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**MUSIC:** The evolution of Super Bowl halftime Page 28



# STARS

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Civil defense members gather at the site of a burned vehicle targeted by a U.S. drone strike in east Baghdad on Wednesday.

## Drone strike kills militia commander

### Iran-backed leader responsible for planning attacks against US forces dies in Iraq

By Matthew Adams Stars and Stripes

A U.S. drone strike in Baghdad on Wednesdaykilledthreemembersof the Kataib Hezbollah militia, including a high-ranking commander, responsible for planning and participating in attacks against American forces in the region, military officials said.

"There are no indications of collateral damage or civilian casualties at this time," according to U.S. Cen-

#### **MIDEAST**

Two new strikes made against Houthi missiles Page 6

tral Command, which is responsible for American military operations in the Middle East. "The United States will continue to take necessary action to protect our people. We will not hesitate to hold responsible all those who threaten our forces' safe-

The attack occurred at about 9:30 p.m. local time. The three Kataib Hezbollah members were in a car when the strike occurred. Two officials with Iran-backed militias in Iraq said one of the three killed was Wissam Mohammed "Abu Bakr" al-Saadi, the commander in charge of Kataib Hezbollah's operations in

The strike follows a barrage of U.S. strikes in Syria and Irag on Friday in response to a Jan. 28 militant drone attack on a U.S. base in Jordan that killed three American soldiers.

The retaliatory U.S. strikes attacked three facilities in Iraq and four in Syria, hitting more than 85 targets, U.S. officials said.

U.S. and British forces on Satur-

**SEE DRONE ON PAGE 6** 

### Marines to inspect all barracks for problems

By John Vandiver Stars and Stripes

Every U.S. Marine Corps barracks will be inspected in the next few weeks as the service attempts to address complaints about substandard living conditions that have rippled across the military.

Gen. Christopher Mahoney, the assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, said Wednesday in a video statement posted online that the inspections must be wrapped up before March 15.

"None of this is going to happen overnight, but this inspection is one of many first steps," Mahoney said. "Commanders and senior enlisted leaders, if your barracks have issues, if there are problems, get out there and own it."

The review is intended to give leaders a one-time, complete assessment of each barracks, enabling them to understand the totality of issues and allocate resources accordingly, the Corps said.

The effort coincides with widespread quality-of-life complaints in the military, especially regarding the treatment of junior enlisted troops.

In September, a Government Accountability Office report sparked outrage when it highlighted some of the unsafe conditions in U.S. military barracks. Issues uncovered included sewage overflows, gas leaks and infestations of mold and

#### **SEE MARINES ON PAGE 3**

#### **MILITARY**

Lawmakers say partners needed to improve housing Page 3

### BUSINESS/WEATHER

#### EUROPE GAS PRICES Super unleaded Super E10 Country Diesel Super plus \$4.268 Azores Germany \$3.545 \$4.072 \$4,308 +3.8 cents Change in price +3.7 cents Change in price +4.1 cents +3.8 cents +3.2 cents \$4.084 \$4.691\* \$4.506 Netherlands \$4.775 \$5.011 Change in price +3.8 cents +8.1 cents Change in price -1.2 cents -1.1 cents -1.1 cents \$4.072 \$4.418 \$4.308 Europe prices are updated daily. These prices are effective Feb. 9. The change in Change in price +3.7 cents +3.8 cents +3.2 cents

PACIFIC GAS PRICES											
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	South Korea	\$3,219		\$4.089	\$3.979		
lapan		\$4.059		\$3.949	Change in price	+4.0 cents		+4.0 cents	-3.0 cents		
Change in price		+4.0 cents		-3.0 cents	Change in price	14.0 CEITES	••	14.0 CEITES	-3.0 Cents		
Okinawa	\$3.269			\$3.949	Guam	\$3.249** +4.0 cents	\$3.779	\$4.119			
Change in price	+12.0 cents			-3.0 cents	Change in price	+4.0 cents	+4.0 cents	+4.0 cents	••		

\*DieselEFD \*\*Midgrade Pacific prices for the week of Feb. 9-15

#### **EXCHANGE RATES**

Euro costs (Feb. 9) British pound (Feb. 9)	\$1.05 \$1.23				
Japanese yen (Feb. 9) South Korean won (Feb. 9)	144.00 1295.00				
Commercial rates					
Commercial rates  Bahrain (Dinar) Britain (Pound) Canada (Dollar) China (Yuan) Denmark (Krone) Egypt (Pound) Euro Hong Kong (Dollar) Hungary (Forint) Israel (Shekel) Japan (Yen) Kuwait (Dinar) Norway (Krone) Philippines (Peso)	0.3769 1.2609 1.3470 7.1168 6.9258 30.9009 0.9289 7.8209 360.04 3.6942 149.28 0.3080 10.6078 55.95				
Poland (Zloty) Saudi Arabia (Riyal) Singapore (Dollar) South Korea (Won)	4.01 3.7501 1.3471 1331.56				

Military rates

vitzerland (Franc)	0.8750
iailand (Baht)	35.92
ırkey (NewLira)	30.6054
(Military exchange rates a	

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
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ime rate	8.50
terest Rates Discount rate	6.00
deral funds market rate	5.33
month bill	5.38
-year bond	4.32

#### **WEATHER OUTLOOK**







### **TODAY**

**IN STRIPES** 

STARS STRIPES

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### Round-the-world news for America's military.

Stripes.com supplies constant updates, on news of interest — including reports from our overseas military bases in Europe, Pacific, Southwest Asia and the Mideast, and coverage of the Pentagon and Capitol Hill.

Also available on mobile apps for Android and iOS.



Mobile • Online • Print

# 5 Marines confirmed dead in helo crash

By Julie Watson AND LOLITA C. BALDOR

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Five U.S. Marines aboard a helicopter that went down during stormy weather in the mountains outside of San Diego are confirmed dead, the military said

Authorities say the CH-53E Super Stallion vanished late Tuesday night while returning to Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in San Diego after training at Creech Air Force Base, northwest of Las Vegas.

"It is with a heavy heart and profound sadness that I share the loss of five outstanding Marines from 3d Marine Aircraft Wing and the "Flying Tigers," Maj. Gen. Michael J. Borgschulte, commander of 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, said in a statement.

The names of the Marines were not immediately released.

"To the families of our fallen Marines, we send our deepest condolences and commit to ensuring your support and care during this incredibly difficult time," Borgshulte said. "Though we understand the inherent risks of military service, any loss of life is always difficult."

Efforts to recover the remains of the five have begun and an investi-



K.C. ALFRED, THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE/AP

A Marine CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter flies during training at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in San Diego on Tuesday.

gation into the crash is underway, according to the statement.

Capt. Stephanie Leguizamon, spokesperson for the wing, said she had little information beyond the statement.

"I do know that it's cold ... I know that's been a contentious issue" for searchers in reaching the crash site.

President Joe Biden said in a statement that he and first lady Jill Biden are "heartbroken" to learn of the Marines' deaths.

"Our service members represent the very best of our nation — and these five Marines were no exception," Biden said. "As the Department of Defense continues to assess what occurred, we extend our deepest condolences to their families, their squadron, and the U.S. Marine Corps as we grieve the loss of five of our nation's finest warriors."

The last known contact with the helicopter was at about 11:30 p.m. Tuesday, Mike Cornette of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection told CBS 8 news. That location was based on a "ping" reported to a Cal Fire dispatch cen-

The craft was discovered

Wednesday morning near the mountain community of Pine Valley, an hour's drive from San Diego.

Civilian authorities searching on ground and by air located the aircraft, which went down during stormy weather in the Southern California mountains, about 45 miles from San Diego.

The helicopter, which was designed to fly in harsh conditions, went missing as a historic storm dumped heavy snow and record rain over California. More rain and snow hit the region Wednesday night, forcing searchers to battle through heavy snow to reach the helicopter.

The five Marines were assigned to Miramar's Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 361, Marine Aircraft Group 16, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, the military said in a state-

While it can carry dozens of people, the normal crew component for the Super Stallion is four: a pilot, copilot, crew chief, and mechanic/ gunner, according to a U.S. Navy

The military worked with federal, state and local agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Border Patrol, San Diego County Sheriff's Department and the state Civil Air Patrol.

But weather and rugged terrain made the task difficult. Pine Valley is at about 3,700 feet in elevation in the Cuyamaca Mountains, an area which saw as much 8 inches of accumulating snow within hours Tuesday night and early Wednesday and saw more falling Wednesday night, according to forecasters.

The area includes San Diego County's second highest mountain, Cuyamaca Peak, at 6,512 feet, and is also near the Cleveland National Forest, which covers 720 square miles with much of it steep, rocky and with limited trails.

The CH-53E Super Stallion is the largest helicopter in the military and the Marines have used it for heavy-lifting duties around the world for more than three decades. More than 130 are in operation.

Equipped with GPS, infrared radar and other equipment, the aircraft has performed "a full range of military combat operations in Beirut, Somalia, the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya," according to a U.S. Navy website.

About 99 feet long, the Super Stallion can move troops and equipment from ships to shore, ferry supplies and launch amphibious assaults.

### More public-private partnerships urged for housing

By Svetlana Shkolnikova Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers said Wednesday that they wanted to see more public-private partnerships in military housing to address poor living conditions and allow service members to focus on warfighting rather than maintaining aging barracks.

Members of the House Armed Services Committee's readiness subpanel suggested such changes could help fix a military housing system that continues to grapple with mold, cockroach and rodent infestations, sewage overflow, broken air conditioning and other

Rep. Mike Waltz, R-Fla., the chairman of the panel, said he was put off by conversations with service leaders that discussed how Marines, for example, could be better trained to oversee heating, ventilation and air conditioning.

"I want those Marines better trained to do bad things to bad people and not managing buildings," Waltz, a former Green Beret, said Wednesday during a hearing on military infrastructure. "We have entities in the United States of America that can do this incredibly well."

The Army intends to lead the way in lessening the burden on service members by creating a "robust workforce" of trained civilian barracks managers, according to Rachel Jacobson, the service's assistant secretary for installations, energy and environ-

"We will no longer ask soldiers to perform these functions as a collateral duty," she told lawmak-

The Army is also hoping to use a pilot project for privatized junior enlisted housing at Fort Irwin in California as a blueprint for barrack privatization. Privatized barracks in the Army are now mostly limited to older enlisted person-

Meanwhile, the Navy is building on its ongoing privatization efforts with a pilot housing program for unaccompanied sailors in San Diego and Norfolk, Va., said Meredith Berger, the service's assistant secretary for installations, energy and environment.

Lawmakers said public-private partnerships are key for remedying systemic problems in military housing that have left living quarters chronically neglected and underfunded, particularly for junior

Rep. John Garamendi, D-Calif., said Congress needs to give more authority to the military to pursue contracts with private companies to repair, renovate, construct and operate barracks.

"Right now there's limitations

on what each of the departments can do," he said. "We need to tell them to get on with it in the next [National Defense Authorization Act].'

But, Garamendi cautioned, the services must be equipped to avoid the highly publicized problems that have plagued privatized military family housing in recent years. Congress has had to enact a slew of reforms to address mold, asbestos, sewage backups and other issues at homes owned by private companies.

The military began turning to the private sector to provide housing services in the 1990s as its own housing stock aged and became unfit for residency.

The Defense Department continues to pour investments into its housing and installations but a significant gap persists between expected standards and the reality on the ground, said Brendan Owens, the assistant secretary of defense for installations, energy and environment.

"The [Defense Department] has in too many instances failed to live up to our role in making sure the housing we provide honors the commitment of the service members and their families and enables them to bring their best versions of themselves to their critical missions," he said.

Jacobson, the Army official,

said a combination of factors have contributed to substandard living conditions, including the sheer size of the military's inventory, a growing backlog of deferred maintenance and ineffective management practices.

Pressure to improve barracks has grown since a government watchdog report last year revealed squalor in rank-and-file base housing. Owens said the Pentagon anticipates implementing 28 of the report's 31 recommendations this year and has assembled a team to determine habitability standards.

Owens told lawmakers that he was not aware of anyone who was fired in response to the findings in

Waltz said the lack of accountability was "unacceptable" and a critical part of why service members are forced to live with mold, feces, broken sewage lines and other unsafe conditions.

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### **Marines:** All inspections to be completed by March 15

**FROM PAGE 1** 

rodents.

GAO found was a rating system faster on improving living conthat gives passing grades to fa- ditions and quality of life for cilities that are clearly substan-

The bad rap over base housing conditions comes as military branches are struggling to attract new recruits. The Marine Corps did meet its recruiting goals last year, while the other Defense Department services fell short.

Lawmakers in recent weeks have held hearings focused on Among the problems the pressing the services to move troops.

The inspections "are about setting the conditions for the kinds of changes we're getting after" in the broader effort to upgrade housing over the next several years, Mahoney said.

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 STARS AND STRIPES Friday, February 9, 2024

### **PACIFIC**

## Watercraft company that saw action at **Vietnam reactivates**

By Seth Robson Stars and Stripes

YOKOHAMA NORTH DOCK, Japan — A U.S. Army unit that will operate landing craft throughout the Indo-Pacific began work Thursday at this waterfront base south of Tokyo.

A bell rang out from the deck of the USAV Calaboza, a landing craft utility vessel, while about 40 soldiers stood in formation on shore, signaling the activation of the 5th Transportation Company, which had been inactive since 1997. The unit "will strengthen maritime maneuver capabilities in contingencies, including disasters in the Indo-Pacific Region," U.S. Army Japan said in a statement provided at the ceremony.

The company traces its lineage to Mechanical Repair Shop Unit 306, constituted in 1917 at Newport News, Va. It saw service in World War II, including at Normandy, and on the Saigon and Mekong rivers during the Vietnam War, according to the ceremony

The unit, led by Capt. Miata Schenaker, is evidence that "the Army can fight on land, air and sea," U.S. Army Japan commander Maj. Gen. David Womack told dignitaries gathered at the dock.

A crew of 13 noncommissioned

officers can deliver equipment and supplies to beaches using vessels like the Calaboza, he said.

The Calaboza and another vessel like it, the USAV Fort McHenry, which is deployed to Cairns, Australia, are the only watercraft operated by the newly activated company so far, Col. Ned Holt, commander of the Okinawabased 10th support Group, said after the ceremony.

LCUs move personnel, gear and supplies to shore. They are small but boast the same payload capacity as seven C-17 Globemaster III aircraft. One LCU can carry up to five M1 Abrams tanks, 24 doublestacked shipping containers or 400 combat-equipped troops.

"These boats are older than most of these soldiers," Womack said of the 1970s- and '80s-era landing craft.

Soldiers on the Calaboza sleep four to a room, although Warrant Officer 2 Jason McElrath, the vessel master, gets his own cabin, he said during a post-ceremony tour of the landing craft.

It is equipped with a pair of .50caliber machine guns, a bow engine that enables it to maneuver in tight spaces, and an aft anchor that can winch the watercraft away from a beach, he said.

McElrath took charge of the Ca-



PHOTOS BY AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

Army Capt. Miata Schenaker commands the 5th Transportation Company, which was reactivated aboard the USAV Calaboza at Yokohama North Dock, Japan, on Thursday.

laboza in June. He said the vessel had been on temporary assignment in the region and moved cargo, vehicles and troops to Sasebo, Okinawa and the Philippines last

Watercraft are integral to the Army's annual Pathways training deployments of U.S.-based units to the Indo-Pacific, Holt said.

The 280 soldiers assigned to the company will live at Camp Zama, headquarters for U.S. Army Japan, and Yokosuka Naval Base, home of the U.S. 7th Fleet, each about 45 minutes' drive from North Dock, he said.

A composite watercraft company includes five landing craft utility vessels, two tugboats, four maneuver support vessels and a har-



Army Warrant Officer 2 Jason McElrath gives a tour of the USAV Calaboza at Yokohama North Dock, Japan, on Thursday.

bormaster operations detachment to provide maintenance, according to an Army news release May

### USNS Brunswick returns stateside after historic deployment

By ALEX WILSON

Stars and Stripes

The USNS Brunswick cruised into the Chesapeake Bay last week, concluding more than seven years of Pacific operations, including the first circumnavigation of the world by an expeditionary fast transport, according to the Navy.

Previously based on Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands, the vessel arrived Saturday at its new home port, Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek in Fort Story, Va., Military Sealift Command announced in a news release Tuesday. The Brunswick's arrival marked the culmination of a seven-year deployment that began when it left Little Creek in January

Since then, the 338-foot-long transport has traveled more than 21,600 nautical miles and circumnavigated the globe.

During its Pacific deployment, the ship participated in numerous large-scale operations, including: Operation Triggerfish in Micronesia; Noble Jaguar and Resolute



The USNS Brunswick arrives at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek in Fort Story, Va., on Feb. 3.

Dragon in Japan; Talisman Sabre in Australia; and region-wide exercises like Pacific Partnership and Valiant Shield.

Last year, it was one of at least three Navy ships positioned off the coast of Sudan to help evacuate American citizens caught in the North African country's civil war that broke out in April 2023.

The Brunswick evacuated 300 people, including American citizens, to Saudi Arabia. It was part of a larger effort to evacuate foreign nationals from the war-torn coun-

ship's performance The throughout the deployment was

"rock-solid" and helped to "foster trust and cooperation with partner nations," the command said.

In May 2015, the Brunswick became the sixth joint high-speed vessel launched from Australian shipmaker Austal USA's yard in Mobile, Ala. It was part of a \$1.6 billion Navy contract for 10 vessels,

according to the company's web-

The Brunswick is part of a ship class designed to provide "high speed, shallow draft transportation" capabilities to include personnel, supplies and equipment, according to the Naval Sea Systems Command website.

The Brunswick can average 35 knots, has a flight deck large enough for a CH-53 Super Stallion helicopter and can operate at austere port facilities, according to Austal. The ship is built for speed and can support operations including humanitarian relief missions, logistics support and larger global operations, according to the command's news release.

It can also "bridge the gap" between airlifts and standard sealift transportation, the command said. Airlifts are fast but suffer from low capacity, while sealifts can shuttle much more cargo at much slower

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### **PACIFIC**

# Military families, friends bond over Swift

### Pop star's Eras Tour comes to Tokyo Dome

By Kelly Agee Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — American pop icon Taylor Swift performed the first of four sold-out concerts this week at the Tokyo

Dome, and the audience did not lack for fans from the U.S. military.

Swift, whose "Midnights" earned album-of-the-year honors at Sunday's Grammy Awards, began the Asia leg of The Eras Tour at the 55,000-seat arena Wednesday night. Thousands of fans, known as Swifties, lined up long before the show's 6 p.m. start time to buy concert merchandise.

The 3½-hour-long show did not disappoint, said Jacqueline Ochoa Luna, a support supply technician at Yokota Middle School. She is among a group of school employees with tickets to see Swift over several days.

"She is a performer; there was a lot of storytelling and there's a connection that you feel, and I did cry during one of the songs," Ochoa Luna said via Facebook Messenger the morning after the concert. "It was a great show, and I hope she comes back to Japan for her next tour."

Swift began the highest-grossing concert tour ever, and first to hit \$1 billion, March 13 in Glendale, Ariz. The tour moves on to Melbourne, Australia, after Tokyo. Swifties speculate she may fly to Las Vegas in between those gigs to watch boyfriend Travis Kelce and his fellow Kansas City Chiefs take on the San Francisco 49ers in the Super Bowl.

Yokota Middle student Madeline Frost, 14, plans to reunite with sister Katherine, 20, at Swift's third Tokyo Dome performance on Friday. Katherine is flying in from Provo, Utah, just for the show, Madeline said by phone Wednesday.

"I look forward to dancing and hanging out with my sister," she said.

Rebecca Riggs, an Air Force spouse at Yokota, said her winning bid in an online auction scored her a \$915 VIP ticket for Friday's show, a long time coming for this Swiftie.

"I've been a fan of Taylor forever," she said Tuesday via Face-



FEDERAL STILL WACHED STARS AND STRIPE

Taylor Swift fans gather outside Tokyo Dome before the city's first Eras Tour concert on Wednesday.

book Messenger. "I am most looking forward to hearing all of the songs live, actually seeing her in person and hopefully experiencing the full Swiftie atmosphere I hear so much about."

Swift is a pioneer in the music industry who breaks all stereotypes of a woman in that field, Air Force Col. Iris Ortiz Gonzalez, commander of the 374th Dental Squadron, said Wednesday at Yokota's dental clinic.

Ortiz Gonzalez and her older daughter have tickets for Swift's final Tokyo performance on Saturday.

Ortiz Gonzalez said she admires Swift's commitment to her work and performance schedule, while also maintaining a balanced personal life and doing the best she can to support her family, friends and relationships.

"A lot of the Taylor Swift publicity and headlines have to do with who she's dating and typical stereotypical things that people highlight about women," she said.



Jacqueline Ochoa Luna

Jacqueline Ochoa Luna, a civlian worker at Yokota Air Base, poses inside Tokyo Dome with a Taylor Swift poster she made for the show.

"I feel like women have had enough of that; very rarely you see articles or news clips of Taylor Swift promoting her entrepreneurship, her creative mind, how she got where she is. And that's the part about her that intrigued me."

This won't be Ortiz Gonzalez's first Swift show; she caught The Eras Tour on May 13 in Philadelphia with her daughters, Kiara, 17, and Liana, 9.

They all vie for the title of big-

gest Swiftie while bonding over the singer's music.

"If you go to my daughter's room, there are posters of her everywhere," she said. "We have all her vinyl, sweaters and T-shirts. "It provides an opportunity to bond, using the hairbrush as a microphone while singing songs. It is great. I love it."

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ris Ortiz Gonzalez

Air Force Col. Iris Ortiz Gonzalez poses with daughters Liana, 9, and Kiara, 17, before a Taylor Swift concert in Philadelphia in May.

### Meetings with Kim must be more than show, S. Korea's president says

By David Choi

Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — North Korea's refusal to relinquish its nuclear weapons should not bar the two Koreas from talking again, but any meeting of the nations' leaders must be more than political showmanship, the South Korean president said this week

A "top-down" approach to hosting a summit is difficult and a meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ought to be held after working-level officials thoroughly discussed their respective agendas, President Yoon Suk Yeol said Wednesday in an interview with the Korean Broadcasting

System

Meeting Kim without preparation "can end up being a show without a conclusion or result," Yoon said. South Korea "gained nothing" from a series of four summits by Kim and Yoon's predecessor, Moon Jae-in, and three by Kim and former President Donald Trump between April 2018 to June 2019

Kim first met with then-President Moon at the Joint Security Area inside the Demilitarized Zone separating North and South Korea on April 27, 2018. The two signed the Panmunjom Declaration, which broadly stated the two Koreas will work toward a "permanent and stable peace."

The pair met again at the DMZ on May 26, 2018, and June 30, 2019, and in Pyongyang on Sept.

Trump first met Kim in Singapore on June 12, 2018. Immediately afterward, Trump said he would freeze joint military exercises with South Korea, which the North routinely criticizes as a rehearsal of an invasion.

The two met again in Vietnam on Feb. 27, 2019, and at the Joint Security Area on June 30, 2019, when Trump became the first sitting U.S. president to step across the border and into the North.

Critics called Trump's summits with Kim rushed and lacking a negotiation strategy.

The Trump-Kim summits were "large photo ops as opposed to meaningful steps toward achieving peace on the Korean Peninsula," Victor Cha of the Center for Strategic and International Studies and Sue Mi Terry, former CIA senior analyst, wrote in a column on the center's website June 11,

"The fanfare associated with the Singapore joint statement both leaders agreed on belied the lack of substance and commitment by both sides to reach a meaningful deal," the pair wrote.

Many of the agreements reached by Moon and Kim have evaporated.

The U.S. and South Korea re-

sumed large-scale military exercises in 2022 and have reportedly discussed plans to include Japan in future drills.

The two Koreas have also walked back their 2018 military deconfliction agreement that included a ban on armed guards and flights near the border.

South Korea's Ministry of National Defense said the military will resume reconnaissance flights near the border in November; The North redeployed armed troops at guard posts and said it would scrap all reunification efforts with Seoul.

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 STARS AND STRIPES Friday, February 9, 2024

### **MIDEAST**

# 2 new strikes made against Houthi missiles

### CENTCOM: Preemptive acts taken in Yemen before possible launch

By Alison Bath Stars and Stripes

U.S. forces carried out two more preemptive strikes on missiles that Houthi militants in Yemen were preparing to launch in their ongoing campaign of attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea, according to U.S. Central Command.

At 9 p.m. Wednesday, U.S. strikes targeted two mobile anti-ship cruise missiles in Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen, CENTCOM said in a statement Thursday.

Another strike at 11:30 p.m. was made against a mobile land-attack cruise missile, which was determined to be "an imminent threat to U.S. Navy ships and merchant vessels," CENTCOM said, without specifying what forces were involved.

The U.S. has launched at least seven strikes in recent days that CENT-COM has described as self-defense. They include targeting 11 anti-ship cruise missiles and one land-attack missile last weekend.

On Monday, U.S. forces also preemptively destroyed two Houthi explosive surface drones, CENTCOM said Tuesday.

The Houthi fighters have said they are attacking commercial and military shipping in the Red Sea as a show of support for Gaza, where war between Israel and Hamas has raged since Oct. 7.

Between Nov. 19 and Feb. 2, the Iran-backed proxy group had attacked or threatened at least 41 commercial vessels in the Red Sea, a Pentagon spokeswoman said Tues-

That assessment didn't include three Houthi attacks Tuesday with anti-ship ballistic missiles that targeted a Marshall Islands-flagged, Greek-owned bulk carrier in the Gulf of Aden, CENTCOM said Wednesday.

The first missile exploded near the vessel and caused minor damage but no injuries, military officials



JANAE CHAMBERS/U.S. Navv

A jet launches from the deck of the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower in the Red Sea on Saturday. U.S. forces made two new strikes against targets in Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen on Wednesday, U.S. Central Command said in a statement Thursday.

said. A subsequent missile landed harmlessly in the water near the ship and the third was shot down by the destroyer USS Laboon, which was nearby, according to CENT-

In a separate attack, the Houthis appeared to target a Barbadosflagged, British-owned cargo ship in the southern Red Sea. All three mis-

siles fired in that attack landed without incident, CENTCOM said.

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### **Drone:** Targeted group linked to US troop deaths

**FROM PAGE 1** 

day also conducted strikes against 36 militia targets in Yemen in a continued effort to stop attacks on the shipping lanes in the Red Sea by Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said last week the U.S. believes the attack on Tower 22 - the U.S. base in Jordan — was planned, resourced and facilitated by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella group that includes Kataib Hezbollah. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has regularly claimed strikes on bases housing U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria since the Israel-Hamas war started in October, saying they are in retaliation for

American support of Israel, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza, the Hamas-run territory.

Kataib Hezbollah had said in a statement that it was suspending attacks on American troops to avoid "embarrassing the Iraqi government" after the strike in Jordan, but others have vowed to continue fighting.

On Sunday, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed a drone attack on a base housing U.S. troops in eastern Syria that killed six fighters from the Syrian Democratic Forces, a Kurdish-led group allied with the United States.

U.S. officials, including Kirby and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, said last week before last Friday's U.S. airstrikes that there will be a multi-tiered response to the attack that killed the three U.S. soldiers.

Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon's top spokesman, said Monday that the Defense Department assessed the strikes had "good effects," but few details have been provided, citing ongoing battle-damage assessments.

"Our responses are not complete," Ryder said. "I'm not going to telegraph, or discuss, what that may be other than we'll come back to that at a time of our choosing."

The Associated Press contributed to this report. @MatthewAdams60



#### HADI MIZBAN/AP

### Israel strikes southern town where Gazans sought aid

Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip—Israeli airstrikes killed over a dozen people overnight and into Thursday in Rafah in the Gaza Strip, hours after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected Hamas' cease-fire terms and vowed to expand the offensive into the southern Gaza town.

More than half of the strip's population has fled to Rafah, on the mostly sealed border with Egypt, which is also the main entry point for humanitarian aid. Egypt has warned that any ground operation there or mass displacement across the border would undermine its four-decade-old peace treaty with Israel.

The overnight strikes killed at least 13 people, including two women and five children, according to the Kuwaiti Hospital, which received the bodies. At the scene of one of the strikes, residents used their cellphone flashlights as they dug through the rubble with pick-axes and their bare hands.

Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken left the Middle East on Thursday with public divisions between the United States and Israel at perhaps their worst level since Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza began in October.

Wrapping up a four-nation Mideast trip — his fifth to the region since the conflict erupted—Blinken was returning to Washington after getting a virtual slap in the face from Netanyahu, who said the war would continue until Israel is completely victorious and appeared to reject outright a response from Hamas to a proposed cease-fire plan.

Israel's 4-month-old air and ground offensive - among the most destructive in recent history - has killed over 27,000 Palestinians, driven most people from their homes and pushed a quarter of the population toward starvation.

Netanyahu has said the offensive will continue and expand until "total victory" over Hamas, which started the war by launching a wide-ranging attack into southern Israel on Oct. 7 in which militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took around 250 hostage.

Israel has also vowed to bring back the over 100 captives still held by Hamas after most of the rest were freed during a cease-fire in November in exchange for the release of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

But both of those goals appear increasingly elusive, as Hamas reemerges in parts of northern Gaza, which was the first target of the offensive and suffered widespread destruction.

Israel has only rescued one hostage, while Hamas says several have been killed in airstrikes or failed rescue missions.

Netanyahu said preparations were underway to expand the offensive into Rafah, where hundreds of thousands of people who fled from other areas are crowded into squalid tent camps and overflowing U.N.run shelters.

Iraqis gather at the site of a burned vehicle targeted by a U.S. drone strike in east Baghdad on Wednesday.

### **EUROPE**

# Hungary warned over Sweden's NATO bid

### Members of alliance caution that patience is wearing thin on further delaying the country's membership

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan said that he and his NATO counterparts cautioned Hungary on Wednesday against further delaying Sweden's membership in the military alliance, and he warned that patience in Washington has its limits.

Lawmakers from the party of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán boycotted an emergency session of parliament on Monday where a vote was scheduled to place Sweden's bid to join NATO on the legislative agenda, adding to 18 months of delays that have angered Hungary's allies.

The governing Fidesz party, which holds an absolute majority in Hungary's parliament, has



Orbar

that Swedish politicians have told "blatant lies" about the state of Hungarian democracy. The party insists that

stalled Sweden's

bid since July

2022, alleging

come to Hungary first.
"We heard security adviser after security adviser say that it's

Sweden's prime minister must

past time for Sweden to get in, and to directly address the representative from Hungary," Sullivan told reporters after a meeting of the organization's top security officials at NATO headquarters in Brussels.

Sullivan said that he and his colleagues had impressed upon Hungary that "it's a matter of credibility and obligation that they take the necessary steps" to complete the parliamentary procedures to ratify Sweden's accession.

Sweden, along with neighboring Finland, set aside decades of military nonalignment to seek protection under NATO's collective security umbrella after Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022.

Finland has since joined the trans-Atlantic alliance. The country, along with the other 30 allies, must all agree that Sweden should stand among NATO's ranks. Hungary is the only member standing in its way.

Sullivan said that he wouldn't "stand here today and make particular threats, or speculation about steps that we would take down the road, but of course our patience on this can't be unlimited either."

He said the U.S. will "continue

to watch it carefully, but hope that there is a constructive resolution to this issue in the very near term."

Orbán, who has broken ranks with NATO allies by adopting a Kremlin-friendly stance toward Russia's war in Ukraine, has said that he invited Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson to Budapest to discuss "future cooperation in the field of security and defense as allies and partners."

