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the game  
with elaborate  
celebrations  
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# STARS AND STRIPES®

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## Fighting intensifies

IRYNA RYBAKOVA/AP

A Ukrainian tank fires in Chasiv Yar, the site of fierce battles with Russian forces, in Ukraine, on Wednesday.

## Combat could indicate start of Ukrainian counteroffensive

By SAMANTHA SCHMIDT  
*The Washington Post*

KYIV, Ukraine — The Ukrainian military has launched a long-anticipated counteroffensive against occupying Russian forces, opening a crucial phase in the war aimed at restoring Ukraine's territorial sovereignty and preserving Western support in its fight against domination by Moscow.

Ukrainian troops, including specialized attack units armed with Western weapons and trained in NATO tactics, intensified their strikes on front-line positions in the country's southeast Wednesday night, according to four people in the country's armed forces, beginning a significant push into Russian-occupied territory.

The four military personnel, including offi-

cers, spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the battlefield developments.

Russian military bloggers also reported heavy fighting in the Zaporizhzhia region, a part of the front line that has long been seen as a likely location of the new Ukrainian campaign.

By cutting south through the flat fields of Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv's forces could aim to sever the "land bridge" between mainland Russia and the occupied Crimean Peninsula, cutting off crucial Russian supply lines. They could also attempt to liberate the city of Melitopol, which Russia has established as the region's occupied capital, and Enerhodar, where the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant is located.

Valeriy Shershen, a spokesman for Ukrai-

nian military units located across much of the eastern and southern front line, confirmed "more activity" in the Zaporizhzhia region but added that he "wouldn't say it's something major." In the Zaporizhzhia region, Ukrainian forces are generally "still in a defense operation," Shershen said in an interview.

Ukrainian officials have said repeatedly in recent days that they would not make an official announcement that the counteroffensive had begun, and that no single action would mark its start.

In the interview, Shershen also described "small counteroffensive activities" of a local scale, particularly the fight for Velyka Novosilka, a village in the Donetsk region just east of

SEE PUSH ON PAGE 8

## Smoky haze blanketing US spurs concern about health

By JENNIFER PELTZ,  
ROB GILLIES  
AND MICHAEL R. SISAK  
*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — On air quality maps, purple signifies the worst of it. In reality, it's a thick, hazardous haze that's disrupting daily life for millions of people across the U.S. and Canada, blotting out skylines and turning skies orange.

With weather systems expected to barely budge, the smoky blanket billowing from wildfires in Quebec and Nova Scotia and sending plumes of fine particulate matter as far away as North Carolina and northern Europe should persist into Thursday and possibly the weekend.

That means at least another day of a dystopian-style detour that's chased players from ballfields, actors from Broadway stages, delayed thousands of flights and sparked a resurgence in mask wearing and remote work — all

SEE HAZE ON PAGE 9



JOSE LUIS MAGANA/AP

With the Washington Monument in the background and a thick layer of smoke, Marine Corps color guard rehearse Thursday in Washington.



# BUSINESS/WEATHER

## EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	Azores	..	..	\$4.655	..
Germany	\$3.923	\$4.433	\$4.766	\$4.179	Change in price	..	..	-2.2 cents	..
Netherlands	..	\$4.500	\$4.767	\$4.410	Turkey	..	..	\$4.454	\$4.115*
U.K.	..	\$4.369	\$4.702	\$4.115	Change in price	..	..	-2.2 cents	-40.6 cents

Fuel prices are updated daily. These prices are effective June 9. The change in prices is from June 2.

## PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	South Korea	\$3.509	..	\$4.459	\$3.869
Japan	..	\$4.429	..	\$3.849	Change in price	-3.0 cents	..	-2.0 cents	-6.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.589	..	..	\$3.849	Guam	\$3.599**	\$4.109	\$4.439	..
Change in price	-3.0 cents	..	..	-5.0 cents	Change in price	-3.0 cents	-2.0 cents	-3.0 cents	..

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

## EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		Commercial rates	
Euro costs (June 9)	\$1.05	Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
British pound (June 9)	\$1.21	Britain (Pound)	1.2516
Japanese yen (June 9)	137.00	Canada (Dollar)	1.3356
South Korean won (June 9)	1274.00	China (Yuan)	7.1155
		Denmark (Krone)	6.9202
		Egypt (Pound)	30.9521
		Euro	0.9289
		Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8361
		Hungary (Forint)	342.76
		Israel (Shekel)	3.6620
		Japan (Yen)	139.00
		Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3073
		Norway (Krone)	10.9215
		Philippines (Peso)	56.01
		Poland (Zloty)	4.16
		Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7500
		Singapore (Dollar)	1.3443
		South Korea (Won)	1300.39

Switzerland (Franc) 0.9014  
Thailand (Baht) 34.70  
Turkey (NewLira) 23.3768

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

## INTEREST RATES

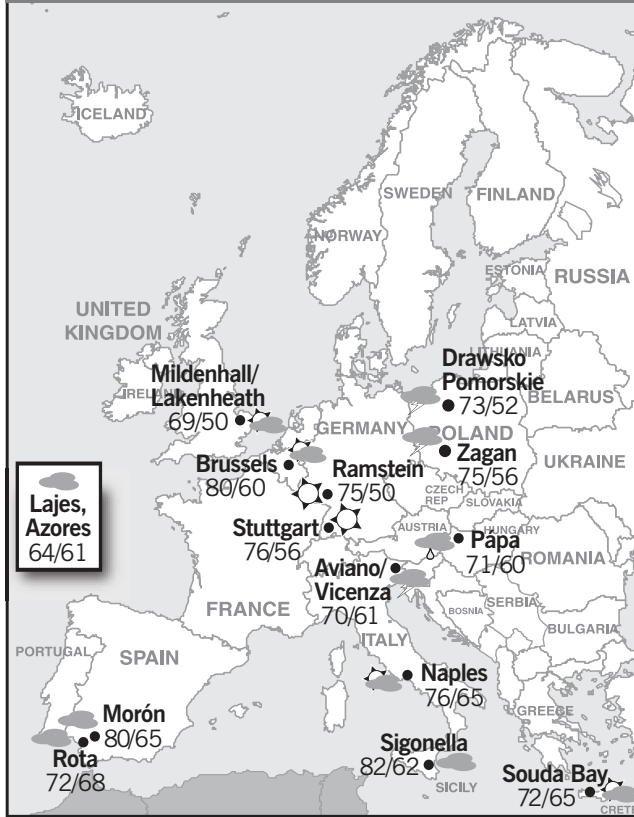
Prime rate	8.25
Interest Rates Discount rate	5.75
Federal funds market rate	5.08
3-month bill	5.32
30-year bond	3.95

## WEATHER OUTLOOK

### FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



### FRIDAY IN EUROPE



### SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

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## MILITARY

## Troop pay raise a concern amid debt talks

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — A proposed 5.2% pay raise for service members is the subject of new concern on Capitol Hill as lawmakers begin drafting an annual defense policy bill within the confines of a debt ceiling deal that limits government spending.

The agreement brokered by House Republicans and the White House last week locks in President Joe Biden's \$886 billion request for 2024 defense spending and prevents lawmakers from boosting the overall amount as they typically do.

Congress last year increased a Defense Department spending plan that included a 4.6% salary boost for troops by \$45 billion.

The inability of lawmakers to similarly pad the Pentagon's coffers this year could force a rethinking of congressional defense priorities, particularly among some Republicans who have called the proposed budget insufficient for competing with China and deterring Russian aggression.

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., on Wednesday urged the leaders of the Senate Armed Services Committee to spare troop pay from any negotiations over potential budget cuts. Service members are slated to receive a 5.2% pay raise next year under Biden's proposed budget.

Gillibrand, a senior member of the committee, pointed out that 24% of service members have trouble putting food on the table

and military families continue to face challenges with spousal unemployment and underemployment.

"We are facing a recruiting crisis, making retention of our service members' expertise and experience more important than ever," she wrote in a letter addressed to Chairman Jack Reed, D-R.I., and the committee's top Republican, Roger Wicker of Mississippi. "We cannot afford to make budgetary trade-offs that negatively impact those in uniform."

Travis Sharp, a fellow at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments think tank and a Navy Reserve officer, said it is highly unlikely troop pay will factor into

discussions over the National Defense Authorization Act, an annual policy bill that outlines Pentagon priorities, or the appropriations bill that funds it.

"I can't imagine Congress saying no, we're going to take back the pay increase in order to free up funds to buy weapons systems," he said. "That will be a political nonstarter."

The drafting of the 2025 Pentagon budget could result in more trade-offs because the debt ceiling deal will essentially keep funding flat, but Sharp said troop pay will remain a primary concern for lawmakers, especially amid a persistent military recruiting crisis.

"Any increase for service members will be the very highest pri-

ority both because it's just bad politics to not include that and also because we already have trouble getting service members," he said. "If you very publicly take away a pay increase, it's going to make the recruiting challenge even worse."

Any potential cuts will probably come out of the Pentagon's accounts for operations and maintenance and research and development, Sharp said.

The armed services committees in the House and Senate will begin laying out their defense priorities next week after weeks of delays caused by the standoff over the debt ceiling.

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## Commissary to soon close for good at fading American base in Seoul

BY DAVID CHOI  
*Stars and Stripes*

SEOUL, South Korea — Another vestige of the U.S. military's former headquarters on the Korean Peninsula will disappear next month as part of a decades-long effort to shrink the military footprint in the country's capital city.

The commissary at Yongsan Garrison will close its doors on July 30 after 35 years in the heart of Seoul, according to an email Wednesday from Kevin Robinson, spokesman for the Defense Commissary Agency. Some commissary employees and equipment will move to Camp Humphreys, roughly 40 miles to the south in Pyeongtaek.

The move appeared imminent on June 2; some commissary shelves were empty as a handful of customers browsed the aisles or proceeded to the one checkout lane still in operation.

Civilian electronics technician John Dehaven, a 25-year Yongsan resident, said he shops at the commissary for its cheaper meat. The store's closure will be a minor inconvenience, Dehaven said. He plans to do his future shopping at nearby South Korean stores or the Osan Air Base commissary about 30 miles away.

"I do shopping for myself here," Dehaven told Stars and Stripes near the commissary on June 2. "My wife is Korean, and she doesn't like American cuisine. That's why she shops off-post. We never shop together."

Army spouse Ashley Woods said she shops at the commissary

because "it's easy and it's convenient." Woods said she will probably "brave Emart," a South Korean retailer, after the closure.

Overcoming the language barrier in South Korean stores will be a challenge, she said.

Going to the commissary has "just become kind of our routine," Woods said as she left the building. "Definitely going to miss it and the people that work here."

The closure is part of the broader move by U.S. forces to Camp Humphreys, the largest U.S. military base overseas.

In 2002, U.S. Forces Korea and South Korea's government agreed to consolidate most American personnel from Yongsan and other dispersed outposts to Humphreys and return the land to Seoul.

All of the major U.S.-led commands in South Korea — USFK, U.N. Command, 2nd Infantry Division, Eighth Army and the Combined Forces Command — moved from Yongsan to Humphreys as part of the nearly \$11 billion relocation project.

The Combined Forces Command, the last of the five commands to move, vacated Yongsan in November.

Business at the commissary over the years reflected the falling numbers of customers. Roughly 47,400 transactions took place there in 2021, according to the commissary agency. That number dropped to about 41,300 the following year.

The 113 remaining Defense Department civilian employees and U.S. service members — mostly military police — still living at



PHOTOS BY DAVID CHOI/Stars and Stripes

**The commissary at Yongsan Garrison will close its doors on July 30 after 35 years in the heart of Seoul, South Korea, according to the Defense Commissary Agency.**



**The commissary at Yongsan Garrison will close its doors as part of a decades-long effort to shrink the military footprint Seoul.**

Yongsan have several options for grocery shopping beyond the base, Yongsan Garrison spokeswoman Laurel Stone said in an email Friday.

Several large South Korean stores that sell the same or similar products are within five miles of the garrison, including Costco Wholesale, Emart and Lotte Mart.

The next closest commissary is about 10 miles away at the U.S. Army's K-16 airfield in Seongnam. Robinson said the hours of operation there will increase and it "will remain a fully servicing commissary."

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## Pentagon pulls plug on MyTravel

BY JONATHAN SNYDER  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Department of Defense has discontinued a new cloud-based system for tracking job-related military travel that cost \$13 million to install.

The Pentagon in October ordered all service branches to switch to the new MyTravel system. It was used to book travel, manage travel-related expenses and make travel-related financial transactions.

But DOD backtracked months later, ordering the legacy Defense Travel System, or DTS, back into service, according to a May 24 memo from Gilbert Cisneros, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness.

"Although MyTravel has made significant advancements, the continued implementation of it is no longer in the best interest of the department," DOD spokeswoman Jade Fulce told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday.

Fulce did not refer to specific problems with MyTravel's performance. DTS, which has been around in some form for over two decades, suffered from "poor usability, low customer satisfaction and improper payment of travel entitlements," according to a 2021 DOD document justifying MyTravel. The system was developed by Bellevue, Wash.-based Concur Technologies, Inc., a subsidiary of Germany's SAP SE.

MyTravel came online after the COVID-19 pandemic put more emphasis on virtual meetings and reduced military travel.

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## MILITARY

# Navy, Air Force briefly pause moves to Guam

By KELLY AGEE  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Navy and Air Force have temporarily stopped personnel moves to new duty stations on Guam as the island continues to piece itself together after a May 24 typhoon.

The Navy has paused permanent change of station, or PCS, moves to Naval Base Guam until June 30, Lt. Cmdr. Katie Koenig, a spokeswoman for Joint Region Marianas, told Stars and Stripes by email Wednesday.

The Air Force halted PCS moves to Andersen Air Force Base until July 24, although that date may change, a spokeswoman for the 36th Air Wing said by email Thursday.

“The stop movement for inbound PCSers was put into place May 25 following Typhoon Mawar in order to ensure incoming service members and their families have adequate resources available to them when it comes time for them to PCS,” said 1st Lt. Jade Watkins. “These resources include housing, food, lodging and child care.”

However, airmen already on their way to Andersen should continue their moves and are encouraged to work with their sponsors and chains of command to ensure a smooth PCS, she said.

The storm caused significant damage to Andersen’s passenger terminal. To remedy the situation, the 734th Air Mobility Squadron turned the 4th Reconnaissance Squadron hangar into a temporary terminal.

The Marine Corps has not stopped PCS moves to Camp Blaz on the island, but it will assess each individual case, Camp Blaz spokeswoman Maj. Diann Rosenfeld said by email Wednesday.

Mawar was the strongest typhoon to hit Guam since Typhoon Pongsona in 2002. Mawar’s eye

Many parts of the territory lack access to clean water while island residents collect and dispose of debris left in the typhoon’s wake.

brushed Guam’s northern edge with winds that reached 140 mph. Up to 2 feet of rain fell on parts of the island. As of Wednesday, more than half the island was still without electricity, according to the Guam government’s Joint Information Center.

Many parts of the 210-square-mile territory lack access to clean water while island residents collect and dispose of debris left in the typhoon’s wake.

The U.S. territory has approximately 21,700 military members and their families at Andersen in the north, Blaz in the northwest and at the naval base in the south.

The chief of naval operations paused PCS moves to Guam in a Navy administrative message, NAVADMIN 128/23, on May 23, Koenig said.

Those with orders to Guam and still at their current commands should remain in place or contact their detailers or MyNavy Career Center for further guidance, according to the message.

Commanders on Guam may override the PCS pause for mission-essential personnel on a case-by-case basis, Koenig said.

Sailors on temporary duty to Guam are not affected by the PCS halt but those scheduled for temporary duty there over the next 30 days should contact their chain of command to determine whether they should proceed as scheduled, the NAVADMIN states.

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KAREN FAHLAND/Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society

People apply for emergency typhoon aid from the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society on Guam on June 2.

## Relief groups pitch in nearly \$2M in typhoon aid for troops in Guam

By ALEX WILSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

As Typhoon Mawar slammed into Guam on May 24, Kimberly Wasson hunkered down with her three children; within days of the winds and rain subsiding, she jumped into action alongside her fellow Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society volunteers.

As Guam slowly recovers in the aftermath of the strongest storm to hit the U.S. island territory since 2002, the relief society and other charitable organizations are stepping up to help service members deal with the fallout.

“Even though I’m without, I understand that people have a lot less than I do,” Wasson told Stars and Stripes in a video call Thursday. “I think for all of us, it makes you grateful for what you maybe took for granted before; the simple pleasures of life are actually great luxuries.”

Volunteers have worked nearly non-stop to provide monetary assistance to active-duty sailors, Marines and retirees on Guam. As of Thursday, the society had provided more than 2,500 people with more than \$1.1 million in assistance, according to Karen Fahland, the organization’s director on Guam.

“What we’re trying to do as an organization is to provide some relief, even if it’s small,” Fahland told

Stars and Stripes in a video call Thursday. “Everybody is dealing with this, everybody’s working with it, and it’s just an amazing testament to my organization and what they’ve been able to accomplish.”

Single service members or retirees are eligible for an immediate \$300 in assistance, and families are eligible for \$600, Fahland said, so people can deal with immediate needs such as gas and food.

“After that, we’re looking at recovery. If they have additional damages that an insurance policy does not cover, we’ll go from there,” she said. “This is not the end; this is going to be a long road.”

The application process is easy and requires just a simple form and presentation of military or retiree identification, Fahland said, though applicants may face long lines. The initial turnout was so overwhelming that commanders from Naval Base Guam and Marine Corps Camp Blaz assigned personnel to help process applications. One volunteer, Jo Miller, normally works with the relief society just two days a week but since the typhoon has been helping every day.

“I have the time, and a lot of these other volunteers can’t come as often,” she said by video June 2. “I’ve been determined to come every day that I could.”

The society also provides other services, such as a visiting nurse program that focuses on new or expectant mothers and a thrift store for those in need of furniture or other goods, Fahland said, but as a nonprofit society, it relies heavily on donations to stay afloat.

“I know there are people out there that are asking ‘How can we help?’” she said, adding that mail delivery is unreliable for now and the relief society doesn’t have a way to distribute care packages. “To be honest, the best way to help would be to donate to our organization and let us do the help.”

The relief society isn’t alone in assisting Guam residents and military families.

The Air Force Aid Society, as of Tuesday, has provided \$715,200 in grants to airmen and dependents and retirees on Guam, the Air Force Times reported Wednesday. Other programs, such as Coast Guard Mutual Assistance and Navy Federal Credit Union are offering several emergency relief options, according to their respective websites.

Navy Federal has options that include special credit card offers, assistance on existing loans and relief loans up to \$5,000. Coast Guard Mutual Assistance is offering loans up to \$6,000, with options to convert portions of those loans to grants.

## Alabama senator: Space Command prefers Huntsville for HQ

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Alabama Republican Sen. Tommy Tuberville said in a tweet Wednesday that the top general in charge of U.S. Space Command told him during a meeting that Huntsville, not Colorado Springs, Colo., is the preferred location for its new headquarters.

Tuberville’s tweet, which his office also issued in a press release, is the latest twist in the ongoing brawl over where U.S. Space

Command should be located. The decision that has become entangled in a far larger political fight between Tuberville and the Defense Department over reproductive health care for service members, which is now jeopardizing the promotions of hundreds of military officers.

The senator tweeted that Gen. James Dickinson “confirmed Huntsville is the preferred location of Space Command headquarters. Enough is enough, it’s time to

bring U.S. Space Command home to Huntsville.”

U.S. Space Command had no comment on Tuberville’s statement.

Huntsville scored higher than Colorado Springs in a Government Accountability Office assessment of potential locations and has long been a home to some of earliest missiles used in the nation’s space programs. It is home to the Army’s Space and Missile Defense Command.

Colorado Springs is home to the Air Force Academy, which now graduates Space Force guardians, and more than 24 military space missions, including three Space Force bases and the temporary home of U.S. Space Command. Proponents of keeping the command in Colorado argue that moving it to Huntsville and creating a new headquarters would set back its progress at a time it needs to move quickly to be positioned to match China’s military space rise.



## PACIFIC

# Captain takes over Naval Forces Korea with his promotion held up

By DAVID CHOI  
*Stars and Stripes*

BUSAN, South Korea — A Navy captain whose promotion to rear admiral is blocked in the Senate became the Navy's representative to South Korea during a ceremony here Thursday.

Capt. Neil Koprowski relieved Rear Adm. Mark Schafer at South Korea's Naval Fleet Headquarters. Koprowski's promotion to rear admiral is one of about 200 held up by Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., who pledged to block the Pentagon's nominations until Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin changes the military's policy on abortions for service members and their families.

Tuberville is using a procedural tactic to slow the Senate votes on promotions until Austin reverses a policy that provides time off and travel expenses for service members and their dependents who travel to obtain an abortion.

Koprowski previously served as branch head for the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations'

programming division in Washington, D.C. Prior to that, he commanded the amphibious assault ship USS Kearsarge.

Koprowski said he felt welcomed to South Korea during Thursday's ceremony in Busan.

"I've been impressed by the energy and professionalism of our team ...," he said. "This only strengthens my belief in our great alliance."

Schafer, a Navy SEAL, is headed to Qatar for his next assignment as commander of Special Operations Joint Task Force-Central.

Speaking to Stars and Stripes prior to the ceremony, Schafer said he had looked forward to leading U.S. sailors and Marines in South Korea after serving in the special operations community for years.

Since "the first day that I showed up" in September 2021, working with South Korea's navy "definitely delivered on my expectations," he said.

"One thing I was excited about

was that after a lot of time working with a lot of partners in the U.S. Central Command's special operations environment: coming out here and working with an ally that we've served with for more than 70 years," Schafer added.

Schafer's tenure coincided with the resumption of large-scale joint military drills between the United States and South Korea.

Joint drills like the Ssangyong Exercise in April were paused in 2018 as former Presidents Donald Trump and Moon Jae-in negotiated for the denuclearization of North Korea. Those drills were downscaled two years later as COVID-19 cases began to spread through the military's ranks.

Restarting that training "really came easy" and the two navies were eager to start working again, Schafer said. He added that the navies aspired to be operationally interchangeable, or able to "seamlessly sail in [each other's] formations."

"That culture of training never ends," he said. "For each individ-



DAVID CHOI/Stars and Stripes

**Capt. Neil Koprowski takes command of Naval Forces Korea during a change-of-command ceremony at Naval Fleet Headquarters in Busan, South Korea, on Thursday.**

ual exercise, we look for opportunities to be pleased with incremental progress but never satisfied we've got it just right."

Schafer, a native of New Hartford, N.Y., graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1994. He served with SEAL Teams 2 and 4, as well as the Naval Special Warfare Development Group.

In a farewell speech to roughly 250 people, Schafer thanked his wife, Anne, as well as the sailors

who served under his command.

"I'm grateful every day to join the hard-working sailors who strive to be smart like a learning organization would be, but also tough like the resilient team that we need to be," Schafer said in his speech. "Anne and I have loved every minute of serving with you."

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## EUROPE

# 'He was a hero'

## Newly found remains of unknown US soldier from WWI buried at military cemetery in France

By DOUG G. WARE  
*Stars and Stripes*

SERINGES-ET-NESLES, France — The remains of an unknown American soldier from World War I, which were discovered only a year ago, were buried Wednesday at an American military cemetery in northern France.

"We do not know his name, his age or his background. But even though we don't know these details, we do know one thing for certain — this soldier was a hero," Gen. James McConville, the Army's chief of staff, said during the reinterment ceremony at Oise-Aisne American Cemetery. "He was a hero because he embodied the values of courage and honor. He was a hero because he fought for a purpose that was greater than himself. And he was a hero because he gave the ultimate sacrifice on the battlefield for the cause of freedom."

The soldier's remains were unearthed 16 months ago by a French undertaker who was excavating for a new grave in the village cemetery of Villers-sur-Fere about 60 miles northeast of Paris. The area saw heavy fighting between German and American forces in July and August 1918.

Police, archaeologists and members of the American Battle Monuments Commission, which operates U.S. military cemeteries around the world, carefully removed the remains, as well as various artifacts that were also discovered lying in the soil. Those artifacts included part of a stretcher, a steel helmet, buttons, a trench knife, an identity tag and bullets dated with the year 1917, which were still in their pouches.

U.S. military officials were not able to determine to whom the remains belonged, mainly because of the state of their decomposition and the fact that the man died so long ago.

"If you find someone from [too old of a] war, they are not going to go through looking for relatives or obtaining DNA and that's the primary reason," said Hubert Caloud, superintendent of Oise-Aisne American Cemetery. "So, the effort wasn't so much to find out who this American was. The effort was to prove he was American, and receive permission from the Army to bury him here. And that's what we accomplished."

Officials are confident, however, the soldier was part of the 42nd Division's 165th Infantry Regiment, which was from New York, mainly owing to a heap of circumstantial evidence.

"Where his body was found was in the path of the 42nd Division," Caloud said. "The Army's most decorated chaplain, Father Francis Duffy ... described burying soldiers from his regiment along



PHOTOS BY DOUG G. WARE/Stars and Stripes

**Military casket bearers carry the remains of an unknown American soldier from World War I to his final grave site at Oise-Aisne American Cemetery in Seringes-et-Nesles, France, on Wednesday.**



**Three people dressed in World War I-era uniforms attend the reinterment ceremony at the Oise-Aisne American Cemetery.**

the cemetery wall where we found these remains."

"I'm sure Father Duffy buried soldiers from his [165th] regiment along that wall," he added, stressing it's "not very likely" that one regiment's chaplain would have buried another's dead.

Caloud leaves open the possibility that the unknown soldier might have belonged to another unit, such as I Corps or one of the other regiments nearby — the 166th from Ohio, the 167th from Alabama or the 168th from Ohio. But he said that's "not very likely."

One of the artifacts found in the ground that offered perhaps the best chance of identification — the ID tag — was fragmented, corroded and unreadable, the commission said. But its features — a round shape with a small hole — is unmistakably American. The buttons found in the soil also bore U.S. insignias.

Once a French government military agency and the American Battle Monuments Commission

determined that the remains belonged to an American soldier, the commission asked Army Secretary Christine Wormuth for authorization to bury him at Oise-Aisne, which is about two miles from where the undertaker found the remains in February 2022.

"He faced the horrors of war, the fear of death, the uncertainty of the future. But despite all these challenges, he remained steadfast and committed to his duty," McConville said during the ceremony as the soldier's silver, flag-draped casket lay a few feet away in the cemetery's memorial colonnade, a curved structure made of rose-colored sandstone. "He fought with courage, he fought with honor and he fought with dignity. And yet, despite all his bravery and sacrifice, this soldier remains unknown to us."

"As we stand here, we cannot help but think about the sacrifices that this soldier made," he added. "He left behind his family, his friends and his loved ones to fight

Washington.

The unknown soldier's grave is the 6,013th at Oise-Aisne and his burial is the first at the World War I cemetery since 1932. His is also the first burial of a World War I soldier at an American Battle Monuments Commission cemetery since 1988, when one was interred at Aisne-Marne American Cemetery about 15 miles away.

The soldier's headstone will be in the ground at Oise-Aisne within a matter of days, according to the commission. It will read, "Here Rests In Honored Glory, American Soldier, Known But To God." There are almost 600 other unknown soldiers buried there.

The commission said being able to bury remains from a war that occurred more than a century ago is "quite an event" and it came during the commission's centennial year. The American Battle Monuments Commission was established by Congress in 1923 to commemorate the service, achievements and sacrifices of American troops. It maintains 23 World War I and World War II cemeteries in many countries around the world. There are about 31,000 American troops buried in the commission's World War I cemeteries — about 1,600 of whom are unidentified.

"So, for the last 100 years [the commission] has worked to honor the service, sacrifice and legacy of American service men and women," said Mike Knapp, the commission's chief of historical services. "I think that dovetails with the mission of the United States military, that we will go to great lengths to ensure that everybody is found and recovered. And for those we can't recover and identify ... [the commission's] mission is to keep their memory alive."

Though the unknown soldier who was buried Wednesday will likely never be identified, those who were involved in the process of recovering his remains in the past year said it's comforting to know he now rests with several thousand of his fallen comrades.

"I think, really, the moral of the story here is that this American was killed in this region liberating it from oppression — and instead of being bones on an aluminum table waiting for some evidence to see who he is, he's being laid to rest with the guys who fought with him," Caloud said. "He slept with these guys, he fought with these guys, he suffered with these guys. And now after 100 years, he's being buried with them. Every Memorial Day, we're going to lay flowers and plant flags at his grave and raise the American flag over his casket every day."



**A biplane performs a flyover at the conclusion of the ceremony.**

for his country."

After McConville spoke, he pinned a Purple Heart to the soldier's casket and joined a procession away from the memorial colonnade and to the soldier's grave site. The procession included casket bearers, a band and a color guard. At the grave site, a group of soldiers fired a volley of shots and another soldier played taps. After the casket bearers folded the American flag, it was given to the mayor of Villers-sur-Fere.

To signify the alliance between France and the United States, two young children then placed long-stemmed white roses on the soldier's casket — a French boy and an American girl. After they placed the flowers upon the casket, the girl said, "We will never forget."

At the ceremony's conclusion was a flyover by a biplane, like those flown in World War I. Other attendees also placed white roses on the casket to signify a connection between the unknown soldiers buried at Oise-Aisne in France and those buried at Arlington National Cemetery near



## MILITARY



WILLIAM PUGH/U.S. Air Force

**Air Force Col. Scott Weyermuller swears in new recruits at the Defenders of Liberty Air Show at Barksdale Air Force Base, La., on March 25.**

## Senate bill seeks to boost recruitment amid shortfall

By PHILLIP WALTER  
WELLMAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

Legislation drafted by a group of U.S. senators aims to alleviate the military's ongoing woes in attracting new members by allowing recruiters greater access to high schools and colleges.

Introduced Wednesday, the Military Service Promotion Act would allow branches of the service to obtain college student dropout data, require the Pentagon to examine ways to prep possible recruits better for physical fitness and aptitude tests and force schools to let recruiters attend career fairs and similar events.

While high schools already must provide access to military recruiters under current law, the new bill would also obligate them to respond to recruiter requests for access within 60 days.

The bill comes amid concerns that the military's all-volunteer force may be reaching its breaking point.

The Army fell short of its most recent recruiting goal of 60,000 by

more than 25%, signing up less than 45,000 new soldiers in 2022.

Other services barely met their targets. In March, Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall said the service was struggling to enlist new airmen and would likely miss its active-duty, reserve and Air National Guard recruiting goals this year.

"Our military is facing the largest recruitment crisis in 50 years, which has real impacts on our national security," Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, one of the bill's sponsors, said in a statement Wednesday.

While the bill is intended to boost enlistee numbers by making more students aware of the opportunities provided by the military, the extent to which it's expected to do so is not specified in the text.

"The more students we teach about these options, the better we can address the concerning issue of geographic diversity among our troops and the recruiting crisis," said Sen. Angus King, a Maine independent who also sponsored the bill. He was referring to a decline in the number of new active troops

from the Northeast and Midwest.

Last year, only 9% of Americans age 16-21 expressed interest in serving in the military, according to data published by the Army. A separate Pentagon report last year found that 77% of young Americans would not qualify for military service without a waiver due to being overweight, using drugs or having mental and physical health problems.

The bill calls for the expansion of the Army's Future Soldier Preparatory Course, which helps those interested in joining the service overcome academic and physical fitness barriers.

In addition, it would require an assessment by the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness to determine whether other branches should create similar programs.

"The Department of Defense should be looking at ways to help those who want to serve our country successfully meet the requirements to do so," Romney said.

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## US will urge NATO members to hit 2% defense spending

By JENNIFER H. SVAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

Fellow NATO members will feel the peer pressure applied by the United States to make good on greater defense spending when they convene next month in Vilnius, Lithuania, the American envoy to the alliance said at a conference this week.

NATO funding will be a significant topic at the summit July 11-12, Ambassador Julianne Smith and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday.

The 31 countries in the alliance will be on notice about dedicating 2% of gross domestic product to defense, a commitment known as the Defense Investment Pledge, or DIP.

The pledge "is a floor, not a ceiling, and there will be language on this," Smith said, adding that the U.S. is planning to introduce what she called "DIP 2.0" at the Lithuania gathering.

Stoltenberg and Smith participated virtually in a conference sponsored by the Center for New American Security.

The 2% threshold was set at a summit in Wales in 2014, following Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, with a target for doing so by 2024.

But Smith said only about seven or eight allies have reached that goal so far, although that number is expected to grow in the next three years.

"We're going to increase the level of readiness, we're going to have a bigger pool of forces from which to draw, but you're absolutely right, it will require countries to deliver on the 2%," Smith said.

The bloc is committed not only to ensuring that Ukraine is victorious but also that it is equipped to prevent future attacks from Russia, they said.

Stoltenberg's annual report for 2022 showed that the U.S., Greece, Lithuania, Britain, Poland, Estonia and Latvia met that target. NATO allies overall increased defense spending by 2.2% from the previous year, according to the report.

During the Cold War, the average in Europe was about 3% of GDP for defense, Stoltenberg said Wednesday, warning that Russia should not be underestimated.

The Russians have seen "big losses for land forces, but they have air and naval forces which have hardly suffered any losses," not to mention cyber and nuclear capabilities.

When the current war ends, the alliance needs to have a "framework" in place to ensure that Ukraine is not attacked again, Stoltenberg added.

That framework will likely include Ukraine as a future NATO member, given that at the Madrid summit in June 2022, "all allies agreed" on eventual membership for Kyiv, Stoltenberg said.

Stoltenberg said Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy plans to attend the July summit in person, but he could not say whether a decision on Ukraine's membership will come as soon as next month.

Zelenskyy has stepped up demands for the alliance to fast-track Ukraine's bid for membership.

"All allies agree that NATO's door is open," Stoltenberg said, adding that "it is for Ukraine and for the allies to decide when the time is right."

Russian President Vladimir Putin "doesn't have a veto over NATO enlargement," he said.

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## In-person university programs in Europe will stay as 2 schools ink deals

By KYLE ALVAREZ  
*Stars and Stripes*

Two U.S. universities that have offered in-person classes for service members in Europe for decades were awarded new five-year contracts from the Defense Department, while two others are bowing out this summer.

The University of Maryland Global Campus announced its deal in a statement Wednesday, and Embry-Riddle spokeswoman

Nancy Tran-Horne told Stars and Stripes on Thursday that it also has an agreement with DOD to keep its classroom coursework going.

The University of Oklahoma and Central Texas College, however, did not seek new contracts for providing classroom education, said Ela Karczewska, a spokeswoman for Installation Management Command-Europe.

The University of Maryland

Global Campus had its beginnings in 1949, when seven teachers went to war-torn Germany to begin instructing students, according to the statement. It will mark its 75th anniversary in Europe next year.

"Our service to the U.S. military has been part of the very foundation of our university and a cornerstone of our global reputation," university President Gregory Fowler said in the statement.

The university offers more than

30 undergraduate degrees and certificates in more than 120 subjects, according to its website.

"This new contract adds several certificate and degree program options, including emergency management, environmental management, legal studies, data analytics and various health-related options," Patricia Coopersmith, vice president and director of the university's Europe division, said in the statement.

The University of Maryland Global Campus and Embry-Riddle will meet next week to discuss the future of the two programs, Tran-Horne said.

