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# STARS AND STRIPES®

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## North Korea: Hypersonic missile made precise strike

By DAVID CHOI  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — North Korea's first weapons test of the new year, carried out Wednesday, was a hypersonic missile that "precisely" hit a target about 435 miles away, the country's state-run news agency said Thursday.

The Korean Central News agency said the launch had a "strategic significance" and that its missile glided 75 miles laterally after detaching to hit its target.

"The test launch clearly demonstrated the control and stability of the hypersonic gliding warhead, which combined the multi-stage gliding jump flight and the strong lateral movement," KCNA said in its announcement.

Hypersonic weapons travel at least five times faster than the speed of sound, or around 3,800 mph. The weapons can fly at lower altitudes and are harder to defend against due to their maneuverability.

The latest missile was detected by South Korean and Japanese militaries at 8:10 a.m. Wednesday. Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi said initial estimates show a projectile flew about 310 miles and fell into the sea outside of his country's exclusive economic zone.

In a statement the same day, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, which oversees all U.S. forces in the Pacific, said the missile launch did "not pose an immediate threat to U.S. personnel or territory, or to our allies."

The communist regime claimed it first tested a hypersonic weapon in September, after the U.S. and South Korean militaries detected a short-range missile fired from the North's eastern coast. North

SEE MISSILE ON PAGE 3



DREW ANGERER, POOL/AP

President Joe Biden speaks from Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol to mark the one year anniversary of the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol by supporters loyal to then-President Donald Trump, on Thursday, in Washington.

## 'Democracy was attacked'

### Biden decries Trump backers' 'dagger at throat' of system of government

By MARY CLARE JALONICK,  
LISA MASCARO  
AND ZEKE MILLER  
*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Thursday forcefully condemned Donald Trump's relentless election-overturning efforts that sparked the deadly breach of the Capitol by his supporters and continues to motivate deep national division. He marked the anniversary by saying the rioters had held a "dagger at the throat of democracy" but failed

to succeed.

Biden's criticism was blistering of the defeated president whom he blamed for the attack that has fundamentally changed Congress and the nation, and raised global concerns about the future of American democracy.

"For the first time in our history, a president not just lost an election, he tried to prevent the peaceful transfer of power as a violent mob breached the Capitol," Biden said. "You can't love your country only when you win."

His voice booming at times, filling the ornate

Statuary Hall where rioters had laid siege, the president called on Americans to remember what they saw Jan. 6 with their own eyes: the mob attacking police, breaking windows, a Confederate flag inside the Capitol, gallows erected outside threatening to hang the vice president — all while Trump sat at the White House watching it on TV.

"The former president's supporters are trying to rewrite history. They want you to see

SEE DEMOCRACY ON PAGE 9



BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel				
Germany	\$3.541	\$4.006	\$4.272	\$3.873	Azores	..	..	\$4.187
Change in price	+0.6 cents	+0.3 cents	+0.4 cents	-0.2 cents	Change in price	..	..	+0.4 cents
Netherlands	..	\$4.616	\$4.898	\$4.569	Belgium	..	\$3.598	\$3.919
Change in price	..	+4.5 cents	+4.4 cents	+6.2 cents	Change in price	..	+19.5 cents	+21.7 cents
U.K.	..	\$3.920	\$4.186	\$3.787	Turkey	..	..	\$4.072
Change in price	..	+0.3 cents	+0.4 cents	-0.2 cents	Change in price	..	..	+0.4 cents

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel				
Japan	..	\$4.079	..	\$3.679	South Korea	\$3.359	..	\$4.089
Change in price	..	-1.0 cents	..	-1.0 cents	Change in price	-1.0 cents	..	-1.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.349	..	..	\$3.679	Guam	\$3.359	\$3.819	\$4.089
Change in price	-1.0 cents	..	..	-1.0 cents	Change in price	-1.0 cents	-2.0 cents	-1.0 cents

\*DieselEFD \*\*Midgrade  
For the week of Jan. 7-13

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		
Euro costs (Jan. 7)	\$1.10	
Dollar buys (Jan. 7)	0.8619	
British pound (Jan. 7)	\$1.32	
Japanese yen (Jan. 7)	113.00	
South Korean won (Jan. 7)	1168.00	
Commercial rates		
Bahrain(Dinar)	0.3770	
Britain (Pound)	1.3534	
Canada (Dollar)	1.2761	
China(Yuan)	6.3815	
Denmark (Krone)	6.5699	
Egypt (Pound)	15.6310	
Euro	0.8829	
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8020	
Hungary (Forint)	318.07	
Israel (Shekel)	3.1148	
Japan (Yen)	115.78	
Kuwait(Dinar)	0.3027	
Norway (Krone)	8.8836	
Philippines (Peso)	51.21	
Poland (Zloty)	4.02	
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7543	
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3603	
South Korea (Won)	1204.09	
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9177	
Thailand (Baht)	33.56	
Turkey (NewLira)	13.8236	

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

INTEREST RATES		
Prime rate	3.25	
Interest Rates Discount rate	0.75	
Federal funds market rate	0.09	
3-month bill	0.09	
30-year bond	2.09	

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

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MILITARY

# Attack drones keep up harassment at al Asad

By CHAD GARLAND  
*Stars and Stripes*

Coalition defenses at Iraq's al Asad Air Base shot down another armed drone Thursday as the sprawling facility, which still houses American troops, thwarted its third attack in as many days.

It follows a barrage of rocket or drone incidents since New Year's Eve targeting foreign forces near Baghdad and in northeast Syria.

The series of daily attacks targeting coalition sites comes on the heels of a Dec. 31, 2021, deadline for Operation Inherent Resolve to transition from a combat mission to one focused only on training and advising Iraqi forces battling the Islamic State.

Combat forces were withdrawn last month, but some 2,500 U.S. troops remain in the country for the new mission.

"Attacks are a dangerous distraction from our #AdviseAssistEnable mission and a threat to the Iraqi people," the coalition said in a statement Thursday.

While not deadly so far, this week's attacks appear to be aimed at harassing coalition forces, perhaps to raise tensions and prompt



International Coalition

**A still image from video released by the U.S.-led coalition shows an artillery strike Tuesday in northeast Syria near a base known as the Green Village, which is used by coalition and Syrian partner forces.**

a disproportionate response.

The United States has blamed Iranian proxy forces for the spate of attacks, which began as Tehran and its surrogates marked the anniversary Monday of the 2020 U.S. killing in Baghdad of Qassem Soleimani, a senior Iranian general responsible for overseeing armed groups outside Iran.

Iranian proxy groups have pledged revenge for Soleimani. They have waged a long campaign

aimed at driving all U.S. forces from Iraq.

"This all looks like causality-minimizing actions, intended to look convincing to the militia base," said Michael Knights, a fellow at the Washington Institute who specializes in Iraq and Iran security affairs.

The Shiite militias and their Iranian backers need a resistance campaign to look credible after a series of blunders late last year,

but they may call it quits after this week if it doesn't draw an outsized U.S. response and if their supporters are satisfied, Knights and co-author Crispin Smith wrote in an analysis.

The unidentified drone downed Thursday did not cause any damage or casualties at the installation, Iraqi officials and the U.S.-led coalition said.

It was engaged by unspecified defensive systems, said a coalition official speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the incident with Stars and Stripes.

A coalition video shows that a missile hit the aircraft, which then falls to the ground in a ball of fire.

Stars and Stripes also obtained official video Tuesday of an earlier shootdown of two explosive-laden drones at al Asad.

That footage shows the aircraft taken out by a missile and what appears to be a stream of 20 mm rounds fired from the Gatling gun of a counter-rocket, artillery and mortar system.

Officials declined to identify the defensive systems used in either video, citing policy.

In Iraq, where Shiite groups

aligned with Iran have significant political clout and Shiite militias form part of the country's security forces, the attacking drones have been downed by defensive systems.

But in the northeastern part of Syria, where a civil war has raged for years and where the U.S. backs largely Kurdish militia forces, the coalition carried out pre-emptive strikes on what it identified as rocket launch sites.

It also struck back with artillery after rockets targeted coalition forces on a base there known as Green Village, officials said Wednesday.

Another pair of newly released videos showed coalition MQ-9 Reaper drones striking more suspected rocket launch sites in Syria, hours after the previously disclosed artillery fire.

A coalition official said five rockets were also fired toward al Asad late Wednesday but landed far from the base. An investigation was underway, the Iraqi government said.

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## Sex assault trial postponed for judge's unanimous verdict order

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — The court-martial of an Army officer facing sexual assault charges is being delayed to give prosecutors time to appeal a military judge's order that a unanimous verdict will be required to win a conviction.

Col. Charles Pritchard, a judge in Kaiserslautern, Germany, issued an extraordinary ruling Monday that said allowing a split guilty verdict in the trial of Lt. Col. Andrew Dial would violate the officer's constitutional rights by denying him equal protection.

On Wednesday, Army prosecutors were granted a delay in the case by the Army Court of Criminal Appeals.

Dial's trial had been slated to begin Jan. 10.

Capt. Karey Marren, an attorney



Dial

for the Army, said in a court filing Wednesday that the government intends to submit a petition for "extraordinary relief" because of Pritchard's ruling.

Prosecutors were given until Jan. 23 to file the petition with the court.

In essence, the petition seeks a reversal of Pritchard's ruling, which came in response to a motion by attorneys for Dial, a member of the Belgium-based Allied Forces North Battalion.

Dial is charged with three counts of sexual assault. Details about the allegations were not included in the ruling or in an Army court docket.

Under the Uniform Code of Mil-

itary Justice, split jury verdicts have long been permitted, although the guidelines have been tweaked over the years.

Since 2019, a three-fourths concurrence of court-martial panelists is required to convict and sentence a defendant in a trial with service members. A death sentence requires unanimous conviction by a jury.

Pritchard, however, said that under the Fifth Amendment, there is "no rational basis" for Congress to treat service members differently than civilians when it comes to the requirement of unanimity of a jury for conviction.

Pritchard also said in his ruling that Congress has consistently narrowed the gap between the military and civilian legal systems, bringing the former more into line with the latter.

By allowing split verdicts in courts-martial, Congress has encroached on Fifth Amendment due process rights, he wrote.

Don Christensen, a former Air Force prosecutor and judge, said Pritchard's ruling would unleash "chaos if the appellate courts don't review this."

"I believe we should have unanimous verdicts, whether for guilty or not guilty," he said. "But the appropriate way to do it is through Congress."

Robert F. Capovilla, a military defense attorney, concurred that the time has come for unanimous verdicts in the military justice system.

"Every other branch of American criminal jurisprudence requires unanimous verdicts. Why is the military different?" he said. "As the Army highlights more and more sexual assault prosecutions,

it's imperative that unanimous verdicts be required."

Still, while Congress has reformed the Uniform Code of Military Justice over the years, there has been no legislative groundswell to do away with split military verdicts, which are outlawed in civilian criminal courts at the federal and state levels.

In his ruling, Pritchard described the practice in the military as a relic of the original Articles of War, which were adopted from the British.

The use of split verdicts in courts-martial "simply slipped into congressional legislation pertaining to military justice," he wrote.

Stars and Stripes reporter Nancy Montgomery contributed to this story.  
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## Missile: North Korea claims hypersonic missile launch hit precise target 435 miles away

FROM PAGE 1

Korean leader Kim Jong Un had vowed to develop longer-range intercontinental ballistic missiles as well as hypersonic aircraft.

South Korean military officials previously told Stars and Stripes that September's launch "shows something different" from the North's previous missile tests. North Korea claimed that that test "ascertained the stability ... of

missile fuel ampoule" for the first time, which would ostensibly make detecting the missile prior to its launch more difficult as well as shortening its preparation time.

North Korea joins a host of other countries developing hypersonic weapons. The United States is "not as advanced" in hypersonic programs compared to China or Russia, according to Space Force Gen. David Thompson, the vice

chief of space operations.

During an interview at the Halifax International Security Forum in November, Thompson said the U.S. had some "catching up to do very quickly" due to the advancement of hypersonic weapons over traditional ballistic missiles.

North Korea's last launch prior to Wednesday's test was in October, after it fired what appeared to be a submarine-launched ballistic

missile. The regime regularly claims its weapons tests are for defensive measures against hostility from the U.S. and its allies.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who addressed the launch in a speech Wednesday, said his country "must not give up dialogue" with the North.

South Korea's Ministry of Unification also said in a statement that North Korea needed to "re-

spond to our endeavors to make peace and cooperation."

"South and North Korea should work together without giving up dialogue between them in order to overcome concern, which is being caused by this launch, by the roots," the ministry said in a statement.

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## MILITARY

# New Albanian HQ to serve as hub for special ops

By JOHN VANDIVER  
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The U.S. has established a forward operating headquarters in Albania and will use the facility in the Adriatic Sea-facing country as a home base for missions in the broader Balkans.

The headquarters will give U.S. special operators more logistical flexibility and better access to regional transportation hubs, U.S. Special Operations Command Europe said Thursday.

“The ability to rapidly move and train within the Balkans in close coordination with other allied and partner forces made Albania the best location for this effort,” said Maj. Gen. David Tabor, commander of Special Operations

Command Europe.

Albania is a fellow NATO member. The move puts American special operators near such countries as Greece, Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia, North Macedonia and Serbia, where Russian political, economic and military influence has been growing steadily stronger.

SOCEUR didn’t say how many troops will be based in Albania, but service members will be stationed there on rotational basis.

For U.S. European Command, the Balkans has been an area of concern for several years, even if the security situation there has been overshadowed by tensions with Russia in the Baltics and the greater Black Sea region.

For example, NATO countries have blamed Russian agents for



DEVIN ANDREWS/U.S. Marine Corps

**A U.S. Army Green Beret prepares Albanian special forces soldiers for drills on July 23. The Stuttgart, Germany-based U.S. Special Operations Command Europe said Thursday that it has positioned a new forward operating headquarters in Albania.**

destabilization campaigns in Montenegro, an alliance member that borders Albania. EUCOM’s Gen. Tod Wolters also has called the Balkans “primary targets of persistent Russian malign influ-

ence.”

For SOCEUR, the headquarters in Albania resembles similar sites in other parts of Europe. The command, based in Stuttgart, Germany, also has small forward oper-

ation sites in Estonia and Ukraine, where troops coordinate training efforts with local forces.

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## Feud flares over review of 50-year-old ICBM

By TONY CAPACCIO  
Bloomberg News

A tiny Pentagon contract for an influential Washington think tank to study the nation’s nuclear arsenal is sparking outsized congressional scrutiny, in a prelude to a bigger fight over whether to spend billions of dollars buying new intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The \$75,000 contract awarded in December to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace will result in a five- to seven-page unclassified paper later this month examining “the relative risks and benefits of various options regarding the land-based leg of the U.S. nuclear triad.”

Citing previous studies and bipartisan congressional support for new ICBMs, the top Republicans on the House and Senate Armed Services committees — Rep. Mike Rogers of Alabama and

Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma—backed language in the \$768.2 billion defense policy bill that President Joe Biden signed last month demanding documents on any contract studying whether to extend the service of aging Minuteman III missiles first deployed in 1970 or on “the future of the intercontinental ballistic missile force.”

“There’s no way yet another review can possibly provide any insights that would outweigh a decade’s worth of previous analyses,” Inhofe said in a statement. “It’s puzzling why the administration has insisted on pursuing yet another review of the same thing.” Both lawmakers called it a waste of money.

The tiff reflects a divide over the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. defense policy—and in defense budgeting—and it foreshadows a ma-

jor political battle this year after the Pentagon releases a new Nuclear Posture Review.

At the heart of the dispute is America’s continuing reliance on Minuteman III ICBMs, and the billions of dollars required to develop Northrop Grumman Corp.’s new Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent program that’s intended to replace the decades-old weaponry.

Major procurement funding hasn’t been committed yet to the \$246 billion program, which includes lifetime operations and support and as much as \$110.6 billion in acquisition for an estimated 659 missiles and the new W-87-1 warhead.

Democrat Adam Smith of Washington, chairman of the House Armed Service Services Committee, praised the Defense Department “for seeking a wide

range of views on U.S. nuclear posture” as it nears completion of the Nuclear Posture Review, committee spokesperson Caleb Randall-Bodman said in a statement. The review “will guide tens of billions of dollars in spending on nuclear modernization.”

In July, 20 Democratic lawmakers, including Elizabeth Warren, a member of the Senate Armed Services panel, wrote Biden reiterating “our call for an independent, outside organization” to “complete a thorough review of the technical feasibility of extending the life of the current Minuteman III ICBM missile before proceeding with a multiple-generation commitment to the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent.”

Still, citing previous studies and congressional support for the new ICBMs, Rogers spokesperson Justine Sanders said in a statement



J.T. ARMSTRONG/AP

**An unarmed Minuteman 3 arcs into the sky in a 2019 test.**

that “the secretary of defense should cancel the contract.” The current plan to replace the Minuteman “was initiated by the Obama administration after a thorough examination and analysis of multiple alternatives,” she said.

## Hacker takes over Hawaii Army hospital’s Facebook page, posts rant

By WYATT OLSON  
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — A hacker posted a bizarre rant on Tripler Army Medical Center’s Facebook page after temporarily commandeering the site Tuesday.

Personnel at the hospital in Honolulu regained control off the account about 9:30 p.m., according to Tripler spokeswoman Claudia LaMantia.

“At this point, we don’t know

what happened other than somebody took control of the page, and we have regained access to it,” she told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday.

The hacker pasted large black-and-red labels reading “SCAM” over the page’s header.

Elsewhere, the hacker wrote, “Who the f— runs this page as you’ve hacked my bank and stolen \$400 from a single parent who just tried to do her shopping and

can’t cause you scammed her bank account but somehow have now linked your account to mine.”

Shortly after, the hacker changed the medical center’s location status to “in London, United Kingdom.”

U.S. Army WTF! Moments tweeted screenshots of the hacked messages Tuesday, adding drolly, “@tripleramc First, hope you are enjoying your leave

in London! Second, give this person back their money cuz they are BIG ANGRY.”

LaMantia said the intrusion did not appear to be a ransomware attack, but the hack is under investigation.

There were no other apparent alterations to the account aside from the scam diatribe, she said.

“They didn’t add anything, didn’t delete anything,” she said. “So, at this point, we’re going

over a checklist. We’ll just reinforce all of our security measures.”

Tripler is the only federal tertiary care hospital in the Pacific Basin and supports 260,000 active-duty and retired military personnel, their families and veterans, according to the medical center’s website.

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## VIRUS OUTBREAK

## Omicron surge vexes parents of kids too young for shots

By LINDSEY TANNER  
Associated Press

Afternoons with Grammy. Birthday parties. Meeting other toddlers at the park. Parents of children too young to be vaccinated are facing difficult choices as an omicron variant-fueled surge in COVID-19 cases makes every encounter seem risky.

For Maine business owner Erin Connolly, the most wrenching decision involves Madeleine, her 3-year-old daughter, and Connolly's mother, who cares for the girl on the one day a week she isn't in preschool.

It's a treasured time of making cookies, going to the library, or just hanging out. But the spirited little girl resists wearing a mask, and with the highly contagious variant spreading at a furious pace, Connolly says she's wondering how long that can continue "and when does it feel too unsafe."

Connolly, of West Bath, said she worries less about Madeleine and her 6-year-old vaccinated son getting the virus than about the impact illness and separation would have on the grandparents. But she's also concerned about her vaccinated parents contracting breakthrough cases.

Although health experts say om-



ROBERT F. BUKATY/AP

Heather Cimellaro holds her 3-year-old son Charlie with his twin brother, Milo, at their home Wednesday in Auburn, Maine.

icron appears to cause less severe disease and lead to fewer hospitalizations, its rapid spread indicates that it is much more contagious than other variants. Nearly 718,000 COVID cases were reported Tuesday, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Omicron is currently the culprit in more than 90% of U.S. cases, a dizzying rise from less than 10% two weeks ago.

"The sheer volume of infections because of its profound transmissi-

bility will mean that many more children will get infected," Dr. Anthony Fauci said Wednesday at a White House briefing.

COVID cases in U.S. children and teens nearly doubled in the last two weeks of December, totaling nearly 326,000 in the final week alone, according to a report from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Children's Hospital Association.

The omicron-fueled surge has also put children in the hospital in re-

cord numbers: During the week of Dec. 27, 2021, to Jan. 2, 2022, an average of 672 children 17 and under were admitted per day to hospitals with the coronavirus — more than double the number from the previous week. Children still represent a small percentage of those being hospitalized, however.

Fauci, the country's top infectious disease doctor, said surrounding children with vaccinated adults is one way to keep them from contracting the virus. Health officials also reiterate that face masks prevent transmissions, and putting them on children 2 and older in public and group settings can help keep them safe.

Parents who had hoped the new year might bring a COVID vaccine for young children had a setback when Pfizer announced last month that two doses didn't offer as much protection as hoped in youngsters ages 2 to 4.

Researchers were disappointed by the setback but are working to restart studies using a third vaccine dose, said Dr. Yvonne Maldonado, chief of pediatric infectious disease at Stanford University's medical school. Maldonado is leading the university's Pfizer vaccine studies in children under 12.

Maldonado said she understands the frustration of parents with young children but advises them to avoid unnecessary travel during this current surge, and to make sure their day care centers, preschools and other care providers are requiring masks and taking other recommended precautions.

Heather Cimellaro, a technology teacher from Auburn, Maine, says she worries more than ever about keeping her 3-year-old identical twin boys healthy. One has had medical issues related to their premature birth and the family makes regular trips to Boston to see a specialist.

"COVID can really throw a wrench in those plans," Cimellaro said.

Cimellaro, 33, says omicron has her rethinking running errands with the twins, library storytime visits, even preschool, located in a health center for the elderly. She worries the boys could catch COVID and spread it to their "grand-buddies."

"It's just a lot of worry: 'Am I doing the right thing?'" she said. "That's the thing, I'm not an epidemiologist. I don't know how dangerous it is for them. So it's kind of like that debate with myself."



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## VIRUS OUTBREAK

# Military raises its health-risk level in Japan

By JOSEPH DITZLER

*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — The U.S. military authority in Japan raised its coronavirus risk level a notch higher Thursday in response to growing numbers of COVID-19 cases on U.S. bases throughout the country.

U.S. Forces Japan reported 1,784 active cases of coronavirus at 18 U.S. bases from Misawa Air Base in northeastern Japan to 10 Marine Corps, Army, Air Force and Navy bases on Okinawa to the south.

By moving to health protection condition Bravo, USFJ imposed a uniform set of rules on all U.S. installations to help stem the coronavirus' spread. Anyone with the military and recently arrived in Japan must wear a mask while waiting on a negative COVID-19 test or while indoors and in public areas on U.S. bases.

USFJ made wearing masks off base compulsory for anyone affiliated with the U.S. military, regardless of vaccination status. That requirement was already put in place by local commanders across Japan.

Also Thursday, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi during a phone call with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken asked for stronger measures from U.S. commands in Japan, including limits on off-base travel, to

curb the coronavirus surge. U.S. commanders in Japan have acknowledged that many post-holiday military travelers returning from the U.S. have tested positive.

The topic is on the agenda again Friday when Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, isolating at home with COVID-19, meets virtually with Hayashi, Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi, Blinken and newly confirmed U.S. Ambassador Rahm Emanuel for the 2022 U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee meeting.

Some U.S. commanders at bases with fast-growing case numbers had already imposed temporary liberty restrictions, but they are in the minority.

Marines at Camp Fuji southwest of Tokyo and at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni near Hiroshima are temporarily barred from overnight stays in local communities, for example.

Camp Fuji, the Marines' Camp Hansen on Okinawa and Misawa Air Base in northeastern Japan were already in condition Bravo.

Although USFJ did not impose a uniform travel ban, condition Bravo calls for avoiding unnecessary travel, "especially to areas known to be experiencing active disease transmission," according to the Defense Department Public Health Emergency Management policy.



JONATHAN SNYDER/Stars and Stripes

**Medical staff conduct COVID-19 testing Thursday outside the Robert M. Casey Naval Family Branch Clinic at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan.**

"Local commanders know best how to make their local decisions," USFJ spokesman Maj. Thomas Barger told Stars and Stripes by phone Thursday. "They can always tighten their local requirements in addition to what USFJ implements."

Barger said USFJ's decisions on public health measures involve consultation with Japanese authorities as well as other factors. He said he could not predict whether the Foreign Ministry's request Thursday would result in restricted travel for the U.S. military population.

"There's a bit of science involved" in raising the health protection level, which also relies on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Barger said. A planning team recommended the change to USFJ commander Lt. Gen. Ricky Rupp, who made the call.

## New on-base cases

The coronavirus caseload at

U.S. bases continued to grow Thursday, although many commanders said most of those with the virus have mild or no symptoms.

MCAS Iwakuni on Thursday reported another 115 new infections, according to a news release. The air station has the most active cases, 529, of all U.S. installations, according to USFJ.

No. 2 with 282 is Camp Hansen, where a mid-December coronavirus spike among a contingent of newly arrived Marines drew the wrath of Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki. He expressed fears of a community spread of the omicron variant.

COVID-19 made a resurgence on the island around the same time. On Thursday, the prefectural Public Health and Medical Care Department reported 981 new coronavirus cases, exceeding the previous one-day pandemic record of 809 on Aug. 25. U.S. bases on Okinawa reported 162 new infections Thursday, according to

the Public Health Department.

No. 3 on USFJ's list is Yokosuka Naval Base, the homeport south of Tokyo of the 7th Fleet, with 213 active cases.

Next is Misawa with 133 active cases, according to USFJ. Base commander Col. Jesse Friedel on Dec. 30 said the base is experiencing its highest caseload of the pandemic.

Two bases on Okinawa, the Marines' Camp Foster with 103 and Kadena Air Base with 101, round out the top six.

The Japanese government also expressed dissatisfaction during the Hansen incident when it learned USFJ had rescinded a requirement that service members headed for Japan test negative for COVID-19 before boarding their flights. USFJ afterward imposed a three-test policy: pre-travel, on arrival and five days later.

Stars and Stripes reporters Hana Kusumoto and Mari Higa contributed to this report.  
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# US military cases set pandemic record in S. Korea

By DAVID CHOI

*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — U.S. Forces Korea reported 682 new cases of COVID-19 for the week ending Monday, a new peak in the coronavirus pandemic for the command responsible for more than 28,500 U.S. troops.

One individual tested positive after arriving in South Korea, but the remaining 681 cases are community generated, according to a weekly update from USFK on Wednesday night.

USFK reached its previous peak of 467 new coronavirus infections between Dec. 21 and 27. Of those, 457 were locally generated and 10 were recent arrivals.

The surge of new cases since mid-December at Camp Hum-

phreys, the largest U.S. base overseas, is more "than what we're traditionally used to," garrison commander Army Col. Seth Graves said in a Facebook video Tuesday before the latest case numbers were released.

"We're really close to flattening the curve here, so we're going to need everyone's help to do that," he said.

Graves said he implemented "heightened measures" at Humphreys and that most of the newly infected people exhibit mild symptoms or none at all.

Roughly eight miles from Humphreys, Osan Air Base is experiencing "a new wave of COVID," base commander Col. Joshua Wood of the 51st Fighter Wing said in a Facebook video Wednesday.

"This wave that we're having is similar in scope to what the United States is currently experiencing right now," he said. "This is expected and not a surprise to any of our medical experts."

Most people with COVID-19 at Osan are experiencing mild symptoms and no service members are hospitalized with the disease, Wood said.

South Korea on Wednesday reported 4,126 new COVID-19 cases, an uptick still short of the one-day record of 7,849 on Dec. 15, according to the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency.

As of Thursday, 86.3% of the country's 51.8 million people had received the first dose of a vaccine and 83.3% are fully vaccinated, according to the KDCA. Over 19.6 million people in South Korea

have received a booster shot, an increase of over 3 million people from the previous week.

Social distancing restrictions remain in place until Jan. 16, including a limit of four people in private gatherings, regardless of vaccination status, and early closures of restaurants, movie theaters and bars.

Despite the surge in cases, USFK has not changed its social distancing restrictions or implemented travel bans on the peninsula. The command instead leaves the option to impose additional restrictions to individual units based on the scope of their duties.

The command's priority is "the protection of the force" and it maintains "an aggressive approach against COVID-19," USFK spokesman Army Col. Lee Peters

said in an email Thursday to Stars and Stripes.

USFK requires service members, civilian employees and their families to wear face masks at all indoor settings on military bases within districts with 50 or more confirmed COVID-19 cases per 100,000 people over seven days. As of Thursday, those bases include Humphreys, Osan and all U.S. military installations north of Command Post Tango in Seongnam.

On Wednesday, the Defense Department reported 422,450 positive cases from service members, contractors, dependents and civilians since the start of the pandemic.

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VIRUS OUTBREAK



U.S. Air Force Capt. Angel Colon administers the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to a high school student at Royal Air Force Lakenheath, England, on June 4.

DODEA-Europe requires vaccine for everyone traveling for events

**By KENT HARRIS**  
*Stars and Stripes*

AVIANO AIR BASE, Italy — Students at Defense Department schools in the European region who want to travel to participate in extra-curricular activities must now be vaccinated against COVID-19.

That announcement came Thursday in a letter from the Department of Defense Education Activity-Europe.

This is the first time since the start of the pandemic that DODEA-Europe students have been given a vaccination requirement of any kind.

“As it stands now, proof of COVID vaccination will be required for all passengers traveling to and from” events under the organization’s auspices, DODEA-Europe Director Michelle Howard-Brahaney wrote.

In addition, proof of a booster shot or a negative test might be required of students 18 and older as well as coaches and other adults, Howard-Brahaney wrote.

The decision on whether to require proof of a booster shot or a negative test will rest with local bus companies, some of which pressed DODEA-Europe to adopt the vaccination mandate, education officials said.

If required, the proof would have to be valid for the entirety of the trip.

The requirement was implemented after consultation with military leaders and medical experts and generally falls in line with requirements of the respective host nation.

Participants in basketball, marksmanship and wrestling will be the ones immediately affected, with events scheduled across the continent on Friday and Saturday.

The decision may add to the uncertainty of an ever-changing situation that students, parents and educators have been experiencing for almost two years.

DODEA-Europe successfully re-

Navy ousts its first sailors for refusing COVID-19 vaccine

**By CAITLIN DOORNBOS**  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Navy has ousted its first group of sailors for refusing the coronavirus vaccine, the service announced late Wednesday.

Twenty sailors who had just started their military careers were boot-ed from the service through what’s known as entry-level separations, the Navy said. These sailors were separated within their first 180 days of active-duty service during their initial training period.

No other separations have been issued, but those with longer ten-ures could face the same fate in the coming months if they continue to refuse the vaccine, the Navy said.

Navy commanders were ordered Dec. 15 to begin the separation process for sailors who have refused to take the coronavirus vaccine. As of Wednesday, 5,268 active-duty and 2,980 Reserve sailors remained un-vaccinated.

Most separations will happen in the first six months of 2022, though some could continue past June 1, Rear Adm. James Waters, the Na-vy’s director of military personnel plans and policy, said last month.

The Navy has approved vaccine exemptions for some active-duty sailors. As of Wednesday, the ser-vice had issued eight permanent medical exemptions, 242 temporary medical exemptions and 74 ad-ministrative exemptions, but no re-ligious exemptions, according to the statement.

So far, the service has received 3,009 active-duty religious accom-modation requests.

The Navy Reserve has also issued nine temporary medical and 31 ad-ministrative exemptions. No Re-serve sailors have been approved for permanent medical or religious exemptions.

The lack of religious exemptions is not unique to the Navy. None of the five military branches have issued vaccine exemptions for religious reasons.

A federal judge in Texas on Mon-day, however, granted a prelimina-ry injunction stopping the Pentagon from firing 35 Navy special oper-ators who sued over their religious objections to the vaccine mandate. In issuing the injunction, U.S. Dis-tribut Judge Reed O’Connor said the “loss of religious liberties outweighs any forthcoming harm to the Navy.”

Since the start of the pandemic, 57,396 sailors have contracted the coronavirus — 17 of whom died, ac-cording to the Navy. Currently, 5,908 sailors are positive for the vi-rus and one is hospitalized.

A coronavirus outbreak briefly delayed the littoral combat ship USS Milwaukee’s departure from a port visit to Naval Base Guantanamo Bay on Dec. 24. All crew members were fully vaccinated and the ship returned to sea Monday.

Before vaccines were available, an outbreak on the USS Theodore Roosevelt in March 2020 sidelined the aircraft carrier in Guam for about three months before it was un-der control and ready to return to sea.

CDC urges booster shots beginning at age 12 to fight omicron

*Associated Press*

The United States is urging that everyone 12 and older get a CO-VID-19 booster as soon as they’re el-igible to help fight back the hugely contagious omicron mutant that’s ripping through the country.

Boosters were already encour-aged for all Americans 16 and older, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Wednesday en-dorsed an extra Pfizer shot for young teens — those 12 to 15 — and strengthened its recommendation that 16- and 17-year-olds get it, too.

“It is critical that we protect our children and teens from COVID-19 infection and the complications of severe disease,” Dr. Rochelle Wa-lensky, the CDC’s director, said in a statement Wednesday night. “This booster dose will provide optimized protection against COVID-19 and the Omicron variant. I encourage all parents to keep their children up to date with CDC’s COVID-19 vaccine recommendations.”

Giving teens a booster for a tem-porary jump in protection against infections is like playing whack-a-mole, cautioned CDC adviser Dr. Sarah Long of Drexel University. But she said the extra shot was worth it to help push back the omi-cron mutant and shield kids from the missed school and other prob-lems that come with even a very mild case of COVID-19.

More importantly, if a child with a mild infection spreads it to a more vulnerable parent or grandparent who then dies, the impact “is ab-solutely crushing,” said panelist Dr. Camille Kotton of Massachusetts General Hospital.

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VIRUS OUTBREAK

US hospitals are seeing a new kind of surge this time

*Associated Press*

Hospitals across the United States are feeling the wrath of the omicron variant and getting thrown into disarray that is different from earlier COVID-19 surges. This time, they are dealing with serious staff shortages because so many health care workers are getting sick with the fast-spreading variant. People are showing up at emergency rooms in large numbers in hopes of getting tested for COVID-19, putting more strain on the system. And a surprising share of patients — two-thirds in some places — are testing positive while in the hospital for other reasons.

At the same time, hospitals have said the patients aren't as sick as those who came in during the last surge. Intensive care units aren't as full, and ventilators aren't need-

ed as much as they were before. The pressures are nevertheless prompting hospitals to scale back non-emergency surgeries and close wards, while National Guard troops have been deployed in several states to help at medical centers and testing sites.

Nearly two years into the pandemic, frustration and exhaustion are running high among health care workers.

"This is getting very tiring, and I'm being very polite in saying that," said Dr. Robert Glasgow of University of Utah Health, which has hundreds of workers out sick or in isolation.

About 85,000 Americans are in the hospital with COVID-19, just short of the delta-surge peak of about 94,000 in early September, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The



Registered nurse Rachel Chamberlin, right, steps out of an isolation room Monday where Fred Rutherford of Claremont, N.H., recovers from COVID-19 at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, N.H.

all-time high during the pandemic was about 125,000 in January 2021.

But the hospitalization numbers do not tell the whole story. Some cases in the official count involve COVID-19 infections that weren't what put the patients in the hospital in the first place.

Dr. Fritz François, chief of hospital operations at NYU Langone Health in New York City, said about 65% of patients admitted to

that system with COVID-19 recently were primarily hospitalized for something else and were incidentally found to have the virus.

At two large Seattle hospitals over the past two weeks, three-quarters of the 64 patients testing positive for the coronavirus were admitted with a primary diagnosis other than COVID-19.

Joanne Spetz, associate director of research at the Healthforce

Center at the University of California, San Francisco, said the rising number of cases like that is both good and bad.

The lack of symptoms shows vaccines, boosters and natural immunity from prior infections are working, she said. The bad news is that the numbers mean the coronavirus is spreading rapidly, and some percentage of those people will wind up needing hospitalization.

No deal, no school: Chicago cancels classes for a 2nd day

*Associated Press*

CHICAGO — Chicago school leaders canceled classes for a second straight day after failing to reach an agreement Wednesday with the teachers union over remote learning and other COVID-19 safety protocols in the nation's third-largest school district.

