Unmoved by the findings

A mover packs a truck in Kaiserslautern, Germany. According to an Inspector General investigation, almost half of military household-goods shipments arrive late and 20% are damaged.

IG says military should get tough on companies for late, lost, damaged deliveries of household goods

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Nearly half of military household goods shipments arrive late and one in five are damaged in transit or lost, an audit by the Defense Department Inspector General has found.

Some Defense Department personnel, meanwhile, may be venting their frustration with what they say are poor moving services by filing wildly inflated damage estimates, the audit suggested.

One person filed a claim of $1 million for a busted trash can and another tried to claim $1 trillion for unspecified damages, the IG report said. Both claims were denied.

The IG made many recommendations on how the military can improve moving services, which have vexed service members for years.

The IG reviewed 9,852 shipments handled by four joint shipping offices in 2018 to determine the extent of problems with household goods shipments and whether proper actions were taken when goods were damaged, lost or arrived late during a move.

More than 4,000 of those shipments, or 41%, didn’t arrive by the agreed-upon delivery date, the audit found. The delays were caused by problems with scheduling and equipment at the moving companies, the IG said.

1 in 5
Military household-goods shipments lost or damaged, according to an audit by the Department of Defense Inspector General.

$33.1M
Amount late deliveries from four joint shipping offices cost the military in 2018.

See Deliveries on Page 4

US officials knew missiles were coming in advance

BY SHANE HARRIS, JOSH DAWSEY, DAN LAMOTHE AND MISSY RYAN
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Iranian missile strike on American locations in Iraq on Tuesday was a calibrated event intended to cause minimal casualties, give the Iranians a face-saving measure and provide an opportunity for both sides to step back from the brink of war, according to senior U.S. officials in Washington and the Middle East.

White House officials were bracing as early as Tuesday morning for Iran to respond to the U.S. killing last week of Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran’s elite Quds Force.

U.S. officials said they knew by Tuesday afternoon that Iran intended to strike at American targets in Iraq, although it was not immediately clear exactly which they would choose.

The early warning came from intelligence sources as well as from communications from Iraq that conveyed Iran’s intentions to launch the strike, officials said.

“We knew, and the Iraqis told us, that this was coming many hours in advance,” said a senior administration official, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence and diplomatic communications.

“We had intelligence reports several hours in advance that the Iranians were seeking to strike the bases,” the official said.

At the Pentagon, the most senior levels of U.S. military leadership gathered in a room and waited for the Iranian missiles to head toward their targets.

“It was literally like right before the Iranians launched their missiles, one senior defense official said.

See Advance on Page 6
Startup to air short videos

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — A startup heavily backed by Hollywood is wagering that you’re ready to set aside YouTube and TikTok to watch star-studded short videos on your phone — for a price.

The company behind this billion-dollar bet is Quibi (KWIH-bee), which is preparing to offer movie-quality viewing in short bursts on mobile devices. It’s an enormous gamble, especially considering that several earlier efforts in mobile entertainment — most notably Verizon’s ill-fated Go90 service — fell flat.

It has backing from all the major movie studios and entertainment companies, $1 billion invested in original programming and star power.

Gas prices were unavailable before press time

**Exchange Rates**

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**PACIFIC GAS PRICES**

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**INTEREST RATES**

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The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.
Brain injuries in combat linked to PTSD

By Wyatt Olson
Stars and Stripes

Service members who suffered moderate to severe traumatic brain injury in combat have significantly higher incidences of mental health disorders in following years as compared to warfighters who sustained other traumatic injuries, a study found.

The study, published in the current issue of the journal Military Medicine, examined almost 5,000 cases of traumatic injury experienced by Marines, soldiers, airmen and sailors during combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan from February 2002 to February 2010.

Among the study’s findings is a clear relationship between moderate and severe brain injury and a greater risk for post-traumatic stress disorder, a link that contradicts a theory posited by some previous researchers.

Traumatic brain injury has been the scourge of U.S. combatants during the extended war on terrorism, particularly in the decade after the September 2001 World Trade Center attack. Improved diagnosis and treatment have reduced the weapon of choice by enemy guerrilla fighters in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Improvements in body armor and medical treatment saved the lives of many blast victims who would have died in earlier conflicts. By 2010, 7,832 warfighters had survived severe traumatic brain injury.

The new research compared two groups — one that sustained moderate to severe brain injury, and the other experiencing general, moderate to severe brain injury, the study said.

If you have severe TBI, you are at risk of having something undesirable,” said David Chin, the study’s co-author and a professor at the School of Public Health and Health Sciences, University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

The study’s findings contradict a theory posited by some previous researchers: that traumatic brain injury is helping us to keep fighting here,” he said.

Sen. Martha McSally flew with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, President Donald Trump commented briefly on his support for the A-10 while speaking to service members at Osan.

“Having Korean Air Lines here on the peninsula do our upgrades is better, because it’s faster,” he added. “These guys are good at what they do — every jet that they have turned for us has been really good. Having them here helps us keep our jets in the fight here.”

The 45-year-old A-10 has proven its value and continues to garner the support of many politicians in Washington.

In late June, following his meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, President Donald Trump commented briefly on his support for the A-10 while speaking to service members at Osan.

“I’ve got more people asking us to keep the Warthog. We are going to keep them as long as we can,” Trump said. “People love them. Senator Martha McSally flew Warthogs, and every time I see her, she says please don’t let the Warthog go, it’s just a very good machine.”

The Arizona Republican’s efforts contributed to the Air Force awarding the new contract to Boeing, according to a statement on McSally’s website.

“As a former A-10 pilot and commander of an A-10 squadron in combat, I know how critical the A-10 is to our military’s success in the air and on the ground,” she said in the statement. “Our troops rely on the A-10’s outstanding and unique ability to provide close air support and combat search and rescue. The A-10 was specifically designed for these types of missions, so having it in the fight can make the difference between lives lost and lives saved.”
Afghan airstrike kills Taliban faction leader

By J.P. Lawrence
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan – A U.S. drone strike killed a regional leader of a breakaway faction of the Taliban in western Afghanistan Wednesday and may have killed several civilians, officials and militants said.

“U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, at the request of Afghan Security Forces, conducted a coordinated defensive airstrike in support of Afghan forces in Shindand, Herat on January 8, 2020,” said a statement sent to Afghan media by U.S. military officials.

The statement did not comment on casualties and a spokesman for Afghan forces in Shindand, Herat directed further questions to the Afghan defense ministry.

The ministry confirmed that airstrikes had occurred in the province, which borders Iran, and said an investigation has been launched to determine if any civilians were killed.

The strikes killed Mullah Mohammad Nangyalai, a regional commander of an insurgent faction led by Mullah Mohammad Rasoul that split from the mainline Taliban in 2015, the breakaway militant group said in a statement.

The splinter group’s fighters will continue to fight against “the U.S. and other foreigners” in Afghanistan, the statement said.

The attack began at 4 p.m. Wednesday in an area controlled by the government, Tolo News reported.

The drone strikes were launched as the Rasoul faction was planning to attack a government checkpoint, said Abdul Hakim, a resident of the district.

“A few civilians were killed and injured” when a second strike hit as they gathered dead bodies after the initial strike, Hakim said.

An official from the area, Tor Shah, said Saturday that several civilians were among the roughly 30 people killed in the strikes.

After the attack, at least 10 people were brought from Shindand to the regional hospital in the city of Herat, about 90 miles away, said Dr. Abu Dukhmin Taman, Herat’s public health director. He was unable to say if the injured were civilians or militants.

A spokesman for the governor of Herat, Jaiñari Farhad, confirmed that there were airstrikes.

The Rasoul group, which has operated with the tacit support of the Afghan government, continues to fight the mainline Taliban in Herat, but the exchanges between the two groups are not as frequent or heavy as in previous years, a source within the group said.

White House welcomes new court ruling on its border wall spending

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The White House welcomes new court ruling in December that had prevented the government from spending $3.6 billion diverted from the military to pay for 175 miles of border wall.

Deliveries: DOD IG suggests issuing warnings, suspension letters to moving companies

FROM FRONT PAGE

Those late deliveries alone cost the military $33.1 million, the IG said.

“Additionally, moving companies did not provide an explanation for delivering some of the shipments after the delivery date,” the IG said.

At least one claim was filed in 21% of all domestic household goods shipments, the IG said.

The IG suggested issuing warning letters or suspension letters to moving companies within 14 days of a missed delivery date. Warning letters would impact moving company ratings, which determine what future shipments will be offered, it said.

The IG also urged TRANSCOM to continue with military construction money.

“I will finish the wall,” she said in a statement.

The spending affected by the court ruling is intended for 11 projects in California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. The longest and most expensive by far would span 52 miles in Laredo, Texas, at an estimated cost of $1.27 billion.

Opponents of the Trump administration’s actions had welcomed the earlier district court ruling that had put the work on hold, calling the Republican president’s actions an “outrageous power grab.” They noted that Trump had promised repeatedly during the 2016 presidential campaign that Mexico would pay for the wall.

Deliveries: DOD IG suggests issuing warnings, suspension letters to moving companies to review shipment status, the IG recommended.

The audit was prompted by an online petition, which had been signed by 107,000 people as of October, calling for moving companies to be held accountable for losses and damages incurred during the military move process, the report said.

Deliveries: DOD IG suggests issuing warnings, suspension letters to moving companies
New leather jackets coming for Navy’s surface warfare officers

BY Caitlin M. Kenney
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON—Navy surface warfare officers will soon be issued new leather jackets to wear and show their expertise and create a sense of pride.

The new jacket is similar to the famous aviation bomber jacket and is “meant to build esprit de corps” and symbolize the “tactical warfighter expertise” of being a qualified surface warfare officer, the Navy said in an announcement Thursday.

The jacket will be available starting in June.

“The surface warfare community has a long-standing history of excellence and an uniquely identifiable item is one way to signify the outstanding achievement and professionalism of our surface warfare officers,” Vice Adm. Richard Brown, commander of Naval Surface Forces, said in the announcement. “Those who wear the jacket will be easily identified as a part of a long lineage of professional ship drivers and maritime warfighters.”

The jacket is black leather and features knitted cuffs and waistband, a pointed collar and will be fully lined. It also has two front pockets with flaps and a Velcro name tape patch on the left side.

Surface warfare officers will primarily wear the jacket while at sea with their at-sea uniforms, according to the Navy. They can be worn when officers are ashore as an optional outer jacket but only with the service uniform.

Active, Reserve, and full-time support officers who have earned the surface warfare officer qualification will be allowed to wear the jacket. Officers who later move to a different job specialty outside of surface warfare can still wear the jacket and can also wear it when they leave the Navy.

Army says text messages about draft are a hoax

The message seems urgent: The “United States Official Army Draft” has repeatedly tried to reach the recipient via email. The unwitting recipient has been marked “eligible” and now must report to the nearest branch for “immediate departure to Iran.” Failure to respond could spell a six-year jail sentence.

The bizarre message is also entirely false, military officials reassure.

“The Selective Services, the federal agency tasked with maintaining a database of young men aged 18-26 who could be called up to serve should a crisis necessitate a military draft, hasn’t had a draft since 1973, notes the Tuesday statement from USAREC. “The military has been an all-volunteer force since that time. Registering for the Selective Service does not enlist a person into the military.”

But among young Americans — particularly young men born decades after the last draft and who fall into the age range for mandatory Selective Service registration — anxieties around conscription for service have grown in the days a U.S. airstrike killed one of Iran’s top military commanders, Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, in Baghdad.

Even as tensions escalate between the U.S. and Iran, Congress and the president would have to pass legislation in order to reactivate the draft.

Enjoy a 1.99% intro APR on balance transfers and purchases for 12 months. After that, a standard variable purchase APR between 7.49% and 18% applies.* Plus, you’ll pay no balance transfer fees.
Defense Secretary Mark Esper had convened the meeting with Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, along with senior civilian leaders of the Defense Department. Esper was pulled out of the meeting when military officials notified him that strikes were underway.

"There was a lot of concern," the senior defense officials said. "It was anxious, wanting to get updates." Early reports did not mention any U.S. casualties, "so there was some optimism after the initial rounds."

The advance warning gave the military commanders time to get U.S. troops into safe, fortified positions at the bases. According to military officials, troops at bases in Iraq were ordered into bunkers, donned protective gear and were told to "shelter in place."

The troops remained in their protected positions for hours, including after the strike. One official said at least one left Al Asad Air Base in western Iraq before the attack. That base was targeted, along with a facility in Irbil, in northern Iraq.

"It’s not luck that no one got killed," a second defense official said. "Luck always plays a role. But military commanders on the ground made good judgments and had good response."

In an address from the White House on Wednesday morning, President Donald Trump credited an "early warning system" for helping prevent loss of life. A defense official later said the president was informed of an incoming strike while in the radar network the military has searching for potential enemy missiles.

At least two sources of intelligence prepared the U.S. time to prepare.

First, there were indications before the launch that was preparing to strike at targets in Iraq, officials said. It was not clear whether that information came from a person or some technical means, such as intercepted communications. A defense official said the U.S. military had received "indications" of a strike prior to launching from information "internal to [the] U.S. government."

Military officials have assessed that Iran would attempt some kind of retaliation at the end of the official mourning period for Soleimani.

The Pentagon "fully expected a retaliation from Iran," the senior defense official said. "What was the issue," the official said. "But we fully expected some sort of reaction."

A second source of warning came from what one official described as technical means. The U.S. military has satellites that can detect a missile shortly after it is launched. U.S. officials alerted allies to the launches shortly after they occurred, according to one Western official.

Iran launched 16 ballistic missiles, including 11 that landed at Al Asad Air Base and one in Irbil. Esper told reporters at the Pentagon that the attack was "not an empty area between the facility and the U.S. Consulate, according to residents who live nearby."

As a precaution after the strike damaged Soleimani, U.S. military forces deployed a brigade of about 4,500 soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, N.C., to the Middle East and also shuffled some forces within the region.

Commanders on the ground, overseen by Marine Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, head of the U.S. Central Command, also moved some service members off small bases in the region and scattered equipment and people on installations to make them harder to hit.

"Let’s get people out of less defensible areas and put them in more easily defended or better defended places," the defense official described, saying the thinking after the Soleimani killing "is that the same time the regime is not overly mass our personnel as a single target."

U.S. officials began alerting reporters to the possibility of Iranian strikes beginning at 4 p.m. Tuesday, an hour before they occurred. Vice President Mike Pence was scheduled to conduct a television interview that evening but banned canceled earlier in the day. Pence’s office said it had changed its mind because of the potential possibility of a strike.

"Let's get people out of less defensible areas and put them in more easily defended or better defended places," the defense official described, saying the thinking after the Soleimani killing "is that the same time the regime is not overly mass our personnel as a single target."

U.S. officials were not sure, once the missiles were launched, which locations Iran had targeted.

It was hard to tell at the Pentagon which bases were under attack "until actual impact on two specific bases," a senior U.S. defense official said. "This was spread out for more than an hour. ... It was more than an hour from the launch to the actual analysis."

"This was not a ‘boom’ and all of this hit at once," the senior defense official said. "This was launch, launch, launch."

Once the bases were taking incoming fire, there was constant contact between the White House, CENTCOM and two other combatant commands: Northern Command and Strategic Command, a second defense official said. They were called in because of their expertise in monitoring and tracking ballistic missile threats.

After the missiles hit, U.S. military officials began to assess the damage.

Pentagon officials called several partners nations and allies right after the Iranian attack, part of a concerted effort to communicate with them in the wake of the Soleimani killing. But the senior administration officials questioned what the U.S. strategy is with Iran after Soleimani was killed, they were supportive and grateful for information Tuesday night, the senior defense official said.

At 7:30 p.m. Washington time Tuesday, officials at the White House had briefed Trump and were “able to pretty clearly say we don’t think any Americans are going to be killed," the senior administration official said. “We knew that no Americans were hurt, either.”

But U.S. officials were not certain there were no fatalities until Wednesday, after service members assessed the wreckage and roll calls were taken. Esper said the missiles hit tents and a helicopter but did not cause major damage.

The lack of casualties gave administration officials more confidence that the Iranians had intended to make a public show of force largely to save face at home, the senior administration official said. The official added that a consensus is building that Iran could have done more damage.

But not all military officials were certain of Iran’s intentions. Milley told reporters that he assessed Iran had intended to cause material destruction and kill Americans but that an intelligence estimate had not been completed.

I believe based on what I saw and what I know is that they were intended to cause structural damage, destroy vehicles and equipment and to kill personnel," Milley said. "That’s my own personal assessment."

Asked what he made of Iran’s intentions, the second senior military official said, “You’d have to ask Iran.”

Esper and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arrived at the White House around 7 p.m. Tuesday to be with the president. About an hour later, Trump began calling reporters to the Oval Office, including allies such as Jens, Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and James Inhofe, R-Okla. Trump told them that no Americans had been killed in the missile attacks and that a path to negotiations with Iran had now opened, the second senior administration official said.

"The president doesn’t want a war, but he doesn’t want to tolerate provocation against American interests," Graham said in an interview with The Washington Post.

Graham said he hoped Iran’s attack was “a show of force for domestic purposes.”

“They want a show of force,” he said, “but they want this to end, because they are scared of the response.”

Matt Pottinger, the deputy national security adviser, told aides in a Roosevelt Room meeting that U.S. officials would take at least two months to understand whether the U.S. strategy was working.

"Our initial reaction has been, this was a domestic effort from the Iranians to save face, not to go to war, so we have proceeded in that vein," said another senior administration official with knowledge of the analysis.

Espen and Milley returned to the Pentagon about 9 p.m.

Trump had told senior military officials Tuesday evening that he did not want to start a war with Iran and wanted a path to ease tensions, which had been escalating at a frantic pace since the strike on Soleimani, the senior administration official said.

When Trump’s military advisers told him there was reason to believe the missile strikes were not designed to kill Americans, a way out appeared, the official said.

Even with the advance notice, U.S. military officials were still scrambling after the attack to assess the damage and determine Iran’s intentions. U.S. forces in the region remained on high alert after the strikes, but no significant troop movements have been made in Syria or elsewhere, according to military officials.

The second senior defense official acknowledged that officials on Tuesday night intended to limit information released to the public until the extent of the damage and how Trump might respond became clearer.

“We all understood that if the Iranians were to respond next, we owned the shot clock after," the official said. “So, you need to be very thoughtful, very deliberate.”

The Pentagon and State Department sent staffers to the White House early Wednesday to write Trump’s speech. He made some last-minute additions, including the decision to start his remarks by declaring, “As long as I am president of the United States, Iran will never be allowed to stand up at the UN again. It appears to be standing down, which is a good thing for all parties concerned and a very good thing for the world,” Trump said.

A third senior administration official said there was a sigh of relief when Trump agreed to read from prepared remarks and not take questions. Some aides were concerned that Trump might deviate from the precise remarks and misspeak if he made extemporaneous remarks to reporters, the official said.

Some officials acknowledged that Iran was likely to continue attacks via proxies and other means. But there was a growing sense among administration officials that killing Soleimani had sobered Iran up to Trump’s willingness to act.

“We actually believe this will be de-escalation,” the senior administration official said. “We’re obviously going to be on alert for proxies with one-off attacks. But we think this worked.”
Iran: Missile strikes on US bases ‘did not intend to kill’

By KAREEM FAHIM AND SARAH DADOUCH
The Washington Post

ISTANBUL — An Iranian military commander said Thursday that a barrage of missiles fired at U.S. military bases in Iraq last week was not aimed at inflicting casualties, in the latest sign that Iran was seeking to avoid any further escalation of hostilities with the United States.

After more than a dozen missiles crashed down on the bases on Tuesday, both sides, for now, appear to be stepping back from further conflict.

“We did not intend to kill,” said Brig. Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh, the head of the Revolutionary Guards Aerospace Force, according to Iranian state media. “We intended to hit the enemy’s military machinery.” He did, however, repeat the government’s claim that “tens of people were killed or wounded.” U.S. and Iranian officials said the strikes caused no casualties.

Iran and the United States had been on a war footing since President Donald Trump approved the killing of Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, one of Iran’s most prominent military commanders, last week. Iran retaliated with missiles damaged structures, aircraft taxies, a parking lot and a helicopter.

The Pentagon said its troops remained on high alert throughout the region, and cautioned that Iran-backed militias across the Middle East could still launch their own attacks as retaliation for the death of Soleimani.

The same day, Iraq’s prime minister issued a nonbinding resolution calling for the withdrawal of foreign forces following the killing of Soleimani. Lawmakers responded by passing a nonbinding resolution calling on the government to end the foreign troop presence in Iraq.

The coalition statement Thursday said it was awaiting “further clarification on the legal nature and impact of the resolution on foreign troops no longer being allowed to stay in Iraq.”

Its training and support of troops fighting ISIS had been suspended, though other activities, including countering the militant group’s propaganda, would continue, the statement said.

Iran: Missile strikes on US bases ‘did not intend to kill’

DOD: Iran attack meant to kill US troops

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon’s top leaders said Wednesday that they believe the ballistic missiles launched by Iran against U.S. military positions in Iraq was an unsuccessful strike meant to kill American troops in retaliation for an Iranian leader’s death.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper and Army Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the barrage of short-range ballistic missiles launched from three sites in Iran struck locations that would have likely hit U.S. and anti-Islamic State coalition troops had they not been prepared for the attack.

The Pentagon leaders said their early warning systems of the impending attack worked properly, allowing troops to take cover.

“Bottom line is, in my professional assessment ... the points of impact were close enough to equipment and personnel that I believe, based on what I saw and what I know, they were intended to cause structural damage, destroy vehicles and equipment and aircraft, and to kill personnel,” Milley told reporters at the Pentagon late Wednesday after briefing members of Congress on recent tensions in the Middle East.

Esper said intelligence officials would work to determine whether the missiles were meant to inflict casualties on American troops.

Some officials, who spoke anonymously because they were not authorized to talk publicly, suspected earlier Wednesday that Iran might have intentionally avoided hitting locations likely to kill Americans.

Reports earlier Wednesday indicated the United States had received verbal warning of the imminent attack from the Iraqis, who said they were warned about an hour before the bombardment. Esper and Milley declined to confirm if such a warning was issued.

The attack did leave damage on U.S. bases, and U.S. and Iraqi officials said the strikes caused no injuries, Iraqi authorities said.

Two rockets struck Baghdad’s Green Zone, which hosts the United States embassy and other foreign diplomatic missions. Officials told reporters that the attack was intended to hit a military base, and aircraft, and to kill personnel and personnel.

Esper and Milley say Iran’s missile attack on American military bases was meant to kill Americans.

The attack did leave damage on U.S. bases, and U.S. and Iraqi officials said the strikes caused no injuries, Iraqi authorities said.

In Iraq, hundreds of ISIS fighters have made their way to rural areas, stepping up their attacks in recent weeks, including ambushes and mortar strikes.

U.S. military officials first announced the suspension of anti-ISIS operations Sunday, as the Trump administration braced for possible Iranian attacks on American military bases in Iraq.

The same day, Iraq’s prime minister urged parliament to take “urgent measures” to force the withdrawal of foreign forces following the killing of Soleimani.

Lawmakers responded by passing a nonbinding resolution calling on the government to end the foreign troop presence in Iraq.

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Lawmakers briefed, split along party lines on Iran

By Steve Beynon
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Democratic lawmakers who came out of a closed-door briefing Wednesday with national security officials said they heard no evidence of an “imminent threat” that justified the killing last week of Iran’s top general by a U.S. airstrike.

“It’s not what I consider to be an imminent threat,” Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, told reporters.

“I was deeply surprised at the lack of information” presented of an imminent threat, said Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., who is also on the committee.

Democratic lawmakers largely agreed the briefing was too short and lacked important information and had vague justification for the Jan. 3 drone strike in Baghdad that killed Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the commander of Iran’s elite Quds Force and a chief advisor to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s supreme leader.

“The briefing] raised more questions than it answered,” Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., told reporters after the meeting.

Shortly after the national security officials briefed lawmakers, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi announced the House will vote Thursday on a resolution to rein in President Donald Trump’s war powers against Iran.

However, Republican lawmakers came out of the briefing in support of Trump’s decision to kill the Iranian general and the president’s restraint after Iran’s missile attack Tuesday against American military bases that house American troops.

“The guy is a designated terrorist. I find that the guy who heads our national security team didn’t have a good reason to hit this guy is ridiculous,” said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., one of Trump’s top allies in the Senate.

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., also told reporters that Soleimani presented a “clear” and “ongoing threat” against the United States.

Democrats have argued Trump was acting outside his constitutional powers when he authorized the attack on Soleimani without consulting Congress. However, Republicans dispute Trump needs to consult Congress for limited and targeted engagements.

“That is silly,” Rubio said of re-examining Trump’s power to attack Iranian targets under the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Terrorists, which allows the president to go after anyone associated with the execution of the 9/11 attacks. “It is ridiculous.”

Rubio said there’s no need for a new war powers measure because Trump is “not planning an invasion.”

House to vote on restraining Trump’s actions

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House is set to vote on a non-binding measure aimed at President Donald Trump’s ability to take military action against Iran as Democratic criticism of the U.S. killing of a top Iranian general intensifies.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said Thursday that the war powers resolution, which does not require Trump’s signature, nonetheless “has real teeth” because it is “a statement of the Congress of the United States. I will not have that statement be diminished by whether the president will veto it or not.”

Pelosi announced the vote Wednesday, declaring that last week’s drone strike that killed Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani was “provocative and disproportionate.”

The Democratic measure seems certain to pass over unified and solid Republican opposition. A similar proposal by Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., faces an uphill fight in the GOP-run Senate.

Louisiana Rep. Steve Scalise, the No. 2 House Republican, denounced the Democratic measure as little more than “a press release designed to attack President Trump,” noting that it has no binding effect and cannot be signed into law.

“This resolution only wastes our valuable time, plays politics with our national security and damages our ability to protect American lives and interests in the Middle East,” Scalise said. The vote comes a day after the Trump administration briefed lawmakers on its actions in Iran. Democrats and at least two Republicans called the briefings inadequate, adding that officials did not provide enough details about why the attack was justified.

Vice President Mike Pence told Thursday that Soleimani “was traveling the region making plans to bring an attack against American personnel and American forces.” He said it was not possible to share full details of the intelligence with lawmakers.

“When it comes to intelligence we have to protect on the U.S. and its forces’ only certain amount we can share with everybody member of Congress,” Pence said on ABC’s “Good Morning America.” “But those of us who have seen all the evidence know that that was a clear and compelling case of imminent threat against American personnel.”

On Twitter on Thursday, Trump urged House Republicans to vote against the resolution. And John Bolton, his former national security adviser, insisted the 1973 War Powers Act, which forms the basis of the Democratic resolution, is unconstitutional.

“It reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of how the Constitution allocated foreign affairs authority between the president and Congress” and should be repealed, Bolton tweeted Thursday.

The House vote was scheduled shortly Iran retaliated for the Soleimani killing by launching missiles at two military bases in Iraq that house American troops. No casualties were reported.

“Congress hereby directs the President to terminate the use of United States Armed Forces to engage in hostilities in or against Iran or any part of its government or military” unless Congress declares war on that country or enacts legislation authorizing use of force to prevent an attack on the United States, the five-page resolution says.

“I think it’s extremely important that we as a country, if we are going to—to either intentionally or accidentally—slide into war, that we have a debate about it,” said freshman Rep. Elissa Slotkin, D-Mich., the measure’s sponsor. Slotkin is a former CIA analyst and Pentagon official who served in Iraq.

While Republican lawmakers applauded Trump’s efforts against Iran, many of them stopped short of backing further military action. However, Graham said he thinks the United States should increase its troop presence in the Middle East, even after the 82nd Airborne Division’s recent deployment to the region.

Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, stopped short of calling for further military escalation and was skittish with the idea of yet another war in the Middle East. He said Trump should seek approved war powers from Congress if a conflict erupts.