In-person instruction is expected to end at University of Oklahoma and Central Texas College classrooms in Europe on July 31, according to their websites.

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## WAR IN UKRAINE

## Russia shells city inundated by dam collapse

Some rescue work halted hours after Zelenskyy visit

BY VASILISA STEPANENKO  
AND JAMEY KEATEN  
Associated Press

KHERSON, Ukraine — Russian forces Thursday shelled a southern Ukrainian city inundated by flooding in a catastrophic dam collapse, Ukrainian officials said, forcing a suspension of some rescue efforts hours after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy went to the area to assess the damage.

The fresh fighting occurred two days after the collapse of the Kakhovka dam on the Dnieper River set off a scramble to evacuate residents in dozens of flooded areas and get aid to those still there.

Officials on both sides said at least 14 people were killed in the flooding, thousands are homeless and tens of thousands are without drinking water after the collapse. Kyiv accused Moscow of blowing up the dam and its associated hydropower plant, which the Kremlin's forces controlled, while Russia said Ukraine bombarded it.

The ensuing flooding has ruined crops, displaced land mines, wrought widespread environmental damage, and set the stage for long-term electricity shortages. Exclusive drone footage captured by The Associated Press showed the ruined dam falling into the river and hundreds of submerged homes, greenhouses and a church.

Upriver from the dam, a supply of water used to cool Europe's largest nuclear power plant was nearing critically low levels, Ukraine's state hydroelectric company said. But the U.N.'s atomic energy watchdog said Wednesday that work was under way to ensure the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant had enough water in reserve to cool its shut-down reactors, in case supplies fell too much.

Zelenskyy's office said Moscow's forces also continued to shell Ukrainian-held areas near the nuclear plant, which is under Russian control.

The high water brought new misery and death to a country suffering uncounted casualties after 15 months of war.



HEIDI LEVINE/For The Washington Post

**A Ukrainian soldier carries a dog through flooded Kherson on Wednesday as residents evacuate their homes. Russian forces on Thursday shelled the city, which was inundated in a dam collapse, officials said.**

Vladimir Leontyev, the Kremlin-installed mayor of Nova Kakhovka, a Russian-occupied city adjacent to the dam, told Russian state TV that five residents there had died in the flooding. And Mykolaiv regional Gov. Vitalii Kim said one person had died in that region northwest of the city of Kherson.

Yevhen Ryshchuk, the mayor of Oleshky to the south who fled the town after the Russians took over, told said residents told him eight people had died so far in the flooding.

Residents of Oleshky have accused Russian authorities in the town of not doing enough to help civilians, and they have formed a group of over 8,000 that is sharing messages about information such as stranded and trapped locals.

In the city of Kherson, the largest municipality affected, Russian shelling echoed not far from a square where emergency crews and volunteers were dispensing

aid. Nine people were wounded, including two emergency workers, a policeman, a doctor and a volunteer from Germany.

As shells landed in floodwaters, rescuers suspended efforts to reach stranded residents and pets in an area that Zelenskyy had visited only hours earlier, officials said.

"The strikes began during evacuation of the residents, whose houses were flooded," Internal Affairs Ministry said. "Russia has abandoned people in calamity in the occupied part of Kherson region. It continues to prevent Ukraine from saving the most valuable — human lives."

Zelenskyy visited an aid distribution point and a medical facility in Kherson, ordering officials to provide a "fair valuation" of the devastation to compensate residents, his office said in an update.

Russian President Vladimir Putin "has no plans at the current moment" to visit the affected Mos-

cow-occupied areas, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists.

Regional Gov. Vladimir Soldo, who was installed by Moscow to oversee the area that Russia occupies, accused Ukrainian troops of firing at an evacuation point in Hola Prystan, a Russian-occupied town. Soldo said in a Telegram post that two people, including a pregnant 33-year-old woman, were killed and that two others were wounded. It was not immediately possible to verify his account.

Fighting has intensified along the more than 620-mile front line from Kherson on the Black Sea to Ukraine's border with Russia — in what some experts and officials say could be part of a long-expected Ukrainian counteroffensive. Kyiv has said it won't announce the start of any such campaign.

Officials say more than 6,000 people have been evacuated on both sides of the river. The true



MAXAR TECHNOLOGIES/AP

**The Kakhovka hydroelectric dam in Ukraine is seen Wednesday, the day after its collapse.**

scale of the disaster is yet to emerge in an affected area that once was home to more than 60,000.

In areas they control, Russian-appointed authorities said nearly two dozen people have been hospitalized, 4,280 people have been evacuated and 14,000 buildings have been flooded.

Regional Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin said about 230 square miles of the region were submerged — more than two-thirds of that on the Russian-controlled eastern bank of the Dnieper.

Ukrainian authorities have largely kept quiet about recent battlefield developments amid growing reports of intensified fighting that could add up to the long-awaited counteroffensive.

In the eastern Donbas, a battle continued for the largely devastated city of Bakhmut — one of the epicenters of the war. Ukraine's 3rd Separate Assault Brigade, in a Telegram post, said it was advancing on the city's flanks.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said his country's forces drove back Ukrainian troops trying to punch through defensive lines in the Zaporizhzhia region after a two-hour battle involving what he said was up to 1,500 Ukrainian soldiers and 150 armored vehicles.

"The enemy's reserve forces specially trained for realizing this breakthrough did not fulfill their task," Shoigu said. He did not immediately give evidence for his claims.

## Push: Ukrainian troops to advance into area Russians have mined

FROM PAGE 1

the Zaporizhzhia region. The Russians, he added, have stepped up their shelling in the Zaporizhzhia region in anticipation of a possible Ukrainian attack.

The offensive is expected to unfold over the course of months and will serve as a pivotal test of a U.S.-led strategy to prepare Ukrainian forces with the most advanced

warfare tactics.

Igor Strelkov, a former officer of Russia's security service who played a brutal role in Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and later its war in the eastern Donbas region, said Thursday that it was clear Ukraine's counteroffensive had begun.

"Perhaps, we can now reliably say that the offensive of the Armed Forces of Ukraine began

five-six days ago," Strelkov wrote on Telegram, providing analysis of troop movements at different hot spots along the front.

The counteroffensive is intensifying as a crisis builds in Ukraine's southern Kherson region, where a breach of the Russian-controlled Kakhovka dam and hydroelectric power plant on Tuesday sent water rushing over the banks of the Dnieper River and in-

to dozens of residential communities in Ukrainian- and Russian-controlled territories.

The vast flooding has redrawn the battlefield in that part of the southern front.

In the Zaporizhzhia region, fierce obstacles will stand in Ukraine's way.

Russian forces have spent months fortifying the area with mines and trenches.

A member of one brigade taking part in the offensive in the south-east described "continuous heavy fighting."

"It is very difficult on the field," he said Thursday.

"Our artillery and aviation are working, but the Russians' are working, as well. It is difficult for us and for them. The armed forces are advancing. But not as fast as we wanted."



## NATION

# British PM has first visit to White House

BY AAMER MADHANI  
AND SEUNG MIN-KIM  
*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak launched wide-ranging talks at the White House on Thursday by vowing that they would work in lockstep as the globe tries to adapt to a period of rapid economic, political and technological change.

The leaders' Oval Office talks were expected to cover the war in Ukraine, China, economic security, international cooperation on regulating the growing field of artificial intelligence, and more. Biden and Sunak have already had four face-to-face meetings since Sunak became prime minister in October, but the talks in Washington will offer the two leaders a chance for their most sustained interaction to date.

"We will put our values front and

center," Biden said.

Sunak reflected on the significant conversations that their respective predecessors have had over the years in the Oval Office and acknowledged that both he and Biden were facing their own daunting moment. The visit to Washington is Sunak's first since becoming Britain's prime minister in October.

"Our economies are seeing perhaps the biggest transformation since the Industrial Revolution as new technologies provide incredible opportunities, but also give our adversaries more tools," Sunak said.

The 15-month-old Russian invasion of Ukraine was expected to be high on the agenda. The U.S. and U.K. are the two biggest donors to the Ukraine war effort and play a central role in a long-term effort announced last month to train, and

eventually equip, Ukrainian pilots on F-16 fighter jets.

Sunak also is looking to make the case to Biden for U.K. Defense Minister Ben Wallace to succeed outgoing NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, who is set to end his term leading the 31-member alliance in September. Stoltenberg is slated to meet with Biden in Washington on Monday, and leaders from the alliance are set to gather in Lithuania on July 11-12 for their annual summit.

Sunak opened his two-day Washington visit on Wednesday by laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. He met with key congressional leaders, including Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, as well as business leaders. He also attended a Washington Nationals baseball game.



SUSAN WALSH/AP

President Joe Biden shakes hands with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak as they meet in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, on Thursday.



MATT ROURKE/AP

A person cycles past the skyline in Philadelphia shrouded in haze Thursday.

## Haze: Officials urge people to stay inside

FROM PAGE 1

while raising concerns about the health effects of prolonged exposure to such bad air.

The weather system that's driving the great Canadian-American smokeout — a low-pressure system over Maine and Nova Scotia — "will probably be hanging around at least for the next few days," U.S. National Weather Service meteorologist Bryan Ramsey said.

"Conditions are likely to remain unhealthy, at least until the wind direction changes or the fires get put out," Ramsey said. "Since the fires are raging — they're really large — they're probably going to continue for weeks. But it's really just going to be all about the wind shift."

Across the eastern U.S., officials warned residents to stay inside

and limit or avoid outdoor activities again Thursday, extending "Code Red" air quality alerts in some places for a third straight day as forecasts showed winds continuing to push smoke-filled air south.

The smoke has moved over Greenland and Iceland since June 1, and was expected to reach Norway on Thursday, the Norwegian Climate and Environmental Research Institute said, but wasn't expected to be a health concern.

In Washington, D.C., Mayor Muriel Bowser ordered schools to cancel outdoor recess, sports and field trips Thursday. In suburban Philadelphia, officials set up an emergency shelter so people living outside can take refuge.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said the state was making a million N95 masks — the kind preva-

lent at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic — available at state facilities, including 400,000 in New York City. She also urged residents to stay put.

"You don't need to go out and take a walk. You don't need to push the baby in the stroller," Hochul said Wednesday night. "This is not a safe time to do that."

More than 400 blazes burning across Canada have left 20,000 people displaced. The U.S. has sent more than 600 firefighters and equipment to Canada. Other countries are also helping.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spoke to President Joe Biden by phone. Trudeau's office said he thanked Biden for his support and that both leaders "acknowledged the need to work together to address the devastating impacts of climate change."

## Supreme Court rules in favor of Black voters in Ala. redistricting case

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Thursday issued a surprising 5-4 ruling in favor of Black voters in a congressional redistricting case, ordering the creation of a second district with a large Black population.

Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Brett Kavanaugh joined with the court's liberals in affirming a lower-court ruling that found a likely violation of the Voting Rights Act in an Alabama congressional map with one majority Black seat out of seven congressional districts in a state where more than one in four residents is Black.

The case had been closely watched for its potential to weaken the landmark voting rights law.

The court had allowed the challenged map to be used for the 2022 elections and at arguments in October, the justices appeared willing to make it harder to use the voting rights law to challenge redistricting plans as racially discriminatory.

The chief justice himself suggested last year that he was open to changes in the way courts weigh discrimination claims under the part of the law known as section 2. But on Thursday, Roberts wrote that the court was declining "to recast our section 2 case law as Alabama requests."

Roberts was part of conservative high-court majorities in earlier cases that made it harder for racial minorities to use the Voting

Rights Act of 1965 in ideologically divided rulings in 2013 and 2021.

The other four conservative justices dissented Thursday. Justice Clarence Thomas wrote that the decision forces "Alabama to intentionally redraw its longstanding congressional districts so that black voters can control a number of seats roughly proportional to the black share of the State's population. Section 2 demands no such thing, and, if it did, the Constitution would not permit it."

The current case stems from challenges to Alabama's seven-district congressional map, which included one district in which Black voters form a large enough majority that they have the power to elect their preferred candidate. The challengers said that one district is not enough, pointing out that overall, Alabama's population is more than 25% Black.

At arguments in October, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson scoffed at the idea that race could not be part of the equation. Jackson, the court's first Black woman, said that constitutional amendments passed after the Civil War and the Voting Rights Act a century later were intended to do the same thing, make Black Americans "equal to white citizens."

Jackson and the other two liberals on the court, Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan, said a decision like the one issued Thursday would result in many fewer districts drawn to give racial minorities the opportunity to elect their candidates of choice.



## NATION

# Possible Trump indictment in document probe

By ERIC TUCKER  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal grand jury investigating Donald Trump in Florida heard from at least one additional witness Wednesday amid signs that the Justice Department was moving toward a possible indictment over the former president's mishandling of classified documents.

In the last week, his lawyers have met with Justice Department officials to argue against an indictment; Trump has issued social media posts in which he suggested he anticipated that he might be charged; and a former top aide appeared before a grand jury in Miami — an indication, legal experts said, that prosecutors had settled on Florida rather than Washington as an appropriate venue for charges.

In addition, several media reports Wednesday evening said prosecutors had recently issued the Trump legal team a target letter, which is often but not always a precursor to criminal charges. The Justice Department defines a target as someone whom prosecutors have substantial evidence linking to a crime.

"I think the signal is increasingly that the charges against the former president will be in Florida," said Brandon Van Grack, a former Justice Department prosecutor and a key lawyer on an earlier special counsel team that investigated ties between Russia and the 2016 Trump campaign.

Lawyers for Trump did not return calls seeking comment. The

Associated Press has not independently confirmed the existence of a target letter. A Trump spokesman would not confirm or deny receiving a letter and a Justice Department spokeswoman declined to comment.

Earlier in the day, Taylor Budowich, who had served as a spokesman for Trump after his presidency and now runs a pro-Trump super PAC, testified before the grand jury. He confirmed his appearance on Twitter, writing, "Today, in what can only be described as a bogus and deeply troubling effort to use the power of government to 'get' Trump, I fulfilled a legal obligation to testify in front a federal grand jury and I answered every question honestly."

A variety of witnesses, including lawyers for Trump, close aides to the former president and officials with the Trump Organization, have appeared over the past year before the grand jury in Washington as part of a Justice Department special counsel investigation into Trump over the retention of hundreds of classified documents at Mar-a-Lago and potential obstruction of the government's efforts to reclaim the records.

Trump's lawyers met at the Justice Department on Monday with officials including special counsel Jack Smith, part of an effort by the legal team to raise concerns about what they say is prosecutorial misconduct and to try to argue against a potential indictment.



RICK BOWMER/AP

People gather during a rally Wednesday at the Utah State Capitol, in Salt Lake City.

## Utah district's Bible ban spurs protest by parents, Republicans

By SAM METZ  
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Republican lawmakers rallied with more than one hundred Bible-toting parents and children at Utah's Capitol on Wednesday to protest a school district's decision to remove the Bible from middle and elementary school libraries in the wake of a GOP-backed "sensitive materials" law passed two years ago.

Concerned parents and children holding signs that read "The Bible is the original textbook" and "Remove porn, not the Bible," said they were outraged after the Davis School District announced that a review committee concluded the Bible was too "violent or vulgar" for young children. The committee ruled that it did not qualify as obscene or pornographic under the sensitive materials law, but used its own discretion to remove it from libraries below the high school level.

Karlee Vincent, a Davis County mother of three kids carrying chil-

dren's Bibles to the demonstration, said districts could weigh banning certain titles with controversial material, but not religious texts like the Bible.

"We love the Bible. We love God. And we need God in our nation," she said.

The anonymously-made challenge to the Bible appears to have been submitted as a statement to undermine the 2-year-old law, noting the sacred text contains instances of incest, prostitution and rape. It derided the review procedures as a "bad faith process" and attacked groups that have pushed to remove certain titles from schools, including Parents United and its Utah-based affiliate.

The Bible removal is the highest-profile effort to remove a book from a school in Utah since the Legislature passed a law requiring school districts to create new pathways for residents to challenge "sensitive materials" and used a statute-based definition on pornography to define them. It has put a crossroads in front of propo-

nents of scrutinizing materials available in schools. The pushback has also emboldened book-banning critics, who argue anger at removing the Bible illustrates arbitrary and political double standards and the issues inherent to removing books that have certain content.

"If folks are outraged about the Bible being banned, they should be outraged about all the books that are being censored," Kasey Meehan, who directs the Freedom to Read program at the writers' organization PEN America, said.

State Rep. Ken Ivory, the sensitive materials law's Republican sponsor, rebuffed the idea that his law paved the way for the Bible to be banned.

Ivory urged the Legislature to change the law so book removal decisions have to be overseen by elected officials at open public meetings, not the kind of committee that decided to remove the Bible from middle and elementary schools in the Davis School District.

## Portland bans daytime camping, imposes other restrictions

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Portland's city council voted Wednesday to pass an ordinance prohibiting camping during daytime hours in most public places as it, like other places in the U.S., struggles to address a longtime homelessness crisis.

The 3-1 vote changes city code to say that people may camp in nonrestricted areas from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m., but after that they must dismantle the site until the permitted overnight hours begin again.

The ordinance also bans camping entirely near schools, parks and busy streets among other locations.

Business and property owners were among those who backed the ordinance, saying campsites are causing them to lose customers and creating safety issues. Advo-

cates for homeless people said it will further burden them, heightening mental and physical distress.

Portland has already prohibited camping on city property at all hours. But it has rarely been enforced and could be found to violate a state law that takes effect July 1.

The new law codifies a 2018 ruling that bars local governments from arresting people for sleeping outside when not enough shelter is available but does allow "objectively reasonable" limits on where, when and how campsites can be set up.

Mayor Ted Wheeler, who introduced the measure passed Wednesday, thanked councilmembers in an evening statement, saying the restrictions along with efforts to increase shelter availability and services are a step toward a revitalized Portland.

"The next few months will be focused on education and outreach — with an emphasis on ensuring the homelessness navigation outreach teams have clear and thorough information on this new ordinance," Wheeler said.

Wheeler and Commissioners Dan Ryan and Rene Gonzalez voted for the measure, while Commissioner Mingus Mapps, who was out of town, did not vote but expressed support in a statement, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported. Commissioner Carmen Rubio voted no.

Rubio said the city should not have approved the measure until it builds more shelter sites, expands capacity at places where people find food, services and shelter, and trains police on how to enforce the new rules in a dignified manner.



CRAIG MITCHELDDYER/AP

Tents housing homelessness people are set up on a vacant parking lot in Portland, Ore., on Dec. 8, 2020.



# NATION

## Republicans pull back Wray contempt charge

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Republican chairman of the House Oversight Committee on Wednesday called off a vote on a contempt of Congress charge against FBI Director Christopher Wray, accepting a last-minute offer by the bureau to allow the full committee access to a confidential document of an unverified tip about President Joe Biden.

Rep. James Comer said in a statement that the committee is removing a contempt resolution against Wray from Thursday's schedule after receiving an accommodation that would give the full committee access to the document.

"Allowing all Oversight Committee members to review this record is an important step toward conducting oversight of the FBI and holding it accountable to the American people," the Kentucky Republican said.

The action that played out over the last month against Wray reflects a larger breakdown between Republicans and the FBI that has only intensified this year, with some conservatives talking openly

about trying to defund the bureau.

It's a rift that first opened during the Russia investigation of then-President Donald Trump and has only widened amid the FBI's wide-ranging criminal investigation into the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the Capitol, which some Republicans view as overly zealous and politicized.



Wray

The FBI made the last-ditch effort to ward off the contempt vote Wednesday, offering to give every lawmaker on the oversight committee access to a redacted version of a confidential document that alleges a bribery scheme involving then-Vice President Joe Biden and a foreign national. That's according to a person familiar with the matter who was not authorized to discuss it publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

It was unclear until late Wednesday if Comer would accept the offer even as House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said that would suffice.

## Newer method could allow for more heart transplants

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Most transplanted hearts are from donors who are brain dead, but new research shows a different approach can be just as successful and boost the number of available organs.

It's called donation after circulatory death, a method long used to recover kidneys and other organs but not more fragile hearts. Duke Health researchers said Wednesday that using those long-shunned hearts could allow possibly thousands more patients a chance at a lifesaving transplant — expanding the number of donor hearts by 30%.

"Honestly if we could snap our fingers and just get people to use this, I think it probably would go up even more than that," said transplant surgeon Dr. Jacob Schroder of Duke University School of Medicine, who led the research.

The usual method of organ dona-

tion occurs when doctors, through careful testing, determine someone has no brain function after a catastrophic injury — meaning they're brain-dead. The body is left on a ventilator that keeps the heart beating and organs oxygenated until they're recovered and put on ice.

In contrast, donation after circulatory death occurs when someone has a nonsurvivable brain injury but, because all brain function hasn't yet ceased, the family decides to withdraw life support and the heart stops. That means organs go without oxygen for a while before they can be recovered — and surgeons, worried the heart would be damaged, left it behind. Now doctors can remove those hearts and put them in a machine that "reanimates" them, pumping through blood and nutrients as they're transported — and demonstrating if they work OK before the transplant.

## Applications for jobless benefits highest since October 2021

Associated Press

The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits last week rose to its highest level since October 2021, but the labor market remains one of the healthiest parts of the U.S. economy.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that U.S. applications for jobless claims were 261,000 for the week ending June 3, an increase of 28,000 from the previous week's 233,000. Weekly jobless claims are considered representative of U.S. layoffs.

The four-week moving average of claims, which evens out some of

the weekly variations, rose by 7,500 to 237,250.

Despite last week's sharp increase in filings for unemployment aid, some analysts cautioned against concluding that layoffs are picking up across the economy. They noted that the weekly figures are prone to revision and that last week's numbers might have been distorted by the three-day Memorial Day weekend.

"The latest reading reflects a holiday-shortened week (Memorial Day), which ought to raise suspicions that the big move was more noise than signal," said Ste-

phen Stanley, chief U.S. economist for Santander. "I am eager to see next week's reading before I draw any conclusions."

The U.S. economy has added jobs at a furious rate since the pandemic purge of more than 20 million jobs in the spring of 2020. Americans have enjoyed unusual job security, despite the Federal Reserve's aggressive campaign to cool the economy and labor market in its bid to stifle persistent, decades-high inflation.

U.S. employers added a robust 339,000 jobs last month, well above expectations.



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## WORLD

# Suspect detained in knife attack on French Alpine town

By JOHN LEICESTER  
Associated Press

PARIS — The prosecutor leading an investigation into a horrific knife attack in a French Alpine town says four children aged between 22 months and 3 years suffered life-threatening wounds and that two adults also were injured.

The prosecutor said the attacker's motives remain unknown but do not appear to be terrorism-related.

The suspect, a 31-year-old Syrian, was detained following the Thursday morning attack in Annecy. French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne said the man has refugee status in Sweden.

Video appearing to show the attack in and around a children's play park in the Alpine and lake-side town of Annecy was posted on social media. The footage showed a man in dark glasses and with a

blue scarf covering his head brandishing a knife, as people screamed for help.

The man appeared to shout "on name of Jesus Christ" as he waved his knife in the air, while people nearby could be heard screaming: "Police! Police!"

He slashed at a man carrying rucksacks who tried to approach him. Inside the enclosed play park, a panicked woman frantically pushed a stroller as the attacker approached, yelling "Help! Help!" and ramming the stroller into the barriers around the site in her terror.

She tried to fend off the attacker but couldn't keep him from leaning over the stroller and stabbing downward repeatedly. Afterward, the man strolled almost casually out of the park, letting himself out through a gate, with the man carrying two rucksacks still chasing



JEAN-CHRISTOPHE BOTT, KEYSTONE/AP

**Security forces gather at the scene of knife attack in Annecy, French Alps, on Thursday.**

after him.

French President Emmanuel Macron described the assault as an "attack of absolute cowardice." Of the victims, he said "children and an adult are between life and death."

"The nation is in shock," Macron tweeted.

Local police said the four child victims all were under age 5. A British child was among the injured, said U.K. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly.

French national police said two of the children, both around 3, suffered life-threatening injuries, as

did one adult.

A witness who spoke to French broadcaster BFMTV said he saw the attacker jumping on an elderly man, and stabbing him repeatedly. The witness said he yelled at police to act.

"I screamed, screamed at them to intervene," he said.

An ice cream seller who works in the waterside park said he'd seen the attacker there several days earlier, looking out at the lake ringed by mountains.

Local police said a second adult also was injured and was being treated at a hospital.

## Pope in 'good condition' after surgery

Associated Press

ROME — Pope Francis was in "good general condition" Thursday, alert and breathing on his own, following a three-hour operation to remove intestinal scar tissue and repair a hernia in his abdominal wall, the Vatican said.

The 86-year-old Francis rested "extensively" during a peaceful night at Rome's Gemelli hospital and was spending his first full day after the surgery observing the "necessary post-operative rest," the Vatican said in a statement.

"The pope is informed of the messages of closeness and affection that have come in the last few hours and expresses his gratitude, while asking for continued prayers for him," the statement said.

Francis was admitted to Gemelli on Wednesday for his second major abdominal operation in two years, following a 2021 procedure to remove part of his colon. During the procedure, doctors removed adhesions, or internal scarring, on the intestine that had caused a partial blockage. They also repaired a hernia that had formed.

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# WEEKEND

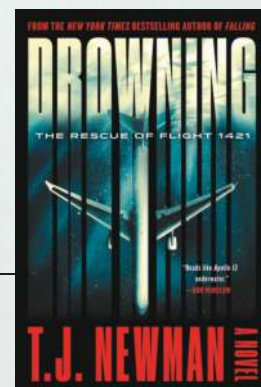


Matchbox Twenty's joyful reunion album

Music, Page 28



# FLYING HIGH



T.J. Newman, who has just published her second aviation thriller, went from furloughed flight attendant to bestselling author who sparks bidding wars

Books, Page 18

T.J. Newman poses for a portrait in Phoenix on May 16 to promote her latest book, "Drowning."

MATT YORK/AP



## WEEKEND: GADGETS &amp; TECHNOLOGY

# Corralling your electrical clutter

Experts offer tips to conceal cords or get rid of them

BY ANNIE MIDORI ATHERTON  
*The Washington Post*

Whether crumpled in a messy pile by your nightstand or climbing up the wall to the TV, a tangle of electrical cords is an eyesore. For those who work remotely, the home office brings even more electrical clutter (as well as more time to gaze at it in quiet irritation).

There is one upside to the fact that this is such a common annoyance: Many people have devised clever solutions. Here are strategies from do-it-yourself pros and organization experts for corralling and concealing the cords you need, and responsibly getting rid of those you don't.

## Affix cords to your furniture

If you have cords dangling from lamps or other devices atop a desk or table, get them out of sight by affixing them to the backs of the furniture's legs. To pull this off, Karen Sloan, the blogger behind interior design site Decor Hint, recommends using Command light clips (which are typically meant for hanging string lights). Attach several of the sticky-backed clips along the legs, then string the electrical cord through. You can often find the clips at major retailers, such as Amazon, Target and Home Depot, for less than \$1 apiece.

Phone and laptop chargers — which easily slide off desks and nightstands when not in use — are another irritation. Professional organizer Kate Pawlowski, co-founder of Done & Done Home in Montclair, N.J., recommends adhesive cord holders that — similar to the Command clips — stick to furniture surfaces. You just string the chargers through, so they'll stay in place.

If your tangle of cords is too bulky to be

reined in by clips, you can try installing a wire rack designed specifically to hide power strips or many cords at once under the surface of your desk. Ashlynn Eaton, a digital content creator and DIY-er, says she chose one that had to be screwed into place because it's extra sturdy. But other options don't require any drilling and instead get secured with clamps.

## Give power strips a home

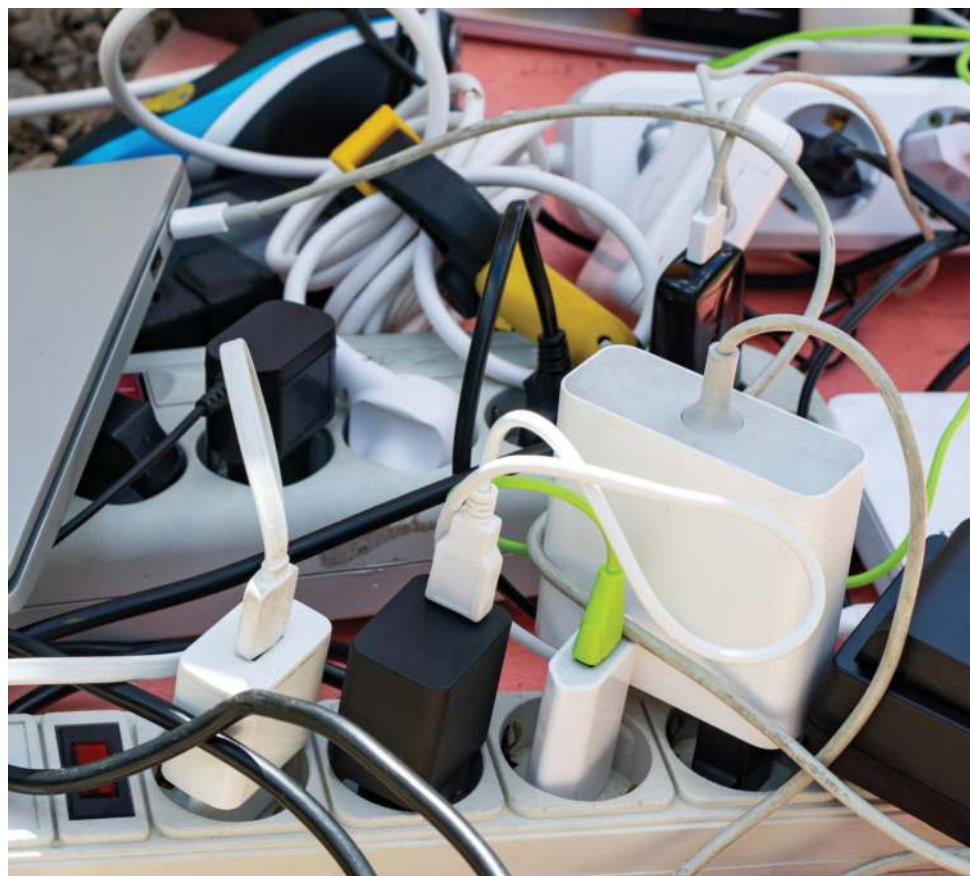
Power strips are a functional way to charge multiple appliances, but the cluster of cords around them is like a plastic snake pit. Why not give the snakes their own tiny house? Pawlowski recommends plopping your power strip in a sleek cable management box, which typically costs less than \$30 and sits unobtrusively on your floor or tabletop. There are plenty of options, in varying dimensions and materials, including versions made of bamboo for those who want to avoid plastic.

## Disguise TV cables

When it comes to hiding the thick black wires that accompany wall-mounted televisions, there are a range of solutions. Some homeowners drill holes in their walls to thread the cables through. Sloan took a simpler approach and attached a "cable raceway" to her wall to cover the cords. Before mounting it, she painted it the same color as the wall, so it blends in more seamlessly.

## Put drawers to work

Some desks and nightstands come equipped with features that conceal cords, but Pawlowski says you can alter a piece you already own to achieve the same result. She wanted to house a power strip in the drawer of her nightstand, so her hus-



iStock

**You don't have to tolerate that tangled pile of electrical cords.**

band drilled a hole in the back of the furniture using a power drill and a hole saw (which makes cutting in a clean circle easier). Then, he drilled a hole in the back of the drawer so that it aligned with the first hole, and ran a power strip through both openings. Now, Pawlowski charges her phone and other tech products inside the drawer, using heavy-duty tape to keep the power strip in place.

## Recycle unneeded cords

The most effective way to reduce cord clutter? Get rid of the cords. Pawlowski says many of her clients have a hard time parting with their old tech and all the accompanying cables. "People's cord bins are often enormous," she says.

She advises taking all of them out and trying to find a match for each one. If you can't easily pair a cord or charger, toss it into a giveaway bag. If you really feel the need to hold onto it, coil it into a neat roll and label it clearly to indicate its use (such as "Charger for old iPhone").

The cords you don't choose to keep can be easily recycled and the copper inside them can be used to create new wiring for houses or device chargers, or included in circuit boards for new electronics, explains Ray Zielke, vice president of sales and marketing at Universal Recycling Technologies.

"For most of the metals that we recycle — steel, aluminum, copper — there's no degradation to the properties of the metal if you recycle it one hundred times," Zielke says.

Responsibly disposing of cords may be as simple as putting them into your regular recycling.

"Most of the time you can recycle those in your household recycle bin with your cardboard and plastic," Zielke says. If you're not sure, check with your local recycling service to confirm.

Otherwise, you can take cords and other e-waste directly to a materials recovery facility or company that specializes in recycling electronics, such as Zielke's.

# NewQ USB-C dock expands desktop connections

BY GREGG ELLMAN  
*Tribune News Service*

With new computers come new ports and configurations. Using them can be as easy as plugging in a cable — that is, if there are enough of the ports you need and they have the power necessary for your devices.

If any of this is a problem, you'll need a docking station, and that's where the NewQ USB-C 16-in-1 docking station shines with all the necessary ports to meet most Mac and Windows expansion needs.

The vertical standing dock is perfect for anyone working at home, in an office or as a gamer. It sits on a flat base with an aluminum alloy shell measuring



**The NewQ USB-C 16-in-1 docking station has all the necessary ports to meet most desktop expansion needs.**

2.1-by-4.5-by-5.7 inches. An alternating current (AC) 150-watt power supply with an AC cable and a 34.5-inch USB-C power

cord are included to connect and power it up.

Included in the 16 ports are two USB-A ports, one USB-C port, a TransFlash memory card slot, an SD memory card slot, a 3.5 mm audio port for standard headphones and a USB-A and a USB-C power delivery out port. On the back are a DP 1.4 port, two HDMI 2.0 ports, two USB-A ports, a gigabit Ethernet port, another 3.5 mm audio port and the power supply port.

After unpacking the NewQ USB-C 16-in-1 docking station and plugging it in, I connected cables to charge my iPhone, iPad and Apple Watch. I attached a CFexpress card reader, an extra monitor, my bank check scanner,

a portable speaker and a basic printer. Nothing fancy or unusual, but it adds up to a lot of cables and devices. I connected them simultaneously to my Apple M1 Mac mini desktop computer with some port help from the USB-C docking station.

The transfer speeds were great with my digital image files, which often cause devices to get hot. The NewQ USB-C has built-in cooling features with a high-efficiency chip to prevent it from heating up.

The NewQ handled everything and then some with ease. There were even more ports available. It also provides triple 4K monitor support for Windows and macOS. NewQ even states, "This

docking station can overcome the traditional limitations of Apple's M1 and M2 chips, which can save a huge amount of money compared to upgrading the laptop."

For output power, it provides up to 96 watts to a laptop and charges smartphones up to 18 watts, and the audio out provides 48 kilohertz stereo sound. Depending on your needs, this dock can support multiple monitors, devices and memory cards. Every combination that was put to the test worked perfectly.

Cosmetically, it's worth noting with all the cables routing in and out of one place (except the PD USB-C to my Mac Mini), my cable clutter is well organized.

