

NHL: Losses drove Lightning to Stanley Cup repeat **Page 56**

TRAVEL: Family fun at dino park in UK **Page 27**

FOOD: Starbucks' 47 new drinks honor Japan **Page 28**

EUROPE
& PACIFIC

WEEKEND

EDITION



MOVIES
Finally, an origin story for Marvel's Black Widow
Profile, Page 19
Review, Page 20

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MILITARY

Out of control



KIP SUMNER/U.S. Air Force

U.S. Air Force Capt. Kristin "BEO" Wolfe flies an F-35A Lightning II near Hill Air Force Base, Utah, in 2020. The Pentagon plans to procure nearly 2,500 F-35s, but the Government Accountability Office said that plan is not financially sustainable.

GAO says cost overruns should force Pentagon to scale back F-35 program

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The failure to control F-35 aircraft cost overruns should force the Pentagon to scale back its fleet of advanced warplanes unless it can find new savings, a government watchdog agency report said.

The development of the advanced F-35 fighter, the most costly weapon system in Defense Department history, has faced steadily rising

costs for years. And while the military has tried to reduce expenses, those efforts "have produced limited results," the Government Accountability Office report released Wednesday said.

"DOD's inability to arrest the increases in F-35 sustainment costs and make progress towards the services' established affordability constraints is due in part to the department's not having a clear, strategic approach across

the F-35 program," the GAO said.

About 400 F-35s are already in service, making the aircraft a growing portion of the Pentagon's tactical fleet.

The Pentagon plans to procure nearly 2,500 F-35s with an estimated life cycle cost exceeding \$1.7 trillion, the GAO said. About \$1.3 trillion of those costs are related to operating and

SEE CONTROL ON PAGE 5

AFGHANISTAN

Biden: US mission will end Aug. 31

President announces plan to evacuate Afghan translators

BY SARAH CAMMARATA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Thursday announced the U.S. military mission in Afghanistan will end by Aug. 31 and his administration will start to move thousands of Afghan translators to several other countries as they await visa approval to enter the United States.

"Our message to those women and men is clear. There is a home for you in the United States... We will stand with you, just as you stood with us," Biden said.

He said the administration has already approved 2,500 Special Immigrant Visa applications that offer safe passage to the U.S. for these Afghan partners. A "point person" in the White House and a State Department-led task force are coordinating these efforts, Biden said.

The administration has already "dramatically accelerated" the processing time for visa applicants to reach the U.S. safely, the president said.

Biden committed in late June to evacuate Afghans who assisted U.S. personnel for nearly 20 years as interpreters, lawyers, teachers and other contract jobs after weeks of mounting pressure from lawmakers and advocates to do so. At the time, he did not offer details on where they would be relocated and in what time frame.

White House Press Secretary

SEE AFGHAN ON PAGE 4

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Prices unavailable at press time.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (July 9)	\$1.16
Dollar buys (July 9)	0.8221
British pound (July 9)	\$1.34
Japanese yen (July 9)	108.00
South Korean won (July 9)	1,113.00

South Korea (Won)	1,150.09
Switzerland (Franc)	.9153
Thailand (Baht)	32.49
Turkey (New Lira)	8.6855

(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.)

Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	.3766
Britain (Pound)	1.3787
Canada (Dollar)	1.2538
China (Yuan)	6.4878
Denmark (Krone)	6.2712
Egypt (Pound)	15.6692
Euro	.8432
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7682
Hungary (Forint)	302.02
Israel (Shekel)	3.2805
Japan (Yen)	109.67
Kuwait (Dinar)	.3011
Norway (Krone)	8.7552
Philippines (Peso)	50.32
Poland (Zloty)	3.84
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7507
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3521

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	South Korea	3.199	3.639	\$3.899	3.409
Japan	\$3.189	...	\$3.869	\$3.399	Change in price	+3 cents	+4 cents	+3 cents	+3 cents
Change in price	+3 cents	...	+3 cents	+3 cents	Guam	3.199	\$3.639	\$3.879	...
Okinawa	3.189	\$3.629	\$3.869	\$3.299	Change in price	+3 cents	+4 cents	+3 cents	...
Change in price	+3 cents	+4 cents	+3 cents	+3 cents					

*DieselEFD **Midgrade
For the week of Nov. 13-19

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	3.25
Interest Rate Discount rate	0.75
Federal funds market rate	0.09
3-month bill	0.05
30-year bond	1.94

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.

TODAY IN STRIPES

- American Roundup 14
- Comics 38, 40, 41
- Crossword 38, 40, 41
- Faces 16
- Opinion 42
- Sports 44-56

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MILITARY

Thomas returns to Yokosuka to lead 7th Fleet

By ALEX WILSON

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A familiar face has taken the helm of 7th Fleet, a command he described as a “supremely credible and integrated naval force” that gives the United States and its allies an upper hand over its rivals in the Indo-Pacific region.

Vice Adm. Karl Thomas assumed command of 7th Fleet on Thursday during a ceremony at Yokosuka’s Fleet Theater. He relieved Vice Adm. William Merz, who had led the nation’s largest overseas fleet since September 2019.

Thomas most recently served as assistant deputy chief of naval operations for operations, plans and strategy at the Pentagon, but previously served as the commander of 7th Fleet’s Task Force 70 and Carrier Strike Group 5.

“This is oddly, and pleasantly, very familiar,” he said during the ceremony. “Less than two years ago, my family and I left Yokosuka and wondered if we’d ever serve our Navy in this spectacular country again — and I certainly hoped that we would.”

Merz noted the novel challenges that arose during the last half of his tenure at 7th Fleet, primarily those resulting from the coronavirus pandemic.

The pandemic’s onset was “followed shortly by our dramatic shift from our port-to-port routine



ARON MONTANO/U.S. Navy

Vice Adm. Karl Thomas salutes after taking command of the 7th Fleet at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, Thursday.

to a new, no-port-at-all routine,” he said. “Through that, we learned some things about what it truly means to be a command ship.”

Merz, Thomas and several guest speakers took a moment during the otherwise upbeat ceremony to reflect on the critical nature of 7th Fleet’s mission in the Pacific.

Operating with up to 70 ships and submarines, 150 aircraft and approximately 20,000 sailors, the fleet routinely engages in bilateral and multilateral exercises with U.S. allies. It also conducts free-

dom-of-navigation patrols and other operations designed to uphold international law or keep the peace.

Another speaker, Vice Adm. Phillip Sawyer, deputy chief of naval operations for operations, plans and strategy, outlined the numerous forces at play in the region.

“7th Fleet operates [in] the world’s most consequential waters — it poses a collection of security challenges not seen anywhere else: strategic competition with China, an increasingly assertive Russia, an unpredictable North

Korea, coupled with regional weather impacts, violent extremists, and, most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic,” he said.

Adm. Hiroshi Yamamura, chief of staff for the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, highlighted the importance of Japan’s relationship with the U.S. and 7th Fleet.

“As the security environment becomes more severe on the Korean peninsula, in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, we believe that strengthening the Japan-U.S. alliance is even more important than ever before,” he said.

“Security issues important to both of our navies are increasing, such as the growing activity of Chinese Coast Guard ships around the Senkaku islands and the militarization of the reefs of the South China Sea.”

Yamamura also said peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait is “very critical” to Japan, the U.S. and the region as whole.

The odds of U.S. warships encountering Chinese vessels are set to increase along with tension across the strait and the frequency of U.S. freedom-of-navigation patrols in the South China Sea, Bo Kong, co-director of the Institute for US-China Issues at the University of Oklahoma, told Stars and Stripes in an email this spring.

Likewise, Jeff Kingston, director of Asian Studies at Temple University Japan, in an email to Stars and Stripes on Wednesday, said Thomas “will face the ongoing escalation of tensions in the region related to a rising and more assertive China.”

Kingston said rising tension surrounding Taiwan, the Senkaku Islands and China’s expansion in the South China Sea would keep Thomas busy “and require a cool head.”

Merz is being reassigned as deputy chief of naval operations for operations, plans and strategy at the Pentagon — replacing Sawyer, who plans to retire, according to 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. Mark Langford.

Air Force updates list of jobs eligible for retention bonuses

By WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

The Air Force’s list of career specialties eligible for the Selective Retention Bonus program has edged up slightly to 39, but the number still remains low by historical standards due to the service’s record-high retention levels.

In January, the Air Force announced that 37 specialties were eli-

gible for bonuses for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1, a significant drop from the 72 qualifying positions in the previous year. The service offered bonuses in 115 specialties for fiscal year 2019.

The updated mid-2021 list is effective as of Wednesday, according to information posted online by the Air Force. The list applies to both Air Force and Space Force person-

nel.

Bonuses are aimed at improving retention of experienced airmen and space professionals in “stressed career fields” or in those that have high training costs, the Air Force said in a January news release.

Overall retention levels have been at record highs this year, according to Air Force officials.

The service expects to pay out

more than \$55 million in bonuses this year, a drop from the \$150 million spent the previous year.

Among specialties now added are human intelligence specialist, target analyst, dental hygienist and tactical aircraft maintenance (5th generation) craftsman.

Among the jobs dropped from the January list are sensor operator and airborne cryptologic Korean lan-

guage analyst.

Still in demand are Russian- and Chinese-language cryptologic analyst; pararescue; special reconnaissance; security forces dog handler; and explosive ordnance disposal.

A link to the complete list is posted at www.afpc.af.mil/retention/.

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Judge rules Air Force mostly at fault in 2017 Texas church attack

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — A federal judge has ruled that the U.S. Air Force is mostly responsible for a former serviceman killing more than two dozen people at a Texas church in 2017 because it failed to submit his criminal history into a database, which should have prevented him from purchasing firearms.

U.S. District Judge Xavier Rodriguez in San Antonio wrote in a ruling signed Wednesday that the Air Force was “60% responsible” for the massacre at First Baptist Church in the small town of Suth-

erland Springs, where Devin Kelley opened fire during a Sunday service. Authorities put the official death toll at 26 because one of the 25 people killed was pregnant.

The attack remains the worst mass shooting in Texas history.

“The trial conclusively established that no other individual — not even Kelley’s own parents or partners — knew as much as the United States about the violence that Devin Kelley had threatened to commit and was capable of committing,” Rodriguez wrote.

Kelley had served nearly five

years in the Air Force before being discharged in 2014 for bad conduct, after he was convicted of assaulting a former wife and stepson, cracking the child’s skull. The Air Force has publicly acknowledged that the felony conviction for domestic violence, had it been put into the FBI database, could have prevented Kelley from buying guns from licensed firearms dealers, and also from possessing body armor.

Rodriguez said that had the government done its job and entered Kelley’s history into the database, “it is more likely than not

that Kelley would have been deterred from carrying out the Church shooting.”

An Air Force spokeswoman did not immediately return a request seeking comment.

Authorities said Kelley fired at least 450 rounds at helpless worshippers who tried taking cover in the pews. As he left the small wood-frame church, Kelley was confronted by an armed resident who had grabbed his own rifle and exchanged fire with him. Kelley fled as two Sutherland Springs residents gave chase, and died of an apparent self-inflicted

gunshot wound after losing control of his vehicle and crashing.

Last month, the Texas Supreme Court ruled that survivors and relatives can’t sue a sporting goods chain where Kelley purchased an AR-556 semi-automatic rifle used in the shooting. Academy Sports and Outdoors had appealed after two lower courts declined to dismiss lawsuits.

The lawsuit against the federal government was brought by family members of the victims. Rodriguez ordered a later trial to assess damages owed to the families.

WAR ON TERRORISM

Taliban's rapid advances put many cities at risk

By SUSANNAH GEORGE
The Washington Post

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Taliban's mounting pressure campaign on key cities across Afghanistan continued Wednesday as fighters battled government forces in the capital of Badghis province, the latest advance in a string of attacks on government-controlled districts since foreign forces began to withdraw in May.

Clashes reached the city center Wednesday, but Afghan government officials said the city remains in government control. Videos circulated by Taliban spokesmen showed cheering civilians on the outskirts of Qala-e Nau as dozens of militants sped by on motorcycles. In a video released by the Afghan government, the province's governor — holding a rifle and wearing an ammunition vest — pledged to defend the city.

"The Taliban suffered casualties and were defeated," Hasamuddin Shams, the provincial governor, said in the video as explosions rumbled in the background. Hours later, Ajmal Omar Shinwari, a spokesman for Afghanistan's security forces, said the city's perimeter had been secured.

The assault on Badghis comes as the Taliban have besieged the capitals of several provinces across the country by overrunning surrounding districts, according to interviews with local officials. The territory grab has given the Taliban control of key roadways into and out of those areas, in what one Taliban commander said was the goal of the operation.

"It was exactly like a dam breaking down."

Abdul Aziz Beg
Badghis provincial council member

Many of the Taliban's advances have faced little to no resistance in the wake of the United States' withdrawal. Without close U.S. support, specifically airstrikes, Afghan forces have been unable to hold territory even in parts of the country far from the Taliban's traditional heartland in the south.

"It was exactly like a dam breaking down," said Abdul Aziz Beg, a member of the Badghis provincial council who was in the city when the assault began.

Beg said the breach was triggered by the deputy police chief deserting his post. After he fled, the Afghan police staffing key checkpoints protecting Qala-e Nau abandoned their positions, he said, allowing Taliban fighters to easily enter the provincial capital.

Shinwari, the security forces spokesman, said the commander's departure was planned, describing it as a "tactical retreat."

Like many of the other provinces where Taliban fighters have rolled back government troops, parts of Badghis have long been under militant control, with front lines remaining static for years. But after U.S. and NATO forces began the last phase of their withdrawal from Afghanistan in May, the Taliban have steadily expand-

ed their reach.

The militants attacked several provinces south of Kabul where they had long held considerable influence. After consolidating gains there, the group's focus shifted to the north in recent weeks, where its influence is more recent.

Initially, the Taliban advances were met with government resistance, but after the militants secured a handful of victories, more districts began to surrender.

Some fell without a single shot fired, said Abdul Samigh Atiq, the former district chief from Badakhshan province, where Taliban fighters overran about 20 districts in two days. On Monday, more than 1,000 Afghan soldiers fled into neighboring Tajikistan ahead of a Taliban advance there.

Takhar and Badghis provinces experienced a similar phenomenon, with Taliban fighters consolidating their control of nearly every district aside from the capital city in a matter of days.

Local officials say a combination of poor logistical support for government forces and officials willing to abandon checkpoints in exchange for money or other deals with the Taliban allowed for the cascading losses.

In Badghis, Beg, the provincial council member, said some local officials accepted bribes from the Taliban to abandon outposts.

"Without commandos or other reinforcements, the situation could get worse," he said. "The Taliban might wait for the nightfall and then attack again."

Taliban fighters now control



MIRWIS OMARI/AP

An Afghan civilian carries a wounded child to the hospital after he was injured during fighting between Taliban and government forces in Badghis province in northwest Afghanistan, Wednesday.

large portions of territory along Afghanistan's northern border with China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

But some Afghan officials say the Taliban did not expect to take so much territory in the north so quickly and the moves have left the group overstretched in an ethnically diverse part of the country that will prove more difficult to hold than more homogenous, largely Pashtun central and southern provinces.

"They are making a huge mistake," Mohammad Radmanesh, a retired Afghan general and former Defense Ministry spokesman, said of the Taliban's northern push. "These operations will only lead to more local resistance against them."

A senior Taliban commander played down the criticism, saying that in recent years the militants have expanded recruitment in the

north, attracting Afghan Turkmen and Uzbeks.

The commander spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

Local officials in the area did not describe significant Taliban recruitment in Afghanistan's north, but many cited deals made between local leadership and Taliban fighters in recent months that paved the way for the group's swift advances.

Ultimately, the senior Taliban commander said the northern push was designed to secure financial gains for the militants.

The aim of the operation was to "get hold of financial hubs, and the main commercial trade routes connecting Afghanistan with central Asian countries," he said, citing Afghanistan's main port with Uzbekistan and crossing with Turkmenistan.

Afghan: US to support Afghan military 'over-the-horizon'

FROM PAGE 1

Jen Psaki told reporters earlier Thursday that for "security reasons," the administration would not announce which countries and possible U.S. territories will temporarily host these U.S. allies as they await for their visa applications to be approved.

However, Psaki confirmed the U.S. will conduct flights for translators to these locations ahead of the full withdrawal of U.S. troops.

In Biden's speech Thursday, the president announced the U.S. military mission in Afghanistan will conclude by Aug. 31. In April, Biden set the withdrawal deadline for Sept. 11.

The president also defended his decision to order all U.S. troops leave Afghanistan, as news outlets

in recent weeks have reported the Taliban has taken control of a growing number of districts throughout the country.

"As I said in April, the United States did what we went to do in Afghanistan: to get to terrorists who attacked us on 9/11 and deliver justice to Osama bin Laden ... We achieved those objectives. That's why we went. We did not go to Afghanistan to nation-build," Biden said.

When Biden announced in April that he would pull out all troops from Afghanistan to end America's longest war, he argued the United States had completed its primary goal for entering Afghanistan in 2001 when Osama bin Laden was tracked down and killed in 2011.

However, critics of the move have warned that Afghanistan could become a safe haven for terrorists once U.S. forces leave, and the Taliban could eventually return to power in the country.

Gen. Scott Miller, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, recently said in an interview with ABC news that a civil war could erupt following the U.S. departure. He also voiced concern over reports of Taliban fighters taking over dozens of Afghan districts throughout the country.

The Pentagon has said it will continue to support the Afghan military after U.S. troops leave the country from a distance by employing "over-the-horizon" capabilities. It remains unclear what those capabilities are.

Press Secretary John Kirby told reporters Tuesday that the Defense Department is working with the State Department on how to conduct counterterrorism efforts from elsewhere in the region without troops on the ground in Afghanistan.

Kirby said the U.S. will maintain an aircraft carrier strike group in the region, along with other military facilities located throughout the Middle East. Contractors are also still providing support to the Afghans and the Afghan air force, he said.

"We are actively working [on] ways in which that contract support can be done remotely or virtually or even physically outside the country," Kirby said.

Kirby said the U.S. withdrawal

is expected to be completed by the end of August. When Biden announced the departure from Afghanistan in April, he said about 650 troops will remain to protect the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, while others might be deployed to protect the capital's airport alongside Turkish troops.

Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris met with their national security team Thursday morning to receive an update on the progress of the drawdown from Afghanistan.

Biden's remarks on Afghanistan come days after U.S. officials announced they had completely left Bagram Airfield, its biggest airfield in the country and a focal point for military operations in Afghanistan for nearly two decades.

MILITARY

Rockets land near US Embassy in Baghdad

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Rockets landed in and around the heavily fortified Green Zone in the Iraqi capital Baghdad, which houses the U.S. Embassy, causing material damage early Thursday, Iraqi security forces said.

Two Katyusha rockets fell near the national security building and in an open courtyard inside the Green Zone. A third rocket fell in a nearby residential area, damaging a civilian vehicle, the statement by the Iraqi security media cell said.

The attack, which came shortly before daybreak, followed two separate attacks on bases housing U.S. troops in western Iraq and across the border in Syria, where U.S.-led coalition forces are based. The drone attack Wednesday in eastern Syria was foiled while 14 rockets landed in Al-Asad Air Base in western Iraq, lightly wounding two personnel.

The attacks come as tension is on the rise between U.S. troops and Iran-backed fighters as Baghdad and Washington negotiate a timeline for foreign troop with-

drawal from Iraq.

The U.S. has blamed Iran-backed militias for attacks — most of them rocket strikes — that have targeted the American presence in Baghdad and military bases across Iraq. More recently, the attacks have become more sophisticated, with militants using drones.

Late last month, U.S. warplanes hit facilities used by Iran-backed militia groups which the Pentagon said support drone strikes inside Iraq. Four Iraqi fighters were killed in the June 27 airstrikes.

A previously unknown group

claimed responsibility for the Wednesday attack on Al-Asad Air Base, saying it was a message to U.S. troops in Iraq: “We will force you to leave our lands defeated.”

A drone attack on Tuesday was reported on Irbil airport in the northern Kurdish-run region, near where U.S. forces are based. In Syria, the U.S.-backed and Kurdish-led forces said they foiled the Wednesday attack that was using drones on the al-Omar oil field in the eastern province of Deir el-Zour. Hundreds of U.S. troops are

stationed in northeastern Syria, working with the Kurdish-led fighters in battling the Islamic State group. Thousands of Iran-backed militiamen from around the Middle East are deployed in different parts of Syria, many of them in areas along the border with Iraq.

A statement from the Security Media Cell, affiliated with Iraq’s security forces, on Thursday said these attacks endanger the lives of citizens and target diplomatic missions, and will be faced forcefully.

Control: GAO wants yearly cost reports on F-35s from Pentagon

FROM PAGE 1

sustaining the aircraft. The projection reflects an increase of more than \$150 billion over 2012 estimates, the GAO said. It is also billions more than the services can afford, making current plans unsustainable, the GAO said.

“We recommended, among other things, that Congress consider making future F-35 acquisitions

contingent on progress reducing sustainment costs,” it said.

The GAO also recommended that Congress require the Pentagon to report annually on progress in meeting cost constraints and develop an affordable plan to sustain the future F-35 fleet.

The Air Force faces the greatest challenge in cutting costs. It is purchasing about 70% of the F-35s and must slash what it spends on

each plane by 47%, or the readiness of its squadrons could be “negatively impacted,” the GAO said.

Even if the Air Force acquired all of its spare F-35 parts for free over the next few decades, it would still fall considerably short of that cost-cutting goal, the report said.

The F-35 program has faced problems and delays from the beginning. Many of the aircraft re-

main unable to carry out a full range of missions, the report said.

Between 2019 and 2020, the U.S. F-35 fleet’s average annual mission capable rate — the percentage of time during which the aircraft can fly and perform one of its tasked missions — improved from 59% to 69%. Its full mission capable rate improved from 32% to 39%.

“F-35 mission capable rates ...

have recently improved, but still fall short of warfighter requirements,” the GAO said.

The Defense Department partially concurred with the GAO recommendations in a written response included with the report. The Pentagon is updating an affordability strategy document that would span the expected life cycle of the F-35 and review cost-cutting constraints.



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VIRUS OUTBREAK

World deaths at 4M amid vaccine rush

By JOSHUA GOODMAN
Associated Press

The global death toll from COVID-19 eclipsed 4 million Wednesday as the crisis increasingly becomes a race between the vaccine and the highly contagious delta variant.

The tally of lives lost over the past year and a half, as compiled from official sources by Johns Hopkins University, is about equal to the number of people killed in battle in all of the world's wars since 1982, according to estimates from the Peace Research Institute Oslo.

The toll is three times the number of people killed in traffic accidents around the globe every year. It is about equal to the population of Los Angeles or the nation of Georgia. It is equivalent to more than half of Hong Kong or close to 50% of New York City.

Even then, it is widely believed to be an undercount because of overlooked cases or deliberate concealment.

With the advent of the vaccine,

deaths per day have plummeted to around 7,900, after topping out at over 18,000 a day in January.

But in recent weeks, the mutant delta version of the virus first identified in India has set off alarms around the world, spreading rapidly even in vaccination success stories like the United States, Britain and Israel.

Britain, in fact, recorded a one-day total this week of more than 30,000 new infections for the first time since January, even as the government prepares to lift all remaining lockdown restrictions in England later this month.

Other countries have reimposed preventive measures, and authorities are rushing to step up the campaign to dispense shots.

At the same time, the disaster has exposed the gap between the haves and the have-nots, with vaccination drives barely getting started in Africa and other desperately poor corners of the world because of extreme shortages of shots.

The U.S. and other wealthy countries have agreed to share at



GUADALUPE PARDO/AP

A family member shovels dirt into the grave of Giro Quispe, who died from complications related to the coronavirus, at El Cebollar cemetery in Arequipa, Peru.

least 1 billion doses with struggling countries.

The U.S. has the world's highest reported death toll, at over 600,000, or nearly 1 in 7 deaths, followed by Brazil at more than 520,000, though the real numbers are believed to be much higher in Brazil,

where President Jair Bolsonaro's far-right government has long downplayed the virus.

The variants, uneven access to vaccines and the relaxation of precautions in wealthier countries are "a toxic combination that is very dangerous," warned Ann Lind-

strand, a top immunization official at the World Health Organization.

Instead of treating the crisis as a "me-and-myself-and-my-country" problem, she said, "we need to get serious that this is a worldwide problem that needs worldwide solutions."

As NY salutes health workers, Mo. fights surge

Associated Press

New York held a ticker-tape parade Wednesday for the health care workers and others who helped the city pull through the darkest days of COVID-19, while authorities in Missouri struggled to beat back a surge blamed on the fast-spreading delta variant and deep resistance to getting vaccinated.

The split-screen images could be a glimpse of what public health experts say may lie ahead for the United States even as life gets back to something close to normal: outbreaks in corners of the country with low vaccination rates.

"We've got a lot to appreciate, because we're well underway in our recovery," declared New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, who rode on a parade float with hospital employees down the Canyon of Heroes, the skyscraper-lined stretch of Broadway where astronauts, returning soldiers and championship teams are feted.

In Missouri, meanwhile, the Springfield area has been hit so hard that one hospital had to borrow ventilators over the Fourth of July weekend and begged on social media for help from respiratory therapists, several of whom volunteered from other states. Members of a new federal "surge response team" also began arriving to help suppress the outbreak.

Missouri not only leads the nation in new cases relative to the



JOHN MINCHILLO/AP

Participants march up Broadway on Wednesday during a parade honoring essential workers for their efforts in getting New York City through the COVID-19 pandemic.

population, it is also averaging 1,000 cases per day — about the same number as the entire Northeast, including the big cities in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

California, with 40 million people, is posting only slightly higher case numbers than Missouri, which has a population of 6 million.

Northeastern states have seen cases, deaths and hospitalizations plummet to almost nothing amid widespread acceptance of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Vermont has gone 26 days with new case numbers in single digits. In Maryland, the governor's office

said every death recorded in June was in an unvaccinated person. New York City, which was the lethal epicenter of the U.S. outbreak in the spring of 2020, when the number of dead peaked at over 800 a day, regularly goes entire days with no reported deaths.

The problem in Missouri, as health experts see it: Just 45% of the state's residents have received at least one dose of the vaccine, compared with 55% of the U.S. population. Some rural counties near Springfield have vaccination rates in the teens and 20s.

At the same time, the delta variant is quickly becoming the predominant version of the coronavi-

rus in Missouri.

Epidemiologists say the country should expect more COVID-19 outbreaks in areas with low vaccination rates over the next several months.

"I'm afraid that that is very predictable," said Dr. Chris Beyrer, an infectious disease epidemiologist at the Johns Hopkins University. "If politicians seize on this and say, 'Who could have predicted this?,' the answer is every licensed epidemiologist in the country."

Republican Gov. Mike Parson said Wednesday that his administration has done "everything possible" to fend off outbreaks.

"Right now, the vaccine's out there," he said. "I mean, people walk past it every day, whether they're in a pharmacy, whether they're in a Walmart, whether they're in a health center."

Mercy Hospital Springfield reported Tuesday that it had more than 120 patients hospitalized with COVID-19 — the highest total since the pandemic began. Seventeen people died in the latest two-week reporting period in the county that surrounds Springfield, the most since January. None were vaccinated, authorities said.

Erik Frederick, Mercy's chief administrative officer, said staff members are frustrated knowing that "this is preventable this time" because of the vaccine.

"We try to convince people, but

it is almost like you are talking a different language," he lamented. "There is no way they are going to get a vaccine. Their personal freedom is more important."

The Mercy system announced Wednesday that it is requiring vaccinations among staff at the hospital in Springfield, as well as at its hundreds of other hospitals and clinics in Missouri and neighboring states. It said about 75% of its more than 40,000 employees are vaccinated.

Missouri also never had a statewide mask mandate. The sentiment against government intervention is so strong that Brian Steele, mayor of the Springfield suburb of Nixa, is facing a recall vote after imposing a mask rule, even though it has long since expired.

At Springfield's other hospital, Cox South, several patients are in their 20s and 30s, said Ashley Kimberling Casad, vice president of clinical services. She said she had been hopeful when she eyed the COVID-19 numbers in May as she prepared to return from maternity leave.

"I really thought when I came back from maternity leave that, not that COVID would be gone, but that it would just be so manageable. Then all of a sudden it started spiking," she said, adding that nearly all the virus samples that the hospital is sending for testing are proving to be the delta variant.

VIRUS OUTBREAK

US jobless claims tick up 2K from a pandemic low

By PAUL WISEMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits rose slightly last week even while the economy and the job market appear to be rebounding from the coronavirus recession with sustained energy.

Thursday's report from the Labor Department showed that jobless claims increased by 2,000 from the previous week to 373,000. Weekly applications, which generally track the pace of layoffs, have fallen steadily this year from more than 900,000 at the start of the year. The four-week average of applications, which smooths out week-to-week volatility, is now 394,500 — the lowest such level since the pandemic erupted in March of last year.

The rollout of vaccinations is driving a potent economic recovery as businesses reopen, employers struggle to fill jobs and consumers emerge from months of lockdown to travel, shop and spend at restaurants, bars, retailers and entertainment venues.

In the first three months of the year, the government has estimated that the economy expanded at a brisk 6.4% annual rate. In the April-June quarter, the annual rate is thought to have reached a sizzling 10%. And for all of 2021, the Congressional Budget Office has projected that growth will amount to 6.7%. That would be the fastest calendar-year expansion since 1984.

The economy is recovering so quickly that many companies can't find workers fast enough to meet their increased customer demand. On Wednesday, the government said that U.S. employers posted

9.21 million jobs in May, the most since record-keeping began in 2000.

And in June, employers added a strong 850,000 jobs, and hourly pay rose a solid 3.6% compared with a year ago — faster than the pre-pandemic annual pace and a sign that companies are being compelled to pay more to attract and keep workers.

Still, the nation remains 6.8 million jobs short of the level it had in February 2020, just before the coronavirus pandemic tore through the economy and eliminated tens of millions of jobs. And weekly applications for unemployment benefits, though down sharply from earlier peaks, are still comparatively high: Before the pandemic, they were typically coming in at only around 220,000 a week.

The total number of Americans receiving jobless aid, including supplemental federal checks that were intended to provide relief during the pandemic recession, amounted to 14.2 million people during the week of June 19, down from 33.2 million a year earlier.

Many states, though, have dropped the federal aid, responding to complaints that the generous benefits were discouraging some of the unemployed from seeking work: A total of 26 states plan to end the \$300-a-week federal benefit before it ends nationally on Sept. 6. Most of those states will also cut off federal assistance to the self-employed, gig workers and people who have been out of work for more than six months.

Still, many factors other than the enhanced federal jobless benefits are thought to have contributed to the shortage of people seeking work again: Difficulty arranging

or affording child care, lingering fears of COVID-19, early retirements by older workers, a slowdown in immigration and a decision by some people to seek new careers rather than return to their old jobs.

"We see weekly filings declining over coming weeks as job growth picks up, although at least some of the improvement will be due to states suspending federal support measures," Rubeela Farooqi, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics, said in a research note.

S. Korea breaks record: 1,275 new cases in day

Stars and Stripes

South Korea announced 1,275 new coronavirus cases on Thursday, its highest daily caseload since the nation confirmed its first COVID-19 patient on Jan. 20, 2020.

Thursday also marked the second day in a row that infection numbers reached into the 1,200s, according to the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency. There were 1,212 cases on Wednesday.

South Korea's previous record was 1,240 new infections on Dec. 25.

Thursday's count follows a weeklong period where the country reported more than 700 new patients each day, most of them in Seoul.

South Korea has confirmed 164,028 infections during the pandemic, according to the KDCA. The death toll stands at 2,034.

The surge has spurred health officials to step up efforts to mitigate the virus' spread, including inspecting businesses considered to be a high risk for transmissibility. Seoul, meanwhile, has walked back its plans to ease pandemic restrictions on mask-wearing and social distancing.

The surge has also impacted U.S. military bases on the peninsula. U.S. Forces Korea announced Wednesday that 19 people had tested positive for the coronavirus respiratory disease between June 19 and July 2.



NAM Y. HUH/AP

A hiring sign is displayed in Downers Grove, Ill., last month. On Wednesday, the government said that U.S. employers posted 9.21 million jobs in May, the most since record-keeping began in 2000.



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NATION

Storm heads up coastline after 10 hurt at Navy base

Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. — Tropical Storm Elsa carved a destructive and soaking path up the East Coast after killing at least one person in Florida and spinning up a tornado at a Georgia Navy base that flipped recreational vehicles upside-down and blew one of them into a lake.

Elsa's winds weakened to 40 mph, but it was dropping torrential rains over the Carolinas as it made its way through South Carolina early Thursday, the National Hurricane Center said in its latest update. Elsa was expected to move over North Carolina later in the day, pass near the eastern mid-Atlantic states by Thursday night and move near or over the northeastern United States on Friday.

Some re-strengthening was possible Thursday night and Friday while the system moves close to the northeastern U.S.

A tropical storm warning was in effect north of Great Egg Inlet to Sandy Hook, N.J., and for the coast of Long Island from East Rockaway Inlet to the eastern tip along the south shore and from Port Jefferson Harbor eastward on the north shore. A warning was also in effect from New Haven, Conn., to Merrimack River, Mass., including Cape Cod, Block Island, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket.

There was a chance Long Island in New York would see sustained tropical storm-force winds late Thursday night and into Friday morning, the National Weather Service in New York warned.

Elsa seemed to spare Florida from significant damage, though it still threatened flooding downpours and caused several tornado warnings. The coasts of Georgia and South Carolina were under a tropical storm warning. Forecasters predicted Elsa would remain a tropical storm into Friday, and issued a tropical storm watch from North Carolina to Massachusetts.

Authorities in Jacksonville, Fla., said one person was killed Wednesday when a tree fell and struck two cars. The National Weather Service reported 50 mph wind gusts in the city. The tree fell during heavy rains and no one else was injured, according to Capt. Eric Prosswimmer of the Jacksonville Fire Rescue Department.

In nearby Camden County, Ga., a possible tornado struck a park for recreational vehicles at Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base. About 10 people were injured and

taken to hospitals by ambulance, said base spokesman Scott Bassett. The extent of their injuries was not immediately clear. He said some buildings on the base appeared to have been damaged as well.

An EF-2 tornado flipped over multiple RVs, blowing one of the overturned vehicles about 200 feet into a lake, the National Weather Service said in a preliminary report early Thursday after its employees surveyed the damage. Debris from the RVs was strewn throughout the park, the agency said.

Sergio Rodriguez, who lives near the RV park, said he raced to the scene fearing friends staying at the park might be hurt. The area was under a tornado warning Wednesday evening.

"There were just RVs flipped over on their sides, pickup trucks flipped over, a couple of trailers had been shifted and a couple of trailers were in the water" of a pond on the site, Rodriguez said in a phone interview.

Cellphone video he filmed at the scene showed trees bent low among scattered debris. He said ambulances arrived and began treating dazed people trying to understand what had happened.

"A bunch of folks had lacerations and were just banged around," Rodriguez said. "A majority of folks were in their trailers when it happened."

The hurricane center said there was a risk of flooding in South Carolina, which was predicted to get 3 to 5 inches of rainfall.

More than 7 inches of rain was recorded at a weather station near Gainesville, Fla., the weather service reported. More than 5 inches of rain had fallen by early Thursday at Sapelo Island off the Georgia coast, and at a weather station along the Savannah River in Jasper County, S.C.

Scattered power outages were being reported along Elsa's path Wednesday evening, with about 35,000 homes and businesses on either side of the Georgia-Florida state line without electricity, according to the website poweroutages.us.

The storm also temporarily halted demolition Wednesday on the remainder of an overturned cargo ship off the coast of Georgia.

The South Korean freighter Golden Ray capsized in September 2019 off St. Simons Island, about 70 miles south of Savannah.

Crews have removed more than half the ship since November.



JOSE A. IGLESIAS/AP

Members of a search and rescue team stand in front of the rubble that once was Champlain Towers South during a prayer ceremony in Surfside, Fla., on Wednesday.

Tears, prayer mark end to search for Fla. collapsed condo survivors

Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Fla. — A somber moment of silence marked the end of the two-week search for survivors of a Florida condominium collapse, as rescue workers stood at solemn attention and clergy members hugged a line of local officials while many of them sobbed.

The painstaking search for survivors shifted to a recovery effort at midnight Wednesday after authorities said they had come to the agonizing conclusion that there was "no chance of life" in the rubble of the Champlain Towers South condo building in Surfside.

"We have all asked God for a miracle, so the decision to transition from rescue to recovery is an extremely difficult one," Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said at a news conference.

The death toll stood at 54 late Wednesday. Officials said 86 people were unaccounted for, although detectives were still working to verify that each of those listed as missing was actually in the building when it collapsed.

Rescuers had spent two weeks digging through the rubble, searching in vain for any sign of life, Levine Cava said.

"They've used every possible strategy, and every possible technology available to them to find people in the rubble," she said. "They've removed over 7 million pounds of concrete and debris from the mound. They've used sonar, cameras, dogs, heavy machinery. They've searched for void spaces and they've searched for victims. They ran into a building they were told could collapse, and they braved fire, smoke, torrential rain and strong winds in the hopes of finding people alive."

"They've used every possible strategy, and every possible technology available to them to find people in the rubble."

Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava

Hours before the formal transition from rescue to recovery mission, those emergency workers joined local officials, rabbis and chaplains in a moment of silence.

An accordion player unseen on a nearby tennis court played Aaron Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man," which was followed by a piccolo playing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Firefighters from Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, the federal government and elsewhere were also present.

On a tall nearby fence, families and well-wishers had posted photos of the victims, supportive messages and flowers. Firefighters hung a banner atop the fence that read "Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Mourns With You."

Officials vowed to continue the recovery efforts until they find the remains of every one of the missing.

Miami-Dade Assistant Fire Chief Raide Jadallah told families during a private briefing that crews would stop using rescue dogs and listening devices.

"Our sole responsibility at this point is to bring closure," he said,

as relatives cried in the background.

Later, during a news conference, Jadallah said crews remained committed to doing whatever it takes to finish the job.

"The resources are still there. The men and women are still there. The support is still there," said Jadallah, who began crying silently after he spoke.

Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Chief Alan Cominsky said he expects the recovery effort will take several more weeks.

Dennis Dirkmaat, an anthropology professor who chairs the Department of Applied and Forensic Sciences at Mercyhurst University, said he expects crews will use heavy equipment in a "top down approach" to methodically lift material off the debris pile, place it in containers and evaluate it for evidence of human remains. He said the process would likely be repeated as the crews move to subsequent floors.

"It's still a process, slow, tedious process of removing all of this debris. And so it's going to take a while," he said.

Hope of finding survivors was briefly rekindled after workers demolished the remainder of the building, allowing rescuers access to new areas of debris.

Some of those voids did exist, mostly in the basement and the parking garage, but no survivors emerged. Instead, teams recovered more than a dozen additional victims. Because the building fell in the early morning hours, many were found dead in their beds.

No one has been pulled out alive since the first hours after the 12-story building fell on June 24.

NATION



SETH WENIG/AP

Former President Donald Trump speaks at Trump National Golf Club in Bedminster, N.J., on Wednesday.

Trump files suit against Facebook, Twitter, YouTube

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former President Donald Trump has filed suit against three of the country's biggest tech companies, claiming he and other conservatives have been wrongfully censored. But legal experts say the suits are likely doomed to fail, given existing precedent and legal protections.

Trump announced the action against Facebook, Twitter and Google's YouTube, along with the companies' Mark Zuckerberg, Jack Dorsey and Sundar Pichai, at a press conference Wednesday in New Jersey, where he demanded that his accounts be reinstated.

Trump has been suspended from the platforms since January, when his followers violently stormed the Capitol building, trying to block Congress from certifying Joe Biden's presidential win. The companies cited concerns that Trump would incite further violence and have kept him locked out. All three declined comment Wednesday.

"We're asking the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida to order an immediate halt to social media companies' illegal, shameful censorship of the American people," Trump said of the filings. "We're going to hold big tech very accountable."

Twitter, Facebook and Google are all private companies, and users must agree to their terms of service to use their products. Under Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act, social media platforms are allowed to moderate their services by removing posts that, for instance, are obscene or violate the services' own standards, so long as they are acting in "good faith." The law also generally exempts internet companies from liability for the material that users post.

But Trump and some other politicians have long argued that Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms have abused that protection and should lose their immunity — or at least have it curtailed.

While conservatives often claim the sites are biased against them, several recent studies have found that isn't the case. Indeed, posts by conservative commentators like Ben Shapiro, Franklin Graham, Dan Bongino and Dinesh D'Souza are routinely among the most widely shared on Facebook.

The suit against Facebook and CEO Zuckerberg says Facebook acted unconstitutionally when it removed Trump from the platform. Suits against Twitter and YouTube make similar claims. All three ask the court to award unspecified damages, declare Section 230 unconstitutional and restore Trump's accounts, along with those of several other plaintiffs who joined the suits and have also had posts or accounts removed.

Trump's lawsuits, however, are likely doomed to fail, said Eric Goldman, a law professor at Santa Clara University in California who has studied more than 60 similar, failed lawsuits that sought to take on internet companies for terminating or suspending users' accounts.

"They've argued everything under the sun, including First Amendment, and they get nowhere," Goldman said. "Maybe he's got a trick up his sleeve that will give him a leg up on the dozens of lawsuits before him. I doubt it."

"Trump's suit is DOA," echoed Paul Barrett, the deputy director of the Center for Business and Human Rights at New York University's Stern School of Business.

Latest hack tests Biden's balancing act with Russia

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden said he would "deliver" a message to Russian President Vladimir Putin about the latest ransomware attacks targeting American businesses, setting up a test of Biden's ability to balance his pledge to respond firmly to cyber breaches with his goal of developing a stable relationship with Russia.

The administration faces few easy options for a ransomware threat that in recent months has emerged as a major national security challenge, with attacks from Russia-based gangs that have targeted vital infrastructure and extorted multimillion-dollar payments from victims.

The White House says the damage from the latest attack — affecting as many as 1,500 businesses worldwide — appeared minimal, though cybersecurity experts said information remained incomplete. The malicious intrusion exploited a powerful remote-management tool run by Miami-based software company Kaseya. It occurred weeks after Biden made clear to Putin that the U.S. was growing impatient with cyberattacks emanating from Russia.

But Biden finds himself in a difficult position as he seeks to press Putin to crack down on Russian cyber gangs targeting U.S. and international business for financial gain and dial back

Kremlin-connected cyber espionage. The administration is mindful that punitive actions against Russia can escalate into tit-for-tat exchanges that heighten tensions between nuclear superpowers.

The latest hack also comes after some Republicans accused the Democratic president of showing deference to Putin by meeting with him and making America weaker in the process. Biden has faced criticism of being too soft on Putin even though former President Donald Trump declined to blame Russia for hacks and interference in the 2016 election despite U.S. intelligence community findings.

Biden met Wednesday with Vice President Kamala Harris and top national security aides to discuss the problem. As he departed the White House to travel to Illinois, Biden was opaque when asked what exactly he would convey to Putin.

"I will deliver it to him," Biden told reporters.

