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EVGENIY MALOLETKA/AP

A woman walks outside a maternity hospital that was damaged by shelling in Mariupol, Ukraine, on Wednesday.

Ramstein donations arriving in Ukraine

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

RAMSTEIN, Germany — Private donations collected at Ramstein Air Base have reached desperate but determined Ukrainians fighting for their survival against invading Russian forces.

Viktoria Shevchuk, 38, was among a group of volunteers sorting through boxes Wednesday at a Ukrainian Orthodox church in Dubno, a city about 250 miles west of the capital, Kyiv.

Shevchuk and Evgeniya Cole, who helped organize the donation drive last week at Ramstein, are former classmates who grew up in Dubno. Through Cole, Shevchuk requested supplies for the thousands of civilians in the town who have stayed behind to help the war effort.

A team of volunteers on base raised nearly \$6,800, which was used to purchase basic items for civilians and volunteer fighters in Ukraine, Shevchuk said.

Cole, who works at the base

SEE DONATIONS ON PAGE 9



Evgeniya Cole

A woman in Rivne, Ukraine, stands by donations collected by volunteers in the Kaiserslautern military community on Thursday.

Airstrikes spur outrage

Attack on a Ukrainian hospital has drawn anger as talks stall

BY EVGENIY MALOLETKA
AND MSTYSLAV CHERNOV
Associated Press

MARIUPOL, Ukraine — A Russian airstrike on a Mariupol maternity hospital that killed three people brought condemnation down on Moscow on Thursday, with Ukrainian and Western officials branding it a war crime, while the highest-level talks yet yielded no progress toward stopping the fighting.

Emergency workers renewed efforts to get food and medical supplies into besieged cities and get traumatized civilians out.

Ukrainian authorities said a child was

■ DOD rejects Poland's plan to give Ukraine fighter jets, calling it 'high risk' **Page 8**

among the dead in Wednesday's airstrike in the vital southern port of Mariupol. Seventeen people were also wounded, including women waiting to give birth, doctors, and children buried in the rubble.

Images of pregnant women covered in dust and blood dominated news reports in many

countries and brought a new wave of horror over the 2-week-old war sparked by Russia's invasion, which has killed thousands of soldiers and civilians, shaken the foundations of European security and driven more than 2.3 million people from Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told Russian leaders that the invasion will backfire on them as their economy is strangled. Western sanctions have already dealt a severe blow to the economy, causing the ruble to plunge, foreign businesses to flee — includ-

SEE AIRSTRIKE ON PAGE 7

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Europe Gas Prices were unavailable before press time

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	South Korea	Guam
Japan	..	\$4.859	..	\$4.919	\$4.179	\$4.599
Change in price	..	+50.0 cents	..	+75.0 cents	+49.0 cents	+50.0 cents
Okinawa	\$4.169	\$4.919	\$4.179	\$4.869
Change in price	+50.0 cents	+75.0 cents	+50.0 cents	+47.0 cents

*DieselEFD **Midgrade
For the week of March 11-17

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		South Korea (Won)	1226.99
Euro costs (March 11)	\$1.08	Switzerland (Franc)	0.9303
Dollar buys (March 11)	0.8809	Thailand (Baht)	33.14
British pound (March 11)	\$1.28	Turkey (NewLira)	14.9166
Japanese yen (March 11)	112.00		
South Korean won (March 11)	1197.00		
Commercial rates		(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)	
Bahrain(Dinar)	0.3769		
Britain (Pound)	1.3133		
Canada (Dollar)	1.2784		
China(Yuan)	6.3218		
Denmark (Krone)	6.7542		
Egypt (Pound)	15.7359		
Euro	0.9076		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8218		
Hungary (Forint)	346.62		
Israel (Shekel)	3.3685		
Japan (Yen)	116.19		
Kuwait(Dinar)	0.3037		
Norway (Krone)	8.9584		
Philippines (Peso)	52.25		
Poland (Zloty)	4.36		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7516		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3592		

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	3.25
Interest Rates Discount rate	0.75
Federal funds market rate	0.09
3-month bill	0.39
30-year bond	2.30

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

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MILITARY

S. Korea to boost US ties, military

President-elect pledges to be tough on North

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's president-elect Yoon Suk Yeol said Thursday that he would solidify an alliance with the United States, build up a powerful military and sternly cope with North Korean provocations, hours after he won the country's hard-fought election to become its next leader.

Yoon, whose single five-year term is to begin in May, said during his campaigning he would make a boosted alliance with the U.S. the center of his foreign policy. He's accused outgoing liberal President Moon Jae-in of tilting toward Pyongyang and Beijing and away from Washington. He's also stressed the need to recognize the strategic importance of repairing ties with Tokyo despite recent bilateral historical disputes.

Some experts have said a Yoon government will likely be able to reinforce ties with Washington and improve relations with Tokyo, but can't really avoid frictions with Pyongyang and Beijing.

"I'll rebuild the South Korea-U.S. alliance. I'll (make) it a strategic comprehensive alliance while sharing key values like a liberal democracy, a market economy and human rights," Yoon told a televised news conference.

"I'll establish a strong military



SONG KYUNG-SEOK / AP

South Korea's president-elect Yoon Suk Yeol attends a ceremony Thursday to disband a presidential election camp at the National Assembly Library in Seoul, South Korea.

capacity to deter any provocation completely," Yoon said. "I'll firmly deal with illicit, unreasonable behavior by North Korea in a principled manner, though I'll always leave the door for South-North talks open."

After his election win, he spoke with U.S. President Joe Biden on the phone. According to a White House statement, Biden congratulated Yoon on the election and emphasized the U.S. commitment to the defense of South Korea. The statement said the two also committed to maintain close coordination on addressing the threats posed by North Korea's nuclear and missile programs.

North Korea hasn't made any comments on Yoon's election. In recent weeks, it's launched a spate of sophisticated, nuclear-capable ballistic missiles in what experts have called an attempt to modernize its weapons arsenal and pressure the Biden administration to

making concessions like sanctions relief amid stalled diplomacy.

On Japan, Yoon said that Seoul and Tokyo should focus on building future-oriented ties.

"The focus in South Korea-Japan relations should be finding future paths that would benefit the people of both countries," he said.

The two countries are both key U.S. allies and closely linked to each other economically and culturally, but their relations sank to post-war lows during Moon's presidency over disputes related to Japan's 1910-45 colonization of the Korean Peninsula.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Thursday expressed a desire to communicate with Yoon to bring back good ties. But he still said Tokyo will stick to its position that all compensation issues have been settled by a 1965 bilateral treaty.

Yoon, who ran on the ticket of the main opposition People Power

Party, had previously served as Moon's prosecutor general. But he left the Moon government and joined the opposition last year after high-profile infighting over his investigations on some of Moon's allies.

Wednesday's election was largely a two-way showdown between Yoon and liberal ruling party candidate Lee Jae-myung. The two spent months slamming, mocking and demonizing each other in one of the most bitter political campaigns in recent memory, aggravating the country's already severe domestic division.

Yoon's razor-thin victory against Lee was partly seen as a referendum on the liberal government, whose popularity waned in recent years over failures to deal with stark economic inequalities, decaying job markets and soaring house prices that paint bleak financial futures for many people in their 20s and 30s.

Army to help fight S. Korea wildfires

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The U.S. military has agreed to help fight raging wildfires in the mountains of South Korea's eastern coast after a formal request from Seoul.

The Army's 2nd Infantry Division will send UH-60 Black Hawk and CH-47 Chinook helicopters, according to a statement from the command Wednesday evening. Around five U.S. helicopters are expected to be deployed, South Korea's Ministry of Defense said in a separate statement.

South Korea has been battling several wildfires since March 4. The blaze the 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade will assist in controlling began in Uljin County and had burned nearly 57,400 acres of woodland as of Thursday, according to a Ministry of the Interior and Safety official speaking on condition of anonymity, which is customary in South Korea.

The helicopters are capable of scooping up hundreds of gallons of water and spreading it over the blaze using a large container known as a "Bambi Bucket." More than 50 members of the aviation brigade are expected to assist.

The command agreed to support South Korea's firefighting efforts "without hesitation," 2nd ID spokesman Lt. Col. Ryan Donald said in an email Thursday.

"The safety of the Korean people is [2nd ID's] primary concern as this fire continues," he said. "Our small contribution to the firefighting efforts continues to show we are not just here as part of the warfighting alliance; it reaffirms our commitment to our [South Korean] partners."

The 2nd ID has been tapped to assist with wildfires in the past. In 2019, at least four helicopters were sent to fight blazes in the mountains of Gangwon province, near the border with North Korea.

Over 1,600 South Korean service members and 48 helicopters have been mobilized to combat the fires as of Thursday morning, according to a statement from the Ministry of Defense.

About 80% of the wildfires had been extinguished as of Thursday afternoon, according to the Interior and Safety official. Hundreds of homes and other buildings have been destroyed, displacing thousands of residents.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in visited the sites on Sunday and promised financial aid to those who were affected, according to a statement from the presidential Blue House.

House lawmakers question India's ties to Russia

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — As the United States works to deepen relationships in the Indo-Pacific region, some House lawmakers on Wednesday questioned India's readiness to partner with the U.S. against China due to its long-standing ties with Russia.

India's decision to abstain from last week's vote at the United Nations on a resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine worried some lawmakers who said the U.S. will need to foster strong cooperation with India and other countries in the region to counter a rapidly modernizing Chinese military.

"It's shocking that such a great

country has abstained on the issue of the mass murder in Ukraine," said Rep. Joe Wilson, R-S.C. "It just seems so unnatural. The relationship with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi should be with the United States, not in any way associated with the megalomaniac [Russian President Vladimir] Putin."

Britain's foreign minister Liz Truss linked India's abstention in the U.N. to its economic and security dependence on Russia, which has long supplied India with the majority of its weapons, according to a Reuters report.

A Pentagon official testifying before the House Armed Services Committee on Tuesday assured lawmakers that India is diversify-

ing its arms purchases away from Russia and is "moving in the right direction."

"From the U.S. perspective, India is absolutely an essential partner," said Ely Ratner, assistant secretary of defense for Indo-Pacific security affairs.

India's "complicated history and relationship" with Russia poses challenges, he said, but "they are manageable."

Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., urged U.S. commanders and the Defense Department to make clear to India that the U.S. would be a better ally than Russia against Chinese aggression.

When skirmishes broke out in 2020 at the Line of Actual Control, a demarcation line that separates

Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory, the U.S. provided intelligence and other support to India, according to Ratner.

"As an Indian-American, I'm perplexed why India is unwilling to condemn Putin's unprovoked aggression into Ukraine," Khanna said.

"We really need to press India not to be as dependent on Russian defense and to be willing to condemn Putin's aggression in Ukraine, just like we would condemn Chinese aggression beyond the Line of Control."

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MILITARY

Marine finds new purpose in snowboarding

Team USA member racing for gold in Paralympics

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

A medically retired Marine who lost an arm to an improvised bomb in Afghanistan will race for gold in Paralympic snowboarding on Friday.

The explosion in December 2010 that wounded Michael Spivey — a young combat engineer with 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment in Helmand province, Afghanistan — wasn't his first.



Spivey

Spivey emerged unscathed from a roadside bombing that damaged his truck in Ramadi, Iraq, in 2008, he said.

The Afghan blast was another story. Spivey lost his left arm below the elbow and had shrapnel in his legs and back. Another Marine lost his legs and an arm, Spivey said.

A year later Spivey tried snowboarding for the first time after a therapist suggested he attend an adaptive sports event in Breckenridge, Colo.

His passion for the sport took a few years to ignite, the San Diego native, 41, told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday from Beijing, where he is representing his country as a member of Team USA.

A few years after he was wounded, Spivey found himself in a dark place. He said he'd lost several friends and loved ones, including Marines who took their own lives or died in accidents.

At his lowest point, in 2014, Spivey woke



Michael Spivey

Michael Spivey, a former Marine who lost his left arm after a December 2010 bomb blast in Afghanistan, is snowboarding for Team USA at the Paralympics in Beijing.

up next to a shotgun and two empty bottles of rum, he said.

"I was like: I have to do something to change what is going on," he said. "I grabbed my backpack and snowboard and started driving to Colorado."

A plan, a purpose

When he got there, he linked up with fellow Marines and slept on a couch for a while. It turned out the group was competing in adaptive sports and Spivey ended up following them to Europe and racing for the

first time in 2015, he said.

The excitement he felt on the track was addictive and he decided to aim for the Paralympics, Spivey said.

"That became the plan," he said. "Now I have a goal. Now I have a purpose. Now I have to figure out how to train and get better and compete," he said.

At the 2018 Paralympics in Pyeong-Chang, South Korea, Spivey competed in snowboardcross, also called boardercross, and banked slalom, finishing 18th in both events.

Snowboardcross involves competitors racing head-to-head down a track that includes banks, jumps and slalom turns.

Banked slalom is raced over the same course with riders' best times out of several runs counting toward medals.

In Beijing, Spivey improved to 17th place in boardercross but failed to reach the top 16 who raced for gold on Monday. China took all three medals in his event, for upper limb impaired athletes.

He will race again in the banked slalom on Friday morning, Beijing time.

Inspirational presence

Some of the features on Paralympic snowboard racecourse aren't as extreme as those in the Olympics but racing down an icy track carries risks, Spivey said.

He broke his hand competing in Finland in December but recovered in time for the Beijing Games, he said.

Coronavirus restrictions mean the athletes haven't seen much of China, let alone the Great Wall, outside of the athletes' village and venues, Spivey said.

There have been chances to interact with one another, and the former Marine thinks his presence likely inspires his fellow athletes.

"I'm old enough to be most of these competitors' dad," he said, noting that the boardercross winners in his category are all in their teens and early 20s.

"Some of these sports you age out so these guys seeing me do this means they can go on to compete at many more games," he said.

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Court awards \$11.6M to Okinawans over US aircraft noise

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND MARI HIGA
Stars and Stripes

OKINAWA CITY, Okinawa — A Japanese court on Thursday awarded \$11.6 million to people living with military aircraft noise from Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, the latest in a series of lawsuits seeking compensation for U.S. air operations over Okinawa.

A three-judge panel from the Okinawa city branch of Naha District Court found the 3,139 plaintiffs — divided into two tiers of exposure — suffered impermissible levels of noise.

One group will receive about \$5,816.25 per resident, or \$77.55

per month, starting three years before the filing date, July 2, 2018, to the end of oral arguments on Sept. 30. The second group will receive \$38.78 per month for 75 months, or \$2,908.50 per resident.

The Japanese government is responsible for paying damages from noise cases involving U.S. military aircraft.

The plaintiffs had sought \$9,693 and \$5,816 per resident, respectively.

"We are unsatisfied," the plaintiffs' leader, Kenei Yamashiro, 83, said after the verdict. "The noise itself is increasing, however, the compensation amount is lower than what we expected."

Yamashiro said the group will consider appealing the decision. The Okinawa Defense Bureau, which represents Japan's Ministry of Defense on the island, could not be reached for comment after court Thursday to see if the Japanese government will appeal.

The lawsuit was one of two legal challenges to noise from MCAS Futenma aircraft, which includes MV-22 Osprey tiltrotors. The other suit seeks compensation but for flights to cease from the air station.

Yamashiro said his group wanted to stop the flights as well, but left that claim out because it could drag out proceedings. Many of the plaintiffs are elderly, he said.

Chief Judge Kenta Adachi admonished the Japanese government for the noise at the conclusion of the trial, calling it "illegal" due to its impact on residents' daily lives. He said the noise was a source of anxiety, irritation and emotional damage. Night flights also disturb residents' ability to sleep.

Between 1982 and December 2018, residents living around U.S. bases on the island filed five separate lawsuits over military aircraft noise, according to an Okinawa prefecture publication, "US Military Bases in Okinawa." Three of those cases were filed over the noise at Kadena Air Base

and two related to MCAS Futenma.

The largest settlement came in 2017, when a three-judge panel awarded 22,054 residents living around Kadena \$265 million. At least three other noise-related lawsuits were filed since December 2018.

Residents are not precluded from joining multiple lawsuits, Makoto Kamiya, attorney for an ongoing Kadena lawsuit filed in January, told Stars and Stripes that month.

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Spending bill adds \$150M toward draining Red Hill fuel tanks in Hawaii

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — A massive \$1.5 trillion omnibus spending bill passed by the House includes \$150 million for emptying and permanently closing the Navy's Red Hill fuel storage facility in Hawaii that was the source of widespread well-water contamination.

The money comes in addition to \$100 million included in a stopgap funding bill signed by President Joe Biden last month. That bill keeps the government funded until Friday, theoretically giving Congress time to pass the Fiscal Year 2022 Omnibus Appropriations Bill that passed in the House on Wednesday.

The Pentagon on Monday an-

nounced that the World War II-era underground storage tanks at Red Hill would be closed, laying out a roughly 14-month timetable to do so.

Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii, who serves on the Senate Appropriations Committee, inserted the \$250 million funding into the two bills.

"We still have more work to do to make sure Red Hill is closed safely, but we now have significant resources to drain the tanks and get this right," Schatz said in a news release Wednesday.

The full cost of decommissioning the facility will likely become clearer as the Navy and Defense Logistics Agency complete an action plan

by May 31 for closing it down.

Jet fuel from the tanks contaminated one of three wells used for the Navy's water distribution system, which supplies military housing communities on and near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

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MILITARY



PHOTOS BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN/Stars and Stripes

Army Maj. Benjamin Clark leads a patient and other American and German medics to the operating room during a mass casualty response drill at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany, on Thursday.

US Army hospital in Landstuhl holds drill with German colleagues

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

LANDSTUHL, Germany — Landstuhl Regional Medical Center teamed up with German doctors and medics for a mass-casualty response drill Thursday that stemmed from a mutually expressed need to work well together.

Last summer's impromptu evacuation effort in Afghanistan entailed the use of both German hospitals and U.S. military facilities to care for refugees who had fled in the wake of the Taliban takeover. Many stayed for weeks in Germany before flying to the United States to start new lives.

"Having Afghan evacuees come through this hospital was a watershed moment for us to be able to understand our true need to integrate better with our host nation," said Aaron Harris, chief of community and global health engagements at LRMC.

Staffers from three German hospitals and members of the German military joined American medical workers for the drill, during which participants evaluated and evacuated



An American first responder questions two victims during a mass casualty response drill.

uated patients from a mock accident site, transported them to the hospital and treated them.

The exercise historically has been held twice a year at LRMC, with less German participation, although it was canceled the past two years because of COVID-19.

"This exercise today is very important to see how the procedures are here compared to those that we are used to," said Dr. (Col.) Erwin Kollig, a director at the German Military Hospital in Koblenz.

The exercise was designed and planned by Army Lt. Col. Ekerette Akpan, chief of readiness integration at LRMC.

He said that in the past, cooperation between the American and German medical communities rested too much on individual relationships.

Akpan and his colleagues are working to make collaboration more systemic.

"If you build processes to maintain that connection, that communication, then long after I leave, long after our current commander leaves, that relationship is still there," Akpan said.

LRMC is the evacuation treatment center for all injured American service members and civilians serving across Europe, Africa and the Middle East in support of four combat commands. The hospital also treats service members from 56 partner and allied nations.

"As the only medical center outside of the continental United States supporting all the combatant commands in this region, we have to be ready at any given time," Akpan said. "And we're not alone. That's really the bottom line."

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Navy announces end to separations for skin condition

Stars and Stripes

Some sailors diagnosed with a skin condition that causes bumps, infections and other ailments from shaving will no longer potentially face being kicked out of the Navy because they can't meet grooming standards, the Navy announced Wednesday.

Sailors diagnosed with pseudo-folliculitis barbae who are allowed to have facial hair also are no longer required to carry a copy of their shaving waiver with them, the Navy said in an administrative memo released by Vice Adm. John B. Nowell, Jr., chief of naval personnel.

The policy decision only applies to each sailor whose condition isn't responding to treatment, the Navy said.

"Sailors found to be willfully non-compliant or that refuse to comply with prescribed PFB medical treatments or commanding officers' shaving requirements may be subject to administrative separation," the memo said.

PFB is an inflammatory disorder of the skin follicles caused by beard hairs, sharpened by shaving or plucking, that curve downward and penetrate the skin. The condition is more commonly found in men of African or Asian

descent, according to the Bethesda, Md.-based National Center for Biotechnology Information.

In January, the U.S. Marine Corps announced similar changes related to PFB, including halting reprimands and separations.

Under the new guidelines, sailors diagnosed with PFB who have facial hair may optionally edge or outline their beards.

Laser hair reduction treatment is optional and must be agreed upon by the PFB-diagnosed sailor. Temporary waivers for PFB medical treatment periods have been increased from 60 to 90 days or as prescribed by a military medical care provider, the Navy said.

The time period for evaluations of PFB-diagnosed sailors whose medical or laser treatments are not working has changed from annually to every two years unless more frequent assessments are required by a medical care provider, according to the memo.

The Navy in 2020 began reviewing a policy that did away with permanent shaving waivers for sailors diagnosed with PFB after receiving feedback through diversity and inclusion programs.

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Vehicle registration fee rises for US personnel in Germany

Stars and Stripes

The annual fee that service members and Defense Department personnel in Germany pay to register their personal vehicles will be \$10 higher starting in May.

The increase, which takes effect May 1, brings the registration cost to \$45 per vehicle.

"We have to buy the license plates from the Germans, and we also maintain the database that includes the plates and reg-

istrations," Victor Baez-An, the operations manager for the registration agency, said in an Army statement. "And both of those have increased over time."

The last fee increase for vehicle registration occurred in 2016.

People who want to re-register a vehicle before the increase kicks in are eligible to do so now if their registration expires on or before June 14, Baez-An said.

HAVE YOU BEEN INJURED?

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Including Non-US Citizens



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MILITARY

Scathing reports find failures in 2020 Kenya militant attack

By LOLITA C. BALDOR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Military investigations have found poor leadership, inadequate training and a “culture of complacency” among U.S. forces undermined efforts to fend off a 2020 attack by militants in Kenya that killed three Americans, U.S. officials familiar with the probes told The Associated Press ahead of the Thursday release of the findings.

Two military reviews of the attack by al-Shabab militants are scathing in their conclusions that there were failures across the board at the Manda Bay air base, where senior military leaders said there was a “deeply rooted culture of a false sense of security.” The attack also wounded three people and destroyed six aircraft.

Army Gen. Stephen Townsend, head of U.S. Africa Command, which did the first review, told the AP that while the actions of no one person caused the attack or the casualties, the reviews concluded that security, intelligence, training and command failures contributed to the losses.

And Air Force Maj. Gen. Tom Wilcox, who was part of the team that did the second review, said that “none of the negligence that we found contributed to the primary cause of the loss of life or damage. However, we did find that they potentially contributed to the outcome, to vulnerabilities on the airfield.”

Defense officials said that a number of Air Force personnel were reviewed for possible disciplinary action and, as a result, eight have received some form of administrative punishment, including written reprimands and loss of certification. The eight range from junior enlisted airmen to officers below the general ranks. A written reprimand can be career-ending for an officer. The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe personnel discipline.

The Manda Bay base, in the Kenyan seaside resort, was overrun by 30 to 40 of the al-Qaida-linked insurgents on Jan. 5, 2020, marking al-Shabab’s first attack against U.S. forces in the East African country. The pre-dawn assault triggered a lengthy firefight and daylong struggle for U.S. and Kenyan forces to search and secure the base.

The initial investigation into the attack was completed a year ago by U.S. Africa Command, but last April, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered a new, independent review led by Gen. Paul Funk, commander of Army Training and Doctrine Command.

“None of the negligence that we found contributed to the primary cause of the loss of life or damage. However, we did find that they potentially contributed to the outcome, to vulnerabilities on the airfield.”

Air Force Maj. Gen. Tom Wilcox

The new report largely mirrors the findings in the initial probe but expands its scope. Both are sharply critical of the inadequate security, training and oversight at the base. Austin has accepted the reports and their findings.

The base at Manda Bay has been used for years by the U.S. military, but it only became a full-time airfield in 2016, with increased personnel, aircraft and operations. According to the reviews, the military there never adjusted security to account for the expanded use and was lulled by the fact the base hadn’t been attacked in 16 years.

The complacency, said the AFRICOM review, permeated every echelon and existed for several years.

The reviews criticized leadership at all levels, from the Air Force wing and security forces to special operations commanders and U.S. Africa Command. They found there was an inadequate understanding of and focus on the threats in the region.

Townsend said a vague intelligence report prior to the deadly attack referred to al-Shabab planning to attack United Nations aircraft.

But that report didn’t get to the right people due to staff shortages. And, he said, those who saw it “didn’t connect the dots” — that it could be referring to the unmarked contract aircraft the United States has at Manda Bay.

He also noted, “We get these every day — al-Shabab is going to attack. Most of them never happen.”

The reviews also said that the various command and service units at the base didn’t communicate or coordinate well with each other or with the local Kenyan forces.

As a result, at 5:20 a.m., 20 to 30 al-Shabab militants were able to slip through a forest and fired

rocket-propelled grenades onto the Magagoni Air Field at the base. In the first two minutes, the RPGs killed Army Spc. Henry Mayfield in a truck and killed two contractors, Dustin Harrison and Bruce Triplett, in an aircraft. Another soldier and a civilian contractor were wounded.

About a mile down the road, another smaller group of the militants fired on Camp Simba, a section of the adjacent Kenyan Navy base where U.S. forces are housed.

The reviews say security troops at the airfield were unprepared to respond to the attack and several never really engaged the insurgents. Instead, Marines at Camp Simba about a mile away responded first.

“Someone starts shooting, and Marines are going to go to the sound of the guns. And so they did. They mounted up, and they led the counterattack,” said Townsend, who visited Manda Bay three weeks ago.

It took about 20 minutes for the Marine special operations team to get to the airfield and begin to fight back against the militants, who had made it onto the flightline and into buildings.

As Kenyan and additional U.S. security forces responded, al-Shabab attacked again. It took until midnight for the military to search the airfield and adjacent buildings and declare the area secure.

In interviews, Townsend and Wilcox said that substantial changes and improvements have been made — some in the first hours after the attack and others that have continued and grown over the past year.

Almost immediately, Army infantry soldiers were brought in for added security, and now the protection force is more than double the size it was during the attack. Fencing and other barriers now ring the entire base, including Camp Simba. And there have been overhauls of intelligence sharing and Air Force security training.

The Air Force now trains all deploying security forces together before they depart for the country, and it requires that personnel be more experienced in force protection to get senior jobs at the bases.

In addition, the reviews recommended that one senior commander at each base be in charge of force protection for the entire facility, and that the commander be able to order training for all troops there.

That would include units that may report to other commands — such as special operations forces or Space Force teams that may be housed at the base.



LACHANDA GARRISON

Lachanda Garrison, a math support specialist at The Bahrain School in Manama, Bahrain, was one of two Department of Defense Education Activity teachers to receive the nation’s highest math and science award.

DODEA teachers win \$10K math and science award

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Lachanda Garrison’s math lessons for elementary students at The Bahrain School often start with a story.

Presenting a photo of a student — shared with parental permission — Garrison asks questions to get the rest of the group thinking about what’s happening in the image. It could be a family celebration or vacation, for instance.

“I ask simple questions — what do you notice? What do you wonder?” she said. Everyone can answer regardless of math ability. She then poses a math problem that relates to the photo.

“Stories are known to be an effective tool for learning,” Garrison said. “The math connects to something real.”

In the process of reinforcing academics, “we celebrate ... and showcase that student,” she said.

Garrison’s inclusive approach to math instruction is gaining some national attention.

Last month, she received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. The program is the highest award mathematics and science teachers can receive from the U.S. government, according to the White House. The award alternates annually between kindergarten through sixth grade and seventh through 12th grade teachers.

Garrison, a math support specialist, was one of two educators from the Department of Defense Education Activity to receive the 2020 award, which comes with a \$10,000 prize. The awards, announced last month,



Garrison

were delayed by the pandemic. Around the nation, 117 individuals and organizations were recognized.

Antoine Sharpe, a mathematics instructional systems specialist at DODEA headquarters in the United States, also was recognized by the White House. Prior to his current job, he spent the last four years teaching math at Humphreys Middle School in South Korea, according to DODEA.

Garrison and Sharpe have a combined 31 years of teaching experience.

Garrison was also named the 2021 DODEA Teacher of the Year. At the time, she taught second grade in Bahrain. She also previously taught in Rota, Spain, for DODEA.

The application process for the White House award was rigorous, Garrison said.

After someone nominated her — she’s not sure whom — she answered a series of written essays and submitted a 30-minute video recording of one of her lessons.

“I did not win this award on my own might,” she said. “There are a lot of people who support me, who mentor me, who are thought-partners for me.”

“This is a collective and collaborative effort with all of those amazing educators and students who surround me,” she said.

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EUROPE

Airstrike: Mariupol resorts to mass burial

FROM PAGE 1

ing, on Thursday, investment bank Goldman Sachs — and prices to rise sharply.

“You will definitely be prosecuted for complicity in war crimes,” Zelenskyy said in a video address. “And then, it will definitely happen, you will be hated by Russian citizens — everyone whom you have been deceiving constantly, daily, for many years in a row, when they feel the consequences of your lies in their wallets, in their shrinking possibilities, in the stolen future of Russian children.”

Russian President Vladimir Putin dismissed such talk, saying the country has endured sanctions before.

“Just as we overcame these difficulties in the previous years, we will overcome them now,” he said at a televised meeting of government officials. He did, however, acknowledge the sanctions create “certain challenges.”

Millions more have been displaced inside Ukraine. Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said about 2 million people — half the population of the metropolitan area — have left the capital, which has become practically a fortress.

“Every street, every house ... is being fortified,” he said. “Even people who in their lives never intended to change their clothes, now they are in uniform with machine guns in their hands.”

Bombs fell on two hospitals in a city west of Kyiv on Wednesday, its mayor said. The World Health Organization said it has confirmed 18 attacks on medical facilities since the invasion began.

Western officials said Russian forces have made little progress on the ground in recent days. But they have intensified the bombardment of Mariupol and other cities, trapping hundreds of thousands of people, with food and water running short.

Staff at one hospital on the outskirts of Kyiv say they’ve never seen anything like the flood of often-badly injured patients streaming through their doors. Many are civilians.

Temporary cease-fires to allow evacuations and humanitarian aid have repeatedly faltered, with Ukraine accusing Russia of continuing its bombardments. But Zelenskyy said 35,000 people managed to get out on Wednesday from several besieged towns, and more efforts were underway on Thursday in eastern and southern



PHOTOS BY EVGENIY MALOLETKA/AP

Bodies are placed into a mass grave on the outskirts of Mariupol, Ukraine, on Wednesday because heavy shelling by Russian forces prevents people from burying their dead elsewhere.



People line up to get water at the well in the outskirts of Mariupol on Wednesday.

Ukraine — including Mariupol — as well as in the Kyiv suburbs.

The Mariupol city council posted a video showing buses driving down a highway. It said a convoy bringing food and medicine was on the way despite several days of thwarted efforts to reach the city.

“Everyone is working to get help to the people of Mariupol. And it will come,” said Mayor Vadym Boychenko.

Images from the city, where hundreds have died and workers hurried to bury bodies in a mass grave, have drawn condemnation from around the world. Residents have resorted to breaking into stores for food and melting snow for water. The city has been without heat for days as nighttime temperatures fall below freezing and

daytime ones hover just above it.

“The only thing (I want) is for this to be finished,” Volodymyr Bykovskiy said as he stood by a freshly dug trench where bodies were being buried. “I don’t know who’s guilty, who’s right, who started this. Damn them all, those people who started this!”

When the series of blasts hit the children’s and maternity hospital in Mariupol, the ground shook more than a mile away. Explosions blew out windows and ripped away much of the front of one building. Police and soldiers rushed to the scene to evacuate victims, carrying a bleeding woman with a swollen belly on a stretcher past burning and mangled cars. Another woman wailed as she clutched her child.

Britain’s Armed Forces minister, James Heappey, said that whether the hospital was hit by indiscriminate fire or deliberately targeted, “it is a war crime.” French President Emmanuel Macron called it “a shameful and immoral act of war.”

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris, on a visit to Ukraine’s neighbor Poland, backed calls for an international war-crimes investigation into the invasion, saying, “The eyes of the world are on this war and what Russia has done in terms of this aggression and these atrocities.”

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov dismissed concerns about civilian casualties as “pathetic shrieks” from Russia’s enemies, and denied Moscow had even invaded.

He also claimed without providing evidence that the Mariupol hospital had been seized by far-right radical fighters who were using it as a base — despite the fact that photographs from the aftermath showed pregnant women and children at the site.

“We have not invaded Ukraine,” he insisted.

Several rounds of talks have not stopped the fighting, and a meeting in a Turkish Mediterranean resort between Lavrov and his Ukrainian counterpart, Dmytro Kuleba, failed to find much common ground.

In their highest-level talks since the war began, the two sides discussed a 24-hour cease-fire but did not make progress, Kuleba said. He said Russia was still seek-

ing “surrender from Ukraine.”

“This is not what they are going to get,” he said, adding that he was willing to continue the dialogue.

Lavrov said Russia was ready for more negotiations but showed no sign of softening Moscow’s demands.

Russia has alleged that Western-looking, U.S.-backed Ukraine poses a threat to its security. Western officials suspect Putin wants to install a government friendly to Moscow in Kyiv as part of an effort to draw the former Soviet state back into its orbit.

Russia’s military is struggling, facing heavier losses and stronger Ukrainian resistance than it apparently anticipated. But Putin’s forces have used airpower to pummel key cities, often shelling populated areas.

In Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-largest city, 91-year-old Alevtina Shernina sat wrapped in a blanket, an electric heater at her feet, as cold air blew in through a damaged window.

She survived the brutal World War II siege of Leningrad, now St. Petersburg, and is now under siege again, her health too fragile to be moved.

Her daughter-in-law Natalia said she was angry that Shernina “began her life in Leningrad under the siege as a girl who was starving, who lived in cold and hunger, and she’s ending her life” in similar circumstances.

“There were fascists there and there are fascists here who came and bombed our buildings and windows,” she said.

EUROPE

DOD rejects Poland jet donation plan

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon on Wednesday rejected a plan offered by Poland to donate its fleet of MiG-29 fighter jets to Ukraine to help beat back the Russian invasion because the risks of such a venture outweigh the benefits.

“The intelligence community has assessed the transfer of MiG-29s to Ukraine may be mistaken as escalatory and could result in significant Russian reaction that might increase the prospects of a military escalation with NATO,” chief Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said.

The assessment follows Poland’s offer Tuesday to donate all of its MiG-29 fighter jets to Ramstein Air Base in Germany “and place them at the disposal of the

government of the United States” and urged “other NATO allies — owners of MiG-29 jets — to act in the same vein.”

The Polish Defense Ministry on Tuesday released the public announcement of its offer without coordinating first with the Defense Department, a senior defense official said Wednesday.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Wednesday called Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak in part to explain why the U.S. rejected his ministry’s offer.

“Secretary Austin thanked the minister for Poland’s willingness to continue to look for ways to assist Ukraine but expressed that we do not support the transfer of additional fighter aircraft to the Ukrainian Air Force at this time, and therefore have no desire to see them in our custody, either,” Kir-

by said.

Aside from the “high-risk” nature of the jet transfer, the U.S. believes fighter jets are not among “the systems that [Ukrainian forces] need most to defeat Russian aggression,” Kirby said, noting the Ukrainian Air Force still has “several squadrons of fully mission-capable aircraft.”

“We assess that adding aircraft to the Ukrainian inventory is not likely to significantly change the effectiveness of Ukrainian Air Force relative to Russian capabilities,” he said. “Therefore, we believe that the gain from transferring those MiG-29s is low.”

Instead, the U.S., whose European Command is at the center of coordinating international weapons donations to Ukraine and assessing what’s needed to help them fight Russian forces, be-

lieves the most-needed weapons involves “anti-armor and air-defense” capabilities, Kirby said.

“We, along with other nations, continue to send them these weapons and we know that they’re being used with great effect [to] slow Russian advance in the north,” he said.