“I am very skeptical of overseas intervention. It is not the mission of our military to engage in nation building or turn Iran or any other Middle East nation into a democratic utopia,” Cruz said.

“When Trump said that, it was a new war powers measure without the Congress or the American people being consulted or informed. That is the right way to go about it.”

By John Vander Veen
Stars and Stripes

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Thursday the alliance can do more in the Middle East but stopped short of detailing how allies might satisfy President Donald Trump’s demand that they become more involved in the region.

“NATO has the potential to contribute more to regional stability and the fight against international terrorism,” Stoltenberg told reporters at the alliance’s headquarters in Brussels.

A day earlier, Trump called on NATO to get more involved in the Middle East, where tensions have soared after the U.S. airstrike on Jan. 3.

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“I am very skeptical of overseas intervention. It is not the mission of our military to engage in nation building or turn Iran or any other Middle East nation into a democratic utopia,” Cruz said.

“I believe in the robust role of Congress, if we enter a situation where the administration were calling for a prolonged military engagement and active war fighting against Iran, I believe the administration should come to Congress and get authorization for that.”

NATO chief responds to Trump’s call, says allies could do more
Pelosi will send impeachment articles ‘soon’

By Lisa Mascaro, Alan Fram, and Andrew Taylor
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Thursday she will “soon” transmit the articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump, but warned that Senate Republicans are rushing to acquittal without a fair trial.

Pelosi brushed back GOP claims that Democrats are afraid to send the impeachment case to the Senate. And she said she has no concerns about the anxiety some House and Senate Democrats are showing over the stand-off with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell over the terms of the delayed trial. It’s now more than three weeks since the House impeached Trump on charges of abuse and obstruction.

“Ever since putting them indifferently,” Pelosi told reporters at the Capitol. “I’ll send them over when I’m ready. That will probably be soon.”

Pelosi said she’s waiting for what she wanted from the start — “to see the arena” and “terms of the engagement” that McConnell will use — before sending her House managers to present the articles of impeachment in the Senate.

“We are proud of our defense of the Constitution of the United States,” Pelosi said. “We are concerned the senators will not be able to live up to the oath they take.”

The standoff over Trump’s impeachment trial deepened this week as McConnell said there will be “no haggling” with Democrats as Pelosi demands for more details and witnesses.

McConnell said on Thursday if Pelosi and House Democrats are “too embarrassed” to transmit the articles of impeachment, the Senate will simply move on next week to other business.

“They do not get to trap our entire country into an unending groundhog day of impeachment without resolution,” McConnell said as he opened the Senate.

McConnell’s Senate majority has the leverage Republicans need to launch Trump’s trial toward swift acquittal of the charges, but Pelosi’s reluctance to transmit the articles of impeachment leaves the proceedings at a standstill.

What started as a seemingly minor over procedures and protocols now is a high-stakes showdown between two skilled leaders facing off over the rare impeachment trial, only the third in the nation’s history.

As Pelosi headed toward a morning meeting Thursday, Pelosi told reporters, “I know exactly when” she plans to send the impeachment articles over, but, “I won’t be telling you right now.”

Trump tweeted Thursday that “Pelosi doesn’t want to hand over the Articles of Impeachment, which were fraudulently produced by corrupt politicians like Shifty Schiff in the first place, because after all of these years of investigations and persecutions, they show no crimes and are a joke and a scam!” Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., led the House impeachment inquiry.

Senators from both sides are eager to serve as jurors for Trump’s day in court. The trial will be conducted in the Senate, where Republicans have a thin majority.

Some Senate Democrats have said the time has come for Pelosi to send the articles so the trial can begin. But aides downplayed any rift between the leaders, saying senators are simply eager to have their say.

Facebook again declines to limit political ad targeting

By Barbara Ortutay
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Facebook has decided not to limit how political ads can be targeted to specific groups of people, as its main digital-ad rival Google did in November to fight misinformation. Neither will it ban political ads outright, as Twitter did last October. And it still won’t fact check them, as it’s faced pressure to do.

Instead, it is announcing much more limited “transparency” features that aim to give users slightly more control over how many political ads they see and to make its online library of political ads easier to use.

These steps appear unlikely to assuage critics — including some of the company’s rank and file employees — who say Facebook has too much power and not enough limits when it comes to its effects on elections and democracy itself.

Since last fall, Facebook has insisted that it won’t fact-check political ads, a move that critics say gives politicians license to lie in ads that can’t be easily monitored by outsiders. CEO Mark Zuckerberg has repeatedly argued that “political speech is important” and that Facebook doesn’t want to interfere with it.

Google, the digital ads leader, is limiting political-ad targeting to broad categories such as sex, age and postal code.

Facebook said in a blog post Thursday that it considered limiting the targeting of political ads. But the social network said it learned about their importance for “reaching key audiences” after conducting outreach with political campaigns from both U.S. parties, political groups and nonprofits.

The company said it was guided by the principle that “people should be able to hear from those who wish to lead them, warts and all, and that what they say should be scrutinized and debated in public.”

Facebook has in
Justice Department: Too late to pass Equal Rights Amendment

By Steve LeBlanc, Associated Press

BOSTON — The Justice Department has thrown a roadblock into efforts to revive the Equal Rights Amendment, finding that an expired pair of deadlines imposed by Congress on ratification of the measure means it’s too late for additional states to ratify it now.

The memo by Assistant Attorney General Steven Engel comes as Virginia is poised to become the decisive 38th state to approve the ERA nearly four decades after Congress sent it to states in 1972, attaching a 1979 ratification deadline to it.

That deadline was later extended to 1982. During that time just 35 states ratified the three short of the 38 needed.

“Because three-fourths of the state legislatures did not ratify before the deadline that Congress imposed, the Equal Rights Amendment has failed of adoption and is no longer pending before the States,” Engel wrote.

“Accordingly, even if one or more state legislatures were to ratify the proposed amendment, it would not become part of the Constitution,” he added.

Engel’s finding is unlikely to be the last word on the amendment.

Democratic Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring said Wednesday he’s going to make sure the will of Virginians is carried out and the ERA is added to the Constitution.

“We want Virginia to have equality guaranteed in the Constitution,” Herring said in a statement. “The fact that Republican attorneys general are supposed to defend the ERA, and that they now have the support of the Trump Administration, is absolutely repugnant.”

Free-market supporters of the ERA filed a federal lawsuit in Massachusetts aimed at clearing a legal path for adoption of the amendment.

The lawsuit argues that because the deadline was set forth in legislation authorizing states to ratify the amendment — and not in the three-sentence amendment itself — it’s not constitutionally binding and Virginia’s vote would put the amendment over the top.

“We are not surprised that the Trump administration acted swiftly to declare its opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment,” said Wendy Murphy, a lawyer for Equal Means Equal, one of the groups that filed the lawsuit in Massachusetts. “This development makes our lawsuit even more urgent.”

Engel also said Congress may not revive a proposed amendment after a ratification deadline has expired. He said the only option is for Congress to begin the process again.

Efforts by ERA opponents are underway to block its ultimate ratification.

The principles include protecting women’s access to abortion and transgender rights.

The language of the ERA states that “equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.”

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Twisted tale involves cult rumors, death

Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — Two dead spouses, two missing children and rumors of a cult. Connection is growing around a series of mysterious deaths and the disappearances of a 7-year-old boy and 17-year-old girl that tie back to a couple who have since vanished themselves.

Joshua “JJ” Vallow and Tylee Ryan haven’t been seen since September.

Larry Vallow and his wife, Chad Daybell, never reported them missing and disappeared soon after being questioned about the children.

What has followed is a twisted tale spanning two states that revealed the deaths of both their previous spouses, the couple’s doomed beliefs and children who swiftly slipped away from relatives who are desperate to find them.

“All I want before I go is to see those children, and especially — I’m being greedy — especially my boy JJ. My little man,” saidadjusted adoptive father Larry Woodcock Tuesday at a press conference in Idaho announcing a $20,000 reward for information leading to the kids.

Vallow’s life was a hairdresser, always keeping JJ’s hair trimmed and styled, Larry Woodcock said. The Woodcocks, who live in Lake Charles, La., visited their son until just a few days before the boy disappeared.

Larry and Kay Woodcock are offering $20,000 for information leading to their grandchildren, Joshua Vallow and Tylee Ryan, who were last seen in September.

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Man accused of killing his missing, estranged wife

Associated Press

A Connecticut man was ordered detained Wednesday on $6 million bail on charges that he killed his estranged wife — a crime investigators say stood to benefit him financially as the couple went through bitter divorce and child custody proceedings.

Fotis Dulos, 52, of Farmington, Conn., was arraigned in Stamford Superior Court, along with two other people authorities say helped him cover up the killing of Jennifer Dulos. Fotis Dulos may be able to post bail Thursday, but the outcome is unclear.

Police are named as a person of interest in the case. If he is released, he will be placed under house arrest and barred from contact with his children.

Jennifer Dulos, 50, a mother of five from New Canaan, has not been seen since she dropped her children off at school on May 24.

Police have not commented on the murder charges, but the arrest warrants hint at a financial motive. Fotis Dulos had debt totaling $7 million and would have expected some access to his children’s trust funds if Jennifer Dulos disappeared and he got custody of the children, the warrants said.

Jennifer Dulos’ mother has custody of the children.

Kay and Larry Woodcock are offering $20,000 for information leading to their grandchildren, Joshua Vallow and Tylee Ryan, who were last seen in September.

Charles’ death wasn’t a justifiable homicide,” Kay Woodcock said.

After the death, Kay and Larry Woodcock said they had a harder time reaching JJ. The once-frequent calls dwindled and seemed scripted, they said.

That month, Lori moved to Rexburg, Idaho, with the kids. It brought her closer to Chad Daybell’s hometown of Salem, Idaho, where she lived with his wife, Tammy Daybell.

The Daybells ran a publishing company that produced his fiction books about end times and theology around The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as well as other authors’ works.

Church spokesman Eric Hawkins declined to comment, saying the case doesn’t involve the faith.

Two months after Lori Vallow moved to Idaho, Tammy Daybell died at her home. She was 49, and her obituary said she died of natural causes on Oct. 19. Police questioned that and had her body exhumed for an autopsy. The results have not been released.

Chad Daybell married Lori Vallow two weeks after Tammy’s death.

In July, John Biekes relatives were growing more concerned about the children. Larry and Kay Woodcock said they have left voice messages, emails and texts for JJ since August but haven’t heard back.

Investigators later determined JJ and Tylee had not been seen since September, but Lori Vallow and Chad Daybell never reported them missing.

Two days before Thanksgiving, officers visited Lori and Chad to check on the children after getting calls from worried family members.

Investigators said the couple claimed JJ and Tylee were visiting relatives in Arizona.

After discovering the lie, investigators returned to the home the next day — only to find Lori and Chad had left town.

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Associated Press

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Jennifer Dulos’ mother has custody of the children.

Fotis Dulos has denied any role in her disappearance. His lawyer, Norman Pattis, noted at the arraignment that Jennifer Dulos’ body has not been found.

“What we have is a suspicious disappearance and an entirely circumstantial case,” Pattis told reporters after the court hearings.

Also arraigned Wednesday were Fotis Dulos’ former girlfriend, Michelle Troconis, and his friend, attorney Kent Mawhinney, who are each charged with evidence tampering and hindering prosecution in June and pleaded not guilty.

Fotis Dulos had been identified months ago as the prime suspect in his wife’s disappearance. He and Troconis were charged with evidence tampering and hindering prosecution in June and pleaded not guilty.

Mothers demand answers in slayings at Miss. prisons

Associated Press

HATTIESBURG, Miss. — Manslaughter isn’t supposed to be a death sentence. Nor is armed robbery, selling cocaine or stealing a vehicle.

But that is what the mothers of three inmates say was ultimately given to their sons, all of whom were killed in prison violence last week. As they plan their chil- dren’s funerals, they are demanding answers. They want to know what happened, and why.

The three prisoners were slain by fellow inmates at Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman Tuesday by fellow inmates at Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman.

Larry Woodcock said. The Woodcocks, who live in Lake Charles, La., visited their son until just a few days before the boy disappeared.

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Online fundraising rises as 6M give $1B to Dems in 2019

By Michelle Ye Hee Lee
The Washington Post

Democratic small-dollar donors gave $1 billion through the online fundraising platform ActBlue in 2019, officials said Thursday, highlighting the explosion of online giving on the left heading into the presidential election year.

Of the 6 million donors who gave to Democratic candidates and organizations in 2019, half were first-time donors, officials said, pointing to the growing base of contributors who are giving online. Forty percent of the new donors gave multiple times, according to ActBlue, in a sign of the new donors’ sustained political interest and engagement.

Donors contributing in low amounts online gave $343 million in the final three months of 2019, officials said.

Those online small-dollar donations point to the enthusiasm among Democratic voters and the increasing sophistication of campaigns and organizations in reaching donors on digital platforms and making it convenient for them to give.

More than half of the donations on ActBlue in 2019 were made on mobile, marking the first year that a majority of small donations came through mobile devices, they said.

The Republican Party also stepped up its small-dollar online fundraising efforts in 2019 with the launch of WinRed, a donation platform modeled after ActBlue.

WinRed announced this week that it had raised $101 million since it launched in the summer of 2019, with almost $70 million in the final three months of the year.

WinRed officials credited House Democrats’ impeachment of President Trump for a surge of online donations on the platform in the final months of the year, thanks to donors showing their support for the president and the Republican Party amid the impeachment inquiry and vote.

All Republican state parties and the majority of GOP Senate and House campaign committees have now adopted WinRed, officials said.

Small-dollar donors have played an important role during the Democratic presidential primaries in 2019, reshaping how candidates raise money in order to remain viable.

Erin Hill, ActBlue’s executive director, said in a statement that the record-breaking Democratic online donations are a positive sign for the party and for its eventual presidential nominee, who will face Trump’s formidable small-dollar online fundraising machine.

“Our nominee will need at least half of their funds from grassroots donors if they want to defeat Donald Trump,” he said. “As we saw last year, the eventual Democratic nominee will have an army of grassroots donors behind them.”

The number of donors and individual contributions were higher in 2019 than in any other previous Democratic primary season as ActBlue’s founding in 2004, officials said.

In 2019, more than 13,000 candidates and causes received donations through ActBlue, totaling 35 million contributions, officials said. The average contribution in 2019 was $30.50, they said.
Calif. governor seeks $1B for homeless crisis

Associated Press
SACRAMENTO, Calif. — A billion-dollar investment last year has yet to curtail California’s growing homeless crisis, and with the state awash in revenue, Gov. Gavin Newsom wants to spend an additional $1 billion more on programs aimed at getting people off the streets.

He signed an executive order Wednesday creating what he intends to be a $750 million fund that could pay for emergency aid, rent, fund affordable housing or aid boarding and care homes.

Newsom also wants to use vacant state property to house homeless people and is seeking changes to the state’s Medicaid program to increase spending on preventive health care.

In addition, the Democratic governor said the final portion of $650 million in emergency homeless aid to cities and counties approved in June was being released Wednesday after a final federal homelessness count.

The report by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development found California’s homeless population increased 16% last year, to about 151,000 people. That’s more than a quarter of the national total.

President Donald Trump continued his criticism of California’s Democratic leaders this week, especially those in Los Angeles and San Francisco, for failing to adequately address homelessness. In a tweet, he called it a local issue but said that if city and state leaders “acknowledge responsibility and politely” ask for help, then his administration “will very seriously consider getting involved.”

Newsom made no mention of Trump in his announcement but acted with an eye toward an inevitable economic downturn that wouldn’t allow the state to spend billions on the problem.

Although California is projected to have a $7 billion surplus, the state’s bipartisan legislative analyst said only $1 billion should be spent on programs that will last beyond the year.

Because Newsom’s proposal on homelessness would eat up the bulk of that $1 billion, the governor proposed to “seed” the fund with one-time state revenue and called on philanthropic and private sector groups “to step up as well.”

His order comes two days before he’ll unveil his annual budget plan, which he said includes $695 million of state and federal matching funds to increase spending on preventive health care. The money would go to things that can prevent homelessness, like helping people find housing. A portion could even go to rent assistance if it helps people not use health care services as often.

A group representing the directors of California’s county behavioral health programs praised Newsom’s proposed budget increases.

David Wolfe, legislative director of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association, was skeptical. He noted that taxpayers in 2018 also approved $4 billion in bonds for existing affordable housing programs for low-income residents, veterans and farmworkers. Wolfe also allowed that the state has access to up to $140 million each year in existing county mental-health funds to pay for housing for homeless people with mental illness.

Lawmakers also allocated $1 billion in the budget last year for homelessness and mental health services.

“You can’t just throw money at homelessness and a lack of affordable housing and expect that you’re going to achieve the result that you’re hoping to achieve,” Wolfe said.

He and Republican Assemblyman Tyler Diep, vice chairman of the chamber’s housing committee, said the state also needs to streamline its strict environmental protections to speed up housing construction.

Student engineers make walking easier for 2-legged dog

By Kelly Meyerhofe
Wisconsin State Journal

MADISON, Wis. — The client: A furry, 4-year-old Australian shepherd mix with a hankering for hot dogs and little ability to communicate beyond a bark.

The assignment for a group of UW-Madison students: Find a way for this two-legged dog to walk more easily.

An introductory engineering design course that has been around since the 1990s connects students to solve problems, according to lecturer Katie Kalscheur.

That’s how Madison residents Pete and Pat Sammataro found themselves on UW-Madison’s campus in early September introducing a group of first-year engineering students to their dog, Louie.

Louie — short for Lt. Dan, a character in the 1994 film “Forrest Gump” — was born without his front legs and destined to be euthanized until the niece of a friend of the Sammataros saved him. When the couple adopted Louie in 2016, they saw how he copes with his limited mobility, either by hopping on his back legs or scooting along, chest low to the ground.

Pat longed for Louie to venture beyond the white picket fence surrounding their yard and take a walk in their Near West Side neighborhood.

She cringed whenever she saw Louie heave himself forward, dragging the metal frame that held his front legs across the concrete.

The Sammataros tried a commercially produced cart for Louie, but the device was unstable with him on it, sending him somersaulting over the two wheels.

These types of problems are the ones that Kalscheur wants to hear about, the Wisconsin State Journal reported.

“This class isn’t possible without the community,” Kalscheur said.

"It makes such a difference when there’s a real client with a need that can’t be met by products currently on the market. Students are invested in coming up with a real solution.”

Freshmen aren’t on the engineering campus as often as they might expect because they’re slogging through calculus, chemistry and other general education requirements, she said. The design practicum course gets students engaged in their field of study early, giving them a taste of what’s ahead.

Kalscheur also shows this type of immersive learning experience increases retention among women and underrepresented minority groups in a discipline that is dominated by white men.

“I don’t think all engineering students have this,” Kalscheur said of the course. “It gives students a feel for what working on a team and having a real client is like.”

Another student group in Kalscheur’s section this fall teamed up with the Portage School District where visually impaired students wanted to run track without someone else guiding them.

They devised a sensor that vibrates and makes sounds based on where a runner is located along the track.

The group of seven students assigned to Louise researched other products on the marketplace and began brainstorming ideas. They consulted with others at MakerSpace, a largely student-staffed place on campus for engineers to help each other on projects and take advantage of university resources, including a 3-D printer.

Students cycled through several prototypes for Louie. One version had a 3-D cast, which the dog didn’t like.

The group even created a back-up design, a scooter with guardrails, in the last week of the semester after Louie made “a bit of a scene” at MakerSpace when he tried on one of the students’ prototypes and told UW-Madison freshman Jessica Nienhaus, one of the students in the group.

Nienhaus, of Racine, said the project was challenging because their client couldn’t explain why a particular design didn’t work, but she found it to be rewarding in a way that her high school projects catering to fictional clients were not.

The students’ final design modified the Sammataros’ existing cart, adjusting its height to fit Louie’s and adding small wheels in the front and back for stability.

The Sammataros used Louie’s cart earlier this month and they roll it out a couple of times each week to train him on his new set of wheels. They know that Louie learning to trust the cart to do what he has done on his own for four years won’t happen overnight.

So the Sammataros keep trying, keep hoping for the day when they can take Louie for a walk and keep coaxing him along with hot dogs.
Program to curb repeat hospital stays fails test

BY MARILYN MARCHIONE
Associated Press

Researchers thought they had a way to keep hard-to-treat patients from constantly returning to the hospital and racking up big medical bills. Health workers visited homes, went along to doctor appointments, made sure medicines were available and tackled social problems including homelessness, addiction and mental health issues.

Readmissions seemed to drop. The program looked so promising that the federal government and the MacArthur Foundation gave big bucks to expand it beyond Camden, N.J., where it started.

But a more robust study released Wednesday revealed it was a stunning failure on its main goal: Readmission rates did decline, but by the same amount as for a comparison group of similar patients not in the costly program.

“There’s real concern that the response to this would be to just throw up our arms” and say nothing can be done to help these so-called frequent fliers of the medical system, said study leader Amy Finkelstein.

Instead, Finkelstein and her colleagues need to seek better solutions and test them as rigorously as new drugs, said Finkelstein of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Federal grants and research groups at MIT paid for the study, which was published in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Just 5% of the U.S. population accounts for half of health care spending, and hospitalization is a big part.

A decade ago, Dr. Jeff Brenner started working with hospitals in Camden, a city with high poverty and crime rates, to identify people who go to hospitals frequently and turn them into patients.

He won a MacArthur genius grant for the work, and federal grants expanded the program to Aurora, Colo.; Kansas City, Mo.; Allentown, Penn.; and San Diego. The government also paid for a den to see if it truly worked.

The study enrolled 800 hospitalized Camden patients with at least two other admissions in the previous six months and at least two of these conditions: homelessness, drug use, a mental health problem, trouble accessing services, lack of social support or use of five or more medicines.

Half were given usual care when they left the hospital. The rest were enrolled in Brenner’s program with nurses, social workers and others coordinat- ing their care for three months. Patients received seven to eight home visits and nine phone calls on average. The effort cost about $5,000 per patient.

Six months later, the readmis- sion rate was 62% in the usual care groups, and there was no difference in total health care spending.

Researchers don’t know what usual care was for the comparison group. If that suddenly improved, it could explain why the program failed to prove better.

However, two key goals of the program — a home visit and a trip to a health provider within a week of leaving the hospital — were met for only 28% of participants. Homelessness and lack of a telephone were big reasons, and the program more recently has worked harder to get people into stable housing.

“If you’re in a shelter or on the streets, it’s just not easy to help and that sometimes leads to more hospitalizations,” said the Camden project’s leader, Kathleen Noonan.

Residents’ attention turned to Facebook in 2018 when a subsidiary bought the empty lot for the cable landing from former NFL University of Oregon quarterback Joey Harrington. County records show Edge Cable Holdings, USA, paid him $495,000 for the beachfront property, about the size of 10 tennis courts.

Locals worry the project will pave the way for cell towers, power junctions and additional cable sites.

Rogers, who owns a house adjacent to the Facebook lot, stood on the beach in stormy weather Wednesday as waves charged the shore. A sign apparently toppled by the high tide said “Keep Facebook off our turf.”

Resident Patricia Rogers told county officials the horizontal directional drilling will last about a month, and all that will remain is a manhole cover.

Weinstein lawyers seek judge’s recusal from rape case over texting jabs

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Harvey Wein- Stein’s lawyers asked the judge in his New York City rape case to step aside Wednesday after he threatened to jail the disgraced movie mogul for texting in the courtroom.

Weinstein’s lawyers sent a letter to Judge James Burke saying his comments Tuesday were “prejudicial and inflammatory” and raised questions about his impartiality. Burke has not ruled on the request.

Burke admonished Weinstein as jury selection was getting under- way, asking: “Is this really the way you want to end up in jail for the rest of your life, by texting in this courtroom in order to do this?”

Burke cut off Weinstein before he could respond. Weinstein’s lawyers said the film producer, who has been seen clutching an iPhone, was using his cell phone before court was in session.

The defense further argued that Burke has failed to adequately safeguard Weinstein’s right to a fair and impartial jury, in part by rejecting a request to halt jury selection for a “cooling off” peri- od after prosecutors in Los Ange- les filed new sex crimes charges against him on Monday.

In addition to Burke’s recu- sal, they demanded the trial be stopped until negative publicity from the new charges dissipates. Weinstein’s lawyers also want more time for individual ques- tioning of potential jurors and asked for permission to have his jury consultant sit with his law- yers during such questioning.

“Faced with extreme and un- fairly prejudicial negative public- ity both pre-trial and now during jury selection, (Burke) has refus- ed the defendant’s requests for additional necessary procedural safeguards,” Weinstein’s lawyers wrote.

Judges seldom step aside from cases over such requests, but Weinstein’s lawyers could be making a play to make an issue of Burke’s comments and rulings for a possible appeal.

The recusal request came dur- ing a second day of jury selection that ended with 30 people invited back next week for additional questioning. In all, 66 prospective jurors have advanced to the next stage in what is expected to be a lengthy selection process.

Weinstein is charged in New York with raping a woman in a Manhattan hotel room in 2013 and sexually assaulting another woman, Mimi Haleyi, in 2006. If convicted, he could be sentenced to life in prison.

The 67-year-old ex-studio boss has pleaded not guilty and main- tains that any sexual activity was consensual.
Going to the mall just got cooler

Lou Fermonte of Northfield, N.J., gets air while snowboarding at Big Snow American Dream, an indoor, year-round ski resort in East Rutherford, N.J.

By Karen Heller
The Washington Post

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — To visit America’s newest ski resort, follow the Jersey Turnpike, exit at MetLife Stadium and Meadowlands Racetrack, and head next door to American Dream.

Which, of course, is a mall.

Actually, it is a $5 billion behemoth still under construction from the people who brought America the Mall of America. When done, this consumer cathedral will be our nation’s largest in square footage.

And skiing.

The mall’s highlight is Big Snow American Dream, a mouthful for an audacious enterprise, which is more than four acres, packed with 5,500 tons of man-made powder and billed as North America’s first indoor, year-round ski resort.

At first glance, Big Snow appears to be a concrete container?

One December Wednesday before lunch, Douglas Nazur, 41, a contractor from Astoria, Queens, hit the mall and the slope. (Technically, there are three trails, and a terrain park for hot-dogging.)

Originally from Ecuador, “a really hot place,” he says, Nazur had never snowboarded before Big Snow opened two weeks earlier. Now he’s on his sixth visit.

Big Snow is no Vail, which may be the point. There are zero lines at the quad lift, and only a couple dozen boarders and skiers on the slope. Nazur completed four runs in less than an hour.

Nature is held in abeyance at Big Snow, where it is perpetually 28 degrees. “It just feels weird but in a good way. There’s no wind. There’s no sunburn. And you’re basically on the doorstep of New York City,” says his friend, bartender and freelance writer Glen Braundorf, 39, of Tinton Falls, N.J.

“Are we definitely going to come here every week?” Nazur asks. “It’s quick, indoor convenience,” says Army Staff Sgt. Daniel Blackstone, 32, who is Puerto Rican and from Mount Laurel, N.J., says, “It’s quick, indoor convenience,” something that has never been said of snowboarding.

When completed, the mall will be 45 percent retail and 55 percent entertainment, and the top floor will be the destination,Welcome around 800,000. When the water park opens, Big Snow hopes to eliminate both.

It’s located in the country’s most densely populated state. Two-hour packages with all necessary gear (including pants and a jacket) are $69.99, and a block of six lift-only passes comes out to $16.66 a visit. To avoid interminable lift lines, only 500 patrons are permitted at a time on the trails.

“It’s bringing the mountains to the people, and abstracting the sport,” says University of Kansas professor Andrew Denning, who wrote a history of skiing. “It’s a form of democratization.”

The domestic ski industry is neither as robust nor as diverse as resort operators desire, and it faces a mountain of obstacles. Only 3 percent of Americans ski, 10.3 million patrons per season.