A White House National Security Council spokesperson said in a statement Wednesday that combating ransomware remained a priority, but that the years-long threat "won't just turn off as easy as pulling down a light switch."

"No one thing is going to work alone and only together will we significantly impact the threat," the statement said.

U.S. officials say they've preached to the private sector

about hardening cybersecurity defenses, worked to disrupt channels for ransomware payments and scored a success last month with the recovery of most of a multimillion-dollar payment made by a fuel pipeline company. But they've been cautious about carrying out retaliatory offensive cyber actions for fear it could quickly spiral into a greater crisis. There are also practical limits to what the U.S. can do to thwart Russian cyber gangs.

Biden and top administration officials repeatedly said around last month's meeting with Putin that their goal was building a "predictable," stable relationship. An all-out cyberwar would seem to work against this goal.

"It's a very fine line that they have to walk as far as providing some kind of consequence for that behavior without it escalating to where cyberattacks are out of control, or increase it to a conflict that goes beyond the cyberspace," said Jonathan Trimble, a retired FBI agent and cybersecurity executive.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Tuesday that Russian and U.S. representatives were meeting next week and would discuss the matter. She said administration officials used Wednesday's meeting to discuss building resilience to attacks and other efforts to combat the problem, and also addressed policies on payments to hackers.





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NATION

In struggle to fill jobs, teens come to rescue

By PAUL WISEMAN
AND JOSEPH PISANI
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The owners of restaurants, amusement parks and retail shops, many of them desperate for workers, are sounding an unusual note of gratitude this summer:

Thank goodness for teenagers.

As the U.S. economy bounces back with unexpected speed from the pandemic recession and customer demand intensifies, high school-age kids are filling jobs that older workers can't — or won't.

The result is that teens who are willing to bus restaurant tables or serve as water-park lifeguards are commanding \$15, \$17 or more an hour, plus bonuses in some instances or money to help pay for school classes. The trend marks a shift from the period after the 2007-2009 Great Recession, when older workers often took such jobs and teens were sometimes squeezed out.

This time, an acute labor shortage, especially at restaurants, tourism and entertainment businesses, has made teenage workers highly popular again.

"We're very thankful they are

"We may not be open if they weren't here."

Akash Kapoor
CEO of Curry Up Now

here," says Akash Kapoor, CEO of Curry Up Now. Fifty teenagers are working this summer at his five San Francisco-area Indian street food restaurants, up from only about a dozen last year. "We may not be open if they weren't here. We need bodies."

The proportion of Americans ages 16-19 who are working is higher than it's been in years: In May, 33.2% of them had jobs, the highest such percentage since 2008. Though the figure dipped to 31.9% in June, the Labor Department reported Friday, that is still higher than it was before the pandemic devastated the economy last spring.

"There's never been a better time to apply for a job if you're a teen," says Mathieu Stevenson, CEO of Snagajob, an online job site for hourly work.

Consider the findings of Neeta



STEVEN SENNE / AP

Pedestrians walk past a sign inviting people to apply for employment at a shop in Boston's Newbury Street neighborhood Monday. As the U.S. economy bounces back, high school-age kids are filling jobs that older workers can't — or won't.

Fogg, Paul Harrington and Ishwar Khatiwada, researchers at Drexel University's Center for Labor Markets and Policy who issue an annual forecast for the teenage summer job market. This year, they predict, will be the best summer for teenage lifeguards, ice cream scoopers and sales clerks since 2008; 31.5% of 16- to 19-year-olds will have jobs.

After collapsing last spring, the economy has rebounded much faster than expected. Restaurants, bars, retail shops and amusement parks have been overwhelmed by pent-up demand from consumers who had mostly hunkered down for a year or

more.

Now, those businesses need employees to handle the influx and are scrambling to find enough. The vaccine rollout was just starting in April and May, when employers typically start hiring for summer. Some of these businesses delayed their hiring decisions, unsure whether or when the economy would fully reopen.

Compounding the labor squeeze, many older Americans have been slow to respond to a record number of job openings. Some have lingering health concerns or trouble arranging or affording child care at a time when

schools are transitioning from remote to in-person learning. Other adults may have been discouraged from seeking work because of generous federal unemployment benefits, though many states have dropped these benefits, and they will end nationwide Sept. 6.

So businesses are offering signing bonuses and whatever else they can to hire teens in a hurry.

All that said, the revival of teen employment might not last. The pre-pandemic trend toward fewer young workers at restaurants and entertainment venues could reassert itself if the economy's labor shortages are eventually resolved.

Have a seat: Shortage of patio furniture tells US economic tale

By JOSH BOAK
Associated Press

COCKEYSVILLE, Md. — People used to go to Valley View Farms to buy five tomato plants and end up with \$5,000 in patio furniture.

This year is different. After a record burst of sales in March, the showroom floor is almost empty of outdoor chairs, tables and chaises for people to buy.

The garden supply store in suburban Baltimore has been waiting six months for a shipping container from Vietnam full of \$100,000 worth of wicker and aluminum furniture. Half of the container has already been sold by showing customers photographs. The container should have arrived in February, but it reached U.S. waters on June 3 and has just docked in Long Beach, Calif.

"Everyone is just so far behind," said John Hessler, 62, the patio section manager. "I've never seen anything like it."

The Biden economy faces the unusual challenge of possibly being too strong for its own good.

There is the paradox of the fastest growth in generations at more than 6% yet also persistent delays for anyone trying to buy furni-



JULIO CORTEZ / AP

John Hessler is patio section manager at Valley View Farms in Cockeysville, Md. The store has been waiting for a shipping container of furniture for six months.

ture, autos and a wide mix of other goods. It's almost the mirror opposite of the recovery from the Great Recession of 2007-2009, which was marred by slow growth but also the near-instant delivery of almost every imaginable product.

What ultimately matters is that demand stay strong enough for companies to catch up and shorten the long waits.

"This is a very good problem for the economy to have," said Gus Faucher, chief econ-

omist for PNC Financial Services. "You're much better off having too much demand than too little, because too little demand is the recipe for an extended recession."

Republicans have held out the shortages and price increases as a sign of economic weakness, while Biden can counter that wages are climbing at a speed that helps the middle and working classes. But the real challenge goes far beyond the blunt talking points of politicians to an economy being steered by a mix of market forces, tensions with China, setbacks from natural disasters and the unique nature of restarting an economy after a pandemic.

As America hurtles out of the July 4th weekend into the heart of summer, the outdoor furniture industry provides a snapshot of the dilemmas confronting the economy. A series of shortages has left warehouses depleted and prices rising at more than 11% annually as Americans resume BBQs and parties after more than a year of isolation. The industry cannot find workers, truckers and raw materials — a consequence of not just government spending but crowded ports, an explosion at an Ohio chemical plant and the devastating snowstorm that hit Texas in February.

Patio furniture makers interviewed by The Associated Press say they expect the supply squeeze to end in 2022 or 2023 — meaning it could remain a political flashpoint even if the broader risk of inflation fades as expected by many Federal Reserve officials and Wall Street analysts. The shortages reflect both the stranded shipping containers, a dearth of truckers and the compounded effect of a fatal explosion in April at the Yenkin-Majestic Paints and OPC polymer plant in Columbus, Ohio that depleted the domestic supply of furniture pieces.

The Biden administration, well aware of the challenge, has made fixing supply chains a priority. It's also trying to direct more money to making the U.S. power grid and other infrastructure more resilient against extreme weather events as part of a bipartisan deal.

The problem is one of market forces that are beyond any one individual's authority, even the U.S. president's.

"You have just this exorbitant amount of demand due to a unique situation that was out of everyone's control," said Erik Mueller, CEO of the Cincinnati-based outdoor furniture and home recreation chain Watson's.

NATION

Study: No heat wave without climate change

By **SETH BORENSTEIN**
Associated Press

The deadly heat wave that roasted the Pacific Northwest and western Canada was virtually impossible without human-caused climate change that added a few extra degrees to the record-smashing temperatures, a new quick scientific analysis found.

An international team of 27 scientists calculated that climate change increased chances of the extreme heat occurring by at least 150 times, but likely much more.

The study, not yet peer reviewed, said that before the industrial era, the region's late June triple-digit heat was the type that would not have happened in human civilization. And even in today's warming world, it said, the heat was a once-in-a-millennium event.

But that once-in-a-millennium event would likely occur every

five to 10 years once the world warms another 1.4 degrees Fahrenheit, said Wednesday's study from World Weather Attribution. That much warming could be 40 or 50 years away if carbon pollution continues at its current pace, one study author said.

This type of extreme heat "would go from essentially virtually impossible to relatively commonplace," said study co-author Gabriel Vecchi, a Princeton University climate scientist. "That is a huge change."

The study also found that in the Pacific Northwest and Canada climate change was responsible for about 3.6 degrees of the heat shock. Those few degrees make a big difference in human health, said study co-author Kristie Ebi, a professor at the Center for Health and the Global Environment at the University of Washington.

"This study is telling us climate

change is killing people," said Ebi, who endured the blistering heat in Seattle. She said it will be many months before a death toll can be calculated from June's blast of heat but it's likely to be hundreds or thousands. "Heat is the No. 1 weather-related killer of Americans."

In Oregon alone, the state medical examiner on Wednesday reported 116 deaths related to the heat wave.

The team of scientists used a well-established and credible method to search for climate change's role in extreme weather, according to the National Academy of Sciences. They logged observations of what happened and fed them into 21 computer models and ran numerous simulations. They then simulated a world without greenhouse gases from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas. The difference between the

two scenarios is the climate change portion.

"Without climate change this event would not have happened," said study senior author Friederike Otto, a climate scientist at the University of Oxford in England.

What made the Northwest heat wave so remarkable is how much hotter it was than old records and what climate models had predicted. Scientists say this hints that some kind of larger climate shift could be in play — and in places that they didn't expect.

"Everybody is really worried about the implications of this event," said study co-author Geert Jan van Oldenborgh, a Dutch climate scientist. "This is something that nobody saw coming, that nobody thought possible. And we feel that we do not understand heat waves as well as we thought we did. The big question for many people is: Could this also happen

in a lot of places?"

The World Weather Attribution team does these quick analyses, which later get published in peer-reviewed journals. In the past, they have found similar large climate change effects in many heat waves, including ones in Europe and Siberia. But sometimes the team finds climate change wasn't a factor, as they did in a Brazilian drought and a heat wave in India.

The study hit home, in British Columbia, for University of Victoria climate scientist Andrew Weaver, who wasn't part of the research team.

"Victoria, which is known for its mild climate, felt more like Death Valley last week," Weaver said. "I've been in a lot of hot places in the world, and this was the worst I've ever been in."

"But you ain't seen nothing yet," he added. "It's going to get a lot worse."

Adams' NYC win latest in surge for moderate Dems

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The triumph of a moderate Democrat in the mayoral primary in deep blue New York City appears to accelerate a recent trend of some of the party's most fervent voters breaking away from its most progressive candidates.

Eric Adams, a former New York Police Department captain, this week became his party's nominee to lead the nation's largest city after making a centerpiece of his campaign his rejection of left-leaning activists' calls to defund the police.

His win comes on the heels of victories by self-styled pragmatic candidates in relatively low-turnout elections — which tend to draw the most loyal base voters — in races for a U.S. House seat in New Mexico, a congressional primary in Louisiana and a gubernatorial primary in Virginia.

And those successes come a year after President Joe Biden defeated more liberal opponents to capture his party's nomination on his way to winning the White House.

It all raises questions as to the best candidates and approaches for Democrats trying to hold on to slim majorities in Congress next year



JOHN MINCHILLO/AP

Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams became the Democratic nominee for New York mayor after making a key part of his campaign his rejection of left-leaning activists' calls to defund the police.

and make inroads in Republican-dominated state legislatures.

"Because there was such an intensity of a reaction on the left to (former President Donald) Trump, many in the political ecosystem mistook that for ideological intensity on the left," said Jennifer Palmieri, who served as White House

communications director for President Barack Obama. "The same ideological shift on the right — Republicans moving with Trump — did not happen on the left and voters are instead being more pragmatic and less ideological."

The long-simmering family feud between the progressive and mod-

erate wings of the Democratic Party exploded in the 2016's presidential primaries when Sen. Bernie Sanders, of Vermont, a self-described democratic socialist, waged a surprisingly robust challenge against establishment favorite Hillary Clinton. Sanders' movement helped define an intraparty divide.

In its aftermath, liberals scored some big victories. But five months later, it was largely center-left Democrats whose wins helped flip the House of Representatives to their party in the general election.

The 2020 presidential primaries were largely perceived as a battle between liberals like Sanders and a group of moderates from which Biden emerged after early missteps. The battle lines drawn during that campaign continue to shadow the Democratic Party in 2021.

Trump tried vainly to paint Biden as a socialist and tie him to the effort to defund the police. Biden, long a friend of law enforcement, rejected the "defund the police" call even as he pushed for reforms, but the issue became something of a litmus test for Democratic candidates.

Biden and his staff have taken

pride in ignoring a lot of the dialogue on Twitter, often fueled by the most inflexible partisans from both parties, a sentiment Adams echoed on Wednesday, the day after his victory was announced.

"We have reached a point where we're allowing the dialogue to get in the way of moving us in the right direction," Adams said on CNN, "and I'm hoping that what happened here in New York City, people are going to see a cross section of everyday, working class New Yorkers came together."

Typically, off-year special elections and primaries feature small turnouts and, often, that is advantageous for a candidate who fires up the most dedicated — and often extreme — wings of the party. But in 2021: Terry McAuliffe, a moderate Democrat and Clinton ally, won the Virginia gubernatorial primary; more moderate Democrats — and even some Republicans in Louisiana's open primary — backed centrist candidate Troy Carter as he defeated fellow State Sen. Karen Carter Peterson, a more liberal pick; and Democratic state Rep. Melanie Stansbury easily won a special U.S. House election in New Mexico.

More states agree to settlement plan for opioid-maker Purdue Pharma

Associated Press

More than a dozen states have dropped their longstanding objections to OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma's reorganization plan, edging the company closer to resolving its bankruptcy case and transforming itself into a new entity that helps combat the U.S. opioid epidemic through its own profits.

The agreement from multiple state attorneys general, including

those who had most aggressively opposed Purdue's original settlement proposal, was disclosed late Wednesday night in a filing in U.S. Bankruptcy Court in White Plains, N.Y. It followed weeks of intense mediations that resulted in changes to Purdue's original exit plan.

The new settlement terms call for Purdue to make tens of millions of internal documents public, a step several attorneys general, including

those for Massachusetts and New York, had demanded as a way to hold the company accountable.

Attorneys general for both states were among the 15 who agreed to the new plan, joining about half the states that had previously approved it. Nine states and the District of Columbia did not sign on.

Purdue sought bankruptcy protection in 2019 as a way to settle about 3,000 lawsuits it faced from

state and local governments and other entities. They claimed the company's continued marketing of its powerful prescription painkiller contributed to a crisis that has been linked to nearly 500,000 deaths in the U.S. over the last two decades.

The court filing came from a mediator appointed by the bankruptcy court and shows that members of the wealthy Sackler family who own Purdue agreed to increase

their cash contribution to the settlement by \$50 million. They also will allow \$175 million held in Sackler family charities to go toward abating the crisis.

Purdue's plan also calls for members of the Sackler family to give up ownership of the company as part of a deal it says could be worth \$10 billion overtime. That includes the value of overdose-reversal drugs the company is planning to produce.

WORLD

Police kill alleged assailants in Haiti president's death

By RACHEL PANNETT
The Washington Post

Police killed four alleged assailants and arrested two others suspected of assassinating Haitian President Jovenel Moïse, in an attack that has escalated a spiraling political and security crisis in the impoverished Caribbean nation.

The gunmen have not been identified, but Communications Minister Pradel Henriquez described them “foreigners.”

The motivation for Wednesday's overnight attack is currently unknown. Moïse, 53, dissolved parliament in January 2020 and ruled by decree as opponents and protesters demanded that he step down. Armed gangs with unclear allegiances have seized control of growing portions of the country, terrorizing the population with kidnappings, rapes and killings.

“He had obviously many enemies,” said Robert Fatton, a politics professor and expert on Haiti from the University of Virginia. “There might have been some degree of complicity on the part of those protecting the president.”

His death raises questions around who is in charge of the country. Moïse had been due to install Ariel Henry, a neurologist, as prime minister on Wednesday after dismissing his predecessor Claude Joseph — the latest in a revolving door of prime ministers. It was Joseph who announced Moïse's killing on Wednesday morning, and said he was now the head of Haiti's government.

In a separate Associated Press interview, however, Henry appeared to contradict Joseph.

“It's an exceptional situation. There is a bit of confusion,” he said. “I am the prime minister in office.”

The leadership vacuum is a potential powder keg in a nation grappling with deepening economic, political and social woes, with gang violence spiking in the capital Port-au-Prince, inflation spiraling, and food and fuel becoming scarcer in a country where 60% of the population makes less than \$2 a day.

“The past 30 years have been one calamity after another and now it is getting more serious,” Fatton said. “We have two individuals vying for the position of prime minister. The economy is in terrible shape, the COVID situation is deteriorating. No one is vaccinated. And then you have the security situation. The police are completely fragmented and some members of gangs are former police officers.”

The Supreme Court's chief justice, who might be expected to help provide stability in a crisis, died recently of COVID-19.

Fatton said Haiti — which was subject to a controversial U.N. stabilization mission between 2004 and 2017 — could face another such intervention if the security situation worsened after the president's murder.

The U.N. Security Council condemned the assassination on Wednesday and called on all parties to “remain calm, exercise restraint and to avoid any act that could contribute to further instability.”

In a statement, the 15-member council “made an emphatic call on all political stakeholders in Haiti to refrain from any acts of violence and any incitement to violence.” It also called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

The council is due to be briefed on Moïse's assassination in a closed-door meeting on Thursday.



JEROME DELAY/AP

French soldiers who wrapped up a four-month tour in the Sahel leave their base in Gao, Mali, in June.

As France plans to shrink Sahel force, jihadi threat keeps growing

By SAM MEDNICK
Associated Press

GAO, Mali — During a grueling, weeks-long mission in northern Mali, French soldiers were confronted by a familiar threat: Extremists trying to impose the same strict Islamic rule that preceded France's military intervention there more than eight years ago.

Traumatized residents showed scars on their shoulders and backs from whippings they endured after failing to submit to the jihadis' authority.

“We were witness to the presence of the enemy trying to impose Shariah law, banning young children from playing soccer and imposing a dress code,” said Col. Stephane Gouvernet, battalion commander for the recent French mission dubbed Equinoxe.

France is preparing to reduce its military presence in West Africa's Sahel region — the vast area south of the Sahara Desert where extremist groups are fighting for control. In June, French President Emmanuel Macron announced the end of Operation Barkhane, France's seven-year effort fighting extremists linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Africa's Sahel region. France's more than 5,000 troops will be reduced in the coming months, although no time-frame has been given.

Instead, France will participate in a special forces unit with other European countries and African countries will be responsible for patrolling the Sahel.

The move comes after years of criticism that France's military operation is simply another reiteration of colonial rule. But the shift also takes place amid a worsening political and security crisis in the region. In May, Mali had its second coup in nine months.

Although officials of Mali's government have been able to return to some towns once overrun by jihadis, for the first time since 2012, there are reports of extremists am-

puting hands to punish suspected thieves — a throwback to the Shariah law imposed in northern Mali prior to the French military intervention.

There have been spikes, too, in extremist attacks in Burkina Faso and Niger, sparking concern that the reduction of the French force will create a security void in the Sahel region that will be quickly filled by the jihadis.

“If an adequate plan is not finalized and in place, the tempo of attacks on local forces could rise across the region over the coming weeks, as jihadis attempt to benefit from a security vacuum,” said Liam Morrissey, chief executive officer for MS Risk Limited, a British security consultancy operating in the Sahel for 12 years.

While France has spent billions on its anti-jihadi campaign, called Operation Barkhane, Sahel experts say that it never dedicated the necessary resources to defeat the extremists, said Michael Shurkin, director of global programs at 14 North Strategies, a consultancy based in Dakar, Senegal.

“They have always been aware that their force in the Sahel is far too undersized to accomplish anything like a counterinsurgency campaign,” he said.

France has several thousand troops covering more than 621 miles of terrain in the volatile region where the borders of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso meet. Alerts about attacks are often missed or responded to hours later, especially in remote villages. Operations rely heavily on the French air force, which conduct airstrikes, transport troops and deliver equipment. The desert is harsh with temperatures reaching near 122 degrees Fahrenheit, exhausting troops and requiring additional maintenance for equipment.

The Associated Press spent the days before Macron's announcement accompanying the French military in the field, where pilots

navigated hostile terrain in the pitch dark to retrieve troops after a long operation.

Some soldiers questioned if the fight was worth it. “What are we doing here anyway?” asked one soldier after Macron's announcement. The AP is not using his name because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

Others acknowledged the jihadis are a long-term threat. “We are facing something that is going to be for years. For the next 10 years you will have terrorists in the area,” Col. Yann Malard, airbase commander and Operation Barkhane's representative in Niger, told the AP.

The French strategy has been to weaken the jihadis and train local forces to secure their own countries. Since arriving, it has trained some 18,000 soldiers, mostly Malians, according to a Barkhane spokesman, but progress is slow. Most Sahelian states are still too poor and understaffed to deliver the security and services that communities desperately need, analysts and activists have said.

Soldiers agree that there are limits to what can be achieved militarily and without political stability in the Sahel, jihadis have the edge.

“We don't have an example of a big win in counterinsurgency, and it's difficult to achieve that in the current environment because for an insurgency to win they just need to stay alive,” said Vjatseslav Senin, senior national representative for the 70 Estonian troops who are fighting alongside the French in Barkhane.

Some of those living in the Sahel fear what hard-fought gains have been made will unravel all too quickly.

Ali Toure, a Malian working in the French military base in Gao warned that “if the French army leaves Mali, jihadis will enter within two weeks and destroy the country.”



JOSEPH ODELYN/AP

An investigator places an evidence marker next to a bullet casing outside the residence of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on Wednesday.

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police: Stolen van gone, but 5 kids in it found safe

MD GLEN BURNIE — A van was stolen from a Maryland grocery store parking lot with five children inside, but they were soon found nearby, police said.

Anne Arundel County police said in a news release that officers responded to a Giant Food Store in Glen Burnie around 11 p.m. Monday after a caller reported that someone stole their Honda Odyssey with their five children inside.

After a brief search, police said the children were found unattended about a mile away. The stolen van has not been found, police said.

Robbery suspect arrested after dye pack explodes

NJ NEWARK — Authorities say they have arrested a New Jersey bank robbery suspect seen on surveillance video as a red dye pack exploded during his escape.

Newark public safety officials said a police detective spotted the 27-year-old man Monday on the street and arrested him. He faces robbery and weapons charges, authorities said.

Authorities allege that the male suspect walked into a Capital One branch around 10 a.m. on Saturday and passed a note to a teller saying he had a gun and demanding money. Officials said the teller gave him money including a dye pack.

Officials released surveillance video showing the suspect walking east outside the bank wearing the backpack, but as he starts to cross a street beyond the bank property the dye pack sends up a red cloud and he runs north out of camera view.

Crews responding to house fire find explosives

NY NORTH TONAWANDA — Authorities responding to a house fire found multiple explosive devices inside an apartment and a man with burns to his face and hands, police said.

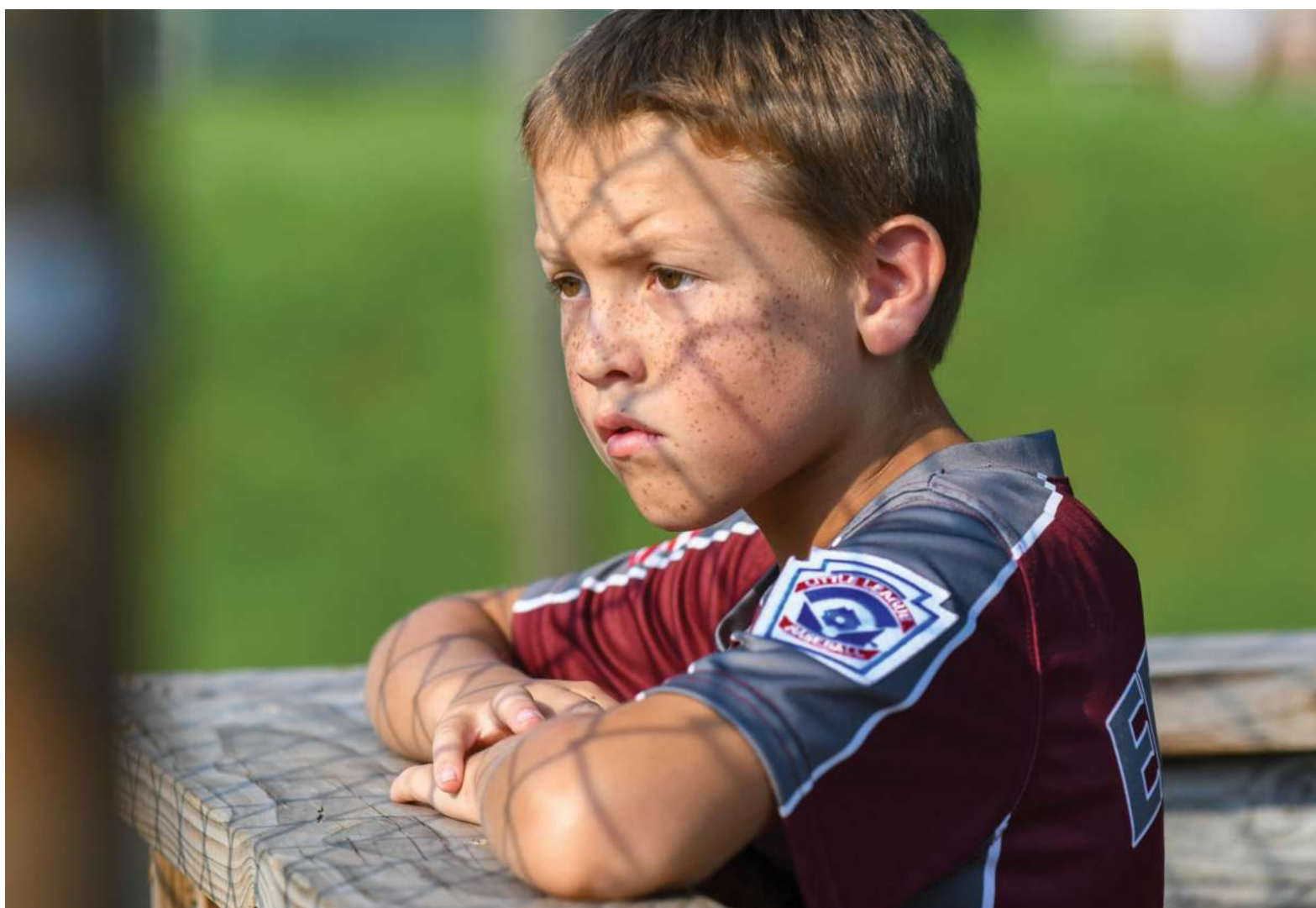
The apartment's occupant initially said he had burned food in the kitchen Sunday, but that didn't explain the large amount of smoke, police said, so detectives were called.

Police did not say what type of explosives were found but said charges against the occupant, who was taken to a hospital with burns, were pending.

The street in North Tonawanda, north of Buffalo, was shut down for much of the day Sunday.

2 charged as officers find animals stacked in cages

SC BISHOPVILLE — Two women face criminal charges after South Carolina Department of Natural Resources officers found more than 200 squir-



JACQUELINE DORMER, REPUBLICAN-HERALD/AP

Diamond life

The sun casts a shadow of the chain link fence over the face of Kamryn Edwards, of Middleport, Pa., while watching the District 24 Little League 10-to-12-year-old semifinal between SPN and Tri-Valley in Saint Clair, Pa., on Monday. Edwards plays for SPN's 9-to-10-year-old team.

rels stacked in cages inside a mobile home near Bishopville.

The department said wildlife officers also found deer, armadillos and potentially invasive nutria on the property.

Officers went to the property Tuesday to serve search warrants related to illegal possession of deer. The women are also charged with inhumane treatment to animals and illegal possession of non-native wildlife species. All the crimes are misdemeanors. The women have been released from jail.

"The question is, how did they come to have these animals in South Carolina," DNR spokesman David Lucas told The Post and Courier of Charleston.

The two women told others they were rehabilitating wildlife, Lucas said. Some animals were in cages stacked in the mobile home's living room, while others were roaming the home. Other animals were kept outside.

Toyota donates 32 cars to 11 tech schools

KY VERSAILLES — Toyota Motor Manufacturing of Kentucky is donating vehicles to the Kentucky Community and Technical College System for its automotive technology programs, officials said.

The company is giving 32 cars to 11 schools across the state, news outlets reported, citing a joint

THE CENSUS

12 The length, in feet, of a python that escaped from its enclosure inside Louisiana's largest shopping mall. Cara got loose Tuesday from her enclosure at the Blue Zoo in the Mall of Louisiana in Baton Rouge, news outlets reported. Cara was described by her handlers as "very sweet." A photo they provided to reporters shows that she's a yellow and white Burmese python, which aren't venomous. The Blue Zoo was closed Tuesday while search efforts continued, but the Mall of Louisiana remained open.

statement from Toyota and the school system. The cars are 2018-2021 models of the Camry, Avalon and Lexus, including several hybrid models. They will be used to teach students about changing vehicle technology and to help prepare them for entry-level jobs.

Officials seek to solve city's feral cat problem

MI MOUNT PLEASANT — Elected officials in Mount Pleasant are hoping the city and others in the community can work together to reduce the numbers of feral cats roaming some neighborhoods.

City commissioners this week postponed a vote on changing the current animal ordinance that would allow the impoundment of abused or neglected animals and limit the number of dogs or cats to three per household, the Mount Pleasant Morning Sun reported Wednesday.

Commissioner Lori Gillis said during the meeting that she lives in a neighborhood with feral cats and that last year 15 of them got in-

to garages and used boats as scratching posts.

"I am an animal lover and it hurts me to see them limping or with one eye," Gillis said. "It's very disturbing ... having to see these cats not being taken care of, and breeding and damaging property."

Woman charged with helping grandson flee

LA PARADIS — The grandmother of a Louisiana man charged in a fatal hit-and-run was arrested for obstruction of justice Monday after authorities determined she helped her grandson flee the scene.

Hunter Mason Johnson is accused of hitting multiple vehicles and construction worker Brady Ortego with a Ford pickup truck while driving along Interstate 310 early in the morning of Jan. 14, according to a news release from the Louisiana State Police. Ortego, 44, was thrown from the Hale Boggs Bridge in St. Charles Parish into the Mississippi River, police said. His body has yet to be recovered.

Police said Johnson, 22, left his truck on the shoulder of the highway after the crash and fled on foot. State troopers discovered that he contacted his grandmother, Marie Sally Dufrene, to pick him up, which they say "prevented investigators from making an arrest at that time."

The 73-year-old was booked into the Nelson Coleman Correctional Center. Johnson was arrested March 12.

Zoo to begin vaccinating animals for COVID-19

CO DENVER — The Denver Zoo will begin vaccinating some of its animals for COVID-19 as early as next week.

Zoologists say they have been working with the veterinary vaccine company Zoetis to receive doses for the animals, and primates and carnivores will be first on the list. The veterinary vaccine, which is formulated primarily for mammals, is being developed separate from the ones for human use.

Transmission is rare between humans and other species, but there have been several documented cases of COVID-19 in large cats, monkeys and certain rodent populations.

Veterinary scientists do not think common house pets like cats or dogs are in significant danger of catching COVID-19.

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LIZ O. BAYLEN/TNS

Colman Domingo, who's been in the entertainment business for 31 years, has multiple projects in 2021.

Domingo on the rise

Writer/actor/director's star power 'a long time coming'

BY JAMI GANZ

New York Daily News

"It's been a long time coming."

That's how Colman Domingo sees his recent surge across screens big and small and people "finally" being "hip to exactly what I'm doing," the "Fear the Walking Dead" star and director, 51, said over Zoom.

The past year alone has seen the Tony-nominated "Scottsboro Boys" star dispensing timely knowledge and warmth as a recovered drug addict in the Peabody-nominated "Euphoria" special and playing the trombone while defending his religious convictions in the Oscar-winning adaptation of "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," racking up awards nominations along the way, and entering the "Twilight Zone."

"I've been working for, what, 31 years in this industry? And I've been carving out a space for myself, basically," said Domingo. "Nothing was given to me and I had to really create work when there was a lack of work."

From the jump, the writer/actor/director — whose play "Dot" was just greenlit for a television adaptation on AMC Networks' streamer — has known there would be times his career opportunities "would be lean and times when I would fully thrive."

"There's different versions of me and ... my audiences know me from very different things," said Domingo. "And now finally, people are understanding the container that it's all in and they're not trying to, I don't know, place it in a little box."

Among his eclectic highlights are two recent releases: "Zola," in which he plays a uniquely disarming pimp, and "The God Committee," which sees Domingo as a priest bearing witness to life-and-death decisions.

"It's gotta scare me a little bit. It's gotta make me feel like I might fail. In a strange way, that's when I thrive. Otherwise I feel like it doesn't [matter]."

Colman Domingo
on what attracts him to a role

"I'm doing the thing, to be very honest, that I think that you seek out when you're a younger actor, which is about having agency in this industry," said Domingo. "I do things that I only care about, you know?"

So what is it that attracts him to a role? "I think it's gotta scare me a little bit. It's gotta make me feel like I might fail," said Domingo. "In a strange way, that's when I thrive. Otherwise I feel like it doesn't [matter]. It's gotta matter. Maybe that's it."

What Domingo most cares about, though, is "being a creator," his favorite version of himself.

"I like creating worlds. And whether that's as a writer or director, or even like producing," said Domingo. "I love being an actor, but I don't necessarily have to be on stage or in front of the camera all the time. I love putting it together. ... I'm somebody who throws a good party, and I think that's the key to any good creator."

Artistic integrity, he says, shouldn't stop with a fan-favorite project — even one with a "huge, rabid fan base." Domingo pointed to "Euphoria" writer-creator Sam Levinson's remarks at the season two table read. Levinson acknowledged the show's "beautiful, successful" first season, and told everyone to "forget it" along with fans' attachment, recalled Domingo.

"That's how it was created before, so you have to trust that formula," said Domingo.

Even with such a wide range of projects under his belt, the actor does have one he holds closest to his heart: Ava DuVernay's "Selma."

"I really feel like that was a film that really had its purest intentions," said Domingo, acknowledging the film's central message continued timeliness. "It really showed me what the power of what we do and how we do it can be when you put it all in there."

Freshly out of prison, Cosby already planning a comeback

BY CHRISTIE D'ZURILLA

Los Angeles Times

Bill Cosby is, in a word, "exuberant." And he wants to get back to performing — and more.

"In his physical appearance, he's exuberant. In his mental state, he's exuberant. In his feelings and humor, he's exuberant," publicist Andrew Wyatt told the Los Angeles Times on Wednesday. The comedian is "colorful and powerful — more powerful than we've ever seen."

Cosby, 83, is with his family at the moment, Wyatt said, a week after his conviction on three counts of aggravated indecent assault against Andrea Constand was overturned. But plans are in the works to get "The Cosby Show" star back onstage in the U.S., Canada and London, Wyatt said.

Wyatt said Cosby's next act will weave the disgraced comic's "vintage storytelling" in with observations from his life today and will be "inclusive of human rights and civil rights" as Cosby works for criminal justice reform and prison reform based on his experiences.

Cosby "gives you a formula without the preservatives," his rep said.

The performer was convicted in April 2018 of drugging and sexually assaulting Constand. He was

sentenced to three to 10 years in prison, a term he was serving at a maximum security state facility in Pennsylvania.

They were the only criminal charges brought against Cosby, who has been accused of sexual misconduct by dozens of women.

Cosby's team — including the legal staff — still has to work out the details about how audiences, promoters and "media insurrectionists ... who fuel the hate" will be screened, Wyatt said, but he says he's not very concerned about hecklers and the like.

Also in the works, according to Wyatt: A book, written by Frederick Williams, will feature Cosby and Wyatt talking about the performer's experiences through both of his trials (civil and criminal) and while he was in prison. They also will discuss the strategies Cosby and his team used.

Additionally, production is almost done on a five-part docuseries about Cosby, from "Venus and Serena" director Michelle Major, which will include the comic's recent experiences in the legal system.



Cosby

Jodie Foster at home in Cannes

Associated Press

"I got one thing to say before I sit down," said Spike Lee during the Cannes Film Festival opening ceremony. "I wish I could speak French like Jodie Foster!"

In the first two days of Cannes, one thing everyone can agree on is that Jodie Foster speaks terrific French. On Tuesday, Foster was awarded an honorary Palme d'Or for lifetime achievement. The award was presented to her by Lee and South Korean director Bong Joon Ho.

"During this year of transition, the cinema has been my lifeline," said Foster, who walked the red carpet with her wife, Alexandra Hedison.

If Foster, 58, has seemed at home in Cannes, it could be because her experience at the festival spans 45 years. Foster first came to Cannes with "Taxi Driver" in 1976. She was just 13 at the time, a sunny, freckled face in the middle of a media storm over the violence in Martin Scorsese's film.

Black-and-white photos from the time capture Foster smiling next to Robert De Niro and Scorsese. Even then, Foster waved off translators and answered questions at the film's press conference in French. (Foster attended a French prep school in Los Angeles.)



BRYNN ANDERSON/AP

Jodie Foster's excellent French was on display this week at the opening of the 74th international Cannes film festival in France.

"Who would have thought that the little Iris from 'Taxi Driver' would have become the woman you have become?" said Pedro Almodovar during the ceremony.

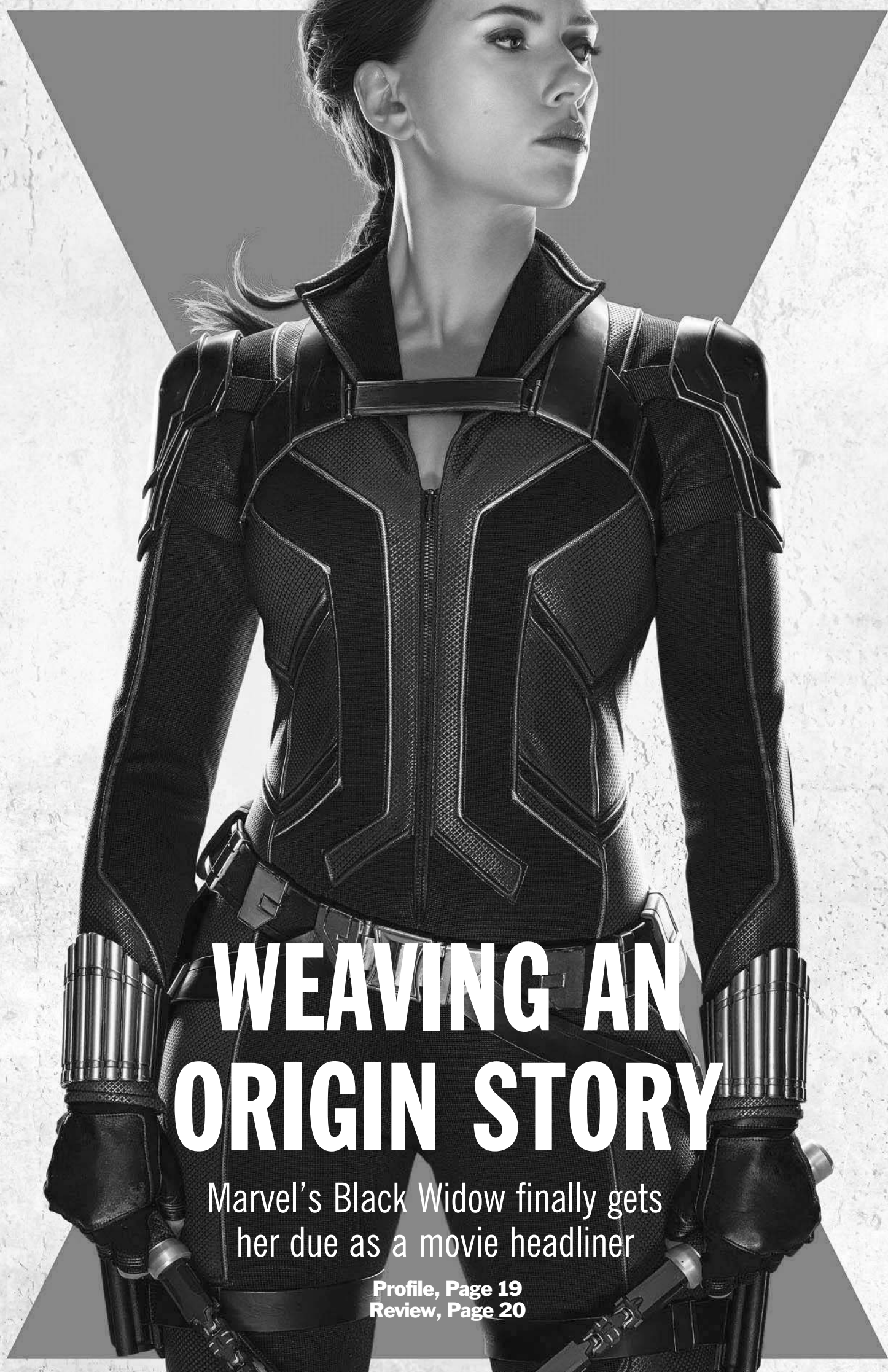
Other news

■ **Robert Downey Sr.**, a director and actor known for subversive comedies and roles in "To Live and Die in L.A." and "Boogie Nights," died Tuesday evening at age 85. His son, "Iron Man" star Robert Downey Jr., confirmed his death Wednesday with a heartfelt Instagram tribute to the "maverick filmmaker," who helmed several projects. Among them were his 1964 feature directorial debut, "Babo 73," as well as "Putney Swope" and "Too Much Sun."

WEEKEND



Tyler, still creating
Music, Page 32



WEAVING AN ORIGIN STORY

Marvel's Black Widow finally gets her due as a movie headliner

Profile, Page 19
Review, Page 20

Marvel Studios

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY



HEINEKEN/The Washington Post

Heineken's cooler innovation, powered by robotics and artificial intelligence, follows users around.

'Are you thirsty?'

Heineken's AI-enabled robot cooler keeps chilled beverages on hand, as long as customers stick to flat environments

BY DALVIN BROWN
The Washington Post

Cargo-carrying robots have yet to go mainstream, but they certainly make for appealing internet videos.

They tote groceries around the supermarket and hold your luggage at the airport. In one wild display, someone retrofitted a tank of beer, a nozzle and a camera onto a robotic dog, which then showed a unique "peeing" functionality.

Now, there's a stuff-toting machine that doubles as an autonomous cooler designed to follow you around the pool or backyard with a dozen cans of beer.

The Dutch brewing company Heineken recently unveiled the "Beer Outdoor Transporter" — a branding concept cooler that uses motion sensors to trail behind its owner. The company launched an online raffle July 1 for people who want to own one.