Kirby said the fact that Russia still does not control the Ukrainian airspace despite having surface-to-air missiles throughout the country “is evidence alone of that.”

“Their effectiveness has been limited due to Ukrainian strategic operational and tactical ground-based air defense systems, surface-to-air missiles and [portable air-defense systems],” he said.

It’s important that the U.S. “be careful about every decision” in responding to the war in Ukraine,

so “we aren’t making the potential for escalation worse,” Kirby said. “That’s not only not good for the United States and our national security should this conflict escalate even further, but it’s certainly not going to be good for the Ukrainian people to have what is already a destructive and terrible war.”

Still, a senior defense official on Wednesday said the U.S. would not stop Poland or any other country from donating fighter jets to Ukraine.

“It’s not the United States’ position to take a position on what another sovereign nation might be talking to Ukraine about what to provide,” the official said. “If Poland or any other nation wants to have that discussion with Ukraine, we respect that process.”

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Harris backs war crimes probe over Russian acts

By AMER MADHANI
Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — Vice President Kamala Harris on Thursday embraced calls for an international war crimes investigation of Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, citing the “atrocities” of bombing civilians, including a maternity hospital.

Speaking alongside Polish President Andrzej Duda at a press conference in Warsaw, where she is demonstrating U.S. support for NATO’s eastern flank allies, Harris expressed outrage over the bombing Wednesday of the maternity hospital and scenes of bloodied pregnant women being evacuated, as well as other attacks on civilians. She stopped short of directly accusing Russia of having committed war crimes.

“Absolutely there should be an investigation, and we should all be watching,” said Harris, noting that the United Nations has already started a process to review allegations. “I have no question the eyes of the world are on this war and what Russia has done in terms of this aggression and these atrocities.”

Duda, for his part, said “it is obvious to us that in Ukraine Russians are committing war crimes.” He added that in his view the invasion was “bearing the features of a genocide — it aims at eliminating and destroying a nation.”

Harris praised the Polish people for their generosity for taking in nearly 1.5 million refugees



SAUL LOEB, POOL/AP

Polish President Andrzej Duda shakes hands Thursday with Vice President Kamala Harris at Belweder Palace, in Warsaw, Poland. Harris pledged U.S. support as Poland helps Ukrainian refugees.

since Russia invaded Ukraine last month.

“I’ve been watching or reading about the work of ordinary people doing extraordinary things, and so I bring you thanks from the American people,” Harris said earlier during a meeting with Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki hours after the U.S. House passed a massive spending bill that includes \$13.6 billion in aid for Ukraine and its European allies.

The legislation includes \$6.8 billion to care for refugees and other economic aid to allies.

Later Thursday, the vice president was slated to meet with Ukrainian refugees who have fled to Poland since the Russian invasion began.

The vice president is also scheduled to meet with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau while in Warsaw. The Canadian leader has been in Europe in recent days meeting with allies about Ukraine.

Harris’ whirlwind visit to Poland and Romania was billed by the White House as a chance for the vice president to consult with two of the leaders from eastern flank NATO nations about the growing humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Already, more than 2 million refugees have fled Ukraine — with more than half coming to Poland — and even more expected to arrive in the days ahead.

Duda warned of a “refugee disaster” if Poland doesn’t receive more assistance to help house and feed Ukrainians fleeing the conflict. He said he asked Harris for the U.S. to “speed up” the process for those Ukrainian refugees who would want to go to the U.S. and might have family there.

“The United States is absolutely prepared to do what we can and what we must to support Poland, in terms of the burden that they have taken on,” said Harris.

White House: Russia might use chemical weapons in Ukraine

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration publicly warned Wednesday that Russia might seek to use chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine as the White House rejected Russian claims of illegal chemical weapons development in the country it has invaded.

This week, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova — without evidence — accused Ukraine of running chemical and biological weapons labs with U.S. support. White House press secretary Jen Psaki called Russia’s claim “preposterous” and said it could be part of an attempt by Russia to lay the groundwork for its own use of such weapons of mass destruction against Ukraine.

“This is all an obvious ploy by Russia to try to justify its further premeditated, unprovoked, and unjustified attack on Ukraine,” Psaki tweeted Wednesday. “Now that Russia has made these false claims, and China has seemingly endorsed this propaganda, we should all be on the lookout for Russia to possibly use chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine, or to create a false flag operation using them.”

The U.S. for months has warned about Russian “false flag” operations to create a pretext for the invasion. Wednesday’s warning suggested Russia might seek to create a pretense for further escalating the two-week-old conflict that has seen the Russian offensive slowed by stronger-than-expected Ukrai-

nian defenders, but not stopped.

Dmitry Chumakov, a Russian deputy U.N. ambassador, repeated the accusation Wednesday, urging Western media to cover “the news about secret biological laboratories in Ukraine.”

Pentagon press secretary John Kirby on Wednesday called the Russian claim “a bunch of malarkey.”

The international community for years has assessed that Russia has used chemical weapons before in carrying out assassination attempts against Putin enemies like Alexei Navalny and former spy Sergei Skripal. Russia also supports the Assad government in Syria, which has used chemical weapons against its people in a decadelong civil war.

Asked by a Russian journalist about the claims, United Nations spokesman Stephane Dujarric said, “At this point have no information to confirm these reports or these allegations about these kinds of labs.”

“Our colleagues at the World Health Organization, who have been working with the Ukrainian Governments, said they are unaware of any activity on the part of the Ukrainian Government which is inconsistent with its international treaty obligations, including on chemical weapons or biological weapons,” Dujarric added.

Filippa Lentzos, a senior lecturer in science and international security at King’s College London, said there are no “U.S. labs” in Ukraine.

EUROPE

Support growing for larger defense budget

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON—Congressional support for increasing the defense budget is gaining steam amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine as Democrats and Republicans rally to meet Russian aggression with long-term military might.

The changing security landscape in Eastern Europe will “no doubt” increase next year's defense budget, Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said at an event last week. Other Capitol Hill lawmakers say they are also prepared to funnel more money to the Pentagon as the U.S. rethinks its national security and defense posture.

“President [Joe] Biden needs to put a serious budget proposal forward to confront the real threats we face,” Sen. Kevin Cramer, R-N.D., said in a statement. “Russia is just one reason why defense spending needs to be higher. China and other nations are watching the serious-

ness and resolve of freedom-loving nations.”

Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukraine has prompted other NATO countries to pledge additional funding for their armed services.

In a reversal of decades of post-Cold War policy, Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz said last month that his country would embark on a \$110 billion rearming program. Poland announced last week that it will raise its spending on defense from 2% to 3% of the country's gross domestic product. Leaders of France, Italy, Latvia and Romania have all vowed in recent days to boost their commitment to defense.

U.S. lawmakers authorized nearly \$778 billion for defense spending for the 2022 fiscal year — \$25 billion more than requested by the White House. The Biden administration has yet to submit its budget request for fiscal year 2023, which starts Oct. 1, but Smith said last week that the eventual spending plan will be “the most impactful and important budget that we've

seen in the 25 years I've been in Congress.”

Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, the top Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said he wants to see defense expenditures grow by at least 3% to 5%, adjusted for inflation. A longtime proponent of a muscular U.S. presence abroad, Inhofe, who is retiring from the Senate on Jan. 3, said the 2018 National Defense Strategy made clear that the U.S. needs to be prepared for a serious military competition with Russia.

“I've always said that the best way to deter our adversaries is with a strong U.S. military and that requires us to step up investment in our armed forces,” Inhofe said in a statement.

Sen. Deb Fischer, R-Neb., will also support a bigger defense budget because “the world has become more dangerous” under Russia's onslaught, her spokesperson said. An aide for Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., said he is open to an increase in Pentagon funding, if necessary.

Democrats have traditionally balked at rising defense costs. A year ago, 50 House Democrats urged Biden to significantly slash the Pentagon's “already inflated” budget and redirect military spending to diplomacy, humanitarian aid and other initiatives, according to a letter that they sent to the White House.

But now there is a unique moment of bipartisanship that will allow the Pentagon to request and receive just about anything it wants, Rep. Elissa Slotkin, D-Mich., said last week during a House Armed Services Committee hearing. Congress is poised to approve \$14 billion for Ukraine aid this week, including nearly \$5 billion for additional troops in Europe and replenishing U.S. weapons already sent to Ukraine. The House passed the package Wednesday and the Senate is expected to vote on the bill by Friday.

“Over multiple administrations, Democrat and Republican, we have tried to minimize friction with

Putin and with Russia, in the hopes that it wouldn't exacerbate a problem... And I feel like that era is over,” said Slotkin, a former Pentagon official. “I think it's a sea change for how both the Defense Department and the State Department should think about our presence in Europe.”

Rep. Anthony Brown, D-Md., an Army veteran who sits on the House Armed Services Committee, said a robust defense budget is just as essential as funding domestic programs, particularly at this precarious time.

“Right now the world's resolve is being tested by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and upending of international law,” Brown said in a statement. “As we work to counter Russia's actions, I look forward to closely working with our military leaders and colleagues in Congress to ensure our country has the resources it needs.”

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Donations: Base rallies to cause

FROM PAGE 1

housing office and is married to a U.S. serviceman, said the Ramstein community had shown tremendous support, from sorting and loading boxes to collecting donations at drop-off points.

A tractor-trailer nearly filled with boxes left Ramstein on Saturday, Cole said.

Shevchuk drove all day Tuesday to pick up the donations, returning to Dubno about midnight, she said. The plan now is to get the items to those who need them by whatever means possible, even if the journey is perilous.

Among the items from Ramstein that will go to volunteers in areas under attack are sleeping bags, floor mats, painkillers, portable kitchenware and first-aid kits, Shevchuk said.

They need “things to help them survive in the cold, things they can immediately use in the field,”

Shevchuk said.

But she added that they still need more “tactical supplies,” such as protective vests and helmets, camouflage clothing, boots, night-vision goggles and tourniquets. After two weeks of war, local businesses and organizations who have supplied volunteers are running low on resources, Shevchuk said.

“A lot of people are staying put ... trying to find a way to contribute to the cause,” she said.

Those who signed up for service after the war began “are protecting Europe with their lives,” she said, adding that no one can say whether Russia will advance beyond Ukraine.

Strollers, diapers, nonperishable snacks and clothing for women and children were also among the donations from Ramstein.

A volunteer charity group was distributing some of the items

Thursday in Rivne, a city of about 245,000 in western Ukraine.

Shevchuk said the recipients are “very grateful for all the assistance” as they try to keep up their spirits and “do whatever it is they can to help Ukrainians win.”

Cole said one more van with donations will likely go out soon. She's waiting on five boxes of diapers being shipped from Spangdahlem Air Base, and she's also received more donated medications.

The priest at the Dubno church where the Ramstein donations were taken, Father Vasiliy, said that in addition to being the distribution hub in Ukraine for various collections of donated items, the church is also taking in refugees.

He said the whole of Russia is to blame for the plight of Ukrainians and the tide of more than 2 million people who have fled to Europe so far.



JENNIFER H. SVAN/Stars and Stripes

Evgeniya Cole, left, and Anya Douglas, Ukrainians married to Americans in the Kaiserslautern military community, help organize a donation drive for people in need in Ukraine on March 4.

“All of what Russia is doing goes beyond the bounds of humanity,” he said. “And that applies not just to the Russian government and the Russian military, but to the en-

tire Russian citizenry as well.”

Stars and Stripes reporter David Edwards contributed to this report.
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‘They were shooting civilians’: Ukraine refugees saw Russian abuses

Associated Press

PRZEMYSL, Poland — As more than 2 million refugees from Ukraine begin to scatter throughout Europe and beyond, some are carrying valuable witness evidence to build a case for war crimes.

More and more, the people who are turning up at border crossings are survivors who have fled some of the cities hardest hit by Russian forces.

“It was very eerie,” said Ihor Diekov, one of the many people who

crossed the Irpin river outside Kyiv on the slippery wooden planks of a makeshift bridge after Ukrainians blew up the concrete span to slow the Russian advance.

He heard gunshots as he crossed and saw corpses along the road.

“The Russians promised to provide a (humanitarian) corridor which they did not comply with. They were shooting civilians,” he said. “That's absolutely true. I witnessed it. People were scared.”

Such testimonies will increasing-

ly reach the world in the coming days as more people flow along fragile humanitarian corridors.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Wednesday said three such corridors were operating from bombarded areas. People left Sumy, in the northeast near the Russian border; suburbs of Kyiv; and Enerhodar, the southern town where Russian forces took over a large nuclear plant. In all, about 35,000 people got out, he said.

More evacuations were an-

nounced for Thursday as desperate residents sought to leave cities where food, water, medicines and other essentials were running out.

At least 1 million people have been displaced within Ukraine in addition to the growing number of refugees, International Organization for Migration director general Antonio Vitorino told reporters. The scale of the humanitarian crisis is so extreme that the “worst case scenario” in the IOM's contingency planning has already been surpassed, he said.

Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking trained psychologists are badly needed, Vitorino said, as more traumatized witnesses join those fleeing.

Nationwide, thousands of people are thought to have been killed across Ukraine, both civilians and soldiers, since Russian forces invaded two weeks ago. City officials in the blockaded port city of Mariupol have said 1,200 residents have been killed there, including three in the bombing of a children's hospital.

NATION

House passes spending bill with Ukraine aid

By ALAN FRAM
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House of Representatives approved a massive spending bill Wednesday night that would rush \$13.6 billion in U.S. aid to battered Ukraine and its European allies, after top Democrats were forced to abruptly drop their plan to include fresh funds to battle COVID-19.

Passage of the Ukraine aid and the \$1.5 trillion government-wide legislation carrying it let both parties lay claim to election-year victories for their priorities. Democrats won treasured domestic initiatives, Republicans achieved defense boosts and both got their imprint on funds to counter Russia's brutal invasion of its western neighbor.

Hours earlier, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., had to scrap the bill's \$15.6 billion for combating the pandemic, a decision she called "heartbreaking" and that spelled defeat for a top priority of President Joe Biden and party leaders. The money was mostly to bolster U.S. supplies of vaccines, treatments and tests and battle the disease around the world, but a Democratic revolt over GOP-demanded state aid cuts to cover the new initiatives' costs forced her to scrap it.

"We've got a war going on in Ukraine," Pelosi told reporters, explaining the urgency Democrats felt in making concessions with Republicans. "We have important work that we're doing here." She said with her party in the 50-50 Senate needing at least 10 GOP votes to pass legislation, Democrats "are going to have to know there has to be compromise."

The House approved the overall bill in two separate votes. The measure's security programs were overwhelmingly approved

by 361-69, the rest by 260-171, with most Republicans opposed.

The Ukraine aid included \$6.5 billion for the U.S. costs of sending troops and weapons to Eastern Europe and equipping allied forces there in response to Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion. There was another \$6.8 billion to care for refugees and provide economic aid to allies, and more to help federal agencies enforce economic sanctions against Russia and protect against cyber threats at home.

Pelosi said she talked to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for 45 minutes Wednesday. She said they discussed weapons and other assistance his country needs and "the crimes against humanity that Putin is committing," including an airstrike that destroyed a maternity hospital. "This is the beast that Putin is," Pelosi said.

While enmity toward Putin and a desire to send assistance to the region is virtually universal in Congress, lawmakers have had a harder time finding unity on other steps. In a remarkable and widespread rank-and-file rebellion, Democratic lawmakers froze the House into inactivity for most of Wednesday. Their demand: a refusal to accept Republicans' insistence that the new COVID-19 spending be paid for with cuts in previously enacted pandemic aid to 30 states.

Pelosi eventually relented and decided to remove all pandemic spending from the government-wide, \$1.5 trillion package.

The House planned to vote next week on a separate measure for the full \$15.6 billion for pandemic programs, without cutting state aid.

It was expected to pass but to likely face fatal GOP opposition in the Senate.



TED S. WARREN/AP

Gas prices are shown Monday in Tumwater, Wash.

US inflation rate over past year sets new 4-decade high of 7.9%

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Propelled by surging costs for gas, food and housing, consumer inflation jumped 7.9% over the past year, the sharpest spike since 1982 and likely only a harbinger of even higher prices to come.

The increase reported Thursday by the Labor Department reflected the 12 months ending in February and didn't include most of the oil and gas price increases that followed Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24. Since then, average gas prices nationally have jumped about 62 cents a gallon to \$4.32, according to AAA.

Even before the war further accelerated price increases, robust consumer spending, solid pay raises and persistent supply shortages had sent U.S. consumer inflation to its highest level in four decades. What's more, housing costs, which make up about a third of the government's consumer price index, have risen sharply, a trend that's unlikely to reverse anytime soon.

The government's report

Thursday also showed that inflation rose 0.8% from January to February, up from the 0.6% increase from December to January.

For most Americans, inflation is running far ahead of the pay raises that many have received in the past year, making it harder for them to afford necessities like food, gas and rent. As a consequence, inflation has become the top political threat to President Joe Biden and congressional Democrats as the midterm elections draw closer. Small business owners and employees have said in surveys that it's their primary economic concern, too.

Seeking to stem the inflation surge, the Federal Reserve is set to raise interest rates several times this year beginning with a modest hike next week. The Fed faces a delicate challenge, though: If it tightens credit too aggressively this year, it risks undercutting the economy and possibly triggering a recession.

Energy prices, which soared after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, jumped again this week after Bi-

den said the United States would bar oil imports from Russia. Oil prices did retreat Wednesday on reports that the United Arab Emirates will urge fellow OPEC members to boost production. U.S. oil was down 12% to \$108.70 a barrel, though still up sharply from about \$90 before Russia's invasion.

Yet energy markets have been so volatile that it's impossible to know if the decline will stick. If Europe were to join the U.S. and the United Kingdom and bar Russian oil imports, analysts estimate that prices could soar as high as \$160 a barrel.

The economic consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine have upended a broad assumption among many economists and at the Fed: That inflation would begin to ease this spring because prices rose so much in March and April of 2021 that comparisons to a year ago would show declines.

Should gas prices remain near their current levels, Eric Winograd, senior economist at asset manager AllianceBernstein, estimates that inflation could reach as high as 9% in March or April.

Texas flagged more than 27K mail ballots for rejection in primary

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — More than 27,000 mail ballots in Texas were flagged for rejection in the first test of new voting restrictions enacted across the United States, jeopardizing votes cast by Democrats and Republicans alike and in counties big and small, according to an analysis by The Associated Press.

It puts the rate of rejected mail ballots in Texas on track to signifi-

cantly surpass previous elections. The preliminary figures—reported by Texas counties after votes were counted in the state's March 1 primary—is the fullest picture to date of how new election rules rushed into place by Republicans following the 2020 election made it harder for thousands of voters in both parties. Some will wind up not having their ballots counted at all.

Rejected mail ballots are relative-

ly uncommon in a typical election. But the initial rejection rate among mail voters in the Texas primary was roughly 17% across 120 counties, according to county-by-county figures obtained by the AP. Those counties accounted for the vast majority of the nearly 3 million voters in Texas' first-in-the-nation primary.

Although the final number of discounted ballots will be lower, the early numbers suggest Texas' rejection

rate will far exceed the 2020 general election, when federal data showed that less than 1% of mail ballots statewide were rejected.

For now, the numbers do not represent how many Texas ballots were effectively thrown out. Voters had until Monday to "fix" rejected mail ballots, which in most cases meant providing identification that is now required under a sweeping law passed last fall.

New requirements include listing an identification number—either a driver's license or a Social Security number—on the ballot's carrier envelope. That number must match the county's records. If a ballot is rejected, voters could add an ID number via an online ballot tracking system, go to the county's election offices and fix the problem in person or vote with a provisional ballot on election day.

NATION

Pressure is building on Biden to repay Venezuela's goodwill moves

Associated Press

MIAMI — Pressure is building on the Biden administration to begin unwinding sanctions on Venezuela after President Nicolas Maduro freed two American prisoners and promised to resume negotiations with his opponents.

Maduro's goodwill gesture came during a weekend trip to Caracas by senior White House and State Department officials that caught off guard Maduro's friends and foes alike.

While the Biden administration is saying little about what was discussed behind closed doors, a smug Maduro — who has sought face-to-face talks with the U.S. for years — bragged that careful protocol was followed, with the flags of the two nations "beautifully united, as they should be."

For the past five years, the U.S. has, with little success, tried everything from punishing oil sanctions to criminal indictments and support for clandestine coups in its campaign to remove Maduro and restore what it sees as Venezuela's stolen democracy.

But Russia's invasion of Ukraine has upended the world order, forcing the U.S. to rethink its national security priorities.

Hostile petrostates under U.S. sanctions like Iran and Venezuela are seen as the most likely to benefit as President Joe Biden seeks to mitigate the impact from a ban on Russian oil imports that may aggravate the highest inflation in four decades.

Venezuelan oil might help ease inflation pressures, at least psychologically and in the medium term, even if it would take time for significant supplies to reach the U.S.

But while Venezuela is eager to win relaxation of the economically devastating sanctions, there were signs Thursday it's not ready to immediately abandon ties to key ally Russia.

Only days after the U.S. talks, Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodríguez met in Turkey with Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the sideline of his talks with Ukraine, according to a photo tweet from Russia's embassy in

Caracas, though no details of their discussions were released.

Still, the approach has changed in Washington.

"Clearly at some level a decision was made to abandon some of the pillars of the U.S. policy toward Venezuela these past few years," said Brian Winter, vice president of the Council of the Americas. "But until we know precisely what the Biden administration is trying to achieve, it'll be difficult to evaluate how far this détente can go."

U.S. officials have not detailed any other specific outcomes of the talks, which were led by Juan González, who is responsible for Latin America on the National Security Council. It was the first Venezuela visit by a White House official since Hugo Chávez led the country in the late 1990s, and a rare opportunity to discuss policy issues with the Maduro government.

One official described it as "a constructive, diplomatic but very candid dialogue" that did not entail any quid pro quo but allowed the Biden administration to share its "view of the world" with Maduro.

55 tons of lettuce is fed to Florida's starving manatees

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — More than 55 tons of lettuce have been fed to starving Florida manatees as part of an experimental program to help the slow-moving marine mammals since their natural food is being destroyed by water pollution, wildlife officials said Wednesday.

The lettuce, funded by more than 1,000 individual donations, is offered to manatees that gather in the warm water discharge near a power plant on Florida's east coast as they typically do during cold months.

Officials from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said in a conference call that the feeding program has made a difference.

"That's a substantial amount," said Ron Mezich, feeding program coordinator for the Florida wildlife commission. "We're not done yet."

The unprecedented feeding response came after a record 1,100 manatees died last year, largely because of starvation. The problem requires a long-term solution because pollution from agriculture, septic tanks, urban runoff

and other sources is killing the seagrass on which the marine mammals rely.

Through Feb. 25 this year, about 375 confirmed manatee deaths have been recorded. That compares to 389 during the same period last year; both are far above the 136 deaths reported in 2020 during the first two months.

More than 80 rescued manatees are currently being cared for at facilities in Florida, Texas, Puerto Rico and Ohio, according to Terri Calleson of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Some of those are abandoned calves that typically take longer to recover.

Florida legislators last year provided \$8 million for several seagrass restoration projects that will get off the ground this year, officials said. But it won't be an immediate solution.

"We're not solving the seagrass issue in a year," said Tom Reinert of the Florida wildlife commission.

There are currently about 7,500 manatees, also known as sea cows, living in Florida waters. They are listed federally as a threatened species, although there are efforts to give them the heightened endangered designation.





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NATION

Testimony begins in Whitmer kidnapping plot trial

Associated Press

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Prosecutors in the trial of four men charged with planning to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer opened the first full day of testimony Thursday by showing jurors profanity-filled messages and social media posts from two of the defendants, some made months before the FBI got involved in the case.

“I want to bring formal charges against our governor and tyrants in our state. ... Let’s do something ... bold,” Adam Fox said in a December 2019 Facebook video. In it, Fox is seen intermittently

laughing and cursing the government while waving two AR-style assault rifles at a camera.

In another, Barry Croft Jr. said Whitmer needs to be “hung.”

“Michigan’s government is a target of opportunity. If opportunity presents we’ll engage,” Croft said.

Prosecutors said the men, angry about pandemic restrictions the Democratic governor imposed, planned to snatch Whitmer from her Michigan vacation home and blow up a nearby bridge to slow the police response. They also said the men were communicating with each other and mak-



Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer

ing inflammatory comments on their own before the FBI got involved or without prodding by informants.

FBI agent Todd Reineck testi-

fied Thursday that some of the social media posts were made prior to any FBI agents or informants were in contact with the men. He also said the men were arrested in fall 2020 because there was a “real concern they might obtain real live explosives.”

Fox’s attorney, Christopher Gibbons, questioned Reineck about the process of paying informants in cash, vetting them before undercover work and the choice of electronic devices they used.

Reineck also acknowledged under questioning by Gibbons that Fox participated in some legal

protests at the Michigan Capitol.

Investigators stopped a “tragedy” by arresting the men, Roth told jurors.

“These were not people who were all talk,” he said. “These were people who wanted to separate themselves from people who were all talk.”

Jurors will hear from two critical insiders, Ty Garbin and Kaleb Franks, who pleaded guilty to the conspiracy and will testify for the government.

Roth described Fox and Croft as masterminds of the plot, and said the four wanted to create a “war zone here in Michigan.”

Hate groups in decline as views hit mainstream, SPLC report says

Associated Press

The number of white nationalist, neo-Nazi and anti-government extremist groups across the United States fell for a third straight year in 2021, even as some groups were reinvigorated by the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol last year and by the ongoing culture wars over the pandemic and school curriculums.

In its annual report, released Wednesday, the Southern Poverty Law Center said it identified 733 active hate groups in 2021, down from the 838 counted in 2020 and the 940 counted in 2019. Hate groups had risen to a historic high of 1,021 in 2018, said the law center, which tracks racism, xenophobia and far right militias.

The number of anti-government groups fell to 488 in 2021,

down from 566 in 2020 and 576 in 2019. Such groups peaked at 1,360 in 2012, the year former President Barack Obama was elected to a second term.

“Rather than demonstrating a decline in the power of the far right, the dropping numbers of organized hate and anti-government groups suggest that the extremist ideas that mobilize them now operate more openly in the political mainstream,” says the new report, shared with The Associated Press ahead of its release.

The Montgomery, Ala.-based law center cited several examples including Fox News’ Tucker Carlson, whose discussion of a conspiracy likening immigration from nonwhite countries to a “great replacement” of white

Americans last September was welcomed by white nationalists who were linked to the “Stop the Steal” rally that preceded the Jan. 6 Capitol attack. The law center counted 98 active white nationalist groups in 2021.

Beyond the Capitol attack, the law center’s report details how

several factions of the far right movement have been reinvigorated by political wedge issues. Issues fueling active hate and anti-government extremist groups include the banning of critical race theory and books that discuss LGBTQ identity in public schools, coronavirus vaccine and mask

mandates, and immigration.

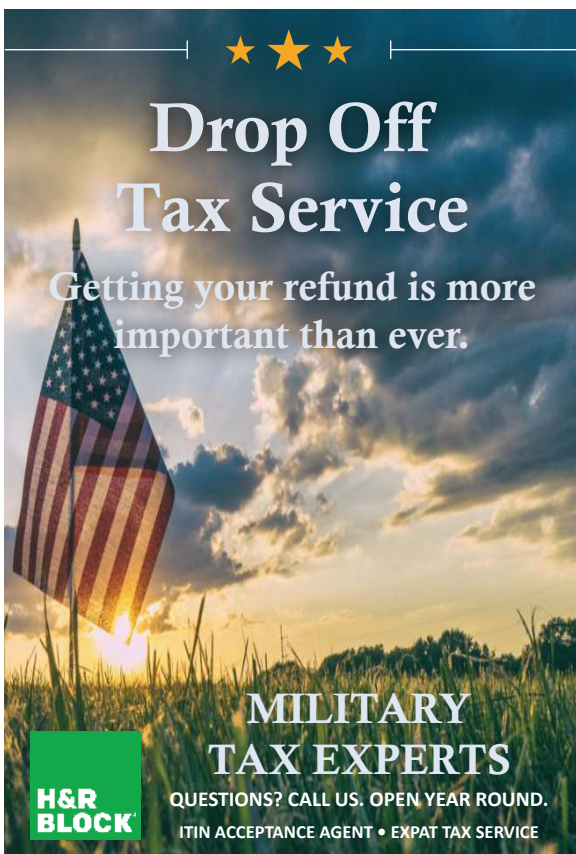
“This movement is working feverishly to undermine democracy, but what’s more startling is that they are also coalescing around a willingness to engage in violence,” said Susan Corke, SPLC’s Intelligence Project director.



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WEEKEND



'Winning Time' looks at Laker dynasty

Television, Pages 30-31



Still getting the hang of things

Pixar creates a large, furry metaphor for the perils of puberty in its latest animated offering, 'Turning Red'

Movies, Pages 17-18

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY

Preserving part of Indigenous culture

How tech could help out endangered languages like Cherokee

BY MATT O'BRIEN
Associated Press

By itself, being able to read smartphone home screens in Cherokee won't be enough to safeguard the Indigenous language, endangered after a long history of erasure. But it might be a step toward immersing younger tribal citizens in the language spoken by a dwindling number of their elders.

That's the hope of Principal Chief Richard Sneed of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, who's counting on more inclusive consumer technology — and the involvement of a major tech company — to help out.

Sneed and other Cherokee leaders have spent several months consulting with Lenovo-owned Motorola, which recently introduced a Cherokee language interface on its newest line of phones. Now phone users will be able to find apps and toggle settings using the syllable-based written form of the language first created by the Cherokee Nation's Sequoyah in the early 1800s. It will appear on the company's high-end Edge Plus phones when they go on sale in the spring.

"It's just one more piece of a very large puzzle of trying to preserve and proliferate the language," said Sneed, who worked with members of his own western North Carolina tribe and other Cherokee leaders who speak a different dialect in Oklahoma that is more widely spoken but also endangered.

It's not the first time consumer technology has embraced the language, as Apple, Microsoft and Google already enable people to configure their laptops and phones so that they can type in Cherokee. But the Cherokee language preservationists who worked on the Motorola project said they tried to imbue it with the culture — not just the written symbols — they are trying to protect.

Take the start button on the Motorola interface, which features a Cherokee word that translates into English as "just start." That's a clever nod to the casual way Cherokee elders might use the phrase, said Benjamin Frey, a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"It could have said 'let's get started' in many different ways," Frey said. "But it said halenagwu — just start. And that's very Cherokee. I can kind of see an elder kind of shrugging and saying, 'Well, I guess let's do it.' ... It re-

minds me very fondly of how the elders talk, which is pretty exciting."

When Motorola thought of incorporating Cherokee into its phones, Frey was one of the people it reached out to. It was looking to incorporate a language that the U.N.'s culture agency, UNESCO, had designated as among the world's most endangered but also one that had an active community of language scholars it could consult.

"We work with the people, not about the people," said Juliana Rebelatto, who holds the role of head linguist and globalization manager for Motorola's mobile division. "We didn't want to work on the language without them."

Motorola modeled its Cherokee project on a similar Indigenous language revitalization project Rebelatto helped work on in Brazil, where the brand — part of China-based parent company Lenovo — has a higher market share than it does in the U.S. The company last year introduced phone interfaces serving the Kaingang community of southern Brazil, and the Nheengatu community of the Amazonian regions of Brazil and neighboring countries.

Several big tech companies have expressed interest in recent years in making their technology work better for endangered Indigenous languages, more to show their goodwill or advance speech recognition research than to fulfill a business imperative.

Microsoft's text translation service recently added Inuinnaqtun and Inuktitut, spoken in the Canadian Arctic, and grassroots artificial intelligence researchers are doing similar projects. But there's a long way to go before digital voice assistants understand these languages as well as they do English — and for some languages, the time is running out.

Frey and Sneed said they recognize that some Cherokee will have concerns about tech companies making a product feature of their work to preserve their language — whether it's a text-based interface like Motorola's or potential future projects that could record speech to build a voice assistant or real-time translator.

"I think it is a danger that companies could take this kind of material and take advantage of it, selling it without sharing the proceeds with community members," Frey said. "Personally, I decided that the potential benefit was worth the risk, and I'm hoping that that will be borne out."



MOTOROLA GLOBALIZATION TEAM/AP

Users of the newest Motorola phones will be able to personalize fonts, layouts and more to display the Cherokee language. Tribal leaders have spent several months consulting with Lenovo-owned Motorola, which recently introduced the interface.

GADGETS

Lamps to improve ambiance or mood

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

Even with the best computer, desk, chair and every accessory possible, the item that seems to change an office's ambiance is a suitable lamp. After turning on the Lastar LED desk lamp (CM001), that was my instant impression.

The AC-powered lamp can be used anywhere in almost any room with functionality, settings, and especially the color modes. The lamp is built with metal and ABS plastic, a 90-degree adjustable arm and a 180-degree foldable head, making use easy and portable.

A single USB-A port is built into the back of the base, next to the plug-in for the included power cable. With your cables, it will charge almost any USB device. On top of the base are touch controls for powering it on and off, cycling through color modes, timer and night light mode. A sliding brightness bar has five levels.

There are four color modes, which are cycled through by pressing the "M" button on the base. They include a nightlight mode, a soft, gentle light to help you fall asleep. The reading mode has a midrange color temperature light and relaxation mode. Study mode has warm light settings for protecting your eyes.

The lamp (\$26.99) will remember the most recent settings after turning it off and use them when it is turned back on.

Five adjustable brightness levels also help achieve the perfect lighting environment with a color temperature range of 2700K to 6500K. The 400 lumens lamp is rated for 50,000 hours of use.

Lastar also has a similar LED Desk Lamp with wireless charging built into the base and the built-in USB port for \$39.99.

Lastar's 12w CM011 Light Therapy lamp (\$25.99) has 60 evenly distributed LEDs to mimic natural sunlight at 6500k. It features adjustable brightness settings from

20% to 100% for different lighting distances while filtering out most UV rays.

The touch control therapy lamp has buttons for power and brightness adjustments making it useful on a desktop, vanity, end table or kitchen counter.

According to Lastar, the AC-powered therapy lamp was designed to help people who suffer from winter blues, mental tension due to jet lag, and shift work to have the best circadian rhythm, and eliminate blue moods through gentle, UV-free light therapy.

With the natural daylight glow, it's easy to see how it can relieve moods during winter depression or just any cloudy day. Lastar recommends using 2500 lux for two hours daily and 10,000 lux for 30 minutes a day. The recommended lighting distance from the lamp is 3.9 feet from your face.



The portable CM003 Lastar Sun Therapy Lamp has many of the same features but is shaped like a tablet with stand. It has a built-in timer with settings of 10 to 60 minutes.

Five brightness levels are changed with touch control to deliver 10,000 lux intensity to provide 6500K UV-free light. The lamp is rated the most effective from 20 inches away for brightening up a mood and any room.

The AC-powered light has 66 LED beads with a color temperature range of 6000-6500K.

And to help (or confuse) anyone not familiar with light terminology, Lux is the measurement of how much light covers a particular area. In contrast, Lumens is the amount of light being emitted. A single candle is about 12.6 lumens.

Online: lastarhome.com

Lastar's LED desk lamp has a 90-degree adjustable arm and a 180-degree foldable head.

LASTAR/TNS

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Gear up, chill out

Gran Turismo 7 has a lot of car culture, a little racing

By MIKE HUME

The Washington Post

In the first 10 hours or so of Gran Turismo 7, the location I feel I've spent the most time in is not a track, nor a garage, but rather an in-game coffee shop. And while the in-game music ranges from jazz to metal, the tunes I most closely associate with the game are the tinkling piano keys that play over cut-scenes of babbling brooks and pastoral European vistas.

In many ways, when I play Gran Turismo 7 it feels like I'm approaching the first tee at Augusta National Golf Club, half expecting to hear the voice of CBS broadcaster Jim Nantz welcoming me to this year's Masters. "Hello, friends." Settle in and get comfortable.

That's not the sort of feeling I associate with a racing game, where the need for speed and thirst for victory typically pump players with adrenaline like gasoline. By comparison to titles like F1 or even the more arcade-like Forza, Gran Turismo 7 feels like a Sunday drive — windows down, radio on, weaving through winding-but-manageable back roads about 15 miles per hour over the posted limit, enough to earn a speeding ticket but not to put yourself in danger. It's a little edgy, but your palms remain dry and your blood pressure remains low.