Domestic skiing began in the 19th century, when there was nothing cushy or bougie about it. It was an activity of Norwegian immigrants in the Upper Midwest, Scandinavian immigrant miners in the West, and veterans of World War II’s 10th Mountain Division, who helped develop resort skiing in the Rockies.

Today, it is considered the diversion of rich, white people.

To attract a fresh, diverse crop of patrons, snow sports need to blow up the existing model, by being inexpensive, accessible, easy and available more than months of the year. They need to be more Jersey.

BY KAREN HELLER
The Washington Post

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When completed, the mall will be 45 percent retail and 55 percent entertainment, including a Nickelodeon Universe theme park, and an NHL regulation-sized ice rink. Three restaurants will offer expansive second-floor views of Big Snow.

American Dream has yet to open the majority of its shops and restaurants, as well as the Angry Birds mini-golf and a massive DreamWorks water park with a wave pool and surfing. When the water park opens, Haguey and Braundorf plan to snowboard and surf during a single visit.

On this Wednesday morning, Big Snow’s patrons are far more diverse than skiing’s snow-white image and include immigrants speaking multiple languages and plenty of novices.

These are the industry’s dream patrons. Rappers Lil Uzi Vert and Meek Mill had visited Big Snow just days earlier. (Did Big Snow stay open late for Meek? Yes, it did.)

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Officials try to tally smoke-related health issues

BY MATTHEW BROWN
Associated Press

PARADISE, Calif. — First came the flames, a raging firestorm propelled by high winds that incinerated Kelsey Norton's house and killed 85 people in her community. Then came the smoke — not just from the forest but also from 14,000 houses and their contents that burned, generating a thick plume that enshrouded portions of Northern California for weeks and left Norton gasping. Since then, and more than a year now, it's been sickness: repeated respiratory infections that sap Norton's strength, interfere with her work and leave the 30-year-old cardiac care nurse worried about future health problems.

"I don't want to have cancer in my 50s because I inhaled smoke in my 30s," she said.

The immediate toll of lives and property lost a year ago when the Camp Fire tore through the Sierra Nevada foothills town of Paradise, Calif., is well documented. Still unknown is the long-term impact of the intense smoke exposure suffered by the tragedy's survivors and the health consequences on a scale of thousands of people living in communities downwind of the blaze.

Increasingly intense wildfires are scorching forests from California to Australia and stoking concern among residents and health professionals about long-term health impacts from smoke exposure.

The issue has far-reaching implications as climate change turns some regions of the globe drier and more prone to fires that send up toxic plumes that can travel thousands of miles and affect millions of people.

"We've seen unprecedented fires scorching huge swaths of Australia offer the most recent example as they blanket major cities with dangerous air pollution. Smoke from those fires, which started burning in September, by this week had spread across more than 7.7 million square miles and drifted across the Pacific Ocean to reach South America, according to the United Nation's Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service. Woes remain after fires are contained

Kelsey Norton shows pictures of her property before it was overrun by a wildfire that incinerated her home in Chico, Calif. Norton says she's suffered repeated respiratory infections since breathing in smoke from the fire.

"It's the closest animal model to replicate what happens with kids," said Lisa Miller, the center's associate director of research.

The difference first showed up when the animals were adolescents, and has continued as they've matured. It's impossible for the untrained eye to distinguish the smoke-exposed monkeys from hundreds of others that share their pens, but Miller's team can tell by the activity levels of the monkeys.

As the animals age, any diseases they develop and how they die would give clues into the fate of humans heavily exposed to smoke.

Studies of wildland firefighters also give insights into the risks of smoke inhalation. They've shown significantly higher rates of lung cancer and death from heart disease, said Michael Kleinman, who researches the health effects of air pollution and is a professor of environmental toxicology at the University of California, Irvine. Firefighters get much higher and more frequent doses of smoke, but Kleinman said a proportional increase in illnesses could be expected among the general public exposed to wildfire smoke across California and the West.

"It's safe to say there will probably be more effects at the long-term level," Kleinman said. "Especially if those events happened over a longer period of time or repeatedly, there will be cumulative damage to the lungs and heart which eventually will lead to chronic disease."

As she fled with her boyfriend ahead of the fire that destroyed Paradise on the morning of Nov. 8, 2018, Norton said the smoke was so thick "it was like midnight." A few days later, she went back to work at a hospital in Chico, about 15 miles from Paradise. But smoke from the still-burning fire had made it inside the facility. There weren't enough face masks to go around so Norton said she went without one for several days.

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Initially she felt just a bit wheezy, as she had during the last major fire in the area about a decade earlier. But two weeks later she came down with a respiratory infection that brought fever and severe congestion.

When that finally cleared, she got another, then another — eight or nine infections in all over the past year. She missed so much work in the months after the fire that she got a warning from a supervisor.

Norton is among about 9,000 people who responded to a health survey as part of a long-term health study of smoke exposure in Paradise and other California communities. The work is led by researchers at the University of California, Davis, who plan to track the lung health of a small number of those respondents in coming years by measuring their breathing capacity.
US: ‘High confidence’ that Iran downed Ukrainian jet

The Washington Post

MOSCOW — U.S. officials have “high confidence” that an Iranian antiaircraft missile brought down a Ukrainian passenger jet near Tehran, killing all 176 aboard, a U.S. official said.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity among officials, believes Iran fired a surface-to-air missile at the Ukraine International Airlines flight UA 752 from Tehran to Kyiv on Wednesday, which came down four hours after Iran launched ballistic missiles into Iraq against U.S. targets in retaliation for the killing of Iraqi Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

The SA-15 system dates back to the Cold War and can be used to down planes, helicopters, drones or incoming missiles. Russia has exported the system to a number of countries, including Iran.

Earlier, Ukrainian investigators said they were considering the possibility that an antiaircraft missile brought down the Ukrainian passenger plane. Iran said the plane was on fire while still in the air and it was heading back toward Tehran’s airport because of a “problem” when it went down.

Ukrainian investigators said they were also looking into engine failure or a terrorist attack as possible causes of the crash. Several witnesses have said the plane was seen on video and the wide debris field, it appeared that the Boeing 737 800 was breaking apart in the air.

A team of 45 experts and search-and-rescue personnel from Ukraine arrived in Tehran early Thursday to participate in the probe, as well as to identify and repatriate the bodies of the 11 Ukrainians on board, including all nine crew members.

Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of Ukraine’s National Security and Defense Council, wrote on Facebook that his team wants to search for possible debris of a plane that crashed in the area in recent weeks, adding that he has assigned his team to look into the possibility of having a plane that crash in the area, located in the vicinity of the crash site. The reports could not be independently confirmed.

He added that Ukraine’s commission includes specialists who help to investigate the July 2014 downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 in Ukraine. The government in Kyiv has also suspended all Ukrainian flights over Iran and Iraqi airspace.

The Ukrainian International Airlines flight departed Tehran at 6:12 a.m. Wednesday and was approaching 8,000 feet when it abruptly lost contact with ground control, officials said.

The report from Iran’s Civil Aviation Organization said witnesses — on the ground and among the crew of another flight in the vicinity — reported seeing a fire while the Boeing 737 800 was still in the air, followed by an explosion when it slammed into a field near an amusement park.

Iranian officials said immediately after the crash that the plane had encountered technical problems, but this did not appear in the report, which also noted that there was no distress call from the aircraft.

The passengers on the plane were mostly Iranians but also included Europeans and more than 60 Canadian citizens.

A sign is displayed beside a burned out house near Mogo, Australia, on Thursday. A fire while the Boeing 737 800 was still in the air, followed by an explosion when it slammed into a field near an amusement park.

Australian on coast urged to flee amid rising fire risk

Associated Press

TOMERONG, Australia — Residents in the path of wildfires raging southeast Australia were urged on Thursday to evacuate if they don’t intend to defend their homes as hot and windy conditions are forecast to escalate the danger over the next two days.

The Rural Fire Service in New South Wales state has told fire-weary community meetings south of Sydney in the coastal towns of Nowra, Narooma and Batemans Bay that northerly winds were likely to once again drive flames toward the coast.

Vacations have retreated to beaches and into the ocean in the area in recent weeks as destructive fires and choking smoke have encroached on the tourist towns, scorching sand dunes in some places.

In neighboring Victoria state, fire-threatened populations were urged to act quickly on evacuation warnings.

“We can’t guarantee your safety and we don’t want to see you getting emergency servicemen — whether it be volunteers or paid staff — we do not want to put them in harm’s way because people didn’t follow advice that was given,” Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews said.

Temperatures in the threatened area were expected to reach more than 110 degrees Fahrenheit on Friday, and conditions remained tinder dry.

“You can get out, you should get out,” said Andrew Crisp, Victoria’s emergency management commissioner. “Because tomorrow is going to be a dangerous and dynamic day.”

The unprecedented fire crisis in southeast Australia that has claimed at least 26 lives since September, destroyed more than 2,000 homes and scorched an area twice the size of the state of Maryland has focused many Australians on how the nation adapts to climate change.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has come under withering criticism both at home and abroad for downplaying the need for his government to address climate change, which experts say helps supercharge the blazes.

Last year was Australia’s hottest and driest on record. The Bureau of Meteorology’s head of climate monitoring, Karl Braganza, said while the country’s rainfall was expected to pick up a bit, it wouldn’t be enough to snuff out the blazes anytime soon.

“Unfortunately, we’re not looking at widespread, above-average rainfalls at this stage,” he said. “That’s really what we need to put the fires out fairly quickly. It is going to be a campaign, in terms of the fires. We are not looking at a short and sharp end to the event — it looks like something that we will have to persist with for some time.”

Along a main roadway in southern New South Wales, forests of evergreen eucalyptus trees have taken on a ghostly autumnal appearance, with golden leaves and blackened trunks. The forests appear devoid of any wildlife. Outside, it often smells like a campfire that has been recently snuffed out, and hazy waves of smoke drift past.

In many small towns, most homes appear untouched apart from one or two that have been razed to the ground, sometimes with only a chimneystack still standing. People have hung signs and banners thanking the volunteer firefighters they call “furies.”

EU’s official says no-deal Brexit more harmful for Britain than EU

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — The European Union’s chief Brexit negotiator said Thursday that if Britain were as much as possible possible to the bloc’s market after it leaves, it won’t have undermined freedom to subsidize its industry.

Michel Barnier also insisted that the state aid rules in any future trade deal would be more stringent than with nations like Canada or Japan, simply because of the physical proximity of the departing EU nation.

“If the U.K. wants an open link with us for the products — zero tariffs, zero quotas — we need to be careful about zero dumping at the same time,” Barnier told a conference in Stockholm.

“I hope that this point is, and will be correctly understood by everybody. We will ask necessarily certain conditions on state aid policy in the U.K.,” Barnier said, adding that if that is not the case, access to the lucrative EU market will be negatively affected.

The EU has been stressing the need for a level playing field in the upcoming trade deal negotiations, meaning that access will be strictly linked to commitments to social welfare and environmental standards, among others. On Thursday, he stressed the need for state aid limits too.

As a member state, Britain was bound by strict state aid rules enforced by the powerful European Commission to make sure there would be no unfair competition among EU nations in its vast single market. Third countries aren’t immediately bound by such strictures.

Britain has decided to leave the EU by Jan. 31, partly because it doesn’t want to be tied down by EU rules, which feel impeded its sovereignty. But negotiating a trade deal will still involve many compromises on rule setting.

Barnier also insisted that Britain’s goal to have a full free trade deal by the end of the year was unrealistic.
US lab chimp were dumped on Monkey Island in Liberia and left to starve. Their caretaker saved them.

By Danielle Paquette

MONKEY ISLAND, Liberia — Ali was quiet when the motorboat pulled to a stop. Saltwater lapped at the narrow sandy shore. Mangrove leaves fluttered in the breeze. Then the man in a blue life jacket cupped his hands around his mouth and shouted: Hoo hoo!

With a secret password, the call uncorked a hidden primate universe. Dozens of chimpanzees emerged from the brush, hairy arms extended. They waded up to the rusty vessel with the nonchalance of someone fetching the mail.

“Time to eat,” said Joseph Thomas, who had fed his charges for 40 years, tossing bananas into the fur-covered crowd.

Chimps aren’t supposed to be stuck on their own island — especially one with no food — or mingle with much-weaker humans.

But nothing about Liberia’s Monkey Island is normal. It’s a spectacle, an increasingly costly burden and the enduring legacy of American scientists who set out to cure hepatitis B in 1974.

Animal testing has existed since doctors in ancient Greece studied the anatomy of rodents — estimated 115 million creatures are still used each year in research worldwide — but rarely is the aftermath so visible. Rarely is it so hungry.

This colony of 66 chimpanzees, which never learned to survive in the wild, eats roughly 500 pounds of produce each day, plus a weekly batch of hard-boiled eggs for protein.

They rely on money from a charity abroad and the devotion of men who’ve known them since they lived in steel cages.

“That’s Mabel,” said Thomas, the captain of that small crew, pointing to a 100-pound female. “Look! She likes to wash her food.”

For 40 years, Joseph Thomas has been the caretaker of a colony of chimpanzees who were infected with hepatitis B in the 1970s and dumped on Monkey Island, Liberia.

Chimpanzees catch food from a team of caretakers on Monkey Island, Liberia, in November.

vote his life to protecting chimps through epidemic and civil war. His long, strange mission started on the tennis court. He dreamed of becoming a professional athlete until he met a researcher from the New York Blood Center. She would give him a job, he said, if he could give her tennis lessons.

At 20, Thomas became a caretaker at the nonprofit’s chimpanzee lab- oratory in Robertsville, a remote town about 20 miles from the capital, Monrovia. He fed the animals, cleaned up after them and got to know their personalities, which ranged from shy to class clown.

He was promoted four years later to medical technician. The chimps were infected with hepatitis and river blindness, an eye ailment caused by a parasite, as researchers developed vaccines.

Chimp testing doesn’t happen anymore. They hate to be cooped up. They laugh, cry, get jealous and have temper tantrums — “just like us,” Thomas said.

He tended the animals as if they were his children. He hoped the experiments would ease suffering in West Africa and beyond. The New York Blood Center set up shops in Liberia because chimps — now considered endangered species — were already climbing the trees of its dense forests.

Chimpanzees not only carry out their own artificial comfort zone. What if the chimps heard the familiar sound of people talking — or poachers talking — and ambled out to say hi?

“For a while the only way to hold them was to put them on an island,” Thomas said.

There are six islands in the Farmington and Little Bassa rivers. These makeshift sanctuaries on the Atlantic coast became known collectively as Monkey Island.

Thomas and the other caretakers collected funds from New York to deliver buckets of bananas and lettuce, among other goods, to the chimps every two days. A veterinarian stayed on the nonprofit’s payroll to check on the animals.

In 2009, the New York Blood Center said it was getting hard to pay for Monkey Island. The charity contacted Liberia’s then-president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, for help and received no reply, its spokeswoman told The Washington Post. (A spokesman for Sirleaf declined to comment.)

By 2015, as the Ebola virus ravaged the country, the New York Blood Center notified the Liberian government that it could no longer divert funds from its important lifesaving mission here at home,” a spokeswoman said in a recent statement.

Thomas stuck to the feeding schedule until the last penny was gone.

He went with the other caretakers from fruit stall to fruit stall, seeking donations — a daunting task in a time of epidemic. One particularly generous neighbor gave him 50 pieces of coconut. The men gathered enough food to keep the chimps alive, if not full, for a few weeks.

During that period, Thomas remembers pulling up to islands and seeing frantic, desperate animals. They screamed and fought over scraps. It wasn’t enough.

He told the story to whoever would listen, he said, and eventually found a sympathetic ear with connections to the Humane Society in Washington.

Thomas has since bankrolled the care, spending about $500,000 annually on Monkey Island. Meals now happen twice a day. The price grows, though, as the colony does.

Despite the team of 10 caretakers’ best family planning efforts, which include vasectomies for males and slipping birth control in sugary milk paste, the chimps have had a few babies. “Very cute accidents,” Humane Society chief executive Kitty Block said.

Over the years, Monkey Island has become a local legend, though some news articles have painted the inhabitants as infectious threats.

“A bunch of ‘monster’ Chimps are living on their own island in a Planet of the Apes meets Resident Evil-style scenario,” one Australian reporter wrote in 2018.

Thomas rolls his eyes.

The public should stay away from animals that might get spooked and attack, he said, but it’s unclear if the chimps still carry disease. Tests are too expensive.

The caretakers dream of building an animal hospital on one of the sanctuaries, as well as a proper security system to keep people away. As of now, one man sits on a small dock off each island, telling onlookers to scram.

That doesn’t stop fishermen from floating over for a peek, and guides from irresponsibly advising tourists to hitch a ride.

No one can get as close as Thomas. Photos show him standing knee-deep in river water, hugging the chimps he sees as family.


“I’ll be doing this,” he said, “until they die or I do.”
New consoles bringing fresh takes on beloved titles

Video games, Page 25

■ Director Sam Mendes describes his vision behind the film’s seeming one ceaseless shot — Page 21

■ Washington Post film critic Ann Hornaday says “1917” is anchored by George MacKay’s breakout performance — Page 22

Travel — 27-31, 34-35  Music — 36-37  Books — 38  Fitness — 40  Crossword — 42
Apple TV Plus execs hope Snoopy, shown in a scene from the animated short “Snoopy in Space,” will appeal to multigenerational audiences as the streaming service hopes to lure subscribers with one eye on looming Netflix, the world’s largest shared by several other streaming services, often as the bedrock for the fledgling platform is one proactively to those two entities,” said Zack Van Amburg, Apple TV Plus’ head of Original Content.

“Both Snoopy and Sesame Workshop are crown jewels of the last decades in what family entertainment looks like. There’s a reason that we went proactively to those two entities,” said Zack Van Amburg, Apple’s head of worldwide video alongside Jamie Erlicht.

The decision to use existing children’s icons as the bedrock for the fledgling platform is one shared by several other streaming services, often with one eye on looming Netflix, the world’s largest streamer with an arsenal of titles attracting kids and families.

The services are competing for kids’ eyeballs not only from each other but also from shows on YouTube and traditional broadcast channels. Often the safest way forward is piggybacking on established titles – something kids already know from their childhood and leaning into the nostalgia.

Amazon Prime Video has rebooted “Clifford the Big Red Dog” and has original shows featuring Kung-Fu Panda, Pete the Cat, and Rocky and Bullwinkle. CBS All Access has series built on the classic book “Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs” and the classic toon “Danger Mouse.” Disney Plus is offering shows starring Forky from “Toy Story 4” and a reboot of the Hilary Duff-led “Lizzie McGuire,” another show built around Phineas & Ferb, plus a new series based on Marvel Comics’ “The Falcon and the Winter Soldier.” And, yes, it too, has Muppets — the unscripted series “Muppets Now.”

Netflix has embraced shows built around Captain Underpants, “Lost in Space,” the book “Green Eggs and Ham,” the comic book “Raising Dion” and even a youth-oriented “Fast and Furious” series.

“Our intention is to offer a lot of choice. When we think about kids or we think about a family audience, one of the things we think about is there’s no two kids that are the same, and there are no two families that are the same,” said Melissa Cobb, Netflix’s vice president of kids and family.

Brian Wright, vice president of original series at Netflix, said its creators are hoping to craft content that allows a family to have a shared experience and a shared conversation — wherever that family is.

“We really want to be in the space of building really appealing worlds that have something for everybody,” he said. “One thing that we talk a lot about is reflecting the world back at itself. We want to break down the barriers of who gets to be seen and represented.”

Apple TV Plus subscribers may not get as many shows as Netflix, but executives are building a carefully curated list, including a dozen 8-minute “Snoopy in Space” animated shorts, as well as episodes of “The Snoopy Show,” with each installment featuring three seven-minute cartoons starring the Peanuts crew.

“They’ll get two series from Sesame: the live-action preschool show of “Helpsters,” which mixes human actors and puppets, including Cody, a new puppet that loves computer coding. And there’s “Ghostwriter,” a live-action fantasy series that re-imagines the Sesame Workshop’s 1992 series.

The streamer will also have the original animated series “Here We Are” based on lauded author Oliver Jeffers’ book, the animated series “Wolfboy and the Everything Factory,” the live-action animated hybrid “Lovely Little Farm” and a pair of animated series based on children’s books “Doug Unplugged” and “Zen Shorts.”

“When you look at the breadth of programming, I think you’ll see a mix of established book properties, reboots of television shows, but also new properties from diverse creators,” said Tara Sorenson, Apple’s head of children’s programming.

“Apple as a whole believes in great storytelling, and so we want to make sure we represent that across our slate.”

Van Amburg and Sorenson said that what makes Apple TV Plus distinctive from some of the others is a commitment to education and imparting lessons. “We want to make sure parents feel good about watching these programs together as a family but also putting their kids in front of them solo,” said Sorenson.

Competing for kids’ eyes

Companies like Apple, Netflix incorporating familiar characters to get families’ attention

By Mark Kennedy
Associated Press

New technology. Same furry faces.

When Apple was thinking about what kind of children’s TV programming it wanted on its new streaming service, it doubled down on two multi-generational crowd-pleasers — Snoopy and “Sesame Street.”

Apple TV Plus has carved out prominent roles for Charlie Brown’s floppy-eared beagle and for puppets from the famed Sesame Workshop in its slate of kid- and family-friendly programs.

“Both Snoopy and Sesame Workshop are crown jewels of the last decades in what family entertainment looks like. There’s a reason that we went proactively to those two entities,” said Zack Van Amburg, Apple’s head of worldwide video alongside Jamie Erlicht.

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GADGET WATCH

Misfit smartwatch gets you moving

By Gregg Ellman
Tribune News Service

The Misfit Vapor X smartwatch is powered by Wear OS by Google and works with both Android and Apple.

I love that it looks like a watch, feels like a watch, but also allows me to play music, track my heart rate and steps, check my calendar, or get paired with an Android, view messages.

With Bluetooth and Wi-Fi built in, the first thing you do is download the Wear OS by Google companion app. From there, the setup was simple right out of the box, even connecting to my home Wi-Fi and Apple iCal.

A simple swipe on the screen allows me to get my calendar notifications, weather updates, access my heart rate, with the heart rate sensor, and the all important steps for the day.

Other internal sensors include Wear OS’ accelerometer, altimeter, ambient light, gyro, in addition to an internal microphone (talk to Google Assistant), NFC and Untethered GPS, all powered by the Qualcomm Snapdragon Wear 3100 processor.

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With the ambient light sensor, I could view the smartwatch night or day. Now that is going from bright outside conditions to darker rooms at my home gym, and the screen was always perfectly viewable.

Pushing the buttons on the side took me to the apps like Google Pay, Google Fit and the Play Store to get more apps for the smartwatch. Third-party app integration includes Spotify and Pandora.

The watch is compatible with Android 6.0+ (excluding Go edition) and iOS 10+. The internal battery (310mAh) lasted about a day with the factory setting and was quickly recharged by setting it on the magnetic charger.

The aluminum Vapor X smartwatch is waterproof up to 30 meters and is swimproof to 30 meters and is swimproof to 30 meters.

At the end of each module, you flip the charging element up to allow your watch to charge, or you can use your watch flat, or you can use your watch flat, or you can use your watch flat. Each module charges a specific device, and all powered by the Qualcomm Snapdragon Wear 3100 processor.

Charging for multiple devices can be a problem after all the gadgets generated during the holiday season, but Scosche has made it simple with the new BaseLynx charging system.

It allows for a choice of charging iPhones, Androids, Apple Watch, iPad, cameras, portable gaming systems, headphones together or individually, all from a single AC power cord.

Scosche describes the BaseLynx as a “little island of order in what can sometimes be a messy world.” It’s a clever, attractive and innovative charging system, allowing you to configure it as needed, with each module connecting to the system in seconds.

The devices you have will dictate what modules you need. Each module charges a specific device, some with Qi Wireless ($49.95), Apple Watch ($69.95) or a vertical stand ($49-49) to easily connect there devices where you connect your USB charging cable directly to the module. The vertical module has charging for one 18W USB-C Power Delivery port and two 12W USB-A ports.

The Apple Watch stand charges your watch flat, or you can flip the charging element up to display your watch in Nightstand Mode while it charges.

At the end of each module, you can add a BaseLynx EndCap ($39.95) to add a one 18W USB-C Power Delivery port and one 12W USB-A port.

The modules are available exclusively at Apple and can be used individually, or add as more needed. There is no setup, just plug them together to work off the one included power cord.

A Pro Kit has a big price savings with the wireless charging pad, Apple Watch, vertical charging station, a pair of USB (A and C) to lightning cables and dual-port end caps bundled for $199. Online: scosche.com

The Misfit Vapor X smartwatch gets you moving.
The goal is to remove as many layers between the audience and the characters as much as possible, not add them.'

Sam Mendes
Director of ’1917’

The winds that were blow- ing in the First World War are blowing again. It was 100 years ago almost to the day that I started writing. The danger is that it will be forgotten. Those that lived through it and fought in it are dead. These men were fighting for a free and unified Europe, which right now would be worth remembering in many other parts of the world. There is a sense there’s something unsettled in the air, the shifting of borders, the obsession with national identity. I thought it was time to be reminded of that and make a movie that’s not defined by its nation. It’s about the human experience of war.
‘1917’ goes the distance
Continuous-shot war film powerful and unforgettable

BY ANN HORNADAY
The Washington Post

A technical exercise in filmmaking, “1917” is reminiscent of Alfred Hitchcock’s “Rope” and “Birdman” — a nearly two-hour “oner,” or continuous shot, during which the story seems to unfold in seamless real time. The fact that Sam Mendes used the conceit to portray the bravery, anguish, death and desecrated landscapes of World War I feels like the right approach at the right time. Just last year, Peter Jackson’s magnificent documentary “They Shall Not Grow Old” rekindled interest in the Great War, and sequences like Joe Wright’s single-shot depiction of Dunkirk in “Dunkirk” showed how powerfully impressive such bravura gestures can be. Which makes it all the more a letdown that “1917” is such a technical exercise in improbable but oddly distancing; ultimately stirring but too often gimmicky. While its visual language and subjective camera might hold promise for conveying the suffering and sacrifice of World War I to a generation raised on video games and virtual reality, there are moments when “1917” feels as rote as any other exercise in leveling-up. Thankfully, the film is anchored by a lead performance that overcomes its self-imposed limitations. As a British lance corporal named Schofield, George MacKay delivers a breakthrough performance, acquitting his primary task — to both witness the horrors of war and confidently lead the audience through them — with just the right combination of vulnerability and quiet command. As “1917” opens, Schofield and his friend Blake (Dean-Charles Chapman) are assigned the daunting task of delivering a life-or-death message to 1,600 British troops preparing to attack German enemy lines. What ensues is a classic race against the clock — made more urgent by the fact that the survival of Blake’s own brother is at stake. Along the way, Deakins creates a remarkable simulation of the psychological toll imposed on its victims and practitioners.

And, as idealistic young men, they must endure the war-ravaged pessimism of their elders, who appear right on cue to give voice to variations on the theme of war-as-hell. As cinematographer Roger Deakins sends his unchained camera through the muddy, rat-infested trenches, corpse-strewn battlefields and abandoned farms of the French countryside, an all-star cast of actors shows up to appear in brief but vivid cameos, including Colin Firth, Benedict Cumberbatch, Mark Strong and Andrew Scott. Using occasional moments of darkness as editing opportunities, Deakins creates a remarkably convincing simulation of the uninterrupted flow of time: doing away with shaky-cam naturalism, he combines fluid, dancelike movement with stately composition and framing to create images of breathtaking beauty. As often as not in “1917,” those images exist alongside hyper-real sequences that would be at home in any action movie or video game, where protagonists dodge booby traps, collapsing buildings and other obstacles to gain extra life. As generic or even downright corny as some of these encounters can be, MacKay and Chapman do an outstanding job of grounding them in the palpable fears and shaky courage of men who are still clearly boys. Although Mendes and his co-screenwriter Krysty Wilson-Cairns eschew the kind of commentary that made films like “Paths of Glory” such persuasive indictments of military hierarchy, “1917” leaves viewers with the indelible and overwhelming impression that war isn’t just hell, but an unconscionable waste.