The Chicago Teachers Union, which voted to revert to online instruction, told teachers to stay home Wednesday during the latest COVID-19 surge while both

sides negotiate, prompting district officials to cancel classes two days after students returned from winter break. Chicago Public Schools, like most other districts, has rejected returning to remote learning, saying it worsened racial inequities and was detrimental to academic performance, mental health and attendance. District officials insist schools can safely remain open with protocols in place.

School districts nationwide

have grappled with the same issues, with most opting to stay open while ramping up virus testing, tweaking protocols and other adjustments in response to the shifting pandemic. White House press secretary Jen Psaki, echoing President Joe Biden from a day earlier, said Wednesday that the country is better equipped now to make sure schools can safely open "including in Chicago," while former President Donald Trump called the closures

"devastating."

District and union officials negotiated behind closed doors Wednesday afternoon but failed to produce an agreement. The issues include metrics that would trigger school closures and more COVID-19 testing. For instance, school leaders support remote learning only at the classroom and school level when there are outbreaks, as has been the case this year, versus a districtwide switch to remote learning, which

the union has supported.

Union President Jesse Sharkey said teachers don't want to return to in-person instruction until the current surge has subsided.

"We'd rather be in our classes teaching, we'd rather have the schools open. What we are saying, though, is that right now we're in the middle of a major surge, it is breaking all the records and hospitals are full," he said during a Wednesday morning news conference.

CDC urges 'up to date' shots; no changes to 'fully vaccinated' status

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — U.S. health officials said Wednesday that they are not changing the qualifications for being "fully vaccinated" against COVID-19, but they are urging Americans to stay "up to date" on their protection against the virus by getting booster shots when eligible.

The move to keep the existing definition of fully vaccinated — either two doses of the mRNA vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna or a single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine — comes as health officials warned of waning protections from the initial doses. They are encouraging Americans to get additional doses to stave off serious illness and death from the delta and omicron variants.

The decision to keep the initial



People in a line wait for COVID-19 testing at West End House in Boston on Monday, including many children who require a test before returning to school.

definition, established more than a year ago when the vaccines first rolled out, means that federal vac-

cination mandates for travel or employment won't require a booster dose.

Maintaining the existing definition of "fully vaccinated" could make it more difficult to encourage some Americans who only begrudgingly got their primary doses of the vaccine to get boosted, since they would not face onerous restrictions often imposed on the unvaccinated — including testing requirements or, in some jurisdictions, being barred from indoor dining and other facilities.

"Individuals are considered fully vaccinated against COVID-19 if they've received their primary series," said Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky. "That definition is not changing."

The CDC instead posted information for Americans to more easily determine their eligibility for booster doses so as to remain

up to date with their COVID-19 shots.

"We are now recommending that individuals stay up to date with additional doses that they are eligible for," Walensky added.

Similarly, Jeff Zients, the White House COVID-19 coordinator, said the administration was not considering an adjustment to require booster shots for international travel or for workers covered by a slew of vaccination mandates instituted by President Joe Biden to press tens of millions of Americans to get the shots.

"That has not changed and we do not have any plans to change that," he told reporters during a White House briefing.

More than 71 million Americans have received a booster dose, according to CDC data.



## NATION

# Former president maintains grip on GOP

BY JILL COLVIN  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As a raging band of his supporters scaled walls, smashed windows, used flagpoles to beat police and breached the U.S. Capitol in a bid to overturn a free and fair election, Donald Trump's excommunication from the Republican Party seemed a near certainty, his name tarnished beyond repair.

Some of his closest allies, including Fox News Channel hosts like Laura Ingraham, warned that day that Trump was "destroying" his legacy.

"All I can say is count me out. Enough is enough," said his friend and confidant Sen. Lindsey Graham. Mitch McConnell, the Senate Republican leader who worked closely with Trump to dramatically reshape the judiciary, later denounced him as "morally responsible" for the attack.

But one year later, Trump is hardly a leader in exile. Instead, he is the undisputed leader of the Republican Party and a leading contender for the 2024 presidential nomination.

Trump is positioning himself as a powerful force in the primary campaigns that will determine who gets the party's backing heading into the fall midterms, when control of Congress, governor's offices and state election posts are at stake. At least for now, there's little stopping Trump as he makes unbending fealty to his vision of the GOP a litmus test for success in primary races, giving ambitious Republicans little incentive to cross him.

"Let's just say I'm horrendously disappointed," said former New Jersey Gov. Christine Todd Whit-



BEN GRAY / AP

**Former President Donald Trump speaks during a September rally in Perry, Ga.**

man, a Republican who now serves on the advisory committee of the Renew America Movement, a group trying to wrest the party away from Trump's control.

"His ego was never going to let him accept defeat and go quietly into the night," she added. "But what I am surprised by is how deferential so many of the Republican elected officials" have been.

Rather than expressing any contrition for the events of Jan. 6, Trump often seems emboldened and has continued to lie about his 2020 election loss.

Federal and state election officials and Trump's own attorney general have said there is no credible evidence the election was tainted. His allegations of fraud were also roundly rejected by courts, including by judges Trump appointed.

An investigation by the AP found

fewer than 475 cases of voter fraud among 25.5 million ballots cast in the six battleground states disputed by Trump.

Undaunted, Trump is preparing for another run for the White House in 2024, and polls suggest that, at the moment, he would easily get the GOP nomination.

For Trump, the extraordinary outcome is the product of sheer will and a misinformation campaign that began long before the election, when he insisted the only way he could lose was if the election was "rigged" and wouldn't commit to accepting defeat.

His refusal to accept reality has flourished with the acquiescence of most Republican leaders, who tend to overlook the gravity of the insurrection for fear of fracturing a party whose base remains tightly aligned with Trump and his effort to minimize the severity of what

happened on Jan. 6.

"Here is the truth: The former president of the United States of America has created and spread a web of lies about the 2020 election," Biden said Thursday at the Capitol. "He's done so because he values power over principle, because he sees his own interest as more important than his country's interest and America's interest. And because his bruised ego means more to him than our democracy or our Constitution. He can't accept he lost."

While five people died during the rioting or its aftermath, less than half of Republicans recall the attack as violent or extremely violent, according to a poll released this week by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs. About 3 in 10 Republicans said the attack was not violent.

The situation has stunned and depressed critics in both political parties who were convinced the insurrection would force Republicans to abandon the Trump era once and for all.

Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., had predicted Trump's hold on the party would "be gone" by the summer. But Kinzinger blamed House Republican leader and Trump ally Kevin McCarthy for proving him wrong.

"What I underestimated was the impact that one person would have on that, and that is Kevin McCarthy and his visit to Mar-a-Lago," Kinzinger said, referring to a trip McCarthy took to Florida in January 2021. With their eyes on retaking the House in 2022, Trump and McCarthy agreed to work together.

"Kevin McCarthy is legitimately, singlehandedly the reason that

Donald Trump is still a force in the party," Kinzinger said.

Others, however, point to fractures that suggest Trump's power is waning.

Banned from Twitter and denied his other social media megaphones, Trump no longer controls the news cycle like he did in office.

During last year's most prominent elections, Republicans like Virginia gubernatorial nominee Glenn Youngkin strategically kept Trump at arm's length.

While Trump's endorsement remains coveted in midterm primary races, it has also failed to clear the field in some key races.

Trump has struggled to prevent other Republicans from eyeing the 2024 presidential nomination. His former vice president, secretary of state and a handful of Senate allies have made frequent trips to early voting states.

John Bolton, Trump's former national security adviser, has funded extensive national and state-level polling on the subject over the last year that has found Trump's sway and the power of his endorsement waning considerably since he left office.

"I really think that the evidence is clear that the people are done with Trump," Bolton said.

Trump is also facing a flurry of investigations, including in New York, where prosecutors are investigating whether his real estate company misled banks and tax officials about the value of his assets. Meanwhile, on Capitol Hill, the Jan. 6 committee continues to investigate the Trump White House's involvement in the deadly insurrection.

## Democracy: Biden lays blame for attack squarely on Trump

FROM PAGE 1

Election Day as the day of insurrection and the riot that took place here on January 6 as a true expression of the will of the people. Can you think of a more twisted way to look at this country, to look at America? I cannot."

The president's remarks launched the start of daylong remembrance, drawing a contrast between the truth of what happened and the false narratives that persist about the Capitol assault, including the continued refusal by many Republicans to affirm that Biden won the 2020 election.

"We must be absolutely clear about what is true and what is a lie," he said. "The former president of the United States of America has spread a web of lies about the 2020 election."

He said: "We are in a battle for the soul of America."

"I did not seek this fight, brought to this Capitol one year from today. But I will not shrink from it either. I will stand in this breach, I will defend this nation. I will allow no one to place a dagger at the throat of this democracy."

Republican leaders and lawmakers are largely staying away from the day's remembrance events, viewing them as overly politicized.

From Florida, Trump dashed off a statement claiming Biden was trying to "further divide America. This political theater is all just a distraction."

Even among congressional Republicans who condemned the attack in the days afterward, most have stayed loyal to the former president.

"What brazen politicization of January 6 by President Biden," tweeted Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-

S.C., a sometimes Trump confidant.

The division is a stark reminder of the rupture between the two parties, worsening since hundreds of Trump's supporters violently pushed past police, used their fists and flagpoles to break through the windows of the Capitol and interrupted the certification of Biden's victory.

Rep. Liz Cheney, chair of the House committee investigating the attack and one of the few GOP lawmakers attending the Capitol ceremonies, warned that "the threat continues." Trump, she said, "continues to make the same claims that he knows caused violence on January 6."

"Unfortunately, too many in my own party are embracing the former president, are looking the other way or minimizing the danger," she told NBC's "Today." "That's

how democracies die. We simply cannot let that happen."

In a bid to inform the public, Democrats investigating the insurrection plan to spend the coming months telling the American people exactly what happened last Jan. 6.

But leaders planned to spend the anniversary appealing to broader patriotic instincts.

Biden and his administration have come under criticism from some in his party for not forcibly explaining to Americans the ways democracy is at risk, or pushing Congress hard enough to pass election and voting rights legislation that is stalled in the Senate.

Former President Barack Obama said "nothing is more important" on the anniversary than ensuring the right to vote.

"While the broken windows have been repaired and many of

the rioters have been brought to justice, the truth is that our democracy is at greater risk today than it was back then," Obama said in a statement.

Biden's address, and that of Vice President Kamala Harris who is leading the administration's efforts on the voting and elections legislation, appeared as a direct response to critics.

"We must pass voting rights bills," said Harris, addressing those gathered. "We cannot sit on the sidelines. We must unite in defense of our democracy."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, has scheduled a moment of silence in the House, where many members were evacuated and some were trapped as the rioters tried to break in.

The Senate also marked the day with a moment of silence and planned speeches.



## NATION

# Philadelphia house fire leaves at least 12 dead

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Two sisters and several of their children were among the 12 people killed when a fire tore through a Philadelphia rowhome that apparently had no working smoke detectors, fire officials said.

Eight children lost their lives in the Wednesday morning blaze — the city's deadliest single fire in more than a century.

At least two people were hospitalized and some others managed to escape from the three-story brick duplex, which was public housing, officials said. The cause of the fire has not been determined. Officials said 26 people had been staying in the two apartments.

"I knew some of those kids — I used to see them playing on the corner," said Dannie McGuire, 34, fighting back tears as she and Martin Burgert, 35, stood in the doorway of a home around the corner.

"I can't picture how more people couldn't get out — jumping out a window," she said.

Officials did not release the names or ages of those killed in the blaze, which started before 6:30 a.m.

Family members on Facebook have identified two of the victims as sisters Rosalee McDonald, 33, and Virginia Thomas, 30. The siblings each had multiple children



JOE LAMBERT/AP

**A family reacts following a fatal fire in Philadelphia on Wednesday.**

but it's unclear if all of them were home at the time of the fire or how many of them died. Messages were left with several people who said they knew or were related to the victims.

Fire officials initially said 13 people died, seven of them children, but those figures were updated Wednesday evening. Eight children and four adults were found dead, officials said.

None of the four smoke alarms appeared to be working, said Craig Murphy, first deputy fire commissioner. The alarms had been inspected annually, and at least two were replaced in 2020, with batteries replaced in the oth-

ers at that time, Philadelphia Housing Authority officials said. It said the last inspection was in May 2021. Smoke detectors were working at that time, officials said.

The fire burned in a residential area of the Fairmount neighborhood, northwest of downtown and home to the Philadelphia Museum of Art and its famous steps from the film "Rocky."

Streets around the home remained blocked off Wednesday evening. Moments after the last firetruck pulled away, several neighbors quietly approached the foot of the block and left candles and flowers.

In the late afternoon, onlookers



MATT ROURKE/AP

**Philadelphia firefighters and police work at the scene of a deadly row house fire Wednesday in the Fairmount neighborhood of Philadelphia.**

and neighbors had migrated to a nearby elementary school, where relatives and friends of the home's residents gathered to wait for news.

A small group of people, some wrapped in Salvation Army blan-

kets, stared down 23rd Street, where the blaze happened, hugging one another and crying. Several friends of the children stopped by the school, hoping for information, after their texts and calls went unanswered.

## Texas day care gets reprieve after drilling plan is rejected

Associated Press

Parents who send their children to a day care center in Arlington, Texas, will be able to breathe easier after the city refused to let a major energy company drill more gas wells a few hundred feet from the center's playground.

The Arlington City Council voted 5-4 on Tuesday night to reject the re-

quest by Total Energies to drill additional gas wells, reversing a preliminary decision by the council in November to allow the wells to go forward.

Tuesday's vote marked a setback for Total and a surprise victory for community members who wanted to halt the drilling because they feared it could harm the children's

and neighboring residents' health. The Associated Press reported on the dispute in November, with a deep look at people affected along the natural gas supply chain. A statistical analysis of the locations of Total's wells in Arlington found a higher density of them in neighborhoods that many people of color call home. Living close to fracking sites

has been linked to health risks, including asthma, neurological and developmental disorders.

"I am elated! Relieved.... It was totally unexpected," said Rosalia Tejeda, who lives a few blocks from the drilling site with her three children. "I hope this means that the health and welfare of our children should come above anything else

because they are the future, our future workforce, our future leaders."

Total Energies said Wednesday that it was reviewing its options in the aftermath of the council vote.

"We work diligently to ensure the safety and quality of life for all our neighbors near every one of our sites," Tricia Fuller, a company spokeswoman, told the AP.

## Ghislaine Maxwell to seek new trial after reports of juror's sex abuse

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Ghislaine Maxwell, convicted last week of conspiring to recruit and groom teenage girls to be abused by Jeffrey Epstein, plans to request a new trial after a juror in her case revealed he was a victim of sexual abuse, her defense lawyers said Wednesday.

The lawyers said in a letter to U.S. District Judge Alison J. Nathan that "based on undisputed, publicly available information, the Court can and should order a new

trial without any evidentiary hearing."

The judge late Wednesday set a schedule for the defense to ask for a new trial, saying it should make the request by Jan. 19, with prosecutors replying by Feb. 2.

She asked them to address whether "an inquiry of some kind" is permitted or required. Nathan also said she will offer a court-appointed lawyer for the juror.

The judge's order came after defense lawyers said Maxwell "in-

tends to request a new trial" with a submission that will include all known undisputed remarks of the juror, along with recorded statements and the questionnaire all jurors filled out.

"It is clear to Ms. Maxwell that based on this record alone a new trial is required," they said, urging that all trial jurors be examined to evaluate their conduct if a hearing occurs.

In interviews published Tuesday and Wednesday by The Independ-

ent and the Daily Mail, one juror described a moment during the deliberations when he told fellow jurors in Maxwell's trial that, like some of the victims of the late financier Epstein, he had been sexually abused as a child. And he said he convinced other jurors that a victim's imperfect memory of sex abuse doesn't mean it didn't happen.

"I know what happened when I was sexually abused. I remember the color of the carpet, the walls.

Some of it can be replayed like a video," he said he told the jury, according to The Independent. "But I can't remember all the details, there are some things that run together."

The judge denied a request by another defense lawyer who wrote a separate letter asking her to suspend all other post-trial motions in the case.

In their own letter to Nathan, even prosecutors said those reports "merit attention by the Court."



NATION

# A season of joy kicks off in New Orleans

**By KEVIN MCGILL**  
*Associated Press*

NEW ORLEANS — Vaccinated, masked and ready-to-revel New Orleans residents were to usher in Carnival season Thursday with a rolling party on the city’s historic streetcar line, an annual march honoring Joan of Arc in the French Quarter and a collective, wary eye on coronavirus statistics.

Carnival officially begins each year on Jan. 6 — the 12th day after Christmas — and, usually, comes to a raucous climax on Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday, which falls on March 1 this year. Thursday’s planned festivities come two years after a successful Mardi Gras became what officials later realized was an early Southern superspreader of COVID-19; and nearly a year after city officials, fearing more death and more stress on local hospitals, canceled parades and restricted access to the usually raucous Bourbon Street.

This year, the party is slated to go on despite rapidly rising COVID-19 cases driven by the omicron variant.

In what has become a traditional kickoff to the season, the Phunny Phorty Phellows were to gather at a cavernous streetcar barn and board one of the historic St. Charles line cars along with a small brass band. Vaccinations were required in keeping with city regulations and seating on the streetcar was to be



**Actor Bryan Cranston waves beads as he acts as the celebrity monarch of the Krewe of Orpheus on Feb. 24, 2020, along the Uptown parade route during Mardi Gras celebrations in New Orleans.**

limited and spaced. And, in addition to the traditional over-the-eye costume masks, riders were equipped with face coverings to prevent viral spread.

Larger, more opulent parades will follow in February as Mardi Gras nears and the city attempts to

leaven the season’s joy with caution.

“It was certainly the right thing to do to cancel last year,” said Dr. Susan Hassig, a Tulane University epidemiologist who also is a member of the Krewe of Muses, and who rides each year on a huge float in the Muses parade. “We didn’t have vac-

cines. There was raging and very serious illness all over the place.”

Now, she notes, the vaccination rate is high in New Orleans. While only about 65% of the total city population is fully vaccinated, according to the city’s statistics, 81% of all adults are fully vaccinated. And the

overall percentage is expected to increase now that eligibility is open to younger children.

And, while people from outside the city are a big part of Mardi Gras crowds, Mayor LaToya Cantrell’s anti-virus measures include proof of vaccination or a negative test for most venues. “The mayor has instituted a vaccine requirement and/or negative test to get into all the fun things to do in New Orleans — the food, the music,” said Hassig. She adds, however, that she’d like to see a federal requirement that air travelers be vaccinated.

Sharing Hassig’s cautious optimism is Elroy James, president of the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club, a predominantly Black organization whose Mardi Gras morning parade is a focal point of Carnival. Early in the pandemic, COVID-19 was blamed for the death of at least 17 of Zulu’s members. Compounding the tragedy: Restrictions on public gatherings meant no traditional jazz funeral sendoff for the dead.

“I think most krewes, particularly, I know, for Zulu, we’ve been very proactive, leaning in, with respect to all of the safety protocols that have been in place since the onset of this thing,” James said Wednesday. “Our float captains are confirming our riders are vaccinated. And part of the look for the 2022 Mardi Gras season is face masks.”

## Scientists to explore ‘doomsday’ glacier

*Associated Press*

A team of scientists are sailing to “the place in the world that’s the hardest to get to” so they can better figure out how much and how fast seas will rise because of global warming eating away at Antarctica’s ice.

Thirty-two scientists on Thursday are starting a more than two-month mission aboard an American research ship to investigate the crucial area where the massive but melting Thwaites glacier faces the Amundsen Sea and may eventually lose large amounts of ice because of warm water. The Florida-sized glacier has gotten the nickname the “doomsday glacier” because of how much ice it has and how much seas could rise if it all melts — more than two feet over hundreds of years.

Because of its importance, the United States and the United Kingdom are in the midst of a joint \$50 million mission to study



**This 2020 photo provided by the British Antarctic Survey shows the Thwaites glacier in Antarctica.**

Thwaites, the widest glacier in the world by land and sea. Not near any of the continent’s research stations, Thwaites is on Antarctica’s western half, east of the jutting Antarctic Peninsula, which used to be the area scientists worried most about.

“Thwaites is the main reason I would say that we have so large an uncertainty in the projections of future sea level rise and that is because it’s a very remote area, difficult to reach,” Anna Wahlin, an oceanographer from the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, said Wednesday in an interview

from the Research Vessel Nathaniel B. Palmer, which was scheduled to leave its port in Chile hours later. “It is configured in a way so that it’s potentially unstable. And that is why we are worried about this.”

Thwaites is putting about 50 billion tons of ice into the water a year. The British Antarctic Survey says the glacier is responsible for 4% of global sea rise, and the conditions leading to it to lose more ice are accelerating, University of Colorado ice scientist Ted Scambos said from the McMurdo land station last month.

## US jobless claims rise by 7,000 to 207,000

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits rose last week but remained at historically low levels, suggesting that the job market remains strong.

U.S. jobless claims rose by 7,000 last week to 207,000. The four-week average of claims, which smooths out week-to-week gyrations, rose by nearly 4,800 to just below 205,000. Despite the increases, the numbers show that weekly claims are below the 220,000 typical before the pandemic struck the U.S. economy in March 2020.

The highly transmissible omicron variant so far does not appear to have triggered significant layoffs.

Altogether, nearly 1.8 million Americans were collecting traditional unemployment aid the week that ended Dec. 25.

Employers are reluctant to let workers go at a time when it’s so tough to find replacements. The United States posted 10.6 million job openings in November, the fifth highest monthly total in records

going back to 2000. A record 4.5 million Americans quit their jobs in November — a sign that they are confident enough in their prospects to seek something better.

The job market has bounced back from last year’s brief but intense coronavirus recession. When COVID hit, governments ordered lockdowns, consumers hunkered down at home and many businesses closed or cut back hours. Employers slashed more than 22 million jobs in March and April 2020, and the unemployment rate rocketed to 14.8%.

But massive government spending — and eventually the rollout of vaccines — brought the economy back. Employers have added 18.5 million jobs since April 2020, still leaving the U.S. still 3.9 million jobs short of what it had before the pandemic. Economists expect that Friday’s jobs report will show that the economy generated another 400,000 jobs in December, according to a survey by the data firm FactSet.

The unemployment rate has fallen to 4.2%, close to what economists consider full employment.



# WORLD

## Dozens of protesters, police dead in Kazakhstan protests

By JIM HEINTZ  
Associated Press

MOSCOW — Security forces killed dozens of protesters and 12 police died during extraordinarily violent demonstrations in Kazakhstan that saw government buildings stormed and set ablaze, authorities said Thursday. One police officer was found beheaded in escalating unrest that poses a growing challenge to authoritarian rule in the Central Asian nation.

Despite the severe response by authorities, protesters took the streets again in the country's largest city, Almaty, a day after breaking into the presidential residence and the mayor's office there. Police were also out in force, including in the capital of Nur-Sultan, which was reportedly quiet, and Russian troops were on their way.

Video from the Russian news agency Tass showed police firing intensely on a street near Republic Square, where demonstrators had gathered, though they could not be seen in the footage. Late Thursday, Tass said protesters

had been swept from the square but that sporadic gunfire in the area continued.

Earlier, Russia's Sputnik news service reported that shots were fired as police surrounded one group of about 200 protesters in the city.

In the unrest on Wednesday, "dozens of attackers were liquidated," police spokeswoman Soltanat Azirbek told state news channel Khabar-24, using a term common to describe the killing of people thought to be extremists by law enforcement. Twelve police officers were killed and 353 injured, according to city officials cited by the channel. The Interior Ministry said 2,000 people have been arrested.

Tens of thousands of people, some reportedly carrying clubs and shields, have taken to the streets in recent days in the worst protests the country has seen since gaining independence from the Soviet Union three decades ago. Although the demonstrations began over a near-doubling of prices for a type of vehicle fuel, their size and rapid spread sug-

gest they reflect wider discontent in the country that has been under the rule of the same party since independence.

The government on Thursday announced a 180-day price cap on vehicle fuel and a moratorium on raising utility rates — an attempt to address the economic issues that catalyzed the protests, though it was unclear what, if any, effect the moves would have.

The president has vacillated between attempts at mollifying the protesters, including accepting the resignation of his government, and promising harsh measures to quell the unrest, which he blamed on "terrorist bands."

Worries that a broader crackdown could be on the horizon grew after he called on a Russia-led military alliance for help. Severe interruptions to internet service and cellphone service also raised concern. The airports in Almaty and one other city have also been shut.

The military alliance, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, said early Thursday that it would send peacekeeper troops to Kazakhstan at Tokayev's request.



RUSSIAN DEFENSE MINISTRY PRESS SERVICE/AP

Vehicles of Russian peacekeepers are parked at an airfield outside Moscow on Thursday, set to be loaded on Russian military planes flying to Kazakhstan.

The operation is the first military action by the CSTO — an indication that Kazakhstan's neighbors, particularly Russia, are concerned that the unrest could spread.

The size and duties of the force have not been specified. Russia has already begun sending forces,

according to the CSTO, which also includes Kazakhstan, Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. But Kyrgyzstan's presidential spokesman, Erbol Sutanbaev, said his country's contingent must be approved by parliament and said that the troops would not take actions involving demonstrators.

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# WEEKEND



VR app provides inspired workouts  
Video games, Page 18

## AT THE MOVIES

After months of upheaval, Hollywood has its sights set on a full slate of releases  
Page 15

There will be plenty of sequels, superheroes and reboots — pandemic permitting, of course — in 2022. Scheduled for release this year are Tom Cruise’s “Top Gun: Maverick,” “The Batman” and “Scream.”  
Paramount Pictures, Warner Bros. Pictures, Paramount Pictures



## WEEKEND: GADGETS &amp; TECHNOLOGY

## Lost art brought back to life

## AI restoring works by Picasso, Klimt and Rembrandt

BY KELSEY ABLES  
*The Washington Post*

Gustav Klimt's 1900 painting "Philosophy" might have been remembered as a pivotal artwork. Made at a turning point in the artist's career, it was vividly colored, dramatically composed — even provocative in its blatant nudity and unflinching emotion. But in 1945, the work was destroyed in a fire and essentially lost to history.

For decades, only black-and-white photographs of "Philosophy" existed. Now, thanks to artificial intelligence, we can see the work in full color. But does the re-creation really look like the original? Does it even look like a Klimt?

The new version, created by Google Arts and Culture using machine learning, shows a very different Klimt than you'd expect if you're familiar with "The Kiss" or "Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I." On the left side of the canvas, interwoven, nude bodies create a fleshy, blue-hued form that looks almost bruised. On the right, an expressionless, algae-colored sphinx dominates a lurid green sky. A glance at the colors in the reconstructed work, and you might mistake Klimt for his Fauvist contemporaries or think he was hanging around with the painter Marc Chagall.

"Philosophy" is one of three massive "faculty paintings" that the Austrian painter (1862-1918) created for the University of Vienna's assembly hall ceiling and that were lost in a fire at the end of World War II. Earlier this year, Franz Smola, a curator at Vienna's Belvedere Museum, which has the largest Klimt collection in the world, guided the paintings' "recoloring" for the Google Arts and Culture "Klimt vs. Klimt" exhibition online.

"I don't know any better than Google what those paintings really look like, but I don't think that they looked like that," says Jane Kallir, longtime director of the Galerie St. Etienne in New York, which gave Klimt his first shows in the United States. "These things look like cartoons. They don't look like Klimt paintings."

The faculty paintings are one of several recent attempts to use artificial intelligence to re-create lost art. The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam used AI to reconstruct missing panels from the edges of Rembrandt's famous



In this composite image, the black-and-white photograph on the left is of the "faculty painting" "Philosophy" by Gustav Klimt, and on the right, a recolored version of the painting, commissioned in 1894 and destroyed in a 1945 fire at Immendorf Castle in Austria.



AUSTRIAN NATIONAL LIBRARY/Google Arts and Culture

"Night Watch" and, over the summer, temporarily installed them alongside the real thing. A pair of researchers in the United Kingdom, who call themselves Oxia Palus, say they've rebuilt a Picasso nude that was hidden beneath "The Blind Man's Meal," using 3D printing and AI. In October, an orchestra in Bonn, Germany, "played" Beethoven's 10th and unfinished symphony in full. The version was written by an algorithm.

George Cann, co-founder of Oxia Palus, posits that artificial intelligence "could give us this parallel alternative universe of art that we never really quite had."

It's an alluring idea. Peek beneath a Picasso at an earlier painting under the surface layer and it's like you're peering into the artist's mind, eavesdropping on thoughts from a century ago. See a painting that was lost to catastrophe come back to life and it's like you've traveled back in time, reversed fate. But if any of this re-created universe of lost art, like "Philosophy," is inaccurate, the AI creators might not be resurrecting history but inadvertently rewriting it.

Klimt's faculty paintings make a particularly compelling case for the kind of rediscovery promised by AI.

In 1894, Austria's Ministry of Education commissioned Klimt to paint allegories representing the disciplines of Medicine, Philosophy and Jurisprudence, ex-

pecting he'd use the same traditional mural style that he was known for around Vienna. That's not what they received. Klimt painted chaotic, dark images of suffering. A sick-looking, motley crew appears in "Medicine," and "Jurisprudence," which shows a gaunt man beneath three glamorous, gold-clad judges, seems to depict not the law's strengths but its elitism.

The works were lambasted by academics who suspected Klimt was mocking their disciplines and by conservative politicians who believed the depictions of female sexuality and nudity would incite immoral behavior. Klimt bought back the paintings from the state and never again did a public commission.

Each application of AI to art has different levels of rigor. To reconstruct Rembrandt's "Night Watch," Rob Erdmann, senior scientist at the Rijksmuseum, collected 55 terabytes of data, collaborated with the museum's art historians, and used a copy of the original painting as a reference. All to give visitors, he says, "the sense — if they squinted — of what the ['Night Watch'] might have looked like if it had not been cut down."

But terms like "digital restoration" can confer a misleading legitimacy. To make a 3D recreation of the Picasso underpainting, Oxia Palus used an X-ray available online and guided its algorithm with paintings from the artist's broad "Blue

Period." They didn't talk to art historians about the original work, but told CNN that "the treasure [Picasso has] hidden for future generations is finally being revealed."

Kenneth Brummel, who co-curated the new exhibition "Picasso: Painting the Blue Period" at the Art Gallery of Ontario, has reservations about Oxia Palus' approach, noting that to re-create a canvas' surface, they would need information accessible only to the museum that owns the work.

Brummel's exhibition explores technical methods used to learn more about Picasso's underpainting, including advanced microscopy and spectroscopic imaging. He says he prefers to present the raw scientific data because it allows visitors to draw their own conclusions.

"Part of the beauty of providing a narrative that is incomplete is that you're inviting others to participate," he says.

From one perspective, mechanically reproducing lost art does the opposite: It offers a clean answer where there are none, and relies on the predictable when the beauty is, often, in the unexpected.

"Whether it's an artist or a composer or whatever, there is such a thing as genius," Kallir says. "The reason that we are awestruck by a Beethoven symphony or a Klimt painting is because they had something that's inimitable."

## GADGETS

## Get a dynamic sonic cleaning for your teeth

BY GREGG ELLMAN  
*Tribune News Service*

The Hanasco Sonic Electric Toothbrush makes brushing teeth easy and effective.

The rechargeable toothbrush is recommended for users 13 years and older. It comes in four colors, each with a matte finish and a comfortable grip.

Once turned on, it brushes with a powerful 38,000 vibrations per minute for micro-brush sonic dynamic cleaning. And according to Hanasco, the Sonic Electric Toothbrush "can drive fluid deep between your teeth and along the gumline for exceptional cleaning."

While that number might not mean much to you (or me), I can say after using the brush for more than a week that it does the job well.

The brush is designed especially for sensitive teeth and gums. I have sensitive gums, and it never caused any pain or discomfort, making it a perfect fit for a whole new brushing experience.

I'm probably getting a better result with the Sonic Electric Toothbrush than a manual brush. Of course, getting advice from your dentist is always recommended.

The toothbrush has a removable brush head with blue bristles, which will fade to white when it's time to change the head. A soft touch button on the handle controls multiple settings: clean, white, polished and gum care. Each has a specific strength to properly care for your teeth.

The toothbrush comes with a USB charging base, and a four-hour charge is rated to be good for 30 days (brushing two times a day). If you charge it for 14-18 hours, it should last for up to 45 days, depending on usage. A low battery indicator reminds you when a charge is needed.

It's built with an IPX7 waterproof rating, making it perfect for use in the shower. The body is built with nano-materials, ensuring that mold or mildew will not build up. A two-minute smart timer reminds you every 30 seconds to change sides, and then the auto turnoff features deactivates the toothbrush after two minutes of use.

The Hanasco Sonic Electric Toothbrush (\$29.99 at Amazon) comes with the charging base, a manual and two additional brush heads. Available colors are black, pink, purple and white. Extra brush heads are available in a four-pack for \$12.99 (Amazon).

Online: hanasco.com



## WEEKEND: MOVIES



Paramount Pictures

Tom Cruise plays Capt. Pete “Maverick” Mitchell in “Top Gun: Maverick.” The sequel to the 1986 film, delayed since 2020 by the pandemic, is set to arrive in theaters May 27.

## Big films expected in 2022 feature Tom Cruise, Robert Pattinson, Sandra Bullock among other familiar faces

By ADAM GRAHAM  
*The Detroit News*

**A** new “Batman.” The return of James Cameron. And finally — we hope — the “Top Gun” sequel we’ve been waiting for.

There are plenty of big movies on deck for 2022, even as a new COVID-19 variant runs rampant and leaves large swaths of the entertainment industry in a state of unease. The pandemic wreaked havoc on Hollywood and caused mass upheaval in 2021 as studios scrambled to release movies in theaters, on home viewing platforms and in many cases, both at the same time.

The result: Superhero movies continued to surge at the box office, with “Spider-Man: No Way Home” proving it’s still possible to pack theaters in record numbers. But serious movies aimed at adult viewers — from “Respect” to “The Last Duel,” from “King Richard” to “West Side Story” — fell and fell hard, leaving many to question whether the future of movies will simply be a playground for blockbusters or if there’s any room left for films about people who don’t wear capes.

Time will tell, but for now, here’s a look at what will be rolling out in theaters over the next 12 months, a year that will see no shortage of familiar faces and characters gracing screens. And as the previous two years have taught us all too well, dates are always, always subject to change.

**A Double Shot of Tom Cruise:** Tom Cruise has sat out the pandemic, and hasn’t been seen on screen since 2018’s “Mission: Impossible — Fallout.” He was due to return in 2020 with his “Top Gun” sequel and in 2021 with his latest “Mission: Impossible” adventure, but both were pushed back due to the uncertainty of theatergoing. (Cruise is an ardent believer in the big screen movie theater experience.) Both are now on deck for 2022, with “Top Gun: Maverick” set for May 27 and “Mission: Impossible 7” due out Sept. 30.

**A new Dark Knight:** Exit Ben Affleck, enter Robert Pattinson. The “Twilight” star becomes Bruce Wayne as a new chapter of the Dark Knight saga begins with “The Batman” on March 4. Director Matt Reeves (“Cloverfield,” “War of the Planet of the Apes”) takes the reins on the franchise and pits Batman against the Riddler, played this time around by Paul Dano, in a turn that’s sure to be darker than Jim Carrey’s take on the joking madman back in the hypercolor world of 1995’s “Batman Forever.”

**Superhero Field Day:** Superhero movies made up four of the top five box office hits of 2021 — all five if you count Vin Diesel’s Dominic Toretto as a superhero — so yeah, there are plenty more in the pipeline. The list includes the “Black Panther” sequel “Black Panther: Wakanda Forever” (Nov. 11), a new animated “Spider-Man” adventure with “Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse”



“The Batman,” due March 4, stars Robert Pattinson, left, in the titular role against Paul Dano as the Riddler. Also starring Zoe Kravitz, right, as Selina Kyle/Catwoman.

(Oct. 7) and Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson’s introduction as “Black Adam” (July 29). And more: “Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness” (May 6), “Thor: Love and Thunder” (July 8), “The Flash” (Nov. 4) and the “Spider-Man”-connected “Morbius” (Jan. 28).