Given the plethora of customization options and a catalog of 400-plus cars, including high-end makes and models that can reach speeds over 200 mph, I'm sure the heart-in-your-throat thrills lay around a bend ahead. But the game's early experi-

ence has been very much a breezy drive in fifth gear. It's a slow build, which is wonderful for entry-level racing game players like myself, but could frustrate a more seasoned racer who wants to dive right in and indulge their inner Ricky Bobby.

Gran Turismo 7 feels like the racing game for car enthusiasts. The people who will most enjoy it are those who keep the latest copy of Car and Driver under their bed pillows, with pinups of Porsches and Aston Martins lining their room. Twenty-five years after the series first hit the market, this is a game that celebrates the car-making industry as much as racing. First you learn about the cars. Then you see what they can do on the track.

At the aforementioned coffee shop, players spend time chatting to a lovely bearded man named Luca, who feels like the sort of quasi-dashing man of intrigue who hangs about such venues chatting up middle-aged divorcees. From behind his salt-and-pepper beard, Luca will tell you helpful information and give you "menus," which are basically a series of challenges you complete to attain new cars and unlock new areas of the world map. After unlocking new cars, Luca will educate you about their history. Did you know that "European hot hatches" are a family of hatchback, compact cars modified for improved performance? Or that FRs are a class of rear-wheel drive cars with the engine positioned in the front? I imagine him slowly caressing the exterior of a BMW as I read his words, his eyes lustily gazing into its just-buffed exterior. Luca, you rascal, behave!

In between these chats, you do actually drive cars around racetracks in Gran Turismo 7. The racing feels great.

Perhaps the most welcome feature is Gran Turismo 7's use of the DualSense controller, which allows you to steer your



car by holding the controller in front of you and turning it left or right like you would a steering wheel. The right trigger accelerates the car, the left trigger brakes and both will push back with various levels of resistance based on what your car is doing. Accelerating rapidly? Expect more resistance on the right trigger. Need to stand on the brakes? Expect the left trigger to push back against your finger.

The entry-level experience also boasts a mode where the game will aid drivers by automatically braking and accelerating, particularly around turns. It makes the racing extremely easy, even against the standard difficulty setting for opposing drivers. I also feel like it could hinder players later in the game, as stiffer competition and faster cars will require players to master accelerating and decelerating around turns and more closely follow the proper paths to maintain high speeds. While the auto-assist will help keep you in control and on course, it also limits how fast you can go.

That said, players should have plenty of time to adjust, because the game's progression is extremely deliberate. Players will need to get comfortable with a lot of other, non-racing tasks to push through the early stages of the game. (Did I really need to "wash" my car at the GT Auto shop? Or noodle with the game's photo mode?) For better or worse, patience is required as you unlock new areas and earn access to tracks and competitions.

The world map consists of 14 venues

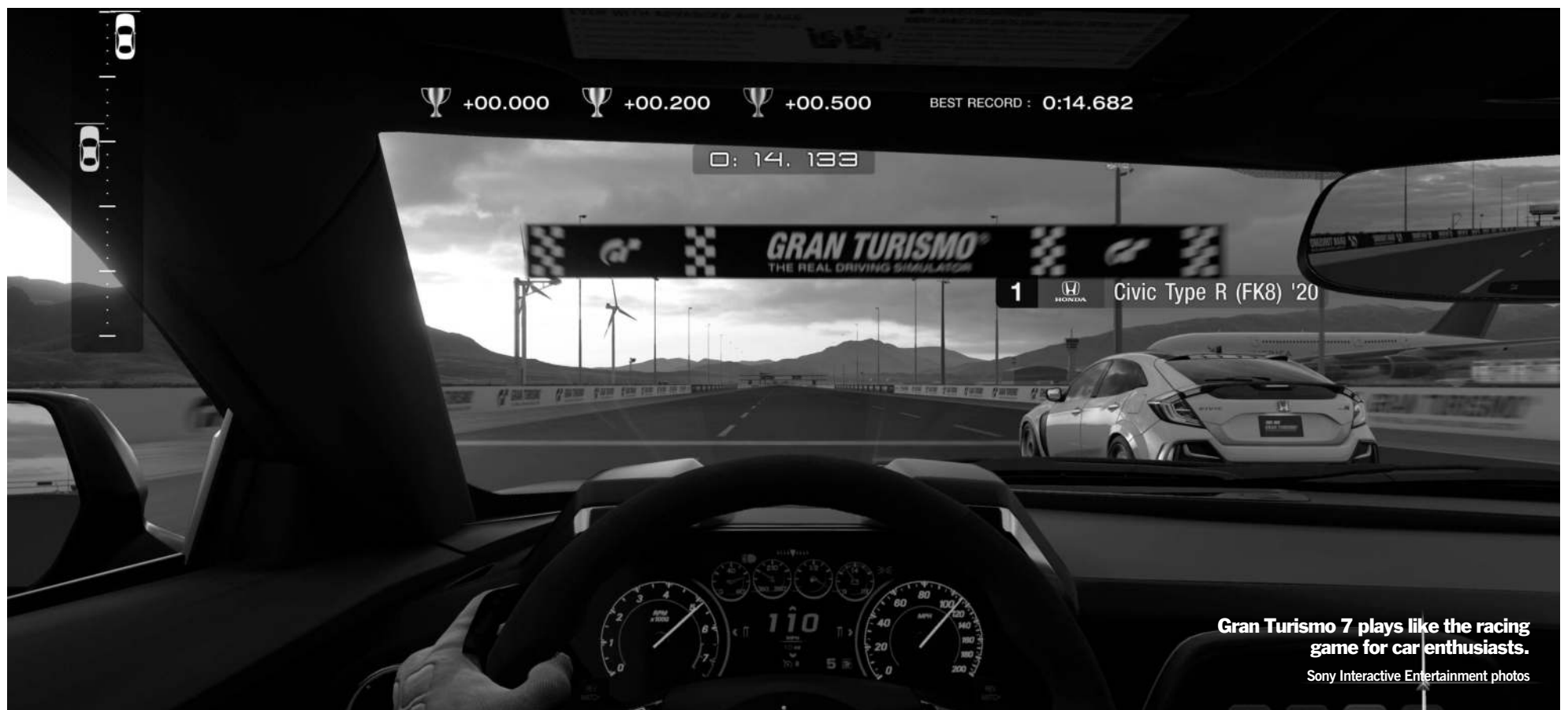
that allow you to perform various functions, such as finding a race, tuning your car, purchasing new vehicles, training or finding a multiplayer race. Each is unlocked gradually, usually preceded by a "menu" from Luca. Some races, like the Tokyo Highway Parade Championship, require you to pass certain training exercises to earn a "license." Multiplayer races aren't unlocked until you complete your 10th challenge "menu." That's followed by Sport Mode, which is the game's ranked multiplayer mode.

The early journey of unlocking facets of the game is made tolerable, even pleasurable, by the massive collection of automobiles. There are scores of sports cars familiar to those who grew up during the 1990s (and before) pining after a dream car they'd never be able to afford. It's similarly enjoyable to drive a virtual version of more attainable vehicles like zippy European or Japanese compacts.

Because I'm not frothing at the mouth, pining to unlock the top-tier cars and races or perfect my cornering, I've very much enjoyed my time with Gran Turismo 7. If you simply want to hop behind the wheel and peel out into the sunset, you likely will find the early game a tad frustrating. If you geek out on car culture as much as racing, and if you take pleasure in talking cars like our guy Luca in the coffee shop, it's likely you will find similar pleasure with this game.

Platforms: PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5

Online: gran-turismo.com



Gran Turismo 7 plays like the racing game for car enthusiasts.

Sony Interactive Entertainment photos

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

BY TODD MARTENS

Los Angeles Times

Sifu, the revenge-focused kung fu action game with nearly 1 million copies sold since its Feb. 8 release, has become a breakout hit in 2022. What's more, the game has earned praise for its fighting complexity as well as the respect it shows to a Chinese art.

But if the game is accurate in depicting the specific kung fu fighting style known as Pak Mei, that's a debt owed to Benjamin Colussi. The Paris resident and kung fu master has seen too many films and games with an inaccurate approach to fighting. He didn't want his name or the Pak Mei school he runs to have their brands sullied.

He was ready to be a pest.

"For me, it was important to not just sign a [licensing] contract and go back to my stuff and that's all," says Colussi, who was recently in Los Angeles to take meetings for other potential media products. "I really wanted to make a point. So before signing, I said, 'I want to see the movement, and want the chance to say, "You can do better."' It was a struggle for the team. They thought I wanted to take up too much space. That was not my goal. My goal was to be sure that what they do reflects what we want."

In a crowded gaming month with blockbuster releases such as *Elden Ring* and *Horizon Forbidden West*, *Sifu* has managed to make an impact. The game has also inspired cultural and mechanical debates, as it's not only difficult — I've barely made a dent into it — but the independent studio that made it, Sloclap, is based in Paris rather than China. As the architect of the game's fighting and a lifelong student of Chinese culture, Colussi is especially sympathetic to the latter discussion.

Since Colussi was 14, he's made nearly yearly visits to China, having lived in the country for three years. "Foreigner" is how he has often been labeled, although Colussi notes that the phrase in China doesn't carry with it the same stigma that it does in France.

"When I was a little kid I wanted to practice kung fu," Colussi says. "I don't have an explanation on that. I was searching for more, and a deep connection to the culture. What is kung fu? You have lots of styles. Some are acrobatic. Some are for fighting. Pak Mei is a bodyguard style of kung fu. Not every kung fu has the same purpose. In France, there was a lot of acrobatic stuff. Even though I loved this as a kid, this is not what I was searching for. So I started learning Chinese and my father flew me to China to show me what kung fu is. It put wood on the fire."

Today, Colussi is considered an heir to the originators of the



SLOCLAP/TNS

Sifu features the kung fu fighting style Pak Mei. Benjamin Colussi modeled the moves for the video game.

Clarity of movement

Pak Mei kung fu master Benjamin Colussi choreographed the action in *Sifu* to more accurately reflect the natural rhythm of real fighting

Pak Mei style, and in nonpandemic times he spends a number of weeks each year in China to continue to study from his masters.

"My master saw the game," Colussi says of his close relationship with Lao Wei San, who took on the French student as an apprentice before Colussi earned the title of *Sifu*, or master, and whose initials grace Colussi's LWS Pak Mei School in Paris. "He didn't play it. He does not care, but he loves the video and he loves every scene. He is very happy."

So is Colussi. The game fell into his lap in large part because some of the creative team has studied with Colussi. Early into production of the game, Sloclap asked Colussi to host a workshop where he went over some kung fu basics. About a year after that, with the game still early in development, the studio reached back out to say that Colussi's movement was inspiring the game, and could he work closely with the team? At that time, Colussi says, what would become *Sifu*

wasn't yet specializing in Pak Mei.

There would be many lessons, and talking to Colussi is akin to getting a free one. Ask about authenticity and Colussi launches into a history seminar, discussing differences between kung fu and wushu and how Chinese martial arts have changed over the decades, including how interpretations may differ from region to region within China. He may dip into some Chinese philosophy, and he is absolutely a student of pop culture, eager to discuss how film, television and games can get aspects of kung fu wrong.

It's easier, for instance, for Colussi to demonstrate a move rather than talk through it, but that's not always feasible in a tight Santa Monica, Calif., coffee shop courtyard. So I ask Colussi how to get kung fu right in a game, and he talks about past mistakes other fighting games have made.

"They asked me to do one punch to the head, one punch to the torso and one kick in the leg," Colussi says. "I said, 'Why don't

we complicate this?' In *Street Fighter* or *Street Fighter 2* or this kind of game, you charge a punch. In real life, you don't charge if you know how to punch. You don't need to block your punch for two seconds and then release it. Why are we still doing that? We can stop doing that."

Instead, *Sifu* is all about creating moments that will open up the characters and allow the player to make a pivotal move. To succeed, one must not only master the ability to dodge, but puzzle together which moves will work best in succession.

"There is a movement in the game in which you strike with the back of your hand," Colussi says. "When you do this, you move a little bit and try to create an opportunity. This is the kind of idea I put in the game to make the character more natural. It's about searching for a way to get in."

Most of Colussi's moves for the game were filmed and motion captured in two days, each spanning more than 11 work hours. Gradually, says Colussi, the deci-

sion was made to focus solely on the Pak Mei style of kung fu. This was partly a concession to schedules but also to the realization that each style is its own language.

"It would have been great to have some other styles, but you need more time," Colussi says. "If you put everything on the table, it's just crumbs. If you want to make scones the French way, and you put sausage in it and sushi next to it, then it is not scones at the end. If you want a taste of something, it's better to not mix."

Of course, there are compromises made for the game. In *Sifu*, as has been the trend since the *Dark Souls* games have risen in popularity, a key strategy is to put a large emphasis on defense and parrying moves. I asked Colussi how this fit in with Pak Mei.

"This is part of the mechanics," he says, referencing the game. "This is not a concept of the strategy of fighting. But it is interesting because you need to read the situation. If you do not, you will get killed. But if you've read the situation, you have a better understanding of how to get through the situation. Defending and attacking are really important. In Europe, we always say 'self-defense,' but I think that's just diplomatic words because when you fight there is always an attack to stop [the attack]."

Ultimately, Colussi wanted to slow the fighting down, to truly make it feel as if the player and the enemies are in a sort of rhythm rather than simply pummeling one another.

"Clarity of the movement," Colussi says. "Sometimes you feel the speed, but you don't see what's going on. If this is just speed when you strike, but you don't have strength, you lose the meaning. It's like speaking really fast. Nobody understands. If you speak quick, it's like you don't speak the language."

Such is the problem with many a Hollywood film, Colussi says, noting that as much as he enjoys the "Kill Bill" movies today, initially the Quentin Tarantino films made him cringe. There's plenty of fast movement, but it's so fast the characters are moving without strength in their actions, he argues. Instead, I ask Colussi to tell me a modern film or two that gets kung fu right. He mentions a few films — including "Blade of Fury" and "The Prodigal Son" — but singles out 2013 film "The Grandmaster" from Wong Kar-wai.

"They want to show a poetic way of fighting, and while I don't always understand this, you can feel how deep kung fu is in the characters," Colussi says. "If you want to understand what kung fu is, you go watch this movie."

Consider it some homework before playing *Sifu*.

"Sometimes you feel the speed, but you don't see what's going on. If this is just speed when you strike, but you don't have strength, you lose the meaning."

Benjamin Colussi

WEEKEND: MOVIES

Turning the page at Pixar



Disney/Pixar

In “Turning Red,” 13-year-old Meilin Lee is happy with her friends, school and, well, most of the time her family—until the day she begins to “poof” into a giant red panda at decidedly inconvenient times. Featuring Rosalie Chiang as the voice of Meilin, “Turning Red” is now streaming on Disney+.

‘Turning Red’ represents an evolution for the storied animation powerhouse

By AMANDA KONDOLOJY
Orlando Sentinel

“Turning Red” may not be hitting the multiplex, but longtime Pixar fans won’t want to miss this movie now on Disney+.

The film follows a 13-year-old girl named Mei Lee who turns into a giant red panda every time her emotions get out of control, which as you might guess, happens a lot when you’re a young teenager.

The setup is a thinly veiled metaphor for puberty, and while themes about the difficulties of growing up are pretty standard fare in Pixar’s film catalog (see “Inside Out,” the “Toy Story” franchise, and even last year’s “Luca”), “Turning Red” approaches the subject differently, focusing on how Mei’s changing worldviews and shifting priorities affect her relationship with her overprotective mother, Ming.

Director Domee Shi recently revealed that much of the film, which is set in 2002 Toronto, was based on her own childhood.

“The inspiration behind ‘Turning Red’ came from my own life growing up in the early aughts,” Shi said, adding that she was a “Chinese Canadian dorky, sassy, nerdy girl who thought she had everything

under control.

“[I was my] mom’s good little girl and then boom, puberty hit. And I was bigger and I was hairier, hungry all the time. I was a hormonal mess and I was fighting with my mom like every other day, and making this film was kind of my chance to go back to that time.”

In addition to tackling some difficult subject matter in a new way, “Turning Red” also represents a big change from the established Pixar style, adding more fantastical elements that tie back to the story. Says Shi, who previously directed the 2019 Oscar-winning Pixar short film “Bao,” “Our intention from the beginning was to try to push the style of the movie to just really reflect the point of view of the character of Mei: How does she see the world?”

To accomplish this, Shi once again looked to her childhood, saying, “I was really excited to push this style to try to, like, blend in all of the things that I love about Japanese anime, which inspired me and influenced me so much growing up,” adding that the final product “pushed the look of CG animation in a really nice way.”



Sandra Oh, Rosalie Chiang discuss power of representation

By PETER SBLENDORIO
New York Daily News

The stars of “Turning Red” believe a movie about a girl who turns into a red panda has a chance to be transformative.

Sandra Oh and Rosalie Chiang are thrilled to be a part of the coming-of-age Disney and Pixar flick that centers on an Asian Canadian teenager named Mei Lee and her family.

“Hopefully this film ... gives the experience to [people] just like Mei that you are the hero; a 13-year-old Chinese girl is a hero,” said Oh.

“For someone like myself, and my generation, we did not see ourselves in the center of the story, or the hero, and the fact that we have a lot more stories that are diverse, it just includes more people and it also makes story-

telling just much more interesting.”

“When I was younger, I never really saw a coming-of-age film starring an Asian girl,” said Chiang, 16, who voices Mei.

“When I watched coming-of-age films, I never was able to really relate to the character,” she said. “However with this, there were so many instances where I was like, ‘That’s my life! I literally experienced that last week with my mom!’ ... I think that’s the beauty.”

The film explores the complex dynamic between Mei and her mother, Ming, who has high expectations for her daughter — a scenario many Asians can relate to.

“This movie is just about her navigating through life,” Chiang said of Mei. “She’s trying so hard. She’s going through all these

changes, and especially her relationship with her mother is changing. Before this movie, things were so much simpler, but then you throw in this giant red panda.”

Oh, who voices Ming, believes anyone can relate to the story told in “Turning Red.”

“It has a lot of love in it, and it has a lot of anger in it,” Oh said.

The actors say the red panda represents many different parts of a person’s life, with Oh listing “puberty, sexuality, doing things wrong, depression” and anxiety as a few.

“It’s very interesting, when we hear from people, [to hear] every person’s very different take on what the panda is to them,” Oh said. “But I’d say, to maybe sum it up, messiness and change.”



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

Sandra Oh, photographed March 1, voices Ming, the mother of a teenager, in “Turning Red.”

WEEKEND: MOVIES



Disney+ photos

In *“Turning Red,”* Mei Lee, 13 (voiced by Rosalie Chiang), is growing up. She’s cringingly embarrassed by her mother, Ming (Sandra Oh), who still thinks of her as her little girl.

Panda-monium of puberty

Pixar’s latest, *“Turning Red,”* likens the emotional experience of growing up to the experience of turning into a big, fluffy mammal

BY MOIRA MACDONALD
The Seattle Times

In *“Turning Red,”* 13-year-old Meilin Lee (voiced by Rosalie Chiang) lives a very normal life, mostly. The only child in a warm Chinese Canadian family, she gets good grades at school, hangs with her three besties, helps her mother run their ancestral family temple, enjoys her dad’s cooking and occasionally — like 13-year-olds everywhere — gets a little dramatic. Oh, and sometimes she turns into a giant red panda.

That’s the charming, offbeat concept at the center of the latest Pixar gem, the debut feature of director Domee Shi (whose enchanting Pixar short *“Bao”* screened with *“Incredibles 2”* a few years back) available on Disney+. *“Turning Red”* has a sense of grounded realness to it; set in 2002 Toronto (where Shi grew up), it’s full of the details of real life: the red Toronto streetcars, the weary-looking lockers in the school hallways, the steam off a perfectly cooked stir-fry, the not-quite-outgrown little-girl trinkets in Mei’s bedroom. Which makes Mei’s first transformation, fairly early in the film, a delightful shock; you knew a Pixar movie would have something like this up its sleeve, but you don’t quite see this coming.

The panda, which quickly becomes a verb (“you’ll get whipped up into a frenzy and panda all over the place,” Mei is warned), is of course a metaphor for puberty. Mei, a bit older than a typical Pixar heroine (Riley of



Mei Lee has a tight-knit group of friends voiced by Ava Morse, Maitreyi Ramakrishnan and Hyein Park as Miriam, Priya and Abby.

“Inside Out” — a film that feels in some ways like a prequel for this one — is 11), is at a crossroads: She loves both stuffed animals and boy bands; adores her parents but prefers to be with her friends; and is cringingly embarrassed by her mother, Ming (Sandra Oh), who’s trying her best to parent an ever-changing daughter sometimes unrecognizable as her little girl. Quite literally unrecognizable: That panda emerges in a cloud of red smoke whenever Mei gets upset or overcome — which is, for a 13-year-old, quite often.

It’s new territory for a Pixar movie to make references to menstruation (Ming, misinterpreting why a panda’d Mei is

hiding in the bathroom, dramatically asks, “Did the red peony bloom?”), but Shi and screenwriter Julia Cho present a sweet, graceful ode to growing up. I watched wishing *“Turning Red”* could be watched on an enormous screen — there are scenes as lovely as any Pixar classic, particularly a fantasy sequence involving an ancient scroll — and that movies like this had been around when I was Mei’s age. We’ve all got an inner beast, Shi reminds us, and taming it isn’t too hard — as long as you have friends (and boy bands) on your side.

“Turning Red” is rated PG for thematic material, suggestive content and language. Running time: 100 minutes. Now streaming on Disney+.

Reynolds time travels in sentimental ‘Adam Project’

BY KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

What if you had a chance, as an adult, to revisit nagging issues with your parents? To reconcile with your younger self? Could it fix the past, or possibly even the future? This is the question undertaken rather literally in Shawn Levy’s clever time travel flick *“The Adam Project.”*

Levy and star Ryan Reynolds recently collaborated on *“Free Guy,”* and *“The Adam Project”* makes similar use of Reynolds’ strength as a motor-mouthed leading man, a movie star who can simultaneously pull off comedy and action hero antics. *“The Adam Project”* is doubly quippy with the presence of Walker Scobell, who plays Young Adam to Reynolds’ Big Adam, and matches him beat for beat when they meet in their respective timelines.

As the film explains that “time travel exists, you just don’t know it yet,” it asks the audience to suspend their disbelief and just go on this journey, a high-concept sci-fi action adventure that’s more about the symbolic repair of father-son relationships than it’s actually about time travel.

Big Adam comes from 2050, and he’s crash-landed in 2022, in his old backyard, where Young Adam, a twerpy tween who’s too smart by half, is trying to survive age 12.

Big Adam was aiming for 2018, in search of his missing wife (Zoe Saldana), but while he’s stopping over in 2022, he needs to fix his ship and heal from a gunshot wound, which offers him ample opportunity to hang with his younger self.

But it’s not all shared quirks and beating up bullies, as the fight that Adam’s chasing finds him, and suddenly he and Young Adam are on the run from a nefarious time traveling tech mogul, Maya Sorian (Catherine Keener). The only way they can

fix things is to go back one last time to find their father (Mark Ruffalo) to stop him from inventing time travel.

“The Adam Project” feels like a retro adventure film, with a precocious kid and an exasperated adult playing *“The Odd Couple”* but with more fighting lasers and killer robots. Despite all the complexities of time travel on display here, the story feels neither innovative nor fresh.

What makes *“The Adam Project”* unique is its grounded aesthetic, the woody, organic landscape of the Pacific Northwest offering a backdrop for the super high-tech futuristic weapons of invisible planes and lightsaber bo staffs. There are some remarkable shots, especially in the first half of the film, juxtaposing the world of 2022 with the weapons of 2050, a contrast that mirrors the relationship between the Adams.

The first half is the more intriguing as older and younger tussle with each other and ask the tough questions, figuring out their mission together. But it all falls apart in a hackneyed third act, as the characters end up in a rote standoff, bargaining for a thingamajig to save the world. Plus, every scrap of nuance in the conversation about reconciling the past and present selves is jettisoned for aggressive sentimentality.

By the time a golden retriever trots by a game of catch, the film has shot right past emotional resonance and landed squarely in the realm of patronizing (unsuccessful) manipulation. This time travel movie is so rife with daddy issues, it’s a shock this film wasn’t rolled out for Father’s Day. Unfortunately, what could have been something cerebral and stimulating ends up feeling like more disposable cinema.

“The Adam Project” is rated PG-13 for violence/action, language and suggestive references. Running time: 106 minutes. Now streaming on Netflix.



Netflix

Walker Scobell, left, and Ryan Reynolds play younger and older versions of the same character in *“The Adam Project.”*

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

History lessons along the Rhine

I'm thinking back on my favorite European memories, and my favorite Europeans — including Herr Jung, the German schoolteacher who passed away not long ago. When I close my eyes, I can still imagine Herr Jung walking me around his hometown ... and I still hear his caring teacher's voice.

When cruising down the romantic Rhine River in Germany, I always stop in my favorite town along that fabled river: Bacharach. This pleasant half-timbered village with vine-covered hillsides was once prosperous from its wine and wood trade, and now works hard to keep tourists happy.

The riverfront scene is laid-back. Retired German couples, thick after a lifetime of beer and potatoes, set the tempo at an easy stroll. I gaze across the Rhine. Lost in thoughts of Bacchus and Roman Bacharach, I'm in another age ... until two castle-clipping fighter jets from a nearby American military base drill through the silence.

As the last of the World War II survivors pass on, memories fade. I pause at Bacharach's old riverside war memorial. Its huge sandstone bricks, marked with an Iron Cross and flanked by two



Rick Steves

helmets, were erected in 1914 to honor local veterans of the then-underway World War I, as well as of five previous wars ... but the inscribed names and dates are now mostly illegible. Bacharach is probably my favorite Rhine Valley town because of my friendship with Herr Jung, the town's retired schoolmaster, who takes me on a thought-provoking walk with each visit. He joins me at the memorial and I ask him to translate the still-readable words carved on the stone.

"To remember the hard but great time ..." he starts, then mutters, "Ahh, but this is not important now."

Herr Jung explains, "We Ger-



DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCCELLI/Rick Steves' Europe

Herr Jung leads a group through his hometown of Bacharach, Germany, a tourist destination on the Rhine.

mans turn our backs on the monuments of old wars. We have one day in the year when we remember those who have died in the wars. Because of our complicated history, we call these lost souls not war heroes but 'victims of war and tyranny.' Those who lost sons, fathers and husbands have a monument in their heart. They don't need this old stone."

As I ponder the memorial, he quotes Bismarck: "Nobody wants war, but everyone wants things they can't have without war."

Herr Jung looks past the town's castle, where the ridge of the gorge meets the sky and says, "I remember the sky. It was a moving carpet of American bom-

bers coming over that ridge. Mothers would run with their children. There were no men left. In my class, 49 of the 55 boys lost their fathers. My generation grew up with only mothers."

"I remember the bombings," he continues. "Lying in our cellar, praying with my mother. I was a furious dealmaker with God. I can still hear the guns. Day after day we watched American and Nazi airplanes fighting. We were boys. We'd jump on our bikes to see the wreckage of downed planes."

"One day a very big plane was shot down. It had four engines. I biked to the wreckage, and I couldn't believe my eyes. Was

this a plane designed with a huge upright wing in the center? Then I realized this was only the tail section. The American tail section was as big as an entire German plane. I knew then that we would lose this war."

Standing there with military jets soaring overhead and contemplating how Herr Jung has dedicated his life to sharing Germany's hard history so other nations (like mine) can learn from it, I recommit myself to sharing the lessons travel can teach us as widely as I can.

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

Outdoor opera festivals, productions coming in 2022

Since the staging of a work by the name of *Dafne*, penned by Italian composer Jacopo Peri around 1597, Europeans have been enjoying various forms of operatic performances. While these dramatic works set to music are traditionally performed in opulent opera houses, the summer months present a short window of opportunity for the staging of these masterful works in the great outdoors. From 2,000-year-old amphitheaters to disused quarries to floating stages, here are some of the Continent's most iconic outdoor opera festivals and the productions to be staged in 2022.



Karen Bradbury

Bregenz, Austria: This festival can trace its history back to 1946, when two barges moored on Lake Constance served a makeshift stage for an early work of Mozart. Since then, the festival next to a vast lake lapping the shores of Austria, Germany and Switzerland has grown in scale and reputation. Each production on the lake's stage brimming with elaborate backdrops and technological wizardry enjoys a two-year season; 2022 sees the premiere of Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. The tragic tale of a Japanese geisha who falls in love with a U.S. naval officer premieres July 20 and is performed on 25 evenings through Aug. 21. The opera is sung in Italian and presented with German subtitles. Tours of the world's largest lake stage are also offered on selected dates between May 30 and Aug. 21; tickets go for 7.50 euros. Online: bregenzfestspiele.com/en

St. Margarethen in Burgenland, Austria: Some 2,000 years ago, mining took place in the Margarethen Quarry, whose limestone was used in the construction of the Carnuntum Roman Fortress, St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna and many other edifices. The rock auditorium that took shape over time now serves as the backdrop for concerts, operas and operettas performed on two separate



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Stagehands prepare the floating stage on Lake Constance for a performance of Giacomo Puccini's *Turandot* during a past Bregenz Festival. This year's festival will produce Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*.

stages. The quarry's steep stone walls lend it a unique atmosphere and superb acoustics. Opera in the Quarry 2022 is Giuseppe Verdi's *Nabucco*, which follows the plight of the Jews under the rule of the megalomaniac Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. The play premieres July 13 and is performed 18 times before its last showing on Aug. 14. Online: tinyurl.com/2s3bub7u

Orange, France: A small town just a few miles north of Avignon is the venue for the Chorégies d'Orange, France's oldest festival. Since its start in 1869, the festival has distinguished itself with its adherence to the Greco-Latin tradition and its location: a UNESCO World Heritage-listed theater from Roman times, considered the best preserved theater in Europe. A venue for shows in Roman times, it continues in this role today. In contrast to

other opera festivals, this festival offers one-off performances. Amongst the performances scheduled this season are *L'elisir d'amore* (July 8); *Italian Night with La Scala in Milan* (July 20); and *La Gioconda* (Aug. 6). Online: choregies.fr/?lang=fr

Torre del Lago, Italy: The Festival Puccini takes place in the town beloved by the Italian composer Giacomo Puccini and just a few miles from Lucca, his birthplace. The open-air theater sits close to the house in which the composer lived and work after having it built in 1900. A small chapel inside the villa serves as Puccini's burial spot. This year, the festival offers *Madama Butterfly*, *Turandot*, *Tosca* and *La Rondine* on 13 dates between July 15 and Aug. 27. Online: puccinifestival.it

Verona, Italy: The Verona Arena (Arena di Verona) is a Roman amphitheater in the city of the same name. The 30 AD construction, considered one of the best preserved ancient structures of its type, is still in use today and is world famous for its large-scale opera performances. Since 1913, the arena has hosted operatic performances, pausing only during times of war. Nowadays, up to six productions are staged between June and August each year. As the sun sets, attendees light the candles they have been given, creating a timeless, mystical atmosphere. Operas for the 2022 season include *Nabucco*, *La Traviata*, *Aida* and *Carmen*. Online: arena.it/en/arena-diverona

Rome, Italy: On a site where citizens of ancient Rome once washed up and socialized, the ruins of the Baths of Caracalla make an atmospheric venue for catching opera or classical music on balmy summer nights. Since 2001, a temporary stage set up in the central part of the bathing complex has hosted various classical and contemporary concerts and ballets. The operas among this year's offerings include George Bizet's *Carmen* (July 15-Aug. 4) and Gioachino Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* (Aug. 2-9). Online: tinyurl.com/ycksse7f

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Evolving for today's adventurers

Travel guidebooks becoming more inspirational as opposed to informational

BY JEN ROSE SMITH

Special to *The Washington Post*

Rick Steves is hyped. That's not so unusual: Infectious joy is surely one key to Steves' success as America's kindly vacation guru. Still, when he leaves next month on a 40-day trip to update his European guidebooks — a ritual he used to perform each spring — it will be the first such journey since COVID-19 erased his travel calendar, which explains his current level of euphoria.

"Just to get back in the saddle has got me so filled with adventure, with energy," he said. "I can hardly wait." The trip follows a pandemic-long dry spell that quieted presses across the guidebook industry. U.S. travel book sales in 2020 were down about 40% from the previous year, according to NPD BookScan. (The category includes, but doesn't single out, travel guidebooks.)

Facing stalled sales and the prospect of ongoing upheaval amid the pandemic, many guidebook print runs were postponed or canceled.

"We put all the guidebooks on pause," said Pauline Frommer, co-president of the guidebook company her father, Arthur Frommer, founded in 1957. "It was very clear from the beginning of the pandemic that things were going to change drastically, and I did not want to print guidebooks that were not worth the paper they were printed on."

The pandemic knockdown came following uncertain decades for the guidebook industry. After sales topped 19 million in 2006, U.S. travel book sales halved over the next decade.

In 2013, BBC Worldwide sold Lonely Planet, a move followed by massive layoffs. Then, having acquired Frommer's, Google quietly stopped all production of Frommer's print guidebooks. (The Frommers repurchased rights and resumed printing guidebooks.)

That's how 2013 became the year of essays trumpeting the demise of travel guidebooks, each attributing cause of death to some combination of apps, influencers, online searches and digital powerhouse Tripadvisor. But the doomsaying was nothing new. "The whole time I've been working on guidebooks, people have been like, 'The end of guidebooks is nigh,'" said author Zora O'Neill, who wrote her first travel guidebook in 2002 and has penned titles for both Moon and Lonely Planet.

Although the end never came, O'Neill saw the industry change. Rates have fallen or stagnated in the past two decades, while in many cases, work-for-hire arrangements replaced traditional royalty contracts. And the once-dominant role of guidebooks in travel culture changed, too.

As an old millennial who started traveling in guidebooks' supposedly halcyon age, I've watched that transformation with interest. Sometimes with nostalgia, too: I miss swapping annotated, dog-eared books with fellow travelers in bars or hostels. Now, you can reliably find those same places filled with people glued to their screens.

Twenty years ago, however, I would have said guidebooks contributed to an informational monoculture I found aggravating. I noticed that people using the same brand of travel guides seemed to follow each other, slightly abashed, from place to place. On one month-long trip through Central America in 2002, fellow owners of Lonely Planet's hefty "Central America on a Shoestring" became familiar faces as we popped up at the same places in city after city.

When new businesses opened, owners struggled to get the word out. Lurid tales of questionable guidebook ethics circulated. Outdated or incorrect entries in a book could leave you stranded, but few other sources existed.

"When I started writing, the problem was that there was not enough information," said Steves, noting that, at one time, guidebooks were almost the only way to

decide where to stay in an unfamiliar city. As times changed, that sameness gave way to the untamed, thrilling diversity of today's digital wilderness.

"It got to the point where there was too much information," he said, noting that proliferating sources made it harder to know what was reliable. Researching a trip online can be a Mad Max infinity loop of unvetted user-generated reviews and self-appointed experts. Trading free trips for sunny features is common practice in the world of travel influencers, with little transparency about who is footing the bill for a given blog post or YouTube video.

While earlier travelers just needed some basic info, Steves said, guidebooks' main value proposition might now be an escape hatch from that digital overwhelm. "Part of my job is to curate all the options — the glut of information — with a consistent set of values," he said. What's more, a print guidebook offers a chance to unplug, allowing travelers to put down their phones, Steves noted. With a screen close at hand, it's too easy to let your attention drift away from that chic Parisian bistro and into drearily quotidian scrolling.

It seems to be working out, because Steves' 2019 royalty checks were the highest of his career. Despite apocalyptic warnings, in fact, guidebooks are generally doing OK. After the rocky industry news of 2013, travel book sales stabilized, then stayed roughly even until the pandemic hit.

Most travelers who still buy print books, though, now seem to read them in conjunction with, not instead of, online resources.