Michael B. Jordan and Jamie Foxx star in “Just Mercy,” directed by Sam Mendes.

‘Just Mercy’ a tale both shattering and satisfying

BY ANN HORNADAY
The Washington Post

The stirring, stylish legal drama “Just Mercy” feels familiar on several levels. The story of a wrongly accused man sent to death row, it joins such films as “Dead Man Walking” and the more recent “Clency” as an affecting examination of how justice is confused with inhuman retribution.

Based on factual events, “Just Mercy” is the story of Walter “Johnny D.” McMillian, who in 1987 was arrested for a murder he didn’t commit, but who was railroaded by a racist and incompetent legal system in Alabama — a story that is as old as the ragged cross itself. McMillian’s case became famous by way of a “60 Minutes” episode and the memoir of Bryan Stevenson, a brilliant, Harvard-educated attorney who came to his defense and has gone on to become a visionary leader in criminal justice reform.

Both on a macro and micro level then, “Just Mercy” — which takes its title from Stevenson’s book — might feel like something we’ve seen before. But in the judicious hands of director and co-writer Destin Daniel Cretton, it feels new and exciting, but fresh and urgent and more timely than ever.

Largely, that’s because Cretton, best known for his exceptionally assured 2013 breakthrough “Short Term 12,” knows exactly when to get out of the way and let Stevenson and McMillian’s story simply unfold. “Just Mercy” begins in 1987, when McMillian — played in an astonishing comeback performance by Jamie Foxx — is in a forest outside Monroeville, where he works as a pulpwood contractor. Arrested for the murder of a white dry-cleaning clerk in town, McMillian insists he couldn’t have committed the crime (he was at a church fish fry that day along with several witnesses). Still, he winds up on death row, the result of countless assaults on his human and constitutional rights that continue once he’s there.

McMillian would have been just another statistic of structural racism and irrational fear and revenge, had Stevenson not decided to move from the Northeast to Monroeville, where upon his arrival he’s encouraged to visit the “Fe-Kill a Mockingbird” museum and to stand “right where Atticus Finch once stood.” In “Just Mercy,” the painful and infuriating gaps between myth and reality of the contemporary South aren’t understated as much as opened up and revealed, allowing audience members to come to conclusions that will range from wincing discomfort to outrage.

Played by Michael B. Jordan with his usual combination of composure and submerged fire, Stevenson is the main protagonist in “Just Mercy,” but this isn’t a biopic. As much as viewers come to admire him for his courage and dedication, they don’t necessarily come to feel they know him. Similarly Brie Larson, who plays Eva Ansley, and Rob Morgan, who brings enormous sympathy to a prison officer whose exterminating circumstances throw the pervertor of the death penalty into heartbreaking relief.

Punctuated by a twitchy, unconvincingly on-point turn from Tim Blake Nelson as a crucial witness named Ralph Myers, “Just Mercy” is transformed from a mere billboard declaring that racism is bad to an intimate, immediate and deeply moving portrait of the trauma and psychic toll imposed on its victims and practitioners. Propelled by a musical score by Joel P. West, “Just Mercy” keeps its emotions on a low simmer; finally coming to a climax that is satisfying on one level, and absolutely shattering on another. From its smooth visuals and warm, swinging sounds to its magnificent performances, “Just Mercy” is masterfully constructed to keep us inside a story that otherwise would be too brutal to bear.

“Just Mercy” is rated PG-13 for realistic violence and strong language. Running time: 119 minutes.
Racial injustice film ‘Just Mercy’ is the first major studio movie produced with an inclusion rider

By Jake Coyle
Associated Press

Michael B. Jordan doesn’t usually get starstruck. Bryan Stevenson had a different effect on him.

Stevenson, whom Jordan plays in the legal drama “Just Mercy,” has led one of the most successful efforts to combat mass incarceration and racial injustices in the United States legal system. In 1989, he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a nonprofit. In 1989, he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a nonprofit.

You don’t really come across too many people like that. There isn’t a voice like his,” says Jordan.” Meeting that person is like: Man, this is the hidden gem. This is the unsung hero. This is the national hero that needs to be protected at all costs. I wanted to do his story justice.”

“Just Mercy” is based on Stevenson’s acclaimed 2014 memoir “Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption.” It’s centered on a formative case for Stevenson, one that helped birth the EJI. In 1989, Stevenson defended Walter McMillian, a then-47-year-old black tree cutter who the year before had been falsely accused and swiftly sentenced to death for the murder of an 18-year-old white woman in Monroeville, Ala., the hometown of Harper Lee.

“Just Mercy,” in which Jamie Foxx plays McMillian, has the shape of a civil rights drama like “To Kill a Mockingbird,” but it’s more contemporary. The story might not be set during slavery or segregation, but those histories are inextricable from the prejudices and injustices that lead to the jailing of men like McMillian. Jordan believes movies like “Just Mercy” can play an important role inraising awareness.

“We don’t see those kinds of stories very often, and I think that’s created a void in our consciousness about what’s happening. We have the highest rate of incarceration in the world, and most people in this country have no knowledge of that,” says Stevenson. “That lack of knowledge and that lack of compassion is what’s made us so vulnerable to the abuse that is on display in this story.”

Jordan and Stevenson were speaking in a recent interview together amid the copious publicity demands of a much-touted holiday movie release, one that has drawn warm reviews since its premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival and found awards season attention ahead of its Dec. 25 release. It expands nationwide Jan. 10.

Stevenson has dedicated much of his life to advocacy outside the courtroom (including a widely watched TED Talk), yet even he was slightly shell-shocked by the experience. “I think I did 67 interviews yesterday,” he said, bewildered.

But both Stevenson and Jordan want “Just Mercy” to be as talked about as possible. The movie is, itself, a representation of the ideals it upholds. “Just Mercy” is the first major studio movie produced with an inclusion rider, the contractual provision mandating the consideration of people from underrepresented groups for cast and crew positions.

After Frances McDormand famously uttered the term in her acceptance speech at the 2018 Oscars, Jordan’s production company, Outlier Society, adopted it. That helped lead to a similar such commitment by WarnerMedia, the parent company of “Just Mercy” distributor Warner Bros., which has a first-look deal with Outlier Society.

“This is the first opportunity for me to really implement the inclusion rider in a real way,” says Jordan.” It’s a step. You’ve got to be able to adapt and find ways to make change. I’m just trying to play my part in the bigger puzzle of it all. Change is something that’s uncomfortable, so you have to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. I’ve learned that from Bryan.”

Jordan, the 32-year-old Newarker, N.J.-raised star of “Black Panther” and “Creed,” and the 60-year-old Stevenson, who experienced segregation and violence firsthand growing up in Delaware before attending Harvard Law, have found a bond despite their divergent worlds. They are both black men from humble Northeast origins who have risen to the heights of their respective industries, and are trying to use their considerable abilities to effect change.

“He’s not just somebody trying to be famous,” Stevenson says of Jordan. “He’s trying to be somebody who makes a difference in the world. I so appreciated that and respected that about him. It made me more hopeful and confident that this project would be OK because I was very apprehensive at first.”

Stevenson had seen plenty of legal dramas that prized theatri c over issues. But he was put at ease, in part, by Jordan’s desire to make the film with the inclusion rider.

“Having a film about justice that isn’t in some way dealing with issues like diversity and inclusion and opening doors to women and people of color would be paradoxical,” says Stevenson. “I was enormously proud that Michael made that part of this.”

The film’s director, Destin Daniel Cretton (“Short Term 12”), is currently prepping Marvel’s first Asian-led film, “Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings.” In making “Just Mercy,” he said he saw the direct effects of the production’s focus on inclusivity.

“We had department heads who have never been a department head in their careers, and they had very long careers. They just had never been given the chance,” said Cretton, specifically citing makeup department head Patrice Coleman. “Now she has that on her résumé, and she will get hired again. That is a really beautiful thing to me. I hope more productions and more studios take the steps to do that.”

“Just Mercy” isn’t just about one case. There is another, harrowingly depicted in the film, about a man on death row (Herbert Richardson, played by Rob Morgan) who doesn’t dispute his guilt but does dispute the state’s right to end his life. “Just Mercy” becomes a drama about the death penalty, itself. In his book, Stevenson writes: “The real question of capital punishment in this country is: Do we deserve to kill?”

Stevenson remains optimistic and tireless. “You can triumph,” he says. “You can make a difference.” His empowering message of hope has resonated for Jordan.

“I feel like I grew up a lot in the last four or five years. Something greater than me has kind of called me in to help push something forward,” Jordan says. “This movie changed me. It opened up my eyes.”
Can aliens swim ‘Underwater’?

Film plays homage to ‘Alien’ with similar roles, plot but different setting

BY KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

The opening shot of “Underwater” roves around the empty, industrial passageways of some kind of transport vessel, its walls creaking. Motivated by an unknown force, the camera’s pan ultimately lands on Norah (Kristen Stewart), who has cropped bleached hair and a mouthful of toothpaste, clad in her skivvies. Immediately the audience recognizes this will be Stewart’s “Ripley moment,” paying homage to Sigourney Weaver’s iconic role in Ridley Scott’s “Alien” (but at the bottom of the Mariana Trench, rather than in outer space).

Norah is a mechanical engineer aboard a large structure surrounding the Kepler ocean drill, which is in the business of penetrating the Earth’s crust searching for minerals like a hungry anteater. She’s a cynical sort of sailor, scooping spiders from the sink, but she knows how to make the tough decisions too. When the structure is rocked by several massive jolts, she’s forced to sacrifice a couple of colleagues while sealing off a passageway to save the whole ship. Soon it’s just a small group of survivors, hoping to make their way down to the ocean floor and across to another drilling station, the Roe-buck. It seems their vulnerable suits and the deadly pressure from the miles of water they’re under will be the most dangerous thing to navigate, but they’re of course underestimating the real threats of what lie beneath.

Written by Brian Duffield and Adam Cozad, the specter of “Alien” haunts “Underwater,” a drag riff off and tribute to the 1979 extraterrestrial horror thriller. One can imagine the pitch meeting: “It’s ‘Alien’ on the ocean floor!” But it was so closely that one can easily predict each story beat, each reveal, each jump scare. Director William Eubank distinguishes the formulaic film with a jittery artfulness rendered in shades of gray and green, but what elevates the B-movie is the presence of Stewart, who is both a movie star and a great actress. Although she sometimes seems to vacillate between the two poles (“Charlie’s Angels” vs. “Personal Shopper,” for example), in “Underwater,” she is both, bringing her cool elan to this monster movie under the sea.

Oh yeah, “Underwater” is a monster movie, but you knew that, right? This Lovecraftian tale takes the “Alien” structure and plagues it “20,000 Leagues Under the Sea,” with a nod to Neil Marshall’s claustrophobic 2006 cave horror flick “The Descent.” The result is something Jules Verne could only dream of, putting even the iconic Xeno-morph to shame:

The sickly green aesthetic and harried editing brings a queasy verve to the proceedings, and coupled with the cast (Stewart is joined by Vincent Cassel, John Gallagher, Jr., Jessica Henwick, Mamoudou Athie and T.J. Miller), “Underwater” rises above its generic provenance. But as stylish as it is, and with as many deeply treacherous and inventive dilemmas as the group faces, the film is too faithful to the formula that it never achieves pulse-quickening suspense. It devolves into a grim bee-checking as our final girl drags herself around the murky environs of the ocean floor. “Underwater” never quite breaches the surface from good to great, though this well-appointed creature feature proves to be an excellent showcase for Stewart’s screen presence.

*Kristen Stewart takes on a very Sigourney Weaver-ish role in “Underwater.”*

From left: Salma Hayek, Tiffany Haddish and Rose Byrne star in “Like a Boss.”

Michael O’Sullivan
The Washington Post

“Like a Boss” is the perfect airplane movie: something that won’t distract you terribly much while you work the New York Times crossword puzzle during a long flight, periodically looking up at the screen when the 2-year-old in the seat behind you kicks the back of your chair. Oh well. At least that way you won’t fall asleep.

In a warm movie theater with reclining lounge chairs, the risk of drifting off is far greater — which is, quite frankly, shocking, considering this is a Tiffany Haddish movie.

With Rose Byrne, the normally hilarious Haddish plays the co-owner of a small, bricks-and-mortar cosmetics shop named, after the childhood best friends, Mel & Mia’s. (You know: the kind of quaint, stand-alone boutique selling hand-mixed foundation and blush that is grown using a mortar and pestle — the kind of place that doesn’t actually exist, except on screen.)

A half-million dollars in debt, Mel & Mia are miraculously bailed out by Claire Luna (Salma Hayek), a predatory makeup mogul who immediately — and predictably — begins driving a psychological wedge between the business partners, playing Byrne’s Mel (the money-minded one) off against Haddish’s Mia (the creative one) so that Claire herself can assume a controlling interest in their company.

But the power of female friendship is too great, in a movie that keeps hammering that point home, between jokes about sex, marijuana and a baby-shower cake with a doll’s head emerging from what looks like an anatomi-cally correct 3-D model you’d find in an OB/GYN’s office.

Throughout a preview screening, the laughs were few and far between, even counting that cake scene. The roster of otherwise funny supporting actors — Billy Porter, Jennifer Coolidge, Karan Soni, Jimmy O. Yang — does little to lessen this flat loaf, which isn’t just flavorless but half-baked. Case in point: Mel and Mia’s product that initially draws the attention of Claire, for instance, is a single-use makeup kit call the One Night Stand, which isn’t just a dumb idea, but a wasteful one. As wasteful as the film is of its talent.

As for director Miguel Arteta, a filmmaker who, from his 1997 breakout “Star Maps,” to 2017’s “Beatriz at Dinner,” has never been afraid to be edgy, even transgressive, it’s a mystery why he would make this film, when Hollywood is full of no-name hacks willing to do the job.

True to its workplace-themed title, “Like a Boss” feels like a chore someone was handed. Perhaps oddest of all, Mel & Mia’s company is all about selling makeup that doesn’t hide a woman’s natural beauty. But “Boss” trovels on the clown white, strenuously reaching for nonexistent yuks instead of trusting in the talent of its likable but ill-used cast.

*Like a Boss* is rated PG-13 for sci-fi action and terror, and brief strong language. Running time: 95 minutes.

*Underwater* is rated PG-13 for sci-fi action and terror, and brief strong language. Running time: 95 minutes.
Final Fantasy VII Remake, Hellblade 2 and Cyberpunk 2077 are a few hotly anticipated games in 2020.

Games go next-gen

2020 to bring much-anticipated sequels, fresh takes to consoles new and old

**Cyberpunk 2077**

*Platform:* PS4, Xbox One, PC, Google Stadia

*Release date:* April 16

Cyberpunk, a science fiction subgenre about dystopian futures and humans with robotic limbs, has a storied history in video games, with games like Deus Ex and Shadowrun. The cyberpunk trend has slowed somewhat in recent years, but Cyberpunk 2077 hopes to bring it back to the forefront.

Cyberpunk 2077, the next RPG from the makers of The Witcher series, was first announced back in 2012. Now, eight years later, it’s finally ready. Set in the futuristic metropolis of Night City, the world is geographically smaller than that of The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt, but it’s expected to be denser with more verticality. It’s one of the first massive sub-genre about dystopian futures and humans with robotic limbs, has a storied history in video games, with games like Deus Ex and Shadowrun. The cyberpunk trend has slowed somewhat in recent years, but Cyberpunk 2077 hopes to bring it back to the forefront.

**The Last of Us 2**

*Platform:* PS4

*Release date:* May 29

Some, including me, were hesitant about a sequel to The Last of Us. The first entry from 2013 had a fitting end, possibly one of the best endings in a video game to date. But after witnessing several trailers for The Last of Us 2, developer Naughty Dog is convincing me otherwise. Maybe there’s more for us within the game's heart, than we expected.

**Halo:** Infinite

*Platform:* Xbox Series X, PC

*Release date:* TBA 2020

Halo has long been the face of Xbox, so it wasn’t a surprise to find out its newest entry is one of the launch titles for Xbox Series X. Halo: Infinite is the sixth main entry in the iconic first-person shooter franchise, and once again puts you inside the helmet of Master Chief. 343 Industries has built a new engine for Halo: Infinite, which will likely show off Series X’s potential. Despite the popularization of battle royale over the past couple years, other long-running franchise creating their own iterations like Call of Duty Black Ops 4's Blackout, 343 Industries has stated that it will not be creating such a mode for Halo.

**Watch Dogs: Legion**

*Platform:* PS5, PC

*Release date:* TBA 2020

Watch Dogs: Legion is best described as a hack-and-slash RPG. It combines Diablo-like loot gameplay, RPG mechanics and melee combat. Set in a fantasy world split into realms of Earth, Water, Air, Fire and Spirit, it looks action-packed to the fullest. Based on the trailer shown at The Game Awards, it looks to be a new game, which does exactly what it says on the tin.

**Godfall**

*Platform:* PS5, PC

*Release date:* TBA 2020

Godfall is the first title to be revealed for the PlayStation 5, as announced at The Game Awards. It’s published by Gearbox, the makers of Borderlands, and developed by Counterplay Games. Godfall is best described as a “lore slasher” — it combines Diablo-like loot gameplay, RPG mechanics and melee combat. Set in a fantasy world split into realms of Earth, Water, Air, Fire and Spirit, it looks action-packed to the fullest. Based on the trailer shown at The Game Awards, it looks to be a new game, which does exactly what it says on the tin.

**Animal Crossing: New Horizons**

*Platform:* Nintendo Switch

*Release date:* March 20

Animal Crossing fans have been clamoring for another installment since Animal Crossing: New Leaf, which released in 2012 on the Nintendo 3DS. Animal Crossing: New Horizons brings the popular simulator franchise to Nintendo Switch and it comes with a bevy of changes. New Horizons follows the formula from the usual urban setting of Animal Crossing to a deserted island. With crafting, furniture customization options and changing seasons that can be matched to reflect your real-life region, it already looks like it’s going to be a great experience. Expect new and returning villages, too. Familiar characters, like Tom Nook and Isabelle, will help this tropical island feel like home.

RPGs by rewarding skill-based offensive gameplay and making every hit matter." Godfall will also release on PC. It does not yet have a release date, but it’s confirmed to launch alongside the PS5 this year.

**Final Fantasy VII Remake**

*Platform:* PS4

*Release date:* March 3

It’s been a long time coming. The Final Fantasy VII Remake began to feel more like a dream than reality when it was a no-show at events like E3 for several years. However, it’s back. With a release date and a ton of branded trailer showing it in action, like the recent sneak peek from The Game Awards, it’s a strong one to look forward to in 2020.

**The Last of Us 2**

*Release date:* TBA

The Last of Us 2 is set in a post-Brexit London, you once again play as a hacker character. But now, you can play as any NPC or non-player character (even a grandma vigilante) when you recruit them to your cause. (even a grandma vigilante) when you recruit them to your cause.

**Watch Dogs: Legion**

*Platform:* PS5, PC

*Release date:* TBA 2020

Godfall is the first title to be revealed for the PlayStation 5, as announced at The Game Awards. It’s published by Gearbox, the makers of Borderlands, and developed by Counterplay Games. Godfall is best described as a “lore slasher” — it combines Diablo-like loot gameplay, RPG mechanics and melee combat. Set in a fantasy world split into realms of Earth, Water, Air, Fire and Spirit, it looks action-packed to the fullest. Based on the trailer shown at The Game Awards, it looks like someone swapped out Destiny’s guns for swords.

**Counterplay CEO and Godfall creative director Keith Lee wrote in a press release that the team is “innovating with Godfall to provide a fresh take on action**
Pawternity perks for pet parents

Some companies acknowledge that four-legged adoptees are part of the family too

BY MARK WILLIAMS
The Columbus Dispatch, Ohio

To BrewDog, furry families are as important as the human ones. That’s why the Scottish brewer, which has based its U.S. operations in Canal Winchester, Ohio, gives its employees an unusual perk: A week of paid time off when they adopt a dog that they can use one time.

“The regular family isn’t everyone’s thing. We have to make sure we’re nurturing people’s family, whether that’s furry families or human families,” said Miranda Dietz, the company’s supply chain manager. “This is just a really cool way to make sure we’re taking care of our people.”

While still few in number, other companies have started to offer similar benefits. Minneapolis digital marketing agency Nina Hale has a “fur-ternity leave” policy that gives new pet parents a week of work-from-home days so that they can adjust to their new pets.

“Part of embracing employee satisfaction as a business priority means recognizing important life events that happen outside of the office,” Nina Hale CEO Donna Robinson said when the policy was put in place in 2018. “If we want to continue to set the example as a top workplace, it is crucial to offer innovative benefits that help to preserve the work-life happiness of our employee owners.”

Pet-food company Mars Petcare encourages its workers to talk with their managers to figure out time off when they adopt a new pet. In addition, the company’s new U.S. headquarters in a suburb of Nashville, Tenn., has a “doggie playcare” with full-time pet-sitters.

The New York City-based software company mParticle offers two weeks paid time off for those who adopt a rescue dog or cat.

Bark, the company behind the dog toy and treat subscription BarkBox, doesn’t have an official policy when it comes to giving workers time off at its Columbus operations when they adopt a new dog. Still, it gives employees time to work from home and has an extensive support system to provide help to new pup parents in the office, said Stacie Grissom, director of content and communications at Bark, where employees are permitted to bring their dogs to work.

“There are so many questions in the first few days and weeks of having a new dog, and we’ve noticed that it’s extremely helpful to have these in-real-life human resources to support folks with a new dog,” she said.

One employee has fostered 63 dogs in the past four years, making her a sort of “dogmother” to the dogs and humans in the office who need help, Grissom said.

For pet-friendly companies, the payoff from such policies is employees more likely to be engaged with their work, research shows.

A 2018 study by Nationwide, the nation’s largest pet insurer, and the Human Animal Bond Research Institute found that 90% of employees in pet-friendly workplaces feel highly connected to their company mission and willing to recommend their employers to others. That drops to less than 65% in less dog-friendly companies, according to the report.

“Pet owners increasingly think of their pets as members of the family,” the institute’s executive director, Steven Feldman, said in the report. “When employers offer pet-friendly benefits, it sends an important signal that the company cares about every member of the family, even the ones with four legs.”

John Macari, 32, of Columbus, took a paid week off from work at BrewDog when he adopted Khaya, a Rhodesian Ridgeback that is now 14 months old. Macari said the benefit might be unusual for most companies, but not for BrewDog, which also allows workers to bring their pets to work with them. Taking time off allows the puppy and its owner to get more accustomed to each other in a new environment for the dog, he said.

“It’s good for the dog,” he said. “It’s good for us. It helps the dog get settled, helps you bond with them.”
Just before Christmas this year, my family and I visited Innsbruck in Austria. Located around 180 miles, or four hours by car, from Aviano, Innsbruck is not only surrounded by the majestic Alps and all they have to offer, but is also home to the Swarovski crystal company and has some great Christmas markets.

We made our way around town on foot, walking along the River Inn or through the Old Town to wherever our curiosity took us.

Our wanderings took us to a giant, illuminated Christmas tree decorated with Swarovski crystal, and set in the middle of one of many Christmas markets around the city. The next day, we visited the Old Town, a densely populated area full of colorful buildings that house a variety of modern and antiques shops. The area is believed to have been built by Maximilian I, the Holy Roman Emperor from 1508-1519.

When we were there, four Christmas markets were set up in the Old Town. In one, we tried Klachln, a hot donut-like fried bread served with warm sauerkraut and Almdudler, a soda made with alpine herbs, and browsed the many shops and stands for artisanal knick-knacks, some from as far afield as Ukraine and Ecuador.

In addition to shopping and dining, there are many beautiful and historic churches and museums to explore in Innsbruck. I really enjoyed visiting the Hofkirche mit Silberner Kapelle, a Catholic church adjacent to the royal palace. In this church are the tombs of Emperor Maximilian I (with larger-than-life iron statues of family members and friends of Maximilian) and Archduke Ferdinand, whose assassination in Sarajevo in 1914 triggered World War I.

There’s also a museum inside the church where you can see artifacts from the Maximilian I era. If you buy the church and museum ticket option, you can climb up the tower for an amazing view of the city and the mountain ranges.

Other must-sees in the Old Town are the Hospital Church of the Holy Spirit — a marvelous pink building with an even more astonishing interior — and the Triumphforte, Innsbruck’s small victory arch with its impressive architecture. There’s also the Golden Roof, a canopy built entirely of golden shingles, and the Hofburg, or royal palace, which is considered one of the three most significant cultural buildings in the country, along with the Hofburg Palace and Schoenbrunn Palace, both located in Vienna.

No matter what you like exploring while on vacation, Innsbruck has something for everyone and that really impressed us.

— Norman Llamas

The Golden Roof, located in Innsbruck’s city center, is a canopy entirely made of golden shingles that is believed to have been built by Emperor Maximilian I. — a marvelous pink building with an even more astonishing interior — and the Triumphforte, Innsbruck’s small victory arch with its impressive architecture. There’s also the Golden Roof, a canopy built entirely of golden shingles, and the Hofburg, or royal palace, which is considered one of the three most significant cultural buildings in the country, along with the Hofburg Palace and Schoenbrunn Palace, both located in Vienna.

The Royal Palace, or Hofburg, of Innsbruck is a former Habsburg palace and considered one of the three most significant cultural buildings in Austria, along with the Hofburg and Schoenbrunn palaces, both in Vienna.
VENICE, Italy (AP) — Venice has a wonderful tradition of cicchetti (pronounced chi-KET-tee) — the local appetizers that line the counters of little pubs all over town at the end of each workday. When in town, my favorite meal is what I call “The Stand-Up Progressive Venetian Pub-Crawl Dinner” — visiting a series of these cozy little drinking areas, eating guilty-looking morsels on toothpicks, and washing it all down with little glasses of wine. An added advantage is that local characters are more inclined to chat in these settings.

And, in a town with canals and no cars, pub-crawling is safe and easy. (Perhaps that’s how you know if you’ve found a real agriturismo, or farm stay, in the middle of the countryside.) Venetians call this pub crawl the giro d’ombra. Giro means “stroll,” and ombra — slang for a glass of wine — means “shade.” This dates back to the old days, when a portable wine bar scooted with the shadow of the Campanile bell tower across St. Mark’s Square. That wine bar is long gone, but the cicchetti bars remain, tucked away in the back streets.

While it is true that Venice, seemingly, sinks in tourist crowds, 90 percent of them seem to gather along the glitzy shopping streets between the Rialto Bridge and St. Mark’s Square. The key for the adventurous tourist is to wander. Don’t worry about getting lost. In fact, get as lost as you can. Keep reminding yourself, “I’m on an island and I can’t get off.” You generally won’t find street names. When you want to find your way, simply look for small signs on the corners directing you to a landmark (e.g., “per Rialto”). Given the confusing street plan, nearly every hotel or restaurant has a neighborhood map on its card. So, if you’re disoriented, simply drop by any business and ask for its business card.

It’s in the far reaches of Venice that you’ll bump into the thriving little bars (as local pubs are called). Try deep-fried mozarella cheese, gorgonzola, calamari, artichoke hearts, and anything odd on a toothpick. Crostini (small toasted bread with a topping) are popular, as are marinated seafood, olives, and prosciutto with melon. Meat and fish (pece) munchies can be expensive, but veggies (verdure) are cheap, at about 3 euros for a mixed plate.

Cicchetti bars have a social standup zone and a cozy gaggle of tables where you can generally sit down with your cicchetti or order from a simple menu. In some of the more popular places, the local crowds spill happily out into the street. Food usually costs the same price whether you stand or sit.