**Return of the King:** It’s been so long since “Avatar” hit screens that it sometimes feels like it never did. The box office behemoth became the biggest grosser of all-time — it has since been topped by “Star Wars: Episode VII — The Force Awakens” and “Avengers: Endgame” — but outside of a 2017 “SNL” sketch, it didn’t leave much of a lasting cultural footprint. James Cameron originally intended for the film’s follow-up to hit theaters in 2014, but the release date and number of sequels has shifted so many times it’s difficult to keep up with it all. With “Avatar 2” finally due out Dec. 16, we’re ready to be wowed.

**Big-name biopics:** Jennifer Hudson’s starring turn as Aretha Franklin in “Respect” didn’t hit box-office gold, but biopics remain an important part of the Hollywood machine. In 2022 we will get the Whitney Houston story with “I Wanna Dance With Somebody” (Dec. 23), Ana de Armas (“No Time to Die”) will play Marilyn Monroe in “Blonde” (date TBA) and “Moulin Rouge” director Baz Luhrmann takes on Elvis Presley in his still-Untitled Elvis Presley Project (June 24), with Tom Hanks as Colo-

nel Tom Parker, Presley’s manager.

**Friendly neighborhood slashers:** This year we’ll finally say goodbye to Michael Myers (yeah right) in “Halloween Ends” (Oct. 14), the final chapter in David Gordon Green’s “Halloween” trilogy, and we’ll say hello again to Ghostface in the rebooted “Scream” (Jan. 14), the meta-horror series’ fifth installment. And what would a year be without Leatherface? He’ll be back for a ninth time in “Texas Chainsaw Massacre” (Feb. 18). Happy hunting!

**Peele back:** What do we know about the latest movie from Jordan Peele? Not a whole heck of a lot. But the “Get Out” director, who stumbled a bit with his follow-up film “Us,” is back with “Nope” (July 22), which reteams him with “Get Out” star (and Oscar-winner) Daniel Kaluuya, along with Keke Palmer and Troy-raised Oscar nominee Steven Yeun.

**Sequels, threequels and more:** A reimagined “Cinderella” for the (latest) Air Jordan generation, “Sneakerella” hits screens Feb. 18. “Disenchanted” (TBA) is a follow-up to 2007’s “Enchanted.” “Lightyear” (June 17) tells the origin story of “Toy Story” good guy Buzz Lightyear. And “Death on the Nile” continues the tale of 2017’s “Murder on the Orient Express.” With the rest of these, the titles pretty much say it all: “Downton Abbey 2” (March 18), “Sonic the Hedgehog 2” (April 8), “Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore” (April 15), “Legally Blonde 3” (May 20), “Jurassic World: Dominion” (June 10), “Minions: The Rise of Gru” (July 1), “Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom” (Dec. 16), “Knives Out 2” (TBA), “Hocus Pocus 2” (TBA).

**Heroes never die:** They only get stronger. They said “Jackass” would never last forever, well then how do you explain the 20-plus year legacy of Johnny Knoxville and his band of merry revelers? They’re back for another round of painful stunts in “Jackass Forever” (Feb. 4) which we hope is not a farewell because we’re still not ready to say goodbye to these American legends.

**Originals:** Heading to the screen in 2022: Sandra Bullock and Channing Tatum in the romantic comedy “The Lost City” (March 25); Harry Styles and Florence Pugh in director Olivia Wilde’s 1950s-set thriller “Don’t Worry Darling” (Sept. 23); and Ryan Reynolds in the time travel adventure “The Adam Project” (TBA), starring as a man who teams up with his younger self to confront his late father. “The Lighthouse” director Robert Eggers returns with his Viking epic “The Northman” (April 8) starring Ethan Hawke, Anya Taylor-Joy and Bjork (!); Channing Tatum makes his directorial debut with “Dog” (Feb. 18); Michelle Yeoh stars in the multiverse sci-fi epic “Everything Everywhere All at Once” (March 25); and Brad Pitt and Tobey Maguire star in the latest from “La La Land” director Damien Chazelle with “Babylon” (Dec. 25).



## WEEKEND: MOVIES

# Perfect timing?

By MICHAEL PHILLIPS  
Chicago Tribune

**“When it’s on-pace, it feels absolutely on point in an era awash in mutual mistrust and willed disbelief.”**

Ann Hornaday  
The Washington Post

## COMMENTARY

Subject of dark comedy ‘Don’t Look Up’ is serious, but director McKay’s methods of delivery debatable

Star-driven movies are back, baby! Oh, and we’re all gonna die. A long way from “Anchorman,” but not as far as all that, screenwriter and director Adam McKay’s jaunty disaster film “Don’t Look Up” is “The Tiger King” of early 2022 — the Netflix-and-gaaaah! phenomenon of the moment. It imagines our planet threatened by a 9-kilometer-wide comet in the sky, and science-denying Americans on the ground. Netflix’s property stars Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Lawrence and Meryl Streep, and it just wrapped its hugely popular second week on the platform.

The first week’s viewership on Netflix tallied 111 million hours’ of collective viewing. The second week, ending Jan. 2, exceeded that by 37% with 152 million hours in 94 countries during the biggest week of views in Netflix history.

Whatever one thinks of it — I wish I liked it more — “Don’t Look Up” succeeds as a black comedy with just enough sincerity of intention to click with a broad audience. It concerns a Michigan State University Ph.D. candidate (Lawrence), working with her astronomy professor (DiCaprio). She discovers a comet hurtling toward Earth. Earth has six months to mobilize and unite behind a plan before this planet-killer strikes.

With the collaboration of the NASA Planetary Defense Coordination Office head (Rob Morgan, the movie’s steady if underutilized voice of reason), these characters soon realize their sense of urgency is not shared by the presumptively Republican president (Meryl Streep), whose wormy chief of staff (Jonah Hill) is also her son.

McKay deploys the incoming comet as a handily apolitical metaphor for many things, all of them innately political. It’s a stand-in for climate change and our willful ruination of the environment. It’s the stunt double for the global pandemic we’re currently mishandling. The movie’s title refers to the fictional president’s adopted slogan, tailored to appease science deniers across the land.

It’s easy to suss out which way a movie would vote, if movies had the vote, and I belong to the same political party as “Don’t Look Up.” But that’s a dead-end antidote to the pleasures of filmmaking, or any kind of artistic expression. Either way: Why don’t I like McKay’s film more?

I’ve struggled with McKay’s serious/funny work for three movies now. And I think it’s because it’s possible to nod your head one way with what a movie’s saying and swivel it the other way, side-to-side, based on how it’s saying it.

“Don’t Look Up” joins McKay’s previous, extended wisecracks of political and social despair, “The Big Short” (2015) and “Vice” (2018), upping the dramatic stakes and trading recent historical events and figures for a fictional calamity.

Vapid media pundits; credulous, double-dealing journalists; an Elon Musk/Jeff Bezos/Mark Zuckerberg/Steve Jobs-inspired tech zillionaire (played by Mark Rylance): All come under fire and rattle around in McKay’s story.

McKay’s kidding!/serious! gyrations feel wobbly to me. He’s a serious satirist,

in that he believes in what his chosen subjects tell us about how we’re paving our roads to ruin, whether it’s geopolitical (“Vice”) or economic (“The Big Short”) or sociopolitical. “Don’t Look Up” addresses all three; all those films do, in the end.

On Facebook and everywhere else, many friends of mine embrace both the cause and the methods of “Don’t Look Up,” and find it wickedly funny with a point. It’s a rallying cry for science, sanity and a better, longer future than McKay’s film envisions. There are clever elements and sharp details, in writing and performance. Lawrence comes closest to the right mixture of dramatic anguish and comic panic. Some of fictional President Orlean’s phrasing has true wit, and only about 10% exaggeration, which makes it funnier: At one point, at a political rally, Streep’s character ends a speech with “May Jesus Christ bless every single one of you. Especially the honorable members of my own party.”

“Don’t Look Up” captures this riven divide in American and global life in more ways than one. On the review aggregation site metacritic.com, it’s scoring a dead-middle 50 out of 100, without a lot of actual mixed reviews.

“Satire so lumbering that it’s enough to turn a tree hugger in to a pro-fracker,” wrote Alonso Duralde, critic for The Wrap. On the other hand, Ann Hornaday of The Washington Post: “When it’s on-pace, it feels absolutely on point in an era awash in mutual mistrust and willed disbelief.”

McKay told Vanity Fair that while he made “Don’t Look Up” to be “populist,” he believes America, right now, no longer accommodates “consensus movies” — meaning, prestigious and commercially successful dark satires on the order of “Network” (1976) or the 1964 film to which McKay’s has been compared most freely, “Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb.”

Yet here we are: “Don’t Look Up” has become one of those topical consensus hits. We’re living in a time and a world, rife with real-world catastrophe both viral and political, where McKay’s jittery apocalyptic joke reflex is really hitting the sweet spot.

McKay’s “perfect satire for our current moment,” per the headline of one critical essay-adjacent posted on Netflix’s self-promotional website Tudum, reminds us that we’ll be the architects of our own downfall. While there’s time to change, that change feels extraordinarily unlikely. That’s the dire message, in McKay’s hands, that goes down very, very easily. The film’s second-week streaming metrics prove as much.

“The timing is just atrocious,” Streep’s fictional U.S. president moans early on in “Don’t Look Up,” given the comet’s arrival so close to midterm elections. For McKay’s movie, on the other hand, the timing is perfect. We’re here, stuck, divided and up for a couple of hours offering some massive talents, a few laughs, a profoundly serious point to make — and a frustratingly glib and hectoring way of making it.

“Don’t Look Up” is streaming on Netflix.

In “Don’t Look Up,” Meryl Streep plays Janie Orlean, a presumably Republican president who isn’t very concerned about the comet heading toward Earth.

Netflix



WEEKEND: MOVIES



Sony Pictures Classics

Milena Smit as Ana, left, and Penélope Cruz as Janis in “Parallel Mothers.” In the film, the two unwed mothers’ lives crisscross after they give birth almost simultaneously at the same hospital in Madrid.

‘No history is mute’

Almodóvar confronts Spain’s past, present in ‘Parallel Mothers,’ both a thriller about parentage and a meditation on motherhood

BY MICHAEL O’SULLIVAN  
The Washington Post

The geometry of film-

maker Pedro Almodóvar’s masterful, moving “Parallel Mothers,” which follows the stories of two women who give birth almost simultaneously in a Madrid hospital, is really a crisscrossing set of two fascinatingly entangled lines.

There’s one superficial similarity between the main characters: Both are unwed mothers. But Janis (Penélope Cruz) is a successful magazine photographer in her late 30s, made pregnant by Arturo (Israel Elejalde), a handsome, married forensic anthropologist she’s shooting for an article. And Ana (Milena Smit) is a slightly clueless teenager, still living with her well-off actress mother (Aitana Sánchez-Gijón), and pregnant after a gang rape.

Named after the singer Janis Joplin (who, like Janis’ own mother, died of an overdose at 27), Janis was raised in a small rural village by her grandmother, Cecilia, after whom she names her own baby, in a story that is packed with mothers, the ghosts of mothers and mother figures. (Rosy de Palma, a familiar face to followers of Almodóvar, appears as a maternal fashion editor and Janis’ best friend.)

All this backstory of lineage and class is dispensed with quickly, almost too quickly. The main plot revolves around Janis and Ana, their daughters and a mishap that — alone in a story that otherwise reveals the writer-

director to be at the top of his storytelling game — seems easily avoidable. Several months after giving birth, Janis and Ana reconnect, with Ana moving into Janis’ apartment as an au pair. Their relationship isn’t easily categorized, and morphs from one thing to another over the course of the film: friends/peers; mentor/protege; rivals in motherhood; and even romantic partners.

But early on, Almodóvar also introduces a secondary, shadow narrative: one that does run parallel to the central story, but mostly in the background. As the film opens, Janis has been trying to get permission to exhume the unmarked mass grave in her hometown where her great-grandfather and several others were executed by fascists in 1936, in the early days of the Spanish Civil War. Janis enlists Arturo, whose expertise is in that field, to help navigate the bureaucracy, and if successful, oversee the disinterment and identification of bodies.

For much of “Mothers,” that subplot remains just that: in the background, with Almodóvar focusing on what would appear to be his complex — and, frankly, somewhat melodramatic — central subject. Relationships include the on-again, off-again dynamic between Janis and Arturo, whose wife has cancer. The two lead actresses deliver great performances here, particularly Cruz, who has never been better.

But toward the end of the film, as its more soapy plot elements resolve themselves and Arturo

makes progress with authorization for the exhumation, that historical narrative swerves out of the shadows, suddenly, into the light.

Could this be Almodóvar’s true theme: Spain’s ugly past, and its still-painful legacy? Political differences between Janis and Ana aren’t deeply addressed, until a moment late in the movie’s third act, when Janis explodes with righteous anger after Ana makes a dismissive offhand comment, parroting her estranged, presumably right-wing father’s views about how it’s better to leave some histories buried.

“Parallel Mothers” is many things at once: a thriller about parentage, a meditation on motherhood. (Almodóvar makes his views known via a T-shirt Janis wears, reading “We should all be feminists.”) It speaks loudest, however, in moments without words at all, with an oblique approach that doesn’t exactly tackle the subject of the Spanish Civil War so much as tease it out of hiding, into the sun, with a story that touches the heart and teaches us about how a country’s present can only be understood by confronting its past.

“Parallel Mothers” ends with another explicit on-screen message from Almodóvar, this time in an epigram courtesy of the Uruguayan journalist and author Eduardo Galeano, which neatly sums up this movie’s silent power: “No history is mute.”

“Parallel Mothers” is rated R for some sensuality. Running time: 123 minutes. In Spanish with subtitles.

Cruz: ‘Parallel Mothers’ rehearsals stimulated my maternal instincts

BY PETER SBLENDORIO  
New York Daily News

Months into rehearsing for the new twist-filled drama “Parallel Mothers,” Penélope Cruz could feel her maternal instincts taking over.

The Oscar-winning actress plays a single mom with a massive secret in the Spanish film, and embraced the challenge of immersing herself in the role.

“When we were rehearsing with a doll, and somebody from props would come and try to get the doll just so that I would rest ... I would react like a lioness, like an animal. Like, ‘Don’t take the doll from me,’” Cruz recalled.

“I was not planning to react like that, but I like when those things happen,” said Cruz, who has two kids with actor Javier Bardem. “It means something about (how) the process has really taken over.”

Cruz stars in “Parallel Mothers,” now playing in theaters, as a photographer named Janis who becomes pregnant early on in the film.

Janis is assigned a hospital room with a young woman, Ana, who is also expecting a child. Their lives quickly become intertwined, kicking off a complicated journey filled with drama.

“Something happens in that hospital that is going to bond their lives forever in very peculiar ways,” Cruz, 47, said. “Then my character is faced with huge moral dilemmas. She has to make very difficult decisions. She has so many problems. She is a good person, but she also knows how to lie in life very well.”

The Spanish-language film is written and directed by Pedro Almodóvar, whom Cruz has frequently worked with throughout her career. Previous collaborations include 1999’s “All About My Mother,” which won an Academy Award for best foreign language film, and 2006’s “Volver,” which earned Cruz a best actress nomination.

They spent four months rehearsing for “Parallel Mothers,” which Cruz says required maximum concentration and effort from the entire cast and crew to meet Almodóvar’s high standards.

“I just love this profession,” Cruz said. “I’ve loved acting since I was a little girl. You’re always a student, and you never get to a place where you feel, ‘Oh, now I have this under control.’ That will never happen. Every movie is starting from zero in a way, because you’re going to get to live with this new person for a while, and get to really know that person, or try.”

The film features a secondary plot in which Cruz’s character works to track down the remains of her great-grandfather, who died during the Spanish Civil War, to provide closure for her grandmother.

“It’s great that Pedro’s talking about something like that, because his movies travel everywhere,” said Cruz, who won the best supporting actress Oscar for “Vicky Cristina Barcelona” in 2009. “This is something that is not only a problem of our country. So many places in the world can identify with that.”

Cruz was named best actress at the Venice International Film Festival for “Parallel Mothers” after the movie premiered there in September. She received the equivalent honor from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association this month.

She appreciates how Almodóvar never judges any of his characters, and said she couldn’t judge Janis, either.

“Everybody is like, ‘Oh, I’m asking myself, what would I do?’” Cruz said.

“That’s what I love about the movie, that everyone can ask themselves those questions, and understand that whatever she would have done, I think the audience would at least understand.”



Sony Pictures Classics

Penélope Cruz, left, and Milena Smit in “Parallel Mothers.” Cruz says she didn’t judge her character, Janis, for her difficult decisions.



# WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



## A GET-FIT HIT

Supernatural photos

Supernatural is essentially a rhythm game that prompts users to swat or punch floating orbs hurled at them with recognizable music hits in the background.

### Oculus Quest fitness app Supernatural serves up inspiring workouts in VR

BY MIKE HUME

*The Washington Post*

I detest fitness classes. It is a deep-rooted loathing, and it has always driven me to find literally any alternative to queuing up in front of an obnoxiously spunky trainer with obnoxiously flawless abs as they bark encouragement that my brain mutates into verbal versions of the jabs they're instructing me to throw.

Fitness instruction unsettles me in ways I can't fully describe. I feel uncomfortable. I feel judged. And I feel out of shape, which I know is the reason I'm there in the first place. So, I stop, my fitness declines even more and I feel worse about myself. This cycle has repeated itself a bit during the pandemic since my usual regimen of rec sports has been put on hold.

It's a bit of a Catch-22, but it's also one that Supernatural, a virtual reality fitness app released in 2020, has helped me break, through the way it approaches workout routines. Instead of trying to surpass goals like running faster miles or throwing more weight on the bench press, it focuses on the thing that's vexed me most around working out: finding the motivation to simply show up and do it.

The app essentially functions as a rhythm game in which the primary modes prompt users to swat or punch floating orbs hurled at them from a portal. The exercise is paired with music that you will actually recognize — Billie Eilish, Bob Marley, Dua Lipa, the Jackson 5 — which is a rarity given the associated music li-

censing fees. The workouts also take advantage of one of virtual reality's best traits, zooming users to normally unreachably locations like the caldera of a volcano, the surface of the moon, the top of China's Great Wall or the steps of pyramids in Egypt, providing a gorgeous, 360-degree environment far more scenic than your local Orangetheory gym.

Then there are the trainers who issue instructions with their joyful expressions (instead of the canned lines found in most other fitness apps) and coax me on. Normally I find such motivational chatter inauthentic and irksome, but somehow in Supernatural, I like it.

What sets Supernatural apart from other fitness classes and apps, to me, is how it is calibrated. Its goal isn't to work users into sweat puddles. It isn't trying to turn users into Olympians, beauty pageant contestants or other paragons of fitness and fabulous physiques. There's no focus on dropping pounds. The goal is to achieve an incrementally fitter version of you. So all of that encouragement hits me differently than some boot camp commandant. It feels attainable — and, more importantly, it keeps me coming back.

While the workout is gamified, tracking streaks for hitting targets and awarding points for power and accuracy, the comments from the trainers are focused on making the user feel comfortable. Sure, they'll encourage people to push themselves as workouts draw to a close, to engage their core and feel the burn during squats, but the most valuable comments

are the ones that address the hardest part of a workout routine: simply showing up.

What Supernatural's trainers — like Head of Fitness Leanne Pedante, or my favorite coach, Raneir Pollard — do best is when they make you feel comfortable. When they appear "in person" at the start of your routine and continue their off-screen encouragement during the session, they praise you for putting in the work, but even more so for just logging on. There's a Stuart Smalley component to the workouts. They don't make you feel like a pitiable schlub who overindexes on Buffalo wings and IPAs, out of place in a gym full of well-toned regulars. They make you feel like a normal person with real challenges and mental barriers to overcome. Pretty much every workout includes a line praising users for putting in the work because they, the user, are worth it.

As a former varsity athlete who played amateur baseball after college and the beer-league softball and dek hockey, I like the idea of working out in a competitive environment. Jogging by myself never appealed to me; I'd usually stop after a mile or two because I was bored and more focused on my discomfort than anything else. But I would sprint up and down a floor hockey rink until I was a panting mess because I wanted to win and didn't want to let my teammates down. I burned way more calories and stayed in far better shape playing dek hockey, racking up more miles than I'd ever log jogging on my own. A combination of competition and accountability provided me with the



Supernatural takes advantage of virtual reality's flexibility in its many exotic physical settings, such as the surface of the moon or the pyramids of Egypt.

right motivation to invest my time in my fitness.

I find something similar with Supernatural. The tracked stats prompt you to perform better than last time, with increasing skill levels (from low- to high-impact) to provide a way to measure your growth. It feels different from FitXR, another VR workout app I've played that features a prominent scoreboard and streak counter that frustratingly resets when you miss a target (or, more frustratingly, when the app fails to register your punch). Whenever I'd see it plummet from the 500s to zero, it was super depressing because it usually meant I wouldn't be able to beat the lobby leader since they typically miss, at most, one target per session. It felt like I'd somehow lost at working out, even though I know that's ridiculous in the grand scheme of things.

Supernatural focuses more on that big-

SEE SUPER ON PAGE 19



WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Super: Virtual trainers surprisingly encouraging

FROM PAGE 18

ger picture: the importance of investing in yourself, your health and well-being. That being said, its scoring system is ... questionable. I'll miss targets or hit them with the wrong hand only to find my streaks were still intact or that I had achieved upward of 90% accuracy for my workout (when I definitely did not). But even the scoring boosts and inflation play into the prioritization of inspiring the user to keep coming back. The ability to select your own tempos and sort workouts by music playlist and trainers help make Supernatural accessible as well. To wit, my 70-year-old mother has adopted the workout app in her daily routine, even involving herself in its super-wholesome online community.

Maybe I'm a sucker, but the encouragement works more effectively for me than other motivational approaches, such as the competitive environment of FitXR where you're measured against other live users in the lobby. Cynically, you could say such lines play directly into the financial model for Supernatural, with its subscription service priced at \$18.99 a month or \$179.99 per year. That's almost double the subscription to FitXR (\$9.99 per month), but to me, the differences justify the extra cost, and it's still far cheaper than Orangetheory's unlimited classes package (\$59 per month).

There is no filter or guise to Supernatural's message: Your fitness is important because you are important. And the Supernatural trainers do a far better job inspiring that sentiment than Captain Kettlebell at that old garage-turned-CrossFit-studio down the street.

In addition to my neuroses about traditional fitness classes, another deterrent to my workouts is time and practicality. With two kids and a more-than-40-hour-a-week job, schlepping to a gym before work seems like a penal sentence and trying to squeeze in a workout session after work — when, in normal times, I have to commute, cook dinner, do the dishes, bathe the kids and put them to bed before I had any hint of free time — felt exhausting. With VR and more time working at home during the pandemic, I can slip on my Ocu-

lus glasses and fit in a 30-minute workout over lunch or whenever I have a gap in my schedule. Even if it's after bedtime for the kiddos, I don't have to get dressed and head out to the gym — I just pop downstairs.

The drawbacks for Supernatural are surprisingly few. Beyond the relative expense of the subscriptions, the biggest is the space required, which can be a challenge for those living in close quarters. Depending on your height, you'll need a circular space between 5-7 feet in diameter, with enough space overhead to allow you to fully extend your arms. This is a limitation of most good VR games and apps, however. The main mode for Supernatural, in which you swat a pair of batons at the orbs a la Beat Saber, requires a bit of space, but the recently incorporated boxing mode makes this less of an issue (and takes a low ceiling out of play).

It would also be wonderful if a future update could incorporate hand-tracking. Occasionally, I'd inadvertently press a button on the handsets that paused the workout or popped me back to the Oculus menu. Given the intensity of some of the workouts (you will sweat, and for the high-temp workouts, you will sweat a lot), it's a little too easy to press the wrong button.

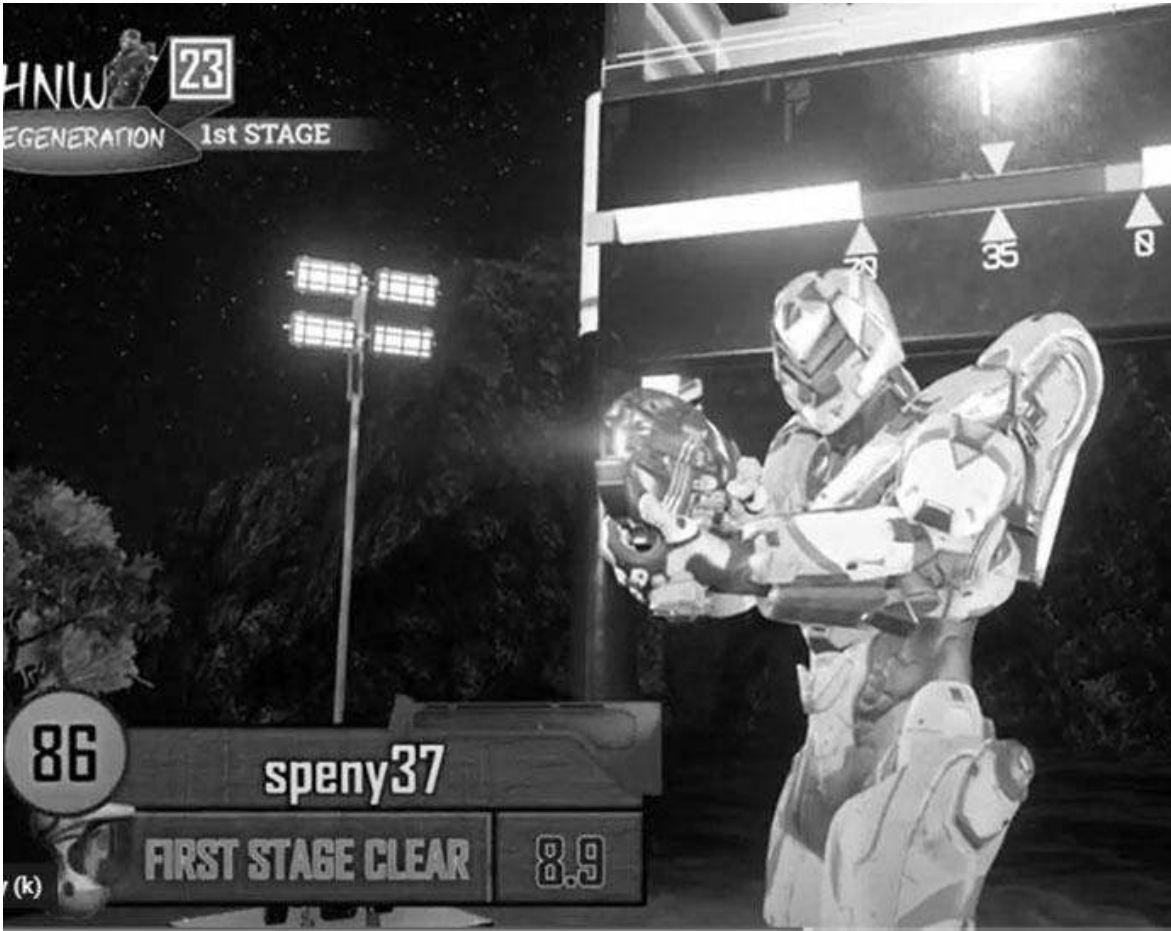
It also must be noted that Meta (nee Facebook) acquired the studio that developed Supernatural in 2021. Fitness plays a role in Mark Zuckerberg's vision for the metaverse, which could prompt additional investment into the app. On the flip side, the company's handling of personal information may give potential users pause when it comes to their biometric data.

In addition to the workouts, there is a meditation mode and also a "moment" mode, in which you just spend time alone looking around your virtual environment (though you can't move around in it). I've gotten less use out of these, but the guided meditation revolves around some of the same themes espoused by the trainers: You're worth investing in, and you should delight in the journey of self-improvement. With Supernatural, I have.

**Platforms:** Oculus Quest and Quest 2

**Online:** getsupernatural.com

There is no filter or guise to Supernatural's message: Your fitness is important because you are important.



YouTube

This screenshot shows a Halo 5 obstacle course tournament, which is based on the "American Ninja Warrior" TV show where competitors attempt several stages of difficulties for a chance to win a cash prize.

Forging a new hobby

AFN broadcaster in Japan connects online gamers to custom Halo obstacle courses

By JUAN KING  
Stars and Stripes

An American Forces Network broadcaster has turned his professional talents to creating obstacle courses for online gamers, a hobby he said takes his mind off stressful workdays.

Staff Sgt. Samuel Burns, 24, of White Plains, Md., is an avid online gamer and fan of the "American Ninja Warrior" TV program. He brings all those pursuits together as inspiration for his online gaming challenge, an obstacle course for the Ninja Warrior of Halo tournaments.

"The community of gamers who compete in these tournaments are known as 'Halo Jumpers,'" Burns said in a recent email to Stars and Stripes. "At any given time, there are about 50 active members on Halo who are involved with the different obstacle courses."

The Ninja Warrior concept has been around since 2012 when it debuted on Halo 3 with "forge mode," which allowed players to create custom maps. A subsequent version, Halo: Reach, continued the theme. It has maintained increasing, world-wide popularity among hundreds of competitive gamers like Burns.

Burns started out creating real-world obstacle courses and then video recording volunteers who took them on, he told AFN Tokyo this fall.

Intrigued with the idea of creating a video version of a ninja-style obstacle course, Burns was led



Pixabay

The Ninja Warrior concept has been around since 2012 when it debuted on Halo 3 with "forge mode," allowing players to create custom maps. A later version, Halo: Reach, continued the theme.

to the online gaming arena, where he produced a course for the Ninja Warrior of Halo tournaments. The creators of Ninja Warrior of Halo constructed the game to permit gamers to contribute their own obstacle courses.

Halo characters go through an obstacle course based on the "American Ninja Warrior" TV show. The competitors attempt several stages of increasing difficulty for a chance at winning \$100 on Xbox Live.

For about nine years, Burns has played and hosted obstacle courses on previous versions of Halo and is now up to Halo 5. He recently hosted his 24th tournament in September, he told Stars and Stripes. All told, he has attracted 1,300 competitor attempts, of which only three resulted in a total victory.

The process of creating a video obstacle course — recording, editing, uploading and adding commentary — can be laborious, he told AFN Tokyo.

Burns also posts the gameplay to his YouTube page, Smokey Massacre, which now has nearly 2,000 subscribers. A plus side of this process, he told AFN, is that it helps him get better at producing videos as broadcaster.

"There are several competitors who have made 10 or more appearances on my course," Burns said in his email, "and there is one player who has participated in every single tournament."

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Basque Country: Europe’s premium blend

The land of the Basque people, split between Spain and France, is a “nation without a state” — left off the map when they drew Europe’s national borders. The Basque Country is often left out of travel itineraries too, and that’s a mistake. With sunny beaches, spectacular modern architecture, tasty tapas and feisty, free-spirited people, this region is filled with cultural treats.

Much unites the Spanish and French Basque regions: They share a striking Atlantic coastline, with the Pyrenees Mountains soaring high above the Atlantic. They have the same flag, similar folk music and dance and a common language, Euskara, spoken by about a half million people. Both, after some struggles, have been integrated into their respective nations.

Wherever you go, your Basque sightseeing should be a fun blend of urban, rural, cultural and culinary activities. Devote at least a day to each country.

In Spain, San Sebastian is the heart of the tourist’s Basque Country, with its sparkling, picturesque beach framed by looming green mountains and a charming Old Town. On-the-rise

Bilbao is worth a look for its landmark Guggenheim art museum (designed by Frank Gehry) and its atmospheric Old Town.

My favorite home base among the French Basques is the central resort village of St-Jean-de-Luz.

It’s a stone’s throw to Bayonne (with its “big-city” bustle and good Basque museum) and the snazzy beach town of Biarritz.

On both sides of the border, traditional village settings reflect the colors of the Basque flag: Deep red and green shutters adorn bright white chalet-style homes scattered across the lush, rolling foothills of the Pyrenees. Spared the beach scene development of the coast, these villages offer a more rustic glimpse of Basque culture.

Mixing influences from the mountains, sea, Spain and France, Basque food is reason enough to visit the region. The local cuisine — dominated by seafood, tomatoes and red peppers — offers some spicy dishes, unusual in most of Europe.

On the Spanish side, hopping from bar to bar sampling pintxos



Rick Steves



CAMERON HEWITT/Ricksteves.com

The Guggenheim Bilbao art museum’s striking architecture has put the Basque city of Bilbao on the map.

(tapas) is a highlight of any trip. Local brews include sidra (hard apple cider) and txakoli, a light, sparkling white wine — often theatrically poured from high above the glass for aeration. You’ll want to sample the famous pil-pil, made from emulsifying the skin of bacalao (dried, salted cod) into a mayonnaise-like substance with chili and garlic.

The red peppers (called pimientos d’Espelette) hanging from homes in French Basque villages give foods a distinctive flavor, and often end up in piperade, a dish that combines peppers, tomatoes, garlic, ham and eggs. Peppers are also dried and used as condiments. Look for them with axoa (a veal or lamb stew on mashed potatoes). Don’t leave

the area without trying ttoro, a seafood stew that is similar to a bouillabaisse or cioppino.

To satisfy your sweet tooth, check out gâteau Basque, a local tart filled with pastry cream or cherries from Bayonne.

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

European sites populate lists of best destinations in 2022

It’s that time of the year when some of the most influential players in the travel industry release their lists of must-see destinations, and as usual, Europe is well represented. An eclectic mix of cities, regions and countries both obscure and famous have made the cuts. Augmenting these lists of places are experiences and activities, resulting in a delightful mashup of places to go and things to do as travel makes its comeback in fits and starts.

**Balearic Islands, Spain:** Conde Nast Traveler awards these hugely popular summer sun destinations a place on its list of The 22 Best Places to Go in 2022 for their newfound artistic ambitions. These include the recent opening of Hauser & Wirth Menorca, a sprawling new arts center in a former naval hospital in Mahón harbor on the less-trodden island of Menorca; new boutique hotels in Mallorca and Formentera; and the Six Senses Ibiza, featuring farm-to-table dining, music, art and wellness.

**Burgundy, France:** Lonely Planet’s 2022 Best in Travel List of regions proposes this area of central France best known for its wine production. Canals crisscrossing the landscape make cycling or traveling by river cruise a great way to explore the rolling vineyards and the elegant chateaus, many of which have been converted into luxurious hotels. Its capital city of Dijon is famous for its medieval and renaissance architecture, along with its signature product, mustard. This spring sees the opening of Dijon’s International City of Gastronomy and Wine, a complex featuring a cooking school, a new hotel, restaurants and a wine cellar offering samples by the glass.

**Crete, Greece:** Travel + Leisure’s list of the 50 Best Places to Travel in 2022 suggests Crete not only for its stunning beauty and history of human settlement dating back to the 7th century B.C., but also for its rich creative community, mostly centered around Chania and its envi-



iStock

The Black Forest city of Freiburg, Germany, is third on Lonely Planet’s Best in Travel List for 2022.

rons. The ruins of a 16th century arsenal facing its harbor now house the Mediterranean Architecture Center, a museum and venue for events and exhibitions.

**Freiburg, Germany:** Landing at number three on Lonely Planet’s 2022 Best in Travel List of cities, Freiburg is known for an abundance of sunshine in comparison with other German towns, a student population that keeps nightlife vibrant and fun and a picture-perfect medieval core. Its Black Forest location promises nature lovers plenty to do outside its centuries-old gates. A 10-day wine festival takes place in the square in front of the cathedral in July.

**Procida Island, Italy:** National Geographic’s list of 25 Amazing Journeys for 2022 includes this island city southwest of Naples that’s easily reached by high-speed ferry in under an hour. Italy’s chosen Capital of Culture for 2022 puts on an ambitious program of contemporary art exhibitions, festivals and performances, spread over

300 days to encourage travel throughout the year. Basking in the spotlight is the Palazzo d’Avalos, first a Renaissance palace and then a prison, now taking on a new life as a cultural venue and urban park.

**Seine River cycling trail, France:** Earning a spot on National Geographic’s list of 25 Amazing Journeys for 2022 is La Seine à Vélo, a newly completed cycling trail running 270 miles between Paris and the Normandy coast. Highlights along the 15-stage trail include a reserve for migratory birds; an ancient, still-working abbey; a chateau with tea room; and the town of Giverny, where Claude Monet painted his famous water lilies.