In recent Facebook and Twitter posts, veteran traveler and content creator Abigail King queried followers about how they use guidebooks today, noticing some buy for pre-trip research, reverting to the internet for facts on the ground. Others turn books into a kind of souvenir stuffed with ticket stubs and handwritten notes.

"I use them in a really different way now, too, mainly for reading about the country and planning an itinerary," said King, who lives in the United Kingdom. She noted that, when traveling to destinations in Europe with consistent cell coverage, she's unlikely to bring a hard copy along.

"Guidebooks are now among a suite of tools people use," said Grace Fujimoto, acquisitions director at Avalon Travel, which oversees the Moon Travel Guides imprint that is the United States' top guidebook seller. (Disclosure: I've written several Moon guidebooks.) Fujimoto said the pandemic accelerated that shift toward book-plus-digital, partly because information has changed so quickly in the past two years.

But it just underscores a broader trend of recent years, she said.

"Guidebooks are becoming more and more inspirational, in addition to just being repositories of information," Fujimoto said, offering a forthcoming guidebook to Spain's Camino de Santiago pilgrimage trail as an example. "It does have a lot of good practical information, but it combines it with ways of appreciating what you're seeing and doing almost every step of the way," she said.

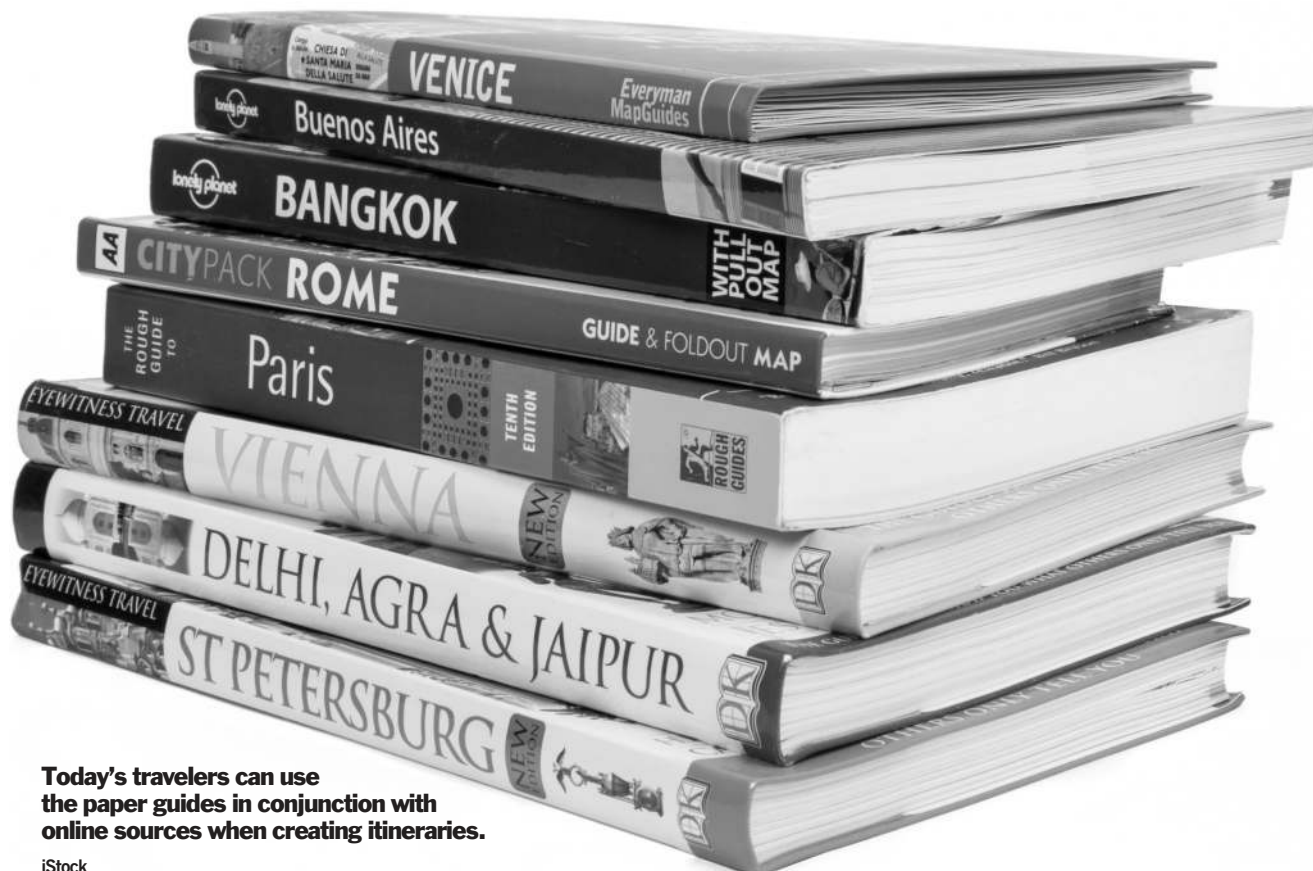
Lonely Planet is another publisher leaning into the shift. "Guidebooks are evolving into this experiential, curated collection," said Lonely Planet spokesman Chris Zeiher. This month, the company released a new line of photo-heavy "Experience" guides, which Zeiher said are designed to inspire.

The first titles in the series, guidebooks to Italy, Portugal, Japan, Ireland, Scotland and Iceland, are noticeably lacking in the old-style comprehensive listings of hotels and restaurants. In their place are expert interviews and short, magazine-style features on the kinds of experiences travelers might build a trip around.

Flip through these to get fired up for chasing waterfalls in Iceland, for instance, or to dream up an itinerary focused on visiting Japanese temples. And unlike the earliest Lonely Planet guides, which were oriented to longer, more comprehensive trips, these are tailored to the shorter vacations increasingly common among travelers from the United States.

Zeiher, too, heard predictions of print guidebooks' demise since he joined Lonely Planet nearly 17 years ago. But he's optimistic about the coming decade. "One thing that Lonely Planet's always done, is we've always evolved," he said. "I think we'll continue to do that."

As the pandemic recedes and travelers return to the world, he's betting there's room in their bags for a book.



Today's travelers can use the paper guides in conjunction with online sources when creating itineraries.

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Deep into the icy continent

Advancements in polar sailing allow travelers to access some of Antarctica's little-visited areas

BY BAILEY BERG

Special to *The Washington Post*

The polar vessel was driving through a sheet of pearl-colored ice and snow like a spoon through creme brulee.

Though we were south of the Antarctic Circle, it was mid-January, late in the austral summer, and we were lucky to have found this several-miles-wide expanse of shore-fastened ice. (Usually by this point in the season, it's mostly melted or broken up.) The goal was to get deep enough into this inlet, to where the ice is thickest, so we could get off the ship and safely walk about on the frozen landscape.

"Incredible, right?" said expedition leader Lucho Verdesoto, as I lifted my camera to capture the scenery, almost lunar in its starkness. "There are very few ships that can do this."

I was aboard Lindblad Expeditions' 126-passenger National Geographic Resolution for a 14-day voyage to Antarctica. Though the vessel shares a name with the first ship to cross the Antarctic Circle, captained by James Cook just under 250 years ago, it's very unlike the original Resolution. As one of the newest vessels in the Lindblad fleet, the eight-deck ship is equipped with dining areas, a spa with two hot tubs and saunas, a gym, a library and more.

But perhaps more important, it was purpose-built to navigate the famously challenging Antarctic waters to bring guests closer to the abstract icebergs, other-worldly blue glaciers and boisterous penguin colonies that have long captivated the imagination of explorers.

Though about 50,000 people visit Antarctica in a (normal) year, Verdesoto said that only roughly 1 percent voyage past the Antarctic Circle, and perhaps even fewer have the ability to stroll on the ice off the shore of the continent. The new technology that went into building this particular ship (and its sister, the National Geographic Endurance, named for Ernest Shackleton's 1914 Antarctic vessel) makes it possible to travel faster and farther into the ice.

"The main idea of building these ships was to stay away from the crowds," explained Captain Martin Graser.

The ship holds a polar class rating of PC5 Category A, making it one of the most substantial ice-breaking expedition ships globally, based on an international rating system. It also has thrusters that can rotate the vessel in any direction. (This is important when it's lodged deep in ice.)

In terms of speed, it has engines so powerful it can slice through the water at more than 16 knots — uncommonly fast compared with other vessels in the region, Graser said, especially in the infamously rough Drake Passage — giving it more range. Its bow shape helps, too. The front of a ship typically leans forward and has blunt angles that push the water away. However, the bow on the Resolution, dubbed the X-bow, is hooked backward, giving it sharper angles that split the sea. It's meant to mimic how sea mammals work with the water, which also makes it more fuel-efficient.

"We're still learning its capabilities, but once we do, we'll use them to the max," Verdesoto said of the months-old ship. (Its first sailing was in November.) Though he's been working in Antarctica for more than 12 years, he still has some bucket-list dreams, such as crossing the Antarctic Circle on the eastern side of the Antarctic Peninsula. It has only been done commercially, he said, on the western side; the area to the east usually saw too much ice. "But, with this vessel, we might be able to do that on an upcoming trip."

Although Antarctic itineraries are never the same — they're based on weather forecasts and ice charts, so expedition leaders often plan on the fly — the Resolution's enhancements open up more opportunities to explore little-visited areas and bring photo-seeking travelers closer to glaciers and wildlife, such as albatross, chinstrap penguins, orcas and leopard seals. Each day, passengers could get off the ship at least twice to go kayaking, hiking or for a ride in a Zodiac



PHOTOS BY BAILEY BERG/For The Washington Post

The National Geographic Resolution stops in an ice sheet. The ship has enhanced capabilities that allow it to take travelers to parts of Antarctica that have seen very little human traffic.

(an eight-person inflatable motorized boat).

On one particularly memorable day, we stopped in an Edenic fjord shaped like an amphitheater where glaciers calved and bergy bits (ice shorter than 16 feet above sea level) bobbed in the water. It was a place that neither Graser nor Verdesoto, a pair who have several decades of Antarctic experience between them, had been. But because we could get back there, we spent the afternoon kayaking and photographing the Weddell seals — which looked like long, overstuffed cigars — that had hauled out on the ice floes. The calm, protected waters also made it possible to do a polar plunge. (Nearly everyone who dared to jump from the mouth of the boat came up sputtering and cursing.)

The ship's capabilities also mean that the collection of biologists, ecologists and climate scientists on board can conduct important new work.

Because of Lindblad Expeditions' partnership with National Geographic, numerous scientists are along for the ride. Our particular sailing included Shaylyn Potter and Brett Garner, whose studies involve marine conservation and testing for microplastics, and Javier Cotin, whose fieldwork involves adding whale and bird sightings to databases from which other scientists can pull. Other sailings this season included John Durban and Holly Fearnbach, a couple whose work focuses on whether the warming climate is threatening the food source of orcas. Each scientist's work has helped serve as a yardstick to how quickly the continent's environment is being altered by people around the



Guests on the Resolution's 14-day expedition to Antarctica kayak past a Weddell seal. Alongside leisure travelers, scientists also conduct research during expeditions to Antarctica.

world. Each night before dinner, the scientists would give presentations on their work, putting what we'd seen that day into context.

With the knowledge gleaned from one of the talks, I tried to identify which species of penguin was atop a short mountain one morning. I was on my balcony, and from that distance, even with a telephoto lens, the scene looked more like a negative of the night sky: an expanse of white where the stars (metaphorically for this particular show) were the color of midnight. I'd have to wait until we got ashore to put my learning to the test.

It didn't take long. When the Zodiac reached the rocky beach, a squad of gentoo penguins waddled down from their perch and dove into the water.

Penguins have their own highway systems, areas where the footfalls of the flock have beaten

down the snow between the nesting site and the water. People aren't allowed to walk on them, so to see the colony from a closer distance, we had to blaze our own path to the top of the mountain. It was a slow hike up, though not because it's particularly steep or because the myriad layers forced a tin-soldier gait; with each step came the desire to stop and snap a few more photos.

At the colony, I focused my lens on a snoozy gentoo penguin whose feathers shone like an oil slick in the glow of the midmorning sun.

It was like nothing else existed but the penguin and me. Until it wasn't. Into the frame came the penguin's mate, carrying a pebble. And as he gingerly added the rock to the perimeter of the nest, a wee downy head peeked out from under the mother's protective pouch and gave a soprano squawk.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY KYLE ALVAREZ/Stars and Stripes

A re-creation of an ancient village is one of the attractions at the West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village and Country Park in England. Visitors can also take the opportunity to learn archery, or learn about the world of J.R.R. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings."



Tools, weapons and other artifacts are on display inside the West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village and Country Park.

West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village and Country Park

Address: Icklingham Road, West Stow, Suffolk, IP28 6HG

Hours: Monday through Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Times will vary depending on the time of year. (April to May 9am-7pm; June to August 9am-8pm; September 9am-7pm; October 9am-6pm; November to March 9am-5pm)

Admission: Adults, 6 pounds; children 5-16, 3 pounds; discounted admission (for the disabled, people over 60, job seekers, low-income people and students), 4 pounds; families (of up to five, with a maximum of two adults), 16 pounds. Admission does include museum and village access.

Information: Phone, +44 01284 728718; Online: weststow.org and [facebook.com/weststow](https://www.facebook.com/weststow)

Kyle Alvarez

A meandering walk through history

West Stow Country Park offers Anglo-Saxon history, archery lessons and 'Lord of the Rings' in one place

BY KYLE ALVAREZ
Stars and Stripes

On the grounds of a sprawling Suffolk park, an unusual blend of book, bow and the feeling of time travel awaits visitors.

The Anglo-Saxon village in West Stow Country Park provides a hands-on experience of what life was like for those who lived in the area surrounding the bases of RAF Lakenheath, Mildenhall and Feltwell during the period from 420 to 650. That's more than 400 years before the Norman conquest.

Carvings near the entrance depict an assortment of images, including one of Beowulf, the hero of the most well-known piece of Old English literature.

Speaking of literature, the park also houses a museum that hosts events based on J.R.R. Tolkien's beloved "Lord of the Rings" trilogy. There is even a model of a hobbit's home outside the back entrance of the museum.

According to museum employee Glynis Baxter, the "Lord of the Rings" events pay homage to the fact that Tolkien was a professor of Anglo-Saxon history. That history provided a lot of inspiration for his books as noted by author Dr. Deborah A. Higgins in her book "Anglo-Saxon Community in J.R.R. Tolkien's the Lord of the Rings," where she discusses how Tolkien created his grand story by examining Anglo-Saxon literary works "On Fairy-Stories" and "Beowulf."

My family's village visit started in a small gallery that displays items found at the site during archaeological excavations, which began in the 1950s. We then headed outside and watched a short video about the history of the Anglo-Saxons and the archaeological site.

Then we ambled around the village, which felt like stepping back in time.

The houses are reconstructions of the ones that archaeologists believe were used by the early inhabitants and were built over the remains found during excavations.

After the village walkthrough, we went to the museum, which offered the more traditional experience. Each display had a word or two in Anglo-Saxon and the English translation underneath it. We had a good time trying to pronounce the Anglo-Saxon words.

The museum also hosts a range of interactive events, including instruction in an old essential skill: archery.

My interest in learning to use the long-bow was piqued. Unfortunately, we couldn't fit the archery lessons into this visit, so I'm definitely coming back for that. It should be fun persuading the wife to let me fire arrows and role-play as Legolas.

Event dates and times can be found on their website for the museums, events and park trails. The online schedule shows that most events are held on weekends.

For further enjoyment, we wanted to



A hobbit house honors J.R.R. Tolkien's works at the West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village and Country Park. The park hosts many "Lord of the Rings" events throughout the year.

check out the trails, but it began to rain. The country park section of the complex is free, and dogs are allowed.

According to the park's website, the park is 125 acres, with trails that pass by lakes and bird blinds.

We finished our visit with a snack at the West Stow Cafe, outside the main entrance, which made for a pleasant end to the day and gave us a chance to talk about what we saw.

I couldn't help but be amazed at the human ingenuity on display. These ancient inhabitants built everything by hand, and the combo of the village and the museum makes for a seamless living history presentation.

Add to that the myriad leisure activities afforded by the park and you have a fine opportunity for an eclectic outing.

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Dinner that's animal-friendly

High-quality vegan options along the Moselle River invite guilt-free gorging

BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

German cuisine is famous for its schnitzels, sausages and meaty roasts smothered in savory sauces.

Although restaurant offerings in Germany tend to be wide-ranging and varied, for vegetarians and foodies with allergies, like my wife, finding a great place to eat remains a challenge.

We therefore did not hesitate to make the hourlong trip from Kaiserslautern to the Hotel Nicolay 1881 in Zeltingen-Rachtig for an afternoon out at vegan stand-out Die Weinstube and its sidekick, the Sonnenuhr Cafe. The small riverfront town is nestled among hills along the meandering Moselle Wine Route, a popular tourist area in the summer.

We were seated in a cozy booth by a sunlit stained-glass window. The decor tastefully combines the building's German roots with modern charm.

Subtle hints of the owner's leanings include a small sign with the ironic question "Can you eat this, or is this vegan?" and small winged piglets with angelic smiles on each table.

The hotel was created as a postal route stop by the Nicolay family in 1881 and is now led by fifth-generation proprietor Johannes Nicolay, who is also the chef for the hotel.

Trained in renowned restaurants in the region and beyond, Nicolay decided to become a vegan in 2012. That same year, his reopened eatery became Germany's first vegan restaurant in a hotel. Since then, he has been concocting seeming magic from unusual ingredients.

"There are no restrictions imposed by veganism in the kitchen," Nicolay wrote on the restaurant's website. "It's more like telling a painter after 20 years that there are another 10 colors he has never used."

Ordering is definitely not complicated. You choose between the mushroom plate for two, or a chef's choice menu with up to five courses.

That may not sound special, but there's a bonus. Visitors can see the mushroom cultivation cellar through a small glass tile in the dining room floor.

We felt comfortable letting Nicolay surprise us and chose the



**AFTER
HOURS
GERMANY**

three-course chef's choice menu. We were not disappointed.

Without delay, kitchen staff got us started with a vegan pesto spread and gluten-free bread followed by a sizable appetizer of scrumptious "Nicolachs," smoked carrot slices loosely inspired by the flavors of smoked salmon, served with crispy potato pancakes and a nondairy spiced mustard creme and side salad.

The entree was a delicately spiced golden flaxseed and lentil fritter with polenta, homegrown shiitake and herb mushrooms atop a savory vegetable jus reduction.

The flavors of the mushrooms and broth-based jus were so satisfying that we had no doubt even meat lovers would enjoy it.

As the name implies, Die Weinstube also serves an assortment of carefully selected regional wines. Viticulture-savvy vegans know that many wineries use production methods that include animal-derived processing aids to bind and remove unwanted substances from the grapes. No need to worry about that here, though.

For those who like a bit more control over their menu choices, the more casual Sonnenuhr (Sundial) Cafe is next door.

The cafe offers seasonal salads customizable with the homegrown mushrooms, falafel and potato wedges. Entrees include animal-friendly twists on German classics such as a schnitzel made from lupin and seitan, spelt-based steaks and vegan burgers.

Finally, the hotel bakery offers vegan cakes, gluten-free goodies and ice cream. We closed our meal with a vegan chocolate mousse with tonka beans and a cherry-vanilla sauce.

We paired our dessert with delicious cow-free cappuccinos topped with firmly whipped "milk foam," available in soy or oat options, that beat any whole milk rival.

While we stopped for a late lunch, Die Weinstube is great for a night out. And the Sonnenuhr's sunlit dining room and outside



Above: A vegan golden flaxseed and lentil fritter is served alongside polenta and homegrown shiitake and herb mushrooms, with a savory vegetable jus at The Weinstube, at Hotel Nicolay 1881 in Zeltingen-Rachtig, Germany. The dish was served as part of a three-course chef's choice menu.

Right: Vegan Nicolachs, smoked carrot slices loosely inspired by the flavors of smoked salmon, is served with crispy potato pancakes and a creamy, nondairy spiced mustard crème and side salad.

Bottom right: A vegan chocolate mousse and vanilla semolina pudding served with cherry and ground tonka beans. All dishes at the hotel are vegan, and gluten-free choices are available.

PHOTOS BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

terrace seating offer a great daytime stop on a bike tour, hike or drive along the river.

The hotel follows an animal-friendly concept. All rooms are down-free, cleaning materials are not tested on animals and rooms can be booked to include a breakfast featuring vegan sausage, cheese, honey, muesli and fresh fruit and vegetables.

So strict are the Nicolay's standards that last year the hotel placed first on a list of vegan-friendly hotels in Germany and Europe compiled by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

The commitment to veganism does not mean that guests miss out, however. The accommodations include a wellness spa, an indoor pool and three saunas, among other creature comforts.

For my wife and me, the visit was worry-free delight, and we'll most certainly be back for another gourmet treat.

riedel.alexander@stripes.com
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Die Weinstube and the Sonnenuhr Cafe

Address: Uferallee 7, Zeltingen 54492

Hours: Wednesday and Thursday, 6:15p.m.-9:30 p.m.; Friday through Sunday, noon-2:30 p.m. and 6:15-9:30 p.m. Closed Monday and Tuesday.

Prices: In the wine bar section, entrees menu items range from the 28-euro mushroom plate for two, to 54 euros for the five-course surprise menu. Menu items at Sonnenuhr vary from no-meat burgers at 9.50 euros to the no-meat steak entree at 16.50 euros. The restaurant features a full drink menu and changing wine list.

English menu: Available on request.

Information: Online: hotel-nicolay.de and facebook.com/Weinstubevegan; email: info@hotel-nicolay.de; phone: 06532-93910.

Alexander Riedel

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Satisfy your sweet tooth

Sweets Paradise, a buffet chain in Japan, specializes in desserts

By **RAY McINTOSH**

For Stars and Stripes

Americans often have a big sweet tooth. In Japan, even traditionally sweet dishes can taste savory to the Western palate, but for those who want dessert before their meal or even as a meal, the Japanese chain restaurant Sweets Paradise is the place to be.

Sweets Paradise is a Japanese buffet specializing in desserts. The chain has many locations, including eight in Tokyo.

The standard buffet is focused on dessert, with the most basic and cheapest option consisting mostly of cakes and cheesecakes. However, patrons may upgrade in stages to unlimited gelato or, ultimately, the savory buffet that includes pasta, fries, soup, salad and fruit.

For drinks, Sweets Paradise offers flavored water, juices, coffee and tea. Alcoholic drinks are available for an additional fee.

The menu is seasonal, so flavors and decor change every few months. There is no labeling in English and no symbols identifying common allergens.

Hidden in the tea bar is a laxative “diet tea” offered without any identifiable warnings or identifying marker, so using a translation app is highly recommended if you don’t understand Japanese.

Vegetarians should also be wary, as almost every dish on the basic buffet contains gelatin.

The many locations are often quite busy. Expect at least a two-hour wait time if you visit



AFTER HOURS JAPAN

Sweets Paradise

Location: The chain has many locations, including eight in Tokyo.

Hours: Varies by location

Prices: Range from 1,100 yen to 2,580 yen depending on which buffet plan you purchase (yen only, no credit cards)

Dress: Casual

Information: Online: sweets-paradise.jp

Ray McIntosh

without a reservation. You can make a reservation by downloading the Sweets Paradise app.

The app cannot be found by its English name in the App Store, and it has no translation options in the app, requiring the user to be able to read and write in Japanese. Some locations limit how many people can be put on a reservation, often a maximum of eight.

If you wish to make a reservation, do so about a month in advance.

If you are new to Japan, arrive at the buffet early, get on the lengthy waitlist, and shop around until there is availability for your party.

Once inside the restaurant, regardless of whether you have a reservation, you must wait in line to see the host to be let in.

When your turn arrives, you go to a vending machine to choose which of the five packages you want to purchase. This will deter-



PHOTOS BY RAY McINTOSH/For Stars and Stripes

Sweets Paradise, a buffet chain in Tokyo, offers various desserts and cheesecakes to those with an insatiable sweet tooth. The menu changes seasonally and upgraded options are available.

mine which buffets you have access to and how long you can stay.

Once you purchase your meal plan, you will be given a wristband, hand sanitizer and plastic gloves.

The basic buffet costs 1,100 yen, or about \$9.60, and allows you to stay for 50 minutes. Upgrading to the standard package includes the basic buffet with access to standard drinks. This costs 1,320 yen and allows you to stay for 70 minutes.

The recommended package allows you to stay 80 minutes, costs 1,490 yen and includes the basic buffet, standard drinks and the Haagen-Dazs gelato bar.

The special buffet package grants access to savory dishes such as the salad bar and “super crispy potatoes,” in addition to everything that is included in the recommended package.

The final package is called fruit paradise, which costs 2,580 yen and allows 100 minutes’ unlimited access to all buffets,

including the fruit section.

Children from age 4 to elementary school students are given a discount with prices ranging from 870 yen to 1,800 yen for the children’s pricing.

The portions, such as the pre-cut slices of cake and dishes to place food on, are on the large size by Japanese standards.

There is something for everyone willing to try something new. For those who love to eat sweets, Sweets Paradise is truly the place to be.



An upgradable option at the Sweets Paradise includes savory options and a fruit bar. There is also a savory buffet available for an extra cost.

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Calling all cat lovers

The Omatsu Daigongen Shrine in Japan is dedicated to a ghostly feline out for justice

Japan News

A shrine in Japan's Tokushima prefecture has about 10,000 beckoning cats on its grounds, drawing in not only cat lovers, but many students hoping to pass their exams.

What blessings does the shrine offer? And why are there so many cat statues at the shrine in the first place?

The legend of a ghost cat is at the heart of the shrine's origin.

Omatsu Daigongen Shrine is in Anan, Tokushima prefecture, about a 50-minute drive from Tokushima City along a mountain road.

A 6-foot-tall beckoning cat greeted me at the side of the main gate.

I followed cat footprints carved into the stone pathway and was suddenly struck by the feeling I had heard a cat meowing somewhere. Maybe it was just my imagination.

Beckoning cats are not the only cat statues on the grounds. There is a cat statue near the main hall said to heal any illness if you stroke the same part of the cat's body as where the illness lies in your own body.

Stone statues of unique cats line the paths in the shrine. The seven deities of good fortune also have a cat motif, each donning adorable smiles. A Buddha statue is modeled after the cat, with a face of indifference. There is also the Fudo Myoo — one of the Buddhist deities — cat statue with a graceful air to it.

It was as if the shrine could not decide between Buddhism and Shinto, but such a mixture of beliefs has been common since ancient times in Japan.

A woman named Omatsu from the Tokugawa Shogunate era in the 17th century was enshrined here following a mysterious story from that time.

There was a village near the shrine suffering from a poor harvest. The leader of the village was named Sobee, the husband of Omatsu. In an attempt to save everyone in the village, Sobee borrowed money from local millionaire Nogami Sanzaemon, using his own rice fields as collateral. Sobee returned the money, but could not get testimony from Sanzaemon that he had, and then Sobee died of illness.

Sanzaemon insisted the money had not been returned, and Sobee's rice fields were confiscated.



Japan News-Yomiuri

Beckoning cats fill the worship hall at Omatsu Daigongen Shrine in Anan, Tokushima prefecture. The legend of a ghost cat lies at the heart of the shrine.

Omatsu appealed to the local magistrate's office, but the magistrate did not listen to her after having received a bribe from Sanzaemon.

Omatsu then appealed directly to the lord of the Tokushima domain. However, at that time, such a direct complaint was illegal and punishable by death, no matter the reason. Omatsu was thus executed along with her calico cat.

After that, a ghost cat appeared around Sanzaemon and the magistrate, followed by the mysterious deaths of their family members. Both houses eventually disappeared.

Local people said it was a curse brought on by Omatsu and her cat, and they built a

shrine to worship a cat statue as the incarnation of Omatsu.

The legend became widely known, and Omatsu became the god of victory since she had ultimately triumphed over the villains. The shrine became crowded with people who wished to win, too, and pass examinations.

The shrine has a custom wherein visitors who make a wish take home one of the beckoning cat statues found there. When their wish is fulfilled, the person must then return the statue and buy another one to dedicate to the shrine and leave it there. This tradition has led to more and more beckoning cat statues at the shrine.

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WEEKEND: BOOKS

Discover 'the coolest place on Earth'

'Uniquely Japan' is a bright, colorful guide to fun and interesting things about the country

BY KELLY AGEE
Stars and Stripes

Are you new to Japan? Do you want to learn more about Japanese culture? If so, "Uniquely Japan" by Abby Denson, may be the book for you.

"Uniquely Japan" guides the reader into discovering what makes Japan "the coolest place on Earth" through Denson's comic book-style illustrations that show some of her favorite things about the country.

Denson has a long history with Japan that is reflected on every page. She first visited the country in 1997 while studying illustration at Parsons School of Design in New York City.

"I was starting to make my own comics and was interested in manga and Japanese comics culture, especially comics by and for women and girls," she told Stars and Stripes during a recent email interview.

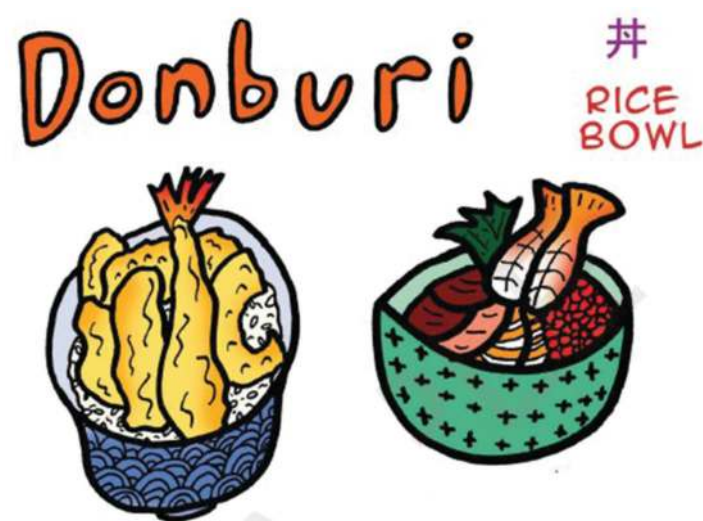
"At the time in the U.S. there weren't very many famous female American comic creators, so I was interested in learning more about that creative environment," she said. "I had started Japanese language classes, and then took a summer session at Sophia University in Tokyo."

It was a "life-changing experience" for Denson.

"Since then, I visit whenever I can, and I have visited Japan almost every year (before the pandemic) for about 10 years in a row," she wrote.

Denson's artistic talent shines in "Uniquely Japan," though she has illustrated Japan before in her books "Cool Japan Guide" and "Cool Tokyo Guide," for which she received Independent Publisher book awards.

"Uniquely Japan" is filled with photos taken by Denson and her friends during their visits to Japan. It also features neat



Tuttle Publishing photos

illustrations of Japanese food, animals and items. It is bright, colorful and eye-catching. It is an easy read for those who need images for visual stimulation.

"I wanted to do a book on cultural topics that would include my illustrations as well as photos that I've gathered over my Japan travels," Denson said. "I also wanted it to be more of a focus on my own personal favorite things about Japan, so it's not like a comprehensive textbook, but should be engaging for those who want to learn and have a fun read at the same time."

The book is easy to follow and split into chapters on the seasons in Japan, arts and crafts, sweets and street signs, just to name a few.

As a newbie to Japan, this book really did help me learn more about the culture and gave me ideas of places and things I want to see during my time here.

A particularly interesting chapter deals with creatures in Japan, the real and the mystical. A highlight was the Tengu, a legendary mountain spirit with a long nose and massive wings.

Tengu are known as tricksters highly skilled in martial arts, and they guard sacred mountains in Japan. There is a statue of a Tengu that people can visit atop Mount Takao in western Tokyo.

"Uniquely Japan" contains useful information as well.

The chapter on street signs cleared up my misperceptions about the lanterns on the roofs of taxis. It gave me the tip that when the sign is red, it means a taxi is

empty; when it is green, it is unavailable. As an American, I would have thought the opposite since red means stop and green means go.

"Uniquely Japan' is for people of all ages who are interested in learning about a variety of Japanese cultural topics and enjoy fun and bright illustrations," Denson said. "It could be a very good introduction to Japan for young readers and adults new to Japan, or an artistic object like a little coffee table book or gift for those who enjoy art books."

"Uniquely Japan" will be available April 5 for \$15.99 from Tuttle Publishing and can also be downloaded to Kindle devices on March 22.

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"Uniquely Japan" by Abby Denson guides the reader into discovering what makes Japan "the coolest place on Earth" through Denson's comic book-style illustrations that share some of her favorite things about the country. Below: An illustration of Godzilla.



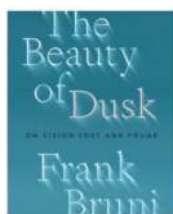
Frank Bruni's memoir offers a playbook on finding silver linings

BY STEVEN PETROW

Special to The Washington Post

One morning in the fall of 2017, Frank Bruni woke up unable to see out of his right eye. During the night, the journalist, then 52, had suffered a rare kind of stroke that ravaged one of his optic nerves. A few days later, a neuro-ophthalmologist warned him, "You know that this could happen in your other eye." Bruni asked what that risk might be. "About a forty percent chance," came the frightening answer.

Bruni's diagnosis was less a line in the sand than a fork in the road, reminding him that he, like most of us, has the agency to choose his path. Do we give into our "sadness and scaredness," or take "deliberate, concrete steps to move beyond them?" he asks in "The Beauty of Dusk:



On Vision Lost and Found."

Throughout the book, Bruni not only tells us his story but introduces a number of people who have come to that fork, including his mother, who challenged "doomsaying, defeatism and dark moods" after being diagnosed with uterine cancer and went on to confound her doctors and model a positive way of living to her son.

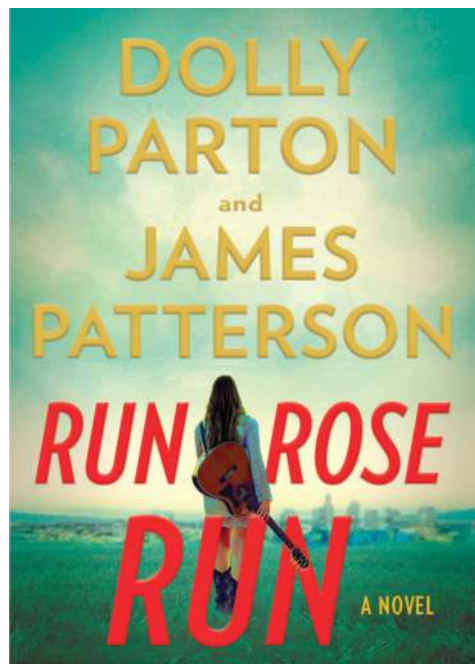
Bruni recalls how his attitude was as important as his treatment options. "My world blurred, but it also sharpened," he writes. "I held my breath; I exhaled. I said hello to new worries; I said goodbye to old ones. A clever friend of mine summed up my status wittily and well: 'When one eye closes another opens.'" A half-full glass kind of guy,

Bruni tells us his story isn't about making lemons out of lemonade or how the night is darkest before the dawn. "It's about dusk. It's about those first real inklings that the day isn't forever and that light inexorably fades."

On that fateful night, he adds, "I went to bed seeing the world one way. I woke up seeing it another."

"Imagine that our hardships, our hurdles, our demons, our pain were spelled out for everyone to see," he writes. "Imagine that each of us donned a sandwich board that itemized them." Bruni says his would be, "Eyesight compromised, could go blind." We all need to understand how little we may see of others' suffering. This is why one of the most popular and recurring social media memes is, "Be kind to others. You never know what someone is going through." Indeed.

WEEKEND: ENTERTAINMENT



BY HILLEL ITALIE
Associated Press

Sometimes even Dolly Parton has a hard time keeping up with the legend of Dolly Parton.