Bar-hopping Venetians enjoy an aperitivo, a before-dinner drink. Boldly order a closed on Sunday. A few words are critical for your pub vocabulary: If you like your wine full-bodied, specify corposo. A good last drink is frangelico, the local sweet wine, either bianco or rosso. It often comes with a little cookie (biscotto) for dipping. Also handy: “Le dispiace se mi siedo qui?” (Do you mind if I sit here?) and “Sei il mio piu bel ricordo” (You are my most beautiful souvenir).

Bellini, a spritz con Aperol or a prosecco, and draw approving looks from natives.

Drink the house wines. A small glass of house red or wine (ombra red or ombra bianco) or a small beer (birrino) costs about 1 euro. The house keg wine is cheap — 1 euro per glass, about 4 euros per liter. Vin bon, Venetian for fine wine, may run you from 2 to 6 euros per little glass. A blackboard usually lists several fine wines that are uncorked and available by the glass.

Bars don’t stay open very late, and the cicchetti selection is best early, so start your evening by 6 p.m. Most bars are
The El Patron plate at Hacienda Mexican Restaurant in Wiesbaden, Germany, is three beef enchiladas. If you are a Mexican food lover in Germany that do fine enough renditions of tacos, burritos and other standards.

Located on the Rhine river in downtown Wiesbaden, Hacienda Mexican Restaurant is a picturesque eatery with mood lighting and an extensive menu. My companion ordered the pulled pork nachos, with guacamole and pico de gallo. The flavor-packed pork was tender and juicy, tasting like it had been braised for hours.

As a very critical Texan, I found lacking the spicy heat that I associate with Tex-Mex. But dialing down the heat isn’t all unusual in Germany. If you are a Mexican food lover in Wiesbaden, I’d recommend Hacienda. What the food lacks in heat, it makes up for by being well-prepared, and the servers are very attentive.

Hacienda Mexican Restaurant

Location: Biebrich Rheingauhausen 152, Wiesbaden, 65203
Hours: Monday-Friday, 5 p.m. to 11 p.m.; Saturday 4 p.m.-11 p.m.; Sunday 12 p.m. to 11 p.m.
Prices: Most entrees are 10-20 euro
Menu: German with English under each description
Information: hacienda-restaurants.de/kontakt; reservations recommended.

— David Edge

BY KATIE WORKMAN
Associated Press

I love a shiny new kitchen object as much as the next cook, and at times my kitchen has resembled a kitchen specialty store. But what if you have a small kitchen, and counter space and cabinet storage are at a premium? Here are some of my all-time favorite gadgets for your cooking life better.

I’m skipping the bigger appliances like slow cookers and air fryers. I’m also skipping knives, cutting boards, pots and pans, measuring cups and the like, because you pretty much know you need those.

There is about great gadgets, both low- and high-tech, that deserve a spot in your kitchen because they work hard and smart.

Perfect peeler

I use a peeler pretty much every day for something. Potatoes, carrots, apples, winter squash, etc. I am a fan of Kuhn Rikon peelers, which are lightweight and easy to use on peels thick and thin. OXO also make an assortment with different blades, shapes and widths.

Pepper mill

Nothing is more important in the kitchen than salt and pepper, and freshly ground pepper is much better than pre-ground. The Peppermate Traditional Pepper Mill is sleek and contemporary looking, made of ceramic with a side crank. It has a removable, clear bottom cup under the grinder to catch the pepper, and an adjustable grinding size, from very fine (for most things) to very coarse (for things like steak au poivre). For a more classic look, Peugeot makes high-quality mills.

Mandoline

It’s hard to get perfectly thin slices for most of our home cooks, even with a good knife. But with a mandoline, you can get even slices of all sorts of vegetables and other ingredients. One example is the OXO Good Grips Hand-Held version, which comes with settings for three different thinnesses, and a handle so you can slice safely and quickly into a bowl or over a plate.

Food processor

I use no appliance more than this one. I use it for pureeing, chopping, slicing and shredding. Cuisinart has long been my go-to brand; I grew up with one and now own half a dozen. Other companies, like KitchenAid and Breville, also make good food processors. Sizes range from quite large (14- or 16-cup bowls) to mini (about 2 cups). I recommend one little one, for things like mincing garlic or making pesto, and one large, for everything else.

Sous vide

If you’ve been curious about sous vide, then you are a new technology to try this latest technology gadget, there are lots of options out there pretty reasonable prices. Sous vide is a cooking method that entails putting food in a vacuum-sealed bag and cooking it in water at controlled temperature. It’s basically impossible to overcook it. The Joule Sous Vide is small compared to other sous vide appliances, but powerful, as well as sleek and attractive enough to leave out. It works with phone apps as well for the ultimate in modern cooking.

Photos by David Edge/Stars and Stripes
WHERE TO GO

2020

WHAT TO DO

It's the dawn of a new year in travel, and while we can quibble over whether 2020 represents a new decade or the last year of the 2010s, we can be fairly confident that the love shown to Europe as a destination for the rest of the world will continue.

According to the statistics published by the World Tourism Organization, Europe accounted for half of the world's international arrivals in 2018, the most recent full year for which statistics are available. But where to go and what to do once on the continent remains the same divine dilemma as ever. Anniversaries, themed years and events that only come around every so often can guide travelers to destinations they might not have otherwise considered.

Trending destinations

The Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) has tagged several European places amongst its destinations to watch in 2020. Italy's Basilicata region wins mention for ancient cave dwellings converted into hotels, cafes and art galleries and a cuisine based on locally sourced fish, meat and veg. Georgia gains a place for its open and friendly people, unspoiled countryside, and its youthful and fun capital city of Tbilisi, offering great restaurants, wine bars and an expanding club scene. Madrid rates for its party and museum culture, along with its interesting and easily accessible neighboring cities of Toledo, Segovia, Avila, and Cuenca. The Netherlands claims its place on the list for its strong artistic heritage, with the master works of Rembrandt, Vermeer and Van Gogh and gems of cities including Delft, Haarlem and Utrecht to explore. Vienna scores points for its pristine baroque architecture, coffee house culture and classical music heritage. abta.com

Lonely Planet's Best in Travel preview for the upcoming year always features plenty of European entries. Included on their list for 2020 are the regions of Le Marche (hilltop towns, food festivals, beaches) in Italy; Cadiz Province (sherry bars and tapas bars/restaurants) in Spain; and the Kvarner Gulf (unspoiled countryside, and its youthful and friendly people, Rijeka) in Croatia. Cities include Salzburg, Austria (100 year anniversary of its classical music festival); Galway, Ireland (share the honors. Rijeka positions itself as "The Port of Diversity" and serves up 600 cultural events and 250 artistic projects, including an exhibition of the early works of Gustav Klimt that's set to run from July through October in its City Museum. Galway structures its program of events around the four seasons of the old Celtic calendar. Its opening event on Feb. 8 will be an open-air extravaganza celebrating the passing of winter. Galway’s International Arts Festival is already considered one of the top multidisciplinary summer festivals of Europe; dates for this year's edition are July 13-26. “Wires Crossed,” slated for Aug. 6-9, is billed as the largest circus spectacle to ever be staged in Ireland. The event entails a high-wire crossing of the River Corrib and Claddagh Basin to be undertaken by 400 individuals of all ages. Online: rjeka2020.eu/en and galway2020.ie/en

A trio of music festivals will be celebrated the weekend the guns fell silent at the end of World War II in Europe. VE-Day 75, some 140 miles inside the Arctic Circle. way some 140 miles inside the Arctic Circle. Shown: Vakhtang Gorgasali Square.

COUNTRY GUIDE

AUSTRIA

Vienna fetes the musical genius of Ludwig van Beethoven, who left his mark on the city during the 35 years he made it his home. Concerts, opera performances and special exhibitions will mark the year in which Beethoven would have celebrated his 250th birthday. Online: wien.info/en/music-stage-shows/beethoven-2020

BELGIUM

The World Choir Games is the world’s largest competition between non-professional choirs. The 2020 edition of this event, which consists of competitive and non-competitive sections and a festival, will be hosted by the Flanders cities of Antwerp and Ghent July 5-18. Some 364 choirs from 56 countries and regions have already registered. Online: interkultur.com/events/world-choir-games/flanders-2020

ENGLAND

When VE-Day dawned on May 8, 75 years will have passed since the guns fell silent at the end of World War II in Europe. VE-Day 75, a three-day international celebration of the arrival of peace, is slated to take place throughout Britain May 8-10. Online: veday75.org

FRANCE

The city of Rouen is taking the lead in celebrating the centenary of the canonization of Joan of Arc. A number of cultural events to mark the date will take place there throughout 2020, including official ceremonies on May 17. Reims hosts its festival in honor of the national heroine June 6-7. Online: rosentourisme.com/agenda/evenement-rouen-jeanne-d-arc-7562

The industrial city of Lille has been awarded the title “World Capital of Design 2020” for a number of new initiatives that are transforming the city into a...
cosmopolitan oasis, from hotels and restaurants to an art museum in the former premises of an Art Deco swimming pool.

GERMANY

The town of Oberammergau in the Bavarian Alps stages its Passion Play just once every ten years. The tradition dates back to 1634, when villagers first reenacted the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as a means of thanking God for delivering them from the plague. Oberammergau keeps the faith by staging the spectacle from May 16 through Oct. 4. Ticket prices range from 30 to 180 euros and are available on the event website. Online: passionspiele-oberammergau.de

ITALY

The 500th anniversary of the death of Raphael Sanzio da Urbino, better known as Raphael, is being marked by several exhibitions, including one in his hometown of Urbino. The Galleria Nazionale delle Marche’s tribute to the Renaissance painter runs through Jan. 19. The exhibition titled “Raffaello, on March 5, June 2 at the Scuderie del Quirinale in Rome, will feature over 100 of his paintings and sketches. Online: scuderiequirinale.it

The Italian Capital of Culture 2020 is the city of Parma, whose contributions to making the world a tastier place include Parmesan cheese and prosciutto ham. The surrounding Emilia-Romagna region blesses mankind with balsamic vinegar, Lambrusco wine and top-quality olive oil. In addition to eating well there, visitors can enjoy world class, art, architecture and an opera house rated to be amongst the best in all Italy.

LUXEMBOURG

Starting March 1, public transport within the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg will become free to use for residents and non-residents alike. The free ride applies to travel in second class only, and those who wish to travel in first class will have to pay for it. Online: mobiliteit.lu/en/tickets/free-transport

NETHERLANDS

The Dutch celebrate the capitulation of Nazi Germany and what marked the end of World War II for their country with their national holiday Liberation Day on May 5. The day is celebrated on a grand scale, particularly in Haarlem and Wageningen, the small town in which the German troops in the Netherlands capitulated in 1945. With 75 years having passed since that date, look for 2020’s celebrations to be quite special. Online: holland.com/global/tourism/information/events/liberation-day.htm

The opportunity to host the annual Eurovision Song Contest is awarded to the country whose contestant won the competition in the previous year. As the 2019 winner hailed from the Netherlands, the 65th edition of the contest will be held in Rotterdam May 12-16.

SWITZERLAND

The city of Schaffhausen will celebrate its 975th anniversary with a grandiose street party. SCHAFFUSIA ‘20 will see the Old Town transformed into a festival grounds offering entertainment and unique attractions June 26-27. Online: schaffusia.ch
Wine for France, Black Tea for England, Manuka for New Zealand ...  

What is the origin of Red Ginseng representing Korea?

The Pope, the Queen of England, French President ...  

What did Korea give to these heads of state as a gift with 120 years of heritage?

Claiming a 76.9 percent share of the market, loved for over 1,000 years ...  

Which Red Ginseng brand do Koreans love the most?

I Origin of Korean Red Ginseng, which represents health functional foods of Korea  
Each country has its own foods for taking care of Health. Like wine with France, Black Tea with England, and Manuka with New Zealand, Korean Red Ginseng has been associated with Korea. Korean Red Ginseng and its components may help prevent several types of harmful viruses. This supports the claim that Korean Red Ginseng boosts the immune system and illustrates why it has been a popular herbal remedy for more than 2,000 years.

I 6 Efficacies of Korean Red Ginseng

Support immune system  
Helps maintain healthy blood pressure  
Improves blood circulation  
Supports healthy metabolism  
Improves brain function  
Supports healthy aging

I Heritage of KGC, the professional of Korean Red Ginseng with 120 years of history

Korea Ginseng Corporation was established in 1899, and has taken the lead in preserving the tradition of Korean ginseng for the past 120 years. KGC now runs four regional headquarters in the US, China, Japan, and Taiwan, and operates overseas分支机构 in over 100 countries with more than 2,000 employees. 

I World’s No.1 CheongKwanJang, the very Red Ginseng brand Koreans love the most

CheongKwanJang is the Korean Red Ginseng brand created by korean reds and passion of KGC. It has been the national gift from Korea’s president to other national leaders visiting Korea. The gift was also given to the states who participated in the 2018 ASEAN-Republic of Korea Commemorative Summit which took place in November 2018. We are extremely proud of our heritage and it is our mission to keep this tradition alive by introducing to consumers worldwide. A 76.9 percent share of the Korean Red Ginseng market now has the CheongKwanJang name. This figure just makes it obvious for CheongKwanJang to be the most beloved Korean Red Ginseng brand. Now it is your turn to share this loved one for an active & energetic lifestyle all year long. It’s your turn to share this loved one for an active & energetic lifestyle all year long.
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In the hills of Chiba, near Sodegaura city east of Tokyo and across the bay, a theme park lights up for the winter.

Tokyo German Village opened in 2001 and has established itself as one of the three greatest theme parks in the Kanto region. It’s listed as a Japan heritage nightscape, according to Japan-Chiba-Guide.com.

This year — the 14th year of illumination at the park — the theme is 1980s video games.

The holidays may be past, but the light show at the village lasts until early April.

For 800 yen, or a little less than $8, you can grab some of the fare which resembles that found at many German-themed parks in the United States. From high atop the slowly spinning ride, you will see the many attractions the park has to offer, such as an 18-hole miniature golf course, petting zoo and swan-shaped paddle boats.

One of the greatest drawbacks for this slice of outdoor pleasure is its distance from anywhere, about a 1 ½-hour drive from Yokota Air Base or about a 2½-hour train ride. A trip to Tokyo German Village is a daylong excursion.

The entrance fee is minimal at 500 yen, or a little under $5, for ages 4 and up, but make sure to bring cash because most rides and attractions cost extra.

Parking is 3,000 yen, a little under $30.

The park is open year-round, weather permitting, with no set closed days.

With more than 500,000 square feet of gardens, activities, food and lights, the Tokyo German Village could make for a great day trip families, friends or anyone looking to get out and see the country.

godbold.theron@stripes.com

Twitter: @GodboldTheron

Tokyo German Village is holding its 14th annual winter illumination festival. The theme is 1980s video games.

Visitors stroll through a 200-foot-long rainbow light tunnel on the way to the Ferris wheel.

An illuminated pig looks over a field of electric tulips.

A child slays an illuminated dragon at one of the many interactive light displays.

Tokyo German Village, a theme park in Chiba prefecture, Japan, offers paddleboats and other activities.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Address: 419 Nagayoshi Sodegaura-cho, Chiba

From Yokota, enter the Chuo Expressway headed toward Tokyo. About a 1 ½-hour drive from Yokota Air Base or about a 2½-hour train ride.

TIMES

Open daily 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., closed during inclement weather

COSTS

500 yen for ages 4 and up; free for those younger than 4

FOOD

There is a variety of food available at the park with multiple vendors selling a Japanese take on German fare. Prices start at 800 yen for a turkey leg but can reach nearly 2,000 yen for a sausage, side and drink.

INFORMATION

Phone: 0438-60-5511

— Theron Godbold
Iwakuni, the city that lends the nearby Marine Corps air station its name, is a wonderful place to live, but it lacks one thing: a pub-style establishment with a large selection of craft beer.

Luckily, Raku Beer, a small restaurant just 1¼ miles from Hiroshima Station, is a perfect weekend getaway for a quick bite and 15 Japanese craft brews on tap.

Hiroshima is about 45 minutes north of MCAS Iwakuni by train, and a 1,000-yen taxi ride from the south exit of the station to Raku Beer takes about eight minutes.

Inside, you’re met with a softly lit interior, English menus and a bartender that hails from the good old USA.

The restaurant’s proximity to Hiroshima’s Peace Memorial Park means it attracts a multicultural clientele. The park marks ground zero for the first atomic bomb ever deployed during war time.

The beer
For 1,000 yen, or around $9.50, you can get a flight of three beers to taste. Raku has everything from Hefeweizen and pale ales to India pale ales and stouts, all of which looked good coming out of the tap.

I settled for a Hefeweizen from Daisen G Beer, a wheat king wit from Baird Brewing, and my favorite, the Mugamuchu, an Imperial IPA from Shiga Kogen Beer. I love IPAs, but the Mugamuchu is special. Smooth, hoppy and not overly carbonated, this IPA has all the flavor without the after effect of leaving me feeling full after the first one. It’s easily one of the top 10 beers I’ve ever had and is hands down the best IPA. I would drink this every day, and it would be a hit at any restaurant or bar stateside.

That being said, it was far from the cheapest beer on the tap list. A pint cost 1,600 yen, or about $14.60. The least expensive option is the Sorachi 1984 golden ale from Sapporo Beer, at 1,050 yen a pint. The most expensive is the Shitatenage Double IPA from Ushitora Brewery at 1,650.

All the beers are offered in smaller 10-ounce glasses for an average of 550 yen, or $5 less per glass.

The food
Raku offers patrons a variety of cuisines, from Japanese-style curry and fish and chips with malt vinegar, to fried pickles, fried Camembert cheese and personal pizzas. They also have a flower-shaped Bologna sausage that the menu claims is a Hiroshima favorite.

On the bartenders’ recommendation, I tried the curry. It was full of potatoes, peas and minced pork paired with locally sourced rice. It cost 880 yen, and while not as spicy as I would prefer, it was still very tasty.

My other go-to dish here is the fish and chips, which comes in two sizes: a small plate for 650 yen and a large plate for 980 yen. The batter for this white fish is thin and crispy and it pairs well with the malt vinegar you get to dip it in.

Both dishes were complemented by the Mugamuchu, but would pair well with any of the beers I’ve had here.

Raku Beer is not a large restaurant and can get busy around dinner time, but I’ve always been able to get a seat at the bar. There are a small number of tables that seat two to six people.

Raku Beer is Hiroshima, Japan, features a variety of craft beers from IPAs to stouts.

Raku Beer offers 15 Japanese craft beers

BY JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

Raku Beer, a pub-style restaurant in Hiroshima, Japan, offers customers an eclectic menu.

RAKU BEER
Location: 3-3 Mikawacho, Hiroshima, Naka Ward 730-0029
Hours: Open daily, expect Tuesdays, from noon to midnight.
Dress: Casual
Directions: A 20-minute walk, about 1 ½ miles, from Hiroshima Station, between the Peace Memorial Park and the Nagarekawa district. Taxis and buses are available from the station.
Information: Phone: 082-247-6768; online: rakubeer.jp

— James Bolinger

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In 2019, K-pop saw some of its brightest lights and darkest hours. There were huge successes in the scene, which shows no signs of slowing in the United States. BTS’ triumph at the Rose Bowl, Blackpink becoming the first major K-pop act to perform at Coachella, groups like Monsta X signing with U.S. major labels and collaborating across genres, LA’s KCON, once again, helped drive the conversation around the genre in new and inclusive directions. Yet after both the Burning Sun sexual assault scandal and the suicides of singers Goo Harra and Sulli, K-pop’s global legion of devoted fans had to confront the consequences of a corporate pop scene where stars are driven to exhaustion and policed in their personal lives, and yet its larger systems are rarely scrutinized.

The year 2020 will likely be a hugely consequential one for the genre, in South Korea and elsewhere. Can new partners keep established stars in the U.S. pop consciousness and bring new ones into the fold? Can global attention on mental health, misogyny and corporate opaqueness in K-pop drive real change? Here are a few of the new stars and emerging narratives to watch out for next year in K-pop.

Is SuperM the next supergroup?
Collaborations, subgroups and member swaps are as common in K-pop as crossover episodes were in ‘90s sitcoms. But SuperM is a novel idea: a boy band culled from top-tier K-pop acts, created by South Korean leviathan SM Entertainment and Capitol Records pitched largely for English-speaking countries. The group draws from popular acts NCT 127, Shinee, EXO and WayV. Its pedigree was secure enough for a Billboard 200 No. 1 album last year. But the way it was done — a public debut with a show outside the Capitol Records building in Hollywood, Calif., and not in Seoul, and a largely English-language kickoff single “Jopping” — suggests that SM’s Lee Soo-Man and his U.S. counterparts are aiming this at a U.S. audience that doesn’t even see K-pop as especially foreign anymore. It could also make a solo star of singer Taemin, who has a slate of beguiling new music ready while his Shinee bandmates serve in the South Korean military.

Another interesting twist is that SuperM brought back U.S. physical sales, a common way for Korean fans to declare allegiance to a group. In an age of ubiquitous streaming services, “The 1st Mini Album” earned 96% of its tally in album sales, which must have left Capitol executives toasting like they did in the mid-‘90s. Rising acts like Ateez, TXT and X1 are already getting similar overtures from U.S. execs looking for the next BTS as well.

Will SuperM be the new BTS? What to look for in 2020

BY AUGUST BROWN
Los Angeles Times

Will Jannabi lead Korean rock, or stumble out of the gate?
For all of K-pop’s futuristic inclinations, emo-tinged rock is having something of a resurgence there too. Acts like N.Flying and Day6 have had huge breakthroughs with earnest, guitar-driven hits that Panic! at the Disco and Lewis Capaldi fans could get behind (N.Flying, like Panic!, has a lung-bursting “Frozen” cover of its own). No band was better positioned to lead this Korean rock revival than Jannabi, who debuted in 2014 but recently vaulted to K-pop-level fame with the album “Legend” in March. They won the MAMA for best band performance with “For Lovers Who Hesitate,” which revives a pre-K-pop style of Korean rock ballad-eering, and sounds more like late-career Elliott Smith than the high gloss at KCON.

But the band hit several stumbles before getting a chance to break wide. Keyboardist Yoo Young-hyun left the band after being accused of bullying a classmate more than a decade ago, and singer Choi Jung-hoon faced questions over any association with his father’s potentially suspicious business ties and friendship with disgraced politician Kim Hak Eui. Choi denied any meaningful connections (he made a long statement explaining his position in May), but in a South Korean music industry still reeling from Burning Sun, that could dampen the rise of the country’s most promising acts.

Itzy, Chungha, (G)I-DLE and girl groups’ next wave
Headliner Ariana Grande might have been only the second most popular female pop act with a high ponytail and something to prove at Coachella in 2019. Blackpink arguably put on a better show, and certainly did more to diversify the fest’s ranks as a launchpad for global pop. So who might be next? Twice is certainly a contender, after making its U.S. debut at the Forum in July. But take a strong look at Itzy, who won best new female artist at the MAMA awards (K-pop’s best analog to the Grammys) and the mercurial and independent-minded (G)I-DLE, who both seem well-placed to pick up Blackpink’s mantle.

Also watch for Chungha, a former member of I.O.I. and a rare female solo act to have a major commercial breakthrough with her single “Gotta Go.” She also recently collaborated with Rich Brian on a compilation from the 88 Rising collective, an influential label for edgy Asian pop. The ‘90s synths and pitch-twisted vocals on “These Nights” feel like Roger Troutman meets the “Drive” soundtrack.

From left: Mark, Lucas, Taeyong, Baekhyun, Ten and Taeyong of SuperM perform Oct. 5 in Los Angeles.

On January 2019, Yola was a little-known singer facing an uphill battle. The 35-year-old artist was about to release her first full-length album under her own name, as a black, British, country music-loving songwriter attempting to establish herself in the Nashville-based Americana genre.

Twelve months later, things have gone rather well. “Walk Through Fire,” Yola’s debut album produced by Dan Auerbach of the Black Keys, was released last February. In November, she earned four Grammy nominations.

When the awards are presented in Los Angeles on Jan. 26, she’ll be up for Americana album of the year, best roots rock album and best Americana roots song, and performance (both for “Faraway Look”), as well as best new artist, a high-profile category in which she’s competing against Billie Eilish, Lil Nas X and Lizzo.

“It’s not even been a year,” she says. “Just from the point of not even having a record out yet, and wondering how people are going to receive it, and no one knowing who I am... We’ve gone from dreaming that a Grammy might be possible somewhere off in the distance, to being nominated for four in the present. And then all the people I’ve met, from having my cover of Elton John endorsed, to meeting Dolly Parton at the Newport Folk Festival in July. “All of these things, if we had one of them happen, we would have deemed it a successful year,” she says. “But to have them all happen, it’s been outrageous. Crazy.”

Yola’s recent success has come quickly, but preceding it were years of music industry struggles.

She was raised by a single mother who moved to England from Barbados in the 1970s, a nurse who was part of the “Windrush generation” of immigrants lured to the United Kingdom from its former colonies by the promise of economic opportunity.

Her mother, who died in 2013, was a music lover. “What she was massively into, and is still a soft spot for me, is disco,” the singer recalls. “She was like the hospital DJ. She would take blood, make the rounds, and then play disco on the radio.”

“She loved Chic and Boney M. and the Bee Gees, and she also loved Dolly and Elton John. And Aretha, so we had (Franklin’s 1972 album) ‘Young, Gifted and Black’ around the house.”

Those vintage sounds blended with the music, from rap to alternative rock, that Yola heard growing up in the 1990s. “I was listening to hip-hop, and also Björk andbeck and Mazzy Starr. And then we’d go over to our friends’ houses and everyone was going through their dad’s record collections and listening to bands like The Kinks.”

Those influences went into the deeply personal songs on “Walk Through Fire,” whose title track was inspired by a blaze at Yola’s house in Tennessee in 2016, from which she escaped without injury. A marketing push dubbed her the “Queen of Country Soul,” but the singer refers to her sound as “a genre-less mix.”

Though Yola’s mother instilled a love of music, she forbade it as a career. “It was that way for me and all my other friends who were black or brown and had strict parents. Music was OK to listen to, but there were only three acceptable jobs: doctor, lawyer, and engineer. Music wasn’t an option.”

Yola pursued it anyway, singing at jazz gigs when she was 14, and trying to keep her mother from finding out. “You sneak around till it’s not feasible to sneak around anymore.”

She had more than her share of ups and downs before “Walk Through Fire,” whose album art is by Philadelphia graphic artist and musician Perry Shall. After dropping out of university, she was homeless in London at age 21.

She fronted the British country-rock band Phantom Limb. She spent time in Los Angeles trying to make headway as a songwriter, but found it easier in Nashville. “Gossip travels faster in Nashville,” she says. “Even through it’s growing, it’s a smaller city, and you have these bump-into situations where people start hearing about you.”

Working with Auerbach and writers like Memphis legend Dan Penn (who co-wrote Aretha Franklin’s “Do Right Woman, Do Right Man”) came naturally. “They extol the virtues of the link between country and soul music,” she says. “That made things easier for me, because I had a lot less explaining to do.”

Yola’s rise to prominence as a black woman on the Americana music scene led to her featured role on the self-titled debut album by The Highwomen, the country supergroup of Brandi Carlile, Amanda Shires, Maren Morris and Natalie Hemby.

Carlile has called Yola an honorary Highwoman, and she contributed to the album’s feminist title track, with a verse that gives voice to a martyred civil rights movement Freedom Rider.