While it can't apply your sunscreen, blow off the sand from the beach or cook your hot dogs, it seemingly solves one issue.

"Nobody loves lugging around a giant cooler and sweating in the 100-degree heat," said Joshua Egan, brand director at Heineken USA. It was built around a "charming" AI personality and was shown this summer to mark the nation's return to semi-normalcy after gatherings last summer were discouraged due to the coronavirus. It was also unveiled to draw attention to the brand's new beer can design, as the beverage category faces increasing competition from hard seltzers.

It doesn't have to house Heineken products. The robot is constructed to tote around ice, so you could seemingly use any beverage you'd want to keep cold.

The robot looks like a mix between WALL-E, the animated waste-collecting droid from Pixar films, and a traditional green garbage truck. It's about knee-high, sits on six wheels and can talk to its owner. "Down here! I'm the cooler with wheels," the droid can say.

In the front is a touch screen and a series of cam-

eras and sensors to help it avoid obstacles. At the rear, there's a cooler backpack, branded with Heineken's logo. The company won't reveal how many it's making, only that it worked with a series of third parties over the past several months to get it built. Winners were announced this week, and the product will ship from Los Angeles soon. It hasn't mentioned plans to sell the robot beyond that.

The new beer robot serves a similar purpose to one already on the market, and another that took the internet by storm. Gita, a two-wheel robotic vehicle by Piaggio Fast Forward, carries up to 40 pounds of cargo around big cities today. It's expensive, costing \$3,250, but it's the first consumer robot in the U.S. with such functionality. In April, a YouTuber gave Boston Dynamics' robotic dog Spot the ability to pee beer into a red cup. A video of the project went viral, reaching more than 100 million views.

Heineken's robot can't do that. But it seems to be capable of rolling through grass, over boardwalks and on concrete with ease. It doesn't have legs, so it can't travel smoothly up staircases. That means, depending on where you're going, you may still need to pick it up. And it's kind of heavy, weighing 70 pounds before you add the ice or drinks. It can travel 15 miles between charges, the company says. The robot features two modes. One allows the machine to follow you. The other allows operators to control where it goes via an app.

In a promotional video, the machine is shown trailing about five feet behind its owner, traversing a swimming pool. "Are you thirsty?" it asks.

Heineken is supplying raffle winners with a companion app-enabled smartphone to pair with the robot.

It's the latest branding stunt pulled by Heineken, a \$60 billion brewing company recovering from a pandemic-spurred drop in restaurant sales. Last year, the brand's division in Brazil created a billboard that doubled as a grab-and-go outdoor bar at a time when food establishments globally suffered from coronavirus-related lockdowns.

GADGETS

Customizable wireless keyboard stands out

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

The new Vissles V84 wireless keyboard took me a few days to get customized and used to. But now I'm hooked.

Taking the white keyboard, surrounded by a black plastic bottom frame, out of the box and pairing it with a computer is easy, but there's a lot of customization and comfort to make it stand out.

Measuring 12.4-by-4.9-by-1.5 inches, with 84 keys it's built with a 75% layout, compared to a full-sized keyboard. It is essentially a standard keyboard without the numerical keys on the right. It's compatible with Windows, Mac OS, Android and iOS.

Some keys are hot-swappable. V84 is compatible with almost all the MX style 3-pin and 5-pin mechanical switches. This brings different ways to show off the backlights. Included are 19 dynamic backlit types and nine monochrome backlit types. Software is included to create personalized RGB lighting effects, shortcuts and macros.

The RGB effects have five levels of brightness and five levels of speed. Patterns include waves, static, rainbows and more. Each effect can have eight colors. The lights illuminate under the keys and shine through the spaces between each, enabling them to light but not be a distraction shining directly at you.

Vissles includes some great accessories you don't normally see included with a keyboard. Included are a leather wrist rest, magnetic rubberized feet, a cleaning cloth, a key puller and a USB-C charging cable. The magnetic rubber feet go on or off in seconds to raise the keyboard to six degrees, and the metal positioning plate keeps the keyboard sturdy.

Online: vissles.com; \$99

Aukey stated it perfectly when touting the **Omnia 100 GaNFast charger**, and I couldn't agree

more: "It's time to be done with bulky, heavy, slow silicon chargers and upgrade to a faster charging and smaller GaNFast charger."

Recently I've been putting the Aukey Omnia 100 watt 2A+2C with GaNFast technology to task at home, work, play and some travel. There's not a situation I can find where the charger doesn't shine.

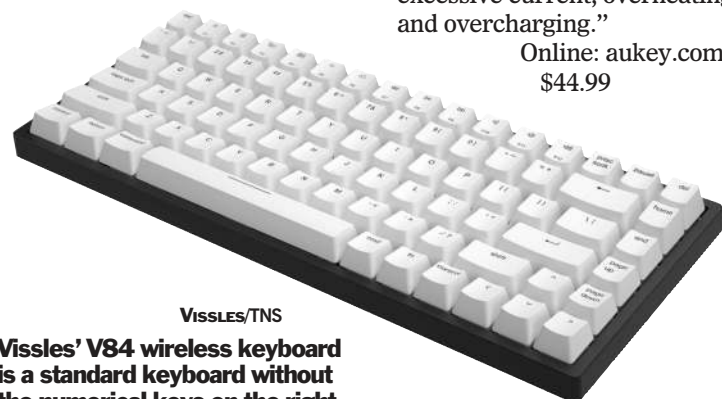
The pocket-sized high-quality charging hub is one of smallest (2.75-by-2.73-by-1.29 inches, 7.87 ounces), if not the smallest, most capable charging hub for your home or travels to charge multiple devices at once. It's built with four ports, two USB-C ports and two USB-A ports, and it gets its power from foldout AC prongs for attaching to any standard AC outlet. Having just one charger with multiple ports reduces the bulk and weight needed to carry around with some of the giant charging bricks still in use.

What's inside the Omnia 100 GaNFast charger makes it stand out. Gallium Nitride chips in GaNFast chargers are stated to be more efficient than silicon, with the ability to charge devices three times faster. All this with a small-profile charger containing all the horsepower needed to fully charge a 16-inch MacBook Pro in just 1.8 hours, while also being 20% physically smaller compared to the 16-inch MacBook Pro charger. And unlike the Apple charger, the Aukey Omnia has three additional ports.

With four ports and all capable of fast charging, it works simultaneously with endless combinations of gadgets needing a boost of power, including a pair of laptops, true wireless earbuds and smartphones. When all four ports are used, it will deliver 45 watts for each USB-C port and will split 12 watts between USB-A ports.

The charger automatically optimizes the power supply for safe charging. According to the Aukey site, "This UL-certified charger with built-in safeguards protects your devices against excessive current, overheating and overcharging."

Online: aukey.com; \$44.99



VISSLES/TNS

Vissles' V84 wireless keyboard is a standard keyboard without the numerical keys on the right.

WEEKEND: MOVIES



Marvel Studios

Scarlett Johansson is pictured in a scene from Marvel's "Black Widow." Johansson also produced the film now showing in theaters and streaming on Disney+ premium.

An introduction a decade in the making

After 7 Marvel movie appearances, Johansson's 'Black Widow' finally gets her moment in the spotlight

BY LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

Scarlett Johansson has had quite a bit of time to think about a "Black Widow" movie. After all, she's played the character in seven movies spanning 10 years.

Yet unlike many of her fellow Avengers who got grand introductions in movies and sequels bearing their names on the marquee, she built the enigmatic Natasha Romanoff as a sideline scene stealer beginning with her introduction in 2010's "Iron Man 2" through her exit in "Avengers: Endgame."

By the time her name was called for a coveted standalone, she knew that, above all, she wanted Black Widow's film to be unexpected. And as the first lead actor to serve as a producer on a Marvel film, she actually had a say.

The character, introduced in the comics in 1964, is inextricably tied to a Soviet-era spy aesthetic fitting of James Bond. But that seemed like the easy route.

"I didn't want it to be an espionage film," Johansson said. "I think we avoided that."

Instead, "Black Widow" helps peel back the layers on a hard-to-grasp character, with a little bit of an origin story, a little bit of a coda and the introduction of people outside of the Avengers who mean something to her. Johansson also personally recruited Australian indie director Cate Shortland, another unexpected and inspired choice, to helm.

Marvel veteran Eric Pearson had the task of writing the script and took advantage of the fact that the character seemed to change and become more emotionally vulnerable between "Civil War" and "Infinity War"/"Endgame," which is when "Black Widow" is set.

"We're looking at what happened there," Pearson said. "What happened when she went back and confronted her past that unlocked her heart and kind of opened her up to the world and eventually led her to make that all-time



Marvel Studios

Florence Pugh, left, and Scarlett Johansson star as long-lost sister-like characters in "Black Widow."

sacrifice at the end of 'Endgame.'"

Part of that involved introducing a sort-of sister character in Yelena Belova, played as an adult by Florence Pugh, who also had the traumatic experience of being trained in the "Red Room" as a child.

"Florence is so vibrant and interesting to watch that you think, 'OK ... there's going to be life here,'" Johansson said.

Despite not really knowing one another beforehand, they quickly connected on set, partly due to a natural chemistry between the two and partly due to the extreme nature of filming a big-budget action thriller.

"Our Day One was me throwing her against a cabinet and we both had our hands in each other's armpits. And it was in that moment that I was like, 'Oh, my God, I have a sweaty armpit. And Scarlett Johansson is touching me,'" Pugh said. "Once that ice is broken, you know, best mates. Weird first day, though, to start with."

It was a fittingly epic endeavor, shooting over 87 days in London, Norway, Budapest, Morocco and Atlanta, with showstopping fights, motorcycle stunts, car chases and even a skydiving sequence. For Pugh, who is more known for slightly less spectacle-driven films like "Midsommar" and "Little Women," it was an eye-opening experience.

"It was just so impressive to see so many departments doing so many things. And you were completely involved into the process and the creating of it. And I just really appreciated how much you were expected to be there for the whole journey," Pugh said. "It only made then waiting and watching the film a year later just even more exciting because you're like, 'Oh, my God, that took so many days to shoot and there we are flying through the air on a bike.'"

"Black Widow" has the distinction of being the first Marvel movie debuting day-and-date on a streaming platform, after being delayed for more than a year due to the pandemic. It's now available in theaters globally and to rent on Disney+ for \$30, the same release pattern as a handful of other Disney projects over the past year.

The film isn't just a tribute and a goodbye to a beloved character, though. It also kicks off "Phase Four" of the Marvel Cinematic Universe after an unplanned two-year gap in Marvel theatrical releases following "Avengers: Endgame" (and, technically, "Spider-Man: Far from Home.")

The stakes for big-budget Marvel movies are always high, but "Black Widow" will also be a litmus test not just because of the unconventional release strategy, but also as a gauge for audience interest in the cinematic juggernaut going forward.

After the 23-film build to "Endgame," which currently holds the title of second-highest grossing film of all time after a re-release of "Avatar" during the pandemic, Marvel is going into uncharted territory with new characters in films like "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings," set for September, and "Eternals" in November. But Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige isn't stressing much about that. This new phase, he said, is one of "new beginnings."

"Within our movies, there's this big shared experience that all the characters had with this, what we call the blip. Now, in real life, we all, as human beings on earth, have had the shared experience of this pandemic, of this lockdown. So there is an interesting parallel that we were playing on in our stories," he said. "It's been two years since we've had a film in theaters, and we are ready. I hope the fans are ready."

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS



Marvel Studios

Scarlett Johansson (Natasha) and Florence Pugh (Yelena) are elite assassins in "Black Widow."

A satisfying detour

Latest Marvel release 'Black Widow' is almost a standalone film, designed to give a proper sendoff after a decade of service

By JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

How fleeting world domination can be. It can disappear in a snap. It's been two years since the last Marvel film, an unfathomable chasm for an ever-churning movie machine. In between, Marvel has made its most ambitious forays onto television, with the streaming series "WandaVision," "The Falcon and the Winter Soldier" and "Loki." Marvel, of course, isn't going anywhere.

But it's also possible that the pandemic hasn't just been a blip in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Even before COVID-19 delayed the release of "Black Widow" and subsequent installments a year or more, "Avengers: Endgame" felt very much like the conclusion of something. Can the most all-powerful juggernaut in movie history just pick up where it left off?

"Black Widow," thankfully, isn't exactly designed that way. It's as close to a one-off as Marvel gets. Set in between 2016's "Captain America: Civil War" (when the superheroes fell out) and 2018's "Avengers: Infinity War" (when they made up), it doesn't have any grander purpose to the franchise's overarching aims than giving Scarlett Johansson's Natasha Romanoff/Black Widow (who perished in "Endgame") a proper sendoff after a decade of service stretching back to 2010's "Iron Man 2."

And I think partly because "Black Widow" needs to exist purely by itself, it works. It's absorbing in its own right. Less occupied with driving a universe of movies forward, the almost-standalone film instead digs into slightly darker, deeper realms of the typically bright and shiny Marvel world. And while it marks a farewell to Johansson, "Black Widow" is given a boost by a number of new faces — Florence Pugh, David Harbour, Rachel Weisz, Ray Winstone — who supply some new verve in a movie world that's recently been dependent on many of its longest-running stars.

The movie begins with familiar suburban scenes of two young girls and their apparent mother (Weisz) readying for dinner. When the father (Harbour) arrives, he's distraught. They have an hour to flee, he whispers. They grab little before driving straight for a small airport. Out the window, while "American Pie" plays on the car stereo, are all-American scenes of families playing on the lawn, a

ballgame under the lights. It's an early sign that "Black Widow" will be about an American Dream denied — or at least delayed — and a kind of anti-"Captain America." Only when the dad flips a car to clear the runway do we have any sense that these aren't your average Americans. And once they land in Cuba, we realize they aren't citizens at all, nor are they a family.

Harbour's character in fact is Alexei Shostakov/Red Guardian, a Soviet-built super soldier made to compete with Captain America. Their family was a cobbled-together Ohio sleeper cell. The four of them are quickly split apart, and over a melancholy cover of "Smells Like Teen Spirit," the opening credits roll with a montage of U.S.-Russian relations over time, mixed with images of Soviet mastermind Dreykov (Winstone) and his Red Room program of elite assassins — dubbed "Widows" — all of them plucked from the streets as young girls.

Twenty years later, the long-freed and reformed Natasha — now an Avenger — is well beyond her painful beginnings. But not as much as she thought. Her belief that she killed Dreykov is spoiled when she reunites in Budapest with her faux-sister from childhood, Yelena (Pugh), who informs her that not only is the Red Room very operational, but Dreykov has created a new, frightful method of control of his Widows. From afar, he can operate their movements and terminate their lives with a few computer buttons.

Natasha and Yelena resolve to topple Dreykov and the Red Room, a mission that requires them to reconnect with their once parents. As a unit, they are an emotionally damaged bunch, making their task throb with not just vengeance but their own psychological healing.

They all also owe their powers to the crippling, cruel system that made them. For Natasha, this is a discomfiting truth always just below the surface. "Black Widow" becomes, kind of stirring, a movie not about franchise extension but sisterhood, improvised families and traumatic pasts.

Marvel movies, like the moon, are categorized in phases. "Black Widow" is meant to kick off "phase four," but it's not clear if the empire is waxing or waning. But if "Black Widow" is a sign of things to come, it's a promising new direction.

"Black Widow" is rated PG-13 for intense sequences of violence/action, some language and thematic material. Running time: 134 minutes.

7 movies to watch before 'Black Widow'

By DAVID BETANCOURT
The Washington Post

When the Marvel Cinematic Universe began to dream of growing into something bigger than Hollywood could ever imagine, the cameras zoomed in on Black Widow, the superspy played by Scarlett Johansson in multiple MCU films over the past decade.

Johansson's first appearance in 2010's "Iron Man 2" represented the MCU's first true signs of expansion. At that point, Robert Downey Jr.'s Iron Man/Tony Stark was the only sure thing. Back then, the brand that would become Marvel Studios was known more for recasting than for a never-ending superhero narrative.

The heroine would eventually become the queen on the Marvel Studios chessboard, able to move anywhere, starring in every Avengers movie and becoming a vital part of the Captain America franchise alongside Chris Evans' Steve Rogers.

After being delayed last summer due to the pandemic, Black Widow is finally ready for her solo movie debut.

If you're looking to dive into her key moments before watching the new film, now in theaters and on Disney+ (for an extra fee, here are seven movies to watch, all of them available to stream on Disney+.

'Iron Man 2'

In her first appearance, Black Widow uses her stealthy spy skills to fool the biggest brain in the MCU, Tony Stark/Iron Man, under the guise of the world's best executive assistant who just so happens to know martial arts. Carefully plucking Stark's playboy strings and playing on his billionaire "there is nothing I can't have" attitude, she eventually reveals her true self to Iron Man, becoming an ally and a bridge between Stark and her boss, Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson), a new alliance that is the first step in the formation of the Avengers.

'The Avengers'

In the first mega MCU team-up featuring all of the original Avengers, Black Widow gets a close-up moment against the movie's big bad guy, Loki (Tom Hiddleston) — who is now starring in his own Disney+ series. Thor's sneaky brother is being held captive by the Avengers after plotting to take over Earth. This is Black Widow's deep background scene, where she reveals to Loki that she, too, was once the bad guy, so much so she was on the radar of the good guys she now works with. She's an assas-

sin trying to clean the old blood off her hands through heroic deeds.

'Captain America: The Winter Soldier'

Black Widow and Captain America are working side by side. The organization they've fought for together for years begins to crumble from within due to an infiltration that neither could see, led by a foe from Captain America's past that Black Widow has fought before. "The Winter Soldier" is considered the MCU's best movie by many, and a big part of its reputation is Johansson matching Evans' screen presence in both action-filled and humorous moments.

'Avengers: Age of Ultron'

In her first meetup with "WandaVision's" Wanda Maximoff (Elizabeth Olsen), who is not yet an Avenger, Black Widow falls under the spell of the future Scarlet Witch's powers and reveals key memories of being trained in the sinister Red Room to become the ultimate spy. "Age of Ultron" also takes a deeper look at a budding romance between Black Widow and the Hulk, featuring romantic scenes with Bruce Banner (Mark Ruffalo) and moments where she helps cage the big green monster within him.

'Captain America: Civil War'

An all-out brawl where the superheroes are constantly punching each other in the face, this movie leads Black Widow to fight her two biggest MCU allies — Captain America and Hawkeye (Jeremy Renner) — over differences about how the government should regulate superheroes after the events of "Age of Ultron."

'Avengers: Infinity War'

In the battle against Thanos — the biggest supervillain the MCU has ever seen — Black Widow helps lead a fight against his forces on the Wakandan lands of the Black Panther.

'Avengers: Endgame'

After Thanos wipes out half the universe with the powerful Infinity Gauntlet, Black Widow helps the surviving heroes go on a time-traveling mission to restore all of humanity. Her mission, alongside Hawkeye, is a fatal one, as she is forced to sacrifice her life to retrieve the Infinity Stone needed to save the universe. "The Black Widow" is a prequel of sorts, taking place before one of the most impactful deaths (right alongside Iron Man's) in the MCU.

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

A road trip gone horribly wrong

'Zola' was captivating in 148 tweets, but loses the fun personality and strange vibe on the big screen

By LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

There are some admirable things in "Zola," the movie based on a viral Twitter thread about an unwitting dancer who gets caught in an ever-escalating nightmare in Florida.

Taylor Paige is phenomenal, for one. The movie, though, is a bold and admirable experiment that doesn't totally work.

Paige plays A'Ziah "Zola" King, the author of said thread who in 2015 recounted, in 148 tweets, the time she decided to take a road trip to Florida with a sex worker Stefani (Riley Keough), her boyfriend Derrek (Nicholas Braun, who has made awkward humiliation his go-to mode), and her "roommate," X (Colman Domingo), an inscrutable and dangerous character, whose mood shifts as violently as his accent. The names have been ever so slightly changed from the ones in the thread (Jessica, Jarrett, Z).

The odyssey begins, as most positive odysseys don't, at a seedy restaurant in Detroit. Zola is waiting on Stefani and it is, if not love, heart emoji-filled infatuation at first sight. They talk about their side gigs as dancers, begin a text flirtation and soon enough, Stefani is inviting Zola to join her on a road trip to Tampa, Fla., to hit the clubs and see how much they can make.

Director Janicza Bravo paints this world with a garish palette. Everything is neon, cheap and lit with fluorescent lights that exacerbate the cheapness and neon-ness. This is intentional, of course, but it does not seem to have been done with love.

And yet there is a delicacy to Bravo's composition, too, thanks in part to Mica Levi's whimsical score that plays on the seemingly harmless dings and rings of a smartphone. Ari Wegner's trash-fairytale cinematography also mimics a kind of amateur music video, and the ugliness is at least captivating for a time. Though there is quite a bit of nudity, it is more matter of fact than erotic. Bravo celebrates the form of her two female leads, but the men, for the most part, are presented with disgust.

Keough, who is white, plays Stefani like a vulgar child appropriating and affecting an accent that she thinks sounds Black. It is its own kind of nightmare. And while Zola, who is Black, never gets any dialogue to comment on this and some other downright racist things, Paige's eyes and performance tell the audience most of what they need to know: This is not OK. This is not funny. This is something she is merely getting through so that she can make some money in the Sunshine State and go home.

But going home is not as simple as she



A24 Films photos

Riley Keough, at left above and below, as Stefani and Taylor Paige as Zola in "Zola."

thinks. X, who she has now deduced is a pimp, has other plans for the girls and it involves more than a pole. Zola is uninterested in sex work. Stefani is. Against her will, she finds herself trapped with her helpless new friend and decides to take pity on and help her get paid fairly for what her services are worth after noticing that she charges only \$100 for sex. This, unfortunately, also makes Zola even more valuable to X, and her journey with this deranged bunch continues.

The Twitter thread itself was a wild and well-told story that fit its medium perfectly — it was funny and strange, a little scary and full of personality. "Zola" the movie is not that. The film leans into the attitude and the language that so captivated bored scrollers for a few days six years ago, but here we are forced to experience these truly horrifying events with Zola, who it becomes achingly clear is just trying to survive. And it is neither fun, funny, exciting or even particularly illuminating. It just feels tragic and traumatic. It seems telling too that while Bravo co-wrote the script with Tony-winning playwright Jeremy O. Harris, Zola's writing is the dialogue that pops.

Someone more generous might see



"Zola" the film as a commentary on exploitation. But it never seems to decide if we are making fun of the characters or not. Are we being asked to find this world entertaining? Braun's performance seems to suggest yes. Paige's doesn't. It also can't seem to reconcile its own tone as the violence and stakes escalate.

In the end, it feels like we're just supposed to gawk in disbelief at the mess and hope that we, and Zola, can emerge from the experience relatively unscathed. In other words, the exact opposite feeling of reading that incredible thread.

"Zola" is rated R for strong sexual content and language throughout, graphic nudity, and violence including a sexual assault. Running time: 90 minutes. Now playing in theaters.

Chris Pratt, aliens, comic relief make 'The Tomorrow War' worth fighting

By ADAM GRAHAM
The Detroit News

Aliens are here — well, they're coming, in about 30 years — but it's up to today's soldiers to fight them in the action-packed, time-traveling, good-time popcorn thriller "The Tomorrow War."

Dan Forester (Chris Pratt) leads a gang of soldiers who are sent into the future to win the fight against a deadly alien species that makes those noise-hating buggers from "A Quiet Place" look like family pets. These suckers — they're called White Spikes, which sounds a little too close to White Stripes whenever they're referenced — are screaming, menacing hellbeasts, SUV-sized and outfitted with tentacles they whip around to rip apart anything in sight. They're not the kinds of creatures you want to be sent into the future to beam down from the sky (scientists are clearly still working out the time travel kinks) and be forced to fight.

But that's what they're up against. It's a call to arms as a group of future fighters interrupt a televised soccer match (was this the best place to make the announcement? Not the Super Bowl?) in the present day to inform the human race that its time on this planet is limited thanks to the impending White Spike invasion. "We are food, and they are hungry," it is later explained, a welcome bit of simplicity that sums up the conflict.

A draft is initiated and it's up to everyone to do their part which, yeah, involves a little time travel, but their stints are limited to seven days due to some sort of glitch



Amazon Prime Video

Chris Pratt, Edwin Hodge and Sam Richardson star in "The Tomorrow War," streaming now on Amazon Prime.

in the space-time continuum. (The particulars are explained, but it's still best to not ask too many questions.)

Pratt's Forester has a wife (Betty Gilpin) and a young daughter (Ryan Kiera) at home, and a father (J.K. Simmons, all buffed up) from whom he's estranged. In the present, Forester is a science teacher, trying to convince his students that formulas and chemical compounds matter when the kids are well aware the world is coming to an end. Science is the key to possibly saving the world, he says, even though it's mostly firepower that he uses to take on the baddies when he eventually gets his draft

notice and is teleported to 2051.

Thrown into battle alongside Forester are Charlie (Sam Richardson), Norah (Mary Lynn Rajskub), Cowan (Mike Mitchell), Dorian (Edwin Hodge) and others, many of whom plummet to their death upon their arrival from the sky. (Those scientists really need to work on that entry process.) From there, it's immediate action as the humans take on the monsters in a nonstop hail of bullets in a burned-out, apocalyptic Miami, where there's still time to make jokes about whether the Dolphins ever make it to the Super Bowl.

Director Chris McKay ("The Lego Batman Movie") layers on the action and firepower in heavy doses, while screenwriter Zach Dean gives the story a core of humanity that grounds Pratt's character and roots the story in family. (Hey, it worked for the "Fast" franchise.)

Richardson, even though he's parodied movies like this on "I Think You Should Leave," makes a nimble action hero, and is given plenty of moments of comic relief, while Simmons is a welcome presence as Forester's hard-ass dad.

"The Tomorrow War" moves and feels like a throwback to the action films of the '90s — and "Independence Day" in particular — when sci-fi violence and jokes met with wild set pieces and combined for a rollicking good time. Hungry for action? This is food.

"The Tomorrow War" is rated PG-13 for intense sequences of sci-fi violence and action, language and some suggestive references. Running time: 140 minutes. Available on Amazon Prime Video.

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS



Universal Pictures photos

Josh Lucas, above foreground and lower left, in “The Forever Purge,” also starring Ana de la Reguera and Tenoch Huerta, lower right.



‘Purge’ franchise heads for the southern border

Action/horror series’ latest chapter takes on immigration debate

BY KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

In 2013, budget horror production studio Blumhouse produced “The Purge,” a nasty, clever action/horror flick written and directed by James DeMonaco that posited the question: what if all crime was legal for one night? Centering on a wealthy family who attempt to wait out the Purge in their heavily secured home, the film made \$89 million on a \$3 million budget. Of course there would be more, and the sequels keep making more and more money at the box office.

Now the dystopian concept of the Purge has become a cultural idiom and a vehicle for reckoning with the uglier parts of American life. It was “The Purge: Election Year” in 2016 that struck a bit too close to home, and now the loose confines of the “Purge” formula have become a vessel for filmmakers to work out their issues. Mexican filmmaker Everardo Gout runs with the opportunity in “The Forever Purge,” in collaboration with DeMonaco, who wrote the screenplay.

In “The Forever Purge,” the filmmakers take on the timely topic of immigration at the southern border. Ana de la Reguera and Tenoch Huerta star as Adela and Juan, a Mexican couple who flee across the border to Texas. Juan finds work for a wealthy white ranching family, the Tuckers, though tensions have erupted with son Dylan (Josh Lucas), who feels emasculated by Juan’s horse-handling skills.

Juan and Adela are committed to their new American lives, which includes the annual “blood holiday” the Purge, instituted by the New Founding Fathers government. The families roll down the shutters and tuck in for a quiet evening protected from the violence: the Tuckers at their posh ranch

house, Adela and Juan in a graffiti-scarred shelter.

But when the shutters roll up at 7 a.m., the purging continues, as butcher-knife-wielding bunnies attack Adela at work and black-masked cowboys go after the Tuckers at home. Racist hate groups declaring a “Forever Purge” have launched a coordinated attack with the intent of a “Purge Purification.” Though organized across the country, their aims seem disjointed, with Forever Purgers waging a class war, perpetuating racist ethnic cleansing, or simply just looking to go berserk. With America on fire and the heavily armed populace turning on each other, millions of U.S. citizens including the Tuckers, with Adela and Juan in tow, make a break for the Mexican border. Viewed with the lens of real-life political and humanitarian issues at the Mexican border, the irony is palpable.

The “Purge” films have become a simultaneously disturbing and cathartic viewing experience. Some of the lines of dialogue and story beats are ripped directly from the headlines of America’s charged political atmosphere. While watching events unfold it feels just a bit too plausible, but DeMonaco and Gout cook up such delicious comeuppance that you can’t help but indulge in the pleasure of revenge.

Tucker patriarch Caleb (Will Patton) struggles with what it means to be a proud American. Adela wants America to live up to her ideals. The Forever Purgers have a warped notion, but they’ll fight to the death for this country anyway. But then there’s Chiago (Zahn McClarnon), a tribal leader on whose ancient lands the first and final battles for America are fought. As the blood spills and citizens flee, Chiago’s tenacity reminds us that if America belongs to anyone, it’s him.

“The Forever Purge” is rated R for strong/bloody violence, and language throughout. Running time: 103 minutes.

‘Fear Street’ film series 3 well-connected blocks long

BY MICHAEL ORDOÑA
Los Angeles Times

When is a miniseries not a miniseries? When it’s “Fear Street”: three full-length movies dropping on Netflix on consecutive Fridays to collectively tell a gruesome tale based on books by R.L. Stine. Parents beware: This is not aimed at a “Goosebumps” audience.

The first movie, “Fear Street Part 1: 1994,” finds teens in Shadyside, Ohio, dealing with the usual angst teen stuff: breakups; the class divide between Shadyside and more-prosperous Sunnyvale; pining for a pretty drug-dealer friend; the usual. The teens come to realize that recent murders may be part of a larger pattern of mass killings that have cursed their town every few years for, oh, a few centuries. No wonder property values are lower in Shadyside. Do real estate agents list it as a premium if no one has been murdered in a house, as far as they know?

Anyway, scrappy, outsiders Deena (Kiana Madeira) has to put aside her heartbreak to stop the killer(s?) before someone close to her — her cheerleader ex (Olivia Scott Welch), her nerdy brother (Benjamin Flores Jr.) or her dealer



Netflix

Maya Hawke is in on the mayhem of the first “Fear Street” chapter, “Part 1: 1994.” The first two of three chapters are now streaming on Netflix.

friends (Julia Rehwald, Fred Hechinger) — ends up under the knife. Or knives. Or hatchet, whatever. The mystery sets up an arching horror tale told over the three films, set in eras indicated by their subtitles: “1994,” “1978” and “1666.” Rest assured, the three will add up to more than the sum of their parts.

To get to where “1994” is going, however, one must overcome a lifeless slasher-

movie opening and a handful of ’90s-ish horror clichés. The dialogue can be clunky and easy to guess in advance, and there’s an unfortunate reliance on jump scares. The thing to remember is that this is all part of a larger story, and without spoiling anything, that story does get significantly more interesting.

That’s the virtue of this not being just another slasher film and its two recycled

sequels; each “Fear Street” is a different animal, yet still pieces of the same puzzle. The first two pay homage to the horror films of the eras in which they’re set. The third is its own thing. The three together end up expressing themes. For instance, the oafish class struggle in “1994” will evolve into a kind of sly social commentary later on.

There are some meta echoes banging about: There are sideways references to Jason Voorhees and those nutty kids from “Scream” (director and co-writer of all three films, Leigh Janiak, helmed some episodes of the short-lived “Scream” TV series), and there’s a re-created sequence from “The Shining.” The cast is appealing enough and does fine with what it has. Flores is endearing and Hechinger is funny.

It’s hard to imagine that older teens will find “1994” scary exactly, but horror fans of that age might get a charge out of some of the more brutal dispatchings. The real enjoyment of “1994” is reaching the end and knowing it’s still headed somewhere.

“Fear Street Part 1: 1994” is rated R for strong bloody violence, drug content, language and some sexual content. Running time: 105 minutes. Now streaming on Netflix.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Final Fantasy VII Remake directors say Intermission points directly to the sequel

By GENE PARK
The Washington Post

Elements of Intermission, the additional chapter in the PlayStation 5 version of Final Fantasy VII Remake, will likely be used in the highly anticipated, and likely far-off, sequel, according to the game's makers.

More specifically, the team-up moves that Intermission stars Yuffie and Sonon can do will likely return in Part 2 of Final Fantasy VII Remake, or whatever the sequel to the remake may be called. In a recent interview with The Washington Post, Naoki Hamaguchi, co-director of Remake, said that last year's battle system was an evolution of the "Active Time Battle" from the original 1997 release.

"From that perspective, I am rather satisfied with this final form, in which the strategic element of the command-based battle from the original co-exists with the real-time, action-oriented battle," said Hamaguchi, who as a young man wanted to work for the Final Fantasy series ever since the sixth installment. "Additionally, with Intermission, there's another element introduced: combo movies where Yuffie and Sonon team up ... which makes for a different feel in battle strategy. I would like to leverage these, including other elements we tried out in 'Intermission,' in our next story."

Final Fantasy VII Remake was released last year April to critical acclaim and became one of the year's most celebrated games. Moreover, the twists and story changes excited fans for the inevitable sequel, particularly since the first story ends right when the party finally leaves the crowded, polluted first city of Midgar and begins to travel the open world.

Longtime, attentive players may have noticed callbacks to several other pieces of Final Fantasy VII media, including the film "Advent Children" and the spinoff titles. Intermission leans into this further, introducing the characters Weiss and Nero, who only appeared in the PlayStation 2 shooter Dirge of Cerberus. That game focused on an optional character from the original game, Vincent. This was no accident, said Motomu Toriyama, another co-director of Remake and a scenario director for the original 1997 game.

"The world of Final Fantasy VII was vastly expanded through multiple works that followed after the original game," Toriyama said. "We do want to make it a culmination of all the Final Fantasy VII-related works created up to this point. There are

characters that, I too, do not know, but that is the same with Cloud and company as well."

Toriyama said that any time a new character from outside the original 1997 release is introduced into the new story, the writers will always frame it as a first encounter with Cloud, the protagonist and audience surrogate.

"For unfamiliar enemies like Weiss or Nero, I think being able to convey that they have a kind of deep darkness about them is plenty," Toriyama said. "At the same time, those who are familiar with them can make a stronger connection to the overarching Final Fantasy VII world by having them appear in the narrative as they are in their respective source material."

Yuffie was a perfect star for the additional chapter Intermission because she was also an optional character in the original game, but her backstory wasn't as solidified as Vincent. Toriyama said reintroducing the gem thief as an integral part of the story wouldn't be as jarring.

"If this were Vincent, another optional character, he would have been sleeping in a coffin in the Shinra mansion, so we wouldn't be able to move him around," Toriyama said. "But Yuffie was traveling the world as a materia hunter in the original. By having Yuffie infiltrate Midgar as part of her travels, she can experience the same incidents Cloud and company were experiencing, depicting the same incidents from a different perspective."

Toriyama is referencing a pivotal, tragic moment in the original 1997 story that was given more dramatic weight in the Remake. The emphasis on the horror of the incident is only magnified through Yuffie's eyes.

"Yuffie is a cheerful and energetic young lady and she will make an appearance after getting over the tragic experience in Intermission," Toriyama said.

"So I believe her encounter with Cloud and his allies will be that much more appealing. Also, Wutai [Yuffie's home nation] was placed in a more important position ... as the opposing force against Shinra. By having groups that oppose Shinra, not just Avalanche, take a more prominent role, I believe we can create an even more suspenseful story."

The directors say they are not losing sight of respecting the original game. They both say they are heartened by the love showered upon Remake, and were very satisfied with player response to the many changes in the gameplay and the story.



GameTomo

Sumire is a kid-friendly indie title that features a one-day journey through a picturesque Japanese village.

Deceptively simple

Sumire seems childlike, but the narrative adventure has more to say

By CHRISTOPHER BYRD
Special to The Washington Post

When I first fired up Sumire, a game about a lonely little girl living in a small Japanese town who promises to show a talking flower a beautiful day, I was less than enthused to see where their adventure might lead. The setup seemed so childishly unpromising that I was unwilling to spend more than 20 minutes with the game. However, when I



returned to it a few days later, I found that I'd misjudged it. Sumire is undoubtedly a kid-friendly game, but it is not childish. The feelings it touches on suggest the sort of wisdom an adult might look to pass on to a child to prepare her for a world that is vertiginously beautiful as well as disappointing.

The game opens with a gentle paradox: a dream that hints at fulfillment and longing. Lying asleep, Sumire, the little girl at the center of the story, envisions sheltering in her grandmother's arms beneath a wisteria tree. In the dream, she watches the happy scene as if she were an observer. Reaching out a hand as if to physically grab the moment in front of her, she wakes up and is unsettled by the thought that her recently deceased grandmother was trying to communicate something important to her that she was unable to understand.

Walking through her one-story house, she stops by the portrait of her grandmother that hangs in a cabinet near the front door. Addressing her grandmother's spirit, Sumire speaks of her mother's depression over her father's absence from their lives and asks for help. Seconds later, she hears the crashing sound of breaking glass, and when she returns to her room she discovers a broken window pane and a seed on the floor. Picking up the seed, she takes it into the living room and plants it in a pot on a table, then falls asleep.

Upon awakening, she is startled to discover that the seed has grown into a talking flower. The flower asks her to show it a beautiful day since it will only live until sunset. At first, Sumire is reluctant to do it any favors. Lost in her melancholy, she tells the flower that all she wants to do is go back to sleep and stay inside the house because her mother needs her.

But the flower is persistent. "Please. Don't just leave me here to die inside," it says before suggesting that by acceding to its request it might be possible for Sumire to see her grandmother again. Banking on that hope, Sumire snips off the head of the flower, which then floats in the air. The floating flower head will accompany her throughout her journey. Sumire then goes to fetch her backpack and notebook and sets out to try to have a "perfect day."

Over the length of the day, Sumire will have the occasion to assist people and critters, e.g., a letter carrier who hasn't spoken with his daughter for 20 years, a lovelorn snake, etc. She'll also be forced to confront her former best friend, who dropped her to hang out with more popular girls, and to spend time in a house shunned by most of the townspeople on account of a grisly murder that took place there.

Sumire is a simple game that mostly involves walking to different places, speaking to various individuals and delivering items from one to another. The game is punctuated with a few minigames: a fantasy card game, a board game and another one which I won't go into detail about since it turns around one of the major plot points of the story — it involves Sumire being given the chance to heal or poison the hearts of her rivals. These basic gameplay mechanics are enlivened by a soft-colored, storybook aesthetic whose standout feature is the curvature of the ground that Sumire walks on, giving the impression that she is traversing a sphere where all points lead back to each other.

The idea of eternal return winds through the story. On different occasions Sumire is reminded of patterns of life that snare people, young and old, and prevent them from being able to communicate with each other. She comes to realize that everyone, including herself and her fondly remembered grandmother, has a shadow side that causes problems for those nearest to them. Themes of broken communication, missed opportunities and unrealized wishes are planted throughout her "special day."

Parents with children on the cusp of adolescence may wish to consider Sumire. Yes, it's fairly sentimental insofar as it dwells on how feelings color the world, but it's not insensible to the gaps that feelings alone can't fill.

Platforms: PC, Nintendo Switch
Online: gametomo.co.jp/sumire

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Istanbul: History striving into the future

Until European travel becomes fully open to Americans, here's a reminder of the fun that awaits us in Europe.

When I was in my 20s, I ended eight European trips in a row in Turkey. I didn't plan it that way — but it became the natural finale, the subconscious cherry on top of each year's travel adventures. Realizing I hadn't set foot in Istanbul for nearly a decade, I decided to return to the city where East meets West.

The moment I step off the plane, I remember how much I enjoy this country. marveling at the efficiency of Istanbul's Atatürk Airport, I pop onto the street and into a yellow *taksi*. Seeing the welcoming grin of the unshaven driver, who greets me with "Merhaba," I blurt out, "Çok güzel!" I'm surprised I remember the phrase. It just comes out of me — like a baby shouts for joy. I am back in Turkey, and it is "very beautiful" indeed.

As the *taksi* turns off the highway and into the tangled lanes of the tourist zone — just below the Blue Mosque — all the tourist-friendly businesses line up, providing a backdrop for their cho-

rus line of barkers shouting, "Yes, Mister!"

I pay my *taksi* driver and step out into the Sultanahmet neighborhood, stopping for a cup of tea to get my bearings. Istanbul, now



Rick Steves

with a population of more than 15 million, is thriving. The city is poignantly littered with both remnants of grand empires and living, breathing reminders of the harsh reality of

life in the developing world.

And yet, this ancient city is striding into the future. Everyone is buzzing about the new tunnel under the Bosphorus, which gives a million commuters in the Asian suburbs of Istanbul an easy train link to their places of work in Europe. This tunnel is emblematic of modern Turkey's commitment to connecting East and West, just as Istanbul bridges Asia and Europe.

Walking down to the Golden Horn inlet and Istanbul's churning waterfront, I cross the new Galata Bridge, which makes me wistful for the old bridge — now dismantled — which was crusty with life's struggles. I think of



Rick Steves

Istanbul, with the new Galata Bridge spanning the Golden Horn of the Bosphorus.

how societies morph with the push and pull of the times. While the beloved old bridge is gone, the new one has been engulfed in the same vibrant street life — boys casting their lines, old men sucking on water pipes, and steaming sesame-seed bread rings fogging up their glass-windowed carts. It shows how stubborn cultural inertia can be.

On the sloppy harborfront, the venerable "fish and bread boats"

are still rocking in the busy harbor. They used to be 20-foot-long open dinghies with open fires for grilling fish ... fish that's literally fresh off the boat. For a few coins, the fishermen would bury a big white fillet in a hunk of fluffy bread, wrap it in newsprint and send me on my way. In recent years, the fish and bread boats were shut down because they had no license. After a popular uproar, they've returned —

a bit more hygienic, no longer using newspaper for wrapping, but still slamming out fresh fish.

Turkish society is confronting powerful forces of change and progress while also wanting to stay the same. And, as a traveler, it's great to witness this evolution firsthand.

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

Take a scenic, cooling hike through a gorgeous gorge

With the sun glaring down on exposed rock surfaces, a summertime hike to a mountaintop can easily turn into a brutally hot proposition. Keeping one's cool is much easier when selecting a trail running through a canyon or gorge. Throw in a waterfall or two, and the pause will really refresh! Here are some beautiful hikes through terrain that helps beat the heat.

