotches in a supermarket,

leading investigators to search Dominique Pelicot's phone and computer.

They found thousands of photographs and videos of men appearing to rape Gisele in their home while she appears to be unconscious.

Shocked, she left her husband after police showed her some of the images.

"For me, everything collapses," she testified. "These are scenes of barbarity, of rape."

Police investigators found communications Dominique Pelicot allegedly sent on a messaging website commonly used by criminals, in which he invited men to sexually abuse his wife. The website has been shut down.

Crude details of the alleged abuses, which investigators said began in 2011, and of the elaborate system Pelicot put into place over 10 years have emerged during the trial.

During questioning earlier, Dominique Pelicot told investigators



LEWIS JOLY/AP

Gisele Pelicot, center, arrives with her children in the Avignon court house, in Avignon, southern France, on Thursday.

that men invited to the couple's home had to follow certain rules — they could not talk loudly, had to remove their clothes in the kitchen, could not wear perfume nor smell of tobacco.

Because Dominique Pelicot

videotaped the alleged rapes, police were able to track down — over a period of two years — a majority of the 72 suspects they were seeking.

Besides Pelicot, 50 other men, aged 22 to 70, are standing trial.

Ugandan Olympic athlete dies after being severely burned by boyfriend

Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya — Ugandan Olympic athlete Rebecca Cheptegei has died at a Kenyan hospital where she was being treated after 80% of her body was burned in an attack by her boyfriend.

The country's sports minister said authorities must do more to combat gender-based violence.

A spokesperson at Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital in Eldoret city, Owen Menach, confirmed Cheptegei's death on Thursday. Menach said the long-distance runner died early in the morning after her organs failed. She had been fully sedated on admission at the hospital.

Cheptegei, 33, competed in the

women's marathon at the Paris Olympics less than a month before the attack. She finished in 44th place.

Her father, Joseph Cheptegei, told journalists at the hospital that he had lost a daughter who was "very supportive" and hopes to get justice.

"As it is now, the criminal who harmed my daughter is a murderer and I am yet to see what the security officials are doing," the father said. "He is still free and might even flee."

Trans Nzoia County Police

Commander Jeremiah ole Kosio said Monday that Cheptegei's boyfriend, Dickson Ndiema, bought a can of gasoline, poured it on her and set her ablaze during a disagreement Sunday. Ndiema was also burned and was being treated at the same hospital.

Menach said Ndiema was still in the intensive care unit with burns over 30% of his body but was "improving and stable."

Cheptegei's parents said their daughter bought land in Trans Nzoia to be near the county's many athletic training centers. A report filed by the local chief said the two were heard fighting over the land where her house was built before the attack.



Cheptegei

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WEEKEND



Madden NFL 25
a crowd-pleaser

Video games, Page 31

He's back He's back

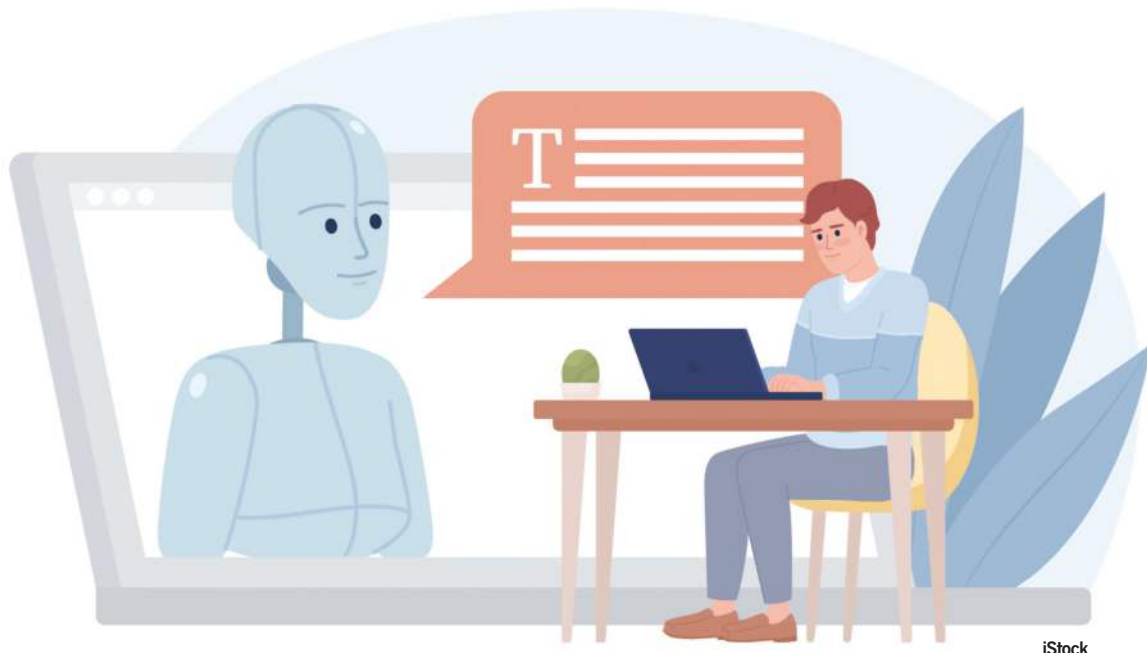
36 years after the original, Michael Keaton digs up his mischievous trickster ghost for another round in 'Beetlejuice Beetlejuice'

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Warner Bros. Pictures

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY



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A not-so-novel approach

National Novel Writing Month faces backlash over allowing AI

BY ADELA SULIMAN
The Washington Post

The nonprofit behind National Novel Writing Month, an annual tradition in which writers try to crank out the first 50,000 words of a novel in November, is facing backlash from authors after it said it would not object to the use of artificial intelligence in its popular event.

AI use in literature has stoked pushback in recent years. Last fall, blockbuster writers including George R.R. Martin, Jodi Picoult and Jonathan Franzen banded together to sue ChatGPT maker OpenAI for allegedly using their work to train its artificial intelligence tools. A growing group of artists, musicians and Hollywood writers are also trying to stop tech companies from benefiting from their work without paying for it.

Here's what to know about the latest literary controversy.

How does it work?

National Novel Writing Month, or NaNoWriMo, began in 1999 as a 30-day literary challenge in which entrants tried to write 50,000 words of a novel — roughly the length of F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby."

"Hundreds of thousands of people around the world" now participate each November, the organization says, with the goal of finishing the month with a first draft of a novel in any genre.

Anyone age 13 and older can take part, including professional and hobbyist writers. "NaNoWriMo is for anyone who has ever thought about writing a novel," the nonprofit says.

The NaNoWriMo organization provides resources for writers, virtual events, chat forums and

offers from sponsors. When the event is over, writers may choose to revise their manuscripts, publish traditionally or self-publish, or simply share their stories with friends and family.

What's the problem?

The furor began last weekend, when NaNoWriMo posted a statement on its website saying that the organization "does not explicitly support any specific approach to writing, nor does it explicitly condemn any approach, including the use of AI."

NaNoWriMo said it would "recognize and respect writers who believe that AI tools are right for them. We recognize that some members of our community stand staunchly against AI for themselves, and that's perfectly fine. As individuals, we have the freedom to make our own decisions."

To condemn AI, the organization said, "would be to ignore classist and ableist issues surrounding the use of the technology," noting that issues around the use of AI "tie to questions around privilege." The group argued that "not all writers have the financial ability to hire humans to help at certain phases of their writing," and that for some writers, AI is a practical solution, rather than ideological.

"Not all brains have same abilities and not all writers function at the same level of education or proficiency in the language in which they are writing," NaNoWriMo wrote. "Some brains and ability levels require outside help or accommodations to achieve certain goals."

The statement goes a step further than last year's comment on the topic, in which NaNoWriMo said writers were welcome to

use artificial intelligence to "assist your creative process" but that utilizing AI to "write your entire novel would defeat the purpose of the challenge."

How are people reacting?

NaNoWriMo's openness to writers using AI has sparked discontent among some authors and writers associated with the organization. At least a few members have said they would no longer participate in the annual challenge.

Fantasy and young adult fiction writer Daniel José Older stepped down from the NaNoWriMo Writers Board on Tuesday because, he said in a statement, NaNoWriMo "has taken a wild and ridiculous stand in favor of Generative AI." He said the decision was "unconscionable" and "harming writers" as he urged others to also resign.

Older also noted that NaNoWriMo is sponsored by ProWriting-Aid, an AI-powered writing assistant.

Maureen Johnson, an author of young adult novels, posted on X that she would step down from the board of NaNoWriMo's Young Writers Program because of the AI statement.

Novelist and essayist Roxane Gay said on social media that she was "embarrassed" for NaNoWriMo.

One writer, Laura Elliott, reacted strongly to NaNoWriMo's assertion that opposing the use of AI would be ableist. She wrote on X that as a "disabled writer," she was "furious."

"Disabled writers do not need the immoral theft machine to write because we lack the ability to be creative without plagiarism — encouraging AI is a slap in the face to all writers," Elliott wrote.

Hub adapters ensure tech needs are covered

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

The change to USB-C on many computers comes with advantages and disadvantages. The biggest disadvantage to many is that you get fewer ports, but an advantage is that they can be expanded easily, even for power delivery.

EZQuest's USB-C Slim Gen 2 Hub Adapter 6-in-1 is one of the better accessories I've seen if you need more USB-C ports with a small profile and portable accessories. Every user has different needs, and this hub suits most, if not all. It can charge and connect memory card readers, flash drives and external hard drives.

The plug-and-play hub does not need software or drivers, is simple to use and covers all needs. To get started, plug in the included 19.6-inch nylon braided strain relief cable. The removable cable is critical; when the cable is permanently attached to the hub, if the cable goes bad, the hub is done. If the removable cable stops working with the USB-C Slim Gen 2 Hub Adapter, you can simply get a new one.

Each port is listed as 5V, 1.5A, with 7.5 watts of power output, and the total shared power is 15 watts when using all ports simultaneously. Four of the ports are Gen 2 with a 10 Gbps speed when used all at once. A single port can be used for USB-C 4K 60Hz video output, and another is USB-C 100W Power Delivery port version 3.0, which includes pass-thru charging up to 80-watt output.

There are some specifications for power delivery. For complete charging of tablets and mobile phones (iOS or Android devices), the power adapter must be 45 watts; otherwise, pass-through charging is not supported. Laptop charging must use the power delivery port to get at least 20 watts of power. Specifications for other devices, including desktop power delivery, are listed on the EZQuest website.

The hub's aluminum housing,

which measures 4.64 by 1.32 by 0.39 inches, lies flat and is accessible from wherever you want to store it. The EZQuest USB-C Slim Gen 2 Hub Adapter 6-in-1 is Thunderbolt 3 and 4 compatible. It is listed to work with all computers with USB-C/Thunderbolt ports and USB-C smartphones and tablets. A complete compatibility list is also on the website.

Online: ezq.com; \$79.99

The Satechi Thunderbolt 4 multi-display docking station is for more advanced users with a wide variety of docking options. The well-built AC-powered docking station is rock-solid in performance and has connections with fast transfer speeds to support higher-end devices such as 4K monitors.

There are enough ports to connect up to four external monitors with 4K/60Hz resolution. If you want the four-monitor setup, two connect to the HDMI ports, and the other two connect via Thunderbolt 4. When a single Thunderbolt 4 port is used, you can achieve ultra-crisp viewing with a resolution of up to 8K/60Hz on compatible devices.

The Space Gray hub, built with aircraft-grade aluminum supports, includes three Thunderbolt 4/USB-C and two USB-A 3.2 Gen 2 ports with transfer speeds of 10 Gbps. In addition, there is an Ethernet connection, an audio jack and a DC power port. The UHS-II SD 4.0 memory card reader has transfer speeds up to 312 MB/s, which can transfer about 1,000 high-resolution photos in 20 seconds. Power delivery will supply up to 96 watts. Each of the Thunderbolt 4 ports (USB-C) will supply up to 15 watts each and 40 Gbps transfer speeds.

Satechi touts that the elite docking station (8.42 by 3.75 by 0.72 inches) allows users to daisy-chain up to six devices at once. A 180-watt power supply is included with a US C5 cable and a Thunderbolt 4 cable to power the docking station.

A full list of device compatibility is on the Satechi site.

Online: satechi.net; \$299.99



SATECHI/TNS

Satechi Thunderbolt's 4 multi-display docking station is for heavy use.

WEEKEND: FALL MOVIE PREVIEW

The box office vs. ballot box

Hollywood seems to be trying to distract from election, and also play off some of its themes

BY JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

Three weeks after the U.S. presidential election in November, Ridley Scott will present his latest big-screen opus. “Gladiator II” returns the prodigious filmmaker to ancient Rome for a story about a power, the survival of Rome and the fate of democracy.

“Hopefully,” Scott says, “it will be a good omen.”

This fall, Hollywood will be trying — with everything from swaggering historical epics like “Gladiator II” to the high-seas adventure of “Moana 2” — to capture the nation’s attention at a time when much of it will be directed at the polls.

Already, Hollywood has played a co-starring role in the election. The Democratic Convention in August was packed with stars like Oprah Winfrey. Republican vice-presidential candidate, JD Vance, was first introduced to many by the 2020 big-screen adaptation of his “Hillbilly Elegy.” And it was George Clooney, who this month stars in the Apple Studios film “Wolfs” alongside Brad Pitt, who was one of the most prominent voices to urge President Joe Biden to step down from the race.

Hollywood, famously progressive, has always had to strike a balance between the liberal leanings of the majority of its creatives with the big-tent demands of pop culture. In recent years, that’s grown increasingly tricky.

At the same time, the movie industry, after several years hobbled by the pandemic and strikes, is striving to recapture its all-audiences populism — and all the billions that can come with it. Disney chief Robert A. Iger last year signaled the need “to entertain first,” adding “it’s not about messages.”

This past summer, Disney led Hollywood out of a box-office slump with a pair of billion-earners in “Inside Out 2” and “Deadpool vs. Wolverine.” Ticket sales for the summer rose to \$3.7 billion, according to Comscore — less than the traditional \$4 billion benchmark, but significantly better than initially feared after a painfully slow start.

One of the fall’s likeliest candidates to continue the trend is “Moana 2.” Dwayne Johnson,

who returns as the voice of Maui, earlier this year said he wouldn’t endorse a candidate in the election out of concern for the division it would cause.

Like many of the films opening this fall, “Moana 2” (opening Nov. 27), as a story about a strong female protagonist and a celebration of Pacific Islander culture, could resonate very differently, depending on the outcome of the election.

“If it resonates for people in a different way, I can’t control that,” says Dana Ledoux Miller, who directed “Moana 2” with David Derrick Jr. and Jason Hand. “I’m so excited about what this story is and what it means to be a person in a community who wants something more for the world they live in and for the future. We’ll see what happens, but the movie is what it is.”

Movies this year have largely only approached political themes from a distance. “Civil War,” by Alex Garland, imagined the U.S. in all-out warfare. “War Game,” directed by Tony Gerber and Jesse Moss, gathered real political figures for an insurrection simulation.

But “The Apprentice” will offer the movie version of an October surprise. The film, the release of which was announced just last week, stars Sebastian Stan as a young Donald Trump under the tutelage of Roy Cohn (Jeremy Strong). The Trump campaign has called it “election interference by Hollywood elites.” Its director, Ali Abbasi, argues filmmakers have a responsibility to face current poli-

“Our story aspires to be about the distance people travel to connect with each other, about seeing the other as not the other, about living in a world where sometimes the truth is not real.”

tics head-on.

“I’ve been hearing a lot: Let’s make a movie about the Second World War or the Civil War — just go back in time,” says Abbasi. “They say a Civil War movie is a good metaphor for the way our society is now. I’m like: Our society is extremely exciting, com-



DISNEY/AP

Auli'i Cravalho voices the lead in “Moana 2.” The movie, about a strong female and a celebration of Pacific Islander culture, could resonate differently depending on the outcome of the U.S. presidential election.



BRIARCLIFF ENTERTAINMENT/AP

Maria Bakalova, left, and Sebastian Stan star in the Donald Trump film “The Apprentice,” which will be released just a few weeks before the election.



PARAMOUNT PICTURES/AP

Director Ridley Scott, left, shown with actor Paul Mescal on the set of “Gladiator II,” says the themes of the film are far from ancient history.

plex, complicated, has huge problems and opportunities. Why not address them? We have a (expletive) responsibility.”

As usual this fall, studios will trot out a new wave of awards contenders. Unlike last year, when Christopher Nolan’s “Oppenheimer” came into the season

“The Piano Lesson,” Steve McQueen’s “Blitz” and LaMell Ross’ “Nickel Boys.”

No matter what’s happening on the news, it won’t be hard to find song and dance on the big screen.

Upcoming musicals include “Joker: Folie à Deux,” “Moana 2” and the two-part adaptation of

open against “Gladiator II” in the fall’s most “Barbeheimer”-like weekend matchup.

In “Wicked,” which imagines the story behind the opposing witches of “The Wizard of Oz,” Platt sees a story with relevance to the current political climate.

“It’s a significant election for both of us,” says Platt. “But our story aspires to be about the distance people travel to connect with each other, about seeing the other as not the other, about living in a world where sometimes the truth is not real.”

During the making of “Gladiator II,” Scott — a self-professed news junkie — continually felt that his film was about much more than ancient history. Russia’s war in Ukraine unspooled during the film’s making, the director noted.

“You are living during what I call democracy against tyrants, tyranny,” says Scott. “We’re looking in this film as about tyrannical leadership against people who try to rectify that. When is history not about that?”

Marc Platt
“Wicked” producer

the clear favorite, no such front-runner has yet emerged. At the Venice, Telluride, Toronto and New York film festivals, notable premieres include Todd Phillips’ anticipated sequel “Joker: Folie à Deux,” Edward Berger’s “Conclave,” Marielle Heller’s “Nightbitch,” Malcolm Washington’s

the Broadway show “Wicked.”

“Wicked” director Jon M. Chu and producer Marc Platt were confident enough in their film, starring Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande, that they opted to split it into two. (Part 2 will release in November 2025.)

“Wicked,” opening Nov. 22, will

WEEKEND: FALL MOVIE PREVIEW



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

Cynthia Erivo plays Elphaba in the first and much-anticipated installment of “Wicked,” coming out Nov. 22. The film also stars Ariana Grande, Jeff Goldblum and Michelle Yeoh.

Most likely to cast a spell over us

The 33 most anticipated fall films include a witch, The Joker, an ‘Apprentice,’ a stop-motion snail and LEGO Pharrell

‘My Old Ass’

Sept. 13 in theaters

A psychedelic trip makes for an unusual meeting in the latest from director Megan Park (“The Fallout”). After sipping some mushroom-infused tea, 18-year-old Elliott (Maisy Stella) finds herself joined by her future self, played by Aubrey Plaza, on a lakeside camping trip outside of Toronto.

‘Will & Harper’

Sept. 13 in theaters; on Netflix Sept. 27

When former “Saturday Night Live” writer Harper Steele came out as trans, she sent an email to friends and family. An old friend and “SNL” colleague, Will Ferrell, responded with the suggestion that they travel the country together. The result is this tender and contemplative documentary, by director Josh Greenbaum, about their 16-day road trip.

‘Speak No Evil’

Sept. 13 in theaters

Christian Tafdrup’s 2022 Danish horror film was potent enough that it led to this Blumhouse remake just two years later. James McAvoy, Mackenzie Davis and Aisling Franciosi star in a thriller about how much can go wrong on a idyllic countryside vacation.

‘A Different Man’

Sept. 20 in theaters

Sebastian Stan stars as Edward, an actor with neurofibromatosis who, after experimental surgery, is cured of his facial disfigurement. But the changes for Edward, who lives next to a friendly playwright (Renate Reinsve of “The Worst Person in the World”), turn out to be a mixed blessing. With a compelling co-starring turn by actor Adam Pearson, who has neurofibromatosis.

By The Associated Press

The seasonal differences of the movie calendar have eroded a little bit with time. Neither of the past two Oscar juggernauts — “Oppenheimer” and “Everything Everywhere All at Once” — opened in the fall, the traditional launching pad of Academy Awards hopefuls.

And just the same, fall tends to be nearly as stuffed as summer is with sequels, horror thrillers and would-be blockbusters. Still, some of the old rules still apply. A large percentage of 2024’s best movies are set to unspool in the coming months.

So with that in mind, here are some of the most anticipated films of this fall, from large to small and everything in between.



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

James McAvoy plays the father of a family with a dark secret in “Speak No Evil.”



AMAZON/AP

Maisy Stella, left, and Aubrey Plaza play the same character in “My Old Ass.”

‘His Three Daughters’

Sept. 20 on Netflix

Writer-director Azazel Jacobs’ latest stars Carrie Coon, Natasha Lyonne and Elizabeth Olsen as sisters who gather in the New York apartment of their dying father. A highlight of the season, “His Three Daughters” is one of the most memorable tales of siblinghood, and of a death in the family, in recent memory.

‘The Substance’

Sept. 20 on Netflix

A Cannes Film Festival hit, Coralie Fargeat’s body-horror parable stars Demi Moore as a TV star who’s deemed too old by male producers. A mysterious service, though, offers her the ability to change into a younger twin (Margaret Qualley) — so long as she doesn’t remain so for too long. “The Substance” seems sure to go down as a classic satire of Hollywood ageism and youth obsession.

‘Wolfs’

Sept. 20 in theaters; Apple TV+ Sept. 27

Brad Pitt and George Clooney play rival fixers who discover they’ve been hired for the same job in Jon Watts’ comic caper. Presumably more charming actors weren’t available, so Watts had to suffice with Clooney and Pitt.

‘Super/Man: The Christopher Reeve Story’

Sept. 21 in theaters

Ian Bonhôte and Peter Ettedgui’s documentary seeks to capture the full arc of Reeve’s life, from the superstardom that followed 1978’s “Superman” to his resiliency following an accident that left him paralyzed from the neck down in 1995.

SEE SPELL ON PAGE 17

WEEKEND: FALL MOVIE PREVIEW

Spell: Sequel to 'Joker' a musical

FROM PAGE 16

'The Wild Robot'

Sept. 27 in theaters

This animated adaptation of Peter Brown's popular book series follows a robot (voiced by Lupita Nyong'o) who crash-lands in a forested wildness where it, seeking a task, raises a runt goose (Kit Connor) until it's able to fly.

'Megalopolis'

Sept. 27 in theaters

Francis Ford Coppola's first film in 13 years stars Adam Driver as Caesar, a visionary with dreams of a utopian New York. Giancarlo Esposito, Aubrey Plaza, Laurence Fishburne and Shia LeBeouf co-star in this wildly ambitious epic that has already earned a wide spectrum of reaction.

'Joker: Folie à Deux'

Oct. 4 in theaters

Five years after their rabble-rousing Oscar-nominated DC Comics blockbuster, director Todd Phillips and Joaquin Phoenix are back for more antihero fun. This time, it's a musical, and Lady Gaga is playing Harley Quinn.

'The Outrun'

Oct. 4 in theaters

Saoirse Ronan stars in Nora Fingscheidt's adaptation of Amy Liprot's memoir of addiction. Ronan plays a young woman just out of rehab and returning home to the Orkney Islands in Scotland.

'The Apprentice'

Oct. 11 in theaters

Opening just weeks before the U.S. election is Ali Abbasi's portrait of a young Donald Trump (Sebastian Stan) under the tutelage of Roy Cohn (Jeremy Strong). The film, which the Trump reelection campaign has called "pure malicious defamation," is made with some of the '80s aesthetics of its setting.

'Piece by Piece'

Oct. 11 in theaters

What's cooler than a documentary about your life? What about a documentary made with Lego bricks? In this film, directed by Morgan Neville ("Won't You Be My Neighbor?"), Pharrell Williams tells his life story brick by brick.

'Saturday Night'

Oct. 11 in theaters

While all eyes will be on "Saturday Night Live" on the small screen this fall, the sketch comedy show will also have an origin story in theaters. Director Jason Reitman ("Juno," "Up in the Air") directs this mid-'70s dramatization of the chaotic infancy of the NBC institution, with Gabriel LaBelle as creator Lorne Michaels.

'We Live in Time'

Oct. 11 in theaters

Florence Pugh and Andrew Garfield star in this human-scaled drama, directed by John Crowley ("Brooklyn") about a relationship charted not always chronologically, through romance, sickness and parenthood. Tissues are recommended.



DREAMWORKS ANIMATION, UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

Roz, voiced by Lupita N'yongo, left, and Brightbill, voiced by Kit Connor, form an unusual bond in the animated film "The Wild Robot."



SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES/AP

Kieran Culkin, left, and Jesse Eisenberg play cousins in "A Real Pain," which Eisenberg also wrote and directed.



LIONSGATE/AP

Adam Driver dreams of a utopian New York in "Megalopolis," the first film from director Francis Ford Coppola in 13 years.



FOCUS FEATURES/AP

Singer-songwriter Pharrell Williams' life is told in Lego bricks in "Piece By Piece."

'Anora'

Oct. 18 in theaters

Sean Baker ("The Florida Project") has long been one of most vital American independent directors. But he takes a step further with "Anora," this year's Palme d'Or winner at Cannes. It stars Mikey Madison as a Brooklyn sex worker whose Vegas marriage to the son of a Russian oligarch prompts a farcical effort by his family's henchmen to have it annulled.

'Nickel Boys'

Oct. 25 in theaters

RaMell Ross' feature directorial debut, selected as the opening night film at the New York Film Festival, adapts Colson Whitehead's 2019 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about two Black teens (Ethan Harisse, Brandon Wilson) who become wards of juvenile reform school in 1960s Florida. Ross previously directed the Oscar-nomi-



PARAMOUNT PICTURES/AP

Paul Mescal stars in "Gladiator II," arriving 24 years after the first movie.

'Venom: The Last Dance'

Oct. 25 in theaters

Tom Hardy is back as the most volatile split-personality superhuman: Eddie Brock and his symbiote Venom — arguably the most captivating double act in comic book movies. In this, the third in the series following 2018's "Venom" and 2021's "Venom: Let There Be Carnage," both are on the run.

'Dahomey'

Oct. 25 in theaters

Writer-director Mati Diop ("Atlantics") creates testimonials for a few dozen African artworks taken from the West African kingdom of Dahomey during France's colonial rule in this, the winner of the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival. Diop dramatizes the artworks' stories



BRIARCLIFF ENTERTAINMENT/AP

Maria Bakalova, left, and Sebastian Stan become Trumps in "The Apprentice."

through what she's called "magical documentary."

'Memoir of a Snail'

Oct. 25 in theaters

Adam Elliot's stop-motion drama, some 10 years in the making, follows the life of Grace Puddle (voiced by Sarah Snook), who begins collecting snails after her mother's death. After her father dies, too, she and her twin brother (Kodi Smit-McPhee) are separated.

'Blitz'

Nov. 1 in theaters

Director Steve McQueen ("12 Years a Slave") returns to World War II for this drama set in a London under siege from Nazi bombs. Saoirse Ronan plays a single mother trying to protect her young son (Elliott Heffernan).

SEE SPELL ON PAGE 18

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEW

Spell: Pope, a piano and a Disney princess on the way

FROM PAGE 17

'Conclave'

Nov. 1 in theaters

A new Pope is needed. Enter Ralph Fiennes. In director Edward Berger's follow-up to "All Quiet on the Western Front," Fiennes stars as Cardinal Lawrence, one of the Vatican figures who gather for a conclave to choose a new pontiff. When Lawrence uncovers a secret that others would rather stay hidden, the conclave teeters toward going up in smoke.

'Emilia Pérez'

Nov. 1 in theaters; Netflix Nov. 13

It's not every day we get a musical about a Mexican drug lord who transitions into a woman. Even more surprising is that French director Jacques Audiard pulls it off. Zoe Saldana, Karla Sofia Gascón and Selena Gomez star in one of the more audacious movies of the year.

'Here'

Nov. 1 in theaters

Robert Zemeckis and Tom Hanks have a long and fruitful history together dating back to "Forrest Gump" and "Cast Away." Appearing to be filmed in one take, Zemeckis' "Here" chronicles one spot of land through history. After a home is built on it, Hanks and Robin Wright move in and raise a family.