**Serbia:** Conde Nast Traveler’s list of The 22 Best Places to Go in 2022 suggests Serbia’s time has come based on capital city Belgrade’s pulsing nightlife scene, its many restaurants serving stunning examples of East-meets-West culinary traditions and the 2022 opening of a St. Regis hotel, a 42-floor tower anchoring waterfront urban revitalization efforts. Serbia’s second-largest city, Novi Sad, has been named as one of three European Capitals of Culture for 2022. Former production facilities are gaining new life as art galleries and performance spaces.

**Slovenia:** Fifth on Lonely Planet’s 2022 Best in Travel List of countries, this nation that emerged from the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991 offers a wealth of beauty from the Julian Alps to deep caves to an Adriatic Sea coastline, and activities such as hiking, canyoning and rafting. Its largest city and capital, Ljubljana, is a trove of art nouveau splendor.

**Tromsø, Norway:** Tripadvisor’s compilation of the Best Bucket List Experiences to try in 2022 features as its number two pick a tour taking in the culture of the Sami, an indigenous people inhabiting some of Europe’s most extreme northern reaches. Following a reindeer-drawn sled tour through the snowy countryside, visitors head to a lavvu tent to sample soup and hear stories about the local culture and traditions.



Karen Bradbury



## WEEKEND: TRAVEL



PHOTOS BY ALAN BEHR/TNS

Heidelberg Castle sits above Old Town in Heidelberg, Germany. Getting a shot of the castle at night was something the author attempted for decades and finally realized.

# Persistence leads to triumph in Germany

After decades of trying, photographer finally nails goal of capturing Heidelberg Castle at night

BY ALAN BEHR

*Tribune News Service*

In their travels, some men quest to scale mountains, trek through deserts or shoot edible mammals. No matter how much they accomplish, there is always that experience left unlive that pulls the true adventurer forward. I, too, had such a goal. Being rather sedentary — the kind of traveler who views the offer of a restaurant that has not yet earned a Michelin star as a rugged dare — the top of my own bucket list was more modest: I wanted to snap a picture.

That is, I wanted a particular image: Heidelberg Castle by night (that is, Heidelberger Schloss bei Nacht).

I am German, and Heidelberg is one of the most picturesque and progressive cities that we offer the world — a major tourist destination, the home of a prominent university and a growing technology hub. It is not far from my family's farmland along the Rhine, and so it was perhaps inevitable that I would join the Heidelberg Club International, which unites enthusiasts for the city from around the world. Several dozen of us were recently gathered with the personable and energetic lord mayor, Dr. Eckart Wuerzner, and his team. With it came my opportunity to nail that photograph.

Heidelberg Castle is a large ruin that sits above the city like a weathered crown. If you want to fantasize what a Renaissance castle might look like after centuries of lightning strikes and war, this would be it. At night, under brilliant floodlights, it sheds a golden glow over the city's Old

Town (Altstadt). Several times during the previous decades, I had come back to Heidelberg and stood at night at a town square, the Karlzplatz, to take a picture of the castle squatting imperiously above me — and had blown it on each occasion.

I have published many hundreds of color travel photographs; my black-and-white images have appeared in books and are collected in museums in the United States and Germany. I'm no Ansel Adams, but even still, you might think I could manage something as simple as getting a snapshot of an enormous subject that is not going to fidget while you set up your tripod or switch off the lights and go to sleep while you compute your exposure.

I had first tried just after graduating law school. Every shot was too dark or too light. And I would keep coming back through the ensuing decades to try and try again. Each time, I would miss the mark. My equipment would be wrong, or I would use it incorrectly. (Never travel with anything you need but have not tested thoroughly.) The shoot would be rained out. The exposure might be almost right; but as the saying goes, almost does not count except in horseshoes and hand grenades. As my grandmother might say, Oy Gewalt! (Think: "Oy vey," only this time, you really mean it.)

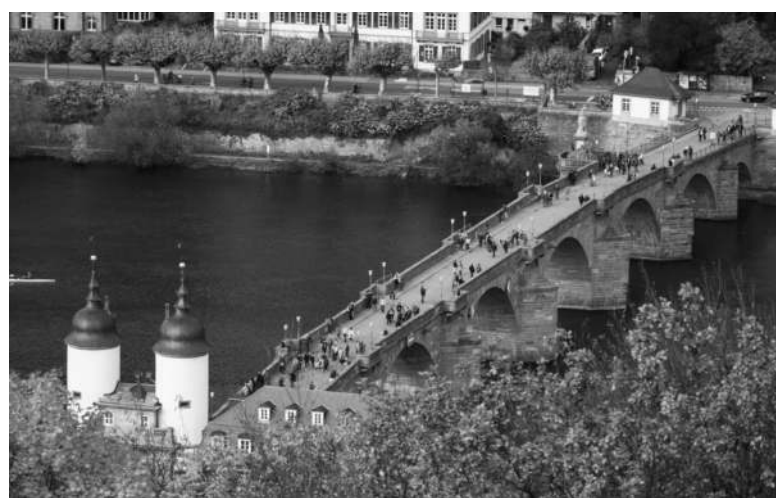
So here I was in Heidelberg, returned to have it out with that castle once and for all. On the day of my big showdown, my group was heading up to the restaurant of another hotel, the Molkenkur, which is seated amid one of the verdant hills that surround the

city. The ground was wet, but cloud cover was light and sporadic and the leaves were festive in their autumnal hues. The concierge at my hotel confirmed that the restaurant was just under two miles distant — a mere six minutes by taxi, but for a New Yorker, as I have been for a long time, an easy walk. That is, if you happen to be in New York City.

Up I went, and up and up, ever higher, along winding roads, across hairpin turns, gnawing steeper footprints into the roadside. I could hear the crunch as cars that drove by shifted into lower gears to pull more power for the climb. I saw a set of stone steps — a shortcut through the wood. The steps led to a path and the path to a large fallen tree that blocked my way. Conveniently, someone had placed a smaller tree trunk perpendicular to the large one to make a ramp. I climbed the ramp, thanking mentally the person who made it — until I broke clean through the rotted wood and my right leg landed on the ground, impaled within.

By the time I got to the restaurant, late, I was sweatier than a marathon runner, and my leg was scraped. But I grabbed cloth and paper napkins, headed to the men's room and improvised a solution with hand soap and my T-shirt, which stood in for the absent scrub brush. I rejoined the group, looking (and smelling) none the worse for my folly.

When I was offered a ride to dinner that night, however, I gladly accepted a lift. We were to have a traditional Heidelberg meal at a popular student pub, Zum Roten Ochsen, that has been in the same family for nearly 200



Looking down on a view of the Alte Brücke from the terrace at the restaurant of the Molkenkur, a hotel on a hill above the Old Town.

of its over 300 years of existence.

A light rain was falling. Before coming over this time, I had bought at Adorama (and tested) a lightweight tripod. My backpack held two cameras, lenses, extra batteries and cards. The Karlzplatz stood just paces away, taunting, goading, daring me to come back in and try that castle photo one last time.

Fortune favors the brave — or at least the persistent.

I set up the tripod. I confirmed that ambient light from the square and street would not be a factor. The clouds graciously cooperated, halting their drizzle. The falling leaves were not stirred into view by the wind.

Gently waving flags would present no problem if I kept to modest time exposures at my cameras' lowest ISO ratings. First, I set up a Leica M10 Monochrom, which, as its name indicates, has a black-and-white sensor. To bring the experience full circle, I mounted the same 90mm f2.8 Tele-Elmarit lens I

had used the first time I had ever attempted the shot. The histogram confirmed an exposure of 7 seconds at f4 (ISO 160, EV-1). The rear screen confirmed success. Now at last was the moment to get that color photograph. I switched to a Leica V-Lux (Typ 114), which has a zoom lens that I set to a moderate wide-angle focal length. For this sensor, the optimal exposure proved to be 2 seconds at f3.2 (ISO 125, EV-2/3). Translation into plain English: nailed it twice over.

I returned to New York City in triumph, along with my photographic souvenirs. I thought momentarily of framing one of the images and hanging it in my office. After some reflection, I decided that would feel like I was showing off. Instead, I went online and bought a framed portrait of Otto von Bismarck. The "Iron Chancellor" would have understood my particularly German form of persistence — but then again, so would almost any photographer.



# WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



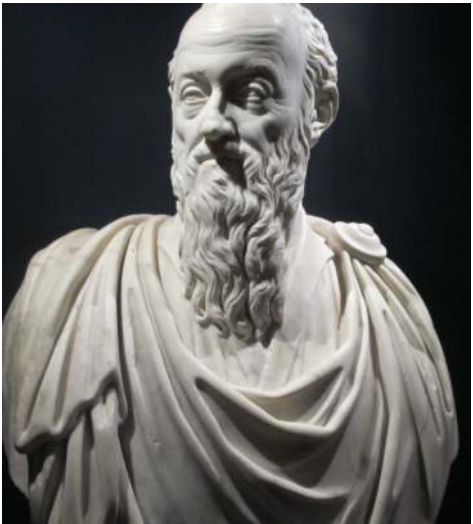
The depiction of the Porto family in two portraits by Paolo Veronese in the 1500s was considered revolutionary. The paintings are held by museums a continent apart. A digitized version of the painting on the left unites them at Vicenza, Italy's Basilica Palladiana.

PHOTOS BY NANCY MONTGOMERY/Stars and Stripes

## On the QT

**Address:** Palladian Basilica, Piazza dei Signori in Vicenza, Italy  
**Hours:** 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Tuesday to Sunday  
**Admission:** 13 euros  
**Information:** Phone, +39 0444326418; internet, [www.mostreinbasilica.it](http://www.mostreinbasilica.it)

Nancy Montgomery



This bust of a judge by Alessandro Vittoria helped cement his status as a preferred portraitist of the 16th-century elites in Italy's Veneto region.

# Vicenza's Renaissance rise from obscurity

## Masterworks shine in exhibit running through April at the Basilica Palladiana

BY NANCY MONTGOMERY  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Porto family has been separated for centuries. Livia Thiene da Porto and her daughter Deidamia have lived, if not breathed, at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. Livia's husband, Iseppo, and her son Leonidas stayed at the Uffizi Galleries in Florence, Italy.

Organizers of an art exhibit at Vicenza's Basilica Palladiana titled "The Renaissance Factory" had intended to reunite the foursome depicted in a pair of majestic, full-length portraits painted by Verona-born Paolo Veronese in 1552.

But it was not to be. Complications stemming from the pandemic prevented shipment of the Baltimore painting, museum officials said, so a digitized version was hung in Vicenza instead.

Despite COVID-19's hindrance of the Porto family reunion, however, the exhibit nevertheless was unveiled, and it gathers exquisite masterpieces of painting, sculpture and architecture.

Covering a 35-year period, it explores how what had been a sleepy little province in the 1400s became a center of Renaissance art a century later. The title of the exhibit is an allusion to this phenomenon.

All it took was a thriving trade in high-quality silk, along with some grandees who revered the glories of the ancient world and were willing to patronize a group of local artistic geniuses.

Veronese and his friends architect Andrea Palladio, painter Jacopo Bassano and sculptor Alessandro Vittoria would become famous all over the world.

Several of the foursome's masterpieces

are included in the exhibit, which also weaves books, fabrics, precious objects and tapestries from the era — as well as the price tags of some of them — to tell the tale of the exceptional artistic life of Vicenza from 1550 to 1585.

"The Renaissance Factory" is all about Vicenza, in fact, and it gathers artworks from some of the world's most important museums.

The richly colored Porto portraits were probably painted for the family's palace in Vicenza, which, like the basilica housing the exhibit, was designed by Palladio.

It's easy to see how the portraits were deemed revolutionary. The parents and children are posed casually, with the affection between them apparent.

Leonidas holds one hand onto Iseppo's arm, while the boy's other hand is entwined with his father's. Deidamia peeks out from Livia's fur-lined cloak, her mother's hand on her shoulder.

The very setting of the exhibit attests to Vicenza's prominence as a cradle of Renaissance culture, with Palladio as its poster boy. His renown spans both time and place.

He is, of course, a revered figure for Italians. Vicenza has a museum dedicated to him, statues of him are plentiful, and many of the wondrous works he designed are today visitor destinations, which can be toured on curated walks.

Thomas Jefferson modeled Monticello and the University of Virginia on Palladian concepts, as did modern-day architect I.M. Pei in his design for the main entrance of the Bank of China building in Hong Kong.

Palladio even became tangentially asso-



Veronese's painting of the Madonna and child is considered among his masterpieces. It is currently on display in an exhibit titled "The Renaissance Factory" in Vicenza.

ciated with a 1990s De Beers advertising phenomenon credited with selling millions of diamond rings.

The commercials used the line "diamonds are forever," coined decades before by Philadelphia copywriter Frances Gerety, who never married, and were set to Welsh composer Karl Jenkins' orchestral work named after the Italian architect.

Vicenza's Renaissance treasures have proved to be equally enduring and glamorous. Many of them can now be viewed in all their dazzling brilliance in one location — and for much less than the cost of a precious stone.

"The Renaissance Factory" runs through April 28. Vicenza is about an hour's drive west of Venice.



Ever wonder if the Roman Emperor Hadrian's lover, Antinous, who was renowned for his beauty before he drowned in the Nile at age 19, was really all that? This bust can confirm.

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# WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING



PHOTOS BY J.P. LAWRENCE/Stars and Stripes

Fried chicken wings and battered fries from Ishan's Gourmet Hot Wings. At least 45 sauces are available, but the menu lists only about 30 or so at any given time.

## Pick your poison

With dozens of choices, Ishan's Gourmet Hot Wings in Kaiserslautern serves chicken with saucy intrigue

BY J.P. LAWRENCE  
*Stars and Stripes*  
**W**hen I visited Ishan's Gourmet Hot Wings in Kaiserslautern, Germany, I came for the chicken. But I stayed for the sauces.

The restaurant offers dozens of sauces to accompany its "American-style" wings, and the roster provides a bit of novelty to ordering food online.

Some sauces are named after action stars. The Jackie Chan sauce is tangy and vinegary, with black pepper to give it a bit of a punch. The one named after Steven Seagal has a honey mustard base. The Bruce Lee sauce has an appropriately spicy kick.

Others are more mysterious. For example, the chili flavor with a bit of pineapple juice is called Spunch-Bobsauce.

The name is a reference to the famous show about a yellow sponge who lives in a pineapple under the sea, but it also incorporates an intentional misspelling of Spongebob Squarepants from an online meme.

What I'm saying is there are layers to the sauce references here.



**Ishan's Gourmet Hot Wings**  
**Location:** Gruener Graben 21, Kaiserslautern, next to the K in Lautern mall.  
**Hours:** Delivery available Monday-Thursday 4-11 p.m. and Sunday 11:30 a.m.-10:30 p.m. Closed Friday and Saturday.  
**Prices:** From 8 euros for six wings to 80 euros for 100 wings.  
**Contact:** Phone, 0631 98410127; for online orders, [www.lieferando.de](http://www.lieferando.de)

J.P. Lawrence

Luckily, the chicken is good enough to warrant repeat visits for a chance to sample different sauces. When fresh, the wings have crisp and crackling skin, with steam escaping when you tear the still-moist meat off the bone.

The boneless wings are juicy, tasting nothing like the dry chicken nuggets served in school cafeterias.

Likewise, the fries that come

standard with the wings are crunchy on the outside but soft and fluffy on the inside.

But the wings and fries must be eaten fresh. The period when they taste their best passes quickly, like a beautiful sunset.

On multiple nights, I waited a bit before digging in, only to find that the chicken wings had dried out as they cooled.

I asked owner Luqman Akbar how many sauces his restaurant has. At least 45, he replied with a laugh, but only 30 or so are on the menu at any given time.

He founded the restaurant in 2019. Years working on U.S. bases around the area inspired him to start selling American-style chicken wings, Akbar said.

He moved Ishan's Gourmet Hot Wings to its present location near the K in Lautern Mall in August.

It has a few tables for dining in, and wings are also available for pickup, but most orders seem to be for delivery.

Many of the customers are Americans, Akbar said. The restaurant delivers to Kaiserslautern, Landstuhl and Sembach, and orders typically take 40 minutes to an hour to arrive at my



Chicken and waffles are among the upcoming menu additions.



A child munches on a basket of crispy but fluffy battered fries.

apartment in Kaiserslautern.

Akbar wants to expand the menu to include burgers, wraps and chicken and waffles. He said he's also always cooking up new recipes, with the most recent being a coconut curry sauce.

The many fried chicken wings I ate in preparation for this re-

view may not have been the best for my cholesterol levels, but the sauce selection at Ishan's Gourmet Hot Wings stoked my curiosity.

Which, like my appetite, was repeatedly satisfied.

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## WEEKEND: TRAVEL



DREAMSTIME/TNS

Toyooka City, on the northern coast of southwestern Japan, is a beautiful town that showcases Japanese culture at its most elemental.

# Land of new adventures and discoveries

## Japan's smaller cities offer an abundance of history and culture without crowds

BY LACEY PFALZ  
*TravelPulse*

**T**okyo and Kyoto aren't the only worthwhile destinations to visit in storied Japan, but they're often the only ones Americans know about. The nation's smaller towns offer plenty of attractions, from a land where oriental white storks fly overhead to a historic town memorable for its hot springs to another notable for its close proximity to the stately and picturesque Mount Fuji.

They're also perfect complements to a longer tour throughout Japan, offering less-crowded destinations with just as much culture, history and gastronomic adventure as the larger cities.

### Land of the white stork

Toyooka City, located on the northern coast of southwestern Japan, can be accessed from Kyoto or one of the other cities in the region. It's a beautiful town offering opportunities to enjoy Japanese culture at its most elemental, complete with izakayas, or pub-style restaurants offering delicious regional dishes.

The town is home to the country's oldest wooden market, Kousetsu Ichiba, which offers freshly grown produce and flowers. Toyooka, known for its history of producing high-quality bags, offers its own Caban Street, or bag street, where travelers can pick up a bag or wicker trunk whose legacy reflects the town's 1,200-year-old bag-making history.

The town is located near two very special natural landmarks. The first is the Genbudo Caves, where columns of basalt rise to the sky in a staggering, seemingly organized manner. The second is the oriental white stork, or kounotori. This gor-

geous bird was once found all across Japan, but was threatened nearly to extinction in the mid-1900s.

It was in Toyooka City that residents captured some of the last wild oriental white storks and began breeding them in an effort to continue their species. Today, Hyogo Park of the Oriental White Stork in Toyooka is a free, family-friendly attraction that includes educational activities along with wildlife viewings.

### Land of snow and steam

Kinosaki is a historic town along the Maruyama River in Hyogo prefecture, just north of Toyooka City. Known for its onsens, or hot springs, residents and travelers to the town have been soaking in the springs since the year 720 A.D.

Kinosaki's seven public onsens, unlike many others throughout Japan, are tattoo-friendly, which means that travelers with tattoos that cannot be hidden won't be denied entry to the springs.

This picturesque town is perfect for visits throughout the year, but is especially beautiful in the winter, when a layer of soft snow covers the tiled roofs and cobblestone streets. Visitors can enjoy skiing and snowshoeing, or hiking along the Ropeway Hiking Course, which includes a stop where hikers can view the valley below.

As a town with a historic past, there's no limit to cultural and historical experiences in Kinosaki, too. Tea ceremonies, meditation, calligraphy workshops and a stop to Osenji Temple are a must for travelers who'd like to immerse themselves in Japanese culture.

The immersion goes even further at the Nishimuraya Honkan, where guests can stay in a traditional ryokan-style property,

with an indoor and outdoor onsen for guests to enjoy, as well as a peaceful Japanese garden.

### Land of towering peaks

The closest city to the esteemed and picturesque Mount Fuji is Fujinomiya, in the Shizuoka prefecture. The city is the starting point for two routes leading to the top of Mount Fuji and is an ideal destination for active adventurers.

Travelers can learn about the region's historic significance at the Mt. Fuji World Heritage Center, then prepared adventurers can start their trek upwards into the clouds with the Fujinomiya Trail or Prince Route. Families or travelers who'd rather not trek the mountain can also enjoy tours around the mountain, from just hiking to whitewater rafting and more.

Other travelers can enjoy visiting Mount Fuji Sengen Taisha Shrine, which has a 2,000-year history as one of the most important shrines of the region. Travelers can also purchase and learn how to wear a traditional Japanese kimono and try locally crafted sake, made from Mount Fuji's snowmelt from the Shiraito Falls.

Fujinomiya is easy to visit from Tokyo. Travelers can take the Yakisoba Express Bus, which goes directly to the town from Tokyo, making this a great addition to any Tokyo visit.

### Land of adventure

Located near Mount Fuji is another town notable for many of its adrenaline-inducing attractions. Gotemba, home to the Fuji Speedway, many golf courses and the start of the longest trail up Mount Fuji offers plenty to enjoy.

For travelers wanting a longer, less crowded trek up Mount Fuji, the Gotemba

Trail is perfect for them, as it is less popular and less developed. Gotemba is also known for its many hot springs, which makes for a perfect end to a cold hike or outdoor activity, like cycling or horseback riding.

Gotemba is also where outdoor lovers can enjoy a luxury glamping experience with Fujino Kirameki. Featuring gourmet food, luxurious accommodations and excursions like forest walks, hiking, cave exploring and more, travelers can enjoy the best of adventure travel without skimping on the luxury.

### Land of luxury

Speaking of luxury, travelers to the tea-rich Shizuoka prefecture should consider Atami City as a great base for their explorations of Japanese culture and food, only 40 minutes away from Tokyo by train.

This coastal city boasts wonderful onsens, views of Mount Fuji and plenty of delicious seafood dishes for the adventurous eater.

This city is also known for three of its luxury accommodations.

The Momoyama Gaen by The Curation Hotel offers Japanese design in locally sourced materials and craftsmen, complete with an onsen and art from the Japanese Edo period. Tounoya-an by The Curation Hotel is a historic Japanese kominka, a stunning villa complete with an on-site onsen and modern accommodations.

Suto-suien by The Curation Hotel is another kominka property, which fuses two Japanese styles together to create a truly unique blend of wabi-sabi, the acceptance of imperfection, and Rinpa, an Edo period artistic style.



# WEEKEND: TRAVEL

By JESSICA MARTINEZ  
*Los Angeles Times*

**I**s a vacation with your dog truly a vacation?

I didn't know until a fall getaway. I had never gone on a trip with a pet. When it came time for my boyfriend and me to plan our annual road trip — two years ago we went to Yosemite and last year we did Arizona, New Mexico and Utah — with a pandemic puppy now living with us, we quickly realized we wanted Millie, our 11-month-old golden-doodle, to come along.

In the weeks leading up to our trip that took us to five national parks — Capitol Reef, Arches, Rocky Mountain, Black Canyon of the Gunnison and Grand Canyon — in a rented camper van, I did tons of research about where to stay, what to do and what to see, including finding dog parks and other dog-friendly spaces.

Two days before we set out on our six-day, five-night trek, I voiced concerns to John. Were we doing the right thing by taking Millie with us? Would she like being in the van for the majority of most days? Would she behave? Would there be enough for her to see and do?

Ultimately, we decided it was too late to change our plans. We just had to go with it. We ended up having a great time and making sweet memories. If you're planning to hit the road in 2022, especially for the first time with a pet, these are some things we learned along the way about traveling with a dog.



JESSICA MARTINEZ/TNS

Millie looks out of the back of the Cabana van on a snowy morning in Arizona's Grand Canyon National Park. With a little planning, traveling can be a fun adventure for you and your pet.

## Roving with Rover

### 10 ways to make traveling with your dog stress-free

#### Find the camper van that works for you

We used Cabana, which I had first heard about in a Los Angeles Times article last year. It allows pets (for a fee). And the big sell? It had unlimited mileage. That was important to us because we knew we'd drive far (we clocked close to 2,500 miles), and we found that most other companies only allow for a set number of miles per day and then charge per mile after that.

#### Find places so your dog can stretch their legs

Depending on your dog's energy level and needs, you'll want to stop the car every two hours or so. I made note of a dog park or two every day of the trip so we never had to worry. Still, despite my extensive research, we were pleasantly surprised by a small fenced-in area at a rest stop in southwest Utah where we let Millie run. We stopped at several rest stops along the way when we were ready for a break, but we really loved a Moab dog park where Millie got her legs covered in red dirt and a large park in

Montrose, Colo., with lots of trees and small trails where Millie could explore.

#### Find dog-friendly spots near your destination

Our plan was to make this a national park tour, but national parks aren't overly dog friendly. (They're allowed, but access varies. We found that Black Canyon National Park was very welcoming.) This meant tracking down dog parks or state parks, which typically allow dogs, nearby. (I found that Rocky Mountain does a great job of advertising close dog-friendly places on its website, nps.gov.)

#### Before you go, practice driving your dog around

Millie is in a car most days, although I was still worried she'd get carsick on the trip. Thankfully she never did despite winding, mountainous roads. We think being used to being in a car helped her a lot.

#### Buy a few things to make life on the road easier

One of the first things we

bought as we neared the start of the trip was a cheap dog bed. We knew it'd likely get dirty (it did), and we were fine with throwing it out when we got home. We also bought a pad for her to lie on outside of the van once we were at a campground, a 20-foot leash so she could have some freedom to explore and a thick bone marrow chew for long stretches in the van.

#### Bring the comforts of home with you, too

I packed up so much of Millie's stuff, it may have looked like we were moving. We brought the dog bed, blankets, a stuffed animal and a few chew sticks and balls. Because I was so worried how she'd do, I may have overdone it, but she seemed to enjoy having options. Millie especially loved a rope toy, which kept her busy in the van, and we'd play together at campgrounds before settling in.

#### Overpack if you're able

If you have some extra room in your vehicle, overpacking can make all the difference. We knew we would camp in semi-remote

areas and we had days with long drives, so we made sure to bring a few extra things. This is what helped us: towels for when we were covered in dirt, more than enough allergy pills, an extra blanket for the bed and tons of snacks. We also packed more jugs of water than we needed. For Millie, we also had towels, lots of treats and an abundance of food. We always had a small amount of water and food available to her in the van as we drove, and whenever we stopped somewhere, we took a collapsible water bowl for her.

#### Look into apps to download ahead of time

In Moab, Utah, John and I ran into Morgan Phillips and Amber Calvo, who do photography work for Cabana, and they told us about iOverlander, an app they use to find places to park their van away from people so their two dogs can run (we do not trust Millie enough yet for that). We downloaded the app and toward the end of our trip, when we were in a crunch, we used it for the first time. iOverlander had plenty of recommendations — submitted by the app's users — of remote places to park and overnight street parking in cities.

#### Make a backup plan for everything

I had lengthy notes ahead of the trip, but there were a few instances for which I didn't have a backup plan. We found ourselves having a small setback our first night in Colorado when snow caused a highway to shut down, preventing us from getting to our campsite. We ended up scrambling to find a spot to spend the night. After initially failing to find a place to park the van overnight, we tried a nearby campground, a hotel and street parking. We ended up settling for the night in a large parking lot in Golden, Colo., that served a strip mall, a Holiday Inn Express and a Home Depot.

#### Have realistic expectations

This could be in terms of your vehicle, your plans, your traveling partner or your pet. Millie has never walked more than two miles at a time, so we knew tough hikes wouldn't be an option. Because we had an ambitious itinerary, we also knew we never had too long in any one place. Still, we carved out time for local coffee in Torrey, dinner from a food truck under string lights in Moab, stopping to marvel at yellow trees in Telluride and playing in the snow at the Grand Canyon.

So, will we travel with Millie again? Two days into this trip, we already started planning the next one.



# WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

BY VALERIE SCHREMP HAHN  
*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

If you're 5 years old and have been growing out your mullet since age 3, does the mullet become you, or do you become the mullet?

"I don't want to cut it," says kindergartner Xane Coultrip, who sports a lusciously wavy mullet that flows halfway down his back, "because my friends won't know who I am."

The mullet (also as the Kentucky Waterfall, the Missouri Compromise, the Camaro Crash Helmet, the Ape Drape, the Canadian Passport — we can go on, and we will) is back.

It's not sweeping heads nationwide, so to speak. But people are asking for the cuts, which are short in the front, long in the back, and hairstylists are just short of consulting circa-1986 Tiger Beat magazines and giving them, or at least more modern, shaggier versions of the cut.

Um. Why?

For sure, people shied away from hair salons during the pandemic, leading to some inadvertent mullets. And maybe people were influenced by the truly exotic mullet topping the head of Joe Exotic, aka the Tiger King, during early pandemic Netflix bingeing.

Mullets flowed back along with the resurgence of '80s and '90s trends such as high-rise mom jeans and half mesh shirts. They're styles that younger generations — some not born until this century — didn't experience themselves the first time around, therefore ripe for rediscovery.

"I've always wanted one," says Sarah Hall, 30, who is growing out a bleached pixie cut into a mullet. She's an instructor at the Paul Mitchell cosmetology school in the Central West End of St. Louis, and she said their students "beg" to learn the cut. "But I'm also the person who when I walk into a room, I want someone to turn around and say, 'What's up with that chick's head?' or 'That's really cool.' I want my hair to be as alternative as my personality."

Xane's mom, April Nickles, 45, says she wasn't sure what to do with her son's hair as it grew long, but when they decided to get the mullet, it turned plainer heads. "Everyone was like, dude, Xane's hair is amazing. And I started seeing mullets popping up everywhere. It was like, everybody wants to look like him."

"Remember that guy at the carnival?" Xane piped in.

"Oh yeah, we went to the Jefferson County Fair, and we saw a few there," said Nickles, who wore a mullet herself as a kid in the '80s.

According to the experts at the USA Mullet Championships, the name mullet didn't gain traction until 1994, when the Beastie Boys came out with the song "Mullet Head."



Lucas DesRoche, 11, does the “mullet shake” he saw on TikTok after styling his hair before a family Christmas party in Oakville, Mo., on Dec. 18. He recently got a perm for his already-wavy mullet.

# Modern mullets

The high-low hairstyle popular decades ago is once again having a moment as more people, both young and old, request the cut

People have worn their hair in the “business in the front, party in the back” style for millennia. Ancient Greeks wore it that way because the hair protected the neck while allowing visibility in the front. In “The Iliad,” Homer describes a group of spearmen who wore “their forelocks cropped, hair grown long at the backs.”

Some argue that mullets have never truly gone out of style.

Kevin Begola is the founder-president of the USA Mullet Championships, a contest he started in 2020. That year he had 130 male competitors come to his Fenton, Mich., men's store, Bridge Street Exchange, flaunting their mudflaps. Then, the pandemic shut the world down, and he had more than 100 men enter a virtual contest. They had to cap the children's entries at 500. He hopes to run regional contests in 2022. They sell a “Mullet Life” calendar of winners, and proceeds go to Stop Soldier Suicide.

“A lot of these guys, they're really great people,” said Begola, who is 41 and bald but wore a rat tail in his younger days. “Some of them have been rocking it for a long time. It's their identity. I think there was a lot of stigma back in the '80s with it, like after the fact. At the time it wasn't a big deal. Just look at other cultures: They wear their hair all kinds of different ways. It's a lifestyle.”

Dale Rouggy, 62, the co-owner of Bouffant Daddy salon in the St. Louis suburb of Maplewood, wore his hair in a permed mullet for years in the '80s and '90s. In fact, in his earlier life as a dancer, he appeared on the television show “Dance Fever” in 1985, his curly mullet bouncing along to his imperial swing dance to “Lo-

vin' Is Really My Game” by the funk band Brainstorm.

He keeps a picture from his “Dance Fever” appearance by his stylist's chair: “They say, ‘Oh, God, that's you?’ and I say, ‘Don't make fun of me.’ Everybody had leg warmers, or guys had big hair.”

He gives a mullet cut about once a month, and while he has an older gentleman client who has kept his for years, the younger clients who seek them like to play around with colors and styles: “I would never talk them out of it. I'm all for it, if that's what makes you happy, and that's what you want. I'm not afraid to do a mullet.”

Helen Petty, 40, who owns Chop Shop in the Grove neighborhood of St. Louis, said she's seen a mullet-like style emerge more recently on TikTok as a “wolf cut.” It's more of an ex-

“I would never talk them out of it. I'm all for it, if that's what makes you happy, and that's what you want. I'm not afraid to do a mullet.”

Dale Rouggy, 62, co-owner, Bouffant Daddy salon

treme shag, with hair shorter on the face and sides and longer in the back.

As for her own thoughts on the mullet, she's diplomatic: “My personal opinion is, if something makes you feel good, I like it. That's my viewpoint on all my haircuts. If you want my advice I'll give you some, like what will go with your face shape or something. But if something makes you feel good and edgy, then go for it.”

With that said, she recently gave a mullet/wolf cut to one of her teenage daughter's classmates, “and she looked rad.”

Sports have undoubtedly influenced the craze, with some teams growing mullets in solidarity. The “hockey flow” of hair from under helmets has never truly gone out of style on the ice.

Xane Coultrip's neighbor, Alex Rugg, 11, has grown his mullet out since the summer, after seeing his friend and teammate Lucas DesRoche show up to baseball with one.

“I think it's hysterical that all of these things are coming back,” said Alex's mom, Beth Rugg, who just had an '80s-themed party for her 40th birthday. “I think it's fun that these kids, especially at their age and so young, are starting a trend.”

“I can rock it,” Alex Rugg says. “It makes me feel pretty good. Kids tell me to shake it.”

As for his friend Lucas, he recently got a perm for his already-wavy mullet, a cut that's now the rage on his Meramec Sharks youth hockey team. During one recent tournament in Nashville, a mom set up shop in a hotel room and cut mullets on the heads of several teammates.

“Honestly, I think it's just perfect,” Lucas said. “I am normally like a big historian. I like anything vintage.”

Lucas' mom, Lesley DesRoche, is happy he's happy. Her younger son, Liam, once sported a mullet that is now cut into more of a mohawk. “I told Lucas, you know what, it's your hair, and if you want to look silly, you'll look silly. But every time, he legit pulls it off.

“Never in my life,” she said, laughing, “did I think mullets would be in my household.”



## WEEKEND: BOOKS

## On the road with Washington

‘Travels with George’ traces first president’s early carriage tours of young nation

BY KEVIN DUCHSCHERE  
Star Tribune

There’s been an impressive flurry of recent books on George Washington: volumes about him as spymaster during the Revolution, his relations with Native Americans, even a breezy biography titled “You Never Forget Your First.” This book, Philbrick’s third on George, is an insightful account of road trips the author took (with his wife, Melissa, and their retriever Dora) tracing Washington’s carriage tours of the young nation after he became president.

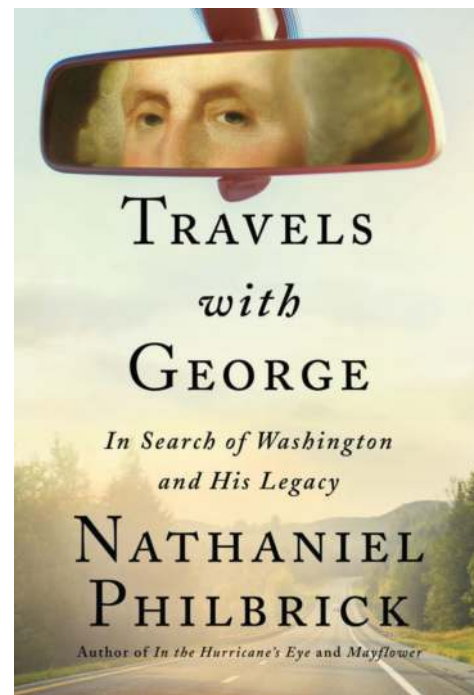
Washington hoped personal contact with his fellow citizens would win their

allegiance to the new government and underscore the importance of his office (while reminding them countless times, if legend can be believed, that he was “only a man”). He made a point of staying in taverns and inns, which often came with lumpy beds and indifferent meals, and he didn’t have AAA to help guide him; the roads, he wrote, “are amazingly crooked ... and the directions you receive from the people equally blind and ignorant.”

It’s fun to read how he would leave his carriage and stage a grand entrance on his white charger when he entered a new town, and how he hated being accompanied from place to place by cavalry (all

that dust). Philbrick notes Washington’s warnings about a divisive presidency, one that “agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms,” and he doesn’t skirt “the cold pocket of horror” that Washington owned hundreds of enslaved people though he knew it was wrong.

The United States will continue to be defined by revolution, Philbrick writes, “as each generation renews the struggle to measure up to the ideals with which this country began — that all of us are created equal.” His book is a cogent reminder that while much has changed since Washington’s time, much remains the same.