Online: newq.store; \$169.99



## WEEKEND: MOVIES

# Critics say Gosling too old to play Ken

Backlash over actor's suitability to play character in live-action 'Barbie' draws attention to issue of ageism in Hollywood

BY JENNIFER HASSAN  
The Washington Post

**L**ife in plastic isn't always fantastic. Just ask 42-year-old Ryan Gosling, who, after landing the role of Ken in the new Barbie movie, has faced claims he is too "ancient" to play the doll.

The internet is already obsessed with the first live-action Barbie movie, thanks to trailers released ahead of the Warner Bros. film's debut next month. But the promotional material has already prompted some critics to use the hashtag #NotMyKen to express their disappointment in Gosling's casting, writing on social media that he is too old to play the part of the chiseled doll with perfect hair.

"I can't be the only one that thinks Ryan Gosling looks old to play Ken," read one of many tweets questioning the star's age. "Ryan Gosling looks old and washed out in this to me. I think it'd have made more sense with someone younger at this point," read another, while a third said: "that's so sad that man is ancient."

Gosling responded to the criticism in an interview with GQ magazine, saying: "If people don't want to play with my Ken, there are many other Kens to play with." He also joked that for decades nobody has ever particularly cared about Ken, who is really known only as Barbie's boyfriend and the guy who works at the beach. "It is funny ... this kind of clutching-your-pearls idea of, like, #notmyken. Like you ever thought about Ken before this?"

Technically, Ken has no official age (he is a doll, after all) although he was first introduced as Barbie's boyfriend on March 11, 1961, which means he has been around for 62 years. (Barbie was created in 1959, which would make her 64.)

But experts say the backlash Gosling faced also highlights that ageism, something that female actors frequently face, impacts men in the industry, too.

"It's interesting to see this conversation happening" over Ryan Gosling, Dennis Olsen, associate professor of advertising and branding at London School of Film, Media and Design, said in an interview. The issue of age has been an "ongoing conversation" centered around women for a long time, and "fresh faces are regularly required by some studios and producers in order to, what they assume, ensure desirability," he said.

"Age impacts both men and women in different ways. Men have more opportunities but the roles they are allowed to play narrow down," Olsen added, with older men in the film industry often cast as "mentors or experts" while older women no longer play "sexy" roles but "quirky" or "evil" type characters.

Audiences may have had particular expectations of what Ken would look like given their association of the doll with childhood, as Barbie and Ken are a couple who represent "eternal youth" and "embody childhood" to many, Olsen said, though he added that some of the backlash has also been centered around the fact that there is a 10-year age gap between the two actors playing Barbie and Ken.

The fact that Barbie and Ken show up in



Warner Bros. Pictures photos

Ryan Gosling, 42, plays Ken in the first live-action Barbie movie. In an interview with GQ magazine, he expressed surprise that people haven't cared about Ken for decades but are suddenly interested now that he's playing him.

**"The incident draws attention to a bigger problem that is still very much prevailing in the film industry, which is how actors are being treated because of age."**

Dennis Olsen

associate professor, advertising and branding  
London School of Film, Media and Design

2023 played by Gosling, 42, and Margot Robbie, 32, could be a bit of a wake-up call for some viewers who may also be feeling a little old themselves.

Producers are probably seeking to capitalize on millennials who remember once playing with one of America's most iconic couples. And so far, nostalgia seems to sell — the trailers released to promote the film have been watched by millions.

Perhaps it is not surprising that the Barbie movie has sparked a debate about ageism and on-screen representation, given that the brand itself has long been



There is a 10-year age gap between Gosling and costar Margot Robbie, 32.

scrutinized over whether it promotes unrealistic beauty standards. The Barbie doll was long criticized for its unrealistic proportions, and for initially not representing different ethnicities — although Mattel has since introduced more diverse dolls, and sought to brand Barbie as a symbol of female achievement and empowerment. The film appears to poke its own fun at the Barbie brand — the trailer says the film is for Barbie fans but also haters, and, at one point in the trailer, Barbie expresses horror at her heels touching the ground — a nod to how classic Barbie

dolls' feet aren't shaped like normal feet.

The Gosling age debate is one that Olsen hopes will shine a light on ageism, which he described as "a real problem" everyone will face at some point.

"The incident draws attention to a bigger problem that is still very much prevailing in the film industry, which is how actors are being treated because of age," he said. "We are so systematically discriminating against people getting older though we all will experience that at some point and hope that it doesn't happen to us."



## WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEW



Paramount Pictures photos

Mirage, voiced by Pete Davidson, in “Transformers: Rise of the Beasts.” The character, a wisecracking silver Porsche, can create multiple hologram-like illusions of itself.

# Better without Bay

More for teens than adults, ‘Transformers: Rise of the Beasts’ a chaotic, violent, sometimes funny and often touching ode to its sentient machines

By MICHAEL O’SULLIVAN  
*The Washington Post*

The question is not whether the new Transformers movie is good or bad, but whether it is really a Transformers movie. “Transformers: Rise of the Beasts” is and isn’t a Transformers movie.

Yes, the word “Transformers” is in the title, and it does center on giant talking alien robots hiding out on Earth by masquerading as vehicles: a semi truck, a yellow Camaro, a motorcycle and, as the film gets underway, a wisecracking silver Porsche voiced by Pete Davidson. His character, Mirage — a funny, likable goofball who can create multiple hologram-like illusions of itself — is a new one, sort of, to the film franchise, having appeared only once before, in director Michael Bay’s 2011 “Transformers: Dark of the Moon,” where he was called Dino and voiced by someone else.

Speaking of Bay, the creator of the now-seven-film Transformers series, known for his loud, bloated action epics, receded into a producer role after the fifth film, handing over the reins for 2018’s “Bumblebee” prequel to Travis Knight (“Kubo and the Two Strings”) and for this one to Steven Caple Jr. (“Creed II”). Both “Bumblebee” and “Beasts” are not just under two hours long — a shocking development for a series that was edging toward

three hours with 2014’s “Transformers: Age of Extinction” — but also prioritize character and story.

Kinda.

Set in 1994, and a direct sequel to “Bumblebee,” “Beasts” is certainly more violent and chaotic than that 1987-set story, a reboot of sorts after the series jettisoned stars Shia LaBeouf and Mark Wahlberg. But “Beasts” does focus on the relationship between Noah (Anthony Ramos), one of its human heroes, and his sickly little brother Kris (Dean Scott Vazquez). At the start of the film, Kris is seen wearing a Power Rangers T-shirt — like Transformers, another property of the Hasbro toy company, whose name is the first thing you see when the movie starts. (Note: “Beasts” also closes with a teaser hinting at a crossover film with a third well-known Hasbro toy line/movie franchise so exciting to fans at a recent screening that a collective gasp could be heard. So yes, this new movie is one long commercial, making it, at least in that sense, a bona fide Transformers movie.)

But it also features Kris saying “bros before hos.” Sure, it’s a laugh line, but one that flew over the heads of some kids at a recent screening, one of whom could be heard loudly asking his adult guardian, “What did he say?” after everyone else over 10 laughed. Members of the target demographic for a Transformers

movie are, generally speaking, small enough to fold their entire little bodies onto the seat cushion of a modern movie theater recliner — and I can guarantee you they aren’t reading this review.

But for anyone who is, a quick synopsis: While Noah is out stealing a car to raise money for his brother’s medical treatment, he encounters Mirage, who leads him to the rest of the Autobots, as these mechanized heroes are known. It appears that something called a transwarp key — or at least part of one — has been located: an ancient power object that can either (a) help the good bots get back to their home planet of Cybertron or (b) assist some other evil bots, called Terrorcons, in thrall to a “vile god” named Unicron, to open up wormholes to other planets, like Earth, that they can lay waste to.

I never felt more stupid than typing that last sentence. But let the fun begin!

Noah teams up with a budding archaeologist (Dominique Fishback) and his new friends, and they’re off to Peru to find the lost piece of the transwarp key and save the world, with a Terrorcon named Scourge (voice of Peter Dinklage) in hot pursuit. (As Noah jokes, this is some serious Indiana Jones stuff here.) It’s in the jungles of South America that they meet the Maximals: a menagerie of animal robots voiced by Michelle Yeoh (in the form of a falcon), Ron Perlman (gorilla)



Anthony Ramos as Noah teams up with a budding archaeologist, Elena, played by Dominique Fishback, to save the world in “Transformers: Rise of the Beasts.”



In the film, the Maximal animal robots assist the human heroes and the Autobots vehicle robots in their fight against the evil Terrorcons.

and others, who will assist them in their battle. The Maximals don’t exactly transform in the same way that the Autobots do, but they do, er, maximize, in the parlance of the film, into more battle-ready forms.

It’s cool, I guess.

Look: This film, like the others, will surely find its audience. And that audience ain’t me. If your reading skills are strong enough that you’ve made it this far, it probably ain’t you either.

On the one hand, “Beasts” is a refreshing departure from the

Michael Bay era: a sometimes funny, sometimes touching, sometimes incoherent CGI fight fest structured around a story of family, found and otherwise, and starring a diverse cast. But it’s still, despite a few mildly grown-up jokes, a quintessential Transformers film in one inescapable way. It should come with a different sort of content advisory: No one over 21 admitted without their inner child.

“Transformers: Rise of the Beasts” is rated PG-13 for intense sequences of sci-fi action/violence and strong language. Running time: 117 minutes.



## WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

# Another serving of cinematic junk food

'Flamin' Hot' a cheesy retelling of the snack's origin story

By MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN  
The Washington Post

The poster image for "Flamin' Hot" — a feel-good comedy/success story that purports to be the true tale of how Frito-Lay janitor Richard Montañez came up with the idea for a spicier version of the snack-food giant's products, marketed to Latino customers — features a play on Michelangelo's "The Creation of Adam" painting from the Sistine Chapel ceiling, but with a bright red Cheeto in the outstretched hand of Jesse Garcia as Montañez.

It's a nod to the fact that this origin story, based on Montañez's memoir, "A Boy, a Burrito and a Cookie: From Janitor to Executive," has a certain aura of myth around it, as if the precise details of its narrative require a leap of faith before they can be swallowed. (In 2021, as publicity for the film, directed by Eva Longoria, geared up, the Los Angeles Times wrote an exposé calling into question many of Montañez's claims about his role in the invention of Flamin' Hot-branded snack foods.)

This review will not resolve any of that,

except to say that the film, written by Lewis Colick and Linda Yvette Chávez, does try to inoculate itself against accusations of stretching the truth, staging many scenes as the unreliable reminiscences of its narrator, Richard, who after one particularly self-aggrandizing scene says, "Judy says I exaggerate this part" — referring to his wife (Annie Gonzalez) — before replaying the same scene in a manner probably a little bit closer to reality.

To say that the film is, well, cheesy, is no hyperbole. Although Garcia makes for a likable hero, the acting is broad, with the actor sporting a variety of obvious wigs. These help carry the 40-year-old Garcia from a troubled high school dropout in the 1970s — in this telling, a gangbanger involved in drugs, guns and car theft — to a goody-goody blue-collar worker and family man with so much initiative (a word he could at one point neither define nor read) that he eventually proposed the idea for Cheetos made with a seasoning of hot peppers directly to PepsiCo CEO Roger Enrico.



Searchlight Pictures

Jesse Garcia plays Frito-Lay janitor Richard Montañez, the supposed inventor of the "Flamin' Hot" snack food, in the film.

Tony Shalhoub plays the godlike head of Frito-Lay's parent company as Richard's savior, falling so under the spell of his can-do employee, said here to be able to sell "water to a whale," that Roger drops everything to produce the new product.

A subplot involving Richard's abusive, alcoholic father (Emilio Rivera) gets stretched out to saccharine effect, with ample time left for the prerequisite scenes of redemption and forgiveness.

It's a meal that may make you want to gag a little and reach for the nearest can of

Pepsi to wash down the hoo-ha. There's so much product placement here, it gets in the way of all the unearned emotionalism.

It's not especially new to see a story about a guy who pulls himself up by his bootstraps, even one this hyperbolic. One might say that "Flamin' Hot" is just another serving of cinematic junk food: corn chips sprinkled liberally with the movie-making equivalent of maltodextrin.

"Flamin' Hot" is rated PG-13 for some strong language and drug-related material. Running time: 129 minutes. Now streaming on Hulu and Disney+.

## 'Shooting Stars' dramatizes rise of James' high school team

By MARK MESZOROS  
The News-Herald, Willoughby, Ohio

Well, "Shooting Stars" nailed the casting of the LeBron James role.

It's not as if Marquis "Mookie" Cook is a dead ringer for the James many of us met when the high school basketball phenom was dubbed "The Chosen One" by Sports Illustrated and put on its cover. However, when Cook — a high-flying prep hoopster himself, making his screen debut in the movie now streaming on Peacock — flashes a smile, you can convince yourself you're watching a teen version of the future four-time NBA champion, four-time winner of the NBA's Most Valuable Player award and the league's all-time leading scorer.

That isn't reason enough to make time for "Shooting Stars," based on the 2009 book of the same name by current Los Angeles Lakers star James and "Friday Night Lights" author and journalist Buzz Bissinger. However, even as it struggles to maintain a rhythm with its narrative, the film is engaging enough to recommend, thanks largely to Cook and his on-screen teammates.

Already the subject the 2008 documentary "More Than a Game," James and four of his teammates from Akron's St.



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/TNS

LeBron James (Mookie Cook), left, and Lil Dru Joyce III (Caleb McLaughlin) in "Shooting Stars."

Vincent-St. Mary Catholic High School — Dru Joyce III (Caleb McLaughlin of "Stranger Things"), Willie McGee (Avery S. Wills Jr., "Swagger"), Sian Cotton (Khalil Everage, "Cobra Kai") and Romeo Travis (newcomer Sterling "Scoot" Henderson) — are front and center again in this dramatization.

We meet the self-proclaimed "Fab Four" of LeBron, Lil Dru, Willie and Sian (portrayed by younger actors) as they play together on a youth team, the Shooting Stars, where they are

coached by Dru's father, Dru Joyce II (Wood Harris of the "Creed" franchise). He has instilled in them a refrain: "It isn't how you start the game. It's how you finish."

A few years later, the talented foursome is preparing to attend what was then John R. Buchtel High School, a public school in Akron, Ohio. However, when the Buchtel coach makes it clear that the undersized Dru would begin playing with the junior-varsity squad, the spunky young man convinces the new coach at

SVSM, the likewise fiery Keith Dambrot (Dermot Mulroney, "August: Osage County"), to let them try out for the varsity if they attend that school instead.

Directed by Chris Robinson, working from a script by Frank E. Flowers, Tony Rettenmaier and Juel Taylor, "Shooting Stars" proceeds to take us through the frequent highs and occasional lows from the amateur portion of James' career.

It's a bit of a bummer that Robinson ("Beats," "Grown-ish"), Flowers ("Metro Manila"),

Rettenmaier ("Space Jam: A New Legacy") and Taylor ("Creed II") struggle to make more than bit players of Willie, Sian and Romeo. That said, it's inevitable that the story would become LeBron-centric as it progressed.

Drama is mined from the big head the future Cleveland Cavaliers star gets, understandably, as the spotlight on him grows ever larger. His teammates grow frustrated by him, and his increasingly annoyed future wife, Savannah (Katlyn Nichol, "Black-Ish") works to keep him in check.

Robinson does manage to keep the basketball scenes, while never spectacular, fresh. He shoots each of the 15 or so games included in the movie in a different way. That's more than what you might expect from a straight-to-streaming affair.

And even though you can see why this Universal Pictures production bypassed theaters — presumably, it didn't have a huge budget as it isn't exactly peppered with big-named actors — it does occasionally rock the rim and offers a relatively inspirational story about a group of boys who came from an unremarkable, if also beloved, place.

"Shooting Stars" is rated PG-13 for strong language, some suggestive references and teen drinking. Running time: 116 minutes.



## WEEKEND: BOOKS



MATT YORK/AP

Author T.J. Newman poses for a portrait in Phoenix on May 16 to promote her latest book, "Drowning." Newman has written one other book and is working on a third.

# An altitude adjustment

Former flight attendant's second novel takes a plunge in the Pacific Ocean to generate thrills

BY HANNAH SAMPSON  
*The Washington Post*

In her 10 years as a flight attendant, T.J. Newman and her colleagues would often joke that they should write a book about their experiences on the job.

"I don't know what you'd categorize it as because it kind of goes into everything: It's a romance, it's a horror, it's a thriller, it's nonfiction, it's, you know, fantasy," she said.

For Newman, a onetime bookseller who lives in Phoenix, that joke came true — and the subject matter touches on scenarios that even the most white-knuckle fliers might not dare to imagine. In her first novel, "Falling," a pilot's family has been kidnapped

and will be killed unless he crashes the plane.

Her latest nail-biter, "Drowning: The Rescue of Flight 1421," follows the survivors on a plane that plunges into the Pacific — while a frantic rescue operation unfolds on the surface. The novel came out May 30, just in time to terrify the throngs of travelers setting out for summer vacations.

Newman said both ideas came to her during quiet moments as she worked red-eye flights. She worked on the first book while flying, writing by hand on cocktail napkins or on the back of the catering bill.

After working for Virgin America and Alaska Airlines, she

SEE SKY ON PAGE 19

## 'Drowning' is ruthlessly suspenseful

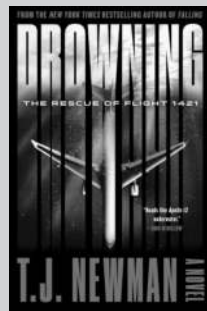
BY E.A. AYMAR

*Special to The Washington Post*

T.J. Newman faced a nearly impossible task. Her first novel, "Falling," was one of the most successful publishing stories of 2021: It debuted at No. 2 on the New York Times bestseller list, it was translated into more than 30 languages, and film rights were sold after an intense bidding war. Second novels are notoriously difficult, from both a commercial and a creative standpoint. For Newman, the stakes and expectations are even higher.

Happily, Newman's second thriller, "Drowning," serves as proof that the expertise displayed in her first book was no fluke. Her story about a plane that crashes in the Pacific Ocean a mere six minutes after its departure from Hawaii is ruthlessly suspenseful, guaranteed to remain in a reader's mind long after the last page is turned. Newman — a former flight attendant — tells her story through a multitude of perspectives, ranging from the crew to the passengers to the

mix of Navy personnel and civilians determined to rescue them. Every sentence seems to intensify the dire predicament that her characters face.



can be difficult to pull off: How do you keep a narrative lively in such a claustrophobic setting? Part of the creative challenge for Newman is to keep the story moving when her characters have no place to go. She succeeds by taking readers outside the sunken plane's cabin through brief, illuminating flashbacks and tense moments from the rescue team; it's a credit to her abilities that those departures don't slow the story. This is a thriller to the core, one that readers will want

to finish in a single sitting.

That said, there are moments when the prose falters — occasionally a sentence is serviceable rather than inspired. A tender moment between two characters feels wooden: "She hugged him in such a way that he knew true healing had broken through." Lines like "they were parents fighting to save their child" lack gravitas. And as compelling as Newman's main characters can be, the side performers are often clichés: a loving, elderly couple; an aggressive, problematic young man; and a determined first officer are just some of the characters who have more to offer than they are given.

But those are quibbles, and they shouldn't detract from what Newman has achieved in her second book.

The readers who took a chance on her debut will find much of what they loved in this follow-up — brisk storytelling, masterful suspense and the chance to vicariously peer into a nightmarish situation from which heroes emerge.



## WEEKEND: BOOKS

## 'The Soldier's Truth'

David Chrisinger

My father lived through World War II and, like many of his generation, said very little about it. But one name he spoke with reverence was that of journalist Ernie Pyle. A slight, driven man twice the age of most soldiers he wrote about, Pyle brought the war home to American readers — his stories, many reported under fire, ran in hundreds of newspapers. Pyle embedded with troops in some of the war's worst places: North Africa. Anzio. Normandy. Not every Pyle column was great, but the best were masterpieces.

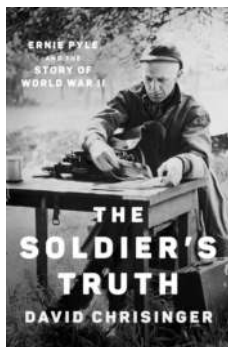
As a young reporter, Pyle chronicled Americans' struggles with the Great Depression, traveling with wife Jerry across the country. The marriage, always troubled, strained to breaking when Jerry's bipolar disorder spiraled out of control. When Pyle's bosses tapped him to become a war correspondent, he arranged for Jerry's care and left for North Africa.

Leaving the big-picture stories to other journalists, Pyle followed the troops. He lived with them, and they grew to trust him. Although he had to submit his columns to censors, it is astonishing how much the reality of war pulses through them — the weariness, filth, loyalty, bravery and dread. Pyle's most famous column, "The Death of Captain Waskow," is almost pitch-perfect.

Pyle won a Pulitzer and published four bestsellers. Depression, self-medicated with alcohol, dogged him, but he kept writing.

Pyle was killed by a Japanese sniper in the waning days of World War II. No one ever got to debrief him. But Pyle talked about storytelling with Arthur Miller, not yet a famous playwright, who later recalled: "The need to tell the truth seemed like an ache he was always feeling."

— Mary Ann Gwinn/Star Tribune



## 'George: A Magpie Memoir'

Frieda Hughes

Hughes is an English poet and painter in her own right. Yet she has spent much of her life in the shadow of her world-famous parents, the poets Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath.

In her first work of nonfiction, Hughes recounts the nearly two years she spent caring for an injured baby magpie — a "tiny, feathered scrap" — at her ramshackle estate some 200 miles from London — and how it helped her come to terms with her traumatic legacy.

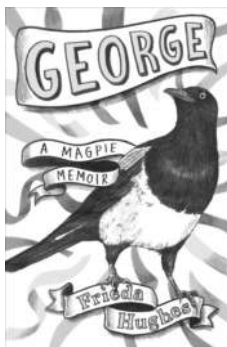
On one level, it is an expert bit of nature writing. But on another level, it is a psychologically profound investigation of how George, her other animals, and the extensive gardens she cultivates on an acre of land in the Welsh countryside give her the "stability and sense of permanence" that she lacked as a child.

As she settles into her "forever home" in Wales, she is finally able to gain some perspective about her American mother's 1963 suicide, when she was just a toddler; the peripatetic lifestyle of her father, the British poet laureate; and the 2009 suicide of her younger brother, Nick, at age 47, after a lifelong struggle with depression.

George is her salvation. By carefully observing his strange but endearing bird-brained behavior — his insatiable curiosity, penchant for hiding things and attraction to all things red — she discovers the courage and wisdom she needs at a difficult moment of her life when a chronic pain condition recurs and her third marriage is falling apart.

George, as a wild animal, must inevitably depart. At first, Hughes is devastated. Then she turns to rescuing other wildlife, doing further restoration work on her residence, developing her garden, constructing an aviary and writing and illustrating this captivating book.

— Ann Levin/AP



## 'Pageboy'

Elliot Page

This highly anticipated debut memoir from the trans actor, director and producer begins by warning that the book follows a non-linear narrative "because queerness is intrinsically nonlinear." The story flits from memory to memory, following a thread that crisscrosses his life in all its comedy and tragedy and mundanity. There are awkward teen parties, wild surprise car-chase stunts and kids kicking the soccer ball in the yard.

Page reads as a normal guy telling a meandering story that often dips into intimate, raw and powerful anecdotes.

Growing up splitting his time between divorced parents, Page describes a childhood that amounts to death by a thousand cuts. These come from bullies at school, toxic family dynamics, a stalker and a frequent lack of support and understanding.

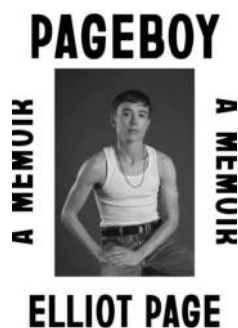
The bad is presented alongside the good. A tense emotional scene with his father is interrupted by a flashback to a family outing at the same spot, climbing up to see a spectacular view, then getting a scoop of ice cream.

If you're looking for a tell-all, know that Page respects people in their own journeys and leaves many of his former lovers and hookups unnamed. At the same time, he reveals intimate details about his relationship with people like actor Kate Mara, whose name appears in the acknowledgments among a list of friends Page reached out to while writing the book.

On the whole, reading "Pageboy" is like listening to a friend.

And by the time you reach the end, when Page thanks people for their support, it's impossible to miss the truth in his words: "I wouldn't be typing this right now if it weren't for you and your care."

— Donna Edwards/AP



## 'The Wind Knows My Name'

Isabel Allende

Prolific Latin American-born author Isabel Allende skillfully braids the traumatic stories of two young children separated from each other by decades and thousands of miles in her latest novel.

It's a kind of homage to parents who make unthinkable decisions to save their little ones, and to kids who survive some of the toughest challenges imaginable.

One fictional child featured in the book is 5-year-old Samuel Adler, whose father disappeared after the 1938 pogrom in Vienna known as Kristallnacht, or the Night of Broken Glass. The other is 7-year-old Anita Diaz, who fled her native El Salvador with her mother only for the pair to be separated in 2019 at the Arizona-Mexico border.

In both cases, the children are traveling by train and are ultimately left alone, torn from their families by war or immigration as we witness the dramatic sacrifices parents sometimes must make to protect their sons and daughters and give them the best lives possible.

Allende moves the story back and forth between Europe and the United States, switching between the past and present, as two very different children in very different places and circumstances search for the safety of home and family.

Through a series of circumstances, Samuel and Anita eventually meet through Leticia, a Salvadoran woman who migrated to the U.S. as a child herself after losing most of her family in the infamous 1981 massacre of hundreds of villagers in El Mozote, El Salvador.

It's a very different kind of book for Allende, who often places her stories in her native Latin America. With "The Wind Knows My Name," Allende has added a new dimension to her varied works.

— Anita Snow/AP



## Sky: Newman grateful for chance to clarify flight attendants' responsibilities

## FROM PAGE 18

was furloughed during the early days of the pandemic and never returned to the skies. Simon & Schuster announced a seven-figure deal for two books in February 2021, and her bestselling debut novel published that summer. Both novels sparked bidding wars for the film rights, and a third book is in the works.

"You don't work in an industry like aviation for 10 years and only have one idea like that," she said.

Newman's inspiration for "Drowning" came as she flew yet another red-eye from Hawaii to Los Angeles and thought about how she was gazing out the window at a void. If something went wrong, she wondered, how would anyone save them? How would the people on board save themselves?

Despite the nightmare scenarios, Newman said the book is

ultimately about rescue, hope, resilience and survival, with a focus on one fractured family.

"I think that people, once they realize that, their attitude shifts and the fear is not the predominant emotion," she said.

But still, Newman said, passengers should want their flight attendants and pilots to dwell on those worst-case scenarios.

"We are trained and conditioned to constantly be thinking about, in the unlikely event that something goes wrong, what's it going to look like and what am I going to do about it?" she said.

Newman tosses in some of the more common crises that unfold in the air, like what can happen to a laptop in extreme turbulence (it gets "lodged into the roof of the plane like an ax without a handle"). A passenger needs an EpiPen, but the plane's first-aid kit doesn't have one — an issue

that travelers rights groups have been hammering.

She said it's been fun to raise a curtain on why flight attendants ask passengers to do things like stow their large objects or bring their seat back up; it's not to control people or make them uncomfortable.

"Everything that a flight attendant asks you to do, I assure you, it's not personal," she said. "Everything we ask you to do is for your safety and your protection."

In the acknowledgments for "Drowning," Newman thanks the aviation community for their support of the books, and notes that she's seen pictures of crew reading her novel in the jump seat. She said the reception has been "truly overwhelming and beautiful" from the industry — including her mother and sister, who have both worked as flight attendants.

"I think the aviation community has really appreciated someone on the inside sort of giving a realistic depiction of what it's like on the line," she said. "The reception has been great because both of my books depict flight attendants as the heroes that they are."

She thinks the most misunderstood thing about flight attendants is that their main job is to pass out snacks and drinks.

"Service is just something we gladly provide," Newman said. "But if you have a heart attack, you know, I'm not going to bring you a Diet Coke. I'm going to bring the defibrillator and I'm gonna restart your heart."

As a full-time writer now, Newman said she's living her dream — but she misses some aspects of flying: the crew, the travel, "the passengers, most of them." She considers herself an

aviation geek and set both of her books on Airbus planes (an A320 and A321).

"Those were my planes," she said. "That was my home away from home."

For now, she's working on an adaptation of "Falling" for Universal Pictures, writing her third book and figuring out logistics for an upcoming book tour that includes the challenge of packing for 12 author events.

And when she travels now, Newman said she thinks about her flights in a totally different way: as source material. She said she doesn't sleep or read or watch a movie.

"I'm looking around, I'm going, 'Okay, what else on here could I potentially break and then have to fix?'" she said.

"How else could this go crazy and we have to figure out a solution?"



## WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



CAPCOM/TNS

Street Fighter 6 has a thorough tutorial mode with character guides, combo training and other options to teach the game to newcomers.

# Reimagining the Street Fighter franchise

Sixth title's solo RPG World Tour adds depth to series' world, while revamped tutorials help newbies learn basics of genre

BY GIESON CACHO  
The Mercury News

Street Fighter 6 is the most important fighting game to come out in more than a decade. It's not just another chapter in the genre's most venerable franchise. Capcom went all out to reimagine the scope of the series. From top to bottom, the game takes a broad look at fighting titles and tries to upend expectations while also keeping to its roots.

I had a chance to play Street Fighter 6 at Capcom's U.S. headquarters. I dabbled in the Fighting Grounds, which is where players will find traditional modes. Players also have an Arcade mode where they choose a fighter and take them through a short story told over five or 12 battles with bonus stages in between.

## Extreme battles, Versus Mode

Street Fighter 6 includes Extreme Battles, which is a party mode. Players can mix six different rule sets with six different gimmicks to create twists on traditional fights. The randomness and chaos of the gimmicks and rule sets evens out the playing field and will lead to amusing moments.

If players are more serious, they can check out one-on-one matches in Versus Mode, or they can even gather friends together for a Team Battle. Each person picks a character and goes head to head until he or she loses.

## A thorough way to learn

One of the best parts of Street Fighter 6 is how it revamps the tutorial process. If you're new to fighting games or just curious about them, this entry does the best

job at teaching players. The Training mode doesn't just flash a move command list. It guides players by showing them the type of each fighter (power, tricky, standard), effective range (long, medium or close) and ease of use (easy, normal and hard). It goes deeper from there with guides that teach players the theory and concepts behind each character.



I checked out the Character Guide for JP, and it elaborated upon how he's a ranged fighter. He's meant to keep players off balance with distance attacks, but if opponents manage to get close, he has a few moves that can knock them away. If players want to sharpen their skills to take everything they've learned from the Character Guide and Training mode, there is a Combo Trial, which tests how well they can perform combos. The tutorial is one of the best ways to learn fighting game lessons that go beyond Capcom's flagship title and extend to the whole genre.

## Enter the World Tour

While those elements serve to augment the competitive experience, Capcom also turned its sights on players who have an itch for a solo role-playing game experience, and created a World Tour. It's easily the most radical Street Fighter addition in years. Players create an avatar, and they join Luke's dojo called the Buckler Basic Training Course in Metro City. This part is another entry point in teaching players the gameplay, and also serves as a way to incorporate narrative and an open world.

Players get to explore the world that

they only saw snippets of in previous games. Along with becoming a student of Luke, players will have a rival named Bosch. As his students, Luke sends you out to explore Metro City and start fights with people.

Players will have to grind through several random fights and take on missions doled out by Alice, who looks like a hipster Pippi Longstocking. All of this levels your avatar up and gives hero experience points to put into the game's skill tree. Reaching higher levels also boosts core stats such as health and punching power.

## Heavy RPG elements

To help players get around, there are bus stops that act as fast travel points. But if they use them, players may miss ladders and other secret areas that have treasure chests containing gear.

Eventually, players will find Chun Li and they can become her student as well. Having multiple masters means that players can mix and match different fighting styles to craft their own fighter. That means, for instance, that I can use her Kikoken with Luke's Rising Uppercut. What's interesting to note is that though players can mix and match Special Moves, they will keep the base moves of the one master they choose to follow. (Don't worry; players can easily switch out the moves of their mentors through a menu.)

In the case of my manly character, he ended up with the risqué and feminine movements of Chun Li. It was amusing to see, but I ran with it.

Players have to keep in mind that just talking to a legendary fighter doesn't guarantee that the avatar becomes a student. The hero has to fulfill a quest. In Chun Li's

case, I had to watch over her student Li-Fen and talk to other students, which often meant impromptu matches.

## A Yakuza feel

As players explore, they'll run into bonus games and even rowdy thugs such as the Canary Crate Gang members. These baddies just rush at players. The whole experience makes Street Fighter 6 feel like the Yakuza games.

The one caveat is that it's in a 2D space, and that can make battles difficult, especially if enemies such as drones surround players. It can be hard to figure out which way to block. What's more interesting is that after each fight, players won't be healed, and that calls for them to use healing items, which can be picked up from random scrums or purchased.

Stores sell knickknacks and clothing items that boost stats while they're worn. Meanwhile, food spots offer goods that temporarily raise stats and heal players.

Lastly, players can build relationships with their teachers. They can buy gifts for them at shops and complete quests for them. That gives them the ability to call on the legendary fighters for help during battles. All of this creates a fairly intriguing campaign and expands the Street Fighter world, giving it depth it never had before.

The big question is whether the story can keep players' attention and be woven in a way that accentuates the core gameplay. If this World Tour feels tacked on, then it could be a huge miss on an idea that has serious potential.

**Platforms:** PlayStation 5, PlayStation 4, Xbox Series X and Series S, and PC

**Online:** streetfighter.com/6



## WEEKEND: TRAVEL

# Village charm among Paris' market streets

As I dodge Parisians walking their poodles and pushing baby strollers down a busy market street, I'm reminded that one of the reasons Paris is endlessly entertaining is its thriving neighborhoods. On streets such as Rue des Martyrs, everyday people make cozy communities in the midst of this vast, high-powered and touristy city. Along these friendly streets, you find a warm and human vibrancy you'd miss if just hopping from big museum to museum.

While traffic-free Rue Cler, near the Eiffel Tower, is my favorite market street in Paris, Rue des Martyrs, at the base of Montmartre, exudes a younger and trendier, less-touristy market ambiance.

Strung across the road above me, a banner announces a neighborhood *vide grenier* ("empty your attic") sale. At a *boulangerie* (bakery), a sign in the window brags its baguettes were voted the best in Paris. And next to me, a line of Vespas is poised to deliver sushi for the next online order. (In this affluent neighborhood, delivery services like this are booming.)

Paris is one of the most densely populated cities in Europe, which makes streets like this one particularly lively. Population density is great news for fishmongers, flower merchants and bakers. In some areas, fishmongers and butchers are being replaced with trendy coffee shops and deli-type restaurants, but a traditional

bakery still seems in demand.

Rue des Martyrs leads toward the center of Paris from the busy Boulevard de Clichy. As you wander, you feel the reality of raising a family and a sense of neighborhood in this urban setting. Still, security is a concern. Several side streets are *voie privée* — private lanes for high-rise, gated communities. Behind big carriage doors, lanes lead to peaceful inner courtyards serving clusters of apartments.