'A Real Pain'

Nov. 1 in theaters

Jesse Eisenberg wrote, directed and stars in this buddy dramedy about two cousins (the other is played by Kieran Culkin) who travel to Poland to honor their grandmother. The two are near opposites played to type: Eisenberg is a sensitive neurotic, Culkin a charismatic idler. Together, they create a funny, poignant two-hander.

'Bird'

Nov. 8 in theaters

"Bird" is British filmmaker Andrea Arnold's first film since 2016's "American Honey." She returns to a working-class English backdrop for a gritty story laced with fable. A 12-year-old girl (Nykia Adams) who lives with her father (Barry Keoghan) is visited by a peculiar stranger (Franz Rogowski).

'Heretic'

Nov. 15 in theaters

The distance Hugh Grant has traveled from rom-com protagonist seems likely to reach a new peak in this A24 horror thriller from "A Quiet Place" co-writers Scott Beck and Bryan Woods.

Sophie Thatcher and Chloe East play a pair of proselytizing Mormon missionaries who knock on the wrong door.

'All We Imagine as Light'

Nov. 15 in theaters

Payal Kapadia's ode to female friendship, a prize-winner at Cannes, is about two Mumbai nurses (Kani Kusruti, Divya Prabha) striving for love and happiness while working and commuting long hours in the Indian metropolis.

'Gladiator II'

Nov. 22 in theaters

Twenty-four years after "Gladiator," Ridley Scott is back with more swords, sandals and ... a rhino. That horned mammal is not the only new addition to the Colosseum. Paul Mescal, Denzel Washington and Pedro Pascal star in this sequel, set several decades following the events of the original movie.

'Wicked'

Nov. 22 in theaters

Before "Wicked" was a Broadway smash, it was a 1995 book and nearly a movie. The big screen was, perhaps, always the most fitting medium for a "Wizard of the Oz" riff. In this Jon M. Chu-directed film, Cynthia Erivo plays the woman who'll become the Wicked Witch of the West, while Ariana Grande plays Glinda. This "Wicked" will be split in two, with Part 2 arriving in 2025.

'The Piano Lesson'

Nov. 22 in theaters

In this adaptation of August Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, Denzel Washington produces while son Malcolm Washington directs, and son John David Washington stars. Led by a powerhouse performance by Danielle Deadwyler, "The Piano Lesson" depicts a Pittsburgh family in 1936 reckoning with a family heirloom, a piano, that doubles as a metaphor for the legacy of slavery.

'Moana 2'

Nov. 27 in theaters

A little "Moana" confusion would be understandable. There's a separate live-action "Moana" in development and this film was originally planned as a series. But "Moana 2" ultimately came together as a big-screen sequel to the 2016 original. Lin-Manuel Miranda isn't returning, but most everyone else is, including voice actors Auli'i Cravalho and Dwayne Johnson. The film, set about three years after the original, finds Moana heading back on an ocean adventure, this time with her sister.



Warner Bros. Pictures photos

Winona Ryder, right, returns as Lydia and Jenna Ortega plays her daughter in "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice."

Reinventing the weird

'Beetlejuice Beetlejuice' adds more plot but is less original

BY TY BURR

The Washington Post

When "Beetlejuice" was released 36 years ago, director Tim Burton was not yet a household name. Winona Ryder, making her third movie, was all of 16 years old. Michael Keaton was in an early career slump. And no one had any idea what that movie title was about.

Nearly four decades is enough to turn anything into an institution, though, and since Burton's scruffy little ghost comedy has already been repurposed as an animated TV series, a video game and a 2019 Broadway musical, it's a wonder a simple sequel took this long. Here "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" is at last, and a mixed bag it is, too, with highs that are almost up there with the maniacal, macabre invention of the original and lows that are big-studio business as usual.

It matters that the three returning actors from the first movie are the right three — Keaton, Ryder and Catherine O'Hara as the lavishly pretentious Delia Deetz — that Burton is still in the director's chair, and that Danny Elfman's musical score, a character in its own right, returns like a runaway calliope. Taken as a whole, "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" is entertaining enough for a night out at the megaplex or a lazy Saturday streaming at home, but in plot and impact, it points up how the movies have changed since 1988, and not for the better.

The main difference between "Beetlejuice" and "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" is that the new movie has a plot — about five of them, in fact. Lydia Deetz (Ryder), the Goth teen from the first film, is all grown up and monetizing her ability to see dead people in a hit TV show where she investigates other people's haunted mansions. The one specter she doesn't want to see is Betelgeuse (Keaton), the grotty demon in the black-and-white zoot suit, but lately he's been popping up in Lydia's field of vision, sending her into panic attacks.

Lydia has a teenage daughter, Astrid (Jenna Ortega), who hates her mom and, more heretically, doesn't believe in ghosts.

Grandma Delia is as self-absorbed as ever, with O'Hara's five years as Moira on "Schitt's Creek" adding fresh layers of narcissism, but Grandpa Charles has been dispatched in a dandy stop-motion shark attack.

Back in the bureaucracy of the undead, Betelgeuse is overseeing the local shrunken-head call center, until he gets word that his ex-wife Delores,



Michael Keaton is the scruffy, deranged monster Betelgeuse who's always listening for his name.

a soul-sucking succubus, is gunning for him. Delores is played with witchy authority by Italian movie star Monica Bellucci, which gives "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" a needed touch of demented class.

Did I mention the undead actor turned cop played with extra-strength mustard by Willem Dafoe? Or Jeremy (Arthur Conti), Astrid's adolescent love interest, who may have a trick or two up his sleeve? All this to-ing and fro-ing is, in a sense, a betrayal of the first "Beetlejuice," which didn't have a storyline so much as a collection of bizarrely hilarious scenes stuck together with Edward Gorey-esque creativity, enjoyably cheap Claymation effects and a great deal of enthusiasm.

For what it's worth, the double-headed sandworms are back, and Keaton brings a scrofulous, lowdown energy that's a delight to witness in a man well into his Medicare years. He's still Betelgeuse; he's never stopped being Betelgeuse, just as Ryder has never really stopped being Lydia amid all the stranger things in her career. O'Hara, of course, is a living legend.

"Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" is at its best — which is more often than you'd think — when it relocates that vein of gonzo surrealism and at its deflated worst whenever it sticks to the story. It's sprightly enough to make a lot of audiences and Warner Bros. bean-counters happy, but it also confirms that Burton, one of the most distinct visionaries in American film history, has become a corporate repurposing machine. It's not insane, and that hurts.

"Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" is rated PG-13 for violent content, macabre and bloody images, strong language, some suggestive material and drug use. Running time: 104 minutes. Now playing in select on-base theaters.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Grandeur, peace in Norway's fjord country

Though I initially came to Norway to visit relatives — three of my grandparents grew up there — nature is the real draw here, even for those with family ties. It's a land of intense beauty, with famously steep mountains and deep fjords carved out and shaped by an ancient ice age.

Traveling through fjord country, I find myself spending lots of time sitting on porches at Victorian-era hotels, mesmerized by the Norwegian mountains. Rather than jagged, they're bald and splotchy, with snowfields on top and characteristic cliffs plunging into inky water.

There's something poetic about summer evenings on a fjord. The world is bathed in a warm, mellow and steady light that hardly changes. The persistent call of gulls and the lazy gulping of small boats taking on little waves provide a relaxing soundtrack. Sometimes I'll stroll through a village, enjoying the sight of blond cherubs running barefoot through the stalled twilight. Cobble lanes lead past shiplap houses to sheer cliffs. Half the sky is taken up by the black rock of a mountain.

It's a glorious setting, but the tourist season in fjord country is

short — just July and early August. In the summer, restaurants and hotels need to scramble like chipmunks to survive the winter. Wondering how that affects the job scene, I notice that most of the employees are seasonal. On the front line are eager Norwegian kids visiting home for the summer. In the back, hard-working immigrants cook and clean. Local hoteliers and restaurateurs probably think that tourists



Rick Steves

don't come to some quaint fjord village to be served goat cheese by a guy from Pakistan or fish balls by a woman from Romania.

The food here is fine, but nobody visits Norway for its cuisine. It seems that each Scandinavian nation has one inedible dish that is cherished with a perverse but patriotic sentimentality. These dishes, which often originated during a famine, now remind the young of their ancestors' suffering. Norway's penitential food, lutefisk (dried cod scured in lye and then soaked for days in water), is used for Christmas ... and for jokes. While travelers swing from



Rick Steves

Elaborate stave churches are architectural reminders of Norway's Middle Ages.

castle to castle through Germany, in Norway we seem to swing from stave church to stave church. These wooden wonders are the only grand architecture surviving from Norway's Middle Ages. They're built like upside-down Viking ships, supported on each corner by staves (thick posts). Medieval Norway was essentially a society built of

wood. Fires were commonplace.

Driving the winding roads along the fjords — and diving for a pullout each time a car approaches — I realize that it's a very dangerous place — not because of the traffic (there's very little), but because of the scenery. It's tough to keep your eyes on the road.

Norway is expensive, but the

great scenery and affable ambience are free. When things get pricey, remind yourself that Norway is stacked with superlatives — the most mountainous, most scenic and most prosperous of all the Scandinavian countries.

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

Autumn marks cultural heritage opportunities on Continent

Once a year, usually in or around the month of September, historical monuments, notable buildings and sites of interest across Europe open their doors, rendering places that are normally off-limits to the general public fleetingly accessible. When a knowledgeable guide is added to the mix, a visit can be as informative as it is enjoyable. Here's a look at how several countries will be celebrating their cultural heritages this year.

Germany: The Tag des offenen Denkmals, or Day of Open Monuments, is an annual event held on the second



Karen Bradbury

Sunday in September each year. On the day, historic monuments across the land are open to the public free of charge. The theme of the day changes each year; in 2024, "True Signs: Witnesses of History" gives form to the openings and guided tours planned for this Sunday. The event takes place within the larger framework of European Heritage Days, a European-Union wide initiative designed to build awareness and appreciation of exceptional and historically significant properties.

With thousands of properties suddenly accessible, it can be difficult to know where to begin. Sites close to where the U.S. military has or had a presence might include the following:

Heidelberg: A redevelopment project known as paraSol will soon transform a building formerly owned by the U.S. military on Campbell Barracks into housing units. Those interested in seeing the building in its original condition are offered a tour at 1 p.m. Coffee and cake will be served onsite. The three-story building is found at Adelheid-Steinmann-Str. 2, 69126 Heidelberg. Online: parasol-heidelberg.de/aktuelles

Kaiserslautern: Burg Hohenecken is a castle ruin perched high on a hill above a part of town also known as Hohenecken. Built sometime between 1150 and 1250, the structure was destroyed in 1688 as part of the Palatinate



Hohenecken Castle Friends Association

Burg Hohenecken would make a fun destination for those near Kaiserslautern who aren't deterred by a steep walk.

War of Succession. Reaching the castle, located at Schloßstrasse 10, 67661 Kaiserslautern, entails a steep uphill walk. Opening hours are noon-5 p.m. Online: tinyurl.com/3bcukwa6

Stuttgart: The Gottlieb Daimler Memorial, in the Cannstatt district of town, is a property once owned by the engineer credited with the invention of the petroleum-fueled engine. The property consists of a workshop, garden house and ruins of the family's villa. On Sunday, the Daimler Tower, a circa-1894 building offering murals and a viewing platform, will be open. The tower is located at Taubenheimstr. 13, 70372 Stuttgart. Online: tinyurl.com/yc5k6fs4

Wiesbaden: The Dotzheim train station, from which a steam train once regularly traveled to Bad Schwalbach, opens its waiting rooms and signal box housing the railroad's levers and other equipment at Moritz-Hilf-Platz 2, 65199 Wiesbaden. Literary readings (in German) complement the open premises. Online: aartalbahn.de

The rotunda of Wiesbaden's Biebrich Palace contains a hall where weddings and other special events regularly take place. At 6:30 p.m., a concert will be given by the students of the Wiesbaden Music Academy. The two-hour program will consist of music from the German Romantic period, with works from Weber, Schumann and Brahms. The palace is located at Rheingaustr. 140, 65203 Wiesbaden-Biebrich. Online: tinyurl.com/mu782cku

Malta: This tiny but history-rich island nation organizes its European Heritage Days later in the year — October 4-14. A highlight is Malta's annual Notte Bianca festival, scheduled to take place Oct. 5. For one night, the island's capital of Valletta will be the site of live performances, art installations and late-night openings. Churches, palaces, public buildings and other spaces host more than 60 forms of artistic expressions, from classical performances to saucy, adults-only fare. Online: festivals.mt/nb

Netherlands: Open Monumentendag — held every second weekend of September — sees some 4,000 historical buildings and sites open to the public free of charge. Many of these places will host activities such as exhibitions, musical performances and guided tours.

Things to do on the weekend of Sept. 14-15 in Amsterdam might include taking a tour of the premises of the ARTIS aquarium set to open in 2026; exploring the dry docks of the Damen Shipyards; or letting the kids take part in a challenge to build the strongest bridge out of LEGO blocks. Online: openmonumentendag.nl

United Kingdom: Open House London in an initiative in which diverse architectural landmarks allow visitors into privately owned or otherwise restricted properties. From Sept. 14-22, explorers can enjoy access to select residences, cemeteries, breweries, distilleries and more.

Open City, the charity that runs the festival, also offers guided walking tours. One takes visitors through a mix of curious and historically notable pubs starting at 6:30 p.m. Sept. 25. The two-hour tour costs 17.95 UK pounds, and pre-registration is essential. Online: open-city.org.uk

WEEKEND: TRAVEL



PHOTOS BY MASSIMO SIRAGUSA, AGENCY VU/For The Washington Post

The ferry depot in Amalfi, one of the only ways to get to the area from Naples, is regularly swarming with tourists. Ferry tickets often sell out by early morning.

TikTok turbulence on the Amalfi Coast

Years of influencer hype has created a 'theme park' atmosphere in this popular Italian region to the shock of tourists, dismay of locals

By ANDREA SACHS
The Washington Post

Ivan Stefanovik set up his tripod in the middle of the sidewalk in Positano, Italy, parting the crowd that had gathered to admire the sweeping cliffside views of the Amalfi Coast. After pressing record on his phone, he twirled and dipped his partner, who teetered in chunky-heeled sandals as her dark, wavy hair cascaded toward the ground. She laughed, and he whispered some pointers in her ear — strut more, wobble less.

When the digital nomad posted scenes of his trip on Instagram, his followers would see a stylish gada-bout soaking up the natural beauty in one of Italy's most-admired vistas.

What they wouldn't glimpse was the ugliness outside the frame: The long queue at the Via Cristoforo Colombo overlook, where selfie-takers posed with their arms raised and their backs to the pedestrians struggling to get around the hordes. The endless, smelly parade of buses, cars and Vespas rumbling past. The dismayed expressions of residents who watched overtourism devour their beloved villages.

"Social media has a lot to answer for," said Lara Capraro, a Positano local whose late father ran a tour boat operation. "People treat the Amalfi Coast like a theme park. I don't know how much longer it can go on like this."

SEE AMALFI ON PAGE 21



Villa Cimbrone's famous Terrace of Infinity, a must for influencers and tourists who follow in their wake.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Amalfi: Influencer reports short on practical tips, downsides

FROM PAGE 20

The causes of overtourism are complex, but affected destinations can point to at least one overriding factor. Santorini, Greece, has a crush of cruise ships; Dubrovnik, Croatia, attracts rabid “Game of Thrones” fans. The Amalfi Coast suffers from overexposure on social media. Search “Amalfi Coast” on TikTok, and you will be bombarded with serene videos of pastel-colored villages wedged into the cliffside like Jenga pieces.

“It’s a mixed bag,” said Mikaela Howell, a Philadelphia-based wedding photographer who was scouting out locations with her videographer husband. “It’s fun to have all the energy of people being here, but everyone wanting to see the same thing makes it a little less magical.”

To prepare for my four-day trip to this scenic stretch of the Campania region, I consumed a steady diet of TikTok videos and Instagram posts. It didn’t take long to discover that the paradise depicted on social media omitted a trove of unpleasant details.

The Amalfi not seen on TikTok

The 34-mile-long Amalfi Coast, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is pinned between the Lattari Mountains and the Tyrrhenian Sea, an arrangement that is easy on the eyes but tough on urban planners. To attain la dolce vita, you need to climb countless steep steps in punishing heat.

The region can be difficult to access, which few influencers will tell you. (One memorable exception: Lexi Jordan, who slammed her compatriots for not providing “disclaimers.”) Most travelers fly into Naples and catch a train or ferry to the southern coast. Because of the impossible traffic and limited parking, renting a car is not recommended. The fashionable people cruising around in vintage Fiats are not showing us the harrowing crawl along SS163 or their futile attempts at finding a parking spot.

No influencers warned me that the ferries often sell out by early morning and that the only other reasonable option is the public bus. (Hiring a private boat was not my world.) After I huffed and puffed up a hill and several flights of stairs to the station in Sorrento, I spent an hour waiting for a bus to Positano. On the return, a coach crammed with passengers flew by our group waiting at a bus stop on the side of a dark road. The next one had more space. For nearly an hour, the children in the back belted Miley Cyrus songs.

“Influencers just show the good parts, but they don’t know about the transportation problems or how it’s not possible for us to rent a house because they’re all Airbnbs,” said Francesca Grammatico, a 20-year-old student who works at her family’s cafe, Il Panino, in Ravello. “I think in 30, 40 years, it’s going to be a tourist town. People my age just want to leave, because the quality of life is not very good.”

In Amalfi, I stepped around bodies splayed on the steps of the Roman Catholic cathedral and was nearly swept away by a mob trying to board a bus to Ravello. I had more room to move at Villa Cimbrone, a garden with the much-liked Terrace of Infinity.

Every influencer feed I watched featured a selfie on the Spiaggia Grande in

Positano, but the beach attendants asked me to leave: once, because I was not a resident; the second time, because I had not paid 40 euros to enter the private strand.

Italian officials envision the Salerno Costa d’Amalfi Airport as one possible salvation. The facility — which has operated as a military airport, flying school, private airport and firefighter and parachuter training center — reopened to commercial air in July, more than a dozen years after the last scheduled flight landed here.

Tourism and transportation authorities hope the revived airport will alleviate the pressure on the international airport in Naples, which handled nearly 12.4 million travelers last year, and disperse people to less congested parts of the Campania region. The intended effect is to extend the region’s season, which typically runs from April through October.

“Salerno, which is very popular among Italians, is not popular abroad,” said Margherita Chiaramonte, the commercial director of aviation at the Naples and Salerno airports for GESAC, the airports management company. “But it really deserves to be, because it has stunning, unspoiled villages and well-preserved traditional places.”

However, tourism experts and locals say the officials are deluding themselves. People will still flock to the Amalfi Coast. An unfamiliar destination with no social media bona fides is a tougher sell.

“We need to have that thing that everyone else has,” said Jonathon Day, a sustainable tourism expert and associate professor in Purdue’s School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, “or it’s like we’ve lost out.”

For many influencers who make content as a career, chasing down followers and sponsorships takes precedent over paint-

“Before COVID, it was calmer and the quality of people was better. They were more respectful. They are demanding and impatient now.”

Francesca Grammatico

Student and cafe employee, speaking about tourists in Ravello, Italy

ing a nuanced picture of a destination. They need to keep up appearances — and promote their brand — even at the expense of a destination’s quality of life.

“They have this idea or opinion of the best places and why, and the people who follow them are going to say, ‘Oh, I’m going to go here because so-and-so told me that,’” said Marla Royne Stafford, a professor of marketing and international business at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. “That makes them incredibly powerful.”

Day, the Purdue professor, doesn’t blame influencers for the chaos that overtourism has wrought. He faults government officials for being blindsided by the surge in visitors.

He said legislators should have proactively created a tourism management plan. Instead, they are scrambling to fix the problems with regulations that locals



MASSIMO SIRAGUSA, AGENCE VU/For The Washington Post

Tourists enjoy the view en masse from La Piazzetta in Capri, Italy, on Aug. 20.

say aren’t working. For example, they introduced in 2019 an alternating license plate system for nonresidents that was supposed to tackle traffic and parking woes. Five years later, both issues are as bad as ever.

Many locals do not use their cars during the tourist invasion for fear of never finding a parking spot. On foot, they avoid the crowded main pedestrian routes and follow a secret passageway through back alleys.

Demanding, impatient tourists

Tourism is an economic dynamo in Italy, which U.N. Tourism ranked as the fifth most-visited destination by international travelers last year.

The sector poured about \$238 billion

and it has become super crowded,” said Debra Levinson, founder of Mr. & Mrs. Italy, a tour operator. “They don’t necessarily need us, because their rooms fill up a year in advance or more.”

Levinson said the average daily rate on the Amalfi Coast has risen nearly 40 percent from pre-pandemic hotel prices, forcing budget travelers to spend beyond their means or find accommodations in less pricey cities and day trip to the coastal villages. She said that unless a client has a strong reason for visiting the area — say, their deceased mother once painted landscapes of the Amalfi Coast — then she will send them to alternatives such as the Italian Riviera, farther north on the Ligurian Sea, or Ischia, an island about 20 miles west of Naples.

“True luxury is being able to separate yourself from the masses of people,” Levinson said.

Shopkeepers in Amalfi and Capri complain about day-trippers much like the folks who lament the invasion cruisers to their shores. They, too, arrive en masse on ferries or buses, spend minimally and clog the streets monumentally, especially at photogenic sites on influencers’ lists.

“Basically, people don’t spend money,” said Paola Savinelli, who runs an Italian street food restaurant in the town of Amalfi. “They take pictures of the Duomo, buy a gelato or the cheapest thing they can buy, and then go.”

At a neighboring pottery store, a couple pawed through bins filled with four-euro souvenirs. They snapped a photo of themselves with ceramic plates decorated in lemons and left empty-handed.

“Before COVID, it was calmer and the quality of people was better. They were more respectful,” Grammatico said. “They are demanding and impatient now.”

Capraro said social media has unleashed a new wave of visitors who are younger and rowdier than their predecessors. They stay in Positano after the last ferries have departed — and party deep into the night.

She often waits until midnight to feed the cats who live on the beach. The boisterous tourists scare the strays, who hide until it’s safe to come out.

into Italy’s coffers, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council, which translates to nearly 11 percent of the nation’s gross domestic product. This year’s forecast is even higher.

The Amalfi Coast has been a longtime magnet for travelers and creative types, including film stars, writers and artists seeking a muse or an Aperol spritz by the sea. The sharp rise in mass tourism is more recent.

The number of visitors started ticking upward a few years before the coronavirus pandemic and boomed after the global health crisis subsided. For the Amalfi Coast’s 13 villages, the Agenzia Regionale Campania Turismo registered 564,981 lodging check-ins in 2023, a 9 percent rise compared with 2019. A decade earlier, fewer than 400,000 people stayed here.

“Social media makes everyone feel like they can afford to visit Amalfi or Positano,

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Make a boulder statement in Nuremberg

Trade hiking trails for indoor climbing gym as cold season nears

BY LYDIA GORDON
Stars and Stripes

Trying to find an activity that satiates my need for outdoor adventure becomes difficult as the cooler months in Bavaria approach, so I've been increasingly looking to indoor spots.

Boulderhalle E4, a climbing gym in the heart of Nuremberg, was exactly what I had in mind. With more than 32,000 square feet of intricate walls, it's one of the largest bouldering centers in the country, according to the company's website.

I decided to drag along a friend who also had minimal experience bouldering, and as two amateur climbers, we didn't know what to expect.

We were greeted by a pristine, modern gym with a small bistro. Tables and booths were set among the check-in area, with a shop carrying clothes and climbing gear.

Staffers at E4 were very friendly as they helped us purchase a discounted day pass and rent the appropriate gear: a chalk bag and climbing shoes. They took care in explaining the seven beginner to expert grading levels we would come across, along with the safety measures.

Color-coordinated tags identify the difficulty of the routes, which are changed every week. My friend and I settled on the intermediate courses and found them to be perfect for our skill level.

While resting between climbs, I observed the range of patrons, from small groups of semiprofessional climbers traversing the most difficult routes to kids unloading their energy with their families.

My friend and I spent about two hours at the gym. At one point, we wandered off to explore one of two upstairs training areas, where there were training walls, pull-up bars and TRX bands for more experienced climbers.

After expending ourselves to the point of being unable to grasp another hold, we decided to call it a day and head to the bistro for some snacks.

Although it didn't have any to-go cups for coffee, I eyed a fridge with a few bottled beers and wines, which may have piqued my interest had it not been mid-morning on a Saturday. I settled on purchasing a few specialty protein bars for the one-hour drive home.



PHOTOS BY LYDIA GORDON/Stars and Stripes

Patrons of Boulderhalle E4 in Nuremberg enjoy a morning climb on Aug. 17. The facility is one of the largest bouldering centers in Germany.



Boulderhalle E4 offers hundreds of climbing routes and more than 32,000 square feet of space.

Boulderhalle E4 offered an array of climbing challenges that I'm eager to visit again throughout the upcoming winter. It will definitely tide me over until the hiking trails beckon in the spring.

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Boulderhalle E4 offers rental equipment for a small fee.

Boulderhalle E4

Address: Allersberger Strasse 185, Nuremberg, Germany
Hours: Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-11 p.m.; Friday-Sunday, 8 a.m.-11 p.m.

Prices: Adults, 14 euros (military discount available); children, 7 euros (2-5 years old), 9 euros (6-13 years old); shoe rental, 4 euros; chalk bag, 2 euros
Information: Phone: +49 911 49042202; online: boulderhalle-e4.de

Lydia Gordon



The bistro at Boulderhalle E4 sells snacks and drinks. It's a nice place to chill after the exertion of a climbing session.



Boulderhalle E4 is located in the heart of Nuremberg, Germany.

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Zum Landgrafen a hidden haven

German-French border town harbors a cozy restaurant serving regional delights

BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

After a long day of hiking and outdoor adventure, there's nothing quite like stumbling upon a great local spot to refuel.

Nearly hugging the French-German border in the heart of the Palatinate Forest Biosphere Reserve, the quaint village of Ludwigswinkel offers Zum Landgrafen, a cozy restaurant with a beer garden and rustic indoor seating.

On a sunny Saturday, my wife and I settled in comfortably beneath the shade of a giant linden tree. Among the voices around us, I caught the distinct melody of French. The proximity to France brings an international charm to this small village.

Our meal began with a creamy and light Palatinate onion soup enriched with bits of smoked ham for my wife.

Meanwhile, I indulged in the Mediterranean grilled feta, a generous portion of sheep's milk cheese served alongside a vibrant medley of grilled summer vegetables and finished with a zesty pesto and crispy baguette. The combination was both satisfying and fresh.

Zum Landgrafen offers a thoughtfully curated menu that caters to a range of preferences. For those seeking plant-based options, which are clearly marked, a vegan schnitzel provides a satisfying alternative to traditional meat dishes.

I couldn't resist the Dreierlei Knoedel, a trio of bread, spinach and beet dumplings served with fresh king oyster mushrooms. The mushrooms, with their chewy texture and mild, earthy flavor, were a delightful companion to the soft dumplings, all brought together in a light, creamy sauce.

On another occasion, I tried the homemade ravioli filled with wild mushrooms, served with a parmesan basil pesto.

While the ravioli were perfectly al dente and the mushroom filling flavorful, the robust pesto slightly overshadowed the delicate mushroom taste. A creamy mushroom sauce might have been a better match.

For meat lovers, there are traditional Palatinate staples like Hoorische Knepp, raw potato

dumplings with ham sauce. Changing seasonal specialties, such as the roast game in Dornfelder wine sauce with cranberries, showcase the region's produce.

On Sundays, special burger offerings have some creative toppings for those seeking American-style comfort food. There is also a selection of steaks, including Black Angus.

My wife chose the Rinderroulade, a classic German dish featuring thinly sliced beef wrapped around a filling of mustard, onions and pickles, all simmered in a rich red wine sauce.

Paired with savory cabbage mashed potatoes, it was a hearty choice that highlighted the restaurant's commitment to traditional fare.

Although the portions were filling, we couldn't resist trying the desserts. My wife chose the frozen yogurt parfait, a refreshing treat layered with blackberry, strawberry and blueberry, all decadently topped with warm honey and sesame.