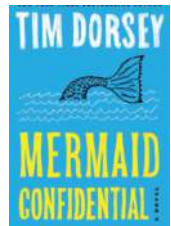
## New releases worth looking forward to in 2022

BY COLETTE BANCROFT  
Tampa Bay Times

I hope you’re caught up on your 2021 books, because the 2022 list is rolling right in. Here are just a few notable books being published in the coming months.

## January

What can we get for Serge Storms to celebrate Tim Dorsey’s 25th novel about Florida’s most lovable serial killer? A silver shiv? “**Mermaid Confidential**” finds Serge and Coleman taking a break from road trips to move into a condo complex in the Keys, where rowdy tourists are ruining the neighborhood and smugglers are in the middle of a gang war.



Crime fiction writer extraordinaire Laura Lippman’s latest is “**Seasonal Work: Stories**,” a collection of short stories and one novella about fierce women (including an appearance by Tess Monaghan) dealing with betrayal,

secrets, heartbreak, murder and more.

Alafair Burke’s new thriller, “**Find Me**,” revolves around a young woman found after a car wreck, her memory gone, 15 years ago. She recovers but never regains any knowledge of her past. Then she disappears, and NYPD homicide detective Ellie Hatcher fears that could be tied to a serial killer.

After the death of Robert B. Parker in 2010, former Tampa journalist Ace Atkins was chosen to continue Parker’s beloved Spenser series. “**Bye Bye Baby**” is the 50th Spenser book, and Atkins’ 10th and last. Spenser is hired to protect rising young political star Carolina Garcia-Ramirez, who’s getting death threats from white supremacists that are more frightening than the usual troll driveline.



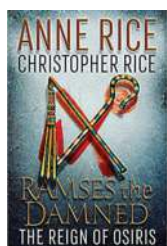
Gish Jen is known for her novels, such as The Resisters, but her new short story collection, “**Thank You, Mr. Nixon**,” is a delight. Focused on the experiences of Chinese immigrants who find themselves caught between two cultures, the stories are witty, insightful and beautifully crafted.

If you were a fan of Hanya Yanagihara’s bestselling 2015 novel “A Little Life,” you’ll welcome “**To Paradise**,” an epic triptych of stories set in 1893, 1993 and 2093. All are connected to Manhattan; the first two are set in alternative histories of America, the last in a post-apocalyptic future.

The latest posthumous publication by Zora Neale Hurston is “**You Don’t Know Us Negroes and Other Essays**.” It collects Hurston’s essays, criticism and journalism over more than 30 years, showcasing her penetrating insights about race, gender and American culture.

## February

Before Anne Rice died last month, she and her son, author Christopher Rice, completed a trilogy with “**Ramses the Damned: The Reign of Osiris**,” in which the pharaoh, made immortal by a magical elixir, awakes in Edwardian England after centuries of sleep. No word on whether there are any more vampire novels in the vault.



The second book in Jamaican author Marlon James’ Dark Star trilogy is “**Moon Witch, Spider King**.” It takes a different perspective on the tale told in the first book, “Black Leopard, Red Wolf,” continuing an exuberant fantasy epic full of monsters and heroes, woven from African myth and evoking everything from J.R.R. Tolkien and Neil Gaiman to Marvel Comics.

British author Lucy Foley made bestseller lists with “The Guest List,” and she’s poised to do it again with “**The Paris Apartment**.” Jess, a young woman whose life has gone sideways, goes to stay with her half brother. His apartment in Paris is just as charming as she’d hoped — but Ben’s not there, and his neighbors aren’t talking.

## March and beyond

Those who bow down to all things Dolly Parton, as we should, will want to pre-order her collaboration with James Patterson. “**Run, Rose, Run**” is set in the Nashville music business and combines mystery and romance. (March)

One of the books I’m most excited about is Jennifer Egan’s “**The Candy House**,” a “sibling novel” to her brilliant, mind-blowing 2011 novel, “A Visit From the Goon Squad.” This one revisits some of “Goon Squad’s” characters and its experimental structure. (April)

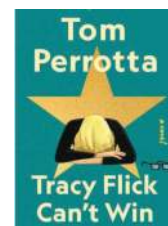
Douglas Stuart made a splash in 2020 with his heartbreaking debut novel, “Shuggie Bain.” He’s back with “**Young Mungo**,” about two young working-class men in Glasgow falling in love in a homophobic culture. (April)

“**Every Cloak Rolled in Blood**” is billed as James Lee Burke’s most autobiographical book yet. Novelist Aaron Broussard, who appeared as a young man in 2020’s “Another Kind of Eden,” is mourning the sudden death of his daughter when he is drawn into a confrontation with a violent criminal network. (May)

**Dolly Parton is releasing a collaboration with author James Patterson in March called “Run, Rose, Run.”**

TNS

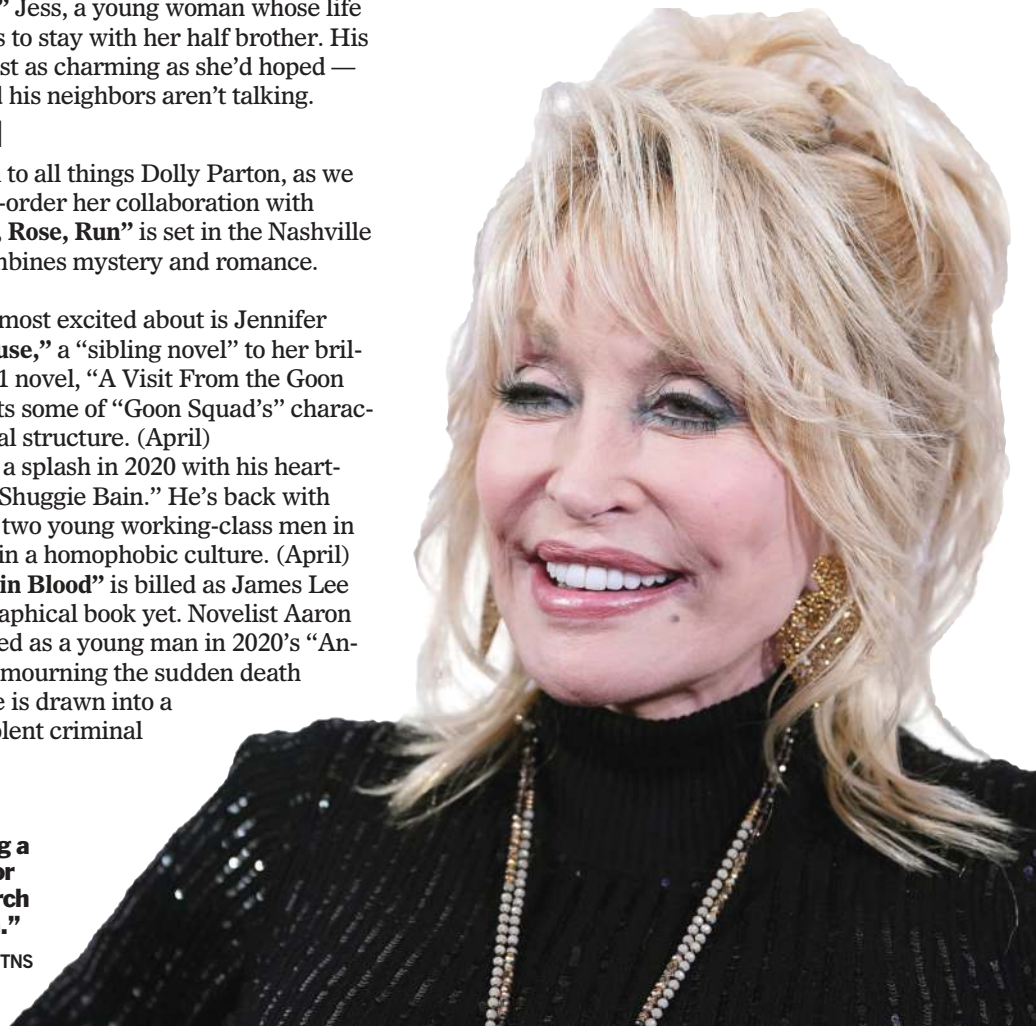
Tom Perrotta’s darkly satirical 1998 novel “Election” was made into a memorable movie starring Reese Witherspoon as Tracy Flick, a madly competitive high school girl. His new book, “**Tracy Flick Can’t Win**,” brings her



back in midlife, an assistant principal competing for the principal’s job. What could go wrong? (June)

At this point, many fall books don’t yet have titles or publication dates. But we can expect new books from Michael Connelly — he says this one puts Harry Bosch in the lead — and Lisa Unger. There’s also a new novel coming from Barbara Kingsolver.

I’m usually not excited about movie star memoirs, but this one cuts through the gloss: Back in the 1980s, megastar Paul Newman started taping his memoir, wanting to get it down in his own words. His family has decided to publish it. No title or date yet, but this one’s on my list.





## WEEKEND: MUSIC

# Maneskin mania

How four '70s-obsessed Italians became America's favorite new rock band

BY AUGUST BROWN  
*Los Angeles Times*

**T**he four members of the Italian rock band Maneskin grew up gigging around the Eternal City of Rome. But when they flew into L.A. for their first sold-out gig at the Roxy in early November, there was one local site of Saturnalian bad behavior they just had to visit.

"The Rainbow Bar!" bassist Victoria De Angelis shouted when asked about which local rock 'n' roll haunts the band had to see on its first trip to the West Coast. "I grew up on metal and glam rock, so we were all sitting on the couch in there, like, 'This is where Lemmy and Mötley Crüe used to hang out.'"

Maneskin is an almost unnervingly lithe band of 20-somethings who can squeeze into '70s David Bowie bodysuits (or, as is often the case at photo shoots, squeeze out of them). It emerged victorious at 2021's Eurovision Song Contest that, decades earlier, gave the world ABBA and Celine Dion; last week, it helped ring in 2022 on "Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve With Ryan Seacrest."

But Maneskin is an anomaly in a rap- and pop-driven era: a guitar/bass/drums combo indebted to Queen and T. Rex that performs largely in Italian and whose breakout U.S. single was a cover of the Four Seasons' oldies staple "Beggin'."

Even its first scandal — a stray Eurovision camera angle capturing what looked like cocaine at its table, which the band denied having and the European Broadcasting Union cleared it of — seemed charmingly retro.

After a year when it made genuine inroads into the Hot 100, where "Beggin'" cracked the top 15, Maneskin — Danish for "Moonlight" — could reasonably claim to be the biggest new rock band of 2021. It topped U.S. rock and alternative radio charts; "Beggin'" has more than 800 million plays on Spotify, and "I Wanna Be Your Slave" tops half a billion too.

"They're one of our three biggest hits of the year, if not the biggest," said Lisa Worden, program director of Alt 98.7 in L.A. and vice president of rock and alternative music at iHeartMedia. "It's so unusual to have a rock band with streams of that magnitude. To have a song like 'Beggin' that gets launched on pop and rises in alt and rock, it's been a while since we've had that across formats."

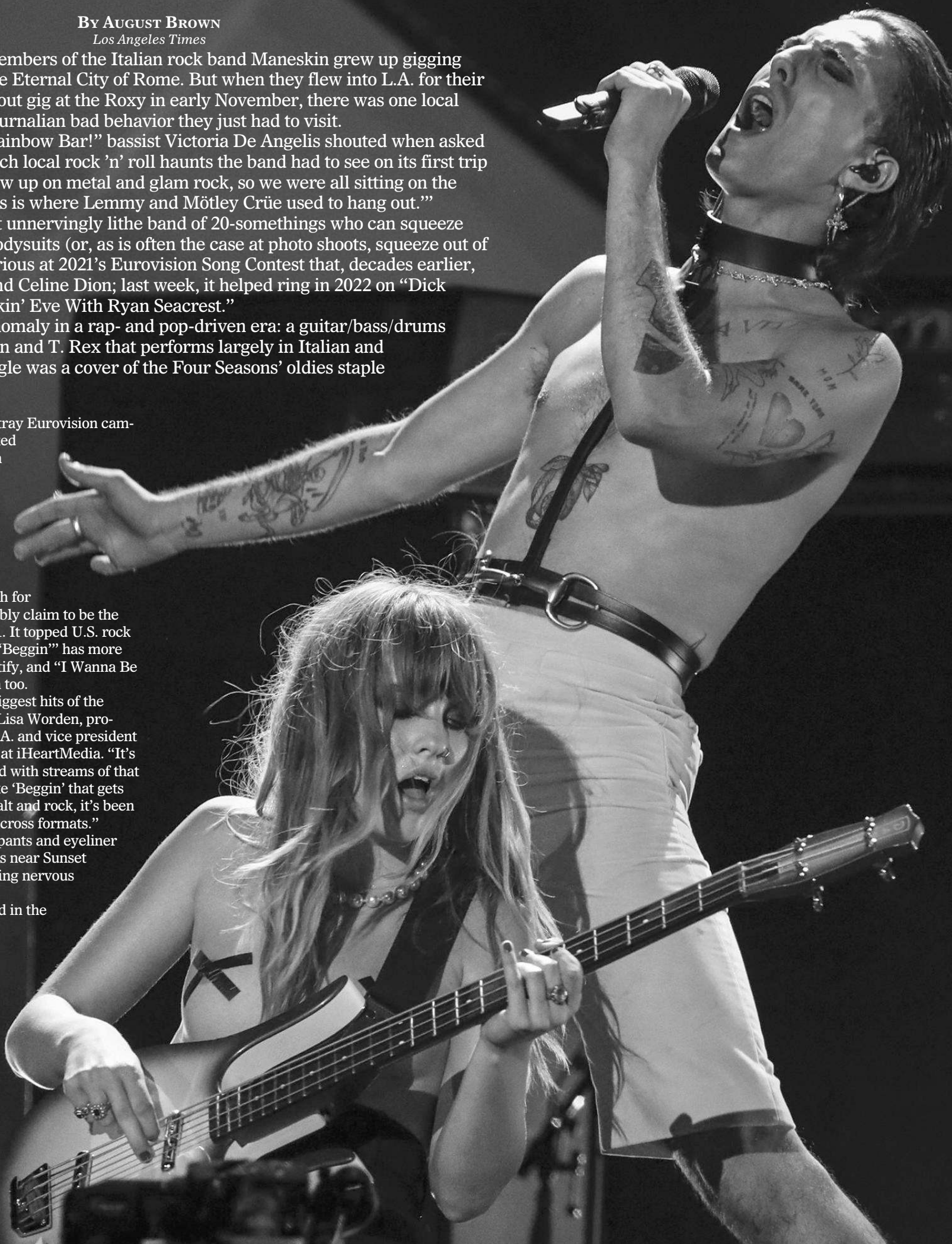
Mesh tops, low-cut leather pants and eyeliner for everyone — should TV sets near Sunset Strip hotel windows start getting nervous again?

"The fact that there's a band in the

SEE MANIA ON PAGE 29

**Victoria De Angelis, bottom, and Damiano David from the band Maneskin perform at the Global Citizen Live concert in Paris on Sept. 25.**

VIANNEY LE CAER, INVISION/AP





## WEEKEND: MUSIC



KENZO TRIBOUILLARD, AFP, GETTY IMAGES/TNS

The members of Maneskin pose for pictures after winning the Eurovision Song Contest at the Ahoy convention center in Rotterdam, Netherlands, on May 22, 2021.

## Mania: Maneskin has been honing rock chops since 2016

### FROM PAGE 28

top of the charts playing just three instruments, it's something that hasn't happened for so long," De Angelis said. "But we didn't expect it to happen in such a short amount of time."

A couple days after their Roxy show, the foursome — bassist De Angelis, singer Damiano David, guitarist Thomas Raggi and drummer Ethan Torchio, all between 20 and 22 — were smoking cigarettes for breakfast on the roof of the Mondrian in West Hollywood. De Angelis is the chattiest in English; Raggi and Torchio were more laid-back, while frontman David was mostly content to quietly smolder on the rooftop lounge couch.

They almost didn't make it onstage. After the band's U.S. TV debut on "The Tonight Show," Torchio came down with the flu just as they landed in L.A.

A resurgent COVID-19 (which tore through Italy in the first waves of the disease) had them fearing the worst as they prepared for a packed Roxy crowd. The band would have had to cancel if everyone hadn't tested negative, which they did. "It wasn't too bad. It's getting better," Torchio said, still a little wobbly from the show.

But they pulled it together for one of the last pre-omicron blowouts on the Sunset Strip. "We were playing songs in Italian from the record that we didn't think were very known here," De Angelis said. "But everyone knew the words, even if it was harder for them to sing."

Maneskin hit U.S. shores fully formed and tightly honed. Its members have played together since 2016 and already put out two well-received records in Italy before March's "Teatro d'ira: Vol. I," released before its May Eurovision win. "It's a completely different thing when you play on television because it's so important to be precise," De Angelis said. "You can't get anything wrong because you'll see it through the television. At a gig, it's not that important to be perfect."

From "American Idol" to Olivia Rodrigo, TV fame can be a leg up the pop

charts, but Maneskin was already wary of its biggest win defining it out of the gate.

"We were pretty far from that concept," David said of Eurovision. "The fact that we won was kind of strange because we're not very mainstream for that kind of competition, but we knew we already had a catalog."

That catalog is packed with zippy, bombastic yet endearingly analog tracks like Eurovision winner "Zitti e buoni," which has a Strokes-y cool in the verses and a Zeppelin-size wail in the chorus. "MAM-MAMIA" makes a strong case for a mid-'00s dance-punk revival, and the band turns "Beggin," a Four Seasons song twice as old as the band members, into a pop-rock single as crackling as "Good 4 U."

"We meet young people that are like, 'I'm 10 years old, I've never heard stuff like this, now I want to buy a drum kit,'" Raggi said.

Oldies resurface on TikTok all the time today, but era-hopping covers are part of the band's appeal. "When we make a cover, we don't really think about the original structure or the original instrumental. We try to rebuild it," De Angelis said.

"I bet a good portion of my audience didn't even realize it was a Four Seasons cover," Worden agreed.

Worden booked the band for iHeartRadio's ALTer Ego rock festival at the Forum in Inglewood, Calif., on Jan. 15. "It's important to give them a chance to be more than a single," she said. "They deserve to have more of their music exposed. I saw them at the Roxy and they're a force. I think people will walk away with a new respect for them."

Maneskin has an even bigger show this year in its hometown at the Circo Massimo, a huge public park that was once the site of ancient Roman blood sport and carnivals.

"It's gonna be our biggest crowd ever, so it's gonna be very emotional," David said. "It's like the biggest place where you can play in Rome." As Italy continues to endure COVID-19, he added: "I think it'll be very good for the country too."

# After 'This Is Us,' Moore music ahead

BY LYNN ELBER  
Associated Press

If Mandy Moore is bracing for emotional whiplash, it's understandable. She and her musician-husband, Taylor Goldsmith, welcomed their first child in February, an event she says that turned her world "Technicolor," and the pair collaborated on an upcoming second album.

The cloud ahead: The end of "This Is Us," the NBC drama that she says proved a "dream on every single level," from her co-stars to the consistently challenging work. The 18-episode final season, which began Wednesday on AFN-Pulse, will include an episode directed by Moore.

"It's going to be so horrific to say goodbye in a couple of months" when taping wraps, said Moore. "I haven't really wrapped my brain around it yet." She plays matriarch Rebecca Pearson in the decade-shifting family drama created and produced by Dan Fogelman — who she says has steadfastly resisted pleas to keep it going.

Moore won't have much of a lull after taping concludes. Next summer, the singer-songwriter and Goldsmith plan to tour in support of their follow-up to 2020's "Silver Landings," with son August in tow. Moore calls him "the best thing in my life" and a lookalike for his Dawes band frontman dad, including the dimple they share ("little butt chin," as Moore cheerfully labels it on the baby, nicknamed Gus).

In an interview with The Associated Press, Moore talked about motherhood and what she sees ahead for her career, which already counts teen pop stardom, movies ("A Walk to Remember," "Saved!") and a lead actress Emmy nomination for "This Is Us." Remarks have been edited for clarity and length.

**AP: As a new parent, how would you describe your life now?**

**Moore:** It's all of the clichés, life in Technicolor. It's a boundless love that you never could have imagined. It's exhausting and exhilarating and everything in between. On a professional level, I approach my job with an entirely new heart. I want to go back to the beginning of this show now, because I have some idea of what it's like to be a mother and what a mother's love is and what it makes you do, and the crazy choices that you never could have imagined yourself making before becoming a parent.

**Your comment about wanting to revisit "This Is Us" with your new perspective brings to mind how protective Rebecca was when her son Randall's birth father tried to enter his life.**

That's exactly what I was thinking about. That was a choice that I really was at odds with Rebecca about early on. It was really challenging to see how she possibly could have made that decision. And now being a mom, that was her baby.

The idea that anybody could potentially harm your child emotionally or could potentially physically remove your child, all of that is unfathomable. So I definitely have a lot more compassion and empathy for the choice that she made.

**Dan Fogelman's thrown challenges at you every season, building to Rebecca's dementia. Can you recall your reaction when you learned what she'd face?**

It was initially shocking, but also heartbreaking. This poor woman, at every juncture of her life, has had challenge after challenge. It really just says so much about who she is and what she brings to the table that with each challenge, she meets it with grace. I was also

terrified, as I was when Dan initially told me, "Hey, we have this idea where you're playing this character present day as we will be jumping around in time." I think I had that same initial, "Whoa, can I do that?" when thinking about (playing) this woman with this very real diagnosis that millions of people

across the country and the world deal with with loved ones. I wanted to make sure that I was doing my due diligence and approaching this chapter of her life thoughtfully, because I know what a platform the show has to really have an important dialogue around Alzheimer's and dementia and diagnosis.

**Early in your acting career, you played several unlikable, snooty characters, and expressed concern at one point about being typecast. Now you're playing a beloved mom, so it looks like you weren't.**

I was not typecast. In fact, I'd love to get back to playing the villain a little bit more, especially after six years of playing arguably television's best mom. I think for a while I kept coming up against being typecast in these sort of lovely romantic comedies and whatnot. And that is definitely a certain side of who I am. But it took Dan, and it takes for any of us, I guess, as actors or creatives, just one person to see something in you and to give you an opportunity that opens an entirely new world. And that is what Dan Fogelman did for me with Rebecca.

**What's ahead for you on the music front?**

This past July, we went back into the studio, the same group of musicians (on "Silver Landings"). And the plan is to pick up in June and July of 2022 and go on the road the way that we had intended a week before the world shut down because of COVID. I feel like we'll have this fully realized tour of music from "Silver Landings" and music from my next record. That'll be out probably right around the same time as we tour next year, and we'll be able to bring Gus with us. So we'll have a bus with mom and dad and Gus and play music every night. It's the dream. It's going to be a fun year in 2022.



AP



## WEEKEND: TELEVISION

# Improving his improv skills

Richie Moriarty took a spirited path to starring in CBS fall show ‘Ghosts’

BY ANYING GUO  
*The Washington Post*

**T**he scene, circa 1987: Actor Richie Moriarty is standing onstage with a stuffed dog puppet in his hand at his school talent show. The 6-year-old gives a quick introduction: “Hi, my name’s Richie, and this is my talking dog. His name is Troubles. My mom thinks he doesn’t talk, but I think he does.” Then, Moriarty stumbles over his first joke, a pun intended to sub out “roof” for “ruff.”

From there, Moriarty fires off joke after joke, both his and Trouble’s voice higher and higher pitched until he tells one of his final jokes in an almost unintelligible pipsqueak: “Yesterday, I saw a new ad for a new soap that’s called Lost. So next time your mom goes to the store, tell her to get Lost!”

Decades later, Moriarty, now 41, is co-starring on the CBS comedy “Ghosts” but still recalls his ventriloquist stand-up routine with clarity and laughter.

“The audience is laughing because they legitimately do not understand a word I’m saying,” says Moriarty over a recent Zoom call. (When he posted a video of the performance on YouTube, he added subtitles.)

This was his first foray into performance after moving to Rockville, Md., at age 5, and though he has never really done stand-up again, he remembers that flicker of joy when hearing an audience respond to his jokes in real time.

His love of performance has led to an acting career, dabbling in a little bit of everything — improv, commercials, voice-over work — before landing a role as Pete on the CBS comedy “Ghosts.”

Originally based on the BBC series of the same name, “Ghosts,” which premiered in October, is about a group of spirits who all apparently met their corporeal end at a wooded country estate, the mansion that serves as their main haunt. They include a hippie mauled by a bear, a pants-less hedge-funder, a fastidious Viking, a gay Revolutionary patriot, a vivacious ’20s jazz singer and a Victorian-era doyenne whose family originally owned the property.

And there’s Moriarty’s Pete, a scout troop leader who took an errant arrow through the neck during a troop outing decades ago, which is still stuck in his ghost form. (“It’s very comfortable, though,” says Moriarty, who just has to watch how he walks through doorways.)

When the elderly occupant of the estate dies (and quickly shoots upward to the afterlife), ownership of the mansion transfers to a distant relative, Sam (Rose McIver), a freelance journalist and her chef-husband, Jay (Utkarsh Ambudkar), who decide to leave the city and move in. To the ghosts’ profound dismay, Samantha and Jay plan to refurbish the place as a bed-and-breakfast inn, constantly filled with (ugh) people.

“I hate getting walked through,” Pete observes. “It’s probably the worst pain I can think of. No, wait — arrow through the neck. That beats it.”

On Moriarty’s first read of the “Ghosts” script, he felt an instant connection.

“[‘Ghosts’] came at a time where I had done a lot of small, but more significant, television and film roles, and it was right in my wheelhouse,” he says. “If I am what they’re looking for, I think I can deliver.”

Show creators Joseph Wiseman and Joe Port were captivated by Moriarty. He was one of the first actors they saw for Pete, and saw how Moriarty could play up Pete’s dorkiness without painting him into caricature.

“He was also incredibly good at being a dramatic actor,” Wiseman says. “There was this anger he could tap into. There’s a quick part [in the show] where he remembers an argument [he and his wife] were having, and you can see him snap at it. But it’s funny anger, not like an ugly sort of anger, but it feels very real.”

Moriarty’s journey to “Ghosts” was not a straight shot from that Rockville talent show. He lost interest in drama after a lackluster experience in a freshman-year play. At Wootton High School, he dove into leadership roles in student government and swimming and served as senior class president (coincidentally, cast member Ambudkar also went to Wootton). Those activities superseded any interest he



CBS photos

Caroline Aaron, left, as Carol, with Richie Moriarty as Pete in the “Ghosts” episode “Pete’s Wife.”

**“He has that ability to step onstage and people immediately feel at ease. They start laughing before anything even comes out.”**

**Matt Catanzano**

Longtime friend and collaborator, Improv Asylum alum



Moriarty as Pete and Utkarsh Ambudkar as Jay in “Ghosts.”

Super Bowl and a four-minute teaser before the kickoff of the 2018 AFC championship game featuring him and Malkovich.

“John Malkovich and I were just in a green room, reading this four-page script together; this is so bizarre,” Moriarty, who got the role in the teaser after a friend and casting manager passed along his reel, recalls.

Longtime friend and collaborator Matt Catanzano saw Moriarty’s work ethic firsthand — how he diligently kept record of the auditions he went on, noting when he got a callback.

“He’s such a charming, funny guy, but he’s also so smart when it comes to that aspect as well,” says Catanzano, a fellow Improv Asylum alum.

Moriarty and Catanzano became the brains behind Simply Unemployable, an improv and comedy project, touring the country while they continued auditioning and building out their TV and film résumés.

“Even a good show, a bad show, a well-attended show, no one at a show — people always walk away loving Richie,” says Catanzano. “He has that ability to step onstage and people immedi-

ately feel at ease. They start laughing before anything even comes out.”

The pandemic slowed “Ghost’s” production, but reception has been warm since its premiere.

One episode this season, called “Pete’s Wife,” centers on Moriarty’s character’s attempt to see his still-living wife, Carol, played by Caroline Aaron. Years have passed since Pete’s death, but he yearns to know what has become of the family he left behind. After much prodding, he gets Sam, the only one who can communicate with the ghosts after a near-death accident, to invite Carol to the mansion. But Pete finds out that Carol has been harboring a devastating, decades-old secret.

“It was my first time where I was getting to perform in this television show and have this storyline be about my character,” says Moriarty, who felt “energized” exploring the depth of the ever-chipper Pete. “It felt like a real career moment for me to be the center of an episode of television. ... I’m hopeful the success of ‘Ghosts’ will allow me to do more film and television. I wanna keep doing this!”



## WEEKEND: TELEVISION



Disney+ photos

Temuera Morrison plays the titular character, shown below in his Mandalorian armor, in “The Book of Boba Fett,” on Disney+.



# It's finally time for Boba Fett to shine

The bounty hunter had only four lines in ‘The Empire Strikes Back’ but now has his own TV show, ‘The Book of Boba Fett,’ on Disney+

By **TRACY BROWN**

*Los Angeles Times*

**D**uring the post-credits scene of “The Mandalorian” Season 2 finale, famed bounty hunter Boba Fett walks into the headquarters of a criminal syndicate to kill a former associate and take over.

The lingering shot as Fett takes his place on the throne — with his lieutenant at his side — makes the message abundantly clear: It's his time now.

Now streaming on Disney+, “The Book of Boba Fett” follows Fett (Temuera Morrison) as he establishes himself as the new crime lord in charge among the local scum and villainy, along with his faithful right hand, Fennec Shand (Ming-Na Wen). The “Star Wars” spinoff series will also fill in some gaps about what Fett has been up to between the events of “Star Wars: Episode VI — Return of the Jedi” (1983) and his appearance in “The Mandalorian.”

Fett's time in the spotlight has been a long time coming. Created more than 40 years ago, the fan-favorite bounty hunter is among the “Star Wars” franchise's best known and most popular characters despite his limited presence in the original trilogy.

Featured among a group of bounty hunters assembled by Darth Vader, Boba Fett makes his live-action debut in 1980's “Star Wars: Episode V — The Empire Strikes Back” played by Jeremy Bulloch. According to “Under the Helmet: The Legacy of Boba Fett,” Fett clocked in with just six minutes and 32 seconds of screen time, speaking a total of four lines.

Still, his few moments were memorable. A mysterious character clad in battle-worn armor who pilots a unique ship, Fett helps Vader track the heroes on the Millennium Falcon to the floating Cloud City, where the crew is captured. And though he's a man of few words, it's clear Fett is unafraid of Vader or the Galactic Empire and is more concerned about ensuring he can collect the bounty on Han Solo, who he later delivers to the fearsome Jabba the Hutt.

## Origins

Fett's cult status means that much of the lore around his conception and introduction is as well-known among “Star Wars” fans as the character's in-universe back story.

Conceived by “Star Wars” mastermind George Lucas as new type of super trooper to be introduced in “Empire Strikes Back,” Fett was designed by the film's art director (and future filmmaker) Joe Johnston and concept artist Ralph McQuarrie. Budgetary constraints led Lucas to reconceptualize the character as a lone bounty hunter, and the original all-white version of his iconic armor was transformed into the one we recognize today.

Fett's public debut came a couple of years before he was seen in “The Empire Strikes Back.” His first onscreen appearance was on television in an animated segment that aired as part of the notorious “Star Wars Holiday Special” on Nov. 17, 1978. The short sees a much chattier Fett befriend Luke Skywalker after saving him and his droids, only to be revealed as working for Darth Vader.

But Fett's first public appearance came shortly

before this, when the character walked in a local parade in San Anselmo, Calif., with Darth Vader, in September 1978. (“Empire Strikes Back” assistant film editor Duwayne Dunham was the person under the Fett armor in the parade.)

After “The Empire Strikes Back,” the bounty hunter returned briefly in “Return of the Jedi,” where he is still in Jabba's circle. When Luke comes to Han's rescue, Fett is (accidentally) knocked into the giant mouth of a sarlacc in a sand pit and is assumed to have perished.

His appearance in “The Mandalorian” proves otherwise.

## Backstory

Although Fett's mystery was part of the bounty hunter's original appeal, Fett's official backstory was revealed during the prequel trilogy in 2002's “Attack of the Clones.” The second installment of the prequel trilogy introduces Boba's father, Jango Fett (Morrison), a bounty hunter who was used as the template for the clone soldiers of the then-Republic's army.

It turns out that Boba is an unaltered Jango clone — meaning the scientists who created him did not modify him in any way, unlike the clone soldiers who were created with different enhancements. He was created in exchange for the donated genetic material, for Jango to raise as his own.

But bounty hunting is a dangerous life, and young Boba (Daniel Logan) watched his father be killed by Jedi master Mace Windu during a battle that led to the Clone Wars. He's seen cradling his father's helmet in the aftermath.

Boba's story was expanded further in a few episodes of the animated “Star Wars: The Clone Wars.” After joining a crew of bounty hunters, a young Boba infiltrates a Republic vessel in the guise of a young clone cadet in order to avenge his father. After he fails, he is captured and sent to a detention facility. While details remain sparse, it's shown that he resumes bounty hunting once free.

## ‘Mandalorian’ connection

Sometime after surviving his close encounter with the sarlacc pit, Fett approaches Mandalorian Din Djarin (Pedro Pascal) to reclaim his armor, which he inherited from his father, during the second season of “The Mandalorian.”

During his adventure with Mando, Fett clears up one key detail fans have long wondered: Is he Mandalorian, or does he just wear Mandalorian armor?

According to Fett, his father Jango was given his armor by Mandalorians, raising the question of whether that makes Jango, and by extension Boba, Mandalorian or not. (Djarin, for example, is a founding who was adopted and raised into Mandalorian culture.) As the first person to wear what is now recognized as Mandalorian armor in “Star Wars,” Boba Fett ran ahead of the franchise's establishment of Mandalorian culture — and, complicating matters further, Jango's changing backstories have gone back and forth over the years as to whether he's actually Mandalorian. For what it's worth, Boba has never claimed to be Mandalorian.

Among other reasons, fans will be watching “The Book of Boba Fett” closely to see if it answers this question once and for all.



# WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS



## Setting weighty goals

DREAMSTIME/TNS

Experts advise how to increase the odds of sticking to your New Year's resolution to exercise more often

By KEN GORDON

*The Columbus Dispatch*

**F**or years, Peggy O'Connor has wanted to start exercising, but her body seemed to have other plans.

O'Connor is a cancer survivor (lymphoma). Her treatments included removing most of her pancreas and undergoing chemotherapy. Those procedures left her with diabetes and nerve damage in her legs and feet.

"At different times I have gotten myself all geared up to do the fitness thing, but then because of the nerve damage I would end up just being injured," O'Connor said.

The last time, she said, "I was just trying to walk fast and do some jogging, and I tripped on a metal plate in the street, fell on my hand and ended up with three months of physical therapy. It's so irritating."

Last fall, she discovered the Exercise is Medicine program run by Ohio State University's Wexner Medical Center.

With the help of a fitness specialist at the OSU Health and Fitness Center in New Albany, O'Connor found she could work out effectively on an elliptical machine rather than a treadmill, on which her occasional drop-foot issues would trip her up. She also used the rowing and strength-training machines.

It is a 12-week program, but it didn't take long for O'Connor to see measurable results: "I have a continuous glucose monitor, and right from the beginning, I noticed my blood sugar during exercise sessions would drop a significant amount."

After several weeks, O'Connor said, her blood sugar levels were down even when she was not working out.

"That made me feel really good about it," she said of her workout program. "It

was motivating."

O'Connor is one of many who find themselves starting and stopping an exercise program, a pattern that is particularly acute in January.

According to a 2018 survey conducted by NPR and The Marist Poll, 13% of those making New Year's resolutions cited exercising more often, making it the most common resolution.

Not surprisingly, fitness center attendance spikes at the beginning of January, according to data from several fitness apps gathered by Bloomberg CityLab and reported in a January 2019 article. The data showed a gradual decline in attendance starting the third week of January, and by mid-March, attendance was back at pre-New Year's levels.

"We see new faces at the beginning of the year, but it feels like they generally don't stick with it," said Amy Kleski, director of retail operations for OhioHealth's McConnell Heart Health Center and Neuroscience Wellness Center.

How can one increase the odds of sticking with it? Kleski and other experts offered this advice:

### Figuring out your why

To be effective, resolutions have to have an identified deeper meaning.

"People want to lose weight, maybe, so we ask 'Why do you want to lose weight?' she said. "Maybe the benefit is improved health, maybe they want to be able to keep

up with their kids or grandkids. There has to be something more personal, so that it resonates with people and they keep going."