Unless another emergency session of Hungary's parliament is called to debate Sweden's bid, the assembly is due to sit for its regular session on Feb. 26.

### Zelenskyy replaces nation's top general

By Illia Novikov Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine's president replaced his top general Thursday in a shake-up aimed at reigniting momentum in the deadlocked war with Russia, which is grinding into its third year as the country grapples with shortages of ammunition and personnel and struggles to maintain support from the West.

After days of speculation that change was coming, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on social media that he was thankful for the service of the outgoing Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi — a military leader popular with troops and the general public. "The time for … a renewal is now," Zelenskyy said on X.

Zelenskyy appointed the commander of Ukraine's ground forces, Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, to lead the army, which needs a morale boost at a time when the conflict with Russia has been at a near stalemate for months. Syrskyi, 58, has been involved since 2013 in the Ukrainian army's effort to adopt NATO standards.

Zaluzhnyi said in a Telegram message that "everyone must change and adapt to new realities" and he agreed there is a "need to change approaches and strategy" in the war.

Neither Zelenskyy nor Zaluzhnyi provided any detail about what the new strategy might entail

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Zelenskyy, said Ukraine needed a rethink of its tactics, "which did not fully ensure proper results last year."

Ukraine needs to "prevent stagnation on the front line, which negatively affects public sentiment, to find new functional and high-tech solutions that will allow (Ukraine) to retain and develop the initiative," he said on X.

Ukraine's struggles with ammunition and personnel come on the heels of a failed counteroffensive last summer and as European allies try to bump up their military production. At the same time, a political standoff in the United States is holding up further aid from Ukraine's main supplier.

Zelenskyy's announcement came as the Kremlin's forces push harder to take the eastern Ukraine city of Avdiivka, throwing more troops into the fourmonth battle and bombarding Ukrainian defenses, as they stretch Kyiv's resources.

Before Thursday's announcement, local media had speculated for days that Zelenskyy would sack Zaluzhnyi. It is the most significant shake-up of military leadership since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24 2022.

Zaluzhnyi was highly regarded by his troops and by foreign military officials. Some analysts warned that his exit could bring unwelcome disruption, potentially driving a wedge between the Ukrainian army and politicians, and fueling uncertainty among Kyiv's Western allies.

There has been little change in positions along the 900-mile front line over the winter, though the Kremlin's forces have kept up their attacks at certain points. Faced with a shortfall in anticipated supplies of Western weaponry, Ukraine has been digging defenses, while Moscow has put its economy on a war footing to give its military more muscle.

Strains had appeared between Zaluzhnyi and Zelenskyy — arguably the two most prominent figures in Ukraine's fight — after



EFREM LUKATSKY/A

A medical worker helps a woman in a yard of an apartment building destroyed after a Russian attack in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Wednesday. Authorities say Russia has fired cruise and ballistic missiles and Shahed-type drones at targets across Ukraine including the capital, Kyiv.

the much-anticipated counteroffensive failed to meet its goal of penetrating Russia's deep defenses. Kyiv's Western allies had poured billions of dollars' worth of military hardware into Ukraine to help it succeed.

Months later, amid signs of war fatigue in the West, Zaluzhnyi described the conflict as being at a "stalemate," just when Zelenskyy was arguing in foreign capitals that Ukraine's new weaponry had been vital.

Zelenskyy said at the end of last year that he had turned down the military's request to mobilize up to 500,000 people, demanding more details about how it would be paid for.

Born into a family of Soviet ser-

vicemen, Zaluzhnyi is credited with modernizing the Ukrainian army along NATO lines. He took charge seven months before Russia's full-scale invasion.

Zaluzhnyi earned broad public support after the successful defense of Kyiv in the early days of the war, followed by a triumphant counteroffensive in the Kharkiv region and the liberation of Kherson. His courage and defiance of Russia's ambitions were renowned, and he became a symbol of resilience and national unity.

Earlier Thursday, Ukrainian forces claimed to have shot down a Russian attack helicopter in eastern Ukraine near the city of Avdiivka, where soldiers are fighting from street to street as Russia's army seeks to surround Kyiv's defending troops.

Avdiivka has become "a primary focus" of Moscow's forces, the U.K. Defense Ministry said in an assessment Thursday.

The General Staff of Ukraine's armed forces reported Thursday that its troops had fended off 40 enemy assaults around Avdiivka over the previous 24 hours. That is roughly double the number of daily Russian assaults at other points along the front line.

Ukraine has built multiple defenses in Avdiivka, complete with concrete fortifications and a network of tunnels. Despite massive losses of personnel and equipment, Russian troops have slowly advanced since October.

### NATION

# High court unsure of Trump ballot removal

By Mark Sherman Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court seems poised to reject attempts to kick former President Donald Trump off the 2024

A definitive ruling for Trump, the leading Republican candidate for president, would largely end efforts in Colorado, Maine and elsewhere to prevent his name from appearing on the ballot.

Conservative and liberal justices alike questioned during arguments Thursday whether Trump can be disqualified from being president again because of his efforts to undo his loss in the 2020 election to Democrat Joe Biden, ending with the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Their main concern was whether Congress must act before states can invoke a constitutional provision that was adopted after the Civil War to prevent former officeholders who "engaged in insurrection" from holding office again. There also were questions about whether the president is covered by the provision.

Without such congressional legislation, Justice Elena Kagan was among several justices who wanted to know "why a single state should decide who gets to be president of the United States."

The outcome could reflect a broad consensus of the court, and it could come quickly.

Eight of the nine justices suggested that they were open to at least some of the arguments made by Jonathan Mitchell, Trump's lawyer at the Supreme Court. Trump could win his case if the court finds just one of those arguments persuasive.

Only Justice Sonia Sotomayor sounded like she might vote to



JOE GROMELSKI/Special to Stars and Stripes

A supporter of former President Donald Trump is interviewed outside the Supreme Court Thursday morning as the justices hear arguments on whether Trump should be kept off the ballot in Colorado.

uphold the Colorado Supreme Court ruling that found that Trump "engaged in insurrection" and is ineligible to be president. The state court ruled Trump should not be on the ballot for the Republican primary on March 5.

In another sign of trouble for the Colorado voters who sued to remove Trump from the ballot, the justices spent almost no time talking about whether Trump actually "engaged in insurrection" following the 2020 election.

Lawyer Jason Murray, representing the voters, pressed the point that Trump incited the Capitol attack to prevent the peaceful handover of power "for the first time in history."

Mitchell argued that the Capitol riot was not an insurrection and, even if it was, Trump did not par-

Trump, speaking to reporters after the proceedings, called the Supreme Court argument "a beautiful thing to watch in many respects," even as he complained about the case being brought in the first place.

"I hope that democracy in this country will continue," he told reporters at his Mar-a-Lago club in

The justices heard more than two hours of history-laden arguments in their first case considering Section 3 of the 14th Amendment. It sets up precisely the kind of case that the court likes to avoid, one in which it is the final arbiter of a political dispute.

Chief Justice John Roberts worried that a ruling against Trump would prompt efforts to disqualify other candidates, "and surely some of those will succeed."

Trump's lawyers argue that the amendment can't be used to keep Trump off the ballot for several

For one thing, they contend the Jan. 6 riot wasn't an insurrection, and even if it was, Trump did not participate. The wording of the amendment also excludes the presidency and candidates running for president, they say. Even if they are wrong about all of that, they argue that Congress must pass legislation to reinvigorate Section 3.

The lawyers for Republican and independent voters who sued to remove Trump's name from the Colorado ballot counter that there is ample evidence that the events of Jan. 6 constituted an insurrection and that Trump incited it. They say it would be absurd to apply Section 3 to everything but the presidency or that Trump is somehow exempt. And the provision needs no enabling legislation, they argue.

A decision upholding the Colorado decision would amount to a declaration from the Supreme Court that Trump did engage in insurrection and is barred by the 14th Amendment from holding office again. That would allow states to keep him off the ballot and imperil his campaign.

The justices could opt for a less conclusive outcome, but with the knowledge that the issue could return to them, perhaps after the general election in November and in the midst of a full-blown constitutional crisis.

Trump is separately appealing to state court a ruling by Maine's Democratic secretary of state, Shenna Bellows, that he was ineligible to appear on that state's ballot over his role in the Capitol attack. Both the Colorado Supreme Court and the Maine secretary of state's rulings are on hold until the appeals play out.

### FCC outlaws AI-generated voices in robocalls after fake Biden call

By Ali Swenson Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Federal Communications Commission on Thursday outlawed robocalls that contain voices generated by artificial intelligence, a decision that sends a clear message that exploiting the technology to scam people and mislead voters won't be tolerated.

The unanimous ruling targets robocalls made with AI voicecloning tools under the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, a 1991 law restricting junk calls that use artificial and prerecorded voice

The announcement comes as New Hampshire authorities are advancing their investigation into AI-generated robocalls that mimicked President Joe Biden's voice to discourage people from voting

in the state's first-in-the-nation primary last month.

Effective immediately, the regulation empowers the FCC to fine companies that use AI voices in their calls or block the service providers that carry them. It also opens the door for call recipients to file lawsuits and gives state attorneys general a new mechanism to crack down on violators, according to the FCC.

The agency's chairwoman, Jessica Rosenworcel, said bad actors have been using AI-generated voices in robocalls to misinform voters, impersonate celebrities and extort family members.

"It seems like something from the far-off future, but this threat is already here," Rosenworcel told The Associated Press on Wednesday as the commission was considering the regulations. "All of us could be on the receiving end of these faked calls, so that's why we felt the time to act was now."

Under the consumer protection law, telemarketers generally cannot use automated dialers or artificial or prerecorded voice messages to call cellphones, and they cannot make such calls to landlines without prior written consent from the call recipient.

The new ruling classifies AIgenerated voices in robocalls as "artificial" and thus enforceable by the same standards, the FCC said.

Those who break the law can face steep fines, maxing out at more than \$23,000 per call, the FCC said. The agency has previously used the consumer law to clamp down on robocallers interfering in elections, including imposing a \$5 million fine on two

conservative hoaxers for falsely warning people in predominantly Black areas that voting by mail could heighten their risk of arrest, debt collection and forced vacci-

The law also gives call recipients the right to take legal action and potentially recover up to \$1,500 in damages for each unwanted call. Rosenworcel said the commission started looking at making robocalls with AI-generated voices illegal because it saw a rise in these types of calls.

It sought public comment on the issue last November and in January, a bipartisan group of 26 state attorneys general wrote to the FCC urging it to move forward with a ruling.

Sophisticated generative AI tools, from voice-cloning software to image generators, already are in use in elections in the U.S. and around the world.

Last year, as the U.S. presidential race got underway, several campaign advertisements used AI-generated audio or imagery, and some candidates experimented with using AI chatbots to communicate with voters.

Bipartisan efforts in Congress have sought to regulate AI in political campaigns, but no federal legislation has passed, with the general election nine months away.

Lingo Telecom said in a statement Tuesday that it "acted immediately" to help with the investigation into the robocalls impersonating Biden and quickly identiand suspended Corporation when contacted by the task force. A man who answered the business line for Life Corp. declined to comment.

第3種郵便物認可 STARS AND STRIPES

### NOITAI



President Joe Biden and North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper, walk with their take order from Cook Out, a burger joint in Raleigh, N.C., on Jan. 18.

### Biden eyes Trump-backed border deal collapse as election weapon

WASHINGTON — How it began: President Joe Biden was urgently seeking more money from Congress to aid Ukraine and Israel. He took a gamble by seizing on GOP demands to simultaneously address one of his biggest political liabilities — illegal migration at the U.S.-Mexico border.

How it ended: Biden came close to succeeding, before it all fell apart spectacularly. Now the president is trying to make the best of it after a major congressional deal was scuttled once Republican front-runner Donald Trump got involved. And Biden is intent on showing that the former president and his "Make America Great Again" Republican acolytes in Congress aren't really interested

The bipartisan legislative deal announced Sunday evening was the culmination of more than four months of negotiations that start-

ed with Senate Democrats and Republicans, and later included top Biden aides and Cabinet officials. It came after Republicans, led by then-House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, backed a temporary spending deal that kept the government operating but delivered no new funding for Ukraine.

Inside the White House, there was no shortage of grumbling that Republicans were insisting on unrelated policy changes and holding up badly needed money for the Ukrainian armed forces.

But Biden and his advisers saw a potential upside as well, at a time when the president's handling of immigration was one of his biggest political vulnerabilities and there were chaotic scenes at the border and in major Democraticrun cities where migrants are sleeping in police station foyers, bus stations and hotels.

Even in failure, the bipartisan agreement in principle was the closest Washington has come to significant revisions to border policy in two decades. And Biden allies are intent on making Republicans take the hit for any further scenes of chaos at the border.

It's far from assured that Biden's efforts to pin the blame on Trump will stick. His GOP critics will no doubt continue their relentless efforts to saddle the current Oval Office occupant with the country's immigration woes. And the president still has to contend with sore feelings among progressive Democrats who feel the president sold them out by going all-in on tougher measures and language that had previously been a nonstarter for the party.

Biden, though, has his plan: "Every day between now and November, the American people are going to know that the only reason the border is not secure is Donald Trump and his MAGA Republican friends."

# Senate moves to work on vote on funds for allies

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate on Thursday voted to begin work on a package of wartime funding for Ukraine and other U.S. allies, but doubts remained about support from Republicans who rejected a carefully negotiated compromise that also included border enforce-

A vote to begin work on the new package passed 67-32, but the legislation's path remained uncertain. Senate leaders had not agreed to a process to limit the debate time for

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer called the vote a "good first step" and pledged that the Senate would "keep working on this bill — until the job is done."

The New York Democrat has tried to salvage \$60 billion in aid for Ukraine, as well as roughly \$35 billion for Israel, other allies and national security priorities, after the collapse this week of a bipartisan agreement to tie border enforcement policies to the package. Republicans are divided about how to proceed, and GOP leaders were still scrambling to find a plan that their senators could back.

Senate Republicans were fractured and frustrated as Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky tried to find a way to squeeze the assistance for Ukraine through Congress. If the measure passes the Senate, it is expected to be even more difficult to win approval in the Republican-controlled House, where Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., has been noncommittal on the aid.

Some Republicans in the Senate have also vowed to do everything they could to delay final action.

"I'll object to anything speeding up this rotten foreign spending

bill's passage," said Sen. Rand Paul, a Kentucky Republican, on

The U.S. is already out of money to send missiles and ammunition to Kyiv, just as the nearly two-yearold war reaches a crucial juncture. Ukraine supporters say the dropoff in U.S. support is already being felt on the battlefield and by civilians. Russia has renewed its commitment to the invasion with relentless attacks.

"There are people in Ukraine right now, in the height of their winter, in trenches, being bombed and being killed," said Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C.

Yet many of his Republican colleagues have expressed serious reservations about supporting a new round of funding for Ukraine. Even after rejecting the bipartisan border plan as insufficient, they have again insisted on tying border measures to the foreign aid.

"My priority is border security. It's always been border security. I think we need a new bill," said Sen. Roger Marshall, R-Kan.

It took Senate negotiators roughly three months of nearly roundthe-clock work to craft the border proposal rejected by Republican senators - some of whom announced their opposition within minutes of the bill text being re-

As the deal collapsed, Schumer, a New York Democrat, moved to strip the border provisions from the legislation and create the standalone \$95 billion package. It would send \$14 billion in military aid to Israel, invest in domestic defense manufacturing, provide funding for allies in Asia, and allot \$10 billion for humanitarian efforts in Ukraine, Israel, Gaza and other places.

### Probe on Biden's handling of classified papers completed

Associated Press

handling of classified documents has completed his inquiry and a report is expected to be released soon to Congress and the public, Attorney General Merrick Garland told lawmakers in a letter Wednesday.

Garland did not detail the conclusions of the report from special counsel Robert Hur, but said he was committed to disclosing as

much of the document as possible WASHINGTON — The Justice once the White House completes a Department special counsel in- review for potential executive the president as he pursues revestigating President Joe Biden's privilege concerns. That process is expected to be completed by the end of the week, said Ian Sams, a spokesman for the White House counsel's office.

The yearlong investigation centered on the improper retention of classified documents by Biden from his time as a U.S. senator and as vice president. Sensitive records were found at his Delaware home and at a private office.

tion arrives in a pivotal year for election in a deeply polarized political climate.

Though the probe's outcome is expected to lift a legal cloud over Biden, criticism of his handling of classified records could blunt his ability to attack Donald Trump his presumptive opponent in November — over a pending indictment charging the former president with hoarding top-secret files at his Mar-a-Lago estate and ob-

The resolution of the investiga- structing FBI efforts to get them

Trump and other Republicans are likely to challenge the legitimacy of the investigation by noting that it was launched by the Biden Justice Department.

But Garland sought to insulate the department from claims of bias and conflicts of interest by last year appointing Hur, a former U.S. attorney for Maryland during the Trump administration, to handle the Biden investigation and by naming a different special counsel, Jack Smith, to oversee investigations into Trump.

While the Trump investigation resulted in dozens of felony charges against the ex-president last year, the outcome of the Biden probe is expected to be different. Justice Department policy prohibits the indictment of a sitting president and, unlike in the Trump investigation, no evidence has emerged to suggest that Biden engaged in comparable conduct or willfully held onto records he wasn't supposed to have.

### NATION

# 'Squad' fights back against pro-Israel PACs

### Progressives in Congress who call for cease-fire in Gaza see record fundraising dollars to stay in office

By Farnoush Amiri Associated Press

WASHINGTON — They were warned that criticism of Israel's conduct during its war on Hamas in Gaza could cost them politically. But in the four months since Israel's blistering offensive was ignited by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, progressives in Congress who have called for a cease-fire are seeing record fundraising dollars as they fight to remain in office.

Members of the "squad" — a group of liberals in the House are being singled out by pro-Israel PACs like the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, better known as AIPAC. The groups have pledged or plan to spend tens of millions of dollars to try to defeat them in Democratic primaries and the general election this year, turning the otherwise safely Democratic districts into election battlegrounds.

The cohort of Black and brown lawmakers is facing what they see as an "existential threat" to their political careers. It's a struggle that raises significant questions about who can be a Democrat in Congress, what positions are permissible about Israel and the Palestinians, and what role outside groups should have in determining both.

Unlike in previous cycles, progressives are being bolstered more and more by Arab American

and Muslim groups who are organizing in record numbers to ensure their voices are heard on Capitol Hill.

The fact that amidst these AI-PAC attacks, amidst us having a viable challenger, we have record-breaking fundraising quarter is because the Muslim community has felt erased and dehumanized throughout this process," Rep. Jamaal Bowman, D-N.Y., told The Associated Press in an interview last month.

AIPAC has defended its track record, telling the AP in a statement that "it is entirely consistent with progressive values to stand with the Jewish state," and that the group has a history of supporting members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

Congressional Democrats have long been sensitive about the divisions around Israel, with even lawmakers aligned with AIPAC declining to discuss the situation on the record.

Bowman, who is among a group of 19 Democrats who have called for a cease-fire in Gaza, is facing a Democratic challenger backed by AIPAC. The group, which has historically yielded immense clout in Washington, has shifted strategy in the last several years, transitioning from strictly a lobbying organization to helping elect centrist, pro-Israel Democrats. In 2022, it began challenging Democratic incumbents in primaries.

Ahead of November, the group and PACs connected to its ethos have once again begun contributing to candidates running against members of the squad. In addition to Bowman, the Democrats facing challengers include Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Summer Lee of Pennsylvania and Cori Bush of Missouri, all of whom have not only called for a cease-fire but have demanded an end to U.S. aid to Israel.

Israel's air and ground offensive has killed more than 27,000 Palestinians, driven most people from their homes and pushed onequarter of the population toward starvation.

In the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas in southern Israel, militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took about 250 people

Progressive groups are closely watching the campaign as they track the unprecedented flow of money into congressional district races at a level usually seen for battleground Senate seats.

In 2022, AIPAC spent around \$27 million targeting progressive candidates. Its war chest this cycle is expected to be more than twice that amount.

In the last quarter alone, the group was the largest donor to George Latimer, Bowman's opponent in the Democratic primary. AIPAC gave the Westchester



Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich., the only Palestinian-American in Congress, is joined at left by Rep. Nydia Velazquez, D-N.Y., as she speaks at an event at the Capitol in Washington on Dec. 14.

County executive more than \$600,000, representing more than 40% of his \$1.4 million in contributions so far, according to campaign finance reports filed Wednesday.

Bowman, meanwhile, managed to raise more than \$730,000 in total last quarter — the majority of which his campaign says came from grassroots Arab and Muslim groups and individual donors.

"(Muslim and Arab groups) are building an infrastructure that is financial and political and social, to fight back against AIPAC and to fight back against entities that continue to demonize them as Muslims as Arabs and as brown people," Bowman said.

It marks a record-breaking

quarter for the educator-turnedcongressman who in December 2021 had barely managed to raise \$200,000 in contributions. But outside groups like Justice Democrats say the challenge ahead is considerable, with AIPAC having the ability to drop more than half a million on a candidate in one quarter.

"This is versus candidates, Black and brown candidates, who come from working-class backgrounds, who represent workingclass districts, who do not take corporate PAC money, who rely on grassroots fundraising. So this is not a fair fight," said Usamah Andrabi, the communications director for Justice Democrats. "It has never been a fair fight."

### More Republicans back child care spending, call it 'economic issue'

By Moriah Balingit

Associated Press

Like a lot of mothers, North Dakota state Rep. Emily O'Brien struggled to find infant care when her daughter Lennon was born in 2019. So O'Brien, a Republican who represents the Grand Forks region, brought Lennon along to meetings with local leaders and

O'Brien had her second daughter, Jolene, in 2022, not long before legislators were due to meet. Wanting more time to bond before returning to work, O'Brien brought the newborn with her to Bismarck, where she snoozed through Gov. Doug Burgum's State of the State address on her mother's desk.

Not long after, O'Brien persuaded her colleagues to back a plan to invest \$66 million in child care, an unprecedented sum for a state that had, like others with Republican leadership, long resisted such spending. But O'Brien argued it could help the state's workforce shortage by helping more parents go to work and attracting new families to the state.

Republicans historically have been lukewarm about using taxpayer money for child care, even as they have embraced prekindergarten.

But the pandemic, which left many child



Rep. Emily O'Brien R-Grand Forks carries daughter Jolene Green. 3 weeks. into the House chamber, Dec. 6, 2022, in Bismarck, N.D.

care providers in crisis, underscored how precarious the industry is and how many working parents rely on it.

In 2021, Congress passed \$24 billion of pandemic aid for child care businesses, an unprecedented federal investment. Now. as that aid dries up, Republican state lawmakers across the country are embracing plans to support child care — and even making it central to their policy agendas.

To be sure, the largest investments in child care have come not from Republicans but from Democratic lawmakers. In New Mexico, the state is covering child care for most children under 5 using a trust funded by oil and natural gas production.

In Vermont, Democratic state lawmakers overrode a Republican governor's veto to pass a payroll tax hike to fund child care subsidies.

Red states are following suit with more modest — but nonetheless historic — investments in child care.

In Missouri, Republican Gov. Mike Parson has proposed spending nearly \$130 million to help low-income families access child care once the pandemic relief money dries up and to create tax credits to support child care providers.

Republican state Rep. Brenda Shields, who sponsored the tax credit bill, said she tells conservative colleagues that child care accessibility is critical to grow the state's

Elsewhere, Louisiana last year approved an unprecedented \$52 million for child care subsidies for low-income families. Alabama provided \$17 million worth of incentives for child care providers to get licensed. And Texas voters approved a property tax cut for some day care centers.

More Republicans have pledged to tackle the child care crisis this year. In Missouri, Senate President Pro Tem Caleb Rowden, a Republican, said he hoped the Statehouse would focus less on culture war issues like criminalizing drag shows and censoring library books — and more on expanding access to child care and school choice. Nebraska and Indiana have both pitched programs to make child care free for child care workers. Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, a Republican who ran on a conservative education agenda, pitched boosting the state's child care and education spending by \$180

Child care advocates say the investments are not enough and called on Congress to authorize a new round of money to keep the child care industry afloat. Already, day care centers report they are raising tuition and losing workers because they are no longer receiving federal subsidies. Some have folded.

GOP resistance to child care spending dates to the 1970s, when President Richard Nixon vetoed a bill to establish a national child care system, invoking fears of communism and saying it had "family-weakening implications."

### NOITAN

# After scary Calif. mudslides, some need to steady nerves

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Jesus Barron answered his wife's panicked phone call warning him that a mudslide was smashing into their bedroom in the hills of eastern Los Angeles County. Then, the line went dead.

"She called me and told me the mountain was coming down," he recalled Wednesday. "I thought the worst."

Wendy Barron escaped their Hacienda Heights home during Tuesday's historic downpours in Southern California, but it was seriously damaged when mud flowed down the hillside and blasted through the two retaining walls the family built when they moved in seven years

"It's not enough to stop Mother Nature, of course," Jesus Barron

The storm fueled by the second of back-to-back atmospheric rivers to hit California in days came ashore last weekend in the state's north before it moved down the coast and parked itself over the south for days. turning roads into rivers, causing hundreds of landslides and killing at least nine people.

The final punch came Wednesday afternoon and evening as heavy rain drenched the region. The fore-

cast was for a potential dump of an additional 1 to 3 inches of rain in parts of Los Angeles and San Diego counties and snow and thunderstorms at higher elevations.

Winter storm warnings and advisories continued in Southern California mountains and to the north in the Sierra Nevada.

The National Weather Service said that around 4 p.m. Wednesday, there were reports of a possible tornado in San Luis Obispo County on California's central coast. Authorities said either the swirling gusts of a tornado or severe straight-line winds toppled trees and power lines, tore up asphalt from streets and caused some building damage in Grover Beach and Pismo Beach.

A tree fell outside a Grover Beach tile and flooring store Wednesday afternoon, although owner Brittany Prince said she didn't hear it go because of the wind.

"We looked outside and saw things blowing down the street," she told the Tribune of San Luis Obispo. "I came out to go close the rollup door, and things were flying, so I just left it. I went back inside to make sure we were safe and then I looked out and saw the tree was down."

The storm was expected to ease off again and move off Thursday or Friday, giving way to fair weather for most of the state by the weekend.

But even after the rain, authorities warned of the ongoing threat of collapsing hillsides. After all of the rain and snow of the past week, it wouldn't take much for more water, mud and boulders to sluice down fragile hillsides, experts said. At least 520 mudslides have already occurred in Los Angeles alone.

Even before the evening drenching, the storm had dumped more than a foot of rain in some areas, making it one of the wettest periods on record for the Southern Califor-

The Barrons' home is too damaged for them to live in for the next few months, though the couple was able to retrieve some belongings. Now, they need to decide whether they want to return once it's repaired.

"We love it here," Jesus Barron said. "However, it wouldn't be easy to go through this again."

Jill Shinefield has lived in Beverly Crest, a neighborhood in the Santa Monica Mountains, for 23 years. She watched this week as her neighbors evacuated and other homes got damaged by mudslides. She chose to stay because her home is not up against the hillside.

"We have in the past been concerned about fires, but we've never



Jesus Barron looks at the damage created by a mudslide inside his home, Wednesday, in Hacienda Heights, Calif. A storm that unleashed historic downpours is moving out of Southern California, but authorities warned of the continued threat of collapsing hillsides.

even really thought about mudslides," she said.

Around 430 trees fell in Los Angeles alone, the city said, and work crews have struggled to deal with the storm's aftermath.

One tree that held firm helped protect a home Sunday night in the Studio City neighborhood. The carob tree and an SUV that had been pushed out of its parking space by mud blocked debris from crashing into Scott Toro's home when a mudslide hit his community.

"The mud came down the hill and it stopped 3 feet short of our front door," Toro recalled Wednesday as he cleaned up his yard. "It sounded like a helicopter crashing, or even a freight train coming through."

Electrical outages on Wednesday had been substantially reduced from their peak levels, but there were still more than 71,000 customers without power, mostly in northern and central parts of the state, according to Poweroutage.us.

Four of the nine people killed by the storm were hit by falling trees or limbs, according to Brian Ferguson, a spokesperson for the Governor's Office of Emergency Services. Another died when power failed and she lost her oxygen supply, one drowned in the Tijuana River near the U.S.-Mexico border and three died in vehicle crashes, he said.

Atmospheric rivers also pummeled the state last year and caused at least 20 deaths.

### Fewer jobless claims are filed despite layoff announcements

Associated Press

The number of Americans filing for jobless claims fell last week despite more layoff announcements from high-profile companies re-

Applications for unemployment benefits fell by 9,000 to 218,000 for the week ending Feb. 3, the Labor Department reported Thursday.

The four-week average of claims, which evens out some of the weekly volatility, increased by 3,750 to 212,250.

Weekly unemployment claims are seen as a proxy for the number of U.S. layoffs in a given week. They have remained at extraordinarily low levels despite efforts by the U.S. Federal Reserve to cool the economy.

In total, 1.87 million Americans were collecting jobless benefits during the week that ended Jan. 27, a decrease of 23,000 from the previous week.

### Mexico tops China as leader in goods imported by US

Associated Press

time in more than two decades, Mexicolast year surpassed China as the leading source of goods imported by the United States. The shift reflects the growing tensions between Washington and Beijing as well as U.S. efforts to import from countries that are friendlier and closer.

Figures released Wednesday by the U.S. Commerce Department show that the value of goods import-

ed by the United States from Mexico WASHINGTON — For the first rose nearly 5% from 2022 to 2023, to more than \$475 billion. At the same time, the value of Chinese imports tumbled 20% to \$427 billion. The last time that Mexican goods imported by the U.S. exceeded the value of China's imports was in 2002.

> Relations between the U.S. and China have deteriorated in recent vears as Beijing has fought aggressively on trade and made ominous military gestures in the Far East.



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### **Ex-Fox News host Tucker Carlson interviews Putin**

Associated Press

Russian President Vladimir Putin has been interviewed by former Fox News host Tucker Carlson, the Kremlin confirmed Wednesday. It is Putin's first interview with a Western media figure since his full-scale invasion of Ukraine two years ago.

Carlson released a video from Moscow on Tuesday in which he said he would be interviewing Putin. Carlson claimed that Western journalists had interviewed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy multiple times but could not be "bothered" to interview the Russian president.

The interview was to be posted Thursday, according to Justin Wells, head of programming at Carlson's streaming network. It's not known what was said in the interview.

Putin has heavily limited his contact with international media since he launched the war in Ukraine in February 2022. Russian authorities have cracked down on media, forcing some independent Russian outlets to close, blocking others and ordering a number of foreign reporters to leave the country. Two journalists working for U.S. news organizations — The Wall Street Journal's Evan Gersh-

kovich and Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty's Alsu Kurmasheva - are in jail on charges they reject.



Western journalists were invited to Putin's press annual conference December — the first since the war began — but

**Carlson** 

only two were given the chance to ask a question.

Putin's spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, told reporters that Carlson was chosen for the interview because "he has a position which differs" from other English-language media.

Before his exit from Fox, Carlson repeatedly questioned the validity of U.S. support for Ukraine following the Russian invasion, and he's wondered why Americans are told to hate Putin so much. His commentaries were frequently circulated on Russian state-run media.

The interview with Putin, Carlson said in his video, will be distributed for free on his website and on X. Carlson, who was fired by Fox News in April, announced he was starting his own streaming service in December.