The honey's sweetness beautifully complemented the tangy yogurt, making it a light yet indulgent end to her meal.

I savored the Pistachio Dream, a concoction with three generous scoops of pistachio ice cream, whipped cream and crunchy pistachio crumbles, all nestled atop a rich pistachio cream bed.

Both satisfied our sweet tooth and took some heat out of the summer's day.

The man behind these culinary creations, chef Klaus-Dieter Liesenfeld, has been running Zum Landgrafen with his family since 1991.

The restaurant, however, is named after the village's founder, Landgrave Ludwig IX of Hesse-Darmstadt, who formally established the town in 1783.

Zum Landgrafen benefits from this prime location in a region rich with attractions, including a dense network of hiking trails, a nearby pony farm, picturesque lakes and a recreational area with a barefoot path.

With its warm hospitality, delicious food and relaxing surroundings, it's an ideal place to unwind from adventures but also can be a destination all on its own.

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PHOTOS BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL/Stars and Stripes

Zum Landgrafen's charming exterior, viewed Aug. 17 from the square across the street in Ludwigswinkel, Germany, invites patrons to relax in the shade of the linden tree in the beer garden.



A comforting bowl of creamy and light Palatinate onion soup with ham bits makes a good starter.



A hearty beef roll with savory cabbage mashed potatoes is a classic of German home cooking.



One vegetarian option: a plate of mixed dumplings served with fresh king oyster mushrooms.



Grilled Hirtenkäse, feta accompanied by a colorful array of summer vegetables and pesto.



The Pistachio Dream, pistachio ice cream scoops with whipped cream and pistachio crumbles.



The frozen yogurt parfait is topped with three kinds of berries, honey and sesame seeds.



Zum Landgrafen

Location: Landgrafenstrasse 33, Ludwigswinkel, Germany
Hours: Thursday through Monday, 11 a.m.-10:30 p.m. Kitchen is closed daily from 2 to 5 p.m.
Prices: Appetizers start at 5.20 euros for the beef soup with traditional German bone marrow dumplings. Entrees range from 12 euros for the potato dumplings to 26.90 euros for the 9-ounce Black Angus steak.
Information: Phone: +49 6321-3554426; Online: zumlandgrafen.de

Alexander Riedel



The cozy, rustic interior of Zum Landgrafen blends traditional charm with modern comfort. During the summer, the eatery also offers an atmospheric curbside seating area.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY JUAN KING/Stars and Stripes

A nearby mountain range looms over Ho'omaluhia, a city botanical garden in Kaneohe, Oahu, Hawaii. The view is so lovely that drivers are forbidden to stop for fear of congestion.

A peaceful refuge for plants, people

Botanical garden
a pretty destination
in Kaneohe, Oahu

BY JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

Four hundred acres of flora from all over the world await you at a botanical garden surrounded by the mist-covered Koolau Mountains of Hawaii.

Ho'omaluhia — “a peaceful refuge” — is a city botanical garden in Kaneohe, Oahu, Hawaii.

It was built more than 40 years ago by the Army Corps of Engineers as part of a flood-control project in the city and has been a relaxing destination ever since.

My family and I traveled out with friends to see the lush selections of plants from places like India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Malaysia, Polynesia, tropical America, Africa and the local area.

Driving down the tree-lined, milelong roadway from the entrance gate, we took in the striking view toward the mountain ridge. So many visitors have tried



A pathway winds through the botanical garden, built decades ago by the Army Corps of Engineers.

for a photo of that view that stopping on that road is prohibited to forestall congestion.

Parking was free and plentiful near the visitors center, and from there we began our walk through the jungle of plants and flowers.

Each species was labeled with its scientific name, where it is found and other information. As we passed through each section, we learned about plants like the Philippines' pandan wangi, used in rice, sweets and other dishes.



Koi jockey for bread crumbs at the large freshwater reservoir inside Ho'omaluhia.

After a 20-minute walk, we arrived at Loko Waimaluhia, a large freshwater reservoir.

There, visitors may feed several species of ducks, swans and a swarm of koi, a brightly colored carp originally found in Central Europe and Asia, a fun activity by the lake.

The koi looked like orange bubbles as they fought for pieces of bread. Other fish in the fray included tilapia and the Midas cichlid.

Make sure to bring raingear, which we quickly discovered we needed when a sudden rain shower arrived. Sporadic showers are common around the island but are a benefit during the summer heat.

You may also see an occasional non-native mongoose scurrying in and out of the tall grass. I caught a glimpse of the small, elusive mammal as it crept out of the nearby trees just a short distance away from me.

On the QT

Directions: Address: 45-680 Luluku Road, Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744-1855

Times: Open daily, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; closed Dec. 25 and Jan. 1.

Costs: Admission is free.

Food: There are vending machines near the visitors center; bring your own food and beverages to the picnic area on the grounds.

Information: Phone: 808-233-7323; Online: honolulu.gov/parks/hbg.html

Juan King

Mongoose were introduced to the island in the 19th century to combat rats. Bringing the weasel-like creature to Oahu backfired; it also became a pest that preys on the native bird population.

Day camping is permitted on the grounds from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m., with a reservation. Camping rules are found on the website.

No camping is allowed in the event of a hurricane or other severe weather.

It was hard to leave such a peaceful atmosphere with its fantastic array of flora and natural beauty. It's worth a second visit.

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Feeling crabby? Head to Tsukiji eatery

All-you-can-eat crab awaits near Tokyo fish market

BY CLAIRE JENQ
Stars and Stripes

Festival season may be ending, but Kanimatsuri restaurant keeps the party going with all-you-can-eat crab in Tokyo's vibrant Tsukiji Outer Market.

There are fans of crabs, and then there are fans of crabs. My partner falls into the latter category. A stroll on the beach usually ends with him chasing crabs along rocky outcrops and holding them up triumphantly once he's caught them.

When I heard of an all-you-can-eat crab restaurant in Tokyo, I knew we had to visit.

Making a reservation online was easy with Google Translate. The restaurant is only a four-minute walk from Tsukiji Station and right above a Lawson.

Red and white lanterns mark the entrance stairs to the left of the convenience store. Festive lanterns strung across the interior of the restaurant and its bright fishing flags give the space an Instagram-friendly look.

Once seated, a worker arrived to explain the rules. She gave us the choice of either an hour of all-you-can-eat snow crab for 6,000 yen — about \$42 — or an upgraded deal featuring Hokkaido crab for 15,000 yen per hour. We went for the more economical snow crab.

A waitress arrived with our first platter, which included two whole crabs, plus extra crab legs. Then she demonstrated with pliers how to extract meat from each part, cracking the leg segments above each joint and deftly exposing an entire portion.

After showing us how to open the crab legs, she set a crab-shaped timer at the table and left us to it. With her helpful instruction, we were able to make the most of our meal within the time limit.

The snow crab was better than I expected. The meat was sweet



PHOTOS BY CLAIRE JENQ/Stars and Stripes

Kanimatsuri restaurant in Tokyo is decorated with red and white lanterns, giving the space a festive feel for diners eager to down crabs.

and juicy, and we made good use of the complimentary sauces. My favorite was the classic garlic butter dipping sauce, but there was also regular butter, Cajun sauce and sweet vinegar.

We used a QR code to order more crab, and the orders arrived quickly at the table.

Skip the miso soup and rice; there isn't anything unique about them and the crab is filling. The menu also contains a la carte items such as a single order of crab and sashimi if you'd rather not attempt the all-you-can-eat deals.

Either way, with so many options and such a fun atmosphere, you can be certain that no one will leave crabby.

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Kanimatsuri crab restaurant

Location: 2F, 4-8-1 Tsukiji, Chuo-ku, Tokyo

Hours: Open daily, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Prices: All-you-can-eat snow crab for one hour is 6,000 yen. The next-level course, which includes Sandai crab, is 15,000 yen.

Dress: Casual

Directions: A four-minute walk from Tsukiji Station.

Information: An online reservation is recommended at hotpepper.jp/strJ003410694

Claire Jenq



The first round of all-you-can-eat snow crab. We had an hour to devour as many as we could for 6,000 yen, or about \$42.

Your votes. Your favorites. Your Best of the Pacific.

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STARS AND STRIPES

WEEKEND: FOOD

Pancakes, meet pandan

Asian American restaurants add their own spin to the weekend brunch

By TERRY TANG
Associated Press

With a DJ spinning and patrons lounging in black-and-gold barrel chairs, Breaking Dawn has clubbing vibes.

But this isn't a club. It's weekend brunch at this restaurant nestled in a Bay Area, Calif., suburb.

The stars of the show are the entrees served with Asian flair and names playing on popular phrases.

There's "Resting Brunch Face," a green pandan waffle with fried chicken and Vietnamese iced coffee syrup. Also popular is "FO Sizzle," beef with sunny-side-up egg, roasted tomato and a baguette — inspired by the Vietnamese dish known as shaking beef or bò lúc lác.

The menu unites Asian and American taste buds. Owner Liz Truong designed it based on her daughter's favorite foods.

"I think food creates memories, food creates conversations," said Truong, keeping watch over the bopping dining room and outdoor patio "So, I created a place where I took the most important foods in different cultures and that's why it's called fusion."

While the term "Asian brunch" might initially evoke images of traditional meals like Chinese dim sum, now it often means restaurants that offer Asian takes on American brunch.

Breaking Dawn was one of two places that opened in the San Francisco Bay Area last spring emphasizing brunch. Although the region is already rich in Asian American-owned places serving comfort food, both eateries have lines out the door.

Asian American restaurants in other cities have also found that sweet and savory spot between breakfast and lunch. But putting an "Asian" spin on it isn't just adding something on the side. It's often a complex balancing act of flavors.

Nattacha "Phin" Lerspreuk and her husband, Thanasit "Toto" Nanthasitsira, own the other new restaurant, Taste and Glory in San Mateo. They were inspired by visits back home to Thailand. There, some newer restaurants have embraced brunch with items like Thai tea French toast, she says.

Among top-selling entrees at Taste and Glory is a tom yum scramble. Tom yum soup, made with lemongrass, galangal and kaffir lime leaves, is the basis for a sauce in a croissant sandwich of scrambled eggs, Dungeness crab, tomatoes, mushrooms, onion and Swiss cheese. It's fine with Lerspreuk if some people frown at her ingredient mash-ups.

"I just want to do something new and something different," she said.

Chef Francis Ang, of San Francisco's Abacá, has been at the brunch game since opening the city's first Filipino fine-dining establishment in 2021. His brunch offerings include an appetizer tower with buttered pandesal (a classic Filipino roll), lumpia (spring rolls), oysters and wagyu beef salad. "We look at seasonality, we look at what people would like. And then we look at Filipino American influence



PHOTOS BY TERRY TANG/AP

"Resting Brunch Face," fried chicken on a pandan waffle with Vietnamese iced coffee syrup, is served at Breaking Dawn restaurant in Los Gatos, Calif., on Aug. 4



"FO Sizzle," beef with a sunny-side-up egg and roasted tomatoes, waits to be taken out of the kitchen at Breaking Dawn.



Breaking Dawn's "Ooh BAE Pancakes," consisting of ube pancakes with sea salt crema and coconut syrup.

too," he says.

Jessica Nguyen, 28, who was finishing brunch at Breaking Dawn, says she'll

almost always choose Asian brunch over regular eggs or waffles. She is willing to overlook that it may be more expensive because of both food and ambience.

"When I try Asian brunch 'fusion' spots that are starting to become popular now, I get excited about seeing how they make the food — how they combine the food," said Nguyen.

A mid-morning meal is customary in a lot of Asian cultures, says Martin Manalansan, co-editor of the book "Eating Asian America." For example, dim sum — a meal of small plates with delicacies like pork buns and shrimp dumplings — is typically consumed at brunch time in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

But Asian American chefs are catering to a contemporary dining scene that loves the ritual of decadent breakfast food with a cocktail thrown in. They are "reappropriating or reconfiguring food" on their terms, he adds.

"Brunch is so mainstream. Especially in urban areas I think that has become kind of a norm," Manalansan says. "It's not just the food itself, but really expanding ideas of what is good and appropriate at a certain time and a certain meal."

There's also a long history of derision of Asian foods, from stereotypes of Chinatown restaurants in the 1800s to smelly-lunchbox cafeteria taunts a century later. Within the past few decades, Asian and Asian American cuisine has become more popular through media and savvy foodies.

Eric Silverstein, founder of The Peached Tortilla restaurants in Austin, Texas, added a brunch menu a few months into the 2014 opening of his first location. The dishes reflect the half-Chinese Silverstein's childhood spent in Tokyo and then Atlanta. The bill of fare ranges from steak marinated in gochujang, sake and fish sauce served with eggs over rice, to chicken katsu curry with a fried egg.

One of his Asian friends used to assure people the food was "a great gateway drug" to trying Asian flavors. A decade later, Silverstein still hears from non-Asian patrons who had never had certain ingredients before.

"You want to be creative but, at the end of the day we're also trying to run a business," Silverstein says. "You don't want to go too crazy and then alienate your customer base either."

He cautions restaurant owners to do more than just brunch if possible.

Silverstein's restaurants also open for dinner. And Truong's Breaking Dawn is part of a "dual concept restaurant"; the space transforms into First Born restaurant at night with a different menu and head chef.

She doesn't see other restaurants with Asian brunch as rivals. In fact, Truong has had other restaurant proprietors come ask her questions and tour the back of house.

"It's all about leaving a legacy. It's all about sharing my experience," she says. "I think if they're good and they're busting their butt and they're working, they deserve support as well."



TOM MCCORKLE/For The Washington Post

Skillet Chicken with Vegetables is a one-pan ode to the late-summer season.

Skillet chicken dish a winner

By ELLIE KRIEGER

Special to The Washington Post

When corn, tomato and zucchini seasons converge, I already know what's on my menu. Here, I turn the versatile vegetable medley into a skillet dinner by cooking it in the same pan that's used to cook the chicken. It's so quick and crowd-pleasing it could help take the pressure off another season — the start of the school year.

Skillet Chicken with Vegetables

4 servings (makes about 6 cups)

Total time: 35 mins

Ingredients

2 tablespoons whole-wheat pastry flour

1 teaspoon sweet paprika

½ teaspoon granulated garlic

½ teaspoon fine salt, plus more to taste

⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper, or to taste

1¼ pounds boneless, skinless chicken

breasts, cut into 1-inch pieces

4 tablespoons olive oil, divided

1 small yellow onion, diced (1 cup)

3 cups fresh corn kernels

1 medium zucchini (8 ounces), trimmed,

quartered lengthwise, sliced ½-inch thick

1 cup grape or cherry tomatoes, halved

⅛ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

¼ cup lightly packed fresh basil leaves, cut into ribbons

Directions

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, paprika, granulated garlic, ¼ teaspoon of the salt and the cayenne pepper until combined. Add the chicken and toss to coat evenly.

In a large (12-inch) deep lidded skillet over medium-high heat, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil until shimmering; set a large plate nearby. Working in batches if needed, add the chicken in a single layer and cook, turning once or twice, until nicely browned but not cooked all the way through, about 5 minutes total. Transfer to the prepared plate and repeat, if needed.

Add the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil to the skillet, followed by the onion, and cook, stirring frequently, until softened slightly, about 2 minutes. Add the corn, zucchini, tomatoes, the remaining ¼ teaspoon of salt and the pepper, and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables soften slightly, about 3 minutes.

Return the chicken to the pan with any accumulated juices. Cover with a lid and cook, stirring occasionally, until the chicken is cooked through and the vegetables are tender, about 2 minutes. Stir in the lemon juice, then taste, and add more lemon juice, if desired. Garnish with the basil and serve.

WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE



PHOTOS BY MAYA ALLERUZZO/AP

Ariel Heller, 4, helps to glue a broken clay jar Aug. 30. The boy accidentally broke another jar at the Reuben and Edith Hecht Museum in Haifa, Israel.

A shattered moment, a graceful recovery

After a young boy breaks an ancient artifact on display, the Israeli museum turns the situation into a learning experience

BY ALEXIS TRIBOULARD
AND JULIA FRANKEL
Associated Press

As her 4-year-old son perused the Israeli museum's ancient artifacts, Anna Geller looked away for just a moment. Then a crash sounded, a rare 3,500-year-old jar was broken on the ground, and her son stood over it, aghast.

"It was just a distraction of a second," said Geller, a mother of three from the northern Israeli town of Nahariya. "And the next thing I know, it's a very big boom behind me."

The Bronze Age jar that her son, Ariel Geller, broke last month had been on display at the Hecht Museum in Haifa for 35 years. It was one of the only containers of its size and from that period still complete when it was discovered. It was likely used to hold wine or oil, and dates back to between 2200 and 1500 B.C.

What could be considered every parent's worst nightmare became a learning experience Aug. 30, as the Geller family returned to the museum, which is associated with Haifa University

in northern Israel. Ariel gifted the museum a clay vase of his own and was met with forgiving staff and curators.

Alex Geller said Ariel — the youngest of his three children — is exceptionally curious, and that the moment he heard the crash that day, "please let that not be my child" was the first thought that raced through his head.

"I'm embarrassed," said Anna Geller, who said she tried desperately to calm her son down after the vase shattered. "He told me he just wanted to see what was inside."

The jar was one of many artifacts exhibited out in the open, part of the Hecht Museum's vision of letting visitors explore history without glass barriers, said Inbar Rivlin, the director of the museum.

She said she wanted to use the restoration as an educational opportunity and to make sure the Gellers — who curtailed their initial museum visit soon after Ariel broke the jar — felt welcome to return.

Nahariya, where the family lives, is in an area just south of Israel's border with Lebanon that has come under Hezbollah rocket

fire for more than 10 months, in a conflict linked to the war in Gaza. The family has been visiting museums and taking day trips around Israel this summer to escape the tensions, Alex Geller said.

There were a lot of kids at the museum that day, and he said when he heard the crash he prayed that the damage had been caused by someone else. When he turned around and saw it was his son, he was "in complete shock."

He went over to the security guards to let them know what had happened in hopes that it was a model and not a real artifact. The father even offered to pay for the damage.

"But they called and said it was insured and after they checked the cameras and saw it wasn't vandalism, they invited us back for a make-up visit," Alex Geller said.

Experts were using 3D technology and high-resolution videos to restore the jar, which will likely go back on display sometime this month.

"That's what's actually interesting for my older kids, this process of how they're restoring



Ariel Heller, center, and his parents Anna, right, and Alex, left, take part in a special museum tour. The boy, who accidentally broke a rare 3,500-year-old jar, has been forgiven and invited back, as curators hope to turn the disaster into a teachable moment.

it, and all the technology they're using there," Alex Geller said.

Roe Shafir, a restoration expert at the museum, said the repairs would be fairly simple, as the pieces were from a single, complete jar. Archaeologists often face the more daunting task of sifting through piles of shards from multiple objects and trying to piece them together.

Shafir, who was painstakingly reassembling the jar, said the artifacts should remain accessible to the public, even if accidents happen, because touching an artifact can inspire a deeper interest in history and archaeology.

"I like that people touch. Don't break, but to touch things, it's important," he said.

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Zedd 'reaches goals' with latest album

Kaleidoscopic 'Telos' was nearly a decade in the making for DJ

BY RICK TABER
Associated Press

It has been almost a decade since Zedd, the Grammy-winning producer and DJ, released his sophomore album, "True Colors." A lot can happen in that time. Mostly, the German dance-pop maverick needed to push himself to make an album that would move the needle — one that told a story beyond the success of his debut LP, "Clarity," or "True Colors," which he says was created to prove that he could not be placed into "this EDM box of making 128 BPM club bangers, because I have more to say."

Enter "Telos," his long-awaited third full-length.

"It is an album that for many years I doubted I could create," he told The Associated Press. "I wanted something timeless, something that I would be proud of forever, and something that is very detailed and where it's not just songs thrown together onto a record, but where every song leads into the next."

The project is also highly collaborative, including features from Muse and John Mayer to newer pop voices like Remi Wolf and Bea Miller.

In the interview, Zedd discusses "Telos," being inspired by Jeff Buckley and the state of EDM. It has been edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: It has been nine years since your last album. Why is that?

Zedd: I've enjoyed not putting pressure on myself, and just releasing singles. And of course, I always — in the back of my mind — I was like, I will make another album. But what am I trying to do, and what am I trying to say? And I came up with these concepts before ever starting (to) work on an album. I wanted it to be meaningful and have some sort of concept behind it, not just, "Hey, I have a contract, I need to make an album."

Then the pandemic came around and I thought, "Well, this is a perfect time. Now everybody's off. I can finally sit down and make an album." And I was aimlessly trying to make this album that just didn't feel genuine to me, and I scrapped the entire thing besides one song, "Dream Brother," which kind of became a pillar of my album.

"Dream Brother" is a surprise.

The whole inspiration behind "Dream Brother" was this artist, Jeff Buckley, that was so hugely inspiring to me in my life, and that song that was really meaningful to me and that felt like, "Well, this is a concept: making things that are genuinely meaningful to me, that have some sort of connection to my musical education or life." And I sort of started redoing my album from around "Dream Brother," and all of a sudden, I felt like, "Oh, there's a concept there." And there was this moment when I kind of cracked the code by saying, "This is going to be an album that



CHRIS PIZZELLO/AP

Zedd poses for a portrait on Aug. 7 in Los Angeles. The producer and DJ released his third full-length album, "Telos," on Aug. 30.

"This is going to be an album that is purely for me, whatever that means musically."

Zedd
on his latest album, "Telos"

is purely for me, whatever that means musically."

So that kind of clicked and I realized, "OK, anything that's coming from the heart is going to be put into this album." And any emotion that I could kind of grasp, of what inspired me back in the day, I want to try to re-create in whichever way, to let other people feel what I felt back in the day when I was deeply inspired by albums.

You've always wanted to work with Matt Bellamy, and Muse is featured on the closing track, "1685," which references Bach's "The Well Tempered Clavier."

They're amongst the most influential people ever to me. So, for me to get to work with Matt Bellamy was a dream — and the entire band, really. And we have tried multiple times in the past... we both tried twice with two different songs. And they felt awesome, but not perfect and not

forever. So luckily, he's very similar to me, musically, in the regard that we're not going to force anything.

I had this vision (for "1685"), and I told my manager, "This one is going to be the instrumental track or with Muse, but with nobody else." There's nobody I would consider, because Muse is an artist who works music this way. They oftentimes will take classical pieces and re-interpret them and make it their own. And to me, it was like, "Well, if I'm going to reinterpret my favorite classical piece of all time, I'm only going to do it with somebody who does that as well — and who inspired me to do that to begin with."

"Telos" comes from ancient Greek; it can mean "end" or "goal." What does it mean to you?

"Telos" does have multiple meanings. One of them is accomplishment and reaching your goal, celebrating the human art. And that was what I was feeling for the majority of making the record. I felt like I've accomplished something that I didn't know I could accomplish, creating an album on a level that I wasn't sure I could still do.

And then towards the tail end of making "Telos," I started feeling the other emotion, which was just that I exhausted myself so extensively to the point of losing nearly 20 pounds. I couldn't sleep at night. I would wake up at four in the morning with the song stuck in my head that I was just working on. It was really kind of traumatizing in a sense for me, and I kind of

really resonated with the meaning — the end — of "Telos."

What are your thoughts on the state of EDM? It's a rollercoaster — highs and lows — in terms of popularity.

I have to admit that I'm not even that in the loop on the state of EDM, and I think — I don't know if it's subconsciously — but since I started working on my album, to me, I started working on a body of work that to me was completely separate from what the trend of EDM is. I don't even know how EDM my album really is. It's half organic, it's half orchestral, it's half electronic. And I'm also not really interested in following the trends, and I haven't been a huge fan of a lot of the trends that are kind of picked up on.

And I feel like trends last a shorter period of time than they ever have, so chasing that tail, I feel like will never fulfill you. Because by the time you arrive, there's already something else that's trendy.

I kind of just made that decision early on in my career that I'm going to create my own path, and I'm going to walk my path the way I want to and whoever wants to join me is welcome to join me. But I'm not for everybody. And my goal has never been to satisfy everybody's opinions.

And that's an unachievable goal to begin with.

And I think if you're genuine about what you do, if you love the music you create, then there are going to be people out there who will feel the same way.

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Recapping Oasis' often rocky history

Oasis announced a reunion tour Aug. 27, 15 years after the Gallagher brothers' feud forced the classic Britpop band to disband. Here's a look back at Oasis' ups and downs:

1967

Noel Gallagher, Oasis' songwriter and guitarist, is born in Manchester.

1972

■ Liam Gallagher, Oasis' frontman, is born in Manchester.

1991

■ Bassist Paul McGuigan, guitarist Paul Arthurs and drummer Tony McCarroll form the band Rain. Liam Gallagher is added as a singer and suggests a different water-based name: Oasis. With the addition of Liam Gallagher's eldest brother, the band has a new direction.

1994

■ Oasis' debut album, "Definitely Maybe," is released and hits No. 1 on the U.K. Albums Chart. "Darlings of the English alternative scene, these four blokes from Manchester alternately are loved by British critics as rough-edged retro popsters with a tinge of Beatles or hated as Fab Four pastiche," an Associated Press review says at the time.

1995

■ Oasis' sophomore album, "(What's the Story) Morning Glory?" is a smash hit and becomes one of the U.K.'s bestselling albums of all time.

■ McCarroll, the original drummer, is fired. He's subsequently awarded 550,000 pounds after suing.

1996

■ Oasis wins best group, best album and best video (for "Wonderwall") at the Brit Awards, saying backstage that the only award they valued was the last one, as it was fan-voted. "Anything that's voted for by corporate pigs means nothing," Noel says of the other, industry insider-decided trophies.

■ Oasis embarks on a U.S. tour that neither begins nor ends well. Minutes before departing from London, Liam refuses to board, forcing Noel to fill in at the Chicago opening date. Liam rejoins the band a few days later, saying he needed to sort out a "personal matter" and denying that the band was about to break up.

■ Two-thirds of the way through the tour, the band returns home prematurely, blaming "internal differences." Oasis denies sibling rivalry or poor ticket sales caused the cancellation, and attributes the decision to Noel. The band says they will begin work on their third album as a result of coming home early.

1997

■ Their third album, "Be Here

Now," is released. Tapes of the early outtakes had been stolen during the hush-hush recording. Noel tells Entertainment Weekly that fans shouldn't expect to see Oasis play festivals, which he likens to "traveling circus-type things" — although some of the band's most tumultuous moments will happen at festivals over the next decade or so. He also has harsh words for Courtney Love and says he finds Alanis Morissette, Sinéad O'Connor and Bjork "annoying."

1998

■ The band's first Australian tour stars off inauspiciously in February, when a Cathay Pacific pilot threatens to throw their 30-member entourage off the plane for rowdy and offensive behavior on a flight from Hong Kong to Perth. Liam denies behaving offensively, blaming instead "rude" passengers and an uptight crew for the six official complaints lodged against the group. Noel says he was asleep and didn't know anything about a disturbance. Liam and other members of the entourage are banned by the airline.

■ Liam is charged with head-butting a 19-year-old British tourist who was taking photographs outside the band's hotel in Brisbane. The teen drops the criminal charge and says he will sue instead. Noel apologizes for the band bickering during a Brisbane show and refusing to do an encore.

■ Later that year, Liam is arrested in London after a photographer claims the singer punched him and smashed his equipment outside a pub, but no charges are ultimately filed.

1999

■ Two more founding members, McGuigan and Arthurs, quit the band within two weeks of each other. Arthurs says he quit to spend more time with his family and the Gallaghers suggest the same might be true of McGuigan. The brothers say they did not try to persuade them to stay.

2000

■ Oasis' fourth album, "Standing on the Shoulders of Giants," is released. Noel suggests the band has come close to splitting before, but also says Oasis has outgrown its "hedonism" phase.

■ In May, the band's management says Noel won't play any further foreign dates and will be temporarily replaced as guitarist. The decision was prompted by friction within the group,



CHRIS PIZZELLO/AP

Liam Gallagher, left, and Noel Gallagher of Oasis perform at Staples Center in Los Angeles in 2008. The British band, inactive since 2009, has announced plans to reunite for a tour next summer.

but band spokespeople do not elaborate. Noel rejoins the band for its final dates in the U.K.