Crete: The Samaria Gorge, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in the southwest corner of the Greek island's White Mountains, is wildly popular with hikers, who highly rate this 10-mile, one-way hike for its ever-changing terrain, colorful wildflowers, chances to swim and availability of drinking water. They're also impressed with the final destination: a coastal village that can't be reached by any road. Upon completion of the downhill hike, walkers can enjoy time on the beach before boarding a ferry. As taking public transportation to the starting point near the village of Omalos is a complicated proposition, many elect to experience the hike as part of a guided tour. The hike can be completed from May to October. Entry to the gorge costs 5 euros. Online: tinyurl.com/wmmadxc

France: The Verdon Gorge in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region of southeastern France has a unique defining feature: mineral-rich waters in a stunning shade of green. The 15-mile canyon between the towns of Castellane and Moustiers-Sainte-Marie features limestone walls rising some 2,300 feet above the riverbed. Most hikers elect to pass along the Blanc-Martel trail, accessible from the village of Rougon. Hiking season runs from April to mid-November. Rock climbing and kayaking are alternative ways in which to absorb the area's stunning surroundings. Online: tinyurl.com/nm4bhx4v

Germany: The Breitachklamm in Oberstdorf counts among one of the most popular attractions in southern



iStock

The Samaria Gorge in Crete is a 10-mile downhill trip.

Germany's Allgäu region. The deepest rock canyon in Central Europe beguiles visitors with its rumbling waters and interplay of dark and light, warm and cool. Easily accessible, secured paths make the experience suitable for almost all ability levels. Visits to the gorge are also possible during the winter months, when massive icicles and frozen waterfalls create a fairy-tale ambiance. The walk is generally accessible from either of its ends, which are in Tiefenbach and Kleinwalsertal, but in keeping with present coronavirus control measures, the walk must be started in Tiefenbach, and online ticket booking in advance is essential. Adult tickets go for 6.50 euros. Online: breitachklamm.com

The Partnachklamm in Garmisch-Partenkirchen offers sensory overload in the form of sheer rock faces, dark tunnels and the sound of water rushing by at a furious pace. The trail is presently walkable only in one direction, and upon approaching its southern exit, one must hike back by way of the Vordergraseck, a fairly challenging climb that passes by the Partnachalm. During the winter

months, guided tours by torchlight are offered. The gorge's entrance can also be reached by means of a horse-drawn wagon. Adult entry costs 6 euros. Online: tinyurl.com/rpsfr7av

The Wutachschlucht is a shady 20-mile stretch of narrow valley cutting through the Black Forest. A narrow, muddy and fairly challenging trail zigzags alongside steep cliffs as it mirrors the route of the Wutach River. Three gorges, each with their own unique geographical features, are found along the route. Walkers here are well catered to, with a convenient "Wanderbus" running on weekends from April through October. The shuttle bus service links up the western trail entrance at Schattenmühle near Löffingen with the easterly trailhead by the Wutachmühle near Döggingen. Online: wutachschlucht.de

Spain: The famous El Caminito del Rey footpath is only about 15 miles north of Malaga city, but another world entirely. This cliffside path running high above the waters of the Guadalhorce River is not recommended for those who suffer from vertigo. The original path built in 1905 had fallen into such disrepair that it was closed to the public in the 1980s, but as of 2015, walkers can enjoy this scary but safe trail through the El Chorro Gorge. The mandatory ticket, purchasable online in advance for 10 euros, helps authorities to control walker numbers. Online: tinyurl.com/2fvjrmj

Switzerland: The Aareschlucht is found in the Berner Oberland, roughly in the middle of the country, between the towns of Meiringen and Innertkirchen. The country's most visited gorge is some 600 feet deep and 40 inches wide at its narrowest point. An easy, milelong trail runs alongside the opaque waters of the Aare River. The attraction is open from April through October, and costs 10 Swiss Francs to enter. On Friday and Saturday evenings in July and August, visitors can experience mystical illuminations, an Alpine buffet and folk music in the Aareschlucht restaurant. Online: aareschlucht.ch/en



Karen Bradbury

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Nothing to see here

As tourists return to Europe, some destinations are seeking ways to discourage inclusion on itineraries

By RICK NOACK
The Washington Post

In one of Europe's most picturesque national parks, officials have embraced a surprising goal: They want to make the site appear less stunning. Standing next to wind-bent pine trees reflected in the turquoise water of the Mediterranean on a recent day, Calanques National Park ranger Alain Vincent did his best to talk the place down. There are too many people and no trash cans, he said, indicating the beach packed with swimmers and sunbathers taking selfies with their dogs.

Every beautiful photo of this bay, Vincent said disapprovingly, is one too many.

As tourism professionals around the world eagerly await the return of visitors, Calanques, in southern France, has a different message: Please, most of you, stay away.

Except during lockdowns, the coronavirus pandemic did not stop people from coming here; in fact, restrictions on foreign travel prompted a surge of domestic arrivals. The park's caretakers say the burgeoning crowds, on the beaches and in the water, threaten the site's sensitive biological equilibrium.

In response, they have forged ahead with an initiative that many other European destinations considered before the pandemic but few acted on: a "de-marketing" campaign aimed at reducing the number of visitors the park attracts.

To that end, officials have begun asking Instagram influencers to take down photos of Calanques' picturesque bays. The park's website advises that the water is often cold and the beaches are "difficult to access, cramped and invaded by crowds." Upon arrival, visitors may soon face a ticketing system.

The changes will likely please locals and some of the rangers, who have long wanted to see nature lovers rather than swimmers and yachtsmen, more people who are mindful of biodiversity and fewer binge drinkers, more who are interested in the growth patterns of pine trees and fewer who want to jump off tree branches into the sea.

"It is, in some ways, a pioneering effort," said Jürgen Schmude, a researcher at the University of Munich. "Other destinations have to get there, too."

As the world's top international tourism destination, France has in recent months prioritized such moves to balance a recovery of the industry with strides toward greater sustainability. In parts of southern France, for example, a popular GPS navigation software has been programmed to suggest alternatives to overcrowded top destinations.

"The crisis has certainly accelerated the thought process," France's junior minister in charge of tourism, Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, said in an interview. The pandemic has caused "a lot of distress," he said. "But this is also a moment of reinvention — we must not miss out on it."

Experts worry, however, that despite the changes underway in southern France and other places, some of the European destinations most affected by overtourism are lagging behind. They say that barring a major resurgence of the coronavirus, overcrowding could again become a problem on the continent as early as this summer, as Europeans embark on annual vacations and vaccinated Americans are welcomed.

"Many people can't wait to get on a plane again," said



PHOTOS BY SANDRA MEHL/The Washington Post

People rest on a beach June 12 in the National Park of Calanques, France. As tourists return to Europe, the popular destination is trying to market itself in such a way as to make it look less appealing to try to limit the number of visitors.

Jeroen Klijs, a professor at Breda University of Applied Sciences researching the social impacts of tourism. "It's almost like revenge tourism — people want to get their holidays back."

Jan van der Borg, a tourism management and applied economics researcher affiliated with multiple institutions, said that major tourist draws such as Venice and Prague have largely failed to recognize the pandemic as an opportunity for more sustainable models. Cruise ships have returned to Venice, Prague's notorious bar crawls are back, and budget airlines have resumed touting deals.

"I'm quite disappointed," van der Borg said.

Still, while many hotel and restaurant owners would be pleased to see a surge in arrivals, tourists may meet more local resistance than in the past.

As Venice's canals emptied of traffic, encouraging dolphins to return, and the streets of Amsterdam were reclaimed by locals last year, many wondered what it would take for it to stay that way.

"Suddenly, residents meet again on the street, drink a cup of coffee together on the sidewalk," Amsterdam residents wrote in a petition last summer for a ban on holiday rentals and other measures. "It's actually bizarre that these normal neighborhood scenes feel strange."

In Venice last week, authorities launched a competition for ideas on how to keep cruise ships and other large vessels away from the historical city center, after years of complaints that the ships are damaging the foundations of buildings. UNESCO recently said Venice may be put on its list of endangered world heritage sites unless action is taken.

In Calanques, Vincent, the ranger, can spot the impact of overtourism from miles away. From a hilltop overlooking the national park, he pointed to a bay below that was once encircled by dense stands of pines.

"The pine trees gradually disappear. There are almost none left," he said, blaming erosion caused by visitors.

"The destruction of the natural habitats can be irreversible," cautioned Zacharie Bruyas, who is responsible for the park's communications.

Calanques has long attracted visitors, though historically on a more manageable scale. But as the nearby city of Marseille became increasingly popular in recent years, the park saw visitor numbers rise, too. Widely shared posts on social media drew more.

Laurent Lhardit, Marseille's deputy mayor for the economy, described the influx of tourists last year as close to an "explosion," overwhelming the city and the adjacent national park.

Officials hope that better crowd control will also benefit



A beach in the National Park of Calanques on June 12 is crowded with people soaking up the sun. Park rangers say tourists are to blame for the erosion of soil and the loss of pine trees in the park.

visitors and allow them to have a better experience. Some may discover new areas, such as the hilltop offering a panoramic — and peaceful — view of the white rocks, steep cliffs and green trees below.

The beach was "beautiful," said Yasmine Bounguab, 24, while leaning against a rock with a friend. But the crowds were too much for them.

"We had to go somewhere else," she said.

For Schmude, the University of Munich researcher, the most promising trend in efforts to combat overtourism may be a change in consumer behavior. "A part of the population will travel more consciously," he said, predicting fewer plane journeys and higher ticket prices as a result.

Klijs, the Dutch researcher, agreed that after an initial period of what he called revenge tourism, questions raised during the pandemic could prompt a rethink. But he warned that leaving the debate up to consumers and the tourism industry will not be sufficient.

Government officials should embrace this moment to "get people to reconsider," he said.

Calanques National Park may serve as an example that change is possible — but it won't happen overnight. As Vincent and his colleagues move around the park by speedboat or car, they encounter rule violators wherever they look, from parking offenders to fishermen threatening them with violence.

"It takes time," he said. "What's needed is a change of mind-set."

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING



PHOTOS BY DAVID EDGE/Stars and Stripes

The Plato La Habana appetizer platter at Havana Restaurant in Wiesbaden includes shrimp, calamari, chicken skewers, potato wedges, mozzarella sticks and more. Some items didn't shout Latin America, but everything was good.

A mixed experience

Appetizers, drinks make up for a disappointing dinner at Wiesbaden's Latin American-inspired Havana Restaurant

BY DAVID EDGE
Stars and Stripes

The various cuisines of Latin America hold a very special place in my heart.

Cuban, Puerto Rican and Mexican food all have their differences, even within their own countries. You'll find food that is earthy, spicy and fruity — sometimes all at once — and when done right, it's some of the best food there is.

Is that possible in Germany? I plan to find out. A good mole, mofongo or arroz con pollo is as comforting as a hug from my grandmother. So I was very excited to try Havana Restaurant and Cocktail Bar.

The restaurant is on the bottom floor of an apartment building and located across the street from the Aukammthal park in Wiesbaden.

The restaurant layout is L-shaped, with most of the seating toward the back of the restaurant, and the bar at the front. The interior was a little dark, but the seating at the front had huge bay windows.

The menu has more than 20 appetizers and 40 main courses, and the drinks come from all over Latin America.

To start, we ordered the Plato la Habana for two. The dish came with shrimp, calamari, chicken skewers, potato wedges, fried mozzarella sticks, stuffed olives, pepperoncini, feta cheese, guacamole and sour



Havana Restaurant's arroz con pollo, left, and a rolla a la abuela, a fried burrito. The Wiesbaden restaurant serves food inspired by multiple Latin American countries.

cream. Some of those things don't exactly shout Cuba. But there was enough food on that plate to be a main course for two, and it was all good.

The main course is when things started to go sideways. My friend ordered the rolla a la abuela, basically a fried burrito with ground beef, sweet corn, onions, potatoes, kidney beans, tomatoes, chili sauce and a Cuban cream sauce. The ground beef tasted like it had no seasoning on it,

Havana Restaurant and Cocktail Bar

Address: Sonnenberger Strasse 32 65193 Wiesbaden

Hours: Monday to Thursday, 5 p.m. to 12:15 a.m.; Friday and Saturday, 5 p.m. to 1:15 a.m.; closed on Sundays; delivery from 4:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Times may change with pandemic restrictions.

Prices: About 10 to 20 euros for most meals.

Menu: German and English.

Information: Phone: 0611-599-0266; Online: havana-restaurant.de

David Edge

while the cream sauce was a little weird and off-putting.

The arroz con pollo came with rice, chicken fillets, leeks, bell peppers, broccoli, kidney beans, bean sprouts, sour cream and chili sauce. It confused me when I saw it, because it looked nothing like any arroz con pollo that I have ever had.

It smelled great, though. If they would have called it a Mexican stir fry, I would have been okay with it. It was tasty for the most part, but I just couldn't get past the broccoli and bean sprouts.

Havana's prices are decent and the English-speaking wait staff was friendly. With that in mind, I'd come back for drinks and appetizers, but not for dinner.

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Herbaceous sauce redefines pesto

BY CHRISTOPHER KIMBALL
Associated Press

All pestos are not created equal. For many Americans, the term brings to mind some version of pesto Genovese, with its copious basil, cheese and pine nuts traditionally mashed together with a mortar and pestle.

But the word derives merely from the Italian for "to pound or crush," which opens up possibilities for numerous flavor combinations.

We were inspired by one version of pesto we saw in "Autentico" by Rolando Beramendi. This Tuscan cook combines bitter herbs and greens with garlic and marinated artichoke hearts into a vegan sauce that pairs beautifully with chunky pasta shapes such as fusilli.

For this recipe from Milk Street's book "COOK-ish," which limits recipes to just six ingredients without sacrificing flavor, we rely on arugula for a backdrop of pepperiness, tempered by grassy parsley. We preferred neutral oil blended into the sauce because its flavor doesn't compete with the other ingredients, but we drizzle on extra-virgin olive oil just before serving. Either canned or marinated artichoke hearts work well.

Be careful to start pulsing the ingredients slowly in the food processor or blender. Otherwise you'll overwork the herbs and the heat will diminish their flavor.

Fusilli with fresh herbs and artichokes

Ingredients

3 cups lightly packed baby arugula or baby watercress

1/2 cups lightly packed fresh flat-leaf parsley

4 scallions, roughly chopped

2 tablespoons fresh marjoram or fresh oregano

2 marinated artichoke hearts, quartered, plus chopped marinated artichoke hearts to serve

6 tablespoons neutral oil

Kosher salt and ground black pepper

1 pound fusilli or cavatappi or gemelli pasta

Extra-virgin olive oil, to serve

Directions

In a blender or food processor, combine the arugula, parsley, scallions, marjoram, artichokes, neutral oil, 1/4 cup water, 1 teaspoon salt and 3/4 teaspoon pepper. Puree until smooth; transfer to a large bowl. Cook the pasta in a large pot of boiling salted water until al dente. Reserve 1/2 cup cooking water, then drain. Add the pasta and 1/4 cup cooking water to the pesto; toss, adding more cooking water to thin. Season with salt and pepper. Serve topped with chopped artichokes and drizzled with olive oil.

Optional garnishes: toasted sliced almonds or shaved pecorino Romano cheese or lemon wedges or toasted breadcrumbs.

Serves 4 to 6.



MILK STREET/AP

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Adventure on a Jurassic scale

ROARR! Dinosaur Adventure near RAF Lakenheath offers tons of family-friendly fun

By **KYLE ALVAREZ**
Stars and Stripes

After more than a year of distance from others, it was nice to hear kids laughing on a recent trip to the ROARR! Dinosaur Adventure theme park, about an hour's drive northeast of RAF Lakenheath.

I could also see in my 3-year-old's eyes a sense of wonder, as this was the first time she had seen so many children playing in one place. There was a skip in her step as she saw kids whizzing by in excitement to climb the many slides, swings and rope bridges in the Outdoor Adventure Play area.

For me, it was the first time I'd seen this sense of normalcy in Britain since arriving in the midst of the pandemic.

Our first stop was The Explorers, a steampunk-themed restaurant based on the Jules Verne adventure story "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea," with copper pipes and pulleys decorating its walls. It offers the usual park foods: sandwiches, burgers, fish and chips and cold sodas.

It was good, quality food without the price gouging I normally expect from theme park dining. Pro tip: arrive early for the restaurant because the line forms quickly. The park features several other eateries, but we noticed that many families brought picnic lunches.

The weather was too chilly for the Splash Zone water park, and the fact that my daughter is a toddler and my wife is seven months pregnant ruled out any chance we'd get to enjoy the more adventuresome attractions, such as Predator! High Ropes. The ropes course is billed on the park's website as East Anglia's largest and the first in the world with parallel "sky rail" zip lines.

With adrenaline-seeking out, my daughter got a thrill from our visit to the Secret Animal Garden, where she saw chickens, some adorable guinea pigs, a ridiculously large turkey, bunnies, wallabies, large pigs, donkeys and ducks. She was giddy at the sight of each animal and called out the names of the ones she knew.

We then strolled through two of the main hiking trails that showcase different prehistoric eras, the aptly named Neanderthal Walk and the meandering Dinosaur Trail. They both featured large statues of the many ancient beasts. I learned a thing or 10 from the signs next to the towering creatures, since I haven't brushed up on dinosaur knowledge since middle school.



PHOTOS BY KYLE ALVAREZ/Stars and Stripes

A dilophosaurus statue is on display at ROARR! Dinosaur Adventure theme park in Lenwade, England.



ROARR! Dinosaur Adventure theme park, located about an hour from RAF Lakenheath, allows visitors to bring their own food and eat in the designated picnic areas. The park also has a variety of restaurants.

In all, we walked a total of about 2 miles and took in the entire park. We also enjoyed the indoor play areas.

My daughter's favorite parts were the X-Tinction Fossil Dig — essentially a large sandbox where kids can unearth simulated fossils — and the Jurassic Putt mini-golf.

As with most theme parks, visitors spend a lot of time on their feet. Comfortable shoes, some weather preparation and a little planning — especially if you have young children — should make this a fun day outing for families.

alvarez.kyle@stripes.com
Twitter: @Kal2931

On the QT

Address: Wenston Park, Lenwade, NR9 5JW

Hours: Daily 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Costs: 16.95 pounds for a standard ticket. Children under 90 cm free, registered disabled person or caregiver 8.48 pounds.

Food: Several restaurants, open from 10 a.m.-5 p.m., with two exceptions. The Explorers is open weekends and holidays 11 a.m.-2 p.m., and Nautilus Fish and Chips is open weekdays from 12 p.m.-3 p.m. and weekends from 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Information: Online: roarrdinosauradventure.co.uk; Phone: +44 01603 876310.

Kyle Alvarez



Penelope Alvarez uses a brush to move sand in an attempt to find more dinosaur bones in the X-Tinction Fossil Dig attraction. The park offers a variety of interactive educational attractions for children.

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Coffee with local flavor

Starbucks pays homage to each of Japan's prefectures with 47 distinct Frappuccinos using local ingredients

BY ERICA EARL
Stars and Stripes

To celebrate its 25th anniversary in Japan, coffee giant Starbucks has released 47 new "jimoto," or local, Frappuccino flavors that pay homage to every one of the country's prefectures.

Each of these sweet, coffee-based blended drinks will be available only in the prefecture they represent, so you'll have to travel around the country to try all 47. They cost 669 yen, or about \$6, for a 12-ounce portion, and will be available until Aug. 3.

The beverages feature ingredients special to their prefectures. For example, Starbucks shops in Hokkaido are offering the Creamy Corn Frappuccino.

People in the nation's capital, including those stationed at Yokota Air Base in the prefecture's western suburbs, can try the Tokyo Coffee Jelly and Caramel Frappuccino. Jelly or tapioca pearls are popular additions to coffees and teas in Japan and other Asian countries.

The coffee jelly is the center of this drink, with nearly every sip containing some. I think it's an enjoyable sensation, like eating and drinking a treat simultaneously, but it can be a bit of an acquired taste to people who are not already a fan of jelly drinks or boba teas.

The flavor for nearby Kanagawa prefecture — home to several U.S. military bases — is the photogenic Kanagawa Summer Blue Cream Frappuccino. Its bright blue colors represent the Pacific Ocean and the region's many trading ports.

Stars and Stripes reporter Daniel Betancourt, who works out of Yokosuka Naval Base, said it takes some vigorous mixing to



Starbucks' Jimoto Frappuccinos

Locations: Unique flavors can be found at Starbucks locations in all 47 of Japan's prefectures.

Hours: Most shops are open daily from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Prices: About \$6 for a 12-ounce serving

Dress: Casual

Information: Online: www.starbucks.co.jp/cafe/jimoto_frappuccino

Erica Earl

blend the citrus drizzle into this vanilla-flavored beverage, but the taste is rewarding once everything is combined. It also contains a butterfly pea tea syrup that adds to the citrus flavor.

Yamaguchi prefecture, home to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, is offering the Sesame Matcha Frappuccino, and uses black sesame and green tea to somehow represent the way the prefecture connects Honshu and Kyushu islands.

The drink for nearby Hiroshima prefecture, dubbed the Setouchi Lemon and Citrus Frappuccino, has a soft pink color that promotes peace and love, according to the Starbucks Japan website, which suggests that people sip on it while visiting the Atomic Bomb Dome or the Hiroshima Peace Memorial.

Hiroshima is famous for lemons, and other ingredients include passion fruit tea and sweet whipped honey. Reporter Jonathan Snyder, based at MCAS Iwakuni, said the drink is a re-



JONATHAN SNYDER/Stars and Stripes

To celebrate its 25th anniversary in Japan, coffee giant Starbucks has released 47 new Frappuccino flavors that pay homage to every one of the country's prefectures.



JONATHAN SNYDER/Stars and Stripes

The Setouchi Lemon and Citrus Frappuccino has a soft pink color that promotes peace and love.

freshing choice for the summer heat that boasts a pleasant balance of sweet and tangy flavors.

Shops in Nagasaki prefecture, home to Sasebo Naval Base, are offering the Castella Coffee and Cream Frappuccino. Castella is a popular cake introduced by Portuguese traders during the Edo period. This drink also uses white chocolate, milk and honey.

People in Aomori prefecture, home to Misawa Air Base, can try the Buzzing Apple Strawberry



MATTHEW M. BURKE/Stars and Stripes

The Okinawa Chinsuko Vanilla Caramel Frappuccino includes a traditional shortbread-like cookie, called a chinsuko, that's popular on the southern island.

Frappuccino, which pays homage to the prefecture being the country's No. 1 apple producer.

The Okinawa Chinsuko Vanilla Caramel Frappuccino includes a traditional shortbread-like cookie, called a chinsuko, that's popular in the southern island prefecture.

This sweet and salty treat uses a vanilla base and caramel sauce, with chinsuko blended into the beverage. It's topped with whipped cream and crumbled



DANIEL BETANCOURT/Stars and Stripes

The Kanagawa Summer Blue Cream Frappuccino from Starbucks in Japan represents the Pacific Ocean and the region's many trading ports.

chinsuko. Reporter Matthew M. Burke, based out of Camp Foster, said it has a nice cookie-dough taste and is very filling.

Japan's first Starbucks opened in Tokyo's fashionable Ginza district in 1996. Since then, it has expanded to more than 1,000 locations across the country, including a reserve roastery in Tokyo and an Edo-style storefront in the historic city of Kawagoe.

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

The Instagram vs. reality of #vanlife

One woman discovers the truth about traveling through Maui in a camper van

BY NATALIE B. COMPTON
The Washington Post

You may have heard that the country is facing a rental car shortage. It's driving travelers into desperation, with some people paying exorbitant rates for standard reservations or booking U-Hauls as a last resort.

It drove me to sleep in a van.

I'll back up. A month out from a trip to Maui, I was combing through the dregs of Airbnb trying to find locally owned accommodations in my budget. My options weren't great. With tourism surging in Hawaii, rental car prices and hotels rates were exorbitant. In between listings for camping equipment and dark studios near the airport, I spotted a big, white Chevrolet Astro from the 1990s, outfitted with a bed and some drawers.

For \$149 a night, plus an insurance day rate of \$16, I could have a bed to sleep in and a car to drive, all in one. Convinced this was a great way to explore #vanlife with no real research, I booked the Astro for the last two nights of my trip.

The expectation was to have an Instagram-worthy, remote-work experience meandering around Maui in my van — parking by the ocean for a swim, exploring off-the-beaten-path parts of the island. My reality was not that.

Expectation: #VanLife will be rejuvenating.

Reality: #VanLife is only good with air conditioning.

After nearly a week of staying in a brick-and-mortar accommodation, I was full of excitement and hope on my way to pick up my van. I pictured myself driving around Maui, all of my belongings in tow, working efficiently from my home/ride with the wind in my hair.

I would have wind in my hair, all right. In the first moments in the van, I discovered it did not have air conditioning. (Not to mention the van died right away, but we will get to this later). The van was obviously built to have such a feature; I could see the knobs and vents in place, but they didn't work.

"Imagine watching the sunrise from the comfort of a queen-size memory foam bed, enveloped by sounds of the ocean and cooled by a warm Maui breeze," I remember the Airbnb listing had described, not realizing that meant no air conditioning.

A surprise to no one who has ever been in a hot car during the summer — let alone a summer in a tropical climate — the breeze was not enough to cool me down.

By day, I felt like a wet dog sweating through my clothes. I would show up to places drenched, having just baked in the scorching sun on my drive over. I used whatever I had on hand to wipe the torrential downpour from my face, i.e. one of my (clean) socks from my luggage.

By night, with the windows and doors sealed for protection from people and bugs, the wet-dog feeling continued. The van came with a few small fans that I held centimeters from my head until I remembered that I was a woman sleeping alone in a van. I worried the hum of the fans would drown out the footsteps of the people who would inevitably come to murder me, so the fans were out. I poured water on one of my shirts and put the wet cloth over my head, which provided enough relief to fall asleep.

Lesson learned: Know exactly what amenities you will have in your van. Does it have air conditioning? Flashlights? Automatic transmission? Find out crucial essentials beforehand.

Expectation: I can improvise a van trip.

Reality: You need to plan van camping in advance.

Before my trip, my Airbnb host told me that it was fine to park along the ocean where I had seen plenty of other campers and van dwellers post up. But the more people I talked to on the island, the more I learned that such camping is not legal — it's just something people get away with regularly.

I had to figure out where to park the van to sleep on the fly.

The first night, I parked on a friend's jungle property, an incredibly lucky last-minute option. As previously mentioned, it turned out to be scarier than expected (and I slept at a haunted house alone last year). I kept peering out the window to see if anyone was coming. There wasn't.

The van was facing tall grass at the edge of the property, and I wondered if I needed to turn it around and face the exit in case I had to spring into action to drive away. My fear was not enough to overcome my exhaustion, and I fell



RYAN SIPHERS/For The Washington Post

Reporter Natalie B. Compton tests out the van life in Maui and learns a few things along the way.

asleep in all of my clothes before I could muster up the energy to get back in the driver's seat.

By the second day, I had done more homework on where I could park to sleep and found a campsite for the night. Camp Olowalu was near, but not on, the ocean, and it had showers, bathrooms, a coffee shop and a gated perimeter, which felt safer than just being out in the woods. I was just happy it was legal.

I parked my Astro and admired all of the surrounding van campers and felt safer having them around. They looked like they were doing it right, with tents on top of their vans and camping chairs and friends to share the experience. They had planned for this and appeared to be having a better time accordingly. Like the night before, I was too tired to reflect much on my day, my shortcomings as a van camper or how hot I would be with just a few windows cracked. I fell into a hard sleep, once again fully clothed.

Lesson learned: Before your trip, make sure you have a legal, safe place to park your van, or at least a game plan in mind.

Expectation: Camping in a van will make life easier.

Reality: Camping in a van will not make life easier.

An hour into my van adventure, I went to start the car — it would not. The battery was dead, and I felt like a failure. I texted the Airbnb owner who happened to be nearby, and he quickly came to rescue me and give the van a jump. He didn't know if he left a light on when he dropped the van off or if I didn't shut a door hard enough or what. Either way, the mechanical hiccup took time out of both of

our days.

The van was functional the rest of the trip, thankfully. But my time in it was not smooth sailing. While the van drove easy and had plenty of space for all of your travel gear, trying to sleep and work in it came with many tiny hassles that added up.

For example, I had to crouch and creep around while inside to get dressed, find my things and get ready for bed. To get my pants on, I had to lay flat on the bed or stand outside (pending no one was around to watch). The van was a cavernous space without a ton of light, so even during the day I struggled to locate my belongings.

Lesson learned: Be prepared to improvise. Traveling in a van — like any kind of travel — is unpredictable. Find out if you have help like roadside assistance to save the day in times of need.

Throughout my days in the van, I tried to appreciate the palm trees, the sound of the ocean waves crashing in the distance and the wild chickens roaming the campground. I did, sometimes, but I mostly focused on trying not to waste more time and energy.

By the time I rolled into the parking lot to drop off the van, I was in worse shape than when I had picked it up. I had slept poorly, and my body was heavy with stress. I didn't feel like I'd gotten a taste of van camping; I felt like I had road-tested a reality where I was locked out of my house for a few days but still needed to work.

The van trip wasn't exactly a success, but it did remind me of an important lesson in travel and in life: Don't believe everything you see on social media. Not all #vanlife posts tell the whole story.

WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

Swamped by save-the-dates

A summer packed with weddings, some postponed from 2020, is taxing guests physically, mentally and financially

By Ashley Fetters

The Washington Post

By the first of July, Matt Tresslar had already been to three bachelor-party weekends and three weddings this summer, and to ask him about it is like interviewing a sweaty, winded NBA player at halftime as he heads for the locker room. He's 29, lives in Louisville and has just a few free weekends to catch his breath before going to seven more weddings between late July and October.

After the last bachelor party, "I texted my friends and I was like, 'After last year, where I was desperate for social events, I said I would never complain about being too social,'" he says. "But I was getting close."

Tresslar hasn't seen the front of his fridge for months. It's papered over in save-the-dates and wedding invitations, as well as change-the dates — a uniquely pandemic-era artifact, born of necessity after nearly a year's worth of weddings were postponed from 2020 to 2021. Three of Tresslar's 10 invites (yes, 10) are to weddings he was supposed to have attended a year ago.

As guests everywhere stare down a summer that's jam-packed with, essentially, two years' worth of weddings, on one hand, they feel grateful: grateful to be traveling again, seeing friends, dancing, drinking with others instead of drinking alone, grateful to be out of the house at all. On the other hand, they also describe a creeping sense of wedding fatigue — they feel physically exhausted, mentally taxed and financially strained.

For Tresslar, it's a summer marathon of trying to stay peppy and personable. During the week, he works as an outside salesman for a building-materials distribution company — a high-energy job in its own right, and on weeks when he's working between weddings, he can't just call in and say he's recovering from having raged too hard.

Plus, "I don't have enough vacation days to take a day off before all of them," Tresslar says. So he's been working on Fridays and driving on Friday nights to places like Indianapolis,

Cincinnati and Bloomington, Ind. (where he and a number of his friends went to college) to arrive in time for wedding festivities on Saturday.

Tresslar describes himself as a "pretty energetic" guy, "and I feel like that's why I get invited to a lot of these weddings," he says.

"I tell my friends, 'I'm like a jack-in-the-box. Everyone just winds me up and they expect me to explode.' But it's getting tough," he says.

With the physical exhaustion of traveling, showing up and sustaining the celebratory gusto comes an array of constant mental reminders: Whose wedding is it this weekend? Who will be there? Which suit should he wear?

"I'm trying to rotate them and make sure, you know, my ... people won't have all seen me in the same one," he says with a laugh.

Cody Clark, a 28-year-old who lives in Chicago, also has 10 weddings on his calendar for 2021, half of which were rescheduled from last year.

For Clark, a management consultant who's been working from home during the pandemic, the seemingly endless cycle of getting his dress clothes laundered before he packs them into a suitcase once again reminds him of being on the road for work.

"It's not fun or ideal," he says, but at least he's used to it.

Clark and his girlfriend, both from Minnesota, sometimes get wistful about the cabin weekends and family visits they're missing out on.

"It kind of feels like your whole summer is spoken for," he said. (Clark spoke to The Post early on a Friday morning, still groggy from a delayed late-night flight. He'd flown home to Minnesota for — what else? — a friend's Friday-evening nuptials.)

For some, of course, the mental burden of frequent wedding attendance comes after the event. Though

the pandemic has slowed in some parts of the country, a wed-

ding could turn into a superspreader event — and Regina Santos, who attended her first of eight 2021 weddings in June, spent the next few days wondering if her headache was from exhaustion or COVID-19.

Santos, a 29-year-old from Philadelphia, has been vaccinated since April, but "I still have the fear of 'OK, if I take off my mask and I don't know who's vaccinated in this group ...'" she says. "The fear is still there, to be honest."

For many, the hardest part has been the expenses.

Santos, the founder of a beauty-tech company, is limiting herself to four new dresses that she'll wear twice each.

Clark, who will travel to San Diego, South Dakota and Wisconsin for weddings this year, says he and his girlfriend "are just racking up credit-card debt to just book all these flights and hotels in advance so we can get the best price." Clark donated several items from his professional wardrobe to charity last year while

he worked from home; after gaining what he calls the "quarantine 15, or 20," he also had to restock his nicer clothes when the invitations began rolling in.

Tresslar, meanwhile, has stopped looking at his credit card statements. He's thankful his job affords him free gas for his car. But that didn't help much when, as best man for a wedding later this summer, he had to foot the bill for an entire bachelor party and wait for the other groomsmen to pay him back.

Rachel Star is 28, and by the end of October she will have attended eight weddings, none of which are near her home in San Francisco. A venture-capital investor and a former consultant, Star is grateful that her years of traveling have resulted in enough airline points to get her to weddings on both coasts and in the Midwest. But as for wardrobe, she says, she'll be relying on clothing-rental services, picking up dresses to wear on Fridays and returning

them the following Monday: "Rent the Runway is the only thing getting me through this summer."

Guests aren't the only ones feeling overwhelmed under the deluge of weddings this year; vendors, too — many of whom had to downsize their businesses during the pandemic — are finding their resources and personnel stretched thin.

Zoe Gallina, creative director of the Tampa, Fla.-based floral design company Botanica International, had to let go of some freelance workers during the pandemic, and lost much of her reliable seasonal help when local college kids went home to their families. Not only are postponed and normally scheduled weddings causing a traffic jam of demand, but newly engaged couples who have waited to plan their weddings are starting to call.

"We're getting such an influx of new inquiries, we've started to have to raise our minimums because we're trying to manage ourselves," Gallina says. Botanica still isn't back to 100% of its pre-2020 capability, "and we have to be more selective, because we don't want to burn ourselves out."

Over the next few months, moderation will be key for the overly scheduled wedding guest: Santos will be refraining from buying new dresses; Star will diligently wear flats to every occasion she can, protecting her feet from long-term distress. Tresslar has adopted a borderline-religious regimen of getting an exercise run in every day to keep his energy levels from flagging.

Still, for the unmarried among them, the 2021 wedding season has imparted its fair share of lessons.

Tresslar, for one, says when he gets married, he'll make sure to pick a location that's convenient for the majority of his guests. Star, meanwhile, may just opt out of the vaunted tradition of a big, blown-out wedding day.

Whenever it happens, she says, "I'm like, 'Wouldn't it be great if we just got some friends together in the backyard and called it a day?'"

"It kind of feels like your whole summer is spoken for."

Cody Clark, 28
Chicago



ILLUSTRATION BY NOGA AMI-RAV
Stars and Stripes; iStock photos

WEEKEND: BOOKS

Writing in plane sight

Novel 'Falling,' written by flight attendant while on duty, provides air travel nightmare fuel just as post-pandemic tourism heats up

By **CHRISTOPHER BORRELLI**
Chicago Tribune

T.J. Newman spent four years in Illinois going about her business in the most benign way imaginable — studying musical theater, surrounded by Central Illinois farmland. And now, thanks to T.J. Newman, and the pandemic, and general anxiety, but mostly T.J. Newman: no thank you, I don't feel like flying. Pop culture offers no shortage of reasons to avoid commercial airlines. Snakes on a plane. Bombs on plane. Leslie Nielsen on a plane. Planes vanish. Planes crash into mountains and the survivors eat one another.

Flying, who needs it, right?

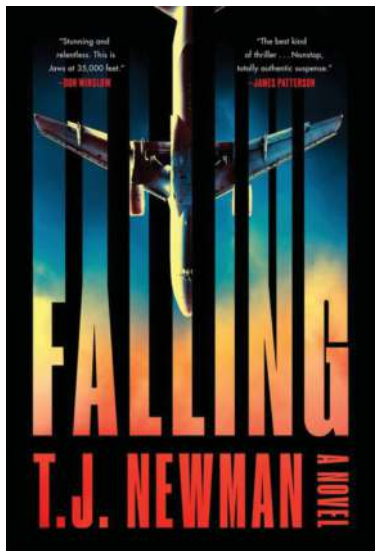
The delirious thing about "Falling," Newman's debut novel, out now, just in time for beach blankets, is how it brushes past those scenarios to come up with an entirely fresh hell. Just when you thought it was safe to go back into an airplane, she writes a novel about a commercial pilot in a completely unwinnable nightmare situation: Soon after taking off on another routine flight, someone kidnaps the pilot's wife and children and (unbeknown to passengers and crew) gives him an option — crash the plane before it arrives in New York, kill everyone on board or we will murder your family.

If that sounds like a thriller waiting to happen, well: Universal already bought the rights and Newman's book agent is Shane Salerno, himself a successful screenwriter ("Armageddon," the 2000 remake of "Shaft") who landed Newman a two-book, seven-figure deal. Even the blurbs sound more cinematic than literary: "This is 'Jaws' at 35,000 feet" (Don Winslow), "Like the films 'Die Hard' and 'Speed' on steroids" (Library Journal).

Now for the scary part:

If "Falling" reads like it was written by someone who knows their way around an airline and the day-to-day life of flight crews, that's because Newman — until the pandemic pushed her into a furlough in March 2020 — was a flight attendant herself for more than a decade, with Virgin Atlantic. She wrote the book while her passengers were sleeping. Then she bought a copy of "The Essential Guide to Getting Your Book Published," and after a lot of rejection, bingo. Million-dollar deals later, she's no longer a flight attendant.

The Chicago Tribune caught up recently with T.J. Newman



(whose initials stand for Torri Jan) from her home in Arizona. The following is a brief version of a longer chat, edited for clarity and length.

Chicago Tribune: You were a theater major?

Newman: Musical theater, at Illinois Wesleyan University. I loved it, it made me happy, because my imagination was going full tilt all the time, and singing and acting had been the way to express it when I was going up. But pursuing that professionally? After graduation, I moved to New York and tried it as a career for a few years, which was nothing but a total failure. A lot of closed doors and no's. I had considered going to Chicago first — after Wesleyan, you either went to Chicago or New York. Most of my friends went into Chicago theater. I chose New York. And when that didn't work out, I moved back home and lived with my parents in Arizona, in my mid-20s. "What do I do with my life?" That kind of thing. Which is so fun. That's when I got a job with a local bookstore in Phoenix named Changing Hands. It really felt like coming home. It felt like I was returning to my own artistic center. I got so much rejection in New York, it hurt. And it was embarrassing, to have friends and family watch you go off and meet only failure.

You had no connections in the book world.

None, no. I had been a reader and a writer, but the dream of being published became a goal only when I started at the store. I would begin and abandon every story that I started. So I left to be a flight attendant. My mom had been a flight attendant, my sister was a flight attendant. I knew the benefits. But that's also when the pieces fell into place. When I started writing "Falling," I told

no one. Even when book deal broke, a lot of reaction was "Congratulations! Wait, you wrote a book?" Nobody knew. I felt like such a failure the first time around in New York, I thought I used up my personal quota of risk.

Was there an incident that led to the plot of the book?

There was a moment. I was working a red-eye, Los Angeles to New York, and I'm standing at the front of the aircraft and looking out at the cabin of passengers, who are all asleep. It's dark, it's cold, it's quiet. I had this thought that their lives, my life, the lives of my crew mates, we were all in the hands of this pilot, but then the flip side: With that much power and responsibility, how vulnerable does that make a pilot? I couldn't shake that. Over the next few days it began to solidify into a scenario. One day when I was working a different trip I just threw out to the captain — "What would you do if your family was kidnapped and you were told if you didn't crash the plane, they would be killed?"

You asked this out of the blue?

Out of the blue. And the look on his face terrified me. I knew he didn't have an answer. That's when I knew I had my first book, that spark. And so, I just got to work.

OK, but what an unnerving thing to hear, from a passenger's standpoint, that this is what the flight attendant is actually thinking about.

I hope it would be reassuring! But I understand. Flight attendants and pilots are trained to be constantly thinking about what can go wrong and what they would do if it did go wrong. That's just good precautionary thinking. We spent most of our time studying previous accidents and incidents to see how it was handled and what went right and what went wrong. What-if scenarios naturally come out of just doing the job. I've had people tell me that (how the characters respond) helped with their fear of flying.

You were writing while flying?

I worked a lot of red-eyes in first class, and I would have the forward galley to myself. So while passengers were asleep, I wrote. I wrote on the back of catering bills with hotel pens. I wrote on napkins and passenger manifests. I would be standing there writing longhand and a fellow attendant would walk over and I would turn over the paper or slip it into a drawer or under



Melissa Young

T.J. Newman's "what ifs" while working as a flight attendant led to her idea for the plot of the novel "Falling."

the coffee pot. Nothing to see here! Again, that was mostly driven by not wanting to put myself out there again. Now that the book is public, I do wonder if the pilots I worked with, if they're like, "Oh, I see; I thought she was really curious about how flying works." I was constantly asking questions to get details right.

The book's villain. Without giving much away, he's harboring a grudge against the United States, though in a twist, his family had been friends with the United States. Which sounds like a pretty sensitive character to write into a 2021 thriller.

I can't give away too much, but these are emphatically not the stereotypical terrorists we have seen. I had that in mind while I was writing. These are not America's enemies. These are friends — friends we betrayed. I wrote the characters and told the story the best way I knew how and so far the book has been published in the UK and Australia, and there have been advance copies all over the United States for months, and the response has been all positive, because I think people understood what I did.

But how do you waterproof a plot like that? Part of the fun of it, in a way, is trying to find the fallacy or the hole in the dastardly scheme. Which is pretty hard.

You go through a lot of revisions. When I started, all I had was the concept. I never plotted it out before I began writing. I started with the scene where the pilot first learns about his predicament. Then I kept writing until I had all the characters and their problems. Which made for a real uphill revision process. It wasn't waterproof for a while. It took like 30 drafts to get there. It's so plot centered, it was a house of cards. You have to make sure everything is shored up tightly. There are times I would write out the entire story beat by beat, then print it off, cut up the beats and move them around my coffee table like a puzzle, until it made sense. Which I did several times. I also had trusted pilot friends who read drafts — I needed the perspectives from the other side of a cabin door.

Any other horrifying commercial flying scenarios I should be worried about?

Well, it was a two-book deal.

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Tyler, the role model?

On sincere and ambitious new album, rapper comes into his own

By MIKAEL WOOD
Los Angeles Times

A little past the halfway mark of Tyler, the Creator's gripping new album, "Call Me If You Get Lost," the Los Angeles rapper's mom puts in a cameo that threatens to steal the show from her son and his other, far more famous guests.

Titled "Momma Talk," the appearance takes the shape of a minutelong monologue in which Tyler's mother, Bonita Smith, recounts the lengths she went to to protect Tyler (whose last name is Okonma) when he was a kid growing up in Hawthorne: "I'd kill a motherf— over this one right here," she says, pride coursing through her words. "My son used to record me beating bitches' ass." She runs down a partial list of the people she "bossed up" on — "teachers, principals, mamas, kids" — then interrupts herself.