Rick Steves

Shopping for groceries is not a mere errand here; it's an integral part of the culture. Parisians shop almost daily for three good reasons: Refrigerators are small (tiny kitchens), produce must be fresh, and it's an important social routine. Shopping is a chance to hear about the butcher's vacation plans, see photos of the florist's new grandchild, relax over un *café* and kiss the cheeks of friends. In a Parisian neighborhood like this, people know their merchants as if it were a village.

Goods spill onto the sidewalk. And locals happily pay more at a shop that's not part of a chain. The corner *charcuterie* still sells various meats. But it's morphed with the times by offering more variety, prepared dishes sold by the weight and even a few tables so that customers can eat in and linger as well as take out.



DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCCELLI/Rick Steves' Europe

The local *pâtisserie* is a key stop in any Parisian's grocery routine.

Across the street is one of the countless late-night groceries. They are generally run by immigrants who are willing to work the night shift for the convenience of others. And well-to-do locals gladly pay high prices for this convenience. I've been warned that any place advertising prices by the half-kilo is trying to mask a very high markup.

The cheese shop has been serving the neighborhood ever since it used to keep goats and cows out back. This *fromagerie* preserves its community roots with vintage aluminum milk jugs and old marble shelves stacked high with pungent cheeses. You won't see any mass-market dairy names at this store — it sells only the products of small artisan farms.

About a block away is the butcher locals head to for top-grade beef. The ceiling

hooks — where butchers once hung sides of beef — now display a red medallion that certifies the slaughtered cow's quality. Freshness is expected.

At the *pâtisserie*, you can jostle with a discerning and salivating clientele for the tasty, delicate and typically French works of art. They bake up special treats for each season: Easter, Christmas and so on.

Rue des Martyrs finishes with a commercial climax before ending at the neighborhood church — the Neoclassical (from 1836) Notre Dame de Lorette. And from there, steps lead into the Métro, where all of Paris is a cheap Métro ticket and a few minutes away.

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

## Sounds of summer include your favorite artists at these festivals

For many music lovers, a highlight of the European summer is the chance to see a favorite artist perform live on stage, and when the act in question plays as part of a festival lineup, the experience can be electrifying.

Here are a few tour dates of today's chart-topping artists and possible things to do while in the neighborhood. Some dates given are those of solo shows, others are when the act performs as part of a festival lineup.



Karen Bradbury

### Harry Styles

Tour dates: London, UK, June 13-17; Cardiff, UK, June 20-21; Düsseldorf, Germany, June 27-28; Warsaw, Poland, July 2; Frankfurt, Germany, July 5-6; Vienna, Austria, July 8; Barcelona, Spain, July 12; Mad Cool Festival, Madrid, Spain, July 14; Lisbon, Portugal, July 18; Reggio Emilia, Italy, July 22.

Explore: Harry Styles takes to the stage in Barcelona on July 12. The British indie group Wet Leg is the opening act. Before or after the concert, seek out sun and sand at one of northern Spain's coastal resort towns. Return to Barcelona by July 15, when the Barcelona Pride Parade will attract many thousands of loud and proud revelers.

### Lizzo

European tour dates: Open'er Festival, Gdynia, Poland, June 28; Lollapalooza Stockholm, Stockholm, Sweden, June 30; Roskilde Festival, Roskilde, Denmark, July 1; Luxexpo Open Air, Luxembourg City, Luxembourg, July 3; Mad Cool Festival, Madrid, Spain, July 6; Nos Alive, Lisbon, Portugal, July 7; North Sea Jazz Festival, Rotterdam, Netherlands, July 9.

Explore: The Open'er Festival takes place June 28-July 1 in Gdynia, Poland. Artists in this year's lineup include



AMY HARRIS, INVISION/AP

Lizzo, shown May 27 at the Napa Valley Expo in Napa, Calif., starts her European tour in late June.

Arctic Monkeys, Kendrick Lamar, Lil Nas X, Machine Gun Kelly, OneRepublic, Queens of the Stone Age and others. Gdynia, a port city along the Baltic Coast, offers modern architecture and maritime history; nearby Sopot is a resort town with numerous wellness facilities and a long wooden pier. Don't miss a visit to Gdansk, a tourist's delight with its medieval flair, monuments and great restaurants.

### Imagine Dragons

European tour dates: Sofia, Bulgaria, July 30; Untold Festival, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, Aug. 4; Rome, Italy, Aug. 5; Pula, Croatia, Aug. 8 and 9; Sziget Festival, Budapest, Hungary, Aug. 11; Warsaw, Poland, Aug. 14; Vilnius, Lithuania, Aug. 16; Frequency Festival, St. Poelten, Austria, Aug. 18; Lovestream Festival, Bratislava, Slovakia, Aug.

20; Paris, France, Aug. 23; Leeds Festival, Leeds, UK, Aug. 25; Reading Festival, Reading, UK, Aug. 27; Superbloom Festival, Munich, Germany, Sept. 3; Athens, Greece, Sept. 6; Chambord, France, Sept. 8; Lollapalooza Berlin, Berlin, Germany, Sept. 10.

Explore: The Lovestream Festival in Bratislava takes place Aug. 18-20 and features The Killers, Jason Derulo, Rag'n'Bone Man, along with the DJs Hardwell and Martin Garrix. A trip to Vienna could include visit to Africa Days (Aug. 11-28), a festival offering roots, reggae and other genres, a bazaar and culinary specialties. Online: wien.afrika-tage.de

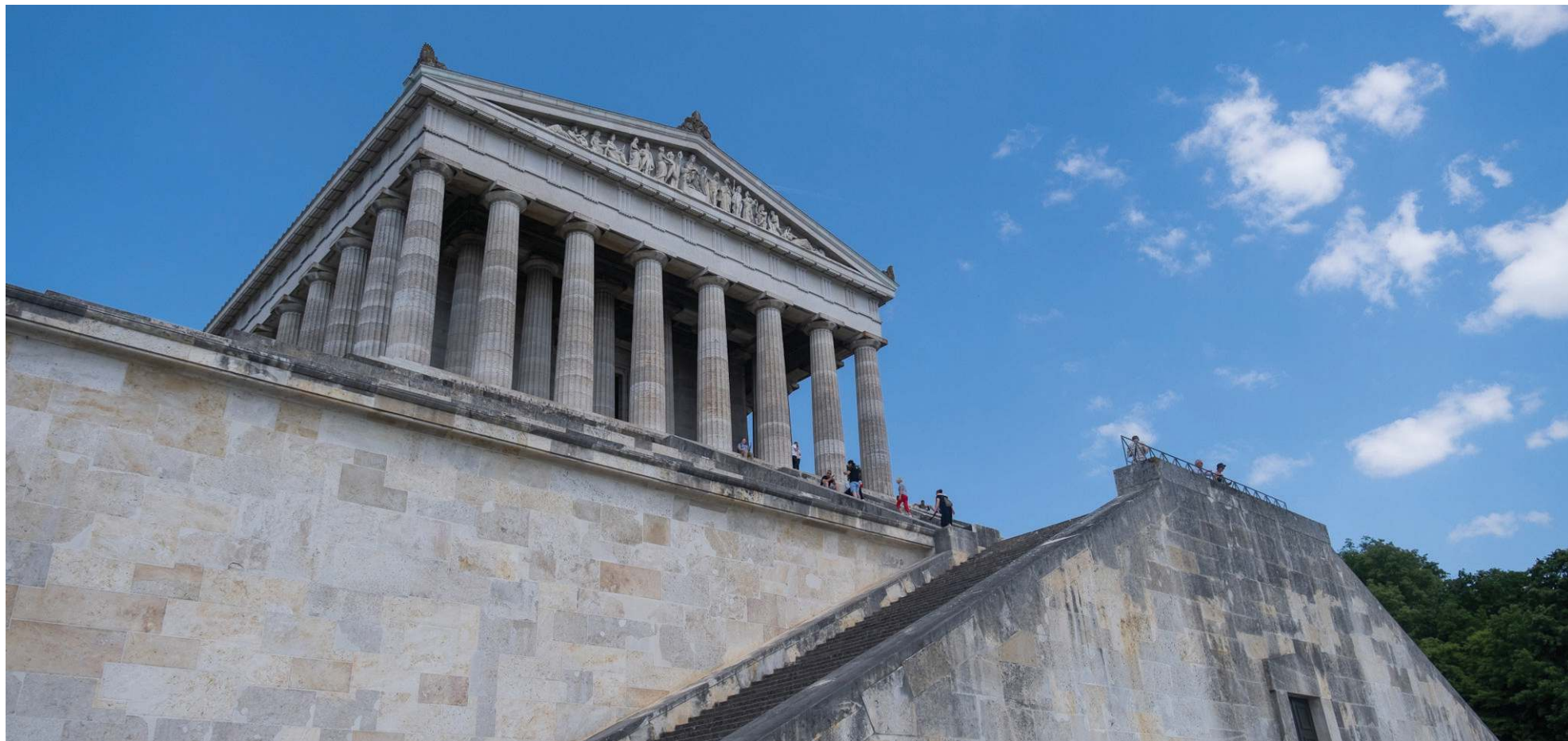
### OneRepublic

European tour dates: London, June 14; Pinkpop, Landgraaf, Netherlands, June 18; Mönchengladbach, Germany, June 21; Hamburg, Germany, June 22; Wiblingen, Germany, June 24; Wiesbaden, Germany, June 25; Open'er Festival, Gdynia, Poland, June 28; Nibe Festival, Nibe, Denmark, June 30; Lollapalooza Stockholm, Stockholm, Sweden, July 1; Bonn, Germany, July 4; Kestenholz, Switzerland, July 5; Moosburg, Austria, July 7; Klam, Austria, July 8; Rome, Italy, July 11; Naples, Italy, July 12; Mantova, Italy, July 14; Moon & Stars Festival, Locarno, Switzerland, July 15; Lucca, Italy, July 16; Colours of Ostrava, Ostrava, Czech Republic, July 19; Rosenheim, Germany, July 21; Salem, Germany, July 22; Lollapalooza Paris, Paris, France, July 23.

Explore: OneRepublic performs as a solo act in Lucca on July 16. Prior to the concert, Lucca invites exploration with its medieval walls topped by pedestrian promenades, ceramics shops and churches. Just over a one-hour drive away is found the small city of Certaldo, site of the Mercantia Festival, running July 12-16. Online: mercantiaceraldo.it



## WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL SLAVIN/Stars and Stripes

Walhalla's 358 marble steps climb the hillside on which the monument was built in the 1840s. The Danube River forms the backdrop to the monument, located in Regensburg.

# King Ludwig I's ode to ancient Greece

The Walhalla in Regensburg honors German luminaries but is architecturally similar to the Parthenon in Athens

BY MICHAEL SLAVIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

When flights to Athens get too expensive for U.S. military families stationed in southeastern Germany or time is just too short, a closer option offers architecture like that of ancient Greece as well as dazzling views of Bavarian surroundings.

Walhalla might not date from the 400s B.C. like the Parthenon, but this memorial just outside Regensburg shares some of the beauty of the Athenian wonder while being nestled in the hills above the Danube River.

Finished in 1842, Walhalla derives its name from the resting place of fallen warriors in Norse mythology.

Similar to such other extravagant 19th-century buildings as Neuschwanstein Castle and the palaces of Linderhof and Herrenchiemsee, Walhalla started as an idea in the head of King Ludwig I, who is depicted on a colossal statue inside.

Walhalla was designed as a hall of fame to honor German-speaking people who made contributions to society. It is now one of the most recognizable memorials in Bavaria and makes for a breathtaking vantage point.

Interested in learning more about the history and construction of the monument? English and German virtual tours can be downloaded via the Walhalla app.

## On the QT

**Address:** Walhallastrasse 48, Donaustauf, Germany

**Hours:** April-October, 9 a.m.-6 p.m., November-March, 10 a.m.-noon and 1-4 p.m.

**Cost:** 4.50 euros regular, 4 euros for certain groups, 12 euros for combination ticket

**Information:** Online: [schloesser.bayern.de/deutsch/schloss/objekte/walhalla.htm](https://schloesser.bayern.de/deutsch/schloss/objekte/walhalla.htm); Phone: +49 9403-961-680

Michael Slavin

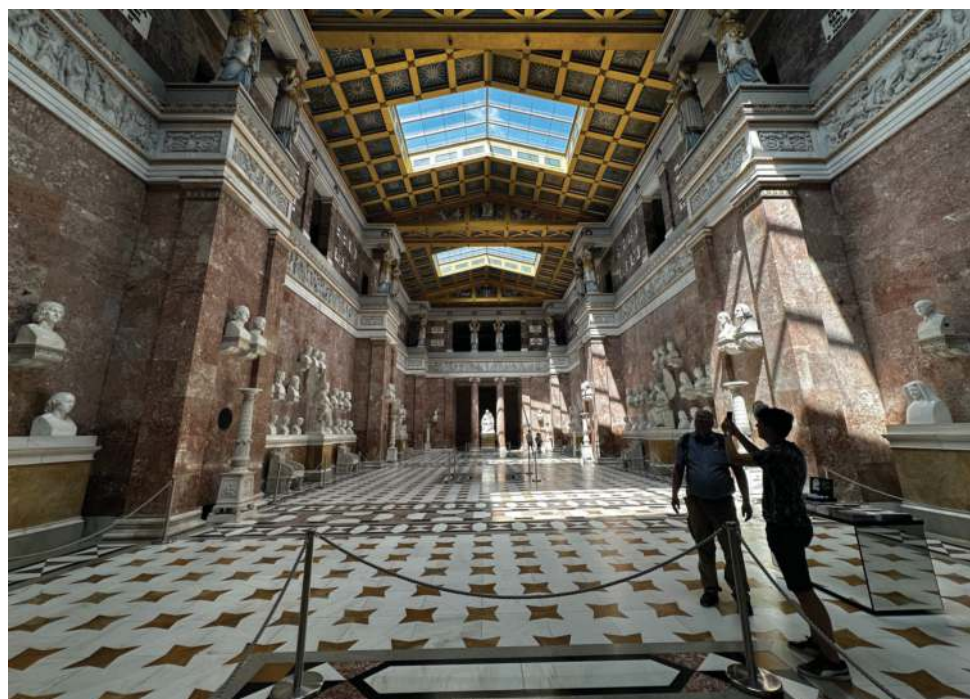
It costs nothing to take in the majesty of the place from the outside. An entrance fee is charged only to visitors who want to go inside. Those who do will find 132 busts and 65 plaques of luminaries of German-speaking lands. This list includes rulers, generals, scientists, politicians, musicians, writers and artists.

The hillside next to the monument is also a popular place for family picnics, and having drinks on the 358-step marble staircase on the front side is also a popular pastime.

It takes less than 45 minutes to walk around the site. There is also a variety of hiking trails and a small kiosk with snacks and refreshments.

A combination ticket allows entrance to the nearby Liberation Hall in Kelheim and Prunn Castle in Schlossprunn.

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Inside Walhalla are 132 busts and 65 plaques honoring a range of luminaries deemed significant contributors to the culture of German-speaking lands. At the far end is a statue dedicated to the man who dreamed up the monument, King Ludwig I of Bavaria.



Figures whose busts are displayed at Walhalla include Mozart (third from left), Immanuel Kant, Martin Luther and Otto von Bismarck.



## WEEKEND: FOOD &amp; DINING

# Bringing good vibes to Kaiserslautern

US Army veteran finally realizes his dream of opening Jamaican brick-and-mortar restaurant based on his food truck

By J.P. LAWRENCE  
Stars and Stripes

U.S. Army veteran Ramon Green, the owner of a new Jamaican eatery in Kaiserslautern, Germany, used to daydream with his fellow soldiers about opening a restaurant one day.

After leaving the military, Green opened a food truck and for the past three years has served spicy jerk chicken to soldiers at Kleber Kaserne. The smoky aromas from his barbecues each morning attracted long lines of Americans, who became regular customers.

But Green's ultimate culinary dream was delayed until January, when he opened Good Vibes, an eatery in downtown Kaiserslautern next to Stiftsplatz.

The restaurant's atmosphere lives up to its name, with soft, yellow lighting and reggae music playing in the background.

Green said about 90% of his customers so far are Americans who know him from his food truck, whose specialty is jerk chicken. And that is the most popular dish at Good Vibes.

Jerk refers to a method of seasoning, smoking and grilling meat, and it has deep ties to Jamaican history.

Slaves who escaped from plantations on the island learned how to smoke meats using local spices from the indigenous Taino people, according to a 2020 article in Smithsonian magazine.

Smoking was important, as an open fire to cook it could reveal an escaped slave's location, the article said.

Green cooked jerk chicken while working at Jamaican eateries in New York. He said Good Vibes draws on that experience as well as his upbringing as part of a family that loved to cook.

The family moved from Spanish Town, Jamaica, when he was 17 in search of economic opportunities in the U.S.

Green joined the Army when he was 22, swayed by "cool commercials." He said he picked a job that could teach him logistics, as even then he dreamed of his restaurant.

Proper jerk chicken takes time to make, Green said. His recipe involves covering chicken quarters in an overnight marinade of thyme, scallions, garlic, ginger, allspice, Scotch bonnet peppers and a bit of soy sauce and vinegar.

The result is leg and thigh pieces that are smoky yet sweet, with a hint of heat. Jamaican food can be very spicy, but Green said he tones it down to ensure



PHOTOS BY J.P. LAWRENCE/Stars and Stripes

Ramon Green, a U.S. Army veteran who dreamed of owning a restaurant, opened Good Vibes, a Jamaican eatery in Kaiserslautern, in January.



## AFTER HOURS GERMANY

### Good Vibes Jamaican Restaurant

**Address:** Muenchstrasse 12, Kaiserslautern, Germany

**Hours:** Wednesday and Thursday, 5-10 p.m.; Friday, 5 p.m.-midnight; Saturday, 2 p.m.-midnight; Sunday, 2 p.m.-10 p.m.; closed Monday and Tuesday.

**Prices:** Jerk, curry and stewed chicken main dishes are 14-15 euros and come with two sides. Beef oxtail and seafood dishes are 20 euros or more. Salads are 6-7 euros.

**Information:** Phone: +49 631 31181937, Online: facebook.com/goodvibeskaiserautern

J.P. Lawrence

that everyone can enjoy it.

Of course, some like it hot, so there are hot sauces available to add a dash of fire.

Green said one benefit of having a brick-and-mortar location is that his food truck regulars can sample other dishes that he can't make out of a trailer.

These include braised beef oxtail, a dish that proved to be tender and savory, with the stewed meat falling off the bone.

The restaurant also has sea-

food, such as red snapper, which was well-cooked and covered in a sweet brown sauce, and jerk prawn pasta, in which shrimp is doused in spicy jerk sauce.

The restaurant also features ackee and saltfish, the national dish of Jamaica. Ackee is a fruit that's cooked to be savory. It tastes somewhat like scrambled eggs and has a texture resembling that of canned mushrooms.

The saltfish adds a contrasting flavor to the ackee, which notably is poisonous if eaten while unripe.

A few vegan and vegetarian options are available, too. The ackee can be ordered without saltfish. In addition, the restaurant offers callaloo, a stewed leafy green vegetable, and salads.

During my visit, the fried plantains surprised a few American customers, who didn't expect to like them. Good Vibes also features a bar with Jamaican beers such as Red Stripe and Dragon Stout as well as imported rums.

The restaurant is still experimenting with the menu, Green said. He said he's taking a lot of lessons from his time as a unit supply specialist in the Army.

"I just felt like this was the right opportunity, the right time, and this is where preparation met opportunity," Green said.

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The signature dish of Good Vibes is jerk chicken, which is marinated in spices before being cooked on a barbecue.



Good Vibes' menu includes red snapper, which is served in a sweet brown sauce and sourced from London.



# WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY JUAN KING/Stars and Stripes

Joypolis in Tokyo's Odabia district boasts three floors of interactive games and virtual and real thrill rides.

## Active thrills, scary chills await at Tokyo's Joypolis

Massive indoor theme park built by Sega an enjoyable outing for all ages

BY JUAN KING  
Stars and Stripes

Summer is almost here and nothing spells fun and excitement better than a large indoor amusement park in Tokyo.

Odaiba, a man-made island in Tokyo, is home to Joypolis, one of a chain of indoor parks built by video game giant Sega. The Odaiba version, billed as the largest indoor theme park in Japan, boasts three floors of interactive games and virtual and real thrill rides for nonstop enjoyment.

A passport ticket grants you admission and on all the rides for the day for 5,000 yen, or about \$36, for adults and 4,000 yen for children.

On the first floor, the Gekion Live Coaster, a ride that went overhead with its twisting track and screaming passengers, quickly grabbed my family's attention. A short wait in a bustling atmosphere with blaring music had us soon experiencing what the excitement was all about.

Halfpipe Tokyo was another much-anticipated ride, for which we waited 45 minutes. It simulated the thrills of snowboarding performed in a half-pipe of snow, a sport I have never experienced. After strapping in, my son and I needed some floor-pressing teamwork. We came out on the low end; my wife and mother earned the higher score.

Another standout ride was Transformers Human-Alliance Special, based on the popular movie franchise. For this experience, we strapped inside a yellow-and-black sphere for a jerky, spinning and upside-down flying simulation, battling alongside our allies against the evil Decepticons.



Wild Jungle Brothers, a ride at Joypolis in Tokyo, simulates falling off cliffs, going through caves and forging into deep jungle.

On the second floor, we sampled Pirate's Plunder, Spicy Taxi and House of the Dead: Scarlet Dawn, the latter a zombie-themed first-person shooter game.

The top floor had adult-themed attractions, like Murder Lodge, a sensory deprivation horror experience, and Sadako: The Curse Psychic Manor, based on the Japanese horror movie. We steered clear of those and, with my son in tow, chose more family-friendly rides.

The simulated rides with large screens — Wild Jungle Brothers, Wild River: The Treasure Hunt and Wild Wing — fit the bill.

The Wild Jungle Brothers ride plummets you off cliffs, through caves and into deep jungle in a large, all-terrain vehicle to your final destination.

Another hurled you on a raft through a raging river, and the last had us high flying precariously through another unrealistic adventure. Each ride fits up to 12 passengers and lasts about five minutes.

There were plenty of food options on each floor, plus rest areas. We enjoyed delicious crêpes at a food truck inside, but also tried other snacks at the Digital Entertainment Lounge food counter on the second floor.

While eating, we observed other visitors engaging with interactive screens and games in that area. A digital facial scanner allows you to transplant your face onto a floating manatee and feed it with the push of a button.

Note that there are height requirements for some rides.

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Halfpipe Tokyo simulates the thrills of snowboarding.



A scanner allows you to transplant your face onto a floating manatee and feed it with the push of a button.

### On the QT

**Directions:** A short walk from Odaiba Kaihin Kouen Station. 1-6-1 Daiba, Minato-ku, Tokyo

**Times:** Open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday; 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Friday; and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

**Costs:** General admission is 1,200 yen for adults; 900 yen for children 7 to 17 years old; 5,000-yen passport ticket for adults; 4,000 yen for children.

**Dress:** Casual

**Food:** Plenty of snack options throughout the complex. Bring plenty of yen as some places do not take credit cards.

**Information:** 03-5500-1801; Online: [tokyo-joypolis.com/language/english](http://tokyo-joypolis.com/language/english)

Juan King



## Month of the Military Child

The PTO of Shirley Lanham Elementary School at Atsugi received a \$250 NEX Gift Card as the prize recipient of the Stars and Stripes Pacific's Month of the Military Child 2023 promotion. Shirley Lanham Elementary School had 100% submission during this year's Month of the Military Child promotion.

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

# A quick drop-in for clean eating

Japanese convenience store specializes in vegan, organic and gluten-free snacks

By **RAY McINTOSH**  
For Stars and Stripes

**W**eller in central Tokyo makes the improbable match of convenience store food with “clean eating.”

Vegan, vegetarian or gluten-free diners can find options — from bento boxes to groceries — just a short walk from the New Sanno Hotel in Tokyo.

The entire store is filled with vegan, “raw vegan” and gluten-free products, including a selection of fresh bentos made daily.

Weller products are free of chemical additives, according to the company’s website. The store claims that from “production to purchase, we offer plant-based, additive-free and healthier products.”

Refrigerated items include onigiri, noodle dishes, soups and salads. A wide selection of drinks is available, and the frozen section has vegan items from American brands such as Amy’s pizza and burritos.

Shoppers will find soups and baking mixes, as well as staples such as vegetables, grains, nuts and seeds. About a third of the



**AFTER HOURS JAPAN**

items sold are sweets and desserts, and another third can be considered snack foods. Coffee and tea can be ordered at check-out.

The prices for refrigerated items are on par with standard chain stores such as 7-Eleven, and prices for shelved items are slightly higher than average. Food items are roughly 600-900 yen per item. A Weller’s point card earns one point for every 500 yen spent, with a free drink at 10 points.

Weller has plenty of options for everyone, from vegan and vegetarian to gluten-free and organic in a Japanese-style convenience store.

Weller is an 80-minute drive or train ride from Yokota Air Base and an hour from Camp Zama or Naval Air Facility Atsugi. And it’s just 15 minutes by foot or 5 minutes by car from the New Sanno Hotel.



PHOTOS BY RAY McINTOSH/For Stars and Stripes

Weller in central Tokyo offers plenty of options for everyone, from vegan and vegetarian to gluten-free and organic in a Japanese-style convenience stores. The store is a 15-minute walk from the New Sanno Hotel.

**Weller**

**Location:** 1-15-4 1F Shibuya City, Ebisu, Tokyo 150-0013  
**Hours:** Open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday; delivery hours are 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. on those days.  
**Prices:** Most items range from 50 yen to 2,000 yen  
**Dress:** Casual  
**Directions:** A two-minute walk from the east exit of Ebisu Station.  
**Information:** Online: [liveweller.jp](http://liveweller.jp)

Ray McIntosh



About one third of Weller’s offerings are sweets and desserts.

**Seared Pork Chops with Fennel and Herb Salad**

This pork chop recipe can be completed in about 30 minutes.

**Ingredients**

- Kosher salt and ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon minced rosemary
- 1 tablespoon fennel seeds
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- Four 8-ounce bone-in center cut pork chops, each about 1-inch thick, patted dry
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 tablespoons salted butter, cut into 2 pieces
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 large fennel bulb, halved lengthwise, cored and thinly sliced crosswise
- 3 scallions, thinly sliced
- 1 cup lightly packed fresh flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped

**Directions**

In a spice grinder, combine 1½ teaspoons salt, 1 teaspoon black pepper, the rosemary, fennel seeds and pepper flakes. Process to a fine powder, about 10 seconds. Measure ½ teaspoon into a medium bowl and set aside.

Sprinkle the remainder onto both sides of the pork chops, then rub the seasonings into the meat.

In a 12-inch skillet over medium-high, heat 2 tablespoons of oil until barely smoking. Add the chops and cook until well browned on the bottom, 3 to 5 minutes. Flip and cook until the centers reach 135°F, another 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer to a platter and tent with foil. With the pan still over medium-high, add ¼ cup water and scrape up any browned bits. Add the butter and whisk until incorporated, then stir in 1 tablespoon of lemon juice. Taste and season with salt and black pepper. Remove from the heat and cover to keep warm.

To the bowl with the spice mix, whisk in the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and the remaining 2 tablespoons lemon juice. Add the fennel, scallions and parsley, then toss to combine. Taste and season with salt and pepper. Pour the sauce over the chops and serve with the fennel salad.

Christopher Kimball’s Milk Street

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## WEEKEND: TRAVEL



## Flower power

PHOTOS BY MICHEL EULER/AP

A view of the perfume gardens of the Chateau de Versailles, west of Paris, on May 25. The Versailles flower gardens have been reimagined to give today's public a glimpse — and a sniff — into the gilded palace's olfactory past.

## Versailles perfume gardens take public back in time to 17th century French court

BY THOMAS ADAMSON  
Associated Press

The Versailles flower gardens were once a symbol of the French king's expeditionary might and helped water-deprived courtiers perfume their skin. Now, they have been reimagined to give today's public a glimpse — and a sniff — into the gilded palace's olfactory past.

Holding secrets to the original concept of flower power, scents of Bulgarian rose, mint and citrus from hundreds of vividly colored historic blooms unveiled last month waft into the nostrils of paying visitors at the Chateauneuf Orangery of the Grand Trianon, transporting them back in time.

"Those discovering the gardens will, from flower to flower, understand what we loved in history," Versailles Palace president Catherine Pegard said. "Many are the original scents."

The aim of the Perfumer's Garden is to unlock the mysteries and significance behind the scented flowers of the 17th-century French court — and remind us that it was no accident that the Versailles Palace was where the job of perfumer was actually invented during that century.

The gardens sprawl in four sections, reimagining the vision of the Sun King, Louis XIV, who wanted his grounds to overflow with the scents of orange blossom, hyacinth, tuberose and jasmine. The king had a practical reason for his obsessions: Following the plague that killed tens of millions of people in the Middle Ages in Europe, people feared that hot water could spread infection. Courtiers instead washed with alcohol rubs and used scents to mask bodily odors.

But there was also a diplomatic explanation for these floral obsessions: The king's flower collection served as a means of projecting strength as France became the

world's greatest power in that century.

"Versailles was all about olfactory diplomacy in those days. Flower meant power. Dignitaries were impressed by the exotic flowers because only the king — who was now very powerful — had the money to fund expeditions to bring back exotic blooms," said Giovanni Delu, one of the garden's creators. "It's a vegetal cabinet of curiosities."

Delu said that court-funded expeditions brought back fashionable plants — many of which feature in the new perfumer's gardens — from far-flung South Asia that were "nursed" or acclimatized in the French soil of Brittany, before being planted in Versailles. Any French nobleman who wanted to replant the prized flowers in his grounds had to first be granted a royal charter or face punishment.

The stories of Versailles' modern gardeners convey the hidden intrigue, humor, knowledge and mystery the flowers once held. Vibrant historical anecdotes flow freely from their mouths, unveiling an unending trove of historical color. Legend has it that Louis XIV loved the orange blossom, as featured in the garden, so much that his courtiers doused themselves in it to curry favor, at one point causing the king to faint. The scent from some blooms was so intense that the bulbs during this latest venture had to be physically separated in the gardens so that they didn't conspire to produce an undesirable — or equally intoxicating — nasal mix.

There were unexpected twists in its conception. A "secret garden" — with four brick walls — was only properly discovered and renovated on the site recently, sending ripples of excitement among the Versailles gardening staff. Now a sanctuary, it has been adorned with plant species so delicate that only the head gardener has the right to handle them. One 17th-century plant now growing there called the fire-

thorn — which leaves a delightful citrus smell on the fingers when rubbed — is prized and feared because it literally catches on fire with the slightest heat.

Another flower holds secrets in its petals to the love story of Louis XV, an obsessive botanist, and his mistress Madame de Pompadour.

"Louis XV sent botanical species 'hunters' around the world to bring species back, because he and his mistress expressed their love through a shared passion for flowers," gardener Fulvia Grandizio said.

Grandizio claimed that Louis XV used one of the world's very first prototype greenhouses here to nurse his plants — a version of which is on display now. Lovingly caressing the flower with billowing pink-red petals called the calycanthus, Grandizio said nostalgically it was Madame de Pompadour's favorite.

Yet the garden has its villains. Grandizio's eyes narrowed when she spoke of Marie Antoinette. It was bad, she said, that the French-Austrian queen wasn't interested in keeping up the scientific work of the previous king, Louis XV, in exotic flowers — and was taken instead with the heady ideas of the Enlightenment thinkers and unbridled nature.

"It's a real shame when Marie Antoinette arrived at Versailles that she transformed what Louis XV built, the big greenhouse and the plant nursery, into a wild English garden," Grandizio said, with a hint of sadness.

Despite that claim, Marie Antoinette loved flowers, and was at the heart of the development of perfume.

"She's not that bad. History has been unkind to her," Grandizio added.

The Versailles Perfumer's Garden opened on May 30, in collaboration with high-end perfume company Maison Francis Kurkdjian.



Some of the different flowers at the perfume gardens of the Chateau de Versailles include, from top to bottom, *Tagetes Erecta*, rose of Bulgaria, *Abelia Mosanensis* and *Iris Pallida*.



A view of the secret garden at the perfume gardens of the Chateau de Versailles. This garden was only properly discovered and renovated on the site recently.



## WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

**‘Now or never’**

Fans going to ever more outrageous lengths, and costs, to see their favorite performers, both in US and abroad

By NATALIE B. COMPTON  
*The Washington Post*

**B**eyoncé and Bruce Springsteen have taken over Europe. Taylor Swift reigns over the United States. And country legends Willie Nelson, Shania Twain and Luke Combs are selling out shows at home and abroad. That means even if your social media feeds are already dominated by pictures of stadium stages and festival fields, you can expect much more concert content from your friends, family and nemeses through the fall.

It seems like everyone is going to see live music right now — and that’s despite sticker shock for concert tickets and travel. The summer of concert travel is coinciding with high travel prices “across the board,” said Duncan Greenfield-Turk, managing director and chief travel designer for Global Travel Moments. It won’t be cheap. But fans are making it work.

Like Bodie Lowe and Cassidy Crawford, both 25, who are known as the “resident Swifties” at the public relations firm where they work in Austin, Texas. When Swift announced the Eras Tour, a 60-plus stop homage to her greatest hits, the question wasn’t if they’d go, but how many times?

“We were like ‘we’re going all out,’” Crawford said. “We have real jobs now. We have credit cards.”

The co-workers scored two third-row tickets for Swift’s stop in Houston for about \$550 each. Then Lowe bought a \$600 VIP floor ticket (which includes a bunch of merch) for an LA tour date he’ll catch with college friends. Crawford will see 13 shows, from opening night in Arizona, to Dallas, to four in LA (she says the average cost of those tickets was \$260).

Since the tour was announced in November 2022, Crawford anticipated prices would be outrageous. She went into her ticket hunt knowing she could buy some with savings and pay off others over time. Instead of getting price-gouged on StubHub and SeatGeek, Crawford bought her tickets by tracking Twitter accounts like @ErasTourResell for tickets being resold at face value, or finding a friend with a “verified fan” Ticketmaster account who had access to presales. For concert accommodations, Crawford’s staying with friends and family or sharing hotel rooms, taking public transportation where she can. She tracked airfare prices and bought flights as early as possible.

And in this don’t-take-life-for-granted, post-pandemic era, all of that money and effort is worth it.

“I think it was just so obvious that it was now or never,” Crawford said.

These concert travelers feel the same:

### Seeing Beyoncé in Paris for just \$103 a ticket

Keyarna Pittman, 44, first discovered concerts are significantly cheaper in Europe on a trip to London in 2018, when she found tickets to see Beyoncé and Jay-Z’s On The Run II tour for \$125 apiece (in North America, they averaged \$403). So when “Renaissance” dates were released, Pittman immediately signed up for the chance to buy tickets in Paris, then locked in hotel reservations and plane tickets in case prices surged when tickets actually went on sale.

Her plan worked. Pittman and her husband, Wayne, 51, got concert tickets for about \$103 per person. With their airfare to Paris from Virginia’s Dulles International Airport (including a 10-hour stop in Casablanca on the way there and an overnight layover in Istanbul on the way home), hotels and the concert, the trip came out to about \$1,000 each.

The couple saw celebrities such as Kris Jenner and Pharrell walk by to the VIP area. Better yet, Beyoncé’s daughter Blue Ivy came on stage for her first surprise performance of the tour.