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### Ex-Pakistani PM says he's confident in vote amid strife

Associated Press

LAHORE, Pakistan — Former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif expressed confidence his party would win national elections Thursday, a vote that has been marred by violence and controversy, especially a nationwide mobile phone shutdown and the imprisonment of a popular conten-

A day before the election, at least 30 people were killed in bombings at political offices, and sporadic attacks on Thursday appeared aimed at disrupting the balloting, including one that killed five police officers in a country beset by surging militancy. The unprecedented total mobile phone shutdown, which was intended to

prevent disruptions and flash protests, drew condemnation from rights groups.

The violence, political feuding and a seemingly intractable economic crisis have left many voters disillusioned and raised questions about whether a new government can bring more stability to the troubled Western ally.

But Sharif brushed off suggestions his Pakistan Muslim League party might not win an outright majority in the parliament and would need to form a coalition to

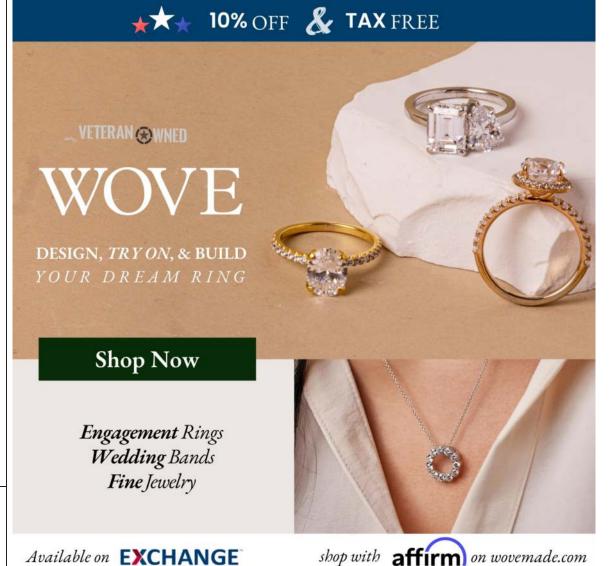
"For God's sake, don't mention a coalition government," he said after casting his vote in the upscale Model Town neighborhood of Lahore.

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What to know about Apple Vision Pro

Technology, Page 14

# Prince, and the evolution

Once seen as a humdrum intermission that featured college marching bands, the Super Bowl halftime show has become one of sport's biggest spectacles

Page 28

Prince performs in the pouring rain during the halftime show of Super Bowl XLI at Dolphin Stadium in Miami on Feb. 4, 2007.

DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP

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### WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY

# A clearer look at Apple's Vision Pro

By Shira Ovide
The Washington Post

pple's first major new product in nearly a decade, the Vision Pro, officially debuted on Feb. 2.

Here are some preliminary answers to big questions about the device, including what the first people to review the Vision Pro think of it:

#### What is the Vision Pro?

It's a fancy computer you strap to your head. It's mostly for virtual reality, but Apple's idea is that the computer also encompasses the space around you.

The goggle-like device puts a super crisp-looking computer screen in your field of vision that you can use, in Apple's imagination, to watch a movie or do office work.

The first thing you see when you strap on the Vision Pro is a cluster of app icons that appear to be floating in the room you're in.

#### What's good about the Vision Pro?

The best feature, according to several of the first Vision Pro reviews, is the sharp, incredible-looking screen.

My Washington Post colleague Chris Velazco, who has tried the Vision Pro several times in Apple-controlled settings, said it was a joy to watch streaming TV or movies and scroll the web on what feels like the highest-definition TV set or computer monitor you can imagine.

Chris and some other Vision Pro reviewers also were wowed by a couple of subtle ways that Apple designed for you to interact with the device.

While you're wearing the Vision Pro, you can pinch your fingers together and just look at apps to control them — "like your eyes are the mouse, and your fingers are the button," the Verge wrote. (The reviewer said the hand and eye gestures do became distracting after a while.)

New ways to control computers can become revolutionary. You're used to it now, but it was a very big deal when the first iPhone had a relatively natural way to scroll and tap on the screen and enlarge images by pinching and expanding your fingers.

#### What's bad about the Vision Pro?

No surprise, but several journalists who tried the Vision Pro said it felt uncomfortable and sometimes very warm to wear a computer on their faces. (It also messes up your



CHRIS VELAZCO/The Washington Post

Apple's Vision Pro computer goggles officially debuted Feb. 2 with a list price of \$3,499, but add-ons can set customers back even more.

hair and makeup.)

And like most head-worn computers, your field of view when you wear the Vision Pro is narrower than you probably expect.

Apple touted the ability to make immersive FaceTime video calls with other people who don't have a Vision Pro. You appear as a 3D virtual version of yourself. The Wall Street Journal columnist said hers was so terrible — "like Botox from hell" — that it scared her family members.

The biggest question about the Vision Pro is whether it can someday convince you to use *another* type of computer — and an awkward-looking one — for some of the tasks you already do with a smartphone, computer or TV set.

#### **OK, but what is the Vision Pro for?**

Apple executives have talked about the device for entertainment, filming immersive videos of your kid's birthday party, as an external monitor for your Mac, for surgeons who need to look at images during procedures and for training mechanics. In other words, even Apple doesn't know what it's for yet.

Lots of companies are betting that some kind of face computer will be the next phase of how we use the internet. There's Meta's line of Quest computer goggles, Snap's Spectacles computer glasses and specialized gadgets like Microsoft's HoloLens headset for business or military uses.

So far, few of us are sold on this future. About 8.1 million head-worn computers were sold globally in 2023, the research firm IDC has estimated. For comparison, more than 1.1 billion new smartphones are sold each year.

#### **How much does the Vision Pro cost?**

The list price is \$3,499. But I clicked on all the Vision Pro add-ons and accessories on Apple's website. My shopping cart totaled \$5,976.09, including tax.

That included:

- Extra digital storage space for 3D videos you take (\$400)
- Two years of the company's AppleCare warranty (\$499)
- An insert for prescription lenses (\$149) if you wear glasses
  - A travel case (\$199)
- An extra battery (\$199). Apple says the Vision Proruns out of juice in about 2 hours.
- A belt-clip holder for the battery (\$49.95). If you had a holster for your Blackberry in 2008, this will feel familiar.

#### Who's going to buy this thing?

Hardly anyone, by Apple's standards.

Analysts who track Apple expect the company will sell a few hundred thousand Vision Pro devices this year. Apple's iPhone sales will be at least 450 times that figure.

Apple hopes it can get you curious about the Vision Pro and persuade you to buy one years from now when its technology is better and cheaper.

For now, CNET advised most of us to "get a free demo at an Apple Store, marvel at its features and wait and see."

#### **How dorky and creepy is the Vision Pro?**

Yeah, it's a snorkeling mask-looking computer you wear on your face. You look like a dork.

Washington Post technology columnist Geoffrey A. Fowler also wrote that Apple's device has the equivalent of four iPhones' worth of sensors, microphones and cameras that track every hand gesture, eyeball flick and couch cushion in your living room.

It's "more data than any other personal device I've ever seen," he wrote.

Apple so far has given little explanation of how it might tackle the risks all this new data might create.

# Vivid-Pix's Memory Station makes digitizing photos easy

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

Tribune News Service We all deal with piles of p

We all deal with piles of predigital old media, including VCR tapes, shelves of CDs and boxes and boxes of prints handed down from previous generations. But the project of digitizing old family photos is inconvenient and time-consuming and often gets put on the back burner.

What scanner do you get, and how to use it? Do you shoot photos of the photos with your cellphone? There are many options for digitizing photos including pay archive services; I have used several, and they do a great job.

However, the Vivid-Pix Memory Station is a one-click scanning solution. Most often, scans do not look as good as the original. But the Vivid-Pix Memory Station

was as consistent and easy to use as most options I've tried.

The hardware setup was quick. Just unpack the scanner and plug the power cord and USB cable into the back of the base. The software must be downloaded and installed, but that takes little time. The interface has an older look but is user-friendly and straightforward.

After your first few scans, you'll want to adjust the software settings. These include format and size/quality. You can always decrease it later, but start with the best and highest.

The Restore software is both easy and fun. Once you open up an image, you'll have a choice of nine presets to fix the image's contrast or brightness. You can also manually color correct the images. A great feature allows you to save your custom settings for future one-click use.

Features of the scanner, which works with both Mac and Windows systems, include being able to scan up to 10 images at a time in the 17-by-11.8-inch scanning area. Images can be saved with a resolution of up to 600 dpi in JPEG or PDF formats. There are also options for book-curve distortion correction and auto-book correction.

The ScanSnap SV600 Scanner is essentially a large digital camera on a stand. When you hit start, its head moves forward to scan the image, book or whatever you need to be scanned, taking just a few seconds.

You can control scanning with the software or manually with



VIVID-FIX/IIV

The Vivid-Pix Memory Station includes a ScanSnap SV600 scanner, fabric mat, a pair of stabilizing braces for the scanner, a power adapter, USB-A cable and software. An acrylic sheet is optional.

the scan and stop button.

An AC power adapter and a USB-A cable are included. I used a USB-A to USB-C adapter with no problems. A fabric mat is included, which will keep your scanned images in place; an optional acrylic sheet was also sent along, which worked great when scanning books that need to be held open. A pair of stabiliz-

ing braces is included if you have a place where you want the scanner secured.

The Memory Station software home edition bundle is \$799.95 and includes the SV600 Scanner, Home Edition MS software, Vivid-Pix Restore software and Abby OCR creation software.

Online: vivid-pix.com/memorystation

### WEEKEND: MOVIES

# Love is on the stream

Rating 3 Netflix rom-coms from 2023 for their Valentine's Day watchability

By Moira Macdonald

The Seattle Times

alentine's Day is soon upon us, which means we must be in need of some cheery Netflix rom-coms in which very attractive and well-dressed people have romantic crises in cute apartments. While there doesn't appear to be anything brand-new that fits the bill on the streamer, I watched and rated three newish ones (all from 2023). Wishing you all a happy and perfectly accessorized Valentine's Day!

#### **Your Place or Mine'**

(Netflix original; 111 minutes)

The premise: Harry and Sally, oops — I mean, Debbie (Reese Witherspoon) and Peter (Ashton Kutcher), have been platonic best friends for 20 years in that grand romcom tradition — despite being polar opposites who live on opposite coasts. But when single mom Debbie's babysitter falls through before her planned trip to New York, Peter offers to fly to Los Angeles to stay with the kid. Worlds collide, secrets are revealed and guess how it ends. Really, just guess.

The setting: We alternate between Debbie's cozy, cluttered California bungalow and Peter's sleek, practically empty, ultramodern New York apartment where he keeps a secret manuscript in his oven, which seems like a dumb place to hide something if you're having a houseguest.

The chemistry: Witherspoon and Kutcher are pros at this sort of thing, but they're hampered by a script that has them on opposite coasts for nearly the entire movie. It's hard to banter in split screen, and harder still to make this story (in which Peter magically becomes the world's greatest dad, and Debbie, for some reason, never removes her one pair of sandals, to the point at which I worried they were permanently fused to her feet) believable

The other people: "Your Place or Mine" has an intriguingly random assortment of secondary characters, including Tig Notaro, whose role in this movie is to carry takeout coffee around; Steve Zahn as Debbie's neighbor/gardener/resident eccentric person who mostly sits around playing guitar in Debbie's yard; Jesse Williams as an almost comically handsome New York editor; and Zoë Chao as Peter's bra-top-wearing ex-girlfriend who befriends Debbie, despite the latter's predilection for den-

The obligatory callout to a Meg Ryan rom-com: Debbie, like Kathleen in "You've Got Mail," waxes rhapsodic about fresh school supplies.

The life lesson learned: Um, maybe don't take 20 years to figure out that your best friend is your soulmate?
The rating: 2.5 hearts

#### **'Love Again'**

(Not technically a Netflix original — it's from Sony Pictures Entertainment — but it's available on Netflix, and if you think I can resist a romantic drama in which Celine Dion gives life lessons, think again; 104 minutes)

The premise: Mira (Priyanka Chopra Jonas) is deeply in love with her boyfriend John (Arinzé Kene), who in the movie's opening moments brings her a packet of Tropical Skittles (swoon) and then dies immediately in a car accident, tragically leaving her with just her memories and the Skittles. Fast-forward two years, and Mira is sending



NETFLIX/TNS photos

Ellie Kemper, left, as Helen and Luke Grimes as Jake meet on a multiday hiking trip in "Happiness for Beginners." Helen and Jake, her brother's best friend, spend much of the movie annoyed with each other but eventually fall in love.

#### Moira's guide to Netflix rom-coms

1 heart — Not even worth hate-watching

2 hearts — If there's nothing else to watch, try this

3 hearts — Watchable, some semblance of plot

4 hearts — Cute, heartwarming

5 hearts — Cult classic

very sad texts to John's phone — which are being read by cute British journalist Rob (Sam Heughan), the current owner of that number. You can figure out the rest.

The setting: New York City, in which Mira and Rob have disappointingly non-luxurious (though perfectly nice) apartments. Note, though, that Rob is a music critic for the New York Chronicle, a newspaper whose offices look strangely like the sort of hotel that offers a lobby wine hour.

The chemistry: It's decent! Both Mira and Rob like opera and putting french fries inside their cheeseburgers, and Chopra Jonas is very good at the rather specific art of executing Sad Yet Loving Glances While Wearing a Cute Hat. Heughan, who I will need to check out on "Outlander," is likewise quite charming, and manages to sell us on Rob's adorably dopey plan of finding Mira by going to the opera every night and, um, maybe she'll be there.

The other people: CELINE DION plays herself in this movie, and yes, that requires all caps, because she actually gets quite a bit of screen time hilariously lecturing Rob (she tells him that he has "the presence of a pair of used underwear," which is the best burn I have heard in many a year) and telling him that love takes courage. It does! I believe you, Celine! Mira's heart will go on!

The obligatory callout to a Meg Ryan rom-com: Rob races through the nighttime New York streets in search of Mira, just as Harry does at the end of "When Harry Met Sally." (Bonus classic rom-com moment: Rob does an excellent lip-sync cover of "All By Myself," just like Renée Zellweger in "Bridget Jones's Diary" but minus the sad pajamas.)

The life lesson learned: When Celine Dion tells you things, listen.

The rating: 3.5 hearts

#### **'Happiness for Beginners'**

(Netflix original, 103 minutes)

The premise: Helen (Ellie Kemper), recently divorced, signs up for a multiday hiking trip in order to expand her horizons and make a fresh start. Unbeknownst to her, also



Reese Witherspoon, left, and Ashton Kutcher play polar opposites who don't realize they're soulmates until 20 years into their friendship in "Your Place or Mine."

on the trip is her brother's handsome best friend Jake (Luke Grimes). Blisters, nature-related catastrophes, uncomfortable-looking camping and true love ensue. (Note, though, that this is the sort of movie fantasy hiking trip in which everyone's hair looks as good, or better, at the end of the trip than before.)

The setting: Unlike most rom-coms, most of this film takes place in the great outdoors, specifically some 80 miles of the Appalachian Trail in Connecticut. The fall colors are lovely, making up (sort of) for this film's sad lack of cute date outfits.

The chemistry: Helen and Jake, as is required by law in rom-coms, are annoyed with each other for much of the movie, and I could have done without the Poignant Twist added near the end. But Kemper, who has an enchanting way of lighting up as if lit by the sun, and Grimes are sweet together, and you root for these two despite yourself.

The other people: The rest of the hikers are an amusingly ragtag assortment, including a young woman who brought a ukulele along (as if camping wasn't uncomfortable enough), and an extremely intense hike leader named Beckett who's always saying terrifying things like, "We pack out at dawn!" (I, a person deeply committed to being indoorsy, may be projecting here.)

The obligatory callout to a Meg Ryan rom-com: Helen adorably sings along with the radio while driving, like Ryan in "Sleepless in Seattle."

The life lessons learned: Avoid walking on potentially hollow logs, deal with blisters as soon as possible, break in your hiking boots before actually hiking and maybe just stay in the city next time.

The rating: 3 hearts

WEEKEND: MOVIES

# Dusting off the movie projectors

Longtime friends Nolan and Villeneuve discuss screening their respective flicks 'Tenet' and 'Dune: Part Two' on film

By LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

hristopher Nolan has, by any account, had a banner year with "Oppenheimer." But "Tenet" was still on his mind.

The palindromic spy thriller starring John David Washington and Robert Pattinson was released at a tricky time during the pandemic, when many theaters were open internationally but not yet in New York and Los Angeles. And all those IMAX 70mm and 70mm film prints, which proved so immensely popular with audiences for "Oppenheimer," were just sitting around.

"It's a film that was designed, almost more than any I've made, to be enjoyed in this form," Nolan told The Associated Press. "When I heard they were going to be making film prints on 'Dune: Part Two,' I jumped at that and thought, what if we opened up the week before? We can dust off the projectors."

Nolan showed one to Warner Bros. film chiefs Pam Abdy and Michael De Luca, and "they got it."

Beginning Feb. 23, "Tenet" will be back in theaters, in Nolan's favorite format.

Longtime friends Nolan and Denis Villeneuve spoke to the AP last week, outside of a sold-out showing of the re-release, about "Tenet," "Dune: Part Two" and the sense that, a decade after Kodak almost stopped making film altogether, movie audiences are embracing and rallying around film too.

Below are excerpts from the conversation, which has been edited for clarity and brevity:

Associated Press: I spoke to people who held off on seeing "Tenet" entirely, holding on to the hope that it would get a proper re-release.

Nolan: For me, living in Los Angeles, I never got to see it with an audience. It came to streaming first here, so this is a really fun opportunity to get it in front of people the way it was intended. The thing with "Tenet" is, I think of all the films I have made, it's the one that's very much about the experience of watching films. It's about watching spy movies in a way. It tries to build on that experience and take it to this very magnified, slightly crazy place. A lot of that is about sound and music and this huge image.

More than any film I've made, "Tenet" was designed to have this very theatrical, IMAX, larger-than-life identity.

"Dune: Part Two" was shot on IMAX digital but will be shown in film. Can you



REBECCA CABAGE, INVISION/AP

Denis Villeneuve, left, and Christopher Nolan pose for a portrait on Feb. 2 in Los Angeles.

#### explain how this works?

**Villeneuve:** It was not planned that I would get an IMAX film release. It was a bit like a gift from life, the movie being delayed because of the strikes. Someone came with the idea to try it. They mentioned this once and then I was like a dog not letting it go. The idea to experiment, and, frankly, Chris will say "cheat" because

**Nolan:** I wasn't going to say that! **Villeneuve:** But still, I left film a long time ago. Or, I didn't leave film, film left me, and my heart was broken.

**Nolan:** Film wants you back. **Villeneuve:** I'm flirting with the

**Villeneuve:** I'm flirting with the idea, Chris Nolan.

I cannot give numbers, but I know that many of the pre-sales for "Dune: Part Two" are in 70mm. There's the notion of an event, and that is something people are starving for; they are craving it.

**Nolan:** As filmmakers, we're competing with incredible home technology. We have

to raise our game, but it's great to see a new generation seeing what the difference is. There's an emotional response to it that I think is very hard to quantify. It's hard to justify to the studio sometimes. So it's wonderful when they look at the numbers and they see that they sell more tickets that way, because audiences get something.

**Villeneuve:** The idea to put "Dune" on film didn't come from me, to be honest. It came from Warners.

**Nolan:** I'm admitting nothing, but we might have pointed out to them some of the numbers that we made.

**Villeneuve:** It always ends up being about the money.

**Nolan:** I just like hearing the guy who made "Dune Two" be like, "it's all about money." I've seen that film. That's not a cheap film, my friend.

**Villeneuve:** I have a question for you, Chris. You must have strong shoulders because you were able to keep film alive

by yourself. You're pretty stubborn, my friend, but was there a moment where you falk a hit clare?

Nolan: Emma was always on the exact same page. I think it would have been very hard if my producing partner hadn't understood it the same way I understood it, emotionally. I've never felt on my own because it was always at least the two of us together. (But) there was a strange feeling of, hang on, how can it come down to this? We've achieved this incredible goal to be able to make films on a large scale; surely they won't take the tools away at the last minute.

**Villeneuve:** I think that's the way movies will survive. Large formats — like IMAX, more precisely — is definitely the future of cinema, because you cannot reproduce that at home. Not even in your home.

Nolan: Well, mine's pretty good

**Villeneuve:** Yours is the BEST. But it's not IMAX.

### WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

# Giving Shelley's classic new life

'Lisa Frankenstein' a bold, colorful, '80s-set romantic retelling with a modern sensibility

By KATIE WALSH Tribune News Service t seems like these days, teenage girls only want one thing, and that's a longdead Victorian boyfriend roused from his grave by an ardent wish and a strike of lightning. He's sweet, he's chivalrous, his tongue has fallen off so he can't speak — dreamboat alert! It's a setup that's a little bit "Freaky Friday" and little bit "Night of the Living Dead," but in "Lisa Frankenstein," writer Diablo Cody and Director Zelda Williams take Mary Shelley's iconic horror text and juice it up with "Heathers"-inspired dialogue and a romantic hero in the mold of "Edward Scissorhands." But this spooky-ooky 1980s-set romance has a thoroughly modern sensibility, and it's about to be the new obsession of quirky teens everywhere.

The good news is that "Lisa Frankenstein" is so chockablock with references that span the gamut of film history - from the silent era to the Brat Pack years that it might inspire younger generations to explore films outside of their comfort zone. Cody's script may be totally '80s (a nostalgic comfort era for a Generation X writer), and indebted to writers like Daniel Waters, John Hughes and Amy Heckerling, but Director Williams, making her feature debut, has embroidered the text with

her own flourishes, nodding to Georges Méliès, James Whale's Universal monster movies and Tim Burton's early studies of suburban absurdism. And yes, there is a passing shoutout to Weimar-era filmmaker G.W. Pabst, if you listen closely.

Kathryn Newton stars as Lisa, an odd outcast with a slasher movie-ready tragic backstory and a predilection for hanging out in the cemetery at the grave of a handsome young dead guy. She has an evil stepmother (Carla Gugino) and a clueless father (Joe Chrest); her stepsister Taffy (Liza Soberano) is a chipper cheerleader earnestly concerned with Lisa's popularity, or lack thereof.

Try as she might, Taffy just can't make Lisa fit in, but it's only when Lisa starts to embrace standing out that she starts to find her power. It's largely thanks to her new beau, the reanimated hunk from the cemetery (Cole Sprouse), who shows up on her doorstep caked in bugs and rot and who encourages her to embrace an edgy new goth princess look. He needs a makeover and a few new parts himself, so Lisa and her Creature have to resort to sordid, murderous means to acquire the limbs he's

With this performance and hers in 2020's "Freaky," Newton has proven herself to be that rare starlet who seems to be a real



FOCUS FEATURES/TNS

Cole Sprouse, left, as the Creature and Kathryn Newton as Lisa Swallows in "Lisa Frankenstein." The Creature helps odd outcast Lisa stand out by encouraging her to embrace an edgy new goth princess look.

weirdo with the face of an angel. With her long, curly mane and large, doleful eyes adorned with excessive makeup, she has the look of a silent film star outfitted in a wardrobe that's Madonna by Lydia Deetz. She adopts a melodramatic movement in the style of Elsa Lanchester's performance in "Bride of Frankenstein," combining all of these influences for a truly memorable turn as Lisa. Sprouse, as the wordless, devoted Creature, delivers a physical performance that is surprisingly moving and

But the breakout star and true discovery of "Lisa Frankenstein" is Soberano, who has a real gift for imbuing Cody's famously clever and convoluted dialogue with a sincerity that elevates the script and character beyond an ironic archetype as she morphs

from mean teen to scream queen. In fact, Soberano might be too good in the role — she's so charming and sympathetic that there's an emotional domino effect that exposes some issues with the script.

At a certain point, "Lisa Frankenstein" loses sight of the characters and becomes more about the central gambit and the metaphor of the monster as a man devoid of toxic masculinity, literally sewn and zapped into Lisa's ideal mate. The script fumbles a complicated emotional through line about the trauma of losing one's mother violently, and careens off into a doomed lovers story, a "supernatural born killers," if you will. At times, the dialogue is interrupted by what seem to be Cody's personal rants and 2020s-friendly social messages, and even if they are relatable, it's transparent.

Still, there's enough verve in the concept and performances, and in Williams' exuberant direction, to carry "Lisa Frankenstein" through. Williams' approach is refreshingly tactile and practical, and filled to the brim with design elements and influences, like a title animation made of Victorian silhouettes and a German expressionism-inspired dream sequence. Her style is a neon-Gothic splendor, combining turn-of-the-century elements with a bold '80s color palette. Assembled lovingly from many different parts, it's Williams' hand that flips the switch on "Lisa Frankenstein," and make no mistake, it's alive.

"Lisa Frankenstein" is rated PG-13 for violent content, bloody images, sexual material, language, sexual assault, teen drinking and drug content. Running time: 101 minutes. Now playin in select AAEES theaters

### 'Scrambled' tackles fertility worries with empathy, humor

By Adam Graham

The Detroit News

Writer-director-star Leah McKendrick makes an impressive debut with "Scrambled," her lively, lived-in comedy about a 30-something Los Angeleno who decides to freeze her eggs.

MeKendrick stars as Nellie, a perennial bridesmaid, whose love life has hit a wall. She has a phone full of past hook-ups but no serious relationship candidates, and at 34, she feels her biological clock tick, ticking away.

So she weighs her options and decides to freeze her eggs, and "Scrambled" details the arduous process and her own maturing as she takes control of her life for the first time. It's a coming-of-age story for the mid-30s set.

McKendrick is a fiery, spunky redhead and she brings comic zeal to the role, and Nellie is a relatable mess who sees her friends going off and getting married



LIONSGATE/TNS

In "Scrambled," Leah McKendrick plays Nellie Robinson, a 34-year-old childless woman who decides to freeze her eggs to take control of her life before it passes her by.

while she clings to the rhythms of the life

She's stuck in a kind of millennial haze, working her Etsy job, and is slow to real-

ize she's in danger of the world passing her by. But she also knows marriage is not the easy answer it presents itself as, and she sees her friends, including Sheila ("Saturday Night Live's" Ego Nwodim), question their decisions to walk down the

Still, ever the reliable friend, she's there to offer comfort and party drugs at the wedding ceremony.

But the egg-freezing route is no walk in the park for Nellie. She has to borrow money from her judgmental brother Jesse (Andrew Santino) for the process, and she has to face the scrutiny of her father (Clancy Brown).

And there's the worry over the success of the procedure, the existential dread of her decision and the passive-aggressive aspersions of those in her friends circle.

McKendrick handles these issues with empathy, warmth, grace and humor, and "Scrambled" stays grounded in reality without sacrificing laughs or heart.

"Scrambled" is rated R for sexual content, nudity, language throughout and some drug use. Running time: 100 minutes. Now playing in select AAFES theaters.

### Weekend: books

## **Kristin Hannah &** the Vietnam War

Prolific novelist turns her attention, focus to the nurses who enlisted in 'The Women'

KRISTIN

By Peter Larsen The Orange County Register

he idea to write about nurses in combat zones in the Vietnam War

came easy, novelist

The writing? Not so much.

Kristin Hannah says.

"The Vietnam War was such a shadow across my childhood," Hannah says of her earliest inspiration for her new novel, "The Women." "My friends' fathers

were serving, and in fact, my best friend's father was shot down and lost.

"I didn't understand all of the complexities, but I knew that the country was angry and divided," she says. "You know, we were watching the aftermath and what was happening in the war on a nightly basis. So it just made a really big impact on me."

So around 1996, after half a dozen or so novels, Hannah decided to base her next book on women who served in the war.

And then: "The truth was, I just wasn't a good enough writer at that point," she says. "Because I knew this story was really important, or at least I felt it was important. and I really wanted to be able to write it to the best of my ability."

She was a new mother at the time, too, so when her editor urged her to set it aside until she felt ready to write it, she did. And there it sat, surfacing occasionally for new beginnings, only to be put aside again until 2020 when the pandemic arrived.

"I had turned in 'The Four Winds,' actually the week that Seattle went on lockdown," says Hannah, who lives on Bainbridge Island in Washington, referring to her previous novel. "Here we are, trapped in our homes for quite some period of time. And I was watching the nurses and the doctors in the medical community, and the price that was being exacted on them by this pandemic.

"Somehow this confluence of being trapped and being reliant on the medical community, and seeing the cost that they were paying to help us, led me back to the Vietnam female nurses," she says. "I thought, OK, I can't go anywhere.

There is no excuse for me not to write this book now, because it feels even more relevant. Our country is divided once again, and so it all felt very familiar."

The protagonist of "The Womis Frances "Frankie" McGrath, a 20-year-old Southern California nurse who in 1966 decides to follow her older brother Finley to Vietnam.

She arrives naively thinking she'll be safely stationed far from

the front only to be thrown into the visceral reality of the 36th Evacuation Hospital where wounded troops and civilians flood the oprooms erating during frequent mass casualty events. She's mentored by her bunkmates Barb and Ethel, nurses who've there a few months longer.

Frankie comes

to flourish despite the hard work and heartache she experiences in Vietnam. After signing up for a second tour of duty, and a transfer to the 71st Evacuation Hospital closer to the fighting, she comes home and finds that her reintroduction into civilian life is anything but easy.

"It wasn't solely nurses in the beginning," Hannah says of her earliest idea for the novel. "Then, once I read the memoirs of these women and understood what they had lived through, and how heroic and tragic their stories are, I just thought, I cannot believe that this story hasn't really been told."

The decision to focus on Frankie, a daughter of privilege from Coronado Island off San Diego, rather than Ethel, a farm girl from Virginia, or Barb, a young Black woman from the South, came partly because the Southern California background matched the early life of Hannah.

"I felt comfortable with that world, Southern California," she says. "I sort of understood it, and I understood the naivete that comes from a bubble world like Coronado. You know, I live on an island in Washington. And I wanted this nurse to go over as starry-eyed and naive as possible.

"In terms of the research, the lion's share of the memoirs I read were very much young women



"The Vietnam War was such a shadow across my childhood," author Kristin Hannah says of her earliest inspiration for her new novel, "The Women." "My friends' fathers were serving, and in fact, my best friend's father was shot down and lost."

who had just finished their nursing degree and went over for adventure or patriotism. Or following someone," Hannah says. "Because they volunteered. They couldn't be made to go and so they chose to go.

"And so I wanted the kind of woman where it made sense that she would be, I guess, naive enough to think, Oh, I'll go to the war. That'll be OK. I'll be far from the front. I'll be fine."

Those real-life accounts, whether written or told directly to Hannah by former nurses she met along the way, also included key details of the difficulties of returning home from the war.

In addition to the PTSD the women experienced from their time face-to-face with the horrific damage the machines of war could do to a human body, many back home discounted their service, saying to their faces, as Frankie experiences in the book, that there were no women in Vietnam.

"She's constantly told, 'No, there were no women. No, we don't have help for you; you don't belong here," Hannah says of the resistance Frankie faces whether seeking services at a VA hospital

or attending a Vietnam veteran's march. "I thought to myself, that really can't be true. It can't be true with the VA. It can't be true among Vietnam vets — male Vietnam

"Yet when I began speaking to the women who had been there, they all had memories of being told by people who ought to know better, that there were no women there," she says. "And their response was very much, 'Well, if you didn't [come into contact with the nurses serving there] then you were lucky.' Meaning you weren't in one of these hospitals, you weren't in these places."

A generation of men was devastated by the war in Vietnam. A smaller number of women who served came home with their own traumas. All of them, as Hannah writes in "The Women" and underscores in conversation, deserved all the help they needed, and often didn't get, once home.