"Am I lying?" she asks, to which Tyler responds in his low, gravelly voice: "You have no reason to."

It's a striking endorsement of the cold, hard truth from an artist who made his name with willfully provocative hyperbole.

Now a well-connected member of a Black creative vanguard that also includes the likes of Solange, Donald Glover and Issa Rae, Tyler emerged more than a decade ago as the scowling face of Los Angeles' punk-inspired Odd Future collective — a teenage Eminem stan whose raw, rowdy music showcased a rogues' gallery of unreliable narrators boasting about rape and murder.

On early records like 2011's "Goblin" and "Wolf," from 2013, you knew not to



Tyler, the Creator

Call Me If You Get Lost (Columbia)

take Tyler's words literally, even if you understood that they carried real pain.

In contrast, here he is at age 30 on "Call Me If You Get Lost" telling sincere, relatively plainspoken stories about the alienating effects of celebrity and about the pressure to form coherent political thoughts and, most vividly, about a furtive romantic relationship with the lover of a close friend.

What's more, after years of feinting, he's finally taking a clear moral stance: "I'm a bad person — like, I'm in the wrong," he admits in "Wilshire," the album's stirring emotional centerpiece, in which he spends eight minutes sifting through the facts and the self-delusions of that complicated affair.

Yet "Call Me If You Get Lost" — Tyler's seventh LP and the follow-up to 2019's Grammy-winning "Igor" — isn't the somber, stripped-back confessional you might expect; it's not a millennial's version of Jay-Z's "4:44," where hip-hop's alpha braggart radically toned down his sound to ruminate on his reasons for cheating on his wife, Beyonce.

Hosted, as Tyler puts it, by the ever-spirited DJ Drama, "Call Me If You Get Lost" instead aspires to one of rap's most grandly theatrical traditions:

the quasi-legal gray-market mixtape — specifically Drama's beloved "Gangsta Grillz" series, which in the mid-2000s yielded boisterous, freewheeling documents by Lil Wayne, Jeezy, Pharrell and others.

Drama threads his signature exhortations throughout the album, alternately hyping Tyler up ("On this here stage tonight is something legendary," he bellows to open "Corso") and providing comic-absurdist detail ("A young lady just fed me French vanilla ice cream," he notes in "Hot Wind Blows,"

SEE ROLE MODEL ON PAGE 33

Tyler, the Creator arrives at the BET Awards on June 27 at the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles.

JORDAN STRAUSS, INVISION/AP

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Hiss Golden Messenger

Quietly Blowing It (Merge)

M.C. Taylor sounds gorgeously despondent at the outset of his band's



new album, a follow-up to his brilliant 2019 record, "Terms of Surrender." But before he's done he has charted his way, musically and lyrically, to a better place.

The result is "Quietly Blowing It," a poignant, often soaring set of anthems for our times.

Hiss Golden Messenger's previous album set a high standard, and the pandemic hit while it was still on a victory lap. So Taylor, the band's lead singer and mastermind, holed up in his house in Durham, N.C., and wrote songs. Really good songs. By the time he brought them to the band, he had the makings of a stunning, richly-textured follow-up about navigating through dark times.

None of it comes off as wallowing because the music is simply gorgeous. The best songs blend piano and guitar-based melody behind Taylor's smoothly soulful singing. Songs like "Hardlytown" and "If It Comes in the Morning" are majestic in different ways, with a sound that builds on Taylor's earlier work but tacks further into rhythm and blues in ways that separate it from the Americana pack.

Lyrical, Taylor blends the personal and the political in an understated way. The only misstep, a not-especially-original song called "Mighty Dollar," can be excused as something Taylor felt he had to include.

By the time he gets to the closer, "Sanctuary," Taylor has figured something out.

"Feeling bad, feeling blue, can't get out of my own mind," he sings as the song opens in a deeply groovy piano-and-bass pop. "But I know how to sing about it."

The song feels celebratory, but not unrealistic. There's acknowledgment that this has been hard. But the safe place for Taylor, and for listeners with him on the journey, has always been the music.

— Scott Stroud
Associated Press

Modest Mouse

The Golden Casket (Epic)

Uh-oh. It's not a good sign when any band starts referencing death right from the jump.

Modest Mouse have placed an open coffin on the cover of its latest album and have called it "The Golden Casket."

Relax, fans. Inside the 12-track album is a band true to its quirky alt-rock soul and having kooky fun. It might be commercial enough to attract new listeners and yet still embrace enough of the bizarre to satisfy longtime admirers. If this is a eulogy, it's a terrific one.

In fact, a resigned tranquility runs through the band's first album since 2015. In the song "Wooden Soldiers," frontman Isaac Brock sings "just being here now is enough for me" and in "We're Lucky," he's happy to be between the stars and the seas: "It takes a lifetime to ever figure out / That there ain't no lifetime that is ever figured out."

Modest Mouse wouldn't be Modest Mouse without some weirdness, and there's plenty of that.

"Transmitting Receiving" is mostly a list of things — "mustard seeds, turtles, weeds" — that goes into the trippy space of The Flaming Lips. A cosmic understanding also resides in the terrific, funky "We Are Between," which positions mankind "somewhere between dust and the stars."

The album was produced with Dave Sardy and Jacknife Lee and the range of instruments is astonishing, from shakers and marimbas to "paper bags filled with wood." On one track, Brock is credited with "soft drink percussion," "space-phone" and "vibraslap" — which is very Modest Mouse.

Whatever he's playing, it's good to have Brock's droll, word-stretching, warping vocal delivery back, together with Modest Mouse's fondness for odd and explicit song titles and a top-notch band always making interesting music.

— Mark Kennedy
Associated Press

**Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real**

A Few Stars Apart (Fantasy)

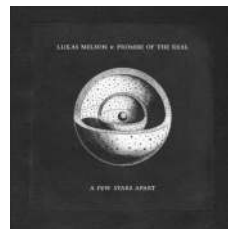
"Despite all the darkness, we'll be all right," Lukas

Nelson sings on the first track of his new album. "We'll Be Alright" sets the tone for an album that sounds deeply intimate but also resonates broadly as a reaction to the pandemic's isolation and upheaval.

Working for the first time with producer Dave Cobb, Nelson and the four members of Promise of the Real lean more toward country than in the past. The vibe is also more laid back, though the band shows it can still kick up a ruckus.

That approach highlights more than ever how much Lukas sounds like his father, Willie, from the dry-as-the-Texas-plains tone and delivery to the hint of vibrato. But "A Few Stars Apart" also reaffirms how much he has forged a substantial identity of his own.

— Nick Cristiano
The Philadelphia Inquirer

**Bobby Gillespie & Jehnny Beth**

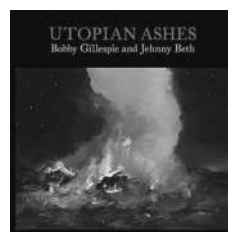
Utopian Ashes (Third Man)

Scotland's Bobby Gillespie has been a crucial figure in the U.K. post-punk

story, mostly at the helm of Primal Scream. France's Jehnny Beth fronted Savages, the intense second-generation (or third or fourth?) post-punk band that released excellent albums in 2013 and 2016.

"Utopian Ashes" sounds like Jehnny Beth went to a Primal Scream session and got the guys to up their game. If they can maintain this quality standard, Jehnny Beth and Bobby Gillespie could join the rarefied country-rock duet pantheon of Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazlewood, and Emmylou Harris and Gram Parsons.

— Steve Klinge
The Philadelphia Inquirer



SOUND ADVICE

The best way to stream music through a stereo

Q: Apple and Amazon now offer lossless streaming, and Spotify will supposedly offer a similar service later this year. What is the best way to play high-resolution streaming music using a traditional stereo system consisting of a receiver and floorstanding speakers? For example, I have seen the "BlueSound Node" highlighted in the media, and I believe Cambridge Audio offers similar devices. I don't know which devices would be easiest to connect to our system or which ones work best.

Ideally, we would like to buy a component that receives its streaming signal over Wi-Fi and then plays it through our stereo with great sound quality. We currently have an inexpensive Bluetooth device that connects to our stereo, but it sounds very poor.

— S.M., Oakland, Calif.

A: The Bluesound Node is certainly an option, but you asked for the best and I still consider that to be the \$1,099 Cambridge Audio CXN(V2) Network Streamer. It features top-notch sound, comprehensive features and an excellent display and interface. You can connect it to your stereo with a stereo RCA cable or a digital cable. Given the extremely high quality of the digital circuitry in the CXN(V2), I would use the stereo RCA connection (cambridgeaudio.com).

The CXN(V2) is Roon Ready, and combining it with Roon makes it even more powerful. It would take more than an entire column to thoroughly discuss Roon, but to sum it up, Roon is a powerful platform for organizing your streaming content and music files, making it easy to locate, enjoy and learn more about music. It's a music geek's dream come true and can be used with your home computer and the matching portable device apps, or with Roon's own Nucleus Core device. If you love music, I strongly suggest you check out Roon at roonlabs.com

— Don Lindich, Tribune News Service

Role model: More mature Tyler covers much stylistic ground

FROM PAGE 32

about Tyler's world travels).

And though Tyler produced all the songs himself — a rarity among rappers — the music covers a huge amount of ground, moving from the creamy R&B of "Wusyaname" to the trippy soul-jazz of "Hot Wind Blows" to the grimy boom-bap of "Lumberjack," which in classic mixtape form more or less cribs the beat from an existing track, in this case the Gravediggaz's mid-'90s "2 Cups of Blood."

Splashy cameos from Pharrell, Lil Wayne and Lil Uzi Vert further broaden the disc's stylistic scope even as Tyler invites the listener deep into the private space of a song like "Manifesto," in which he ponders his old antics (including a bunch of creepy tweets he sent to Selena Gomez) and frets over whether he's "doing enough or not doing enough" to advance the cause of racial justice. In its blend of the spectacular and the hyperpersonal, the result can recall "My Beauti-

ful Dark Twisted Fantasy" by one of Tyler's heroes, Kanye West.

"Call Me If You Get Lost" also reframes Tyler's relationship with the hip-hop mainstream. For years he saw himself as an outsider — "I never fully felt accepted in rap," he said in his speech at the Grammys — so he and the rest of Odd Future built a parallel universe complete with clothing lines, TV shows and LA's annual Camp Flog Gnaw music festival.

That universe attracted fellow misfits: In 2019, when Drake made a surprise appearance at Flog Gnaw in a slot many thought was meant for Odd Future's Frank Ocean, the crowd infamously booed the pop superstar.

Yet social media and digital streaming, where Tyler flourishes, have shifted power away from the record labels and radio stations that once controlled hip-hop; now Tyler enjoys the type of industry prestige and commercial clout that earlier charismatic weirdos could only dream of, which

might be why he seems so at home amid DJ Drama's big-tent trappings. (Looking back, Tyler's flirty 2019 interview with Funkmaster Flex — that stalwart guardian of centrist hip-hop values — seems like a crucial step in this album's development.)

Indeed, he's become sufficiently established that on "Call Me If You Get Lost" he's the one arranging guest spots from quirky younger acts with devoted online followings: Teezo Touchdown, who adds emo-rap squeaks to "Runitup"; 42 Dugg, charmingly growly in "Lemonhead"; YoungBoy Never Broke Again, who yelps a wistful verse in "Wusyaname."

In a way that's a very Drake move — pulling close potential threats. But with Tyler, the curating feels less opportunistic; he seems to take real pleasure in serving as a bridge figure between two generations. There's a great series of backstage photos of Tyler and Lil Nas X at the recent BET Awards, and what comes across is Tyler's genuine admiration for the artists

remaking hip-hop in his footsteps.

With the psychedelic "Igor," Tyler's innovation had to do with his formal slipperiness — here was a rap record, according to the Grammys, with basically no rapping on it — and with lyrics widely perceived to be about queer romance.

He's still tweaking the genre's conventions in those ways — in a song like the nearly 10-minute "Sweet / I Thought You Wanted to Dance," which mashes together sparkly R&B and throbbing reggae, and in "Massa," where he says, "Everyone I ever loved had to be loved in the shadows."

Yet the evolution on display on "Call Me If You Get Lost" is more elemental; he's rethinking what kinds of stories he wants to use his music to tell and how much of himself his success obliges him to reveal.

"This is my perspective / This is how I feel," he insists toward the end of the epic yet painstaking "Wilshire," "I ain't fabricate nothing / I kept it real."

He sounds as surprised as anyone else.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

Old films, new fans

Classic movie channel TCM knows it must adapt if it will survive in a streaming world

By **STEPHEN BATTAGLIO**
Los Angeles Times

Turner Classic Movies host Ben Mankiewicz once walked the red carpet at an American Film Institute event in Hollywood and found himself standing next to director Steven Spielberg.

Mankiewicz looked down, trying to avoid fanboy eye contact. But then Spielberg said to the host, “Oh my God, I love all your movies.”

It’s become part of life for Mankiewicz, who joined TCM 17 years ago and has encountered stars and filmmakers offering similar sentiments ever since.

Such are the perks of being on a cable channel with one of the most devoted audiences in television. The Atlanta-based TCM has long been the sanctuary of classic film on TV, presenting mostly pre-1980 movies commercial-free with a deep respect for moviemaking history going back to the silent film era.

TCM has managed to stick to its mission through shifting ownership of its parent company, WarnerMedia, which next year is expected to be spun off and merged with Discovery Inc. While current owner AT&T made its influence felt across WarnerMedia’s units, TCM has gone largely untouched and its ad-free format has been maintained, a relief to fans.

“TCM amongst filmmakers is considered holy ground,” said director Paul Thomas Anderson. “Politically neutral, essential and unimpeachable in its dedication to film history. There is nothing like it, and it should be protected.”

But surviving as a traditional TV outlet in the current media landscape won’t be easy for TCM. Viewers who want classic movies of all genres can access them on demand through a variety of streaming services, or even find them on YouTube.

TCM also faces the same pressure squeezing all cable channels — every month, thousands of U.S. homes are dropping their pay TV services. For TCM, it has meant a loss of subscribers. The channel was available in 68.2 million homes at the end of 2020, down from 73.3 million in 2019, according to Nielsen.

TCM’s commercial-free status is a key reason viewers embrace it. The downside is it cannot raise ad rates to offset the revenue decline caused by cord-cutting. S&P Global Intelligence data shows the network took in \$286 million in subscriber revenue in 2020, down from \$313.6 million the previous year.

“I fear for the future of TCM,” director Martin Scorsese said. “So does everyone else I know who loves movies.”

Scorsese will keep TCM on one of the screens in his editing suite while he’s working.

“It gives me something to turn to, to



METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER STUDIOS, ENTERTAINMENT PICTURES, ZUMA PRESS/TNS

Vivien Leigh, left, and Hattie McDaniel appear in a scene from “Gone with the Wind,” the film TCM screened for its launch in 1994.

bounce off of, to rest in, to reinvigorate my thinking — just glancing at some image or combination of images at a certain moment,” he said. “It’s more like a presence in the room, a reminder of film history as a living, ongoing entity.”

TCM launched on April 14, 1994, with a ceremonial screening of “Gone with the Wind” in New York’s Times Square. It became the preeminent brand for vintage classic film over the next 27 years.

“We created a world that people wanted to come into all the time, and we didn’t

“We hear plenty of people say, ‘Do I need all those other channels I don’t watch?’” she said. “But at the end of the day, they really want and desire TCM, so they are going to stay with cable as long as we’re there.”

While TCM celebrates Hollywood’s past, the channel is trying to connect with a younger generation of classic film enthusiasts.

In 2019, the channel added Jacqueline Stewart, a film professor at the University of Chicago, to its lineup of hosts. Stewart,

It’s why Stewart, Mankiewicz and fellow hosts Dave Karger, Alicia Malone and Eddie Muller were part of TCM’s “Reframed” series in March, which addressed problematic issues related to race and gender in 18 titles that have long been staples on the channel, including “The Jazz Singer,” “My Fair Lady,” “Breakfast at Tiffany’s” and “Woman of the Year.”

“We feel it’s important as being part of a brand in 2021 to recognize what’s going on around us,” said Changnon, adding that younger fans feel more comfortable watching with the historical context provided.

For Stewart, some of the “Reframed” topics reflect the conversations Black viewers were having over years of watching movies presented to them without any context.

“I was in a household who had seen those movies in the theater and had a real love for them,” Stewart said. “At the same time, we could point out the problems that existed in these films when there was denigrating representations of people of color.”

While TCM has no plans for a direct-to-consumer streaming product, Changnon said the brand is building its presence on WarnerMedia’s HBO Max as a way to reach younger consumers who are bypassing cable.

TCM has its own hub on HBO Max, giving its users an array of classic films on demand and the channel’s original programming that aired during its classic film festival in May.

But fans such as Scorsese are still happy to switch TCM on and take in whatever is showing with the knowledge that it was curated by a film lover and not an algorithm.

“We will definitely be losing something if we don’t have TCM to go to,” Scorsese said. “I suppose it’s the equivalent of the disappearance of bookstores, where you can actually walk in and browse, and maybe find something you hadn’t planned to even look for.”

“TCM amongst filmmakers is considered holy ground. Politically neutral, essential and unimpeachable in its dedication to film history. There is nothing like it, and it should be protected.”

director Paul Thomas Anderson

assault them with commercials,” said Brad Siegel, a former Turner executive who ran TCM when it launched.

Despite challenges, TCM does have an advantage over other entertainment channels. By depending on film libraries — many of the 16,000 titles it can draw on are owned by its parent company — TCM is less vulnerable to rising programming costs. WarnerMedia does not disclose financials for TCM but, according to Siegel, the channel has delivered strong profits since its launch.

TCM also appeals to an older audience that is more likely to hold onto its cable subscription than younger viewers who quickly adapted to streaming platforms. The channel also connects with fans through live events, cruises, books, an annual film festival and even a wine club.

Pola Changnon, general manager for TCM, said internal research shows the channel is keeping some subscribers from cutting the cord.

who is TCM’s first Black host, demonstrated her value when WarnerMedia’s new streaming service HBO Max became engulfed in controversy last year, pulling “Gone with the Wind” from the site in response to screenwriter John Ridley’s op-ed in the Los Angeles Times that said the 1939 film glorified the antebellum South.

When the film returned to HBO Max, it came with an authoritative introduction from Stewart, who recognized the film’s historical importance while citing its flaws and the discriminatory treatment of its Black cast members, including Oscar winner Hattie McDaniel.

TCM has never aired a film altered for time constraints or content. Explanations of dated or inappropriate depictions have always been cited in its host introductions. But the focus on social justice and gender equality, especially among younger viewers, have brought those issues to the forefront.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION



HBO Max

Hannah Einbinder, left, and Jean Smart star in “Hacks,” an HBO Max show about an older comic (Smart) paired with a Gen Z joke writer (Einbinder).

Watch 'em while they're hot

Catch up on the 10 greatest TV programs of 2021 so far

BY INKOO KANG
The Washington Post

Summer is officially here, which means strutting out of the house after a grueling quarantine ... and getting sunburned, bitten by bugs and struck with the realization that being cooped up for more than a year didn't do wonders for your cardiovascular health.

If you're happiest sitting on your couch even after the past 15 months — or you just want to know what's the best new (ish) thing to watch — you're in luck: There's no shortage of fantastic TV to catch up on.

Here are, in alphabetical order, the 10 greatest shows of the first half of 2021:

'Call My Agent' (Netflix)

Showbiz satires seldom boast so much heart. Affectionately crafted characters distinguish this Paris-set dramedy with a delectable premise: a look into the inner workings of a glamorous but perpetually chaotic talent agency with clients such as Juliette Binoche, Isabelle Huppert and Jean Dujardin (who play themselves). Debuting in January on Netflix a few months after its run in its native France, the fourth season — the show's last for a while, though a fifth chapter as well as a movie are in the works — features guest turns by Sigourney Weaver and Charlotte Gainsbourg (also playing themselves) and is the emotionally richest this wry, warm, winking series has ever been.

'Girls5eva' (Peacock)

Midlife crises don't get funnier than on “Girls5eva,” about the now 40-something members (played by Sara Bareilles, Busy Philipps, Paula Pell and breakout star Renee Elise Goldsberry) of a one-hit-wonder girl group from the turn of the millennium getting back together for a second chance at fame. Creator Meredith Scardino

freely borrows executive producer Tina Fey's breakneck comic pacing and lacerating feminist critiques, especially when it comes to the damage wrought on women in the spotlight.

'Hacks' (HBO Max)

It's hard to think of a more universally acclaimed performance so far this year than Jean Smart's on “Hacks,” in which the 69-year-old TV veteran, who's enjoyed a career renaissance of late, finally gets the starring role she deserves. Smart is nothing short of beguiling as Deborah Vance, a workaholic Vegas comic and onetime stand-up pioneer whose material could now use an upgrade. Paired with a down-and-out Gen Z joke writer (Hannah Einbinder) who's no less spiky and opinionated, Deborah is forced to contend with comedy's changing landscape.

'High on the Hog' (Netflix)

Food is history and history is food on this incredibly informative, gorgeously shot and wholly essential travelogue hosted by writer Stephen Satterfield, who highlights African American contributions to the culinary story of America. Based on the book by Jessica B. Harris (who joins Satterfield in Benin to trace back a primary origin of African American cuisine in the four-part docuseries' first installment), the series follows its amiable host as he journeys from South Carolina to Texas and from Monticello to Los Angeles to learn how Black Americans found survival, community, resistance, innovation and sometimes literal freedom in and through food.

'It's A Sin' (HBO Max)

Few shows are as ferociously tragic and surprisingly joyful as Russell T. Davies' five-part miniseries about the AIDS epidemic in 1980s London. Davies' celebration of the brief lives his characters managed to have — and the urban freedom they got to enjoy once they found their tribe after teenage years trapped in closets — make

“It's a Sin” a masterwork of tonal control, a heartbreaking chronicle of institutional homophobia and a well-rounded portrait of a lost generation. And yet it's the characters you'll remember most: Neil Patrick Harris' altruistic harbinger, Callum Scott Howells' shy Savile Row apprentice and Olly Alexander's promising young actor, too jejune to grasp the urgency of a plague until it's too late.

'The Lady and the Dale' (HBO)

If you like your docuseries to keep you guessing, you can't get much twistier than “The Lady and the Dale,” about Elizabeth Carmichael, a con woman selling a three-wheeled, fuel-sipping car made of a supposed bulletproof plastic during the 1970s oil crisis, who also happened to be a trans pioneer. Striking and inventive animation further enliven this four-part documentary that's part-biography of a singular, family-oriented scammer; part-car history; part-trans tale; part-media critique; and all riveting.

'Oprah With Harry and Meghan' (CBS)

It was the special that launched a thousand headlines. Few families are covered as exhaustively as the House of Windsor, but this trio of mononyms delivered a truly revelatory, once-in-a-generation interview whose repercussions we'll likely feel for years to come. Oprah Winfrey reminded us of her journalistic talents with her unflinching questions and (instantly meme'd) everywoman reactions, while Harry and Meghan, following Princess Diana's footsteps, gave an international audience more than a peek behind the Buckingham Palace gates with answers that blurred the line between personal disclosure and mental health advocacy.

'Philly D.A.' (PBS)

“Philly D.A.” has been compared endlessly to “The Wire,” and rightly so. An eight-part portrait of Larry Krasner, a civil-

rights attorney who was elected the head prosecutor of one of America's most incarcerated cities in 2017 on a campaign of racial equity, the docuseries is a nuanced and sobering account of what it takes to create change — and the limitations of what one man can achieve, especially when he's surrounded by people who share his outrage and sense of urgency but may ultimately enable his self-segregation from potential allies. Too many TV docs feel bloated, but “Philly D.A.” judiciously uses its wide canvas to tell as full and multifaceted a story as it can about an effort to find justice within our ailing court system that's too radical for some and not radical enough for many.

'Physical' (Apple TV+)

The Summer of Love is just a dream some of us had in “Physical,” a 1981-set twisted female liberation tale, which finds self-loathing housewife Sheila (a sensational Rose Byrne) weary of her narcissistic professor husband (Rory Scovel), a former antiwar activist, and ready to cozy up to The Man. In Sheila's case, that means embracing bootstrapping entrepreneurship, but also the newfangled activity of aerobics, in which Sheila can find a way to channel her obsession with dieting and weight into something close to self-care.

'We Are Lady Parts' (Peacock)

Easily the biggest crowd-pleaser on this list, the belated-coming-of-age comedy “We Are Lady Parts” is also a triumph of representation — and a compelling illustration of how quickly online discourse about representation can get distorted. The London-set British import tells a classic story: Girl meets boy; boy leads girl to an all-female, all-Muslim punk band; girl realizes that the band is what she was searching for her entire life and didn't know it. Hopeful and winsome, it's a deceptively simple show, but one that's leading a conversation about how and under what conditions outsiders are able to speak for themselves.

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

'Feel like a kid again' with this fitness trend

Add weight to a Hula-Hoop to lose weight from your waist, strengthen your core

BY ANGELA HAUPT

Special to *The Washington Post*

Earlier this year, Angie Wang wanted to switch up her exercise routine, so she bought a weighted Hula-Hoop and posted footage of herself trying it out on TikTok. The video collected more than 400,000 likes.

Wang was smitten. Hooping was a great way to spice up her usual workouts, far more entertaining than, say, jogging on a treadmill. And it worked: She's seen benefits from months of frequently using her 3.6-pound hoop, usually for about 15 to 30 minutes at a time.

"It's fun and different," said Wang, 25, a content creator who lives in Philadelphia. "I feel like it definitely strengthened my abs, and my core section is just stronger in general."

Though they've existed for more than a decade, weighted Hula-Hoops have emerged as a social media favorite during the pandemic, enticing fitness enthusiasts looking for new, affordable and convenient ways to work out at home with the promise of childlike fun (some gyms and studios are adding in-person classes as clients return). Videos tagged "weighted hula hoop" have generated more than 176 million views on TikTok, and some popular hoops have reportedly been selling out online.

"I was stunned at the results," said Lauren Constancio. The 26-year-old content creator who lives in Orange County, Calif., said she started seeing a trimmer waist and hips after a week of hooping for 10 minutes daily — in addition to weight training and eating healthfully. "After the first day of using it, I was like, 'Wow.' You really feel your whole body working. Cardio-wise, you don't feel that on the elliptical — and even when I did cycle classes, I never really felt that sore in my core."

If you're tempted to give weighted hooping a go, here's what you should know:

Hoop selection and safety

Weighted Hula-Hoops (which cost \$20 to \$30) are heavier than the plastic ones you might have used as a kid. They typically weigh one to four pounds, and most are 37 to 45 inches in diameter, said Nicole Thompson, a San Diego-based personal trainer and associate project manager with the American Council on Exercise. When you place the hoop vertically on the ground, it should reach your waist — "not any higher than mid-chest," she said.

To avoid excess soreness, Thompson suggests, start with a hoop that's on the lighter side, like one pound, and work your way up as you become more advanced. (Some hoops have adjustable weights.)

Starting light also can help prevent one of the main side effects of using weighted Hula-Hoops: bruising. As some TikTok hoopers' videos indicate, it's common to develop black and blue marks on the abdomen, especially in the early days of hooping.

"You may bruise or you may not — it



Angie Wang

After Angie Wang started exercising with a weighted Hula-Hoop, she said her abs and core section felt stronger. The Philadelphia resident described it as "fun and different."

"I was stunned at the results. After the first day of using it, I was like, 'Wow.' You really feel your whole body working. Cardio-wise, you don't feel that on the elliptical — and even when I did cycle classes, I never really felt that sore in my core."

Lauren Constancio, 26

Hula-Hooper in Orange County, Calif.

depends on your own physical constitution and your propensity for bruising," said Karla Horton, a personal trainer who owns Dragonfly Paddle and Fitness in Stevensville, Md., where she teaches hooping classes. If you have a history of back or hip problems, or recently suffered an injury, she recommends checking with your doctor before trying Hula-Hooping.

Benefits

Weighted Hula-Hoops offer a low-impact cardio workout. Using one several times a week can help you burn calories, lose fat, build core strength and improve your balance and flexibility, according to Thompson, the San Diego-based trainer.

"It's a fun way to exercise, and it has kind of a relaxing, meditative effect due to its rhythmic nature," she said.

experienced increased muscle mass in their trunk.

Hooping also can increase your motivation to exercise. A 2016 pilot study examined women's intentions for future workouts after either Hula-Hooping or walking for 30 minutes. The study found that those in the Hula group reported "significantly stronger intentions" to exercise again than those in a walking group.

The workout

First, Thompson said, warm up by doing some side stretches and marching in place to activate your core. Then, stand with your feet about shoulder-width apart; if you're hooping clockwise, your left foot should be slightly forward. If you're spinning counterclockwise, shift your right foot forward. Move your hips "in a straight line, front to back," Thompson said. (The idea that using a Hula-Hoop means moving your hips in a circular motion is a common misconception.)

Hula-hooping in one direction will usually feel most natural. But, Horton said, don't spend all your time spinning in that direction; doing so will overdevelop the muscles on a single side of your body. During her classes, she blasts lively music, and participants switch directions midway through the songs: They start hooping clockwise, then switch to counterclockwise.

So what do you do with your arms during all this? At first, many students adopt the slightly awkward T-rex pose, Horton said: They "hold their arms in towards their trunk, and they've got the little draping hands in front," just like the classic dinosaur stance. Once her students become more advanced, she coaches them to hold their arms above their head or to do aerobic-style movements. Some people even do bicep curls while they're spinning.

In addition to starting with a light hoop, you should ease into hooping by starting with two minutes a day, and then 2.5, and working your way up to about 15; the gradual increase will help prevent bruising. It will also acclimate you to the workout, Horton said. Hooping isn't natural for everyone, and some people report that it's uncomfortable for the first few days.

There's also a learning curve: At first, you might spend most of your time picking the hoop off the floor.

"It's a complex movement," said Kyle Gonzalez, a coach with Future, a personal training app. He suggests working with a trainer to safely master optimal hooping form because it's not always easy to learn from a video.

Skyler Slunjski, a YouTuber who lives in Michigan and had used a hoop as a child, found that picking it again wasn't exactly an easy muscle memory feat.

"It was definitely harder than I thought," said Slunjski, 28. "I could barely get it to spin around more than once — it took me a couple days to get the hang of it."

Ideally, hooping should be incorporated into a broader exercise program, but if it's the only exercise you can squeeze in each day, it's better than nothing, Thompson said. It does have one advantage over most other fitness regimens, she added: "It brings you back to a time that was fun, and it can make you feel like a kid again."

Still, she cautions, not everyone will drop inches off their waist, and especially not in one week, as some TikTokers say they have experienced. While slimming the waist is feasible for some people, she said, it's unlikely to happen without additional changes to diet or exercise.

According to a small 2015 study of women in their 30s to 60s published in the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, using a weighted Hula-Hoop for six weeks was associated with a reduced waistline and hip girth. On average, the participants lost 1.3 inches from their waistlines and 0.6 inches from their hips.

Another study, published in 2019, compared weighted Hula-Hooping to walking. Participants who hooped for 13 minutes a day over six weeks reduced their waist circumference and body fat, and they

WEEKEND: FAMILY



JEENAH MOON/For The Washington Post

David Bressler and his kids, Reed and Evie Romann, explore the world outdoors at Pier 26 in Manhattan.

Swapping screens for sun

Parents are concerned for kids who spent the year in a tech-filled haze

BY HEATHER KELLY
The Washington Post

The week after Rebecca Grant took away her kids' video games for a month, after a year of relaxed pandemic rules, her 10-year-old son was livid. He gave her the silent treatment, mostly ignoring her except to spit out a hurtful, "I don't love you," one night at bedtime.

The ban wasn't an easy decision for Grant. The 46-year-old mom of two from Fremont, Calif., did hours of research and read multiple books from parenting experts. She joined Facebook groups for families in similar situations and closely watched her children's behavior, which had been worrisome for a while. Still, she was caught off guard by the reaction.

"He was really not taking it well," Grant said. "In a way, it reinforced my decision. He's just so attached to this [video games], he's not rational."

After 15 months of various levels of shutdowns, families in the United States are trying to come out of a tech-filled haze for summer. It's a chance to swap out Xbox time for bike rides with friends, or Zoom school for summer camp. But parents are discovering that subtracting screen time is much harder to do than adding it. They are facing resistance from kids accustomed to their freedom or just struggling to find alternatives to fill the time before a more normal fall school semester begins.

While businesses and child care centers are opening up as coronavirus infection rates slow down, early data shows that the amount of time consumers spend on their screens hasn't fallen sharply. According to research firm Similarweb, there has been a 24-second drop in the average time spent per session on the top 100 websites.

During the pandemic, limits around screen time were raised or put on hold altogether with the blessing of many screen-time experts. Screens prevented millions of children from falling a year behind in school and allowed many parents to continue working in and out of the house. For kids unable to see friends, options such as messaging apps and video games gave them an essential tether to their old lives.

For all the good technology has done for kids over the past year, there were also unavoidable downsides. A recent study in the journal *Pediatrics* of patients at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Care Network found a nearly 2% increase in obesity among children during the pandemic.

While some parents just want their kids to be social or active again, many have noticed personality and behavioral changes in their children. They're irritable, argumentative and have poor focus. Some have become anxious or depressed, or throw more tantrums and fly into rages.

Grant noticed moments when her kids weren't acting like themselves. Like when her youngest son, 7, would burst into tears anytime something small went wrong. And when her 10-year-old faked attending Zoom class so he could watch YouTube, or got hyper-competitive and fought with a friend who was over playing video games.

"Having all that screen time all day for a whole year, their nervous system is really dysregulated, and those symptoms need to be reversed," said Victoria Dunckley, a child psychologist who studies the impact of screens on children, and the author of "Reset Your Child's Brain." "All this overstimulation is putting them into a state of stress."

While some parents are recoiling from how much screen time they've allowed, others have found a new appreciation for the way it can help kids socialize and learn.

The popular concept of screen time — the idea that a kid's exposure to technology should be tallied in hours — was never a big concern for David Bressler. The software engineer quit his job early in the pandemic to take over child care for his 6-year-old daughter and 8-year-old son.

"I really believe that I can bond with my kids over the tech. We can talk about it; I can talk about what they're interested in," says Bressler, 53, who lives with his family in New York City. "I've always been liberal with tech use, but very involved with the way they use it because I believe it builds the bridge between us and the kids. It's not a fear-driven approach where it's a punishment or a reward."

Still, he is frustrated with his son's fondness for watching YouTube and understands that both kids need to have alternatives to screens. He works to make sure they are outside as often as possible now that the city has opened up. He takes them to nearby parks to run off energy and to skateboarding classes. Even a recent outing to a retail store was a thrilling field trip for the family, he says. Instead of spending their summer on devices, they'll attend an outdoor camp, complete with the classic camp fixings like pools, sports and arts and crafts.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Family favors shore despite shark uproar

I feel fortunate to have been a Navy spouse, because our family had the pleasure of living near the beach for nearly two decades. Other than a stint in D.C. and two joint tours in Europe, our Navy family was always stationed in coastal areas where we could access the ocean, if not see it right out of our base kitchen window. My Navy wife friends and I felt so superior, with our in-your-face nautical-inspired clothing and home decor adorned with anchors and whales and signal flags and boats, as if we were married to Captain Ahab himself. We pitied our poor Army and Air Force comrades, stationed in olive-drab Timbuktu, staring out of their base kitchen windows at grain silos.

"Bless their hearts," we claimed, while clinking mojitos in anchor-embellished Tervis tumblers and sunning ourselves from the comfort of our beach chairs.

We never admitted to our landlubber counterparts that living near the ocean had its drawbacks. Like hurricanes, one of which dropped an 80-foot loblolly pine into the master bedroom of our first house in Virginia Beach, thanks to a little storm named Isabel in 2003. And rip currents, which cause more than 100 deaths per year in the U.S., always prevented me from relaxing while my kids were in the surf.

But there's a coastal critter that strikes fear in the hearts of every salt-life-loving Navy wife, even the ones with L.L. Bean totes obnoxiously embroidered with lobsters. In fact, this deadly ocean dweller frightens civilian and military Americans alike: Sharks.

The summer of 1975 was vividly imprinted on my brain. I was 9, and our family had traveled to visit my grandfather, aunt, uncle and cousins. Louisville, Ky., was the "big city" to my brother and me, so our cousins planned activities that weren't yet offered in our small Pennsylvania town. Like cheeseburgers and Frostys at Wendy's, and the new Steven Spielberg movie, "Jaws."

I shivered in the air-conditioned theater from the chill and the creepy images on the big screen before me. Listening to the rhythmic "dun-dun-dun-dun" of the now-iconic movie score, we watched scuba-diving Richard Dreyfuss inspect a huge shark tooth he plucked from a hole in a sunken boat hull. Seconds later, the violin strings screeched when a severed human head floated out of the same hole — a classic jump-scare, effective to this day. However, my flinch was superseded by my father nearly jumping out of his seat and emitting a childlike scream, popcorn flying from his bucket.

"Jaws" implanted irrational, yet permanent fear in the American psyche. As a Navy family, we've frolicked in the waves near many coastal duty stations all summer long in Virginia, California, Florida and Rhode Island. But we never let on that, under our nautical-inspired beachwear and sun-tanned faces, we were terrified of sharks lurking under the waves, sniffing the sea for flesh and blood.

This semi-subconscious anxiety wasn't enough to keep us off the beach, but it was enough to make us freak out — "Kids! Out of the water!" while flailing our arms wildly — when we felt something (always turned out to be a jellyfish) or saw a fin (always turned out to be a dolphin). Although unprovoked shark attacks are extremely rare (only 16 per year in the US, almost none fatal), Americans can't escape sources of information and entertainment that stoke our fears: The inevitable news reports about shark bites; web-based shark trackers that follow tagged beasts like the 12-foot Great White "Ironbound"; Discovery Channel's "Shark Week," which begins July 11; a movie titled "Great White" coming out July 16; and endless "Jaws" summer replays.

How is a beach-loving Navy spouse to cope with all this shark-fear mongering? Move to a landlocked base and stare at grain silos? No way. I'll stay at the beach and swallow my anxiety, along with an ice-cold mojito.

Read more at themeatandpotatoesoflife.com, and in Lisa's book, *The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com*. Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

GRAVITY'S RAINBOW

BY ROSS TRUDEAU AND LINDSEY HOBBS / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

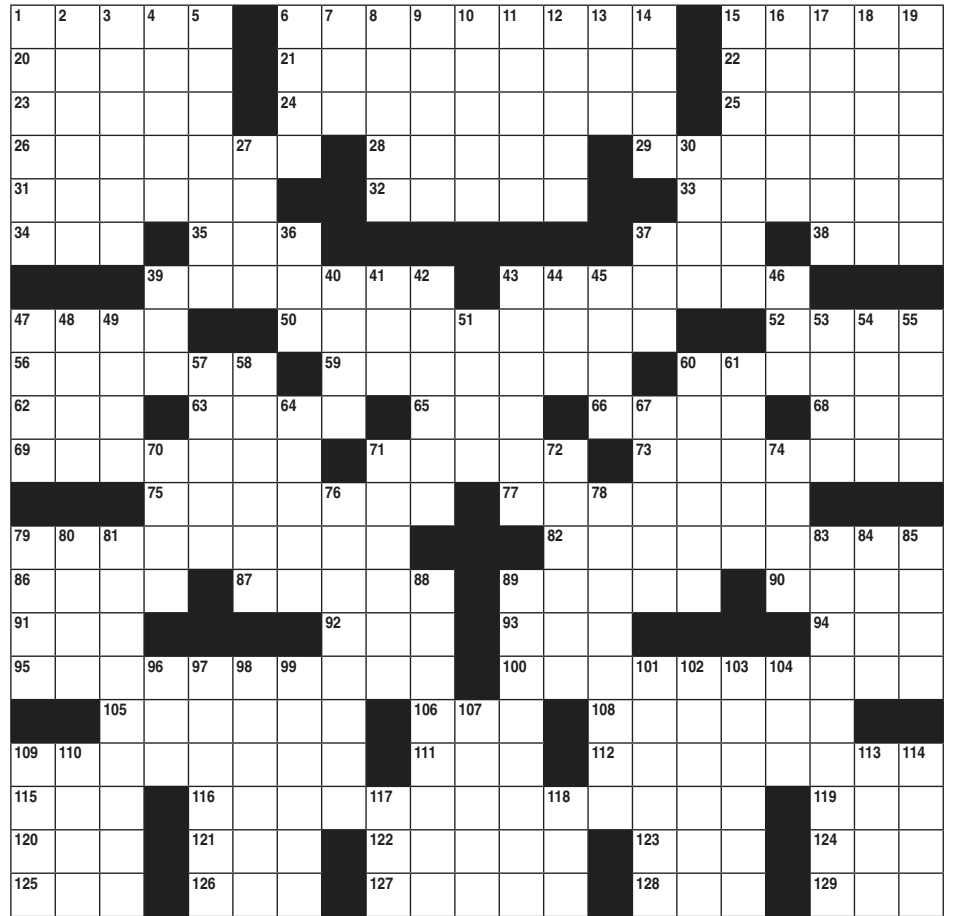
Ross Trudeau, of Cambridge, Mass., works for a K-12 education nonprofit. Lindsey Hobbs, of Brooklyn, is the head of the Preservation and Conservation department at the New York City Municipal Archives. They met virtually through Facebook's Crossword Puzzle Collaboration Directory. Ross suggested the theme for this puzzle, which relates to an annual June celebration. It was a joint effort thereafter. — W.S.