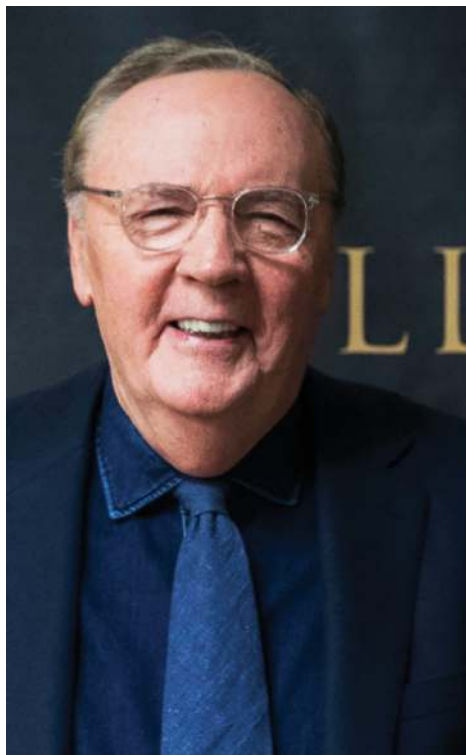
“I often go into my museum in Dollywood, you know, because I’m in the mood to be there or we’re in there doing something or putting something new in. And I look at all that stuff and think, ‘When, how did that happen?’” she says. “I shake my head when I see, like, a documentary or something. I think, how did I do all that? How did I get all that done?”

The singer, songwriter, actor and philanthropist is speaking from another wing of her empire, one of two soundstages at a 7,200-square-foot studio complex outside of Nashville, with assistants and technicians moving about and Parton herself in a characteristically cheerful mood on an otherwise overcast afternoon. Seated next to her — and wearing a dark tuxedo jacket touched with black and red to match the pattern of her dress — is a novelist as prolific in his field as she is in songwriting: James Patterson.

He is among the bestselling authors in history and, like Parton, a champion of literacy programs. He is 74 and has written or co-written hundreds of books. She is 76 and has written thousands of songs. Until a couple of years ago, they were mutual admirers who had never met. Now, they have completed a novel that came out this week, “Run, Rose, Run,” an Amazon.com bestseller even before publication and the rare work of fiction to arrive with an accompanying soundtrack.

“He’d give me ideas for the songs. I gave him ideas that he expanded on for the characters and incorporated in the book,” says Parton, whose “Run, Rose, Run” album includes 12 new songs. “So it really was a magical team.”

The collaboration began as just one of countless ideas for Patterson, who reliably turns out several books a year, from children’s stories to a biography of the Kennedys to two bestselling thrillers written with former President Bill Clinton.



AP photos

Author James Patterson, left, and the multitalented Dolly Parton were mutual admirers who quickly agreed to work together when they finally met a couple of years ago.

A story for both the eyes and ears

Author James Patterson, singer-songwriter Dolly Parton collaborate on ‘Run, Rose, Run’ novel and soundtrack

Patterson spent a lot of time in Nashville in the 1960s while attending Vanderbilt University and thought of an archetypal story — a young, promising and frightened country singer, AnnieLee Keyes, facing a “million to one odds,” and her bond with a retired country superstar, Ruthanna Ryder.

As Patterson and Parton both recall, Patterson contacted Parton’s team and the two soon spoke in Nashville.

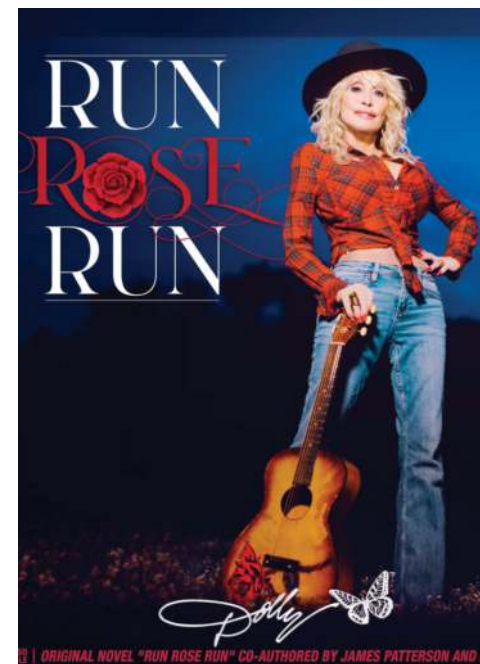
“We liked each other right away. And we kind of made the deal right there — no lawyers. We didn’t want anybody in the way,” Patterson says.

“Run, Rose, Run” is a close look at the Nashville music scene, through the eyes of women. The narrative has music and romance and cheering crowds, and lyrics to Parton songs such as the mid-tempo rocker “Big Dreams and Faded Jeans.” On the darker side are unscrupulous executives, unwanted physical advances and the male-oriented ways of the market, defined by a radio consultant’s “salad” theory in which men are the essential artists, “the lettuce,” and the women more like tomatoes “to be sprinkled into airplay

now and again as garnish.”

Parton, who famously rose from a cabin in the Great Smoky Mountains of East Tennessee to international acclaim, says her back story differs from AnnieLee’s. But she did endure “having bad managers and having to, you know, just squirm, trying to get out of situations.” AnnieLee’s struggles to take control of her career reminded Parton of her early work with Porter Waggoner, who helped her break through professionally in 1967 when he brought her on to his popular television show. They recorded and toured together for seven years, their battles well publicized, before she announced her departure. The end of their working partnership inspired her classic “I Will Always Love You.”

“Oh God, I used to fight all the time with Porter Waggoner,” she says of the late singer, who died in 2007. “We were known for, you know, for our disagreements. But he gave me a big hand up and I always appreciated that. But I (also) had always wanted to be my own star, and I said that at the start. I didn’t want to be just a girl singer in somebody else’s group.”



Parton’s life now is much closer to Ruthanna’s, “one of country music’s grandest queens.” But Parton is a bit gentler. When Ruthanna first meets AnnieLee, at a small table in the back of a bar, Ruthanna praises her talent as “something special” before advising her to “get the hell out of Nashville” and be spared ending up broke and on her own.

“I would never, ever tell somebody not to follow their dream,” Parton says. “I would just say, ‘If you’re dead serious about what you’re doing, you got to buckle up and take it. You’ve got to sacrifice as far as you can and compromise, but don’t ever sacrifice your soul and your principles and your values.’ That’s where Ruthanna and I differ. I would never tell a young person not to follow their dream because I would crush somebody. Even if they weren’t that talented, I wouldn’t tell them that.”

Ruthanna is out of the business and well pleased to be past the “desire to pour her heart out into a melody.” Parton is all in, writing so often she likes to tell Patterson that she could turn out a song while standing on her head. “Run, Rose, Run” is just one part of their 2022. His other books this year include the memoir “James Patterson: The Stories of My Life” and another “Michael Bennett” thriller. She hosted the Academy of Country Music Awards on the night her book came out and, via live-stream, will later this month appear for the first time at the SXSW Festival in Austin, Texas.

“Where would I go?” she says when asked if she would ever retire. “You can’t leave yourself behind. I would be doing my music, writing my songs if I had to sell them out of the trunk of my car. And I did that in the early days when I was young and trying to get things going. So I would do it no matter what, even if I had to take another job.”

“One of the similarities that Dolly and I have is, we don’t work for a living,” Patterson adds. “We play for a living. You don’t stop doing that. Why would you stop playing if you can, if you can do it?”

“He’d (James Patterson) give me ideas for the songs. I gave him ideas that he expanded on for the characters and incorporated in the book. So it really was a magical team.”

Dolly Parton

WEEKEND: MUSIC

'All of a sudden, you're everywhere'

You may know him as the 'Applebee's guy,' but Grammy-nominated country star Walker Hayes is more than a viral TikTok

By Emily Yahr

The Washington Post

In terms of metaphors, this one was a little too on the nose. During halftime of the NFL's AFC Championship in January, the CBS commentators started to discuss the game: "The answer is time, that's what Patrick Mahomes ...," Phil Simms began to say.

But he was immediately drowned out as the nearby speakers suddenly blasted the offscreen halftime performance from Walker Hayes, whose No. 1 smash "Fancy Like" is probably familiar to anyone who uses TikTok or has watched TV commercials in the past year: "FANCY LIKE APPLEBEE'S ON A DATE NIGHT, GOT THAT BOURBON STREET STEAK WITH THE OREO SHAKE / GET SOME WHIPPED CREAM ON THE TOP TOO / TWO STRAWS, ONE CHECK, GIRL, I GOT YOU ..."

The commentators were barely audible for the rest of the show as Hayes' music took over; viewers found this hilarious, and a video clip of it blew up online. ("Someone at CBS forgot to check halftime show speaker levels ...") But the situation was also oddly symbolic of the past eight months of Hayes' life, as he has catapulted from a country singer struggling to find a lane to inescapable star.

"That is exactly how this past year has gone," Hayes, 42, said in an interview. "You don't plan for it, and then all of a sudden, you're everywhere."

Hayes, who not long ago had to squeeze in early-morning shifts stocking coolers at Costco before songwriting sessions to provide for his wife and six kids, now performs on late-night shows and morning shows and award shows and "Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve with Ryan Seacrest." Next month, he will attend the Grammy Awards, where the double-platinum "Fancy Like" — which blew up on TikTok and is an ode to life's simple pleasures, including eating at one of America's most popular casual dining spots — is nominated for best country song. On Monday night, he performed at the Academy of Country Music Awards, where he had five nominations but went home empty-handed.

But much of the audience who only know him as the "Applebee's guy" know little about his long, winding journey as one of country music's most intriguing and polarizing songwriters. Or, they're just starting to discover a deeper catalogue that includes songs about Hayes' battle with alcoholism and the fear of being so broke that you

SEE EVERYWHERE ON PAGE 29

Much of the audience who only know Walker Hayes as the "Applebee's guy," an allusion to his megahit "Fancy Like," know little about his long, winding journey.

Robert Chavers



WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS

Everywhere: Song about date night took off through TikTok

FROM PAGE 28

can't afford a car with enough seat belts for all of your children. Most don't know about the past 18 years, where he tried repeatedly to launch a career in Nashville despite constantly being told that his pop-heavy music was too offbeat to ever work.

"I mean, I'm so grateful. But I think the frustrating thing is I still don't know how it's all happening," Hayes said. "You don't expect so many yeses, especially in this town. And lately, no one's told us no. It's a little unnerving. You're like: What's going on right now? How has people's perception of what I do changed so drastically in such a short amount of time?"

"It's just still weird to think back. Eight months ago, there was so much uncertainty," he continued. "And now I am certain I will have a job for at least 10 more years."

This is not false modesty. In 2015, Hayes had been dropped from two record deals after a decade in Nashville and was starting to seriously reconsider whether a music career was a feasible long-term plan.

Then came Shane McAnally, the powerhouse country songwriter and producer who had once declined to sign Hayes to a songwriting deal at his publishing company, figuring that his quirky habits — beat-boxing, unique phrasing, talk-singing, name-dropping brands, writing about extremely specific life experiences — wouldn't fit for other artists. But in 2016, McAnally decided that Hayes' music was impressive enough that he deserved a shot as an artist. So he signed him to a record deal at his label, Monument Records.

"The thing you get, always, with Walker, is, 'Wow, that's an incredible song. I don't know what you're going to do with it, but that's amazing,'" said Robert Carlton, Hayes' manager and the senior vice president of development at McAnally's publishing company, SmackSongs. Seeing Hayes' career finally take off has been mind-blowing: "It's so validating, because you believe in something for so long and you're just banging your head against the wall trying to figure out what to do."

Hayes' breakout moment is almost too fitting for a singer who never followed the "traditional" country path by getting a big hit at radio. After he was signed by McAnally, the deceptively jaunty "You Broke Up With Me" became his first hit single in 2017. But his follow-up songs didn't get any traction, and it felt like he was back at square one.

Then, last summer, he released "Fancy Like," an upbeat track he wrote with Cameron Bartolini, Josh Jenkins and Shane Stevens, with a chorus about going to Applebee's on a date night. (A place where Hayes and his high school sweetheart wife, Laney, have spent lots of time.) His teenage daughter, Lela, decided it needed an accompanying dance on TikTok; the two bonded during the coronavirus pandemic by learning TikTok dances together. After church one Sunday, they spent



JOHN LOCHER/AP

Walker Hayes performs a medley at the 57th Academy of Country Music Awards on Monday at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas.

about an hour coming up with the "Fancy Like" routine before Hayes posted it.

Soon, the video was racking up so many views that he assumed there was a glitch in the app. Fans started sharing their own versions of the dance; within weeks, Hoda Kotb and Jenna Bush Hager invited him on "Today" to show off their version of the dance, too. Kesha recorded a remix. Applebee's came calling to use the song in an ad campaign in a series of unstoppable TV commercials. The original video racked up more than 35 million views, and more importantly, translated into sales: It was the second-highest-selling digital song in the country in 2021, behind only BTS' "Butter."

Hayes found a huge audience of new fans, all charmed by his adorable and slightly chaotic large family, who make frequent appearances on his social media. (Hayes has explained that when you have six kids, taking everyone to Applebee's truly constitutes a fancy meal.) That's one reason the original TikTok exploded: It was a genuinely joyful moment between a dad and his daughter.

Carlton admitted that there was talk of an image makeover for Hayes, but ultimately, they realized his everyday-dad image is what draws people to him: "He's 100 percent himself ... and when you're 100 percent you, other people will feel that."

"I think if you asked my label, they didn't orchestrate that or intend for me to go on TikTok and do dances with my daughter," Hayes said. "But we probably wouldn't be here right now if that song wasn't accompanied by such a magical visual."

Every viral hit comes with haters. And sure enough, the earworm that is "Fancy Like" (popular enough to now be officially at "overplayed" status) drives some people crazy. One viral video shows a man repeatedly punching his car radio when the song starts playing; Hayes posted the clip himself with cry-laughing emoji and the caption: "Gotta give props for the creativity."

"I wouldn't say he's unfazed by [the criticism], but when you've been writing songs that no one has ever heard for years and years, it's a huge compliment for someone to be like, 'I've heard that song so much I hate it,'" Carlton said. "That's the dream right there."

Yet like with so many artists who be-

came stars thanks to huge pop hits, Hayes' music goes much deeper. "AA," his latest song climbing the country radio charts, has a laid-back tone directly in contrast with candid lyrics about the challenges of sobriety. "Briefcase," one of the standouts on his new record, "Country Stuff the Album," was co-written with famed Nashville singer-songwriter Lori McKenna. Its heart-wrenching lyrics detail how Hayes hated seeing his father's briefcase as a kid, because it meant he was leaving on a business trip; now, he deals with the same feelings as he picks up his guitar case to go on tour.

McKenna recalled the two of them writing the song over Zoom in the height of the pandemic; Hayes came in with the concept, and she was blown away. "I said, 'Oh my God, this is an incredible idea,'" said McKenna, who is a featured vocalist on the song. "It's in the heart of an incredible artist that knows how to write really well."

Hayes has the reputation in Nashville as a great songwriter, she said, and credits it to his authenticity: "I don't think Walker could ever write or sing something that he didn't think was true."

While "Briefcase" has become a fan favorite at Hayes' concerts, it also contains the absolute truth about Hayes' anxieties about spending time away from his children. At one point over the past year, he started to regret being gone so often. He told Carlton that although he was thrilled "Fancy Like" was paying off for the label after its investment in him, if he didn't figure out a way to balance his family life, he was done.

"If I gotta choose between family and fame, it's a very easy decision to me," Hayes said. "I don't even have to sit and think about it."

Eventually, he was making enough money to pay for a second tour bus, bringing his wife and children (already being home-schooled) on the road with him. And while his whirlwind year is still an adjustment, he can't help but think about what's next; playing that NFL halftime show lit a spark, and he keeps thinking about what it might be like to headline a stadium show one day.

"When I walked offstage, I felt something. It was like, 'I'm born to do this. That is what I want to do,'" he said. "So that's a fun unrealistic goal for me to chase ... I love to chase the impossible ones, because look what happens when you do that."

Rick Holmstrom

Get It!

(LuEllie Records)

Guitarist Rick

Holmstrom's new

album is an all-

instrumental col-

lection of toe-tappers, thigh-slappers and finger-snappers. There's an irresistible backbeat, and the mood is upbeat. Grin and hear it.

Holmstrom, who has worked with Mavis Staples for the past 15 years, draws on antecedents reaching back much farther than that, to the days when the electric guitar was ubiquitous on the pop charts. His playing is a stylish swirl of hipster funk, twang, the blues and garage rock — in fact, most of "Get It!" was recorded in a Los Angeles garage.

Accompanied by drummer Steve Mugaian and bassist Gregory Boaz, Holmstrom tears through 14 tunes, all original, in less than 40 minutes. There's plenty of playful interplay and the rhythm always jumps, whether Holmstrom's band of joy is evoking a prayer meeting, sock hop, beach party or juke joint.

Holmstrom plays a distinctive mix of lead and rhythm guitar, as he does with Staples. His neck excursions combine dips and scoops, lyrical runs, toggles between registers and shimmering chord clusters. Notes cascade, collide, argue and agree. It's all in good fun, and words would just get in the way.

— Steven Wine
Associated Press

Alice Glass

PREY//IV

(Eating Glass Records)

Alice Glass is the

blueprint for hyper-

pop — the new

music genre loved

by Gen Z and trend-

ing on TikTok. In her long-awaited solo full-length album, "PREY//IV," the queen of electro-punk is back and asking, "Where would you be without me?"

She's in full control, using her raw voice and lyrics as she details the end of a toxic relationship and getting to a place where the "Sorrow Ends."

Glass parted ways with indie electronic pop group Crystal Castles in 2014 and later publicly addressed abuse at the hands of a former bandmate. Her album makes references to darker times in Crystal Castles in the lyrics and the album title.

In her first song on the album symbolically named "Prey" she asks the listener: "Do you believe me? Does it matter?"

Through the vulnerability of her lyricism, Glass pulls back the curtain on her pain and stands in her power. On "Prey//IV," the Canadian musician uses her voice as an instrument to create a complex soundscape over dark electro-pop beats.

In her stirring song "Fair Game," Glass flips the cutting criticism and manipulative words of the abuser back onto them. "I know you don't know this but you're a cliché," she sings. "You screw up everything."

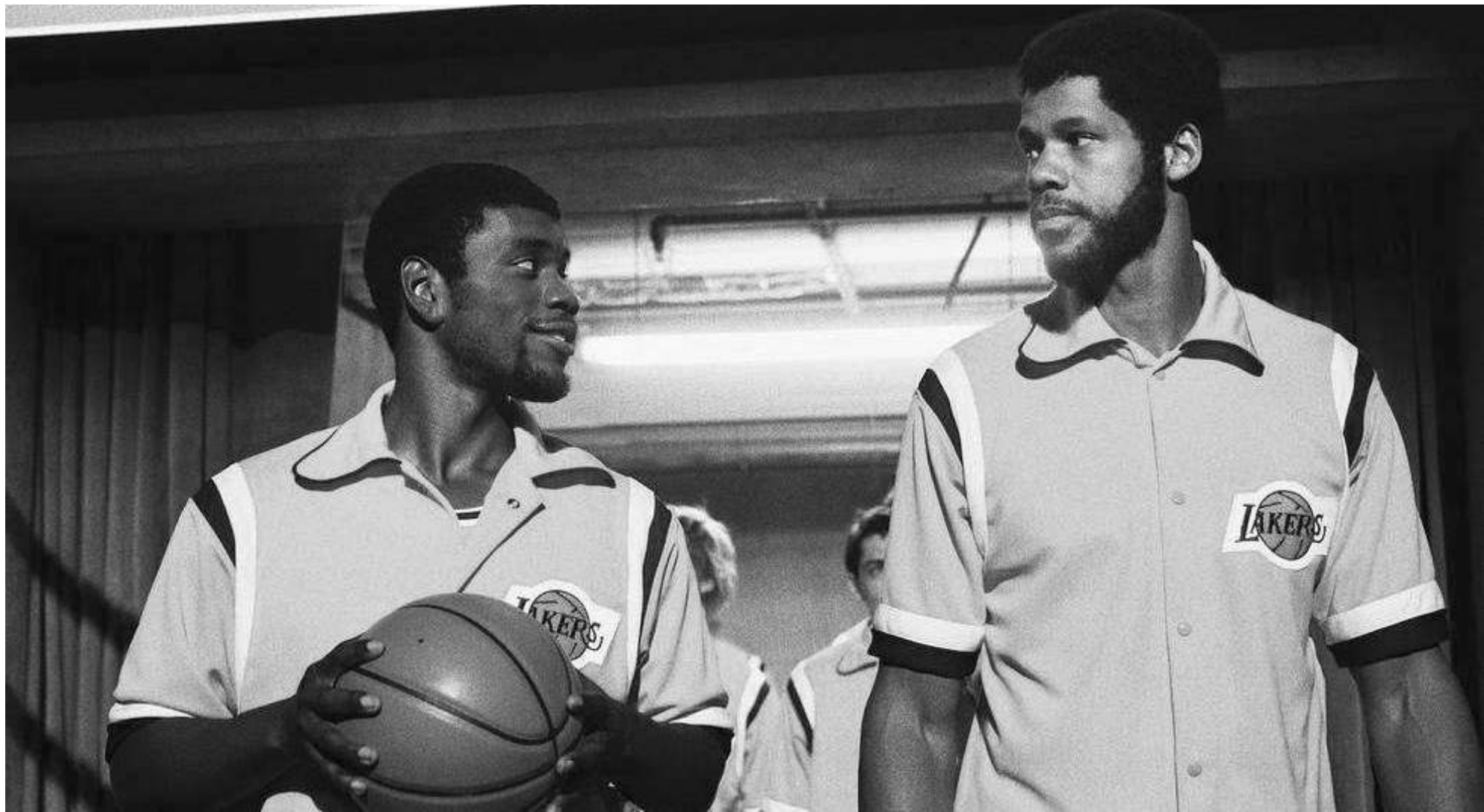
The song is a defining moment for Glass. It's her biting back at all those who have questioned her rise since leaving Crystal Castles.

— Beatrice Dupuy
Associated Press



RICK HOLMSTROM

WEEKEND: TELEVISION



HBO photos

Quincy Isaiah, left, and Solomon Hughes star as Lakers legends on the rise Earvin "Magic" Johnson and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar in "Winning Time: The Rise of the Lakers Dynasty."

Athleticism and entertainment

HBO series 'Winning Time' a portrait of Lakers during 'Showtime' era of '80s

BY GREG BRAXTON
Los Angeles Times

When NBA legend Michael Jordan reminisced about his remarkable career and final championship season with the Chicago Bulls in 2020's "The Last Dance," viewers turned up in droves, making the ESPN docuseries an instant smash.

HBO is hoping to score a similar victory with a strikingly different story of basketball greatness, one that could easily be subtitled "Flashdance." "Winning Time: The Rise of the Lakers Dynasty" stars a veteran team of top-tier performers and a pair of screen rookies portraying NBA legends Earvin "Magic" Johnson and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

Set at the start of the "Showtime" era of the 1980s Los Angeles Lakers, the series, which premiered March 6, depicts how the team, with an assist from the fresh-faced rookie Johnson and the dominant but moody Abdul-Jabbar, realized owner Jerry Buss' revolutionary vision of mixing muscular athleticism with noisy, sexy entertainment, transforming the franchise into a dazzling powerhouse with world-wide popularity.

Like "The Last Dance," "Winning Time" is filled with strong, colorful personalities; intense locker room drama; memorable allusions to pop culture; and the pressurized frenzy of sporting fame.

Against its predecessor's relatively straightforward approach, anchored by

talking head interviews with the key players, "Winning Time" is an extensively researched, rollicking tale of flash, cash and clashes, filled with outrageous situations likely to make viewers wonder, "Did that really happen that way?" It's the latest from executive producer Adam McKay, who directed the pilot and injects the series with the irreverent flavor of his other projects, with family drama to rival "Succession" and stylistic touches remi-

Barnes: "At its core, this is about the creation of entertainment and show around basketball. People will get a better idea of the business of basketball, plus the behind-the-scenes stuff you didn't know, along with the things you did know."

"Winning Time" kicks off a flood of forthcoming TV projects celebrating the Lakers, who are currently struggling though a low-octane season of uninspired play and relentless scrutiny of manage-

We want everyone to have a blast watching this. It's a show about how basketball changed culture. This moment in American history changed the NBA and influenced our culture on a global scale."

Max Borenstein

co-creator, showrunner and executive producer, "Winning Time: The Rise of the Lakers Dynasty"

niscent of his films "The Big Short," "Vice" and "Don't Look Up."

"We want everyone to have a blast watching this," said co-creator, showrunner and executive producer Max Borenstein. "It's a show about how basketball changed culture. This moment in American history changed the NBA and influenced our culture on a global scale."

Added executive producer Rodney

ment decisions. Current owner and president Jeanie Buss (daughter of Jerry) and filmmaker Antoine Fuqua ("Training Day") are developing a nine-part documentary series exploring the team's history during the last four decades for Hulu. And Johnson will be the subject of his own four-part docuseries, "They Call Me Magic," scheduled to premiere in April on Apple TV+.



These authorized endeavors are not likely to have the salacious edge or free-wheeling energy of "Winning Time." Characters break the fourth wall, commenting on the action and winking at the audience. On-screen captions identify characters, often with unflattering descriptions. The dialogue is crammed with expletives.

Some viewers may be startled by some of the excessive behavior, Barnes acknowledged: "Anytime you do some kind of rendition of a team or players or individuals, there are many facets. There is the public persona, the persona within the game, and then you have aspects of who a person may be, based upon the research that we've done."

He added, "I think it's a fully realized portrait. No human being is one particular thing. We don't do anything in 'Winning Time' that is disparaging, or at least that's not the intent. This is done out of love and appreciation for the Lakers and the game itself."

SEE LAKERS ON PAGE 31

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

Like father, like son

DeVaughn Nixon suits up to play his dad, former Laker 'Stormin' Norman, in new HBO series 'Winning Time'

By JOSHUA AXELROD
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Norm Nixon hasn't lost any of the fire or swag that helped the Duquesne University basketball legend win two championships with the "Showtime" Lakers of the 1980s. For proof, just ask his son, DeVaughn.

"We'll be watching basketball games and he'll be like, 'DeVaughn, you know I was a beast on that court,'" Nixon, 38, said. "When I go back to Pittsburgh and Macon [Ga.], they know your dad."

"I'm like, 'All right man, I get it, you played for the NBA and you're better than me. That's why I act.'"

Nixon has been working in Hollywood since he was a kid, but he recently embarked on his greatest acting challenge yet: portraying his father in "Winning Time: The Rise of the Lakers Dynasty," which premiered March 6 on HBO. The series is based on Jeff Pearlman's 2014 book, "Showtime: Magic, Kareem, Riley, and the Los Angeles Lakers Dynasty of the 1980s."

Both the book and show highlight the many colorful characters who contributed to the Lakers winning five NBA championships from 1980 through 1988 — including "Stormin'" Norman Nixon.

"My biggest thing with doing this was to put the looking glass on him for a change," his son said. "He's always been a very private person ... but I think he's going to thoroughly enjoy it."

Movies were always a huge part of Nixon's life. His mother — actor, dancer and choreographer Debbie Allen — would

regularly drop off him and his grandfather at a Los Angeles movie theater and the two would spend the day theater-hopping until she picked them up later that evening. Watching the way pop star Michael Jackson was able to draw emotion out of a crowd also helped instill Nixon with a passion for performing.

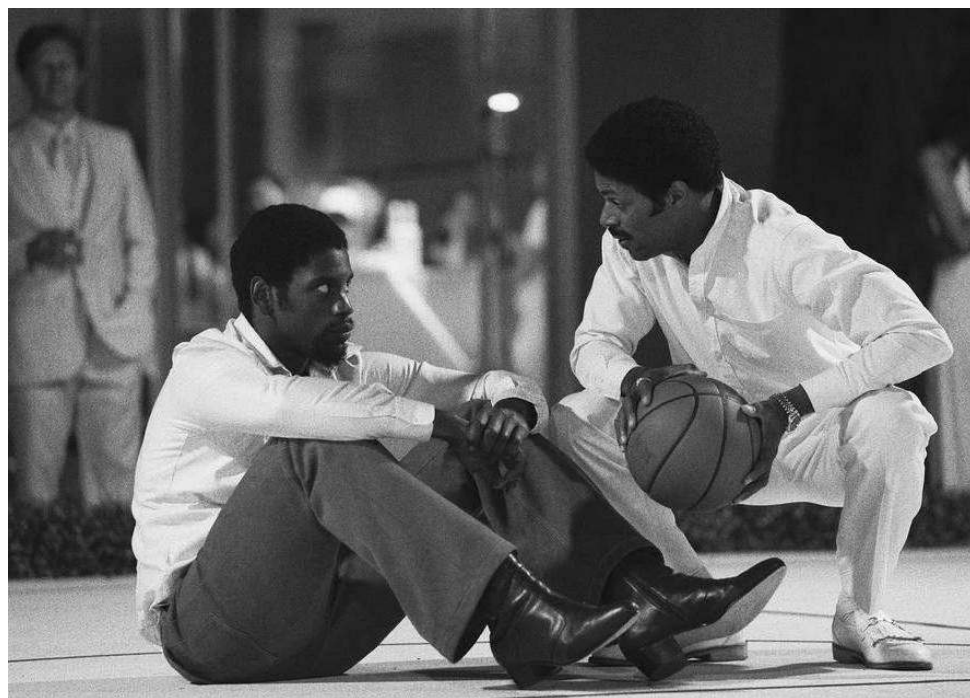
He began his entertainment career as a model for a video game, which is where talent scouts first saw his face. Soon he was making movies. Nixon was only 5 years old when he acted in his first movie, 1990's "To Sleep with Anger." He went on to have small roles in classics like 1991's "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" and 1992's "The Bodyguard."

Since then, most of Nixon's work has been on the small screen. Before "Winning Time," he appeared in "Runaways" on Hulu and "Snowfall" on FX.

Being Norm Nixon's son did not mean DeVaughn automatically was selected to play his own father. He had to audition and actually went up against his brother, Norm Jr., for the role. There was "a little inherent competition" going on between the brothers, but they agreed early on that this part should definitely go to one of them. There were no hard feelings when DeVaughn was ultimately cast as Norm Nixon.

Playing his father put Nixon in a unique position. He knew there wasn't much he could offer to the creatives behind "Winning Time," especially executive producer Adam McKay. But there were times when he felt compelled to say, "My dad wouldn't do that."

"I did my best to please [my dad] while



HBO

DeVaughn Nixon, right, plays his father, Norm Nixon, who won two championships with the Los Angeles Lakers, in "Winning Time." Also shown: Quincy Isaiah.

also pleasing the writers and producers," he said. "I had to marry those two, and that was the biggest challenge for me."

His version of Norm Nixon is dripping with bravado when "Winning Time" starts. At that point, Nixon was the Lakers' undisputed starting point guard. That would change when the team drafted immediate franchise-changer Earvin "Magic" Johnson (Quincy Isaiah). Nixon said he started off "a little over the top" in portraying his father, but his dad eventually "simmer down a little bit" as he accepts his new role.

DeVaughn feels like his father's early contributions to the Lakers sometimes get overlooked. One of the reasons he was so excited to play this part was to "let people know that he's a bad mofo." "Winning Time" establishes that quickly in the pilot as Nixon easily takes down a young Magic Johnson in a game of one-on-one.

"I felt like that scene kind of did him a little bit of justice," Nixon said. "It's a bit of a metaphor showing how great of a player he was. Obviously some things were added and some truths were stretched. But that's television."

Nixon believes "Winning Time" will win over viewers "whether you're a sports lover or not." He thinks they'll leave both dazzled by how the basketball scenes are shot and feeling like they learned a lot about an important time in NBA history.

Most importantly, he hopes the series will finally put the proper amount of respect on the name Norm Nixon.

"I feel like my dad's stock is going to rise," he said. "I feel like they're going to start bringing out his jerseys again. His cards are going to go flying off the shelf. ... I think this is going to create opportunities for both of us."

Lakers: Actors say they admire team, the former players they portray

FROM PAGE 30

The star-studded cast includes John C. Reilly as Lakers owner and man-about-town Jerry Buss; Jason Clarke as Laker legend Jerry West; Adrien Brody as coach Pat Riley; Jason Segel as his Shakespeare-quoting colleague Paul Westhead; Sally Field as Jerry's mother, Jessie Buss; and Hadley Robinson as young Jeanie.

Occupying the center of the action are newcomers Quincy Isaiah and Solomon Hughes, who play Johnson and Abdul-Jabbar, respectively. Both have minimal acting experience: Isaiah, who like Johnson hails from Michigan, has had a few minor roles. Hughes, a former college basketball player and Harlem Globetrotter who earned a doctorate in higher education from the University of Georgia and lectured at Stanford University's School of Higher Education, is making his professional acting debut.

And aside from the massive Lakers fan base devoted to all things purple and gold, Isaiah and Hughes may be the two people most excited for "Winning Time."

"I was a Shaq (O'Neal) fan, so naturally I loved the Lakers," Isaiah said during a recent joint Zoom interview with Hughes.

"Since I was a kid, I've been a Kareem kid," the latter piped in. "His autobiography 'Giant Steps,' along with 'The Autobiography of Malcolm X,' were some of the first books I ever read. To play someone that I've admired my whole life is just surreal."

The first chapters of "Winning Time" chronicle the tension that arises between the two stars after Johnson is drafted by the Lakers in 1979. The no-nonsense Abdul-Jabbar, who loves jazz and is deeply dedicated to his Muslim faith and to Black culture, had little patience for most people, including his teammates — and at first, the upbeat, eager-to-please rookie was no exception. But they soon evolved into a phenomenal force on the court, and close friends off it.

"Kareem isn't sure how he feels about the game, and then this young kid comes in and breathes life into the organization and gives it new wings," Hughes said.

Stepping into the high-top sneakers of superstars was a challenge for both actors, neither of whom consulted with his character's real-life counterpart.

It was particularly difficult to portray moments that illustrated Johnson's and

Abdul-Jabbar's frailties.

"It's tough; I'm not going to lie," Isaiah said. "You're playing someone who is beloved, a hero. It's tough to see that the people you look up to are human. But it's also helpful. It shows that they're not that different from you. You can mess up, make mistakes and still come out on top."

He added, "You don't do a show like this without a deep admiration and love for what they did and who they are. I just hope the people see that — that these people are human but also extraordinary."

"There is definitely fear and trepidation in playing these guys," Hughes added. "But I don't take for granted the opportunity to honor these men, to tell their story and show what they built, the coming together of sports and entertainment. These were the two players at the center of making that happen."

Borenstein and Barnes were ecstatic about Isaiah's and Hughes' performances. Both actors were cast after a long and arduous nationwide search in which hundreds of actors were considered.

"Not only did we have to find actors who could pull [off] the likeness of Magic and Kareem and reasonably play basketball,

but we needed actors who could embody those unique and very different characteristics," Borenstein said. "Magic has this extraordinary charisma and charm — the kind of movie-star charisma that even movie stars don't have — while Kareem has this gravitas, this intellectual weight."

"The casting gods smiled down on us," Barnes added. "Quincy is from Michigan, so there's already this understanding of who Magic is as a person. And he is a big personality — he looks like Magic and has that million-dollar smile. Solomon has that intellectual conviction and a big heart. Plus, they got along. Their dynamic is much like what I imagine Magic and Kareem are in real life. They were able to go from having very little acting experience to totally carrying that storyline."

Both actors hope that viewers enjoy the project. Isaiah also has a message for viewers who recognize him after "Winning Time" airs.

"I just want to say this — this is TV," he said. "I don't want anyone to come up to me challenging me to a game of one-on-one."

"Winning Time: The Rise of the Lakers Dynasty" is now streaming on HBO Max.

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS



Although notoriously challenging, experts say each component of the exercise can be broken down, practiced separately

BY RACHEL FAIRBANK
The Washington Post

There is perhaps no exercise as feared or recommended as a burpee. A full burpee combines a squat, jump-back, plank, push-up and a jump in the air into one continuous movement.

“Burpees are a fully functional exercise,” said Ben Walker, a personal trainer and owner of Anywhere Fitness, based in Dublin. Different body parts have to work together, while also developing a fuller range of movement. “This promotes better movement and flexibility in our everyday life.”

The burpee was invented in the 1930s by a physiologist named Royal H. Burpee Sr., as a way to test a person’s fitness. It was later adapted by the U.S. Army to evaluate recruits’ fitness levels.