"That is something that I just want to be front and center on people's minds all the time," she says. "Because I think if we ask our military people to go to war, we have to care for them when they get home."

### In honor of 'The Women' who served

By Jenny Shank Star Tribune

Kristin Hannah has been a juggernaut for three decades, crafting more than two dozen historical fictions about women defining themselves during eventful times.

If you think you can resist the allure of her storytelling, that's the first sign you've never read a Hannah novel. With "The Women," she again proves her skill at submerging readers in a compelling character's experience and enlightening them about history's overlooked heroines.

How does she do it? Hannah begins with an untested, unformed young woman, Frankie McGrath, 20, raised in privilege. Her father honors the family's male veterans with a "heroes' wall" of portraits. It's 1966, and Frankie's parents throw her brother a lavish party before he reports to the Navy, as is expected for all McGrath men.

Frankie pursues nursing, one of the few careers her family considers acceptable for a woman. A Vietnam veteran tells Frankie a nurse saved his life and Frankie decides to become a hero too, joining the Army with limited training.

Bad idea, you're thinking. But Frankie presses ahead, and we see how the outcome of one impetuous decision can shape an entire life and overthrow a worldview. Frankie is plunged into field hospital chaos, witnessing unimaginable injuries.

"The Women" follows Frankie through 200 heart-rending pages of combat hospital trauma, then presents the true challenge of her life: When she returns home, peers consider her service a disgrace. Even veterans shun her, disavowing that any women served in Vietnam. When she's rocked by flashbacks, the VA denies her help. No one considers her a hero, and everyone wants her to pretend the war never happened. Frankie learns that many tenets her lovers, family and country have insisted were truths were, in fact, lies. The only people able to help are her fellow former servicewomen.

Hannah has rendered you helpless at this point, compelled by a character who grows increasingly complicated and flawed, as she flails in love and life and joins a quest for recognition of the approximately 10.000 women who served in Vietnam. "Some women had worn love beads in the sixties," Hannah writes, "others had worn dog tags." You're basically marching alongside Frankie at rallies at this point and, sorry, but you're a Hannah fan now.

### WEEKEND: TRAVEL

# Lisbon a salty reminder of bygone times

ortugal's capital city of Lisbon feels to me like Europe's San Francisco — it has rattling trolleys, a famous suspension bridge, a heritage dominated by a horrific earthquake and lots of fog. And like San Francisco, it's a charming mix of now and then.

Lisbon's glory days were in the 15th and 16th centuries, when Vasco da Gama and other explorers opened new trade routes to India and Asia, making Lisbon the queen of Europe. Later, the riches of colonial Brazil boosted Lisbon even higher — until an earthquake in 1755 leveled the city, leaving a smoldering pile of rubble. Rua Augusta, the triumphal gateway arch to the city, signals the city's rebirth, and affords a grand view down the main drag. Climbing to the top of the arch, you can see that the center of town was rebuilt in a strict grid plan with broad boulevards and inviting squares.

Downtown Lisbon fills a valley flanked by two hills along the banks of the Rio Tejo. Three characteristic neighborhoods line the downtown harborfront: the modern-feeling Baixa (lower town); the Alfama's jumble of medieval streets on the hill to the east; and the Bairro Alto (high

town), on the hill to the west, whose old lanes brim with restaurants, bars and nightclubs.

The city's trolleys provide a fun do-it-yourself orientation tour. Many of the cars are vin-



Rick Steves

tage models from the 1920s. Shaking and shivering through the old parts of town, they somehow safely weave within inches of parked cars, climb steep hills and offer breezy views of

the city. They're perfect for a Rice-A-Roni-style joyride.

The essential Lisbon, however, is easily covered and best enjoyed on foot. The Alfama's tangled street plan, a cobbled playground of Old World color, is one of the few bits of Lisbon to survive the earthquake. Its main square, Largo de São Miguel, is the best place to observe this atmospheric quarter.

Bent Alfama houses comfort each other in their romantic shabbiness, and the air drips with laundry and the smell of clams. Favorite saints decorate doors to protect families (St. Peter, protector of fishermen, is big here).



CAMERON HEWITT/Rick Steves' Europe

Lisbon's hilly Alfama district is a jumble of whitewashed houses overlooking the mouth of the Tejo River.

Today, young people are choosing to live elsewhere. In just a couple of generations, the inhabitants have changed — from fishermen's families to immigrants to young bohemians.

Despite the change in demographics, the city's back streets still host halls for Lisbon's traditional folk music, fado — melancholy ballads of longing and loss, often sung by widows and other

victims of fate. I like fado vadio, a kind of open-mic fado evening where amateurs line up at the door of neighborhood dives for their chance to warble.

On my must-do list in Lisbon is stopping at a bar to have pastel de bacalhau, a fried potato-andcod croquette. Bacalhau (salted cod) is Portugal's national dish. Imported from Norway, it's never fresh, and Portuguese kids think it's a triangular fish because of the way it's sold. I think that Portugal must have the only national dish that's imported from far away — strange, and yet befitting a nation whose centuries-old economic foundation was the result of great explorers.

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### Carnival events take various, but always fun-filled, forms

Ask a kid to name his or her favorite holidays, and there's a good chance Halloween will come out near or at the top of the list. And what's not to love about a date that promises the chance to dress up like a cartoon hero or fairy-tale princess AND collect a bagful of candy? Small wonder, then, that Fasching, Fasnacht, Carnival or the myriad other names it goes by is so enduringly popular. And when the grown-ups also dress up and get into the act, you've got a day out that makes a big impression. To

see a child's eyes grow a mile wide, consider attending one of these events:



Karen Bradbury

Children's parades: Many German carnival stronghold cities hold events specifically geared toward children. Mainz, Germany, is the site of what's billed as Europe's largest child and youth parade, which sets forth from the city center at 2:11 p.m. on Saturday. Duesseldorf also stages a child and youth parade that begins at the Goerres-Gymnasium at 2 p.m. on Saturday

and winds up at the Burgplatz. Children in Wiesbaden will converge upon Luisenplatz at 3:33 p.m. on Saturday. The parade concludes with the traditional storming of the Rathaus, or City Hall. Aachen's youth will set off from Oppenhoffallee at 11:11 a.m. on Sunday.

Free candy!: As those riding on board carnival floats throw candies and other trinkets in the direction of the spectators lining the streets, minor melees ensue. These treat-filled parades include the following events scheduled for Sunday: (11:55 a.m. in Wuerzburg; 12:11 p.m. in Wiesbaden); Rose Monday: (10 a.m. in Cologne; 11:11 a.m. in Aachen; 11:11 a.m. in Mainz; 1:11 p.m. in Ludwigshafen) or Tuesday: (2:11 p.m. in Heidelberg).

**Burning effigies:** Many celebrations conclude by burning an effigy symbolizing the excesses of all the festivities that came before. In the suburbs of Cologne, Germany—namely Nippes, Ehrenfeld and Muelheim—the last day



Gilles in masks dance in the streets each year in Binche, Belgium, on Shrove Tuesday. This year, that's Feb. 13.

of carnival (Tuesday) includes the burning of the Nubbel, a scarecrow-like straw figure, in public spaces. Online: koeln.de/karneval/veilchendienstag-koeln

International Kid's carnival: In Venice, Italy, the folks behind the Biennale di Venezia work hard to ensure kids are included in the carnival festivities held throughout February. Through Feb. 11, children and their elders can enjoy theater workshops and more at the city's Teatro Piccolo Arsenale and Ca' Giustinian-San Marco, as well as at the Parco Albenese, Bissuola in Mestre. Preregistration is required and can be done online at labiennale.org.

**Boat races:** The city of Schramberg, Germany, celebrates its carnival with a crazy boat race known as the Da-Bach-Na-Fahrt. At 1 p.m. on Rose Monday, 40 or so decorated two-man craft will take to a stream known as the Bach Berneck, their mission to navigate a 500-meter section of the waterway in the fastest time possible without going overboard. The purchase of an armband is the

key to admission, and also allows entry into the carnival parade immediately following. Online: bach-na-fahrt.de

A thousand identically dressed marchers: The carnival in Binche, Belgium, stars some of carnival's strangest personalities, namely the Gilles. On Shrove Tuesday, men wearing straw-padded red, black and yellow suits and white bow-tie collars, wax masks with glasses drawn on and wooden clogs will clomp to the sound of a drum, waving sticks to ward off evil spirits. On their second round through town, they'll be wearing hats adorned with ostrich feathers and carry baskets of oranges which they toss, sometimes a bit too energetically, toward the spectators. It's considered bad form and bad luck to toss the citrus back their way. Online: tinyurl.com/za3uhmcn

A massive food fight: Oranges also play a central role in the carnival of Ivrea, a city in northern Italy. The carnival's origins are steeped in a legend that recounts the rape of a miller's daughter by a tyrant of noble lineage on the eve of her wedding. After the young lady managed to cut his head off, an affronted populace stormed the palace and burned it to the ground. This liberation is commemorated by means of the Battle of the Oranges, in which teams of orange throwers on foot take on those positioned in carts. Tourists can also get in on the act by joining one of the nine combat teams. The battles take place at 2 p.m. on Feb. 11, 12 and 13. Online: storicocarnevaleivrea.it

**Fool's jump:** The Black Forest town of Rottweil, Germany, adheres to an age-old tradition known as the Narrensprung, or Fools Jump. In their traditional dress of shirt, sash and gloves of white bedecked with colorful capes and bells, these figures wearing carved wooden masks passed down through the generations carry poles that serve as pogo sticks of sorts, allowing them to jump and cavort to the delight of the gathered crowds. The Narrensprung takes place at 8 a.m. on Feb. 12 and at 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Feb. 13. Tickets go for 10 euros adults and 5 euros for children. Online: narrenzunft-rottweil.de

### VEEKEND: TRAVEL



ROBERT FULLERTON, DREAMSTIME/TNS

# **Coolness of** ice climbing

Americans warming up to variability, ephemeral quality of the chilly sport

By Lila Seidman

Los Angeles Times

hwack! Thwack! Thud! Oh, thank God, my whole body exclaimed. After a few swings, the razor-sharp pick I clutched lodged firmly into a cascading frozen waterfall. Shards of ice exploded from the point of contact onto my face. A taste of blood. At least the hold seemed solid. I raised one foot and kicked the tippy-toe spike of a traction device attached to my boot into the opalescent surface. Then I raised the other.

Like a cat walking on extended claws, I made my way up Chouinard Falls in Lee Vining Canyon, a California ice-climbing mecca just east of Yosemite National Park. Swing, crash, thud. Two steps. Swing, crash, thud. Two steps.

I wasn't fast. I definitely wasn't graceful. But I was ice climbing.

Ice climbing, as the name suggests, entails scaling frozen water. Even mountain goats can't scramble up vertical ice, so specialized equipment is needed. Like rock climbing, the sport entails a rope system — known as belaying - but differs in substantive ways.

Not only does ice-climbing gear resemble medieval torture devices, but the sport, for obvious reasons, must be done in the cold. Ice forms in the shade, adding to the chill factor. Particularly frigid climbs can bring on the "screaming barfies," a cluster of symptoms that include severe hand pain and nausea. (My sun-soaked Angeleno blood curdles at the thought.) As climbers chop into the ice with their tools and crampons, frozen debris rains

While it is still relatively obscure, several mountain guides said ice climbing received a nudge closer to the mainstream with the explosion of outdoor recreation in recent years. Roughly 2.5 million Americans climb ice, rock or pursue mountaineering, an increase of nearly 18% from the number of Americans who did so in the mid-2000s, according to the Outdoor Industry Association, a collective that includes business leaders, climate experts and policy makers.

"Before I tried it, I always had this idea that it was the craziest thing you could do," said Michael O'Connor of Sierra Mountain Guides. "I was, like, 'Does the ice just fall down and hit you?' And, yeah, the equipment seems cool, but it also seems horrifying."

Yet O'Connor came away from his first tussle with ice, around 2010, wanting more.

Now, "by the time fall is hitting and I see the ice starting to form up and start to hear about people climbing on things, I'm like, 'All right, I'm getting kind of psyched.' And then once it's here in Sierra, I'm like, 'Let's go.' And

#### **Sunny California, an unlikely birthplace**

Conquerors of big mountains have long contended with ice. Once upon a time, alpinists laboriously hacked steps into it — literal stairways to heaven. That all changed in the mid-1960s to early 1970s. Renowned climber Yvon Chouinard — who set up a blacksmith shop in Ventura, Calif., and later opened outdoor clothing brand Patagonia's first store nearby — developed a curved pick that could claw into steep ice and stay put. Early climbs using the innovative tool were made in California's Eastern Sierra Nevada.

"It's no stretch to call that the ice-climbing revolution,"

### WEEKEND: TRAVEL

### Ice: Outdoor activity is more accessible than it seems

#### **FROM PAGE 20**

said Doug Robinson, who frequently climbed with Chouinard in those days and helped usher in the sport's transformation.

Climbers began to haul themselves up frozen waterfalls and dangling icicles, carving out a discipline separate from mountaineering. Sunny California, far from the epicenter of the sport today, can broadly be considered the cradle of its modern form.

#### The allure of ice climbing

Ice fanatics and detractors alike speak reverentially of its ephemeral quality. (The qualifier is so intertwined with the practice that a recent Instagram post I came across read, "This is a generic ice climbing post ... ephemeral ephemeral ephemeral ephemeral ephemeral ...")

Unlike rock, ice is constantly changing. It can form, melt and reform multiple times a season — and exactly how it manifests is different each time. Depending on the climber, this presents an interesting puzzle or infuriating challenge.

Adrian Ballinger, owner of Lake Tahoe-based guiding company Alpenglow Expeditions, highlighted the creative movement the malleable surface permits.

In rock climbing, "whether you're outside or in the gym, there are a certain number of places where you can put your hands and feet and that's it," he said. "The beauty of ice is since you have these spikes on your feet and in your hands, you can make your handholds and footholds anywhere you choose."

The same principle makes it accessible to a range of body types, he added. While one rock climb might be better or worse for a short person, ice allows people of all shapes to forge their own path.

Then there's just the badassery of pursuing an activity that epitomizes radical.

#### Ready? Here's how to get started

Despite its hard-core aura, ice climbing is more accessible than it seems. Interest, drive and hardiness can carry a novice a long way, according to alpine veterans.

"It's pretty intuitive," said Aaron Jones, 37, a mountain guide based in Bishop, Calif. "If you can swing a hammer, you can swing an ice tool."

It does, however, require a significant amount of expensive gear and technical know-how to get off the ground. It's not something you can learn entirely through You-Tube videos. Seasoned climbers recommend sampling the sport by tapping a reputable mountain guiding service or

pairing up with an experienced friend with enough patience to show you the ropes.

Necessary gear includes mountaineering boots, crampons (devices with long spikes fitted onto stiff-soled boots that dig into ice and snow to prevent falls), two ice tools (the picks), a harness, helmet, ropes, ice screws (to protect the lead climber) and winter clothing. Because these items can amount to hundreds, even thousands, of dollars, it's not advised to buy everything for your first go. It's best to see if you enjoy the sport and then try out different equipment before your wallet takes a hit. "Before I tried it, I always had this idea that it was the craziest thing you could do. I was, like, 'Does the ice just fall down and hit you?' And, yeah, the equipment seems cool, but it also seems horrifying."

Michael O'Connor Sierra Mountain Guides

Besides group and individual instruction, guiding services generally provide all the goodies you need to ascend ice. If you're connected to a rock-climbing or outdoorsy community, you may be able to borrow some gear. Some can be rented.

While you don't need to be an accomplished athlete, a basic level of fitness is often needed just to get to the ice.

"You have to have some resilience and robustness to



REAMSTIME/TNS photos

A mountain guide rappels down a steep frozen waterfall. Ice climbing can be dangerous — mountain experts generally agree that ice climbing is more dangerous than outdoor rock climbing — but its risks can be managed and minimized, although not entirely avoided.

just withstand those elements alone. And then if you add in climbing and carrying all of your equipment ... it's definitely not for everyone," O'Connor said. "I'm not saying that everyone shouldn't try it, but not everyone's gonna like it"

#### **Clothing considerations**

What distinguishes ice climbing from many other other winter sports is that it involves relatively long periods of inactivity. While one person climbs, another waits below (or above) and belays them. This trade-off of movement and pause makes a clothing layering system particularly important.

The person who isn't climbing generally throws on a heavy jacket and warm gloves. The outer jacket is shed while climbing and often gloves will be swapped for ones

that allow for more dexterity. If the walk to and from the ice wall is long or strenuous, it's important that you can strip off layers when you inevitably heat up.

Bringing "four pairs of gloves is not uncommon," O'Connor said.

#### A note on danger

On a recent outing in Yosemite National Park's Lee Vining Canyon, shards of ice whizzed past me on a deviously slick platform underneath frozen waterfalls that resembled lofty ice sculptures. One thumped my hand, as if to say, "Outta my way!"

"They didn't tell you about this part?" asked Jake

Ballard, observing my consternation amid the onslaught. Ballard, 42, an experienced rock climber, recently started to task laise.

Actually, I had been told that one of the hazards of ice climbing is falling frozen debris. But I mistakenly assumed that ice would only plummet occasionally. (Later, I saw Ballard belaying a friend while he crouched behind a ridge to avoid the ice's flight path.)

No activity conducted in the mountains is 100% safe, ice



Ice climbing equipment is expensive, so experts suggest new climbers rent before buying to make certain they enjoy the sport.

climbing included. Risks can be managed, minimized, but not entirely avoided.

Mountain experts generally agree that ice climbing is more dangerous than outdoor rock climbing. Avalanches, sharp equipment, cold weather and unstable ice all threaten bodily harm.

"If you're in the wrong place at the wrong time ice can fall and, if it hits you, there's big enough pieces that it will kill you," O'Connor said, adding that there are practices employed to position yourself to lower the likelihood of being hit.

There's also a major difference between the risks posed by what's known as leading and top roping a climb, both terms used in rock climbing. A person who leads a climb sets up the rope system that makes climbing safer for those who follow. They're less protected on the first ascent and can suffer a serious fall. The person who climbs after the system is set up will be on top rope, which means that their partner should be able to catch them if they fall with minimal consequence.

Jones, who owns Sierra Climbing School, said the changing nature of the medium makes screws inserted into the ice to limit the distance the lead climber can fall "inherently suspect."

"When you're top roping ... it's just as safe as rock climbing as long as you're not stabbing yourself with a pick," he said.

### VEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



**PHOTOS BY JOHN VANDIVER/Stars and Stripes** 

The Maerklineum toy museum features hundreds of different types of model trains, spanning the course of the company's long history. Maerklin was founded in 1859.

# Just the ticket for railfans

Museum in Goeppingen showcases hundreds of Maerklin model trains, cars, other toys

By John Vandiver Stars and Stripes

he fancy model trains produced by renowned toymaking company Maerklin were a hit with GIs in the aftermath of World War II when U.S. forces set up shop around the German town of Goeppingen.

Nowadays, the Maerklineum museum is dedicated to telling the company's history and showcasing some of the toys that made its reputation.

On a recent visit, I arrived with an awareness of the model trains but little else pertaining to the Maerklin story. Luckily, the information panels in English did a good job of filling me in on the de-

Founded in 1859, the company made its name on the high quality of the metal toys developed at its factory about 30 miles southeast of Stuttgart.

Although I'm not a model train aficionado, knowing some of the background and Goeppingen's history as an old U.S. Army garrison town made my tour more enrich-

There are hundreds of models on display, some dating back well over 100 vears.

They have the sturdy look of toys from a



The museum also includes other items such as model cars, dollhouses and the miniature sets used to decorate them.

bygone era when things were built to last. In the early 1900s, the company was already a major name for high-end toys. few cargo car models that caught my eye were made for U.S. export from around

The models advertised the big American beer brands of the time: Pabst Blue Ribbon, "the beer of quality"; Schlitz, "the beer that made Milwaukee famous"; and Budweiser, which even then was called the "king of beers."

In addition to trains, the museum also displays some of the other toys it was



Some of Maerklin's model trains were made especially for export to the United States, such as this beer car advertising Pabst Blue Ribbon.

known for in the early days of the company, such as dollhouses and miniature sets to decorate them.

There also are model cars and replicas of German train stations. On the ground level, there is an elaborate setup of a model train track coursing around a German

Toy companies, incidentally, weren't immune from becoming part of the Nazi war machine during World War II. Maerklin was required to use its manufacturing prowess to develop telecommunications



The Maerklineum toy museum is located in Goeppingen, Germany, an old U.S. Army garrison town.

#### Maerklineum

Address: Reuschstrasse 6, Goeppingen, Germany Hours: Tuesday-Sunday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Cost: Admission is 10 euros for adults, 6 euros for children

Information: Online: maerklineum.de

John Vandiver

equipment, vehicles and weapons.

And it did so with the forced labor of foreign workers, according to the mu-

I noticed a mix of ages during my visit. Young and old alike seemed to check out the displays in earnest, a sign of the multigenerational appeal of model trains.

The gift shop has a huge collection of model trains, tracks and various assembly kits. I left empty-handed, but probably wouldn't have if I was more of an enthusiast.

vandiver.john@stripes.com @john\_vandiver

### WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING



**Рнотоs ву Неатнек Веліт**/Stars and Stripes

Babe's Boba Tea adds a splash a color to Schillerplatz in downtown Kaiserslautern, Germany.

# Spilling the tea on Babe's Boba

Cafe-style shop in downtown Kaiserslautern one of many bubbling up to sell fancy drinks

By HEATHER BENIT Stars and Stripes

ove over, designer cupcakes, expensive donuts, rolled ice cream and gourmet marshmallows. Kaiserslautern is catching up on the bubble tea trend.

Like doner eateries, tattoo parlors and chic convenience stores, bubble tea shops keep popping up around town. One of these spots is Babe's Boba Tea on Schillerplatz.

Bubble tea's signature ingredient is texture-making tapioca pearls that are either chewy or pop in your mouth. They are gluten-free and usually made of tapioca starch, water and brown sugar or other sweeteners.

Also known as milk tea and boba tea, the drink originated in Taiwan in the 1980s. The concoctions are now big on social media, thanks in part to the tea shops' bright colors and Instagrammable decor.

I was a boba tea novice when I walked into Babe's. The menu was full of options, combinations and insider terminology. I was overwhelmed. How can one drink be so complicated?

I asked for a "popular" boba with caffeine-free tea, regular milk and sweet jelly beads. Although I'm not exactly sure what I got, the drink was sweet and sensory. The beads rushed up the straw and popped in my mouth. My order was a success.

With my newfound ordering confidence, I returned with my

son to try a customized drink. Babe's usually has a steady stream of take-away customers, but we were the only patrons that evening.

Our combined wish list was simply tapioca pearls and lots of chocolate. I asked the bobarista for help. Her English was excellent and she was full of suggestions

I ended up with the Classic Babe's with original tapioca, medium sweetness, lactose-free milk — despite asking for regular milk — and coconut jelly. The chewy tapioca beads added a desirable texture but lacked the same burst of joy the popping beads had.

My son's drink was a tea-free chocolate milk, conveniently ordered off the kids section of the menu, with strawberry popping beads and normal sweetness.

Even at the smallest size of roughly 17 ounces, the order was too large for him, so I drank the rest after he went to bed. It tempted me from the fridge like sugary dessert.

Curiosity about the possibility of bubble oolong tea drew me back a third time. Since bubble tea is a Taiwanese drink, I expected to see oolong on the menu, but alas, it wasn't. Babe's serves black and green teas.

I bravely ordered a small create-your-own with jasmine green tea, peach popping pearls, lavender and mango flavors, regular sweetness and no added sugar.

My drink tasted like a piña colada with a price tag to match,



The upstairs lounge at Babe's Boba Tea offers a nice view of Schillerplatz. The bubble tea pictured is a Create Your Own with milk, jasmine green tea and other flavors for about 7 euros.



A Classic Babe's bubble tea and children's chocolate milk with boba pearls at Babe's Boba Tea. Babe's only uses black and green teas.



#### Babe's Boba Tea

**Address:** Schillerstrasse 5 67655 Kaiserslautern

**Hours:** Monday-Friday 1 p.m.-7 p.m.; Saturday-Sunday 12 p.m.-7 p.m. **Prices:** Varies, but expect to pay 5 to 7 euros per drink

Delivery: Available via Lieferando.de Online: Babe's website at babes-bobatea.simplywebshop.de/storedata/listStore; Instagram.com/babesbobatea; facebook.com/BabesBobaTea

Heather Benit

6.85 euros. It came with ice, which trapped the boba pearls and stopped them from flowing up the straw and popping in my mouth, making each sip delicious but disappointing.

Babe's cafe-style indoor seating sets it apart from the takeout bubble tea places downtown. The view over Schillerplatz was good for people-watching.

The walls were decorated with cute artwork from an art competition, giving the interior a community feel. But the area is a bit run-down and not Instagraminspiring.

Because bubble teas are served in a plastic cup with a plastic covering and straws, tossing more waste from this latest drink killed my sugar buzz. Bubble tea was turning into an expensive indulgence. The thrill was gone.

Sampling the Valentine's Day specials might tempt me to go



The walls at Babe's Boba Tea in Kaiserslautern feature entries from an art competition, giving the interior a community feel.

back in February, but it's unlikely I'll make drinking bubble tea a habit. For a sweet treat, I'd prefer an ice cream cone for 2 euros a scoop, zero plastic waste and no decision fatigue.

benit.heather@stripes.com

### WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

# A snow sports mecca not far from Sapporo

Kiroro Resort on Hokkaido a moderately priced location with gorgeous powder, variety of trails

By SETH ROBSON Stars and Stripes

nowy pine-covered mountains and valleys at this quality resort just over an hour's drive from the largest city in northern Japan are the perfect winter playground for skiers and snow-boarders.

Kiroro, which opened in 1991, is west of Yoichi-dake, at 4,881 feet the tallest peak within the Sapporo city limits on the island of Hokkaido. The ski area is near Akaigawa, a small country town close to a scenic caldera formed by a volcanic eruption more than a million years ago.

Skiers looking for an alternative to resorts in and around the better-known Niseko resort might consider this upscale but more moderately priced ski area.

An adult day pass at Kiroro costs 7,400 yen, or about \$49.80, but a good option is the six-hour pass for 6,600 yen. That's more than you'll pay at most places on main-island Japan, but a lot lower than U.S. prices and cheaper than some of the resorts near Niseko.

If you arrive early, you'll be able to park in front of the ski lifts at the Mountain Center.

Most skiers park farther away, but there's a free gondola to ride up to the lift ticket office and other facilities.

Everything at Kiroro, from lifts to lodges, seems top notch. If you're a non-skier, you can enjoy the stunning scenery and ride a gondola to a mountaintop restaurant.

If you're a beginner, the place has more than its share of instructors guiding people around the slopes, which are connected by relatively flat beginner trails. There's also a large kids' area at the bottom of the hill.

Competent skiers can zoom down dozens of groomed intermediate runs that will take an entire weekend to explore.

Experts can enjoy Hokkaido's famous champagne powder in numerous ungroomed expanses as well as tree-run and back-country areas.

Several valleys feeding down from the upper areas of the ski field feed back to the Mountain Center, although you'll have to be careful not to fall into snow-covered creeks running along valley floors.

The ski area has several eateries. I had pie and a soft drink for lunch at a cafe under the gondola, which served Japanese staples such as curry rice and pork cutlet for around \$11 a plate.

Hotels near the ski area are pricey, but it's possible to find cheaper accommodation not far off at Otaru or even in Sapporo if you don't mind a longer drive.

Japan boasts more than its share of great snow resorts, but whatever kind of ski or snowboard experience you're looking for, Kiroro is a good place to start.

robson.seth@stripes.com @SethRobson1



Snowy pine-covered mountains and valleys at Kiroro Resort are the perfect winter playground for skiers and snowboarders in Hokkaido.



**РНОТОS BY SETH ROBSON**/Stars and Stripes

Kiroro Resort is a ski area near Akaigawa, a small country town close to a scenic caldera formed by a volcanic eruption more than a million years ago.



Those who arrive early should be able to park in front of the ski lifts. There's a free gondola to ride up to the lift ticket office.

#### On the QT

**Directions:** 128-1 Aza-Tokiwa, Akaigawa-mura, Yoichi-gun, Hokkaido, Japan. By car, about an hour and 20 minutes from Sapporo and an hour and 40 minutes from New Chitose Airport.

Times: Open daily, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Costs: Adult day pass, 7,400 yen; senior pass (over 65), 6,500 yen; youth, ages 13-18, 6,500 yen; children ages 6-12, 4,000 yen. Food: The resort boasts several eateries, including a mountaintop restau-

Information: Online: kiroro.co.jp

Seth Robson



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### VEEKEND: DINING



PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER GREEN/Stars and Stripes

Inside Philadelphia Cheesesteaks in Pyeongtaek, South Korea, you'll find posters of celebrities and sports teams — as well as the cuisine - associated with the City of Brotherly Love.

# Philly favorite

Philadelphia Cheesesteaks grills up epic rib-eye sandwiches near Osan Air Base

By Christopher Green Stars and Stripes

n authentic Philadelphia-style cheesesteak in the heart of South Korea? Get outta here, vouse.

Philadelphia Cheesesteaks in Pyeongtaek serves arguably the best rib-eve sandwich this side of Broad Street. But don't look for this overlooked gem on Google; its online presence is low-key.

Word of mouth alerted me to its location just a short stroll from Osan Air Base's main gate. The place has been serving its distinctively Mid-Atlantic mainstay for a decade.

The restaurant blends into its surroundings, but once you find it, you'll find it hard to believe you overlooked it. A sign outside proclaims Philadelphia Cheesesteaks in bold letters of blue and white, the colors of Penn State. A huge Philadelphia Flyers flag hangs on the door.

Inside are posters of celebrities and sports teams associated with the City of Brotherly Love.

Philadelphia Cheesesteaks' owner, Kim Minjun, lived up to the city's reputation for hospitality. He said he learned how to make the perfect cheesesteak from his uncle, a Philly native.

The menu features just two items: cheesesteaks and fries.

The cheesesteaks come in two sizes: 8 or 14 inches of sliced, grilled rib-eye beef, caramelized onions, green bell pepper and white American cheese served on soft homemade white bread. Everything is cooked to order and served within minutes.

My cheesesteak arrived hot, a mouthwatering combination of meat, cheese, onions and pep-

pers, authenticity in every bite.



Philadelphia Cheesesteaks' owner says he learned how to make the perfect cheesesteak from his uncle, a Philly native.



S. KOREA

#### **Philadelphia Cheesesteaks**

Location: Gyeonggi-do, Pyeongtaek-si, Jungangsijang-ro 11beon-gil, 10-1 Hours: 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday to Sunday; closed Monday and Tues-

Prices: About \$10 for an 8-inch cheesesteak and \$15 for a 14-inch sandwich. Fries are \$4, drinks are included in the price of the sandwich. **Dress:** Casual

**Directions:** About a 5-minute walk from Osan Air Base's main gate. **Information:** 070-8969-6168

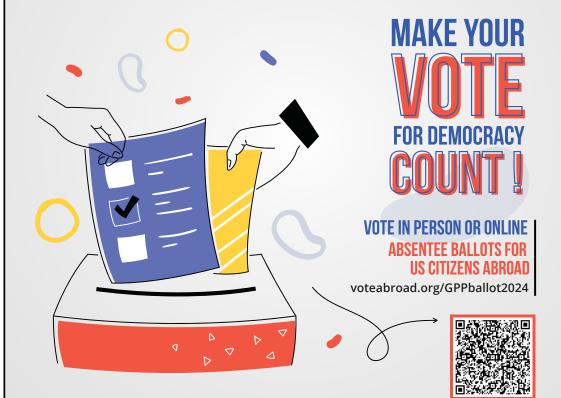
Christopher Green



Philadelphia Cheesesteaks has an unassuming exterior, but is well worth seeking out.