### Make realistic goals

One common pitfall of people starting a new exercise program, experts say, is they try to do too much, too soon. Sometimes

this happens when newbies go to a gym and compare themselves to others, thinking they have to do the same exercise or for the same amount of time as someone else.

"Try to use specific, measurable, actionable goals that are realistic and time-based,"

David Groen  
primary care physician

said Allan Sommer, the wellness program manager at Wexner Medical Center. "If you're sitting on the couch right now not exercising at all, maybe my goal next week is, 'I will walk to the mailbox and back three times.'"

"So you're not saying, 'I'm going to start walking.' Set something you can track and monitor, and then hopefully you can say, 'Oh, I can do this, so maybe now I'll try this.'"

### Choose wisely

It sounds basic, but experts decry how often people choose an exercise program they don't enjoy or is impractical.

"Patients ask me all the time, 'What's the best exercise?' and I tell them, 'The one that you're going to do,'" said Dr. David Groen, a primary care physician with

Mount Carmel Medical Group. "I don't mean that sarcastically. Pick something you're going to do. You may say you want to start swimming, which is an excellent form of exercise, but if the nearest pool is an hour drive away, you're not going to stick with it because it's so inconvenient."

### Be patient

Perhaps some of the drop-off in fitness center attendance as January turns to February and March is because people new to exercise don't realize that it takes some time to see results.

"If you haven't been exercising in awhile, it takes almost three months to notice any outward appearance changes," Sommer said. "The first thing that happens is those nerves that work on firing to muscles haven't been used this way in a long time, and then there's a whole change in metabolism that is going on inside that you don't see on the outside."

"I always say you have to be willing to stick with me for a minimum of three months. You might not lose weight, you might not look different, but I guarantee you will feel better."

### Anything helps

The often-cited recommendation from the American Heart Association is to get at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity a week, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity.

But experts caution not to let perfection be the enemy of good.

"We encourage you just to move every day," Kleski said. "Some days you may feel truly dedicated and exercise for 60 minutes, but there may be a day or two where you only feel like a 10-minute walk, and that's OK."

"People need to give themselves grace."



WEEKEND: FAMILY



Rekindling friendships

Experts suggest taking small steps to reconnect after the pandemic

By JULI FRAGA  
The Washington Post

When it comes to relationships, friendships are more than social ties. For many of us, friends are strong sources of emotional support, especially when tragedies knock life off track.

But despite their importance, the pandemic has taken a toll on some friendships, research suggests. According to a 2021 study that included 634 participants, younger individuals and those with higher socioeconomic status felt more negative about their friendships during the lockdown.

“Some people felt lonelier and more isolated, while others felt guilty about not checking in with their friends in person,” says Jessica Ayers, lead author of the study. Another study found that social distancing decreased friendship satisfaction, especially for women.

Eloise Skinner, an entrepreneur in London, can relate.

“At the start of the pandemic, my friends made a collective effort to connect via Zoom, but as life ramped up, our hangouts faded,” she says. With fewer chats and starting a new job, Skinner began to feel distant from some of her pals.

Reconnecting with those friends hasn’t been easy. “I feel guilty about not staying in touch as much as I wanted to,” Skinner admits. “Also, over the past two years, a lot has changed, and it’s hard to know how to pick these friendships back up.”

Rekindling friendships requires action, and reaching out can be challenging, says Marisa Franco, a clinical psychologist and friendship expert.

For starters, stressors such as job loss, family issues and financial strain can influence how we feel about relationships.

“When we’re under-resourced, we have less energy to devote to our friendships,” Franco says. Researchers call this “stress-induced social avoidance,” and studies show that higher and daily stress levels can lead to social withdrawal.

In addition, pandemic-induced loneliness may play a role.

“Loneliness can induce self-doubt, which can make us think people dislike us,” Franco says. And when negative narratives take over, we may be less likely to connect because we’re afraid of being rejected.

For those looking to rekindle friendships and start anew this year, taking small steps can help, Ayers says. Here are some expert-backed tips to help guide you.

Manage social worries

After nearly two years of limited in-person contact and too many video hangouts, our social skills may be rusty.

“Social interaction is a muscle and with less practice, we may feel like our skills have withered,” Franco says. As a result, she says it’s common to worry that we’ll talk too much, interrupt, or simply not have enough to say.

To rebuild social stamina, flex this muscle slowly. “Hang out with someone you feel comfortable with and create a time limit around the interaction,” the psychologist suggests.

For their first in-person get-together, Skinner and her best friend merely met for a walk and coffee.

“It was a nice way to catch up, and we didn’t feel any time pressure,” she says.

Adjust expectations

When reuniting with friends, it’s common to want to make up for lost time, says Geoff Greif, a social work professor at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. This pressure can lead to outsize expectations such as wanting to tell your friend everything they’ve missed or hoping the connection will still feel the same.

“With one of my besties, our friendship definitely changed,” says Sarah Sati, a mindfulness educator in Northern California.

Before the pandemic, Sati and her friend enjoyed yoga and meditation classes together. But once they reunited, their relationship never really bounced back.

“We still see each other, but the conversation feels forced instead of authentic,” Sati says.

“Friendships are imperfect, and reconnecting can stir up feelings of disappointment and frustration,” clinical psychologist Patricia E. Zurita Ona says.

Adjusting expectations is one way to handle these tough emotions. Accept that differences may arise, Zurita Ona says.

Practice self-compassion

“Many friendships have changed during the pandemic because the pandemic has changed us,” Franco says. But when friendships shift, we may be quick to label ourselves as “bad friends.”

Zurita Ona says one antidote to this shame spiral is self-compassion.

“Self-compassion is one way to physiologically soothe distressing emotions,” she says. Research suggests that self-compassion can help intercept brooding and rumination, two thinking patterns that can make feelings of depression and anxiety worse.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Light finally being shed on privatized housing issues

“There’s no knob on the door,” I said to the Balfour Beatty Communities manager when we arrived at our quarters at Naval Station Newport, R.I. It was a hot day in July of 2013 when the BBC manager sheepishly opened the knob-less door of the century-old duplex house we had been assigned.

Having come from another BBC property at Naval Station Mayport, Fla., we thought we knew what to expect. Our idyllic ocean-side Florida housing neighborhood was lined with pristine, newly constructed, pastel-colored homes.

Once in Rhode Island, we gladly leased another BBC house, believing we’d have another positive experience. As we entered the house on move-in day, we were shocked to find broken windows, construction debris, unfinished repairs and a dirt-floor basement area covered in multiple piles of dog feces. The jittery BBC manager promised us that repairs would be made right away.

This was the first of many broken promises BBC made to us during our five-year stay in that property. We, and many of our base neighbors, submitted negative comment cards and complaint letters regarding our unsatisfactory experiences to BBC. Little did we know, BBC would later be accused of ignoring and hiding resident complaints. Across the U.S., privatized housing residents were complaining about rodents, mold, faulty wiring, construction errors, cockroaches, lead paint, raw sewage, rotten wood, toxic water, chronic leaks, asbestos and more.

In 2018, Reuters published reports of military families suffering from lead poisoning, mold-related illnesses and other dangerous conditions while living in privatized housing. In January 2019, the Military Family Advisory Network conducted a survey of privatized military housing residents, finding that 55% of respondents had a negative or very negative experience with privatized military housing.

In February 2019, the Senate Armed Services Committee held hearings and initiated an investigation by the Department of Justice, discovering that, from 2013 to 2019, Balfour Beatty was engaging in widespread schemes to defraud the military out of millions of dollars in performance incentives by “cooking the books” — fudging numbers and destroying resident comment cards. By submitting false records to the Army, Navy and Air Force, Balfour Beatty was able to collect 95% of performance bonuses each year, despite allowing military families to suffer in poor conditions.

Two Balfour Beatty employees were found guilty of criminal fraud charges last year. Then on December 22, 2021, the DOJ announced a “global resolution” of criminal and civil investigations into Balfour Beatty’s fraud schemes. Balfour Beatty pleaded guilty and was ordered to pay more than \$68 million in fines, and submit to an independent monitor for three years to ensure compliance with the contract.

That’s right. ... Despite admitting to felonious criminal fraud against the Army, Navy and Air Force, Balfour Beatty still gets to manage and collect revenue from 50,000 units of privatized housing worth \$6 billion under a 50-year lease. It’s no wonder Balfour Beatty’s shares rose on the day of the DOJ announcement.

Some call the fines a slap on the hand for Balfour Beatty, and other privatized housing managers still under investigation have not been brought to justice. After more than a year of delays, a Military Housing Privatization Initiative Tenant Bill of Rights (TBOR) and a Universal Lease were created, but not all landlords have implemented the new policies.

In the meantime, military families continue to live in more than 200,000 privatized military housing units in the U.S. What should they do when major issues arise? Fill out another comment card and hope it doesn’t get lost in the abyss? Not anymore. If you have a housing problem and don’t know your rights under TBOR, request free help through Armed Forces Housing Advocates, [www.afhousingadvocates.org](http://www.afhousingadvocates.org).

Read more at [themeatandpotatoesoflife.com](http://themeatandpotatoesoflife.com), and in Lisa’s book, *The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com*. Email: [meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com](mailto:meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com).



WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

PEST CONTROL

BY CHRISTINA IVERSON / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Christina Iverson, of Ames, Iowa, is a crossword constructor with two young children. She has been making puzzles for The Times since 2019. Christina says she aims to make puzzles that are fun and accessible. “I try my hardest to stay away from obscure language — and squeeze in dad jokes whenever I can.” This is her fourth Sunday and 10th crossword overall for the paper. — W.S.

ACROSS

1 Appoint

7 People of the Southwest

13 Wishy-washy response

19 Had the opportunity to, casually

20 Entertainment with a private audience?

21 Malice, more formally

22 One wearing chap stick, perhaps

24 Be up against

25 Poker variety similar to Texas Hold ‘em

26 Counterpart of “Thx”

27 Saves for later, in a way

29 Ploy

30 Lost

32 Antarctic coordinate

35 “A man has cause for \_\_\_\_ only when he sows and no one reaps”: Charles Goodyear

38 Bit of tinder

41 First side to vote

42 \_\_\_\_ course

43 New York City transport stopping at Kennedy Airport

46 Beginning stage

47 Prefix with thermal

50 There might be a catch with this

51 Blouse and broach, perhaps

54 Wet bar?

55 Form of nepotism, symbolically

57 Herd member

58 Sauce

59 Place, as ceramic tiles

60 Like autumn air

62 Person helping with a delivery

63 Word before film and after clip

65 It has many beet and beef options

70 “\_\_\_\_ Trois Petits Cochons” (French fable)

71 Sport at the Special Olympics

73 G.I. \_\_\_\_

74 Calling

76 Not be able to stand

77 Ending with invent

78 War and peace, in “War and Peace”

83 Like most dorms nowadays

84 Tickled

87 Focus of modern mining

88 “\_\_\_\_ be an honor!”

89 They can be graphic

90 Surround, as with light

91 Considerations for N.C.A.A. eligibility

92 \_\_\_\_ Wintour, longtime Vogue editor in chief

93 Spring locales

94 Takes by force

96 Pop fly

100 Some family babysitters

102 Match

103 Sarge’s boss

105 A-number-one

106 The Venetian way?

110 Alternative to Dropbox

113 Gradually fix something. . . . or what to do to understand this puzzle’s italicized clues?

116 Briefly, e.g.

117 What’s used to catch some waves

118 Supreme Egyptian god

119 Bum out

120 Famous cryptid, familiarly

121 Intimates

18 Pecan or peach

20 Sch. where a live bear used to take the field during football games

23 Echo, perhaps

28 Pimple look-alikes

31 It usually works in corners

33 “Catch!”

34 Baker’s Joy alternative

35 Record speeds, for short

36 Adams of New York City politics

37 Antelope, say

38 Parable or allegory

39 Devices with Nunchuks

40 Business newsmagazine

44 “For shame!”

45 Slugging stat

46 Member of the inn crowd?

47 Approach for directions

48 Onetime collaborator with Ice Cube and Dr. Dre

49 Some sports tournaments

52 Big name in women’s hair and skin care

53 Boo-boo

54 Word with story or sister

56 Economist/author Emily

58 Screw up

60 Relative of a club, for short

61 Place for boarding

63 You can count on them

1	2	3	4	5	6			7	8	9	10	11	12		13	14	15	16	17	18
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71							73								74			75		
76																			81	82
83						84	85					86						87		
88						89						90						91		

64 Member of the modern work force

66 Great Lakes natives

67 Kind of bean

68 Taiwanese electronics giant

69 “I’m about to tell you something shocking”

72 Haddock relative

75 Doesn’t put it all on one pony

78 Suvari of “American Beauty”

79 Sounds heard in 93-Across

80 Destructive 2021 hurricane

81 Nouveau-Mexique, e.g.

82 Lip or cheek

84 Put over the moon

85 One hanging around Queen Elizabeth?

86 With it, in old slang

89 “Snowpiercer” ailer

92 Sporting a certain natural style

93 Avoids

95 Tortoise’s challenge to the hare

96 Nickname for the French Alexandre

97 No longer squeaky (one hopes!)

98 John Wayne, by birth

99 Who ran against George Washington for president

100 “\_\_\_\_ chance!”

101 Letters that complete this word: \_P\_ROPRIA\_E

102 Snaps

104 Squeezes (out)

105 Good thing to be in

107 Letters on dreidels

108 Taj Mahal’s home

109 Exam that once required fingerprint identification, for short

111 Exercise

112 Animal house

114 Demon of Japanese folklore

115 Folklore villain

GUNSTON STREET



“Gunston Street” is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE

S	A	D	D	E	N				N	E	S	S	I	E			G	E	T	S	A	T				
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## FACES

## Omicron postpones Grammys indefinitely

By SONIA RAO  
The Washington Post

The Recording Academy and CBS announced Wednesday that they are indefinitely postponing the 2022 Grammy Awards due to concerns over the omicron coronavirus variant. The ceremony was previously set for Jan. 31.

“The health and safety of those in our music community, the live audience, and the hundreds of people who work tirelessly to produce our show remains our top priority,” the organization and network wrote in a statement. “Given the uncertainty surrounding the Omicron variant, holding the show on January 31 simply contains too many risks.”

The Grammys are only the latest entertainment industry event to be postponed over potential health risks. Multiple award ceremonies — including those hosted by the National Board of Review and the New York Film Critics Circle, as well as the Critics Choice Awards — made the decision last month to push their respective events. The Sundance Film Festival, which is traditionally held in person in Park City, Utah, also announced Wednesday afternoon that it would be forgoing plans for a hybrid festival later this month in favor of one conducted fully online.

“This was a difficult decision to make. As a nonprofit, our Sundance spirit is in making something work against the

odds,” festival organizers wrote in a statement. “But with case numbers forecasted to peak in our host community the week of the festival, we cannot knowingly put our staff and community at risk.”

Last year’s Grammys were also postponed over coronavirus concerns. The March ceremony was held in downtown Los Angeles outside its usual home at the Staples Center (since renamed the Crypto.com Arena). Comedian Trevor Noah hosted from an outdoor stage, stationed in front of masked attendees seated at socially distanced tables.

Noah is set to return as host of the 2022 Grammys, for which a new date “will be announced soon.”

## Comedian crafting connections

Fortune Feimster shares her story for laughs, ends up helping people



By THOMAS FLOYD  
The Washington Post

Fortune Feimster’s confessional brand of comedy is designed, first and foremost, to elicit belly laughs. It wasn’t until the stand-up released “Sweet & Salty,” her hourlong Netflix special, in January 2020 that Feimster realized she had a knack for tugging at heartstrings as well.

Packed with anecdotes about her North Carolina upbringing as a gay, self-described “fat kid” in a deeply religious and body image-conscious environment, the special amplified Feimster’s message of self-discovery and acceptance for a global audience. Although viewers may have known Feimster from appearances on such TV shows as “Chelsea Lately” and “The Mindy Project,” “Sweet & Salty” gave them a more personal taste.

“That Netflix reach is so huge, and I was getting really incredible messages from straight people, gay people, parents of gay people,” says Feimster, 41. “It certainly took me back, just because when you are a comedian, your first goal is to be funny. You don’t really realize that by telling that story, you’re sharing that story with other people who’ve felt like they’re different or that they don’t fit in. There’s a lot of power in that.”

After a pandemic-induced break from stand-up, Feimster is back on the road with her follow-up act, “2 Sweet 2 Salty.” In a phone interview last month, Feimster discussed responding to “Sweet & Salty’s” success, re-writing her material in quarantine and getting married during the pandemic.

**Q: Let’s start by rewinding to January 2020. What do you recall from the release of “Sweet & Salty”?**

**A:** The response right away was really incredible. The byproduct of me telling my story was that it seemed like it helped people in their journey. I even had parents email me and say, “I didn’t know what to expect when my kid came out. I didn’t necessarily handle it the best way. I watched your special and learned some things about how to be there for them.” And I had people say, “I’ve been afraid to come out to my mom or dad, and I played them your special and I watched them watch you. When I saw that they were smiling and laughing, I felt safe to come out.” I mean, that kind of thing just really blows you away.

**How did you imagine the rest of 2020 playing out as you looked to build off the special’s momentum?**

Right after it came out, we put up this big tour. It was my first theater tour and we didn’t know what to expect, and that whole tour sold out, like, in a month. So 2020 was looking like it was going to be a very exciting year — and the first show was supposed to be March 14, which obviously did not happen. I had my suitcases packed to go to Michigan and the world basically shut down.

**What was your response to the pandemic putting your stand-up career on pause?**

I kind of sulked for a good month of just watching TV and being sad. But at some point, after [the pandemic] just kept going and going and we kept being at home and the waves kept coming, you just had to figure out how to make

life okay. I got to spend a lot of time with my wife (Jacquelyn Smith) and my dogs and just let go of the stress of the business and the grind, and I think it did a lot for my mental health. My brain was clear and I felt really good after a while, aside from obviously the horror of trying not to get COVID. When I could just be at peace at home, it allowed me to free up my brain, and I wrote an entire new hour of stand-up. And that’s the tour that I’m doing now.

**Did you work the material you originally planned on touring in 2020 into the new hour, or is it on a shelf?**

It’s on a shelf. A year and a half later, it just didn’t work. That was a story of my journey and trying to figure out who I was. This is who I am as an adult, and here are things about me where you might think I’m one way but I’m really this way. It just shows people who I am at this stage in my life.

**How have you adjusted to the larger venues on this tour, making the jump from comedy clubs to theaters?**

Pre-COVID, I had been doing clubs and colleges for 11 years. But the theater part, for me, it’s perfect because I am more of a storyteller. I’m not doing a bunch of setups and punchlines. I am telling a lot of stories, and I feel like theaters are way more conducive to that. It’s a perfect setting to hear stories, whereas clubs, you have to work that much harder because I’m telling these longer stories while people are yelling for ketchup for their cheeseburger. So the theaters feel like this beautiful payoff of the last 10 years of building my act and trying to become a better stand-up.

## ‘Beavis and Butt-Head’ to get new film

From wire services

“Beavis and Butt-Head,” America’s favorite cartoon couch potatoes, are getting a new film “and more,” creator Mike Judge teased Tuesday night on Twitter.

“Beavis and Butt-Head will be returning this year with a brand new movie and more on Paramount+,” Judge wrote in the post, which included a sketch of the pair having aged several decades, with Butt-Head looking like he’s packed on some pounds. “No exact date yet, but soon. They need some time to get back in shape.”

The title teen characters were first featured in Judge’s 1992 short film “Frog Baseball,” before finding fame in the “Beavis and Butt-Head” series that ran from 1993 to 1997, and then returned again, briefly, in 2011.

## ‘Don’t Look Up’ Netflix’s No. 3 most watched

The star-studded “Don’t Look Up” movie that debuted on Netflix on Christmas Eve is already the No. 3 most popular film of all time on the streaming service.

In the apocalyptic drama-comedy, clocking in at 2 hours 18 minutes, two university astronomers discover that a comet is speeding toward Earth with enough girth to destroy the planet.

As they desperately try to warn the president of the United States, as well as the general public via a media tour, they’re stunned to realize few people across the nation believe them or even care.

“It’s about to pass #2, Bird Box, pretty easily,” Forbes reported Wednesday as it shared the current Top 10 movie list according to Netflix data. “Red Notice” stands at No. 1.

## Other news

■ An arrest warrant has been issued for Justin Johnson, 23, wanted in connection with the fatal shooting of rapper **Young Dolph**, who was gunned down in a daylight ambush on Nov. 17 at a popular cookie shop in his hometown of Memphis, authorities said Wednesday.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Sheriff: Couple left son, 11, home alone for weeks

**AZ** ELFRIDA — An Arizona couple has been arrested after allegedly leaving their 11-year-old son home alone for two weeks.

The Cochise County Sheriff's Office arrested the couple last week after they returned to their home in Elfrida, about 100 miles southeast of Tucson. Authorities say the mother left the state before Thanksgiving and the father left a few days after the holiday.

Sheriff's deputies visited the home Dec. 12 after a caller said the boy may have been left alone, according to the sheriff's office Facebook page. Deputies were unable to reach the parents, and the boy was placed in foster care. He told authorities he had frozen food in the refrigerator and did not go to school for at least two weeks.

The sheriff's office says both parents have been indicted on charges of child neglect. The Associated Press is not identifying them to protect the identify of the boy.

## Police: Bystander uses stun gun on shoplifter

**SD** SIOUX FALLS — Police in Sioux Falls say a bystander used a stun gun on a shoplifter who assaulted store employees.

Police said the 38-year-old man tried to steal from a convenience store the afternoon of Dec. 22. The man assaulted two employees before police arrived. The bystander stunned the man to stop him, the Argus Leader reported.

The alleged thief was arrested. Police Sgt. Travis Olsen says it doesn't appear the person who fired the stun gun will be charged.

## Cruelty to child in car is among driver's charges

**VT** ST. JOHNSBURY — A Rhode Island man is facing a variety of charges after driving the wrong way on Interstate 91 and then fleeing from police with an unrestrained 6-year-old child in the front seat, Vermont State Police said.

Police received a report Sunday evening of a driver heading south in the interstate's northbound lane in Sheffield. Troopers located the vehicle after it had turned around and was heading north in the northbound lane. The driver refused to stop and later crashed. The child suffered minor injuries.

The driver was charged with resisting arrest, attempting to elude, cruelty to a child, gross negligent operation and suspicion of driving under the influence.

## Man loses hand after picking up firework

**WA** LONGVIEW — A New Year's Eve celebration turned to tragedy when



CHRISTIAN MURDOCK (THE COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO. GAZETTE)/AP

# Roundup of the best for show

Ranch partner Gary Lake rounds up the longhorn cattle Wednesday on the Silverado Ranch east of Colorado Springs, Colo., to select the cattle for the National Western Stock Show that begins Saturday in Denver. The parade through downtown Denver scheduled for Thursday was canceled because of the forecasted snow and cold weather, but the stock show will run as scheduled through Jan. 23. The longhorns have been a part of the stock show for more than 40 years.

police say a man lost his hand Sunday after he picked up a homemade explosive thrown toward him in Longview, Wash.

Longview Capt. John Reeves said Corey Bartlette, 25, of Longview, threw a tennis ball filled with explosives around midnight in the direction of a 49-year-old transient man.

Reeves said the man picked up the ball and "his hand was blown off."

Bartlette was booked on suspicion of second-degree assault around 3 a.m. Sunday, the Daily News reported.

Bartlette's father, Tom Lake, of Longview, called the device a homemade firework used during a New Year's Eve celebration. He said the ball bounced toward the victim, and was not intended to hit a person. Lake said his son turned himself in after the incident and "never meant any harm."

Reeves said homemade fireworks are illegal.

## Officer shoots police K-9 after dog attacks him

**CA** FRESNO — A central California police officer fatally shot a K-9 officer on Tuesday after the dog bit him while he was taking the animal to be euthanized, authorities said.

Odin, a 4-year-old Belgian Malinois, had worked for the Fresno Police Department for three years but was taken out of service in October after suddenly attacking and seriously injuring his partner, officials said in a news release.

A veterinarian who examined the K-9 said Odin may have suf-

## THE CENSUS

**80** The approximate number of different specialty license plates now available to Arizona vehicle owners. The state Department of Transportation said 15 newly available specialty plates approved by the Arizona Legislature include 11 versions sponsored by the state Department of Veterans' Services. Those various versions include ones displaying the seals of the military services and ones for female veterans. ADOT said in a statement this week that most specialty plates cost \$25 annually, with \$17 of that amount going to a designated charity or nonprofit group.

ferred from a neurological issue that made him aggressive, according to the Fresno Bee.

After months of evaluations, authorities decided Odin needed to be euthanized for the safety of officers and the public, police said. Despite being given sedatives, Odin attacked an officer taking the dog to be euthanized.

The officer determined he could not get Odin to release the bite on his arm and used his service weapon to kill Odin instantly, police said.

"Members of the Fresno Police Department are truly saddened with this incident, and we will be forever grateful for his years of service to our community," the news release said.

## Dog finds help, leads cops to owner's car crash

**NH** LEBANON — A German shepherd named Tinsley, first thought to be a lost dog, successfully led New Hampshire state police to the site of its owner's rollover crash.

Both the vehicle's occupants were seriously hurt, but thanks to Tinsley's dogged efforts they quickly received medical assistance once officers discovered the

truck, which went off the road near a Vermont interstate junction, WMUR-TV reported Tuesday.

"The dog was trying to show them something," said Lt. Daniel Baldassarre of the New Hampshire State Police. "He kept trying to get away from them but didn't run away totally."

"It was kind of, 'Follow me. Follow me.' And they did that and you know, to their surprise to see the guardrail damaged and to look down to where the dog is looking at, it's just, they were almost in disbelief," he said.

A New Hampshire state trooper and Lebanon police responded to the crash site late Monday, just across the state line in Vermont.

## Fire at amusement park damages roller coaster

**PA** CONNEAUT LAKE — A fire at a northwestern Pennsylvania amusement park has damaged a wooden roller coaster built more than eight decades ago.

WICU-TV said reports from Conneaut Lake Park late Tuesday afternoon indicated that a controlled burn near the carousel got out of hand.

The fire spread to nearby buildings and structures, including part of the Blue Streak roller coaster, the station reported. No injuries were reported.

The coaster was built in 1937 and has been opened and closed a number of times over the years. It didn't operate last year due to the need for a structural evaluation, officials said.

Conneaut Lake Park has operated as an amusement park since 1892, when it opened as Exposition Park, but has been closed a number of times during years of financial difficulty.

**Man dies after falling through iced-over river**

**WI** MILWAUKEE — A man died after he jumped out of an apartment window, ran onto the frozen Milwaukee River and fell through the ice, authorities said.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported the city's fire department got a call Monday morning of someone in the river on the city's lower east side.

First responders pulled Jeffrey Bishop, 31, from the water. He was taken to a hospital where he later died.

According to a medical examiner report, a neighbor saw Bishop break his second-floor apartment window and jump out of it.

The apartment is less than half-a-mile from the river.

The report said Bishop suffered from mental health issues.





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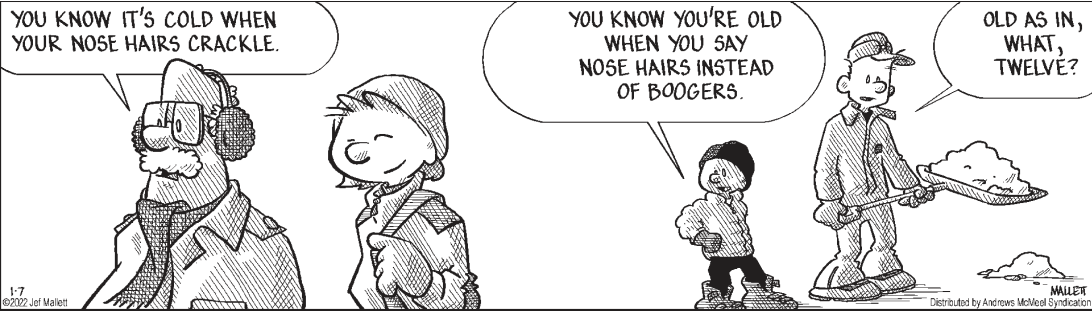
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Frazz



Dilbert



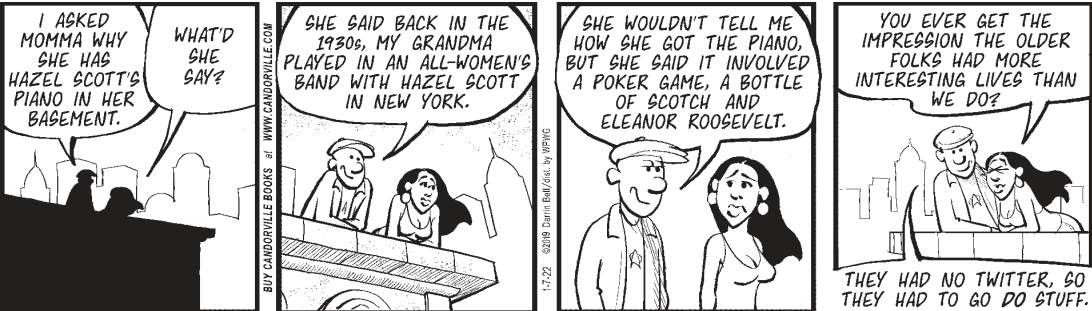
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3			4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11
12					13				14				
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					45				46		47		
48	49	50	51								52		
53							54				55		
56							57				58		

- ACROSS
- 55 Soon-to-be grads
- 26 Gullet
- 1 Schlep
- 28 "You betcha!!"
- 4 Family docs
- 30 Mosquito barrier
- 7 Cognizant
- 31 "Acid"
- 12 Mil. address
- 32 "So that's it!"
- 13 Football's Parseghian
- 33 Speed (up)
- 14 Jail-related
- 36 During
- 15 Oahu, for one (Abbr.)
- 37 Swallows' cousins
- 16 Separated by a barrier
- 40 Slender woodwinds
- 18 Roulette bet
- 42 "You win"
- 19 Windy day toys
- 43 Striped equine
- 20 Male deer
- 44 Be
- 22 Pink Floyd's Barrett
- 45 Office part-timer
- 23 Clock radio toggle
- 46 Miles away
- 27 CBS logo
- 48 Fire
- 29 Germany's Merkel
- 49 Lawyers' gp.
- 31 "SNL" producer Michaels
- 50 Salonga of "Miss Saigon"
- 34 Fund
- 51 Varnish ingredient
- 35 Everest guide
- 25 Mideast org.
- 37 Canonized Fr. woman
- 24 Club —
- 38 Peace symbol
- 23 De Mille of dance
- 39 Trim the grass
- 41 Dimension
- 45 Leg bone
- 47 Superman foe Luthor
- 48 Canceled
- 52 Kimono sash
- 53 Perpendicular, at sea
- 54 Greek H

Answer to Previous Puzzle

T	B	A		T	U	R	N		F	L	A	B
E	E	L		O	R	E	O		I	O	T	A
A	L	T	R	U	I	S	M		G	R	A	B
		H	A	T		T	A	G	L	I	N	E
G	N	O	M	E	S		D	Y	E			
I	C	U		D	A	B		M	A	J	O	R
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A	S	H	E	S		B	I	B		H	A	M
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A	A	R	E		R	O	C	K	S	A	L	T
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D	E	B	S		D	I	O	R		T	U	X

1-7 CRYPTOQUIP

D V S B R L S B D   L Y   L ' S   O B L Q P

Y V Z M B H   R V   O B   O Z J R C E E A

W V Q B D R   F L R W   D V S B O V H A ,   L

F L E E   P B R   C   R Z J R W - C M W B .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: NOVEL ABOUT THE SURPRISING GROWTH OF UNCULTIVATED CABBAGELIKE PLANTS: "THE KALE OF THE WILD."

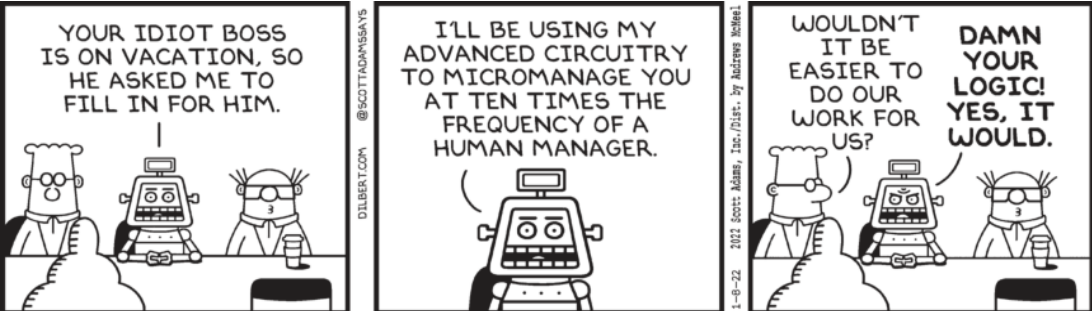
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals B



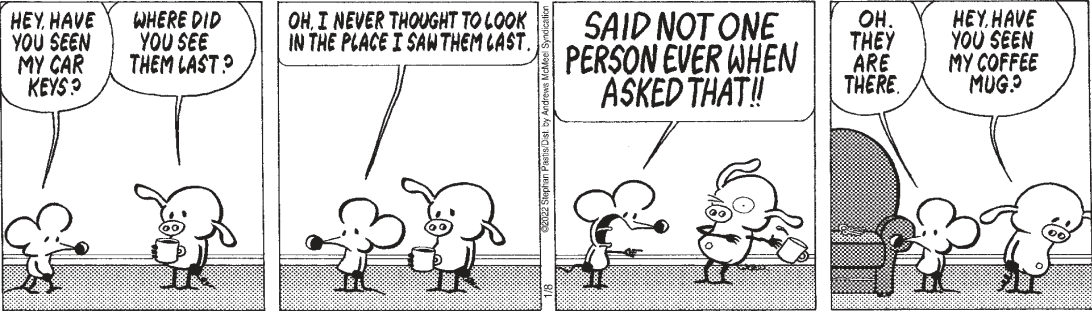
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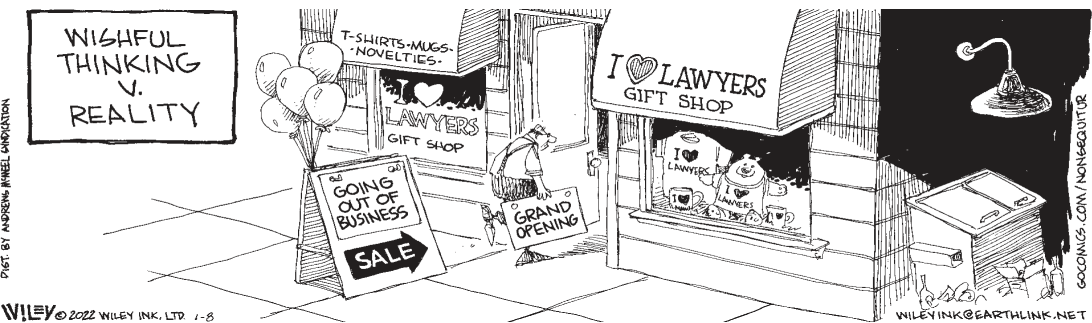
Dilbert



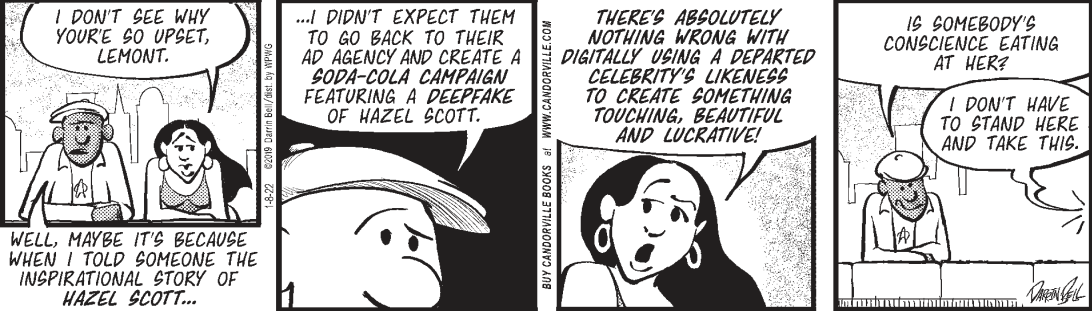
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



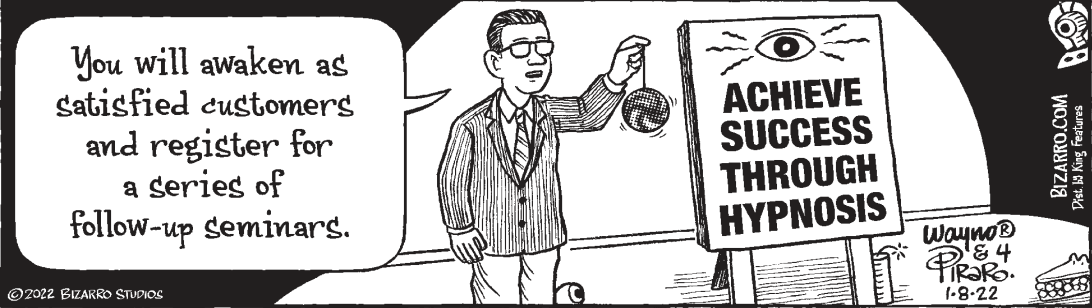
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
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			36			37						
38	39	40			41				42	43	44	
45					46				47			
48					49				50			
51					52				53			

- ACROSS
- 52 Bump into
- 53 Sound from a hot wok
- 24 Small battery
- 25 Annoy
- 26 JFK Library architect
- 27 Convent resident
- 28 Tolkien creature
- 29 Approves
- 31 Math statement
- 32 Sub shop
- 34 "My word!"
- 35 Waist-cinching garment
- 36 Tea biscuit
- 37 Un-fettered
- 38 Baby carriage
- 39 "Damn Yankees" role
- 40 Latin 101 word
- 41 Blaze
- 42 Periodontist's concern
- 43 Rapsclallions
- 44 Kvetches
- DOWN
- 1 McEnroe's rival
- 2 Winged
- 3 Transcending (Pref.)
- 4 Fancy cake
- 5 Loathe
- 6 Lowly worker
- 7 Fruit-filled dessert
- 8 Horned beast
- 9 Meditative practice
- 10 Mr. Guinness
- 11 Post-WWII alliance
- 19 Pepsi rival
- 20 URL ending
- 23 Stable diet?