“Everybody was screaming,” said Pitt-

man, an interior designer and travel agent. “You just feel, like, the love in the room from everybody, all cultures, everything. It was just amazing.”

### Three weeks, \$30,000 to see the Boss. Twice.

Not everyone goes to Europe to save on concert tickets. Last summer, Greenfield-Turk arranged an eight-day trip for a family of four from the East Coast to the U.K. to see two Harry Styles concerts, which added up to roughly \$50,000. It would have been even more to plan the same trip this summer. “With the pricing of gigs at the moment ... and adding on all the transportation ... things are getting more costly at the moment,” he said.

But money wasn’t an issue for a client of Susie McMahon, owner of Luxurious Journeys. The travel planner recently coordinated a trip for a father and his 19-year-old son to see Springsteen in Barcelona and Dublin (plus a Springsteen-free stop in Lisbon) that was close to \$30,000, excluding concert tickets.

The three-week adventure included a mix of four- and five-star hotels such as El Palace in Barcelona, where during their stay, former president Barack Obama,



T.J. KOZIKOWSKI AND MARY WILLETT

**T.J. Kozikowski and Mary Willett saw Bruce Springsteen in Italy in May.**

first lady Michelle director Steven Spielberg and Springsteen had dinner together.

### Using miles and points to see Springsteen in Italy

Two years ago, Mary Willett, 65, and T.J. Kozikowski, 60, had a dream getaway to Italy canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic. The New Jersey residents, both huge Bruce Springsteen fans, decided to revive their original trip plan when they saw that the Boss was touring Europe. They couldn’t get tickets in Rome but could snag a pair in Ferrara. They planned a trip around the show with stays in Venice, Bologna, Tuscany and the capital.

The couple used credit card points to book airfare and Marriott points for a hotel when they weren’t staying in Airbnbs (about \$100 per night), so they were able to save significantly on key parts of the trip. But there was one hurdle: With rental car prices outrageously high, how would they get from Bologna to Ferrara for the concert?

Willett crowdsourced the answer from Springsteen superfans.

“I belong to a Facebook group called ‘Spring Nuts,’ and they helped a lot,” Willett said. “I found a bus called Bus for Fun that left from Bologna directly to the concert in Ferrara.” Two round-trip tickets set them back less than \$40 total.

### Mexico to Minneapolis for a daughter’s first concert

John Peter Larson and his wife, Nicole, are pulling out all the stops for their daughter Carolina’s first concert. For starters, the expats in Mérida, Mexico, are not just taking their 16-year-old to see Taylor Swift in Minneapolis, their home-

town. They’re also bringing five of her friends on the weeklong adventure, plus getting custom-made outfits to commemorate different Swift albums.

With concert tickets at \$350 apiece, the tailored ‘fits (about \$50 each) plus airfare from the Yucatán for the family (the friends will pay their way), a trip to the Mall of America and meals out, the vacation won’t be cheap, but it will be memorable.

To round out the tourist activities, “We’re going to do a day where the girls are going to go and volunteer in a commissary kitchen and help cook food,” said Larson, the co-founder of Delicacies Jewelry.

### A Deadhead with deep pockets

After playing more than 2,400 concerts, the surviving members of the Grateful Dead are on their last tour this summer. Mari Hawkins, a luxury travel adviser with the Travel Leaders Network, got a last-minute request from a 54-year-old client in New York to go see them. Not just once, but in four different cities: San Francisco; Chicago; Boulder, Colo.; and George, Wash.

Hawkins had no problem finding hotels for half of the trip, even with only a few weeks’ notice. She could easily book rooms for the client and travel companions (a different friend or family member would join him for different shows) at the Four Seasons in San Francisco, and in Chicago at the Gwen. But “it was really hard to book outside of big cities,” Hawkins said. In Colorado, she had to pull strings to get him rooms at the Best Western.

The bill for just business-class flights (including ones back to New York between shows), hotels and ground transportation: about \$10,000.



## WEEKEND: MUSIC

# Following the light

## Matchbox Twenty returns with album of exuberance

By MARK KENNEDY  
Associated Press

**M**ore than a decade has passed since the last Matchbox Twenty album, so fans can be forgiven for thinking it was the end of the line. That's what Matchbox Twenty was thinking, too.

"We had pretty much come to terms that we didn't think we're ever going to make another record. We thought 'North' was the last record. Maybe we'd tour every few years, put out a song or two and kind of that'll just be it," says singer-songwriter Rob Thomas.

So fans can thank guitarist-keyboardist Kyle Cook for "Where the Light Goes," the band's 12-track album of new music — the first since 2012 — released May 26. Cook floated the idea of giving fans who had waited through the pandemic a full album of fresh tunes.

As the album's songs started coalescing, Thomas realized that they were on the sunny side, with nods to the '80s throughout, like Peter Gabriel, T'Pau, Go West and Level 42. It was turning out to be a post-pandemic record, one of exuberance.

"We weren't making a downer record. We weren't making a pandemic record, and we weren't

making a cynical record," he says. "This was a record about joy and optimism."

From the opening song "Friends" — a bubbly, sing-along celebration — to the soaring, romantic "One Hit Love," "Where the Light Goes" is a sunny collection from a band Thomas jokes "almost invented '90s manufactured angst."

The album's second song, "Rebels," nods to that change, with Thomas looking back at a younger man's fire. "When you get angry with yourself / You blame the rebel that you sold out / Let go and be yourself right now."

Thomas, whose signature growl fueled such hits as "Push" and "3AM," explains that he's gotten to the point in his life when it's OK to pass the torch, that he doesn't always need to be raging or worried that he sold out.

"I posit that that rebel inside of you is tired," he says, laughing. "He's raged on against the dying of the light, and now he would just maybe blog about it. Dude, you'll be fine."

The reunited Matchbox Twenty has also lost some of the internal spikiness of the past, adding a more collaborative feel. "Nobody's precious anymore and nobody is quick to anger anymore," Thomas says.

"When you're in your 20s, ev-

erything feels like a slight. You want real estate on that record and you want your ideas heard and you want people to hear your point of view." Now, he says: "I don't think anybody should die with their best songs in their pocket. So if you've got it, you should show it."

One of the first songs they worked on was the title tune by Thomas, something he'd been thinking about for a solo album.

He sent a version to multi-instrumentalist Paul Doucette, who added his parts and then sent it to Cook.

"When it got back to me, my first thought was, 'Man, this sounds like Matchbox Twenty,'" Thomas says. "I know what I sound like. But once their DNA gets into this song, it sounds like Matchbox Twenty. I was just like, 'I get it now. Like, I understand.' No matter what I do, if I want a Matchbox Twenty sound, I have to do it with Matchbox Twenty."

During their time away from the band, Thomas released five solo albums, winning three Grammy awards, and Doucette scored and contributed original music to film and television series like "Utopia" and "For All Mankind."

They leaned on technology as they started working together again since Thomas was in

**SEE LIGHT ON PAGE 29**



From left, Kyle Cook, Brian Yale, Rob Thomas and Paul Doucette make up Matchbox Twenty, who recently released their fifth album, "Where The Light Goes."

Atlantic Records photos



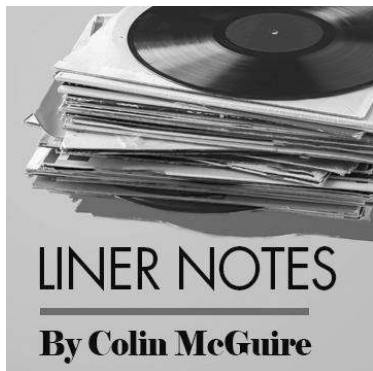


## WEEKEND: MUSIC

## Kesha, Three Days Grace, Phair announce fall tours

Can you believe Kesha has been in the music industry for nearly 20 years now? It's sort of remarkable. If you trace her career all the way back to when she was 18 and signed to Kemosabe Records, you can make the argument that she's spent more than half her life in the business (she celebrated her 36th birthday in March, for those counting). Anyone who's followed her knows she's been through the ringer ... and then some ... and perhaps that's why her fifth full-length album, "Gag Order," which hit stores a couple weeks ago, is named what it is. It's also, perhaps, why she's set to embark on the creatively titled "Gag Order Tour" in October.

The trek, which was only recently announced last week, will take the singer through U.S. theaters until Nov. 18, when she wraps things up in Hollywood. While there's no word on if Big Freeida, Brian Wilson or Sturgill Simpson — all of whom appear on her latest album — will turn up at any of the dates, we can at



least say that she'll be hitting the road with Betty Who as support.

Speaking of support, this month marks the first time in the short history of this column that Harry Styles isn't getting any of it. That's according to Pollstar's Live 75 chart, which tracks active tours by the average tickets sold for shows that happened over the past 30 days. The metric, which we spotlight each month here, has featured the pop star prominently for all of 2023 ... until now. As of last week, Styles was not in the top 10 on the list. Instead, the winner — and by a wildly wide margin — was

country star Luke Combs, who averaged about 56,000 tickets over the past 30 days. Rounding out the top three were Morgan Wallen and Ed Sheeran with about 22,000 and 21,000 tickets sold, respectively.

Elsewhere in live music news, Canadian rockers Three Days Grace announced last week that they'll head out on tour this fall, splitting headlining duties with Chevelle. The outing, which begins Sept. 8 in Bethlehem, Pa., will zigzag through the U.S. until Oct. 14, when the bands take the MGM Music Hall at Fenway stage in Boston.

If contemporary radio rock isn't for you, Patti Smith is set to hit the road sporadically over the next handful of months. The legend will be in Oslo, Norway, on June 20. She'll then make stops in Germany before heading back to the States for an August run of dates.

And then there's Liz Phair. The singer will celebrate 30 years of her influential album "Exile In Guyville" when she takes stages across the U.S. in November.



Vincent Haycock

**Kesha announced recently she will set out on her "Gag Order Tour" in October, named after her recent album of the same name.**

Taking flight Nov. 7 in California, the outing will conclude Dec. 3 in Dallas. Blondshell — also known as Los Angeles-based indie rocker Sabrina Teitelbaum — will open the dates and as far as we

know, Ms. Phair continues to wonder why she can't breathe or speak whenever she thinks or talks about you. Ahhh, 2003 was a hell of a year for pop music. Anyway, happy concert-ing!

## Ben Folds

What Matters Most (New West)

Ben Folds' pop confections are sweet and tart, a recipe that makes him popular with both boomers and college students. He's a master melodist and sly satirist, a sentimental cynic and piano pounder who loves a waltz.

All those sides are evident on "What Matters Most," an engaging 10-song set and Folds' first studio album since 2015.

As usual, his musical approach varies widely, from ping-ponging synthesizer to lyrical piano, a string section, horns and handclaps, a 7/4 time signature and overdubbed vocals in inventive arrangements that evoke the Beach Boys, the Bee Gees and a barbershop quartet. Hummable hooks are plentiful as Folds sings about "life and doldrums and pain," hilariously swears off motel flings, and makes surrendering to love sound triumphant.

His conversational lyrics lament the state of Western civilization on "But Wait, There's More," and specifically the perils of internet disinformation on "Kristine From the 7th Grade." For those who disagree with his perspective, the CD package includes a photo of Folds seated atop a piano, happily sharing an obscene gesture.

Perhaps the pandemic prompted the song "Back to Anonymous," a shuffle that contemplates the impermanence of celebrity. But "What Matters Most" should have Folds back on the charts.

— Steven Wine  
Associated Press



## Arlo Parks

My Soft Machine (Transgressive)

Britpop artist Arlo Parks approaches her work as a poet, laying incisive lyrics over a murkily cozy lo-fi hip-hop. On her second album, "My Soft Machine," Parks balances childlike wonder with personal trauma and disappointment.

The opening track, "Bruiseless," sets the mood expertly with the line, "I just wish that my eyes were still wide."

Since the release of her 2018 single, "Cola," Parks has produced a steady stream of stories told with disarming warmth and honesty.

Her debut album, "Collapsed in Sunbeams," composed during quarantine, is a striking document of time spent inside her room and her mind. On the new release, she retains her inviting, catchy vibe, but starts to venture outside both thematically and musically.

In interviews, Park says that she has come to know exactly what she wants. On "My Soft Machine," Parks stays true to her DIY foundations, but, as a producer on the recording, she has expanded her sound.

The exploration taps a broad range of influences — musicians such as Portishead, Elliott Smith and Joni Mitchell, as well as a precise focus on mood inspired by visual artists such as photographer Nan Goldin and filmmaker David Lynch.



Overall, Parks offers a lush sound than on past recordings. The vocals at times skirt the edge of overproduction, but her unique delivery is preserved by frequent shifts from singing to spoken work.

Parks delivers some of the most personal lines by pronouncing them softly and deliberately.

On the third track, "Devotion," Parks pushes beyond her familiar lo-fi loops into a noisier guitar-driven swirl, even name-checking the Breeders' Kim Deal in the song.

Hot on its heels comes "Blades," which features an irresistible hook that sounds as though it bounced around the universe for a thousand years before Parks captured it.

The track "Pegasus" features Phoebe Bridgers on supporting vocals.

Their voices mesh readily and the pair repeat the line "I think you're special 'cause you told me" in what may be the most cautiously optimistic song in either of their respective catalogs. Bridgers has a passionate fan base that is set to explode in her summer tours with boygenius and Taylor Swift. This collaboration promises to expose Parks to some of that audience stateside.

— Jim Pollock  
Associated Press

## Light: Thomas and company surprise themselves with new set

FROM PAGE 28

upstate New York, bassist Brian Yale was in Miami, Doucette was in Los Angeles and Cook was in Nashville.

They'd work at their various homes on songs and then meet to record once they had enough.

Pete Ganbarg, president of A&R for Atlantic Records, who has been working

with Thomas since he teamed up with Santana on the massive 1999 hit "Smooth," says the band members feel comfortable in their own skin.

"It's a lot of fun to watch them in the studio now, a couple of decades later, because they all understand who they are and they work with that very naturally," he says. "This is a band that's been around

since 1995. How many bands like that are still making records close to 30 years later?"

One thing that hasn't changed is that the band remains cheeky when it comes to album covers. Members of Matchbox Twenty have a tendency of not being fully shown — either they're covering their faces, languishing in the distance or not

there at all. "Where the Light Goes" continues the tradition, with the quartet's likeness distorted beyond recognition.

"Nobody wants to see four 50-year-old guys," says Thomas. "There's no packaging in the world that's like 'You know what's going to make this sell better? Four 50-year-old guys standing in front of a camera.'"



## WEEKEND: TELEVISION



AMAZON PRIME/AP photos

The new Amazon Prime docuseries "The Ride" offers a behind-the-scenes look at the fearless competitors of the Professional Bull Riders league and those closest to them.

# A sport to die for

Prime docuseries 'The Ride' about world of professional bull riding

By GARY GERARD HAMILTON  
Associated Press

If at first you're thrown from the bull, try, try again — at least that's part of what the new docuseries "The Ride" highlights.

"Bull riding: you have to eat, sleep and breathe it. Whenever you go to bed at night, you got to be thinking about it," said 25-year-old Ezekiel "Blue" Mitchell. "And when you wake up in the morning, you've got to be thinking about it."

Cameras followed an engaging cast of competitors, along with coaches and executives, during the Professional Bull Riders' 30th anniversary last year and the debut of its new Team Series. The eight-episode Prime Video docuseries, now airing, documents the peaks and valleys experienced by the fearless competitors of the PBR league and those closest to them.

Previously an individual-focused competition, the new format features eight squads competing in five-on-five matches across a 28-game regular season to secure a spot in the championship tournament in Las Vegas. "The Ride" isn't only about the sport — but also about getting back in the saddle after being thrown down in the arena of life.

Some competitors were a little uneasy about having their lives — and most vulnerable moments

— documented by cameras, but Mitchell, the Austin Gamblers rising star, was unbothered.

"I've been in a particularly odd situation since I became a professional athlete with the PBR. Being an African American, I've been used to cameras and people wanting to talk to me, so it was nothing different," said Mitchell, a native Texan whose father notes in the series that they didn't always feel welcome at competitions and faced discrimination.

"Growing up in the rodeo scene around Houston and the surrounding areas ... there were African American bull riders that were riding professionally whenever I was coming up as a younger guy. So, I had some people there to look to," Mitchell said.

PBR was founded in 1992 by 20 bull riders seeking mainstream attention for the sport, each contributing \$1,000 — money many didn't have — to form the organization. Today, around 800 riders globally compete in more than 200 events annually, hoping to qualify for the finals and take home a \$1 million bonus.

"It's not a hobby sport. This is a sport that you've got to have a passion and literally love enough to die for," said Tiffany Davis, who serves in an assistant general manager-like capacity for the Carolina Cowboys, based in Winston-Salem, N.C. "I hate to say

that, but it's very dangerous."

Davis knows the risks all too well. In 1998, engaged and in wedding planning mode, her life was flipped-upside down after her 25-year-old superstar fiancé, Jerome Davis, suffered a catastrophic injury after falling from a bull during a Fort Worth, Texas, competition. The 1995 world champion suffered a broken neck and remains unable to walk.

Instead of leaving a sport that doled out such cruel fate, the couple doubled down. Jerome Davis serves as the Cowboys' coach, and the family is as intertwined with the sport as they've ever been.

"We love to do this and it's a passion. And the bull riders, for example, it's something that's instilled in them by God ... just like some people have a passion to jump out of airplanes and stuff, this is their passion," Tiffany Davis said.

"My husband, for example, you'll see he's paralyzed still from the sport of bull riding ... when the doctor come in and told him that, 'Hey, you're never going to walk again,' the first thing my husband said to the doctor was, 'You mean I can't ride bulls anymore?'"

The riders aren't the only ones whose jobs involve safety risks. Recently, during routine maintenance, a bull kicked a gate, knocking Tiffany Davis uncon-



A member of the Carolina Cowboys prepares to ride a bull in a scene from the eight-episode series "The Ride."

scious and in need of stitches on her forehead and staples in her back.

"When (bull riders are) finding girls, I'm like, 'If this is what you want to do the rest of your life, you better find a girl that ain't scared to wear mud boots during the week and her stilettos on the weekends,'" she said with a smile.

The Davises' other livelihood is stock contracting, which provides animals for competitions. They hope the series dispels negative misconceptions of how bulls are treated, stating the money-making animals are also lucrative athletes that receive top-notch care including chiropractors, progressive therapy techniques and high-end nutrition. She says the healthiest and strongest bulls result in the best product for competitions, and especially the fans.

With sports documentaries becoming more popular and fans craving content beyond the com-

petition, there's optimism that "The Ride" can expose an even wider audience to the PBR. Executives also hope to take advantage of the re-emerging pop culture interest in Old West nostalgia, in part due to shows like the "Yellowstone" franchise.

Mitchell, who's aiming for individual "gold buckle dreams" to go along with his team title aspirations, hopes "The Ride" will attract a new audience to the sport he holds so dear.

"I just want everybody to see how normal we are in a way, and how human we are. A lot of times we get that we're crazy guys and we have this really tough guy persona. I believe that a lot of people will see this softer side to some guys and just the willingness to be able to compete," said Mitchell, who has thought about taking his saddle to Hollywood later in his career. "We're all just blessed to be a part of this organization and be able to do what we love for a living."



## WEEKEND: TELEVISION

## Q&amp;A

# Helping a family find truth, peace

Cynthia Hill, director of HBO's 'Burden of Proof,' talks about filming the true-crime documentary

By **BROOKE CAIN**  
*The Charlotte Observer*

A new four-part true-crime documentary premiering this week on HBO (and streaming on MAX) goes beyond the typical genre offering.

"Burden of Proof," directed by Cynthia Hill, tells the story of Stephen Pandos and his search for answers about what happened to his sister, Jennifer, who was just 15 years old when she disappeared from her home in Williamsburg, Va., in 1987.

But beyond the (presumed) murder plot, the story is equal parts family drama, as Stephen, who lives in Charlotte, N.C., is convinced that his father, Ronald Pandos, killed his sister, and that his mother, Margie, helped him cover it up — or at the very least, knows more than she's telling.

Everything about "Burden of Proof" is heartbreaking, but it's also exhilarating in parts, as the story twists and turns until the very end, unfolding in real time all while Hill is filming. The story you think you have at the beginning is not the story you are left with at the end of Part 4 — and it's fascinating to watch.

Hill, who has won major awards for her domestic violence documentary "Private Violence" and for the PBS series "A Chef's Life," about Kinston, N.C., chef Vivian Howard, spent seven years chronicling Stephen's quest, creating an intimacy not just with him but with his mother, who also lives in Charlotte. Jennifer's father also agrees to interviews, as do Jennifer's friends from high school and law enforcement authorities, both past and present, all of which help get us closer to answers.

Hill and Pandos both agreed to answer some questions from us about the filmmaking process and about where things stand now. There are no spoilers in their answers:

**The Charlotte Observer: When considering new projects, you must have so many choices. How did you learn about this case and what made you decide to take it on?**

**Hill:** Stephen reached out to me. He wanted to bring attention to his sister's case. He believed his mother had been traumatized and that prevented her from

telling the truth about what his father did to Jennifer. He knew about my prior film, "Private Violence," about domestic violence survivors. He knew I was from Eastern North Carolina. His mother is from Lumberton. He thought I would be able to connect with her.

What initially drew my producer, Christine Delp, and I to the story was how not knowing what happened to his sister had affected Stephen. And for me, having two young daughters of my own, I really wanted to learn more about Jennifer. In many of these cases and documentaries in this genre, the victim gets lost and we don't fully get to know them and their stories.

**You must have envisioned the narrative in a certain way when you started, before things began to shift. How did you initially see the story?**

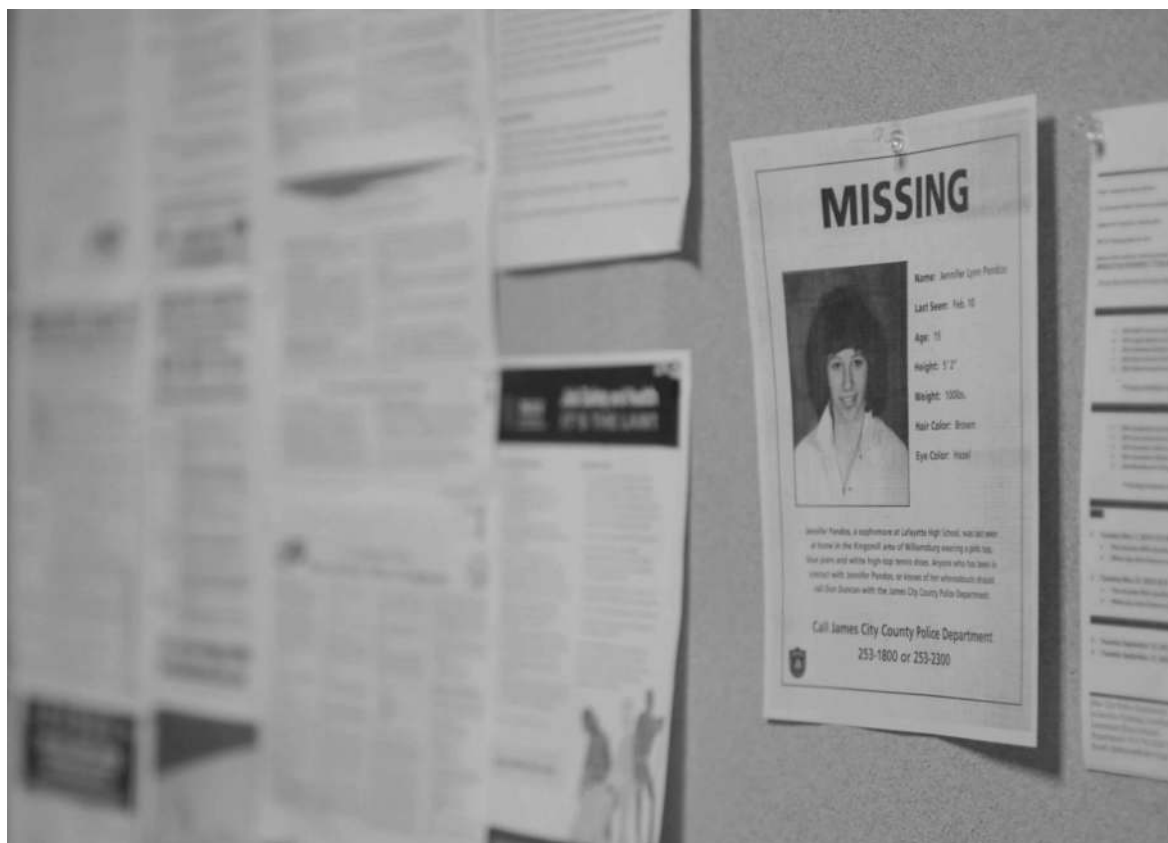
To be honest, when I begin a project, I don't know what will happen with the story. That's the exciting part of this business. You are following real people with real things happening to them.

As we got deeper into the story, I saw it as a film about how a tragic and unsolved case deeply affected a family for more than three decades. It was never going to be a whodunit type of story. Of course people will be intrigued by the mystery. But to me, the most interesting part is how the search for answers can become a lifelong burden.

When we began filming, the members of Stephen's family were estranged from each other. No one talked to each other. The pain and the mistrust was palpable. We had to develop relationships with Stephen, Margie and Ron separately. Viewers witness how our relationship with each family member evolved and how their relationships to each other change over the years.

**I loved the ending of the documentary, but the story really could have continued on and on. With a story like this that is sort of ongoing, how do you know when to stop filming and reporting, and put out a finished product?**

As a filmmaker documenting a story in real time, you have to find a stopping point. No, it is not



HBO photos

A missing poster for Jennifer Pandos is shown in a scene from the true-crime documentary "Burden of Proof," which premiered this week on HBO and is streaming on MAX.

the end of the story, but it is a conclusion for the story that we are telling.

There's a significant transformation of Stephen. He goes from being so certain to being less certain, and more at peace with the uncertainty. And the audience goes on that same journey. I think that's really interesting, especially in the true-crime genre where there's a lot of pressure to have a conclusive ending. Our series feels really different.

**And related to the idea of going on and on, would you consider filming more if something else happens in the case?**

Definitely. We're invested in this story and would love to continue. But we are also OK if we end here.

**What is your next project?**

Good question — and the most scary question for an artist. I'm always looking for what is intriguing and challenging for me and the whole team. Right now we are dipping our toes into some new territory and filming Bigfoot hunters in the Ozarks.

**You've been trying to get justice for Jennifer for a long time. Do you feel like the involvement of a documentary film crew prompted the Williamsburg authorities to push harder on the case?**

**Pandos:** I don't know if that made them push harder. I think it made it harder for them to ignore me. I think they'd have had the same resolve to solve the case without the film.

**It seems like there was a measure of resolution at the end of the series — if not a definitive answer, a good idea of what may**



"Burden of Proof" is equal parts murder investigation and family drama as Stephen Pandos, shown, pursues the truth behind his sister's disappearance in 1987.



Pandos meets with investigators in a scene from "Burden of Proof."

**have happened. Do you feel any peace with that part of it? Or does it still feel unresolved to you?**

There's peace in knowing I've done all I can do. Whether it's resolved or not, I have to take solace in that. I don't get to deliver justice. I don't get to define it. I just have to be at peace know-

ing I have done all I could do.

**The end of the documentary suggests that you and your mother were in the process of healing your relationship. Has that happened? What about with your father?**

Yes. I'm working on my relationship with my mother. With my father, it's more complicated.



## WEEKEND: HEALTH &amp; FITNESS

# An audio alternative to counting sheep

Podcasters use soothing vocals and boring topics to calm the minds of frustrated insomniacs

By **TIM LOH**  
Bloomberg News

**B**enjamin Boster was driving in a car with his boss, trying to relay an exciting anecdote, when he discovered that his main talent as a storyteller lies elsewhere.

“He was like, ‘Ben, I’m sorry, your voice is so soothing that I just kind of fell asleep,’” recalls Boster, a 42-year-old father of three.

Rather than take it as an insult, Boster, a salesman for a tech company in Salt Lake City, sensed a market opportunity. So in 2019, he created the “I Can’t Sleep” podcast, in which he employs his baritone voice to read Wikipedia entries for subjects as riveting as “cardboard,” “logistics” or “Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.”

“I bore you to sleep with my soothing voice,” he explains.

Boster’s show is one of a growing number of “sleep-casts” designed to calm the minds of frustrated insomniacs. Alongside indie podcasts like his, tech companies such as Headspace Inc., Peloton Interactive Inc. and Fitbit Inc. have also entered the bedtime audio programming space. Collectively, these shows are pioneering a sort of inattention economy that reaches millions of late-night listeners every month.

While the shows are still small in terms of revenue, they’re nonetheless helping transform the sleep sector — once dominated by mattress makers and medicines like melatonin and Ambien — into a central pillar, along with fitness and nutrition, of what McKinsey & Co. considers a \$1.5 trillion global wellness market.

“Half of consumers around the world reported a desire for more products and services to meet the need for higher-quality slumber,” McKinsey concluded in a 2021 report, which found the overall wellness market expanding as much as 10% a year.

The boom in sleep services comes at a moment in which millions of people are struggling to balance the demand for ever-greater productivity with the fact that sleep is a crucial component of mental and physical health.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, health experts warned that societies need to get more rest. In 2016, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that a third of U.S. adults are sleep deprived, raising the risk of car crashes, heart disease and mistakes on the job. The COVID-19 era made matters worse for many, heightening anxiety and stress levels to the point that it became even harder to fall and stay asleep, according to several studies.

The problem is especially acute for the 30% or so of people — including many teenagers — regarded as night owls. Despite a genetic disposition to be productive later in the day, they’re often forced to rise early, which can fuel sleep deficits and put them at higher risk of mood disorders and substance abuse, according to studies.

After decades as director of the child and adolescent sleep clinic at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia, Michael Gradisar took a job last year as head of sleep science at Swedish software company Sleep Cycle AB. He recognized that the market for sleep wellness was growing quickly and wanted to ensure that the industry remains as close as possible to the latest science, he said.

Simply falling asleep is the most common challenge people face, according to Gradisar. The classic case of the troubled sleeper is the person who lies awake thinking about everything and nothing. After a while, they might look at the clock and start fretting that they won’t get enough sleep, which just makes things worse. The key is to recognize what’s happening and know how to deal with it, Gradisar says.

“You can’t shut it off like a light switch,” he says. “I tell



DREAMSTIME/TNS

**In 2016, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that a third of U.S. adults are sleep deprived.**

people you can try to turn it down like a dimmer switch. One way to do that is to try to distract yourself from those worries.”

Like many of its competitors, Sleep Cycle’s app offers audio programming to do just that, including guided meditations and long, meandering stories told by celebrities such as heartthrob Swedish actor Alexander Skarsgård.

“My wife loves him whispering in her ear at night when she falls asleep,” Gradisar muses. “And I’m not jealous at all.”

**“We live in a world that’s tragically not boring. Lots of people would like a world that’s actually a bit more boring and you weren’t constantly just doom-scrolling the news, thinking, ‘Oh God, what now?’”**

James Ward

host of BBC Radio podcast “The Boring Talks”

While Sleep Cycle offers bedtime fictions, others prefer to stick with the facts — particularly dry ones. Each week on her 45-minute “Boring Books For Bedtime” podcast, Florida-based Sharon Handy, who by day designs content for science and children’s museums, reads from public-domain works of history, science and philosophy as dreamy music plays in the background. Typically, she gets about 10,500 downloads for each new episode, and 260,000 total monthly plays. Last month, on the eve of U.S. Tax Day, she soothed listeners’ nerves by intoning passages from Adam Smith’s “The Wealth of Nations.”

Repetition is a popular strategy within the genre. On a recent episode of Drew Ackerman’s “Sleep With Me” podcast, the upbeat host described his job as such: “I’m here to be your bore friend, your bore bae, your bore sib, your bore bud, your bore bestie,” he said. “Your friend in the deep dark night. Keep you company while you drift off. But if you can’t sleep, I’m here to keep you company, too.”

Ackerman’s podcast, which gets about 3 million plays each month across its archive of 600 shows, carries

echoes of talk-radio, which used to be the only thing that would help him fall asleep. Toby Baier takes a similar approach on his German-language “Einschlafen Podcast,” which for 13 years has bored listeners with long digressions on everything from a Hamburg soccer team to his periodic viral infections to — quite often — the 18th-century philosopher Immanuel Kant.

For long-suffering insomniacs, finding the right show can make the difference between hours of tossing and turning and a good night’s rest. On internet forums like Reddit, listeners debate the pluses and minuses of various podcasts — for instance, whether a host’s voice is soporific enough or if a program suffers from drifting into the realm of engaging.

James Ward has put a lot of thought into the blurry line between boring and interesting. That tension is at the heart of his annual Boring Conference in London, which people keep attending despite his warnings that it’s a complete waste of their time and money. Past speakers have included a man named Peter Fletcher, who’s counted and documented all of his sneezes since 2007.

In 2018, Ward launched his own BBC Radio podcast, “The Boring Talks,” which for three years plumbed subjects such as pencils or lampposts that he described as “very interesting ... maybe.”

Ward’s goal wasn’t to put his listeners to sleep, though he didn’t mind if that was the outcome. For his own bedtime needs, Ward enjoys listening to foreign language radio shows, which allow him to follow the cadences of speech without getting distracted by meaning. He’s not surprised by the fact that boring podcasts are getting popular.

“We live in a world that’s tragically not boring,” he explains. “Lots of people would like a world that’s actually a bit more boring and you weren’t constantly just doom-scrolling the news, thinking, ‘Oh God, what now?’”

Which brings us back to Boster, the man who bored his boss to sleep. He always knew he had a gift when it came to his voice. At Brigham Young University, where he got both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in vocal performance, he’d often skip big football games on campus to attend opera rehearsals or shows. It was only after realizing that he didn’t want to spend the rest of his life pursuing a stage career that he became a salesman.

But he never fully gave up on his dreams of show business. Not long after that fateful car ride, he watched an episode of the sitcom “Parks and Recreation” in which one of the characters goes on a farcically dull public radio program called “Thoughts For Your Thoughts.”

“I was like, ‘Oh crap, maybe I could try this. I’m already boring people to sleep, maybe I just use the radio,’” he recalls.

For his first episode in February 2019, Boster spent about 10 minutes reading the Wikipedia entry for “gilet,” which is, he explained, “a sleeveless jacket resembling a waistcoat or blouse.” He got four listeners, and was excited. Over the coming year, he gained a loyal following, averaging about 15,000 total plays a month. And then the pandemic hit. Before long, his audience jumped by more than a factor of 10.

“I remember people writing to me and saying, ‘I live alone in France, and your voice just kept me going when no one else was around,’” he recalls. He also got heartfelt notes from people struggling with post-traumatic stress and anger management issues who were finally managing to fall asleep. Among his most loyal listeners is a 7-year-old Vermont girl named Lilly who, according to her grandma, has fallen asleep to Boster’s show every night for three years. “She calls me the man with the voice,” he says.

For now, the show relies on donations and revenue from ads, which play at the start of each episode so as not to startle listeners awake. Fans can also pay \$3 a month to get an ad-free experience. Boster still has his day job, but he is considering ways to scale up.

He’s ruled out one thing, though: bringing experts on his show.