After spending her adult life working in music in marginalized roles, Yola, now 36, believes she finally broke through because she finally fully expressed herself. “To be absolutely fair, I’ve been withholding my name, and withholding my commitment to music, because there wasn’t an option,” she says. “It was like, ‘Here are your options,’ and I didn’t like any of them. So I was purposefully holding back until exactly this moment. It was like, ‘You can change yourself and who you are at the very core, if that suits you.’ And I was like, ‘No, it doesn’t suit me to change who I am, how I sing, what I’m into.’”

Yola says she could have “carried on turning out mediocre music. But... I held out. There is so much fear in people to settle, in life, in music, in work. And I didn’t do that. I didn’t settle. I waited, and I waited, and I kept on trying things to find what I really wanted to do within my range of taste.”

What she ultimately found is “who I am.”

Yola, shown performing at Nashville’s Bridgestone Arena on Oct. 25, says her parents instilled a love of music, but forbade her to pursue it as a career.

Jason Kempin, Getty Images/TNS

I didn’t settle

GRAMMY-nominated British singer Yola credits hard work for 2019 breakthrough

Yola, the Queen of Country Soul, is up for all the big awards this year. She’s become a success story for anyone who might have been told they couldn’t make it in the music business.

BY DAN DELUCA

The Philadelphia Inquirer
A conversation with Mo Rocca is akin to his “Mobituaries” column: a swooping exploration of people and things past, with the author deftly connecting the dots in entertaining and enlightening fashion.

As the footnotes demonstrate, the book is thoroughly researched. It is important to you that readers understand it is fact-based history.

It is important to me. Look, I like to surprise the reader, and there’s two different ways that are opposites. I like a topic that seems like it’s going to be light and funny and it’s going to be a trip, like Billy Carter is going to be about Billy Beer and when you go into it, it’s “Why did I buy that up?” Conversely, I like to take something that seems like it’s going to be heavy. I like the challenge of (post-Civil War) reconstruction, and that’s for this one: I’m a big Streed- son fan, as you can probably tell from the book, and drawn to the idea that the movie “Funny Girl,” when you watch it, you forget that it’s the story of this person, Fanny Brice. You think you’re watching the story of Barbra Streisand. At least I think that, and it’s because the performance is so eclipsing and volcanic that it kind of displaces the person it’s about. And this is the kind of book that had a place for it, and then the “graveyard” has other people, historic figures, who were eclipsed by the people who played them.

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NEW ON DVD

"Maleficent: Mistress of Evil": While 2014’s live-action "Maleficent" had a clear goal of rehabbing the image of Sleeping Beauty's evil stepmother with a compelling performance by Angelina Jolie, its sequel adds much more chaos to the mix. Initially this comes in the form of meeting the in-laws (relatable?), with the marriage of Queen Aurora (Elle Fanning) and Prince Philip (Harris Dickinson) uniting the two kingdoms. The family is led by a cutthroat Queen Ingrith (Michelle Pfeiffer), eventually inspiring Maleficent to storm off, with plenty of pandemonium to ensue.

Also available on DVD:

"Gemini Man": An assassin (Will Smith) faces a cloned version of his younger self attempting to kill him.

"The Death and Life of John F. Donovan": An actor (Ben Schnetzer) recalls his childhood correspondence with a renowned actor who has died of an overdose (Kit Harrington).

"Beyond the Law": An ex-mobster and detective face off against an ex-cop seeking revenge for the murder of his son. Steven Seagal, DMX and Johnny Messner star.

"Code 8": A man with superpowers (Robbie Amell) gets in trouble with the law after a heist gone wrong.

"Krypton: The Complete Second & Final Season": The Syfy series follows Superman's grandfather, Seg-El (Cameron Cuffe), on his home planet.

"Line of Duty": A disgraced cop (Aaron Eckhart) and livestreaming journalist (Courtney Eaton) attempt to solve the police chief's kidnapped daughter.

"Macgyver: Season 3": The crime solver with a knack for using unusual methods (Lucas Till) returns in the 2018-19 season of the CBS adventure-drama series.

"Mob Town": A sergeant (David Arquette) stands up to a group of mafia bosses. Based on a true story.

"Running with the Devil": A CEO sends two employees to investigate a manipulated cocaine supply line. Nicolas Cage and Steven Seagal star.

"Till": A sergeant (Oswalt) and a police chief's kidnapped daughter.

"The Big Trip": In this animated film, a team of animals sets out to bring a panda accidentally dropped off by a stork to its rightful home. Drake Bell and Pauly Shore star.

"Turkey Bowl": A man visiting his Midwestern hometown (Ryan Hansen) is forced to complete a high school football game that he's a happy-go-lucky jock in danger of being deported to Mexico, Lucia angrily argues with the officers taking her parents away.

"Deep: Season 7": The final season of the acclaimed HBO comedy series has Selina Meyer (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) fighting for support from early primary states.

"Party of Five" reboot features family affected by immigration

By Hank Steuer

The Washington Post

viewers have earned the right to be picky — and even disdainful — when it comes to the steady excess of TV reboots, revivals and revivals. Not only do such shows feed a troubling nostalgia addiction in our popular culture, they provide progress and true innovation. For every reboot that crowds the schedule, an original idea is lost at sea.

Still, there's nothing wrong with showing some compassion for the stronger efforts. Freeform's capable and compelling rendition of "Party of Five," from the same creators who brought us the 1990s hit drama about five orphaned siblings, makes a more than adequate case for do-overs.

This "Party of Five," which premiered stateside on Wednesday, is about a Los Angeles family, the Acostas, whose lives are turned upside-down when Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers raid Los Cantaritos, the casual Mexican restaurant owned by parents Javier (Bruno Bichir) and Gloria (Fernanda Urrejola).

Tipped off that ICE is on its way, Javier hustles his undocumented kitchen employees out the back door, never dreaming that the agents have come for him and Gloria instead. They've spent two decades building a family and a business, paying taxes and pledging their patriotism — yet, indeed, they themselves lack the necessary proof. ("You think the rules don't apply to you?" one of the officers growls. "Things have changed, Mr. Acosta. I need to see your papers.") They're arrested and sent to a detention center where they await a deportation hearing.

That's an immediate, and topical, swipe from the original series, where the parents of the Salinger siblings were killed in a car crash. Yet the result is tonally similar: The Acosta children — four siblings and a baby brother — are left to fend for themselves, juggling school, child care and restaurant management in one fell swoop while also trying to hire the best legal aid for their parents.

Oldest brother Emilio (Brandon Larsoncuenta), who was an infant when his parents hired a desert to get to the United States, is a striving musician with an increasingly jeopardized "dreamer" status; beyond that, he's preoccupied with fronting his band, the Natural Disasters. (Talk about a '90s throwback: His grunge-lite performances would be right at home in the old series.)

The remaining four Acosta siblings are natural-born citizens who are so Americanized that they never learned to speak much Spanish. Twins Lucia (Emily Tosta) and Beto (Niko Guardado) are high school juniors with opposite problems: She's a gifted student struggling against authority figures; he's a happy-go-lucky jock in danger of flunking half his classes. Kid sister Valentlna (Elle Paris Legaspi) is the family genius, skipping grades in math but also the most visibly traumatized by what's happened. Their baby brother, Rafael, is an adorable reminder of big change (who always needs saving).

The echoes to the first series are apparent but not forced. Creators Amy Lippman and Christopher Keyser have put great thought and empathy into telling the Acosta family's story in all the ways that it would naturally differ from the Salinger days, using the opportunity to give American viewers a solid, up-close experience of how easily U.S. immigration policy (and its blunt enforce-

ment) can tear apart a good, law-abiding family. That in itself is an overdue idea for a TV drama.

But Lippman and Keyser have also retained the lived-in, comfortable pace of their earlier show, reminding viewers that this family's daily dramas can be ordinary as often as they can be extraordinary. Their young actors — particularly Guardado and Tosta — ably convey the emotional instability of a devastated household, helped greatly by dialogue that sounds and feels authentic rather than overwrought (or over-politicized).

When Javier and Gloria's appeal is denied by an immigration court judge and they are deported to Mexico, Lucia angrily argues with the officers taking her parents away.

"Dignity, mi hija," Javier tells his daughter, from behind a chain-link fence. "Show them who we are."

"They don't care who we are, Papi," Lucia says. "Don't you see that by now?"

"We'll show ourselves," Javier replies.

Where the Salinger kids processed the grief of their parents' deaths, the Acosta kids must cope with a different kind of loss — made better and worse by constant video chats, texts and calls from their parents.

When an out-of-work psychology major, Vanessa (Amanda Acurri), joins the restaurant staff as a hostess (and quickly becomes Emilio's lover), she quickly diagnoses a modern-age problem, thanks to iPhones and iPads: The parents are still too ensnared in what happens with the kids and the restaurant, which compounds the stress and the pain. Then and now, "Party of Five" relies on the idea that the kids must find their own way.

The premiere episode of "Party of Five" is available on Hulu.

From left, Valentina, Emilio, Rafael and Beto Acosta deal with the deportation of their parents in "Party of Five."
Many moms feel they must care for their young children past the point of exhaustion.

BY DANIELLE CAMPOAMOR Special to The Washington Post

“I can’t even tell you how many times I had been coughing for weeks, battling fevers as high as 104 and struggling to find enough energy to sufficiently care for two children, ages 5 and 1. It wasn’t until I was holding my 5-year-old son’s hand at 2 a.m. in the middle of the pediatric emergency room that someone noticed how sick I was — that someone being the attending pediatrician. After the doctor listened to my son’s lungs, and after he ordered a chest X-ray that would later confirm pneumonia, he turned his attention to me. “You’re clearly very sick,” he said. “I know you don’t want to leave your son, so I’m going to have someone from the adult doctor but the one tasked with examining me, five years after having your first child, can have serious consequences. But it’s not just a lack of sleep, the understandable shift in priorities, the intense physical changes in the postpartum period or the myriad germs children seem to attract that’s making and keeping moms sick: It’s our unwillingness to treat ourselves with the same care that we provide our children. Moms are notoriously bad at asking for help, a byproduct of our “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” culture that has attached a person’s worthiness to their ability to act entirely independent of anyone else. Moms in particular are judged by their resourcefulness and capacity for self-sacrifice, regardless of the personal cost. “Despite all the strides we have made for women’s equality since the 1950s, June Cleaver and the iconic mothers of that generation remain deeply embedded in our culture as the ideal image of motherhood in that they sacrificed themselves in totality for their families,” says Carly Snyder, a reproductive and perinatal psychiatrist practicing in New York City. “Women in general grow up with the expectation that they will be both self-sacrificing and capable. “When our jobs as mothers are often a choice and more of a default response. We’re ignoring calls for us to put our oxygen masks on before we tend to our children as we gasp for air. As a result, it’s the people we trust to care for our children who end up noticing that we need to be cared for, too. “I can’t even tell you how many times I end up noticing something is wrong with Mom,” says Sara Siddiqui, a pediatrician and clinical assistant professor in the pediatrics department at NYU Langone’s Hassenfeld Children’s Hospital, who has treated children for more than 20 years. “First of all, we’re sometimes the first person to see them after they have a baby.” Siddiqui has diagnosed moms who have arrived in her office two or three days postpartum with swollen feet or difficulty breathing, who haven’t seen any doctor but the one tasked with examining their newborns. “I even had a mom almost pass out in my office as I’m examining her baby because she just had a C-section and she didn’t realize that she was still very weak,” she continues. As priorities shift after a mom has her baby — and as the people around the mom focus on the baby instead of her — she begins to care less for herself and more for her child. This mindset doesn’t change as the child grows, either. But parents, especially parents of young children, are more susceptible to illness. Scientists have found that children younger than 6 contract an average of six to eight colds in a calendar year, and because their immune systems are still developing, it takes them much longer to recover. And because parents — particularly moms, who are still doing the majority of the child rearing and are getting less sleep than their male partners — are tired and run-down, it’s more difficult for their immune systems to protect them from their children’s colds. Failing to adequately care for oneself, whether in the postpartum period or, like ability to act entirely independent of anyone else. Moms in particular are judged by their resourcefulness and capacity for self-sacrifice, regardless of the personal cost. “Despite all the strides we have made for women’s equality since the 1950s, June Cleaver and the iconic mothers of that generation remain deeply embedded in our culture as the ideal image of motherhood in that they sacrificed themselves in totality for their families,” says Carly Snyder, a reproductive and perinatal psychiatrist practicing in New York City. “Women in general grow up with the assumption that we are the caregivers, and any additional help is gravy. This is regardless of whether we lived in progressive homes with parents who shared the duties of parenthood to whatever degree possible or not.” Snyder says we embrace — even celebrate — our martyrdom because it allows us to hide the fact that we cannot live up to unrealistic expectations. “Perfection is the goal, and honestly saying, ‘I can’t do it,’ ‘let alone,’ ‘I don’t want to do it,’ is too anxiety-inducing because it threatens to unmask our vulnerability; saying these things means we aren’t what we imagined to be the ideal mother, and that’s scary.” So us moms do what I did: Ignore our needs in the name of perceived perfection, and if it literally makes us sick. “Moms must realize that our children need us to be healthy, but we are human and sometimes we all get sick,” Snyder tells me. “We can’t heal quickly or effectively if we don’t give our bodies a chance to do so.” And knowing that I need help doesn’t make asking for help any easier. Knowing that I need to remain healthy so I can adequately care for my children doesn’t make it any easier to prioritize my own health, mental and physical. As moms, we are encouraged to prioritize our children’s health over and even to the detriment of our own. We are hailed as “great parents” if we race our children to their pediatrician’s office at the first sign of distress while “powering through” our own illnesses. We are applauded for our selflessness over and over again until caring less and less for the self is less of a choice and more of a default response. When our jobs as mothers are often thankless, any praise — even if it requires the deterioration of our mental and physical health — seems worth it. But if we encouraged moms to help themselves as often as they help their children, and if we believed moms when they said they are sick or in pain, perhaps we wouldn’t have the worst maternal mortality rate in the developed world.
Giving while staying whole
Teaching tweens healthy emotional boundaries

By PHYLLIS FAGELL
The Washington Post

As middle-schoolers separate from parents and other authority figures, they invest more in their friendships.

“There’s a lot of stormy weather, but it’s also a time of deeply tender moments of shared vulnerability,” explains Helen Riess, an associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and author of “The Empathy Effect: Seven Neuroscience-Based Keys for Transforming the Way We Live, Love, Work, and Connect Across Differences.” “This is when some kids just keep giving and putting themselves out there because they care very much about other people’s needs.”

As tweens sort out their identity, they want to be seen as trustworthy and caring, but insecurity can generate pressure to be “the best.”

We’re experiencing an unprecedented decline in empathy and can’t afford to discourage kindness, but we also need to impart lessons about reciprocity, healthy boundaries and the limits to generosity.

Applaud them for asking small steps

Because tweens operate in complex networks, they have less autonomy and mobility in their social lives than adults. “One bold announcement at lunch won’t effectively shift firmly established autonomy and mobility in their complex networks, they have less autonomy and mobility in their complex networks,” says Michele Borba, author of “UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About-Me World.”

Underscore that helping should be a shared responsibility. In the school setting, I demonstrated this by adapting Grant’s Givitas exercise. I had my sixth-graders write on an index card something that they wanted or needed but couldn’t provide for themselves. The requests ranged from, “I want to get better at basketball,” to, “I could use a friend.” Then I asked the students to use their name on any add with a request they could fulfill. To their surprise, no card was left empty. They realized that everyone wanted to help, and no one had to carry an undue burden. When kids understand that empathy is a two-way street, they’re less likely to give to someone who consistently takes advantage of them.

Challenge gender stereotypes

Parents need to challenge the stereotype that girls are responsible for emotional labor or that “real men” suppress their feelings. “There’s a common dynamic where girls will give, give, give of themselves in processing boys’ emotions until it’s harmful to themselves physically, and it’s equally harmful to boys,” says Peggy Orenstein, author of “Cinderella Ate My Daughter.” “Boys & Sex” and other books about teens and tweens. “We have an epidemic of male loneliness and suicide, and we have to be aware of how equitable the divide is, and how much boys are learning to connect with one another and not just the girls or women in their lives.”

On this topic, a father’s perspective may be particularly useful to daughters because men are socialized differently. “Fathers should pay attention to where their daughters fall on that spectrum and be talking about relationships, too,” Orenstein says. This isn’t to discount the importance of mothers. “As women, we have to interrogate how we conduct our relationships and be role models,” she adds.

Mention when they’re out of their depth

When well-meaning, generous tweens spend a huge amount of time offering a friend support at the cost of their own sleep or mental health, Damour suggests implementing a three-part plan: Reassure the boys they deserve, then help them navigate their friend’s needs going forward.

5. Do an initial weigh-in

Once I’ve reached my maximum level of personal disgust, it’s time for the initial weigh-in. The goal is not accuracy, but rather to record these upbeat weight-loss aspirations. It can only go down from here. It makes sense a few days into my diet, when I’m so hungry I find myself eyeing the dog’s kibble. Desperate for a bit of good news to motivate me to stick to the plan, I step on the scale after emptying my bladder, trimming my toenails, shaving my legs and blowing my nose. Inevitably, I’ve lost a pound or two.

I might be water weight, but if I’ve learned anything about yo-yo dieting by now, it’s that success is on the scale of the beholder.
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTIONS

BY ANDREW CHAikan / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Andrew Chalkin, of San Francisco, is a singer and meditation teacher who goes by the name Kid Beyond. He has opened for such luminaries as James Brown, Ray Charles and Samir Rasoolis. This is his third Sunday crossword for The Times. Last January he made a resolution to have another puzzle in the paper by the end of the year. In October, with time running out, he thought, what’s an idea they'd want to publish by Dec 31? Velvét — W.S.

ACROSS
1. Reform, as a plot twist (3, 4)
6. Hit 1980s–90s show with TV’s first lesbian kiss (4)
11. Closed (4)
15. Blemsish (8)
19. Groan-inducing, perhaps (9)
20. Pop up (6)
21. The eyes have it (8)
22. Fictional lab assistant (8)
23. Casino gambler’s resolution? (9)
26. Reputation (10)
27. Locale of 10 Winter Olympics (9)
28. Match.com, e.g. (5)
29. Helen Mirren or Judi Dench (9)
30. New Age author Chopra (10)
32. Smartphone lover’s resolution? (10)
37. Bunny-earning TV producer Kristen (12)
38. Morales of “NYFD Blue” (7)
39. Encouraging start? (5)
40. “Wow, awesome!” (5)
42. French, say, to a Brit (10)
44. Georgia, once. Abb. (6)
46. Sold-out sign (8)
49. Popular Fisher-Price toy for pre-kindergartners (10)
51. Hen’s resolution? (6)
52. Round of applause (6)
57. ___ “Tiki” (6)
59. Small dam (7)
60. Children’s author Beverly (6)
61. Wall St. works on it all summer (8)
62. Simple (6)
63. First of two U.S. U.S.R. pact (7)
64. Locale of New York’s Frederick Douglass Blvd (8)
65. Nun’s resolution? (8)
68. ___ Shepherd, former co-host of “The View” (8)
71. Trees used in furniture-making (6)
72. Hob (6)
73. CEO’s deg. (5)
76. Whip, as cream (7)
77. Best Actor winner Malek (8)
78. Junior (5)
79. Many a TikTok user (7)
80. Stalking tiger’s resolution? (8)
84. “African Night” locale (5)
86. Floral wreath by a sundial (8)
87. Olympic gymnast Rausan (8)
88. Line from the past? (10)
90. Standout star (8)
91. Prominent part of a Mickey Mouse costume (9)
94. Historic plaintiff Scott (8)
96. Ball game (6)
97. Bank robber’s resolution? (8)
104. Midriff pain talk? (9)
105. Out of juice (6)
106. Tat (5)
107. Quakerism (6)
109. Cry of woe (5)
110. Union activist’s resolution? (7)
116. Bargaining point that’s unmentionable (8)
117. Actor/LG.B.T. rights activist George (9)
118. Roses for later in a way (10)
119. Word before streak or business (9)
120. Artist Warchol (8)
121. All tucked out (7)
122. It gets your blood flowing (7)

DOWN
1. Pot cause, for short (8)
2. Takes the lead (5)
3. Megagroup (8)
4. Lackey-split (5)
5. Oil’s name ending (7)
6. Actress Metcalf who was nominated for an Oscar for “Lady Bird” (12)
7. Uncultured (7)
8. Blotto (5)
9. Louisville Slugger material (9)
10. Creeping Charlie and Good King Henry (9)
11. Many plays are seen in it (6)
12. Actor Rutger of “Blade Runner” (7)
13. Letters naval gazettes see (5)
14. What punctual people arrive on (5)
15. They appreciate a nice bouquet (7)
16. Visibly stunned (6)
17. Not italicized (5)
18. Quite a hike (8)
19. Lead-in to “Town” or “Gang” (8)
20. Scenery chewer (7)
21. Direct deposit, for short (8)
22. Various offering (5)
23. Da’, Vizwan (7)
25. Fashionable Christian (8)
26. Pull down (7)
27. Israil’s Dayan (8)
41. Feature of many a summer camp cabin (8)
43. Get lost or stolen, in British lingo (9)
44. Metalworker (5)
45. Some of them call (7)
47. Honesty-goodness (8)
48. Shoo, e.g. (5)
50. “Auld Lang Syne” (11)
52. Pees (7)
53. Spicy sathers (7)
54. Online magazine (9)
55. Locales involved in many a New Year’s resolution (5)
58. Like Switzerland during World War II (6)
62. Fill in (5)
63. “Gone here!” (5)
65. Comic foil of early TV (7)
66. Having the taste of smoke, as some Scotchers (9)
67. Nincompoop (7)
68. Toothy tool (7)
69. Get better (9)
70. Panned Doco designer (8)
71. Having deep thoughts (8)
72. Marilyn Monroe or Beyoncé (8)
73. “Consequently…” (9)
75. Fly off the handle (9)
76. Treasure chest feature (5)
77. Rock band that Shabb really ought to play for (7)
83. Lip-packeting (7)
85. Kind of monster (7)
90. 90s strips a day, say (9)
92. “Feliz ___ Noël!” (cry on el. f. men) (9)
93. Title heroine of classic 60-Apocalypse books (11)
95. P.R. advice for the accused, maybe (9)
97. New moon, e.g. (7)
98. Boxer Ali (7)
99. Beat by a hair (10)
103. “Shall we?” (7)
105. Season ticket holder, e.g. (9)
120. Works a red pen, perhaps (5)
122. 3 petals and a boot (7)
123. Start a triathlon (8)
2. 108 Trial (11)
65. “Star Wars” villain (5)
128. Kyllo (11)
113. Squeeze (out) (5)
114. N.B.A. one-pointers (7)
115. “Gunston Street” is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and visit gunstonstreet.com.

GUNSTON STREET

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE

“Gunston Street” is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and visit gunstonstreet.com.

102. Works a red pen, perhaps (5)
103. 3 petals and a boot (7)
104. Start a triathlon (8)
108. Trial (11)
111. “Star Wars” villain (5)
128. Kyllo (11)
113. Squeeze (out) (5)
114. N.B.A. one-pointers (7)

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Early Oscars leave voters scrambling

By Josh Rottenberg
Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — We all know the feeling of coming back from a leisurely holiday break to suddenly face a wall of deadlines. This year in Hollywood, that experience has had its own unique twist.

The voting period for this year’s Academy Awards nominations closed Tuesday afternoon — a full two weeks earlier than normal — a compressed timetable forced Oscar campaigners to push their “for your consideration” blitzes forward and left many of the motion picture academy’s nearly 9,000 voting members scrambling to plow through piles of DVD screeners, make their lists and check them twice. Despite the academy’s frequent reminders, some seem may have been unaware of the shortened deadline altogether, believing they still had more time to set aside for, say, Martin Scorsese’s sprawling, 3½-hour gangster epic “The Irishman” or the black-and-white Czech war drama “The Painted Bird.”

It was very rushed this year, and it was hard to watch over the holidays while traveling,” said Australian documentary film-maker Eva Orner, who produced 2007’s Oscar winner “Taxi to the Dark Side.” “A lot of screeners came late in the second half of December. I actually like to unplugged holidays, so it was very difficult.”

The awards season calendar, like the presidential election calendar, has its own familiar rhythms and longstanding rituals and milestones.

Any change in that calendar is bound to create ripple effects through the entire awards ecosystem, from the consultants who strategize Oscar campaigns down to the designers who dress the stars for the red-carpet gala. And this year, the academy made a big change: After more than a decade of the Oscars being in late February or early March, the 92nd Academy Awards will be held Feb. 9, the earliest date ever.

Knowing the effect the abbreviated schedule would have, the academy gave its members — and all of Hollywood — plenty of time to prepare. In October 2019, the academy began steadily sending its members nudges to remind them of this year’s key dates: an effort that has since intensified to nearly daily emails, robo-calls and text messages.

For some members, the constant stream of reminders has been a bit wearying. “They’re telling us for weeks: ‘It’s a shorter window. Vote. Vote. Vote.’” said one screenwriter, who declined to speak on the record due to having a film in this year’s awards race.

“Every time I’ve received so many emails from the academy,” said another member in the acting branch, who is also involved in a potential contender and wished to remain anonymous. “They’ve been extremely diligent. Do I wish I had more time? Yes. But I feel that way every year.”

Still, anecdotally, it seems some academy voters may not have received the message. Last week, as the nominations deadline loomed, film journalist and longtime academy observer Mark Harris tweeted, “Based on my extremely informal survey of Oscar voters, a high number of them have NO idea that voting for nominations ends in three days.”

Those who have been left feeling frazzled can take comfort in two things: One, the academy has already announced that in 2021 and 2022, the Oscars will return to their traditional late-February spot. And two, as frantic as this year may feel, it’ll all be over that much sooner.

Oscars to go hostless for 2nd consecutive year

The Oscars are going without a host again this year.

ABC Entertainment President Karey Burke said the Feb. 9 telecast will focus on the “the word last year — huge entertainment value, big musical numbers, big competitive and big power.”

Last year’s ceremony attracted 29.6 million viewers, the second-smallest in Oscars history but 12% more than in 2018, which ended a four-year fall in viewership. Comedian Kevin Hart was originally announced as host but he backed away when some anti-gay tweets he posted a decade ago resurfaced.

ABC and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences agreed to go without a host for a second straight year, Burke said.

“We expect that without a host we’ll have a very commercial set of nominations,” Burke told a TV critics meeting Tuesday, “although we expect all of our nominees come together that convinced us we’ll have a very exciting red carpet.”

Nominations will be announced on Monday.

From The Associated Press
This Republican seeks a credible Dem nominee

By Sheila Bair
Special to The Washington Post

The decision from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., to push through rules governing President Donald Trump’s impeachment trial seemed to flouting none of the demands of Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., has been harshly criticized. McConnell is right, and his critics are wrong.

This impeachment has been a purely political exercise in bare-knuckle politics. McConnell is widely acknowledged as having been co-opted by Trump voters. The public hearings chaired by House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, D-Calif., were littered with unsworn, unsworn witnesses and an avalanche inquiry. As his daily opening and closing statements showed, this was the political equivalent of a grand jury hearing where a prosecutor controls the information to get an indictment from jurors on his or her terms. The hearings chaired by House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., were less competently run, but equally imbalanced and outcome-directed. Unlike the Starr report, the House process was designed to accomplish those goals.

The House conducted closed-door proceedings, but their findings were always mysteriously leaked to friendly media outlets, attempting to control the flow of information. The public hearings chaired by House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, D-Calif., were littered with unsworn, unsworn witnesses and an avalanche inquiry. As his daily opening and closing statements showed, this was the political equivalent of a grand jury hearing where a prosecutor controls the information to get an indictment from jurors on his or her terms. The hearings chaired by House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., were less competently run, but equally imbalanced and outcome-directed. Unlike the Starr report, the House process was designed to accomplish those goals.

The political climate for impeachment advocates was that this never-ending barrage of facts had hardened Trump supporters’ resolve. But not for long. After two years, as an unmistakable attempt to coerce their unconditional surrender on matters of the president’s policies and care about. Cornered dogs fight fiercely rather than submit. Trump voters are no different.