ACROSS

- 1 Rackets
- 6 Spruce or fir
- 15 Japanese city that shares its name with a dog breed
- 20 Home to the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum
- 21 Homemade headgear for pretend pirates
- 22 Conducted, as a campaign
- 23 Undo, legally
- 24 Highly specialized knowledge
- 25 Color whose name is derived from "lapis lazuli"
- 26 Frequent comics collaborator with Jack Kirby
- 28 Belief
- 29 Hubbubs
- 31 "See? I knew what I was talking about!"
- 32 Gives an edge
- 33 Indignant denial
- 34 Bozo
- 35 "I 30-Down the fool!" speaker
- 37 GPS suggestion: Abbr.
- 38 What might follow you
- 39 1966 Donovan hit
- 43 Sinatra, to fans
- 47 Band whose "Gold: Greatest Hits" has sold over 30 million copies
- 50 Raised a false alarm
- 52 Tennis's Nadal, informally
- 56 Fruit with crimson-colored flesh
- 59 Guest feature?
- 60 Popular folk-rock duo
- 62 Place for a canal or a kernel
- 63 1968 self-titled folk album
- 65 A.L. West team, on scoreboards
- 66 Rubik with a cube
- 68 Ice cream holder
- 69 Cal's game-winning kickoff return against Stanford in 1982, familiarly
- 71 World's deepest river
- 73 Little tasks that crop up
- 75 Wood-shop item
- 77 Investigate, à la Sherlock Holmes
- 79 Wunderkinder
- 82 Implement for an Amish driver
- 86 Features of classic cars
- 87 It's covered in paint in the Sherwin-Williams logo
- 89 Oscar-winning song from "Slumdog Millionaire"
- 90 "Likewise"
- 91 Media watchdog agcy.
- 92 "Strange Magic" band, for short
- 93 Medium for Kehinde Wiley's "President Barack Obama"
- 94 Took a load off
- 95 Mars
- 100 Harmful bits of sunlight
- 105 Remove calcium deposits from
- 106 Sharp shooter, for short?
- 108 Harder to grasp
- 109 Changes by degrees
- 111 Whole bunch
- 112 You might cry if you slice it
- 115 Word rhymed with "ami" by Lafayette in "Hamilton"
- 116 Like Merriam-Webster's inclusion of the word "irregardless," originally
- 119 College admissions fig.
- 120 Delta hub, on luggage tags
- 121 Birth-control option, briefly
- 122 In the blink of ____
- 123 Deli or bar order
- 124 Stags or bucks
- 125 Biblical possessive
- 126 Alcoholic's affliction, briefly
- 127 Complicated, as a relationship
- 128 Retired flier, for short
- 129 Explosive stuff
- 6 Olympic poker?
- 7 Military hospitals, briefly
- 8 Period of history
- 9 Back in
- 10 Fresh, in a sense
- 11 A one and a two
- 12 Bursts in on
- 13 And the rest, for short
- 14 Twin in Genesis
- 15 Prizewinner
- 16 Instrument often played for comedic effect
- 17 Tennessee Williams's "The Night of the ____"
- 18 Babysitter's handful
- 19 "____ Fideles"
- 27 ____ Simmons, real name of the late rapper DMX
- 30 See 35-Across
- 36 Affectionate attention, briefly
- 37 One enforcing traveling rules
- 39 Kind of jacket
- 40 "Ish"
- 41 Xbox 360 competitor
- 42 Chicken
- 43 Total domination, in gamer-speak
- 44 Whole bunch
- 45 Racy
- 46 Polite form of address similar to "Mr." or "Ms."
- 47 Criminally aid
- 48 Yawn-inducing
- 49 Make yawn
- 51 Campus leader
- 53 With the bow, musically

DOWN

- 1 California-based soft-drink company
- 2 Divisions of long poems
- 3 Historical records
- 4 Place for a pitcher
- 5 "I'm such a dummy!"



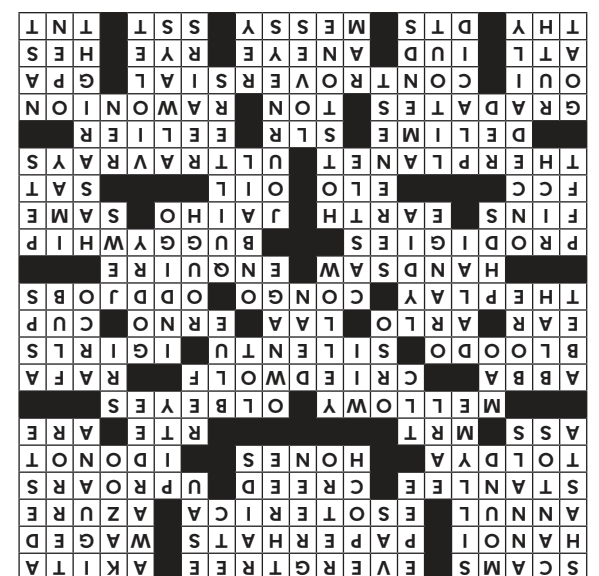
- 54 Bungle
- 55 Vipers with upturned snouts
- 57 Part of a religious title that means "ocean"
- 58 Southern California county
- 60 "Mood ____" (Duke Ellington classic)
- 61 Quit drinking
- 64 Golf's ____ Ko, youngest golfer to be ranked No. 1
- 67 In draft form
- 70 High degrees, for short
- 71 Setting for many a Super Mario Bros. level
- 72 Temporarily out
- 74 Pesach observers
- 76 Most peaceful
- 78 Groups of bees?
- 79 "You can't expect me to believe that!"
- 80 Laughable
- 81 Typical way to take a multivitamin
- 83 Is legally entitled
- 84 "It's a possibility for me"
- 85 Family members that get talked down to?
- 88 Kind of massage
- 89 Travels
- 96 ____ River, part of the Texas/Oklahoma border
- 97 Even-tempered
- 98 Skedaddled
- 99 They might be made after a fight
- 101 Runs again
- 102 Without fail
- 103 State flower of Illinois or New Jersey
- 104 ____ Faire (event with jousting, for short)
- 107 Is mad about
- 109 Source of the milk for chèvre cheese
- 110 The "R" of R.B.G.
- 113 Ready for business
- 114 Condé ____
- 117 What might make a ewe turn
- 118 Spanish monarch

GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

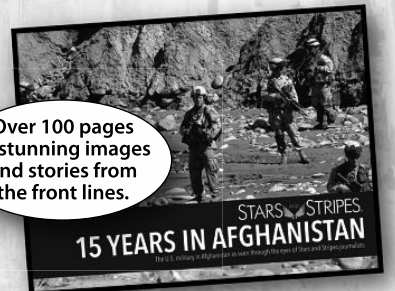
RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



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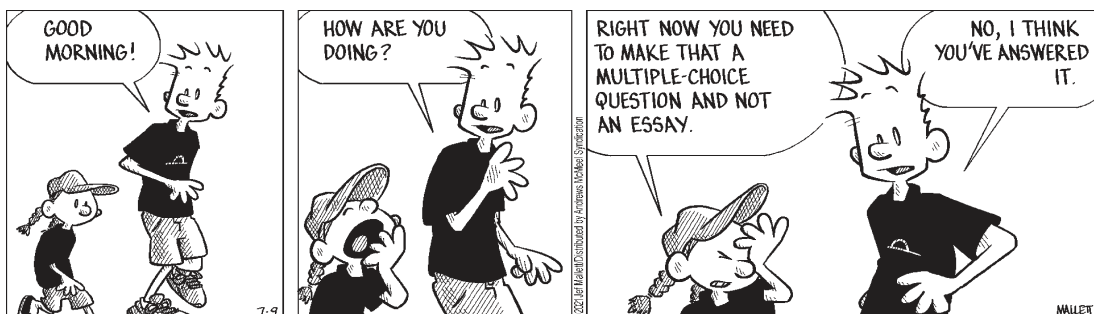
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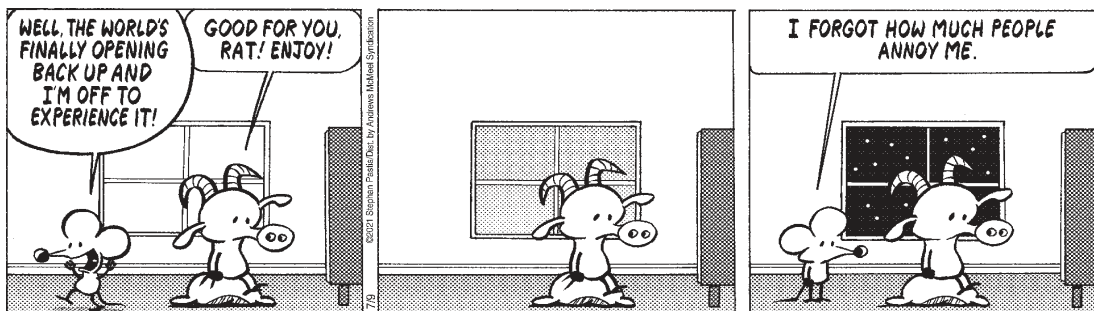
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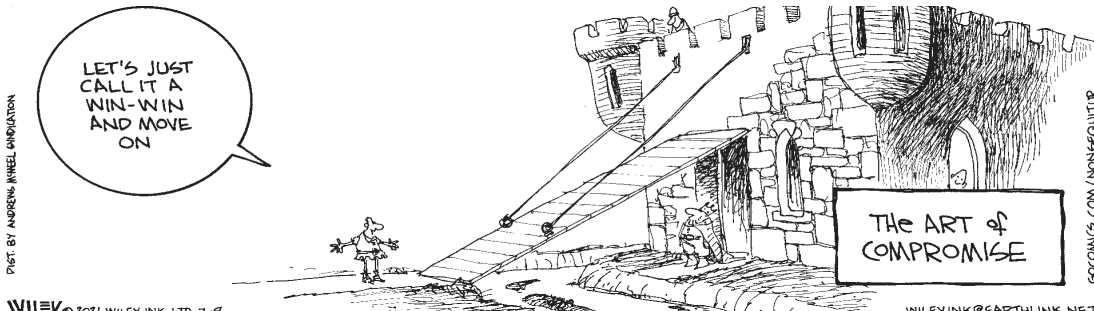
Dilbert



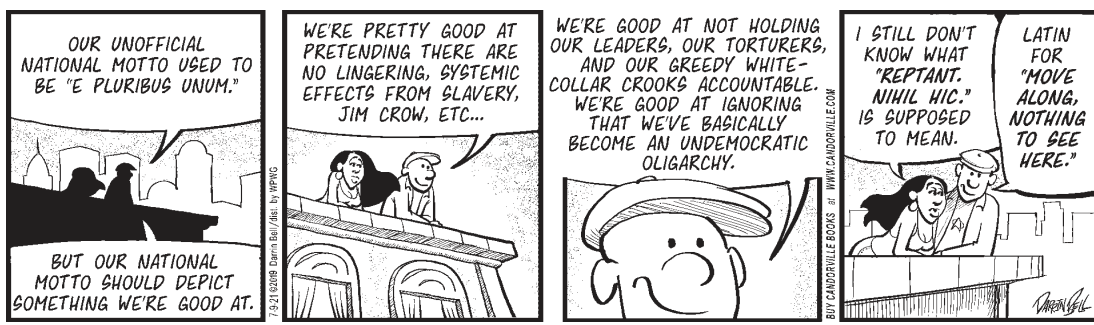
Pearls Before Swine



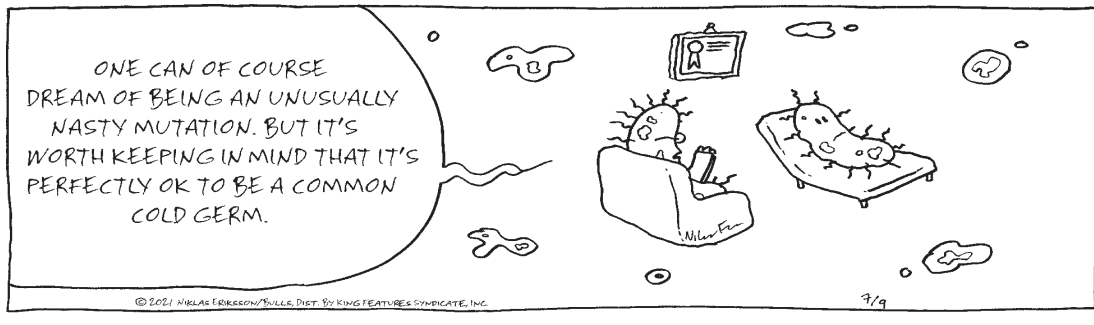
Non Sequitur



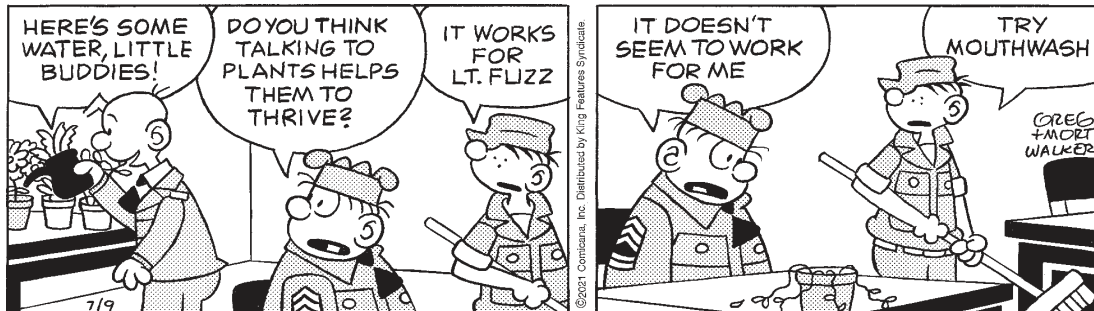
Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
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37			38				39					
			40				41			42	43	44
45	46	47				48	49					
50						51				52		
53						54				55		

ACROSS

- 1 Mature
- 4 Hit the runway
- 8 Stink
- 12 Wet dirt
- 13 Both (Pref.)
- 14 Mata —
- 15 Insulin producer
- 17 Domed tent
- 18 Frightens
- 19 Deli choice
- 21 Asner and Harris
- 22 Cardin of fashion
- 26 "Midnight Cowboy" role
- 29 Young fellow
- 30 Fine, at NASA
- 31 LAX guesses
- 32 Brooch
- 33 Ilk
- 34 Hostel
- 35 La —, Bolivia
- 36 Ploys
- 37 Pooch's play area in a park
- 39 Day light?
- 40 Crumb carrier
- 41 Narcotic
- 45 Deeds
- 48 Time on earth
- 50 Gridlock sound
- 51 Mideast ruler
- 52 Ex-quarterback Manning
- 53 Electronics giant
- 54 Bearded beast
- 55 Deleted

DOWN

- 1 Band boosters
- 2 Avocado dip, for short
- 3 — St. Vincent Millay
- 4 Rio Grande city
- 5 Make — of (bungle)
- 6 Cagers' gp.
- 7 Kitchen basin
- 8 Limerick feature
- 9 Water (Fr.)
- 10 Blunder
- 11 DIY buy
- 16 Salad green
- 20 Succor
- 23 Light beams
- 24 Lariat
- 25 Stretches (out)
- 26 Tara of "Sharknado"

- 27 — time (never)
- 28 Tart flavor
- 29 Singer Phair
- 32 One of a pair of jeans
- 33 North African capital
- 35 Bit of wit
- 36 Media mogul Murdoch
- 38 Grating
- 39 Director Coppola
- 42 Pinnacle
- 43 Yarn
- 44 Oklahoma city
- 45 Six-pack muscles
- 46 Corp. boss
- 47 Toe count
- 49 "As I see it," to a texter

Answer to Previous Puzzle

B	R	O	W	T	A	R	P	T	B	A
B	O	R	E	E	L	O	I	H	E	R
Q	U	E	E	N	S	I	Z	E	E	A
S	T	O	N	E	S	T	O	Q	U	E
			I	T	O	H	Y	O	U	
F	O	R	E	R	U	E	H	E	I	R
A	V	E	A	T	A	E	C	O		
D	A	D	S	G	I	L	S	N	U	B
			Q	U	E	E	B	A		
G	R	U	B	S	B	A	L	S	A	M
L	I	E	Q	U	E	E	N	M	A	R
A	P	E	U	R	G	E	O	T	I	S
M	E	N	E	L	O	N	N	E	A	T

7-9

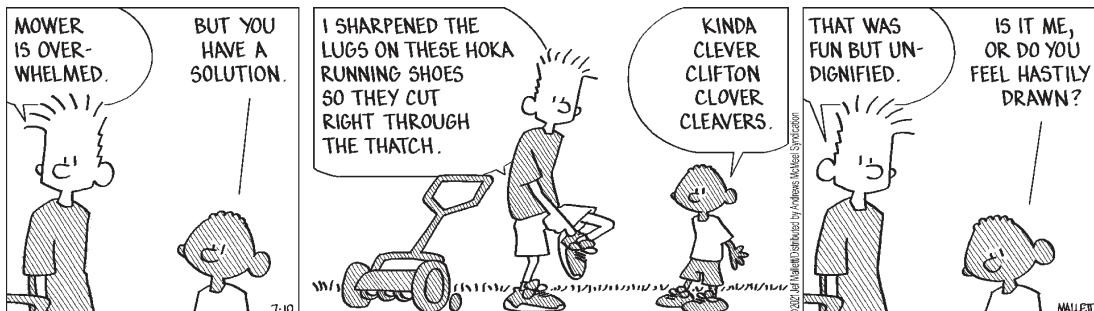
CRYPTOQUIP

NMSWL BW ZNQ HV SNYYV
 QNTJ RMM QUSB HV UXW-
 FLNYYUDF PSWDZUT, BW NZJWC

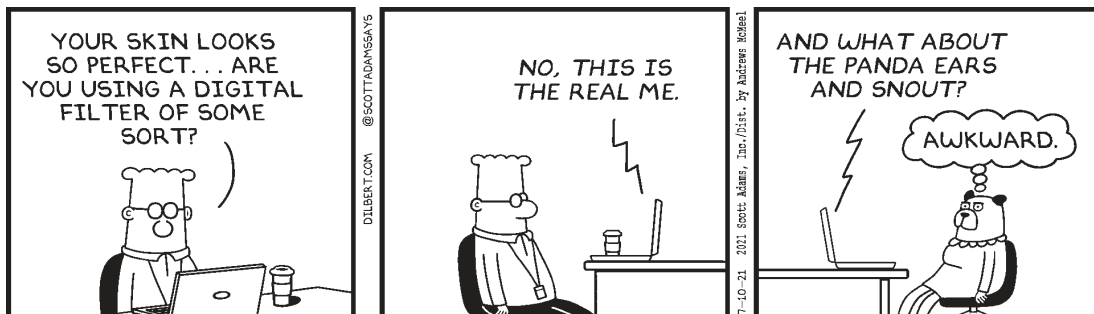
"XNS FRS VRPL SRDFZ?"

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: POPULAR VOCALISTS PERFORMING VERY MUCH IN THE CLASSIC STYLE OF SINGER FRANCIS: NEO-CONNIES.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Y equals B

Frazz



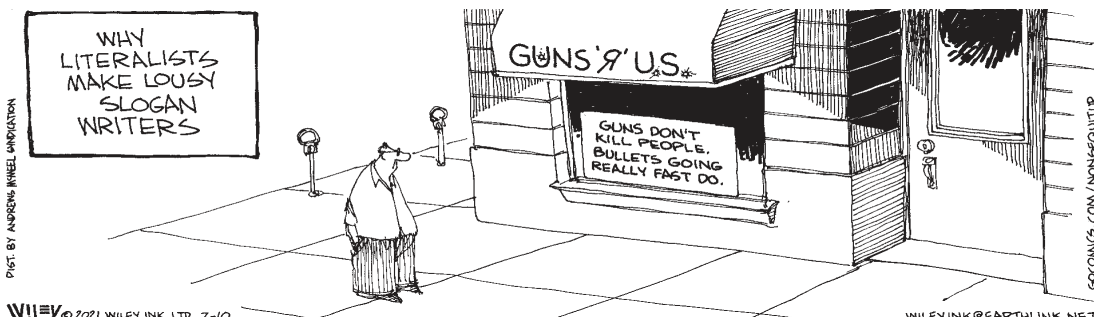
Dilbert



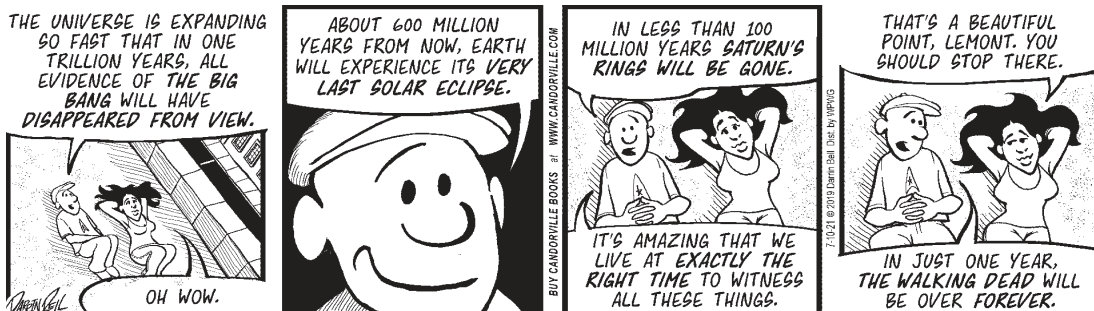
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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		38		39		40			41			
42	43			44	45				46	47	48	49
50			51					52	53			
54								55				
56								57				

ACROSS

- 1 Penned
- 6 Los —, New Mexico
- 12 Like glee club music
- 13 Two-footed creatures
- 14 Lectern
- 15 Classic French actress
- 16 Org.
- 17 Despot
- 19 Online chats, briefly
- 20 Mentor
- 22 — Paulo
- 24 Smartphone download
- 27 "Arbitrage" star Richard
- 29 March Madness gp.
- 32 "The Hunger Games" actor
- 35 Mexican money
- 36 Spanish ayes
- 37 Brit. record label
- 38 Fixed
- 40 Without
- 42 Architect I. M.
- 44 Donald Duck's nephew
- 46 Mideast ruler
- 50 Skier's destinations

- 52 Somewhat
- 54 "Truman" actor Gary
- 55 Church toppers
- 56 Took a bite
- 57 Cafeteria stack

- 18 Guess
- 21 "Gross!"
- 23 Year in Madrid
- 24 Jungfrau, for one
- 25 Picnic dessert
- 26 Intense feelings
- 28 Composition writer
- 30 \$ dispenser
- 31 Sashimi fish
- 33 Skier Tommy
- 34 Victory
- 39 The ones here
- 41 Old photo tint
- 42 "Hey, you!"
- 43 Lamb alias
- 45 Secondhand
- 47 Crèche figure
- 48 Enrages
- 49 ACLU issues
- 51 Trench
- 53 "Fresh Air" aier

DOWN

- 1 "— on first?"
- 2 Scepters
- 3 Rubber gasket
- 4 Greek cross
- 5 Shade providers
- 6 "Fernando" group
- 7 Tale tellers
- 8 Earth Day mo.
- 9 So-so
- 10 "Hamilton" actor Leslie — Jr.
- 11 Bygone fliers
- 12 IRS employee

Answer to Previous Puzzle

A	G	E	L	A	N	D	R	E	E	K	
M	U	D	A	M	B	I	H	A	R	I	
P	A	N	C	R	E	A	S	Y	U	R	T
S	C	A	R	E	S	H	A	M			
			E	D	S	P	I	E	R	R	E
R	A	T	S	O	L	A	D	A	O	K	
E	T	A	S	P	I	N	T	T	E		
I	N	N	P	A	Z	R	U	S	E	S	
D	O	G	R	U	N	S	U	N			
			A	N	T	O	P	I	A	T	E
A	C	T	S	L	I	F	E	S	P	A	N
B	E	E	P	E	M	I	R	E	L	I	
S	O	N	Y	G	O	A	T	X	E	D	

7-10

CRYPTOQUIP

O C Z T K B G N J T ' S L S B Y

Y X N S G H X T D V G L X N J F Y X S N C Z L

X T K B G H V X T I, X O B G F I L J K

K B G C J R Z S B T J F R X L X B T.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: AFTER HE SAW MY TABBY WALK OFF WITH MY ICE-GRABBING UTENSIL, HE ASKED "CAT GOT YOUR TONGS?"

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: F equals L

STARS AND STRIPES.

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OPINION

US troops in Iraq, Syria are sitting ducks

BY DANIEL R. DEPETRIS

Special to Stars and Stripes

Hardly a week goes by when U.S. troops and contractors in Iraq and Syria are not taking defensive measures to protect themselves from rocket and drone attacks.

In what has become a troubling pattern in both countries, Shiite militia units stocked to the gills with a seemingly unending supply of lethal projectiles and explosive-laden drones targeted U.S. military facilities yet again on Wednesday. At 12:30 p.m., al Asad Air Base in western Iraq, one of the critical Iraqi facilities hosting U.S. forces in the country, came under attack by 14 rockets. U.S. forces took defensive precautions and retaliated, neutralizing the source of the rocket fire near the town of al-Baghadi. On the same day in next-door Syria, U.S. soldiers stationed near the al-Omar oil field also came under threat from a drone, which was destroyed before it could cause any damage. By the time the day was over, two coalition troops in Iraq were nursing minor injuries.

Fortunately, nobody died in this episode. The trend line, however, is increasingly worrisome. Despite the Biden administration's latest series of airstrikes against Shiite militia facilities in Iraq and Syria late last month (strikes U.S. defense officials insisted would reintroduce deterrence into the equation), the rocket and drone attacks from these very same militias have continued unabated. The Biden administration is drawing an even harder line than the Trump administration did, promising swift retaliation regardless of whether a U.S. soldier or contractor has been

killed.

Thus far, the U.S. has been incredibly fortunate to escape fatalities. But one is left wondering if Washington is tempting fate. The rocket attacks won't be ending anytime soon. The Shiite militias, many of which have been included in the official Iraqi security forces, appear to be impervious to tough talk from U.S. officials. The kind of normal deterrence that works against the likes of North Korea's Kim Jong Un and Russia's Vladimir Putin doesn't seem to be effective with these nonstate armed groups. If they were, the rockets would have stopped after the Biden administration conducted its first military action in February.

Logic would suggest that the longer U.S. forces are deployed in Iraq and Syria, the more likely one of these flying rockets or harassing drones will eventually claim the life of an American. President Joe Biden would have to respond militarily in such a situation, which would in turn be highly likely to draw even more hostile fire from Shiite militias that (let's face it) are now an integral part of Iraq and Syria whether we like it or not. The probability of a full-scale confrontation is not a scenario U.S. officials can casually dismiss. Nor can they assume more airstrikes on yet more militia storage facilities and weapons depots produce the calm the U.S. desperately wants. If precedent is any indication, a stronger U.S. military response would generate the very full-blown confrontation the U.S. rightly hopes to avoid.

U.S. policymakers back in Washington are using the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria to justify continuing the mission when the original mission itself — eliminating Islamic State's territorial caliphate — ended the

moment hundreds of ISIS stragglers surrendered their last patch of territory more than two years ago. Rather than admitting success and removing the troops, however, U.S. officials chose to hand the U.S. military an altogether different mission-set that is as discomfuted as it is disconnected to direct U.S. national security interests: help create a perfect Iraqi army; hold Syria's eastern oil fields so the Syrian government can't get hold of them; ensure every last Iranian boot leaves Iraqi and Syrian soil; and help the Iraqis and the Syrian Kurds kill every last ISIS fighter on the planet. If these goals aren't the definition of expansive and unattainable goals, I don't know what is.

It's past time for U.S. officials to ask what many Americans have already asked: What exactly is the purpose of the U.S. troop presence in Iraq and Syria? What are U.S. troops truly being asked to risk their lives for? What is the U.S. objective? Is this objective realistic, or is it meant to rationalize a de facto permanent U.S. force posture in two nations that will remain unstable and violent for a long time to come? Do the risks outweigh the rewards? And are there any rewards to begin with?

Right now, U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria are, in practical terms, sitting ducks. If the Biden administration is deeply serious about ending forever wars and extricating U.S. troops from the Middle East, then it needs to go beyond an unsustainable, downright dangerous status quo that is becoming more unjustifiable with each passing day.

Daniel R. DePetris is a fellow at Defense Priorities and a foreign affairs columnist at Newsweek.

Navy needs a course correction to avoid politicization

BY BRENT D. SADLER

The Heritage Foundation

The U.S. Navy has one paramount mission: prepare to defend our nation and our national interests through the application of violence at sea. Getting and staying ready to do just that is pretty much a full-time job, leaving little time to dabble in politics.

So why has the Navy's senior-most officer, Adm. Michael Gilday, insisted on including politically charged books on his officially endorsed reading list for all naval personnel? It's especially confounding when one considers the lack of evidence suggesting that the Navy has a "diversity problem."

Gilday's refusal to address congressional concerns about his list and his subsequent fact-free assertions of racism are leading Americans to question whether the Navy is being politicized.

During a recent House Armed Services Committee hearing, Gilday refused to acknowledge feedback pouring in from sailors troubled by what they perceive as "woke" diversity training. When pressed on why he included Ibram X. Kendi's problematic book "How To Be An Antiracist" on his Professional Reading Program, he offered little in the way of explanation.

His nebulous response — "I am the chief of naval operations, not a theorist" — answered nothing. Rather, he merely doubled down on the righteousness of his decision.

Coming from the man who stands at the pinnacle of the Navy's hierarchy, Gilday's endorsement carries enormous weight. Many sailors who might wish to raise uncomfortable but respectful questions about "woke" instruction

fear doing so would risk ostracism and negative career consequences.

That's what prompted two veterans, Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., and Rep. Dan Crenshaw, R-Texas, to establish a new whistleblower hotline. Judging from the litany of troubling complaints flooding in, it was sorely needed.

Gilday told lawmakers he included Kendi's book and Michelle Alexander's "The New Jim Crow" because he wanted his reading list to present a diversity of thought. Yet the premises of these books are not contested in any other book on the list. Nor has Gilday expressed any reservations about them.

So what was Gilday thinking? Undoubtedly, he was motivated by forces outside the Navy. A July 1 memo cites the turmoil inflamed by a contentious presidential campaign and the death of George Floyd. He responded first by forming a group called "Task Force One" to look into diversity and equity in the Navy.

Task Force One's final report sadly provides little raw data, only anecdotal or subjective opinion surveys. Among its few factual findings:

- Minority junior officers enjoy higher retention rates than white officers.

- Retention rates for female officers are rising.

- There is no disparity in promotion rates up to midgrade level officers, while minorities receive senior enlisted promotions at a higher rate than whites.

The report did find a racial disparity favoring whites in senior officer promotions and junior enlisted promotions. It infers racism as the reason but offers no analysis of promotion boards to justify that conclusion.

The report acknowledges, however, that

since 2000 the Navy has made significant strides at increasing its racial, gender and ethnic diversity. Its enlisted population today is 60% more racially diverse, 56% more gender diverse, and over 300% more ethnically diverse than 20 years ago.

Separately, regarding discrimination, there is nothing among the recorded complaints that suggests a major problem. Since 2016, only between four to 10 cases of actual discrimination have been reported annually in an organization of more than 600,000 uniformed and civilian members. Either the Navy's reporting system is flawed, or discrimination is very rare. Determining which was true should have been a job of Task Force One.

At the direction of the secretary of defense, the Navy conducted a single day anti-extremism stand-down earlier this year. Was this necessary? The Navy has been unable to provide historical records regarding past members separated from the Navy for extremism, and the Department of Defense still struggles with legally defining the term.

Gilday and other Navy leaders should course-correct to steer the service out of a political morass. A good first step would be to stop defending indefensible books like Kendi's.

Finally, and most importantly, focus on facts before making future assertions of discrimination, systemic racism or extremism in the ranks. Those in uniform have no business stoking politically charged rhetoric devoid of facts. It serves no one well, nor does it serve our national interests.

Brent Sadler is a senior fellow for naval warfare and advanced technology at The Heritage Foundation.

STARS AND STRIPES SERVICE DIRECTORY

The Daily Guide to Navigating the European Business Market



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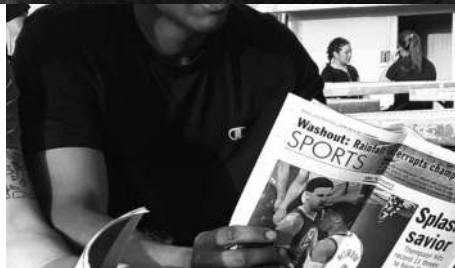


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Web



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SCOREBOARD/SOCCER

PRO SOCCER

MLS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
New England	7	3	3	24	22	18
Orlando City	6	3	3	21	20	12
Philadelphia	5	3	4	19	15	11
CF Montréal	5	3	4	19	14	11
Nashville	4	1	6	18	14	11
NYCFC	5	4	2	17	19	13
D.C. United	5	6	1	16	17	14
New York	5	5	1	16	16	14
Columbus	4	3	4	16	11	9
Atlanta	2	3	6	12	11	13
Chicago	3	7	2	11	13	18
Cincinnati	3	5	2	11	10	18
Inter Miami CF	2	7	2	8	9	17
Toronto FC	2	8	2	8	16	29

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Seattle	8	0	5	29	23	8
Sporting KC	8	3	2	26	24	15
LA Galaxy	8	4	0	24	20	18
Colorado	6	3	2	20	18	12
LAFc	5	4	3	18	15	12
Real Salt Lake	4	3	4	16	18	12
Minnesota	4	5	3	15	12	16
Houston	3	4	6	15	16	19
Portland	4	6	1	13	14	19
Austin FC	3	6	4	13	10	14
San Jose	3	7	2	11	14	22
FC Dallas	2	5	5	11	14	20
Vancouver	2	7	3	9	12	22

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Saturday, July 3

New England 2, Columbus 2, tie
D.C. United 7, Toronto FC 1
CF Montréal 1, Miami 0
New York 2, Orlando City 1
Chicago 3, Atlanta 0
San Jose 2, Minnesota 2, tie
Nashville 1, Philadelphia 0
Cincinnati 1, Houston 1, tie
Los Angeles FC 1, Real Salt Lake 0

Sunday, July 4

Vancouver 2, FC Dallas 2, tie
Seattle 1, Colorado 1, tie
Sporting Kansas City 2, LA Galaxy 0

Wednesday's games

Toronto FC 3, New England 2
CF Montréal 2, New York City FC 1
Chicago 3, Orlando City 1
Seattle 2, Houston 0
Los Angeles FC 2, Austin FC 0
Colorado 2, Minnesota 0
Real Salt Lake 4, Vancouver 0
LA Galaxy 3, FC Dallas 1

Thursday's games

Philadelphia at New York
Atlanta at Nashville

Friday's game

Columbus at Cincinnati

Saturday, July 17

New England at Atlanta
Miami at New York
Cincinnati at CF Montréal
D.C. United at Philadelphia
New York City FC at Columbus
Orlando City at Toronto FC
Chicago at Nashville
San Jose at Colorado
LA Galaxy at Vancouver
FC Dallas at Portland
Real Salt Lake at Los Angeles FC

Sunday, July 18

Seattle at Minnesota

NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
North Carolina	5	2	1	16	14	4
Orlando	4	2	3	15	12	10
Portland	5	3	0	15	14	6
Houston	4	3	1	13	10	8
Gotham FC	3	1	3	12	7	3
Washington	3	2	3	12	8	8
Chicago	3	4	2	11	6	13
Louisville	3	4	1	10	6	12
Reign FC	2	5	1	7	5	10
Kansas City	0	6	3	3	5	13

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Saturday, July 3

Portland 2, Louisville 0

Sunday, July 4

North Carolina 2, Orlando 0

Friday's games

Louisville at Orlando

Saturday's games

North Carolina at Washington

Sunday's games

Gotham FC at Portland
Houston at Chicago
Kansas City at Reign FC

Saturday, July 17

Houston at North Carolina

Sunday, July 18

Gotham FC at Washington
Reign FC at Chicago
Orlando at Portland

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Connecticut	12	6	.667	—
Chicago	10	9	.526	2½
New York	10	9	.526	2½
Washington	7	10	.412	4½
Atlanta	6	11	.353	5½
Indiana	2	16	.111	10

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	15	4	.789	—
Las Vegas	14	5	.737	1
Minnesota	10	7	.588	4
Phoenix	8	9	.471	6
Dallas	9	11	.450	6½
Los Angeles	6	12	.333	8½

Tuesday's games

No games scheduled

Wednesday's games

Minnesota 85, Dallas 79
Seattle 71, Los Angeles 62
Phoenix 99, Las Vegas 90, OT

Thursday's games

No games scheduled

Friday's games

Atlanta at Connecticut
New York at Indiana
Seattle at Phoenix
Minnesota at Las Vegas

Saturday's game

Washington at Chicago

Sunday's games

Las Vegas at Dallas
Connecticut at New York
Indiana at Atlanta
Phoenix at Seattle
Minnesota at Los Angeles

TENNIS

Nordea Open

Wednesday

At Bastad Tennis Stadium

Bastad, Sweden

Purse: \$125,000

Surface: Red clay

Women's Singles

Round of 16

Anna Bondar, Hungary, def. Anna Kalinskaya (2), Russia, 6-4, 3-0, ret.
Mihaela Buzarnescu, Romania, def. Anna-Karolina Schmiedlova (5), Slovakia, 6-2, 6-2.
Nuria Parrizas-Diaz, Spain, def. Maddison Inglis (8), Australia, 6-2, 3-6, 6-1.
Rebecca Peterson (1), Sweden, def. Lara Arruabarrena, Spain, 6-1, 6-1.
Mayar Sherif (3), Egypt, def. Kateryna Kozlova, Ukraine, 7-6 (9), 6-0.
Aliona Bolsova Zadoinov, Spain, def. Katie Volynets, United States, 6-4, 6-1.
Claire Liu (4), United States, def. Caijsa Wilda Hennemann, Sweden, 6-0, 6-1.
Olga Govortsova (7), Belarus, def. Leonie Kung, Switzerland, 7-5, 6-1.

Women's Doubles

Round of 16

Tereza Mihalikova, Slovakia, and Kamila Rakhimova (3), Russia, def. Anna-Karolina Schmiedlova, Slovakia, and Anna Kalinskaya, Russia, walkover.
Rebecca Peterson, Sweden, and Mayar Sherif, Egypt, def. Kateryna Kozlova, Ukraine, and Katie Volynets, United States, 7-6 (5), 6-4.

Hamburg European Open

Wednesday

At Am Rothenbaum Rot-Weiss Tennis Club

Hamburg, Germany

Purse: \$235,238

Surface: Red clay

Women's Singles

Round of 32

Kristina Kucova, Slovakia, def. Mona Barthel, Germany, 6-3, 7-6 (4).
Magdalena Frech, Poland, def. Marina Melnikova, Russia, 6-4, 6-4.
Elena-Gabriela Ruse, Romania, def. Jil Teichmann (6), Switzerland, 7-5, 7-6 (1).
Tamara Korpatsch, Germany, def. Mandi Minella, Luxembourg, 7-5, 6-3.
Kristyna Pliskova, Czech Republic, def. Irina Bara, Romania, 6-2, 7-6 (5).
Anna Zaja, Germany, def. Viktoriya Tomova, Bulgaria, 0-6, 6-3, 7-5.
Jule Niemeier, Germany, def. Caroline Garcia (8), France, 6-4, 6-2.
Andrea Petkovic, Germany, def. Anna-Lena Friedsam, Germany, 6-4, 7-5.
Sara Errani, Italy, def. Fiona Ferro (5), France, 7-5, 6-3.

Women's Doubles

Round of 16

Alexandra Panova, Russia, and Julia Wachaczyk, Germany, def. Marina Melnikova and Alena Fomina, Russia, 6-3, 6-4.
Alicja Rosolska, Poland, and Vivian Heisen (3), Germany, def. Katharina Gerlach and Katharina Hobgarski, Germany, 4-6, 6-3, 10-7.
Jasmine Paolini, Italy, and Jil Teichmann, Switzerland, def. Natela Dzalamidze, Russia, and Isabella Shinikova, Bulgaria, 6-0, 6-3.
Astra Sharma, Australia, and Rosalie Van Der Hoek, Netherlands, def. Lisa Matviyenko and Sina Herrmann, Germany, 6-4, 6-3.
Anna Zaja and Tamara Korpatsch, Germany, def. Katarzyna Piter, Poland, and Miyu Kato (4), Japan, 6-3, 6-2.

DEALS

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL

Major League Baseball

American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Placed INF Maikel Franco on the 10-day IL. Recalled INF Kelvin Gutierrez from Norfolk (Triple-A East).

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Reinstated OF Adam Engel from the 10-day IL. Designated OF Adam Eaton for assignment.

CLEVELAND INDIANS — Selected the contract of RHP DJ Johnson from Columbus (Triple-A East). Transferred RF Josh Naylor from the 10-day IL to the 60-day IL. Placed LF Eddie Rosario on the 10-day IL, retroactive to July 6. Recalled 2B Owen Miller and RF Daniel Johnson from Columbus.

DETROIT TIGERS — Optioned RHPs Bryan Garcia and Alex Lange to Toledo (Triple-A East). Selected the contract of LHP Ian Krol from Toledo. Placed OF Daz Cameron on the 10-day IL, retroactive to July 5. Reinstated INF/OF Niko Goodrum from the 10-day IL. Transferred RHP Spencer Turnbull from the 10-day IL to the 60-day IL.

HOUSTON ASTROS — Reinstated RHP Joe Smith from the 10-day IL. Optioned IF Taylor Jones Sugar Land (Triple-A West) after last night's game.

MINNESOTA TWINS — Recalled RHP Michael Pineda from rehab his assignment and reinstated him from the 10-day IL. Optioned RHP Griffin Jax to St. Paul (Triple-A East). Acquired RHP Joe Kuzia from Texas in exchange for cash considerations.

SEATTLE MARINERS — Reinstated RHP Erik Swanson from the 10-day IL. Placed LHP Justus Sheffield on the 10-day IL.

TAMPA BAY RAYS — Recalled CF Vidal Brujan and LHP Ryan Sherriff from Durham (Triple-A East). Placed RF Manuel Margot on the 10-day IL, he is expected to be out two to three weeks.

TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Optioned RHP Trent Thornton to Buffalo (Triple-A East). Assigned RHP Trevor Richards to the active roster for tonight's game. Sent LHP Ryan Borucki on a rehab assignment to Buffalo.

National League

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Sent LHP Ryan Bucheter outright to Reno (Triple-A West).

ATLANTA BRAVES — Optioned C William Contreras to Gwinnett (Triple-A East). Transferred LHP Grant Dayton from the 10-day IL to the 60-day IL. Selected the contract of C Jonathan Lucroy from Gwinnett.

CHICAGO CUBS — Placed RHP Jake Arrieta on the 10-day IL. Recalled RHP Cory Abbott from Iowa (Triple-A East).

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Recalled RHP Mitch White from Oklahoma City (Triple-A West). Placed LHP Clayton Kershaw on the 10-day IL, retroactive to July 4.

MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Recalled 1B Rowdy Tellez and added him to the active roster. Designated INF/OF Daniel Robertson for assignment. Selected the contract of RHP Jandel Gustave from Nashville (Triple-A East) and agreed to terms to a major league contract.

NEW YORK METS — Recalled RHP Nick Tropeano from Syracuse (Triple-A East) and will serve as the 27th man for today's second game. Sent CF Johneshwy Fargas to St. Lucie (Low-A Southeast) on a rehab assignment.

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Signed RHP Cam Bedrosian to a minor league contract.

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Recalled RF Lars Nootbaar from Memphis (Triple-A East). Placed RHP Carlos Martinez on the 10-day IL, retroactive to July 5.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Announced that Pablo Peguero, Director of Dominican Republic Operations, passed away unexpectedly this morning at his home in Santo Domingo.

WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Optioned RHP Andres Machado to Rochester (Triple-A East). Reinstated RHP Daniel Hudson from the 10-day IL.

HOCKEY

National Hockey League

ARIZONA COYOTES — Signed Jay Varady to a three-year contract as head coach of the Tucson Roadrunners (AHL).

SOCCER

Major League Soccer

ATLANTA UNITED — Announced Dimitrios Efsthathiou will join the front office as vice president of soccer operations & strategy, effective August 6.

LA GALAXY — Signed MF Daniel Aguirre to a one-year contract with three club option years. Acquired D Josh Drack on a short-term loan from USL Championship affiliate LA Galaxy II under extreme hardship, making him available for tonight's match.

NASHVILLE SC — Acquired F Ake Loba via a transfer from C.F. Monterrey of Liga MX (Mexico).