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### **WEEKEND: TRAVEL**



PHOTOS BY EUGENE HOSHIKO/AP

Customers play with a micro pig at the Mipig Café in Harajuku, Tokyo, on Jan. 24. It is one of 10 such pig cafés its operator has opened around Japan. Two more are expected to open later this year.

# An oink with your order?

Mipig Cafés around Japan the latest in series of coffee shops that focus more on experience of cuddling with animals than on drinks

Associated Press
irst there were cafés that allowed pets. Then came cat cafés, where lattes took second place to feline interaction. The latest craze in Japan: The pig café.

"It was wonderful. Very relaxing and enjoyable," said Brad Loomis, a software engineer from Pullman, Wash., after visiting one of Tokyo's Mipig Cafés with his 21-year-old daughter, Paige.

They were among dozens of customers on a recent morning, taking selfies and breaking into huge smiles. The pigs, a miniature breed, trotted about the room, looking for a cozy lap to cuddle up in.

The pigs are surprisingly quiet, although they do snort now and then. They don't like to be alone, making for great companionship. Unlike the stereotype, they're very clean and don't smell.

Customers pay 2,200 yen (\$15) for the first 30 minutes in the company of the pigs. A reservation is required.

"Each pig is unique. Each one has his or her own personality. You may notice one may be strong-headed, and another may be gentle," said Shiho Kitagawa, an executive at Mipig who refers to the pigs as "buta-san," using an honorific.

The Mipig Café in fashionable Harajuku is among 10 such pig cafés the operator has opened around Japan. The first one opened in another part of Tokyo in 2019. Two more are in the works for later this year.

Their animals, known as "micro pigs," don't get bigger than corgi dogs, even as adults. The cafés also feature adorable baby pigs the size of toy poodles.

Pig lovers say they make great pets. They can be purchased for about 200,000 yen (\$1,350) from Mipig, have already been toilettrained and are used to being with people. Micro pig food is also for sale. Mipig says it has sold 1,300 pigs as pets.

A drink dispensing machine is in the corner of the café, but hardly anyone was bothering to get a drink, being too occupied with the pigs.

Foreign tourists visiting the café said they found out about it on Instagram and other social media. The café does not invest in advertising. They made sure to include a visit during their trip to Japan, along with the usual tourist spots like the ancient capital of Kyoto, they said.

Australian Ben Russell smiled when a pig finally climbed into his lap. Although this was his first encounter with a real pig, pigs have always been his favorite animal, he said, although he wasn't sure exactly why.

Sophie Mo'unga from New Zealand, in Japan with her husband and two children, was a big hit with the pigs, with several of them fighting over her lap.

"They were cute. I think they were all keeping each other warm," she said.

The pig cafés are the latest in a series of animal coffee shops that have popped up in Japan, including ones that feature owls, hedgehogs, birds and even snakes.

Some people have raised ethical questions about whether the animals enjoy the experience as much as the humans.

"It must be stressful to be touched and fondled by a bunch of strangers," said Sachiko Azuma, head of Tokyo-based PEACE, which stands for Put an End to Animal Cruelty and Exploitation.

"The animals have become tools for a money-making business," she said.

Her group mainly opposes animal experiments and "petting zoos." Cafés tend to be tiny and don't provide enough of a natural environment for cats or small pigs, and those that entrap wildlife are abhorrent, Azuma said. She approves of cafés run by shelters trying to find owners for abandoned pets.

Dr. Bruce Kornreich, profes-



The dozens of people at the café on Jan. 24 were taking selfies and breaking into huge smiles. The pigs, a miniature breed, trotted about the room, looking for a cozy lap to cuddle up in.



Each of the micro pigs at the café has its own unique personality. The pigs are surprisingly quiet, although they do snort now and then. They don't like to be alone, making for great companionship. Unlike the stereotype, they're very clean and don't smell.



Experts say interacting with animals, as these customers at the café are doing on Jan. 24, can lower one's blood pressure and reduce headaches and the risk of cardiovascular disease. It also enhances a sense of well-being and helps people cope with stress.

sor of clinical sciences at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine in Ithaca, N.Y., said interacting with animals can lower one's blood pressure and reduce headaches and the risk of cardiovascular disease. It also enhances a sense of well-being and helps people cope with stress, he said.

"How they do these things, I'm not sure we know the answer," said Kornreich, who is also part of the Cornell Feline Health Center, which advocates the study and well-being of cats. "There is mounting evidence that associating with and owning pets can provide mental health and physical health benefits for people," he said in a Zoom interview.

Even with dogs, it's not clear if it's walking the dog that helps the owner's health or being in the presence of a friendly animal.

Whatever it is, with dogs or pigs, people are soothed and happy.

"Very cute and very sleepy," Paige Loomis said of the pigs. "They made me sleepy."

### WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

# Setting the confectionery world on fire

### Burn-away cakes the newest TikTok trend

By EMILY HEIL The Washington Post

he latest food trend on social media has all the ingredients needed to reach viral status. For starters: It's cake (people love the stuff, from #fails to the is-it-cake meme), plus there's a crazy

If the "burn-away cake" has shown up on your feed, you're hardly alone.

visual stunt and ... Taylor Swift.

The on-fire confections consist of a standard iced cake topped with an image printed on paper that is set ablaze, causing it to burn away and reveal another image underneath. Though such creations have existed for at least a few years, the dessert's newly spiking popularity can be credited to a couple of bakers.

Illinois-based Denise Steward, who posts as Denise's Delights on social media, posted a video of a cake inspired by both New Year's and Swift in which a top with a midnight countdown burned off to reveal the message, "In My 2024 Era."

Steward's videos inspired Ontario-based baker Namaya Navaratnarajah (she's @cakesbynams on social media), whose creations include cakes featuring (more) Swift, Pokémon and "The Hunger Games" and have been viewed more than 100 million times on TikTok. The trend has spread, with other bakers creating their own versions to mark birthdays, anniversaries and (of course) gender reveals.

Navaratnarajah thinks the reason the cakes caught on is that people are looking to create special moments at their celebrations.

"People want some sort of wow factor," she says in an interview. "It's something new."

Ellen DeGeneres confirmed the burn-away cakes' everywhere-right-now status last week when she posted an Instagram video of her own pickleballthemed one.

"How do they do it?" the former talk show host marveled, as the flames revealed a birthday greeting.

The answer to her question is less sorcery than careful layering and the right equipment.

Various online tutorials explain that the key to the eyecatching trick is to use a regular edible image for the bottom layer, which is then surrounded by a thick border of piped icing to create space between the layers. The top image is printed on wafer paper — a thinner, flammable product — and fin-



amaya Navaratnarajah photos

A Pokémon-themed cake, featuring Charmander, with the first layer of cake about to be burned.



The second and third layers of the Pokémon cake show Charmander's evolution into Charmeleon and finally into Charizard. A video of the "double layer" cake raked up 37 million views on social media.

ished with another iced border.

Navaratnarajah owns her own edible-ink printer because of her bakery business, but she says before she invested in the pricey equipment, she had her local grocery print images for her, which she suggested might be an option for others wanting to try the trend.

A lot of the fun of it is in the order of the successive images. Navaratnarajah's first big hit was a cake showing an image of Swift's blank Instagram page, a reference to the time in 2017 when the pop icon wiped all her social media pages, sending the internet into a frenzy of speculation, only to use the dramatic pause to launch her album, "Reputation." That image burns away — to the tune of "Look What You Made Me Do" — to reveal a photo of Swift, with a caption teasing her yet-to-be-released "Reputation (Taylor's Version)." That video has been viewed 20.5 million times.

Another "double layer" cake (which has racked up 37 million views) at first shows the Pokémon character Charmander, with successive layers burning to reveal the character's evolution into Charmeleon and finally into Charizard.

People are making birthday cakes with multiple messages, like DeGeneres'. And of course, burn-away cakes offer just the right amount of suspense to make them perfectly suited for gender reveals (and although they do involve live flames, at least they're a little safer than some stunts).

Another popular subgenre is "Mean Girls"-inspired, with references to the movie's "burn book" playing into the pyrohappy format.

Navaratnarajah says she's enjoyed the way her pop-cultureinspired cakes have created excitement among various subjects' fandoms. But her favorites are more personal, such as the one she recently made for a guy's birthday. The top layer was a birthday message, but underneath, there was a proposal to his girlfriend.

"I just loved the way he took this moment that was supposed to be about him and made it special for them both," she says.

She notes that the cake-baking world is always chasing the next new thing, such as the glitter hearts that were "everywhere" last year. But she thinks the burn-away has staying power.

"There's something new coming all the time, so it's hard for a fad to become a trend," she says. "But I think this might be here to stay for a while — at least I hope."

### WEEKEND: MUSIC





MATT SLOCUM/AP

Beyoncé, one of the artists who has helped the NFL better reflect current culture, performs during halftime of Super Bowl 50 in Santa Clara, Calif., on Feb. 7, 2016.



MATT SLOCUM/AP

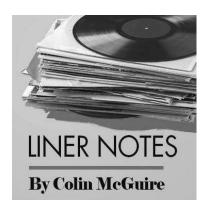
Rihanna's halftime show last year in Glendale, Ariz., complete with pregnancy reveal, was the most-watched in history with more than 121 million viewers.

### **VEEKEND: MUSIC**

## Summer season takes shape with Avril, Clark

If January is slow season for live music announcements, February returns the favor by being the hub for all things summer. As it goes, by the time this month is up, the majority of the outdoor sheds have their bookings lined up, artists are posting about how great of a time they can't wait to have in the warmer months, and we long for the days of daylight, shorts and at least a tiny amount

We'll get to some of those recent tour announcements in a minute. First, as we do each month, let's look at Pollstar's Live 75 Chart, which ranks worldwide active tours by average tickets sold for shows performed over the past 30 days. Topping the most recent list was Luis Miguel, who averaged nearly 25,000 tickets sold over the past month or so, running away with the most impressive numbers of the time period. Billy Joel took second with roughly 17,500, while U2 (ye of Sphere fame) rounded out the top three with about 16,000.



The most surprising addition to this month's list? Madness, who came in 10th with a figure of about 12,000.

Shall we say they've made some of these venues into "their house"?

Yes. Yes, we shall.

Moving on to some tour reveals in the past couple of weeks, Avril Lavigne announced plans to embark on a greatest hits tour, which at once somehow makes some of us feel both old and young again. She'll be supported by All Time Low and Simple Plan on select dates (the latter is pick-



Gary Clark Jr. recently announced a run of 2024 tour dates to support his new album, "JPEG RAW," which will be released in March.

ing up the bulk of the tour). The fun — which is set to go down everywhere from Vegas to Toronto to Croatia to Germany will last from late May to mid-September.

Blues Savior(ish) Gary Clark Jr. also noted last week that he'll

be hitting the road this summer. Paired with a brand new album set for a March release, the guitarist will begin his trek May 8 in Forth Worth, Texas, before wrapping things up Aug. 21 in Los Angeles at a venue to be determined. For those looking for a

little less grit and a lot more ... let's say shine ... power-poppers REO Speedwagon are set to venture out for a summer run with vehicle-named brethren Train. Creatively titled "Summer Road Trip," the tour will include Yacht Rock Revue and will go all the way from July 8 to Sept. 11, when the circus will bid farewell in

And then there's Heart. The Hall of Famers will reunite for a long run of shows this summer throughout North America. Cheap Trick will join them on the stateside run while Squeeze will reportedly hop on the bill whenever the European dates for the proceedings are announced. Featuring both Ann and Nancy Wilson for the first time in five years, the jaunt will kick off April 20 in Greenville, S.C., and wrap up at the world-famous Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Colorado on Sept. 22.

For those wondering, yes. All reports indicate they will be happy to go crazy ... on you.

Happy concert-ing!

### Halftime: Performances draw more than 100 million viewers

#### **FROM PAGE 28**

Chiefs' 38-35 victory against the Philadelphia Eagles.

"I think the live element is pretty exciting for people because it's a massive production and there's so many moving pieces," said actor Scarlett Johansson, who doesn't consider herself a football enthusiast.

But she's intrigued by the unpredictability of the halftime show like Justin Timberlake and Janet Jackson's infamous "wardrobe malfunction," Lady Gaga dropping from a stadium roof and Rihanna's pregnancy reveal.

"You kind of watch with nervous excitement," Johansson said. "You know at any moment something could maybe go wrong. That's why it's so fun to watch it because you've got all this anticipation. The production is so huge and so many people have come together to create this one moment. It's kind of awe-

Kris Jenner agrees, calling the halftime show a "giant surprise."

"The production level and how quickly they put it together as they're breaking into commercial and come back with this fabulous, epic show," said Jenner, the matriarch of "The Kardashians" reality television show. "Through all the years and technology, it gets better and better. It's so exciting to watch and see what they come up with next and who is going to perform. It's such a big deal."



VIANNEY LE CAER/AP

Usher, who appeared with the **Black Eyed Peas during the** 2011 Super Bowl, will headline Sunday's halftime show. His show will be vastly different than the first one, in 1967, which featured two marching bands

Usher — who last year told The Associated Press his appearance with the Black Eyed Peas during the 2011 Super Bowl taught him not to "take the moments for granted because you only get 13 of them" — will headline this year's show in Las Vegas on Feb. 11.

His show will be vastly different than the NFL's first Super Bowl halftime show in 1967, which featured marching bands from the University of Arizona and Grambling State University, a historically Black college, along with hundreds of flying pigeons, thousands of balloons and two soaring men wearing jetpacks.

After the inaugural Super Bowl, the NFL kept bringing back other marching bands, drill teams, signed Chubby Checker and Up with People, an organization that stages positive thinking through dance and song performances. However, none of those acts were considered huge

But as the Super Bowl's popularity soared and game day emerged as an unofficial holiday in the U.S., the NFL wanted the halftime show to grow in the same capacity. The league tapped New Kids on the Block and Gloria Estefan the first two years of the '90s. Then it saw a huge breakthrough when Michael Jackson headlined the 1993 show at the Rose Bowl in Southern California, where the King of Pop notoriously moonwalked across the stage and performed hits including "Billie Jean," "Black or White" and "Heal the World."

Jackson's stellar performance opened the door for other stars like the Rolling Stones, Diana Ross, Jennifer Lopez and Shakira who are eager to perform.

"That certainly was the one that changed the course of pop stars and major musicians taking that stage seriously," said Seth Dudowsky, the head of music at the NFL. He's the point person for all musical activations for the league and a liaison with Jay-Z's Roc Nation, which has produced the halftime show since 2019.

The NFL handles production costs and expenses for performers — who don't get paid — but the exposure to hundreds of millions of people worldwide is considered priceless.

Dudowsky recalled when Coldplay frontman Chris Martin said the "Super Bowl of music is the Super Bowl." He said the halftime show has been able to grow thanks to the NFL's ability to adjust to the current culture and giving deserving artists the platform to express their artistry.

Some notable examples include U2's remembrance of the 9/11 victims; Beyoncé's unapologetic Blackness and political activism through her Black power anthem "Formation"; and the first show to feature hip-hop artists led by Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg in 2022.

"We really wanted to start to focus on leading into culture," said Dudowsky, who has worked at the NFL since 2013 and attended 11 Super Bowls. "Whether that's the culture of the city, what's happening in culture at large and then focusing on it so that what we're doing feels cultu-

rally relevant and using that platform for artists to be able to be themselves and show their art on stage. ... We want them to feel empowered."

Dogg praised NFL commissioner Roger Goodell and Jay-Z for pushing the halftime show forward.

The league worked with Roc Nation to help its Inspire Change initiative, created by the NFL after an agreement with a coalition of players who demonstrated during the national anthem to protest social and racial injustice in this country.

"Shoutout to Jay-Z for changing the climate. Roger Goodell for giving him an opportunity," Dogg said. "This is music. The music that dictates the world is what's performing at halftime now. They're starting to understand that it's about what those players want to hear, what those fans want to hear, and what's universally effective. It has no color on it now. Pop used to have a color on it. Now pop is popular. So, the most popular music is the music that we make. It makes sense to put those people on there that make that music."

Dogg said Usher perfectly "fits the mold to the fullest.

"He looks good. He dances good. He sounds good," the rapper said. "All the above. And he's got hit records. You want to see that. You want to see a performer perform. You want to see a real entertainer."

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### WEEKEND: TELEVISION

# At home with 'Mr. & Mrs. Smith'

Re-imagined version of 2005 film focuses on everyday life of married assassins

By MEREDITH BLAKE Los Angeles Times

onald Glover and Maya Erskine are lounging in a bunker-like greenroom in the bowels of 30 Rockefeller Plaza, debating which of them would make a better assassin.

Glover thinks it would be Erskine. Naturally, she thinks the opposite.

"I wouldn't pull the trigger," Erskine says.

"Are you talking about who's willing to kill somebody?" Glover asks, his voice rising in amused disbelief.

"I think you'd be better at, like, 'I was told to do this. Pffftt," she says, dutifully firing an imaginary gun with her thumb and pointer finger.

He considers it for a second: "I mean, I guess. I don't want to kill people, either."

"I don't think you want to kill people," she responds, laughing. "I'm just saying you'd be better at the job."

The argument is relevant: the duo star in "Mr. & Mrs. Smith," a reboot of the 2005 comedic spy thriller about a pair of married assassins that is now largely remembered for unleashing Brangelina on the world.

In the series, which premiered Feb. 2 on Prime Video, Glover and Erskine play disillusioned millennials who accept jobs with an unnamed spy agency and are set up as partners — in marriage and espionage. Known by their code names, Jane and John Smith, they move into a Manhattan brownstone worthy of an Architectural Digest spread complete with indoor pool — and, when they're not stalking their targets in Lake Como, Italy, enjoy visiting the farmers market and practicing yoga on their rooftop terrace. Initially awkward together, they gradually form an attachment informed by the trauma of the job, and their arranged union becomes a love match — albeit an unusually complicated one.

Created by Glover — who also directs several episodes — and Francesca Sloane, this re-imagined version of "Mr. & Mrs. Smith" departs radically from the source material, in both narrative and tone. (As if to signal this deviation, the cheeky opening scene depicts a pair of Brad



Prime Video photos

Donald Glover and Maya Erskine star in the re-imagined TV version of "Mr. & Mrs. Smith," the 2005 spy thriller starring Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt. But this version departs radically from its source material, in both narrative and tone.

"We're not going for perfection. We're going for real nuance, seeing all sides of a character. Let's show them being rejects. They're not the perfect spies. And that's exciting to me."

Maya Erskine

Mrs. Smith in "Mr. & Mrs. Smith"

and Angelina lookalikes, played by Alexander Skarsgard and Eiza González Reyna, getting killed off in a spray of bullets.)

Although the series boasts glamorous locations and intense action sequences worthy of a Bond movie, its spy storyline is mostly an afterthought, a Mac-Guffin that lures us into what is actually an exploration of marriage and the difficulties and rewards of romantic commitment. We never really find out or care — whom John and Jane are working for or learn much about the greater goal of their various missions. Instead, each episode focuses on a milestone in the Smiths' relationship: first date, honeymoon, therapy and infidelity.

When it was announced in late 2021 that Glover would follow the inventive, idiosyncratic and often surreal comedy "Atlanta" with a TV adaptation of popcorn fare

like "Mr. & Mrs. Smith," many fans were surprised. It's not what he expected, either.

"I don't like remakes," he says.
"I think most of the time, they are just kind of wack."

But a few years ago, producer Michael Schaefer asked him to take a look at the Doug Liman film about a husband and wife who discover they are assassins working for rival agencies — and have been assigned to kill each other. Glover had never seen it and figured at the very least that he would finally watch this movie that had become such a cultural touchstone for reasons that had little to do with its cinematic virtues.

"I remember watching it like, 'Oh, I wouldn't have done it that way at all. They don't know each other as spies? How is that even believable?" he recalls. But he called his brother and frequent collaborator, Stephen Glover,



Viewers never really find out whom John (Glover) and Jane (Erskine) are working for or learn much about the greater goal of their missions. Instead, each episode focuses on a milestone in their relationship.

who brought him back down to earth. "He was like, 'You're watching it wrong. It's a great date movie. Let's go to the movies on Friday, and you see boys versus girls, but they're hot with guns."

To make the story hot in a deeper, more contemporary way required an authentic sense of intimacy, Glover decided, not just conventionally attractive leads. ("I look just like, you know, Brad Pitt? Obviously, I think that's what everyone's been saying. I'm surprised you didn't bring it up," he jokes.) It also

needed a strong female point of view, so he brought the project to Sloane, a standout writer on "Atlanta," who was initially puzzled by his interest in the material.

"I sincerely thought he was making a weird Donald joke," Sloane said in a separate conversation over Zoom.

But she heard him out and grew intrigued by the possibility of humanizing a larger-than-life genre: "I have always been interested in thinking about the

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### WEEKEND: TELEVISION

## 'We need both'

Executive producer: New 'Genius' installment aims to show Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr. weren't entirely different

> By Alicia Rancilio Associated Press

uch has been written about the one and only time the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X met. It was on March 26, 1964, and the two civil rights leaders were both in Washington for a Senate debate on the Civil Rights Act.

The moment is also depicted in the new installment of National Geographic's "Genius" anthology series called "Genius: MLK /X," which premiered Feb. 1. This is the fourth series.

Kelvin Harrison Jr. (King) and Aaron Pierre (Malcolm X) now can be at ease about being scheduled to shoot the scene on the first day of filming. At the time, it was intimidating.

"I was like, what kind of prank are the producers trying to play on us?" Harrison recalled. "We barely even knew what we were doing yet.

"We kind of went into separate corners ... and we didn't really see each other until that moment. What you see is us seeing each other for the first time in character," he said.

Looking back, Pierre thinks it was a smart scheduling decision.

"Had we had four months (of shooting) under our belt, I think we might have gone into that differently, but we had no choice but to just lean into the present moment,"

Executive producers Gina Prince-Bythewood and Reggie Rock Bythewood kept a photo of the real-life introduction on their two sons' walls while they were growing up. Their hope is that with "Genius: MLK/ X," viewers will recognize the contributions of both men to civil rights and U.S.

"One misconception is that we're told we have to choose. Either you align with Malcolm, or you align with Martin, you know, but our offering is that we need both," Bythewood said. "While they challenged each other, they also learned from each other, and they were aligned in many

Past seasons of "Genius" have covered Albert Einstein, Pablo Picasso and Aretha Franklin. "Genius: MLK/X" examines each man's origin story and what led them to make the choices they did to lead a

"We know the speeches. We know the interviews. We know the famous moments. But we wanted to explore what happened in the lead-up to those moments and what made these men believe they had the capacity to do the things they did," Pierre said.

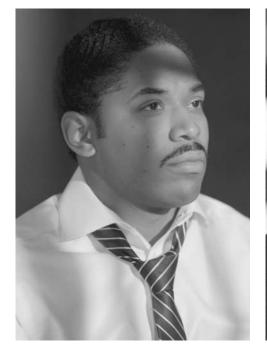
For accuracy, the producers and writers held a two-week "think tank" for eight hours a day. Scholars, activists and people who were involved in the Civil Rights Movement were invited. They dug into the men's personal lives, mental health and more.

Bythewood says they discussed things they wouldn't have ever gotten from histo-

"Some of these scholars even debated each other," he said. "As writers, we were like: 'This is a gold mine."

Another priority: to "amplify" Coretta Scott King and Betty Shabazz, who were married to King and X.

"Too often, they're thought of as just the wives or the sidekick. They were so in-





Kelvin Harrison Jr., as Martin Luther King Jr., left, and Aaron Pierre as Malcolm X in the fourth installment of National Geographic's "Genius" anthology series, "MLK/X."

tegral not only to the genius of the two men, but to the movement itself," Prince-Bythewood said.

The fifth episode of the series tells each woman's backstory and how they evolved into leaders.

"We shine a powerful, beautiful light on those women and the equal role they played in these movements," Pierre said. "I think that's something really special."

Harrison says he originally believed he was not up for the challenge of playing

"I said no at first," Harrison said. "The producers asked me to read the first episode at least, and I met with them and expressed my feeling of basically imposter syndrome, that I didn't think I had what it takes to do it. They said, 'That's the reason why we want you to do it, because at the age that Dr. King was, when he had to step into this big movement, he also didn't know if he had what it took."

For Pierre, he hopes that people finish this "Genius" installment with a fresh understanding of Malcolm X, a man who he says, "there is a considerable amount of misinformation about."

"Malcolm X, el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, he operated from a place of love. He operated from a place of light. He wasn't advocating someone to see out physical confrontation. He was advocating for the cause of his deep love for his family, his friends, his community, his loved ones, anyone in the world that looked like him," Pierre said.

The series is premiering at a time when Black history is threatened in schools and key moments are being removed from curriculums.

"There are places across the country where the 'Letter from Birmingham Jail' is banned. 'The Autobiography of Malcolm X' is challenged. But this is American history," Bythewood said.

### **Spy:** Crew inspired by lengths reality TV stars go to in pursuit of love

#### **FROM PAGE 30**

in-between moments, like when do they use the bathroom? Or what happens if they wear the wrong shoes and come home and they have a blister because their shoe was a little bit too small?'

"Fleabag" auteur Phoebe Waller-Bridge was originally attached to star in and create the series with Glover, in what would have been a meta pairing of Emmy winners behind two of Peak TV's most distinctive comedies. She left the project in late 2021 due to what has been mutually described as creative differences.

They began to look for a new Jane and couldn't stop thinking about Erskine, star and co-creator of another groundbreaking, deeply personal comedy, "PEN15."

When Glover reached out about the project, Erskine says she "had no idea what part I was going to play."

"I was just excited to just talk to him about it," she adds. "He



Prime Video

**Donald Glover and Maya Erskine** say that despite their characters' unique partnership, the show is definitely pro-marriage.

didn't say 'I want a new Jane' right away."

When, after several phone calls, he offered her the role, Erskine was quick to say yes excited by their vision of a more relatable spy duo.

"It was very clear that they were not going for the Angelina Jolie-Brad Pitt 'Mr. & Mrs.

Smith.' We're not going for perfection," Erskine says. "We're going for real nuance, seeing all sides of a character. Let's show them being rejects. They're not the perfect spies. And that's exciting to me."

This version of "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" will remind many viewers of "The Americans," the critically beloved FX drama about a pair of Russian agents in a spicy arranged marriage. But the show also harkens back to the sophisticated detective procedurals of 1980s broadcast TV, like "Hart to Hart" and "Moonlighting." Each episode features a mission of the week and memorable guest stars like Sharon Horgan, John Turturro, Sarah Paulson, Parker Posey, Ron Perlman and Michaela Coel. (In a decidedly 2024 twist, the couple, like Uber drivers, receive their assignments via text message from someone they call Hihi, the casual greeting that opens each message. They're just two covert agents plying their trade in the gig economy.)

The creative team also found inspiration in an unexpected genre: reality TV, particularly shows like "Married at First Sight," "Love is Blind," "Terrace House" and "The Real World," in which young people are thrust into strange, dramatic circumstances and do seemingly inexplicable things in pursuit of love, fame or a few months of rent-free living in a cool house.

It's easy to view John and Jane's partnership skeptically; after all, they are paired by the company because they both like Korean barbecue. But Glover sees something laudable in how they commit to their assignment.

"Before [the pandemic], I was like, 'Why do people get married? You're swiping on your phone and there's always something better," says the multi-hyphenate star, who wed his longtime partner, Michelle White, while making the show. "It's like being

forced. I hope this doesn't become the headline - 'Donald is for arranged marriages' — but [the show] is definitely pro-mar-

"It is!' says Erskine, who also recently got married, to actor Michael Angarano.

"There's something about the fact of accepting and understanding that this person is not perfect, right? And you will never fix them," Glover adds. "My wife is the woman who helps me be a better guy because I want to be the guy that she wants me to be. So I'm always reaching for that. It's really special."

Co-creator Sloane doesn't think John and Jane are soulmates, either. And that's a good thing.

"I think that's the beauty of it," she says. "So many times that's what marriage really is. It's about deciding that this is something you want with this other person and dealing with the muck of life with somebody by your side."

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### WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS



# Preventing injuries on the slopes

### Athletic trainer discusses how ski vacation-ending ACL tears typically occur, offers training tips to lower your risk

By Ian McMahan

Special to The Washington Post

f you're planning a winter ski trip, you have probably given plenty of thought to the warm clothes, the gear and the lodge. Now it's time to plan for injury prevention.

A common ski injury is a tear to the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL). It happens to an estimated 120,000 recreational skiers worldwide every year who usually end a weekend or vacation on a ski patrol sled.

Despite the prevalence of ACL injuries in recreational skiing, little has been done to prevent them. A recent editorial in the British Journal of Sports Medicine noted that specialized injury prevention programs are very successful in ball sports, but they haven't been utilized in recreational skiers.

"Research has found considerable benefits, more than a 50% ACL injury reduction, following specific ACL injury prevention programs in ball sports," says Martin Burtscher, the lead author of the editorial and a professor at the University of Innsbruck. "Why should this not work in Alpine skiing?"

When an ACL tears on a soccer or other sports field, it's often because the body twists and the foot doesn't, transmitting that torque to the knee. But snow and skis make for a different equation, says Tim Hewett, professor and director of research at Marshall University's Department of Orthopedics in Huntington, W.Va.

Recognizing how the body might be positioned when these injuries often happen can help people lower the risk. There are three main ways people tear their ACL while skiing:

- The slip-catch: This typically happens during a turn when an outside ski loses contact with the snow and the skier attempts to regain contact in a more vulnerable, extended-knee position.
- The dynamic snowplow: This occurs when an inside ski loses contact with the snow during a turn and re-engages with the snow in a snowplow position. This causes

the inside knee to twist.

■ Backward fall: An out-of-balance backward fall can happen when the skier sits on the back of the skis. It also occurs when the skier hits the snow with the backs of the skis while the legs are very straight.

Not all of these risky situations can be avoided, especially since they involve unanticipated movements, but some can. That's why prevention programs for recreational skiers can be effective, Burtscher stresses.

#### What you can do to prevent ski injuries

While it's best to start a training program a few months before your trip and maintain it throughout the year, you can still benefit from training even if your trip is weeks away.

Matthew Jordan, former director of sport science/sport medicine for Alpine Canada, said injury-prevention training programs should focus on the following areas:

- Core strength: Exercises that build your core will help you maintain a stable position on skis. Try a plank (hold a pushup position with straight arms or resting on your forearms) or a bridge (lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat; use glutes to lift hips up).
- Knee and hip control: Exercises that develop dynamic strength and balance can help in situations when the snow is suddenly icier, bumpier or when another skier runs into you. Try standing on one leg with the knee slightly bent and back straight. Lower the torso so it is parallel to the floor. Or try lunges on a balance pad. With one foot on a balance pad or disc, step the other foot back. Now lower the back knee to the floor.
- Hamstrings and quadriceps: Strong legs act as a brace for the knees, and having balanced strength between the quads and hamstrings is an important factor when skiing. Do squats. Keeping your back straight, bend your knees and hips to 90 degrees.
- Lower limb asymmetry: Exercise one leg at a time. This helps maintain the ability to stop and make turns in each direction, especially while fatigued. At the gym, do

single-leg presses on each side. Or do a series of squats or calf raises while standing on one leg, and then switch sides.