House Democratic leaders, then, faced a serious choice when they decided to take up impeachment. They would need 20 GOP votes to convict Trump in the Senate. That was not going to happen so long as supermajorities of Trump voters opposed impeachment. Changing that calculus would have required a reversal in tactics, from never-ending assaults to calmer efforts to persuade. That would require GOP cooperation and take time.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., would have none of that. We can’t know another’s state of mind, and it’s a regrettable fact that even if Trump had been impeached and convicted, he and his enablers would have been armed with this as an excuse to resist. It is a regrettable fact that even if Trump had been impeached and convicted, he and his enablers would have been armed with this as an excuse to resist. It is a regrettable fact that even if Trump had been impeached and convicted, he and his enablers would have been armed with this as an excuse to resist. It is a regrettable fact that even if Trump had been impeached and convicted, he and his enablers would have been armed with this as an excuse to resist. It is a regrettable fact that even if Trump had been impeached and convicted, he and his enablers would have been armed with this as an excuse to resist.

Democrats need to decide whether they want to get to the finish line or get to the finish line. They need to decide whether they want to get to the finish line or get to the finish line. They need to decide whether they want to get to the finish line or get to the finish line. They need to decide whether they want to get to the finish line or get to the finish line. They need to decide whether they want to get to the finish line or get to the finish line. They need to decide whether they want to get to the finish line or get to the finish line. They need to decide whether they want to get to the finish line or get to the finish line. They need to decide whether they want to get to the finish line or get to the finish line. They need to decide whether they want to get to the finish line or get to the finish line. They need to decide whether they want to get to the finish line or get to the finish line.

Democrats and their elite pundit allies are furious that McConnell held his group in line. They want a Democrat in the White House, but they want one who is more persistent than those with whom they want to simultaneously gratify their party base and achieve their goals. The House process was designed to accomplish those goals.

Democrats held closed-door proceedings, but their findings were always mysteriously leaked to friendly media outlets, attempting to control the flow of information. The public hearings chaired by House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, D-Calif., were littered with unsworn, unsworn witnesses and an avalanche inquiry. As his daily opening and closing statements showed, this was the political equivalent of a grand jury hearing where a prosecutor controls the information to get an indictment from jurors on his or her terms. The hearings chaired by House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., were less competently run, but equally imbalanced and outcome-directed. Unlike the Starr report, the House process was designed to accomplish those goals.

The second is that Trump voters are American, too. There’s a reason it’s hard to impeach and remove someone: The Founders set high hurdles to ensure that narrow majorities do not get to remove someone from power. The Constitution, Article I, Section 3, clearly states that the Senate cannot remove anyone without a trial. The Senate can only remove someone if the House votes to impeach. This is why the Senate is so important. It is a way to ensure that only those who have not been found guilty of wrongdoing are removed from office.

This impeachment has always been an exercise in bare-knuckle politics. McConnell excels at winning this type of fight. It’s no surprise he’s ruthless in his efforts to ensure that the power he has. It will also be no surprise that Republicans will praise him for doing this.
Embrace 2nd chance to assist Puerto Rico after quakes

Puerto Rico is working to recover from the aftermath of a powerful 5.8 earthquake and equally powerful aftershocks. Casualties are low, and electrical power is slowly returning. But the quakes are just the latest natural disasters to cripple the U.S. commonwealth.

Puerto Rico still is healing from the hit it took two years ago from Hurricane Maria. Gov. Wanda Vazquez has declared a state of emergency for the island.

Declaring a state of emergency is no-brainer. This is also an election year, to the extent that Donald Trump will be on the run from the 2020 campaign trail. More than a year and a half after Maria hit, the president was still talking trash about Puerto Rican leaders, saying in 2019 that they “only take from the USA,” while a spokesperson referred to it as “that country.”

Raging fires are a warning that land and drought more likely. This phenomenon has dried out the nation’s eucalyptus forests, the fuel for what the scientists call “bushfire syndrome.”

The last thing Senate Republicans wanted was the prospect of testimony by former national security advisor John Bolton. Under the Constitution, the American people deserve to hear fair trial instead of railroading this president, said Dr. John Holdren, former science and technology adviser to President Barack Obama.

Bolton's testimony relevant, plus it would sideline GOP plans for speedy acquittal

A major hiccup has been introduced into Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's plans for a speedy acquittal of President Donald Trump at his impending impeachment trial. Former national security adviser John Bolton says he is prepared to testify if subpoenaed. McConnell, with a big assist by Missouri Republican Sen. Josh Hawley, was all but prepared to declare the impeachment process dead.

Until Bolton’s announcement Monday, GOP leaders had convinced themselves that weeks of House testimony by former and current administration officials — describing multiple ways in which Trump abused his presidential power — really amounted to nothing.

This phenomenon has dried out the national forests, making it impossible to quantify any link between climate change and the drought’s recent behavior, scientists warn. A drier landscape increases fire danger and shifts the cycle, making extended Australian droughts more likely.

A major factor worsening Australia’s fire season is a natural cycle known as the Indian Ocean Dipole, which can make water in the western Indian Ocean warmer and in the eastern Indian Ocean cooler. This results in less rainfall over Australia. This phenomenon has dried out the nation’s eucalyptus Forests, the fuel for what the scientists call “bushfire syndrome.”

The last thing Senate Republicans wanted was the prospect of testimony from someone with undeniable credibility. Bolton was in the room when many of the Trump discussions occurred between Trump and other top administration officials. Former aides described Bolton as harshly critical of the pressure being applied on Ukraine.

Bolton resigned abruptly on Sept. 10 as details surfaced of his casework before surfaces publicly. Bolton’s public dispute with Trump over the reasons for his White House departure is the latest indication that Bolton would not offer flattering versions of Trump’s involvement in the Ukraine affair.

That’s exactly why McConnell is likely to do anything he can to circumvent the possibility. Hawley offered help Monday by introducing an amendment, wording to instruct Homeland Secu-

This is also an election year, to the extent that Donald Trump will be on the run from the 2020 campaign trail. More than a year and a half after Maria hit, the president was still talking trash about Puerto Rican leaders, saying in 2019 that they “only take from the USA,” while a spokesperson referred to it as “that country.”

Raging fires are a warning that land and drought more likely. This phenomenon has dried out the nation’s eucalyptus forests, the fuel for what the scientists call “bushfire syndrome.”

The last thing Senate Republicans wanted was the prospect of testimony by former national security advisor John Bolton. Under the Constitution, the American people deserve to hear fair trial instead of railroading this president, said Dr. John Holdren, former science and technology adviser to President Barack Obama.

Bolton's testimony relevant, plus it would sideline GOP plans for speedy acquittal

A major hiccup has been introduced into Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's plans for a speedy acquittal of President Donald Trump at his impending impeachment trial. Former national security adviser John Bolton says he is prepared to testify if subpoenaed. McConnell, with a big assist by Missouri Republican Sen. Josh Hawley, was all but prepared to declare the impeachment process dead.

Until Bolton’s announcement Monday, GOP leaders had convinced themselves that weeks of House testimony by former and current administration officials — describing multiple ways in which Trump abused his presidential power — really amounted to nothing.

This phenomenon has dried out the national forests, making it impossible to quantify any link between climate change and the drought’s recent behavior, scientists warn. A drier landscape increases fire danger and shifts the cycle, making extended Australian droughts more likely.

A major factor worsening Australia’s fire season is a natural cycle known as the Indian Ocean Dipole, which can make water in the western Indian Ocean warmer and in the eastern Indian Ocean cooler. This results in less rainfall over Australia. This phenomenon has dried out the nation’s eucalyptus Forests, the fuel for what the scientists call “bushfire syndrome.”

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**American Roundup**

**2 men accused of trying to scam lottery**

**MS** FLOWOOD — Authorities in Mississippi said two men attempted to scam the state lottery commission by submitting a losing ticket that had the winning numbers glued onto it.

Odis Latham, 47, and Russell Sparks, 48, were charged with offenses including uttering counterfeited instrument over $1,000.

The state lottery commission called Flowood police about the fake ticket Monday morning, Sgt. Adam Nelson said. Officers were told the suspects presented an altered $100,000 ticket that appeared to have the winning numbers glued onto it.

**Corn spill forms smooth path on railroad tracks**

**MN** CRYSTAL — Bushels and bushels of corn spilled from a freight train and formed a smooth, yellow path for more than a third of a mile on railroad tracks in a northern Minneapolis suburb.

The spill happened in Crystal on the Canadian Pacific line. The Star Tribune reported the corn stretched for about 2,000 feet. Assuming the corn was about 1.5 inches deep the entire way, the Tribune estimated the spill would amount to about 900 bushels.

**Twins born in different decades**

**IN** CARMEL — Twins siblings born in an Indiana hospital around the New Year’s holiday have birthdays in different decades.

Dawn Gilliam delivered one baby, Joslyn, at 11:37 p.m. on Dec. 31, 2019, and a second baby, Jaxon, 30 minutes later at 12:07 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2020.

The babies weren’t due until February, but Gilliam made a New Year’s Eve trip to the hospital when she had a concern about a lack of fetal movement. Gilliam told the suspects presented an altered $100,000 ticket that appeared to have the winning numbers glued onto it.

**Riding out the storm**

**The Census**

The number of sets of twins a Florida mom gave birth to in the same year. Doctors told Alexandria Wolliston she had a better chance of winning the lottery than of giving birth to two sets of twins in the same year.

But Wolliston said she won the jackpot last year with the births of Mark and Malakhi in March and Kaylen and Kaleb in December. She said her 3-year-old daughter helped her prepare for the double dose of twins.

**Man uses zip ties to detain hit-and-run driver**

**MT** BUTTE — A Butt man used zip ties to detain a hit-and-run driver, Butte-Silver Bow law enforcement officers said.

Dispatchers received two reports of hit-and-run crashes Jan. 2. A man who witnessed the suspect rear-end a car and drive away called police and followed the suspect.

The suspect got out of the car and jumped over a fence, but fell. The witness followed and used zip ties to detain the suspect until police arrived and swapped the zip ties for handcuffs.

**6 teens arrested in melee at skating rink**

**AZ** MESA — Six teenagers were arrested after several fights broke out at a crowded indoor skating rink in Mesa, authorities said.

Mesa police said they were called to Skateland in response to a report of teens fighting.

Officers on the scene said they had to deal with fighting and other disruptive behavior amid a crowd of roughly 1,000. Hundreds of people fled as more police arrived. Yet, fights continued to erupt inside and outside.

In a statement on its Facebook page, Skateland said the melee began when a customer became angry about not being allowed to go in and out of the building with her rental skates. According to the facility, she attempted to charge at an employee. The incident escalated with others in her group getting unruly.

Police say suspect lured seagulls, ran them over

**MD** LAUREL — Police in Laurel, Maryland, are investigating an apparent animal cruelty case involving seagulls that officers say were lured with popcorn and then run over with a vehicle.

The Laurel Police Department said at least 10 seagulls were killed in a shopping center, The Washington Post reported.

Police said someone emptied a bag of pre-popped popcorn, “intentionally luring” the gulls, and then ran them over.

**Husband, wife married in 1953 die on same day**

**MI** PORT HURON — A Michigan man and woman married over 60 years died within hours of each other on New Year’s Day, family members said.

Robert and Janet Perry married in 1953 and remained in the Crosswell area until their deaths of natural causes, according to The (Port Huron) Times Herald. He was 84 and she was 85.

Their son, Bart Perry, said they met in high school because his father had a horse trailer and his mom needed a horse taken to a saddle club.

**Big rig carrying trash overturns on highway**

**GA** ATLANTA — A tractor-trailer full of trash overturned on an Atlanta highway, spilling its cargo and closing the road for hours.

No injuries were reported in the wreck on Interstate 285 crash near Interstate 75, Georgia State Patrol Lt. Stephanie Stallings said.

She said the cause of the accident was not yet known, and she did not know whether the driver was cited.

**School evacuated after firework ignites inside**

**TX** HOUSTON — Officials evacuated a Houston-area high school after reports that a firework was ignited inside the campus cafeteria.

It wasn’t immediately known if anyone was injured during the incident at Klein Forest High School in Klein, Texas.

In a tweet, the Harris County Fire Marshal’s Office said one person might have been injured. But the Klein school district said in a separate tweet that all students and staff were safe.

From wire reports
Welcome to the Neighborhood.

You rely on your military community when you’re far from home.

We get that.

Use our community sites to connect and share during your time overseas.

With base information, travel tips, restaurant reviews and even the score of your child’s high school basketball game, we’ve got you covered.

Visit one of our community sites today!

Stars and Stripes. Okinawa
Stars and Stripes. Korea
Stars and Stripes. Guam
Stars and Stripes. Japan
Stars and Stripes. Europe

Stay connected and hey, welcome to the neighborhood.
WELCOME HOME VETERANS

All honorably discharged Veterans are eligible to shop their military exchanges online, tax-free for life.

This benefit saves Veterans money and helps the military community by generating earnings in support of critical Quality-of-Life programs.

Verify your eligibility today at shopmyexchange.com/vets

Starting January 2020, the Department of Defense expanded in-store military exchange and commissary shopping privileges as well as MWR resale facility use to all:

- Veterans with service-connected disabilities
- Purple Heart recipients
- Former Prisoners of War
- Primary registered caregivers

Learn more about this new benefit at shopmyexchange.com/vets
**Eugene Sheffer Crossword**

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**ACROSS**

1. Bread spread
4. Desist
8. Use an eggbeater
12. Swelled head
13. Mystique
14. Get wind of
15. Passing craze
16. Trucker with a handle
17. Madame Bovary
18. Sneaky clean
21. Director Craven
22. Belly
23. March honoree, for short
26. Watch chain
27. Vinyl records
30. Algerian port
31. Press for payment
32. Difer
33. Chignon
34. Sawbuck
35. Autumnal quaff
36. Bro's kin
37. "Now I get it!"
38. Totally harmless
45. Concept
46. Knocks
47. Diner dessert
48. Tall teller
49. Nest setting
50. Sorape (out)
51. Shoulder muscle, for short
52. Email command
53. Ballot marks
25. Zero-star review
26. Gaiety
27. Young fellow
28. Opposite of "post-

**DOWN**

1. Bridges or Daniels
2. Lab gel
3. Style
4. Potpouri pouch
5. Big brass
6. Raw minerals
7. Ideal
8. Bread grain
9. Half (Pret.)
10. Pet food brand
11. Use a rosary
12. Cygnet's parent
13. Fix the soundtrack
14. Cry
15. Capote nickname

**Answer to Previous Puzzle**

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**I-11 CRYPTOQUIP**

**BTWECQA: RDSLHQ CWENLEX**

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: TO PROPERLY TIE THINGS UP WITH STRONG STRING, YOU NEED TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE TWINY DETAILS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals N
Mobile apps with constantly updating news, featuring breaking news and stories from reporters at overseas bases. Unique galleries of images available nowhere else presented in an uncluttered interface and a responsive, intuitive design. One iOS app serves both phone and tablet devices.

In print, we serve military stationed overseas in contingency areas, Europe and Pacific. Daily editions focus on military news and include sports, comics and opinion. Available by mail delivery to any U.S. address.

Discover unique stories from reporters at bases around the world and embedded with downrange forces at Stripes.com, along with military news from every part of the country and photo galleries you’ll see nowhere else. DoDDs sports also gets good coverage online. If it concerns our U.S. forces, you’ll find it on our website.
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Jan. 10
2020 — New Guy Labonde scores six goals in his feature game. The Canadian-born 20-4-7 at Montreal
rats 1-7 at the Montreal Royal Athletic. The 21 goals sets a
record and never plays in the NHL again.
1936 — Joe Montana's third touch-down pass of the game passes through the 17-yard line to Dwight Clark with 61 seconds remaining, sending the 49ers to a 21-17 victory over the Dallas Cowboys in the NFL title game.
1985 — Seattle's Lynn Wilkins becomes the first woman to play in one of the NFL games when the Superbowl defeated the Cincinnati Bengals 27-17.
2002 — Todd Elrod wins his sixth U.S. Figure Skating Championship and the perfect 6.0 out of nine marks for artistry in the free skate.
2012 — R权利高 & 三重会 - PAGE 2
2014 — Goaltender Jim Stewart, playing in his first and only game with the Buffalo Sabres, makes 37 saves and
The Brooklyn Daily Eagle - PAGE 56
2020 — The record losing streak isn't broken until the first-year Washington Capitals win.
2020 — The First-Year Washington Capitals win.
2020 — The First-Year Washington Capitals win.
Scoreboard

Eastern Conference
Atlantic Division

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Western Conference

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Scoreboard

BY LARRY LAGE
Associated Press

It’s still no man’s land in front of NHL goalies, a forbidden place for offensive players who risk hard shoulder, cross-checks — or worse — when they settle in.

But it isn’t nearly as rough and tumble as it used to be.

The league has cracked down on the over-the-top physical play in general and that includes going after players who park themselves in front of the net in hopes of blocking a goalie’s view, tipping in a shot or sliding in a rebounding puck for a greasy goal.

The savage blows once seen on a nightly basis are now far more rare, certainly in the regular season.

“It has changed drastically,” San Jose Sharks defenceman Brent Burns said. “I think they’re trying to create more goals and that’s one way to try to do it. It’s a great place for forwards to go to make a big difference.”

James Neal is one of those players.

The Edmonton winger has scored 19 times this season, putting him on pace to approach his career high of 40 goals. Neal honed his puck-tipping craft a lot last summer and it helps that he is surrounded by a lot of talent that opens up space on the ice.

“I’ll definitely say it’s something I’ve worked on, and it’s really helped,” Neal said. “I’ve scored a lot more goals in front this year.”

Net-front play is critical in every NHL game simply because goalies tend to stop shots they can see. Interference with their view, their concentration, and the pucks start going in. Tipping a fast-moving puck with a stick to change the trajectory of a shot is another way to score, and being in front of the net is the best place to employ that mix of skill and luck.

It’s up to defencemen to move opponents out of the way without drawing a penalty that could give the other team a power play.

This game within the game has evolved over the years.

Former Detroit forward Tomas Holmstrom, who is widely regarded as one of the game’s great net-front players, pays the price for the role from 1996 to 2012.

“He seems to get his stick on everything and he takes your eyes away,” Howard said.

In today’s game, it is difficult to defend the front of the net because physical play against someone without the puck often draws a penalty. Cole said the key is to try to prevent opponents from getting where they want to be.

“It’s really tough to move guys when they’re already there,” Cole said. “There are things you can do, but you’re probably going to 100% take a penalty. Just the way your skates are, you’re not going to be able to push guys sideways. They’re going to dig their edges in and not going to move. Then you start to push them forward and they rotate their foot and you can’t push them forward.

Goalies, while the puck travels from stick to stick, stay on the move ever so slightly so that they can see what they’re trying to stop.

“As a goalie, our eyes are our everything,” Howard said. “If you see the puck, nine times out of 10 guys are going to stop it.”

That’s easier said than done.

Game of the week

Edmonton at Calgary (Saturday):
The battle of Alberta should be intriguing, matching up teams that may be competing the rest of the season for the third and guaranteed playoff spot in the Pacific Division or a wild-card berth.

The Flames beat the Oilers 5-1 two weeks ago on the road in their first of five games.

AP hockey writer John Wawrow in Buffalo, N.Y., and AP Sports Writer Pat Graham in Denver contributed to this report.

Calvin Pickard makes a save for the Colorado Avalanche against the Minnesota Wild in an NHL hockey game Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2020, in Denver. (AP Photo/David Zalubowski)
Girard showing grit at Syracuse

Freshman guard becoming key player as Syracuse tries to make headway in the ACC

BY JOHN KERES
Associated Press

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Joe Girard said the open court after a fall on the hardwood of Jim Boeheim Court and stared up at Notre Dame’s Prentiss Hubb as the sophomore hovered over the Orange freshman guard, glaring down in menacing fashion late in a tight game with the Irish.

Girard hopped up and walked away after the brief altercation as the referees huddled and then called a technical foul against Hubb. Girard responded by sinking both free throws, the beginning of 10 straight points from Girard while Hubb responded by hitting a pair of three-pointers to keep the game close.

It was a moment that will be etched in the minds of the Orange faithful for a long time, reminiscent of the grit Gerry McNamara brought to the team nearly two decades ago.

"If somebody challenges me or any competitor, usually you’re going to step your game up a little bit," said Girard, who drained a four-point basket at the final buzzer.

"I got over it," he said. "The refs saw it. He got over it." Girard hopped up and walked away. But that’s still our expectation," Antonetti said. "I don’t think it’s constructive for our dialogue with him."

Franco Lindor's Wins Above Replacement in 2013 as he won a Golden Glove and hit .284 with 74 RBIs.

Lindor’s WAR in 2018, when he led the American League in runs and hit .277 with 92 RBIs and a career-high 38 homers.

Lindor’s 2017 WAR. He hit .273 with 89 RBIs, 33 homers and also led the league’s shortstops in double plays.

By the numbers

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The departure of his backcourt — point guard Frank Howard and Tyus Battle — after last season opened the door for Girard to step up and has really stepped in and really stepped up.

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"Obviously, he can score, but he’s done a much better job handling the ball playing the point guard position," Boeheim said.

"His ballhandling has been real solid for a freshman. His decision-making has been really good overall. He’s having a tremendous year for a young player. He stepped in and has really stepped up." Girard picked Syracuse among several suitors and Boeheim inserted him in the starting lineup in the third game of the season.

He responded by scoring a season-high 24 points against Seattle, hitting five three-pointers.

"New York state’s all-time leading high school scorer had found his niche. He has started every game since, has reached double figures in scoring 10 times, and is averaging just under 12 points to rank third on the team. He’s also third with 32 three-pointers in 96 attempts.

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"New York state’s all-time leading high school scorer had found his niche. He has started every game since, has reached double figures in scoring 10 times, and is averaging just under 12 points to rank third on the team. He’s also third with 32 three-pointers in 96 attempts.

Freshman guard Joe Girard, right, has become an important player for Syracuse, averaging just under 12 points per game. He’s also third on the team with 32 three-pointers.

Indians team president Chris Antonetti said Wednesday he’s more confident that four-time All-Star shortstop Francisco Lindor, above, will be in Cleveland’s lineup to start the season.

Indians growing confident Lindor will be in the lineup opening day

BY TOM WITHERS
Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Francisco Lindor’s status with the Indians has been slightly upgraded.

Team president Chris Antonetti said Wednesday he’s more confident that all-star shortstop will be in Cleveland’s lineup to start the season after the Indians didn’t receive a trade proposal that’s their liking over the past few weeks.

Antonetti did not disclose what has been offered for Lindor, a four-time all-star and one of baseball’s best all-around players.

Lindor is scheduled to appear at the team’s Tribe Fest fan event on Feb. 1. The team did note the list of players scheduled to attend is subject to change, and there’s always a chance Lindor could get moved if the Indians get the right proposal.

"I have never had a different expectation other than Francisco will be our shortstop opening day," Antonetti repeated. "That was my expectation when the season ended. That’s my expectation. I can’t control the conduct of our expectations as far as them calling us with interest and wanting to explore things.

"We have a responsibility to be responsive to those teams when they engage with us. I can say that we’ve had conversations on the majority of our major league roster and a bunch of players in our minor league system over the course of the offseason. The majority of those guys, other than just a couple, are still with us."

The Indians did sign free-agent second baseman Cesar Hernandez, who spent the past seven seasons with Philadelphia.

Hernandez fills the hole created by the team’s decision not to resign Jason Kipnis, and it means Jose Ramirez will stay at third.

Francisco Lindor won his first American League Player of the Year award in 2018, when he led the league in runs and RBIs. He was also a Golden Glove winner that season.

By the numbers

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Best of the bowls

LSU’s Burrow, Jefferson lead All-Bowl Team

By Steve Megargee
Associated Press

Joe Burrow and Justin Jefferson were easy selections for The Associated Press All-Bowl Team after they connected for four first-half touchdowns in LSU’s College Football Playoff semifinal blowout of Oklahoma.

Selecting the rest of the team wasn’t nearly as simple.

And why shouldn’t it? If the season won’t end until LSU faces Clemson in the championship game Monday night in New Orleans, all the post-season games with “bowl” in the title have been played. So why wait?

Because some defenses run a 4-3 scheme, some run a 3-4 and others use the nickel as their base defense, AP included four line- men, four linebackers and five defensive backs in picking the honorees. There are also 13 players on offense, since we include an all-purpose player and a third running back.

There were far more receivers than tight ends worthy of consideration, so we left out the tight end position and went with three receivers instead.

Offense

Quarterback

Joe Burrow, LSU (Peach): The Heisman Trophy winner tied a bowl record by throwing seven touchdown passes in the top-ranked Tigers’ 63-28 victory over No. 4 Oklahoma — all in the first half. Burrow went 29-for-39 for 394 yards passing. He also had a touchdown run.

Running back


Lineman

Lamical Perine, Florida (Orange): Perine ran for 138 yards and caught five passes for 43 yards in the ninth-ranked Gators’ 25-19 win over No. 8 Penn State. He also had a touchdown run.

Wide receiver


Jerry Jeudy, Alabama (Citrus): Jeudy caught an 85-yard touchdown pass on the No. 9 Crimson Tide’s first play from scrimmage and finished with six receptions for 204 yards in a 35-16 victory over No. 17 Michigan.

Trey Johnson, Minnesota (Outback): Johnson had 12 receptions for 202 yards and two touchdowns as the No. 16 Gophers defeated No. 9 Auburn 31-24.

Defensive end

Tremayne Anchrum and Jackson Carman, Clemson (Fiesta): The Tigers’ two offensive tackles helped limit Heisman Trophy finalist Chase Young in third-ranked Clemson’s 29-23 victory over No. 2 Ohio State in the other CFP semifinal.

Samuel Cosmi, Texas (Alamo): Cosmi anchored a line that helped the Longhorns rush for 231 yards against a 12th-ranked Utah team that had been leading the nation in run defense. The Utes also ranked third in total defense, but Texas gained 438 total yards in its 38-10 victory.

Charlie Heck, North Carolina (Military): The Tar Heels’ left tackle led a line that allowed no sacks against Temple, which had 39 during the regular season. North Carolina gained 534 yards in a 55-13 blowout.

Ford Higgins, Navy (Liberty): The Midshipmen’s center helped pave the way for quarterback Malcolm Perry’s 213-yard rushing performance as 21st-ranked Navy edged Kansas State, 20-17. The Midshipmen controlled the ball for 36 1/2 minutes against a Kansas State team that was ranked fourth in time of possession.

James Hudson, Cincinnati (Birming- ham): The Michigan transfer made his Bears debut as a starting left tackle and helped 23rd-ranked Cincinnati gain 343 yards in a 36-6 rout of Boston College.

All-purpose

Lynn Bowden Jr., Kentucky (Belk): The receiver-turned-quarterback rushed for 235 yards and two scores and threw a game-winning touchdown pass with 15 seconds remaining in the Wildcats’ 37-30 victory over Virginia Tech.

South Carolina

Line

A.J. Epenesa, Iowa (Holiday): The Associated Press All-America second-team defensive end collected 2 ½ sacks and forced a fumble as the 19th-ranked Hawkeyes defeated No. 22 Southern California, 49-24.

Malcolm Koonce, Buffalo (Bahamas): Koonce had two of the Bull’s five sacks in a 31-9 rout of Charlotte. He also forced a fumble and had five tackles.

Jesse Lemonier, Liberty (Cure): Lemonier had eight tackles and recorded two sacks to improve his two-year career sack total to 20 ½. He was named the game’s most valuable player after the Flames’ 23- 16 victory over Georgia Southern.

Kenny Willekes, Michigan State (Pine- stripe): Willekes had nine tackles, forced a fumble and delivered 1 ½ sacks in the Spartans’ 27-21 triumph over Wake Forest.