PORTLAND TIMBERS — Acquired a 2021 international roster slot from FC Cincinnati in exchange for \$100,000 in General Allocation Money (GAM). Acquired \$230,000 in General Allocation Money from Nashville SC in exchange for a 2021 international roster slot.

SEATTLE SOUNDERS — Acquired Tacoma Defiance MF Juan Alvarez on a short-term loan from USL Championship affiliate Rave Green under extreme hardship, making him available for the club's match.

COLLEGE

EAST CAROLINA — Named Austin Knight men's baseball pitching coach.

HOFSTRA — Named Frank Catalanotto head baseball coach.

MICHIGAN ST. — Named Thomas Wilcher the football director of community and high school relations.

PACIFIC — Named Leonard Perry head coach of the men's basketball program.



FRANK AUGSTEIN/AP

England manager Gareth Southgate celebrates after winning the Euro 2020 semifinal match between England and Denmark on Wednesday at Wembley Stadium in London. England won 2-1 in extra time.

EURO 2020

England on verge of ending misery

By ROB HARRIS

Associated Press

LONDON — All the years of hurt, England fans sing about it. All that sense of entitlement, rival fans are irritated by it.

After decades of embarrassment and moaning at tournaments, the English have a chance to finally back up the bravado — just listen to the team anthem, “Football’s Coming Home” — with a trophy.

The nation that lays claim to being the inventor of soccer, but is more fittingly one of the sport’s great underachievers, is back in a final — against Italy in the European Championships.

The teams will meet Sunday night at Wembley Stadium in London, where England will be going for its first major title since winning the 1966 World Cup on its home field. The Italians are unbeaten in 33 games.

It’s been 55 agonizing years for England through 26 World Cups and European Championship tournaments, seven of which it didn’t even qualify for.

Even less illustrious national teams like Denmark and Greece have won trophies since then. But England became all about falling short on a world stage it felt it should dominate.

Beating Denmark on Wednesday broke through the semifinal obstacle at least in the Euros, prevailing 2-1 in extra time and avoiding the penalty shootouts that have proved to be the team’s nemesis through all those near-misses.

“What a brilliant moment for us,” England coach Gareth Southgate said on the field with fans still singing into the night at Wembley. Let’s savor this.”

No way were the England players missing out on the chance to lap up

the acclaim of a crowd waiting for this healing moment, not only to reach a final again but to gather in such big numbers again as the pandemic-restricted capacity swelled to 66,000.

“It’s too late,” Southgate quipped discussing any attempt to curtail the exuberance. “We all let ourselves down on the pitch.”

The celebrations were a reflection of the bond the coach has forged between the national team and an English public that seemed disillusioned with the hubris and dreary performances before Southgate’s overhaul began in 2016.

Leading England to a final is proving cathartic for the coach who as a player missed the decisive penalty kick in the Euro ’96 semifinal shootout against Germany. It was that tournament that saw the introduction of the England “Three Lions” song talking of “30 years of hurt.”

It’s never easy for England. Even when the path to the Euro 2020 semifinals seemed smooth — even the 2-0 win over archrival Germany — Southgate was prepared for difficulties against Denmark, especially after losing the 2018 World Cup semifinal to Croatia and being beaten in the 2019 Nations League last four by the Netherlands.

“I knew it might be a tortuous path,” Southgate said. “In the end it’s a wonderful evening for our fans, for our public and for our country.”

Southgate stayed calm as England held on, only making a substitution when five were available to him in the 90 minutes before extra time.

“It’s one of the proudest moments in my life,” said captain Harry Kane, who netted the winner from a rebound after his penalty was saved. “But we haven’t won it yet, we’ve got one more to go.”

WIMBLEDON/SPORTS BRIEFS



KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH/AP

The Czech Republic's Karolina Pliskova plays a return to Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus during Pliskova's 5-7, 6-4, 6-4 semifinal win Thursday at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London.

Pliskova, Barty push on, set up matchup in final

BY HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

WIMBLEDON, England — It might have been difficult for Ash Barty to imagine that a trip to her first Wimbledon final was just around the corner when she stopped playing at last month's French Open with a hip injury.

Or even when she was two points from being pushed to a third set by Angelique Kerber in their semifinal at the All England Club.

Barty does not let obstacles trouble her for too long. She figures out a way. That's why she's ranked No. 1 and now stands one win from a second Grand Slam title after beating 2018 champion Kerber 6-3, 7-6 (3) on Thursday.

"I've had ups and downs and everything in between and I wouldn't change one day or one moment or one, kind of, road that we've taken in my path and my journey," said Barty, who was the 2011 junior champion at the All England Club and stepped away from tennis for almost two years starting in 2014 because of burnout. "It's been unique. It's been incredible. It's been tough. There have been so many things that led to this point."

Her opponent in Saturday's final will be No. 8 seed Karolina Pliskova, who emerged from a power-hitting and serving display to come back to defeat No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka 5-7, 6-4, 6-4.

Pliskova produced 14 aces, Sabalenka 18. The difference: Pliskova was broken just once, Sabalenka twice.

After going 0-for-8 on break points in the first set, the first set

Scoreboard

Wimbledon

Thursday
At the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club
London
Surface: Grass
Women's Singles
Semifinals

Ashleigh Barty (1), Australia, def. Angelique Kerber (25), Germany, 6-3, 7-6 (3).
Karolina Pliskova (8), Czech Republic, def. Aryna Sabalenka (2), Belarus, 5-7, 6-4, 6-4.

Men's Doubles Semifinals

Nikola Pietrangeli and Mate Pavic (1), Croatia, def. Rajeev Ram, United States, and Joe Salisbury (6), Britain, 7-6 (6), 6-3, 6-7 (2), 7-6 (5).

Marcel Granollers, Spain, and Horacio Zeballos (4), Argentina, def. Simone Bolelli, Italy, and Maximo Gonzalez, Argentina, 6-4, 6-4, 7-6 (3).

Mixed Doubles Third Round

Kveta Peschke, Czech Republic, and Kevin Krawietz (9), Germany, def. Rajeev Ram and Bethanie Mattek-Sands (5), United States, walkover.

she's dropped in six matches, Pliskova "got a bit frustrated," she acknowledged afterward.

But she went 1-for-1 in that category in each of the last two sets.

"It was just super important to stay in the game, stay focused," said Pliskova, whose coach, Sascha Bajin, used to work with Naomi Osaka and was Serena Williams' hitting partner. "That's what I did."

Neither she nor Barty had ever been past the fourth round at the grass-court Grand Slam tournament.

Pliskova, a 29-year-old from the Czech Republic, was the runner-up at the 2016 U.S. Open to three-time major champion Kerber and used to be ranked No. 1.

The 25-year-old Barty won the 2019 French Open and is currently

ranked No. 1. She is the first woman from Australia to reach the title match at Wimbledon since Evonne Goolagong won the trophy 1980; Barty has been wearing an outfit intended as a tribute to Goolagong this fortnight.

"Now to kind of give myself a chance to create some history, almost in a way that's a tribute to her, is really exciting," Barty said.

She arrived in England not having competed since June 3, when she withdrew during her second-round match in Paris, in too much pain to continue.

"To be honest, it was going to be touch-and-go. Everything had to be spot on to give myself a chance to play pain-free and to play knowing that I could trust my body," Barty said. "If you told me a month ago we'd be sitting in this position, I really wouldn't have thought that we would even get close."

On Thursday, she faced a big test in the second set, which Kerber was two points from owning when Barty served at deuce while trailing 5-2. The full-capacity crowd was backing the comeback effort for the 33-year-old German, too, with shouts of "Come on, Angie!" and "Go on, Kerber!"

But Barty steeled herself to hold there, then broke to get within 5-4 with a cross-court forehand passing winner.

That was part of a 38-16 advantage in total winners for Barty, responsible more than anything else for her triumph. And this was remarkable: She compiled that many point-ending shots while making only 16 unforced errors.

BRIEFLY

Osaka says Djokovic, Michelle Obama, others have offered support

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Naomi Osaka says former first lady Michelle Obama and sports stars Novak Djokovic, Michael Phelps and Stephen Curry were among those who reached out to offer support after she withdrew from the French Open to take a mental health break.

In an essay in Time magazine's Olympic preview issue, on sale Friday, Osaka — a four-time Grand Slam champion and former No. 1-ranked player — wrote that she hopes "we can enact measures to protect athletes, especially the fragile ones," and suggests they be allowed to sometimes skip media obligations without punishment.

"There can be moments for any of us where we are dealing with issues behind the scenes," the 23-year-old Osaka said. "Each of us as humans is going through something on some level."

German rider Politt wins Stage 12 in Nimes

NIMES, France — Nils Politt posted his first Tour de France stage win on Thursday after pulling away from a breakaway group.

The German rider from the Bora-Hansgrohe team attacked from a reduced group of three riders with about 12 kilometers left and reached the finish in the southern city of Nimes on his own.

Race leader Tadej Pogacar rode with all other main contenders well behind the breakaway. The defending champion was expected to keep the yellow jersey since none of the breakaway riders were threats in the general classification.

China slams Olympic boycott discussion

BEIJING — China on Thursday criticized what it called the "politicization of sports" after British lawmakers urged a boycott of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics unless China allows an investigation

of complaints of human rights abuses in its northwest.

A boycott "will not succeed," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said.

The British Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee called for the government to urge British companies to boycott the Beijing Games, scheduled for February. The appeal adds to pressure on China's ruling Communist Party over reports of mass detentions and other abuses of mostly Muslim ethnic minorities in the northwestern region of Xinjiang.

Astros' Altuve, Correa drop from All-Star Game

HOUSTON — Houston Astros stars Jose Altuve and Carlos Correa will not play in next week's All-Star Game.

Both players were named reserves for the game Tuesday night in Denver.

Altuve, a second baseman, on Thursday cited needing the time off to deal with unspecified "issues" with his left leg as his reason for pulling out of the game.

Hartford athletes sue to block move to Division III

HARTFORD, Conn. — A group of athletes and student managers at the University of Hartford has filed a federal lawsuit in attempt to block the school from downgrading its athletic programs from Division I to Division III.

The lawsuit, filed Wednesday in U.S. District Court, argues the school is breaking promises made to the athletes when they were recruited to Hartford, including that "they would be able to participate in a Division I athletic program for up to five years."

The university's Board of Regents voted in May to make the transition to Division III after a consultant's report concluded the move could save the school more than \$9 million a year.



CHRISTOPHE ENA/AP

Slovenia's Tadej Pogacar, wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey, speeds in a tuck in the twelfth stage of the Tour de France.

MLB

Back to the ballpark

Concession workers get to ply wares

BY NOAH TRISTER
Associated Press

A suite attendant at the Miami Marlins' home ballpark, Lisa Eckstein had a chance to reconnect with a familiar face when she returned to work this season.

"I have a guest I've taken care of for 18 years," she said. "Their initial reaction was to come and hug me because we're like family — and then we're doing the elbow thing."

It would be premature to say the scene at major league ballparks has completely returned to normal, but there's no question this season has been a step in that direction — perhaps most crucially for the people who work there. With fans back in the stands and concessions being sold, ballpark employees had a chance to return after the pandemic hit many of them hard.

"For some of my coworkers it was pretty tough, because that was their only job," said Eugenia Mays, who has worked at Coors Field in Denver for about two decades. "So unemployment was kicked in, food stamp was kicked in, and you just have to learn how to budget and how to do things off of that point. Some got other jobs, some had to buddy up with others to live together."

After a significantly shortened 2020 season, baseball returned this year with at least some fans attending in person. All teams have now opened their parks to full capacity.

Delaware North, a concessionaire that operates at 11 big league ballparks, says it has recalled around 8,000 employees and hired around 3,000 new ones since Jan. 1 at those parks.

"We are continuing to recruit additional associates who have worked for Delaware North to come back and are seeing more do so now that they see our safe and exciting operations are back in action," company spokesman Glen White said.

Eckstein recalled when the coronavirus crisis brought basketball and hockey to a standstill last year — and the start of the baseball season was postponed.

"We got an email that said go ahead and start your unemployment benefits because nobody knows what's happening," she



CHARLES REX ARBOGAST ABOVE, AND GENE J. PUSKAR, BELOW/AP

Above: A concessions worker walks the aisle near home plate as the Chicago Cubs' Willson Contreras waits for a pitch during the second inning Monday in Chicago. Below: Tom Congdon, a vendor at Pittsburgh sports venues for 38 years, mans his beer and water cart in the concourse at PNC Park before a game between the Pirates and the Atlanta Braves on Monday.



said. She described the unemployment system as a "nightmare" but said her union — Unite Here — was crucial in helping people navigate it.

Eckstein said she was apprehensive about going back to work this season. She hadn't been going out much, except for groceries, but she knew there would be safety precautions.

"We had discussions that we would be afforded the PPP that we needed ... that social distancing would occur, and if we had any difficulty, of course we always have someone to go back to besides the company, which would be the

union," she said. "It's been very good as far as all that goes."

Marlene Patrick-Cooper is president of Unite Here Local 23, which has members in the Washington, D.C., area, home of Nationals Park. She said workers would have to wait in line to clock in to start their shifts — but an app on employees' phones helped alleviate that social distancing concern.

"They could use that as opposed to standing in line," she said.

Eckstein said she was vaccinated by the second homestand, which was a relief. She said most people in her department came back to work, although she wasn't

sure if that was true in more cramped areas like concession stands.

Mays said some employees have had extra work because others didn't return.

"I would prep for Infield Greens — that's the salad bar," she said. "Now, instead of prepping for just one place, I prep for two places. ... I ping-pong back and forth to make sure they're OK."

White said Delaware North is having challenges recruiting for openings, especially cooks and other culinary positions. The company has held job fairs at ballparks in places like Atlanta, Detroit, St. Louis, Cleveland and Texas. It has also looked to nonprofit organizations for help.

"It's an easy way for groups such as civic organizations, high school boosters, churches and other nonprofit groups to operate concessions at the stadium to raise funds for their respective organizations," White said.

With the season now about half over, ballparks have slowly started buzzing again. This year is still different, but for many employees, the past couple of months have been a welcome respite after a tumultuous year.

Scoreboard

American League

East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	54	34	.614	—
Tampa Bay	51	36	.586	2½
Toronto	44	40	.524	8
New York	44	41	.518	8½
Baltimore	28	58	.326	25

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	51	35	.593	—
Cleveland	42	42	.500	8
Detroit	40	47	.460	11½
Kansas City	36	50	.419	15
Minnesota	35	50	.412	15½

West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	54	33	.621	—
Oakland	49	39	.557	5½
Seattle	45	42	.517	9
Los Angeles	44	42	.512	9½
Texas	34	53	.391	20

National League

East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	45	38	.542	—
Washington	42	43	.494	4
Atlanta	42	44	.488	4½
Philadelphia	41	43	.488	4½
Miami	38	47	.447	8

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	52	36	.591	—
Cincinnati	45	41	.523	6
Chicago	43	44	.494	8½
St. Louis	43	45	.489	9
Pittsburgh	32	54	.372	19

West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
San Francisco	54	32	.628	—
Los Angeles	53	34	.609	1½
San Diego	51	38	.573	4½
Colorado	37	50	.425	17½
Arizona	25	63	.284	30

Wednesday's games

Tampa Bay 8, Cleveland 1, 7 innings, 1st game
 Tampa Bay 4, Cleveland 0, 7 innings, 2nd game
 Chicago White Sox 6, Minnesota 1
 Detroit 5, Texas 3
 L.A. Angels 5, Boston 4
 Toronto 10, Baltimore 2
 Houston 4, Oakland 3
 N.Y. Yankees 5, Seattle 4
 Atlanta 14, Pittsburgh 3
 N.Y. Mets 4, Milwaukee 3, 8 innings, 1st game
 Milwaukee 5, N.Y. Mets 0, 7 innings, 2nd game
 Cincinnati 5, Kansas City 2
 Miami 9, L.A. Dodgers 6
 Chicago Cubs 8, Philadelphia 3
 Arizona 6, Colorado 4
 San Francisco 5, St. Louis 2
 Washington 15, San Diego 5

Thursday's games

Oakland at Houston
 N.Y. Yankees at Seattle
 Toronto at Baltimore
 Kansas City at Cleveland
 Detroit at Minnesota
 L.A. Dodgers at Miami
 Colorado at Arizona
 Pittsburgh at N.Y. Mets
 Philadelphia at Chicago Cubs
 Cincinnati at Milwaukee
 Washington at San Diego

Friday's games

Chicago White Sox (Keuchel 6-3) at Baltimore (Lopez 2-11)
 Kansas City (Keller 6-9) at Cleveland (TBD)
 Toronto (Stripling 3-4) at Tampa Bay (McClanahan 3-3)
 Oakland (Irvin 6-7) at Texas (Lyles 4-5)
 Detroit (Manning 1-2) at Minnesota (Maeda 4-3)
 N.Y. Yankees (Cole 8-4) at Houston (Odorizzi 3-3)
 L.A. Angels (Cobb 6-3) at Seattle (Gonzales 1-5)
 St. Louis (LeBlanc 0-1) at Chicago Cubs (Hendricks 10-4)
 Atlanta (Morton 7-3) at Miami (Thompson 2-2)
 Philadelphia (Velasquez 3-3) at Boston (Richards 4-5)
 Pittsburgh (TBD) at N.Y. Mets (Stroman 6-6)
 Cincinnati (Miley 6-4) at Milwaukee (Lauer 3-3)
 Washington (Espino 2-2) at San Francisco (Webb 4-3)
 Arizona (TBD) at L.A. Dodgers (TBD)
 Colorado (Freeland 1-2) at San Diego (Snell 3-3)

STANLEY CUP FINAL

Lightning edge
Habs in Game 5

BY STEPHEN WHYNO

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — It only took scoring once for the Tampa Bay Lightning to strike twice and repeat as Stanley Cup champions.

Backstopped by their star goaltender and the only two Tampa Bay players on the ice without their name on the Cup, the Lightning won it all for the second time in 10 months by beating the Montreal Canadiens 1-0 in Game 5 on Wednesday night.

Andrei Vasilevskiy had a series-ending shutout for an NHL-record fifth consecutive time dating to the 2020 final. Finishing with a handful in a frantic final minute, he made 22 saves to remain undefeated in games after a loss over the past two playoffs, both contested during a deadly pandemic with the Lightning coming out on top each time.

Ross Colton and David Savard weren't around last year and made sure to put their stamp on Tampa Bay's latest title run. Savard set up Coleman's goal midway through the second period

past Canadiens stalwart Carey Price that fired up the crowd of over 17,000 fans at Amalie Arena.

The scene couldn't have been any further from the mirthless, empty arena where the Lightning won the Cup last September in a quarantined bubble across the continent in Edmonton, Alberta. Tampa Bay joined Pittsburgh as the only back-to-back Cup winner in the salary-cap era, but even more impressively did it amid virus protocols with the shortest span between championships in the long history of the NHL.

Never losing twice in a row thanks to a combination of Vasilevskiy's brilliance and one of the deepest rosters constructed since the cap was implemented in 2005, the Lightning solidified their status as a modern-day dynasty.

How deep? Nikita Kucherov had 32 points to join Mario Lemieux as the only players to lead the postseason in scoring two years in a row, and Brayden Point scored 14 goals through three rounds. Kucherov, Point



GERRY BROOME/AP

Lightning left wing Ross Colton (79) reacts after scoring on Montreal Canadiens goaltender Carey Price during the second period of Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final on Wednesday in Tampa, Fla.

Scoreboard

Stanley Cup Final
(Best-of-seven)

Tampa Bay 4, Montreal 1

Tampa Bay 5, Montreal 1
Tampa Bay 3, Montreal 1
Tampa Bay 6, Montreal 3
Montreal 3, Tampa Bay 2, OT
Wednesday: Tampa Bay 1, Montreal 0

and defenseman Victor Hedman all played through injuries, too.

It was just too much for the Canadiens, who relied again on

Price to keep them in a game. He finished with 29 saves — one too few to prevent a Cup celebration for Tampa Bay.

The sunbelt franchise in a non-traditional market that didn't even exist until 1992-93 went through the NHL's most storied franchise to do it. The Lightning won the Cup for the third time in franchise history and denied Montreal a 25th league championship banner.

The Lightning also added an-

other title for "Champa Bay," with this title coming on the heels of Tom Brady leading the Buccaneers to a Super Bowl victory in February. The Tampa Bay Rays went to the World Series last fall.

Tampa Bay's mayor had suggested the Lightning lose Game 4 on the road so they could win at home, and she got her wish as coach Jon Cooper's team became the first since Chicago in 2015 to hoist the Cup on home ice.

Repeat: Tampa Bay never lost back-to-back playoff games in either Cup run

FROM PAGE 56

Backstopped by goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy posting another shutout in a clinching game and going undefeated after losses, Tampa Bay showed the resolve of a champion.

"There's always big losses," said forward Patrick Maroon, who became the fourth player in NHL history and first in 57 years to win the Cup three years in a row on different teams. "We've had some tough ones during the playoffs this year. It's the way you respond."

Listen to captain Steven Stamkos or veteran defenseman Ryan McDonagh, and it's clear Cooper's vision of navigating playoff hockey has filtered down to his players. There was no riding the highs or wallowing in the lows.

The Lightning instead learned to react well to each twist and turn, and the front office learned to build a juggernaut of a team in the salary cap era that has reached the semifinals five times in seven years and the final three times.

That's no easy task, as the players who have been with Tampa since the 2015 final loss to Chicago and beyond know well. Those around in 2019 remember winning the Presidents' Trophy with the league's best record and then being swept right out of the playoffs in the first round at the hands of a harder-working, less-talented team in Columbus.

"There's no doubt that today those experiences are part of our baggage," said general manager Julien BriseBois, who wasn't afraid to ante up at the past two trade dead-



GERRY BROOME/AP

The Lightning's Steven Stamkos, left, and Anthony Cirelli, right, crowd left wing Ross Colton after he scored against the Montreal Canadiens on Wednesday in Tampa, Fla.

lines to go all in. "We can draw on those experiences to prepare for our games. ... They made us better."

Perhaps it's so difficult to repeat because it is so exhausting. It's only been done once since the cap era began in 2005.

What the Lightning did from the time they hoisted the Cup as bubble hockey champions Sept. 29 in Edmonton, Alberta, until Wednesday night was get better from each individual setback.

The first challenge was finding out Ku-

cherov would not be able to play during the condensed, 56-game regular season. Tampa Bay took advantage of salary cap rules to bring back their superstar in time for Game 1 of the first round, which the Lightning started on the road after losing four of six.

Missing the benefits of home didn't matter, not after almost every NHL team became used to playing in empty or nearly empty arenas.

Losing to the Islanders in overtime in Game 6 put the Lightning in their first must-

win situation in 22 months, not since facing elimination against the Blue Jackets in 2019. This time, with Montreal already waiting, Yanni Gourde scored the only goal of the night, Vasilevskiy made 18 saves and Tampa Bay found a way.

"It was all a culmination of two years of work," Cooper said.

Tampa Bay was the overwhelming favorite against the Canadiens, who brought the underdog label and an exciting blend of young and old talent backstopped by stand-out goalie Carey Price.

The Lightning shrugged off the feel-good Habs, solved Price and relied on their depth to win it all — after they were dealt one final blow to learn and grow from. The morning after their only loss of the Final, players at breakfast found renewed focus.

"At the end of the day, you hate to lose," McDonagh said. "Sometimes you hate to lose more than you like to win. That's probably the identity of this group."

Tampa Bay never lost back-to-back playoff games in either Cup run. It's impossible to lose a best-of-seven series that way, and Tampa Bay showed why it deserves to be in the modern-day dynasty conversation.

"That's the mentality we've had: Sometimes it takes four games, sometimes seven," Stamkos said. "This group is very mature in terms of realizing the task at hand."

Much like the tail end of the pandemic in the U.S., the Lightning are likely at the end of their reign as perennial Cup contenders with roster moves on the horizon. If this run has shown anything, it's that they can lose and still find a way to win.

NBA FINALS

NOTEBOOK

Sweating with the oldies: 30-somethings abound in the Finals

BY DAVID BRANDT
Associated Press

PHOENIX — Chris Paul and his 36-year-old legs climbed onto the podium at the NBA Finals on Wednesday. He was asked to reminisce about things that have changed in his game during the past 16 years.

"I'm not as athletic as I was then," Paul said grinning.

But what he lacks in athleticism, he's made up for in other ways. He was fantastic in Game 1 on Tuesday night, finishing with 32 points and nine assists to lead the Phoenix Suns to a 118-105 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks.

He is one of several 30-somethings in these playoffs proving that older legs and a little savvy can still carry teams a long way.

Three of the Bucks' starting five — Jrue Holiday, P.J. Tucker and Brook Lopez — are at least 30 and a fourth, Khris Middleton, will turn 30 this summer. Backup point guard Jeff Teague recently turned 33.

Paul is the oldest player on the Suns, but rotation players Jae Crowder and Torrey Craig are also in their 30s.

Paul was the unquestioned star, shooting 12-for-19 from the field, including 4-for-7 from three-point range. Lopez was solid for Milwaukee, scoring 17 points and making three three-pointers.

Others struggled: Crowder scored just one point on a free throw and was 0-for-8 from the field and missed all five of his three-point attempts. Holiday hit just 4 of 14 shots.

Tucker was his usual self, providing valuable defense and toughness for the Bucks. He added seven points.

And with so much experience on that court, no one expects the upcoming games to be easy.

"It's going to be a very hard series," Crowder said. "These guys played very hard. They are a good

team and they have very good players. I think the physicality and the way the game was played was high-level; you respect that."

Mind games

It was absurdly loud from the moment Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo stepped to the line for his first free-throw attempt in Game 1 on Tuesday night.

It sounded like every one of the 17,000 strong at Phoenix Suns Arena started counting — screaming out the seconds as Antetokounmpo went through his lengthy routine. By the end of the game, it was deafening and the crowd roared each time he missed.

It's hard to say if it had much of a direct effect; Antetokounmpo was 7-for-12 from the line. He's struggled shooting free throws the past two playoff series, making just 44 of 88 (50%) against the Nets and the Hawks. He's made 72% from the free-throw line in his career.

"Of course, 20,000 people yelling, 'one, two, three, four,' you notice that," Antetokounmpo said. "But as I said, like I've learned to embrace it. Like I know it's not going to stop."

Olympics got next

Suns guard Devin Booker has a message for the USA basketball team: "I'll be there."

"I've reached out to Coach Pop," Booker said of national team coach Gregg Popovich. "I reached out to (Jerry) Colangelo just recently and then I told them I saw all the guys reported to Vegas, and the only other place I would rather be is the Finals. But I would love to be there with the guys and I'll be there soon."

The logistics of getting from the NBA Finals to Tokyo could be tight if the series goes all seven games. Game 7 is scheduled for July 22 and the first game for USA Basketball at the Olympics is July 25. Holiday and Middleton could be in the same situation for the Bucks.



CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/AP

The Phoenix Suns' Deandre Ayton, left, attempts a shot ahead of the Milwaukee Bucks' Brook Lopez during Game 1 of the NBA Finals on Tuesday in Phoenix. Ayton had 22 points and 19 rebounds.

With Suns' stars rolling, Bucks need to step it up

BY BRIAN MAHONEY
Associated Press

PHOENIX — At their best, the Phoenix Suns have three players who can take over a game.

There's Chris Paul and Devin Booker, breaking down defenses from the backcourt. Deandre Ayton has been a beast on the backboards and almost automatic as a shooter.

When all three are rolling the way they were in Game 1 of the NBA Finals, it's easy to see why this could finally be the Suns' championship chance.

"We have a real team," Paul said Wednesday, "like a team where you can't just key on one guy or two guys."

The Milwaukee Bucks are supposed to have the same formula.

Yet just when Giannis Antetokounmpo came back, Jrue Holiday's game went away. And if the Bucks are going to compete they can't afford bad nights from those two or Khris Middleton.

"I think in that perfect, ideal world, all three guys are hitting and clicking and everything is perfect," Milwaukee coach Mike Budenholzer said. "But I'm guessing if you look at any team that has three great players or three really significant players, I bet a lot of nights it's two out of three that they're going and playing well."

Antetokounmpo had 20 points and 17 rebounds in his return to the lineup, and it might be hard for the Bucks to ask for much more so soon after a left knee injury that looked like it could have knocked him out far longer.

But Milwaukee certainly can ex-

Scoreboard

NBA Finals

(Best-of-seven)

x-if necessary

Phoenix 1, Milwaukee 0

Phoenix 118, Milwaukee 105

Thursday: at Phoenix, AFN-Sports, 3 a.m. Friday CET; 10 a.m. Friday JKT

Sunday: at Milwaukee, AFN-Sports, 2 a.m. Monday CET; 9 a.m. Monday JKT

Wednesday, July 14: at Milwaukee, AFN-Sports, 3 a.m. Thursday CET; 10 a.m. Thursday JKT

x-Saturday, July 17: at Phoenix, AFN-Sports, 3 a.m. Sunday CET; 10 a.m. Sunday JKT

x-Tuesday, July 20: at Milwaukee

x-Thursday, July 22: at Phoenix

pect better from Holiday, who missed 10 of his 14 shots and finished with just 10 points in the Suns' 118-105 victory. And though he's long been regarded as one of the NBA's top defensive guards, he wasn't able to limit either Paul or Booker — though in fairness, maybe nobody could have Tuesday.

Holiday said he knows what he needs to do offensively.

"Pick my spots to be aggressive, and I think sometimes it's gotten me in trouble," Holiday said. "I think I've got to be aggressive from the beginning of the game. Sometimes it gets just a bit difficult, or it's just a bit different, again, because we have another ball handler and somebody that's great in transition and makes plays for others."

Holiday averaged 26 points and 11 assists in the two victories that Antetokounmpo missed to end the Eastern Conference finals. He took at least 20 shots in both games, playing with an aggression without the two-time MVP that he hasn't always provided with him in the postseason.

Budenholzer said that's the chal-

lenge of getting three players going at once.

"So it's harder than people realize," he said.

It wasn't any problem for Phoenix. Paul had 32 points and nine assists, Booker added 27 points and six assists, and Ayton finished with 22 points and 19 rebounds.

Paul in particular wore the Bucks out in the third quarter by exploiting their coverage of the pick-and-roll whenever it ended up with a big man such as Brook Lopez or Bobby Portis switching out to defend him. The crafty and creative All-Star guard could either blow by those players off the dribble, or step back away from them to launch deep jumpers.

Milwaukee has faced that problem before. The Bucks never got a handle on the Brooklyn Nets until first James Harden and then Kyrie Irving were injured, or Atlanta's Trae Young until he hurt his foot in the East finals.

Antetokounmpo said he was having no problems with his hyperextended left knee. He wasn't at his best in Game 1 — and certainly was not as effective as Ayton, who hiked his field-goal percentage in the postseason to an absurd 71.1% — but is looking forward to the challenge of Game 2 before the NBA Finals return to Milwaukee this weekend for the first time since 1974.

"Hopefully I can feel more comfortable, more confident to go downhill, to make more plays," Antetokounmpo said. "We'll see. We'll see. I don't know how tomorrow is going to be, but hopefully I can be in a position that I can make more plays."



MATT YORK/AP

Veteran Milwaukee Bucks center Brook Lopez, age 33, rebounds as 36-year-old Phoenix Suns guard Chris Paul, right, looks on.

OLYMPICS



NG HAN GUAN/AP

Team USA player Jayson Tatum reacts after scoring against Turkey in a FIBA Basketball World Cup game in 2019. Tatum has worn No. 10 as part of U.S. teams several times and will wear it at Tokyo.

The Power of 10: Tatum eager to don Kobe's Olympic number

BY TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Jayson Tatum was 15 when he made his first USA Basketball national team. It was 2013, when he got picked to play in the FIBA Americas U-16 championships in Uruguay. And one of the biggest thrills from that experience was getting his jersey.

It bore No. 10.

Kobe Bryant's number. Tatum's favorite player's number.

Bryant wore No. 24 and No. 8 with the Los Angeles Lakers, but he donned No. 10 for USA Basketball when he helped the Americans capture gold medals at the 2008 and 2012 Olympics. Tatum has worn that number as part of U.S. teams several times since — and will wear it at the Tokyo Olympics, where the Americans will aim to capture a fourth consecutive gold medal.

"With this being the first Olympics since we lost him, it holds that much more value," Tatum said. "It's not something I take lightly."

There is a significance to the No. 10 jersey across sports, particularly soccer, where it always seems to be adorning the best players. Pele wore 10 for Brazil. Diego Maradona wore it for Argentina, and Lionel Messi does now. Landon Donovan wore it for the U.S. men's soccer team when he led that program; it has since been passed to Christian Pulisic. For the U.S. women's soccer team, it belongs to Carli Lloyd.

For USA Basketball, it was Bryant's. When he decided not to play in the 2016 Olympics, the number ended up with Kyrie Irving — another player who idolizes Bryant, just as Tatum does. And now, as was the case when the U.S. went to the Basketball World Cup two years ago, the jersey is Tatum's.

"For JT to have this moment, I'm happy for him, genuinely," U.S. center Bam Adebayo said. "I've known JT since I was 12. He deserves everything he's getting and he's going to keep deserving more because he's such a great player. I'm happy for him. That's his idol, and he gets to represent that number. I know he's going to have that 'Mamba Mentality' when he puts that 10 on."

Adebayo is another player who makes no secret of his affinity for Bryant, the five-time NBA champion and now Basketball Hall of Fame enshrinee who died in a helicopter crash along with one of his daughters and seven other people in January 2020 on their way to a basketball tournament. He's worn Bryant's shoes for games, and said he's devastated that he never got to meet him.



ERIC GAY/AP

Kobe Bryant reacts after a dunk during the men's gold medal game against Spain at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. Bryant wore No. 24 and No. 8 with the Los Angeles Lakers, but he donned No. 10 for USA Basketball.

Tatum knew Bryant well. They worked out together and Bryant offered him advice many times.

"I remember one talk, it might have been after a game, and he was saying that a lot of people won't understand what you do," Tatum said. "He said, 'What I mean by that is, the ones that really want to be great and really want to be special really take that whatever-it-takes mentality.' He told me it takes sacrifice, because the ultimate question is about how much are you willing to give up to be great."

U.S. coach Gregg Popovich still laments that Tatum got hurt at that World Cup in China. That team was built for Tatum to be, as Popovich put it, "the go-to guy" — just as Bryant had been for past U.S. teams. When Tatum was ruled out of the World Cup with an ankle injury, the Americans sputtered and wound up finishing only seventh.

Popovich said Tatum is even better now.

"He's become more of a two-way player," Popovich said. "He's way more confident. He's developed more skills. He's, on top of that, more aggressive and knows that he can dominate people."

People would say the same things about Bryant as well.

"I remember that first team when I was hoping, wishing, that I got No. 10," Tatum said. "Kobe, everyone knows that was my favorite player. I was 15 years old and got to wear the number of my favorite player. It just felt like I had some level of connection with him."

Tokyo's state of emergency means no fans at Games

BY HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Olympic events in and around Japan's capital will take place without fans in the stands, after the prime minister announced a state of emergency in Tokyo on Thursday to combat the surging number of coronavirus cases.

The local organizing committee met with the International Olympic Committee and made the no-spectators decision for venues in Tokyo and the nearby prefectures of Chiba, Saitama and Kanagawa, according to the Reuters news agency.

Hours earlier, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga announced the fourth emergency during a Novel Coronavirus Response Headquarters meeting. It takes effect Monday and lasts until Aug. 22, he said. The Olympics open July 23 and conclude Aug. 8.

"Although the number of new cases is declining in many areas in Japan, the number of infected cases is on the rise in metropolitan areas centering around Tokyo since the end of last month," he said.

"There is a need to strengthen measures in order to prevent the infection from spreading nationally again while considering the effects of the variant strain, although the number of those in serious condition and occupancy rate of beds in hospitals are low," Suga added.

The Japanese government will also extend focused, anti-infection measures for Osaka, Chiba, Saitama and Kanagawa prefectures until Aug. 22 but will lift

those restrictions in Hokkaido, Aichi, Kyoto, Hyogo and Fukuoka prefectures on Sunday as originally planned.

Kanagawa is home to several U.S. military installations, including Yokosuka Naval Base and the Army's Camp Zama.

Alcohol will be banned at areas under the state of emergency, Suga said, and in those areas under the focused anti-infection measures, depending on the situation.

Tokyo had implemented shortened hours for bars and restaurants that failed to slow the virus' spread, according to AP. A ban on alcohol sales would dampen festivities associated with the games in Tokyo's central wards, long-time pandemic hotspots.

The capital reported 896 new cases on Thursday. That figure is in line with experts' earlier estimate that daily cases in Tokyo could hit 1,000 before the games, AP reported. Also Thursday, two U.S. military bases in Japan had reported new coronavirus patients as of 6 p.m.

One person at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni contracted the virus sometimes since Wednesday, according to a post on the base Facebook page.

Kadena Air Base on Okinawa had six people test positive since July 2, according to its Facebook page. One person tested positive after falling ill; two more tested positive during their 14-day restriction after travel outside Japan; and three quarantined as close contacts also contracted the virus, according to Kadena.

Stars and Stripes reporter Joseph Ditzler contributed to this report.



EUGENE HOSHIKO/AP

International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach waves to media upon his arrival Thursday in Tokyo. Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga announced a state of emergency in Tokyo through Aug. 22, meaning there will be no fans at Olympic events.

OLYMPICS

Tools of the trade

Hands the key to keeping a grip in climbing

By JOHN MARSHALL
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY— The skin stretches taught, veins pouring in tributaries over the linear lines of the carpals and metacarpals.

The phalanges fall into line like a picket fence with boards of varying lengths, the knuckles unknobby. They're long, yet not spindly, even muscular — if fingers can be muscular.

The palms are proportional, powerful like mini car compactors. The fingernails are closely cropped, tips arching in unblemished partial ellipses.

The cue is in the cuticles, chalky halos announcing these are the hands of a climber.

Flipover Kyra Condie's appendages and find more proof: calluses not quite on the fingertips, not quite centered on the final pad of each digit.

"Honestly, my hands are less ugly than people would think they are," said Condie, one of four American climbers headed to the Tokyo Olympics. "People picture like torn apart, bloodied everywhere. That does happen, but it's not like a daily occurrence."

Baseball players need bats and gloves, tennis players racquets, golfers their clubs.

Climbers' instruments are their hands.

Hands are the main contact point to the only obstacle in the sport, a sheer wall freckled with holds set at an array of angles, some no wider than a fingertip.

Strength, in muscle and skin, is paramount. A breakdown in either is disastrous.

"The hands are our main tool," U.S. Olympian Nathaniel Coleman said. "Every little muscle in our forearms, in our hands are essential for using our entire body to climb."

Serious climbing is a constant full-body workout hinged at the fingers.

Those pullups most of us struggle to do more than a couple? Climbers do it from their fingertips, sometimes one handed — over and over again.

They practice on hang boards bolted to walls, dangling by nothing but their fingers. Rest during a climb constitutes clinging to holds with hands and feet.

Climbing's Olympic debut in Tokyo this month will include three disciplines: lead, bouldering and speed.

All three will take walnut-cracking hand strength.

"Almost more important than anything else is your hands being able to have good finger strength, healthy fingers so you don't pop a tendon or anything like that," American Olympic climber Collin Duffy said. "Every single time you're on the wall, you're using your hands in some fashion."

The minutes and hours between those times on the wall are spent making sure their hands aren't too battered to do it again

— a skin breakdown could mean the end of a competition, a finger pulley injury up to a year on the shelf.

Sweat is every climber's enemy, so they coat their hands in chalk before every climb to prevent slippage. Some take it a step further, bringing battery-operated fans to dry their hands before attacking the wall.

The problem: All the drying can lead to cracking.

Lotions, balms and salves are essential to most climbers' hand-care toolkits, but there is a fine line. Too soft and the callouses break down, maybe even break off.

Soaking in water has the same effect, so climbers do dishes wearing rubber gloves or, better yet, leave it to someone else. Climbers have been known to wear rubber gloves in the shower before climbing. Find yourself soaking in a hot tub with a group of climbers and



PHOTOS BY RICK BOWMER/AP

American Olympic climber Nathaniel Coleman looks at his hands before a practice climb in May. Climbing is an Olympic sport for the first time, and the spotlight will introduce a massive audience to an oft lonely pursuit.

you'll likely be the only person whose hands are in the water.

Files, razors and sandpaper also are essential.

Not for the nails. For the callouses.

An imperfection on a callous can catch on a crystal in the rock or a sharp edge, so those have to be sanded down or trimmed off. Files and sandpaper can prevent cuts from opening up. Razors are good for trimming because fresh skin heals faster than callouses.

Some climbers walk around with rocks in their pocket to try making their skin hard. One climber supposedly burned his fingertips on a hot tea kettle to make his skin harder.

There are even reports of climbers immersing their hands in water and running an electrical current to cut down on excessive sweating.

"People try to control it as much as possible," Condie said. "There are some interesting methods out there, but whatever it takes."

Those hands are a precious commodity in the climbing world.



Gymnast Malone has taken unusual path to Tokyo

By WILL GRAVES
Associated Press

Brody Malone insists there is nothing special about his origin story. His parents signed him up for gymnastics when he was 3 because he couldn't — or more to the point, wouldn't — sit still.

"Typical," Malone said in the soft southern twang that betrays his Tennessee and Georgia roots.

That may be the only typical thing about the 21-year-old newly minted national champion who will head to Tokyo later this month as the standard-bearer for the U.S. men's team.

Malone is a rodeo-riding, froggigging son of the South. And



JEFF ROBERSON/AP

Brody Malone blows chalk off his arm during the men's Olympic Gymnastics Trials on June 26.

yeah, he knows he might be the only person in the history of the Stanford men's program to ask coach Thom Gliemi for a good place to hunt in the northern California woods.

"I don't think he gave me much," Malone said with a laugh.

Hard to blame Gliemi, though he is quick to point out what looks like an unusual marriage between school and athlete on the surface is more of a testament to the lengths Malone will go to challenge himself.

Sure, there were programs that might have seemed like a better fit for someone who grew up in tiny Summerville, Ga., about 90 min-

utes northwest of Atlanta. Malone instead opted for the one 2,300 miles away geographically and, well, maybe far more than that culturally.

Gliemi describes Malone as a "lunch-pail" athlete whose teammates voted him as the squad's hardest worker this season while winning his second NCAA all-around title and leading the Cardinal to a national championship in April.

It marked the start of a run that's thrust Malone into the spotlight, whether he likes it or not. He was so dominant at the U.S. Olympic Trials — an event he won by a staggering three points in a sport

where mere tenths often separate success and failure — that men's high-performance director Brett McClure proclaimed "What a stud!" in the aftermath.

If he's being honest, Malone still isn't comfortable with the attention he's receiving. If he had his way, he'd just go to the gym and put in the work. Yet the landscape around him is shifting.

"In rodeo, no matter what, you have to be ready to go," he said. "You have to be in the right mindset. There's a lot of moving parts. ... It's the same in gymnastics. You've just got to have that competitor's mindset and be able to perform when you have to."