■ Dynamic movement: These exercises can improve power and explosiveness, which is important as skiing involves quick contractions of muscles to turn, stop and jump. Try jump squats, broad jumps (jumping forward) or skater jumps (jumping from side to side, one leg to the other).

One such prevention program, which focused on competitive high school skiers in Sweden, reduced ACL injuries by 45% compared with injuries of skiers who didn't take part in the program. The study, conducted over a 21-month period with more than 400 adolescent Alpine skiers, emphasized core strength, jumping and squatting movements. You can watch the video education program to see a demonstration of the exercises.

A similar prevention program involved a group of 184 teenage competitive Alpine skiers in Switzerland. The group followed a once-a-week, 20-minute injury prevention program for youth skiers that consisted of hip and leg strengthening and core stabilization training. The result was a decrease in the rates of all traumatic injuries by 34% and overuse injuries by 30%.

How well these prevention efforts would translate to middle-aged recreational skiers isn't known, but experts are optimistic. They might even be more effective, hypothesizes Hewett, since less trained individuals typically respond to training interventions more readily than elite or highly trained athletes.

"If you have a recreational athlete who hasn't strength trained in a long time, and you give them even a basic strength-dynamic balancing exercise, they are going to get better at that a lot in a very short period of time," Hewett says.

lan McMahan is a San Francisco-based writer and certified athletic trainer. He has a master's degree in exercise physiology from the University of Maryland and has worked as an athletic trainer for Major League Soccer, the Women's World Cup and

### **WEEKEND: FAMILY**



iStock

There is likely to be more essential paperwork to consider when an older couple decides to marry.

# A gray marriage in the pink

CFPs advise older adults on financial decisions to make before tying the knot

By Kate Ashford NerdWallet

etting married when you're an older adult comes with complications: You and your spouse may have assets from years of working, and you may have children from previous relationships. Tying the knot could affect your Social Security benefits if you're widowed or divorced. You will need to update estate documents and beneficiary designations, and you may even want to consider a prenuptial agreement.

Working together to create a financial plan that incorporates your new family structure is essential. Here are the things you should do if you walk down the aisle in your later years:

#### Talk to each other

Before you marry at this stage of your life, have a frank conversation about money with your spouse-to-be — and consider involving a financial professional.

"Working with a planner can really help because there can be some conversations that people aren't used to having," says Jaymon Meikle, a certified financial planner in St. Joseph, Mo.

This is a time to set expectations: Are you keeping your money separate or commingling your funds? How will you divide expenses going forward? What will happen when one of you dies?

Even if you aren't combining finances, you must understand your partner's financial situation so you can organize your tax planning.

"There has to be coordination," says Rob Schultz, a CFP in Encino, Calif. "You can't do financial planning for one spouse and not consider the other spouse's situation if they're married."

#### **Update your beneficiaries**

A new marriage is a significant change in legal and financial status, and your financial plan should incorporate it. That means, among other things, updating beneficiaries on all accounts, since beneficiaries trump anything you have in a will.

"What we do typically is we have all the beneficiaries laid out so nothing goes through probate," says David Demming, a CFP in Aurora, Ohio. "That's where we have the dialogue: Who do you want to have these funds?"

Check both primary and contingent beneficiaries to ensure that you still agree with your choices — and

that there are no surprises.

"Someone has come to me after a death and we go through what they're going to be receiving," Schultz says. "And their current spouse had an ex-spouse as a beneficiary, and that's heartbreaking."

#### Weigh a prenuptial agreement

You or your betrothed may be coming into the marriage with significant assets or property, and if you ever divorce, that can get sticky. A prenuptial agreement can outline what you owned before the marriage and what will happen should the marriage end.

"Usually there's a primary goal that drives what the focus of the prenup is," says Kaylin Dillon, a CFP in Lawrence, Kan. "If it's to make sure you have protections in place for children from a previous relationship, that prenup is going to look very different than if your primary goal is to make sure that income from a family business remains separate property."

If you have property, significant retirement assets, a pension, a business ownership or an ownership interest in a family business, or you have children from a previous relationship, it's something to think about.

"Prenups are really flexible documents," Dillon says. "Contract law leaves a lot of room for people to be creative."

#### **Check with Social Security**

Marriage affects your Social Security benefits, so make sure you understand the ramifications of taking that step. If you're not yet 60, remarrying makes you ineligible for any survivor's benefits if you're a widow or widower. If you're divorced, remarriage means you can't collect benefits based on your ex-spouse.

"That's something to consider, especially if Social Security is going to be a significant portion (of your retirement) or something you're going to depend on," says Kassi Fetters, a CFP in Anchorage, Alaska.

#### Ask about a trust

One of the considerations of marrying later is whether and how you'll leave assets to any children you may already have. If you die without a will, your assets will generally go to your spouse. A trust gives you more control over the inheritance you want to leave.

An estate attorney can assess your situation and recommend a trust that will accomplish your goals.

### THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



# Tackling the reality of family's football frenzy

"Tray, your sister missed the bus, so drop her off on your way to school!" my mother bellowed from the porch as my brother was about to get into his maroon Galaxy 500.

"Are you kidding me?" he griped, as I stood pathetically in the driveway. He was a senior in high school, and I was in middle school. He drove himself, along with several football team buddies, to school each morning, passing right by the middle school on the way, but he didn't want to be seen with his geeky little sister. In my defense, my bus stop was a halfmile down our road, and the bus had come a smidge early.

"Get in, and keep your trap shut," Tray snapped. In the back seat, I tried to be invisible. He fired up the Galaxy's engine and turned on the stereo, which he had installed himself. "Wango Tango" by Ted Nugent blared.

On the outskirts of town, Tray's football buddies hopped in with a quick "Sup" before the stereo volume was turned up. They all looked the same — hair parted down the middle, stone-washed jeans, tube socks and turf shoes.

I was starstruck. I didn't interact with the cool crowd, much less high school football players. Even though they glared at me with disdain, I savored this rare opportunity.

As Tray's car approached my middle school, he slowed and gave me a threatening glance. I'd better get out, and quick. No goodbyes, just go, and never let this happen again. I was exhilarated, and hoped someone saw that I'd jumped out of a car full of high school football players.

Growing up in Western Pennsylvania, football was a big part of life. If you didn't play football, you watched it. Being a Steelers fan was mandatory. High school football games were the prime event on fall Friday nights. Even though I didn't understand much about the game, positive associations were imprinted that would last a lifetime.

Later on, it took marriage and kids before I discovered the pleasure of sitting on a couch and watching football at home. It's there that I began to understand the rules.

When our son was 11, we signed him up for flag football. Having registered late, Hayden was placed on a team that was so bad, no one stepped up to coach. My husband volunteered, and I became team mom. "The Sharks" lost every game, but we excelled in team spirit, creating unique cheers, waving purple towels and blasting the theme from "Jaws" from our side of the field.

While stationed in Europe, we went to great lengths to watch American football, often resorting to the frustrating early versions of online streaming. Since our cumbersome Dell computer was located in the primary bedroom, our family of five, along with our 110-pound dog, would gather on our bed with snacks. When our team scored, the bed became a human salad shooter, with nacho chips, paper plates and drink cups flying everywhere.

On a fall family trip to Paris, we found a bar that played the Steelers-Browns game. And on a February trip to Rome, we woke in the middle of the night to watch the Packers beat the Steelers in Super Bowl XLV.

During that tour, Hayden joined the high school football team. A band geek at heart, during halftime, he'd run off the field in his pads and jersey to play tuba with the band. Then he was back to play for the second half. We were so proud.

Hayden went on to play lineman at two more high schools. In Florida, I was team mom again, which became my unpaid, full-time job. I baked cupcakes, raised funds for a new scoreboard, applied for tax-exempt status for the Boosters Club and planned the end-of-season banquet. During the season, I communicated with the coach more than with my husband.

Now empty nesters in Rhode Island, my husband and I will be watching the Super Bowl on our couch at home with a pot of chili, while we wait for grandchildren that we can manipulate into playing football one day.

Read more at themeatandpotatoesoflife.com and in Lisa's book, "The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com." Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com

### WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

#### NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

#### **HAMMER TIME**

#### BY NATHAN HASEGAWA / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Nathan Hasegawa, of Oakland, Calif., is a junior at Harvey Mudd College majoring in mathematics. This is his second crossword for The Times. His first was in 2021, during his senior year in high school, when every student had to pursue a yearlong project and Nathan's was to get a crossword published here. This follow-up, which has a multifaceted theme, a yearlong project and Nathan's was to get a cross was two years in the making (on and off). — W.S.

#### **ACROSS**

- 1 Toy on a racetrack
- 8 Soccer star who has won a record eight Ballon d'Or awards
- 13 Like "t," "k" and "p," in phonetics
- 20 What Hemingway claimed he did to the ending of "A Farewell to Arms" 39 times
- 21 Dartmouth and Penn, e.g.
- 22 Fled
- 23 Mnemonic start
- 24 Actor Leary
- 25 Flowerlike sea creature
- 26 Massive victory . . . or a high score in 113-Across?
- 29 Really enjoys oneself
- 31 Doofuses
- 34 Wetland
- 35 Objections
- 36 Be part of an uprising
- 37 Lowercase letter that resembles an "n"
- 39 Las Vegas resort with a music-inspired
- 41 But
- 42 Resort amenity
- 45 Medical procedure, for short
- 46 Overabundance
- 47 Vodka drink. informally
- 49 Tremble

52 Contaminating trace 53 Chemical-solution

strength

- 54 "Yeshiva boy" played by Barbra Streisand
- 55 Author who penned the line "Sometimes the smallest things take up the most room in your heart"
- 56 Climate issue addressed in the Montreal Protocol
- 58 Approach something with gusto
- 60 What's the matter?
- 61 Sunder
- 62 Shapes of many carrot slices
- 64 Currency worth a little more than dollars
- 66 Spreadsheet command
- 67 Spot for a loft
- 68 Muesli bit
- 70 Make a pile, perhaps 72 Rentable
- transportation options
- 76 Fracas
- 78 Music's Little
- 83 Used TurboTax, say 84 Journalist's accessory
- 86 Knuckle-headed act?
- 87 Biblical man who lost his birthright 88 2017 musical retelling
- of the stories of Henry VIII's wives 89 Symbol for torque, in
- physics
- 91 Many a viral post
- 92 Point of no return?
- 95 Ace
- 98 Coast

- 101 Ellipsis element
- 104 Aviator's maneuver in a crosswind landing
- 108 Proportional
- 109 "The Last Supper," 111Spot on an
  - afternoon schedule? 112 Doofuses
  - 113 Game represented visually in this puzzle
  - 116 Talks like Tom Waits
  - 117 Justice Kagan
  - 118 Try for a seat in the Capitol 119 Fifth-century pope
  - dubbed "the Great" 120 Constant nuisance
  - 121 Like some postage and parking spaces
  - 122 Fish whose juveniles can climb walls

#### DOWN

- 1 Many prom attendees: Abbr.
- 2 Niihau neckwear
- 3 Symbol of wisdom
- 4 Lock
- 5 Mountebank
- 6 "Nice work, little fella!'
- 7 Dreamy state 8 Skirts that go below
- the knee
- 9 Giant slalom at the Olympics, e.g.
- 10 Choir director's command
- 11 Tremor
- 12 Put out
- 13 Make perfect, maybe
- 14 Frustrating highway driver

- 15 Short tennis session
- 16 Gregor \_\_\_\_\_, Franz Kafka character
- \_\_\_ Jima 18 Small band transport
- 19 Image at the top of the pyramid on the back of a dollar bill
- \_ la vista, baby!"
- 28 Insertion mark
- 29 Put on a pedestal, say 30 Jennifer of "The Morning Show
- 32 "White Noise" author Don
- 33 What a shock! 34 11,111 vis-à-vis 123,454,321
- 38 Swear (to)
- 40 Tweak, say 42 Ejects forcefully
- 43 Primitive camera feature
- 44 Like a winner of a mountain marathon. in two senses
- 46 First name of Julius Caesar
- 48 Unrefined mined find
- 50 Finish line for the first stage of the first de France
- 51 Giant name in Giants history
- 52 Cinemax competitor
- 57 It's facedown on a poker table
- 58 Negroni spirit 59 [I'm SO mad!]
- 60 Cotton fabric often used in bandages
- 63 Hosp. areas
- 65 Gondola propeller

67 Honey

53

87

108

112

117

120

69 Verb sometimes abbreviated to its central letter

93

- 71 Prefix with tourist or hotel
- 72 Series finale
- 73 Counterfactual starters, in logic
- 74 Karachi-based carrier
- 75 Certain urban nightlife
- 76 Military hiding spot

77 Place that's cramped and squalid

113 114

118

- 79 Something a presidential candidate often wins
- 80 Gray, say
- 81 Part of a hoop 82 It may be repeated
- after "fiddle" 84 Oregon-based
- athletic brand 85 Podium
- 88 Items in a hardware store bin
- 90 Acting as one 93 Capital in the Himalayas

102

109

- 94 Company originally known as Control Video Corp.
- 96 Shelley's "\_ West Wind"
- 97 Converges on 98 Source of a sleeper
- hit, perhaps \_ Holmes, Netflix character played by Millie Bobby Brown
- 100 Pitkin County ski town

106

32

- 101 Old Venetian money
- 102 Give a keynote, say 103 Performer with lions
- 105 Cotton fabric often used
- in hosiery 106 Urge

116

- 107 Some dinero
- 109 Part of a lion 110 Ear piece
- 114 Bottom line? 115 Container component

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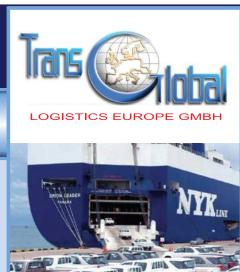
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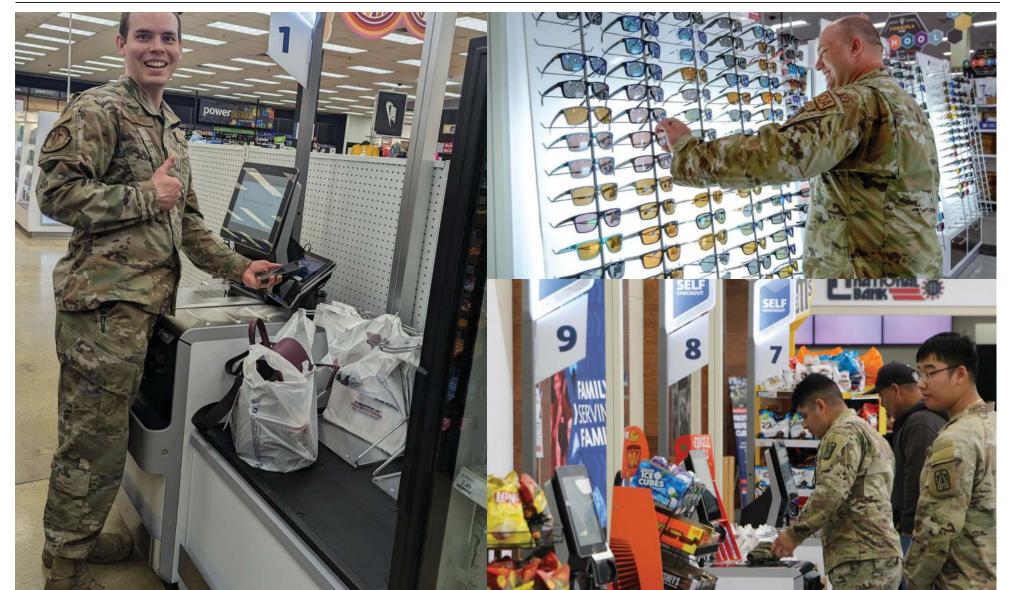
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#### **Bizarro**



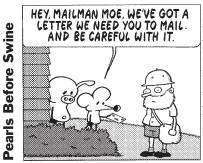
#### **Loose Parts**



















**Carpe Diem** 







TOTALLY CONFIDENTIAL. THAT'S NOT EVEN CONGIDERED A DANGER ANYMORE.







#### **Eugene Sheffer Crossword**

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8		9	10	11
12						13				14		
15						16			17			
		18			19				20			
21	22			23				24				
25			26		27		28					
29				30			31			32	33	34
			35			36			37			
38	39	40				41		42		43		
44					45				46			
47				48				49			50	51
52				53				54				
55				56				57				
									000			

#### **ACROSS**

- 1 In check
- 6 Pitch
- 9 Talk on and on 12 Tickle
- 13 Census stat
- 14 Mauna —
- 15 Prepares flour
- 16 Cushions
- 18 Closing number
- 20 Overdue
- 21 Conk out
- 23 Mined-over matter
- 24 Moon-related
- 25 Literary reps
- 27 Bygone
- anesthetic 29 Musical mixture
- 31 Inflatable sleeper
- 35 Ritzy violin
- 37 Arizona city
- 38 Seize by force
- 41 Online address
- 43 Little lie
- 44 Gershwin's
- "The Love" 45 Use a towel
- 47 Clown
- 49 Dumpster filler
- 52 Yalie
- 53 Dad on
- "Black-ish" 54 "I cannot — lie"
- 55 Trio after Q
- 56 Listening device

- 57 Aromas **DOWN**
- 1 Remote
- 2 Texter's

- 4 Italian wine
- 5 Kind of question
- 7 Flu symptom
- 8 Game official
- 9 Collect slowly
- 10 Heart line
- 17 Light snowfall
- 19 Venezuelan
- corn patty

- batteries, often
- "Enough!"
- 3 Self-service
- meals
- region
- 6 iPad, for one

- 11 Less noble

- 21 River blocker

- 24 Island garland
- 26 Zhivago

22 Polish tennis star Swiatek

- portrayer
- 28 Hirsute
- 30 Strike caller
- 32 City on Lake Erie
- 33 Brit. record label
- 34 Apply cream
- 36 Actress Kathleen 38 Brown shade
- 39 Author Bellow,
- et al.
- 40 III-suited
- 42 Gambling game 45 Nickelodeon's
  - "Explorer"
- 46 Dancer Astaire
- 48 Verse by Neruda
- 50 Camera type
- 51 Possesses

#### **Answer to Previous Puzzle**

S	L	0	Р		С	0	В		С	Н	E	Т
Т	_	М	Е		Α	Ζ	0		Α	0	Z	Е
Α	L	Α	R		Н	0	Т		Z	U	D	Е
Т	Α	R	М	Α	C		Н	J	D	S	0	Ν
			Π	S	Н			Ζ	0	Е		
М	U	S	Т		Е	Ν	С		R	С	┙	Е
0	Р	Т			R	Е	Α			Α	0	K
М	Α	R	М	0	S	Ε	Т		S	Т	Υ	Ε
		Α	Α	Α			Α	G	Ε			
T	R	Υ	S	Т	S		С	0	L	М	Α	Ν
W	Α	С	0		Н	В	0		F	Α	R	0
Τ	R	Α	Ν		Ε	L	М		Τ	Т	С	Н
N	Ē	Т	S		D	U	В		E	S	S	0

#### 2-9

#### **CRYPTOQUIP**

SZHHLX XGL QGNQ XLIOZM

WIKJGYTA KU JLSQ-MIYTO

WNHHZM YQ FKYQJ. YQ WNTJ

XNJ JLMN-UIZJJYTA.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SUPPOSING A PIG IN A KARATE CLASS DEALT A SHARP DOWNWARD BLOW, WOULD THAT BE A PORK CHOP?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: X equals W





第3種郵便物認可 Friday, February 9, 2024 STARS AND STRIPES **PAGE 39** 

#### **Bizarro**



#### **Loose Parts**









**Pearls Before Swine** 

Sequitur

**Carpe Diem** 





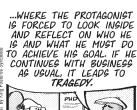






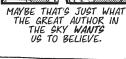


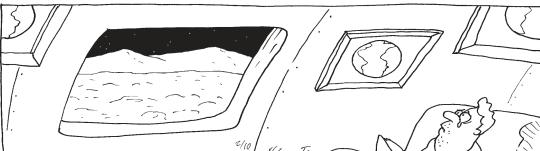
















#### **Eugene Sheffer Crossword**

	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	
11							12					13
14							15					
16				17		18				19		
20			21		22				23			
24				25		26		27				
			28		29		30					
31	32	33				34		35		36	37	38
39					40		41		42			
43				44				45		46		
47			48				49		50			
51							52					
	53						54					
							_		400	C1 1		

#### **ACROSS**

- 1 Caravan beast
- 6 Laugh track sounds
- 11 Malay island 12 Apple music
  - service
- 14 Snicket of kid-lit
- 15 Assault
- 16 Globe
- 17 Skewered
- Thai recipe
- 19 "7 Faces of
- Dr. —"
- 20 "Superfood" berry
- 22 Vegas opener
- 23 Fizzy drink
- 24 Haute
- 26 Dakar's country 28 Decks in the ring
- 30 Zilch
- 31 "Out of Africa" author Isak
- 35 Gather 39 Saharan
- 40 Opposite
- of paleo-
- 42 Queens
- stadium name
- 43 Arcing tennis
- 44 Messing on TV
- 46 Cowboy moniker 47 As a whole
- 49 Main dish

- 51 Pop star Gomez
- 52 Rings on a pizza 53 French painter
- Edgar
- 54 Zesty dip

#### **DOWN**

- 1 Pressure 2 Martial arts hold
- 3 L-P link
- 4 Nights of yore
- 5 Faithful
- 6 "Razor Girl"
- novelist Carl 7 Lawyer (Abbr.)
- 8 Shack
- 9 Not digital
- 10 "Just Another Day" singer Jon
- 11 Distend
- 13 Toaster's word

- 18 Prof's helpers 21 Ticked off
- 23 Alabama city
- 25 Dawn goddess
- 27 Long of "Soul Food"
- 29 Five Nations members
- 31 Valleys
- 32 Pressed
- 33 Wee bite
- 34 Kan. neighbor
- 36 Houston team
- 37 Pop singer
- Easton
- 38 Genders 41 Two-tone cookies
- 44 Lady of Spain
- 45 Editor Wintour
- 48 Pants part
- 50 Up to

#### **Answer to Previous Puzzle**

Α	T	В	Α	Υ		Τ	Α	R		G	Α	В
Α	М	U	S	Ε		Α	G	Ε		L	0	Α
S		F	Т	S		В	U	F	F	Е	R	S
		F	Ι	Ν	Α	L	Е		L	Α	Т	Е
D	_	Е		0	R	Е		L	U	Ν	Α	R
Α	G	Т	S		Е	Т	Н	Ε	R			
М	Α	S	Н	U	Р		Α	П	R	В	Е	D
			Α	М	Α	Т	Ι		Υ	U	М	Α
U	S	U	R	Р		כ	R	┙		F	_	В
М	Α	Ν	_		D	R	Υ	0	F	F		
В	U	F	F	0	0	Ν		Т	R	Α	S	Н
E	L	ĺ		D	R	Ε		T	Ē	Ĺ	L	Α
R	S	Т		Ε	Α	R		0	D	0	R	S

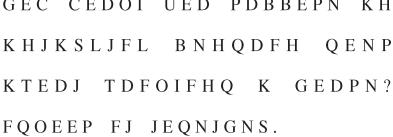
#### 2-10

#### **CRYPTOQUIP**

CEDOI UED PDBBEPN GEC ΚH

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THAT FELLOW WHO WORKED CRUSHING UP SOFT-DRINK CANS CALLED IT QUITS. IT WAS SODA-PRESSING.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Q equals G





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### OPINION

## Russian, Ukrainian generals agree on battlespace

#### By David Ignatius

The Washington Post

stop Russian and Ukrainian generals assess the battlefield after nearly two brutal years of stalemated "positional" warfare, they draw the same lessons: Tanks, manned aircraft and traditional maneuver forces are sitting ducks, while advanced drones and digital battlemanagement systems can have a decisive impact.

Russia has come to realize what Ukraine recognized more than a year ago: This is an "algorithm war," one where digital intelligence and targeting systems have rewritten the rules of conflict. The "fog of war" experienced by commanders for centuries has cleared. In the newly transparent battlespace, movements by large units are instantly visible and vulnerable.

This look into Russian and Ukrainian military assessments is possible thanks to commentaries published in the past two weeks by two veteran commanders, Gen. Yuri Baluyevsky, a former chief of the Russian general staff, and Gen. Valery Zaluzhny, [who was] in charge of the Ukrainian military [until he was fired Thursday]. They appeared, respectively, in Army Standard, a Russian publication, and on the website of the Ukrainian defense ministry. The commentaries were flagged to me by Kevin Ryan, a retired Army brigadier general who served as U.S. defense attaché in Moscow and then taught at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center. He translated the articles and circulated them among Russia specialists. Zaluzhny made similar comments about the importance of drones in an interview published in November in The Economist, but the Russian analysis is new and star-

"These two adversaries see many of the same lessons," Ryan writes in an email summarizing the commentaries. The generals recognize that in the Ukraine battlespace, "no concentration of troops, large or small, can escape the ever-present reconnaissance by unmanned aerial systems and satellites," he notes.

The tactical revolution underway in Ukraine underlines why a congressional failure to approve continued U.S. military support for Kyiv would be so devastating. As Russia gains increasing mastery of digital warfare, Zaluzhny worries that Ukraine is hobbled by "exhaustion of our partners' stocks of missiles and ammunition" and "the difficulty of our allies in determining the priorities of support."

Baluyevsky's comments read like a wakeup call to his fellow Russian officers. He argues that the so-called special military operation in Ukraine has been "an unprecedented test of literally all components of military affairs and military construction." His analysis came in the foreword for an anthology of essays about the war, which was then summarized in Army Standard by Russian journalist Sergey Valchenko.

Baluyevsky echoes many Western commentators who have argued that defense has trumped offense in Ukraine. "Air defense has won an unexpected triumph over military aviation," which has "lost the ability to operate en masse over enemy territory" and even must fly "with caution over its own territory."

The tank "has become one of the main casualties of the combat experience of the last two years," he explains, since it was "an easily detected and easily hit target" and "turned out to be very vulnerable to mines." Similarly, "the impossibility of concentrating troops... forces us to conduct combat operations with small units and separate combat vehicles."

Baluyevsky has some scathing comments about the performance of Russian weapons. "The qualitative superiority of NATO artillery is evident," he contends. Ukraine "has revealed a significant lag in Russian artillery and missile systems and requires their priority radical rearmament in the next few years."

The winners in this war are drones. "Unmanned aircraft have rapidly and unconditionally conquered the airspace," Baluyevsky argues. Zaluzhny agrees that "unmanned systems, along with other new types of weapons, are almost the only tool for getting out of" the stalemate of trench warfare.

Zaluzhny bemoans Russia's manpower advantage and Ukraine's "inability ... to improve the state of staffing of the Defense Forces without the use of unpopular measures," such as a nationwide draft. His disagreement with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy about the need for such an all-out mobilization is one reason for recent tension between the two men — [and likely contributed to Zelenskyy firing him Thursday].

Ukraine, as I wrote after visiting Kyiv in October, is exhausted by war and slowly bleeding out. Zaluzhny implicitly recognizes this war fatigue in arguing for increased use of unmanned systems to "reduce the level of losses ... reduce the degree of participation of traditional means of destruction ... [and] limited involvement of heavy equipment."

The lesson for the United States, beyond the simple but urgent need to continue military assistance for Ukraine, is to focus that support on the high-tech weapons that matter. The weapons that have generated endless debate, such as tanks and F-16 fighters, are less important than drones, antiaircraft systems and electronic-warfare jammers.

The best weapons today, agree the Russian and Ukrainian generals, might be small, cheap systems such as "first-person view," or FPV drones that fly into targets like tiny suicide bombers and can be almost impossible to stop. The chilling fact is that these silent killers can be bought and used by almost any combatant, anywhere on Earth. It is, as the generals agree, a new day in warfare.

## How to solve America's soaring homelessness woes

#### By RACHEL SHEFFIELD

The Heritage Foundation

omelessness set two records in 2023. The increase in homelessness between 2022 and 2023 was the largest ever recorded since the government began collecting data in 2007. That brought the number of Americans living in homeless shelters and on the streets to an all-time high.

The problem is neither new nor local. Homelessness has been rising for several years. Last year, it increased in all but nine states, with New York topping the list. New York City Mayor Eric Adams recently announced that the city's homeless shelters are out of room due to soaring illegal immigration.

Evidence of the accompanying social decay can be found coast to coast: in Portland streets littered with hypodermic needles and other waste, on San Francisco sidewalks covered with human feces and tent encampments, and with increasing numbers of people languishing on the streets of Los Angeles.

Some unique factors contributed to the jump in homelessness in 2023, but policies to address homelessness have been off track for a long time. For two decades, the federal government has taken a "housing first" approach to homelessness, focusing on "permanent supportive housing" with low or no barriers to entry

This means providing permanent housing

without any conditions, such as meeting sobriety requirements, participating in drug treatment, engaging in mental health counseling or participating in job training. The idea is that giving a person housing will solve homelessness.

But housing first has failed on several counts. While it increases the likelihood that an individual remains housed—at least for the people who receive permanent housing—housing first fails to reduce overall rates of homelessness or to improve other outcomes of well-being. Indeed, some places that have increased their supply of permanent supportive housing have seen homelessness grow.

For example, between 2010 and 2019 California increased its number of permanent supportive housing units by 25,000, but the number of unsheltered homeless people in the state increased by 50%.

How can this be? Some people may stay in permanent supportive housing longer than they would have remained homeless, occupying units that would otherwise be available for others. Others may migrate to an area that offers permanent supportive housing.

Whatever the reasons, Kevin Corinth of the American Enterprise Institute estimates it takes 10 permanent supportive housing units to reduce homelessness by just one person.

Housing first is also expensive. A housingfirst project in Los Angeles has cost the city \$690,000 per unit. Prioritizing housing first also means that programs requiring treatment or behavioral change are penalized, even though "treatment-first" approaches are more successful at improving the well-being of homeless people by reducing drug use and increasing employment stability. By focusing on helping people move forward in their lives, treatment-first programs can ultimately serve more people too, since they are not designed to keep people in government-funded housing permanently.

Many people living on the street are dealing with severe mental illness. States should work to improve their mental health care systems and to increase the number of hospital beds available for the severely mentally ill.

Local leaders could work with nonprofit organizations to see that emergency and short-term shelters are available for those in crisis. At the same time, cities should maintain order on the streets by ensuring that public areas are free from tent encampments and that laws against illegal drug use and theft are enforced.

Helping the homeless should focus on addressing the underlying causes, rather than continuing to fixate on symptoms. Policies to help our brothers and sisters should promote wellness and upward mobility to help people find their way home.

Rachel Sheffield is a Research Fellow in Welfare and Family Policy at The Heritage Foundation.