Given how hard each of these separate exercises can be, combining them into a single exercise is a tough task, but one that develops and shows flexibility and improves range of motion, strength and cardiovascular conditioning.

“One of the biggest benefits is that burpees challenge the cardiovascular system as well as the muscular system in one catchall movement,” said Jacque Crockford, a personal trainer and senior product manager with the American Council on Exercise. “When done appropriately, the burpee can be a high-reward exercise.”

If you’d like to access some of the benefits of burpees, but don’t know where to start, these are some ways to safely and gradually work your way up to them.

When it comes to learning to do a full burpee, think of it as an end-goal, rather than the beginning.

“You’re much better off building up slowly and steadily, rather than overdoing it on day one and potentially hurting yourself,” said Vijay Jotwani, a sports physician at Houston Methodist Hospital.

The risk of pushing yourself too hard, too fast is that burpees require a high degree of flexion in the wrists, elbows, shoulders, hips and knees, which can increase the risk of straining or injuring a muscle or ligament. To build up slowly, focus first on the individual components or modified burpees.

“Just because someone does something one way doesn’t mean that it is incorrect to do it another way, especially if you have particular needs in your own body that you have to be managing,” Crockford said. “Giving yourself a little bit of grace is important.”

A gradual approach can help avoid overtraining and injury.

“As long as someone is listening to their body and slowly advancing the intensity of their exercise, the risk of injury is low,” Jotwani said.

If you are recovering from an injury or have any concern, talk with your doctor and work with a certified fitness professional who can suggest additional modifications.

One of the challenges of burpees is the quick transition from a prone to an upright position. If you are dehydrated or recovering from an illness, this can cause dizziness. Be sure to hydrate well, and if the

dizziness persists, be sure to talk with your doctor.

If you are struggling with one or several of the burpee’s components, work on them separately until you are comfortable doing each one.

“The whole burpee can be broken down and workshopped,” said Cat Kom, a personal trainer and the founder of Studio SWEAT onDemand in San Diego.

Starting with individual movements gives you the space to focus on developing the necessary strength. Combining them into a single continuous movement has the added benefit of getting your heart rate up, which helps with cardiovascular conditioning.

Moving from repetitions of a single body weight exercise to the combined movement of a burpee, however, means adding in transitions, most notably the jump into and out of the plank position.

“In my experience, the jump-back is usually the most fearful part of a burpee,” Walker said.

1. Step-back burpees

One way of getting used to the transition from a plank to an upright position is to do a step-back burpee. For this modification, you step back into the plank position, and then step forward to return to an upright position. Kom recommends bringing your hands upward again, reaching toward the ceiling, to prepare yourself for doing the same during a full burpee.

A step-back burpee will also help with hip and ankle mobility, which is needed for the jump.

“Because you are moving your body from a horizontal position back to a vertical one, there is some extreme hip flexibility that is necessary,” Crockford said.

2. Half-burpee

Once you have developed enough hip flexibility to do a step-back burpee, you can then progress to a half-burpee, where you assume a plank position, jumping your feet forward and then back again.

3. Half-burpee with squat

When you are comfortable with a half-burpee, one variation is to add in a half-squat after jumping your feet forward. Then, you’ll jump your feet back again, returning to a plank position.

4. Half-burpee with pushup

To get used to adding in a pushup, you can do a half-burpee, for which you’ll just be jumping your feet forward and back, adding in the pushup right after you return to a plank position.

5. Squat jumps

One of the final components of a burpee is to go from a squatting position to a jump in the air, a movement that can be practiced separately. Once you are comfortable with all of these modified versions, you can combine them for a full burpee.

There are other ways to modify the different components of a burpee to suit your needs and goals.

“Every part of the burpee can be modified,” Kom said. “There’s a burpee for everybody.”

“Just because someone does something one way doesn’t mean that it is incorrect to do it another way, especially if you have particular needs in your own body that you have to be managing. Giving yourself a little bit of grace is important.”

Jacque Crockford

personal trainer, senior product manager with the American Council on Exercise

WEEKEND: FAMILY

‘A global teachable moment’

Experts offer tips for helping kids understand the situation in Ukraine

By AMY JOYCE

The Washington Post

The day after Russia first attacked Ukraine, I passed the Russian Embassy with my 12-year-old son. People were gathered at its ominous gates, protesting that country's invasion.

“What have you heard so far about Ukraine and what's happening?” I asked him. I was taking advice from experts who say when something scary happens, first ask how much our children know and go from there. My son knew a decent amount. And then I asked: “How do you get your information?”

“SportsCenter,” he said.

He and his 14-year-old brother, who gets much of his news from Instagram, TikTok and texts from friends, had a grasp of what was happening, but they didn't understand why or how. They also are dodging a lot of misinformation.

If you think your kids don't know about Putin's war against Ukraine, you're wrong. They're hearing about it, and as their caretakers, we need to make sure information is correct — and that they aren't immediately anxious that we're on the verge of World War III.

“Most kids will have heard something about this on TV, radio, social media, from friends,” says Richard Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations. And much like the Cuban missile crisis implanted itself on his 11-year-old brain forever, “this won't be something they'll forget,” Haass says.

I spoke with several experts who explain how parents of tweens and teens should look to this terrible time as an opportunity to discuss global issues — and to help them understand how to help. Maybe we parents will learn a few things in the process.

Kids are taking the news in. Now what?

“As much as we think our kids don't hear what we're anxious about, I think they do,” says Caroline Netchvolodoff, vice president of education at the Council on Foreign Relations. “I have four sons. One of the things I've learned very clearly is kids do pick up on what their parents are anxious about. ... They are aware.”

Kids of different ages require different kinds of explanations and parental involvement, she says.

When Emma Humphries asked her 10-year-old what she had heard and what she thought was going on, her daughter said, “I heard we're going to have a World War III.” Humphries, a former history teacher and now chief education officer at

iCivics, a nonprofit that promotes civics education and provides educational resources for teachers, knew to frame what is happening in a historical way, comparing it to the previous world wars, and explaining how it is different.

“Whenever you're in a current moment and it feels scary or fraught, you can lean into the history and use that for the framework” of your conversation, she says.

For parents of older kids who are accessing Ukraine news via

TikTok or other social media, now is the time to get involved. When they mention something they saw or read, sit with them while they show you where they gain their knowledge. Treating this as something you're figuring out together will keep them from feeling like they have to hide it from you.

“In this fog of war, we're getting such incomplete information,” Humphries says. “So talk to them about their sources. Ask, ‘Can we find this information in other places? Are they reputable?’”

Find resources, meet them where they are

The Council on Foreign Relations and iCivics recently created “Convene the Council,” an online game for ages 12 and older, aimed at showing how the president of the United States makes foreign policy decisions. The Ukraine situation is an “extreme example” of a foreign policy challenge, Netchvolodoff says, but playing alongside your child as they worry and wonder about the situation in Eastern Europe can help provide them with more information about how things work. And more knowledge can mean more ease as they see pictures and videos and hear friends talking about what's going on.

“In some cases, you're co-learning” with your children, says Julie Silverbrook, senior director of partnerships at iCivics.

“The good news is you've got something ... that will elicit questions from a younger person. It's a way for parents to say here's what's going on,” Haass says. He suggests you take a moment and look at a map together. You can talk about the invasion and ask your tween or teen questions, so they understand that question so many are asking: Why should we care?

“You can talk about freedom, about the importance of democracy,” Haass says. “So much tends to be abstract. Here you have pictures and videos. Suddenly it doesn't seem so remote. It's all too graphic and real.”

Stop scrolling, start doing

It's easy for any of us to scroll through Twitter and Instagram, to feel anxiety and sorrow and then what?

“Any time you have a global crisis, if you look throughout world history, there has been an awakening that happens about your place as an individual, as a family, in the world,” Silverbrook says. “The pandemic really illustrated that we're all interconnected. ... Now there's a feeling of a call to service for humankind.”

Now is the perfect time to sit down with your children and figure out how they can help. Feeling as if they can

have some impact during such a tumultuous time

gives them agency and a feeling that they can

make a difference. There

are many vetted places that

you can peruse together before

you decide what to do, or how.

Again, this is a good time to talk

about legitimate sources.

“What we have here is a global teachable moment,”

Humphries says. “This is the type of moment that

allows us to have those conversations.”

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari

**A Lenten ode to my caffeinated companion**

Sometimes, I worry that I might be addicted to caffeine. When this happens, I quit cold turkey for a while, usually during Lent. Since my primary source of caffeine is coffee, I'm forced to give it up during these decaffeinated hiatuses, which isn't easy considering that coffee is not only my morning beverage of choice, it is my lifestyle, my culture, my manifesto, my identity.

I am a coffee drinker, through and through.

It all began in 10th grade when I couldn't manage to stay awake during geometry class. Every morning at 8 a.m., my big, sandy, iron-curved head of hair would bob and my purple frosted eyelids would droop while my peers giggled and Mr. Sistek scowled.

In an effort to end this daily public humiliation, I tried pinching my leg, chewing gum, shaking my head and doodling in the margins of my textbook, but nothing kept my adolescent brain from slipping into slumber.

At home, I observed that my mother relied on a scoop of Folgers Instant in a cup of hot water to start her day with a boost of energy, so I gave that a try. Once prepared and cooled, I chugged the mug's contents while pinching my nostrils shut to avoid the acrid flavor.

To me, drinking coffee was revolting; however, I couldn't deny the pep it put in my step. Not to mention, the jittery tremors in my extremities. I wondered, perhaps I should use the recommended one scoop of instant coffee instead of four?

Notwithstanding the slight deterioration in my handwriting skills, my geometry grades improved remarkably.

I eventually discovered that coffee is actually tolerable if prepared according to the directions. And that by testing certain additives — creamers, sweeteners, flavorings — one may actually enjoy the experience.

After marriage, a drip coffee maker became a fixture in our family household no matter where the Navy stationed us. Our coffee tastes varied over the years from large cans of inexpensive ground coffee with powdered non-dairy creamer, to specialty beans ground at home and lightened with warm, frothy oat milk.

At first, I drank coffee exclusively in the mornings. But with each passing year of life, I found reasons to sip more and more throughout the day, often microwaving coffee that had long gone cold just to savor one more cup. Somewhere along the way, I bought an insulated to-go tumbler to take hot brew with me to the commissary, to the gym, to cross-country meets, on dog walks, to Target, wherever.

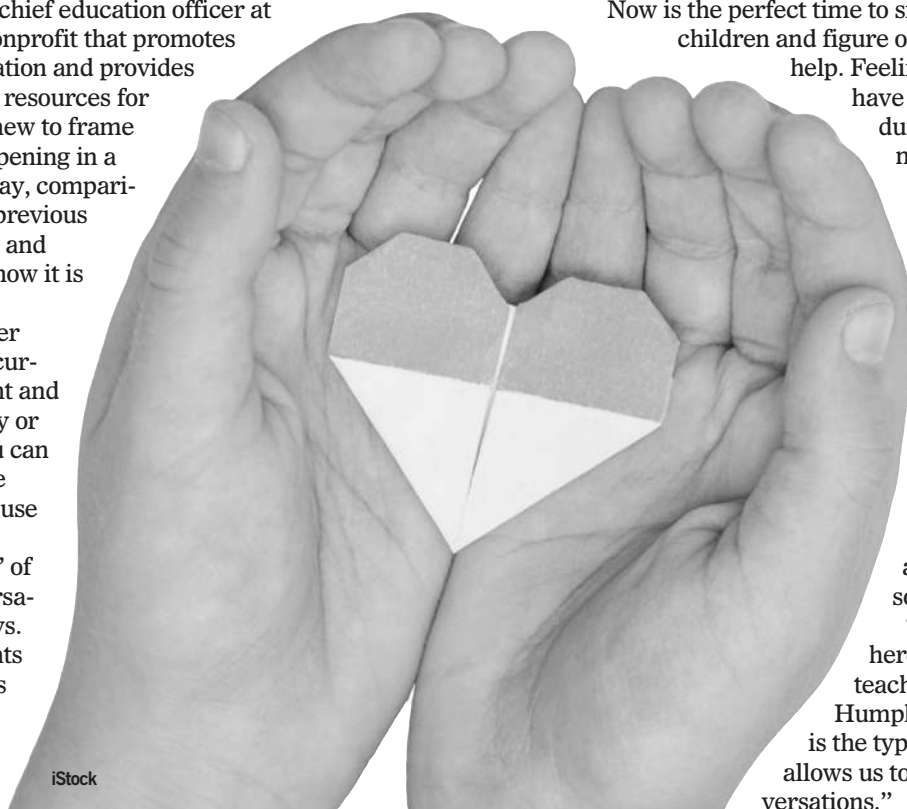
Regardless of how, when or where, coffee has become a constant in my life — an ever-present friend I can always depend upon.

In the morning, coffee rouses me gently, begging me to inhale its aromatic vapor. From the first sip, I feel it permeate my insides, course through my veins and awaken my senses. It simultaneously soothes and invigorates, emboldening me to seize the day. In the midst of my daily routine, hot coffee offers me a break from chaos, boredom, tedium. It's a tiny treat tempting me like a rich and creamy bonbon wrapped in colored foil, lifting my mood and carrying me on. Then, in the afternoon, coffee comes to my rescue, beckoning me out of my inevitable late-day slump with its swirling jolt of steamy goodness.

During Lent, while I'm drying out from my pandemic caffeine bender, I'll be drinking herbal teas, which, to a hardened coffee drinker such as myself, is akin to ingesting my own soapy bathwater.

Despite the steady hand, reliable bladder and unstained teeth that hibiscus, green, ginger, chamomile and echinacea teas offer, they are, nonetheless, a pitiful substitute for coffee — my beloved morning elixir, my heavenly nectar of the gods, my lusty liquid constitution.

Read more at themeatandpotatoesoflife.com, and in Lisa's book, *The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com*. Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com.



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WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

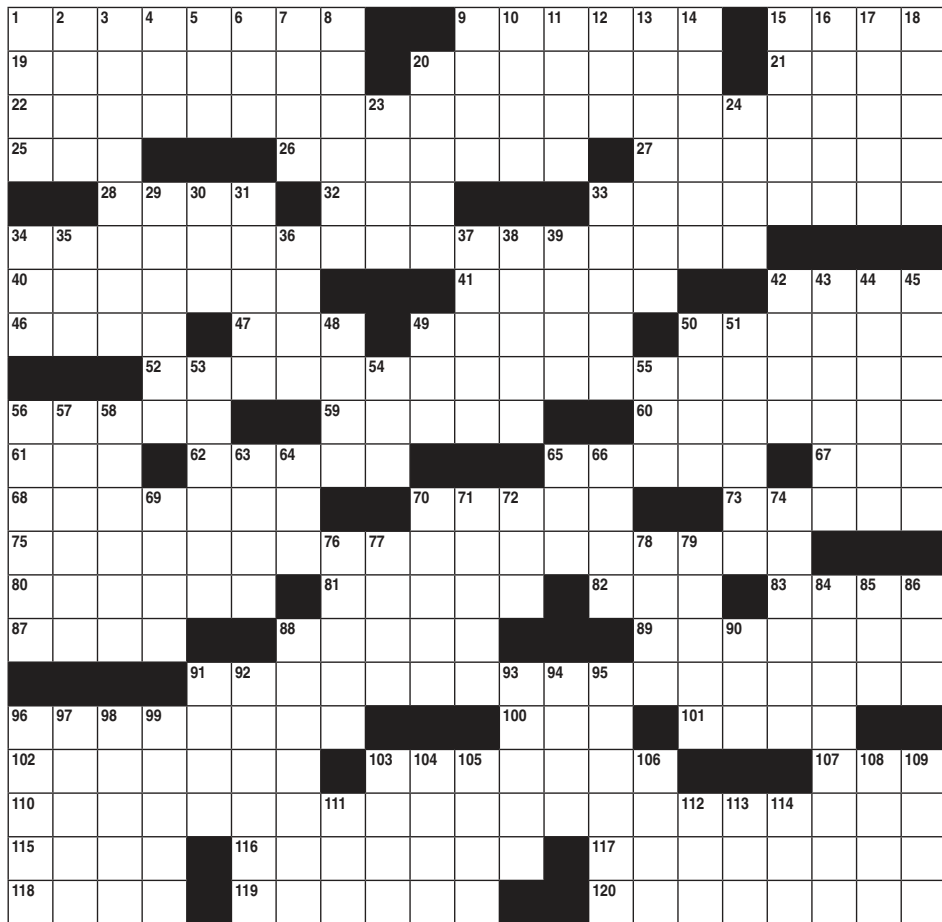
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

CINEMAGRAMS

BY SHELDON POLONSKY / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Sheldon Polonsky, of Cincinnati, is a pediatrician and medical software analyst at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. He loves movies and wordplay and sees films in theaters whenever possible. The theme clues for this puzzle took varied amounts of time to compose: 75-Across came in five minutes; 119-Across took half an hour; 22-Across required three days, on and off. This is Sheldon's second Times puzzle and first Sunday. — W.S.

- ACROSS**
- 1 Items used with PINs
 - 9 There's one for the U.S. Census
 - 15 In a tussle
 - 19 Dismiss
 - 20 Takes it one step at a time
 - 21 Pad Thai garnish
 - 22 Sea captain: robber, thief (2003)
 - 25 Photographer's tool, for short
 - 26 Unlike this puzzle, we hope
 - 27 Source of suffering
 - 28 They're hoppy at happy hour
 - 32 Quaint lead-in to while
 - 33 All the kings' men?
 - 34 True fellow is a find (1946)
 - 40 With room for interpretation
 - 41 Top
 - 42 Game pieces in Mastermind
 - 46 Word after contact or before cover
 - 47 Chill (out)
 - 49 Bit of deception
 - 50 Unfinished attic space
 - 52 Re: town fire one night (1974)
 - 56 "Whoopee!"
 - 59 Origin of the words "club" and "gun"
 - 60 It's a lot in London
 - 61 Tip of the tongue?
 - 62 Best-selling crime novelist Gregg
 - 65 Breed featured in 2009's "Hachi: A Dog's Tale"
 - 67 Miff, with "off"
 - 68 One seeking a new agreement, perhaps
 - 70 Ground-breaking tool
 - 73 "Not interested"
 - 75 Evil Streep had award (2006)
 - 80 Be a paragon of
 - 81 Guys that rhyme with "girls"
 - 82 Folder attachment
 - 83 The "Y" of Y.S.L.
 - 87 Beams
 - 88 Wallop
 - 89 One of the Roys on "Succession"
 - 91 M. Ryan, what's her yell? (1989)
 - 96 They have massive calves
 - 100 "OK!" in Okayama
 - 101 Puts forth
 - 102 Account
 - 103 Protected creature in the Congo Basin
 - 107 Alternatives to tablets
 - 110 R.E.M.: alarming to the teens (1984)
 - 115 ___ colada
 - 116 "Louisiana ___," music show that helped launch Elvis's career
 - 117 Fried, filled Filipino fare
 - 118 Part of STEM: Abbr.
 - 119 Angry dog sounds
 - 120 Elf at the North Pole, e.g.
- DOWN**
- 1 First courses, informally
 - 2 Drudgery
 - 3 First Black woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature
 - 4 When doubled, a dance
 - 5 Quick to learn
 - 6 Spawn in the sea
 - 7 "___ thou love life?": Benjamin Franklin
 - 8 Drove (away)
 - 9 ___ Men ("Who Let the Dogs Out" group)
 - 10 One with a password, maybe
 - 11 Document stamp abbr.
 - 12 That: Sp.
 - 13 Blimp, e.g.
 - 14 Humanitarian org. with Halloween fund drives
 - 15 First name in Harry Potter
 - 16 Ranks
 - 17 Would you look at that!
 - 18 Believe in it
 - 20 Onetime dentist's supply
 - 23 Front
 - 24 Company with sound financials?
 - 29 Target with a throw
 - 30 "!!!!!" feeling
 - 31 Crack
 - 33 Held tightly
 - 34 "'Tis an ___ cook that cannot lick his own fingers": "Romeo and Juliet"
 - 35 The third of three X's
 - 36 Opposite of da
 - 37 All ___ (English card game)
 - 38 Release, in a way
 - 39 Soul singer Bridges
 - 42 School for the college-bound
 - 43 Paper slips?
 - 44 Signs in a bookstore, perhaps
 - 45 Encourages
 - 48 Out of the park
 - 49 Each
 - 50 Airborne irritant
 - 51 Chicken... or cowed
 - 53 Addicted
 - 54 Broke the finish line ribbon
 - 55 "___ on parle français"
 - 56 Lead-in to day or year
 - 57 Pulmicort targets it
 - 58 Adverb in many legal documents
 - 63 Impose, as a fine
 - 64 ___ Lanka
 - 65 Certain banner fodder
 - 66 Didn't ditch
 - 69 Certain partners' exchanges
 - 70 Brand with an iComfort line
 - 71 Less vibrant
 - 72 Harvard dropouts, maybe?
 - 74 Recurrent space in The Game of Life
 - 76 Depends (on)
 - 77 Break-even situation
 - 78 Aid in putting together a fall collection
 - 79 Drives the getaway car for, say
 - 84 Slangy SoCal dialect
 - 85 Sharp turn
 - 86 Designing
 - 88 Rhea with four Emmys
 - 90 Phone-tracking org.
 - 91 Accompanying
 - 92 Shrubby areas
 - 93 Europe's Three Countries Bridge crosses it
 - 94 Big name in locks
 - 95 Grain variety
 - 96 ___-Nuts
 - 97 World leader who appeared on a Time magazine cover 40 years after his death
 - 98 Sailing through
 - 99 The world's most expensive one, the Gurkha Royal Courtesan, costs over \$1.3 million
 - 103 Angry dog's sound
 - 104 Trompe l' ___
 - 105 Sticks
 - 106 Some finds in Fortnite
 - 108 Hand over
 - 109 Have the lead (in)
 - 111 Actress Cash of FX's "You're the Worst"
 - 112 Who might bug you?
 - 113 Headwear with a pompom
 - 114 Vaccine molecule

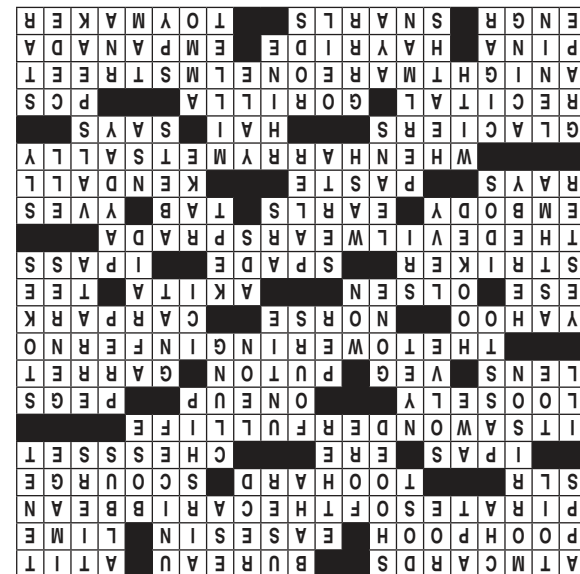


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"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

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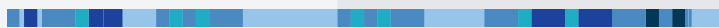


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STARS AND STRIPES

OPINION

US is rightfully wary of the wider war

BY DAVID IGNATIUS

Washington Post Writers Group

WASHINGTON

As Russia rains relentless fire on Ukrainian cities, the country's leaders have been pleading for more Western help. But the United States is rightly wary of a proposal to send the Ukrainians MiG-29 fighter jets—a move that would bring small benefits on the battlefield and entail large risks of a wider war.

The dilemma of how to help Ukraine without triggering a global conflict will only get more painful as Russian President Vladimir Putin keeps doubling down on his losing bet in Ukraine. The latest warning of Putin's recklessness came from a senior British official, who warned Post journalists on Wednesday that "we've got good reason to be concerned about possible use of nonconventional weapons" by Russia down the road.

Putin keeps climbing the ladder of escalation. Blocked from the easy victory he expected in Ukraine, he is gradually turning that country's cities into rubble. Already derided as a war criminal, he seems to be following the Russia mafia code known as "bespredel," which means "without limits."

Visceral images of the suffering and courage of the Ukrainian people are driving the MiG debate, and an earlier discussion of a NATO-enforced no-fly zone. The Russians are bombing maternity wards, schools, churches. Our hearts tell us to intervene, whatever the danger—just as they would if we were watching a child being strangled before our eyes.

But our heads should counsel caution. The Ukraine crisis carries a genuine risk of di-

rect military conflict between the United States and Russia. And that, in turn, could escalate into a catastrophic nuclear confrontation. The West needs cool heads, not hot ones, to successfully navigate what could become the most dangerous nuclear standoff in history—riskier even than the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, because it is taking place against the backdrop of a hot shooting war.

The Pentagon was right to reject a proposal by Poland to transfer the MiGs to beleaguered Ukraine. Secretary of State Antony Blinken had opened the door to that possibility Sunday on CBS's "Face the Nation" when he said the Polish proposal had a "green light." But Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said on Tuesday that Poland's plan to transfer the planes, via the United States, was not "tenable." Kirby went further on Wednesday, calling it a "high-risk" plan that could draw a "significant" Russian reaction, while the benefits would be "low."

"The intelligence community has assessed the transfer of MiG-29s to Ukraine may be mistaken as escalatory and could result in a significant Russian reaction that might increase the prospects of a military escalation with NATO," Kirby said.

Military utility should be the yardstick for any Western assistance now. Sending used MiGs to Ukraine from Poland, as the government in Warsaw had proposed, doesn't meet that test. The Ukrainian air force already has several squadrons of MiGs, but they haven't been very effective. Rather than seeking more MiGs, Ukraine should expand the tactics that have already proved successful—antitank and antiaircraft weapons, such as the Javelins and Stingers that the United States and its allies are providing in increas-

ing numbers.

Ukraine's success in slowing Russia's invasion has resulted from two factors. First, the Ukrainian army has used its antitank weapons to pound the attackers. As Russian columns move down roads, Ukrainian soldiers fire at them with devastating accuracy. Second, the Ukrainians have been surprisingly successful in using air-defense weapons, not just the shoulder-fired Stingers, but larger systems they were able to shield from the Russians. They need more of both—tank and aircraft killers—from the West.

The British official told Post journalists that "the best way of dealing with" Russia's air power is antiaircraft weapons, and that Britain was planning to send more of its "Starstreak" high-velocity missiles. Like Stingers, they are shoulder-fired, but they are laser-guided and, according to experts, are harder to jam than the infrared-guided, U.S.-made Stingers.

As Western strategists deliberate responses to Putin's aggression, they are caught between the historical analogies of the 20th century's two world wars, which led to unspeakable suffering and the deaths of more than 100 million people. The lesson of August 1914 is to avoid lockstep escalation and seek diplomatic compromise. The lesson of Munich 1938 is to avoid appeasement and meet threats with force. As Ukraine bleeds, the United States and its allies are struggling to decide which lesson is most applicable.

What's the off-ramp for Putin? Hopefully, there's still a diplomatic path. Otherwise, his off-ramp is defeat, and the challenge is how to achieve that result without a global catastrophe.

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Trump's Russia comments make true reflection tough

BY GARY ABERNATHY

Special to The Washington Post

On the topic of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, former President Donald Trump called Russian President Vladimir Putin "smart" and "savvy," referred to U.S. leaders as "dumb," and joked about attacking Russia with U.S. fighter jets flying Chinese flags. His critics exploded.

But Trump also said that the invasion was "an outrage and an atrocity that should never have been allowed to occur," and insisted it would not have happened if he was still president. His supporters wholeheartedly agreed.

It is often noted that people either love Trump or hate him. Nuance is in short supply. Books on Trump are plentiful, but they tend to crucify him or sanctify him. There is a yawning chasm awaiting the kind of analytical and dispassionate review of Trump and his presidency that history requires. But a balanced examination is a distant dream. For now, supporters and detractors insist that sides must be chosen, or there is hell to pay.

I know whereof I speak. While I spent the bulk of Trump's ascendancy defending Trump voters from accusations of ignorance and racism, I was more ambivalent about Trump himself. I defended him on Russian collusion, his overtly politicized first impeachment and other unfounded attacks from the left and many in the media. But I regularly pointed out his failure to inspire, his schlocky B-picture persona, and his narcissistic and boorish behavior.

I criticized his performance in his first debate with Joe Biden, and immediately accept-

ed his 2020 election defeat while urging him to do the same. I called out his refusal to accept the election results and his part in igniting the U.S. Capitol riot as attacks on democracy that disqualified him from my future support.

Others—unfortunately far too few—have also tried to fairly weigh Trump's good qualities against the bad, but they, too, were assuredly accused of being too anti-Trump and falling into the swamp, and too pro-Trump by those who demand nothing less than complete repudiation of the man and his presidency.

Trump generated such heat that we remain light-years away from discussing him coolly. A hot topic now among Democrats is how much to blame Trump for Russia attacking Ukraine. It's a way to deflect from President Biden's tepid response. Sanctions are appropriate, but let's refrain from calling them "tough" while Putin literally kills, maims and steamrolls his way through a sovereign state filled with demonstrably tough people.

Blaming Trump appears desperate in this case. He might not be entirely faultless, but the lengths some are going to pin Russia's attack on a president more than a year removed from office are comical. One of the strangest examples came courtesy of John Bolton, a former national security adviser, who expressed his belief that Trump might well have withdrawn the U.S. from NATO had he won a second term. That was interesting and even logical, considering Trump's open disdain for NATO, until Bolton added, "I think Putin was waiting for that." Really? As we all recall, Biden became president well over a year ago, ending any chance of the U.S. withdrawing from NA-

TO. Putin invaded Ukraine anyway. Clearly, his plans were not impacted by Trump's intentions with NATO.

As Trump boasted at a recent Conservative Political Action Conference, he is "the only president of the 21st century on whose watch Russia did not invade another country." Reinforcing that notion is a Harvard Center for American Studies-Harris Poll finding that 62% of Americans believe that Russia would not have invaded Ukraine if Trump was still president. Who knows.

To Trump's shame, he spent much of his presidency expressing admiration for autocrats such as Putin and North Korean President Kim Jong Un. Trump's recent comment that he wished that "my people" would cower in his presence as Kim's do in his might have been made in jest, but when such things are said so often they lend credence to the notion that Trump's tacit nods emboldened Putin to test the West's resolve.

All this unfortunately clouds a public debate that could actually be useful in assessing the causes of Putin's aggression. Would Trump's presence in the White House have caused Putin to think twice before launching a war? Or did Trump's admiration for autocrats and his post-election attacks on U.S. democracy make Putin's path that much smoother? It's a topic worthy of a discussion featuring lots of reflection and nuance—impossible now, but beneficial at some point. Sadly, that's likely to be in the far distant future.

Gary Abernathy, a Washington Post contributing columnist, is a freelance writer based in the Cincinnati region.

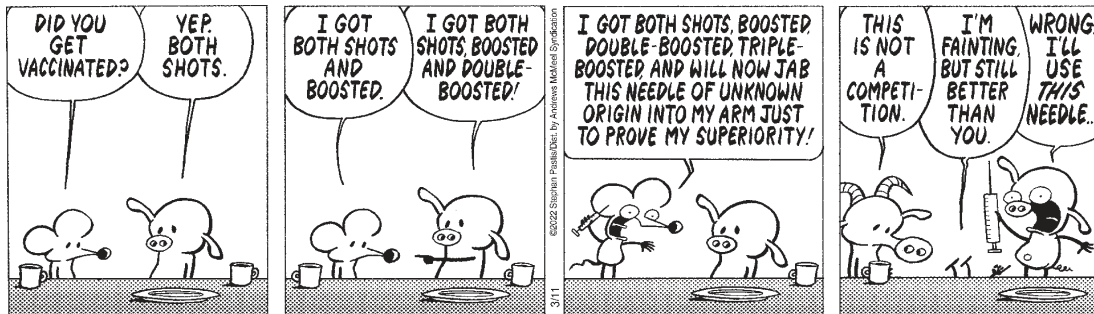
Frazz



Dilbert



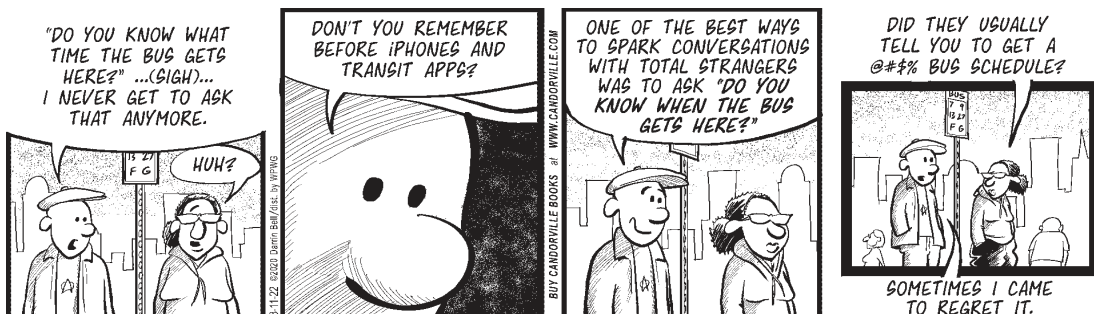
Pearls Before Swine



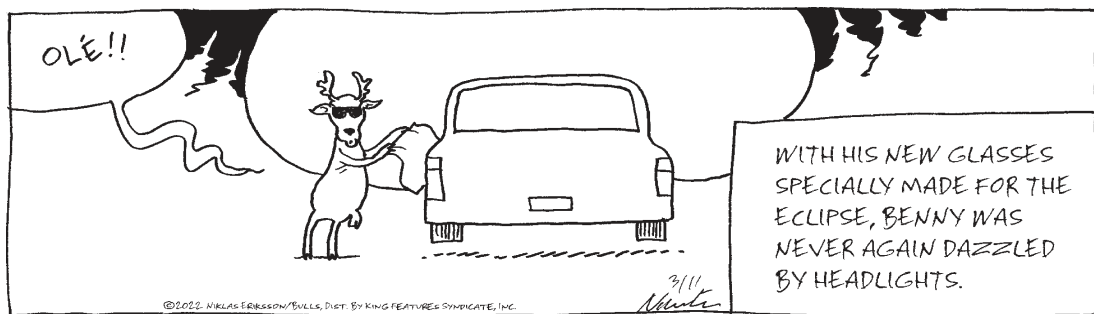
Non Sequitur



Candorville



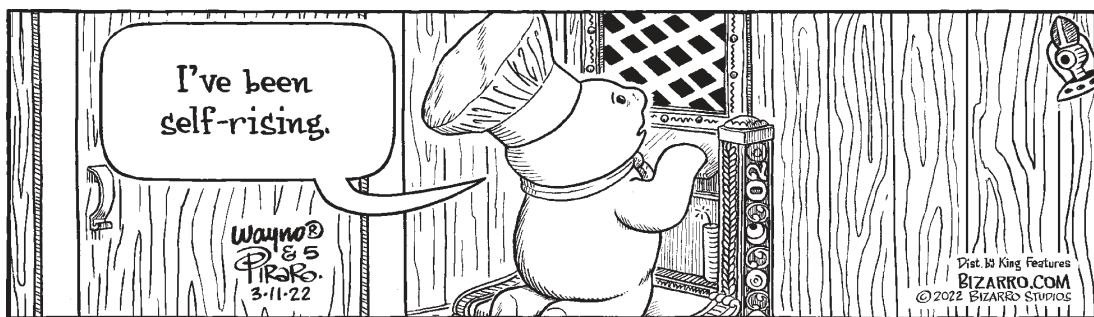
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8		9	10	11
12						13				14		
15						16				17		
		18				19				20		
21	22			23				24				
25			26		27		28					
29				30			31			32	33	34
			35			36				37		
38	39	40				41		42		43		
44					45			46				
47				48				49			50	51
52				53				54				
55				56				57				

ACROSS

- 1 "Poison" shrub
- 6 Your
- 9 CEO's deg.
- 12 Hemingway's "— Time"
- 13 Chit
- 14 — Lingus
- 15 Diacritical mark
- 16 Hawaiian island
- 18 Insulted, slangily
- 20 Plane part
- 21 Slugger's stat
- 23 Polite address
- 24 Expels
- 25 Charged bits
- 27 Autocrats
- 29 Explorer Vasco —
- 31 Overflowed
- 35 Primary
- 37 Japanese noodles
- 38 Nasser's successor
- 41 McCourt memoir
- 43 Scale abbr.
- 44 Computer brand
- 45 Corsage flower
- 47 "Tartuffe" playwright
- 49 Love, to Luigi
- 52 Bikini half
- 53 "Gosh!"
- 54 Expert
- 55 Whatever

- 56 Republicans
- 57 A lot

- 24 Mine yield
- 26 Jungle trek
- 28 Top story
- 30 Cambridge sch.
- 32 Neighbor of Ukraine
- 33 Recede
- 34 "— Kapital"
- 36 Meryl of film
- 38 Brazilian dance
- 39 Future oak
- 40 Postpone
- 42 Pillow covers
- 45 Layered cookie
- 46 Apple on a desk
- 48 Nest occupier
- 50 Roulette bet
- 51 USN rank

DOWN

- 1 Perch
- 2 Numerical prefix
- 3 Window trim
- 4 BMW rival
- 5 Salad green
- 6 Stopwatches
- 7 Cobra feature
- 8 Actor Brynner
- 9 Mighty sharks
- 10 Monster
- 11 Zodiac ram
- 17 Burdens
- 19 Ravi's instrument
- 21 Abolish
- 22 Feathery neckpiece

Answer to Previous Puzzle

T	I	C	S		D	A	M		S	S	N	S
H	O	O	T		E	Y	E		I	C	E	E
E	W	E	R		C	N	N		E	R	S	T
M	A	D	A	M	E		S	T	R	U	T	S
					N	A	M		A	R	B	
R	O	A	D		B	A	R	N	A	B	A	S
A	N	D			E	K	E		E	L	I	
H	O	L	O	G	R	A	M		T	R	A	P
					I	R	E		E	D	U	
W	E	B	B	E	D		M	A	C	R	O	S
A	M	B	I		R	U	B		K	A	V	A
D	U	E	T		A	N	E		E	M	I	T
S	S	R	S		M	I	R		R	I	D	E

3-11

CRYPTOQUIP

B X K B W O I W A B T K A B L L J H P B T K J

E A K S K I L Y C K A K J H D K B W E

E W W A S H B X W H B X W A X K J E .