“People don’t come here to hear about how sleep works,” he explains. “They come here to sleep.”



## WEEKEND: FAMILY



iStock

Parents whose kids use smart speakers at home should adjust the settings so recordings will not be saved.

# Protecting kids using Alexa

What the FTC settlement means for families with Amazon smart speakers

BY HEATHER KELLY  
AND CAROLINE O'DONOVAN  
*The Washington Post*

In the nearly 10 years since Amazon launched its Alexa voice assistant, children have learned to embrace the always-on technology. They shout commands to Siri, Alexa and Google Assistant without thinking twice, asking it to play music, tell them stories or make silly jokes.

The tech's popularity has grown in spite of privacy concerns and lawsuits. In May, the company said it had already sold more than half a billion Alexa devices.

Last month, the Federal Trade Commission settled a lawsuit against Amazon over the company's alleged failure to delete recordings of children when it should have. Regulators said Amazon would pay \$25 million for violating federal child privacy laws.

Here is what parents need to know about protecting their children's privacy when it comes to using voice assistants:

## Stop speakers from saving recordings

If parents decide to allow devices with cameras and microphones into their homes, the first thing they should do is adjust privacy and security settings.

Once you have an Alexa-enabled device like an Amazon Echo, open the Alexa app on your smartphone or tablet and go to Settings > Alexa Privacy > Manage your Alexa Data > Choose how long to save recordings. Select "Don't save recordings" and hit confirm. Delete past recordings in the Alexa Privacy section, including your voice history and history of detected sounds.

While you're in Settings, turn off interest-based ads, the option to improve Alexa with your recordings and the option for Amazon to use your Alexa messages to improve transcription. Finally, disable Voice Purchasing lest you end up with a pile of Amazon orders your kids made.

If you have an Echo Show or other device with a camera built-in, make sure the cover is over the camera at all times unless you are using the device for video calls.

## Teach your kids about how the tech works

Children don't really question why a gentle disembodied voice does their bidding, but they probably should. To help them make the right choices around

technology, tell them a little about how it works, who owns it and any potential downsides of using it.

Depending on their age, you can tell them how private companies collect data from tablets, smartphones, watches and speakers — everything from their YouTube history to physical location.

## Turn on parental controls

Alexa makes an Echo just for kids that comes in cute animal designs and is supposed to give only kid-friendly replies. It also lets you make profiles for everyone in your family for use across devices.

You can set up parental controls in Alexa settings by going to [parents.amazon.com](https://parental.amazon.com). There are options for daily time limits and filtering content by factors like their age.

Keep in mind that to use kids' profiles you are giving Amazon consent to collect some data about your children. It's required to use some of the kid-specific features on Alexa-enabled devices.

## Know what the lawsuit means for you

If you are a parent and your family used to use Alexa and the settlement has made you anxious, know that the company is now required to delete all inactive profiles and associated data.

Amazon is also now required to actually delete data when parents make a request, so if your family still uses Alexa and you want to do that, follow the instructions above.

Parents should also look out for updates from Amazon, which is now required to tell customers about the settlement as well as make them aware of "its retention and deletion practices." The company will also be creating a privacy program specifically targeted at protecting geolocation data.

The FTC said the recordings helped Amazon create "a valuable database for training the Alexa algorithm to understand children."

"Our devices and services are built to protect customers' privacy, and to provide customers with control over their experience," said Amazon spokeswoman Parmita Choudhury in a statement. "While we disagree with the FTC's claims ... and deny violating the law, these settlements put these matters behind us."

As for that \$25 million settlement, it will not go to impacted families. Instead, like all Children's Online Privacy Protection Act penalties, it will go straight to the U.S. Treasury.

## THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



## It's finally time to tell my inner runaway to stay put

Carefully forming the red bandanna into a pouch, I placed my cherished treasures into its folds. For companionship, a miniature doll with hot pink hair. For creativity, a small box of four crayons and spiral-bound notepad. For direction, a plastic compass from a Cracker Jack box. For sustenance, a Pillsbury Space Food Stick. For luck, a rabbit's foot key-chain.

Gathering the four corners of the bandanna around my treasures, I tied the ends to a long stick the way I'd seen cartoon characters do it in the shows I'd watched on Saturday mornings. With my belongings secured to the stick, I placed it over my shoulder and looked both ways up and down North Seventh Street before crossing.

Taking one last glance back at our house, I turned right toward town, with no clear idea of where my travels would take me. I might camp in the woods, or find an abandoned canoe near a stream. I might build a cabin or a treehouse. All I knew for sure was that I wasn't coming back. Ever.

I was about 6 years old, and I was running away from home. For real this time.

About three hours later, I was back at our kitchen table sporting a milk mustache, picking through my dinner of Salisbury steak, Rice-A-Roni and canned peas.

Throughout my childhood, I made many plans to run away. My parents weren't abusive or neglectful, although they did drop me off at the pool during summer for hours at a time with only a dollar for the snack bar.

To the contrary, I lived a normal childhood, complete with cutoff jean shorts, polyester halter tops, Hot Wheels tricycles, skinned knees, yellow school bus rides, Monopoly board games on rainy Saturdays and Tang orange drink.

I had no real reason to escape my home life, but running away seemed so romantic. To have the power to wipe the slate clean, to reinvent myself and to start off on an unknown journey was the ultimate adventure to me. I longed to transform myself from a pudgy neighborhood girl on a yellow Schwinn bike with playing cards flapping in the spokes, to a self-sufficient, courageous and resourceful explorer.

I wanted to shake the dust of North Seventh Street off my shoes and experience freedom. I wanted to see the world!

Well, I really just wanted to camp in the woods for a night and roast marshmallows on a fire, but big dreams must start somewhere.

I never made it more than a few blocks before getting distracted. I'd usually run into a friend and end up playing Barbies in her sandbox or notice an interesting puddle to inspect. When I'd hear my mom ring the bell from our front porch, I'd feel pangs of hunger like Pavlov's dog. I'd resolve to run away another day and head home, hoping we were having something other than Salisbury steak, Rice-A-Roni and canned peas for dinner.

Fifty years later, I find myself a post-military-retirement Navy wife, finally planted in one place. After nine military moves over more than two decades of active duty life, I'm happy that we found our forever home in a quaint New England village by the sea. However, I've been here for six years now, and I'm starting to feel that familiar itch.

During my husband's Navy career, I became quite accustomed to change. In fact, I was well-suited for it. It scratched my itch for periodic reinvention and adventure that I'd felt since childhood. Moving to different locations in the U.S. and overseas kept me from getting bogged down in set routines, mindsets and identities. PCS moves became my adult version of running away from home, and in that way, I found it strangely comforting.

Now, for the first time in my life, I must find comfort in staying put, in my home and in my own skin. It's time to accept who and where I am — to appreciate the beauty around and inside me.

Read more at [themeatandpotatoesoflife.com](https://themeatandpotatoesoflife.com) and in Lisa's book, "The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com." Email: [meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com](mailto:meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com)



# WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

## NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

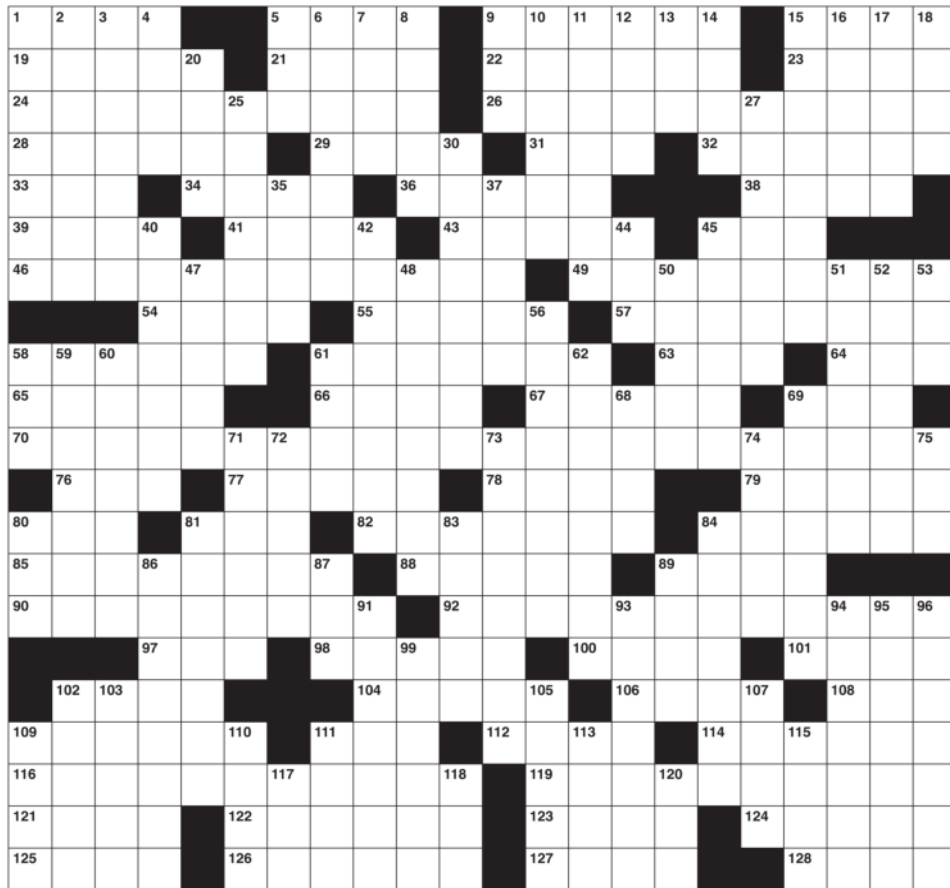
### U-HAUL

BY CHANDI DEITMER AND TAYLOR JOHNSON / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Chandi Deitmer, of Cambridge, Mass., edits puzzles for Elevate Labs, which develops a brain-training app. Taylor Johnson, of Minneapolis, is a stay-at-home dad who works part time at a food co-op. After meeting via an email chain, they became friends and sounding boards for each other's work. Chandi says, "The good thing about good friends is they tell you when your theme idea isn't landing — and offer to collaborate with you to make it better." Each has been previously published in The Times, but this is their first puzzle here together. — W. S.

#### ACROSS

- 1 Conceal
- 5 \_\_\_ Kola (Peruvian beverage partly owned by Coca-Cola)
- 9 Brittany who blocked more shots individually in 2012 than any entire N.C.A.A. women's team
- 15 Tap alternative
- 19 From the top
- 21 Yoga mat, at times
- 22 I—
- 23 Home to the Cedar Point amusement park, a mecca for roller-coaster enthusiasts
- 24 Enjoy a La-Z-Boy recliner?
- 26 Head exec?
- 28 Supplements
- 29 "That was . . . really bad"
- 31 What a pump might squeeze
- 32 Burns a little
- 33 Affectedly shy
- 34 Captain Hook's No. 2
- 36 "How I Met Your Mother" narrator Bob
- 38 Yard-sale condition
- 39 Navy and others
- 41 Scratching-post scratcher
- 43 Tantalizingly detailed
- 45 Six-foot runner?
- 46 "My luggage has gone missing!"?
- 49 Germs from day care, e.g.?
- 54 Metallic fabric
- 55 Develop further, with "out"
- 57 Prince William, to Charles and Diana
- 58 They're found beneath sink holes
- 61 Jousts with
- 63 Refrain from sports?
- 64 Simple sandwich
- 65 "Likewise"
- 66 Vegetable with striped and golden varieties
- 67 Like a jiggly tooth
- 69 Grp. regulating pesticides
- 70 Request for one-on-one time in the "Bachelor" TV franchise . . . or a phonetic hint to four pairs of answers in this puzzle
- 76 Website-feed inits.
- 77 Committee head?
- 78 Only
- 79 Dog breed associated with the British royal family
- 80 Nowhere to be found, for short
- 81 The Lions, on scoreboards
- 82 Mexican garments, as they're spelled in Mexico
- 84 Like some hats and sheets
- 85 Comprises
- 88 Carried
- 89 Bodily function?
- 90 Things to avoid when baking desserts?
- 92 Sadness at the last Boston cream being taken, e.g.?
- 97 Annual gala host, with "the"
- 98 Went down an Olympic track
- 100 Bother
- 101 Sea eagle
- 102 It's one foot long
- 104 Swell
- 106 Had down
- 108 Amer. currency
- 109 Remains in a hearth
- 111 Big time?
- 112 Farm connector
- 114 Area for note-taking
- 116 My garden waterer that's seen better days?
- 119 Shopping destination for your underwear needs?
- 121 Tilt-a-Whirl, e.g.
- 122 The burdens we carry
- 123 Barre bend
- 124 Stashes (away)
- 125 Foil alternative
- 126 Kitsch
- 127 Hit the paper-plane icon, say
- 128 Assemble in one large body
- 7 Award won by Don Draper on "Mad Men"
- 8 Gladys Knight and Norah Jones, for two
- 9 Platoon members, for short
- 10 Networking aid
- 11 Half-baked
- 12 Evening, in advertising
- 13 Northwestern follower
- 14 CrossFit bits
- 15 One who's barely acting?
- 16 Board game popular in Japan
- 17 Certain trig ratios
- 18 Preschoolers
- 20 "Damn!"
- 25 Woo-woo films?
- 27 Intended
- 30 High register
- 35 "Who \_\_\_?"
- 37 "\_\_\_ who?"
- 40 Deli assortment
- 42 Comedian who said: "I once spent a year in Philadelphia. I think it was on a Sunday."
- 44 Mother rabbit
- 45 Throws, in a way
- 47 Prized metamorphic rock
- 48 Urban scavenger
- 50 Author Mario Vargas \_\_\_
- 51 Drive home?
- 52 Singer Knowles
- 53 Head doc?
- 56 More than cracked
- 58 Donor group, for short
- 59 Title for multiple Marias and Annas in history
- 60 Pillage
- 61 Letter-shaped beam
- 62 Equipped, as a factory for production
- 68 Miner discoveries
- 69 Subspecies adapted to a specific environment
- 71 Timely thing to arrive on
- 72 Packed away
- 73 Newspaper debut of 9/15/82
- 74 Vapes
- 75 Pulled off
- 80 It may be dropped for emphasis
- 81 Fratty type, colloquially
- 83 Event with barrel racing
- 84 Close rival, in a sense
- 86 "Show it here!"
- 87 The Cards, on scoreboards
- 89 Mr. Wednesday's true identity in Neil Gaiman's "American Gods"
- 91 Secretly, from the Latin
- 93 Given shelter
- 94 Salad green also known as "rocket"
- 95 Brooks no debate
- 96 Ripe-strawberry feature
- 99 Comedian/TV host Nikki
- 102 Reply to "You dig?"
- 103 Stick (by)
- 105 Big name in baseball cards
- 107 Cartoonish baby cries
- 109 Infinitive of the French "suis" and "somes"
- 110 Slovenly sort
- 111 Former Israeli P.M. Barak
- 113 Relative of wild cabbage
- 115 Wander
- 117 Focus of the Human Genome Project
- 118 Suffix with darned
- 120 Titular character portrayed by Jason Sudeikis



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## FACES

# Where the joke is on the guests

‘The Eric Andre Show’ still pulling pranks on unwitting celebrities in its 6th season

By **KRYSTA FAURIA**  
Associated Press

In theory, “The Eric Andre Show” is not a series that lends itself to longevity. Its titular star, who plays a version of himself and satirizes talk shows by putting unsuspecting celebrity guests through hellish interviews, has become considerably more famous since the series first aired more than a decade ago.

But through a combination of disguises and an artfully deceptive booking team, Andre launched a sixth season last weekend on Adult Swim, boasting a star-studded list of guests in the episodes to come, including Lil Nas X, Natasha Lyonne and Jon Hamm.

“We used to worry about, like, ‘Oh, am I going to be more recognizable?’” Andre said of his increasing fame, eventually realizing it doesn’t take much to fool people. “I disguised myself a lot this season. I rocked the ponytail and the glasses, and I would wear COVID masks sometimes.”

There is a kind of poetic, albeit sadistic, justice that comes from watching the cult show make the most envied in society the butt of its joke, including high-profile names over the years like Seth Rogen, Demi Lovato, Dennis Rodman and Judy Greer.

A few — including Lauren Conrad and T.I. — have walked off in disgust or indignation. But that number is surprisingly low given that Andre often keeps guests in emotional and physical discomfort for an hour or more, only to edit interviews down to mere minutes.

Once celebrities are brought on the “talk show,” their egos are subjected to all kinds of abasements, both through Andre’s absurd line of questioning and through physical pranks.

“It’s a break from the kind of fictitious propaganda of traditional press, I think,” he theorized, mocking actors and the stories they share on actual late-night talk shows. “They’re like, ‘Hey, you know, on set, George Clooney played a prank on me,’ or whatever. They have some anecdote from set. It feels — people can smell it’s a little inauthentic.”

Part of what makes the pranks so impressive is Andre’s ability to pull them off, even when guests become visibly angry and sometimes threatening toward him.

“I’m calculating every next step,” the comedian said of what goes through his mind during the interviews. “I don’t want to laugh. I’ve done so much work and so much prep has gone into bringing that prank into production that I



ADULT SWIM/AP

Viewers — and celebrity guests — never know what to expect from Eric Andre on “The Eric Andre Show.”

don’t want to be the one that blows it.”

Despite the fact that even he is not particularly comfortable with it, Andre’s antics often at some point involve nudity — either by him or the show’s infamous “naked PA” — a move that frequently pushes guests over the edge.

“You gotta do what it takes,” Andre, ever the showman, explained. “There’s not a lot of things that are, like, completely jaw-dropping shocking. So, nudity is just kind of like a guaranteed reaction.”

Although he denies outright lying to get people on the show, he concedes he and the bookers frequently “bend the truth,” and then come up with elaborate schemes to prevent publicists from seeing what they unknowingly walked

their clients into.

“We don’t let publicists into where the stage is and we’ll show them, like, fake monitor feeds and stuff,” he explained, adding they are sometimes sent on a “wild goose chase” when they get an inkling of what is going on.

He recalled having actor Robin Givens on the show last season, saying her publicist at one point demanded the interview be stopped. In an effort to buy Andre more time, the show’s assistant director allegedly led the publicist down a series of wrong turns throughout the building.

“Outside, back in, pretending he didn’t know where we were,” Andre said, bursting into laughter.

His stunts may lead some to believe that Andre is a simple clown. But the comedian, who studied upright bass at the Ber-

keley College of Music, will often give glimpses into the more learned corners of his brain, inexplicably dropping commentary on things like capitalism or militarism amid the chaos of his interviews.

“What can I say, man? Patriotism is the conviction that your country is superior to all others because you were born in it,” he says abruptly in one interview with NBA player Blake Griffin last season.

The fact that Andre keeps coming back for more has been of late a pleasant surprise for fans, given that he at times seems ready to move on from the show.

“Why permanently close the door on a show where I have full creative freedom?” he said, hinting that door is still open for more after this season.

## Tupac Shakur gets Walk of Fame star

From wire reports

Tupac Shakur received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on Wednesday, a few days before the hip-hop legend’s June 16 birthday.

The late rapper’s sister, Sekyiwa “Set” Shakur, accepted the star on behalf of their family. During her speech, she shed tears while describing her older brother’s vision of being celebrated with a star in Hollywood.

“From the first time he stepped foot on this stage of the Apollo Theater at 13 years old, before anyone recognized his name, he knew he had the dream to have a star here on the Walk of Fame,” said Sekyiwa Shakur.

Shakur was given the 2,758th star on the Walk of Fame.

Shakur, one of the most prolific figures in hip-hop, died in 1996 from gunshot wounds at the age of 25. His professional music career lasted only five years, but he sold more than 75 million records worldwide, including the diamond-certified album “All Eyez on Me,” which was packed with hits including “California Love (Remix),” “I Ain’t Mad at Cha” and “How Do U Want It.” He was

inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2017.

As an actor, Shakur starred in popular films such as “Poetic Justice,” “Gang Related,” “Juice” and “Above the Rim.”

### Other news

■ **Morgan Wallen** has been cleared to return to performing. The “Whiskey Glasses” singer, 30, canceled a series of concerts after injuring his vocal cords in May. “The doc cleared me to talk and sing... we back,” he wrote on his Instagram story Tuesday. Wallen’s website lists his next two shows as scheduled for June 22 and 23 at Wrigley Field in Chicago. That would be about seven weeks after he was ordered to rest his voice.

■ **Scottish singer Lewis Capaldi** announced Monday that he will “cancel all commitments” until he plays England’s Glastonbury music festival on June 24. Capaldi, who kicked off the Broken by Desire to be Heavenly Sent global tour in January, said that while the tour has been “beyond anything I could have ever dreamed of,” he has been “full on both mentally and physically.” The 26-year-old had been sched-



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

An image of the late rapper/actor Tupac Shakur is placed June 7 near his new star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame during a posthumous ceremony in Los Angeles.

uled to perform various shows in Glasgow, Dublin, London and Norway.

■ **Mike Ness**, singer and guitarist for the punk group Social Distortion, announced Wednesday that he has stage 1 tonsil cancer. Social Distortion announced it will postpone a planned summer tour and its work on a forthcoming album, the band’s eighth.

### Pianist George Winston dies

George Winston, the Grammy-winning pianist who blended jazz, classical, folk and other stylings on such million-selling albums as “Autumn,” “Winter Into Spring” and “December,” has died at age 73.

A spokesman confirmed that Winston died Sunday after a 10-year battle with cancer. His most recent album, “Night,” came out last year.

Winston was a native of Hart, Mich., who grew up in Montana, Florida and Mississippi and drew upon influences ranging from Fats Waller to the Doors. He released more than a dozen solo piano albums. His 1995 release “Forest” won a Grammy for best New Age recording, while his Doors tribute “Night Divides the Day” received a Grammy nomination in 2004 for best contemporary instrumental album.

“I came up with the melodic style that I play in 1971, and I have always called it ‘Folk Piano,’ (or more accurately ‘Rural Folk Piano’), since it is melodic and not complicated in its approach, like folk guitar picking and folk songs, and has a rural sensibility,” reads a quote from a “Q&A” section on his website, georgewinston.com.

Associated Press



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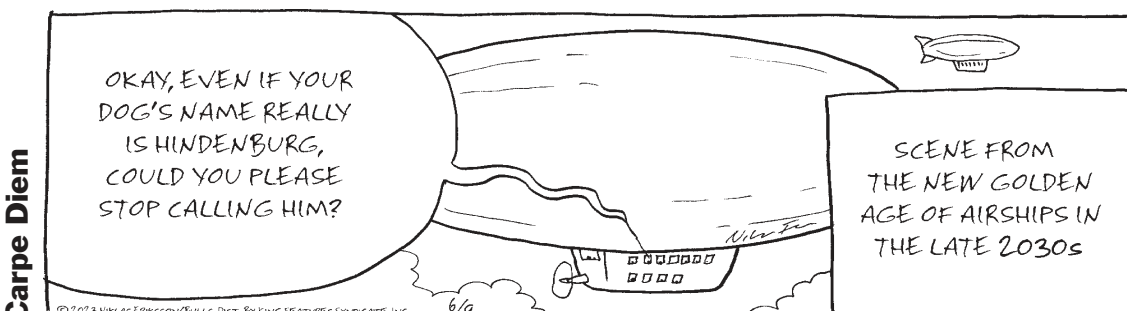
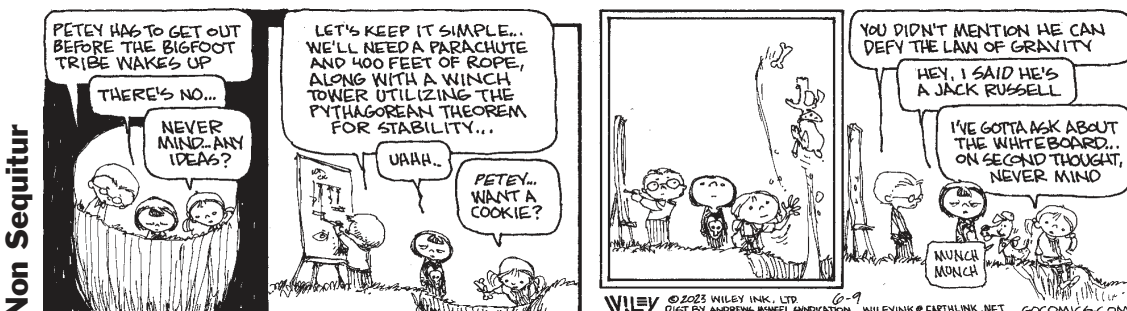
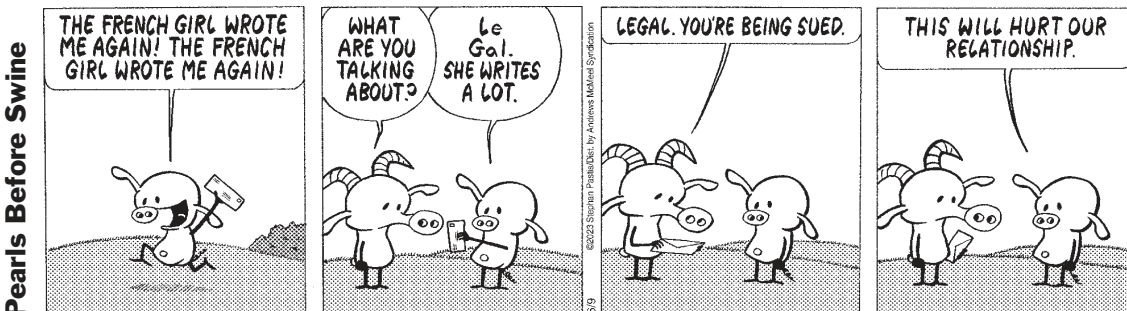
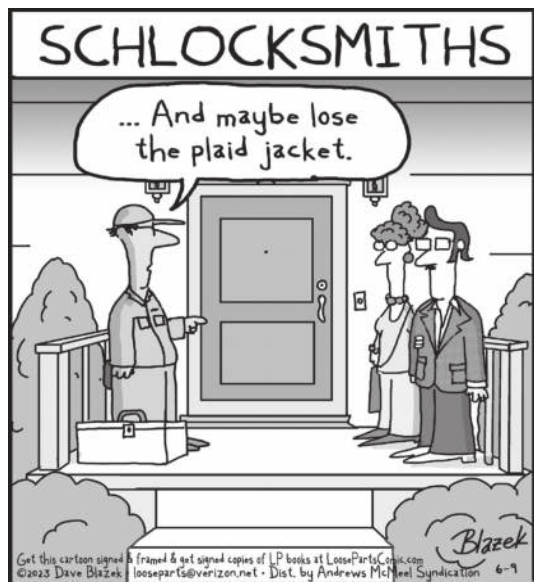
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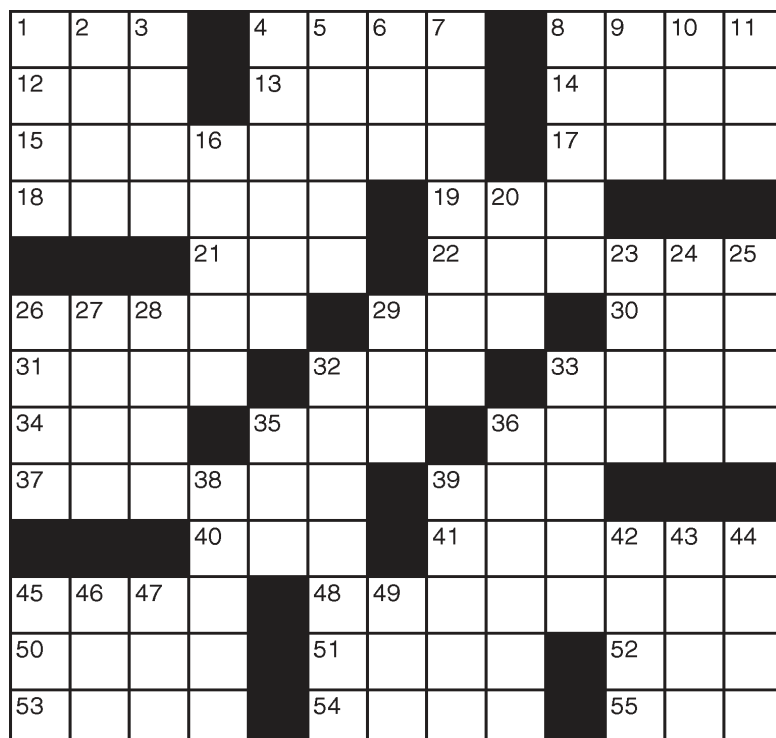
Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Tavern
- 4 Computer debut of 1998
- 8 Bud holder
- 12 Rushmore prez
- 13 "Breaking Bad" drug
- 14 Trenches
- 15 "Dunno"
- 17 Leer at
- 18 "Billy —" (2000 film)
- 19 Brit's restroom
- 21 — carte
- 22 Mogadishu resident
- 26 Berate
- 29 Mardi Gras VIP
- 30 Part of UCLA
- 31 Trails
- 32 "Unstoppable" singer
- 33 Produce producer
- 34 Chowd down
- 35 Spider's home
- 36 Ballet bends
- 37 Brandy TV series
- 39 Time line period
- 40 Soup cooker
- 41 Mirage
- 45 Half a sextet
- 48 View from Dublin
- 50 Really, really
- 51 Brooklyn NBA team

- 52 Chang's brother
- 53 CNN's Blitzer
- 54 Aussie greeting
- 55 Dawn goddess

- 25 Doctrines
- 26 Poetry contest
- 27 Roman censor
- 28 Curved molding
- 29 Chest bone
- 32 Usher's job
- 33 News bulletin
- 35 One of the five W's
- 36 Overly proper
- 38 Parody
- 39 Madonna role
- 42 "Understood"
- 43 Wine (Pref.)
- 44 Kvetches
- 45 Road rescue
- 46 Sorority letter
- 47 Oahu or Maui (Abbr.)
- 49 Roulette bet

DOWN

- 1 Pedestal
- 2 Genesis brother
- 3 Authentic
- 4 "Brrr!"
- 5 Maestro Zubin —
- 6 Cash dispenser
- 7 Area of London
- 8 Engine sound
- 9 Calendar abbr.
- 10 Cardinal cap letters
- 11 Jargon suffix
- 16 Iranian money
- 20 Tic-tac-toe loser
- 23 Jai —
- 24 Traditional tales

Answer to Previous Puzzle



6-9

CRYPTOQUIP

ZJL OE IENC MCIWOCRDI QAL  
 JENCI, ZJWVC EDJCMI MCRD  
 DJCN EAD? QCBHAIC LEA  
 BHR'D VCHIC CKMLERC.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT WOULD YOU SAY POST OFFICES AND BEDS SHARE IN COMMON? THEY'RE BOTH DROP-OFF LOCATIONS.

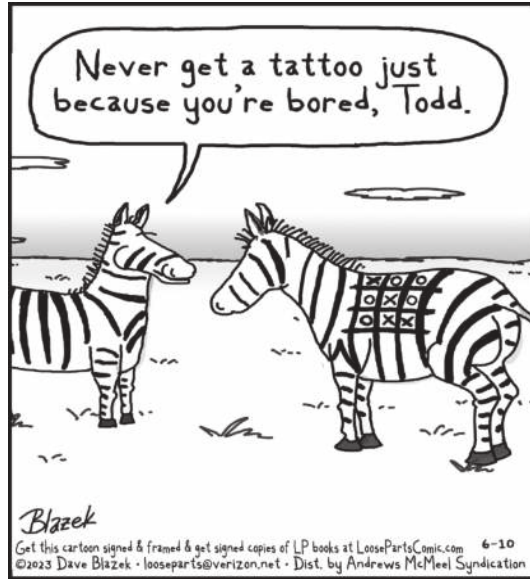
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals Y



Bizarro

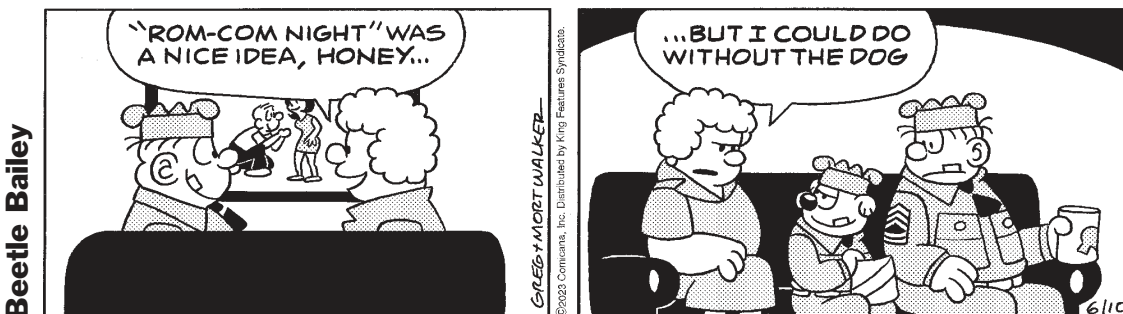
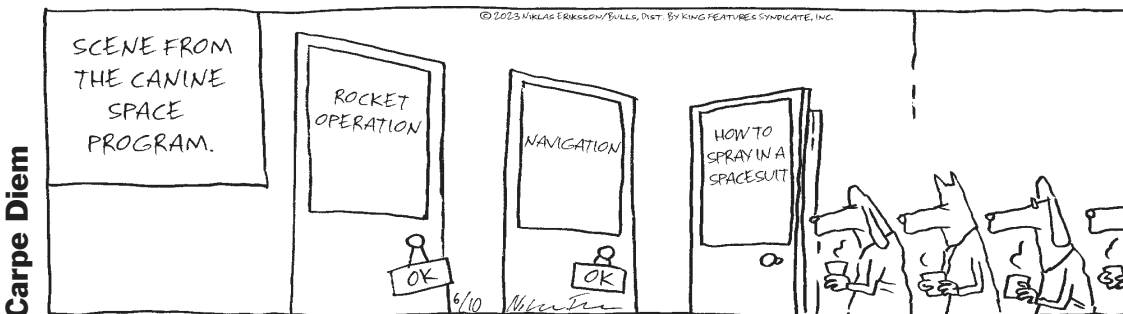
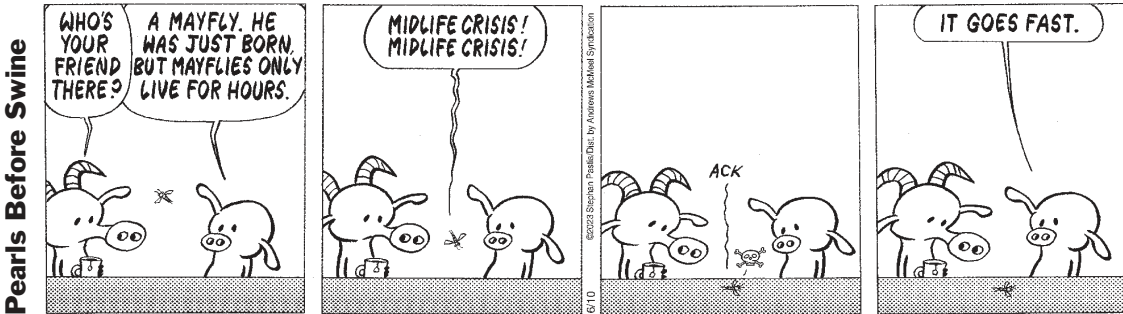


Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

Grid for Eugene Sheffer Crossword with numbered squares.