## SCOREBOARD/COLLEGE FOOTBALL

#### **COLLEGE BASKETBALL**

#### Wednesday's men's scores

EAST
Army 68, Lehigh 57
Bucknell 80, Navy 67
Colgate 74, Boston U. 64
Davidson 72, Duquesne 59
Lafayette 75, Holy Cross 59
Loyola (Md.) 44, American 43
Providence 91, Creighton 87, OT
Saint Louis 102, La Salle 84
Seton Hall 76, Georgetown 70
St. Bonaventure 79, UMass 73
Syracuse 94, Louisville 92
SOUTH
Auburn 99, Alabama 81

SOUTH
Auburn 99, Alabama 81
Belmont 69, Murray St. 64
Duke 71, Notre Dame 53
E. Kentucky 90, Florida Gulf Coast 82
ETSU 57, Wofford 50
Georgia St. 78, Louisiana-Lafayette 69
Louisiana-Monroe 79, Coastal Carolina

Loyola Chicago 85, George Mason 79
Mercer 78, Furman 69
Mississippi St. 75, Georgia 62
Pittsburgh 67, NC State 64
Presbyterian 77, Gardner-Webb 75
SC-Upstate 69, Longwood 64
South Alabama 78, Georgia Southern 65
Southern Miss. 78, Old Dominion 73
Tennessee 88, LSU 68
Troy 82, Marshall 66
UNC-Asheville 86, High Point 81
W. Carolina 71, The Citadel 64
W. Kentucky 81, Louisiana Tech 76
Winthrop 67, Charleston Southern 46
MIDWEST
Cleveland St. 75, Fort Wayne 72
Drake 92, S. Illinois 88, OT
Evansville 73, Bradley 70
Ill.-Chicago 61, Illinois St. 56
Indiana St. 101, Valparaiso 61
Michigan 72, Wisconsin 68
N. Iowa 72, Miscouri St. 65
Northwestern 80, Nebraska 68
Stetson 84, Bellarmine 77
Texas A&M 79, Missouri 60
Wichita St. 84, UTSA 64
Xavier 56, Villanova 53
SOUTHWEST
James Madison 77, Arkansas St. 73
North Texas 68, Tulsa 55
SMU 95, Rice 69
Texas St. 63, Appalachian St. 56 Loyola Chicago 85, George Mason 79

Texas St. 63, Appalachian St. 56 FAR WEST

California 83, Southern Cal 77, OT Gonzaga 96, Portland 64 San Diego 79, Loyola Marymount 77 UCLA 82, Stanford 74

#### Men's AP Top 25 schedule

Friday's games

No. 18 Dayton (19-3) at VCU (15-8)

No. 24 San Diego St. (18-5) at Nevada (18-5)

#### Wednesday's women's scores

EAST
Duquesne 79, UMass 62
Fordham 70, Dayton 48
George Washington 69, St. Bonaventure

Marshall 74, Louisiana-Lafayette 42 Richmond 68, Rhode Island 49 UConn 67, Seton Hall 34 SOUTH

Appalachian St. 78, Louisiana-Monroe

Appalachian St. 78, Louisiana-Monroe

Charleston Southern 65, Winthrop 50
Cincinnati 67, UCF 61
FAU 66, Charlotte 55
Gardner-Webb 86, Presbyterian 57
Georgia St. 58, Arkansas St. 56
High Point 62, UNC-Asheville 54
James Madison 82, South Alabama 66
Lipscomb 58, Jacksonville 52
North Florida 52, Austin Peay 50
Old Dominion 63, Troy 59
Rice 69, South Florida 59
SC-Upstate 49, Longwood 45
Southern Miss. 62, Georgia Southern 54
Texas St. 52, Coastal Carolina 49
UAB 94, Tulane 77
W. Kentucky 64, Louisiana Tech 56
MIDWEST

Akron 68, E. Michigan 67, OT
Bowling Green 69, Ohio 52
Buffalo 49, Miami (Ohio) 43
Cleveland St. 71, Wright St. 59
DePaul 84, Providence 72
Kent St. 70, W. Michigan 57
Marquette 52, Georgetown 38
N. Illinois 76, Ball St. 71, OT
Toledo 93, Cent. Michigan 68
VCU 76, Saint Louis 67
SOUTHWEST

VCU 76, Saint Louis 67 SOUTHWEST

Oklahoma 72, TCU 55 FAR WEST

BYU 78, Baylor 66 Boise St. 73, San Jose St. 42 Colorado St. 69, Fresno St. 56 Nevada 62, Air Force 56 San Diego St. 60, New Mexico 53 Wyoming 62, Utah St. 47

#### **TENNIS**

#### **Dallas Open**

Wednesday At Styslinger/Altec Tennis Complex Purse: \$756,020 Surface: Hardcourt indoor

Men's Singles Round of 32

Denis Kudla, United States, def. Radu Albot, Moldova, 6-3, 7-6 (3).
Rinky Hijikata, Australia, def. Ethan Quinn, United States, 6-4, 6-4.
Round of 16

Marcos Giron, United States, def. Max Purcell (6), Australia, 6-4, 6-3. James Duckworth, Australia, def. Chris-topher Eubanks (5), United States, 7-6 (3),

Ben Shelton (3), United States, def. Mi-chael Mmoh, United States, 6-3, 6-3. Tommy Paul (2), United States, def. Taro Daniel, Japan, 6-3, 6-2.

#### **PRO HOCKEY**

#### NHL

#### **EASTERN CONFERENCE**

|--|

	GP	W	L	ОТ	Pts	GF	G/
Boston	50	31	10	9	71	174	13
Florida	50	31	15	4	66	159	129
Toronto	49	26	15	8	60	173	15
Tampa Bay	51	27	19	5	59	176	16
Detroit	50	26	18	6	58	176	16
Montreal	50	21	21	8	50	141	17
Buffalo	50	22	24	4	48	147	15
Ottawa	47	20	25	2	42	158	17
14-	4	- 124	F				

#### **Metropolitan Division**

	GP	W	L	ОТ	Pts	GF	GA
N.Y. Rangers	51	32	16	3	67	166	144
Carolina	49	28	16	5	61	165	147
Philadelphia	51	26	19	6	58	149	149
N.Y. Islanders	50	21	17	12	54	146	168
Pittsburgh	47	23	17	7	53	141	126
New Jersey	48	25	20	3	53	166	171
Washington	48	22	19	7	51	117	151
Columbus	50	16	24	10	42	148	184
		=			=		

#### WESTERN CONFERENCE

#### **Central Division**

	GP	W	L	ОТ	Pts	GF	GA				
Colorado	51	32	15	4	68	194	160				
Dallas	51	31	14	6	68	189	157				
Winnipeg	48	30	13	5	65	148	112				
St. Louis	49	26	21	2	54	141	153				
Nashville	51	26	23	2	54	153	160				
Arizona	48	23	22	3	49	143	147				
Minnesota	50	22	23	5	49	151	167				
Chicago	51	14	35	2	30	106	179				
	Pacific Division										

	GP	W	L	ОТ	Pts	GF	GA
Vancouver	50	34	11	5	73	189	129
Vegas	51	30	15	6	66	166	139
Edmonton	46	29	16	1	59	161	127
Los Angeles	48	23	15	10	56	152	132
Seattle	50	21	19	10	52	140	147
Calgary	50	23	22	5	51	153	156
Anaheim	50	18	30	2	38	129	170
San Jose	51	14	32	5	33	107	199

**Note:** Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

#### Wednesday's games

N.Y. Rangers 3, Tampa Bay 1 Toronto 5, Dallas 4 Minnesota 2, Chicago 1

#### Thursday's games

Calgary at New Jersey Vancouver at Boston Washington at Florida Winnipeg at Philadelphia Colorado at Carolina Tampa Bay at N.Y. Islanders Vegas at Arizona

#### Friday's games

Pittsburgh at Minnesota N.Y. Rangers at Chicago Edmonton at Anaheim

#### Saturday's games

Calgary at N.Y. Islanders Dallas at Montreal St. Louis at Buffalo Vancouver at Detroit Vancouver at Detroit
Washington at Boston
Colorado at Florida
New Jersey at Carolina
Pittsburgh at Winnipeg
Seattle at Philadelphia
Tampa Bay at Columbus
Toronto at Ottawa
Arizona at Nashville **Edmonton at Los Angeles** 

Sunday's games

St. Louis at Montreal Vancouver at Washington

Monday's games

Seattle at New Jersey Calgary at N.Y. Rangers Arizona at Philadelphia

#### **PWHL**

	W	L	ow	OL	Pts	GF	GA
Montreal	3	1	3	1	17	22	19
Minnesota	3	2	2	2	15	21	19
Boston	2	2	2	1	11	17	18
Toronto	3	5	0	0	11	18	24
New York	2	4	2	1	11	22	21
Ottawa	2	1	Λ	1	10	1Ω	17

Teams awarded three (3) points for an ergulation win, two (2) points for an overtime or shootout win, one (1) point for an overtime or shootout loss, and zero (0) points for a regulation time loss.

Sunday, Feb. 4

New York 4, Ottawa 3, OT

Montreal 2, Roston 1, OT

New York 4, Ottawa 3, OT
Montreal 2, Boston 1, OT
Wednesday, Feb. 14
Toronto at Boston
Ottawa at Minnesota
Friday, Feb. 16
Montreal at Toronto
Saturday, Feb 17

Minnesota at Ottawa New York at Boston

#### **GOLF**

#### **World rankings**

#### Through Feb. 5 Scottie Scheffler 9.27 Rory McIlroy 8.55 Jon Rahm 6.19 Viktor Hovland Xander Schauffele 5.32 Wyndham Clark 5.24 Patrick Cantlay 5.03 4.30 Max Homa Matt Fitzpatrick 4.06 9. 10. Brian Harman 4.05 11. Ludvig Aberg

#### **DEALS**

#### Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL Major League Baseball American League

Major League Baseball
American League
BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Named Mike
Montville hitting coach and Seth Ellanson
assistant athletic trainer for Norfolk
(IL),Roberto Mercado manager, Josh Bunselmeyer hitting coach, Chase Sebby fundamentals coach, Billy Facteau development coach, Julio Ibarra athletic trainer
and Austin Meine pitching coach for Bowie (EL), Felipe Rojas Alou Jr. manager,
Jordie Henry pitching coach, Charles Bolden fundamentals coach and Ryan Goll
development coach for Aberdeen (SAL)
and Collin Woody manager, Andy Sadoski
pitching coach, Christian Poulsen hitting
coach, Calvin Christiansen development
coach, Griffin Pyott athletic trainer and
Mason Gomez Clubhouse manager for Delmarva (CRL). Acquired INF/OF Nick Maton
from Detroit for cash considerations.

LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Acquired RHP
Guillermo Zuniga from St. Louis in exchange for cash considerations. Designated RHPs Austin Warren, for assignment.

MINNESOTA TWINS — Agreed to terms
with 1B/DH Carlos Santana and RHPs Jay
Jackson and Jakob Junis on one-year contracts. Claimed RHP Zack Weiss off waivers from Boston. Designated RHPs Daniel
Duarte and Jordan Balazovic and OF Bubba Thompson for assignment.

SEATTLE MARINERS — Claimed OF Ca-

Duarte and Jordan Balazovic and OF Bubba Thompson for assignment.

SEATTLE MARINERS — Claimed OF Canaan Smith-Njigba off waivers from Pittsburgh. Sent RHP Darren McCaughan outright to Tacoma (PCL). Agreed to terms with RHPs Cory Abbott, Joey Krehbiel and Casey Lawrence and LHPs Kirby Snead and Jhonathan Diaz on minor league contracts

**National League** MIAMI MARLINS — Designated RHP Ka-leb Ort for assignment. Claimed RHP De-clan Cronin off waivers from Houston. Ac-quired 3B Jonah Bride from Oakland for

cash considerations.

MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Agreed to terms with RHP Jakob Junis on a one-year contract. Designated LHP Clayton An-

drews for assignment.

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Claimed RHP Max Castillo off waivers from Boston. Designated CF Simon Muzziotti for assign-

## BASKETBALL

National Basketball Association BROOKLYN NETS — Assigned F Noah Clowney to the Long Island Nets of the G

INDIANA PACERS — Assigned G Jarace Walker to the Indiana Mad Ants of the G

UTAH JAZZ — Recalled Fs Taylor Hendricks and Brice Sensabaugh from the Salt Lake City Stars of the G League.

Women's National Basketball

Association Association

LOS VEGAS ACES. — Re-signed F/C Candace Parker.

National Football League DETROIT LIONS — Signed WR Tre'Quan Smith to a futures contract for 2024. KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Placed DE Charles Omenihu on injured reserve. Ac-tivated WR Skyy Moore from injured re-serve.

NEW YORK GIANTS — Promote Mike Kafka to assistant head coach and offensive coordinator, Jerome Henderson to secondary coach and passing game coordinator and Steve Tierney quarterbacks coach and offensive passing game coordinator. Named Charlie Bullen linebackers coach and Zak Kuhr defensive assistant. HOCKEY

National Hockey League

ANAHEIM DUCKS — Reassigned LW Blake McLaughlin from San Diego (AHL) to Tulsa (ECHL).

CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS — Activated C. NEW YORK GIANTS — Promote Mike Kaf-

CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS — Activated C Tyler Johnson from injured reserve. Recalled D Louis Crevier from Rockford (AHL).

MINNESOTA WILD — Activated C Vinni

MINNESOTA WILD — ACTIVATED C VIIIII
Lettieri from injured reserve.

TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Activated D
Mikhail Sergachev from injured reserve.

VANCOUVER CANUCKS — Returned RW
Linus Karlsson to Abbotsford (AHL).

VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS — Reassigned
RW Sheldon Rempal to Henderson (AHL).

SOCCER

Major League Soccer
FC CINCINNATI — Acquired M Pavel Bucha from FC Viktoria Plzen (Czech First League) via transfer and signed him to a contract through 2026.

NASHVILLE SC — Signed M Isaiah Jones to a homegrown player contract through 2027.

2027.

SAN JOSE EARTHQUAKES — Acquired D Vitor Costa from Portuguese side C.S. Maritomo and signed him through 2025, pending receipt of his international transfer certificate (ITC) and P-1 visa,



Nick Saban's retirement set off a chain reaction among the coaching ranks as several coaches moved to other schools.

## **Coaching changes** affect Signing Day

By Steve Megargee Associated Press

College football's busy recruiting calendar created a particularly hectic first few weeks on the job for all the head coaches who switched schools over the last month.

When Nick Saban announced his retirement last month, it set off a chain reaction that resulted in head coaching changes at Arizona, Washington and San Jose State as well as Alabama. That doesn't even factor in Jim Harbaugh leaving Michigan for the NFL's Los Angeles Chargers or Jeff Hafley exiting Boston College to become the Green Bay Packers' defensive coordinator.

All those late coaching moves added some intrigue to the first Wednesday of February, a day that once highlighted the recruiting calendar but has been anti-climactic ever since the 2017 launch of a December signing period. New coaches had to re-recruit prospects who had signed to play for a different staff and now were free to look elsewhere.

Washington coach Jedd Fisch, who was hired away from Arizona last month, was giving his Signing Day news conference at his new school Wednesday when he described the varied challenges he faced the last few weeks in keeping a roster together.

"You've got the group that wants to get to know you because they've committed to you, but they're in the portal to go look somewhere else," Fisch said. "Then you've got the next group that has signed with you, but they want to consider getting out of their national letter of intent because they chose a different staff. And then you have your own team who you have to figure out the guys who aren't in the portal to make sure they don't go in it."

Kalen DeBoer, who preceded Fisch as Washington's coach before deciding to replace Saban at So did Brent Brennan, who left San Jose State to take over for Fisch at Arizona.

The game of musical chairs between coaches carried over to the recruiting world.

Alabama announced Wednesday the addition of edge rusher Noah Carter, who had signed with Washington in December but will now follow De-Boer to Tuscaloosa. Other players who had signed with the Huskies or committed to them but altered their plans after the coaching change included defensive linemen Ratumana Bulabalavu (who chose Southern California) and Dominic Kirks (Ohio State) as well as edge rusher Keona Wilhite (Nebraska).

Washington refortified its class by adding several players who originally had signed to play for Fisch at Arizona.

Alabama had its own recruiting issues after Saban's departure.

Julian Sayin, the nation's No. 1 quarterback and No. 6 overall prospect according to composite rankings of recruiting sites compiled by 247Sports, enrolled early at Alabama but entered the transfer portal after the coaching change and eventually committed to Ohio State. Alabama also lost cornerback Jameer Grimsley, who signed with the Tide in December but will now play at Florida instead.

But the Tide managed to keep five-star receiving prospect Ryan Williams, who had entered the transfer portal before opting to stick with Alabama.

Wide receiver Ashton Bethel-Roman was the only player ranked among the top 247 prospects by 247Sports who was uncommitted as of Wednesday morning. Bethel-Roman chose Texas A&M.

AP sports writers Tim Booth and John Zenor contributed to this report.

 STARS AND STRIPES Friday, February 9, 2024

### COLLEGE BASKETBALL/NBA

## Rebuilt Virginia back to playing like contender

By HANK KURZ JR.

Associated Press CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. —

Some numbers still identify Virginia as one of the elite teams in college basketball, especially on the defensive end — long its calling card under coach Tony Bennett.

Except, that is, for the ones that put a Top 25 number before their

But in a season that certainly qualifies as a rebuilding one, the Cavaliers finally seem to be all on the same page, and are playing like a team to be reckoned with again.

Virginia (18-5, 9-3 Atlantic Coast Conference) has virtually lived in the top 10 for several years, but the two times they've played their way into the poll this year, they quickly followed with blowout losses, first 65-41 against No. 6 Wisconsin, then 77-54 at Memphis. Their five losses have come by an average of 20.8 points.

But things are getting better.

Their 60-38 victory over Miami on Monday was their seventh in a row and 23rd straight at home, the longest active home winning streak in the nation. The Cavaliers improved to 114-2 when allowing 50 points or fewer in the Bennett

They hope to continue their resurgence on Saturday when they play at Florida State (13-9, 7-4).

"I think we're improving. Still have a ways to go," Bennett said after a 65-53 victory over Notre Dame last week., which avenged a

76-54 loss in South Bend on Dec. 30, their worst ACC loss since 2017. "Early, you could see, trying to find our identity. ... We just kept chipping away, simplifying some things on both ends and really demanding more, quite honestly. But also being more patient, if that makes sense.'

The need for patience mostly came from having to incorporate an influx of transfers and freshmen after the program lost seven players following last season. Three of them, groomed for expanded roles this year, opted to transfer instead.

The losses could have been harsher, but point guard Reece Beekman decided to return after testing the NBA waters, giving Bennett some much-needed lead-

"That's kind of a reason I came back to school was to lead these guys and have another opportunity to have Virginia in the top of the standings," Beekman said after leading the way with 21 points against the Irish. "It's still a long season. We've got much to improve, but I like how we're trending in the right direction.'

The reigning ACC defensive player of the year, Beekman eclipsed 1,000 for his career when he scored 14 in a 66-65 win over Clemson Saturday and leads the ACC in assists and steals.

A fellow starter, sophomore Isaac McKneely, ranks among leaders nationally in 3-point percentage (46.6) and arrived last



Point guard Reece Beekman decided to return for his junior season. providing Virginia some much-needed leadership and stability.

year as West Virginia's Mr. Basketball with the benefit of having played a version of the Pack-Line defense in high school.

Learning the defense is essential at Virginia, and as transfers Jordan Minor (Merrimack), Jacob Groves (Oklahoma) and Andrew Rohde (St. Thomas, Minn.) have picked it up, it's made them bigger factors, greatly expanding Bennett's options.

Groves was averaging just 7.3 points per game, but scored a season-high 18 against the Irish on 6for-8 3-point shooting and followed that with 17 against Clemson and 12 against Miami.

Minor is physical and tied his season-high with nine rebounds against Clemson. He also had a three-game stretch recently when he scored in double figures.

Rohde, a third starter in the backcourt, averages just 4.8 points but has 66 assists and only 28 turn-

"The sign of a good team, which they are, and a well-coached team, is they are starting to hit their stride right now," Irish coach Micah Shrewsberry said.

Perhaps the clearest sign that things are coming together is that only two of the Cavaliers' last eight opponents have reached 60 points. They haven't finished lower than sixth in scoring defense nationally in the past 13 seasons — they've been first six times — and rank among the leaders in field goalpercentage defense, too.

The benefits come at both ends.

"Why we've been a better team as of late is we've been better defensively," Bennett said. "And I think that helps a lot of things. We've just simplified."

They hope the formula keeps them trending upward.

## Hield dealt to Sixers, source says

By Dan Gelston Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA slumping Philadelphia 76ers have acquired guard Buddy Hield from the Indiana Pacers for Marcus Morris Jr., Furkan Korkmaz and three second-round draft picks, a person familiar with the decision told The Associated Press on Thursday.

The Sixers also sent Daniel House and a 2024 second-round pick to the Detroit Pistons, the person said. The House trade creates \$4.3 million in cap space as part of the traded player exception. The trades have opened salary cap and roster space for the Sixers to pursue a player on the buyout market.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the trades were not yet official.

Sixers president Daryl Morey made the moves hours ahead of the NBA trade deadline with the Sixers tumbling down the East standings without injured All-Star Joel Embiid.

The 76ers are 4-12 without Embiid and will be without the reigning MVP for at least a month — if not much longer following knee surgery this week.

Hield will earn \$19.2 million this season in the final year of a four-year contract. He averaged just 12 points this year in 52 games with the Pacers. He is a career 40% 3-point shooter. Hield made just 28 starts this year but should see an expanded role on a Sixers team hit hard by injuries and illness.

The Sixers have lost seven of eight games.

Hield has been one of the top 3-point shooters in the NBA for years in both volume and makes. He hit at least 260 in four straight seasons with the Sacramento Kings and made a career-high 288 last season with the Pacers.

The Sixers are shooting just 31% from 3-point range this season and can only hope Hield provides not only a viable outside option down the stretch but can take some of the pressure off All-Star guard Tyrese Maxey, who has struggled in Embiid's ab-

Indiana's desire to move Hield was not much of a surprise. Hield, who finished sixth in the league with 3.6 3s per game last season, had been the subject of trade rumors since last year's trade deadline. An expiring contract and his ability to score made him a likely addition for a team trying to make a deep playoff run — which the 76ers still believe they can do if Embiid is healthy and can return in time for the playoffs.

## UConn's Auriemma reaches 1,200 victories

By PAT EATON-ROBB

Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. — Geno Auriemma allowed himself to get a bit nostalgic after becoming just the third coach in Division I basketball history to reach 1,200 wins.

With UConn's 67-34 rout of Seton Hall Wednesday Auriemma joined former Duke men's coach Mike Krzyzewski (1,202 wins) and Stanford's Tara VanDerveer (1,206) as the only ones to reach that milestone.

After breaking open a pinata with his team and being showered with confetti and balloons, Auriemma's thoughts went back to a 1987 doubleheader in Hartford with the UConn men's team, when about 50 people showed up early to watch the women beat Central Connecticut.

Wednesday night, there were more than 14.000 fans on hand in the same building, including thousands of little girls, dozens of



Auriemma

for a photo or autograph with one of their heroes.

"We created a subculture that didn't exist," Auriemma said. "It wasn't there. And through a lot of hard work and a lot of people putting a lot of hard work into it, a cul-

ture was born out of nothing."

Auriemma reached 1,200 wins faster than anyone else, reaching the milestone in his 39th season. Krzyzewski coached for 47 years and VanDerveer is in her 45th season as a head

And he has done it all at a single school.

He turned UConn from a program that had just one winning season before he arrived in 1985 to perennial title contender. In addition to the 11 titles, the Huskies have also been to 22 Final Fours and recorded six perfect seasons.

whom waited by the tunnel His teams haven't won fewer than 25 games in a season since 1992-93.

"What stands out to me is the totality of what he has built in Storrs," said Rebecca Lobo, who led UConn to its first title in 1995 and now serves as an ESPN analyst. "The national championships, league championships, the consecutive win streaks, the teams that seem to yearly get inducted into the Huskies of Honor, the sure-fire Hall of Fame players. Twelvehundred is amazing on its own, but when you look at it intertwined with everything else, it's mind boggling."

And DePaul coach Doug Bruno, a longtime friend and assistant coach, said Auriemma's impact goes far beyond the numbers.

"I'll argue with anybody in any bar in any town in the world and the United States of America about which college program has done the most (for the game)," he said. "And it's UConn."

### NBA

#### **Scoreboard**

#### **Eastern Conference**

**Atlantic Division** 

	w	L Pct	GB
Boston	39	12 .765	
New York	33	18 .647	6
Philadelphia	30	20 .600	81/2
Brooklyn	20	30 .400	181/2
Toronto	18	33 .353	21

Southeast Division										
	w	L	Pct	GB						
Miami	28	24	.538	_						
Orlando	27	24	.529	1/2						
Atlanta	22	29	.431	51/2						
Charlotte	10	40	.200	17						
Washington	9	41	.180	18						

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	33	16	.673	
Milwaukee	33	18	.647	1
Indiana	29	23	.558	51/2
Chicago	24	27	.471	10
Detroit	7	43	.140	261/2

#### Western Conference

#### **Southwest Division**

	W	L	Pct	GB
New Orleans	30	21	.588	
Dallas	28	23	.549	2
Houston	23	27	.460	61/2
Memphis	18	33	.353	12
San Antonio	10	41	.196	20
Northy	vest Div	ision		
	w	L	Pct	GB

Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GE
Oklahoma City	35	16	.686	_
Minnesota	35	16	.686	_
Denver	35	16	.686	_
Utah	26	26	.500	91/2
Portland	15	35	.300	191/2
Dacific Division				

	w	L Pct	GB
L.A. Clippers	34	16 .680	
Phoenix	30	21 .588	41/2
Sacramento	29	21 .580	5
L.A. Lakers	27	25 .519	8
Golden State	23	25 .479	10

#### Wednesday's games

Toronto 123, Charlotte 117 Cleveland 114, Washington 106 Boston 125, Atlanta 117 Miami 116, San Antonio 104 Golden State 127, Philadelphia 104 Detroit 133, Sacramento 120 New Orleans 117, L.A. Clippers 106

#### Thursday's games

Golden State at Indiana
San Antonio at Orlando
Cleveland at Brooklyn
Dallas at New York
Chicago at Memphis
Minnesota at Milwaukee
Utah at Phoenix
Denver at L.A. Lakers
Detroit at Portland

#### Friday's games

Atlanta at Philadelphia Houston at Toronto
Washington at Boston
Charlotte at Milwaukee
Denver at Sacramento
New Orleans at L.A. Lakers

#### Saturday's games

Oklahoma City at Dallas Detroit at L.A. Clippers San Antonio at Brooklyn
Chicago at Orlando
Memphis at Charlotte
Philadelphia at Washington
Cleveland at Toronto
Houston at Atlanta Indiana at New York Phoenix at Golden State New Orleans at Portland

#### Sunday's games

Boston at Miami Sacramento at Oklahoma City

#### **Scoring leaders Through Wednesday**

	G	FG	FI	PIS	AVG
Doncic, DAL	43	501	313	1482	34.5
Antetokoun., MIL	49	574	365	1536	31.3
GilAlex., OKC	50	545	403	1554	31.1
Mitchell, CLE	40	402	205	1141	28.5
Durant, PHO	44	448	248	1245	28.3
Booker, PHO	42	412	253	1173	27.9
Curry, GS	45	404	225	1247	27.7
Brunson, NY	49	476	252	1335	27.2
Young, ATL	46	391	309	1247	27.1
Fox, SAC	44	422	209	1184	26.9
Tatum, BOS	48	437	268	1289	26.9
Jokic, DEN	49	504	232	1291	26.3

#### **AROUND THE LEAGUE**

## Embiid's injury opens door for MVP

#### By Pat Graham

Associated Press

DENVER — The NBA MVP race just became a little more wide open now that Joel Embiid's chances at a repeat have ended.

The Philadelphia 76ers big man was the odds-on favorite at the midway mark of the season, before the announcement that he would need surgery to repair the lateral meniscus in his left knee.

Embiid had surgery Tuesday. The Sixers did not release any kind of timetable on his return. There's still a chance he could return for the postseason — there's just no chance he can extend his MVP reign given the league's new rules on minimum games necessary to be eligible for awards.

Nikola Jokic, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Giannis Antetokounmpo slide into the MVP driver's seat.

Jokic, in particular, has the inside track to earn a third MVP title in four seasons for the defending champion Denver Nuggets. Close behind is Gilgeous-Alexander, the rising standout for Oklahoma City, and never count out the "Greek Freak."

Really, though, this could be the year of the dark horse as someone not named Embiid, Jokic or Antetokounmpo attempts to claim the NBA MVP trophy for the first time since 2017-18.

The odds favor Jokic, improving to minus-150 according to FanDuel Sportsbook. Gilgeous-Alexander is at plus-230 and Antetokounmpo, a two-time MVP winner, checks in at plus-650.

There are a few long shots to keep an eye on, including Jalen Brunson. His MVP stock continues to rise as the New York Knicks remain near the top of the Eastern Conference despite missing Julius Randle. Don't forget about Kawhi Leonard, either, a catalyst for the resurgent Los Angeles Clippers. Or Dallas standout guard Luka Doncic, who erupted for 73 points on Jan. 26 — the top mark this season (Embiid had 70 four days prior). Or Boston do-everything forward Jayson Tatum. Or even Anthony Edwards, who's at plus-50,000 to win an MVP as he's guided the Minnesota Timberwolves to a tie for the top spot of the Western Conference with the Thunder.

The misfortune of Embiid has opened the door not only for the MVP race, but criticism about the game-minimum standards that went into effect this season to discourage what's become known as "load management" (resting healthy players). The new collective bargaining agreement requires players, in most instances, to play in 65 regular-season



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic, left and Oklahoma City Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander have become two of the new favorites to win NBA MVP with Joel Embiid out for an extended period after knee surgery.

games to be eligible for awards such as MVP or the All-NBA

It's a slippery slope.

Embiid hurt his left knee last week in a loss to the Golden State Warriors. But he had already been bothered by knee injuries this season that cost him considerable playing time. He sat out the game in Denver and another in Portland before suffering an injury that requires surgery.

"Health is something that we just cannot take for granted," said Monica McNutt, an NBA, WNBA and college basketball analyst for ESPN. "I was even at the point of like, 'OK, well, if (Embiid) misses MVP, he's already been able to accomplish that.' You just want him healthy in the postseason. ... I mean, our league is at its best when the stars are available and doing what they do best brightly on the biggest stages."

Jokic has been doing that for

quite some time, and is soaring again this season in averaging 26.3 points per game, 12.2 rebounds and nine assists. Those are stats right in line with what he posted in his MVP seasons of 2020-21 and '21-22.

"He's the best passer I have ever seen in any position," said Trail Blazers coach Chauncey Billups, who won a title with the Detroit Pistons in 2004. "He's really unique. There's just nothing like it. He brings the ball up the floor and he just does it all. He puts you in a lot of tough spots defensive-

No argument from Jokic's coach, Michael Malone, who's seen his versatile center record 15 triple-doubles this season. Jokic also was the NBA Finals MVP last season as the Nuggets won their first title.

"Just his ability to be great for himself, but more importantly, his ability to make everyone around

him better," Malone said. "That truly is the definition of greatness.

"We have been spoiled, I'm sure. Some of us do find ourselves maybe taking it for granted. But just remind yourself that there are not many guys like Nikola Jokic that walk through those doors and appreciate every opportunity that you have to watch him play."

There's some great basketball being played in Oklahoma City by Gilgeous-Alexander, too. The sixth-year player just keeps improving and leads the league in overall points, steals and free throws this season.

Antetokounmpo stays in the MVP conversation season after season after season. He's been flourishing in a new system and averaging 34.3 points in four games since Doc Rivers took over as coach.

One thing's clear: It's shaping up to be an entertaining finish in this tight MVP race.

第3種郵便物認可 STARS AND STRIPES Friday, February 9, 2024

### SUPER BOWL

## 49ers All-Pro Williams savors 1st trip to big game after 14 seasons

By Josh Dubow

Associated Press

HENDERSON, Nev. — Trent Williams' accomplishments are already worthy of a Hall of Fame career with 11 Pro Bowl bids, three first-team All-Pro selections and near universal recognition as the best left tackle of his generation.