Answer to Previous Puzzle

L	U	G		G	P	S		A	W	A	R	E
A	P	O		A	R	A		P	E	N	A	L
I	S	L		W	A	L	L	E	D	O	F	F
R	E	D		K	I	T	E	S				
S	T	A	G		S	Y	D		A	M	P	M
				E	Y	E		A	N	G	E	L
L	O	R	N	E				E	N	D	O	W
S	H	E	R	P	A		S	T	E			
D	O	V	E		M	O	W		S	I	Z	E
				T	I	B	I	A		L	E	X
C	A	L	L	E	D	O	F	F		O	B	I
A	B	E	A	M		E	T	A		S	R	S
N	A	A	C	P		S	S	R		E	A	T

1-8 CRYPTOQUIP

H Z C R O P N R P S    H O Z Q D    S J B S

B N B Y Y R Y    F P M Z    Z P    D B O S F I Q A B O

M F Y J    M F P Y :    S J R    C R P S O B A

F P S R A A F H R P I R    B H R P I W .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SOMETIMES IF I'M BEING FORCED TO BE BRUTALLY HONEST WITH SOMEBODY, I WILL GET A TRUTH-ACHE.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: H equals G





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OPINION

Political violence is in our DNA. Can we avoid it?

By JAMES HOHMANN

*The Washington Post*

Political violence has always been contagious — inspiring copycats, encouraging ideologues to embrace the tactics of their opponents and spawning a crushing spiral of tit-for-tat escalation.

From Bleeding Kansas to Bloody Sunday, from the Colfax Massacre to Charlottesville, political violence has long been a feature of the American experience.

Donald Trump didn't just incite an insurrection last January as he clung to power. During the years leading up to the attack on the Capitol, he helped usher in a new era of militancy. The number of threats aimed at members of Congress rose from fewer than 4,000 in 2017 to 9,600 in 2021. The FBI says there are about 2,700 open investigations into violent extremism at home, up from 1,000 in the spring of 2020. The latest Washington Post-University of Maryland poll shows 34% of Americans say violent action against the government is sometimes justified, more than double what surveys showed in 2010. You can draw a fairly straight line back from the Capitol rioters, some of whom paraded with Confederate battle flags, to the Southerners who pummeled abolitionists on the floor of the House and Senate during the decades before the Civil War. The members of the 2021 mob were the descendants — spiritually, if not literally — of Know-Nothings and klansmen.

This legacy is not to excuse the behavior of those who stormed the Capitol at Trump's behest, but it is a reminder that we've never outgrown our own brutish tendencies. Pretending Jan. 6 was a singular event risks a dangerous complacency.

The Capitol itself has long been a popular focal point for violence. In 1954, Puerto Rican nationalists opened fire from the House gal-

lery and wounded five congressmen. In 1971, in opposition to the Vietnam War, the Weather Underground detonated a bomb in the men's bathroom underneath the Senate chamber, saying the goal was to "freak out the warmongers." In 1983, self-described communists exploded a bomb under a bench outside the Senate majority leader's office, purportedly in retaliation for U.S. intervention in Grenada and Lebanon.

The Capitol Police formed in 1828 after President John Quincy Adams's son was punched in the Rotunda. The first assassination attempt on a sitting president happened at the Capitol in 1835 as Andrew Jackson left a congressman's funeral. The revolver misfired. That was the start of an especially violent stretch on Capitol Hill. Yale historian Joanne B. Freeman documented more than 70 incidents of violence between lawmakers from 1830 to 1860, from duels to brawls on the House floor. Most notoriously, in 1856, Rep. Preston Brooks, of South Carolina, hit Sen. Charles Sumner, of Massachusetts, with a cane at least a dozen times — nearly killing him — over a speech decrying the conduct of the slavocracy.

Political violence cooled a bit following the Civil War but increased again as Northern voters lost the will to enforce civil rights for African Americans. After the contested 1876 election, President Ulysses S. Grant mobilized the military to defend the Capitol if it was besieged by supporters of Samuel J. Tilden.

In a compromise, Republicans kept the White House in exchange for ending Reconstruction. This paved the way for Jim Crow laws and another century of terrorism against Blacks. The NAACP documented nearly 5,000 lynchings from the 1880s to the 1960s.

The civil rights movement led to a new era of violence against African Americans, which helped prompt new federal protections,

which again led to backlash.

But the notion that our contemporary era has been mostly free of political violence is incorrect; if anything, violence has increased of late. In 2017, a gunman who hated Trump deliberately targeted Republican congressmen as they practiced for the annual Congressional Baseball Game, wounding the House majority whip before dying in a firefight with police. On the eve of the 2018 midterms, a Trump super fan mailed pipe bombs to 16 people he believed had treated the president unfairly. Authorities announced they'd foiled a plot to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat, a few months after Trump tweeted "LIBERATE MICHIGAN!"

Last August, a North Carolina man demanding Trump be returned to power parked outside the Library of Congress and claimed his pickup was full of explosives. Rep. Paul Gosar, R-Ariz., was recently censured by the House on a mostly party-line vote for posting an animated video depicting himself killing Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y.

The Justice Department estimates that as many as 2,500 people could ultimately be charged with federal crimes related to the attack on the Capitol; so far, only 704 have faced prosecution. Attorney General Merrick Garland asked Wednesday for the public's help in identifying hundreds of suspects who were photographed but haven't been arrested, including about 250 who are believed to have assaulted police officers. Especially worrisome is that no one has been apprehended for placing pipe bombs with timers outside the Democratic National Committee and Republican National Committee.

Our tradition of political violence is in our DNA. And it is unlikely to end in this recent and deadly chapter.

James Hohmann is a Washington Post opinion columnist.

Positive developments and human challenges in 2022

By ARTHUR I. CYR

*Special to Stars and Stripes*

COVID-19 scare stories continue, sensationally spurred by media, even as we collectively reopen and return to a more normal existence.

To provide context, TV talking heads often mention the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918.

The reference ignores health challenges over the intervening decades. In fact, pandemics have plagued the world's populations throughout time, including the 20th century. During 1957-58, the Asian Flu was a major public health problem. The pandemic originated in China, as the misnamed Spanish Flu of 1918 probably did as well.

The Hong Kong flu came to the U.S. in 1968, spread by several hundred thousand mostly young men in our military rotating home, generally after one-year duty tours in Vietnam. The disease spread rapidly. Like many, President Lyndon B. Johnson became seriously ill and hospitalized, for a time in intensive care.

Mercifully, young people appear to be relatively immune to COVID-19. That was not the case with these earlier pandemics. Yet generally, there were no mass isolations, detailed severe restrictions or media fearmongering.

People viewed disease as an unfortunate part of life. After all, the Salk Vaccine to defeat the horror of polio had only become available in 1955. The last case of smallpox in the U.S. was also recent: 1949.

In that earlier time, for the vast mass of em-

ployed people there was no alternative to going to work, in literal terms, in a group location. If you failed to show up, you would be out of a job. The computer and telecommunications revolutions that permit remote work were just beginning, and public health problems in any case were regarded with stoicism.

The good news is we are so secure today that anything less is a shock. The bad news is we have become extremely vulnerable to fear.

Extraordinary prosperity permits the extraordinary measures taken to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, and other ills once regarded as unavoidable. Greg Ip of The Wall Street Journal is particularly insightful regarding this important neglected dimension, along with the Brookings Institution, the World Bank and others.

As recently as 1980, approximately one-half of the world's population lived in "extreme poverty." The World Bank defines that condition as below \$1.90 per day valued in 2011 dollars, an estimate that endeavors to include drastically different cost and price structures in various regions. Less than that amount prevents essential conditions of human life.

That is not news. Through the long sweep of human history, the vast majority of the population lived in undernourished, often dangerous environments. That reality drove powerful reform movements, some of them extreme, violent and destructive.

Destitution no longer is the norm. Under 10% of the world's population is now in ex-

treme poverty, though there are serious disruptions. COVID-19, climate change and armed conflict are among current challenges. The long-term downward trend nevertheless continues. As this implies, the poorest parts of the globe are successfully playing economic catch-up. The influential, respected Brookings Institution in Washington currently is devoting instructive in-depth attention to the "Africa Growth Initiative."

Related to economic progress and development, democracy is becoming the desired way of life for the world's population overall, not just the privileged few. As recently as three decades ago, the people of Latin America lived almost uniformly in authoritarian regimes. Today, Cuba's dictatorship is isolated.

The U.S. military has a long and impressive history of providing direct help, including medical aid and disaster relief, both at home and abroad. Public health work includes deploying transport aircraft, providing quarantine facilities and other resources to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. This entails cooperation with the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and other domestic as well as international organizations. We are integral to the long-term improvement of the global human condition.

Nonetheless, fear remains an infectious public menace. Unchecked, it can kill individuals, institutions, and eventually civilization.

Arthur I. Cyr is author of "After the Cold War."



# SCOREBOARD

## PRO FOOTBALL

### NFL

#### AMERICAN CONFERENCE

	East					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
x-Buffalo	10	6	0	.625	456	279
x-N. England	10	6	0	.625	438	270
e-Miami	8	8	0	.500	308	349
e-N.Y. Jets	4	12	0	.250	300	477

	South					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-Tennessee	11	5	0	.688	391	329
Indianapolis	9	7	0	.563	440	339
e-Houston	4	12	0	.250	255	424
e-Jacksonville	2	14	0	.125	227	446

	North					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-Cincinnati	10	6	0	.625	444	355
Pittsburgh	8	7	1	.531	327	385
Baltimore	8	8	0	.500	374	376
e-Cleveland	7	9	0	.438	328	355

	West					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-Kansas City	11	5	0	.688	452	340
L.A. Chargers	9	7	0	.563	442	424
Las Vegas	9	7	0	.563	339	407
e-Denver	7	9	0	.438	311	294

	National Conference					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-Dallas	11	5	0	.688	479	332
Philadelphia	9	7	0	.563	418	334
e-Washington	6	10	0	.375	313	427
e-N.Y. Giants	4	12	0	.250	251	394

	South					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-Tampa Bay	12	4	0	.750	470	336
New Orleans	8	8	0	.500	334	315
e-Atlanta	7	9	0	.438	293	429
e-Carolina	5	11	0	.313	287	363

	North					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
*-Green Bay	13	3	0	.813	420	334
e-Minnesota	7	9	0	.438	394	409
e-Chicago	6	10	0	.375	294	376
e-Detroit	2	13	1	.156	288	437

	West					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
x-L.A. Rams	12	4	0	.750	436	345
x-Arizona	11	5	0	.688	419	328
San Francisco	9	7	0	.563	400	341
e-Seattle	6	10	0	.375	357	336

\*-clinched division and homefield advantage in the playoffs  
y-clinched division  
x-clinched playoff spot  
e-eliminated from playoffs

#### Sunday, Jan. 2

Buffalo 29, Atlanta 15  
Chicago 29, N.Y. Giants 3  
Cincinnati 34, Kansas City 31  
L.A. Rams 20, Baltimore 19  
Las Vegas 23, Indianapolis 20  
New England 50, Jacksonville 10  
Philadelphia 20, Washington 16  
Tampa Bay 28, N.Y. Jets 24  
Tennessee 66, Miami 3  
L.A. Chargers 34, Denver 13  
San Francisco 23, Houston 7  
Arizona 25, Dallas 22  
New Orleans 18, Carolina 10  
Seattle 51, Detroit 29  
Green Bay 37, Minnesota 10

#### Monday's game

Pittsburgh 26, Cleveland 14

#### Saturday's games

Kansas City at Denver  
Dallas at Philadelphia

#### Sunday's games

Chicago at Minnesota  
Cincinnati at Cleveland  
Green Bay at Detroit  
Indianapolis at Jacksonville  
Pittsburgh at Baltimore  
Tennessee at Houston  
Washington at N.Y. Giants  
Carolina at Tampa Bay  
N.Y. Jets at Buffalo  
New England at Miami  
New Orleans at Atlanta  
San Francisco at L.A. Rams  
Seattle at Arizona  
L.A. Chargers at Las Vegas

#### NFL calendar

**Jan. 15-16** — Wild-card playoff games.  
**Jan. 17** — Deadline for college underclassmen to apply for special entry into the NFL Draft.  
**Jan. 22-23** — Divisional playoff games.  
**Jan. 28** — HBCU combine, Mobile, Ala.  
**Jan. 30** — AFC and NFC championships.  
**Feb. 13** — Super Bowl LVI, Inglewood, Calif.

## COLLEGE BASKETBALL

### Wednesday's men's scores

	EAST					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Adelphi 83, S. Connecticut 71						
Albright 69, Widener 68, OT						
Arcadia 77, Misericordia 61						
Babson 80, Emerson 73						
Bentley 76, St. Michael's 56						
Bloomsburg 86, Lock Haven 79						
Bridgeport 74, Dist. of Columbia 70						
Bridgewater (Mass.) 66, Framingham St. 62						

Buffalo 99, Bowling Green 88						
Charleston (WV) 89, WV Wesleyan 74						
Clark 86, MIT 75, OT						
Davidson 88, Saint Joseph's 73						
East Stroudsburg 113, Mansfield 90						
Fairmont St. 93, Alderson-Broadus 88						
Holy Family 55, Sciences (Pa.) 45						
Hood 89, Lebanon Valley 83						
Indiana (Pa.) 84, California (Pa.) 71						
Merchant Marine 65, SUNY Maritime 56						
Mercyhurst 68, Gannon 63						
Millersville 75, Shepherd 71						
Morgan St. 100, Goucher 41						
Penn St.-York 96, Penn St.-Berks 72						
Penn State-Erie 66, Pitt.-Greensburg 52						
Pitt.-Bradford 75, Mount Aloysius 68						
Pitt.-Johnstown 91, Slippery Rock 87						
Queens (NY) 78, Mercy 51						
Rochester 99, Buffalo St. 57						
Rowan 89, College of NJ 84						
St. John's 89, DePaul 84						
Swarthmore 78, McDaniel 37						
Villanova 75, Creighton 41						
West Liberty 85, Concord 67						
Wheeling Jesuit 92, Glenville St. 83						
Worcester Tech 68, Springfield 52						
Youngstown St. 64, Robert Morris 60						

#### SOUTH

Alabama 83, Florida 70						
Alabama A&M 72, MVSU 67						
Alcorn St. 65, Jackson St. 50						
Benedict 54, Lane 51						
Chattanooga 75, Wofford 67						
Clayton St. 85, Young Harris 69						
E. Mennonite 91, Washington & Lee 83						
ETSU 80, VMI 79						
East Carolina 88, Tulane 80						
FIU 68, Bethune-Cookman 65						
Flagler 75, Columbus St. 67						
Florida Gulf Coast 74, North Florida 67						
Furman 58, UNC-Greensboro 54						
Gardner-Webb 88, Charleston Southern 63						

Houston 83, South Florida 66						
Lincoln Memorial 82, Newberry 64						
Longwood 109, Pfeiffer 69						
Louisville 75, Pittsburgh 72						
Mercer 83, Samford 80						
Miami 88, Syracuse 87						
NC A&T 65, Presbyterian 57						
North Georgia 72, Georgia Southwestern 60						
Nova Southeastern 89, Lynn 72						
Queens (NC) 71, Lenoir-Rhyne 56						
Richmond 80, UMass 72						
SC-Aiken 74, Lander 73						
Tampa 88, St. Leo 80						
Temple 66, UCF 62						
Tennessee 66, Mississippi 60, OT						
Texas Southern 67, Grambling St. 61						
Tusculum 65, Wingate 60						
UNC-Asheville 60, Campbell 54						
W. Carolina 94, The Citadel 90						
West Georgia 73, Delta St. 66						

## COLLEGE FOOTBALL

### Bowl Glance

<b>Saturday, Dec. 25</b> <b>Camellia Bowl</b> <b>Montgomery, Ala.</b> Georgia St. 51, Ball St. 20	<b>Monday, Dec. 27</b> <b>Quick Lane Bowl</b> <b>Detroit</b> W. Michigan 52, Nevada 24	<b>Military Bowl</b> <b>Annapolis, Md.</b> Boston College (6-6) vs. East Carolina (7-5), canceled	<b>Tuesday, Dec. 28</b> <b>Birmingham Bowl</b> <b>Birmingham, Ala.</b> No. 21 Houston 17, Auburn 13	<b>SERVPRO First Responder Bowl</b> <b>Dallas</b> Air Force 31, Louisville 28	<b>Liberty Bowl</b> <b>Memphis, Tenn.</b> Texas Tech 34, Mississippi St. 7	<b>Holiday Bowl</b> <b>San Diego</b> UCLA (8-4) vs. No. 18 NC State (9-3), canceled	<b>Guaranteed Rate Bowl</b> <b>Phoenix</b> Minnesota 18, West Virginia 6	<b>Wednesday, Dec. 29</b> <b>Fenway Bowl</b> <b>Boston</b> Virginia (6-6) vs. SMU (8-4), canceled	<b>Pinstripe Bowl</b> <b>New York</b> Maryland 54, Virginia Tech 10	<b>Cheez-It Bowl</b> <b>Orlando, Fla.</b> No. 19 Clemson 20, Iowa St. 13	<b>Alamo Bowl</b> <b>San Antonio</b> No. 14 Oklahoma 47, No. 15 Oregon 32	<b>Thursday, Dec. 30</b> <b>Duke's Mayo Bowl</b> <b>Charlotte, N.C.</b> South Carolina 38, North Carolina 21	<b>Music City Bowl</b> <b>Nashville</b> Purdue 48, Tennessee 45, OT	<b>Peach Bowl</b> <b>Atlanta</b> North Dakota St. vs. Montana St.
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	MIDWEST					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Albion 70, Calvin 62						
Blackburn 64, Spalding 60						
Capital 59, Wilmington (Ohio) 50						
Cleveland St. 65, Fort Wayne 58						
Concordia (Ill.) 87, Lakeland 82						
Dubuque 71, Coe 63						
Edgewood 75, Benedictine (Ill.) 72						
Eureka 79, Westminster (Mo.) 76						
Hanover 77, Mount St. Joseph 72						
Illinois Tech 76, Dominican 72						
Iowa St. 51, Texas Tech 47						
Manchester 87, Anderson (Ind.) 84						
Marietta 92, Muskingum 72						
Michigan St. 79, Nebraska 67						
Milwaukee 63, Green Bay 49						
Missouri St. 71, Bradley 69						
N. Iowa 92, Valparaiso 65						
Notre Dame (Ohio) 94, Frostburg St. 86						
Notre Dame 78, North Carolina 73						
Ohio Wesleyan 89, Hiram 83						
Olivet 92, Adrian 85						
Otterbein 57, Ohio Northern 53						
Penn St. 74, Northwestern 70						
Rose-Hulman 71, Franklin 64						
St. Norbert 79, Wis. Lutheran 67						
VCU 53, Dayton 52						

#### SOUTHWEST

Ark.-Pine Bluff 70, Alabama St. 68						
Embry-Riddle (AZ) 113, Florida Southern 89						

#### FAR WEST

Long Beach St. 90, Westcliff 64						
N. Arizona 101, Embry-Riddle (AZ) 54						

### Wednesday's women's scores

	EAST					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
American 66, Colgate 52						
Boston U. 64, Loyola (Md.) 51						
Lehigh 62, Army 55						
Maine 65, Hartford 44						
Navy 57, Bucknell 55						
Northeastern 77, UNC-Wilmington 67						
Richmond 66, George Washington 63						
Vermont 60, New Hampshire 37						

#### SOUTH

Alabama A&M 65, MVSU 56						
E. Kentucky 61, Cent. Arkansas 46						
Florida Gulf Coast 88, North Florida 57						
Gardner-Webb 99, Charleston Southern 62						

Jackson St. 75, Alcorn St. 49						
Jacksonville St. 72, Bellarmine 63						
Liberty 65, Stetson 49						
Longwood 62, UNC-Asheville 57						
Southern U. 89, Prairie View 52						
Texas Southern 73, Grambling St. 66						
Tulsa 72, Memphis 69						
UCF 54, Tulane 47						
VCU 74, Duquesne 70, OT						

#### MIDWEST

Akron 62, Kent St. 61						
Ball St. 83, N. Illinois 82, OT						
Buffalo 82, Bowling Green 66						
Houston 66, Wichita St. 61						
Indiana 76, Wisconsin 53						
South Florida 61, Cincinnati 46						
Toledo 64, E. Michigan 48						
W. Michigan 58, Cent. Michigan 44						

#### SOUTHWEST

Alabama St. 54, Ark.-Pine Bluff 40						
Iowa St. 81, Oklahoma 71						
Kansas St. 60, Oklahoma St. 49						
Texas A&M-CC 61, Houston Baptist 56						
Texas Tech 74, Texas 61						

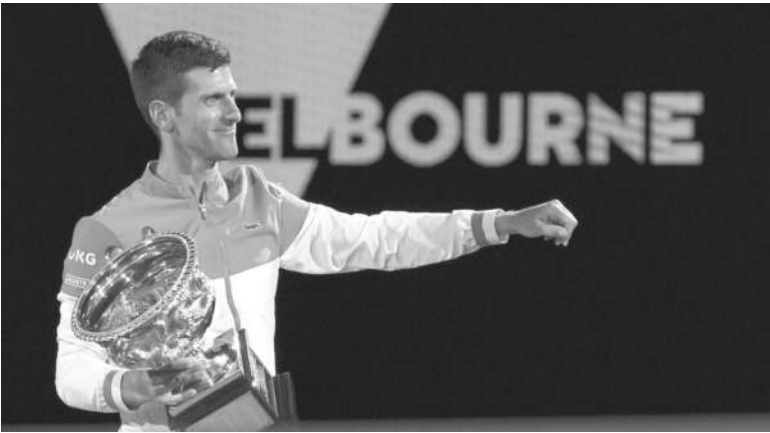
No. 11 Michigan St. 31, No. 13 Pittsburgh 21						
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<b>Las Vegas Bowl</b> <b>Las Vegas</b> Wisconsin 20, Arizona St. 13	<b>Friday, Dec. 31</b> <b>College Football Playoff Semifinal</b> <b>Cotton Bowl Classic</b> <b>Arlington, Texas</b> No. 1 Alabama 27, No. 4 Cincinnati 6	<b>College Football Playoff Semifinal</b> <b>Orange Bowl</b> <b>Miami Gardens, Fla.</b> No. 3 Georgia 34, No. 2 Michigan 11	<b>Gator Bowl</b> <b>Jacksonville, Fla.</b> No. 20 Wake Forest 38, Rutgers 10
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<b>Sun Bowl</b> <b>El Paso, Texas</b> Cent. Michigan 24, Washington St. 21	<b>Arizona Bowl</b> 
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TENNIS/NHL



MARK DADSWELL/AP

**Novak Djokovic celebrates after winning the singles final at last year's Australian Open. Djokovic was detained upon arrival to Australia. A court hearing on his bid to stave off deportation was set for Monday.**

Djokovic in limbo, awaits court ruling

**BY JOHN PYE**  
*Associated Press*

Locked in a dispute over his COVID-19 vaccination status, Novak Djokovic was confined to an immigration detention hotel in Australia on Thursday as the No. 1 men's tennis player in the world awaited a court ruling on whether he can compete in the Australian Open later this month.

Djokovic, a vocal skeptic of vaccines, had traveled to Australia after Victoria state authorities granted him an exemption to the country's strict vaccination requirements. But when he arrived late Wednesday, the Australian Border Force rejected his exemption as invalid and barred him from entering the country.

A court hearing on his bid to stave off deportation was set for Monday, while the 34-year-old Serb and defending Australian Open champion was forced to wait it out in Melbourne at a secure hotel used by immigration officials to house asylum seekers and refugees.

The tournament begins on Jan. 17. Djokovic is hoping to overtake rivals Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer in the record books and win his 21st Grand Slam singles title, the most by any player in men's tennis.

Djokovic's bid to get around the vaccine requirements so that he could play has caused an uproar and triggered allegations of special treatment in Australia, where people spent months in lockdown and endured harsh travel restrictions at the height of the pandemic.

After his long-haul flight, Djokovic spent the night trying to convince authorities he had the necessary documentation, to no avail.

"The rule is very clear," Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said. "You need to have a medical exemption. He didn't have a valid medical exemption. We make the call at the border, and

that's where it's enforced."

Health Minister Greg Hunt said the athlete's visa was canceled after border officials reviewed Djokovic's medical exemption and looked at "the integrity and the evidence behind it."

While Djokovic has spoken out against vaccines, he has steadfastly refused to say whether he has gotten any shots against the coronavirus, though it is widely presumed he would not have sought an exemption if he had been vaccinated.

Federal Circuit Judge Anthony Kelly adjourned Djokovic's case to Monday. A lawyer for the government agreed the nine-time Australian Open champion should not be deported before then.

"I feel terrible since yesterday that they are keeping him as a prisoner. It's not fair. It's not human. I hope that he will win," Djokovic's mother, Dijana, said after speaking with him briefly by telephone from Belgrade.

She added: "Terrible, terrible accommodation. It's just some small immigration hotel, if it's hotel at all."

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said that he had spoken to Djokovic and that his government asked that the athlete be allowed to move to a house he has rented and "not to be in that infamous hotel."

He added that Djokovic has been treated differently from other players.

"I'm afraid that this overkill will continue," Vucic said. "When you can't beat someone, then you do such things."

Asked about the confusion in Djokovic's case, Morrison said the onus is on the traveler to have the proper documentation on arrival.

The prime minister rejected any suggestion that Djokovic was being singled out but acknowledged that other players may be in Australia on the same type of medical exemption.

NHL scoreboard

Eastern Conference								
Atlantic Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Tampa Bay	35	22	8	5	49	116	103	
Florida	33	22	7	4	48	128	97	
Toronto	32	22	8	2	46	108	78	
Boston	29	17	10	2	36	85	76	
Detroit	34	16	15	3	35	96	114	
Buffalo	33	10	17	6	26	89	116	
Ottawa	29	9	18	2	20	79	107	
Montreal	34	7	23	4	18	73	123	
Metropolitan Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
N.Y. Rangers	34	22	8	4	48	101	85	
Washington	34	20	6	8	48	119	89	
Carolina	31	23	7	1	47	106	66	
Pittsburgh	32	19	8	5	43	104	84	
Philadelphia	33	13	14	6	32	86	110	
Columbus	31	15	15	1	31	101	112	
New Jersey	34	13	16	5	31	99	121	
N.Y. Islanders	28	10	12	6	26	64	80	
Western Conference								
Central Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Nashville	34	21	11	2	44	104	91	
St. Louis	34	19	10	5	43	119	96	
Colorado	29	19	8	2	40	123	96	
Minnesota	31	19	10	2	40	116	98	
Winnipeg	32	16	11	5	37	98	92	
Dallas	29	15	12	2	32	82	85	
Chicago	33	11	17	5	27	77	112	
Arizona	31	6	22	3	15	64	120	
Pacific Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Vegas	36	22	13	1	45	129	110	
Anaheim	36	18	11	7	43	111	99	
Calgary	31	17	8	6	40	100	73	
Edmonton	34	18	14	2	38	113	111	
Los Angeles	33	16	12	5	37	91	89	
San Jose	34	17	16	1	35	96	108	
Vancouver	34	16	15	3	35	89	95	
Seattle	33	10	19	4	24	92	122	
Wednesday's games								
Toronto 4, Edmonton 2								
Pittsburgh 5, St. Louis 3								
N.Y. Islanders at Vancouver, ppd								
Thursday's games								
Calgary at Tampa Bay								
Columbus at New Jersey								
Minnesota at Boston								
Pittsburgh at Philadelphia								
San Jose at Buffalo								
Toronto at Montreal, ppd								
Florida at Dallas								
Chicago at Arizona								
Winnipeg at Colorado								
Detroit at Anaheim								
N.Y. Rangers at Vegas								
Ottawa at Seattle, ppd								
Nashville at Los Angeles								
Friday's games								
Calgary at Carolina								
Washington at St. Louis								
Saturday's games								
Pittsburgh at Dallas								
Boston at Tampa Bay								
Buffalo at Montreal, ppd								
Florida at Carolina								
New Jersey at Columbus								
San Jose at Philadelphia								
Seattle at Winnipeg, ppd								
Toronto at Colorado								
Nashville at Arizona								
Washington at Minnesota								
Chicago at Vegas								
N.Y. Islanders at Edmonton, ppd								
N.Y. Rangers at Anaheim								
Ottawa at Vancouver								
Detroit at Los Angeles								

McDavid misses loss; Stars finally return

**BY STEPHEN HAWKINS**  
*Associated Press*

Edmonton captain and reigning league MVP Connor McDavid went on the NHL's COVID-19 protocol list Wednesday, while the Dallas Stars and their captain Jamie Benn prepared to return to the ice after missing six games over 2 ½ weeks because of virus issues.

McDavid, forward Derek Ryan and defenseman Tyson Barrie were placed in COVID-19 protocols before the Oilers' game Wednesday night at Toronto.

The Maple Leafs beat Edmonton 4-2, handing the Oilers their 11th loss in 13 games. Ilya Mikheyev scored the tiebreaking goal on power play in the third period.

McDavid hadn't missed any of Edmonton's first 33 games. Maple Leafs star Auston Matthews was cleared for that game after a second false positive scare in recent weeks.

On Wednesday night, the NHL postponed three more games in Canadian cities because of the current attendance restrictions in some provinces. The league said the games — New Jersey at Montreal on Saturday night, New Jersey at Toronto on Jan. 17 and Chicago at Edmonton on Jan. 18 — will be rescheduled for later in the season when such restrictions may be eased or lifted.

Vancouver center Elias Pettersson was placed into the protocols

Wednesday. He's is the fifth Canucks player added to the protocols in a week, following Brock Boeser, Phillip Di Giuseppe, Justin Dowling and Jason Dickinson.

Dallas was getting ready to play for the first time in 17 days after Benn and 10 other Stars went through COVID-19 protocols since their last game Dec. 20. The Stars got them all back before a home game Thursday night against Florida.

Dallas returns with two games in less than 48 hours: Pittsburgh visits Saturday.

The 29 games for the Stars match Colorado for the fewest played among Western Conference teams. Vegas and Anaheim, the top two teams in the Pacific Division, have both played 36 games.

"We've got some tough challenges ahead of us, there's no question," Stars coach Rick Bowness said Wednesday. "We're seven games behind Anaheim and Vegas. That's unreal, but 17 days between games is going to do that to you. ... It's nice to sit there and see how we've got those games in hand, but now we're forced to win them just to get back up in the pack."

Dallas won its last two games before its pause that extended well past the NHL's overall shutdown. Before those games, the Stars had a five-game losing streak that followed a season-best seven wins in a row.



BILL KOSTROUN/AP

**The Oilers' Connor McDavid went on the NHL's COVID-19 protocol list and missed Edmonton's game against Toronto on Wednesday.**

Crosby, Rodrigues help Pens remain hot

*Associated Press*

**PITTSBURGH** — The Pittsburgh Penguins have been the NHL's hottest team for the better part of a month. They struggled early against the St. Louis Blues. Sidney Crosby then took over.

Crosby and Evan Rodrigues scored 12 seconds apart in the third period, and the Penguins rallied for a 5-3 win over St. Louis on Wednesday night.

"I thought he was in beast mode tonight," Pittsburgh coach Mike Sullivan said. "When he's playing the game that way, he's the standard bearer for the team."

Bryan Rust scored twice and Brock McGinn also had a goal to help the Penguins win their ninth straight — their longest since winning 15 in a row in March 2013. It is the longest active streak in the league, tying Carolina for the longest of the season. Pittsburgh is 14-2-1 in its last 17 games.

Crosby scored his fifth, Rodrigues his 14th and McGinn his ninth, as the Penguins scored three in the third to erase a 3-2 deficit.

"I give our players so much credit for their resilience," Sullivan said. "Our team has been competing hard consistently. We're not

perfect. We're striving for it."

Casey DeSmith stopped 13 shots, but was pulled after the Blues' third goal. He's allowed three goals or more in 11 of his last 14 games dating to last season. Tristan Jarry, who recently came off the NHL's COVID-19 protocol, stopped all 13 shots in relief.

Brayden Schenn returned from injury to score his fifth of the season and 200th career goal for St. Louis. Jordan Kyrou stayed hot with his 13th of the season, and Vladimir Tarasenko had two assists to extend his point streak to six games.



NBA

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference					
Atlantic Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Brooklyn	24	12	.667	—	
Philadelphia	21	16	.568	3½	
Toronto	18	17	.514	5½	
Boston	18	20	.474	7	
New York	18	20	.474	7	
Southeast Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Miami	24	15	.615	—	
Charlotte	20	19	.513	4	
Washington	19	19	.500	4½	
Atlanta	17	20	.459	6	
Orlando	7	32	.179	17	
Central Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Chicago	25	10	.714	—	
Milwaukee	25	15	.625	2½	
Cleveland	21	17	.553	5½	
Indiana	14	25	.359	13	
Detroit	7	29	.194	18½	
Western Conference					
Southwest Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Memphis	25	14	.641	—	
Dallas	20	18	.526	4½	
San Antonio	15	22	.405	9	
New Orleans	13	25	.342	11½	
Houston	11	28	.282	14	
Northwest Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Utah	28	10	.737	—	
Denver	18	18	.500	9	
Minnesota	18	20	.474	10	
Portland	14	23	.378	13½	
Oklahoma City	13	24	.351	14½	
Pacific Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Golden State	29	8	.784	—	
Phoenix	29	8	.784	—	
L.A. Lakers	20	19	.513	10	
L.A. Clippers	19	19	.500	10½	
Sacramento	16	24	.400	14½	
Wednesday's games					
Charlotte 140, Detroit 111					
Philadelphia 116, Orlando 106					
Houston 114, Washington 111					
San Antonio 99, Boston 97					
Dallas 99, Golden State 82					
Brooklyn 129, Indiana 121					
Minnesota 98, Oklahoma City 90					
Toronto 117, Milwaukee 111					
Utah 115, Denver 109					
Atlanta 108, Sacramento 102					
Miami 115, Portland 109					
Thursday's games					
Boston at New York					
Detroit at Memphis					
Golden State at New Orleans					
L.A. Clippers at Phoenix					
Friday's games					
San Antonio at Philadelphia					
Milwaukee at Brooklyn					
Utah at Toronto					
Dallas at Houston					
Minnesota at Oklahoma City					
Washington at Chicago					
Sacramento at Denver					
Atlanta at L.A. Lakers					
Cleveland at Portland					
Saturday's games					
Memphis at L.A. Clippers					
Milwaukee at Charlotte					
Orlando at Detroit					
Utah at Indiana					
New York at Boston					
Miami at Phoenix					
Sunday's games					
San Antonio at Brooklyn					
Atlanta at L.A. Clippers					
New Orleans at Toronto					
Washington at Orlando					
Denver at Oklahoma City					
Minnesota at Houston					
Chicago at Dallas					
Cleveland at Golden State					
Sacramento at Portland					
Memphis at L.A. Lakers					
Leaders					
Through Wednesday					
Scoring					
	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Durant, BKN	31	338	194	929	30.0
Young, ATL	33	321	202	937	28.4
Antetokmpo, MIL	31	307	220	866	27.9
Rebounds					
	G	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVG
Gobert, UTA	37	130	427	557	15.1
Jokic, DEN	31	81	359	440	14.2

Irving is a shot in the arm for Nets

Unvaccinated guard scores 22 in road win over Pacers in his debut

By BRIAN MAHONEY  
Associated Press

Kyrie Irving was just the jolt the Brooklyn Nets needed to escape a midseason slump.