- ACROSS: 1 Moral principle, 6 Dental woes, 12 Nobel-winning Mother, 13 Eight fluid ounces, 14 Decelerate, 15 Mexican painter Diego, 16 Villa d'—, 17 Actor Omar, 19 Two, in Acapulco, 20 Facts and figures, 22 Clean air org., 24 JFK info, 27 Shed, 29 Not — many words, 32 Wealthy "Annie" character, 35 Pakistan's language, 36 Final Four org., 37 Needle hole, 38 Cyclades island, 40 Goals, 42 Suitable, 44 Swear, 46 Corn castoffs, 50 Director Rob, 52 Overacts, 54 Sings softly, 55 Dialect, 56 Solar-brewed drink, 23 More, in music, 24 Sch. URL ender, 25 Sailor, 26 Building wing, 28 Nave crosser, 30 Cloud setting, 31 Sugary suffix, 33 Pair, 34 Misbehaving, 39 Public outburst, 41 Dundee residents, 42 Curved lines, 43 Lima's land, 45 Celestial bear, 47 Oklahoma tribe, 48 "So —" ("Amen"), 49 Snake's sound, 51 Word of denial, 53 Dallas cager, for short.

Answer to Previous Puzzle

Answer grid for the previous crossword puzzle.

6-10

CRYPTOQUIP

KMIH ZIHRJBSZ BS ABUIHBSZ
ADUI IRPM BJMIS ZOWTN
WBBTZ, RSI JMIN IHARADHA
DH VBOJN VBWDJDPZ?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHY DO SOME RESIDENTS BUY HOMES, WHILE OTHERS RENT THEM OUT? BECAUSE YOU CAN'T LEASE EVERYONE.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: A equals G



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Ernie Gates

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## OPINION

## Smoke from Canada signals a future with fires

BY BRIAN BANKS

Special to The Washington Post

Right now, eastern North America sits under a blanket of choking smoke and an eerie orange haze more appropriate to the surface of Mars than the Great Lakes or Atlantic Seaboard.

The cause: an unprecedented number of spring wildfires burning in the Canadian province of Quebec — 164 of them as of Monday morning. It was a similar story two weeks ago, when drifting smoke from an intense outbreak of wildfires in western Canada cast a pall over much of the east.

The result is a battle on multiple fronts: in the fire zones, where firefighters and residents are struggling to contain the blazes and stay safe; in communities downwind, where poor air quality is closing schools and businesses; and on the dockets of emergency planners and researchers tasked with determining what locations might be vulnerable to future wildfires, and how to better understand their broader reverberations.

In the long term, this last might be the most significant of all the urgent questions.

More fires are breaking out, at different times, and in different places. This year, through Sunday, some 2,214 wildfires have burned through 3.3 million hectares of Canada's forests, scrub and grasslands. The 10-year average for the same period is 1,624 fires and 254,429 hectares burned — about 13 times less. Mike Flannigan, a fire sciences professor at Thompson Rivers University in British Columbia, points out that this year's strong early fire season even includes North-

west Territories, where snow cover typically delays large outbreaks until later.

It's a theme that connects Canada's current wildfire season with a global trend: evident in Britain in 2022, where wildfire destroyed homes in London for the first time; during Australia's epic bush fires in 2019, which burned millions of hectares of vegetation, including in the Gondwana rainforest, where fire was rare; and in recent fires on the Oregon coast in 2020, where it's typically too moist to burn.

Clearly, many people in places that never had to think about wildfire before need to start doing so now.

In the United States, the greatest increase in future wildfire threat will be — perhaps counterintuitively — in the verdant, humid states in the Southeast, according to data scientists at First Street Foundation, a New York nonprofit that models climate-related risks. Current moisture levels contain many fires in the region right now, but warmer, faster-drying conditions in the future have the potential to turn that area's abundant vegetation into extra fuel to burn.

The cause of all this is known, of course. Specific wildfire triggers are varied, but most experts blame human-caused climate change for their expanding reach. As well as drying things out, a warmer world leads to more of what fire scientists call "fire weather" — hot, dry, windy days that can turn a small, early-winter grass fire into a racing inferno, such as the 2021 Marshall Fire in Boulder County, Colo. First detected the morning of Dec. 30, within 12 hours it was the most destructive fire in the state's history, causing \$2

billion in property damage.

There are efforts to prepare for the surge in fires. A team in Britain, for instance, is working to develop the country's first Fire Danger Rating System, a response to the growing incidence of recent large-scale wildfires and the need to understand this threat. Even Canada, with extensive wildfire history, is upping its game: The Canadian Forest Service plans to publish the country's first-ever national risk assessment framework for wildland fires. Its goal is to produce "maps and data sets of burn probability and potential fire behaviour for the forested regions ... and assess fire risk in and around the Canadian landscape."

More vexing, perhaps, is devising responses to the wider repercussions, such as smoke. Closing windows, buying air filters, staying at home might work in the short term. But what of the economic costs and longer-term health impacts? If a local factory is spewing pollutants into the air, authorities can shut it down. Containing smoke from wildfires, however — like climate change itself — is a quandary of the commons.

By necessity, resources must be funneled to fire crews and other fire suppression activities to deal with raging wildfires right now. But what the current situation underscores is that we need a much greater understanding of the spread of fires — and all of their impacts — in the future. Without that, it leaves everyone on the front lines, forever fighting a losing battle.

Brian Banks is an Ontario-based writer and editor who specializes in nature, science and sustainability.

## PGA merger with LIV Golf is only the beginning

BY ADAM MINTER

Bloomberg Opinion

Human rights and golf were rarely mentioned in the same breath until the launch last year of LIV Golf, the Saudi-backed tour organized to challenge the PGA. Fans, sponsors, players and PGA executives claimed to be appalled at the involvement of a country connected to 9/11 and the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, among other long-standing human rights concerns. Predictably, then, the news on Tuesday that the PGA Tour and LIV Golf have agreed to a merger largely backed by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund has come as a shock.

It shouldn't. Ownership of a professional sports franchise is a key means for wealth to project status and soft power in the 21st century. It was just a matter of time before Saudi Arabia and other authoritarian governments decided to join the market. For the PGA, which has always been about generating revenues, acceptance was inevitable. Other professional U.S. sports organizations will inevitably follow its lead when presented with the opportunity.

Historically, U.S. sports haven't lacked for scandals that could and should be seen as human rights issues. Correct or not, those scandals tend to be viewed as criminal matters while human rights as an issue tend to be applied to authoritarian countries, especially during Olympic years. That choice has created some awkward and uncomfortable situations in recent years. For example, despite loud calls by human rights groups to boycott the Games in Beijing in 2008, Sochi in 2014 and Beijing again in 2022, the opportunity to

compete — and market — on a global stage has simply been too enticing for athletes and corporate sponsors to turn down.

There are also other reasons to embrace the Olympics. Since the 1950s, Russia and China have viewed the Games, in particular, as a premier means to market their national images at home and abroad. Athletic success at the Games — say, a top spot on the medal table — is openly celebrated as a proxy for national standing. How bad can a government be if it goes from Olympic nonparticipant to the top of the medal table in a generation, as China has?

For China and much of the world, professional athletic success has mostly been viewed as a means to achieving that gold medal. However, as wealth and power has accumulated in professional sports, China and other maligned authoritarian governments have increasingly viewed professional sports as a means to repair their images. In the 2010s, soccer fan Xi Jinping spurred a national soccer spending spree as Chinese tycoons vacuumed up European clubs and players. However, thanks to combination of incompetent management and financial instability, China's soccer spending has amounted to little so far.

Saudi Arabia has been more methodical in its sports investments, dating back to the 1990s, when it launched what became the FIFA Confederations Cup. In 2021, Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund acquired the Premier League football club Newcastle United. Its soccer league now includes Cristiano Ronaldo, lured by a contract worth \$200 million a year. The goal is not simply to improve Saudi Arabia's image; the Saudi

regime views sports as a crucial investment and means of growing the kingdom's economy beyond its reliance upon oil.

However, accomplishing that requires a foothold in the U.S., the world's largest and most lucrative sports market. LIV Golf was the perfect vehicle. The PGA Tour, accustomed to its prominence and convinced of its dominance, was vulnerable to disruption. LIV offered a more dynamic and — arguably — fan-friendly golf experience. More important, it was backed by the bottomless resources of Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund. That money was crucial: It bought players and time for the new tour to establish itself. And even though the PGA Tour was beginning to regain some of its footing after the initial shock of competition, the PGA must have wondered how it could withstand years of Saudi money in a sport — and an industry — that demands big purses. Under the circumstances, a merger was most likely seen as the best option.

The PGA isn't alone in its willingness to do business with countries that have troubling human rights records. In recent years, both the NBA and the WTA have accommodated China's political prerogatives after high-profile standoffs over human rights. In both cases, the money to be made in China's market overrode moral concerns. The PGA's abrupt decision to merge with LIV is no different. As long as money rules U.S. professional sports, this won't be the last time such compromises are made.

Adam Minter is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering Asia, technology and the environment. He is author, most recently, of "Secondhand: Travels in the New Global Garage Sale."



# SCOREBOARD/NFL

## PRO SOCCER

### MLS

#### EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Cincinnati	12	1	3	39	26	15
Nashville	9	3	4	31	24	11
Philadelphia	9	4	3	30	27	15
New England	7	3	6	27	25	20
Atlanta	6	4	7	25	32	28
Columbus	7	6	3	24	33	24
D.C. United	6	6	5	23	24	21
Orlando City	6	4	5	23	20	17
Charlotte FC	6	8	3	21	22	30
CF Montréal	6	9	1	19	15	27
New York	4	6	7	19	11	16
Toronto FC	3	5	9	18	16	20
NYCFC	4	7	5	17	17	22
Chicago	3	5	8	17	21	25
Inter Miami CF	5	11	0	15	15	21

#### WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Saint Louis SC	9	5	1	28	32	16
Seattle	8	6	3	27	21	14
LAFC	7	1	5	26	23	10
FC Dallas	7	5	5	26	21	18
San Jose	6	5	5	23	19	19
Vancouver	5	5	6	21	26	20
Minnesota	5	6	5	20	15	18
Austin FC	5	7	4	19	17	23
Real Salt Lake	5	7	4	19	18	27
Houston	5	7	3	18	15	21
Portland	4	7	5	17	19	24
Sporting KC	4	8	5	17	16	24
Colorado	2	8	7	13	14	25
LA Galaxy	3	9	3	12	13	26

**Note:** Three points for victory, one point for tie.

#### Wednesday's game

Atlanta 0, Los Angeles FC 0, tie

#### Saturday's games

D.C. United at Atlanta  
Seattle at Charlotte FC  
Minnesota at CF Montréal  
Miami at New England  
Colorado at Orlando City  
Nashville at Toronto FC  
Columbus at Chicago  
Los Angeles FC at Houston  
Austin FC at Sporting Kansas City  
New York City FC at Real Salt Lake  
Philadelphia at San Jose  
Cincinnati at Vancouver

#### Sunday's games

LA Galaxy at Saint Louis City SC  
FC Dallas at Portland

#### Wednesday, June 14

Houston at Los Angeles FC

#### Saturday, June 17

Columbus at New York City FC  
Real Salt Lake at D.C. United  
Orlando City at New England  
Los Angeles FC at Sporting Kansas City  
Saint Louis City SC at Nashville  
Portland at San Jose

## NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Portland	5	1	4	19	25	11
San Diego	6	3	1	19	17	11
Washington	4	1	5	17	13	9
Gotham FC	5	3	2	17	12	9
OL Reign	5	4	1	16	17	13
Houston	4	3	3	15	9	9
North Carolina	4	4	2	14	10	11
Louisville	2	3	5	11	13	12
Orlando	3	6	1	10	7	15
Chicago	3	6	1	10	14	23
Angel City	2	5	3	9	13	19
Kansas City	3	7	0	9	10	18

**Note:** Three points for victory, one point for tie.

#### Saturday, June 3

Portland 2, OL Reign 0  
Louisville 1, Washington 1, tie  
Houston 2, Orlando 0  
Kansas City 1, North Carolina 0

#### Sunday, June 4

San Diego 1, Gotham FC 0

#### Monday, June 5

Chicago 2, Angel City 1

#### Friday's game

San Diego at Louisville

#### Saturday's games

Angel City at Washington  
North Carolina at Chicago  
Kansas City at OL Reign

#### Sunday's games

Gotham FC at Houston  
Portland at Orlando

#### Saturday, June 17

Angel City at San Diego  
Orlando at North Carolina  
OL Reign at Houston

#### Sunday, June 18

Gotham FC at Louisville  
Portland at Chicago  
Washington at Kansas City

## COLLEGE SOFTBALL

### World Series

#### At Oklahoma City Double Elimination Thursday, June 1

Tennessee 10, Alabama 5  
Oklahoma 2, Stanford 0  
Florida St. 8, Oklahoma St. 0

#### Friday, June 2

Washington 4, Utah 1  
Stanford 2, Alabama 0, Alabama eliminated

#### Saturday, June 3

Oklahoma 9, Tennessee 0, 5 innings  
Florida St. 3, Washington 1

#### Sunday, June 4

Stanford 1, Washington 0, Washington eliminated

Tennessee 3, Oklahoma St. 1, Oklahoma St. eliminated

#### Monday, June 5

Oklahoma 4, Stanford 2, 9 innings, Oklahoma advances

Florida St. 5, Tennessee 1, Florida St. advances

#### Championship Series (Best-of-three; x-if necessary) Wednesday, June 7

**Game 1:** Oklahoma 5, Florida St. 0  
Thursday, June 8

**Game 2:** Oklahoma vs. Florida St.  
Friday, June 9

**x-Game 3:** Oklahoma vs. Florida St.

## COLLEGE BASEBALL

### NCAA Super Regionals

Best-of-three; x-if necessary

**Host school is Game 1 home team; visiting school is Game 2 home team; coin flip determines Game 3 home team**  
**At Winston-Salem, N.C.**  
Saturday: Wake Forest (50-10) vs. Alabama (43-19)  
Sunday: Wake Forest vs. Alabama  
x-Monday: Wake Forest vs. Alabama  
**At Stanford, Calif.**  
Saturday: Stanford (42-17) vs. Texas (41-20)

Sunday: Stanford vs. Texas  
x-Monday: Stanford vs. Texas  
**At Baton Rouge, La.**  
Saturday: LSU (46-15) vs. Kentucky (40-19)

Sunday: LSU vs. Kentucky  
x-Monday: LSU vs. Kentucky  
**At Hattiesburg, Miss.**  
Saturday: Tennessee (41-19) vs. Southern Miss. (45-18)

Sunday: Tennessee vs. Southern Miss.  
x-Monday: Tennessee vs. Southern Miss.  
**At Gainesville, Fla.**  
Friday: Florida (48-15) vs. South Carolina (42-19)

Saturday: Florida vs. South Carolina  
x-Sunday: LSU vs. South Carolina  
**At Charlottesville, Va.**  
Friday: Virginia (48-12) vs. Duke (38-22)

Saturday: Virginia vs. Duke  
x-Sunday: Virginia vs. Duke  
**At Eugene, Ore.**  
Friday: Oral Roberts (49-11) vs. Oregon (40-20)

Saturday: Oral Roberts vs. Oregon  
x-Sunday: Oral Roberts vs. Oregon  
**At Fort Worth, Texas**  
Friday: Indiana St. (45-15) vs. TCU (40-22)

Saturday: Indiana St. vs. TCU  
x-Sunday: Indiana St. vs. TCU

## PRO BASKETBALL

### WNBA

#### EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Connecticut	6	2	.750	—
New York	4	2	.667	1
Chicago	5	3	.625	1
Washington	3	3	.500	2
Atlanta	2	3	.400	2½
Indiana	1	5	.167	4

#### WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Las Vegas	7	0	1.000	—
Dallas	4	3	.571	3
Los Angeles	3	3	.500	3½
Seattle	1	4	.200	5
Phoenix	1	4	.200	5
Minnesota	1	6	.143	6

#### Wednesday's games

Dallas 84, Phoenix 79  
Minnesota at New York, ppd

#### Thursday's games

Las Vegas at Connecticut

#### Friday's games

New York at Atlanta  
Indiana at Minnesota  
Phoenix at Dallas  
Chicago at Los Angeles  
Washington at Seattle

#### Saturday's games

No games scheduled.

#### Sunday's games

Dallas at New York  
Chicago at Las Vegas  
Washington at Seattle  
Connecticut at Atlanta  
Phoenix at Indiana  
Los Angeles at Minnesota

## DEALS

### Wednesday's transactions

#### BASEBALL Major League Baseball American League

**CHICAGO WHITE SOX** — Sent RHP Jimmy Lambert to Charlotte (IL) on a rehab assignment.

**DETROIT TIGERS** — Sent RHP Beau Brieske to West Michigan (ML) on a rehab assignment.

**KANSAS CITY ROYALS** — Placed RHP Josh Staumont on the 15-day IL, retroactive to June 6. Recalled LHP Austin Cox from Omaha (IL).

**LOS ANGELES ANGELS** — Recalled OF Jo Adell from Salt Lake (PCL). Placed OF Hunter Renfroe on the paternity list.

**NEW YORK YANKEES** — Placed OF Aaron Judge on the 10-day IL, retroactive to June 4. Transferred RHP Ryan Weber from the 15-day IL to the 60-day IL. Selected the contract of OF Billy McKinney from Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (IL).

**TAMPA BAY RAYS** — Placed RHP Calvin Faucher on the 15-day IL, retroactive to June 6. Recalled RHP Luis Patino from Durham (IL).

#### National League

**CHICAGO CUBS** — Placed 3B Edwin Rios on the 10-day IL, retroactive to June 4. Recalled RHP Michael Rucker from Iowa (IL).

**MILWAUKEE BREWERS** — Sent L Jesse Winker to Nashville (IL) on a rehab assignment. Reinstated SS Willy Adames from the 7-day IL. Optioned INF Brice Turang to Nashville.

**PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES** — Sent OF Cal Stevenson outright to Lehigh Valley (IL).

**PITTSBURGH PIRATES** — Sent SS Chris Owings outright to Indianapolis (IL).

**SAN DIEGO PADRES** — Designated OF David Dahl for assignment. Sent DH Nelson Cruz to El Paso (PCL) on a rehab assignment. Optioned LHP Adrian Morejon to El Paso (PCL).

**WASHINGTON NATIONALS** — Recalled RHP Cory Abbott from Rochester (IL). Designated RHP Erasmo Ramirez for assignment. Assigned RHP Andres Machado to Rochester.

#### BASKETBALL

#### Women's National Basketball Association

**DALLAS WINGS** — Signed G Odyssey Sims to a rest-of-season hardship contract.

#### FOOTBALL

#### National Football League

**ATLANTA FALCONS** — Signed DL Carlos Davis and OL Matthew Bergeron. Waived DT Jalen Dalton.

**BUFFALO BILLS** — Signed CB Cameron Dantzler. Waived CB Kyler McMichael.

**DALLAS COWBOYS** — Signed DE Ben Bagnou.

**LOS ANGELES RAMS** — Waived RB Tiyon Evans.

**SEATTLE SEAHAWKS** — Signed DE Derick Hall.

**TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS** — Waived K Jake Verity.

#### HOCKEY

#### National Hockey League

**NEW YORK ISLANDERS** — Signed F Eetu Lukas to a three-year, entry-level contract.

#### SOCCER

#### Major League Soccer

**MLS** — Rescinded the one-game suspension of New York City FC D Braian Cufre during a June 3 match against New England Revolution after an appeal to an independent review panel.

**FC CINCINNATI** — Signed D London Aghedo to a one-year contract.

## GOLF

### World rankings

#### Through June 5

1. Scottie Scheffler	11.49
2. Jon Rahm	10.35
3. Rory McIlroy	8.29
4. Patrick Cantlay	7.25
5. Viktor Hovland	6.72
6. Xander Schauffele	6.38
7. Max Homa	5.52
8. Matt Fitzpatrick	5.31
9. Cameron Smith	5.19
10. Jordan Spieth	5.01
11. Will Zalatoris	4.79
12. Tony Finau	4.57
13. Brooks Koepka	4.46
14. Sam Burns	4.44
15. Justin Thomas	4.31
16. Tyrrell Hatton	4.22
17. Cameron Young	4.19
18. Collin Morikawa	4.01
19. Sungjae Im	3.80
20. Kurt Kitayama	3.57
21. Tom Kim	3.24
22. Jason Day	3.21
23. Tommy Fleetwood	3.03
24. Keegan Bradley	2.98
25. Hideki Matsuyama	2.96
26. Shane Lowry	2.95
27. Sahith Theegala	2.90
28. Justin Rose	2.87
29. Corey Conners	2.82
30. Si Woo Kim	2.74
31. Russell Henley	2.70
32. Wyndham Clark	2.70
33. Sepp Straka	2.60
34. Joaquin Niemann	2.55
35. Denny McCarthy	2.54
36. Tom Hoge	2.53
37. Adam Scott	2.46
38. Billy Horschel	2.42
39. Chris Kirk	2.40



JEFF LEWIS/AP

Arizona Cardinals wide receiver DeAndre Hopkins turns upfield after catching a pass against the Los Angeles Rams. Arizona released the five-time Pro Bowl receiver in a salary cap move May 26 after failing to find a trading partner in the offseason.

# Titans bringing in Hopkins for visit

By TERESA M. WALKER

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Tennessee Titans have a major need for help at wide receiver, and they will be the first NFL team to bring three-time All-Pro wide receiver DeAndre Hopkins in for a free-agent visit.

They certainly could use his experience in a very young wide receiving group. Hopkins, who turned 31 Tuesday, would have led Tennessee last season with his 64 catches for 717 yards despite being limited to nine games by a six-game suspension. He also missed the final two games.

Both coach Mike Vrabel and his new offensive coordinator Tim Kelly worked in Houston during Hopkins' tenure with the Texans. Vrabel made clear Wednesday he won't be trying to recruit Hopkins, something he left behind when he moved from Ohio State to the NFL.

The NFL Network reported Hopkins would be arriving Sunday. Vrabel would only say Hopkins will come to Nashville in the next few days and the Titans will go through the same visit they use with all free agents.

"I would really just want people that want to be here," Vrabel said. "And then if that works out, then you go on to the next step. So that will be pretty much it until we either sign or don't sign the next player."

Arizona released the five-time Pro Bowl receiver in a salary cap move May 26 after failing to find a trading partner in the offseason.

The Cardinals cut Hopkins three seasons after acquiring him in a blockbuster trade in 2020 with Houston and had signed him to a \$54.5 million contract extension through 2024. Hopkins would have counted close to \$31 million

against the cap this season for Arizona, which still took on a dead cap hit of \$22.6 million.

Hopkins ranks 36th in NFL history with 11,298 yards receiving in his 10 seasons over 145 games. He's a popular free agent with his former Houston quarterback Deshaun Watson making a pitch for the receiver to join him in Cleveland. Watson also spoke to Hopkins on Tuesday and wished him a Happy Birthday.

"Nothing about football, just about life and just how he can just enjoy his day and more blessings to him," Watson said.

Right now, the Titans' wide receiving group is led by Treyton Burks, the 18th pick overall in the 2022 draft. He was the player taken with the selection acquired when Tennessee traded A.J. Brown to Philadelphia. The general manager that made that move was fired Dec. 6.

Tennessee cut veteran Robert Woods after he led the team in both receptions and yards receiving. The Titans have approximately \$8.3 million in cap space, according to Spotrac.com. Quarterback Will Levis, their second-round pick, is the only rookie from their draft class currently not signed.

The Titans' returning receivers combined for 69 catches for 962 yards and four touchdowns.

Vrabel fired offensive coordinator Todd Downing after only four NFL teams scored fewer points per game than Tennessee's 17.5 in 2022. The Titans also ranked 30th in both total yards (296.8) and passing yards (171.4) per game. That was despite Derrick Henry ranking second in the NFL with 1,538 yards rushing.

AP sports writer Tom Withers contributed from Cleveland, Ohio.



# AUTO RACING/STANLEY CUP FINAL

## Busch and Childress, once enemies, now winning combination

By DAVE SKRETTA  
Associated Press

MADISON, Ill. — Twelve years after Richard Childress and Kyle Busch came to blows in one of the parking lots of Kansas Speedway, the two were celebrating a NASCAR Cup Series victory at a track straight down Interstate 70 near St. Louis.

It was proof of many things: That a team that once dominated NASCAR's top series with Dale Earnhardt behind the wheel of the famed No. 3 could still contend for championships, that Busch could be every bit as successful after moving on from powerhouse Joe Gibbs Racing and, perhaps most importantly, that a couple of boys can grow up.

"Yeah, I mean, people change," Busch said after holding off Denny Hamlin on Sunday night to win at World Wide Technology Raceway.

"The relationship that I have now, and the effort that's gone into securing me, to get me to go to RCR — the discussions and talks that happened there — just proves them right, right?"

It sure seems that way.

It's not as if Busch has magically turned around the No. 8 team in his first season; Tyler Reddick drove the car to three wins a year ago. But with his green-white-checkered victory just outside St. Louis, the two-time Cup Series champion matched the total and is now halfway toward reaching Childress' audacious goal of winning six times this season.

"It's been fun to have that group around," said Busch, who's also won at Talladega and Auto Club Speedway in California. "They know when we go to places, we struggle at places, that we all want to get better, right? I could do a better job most of the time. (Crew chief) Randall Burnett and the guys can do a better job as well. We just all continue to strive and work hard and bounce off of each other in order to come out and have the

best possible stuff every time we hit the race track."

It's hard to believe there's such synergy between Busch and Richard Childress Racing given where they once were.

The infamous brawl between Childress and Busch came after a Truck Series race in 2011 at Kansas. Busch had been racing hard with Joey Coulter, who was driving for RCR, and Childress didn't appreciate it. He went to confront Busch and, after removing his watch and handing it to grandson Austin Dillon, proceeded to put him in a headlock and begin throwing punches.

Childress, a spry 65 at the time, had to be pulled off Busch, who went to the ground defensively to avoid any more punches. He was later fined \$150,000 by NASCAR and placed on probation for the remainder of the season.

"Yeah, we put that totally behind us," said Childress, now 77 yet every bit as fired up about winning races. "We talked about it. That was one of the first things we talked about. That's history. We've both grown a lot. I know I've grown up. I've grown older, but I've grown up, too. There's an old song out there, 'I'm still growing up but I'm getting older.'"

Busch has turned out to be an improbably perfect fit.

"You know, we won a lot with Harvick, won a lot with Earnhardt. Our plan is to win a lot with Kyle," Childress said, "and not only be a contender for that championship. If we make the final four, we'll have a shot at winning it for sure."

Not just this year, but for years to come.

"Kyle has been really — he's such a pleasure to work with," Childress said. "Everybody says, 'Man, how y'all going to get along?' Same questions they asked me about, 'You and Dale won't last six months.' We lasted 20 years. I want to keep Kyle here, and hopefully we can end his career when he gets ready to."



Kyle Busch celebrates after winning a NASCAR Cup Series race at World Wide Technology Raceway on June 4 in Madison, Ill.

JEFF ROBERSON/AP



ABBIE PARR/AP

Golden Knights players greet goaltender Adin Hill after Game 1 against the Florida Panthers on June 3 in Las Vegas. The Golden Knights defeated the Panthers 5-2 en route to taking a 2-0 series lead.

# Journeyman goaltender Hill has Golden Knights up 2-0

By STEPHEN WHYNO  
Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Adin Hill heard fans chanting his name following one big save after another. He tried not to listen too intently.

After all, many in the crowd almost certainly didn't know who Hill was as recently as a few months ago. An unheralded 27-year-old journeyman goaltender is now a household name because his play is one of the biggest reasons the Vegas Golden Knights are up 2-0 on the Florida Panthers in the Stanley Cup Final and two victories away from winning it all.

Game 3 was Thursday night and Hill was set to return to the arena he was drafted in eight years ago — the fifth goalie picked, 76th overall in 2015 — as a playoff starter who has come of age since stepping in during the second round. He has since gone 9-3, giving up just over two goals a game and posting an NHL postseason-best .937 save percentage. Paid \$2.7 million per year, Hill has been better than two-time Vezina Trophy winner and \$10 million per season netminder Sergei Bobrovsky of the Panthers so far in the Final.

He also has one of the top plays in the Final so far with a spectacular stick save in the opener.

"It's probably the most fun I've ever had playing hockey," Hill said. "I'm just enjoying it, cherishing every day. ... I'm just living in the moment, and it's been fun. It's been awesome to be part of the journey with this team."

The journey would not be possible without Hill, who in the Final alone has turned aside 62 of 66 shots. On the other side, Bobrov-

## NHL scoreboard

### Stanley Cup Final

(Best-of-seven; x-if necessary)  
Vegas 2, Florida 0

Vegas 5, Florida 2

Vegas 7, Florida 2

Thursday: at Florida

Saturday: at Florida, AFN-Sports, 2 a.m.

Sunday CET; 8 a.m. Sunday JKT

x-Tuesday: at Vegas

x-Friday, June 16: at Florida

x-Monday, June 19: at Vegas

sky allowed four goals each game and got pulled midway through Game 2.

While Bobrovsky got the hook, Hill has been quick with a jab. Florida's Nick Cousins and Matthew Tkachuk have both gotten a blocker to the head when they have skated into Hill's crease.

Hill even gave Tkachuk a hearty slash on the way out in Game 2. It's his way of telling his defenders they don't always have to stick up for him when opponents encroach on his space, a glimpse into Hill's anger that usually only surfaces for a second or two when he's playing video games.

"If guys are going to the net and stuff, you have to stand your own ground," Hill said. "Our team all year, we've been disciplined but we'll stand up for each other."

Discipline has been an issue for the Panthers so far in the Final. They've taken 25 penalties, including nine misconducts and another for abuse of officials.

Coach Paul Maurice said his team's Game 2 loss "wasn't a discipline problem," as much of the time in the penalty box came after the score was lopsided. Florida

can't afford to be short-handed this much, especially with the Golden Knights' power play finally clicking.

The Panthers have yet to score a power-play goal in the series, and part of that is thanks to Hill. He made four saves in quick succession early in Game 2 that altered the course of the game and allowed Vegas to pounce and build a lead.

Recalling Hill keeping the puck out of the net during that penalty kill, teammate William Carrier was at a loss for words.

"It's hard to say," Carrier said. "He's been unbelievable for us since he came back. He worked hard at the end of the season there when he was hurt. He's been unreal for us."

Hill wasn't even dressed for the first first round because of an injury from early March. Laurent Brossoit started Vegas' first eight playoff games before he was injured early in Game 3 against Edmonton, pushing Hill into the lead role.

He's quick to say much of his success is thanks to the team in front of him, and that's by design from first-year coach Bruce Cassidy. His self-described goalie-friendly system allowed the Golden Knights to finish atop the Western Conference with five different guys in net playing — and winning.

"I feel like we want to be a layered hockey team and insulate our goalie from high-end chances all the time," Cassidy said Tuesday. "But there's going to be some, and (Hill has) been there every step of the way."



## SOCCER

# Messi to join MLS in stunning move

7-time Ballon d'Or winner will play for Inter Miami while still near his peak

By TIM REYNOLDS  
Associated Press

MIAMI — Lionel Messi has pulled off his latest stunning feat: He is headed to Major League Soccer and joining Inter Miami.

After months — years, even — of speculation, Messi on Wednesday finally revealed his decision to join a Miami franchise that has been led by another global soccer icon, David Beckham, since its inception but has yet to make any real splashes on the field.

That likely will soon change. One of Inter Miami's owners, Jorge Mas, tweeted out a photo of a darkly silhouetted Messi jersey shortly before the Argentinian great revealed his decision in interviews with Spanish news outlets Mundo Deportivo and Sport.

It was widely believed that Messi eventually would choose to play for Al-Hilal in Saudi Arabia, following longtime rival Cristiano Ronaldo to a nation where some clubs now are funded by the state's sovereign wealth fund. Going back to Barcelona, a storied franchise where he spent most of his career, was another possibility.

But in the end, he made the call that surprised many. Messi is joining MLS. He said in the interviews Wednesday that some final details still need to be worked out, but that he has made the call to "continue my path" in Miami.

"After winning the World Cup and not being able to return to Barcelona, it was my turn to go to the league of the United States to live football in another way," Messi said.

He didn't take the money. He didn't choose the memories. He picked Miami instead. Messi's next matches are likely to be exhibitions with Argentina against Australia on June 15 at Beijing and at Indonesia in Jakarta four days later — and then his Inter Miami debut figures to be sometime in July.

"We are pleased that Lionel Messi has stated that he intends to join Inter Miami and Major League Soccer this summer," read a statement from MLS. "Although work remains to finalize a formal agreement, we look forward to welcoming one of the greatest soccer players of all time to our league."

The seven-time Ballon d'Or winner — the trophy given annually to the world's best player — makes his move after two years with Paris Saint-Germain. At 35, Messi has nothing left to prove in the game and filled the only significant unchecked box on his résumé back in December by leading Argentina to the World Cup title.

Messi has more than 800 goals in his career for club and country, making him one of the greatest scorers in the sport's history. In more than 17 years of representing Argentina on the international stage, he has scored 102 goals against 38 different national team opponents — 16 of those goals coming on U.S. soil. He scored twice in last year's World Cup final against France, a match that ended 3-3 with Argentina prevailing 4-2 on penalty kicks.

He has been to the absolute mountaintop of the game. He is a four-time Champions League winner and his 129 goals in the top



CHRISTOPHE ENA/AP

Lionel Messi celebrates after scoring a goal for Paris Saint-Germain in February. After months of speculation, Messi announced his decision Wednesday to join MLS franchise Inter Miami, which has been led by another global soccer icon in David Beckham.

**"I think it'll be great for the sport in this country, especially ahead of the 2026 World Cup. And I'm excited to play against him."**

Walker Zimmerman

Nashville defender and U.S. national team regular

club competition are second to Ronaldo's 140. Messi has won 10 La Liga titles and two Ligue 1 championships, seven Copa del Reys and three Club World Cups plus a Copa América and Olympic gold medal for Argentina.

And now he comes to MLS, and a team that is struggling — last place in the Eastern Conference, just a few days removed from the firing of coach Phil Neville (who was hand-picked by Beckham two years ago).

Messi's decision to play in the U.S. might be the biggest boost ever for American soccer on the pro stage. Some of the game's biggest names — Pelé, Franz Beckenbauer, Thierry Henry and Beckham himself — have come to the U.S. toward the end of their careers, but landing a player still no worse than near the pinnacle of his game and just a few months removed from hoisting a World Cup is simply huge.

"This is obviously the biggest signing that they've brought in," said Nashville defender Walker Zimmerman, a U.S. national team regular. "It's kind of reminiscent of Beckham when he came originally. You saw how the league has kind of changed in the 15 years since he arrived, and hopefully 15 years from now we're seeing all the growth from this addition to the league. I think it's a great thing."

"I think it'll be great for the sport in this country, especially ahead of the 2026 World Cup. And I'm excited to play against him."