■ Noel tells the BBC in June that he left because of Liam's behavior, calling his younger brother "monkey boy" and "a bit of an idiot." Noel takes credit for keeping the band together and says it's "just been made impossible for me to let alone be on the same stage but be in the same room as" Liam.

■ Within two weeks, Oasis cuts short sets at festivals in Switzerland and Portugal after being pelted with objects on stage, receiving criticism for their attitude from the organizers.

2002

■ "Heathen Chemistry," their fifth album, is released.

■ Oasis takes on the British army over its unauthorized use of two older songs in a recruitment video for Scotland's Highlanders regiment, leading to the recall of 300 copies.

■ In August, Noel and two other band members are hurt but not seriously injured in an Indianapolis car crash.

■ A fight in December at a posh Munich hotel between patrons and Oasis' members and entourage leaves Liam with broken teeth. He's accused of kicking an officer outside the hotel nightclub and the remaining concerts in Germany are scuttled so Liam can get surgery. The band calls the fight an "unprovoked attack." Two years later, Munich prosecutors say they're unable to determine who started the brawl

and drop the investigation after fining Liam 50,000 euros.

2004

■ After drummer Alan White quits the band, Oasis taps Ringo Starr's son Zak Starkey to fill in during their headlining set at the Glastonbury Festival, intensifying comparisons between the band and the Beatles.

2005

■ Their sixth album, "Don't Believe the Truth," is released.

■ Oasis' 1995 hit "Wonderwall" is voted the best British song of all time by Virgin Radio listeners, besting Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody," Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" and The Beatles' "Let It Be."

2008

■ In September, Noel is attacked at the Virgin Festival in Toronto when

a man rushes the headlining band from backstage and pushes him. Noel falls on his speakers and is taken to the hospital after the show for a suspected fractured rib and ligament damage.

■ Their last album before splitting, "Dig Out Your Soul," is released.

2009

■ Oasis says China blocks the band's mainland debut over Noel's participation in a 1997 concert for an independent Tibet.

■ Noel quits Oasis just before a performance at a festival near Paris, this time seemingly for good as the band disbands. He cites "verbal and violent intimidation," without offering details.



"Don't Believe the Truth," 2005



The finale, "Dig Out Your Soul," 2008

2011

■ Liam sues Noel for saying Liam's hangover caused the cancellation of a 2009 festival performance. He says in a statement that the lawsuit is not about money, but that he wants an apology and for fans "to know the truth" about what happened, and that laryngitis prevented him from performing. The lawsuit is later dropped.

2012

Liam performs "Wonderwall" without Noel at the London Olympics' closing ceremony.

2013

■ Noel reportedly turns down 20 million pounds to reunite with Liam for an Oasis anniversary tour.

2017

■ Liam performs at a benefit concert for the victims of the deadly Manchester Arena bombing, prompting speculation the brothers could reunite. He blasts Noel's absence, saying he had shown his "true colors." Benefit organizers say Noel — whose spokesperson said he couldn't attend because of a family trip — approved using Oasis' music during the concert and that he would donate royalties from "Don't Look Back in Anger" to the British Red Cross' One Love Manchester fund. Noel is later announced as the headliner of a concert in honor of the victims as the venue reopens.

2019

■ Liam tells the AP he would like to reunite with Noel, but accuses him of wanting to go solo to "get all the coin and be surrounded by all the yes men you can fire and hire whenever he wants."

2024

■ Oasis announces a 14-date tour of the U.K. and Ireland for summer 2025.

WEEKEND: BOOKS

'Imminent'

Luis Elizondo

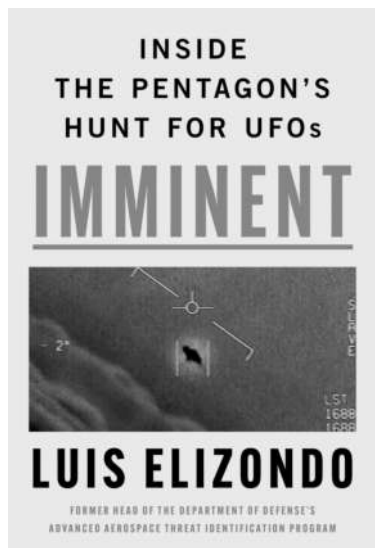
A procession of books in recent years have explored the UFO phenomenon, but few perhaps with the authority Elizondo brings as a Defense Department insider, laboring for decades to learn who the visitors are, where they are from and what they want.

In the 275 pages of "Imminent: Inside the Pentagon's Hunt for UFOs," Elizondo provides evidence of what the U.S. Department of Defense knows with this somewhat surprising conclusion — Defense Department higher-ups often thwart Elizondo and his team's efforts.

Why? Elizondo writes that the defense establishment doesn't want to present a problem it neither can explain nor offer a solution for. But are these visitors a threat? Elizondo concludes that the visitors' capabilities make them a "very serious national security issue."

Earliest documented UFO sightings go back to before World War II and since then, many UFOs have violated sensitive military airspace, but no one appears to have been deliberately hurt by a UFO in the United States. However, perhaps given his combat experiences and long association with Defense Department work, Elizondo worries about another 9/11-type attack, a threat we should have anticipated but did not.

Elizondo deploys way too many government acronyms — consider AAWSAP/AATIP, for example — but he's undeniably



thorough in presenting what he has worked on and learned over two decades.

Elizondo became so alarmed at what he was learning about UFOs that the Defense Department refused to disclose to the public that he ultimately resigned his job with the Defense Department so he could go public with much of what he knows.

The Defense Department recently has released more information on UFOs, thanks largely to Elizondo and his colleagues, but given the reluctant government pace, the bureaucracy doesn't appear to judge UFOs as an "imminent" threat.

Meantime, the general public seems to regard the proven-beyond-reasonable-doubt arrival of visitors from far away as news eliciting little more than a shrug.

Elizondo fears the Defense Department never will disclose what it knows.

— Jeff Rowe/AP

'Swallow the Ghost'

Eugenie Montague

In many ways, Montague's debut novel feels like three separate novels. That's what makes it so imaginative — and also so frustrating.

The story's center is Jane Murphy, who works at a New York social media startup on an internet novel that's become a viral hit through social media posts where elaborate backstories about its characters are formed.

But Murphy's story and a tragic event are told through three interlocking sections. The first focuses on Jane. The second focuses on Jesse, a former journalist working as an investigator for a law firm. The third focuses on Jeremy, the pretentious, Kafka-quoting novelist and sometimes boyfriend of Jane's.

The writing style and genre shifts with each section, but Montague's novel at its heart explores memory in the digital era. It's a promising concept, but feels uneven.

Montague's novel is filled with beautiful prose that's hard to forget, and poses intriguing questions about how someone is re-



membered. The interactions between Jesse and his mother, whom he cares for and who has dementia, are some of the novel's most heartbreaking moments.

But there are other portions of the novel that meander, especially the final section of the book.

Though the approach falls short at times, it's an ambitious one that leaves readers much to think about and introduces Montague as an inventive new voice.

— Andrew DeMillo/AP



PAMELA SMITH/AP

Juliana Pache, shown July 16 in Washington Square Park in New York, didn't like what she didn't see in crosswords. So she created blackcrossword.com and released a book called "Black Crossword."

Puzzling out a solution

Juliana Pache didn't see her Black heritage and interests in crosswords, so she started making her own, including a new book, 'Black Crossword'

BY DEEPTI HAJELA
Associated Press

It started a couple of years ago when Juliana Pache was doing a crossword puzzle and got stuck.

She was unfamiliar with the reference that the clue made. It made her think about what a crossword puzzle would look like if the clues and answers included more of some subjects that she was familiar with, thanks to her own identity and interests — Black history and Black popular culture.

When she couldn't find such a thing, Pache decided to do it herself. In January 2023, she created blackcrossword.com, a site that offers a free mini-crossword puzzle every day. And last month, she released her first book, "Black Crossword: 100 Mini Puzzles Celebrating the African Diaspora."

It's a good moment for it, nearly 111 years after the first crossword appeared in a New York newspaper. Recent years have seen an increasing amount of conversation around representation in crossword puzzles, from who's constructing them to what words can be used for answers and how the clues are framed. There's been a push to expand the idea of the kinds of "common knowledge" players would have to fill them out.

"I had never made a crossword puzzle before," Pache, 32, said. "But I was like, I can figure it out." And she did.

Each puzzle on Pache's site includes at least a few clues and answers connecting to Black culture. The tagline on the site: "If you know, you know."

The book is brimming with the kinds of puzzles that she estimates about 2,200 people play daily on her site — squares made up of five lines, each with five spaces. She aims for at least three of the clues to be references to aspects of Black cultures from around the world.

Pache, a native of the New York City borough of Queens with family ties to Cuba and the Dominican Republic, had a couple of goals in mind when she started. Primarily, she wanted to create something that Black people would enjoy.

"I'm making it with Black people in mind," she said. "And then if anyone else enjoys it, they learn things from it, that's a bonus, but it's not my focus."

She's also trying to show the diversity in Black communities and cultures with the clues and words she uses, and to encourage people from different parts of the African diaspora to learn about each other.

"I also want to make it challenging, not just for people who might be interested in Black culture, but people within Black culture who might be interested in other regions," she said. "Part of my mission with this is to highlight Black people from all over, Black culture from all over. And I think ... that keeps us learning about each other."

While on the surface it might just seem like a game, the knowledge base required for crosswords does say something about what kind of knowledge is considered "general" and "universal" and what isn't, said Michelle Pera-McGhee, a data journalist at The Pudding, a site that focuses on data-driven stories.

In 2020, Pera-McGhee undertook a data project analyzing crossword puzzles through the decades from a handful of the most well-known media outlets. The project assessed clues and answers that used the names of real people to determine a breakdown along gender and race categories.

Unsurprisingly, the data indicated that for the most part, men were disproportionately more likely than women to be featured, as well as white people compared to racial and ethnic minorities.

It's "interesting because it's supposed to be easy," Pera-McGhee said. "You want ... ideally to reference things that people, everybody knows about because everyone learns about them in school or whatever. ... What are the things that we decide we all should know?"

There are efforts to make crosswords more accessible and representative, including the recently started fellowship for puzzle constructors from underrepresented groups at The New York Times.

Bottom line, "it is really cool to see our culture reflected in this medium," Pache said.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



EA Sports photos

In Madden NFL 25's Superstar Mode, gamers can create a player and control his career from his college days all the way through his pro career.

Flexing new muscles

More modes, ways to play keep Madden NFL 25 appealing for both casual fans, hard-core gamers

BY GIESON CACHO
The Mercury News

Electronic Arts was ahead of the game when it comes to creating the Madden NFL series. The venerable football series launches each year, and there's a handful of improvements along with a roster update. Every once in a while, the developers push the genre forward in terms of graphics or gameplay, but otherwise, the series is all about incremental upgrades.

The video game's production cycle is comparable to the iPhone. Apple's flagship product generally stays the same with refinements over a few years before the smartphone receives a huge redesign. It essentially means that year after year, the improvements aren't exciting, but every once in a while, there's an iPhone worth the hype.

I see that same approach to the Madden NFL series. Some years, the game is an essential purchase while other iterations can be skipped. Madden NFL 25 falls somewhere in between. Gamers experience an update that again refines longtime franchise elements, but doesn't necessarily offer anything groundbreaking.

The developer has added what it calls Boom Tech to its animation-branching system. The feature now calculates physics into player tackles and collisions that

impact the defense and running game. EA Tiburon backs up these changes with skill-focused tweaks to the Hit Stick and ball-carrier skills with the Setup State that allows gamers to fake out defenders for bigger gains. Receivers also have a spectacular catch option that expands their radius at the expense of a higher chance of dropping the ball.

These changes add a greater sense of realism and offer gamers a higher degree of control. They are the type of incremental improvements that casual fans will gloss over, but hard-core Madden gamers will appreciate.

The challenge of designing a game like Madden is in keeping the franchise accessible to a wide range of skills and fans, and EA Tiburon has done it by adding more modes and ways to play. Madden NFL 25 maintains this effort through the Ultimate Team, Franchise Mode and Superstar Mode.

Over the years, Franchise Mode has faded in importance and Ultimate Team, a type of fantasy football, has gained in prominence. EA Tiburon now puts Ultimate Team front and center. The mode starts gamers off with a squad of average players and lets them add to their roster by opening packs and collecting cards. The developers have refined this part of the gameplay in the past iterations by

adding more role-playing game elements.

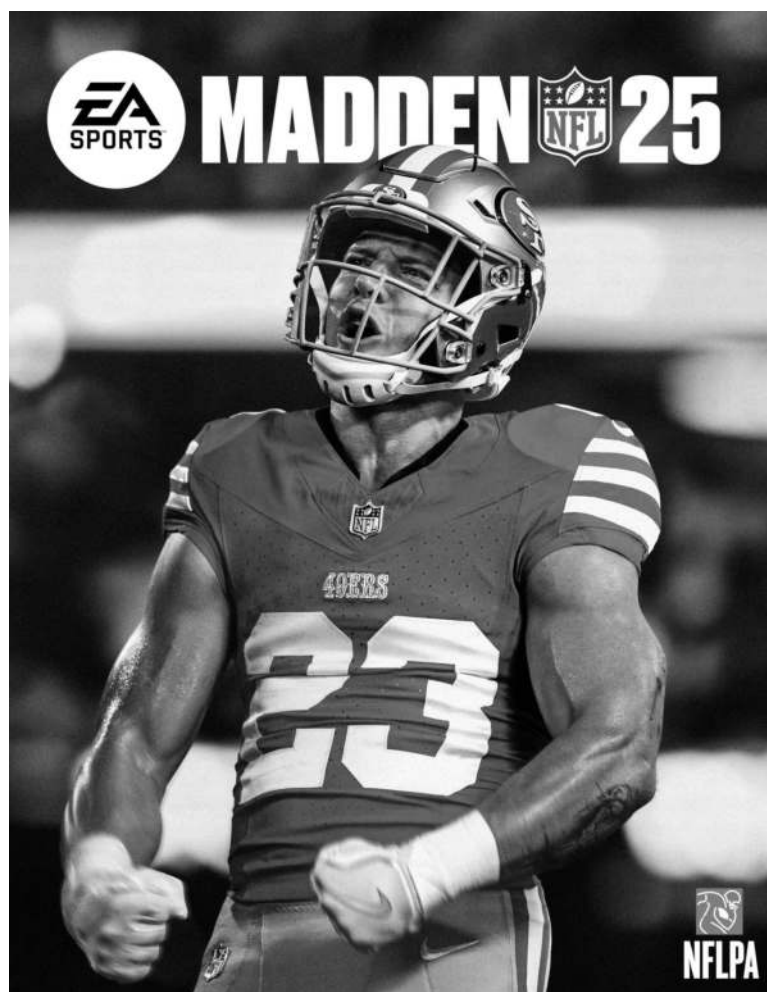
Ultimate Team is also where Madden NFL 25 makes more money through microtransactions while also extending the life of the game beyond the Super Bowl. Meanwhile, the Franchise Mode has mostly stayed the same as gamers can play as coach or owner and manage different aspects of building a team into a championship contender.

It remains an all-encompassing experience, and it's where gamers can spend hundreds of hours scouting, negotiating contracts and upgrading players and coaches while building a dynasty that stands the test of time. It can even be played as a multiplayer league. With so many areas to monitor, it's the most demanding and intimidating mode.

I actually preferred Superstar, which allows gamers to create a player and control his career from his college days all the way to the twilight of a pro career.

What's new to this mode is that gamers can import a player created in Road to Glory in College Football 25. Madden NFL 25 will keep track of the player's college history and mention it in the draft and during broadcasts.

This is an option that gamers haven't had in years, but with the return of a college football game, it opens a new avenue for Madden NFL 25 to grow. The Super-



San Francisco 49ers fans should be happy — or maybe unhappy — to see running back Christian McCaffrey as the cover athlete for Madden NFL 25. It depends on whether they believe in the Madden curse.

star isn't as cinematic as past efforts, but it does the job of letting gamers feel as though they're a burgeoning NFL star. The mode does have microtransactions as well if players want to give their athlete a boost.

For those who have friends over, Quick Play offers a short diversion. It's simple and direct, a fantastic option for newcomers. The developers offer Training Camp, a mode where players can check out Mini Games, Skills Trainer or a free-form Training

Practice. The option is a great way to learn about how to play video game football, and it will also deepen gamers' understanding of the sport.

Madden NFL 25 isn't groundbreaking, but for fans who haven't played the game in a few years, it's worth the price of admission.

Platforms: PC, PlayStation 5, PlayStation 4, Xbox Series X/S, Xbox One

Online: ea.com/games/madden-nfl

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

Culture, climate change are colliding

Runners, used to toughing it out, face greater risk as dangerous heat increases

By MICHAEL PHILLIS
Associated Press

Carolyn Baker, clad in a neon pink top and matching sunglasses, smiled as she ran the Falmouth Road Race on the shore of Cape Cod, looking around for friends as she neared the end of a race she'd completed more than a dozen times before.

Suddenly, Baker collapsed, as her exertion on a sunny August day sent her internal temperature soaring. As medical volunteers rushed to her aid by plunging her into a tub filled with ice water, they measured it at nearly 107 degrees.

For family members, the first sign of trouble was when their tracking app showed Baker moving backward on the course — as she was taken to the medical tent. Her husband, catching up with friends after finishing earlier, blurted "Oh my god," after his daughter called to alert him, then rushed to the tent.

The heatstroke that felled Baker last year is a deadly illness associated with extreme heat, and climate change is worsening the risk. In the continental U.S., the frequency of dangerously hot days is expected to grow by roughly one-third by mid-century.

Exertional heatstroke happens during exercise when the body can't properly cool, rising above 104 degrees and triggering a central nervous system problem such as fainting or blacking out. It can be effectively treated by rapidly cooling a victim, but many races lack resources or expertise to do it. Many runners, in a culture that esteems grit and suffering, may ignore conditions that put them at risk.

Muscles can break down, releasing proteins that damage kidneys. The lining of the digestive system may weaken and leak bacteria. Brain cells may die. It can damage organs and, ultimately, kill.

The Falmouth race is a magnet for heatstroke. At 7 miles, it's long enough to give the body time to heat up dangerously and short enough that many runners are pushing hard. And with more than 11,000 runners, odds are good that some haven't trained to acclimate to hot weather, or show up dehydrated. Some runners are simply more vulnerable.

But if you are going to have heatstroke, you could do it in a worse place than Falmouth. They have enough people, equipment and experience to handle lots of cases. And medical director John Jardine has documented nearly 500 cases of heatstroke in more than two decades — so many the race has attracted researchers.

The problem is, lots of races don't have the equipment or expertise to offer the right lifesaving care, said Douglas Casa, director of the University of Connecticut's Korey Stringer Institute, named for the Minnesota Vikings lineman who died of heatstroke in training camp in 2001.

"Think of the local 5K races," Casa said. "They might have an ambulance there or they might have a nurse or medic or somebody there, but they don't have a whole



PHOTOS BY JEFF ROBERSON/AP

A volunteer holds out a cup of water for passing runners during the Falmouth Road Race on Aug. 18 in Falmouth, Mass. The increasing frequency of dangerously hot days is putting runners at risk of illnesses such as heatstroke.

medical tent set up to be able to deal with heatstroke."

Keeping runners alive

Getting victims into a tub of ice water is the best way to quickly cool them. And it needs to happen fast. Medical staff need rectal thermometers to gauge temperature when skin can be deceptively cool.

"I can't guarantee everything that is going to happen in the future," Casa said. "But based on over 3,000 cases we've tracked, if someone's temp gets under 104 within 30 minutes of the presentation of heatstroke, no one has ever died."

He said there isn't good data on how many races do it right. From his decades of experience, very few do, although generally he said care is better now than when he started. Casa suggested governing bodies for racing should publish heat-related recommendations for safety.

Race directors must organize complex events for runners of all ability. Some are big races with lots of resources; others are small local affairs with shoestring budgets. Security, organizing workers and volunteers, tracking runners and medical care all must be assembled and paid for, said Dave McGillivray, who helps direct the Boston Marathon and also advises other race directors.

Runners bear responsibility, too. McGillivray recalls grabbing a mic at the 2012 Boston Marathon when it was apparent the day was going to be hot, telling runners they needed to take it easy. It's a hard message for runners who have trained months to meet goals.

"We cannot fit all of you in our medical tents," he remembered saying. More than 2,000 people needed treatment that day; roughly 200 went to the hospital.

"It was a lot of carnage out there," McGillivray said. "But, you know, no one passed, people went home, and we dodged the proverbial bullet. Not every race can say that. If you don't have the resources,



Equipment is seen inside the finish line medical tent ahead of the Falmouth Road Race. Many races lack the equipment and expertise required to offer lifesaving care.

then you shouldn't be firing the gun."

Two athletes' stories

Evan Hauptmann, a multi-sport athlete in high school, decided to run Falmouth at 17. He wanted to finish in under an hour and felt fine until a big hill late in the race made him light-headed. By then he could see the finish line and his competitive nature kicked in.

Soon after finishing, he lost consciousness. His temperature was the highest Jardine has seen at Falmouth — 112.8. Hauptmann got immediate care, with a half-hour in the ice bath bringing his temperature down quickly. He went home that day. Doctors worried about organ damage. Blood tests showed high protein levels from muscle breakdown, but they came down and he avoided lasting injury.

Two weeks later he started playing football again. But he's more aware of heat's danger, and makes sure to stay hydrated and aware of how he is feeling.

"As an athlete, I can't really let it stop

me from competing," he said. "I kind of just have to learn from it, realize what I did wrong and realize what I can do better in the future to listen to my body."

In contrast, there's Zoë Wallis, recruited to play college basketball in South Carolina. The summer before her freshman year in 2014, her team was told their mental strength would be tested with a 5-mile run they had to finish within an hour. It was about twice as far as she had ever run.

By the second half, she started feeling hazy, then panicky. Eventually, a teammate on each side held her up. She recalled saying she wanted to stop but being pushed forward.

"What I remember happening was getting a jolt of energy near the end and feeling like I was hitting this runner's high and was going to finish the run strong," she said. "In reality, what happened is that I completely collapsed, skinned my entire arms, elbows, knees."

She was taken to the hospital in a car, laid across the warm laps of teammates. She awoke in the emergency room, disoriented. Her kidneys and liver had failed, she said. She eventually sued the school and receive a settlement.

Wallis said it took about three months to resume practice. But the sport never felt the same. Eventually, she left the team, lost her scholarship and transferred.

"The mental aspect of the heatstroke consumed me. I felt so fragile, not only when I was practicing and actually playing my sport, but also just existing. I was just afraid in so many ways," she said. Ten years later, she's in a good place, but it took therapy and time.

Keep running, but be smart

Racing may slightly increase the chances a runner will suffer a rare event like heatstroke or cardiac arrest, but doctors say it's almost certainly healthier to show up anyway.

"Runners and athletes are at reduced risk of having not only cardiac arrest, but all forms of heart disease compared to non-runners," said Dr. Aaron Baggish, a professor at the Université de Lausanne and former medical director of the Boston Marathon.

Baker, now 61, had a happy ending.

She regained consciousness in an ice bath that brought her temperature down to a safe level. Her head hurt and she felt weak, but family members eventually helped her stand and she was able to go home. She had no memory of her collapse, and called it "eerie" afterward when she came upon a gallery of race pictures online and saw photos that showed her falling to the ground.

One week later, Baker dressed in the same pink top, sunglasses and racing bib to run Falmouth's last mile, striding past the spot where she collapsed. Her husband's photos show her smiling and flexing at the finish.

"We have a big running group of friends and family," Baker said. "Everybody in our group had finished the race except for me. And I was like nah, I need to do it. And I need to know I'm going to be OK mentally."

This year, she was back at Falmouth again — and finished safely.

WEEKEND: FAMILY

Can you speak Gen Alpha?

Test your 'skibidi' slang

BY EDWARD MEDELES
Associated Press

As American kids head back to school, they're likely to return home with an alien language their own parents may find befuddling.

From TikTok to the kitchen table, words like "rizzler" and "skibidi" are finding a foothold in today's tween lexicon.

Are you fluent enough to survive the back-to-school season? Put your knowledge to the test with this vocab quiz.

Sigma

Your middle schooler describes his friend as "sigma." That means he thinks his friend is:

- a. weak
- b. weird
- c. Greek
- d. an alpha male

Rizzler

Your friend is described as a "rizzler." That means he's someone who:

- a. is always late
- b. likes to steal
- c. is flirty
- d. is loud

Skibidi

Your quiz skills are looking "skibidi." That means they're:

- a. impressive
- b. bad
- c. awkward
- d. a joke

Fanum tax

Your favorite snack has just been "fanum taxed!" What does that mean?

- a. it was stolen
- b. it was affected by inflation
- c. it was dipped in chocolate
- d. it was dropped on the floor

Mogging

A TikToker claims that Chris Evans "mogged" Chris Pine in a red carpet photo. What do they mean?

- a. Evans looked taller than Pine
- b. Evans looked better than Pine
- c. Evans looked worse than Pine
- d. Evans dressed with less pizzazz than Pine

Mewing

As you prepare to take a photograph you start "mewing," meaning. ...

- a. you meow like a cat
- b. you restructure your face to appear slimmer
- c. you smile with your eyes
- d. you frame your face with your hands

Ohio

A friend describes your outfit as "so Ohio." That means it's...

- a. cringe
- b. stylish
- c. vintage
- d. expensive



EVA MALEK/AP illustration

ANSWERS

SIGMA: d. "Sigma," in this case, does not mean the 18th letter of the Greek alphabet. Today, the word is used to describe an alpha male or macho dude. British-GQ traced the term's origins back to the so-called "manosphere," a collection of online forums for misogynistic beliefs.

RIZZLER: c. Oxford University, which named "rizz" as its word of the year in 2023, defines the term as "someone's ability to attract or seduce another person," and nodded to a common assumption that the word is derived from the word charisma. A "rizzler" is the latest variation on the trend: Someone who is successful at flirting with people.

SKIBIDI: a, b, c and d. Trick question. "Skibidi," pronounced like "skippy," has no inherent meaning. It can be used as a wacky adjective to mean cool, bad or dumb, depending on the context, according to Urban Dictionary. It can also be used as a way to start a joking conversation in reference to absurd slang culture. The term is derived from a song used in the viral Skibidi Toilet YouTube Shorts series by Alexey Gerasimov. The #Skibidi hashtag on TikTok has more than 670,000 posts.

FANUM TAX: a. "Fanum tax" is the theft of food between friends. It was popularized on TikTok but created by Fanum, a Twitch streamer with over 2.5 million followers and member of fellow streamer Kai Cenat's social media influencer group, AMP.

MOGGING: b. "Mogging" gained popularity on TikTok, where users post slideshows of photos of celebrities in which one star outshines the rest, looking so attractive they make another look bad in comparison. In other words, they "mog" the competition. The word can be traced to incel-centric online forums from as early as 2016 where members, mostly men, discuss how to maintain dominant social status using their appearances.

MEWING: b. According to the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO), "mewing" is a technique in which one flattens their tongue against the roof of their mouth in an attempt to define their jawline. The #mewing hashtag on TikTok is filled with over 421,000 videos teaching users how to mew, pose and define their jaws. Unfortunately for Gen Alpha, the AAO warns that this technique will probably not have any long-term benefits.

OHIO: a. The term is thought to have originated from memes like "it's all Ohio" and "Only in Ohio" popularized in the past few years, according to the internet culture publication The Daily Dot. In more modern tween slang, the state of Ohio is used as a stand-in for anything that is weird, cringe or random.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



The fix is in for yet another clueless pet

Our our 18-month-old yellow lab, Gilligan, has been bumbling around wearing a plastic cone on account of having had neuter surgery on Monday. Gilly is the third of the Molinari family dogs, so this isn't our first rodeo. Gilly's predecessors, first Dinghy and then Moby, were neutered, too, and each dog spent their post-operative weeks moping around in a "cone of shame."