All that was missing for the San Francisco 49ers star was something he never envisioned would be possible as he spent the first decade of his career mired in the dysfunction and ineptitude in Washington — the opportunity to play in the Super Bowl.

"This is the pinnacle," Williams said about playing the Kansas City Chiefs for a championship on Sun-

"You work to get here. It's incredibly disheartening when you don't feel like you have a chance to be here. For the first 10 years of my career, this seemed like it would be out of reach. The way these last four years went for me, I'm super grateful."

Williams' career has been revitalized since he arrived in San Francisco in 2020, after sitting out the previous season in Washington. He was at odds with the organization when he refused to play because he said he distrusted the medical staff and front office because of a botched cancer diagnosis.

The Niners acquired Williams from Washington during the 2020 draft for a fifth-round pick and future third-rounder — a small price to pay for such a valuable player.

Williams shook off some rust his first year with the Niners before taking his game to even new heights starting in 2021 after signing a six-year, \$138.1 million contract in free agency after nearly

leaving for Kansas City.

"He's a different human being. He's a different player," San Francisco general manager John Lynch said. "I don't like talking about Hall of Fame-type stuff with players. But he's a guy I'm not shy doing that about because he'll be there and he should be there first ballot. Nothing would help to cement that more than a win in this game."

Williams has made a strong case for the Hall. He was picked as a first-team All-Pro the past three seasons, when he has allowed just two sacks on 1,663 pass-blocking snaps, according to Pro Football Focus.

He is also the key to San Francisco's running game, with the Niners averaging 5.9 yards per carry when they run to the left

"He might be the best player I've ever seen," All-Pro running back Christian McCaffrey said. "When he's out there, he gives everybody a little boost of confidence."

At 35, Williams knows he's far closer to the end of his career than the beginning, but he's not quite ready to hang it up and retire.

He has three years left on his contract and the Niners are hoping he can finish this deal as the anchor to the team's offensive

"I don't even like to speculate on it," Williams said. "I'm not even worried about the expiration date at this point. I've been so blessed to this point to be 14 years in and still playing at a high level. The last thing I'm worrying about is how many I got left. I think I'm gonna approach it every year the same. And when I'm not the same, I know I can hang it up."



JEFF CHIU/AP

After a decade dealing with the dysfunction in Washington, 49ers offensive tackle Trent Williams finally gets to play in a Super Bowl.



San Francisco 49ers tight end George Kittle, left, and Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce shake hands during Super Bowl 58 opening night Monday in Las Vegas.

## Friends and foes: Kittle, Kelce ready for rematch

By Dave Skretta

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Chiefs' Travis Kelce and the 49ers' George Kittle are best of friends when they are off the field.

They are fierce competitors when they step on it.

They also happen to be two of the best tight ends ever to play the game, and largely responsible for the way their position has evolved from a glorified offensive lineman catching occasional passes to a vital cog in a modern, pass-happy league.

In fact, the two of them along with retired tight end-turned-TV broadcaster Greg Olsen founded Tight End University three years ago to help teach their craft. The immersive three-day program is designed to help players at their position learn from each other, whether that's studying film, doing on-field work or sharing the best practices when it comes to recovery and re-

"My guy right there! The king of Tight End U," Kelce said of Kittle, when asked about their relationship. "He's the best tight end in the league and deservingly so this year. He's been playing lights-out, playing the best football of his career, and really catapulted that San Francisco team through the playoffs, man, and I couldn't be more proud of him."

In truth, both have been instrumental in getting Kansas City and San Francisco to the Super Bowl on Sunday in Las Vegas, where they will play a rematch of the championship game won four years ago by the Chiefs.

Kittle led all tight ends with 1,020 yards receiving this season, but he also played one game more than Kelce, who missed Week 1 with a hyperextended knee and then sat out the Chiefs' meaningless regular-season finale. If Kelce would have played, the 34-year-old boyfriend of pop superstar Taylor Swift might have clipped his good buddy, rather than finishing with 984

That snapped Kelce's streak of seven consecutive 1,000-yard sea-

Kelce said the streak didn't mean as much to him as trying to win a third Super Bowl ring, and getting healthy for the playoffs has proven to be invaluable. Kelce has been at his best in win-or-go-home games, catching seven balls for 71 yards in a frigid wild-card win over Miami. five for 75 yards and two scores in Buffalo, and 11 for 116 yards and a TD in the AFC title game in Balti-

That three-game stretch has made Kelce one of the most productive pass-catchers in postseason

He has 156 catches overall, breaking the record of 151 set by Jerry Rice from 1985-2004, and his 116 yards against the Ravens was his eighth game of at least 100, which tied Kelce with the longtime 49ers star for the most in playoff history.

Most of those passes have come from Patrick Mahomes, with whom Kelce has helped to turn Kansas

City into a juggernaut.

"I think they obviously have as great a bond as any one-two punch in the NFL, a quarterback and skill position player in history," San Francisco linebacker Fred Warner said. "Pat knows exactly where Kelce is going to be on every single play. Kelce, having the confidence and trust in Pat that he can run his routes a certain way, where it's not necessarily going to be by the playbook. He's going to find open space and they can have a feel out there on the field."

It worked out pretty well the last time San Francisco played Kansas City in the Super Bowl. Kelce had six catches for 43 yards and a touchdown that night in Miami, helping the Chiefs rally with three fourthquarter TDs for a 31-20 victory.

Kittle was largely shut down in that game. He finished with four catches for 36 yards.

He hasn't been stopped much in the years since. That includes the divisional round of the playoffs a few weeks ago, when he had four catches for 84 yards and a touchdown, helping the 49ers squeak past the Packers.

Kittle had two more catches in the NFC title game against Detroit to set up his rematch with Kelce and the Chiefs

"I couldn't be more proud of him," Kelce said, "couldn't be more honored, really, to go up against George in another Super Bowl. I can't say enough amazing things about who he is, who his family is. I can't say a bad thing about him. It's going to be a fun time."

### SUPER BOWL

#### At a glance

#### **Super Bowl 58**

San Francisco (14-5) vs. Kansas City(14-6) At Las Vegas

Opening line: 49ers by 2½, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

Against the spread: 49ers 9-9-1; Chiefs

Series record: Chiefs lead 8-7.

Last meeting: Chiefs beat 49ers 44-23 on Oct. 23, 2022, in Santa Clara, Calif.

Last game: 49ers beat Lions 34-31; Chiefs beat Ravens 17-10.

49ers offense: Overall (2), rush (3), pass (4), scoring (3).

49ers defense: Overall (8), rush (3), pass (14), scoring (3).

Chiefs offense: Overall (9), rush (19), pass (6), scoring (15).

Chiefs defense: Overall (2), rush (18), pass (4), scoring (2).

Turnover differential: 49ers plus-10; Chiefs minus-11

49ers player to watch: QB Brock Purdy. The third-youngest quarterback ever to start a Super Bowl, the 24-year-old Purdy can cap a remarkable rise from final pick of the 2022 draft to champion in less than two years. Purdy struggled in the rain in the divisional round against Green Bay and for the first half in the conference championship game against Detroit, but he has led back-to-back comeback wins. He has thrown for 519 yards and two TDs with one INT this postseason.

Chiefs player to watch: QB Patrick Mahomes. He can further cement his legacy as one of the greatest players in NFL history with his third Lombardi in his first six seasons as a starter, and perhaps even capture a third Super Bowl MVP to go with it. Mahomes sacrificed stats for wins most of the season, relying on the league's No. 2-ranked defense while the Kansas City offense was scuffling. But he's been excellent in the playoffs, throwing for 528 yards and five TDs with no INTs.

Key matchup: San Francisco DE Nick Bosa vs. Kansas City's offense tackles. Bosa had two sacks in the NFC title game to give him a franchise-record 10 in his postseason career. If Bosa can't get to Mahomes, he might be able to draw holding calls against one of the most penalty-prone units in the league. The Chiefs have been called for offensive holding a league-high 36 times in the regular season and playoffs. RT Jawaan Taylor is tied for the most with eight and LT Donovan Smith has four.

Key injuries: Chief All-Pro LG Joe Thuney is unlikely to play after sustaining a pectoral injury in the divisional round in Buffalo. RB Jerick McKinnon is also unlikely to play despite being designated to return from injured reserve, where he has been since a procedure for a core muscle injury on Jan. 2. ... The 49ers are relatively healthy with the only active players limited in practice this week being TE George Kittle (toe) and DL Arik Armstead (foot, knee). Both are expected to start Sunday.

Series notes: The teams met in the Super Bowl four years ago with Kansas City overcoming a 10-point deficit with three fourthquarter touchdowns for a 31-20 victory in Miami. The Chiefs have won five of the past six in the series, including all three games with Mahomes at quarterback. They won

38-27 in 2018 and 44-23 last season. Stats and stuff: San Francisco is making its eighth Super Bowl appearance — tied for second most ever — and is seeking its record-tying sixth championship. ... The 49ers lost their two previous trips in the 2019 and 2012 seasons and haven't won it all since 1994. ... San Francisco's 38 playoff wins are the most in NFL history. ... The 49ers are the eighth team to reach the Super Bowl after overcoming a second-half deficit in the divisional round and the conference championship game. Four of the previous seven won it all. ... Niners coach Kyle Shanahan is 8-3 in the playoffs, tied for the second-best winning percentage for any coach with at least 10 ... San Francisco allowed 318 yards rushing the past two games, the most ever in the divisional round and conference championship game for a team that reached the Super Bowl ... Purdy's four playoff wins are one shy of Ben Roethlisberger's record for the most in a player's first two seasons. ... Niners RB Christian McCaffrey has at least 50 yards from scrimmage and a TD in all six of his career playoff games. That's one shy of the longest streak ever held by John Riggins, Marcus Allen, Terrell Davis and Leonard Fournette. ... McCaffrey's 25 TDs in the regular season and playoffs are the most for any 49ers player in a single season. ... Niners rookie K Jake Moody missed a FG in their first two playoff games and has four missed kicks in his past four games. ... The Chiefs are making their sixth Super Bowl appearance. They lost the first Super Bowl to Green Bay, beat Minnesota in Super Bowl IV, then waited 50 years before beating the 49ers four years ago. ... The Chiefs are one of seven franchises to have reached consecutive Super Bowls more than once. The Patriots in the 2003 and 2004 seasons were the most recent to win two in a row. ... Chiefs coach Andy Reid would tie Hall of Fame coaches Joe Gibbs and Bill Walsh for the third-most Super Bowl wins with his third. He is coaching in his fifth overall. ... Mahomes can pass Hall of Famers Terry Bradshaw, John Elway and Peyton Manning for the third-most playoff wins by a QB in NFL history with his 15th. ... Mahomes needs two TD passes to move past Manning (40) and into the top five in NFL playoff history. ... Kelce has an NFLrecord 159 postseason catches, while his 1,810 yards receiving and 19 touchdowns trail only Jerry Rice in history. ... Kelce has 257 yards receiving in the Super Bowl. He needs 67 to move into the top five and 108 to climb to No. 2 in history. ... Mahomes has the Chiefs' postseason rushing record with 458 yards. RB Isiah Pacheco is second with 451 yards. ... Chiefs WR Rashee Rice needs 20 yards receiving to pass Torry Holt (242) for second among rookies in the playoffs. He needs 146 to break Ja'Marr Chase's record. . Chiefs CB L'Jarius Sneed needs six tackles to break S Daniel Sorensen's franchise playoff record of 72. ... K Harrison Butker has

scored a Chiefs-record 145 points in the post-

season. He needs nine to pass Gary Ander-

son for fifth in NFL history



SCOT TUCKER/AP

San Francisco defensive end Nick Bosa has a franchise-record 10 sacks in his postseason career.

## Game: Chiefs' success has caused high expectations from players, fans

#### **FROM PAGE 48**

the most pressure.

"That expectation has become a demand at this point," Kelce said. "I know the years that we haven't won since we won our first one have felt like the biggest losses of my life. So it's just having that mentality year in, year out, and putting the expectations on yourself, making sure that no one puts higher expectations on us more than us. We're here to win this thing, baby. That's for sure.'

Mahomes, the two-time NFL and Super Bowl MVP, is already drawing comparisons to Tom Brady, who won seven Super Bowl rings. Brady won three in his first four seasons as a starter. Mahomes is going for No. 3 in his sixth season.

Even if he wins, it's too early to have the conversation.

"I'm not even close to halfway, so I haven't put a lot of thought into it," Mahomes said. "I mean, your goal is to be the best player that you can be. I know I'm blessed to be around a lot of great players. And so, right now, it's doing whatever I can to beat a great 49ers team and try to get that third ring. And then if you ask me that question in 15 years, and I'll see if I can get close to seven. But seven seems like a long ways away still."

This is a rematch of the game the Chiefs won four years ago to give coach Andy Reid his first championship. Niners coach Kyle Shanahan has been close to winning twice before only to see his teams blow big leads.

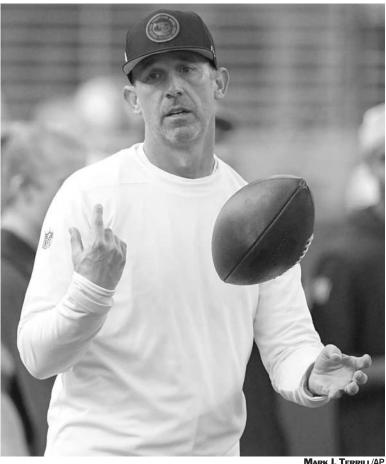
He was Atlanta's offensive coordinator when Brady and the Patriots rallied from a 28-3 second-half deficit to win the Super Bowl in 2017. His 49ers team led the Chiefs 20-10 entering the fourth quarter only to watch Mahomes rally Kansas City to a 31-20 win in Miami in 2020.

"Both of them are heartbreaking," Shanahan said. "Those things last awhile. But it's all about getting back there again, and that's what I'm excited for."

Shanahan's dad, Mike, lost two Super Bowls as an offensive coordinator with Denver before going to San Francisco and winning one in 1995. He then won two more as the head coach of the Broncos.

"I remember seeing my dad after those Super Bowls when he was a coordinator in Denver when I was younger and how hard it was on him," Shanahan said. "So I think anytime you get that close and vou lose the last one, that's definitely the hardest."

Jimmy Garoppolo was the team's quarterback last time around. Now, it's Purdy, an AP NFL MVP finalist who overcame all the odds and continues to make critics look foolish.



MARK J. TERRILL/A

Kyle Shanahan has come agonizingly close to winning the Super Bowl twice, once as offensive coordinator in Atlanta and four years ago as head coach of the 49ers. He gets another shot Sunday.

Purdy isn't concerned with proving doubters wrong. He has rare maturity for a 24-year-old that helps him play with confidence and keep his composure.

"It comes down to how do I do my job really well for three hours against the Kansas City Chiefs' defense," Purdy said. That's where my mindset's at. I want to do everything I can to help my team win. I'm focusing on the plays. I'm focusing on what we're trying to do for this week, not getting caught up in all the paparazzi and all that kind of stuff outside."



## SUPER BOWL

## 49ers overcame Lance trade, built with Purdy

By Josh Dubow Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — The San Francisco 49ers made the kind of decision that could set a franchise back for years when they traded three first-round picks to draft Trey Lance third overall in

The big investment in a potential franchise quarterback turned into a dud with Lance making just four starts his first two seasons and then being dealt away last summer for a fourth-round pick when he couldn't even earn the No. 2 job on the 49ers.

The impact on the field from one of the worst draft moves in recent history has been minimal with San Francisco making the NFC championship game the first two seasons after the pick and now headed to the Super Bowl to take on the Kansas City Chiefs on Sunday.

The reason?

A run of big draft hits in previous years, two trades for All-Pros and perhaps the greatest get-out-ofjail-free card in draft history.

After missing big on a quarterback in 2021, the Niners hit with the last pick of the draft the following year when they took Brock Purdy.

He took over as starter because of injuries late last season and led the NFL in passer rating and yards per attempt on the way to becoming an MVP finalist in his first full season as a starter. He's done all that while getting a salary of \$870,000 this season, allowing San Francisco to spend big at other spots.

"It's just like hitting the lottery, you get a player like that with the last pick of the draft," All-Pro left tackle Trent Williams said. "Liter-



Quarterback Brock Purdy, left, has been a great bargain, but the 49ers were willing to pay for All-Pro tackle Trent Williams as a free agent.

ally like playing the lottery and winning the Powerball when it's at \$2 billion."

Coach Kyle Shanahan and general manager John Lynch have done a stellar job building one of the league's best rosters since taking over a two-win team in 2017.

It didn't start that way, as CEO Jed York recalled Shanahan's assessment of the roster when he interviewed to get the job.

"Kyle was pretty clear. He was like this is one of the worst rosters I've ever seen in the NFL," York said this week.

That quickly changed.

The Niners drafted five players - tight end George Kittle, linebacker Fred Warner, defensive end Nick Bosa, receiver Deebo Samuel and injured safety Talanoa Hufanga — who went on to be named first-team All-Pros, with four of those picks coming after the

first round.

But the two most important additions outside of Purdy might have come in trades. They got the best left tackle in the NFL when they acquired the disgruntled Williams from Washington in a 2020 draftday trade for a third- and fifthround pick.

The offense reached another level when they traded picks in the second, third, fourth and fifth rounds for Christian McCaffrey before last season's trade deadline. Shanahan was hesitant to pay such a big price for a running back but was persuaded to make it happen.

"Ultimately we were able to pull it off," Lynch said. "I think it's paid great dividends. Fond memories."

#### Offense

The Niners gave big-money extensions to Williams and Samuel and are in line to give another to sec-



SCOT TUCKER/AP

been the best in the league the past few years.

ond-team All-Pro receiver Brandon Aiyuk this offseason.

San Francisco also invested heavily in McCaffrey and has the highest-paid fullback in the league in All-Pro Kyle Juszczyk.

Besides the savings at quarterback with Purdy, the Niners have had to scrimp other places with offensive line being the main spot.

The other four starters besides Williams account for about \$9 million combined on the salary cap this season. San Francisco used a second-roundpickin 2021 on left guard Aaron Banks and a fifth-rounder in 2020 on right tackle Colton McKivitz. Center Jake Brendel and right guard Jon Feliciano were signed as cheap free agents the past two offseasons.

#### **Defense**

The focus on team building for the 49ers under Shanahan and Lynch has been the defensive line, with the team using three firstround picks in their first four drafts at the position.

The big hit in that group was Bo-

sa, who won Defensive Player of the Year in 2022 and has a franchise-record 10 sacks in the postseason.

The Niners also gave Arik Armstead — a first-round pick in 2015 by an old regime — a lucrative extension and signed defensive tackle Javon Hargrave to a four-year, \$81 million contract this offseason.

San Francisco added to the position by dealing a third-round pick at the trade deadline for a former No. 2 overall pick in Washington, Chase

The key to the defense is the play of two linebackers drafted in the middle rounds. Warner has been the best in the league the past few years and 2019 fifth-rounder Dre Greenlaw sets the tone with his physical play.

The 49ers don't invest as heavily in the secondary but did spend a year ago to lure cornerback Charvarius Ward away from the Chiefs with a three-year, \$40.5 million deal. That move has paid off in a big way with Ward being named a second-team All-Pro this season.

## Shanahan gets shot at title that has eluded him

By Josh Dubow

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Kyle Shanahan's offense is mimicked throughout the NFL as his innovative schemes are utilized by several teams.

His former assistants are spread around the league as coordinators and head coaches as the "Shanahan offense" has become one of the most predominant ones in today's

In seven years in charge in San Francisco, Shanahan has turned overlooked quarterbacks into productive ones, has led the 49ers to four NFC championship trips and now has the Niners in the Super Bowl for the second time in the past five seasons.

All that's missing for Shanahan is the championship that painfully eluded him as a coordinator in Atlanta and then again in his first trip to the title game with San Francisco.

He gets another chance to fill the one big



Shanahan

void in his career on Sunday when the Niners get a rematch against the Kansas City Chiefs in Las Ve-

"There's been a lot of good things, but the ultimate goal, we always say it, there's only one team

happy at the end of the year," Shanahan said. "We're real proud of a lot of things that we've accomplished here in the last five years or so. We still want to be that one team that's happy. No matter what you accomplish, if you don't win that Super Bowl, it's always disappointing."

Shanahan has experienced plenty of postseason disappointment that led critics to question his ability to win the "big one."

He was the offensive coordinator in Atlanta when the Falcons squandered a 28-3 lead in Super Bowl 51 against New England, leading to a 34-28 overtime loss.

He then had a 10-point lead in the fourth quarter of the Super Bowl against Kansas City four years ago only to have the offense sputter and the defense wilt in a 31-20 loss to the Chiefs.

Then there were back-to-back losses in the NFC title game the past two seasons. But Shanahan was able to lead his team back again and win as he always makes sure his message and schemes never get stale.

"Every year, going into every season, there's always something new that we have to work on to get better at to attain what we're trying to do here." All-Pro linebacker Fred Warner said. "That's something that he has done a great job of every year, just continuing to get better as a coach and a leader for

But he remains his own toughest critic.

"I think if you're not hard on yourself, it's kind of hard to put in the work and stuff that it

takes I think to be an NFL coach," he said. "I think most of us are pretty hard on ourselves. We're kind of perfectionist because you know how hard it is to win games for everybody. So you demand a lot out of everybody, just like you demand a lot out of yourself."

His greatest trait might be as a teacher in film sessions, where he can spend hours describing the intricacies of a single play in a way that helps all of his players learn some-

"His team meetings are phenomenal," All-Pro tight end George Kittle said. "The way he describes football, the way that he teaches football to offense, defense and special teams guys. He's been such a great teacher. ... It's really fun to be around a person like that because I've been playing football since I was 5 years old. But I've learned more in the seven years, specifically, those last three or four years than I probably did my first 26."

### SUPER BOWL

## Trading away Hill has been fruitful for KC

## Not having top WR surprisingly allowed one of NFL's top defenses to be built

By Dave Skretta Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — It has taken two full years to accurately evaluate one of the most important deals that the Kansas City Chiefs have ever made, when they traded gamebreaking wide receiver Tyreek Hill to the Miami Dolphins for a package of draft picks.

The Chiefs knew that if they gave Hill a long-term contract, it would be in the neighborhood of the four-year, \$120 million deal he later signed with the Dolphins. And while that would have ensured one of the league's most dynamic weapons for Patrick Mahomes for the near future, it also would have saddled Kansas City with a mountain of long-term financial commitments.

Turns out the deal made by Chiefs general manager Brett Veach played out well beyond anyone's wildest dreams.

Two of the draft picks they acquired turned into All-Pro cornerback Trent McDuffie and rookie safety Chamarri Conner, who played big roles in shutting down Hill and the Dolphins along with the Bills and the Ravens in the postseason. Some of the other selections they received they used to move around the draft board and add other players to the mix.

The cash savings likewise allowed them to make a series of savvy free-agent signings: safety Justin Reid to orchestrate the back end, and this past offseason, linebacker Drue Tranquill, safety Mike Edwards and defensive end Charles Omenibu

That influx of talent helped Kan-

sas City become the league's No. 2-ranked defense this season, and that in turn helped to keep Mahomes and Co. in games when the Chiefs offense was struggling to find its footing early on.

"I think it speaks to this organization and the quest they're on bringing in good players, whether it's through the draft or free agency," said Tranquill, who arrived in Kansas City from the AFC West rival Chargers. "Veach is one of the best doing that, and you know, Charles and Mike and myself, and the other free-agent acquisitions that were brought on, everybody kind of bought into the championship culture here, and that's what coach (Andy) Reid sets forth."

#### **Offense**

The Chiefs offense has been built around Mahomes since the moment he was drafted in 2017, and while his numbers this season took a dip—partly thanks to a league-leading 44 dropped passes—his postseason play has been superb.

While the Chiefs spent in free agency to add bookend tackles Donovan Smith and Jawaan Taylor, most of Mahomes' supporting cast arrived through the draft. That includes standout center Creed Humphrey and right tackle Trey Smith, who along with left guard Joe Thuney, have given Kansas City one of the best interior offensive lines in the league.

Isiah Pacheco, one of the league's bright young running backs, was a seventh-round pick two years ago.

The biggest reason for the lateseason success of the Chiefs offense,



NICK WASS/AP

Kansas City Chiefs safety Justin Reid, right, and linebacker Nick Bolton sack Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson during the second half of the AFC championship game Jan. 28 in Baltimore.

though, has been the emergence of Rashee Rice, the wide receiver they took in the second round last April. Veach largely whiffed using a second-round pick the previous year on Skyy Moore, who is on injured reserve, but he tried again with Rice and hit a home run. Rice had 79 catches for 938 yards and seven touchdowns during the regular season, and he has 20 catches for 223 yards and a score in three playoff games.

#### Defense

The Chiefs tried to sign defensive tackle Chris Jones to an extension last offseason, but the sides were never close. He held out through Week 1 but returned on a revised one-year deal and remained an im-

posing presence on the defensive line.

The arrival of Tranquill, Edwards and Omenihu — who will miss the Super Bowl with a torn ACL—were also important.

"It was a unique free agency in that there wasn't much to pick from, and we drafted last," Veach explained, "so we took what we had and we invested in some veteran defensive players."

The biggest improvement, though, has been in the secondary, where a group of wide-eyed youngsters began playing like veterans. McDuffie has become a bona fide No. 1 cornerback, L'Jarius Sneed may have been the biggest Pro Bowl snub in years, and former fourthround pick Josh Williams and sev-

enth-rounder Jaylen Watson made big plays at crucial moments. Conner has been excellent as a rookie when pressed into service due to injuries.

#### **Special teams**

Harrison Butker is almost automatic, going 33-for-35 on field-goal attempts and hitting all 38 of his extra points this season, and he has impressive range. He hit a 62-yard field goal in 2022 and a 60-yarder earlier this season.

The Chiefs' punter, Tommy Townsend, has become more important as they leaned more heavily on their defense to play the field-position game. Townsend punted six times against the Ravens alone in the AFC championship.

## Pacheco's 'angry' running style could help lift Chiefs

By Mark Anderson Associated Press

HENDERSON, Nev. — Chiefs running back Isiah Pacheco was relaxed Wednesday as reporters peppered him with questions, the opposite of his running style that has commonly been described as angry.

When asked how he would describe his style, Pacheco deferred to the experts, or in this case, the media.

Kansas City coach Andy Reid had his own description, calling Pacheco "a violent runner."

If any player could actually run through a wall, it would be Pacheco, who punishes linebackers and defensive backs trying to bring him down.

"That starts with practice at the beginning of the week when we prepare," Pacheco said. "I go out there with a full head of steam knowing the down and distance,



Ed Zurga/AP

Chiefs running back Isiah Pacheco picks up yards against the Miami Dolphins during a wild-card playoff game Jan. 13 in Kansas City, Mo.

getting 4 yards or whatever it may be to win the down."

The Chiefs will need Pacheco's

ability to move the chains to balance Patrick Mahomes' passing attack when they play the San Francisco 49ers in the Super Bowl on Sunday.

Pacheco, though, knows how to keep an event even as enormous as the Super Bowl in perspective.

He has suffered enormous loss away from the field, which likely fuels his play on it. Pacheco downplayed the effect of losing two siblings in his home state of New Jersey as a reason he runs so hard, saying he always had the fire inside him.

His brother, Travoise Cannon, was fatally stabbed in 2016. He was 29. Pacheco's sister, Celeste Cannon, died the following year after being shot in the head by a man who shared a child with her. She was 24.

Pacheco was in high school at the time, forcing him to grow up fast. He had the chance to leave New Jersey and play college ball elsewhere, but opted to remain in the state and play at Rutgers. His best season was his sophomore year when Pacheco rushed for 729 yards and seven touchdowns. He failed to match those numbers his final two seasons, making Pacheco a borderline NFL prespect

The Chiefs saw enough in him to take Pacheco in the seventh round of the 2022 draft, but a selection that late is far from a sure thing to even make the roster.

Pacheco not only made the team, he started 11 games, played in all 17 and rushed for 830 yards on 4.9 yards per play. This season, Pacheco started 13 games and gained 935 yards on a 4.6 average. He has a combined 12 touchdown runs both seasons.

"Stay patient," Pacheco said.
"No matter where you go, where you come from, when you get that opportunity, make the best of it, special teams or wherever. Be the difference."

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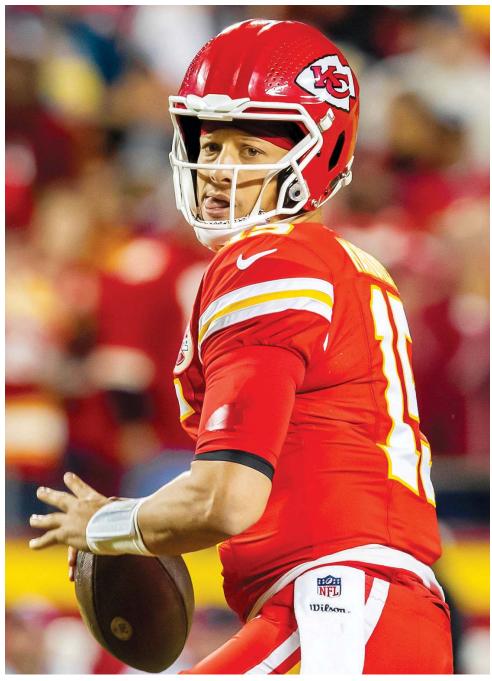
# SPORTS



### **Dealt at the deadline**

Source: Pacers trade Hield to 76ers for 2 players, draft picks » NBA, Page 42

# Glitz, glamour and a game





Kansas City quarterback Patrick Mahomes, left, has already won two Lombardi Trophies, while San Francisco quarterback Brock Purdy will be attempting to win his first.

## First Super Bowl in Vegas has plenty of storylines, interesting matchup

By Rob Maaddi

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — The first Super Bowl in Las Vegas has everything the imaginary NFL script writers could've wanted.

There's Patrick Mahomes and the underdog Kansas City Chiefs (14-6) aiming to become the first repeat champions in 19 years and trying to solidify their claim to a dynasty with a third Super Bowl title in five years.

There's Brock Purdy returning from a significant injury after ris-

ing from "Mr. Irrelevant" to now lead the San Francisco 49ers (14-5) to the brink of a record-tying sixth Super Bowl title that would etch his name alongside Pro Football Hall of Famers Joe Montana and Steve Young.

Of course, there's the glitz and glamour of America's showcase city and the irony of playing a Super Bowl in this gambling capital, an idea that used to be taboo for the NFL.

Did we mention Taylor Swift



**Super Bowl 58** San Francisco 49ers (14-5) vs. Kansas City Chiefs (14-6)

at Las Vegas **AFN-Sports** 12:20 a.m. Monday CET 8:30 a.m. Monday JKT

Make room for the Grammywinning superstar to jet into town just in time to see her boyfriend, Travis Kelce, try to win another ring. Swift is expected to fly in for Sunday's game at Allegiant Stadium from Japan after her concert on Saturday.

Kelce, the four-time All-Pro tight end, is focused on limiting the distractions despite fielding numerous questions this week about their relationship that has captivated millions and attracted a new audience of football fans.

"Show up every day thinking about the now and not too much the future," Kelce said. "Obviously, you gotta prepare for what's ahead but not harp on the past is the biggest thing ... I think we would never try and tie in what we did last year to this year. Every single year is really its own journey."

For the Chiefs, nothing less than hoisting another Vince Lombardi trophy is acceptable, so they have

**SEE GAME ON PAGE 45** 