Linebacker

Joseph Ossai, Texas (Alamo): Ossai posted nine tackles — six for loss — and three sacks against Utah.

Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah, Notre Dame (Camping World): Technically listed as a rover, Owusu-Koramoah recorded nine tackles — four for loss — and three sacks in the 14th-ranked Fighting Irish’s 33-9 victory over Iowa State. He also forced and recovered a fumble.

Micah Parsons, Penn State (Cotton): Parsons had seven solo tackles, seven assists, three tackles for loss, two sacks, two forced fumbles and two pass breakups against Memphis.

Rashad Smith, Florida Atlantic (Boca Ratón): Smith scored on a 34-yard fumble return and also had a 22-yard interception return as well as 11 tackles in the Owls’ 52- 28 triumph over SMU.

Secondary

Khoury Bethley, Hawaii (Hawai’i): Bethley made 10 solo tackles — one for loss — and picked off two passes in a 38-34 victory over BYU. His second interception clinched the game with 25 seconds left.

Brady Breeze, Oregon (Rose): Breeze scored on a 31-yard fumble return and also forced a fumble to set up No. 7 Oregon’s go-ahead touchdown in a 28-27 victory over No. 11 Wisconsin. He had 11 tackles and a pass breakup.

Antwan Collier and Richie Grant, Central Florida (Gasparilla): Grant had 10 tackles in a 48-25 win over Marshall and opened the scoring with a 39-yard interception return. Collier had a 34-yard interception return, two tackle recoveries and six tackles.

Richard LeCounte, Georgia (Sugar): LeCounte picked off two passes in the fifth-ranked Bulldogs’ 26-14 victory over No. 8 Baylor.

Elijah Molden, Washington (Las Vegas): Molden had a 31-yard interception return, forced a fumble and made nine tackles in the Huskies’ 38-7 victory over No. 18 Boise State.

Special Teams

Kicker

Riley Patterson, Memphis (Cotton): Patterson made all six of his field-goal attempts, connecting from 37, 41, 42, 44, 48 and 51 yards away. His accuracy gave him a slight edge over Western Kentucky’s Cory Munson, who made a game-winning 52-yarder on the final play of the First Res- ponders Bowl but missed a 29-yard attempt earlier in the game.

Punter

Michael Turk, Arizona State (Sun): Turk averaged 45.8 yards on his eight attempts, connecting from 37, 41, 42, 44, 48 and 51 yards away. His accuracy gave him a slight edge over Western Kentucky’s Cory Munson, who made a game-winning 52-yarder on the final play of the First Re- sponders Bowl but missed a 29-yard attempt earlier in the game.

Returner

Imhir Smith-Marsette, Iowa (Holiday): Smith-Marsette scored on a 96-yard kick- off return. He also had a 60-yard touch- down run and a 12-yard touchdown catch.
By Pete Iacorelli
Associated Press

CLEMSON, S.C. — LSU’s Clyde Edwards-Helaire and Clemson’s Travis Etienne have much more in common than their Louisiana backgrounds heading into the national title game.

Both are smallish running backs who were overlooked at times in high school but have emerged as critical factors for next week’s College Football Playoff championship game.

“Definitely a great opportunity to go out there and finish it off with a W,” said Etienne, a junior considering a jump to the NFL after playing for a second straight national crown.

Etienne has proven he can get it done on the biggest stage. But his path from Jennings, La., to Clemson was far from direct.

The Tigers were locked into another promising backfield commit from Tennessee before Darrius Richardson had a change of heart and caused Clemson offensive coordinator and running backs coach Tony Elliott to scramble to fill the roster spot.

Etienne emerged as a possibility and Elliott went to meet him mid-January 2017 — soon after Clemson won the 2016 national championship over Alabama.

“When we saw him, we just hit it off,” said Elliott, who remembered waiting through visits from LSU and Tennessee before meeting the 5-foot-11 Etienne.

Etienne grew up a fan of the Southern Conference, former SEC power Louisiana Tech and then LSU, from attending so many games as a teenager.

But after meeting Elliott and talking with coach Dabo Swinney, Etienne became hooked on Clemson.

He still can’t fully believe that Clemson reached out to “a small kid from Jennings, La.”

He can thank Richardson for that, who played at UCF as a freshman before transferring to Texas A&M.

But when Clemson did make the call was when Etienne decided where he wanted to play college football. “Like this is meant to be, me going there.”

The coupling has been fruitful.

Etienne was the Atlantic Coast Conference Player of the Year in his first season with 1,305 yards and 16 touchdowns this season.

Edwards-Helaire is confident in his abilities and is ready to prove doubters wrong once again.


And Clemson knows what he can do.

National Championship
No. 1 LSU (14-0)
vs. No. 3 Clemson (14-0)
AFN-Sports
2:15 a.m. Tuesday CET
10:15 a.m. Tuesday JKT

“Definitely a great opportunity,” Edwards-Helaire said.

Edwards-Helaire has embraced the challenge, more than living up to that LSU running back pedigree.

He has rushed for 1,305 yards and 16 touchdowns this season.

He was crucial in ending LSU’s eight-year run of futility against Alabama in a 46-41 victory this season with 103 yards and three touchdowns rushing with nine catches for 77 yards and another score.

Edwards-Helaire, whose mother once thought he was too small to play football, has dealt with string injury leading up to LSU’s 63-28 win over Oklahoma at the Peach Bowl and was pretty much just a decoy in the semifinal win. He had just two rushes for 14 yards and sat once the game turned into a blowout.

“Orgeron said Edwards-Helaire should ready to play against Clemson.

Edwards-Helaire has plenty of highlight reels making defenders miss, spinning free for long gains.

“I know what I could do,” he said. “The people in my corner knew what I could do.”

And Clemson knows what he can do.

“We wanted Travis Etienne, but it was too little, too late,” he said.

Not that Orgeron completely lost out.

While Etienne was leaving his home state, Edwards-Helaire was excelling close to his future campus as a stellar prep tailback in Baton Rouge.

Edwards-Helaire was a one-time high school teammate of former LSU star tailback Derricks Guice. There was one distinction that stood out about Edwards-Helaire. The Tigers’ recent starting running back like the 6-foot Leonard Fournette and 5-11 Guice were taller; Edwards-He-
NFL PLAYOFFS

Versatile Honey Badger could haunt Texans

Houston coach O'Brien wanted to retain Chiefs S Mathieu in offseason

BY DAVE SKEETTA
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — One of the first things Bill O’Brien wants is perfect clear is that he never wanted to lose the Honey Badger.

In just one season in Houston, versatile safety Tyrann Mathieu had become such a ball-hawking leader that he was voted a team captain. He piled up nearly 90 tackles, filled in at nickel back when injuries decimated the Texans’ defensive backend, and he helped lead the franchise back to the playoffs after a one-year absence.

So when Mathieu’s one-year prove-it contract was up, the Texans made a strong push to keep him. Various reports suggest they offered him a multiyear contract worth about $11 million per year, a nice bump from the $7 million he made last season.

It wasn’t enough. Not when the Kansas City Chiefs entered the picture.

With new coordinator Steve Spagnuolo transitioning the Chiefs to a 3-4 defensive scheme, the Chiefs knew they needed to find some help pushing the passer and in the secondary. General manager Brett Veach solved the first problem by trading for defensive end Frank Clark and signing him to a long-term contract, and he solved the second by luring Mathieu to Kansas City with a $42 million, three-year deal.

Spagnuolo transitioning the Chiefs to a 3-4 defensive scheme, and in the secondary. General manager Brett Veach solved the first problem by trading for defensive end Frank Clark and signing him to a long-term contract, and he solved the second by luring Mathieu to Kansas City with a $42 million, three-year deal and the chance to play for a legitimate Super Bowl contender.

Now, the Honey Badger has the

Chiefs safety Tyrann Mathieu celebrates an interception last month in Kansas City, Mo. Mathieu had 75 tackles, two sacks and picked off four passes — the second most of his career — in his first season since joining the Chiefs on a $42 million, three-year contract last offseason.

FROM BACK PAGE

 Surprise: WR Metcalf has played major role for Seahawks

Seattle Seahawks (12-5) at Green Bay Packers (13-3)

Seattle 12:30 a.m. Monday CET

AFN-Sports

8:30 a.m. Monday JKT

The Seahawks’ D.K. Metcalf catches a pass late in Sunday’s wildcard playoff game against the Eagles in Philadelphia.

Seattle Seahawks (12-5)
at Green Bay Packers (13-3)

AFN-Sports

9 p.m. Sunday CET

5 a.m. Monday JKT

Ed Zurga/AP

The Seahawks’ D.K. Metcalf catches a pass late in Sunday’s wildcard playoff game against the Eagles in Philadelphia.

Seattle Seahawks (12-5) at Kansas City Chiefs (12-4)

Houston Texans (11-6) at Kansas City Chiefs (12-4)

9 p.m. Sunday CET

5 a.m. Monday JKT

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — One of the first things Bill O’Brien wants to make perfectly clear is that he never wanted to lose the Honey Badger.

It wasn’t enough. Not when the Eagles — which

In the nine games that followed — including that Week 9 win over the Bucks — Metcalf has 42 receptions for 658 yards while his responsibilities within Seattle’s offensive scheme have expanded. While the game against the Eagles was the best of his young career, Metcalf had been building toward that kind of performance for weeks.

Seattle coach Pete Carroll said Metcalf had disappointment from the Seahawks’ earlier meeting against the Eagles — which who could only run straight down the field.

“When he came in, I was very confident he was able to do a lot of things that a lot of people weren’t giving him credit for,” Seattle wide receivers coach Nate Carroll said.

Metcalf’s season turned in Week 9 when he had six catches for 123 yards against Tampa Bay. Up to that point, Metcalf had 23 receptions, four touchdowns and was averaging about 17 yards per catch. It was solid, but not spectacular numbers from the rookie.

In the nine games that followed — including that Week 9 win over the Bucks — Metcalf has 42 receptions for 658 yards while his responsibilities within Seattle’s offensive scheme have expanded. While the game against the Eagles was the best of his young career, Metcalf had been building toward that kind of performance for weeks.

Seattle coach Pete Carroll said Metcalf had disappointment from the Seahawks’ earlier meeting against the Eagles — which also finished 17-9 — and wanted a chance to atone for the previous game.

“He didn’t play the game he wanted to play last time we were there,” Pete Carroll said. “It was important to him to put that to rest. He was very competitive about it.”

Metcalf knows as his numbers increase so will the attention he receives from opponents. He was shut out by Arizona in Week 16 in his only game of the season without a catch. He doesn’t know how Green Bay will defend him this week.

“H e would like to run through everybody, which I love that part of him, and we all do and it gets us all going,” Carroll said. “But at the same time, you’ve got to make sure that the ball safety is paramount. That’s the next evolution right there is just understanding when to and when not to. I think that’s been the coolest thing is just seeing him be able to just feel comfortable out there and just play fast every chance he gets.”
ANDREWS SHINES AS JACKSON’S FAVORITE TARGET

By DAVID GINSBURG
Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — The Baltimore Ravens were preparing for the 2018 NFL Draft when coach John Harbaugh began studying tape of a pretty good tight end at Oklahoma by the name of Mark Andrews.

“He always got open,” Harbaugh recalled. “He always made catches. You’re like, ‘Is he going to be able to do that in the NFL?’”

The answer: Undoubtedly, yes.

Following a modest rookie season, Andrews led the Ravens this year with 64 catches, 852 yards receiving and 10 touchdown receptions. He also earned an invitation to the Pro Bowl and is one big reason why Baltimore (14-2) will bring a 12-game winning streak into its playoff opener Saturday night against the Tennessee Titans.

Sure, the Ravens are known for their ability to run. But when dual-threat quarterback Lamar Jackson decides to throw, more often than not he will start his progression with Andrews.

“Mark does a great job of reading the defense, knowing when they’re zoning,” Jackson said. “He finds a way to get open. I just call it street ball.”

Andrews was targeted 98 times this season, 27 more than runner-up Marquise Brown and at least twice as often as anyone else. In addition, his 10 TD catches were only one fewer than the combined total of everyone else on the squad.

And yet, Andrews was the second tight end drafted by the Ravens in 2018, behind Hayden Hurst. Andrews finally went in the third round, but that doesn’t mean the scouts — and Harbaugh — did not appreciate his body of work.

“The truth is, I think hindsight would say that he was undervalued by the NFL world of evaluation,” Harbaugh said. “But when we first did it, he was our top tight end in the rankings.”

Jackson and Andrews entered the NFL together, and it didn’t take a whole lot of practice for them to get on the same page — even if it wasn’t precisely out of the playbook.

“I would run a route maybe a little differently than how it was drawn up, and he would see it the same way and would throw it perfectly on time,” Andrews said. “We’ve had that kind of chemistry pretty early on from the start.”

Hurst and Nick Boyle give Jackson a couple of options in terms of tight ends to target. But it’s clear who is the No. 1 choice.

“Obviously, he likes his Pro Bowler, Mark Andrews,” Titans safety Kenny Vaccaro said. “I think what makes him good is Lamar trusts him.”

Vaccaro lauded Andrews for his “catch radius” — the ability to snag a ball in the immediate vicinity — along with the tight end’s effort to catch the ball at its highest point.

Though Andrews has displayed soft hands downfield, he’s not afraid to bang helmets on the line of scrimmage.

“I’m never going to shy away from someone. I don’t fear anybody,” he insisted. “A lot receiving tight ends, you look at them and they don’t go into the block wanting to block. That’s not who I am. I’m a guy who wants to do my job to the best of my ability. I’ve worked really hard at getting better at that.”

Andrews shines as Jackson’s favorite target
TE led Ravens in catches, yards, TDs

Baltimore Ravens tight end Mark Andrews scored on a 39-yard touchdown reception during the first half of a Dec. 22 game against the Browns in Cleveland. Andrews led the Ravens this year with 64 catches, 852 yards receiving and 10 touchdown receptions.
**NFL PLAYOFFS**

**Titans’ top duo in final year of contracts**

Tannehill, Henry may wind up on different teams next season

BY TEREsa M. WaLKER
Associated Press

R yan Tannehill has gone from a quarterback traded away in March to the NFL’s top-rated passer fresh off a victory in his playoff debut for Tennessee. Derrick Henry has led the league in rushing and seemingly gets stronger and harder to tackle each game.

Their next loss could be their final game in a Tennessee Titans uniform. Tannehill and Henry are in the final years of their contracts, the quarterback in a deal reworked when Miami traded him to the Titans and the 2015 Heisman Trophy winner in the fourth year of his rookie contract.

Not that any of the Titans are looking past Saturday night, when they visit top-seeded Baltimore (14-2) in the AFC divisional round.

“I don’t even think about that,” Tannehill said Tuesday. “It’s just excitement in the city to go up there and play and to get an upset, ideally.”

Ryan Tannehill Titans QB on whether he’ll get a new contract with Tennessee

Jack Conklin. Robinson will have options, with a projected $57 million in salary cap space for 2020, according to Spotrac.com. Robinson kept safety Kenny Vaccaro out of free agency and CB Adoree’ Jackson (foot). WR Kalif Raymond (concussion protocol) practiced Wednesday, along with RG Nate Davis (knee) and LB Jayon Brown (shoulder). WR Kali...}

Running back Derrick Henry has had a career year, with 1,540 yards rushing during the regular season. In the last seven games, he’s averaging 154 yards per game.

The NFL being in the final year of its collective bargaining agreement allows teams to use both the franchise and transition tags, which could buy the Titans more time to negotiate extensions, if needed. The toughest decision then might be which tag to use on which player.

Henry has been so dominating that he is due for a hefty raise from the $1.13 million base salary he’s earned this season. Overthecap.com projects the franchise tag for a running back could be as much as $12.4 million. The transition tag is cheaper at possibly $10.1 million but allows other teams to make contract offers that the Titans could match to keep Henry.

Tannehill wouldn’t be the only quarterback hitting free agency. The projected franchise tag for quarterbacks currently is $26.8 million, with a transition tag possible at $24.3 million. That would be a massive raise for Tannehill, whose base salary is $1.75 million, with Miami picking up $5 million and having taken an $18.4 million salary cap hit by trading him away.

Ryan, who sealed last week’s win with an interception returned for a TD, said it’s easy to focus now with the stakes at hand.

“I would be foolish and selfish to worry about myself or something about my deal — whatever that may be — and not worry about this game at hand. Not that any of the Titans are looking past Saturday night, when they visit top-seeded Baltimore (14-2) in the AFC divisional round. Sitting out the Week 16 loss to New Orleans helped him rest a sore left hamstring, and Henry ran for 211 yards against the Texans the next week, helping the Titans clinch the AFC’s No. 6 seed. He set the franchise’s postseason rushing mark with 182 yards against the Patriots. Henry has made clear during the offseason program that he wasn’t thinking about his contract status. The Titans’ third draft pick in the second round of 2016 has been even better the past seven games, with 1,078 yards rushing for an average of 154 yards per game. Sitting out the Week 16 loss to New Orleans helped him rest a sore left hamstring, and Henry ran for 211 yards against the Texans the next week, helping the Titans clinch the AFC’s No. 6 seed. He set the franchise’s postseason rushing mark with 182 yards against the Patriots.

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Ryan Tannehill is 8-3 since being named Tennessee’s starting quarterback, and led the league with a 117.5 passer rating.

Second-year coach Mike Vrabel leaves the contracts to general manager Jon Robinson, and the GM doesn’t talk about contracts until a deal is done.

“I really just try to coach the guys that are here and try to get the best out of them,” Vrabel said. “Guys have helped us win a lot of games. They’ve helped us get to this point. All that stuff really gets taken care of in the offseason.”

First up, the Titans (10-7) are trying to advance to the franchise’s first AFC championship game since January 2003, when...
6th seeds showing strength

By Rob Maaddi
Associated Press

There’s strength at six. Both No. 6 seeds advanced to the divisional round of the playoffs for the second year in a row, marking the first time that’s happened in consecutive seasons since the NFL instituted the current 12-team format in 1990.

First, the Tennessee Titans (10-7) sent the New England Patriots (12-5) to their earliest exit in a decade. Then, the Minnesota Vikings (11-6) knocked off the New Orleans Saints (12-5).

Last year, the Indianapolis Colts and Philadelphia Eagles won wildcard games as No. 6 seeds. Both teams lost in the divisional round.

Since 2013, No. 6 seeds are 10-4 in the wildcard round. But those teams were 0-12 the following week. The last time a No. 6 seed reached the conference championship was the 2010 season, when the New York Jets and Green Bay Packers did it. The Packers went on to win the Super Bowl.

The Vikings and Titans aim to upset No. 1 seeds on Saturday. Minnesota visits the San Francisco 49ers (13-3) in the early game and Tennessee faces the Baltimore Ravens (14-2) in the nightcap.

The 2005 Steelers are the only other No. 6 seed to win a Super Bowl. The 2008 Ravens and 2009 Eagles also reached conference title games as No. 6 seeds before losing.

You like that: Kirk Cousins was 0-15 in his career against teams with a .700 winning percentage before leading Minnesota to an overtime win against the Saints. With the Vikings, he had been 0-10 against 10-win teams, 2-10 against playoff teams, and 3-11-1 against teams with a winning record.

Browns meet Vikings OC for coaching job

The Browns’ coaching search went back on the road Thursday. The team is interviewing Vikings offensive coordinator Kevin Stefanski, who took a break from playoff planning to meet with Cleveland’s group. Stefanski was a finalist last year for the Browns job, which went to Freddie Kitchens but came open again after a woeful 6-10 season.

The 37-year-old Stefanski is the seventh candidate to meet with the Browns, who talked with Eagles defensive coordinator Jim Schwartz on Wednesday. The Browns are scheduled to interview Patriots offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels on Friday.

He’s the presumed favorite to get the gig because McDaniels has NFL head coaching experience and success working with star quarterback Tom Brady.

Two years ago, McDaniels agreed to coach the Indianapolis Colts, but he backed out to stay with New England. He went 11-17 as Denver’s coach in 2009-10.

Giants finalize deal to hire Judge as coach

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — The struggling New York Giants went into their third coaching search since 2015 looking for a leader for their young team.

In hiring New England Patriots special teams coordinator and wide receivers coach Joe Judge on Wednesday, the Giants settled for a 38-year-old assistant who has never run a team either at the college or NFL level.

What they did get with Judge, though, was a young man who has worked with two of the best football coaches in the past 30 years in Bill Belichick and Nick Saban.

The hope is the success those men have had rubs off and makes the Giants relevant in the NFL again.

“Joe is one of the brightest young coaches in our profession, and I think he will do a tremendous job as the head coach of the New York Giants,” Saban said in a statement. “They are getting an extremely smart football coach who is very loyal, organized and diligent about getting the job done.”

The Giants and representatives for Judge reached a contract agreement Wednesday, less than 24 hours after he was offered the job.

Briefs

League investigating if Bills violated injury reporting rules

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — The NFL is looking into whether the Buffalo Bills violated league rules on reporting injuries in connection to defensive end Jerry Hughes revealing he played with torn wrist ligaments.

The league on Thursday notified the Buffalo chapter of the Pro Football Writers of America that it is standard policy to review what happened after being made aware of concerns raised earlier this week.

Hughes, who did not miss a game, revealed the severity of the injury in a note posted on his Twitter account Tuesday. He wrote he wasn’t going to let “my wrist slow me down as the team was so close to achieving our goal of an AFC East banner and playoff games.”

He finished with 4½ sacks in the regular season, down from seven the previous year. He then set a team playoff record with three sacks in a 22-19 overtime loss at Houston in a wildcard game Saturday.

The Bills never listed Hughes as having an issue with his wrist on their injury report this season.

During five weeks he was listed on the report as missing practices due to rest, including the week leading up to the playoff game. He was also twice listed in November as having a groin injury.

A message left with the Bills was not immediately returned.

Coach Sean McDermott on Tuesday wouldn’t say why the Bills didn’t list Hughes on the report for having a wrist injury. McDermott said the times Hughes was listed was not in relation to his wrist.

Old school football: Derrick Henry set a postseason franchise record with 182 yards rushing in Tennessee’s win at New England. Titans quarterback Ryan Tannehill completed only eight passes against the Patriots, the same number of passes Nick Foles completed on the go-ahead touchdown drive when the Patriots had previously lost a playoff game, Super Bowl 52 against Philadelphia.

Old school football II: The Titans-Ravens matchup features two of the top three rushing teams in the league. The Ravens set an NFL record with 3,296 yards rushing and the Titans had 2,223.

Henry led the league with 1,540 yards rushing while Baltimore got 1,206 from quarterback Lamar Jackson and 1,018 from Mark Ingram.

Tennessee cornerback Logan Ryan celebrates his interception for a touchdown against the New England Patriots in their wildcard playoff game on Saturday in Foxborough, Mass. The Titans won 20-13.

This will be the fourth time the team with the top rushing offense met the team with the league’s leading rusher in the playoffs during the Super Bowl era. The team with the leading rusher won the first three.

Young guns: When the Texans (11-6) visit the Chiefs (12-4) on Sunday, it’ll be the third time two quarterbacks under age 25 face off in the divisional round of the playoffs since 1967. Houston’s Deshaun Watson is three days older than Kansas City’s Patrick Mahomes.

Chasing greats: Aaron Rodgers enters Green Bay’s game against Seattle with 36 TD passes in the playoffs, fifth-most in league history. Tom Brady is first with 73, and Peyton Manning is fourth with 45, though Joe Montana had 40, Brett Favre had 44 and Steve Young had 42.

The Titans-Ravens game features the top two scoring teams in the league. Tennessee is three days older than Kansas City’s Patrick Mahomes.

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EAGAN, Minn. — Over Minnesota’s past six games, Anthony Harris has picked off Russell Wilson, Aaron Rodgers and Drew Brees, owners of three of the four lowest interception percentages in the NFL this season.

The fifth-year safety has come a long way from undrafted practice squad player, as some of the league’s best quarterbacks have been reminded recently. Harris, who became a full-time starter last year, tied for the regular-season league lead with six interceptions in 2019. “Every time he got an opportunity, he stepped up,” Vikings defensive coordinator George Edwards said.

The tandem Harris has formed with Harrison Smith in the secondary has been a significant part of the success the Vikings defense has had this season, a value that will be scrutinized at team headquarters in the coming months with his contract set to expire which will make him an unrestricted free agent. Harris and Smith will be an integral part of the plan to stop San Francisco’s versatile offense in the divisional round game on Saturday.

“The scheme they play in is very good. It puts a lot of pressure on them, but it allows them to make a lot of plays, too,” 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan said. Harris has done just that.

All three of those statistically improbable interceptions led to touchdowns for the Vikings. When Wilson’s pass for Seattle was shadowed at the line of scrimmage, his ill-fated attempt to knock the ball to the turf fell just in the air long enough for Harris to snag it and run it in for a 20-yard score to break a second-quarter tie.

Harris helped break a second-quarter tie against Green Bay, too, when he darted in front of Davante Adams to grab an underneath throw by Rodgers and return it 10 yards. The Vikings were in the end zone three plays later.

Then at New Orleans, with the Vikings trailing 10-6 just before the two-minute warning, Harris hung on to the deep ball from Brees after landing on his back with a leaping catch, climbed to his feet and returned it 30 yards to reach Saints territory. The Vikings scored the go-ahead touchdown seven plays later and, with Harris helping hound star wide receiver Michael Thomas and keep Brees from doing his usual damage, pulled out a 26-20 victory in overtime to oust the Saints and advance in the playoffs.

Rodgers is the least likely quarterback to be picked off in league history, with a career interception rate of just 1.4%. He dropped that to 0.7% in 2019, with Kansas City’s Patrick Mahomes, Wilson and Brees right behind him on the leader board.

Harris tied for the league lead with six interceptions in 2019. The Vikings have 17 takeaways over their past six games, including five forced turnovers against Green Bay and New Orleans.

“It’s been a long journey, but I look at it as a continuous thing,” the 6-foot-1, 202-pound Harris said. “It’s not just something he’s been.”

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“It’s been a long journey, but I look at it as a continuous thing,” the 6-foot-1, 202-pound Harris said. “It’s not just something like, ‘Now I’m here. Now I’ve arrived.’ It’s going to be a continuous process for me. It’s just been embracing the opportunity that I have.”

QB Garoppolo set to make first playoff start for 49ers

BY DAVE CAMPBELL
Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Jimmy Garoppolo’s postseason experience consists of a couple of garbage-time handshakes with New England during the 2014 AFC championship game that is remembered far more for the controversy surrounding deflated footballs.

Garoppolo will carry a much bigger burden when he makes his first career playoff start for San Francisco as the 49ers host the Minnesota Vikings on Saturday in their first playoff game since the 2013 season.

“I’ve seen the atmosphere in the building ramp up, the atmosphere of the coaches and players and everyone,” Garoppolo said Tuesday about the lessons he learned during his time with the New England Patriots. “Just a lot more energy in the building for sure.”

Garoppolo’s first full season as a starting quarterback in the NFL was a success as he helped lead the Niners (13-3) to the playoffs for the first time in six years, earning the top seed in the NFC. He had highs and lows, with
Rookie WR Metcalf found ‘perfect situation’ in Seattle

By Tim Booth
Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. —

mid an avalanche of attention following the best game of his career, DK Metcalf allowed himself a little bit of reflection.

What would have happened if he hadn’t unexpectedly slid out of the first round of the NFL Draft last April? What if all the hype that surrounded his performance at the NFL combine had led to hearing his name called on the first night of the draft and not a day later when the Seattle Seahawks swooped in to grab the wide receiver with the 64th overall pick.

“It was a perfect situation for me,” Metcalf said on Wednesday. “At the moment I was mad, but after everything was said and done looking back at it I’m just happy that I landed here. Great quarterback. Great offense. Great team. Great organization. We’re in the playoffs.

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