Gilly, a goofball, seems oblivious to the loss of his manhood marbles, and is therefore coping quite well. A keenly intelligent poodle-mix, Dinghy's masculinity wasn't fazed by his sudden lack of testosterone — in fact, he became known for his critter hunting prowess and dog park domination. However, to our middle dog, Moby, a sweet simpleton with a one-track mind for tennis balls, neutering surgery was a shocking betrayal.

We were living on base when I told my friends they wouldn't see Moby for a while. When I explained why, the men collectively cringed and hitched their knees together.

First thing Monday morning, Moby loped out our front door into the crisp morning air just like always, his stout wagging tail on one end and a big sloppy smile on the other. I opened the minivan's door, and Moby hopped right in, probably expecting me to drive him to the beach to chase balls and eat dead fish.

But instead, we drove 25 minutes northward to the veterinary clinic. Once parked, I opened the door to let Moby out. "Hey, lil' buddy! C'mon, this is gonna be fun!"

Moby was a blockhead, but even he knew something was up. He was hesitant to emerge, wondering why I'd left the tennis balls in the car. When I tugged at his leash, he pulled back, causing all his neck flub to bunch up around his face.

Finally, Moby noticed that the air outside the minivan was a veritable cornucopia of intriguing odors, so he jumped out to investigate years' worth of animal pheromones, territorial markings and nervous involuntary spillage in that parking lot. On my way to the clinic door, the leash stopped with a jolt while Moby sniffed, then licked, then marked tufts of dead grass peeking through cracks in the asphalt.

In the waiting room, Moby wasn't sure if he should hide or jump for joy. On one hand, there were lots of fun-looking dogs and people, and even one small hissy thing that made a peculiar yowling sound. But on the other hand, there were unfamiliar smells, like medicine ... disinfectant ... and fear.

Before Moby could figure it all out, the veterinarian's assistant led him away. I watched his tail wag as he looked up at her, probably thinking she was taking him to chase balls.

Oh, the irony.

Several hours later, Moby was back in the minivan, stunned at having been robbed of his virility and wondering why there was a ridiculous cone around his head.

The physical pain in his nether regions was a mere annoyance compared to the humiliation of the cone. It soon became the bane of his existence. He knocked over lamps and spilled his water.

Worst of all, it got in the way of chasing balls.

At the end of the week, when Moby had reluctantly accepted that he'd be wearing that blasted cone for the rest of his life, it suddenly cracked and fell off while he was rolling in the snow. Moby stared at the cone a moment, not sure if he should be sad at losing another appendage or happy to be rid of it. Instinct took over, and Moby pounced onto the cone, grabbing and shaking it with all his might.

Killing the cone restored Moby's faith in his lingering masculinity, and as he trotted back to the house with his head held high, I could almost hear him say, "Nothing will ever get between me and my balls again."

Read more at themeatandpotatoesoflife.com and in Lisa's book, "The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com." Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

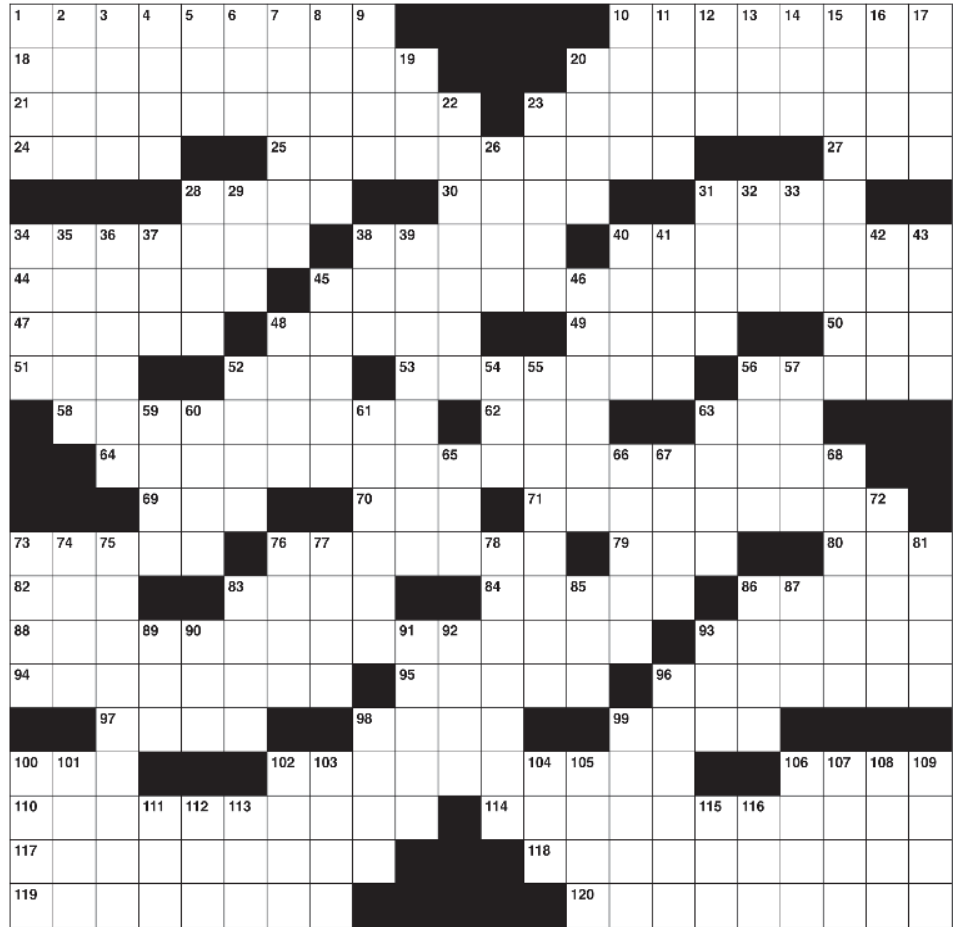
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

IS THERE AN ECHO IN HERE?

BY JOHN KUGELMAN / EDITED BY JOEL FAGLIANO

John Kugelman, of Gainesville, Va., is a software engineer and musician. His puzzles often have a playful sense of humor to them, a style he attributes to his crossword-constructing "North Star," the great Patrick Berry. About Patrick, he writes, "He doesn't have a flashy gimmick behind every puzzle; it's just how well he pulls off the simple themes." This puzzle likewise has a simple concept, pulled off quite cleverly.

- ACROSS**
- 1 Loses one's shirt, say
 - 10 Primarily studies
 - 18 City with a cowboy-hat-wearing replica of the Eiffel Tower
 - 20 Videography option on a smartphone
 - 21 "Tsk, tsk"?
 - 23 Buddy-buddy?
 - 24 Resistance units
 - 25 What "Ten-four" and "Over" are used in
 - 27 _____liver oil (dietary supplement)
 - 28 Honnold who was the first to free-solo climb El Capitan
 - 30 Exploit
 - 31 Sight at Sydney's yearly Festival of the Winds
 - 34 "You're on!"
 - 38 Paper-saving invoice
 - 40 They keep people in the dark
 - 44 [Knock, knock]?
 - 45 11?
 - 47 First-tier, as a celeb
 - 48 Thudding noise
 - 49 Diamond authorities
 - 50 Go (for)
 - 51 Word used three times in the Postal Service creed
 - 52 Sen. or rep., e.g.
 - 53 Up to
 - 56 N.W.A.'s "Straight _____ Compton"
 - 58 Owl or whippoorwill, e.g.
 - 62 Big step for a start-up, for short
 - 63 "Now I get it!"
 - 64 Pooh-pooh?
 - 69 Wrap up
 - 70 Sch. with campuses in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai
 - 71 Places to let out anger by smashing objects
 - 73 Built (on)
 - 76 Core exercise done lying down
 - 79 Queer identity, for short
 - 80 Output of some refrigerators
 - 82 Word often followed by a Roman numeral
 - 83 Helping hand
 - 84 Show up, perhaps
 - 86 Else
 - 88 Tut-tut?
 - 93 "Ow! Ow!"?
 - 94 Buccaneer's buddies
 - 95 Park worker?
 - 96 "That much is obvious"
 - 97 Ran out of juice
 - 98 The Lincoln Memorial appeared on it until 2008
 - 99 Tangled masses of hair
 - 100 One of the Mannings
 - 102 George Lucas's original surname for Luke Skywalker
 - 106 Shock proof?
 - 110 "OK, OK"?
 - 114 "Hubba, hubba!"?
 - 117 Outpouring of ideas
 - 118 Seasonal workers in suits
 - 119 Official beer of the Boston Red Sox, familiarly
 - 120 On the comeback trail
- DOWN**
- 1 Swept style
 - 2 Chemical formula for lye
 - 3 Oil container
 - 4 Needles
 - 5 Night-school subj.
 - 6 Basilica of _____ Anne de Detroit (historic Michigan landmark)
 - 7 "Three may keep a _____, if two of them are dead": Benjamin Franklin
 - 8 Over-the-counter brand that promises "Guaranteed relief every time"
 - 9 Put forth
 - 10 Flaky mineral
 - 11 Wild
 - 12 "Friends" star, to friends
 - 13 Antediluvian
 - 14 Run into
 - 15 Carnival attraction that propels its riders sky-high
 - 16 "..." in analogies
 - 17 Call for
 - 19 Half a rhyming genre name
 - 20 Steaming, with "off"
 - 22 Alaskan salmon hunters
 - 23 Hulled wheat
 - 26 Mirror image?
 - 28 Be next to
 - 29 MGM's aptly named mascot
 - 31 Nine credited roles in "Barbie"
 - 32 Texter's hedge
 - 33 Bit of ink, familiarly
 - 34 Home of Kurdistan's easternmost regions
 - 35 Raven claw
 - 36 Vital spark
 - 37 Plugs
 - 38 Brian in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame
 - 39 Big name in allergy medication
 - 40 Humorist Bombeck
 - 41 Talks incessantly
 - 42 Didn't spoil
 - 43 Mlle. of Madrid
 - 45 Basic skateboarding trick
 - 46 Jovian moon
 - 48 Kind of salad with hard-boiled eggs
 - 52 What cognitive behavioral therapy can treat, in brief
 - 54 It bears no etymological relation to "conifer," surprisingly
 - 55 Camera opening
 - 56 State with a five-sided flag
 - 57 "That's just ... wrong"
 - 59 Clarified butter
 - 60 Rear
 - 61 Park worker
 - 63 Por _____ lado (on the other hand: Sp.)
 - 65 Fashion designer Anna
 - 66 "By Jove!"
 - 67 Lead-in to nautical
 - 68 Key of Mozart's Symphony No. 40
 - 72 Glower
 - 73 Part of a baby's nighttime routine
 - 74 Hurt
 - 75 Filming innovation used in "The Shining"
 - 76 Choice for a twist
 - 77 Häagen-Dazs shelfmate
 - 78 Ball that just grazes the bat, perhaps
 - 81 Online crafts marketplace
 - 83 Betwixt
 - 85 Explosive inits.
 - 86 Corsica and Réunion
 - 87 Part of 115-Down: Abbr.
 - 89 PET scan alternative
 - 90 Uintah Basin people
 - 91 Word in the mnemonic E-G-B-D-F
 - 92 Deliberately try to fail, informally
 - 93 Key near Ctrl
 - 96 "O Tannenbaum" and others
 - 98 "Li'l Abner" cartoonist
 - 99 Haggard fellow?
 - 100 Abates
 - 101 "Good Morning America" co-host Spencer
 - 102 Dirty film
 - 103 Some turkeys and tabbies
 - 104 Hasty getaway
 - 105 "Success has always been the greatest _____": Nietzsche
 - 106 Group of buffalo
 - 107 Payment before a deal
 - 108 Big supporter, in modern slang
 - 109 Quiet "Hey!"
 - 111 Telluride maker
 - 112 Sturm _____ Drang
 - 113 Initialism for exhibitionism
 - 115 Seminoles' sch.
 - 116 Tiger's target



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GUNSTON STREET



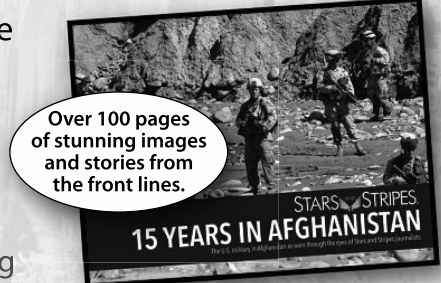
"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



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FACES

Q&A

Live album a labor of love

War on Drugs' frontman says project was anything but easy as band preps for tour

By **KRYSTA FAURIA**
Associated Press

For many musicians, a live album is an afterthought — a way to quickly appease insatiable fans or make some easy money.

But when Adam Granduciel, the frontman of the anthemic rock band The War on Drugs, set out to make their newest live album announced Wednesday, it was a labor of love that is anything but quick or easy.

For “Live Drugs Again,” out Sept. 13, Granduciel wanted to do justice to the ways in which the band has grown, both literally (they’ve added a member since their first live album was released in 2020) and figuratively as musicians who have honed their sound. So he combed through about 100 hours of recordings from their shows and even spliced different parts of the same songs together.

The album comes in tandem

with the start of their co-headlining tour with The National, which kicks off Sept. 12 in New Hampshire. Granduciel spoke with The Associated Press about the album, and how performing a song live changes it.

The interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

Associated Press: Talk about what went into making this live record.

Granduciel: I think we used maybe like 50 shows total. There are a few songs where it’s four shows spliced together, and part of that too is just having fun with the process. You know, you go into it remembering specific nights, like there are a few songs from a show in Bentonville, Ark., which is a town we had never been to in 20 years of being a band. And we kind of rolled into this town and it was this really beautiful little young artist student community. It was incredible. We had an amazing day and the show at night was out-



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

Adam Granduciel, leader of The War on Drugs, is photographed Aug. 26 at his studio in Burbank, Calif.

doors, and it was just one of those memorable nights.

You kind of start there, and then you get so deep into the process of mixing versions and maybe doing a little post-production, like all great live records do. I just wanted to put as much work into it as myself and the band put into our live show, you know, just the amount of time it takes to sort of hone a set, it’s years really. And we wanted to kind of put that into the record.

You’re a bit of a gearhead. Did you use anything interesting for this album?

Well, unlike our first live rec-

ord, we used a lot of the actual ambient mics that we recorded. Sometimes it can be tricky with phase and all this stuff. But for this one, we used a lot of the actual just source ambient mics so all the crowds are real to that moment. I think most live records these days are just going to be sort of put into digital spaces. You just have more control over everything. But this one, I think we had like 12 different ambient mics throughout the stage and the venues.

Does the anticipation of performing your music inform your songwriting process at all?

Do you factor in how it will sound live or do you just think about that part after?

Definitely after. I think things just naturally progress. And they sort of end up in a whole new place once the audience is part of the equation, you know? I mean, if we went back and made a re-recorded “Under the Pressure” the way we play it, it probably wouldn’t be the same thing on a record. But whenever you come off a touring cycle and things reach that next tier from the band dynamically, it always informs the next thing you do.

Elton John says infection has affected vision in 1 eye

From wire reports

Elton John — he of the bedazzled spectacles and dazzling spectacles — has been “quietly” spending his summer recovering from a “severe eye infection” that has affected his vision.

The “Crocodile Rock” and “Bennie and the Jets” singer shared the health update Tuesday, explaining his subdued presence on social media over the past few months.

“Over the summer, I’ve been dealing with a severe eye infection that has unfortunately left me with only limited vision in one eye,” the musician said in a statement on Instagram. “I am healing, but it’s an extremely slow process and it will take some time before sight returns to the impacted eye.”

The 77-year-old rocker said that his doctors, nurses and family have been taking care of him over the last several weeks and that he’s been “quietly spending the summer recuperating at home.”

“[I] am feeling positive about the progress I have made in my healing and recovery thus far,” he added. John, who was born Regi-

nald Kenneth Dwight, did not further elaborate on the condition or what caused it.

Representatives for John did not immediately respond Wednesday to the Los Angeles Times’ requests for comment.

The legendary singer-songwriter has been dogged by health issues over the past few years.

John — who retired from touring last year — was briefly hospitalized last summer after falling at his home on the French Riviera, where he had been spending his summer with husband David Furnish and their children since wrapping his record-breaking Farewell Yellow Brick Road tour that July.

Queen guitarist May says he had a ‘minor stroke’

Brian May, the lead guitarist of British rock band Queen, revealed Wednesday that he had a “minor stroke” last week, which caused him to temporarily lose control over his arm.

May, 77, said in a video on his website that he was doing “OK” but that he was “grounded” and



TNS

Elton John, shown in 2022, says he’s had a quiet summer, recuperating from an infection.

advised not to drive, fly or do any activity which raises his heart rate too high.

“I’m here to bring you first of all some good news, I think, good news is that I can play guitar after the events of the last few days,” he said. “And I say this because it was in some doubt because that little health hiccup that I mentioned, happened about a week ago, and what they called it was a minor stroke and all of a sudden, out of the blue, I didn’t have any control over this arm.”

May said the experience was “a little scary” but praised the “fantastic care” he received from his local hospital in Surrey, southwest of London.

George R.R. Martin rips TV’s ‘House of the Dragon’ on blog

The Washington Post

George R.R. Martin published a blog post Wednesday that criticized the HBO series “House of the Dragon” and its showrunner, saying the series has started to stray too far from the novelist’s source material.

In the blog post, titled “Beware the Butterflies,” Martin wrote that “HotD” showrunner Ryan Condal’s decision to delay the birth of a character named Maelor created a “butterfly effect” that will make the HBO series widely different from Martin’s 2018 book, “Fire & Blood,” and less enjoyable for fans. The concerns come about one month after “House of the Dragon,” a prequel to HBO’s “Game of Thrones,” wrapped up its second season.

“Change begets change, and even small and seemingly insignificant alterations to a timeline — or a story — can have a profound effect on all that follows,” Martin wrote in the blog post, which is no longer viewable on his website.

A spokesperson for Martin did not respond to questions about what happened to the blog post.

An HBO spokesperson said in a statement that the “HotD” creative team supports Martin’s work and that the creative decisions are made to help audiences.

“Commonly, when adapting a book for the screen, with its own format and limitations, the showrunner ultimately is required to make difficult choices about the characters and stories the audience will follow,” the spokesperson said. “We believe that Ryan Condal and his team have done an extraordinary job and the millions of fans the series has amassed over the first two seasons will continue to enjoy it.”

Martin’s spoiler-filled musings published Wednesday mostly centered around the minor character of Maelor, the third child of Aegon and Helaena Targaryen in “Fire & Blood,” whose story arc directly affects several characters, including Queen Rhaenyra. In the show, the character hasn’t been born yet; Martin said Condal delayed his birth over budget and casting concerns. And therefore some of the book’s crucial events can’t happen in “HotD,” Martin wrote.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman indicted in attack on Muslim kids at pool

TX DALLAS — A Texas woman accused of attempting to drown two Muslim children in an apartment complex pool was recently indicted by a Tarrant County grand jury.

Elizabeth Wolf, 42, is charged with attempted capital murder of a person under 10 years old and intentionally causing bodily injury to a child younger than 15, court documents show. The indictment, filed Aug. 15, includes a hate crime enhancement.

Wolf, of Grand Prairie, allegedly made “racial statements” before grabbing a 6-year-old boy and trying to drown his 3-year-old sister on May 19 at the family’s apartment complex pool, Euless police previously said.

She was initially arrested on a public intoxication charge and released on a \$40,000 bond, but the charges were later elevated to attempted capital murder and injury to a child, which led to her rearrest in July.

‘Whistleblower’ says he leaked plans, then fired

FL TALLAHASSEE — A former state employee who said he leaked information about the plans to build golf courses and hotels in Florida’s state parks has apparently been fired.

But James Gaddis, who described himself as an “ethical whistleblower,” said he doesn’t regret making the public aware of the proposals, according to the Palm Beach Post.

“I just happen to be a guy in the middle of all this and the clock was ticking, and I figured someone has to step up to the plate and stop the madness,” Gaddis told the newspaper.

Gaddis, who worked as a cartographer for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, said he was directed to draw up conceptual maps for the proposals to build golf courses, pickleball courts, 350-room hotels and more at nine state parks from Miami to the Panhandle.

After leaking the information, Gaddis was put on administrative leave on Aug. 30. The next day, he got a letter of dismissal in the mail saying he violated department policies.

A spokesperson for DEP did not respond to a request for comment.

Lawyer: Ex-official treated for addiction amid charge

MS JACKSON — A former tax assessor and collector in north Mississippi checked into a residential treatment center for a gambling addiction after he called the state auditor’s office and confessed to misusing more than \$300,000 in public money, his attorney said Tuesday.

Shannon Wilburn, 49, resigned in April from the elected office he had held in Benton County since



JOHN RUCOSKY, THE (JOHNSTOWN, PA.) TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT/AP

Everything’s just ducky!

Lincoln Ward, 4, of Northern Cambria, Pa., chooses a duck for a prize during the American Legion County Fair in Ebensburg, Pa., on Monday.

2016, and he began the 12-week addiction treatment in late July, his attorney Tony Farese told The Associated Press.

Mississippi Auditor Shad White announced Tuesday that Wilburn has been charged with one count of embezzlement. The announcement came days after Wilburn was indicted. Farese said Wilburn turned himself in to the sheriff’s office last Friday, then posted bond and returned to the treatment program.

Driver charged in partially automated SUV crash

PA PHILADELPHIA — A woman was intoxicated and using a partially automated driving system when she caused a March highway crash in Philadelphia that killed two people, authorities said as they announced homicide charges against the driver.

State and federal investigators say the woman’s Ford Mustang Mach-E SUV struck the stationary vehicle of a man who had stopped on the left shoulder of I-95 to assist a driver whose car had broken down ahead of him. The March collision, which occurred around 3 a.m., killed both men.

Ford’s Blue Cruise system allows drivers to take their hands off the steering wheel while it handles steering, braking and acceleration on highways. The company says the system isn’t fully autonomous and it monitors drivers to make sure they pay attention to the road.

Investigators in Philadelphia believe that Mustang driver Dimple Patel, 23, was driving about 71 mph, using both Blue Cruise and Adaptive Cruise Control, when the crash occurred.

Afghan refugee pleads no contest to 2 murders

NM ALBUQUERQUE — An Afghan refugee convicted of first-degree murder in one of three fatal shootings in 2022 that shook Albuquerque’s Muslim community pleaded no contest Tuesday to two homicide charges stemming from the other killings.

Prosecutors said Muhammad Syed, 53, entered the pleas to two counts of second-degree murder for the deaths of Muhammad Afzaal Hussain, 27, and Naeem Hussain.

A jury had convicted Syed in March in the shooting death of Aftab Hussein, 41, in July 2022.

The three ambush-style killings happened over the course of several days. Investigators shifted away from possible hate crimes to what prosecutors called the “willful and very deliberate” actions of another member of the Muslim community.

Syed, who settled in the U.S. with his family several years earlier, denied involvement in the killings after being stopped more than 100 miles from Albuquerque. He told authorities he was on his way to Texas to find a new home

for his family, saying he was concerned about the killings in Albuquerque.

Bernalillo County prosecutors said Syed faces a life prison sentence in Aftab Hussein’s killings and will serve 30 years behind bars for the no-contest pleas. A sentencing date hasn’t been set.

Hospital sued after nurse charged in drug probe

OR MEDFORD — Attorneys representing both living and deceased patients of an Oregon hospital filed a \$303 million lawsuit against the facility on Tuesday after a nurse was accused of replacing prescribed fentanyl with nonsterile tap water in intravenous drips.

The wrongful death and medical malpractice complaint accuses Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center in Medford of negligence. The suit says the hospital failed to monitor medication administration procedures and prevent drug diversion by their employees, among other claims.

A spokesperson said the hospital had no comment.

Dani Marie Schofield, a former nurse at the hospital, was arrested in June and charged with 44 counts of second-degree assault. The charges stemmed from a police investigation into the theft and misuse of controlled substances that resulted in patient infections. She has pleaded not guilty.

Schofield is not named or listed

as a defendant in the complaint filed Tuesday. A separate suit was filed against Schofield and the hospital earlier this year on behalf of the estate of a 65-year-old man who died.

The 18 plaintiffs in the new suit include nine patients and the estates of nine patients who died. According to the suit, the hospital began informing them in December that an employee had replaced fentanyl with tap water, causing bacterial infections.

Officer dies after crash into tree during chase

MO OSAGE BEACH — A Missouri police officer and mother of six children died after losing control of her patrol vehicle and crashing into a tree while chasing someone who fled a traffic stop.

Osage Beach police officer Phylcia Carson, 33, spun off the road and hit a tree Saturday while chasing someone a different officer had tried to pull over for speeding. The Camden County Sheriff’s Office identified that person as Christopher Aaron Bishop Wehmeyer, 23, who faces felony charges for resisting arrest and creating a substantial risk of death, according to jail records.

Carson joined the police department last year, Osage Beach Police Chief Todd Davis said at a news conference.

From wire reports



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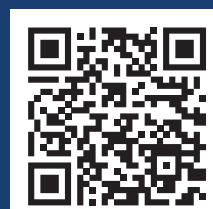
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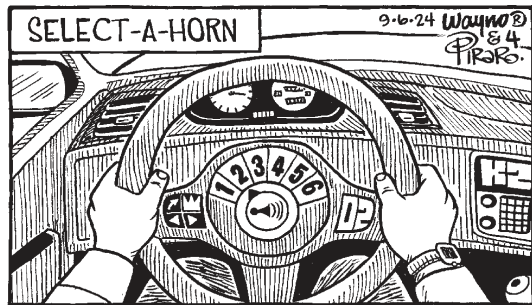
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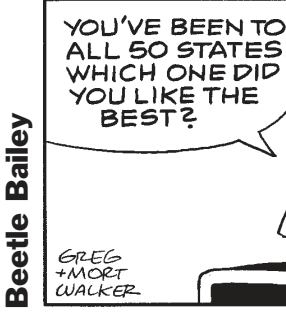
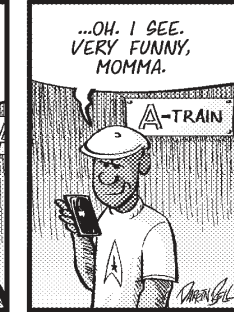
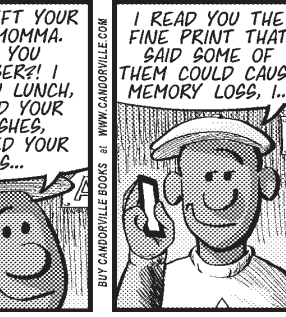
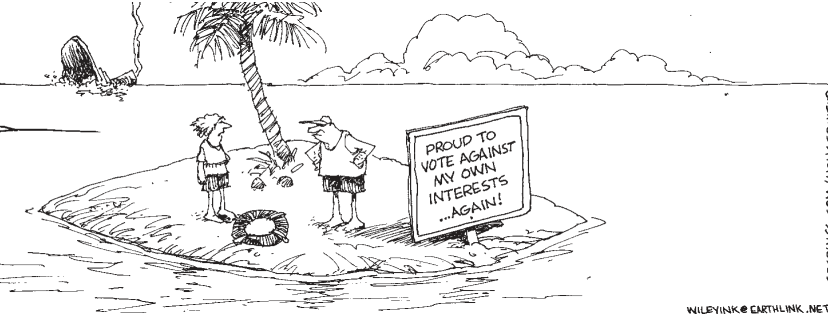
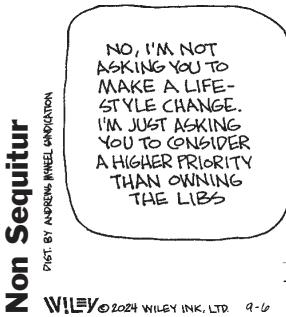
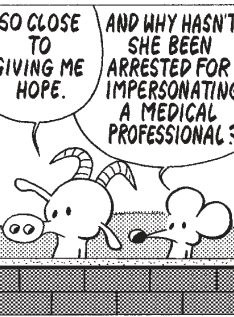
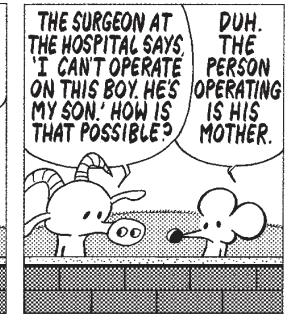
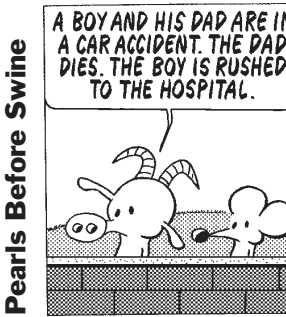
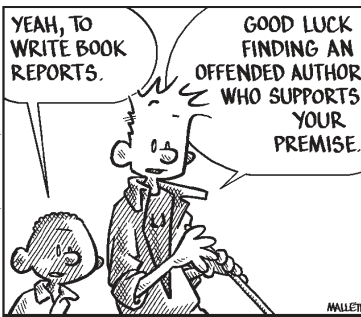
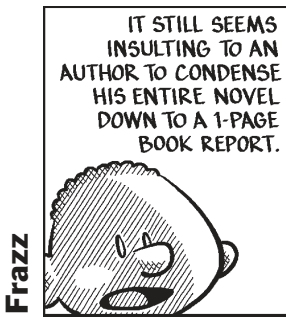
Apply Now!
aafes.media/milstar

Bizarro



1: Howdy, neighbor.
 2: Your ride is here!
 3: Please move aside, deer.
 4: Go! The light's green!
 5: Outta my way, jerk!
 6: !\$@&*!!

Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15			16						17			
		18						19				
20	21					22	23					
24					25					26	27	28
29				30						31		
32			33							34		
			35					36				
37	38	39						40				
41					42	43					44	45
46					47					48		
49					50					51		

ACROSS

- 1 Jungfrau, e.g.
- 4 Musician's jobs
- 8 Raised
- 12 Mauna —
- 13 Redact
- 14 Speck
- 15 "Sex and the City" author Candace
- 17 Family
- 18 Atmosphere
- 19 Berry of "Monster's Ball"
- 20 Move slightly
- 22 Israel's Golda
- 24 Black-and-white cookie
- 25 "The Power of Myth" author Joseph
- 29 Scooted
- 30 North African capital
- 31 Noon, on a clock
- 32 "Outliers" author Malcolm
- 34 Part of a French play
- 35 Optimistic
- 36 Levels (up)
- 37 Heroic tales
- 40 Pouchlike parts
- 41 Tiny branch
- 42 "Gone With the Wind" author Margaret
- 46 Modern "carpe diem"
- 47 "Pinocchio" fish

- 48 Cattle call
- 49 Flair
- 50 Hardens
- 51 "Xanadu" band

- 21 Caspian Sea feeder
- 22 Virile
- 23 Pianist Gilels
- 25 Pool sticks
- 26 "I beg your pardon!"
- 27 Low-calorie
- 28 Fibs
- 30 Pairs
- 33 Fiery monster
- 34 Eyebrow shape
- 36 Mexican entrees
- 37 Eyelid woe
- 38 Missing
- 39 Arizona river
- 40 Dele undoer
- 42 Roast VIPs
- 43 Land in la mer
- 44 Texter's chuckle
- 45 Bathroom, in London

DOWN

- 1 Cleric's tunic
- 2 Singer Reed
- 3 Rose Bowl city
- 4 Category
- 5 Concept
- 6 Baseball's Hodges
- 7 Cardinal cap letters
- 8 Tummy settler
- 9 Hot dog holder
- 10 And others (Lat.)
- 11 Hamlet, e.g.
- 16 Novelist Victor
- 19 Places for holsters
- 20 Bjorn of tennis fame

Answer to Previous Puzzle

P	U	R	R	M	A	D	B	S	M	T			
E	P	E	E	A	R	E	L	P	G	A			
R	O	L	F	C	C	C	A	L	M	S			
E	N	O	U	G	H	R	O	K	U				
				G	O	O	S	E	B	E	R	R	Y
E	B	B	E	D	P	E	I	G	E	O			
L	I	R	E	W	A	D	B	E	A	K			
L	E	A	E	E	R	M	A	D	R	E			
E	L	D	E	R	B	E	R	R	Y				
				P	E	A	S	I	S	L	A	N	D
S	T	I	R	T	O	T	E	L	I	A			
N	O	T	I	E	W	E	A	B	C	D			
L	A	T	E	R	N	S	F	A	K	E			

9-6

CRYPTOQUIP

XEV'QJ NJSSHBP IJ XEV ZEB'N

GEIDSJNJSX SEKJ NRJ EDJQM

"ENJSSE" EQ "QHPESJNNE"?

NRJ KJQZH HZJM!

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: NO ACTORS COULD BE BRIGHTLY ILLUMINATED DURING THE STAGE PLAY. SOMEBODY STOLE THE SPOTLIGHT.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals O

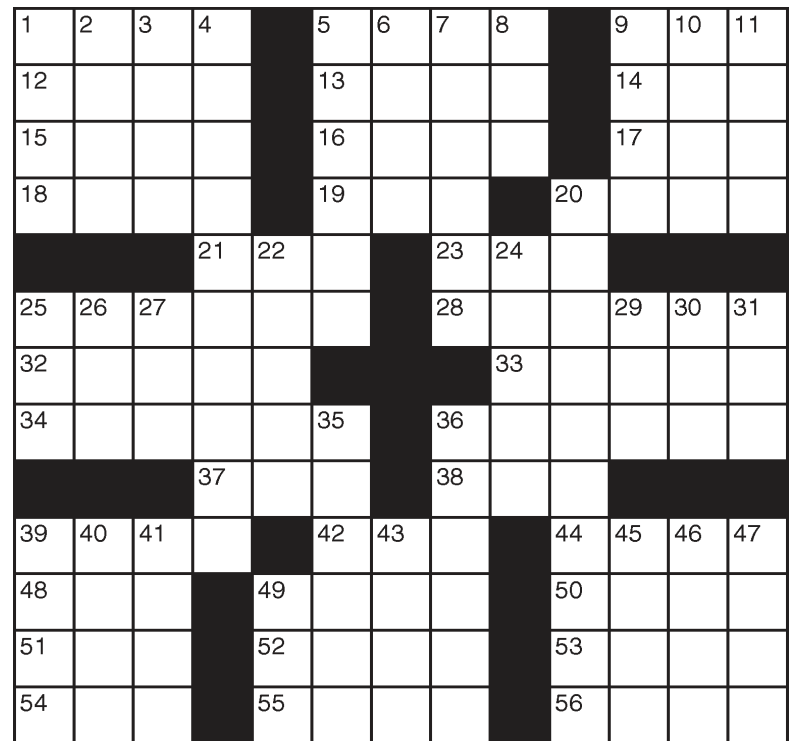
Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Persian leader
- 5 Naked
- 9 '60s chic
- 12 Pueblo people
- 13 Regrettably
- 14 Previously
- 15 Fashion's Cassini
- 16 Calendar squares
- 17 Patient's need, briefly
- 18 Cleanse
- 19 Work unit
- 20 Onion relative
- 21 Food additive
- 23 Popular card game
- 25 Olympic sport
- 28 Like Enya's music
- 32 Skirt style
- 33 "Gimme five!"
- 34 Nike rival
- 36 Mistakes in print
- 37 Scratch (out)
- 38 Scary cry
- 39 See to
- 42 Sign before Virgo
- 44 Chow
- 48 Citric beverage
- 49 Roundish do
- 50 Cookbook author Rombauer

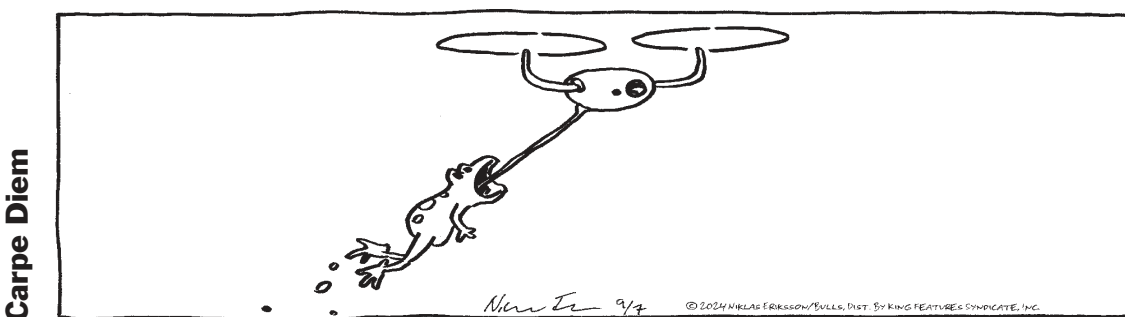
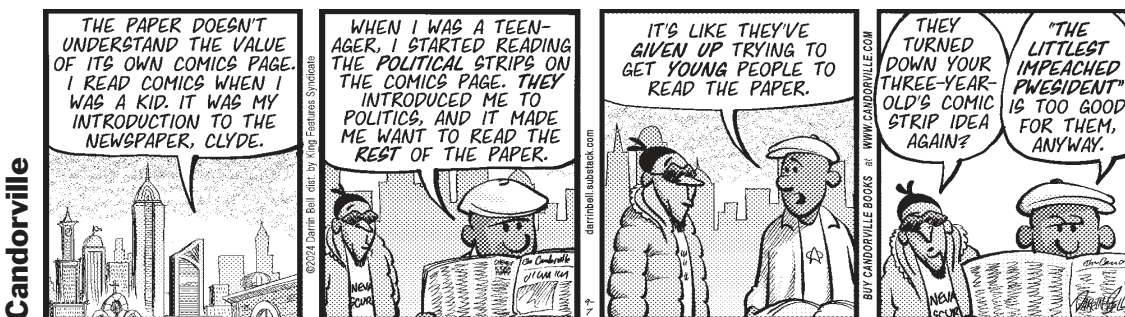
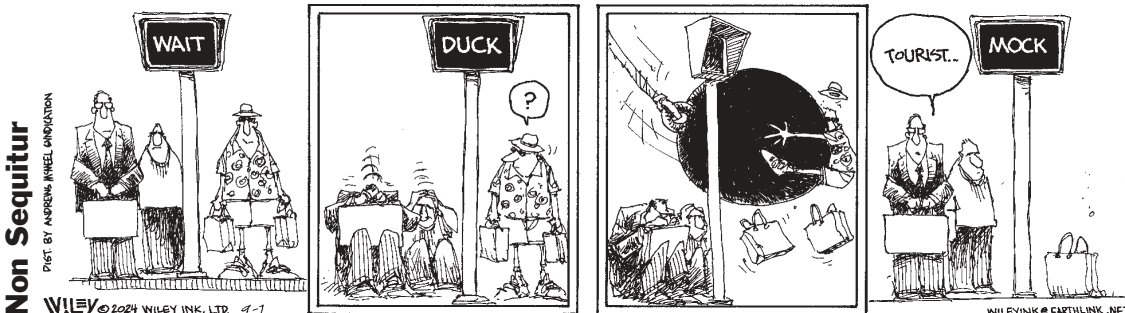
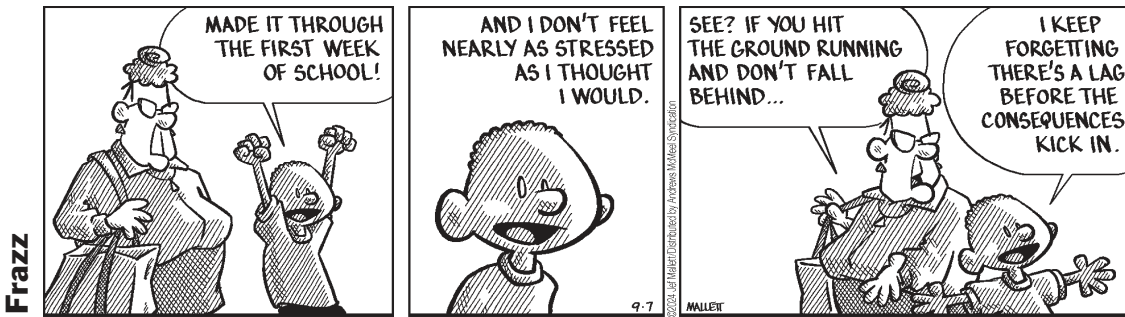
- 51 Prof's helpers
- 52 Frisbee, e.g.
- 53 Pencil filler
- 54 Invoice fig.
- 55 DJ Rick
- 56 Billions of years

- 22 Sly one
- 24 Prefix with surgeon
- 25 Sheepish "Hello!"
- 26 Vintage
- 27 Noon, on a clock
- 29 One-time link
- 30 Understood
- 31 Clean air org.
- 35 Arm's-length pic
- 36 Kindle downloads
- 39 "Toodle-oo!"
- 40 Wax-coated cheese
- 41 Avian abode
- 43 Gaelic
- 45 Layered cookie
- 46 Yemen neighbor
- 47 June honorees
- 49 Calculate a sum

DOWN

- 1 Broadway offering
- 2 Spanish greeting
- 3 Mimics
- 4 Honorable
- 5 No-goodnik
- 6 Winged
- 7 Sci-fi zapper
- 8 Twisty turn
- 9 Partner
- 10 Leer at
- 11 Berth place
- 20 Inconspicuous

Answer to Previous Puzzle



9-7

CRYPTOQUIP

KMDG VQ VG ADJLU KMLY
 OLFOJL KFNRFY GMLVN
 ELUVGDGVSL EDYGND-AMDYGVYP
 QRVJJQ? FE VEONFSLELYG.
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: YOU'RE TELLING ME YOU DON'T COMPLETELY LOVE THE OPERA "OTELLO" OR "RIGOLETTO"? THE VERDI IDEA!
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals P

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Lt. Col. Marci Hoffman, Pacific commander

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OPINION

What Biden can do to free Venezuela of Maduro

BY KRISTINA FOLTZ

Los Angeles Times

With flags and voting receipts in hand, thousands of Venezuelans have taken to the streets in Caracas and worldwide to protest Nicolás Maduro's refusal to recognize his overwhelming defeat in the presidential election a month ago. The United States can do more to back them up.

The opposition party's leader, María Corina Machado, recently came out of hiding to ride through the streets among throngs of demonstrators. Emerging from an armored truck, she urged her supporters to maintain their courage, defend the truth and ramp up defiance against Maduro's fraudulent regime. Calling the protests the "greatest civic feat in the history of the country," Machado warned that the movement would not relent.

After Maduro ordered his military leaders to respond to the protesters with an "iron fist," at least 24 were found dead and 2,200 were imprisoned. Undaunted, opposition leaders plan to keep a critical mass on the streets, lure military leaders to their side and drain the dictator's resources and power. But to achieve all that, they will need all the help they can get from Washington.

The Biden administration has expressed openness to negotiations with Caracas, but Maduro has shown he can't be trusted to abide by his agreements. After talks with the United States in Qatar last year, Maduro's government promised to allow free and fair elections. It turned out to be another bluff: Not only was the election stunningly unfair, but Maduro responded to the result by cracking down on opposition leaders and their supporters.

Waiting for intervention by Maduro's fellow leftists in Colombia, Brazil and Mexico,

meanwhile, will only buy the dictator more time for deception and repression.

The Biden administration has alluded to the possibility of offering Maduro amnesty from prosecution on drug trafficking charges if he agrees to a peaceful transfer of power. But given his past failures to comply with international agreements, and with four long months left in his term, that "carrot" probably won't be enough to dislodge the strongman. The United States and other foreign powers will have to threaten him with "sticks," imposing economic and diplomatic consequences to push him out of power.

The harshest possible sanctions must be leveled against Maduro and all state-owned industries to make an exit plan his best option. Hector Briceño, a Venezuelan postdoctoral researcher at Germany's University of Rostock, told me that although sanctions on private business could hurt ordinary Venezuelans, targeting state-owned enterprises such as the country's petroleum industry can be effective when the regime is as cash-starved as it is now.

"Profits from the petroleum industry don't reach the people," Briceño said. "Maduro spreads them between his allies among the military and other top officials."

Maduro's regime, like that of his predecessor, Hugo Chávez, operates on a top-down system of bribes and threats. The threats alone work for only so long; at some point, Maduro's minions will expect to be paid.

In April, responding to Maduro's interference with and intimidation of the opposition ahead of the election, President Joe Biden reinstated some of the Trump-era sanctions that had been eased following the Qatar deal. But the administration indicated that it would allow certain foreign oil oper-

ations to continue in the country.

The Maduro government's objections to the reimposition of sanctions showed that they have an impact, but his continued intransigence also reveals that they haven't gone far enough to affect his behavior. And this is the worst moment to be generous with the regime. Why not hold up authorizations of the remaining low-yield, risky and environmentally hazardous foreign oil ventures, at least until a democratic government is in place?

Washington should also officially recognize Edmundo González Urrutia as the country's rightful incoming leader. The Biden administration has joined a few other countries in acknowledging that González won the election, but it stopped short of calling him the president-elect.

The administration can't necessarily ensure that Venezuela's valiant struggle for liberty prevails. But doing less than it can will only help Maduro and his cronies get richer and bolder in prolonging their hold on political power.

The stakes couldn't be higher. Nearly 8 million Venezuelans have migrated to the United States and other countries in search of a better future, and 40% of those remaining say they plan to leave if Maduro doesn't. A once-thriving economy has been devastated by years of inept and corrupt rule, and the country has become a haven for institutionalized crime and terrorism and a security threat to the entire hemisphere.

The brave Venezuelan resistance isn't giving up, and the United States shouldn't either. This is a golden opportunity to end 25 years of misery under Chávez and Maduro.

Kristina Foltz is a researcher and writer based in California and Colombia.

Disaster preparedness must be on candidates' radar

BY KELLY MCKINNEY

Chicago Tribune

Thirty-two years ago, a tropical storm wandered over an area of superheated water and exploded into a monster Category 5 hurricane with 174 mph winds.

Compact and powerful, Hurricane Andrew slammed into south Florida, obliterating houses and leaving 65 people dead. In the days that followed, our response to the disaster was a textbook case of failure, with a breakdown in communication and coordination at all levels of government. Nobody, from the White House down, had any inkling what was going on. Peg Maloy, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's spokesperson at the time, put it best: "Something is wrong. Nobody knows where it's breaking down. I'd like to know myself."

The result of our failed government response was, as always, human suffering, with the affected communities left to fend for themselves. The town of Homestead was a devastated landscape, littered with dead animals, the smell of human waste hanging in the air. Dade County's Emergency Management director, Kate Hale, said during a televised news conference: "Where in the hell is the cavalry on this one?"

The bad news is that, when it comes to responding to catastrophes, little has changed in the decades since that hot August morning some three decades ago. While some agen-

cies (FEMA is a notable example) have improved their capabilities and their processes, as a nation we have made no progress in our readiness for major disasters.

This was clearly shown 13 years later in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina and, most recently, by our national response to the COVID-19 pandemic, when a clumsy federal bureaucracy and its various components, from the Department of Health and Human Services to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA, failed to take an ownership stake in the crisis. Instead, they pointed at each other and dithered, while the virus spread rapidly across the nation.

Although it's true that the COVID-19 disaster unfolded in a polarized political climate, its failures cannot be attributed to partisanship. The causes of our national failure arose out of incompetence. The partisan divisions that emerged were the result of that incompetence, not its cause. Meanwhile, the absence of a cohesive national plan leaves us vulnerable.

Catastrophes overwhelm us, affecting everyone in the same way at the same time. They ignore political boundaries, sowing chaos and demanding information and resources way beyond what is immediately available. Many people, even some crisis management professionals, think the challenges are just too great. They believe that planning for catastrophes is wasted effort; an

exercise in futility. They are wrong.

Planning (i.e., what must happen and who is on the hook to do it) enables coordination, and, with effective coordination, nothing is impossible. Only national executive leadership can build the plan that establishes accountability across all levels of government, that connects to the private sector and deploys the resources and solutions needed to address widespread and urgent human suffering.

Now is the time for us to stop the dithering and the finger-pointing and to start reconfiguring ourselves to confront the unknown in a complex environment. With the national nominating conventions over and the candidates engaged in a nine-week sprint to Election Day, this is a critical opportunity to elevate this issue. Preparing the nation for the inevitable next catastrophe — whether it be a natural disaster, pandemic or terrorist attack — is a fundamental responsibility of the federal government. The president owns this issue, and we should not let the candidates off the hook.

How many more failures must we be forced to endure before we get the plan we need? The voters deserve to know.

Kelly McKinney is the assistant vice president of emergency management and enterprise resilience at NYU Langone Health in New York City. He is a former deputy commissioner for the New York City Office of Emergency Management and the author of "Moment of Truth: The Nature of Catastrophes and How to Prepare for Them."

SCOREBOARD/WNBA

DEALS

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Sent RHP Jacob Webb to Bowie (EL).

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Placed INF Brooks Baldwin on the 10-day IL. Recalled INF Bryan Ramos from Charlotte (IL).

KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Sent RF Hunter Renfroe to Northwest Arkansas (TL) on a rehab assignment.

MINNESOTA TWINS — Recalled RHP Louie Varland from St. Paul (IL). Optioned RHP Diego Castillo to St. Paul.

NEW YORK YANKEES — Sent RHP Ian Hamilton to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (IL) on a rehab assignment.

OAKLAND ATHLETICS — Reinstated LHP Scott Alexander from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Joe Boyle to Las Vegas (PCL). Claimed INF CJ Alexander from Kansas City. Transferred OF Esteyru Ruiz to the 60-day IL.

SEATTLE MARINERS — Agreed to terms with RHP Jesse Hahn on a minor league contract.

TEXAS RANGERS — Placed SS Corey Seager on the 10-day IL. Selected the contract of OF Sandro Fabian from Round Rock (PCL). Transferred RHP Jon Gray to the 60-day IL.

National League

CHICAGO CUBS — Recalled RHP Trey Wingenter and RHP Jack Neely from Iowa (IL). Placed RHP Jorge Lopez on the 15-day IL, retroactive to Sept. 3 and LHP Justin Steele retroactive to Sept. 1.

MIAMI MARLINS — Optioned RHP George Soriano to Jacksonville (IL). Added LHP Anthony Veneziano to the active roster.

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Designated RHP Michael Rucker for assignment. Selected the contract of RHP Nick Nelson from Lehigh Valley (IL). Optioned RHP Tyler Phillips to Lehigh Valley.

SAN DIEGO PADRES — Optioned LHP Tom Cosgrove to El Paso (PCL).

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Agreed to terms with Matt Chapman on a six-year contract for 2025-30.

FOOTBALL

National Football League

CAROLINA PANTHERS — Signed TE Mesiah Swinson from Green Bay's practice squad.

HOUSTON TEXANS — Waived TE Teagan Quitoriano from injured reserve with a settlement.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Waived DB Tyree Gillespie from injured reserve with a settlement.

MIAMI DOLPHINS — Waived WR Braylon Sanders from injured reserve with a settlement. Released DE Wyatt Ray from injured reserve with a settlement.

NEW YORK GIANTS — Released OT Yodny Cajuste from injured reserve with a settlement.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Signed OT Jack Driscoll and WR Kyle Phillips to the practice squad. Released TE Kevin Foelsch and DB Caden Sterns from the practice squad.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Signed RB Aaron Shampkin to the practice squad. Placed RB Boston Scott on the practice squad injured list.

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Signed DT Quinton Bohanna and DT Kenneth Odumegwu to the practice squad.

TENNESSEE TITANS — Signed LB Luke Gifford to the practice squad. Released G Lachavious Simmons from injured reserve with a settlement.

SOCCER

Major League Soccer

SAN DIEGO FC — Recalled G Duran Ferree from loan at Orange County SC (USL Championship).

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
x-New York	27	6	.818	—
x-Connecticut	24	9	.727	3
x-Indiana	18	16	.529	9½
Atlanta	11	22	.333	16
Chicago	11	22	.333	16
Washington	10	23	.303	17

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Minnesota	24	9	.727	—
x-Las Vegas	21	12	.636	3
x-Seattle	20	13	.606	4
x-Phoenix	17	17	.500	7½
Dallas	9	24	.273	15
Los Angeles	7	26	.212	17

x-clinched playoff spot

Wednesday's game

Indiana 93, Los Angeles 86

Thursday's games

Seattle at New York
Washington at Phoenix

Friday's games

Dallas at Atlanta
Las Vegas at Connecticut
Minnesota at Indiana
Los Angeles at Chicago

Saturday's game

Phoenix at Seattle

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Schedule

Friday
MIDWEST

W. Illinois (0-1) at Indiana (1-0)
Duke (1-0) at Northwestern (1-0)

SOUTHWEST

BYU (1-0) at SMU (2-0)

Saturday
EAST

Georgetown (1-0) at Marist (0-0)
Georgia Tech (2-0) at Syracuse (1-0)
Bowling Green (1-0) at Penn St. (1-0)
Akron (0-1) at Rutgers (1-0)
Merrimack (0-1) at Uconn (0-1)
Lafayette (0-1) at Monmouth (NJ) (0-1)
Wagner (1-0) at Lehigh (0-1)
St. Anselm (0-0) at Sacred Heart (0-1)
New Hampshire (0-1) at Holy Cross (0-1)
Temple (0-1) at Navy (1-0)
Michigan St. (1-0) at Maryland (1-0)
Duquesne (0-1) at Boston College (1-0)
Stonehill (0-0) at Stony Brook (0-1)
Franklin Pierce (0-0) at Bryant (0-1)
Morgan St. (1-0) at Towson (0-1)
Edinboro (0-0) at Robert Morris (0-1)
Fordham (0-1) at CCSU (0-1)
Albany (NY) (1-0) at West Virginia (0-1)
Villanova (1-0) at Colgate (0-1)
Mercyhurst (1-0) at Howard (0-1)

SOUTH

Troy (0-1) at Memphis (1-0)
Army (1-0) at FAU (0-1)
Kansas St. (1-0) at Tulane (1-0)
SC State (0-1) at The Citadel (1-0)
Campbell (0-1) at W. Carolina (0-1)
Bucknell (0-1) at VMI (0-1)
Tennessee Tech (0-1) at Georgia (1-0)
Mercer (1-0) at Bethune-Cookman (0-1)
Wofford (1-0) at Richmond (0-1)
South Carolina (1-0) at Kentucky (1-0)
Charlotte (0-1) at North Carolina (1-0)
California (1-0) at Auburn (1-0)
Jacksonville St. (0-1) at Louisville (1-0)
Virginia St. (0-0) at Norfolk St. (0-2)
Middle Tenn. (1-0) at Mississippi (1-0)
Marshall (1-0) at Virginia Tech (0-1)
Virginia-Wise (0-0) at ETSU (0-1)
Kentucky Christian (0-0) at Morehead St. (1-0)

Virginia Union (0-0) at Hampton (0-1)
East Carolina (1-0) at Old Dominion (0-1)
Elon (0-1) at NC Central (1-0)
Gardner-Webb (0-1) at James Madison (1-0)

Florida A&M (2-0) at Miami (1-0)
Cent. Michigan (1-0) at FIU (0-1)
Charleston Southern (0-1) at Furman (0-1)

Warner University (0-0) at Stetson (1-0)
Miles (0-0) at Alabama St. (0-1)
Sam Houston St. (1-0) at UCF (1-0)
William & Mary (1-0) at Coastal Carolina (1-0)

E. Kentucky (0-1) at W. Kentucky (0-1)
Louisiana-Lafayette (1-0) at Kennesaw St. (0-1)
Samford (0-1) at Florida (0-1)
South Florida (1-0) at Alabama (1-0)
S. Illinois (0-1) at Austin Peay (0-1)
Winston-Salem (0-0) at NC A&T (0-1)
Catawba (0-0) at Davidson (0-1)
SE Louisiana (0-1) at Southern Miss. (0-1)

Virginia (1-0) at Wake Forest (1-0)
Tuskegee (0-0) at Grambling St. (0-1)
Presbyterian (0-1) at Erskine (0-0)
Prairie View (0-1) at Northwestern St. (0-1)