X W ' P Z K D Z H - E W O B A L Y P .

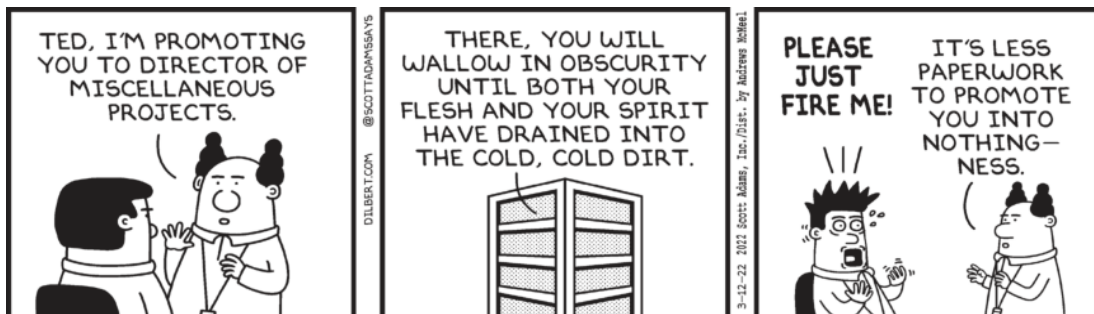
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SONG ABOUT A BOYFRIEND WHO FOSTERS UNBIASED THOUGHTS: "YOU MAKE ME FEEL LIKE A NEUTRAL WOMAN."

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals T

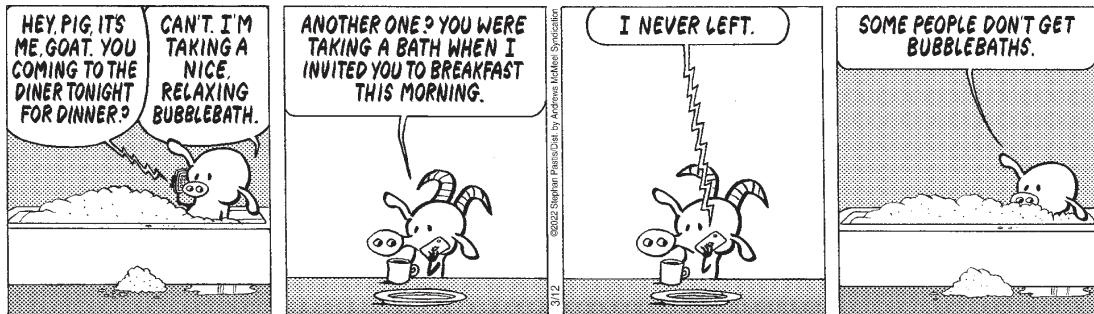
Frazz



Dilbert



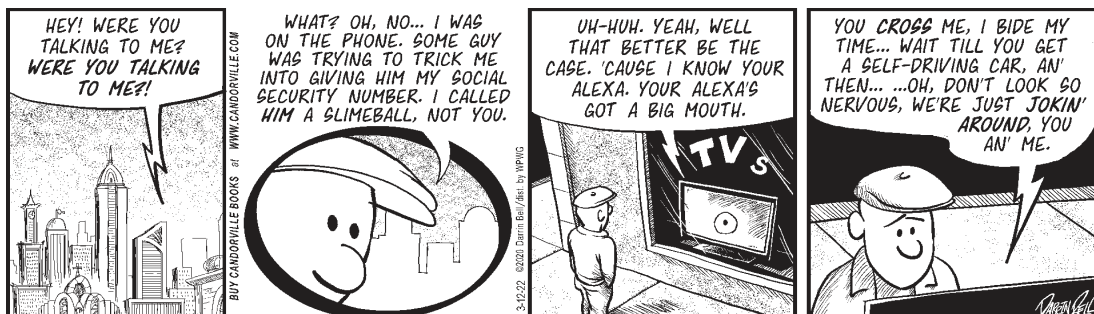
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



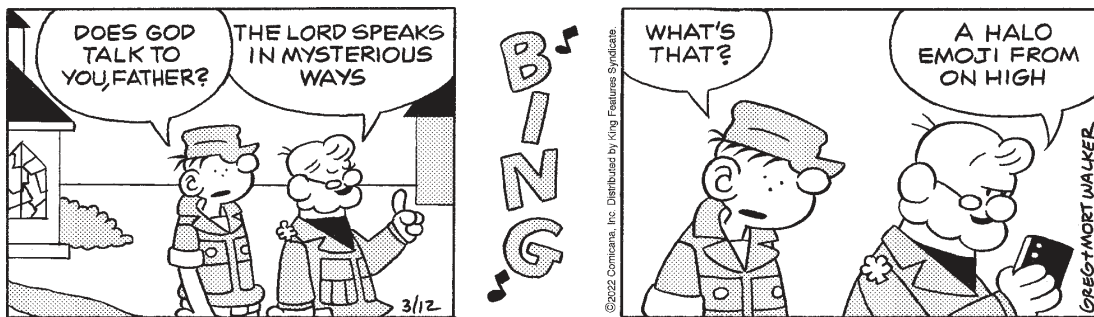
Candorville



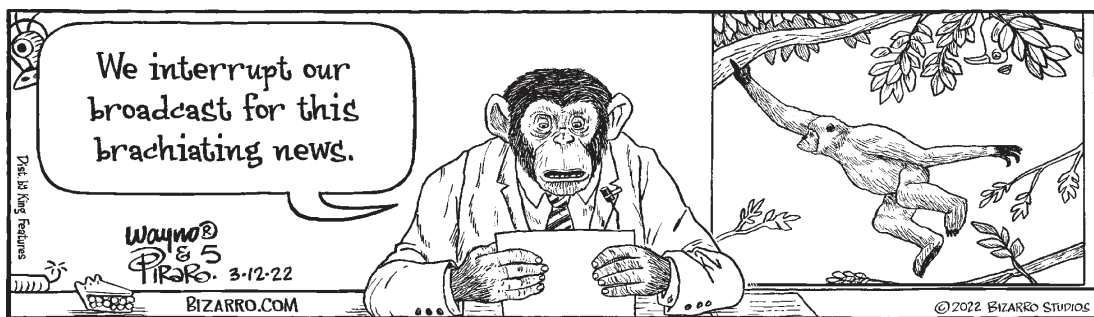
Carpe Diem



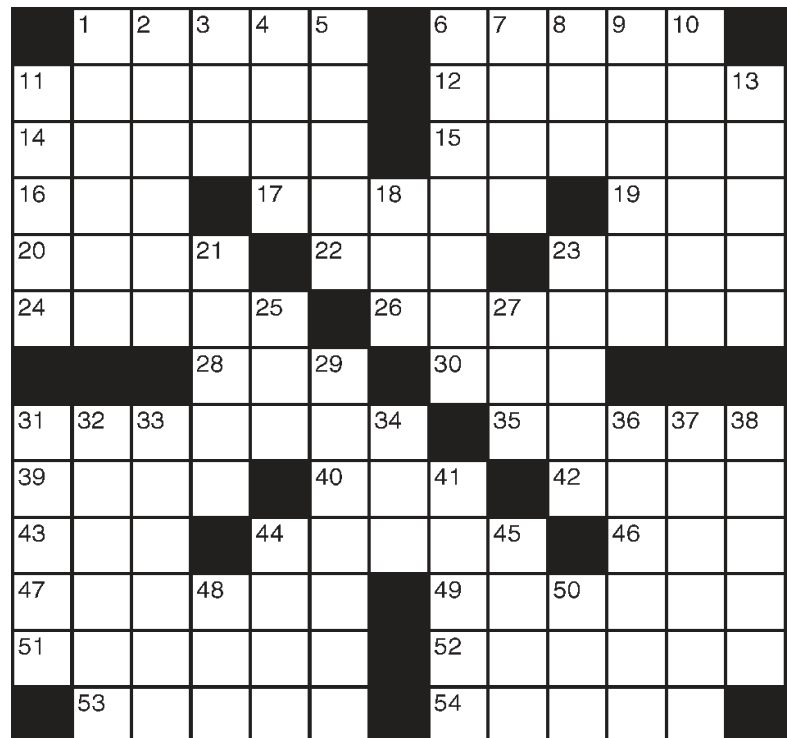
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Part of Hispaniola
- 6 Fictional Doone
- 11 Seethed
- 12 Goddess of wisdom
- 14 Ochoa of the LPGA
- 15 Packed away
- 16 LAPD alert
- 17 Harry Potter's rival
- 19 Nashville awards org.
- 20 Thick chunk
- 22 Actress Longoria
- 23 Twosome
- 24 Astronomer Carl
- 26 Loser
- 28 Meadow
- 30 Be sick
- 31 Edie's "Sopranos" role
- 35 Test versions
- 39 Elevator name
- 40 Diner order
- 42 Punjabi believer
- 43 Depot (Abbr.)
- 44 Labrador explorer
- 46 Never, in Bonn
- 47 "Paradise Lost" author
- 49 "I want to be on the team!"

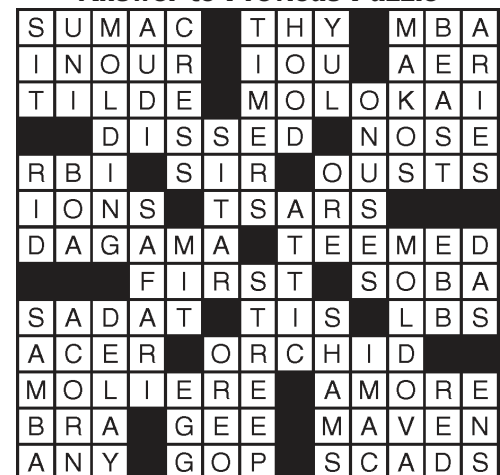
- 51 Eight-armed creatures
- 52 Owing money
- 53 "Mortal Kombat" agent
- 54 Egypt's capital

- 11 Fashion designer Bill
- 13 Give — (care)
- 18 Gardner of film
- 21 Ointments
- 23 Fishing rods
- 25 Born abroad?
- 27 Bro or sis
- 29 Tirana's land
- 31 Vodka cocktail
- 32 Top rooms
- 33 Venetian marketplace
- 34 Cleric's garment
- 36 Fiddle (with)
- 37 With hands on hips
- 38 Bed cover
- 41 Debate issue
- 44 Mimic
- 45 Comedian Fey
- 48 Heavy weight
- 50 Roman 401

DOWN

- 1 Ado
- 2 Car safety feature
- 3 Land in la mer
- 4 See to
- 5 "— you!" (challenger's cry)
- 6 Milan attraction
- 7 Director Preminger
- 8 Greek P
- 9 Game show prize
- 10 Lack of vitality

Answer to Previous Puzzle



3-12

CRYPTOQUIP

AH NJFQWDD EQAHHAFY TQ
 DAUEWQ PQTMU JTLLAFFWC
 JQALWD, FYTDW MTKXC PW
 LWXNUAW'D HWXTUAWD.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THAT EXPERT CARTOONIST CAN DRAW A POPULAR ANIMATED DEER WITH EITHER HAND. HE'S BAMBI-DEXTROUS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: H equals F

SCOREBOARD/GOLF

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Wednesday's women's scores

TOURNAMENT
American Athletic Semifinal
 UCF 61, SMU 28
 South Florida 58, Houston 10

Atlantic Sun Semifinal
 Florida Gulf Coast 82, Stetson 67
 Jacksonville St. 59, Liberty 57

Big Sky Semifinal
 N. Arizona 72, N. Colorado 67
 Montana St. 73, Idaho 67

Big West Quarterfinal
 Hawaii 48, CS Bakersfield 47
 UC Riverside 46, UC Santa Barbara 42
 UC Irvine 80, Cal St.-Fullerton 68
 UC Davis 55, Long Beach St. 45

Conference USA Second Round
 Rice 80, Marshall 62
 Old Dominion 65, UTSA 45
 UAB 74, W. Kentucky 62
 Southern Miss. 78, FIU 60

Metro Atlantic Athletic Quarterfinal
 Fairfield 69, Iona 56
 Quinnipiac 63, St. Peter's 42

Mid American Quarterfinal
 Toledo 80, Ohio 67
 Ball St. 60, N. Illinois 54
 Buffalo 63, W. Michigan 49
 Akron 81, Bowling Green 67

Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference Quarterfinal
 Howard 87, Delaware St. 51
 Norfolk St. 58, NC Central 52

Mountain-West Conference
 UNLV 75, Colorado St. 65

Southwestern Athletic Quarterfinal
 Grambling St. 62, Alabama A&M 54
 Jackson St. 78, Ark.-Pine Bluff 67

Western Athletic Second Round
 Rio Grande Valley 73, Abilene Christian 70
 Sam Houston St. 73, Lamar 69

Women's NCAA automatic bids
 Belmont, Ohio Valley Conference
 Mercer, Southern Conference
 NC State, Atlantic Coast Conference
 Kentucky, Southeastern Conference
 UMass, Atlantic 10 Conference
 Iowa, Big Ten Conference
 Stanford, Pac-12 Conference
 Longwood, Big South Conference
 Texas-Arlington, Sun Belt Conference
 UConn, Big East Conference
 IUPUI, Horizon League Conference
 South Dakota, Summit League Conference
 Gonzaga, West Coast Conference
 UNLV, Mountain West Conference

TENNIS

BNP Paribas Open

Wednesday
At Indian Wells Tennis Garden
Indian Wells, Calif.
Purse: \$8,584,055
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Men's Singles Qualification
 Juncheng Shang, China, def. Mats Moraring (19), Germany, 6-3, 0-0, ret.
 Mikhail Kukushkin, Kazakhstan, def. Yoshihito Nishioka (6), Japan, 6-2, 7-6.
 Jaume Munar (8), Spain, def. Aleksandar Vukic (18), Australia, 6-3, 6-2.
 Tomas Machac, Czech Republic, def. Ilya Marchenko, Ukraine, 5-7, 6-3, 6-3.
 Taro Daniel (12), Japan, def. Daniel Masur, Germany, 6-4, 6-2.
 Philipp Kohlschreiber (22), Germany, def. Denis Kudla (10), United States, 0-6, 6-3, 6-3.
 Thanasi Kokkinakis (7), Australia, def. Vasek Pospisil (20), Canada, 7-6, 7-5.
 Jeffrey John Wolf, United States, def. Daniel Elahi Galan (11), Colombia, 7-6, 6-2.
 Christopher Eubanks, United States, def. Joao Sousa (2), Portugal, 7-6, 7-6.
 Liam Broady (17), Britain, def. Christopher O'Connell, Australia, 7-6, 6-0.
 Holger Vitus Nodskov Rune (3), Denmark, def. Stefan Kozlov (15), United States, 6-4, 6-2.
 Tennyis Sandgren, United States, def. John Millman (1), Australia, 6-7, 7-6, 7-6.

Women's Singles Round of 128
 Kaia Kanepi, Estonia, def. Robin Montgomery, United States, 6-3, 6-3.
 Petra Martic, Croatia, def. Anna Bondar, Hungary, 7-5, 6-3.
 Ekaterina Alexandrova, Russia, def. Elvina Kalieva, United States, 4-6, 6-2, 7-6 (7).
 Alison Riske, United States, def. Caty McNally, United States, 6-0, 6-3.
 Misaki Doi, Japan, def. Anastasia Potapova, Russia, 0-6, 6-4, 6-3.
 Claire Liu, United States, def. Viktoriya Tomova, Bulgaria, 7-6 (2), 6-4.
 Ajla Tomljanovic, Australia, def. Hailey Baptiste, United States, 6-2, 2-6, 6-2.
 Zheng Qinwen, China, def. Vera Zvonareva, Russia, 6-3, 6-2.
 Anhelina Kalinina, Ukraine, def. Clara Burel, France, 6-3, 6-2.
 Harriet Dart, Britain, def. Ana Konjuh, Croatia, 6-1, 3-1, ret.
 Katie Volynets, United States, def. Arantxa Rus, Netherlands, 4-6, 6-4, 6-1.
 Danka Kovinic, Montenegro, def. Jil Teichmann, Switzerland, 7-5, 7-5.
 Caroline Garcia, France, def. Dayana Yastremska, Ukraine, 6-4, 6-7 (8), 7-5.
 Anna Kalinskaya, Russia, def. Harmony Tan, France, 6-2, 1-0, ret.
 Ann Li, United States, def. Madison Bregle, United States, 1-6, 7-6 (5), 6-0.
 Beatriz Haddad Maia, Brazil, def. Sofia Kenin, United States, 6-3, 7-5.

DEALS

Wednesday's Transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball National League
NEW YORK METS — Named Andy Goldberg executive vice president and chief marketing officer.
BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association
NBA — Suspended Sacramento C Domantas Sabonis one game without pay for aggressively confronting and making contact with a game official in a game on March 7 against the New York.
WASHINGTON WIZARDS — Signed G Jordan Schakel to a two-way contract.
FOOTBALL
National Football League
ARIZONA CARDINALS — Re-signed RB Jonathan Ward and WR Antoine Wesley to one-year contracts. Released LB Jordan Hicks.
ATLANTA FALCONS — Released LB Duke Ejirofor.
BALTIMORE RAVENS — Released CB Tavon Young. Re-signed DT Aaron Crawford. Extended tenders to C Trystan Colon, QB Tyler Huntley, LS Nick Moore, S Geno Stone, LB Kristian Welch and RB Ty'Son Williams. Placed OT Alejandro Villanueva on the reserve/retired list.
BUFFALO BILLS — Released OL Jon Feliciano.
CAROLINA PANTHERS — Signed K Zane Gonzalez to a two-year contract extension.
DETROIT LIONS — Re-signed WR Josh Reynolds to a two-year contract extension. Extended tenders to LS Scott Daly, P Jack Fox, CBs Mark Gilbert and Bobby Price, S JuJu Hughes, RB Godwin Igwebu, WR Tom Kennedy, G Tommy Kraemer, OLB Jessie Lemonier, T Matt Nelson, K Riley Patterson, LB Anthony Pittman and TE Brock Wright.
INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Traded QB Carson Wentz to Washington in exchange for a package of draft picks.
JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Signed LB Tyrell Adams to a contract extension.
MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Signed DT T.Y. McGill. Named Tyler Williams executive director of player health and performance and Grant Udinski assistant to the head coach special of projects.
NEW YORK GIANTS — Signed OT Matt Gono to a one-year contract.
NEW YORK JETS — Re-signed OL Conor McDermott to a one-year contract.

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Signed OL Jake Brendel to a one-year contract extension.
TAMPA BAY BUCCANERS — Placed G Ali Marpet on the reserve/retired list.
TENNESSEE TITANS — Re-signed DT Teair Tart, WR Nick Westbrook-Ikhine and QB Logan Woodside.
HOCKEY
National Hockey League
ANAHEIM DUCKS — Reassigned D Brendan Guhle to San Diego (AHL) from loan.
BOSTON BRUINS — Recalled D Jack Ahcan and RW Jesper Froden from Providence (AHL) from loan.
COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS — Reassigned G Cam Johnson from Cleveland (AHL) to Florida (ECHL).
LOS ANGELES KINGS — Recalled D Jordan Spence from Ontario (AHL) from loan.
NASHVILLE PREDATORS — Signed F Navrin Mutter to a three-year, entry-level contract.
NEW YORK ISLANDERS — Reassigned G Ken Appleby from Bridgeport (AHL) to Worcester (ECHL).
PHILADELPHIA FLYERS — Recalled D Cam York from Lehigh Valley from loan.
PITTSBURGH PENGUINS — Reassigned RW Kasper Bjorkqvist to Wilkes-Barre/Scranton (AHL) from loan.
ST. LOUIS BLUES — Reinstated D Marco Scandella from injured reserve.
SAN JOSE SHARKS — Reinstated C Jonathan Dahlen from injured reserve.
TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS — Signed D Carl Dahlstrom to a one-year, two-way contract. Signed LW Kyle Clifford to a two-year contract extension.
WINNIPEG JETS — Promoted D Ville Heino from Manitoba (AHL).
SOCCER
Major League Soccer
MLS — Fined Philadelphia F Julian Carranza an undisclosed amount for failure to leave the field in a timely manner in a match against CF Montreal on March 5.
AUSTIN FC — Loaned G Will Pulisic to Carolina FC (USL League 1) pending league and federation approval.
HOUSTON DYNAMO FC — Traded F Derrick Jones and 2023 general allocation money to Charlotte FC in exchange for 2022 general allocation money. Loaned F Nico Lemoine to Oakland Roots SC (USL Championship) for the remainder of the season.
National Women's Soccer League
NWSL — Named Jessica Berman commissioner.

PRO SOCCER

MLS

	Eastern Conference					
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
New York	2	0	0	6	7	2
D.C. United	2	0	0	6	4	0
Columbus	1	0	1	4	7	3
Orlando City	1	0	1	4	2	0
New England	1	0	1	4	3	2
Philadelphia	1	0	1	4	3	2
Atlanta	1	1	0	3	3	4
Chicago	0	0	2	2	0	0
NYCFC	0	1	1	1	0	1
Toronto FC	0	1	1	1	2	5
Inter Miami CF	0	1	1	1	1	5
CF Montréal	0	2	0	0	1	4
Charlotte FC	0	2	0	0	0	4
Cincinnati	0	2	0	0	0	6

	Western Conference					
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Austin FC	2	0	0	6	10	1
LA Galaxy	2	0	0	6	2	0
LAFC	1	0	1	4	4	1
Nashville	1	0	1	4	2	1
Real Salt Lake	1	0	1	4	1	0
Colorado	1	1	0	3	3	3
Sporting KC	1	1	0	3	2	3
Portland	0	0	2	2	3	3
Minnesota U.	0	0	2	2	2	2
FC Dallas	0	1	1	1	1	2
Houston	0	1	1	1	0	1
San Jose	0	1	1	1	4	6
Vancouver	0	1	1	1	0	4
Seattle	0	2	0	0	0	2

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Sunday, March 6

Austin FC 5, Miami 1
 Portland 1, Los Angeles FC 1, tie

Saturday's games
 CF Montréal at New York City FC
 Toronto FC at Columbus
 Los Angeles FC at Miami
 LA Galaxy at Seattle
 Vancouver at Houston
 Chicago at D.C. United
 Real Salt Lake at New England
 Cincinnati at Orlando City
 San Jose at Philadelphia
 Nashville at FC Dallas
 Sporting Kansas City at Colorado
 Austin FC at Portland

Sunday's games
 Charlotte FC at Atlanta
 Minnesota at New York

GOLF

Honda LPGA Thailand

Thursday	
At Pattaya Old Course Chon Buri, Thailand	
Purse: \$1.6 million	
Yardage: 6,576; Par: 72	
First Round	
Nasa Hataoka	32-31-63
Esther Henseleit	32-31-63
Su-Hyun Oh	32-31-63
Xiyu Lin	31-33-64
Celine Boutier	32-33-65
Brooke Henderson	34-31-65
N. Koerstz Madsen	31-34-65
Jennifer Kupcho	32-33-65
Alison Lee	33-32-65
L. Weaver-Wright	30-35-65
Carlota Ciganda	32-34-66
Danielle Kang	34-32-66
Jeongeun Lee6	34-32-66
Yu Liu	30-36-66
Lizette Salas	32-34-66
Amy Yang	35-31-66
Perrine Delacour	33-34-67
A Lim Kim	35-32-67
Min Lee	33-34-67
Stacy Lewis	33-34-67
Lucy Li	35-32-67
Hinako Shibuno	33-34-67
Brittany Altomare	34-34-68
Pajaree Anannurakarn	34-34-68
In Gee Chun	32-36-68
Mina Harigae	34-34-68
Jeong Eun Lee	34-34-68
Gaby Lopez	32-36-68
Caroline Masson	34-34-68
Kaitlyn Papp	31-37-68
Madelene Sagstrom	36-32-68
Yuka Saso	36-32-68
Sarah Schmelzel	37-31-68
Wei-Ling Hsu	33-36-69
Megan Khang	32-37-69
Hyo Joo Kim	35-34-69
Minjee Lee	35-34-69
So Yeon Ryu	35-34-69
Jennifer Song	34-35-69
Emma Talley	36-33-69
Rina Tamematsu	36-33-69
Aditi Ashok	36-34-70
Jaravee Boonchant	36-34-70
Matilda Castren	33-37-70
Hannah Green	33-37-70
Moriya Jutanugarn	35-35-70
Leona Maguire	34-36-70
Emily Pedersen	33-37-70



GERALD HERBERT/AP

Tiger Woods stands with his daughter Sam during his induction into the World Golf Hall of Fame Wednesday in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.

Woods inducted into Hall, credits work and passion

By DOUG FERGUSON

Associated Press

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla. — The greatest of his generation, Tiger Woods took his place among the best of all time Wednesday night when he was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame and shared a life story of a passion to play and a work ethic that made him feel like he earned it.

Woods didn't touch on any of his 82 victories on the PGA Tour or his 15 majors, or the eight surgeries he endured along the way.

He spoke of his parents taking out a second mortgage that allowed him to play the junior circuit in California, choking up when he mentioned his late father who told him he would have to earn everything he wanted.

"If you don't go out there and put in the work, you don't go out and put in the effort, one, you're not going to get the results," Woods said. "But two, and more importantly, you don't deserve it. You need to earn it. So that defined my upbringing. That defined my career."

He was introduced by Sam, his 14-year-old daughter who said her father preaches to her and 13-year-old brother Charlie the same message he learned from his late father.

"Train hard, fight easy."

Woods was the headliner in an induction class that included retired PGA Tour Commissioner Tim Finchem, three-time U.S.

Women's Open champion Susie Maxwell Berning and the late Marion Hollins, a visionary who became the first woman to develop prominent golf courses.

The show was so geared around Woods that it featured three short video presentations that were titled "GOAT," the popular acronym for "greatest of all time."

The Players Championship prize fund this week is \$20 million, and that's not lost on the players in the field. The entire purse was \$3.5 million in 1997 when Woods made his debut. The winner this week gets \$3.6 million.

"I think every pro out here owes a debt of gratitude to Tiger because this sport wouldn't be where it is today without his impact," Patrick Cantlay, who won the \$15 million prize last year as FedEx Cup champion, said earlier this week.

Woods, the first player of Black and Asian heritage to win a major at the 1997 Masters when he was 21, also spoke of the discrimination he felt as a youth. He told one story about going to a country club to play a tournament, and he wasn't allowed in the clubhouse like the other juniors because of the color of his skin.

"So I was denied access into the clubhouses. That's fine. Put my shoes on here in the parking lot," he said. "I asked two questions only, that was it. Where was the first tee, and what was the course record? Not complicated."

NBA

Raptors defeat Spurs, delay Popovich's mark

BY RAUL DOMINGUEZ
Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Fred VanVleet had 26 points and the Toronto Raptors beat the San Antonio Spurs 119-104 on Wednesday night, delaying Gregg Popovich's coronation as the winningest coach in NBA history.

Popovich is tied with his friend and mentor, Don Nelson, with 1,335 regular-season victories.

"Obviously, we have a competitive pride and professional pride," VanVleet said. "With as much respect to Pop and what he's been able to do in his career, we didn't want to be the team that he won against. So, that was a little bit of added motivation."

San Antonio's next opportunity to get the record for its 73-year-old coach is Friday night at home against Utah.

VanVleet was 7-for-15 from the field in his return from a five-game absence because of knee soreness. Scottie Barnes and Pascal Siakam added 20 points to help Toronto snap a three-game skid.

The Spurs entered the game 3-36 when trailing by double digits and VanVleet and the Raptors made sure that dubious trend continued. Toronto led by 17 points in winning for the first time since beating Brooklyn on March 1.

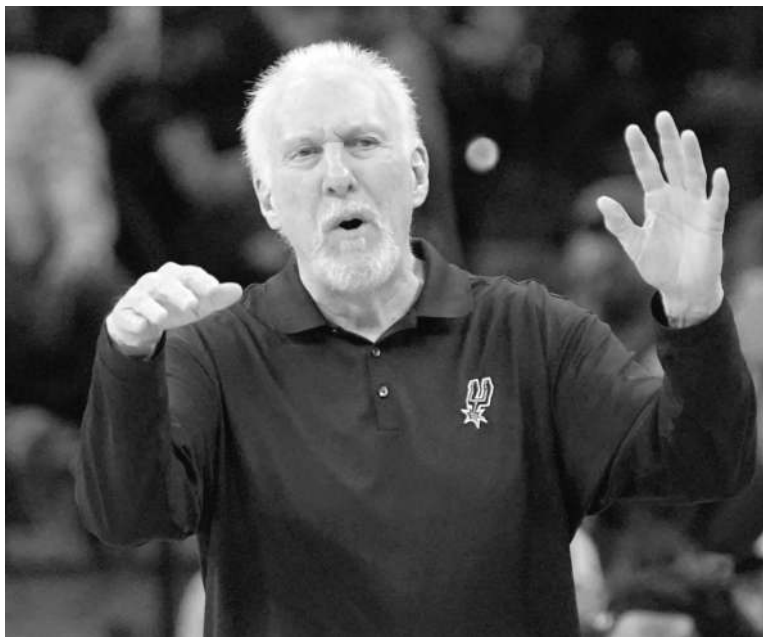
The Raptors had five players score in double figures while shooting 48% from the field and 37% on three-pointers.

"You got to fight, NBA, next man up," San Antonio point guard Dejounte Murray said. "We tried, but that's a long, talented team that's been together. They all get to their spots, whether it's driving, kicking or finding the open man."

After Murray cut the Spurs' deficit to 91-86 three minutes into the final quarter, Toronto went on an 8-0 run to regain control.

Keldon Johnson had 27 points for San Antonio, and Murray added 25 points, 12 assists and nine rebounds. The Spurs have lost five of six games.

Murray exited with 6:57 remaining in the third quarter after colliding heads with Khem Birch.



ERIC GAY/AP

Spurs coach Gregg Popovich reacts to a call during Wednesday's 119-104 loss to the Toronto Raptors in San Antonio.

Birch appeared to take the blow to his mouth and Murray immediately pressed a towel to his brow after play was stopped. Murray and Birch both walked to the locker room after the play. Murray returned but Birch did not.

"I thought we played them well until we got that one stretch in the third quarter," Popovich said. "They scored nine in a row, and that really changed the game."

Having Dejounte out for that period right after, that didn't help."

VanVleet had eight points, three rebounds and an assist in leading the Raptors to a 34-29 lead in the opening quarter.

"We know how special this building can be when it gets going," VanVleet said. "So, just having a good start to give us a chance for the rest of the night was really important."

Returns: Lakers far from championship expectations

FROM PAGE 48

franchise with glory days worthy of an HBO series. "Winning Time," the dramatization of LA's vibrant championship teams of the 1980s, began airing last weekend.

James Worthy, a star on those Showtime Lakers, recently referred to the current team as "the walking dead" on its own television network. Shaquille O'Neal castigated the team last week for its lack of visible passion during another defeat — and boasted he wouldn't have accepted the current situation.

"I'm losing to the Clippers, somebody is getting beat up that night in the locker room," Shaq said.

The past two games encapsulate the frustration and inconsistency that have defined LA's season. James carried the Lakers to a 124-116 victory over powerhouse Golden State last Saturday with a massive 56-point performance, tied for the third-biggest in his 19-year NBA career — but then he sat out a 117-110 loss Monday at 12th-place San Antonio with knee soreness.

The team lost to the Spurs without their two most important players on the court, and they did it on the two-month anniversary of the last time they won consecutive games.

"I feel like every time we get some momentum, something happens," Westbrook said, shaking



ERIC GAY/AP

Lakers guard Russell Westbrook has been a frequent target of fans' frustration with the team's struggles this season.

his head. "It's been like that. When we play a good game, something always happens (shortly afterward). But that's just how it's been for us. We've got to keep plugging away, keep finding ways to pick each other up, because some of that stuff is out of our hands, and health is the most important thing for all of us."

Westbrook is correct: Of all the Lakers' risky personnel decisions over the past 16 months, relying on Davis to stay healthy has been the biggest bust.

The star forward's gangly body and awkward movement have never allowed him to be durable, but Davis has been sidelined by several woes for much of the past two seasons, undercutting everything Los Angeles wants to do.

After missing half of the Lakers' 2020-21 regular season with injuries and then getting hurt again in the playoffs, Davis missed 17 more games this season with a sprained knee. He went out yet again before the All-Star break with a sprained foot, and there's a chance he won't return at all this season.

While Davis has missed 27 of Los Angeles' 64 games, James has also been less reliable than usual, missing 18 games. They appeared in only 27 games together last season, and they've played just 20 games alongside Westbrook this year — only five since Dec. 17.

The Lakers have used 32 starting lineups already, both because of their stars' injuries and their unimpressive supporting cast. They're currently starting Austin Reaves, an undrafted rookie who wasn't expected to play much at all.

"It changes a lot of things when you've got some of your main guys out," said Westbrook, whose first year with his hometown team has been largely a nightmare. "We've got to stick to it, and hopefully guys can step up and make that change."

The 2017 NBA MVP is shooting poorly and struggling to fit along-

side James. Westbrook's 18.1 points per game are his fewest since 2009-10, as are his 15.9 shots, but that attempt to play team ball isn't translating into wins.

Just as Pau Gasol was the target of Los Angeles' frustration during their most recent season with this level of unrealized expectations in 2013, Westbrook is the prime scapegoat at their arena. He has even stopped bringing his family to home games because of the booing and profanity directed at him.

"It's just super unfortunate, and it's super upsetting to me," Westbrook said. "The shaming of my name, the shaming of my character, the shaming of who I am as a person is, to me, not warranted. I haven't done anything to anybody. I haven't hurt anyone. I haven't done anything but play basketball in a way they may not like."

The only thing that suggests the Lakers still might make something of this miserable season is the name at the top of the roster. Although he'll apparently have to manage his knee soreness down the stretch, the 37-year-old James has missed the playoffs just once since 2005, and he's still near the peak of his formidable talents when healthy.