OLYMPICS



ANDRE PENNER/AP

Kokona Hiraki of Japan competes during the 2019 Skate Park World Championship in Sao Paulo. Skating is one of four debut Olympic sports, along with karate, surfing and sport climbing.

SKATEBOARDING

On shaky footing: Olympics, skateboarders must adjust

By JOHN LEICESTER
Associated Press

CHELLES, France — For skateboarding, a sport where the No. 1 rule is that there are no rules, the straight jacket of the Olympic Games, with its dense thickets of tradition and regulation, may not be a natural or immediate fit.

So at the Tokyo Games, freewheelin' skaters and Olympic officials are going to learn a lot about each other. Could be quite a ride. Both have plenty to gain from making a splash with their brand-new partnership. Skating is one of four debut Olympic sports, along with karate, surfing and sport climbing.

The spectacle of skaters turning their boards into flying machines, soaring over obstacles, will deliver a rejuvenating injection of youthful energy to the dowdy sporting extravaganza. The youngest, Japan's Kokona Hiraki and Britain's Sky Brown, are just 12.

With its street fashions and "all-are-welcome" inclusive culture of all genders, ages and abilities having four-wheeled fun together, skating officials anticipate that the sport will help snag future generations of Olympic fans and viewers that the International Olympic Committee needs to keep making megabucks from the Games.

Freedom or fame

For skaters, the powerful Olympic spotlight means global visibility and,

with that, possibly better prospects of earning a living from riding and sponsorships. Skaters also hope the Olympic seal of approval will generate more funding for skate parks and bowls to train, land and invent their tricks.

Some skaters fret that Olympic codification will come at a cost for the freedom, spontaneity and soul of their sport born on the streets. They argue that skating is a whole lifestyle, and worry it will be crimped and compromised by being co-opted. There were similar misgivings with snowboarding — before it went on to become one of the most riotous and popular shows at the Winter Olympics, and three gold medals turned Shaun White into a household name.

See that fakey five-o?

With high-adrenaline acrobatics akin to those seen on Olympic snow — so much so that White toyed with the idea of trying to also qualify in skating for Tokyo — skateboarding promises to wow and hook both existing and untapped Olympic audiences.

"The people who watch us in Tokyo are going to say to themselves, 'This is pretty,'" predicts Madeleine Larcheron, a 15-year-old who'll compete for France.

"I'm often asked, 'What's the scariest trick?' There isn't one. In skating, everything is scary," she said. "You go upside down, you speed along, there is always a slice of danger."

At a glance

What's new: Absolutely everything. Skateboarding is one of four sports making their Olympic debuts at the Tokyo Games, along with karate, surfing and sport climbing. As was the case when its winter sports cousin, snowboarding, joined the Olympic program in 1998, some skateboarders fear the sport is selling out.

But the Olympic spotlight will introduce skating to a huge global audience and, as proved true in snowboarding, likely attract more kids to skating and encourage them to push the sport and their daredevil tricks forward.

Tokyo expectations: For their inaugural Olympic competition, the 40 men and 40 women have a custom-built skate park on the shores of Tokyo Bay to play with. They'll be chasing medals in two events: park, where they skate in a bowl, and street, where they navigate stairs, rails, curbs and other urban furniture. Skateboarding will have one of the largest age spectrums of the games, with competitors ranging from pre-teens to middle age.

Athletes to watch: Host Japan will be looking for medals in the women's park competition from the top-ranked Misugu Okamoto and Sakura Yosozumi, as well as 12-year-old Kokona Hiraki. British phenom Sky Brown, who'll just have turned 13, will be trying to stop them. With no-fear stunts and polished messaging that age is irrelevant, Brown already has a rich portfolio of sponsors and social media accounts. She is back from a terrifying fall last year — video of which was posted on an Instagram account managed by her parents.

Gold medal moments: The street contests are in the first week, with the men competing on July 25, followed the next day by the women. The park events round out week two, with the women's competition on Aug. 4, with the men dropping into the bowl the next day.

3X3 BASKETBALL

Playing to 21: Sport is Olympic version of a pickup game

By EDDIE PELLIS
Associated Press

The latest stop on the perennial search for the younger, attention-span-challenged audience for the Olympics might look familiar — the blacktop, and 3-on-3 basketball.

Not a pickup game, mind you. Once the Olympics gets hold of this version of street hoops, it will only share a faint resemblance to anything happening on an urban playground.

For one, there will be no Americans — at least none playing in the men's tournament. Another difference is that these games will have refs, a scoreboard and each team gets one sub.

But some of it might look familiar. Games are first to 21 (Or whoever is winning after 10 minutes.) Teams have to clear the ball back to around the three-point line after rebounds. Inside buckets are worth one, and "threes" are worth two. The teams have coaches but they are for behind-the-scenes stuff, not allowed on the court.

"For me, the best thing is, it's always been fun to play," said Dusan Bulut, widely considered the best in the world, who will lead Serbia into the tournament as a favorite. "When you play 3-x-3, you have all the freedom in the world and it was so much fun for me because I can show everything I am."

Who's there

In addition to trying to capture more young eyes, one of the IOC's stated missions in bringing 3-on-3 basketball to the big stage was to expose more of the world to the sport. In at least one respect, this mission has been accomplished. Mongolia will bring one of the eight teams in the women's field.

Mongolia is not a newcomer to the Olympics, but it has always fielded competitors in individual sports, such as wrestling and box-

At a glance

What's new: Everything. The Olympics website calls this version of hoops "exciting, urban and innovative." It was added to the program for Tokyo to lure a younger audience and get more countries involved in one of the core sports of the games. In one way, that has worked. Mongolia will field a women's team. The United States did not qualify for the men's tournament.

Tokyo expectations: Fast-paced fun for those who don't have the stamina to watch an entire, full-court game. Held on an outdoor half-court under a dome-like covering, teams will play to 21, or for 10 minutes, whichever comes first. Buckets are worth one point inside and two from outside the line. Let's hoop!

Athletes to watch: The international basketball federation, FIBA, ranks 3x3 players. Top on the men's list is 35-year-old Dušan Domociv-Bulut of Serbia. Laetitia Guapo of France is the top-ranked woman.

Gold Medal moment(s): Gold and bronze medal games are July 28.

ing. This will be the first time the country has entered a team sport into the Summer Games.

Who's not

It seemed a foregone conclusion that the U.S. would field a team in the sport it invented. Not to be on the men's side.

Unlike the 5-on-5 version, a win at the World Cup for the U.S. in 2019 did not secure an Olympic spot. And the Americans, led by former Purdue star Robbie Hummel, suffered a stunning upset to the Netherlands in May that knocked them out of the race for one of the last Olympics spots. It means the world's second-ranked team, behind Serbia, will be watching the Olympic debut of 3x3 from home.

Schedule stuff

Teams will play round robin, sometimes two games a day, from July 24-27. The semifinals and finals all take place July 28. All the action is at Aomi Urban Sports Park, an outdoor venue with a covered half court.



MARTIN MEJIA/AP

Olivia Nelson, right, of the United States, drives past Evelyn Mariano, of Brazil, during the 3x3 semifinal at the Pan American Games in Lima, Peru, in 2019.

OLYMPICS

WOMEN'S SOCCER

US is team to beat, of course

BY ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

The United States women's national soccer team has something to prove at the Tokyo Olympics.

It's not so much about revenge after a surprising loss to Sweden at the 2016 Rio Games but, rather, a new goal: The U.S. can become the first team to win an Olympics following a World Cup victory.

In Tokyo the Americans will play for their first world championship under coach Vlatko Andonovski. His immensely deep and talented squad includes the sport's biggest names: Alex Morgan, Megan Rapinoe, Christen Press and Carli Lloyd.

The U.S. team, winner of the 2019 World Cup in France, is ranked No. 1 in the World. It is undefeated in 42 straight matches and shows no sign of slowing down heading into the 2023 World Cup.

The biggest hurdle along that path will be the Olympics, where a small roster, a condensed schedule and the hot and humid conditions will all be challenges — along with the competition.

Andonovski emphasized versatility in choosing his squad for Tokyo. Experience counted, too, with the average age of the team at 30.8 years old — the oldest U.S. Olympic roster ever. Seventeen of the 18 players were on the World

Cup squad.

"There's so many boxes that the players need to check in order to make the roster, starting from health and fitness, and very important, performance. They've got to perform. It doesn't matter if they're versatile if they don't perform well. So there's a certain level of performance that they need to have, or a certain way they need to execute the task," Andonovski said. "And then obviously the experience that they have, they've already been on this team in big tournaments."

The United States, in Group G, will open with nemesis Sweden in Tokyo on July 21. In Brazil, Sweden knocked the Americans out in the quarterfinals on penalties, after which goalkeeper Hope Solo famously called the Swedes "cowards" for bunkering in on defense.

One of Sweden's advantages in 2016 was coach Pia Sundhage, who was the former U.S. coach and knew her former team — and it's weaknesses — well. She's now head coach at Brazil, while Sweden is led by Peter Gerhardsson.

The basics

There are 12 teams competing, separated into three groups. The tournament starts on July 21 and will be played across six cities in Japan with the finals set for Aug. 6 at Japan National Stadium.



JESSICA HILL/AP

United States' Megan Rapinoe controls the ball as Mexico's Bianca Sierra defends during the first half of an international friendly soccer match, Thursday, July 1, 2021, in East Hartford, Conn.

Germany, the winner in 2016, is not among the teams in the field. UEFA qualifying for the Games was the Women's World Cup, meaning France, Great Britain and runner-up Netherlands won the berths.

Women's soccer joined the Olympics in 1996. The United States has four gold medals overall, and has advanced to the final match in all but the 2016 edition.

Pia's Move

Sundhage was named Brazil's coach after the 2019 World Cup. She was coach of the United States from 2008-12, then coach of her native Sweden from 2012-17.

Like Andonovski, Sundhage has a talented, deep Olympic roster with five-time FIFA World

Player of the Year Marta, as well as Debinha and forward Ludmila. Also included is Formiga, who is a seemingly forever-young 43 and has played in a women's record six Olympics.

In announcing her squad, Sundhage sang: "I'm so excited, I just can't hide it."

"I've learned a lot from the Brazilian players and I hope we've also taught them a couple of things about cohesion and about being on the same page and doing our best," Sundhage said.

Canada's quest

The Canadians qualified along with the United States in the CONCACAF region. Led by new coach Bev Priestman, Canada's roster includes Christine Sinclair, the

At a glance

Highlights from Rio: Germany won its first gold medal with a 2-1 victory over Sweden. It was quite a swan song for Germany coach Silvia Neid, a two-time FIFA Women's Coach of the Year. She stepped down after the game. But the big story was that the United States wasn't in the final for the first time since women's soccer became part of the Olympics in 1996. That's because the Americans were memorably eliminated by Sweden — and former coach Pia Sundhage — in the quarterfinals. Afterward, U.S. goalkeeper Hope Solo called the Swedes cowards for bunkering in on defense. Canada won its second straight bronze by defeating Brazil.

Tokyo expectations: The United States has four Olympic gold medals, most of any nation, and they're the favorites in the field of 12 teams. The Americans are trying to become the first team to double, winning Olympic gold after winning the World Cup. The U.S. team is deep, with stars like Alex Morgan, Carli Lloyd and Megan Rapinoe. Canada is back, too, hoping to improve on back-to-back bronzes. Among the other teams looking to medal are the Netherlands, runners up to the United States at the World Cup, and host Japan. Dutch coach Sarina Wiegman will step down following the Olympics to take over as England's head coach heading into the 2023 World Cup.

Athletes to watch: Brazil's Marta is back for her fifth Olympics. The six-time FIFA World Player of the Year helped Brazil win silver medals in 2004 and 2008, but the gold has eluded her. ... Canada's Christine Sinclair is the game's top international goal scorer, among men and women. She's heading to her fourth Olympics. ... Australia's Sam Kerr is known to do backflips after she scores — which she does a lot. ... On the American side, Carli Lloyd has worked to show she's still got it at 38, and will be 39 when the tournament opens. And of course Megan Rapinoe usually stands out at these big events.

Gold medal moments: The gold medal match is set for Aug. 6 at Tokyo's National Stadium.

all-time top international scorer among men and women.

As captain of the Canadian team, Sinclair, 38, is making her fourth Olympic appearance. She has appeared in 15 overall Olympic matches, scoring 11 goals.

At the 2016 Brazil Games, Sinclair scored the game winner in a 2-1 victory over Brazil for Canada's second consecutive Olympic bronze medal.

MEN'S SOCCER

Clash with European season creates a headache

BY ROB HARRIS
Associated Press

Often the event that connects an Olympic host city with the rest of the nation, soccer could be a source of trepidation rather than excitement in Japan.

Players spreading across the country is far from desired as Japan is trying to stage a Games that limits the risks of COVID-19 infections spreading.

Of the seven stadiums, five are away from the Tokyo area, with Sapporo about a 100-minute flight north of the capital.

With crowd sizes restricted, too, Japan's men won't get to experience the joy that the packed Maracanã provided when Neymar's penalty clinched gold for Brazil.

Japan has little pedigree in Olympic men's soccer, winning its only medal — a bronze — at the 1968 Mexico Olympics.

The country's most recent brush with glory came at the 2019 Asian Cup before a surprise loss to Qatar in the final. Even though men's soccer squads at this Olympics are mostly players under the age of 24, Japan isn't using a youth team coach for the Olympics. Hajime

Moriyasu, who has been in charge of the senior team since 2018, will coach at the Olympics as well.

Moriyasu has opted for versatility with players who can adapt to different roles, including Kou Itakura, who plays for Dutch club Groningen at either center back or midfield.

"We prioritized players who can create opportunities single-handedly, play solid defense at the individual level," Moriyasu said, "and make runs for the team."

Olympics clash

The clash of the Olympics with the start of the European season makes it hard for teams to often take their best players. So, Japan will be without its biggest star. Forward Takumi Minamino is with Liverpool trying to regain the Premier League title.

Egypt also won't be able to call on Minamino's Liverpool teammate Mohamed Salah.

The Olympics is the only major title Lionel Messi has won with Argentina, at the 2008 Beijing Games. But the out-of-contract Barcelona forward is not one of the three permitted overage players in the Argentina squad at a

time when he looks to resolve his club future and has been involved in the Copa America in this offseason.

World Cup winner

France will be looking to become dual Olympic and world champions. While Florian Thauvin has a World Cup winner's medal from 2018, the winger will be hoping to appear in Japan for more than the one minute he played in Russia. He only came on at the World Cup in one game as a late substitute for Kylian Mbappé. Even though the Paris Saint-Germain star failed to score in June as France exited the European Championship in the round of 16, he won't get a chance to quickly make amends given his absence from the Olympic squad.

Mandatory release

The one country where clubs have to release players for the Olympics is Spain. That means six men from its Euro 2020 team will get a chance to deliver Spain's first soccer gold since 1992, including senior national team starting goalkeeper Unai Simón.

At a glance

Highlights from Rio: Brazil winning gold lifted the footballing mood of the nation two years after a humiliating, 7-1 loss to Germany at the last major sporting event to be held in the country — the World Cup. Neymar's status as a national hero was also cemented when he scored from a free kick and added the winning kick of the Olympic final penalty shootout against Germany. The boisterous celebrations spread far from the Maracana Stadium.

Tokyo expectations: Brazil starting the group stage in Rio five years ago with two draws shows how difficult it can be to advance even as one of the top-placed teams in a group. This time, the reigning champion has not only Germany to overcome but also Saudi Arabia and the Ivory Coast. France is hotly tipped for glory but has a group with host Japan, Mexico, which won the CONCACAF qualifying tournament, and South Africa.

Athletes to watch: Neymar won't be able to win a second gold because, unlike in 2016, he's playing at the Copa America. Maybe it's time for a star of this year's host nation to shine such as Takefusa Kubo, who flaunted his skills by nutmegging four opponents when Japan played an Olympic warmup against Jamaica in June. The winger is a Real Madrid player who has spent his time in Spain on loan at Mallorca, Villarreal and Getafe. At the other end of the age spectrum, Brazil is taking the 38-year-old Dani Alves, the former Paris Saint-Germain and Barcelona defender now back in his homeland with Sao Paulo.

Gold medal moments: The gold medal match is set for Aug. 7 in Yokohama.

OLYMPICS



TORU TAKAHASHI/AP

Right-hander Tomoyuki Sugano, the reigning Central League MVP, heads an Olympic pitching staff for Japan that includes current Rookies of the Year Masato Morishita and Kaima Taira.

BASEBALL

Japan favored in tourney

Host nation, unlike the U.S., will close down its top leagues for Olympics

BY RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

While most Olympic events are a competition among the best, the better you are in baseball, the less of a chance you have of playing for gold.

Major League Baseball refused to allow players on 40-man rosters to participate in the six-nation Olympic tournament, and many top prospects who technically are eligible are discouraged by their clubs, who don't want to risk injury and prefer they remain available if needed by big league teams.

Rosters for the Olympics remain in flux. Israel lost catcher Ryan Lavarnway when the Indians brought him up from Triple-A Columbus in late June after Austin Hedges went on the concussion injured list. Israel manager Eric Holtz, already without Baltimore pitcher Dean Kremer, was hoping to get Lavarnway back because his team's opener is against the United States on July 30.

"Our guys are playing all over the place. But it's not like a 162-game season where we have time to work on stuff," Holtz said. "We've got to put stuff together and basically treat this like a 12-year old travel tournament, right, where it's win or go home."

Host Japan is favored to win. The Central and Pacific leagues are stopping their seasons between July 14 and Aug. 13 for the Olympic tournament, which runs from July 28 to Aug. 7.

While Japan is missing major leaguers, including Los Angeles Angels two-way sensation Shohei

Ohtani, San Diego right-hander Yu Darvish and Minnesota right-hander Kenta Maeda, it has far more top-level players than the other five nations.

Masahiro Tanaka, back in Japan with the Tohoku Rakuten Golden Eagles after seven seasons with the New York Yankees, is the only holdover from the 2008 Japan team that lost to the U.S. 8-4 in the bronze medal game.

Right-hander Tomoyuki Sugano, the reigning Central League MVP, heads a pitching staff that includes current Rookies of the Year Masato Morishita and Kaima Taira.

U.S. roster

Joe Ryan, a 25-year-old Triple-A right-handed pitcher in the Tampa Bay Rays organization, was a holdover from qualifying and 22-year-old Double-A righty Shane Baz was added to the 24-man roster by manager Mike Scioscia. They'll be joined in the rotation by Toronto right-hander Simeon Woods Richardson and former Texas right-hander Nick Martinez, now with Fukuoka in Japan.

Scioscia also included 37-year-old left-hander Scott Kazmir, who could be his fifth starter, and outfielder Bubba Starling among 10 additions.

They joined a group from qualifying led by third baseman Todd Frazier, relievers Edwin Jackson and David Robertson, and Miami infielder Eddy Alvarez, a 2014 silver medalist in short-track speed skating.

At a glance

Highlights from Rio: Baseball was dropped for the 2012 and 2016 Olympics. It has been dropped again for the 2024 Paris Games and is expected to return for 2028 in Los Angeles.

What's new: The eight-nation tournament in Beijing in 2012 was cut to six for Tokyo. A complicated format has two groups of three: Group A — Dominican Republic, Japan, Mexico. Group B — United States, Israel, South Korea. The first round determines only seedings for the double-elimination, 10-game knockout stage. The Japan-Dominican Republic opener on July 28 will be played in Fukushima, the rest of the tournament in Yokohama.

Tokyo expectations: Major League Baseball refused to give national teams access to 40-man roster players, while Nippon Professional Baseball is stopping the Central and Pacific League seasons for the Olympics, giving the hosts an All-Star team that is the favorite.

Athletes to watch: RHP Masahiro Tanaka, back with the Tohoku Rakuten Golden Eagles after seven seasons with the New York Yankees, is the lone holdover from the 2008 Japan team that lost to the U.S. 8-4 in the bronze medal game. RHP Tomoyuki Sugano, the reigning Central League MVP, would attract interest from major league teams if he becomes available. The U.S. team is expected to include INF Todd Frazier, released by Pittsburgh in May.

Gold medal moment: The medal games are Aug. 7.

Old-school ball

While teams do scouting that leads to defensive shifts, these games don't have Statcast, the modern metrics system that has changed how Major League Baseball is played. That means no spin rates, exit velocities and launch angles.

"It goes to show you you really don't need most of that stuff," Frazier said.

SOFTBALL

Americans dot rosters for several nations

BY RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

Ken Eriksen predicts tight competition in softball as the sport returns to the Olympics.

"Over the last probably 16 years you've seen the world catch up in softball because of the opportunities that USA Softball provided in the teaching and the clinics overseas, but also the colleges started to recruit some really good athletes overseas and develop them," the U.S. coach said. "And then the rules have been relaxed in respect of do you have to be a 100% citizen, whatever that means, in quotations, of a country that's playing. And so we are going to be playing against a lot of citizens of the United States that happen to be on Italy, that happen to be of Mexico, that happen to be of Canada."

Seventeen of the 19 players currently on Mexico's roster are listed on the team's website as living in the United States.

Italy's roster includes second baseman Emily Carosone, born in Orlando, Fla.

Infielder Kelsey Harshman, who was born in Tucson, Ariz., is part of a Canada team filled with U.S. college veterans that include Joey Lye, who quit as Bucknell's coach to compete for the Olympic team.

"And so that's where those countries have caught up quite a bit," said Eriksen, the head coach since 2011 after nine years as an assistant. "Australia has a great developmental program and Japan, a very disciplined and structured organization. So this will be an Olympics unlike any other. I think everybody right now is not that separated as they used to be."

The technological revolution that has altered Major League Baseball also has impacted Olympic softball. Eriksen sees that both with South Florida, where he has

At a glance

Highlights from Rio: Softball was dropped for the 2012 and 2016 Olympics. It has been dropped again for the 2024 Paris Games but is expected to return for 2028 in Los Angeles.

What's new: What had been an eight-nation tournament in Beijing has been reduced to six: the United States, Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan and Mexico. Under the new format, each nation will play a single round-robin for a total of 15 games. Third and fourth place will play for the bronze medal and first and second place for the gold. Games on July 21-22 will be played in Fukushima, the rest of the tournament in Yokohama.

Tokyo expectations: The United States won the first three softball gold medals in 1996, 2000 and 2004 and has been waiting for this moment since it was upset by Japan 3-1 in the 2008 gold medal game. Australia's team was among the first athletes to travel to the Olympics, arriving in Japan on June 1.

Athletes to watch: LHP Cat Osterman, the losing pitcher, and LHP Monica Abbott, who relieved, are the two holdovers on the 15-woman U.S. roster, which was announced on Oct. 6, 2019.

Gold medal moment: The medal games are July 27.

been coach since 1996, and the U.S.

Holdovers

The 15-woman U.S. roster includes 38-year-old left-hander Cat Osterman, the last holdover from the 2004 gold medal-winning team, and 35-year-old left-hander Monica Abbott, who joined Osterman on the 2008 team.

Osterman started and Abbott relieved her in the sixth inning of the 2008 gold medal game, a 3-1 loss to Japan that ended the Americans' 22-game, eight-year Olympic winning streak.

Eriksen said part of their jobs are to steady the rest of the team, to tell them: "Try not to get stars in your eyes of what's going on around you, and at the same time, understand that it's just another tournament, just happens to have five rings on it, but it's still another tournament and you're going to play softball."



SUE OGRICK/AP

Auburn's Emily Carosone, left, will play for Italy in the Olympics, one of several U.S.-born players who are on the rosters of other nations.

OLYMPICS

BEACH VOLLEYBALL

New generation hits the beach

US no longer has Walsh Jennings

By JIMMY GOLEN
Associated Press

London Olympics organizers erected a 25-foot statue of two-time defending champion Kerri Walsh Jennings in St. James' Park, just a short stroll from the venue where she wound up winning her third beach volleyball title.

Four years later in Rio de Janeiro, Walsh Jennings again climbed onto the podium to claim her fourth Olympic medal — this one bronze.

For two decades, no one loomed larger in the sport than the five-time Olympian known as "Six Feet of Sunshine." But when the Summer Games begin in Tokyo this month, the 42-year-old Californian won't be there.

"This is the first Olympics she hasn't been to in the 21st Century, which is just crazy to think about," said Sarah Sponcil, who with her partner Kelly Claes won the final two qualifying events to snatch the last U.S. spot in Tokyo from Walsh Jennings and Brooke Sweat.

"It's crazy the end of the race for the Olympic spot. No one, I think, saw it coming," said April Ross, who was Walsh Jennings' partner in Rio but will return to the Olympics with Alix Klineman. "For the

longest time, I just assumed Kerri was going to be there."

Claes, 25, and Sponcil, 24, are the youngest U.S. beach volleyball team ever to qualify for the Olympics and the first NCAA beach volleyball products to reach the Summer Games. (Tina Graudina, who will compete for Latvia in Tokyo, also played at USC.)

The older generation isn't ready to give up just yet.

Ross, who won silver in London and bronze in Rio, is 39 and heading to her third Olympics. The U.S. men's teams feature 45-year-old Jake Gibb, the oldest volleyball player in Olympic history — beach or indoor — and Beijing gold medalist Phil Dalhausser, 41.

Beach party

Five years after the beach volleyball venue bounced to a samba beat at Copacabana Beach, it's spiritual home, the event moves to Shiokaze Park in Tokyo Bay.

There's no Olympic sport that relies more on a party atmosphere than beach volleyball, and there's some doubt about what the sport will lose without a full house and a disc jockey to keep them dancing.

"It's the Olympics, and you want that party atmosphere," Ross said. "Japanese fans are awesome, so if



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

The United States' April Ross digs a ball while playing against Brazil during the women's beach volleyball bronze medal match at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. Ross will be at the Tokyo Olympics, paired with Alix Klineman.

those are the fans we're going to have, I think it's going to be a great atmosphere."

Partner swaps

Only two women's teams return from Rio intact, with Spain's Elsa Baquerizo and Liliana Fernández the only pair to make the Round of 16 in 2016 and qualify for Tokyo. On the men's side, six partnerships survived, including silver medalists Daniele Lupo and Paolo Nicolai of Italy, and bronze winners Alexander Brouwer and Robert Meeuwssen of the Netherlands.

Instead, retirement, injury, childbirth and just plain strategy

led to a reshuffling of partnerships that is common — though not usually so extensive. Germany's Laura Ludwig, who paired with Kira Walkenhorst to win gold in Brazil, is paired with Margareta Kozuch. Silver medalist Ágatha Bednarczuk is with Duda Santos Lisboa instead of Bárbara Seixas. Bronze winner Ross is back with Klineman instead of Walsh Jennings.

Reigning men's champions Bruno Oscar Schmidt and Alison Cerutti are both back — but with new partners. Schmidt is teamed with Evandro Oliveira and Cerutti will try to repeat with Álvaro Filho.

At a glance

Highlights from Rio: When Germans Laura Ludwig and Kira Walkenhorst took gold in 2016, they had to ask the bronze medal winner what to do on the victory stand. It was the first women's beach volleyball medal for Germany, and it ended American Kerri Walsh Jennings' run of three straight titles. The Germans beat hometown favorites Ágatha Bednarczuk and Bárbara Seixas in the final, while Walsh Jennings and April Ross beat the other Brazilian team, Talita Antunes and Larissa França, for third.

A day after the hosts' two losses in the women's medal round, Alison Cerutti and Bruno Oscar Schmidt gave Brazil reason to celebrate on Copacabana beach. Their victory over Italians Daniele Lupo and Paolo Nicolai set off a rain-soaked samba at the sport's spiritual home. The Netherlands beat Russia for bronze. The lone U.S. medal was its worst haul since 2000.

Tokyo expectations: Ross, who won a silver medal in London with Jen Kessy, is back in the Olympics with a third partner, Alix Klineman. They are the No. 2 seed, with world champions Sarah Pavan and Melissa Humana-Paredes of Canada earning the top spot by tiebreaker. The other U.S. women's team, Sarah Sponcil and Kelly Claes, won the last two world tour events to pass Walsh Jennings and Brooke Sweat in the points race and foil the 42-year-old, three-time gold medalist's bid for a sixth Olympics.

Christian Sorum and Anders Mol of Norway are the top-seeded team in a men's bracket that has neither Brazilians nor Americans among the favorites. Russians Viacheslav Krasinikov and Oleg Stoyanovskiy are the world champions and the No. 2 seed.

The Americans are sending a couple of veterans. Jake Gibb, 45, returns for a fourth time, this time as the oldest volleyball player — beach or indoor — in Olympic history; he'll be with Taylor Crabb for the first time. 2008 gold medalist Phil Dalhausser is also back for his fourth Olympics, with Rio partner Nick Lucena.

Athletes to watch: Qatar's Cherif Younousse and Ahmed Tijan head to Tokyo with a No. 3 seed in their attempt to earn the first Middle Eastern medal in Olympic beach volleyball history. ... Italian skyball server Adrian Carambula returns with a new partner, Enrico Rossi. ... Reigning gold medalist Bruno spent two weeks in the hospital with COVID-19 in February; he also has a new partner, Evandro Goncalves. ... Sanne Keizer and Madelein Meppelink of the Netherlands — both around six feet tall — could pose problems on the women's side. ... Ludwig took 18 months off after having a baby. She will team with Margareta Kozuch.

Gold medal moments: Women: Aug. 6; Men: Aug. 7.

VOLLEYBALL

Early losses haven't hurt teams in past tournaments

By JOSH DUBOW
Associated Press

If the past two Olympics have proven anything when it comes to indoor volleyball it's the fact that slow starts are far from detrimental.

Both gold medal teams from the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro finished fourth in pool play before winning three straight matches in the knockout round to claim gold.

The Brazilian men needed to beat France in their final pool play match just to advance, while the Chinese women lost three of their first five matches before rolling through the medal round.

That was a pattern that was similar to the 2012 Games in London when eventual champions Russia (men) and Brazil (women) won gold after finishing third and fourth, respectively, in pool play.

"The teams that do win have figured out a way to overcome massive adversity, lose a critical match, lose more than one match," U.S. women's coach Karch Kiraly

said. "I don't know that anybody will get through unscathed. That's all a part of that process. I don't know anybody who's won that event in quite a number of Olympics who didn't face down some serious adversity."

Top-heavy pools

The draw has presented an extremely challenging Group B on the men's side with four of the top five ranked teams in the world all together with defending champion Brazil, Russia, the United States and France all grouped together, with Poland facing an easier path in Group A.

On the women's side, the No. 1-ranked U.S. women are in the same group as defending champion China, which is ranked second in the world.

Defending champs

Both defending champions are in good position to contend for a repeat with Bruno Rezende back for a fourth Olympics for

the Brazilian men after winning silver in 2008 and '12 and gold at home in Rio five years ago. He's joined by Olympic newcomer Alan Souza, who was the MVP of the 2019 World Cup. Brazil is seeking its fourth gold medal to match the combined total for the Soviet Union and Russia.

The Chinese women are also seeking their fourth gold to match the record held by the Soviets with 2016 MVP Zhu Ting back again on the squad coached by Lang Ping, who is the first person to win gold in volleyball as both a player (1984) and coach (2016).

Carry over

Both the men's and women's teams from the United States overcame crushing losses in the semifinals in Rio to bounce back and win bronze medals two days later. They hope that experience will carry over into these games when the women are seeking their first gold medal ever and the men are looking to get back on top for the first time since 2008.

At a glance

Highlights from Rio: The Chinese women beat Serbia to win gold for the third time in their history behind coach Lang Ping, who became the first person to win gold in volleyball as both a player and coach having won as a player in 1984. Host Brazil beat Italy in the men's tournament for its third gold medal. Both U.S. teams medaled with each earning the bronze.

Tokyo expectations: Volleyball returns to its Olympic home having been first held at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. The reigning gold medalists are in contention to win again five years later with Brazil's Bruno Rezende seeking his fourth medal having won silver in 2008 and '12 before getting gold in Rio. China has won back-to-back women's World Cups to go along with the 2016 gold. Poland is a top contender on the men's side, while the United States has a shot at its first gold medal ever on the women's side.

Athletes to watch: Brazil's Alan Souza was the MVP of the 2019 World Cup and one of the top players headed into his first Olympics. Cuban-born Wilfredo Leon, who competes as an outside hitter for Poland, is known as the Cristiano Ronaldo of volleyball for his skill as an outside spiker. Among the top players on the women's side are American Foluke Gunderson, who is back for a third Olympics after giving birth to her first child in 2019, and 2016 women's MVP Zhu Ting of China.

Gold medal moments: The men's medals will be awarded on Aug. 7 with matches for the bronze and gold medal. The women's medals will be contested for the following day, just before the closing ceremonies.

OLYMPICS

Stunning rise: Harrison aiming for gold

BY JIM VERTUNO
Associated Press

Sometime before she races across Tokyo Bay, American teenager Nevin Harrison will likely paddle her canoe to a quiet spot and have a good cry.

Harrison's pre-race tears are a pressure-valve release, meant to settle and refocus the 19-year-old before the start of a furious sprint of pain and muscle across 200 meters of water.

She knows it's a bit odd. But who can argue with a routine that helped crown her world champion at age 17 and has her as a favorite to win the first women's Olympic gold medal in the debut event of women's sprint canoe?

"I get really stressed, I get really worked up and bottle it up, and right before the race, it just kind of comes out," Harrison said. "And then ... everything is a little bit more calm."

At least until the race start, when Harrison attacks the water — "like a horserace" — with a powerful thrust that won her a stunning world title in 2019, and upended the pecking order in a sport she'd picked up barely five years earlier on a lark at the end of summer camp.

She followed that championship with world cup victories in 2020 and 2021 and heads to the Tokyo Games carrying a mountain of expectations on her broad shoulders.

"I'm so scared," Harrison said with a laugh. "I'm really nervous."

Spoken like a teenager who was perhaps surprised by her meteoric success, and who is now both awed by, and prepared for, the Olympic stage.

But an extra year of maturing, physical growth and enhanced training forced by the Olympic pandemic delay, allowed Harrison to shed the shock of the world title and embrace the role of favorite.

"I was nowhere near ready to be competing in an Olympics a year



BRYNN ANDERSON / AP

Nevin Harrison, 19, of Seattle, picked up the sport of canoe sprint on a lark at summer camp and became a world champion just five years later as a 17-year-old in 2019. An extra year of maturing, physical growth and enhanced training before her first Olympics has solidified her status as the favorite for the gold medal in the women's sprint canoe 200 meters, a new event in a bid for gender equity.

ago," Harrison said. "In 2019, winning worlds was a shock to me. Even going into 2020, I didn't really know what I was doing. Everything was coming really fast and I had no idea how I got to where I was and had not enough time to get to where I needed to be ... It was stressful and scary."

And it was a long way from that summer camp outside Seattle when she first tried the sport at the urging of a counselor. She needed a sport. Track and field, her love, was going to be painfully impossible with a diagnosis of hip dysplasia that promised constant pain.

Sprints on the track turned into sprints across water and learning how to not fall out of the boat.

Her parents quickly sensed big things could be on the horizon as they watched her first learn how to stay dry, then develop skill, rhythm and raw muscle in the pre-dawn chill of practice in the winter mornings in the Pacific Northwest.

"She was falling out of the boat for a year before she really learned how to balance it out," said her mother, Laura Worthen. "By 13 and 14 she was starting to pull away from the pack."

She started climbing the junior ranks and won an Olympic hopeful event in 2017.

"That's when I knew," said her father Mark Harrison, "that I was going to enjoy this ride."

Still, she was an outlier internationally in a sport long dominated by the Europeans. Then came her lighting strike win in Hungary in 2019.

Nevin went to the championships hoping to finish top six with an outside shot at a medal. That's when a teammate shook his head at a naive 17-year-old who didn't realize what was really in front of her.

"You don't get it," he laughed. "You realize you can win this thing?"

Few did.



BRYNN ANDERSON / AP

Harrison trains near Lake Lanier Olympic Park on July 1 in Gainesville, Ga. She is a favorite in the canoe sprint 200 meters.

"The first time she won the world championship, no one was noticing her. The announcer was essentially asking where did she come from during the race," Mark Harrison said.

Nevin bolted to an early lead and never let up. At the finish line, she looked at the results in disbelief and covered her mouth to stifle a gasp. The medal ceremony was briefly delayed because event officials couldn't find an American flag. They'd never needed one before.

That was two years ago. The competition won't overlook her at the Olympics, when everyone is chasing the same dream to win the first gold medal in the women's canoe sprint 200. Harrison's race and the women's canoe 500 double will debut as Olympic events in Tokyo.

Women's canoe sprint is still a young sport at the international level. It wasn't a world championship event until 2010. And to balance gender equity among events in Tokyo, Olympic officials dropped the men's canoe 200 and the men's kayak double 200, moves that didn't sit well with some male athletes who complained events were being sacrificed.

At the Rio Games in 2016, several male athletes mocked the idea of women in canoe sprint.

Harrison said she's sympathetic to anyone who lost an Olympic spot, but is determined that the women have earned their shot in Tokyo.

"It's exciting to be leading that charge showing we are equal and we can do the same things," she said. "Once an event becomes an Olympic sport, the depth and the athlete pool become so much bigger because it becomes something people want to invest their time in."

"Everyone wants to be an Olympian," Harrison said. "I think it's more important to have every group represented rather than having a lot in just one gender or discipline."

ROWING

Highlights from Rio: New Zealand's Mahé Drysdale defended his single sculls gold medal in a photo-finish duel with Croatia's Damir Martin. Great Britain topped the medal count with five, including three gold.

What's new: In a move for gender equity, the women's coxless four replaces the men's lightweight coxless four.

Tokyo expectations: Some dominant names return in new disciplines, and some have even come out of retirement. New Zealand is the likely favorite in the women's eight, an event long dominated by the U.S. China hired former British rowing champion Sir Steve Redgrave as performance director with the goal of winning its second rowing gold medal.

Athletes to watch: Germany's Oliver Zeidler is the reigning world and European champion in single sculls ... Croatian brothers Martin and Valent Sinkovic won gold in double sculls in 2016, then switched to the men's pair and won the 2019 world championship ... Great Britain's Helen Glover, a two-time gold medalist in the women's pair, had all but retired after Rio and had three children, only to announce a comeback at age 34. She won the European championship with teammate Polly Swann in May ... The U.S. women's eight is the three-time defending champion, but has just one rower with Olympic experience in the current boat.

Gold medal moment(s): July 27, quadruple sculls; July 28 double sculls and sweep four; July 29, lightweight double sculls and sweep pair; July 30, single sculls and sweep eight.

CANOE SPRINT

Highlights from Rio: Hungary's Danuta Kozák was the star, winning gold in three of the four women's competitions in the kayak single, pairs and four 500 meters.

What's new: The women's single and double canoe sprint are new events, added after the 2016 Rio Games to provide gender equity. Men and women will compete in four kayak events and two canoe events.

Tokyo expectations: While historically dominated by Europe, the gap is closing with the emergence of China, Brazil and New Zealand in recent years, with those countries winning gold at the 2019 world championships.

Athletes to watch: Great Britain's Liam Heath is the defending gold medalist in the men's kayak 200 ... Germany's Sebastian Brendel is a two-time gold medalist in the men's canoe 1,000 ... New Zealand's Lisa Carrington is unbeaten in the World Championships since 2011 in the kayak 200. She will compete in all four kayak events ... American teenager Nevin Harrison is a gold medal favorite in the women's canoe sprint 200 ... Moldova's Serghei Tarnovschi returns after a four-year suspension for a positive doping test that stripped him of his 2016 bronze in the men's canoe 1,000.

Gold medal moment(s): Aug. 3: men's canoe double 1,000 and kayak single 1,000, women's kayak single 200 and kayak double 500; Aug. 5: men's kayak single 200 and kayak double 1,000, women's canoe single 200 and kayak single 500; Aug. 7: men's canoe single 1,000 and kayak four 500; women's canoe double 500 and kayak four 500.

CANOE SLALOM

Highlights from Rio: France's Denis Gargaud Chanu won an unexpected gold in the men's canoe slalom in his first Olympics. Slovakia's Matej Benus earned silver to keep his country's medal streak alive at six consecutive Games. Bronze medalist Takuya Haneda of Japan was the first paddler from an Asian country to win an Olympic medal in canoe/kayak.

What's new: Women's canoe single debuts, taking the place of the men's double canoe.

Tokyo expectations: New gold medalists in men's canoe and kayak as 2016 winners Chanu and Great Britain's Joseph Clarke didn't qualify for Tokyo. Spain's Maialen Chourrara returns to defend her women's kayak gold, competing in her fourth Olympics ... Australia's Jessica Fox is a favorite in the women's kayak. A previous silver (2012) and bronze (2016) kayak medalist, Fox crushed the field at the World Cup in June, winning by nearly five seconds.

Athletes to watch: Great Britain's Mallory Franklin is a close second to Fox. Tall and rangy, she uses her length for superior balance and will be a top medal contender. ... Evy Leibfarth, 17, will represent the U.S. in both the women's canoe and kayak ... Lukas Rohan of the Czech Republic won gold at the World Cup in June.

Gold medal moment(s): July 26 men's canoe; July 27 women's kayak; July 29 women's canoe; July 30 men's kayak.

Capsules by Associated Press

SPORTS



Tatum taking up '10'
Celtics star to wear Kobe's number with Team USA » **Olympics, Page 49**

ANALYSIS

Resolved to repeat

Fueled by losses, Lightning wouldn't be denied second straight Stanley Cup title

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

When the Tampa Bay Lightning had their first chance to clinch the Stanley Cup championship in the 2020 playoff bubble, Jon Cooper recalls how he let his mind drift to what the celebration would be like.

"You're thinking about raising the Stanley Cup, what's it going to be like after, lifelong dreams, who's going to get the drink out of it," he said. "That's called channeling your energy in the wrong direction."

After missing their chance to sweep the Canadiens in Montreal, Cooper and the Lightning were only steeled further by another dispiriting loss. In a familiar way, too: Motivated by just the latest aggravating defeat throughout the past two playoffs, the Lightning came back two nights later and won the Stanley Cup with a gritty, 1-0 win on Wednesday in Tampa, Fla.

It put an exclamation point on a second consecutive championship and third overall that was made possible by stumbles along the way. This extraordinary repeat, with each title coming in the midst of a pandemic, was filled with lessons learned.

Cooper said "it's a journey" to win, and the mile markers along the way were losses: Game 5 of the Final to Dallas 10 months ago before winning the Cup in six. Superstar Nikita Kucherov sitting out for the entire regular season after hip surgery. An overtime heartbreaker in the potential semifinal clincher against the New York Islanders. And then that OT loss in Montreal with the Cup in the building.

SEE REPEAT ON PAGE 47

"At the end of the day, you hate to lose. Sometimes you hate to lose more than you like to win. That's probably the identity of this group."

Ryan McDonagh
Tampa Bay Lightning defenseman

Lightning goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy, also this year's Conn Smythe winner, holds the Stanley Cup while celebrating the Lightning's 1-0 victory over the Canadiens in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final in Tampa, Fla., on Wednesday.

DIRK SHADD/TNS



Japan won't permit fans at Tokyo Games » **Olympics, Page 49**