UAB (1-0) at Louisiana-Monroe (1-0)
Savannah St. (0-0) at Southern U. (0-1)
Chattanooga (0-1) at Georgia St. (0-1)
Butler (1-0) at Murray St. (0-1)
Lane (0-0) at Jackson St. (0-1)
Illinois St. (0-1) at North Alabama (0-2)
Kentucky St. (0-0) at Alabama A&M (0-1)
Alcorn St. (0-1) at Vanderbilt (1-0)
Nicholls (0-1) at LSU (0-1)
NC State (1-0) vs. Tennessee (1-0) at Charlotte, N.C.
Appalachian St. (1-0) at Clemson (0-1)

MIDWEST

Texas (1-0) at Michigan (1-0)
Rhode Island (1-0) at Minnesota (0-1)
Pittsburgh (1-0) at Cincinnati (1-0)
Missouri St. (0-1) at Ball St. (0-0)
N. Iowa (1-0) at St. Thomas (Minn.) (0-1)
Valparaiso (0-1) at Youngstown St. (0-1)
St. Francis (Pa.) (0-1) at Kent St. (0-1)
Tennessee St. (1-0) at N. Dakota St. (0-1)
UMass (0-1) at Toledo (1-0)
South Dakota (1-0) at Wisconsin (1-0)
N. Illinois (1-0) at Notre Dame (1-0)
Iowa St. (1-0) at Iowa (1-0)
South Alabama (0-1) at Ohio (0-1)
Cent. Arkansas (0-1) at Lindenwood (Mo.) (0-1)
Kansas (1-0) at Illinois (1-0)
Buffalo (1-0) at Missouri (1-0)
UT Martin (0-1) at SE Missouri (1-1)
Incarnate Word (1-0) at S. Dakota St. (0-1)

SOUTHWEST

Arkansas (1-0) at Oklahoma St. (1-0)
McNeese St. (1-1) at Texas A&M (0-1)
UTSA (1-0) at Texas State (1-0)
Texas Southern (1-0) at Rice (0-1)
Tarleton St. (1-1) at Houston Christian (0-1)
MVU (0-1) at Lamar (0-1)
Tulsa (1-0) at Arkansas St. (1-0)
Stephen F. Austin (1-0) at North Texas (1-0)
Houston (0-1) at Oklahoma (1-0)
LIU Brooklyn (0-1) at TCU (1-0)
Arkansas Baptist (0-0) at Ark.-Pine Bluff (0-1)
West Georgia (1-0) at Abilene Christian (0-1)
S. Utah (0-1) at UTEP (0-1)

FAR WEST

Utah Tech (0-1) at UNLV (1-0)
Baylor (1-0) at Utah (1-0)
E. Michigan (1-0) at Washington (1-0)
Idaho (0-1) at Wyoming (0-1)
Cent. Washington (0-0) at San Diego (1-0)

W. Oregon (0-0) at Idaho St. (0-1)
Drake (0-0) at E. Washington (1-0)
San Jose St. (1-0) at Air Force (1-0)
Cal Poly (0-1) at Stanford (0-1)
N. Colorado (0-1) at Colorado St. (0-1)
Georgia Southern (0-1) at Nevada (1-1)
Maine (1-0) at Montana St. (2-0)
Portland St. (0-1) at Weber St. (0-1)
Texas A&M Commerce (0-1) at UC Davis (0-1)

Boise St. (1-0) at Oregon (1-0)
Sacramento St. (0-1) at Fresno St. (0-1)
Texas Tech (1-0) at Washington St. (1-0)
N. Arizona (1-0) at Arizona (1-0)
Liberty (1-0) at New Mexico St. (1-0)
Mississippi St. (1-0) at Arizona St. (1-0)
Oregon St. (1-0) at San Diego St. (1-0)
Utah St. (1-0) at Southern Cal (1-0)

PRO SOCCER

MLS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Inter Miami CF	18	4	5	59	62	40
Cincinnati	16	8	3	51	48	36
Columbus	14	4	7	49	52	24
New York	10	5	12	42	43	34
NYCFC	11	10	6	39	40	36
Charlotte FC	10	9	8	38	31	29
Orlando City	10	10	7	37	42	41
Toronto FC	10	15	3	33	36	50
Atlanta	8	12	7	31	36	38
Philadelphia	7	11	9	30	47	43
D.C. United	7	12	8	29	41	55
CF Montréal	6	12	9	27	35	58
New England	8	15	2	26	28	49
Chicago	6	13	8	26	33	48
Nashville	6	13	8	26	26	44

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
LA Galaxy	15	6	7	52	53	38
LAFC	14	6	5	47	48	32
Real Salt Lake	13	6	8	47	53	36
Colorado	13	9	5	44	53	45
Vancouver	12	8	5	41	44	35
Portland	11	9	7	40	55	46
Houston	11	8	7	40	37	31
Seattle	11	9	7	40	37	32
Minnesota	10	11	6	36	44	45
Austin FC	9	11	7	34	30	38
FC Dallas	9	12	6	33	44	45
Sporting KC	7	14	6	27	44	52
St Louis City	5	10	12	27	38	51
San Jose	5	20	2	17	34	63

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Saturday's games

St Louis City at New England
Sporting Kansas City at New York
Seattle at Columbus
D.C. United at Chicago
Los Angeles FC at Houston
FC Dallas at Vancouver

NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Orlando	13	0	5	44	35	12
Washington	12	4	2	38	37	20
Kansas City	10	3	5	35	42	28
Gotham FC	10	4	4	34	21	15
North Carolina	9	8	1	28	22	19
Portland	8	7	3	27	28	25
Chicago	7	9	2	23	25	27
Bay FC	7	11	0	21	23	31
Angel City	6	9	3	21	20	28
Louisville	4	7	7	19	26	26
Seattle	4	9	5	17	20	30
San Diego	3	8	7	16	14	20
Utah Royals FC	4	11	3	15	13	30
Houston	3	10	5	14	12	27

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Friday's game

Seattle at Angel City

Saturday's games

Portland at Washington
Utah Royals FC at Kansas City
Louisville at Bay FC

Sunday's games

Houston at Gotham FC
Orlando at Chicago
North Carolina at San Diego

Friday, Sept. 13

Bay FC at North Carolina
Kansas City at Orlando
Chicago at Portland



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

Fever guard Caitlin Clark, left, drives on the Los Angeles Sparks' Kia Nurse on Wednesday. Indiana had clinched a playoff spot before the win.

Fever in playoffs, hungry for more

By MICHAEL MAROT

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana Fever coach Christie Sides slept through her team's playoff-clinching moment Tuesday night. Rookie guard Caitlin Clark watched the decisive game, then went to bed.

For the WNBA's top-drawing team, the end to a seven-year playoff drought on a night it didn't play seemed a little unceremonious.

On Wednesday morning, the Fever's world changed. The team that endured seven straight losing seasons, had won only 30 games over the previous four years and started this season 1-8 was the toast of Indianapolis.

"I usually go to bed by 9:30, 10 o'clock every night, but I did set my alarm for midnight to wake up and I actually just turned it off. Didn't even look," Sides said. "So this morning, I woke up to some really awesome text messages."

Losses by Chicago and Atlanta gave the Fever their first postseason berth since Tamika Catchings retired in 2016, even if Sides wanted just one of those teams to win so the Fever could clinch it on their home court in front of another near-capacity crowd.

Still, nobody was all that upset, and the fans still had plenty to celebrate Wednesday night when Indiana beat Los Angeles 93-86 behind a triple-double from Clark, who also became the fastest player in WNBA history to reach 100 3-pointers in a season (she now has 102).

During pregame warmups, beaming smiles could be found on faces all around — Clark, the former Iowa star who has taken women's basketball to unprecedented heights; Kelsey Mitchell, the seven-year veteran who will finally get her first taste of playoff basketball; and especially Sides, who on Wednesday was named WNBA coach of the month, a first for the Fever.

While this was the goal from the moment Indiana drafted Clark with the No. 1 overall in pick, it was never a gimme.

"Definitely, cool," said Clark, who swept the league's monthly honors for player and rookie of the month. "It doesn't even have to come down to the wire for us, and I think that's special. Like you can just relax and play basketball and have a lot of fun. Yeah, we accomplished that, but there's still so much more left on the table."

It's not just Clark who realizes what's possible.

Guard Erica Wheeler appeared in four playoff games during her first two WNBA seasons and it took her eight more to make it back. It's been so long, the playoff format has changed, as has her role — playing behind Clark.

But as one of four Fever players with postseason experience, she can bring some important perspective.

"The job is not done," Wheeler said. "We still have six, seven more games and we can't think ahead like that. Me being a vet, I know that for a fact. So for me, it's not time to think about the playoffs. You've got seven games left."

Just three months ago, the postseason appeared unlikely.

A brutal early schedule coupled with Clark starting her pro career just five weeks after completing a 39-game college schedule contributed to Indiana's early woes. The Olympic break gave Clark a much-needed breather and a young team time to figure out how to jell.

Indiana is a league-best 9-2 in its past 11 games and since June 1 has victories over each of the league's top three teams — New York, Minnesota and Connecticut.

"We were able to keep it together and they focused on the things we kept talking about — creating good habits, relentless effort, togetherness and toughness," Sides said. "We focused on those things and that's what mattered."

MLB

Cubs throw combined no-hitter

BY GAVIN DORSEY
Associated Press

CHICAGO — Shota Imanaga wasn't disappointed when he was removed after seven hitless innings and 95 pitches.

"He actually didn't know he had a no-hitter going at all," Chicago Cubs manager Counsell said.

Nate Pearson and Porter Hodge each followed with a perfect inning to finish a 12-0 victory over the Pittsburgh Pirates on Wednesday night, the Cubs' first no-hitter at Wrigley Field since 1972.

"That's 100% about taking care of Shota and making sure we're doing the right thing for him," Counsell said. "It's not fun to do, but when you're prioritizing the player's health and you don't know what's going to happen moving forward, we want him to stay healthy."

Imanaga (12-3) struck out seven and walked two, throwing 66 pitches for strikes.

A 31-year-old left-hander in his first season with the Cubs after pitching in Japan for eight seasons, Imanaga has not gotten an out in the eighth inning this season and has thrown a high of 103 pitches.

He needed 25 pitches to get through the second inning. He complimented catcher Miguel Amaya, who posed for photos with the three pitchers after the final out.

"Miggy studies the hitters, and there were a few occasions today where there was a specific pitch I wanted to throw, Miggy had a different sign, and I just trusted him and it worked out," Imanaga said through an interpreter. "I can't thank him enough."

"The way he works, the presence, the confidence that he shows up there, every pitch is with intention," Amaya said. "He's a grinder."



CHARLES REX ARBOGAST/AP

Chicago Cubs pitchers Shota Imanaga, left, and Porter Hodge shake hands after Imanaga, Hodge and Nate Pearson combined for a no-hitter against the Pittsburgh Pirates in the team's 12-0 win Wednesday in Chicago.

Chicago's previous no-hitter was by Zach Davies, Ryan Tepera, Andrew Chafin and Craig Kimbrel at Dodger Stadium on June 24, 2021. The Cubs had not pitched a no-hitter at Wrigley Field since Milt Pappas against San Diego on Sept. 2, 1972 — Pappas was one pitch from a perfect game when Bruce Froemming called ball four on a full-count pitch to Larry Stahl. Garry Jesteadt then popped out.

Chicago ended a streak of 4,147 regular and postseason games at Wrigley Field without a no-hitter, the second-longest for a team in a single ballpark behind Pittsburgh, according to Opta. The Pirates

never had a no-hitter in 4,773 games at Forbes Field from 1909-70.

Cubs players celebrated when shortstop Dansby Swanson threw to first baseman Michael Busch for the final out on Oneil Cruz's grounder, but were more muted than during celebrations after individual no-hitters.

Swanson insisted on staying in the game despite the blowout.

"He goes about his work the same every day, whether he's had a good outing or a bad outing," Swanson said on Imanaga. "He's always wanting to get better. He's always doing the routine that he needs to do to be able to go back

out again in five days and be able to pitch well. He's always prepared. He has his own way of doing things and takes full pride and responsibility to do that."

This was the fourth no-hitter this season after complete-game efforts by Houston's Ronel Blanco against Toronto on April 1, San Francisco's Blake Snell at Cincinnati on April 2 and San Diego's Dylan Cease at Washington on July 25.

Nico Hoerner, Pete Crow-Armstrong and Swanson each had three of Chicago's 17 hits, with Swanson and Crow-Armstrong both finishing a triple shy of the cycle.

Yanks look ahead instead of focusing on rut

BY SCHUYLER DIXON
Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Aaron Judge hasn't homered in nine straight games for the first time this season, and the New York Yankees are under .500 over the equivalent of half a season.

Never mind that Judge leads the major leagues with 51 home runs or the Yankees are just a half-game behind Baltimore for the AL East lead and the AL's best record.

"Nobody's going to feel sorry for us," manager Aaron Boone said. "I'm sure a lot of people out there are rooting against us. We've got to have that us-against-the-world, go take this thing, go take this position, go take this playoff opportunity. It's all there for us. We've got to do it."

In a 10-6 loss at the Texas Rangers on Wednesday night that gave the Yankees their third consecutive series loss, New York was within inches of cutting a ninth-inning deficit from eight runs to one.

Wyatt Langford made a leaping, game-end-



Judge

ing catch at the top of wall in left field on a 104 mph liner from Giancarlo Stanton with two runners on after Trent Grisham's two-out grand slam. This was a night after the Texas rookie's game-ending slam in a 7-4 Rangers victory.

Judge and Juan Soto had left the game in the eighth inning because of the 10-2 deficit, so Judge was already assured of his ninth consecutive game without going deep — he had a pair of eight-game stretches earlier this season.

"Just don't think about it, try not to hear those kinds of things," said Judge, who was 6 of 34 with two doubles over the three series losses. "I think I heard it early in the year, too, but there's nothing I can do about that. I'm not trying to hit homers."

The Yankees are currently without a specific closer after two-time All-Star Clay Holmes gave up Langford's drive with New York on the

cup of a series victory in the middle game against the Rangers — Holmes' big league-high 11th blown save.

Boone says there are several options, including Holmes, for the next save opportunity in what he called a short-term situation. Those answers won't come until Friday at the earliest, at the Chicago Cubs.

New York's 40-41 record goes back to June 1, when it started that day 40-19. Even back then, though, the Yankees were only two games ahead of the Orioles.

AL Central-leading Cleveland (80-60) is also in the mix for the AL's best record, tied with New York and a half-game behind Baltimore (81-60).

"We are right there with every opportunity to reach our hopes and dreams. And that's because of the season we've had as a whole," Boone said. "We've put ourselves in position to go grab this thing. But if we want to go grab it, we've got to play our best ball and put our best foot forward with 22 to go."

Scoreboard

American League

East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Baltimore	81	60	.574	—
New York	80	60	.571	½
Boston	70	70	.500	10½
Tampa Bay	69	70	.496	11
Toronto	67	74	.475	14

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	80	60	.571	—
Minnesota	75	64	.540	4½
Kansas City	76	65	.539	4½
Detroit	70	70	.500	10
Chicago	32	109	.227	48½

West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	75	64	.540	—
Seattle	70	70	.500	5½
Texas	67	73	.479	8½
Oakland	61	79	.436	14½
Los Angeles	58	81	.417	17

National League

East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	83	56	.597	—
Atlanta	76	63	.547	7
New York	76	64	.543	7½
Washington	62	77	.446	21
Miami	52	87	.374	31

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	81	59	.579	—
Chicago	72	68	.514	9
St. Louis	71	69	.507	10
Cincinnati	67	73	.479	14
Pittsburgh	65	74	.468	15½

West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	84	56	.600	—
San Diego	80	61	.567	4½
Arizona	79	61	.564	5
San Francisco	68	72	.486	16
Colorado	51	89	.364	33

Wednesday's games

- Chicago Cubs 12, Pittsburgh 0
- Philadelphia 4, Toronto 2
- Chicago White Sox 8, Baltimore 1
- Cincinnati 12, Houston 5
- Miami 4, Washington 3, 10 innings
- Tampa Bay 9, Minnesota 4
- N.Y. Mets 8, Boston 3
- Atlanta 5, Colorado 2
- Kansas City 4, Cleveland 1
- St. Louis 3, Milwaukee 2, 10 innings
- Texas 10, N.Y. Yankees 6
- L.A. Angels 10, L.A. Dodgers 1
- San Diego 6, Detroit 5, 10 innings
- Seattle 16, Oakland 3
- Arizona 6, San Francisco 4

Thursday's games

- Houston at Cincinnati
- Minnesota at Tampa Bay
- Seattle at Oakland
- Arizona at San Francisco
- Philadelphia at Miami
- Washington at Pittsburgh
- Colorado at Atlanta
- L.A. Angels at Texas
- Detroit at San Diego

Friday's games

- N.Y. Yankees (Gil 12-6) at Chicago Cubs (Wicks 2-2)
- Colorado (Feltner 1-10) at Milwaukee (Montas 6-9)
- Washington (Herz 2-7) at Pittsburgh (Ortiz 6-4)
- Tampa Bay (Baz 2-2) at Baltimore (TBD)
- Philadelphia (Wheeler 13-6) at Miami (Cabrera 3-6)
- Cincinnati (TBD) at N.Y. Mets (Manaea 11-5)
- Chicago White Sox (Martin 0-3) at Boston (Pivetta 5-10)
- Toronto (Gausman 12-10) at Atlanta (Fried 8-8)
- L.A. Angels (Aldegheri 0-1) at Texas (TBD)
- Arizona (Pfaadt 9-7) at Houston (Valdez 13-6)
- Minnesota (Matthews 1-2) at Kansas City (Ragans 10-9)
- Seattle (Miller 10-8) at St. Louis (Fedde 8-8)
- Detroit (Skubal 16-4) at Oakland (Spence 7-9)
- San Francisco (TBD) at San Diego (King 11-8)
- Cleveland (Boyd 1-1) at L.A. Dodgers (TBD)

This day in baseball

Sept. 6

1995 — Cal Ripken Jr. plays in his 2,131st consecutive major league game to surpass Lou Gehrig's 56-year record. Ripken receives a 22-minute standing ovation and later hits a homer in the Baltimore Orioles' 4-2 win over the California Angels.
1996 — The Baltimore Orioles' Eddie Murray hits his 500th career home run.

US OPEN/AUTO RACING



EDUARDO MUNOZ ALVAREZ/AP

Jessica Pegula, of the United States, returns a shot against Iga Swiatek, of Poland, in U.S. Open quarterfinals on Wednesday in New York. Pegula advanced to a Grand Slam semifinal for the first time in her career.

Pegula upsets No. 1 Swiatek for first Grand Slam semis

BY HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The questions wouldn't stop for Jessica Pegula: Why was she 0-6 in Grand Slam quarterfinals heading into her U.S. Open matchup against No. 1 Iga Swiatek? What could Pegula do to change that?

They came up during her on-court interview after winning in the previous round. And again at the news conference that followed. And again during a brief TV interview right before striding onto the court at Arthur Ashe Stadium on Wednesday night.

If that all weighed on Pegula, the 30-year-old American hid it well, pulling off a big upset by easily beating Swiatek 6-2, 6-4 at Flushing Meadows and earning a debut trip to the semifinals at a major.

"There have been so many freaking times, and I just kept losing," said Pegula, who has won 14 of her past 15 matches, all on hard courts. "I know everyone keeps asking me about it, but I was like, 'I don't know what else to do. I just need to get there again and, like, win the match.' So thank God I was able to do it. And finally — finally! — I can say, 'Semifinalist.'"

She will face unseeded Karolina Muchova of the Czech Republic on Thursday for a berth in the final.

Muchova, the runner-up to Swiatek at the 2023 French Open, made it to the final four in New York for the second consecutive year with a 6-1, 6-4 victory over No. 22 seed Beatriz Haddad Maia earlier Wednesday. Shortly after losing to Coco Gauff in last year's semifinals, Muchova had surgery on her right wrist, then was off the tour for about 10 months until returning this June.

That was the latest in a series of injuries for Muchova, who called it "one of the worst ones that I had."

"Doesn't seem to matter how many matches she's really gotten in, she seems to have good results no matter what. It's cool to kind of see her back, because I think she's really great for the game and the way she plays is really fun," said the No. 6-seeded Pegula, who defeated Muchova at the Cincinnati Open last month. "She's good, so talented, so skilled as a tennis player. Like, so complete. Doesn't have a ton of weaknesses."

The other women's match Thursday night also featured an American making her major semifinal debut — No. 13 Emma Navarro against No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka, who won the past two Australian Open titles. Sabalenka lost to Gauff in the 2023 final in New York, while Navarro ended Gauff's title

defense in the fourth round.

There are two Americans in the men's semifinals, too, and they'll face each other: No. 12 Taylor Fritz takes on No. 20 Frances Tiafoe on Friday.

This is the first time since the 2003 U.S. Open that multiple Americans reached both the women's and the men's semis.

The other men's semifinal will be No. 1 Jannik Sinner against No. 25 Jack Draper. Sinner defeated 2021 champion Daniil Medvedev 6-2, 1-6, 6-1, 6-4 on Wednesday night to reach the final four at Flushing Meadows for the first time. Draper eliminated Alex de Minaur in straight sets.

The lopsided nature of Pegula's win was surprising, but she did not think this day would never arrive.

"I knew I could do it," she said. "I just had to go out and execute my game and not get frustrated."

Swiatek served poorly in the first set and her forehand was a real problem, with 22 of her 41 unforced errors coming on that side. Pegula made only 22 unforced errors in all and used terrific defense to keep forcing Swiatek to hit an extra shot.

"It's never easy to play against Jess. She has a tricky ball because it's pretty low and pretty flat," Swiatek said. "I just made too many mistakes."

Playoff surprises unlikely as power programs dominate

BY PETE IACOBELLI
Associated Press

DARLINGTON, S.C. — NASCAR's regular season finished with a pair of surprises in winless drivers Harrison Burton and Chase Briscoe pulling off unexpected victories at Daytona and Darlington.

Don't look for more stunners when the playoffs start next week and NASCAR's power programs, Hendrick Motorsports, Joe Gibbs Racing and Team Penske, dominate the grid with 11 of the 16 drivers who will chase the championship next Sunday in Atlanta.

Throw in Burton and owner Wood Brothers' connection with Penske, and 75% of the field has blue-blood connections to research, equipment and advanced technology that give their racers most everything they need to succeed.

"I mean, the way I look at it is we got nothing to lose, right?" Briscoe said after his dramatic, late, three-wide pass to win the Southern 500. "If you can win at Darlington, you can win anywhere on the schedule."

Briscoe gave soon-to-be-shuttered Stewart-Haas Racing, once a power program with championships from Tony Stewart in 2011 and Kevin Harvick in 2014, a final chance to add to that legacy when he passed Kyle Larson and Ross Chastain for the lead, then outran Kyle Busch at the end.

History says it won't be easy for Briscoe and others non-power players to celebrate in Phoenix when the championship will be awarded in two months.

Drivers from Hendrick Motorsports, JGR and Team Penske have won the past 10 titles.

Hendrick's lineup features past champions Larson and Chase Elliott along with William Byron and Alex Bowman.

"You work hard all year long to get stage wins, to get race wins to

position yourself in the playoffs," said Larson, the 2021 Cup Series champion who will open as the top seed in Atlanta. "Just keep on doing what we're doing. Our cars have been fast. Keep it up and hopefully, we can advance on through."

All four Gibbs drivers reached the playoffs, with Joe Gibbs' grandson, Ty Gibbs, earning his first playoff berth and 2017 series champ Martin Truex Jr. holding on to the 16th and final spot despite an early wreck that knocked him out of the Southern 500 when his playoff fate was very much in doubt.

Christopher Bell and Denny Hamlin each won three times this year.

Penske enters with the past two reigning champions in Joey Logano in 2022 and Ryan Blaney last year. Austin Cindric won his way into the field in June at World Wide Technology Raceway outside of St. Louis.

Blaney is ready to run it back, even though his Southern 500 was cut short when he was taken out early in the wreck with Truex, who took all the blame for the miscue.

The rest of the field includes 23XI Racing's Tyler Reddick, who won the regular-season championship by a point over Larson; Brad Keselowski of Roush Fenway Keselowski Racing, who won the series title in 2012; and Daniel Suarez, who runs for Trackhouse Racing.

Bring it on, says Briscoe, energized that he and Stewart-Haas have something to race for before the garage is shut for good. If he comes up short, Briscoe likely has more chances down the road since he's headed to JGR next season to replace Truex, who is retiring after the playoffs.

"We just got to go" and compete, Briscoe said of this playoff run. "If we do what we did (at Darlington), we can beat anybody. It's just a matter of putting it all together."



MATT KELLEY/AP

Chase Briscoe celebrates in Victory Lane after winning a NASCAR Cup Series race at Darlington Raceway on Sunday in Darlington, S.C.

NFL

INSIDE THE NUMBERS

Rookie QBs Nix, Williams, Daniels will start Week 1

By JOSH DUBOW
Associated Press

The days of rookie quarterbacks waiting their turns before taking over teams is long gone. For the third time in four years, there will be three rookie quarterbacks starting the season opener.

No. 1 draft pick Caleb Williams got the nod for Chicago, No. 2 pick Jayden Daniels for Washington and No. 12 pick Bo Nix for Denver, meaning half of the record-tying six QBs selected in the first round in April became immediate starters.

That follows Trevor Lawrence, Zach Wilson and Mac Jones in 2021, and Bryce Young, C.J. Stroud and Anthony Richardson last season as years with three rookie QBs starting in Week 1. It happened only once before since the 1970 merger, with five rookie quarterbacks starting the season opener in 2012.

After this week, 32 of the 55 rookie quarterbacks to start the opener will have done it in the past 19 seasons, with only 23 doing it in the first 38 years following the AFL-NFL merger.

The rookie QBs have a 16-35-1 record in openers, including a 0-7-1 mark the past five seasons. The last rookie QB to win a Week 1 start was Sam Darnold for the New York Jets against Detroit in 2018.

Williams will try to become the first No. 1 overall quarterback pick to win a season opener as a rookie since David Carr did it for the expansion Houston Texans in 2002 against Dallas. No. 1 pick QBs are 0-8-1 in Week 1 since then, with Kyler Murray getting the tie for Arizona in 2019.

The only other No. 1 pick QBs to win an opener as a rookie were

Jim Plunkett for New England in 1971 and John Elway for Denver in 1983.

Williams will also aim this season to give the Bears something the franchise has never had in its storied history — a 4,000-yard passer.

Chicago is the only franchise without a player to throw for at least 4,000 yards in a season. Erik Kramer's 3,838 yards in 1995 stand as the Bears' single-season record.

Twenty-eight of the other teams have had at least one 4,000-yard passer in the past 13 seasons as the 17th game and a pass-happy era have made reaching that milestone more routine. Of the 227 4,000-yard seasons in history, 189 (more than 83%) have come since 2000.



DOUG MURRAY/AP

Jayden Daniels is set to be the eighth different Week 1 starting quarterback for the Washington Commanders in as many seasons.



ANDY NELSON/AP

Caleb Williams, left, and Bo Nix met at a USC-Oregon game Nov. 11. Less than a year later, both quarterbacks are now NFL starters for the Chicago Bears and Denver Broncos, respectively.

The only other franchises without a 4,000-yard passer since 2011 are the Titans, who last did it in 1991 with Warren Moon when they were known as the Houston Oilers, the Browns (Brian Sipe, 1980) and the Jets (Joe Namath, 1967).

Revolving door

Daniels will be the eighth different Week 1 starting QB for Washington in the past eight seasons, setting a record for the Super Bowl era.

Indianapolis' streak of seven Week 1 starters in seven seasons will end with Richardson set to get the nod for a second straight year. The Commanders hope Daniels will bring an end to their streak that started with Kirk Cousins in 2017, followed by Alex Smith, Case Keenum, Dwayne Haskins, Ryan Fitzpatrick, Carson Wentz and Sam Howell.

The only other teams to do it seven years in a row were Cleveland (2013-19), Baltimore (1997-2003) and the Chargers (1987-93).

Week 1 fixtures

Matthew Stafford has never sat out an opener in his career and is scheduled to make his 16th Week 1 start in 16 seasons when the Los Angeles Rams face Detroit on Sunday night.