It took months of negotiations with MLS, the Miami ownership, Adidas and even Apple getting involved in a creative pitch to

bring Messi to Miami's pitch. Apple — which is a broadcast partner of MLS — announced Tuesday that it will show a still-untitled four-part documentary series "featuring exclusive behind-the-scenes access to global superstar Lionel Messi. ... In his own words, Messi tells the definitive story of his incredible career with the Argentina national football team, providing an intimate and unprecedented look at his quest for a legacy-defining World Cup victory."

And now, his story will have a Miami chapter. His move comes in a week when the NBA's Miami Heat and NHL's Florida Panthers are both at home in their respective title series — and the Heat, during Game 3 of the NBA Finals on Wednesday night, flashed a graphic on their scoreboard welcoming Messi to Miami.

The Heat trailed by 21 points at the time. A few people cheered anyway.

Inter Miami needed six years from inception to playing its first match, and its first four seasons have been less than stellar.

Messi is joining a team that sits last in the Eastern Conference and just fired its coach. It has made the playoffs in two of its first three seasons but has yet to finish a season with a winning record or even a positive goal differential.

Still, there have been hints for months that Miami remained very much in the Messi sweepstakes. Messi met with Inter Miami co-owner Beckham this spring, and that was shared publicly almost to ensure that everyone knew the sides were still talking. Messi and his family also own several

pieces of luxury real estate in South Florida, and — almost as if to suggest something big was coming — the MLS club told fans the only way they could get tickets for the second half of this season was to purchase a season-ticket package.

He's an enormous draw everywhere on the globe, including Miami. Two days after Argentina won the World Cup, Miami Heat guard Kyle Lowry sat on his team's bench for a game unable to play because of injury. He wore a Messi jersey that night.

Inter Miami still plays home matches in a temporary home in Fort Lauderdale, about 45 minutes north of the site in Miami where the team wants to build a permanent complex.

And even in an area where the population has a serious Latin flavor, and where more people might actually call the sport fútbol than soccer, Inter Miami has struggled to generate the same attention as do the area's primary pro teams — basketball's Heat, baseball's Miami Marlins, football's Miami Dolphins and hockey's Panthers.

Messi could change that in an instant. In a flash, he becomes the biggest name in MLS and makes everything Miami does newsworthy. Barcelona released a statement saying Jorge Messi, the player's father, told club president Joan Laporta of the decision to go to Miami and wished him well.

His decision ends what has been a wild saga. Barcelona made Messi a superstar, but the financial issues that forced the team to let him go two years ago still remain an issue.

"I heard that they'd have to sell players or lower players' salaries and the truth is, I didn't want to go through that," Messi said Wednesday.

Everyone knew he wouldn't be back with PSG. Few likely thought he was heading to Miami. But here he is, a move to Miami by a superstar that might even be more shocking than LeBron James arriving to join the Heat 13 years ago.



## FRENCH OPEN/GOLF



THIBAULT CAMUS/AP

Carlos Alcaraz, left, and Novak Djokovic meet for just the second time in Friday's French Open semifinals. Alcaraz won their only previous encounter more than a year ago on clay at the Madrid Masters.

# Alcaraz, Djokovic set for highly anticipated match

By HOWARD FENDRICH  
Associated Press

PARIS — Two weeks ago, before the start of play at the French Open, the brackets were set for the tournament, and one possible semifinal matchup immediately demanded attention: No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz, the Next Big Thing in men's tennis, against No. 3 Novak Djokovic, the Current Big Thing in men's tennis.

The heightened anticipation was not merely because it would be fascinating to see the two of them play at Roland Garros. It also would be fascinating to see them play each other, period: They've met only once, and it was 13 months ago, with Alcaraz coming out on top.

So get ready: Alcaraz and Djokovic finally will share the stage again on Friday in Court Philippe Chatrier, where they will compete for a spot in the championship match.

"Since the draw came out, everyone was expecting that match — the semifinal against Novak. Myself, as well," Alcaraz said after completing his half of the bargain by outclassing Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-2, 6-1, 7-6 (5) in the quarterfinals Tuesday night. "I really want to play that match."

A moment later, Alcaraz observed: "If you want to be the best, you have to beat the best."

That echoed, word for word, the phrase Djokovic uttered hours earlier as he looked ahead after beating Karen Khachanov 4-6, 7-6 (0), 6-2, 6-4 on Tuesday: "It's definitely the biggest challenge for me, so far in the tournament. If you want to be the best, you have to beat the best. He's definitely a guy to beat here. I'm looking forward to that."

The other men's pairing in the final four will include No. 22 Alex-

ander Zverev, who advanced to that round in Paris for the third consecutive time by defeating Tomas Martin Etcheverry 6-4, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4. Two years ago, Zverev lost to Tsitsipas in five sets; last year, Zverev left the stadium in a wheelchair after tearing ligaments in his right ankle in the second set against Rafael Nadal.

"It was the most difficult year of my life, for sure," said Zverev, the runner-up at the 2020 U.S. Open. "I'm so happy to be back at this stage."

He now takes on No. 4 Casper Ruud, a finalist at Roland Garros and Flushing Meadows last season. Ruud took advantage of No. 6 Holger Rune's terrible start to build a big lead and then held on to win 6-1, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 on Wednesday night.

Rune began about as poorly as possible and accumulated seven double-faults and 30 unforced errors in the hour or so that it took Ruud, a 24-year-old from Norway, to grab the initial two sets.

With the crowd repeatedly breaking into chants of "Hol-ger! Hol-ger!" — likely more out of a desire to see more tennis in return for their ticket cost than any affinity for the 20-year-old Dane — Rune briefly was back to better play. But Ruud broke to go up 3-1 in the fourth set and was on his way in a far less contentious meeting than his victory over Rune in the same round last year in Paris.

The only previous instance of Alcaraz vs. Djokovic came on May 7, 2022, on red clay at the Madrid Masters. Alcaraz had eliminated Nadal in the previous round, and his 6-7 (5), 7-5, 7-6 (5) victory over Djokovic made the Spaniard the first player to beat those two titans of the sport at the same clay tournament.

The tennis world already knew

about Alcaraz, but that truly announced his arrival. He went on to win his first Grand Slam title at the U.S. Open in September and became the first teenager to finish a season at No. 1 in the rankings.

"He is ready to try to do big things (in) tennis. I don't know if it's going to be this tournament but, of course, I think he is ready," said Alcaraz's coach, 2003 French Open champion Juan Carlos Ferrero. "He dreams very big about what he can do, so I think it's one of the most important things that he believes in himself and that he believes that he can go to the court and win against everybody."

So why does everyone care so much about this particular match? One player, Alcaraz, is seen as a star of the future.

The other, Djokovic, is still very much a star of the present: His championship at the Australian Open in January was his 10th in a span of 19 majors (Nadal collected six of those; three other players took one apiece, including Alcaraz).

Alcaraz is 20; Djokovic is 36.

In sports, it can help to be the one with the younger body.

Djokovic owns 22 Grand Slam titles, tied with Nadal for the most in the history of men's tennis; Alcaraz owns one. Friday will mark Djokovic's 45th appearance in a major semifinal and Alcaraz's second.

In sports, it can help to be the one with the more extensive know-how.

"Well, one has experience; the other one has legs," was Tsitsipas' assessment. "One can hit huge, super-big shots, and the other one prefers control over anything else, probably control and precision, to apply pressure and just make the opponent move as much as possible."

# McIlroy feels like 'sacrificial lamb' amid LIV merger

By DOUG FERGUSON  
Associated Press

Rory McIlroy, the strongest voice against Saudi-funded LIV Golf that caused so much disruption in golf, said Wednesday he now feels like a "sacrificial lamb" with the stunning reversal of the PGA Tour becoming partners with Saudi Arabia's enormous wealth fund.

It was McIlroy who helped lead a players-only meeting last August that reshaped the PGA Tour to fend off the challenge of LIV Golf. He has been the loudest critic, a member of the tour's policy board. And he was among the last to hear the news shortly before it broke.

"It's hard for me to not sit up here and feel somewhat like a sacrificial lamb, and feeling like I've put myself out there and this is what happens," McIlroy said at the RBC Canadian Open, where he is the two-time defending champion.

"Again, removing myself from the situation, I see how this is better for the game of golf. There's no denying that," he said, "But for me as an individual, yeah, there's just going to have to be conversations that are had."

McIlroy was in the player meeting Tuesday afternoon where PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan faced heavy criticism from members who wondered why the tour is taking money from the Public Investment Fund and why they weren't made aware.

But the four-time major champion also felt resigned that Saudi Arabia was going to continue investing in golf, and that making an enemy a minority investor would help in the long run.

"I see what's happened in other sports. I see what's happened in other businesses," he said. "It's very hard to keep up with people that have more money than anyone else. And again, if they want to put that money into the game of golf, then why don't we partner with them and make sure that it's done

in the right way? And that's sort of where my head's at."

McIlroy pushed back against the idea the PGA Tour is merging with LIV Golf. Still to be determined is the very future of LIV Golf.

The agreement — still not finalized — is for the PGA Tour, the European tour and the Public Investment Fund to merge commercial businesses. One of PIF's businesses is LIV Golf, which essentially will be under the control of the new company that still doesn't have a name.

Monahan is the CEO of the new company. Yasir Al-Rumayyan, the PIF governor, will be the chairman.

"So technically anyone that is involved with LIV now would answer to Jay," McIlroy said.

Monahan went on the Golf Channel ahead of the Canadian Open and referred to the agreement as "a great day, something that will bear itself out" over time.

But he conceded the "suddenness is a shock to the membership," which he said was a setback that could only be healed by talking to the players and explaining the new direction.

"I don't expect everybody to understand it right off the bat," Monahan said.

McIlroy said he felt the tour's future was brighter as a whole. The key point going forward is how the tour handles the return of players who defected to LIV Golf.

"That's where the anger comes from. And I understand that," McIlroy said. "There still has to be consequences to actions. The people that left the PGA Tour irreparably harmed this tour, started litigation against it. We can't just welcome them back in. That's not going to happen."

"I think that was the one thing that Jay was trying to get across yesterday is, 'Guys, we're not just going to bring these guys back in and pretend like nothing's happened.'"



NATHAN DENETTE, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Rory McIlroy speaks to the media about the deal merging the PGA Tour and European tour with Saudi Arabia's golf interests.



## NBA FINALS

## Multiple triple-doubles lead Nuggets to win

BY TIM REYNOLDS

Associated Press

MIAMI — Never had two players from the same team had 30-point triple-doubles in the same game. Never in the regular season. Never in the playoffs. Certainly never in the NBA Finals.

Until now.

Nikola Jokic and Jamal Murray made history Wednesday night — and have the Denver Nuggets two wins away from making some real history as well.

Jokic and Murray became the first teammates in NBA Finals history to both record triple-doubles, and the Nuggets reclaimed the lead in the series by beating the Miami Heat 109-94 in Game 3.

“By far, their greatest performance as a duo in their seven years together,” Nuggets coach Michael Malone said after his team moved two wins away from Denver’s first title.

Jokic finished with 32 points, 21 rebounds and 10 assists — the first such game in NBA Finals history, or at least the first since assists were tracked. Murray had 34 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists, getting the rebound he needed with 9 seconds remaining.

The Nuggets outrebounded the Heat 58-33, and took a 2-1 lead. Game 4 is Friday in Miami.

“I’m just glad that we won the game,” Jokic said. “It was a big one for us because they won in our arena. We just didn’t want to go down 2-1.”

Jimmy Butler scored 28 points for Miami, and Bam Adebayo finished with 22 points and 17 rebounds. Caleb Martin added 10 points.



KYLE TERADA/AP

Denver Nuggets guard Jamal Murray shoots the ball against Heat center Bam Adebayo, left, and forward Kevin Love during the first half of Game 3 on Wednesday in Miami. The Nuggets won 109-94.

“We’ve got to come out with more energy and effort and that’s correctable,” Butler said. “That’s on us as a group.”

Jokic and Murray combined for 24 field goals; Miami had 34. Jokic and Murray combined for 31 rebounds; Miami had 33. Jokic and Murray combined for 20 assists; Miami had exactly that many.

Somehow, some way, the Heat know they need to find an answer before Friday.

“It’s not an easy task to do,” Butler said. “But if we want to win, we’re going to have to figure it out.”

Miami has been the comeback king of these playoffs — seven rallies in games after trailing by at least 12 points. The Heat were down by 14 going into the fourth, and Malone reminded his club of Miami’s penchant for comebacks.

“First two games, they won the fourth quarter,” Malone said. “Tonight, we win the fourth quarter, we win the game.”

His team listened.

The lead eventually reached 21, the outcome never seriously in doubt, and Jokic looking very much like he’s back in cruise control. The Heat got within nine on a

three-pointer by Duncan Robinson with 1:22 left, but there was no epic finish for Miami. Murray and Jokic had the Nuggets too far ahead to get caught.

“You have to expect there to be elite talent in the finals,” Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. “And both those guys are elite-level talent.”

Officially, Jokic is now the seventh player to have two triple-doubles in the same Finals. Magic Johnson and LeBron James each did it in three different Finals. Draymond Green, Wilt Chamberlain, Larry Bird and Butler all had

## Scoreboard

## Finals

(Best-of-seven; x-if necessary)  
Denver 2, Miami 1

Denver 104, Miami 93  
Miami 111, Denver 108  
Wednesday: Denver 109, Miami 94  
Friday: at Miami, AFN-Sports, 2:30 a.m.  
Saturday CET; 9:30 a.m. Saturday JKT  
Monday: at Denver, AFN-Sports, 2:30 a.m. Tuesday CET; 9:30 a.m. Tuesday JKT  
x-Thursday, June 15: at Miami  
x-Sunday, June 18: at Denver

one title series with two triple-doubles.

It was Jokic’s 10th triple-double of these playoffs, extending his single-season record, and he was unbothered by whatever Miami threw his way. He finished 12-for-21 from the floor and 7-for-8 from the line, playing 44 minutes.

“We were more locked in, more focused,” Jokic said.

Christian Braun was tremendous off the bench for the Nuggets, scoring 15 points on 7-for-8 shooting in 19 minutes. Aaron Gordon added 11 for Denver.

And afterward, they both marveled at what their stars did in Game 3.

“It’s greatness, man. It’s greatness,” Gordon said. “That’s a dynamic duo right there.”

Added Braun: “I would say that it’s what they do every game.”

The Heat stole home court by winning Game 2 in Denver, a game where Murray had a chance to force overtime with a three-point try that missed at the end. The Nuggets now have the lead again, and there was no Game 2 hangover on Wednesday.

“Not just me,” Murray said. “Everybody bounced back.”

## Heat follow Game 1 script, drop Game 3 with poor shooting

BY ALANIS THAMES

Associated Press

MIAMI — Those open looks Miami kept knocking down three nights earlier in Denver just wouldn’t go down back home.

Jimmy Butler and Bam Adebayo were a combined 10-for-30 in the paint, and too many other shooters were cold in a 109-94 loss Wednesday night that gave the Nuggets a 2-1 lead in the NBA Finals.

“I just missed some that I normally make,” said Butler, who finished with 28 points on 11-for-24 shooting. “Along with Bam, too, but we’re gonna continually take those, getting two feet in the paint. If you can get a shot up, get it up, and if you can’t, get it out to your shooters. I think we did a good job with that. Maybe we do have to do a better job, but those are the same shots that we’re gonna get next game, and we’re expected to take and make those.”

After knocking down 17 three-pointers in Game 2, Miami made

11 of 34 shots from deep in Game 3. Duncan Robinson had three. Caleb Martin added a pair of back-to-back three-pointers in the second quarter.

Despite getting the looks inside they wanted, the Heat simply did not knock them down, resulting in a loss in which their fans, once roaring as loud as they could as they swirled white flags above their heads, were finding the exits before the final minutes.

Gabe Vincent shot 2-for-10 and Max Strus was 1-for-7, the starting guards combining to miss eight of their 10 attempts behind the arc.

Butler couldn’t seem to find the words to describe what went wrong, or why it was such a far cry from their success in a tough road environment a few nights earlier.

“I don’t know. It just can’t happen,” Butler said. “It won’t happen again, and it starts with myself. I’ve got to lock in on the defensive end ... I think if I start playing and doing that, then everybody else has to follow suit.”



WILFREDO LEE/AP

Heat forward Jimmy Butler looks up during the second half of Game 3 on Wednesday in Miami. Butler finished with 28 points.

Miami made just 9 of 26 first-half attempts in the paint and finished the game shooting 37% from the field, compared to Denver’s 51.2.

“I thought offensively we actually did get a lot of opportunities in the paint,” said Miami coach Erik Spoelstra. “Yes, you have to credit their size and everything

like that, but we’ve proven that we can finish in the paint when we’re at our best.”

Adebayo finished with 22 points and 17 rebounds but shot just 7-for-21 from the field.

The Nuggets pulled away in the third quarter — leading by as many as 19 — by accomplishing what the Heat couldn’t: They had 60 points in the paint to Miami’s 34. Denver only took 18 three-point attempts after taking 28 in Game 2 and 27 in Game 1.

“They pummeled us in the paint,” Spoelstra said. “They didn’t really have to shoot threes. ... There wasn’t a need to space the floor. We didn’t offer much resistance.”

The Heat pulled within nine with 1:22 left thanks to a three-pointer by Robinson but missed all of their shot attempts the rest of the way.

“Good win for us,” Denver coach Michael Malone said, “but we did not come down here to get one win.”



## COLLEGE BASEBALL/MLB

# Things to know as tourney hits super regionals

By ERIC OLSON  
Associated Press

Super regionals are the next stop on the NCAA baseball tournament's Road to Omaha.

Four of the best-of-three series are Friday through Sunday: No. 15 national seed South Carolina (42-19) at No. 2 Florida (48-15); Duke (38-22) at No. 7 Virginia (48-12); Oral Roberts (49-11) at Oregon (40-20); No. 14 Indiana State (45-15) at TCU (40-22).

The four series Saturday through Monday: No. 16 Alabama (43-19) at No. 1 Wake Forest (50-10); Texas (41-20) at No. 8 Stanford (42-17); No. 12 Kentucky (40-19) at No. 5 LSU (46-15); Tennessee (41-19) at Southern Mississippi (45-18).

The eight winners advance to the College World Series in Omaha, Neb., starting June 16.

## Familiar faces

Three of the super regionals match teams from the same conference: South Carolina-Florida and Kentucky-LSU from the Southeastern and Duke-Virginia from the Atlantic Coast.

South Carolina swept the three-game series with the Gators in Columbia in April, when the Gamecocks were in the midst of their 34-6 start. Prior to that, South Carolina had lost 16 of 24 games to the Gators, but the Gamecocks lead the series 54-51.

LSU won two of three against Kentucky in Baton Rouge in April and leads the series 57-32-1.

Duke took two of three in Charlottesville in April as part of a season-best eight-game winning streak. Virginia leads the series 112-69-1, including 65-24 at home.

## On a roll

Oral Roberts, only the eighth No. 4 regional seed to make it to supers under the current format (1999), is riding the nation's longest winning streak at 21 and has won 39 of its last 42.

Oregon has won nine straight after dropping five in a row. TCU has won nine in a row and 17 of 19.

## Dominant Deacs

Wake Forest has proved worthy of its No. 1 seed, and then some.

Tom Walter's Demon Deacons outscored their first three opponents 48-7, batted .376, had a .503 on-base percentage, allowed 4.76 hits per nine innings and struck out 50.

Pierce Bennett, whose .330 batting average entering the tourna-

ment was fourth-best on the team, batted .769 to lead all players in regionals. Justin Johnson drove in 13 runs. Seth Keener led all pitchers in regionals with 13 strikeouts.

Brock Wilken and Nick Kurtz combined for 50 of the team's 110 homers through the ACC Tournament. Neither hit one in the regional.

## Been here, done that

LSU's 16 super-regional appearances rank second all-time to Florida State's 17; Stanford and South Carolina are tied for third with 14; Texas is sixth with 13 and Florida is eighth with 11.

Texas has won the most games in super regionals and has the second-best winning percentage (23-8, .742) behind Tennessee (7-2, .778) among teams that have played at least four games.

## Have bat, will travel

Indiana State is the only team making its first appearance in supers. The Sycamores would have hosted TCU if it weren't for the school's commitment to host the Indiana Special Olympics this weekend.

The Sycamores shouldn't be intimidated. Their 23-7 road record (.767) is best in the country and includes a win at national power Vanderbilt.

## Who are these guys?

Much like the Oral Roberts men's basketball team that reached the 2021 Sweet 16, the Golden Eagles of the Summit League are the lovable underdogs heading into supers.

The small evangelical school in Tulsa, Okla., started playing baseball in 1966 and has a proud history and even reached the CWS in 1978. More than two dozen ORU alums have appeared in the major leagues.

The Golden Eagles play in a conference ranked 28th out of 30 in RPI, so they had to win the Summit League Tournament to get into nationals. No one knows better than Oklahoma State that they're not an easy out. ORU beat OSU three times this season, including in the regional opener in Stillwater.

ORU is the best fielding team in the nation (.984), in the top five in batting (.324) and ERA (3.83) and in the top 50 of almost every other major category. Names to know are Jonah Cox, who's batting .424, and Cade Denton, who shares the national lead with 15 saves.

## MLB scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Tampa Bay	45	19	.703	—
Baltimore	37	24	.607	6½
New York	36	26	.581	8
Toronto	35	28	.556	9½
Boston	31	31	.500	13

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	31	31	.500	—
Cleveland	28	33	.459	2½
Detroit	26	33	.441	3½
Chicago	27	35	.435	4
Kansas City	18	44	.290	13

West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Texas	40	21	.656	—
Houston	36	26	.581	4½
Los Angeles	33	30	.524	8
Seattle	30	31	.492	10
Oakland	14	50	.219	27½

National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	37	24	.607	—
Miami	35	28	.556	3
New York	30	32	.484	7½
Philadelphia	29	32	.475	8
Washington	25	36	.410	12

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	34	28	.548	—
Pittsburgh	32	29	.525	1½
Cincinnati	29	33	.468	5
Chicago	26	35	.426	7½
St. Louis	26	37	.413	8½

West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Arizona	37	25	.597	—
Los Angeles	35	27	.565	2
San Francisco	31	30	.508	5½
San Diego	29	33	.468	8
Colorado	26	37	.413	11½

Wednesday's games				
Oakland 9, Pittsburgh 5				
San Diego 10, Seattle 3				
Miami 6, Kansas City 1				
Tampa Bay 2, Minnesota 1				
Toronto 3, Houston 2				
Cleveland 5, Boston 2				
Milwaukee 10, Baltimore 2				
St. Louis 1, Texas 0				
L.A. Angels 6, Chicago Cubs 2				
Detroit at Philadelphia, ppd.				
Chicago White Sox at N.Y. Yankees, ppd.				
Arizona 6, Washington 2				
Cincinnati 8, L.A. Dodgers 6				
Atlanta 7, N.Y. Mets 5				
San Francisco 5, Colorado 4				

Thursday's games				
Minnesota at Tampa Bay				
Baltimore at Milwaukee				
Chicago White Sox at N.Y. Yankees, 2				
Detroit at Philadelphia				
Houston at Toronto				
Boston at Cleveland				
Chicago Cubs at L.A. Angels				
L.A. Dodgers at Cincinnati				
Arizona at Washington, ppd.				
San Francisco at Colorado				
N.Y. Mets at Atlanta				

Friday's games				
Arizona (Nelson 2-3) at Detroit (Lorenzen 2-2)				
Texas (Heaney 4-3) at Tampa Bay (Glasnow 0-0)				
Boston (Whitlock 2-2) at N.Y. Yankees (Cole 7-0)				
Kansas City (Lynch 0-1) at Baltimore (Wells 4-2)				
Minnesota (Gray 4-1) at Toronto (Kikuchi 6-2)				
Houston (Javier 7-1) at Cleveland (Allen 3-2)				
Miami (Pérez 3-1) at Chicago White Sox (Cease 3-3)				
Oakland (Medina 0-5) at Milwaukee (Houser 2-1)				
Seattle (Castillo 4-3) at L.A. Angels (Ohtani 5-2)				
L.A. Dodgers (Grove 0-2) at Philadelphia (Suárez 1-2)				
N.Y. Mets (Megill 5-3) at Pittsburgh (Hill 5-5)				
Washington (Gore 3-4) at Atlanta (TBD)				
Cincinnati (Lively 3-3) at St. Louis (Montgomery 2-7)				
San Diego (Darvish 4-4) at Colorado (Gomber 4-4)				
Chicago Cubs (Stroman 6-4) at San Francisco (DeSclafani 4-5)				

Calendar				
June 13-15	—	Owners' meeting, New York.		
June 24-25	—	Chicago Cubs vs. St. Louis at London.		
July 9-11	—	Amateur draft, Seattle.		
July 11	—	All-Star Game, Seattle.		



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Smoke from Canadian wildfires creates a haze above Yankee Stadium during the game against the White Sox on Tuesday night.

# Games postponed by poor air quality

Associated Press

The Washington Nationals' home game against the Arizona Diamondbacks was postponed Thursday and racing at Belmont Park was canceled due to poor air quality from wildfires in Canada.

It's the second straight day the continuing fires north of the border have impacted sports in the Northeastern United States. Two Major League Baseball games were called off Wednesday. A National Women's Soccer League game in New Jersey and an indoor WNBA game set for Brooklyn were also called off Wednesday amid hazy conditions that have raised alarms from health authorities.

With weather systems expected to barely budge, the smoky blanket billowing from wildfires in Quebec and Nova Scotia and sending plumes of fine particulate matter as far away as North Carolina and northern Europe could persist throughout Thursday and possibly the weekend.

The New York Racing Association canceled live racing at Belmont Park two days before the facility is scheduled to host the final leg of the Triple Crown with the Belmont Stakes.

"Based on current forecast models and consultation with our external weather services, we remain optimistic that we will see an improvement in air quality on Friday," NYRA President & CEO David O'Rourke said in a statement. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul warned the Belmont Stakes could be called off if the air quality index exceeds 200 on its scale.

If the air quality is 150 to 200, only horses that pass an additional pre-race vet examination will be permitted to race.

"People come from all over the country," Hochul said. "It's huge for the local economy. And so we ... hopefully can get this going, but there's no assurance of what the weather's going to be. So it's going to be a last-minute decision, I'm

sure."

A statement from Major League Baseball said the Diamondbacks-Nationals postponement was made after conversations with medical and weather experts and the two teams "regarding clearly hazardous air quality conditions in Washington, DC."

Plans call for a makeup game at 1:05 p.m. on June 22 at Nationals Park.

The postponement comes a day after games in New York and Philadelphia were postponed because of the poor air.

The Yankees' game against the Chicago White Sox was rescheduled as part of a doubleheader on Thursday, and the Phillies' game against the Detroit Tigers was reset for Thursday, originally a day off for both teams.

The Yankees and White Sox played through a lesser haze on Tuesday night. A day later, stadium workers and fans arriving early to the ballpark wore face masks for protection in a scene reminiscent of the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It was business as usual for me coming in. I got in around 12, 12:30, and didn't really think too much of it," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "I actually walked outside about 2 o'clock and was like — like everyone else, like — whoa."

White Sox manager Pedro Grifol thought MLB made the right decision postponing the game.

The Diamondbacks defeated the Nationals 6-2 on Wednesday when smoky conditions were noticeable, but not as severe as Thursday.

About 20 minutes before the game was called off, Washington manager Dave Martinez said he took his dog for a walk earlier in the morning.

"Not good," Martinez said. "It was a quick one. ... It's pretty bad out there."

The NFL's New York Giants also canceled practice Thursday.



## MLB

# Game: Celebrations aren't meant to annoy opponents

## FROM PAGE 48

around a garden hose, as the Baltimore Orioles do after big hits.

"It is very dumb, but it is hilarious," McCutchen said. "Especially when you get the whole team involved."

McCutchen pointed to the crowded dugout rail as proof the Orioles are creating the kind of good vibes difficult to quantify but essential to navigating a six-month season that can sometimes feel like a slog no matter how well it's going.

"Everyone is watching the game, they're watching what's happening," McCutchen said. "You don't have guys in the clubhouse just wondering what's going on or not paying attention. They're out there."

It's also creating a bond with the people who buy the tickets. The Orioles have labeled a section of left-field seats "Bird Bath Splash Zone" where fans can get doused — thankfully with water from a cannon and not a player's mouth — after extra-base hits.

"They want to feel connected to their team, and I think it gives them a way that hopefully they're enjoying it," Baltimore pitcher Kyle Gibson said. "It gives them a way to get in touch."

There are a handful of unwritten rules — of course, there are unwritten rules, it's baseball — that come with the territory. First off, the props have to be organic, or at the very least on brand. Oh, and they can't upset a league sponsor, like when Atlanta broke out a comically oversized Braves hat, only to be chided by MLB because it wasn't created by New Era, MLB's official hat provider.

The Twins started their "Land of 10,000 Rakes" routine at the urging of pitcher Pablo López, who created an informal planning committee to hatch something symbolic of the region. They came up with a beige fishing vest and a child's fishing pole, with the opportunity for more to be added over the summer.

"Maybe we can add a bucket hat, or a big fish would be good," outfielder Michael Taylor said.

Change can be good. Miami's homer party has morphed from a simple chain with a massive Marlins logo to a full-on ensemble that now includes a giant straw hat and a



JULIO CORTEZ/AP

**Mr. Splash sprays fans in the "Bird Bath Splash Zone" during a game between the Orioles and the Rangers on May 26 in Baltimore.**

pair of sunglasses, a nod to a city that's part neon glam, part retirement community.

Arizona used to pull out a stuffed rattlesnake but has since traded it for a "victory vest" that the night's star player can wear during postgame TV interviews.

"Anything you can do to break up the dog days of the season, little things like that, sneak in a laugh," Diamondbacks first baseman Christian Walker said. "We've had a couple of things we've retired along the way, but it seems like the jacket is sticking."

It helps that the Diamondbacks are winning, a key factor in whether something catches on or fizzles out. San Diego Padres star Fernando Tatis Jr. thought he was on to something when he brought a full-size red, white and green sombrero into the dugout during a series in Mexico City against the

San Francisco Giants in April. The Padres homered six times that first night, with the sombrero finding its way onto the head of whoever sent the ball over the fence.

A May swoon, however, soon followed. And the sombrero went back into storage after two short-lived weeks.

"It died," Tatis joked, allowing it will "probably" return at some point. "It's in the back. It's resting. He gave everything he had."

Still, San Diego doesn't lack options. The Padres occasionally pose for photos with a baseball — typically with a face drawn on it by bench coach Ryan Christenson — that sports a mini-sombrero up top after homers.

Nearly every player The Associated Press talked to stressed most of the celebrations are generally all in good fun and don't cross the line into something personal, unlike say a particularly showy backflip or the "sword" motion former MLB pitcher Trevor Bauer used to flash after a strikeout.

They're also typically done in the "privacy" of the dugout, out of the sight of the opponent on the field.

Still, that doesn't mean they don't occasionally get under the skin. That's where the beauty of the game comes in.

"It's a two-way street," McCutchen said. "The hitter can do what they want. The pitcher can do what they want. But just know if there's ever a meeting again, that other person is going to feel like, if I get you here, I'm going to do something to where I feel some type of vengeance. I have some time of vengeance against you because you did that. I'm going to really celebrate on this one."

It's not on McCutchen to decide what's good for the game or bad for the game. At 36, he's old enough to be considered "old school," even though there's been a flashiness to his game from the moment he made his major-league debut in 2009. Now a fa-



CRAIG LASSIG/AP

**The Twins' Jorge Polanco casts a toy fishing rod while wearing a fishing vest after hitting a home run against the Guardians on June 3 in Minneapolis.**

ther of three — including two young sons who are already playing T-ball — he understands the game needs to adapt or die.

If that means turning every home into a production — within reason — then so be it. Bring on the props. A decade ago he was part of a team that flashed a "Z" in reference to Zoltan, the villain in the early 2000s comedy "Dude Where's My Car?" — perhaps one of the most random "things that became a thing" in the sport's modern history.

This season, it's a cutlass and a jacket that's a little too tight. Next year it'll be something else.

"It's going to change," he said. "For me, you either accept it or you're just mad. We're showmen. We put on a show. That's what brings you to the ballpark. You play the game but you also do some things that make people be like, 'Man, that was really cool.'"

AP sports writers Dave Campbell, Noah Trister, David Brandt, Bernie Wilson, Jay Cohen, Tim Booth, Paul Newberry and Kristie Rieken and Associated Press writer Santos Perez contributed to this report.



CARLOS OSORIO/AP

**The Tigers' Andy Ibanez uses a hockey helmet and stick to score an imaginary goal in the dugout after his solo home run against the Rangers on May 30 in Detroit.**



# SPORTS



## Nuggets put on a show

Pair of triple-doubles leads Denver past Miami in Game 3 » **NBA Finals, Page 45**



The Pirates' Miguel Andujar celebrates in the dugout with a plastic cutlass after hitting a two-run home run against the Nationals. Many clubs are using some kind of prop to celebrate a big hit, including, top to bottom, the Angels, the Reds, the Nationals, the Royals and the Braves.



# Propping up the game

## From swords to fishing lures, celebrations are big productions

BY WILL GRAVES  
Associated Press

There are very few things that make Scott Bonnett panic.

Spending the last 15 years making sure the Pittsburgh Pirates have whatever they need whenever they need it has taught the longtime equipment manager the importance of being prepared for anything.

Well, almost anything.

Bonnett found himself in the dugout in Seattle late last month watching Andrew McCutchen round third following a leadoff home run against the Mariners when joy was quickly replaced by panic. The pathologically meticulous Bonnett scanned the end of the bench looking not for a helmet or a glove or pine tar but ... a rubber sword and a black suit jacket that looks like it got attacked by an overzealous tailor with an affinity for patches.

Welcome to major league baseball in 2023, where an ever-increasing number of homers and big hits aren't met with simple fist bumps or forearm bashes but a full-on production.

**"Anything you can do to break up the dog days of the season, little things like that, sneak in a laugh."**

Christian Walker  
Arizona Diamondbacks first baseman

In Pittsburgh, they swashbuckle. You know, as Pirates do. In Minnesota, they fish. In Miami, they drape themselves in bling. In Seattle, they don a tricked-out Darth Vader helmet and brandish a trident. In Washington, they literally wig out. In Arizona, they wrap themselves in leather.

A trend that began with a few rogue teams during the pandemic as a way to bring life to fan-less stadiums is catching on thanks in part

to social media and simple competitive one-upmanship.

The surprising Pirates began using a sword — OK, technically a "cutlass" — this season at the behest of a group of fans that call themselves "The Renegades of the Rotunda" and regularly show up to games at PNC Park in full cosplay glory. McCutchen — who was able to flamboyantly parry with an invisible opponent in Seattle after his 295th career homer when Bonnett found the momentarily misplaced prop just in time — figures his club is just trying to keep up with the times.

"You almost feel like an outcast if you don't have it on a team," the five-time All-Star said. "It's just kind of where we are."

Or more specifically, where they're going. Baseball isn't just evolving on the field but off it. Sure the pitch clock is cool. It just doesn't go viral like say, players slamming water through a funnel or turning themselves into "human sprinklers" like kids goofing off

SEE GAME ON PAGE 47

# Messi opts to play in MLS for Inter Miami » Soccer, Page 43



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