He can only provide it on a part-time basis, as his refusal to get vaccinated against the coronavirus means he can't play in New York. So for now, Irving will enjoy every chance he gets on the road — while still holding out hope he'll be able to put on a show for his own fans.

"I know what the consequences were, I still know what they are," Irving said Wednesday night. "But right now, I'm just going to take it one day at a time, like I said, and just enjoy this time that I get to play with my guys."

"However it looks later in the season, then we'll address it then."

Irving scored 22 points in his first game of the season, helping the Nets rally for a 129-121 road victory over the Indiana Pacers.

After being held out of the team's first 35 games because he refused to get vaccinated, Irving started and played 32 minutes in his highly anticipated season debut.

"The game of basketball is hap-



DARRON CUMMINGS/AP

Brooklyn guard Kyrie Irving, right, is defended by the Pacers' Duane Washington Jr. during the Nets' 129-121 win Wednesday in Indianapolis. Irving had 22 points in his first game this season.

py to have him back," said teammate and close friend Kevin Durant, who scored 39 points.

Irving is unable to play at home because of New York City's vaccination mandate and had been unwelcome on the road. The Nets didn't want a part-time player, so

sent him away during the preseason.

Things changed. A recent COVID-19 outbreak left Brooklyn severely short-handed and it decided having the superstar half the time was a better option than signing lesser players to 10-day hard-

ship contracts.

Irving made it look like the right decision Wednesday.

"It felt like he's been playing all season," fellow All-Star guard James Harden said.

AP Sports Writer Michael Marot in Indianapolis contributed to this report.

AROUND THE NBA

Eastern rookies show plenty of promise

By NOAH TRISTER  
Associated Press

Cade Cunningham and Franz Wagner are giving the Eastern Conference's bottom two teams reasons for optimism.

The Detroit Pistons and Orlando Magic have seven victories apiece this season, but they also have two of the NBA's top rookies. Detroit took Cunningham No. 1 overall in last year's draft, and the former Oklahoma State star has impressed with his all-around contributions. Wagner went to the Magic at No. 8. The Michigan product leads all rookies, averaging 15.8 points per game.

In fact, four of the game's top newcomers reside in the East. Evan Mobley of Cleveland and Scottie Barnes of Toronto are ranked 1-2 among rookies in rebounds per game.

"It seems like a strong group," said Milwaukee coach Mike Budenholzer, whose team allowed 38 points to Wagner last Tuesday. "We've played Cleveland multiple times and talked about Mobley and what a big impact he's having on the game. The game Wagner had the other night was about as impressive as I've seen from a rookie in a long time. Cunningham, as a first pick, is somebody who's kind of been in and out, and I think the second time we played him he was a lot better. Tonight we get to learn more and see more."

Budenholzer made those comments prior to Monday night's clash between the Bucks and Pistons. Detroit upset the defending champs behind 19 points and seven assists from Cuning-



AARON GASH/AP

Detroit Pistons guard Cade Cunningham, right, is averaging 15.4 points, 6.0 rebounds and 4.0 assists as a rookie.

ham. The rookie guard did have five turnovers, something that's been an issue for him.

"It's about where rookie point guards usually are, in that situation," Pistons coach Dwane Casey said. "It's like a rookie quarterback in football. It's tough. But that's what this year is all about, is him growing."

Cunningham is averaging 15.4 points, 6.0 rebounds and 5.3 assists, although his arrival hasn't helped Detroit's record much. Mobley, on the other hand, is part of a resurgence in Cleveland. The Cavaliers, who went 22-50 last season, are

21-17 now.

Mobley, the third pick in the draft out of Southern California, is averaging 14.8 points and 8.2 rebounds while shooting 50% from the field.

"His ability and poise with the ball, he just never gets sped up," said Pacers coach Rick Carlisle, whose team lost to Cleveland on Sunday night, thanks in part to Mobley's 24 points and nine rebounds. "I marvel at his skills at such a young age."

Barnes was the fourth pick in the draft out of Florida State. He is averaging 15.1 points and 8.1 rebounds.

Wagner, a big contributor on both offense and defense in college, has been quite an addition for the Magic, who could use a few bright spots to distract from their league-worst 7-32 record. Wagner is one of three ex-Michigan players with Orlando, along with his older brother Moe and Iggy Brazdeikis.

Wagner has played in all 39 of his team's games this season. Other rookies haven't been as fortunate. Cunningham, Barnes and Mobley have all spent time in health and safety protocols. Earlier this season, Mobley missed four games with an elbow injury, and Cleveland lost them all.

"At his age, and his level of experience, his intellect far outweighs what you see," Cavs coach J.B. Bickerstaff said. "Not only is he extremely bright, he picks up things quickly and he can pick them up in the moment."



## OLYMPICS

# IOC tells teams Beijing Olympics will go ahead

By GRAHAM DUNBAR  
Associated Press

GENEVA—A day after Switzerland's team leader asked for talks about possibly postponing the Beijing Olympics because of the coronavirus pandemic, the IOC promised officials worldwide on Wednesday the Winter Games will go ahead as planned.

The Swiss Olympic committee said the IOC gave assurances about staging next month's event during a video conference call with teams.

The International Olympic Committee also promised case-by-case assessments of athletes who recover after testing positive for COVID-19 ahead of traveling to China, the Swiss team said in a statement.

"The issue of a postponement is no longer relevant to all of us," Swiss team leader Ralph Stöckli said in the statement.

The International Olympic Committee is hoping to avoid a second straight delay. The Tokyo Games, originally scheduled to be held in 2020, were postponed by one year. That decision was made four months before the scheduled opening ceremony.

However, Stöckli raised concerns about going ahead with the Beijing Olympics amid rising numbers of athletes being infected by COVID-19 when speaking Tuesday in a Swiss television interview.

"We must really discuss the possibility of a postponement of the Games," Stöckli had told French-

language state broadcaster RTS. "If we don't have the best athletes there, that's going to be very, very difficult."

After listening to the IOC on Wednesday, the Swiss Olympic team said it is "happy to now have some certainty on this subject."

Another Swiss concern that was eased Wednesday related to waiting times after recovering from a COVID-19 infection before an athlete would be allowed to enter China. The IOC and Chinese organizers announced that a panel of international experts will evaluate individual cases and handle the issue in a "more flexible manner," the Swiss team said.

"It's a positive signal," Stöckli said, otherwise given the high current case rates "we would have had to assume many athletes, no longer presenting any risk of infection, would have been deprived of their dream of participating in the Olympic Games."

Still, the team noted "very demanding" conditions to compete, qualify and prepare with the opening ceremony on Feb. 4 only 30 days away.

Stöckli acknowledged Wednesday "there will probably be disappointments" for athletes who end up being unable to compete.

Beijing organizers and the IOC are creating a health safety bubble for the Olympics with stricter testing and limits on travel and movement than were enforced at last year's Tokyo Games.



JOHN LOCHER/AP

Alysa Liu performs during the women's free skate at the 2021 U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Las Vegas. She is going for her third consecutive national title and first Olympic berth.

## Liu eyes 3rd US figure skating title, but her 1st Olympic berth

By DAVE SKRETTA  
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Alysa Liu already has won a pair of U.S. figure skating championships, breaking Tara Lipinski's record for the youngest winner at age 13 and then defending her title with an incredible free skate the following year in North Carolina.

No wonder the sprightly skater from Northern California isn't feeling much pressure at nationals this week.

"I think I've basically blocked out, like, everybody's expectations of me," said Liu, now 16. "I don't know how I did it. But last year I really changed my point of view. And I don't really feel that much pressure. I'm not really nervous, ei-

ther.

"Actually," she said, "this feels better than all the other nationals I went to."

Which is a good thing.

There's more at stake than ever before.

Liu wasn't old enough to qualify for the 2018 Pyeongchang Games, so this week represents her first chance to earn a spot on the U.S. Olympic team. And while she has yet to perform to her own lofty standards or expectations this season, Liu still represents the best chance for an American woman to knock the heavily favored Russian team from one of the podium steps at the Beijing Games next month.

Liu's season-best score of 219.24 points at the Lombardia Trophy, a

competition a level down from Grand Prix events, would be the fifth best of any potential competitor in China. And while the gap to Russian record-setter Kamila Valieva is about as wide as the Pacific Ocean, the gap to a spot on the medals stand certainly is within reach.

All of which makes it counterintuitive that Liu feels so free at this year's national championships, which begin Thursday night at Bridgestone Arena and continue through the weekend.

"I feel the best going into this because I've started to care less about, like, the expectations," Liu said. "So it feels good not to have that pressure, and now skating is more fun."

## Top pairs skaters withdraw from nationals due to COVID-19



JOHN LOCHER/AP

Alexa Knierim and Brandon Frazier react to receiving the top score in the pairs free skate at the 2021 U.S. Figure Skating Championships.

By BARRY WILNER  
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Defending champions Alexa Knierim and Brandon Frazier withdrew from the U.S. Figure Skating Championships on Wednesday night when he tested positive for COVID-19.

The pairs event begins Thursday at what amounts to the U.S. trials for the Beijing Olympic team. Knierim and Frazier, who became a duo last season when her husband, Chris, retired from skating, still could be selected for the Games. They would need to petition to a selection committee and prove they are fit to be chosen.

The United States has two spots in the pairs field for China.

"We're aware of the process and I have been through it before," said Knierim, who successfully petitioned to make the 2017 Four Conti-

nents event after she underwent abdominal surgeries and was sidelined. "It's not a great feeling to go through it for anyone, but we are grateful that our federation has this mechanism."

Knierim competed at the 2018 Winter Games with her husband, finishing 15th.

Frazier tested negative Saturday when he began having symptoms. By Tuesday, he was much more ill, and he tested positive Wednesday. He will need to isolate through the weekend.

"I am devastated," Frazier said. "Any athlete would agree with me, you always want to have the ability to go out and compete. This has been one of the most emotional days of my career. There's nothing you can do, you have to be safe and smart, but the competitor in you wants to go out and compete and defend your title."

Frazier and Knierim are vaccinated and have received boosters. So have their coaches, former U.S. champions Jenni Meno and Todd Sand.

"We feel we provided a safe bubble environment at home, kept the skaters so they weren't cross mixing," Sand said. "We've been extremely careful."

U.S. Figure Skating's process for determining who goes to the Olympics takes into account finishes in key competitions over the past year. Knierim and Frazier have put up the best numbers of any American pairs, and it's not particularly close.

So their chances of having their petition approved would seem relatively strong.

Still, being on the ice showing what Meno called their "great skating" won't be happening in Nashville.



# COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF



BUTCH DILL/AP

Georgia quarterback Stetson Bennett carries the ball against Auburn on Oct. 9, 2021. Bennett, a former walk-on, will lead the Bulldogs against Alabama for the national championship on Sunday.

## Title game pits 5-star QB recruit vs. former walk-on

By STEPHEN HAWKINS  
Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Bryce Young is a former five-star recruit who won the Heisman Trophy in his first season as Alabama's starting quarterback. Stetson Bennett is a former walk-on who became the starter at Georgia and never really lost the confidence of his teammates.

They will meet again in the national championship game after both threw three touchdowns in College Football Playoff semifinal games, only four weeks after Young and the Crimson Tide beat Bennett and the previously undefeated Bulldogs for the Southeastern Conference title.

"It's been a long journey," Bennett said, referring to his entire Georgia career, not just the gap between two crucial interceptions in the SEC title game on Dec. 4 and his offensive MVP performance in the dominating 34-11 Orange Bowl victory over second-ranked Michigan on New Year's Eve. "But like coach (Kirby Smart) said, this game was just so we could play the next game."

That game is scheduled for Jan. 10 in Indianapolis, where the top-ranked defending national champion Crimson Tide and the No. 3 Bulldogs meet in the final game for the second time in five seasons. Both teams are 13-1.

Bennett was a scout team quarterback during the 2017 season when Georgia won the semifinal Rose Bowl before losing in overtime to Alabama in the national



VASHA HUNT/AP

Alabama's Heisman-winning quarterback Bryce Young.

championship game. He left to play a season in junior college before returning to the Bulldogs as a backup, then started half of their games last year and the past 10 this season.

Young sealed the first Heisman Trophy for a Tide quarterback by setting SEC title game records with 421 yards passing and 461 total yards in a 41-24 win over previously undefeated Georgia. That came a week after the 20-year-old sophomore led a late, game-tying 97-yard TD drive in the regular-season finale, a four-OT win at Auburn that kept Alabama in the national championship hunt.

In a 27-6 win Friday over Cincinnati in the CFP semifinal, Young had a season-low 181 yards while completing 17 of 28 passes. But the

Tide had 301 yards rushing against the Bearcats, the first non-Power Five team to make the four-team playoff.

"We want to do what's best for us offensively," said Young, whose 4,503 yards and 46 passing TDs are both single-season 'Bama records. "So for me ... it's amazing to have a night like that."

Bennett completed 29 of 48 passes for 340 yards and three touchdowns in that SEC title game on Dec. 4, but his two interceptions stood out.

After Young's 55-yard TD pass to All-America receiver Jameson Williams to open the second half for a 31-17 lead, the Bulldogs drove inside the 20 before Bennett's first pick. The Tide's Jordan Battle then returned an interception 44 yards early in the fourth quarter for a three-touchdown lead.

There were many questions from outsiders heading into the playoff about Georgia's confidence in Bennett and if JT Daniels, who opened the season as the starter, could replace the former walk-on. But not from inside the program. Bennett completed 21 of 31 passes for 310 yards in the Orange Bowl, and the Bulldogs became the first CFP team to score on each of its first five possessions.

"As a leader on our offense, he doesn't let that negativity go to his head, for real," Georgia running back James Cook said. "Like he said, he ain't got no social media ... and he just let the noise go over his head and play football. That's what I love about him."

## Alabama hoping to buck history in CFP championship

By PAUL NEWBERRY  
Associated Press

A mere 37 days after they last played, Alabama faces Georgia again with a national championship on the line.

History shows how tough it is to win again in the rematch.

Nick Saban knows that firsthand.

During the 2011 season, Saban's Crimson Tide were edged by LSU 9-6 in overtime during the regular season.

When the powerhouses met about two months later in the BCS championship game at New Orleans, Alabama smothered the unbeaten Tigers 21-0.

Now, it's the Tide (13-1) on the other side, looking to beat Georgia (13-1) for the second time in a little over a month after a 41-24 cake-walk in the Southeastern Conference championship game on Dec. 4.

They meet again Monday night at Indianapolis in the College Football Playoff title game, their last meeting separated only by a pair of easy victories in the semifinal bowl games.

Saban tried to shrug off any comparisons to 2011, for obvious reasons.

This time, he's the one who'll have to beat an SEC rival for the second time to finish No. 1.

"Those two games were extremely hard-fought, close games in both circumstances, and I would expect the same in this game," Saban said. "I don't know that there's anything that I can really take from that (2011) experience that's going to have any effect or impact on this one."

The Bulldogs are hoping to replicate a similar scenario from the 2017 season.

They were blown out by Auburn

40-17 during the regular season, but got another crack at the Tigers three weeks later in the SEC championship game.

Again, it was no contest, only the rematch had Georgia romping to a 28-7 victory that sent the Bulldogs to the College Football Playoff.

Georgia coach Kirby Smart conceded that some key things have changed compared to what was on film leading up to this season's SEC championship game.

The Bulldogs can now study what they did wrong in their only loss of the season, as well as an impressive bounce-back victory over Michigan in the Orange Bowl semifinal on New Year's Eve.

"You've got to be careful," Smart said. "What tendencies changed, what matchups we're looking for, who is in, who is out. There's a lot of things that go into it."

There are a couple of reasons why a second meeting during the same season can be so much different than the first.

For one, the team that lost usually has plenty of obvious things it can work on in practice to try to reverse the outcome. Not so for the winning team, which has a natural tendency to stick with what worked so well.

More importantly, perhaps, is the mental side.

A team that lost usually finds it a lot easier to get motivated heading into the rematch.

Rest assured, Georgia — a unanimous No. 1 much of the season — has a huge chip on its shoulders after the way it was manhandled by Alabama last month.

"You can only judge a man by what he does next and how hard he gets hit and gets back up," Georgia linebacker Nolan Smith said. "We got hit pretty hard."



BRYNN ANDERSON/AP

Georgia head coach Kirby Smart speaks with Alabama head coach Nick Saban before the SEC championship game on Dec. 4, 2021.





Fans watch a game between the Packers and the Vikings at Lambeau Field Sunday in Green Bay, Wis. The Packers were 8-0 at home this season, but most NFL teams didn't have a big home advantage.

# Return of crowds did little to boost home advantage

By JOSH DUBOW  
Associated Press

The cheering fans returned to NFL stadiums this season, forcing road teams into silent counts and other coping mechanisms to deal with the noise.

But the home-field advantage that could be expected over road teams that have to deal with travel, time zone changes on occasion, and the din from the loud crowds has once again been missing.

A trend that began the year before the pandemic and continued last season when games were played in mostly empty stadiums has been evident once again in the 2021 season.

Home teams have posted a .510 winning percentage — excluding two games in London — for the third-worst mark since the merger in 1970, with only the .498 winning percentage last season and the .508 in 1972 faring worse.

“I think really winning on the road is not as big of a challenge in my opinion as it was probably 10, 15 years ago,” Dallas coach Mike McCarthy said.

McCarthy pointed to quarterbacks’ comfort from college in using the no-huddle offense and calling the plays at the line of scrimmage to more visiting fans traveling to games among the factors leading to the change.

“I think that the home field is something that is definitely still a benefit but I think the statistics would support that the challenge of winning on the road, I think teams do a better job of it in today’s game,”

**.510**  
Winning percentage this season for home teams in the NFL, excluding two games in London, the third-worst mark since the AFL-NFL merger in 1970, but better than last season’s .498 winning percentage at home.

Source: Associated Press

he said.  
The league was on track for a second straight losing season at home before home teams went 21-11 the past two weeks.

Before a key Week 16 home win against Denver, Raiders interim coach Rich Bisaccia joked that he might take the team out of town before the game because Las Vegas had more success on the road than at home.

The Raiders won that game and got a boost from the crowd, but still are just 6-10 in two seasons at fancy new Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas compared to 11-5 on the road in that same span.

Now they likely need another win at home on Sunday night against the Chargers to clinch a playoff spot.

“We get Raider Nation coming in here. They call them crazy Raider fans; we can’t get enough of them,” Bisaccia said. “We want every one of them and we want them to be loud. Hopefully it’s a ‘black out’ come Sunday night.”

Las Vegas is just one of several potential playoff teams that have struggled winning at home this season. The Patriots posted their first

losing record in 20 seasons at Gillette Stadium, the Saints have gone 2-5 at the Superdome for their worst mark since 1996, and the Cardinals are taking a 3-4 home record and 8-1 road mark into their season finale.

While home field used to traditionally be worth about three points and was reflected that way on betting lines, that has dropped in recent years to just under two points. But that change is a far smaller factor on betting lines than injuries, weather, or in recent weeks outbreaks of COVID-19.

“I would say we’re aware of it, but it really doesn’t play into how we’re going to open the line,” said Adam Burns, the Sportsbook Manager at the Internet gambling company BetOnline.

While the home and road records have been close to even this season, home teams have had the edge when it comes to scoring (23.7 points per game at home to 22 on the road), passer rating (92.0 to 89.1) and penalties (5.9 per game to 6.1).

That wasn’t the case in 2020 when scoring was even and road teams fared slightly better in passing efficiency.

The success of road teams last season carried over to the playoffs when Tampa Bay went into Washington, New Orleans and Green Bay in successive weeks and won to become the fifth team in history to win three road games to make it to the Super Bowl.

AP Pro Football Writers Teresa M. Walker and Schuyler Dixon and Sports Writer Steve Megargee contributed to this report.

## Weekly statistics

AFC individual leaders						NFC individual leaders					
Quarterbacks						Quarterbacks					
	Att	Com	Yds	TD	Int		Att	Com	Yds	TD	Int
Herbert, LAC	608	409	4631	35	14	Brady, TB	682	456	4990	40	12
Carr, Las	590	408	4618	21	14	Stafford, LAR	569	383	4648	38	15
Burrow, Cin	520	366	4611	34	14	Prescott, Dal	569	389	4154	32	10
Mahomes, KC	614	409	4569	35	13	Aa.Rodgers, GB	513	352	3977	35	4
Allen, Buf	601	385	4168	34	15	Cousins, Min	539	358	3971	30	7
M.Jones, NE	491	332	3540	21	12	Ryan, Atl	527	355	3752	19	11
Roethlisberger, Pit	561	360	3496	21	9	K.Murray, Ari	442	305	3547	23	10
Tannehill, Ten	499	334	3447	17	14	Garoppolo, SF	409	278	3494	19	10
Lawrence, Jac	570	336	3418	10	17	Heinicke, Was	476	312	3299	20	15
Wentz, Ind	487	305	3378	26	6	Hurts, Phi	432	265	3144	16	9
Rushers						Rushers					
	Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD		Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Taylor, Ind	317	1734	5.5	83	18	Cook, Min	235	1080	4.6	66	6
Mixon, Cin	292	1205	4.1	32	13	Elliott, Dal	219	915	4.2	47	10
Chubb, Cle	219	1201	5.5	70t	8	Gibson, Was	237	891	3.8	27	6
Harris, Pit	296	1172	4.0	37t	7	Mitchell, SF	186	878	4.7	39	5
Henry, Ten	219	937	4.3	76t	10	Fournette, TB	180	812	4.5	47t	8
Harris, NE	191	892	4.7	64t	14	Michel, LAR	187	802	4.3	39	4
J.Williams, Den	191	857	4.5	49	4	Jones, GB	171	799	4.7	57	4
Ekeler, LAC	190	847	4.5	28	11	Hurts, Phi	139	784	5.6	31	10
Gordon, Den	191	808	4.2	70t	7	Montgomery, Chi	205	777	3.8	41	7
Singletary, Buf	169	782	4.6	46t	6	Sanders, Phi	137	754	5.5	38	0
Receivers						Receivers					
	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD		No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Chase, Cin	79	1429	18.1	82t	13	Kupp, LAR	138	1829	13.3	59	15
Andrews, Bal	99	1276	12.9	43	9	Jefferson, Min	103	1509	14.7	56	9
Hill, KC	110	1237	11.2	75t	9	Adams, GB	117	1498	12.8	59	11
Diggs, Buf	94	1144	12.2	61	9	Samuel, SF	73	1310	17.9	83	6
D.Johnson, Pit	100	1110	11.1	50t	8	Godwin, TB	98	1103	11.3	44	5
Higgins, Cin	74	1091	14.7	54	6	Lockett, Sea	68	1077	15.8	69t	6
Kelce, KC	88	1091	12.4	69	8	Moore, Car	86	1070	12.4	64	4
Allen, LAC	100	1086	10.9	42	6	Lamb, Dal	77	1057	13.7	49t	6
Williams, LAC	67	1027	15.3	72t	8	Pitts, Atl	66	1018	15.4	61	1
Renfrow, Las	99	1025	10.4	54	7	McLaurin, Was	73	960	13.2	46	5
Punters						Punters					
	No	Yds	Lg	Avg			No	Yds	Lg	Avg	
Cole, Las	60	3021	71	50.4		Fox, Det	63	3101	70	49.2	
Bailey, NE	46	2178	71	47.3		Way, Was	54	2656	66	49.2	
Scoring						Scoring					
Touchdowns						Touchdowns					
	TDRush	Rec	Ret	Pts			TDRush	Rec	Ret	Pts	
Taylor, Ind	20	18	2	0	120	Conner, Ari	16	14	2	0	96
Ekeler, LAC	18	11	7	0	108	Kupp, LAR	15	0	15	0	90
Kicking						Kicking					
	PAT	FG	LG	Pts			PAT	FG	LG	Pts	
Folk, NE	39/44	35/38	53	144		Gay, LAR	45/46	31/33	55	138	
Carlson, Las	28/31	35/38	56	133		Joseph, Min	32/36	32/37	55	128	
AFC team statistics						NFC team statistics					
AVERAGE PER GAME						AVERAGE PER GAME					
OFFENSE						OFFENSE					
	Yards	Rush	Pass				Yards	Rush	Pass		
Kansas City	397.2	113.8	283.5			Tampa Bay	405.8	99.2	306.6		
L.A. Chargers	387.1	109.3	277.8			Dallas	402.8	121.8	281.0		
Buffalo	379.3	127.4	251.9			L.A. Rams	378.8	101.2	277.6		
Baltimore	378.7	139.4	239.3			Arizona	377.9	122.4	255.6		
Cincinnati	372.7	103.9	268.8			San Francisco	371.1	126.9	244.2		
Las Vegas	364.9	90.2	274.7			Green Bay	364.8	111.1	253.7		
Indianapolis	354.2	152.9	201.4			Minnesota	364.8	114.1	250.7		
New England	351.8	126.1	225.8			Philadelphia	362.8	160.4	202.4		
Tennessee	338.6	142.5	196.1			Washington	323.6	114.7	208.9		
Cleveland	338.4	141.6	196.8			Detroit	317.5	111.7	205.8		
Denver	328.4	114.6	213.8			Seattle	317.2	117.0	200.2		
N.Y. Jets	322.2	101.2	221.0			Atlanta	306.7	86.8	219.9		
Pittsburgh	315.4	94.0	221.4			Chicago	304.3	120.5	183.8		
Miami	307.6	85.8	221.8			New Orleans	300.5	112.2	188.2		
Jacksonville	304.6	103.4	201.2			Carolina	297.8	108.2	189.5		
Houston	273.4	84.9	188.5			N.Y. Giants	293.9	99.6	194.3		
DEFENSE						DEFENSE					
	Yards	Rush	Pass				Yards	Rush	Pass		
Buffalo	286.5	113.6	172.9			Carolina	299.5	115.6	183.9		
New England	311.6	119.2	192.4			San Francisco	312.8	106.0	206.8		
Cleveland	319.6	111.1	208.5			Chicago	315.6	126.4	189.1		
Denver	322.1	109.8	212.3			Philadelphia	319.7	103.9	215.8		
Tennessee	328.4	85.9	242.5			New Orleans	322.1	95.4	226.6		
Las Vegas	330.8	116.1	214.6			Arizona	322.9	109.4	213.5		
Miami	334.9	108.3	226.6			Green Bay	323.4	109.8	213.7		
Indianapolis	344.8	109.6	235.2			Tampa Bay	332.4	91.4	240.9		
Cincinnati	349.2	96.1	253.2			L.A. Rams	338.4	101.2	237.2		
Pittsburgh	359.9	139.6	220.2			Dallas	353.2	110.6	242.7		
Jacksonville	360.6	127.1	233.5			N.Y. Giants	356.7	122.9	233.8		
L.A. Chargers	361.0	136.7	224.3			Atlanta	364.1	127.9	236.1		
Baltimore	366.5	84.8	281.7			Washington	370.7	105.1	265.6		
Kansas City	369.2	113.0	256.2			Detroit	379.9	135.9	244.0		
Houston	383.1	143.4	239.8			Seattle	383.8	113.4	270.4		
N.Y. Jets	396.0	136.3	259.7			Minnesota	385.4	133.2	252.1		



## NFL



JEFF BOTTARI/AP

Raiders quarterback Derek Carr celebrates after a touchdown against the Denver Broncos on Dec. 26, 2021, in Las Vegas.

## Start: Raiders can make playoffs for second time in past 19 seasons with win

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lowed a 5-2 start to the campaign left the Raiders near the bottom of the AFC standings.

Suddenly, though, a three-game win streak — including road wins in Cleveland and Indianapolis after Carr led last-minute, game-winning drives — has Las Vegas on the brink of pulling off what seemed unimaginable less than a month ago.

The Raiders will make the playoffs for the second time in the past 19 seasons with a win. They also could sneak in with a loss if both Indianapolis and Pittsburgh lose, but the most direct path to extending the season would be win No. 57 for Carr.

Not to mention give Carr his first opportunity to compete in the playoffs.

Las Vegas was 12-3 when Carr went down with a broken leg in 2016 and wasn't able to play in the postseason. The Raiders, who are 44-67 since then, are 56-70 during Carr's career.

While there's no been no denying his ability to lead game-winning drives during his career, a win Sunday could silence the detractors who've questioned whether Carr is a quarterback who can lead a franchise to a championship, let alone the postseason.

Carr is one of 89 quarterbacks to start 100 or more games during the Super Bowl era (126). He joins Ryan Fitzpatrick (147) and Archie Manning (139 starts) as the only ones never to appear in a playoff game.

"He's definitely ready for this,"

Las Vegas defensive end Yannick Ngakoue said. "Just seeing over the course of these last couple of weeks, just the confidence and fire that I see from him. I love it. Super happy for him to be in this moment and I know he's going to get the job done."

Despite the tumultuous off-field distractions the Raiders have dealt with following Jon Gruden's sudden resignation over an email scandal in October and star receiver Henry Ruggs III's release after a fatal DUI crash in November, Carr has continued to be the face of the franchise.

He's been a leader in the locker room and helped the team overcome adversity along the way while putting together a rather impressive season statistically. He ranks fourth in the NFL with 4,618 yards passing this season.

Carr hasn't been quite as sharp of late, turning the ball over at least twice in his last four starts as the Raiders have scored more than 17 points just twice in the past nine games.

But Carr has stepped up in key spots, leading fourth-quarter comebacks to beat both the Browns and Colts.

"What I love about Derek is when things get real, when things get like, 'it's time to go,' he got it done," linebacker KJ Wright said. "We know this game is going to be tight. We know it'll probably come down to a two-minute drill, and I know Derek Carr is going to find a way to get it done. He's a quarterback I always respected. Hopefully, we can just seal this deal and get this thing started."

## Titans' Henry cleared to practice

BY TERESA M. WALKER  
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Tennessee Titans have made the easy move opening the 21-day window for Derrick Henry to practice Wednesday.

The next decision, particularly the timing, will be more challenging.

Taking the 2020 AP NFL Offensive Player of the Year off injured reserve by Sunday means he could help beat Houston, clinching the AFC's No. 1 seed. Waiting means the Titans try to earn the first-round bye without Henry, giving him more time to shake off the rust from missing the past nine weeks with a broken right foot.

"See how he responds and ask him to start doing some of those things that he's going to need to do in the football game," coach Mike Vrabel said Wednesday. "No different than what we have done with any other guy that's come back from the injured reserve and as they start their return to play."

Tennessee has to balance Henry's health against the benefits of playing in a game compared to the quality of work available in practices at the end of the NFL regular season.

"We will try to do everything we can for the players that are coming back to try to recreate, to give them the confidence and the trust that they can go out there and do their job," Vrabel said. "We try and do that with every player that is returning."



WADE PAYNE/AP

Titans running back Derrick Henry has missed the past nine weeks with a broken right foot. Tennessee's 2020 AP NFL Offensive Player of the Year was cleared to practice on Wednesday.

Henry, who turned 28 on Tuesday, broke his right foot Oct. 31 and had surgery Nov. 2 to repair his fifth metatarsal. Henry led the league with 937 yards rushing when he was put on injured reserve, and the NFL's 2019 and 2020 rushing leader still ranks sixth in the league despite missing eight games.

The 6-foot-3, 247-pound Henry has been out nine weeks counting the Titans' bye Dec. 5. Henry is averaging a league-high 117.1 yards a game. He is averaging 4.3 yards per carry with 10 touchdowns rushing.

Tennessee (11-5) clinched its second straight AFC South championship last week with a 34-3 rout of Miami. A win Sunday over the

Texans (4-12) would give the Titans the franchise's third No. 1 seed in the AFC since leaving Texas and first since 2008. Even better would be practice for Henry.

But Henry has 461 yards rushing with five TDs combined in his past two games in Houston.

One factor could be the Texans play on an artificial surface, similar to Indianapolis where Henry played his most recent game. Using more of the 21-day window would allow Henry to return on natural grass in Nashville in the wild-card round at worst and divisional round with the bye as the No. 1 seed at best.

"There's a lot of factors that go into decisions that we make," Vrabel said.

## Brown says he was forced to play injured by Buccaneers

BY FRED GOODALL  
Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Antonio Brown says he didn't quit on the Tampa Bay Buccaneers during the middle of a game, but rather he was cut after refusing to play through an ankle injury that sidelined him for several weeks this season.

The oft-troubled wide receiver, who took off his jersey, shoulder pads and undershirt before walking off the sideline during a game Sunday against the New York Jets, said in a statement released by his attorney that he was pressured to play and coach Bruce Arians fired him when the player told the coach he was not able to re-enter the game because of his ankle.

While not specifying which ankle was hurt, Brown — through a statement released by his attorney Wednesday — said an MRI performed Monday showed broken bone fragments, a ligament tear and cartilage loss "which are beyond painful. You can see the bone bulging from the outside."



ADAM HUNGER/AP

**Former Tampa Bay Bucs WR Antonio Brown sits courtside for an NBA game between the Memphis Grizzlies and Brooklyn Nets, Monday, in New York.**

Arians said the day after the game that Brown did not claim he was injured when he refused to continue playing against the Jets.

The coach declined to discuss specifics of the conversation on the sideline and said he had "no clue" why the receiver reacted by storming off the field, tossing some of his gear into the stands and waving to fans at MetLife Stadium.

Brown told a different story in his statement.

"Because of my commitment to the game, I relented to pressure directly from my coach to play injured," he said. "Despite the pain, I suited up, the staff injected me with what I now know was a powerful and sometimes dangerous painkiller that the NFLPA has warned against using, and I gave it my all for the team. I played until it was clear that I could not use my ankle to safely perform my playing responsibilities."

The receiver alleged a cover-up.

"I didn't quit. I was cut. I didn't walk away from my brothers. I was thrown out," Brown's statement read.



## SPORTS



## Left in limbo

Confined Down Under, No. 1 Djokovic awaits court ruling » Australian Open, Page 42

NFL

# Building to something

Career start No. 127 is the biggest of them all for Raiders quarterback Carr

By W.G. RAMIREZ  
Associate Press

HENDERSON, Nev. — Derek Carr has started 126 games during his eight-year NFL career.

There has been none bigger than No. 127.

Carr will lead the Las Vegas Raiders into the NFL's final game on Sunday night against the Los Angeles Chargers in what likely will be an all-or-nothing showdown between AFC West rivals.

For Carr, who has one year left on his contract and who has expressed his feelings about being a Raider for life, the game on Sunday is the most consequential of his career.

"If you look back to the last three games, they've all been the biggest games of our career," Carr said Wednesday. "I feel like that's kind of been the feeling around our team and around my heart for the last month. And so, this one's exciting, obviously, because it's the last one and it really tells you what happens. But at the end of the day, I feel like the last month we've been playing in our playoffs."

That's because a 1-5 skid that fol-

SEE START ON PAGE 47

Quarterback Derek Carr will make his 127th career start for the team that drafted him in the second round of the 2014 NFL Draft when the Las Vegas Raiders host the Los Angeles Chargers in the final game of the NFL's regular season Sunday night.

REED HOFFMANN/AP

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