The only other QB to start the opener in his first 16 seasons since

starts began being tracked in 1950 was John Elway. Only two other QBs made more than 16 straight starts in openers at any point in their career, with Brett Favre doing it 18 straight years from 1993-2010 and Fran Tarkenton for 17 straight years from 1962-78.

Russell Wilson is set to make his 13th straight Week 1 start when Pittsburgh plays Atlanta, which would tie Peyton Manning and Warren Moon for the fifth-longest streak.

Division doings

Teams going from last to first in the division are far from rare in the NFL. Houston pulled off the feat last season, marking the 19th time in the past 21 seasons that at least one team did it.

The teams looking to go from the worst record in a division to champion this season are New England, Cincinnati, Tennessee, the Chargers, Washington, Carolina, Arizona, Minnesota and Chicago.

Kansas City heads into the season having won eight straight AFC West titles — three shy of the record set by New England from 2009-19. The only other teams to repeat as division champs headed into this season are Buffalo (four straight), Tampa Bay (three straight) and San Francisco (two straight).

The NFC East hasn't had a repeat division champion in two decades, with Philadelphia the last to do it from 2001-04. Dallas will try to end that streak this season after finishing first a year ago.

Opening thoughts

Coach Jim Harbaugh is back in the NFL with the Los Angeles Chargers after a nine-year stint in college at Michigan, capped by a national championship last season.

Harbaugh's .695 winning percentage in four seasons with San Francisco from 2011-14 ranks second-best to John Madden among the 163 coaches with at least 50 games since the merger. Harbaugh will try to join Jimmy Johnson, Barry Switzer and Pete Carroll as the only coaches to win both a Super Bowl and a college championship; he lost the NFL title game to his brother John's Ravens following the 2012 season.

Harbaugh is 4-0 in season openers and can tie Raymond Berry as the only coaches to be 5-0 or better in season openers. Berry won all five in New England from 1985-89.

As for current streaks, the Saints come into the year having won five straight openers for the longest active run. Tennessee and New England have both lost three straight openers for the longest current droughts.

Games on AFN



Tennessee Titans
at Chicago Bears
AFN-Sports2
7 p.m. Sunday CET
2 a.m. Monday JKT



Arizona Cardinals
at Buffalo Bills
AFN-Atlantic
7 p.m. Sunday CET
2 a.m. Monday JKT



Jacksonville Jaguars
at Miami Dolphins
AFN-Sports
7 p.m. Sunday CET
2 a.m. Monday JKT



Las Vegas Raiders
at Los Angeles Chargers
AFN-Sports
10 p.m. Sunday CET
5 a.m. Monday JKT



Denver Broncos
at Seattle Seahawks
AFN-Atlantic
10 p.m. Sunday CET
5 a.m. Monday JKT

NFL

Scoreboard

American Conference						
East						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Buffalo	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Miami	0	0	0	.000	0	0
N.Y. Jets	0	0	0	.000	0	0
New England	0	0	0	.000	0	0
South						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Houston	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Indianapolis	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Jacksonville	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Tennessee	0	0	0	.000	0	0
North						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Baltimore	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Cincinnati	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Cleveland	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Pittsburgh	0	0	0	.000	0	0
West						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Denver	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Kansas City	0	0	0	.000	0	0
L.A. Chargers	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Las Vegas	0	0	0	.000	0	0
National Conference						
East						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Dallas	0	0	0	.000	0	0
N.Y. Giants	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Philadelphia	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Washington	0	0	0	.000	0	0
South						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Atlanta	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Carolina	0	0	0	.000	0	0
New Orleans	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Tampa Bay	0	0	0	.000	0	0
North						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Chicago	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Detroit	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Green Bay	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Minnesota	0	0	0	.000	0	0
West						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Arizona	0	0	0	.000	0	0
L.A. Rams	0	0	0	.000	0	0
San Francisco	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Seattle	0	0	0	.000	0	0

Lions host Stafford, Rams in rematch

BY DAVE HOGG
Associated Press

DETROIT — The Detroit Lions know they have to put the 2023 season behind them and focus on 2024.

That won't be easy. Detroit opens the season Sunday night against the Los Angeles Rams in a rematch of their wild-card game in January — won by the Lions for the franchise's first playoff victory in 40 years.

It's another night game on national TV and another encounter with the symbol of the pre-Dan Campbell Lions — Matthew Stafford. Boed on every play, Stafford dominated his former team, passing for 367 yards and two touchdowns, but Detroit escaped with a 24-23 win.

The Lions went on to beat Tampa Bay before blowing a big lead against San Francisco in the NFC championship game.

Eight months later, it is the Rams again.

"It doesn't get any better than this — it really doesn't," Campbell said Monday. "The hardest thing is that we've still got seven days to go, but I'm excited, the staff is excited and so are the players, and I know our fans are ready to roll."

Last time, a lot of fans talked about their respect for Stafford — the best quarterback in franchise history — and insisted they were only booing him because of the magnitude of the situation. The idea was the Rams would come to Detroit for a regular-season game and he would get the kind of response former Tigers pitcher Justin Verlander gets when he comes back to Comerica Park.

That's probably not going to hap-



RICK OSENTOSKI/AP

Rams quarterback Matthew Stafford threw for 367 yards and two touchdowns against the Lions in the NFC wild-card playoffs in Detroit in January. Stafford visits his former team again on Sunday night.



Los Angeles Rams
at Detroit Lions
AFN-Sports
2:20 a.m. Monday CET
9:20 a.m. Monday JKT

pen Sunday night in Week 1; he's still the player they have to stop.

Rams coach Sean McVay "altered a little bit of how they traditionally played last year — they have a little bit more of a downhill

approach," said Campbell, who is beginning his fourth season as Lions coach. "That got some hits off Stafford and let him do what he does best, which is a winning recipe. We absolutely need to be beefed up and ready to go up front."

The good news for the Lions is the Rams don't have a Hall of Famer in the middle of their defense anymore. Aaron Donald's retirement at 32 ends a lot of sleepless nights for offensive coordinators.

"You always needed to account for him, you needed to know where he was at all times," Campbell said. "You were shifting and motioning just for him, and you are damn near doing it every play, plus you are trying to chip on one side so the

tackle could help the guard so the guard could help the center with Donald.

"It's nice not to have to worry about him."

The Lions have never played in the Super Bowl, but Campbell is up front about Sunday being the next step in achieving that goal.

"Talking about it doesn't matter now," he said. "The first step is winning the division, and once you do that, it is about seeding. You want to be the three seed or the two or even the one seed? You have to start winning the head-to-head games, and this is an NFC opponent who could win the West.

"That's a long way down the road, but this is when you start setting it up."

Overcoming CB injuries not new for Cowboys

BY SCHUYLER DIXON
Associated Press

FRISCO, Texas — Caelen Carson is next in line in a third consecutive season of the Dallas Cowboys having to fill in for a significant injury at cornerback.

If the name isn't familiar, recent history says it could be soon.

Dallas was without nickel cornerback Jourdan Lewis for most of 2022, when DaRon Bland emerged as a rookie and set the stage for a record-setting 2023 after Trevon Diggs went down with a knee injury.

Carson is expected to start the opener at Cleveland on Sunday as a rookie fifth-round pick because Bland, who set an NFL record with five interception returns for touchdowns last season, is sidelined at least the first four games following surgery for a stress fracture in his foot.

Bland was a rookie fifth-rounder when he led Dallas with five interceptions two years ago.

"We've seen guys step in and be-

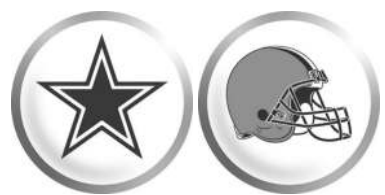
come, I don't want to say household names, because we don't care about that," safety Malik Hooker said. "There's guys that built their confidence up, not only within themselves, but with the organization and our team, with going out there and stepping in there and making plays."

The Cowboys lead the NFL with 59 interceptions since the start of 2021, when Diggs was an All-Pro after tying the franchise record with an 11-pick season. Dallas has been a 12-5 playoff team each year.

Diggs was in his second year when he led the NFL in interceptions, just as Bland was last season when he had a league-leading nine.

Not exactly the numbers to expect with a starting corner missing at least 10 games because of an injury.

"I don't even think it's circle the wagons," Lewis said. "I feel like the production is still there regardless of whoever's out. Trevon was out, (Bland) stepped up. We're always going to turn the ball over. I



Dallas Cowboys at
Cleveland Browns
AFN-Sports2
10:25 p.m. Sunday CET
5:25 a.m. Monday JKT

feel like that's a staple of what we do."

Lewis broke his foot two years ago, an injury so complex there were questions of whether he would play again. It turned out to be a good thing he did when Diggs tore a knee ligament in practice after just two games last season.

Bland was complaining of discomfort during training camp this summer, and the team announced his injury the day of the preseason finale. By then, Carson had already

emerged with his work in the off-season and in California.

"He has a quiet confidence about himself," coach Mike McCarthy said. "Since he's arrived here, I haven't seen him really take a step backward. He competes, very instinctive, very aware."

"I just feel like nothing changes," Carson said. "More people, and it's on television. But at the end of the day, you've been doing this since you were 5 years old."

The lesson of Bland is something the Cowboys can teach to Carson, and others.

"I think it's definitely something you can point to," McCarthy said. "And I think anytime you have a situation that occurs and you can point internally to how you've handled it, that's part of that five-year growth that I'm talking about."

Orin Carson's case, a test of first-year growth.

"It's an opportunity of a lifetime," he said. "You wait for this moment as a child, and it happened to be my first game."

Thursday's game	
Baltimore	at Kansas City
Friday's game	
Green Bay	vs Philadelphia at Sao Paulo, Brazil
Sunday Sept. 8	
Arizona	at Buffalo
Carolina	at New Orleans
Houston	at Indianapolis
Jacksonville	at Miami
Minnesota	at N.Y. Giants
New England	at Cincinnati
Pittsburgh	at Atlanta
Tennessee	at Chicago
Denver	at Seattle
Las Vegas	at L.A. Chargers
Dallas	at Cleveland
Washington	at Tampa Bay
L.A. Rams	at Detroit
Monday, Sept. 9	
N.Y. Jets	at San Francisco
Thursday, Sept. 12	
Buffalo	at Miami
Sunday, Sept. 15	
Cleveland	at Jacksonville
Indianapolis	at Green Bay
L.A. Chargers	at Carolina
Las Vegas	at Baltimore
N.Y. Giants	at Washington
N.Y. Jets	at Tennessee
New Orleans	at Dallas
San Francisco	at Minnesota
Seattle	at New England
Tampa Bay	at Detroit
L.A. Rams	at Arizona
Cincinnati	at Kansas City
Pittsburgh	at Denver
Chicago	at Houston
Monday, Sept. 16	
Atlanta	at Philadelphia
Thursday, Sept. 19	
New England	at N.Y. Jets

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Notre Dame leans on QB Leonard as experienced leader

BY CURT RALLO
Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Notre Dame quarterback Riley Leonard showed his teammates what he was all about with an early scramble and a subsequent slide that drew a first-quarter targeting penalty on Texas A&M defensive back Dalton Brooks last weekend.

Leonard got up, dusted himself off and went right back to work — a business-as-usual moment that struck a chord on the Fighting Irish sideline.

“Taking a hit like he did, the targeting penalty, a lot of people would have been shaken up by that,” wide receiver Beaux Collins said. “They would have been rattled and thrown off. I felt he was poised the whole game. I didn’t see any type of worry, no type of doubt in his eyes.”

Neither did anyone else, which was a key reason coach Marcus Freeman pursued Leonard when he entered the transfer portal.

That decision is already paying dividends at Notre Dame, which moved up two spots to No. 5 in the AP Top 25 after a 23-13 victory over the then-No. 20 Aggies. Leonard threw 18 of 30 for 158 yards and ran 12 times for 63 yards.

On Saturday, he gets to do it all over again when the Irish (1-0) face Mid-American Conference opponent Northern Illinois (1-0). And after being a two-year starter at Duke, the veteran doesn’t expect any butterflies when he plays in one of college football’s most revered venues — Notre Dame Stadium.

“As the game builds up, I become more and more emotionless, because I’m more confident,” Leonard said. “Nerves come with lack of preparation. Everybody that comes to Notre Dame has a goal and a legitimate chance to go to the NFL. Everybody here is like, ‘Hey, can we watch film; hey, what do you think about this?’”



Northern Illinois (1-0)
at No. 5 Notre Dame (1-0)
AFN-Sports
9:30 p.m. Saturday CET
4:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

The 6-foot-4, 216-pound former Alabama prep star certainly knows about the mystique of Irish football, everything from Knute Rockne to “Rudy.” And he was part of a new chapter last season when he suffered a high sprain of his right ankle late in Duke’s 21-14 loss to Notre Dame.

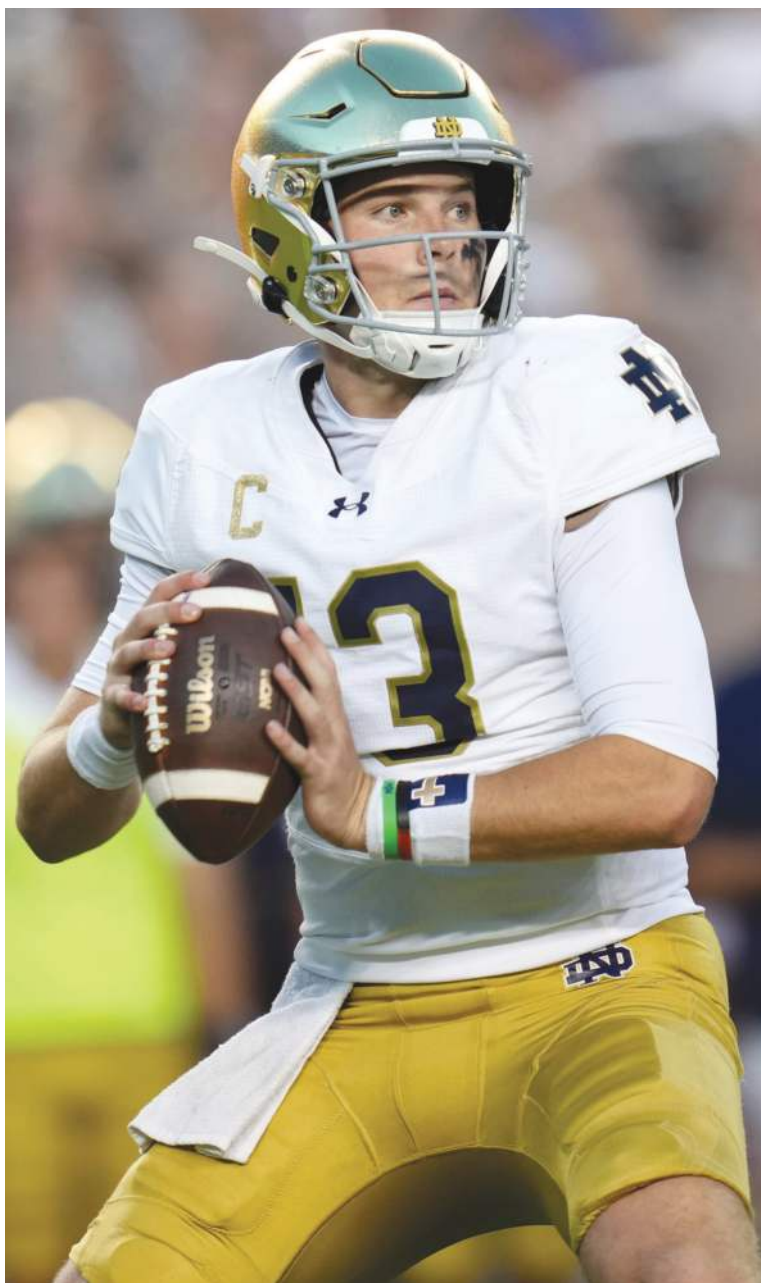
Irish quarterback Sam Hartman, who played previously at Wake Forest, waited outside the injury tent after the game ended to check on Leonard. Leonard emerged on crutches, and the two briefly chatted.

Whether that influenced Leonard’s eventual decision to join the Irish this season isn’t clear. Leonard has said he chose Notre Dame because of the camaraderie he found among the players. The last few months have only confirmed his initial impression.

“We’ll be sitting in the locker room drawing up plays,” Leonard said. “When you see somebody in the facility late at night, watching film, that’s just going to drive you to go later than him and watch more film than him. That’s the atmosphere and the culture here.”

It shows with the dual-threat quarterback’s unusual leadership style.

“He’s kind of like a chill dude at all times throughout the game,” Collins said. “I didn’t know what to expect from him. He’s definitely the leader that we needed.”



SAM CRAFT/AP

Notre Dame quarterback Riley Leonard looks to pass against Texas A&M during the first quarter Aug. 31 in College Station, Texas.

Leonard brings an experienced hand, too.

He was 250 of 392 passing with 2,967 yards, 20 TDs and six interceptions during his first season as Duke’s starter but was limited by injuries last season. He threw 95 of 165 for 1,102 yards and three TDs while rushing 124 times for 699 yards and 13 scores before a season-ending left toe injury in late October.

But it’s not just what he does on the field that makes him special.

His penchant for learning has helped him thrive in Notre Dame’s offensive system and lead the team in front of a rocking, raucous 107,000 fans at Texas A&M, too.

“He picks things up fast,” Notre

Dame offensive coordinator Mike Denbrock said. “I think he’s a guy who seeks details. He wants detailed information. He wants detailed feedback, whether that’s positive or negative, so he can go and learn as a player.”

But as gritty as Leonard’s start was last weekend, his finishing kick also turned heads around South Bend, giving the Irish and their fans a glimpse of how promising this season could be with Leonard behind center.

“To finish the fourth quarter with an eight-play, 85-yard TD drive that was the difference,” Freeman said. “That’s really the moment where we were able to say: ‘We have this. We’ve got the game.’”

With Mertz out, Florida hands ball to Lagway

BY MARK LONG
Associated Press

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — Florida expects to be without quarterback Graham Mertz against lower-division Samford on Saturday night, opening the door for highly touted freshman DJ Lagway to make his first career start.



Lagway

Mertz was knocked out of last week’s 41-17 home loss to No. 19 Miami in the third quarter with a concussion. Coach Billy Napier said Mertz missed a third consecutive practice Wednesday and is unlikely to be cleared in time to play against the Bulldogs.

“He’s doing better, but he’s not quite there yet,” Napier said. “So as of now, DJ will start the game.”

Mertz, a former Wisconsin starter, had his worst game in two seasons with the Gators. He completed 11 of 20 passes for 91 yards and an interception.

Lagway led the Gators to a touchdown and threw an interception in three series of work. He also ran for 20 yards. Now he could get the entire game to gain experience and possibly earn more playing time the rest of the season.

“I want to see clean football,” Napier said. “I want to see him lead the team, execute our offense, be the point guard, distribute the ball, take what the defense gives you, throw completions, create explosives when presented opportunities, be a great communicator, respond to success and adversity throughout the game and ultimately prepare in a way that reflects the vision for what you want to accomplish on Saturday.”

Lagway was a five-star prospect from Willis, Texas. The 2023 Gatorade Player of the Year was the consensus No. 1 QB in the country. He threw for 4,604 and 58 touchdowns as a senior at Willis High. He also led the team in rushing with 957 yards and 16 scores.

“He’s got a good look in his eye,” Napier said.

Games on AFN



Arkansas (1-0)
at No. 16 Oklahoma State (1-0)
AFN-Sports2
6 p.m. Saturday CET
1 a.m. Sunday JKT



Bowling Green (1-0)
at No. 8 Penn State (1-0)
AFN-Atlantic
6 p.m. Saturday CET
1 a.m. Sunday JKT



Iowa State (1-0)
at No. 21 Iowa (1-0)
AFN-Sports2
9:30 p.m. Saturday CET
4:30 a.m. Sunday JKT



No. 14 Tennessee (1-0)
at No. 24 NC State (1-0)
AFN-Sports
1:30 a.m. Sunday CET
8:30 a.m. Sunday JKT



Utah State (1-0)
at No. 13 USC (1-0)
AFN-Sports
5 a.m. Sunday CET
12 p.m. Sunday JKT

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Fending off toxic effects of 'rat poison'

Miami coach Cristobal learned from Saban about harm that outside praise can cause

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — Miami coach Mario Cristobal worked at Alabama under Nick Saban, so he's fully aware of what his former boss considers to be one of the biggest threats to a good football team.

Saban called it "rat poison" — his term for praise from the outside world, the type that is so highly heaped it can distract a team from doing its job.

Cristobal knows it's coming.

Miami (1-0) moved up seven spots to No. 12 in the AP Top 25 on Tuesday, voters obviously having been impressed by the Hurricanes' 41-17 road romp over Florida in the opener for both teams last weekend. That win, combined with Florida State's 0-2 start that sent the Seminoles from No. 10 to unranked, left the Hurricanes as the only Top 25 team in the Sunshine State after one full week.

"Miami has gotten off to a good start this season," said Cristobal, who spent four seasons — 2013 through 2016 — on Saban's staff at Alabama. "We're 1-0."

He'd like to keep the narrative that simple. He knows that's not going to happen, at least not from the outside world.

And to be fair, there's a ton to like from the Miami perspective. Quarterback Cam Ward, who daz-



Miami quarterback Cam Ward threw for 385 yards and three TDs in the Hurricanes' opening victory over Florida.

zled with 385 yards — the most by anyone in the country against a Power 4 opponent so far this season — and three touchdown passes in the opener, vaulted deeper into the way-too-early Heisman Trophy conversation. The Hurricanes' biggest rivals in the state, Florida State and Florida, are now a combined 0-3. There were recruits at Florida Field making "The U" with their hands as the Hurricanes were walking into the locker room once the 24-point victory was in the books.

"We're nowhere near what we're capable of," Miami receiver Xavier Restrepo said Tuesday. "We did have a decent day on Saturday and it just shows you a little



PHOTOS BY JOHN RAOUX/AP

Miami coach Mario Cristobal makes the sign of "The U" to fans after the Hurricanes defeated Florida on Aug. 31 in Gainesville, Fla. Cristobal would like to keep the narrative around his team simple.

bit of how dangerous we are as an offense. But we're nowhere near where we need to be. ... We have a long way to go."

That's exactly what Cristobal wants the Hurricanes to be saying, thinking and believing.

It's just one game, but the Hurricanes haven't been ranked this highly in the AP poll since reaching No. 9 on Dec. 6, 2020. The trick is staying there: Miami hasn't finished a season ranked 12th or better nationally since 2004.

And on that front, like Restrepo said, there's a long way to go.

"They have an extremely athletic, big-time offensive line. Very, very good on the defensive line. Obviously very, very good at some of their skill positions," said Florida A&M coach James Colzie, whose Rattlers (2-0) will visit the Hurricanes on Saturday in Miami's home opener. "So, we have our work cut out for us."

Saban's approach and preaching about the perils of rat poison

worked wonders for him at Alabama. Miami teams haven't always listened to such talk; Cristobal thinks this year's group understands what he means when he talks about blocking out such noise.

"You go right at it. You don't sugarcoat it," Cristobal said. "The best part about this team is you can look them right in the eye and give it to them, like right between the teeth, man. No holding back and they appreciate that."

Rebuilt: Chance to play with Ewers motivated Bond to transfer

FROM PAGE 48

ship team. Ewers' favorite targets then were Xavier Worthy and A.D. Mitchell, who combined for three touchdowns in the big win at Alabama. That game set up the Longhorns' run to the program's first appearance in the College Football Playoff.

Even before they left campus, Texas coach Steve Sarkisian and the Longhorns had propped the transfer portal wide open with an enticing invitation for 2024: join an elite offense with a big-armed QB just as the program heads into its first season in the SEC.

Golden was the first one in. He caught two touchdowns against the Longhorns last season with Houston, then caught two more in his burnt orange debut last week. One was a no-look pass from Ewers.

Next in was Bond, who left Alabama after coach Nick Saban retired. Bond was the Crimson Tide's leading receiver last season. Bond has not yet met with reporters at Texas, but told ESPN in January that the chance to play



MICHAEL THOMAS/AP

Texas receiver Isaiah Bond runs after a catch against Colorado State on Aug. 31 in Austin, Texas. Bond, who was Alabama's top receiver last season, transferred when coach Nick Saban retired.

with Ewers was a big factor in his decision.

"(Ewers) is top pick in the draft next year. I'm also going to be a top pick. It's going to be a good duo," Bond said.

A few days later, Bolden committed to transfer from Oregon State, where he was the Beavers' top receiver. He is also the Longhorns No. 1 punt returner, and set up Golden's second touchdown

last week with a 35-yard return.

"We've got a lot of weapons," Golden said.

Texas coach Steve Sarkisian praised all three, and Ewers' leadership in spring practice and summer workouts, for the seamless transition within the offense.

"They played with a lot of confidence. That's half the battle. When you know what to do, you play fast. And that's where we're pretty dangerous," Sarkisian said.

As a group, the newcomers are on the small side. Golden is the biggest at 6 feet and 195 pounds. But all bring top-level speed that can stretch a defense and burn up chunks of yards in the blink of an eye. Sarkisian's offense thrives on personnel mismatches in open space.

"They're all fast. They're all playmakers," Michigan coach Sherrone Moore said. "The big thing that stands out is their speed, their ability to separate."

Texas goes deeper than just those three. The Longhorns have a legitimate six-man rotation that also boasts freshman Ryan Wingo,

a five-star recruit who had four catches for 70 yards in the opener.

"(Last year) we had to keep guys on the field that were probably too tired to play at a really optimal level. Now we have a really good rotation and they've earned our trust. I'm very comfortable with those six guys," Sarkisian said.

Michigan has played Bond before. He caught four passes for 47 yards but did not score against the Wolverines in last season's Rose Bowl playoff matchup that Michigan won in overtime. Johnson, Michigan's shutdown corner, remembers Bond from that game. And he was on a 7-on-7 team with Golden in high school.

The Longhorns won't just yield the field to Johnson. Fresno State didn't last week, when Johnson allowed five catches before closing out a 30-10 Michigan victory with an 86-yard interception return for a touchdown.

"They are very explosive with a lot of experience," Johnson said of Texas. "When the ball is thrown my way, I have to make a play."

SPORTS



QB youth movement
3 rookies starting in Week 1 for third time in four years » **Page 44**

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Rebuilt and ready to rumble

No. 3 Texas takes restocked, speedy receiving corps into early clash at No. 10 Michigan

By **JIM VERTUNO**
Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Texas ended Alabama's long home winning streak last season with Quinn Ewers throwing to big and fast receivers who are now in the NFL.

When the No. 3 Longhorns play at No. 10 Michigan on Saturday, Ewers will be throwing to a mostly new receiving corps, one rebuilt through the transfer portal with smaller, fast players who could pose a challenge for a Wolverines secondary that features preseason All-American corner Will Johnson but only one other player with extensive starting experience.

The game at the Big House is the first regular-season meeting between the historic programs, and the only Top 10 matchup this week. The Longhorns (1-0) and Wolverines (1-0) have not played each other since the 2005 Rose Bowl. Michigan, the defending national champion, has won 23 in a row at home.

Texas figures to be throwing it around. Ewers spread the ball to 10 receivers in the first half alone of Texas' 52-0 opening romp over Colorado State. Top transfers Isaiah Bond, Matthew Golden and Silas Bolden all caught touchdowns in their debuts.

"We need like two quarterbacks back there to throw to all those guys," Ewers said.

In a way, Texas did. Ewers left the game in the third quarter for top backup Arch Manning to throw his first career TD pass.

Texas lost its top five receivers from the 2023 Big 12 champion-

SEE REBUILT ON PAGE 47



ERIC GAY/AP

Texas wide receiver Matthew Golden runs for a touchdown against Colorado State on Aug. 31 in Austin, Texas. The Longhorns' three standout transfers — Golden, Isaiah Bond and Silas Bolden — all caught TD passes in their debuts as Texas won 52-0.



No. 3 Texas (1-0)
at No. 10 Michigan (1-0)
AFN-Sports
6 p.m. Saturday CET
1 a.m. Sunday JKT

3 Cubs throw 1st no-no at Wrigley since '72 » MLB, Page 42