"Even though they've struggled, they'll be able to figure it out," Clippers coach Tyronn Lue said. "I have no doubt about that. I've seen Bron in tough situations before. I've always seen him come out on top."

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	40	24	.625	—
Boston	40	27	.597	1½
Toronto	35	30	.538	5½
Brooklyn	33	33	.500	8
New York	28	38	.424	13

Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	44	23	.657	—
Charlotte	32	35	.478	12
Atlanta	31	34	.477	12
Washington	29	35	.453	13½
Orlando	17	50	.254	27

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	42	25	.627	—
Chicago	40	26	.606	1½
Cleveland	38	27	.585	3
Indiana	22	45	.328	20
Detroit	18	48	.273	23½

Western Conference

Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	45	22	.672	—
Dallas	40	26	.606	4½
New Orleans	27	39	.409	17½
San Antonio	25	41	.379	19½
Houston	17	49	.258	27½

Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Utah	41	24	.631	—
Denver	40	26	.606	1½
Minnesota	38	29	.567	4
Portland	25	40	.385	16
Oklahoma City	20	46	.303	21½

Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Phoenix	53	13	.803	—
Golden State	44	22	.667	9
L.A. Clippers	35	33	.515	19
L.A. Lakers	28	37	.431	24½
Sacramento	24	44	.353	30

Tuesday's games

Brooklyn 132, Charlotte 121
Cleveland 127, Indiana 124
Phoenix 102, Orlando 99
Memphis 132, New Orleans 111
Milwaukee 142, Oklahoma City 115
Golden State 112, L.A. Clippers 97

Wednesday's games

Boston 115, Charlotte 101
Chicago 114, Detroit 108
Phoenix 111, Miami 90
Milwaukee 124, Atlanta 115
Minnesota 132, Oklahoma City 102
Orlando 108, New Orleans 102
Houston 139, L.A. Lakers 130, OT
Toronto 119, San Antonio 104
New York 107, Dallas 77
Utah 123, Portland 85
Denver 106, Sacramento 100
L.A. Clippers 115, Washington 109

Thursday's games

Brooklyn at Philadelphia
Golden State at Denver

Friday's games

Minnesota at Orlando
Detroit at Boston
L.A. Clippers at Atlanta
Charlotte at New Orleans
Cleveland at Miami
Dallas at Houston
New York at Memphis
Utah at San Antonio
Toronto at Phoenix
Washington at L.A. Lakers

Saturday's games

Cleveland at Chicago
Indiana at San Antonio
Minnesota at Miami
Milwaukee at Golden State
Sacramento at Utah
Toronto at Denver

Leaders

Through Wednesday

Scoring					
	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Embiid, PHI	52	489	500	1546	29.7
Anteknm, MIL	56	567	462	1661	29.7
James, LAL	47	518	211	1376	29.3

Rebounds					
	G	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVG
Gobert, UTA	51	183	567	750	14.7
Jokic, DEN	59	165	654	819	13.9

Assists			
	G	AST	AVG
Paul, PHO	58	619	10.7
Harden, PHI	49	509	10.4

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Scoreboard

America East Conference
First Round
 Binghamton 72, New Hampshire 69
 UMBC 93, Mass.-Lowell 85
 Hartford 61, Albany (NY) 49
 Vermont 98, NJIT 59

Semifinals
Wednesday, March 9
 Vermont 74, Binghamton 42
 UMBC 80, Hartford 60

Championship
Saturday, March 12
 Vermont vs. UMBC

American Athletic Conference
At Fort Worth, Texas
First Round
Thursday, March 10
 Cincinnati vs. East Carolina
 Wichita St. vs. Tulsa
 UCF vs. South Florida

Quarterfinals
Friday, March 11
 Houston vs. Cinc.-E. Carolina-winner
 Temple vs. Tulane
 SMU vs. Wichita St.-Tulsa-winner
 Memphis vs. UCF-South Florida-winner

Atlantic 10 Conference
At Washington, D.C.
First Round
Wednesday, March 9
 La Salle 63, Saint Joseph's 56
 Rhode Island 79, Duquesne 77

Second Round
Thursday, March 10
 Fordham vs. George Mason
 Saint Louis vs. La Salle
 George Washington vs. UMass
 Richmond vs. Rhode Island

Quarterfinals
Friday, March 11
 Davidson vs. Fordham-George Mason
 winner
 St. Bonaventure vs. Saint Louis-La Salle
 winner
 Dayton vs. George Washington-UMass
 winner
 VCU vs. Richmond-Rhode Island winner

Atlantic Coast Conference
At Brooklyn, N.Y.
First Round
Tuesday, March 8
 Boston College 66, Pittsburgh 46
 Clemson 70, NC State 64
 Louisville 84, Georgia Tech 74

Second Round
Wednesday, March 9
 Syracuse 96, Florida St. 57
 Boston College 82, Wake Forest 77
 Virginia Tech 76, Clemson 75
 Virginia 51, Louisville 50

Quarterfinals
Thursday, March 10
 Duke vs. Syracuse
 Miami vs. Boston College
 Notre Dame vs. Virginia Tech
 North Carolina vs. Virginia

Big 12 Conference
At Kansas City, Mo.
First Round
Wednesday, March 9
 West Virginia 73, Kansas St. 67

Quarterfinals
Thursday, March 10
 Texas vs. TCU
 Kansas vs. West Virginia
 Baylor vs. Oklahoma
 Texas Tech vs. Iowa St.

Semifinals
Friday, March 11
 Kansas-West Virginia winner vs. Texas-TCU
 winner
 Baylor-Oklahoma winner vs. Texas
 Tech-Iowa St. winner

Big East Conference
At New York
First Round
Wednesday, March 9
 Butler 89, Xavier 82
 St. John's 92, DePaul 73
 Seton Hall 57, Georgetown 53

Quarterfinals
Thursday, March 10
 Providence vs. Butler
 Creighton vs. Marquette
 Villanova vs. St. John's
 UConn vs. Seton Hall

Semifinals
Friday, March 11
 Providence-Butler winner vs. Creighton-
 Marquette winner
 Villanova-St. John's winner vs. UConn-
 Seton Hall winner

Big Sky Conference
At Boise, Idaho
First Round
Wednesday, March 9
 Sacramento St. 57, Idaho 54
 Portland St. 66, Idaho St. 52
 E. Washington 78, N. Arizona 75

Quarterfinals
Thursday, March 10
 Montana St. vs. Sacramento St.
 Weber St. vs. Montana
 S. Utah vs. Portland St.
 N. Colorado vs. E. Washington

Big Ten Conference
At Indianapolis, Ind.
First Round
Wednesday, March 9
 Northwestern 71, Nebraska 69
 Penn St. 60, Minnesota 51

Second Round
Thursday, March 10
 Michigan vs. Indiana

Iowa vs. Northwestern
 Michigan St. vs. Maryland
 Ohio St. vs. Penn St.

Quarterfinals
Friday, March 11
 Illinois vs. Michigan-Indiana winner
 Rutgers vs. Iowa-Northwestern winner
 Wisconsin vs. Mich. St.-Mary. winner
 Purdue vs. Ohio St.-Penn St. winner

Big West Conference
At Henderson, Nev.
First Round
Tuesday, March 8
 CS Bakersfield 58, CS Northridge 45
 UC Davis 63, Cal Poly 53

Quarterfinals
Thursday, March 10
 Long Beach St. vs. CS Northridge
 UC Irvine vs. UC Santa Barbara
 Cal St.-Fullerton vs. UC Davis
 Hawaii vs. UC Riverside

Conference USA Conference
At Frisco, Texas
First Round
Tuesday, March 8
 Marshall 74, FIU 62
 Southern Miss. 67, UTSA 64

Second Round
Wednesday, March 9
 Rice 73, Charlotte 61
 Louisiana Tech 77, Marshall 67
 UTEP 74, Old Dominion 64
 FAU 86, Southern Miss. 59

Quarterfinals
Thursday, March 10
 North Texas vs. Rice
 W. Kentucky vs. Louisiana Tech
 Middle Tennessee vs. UTEP
 UAB vs. FAU

Ivy League Conference
Semifinals
Saturday, March 12
 Princeton vs. Cornell
 Yale vs. Penn

Championship
 Saturday, March 13

Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference
At Atlantic City, N.J.
First Round
Tuesday, March 8
 Rider 79, Manhattan 67
 Fairfield 72, Canisius 50
 Quinnipiac 77, Marist 52

Quarterfinals
Wednesday, March 9
 Rider 71, Iona 70
 St. Peter's 77, Fairfield 63

Thursday, March 10
 Siena vs. Quinnipiac
 Monmouth (NJ) vs. Niagara

Semifinals
Friday, March 11
 Rider vs. Monmouth-Niagara winner
 St. Peter's vs. Siena-Quinnipiac winner

Mid-American Conference
At Cleveland
First Round
Thursday, March 10
 Toledo vs. Cent. Michigan
 Akron vs. Buffalo
 Kent St. vs. Miami (Ohio)
 Ohio vs. Ball St.

Semifinals
Friday, March 11
 Toledo-Cent. Michigan winner vs. Akron-
 Buffalo winner
 Kent St.-Miami (Ohio) winner vs. Ohio-
 Ball St. winner

Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference
At Norfolk, Va.
First Round
Wednesday, March 9
 Norfolk St. 74, Delaware St. 66
 Coppin St. 59, Howard 57

Thursday, March 10
 Morgan St. vs. SC State
 NC Central vs. Md.-Eastern Shore

Semifinals
Friday, March 11
 Norfolk St. vs. Morgan St.-SC St. winner
 Coppin St. vs. NC Central-Md.-Eastern
 Shore winner



JOHN MINCHILLO/AP

Virginia Tech's Justyn Mutts (25) and Clemson's PJ Hall battle for a loose ball in the Hokies' 76-75 win Wednesday in the ACC tourney.



HANS PENNINK/AP

Colgate center Jeff Woodward (55) grabs a pass intended for Navy during the Patriot League men's championship Wednesday, in Hamilton, N.Y. Colgate won 74-58.

Colgate builds big lead, holds off Navy for title

Associated Press

HAMILTON, N.Y. — Tournament MVP Jack Ferguson scored 17 points, Nelly Cummings added 15 and Colgate turned away a late Navy push to win the Patriot League championship game 74-58 on Wednesday and return to the NCAA Tournament for the second straight year.

Tucker Richardson scored 12 points as did Jeff Woodward, who grabbed eight rebounds. Oliver Lynch-Daniels added 10 points, all in the first half, for the Raiders (23-11), who won their 15th straight game, the third-longest active win streak in the nation.

Greg Summers had 18 points and eight rebounds, Tyler Nelson added 11 points and John Carter Jr. 10 for the Midshipmen (21-11), who were playing in their first league championship game since 2001.

Colgate led 40-22 at halftime and seemed to have the game well in hand, leading by 22 midway through the second half when Navy went on a 16-0 run led by seven points from Sean Yoder to get within six with six minutes remaining. While the Midshipmen were shooting 5-for-7, the Raiders missed five straight shots and had three turnovers.

Colgate responded by outscoring Navy — which then had its own spate of turnovers plus five straight misses — 14-4 over the the final six minutes.

Now its a return trip to the NCAA tournament

“It’s what kids grow up dreaming

NCAA Automatic Bids

- Murray St., Ohio Valley Conference
- Longwood, Big South Conference
- Loyola Chicago, Missouri Valley Conference
- Chattanooga, Southern Conference
- Georgia St., Sun Belt Conference
- Jacksonville St., Atlantic Sun Conference
- Delaware, Colonial Athletic Conference
- Wright St., Horizon League Conference
- Bryant, Northeast Conference
- South Dakota St., Summit League Conference
- Gonzaga, West Coast Conference
- Colgate, Patriot League Conference

about myself included,” said Raiders coach Matt Langel. “So these guys work tirelessly for that opportunity. They’ve had a little bit of a taste of it before. It’s part of why, you know, a couple of them came back for another run at it and so it’ll be another tremendous experience.”

The teams exchanged baskets to open the game before Colgate went ahead for good. The Midshipmen stayed within single digits before the Raiders finished the half on a 17-5 run in which five Colgate players scored.

The Raiders shot 56%, more than 20% better than Navy, was 8 of 17 from the arc and had a 19-3 bulge in points off turnovers. Colgate made 20 of 28 free throws to the Midshipmen’s 8 of 13. Three Navy players fouled out.

The Raiders beat the Midshipmen by 19 in their first meeting this season but by only five in the teams’ regular-season finale. Colgate has won seven straight in the series.

The victory was the third in five straight championship game appearances for the Raiders.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL/NHL

Weber steps down at Kansas State

Coach resigns one day after opening Big 12 Tournament with a loss

BY DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Bruce Weber resigned as the basketball coach at Kansas State on Thursday, one day after the struggling Wildcats lost to West Virginia in the opening round of the Big 12 Tournament to cap a third straight losing season.

He didn't walk away quietly. First, the long-time coach criticized the NCAA over its handling of the FBI probe into college basketball corruption. Then, Weber struck out at Kansas State fans who used social media to berate him and his program. And finally, he professed his desire to continue coaching, asking for "some (athletic director) out there who would appreciate a coach that graduates players, wins championships, supports the university and embraces the community."

"I've been preparing for this for a long time," said Weber, who had one year remaining on his contract. "I got into coaching — I got into teaching — because my dad and mom thought there was no better life than to help others. That's been my goal. 'Hopefully I've impacted people and helped them with their lives so that now they can help others.'"

The 65-year-old Weber was a



CHARLIE RIEDEL/AP

Kansas State coach Bruce Webber, who was 184—147 at the school but 23-37 the past two seasons, resigned Thursday.

largely unpopular pick to replace Frank Martin when he was hired by former athletic director John Currie in 2012, shortly after he was fired by Illinois.

He led the Wildcats to a share of the Big 12 title in his first season, made five NCAA tournaments in his first seven seasons and added a share of another conference title just four years ago.

But the past few years have been a struggle.

They went 9-20 last season and 14-17 this season, leaving Weber — who took the Illini to the national championship game in 2005 — with a 184—147 record with the Wildcats. His career mark, including a highly successful run at Southern Illinois that included two NCAA tourney appearances, stands at 407-301 with 13 appearances in the NCAA Tournament.

Crean awaiting verdict at Georgia after dismal year

Associated Press

ATHENS, Ga. — A 12-game losing streak capped by Georgia's worst offensive performance of the season has left coach Tom Crean awaiting a final verdict on his future with the school.

The Bulldogs put up little fight in what may have been their last chance to make a case for Crean, losing 86-51 to Vanderbilt in the first round of the Southeastern Conference Tournament in Tampa on Wednesday night.

Georgia finished with 26 losses, the most in school history. Crean was unable to find a way to prevent the free fall of 20 losses in the final 21 games.

The SEC Tournament loss was a fitting finish to a dismal season. The Bulldogs were held without a field goal in the final 12 minutes of the first half and trailed 35-14 at halftime. They set season lows for fewest points in a half and a game.

"A lot of the things that hurt us throughout the year hurt us to-

day," Crean said. "Too many turnovers, too many open 3s, too much missed communication and too much losing our spirit when we're not scoring points."

When asked if he had addressed his job status with his players before Wednesday night's game, Crean said: "You know what? Anything with my situation, that's got to go through the athletic department, right?"

Crean's future now rests with athletic director Josh Brooks. Crean was hired by Brooks' predecessor, Greg McGarity.

The buyout clause in the six-year, \$19.8 million contract Crean signed in 2018 decreases from \$7.2 million to \$3.2 million with the end of the season.

Crean is 47-75 overall and 15-58 in SEC games in four seasons. He has been unable to duplicate the success he enjoyed at Marquette, where he advanced to the Final Four, or Indiana, where he coached three Sweet 16 teams.

NHL scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Florida	57	39	13	5	83	237	167
Tampa Bay	56	37	13	6	80	196	162
Toronto	57	37	16	4	78	213	171
Boston	57	34	18	5	73	173	155
Detroit	57	24	27	6	54	165	212
Ottawa	56	20	31	5	45	147	180
Buffalo	58	18	32	8	44	154	209
Montreal	57	15	35	7	37	140	217

Metropolitan Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Carolina	56	39	12	5	83	191	134
N.Y. Rangers	57	36	16	5	77	171	144
Pittsburgh	58	34	15	9	77	188	156
Washington	59	31	18	10	72	193	166
Columbus	57	28	26	3	59	190	210
N.Y. Islanders	53	21	24	8	50	137	152
New Jersey	57	21	31	5	47	176	205
Philadelphia	56	18	28	10	46	141	193

Western Conference

Central Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Colorado	58	41	12	5	87	230	168
St. Louis	56	32	17	7	71	195	155
Minnesota	55	33	19	3	69	208	179
Nashville	56	32	20	4	68	176	156
Dallas	56	32	21	3	67	166	162
Winnipeg	57	25	22	10	60	174	178
Chicago	58	21	29	8	50	152	201
Arizona	56	17	35	4	38	141	203

Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Calgary	56	34	15	7	75	197	139
Los Angeles	58	32	19	7	71	172	162
Vegas	58	32	22	4	68	185	169
Edmonton	58	31	23	4	66	189	186
Vancouver	58	29	23	6	64	169	168
Anaheim	59	27	23	9	63	175	187
San Jose	56	24	25	7	55	145	179
Seattle	59	17	37	5	39	152	213

Tuesday's games

- Florida 4, Pittsburgh 3
- New Jersey 5, Colorado 3
- Philadelphia 2, Vegas 1
- Arizona 9, Detroit 2
- Toronto 6, Seattle 4
- Ottawa 4, St. Louis 1
- Minnesota 5, N.Y. Rangers 2
- Winnipeg 7, Tampa Bay 4
- Nashville 2, Dallas 1
- Chicago 8, Anaheim 3
- Washington 5, Calgary 4

Wednesday's games

- Edmonton 4, Washington 3, OT
- Vancouver 5, Montreal 3

Thursday's games

- Arizona at Toronto
- Chicago at Boston
- Colorado at Carolina
- Minnesota at Detroit
- Philadelphia at Florida
- Seattle at Ottawa
- Vegas at Buffalo
- Winnipeg at New Jersey
- Columbus at N.Y. Islanders
- Anaheim at Nashville
- N.Y. Rangers at St. Louis
- Tampa Bay at Calgary
- San Jose at Los Angeles

Friday's games

- Minnesota at Columbus
- Vegas at Pittsburgh
- Winnipeg at N.Y. Islanders
- Washington at Vancouver

Saturday's games

- St. Louis at Nashville
- Philadelphia at Carolina
- Anaheim at New Jersey
- Arizona at Boston
- Chicago at Ottawa
- Detroit at Calgary
- Seattle at Montreal
- N.Y. Rangers at Dallas
- Los Angeles at San Jose
- Tampa Bay at Edmonton

Scoring leaders

Through Wednesday

	GP	G	A	PTS
Connor McDavid, EDM	57	30	51	81
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	58	38	41	79
Jonathan Huberdeau, FLA	57	18	60	78
Auston Matthews, TOR	54	43	32	75
Johnny Gaudreau, CGY	56	23	51	74
Nazem Kadri, COL	55	22	50	72
Kirill Kaprizov, MIN	54	28	43	71
Alex Ovechkin, WSH	57	36	34	70
J.T. Miller, VAN	56	23	44	67
Mikko Rantanen, COL	55	27	40	67
Cale Makar, COL	54	21	44	65
Matthew Tkachuk, CGY	56	27	38	65
Patrick Kane, CHI	54	19	45	64
Kyle Connor, WPG	57	34	30	64
Steven Stamkos, TB	55	27	36	63



AMBER BRACKEN, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Washington Capitals' Alex Ovechkin (8) looks on as Edmonton Oilers' Brad Malone (24) celebrates his team's goal during the second period of a 4-3 overtime win Wednesday in Edmonton, Alberta.

Oilers top Caps in overtime, halt skid

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — When the opportunity to beat the Washington Capitals in regulation and end their skid evaporated with less than two seconds left, Connor McDavid and the Edmonton Oilers felt the pain that has been all too familiar lately.

Then McDavid made that all go away by scoring the overtime winner to give the Oilers a 4-3 victory Wednesday night and two valuable points in their playoff pursuit. Edmonton won for just the third time in nine games, snapping a three-game losing streak and moving one point back of the final playoff spot in the Western Conference.

"These are big points," McDavid said. "They all are from here on out. We need to start piling them

up." The reigning NHL MVP scored on a 2-on-1 with Leon Draisaitl 3:27 into the 3-on-3 OT with a shot goal-tender Ilya Samsonov stood little chance of stopping. McDavid also assisted on Kailer Yamamoto's goal — the Oilers' first on the power play in three games.

With all eyes on Alex Ovechkin's chance to pass Jaromir Jagr for third on the NHL career goals list, the spotlight instead fell on long-time running mate Nicklas Backstrom, McDavid and an unlikely hero for Edmonton. Journeyman Brad Malone had a goal and an assist for his first NHL points in more than six years.

Malone picked up his first assist since Feb. 28, 2016, when he assisted on Cody Ceci's goal in the second period.

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MLB/COLLEGE BASEBALL

MLB, players working on international draft

By RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

NEW YORK —Major League Baseball and its locked-out players agreed Thursday to negotiate on an international amateur draft, paving the way for renewed economic talks.

Under an agreement reached on the 99th day of a lockout that has delayed the season, the sides agreed to a July 25 deadline to establish an international draft that would start in 2024.

Talks aimed at ending the lockout bogged down on the draft issue Wednesday, and baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred canceled 93 more games, raising the total to 184. He said opening day, originally sched-

uled for March 31, would be no earlier than April 14.

The sides narrowed many economic differences to a small margin, when the international draft obstacle caused MLB to refuse to counter the union's latest proposal.

Under the deal reached Thursday, if a negotiated agreement on a draft is reached by July 25, direct amateur draft-pick compensation would be removed for free agents starting with the 2022-23 offseason.

If the sides do not reach an agreement by July 25, direct amateur-draft pick compensation would remain in place.

"The PA awaits a counter from the league to its global proposals made at 1 p.m. yesterday," the union said in a statement.

The agreement does not impact the current offseason's qualified agents who remain subject to compensation: Carlos Correa, Freddie Freeman, Michael Conforto, Nicholas Castellanos and Trevor Story.

While Manfred did not use the word "canceled" to describe the games wiped off the calendar, he left the appearance 162 games no longer could be played due to baseball's ninth work stoppage, its first since 1995.

"We were talking these last few days about taking those first two series and finding a way to get them back in the schedule," Arizona Diamondbacks President Derrick Hall said.

Players dropped their threshold for the luxury tax to \$232 million this year, with in-

creases to \$235 million in 2023, \$240 million in 2024, \$245 million in 2025 and \$250 million in 2026.

Players had been at \$238 million to \$263 million in their previous proposal of a week earlier. They were within 2.5% of management's starting figure of \$230 million in Tuesday's proposal. Players were within 3.2% of MLB's \$242 million 2026 proposal.

Management's desire for an additional fourth tax threshold \$60 million above the first is among the remaining squabbles.

Players dropped to \$65 million from \$80 million for their proposed pre-arbitration-eligible players bonus pool, a day after MLB raised its offer from \$30 million to \$40 million.

College ball poised to gain fans as MLB lockout drags on

By ERIC OLSON
Associated Press

Kush Patel showed up at Minute Maid Park wearing the No. 43 jersey of Houston Astros ace Lance McCullers Jr. and hankering for some baseball.

This time, instead of watching his favorite team, Patel was there to see the Tennessee Volunteers play the Texas Longhorns in a battle of college baseball heavyweights.

"I'm a diehard Astros fan, so it's just good to be back in this building, watching some baseball," Patel said. "I'm more of an MLB guy, but I started watching college baseball last year for the College World Series. In college, it seems like the players are allowed to have more passion, so that definitely makes the game a little more interesting and fun to watch."

The college game might turn out to be an attractive alternative for Patel and other fans if the Major League Baseball lockout extends deep into the spring.

College baseball has experienced unprecedented growth over the past decade with schools

spending hundreds of millions of dollars to build new stadiums and facilities and increase coaching salaries. The level of play is at an all-time high and will get even better, people in the game say, because the reduction of rounds in the MLB draft means more elite players will go to school, or stay in school, rather than go pro.

Those factors, plus the lockout, give the college an opportunity to expand its fan base.

"For someone that doesn't know much about the college game, once they see it, they may not want to go back to watching the pro game as much as the college game," American Baseball Coaches Association executive director Craig Keilitz said. "The passion in the college game and the love for the game itself, every game seems to be 'the game.' It's a little bit different than a 162-game season. The passion, excitement, the collegiate feel can't be matched."

One of the college game's premier events, the Shriners Children's College Classic, was held over the weekend at Minute Maid Park. Houston is in between the campuses of Texas and LSU, and a game between those teams on Saturday attracted 24,787. Crowds of better than 16,000 turned out for other matchups.

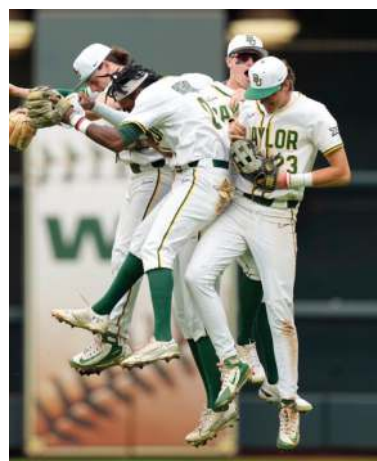
Oklahoma coach Skip Johnson said the lively atmosphere differentiates college ball from MLB.

"You look at Major League Baseball and their playoffs — all our kids aspire to be major leaguers," Johnson said. "But there's something different about March Madness and the super regionals and (CWS in) Omaha, and you hear, 'Boomer Sooner!' Or the regional we played in at Florida State and they were doing, 'K-



DAVID J. PHILLIP / AP

Above: Oklahoma's Jackson Nicklaus, right, is tagged out at second by LSU's Jordan Thompson while trying to stretch a single into a double during a Shriners Children's College Classic game at Minute Maid Park, home of the Houston Astros, on March 4. Below: Oklahoma baseball coach Skip Johnson yells to the umpires during the game. Below, left: Baylor's Kyle Nevin (23), Tre Richardson (0), Jack Pineda, left, and Jared McKenzie celebrate a win against UCLA at Minute Maid Park on March 4.



Time, K-Time, K-Time!"

"That's the spirit of the game, and it makes the hairs stand up on the back of your neck, and it makes you want to go out there and compete and get after it. It's almost like a football game on a baseball field at times. So, I think that's what's been fun about it."

Schools, especially in the Power 5 conferences, are showing more commitment to their baseball programs as the sport's profile is ris-

ing nationally.

Sports Business Journal reported total spending on college baseball and softball stadiums went over \$256 million in 2020, up from \$100 million in 2019.

New stadiums have opened at Florida (\$65 million), Oklahoma State (\$60 million) and Connecticut (\$40 million), among other places, and North Carolina State recently announced a \$15 million baseball facilities upgrade to start

after this season. Outside the Power 5, an anonymous donor fully funded a \$60 million baseball facilities project at Binghamton in New York.

According to research by AthleticDirectorU.com and USA Today, the average salary among Power 5 head coaches in 2020 was \$613,807. The Southeastern Conference had the highest average at just under \$900,000.

There were 10 coaches in the country known to be earning at least \$1 million per year in 2020, according to the USA Today salary database. There now are at least 11, with Tennessee's Tony Vitello getting a raise to \$1.5 million per year after leading the Vols to the 2021 College World Series.

Last year's College World Series in Omaha, Neb., drew a record 361,711, and more than 24,000 turned out for each of the three games of the finals.

AP freelance writer Jordan Godwin in Houston contributed to this report.

NFL



AP

The Washington Commanders have agreed to acquire Carson Wentz from the Indianapolis Colts, according to a person with direct knowledge of the situation.

Commanders acquiring QB Wentz from Indianapolis

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
AND MICHAEL MAROT
Associated Press

The Indianapolis Colts are moving on from Carson Wentz after one season, sending him to a team he's familiar with from his days in the NFC East.

The Colts agreed to trade Wentz to the Washington Commanders, according to a person with direct knowledge of the situation. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity Wednesday because the deal cannot be finalized until the start of the new league year next week.

Washington is getting the 47th pick in the draft along with Wentz and sending Indianapolis Nos. 42 and 73 this year and a 2023 conditional third-rounder that can become a second based on Wentz's playing time, according to another person with knowledge of the move.

Wentz, 29, has three years left on his contract with salary cap hits of \$28.3, \$26.2 and \$27.2 million consecutively. The 2016 second overall pick of the Philadelphia Eagles spent just the 2021 season with Indianapolis, with the team going 9-8 and missing the playoffs.

This will be the sixth consecutive year the Colts will have a different opening day starter, although Jacoby Brissett took over when Andrew Luck missed the season in 2017 and in 2019 when Luck abruptly announced his retirement in August.

Washington has started 12 QBs since acquiring Alex Smith from Kansas City in 2018. That includes Smith, who broke his right leg 10 games into his tenure there.

Adding Wentz likely relegates previous starter Taylor Heinicke to a competition with Kyle Allen for the backup job.

Rams are tough act to follow

Super Bowl champs' model for success not easy to replicate

BY ROB MAADDI
Associated Press

Going all-in paid off for the Los Angeles Rams. They have a shiny new Lombardi Trophy to show for the money spent on big contracts and draft picks traded away.

While some teams may be tempted to follow a similar path for success — the Denver Broncos just agreed to send a massive haul to Seattle for Russell Wilson — even the Rams know it's not a wave of the future in the NFL.

"Maybe that's not for everybody, and maybe that's not sustainable," Rams chief operating officer Kevin Demoff said before the Rams beat Cincinnati to win the Super Bowl last month. "Maybe it doesn't work long term, even though we seem to figure it out every year. But it's working right now."

The Rams haven't had a first-round pick since selecting quarterback Jared Goff at No. 1 overall in 2016, and they don't own another one until 2024. But using four of those first-rounders to acquire Jalen Ramsey and Matthew Stafford helped them become champions.

"The model is working," Rams general manager Les Snead said last month. "It's allowing us to consistently win games, consistently contend for the NFC West. We'll try to use our picks in an innovative, creative way, and sometimes it will be picking players in the draft and sometimes it will be using them to go acquire players."

Despite having no first-round picks since Goff, the Rams have had the second-most picks of any team since 2017. Finding starters in middle and later rounds is essential.

The Baltimore Ravens priori-



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

Los Angeles Rams quarterback Matthew Stafford celebrates after the Rams beat the Cincinnati Bengals in Super Bowl LVI on Feb. 13 in Inglewood, Calif. Acquiring Stafford was a key part of the Rams' strategy.



AP

The Denver Broncos appear to be following the Rams' playbook by sending a massive haul of picks and players to the Seattle Seahawks for Russell Wilson.

tized adding compensation picks to give them more assets.

"Years ago, for instance, we felt like we had an opportunity to collect comp picks, and it took a long time for other teams to catch up. Now, everybody is doing it," Baltimore general manager Eric De-

Costa said.

With free agency opening next week and the draft coming up next month, teams have opportunities to bolster their rosters without dealing valuable picks for high-priced stars. Of course, spending freely has limitations in a salary cap sport. The Rams, Saints, Packers, Buccaneers and Vikings currently are more than \$15 million over the threshold, according to Overthecap.com.

"You need to be able to look at the whole year as an opportunity to improve your team. It's not just small windows in March or April," Las Vegas Raiders coach Josh McDaniels said. "There's opportunities in pro free agency. There's opportunities in the draft. There's opportunities after the draft, players that didn't get drafted. There's opportunities that are going to present themselves later on in the spring, the summer, all the way through the course of the

season and the trade deadline."

The Broncos took a different approach after missing the playoffs the last six seasons.

They're counting on Wilson, who led the Seahawks to the playoffs eight times in 10 years and started every game until a finger injury last season cost him three games, to make them contenders. Denver has a solid nucleus with dynamic wide receivers Jerry Jeudy, Courtland Sutton, Tim Patrick and K.J. Hamler, tight end Albert Okwuegbunam and running back Javonte Williams.

Wilson came within a yard of leading the Seahawks to consecutive Super Bowl victories in his first three seasons. He saw Tom Brady join the Buccaneers in 2020 and lead them to a Super Bowl title. Stafford did the same in his first year with the Rams. Wilson doesn't have to win one in his first season in Denver for the trade to be worth the cost for the Broncos.

Flores wants lawsuit against league heard in court

Associated Press

Brian Flores wants the NFL to reject the Miami Dolphins' request for an arbitration hearing regarding his class-action lawsuit against the team and the league alleging racist hiring practices.

Flores' lawyer sent a letter to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell on Wednesday, urging him to turn down Miami's request and have the case settled in court.

"Arbitration is not transparent," attorney Douglas H. Wigdor wrote in his letter. "Indeed, arbitration is by its very nature a secretive process that takes place behind closed doors and outside of the public eye. The lack of transparency in arbitration only serves to continue the status quo — which in this case, is one that you have conceded must be fairly evaluated and potentially overhauled. That cannot hap-



Flores

pen in arbitration. In addition to being secret and confidential, it is a well-accepted fact that arbitration presents a barrier to justice for victims of discrimination and other misconduct."

Flores, hired as a senior defensive assistant for the Pittsburgh Steelers last month, filed suit against the NFL, Dolphins, New York Giants and Denver Broncos following his dismissal by Miami. Flores led the Dolphins to consecutive winning seasons before he was fired in January.

"The claims that we filed involve important issues of systemic race discrimination and the integrity of NFL football games," Flores said in a statement provided by his lawyer. "Unfortunately, the Dolphins and their attorneys, Quinn

Emanuel and Paul Weiss, are trying to push the claims against the Dolphins into secret arbitration proceedings that lack transparency. There are currently ongoing legislative efforts to end forced arbitration for claims of race discrimination, which I fully support. I would hope that the NFL and Dolphins would also support those efforts. Commissioner Goodell now has a choice to make. Will he allow this case and future race discrimination claims to play out in a transparent and public legal process, or continue along the same unacceptable path?"

Flores' suit alleges the league has discriminated against him and other Black coaches for racial reasons, denying them positions as head coaches, coordinators, quarterbacks coaches and general managers. Flores also claims Miami offered him \$100,000 per loss in 2019 in an effort to receive a top draft pick.

SPORTS



Tougher than it looks

Rams' path to success won't be easy for others to replicate » **NFL, Page 47**

NBA

Going off-script

Lakers' superstar roster not delivering expected returns

By GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

The Los Angeles Lakers just can't get it together, and now they're nearly out of time.

From Anthony Davis' injuries and Russell Westbrook's subpar play to LeBron James' inability to carry them all, practically nothing has gone well this season for the franchise that momentarily assembled a veteran-laden roster last fall to chase another ring.

After their 136-130 loss to the Rockets on Wednesday night, the Lakers are 28-37 and in ninth place in the Western Conference, just three games out of 11th. A group expected to contend for a title is much closer to missing the 10-team playoffs.

They haven't given up hope in Hollywood: James and coach Frank Vogel both insist there's still time for Davis to get healthy, for Westbrook to find his game and for Los Angeles' supporting cast to recapture its collective prime.

"We still have games to play," James said last week after the Lakers blew a late lead and lost to Dallas at home. "Until you stomp me out, cut my head off, bury me 12 feet under, then I got a chance. So that's my confidence."

But every dispiriting loss and injury setback underscores the likelihood that Los Angeles' dreams of an 18th title are profoundly unrealistic. A roster with four members of the NBA's 75th Anniversary Team has gone 7-17 since Jan. 7.

Nobody knows exactly where to assign the blame for this mélange of mediocrity —

not even the Lakers' front office, which hasn't yet scapegoated Vogel for the struggles by firing him.

But past Los Angeles greats are embarrassed by the current state of the

SEE RETURNS ON PAGE 43

"Until you stomp me out, cut my head off, bury me 12 feet under, then I got a chance. So that's my confidence."

LeBron James
Lakers' four-time NBA MVP



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James.

MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

MLB, players negotiating international draft » Page 46

